

# @MANIPULATION

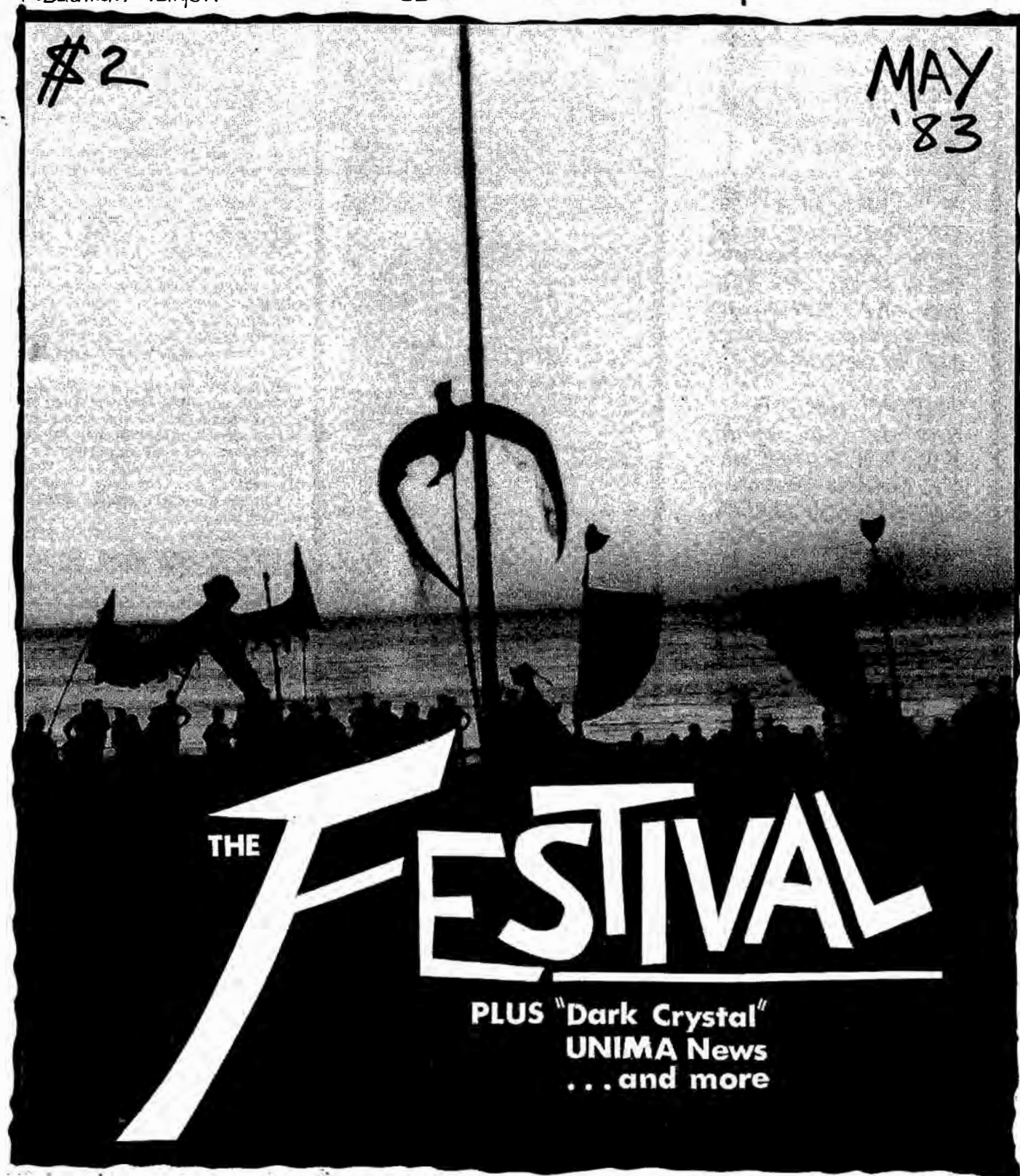
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A MAGAZINE for PUPPETEERS

#2

MAY  
'83



THE

# FESTIVAL

PLUS "Dark Crystal"  
UNIMA News  
... and more



HELLO READERS....  
APART FROM THE USUAL-  
REASONS (APATHY, THE  
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WITH CUSTOMARY TARDI-  
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ANYWAY, here it is -  
another issue of MAN-  
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TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS  
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little help from Caz, Roy, Pat,  
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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: \$6

PRICE RISE NEXT YEAR!

EDITOR/DESIGNER: MAEVE VELLA

ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO  
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## THE dalang's APPRENTICE



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We visited Bambang Gumardjo (who was  
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We have settled temporarily in Yog-  
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His name is Suparman, a common name  
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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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People who know me know how much I  
love the Australia Council and their  
queer way of funding.

AXEL AXELRAD

## TWELFTH NIGHT'S NEW DAY a new venue for puppet theatre



BRISBANE'S PUPPET PEOPLE - Gwen and Peter Iliffe - ARE EXTREMELY PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN OVER THE RUNNING OF the Twelfth Night Theatre in Bowen Hills. It won't be ONLY for Puppet Theatre - but the opening production in Feb. was ERIC BASS's "Autism Portraits" - and there'll be more, they promise!

## VIC. GUILD news

The Victorian branch of the Australian Puppetry Guild held its annual general meeting in March, and a number of changes resulted. Axel Axelrad retired from the presidency after three years of generous service, and Marie Donald was elected to replace him. Marie's old position of secretary was filled by Perth puppeteer Clelia Tedeschi, who recently moved to Melbourne to work with Polyglot Puppets. Lorrie Gardner was re-elected as treasurer.

The meeting decided to cut back the number of meetings from 8 to 4 per year, in the hope that more puppeteers will be able to attend regularly. The time slot remains 7.45 pm on the last Wednesday of the month, but the months are now February, May, August and November.

NEXT MEETING: 25th May at the Drama Resource Centre, 117 Bouverie Street, Carlton.

### Contact addresses:

President, Marie Donald  
50 Albert St. Glen Waverly

Secretary, Clelia Tedeschi  
18 Queens Pde. North Fitzroy

## PUPPETEERS' CONFERENCE 1985

A steering committee was appointed at the recent Puppet Festival to make arrangements for a conference of puppeteers to be held in two years' time (See Festival report, page .)

Readers are invited to send recommendations for the structure, content, timing and location of the conference to the committee members at the following addresses:

## MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA



The New South Wales government has just granted the Marionette Theatre of Australia \$195,000 to complete work on the main theatre of their Sailors Home building in Sydney's Rocks area. The theatre will seat 300 people, and the grand opening will take place in the first week of August.

The company also plans a smaller, 100-seat theatre for experimental work and a gallery for exhibitions, but these will have to wait until more money is found.

Funding to date has totalled \$545,000. Sources are: Meadow Lea, \$150,000; the NSW government, \$100,000 in 1981 plus the recent grant; and MFA's fundraising activities, which have yielded another \$100,000.

Peter Wilson,  
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre  
P.O. Box 897, Fremantle WA 6061.

Annie Heitman,  
UNIMA Australia secretary,  
R.M.B. Glen's Creek Rd, Nymboida NSW

Roy McNeill,  
Jika Jika Puppet Company  
75 Delbridge St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Ian Cumming,  
156 Clausen St, N. Fitzroy VIC 3068

Maeva Vella, c/o MANIPULATION.

## SCRIPTWRITERS' WORKSHOP

HOBART, MAY 30 → JUNE 11

Terrapin Puppet Theatre is planning a workshop for puppet playwrights from May 30th - June 11th.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide committed writers with the opportunity to work with puppets, puppeteers, actors, a director and playwright to generate scripts that take advantage of the imaginative possibilities inherent in puppetry.

At the recent International Puppet Festival held in Adelaide the wide diversity of plays presented gave evidence of the potential scope for puppetry and the new levels of sophistication reached in this form of theatre. Some plays were for adults and some for children, but the degree of excellence needed for children was no less than that needed for adults.

To continue the development of puppetry today companies need to work with writers interested in using this medium to the full. We need input from creative writers.

The puppet playwrights workshop will combine ideas with their practical application. Puppeteers will demonstrate the use of different kinds of puppets and methods of staging. Writers' script ideas will be workshopped with puppeteers and actors, improvising and creating the objects and spaces needed. Work in progress will be discussed and analysed.

We hope that by the end of the process the writers involved will be in a position to continue their work with an appreciation of the breadth of visual and dramatic form puppetry can encompass - and that their scripts will be used by professional companies.

Anyone interested, please contact  
Terrapin Puppet Theatre  
P.O. Box 23, Sandy Bay TAS 7005.

## Scripts Wanted

SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE invites script outlines from writers with an ability to write for the stage in images - utilising sound, music and movement, with minimal dialogue - for puppets. We seek material on contemporary issues suitable for performance to children, to youth and to adults. (Noddies need not submit) The company is a small active theatre group based in WA since 1981. We use traditional and experimental puppetry and seek scripts available for production in 1984.

Contact: The Administrator,  
Spare Parts, P.O. Box 897,  
Fremantle WA 6061  
Phone (09) 335 3533

# HANDSPAN plays the palace

Melbourne's Handspan Theatre recently performed Camille Saint-Saens' CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS in the largest black theatre booth in the Southern Hemisphere - the Concert Hall of the Melbourne Performing Arts Centre.

With accompanying verse by Ogden Nash, read by well-known Melbourne Theatre Company actor Frederick Parslow, and the Victorian College of the Arts Orchestra conducted by Paul Baeyertz and John Hopkins, Handspan illustrated each musical segment with large puppets in a curtain of light on the Concert Hall's 20-metre wide stage.

Cabaret artist Tony Rickards wrote a script involving the Emu, Kangaroo, Platypus and Bunyip from Handspan's BUNYIP OF BERKELEY'S CREEK show. About a dozen other animals were constructed for the original Carnival, and the Australian animals, demanding "Oz Animals for Oz musicals and vice versa" were included in the festivities to new music written by Paul Baeyertz.

The CARNIVAL puppetry used 2-dimensional "things on sticks" behind a scrim curtain. The task of finding sufficient black velvet to mask the black theatre booth and the "unusual" lighting required for the technique stretched the resources of the Concert Hall technical staff somewhat.

But the final effect of this large scale black theatre proved a success. The show played four performances to schoolchildren on the 7th and 8th of April, playing to an average audience of 2,500 primary-aged kids.

This light-hearted event will be repeated for South Australian audiences at the Rotunda in Adelaide Zoo as part of the 1983 COME OUT festival in May.

ANDREW HANSEN

# ....and Italy

The first few months of 1983 have been heady days indeed for Handspan. After their production of Nigel Triffitt's SECRETS won the critics' award for the most innovative production at the Puppet Festival in Adelaide and a season at the Universal Theatre in Melbourne, the company received an invitation to perform SECRETS at the Spoleto Theatre Festival in Italy in July. Looks like Handspan will be celebrating their sixth birthday over spumante and bombonieri this year.

# and down the street

As well as staging CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS, the company has been hard at work on a new schools production, STREETWISE, scheduled for Victorian country touring from late April.

Adapted from a script by John Lonie, STREETWISE shows the fears and fantasies of a small boy on his first trip alone down the street to the milk bar. Judging by what I've seen at rehearsals, the show will be a winner. It's sensitive, funny and energetic, and jam-packed with animated objects - true visual theatre, as puppetry should be.

"STREETWISE" was created with a \$20,000 grant from the Australia Council.

Designer Ken Evans' set is a remarkable collection of things that open, shut, disappear and transform, all set onto a large wheeled framework - a monster version of Handspan's old revolving booth. It will take some time for the cast of four puppeteers and one stage manager to get the bumping in and out procedure smooth on those rigorous schools tours. Ken's research for the set design has been - what else? - local kids' drawings of their own urban streets. The graffiti, the garbage cans, the highrise flats and the barking dog behind the paling fence - they're all in there, and they're all ALIVE.

MAEVE VELLA



Bernie and Eileen Ehmer are preparing their next major production for a season at Brisbane's Chandler Theatre from 31st October to 4th November. Entitled "DREAMTIME IN THE DEEP", it is to be an underwater fantasy involving a sister, a brother, "and a multitude of underwater creatures."

Large (puppet) casts are something of a trademark of the Ehmers. Last year their Commonwealth Games presentation "Strings Over Australia" boasted almost 100 characters in eleven scenes. The show rambled from the days of white settlement of Australia through to life in present-day Brisbane, with particular emphasis on the attractions of the Sunshine State for the tourist and holidaymaker. The Ehmers report that the show itself attracted 10,000 people during its five-day season at the Chandler Theatre.

Now, amongst their touring performances and business promotions ("Have puppets WILL travel" is the motto on their letterhead) the Ehmers are hard at work on "DREAMTIME IN THE DEEP". One aspect of the production is particularly exciting for these veterans of 27 years in professional puppetry: a large part of the design and construction of the show is being done by their son Stephen Ehmer. "A second generation puppeteer" they observe, "that's quite unusual in Australian puppetry."

MAEVE VELLA

# Inside Paperbag



There are now four of us - Wendy, our Australia Council-funded trainee, and our son Ivan, who has become a junior partner in the company. Our other two children are at University and high school now, and Caroline Strahle is doing a teacher-training course, but all of us will be performing together

again during COME OUT in "PAN TWARDOWSKI" at the Q Theatre. We also hope to have our special orchestra by then.

We are as busy as ever, or even a bit more. We are fully booked until October, and are preparing a set of six multicultural textbook-kits for the S.A. Education Department - six different countries studied through language, history, fairy tales, songs and original plays and performance designs.

One of the plays in the kit series is also to be performed by La Mama Theatre in May. It's "THE FORGOTTEN DEVIL", written by Eva and based on a Czech fairy tale about a devil who was left for some 360 years in an old cottage and then civilized by a village widow. When Hell found out they put him on trial - he was so brainwashed he could corrupt the other devils - and threw him out. However, some lower-rank devils follow him into the world.

Eva has been appointed to the Carclew Youth Performing Arts Council for the next two years. The Council has the dual role of advising on policies the Department of the Arts and the Education Department, and active and passive decision-making. As they have never had a professional practitioner on the Council before, they are expecting some exciting novelties.

The S.A. Department of the Arts has now taken on ongoing funding responsibility for the company, to begin on July 1st. (Till then we continue to be funded by the Education Department). Administered through Carclew, the money will be given to us in four regular payments every year. The deal has taken 10 months and two governments to get through, but they say it is now fully endorsed by everyone. Out of the red at last.

EVA & KAREL REHOREK

# "ON the LINE"

The Telephone Company - Joy Economous and James MacDonald - premiered their new show "ON THE LINE" at Adelaide University's Little Theatre in March.



A one-act, one-hour comedy for adults, it stars Lucy, a woman, and the Captain, an adolescent parrot. Joy and James describe the show as "a farcical yet tragic portrayal of a lover imprisoned in her own self-afflicted fantasy."

They devised the script using Gian-Carlo Menotti's libretto "The Telephone" and Jean Cocteau's play "The Human Voice". The puppets were constructed by Cynthia Harper, Beverley Campbell-Jackson and Laura Tate. Original music was commissioned from Sydney composer Ian Farr, and the project was assisted by a grant of \$3,900 from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.

## MELBOURNE'S CHINESE DRAGON

I went down to see the Dragon at Chinese New Year, and it was a magnificent sight, with its enormous body the length of a city block and spots of light reflected from its mirror scales dappling the buildings in Lonsdale St. It had bells on its tail, and a runner in front leading it on with a ball dangling from a stick - a tiny ball in marked contrast to the big Dragon it "controlled". The scales of the Chinese community's old Dragon - brass plates with a piece of mirror and coloured fluff stuck on - were on sale to help pay for the present one.

JOHN HANDLEY

# Edith Murray - THE MOVIE

FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS EDITH MURRAY HAS BEEN HELPING CHILDREN CREATE PUPPET THEATRE. THIS NEW FILM, MADE FOR THE FEDERAL ARTS IN ARCHIVE SERIES, DOCUMENTS HER WORK.



Photo - Jacqui Tan

The Australia Council's film "EDITH MURRAY - PUPPETEER" had its world premiere to a packed house at the 1983 Australian Puppet Festival. The film met with an enthusiastic response from an audience of Mrs. Murray's friends, colleagues and ex-students, plus assorted puppeteers.

My own contact with Mrs. Murray began six years ago when I visited her home in Springwood NSW as a fledgling puppeteer. The impact of meeting an artist of such experience and conviction firmly sealed my interest in the art. In Mrs. Murray's own words "I was infected". It is this experience the film attempts to share. Jacqui Fine's sensitive direction has come as close as a camera can take us on a visit with one of Australian puppetry's leading advocates.

I feel the film serves as a valuable introduction to puppetry as a living and useful medium. Mrs. Murray relates first hand experience of its benefits as an educational tool, explaining the integration of all the elements of puppet theatre as a positive learning experience for children.

The style of the film is for mature audiences - especially teachers' colleges, tertiary institutions, high schools, hospitals, retirement villages or puppeteers' cult screenings. We are now negotiating for TV release.

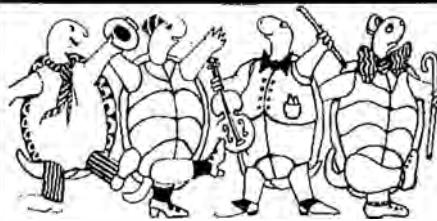
Films cost ridiculously large amounts of money so it's essential to lobby now for a copy to be made available for hire through the State Film library. Then if anyone wants to use it in a workshop, lecture or discussion with community groups interested in puppetry a print can be made available at an economical rate. If any "Manipulators" feel that at some stage they could use a film of this sort in any capacity, the person to contact is:

Peter Campbell  
Project Officer,  
The Arts on Film,  
Australia Council  
PO Box 302  
North Sydney NSW 2060

Peter Campbell is the executive producer of the film and without his unfailing support it would not have been possible.

Jacqui Fine and myself would also like to thank everyone who helped us with the project, in particular Richard Bradshaw, Norman Hetherington, Geoff Murray, "Manipulation" and of course Edith Murray - puppeteer.

CHRISTINE WOODCOCK



## TERRAPIN ON TOUR

After a well-attended preview of our latest production, THUNDER & LIGHTNING, on the 5th of April, Terrapin have been touring Tasmanian schools and will soon be touring South Australia's country areas prior to performances at the Come Out festival in Adelaide.

THUNDER & LIGHTNING consists of three folk tales. "The Thunderbird" a Siber-

ian story, shows how an old man is transformed into the Thunderbird, herald of seasonal change. "The Soldiers of Heaven" tells how the noisy guards of the gates of Heaven incur the anger of St. Peter, who takes drastic steps to silence them. "Shango - the Orisha of Storms" comes from Nigeria, and is the story of how Shango, god of storms, regains his waning powers.

Our director for this production was Allen Harvey. It was his first experience of directing a puppet production - but it proved a task he was quite capable of undertaking.

The company consists of three puppeteers and one puppeteer-stage manager. In conjunction with THUNDER we will be touring THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF, a participation show for small children.

It's shaping up to be a busy year for Terrapin, with many weeks of touring, plus hosting the Scriptwriters' Workshop in June and possibly an Advanced Puppetry Workshop in November.

PETER LUCAS



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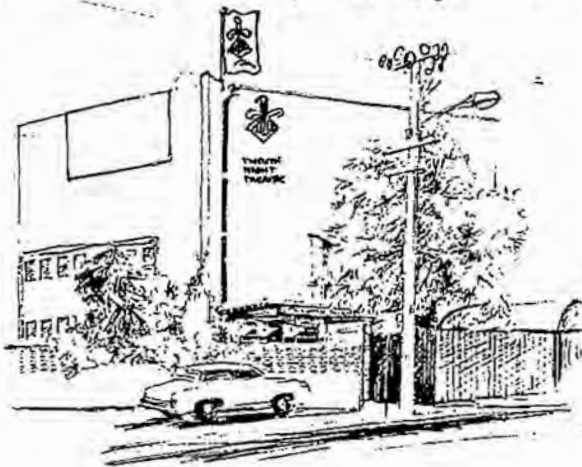
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that puppeteers were not informed. I  
made no comment about grants, in fact  
I was not thinking about funding.  
People who know me know how much I  
love the Australia Council and their  
queer way of funding.

AXEL AXEIRAD

## TWELFTH NIGHT'S NEW DAY a new venue for puppet theatre



BRISBANE'S PUPPET PEOPLE - Gwen and Peter Iliffe - ARE EXTREMELY PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN OVER THE RUNNING OF the Twelfth Night Theatre in Bowen Hills. It won't be ONLY for Puppet Theatre - but the opening production in Feb. was ERIC BASS'S "Autumn Portraits" - and there'll be more, they promise!

## VIC. GUILD news

The Victorian branch of the Australian Puppetry Guild held its annual general meeting in March, and a number of changes resulted. Axel Axelrad retired from the presidency after three years of generous service, and Marie Donald was elected to replace him. Marie's old position of secretary was filled by Perth puppeteer Clelia Tedeschi, who recently moved to Melbourne to work with Polyglot Puppets. Lorrie Gardner was re-elected as treasurer.

The meeting decided to cut back the number of meetings from 8 to 4 per year, in the hope that more puppeteers will be able to attend regularly. The time slot remains 7.45 pm on the last Wednesday of the month, but the months are now February, May, August and November.

NEXT MEETING: 25th May at the Drama Resource Centre, 117 Bouverie Street, Carlton.

### Contact addresses:

President, Marie Donald  
50 Albert St. Glen Waverly

Secretary, Clelia Tedeschi  
18 Queens Pde. North Fitzroy

## PUPPETEERS' CONFERENCE 1985

A steering committee was appointed at the recent Puppet Festival to make arrangements for a conference of puppeteers to be held in two years' time (See Festival report, page .)

Readers are invited to send recommendations for the structure, content, timing and location of the conference to the committee members at the following addresses:

## MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA



The New South Wales government has just granted the Marionette Theatre of Australia \$195,000 to complete work on the main theatre of their Sailors Home building in Sydney's Rocks area. The theatre will seat 300 people, and the grand opening will take place in the first week of August.

The company also plans a smaller, 100-seat theatre for experimental work and a gallery for exhibitions, but these will have to wait until more money is found.

Funding to date has totalled \$545,000. Sources are: Meadow Lea, \$150,000; the NSW government, \$100,000 in 1981 plus the recent grant; and MTA's fundraising activities, which have yielded another \$100,000.

Peter Wilson,  
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre  
P.O. Box 897, Fremantle WA 6061.

Annie Heitman,  
UNIMA Australia secretary,  
R.M.B. Glen's Creek Rd, Nymboida NSW

Roy McNeill,  
Jika Jika Puppet Company  
75 Delbridge St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Ian Cuming,  
156 Clausen St, N. Fitzroy VIC 3068

Waeve Vella, c/o MANIPULATION.

## SCRIPTWRITERS' WORKSHOP

HOBART, MAY 30 → JUNE 11

Terrapin Puppet Theatre is planning a workshop for puppet playwrights from May 30th - June 11th.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide committed writers with the opportunity to work with puppets, puppeteers, actors, a director and playwright to generate scripts that take advantage of the imaginative possibilities inherent in puppetry.

At the recent International Puppet Festival held in Adelaide the wide diversity of plays presented gave evidence of the potential scope for puppetry and the new levels of sophistication reached in this form of theatre. Some plays were for adults and some for children, but the degree of excellence needed for children was no less than that needed for adults.

To continue the development of puppetry today companies need to work with writers interested in using this medium to the full. We need input from creative writers.

The puppet playwrights workshop will combine ideas with their practical application. Puppeteers will demonstrate the use of different kinds of puppets and methods of staging. Writers' script ideas will be workshopped with puppeteers and actors, improvising and creating the objects and spaces needed. Work in progress will be discussed and analysed.

We hope that by the end of the process the writers involved will be in a position to continue their work with an appreciation of the breadth of visual and dramatic form puppetry can encompass - and that their scripts will be used by professional companies.

Anyone interested, please contact Terrapin Puppet Theatre  
P.O. Box 23, Sandy Bay TAS 7005.

## Scripts Wanted

SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE invites script outlines from writers with an ability to write for the stage in amages - utilising sound, music and movement, with minimal dialogue - for puppets. We seek material on contemporary issues suitable for performance to children, to youth and to adults. (Noddies need not submit) The company is a small active theatre group based in WA since 1981. We use traditional and experimental puppetry and seek scripts available for production in 1984.

Contact: The Administrator,  
Spare Parts, P.O. Box 897,  
Fremantle WA 6061  
Phone (09) 335 3533



Simon Chilvers

Ian Cuming

Photo: Melbourne Times

## "Gulls"

The Melbourne Theatre Company has just completed an 8-week season of "GULLS" by Robert Hewett, a production which combined actors and puppets - a first for the MTC.

The central character, Bill, played by Simon Chilvers, is a brain-damaged car accident victim whose greatest pleasure is to watch the seagulls at the beach. The puppeteers, Ian Cuming and Bruno Ametta, operate the birds in view of the audience.

The inclusion of the puppets, which appeared many times during the two-hour show, was not at all half-hearted. It seemed a conscious decision had been made to make them a strong part of the show rather than a background gimmick.

The puppeteers often worked up close to the audience, sweeping the gulls on long rods over our heads. Their construction was simple, not overly realistic - you were expected to give the participation of your imagination, which the audience readily did.

Music accompanied the gulls whenever they appeared. Sometimes it was soaring journey-type electronic music - pretty standard stuff really, but at other times there was a wonderful burbling sound, as if played on a bamboo xylophone, that was just like gull talk - as if they were talking in Bill's head.

The press and public received the puppetry very well. A "Melbourne Times" critic wrote:

"Puppeteers operate the birds onstage, an unusual technique which works brilliantly to alienate Bill's affection towards them and avoids any risk the play has of becoming sentimental."

Conversations afterwards centred on the social issues raised, and technical discussion - there was general appreciation of the Brechtian methods used - like the actor stepping out of role to comment on the action - and excitement over the use of puppets.

ROSEMARY REINHARDT-GODDE



### ENGLAND · Puppet Centre Cuts

Funding cuts at the Puppet Centre in London mean they have lost their Education Officer, Jim Still. Jim ran a consultancy service from the Centre for teachers and therapists, and edited the "Spotlight" education and therapy section in ANIMATIONS magazine.

But the funding stopped last year, and though the Puppet Centre managed to pay Jim's salary for a few months, their reserves are now exhausted. Jim is continuing his puppetry work in Bristol.

### ·Panto Memorial Book

One of Jim Still's tasks as Education Officer at the Puppet Centre was the collection of material for a resource book on puppetry in education and therapy, financed by money from the A.R. (Pantopuck) Philpott Memorial Fund. Contributors from all over the world have sent material, and Jim is now editing the work with David Currell and Caroline Astell-Burt.



## AUSTRALASIAN DRAMA STUDIES

*Australasian Drama Studies* is a new journal devoted to the criticism, analysis and documentation of drama and theatre. Its emphasis will reflect research and activity in Australia and New Zealand, and will cover contemporary writers and issues, theatre history, radio and television drama and popular theatre. Occasionally casebooks of significant theatre productions, interviews with practitioners, and hitherto unpublished scripts will be included.

Vol 1 No 1 October 1982. NOW AVAILABLE:

- \*Eric Irvin on William Archer
- \*Dorothy Green on William Forster
- \*CASEBOOK- the Sydney Theatre Company *Macbeth*. Plus: The Women and Theatre Project; Sport and Nationalism in Australian drama; Television Situation Comedy; post-war British drama.

Vol 1 No 2 April 1983. POPULAR THEATRE ISSUE.

- \*Michael Booth on 'What is Popular Theatre?'
- \*Robyn Archer on the Politics of the Musical.
- \*John Docker on Drama in Television.
- \*Bernth Lindfors on the Hottentot Venus
- \*INTERVIEW: Stephen Sewell, Louis Nowra, Neil Armfield. Plus: The Politics of the Popular; Garnet Walch's *Australia Felix*; P.R. Stephensen's agit-prop plays; Reviews.

Published twice yearly and available for \$15.00 per year (\$10.00 Students). All subscriptions include sea-postage. Write to:

Australasian Drama Studies,  
Department of English,  
University of Queensland,  
St. Lucia, Q.  
AUSTRALIA. 4067.

### GERMANY · New Bookshop

PUPPEN & MASKEN, theatrical publishers and distributors specializing in books on puppetry, have been running a mail-order service for some years now, and have built up a substantial list of titles of interest to puppeteers. Now they have opened their own shop in Frankfurt-am-Main where the enthusiast can browse among 1600 publications in various languages, including English, on puppetry, circus, general theatre, acrobatics, magic, vaudeville, mask and theatre for play and education.

Their mail-order catalogue, "Schauplatz der Spielkünste" (Performance Showcase), is available for the nominal cost of 5 DM (5 International Reply Coupons).

ADDRESS:

International Theater Buchhandlung,  
Kronberger Strasse 19,  
D-6000 Frankfurt/M 1,  
West Germany.

# Interview



The High Chamberlain. Is he really, as Frank Oz believes, the next puppet pin-up?

**JIM HENSON** was in Australia in March to promote his new movie, **"DARK CRYSTAL"**. **PETER SEABORN** spoke to him in Melbourne.

**Peter Seaborn :** Most of your work has been in television. Have you ever done any live work ?

**Jim Henson :** Let's see .. a number of years ago, about ten, we did a few things in Las Vegas. We designed some large creatures that worked with Nancy Sinatra. For that we built some 15 foot creatures that were made out of feathers. So we've worked just a little bit on stage, but basically, virtually all my career has been on television, and I've done three movies. Five or six years ago we did "The Muppet Movie" and three or four years ago we did "The Great Muppet Caper", and of course we've just finished "Dark Crystal".

Then in addition to that, of course, I used to produce a lot of television commercials and industrial films. Before "Sesame Street" I supported my company for years with maybe hundreds of commercials. Then when I started in "Sesame Street" I could afford to turn commercials down. Commercials - you don't want to do commercials unless you have to.

**PS :** They're a necessary evil ?

**JH :** Well, it's a strange form to work in. I think people who work in advertising agencies and do commercials are constantly compromising and dealing with a committee system, where, you know, fifteen people enter a room and they all have to change their ideas a certain amount. It's very difficult to work with a sense of quality - at least in the United States that's the story.

I still find puppetry very exciting - and we've only just done a few of the things that can be done with it. In many ways "Dark Crystal" was nice for me, because it gave us an opportunity to do something entirely different. We have The Muppets, and it's interesting, it's a puppet style that I enjoy, but I don't feel that's all there is. I wanted to work with something that had no relationship to what we did with them.

**PS :** "Dark Crystal" is a departure from the visual line of The Muppets, but there's a personal touch, a style of your own that has come through the years. There's a bit of the same humour about it.

**JH :** Yeah, there's a little bit of that, and of course many of the Muppet performers worked in "Dark Crystal", and some of the designers and builders. But the basic design was Brian Froud's. He designed the entire thing : all of the characters and the scenery and the look of the sets, the plant life - everything. So working with Brian gave us a completely different look.

**PS :** But the ideas expressed came from you.

**JH :** Yes and no. The basic story outline was mine. But a motion picture is a very collaborative thing. By the time the film was finished it was the work of many of us. Frank Oz, who directed it with me, had a great deal to do with the story and the characters. Brian added a lot to the story, and then there was David Odell who did the script.

**PS :** In "Dark Crystal" there's the idea of the balance of good and evil not necessarily going one way or the other, the idea that they merge at the end of the story. That's not a new idea, but it's certainly a shift away from where a lot of modern fantasy movies have gone. Is it something you feel personally ?

**JH :** Yes, it reflects some of my point of view. I don't believe there are evil people. And the idea of one power destroying another power - we have to learn to live with each other in our world.

**PS :** One thing I guess every puppeteer thinks about at some time is their relationship to the puppet.

**JH :** Well you know, our work has always been on television, and we always work with monitors. So to me, the character has only lived on the screen. I would be operating the puppet, but not thinking about my hand at all. I'm watching the screen, and that's where the life is. You have to work with a monitor for a number of years, really, before the image is totally "there".

**PS :** How would you teach somebody to do that ?

**JH :** I don't have any other way than doing it - doing it a lot.... Our good puppeteers don't become good until they've been with us at least three years. That's three years of working constantly before a person matures to the point where they're like a lead puppeteer.

**PS :** You're an innovator, someone who's initiated progressive moves.

**JH :** The idea of taking the techniques of puppetry and mixing them with the techniques of film and television has always excited me. In film for instance, the fact that you're working with camera cuts means you can take one style of puppet to do one part of a scene and then immediately change the puppet entirely. In between every cut we're operating these puppets in totally different styles. You're using the things that the motion picture enables you to do to broaden what puppetry is capable of. I love trying to do something new that we've never done before.

**PS :** George Lucas, who created "Star Wars", has spoken of a dream of seeing his creations, his stories, performed in huge stadium-sized holographic laseriums. That certainly sounds like the stuff legends are made of. Modern-day technology growing as it is, do you have some dreams about the future of your art form ?

**JH :** Well, there are new areas that are opening up. We're beginning to dabble in videographics. So yes, there are always interesting new areas.

**PS :** At this stage, not on that scale ?

**JH :** No - I think it'll be a while before we have the **Giant Laseriums**.

# The Dark Crystal

David Snow

The Muppet Men are back. But anyone excited by the prospect of further adventures of Miss Piggy and her reluctant swain Kermit the Frog, Animal the mad drummer and the rest of the gang had better think again. This time around Muppet king Jim Henson and his associate Frank Oz (who operates Miss Piggy) have come up with a new set of characters who are far removed from the lovable pigs, frogs and bears we're used to. In fact, some of their new creations are downright repulsive. There are the vicious, reptilian Skeksis; beetle-like, killer troops called Garthrim and a High Chamberlain figure who is Evil Incarnate. Together with the Land Striders, the Gelflings and the urRu, they inhabit the weird world of a \$30 million fantasy film, *The Dark Crystal*.

According to co-producer Gary Kurtz, who also produced *Star Wars*, 'We want to see fantasy become one of the accepted genres which are used for films every year. *Star Wars* did the trick for science fiction and we're hoping *The Dark Crystal* will be the breakthrough film for fantasy.'

Conceived to appeal to adults and student audiences rather than young children, *The Dark Crystal* is Jim Henson's pet project, the film he's wanted to make for years before the international success of the Muppets enabled him to raise the finance. A mild, bearded man with a gift for creating a family atmosphere even on a pressured film set, Henson admits: 'I'm not a science fiction or fantasy buff. What I do love, though, is creating whole worlds, starting from scratch and making everybody who is in it. We've invented everything in *The Dark Crystal* right down to the sort of cups these creatures would drink from and the food they'd eat. Most films begin with someone writing a script. In our case, we began by developing the creatures. The reason the film took four years to make was the research we put into the puppets.'

Work began on *The Dark Crystal* - the title refers to a magic crystal which keeps the evil Skeksis in power - in New York in 1978. By the time the film was shot in England in the summer of 1981, 480 people were involved (as against, say, 150 for a normal film). One of the key members of the production team was British fantasy artist Brian Froud, whom Henson hired on the strength of his picture books like *The Land Of Froud*.

'Nothing was defined about my role at the beginning,' Froud recalls. 'We had a sort of Muppet summit meeting in New York and talked about the characters, then we began building endless prototypes. No one had ever done anything like this before, so we just had to feel our way. As it's turned out, *The Dark Crystal* is totally opposite in style to the Muppets. The Muppets were very simple puppets in bright colours with instantly identifiable characters.'

'The puppets in *The Dark Crystal* are more ambitious and complex - the High Chamberlain alone has 21 moving parts - and they're sort of wrinkly-looking, in muted colours. Each scene in the finished film is like a special effect, the kind of thing most horror films, for instance, save up for the last three seconds. We're giving people that quality all the way through the film.'

While Henson, Oz and Froud were developing *The Dark Crystal* - and Henson and Oz continued to produce *The Muppet Show* - they were approached by Gary Kurtz, who was then producing *The Empire Strikes Back*, the second in the *Star Wars* series. 'We wanted a special creature as a surprise in *Empire*,' Kurtz says, 'and Jim and his team are simply the best at creature development in the world. We went to see them and they agreed to work with us, partly as a trial run for *The Dark Crystal*.' The result was Yoda, the long-eared, gnome-like Master who undertakes to teach Luke Skywalker the secrets of The Force. 'Yoda,' Froud feels, 'is halfway between the Muppets and the creatures in *The Dark Crystal*.'

KIRA - OPERATED BY KATHRYN MULLIN. In mid-flight after leaping from a cliff she sprouts wings, catches JEN and lands them both safely on the ground. "WHY HAVEN'T I GOT THEM?" he asks. "BECAUSE YOU'RE A BOY."

AUGHRA, KEEPER of SECRETS, INSIDE HER - FRANK OZ. She knew just about everything, and could take out her eye & put it on the table to keep watch.





A MYSTIC DIVINES THE FUTURE IN AN EARLY SCENE OF *"Dark Crystal"*

By July 1979, work on *The Dark Crystal* had progressed sufficiently for supervisor Sherry Amott to pack up and move, lock, stock and barrel, from New York to London, to a new headquarters near Henson's Hampstead home.

'I turned over my packing case and that became my desk. For the first three weeks we had no phone so I'd walk over to Jim's house and use his. I found literally everything I needed through the Yellow Pages.'

'Everything' included artificial eyes, melted plastic soldiers (for the Skeksis' strange jewellery) and a special kind of foam rubber made in Boston. 'The foam was a problem. I'd thought anything I could find in America I could also find in England. But the main use for this particular foam is in air-conditioners and you don't use air-conditioners in this country.'

To assist her, Sherry Amott assembled a team including art school graduates, dressmakers, puppet makers and people who had worked on props and costumes in the theatre. 'They were

all people who, in the normal course of things, would never meet. There are traditional barriers between their different crafts. It was great to see them getting together and swapping skills. By the end of the film, they were all saying, 'This is great. Why can't we work like this more often?'

While Amott's team built the characters, Henson was writing the script. He kept it deliberately simple. *The Dark Crystal* tells the story of Jen the Gelfling and his quest to replace a missing shard of the Dark Crystal, thus ending the Skeksis's domination of his world. It sounds like 'The Muppets Meet The Lord Of The Rings' but Henson denies any outside influences.

The Muppets were cuddly and cute and made a fortune. Will audiences react to the darker vision of *The Dark Crystal* in the same way? Henson and Oz admit it's a giant gamble and say they're grateful to Lord Grade for underwriting it. But, they insist, the Muppets had to come to an end 'while we were still enjoying them and before we ran out of ideas - or guests'.

Adds Frank Oz: 'The Muppets aren't dead by any means. We won't be doing any more TV shows, but we still have a great time performing those characters. In fact, in the early months of shooting *The Dark Crystal* we were also doing Polaroid commercials with the Muppets on weekends. We went from the very difficult work on the film to what was like a vacation for us. We were laughing until we cried. That was proof to us that we still wanted to do the Muppets.'

Oz has worked for Henson for 18 years and can remember Muppet characters before they became the Muppets. In fact, they began in commercials, then gradually appeared in guest slots on American TV variety shows. 'Ralph, the dog, was the star in those days,' Oz says. 'I remember we tried to get Kermit on one show and nobody wanted him - they said, no thanks, not a frog.' Oz also professes himself baffled by Miss Piggy's rise to stardom. 'The truth is, she's not very tall, she doesn't do a lot as a puppet and, of course, she's not human. Yet her character has transcended all of that and become this huge star. I've no idea how it happened though.'

Does Frank Oz think there maybe a potential Miss Piggy in *The Dark Crystal*?

'Well, I have a soft spot for the High Chamberlain. He's a bad guy, he'd kill his own mother, but he'd smile while he was doing it. The creature was all made, but it was my idea to include the smile. That's the way I see him. Reprinted from YOU



JEN was OPERATED by JIM HENSON, THE FIZZGIG by DAVE GOELZ.

hope we got most of it right

Survival: t-shirts, badges, postcards, prints and other paraphernalia. Take home some mementos, posters, shoulder

SEMINAR: ... go to ... children.  
TRAINING FOR ... a generation and ...  
By apprenticeship ... Shark Bay and The ... productions ... best ... one ...

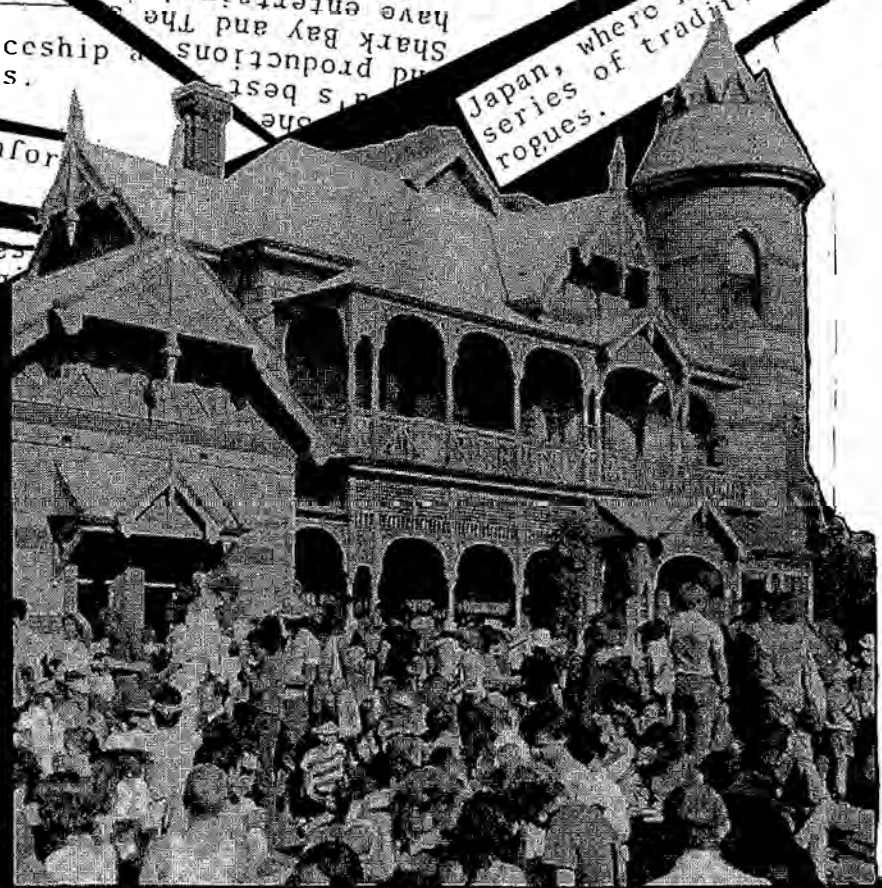
Japan, where he encounters a series of traditional puppet rogues.

Beauty is set backstage at a

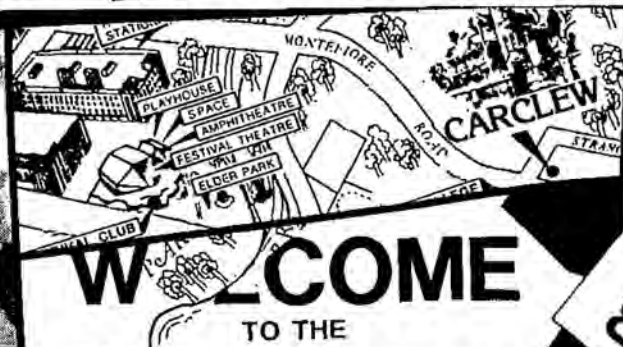
the ... ly in water ... for tourist consumption. These Adelaide performances will recreate the true magic and mystery of this art form - possibly the oldest form still surviving in its original form.

Members \$3.90  
New Yorker Eric Bass  
Delighting audiences since 1970  
menacing elements, also be seen to symbolise sexual experience and Victorian moral attitudes.

workshoppers will in class ... a basic head and ... model a plaster head with ... make a plaster mouth move ... make to create mouth move ...



THAT was the **FESTIVAL** that was



WELCOME TO THE  
**Australian International PUPPET**

MEMBER  
NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PARADE PUPPET leaving Festival Plaza.

Photo: Maeve



GREG TEMPLE directing the Parade.

Photo: Maeve



PARADING down King William St.

Photo: Maeve



Photo: Jan Kamma



NEVILLE TRANTER - Beauty and Beast from "Studies in Fantasy."

Photo: Lorrie Gardner



Photo: Chooi Tan



PAPERBAG's Karel Rehorek: "The Grateful Dragon."

Photo: Maeve



NORIKO teaches PAPERBAG's Daniel & Ivan Rehorek.

Photo: Tom

PARADE PUPPET at CARCLEW.



JONATHAN ACORN meets the MAYOR OF ADELAIDE.

Photo: Maeve



KATY BOWMAN: "Transfigurations," in Elder Park.

## The Festival

The Australian International Puppet Festival was held in Adelaide from January 21 - 30 1983 and was produced by Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre Inc.

Its aim was to develop puppetry in Australia in two ways - by developing the skills and sensibilities of practitioners and by showing a wide public the enormous possibilities of puppet theatre. I believe these goals were manifestly achieved and expectations surpassed. Testimonials from puppet companies, individual performers, the press and the general public have indicated that the Festival provided a stimulating programme of performances and workshops, and created a new public image for puppet theatre, with benefits extending to many other areas of the arts.

The Youth Performing Arts Council took an enormous risk on an event which could not guarantee box office success, could not guarantee commercial interest and sponsorship, and sought to change the perceptions of the performing arts not only for young people but for the entire community.

Major support for the Festival was gained from the South Australian Government through the Department for the Arts, the Australia Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Australia-China Council, the Education Department of South Australia, the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, and many other organisations and individuals, including major commercial sponsors Westpac, Myer, N.H.S.A. and channel NWS 9.

Over two hundred performances, workshops, seminars and other events were staged during the ten days of the Festival, and a further one hundred performances by international artists were presented in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Perth, Canberra, and country regions of Western Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.

17,950 people attended performances in eight theatres around Adelaide and an estimated 10,000 people saw a wide range of local and international performers on the specially-constructed stage in Elder Park, the venue for 29 free performances. Other performances were presented in cabaret venues, theatre foyers, beaches, department stores, hospitals and Carclew's Stables. Attendances were close to targeted figures and exceeded them in several cases, although target figures were not reached for two of the major international companies.

## PROGRAMME

The Festival programme was selected to show the best and most innovative puppetry occurring in this country, alongside examples of the finest puppetry from Europe, the USA and Asia. The international programme recognised our European cultural heritage at the same time as recognising Australia's developing relationship with Asia, home of

## CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT - Andrew Bleby

the oldest and most complex cultures on Earth. Theatre for adults as well as children was emphasised, and new experimental works were also given prominence. The programme covered many styles of puppetry, ancient and modern; strings, rods, gloves and other techniques; and various presentation styles in theatres, out-of-doors and in the media.

Workshops were conducted by Australia's top professionals in many specific areas, including Rod Puppet Mechanisms, Using Latex, Advanced Manipulation, Voice Characterisation, Shadow Puppets, Marionettes, Puppets in Therapy, Black Theatre and Design. Two special workshops were conducted by the world's leading authority on voice teaching, Cicely Berry, and international companies demonstrated their work and technique in a series of seminars. Other seminars covered such topics as film production and techniques, television puppetry, training for the puppet theatre, funding and working conditions, and a general meeting of UNIMA.

A puppet cabaret night at the Adelaide Festival Centre and the final night party at Glenelg displayed many different and entertaining styles; the Puppet Festival Club provided a venue for late-night discussion and entertainment; the opening parade of giant puppets provided a spectacular beginning to the Festival; extra performances were held daily in the Carclew Stables; and exhibitions of precious puppets and posters were on display, in addition to the exhibition of Pinnocchio illustrations and fabric montages held in the Adelaide Festival Centre Gallery.

Featured companies performing at the Festival included:

**PUPPENTHEATER DRAK** (Czechoslovakia) One of the greatest puppet theatres in the world, this extraordinary and delightful company presented a full-stage production of "Sleeping Beauty" at the Royalty Theatre. The company's sense of design, superb manipulation, humour and overall professionalism won them many friends, with the notable exception of the Advertiser's theatre critic whose review contributed to a shortfall in expected attendances. Drak won many hearts with their free Elder Park performance of "Petroushka", a traditional and very funny knockabout Russian tale.



### THE HUNAN PUPPET TROUPE OF CHINA

The most highly regarded puppet troupe in all China, this company stunned audiences at the Scott Theatre with the beauty and dexterity of traditional Chinese rod puppets in "The Golden Spirit" and forged even closer links between Australia and the People's Republic of China.

### ERIC BASS (USA)

New Yorker Eric Bass brought an example of the art of manipulation brought to perfection. His carefully studied "Autumn Portraits" at the Troupe Theatre was a complete sell-out even after two extra performances were scheduled, and he was awarded the NHSA Critics' Award for the best production of the Festival.

### HANDSPAN THEATRE

Their production of Nigel Triffitt's "Secrets" won the NHSA Critics' Award for the most innovative Australian production at the Festival, and provided audiences at the Space Theatre with an overpowering example of the endless possibilities of visual theatre for adults. The show's reputation gathered impetus quickly and was booked out for the last few nights - a most unusual result for experimental theatre in the Space. This production was sold to and managed by the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust.

### STEVE HANSEN

Steve is a versatile and endearing performer from the USA who entertained large numbers of people with his outdoor Punch and Judy show, his new production "The Story of Storytelling" at the Space Theatre, and the outrageous "Rise and Fall of the Entire Human Race". His easy rapport with children and adults made him a favourite.

### PETER OLDHAM

His "Clowns" at the Space Theatre was a skilfully manipulated, informative show for children by one of Australia's best professional puppeteers. Peter also contributed to the Festival's Cabaret Night in the Festival Centre.

### YAKSHAGANA PUPPET TROUPE (India)

Unique in the world, this is the last remaining troupe maintaining this 2,000 year-old tradition from southern India. Large, relaxed audiences were charmed by the company's sunset

performances in Elder Park, and fascinated by their skilful manipulation, elaborately-carved puppets, endearing politeness and obvious dedication to their art. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Marionette Theatre of Australia combined with the Puppet Festival to make the visit possible.

**THE MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA**  
Their "Bottersnikes and Gumbles" at the Arts Theatre, based on the Australian children's book of the mid-seventies by Sam Wakefield, was seen by more people than any other Festival performance. In the style of the MTA's recent hit "The Magic Pudding", this production was enjoyed by audiences once the sound had been balanced, although it received only lukewarm acclaim from the critics.

#### RICHARD HART

His "Angler Fish Ballet" was one of the experimental triumphs of the Festival. Complex, hand-drawn slide projections created a three-dimensional, mystical world which could change in an instant. Although initially accorded a two-performance season the show continued at Theatre 62 for a further week in response to requests for an extension.

**THE STUFFED PUPPET THEATRE (Holland)**  
Expatriate Australian Neville Tranter displayed a newfound European sensitivity alongside his Australian bravado. With skill and flair, he used an incredible range of inventive puppets to sketch a series of "Studies in Fantasy" which kept late-night audiences at Troupe Theatre spellbound.

#### LITTLE PATCH THEATRE

Little Patch's early interest in new forms of puppet theatre led to the first suggestion that the 1983 Puppet Festival be held in Adelaide. In the company's tradition of producing Australian narrative morality yarns with varying techniques, this show contained likeable characters, a thoughtful intent and lively music.

#### AUORE PUPPET THEATRE

With the support of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, their production of "Forbidden Fruit" was first mounted for a New Australian Theatre Season at the Sydney Opera House, and played at the Union Theatre of Adelaide University for the Festival. Based on Christina Rossetti's poem of Victorian repression, the show offered splendidly designed puppets integrated inventively into a main-stage play.

#### PANUT DARMOKO

Indonesian puppetry expert Bambang Gunardjo had arranged a study and lecture tour of Australia when, at the Puppet Festival's instigation, the Department of Foreign Affairs asked for him to be accompanied by a leading Indonesian puppeteer, or Dalang. Panut Darmoko came with him and presented several late-night performances in Elder Park. These shadow puppets are becoming more familiar in Australia as more Australians visit Bali.

#### THE ROTATING PUPPET THEATRE

Not a company but a venue - Theatre 62, where a new production was presented each day for children. Comedy, fantasy, adventure and folklore were all represented in the work of seven companies: PAPERBAG THEATRE COMPANY (Adelaide) - "The Grateful Dragon"

PUPPETFOLK AUSTRALIA (Adelaide) - "The Tree that Wanted to See the Sea"

JIKA JIKA PUPPET COMPANY (Melbourne) - "The Dream Gobbler"

GARDNER PUPPET THEATRE (Melbourne) - "Gold or Gumnuts"

SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE (Perth) - "Il Mondo Marionnetta"

QUEENSLAND THEATRE OF PUPPETRY (Gold Coast) - "The Gingerbread Man"

ACORN'S PUPPETS (Auckland, New Zealand) - "Just Walking the Goldfish"

#### OTHER ARTISTS

Many other artists had their own impact on the Festival and contributed in extraordinary ways. Notable were: Greg Temple, who worked with a group of young people for a month to create giant celebratory puppets for the parade and the final sunset performance at Glenelg Beach; Lizzie Paterson's astonishing performance pieces at the Stables and Festival Club; Velo Theatre (France) performed an enchantment in miniature in Elder Park; plus Richard Bradshaw, Ross Brown, The Singers' Company's Amphitheatre Opera, Kostas Zouganellis, the inimitable Leslie Trowbridge from NZ - and many more.

## TOURING

Ten separate managements were involved in touring every overseas company to capital cities and country areas throughout Australia. In most cases the Puppet Festival subsidised these tours to some extent, in order to spread the benefits and costs around the country in the face of timidity and suspicion about puppetry. All the managements which took visiting companies on tour did so, however, with the conviction that here was an opportunity not to be missed.

## ADMINISTRATION

Apart from the Artistic Co-ordinator, who was employed on an eleven-month contract, three other key people were contracted to oversee particular areas of responsibility: Peter Farrell as Publicity Manager, Jeanne Hurrell as Productions Manager, and Helen Rickards as Programme Assistant. All three work professionally and consistently, with great dedication which led them to work far beyond anyone's initial expectations. The entire staff of Carclew were eventually involved in particular areas of Festival administration, and all worked beyond the call of duty. Roger Chapman, as Director of Carclew, also took on specific responsibility for the Human Puppet Theatre's arrangements as well as overseeing the whole exercise. In addition to the existing and contracted staff, several casual employ-

ees were necessary, particularly in the production area, and a vast army of young volunteers was organised to undertake the massive task of front-of-house, merchandise selling, errand running and general assistance. The practical operation of the Festival would not have been possible without these people, nor without the selfless assistance of adult volunteer workers such as Drummond Jewitt and Bev Doherty (who was seconded from the S.A.I.T. Arts Administration course).

In retrospect, the smooth running of the Festival was almost a miracle, because the scale and scope of the event were too great to be managed by such a small core staff. Financial limitations encouraged the employment of too few people for too short a time, and some minor inefficiencies were inevitable at peak periods when everyone was facing an overbearing workload. Not having been established as a Festival organization a management structure had to be developed from scratch within Carclew's own capabilities.

## PUBLICITY

Peter Farrell's experience as journalist, theatre critic and publicity manager for the Adelaide Festival Centre and Adelaide Festival led to the development of a vibrant, comprehensive campaign aimed not only at generating "bums on seats" but at developing public awareness of puppetry. Graphics, advertising, press, radio and television coverage were all interesting and thorough. Through a lack of staff and time, the Festival's merchandising of programmes, bags, hats, badges and T-shirts was not planned or handled thoroughly enough to guarantee proper returns.

## PRODUCTION

The vast complexities of professionally staging nearly forty different productions in ten days were handled with aplomb by Jeanne Hurrell, with the assistance of Bob Jesser, Thaddeus Robertson and several casual assistants. Inadequate information from visiting companies, plus the inadequacies of several Adelaide venues called for fast thinking, generous cooperation with other managements and a thorough local and technical theatrical knowledge.

Details of programming, contracting, workshops, freight movements and other matters were capable attended to by Helen Rickards, who also brought to the Festival valuable knowledge of the field as a practising puppeteer.

It is impossible to name all those others who contributed support, time, energy and enthusiasm towards making the Festival a major success, but there were many. As Artistic Co-ordinator I was pleased that it was possible to bring the concept to reality, and particularly delighted that general consensus has indicated that the important aims of the Festival were achieved.

Photo: Chooi Tan



Photo: Chooi Tan



Photo: Chooi Tan



ACORN'S PUPPETS: "Just Walking the Goldfish"  
13.



DRAK: "How Petroschka  
got Married."

ERIC BASS: "Autumn Portraits."

Photo: Maeve

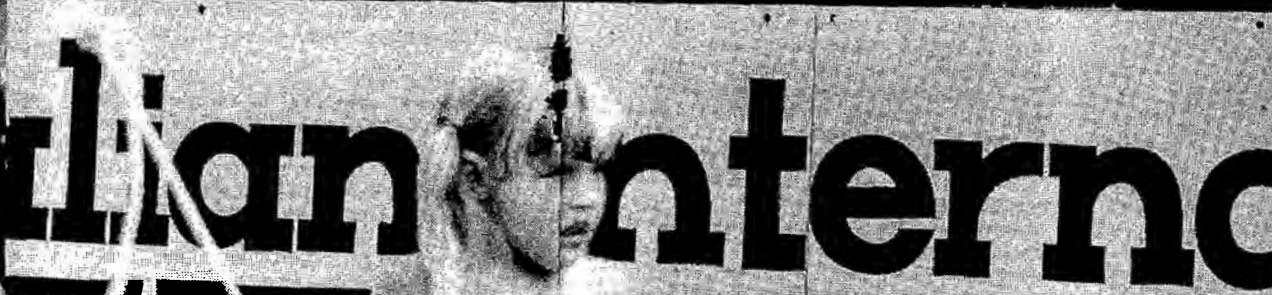
S.A.Y.T.C. - Behind the scenes of "The Queen's Banquet."



The White Lady (from the Festival poster) leads the PARADE.



Photo: Chooi Tan



YAKSHAGANA

Photo: Chooi Tan

ANN DAVIS



Photo: Jan Kamma

Photo: Ptacek Josef



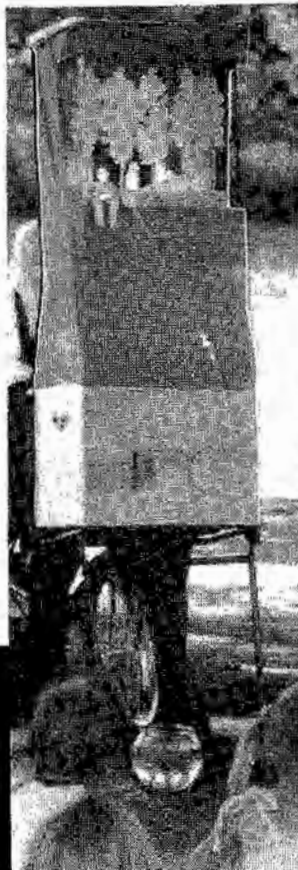
DRAK: "Sleeping Beauty"

Photo: Chooi Tan



S.A.Y.T.G. - "The Queen's Banquet."

Photo: Maeve



VELOTHEATRE

Photo: Jan Kama



ERIC BASS: "Autumn Portraits"

**I WAS THERE**  
~ Maeve Vella

The first day of the Festival began with the Rainbow Parade.

A glorious affair - big crowd, big puppets, all placed according to their colour and directed all the way from assembly at the Festival Centre Plaza to dispersion at Carclew by Greg Temple on megaphone. I never knew a parade could be so tightly organized - Greg was there barking directions: "Yellows go through!" "Reds hurry up there!" - yet be so much fun. It was wierd not having a slogan to shout - I've only been in political parades before this - but I got the hang of it - you don't just DISPLAY the puppets, you play with them, it's a freewheeling performance on a large scale. So inflatable snakes were undulating round giant flapping birds and timid little hand puppets; the White Lady at the head of the procession seemed to float on her parachute skirt as it billowed in the hands of children dancing, not just strolling; bands banged drums, peopled strode on stilts or glided on rollerskates; Jonathan Acorn in his jester persona skediddled round on a unicycle arguing with his bauble (the head on a stick that jesters hang out with, I MEAN): "Whaddya mean you can't see any puppets. Are you mad?"; Steve Hansen in tramp disguise carrying a tattered cardboard box from which emerged a woolly, motheaten creature of an unidentifiable species; flags and banners, pennants and ribbons and abstract shapes on long poles filling up the spaces. We shimmered down King William street, rerouting a few buses

and startling a few motorists and it was a great publicity stunt to open a Festival that wished to attract large numbers of the public to performances and give the industry some much-needed exposure - but more than that, it was fun, glorious fun, playing with puppets in the street.

The Garden Party after that was nothing like the genteel straw hats and white wine tasting I'd anticipated. It started with a performance, a rough and gutsy one too, all about greed and oppression, by the kids of ESSAI, the SA Youth Theatre Troupe. It devolved on food, and was called "THE QUEEN'S BANQUET". The Queen was a gigantic sack suspended from the Carclew balcony, bulbous and floating slightly from the hundreds of balloons inside, which were released at the end after the Have-nots had their revolution. Other images were a 5-metre chef's hat walking around, leading a string of giant cup-cakes - "He's the national treasure!". The narrator was a fellow with a sharp and penetrating voice (and maybe a shade too much sarcasm too often in his delivery) wearing the figure of the jester like a leering incubus strapped to his chest. The script threw out some snappy slogans: "We starve while you carve" and "Let US eat cake" painted on signs held by the Have-nots, an anonymous crowd represented by constructions resembling broken paling fences. I slunk off to the Garden Party feeling like a filthy Have.

My guilt didn't last long, it wasn't aristocratic at all. It was loose and lazy, milling crowds and lounging bodies soaking it up on the little sloping hill in Carclew's backyard. The food ran out early, and I had to pinch a pineapple from the "Those are only for decoration" platters. There were three of us amongst that happy throng, however, who could not enjoy these simple pleasures to the fullest. Peter Wilson, Richard Bradshaw and I were thinking about the next item in the day's programme: the first Seminar of the Festival, at which each of us were to give a talk on The State of the Art. Terrifying. None of us had done it before.

We gave our talks, but we none of us pontificated about Puppetry in Australia, we couldn't. We felt more comfortable and perhaps more honest talking about what we were doing in our own work, and why, and how we wanted it all to turn out. That was OK because no-one had ever made such personal artistic statements in public at Festivals before, and there was much interest in what was said. The discussion that followed did go some way toward an overview of the Art anyway, sparked a few passionate statements on the matter of training, for one instance; "You don't need it if you got talent" ran one line; "We are starving for lack of it" went the other.



A typical Festival day began at about 9.30am with morning workshops in various rooms of the Carclew building. There were usually three or four to choose from - some in puppet-making, like Ross Hill's ROD PUPPET MECHANISMS sessions, or Richard Bradshaw's SHADOW PUPPETRY classes, and others in performance techniques, like Noriko Nishimoto's MANIPULATION and Cicely Berry's VOICE classes.

Children's performances began at 11am in various theatres around town, and, with the exception of shows on the Rotating Programme at Theatre 62, were repeated at 2pm. From lunchtime on through the afternoon there were outdoor performances in Elder Park beside the Torrens River.

Back at Carclew, the afternoon held a seminar on some issue of importance, like FUNDING & WORKING CONDITIONS or TRAINING, and one or two lectures on subjects like TELEVISION PUPPETRY (by Jenny Hooks of "Shirl's Neighbourhood") and the REVEALED sessions in which different shows on the programme were explained by their makers and performers.

Throughout the day an open programme for anyone wishing to perform operated in the Stables at Carclew, and upstairs in the Resource Centre videos ran (almost) continuously.

Family and adult shows at various venues went up at 7.30 and 8pm, and at one, Troupe Theatre, there was a double bill, with Neville Tranter's "STUDIES IN FANTASY" as a late show following Eric Bass's "AUTUMN PORTRAITS".

Meanwhile, the Elder Park stage operated well into the balmy night with performances, like YAKSHAGANA from India or Pamut Darmoko's WAYANG PURWA shadow show.

Cabaret performances at the Festival Club (housed in the Adelaide Festival Centre's Banquet Room) got underway at 10pm and ran on until the small hours.

They were full days indeed - and there were ten of them! Programmed events, of course, are only half of a Festival. There were all the people - the puppeteers, the audiences, the theatre technicians, the administrators, the journalists, the passers-by wanting to know what was going on. A thousand conversations with friends old and new. Deals were made, jobs changed hands, funding body reps were lobbied and shows were discussed - endlessly - judged, dissected, explained. Reputations were made and unmade. Ideas for new shows bubbled and frothed everywhere.

My typical Festival day was a little different from the average. It began at 8.30am with the production of the daily Festival News. It usually took about three hours to sort out the material, type it up and lay it out and hand it to Bob West, Carclew's Youth Arts Press printer for reproduction. Such is the miracle of Mr. Gutenberg's invention it took Bob a mere 15 minutes to produce a steaming bundle of Festival News's. I would appear triumphant from the Carclew woodwork at 11.30, slap the day's edition on the counter of the foyer and subside into coffees and chats with passing Festivalliers, watching from the corner of my eye the responses as people picked up and read the News.

Most afternoons I found the sunshine more attractive than the inside of a theatre, so it was down to Elder Park. There was always something going on.

Velotheatre's bicycle show was often there, with Charlot gleefully, meticulously setting up its tiny parts - the set-up was part of the performance, and it lasted almost as long as the story. You watch as he brings obscure items from their box and places them, just so, and you wonder What's that for? Slender rods slot into place to support the fabric roof, a goldfish bowl on the grass, and the fisherman placed with his line falling down into it. The story deals with the fisherman's struggle to find peace and quiet away from noisy people and their noisy machines.

Straight after the Festival Velotheatre, Charlot and his friend/roadie Tatiana, returned to France on a new bicycle show. In this one Charlot will be a postman, bearing huge parcels. The show begins when one of them begins to smoke and Charlot investigates. The front of the parcel opens down to rest on the grass and reveal within, along its slope, a miniature landscape with a tiny volcano huffing in the middle.

Watching Velotheatre is like playing with toys when you are seven.

Yakshagana played Elder Park at sunset, and though the crowd, including myself, could not comprehend all that the jiggling marionettes were acting out, not being familiar with the Hindu myths, the music and the sun setting beyond the river were enough to hold us rapt. The two chanting musicians sat beside the puppets at stage right, playing percussion and ringing bells. Till the darkness came it was pleasant to watch the musicians watching the puppets - more interesting than watching the puppets, I'm afraid. Though Richard Bradshaw had attempted to bridge the cultural gap by explaining the action before the show it was impossible to retain the story-lines and relate them to the dances of the figures. Except one time when Krisna leapt acrobatically onto the back of a giant bird and rode it rodeo-style offstage. The crowd cheered that one, and I think he did an encore later. The encore was the best, because the screens were removed to reveal the puppeteers, intent on their work, grimacing and leaping along with their puppets.

Well isn't it almost always the way? The show behind the show has its own fascination. And that's one of the reasons - but not the only reason - that New Puppetry is distinguished from traditional puppetry in this country primarily by the strong presence of the performer.

Take "SECRETS" for instance. I'm not a fan of this show, it's more of a fashion parade of glamorous objects than a full-bodied performance, but you are compelled to watch the performers creating the images, and when they are firing the Handspan cast move with a precision and a grace that is thrilling. There is a detached, technical sort of enjoyment to be had from "SECRETS" in this way, though many people also felt deeply about the images.

I, alas, am not one of them, but perhaps in a later incarnation of the show - it took me a few years to love "MOMMA", after all.

"Puppeteer in view" is a popular concept right now, and so, it seemed at the Festival, is "musicians in view". Yakshagana did it, Asian traditional forms do it (and if the Festival organizers had had their way we would have seen the Wayang the traditional way, with access to view the show before and behind the screen at will.) and so did "TRANSFIGURATIONS" and Acorn's Puppets.

Acorn pranced in his walking booth or clowned with Mrs. Whatsit while Sid the soundman stood to some few feet back operating his stand of myriad FX devices.

Katy Bowman in her bag costume was the focal point of "TRANSFIGURATIONS" but her two musicians were not inconspicuous standing 3 or 4 yards away. They had added interest because of



AURORE PUPPET THEATRE:  
"Forbidden Fruit."

their instruments - most of us don't see didgeridoos, bull-roarers and song-sticks played very often, and they were combined with flute melodies, often well-known pop/folk tunes, to great effect.

## THE CRITICS' AWARDS

One of the highlights of the Festival for me personally was the Critics' Awards meeting. This was the first time that prizes had been awarded at an Australian Puppet Festival, and it came about because one of the Festival's major sponsors, NNSA insurance company, provided \$1,000 for the purpose.

The categories for awards and the winners were:

Best Festival Production - "AUTUMN PORTRAITS" created and performed by Eric Bass from the USA. This carried a non-cash prize, a plaque-style trophy.

Most Innovative Australian Production - "SECRETS" created by Nigel Triffitt in association with Handspan Theatre. This carried a prize of \$750.

Best Overall Contribution to the Development of Australian Puppetry by an Individual - Greg Temple. This carried a prize of \$250.

On the first day of the Festival I was invited to be part of the panel and informed of the categories for awards. On the second-last day I met with the other panel-members, four professional critics writing mainly for the daily press in Adelaide, to decide the winners. I was pleased to have the opportunity to hear from

the professionals the ideas and attitudes behind their opinions, and they in turn were interested to hear mine as someone involved in a form of theatre not widely written about or analysed. So for me it was an invaluable experience for my development - and confidence - as a writer on puppet theatre.

On the first award category we were almost unanimous. Eric Bass' show was indeed the best production at the Festival. Sensitive, intelligent, well-paced, well-made puppets skillfully operated - it was an easy choice.

The Most Innovative award took a bit more thinking. "SECRETS" was the favourite until I dissented by nominating "THE ANGLER FISH BALLET". My reason was that, though "SECRETS" was decidedly in the vanguard of new developments in Australia, it was still an extension of forms that had been introduced in 1978 in "MOMMA'S LITTLE HORROR SHOW" and was therefore not, in my strict definition of "innovative", the newest seminal idea to hit the scene.

Some of the personal gratification I felt after the meeting came from the interest the other critics showed in my description of the techniques of the ANGLER FISH BALLET and explanation of my nomination of it. They listened, and watched my waving arms trying to define visuals difficult to describe in words: "The thing is he (Richard Hart, the show's creator) creates environments from light - with slides, and layers of scrim curtaining in which the puppets move, operated by black-clad puppeteers. And this light manipulation has not been used in Australian puppetry before - and is used here to such effect that others will be inspired to try it. They were powerful environments - like in one scene the Swimmer puppet goes to the bottom of the ocean, and she swims in a place created by patterned slide projections that is so still, so mysterious, and so beautiful - the inner sanctum of the ocean, and by implication the mind. And another time she is bathed in a red and black chequered pattern, and she climbs slowly, check by check, up this wall of light. And - and I can't really do justice to it in words but it blew me out and I think a lot of people will be influenced by it and find the technique it demonstrates useful in their own productions."

"Wow" said the other critics. Trouble was, none of them had seen it. It was booked unseen for the Festival, a dark horse is an apt cliché here, and only given a two-night spot in the Rotating Programme out in the suburbs at Theatre 62. Such was the reception it got that it had an extended season in the week following the Festival.

This illustrates one important aspect of the awards - we had not seen every show, even between us. The profess-

ional critics had admittedly only seen the high-profile productions, the ones with full-length seasons in commercial theatres. I had seen a lot more, but commitment to producing the daily News and covering meetings, seminars and workshops as well as shows meant I couldn't see everything.

This was a shame, and the practical result of it was that no children's theatre productions were awarded prizes. An ironical situation in a medium generally supposed to be "just for kids". Of course, there were up-market children's shows - Drak's "SLEEPING BEAUTY" (Czechoslovakian) and the Marionette Theatre of Australia's "BOTTERSNIKES AND GUMBLES" - but they did not appeal enough to any of us on the panel to merit awards. What of the twenty-odd low profile kids' shows?

The problem as I see it is that both the panel and the award categories were incomplete. They needed judges and a category that would ensure recognition of work for children. Any future Critics' Awards should include a couple of kids and a prize for the Best Children's Show.

The prize for an individual's general contribution to puppetry pointed up what we all know already - no-one outside puppetry knows much about the puppeteers doing it. The critics looked at me and said "We don't know - you tell us who should get the prize."

I nominated Greg Temple, because in the five or six years he has worked as an animator creating performances and processions with people in the community he has passed on knowledge and enthusiasm to so many, including the professional puppeteers who have worked with him. For myself, I had benefitted as a puppetmaker from his method of plastic foam construction, which I learnt from colleagues in Handspan after they worked with Greg on the Riverboat project in 1978.

I have only one regret - if I had not been in the panel I may have received this award myself, for Manipulation, and had \$250 to pump into the next issue. C'est la vie - Greg used the money to get to Sydney to see this year's TREE production - a fabulous multi-media outdoor community creation that happens every year at Wattamolla Lagoon - so that's alright.



Photo: Maeye

## YAKSHAGANA musicians.

Since the Festival I've heard it stated that the overall standard of Australian work shown was low. I disagree. I found so much to enjoy and appreciate - admire too - in almost everything I saw, I'm not worried at all about the state of the art form in this country.

I see traditional and experimental forms existing side by side with respect for each other, and a refusal to lay down rigid rules for what is and isn't the right way to do puppet theatre. I see a field where the famous, the not-so-famous and the amateur practitioners meet and mingle on an equal footing and really listen to each other. Artistically, the form is wide open - everything is possible, permissible and everyone is interested in each others work.

## CABARET

In terms of standards I would only like to generalise about one particular sub-category of performance, and that is cabaret.

I don't think most of the Australian acts were a patch on the two American offerings, Steve Hansen's and Ross Brown's one-handers, and the main problem was their inability to respond to their audience. Cabaret is an intimate form, and a two-way event because it takes place in an environment where -drinking, smoking, socialising- the audience is a more active onethan in other theatrical situations. If the performer forces

them to be passive, or takes no notice of who those people out there are, then the whole thing is futile. So we had Peter Oldham trotting out his standard RSL show to an audience patently not RSL types. We had Liz Paterson replaying her OLD WOMAN AT THE WINDOW word-for-word as she would in an art theatre to a hall full of boozing party-goers getting desperate for a good laugh. Neville Tranter ran through selections from his "STUDIES IN FANTASY" without adaptation - it was yet another action replay.

There's more. Straight Left totally ignored the displeasure of the audience, refusing to leave the stage for a full hour and a half though the catcalls and the crowds streaming from the room clearly indicated that we were neither entertained nor challenged by their material. If they had dared to respond directly to what people were saying the evening might have turned out interesting

Jude Kuring, MC-ing with Ross Hill's Mother Bojangles puppet and a now-famous tampon ("Is this a puppet?" became a catchphrase at the Festival and is probably destined for immortality) did pretty well. She certainly played to us and with us. But she indulged in one dirty trick - she victimised one table - and though that's an accepted part of cabaret and exciting in its danger and unpredictability, she chose the one sub-group of the audience least able to defend themselves and she should have laid off them after a quick burst and attacked other groups as well.

All this is to say that cabaret has a dialogue aspect to it at which Australian puppeteers are particularly inept. Experience will no doubt rectify this as more opportunities are offered and created in this volatile field.

There were exceptions. TRANSFIGURATIONS as a visual dance/object performance could not involve vocal communication but was still appropriate for cabaret. I don't say cabaret has to be all jokes, but I do think it should be fluid and its performers should be playing in the here and now, not in an insulated bubble. TRANSFIGURATIONS had a sense of immediacy, Katy Bowman was moving and acting to the constraints and inspirations of the moment. Improvisation, musical and visual, is as exciting as backchat.

Kostas Zouganelis' show was also performed in a "cabaret situation" and is an exception because though I cannot make a critical judgement of it myself, not being a Greek speaker, I saw that the large audience of Greek Australians enjoyed his version of the traditional KARAGOZ shadow show hugely. The handful of non-Greeks present simply enjoyed the atmosphere.

# The Festival

Of course, audience rapport is not only essential in cabaret. In different ways it is the bottom line of criticism whatever the style or venue. Curiously enough, it was this one that gave the most trouble to the highest-profile company on the programme, the Marionette Theatre of Australia. Their "BOTTERSNIKES AND GUMBLES" was bedevilled by communication problems. They were improved by better sound equipment, but an increase in volume was not enough to counteract a set design that completely overwhelmed the characters. I can't analyse all the reasons because I saw only the last ten minutes of the show (accident!) but I saw the effect - an unruly, inattentive audience chattering to itself and giving perfunctory applause at the curtain call. The feeling in the theatre at the end of the show is the one that matters most, and this one was not buzzing. The feeling in the dressing room was worse. The performers hated their own show, hated the physical problems of heavy puppets and muffling set and felt little satisfaction from their exertions. Whatever happened to the glories of "SMILES AWAY" ?

Drak's "SLEEPING BEAUTY" had charm and invention, with its tall revolving set of wire and metal contrasting nicely with the silks and laces of the costumes and puppets poked through it. But there was a something missing, and that, I think, was because the narration, in English, was on a taped soundtrack. The voice was too EBC, too clinically correct to be compelling listening. It was a large part of the show, and if you didn't listen you missed many allusions that explained the show's unusual premise. It was set backstage at a performance of the ballet of the same name, with the dancers passing for their stage entrances and exits and the stage and lighting managers going through their paces while unbeknownst to them, puppets played out their own version of the Sleeping Beauty story. I spoke to several kids to whom this was not at all clear, kids who weren't toddlers or unused to theatre.

Drak's outdoor show, "PETROUSCHKA" was in complete contrast one of the most vibrant and engaging shows at the Festival. Though the script was in English it was live; this well-travelled company is obviously adept at performing in translation. The set and presentation were simple and the style easygoing. One thing that impressed me about the company itself is the fact that - is this socialism? - their director travels with them, operates the sound in one production and is present to watch and help at others. No class/job lines drawn here. How many directors lose interest in a production once it's set? How many come to see it only when there's trouble, even when it's been going for years ?

Photo Kaye Tucker



HANDSPAN THEATRE: "Secrets."

"Yes, I have seen it before" Drak's director joked with me when I invited him to see another production while Petrouschka played at the Club - but he was there at the Club just the same. Obsession? A luxury afforded by full and generous government funding? Maybe, but I think we should encourage this sort of attitude in our Australian companies.

and stills from Clovelly Puppet Theatre in the fifties kept things moving. The hard data - dates, names etc. - was brilliantly handled by occasional title-boards. Two nice touches - when Mrs. Murray's name is followed by a succession of qualification initials, one by one, that take the full width of the screen. Visual joke. The other is the last moment of the film. Mrs. Murray is trying to explain her enthusiasm for puppetry, her exquisite jester marionette perched attentively on the back of the sofa. "It just infected me" she says, then words fail her and her arm swings expressively in an expansive gesture. End of film. Good editing.

## MOVIES

Two new movies were screened at the Festival, quite different but equally wonderful. Christine Woodcock describes the film of which she was instigator and producer, "EDITH MURRAY - PUPPETEER" on page 4, so I'll just say that she and her tiny production team succeeded eminently in creating a record of the work and enthusiasm of a woman whose contribution to puppet theatre has benefited professional and amateur practitioners for fifty years. It was easy to watch and very informative. Mrs. Murray's confident and caring personality and her accumulated experience were allowed to come across without interference in the lengthy interviews and voice-overs. The visuals never became static as different locations on Mrs. Murray's Springwood property and intercut footage

The other film was "RUBBISH" and I enjoyed it for its bizarre rubbish puppet sequences, for the performances of ten-year-old Emil Minty and (thirty something ?) Jude Kuring, and for the scenes in Sydney's well-loved Rocks streets. Many funny moments, a few terrifying ones that reserve it for big kids and upwards, and remarkable ingenuity in blending reality and fantasy are a couple more points. It is the second of the Marionette Theatre of Australia's ventures into filmmaking under Special Projects man Michael Creighton (who directed it) - the "Puppet Pudding" doco of the making of the 1980 "Magic Pudding" show came first - and it's good to know it won't be the last. The company is determined to expand its work in film and television, which is of particular benefit to performers who can't handle the heavy touring commitments of its several live productions. Roll on the MTA Movie Machine!



Photo: Maeve

VELOTHEATRE

# FUTURE FESTIVALS

EXTRACTS FROM TAPE TRANSCRIPTS OF A MEETING CALLED TO DISCUSS PLANS FOR THE NEXT FESTIVAL.

FESTIVAL CO-ORDINATOR  
Andrew Bleby GAVE  
SOME BACKGROUND ON  
THE PRESENT ONE —

Carclew has been a centre for youth performing arts since 1974. At first its main activity was providing classes for school students.

In 1981 it became a kind of headquarters for youth performing arts, recommending policy to the government and administering grants, etc. At that time it was also looking to generate more activity, and one of the first suggestions that came up, from Helen Rickards and Maeve Vella, was the Puppet Festival, and after some thought it seemed that Carclew was the ideal organization to run it.

Some initial budgets were submitted to the Australia Council and the State Arts body, and they gave guarantees for major funding for what has

become about one third of the Festival programme.

State and Federal funding totalled around \$90,000, with \$20,000 approx. from organizations like the Australia China Council and the Foreign Affairs Department. There was \$10,000 each from Myer, Westpac and NWSA, \$30,000 worth of advertising from Channel 9 Adelaide, and funding from several minor sponsors.

It was a potential risk. But that was the advantage of running it through an institution — there was bound to be a deficit, but Carclew as an organization would not have to go to jail, it would stand the loss or raise more money from its sponsors.

Work began in October 1981 with visits to embassies, mainly Asian ones, to check out the possibilities, and this led to booking Yakshagana, the Wayang and the Hunan troupe. I began asking around puppeteers and others about what they thought the Festival needed, what they wanted to see and do.

I started full-time work on the Festival in April 1982 — I think now that planning really should have started 18 months to two years in advance.

We had a smaller staff than is really needed for an event of the scope we planned — but we had no idea of exactly what work would be involved, it was guess-work. Any Festival is just bits of paper until the day people start arriving — it's quite a shock when that first person gets off the plane!

In retrospect I wish I'd had more to do with puppets and theatre through the year of planning than with offices, desks, plans and budgets.

One thing we decided very early on was to make it a double-barrel Festival — not just a gathering of puppeteers but a public theatre festival as well. We knew that many puppeteers work in isolation from each other and from the rest of the theatre and art community. We also knew that puppetry was pretty low on the list of prestigious art forms and so we were determined that as a public showing the Festival would demonstrate the potential in puppetry and change people's ideas about what it could be. And for that we had to do a massive publicity campaign as well as taking enormous box office risks in public theatres.

## PROGRAMME ASSISTANT Helen Rickards ADDED —

Attached to Carclew is the SA Youth Theatre Company, who gave the opening performance, "THE QUEEN'S BANQUET". They worked here for 2 nights a week for two months and then 2 weeks full-on in January, preparing the show. They also offered themselves, all 30 of them, as volunteer staff for the Festival.

Well we thought Hmmm, yeah, we need a few volunteers. When we sorted out exactly what was needed we found we needed volunteers for 250 separate jobs! The SAYTC did them — front-of-house, go-fering, everything. They were an absolute necessity, and it's largely because of them that the Festival has worked so well.

## AND THEN WE GOT DOWN TO SOME DISCUSSION.....

Proposals were called for for the site and organizing body of the next Festival. Canberra received some support — "When it happens in a small city it really HAPPENS." and two bodies were suggested: The Canberra Festival and Reed House Theatre Workshop.

Melbourne and Sydney were both deemed inappropriate as being too big for the Festival to have much public impact. There was criticism of the organization of the Sydney Festival — "It was a swamp, no real sense of event." and Brisbane was praised for its annual festival and the fact that the city made a profit out of the Commonwealth Games last year.

It was also suggested that Carclew continue to organize the Festival next time around, to make use of the expertise gained from the present one. It was pointed out that moving the site and changing the administrative body each time meant a great wastage of experience. Another person commented that, whether the site changed or not, it was desirable to have a permanent centralised organizing body.

# The Festival

Then came the "progressive dinner" proposal - that the next Festival be a travelling one, moving around Australia and picking up resident companies in each city. It was pointed out that the arrangement of tours for the international companies took approximately half the administrative labour of the present Festival. The administration of a travelling Festival would be "a nightmare".

That led to a consideration of holding small local festivals at short intervals and a big international one every few years.

Discussion then returned to the "progressive dinner" Festival with the suggestion that it be a matter of companies in near cities swapping over - e.g. Sydney puppeteers going to Brisbane and vice versa - instead of touring the whole country. It was further suggested that this travelling Festival, since it would otherwise lose the opportunities for meetings, culminate (or begin) with a conference in one city - Adelaide was proposed.

The idea of a conference separate from a performance Festival was then examined, and received much support, resulting in the appointment of a steering committee to make arrangements for a conference in two years' time. (See page 2 for names.)

The composition of such a conference was looked at, and it was suggested that it combine meetings and seminars with workshops - a sort of puppeteer's "summer school".

That led to consideration of the timing of such a conference - by a narrow margin the colder months won out over the warm ones.

The best timing for a Festival seemed difficult to pinpoint - slack periods for some companies were busy for others, and it was pointed out with some feeling that puppeteers need their holidays as much as any other workers. It was also explained that the present Festival was held in January to use the Sydney and Perth

Festivals (just before and just after, respectively) as potential bookers of touring companies.

There was further discussion on the proposed conference - that it should be made clear whether its emphasis would be for professionals only or open to anyone, and that papers be called for to be circulated several months in advance to allow for thorough discussion of them.

Lastly comments were called for on the problems and difficulties of the present Festival.

Shows clashing, was one, especially for performers in the full-length season shows. More rotation of shows in fewer venues was suggested. Some performers also found they had no time to attend workshops. The programming of workshops was a vexing question - one was suggested midnight.

The distance of Theatre '62 and the lack of transport there was brought up. It seems that the hire of a bus was looked at but proved too expensive for the Festival's budget.

The call for a less austere Festival Club next time received applause - it was pointed out that the main (and as it turned out, sole) advantage of the siting of the Club in the Adelaide Festival Centre was that it was rent-free to the Festival.

It was suggested that the next Festival have a more casual opening night cabaret, with fewer performances to give people more chance to socialize. Booking a restaurant for the night was also suggested.

The problems associated with individual ticketing for shows were raised, the difficulty of knowing beforehand exactly what you want to see (though some saw this as an advantage - having a clear programme ahead) and making changes during the Festival. A lump sum ticket and accommodation fee was proposed - but the disadvantage of the single all-purpose ticket was seen to be that it caused overcrowding and competition

Photo: Maev



PANUT DARMOKO performing WAYANG PURWA

with the public at popular shows - the problems in Charleville-Mexieres were cited as an instance.

Lastly it was suggested that workshops be clearly graded for beginners and advanced students.

## TRAINING SEMINAR

FROM TAPE TRANSCRIPTS, A SUMMARY OF THE POINTS MADE.

There is a shortage of people to teach.

Trainee puppeteers benefit more from being involved in a production than in an institution.

A person may be trained by participating in a show in a comparatively less responsible position.

It is possible, by training with many people, not to feel pushed into a particular style.

Apprenticeships, combining work in a company with classes at an institution, may be a solution.

Provision must be made for extending the skills of working puppeteers.

Puppetry should become an option in performing arts courses.

Australian companies lack the financial resources to fund training - small companies require every member to be productive if they are to make even a modest living.

Photo: Maev



"ULURU'S WHITE PASSAGE": Collective production created at the Festival by GREG TEMPLE and ASSISTANTS, performed at GLENELG BEACH.



HUNAN PUPPET TROUPE: "The Golden Spirit."

## PHILIP STYLES / Marketing Consultant & Fund-raiser for the Festival:

"Too often those seeking sponsorship approach potential sponsors unprepared.

When talking to potential sponsors you must be able to talk about the benefits to their company of sponsoring you. That means you must know the nature and products of the company you're approaching, the kind of audience you will play to, and you must tag the benefits - no-one will give money for nothing.

Establish a list of potential sponsors and choose those to whom your project best relates. Don't just go to the major companies - they're the ones that get 20 requests a day.

If possible, arrange contacts in order to reach the most senior person to make your presentation to.

Know your project well, and present your material in a concise and thorough format. Offer to leave photos, press cutting - any material that will support your submission on the project.

Include a brief history of your company and its objectives - make the sponsor feel part of the growth of what you're doing.

The business person will want to measure in cold hard dollars just what they are going to get. They'll want visibility in the press and electronic media, logo credits and acknowledgements on programmes, tickets, etc. They'll want tickets to previews and opening performances.

You should detail exactly what you're offering in these areas, and if possible some sort of dollar assessment of it. Remember that in most cases the person you're dealing with will have to justify the project in their report to management.

Once the project is achieved you must maintain a good relationship with the sponsor. All the press credits promised, for example, must appear. But don't just give them their credits and a few free tickets and forget about them. Keep them involved and informed. When your review comes out and it's a good one, send it to them. When you've got a few photos left over, send some to them for their files. And when the project is completed, send in a resume of what the sponsor received for their money.

This means that you get a good reputation in the funding area and the sponsor is likely to fund you again.

## MARY TRAVERS / Australia Council:

"At present the Theatre Board's budget totals around \$17 million. Just over \$1 million of that was spent last year on puppetry.

Applications from puppeteers to the Theatre Board have a higher success rate than average applications to the Australia Council. For example, last year 17% of applicants to the Literature Board were successful. The same year 65% of puppetry applicants to the Theatre Board gained a grant.

Despite the encouraging appearance of these figures, puppeteers are not funded by the Board in large numbers. In 1982 grants went to 11 groups and 3 individuals.

Funding to puppetry hasn't declined. In 1973 puppetry claimed 3.8% of the Theatre Board budget. The next year it was 2% but it's ultimately gone to 10%.

At its most recent policy meeting the Theatre Board decided that for puppetry the priorities for funding would be towards raising standards, training, development and innovation. Such a policy looks okay on paper, but the strategies must be found to make any impact from funding in this way.

It is the Theatre Board's view that we have very few puppeteers working at a consistently high standard - innovation does exist, but in small quantities.

I would suggest that puppeteers possibly make it difficult for themselves at times. It is rare that theatre artists have to complete all stages of a production for most of their career - indeed many would feel unable to write, direct, design and perform at a consistently high standard.

## FUNDING SEMINAR

The problems I am thinking of are isolation from other artists in the art form, lack of critics, and no pool of directors, writers or creators to draw from. We have begun to solve our problems of communication via "Manipulation" and "Lowdown", and of course the Festival. I think our strengths in puppetry are particularly in the aspects of craft and manipulation. These are chiefly technical concerns. In order to raise standards they may be the vehicle, but are subservient to matters of form and content.

To begin to delegate tasks, and to gain from the stimulus of group collaboration, have time to concentrate on strengths, and buy the time from the Theatre Board to develop these strengths further, is a possibility.



Photo: Maevie

JIKA JIKA PUPPET COMPANY: "The Four Chinese Brothers."

# TWO VIEWS ON THE FESTIVAL'S INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

## Who's pulling the strings?

On the 21 January 1983 the Australian International Puppet Festival commenced in Adelaide. Individual puppeteers and companies from all over Australia, and indeed the world, gathered in Adelaide to practice their craft for ten days.

The Festival organised under the umbrella of the Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre Incorporated attracted some 200 performers demonstrating a diverse range of puppetry.

It would seem that most puppeteers have regarded themselves as "Fringe Dwellers" in relation to Equity in the past. The Festival was an opportunity not to be missed in terms of trying to identify the problems of puppeteers in a poorly financed, isolated and minority area of the Theatrical Arts. As a number of seminars and workshops had been organised, time was allocated to Equity at a seminar on Funding and Working Conditions on Thursday 27 January.

A number of problem areas came to light before, after and during the seminar.

### The Multifarious Nature of the Manipulator

Most puppeteers perform many varying functions in the creation of their theatrical performance. A puppeteer may write, compose, devise, construct, perform and act as his or her own stage crew. The widening sphere of puppetry has aided this diverse nature. Traditional performance styles such as rod, string or glove puppets were in evidence at the Festival, although many of the street performers such as Katy Bowman (who worked from within a black bag changing her shape and form to tell a story) encroached on the world of dance drama. Obviously the Federal Theatrical Award does not cover all the areas puppeteers are engaged in.

### The Lack of Relevant Information

As puppeteers often work alone, in pairs or in small groups, it is difficult for each, in isolation, to obtain information pertaining to a number of issues. It is entirely possible that if there was a closer relationship between Puppeteers and Equity we would be able to obtain this information and make it available to all our "manipulator members". Some examples of the questions raised were:

1. The use of hazardous materials in the creation of their puppets. An occupational hazards information source is necessary as it is often not known what perils may lie in the use of materials such as styrofoam, fibre glass, resins and instant papier mache.

2. The question of copyright of puppet characters was raised at the seminar. It was suggested that as Jinx Looten had started the move for a clowns register within Equity, that a similar arrangement be entered into for puppet characters.

23.

3. The old question of insurance has arisen again. "Ever been run over by a forty foot puppet?" questioned one puppeteer. As it would seem that many artists perform in venues such as schools and shopping centres where it is questionable as to if and in what way they are covered by insurance.

Several specific incidents arose which highlighted the lack of knowledge by most puppeteers of their rights. The most glaring example was that of the documentary, which became a Children's Television Special. The contracts offered for the Festival had contained a clause allowing the performers to be filmed; free of charge in a documentary about the Festival. It is often the case that Festivals attract documentary film makers. Usually portions of performance, rehearsal and possibly interviews are carried out. In this case however, the puppeteers were requested to read scripted lines to an actress who was playing the part of a puppet who came to life. The producers NWS 9 Adelaide and NBN 9 Newcastle insisted that it was a documentary, but clearly this was a children's television programme special. Parts had been allocated to actors and the puppeteers were not performing the productions they had brought to the Festival, but were being used to create a film fantasy for children's television. For two days we spoke to the producer with regard to paying as per the Actors Television Programmes Award and signing an ATRRA agreement. The producer verbally acknowledged that the agreement would be signed, contracts issued, etc. However he eventually declined to sign. It was pointed out that apart from anything else, the use of the international performers represented a serious breach of the agreement under which they had entered the country. As he was no longer willing to negotiate I contacted as many puppeteers as possible. Once it was explained that Channel 9 was attempting to obtain a commercial, saleable product for almost nil cost as far as the puppeteers were concerned, all those I had spoken to agreed that they would not perform unless they were given the go ahead by the Equity office. Such a situation begs the question "were the film technicians being paid?" Philip Styles, the money gatherer for the Festival pleaded at the Working Conditions Seminar that "any exposure was good exposure". Many puppeteers expressed concern as to whether their craft would be designated clearly as children's theatre in the film, as they had only just begun to throw off this label and be recognised as having a lot to offer to adults as well.

Thanks to the copyright on the puppets used by the Marionette Theatre Company, we were able to make the producer realise he would either have to negotiate or cease production. Hence production ceased on Friday 28th.

It would seem that those performers who have previously worked in areas other than manipulation are on the ball as far as knowing what they are entitled to, but those who have yet only concerned themselves with puppeteering are still ignorant of many of their basic rights as performers.

Ignorance is not always as blissful as suggested, and a remedy is necessary. How? If all puppeteers could contact the Equity office in their state, a start could be made to attempt to solve both known and unknown problems as soon as possible. Without the necessary information and feedback it is impossible for Equity to assess your needs. So drop your strings, rods and gloves and dial that number now.

Colleen Ross  
S.A. State Secretary

Reprinted from EQUITY, March '83.

## ANDREW BLEBY REPLIES:

From the Puppet Festival's view, the cancellation of Ian Fairweather's film was unfortunate and messy.

The Festival itself had no direct involvement in the affair, apart from having contracted all companies to perform up to four minutes of their performance for the purposes of a film or television documentary on the Festival or to promote the arts in Australia.

Equity claims the film was not a documentary but a commercial "fantasy for children's television." It could be a moot point, but this objection was never properly stated, and Equity had seen neither script, storyboard nor shooting breakdown on which to make its assessment. The Festival understands that

M.T.A. puppeteers were asked to read four lines of linking material (the only case of such 'scripted' material) and they agreed, contacting the union subsequently. Had they refused, or later withheld permission to use the piece, there may never have been a major problem.

The filming did not constitute a serious breach of the agreement under which overseas artists had entered the country. Copies of all overseas contracts, including the filming clause, were sent to the Department of Immigration in November and were sighted and approved by Equity. Such films have many precedents, and the relevant clauses were based on those used by the Adelaide Festival of Arts.

Whether or not the union had a case to make in retrospect, there was no time to talk about it, argue it through, or even clarify their objections. The film was stopped in a somewhat cavalier fashion.

Equity's objections were never clearly stated, and their stance changed dramatically throughout the process. As one objection was answered, another was put. The grounds of objection kept changing, and no objection was ever put in writing.

Colleen Ross' reference to copyright on the M.T.A.'s puppets is an odd one, as the M.T.A.'s management themselves signed the contract including the filming clause.

The upshot is that a \$25,000 investment was wasted, a film crew was put out of work, relations between Equity and the film and television industry were severely damaged, and puppetry will not receive the promotional benefits of the wide exposure the film could have received.

Equity's cause is supported by the Puppet Festival Management, but their methods in this case are not. All of us are working towards a better deal for puppeteers-the Festival itself was aimed at professional development for puppeteers. If the union had thoroughly researched its facts and stated any objections clearly there would possibly never have been a dispute. But in this case it seemed Equity had a desire to enter into objection and dispute with uncertain policies rather than attempting to promote the broader real interests of its members and the arts in general. We are all poorer as a result.



THE ANGLER-FISH BALLET.



NEVILLE TRANTER and  
colleague: Not MORE  
exposure for Austral-  
ian puppetry !!  
-PATI D'FOIE

One afternoon in the Ballroom at Carclew, a puppeteer shyly slipped me a poem. "Maybe you can use this in the magazine ....."

#### PUPPET IN AN ARMCHAIR

Soft voices in the dark  
natter, then  
pulses the puppet's heart.  
Is our breath  
the puppet's a little while?  
A sympathetic sigh  
a cloth hand wipes an eye  
a little white head  
turns; nods, looks lost.  
"Am I? What is?"  
Voice, shadow  
won't let go.  
Breathing  
wets my neck  
hands easing  
this way, that.

Soft voices sigh,  
I subside tangled in an armchair.  
My heart in the hands of a shadow  
I dreamt a breath.

Clelia Tedeschi  
28th January 1983

Singer/songwriter PAT WILSON came to the  
Festival Club and gave us a serve from  
her satiric pen:



#### THE SONG OF THE COMMITTED PUPPETEER

I do alternative puppet theatre,  
Significant and socially aware.  
I get Australia Council grants to do the CAE's  
As a psycholinguistic Esalen puppeteer.  
I perform, for a modest honorarium,  
A private consultancy or two.  
If you lie down upon my couch and tell me all your fears,  
I'll devise for you in latex, wire and a pair of old brassieres,  
A personal catharsis that will last for years and years.

My work, you understand, is very serious  
And far removed from facile jollity.  
Neurolinguistic programming is central to my art,  
With no storyline to blur its cogency.  
I've no time for traditional Punch-and-Judies -  
Violent, right-wing, reactionary.  
My Punch and Judy show is as Gestalt as it can be,  
With Transactional Analysis - it's even got Tai Chi!  
But I never use aggression; it implies discourtesy ...

An actor's skills are hardly necessary  
For a psychodiagnostic puppeteer.  
A polysyllabic vocabulary doesn't go astray,  
And vegetarianism helps, my dear.  
Everybody asks me how I started  
My seminal therapeutic puppetry.  
I was Rolfed by a Reichian therapist who was into Bunraku,  
And ever since then I've been doing this work that I feel called to do ...  
And I'll help you write submissions, dear, so you can get rich too!

Pat Wilson  
29th January 1983



NORIKO NISHIMOTO'S students "bunrakuing".

Demonstrating elasticised controls in DRAK REVEALED session.





# AUSTRALIAN CENTRE OF UNIMA

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MEMBERSHIP OF UNIMA AUSTRALIA COSTS \$10 PER YEAR. MEMBERS RECEIVE AN ID CARD WITH STICKERS FOR EACH YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP PLUS NEWSLETTERS & THE INFORMATION BULLETIN PUBLISHED BY UNIMA HEADQUARTERS.

## NEWS FROM...

### Adelaide

KOSTAS ZOUGANELIS's show was so popular at the Adelaide Puppet Festival in January that he has been invited back to do two special performances for the Greek community there. With his son as assistant, he is taking two of his KARAGIOZIS programmes (in Greek, of course) and is sure to be even more successful on his return trip.

### America

This letter was received from HAL TAYLOR MARIONETTE PRODUCTIONS:

"We are one of several marionette theaters and museums in the United States, and we are presently developing an international puppetry museum ... and would like to include Australia in our exhibits. Therefore, we are requesting a hand puppet or marionette or any other donated puppetry items that you would like to exhibit in the United States.

Hal Taylor, a UNIMA member, has been involved in puppetry for over fifty years. His marionettes are wooden and hand carved in the traditional European style. He is widely known in the Philadelphia area and performed in Europe during the war.

Please feel free to correspond with us before making any decisions. We look forward to becoming involved in puppetry in Australia."

If anyone is interested, please write direct to:

Catherine A. Brownholtz,  
Hal Taylor Marionette Productions,  
2501 Christian Street,  
Philadelphia PA 19146 USA.

## 1984 CALENDARS

Anyone wishing to order calendars through UNIMA Australia (cheaper!) please contact the Secretary.

Hello folk! This is the beginning of a regular new feature for Manipulation - THE UNIMA PAGE.

UNIMA stands for Union International de la Marionnette and is an international fellowship of puppeteers formed in 1929. The official language is French (hence the initials), but publications are bilingual (French/English) and often in Russian and German as well.

At present UNIMA headquarters is based in France. Membership encompasses many cultural and political backgrounds, transcending the barriers imposed by these.

Australia nUNIMA, as a member of this international organization, keeps its

members informed of international events and developments in puppetry, for example international puppet festivals.

It is also the only Australia-wide organization of puppeteers and helps keep members in touch with each other across the country. (Members travelling interstate are welcome to write to the Secretary for addresses of other puppeteers they may like to visit) Several people have joined in the past only for the purpose of attending overseas festivals and failed to rejoin once back in Australia - I realise there may be several reasons for this, but it doesn't help to make a strong Australian contingent of puppeteers.

Regards,

Annie

## "UNIMA LIVES ONLY THROUGH ITS ACTIONS"

This letter was received from the UNIMA Publications Committee URGENTLY requesting photos for its forthcoming Pictorial Volume:

"Dear friends, one of UNIMA's projects that has been successfully realised over many years is the publication of PICTORIAL BOOKS on puppetry throughout the world. As you know, the third of these volumes is planned for 1985.

Pictures (B&W, colour prints & transparencies) must be ready now. In case you have not yet sent in material, do it without delay! All the available material must be in the hands of the Commission's members in the very near future.

If your country is not represented, the new book will partly miss its aim of giving a survey as interesting and complete as possible over actual standards and forms of application of the ART OF THE PUPPET in the whole world.

We thank you for your help,  
Yours cordially, DEZSO SZILAGYI,  
President.

The Commission needs photos for the following chapters of the book:

- 1 New productions since 1975 (the main part of the book)
- 2 Living traditions
- 3 Puppets and animated figurative elements in drama and music theatre
- 4 Puppets in entertainment, e.g. floor-shows, ventriloquism, etc.
- 5 Puppets in film and TV (all kinds of animation techniques)

6 Theatrical productions, pageants, parades etc. in public health, social and political campaigns

7 Puppets in education

8 Puppets in special education, e.g. social reintegration, therapy, psycho-analysis, etc.

9 Puppets in advertising (film, TV, shop windows, etc.)

All material will be carefully treated, returned if rejected or kept until the completion of the work. Pictures chosen for publication will be apid for according to the standards customary in the publisher's country (East Germany - the company is Henschel-Verlag, Berlin).

Please attach information as outlined below. (Do not write on backs of prints, as this might damage them)

NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER  
(theatre, institution or photographer)

TITLE OF PRODUCTION  
AUTHOR, DIRECTOR, DESIGNER (puppets),  
DESIGNER (scenery), PERFORMERS

DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE

INFO ON CONTENT OF PHOTO

NAME & ADDRESS OF PHOTOGRAPHER

PLEASE FORWARD PHOTOS  
TO UNIMA COMMISSION FOR  
PUBLICATIONS

to Gustav Gysin  
Roggenstrasse 1  
CH-4125 RIEHEN  
Switzerland.