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INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION

UNIMA CENTRE AUSTRALIA

JUN '95

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UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

» SECRETARY'S REPORT

Greetings,

Please see the "International News" section immediately if you are planning to go overseas this year.

A *Digest of International Festivals* will now feature in every issue. Anyone wanting details about a particular festival or about UNIMA activities in a particular country should contact me. Many members have expressed interest in the International UNIMA Festival in Budapest, 23 to 30 June 1996, so we'll be looking into an airfare deal.

Apologies for any bewilderment caused last issue to those whose membership information on their mailing label was not up-to-date. The UNIMA computer has been soundly chastised and the info on this issue's label is correct. Please check your label and contact Garry if there's still a problem. If you have not renewed your subs in time for the next issue, this will have to be your last Newsletter. Please, please use the renewal form so that we can start to build up a members' profile.

I am pleased to announce the addition of UNIMA-USA to our little network of UNIMA Centres exchanging newsletters with us. We have also approached the Czech Republic, South Africa and Canada. We can expand the network even further if we can find members like Jindra and Noriko who know a language other than English and are willing to monitor newsletters. Please ring me if you'd like to get involved.

A couple of members have mentioned to me that they would like to see more practical information in the Newsletter. We do have the *AT THE COALFACE* section but we need more contributors for it. Touring Tips are always welcome. If you don't want to write a full article, send a short Tip instead.

The best tip I ever had came from Storyteller Chardi Christian who used to go from cafe to cafe in country towns asking if they used real coffee in their cappuccinos (as opposed to instant coffee.) She said, "*Find a cafe that serves real coffee and chances are they'll serve real food too.*"

Lastly, in February The Australian newspaper printed a review of a Spare Parts production. In it the reviewer made the statement "*Tiny figures are an obligatory part of contemporary puppetry*" This may come as a surprise to some puppeteers but I have never known a theatre critic to lie - unless it was absolutely convenient.

Happy Puppeteering,

Dennis



» TREASURER'S REPORT

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

The Noosa Festival plans are still preceding and the co-ordinator, John Lamb, has filed a separate report for this publication.

NEW TREASURER REQUIRED

December 31 this year will see me resigning as UNIMA Treasurer so that I can move onto other areas of voluntary community work. Most of the treasurer's work is completed between January and May so I urge any budding ledger keepers out there to apply.

National News

ACT NEWS

Skylark Theatre (formerly Skylark Puppet and Mask Theatre) has changed its name to Company Skylark. They are touring their production "Inside Dry Water" to exotic locations such as China, Korea and Newcastle.

Our "Harlequin's Puppet Theatre" featured at the superb National Folk Festival in Canberra where I ran into Lorrie Gardner (Gardner Puppet Theatre, Melbourne). The last time I saw Lorrie she was having back trouble so I was pleased to hear she was better, thanks in part to a slow year. Lorrie said they did "only 340 performances last year." I pointed out to her that for many puppeteers that would constitute a busy year and to many of us it would even seem downright ungrammatical to describe the number 340 with the adjective 'only'.

Elizabeth Patterson has reached the workshopping part of her street theatre project using actors in an improvised cart and experimenting with recorded street noises overlaying the real thing.

I also met a very enthusiastic young ventriloquist, Natalie Hall, who has excellent lip technique acquired quite naturally at age twelve. A name to watch out for.

Having just been attacked by that great beast of journalistic mythology, the Giant Tax Slug, I had the theme of 'waste' going through my mind as I walked over the Parliament House lawn. I saw that the floodlights were still on in broad daylight on a sunny day and that a liberal amount of time-release fertiliser capsules were strewn over both the lawn and the footpath. *Grrrrrr!*

NSW NEWS

Congratulations to *Murray Raine*. His club show been nominated for a 'Mo' award, the first time a puppeteer has been nominated since Norm Berg was up for it fifteen years ago.



Sydney Puppet Theatre are working on a new show for the Rocks Puppet Cottage. Called "Things with Wings" it will feature different types of puppets including shadows. The project keeps getting delayed as other opportunities come up. For example, Sue and Steve appeared with Cahoots at the Belvoir Theatre doing a Shakespeare play. No puppets - they played persons.

The NSW Department of Education has just published its new-look "Authorised Performances For Schools, 1995" available to individuals and schools outside the system for \$15. It lists 16 'authorised' puppet shows from 12 puppeteers. {Ross Browning and Greg Howard account for three shows each.}

Beyond authorisation is 'Accredited Performers'. These are artists with authorised shows who have had outstanding feedback over a period of at least three years. Of the 19 artists named, four are puppeteers. Two puppet companies listed are Skylark and Camp Quality Puppets.

Systematic changes are afoot to tighten up on shows' quality. This was set off, in part, by a puppet company being found to be artistically-challenged. Its authorisation was revoked.

DENNIS

CAROUSELLE THEATRE COMPANY

JOSEF KROFTA Puppetry Workshop (Feb. 10-Mar. 27, 1995)

Carousel Theatre Co. Inc. is a theatre-for-young people company based in Adelaide, South Australia. The company specialises in puppetry and has a strong interest in multicultural issues. In February the company brought world renowned puppetry director Josef Krofta to Adelaide to guest direct a special tenth anniversary production of 'Don Quixote' for Come Out '95 Youth Arts Festival.

During his stay in Adelaide Krofta conducted a series of master classes for Carousel. The workshops drew together a wide range of puppetry enthusiasts including students, professionals and people with an interest in visual theatre. The aim of the workshops was to give the participants an insight into puppetry as an art form. Participants were able to observe Krofta at work directing 'Don Quixote' over a period of eight weeks.

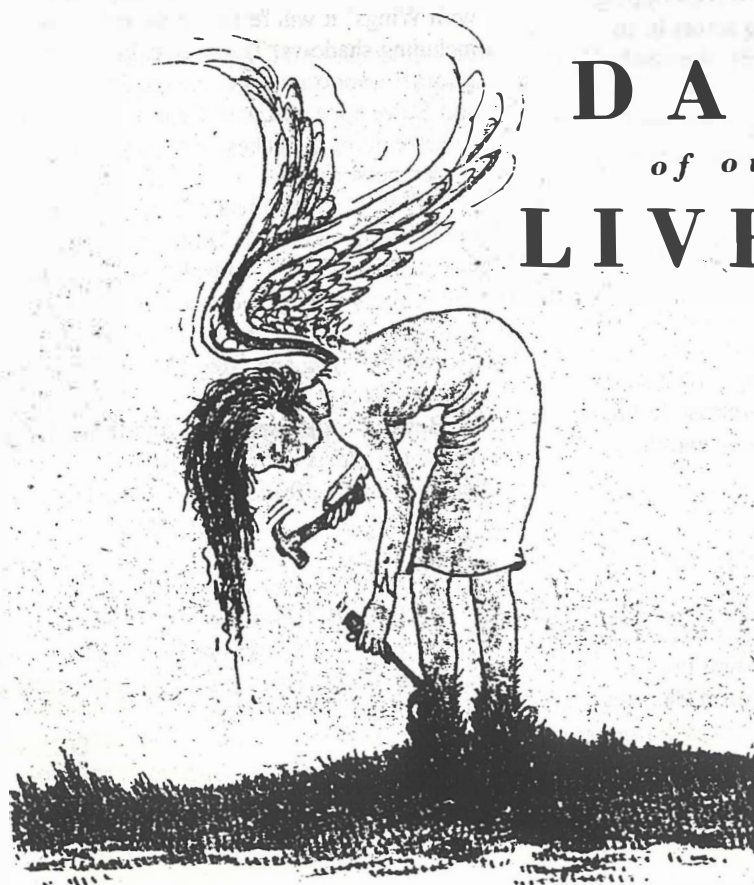
The individual sessions included the following:

- Overview of puppetry as a theatre art.
- History of Czech and European puppetry.
- Language of puppetry (image, characterisation, movement & sound).
- Design process for puppetry theatre (Jana Krofta).
- Video presentation of Josef Krofta's more famous works.
- Hands on experience - the participants created their own images, using sets and props from 'Don Quixote'.
- Observation of the rehearsal process and follow-up discussions.

The workshops culminated with the participants attending the dress rehearsal of 'Don Quixote' followed by a debriefing session with Krofta. Carousel believes that the workshops created an awareness of the unique puppetry techniques used by Krofta and forged links between people with an interest in puppetry in Adelaide. Participants enjoyed handling and manipulating the beautiful hand-sculpted puppets that were designed and carved in the Czech Republic by Josef's daughter, Jana Krofta.

Following the success of 'Don Quixote' in the Come Out '95 Festival, Carousel has been invited to attend the International Puppet Theatre Festival Biesko-Biala in Poland, the Skupova International Puppetry Festival in the Czech Republic and the World Festival of UNIMA in Hungary.

David O'Brien reviewing 'Don Quixote' in Lowdown Magazine wrote that the production "...is a vibrant celebration of the struggle between the repressive demands of reality and the need for imagination and magic in life..."



DAZE *of our* **LIVES**



HANDSPAN are performing 'Daze of Our Lives' at the George Fairfax Studio, Victorian Arts Centre, from 8-17 June.

The show is inspired by Mary Leunig's wonderful, bizarre cartoons of domestic life. It was written and devised by Katy Bowman and Anne Wylie, and features Julie Forsythe as Leunig's 'Everywoman'.

POLYGLOT Puppet THEATRE

TOURING TAIWAN

POLYGLOT toured Taiwan in February this year taking two productions: ALMOST A DINOSAUR and TADPOLE. They were both shortened to forty minutes each and together made an hour and a half program that toured throughout the island. We played fifteen shows in three weeks.

Performances were in English with a Taiwanese narrator propelling a precised version of the script. As puppetry is such a visual art form, this technique worked very well and the stories were easily understood by the Taiwanese audiences.

If Australia is to open up Asian markets and develop a policy of cultural exchange and mutual understanding, tours such as ours to Taiwan are mandatory for gaining insight and experience that can implement such a policy successfully.

Our tour was invaluable for the company to have first hand experience of working in another culture and living in their work ethic - twelve to fifteen hour days, eating and socialising on the job, one day off a week, working in enormous but very basic theatres with agricultural amenities - all made us realise how lucky we are in Australia.



Philip Millar with dinosaur puppets (Photo S. Schluter)

We now especially appreciate our good fortune in working within our Australian arts environment where companies are funded and art and innovation are encouraged and flourish. In Taiwan there is no funding in the Arts, no risk-taking and all shows need to be popular and make money.

It was affirming to see how well our work translated into another culture. Australian puppetry does not emanate from a specific style or tradition. It is innovative, eclectic puppetry combining aspects of the artform from various cultures. This freedom results in a style of puppetry that suprised and delighted

our hosts in its freshness and originality. It was appreciated and enjoyed by audiences all over the island. We believe we gave them a glimpse of what Audtralian theatre for young people has to offer.

Whilst on tour the company had the opportunity of viewing Chinese Shadow puppets and obseving a difference in emphasis. Ours is to articulate movement, technique and character development. The Chinese are more concerned with the aesthetics of the puppet and its place in theatre ritual.

Our tour was a steep learning curve, a memorable three weeks and a landmark in the growth of the company. We hope we can go again and if we do, the experience we have gained and the contacts we have made will be invaluable for planning future tours and forging dtronger ties with our Asian colleagues.

NAOMI TIPPETT and HELEN LUNN

THE MELBOURNE PERFORMERS FORUM

The Melbourne Performers Forum is a regular meeting of performers to discuss their work and the arts industry in general. It is based on the Sydney Actors Forum, but the title was specifically changed to 'Performers' to include puppeteers, dancers, magicians, etc.

A particular topic is discussed every month, followed by an open forum of general conversation, whingeing and news about the industry. Some previous topics include a proposed Performers Centre, agents and share-profit ventures. Discussion is not just about conditions, but about the quality and nature of the work we do. As such, it is often a source of inspiration and encouragement, as well as practical information.

The joys and hardships of performing are common to all the 'sub-categories' and the forum aims to make performers feel less isolated - a very common feeling.

The Melbourne Performers Forum meets at 360 King St, West Melbourne on the first Thursday of each month at 2.00pm. A few puppeteers already come along, so please join us!

(I don't know anything about similar meetings in other states, so if anyone else does, please write about it.)

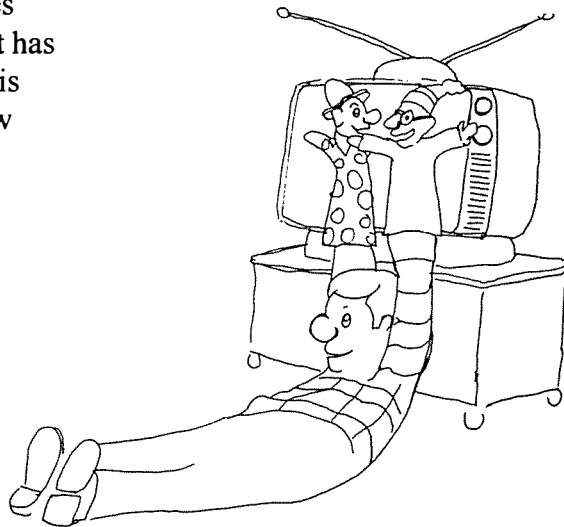
by Jenny Andersen



Lotte Reiniger

Recently some mail sent to addresses provided by the UNIMA mailing list has been returned. If these people see this notice, could you please let me know your current address?

Katy Bowman
Lachlan Haig
Jan Scott



Cartoon by Lynette O'Reilly from Behig Ak of Turkey.

Janet Macallister is doing some research into the development of puppetry in Burma and will be travelling there soon. If anyone has contacts, reading material or other information about Burmese puppetry she would be grateful if you could pass them on. (Maybe this issue's book review will be useful!)

Contact: Janet Macallister
PO BOX 313
Baulkham Hills NSW 2153

UNIMA ASIA-PACIFIC/OCEANIA COMMISSION

In early May, Andrew Hansen received a fax from Dadi Pudumjee (Vice-President of UNIMA India) regarding a meeting of the UNIMA Asia-Pacific/Oceania Commission in Iida, Japan, 3rd-7th August. UNIMA Australia has been invited to send a delegate to the meeting, which will coincide with the Iida Puppetry Carnival.

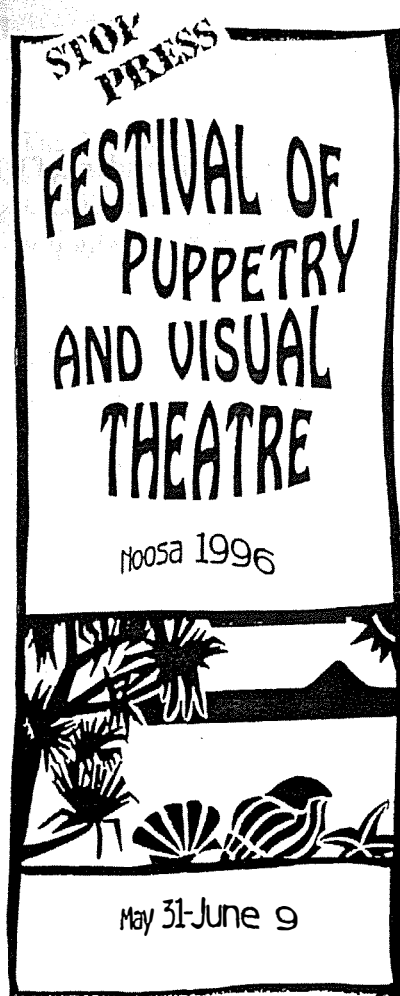
Many national UNIMA centres are forming regional commissions to improve communication within those geographic areas, and to have a stronger presence at World UNIMA congresses.

President Jennifer Davidson is currently trying to obtain more detailed and official information about this commission's meeting so that UNIMA can apply for 'Quick Response' funds from the Australia Council to pay for our delegate's airfare.

There is not much more information than this yet, but if you would like to send a letter of support to Jennifer for UNIMA Australia's involvement in this commission, it may help our application.



Kym Tonkin (with 'Granma')
in *These Foolish Things* by ONE TOE.



'Puppets '96', the Australian Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre, is set to run for eleven days from 31 May to 10 June 1996 giving a thirteen day break before the commencement of the UNIMA Congress in Budapest. The Festival program has four main components; a conference program and a masterclass program for professional puppeteers, and a performance program for the public and a community workshop program for novice and aspiring puppeteers.

The Festival will seek input from UNIMA members over the next three months on the Conference and Masterclass program as well as other aspects of the Festival. Organising Chairperson Pat Zuber says that the input of puppeteers in shaping the content of the Conference and Masterclass program was the best way of ensuring that the Festival meets everyone's expectations.

A Conference and Masterclass sub-committee drawn from puppeteers around Australia is

currently finalising a questionnaire which will ask puppeteers what they want in their Festival, according to Pat.

In the meantime the planning is moving ahead in other areas. The organisers, the ETC Company, have appointed John Lamb as Coordinator for the Festival. John is a very experienced arts administrator with a background in theatre and event management. Venue sites have been identified with most of the performances to be staged in Hastings St Noosa Junction precinct, utilising outdoor venues, and a couple of well-equipped marquees to be set up as theatre venues.

The scale of the Festival will depend to a large extent on the level of funding. The net is being cast widely according to John Lamb. Funding for the Conference and Masterclass program has been sought from the Performing Arts Board (Australia Council). In July funding applications are to be lodged with Playing Australia and its funding twin the newly established Festivals Australia. Also in July, a substantial application will be made to Arts Queensland for much of the Festival infrastructure. While nothing is ever certain in 'funding land', John Lamb says the Management Committee is quietly confident Arts Queensland will come to the party, having provided substantial seeding funds for this year. Support for the community workshop program will be sought from the Community and Cultural Development Board (Australia Council) and through the Department of Foreign Affairs for the international component.

To tackle private sponsorship, the ETC Company members David Hamilton, and David Poulton have joined the Finance and Marketing sub-committees. Sponsorship is probably even harder than funding as it is not seen as a mainstream event by potential sponsors. However a strategy is being developed and sponsors carefully targeted for optimum results.

"Puppets '96" will be as big as a success as the level of support by puppeteers in general and UNIMA members in particular. So please respond the questionnaire and let us have your ideas. For further information write to Puppets '96. PO Box 1455 Noosa Heads QLD 4567 or telephone (074) 74-8188 or fax (074) 74-9378.

By John Lamb



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE — INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

The Australian Centre of ITI is a performing arts information service that promotes international exchange. The following is reprinted from the ITI NEWS ROUND-UP, the Centre's bi-monthly newsletter. For further details on these items or other ITI services contact: 8A/245 Chalmers Street, REDFERN, NSW 2016.

Tel: (02) 319 0718. Fax: (02) 698 3557.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS:

FACP Conference, 5-7 Jan, 1996. Melbourne, VIC.

The annual event of the Federation of Asian Cultural Promotion, (the most important network for promoters, presenters, producers, festival directors, venue managers and agents in Asia), will be the meeting place for buyers and sellers of the performing arts. There will be a performance showcase for those interested.

THEATRE LIGHTING, 3-14 September, London, UK

A seminar on lighting design and technology. Designers and manufacturers will advise on the installation and use of their equipment. The event will encourage debate on the creative interactions possible at the crossroads between art & technology.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS:

PERFORMING ARTS MARKET;

Following the success of the first Australian Performing Arts Market last October, in association with the National Festival of Australian Theatre, the PAB of the Australia Council has decided to establish the market on a biennial basis. Planning is underway for the 1996 event which will also take place in Canberra.

MOVEMENTS:

Ross Browning is touring his Puppet Cabaret show in Taiwan, at the Australian Commerce and Industry Office in Taichung. Ross will be touring New Zealand schools for 5 weeks in July-Aug.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Jessie St Trust offers a grant of \$2000 for a project promoting women's rights, status and welfare, Aboriginal rights, peace or the elimination of discrimination.

The Performance Space is calling for proposals from artists interested in performing in a one day only off-site Eventspace as part of the Artful Park project in Sept./ Oct.

Onassis International Playwriting Competition: Big prizes for a new and original play regardless of theatrical form, which will deal with the issues affecting humanity on the threshold of the 21st century.

Official languages are English, French, German, Greek, Italian & Spanish.

Deadline: 30/6/96.

World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: A UNESCO project. World theatre in all its forms from 1945 to the present. Seeking scholars and/or practitioners to write national articles on theatre. All writers will be paid a small honorarium.

WORKSHOPS:

(These two are out of date, but they look interesting, and maybe they will come around again next year.)

Puppetry Conference: 17-25 June, Connecticut, USA. Collaborative workshops with shadow artist Larry Reed, puppet artist Jane Henson, George Latshaw and playwright Annie Evans, who will guide participants in the development of their own performance pieces. A dramaturgical development workshop by dramaturg Lenny Pinna and puppet artist Bart Roccoberon will assist writers in developing new scripts for puppet theatre.

Soul of Puppet: 1-23 June, Prague, CZECH REP. Workshop festival organised by Theatre Minor, the theatre of actor and puppet, in Prague. Theoretical and historical perspective, lectures, practical exercises and visits to various theatres. Also a weekend woodcarving course.

Contact ITI for further information on any of the above.

FRANCE: L'Institut International de la Marionnette in France has published its 1995 programme. Courses include:

- 1) The Art of Bunraku July 3 to 21 with YOSHIDA Minotaro
- 2) Summer University July 10 to 21 covering
 - a. "Popular Theatre and Contemporary creation in Puppet Theatre." with Alain RECOING
 - b. "Marottes, stories and rhythms" with Andre TAHON
 - c. "The body-stage" with Claire HEGGEN
- 3) Interior Landscapes with Philippe Genty & Mary Underwood

from August 1 to 25

Applications are also open for their "Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette", a three year course. Unfortunately communications are very slow so if you are interested in the courses contact Jennifer Davidson IMMEDIATELY or risk missing the deadline for application.

UK: TV's Spitting Image is in their final series. After 11 years and 800 puppets, ITV executives decided it had lost its impact and the series has been cancelled. Though the puppets were often more recognisable to the public than the cabinet members they portrayed, ratings fell from 15 million viewers in the 1980's to fewer than 6.5 million. {The royal family sending themselves up didn't help, either.}

RUSSIA: There has been an equivalent TV show in Russia called simply "Kukly" (puppets). Humorous and satirical though not as cruel as Spitting Image, this show airs on the independent channel NTV. Apparently fear of liable suits has become almost as great a disincentive for satirists as the old regime's censorship was.

FRANCE: The French cult satirical puppet show, "Les Guignols de l'Info", is currently being sued for libel by Peugeot car chief Jacques Calvet over a scene that shows him having car trouble. It also ascribes a certain amount of pompousness and authoritarianism to M Calvet who is concerned that the show will cost jobs in the Peugeot factory.

Our thanks to British UNIMA for providing most of the above information.



Marty Robinson

With 'Ben Elton' and Nigel Plaskitt on Spitting Image.

OVERSEAS FESTIVALS

JULY 10-12 Etevous Puppet Festival (One person shows), France

21-30 International Puppet Festival, Mexico City

23-29 The 1995 Puppeteers of America National Festival

AUGUST 1-5 Hame Castle Children's Festival, Finland

9-11 4th Puppet Festival at Kangasala, Finland

10th World Peace Puppet Day, Albuquerque USA, 50th anniversary of

Hiroshima/Nagasaki

19-27 Festival of The Puppet Masters, Italy



■ AUSTRALIA JAPAN PERFORMING ARTS EXCHANGE ■

The Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Australia Council expressed their complete satisfaction with results achieved under the arrangement for the period July 1991 until June 1993. Both parties agree to continue this arrangement for co-operation in promoting creativity in the performing arts in Australia and Japan by encouraging and facilitating closer links between artists and others associated with the performing arts in both countries.

Priority will be given to creative activities of a high standard in the contemporary performing arts, and co-operation may include:

- i facilitating performance tours of each other's country by Australian and Japanese performing groups;
- ii Facilitating joint performance projects by Australian and Japanese performing groups;
- iii facilitating exchanges of individual artists for training;
- iv exchanging information on the performing arts in each country;
- v facilitating workshops for artists, administrators, critics and others associated with the performing arts.

SEPTEMBER 1-6 PIF
International Festival,
Zagreb

4-8 Bottroper Puppet
Theatre Day, Bottroper,
Germany

15-24 International
Puppet Festival, Dublin
8-30 African International Puppet
Festival, Johannesburg

OCTOBER 9-14 Octobre
dans la rue (Franco-Italian
streetpuppetry), France

11-28 European
Season of Puppet Theatre,
Edinburgh

24-29 International
Puppet Days, Mistelbach,
Austria

27-Nov 5
International Week de la
Marionnette en Pays

Neuchatelois,
Switzerland

For details on any of the
above, contact the Secretary.

The Agency and the Council will make their best endeavours to secure funding with activities supported under the arrangement.

Each side will nominate an advisory committee and a secretariat. Annual programs will be determined in consultations between these bodies.

This arrangement shall take effect for a period of three years and shall continue thereafter until the expiration of one year from the day on which one of the parties has given notice of its intention to terminate the arrangement.

Tadahiko Fukushima
Director-General
Cultural Affairs Department
Agency for Cultural Affairs

Carrillo Gantner
Chairman
Performing Arts Board
Australia Council for the Arts



HISTORY

PUNCH AND JUDY IN EARLY AUSTRALIA

On page 92 of George Speaight's history of "PUNCH AND JUDY" there is a picture of a print captioned: "Toby in a Punch and Judy show at Melbourne, Australia, c.1853". Some years ago I wrote to George Speaight to see if he could give me any more information about this. He wrote back saying that the print comes from a cutting which has the date 1867 pencilled on it. There are no clues to the magazine it comes from except that a story on the back identifies it as English in origin. The illustration accompanied a poem which George Speaight kindly copied out for me, commenting that "no genuine Australian could have penned such sentimental twaddle."

I will spare you the full poem, which was written by Christable R. Coleridge, who seems to have visited Australia. It is called "Punch and Judy" and claims to be "A true incident in Melbourne life about fourteen years ago." If the pencilled date is reliable, this puts the event somewhere about 1853.

The poem tells of a Punch and Judy man who comes from "over-busy" England to the "new-built city" of Melbourne, and, with beating heart, prepares to do a show.

'And the crowd comes to a standstill,
One by one their eyes are caught,-
"What! a Punch! Old Punch in Melbourne!
Oh! how near old times are brought!"'

The eyes of a rough, bearded bushman in the crowd fill with tears as he recalls his London childhood and thinks of his mother

growing old in England. A wealthy trader alongside him "deigns a laugh" as he reminisces on a Punch show he once saw in a little English country town with his two sisters now separated from him by long miles of sea. The eyes of the crowd grow tearful as they remember England now far removed in time and distance.

"Pay him all we have to give him,

Easily are nuggets won!

Pay him well - he comes from England -

Fill that - quick - pass it on."

While we may be in doubt about the exact year of this Punch in Melbourne, we can have no doubt on one early appearance of Punch in Sydney. This was reported in "Varieties of Vice-Regal Life", (Vol. I), by Sir William Thomas Denison, (London: Longmans, Green, 1870), and I was directed to it by an historian friend, Dr Hilary Golder. When Sir William was governor of New South Wales, his wife wrote in her journal on 27 November, 1855, about a visit they made to the north shore of Sydney. They had to get their carriages and horses over the water in a ferry.



"As we were driving back towards the ferry, we saw before a door a crowd of children, looking like a school just turned out, and such, at first, we took it to be; but as we approached nearer, W____[ie. Sir William Denison], starting forward in the carriage with a sort of ecstasy, much as he might have done at the unexpected sight of an old friend, exclaimed, 'There's Punch! By the Lord Harry, there is Punch!' his raptures evidently causing great amusement to the footman on the box, who overheard the exclamation, and who, I suppose, being fresh from England, could not at all understand his master's transports at what, to him, must have seemed the most commonplace of all sights, but to W____ was like the reappearance of an old acquaintance, unseen for years. He is so delighted at the idea of there being a Punch in Sydney, that he insists on sending for it to exhibit here some day, in order, as he says, to "show Australian children what it is like."

Immediately following is the entry for December 4:



"Punch was sent for to come and perform here at Government House a day or two ago, and W____ had a quantity of children to see it. This certainly must be a terrible country, where even Punch is unknown to children. The man who performed left England in August, and has not been at work more than a month. You should have seen the faces of the children, and their astonishment at the blows given and received by Punch and his friends and enemies."

So this Punch and Judy man left England in August, 1855, and began to do shows in Sydney in November of that year. Given the uncertainties about the exact year of the show in Melbourne it may be that this was by the same performer some time later, and not as early as 1853.

Postscript:

John Lewis recently drew my attention to a note in the P. of A's "Playboard" concerning a first edition, (1875), of "Robert Heller, His Doings" in which Heller claimed to have performed the first Punch and Judy shows in Australia, India and China. Robert Heller, (1830-78), whose real name was W.H.Palmer, was a famous magician/pianist who spent much of his life in the U.S.A. and was especially known for his mind reading act. He was born in England and had a brother who came to live in Victoria in 1853. In 1869-70, Robert Heller gave performances in Melbourne, (and later in Sydney), which included marionettes and Punch and Judy.

Richard Bradshaw

AT THE COAL-FACE

SCRIPT-WRITING by Lian Tanner



For the three years leading up to 1992 I worked as an actor with Salamanca Theatre Company. I left just as Annette Downs was taking up the Artistic Directorship of Terrapin. I was going off to write, short stories mostly. I hadn't even considered writing for puppets until Annette handed me an article by Andrea Lemon in which she talked about puppetry as being like the performance form of a poem, the capturing of "images and essences, metaphors and emotions". I was intrigued, and started to read more, began to get a sense of the difference of puppetry, to tie it in with my response to visual images and my desire, in my writing, to touch people on a number of levels.

At the same time I was thinking about kites. The kite as a metaphor for the soul. I had a friend who worked with children with severe disabilities, and I was having to re-examine my concepts of "self" and "spirit", and how they could be expressed if one's body acted more as a cage than as a vehicle. I had an image of a child in a wheelchair, holding a kite. Everything that happened to the child - the pointing hands, the whispers, the commonplace indignities - would be reflected in the kite. I saw it being attacked by seagulls, blown out of the child's hand, stolen by others who caught a glimpse of its beauty. .

Then I found this quote from Korea:

"...From these poles, bellying out in the breeze, are one, or two, or three large sized coloured carp, made of cloth or paper. The carp being a fish which resolutely overcomes all difficulties it encounters in its passage up the streams of the country, even ascending waterfalls, and eventually, it is said, being changed into a flying dragon..."

S. Culin, *Korean Games*

I submitted my still very fragile idea to Annette, who liked it. Great, I thought, at some stage in the next year or so I'm going to write a puppet play! And I went back to walking on the beach, pruning the apple tree, and pottering my way very gently through another short story. But I had started a process and, much too quickly from my point of view, Annette was talking about writer development periods, timelines (timelines!!), finances....and a contract. I signed, feeling as if I was stepping off the edge of a cliff.

I still knew so little about puppetry, but Terrapin is used to this in their writers. They set about educating me, sat me in front of videos of every known variety of puppet show, said: "Look at this, this works because...., and this one is boring because...., and this is only one puppeteer but look...!"

At the same time I was talking to kids and adults in wheelchairs, and beginning to get a sense of what I had taken on, the responsibility that one assumes in choosing to write something like this. But also the awareness that a journey is a journey is a journey, and that the story was as much about me as anybody.

My initial terror in signing the contract with Terrapin had been partly assuaged by the knowledge that Andrea Lemon would be working with them as a dramaturg at the time when my first draft was due. This was a safety net, something to grasp in the middle of what was, to me, an unknown process. I felt this even more keenly when I finished the first draft. I was pleased with it, as far as it went, but strongly aware that it wasn't a finished play, and that I had no idea how to make it into one.

I had already had input from Annette, Jindra Rosendorf, and the designers Ruth Hadlow and Greg Methe at several stages, and had found this alternately useful (a flock of seagulls would take how many puppeteers???), encouraging (they like it!) and devastating (Oh God they *criticised* something the whole play must be a disaster I may as well give up...). Now I was to go into it in considerably more depth with Andrea, Annette and Greg.

The first thing Andrea did was to formalize ways of working - group norms, what we saw as our role in being there, how we each liked to work, and personal contracts for the duration. Over the next couple of weeks this gave me a much needed framework for looking at my own creative process. I came into the

group feeling rather apologetic about the way I work, the amount of time and space I need to develop ideas, to incorporate changes and criticism. Having to clearly specify these needs, having the other people in the group accept them without shock or sideways glances, hearing them state their own requirements, clarified a lot of things for me. The way I work is the way I work and it is OK !! (Hallelujah Sister!)

It was good to start with a sense of confidence in myself. I was going to need it. We spent the next few meetings looking at the intention behind each character and each moment in the script. I found this very confronting, having to explain exactly why everything happened, because, of course, a lot of the time I didn't know. I had written in characters and events because I wanted to use a particular device that had struck me as interesting, because I liked them, because I couldn't think of any other way of getting past a difficult point. Now it was clear that those were not good enough reasons. I began to realise that the second draft was going to involve more than just shifting a few scenes around.

At this stage the puppeteers did a mock runthrough for us, using puppets from old shows, bits of cloth, anything that might vaguely represent what was in the script. They read then ran each scene, and despite the roughness of it, it was enough to give us an idea of the overall look of the play. What became evident was that although the story was about a liberation, a breaking out, the play itself became more and more static as it progressed.

I had left a copy of the first draft with two of the people who had helped me with my research - Jan Neville, a teacher, and Brian Gilligan, a teacher's aide. Now I went back to them for their response. "Tell me the things you like about it first," I said to Brian, doing my most charming Visiting Lady Writer act. "I didn't like any of it," he said. Oh.... "It's too heavy. it's

patronising, where's the fun?" "It makes it look as if life in a wheelchair's a constant slog," said Jan. "It lacks the victories, the ordinary good things. And why've you got an adult helping this kid, Luke? What he needs is a friend." Oh....

I think this was the hardest time in the whole process. All the criticism had taken the play away from me, it was no longer mine, and it took several days to reclaim it. Also, because of the changes needed, I had lost sight of what it looked like and was forced to go back to butcher's paper and textas and drawings of the basic framework to get some sort of perspective. Several characters just quietly slipped away during this process, hardly even said goodbye, and one, Millie, appeared almost fully grown as I was walking under the banana passionfruit vine that covers my front gate.

Once I had come to terms with the changes however, the second draft fell quickly into place. There were still a number of question marks in it but they were things that needed to be worked out in rehearsal.

I think it must sometimes be difficult to hand over a script, not knowing what a company will make of it. I think I was lucky, first time around. It surprised me, the degree to which everyone involved, director, designers, composer, puppeteers, made the script theirs, approached it with care and curiosity. It continued to change of course, all through rehearsals, and it was only with its first few performances that it found its final shape.

The outcome for me, now, is a sense of excitement, about writing for puppetry, about the power of images, about the energy that goes into making a show like *Heroes* and the energy that comes out of it. About what I've learnt since stepping off the cliff. And of course, the desire to do it again. ●

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At the time of putting this edition together I was attending a week of masterclasses with Noriko Noshimoto (Spare Parts, W.A.). They were hosted by Polyglot Puppet Theatre.

They are fantastic - very stimulating and lots of fun. I hope to have a fuller report in the next edition.

Jenny Andersen.

AT THE COAL FACE: MATERIALS

"S ' EASY" is a modelling medium which is described as; "Cellulose Silica Mache". As far as I can work out, it's a non-toxic mixture of powdered glue and mulched newspaper. like papier mache', you add water, but then you can mould it like clay. It dries in the air, and the wet mixture stores reasonably well for a couple of weeks.

I found the mixture easy to mould, but when I had it wet enough to do refined bits (I was making finger puppets), it was a little difficult to keep from sagging. A friend has made some stunning Commedia masks with it, so I think the trick is to mould it and dry it around something firm. It looks lumpy when dry, but it sands down well, and is easy to paint, (boot polish looks great).

'Because it is so light, it is good for masks, trial-runs of projects, and for kids to use. It is \$8.00 per 500g tub, which makes up a reasonable amount of mixture.

"S ' EASY" is sold in Adelaide (cr. Morphett & Hindley St's), and they're hoping to sell in other states soon.

The manufacturer is:

T. TURNER ASSOCIATES

PO BOX 445

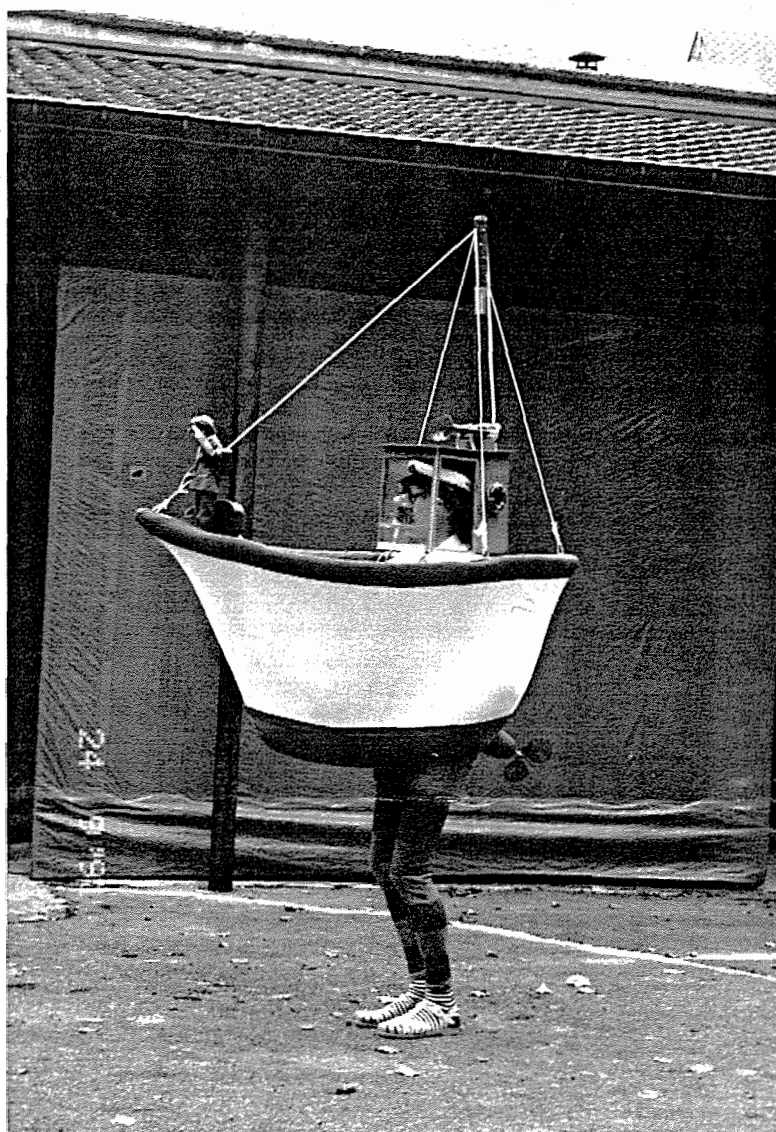
NORTH ADELAIDE, S.A. 5081

FAX (08) 269 2605

By Jenny Andersen

IS ANYONE INTERESTED
IN WRITING REVIEWS OF
SHOWS? - OR EVEN AN
ARTICLE INSPIRED BY A
PARTICULAR FEATURE OF
A PERFORMANCE?
PLEASE DO.

ALSO... **please**
SEND ME
PHOTOS OF
YOUR WORK !



Jean-Claude Leportier
- from Compagnie Coatimundi, in
Chapeau la Mer, France.

BOOK REVIEW

"BURMESE PUPPETS", Noel F. Singer,
Oxford University Press, 1992

by Dennis Murphy

"BURMESE PUPPETS" is a wide ranging and fascinating history of the Burmese marionette. What was once a very tradition-bound art form has become one of the most innovative (but highly stressed) forms of folk-puppetry today.

The book is full of fascinating details. Burmese Puppetry was ruled by a mixture of government regulation, astrology, taboo and superstition. The wood was placed in water to determine which was the male side. Characters were carved with the appropriate sex organ. Natural enemies may not be stored together and celestial beings may not come into contact with the earth. The puppeteers' feet must never touch the puppet. Red lines on the puppets' neck indicate folds of fat - a sign of beauty. A string breaking in performance was a bad omen and left the puppeteer liable to a thrashing. The natural and the supernatural often overlapped and it was accepted that a marionette was imbued with a life of its' own.

The author complains of the difficulty in research because of the use of the infuriating expression; "SHAY-AH-KHA-GA", (in the old days), to designate anything from fifty years ago to five centuries. The first written evidence of the puppets was in 1444. Records for the following 300 years indicate the spread of puppetry into the royal court.

In 1776, itinerant puppet troupes were brought under the control of a Minister for the Performing Arts. He designated the 28 puppets each troupe must carry and what wood to use to make them. He outlined stage construction and assigned ranks and emblems for the troupes. One emblem was the THAING, a type of wand, fixed to the front of the stage.

"Their presence indicated that the leader of the troupe was entitled to thrash and eject any unwelcome visitors, including drunken members of the royal family or officials who wandered onto the stage."

The puppeteers were so socially inferior that the author doubts they ever dared exercise their rights. They were exempted from the taboo of having their heads higher than the heads of royalty at a performance because the puppeteers simply didn't count.

In the 19th century, Burma fell to the British and royal court authority vanished. Puppet troupes began to compete, some using royal emblems they were never entitled to. The marionettes became more complex with more strings and more realistic manipulation. Novelty was the word. They started doing amazing tricks and effects. Once audiences had come to shows primarily to hear the singers, now they came expressly for the puppetry. Contemporary themes and fashions began to appear. A Golden Age.

By the 1920's, the marionettes' popularity waned in the face of competition from live performances, Indian circuses and the cinema. Japanese occupation, World War II and later civil unrest took a big toll. The puppetry hasn't died but it is still suffering. Nowadays the marionettes ride motorcycles and fly planes, but the current military government has strict curfews that prevent all-night performances and drive struggling troupes into bankruptcy.

The book's table of contents gives an indication of the range of this book: Historical Background; The Puppets; A Puppet Troupe; The Puppet Stage; A Puppet Performance; The Influence of Puppets on Burmese Dance and Craft. According to that last chapter, for a dancer to be told she dances 'like a stringed doll' was highly complimentary.

I highly recommend "BURMESE PUPPETS". It's published as part of an 'Images of Asia' series and is still available. The series also has a book on "JAVANESE SHADOW PUPPETS" by Ward Keeler.

OBITUARIES

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF GREG TEMPLE (23/3/50 - 15/8/94) by Richard Bradshaw.

In the Winter 1994 edition of the journal of the Puppeteers of America there is a warmly written obituary for Greg who died last September. It was written by Chris Carter of the Carter Family Marionettes of Seattle, and Greg had just finished a run in one of their shows when he was diagnosed with leukaemia early in 1993.

I met Greg at a P. of A. Festival in Oakland, CA in 1972, the year before he came to Australia. If my memory serves me right, even then he sported a top hat and there was something in the manner of this quietly spoken, tall, bearded, lanky chap that suggested a younger, gentler, pacific version of Uncle Sam. I can't remember whether he mentioned that he might be coming to Australia, but he certainly knew "The Magic Pudding". He had considered it for puppets, but was surprised by the violence which he thought might be too much for American audiences. He came to Australia in 1973 and for a while he taught at Christies Beach High School in South Australia.

Greg quickly became part of the puppetry scene in Australia and his "Punch and Judy" began the puppetry festival in Melbourne in 1975. Those who were there will remember with delight the moment when Punch's hand flew off and landed in the lap of the Victorian premier, Dick Hamer. Greg wasn't at all fazed, and it's hard to imagine Greg being thrown by anything unexpected. In fact, he had an ideal temperament for working with groups of people and was frequently involved with student and community projects using large puppets. He had a special interest in Aboriginal culture. (You can read more about his work in 'Theatre of the Impossible'.)

He returned to the U.S. in 1990, to Seattle, and I caught up with him at a children's theatre showcase in Portland, Oregon the following year. These are events where agents and performers have booths to promote their work, and by a happy fluke David Poulton, Greg and I were all in the one area. But in this outpost of Australia it was Greg who had the didgeridoo!

Greg's "Punch and Judy" was gentler than most, and Judy had embraced feminism. However, one problem Greg encountered in Seattle was that the person overseeing performances in schools adamantly refused to allow him to do his show. "And it's not because my name is Judy!" she protested.

I last saw him after a show I gave in the small town of Kent, south of Seattle, in 1993. He was there with his wife, Eileen, and his young son, of whom he was so proud. He told me he'd had a bit of a setback in his health, but I didn't realise how serious it was. And he gave me a jar of smoked salmon, the local speciality, a little act of generosity which in some way reflects the way his thoughts were turned out towards others even then. Chris Carter writes that Greg was active in the Puppeteers of Puget Sound, giving generously of his time and talent... He continued to perform his shows and help with the guild as his health permitted. His last performance was at a camp for children with cancer."

* * *

Philip Edmiston, the Artistic Director of Queensland Marionette Theatre also passed away recently.

SWOT Analysis (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities Threats)

(of UNIMA Australia)

By Dennis Murphy

STRENGTHS

1. The only National Puppetry organisation
2. The only National Puppetry newsletter/communications between puppeteers.
3. Resource for international information and contacts.
4. High profile among puppeteers.
5. Editorial team.

WEAKNESSES

1. Dependent on members'support and subs.
2. Perceived as being more relevant to larger companies than small ones or soloists.
3. International contact and festival lists not updated by Headquarters (International).
4. Members' reluctance to contribute articles to newsletter.
5. A lack of coordinated vision by UNIMA executive as to where UNIMA is going.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. To establish contacts and ferret out Festival information directly with other national centres, bypassing Headquarters.
2. Expand membership.
3. Develop profile of members.
4. Bring puppeteers together for UNIMA dinners in capital cities.
5. Encourage more contributions of articles.

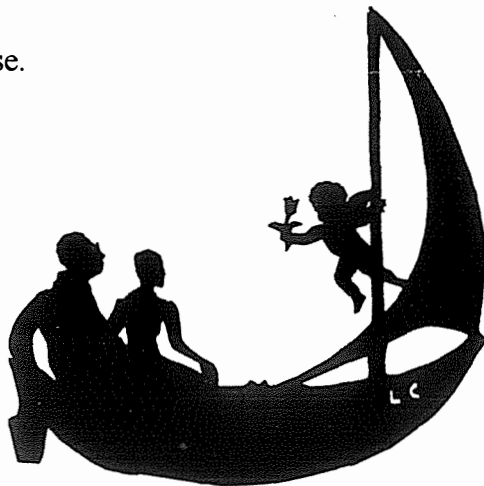
THREATS

1. Non-renewal of annual membership
2. International mail (incoming and outgoing) delayed because of old addresses.
3. Perceived lack of relevance to small companies.

BACKGROUND

As of May '95, we have 72 members in total. We have five large companies as members - Spare Parts, Terrapin, Handspan, Coarouselle and David Poulton. The rest, 67, are INDIVIDUAL members.

Your comments, please.



EDITORIAL

When I took on the editorship of this newsletter I received many expressions of sympathy - it was meant to be a real drag! Well, luckily for me and the UNIMA newsletter, there is not really one editor now, but rather an editorial team. This consists of myself, Richard Hart and Jennie Pfeiffer. Richard and Jennie are providing the computer expertise and are thus completely responsible for the lovely layout and design you are holding. They are also giving valuable input and feedback on the content of the newsletter, so I have more help than any editor ever before!

We hope that this division of labour will allow us to expand the newsletter into a magazine, with more technical and philosophical information about puppetry, as well as more current news about UNIMA members' activities.

If there are any types of articles you would like to see published, please let me know. For a start, I'd like to have a 'Letters to the Editor' column where people can vent their opinions about the newsletter, and any puppetry issue in general. Other proposed sections are - a 'diary' of members' public seasons (so that when we are touring we can see each others' work), and detailed articles about individual puppeteers and companies. I hope that by doing this we can learn from, and be inspired by each other, and perhaps even communicate and share skills more. It is nice to know of an electronics expert, for example, if you are building a remote-control puppet.

Thankyou to everyone who contributed to this newsletter - keep it coming! And thankyou especially to Richard, Jennie and Dennis for their help in easing me into the job.

Best wishes,

Jenny

PS. My involvement in puppetry began as a ventriloquist. In 1991 I received a grant to follow-up some object theatre study with Jacques Templeraud in France, and then in 1992 I formed ONE TOE with Kym Tonkin. We have been devising visual theatre works which are a mixture of acting, object-manipulation, and puppetry.



COMPETITION! YES - you could win a year's FA-REEE subscription to UNIMA simply by coming up with a fantastic, evocative name for the newsletter! (Entries close when we get the name we reckon has won.)

