



PRESIDENT
Jennifer Davidson
62 York St
Sandy Bay TAS 7005.
Ph: (002) 23-6546

SECRETARY
Dennis Murphy
79 Binalong Rd
Old Toongabbie NSW 2146
Ph: (02) 9631-0613

TREASURER
Richard Hart
20 Coleman St
North Fitzroy VIC 3068
Ph: (03) 9489-8337

EDITOR
Jenny Andersen
99 Bent St
Northcote VIC 3070
Ph: (03) 9482-3292

INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION

UNIMA AUSTRALIA

JUNE
1996



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

Liss Gabb in LITTLE MOMENTS by Helen Lunn. Directed by Noriko Nishimoto, designed by Rob Matson, performed by Liss Gabb and Craig Gillespie. POLYGLOT. Victoria. 1996.

EDITORIAL

It has been a busy couple of months for UNIMA Australia. A good number of members are off to Budapest for the International UNIMA Congress, and to Noosa for the Aqueous '96 Festival. Have fun, everyone!

Here in Melbourne we've put in an application to the Australia Council to make the magazine editorship a part time paid position. The amount asked for is \$10,300 which is the pro-rata rate for 12hrs work per week. The thrust of our argument was that with more time to devote to the magazine, the editor can solicit more articles, respond better to members' requests & interests, and improve the publication's production values generally. I asked a few companies and individuals if they could write letters of support, and was greatly encouraged by your responses. Thankyou everyone - it's good to know that the magazine is appreciated so much.

This month the editorial team also put together an information brochure about UNIMA Australia. Initially copies have been sent the Aqueous '96 Festival to put on the UNIMA stand there. However, I hope to get them into training institutions, arts centres, MEAA offices, puppet company offices etc. If you can distribute some brochures, or would like to have a few on hand to pass on to prospective members, please let me know and I'll send you some. (Likewise, if you'd like a copy of the Australia Council application, please give me a call.)

The September issue will focus on puppet design & construction. Last month I sent out a questionnaire, to gather some opinions and perspectives on this essential part of puppetry. The questions are fairly broad, with plenty of scope for people to express any individual passions, bug-bears or pieces of advice. If you'd like a copy, so that you can contribute to the discussion, please give me a call on (03) 9482 3292.

Jenny Andersen

FAREWELL TO ANJA REINALDA

Anja Reinalda has been an important creative source behind Terrapin's shows for the past three years. With the help of an Australia Council traineeship grant, she has been working alongside Terrapin's design team of Greg Methe and Ruth Hadlow.

Some highlights of Anja's work with Terrapin include the dressing of the extraordinary puppets for "Heroes", the making of sets & puppets for "Desires", and her work with Tasmanian school children as a puppet-making tutor

Anja will now continue to freelance as a theatre designer.



Bill Bilby, with Ralph Baker in Garner Puppet Theatre's
Road Safety. Puppet design & construction by Richard Hart



SECRETARY'S REPORT

Well, I have been Secretary now for two years so I suppose it's time for a mid-term report. When I took on the job, my main aim was to increase communication between puppeteers. Among my concerns was the need to have more financial reserves, a wider base of contributors to the newsletter, a higher profile among puppeteers, and a broader range of puppeteers subscribing.

I felt those problems would all be overcome if we could increase memberships. With the help of present and past Executive members, we did three mail-outs to non-UNIMA puppeteers and companies.

The first mail-out in 1994 was based on Yellow pages entries and a list of puppeteers compiled by Gypsy Smith during his travels. The second went to subscribers of MANIPULATION magazine, and the third was based on the mailing list for PUPPETS '96. As a result, we now have a record number of members: over 100, thus solving the aforementioned problems and giving us the right to appoint Councillors at the UNIMA Congress in Budapest.

Another initial concern was the lack of information coming in from overseas. I managed to get around that by enrolling us in the International Federation of Centres for Puppetry Arts. They send a regular festival agenda. I have also set up reciprocal newsletter arrangements with other national UNIMA centres to get their information to pass on. As a result of this year's survey we have joined Puppeteers of America (P of A).

We've had UNIMA dinners and, this year, UNIMA conferences in most capital cities. Communication between puppeteers is mushrooming. We have a very active and enthusiastic editorial team to thank for the blossoming of our newsletter into a magazine.

Another initiative was to build up a profile of membership: find out

what you need. For two years now we have done an annual survey at subs renewal time. *See separate article for this year's results.*

NEXT INITIATIVE: UNIMA Consultants. We are looking to appoint members with specialist knowledge to be UNIMA Consultants. The idea is that as we get enquiries about, for example, Japanese puppetry, we will have someone to refer the enquirer to. The consultant, in return for being willing to answer queries, will receive copies of any information about their speciality that comes across my desk. Aside from the UNIMA publications, we get ANIMATIONS from the UK and the P of A journal. If you would be interested in the scheme, please write to me with details of your subject. So, that's what the executive and I have been doing these last 2 years.

Janice and I are about to fly out to Europe for a 10 week holiday, albeit a working one. Between puppet festivals we hope to have some adventures in Tartarstan and in what is being billed as "the last frontier of European travel", the Baltic States. Last year I chalked up 620 performances; a busy year even by my standards. So I've resolved that this year I will create less and consume more.

I'll attend the UNIMA Congress and Festival in Budapest but won't be back in time for the next issue. Michele Spooner has taken on the task of "UNIMA Foreign Correspondent" so watch these pages next issue for reports on Budapest and the Aqueous Festival.

I hope to see some of you in Budapest, or at the Melbourne UNIMA Conference.

Happy puppeteering,
Dennis.

OVERSEAS FESTIVAL DIGEST

JULY 1996

- 1-5: Puppet in my Pocket, soloists & small companies, Sarospatak, Hungary.
- 1-6: 11th International Puppet Festival, Bekescsaba, Hungary
- 1-7: Int'l Marionette Festival, Nyirabator, Hungary
- 2-6: The Moon is Blue Festival, San Minato, Italy.
- 5-14: Semaine Mondiale de la Marionette, Jonquiere, Quebec
- 16-10/8: Mercantia Open Air Festival, Certaldo, Italy.
- 21-28: Figueuro Sols, Gent, Belgium.
- 24-4/8: Festival Internacional de Titieres, Mexico City, Mexico
- TBA: Loutkarska Chrudim, National Festival of Amateur Companies, Prague.

AUGUST 1996

- 1-4: Int'l Puppet Festival, Mirepoix, France
- 2-10: Int'l Puppet Festival, Tlaxcala, Mexico
- 3-8: Phenomenon, Jerusalem, Israel
- 8-26: The Magic of Puppets, Copenhagen Denmark
- 17-25: Festival of Traditional Glove Puppetry, Italy
- 18-27: Arrivano dal Mare, Int'l Puppet Festival, Italy
- 26-30: Playing with Objects. Workshop with Jacques Templeraud & Gyula Molnar, Amsterdam, NLDS
- 27-4/9: Festival Du Parc Pasteur, Orleans, France
- 30-4/9: PIF Int'l Puppet Festival, Zagreb, Croatia

SEPT 1996

- 4-8: The Fish in Puppet Theatre, Osnabruck, Germany
- 5-8: Baden Figura Theatre Festival, Baden, Switzerland
- 9-20: Bottroper Marchentage, Bottrop, Germany
- 11-22: Int'l Festival by Henson Organisation, New York, USA
- 13-15: Papiertheatertreffen (PaperTheatre), Preetz, Germany
- 13-22: Int'l Puppet Festival, Dublin, Ireland
- 28-4/10: Rencontre Internationale, performances, workshops, debates etc, Charleville, France
- 30-10/4: 10th Puppet Festival, Banska Bistrica, Slovakia

OCT 1996

- 1-8: The Golden Dolphin Int'l Puppet Festival, New forms and modern achievements in the development of the puppet art (held once every 3 years), Varna, Bulgaria
- 10-15: Festival of Things, Bodies and Sounds, Berlin, Germany
- 17-27: Third Int'l Puppet Festival, Lahore, Pakistan
- 22-27: 18th Internationale Puppentage, Mistelbach, Austria
- 23-2/12: Visions '96, Festival of International Animated Theatre, Brighton, UK

NOV 1996

- 1-9: Images: Visual, Object & Puppet, Arnhem, NLDS
- 15-23: Int'l Puppet Festival, Munich, Germany
- 23-2/12: 14th Festival Internacional de Marionetas, Tolosa, Spain
- 29-1/12: Faustovani, Festival & workshops for adults, Prague, Czech Republic

MARCH 1997

- 1-9: 14-20 Int'l Puppet Festival, Weis, Austria
- 15-22: Nat'l Puppet Festival, Gernsbach, Germany

MAY 1997

- 7-11: People & Puppets, Int'l Puppet Festival, Pleven, Bulgaria
- 7-13: Int'l Puppet Festival, Magdeburg, Germany
- 23-1/6: Int'l Puppet Festival, Evora, Poland
- 30-5/6: SLUK National Puppet Festival, Osijek, Croatia

JUNE 1997

- 18-22: International Micro Festival, Dordrecht, NDLS

JULY 1997 5-11: Synergura, Erfurt, Germany
25-3/8: Int'l Puppet Festival, Mexico City, Mexico

SEPT 1997 ?-? Int'l Festival of Family Theatres, Moscow

For details on any of the above, contact the treasurer

VISIONS '96

Visions '96 is a very exciting Visual Theatre festival to be held in Brighton, England in Oct/Nov this year.

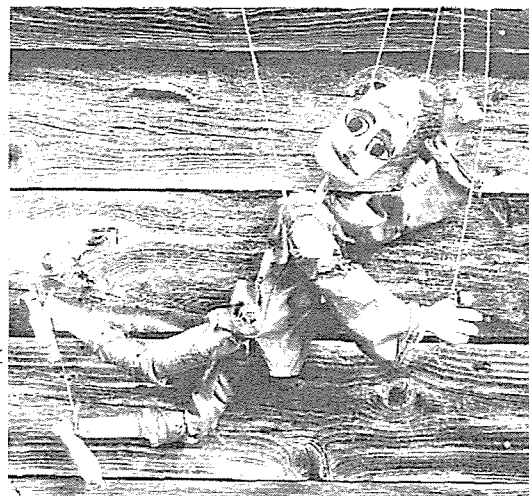
The festival includes international theatre performances, an exhibition programme, animation films and workshops.

The festival began in 1994, and is run by the University of Brighton. What makes it viable is that the festival joined with satellite venues, promoters and festivals so that the performers could go onto other paid shows after Brighton. This shared the cost of international and national touring.

The programme is mainly made up of small, exciting sounding companies such as Vélo Théâtre from France.

I have asked for further information to be sent to UNIMA Australia, so if anyone is lucky enough to be travelling there at the time, and wants to know more, please contact me (Editor).

Pannal's Puppets in Circus ad Libitum (vision94)



The IXth International Festival of Perugia will be held from 24-29 August, 1996. The festival is open to traditional and modern puppetry, and includes an impressive variety of venues, for anything from street and park performances to big productions in a circus tent. There will also be workshops, a conference, and an exhibition focussing on new methods in animation and electronic medias.

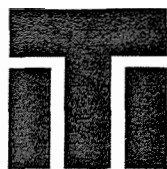
UNIMA Italia has asked us for a mailing list of Australian members, so that will be sent to them soon.

For entry forms and/or more detailed information about the festival, please contact the editor.

AXEL AXELRAD has recieved a letter from the Vietnamese Puppet organisation "**For the Smiles of Children**". The director and performer, **VAN HOC**, has received many prizes for his work and would very much like to perform in Australia. Being a voluntary charity organisation, "For the Smiles of Children" cannot afford to come here unless sponsored or subsidised in some way.

Van Hoc performs original work, using a variety of puppetry styles, minimal dialogue and both traditional and new Vietnamese music. The productions are highly portable, have short set-up times and minimal technical requirements.

Van Hoc's address is: Artist Van Hoc
Vietnamese National Puppetry Theatre
32 Truong Chinh Str. Hanoi City
Vietnam
Ph: 534545



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.

Canberra Festival: is seeking expressions of interest from companies around Australia wishing to participate in the 1997 event (held in October).

Assos Festival: 20-22 Sept, Assos, Turkey, is calling for the participation of Australian groups who do not take text as their starting point of their work. The festival presents works by dance, theatre, music & puppetry groups from Turkey & around the world. Held in a small village overlooking the Aegean Sea, 12 miles from the island of Lesbos, the event provides no restrictions on venues: artists can use the temple, village streets, bay, ancient theatre, graveyard... anywhere. Food, accommodation, transport costs & a production budget are provided.

International Puppetry Festival: 23 Nov-4 Dec, Ougadougou, Burkina-Faso: organised annually by the Burkina-Faso ITI Centre & UNEDO, it will have theatre performances by guest ensembles from Africa & around the world, puppet theatre, workshops & discussions.

'96 Funding Deadlines for the Australia Council are as follows: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts 15 Jul, Community Cultural Dvpt 15 May for individuals & communities & 15 Aug for organisations & communities, Performing Arts 15 May & 15 Nov. Closing dates for funding across artform areas (eg festivals, hybrid arts etc) still to be advised.

Artists Wanted: Outback Theatre Co. in Hay, NSW runs workshops in schools throughout the South-West region and as far north as Bourke & Walgett. The company will be utilising the services of people experienced in working with Aboriginal communities & of theatre practitioners who can conduct workshops. Expressions of interest are welcome.

Australian Performing Arts Market: 13-17 Oct, Canberra, ACT. A marketplace where drama, dance, circus & physical theatre, site performance & music theatre artists can promote & present their work to a highly targetted group of international & national performing arts presenters. Organised by the Performing Arts Unit of the Australia Council & presented in conjunction with the National Festival of Australian Theatre. Local companies interested in showcasing their work are encouraged to contact the organisers now.

Scripts & Writers are wanted for a database recently established by the British Centre of ASSITEJ in association with the New Playwrights Trust in the UK. The data base will contain details of scripts for theatre for children & young people available in English, plus information on writers committed to writing for children. Theatre companies world-wide will have access to the information in order to commission writers & produce scripted material.

Contact ITI for further details.

There is a new theatre venue in Melbourne - **The Workhouse Theatre**. Situated on Victoria Street, Collingwood, this tiny space is owned and will be run by Anita Sinclair. Anita is no stranger to these entrepreneurial ventures as she used to manage the House Theatre.

Given the huge demand for La Mama (see p's 16-17), a new small theatre in Melbourne can only be a good thing.

More information soon, we hope!

Lately there have been a number of puppetry workshops held at Polyglot and at Handspan in Melbourne. They have been well attended, and much appreciated by performers and puppet makers.

Some of the workshops have not been directly about puppetry, focussing, rather, on related skills such as Anatomy or Text. It has been good to be reminded of the wide range of skills needed to be a well-rounded performer.

COMPANY SKYLARK



Plans are underway to remount **Little Shop of Horrors** by production company David Atkins Enterprises. It will open in Sydney in September, followed by a national tour. Puppet direction will be by Peter J. Wilson, and puppetry by Peter Seaborn.

SKYLARK THEATRE COMPANY has several interesting projects on the boil at the moment. Their newest work, **Wake Baby**, will premiere at the Out of the Box Festival in Brisbane from June 10th to 17th.

Wake Baby credits include Gillian Rubenstein - writer, Richard Jeziorny - designer, Nigel Jamieson - director, Phil Lethlean - lighting designer, Peter J. Wilson - puppet director and performer.

The story is about the innocence of childhood, and combines physical theatre, circus skills and puppetry.

The wonderful children's classic **Charlotte's Web** was a big success when **Skylark** first produced it in 1992. Now it is back for a national tour (see dates below). The production is directed by Christine Anketell, with puppet direction by Peter J. Wilson. Performers include Sean Masterson, Matthew McCoy and Catherine Mann.

Tour dates:

Melbourne - from July 1st, Alexander Theatre

Adelaide - from 15th July, Arts Theatre

Canberra - from 29th July, Canberra Theatre

Sydney -- from 5th August, Enmore Theatre

Gosford - 19th - 22nd August

Echuca - 24th August

Melbourne - 26th August - 1st Sept., National Theatre

Skylark is also developing a new work by writer John Romeril, with the working title **Double Suicide**. The script is based on a classic by Japanese writer Chikamatsu Manzaemon, and will premiere in 1997.

* * *

WELCOME to new members **No Strings Attached.**

This group is part of a LEAP project sponsored by Swinburn University of Technology. Jennie Pfeiffer is the project co-ordinator, and Colin Sneesby is the technical advisor. A more detailed report will follow soon...

OBJECTIVITY

Due to popular demand, there will be an Objectivity meeting on **Sunday June 23rd at 5pm** at Richard Hart's house (20 Coleman St, North Fitzroy).

Anyone interested in plans for this year is most welcome to come along. If you can't make it, but are keen to be involved, &/or have some great ideas, you can give Richard a call before the get-together on 9489 8337.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the magazine. It's fantastic. A joy to read. Keep up the good work!

Jonquil Temple



Specialists in Puppetry

Queensland under-8 audiences (& parents too!) are enjoying the puppet performances by Julie McNeill, of her adaptation of the Gingerbread story.

The Gingerbread Kid is designed to introduce innovative puppetry styles to young children in an intimate atmosphere such as their lounge rooms, local libraries, child-care centres, playgroups and local shopping malls.

Working with brightly coloured, larger-than-life soft foam-rubber sculptured hand puppets, Julie acts as a narrator of the tale with the action and characters of the puppets taking over. This allows children, who can be frightened of puppets, to get used to the idea of the puppeteer's job ie: to transfer energy to an inanimate object, making it come to life: Thus the large fox head is situated throughout the story on the edge of the river, in view of the audience.

The 'Gingerbread Kid', who has run away from Nan & Pop, Maggie Magpie and her hungry chicks, the lime green rainforest possum, the hungry goanna and Rock Wallaby, is enticed to jump onto the shoulders of the fox/puppeteer who now enters the river and swims with it until it is gobbled up with a snip, snip, snap.

At the end of the show children are eager to touch and 'try on' the puppets, work the mouths and, for a few seconds at least, feel what it is like to try the fox mask on.

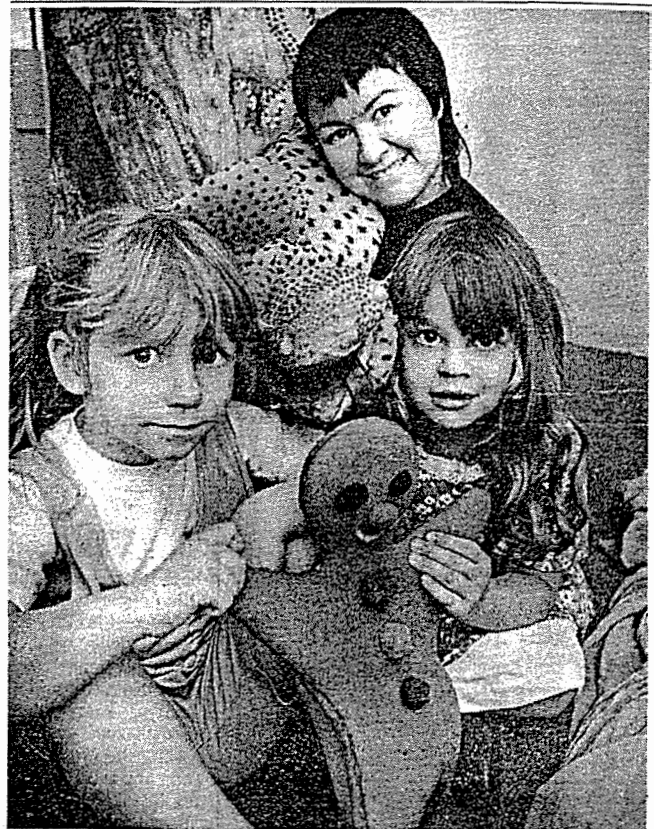
GET WELL JINDRA

When Jindra Rosendorf was in Adelaide recently, she became ill and couldn't rehearse or perform 'Don Quixote' with Carouselle Theatre. The water is definitely VERY bad in S.A.!

We are all very sorry to hear of your bad luck, Jindra and hope that you make a speedy recovery.

MELBOURNE UNIMA CONFERENCE

There will be a UNIMA conference held at Polyglot Puppet Theatre (27A Cromwell Rd, South Yarra) at 3pm Sunday 25th August. All members are welcome!



GINGERBREAD SHOW

Satellite Weekly Times 6/9/95



TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

77 Salamanca Place, Hobart Tas. 7004.
Ph: 002) 23 6834 or 002) 34 6086
Fax: 002) 23 6399

News from the Terrapin team..

On the home front, Terrapin's new production **The Hunt** is touring Primary schools throughout Tasmania. This piece is a collaboration between the Company and the very talented Sue Giles. Sue has directed and written **The Hunt** and created a very funny performance that the Primary audiences are loving. **The Hunt** features a range of puppets from Terrapin's past, such as marionettes, large scale body puppets and rod puppets, some of which were created ten years ago. This is mixed with the manipulation of everyday objects to give things including blow up pools, toilet ducks and pillows a life of their own!

The story follows twins that return to their family home to conclude an unfinished game, where they uncover old secrets and revisit the rich imaginations of their childhood years.

The Company are extremely excited to be heading off to Budapest for the UNJMA Festival, with the performance **Desires**. This production is Terrapin's adult performance and was premiered very successfully in Tasmania in October 1995. This performance is comprised of four original short works, written by four Australian playwrights that all use very different puppetry techniques. Andrea Lemon's "Undertow" features film and black puppetry techniques, Belinda Bradley's "Mary May" uses body puppets and actors, "The Source" by Peta Murray uses large scale body puppets and an oversized set and Lian Tanner's "Corpus Nullius" features beautifully crafted miniature Bunraku puppets.

Whilst overseas Annette Downs (Artistic Director) and Greg Methe (Designer) may visit the Plzen Festival as special guests. Many thanks to Wociech at Carouselle Theatre for arranging this to happen.

Upon returning home in August, Terrapin will re-stage the performance **Jump In To The Picture** (also written by Sue Giles) for schools in Tasmania, and October sees **Desires** on the road again, bound for India, as part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's "Elite Performance team".

Everyone at Terrapin will be very busy this year, but we are all extremely confident that the hard work will be rewarded with overseas exposure of the quality, original productions that the Company creates.

Jackie O'Toole
Publicist.

MUPPETNAPPING!

Newsflash: The original Bert and Ernie puppets have been stolen!!!

They were on exhibition in January this year in the town of Erfurt, Germany - part of a collection of 36 Muppets on display at the Erfurt Garden Show.

That's a little down market for such pop icons, surely? I'm not knocking garden shows, I love 'em, but they are damp affairs and a lot of dirt is involved. What about mould, black spot, root rot and the various Blights?

But that's not what got Bert and Ernie. Thieves broke through a wall and pinched them. They tried to get Miss Piggy too, and knocked her about in the process, but they failed to detach her from the floor(!). Henson Productions had Bert and Ernie insured for \$171,000 (US).

The phones went nuts when Michael Tunn announced this news on the JJJ request show that night. I was one of the callers - it takes AGES to get through, by the way - because I smelled a Big Story and wanted to find out more.

I spoke to the producer, who said she knew nothing and would I like to speak to Michael? Sure. Suddenly, without meaning to, I was speaking on national radio, introduced by Michael Tunn as "a very distressed puppeteer". I was distressed, not about B & E but about me, moi, speaking on national radio! But I pretended I wasn't and observed - quite

spontaneously, I thought, since I'd already said this to the producer, who sort of screened me first - I observed to Michael that it was a tragedy akin to the disappearance of the Mona Lisa. Michael said it was even worse. We agreed this had to be so, since there were two of them.

Michael unfortunately had had no further bulletins "on the wire" - I love that expression - so I blurted out "Love ya show!" and brought to a dignified conclusion my 15 seconds of fame.

**The Magic Pudding
was very cut up.
Blinky Bill was in
tears.**

Despite the absence of any further facts, from this point in the programme the Bert and Ernie story grew to enormous proportions. Everybody had a theory. Nick from Melbourne rang Tunny to say Bert and Ernie had been sighted on the Gold Coast after arriving from Germany on a cargo ship, and would only say that they "had to get out of Sesame Street".

Another caller maintained they had been spotted singing songs from their albums in Melbourne, and gave their location as Melways reference Map 61, J-10. That's Sesame Street - Mount Waverly. Someone else claimed the REAL dirt on the story was that Bert had DUMPED Ernie in order to pursue a

solo career, and now, like another megastar who has recently become nameless, wished to be referred to as "The Muppet Formerly Known as Bert".

Tunny played Bert and Ernie hits and I rang to request "Rubber Ducky" but I didn't get through. Some sicko rang to confess to kidnapping and torturing the pair, which wasn't nice and upset Michael a bit (did the producer screen that one?).

I had my own theory. An update on the wire - or as we puppeteers call it, "the string" - said the Muppet megastars were actually being held in a railway locker in the town of ERNBERT (a correction on the earlier bulletin), and that a glove puppet claiming to be Mrs Judy had admitted to the muppetnapping and was demanding an \$80 million movie contract from Henson Productions in exchange for their release.

Mind you, it's just as well I didn't get through because later that night I discovered this was a hoax. I didn't really have a "wire" - or a string. I actually got the story off the Internet. From Big Bird's Web site. You can access Big Bird's Web site by typing ABIGBIRDTOLDME.com .dot.

But that's where I made a big mistake because it's common knowledge that Big Bird is given to playing practical jokes and is not to be trusted. That guy just never grew up, did he?

Tunny finished the request show with Bert and Ernie's great hit "It's Time

to Pick up the Record and Put it Away".

I tried to get through the following night. I needed to let Michael know I had been inundated with calls from distressed puppets. They were upset by what had happened to Bert and Ernie. Who knew? One of them might be next. They were even more upset by the hoax calls of the previous evening.

I wanted to explain that these hoaxes, though amusing, were cruel. The Magic Pudding was very cut up. Blinky Bill was in tears. Mr Squiggle's nose was out of joint. And Aggro was drinking again.

Mr Squiggle rang Michael himself later to request a song by Bert and Ernie's favourite band - Talking Heads - and to dedicate it to them with the message "Hang in there guys!" But he didn't get through. Neither did I.

So I don't know what happened to Bert and Ernie.

I hope that someone, somewhere, is playing with them and looking after them. I hope they're not shut up in a dark box, and if they are, I hope they escape. I want to write the screenplay.

About the other 34 Muppets in the exhibition: assuming Miss Piggy will soon be well enough to travel, when can we expect to see this exhibition in Australia? Or have we seen it already? I wouldn't know. I only know what I hear on the radio.

Maeve Vella
15/2/96

BIBLIOGRAPHY

by Dennis Murphy

I've always held that it's better to develop technique and get a feel for what I'm doing before going into the theories behind it all. I remember a mask workshop where the teacher went into so much theory before even handing out the masks that the students were convinced that the Mask would take immediate possession of them. It doesn't work that way of course and there were some very disappointed participants.

Theory helps me to find a vocabulary word for a technique. Having a word for it helps me to remember it and apply it in different circumstances.

I also go over videotapes of shows from previous years. Since a lot of my work is improvised I often forget a bit of business if it was just a one-off inspiration. Seeing it on tape reminds me of it and I get it down on paper so it can be incorporated into the show.

In going over Theory this year I came across some excellent books that I recommend, especially to anyone who specialises in writing and performing comedy.

Louis E. Catron, *The Elements of Playwriting*, Collier, 1993

Robert W. Corrigan ed., *Comedy: Meaning and Form*, Chandler Publishing, 1965

John Hind, *The Comic Inquisition*, Virgin, 1991

Buster Keaton, *My Wonderful World of Slapstick*, Allen & Unwin, 1967

John Lahr, *Automatic Vaudeville; Essays on Star Turns*, Heinemann, 1984 (see also Lahr's "Dame Edna Everage and the Rise of Western Civilisation", & his biography of his father Bert Lahr, "Notes on a Cowardly Lion")

Frank Manchel, *The Talking Clowns - from Laurel & Hardy to the Marx Bros.*, Franklin Watts, 1976

Athene Seyler & Stephen Haggard, *The Craft of Comedy*, Garnet Miller, 1958

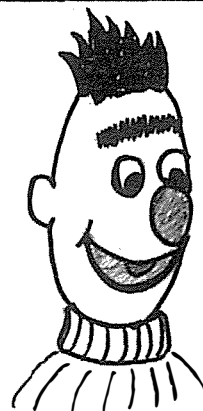
Ronald Wolfe, *Writing Comedy*, Robert Hale, 1992

Any of George Burns' books will both amuse you and give insights into comedy and variety performance.

None of the authors relate their work to puppetry but anyway that's our job.



FOR
RANSOM!



ROMAN PASKA VISITS MELBOURNE



Roman Paska with MOBY DICK IN VENICE, 1996. Photo by Josef Astor.

Roman Paska, in Australia to work on the *Moby Dick* project with Spare Parts Theatre in Perth, took time to conduct a three-day workshop in Melbourne. It ran from the 22-24 May and was unanimously declared to be awesomely good.

"...it was good to expand the concept of a puppet to embrace many areas but on what seemed to be to a deeper level than I've experienced before..." Richard Hart

"Theory, talking, challenging exercises... a puppeteer's puppeteer. Thank you Spare Parts, Handspan and UNIMA for making it possible...It was great!" Jonquil Temple

"It inspired me to write the neo-Fetishist Manifesto...it re-affirmed my passion..."

Katy Bowman

DATA BASE UPDATE

Thanks, first of all, to all members who took the time to fill out the form to help us build up a profile of the membership.

This year I was mainly looking to see where we puppeteers were drawing our inspiration from. Was it still coming from the UK, Europe and USA or were we looking to Asia as governments and funding bodies have been coaxing us to do?

First of all, let me say that it is impossible to quantify the results and give percentages. Not everyone answered every question and many people named as many as five countries whose puppetry had inspired them. Quite a few people said that it wasn't a country's puppetry but more a matter of an individual or company in a country that impressed.

John Lewis in Sydney refused to fill in his form as a protest "since over the last 8 or 9 years our activities have never been mentioned in the UNIMA magazine so obviously the executive and correspondents think what we do is not of interest to the UNIMA membership??"

Let's look at the trends based on the 38 forms I have at hand. They come from 1 agent, 6 hobbyists, 15 part-time and 16 full-time puppeteers. As I suspected, we are not much inspired by Asian Puppetry. 6 people mentioned Japan but several of those were because of workshops in Australia with Noriko Nishimoto. Indonesia was also mentioned but only once.

Europe accounted for 29 mentions; 10 of those were UK. France came second to the UK with 7, the Czech Republic had 5. Nearly everyone mentioning France named "Compagnie Philippe Genty" as their inspiration. DRAK was named by everyone who opted for the Czech Republic. (Considering DRAK was here back in 1983 for the Puppet Festival in Adelaide, it certainly shows how important and inspirational puppet festivals are to us.)

Australia and the USA tied with 9 mentions each. As a result UNIMA Australia has now joined Puppeteers of America so we can pass on their information.

As to where members would go next for a puppet festival; Europe again came out on top. There was strong support for UK, then France, then the Czech Republic. UK and USA tied with 5 each. Japan got 4.

Only 3 members trained in Asia. Everyone else who had studied overseas mentioned European countries.

If you'd like to look through the surveys, Richard and I each have copies you are welcome to peruse.

What questions would you like to have in next year's survey?

Dennis.Murphy



"Stimulating..." Rob Matson

"Illuminating and inspiring!..." Ingrid Maganov

"The degree of interrogation was wonderful...thank you Roman, for introducing me to "The Suicide Club"...it was tweaking..." Jen Pfeiffer

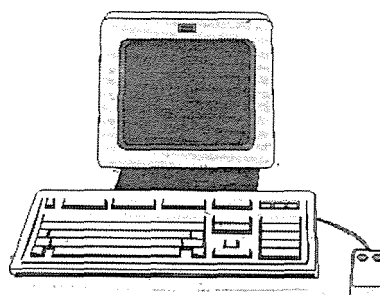
"Finding solutions to simple questions proved unexpectedly challenging..." Colin Sneesby

"It was a pleasure to be in analysis with Roman." Annie Wylie

"When Roman poses the question, 'What defines the puppet?', you're in for three days of journeying into the world of discovering the heart of the object...And what a heart it was!" Liz Talbot

We hope to present a more detailed article about the workshop in the next issue of the UNIMA Magazine. So keep a lookout for it.....Jen Pfeiffer.

CYBER-GOSSIP



New on the Puppetry Home Page.....

Spence Porter, an American puppet-o-phile, is offering several plays which he has produced in "tiny theatres", using mask and puppetry techniques. Titles include *"Hippolytus"* - loosely based on the Greek, using jazz, masks and modern dress; *"The Mouse Prince"* - a large scale puppet/actor adult fantasy; and *"Argument with Myself"*, a series of six short plays using puppets and masks.....Die Pfefferminz-Prinzen (The Peppermint Prince), a puppet theatre group based in Köln, Germany, has been around since 1989, and has added a brief listing to the Internet. Their most recent play, *"The Wölfchen"* is the story of a wolf who wants to be vegetarian.....Petrusjka Teater was formed in Norway in 1978, and their recent listing shows a detailed rundown of the company's tours and plays over the years.

And in other news.....

Disney has a home-page for their recent production of *"James and the Giant Peach"*, based on Roald Dahl's book. The film, produced by Tim Burton (*"Nightmare Before Christmas"*) uses stylised live action outside the peach. Once James goes into the peach, everything is done using stop-motion animation puppets. The film stars Richard Dreyfuss, Susan Sarandon, Joanna Lumley, Simon Callow and Miriam Margolyes (the voice of Fly in *"Babe"*). As usual, details of puppet design are non-existent, so I apologise for being short on puppetry info!

The best find of the Puppetry Home Page this edition was a really interesting interview with Jerry Juhl, long-time writer for the Muppet Show. He talks of his early days with Jim Henson, when he was actually a puppeteer for shows like "Saturday Night Live". He recalls that he was even then more interested in the writing, and decided to concentrate on that once he realised it was much easier on the arms. He also talked with some glee of the process of writing the latest Muppet movie, *"Treasure Island"*, and how easy it is now to write for the main characters. Kermit, Miss Piggy, Gozo and Fozzie practically write themselves, he says - he just sits in a room with his eyes closed and listens to the voices. He also relates the beginnings of Gonzo's obsession with chickens. Jim Henson had decided it would be fun to have live chickens on set with the puppets, and they had written a scene where Gonzo auditioned chickens for the show. Naturally, the chickens wouldn't do what they were supposed to, and after about an hour with his hand stuck through a hole in the set, Dave Goeltz (Gonzo's puppeteer) watched as one of the chickens walked out through the shot. He ad libbed "Don't call us, we'll call you!"; then added "Nice legs, though"...and that's where it all began!

The puppetry mailing list has been varied since I last wrote. A number of subscribers are puppeteers who use their skills as part of a Christian ministry, and they have had some lively interchanges about whether or not to charge for shows. There have been pleas for good sources of fur fabric, and debates on the propriety or otherwise of using tacky jokes on the mailing list. We also got heavily into a debate about whether or not the glass ceiling for women applies to the puppetry industry too; and I have to say that on a global scale, it probably does. And on the issue of copyright and intellectual property theft, there have been some very interesting viewpoints - it seems many puppeteers have never considered using someone's music without permission to be theft, until now. And on a lighter note, there have been some great anecdotes and suggestions on how to deal with those less-than-wonderful audience members - the ones who want to video the show and the ones who let their kids grab the puppets off your hand.

All in all, it's been an active couple of months. And I'm hoping that it will only get better; we are currently trying to arrange a regular puppetry "chat" session. This means that a particular prearranged time, anyone's who's interested can join in the puppetry channel using Internet Relay Chat software, and we can converse with each other in real time. Kind of like a conference call on your computer screen, and potentially a great place to keep in touch. I'll be keeping you posted in the next edition, and will let you know any other gossip to come my way!

Janet Dalglish - email jdalsim@netspace.net.au

IIDA FESTIVAL - BEGINNINGS

I recently received a letter from a friend I made in the City Planning Department of Iida City while I was attending the UNIMA Asia-Pacific Commission. I asked Mr Ogiso, in my own stumbling Japanese, if he could gather some information for me about the beginnings of the Iida Festival. What was it that kept it alive and growing since its seventeen year inception? I thought such information might serve as a useful model, giving us things to think about if we should aim to ever have a Puppetry Festival that takes place on a regular basis.

Of course things are very different here: We are a large continent and Japan is small and more manageable. We don't have the same degree of community interest in puppetry or its practice, and our bureaucratic and administrative arrangements are different. Nevertheless, I present the information, minus the pages and pages of statistics (all in Japanese of which I have to confess I can't make head or tail out of unless I go back and learn Japanese for another 3 years). However, Noriko Nishimoto saved the day and kindly assisted by translating the bulk of the letter for me, and so I present it for your interest.

The Iida Festival, or Carnival as it is known there, began in 1979 in the International Year of the Child. Iida City decided to show puppetry performance to the community, both adult and children. A meeting was set up to decide how this might be possible. Initially meetings took place between the Mayor of Iida, Taro Matzuzawa, Artistic Director Dintaro Suda and Koshiro Uno from the Foundation Modern Puppet Centre to decide how to have a Carnival. There was encouragement from Puppet Theatres to not just have an event that was for one year, but to make a continuing carnival. All the puppet companies in Japan were contacted along with kindergartens and schools in an effort to get community support. It was an opportunity to bring traditional theatre of old Japan and the community together in a Festival.

Why there were good conditions for a continuing festival in Iida.

All the puppetry people were enthusiastic to come together and make it work. In the region of Iida, there are 4 traditional puppet theatres with 300 year traditions: I'ma Dani Puppet Theatre in Iida, Kuroda Ningyo Shibai Hozonkai in Iida, Waseda Ningyo Hozonkai in Ananchyo and Furutai Ningyo Hozonkai who are still active and supported and contributed to the Festival. The location was central and was easy to access for most people. The size of the festival was manageable and not too large, that made for easier organisation of transport, venues, accommodation. There was one central ticketing agency.

Things that were unique to Iida Festival.

Everywhere was a potential venue not just theatres but the street, shopping centres, kindergartens, schools and even church.

One ticket was 700 yen which everybody can use as a ticket to go anywhere and see any performance. This arrangement was organised together by the Iida city government, the community and puppetry people. Puppetry people undertook to pay registration to take part in the carnival and the community agreed to pay for the ticket.

There was close communication between the puppetry people and the community. After performances there was feed-back and discussion and party and talk.

There was time set aside for training and workshops on 30 different topics ranging from basic elementary and practical like building, making and conceptual. 500 people attended the workshops ranging from puppetry people, young theatre artists and members of the community.

It was quite unique for the puppetry community, the government and the community of the city to come and work together. The strength of Iida Puppetry Carnival was its united vision.

Kind thanks to Mr Ogiso and Noriko Nishimoto

(compiled by Jennie Pfeiffer.)



LA MAMA

205 Faraday St, Carlton Vic 3053
Postal Address: PO Box 1009, Carlton, Vic 3053
Ph (03) 9347 6948 Fax: (03) 9349 2063

La Mama Melbourne is a tiny space (20' x 28' in total) with a large history. It has played a vital part in this country's cultural explorations over the past 29 years.

Its founder Betty Burstall wrote

"I got the idea for La Mama when we went to New York in the sixties. We were poor - but there were these places where you paid 50 cents for a cup of coffee and a performance. It was very immediate and exciting and when I came back to Melbourne I wanted to keep going, but there didn't exist such a place. So I talked around a bit, to a few actors and writers and directors sounding them out about doing their own stuff, Australian stuff... People showed interest so I went ahead and got the place. My gamble was whether there was enough material being written for which such an outlet is needed? Is there enough going on here in this city of 3 million people? There was, and there still is, in spite of the proliferation of theatres."¹

Len Radic continues the story

"It is a place where the new, the bizarre, the experimental, and the unconventional can find a home. It is a showcase for Australian writers, directors, and actors - but most of all writers. It is a place where all of them can experiment, at little or no cost to themselves.

This open-door policy means that over the years La Mama has played host to many works that cut across the major artforms. Improvisations, multi-media experiments and theatrical happenings have featured regularly in the theatre's bill of fare. The place has also been a home for poets, musicians, film-makers and folk singers. Some of those who set up tent at La Mama do so once and then disappear from sight. Others like Lloyd Jones, who has done 26 mixed-form productions there, come back year after year.

Of the playwrights, those with long-standing track records include Jack Hibberd, Barry Dickins, John Romeril, Frank Bren and Kris Hemensley. Others with an extended involvement with the place include Peter Mathers, Valerie Kirwan, Tes Lyssiotis, Colin Ryan and Ian Scott."²

And what of puppetry at La Mama? Explorations in this area have been as varied and experimental as in other art forms. In Tes Lyssiotis' **Cafe Misto** in 1986 they ranged from Ted Hopkins emerging through a trap door in a complete astronaut's rig-out to the 'smalls' of Michelle Spooner - puppetry on a tiny and delicate scale.



Liz Paterson in *The Old Woman at the Window*, 1980

¹ "La Mama: the story of a Theatre" McPhee Gribble 1988

² "Theatre at La Mama: 675 Reasons to Celebrate" The Age 29/7/92

La Mama puppetry history commenced on a grand scale in works such as **Mr Big, the Big Big Pig** (John Romeril 1969) which burst onto the streets and made the *La Mama Company* (later A.P.G.) a constant force in the Vietnam street moratoriums.

This style of work was refined, and emerged with subtlety and sophistication in the hands of Liz Paterson who worked extensively out of La Mama in the early 80's evolving her **Old Woman at the Window, Car Person, Three Masquerades, Haberdasher's Coat** and **Amongst Other Things**.

Puppetry has played a vital part in the continual cross-art form explorations at La Mama of artists such as the late Syd Clayton, James Claydon and Lloyd Jones. James made extensive use of a ventriloquist doll and a tiny papier maché "little man" in a number of his productions. Lloyd Jones has worked extensively with dummies and masks. And Syd in his **Brothers: The Tragic Life of Vincent Van Gough** (1988) used the Indonesian Wayang Kulit (shadow puppetry) techniques like a true "dalang".

In 1994 found-object animators ONE TOE (Kym Tonkin and Jenny Andersen), already well-known for their school show **BINI**, brought the delicate and sophisticated **These Foolish Things** to La Mama with a return season in 1995. The life these two breathe into a cup and saucer, or a string of pearls is a delight.

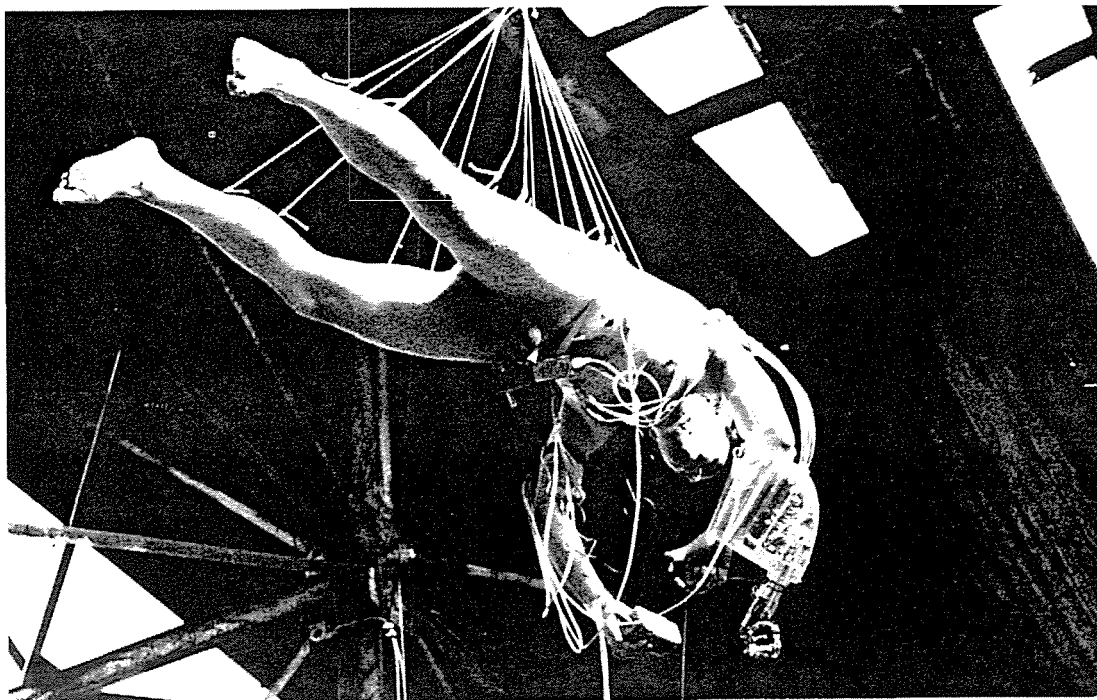
Then there is the most conceptually challenging puppeteer of all - Stellarc. Most famous for suspending himself puppet-like by fishing line and hooks from tall objects all over the world, at La Mama he worked on a smaller, yet no less exciting scale. Commencing in

Event for Obsolete Body where he worked on his third arm operated by electrodes attached to his pelvic muscles, he has moved on in the 90's in work such as **Interplay/Interplay: Event for Scanning Robot, Involuntary Arm and Third Hand** (1992). In this he not only operated his third hand and used a huge "robot" puppet, but he had his own arm muscles wired to electrodes and they thus performed weird disembodied marionette-like movements operated by an external techno-wiz-puppet master. Where to next one is forced to ask!

Well, next will be **Waiting** in early 1997, a delicate and innovative exploration in puppetry by Heather Monk working with director Ariette Taylor.

"Given the short shelf life of most small theatre companies, it is probably necessary to calculate their ages with the sort of leeway usually extended to dogs. Given that La Mama turns 25 this month, therefore, one can only shudder to think how old it must be in theatre years. Far from showing signs of decrepitude, or artistic arthritis, however, the little theatre on Carlton's Faraday Street, with more coats of paint than a politician has layers of skin is still thriving and inventively bustling. In reality, La Mama is probably more precious now than it ever has been. (It) is the only place where you can literally put on a show with no budget. It is a vital resource for the cash-strapped arts community"³

by Liz Jones, artistic director,
La Mama



EVENT FOR STRETCHED SKIN/ THIRD HAND
(THE LAST SUSPENSION) STELLARC

PHOTOGRAPHER- SIMON HUNTER

³ Fiona Scott-Norman, The Melbourne Times, 15/7/92

INTERNATIONAL PUPPET INSTITUTE, CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES

I am regularly sent information about puppetry courses in Charleville-Mézières, France. Unfortunately, the brochures often arrive 'between' magazines, so the application deadlines lapse before I can publish them. If you are interested in doing any of the courses the Institute offers, please let me know, and I'll send you the information directly, when I get it, rather than hoping it arrives in time for the magazine.

Just for your interest, the courses this year include:

The Workshop on Writing and the Art of the Puppet (July 11th-31st) - 'How to write ballets for objects, for human bodies, in terms of movements as well as words?'

Writing for a Gestural Theatre (August 4th-14th) - 'How to write with the body?'

How does the body on stage compose its own gestural writing?'

Some Ways of Writing/Workshop (August 5th-21st) - 'Some ways of writing ON the stage: to take the performance space as the Page for writing.'

SUMMER UNIVERSITY (July 8th-19th):

1) Bringing the Character into Play - Interpretation of a contemporary text.

2) Puppet-Character and Other Animated Forms (Text, space, performance)

3) Oral Traditions and the Contemporary Arts of the Puppet

In September - October, the Institute will host the **International Encounter for the Teaching of Arts**: 'At a level that is both European and more widely international, and with a multi-disciplinary approach, the Meeting hopes to be an opportunity for exchange and openings between all forms of artistic education: the plastic arts, audio-visual, dance, music, theatre, and puppetry.'

In October, **The Villa D'Aubilly** opens. This is a residential centre for students, academics and artists (writers, composers, musicians, painters, directors and puppet practitioners) who may benefit from the Institute's various creative spaces & workshops, which may benefit projects (to do with puppetry) at the experimental stage, or in-progress.

I also have an order form and membership form for the French puppetry magazine, **PUCK**. They are mostly in French, although some issues are reprinted in other languages. Membership gives you a 5% discount on issues, plus free postage. If you would like a copy of the form, please let me know. (Ed)

COLLABORATIVE CREATION IN THEATRE

In February this year Josef and Jakub Krofta led a production project with post-graduate students at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. The project involved 40 writers, directors, performers, puppeteers and designers, and resulted in 4 highly successful productions. The aim was to introduce people to DRAK's collaborative style of working, where actors, puppeteers and musicians appear together on stage, within a strong design concept.

The course directors are now holding interviews for a one year intensive practical course about collaborative creation in theatre. The school is looking for four highly skilled puppeteers who want to broaden their understanding of theatre making, to improve their performing skills, and to increase their versatility, and thus their opportunities for work in the profession at large. They will be working alongside similarly experienced practitioners of other theatre disciplines and also a range of tutors from the profession.

Anyone interested can sent for a prospectus &/or application form, from the following address or phone number:

Central School of Speech and Drama
Embassy Theatre, Eton Ave
London NW3 3HY
Ph: 0171 388 5768

The school also has a 3-year BA Theatre Studies course. For more information about this, call Frances Tolley on 0171 722 8183

REVIEWS

SHAPE UP SMELLY

Created and performed by
The Sydney Puppet Theatre at the
Puppet Cottage, The Rocks, Sydney, 12/4/96

The 50 waiting children stopped belting each other with the Puppet Cottage glove puppets and threw them at the assistant with the cane basket. This was the 12.30 performance of the Sydney Puppet Theatre's new single-hander, **Shape up Smelly**, and Sue Wallace entered to 'warm' the crowd.

First on was Smelly, a large latex puppet in clothes with marks on. He had the talking parts. Sue talked to Smelly as Sue, and Sue talked to Sue as Smelly. Her mouth

moved both times but there was no pretense at ventriloquism, so it worked fine. The audience watched Smelly. However I couldn't smell Smelly. I could only smell the kids around me. I'm still not convinced that he was smelly. Dirty yes. His clothes were washed off-stage, bubbles drifting over the playboard, after which I saw him in clean clothes. He was Dirty Got Clean.

The 25 minute performance was a showing of puppets. Of puppets, like their

young audience, trying to make sense of a malevolent world. A finger-ball puppet, which would have made Obratsov proud, fought against the puppeteer's constraints, followed by a finger-ball dog who took over to annoy it further. Then it took the upper hand over two wooden squares and a wooden cylinder, which moved magically around the play board to assemble itself with a wooden cone as a head, and elastic for sinews. Exit the finger-ball,. The wood pieces strove against gravity. Exit the wood pieces.

I was enchanted by the results of Steve Coupe's experimentation, making marionettes in perspex. Named Crystal, a naked perspex marionette was carried out in Sue's arms. As it came to life, stretched, danced and flew, the light glittered off the 3 - dimensionally shaped body parts. To the accompaniment of Steve's sparse musical composition, one child was heard to say "It's made of water!". Another perspex

SMELLY by Steve Coupe - latex head with moving mouth, eyes & nose. Foam body, arms, & legs; feet & hands made from wire, hot glue & latex.

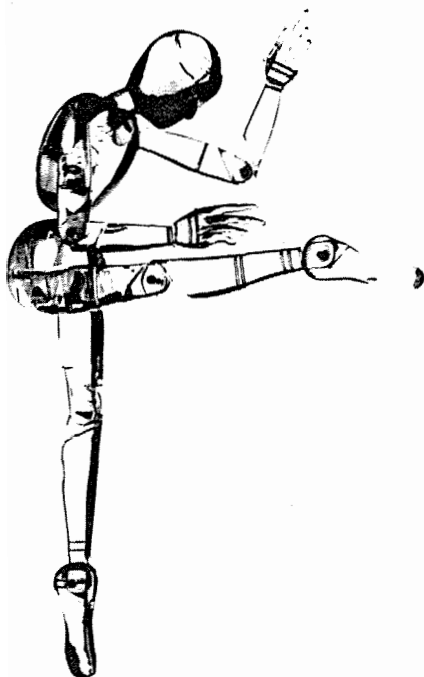


marionette, this time 2-dimensional, appeared from behind the shadow screen, a red heart-face, red circles for hands, red triangles for feet. I wanted it to tell me its entire story in that bright, round, confined space of the shadow screen, not to fade on the playboard.

The set was simple, quite beautiful and effective. A marionette podium stood in front of the playboard, both in red and black. The shadow screen was mounted on the stage-right end of the playboard and a small sparkly basket on the other. A tall blue curtain ran the width of the open booth area behind the black-clad puppeteer.

The four to seven year olds laughed. They know what it's like to negotiate a huge pole, to have the floor come up to meet them and to have things roll over them. I enjoyed the silence between the sounds and the emphasis on well-controlled movement. Every movement necessary. But I would also like to know more about Smelly.

Peter Grasshopper



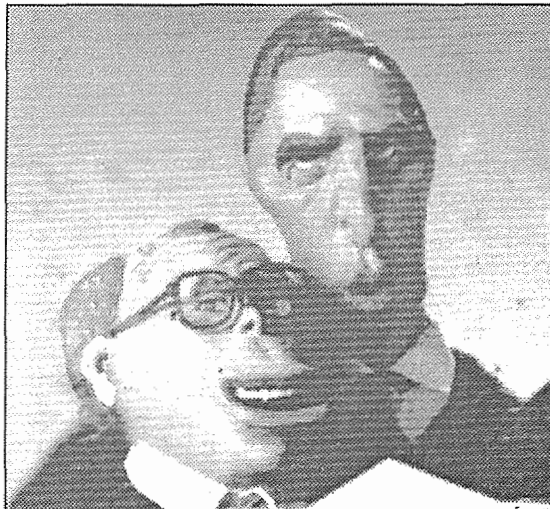
CRYSTAL - marionette constructed in laminated perspex with brass bolts for joints. Based on a template design published by Waldo Lanchester in *Hand Puppets and String Puppets* (Dryad Press, 1937) Control is an adaptation of a design by Harry Tozer published in his recent *The Marionettes of Barcelona*.

THE EXHIBITION WE HAD TO HAVE

Review of "The Rubbery Years"

Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney.

Till 10 March 96



There is plenty to enjoy in this exhibition of puppets and related material from TV's "Rubbery Figures", the short, sharp satirical sketches that appeared on ABC TV's "National" and Seven's "Fast Forward" during the 80's.

I should say at the outset that I worked as a puppeteer for the Rubbery Outfit on occasion, and therefore one of my particular pleasures in viewing this exhibition was the sight of my name in the credits. It brought happy memories and a warm glow to a wet afternoon.

I also enjoyed my reunion with John Howard. I've had my hand up John more times than I care to mention, and there he was, large as - well considerably smaller than - life. His lips are still difficult to grip properly, so that his utterances remain as vague and misguided as ever.

All our political heroes and villains of the last decade are here. Paul Keating's in drag as Placido Domingo. Alan Bond is up to his neck in money spewing from an automatic teller. Maggie Thatcher's head looms large to promote the Poll Tax while a rat named POVERTY runs through her lacquered bouffant.

Two shelves of preserving jars hold the caricature heads of various polities and their mates - a Pickled John Elliott is one - looking like the larder of some mad forensic kitchen in the bowels of Parliament House.

A TV runs continuous tapes of the best Rubbery sketches, and continuous too are the chuckles that burst from those viewing.

The walls are lined with the pick of Nicholson's political cartoons for the Melbourne Age. And this brings me back to the credits. Peter Nicholson - artist, cartoonist and director - is the creator and mastermind of Rubbery Figures. This exhibition is a testimony to Peter's talent, acuity and wit. We who gave him a hand salute him.

Maeve Vella.

Reprinted from Williams Valley Free Press,
February 13, 1996

Little MOMENTS

by Helen Lunn

Director: Noriko Nishimoto

Cast: Liss Gabb & Craig Gillespie

Set, puppets & costume designs: Rob Matson

Puppet realisation: Rob Matson, Mary Sutherland, Ingrid Maganov

Set construction: Rob Matson, Misha Long

Music: Peter Mummé

This latest offering from Polyglot Puppet Theatre is the first collaboration between Helen Lunn and Noriko Nishimoto, both recognised for their expertise in creating works for that most difficult of audiences, Very Small Children. And the performance I saw at Ascot Showgrounds Day Nursery was for very small children indeed! I shared the performers' apprehension as the tiniest of toddlers were herded in and deposited on the floor, but our fears turned out to be groundless.

Whatever reservations an adult might have about this show, with its episodic and gently undulating structure, the audience was held by the show from beginning to end. *Little Moments* belongs in the "Day in the Life" genre. The life in question is that of Little Bloke, a seven-year-old boy with a Mum, Dad, a best-friend raggedy doll called Friendly, and an imagination populated by shadows, stars, everyday objects and a bully. The show explores the moments in his life: scary moments, happy moments, painful moments, and just plain old domestic moments of eating and sleeping.

It is this detailing of the everyday and the familiar that makes the show seem insubstantial for us mere adults, yet so accessible for small kids. They are watching a mirror of their own lives, and there is no complicated plot to get in the way. They share with glee as Mum plays a joke on Little Bloke; and they murmur knowingly when Little Bloke is sent to

his room for being naughty - "time out".

The performers appear as both actors and puppeteers, sharing the performance of Little Bloke and also playing Little Bloke's Mum and Dad, and the characters of his imagination. Liss Gabb as Mum is particularly good, skipping effortlessly along that fine line which allows a performer to share her thoughts with the audience without talking down to them. Craig Gillespie plays both Dad and the bully, separating the characters very successfully once Dad is given the opportunity to show his nurturing side.

Polyglot is onto another winner

The puppetry performances are also very good, with some tricky moments (handovers, etc) handled with great skill. The character of Little Bloke is beautifully drawn, and stays consistent regardless of who is in charge at the time. But there are occasions, particularly in moments of great physical excitement, where the manipulation becomes a little woolly, which is more than likely a result of the very short (three weeks) rehearsal period. I must say, though, that the manipulation is still better than most I've seen for a long time.

Rob Matson's set design is wonderful; not just a place for the action to happen, but a fundamental part of the action. A blue ringed planet turns out to be

Little Bloke's bedroom; the set itself becomes a tree for Little Bloke to climb. His designs for the puppets, too, are a delight. Little Bloke is reminiscent of the old wooden marionettes, with a solid face and a shock of hair. It's a brave decision, not to put a moving mouth on a talking puppet, but in this case it fits in with the simple, clean directorial lines of the show.

And I have to mention how wonderful it is to see puppeteers dressed like normal people! Instead of black pyjamas or nauseatingly coloured overalls, the performers were dressed in real, purchased, ordinary street clothes. - Mum had "got the look"!

Like most shows on their first outing, there are still areas of improvement to be made with this piece. The internal logic of the show is inconsistent - Little Bloke climbs a tree and falls from a great height with nothing more than an ouch; a few minutes later, he falls again and breaks his leg. At times the direction seems unsure of the point it's trying to make - Mum rescues Little Bloke from the bully by tickling the bully to make him laugh; then she finishes the bully off by donging him on the head.

But these problems are eminently fixable, and the show is fundamentally very good. Polyglot is onto another winner, and this should stay in the company's repertoire for many years to come.

Janet Dalglish

See front page for photo

WOYZECK ON THE HIGHVELD

by Handspring Puppet Company
at the Adelaide Festival, March 1996

Georg Büchner's **Woyzeck** is a collection of fragments from an unfinished play. The sketchy plot is tragic and disturbing, with the main character, Woyzeck, being caught in a desperate trap of poverty and oppression. It seemed like an interesting starting point for a play set in South Africa, and I went to this production at the Adelaide Festival with high hopes.

At times these expectations were realised - and at times they weren't. The set was a heavy, dark structure which seemed fitting for the play's brooding atmosphere. It consisted of two main play boards created by a large table downstage and a wall upstage. Neither structure fully hid the puppeteers who sometimes doubled as actors or made their presence as puppeteers part of the action. This made me wonder why they were there at all. They restricted movement to parallel lines across the stage and made the puppet/puppeteer conventions inconsistent and muddy. As the play was very wordy, there were long passages of puppets standing still and talking, something which I think humans do better.

That said, the manipulation was very fine, with intense focus and excellent duo work. Interestingly, the puppeteer on the left arm of the hand-rod puppet rather than the person manipulating the head, did the character's voice.

The puppets were very striking carved wood figures (designed by Adrian Kohler and William Kentridge), mainly manipulated by hand-rod actions. Each puppet had a distinctive movement which gave them an immediate and strong characterization. eg: Woyzeck's rival had a wonderfully charismatic swing to his broad

shoulders. However, the puppets' movements seemed to be restricted by both the set and the wordiness of the script, so that in the end the characters lacked depth.

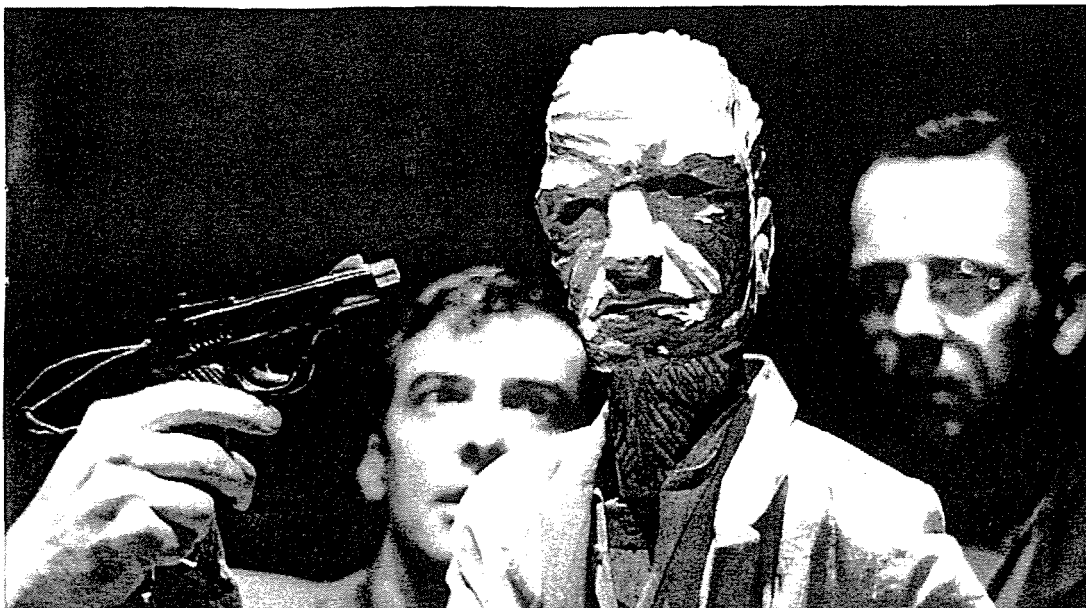
The best part of **Woyzeck on the Highveld** was undoubtedly the charcoal animation films by William Kentridge, the director. A video screen loomed at the centre rear of the stage, providing both a changing backdrop to and commentary on the action. The most memorable scene had Woyzeck setting a table downstage, while the screen showed his psychological state. As he furiously wiped the table, the screen filled with images of blood, confusion and violence. This moment highlighted how the original play's essence could be used to create a powerful, multi-layered visual image without resorting to long speeches.

There was no direct interaction between the puppets and the film except where the figures accidentally cast a shadow on the screen. It may have been interesting if this had been developed further, as it strongly suggested to me a sense of the characters' dislocation from the 'real world'.

The sound was excellent throughout, creating a tense atmosphere with a mixture of pre-recorded effects and lyrical accordion music by Alfred Makgalemele and Isaac van Graan.

Woyzeck on the Highveld was an interesting attempt to combine puppetry and animation and in its most abstract moments it was largely successful. Unfortunately, too much reverence was given to the words of a play which lacks a clear dramatic structure, at the expense of the visual content and action.

Jenny Andersen



HANDSPRING PUPPET COMPANY

HISTORY

THE ROYAL MARIONETTES

The word "marionette" for a puppet operated from above with strings did not properly enter the English language until 1852, when the Royal Marionette Theatre opened in London in January of that year. The puppeteer responsible was an Italian, Signor Bragaldi (or Brigaldi) who had earlier presented a season of Royal Marionettes in New York, in 1837-8.

Other Royal Marionette companies followed. The first such company to appear in Australia was that of Henry Beaufoy Merlin in Sydney in 1853, dealt with in an earlier article.

In 1875 McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes came to Australia from the U.S.A. In Paul McPharlin's book *The Puppet Theatre in America* a whole chapter is devoted to 'The Odyssey of the Royal Marionettes'. This show had its origins in Bullock's Royal Marionettes which had appeared in London in 1872. In 1873 William Bullock entered into an agreement with the Americans John McDonough and Hartley Earnshaw who were to act as managers for a tour of a second company in America beginning that September. But early in 1874, while Bullock's original company was performing at the Crystal Palace in London, disagreement between an agent Bullock had appointed to represent him in the U.S. and the American entrepreneurs resulted in

some tangled litigation. Bullock's agent was granted custody of the puppets but McDonough and Earnshaw severed their connection with Bullock and formed another company to do an almost identical show!

That separation happened in Pennsylvania, and some of the puppeteers that Bullock had originally engaged advertised their intention to shift allegiance to McDonough and Earnshaw. They included Mr and Mrs Thomas Holden, Mr and Mrs Charles Webb, and Miss Elizabeth Hughes. The Holdens left the company before the Australian tour, and Thomas Holden went on to become one of England's most celebrated marionettists, winning special fame in France.

The company arrived from the U.S.A. in Sydney in 1875. There were ten of them: McDonough and Earnshaw (managers), Mr and Mrs Webb, Miss Hughes, Mr and Mrs Lawson, Mr Trotter, Mr Robinson and Mr Warner. The show they brought was pretty much the same as Bullock's original show. In fact, they even claimed to have been the very company that had performed at the Crystal Palace! The performance was in three parts: A Negro Minstrel Show, Fantoccini (i.e. traditional marionette variety acts), and the pantomime of "Little Red Riding Hood", complete with a harlequinade at the end in keeping with the pantomime tradition of the time. Halfway through a

season there were some changes in the show, and "Babes in the Wood" was added, with its closing tableau showing the "Ascension of the Children". A very detailed program, printed in Melbourne, survives in the La Trobe Library, and in addition to words for the minstrel songs it gives the full, somewhat convoluted, text of the pantomime. Although there are contemporary allusions, none directly relate to Australia.

Press reviews were enthusiastic. Audiences sometimes included members of parliament and in New Zealand there was a vice-regal performance. Most shows were given to adults but matinees were given to allow children to attend. The tour began in May, 1875 in Sydney and continued to Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat, Castlemaine, Bendigo, Melbourne again, Hobart and Launceston, where the last show was given in January, 1876. The company then sailed via Melbourne to New Zealand. Shows were given in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland but when the company set sail for San Francisco from Auckland in June, 1876 three of the original group which had arrived over a year earlier were not on board. One was Charles Trotter, who sailed southwards from Auckland twelve days later, on his way to join Mr and Mrs Webb in Australia.

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Webbs performed the kind of items that formed the "fantoccini" of the larger show.

Before McDonough and Earnshaw's troupe had finished their N.Z. tour, the Webbs had returned to Australia with Smith's variety company. This is where Trotter was to join them and where they would be based until the Webbs died. With the help of John Phillips in London I have recently been able to fill in a major gap in their touring so that we now know that they performed in England as the "Australian and Indian Royal Marionettes". The story of Webb's or Webb and Trotter's Royal Marionettes will be told in a later article.

Richard Bradshaw



99 Bent St
Northcote
Vic 3070

(03) 9482 3292

ONE TOE (Jenny Andersen & Kym Tonkin) have received funding from the Australia Council to take their show **BIN!** to the Third International Puppet Festival Pakistan in October this year.

DUCK & CO with ONE TOE will be having a (re)launch of **There's a Moon in my Room** by Peta Murray, Liss Gabb and Denise Rundle, at Polyglot Puppet Theatre (27A Cromwell Rd, South Yarra) on Sunday, 16th June at 3 pm. Please come along!

We're also performing the show at Scienceworks over most of the July school holidays.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES for a name for the UNIMA magazine. Remember, the winner gets a year's free membership! Send your suggestions to The Editor (address on the front cover).

PETER HARTLAND of HARTLAND MARIONETTES has published three books: - on his life running a marionette theatre company; on plays for the puppet theatre; and on marionette and rod puppet construction.

Well known in most of the mainland states of Australia and on television during the 60's and 70's, Peter pioneered the art of political satire in adult cabaret through the use of marionettes of famous people and politicians. As a retired senior master of the Art and 'Adviser in Puppetry' to the Education Dept of W.A., he has written the following books:

Life Among the Little People (\$12.50)

How I Make Proper Marionettes (\$7)

How to Write Your Own Puppet Plays (\$8.50)

Peter Hartland on Rod Puppets - Detailed worksheets (\$6)

For enquiries and order forms, Ph: (09) 339 3515

