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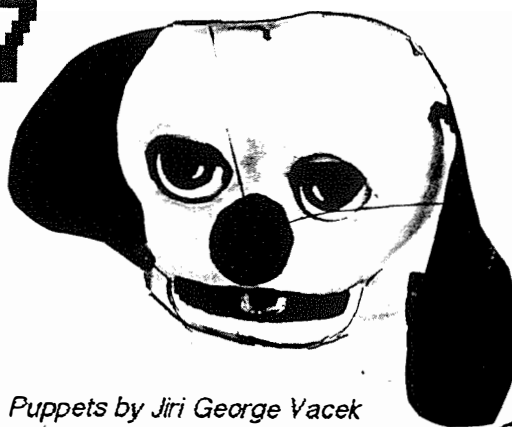
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UNIMA AUSTRALIA

June 1997

UNIMA CENTRE AUSTRALIA
INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION



Puppets by Jiri George Vacek



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929 MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

EDITORIAL

This editorial is really an advertisement. Over the past few months I have decided to stop editing this magazine, so there is an opportunity available for someone to take over as of the September issue.

Producing this magazine has been enormously rewarding. I have learned a lot about the puppetry world, and I hope that it has helped other puppeteers to find out about each other too. I've also had a steep learning curve regarding desktop publishing - I couldn't even turn on a computer when I started! In many ways I would like to continue, but I want to put more time into my own theatre and music work.

I hope that someone out there comes forward to take over this position, so the magazine can keep up the momentum it's gained over the past 4 years or so. You need to have computer equipment and if it can be linked up to a scanner, all the better. I'm happy to discuss the

technical details of how I've been doing it with anyone who'd like more detailed information, and we could do a joint issue in September to get you started. There is also always lots of support from Jennie Pfeiffer and Richard Hart, and I will help in whatever way I can. If no-one comes forward, though, there will not be a September issue.

Since I began this job more and more "copy" arrives unsolicited, and there are several regular reviewers you can call on around the country. This alleviates a lot of work at the editing end, as there is less "coaxing" to do now to get articles. Although the work is unpaid, your expenses are reimbursed, and there are many valuable non-monetary gains to be had. You receive lots of information from overseas and all over Australia, and you get to know many puppeteers personally. Please consider taking it on - it is worth it.

Jenny Andersen

**The deadline for the September issue
is August 24th**

Send articles to Jenny Andersen (address on cover).

NEW MEMBERS

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9 Victoria Ave
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PRESIDENT'S PROSE

Thankyou for your vote of confidence in electing me President.

I found out during the very emotional party/wake of the Rock's Puppet Cottage - a fitting occasion for Dennis to tell me since I not only already had a glass of champagne in hand, I was also surrounded by puppeteers. It is an honour to be allowed to play an active role within this very special international organisation.

In the last few months I have been able to personally contact puppeteers in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania to talk about puppetry in general and UNIMA issues in particular. I have also met with the NSW Ministry for the Arts in an effort to get some state support for communication equipment (computer and stuff) - no luck there. The computer issue is like a can of worms they are afraid to open knowing the demand there

will be for the bait. Still, there are murmurings from within the membership that extra personal contributions may boost our operating account enough to buy some equipment.

Research is being done to see if investing in new equipment will actually make the editor's job more efficient.

I have had meetings about the scholarship fund and about an internet site for UNIMA Australia. Jennifer Davidson and I met for dinner and had a passing-on ceremony which, for the uninitiated, involved large amounts of paper.

Puppetry, like any art form, is sometimes a struggle and sometimes a real joy. I wish you all the best in your quest for excellence and encourage you to keep communicating generously and honestly.

Sue Wallace

from p. 10

OTHER FESTIVAL INFORMATION

For lists of festivals from the German theatre magazine *Das Andere Theater*, or for a list of Japanese Puppet Festivals (which is, however, rather hard to follow) contact Jenny Andersen.

CANADIAN DIRECTORY OF PERFORMING ARTS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

This publication has information on festivals, venues, agents, funding agencies, producers, markets, and touring. It is published by the Canadian Institute for the Arts for Young Audiences, who also present the Vancouver International Children's Festival.

The publication costs \$65 (Canadian) and is in English in French. For a copy of the order form contact Jenny Andersen.

PAKISTAN FESTIVALS

The Rafi Peer Workshop is inviting submissions for the 2nd International Theatre and Dance Festival (to be held in November 1997) and the 4th International Puppet Festival (to be held in October 1998). Both festivals will take place in Lahore, Pakistan. The selection criteria are broad, to encourage a variety of forms and content, although the stated theme of the Theatre and Dance Festival is "Freedom and Independence". The organisers provide all local hospitality costs. For details, contact Jenny Andersen.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

A recent 13 000 km ten-week tour gave me ample opportunity to catch up with some puppeteers along the way. In Brisbane I attended an "Artists in Education Forum" organised by the Queensland Arts Council where I finally got to meet marionettist Norman Berg. Now retired, Norman and his wife Nancye began their careers as ballroom dancers. On one of their overseas tours they shared the bill with the Walton and O'Rourke Puppets, the puppets seen in the movie "Lili". Inspired by them, Norman and Nancye took up Puppetry. They went on to tour most of Australia with school shows (47 tours for the Queensland Arts Council alone) but TV work in Japan has made them far better known there than in Australia.

Also at the Forum I caught up with David Poulton. Another globetrotter, David now has three units on the road, employing nine puppeteers and endeavoring to give them at least 40 weeks of work per year. For this year he's lined up 120 weeks of touring, a third of which is overseas - Canada, Taiwan and New Zealand.

There then followed a period of Outback Queensland touring where I encountered four swollen creeks but no puppeteers.

Once in Hobart, I caught up with (and sponged off) the Gypsy Smithes. Though not 'settled', Basil and Janet are infatuated with their first granddaughter so they are staying put - except for weekends when they head off to perform at festivals. They introduced me to marionettist Tony Le Fèvre who in turn showed me some of the puppets created by the late Kingley Fairweather who worked for the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre.

I caught up with our ex-president Jenny Davidson, and I was privileged to spent an afternoon under the tutelage of Czech-born puppeteer and director Jindra Rosendorf, formerly of DRAK Puppet Theatre.

A cancellation opened the possibility of me catching a Terrapin Puppet Theatre school show but they had set aside first term for rehearsals. Luckily my visit coincided with their Puppet Picnic so I took my Flea Circus along and joined in the fun. The Puppet Picnic is an

annual event, well publicised and very well attended.

In Canberra at the National Folk Festival I ran into Skylark's Cathy Mann and Peter Wilson. Peter had just recieved the prestigious Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award. Skylark set off for a European tour in May.

Back in Melbourne, (Melbourne always comes at the end of my tours - I'm coming to hate the place) I caught up with most of our Executive Committee and got to see Richard Hart's stunning production, "Dreamer". I had hoped to meet some puppeteers whose names I know but whom I've never met, but it was not to be; everyone was so busy. (But it's always heartening to hear that puppeteers are busy.)

Back home at last and there were quite a few inquiries about UNIMA and puppetry in general. The Executive is currently looking at a proposal from NZ UNIMA regarding a merger of puppetry information. We are also setting up a UNIMA Australia web site on the Internet. Many thanks to Mary and Joseph Sutherland for their help and initiative.

So that's where we are at the moment. I've been home for two whole weeks already so it's time to load a different set of books and go off touring again.

Dennis.

SIDNEY MYER PERFORMING ARTS AWARD

Artistic Director of Company Skylark, Peter Wilson was recently awarded the 1997 Sidney Myer Fund Individual Award for 25 years contribution to performing arts and particularly puppetry. The \$25 000 award is one of the most prestigious awards in Australia, recognising the highest level of achievement and commitment by artists within their chosen fields. Peter is the first puppeteer to have been awarded the prize. Congratulations Peter, and may you continue your wonderful work!

NATIONAL NEWS

CAROUSELLE PUPPET THEATRE

The Giant

Space Theatre April 1-5, 1997

Adelaide's Take Over '97, The Australian Festival for Young People, brought South Australian audiences a feast of puppetry and physical theatre. Carouselle presented its second international collaboration as part of AFYP, performing "The Giant" at the Space Theatre. Renowned Polish director Piotr Tomaszuk guest directed this Australian version of his landmark production for Carouselle and it was his first experience directing outside Poland.

The magic of "The Giant" lies in the imaginary world created by three performers interacting with a large hand-sculpted wooden giant, a small wooden puppet girl and set elements

including a miniature forest and city. Young audiences revelled in the humour of the work, enjoyed the stunning visual imagery and were inspired to participate in the action. More than one person was heard singing the giant's infectious 'Yummy' song as they left the theatre!

During the festival Carouselle members met with other puppeteers including Annette Downs from Terrapin, Peter Wilson from Skylark and shadow puppeteer Richard Bradshaw. Also in Adelaide for the festival were Spare Parts from Western Australia and I Wayan Wija from Indonesia. One of the frustrations of performing in such a large festival is that everyone tends to be preoccupied with their own performances and it is not always easy to meet or to see each others' work. Perhaps next festival Carouselle might help to organise a gathering of puppeteers as part of the official programme!

Phil Callaghan (administrator of Carouselle)

Below: "The Giant" by Carouselle Puppet Theatre



NSW NEWS

The NSW Department of School Education has instituted changes affecting all Theatre in Education (TIE) performers. The Department has cut funding to their Performing Arts Unit. This Unit is responsible for the process of authorising TIE productions to perform in NSW schools.

The Performing Art Unit is now required to raise its own funding. This will come from a registration fee imposed on all performers - now known as "Outside Providers".

At a meeting late last year performers raised many objections and concerns about this change; what are the benefits for the performers? Performers want more input to the process if they are to foot the bill for the Unit. The Department, for example, publishes an expensive, glossy booklet listing all authorised shows and posts them out to headmasters at all schools. But hardly any teachers ever get to see it.

The question was asked, would all "outside providers" pay fees to maintain their respective parts of the Department? Would sporting goods suppliers help pay for the Sports Department? How about stationers and caterer? I have written to John Aquilina, NSW Education Minister, asking these questions but have received no reply.

One of the points made at the meeting was that performers were there to be informed of the change - they were not being consulted. The fee seems to fly in the face of the Department's stated commitment "to developing children's appreciation and enjoyment of the arts in all its forms as part of their education" It acknowledges that opportunities for experience of live performing arts can be provided only by performers practicing their craft at a high level of educational and artistic competence."

The \$15 application fee and \$180 registration fee came into effect in March. The protest against it has put the Department on their mettle and there have been some reforms of the bureaucratic silliness. Approvals now last two years instead of one. The three year approvals for Accredited Performers (this category has apparently disappeared) were in effect only for two years because the current year was included regardless of whether or not you were already authorised for that year. I had a new show authorised in late November last

year. 1996 was counted as the first year of authorisation despite the fact that there were less than 4 weeks of school left in 1996.

There is always the fear of some sort of vague "percentage of educational content" being imposed. There is also talk of more stringent adherence to authorising only the best performers. This has often been said over the years. With so many Approval Committees it is hard to standardise the process. I did just hear of a Chairperson requiring a company to rethink their production and come back twice to re-audition. So some good may come of all this. It will be easy enough to monitor. Simply watch who appears on the next list of authorised performers.

Dennis Murphy

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SYDNEY PUPPET THEATRE NEWS

Our show **Oh Rats!** has been invited to an International Festival of Puppetry in Mexico City in July/August. This came about from being seen at a regional festival in Sarospatak in Hungary last year. Since we will fly Japan Airlines, we are also negotiating performances in Japan.

The end of the Puppet Cottage meant a great change in our working life. We have been performing 2 theatre-in-education shows (produced by Greg Howard of School Performance Tours) that go out under the Greenpeace banner; one for high schools about global warming and the other for primary schools about the current fishing crises of the blue fin tuna and the consequences on the great wandering albatross. The high school show has also been invited to regional environmental festivals in NSW.

Concurrently, one of our marionette shows has been playing at Australia's Wonderland and it has been a privilege to be able to provide work for other puppeteers.

Sue Wallace

COMPANY SKYLARK

WAKE BABY ON TOUR

Following its very successful national tour of *Wake Baby*, Company Skylark is about to embark on an international tour of the show.

Wake Baby will be performed in Toronto (Milk International Children's Festival of the Arts), Lyon (Biennale Théâtre Jeunes Publics) and Belgium (Showcase Season, De Kopergieterij Theatre) with the help of the Australia Council's Advocacy and Audience Development Unit. The **4th Marché International du Théâtre Jeunes Publics** is an international arts marketplace held during the Lyon Biennale. Skylark hopes that their presence will help to secure future dates in Europe. *Wake Baby* is already scheduled to perform in Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium and hopefully France later in 1997.



Above: Sofia Gibson as Orfe in *Wake Baby*

Next year Skylark will embark upon a four month tour to every state of Australia.

Wake Baby has received excellent reviews throughout Australia, praising the originality of the script, the puppetry direction and execution, and the acrobatic performing skills of Sofia Gibson, who plays Orfe in the show. (See the UNIMA Magazine review of *Wake Baby* on p.14 of this issue.)

THE RINKY DINK CIRCUS

1984 - 1996

By Dennis Murphy

On 7th December 1996 we set up for the last performance of THE RINKY DINK CIRCUS.

We had decided three years ago to drop it from our repertoire but bookings for it were still coming in so we decided to wait and let it have a natural death.

We devised the show after returning from overseas in 1983. We based its look on fairground art with some contemporary touches. We had to choose between two then-current rages; breakdancing or Boy George. Luckily we chose the former, which aged well; the Boy soon disappeared. We opened at the 1984 Singleton Agricultural show. Over the circus' twelve year life span the Singleton people invited us back six times so it was a portentous opening. It toured to festivals and agricultural shows and was seen in over forty NSW country towns.

But as we set up for the final performance, it was a thunderstorm that was portentous. A huge black cloud was looming. We started setting up on the ground in front of the main stage. We came early as there was a full afternoon's entertainment on and we wanted to be in place before

the crowds gathered.

As the sky grew darker, "The Simpsons" came onstage. These were character costumes with the ubiquitous half-wit with a mike. (Never trust anyone who smiles with their mouth open.) The kids rushed up to the stage and we scrambled to pull our equipment back out of the way. Being pinned in there left us with plenty of time for reflection on the fairground puppeteer's lot in life.

When 'Big and Loud' is all the rage, 'Talented and Subtle' is irrelevant.

Looking at our show I realised that if we were devising this now, it would be a lot different. Back in 1983 we expected to have to spend forty minutes setting up and to make nine trips to carry it all in. We certainly wouldn't do that now, nor would we produce such a large show. Puppets are just too small to compete with big stage shows.

Scale in puppetry is always over the heads of sound technicians and sales people. They will always try to hook you up to a system which would give you sound that would be seven or eight

times bigger than your show.

As the storm got closer, I resolved that while I wanted to keep up the fairground puppetry tradition, I would stick to our smaller, more versatile productions and smaller, more intimate audiences. Yes, intimacy is possible on the fairground. With stage presence and breaking frame (having puppets that relate directly to the audience) you can do a lot; even outdoors in the blazing sun.

Onstage the costume characters pranced about. They only had to bring the costumes. They walked on and used the festival's sound gear while we lugged our own sound gear and can never set up on the main stage because we need too much time for setting up and tearing down. While the costume show was totally artless, it went down big with the kids and I began wondering why we puppeteers bother. When 'Big and Loud' is all the rage, 'Talented and Subtle' is irrelevant.

The expected storm finally hit and the crowd dispersed enough so that we could carry our stage to a sheltered area to await the announcement that the festival was cancelled. It was an ignominious ending for THE RINKY DINK CIRCUS.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY INSTITUTE, CHARLEVILLE - MEZIERES

Ed: The deadlines for the following courses had all expired by the time this information got to me, but I have included it to give you an idea of the type of training available at Charleville. If you would like to get the information earlier, the best thing to do would be to contact the Institute yourself. It is easier to get a response if you write in French. Course fees range from 500 FF - 4500FF. For a copy of this last brochure, contact me, Jenny Andersen.

Institute International de la Marionette (Director Margareta Niculescu)
7, place Winston Churchill - 08000 Charleville - Mézières, France.
Ph: 03 24 33 72 50 Fax: 0324 33 72 69
e-mail: inst.marionnette@ardennes.com

COURSES

Voice/Movement Parallel and combined workshops of voice and movement, to meld these two disciplines which are so often treated as being mutually exclusive. Workshop leaders are Claire Heggen from Théâtre du Mouvement (dance/mime/gestural/visual theatre) and Martine Viarde, a singer and actress who has worked with composers such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Georges Aperghis

The Poetics of Space A scenography workshop with Josef Svoboda, "master of controlled techniques" such as the "poly-screen". This highly technical week focuses on lighting, reflection, creating images etc. and requires the students to plan 5 designs before the class commences.

The following week is with Leszek Madzik, a Polish director and scenographer who uses no words, giving "a major part to the human, being, the presence (or absence) of which he reveals by means of masks, mannequins, shadows and a few objects..."

The Art of Bunraku Three 2-day courses to be taken separately or together, including and overview of traditional and contemporary Japanese puppet theatre, and analysis of Bunraku stories, characters and techniques, and the traditional Bunraku training method.

1997 PUPPETEERS of AMERICA Inc. NATIONAL FESTIVAL

If you are travelling to America in July/August this year, you would do well to visit The Puppeteers of America National Festival. It will be held at the University of Toledo, Toledo Ohio, from July 27 to August 2, 1997 and is billed as "A Kaleidoscope of Puppetry".

It certainly is just that, with performances, exhibitions, a puppet and book exchange, and a terrific workshop programme. There are classes for beginners through to experienced professionals, in all fields - from therapeutic uses of puppetry to technical theatre adapted for puppetry.

One very innovative scheme is the "Mentor Program" where a young or inexperienced puppeteer is teamed up with an experienced festival attendee of similar interests, aiming at enhancing the festival for both of them.

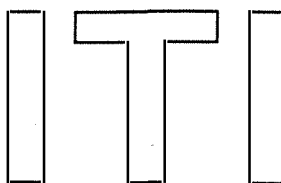
If you would like a copy of the very comprehensive festival programme (including registration forms and accommodation suggestions), please contact Jenny Andersen (address and phone number on the cover of this magazine).

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INTERNATIONAL PUPPET WEEK, QUEBEC, CANADA

"La Semaine Mondiale de la Marionnette" is a biennial festival held in Québec, Canada. It will be held next in 1998 (July 3rd - 12th). Applications for selection in the performance programme have already closed, but the festival maintains an "information bank" on puppet companies, so it might be worth while filling in their questionnaire anyway. They ask for a list of your overseas performance engagements so that, if possible, they can see your show. They have even sent a list of criteria by which each show is rated (although it is in French) so you can see if yours would fit the bill.

If you would like a copy of the application form, or the festival's address, please contact Jenny Andersen.



INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE (AUSTRALIAN CENTRE)

4/245 Chalmers Street, REDFERN NSW 2016, AUSTRALIA

Tel: 61 (0)2 9319 0718 Fax: 61 (0)2 9698 3557 Email: artslink@magna.com.au

Life Skilling for Artists, Townsville, QLD: a seminar to be held in Aug. by the QLD Artswokers Alliance.

Artrage, 21 Sp - 12 Oct, Perth WA: an annual festival of the new and innovative arts is open to all artists & includes work in any artform. Artrage offers a high level of assistance to artists, including provision of venues, assistance with publicity & administrative participation. Some international participation is anticipated.

Bellingen Global Carnival, Oct, Bellingen, NSW: is calling for expressions of interest. The planned focus is stage & street theatre by small & innovative companies & they wish to showcase some of the more bizarre & unusual works which are being developed by Australian performance artists.

Melbourne Fringe, 28 Sep-19 Oct, Melbourne, Vic: annual open access festival of Victoria's independent and innovative artists. The festival provides umbrella promotion & extensive advice on every aspect of producing a successful Fringe Festival event.

International Meeting of Animation Theatre, 2-15 Sep, Ascona, Switzerland: will offer shows & workshops for amateur and professional puppeteers which will lead to a final collective performance. The theme is "Heritage & Tradition". The organisers, Theatre Antonin Artaud are seeking expressions of interest from Australian puppeteers wishing to participate.

Next Wave festival, 15-31 May, 1998, Melbourne, Vic.: Biennial festival for young people is seeking proposals from artists, curators & organisations.

Arts Council of NSW: will include details & a photo in their data base of performers and artists wishing to give workshops in their chosen field. The information is made available to local arts councils and each edition of Country Exchange (the Council's newsletter) will feature the work of one performer or artist. This is a FREE service.

97-98 Bunkacho Fellowship: a study opportunity offered by the ITI (Japan) to a person wishing to undertake a training programme in Japan for 3-10 months. Applications through ITI Australia.

Artists Regional Exchange: is a national organisation supporting exchanges between Australian, SE Asian & NZ artists. Artists are paid travel, living & some material costs.

Uchimara Prize, Japan: is an annual prize awarded by the Japanese ITI centre, to stimulate or encourage initiatives taken by a group or artist outside Japan, leading to an action or project featuring relations with Japanese theatre. The prize is worth 500 000 yen. Deadline 30/6/97.

Professional Development Grants: artsACT offers assistance for ACT artists to attend a conference, seminar or course of specific value to their career.

Behind the Scenes: a new company established by Neil Wilson, Chris Clark, Peter de Bock and Jonah Jones to provide specialist freight forwarding & transport services for the performing arts & film industries. The company has established alliances with companies in Singapore, Los Angeles, Wellington & London.

Linda Martin is the new general manager of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre in Perth.

Grantseeker Workshops: the Aust. Assoc. of Philanthropy offers workshops on how to approach Trusts & Foundations; how to be an effective grantseeker & secure funds for your work. A full programme of dates is available.

Canberra Festival, ACT: is seeking expressions of interest and proposals for productions that may be suitable for the March 1998 programme.

Christchurch Arts Festival, 17 July-3 August, NZ: Biennial festival including all artforms.

Festival of Contemporary Arts, 9-25 Oct, Canberra, ACT: Expressions of interest sought.

Visions 98, 23 Oct-2 Dec, Brighton, UK: Biennial festival of International Animated Theatre. Expressions of interest sought.

The Arts Office: ex-Arts Queensland has programmes of assistance available. Closing date for 1998 projects 20 June 1997.

The School of Puppetry, Toronto, Canada: is a training centre run by 4 puppet companies. It offers short courses and workshops on many styles of performance and building.

Time Based Events, London, UK: specialise in visual & performance theatre & are looking for artists with special skills for openings, parties and special events. Also performers who speak languages other than English

Contact ITI for details on any of the above.

cont/... p. 3

INTRODUCING...

JIRI GEORGE VACEK

My name is Jiri George Vacek. I have been married for twenty one years and have three children. I was born in 1950 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. Both my parents were working as actors in the State National Theatre.

I studied at the Academy for the performing arts, specialising in drama and puppet design and control. I graduated in 1975. During this period I worked as a Trainee at the State Puppet Theatre in my spare time.

From 1975-1980 I directed and hosted my own children's programme on National Television, and was also employed by various theatre companies in Czechoslovakia as an actor. From 1980 onwards I had my own Puppet Theatre (owned by the State Government) and I toured around Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries. The political problems in my region forced me to cease performances. I had been arrested and charged as a political protester. I worked as a building site worker and factory labourer.

In 1985 my family and I defected and found political asylum in Sydney, Australia. After taking lessons in English, I was lucky enough to find a position as a cameraman for the cartoon company Hanna-Barbera in Sydney. I left after six months as I felt it did not allow me to use my creativity and, as such, did not offer me an adequate challenge.

During my stint as a cameraman my wife opened her own business, a design studio, as she had been a costume designer in Czechoslovakia. I joined her, but was forever contemplating how I could realise my dreams of opening my own Puppet Theatre in this country.

For the last three years, thanks to my wife and family, I have been in the process of setting up my Puppet Theatre and from 1997 will be ready to perform my one man show. (I performed as a volunteer in various places in 1996, and my show was taped by Channel 9 News, and local press have acknowledged my work.)

It will be a pleasure to present my knowledge of the historical development of puppetry, and to use my performing skills to present a live show to Australian youngsters.

Jiri George Vacek

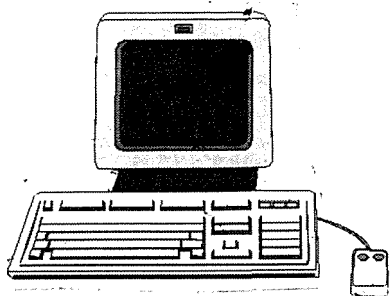
Classic Marionette Theatre
PO Box 12
Chevron Island Post Office
QLD 4217
Ph: (07) 55 381 099

THE WAY WE WERE tells Jiri George's own story; his childhood, educational experiences and early professional life. The story is based on correspondence with his elderly mother and is a tribute to strong family relations. It is also a celebration of freedom, democracy, the Government of Australia and links between people of different cultures.

THE WAY WE WERE is a marionette and musical variety show. After the 50 minute performance Jiri George explains how the puppets work, using a specially made half-cut marionette head.

Above: Marionette by Jiri George Vacek.





CYBER NEWS

A UNIMA AUSTRALIA

Homepage

By Sue Wallace

COST

To set up a web site will cost us only \$25 with Joe Sutherland offering to do all the leg work. This is a once only fee with 5 hours free access, then \$5/hour between 7am and midnight, then \$2.50/hour till 7am. Because of his expertise and experience in this area, Joe Sutherland has volunteered to be the "site manager". This entails designing the site and entering the data.

PURPOSE OF THE WEB SITE

- * To provide an information resource for members
- * To attract new members
- * To provide a data resource for anyone interested in Australian puppetry.

CONTENT

- * Welcome page with contact details for UNIMA Australia executive and UNIMA headquarters in France.
- * Mission statement of UNIMA
- * Information of the benefits of joining UNIMA Australia and how to join, including headlines from the current magazine and examples of interesting past articles (with permission from the authors).
- * Diary of events - to be updated monthly - of shows, festivals workshops, lectures, meetings etc. It will be up to the membership to let the site manager know of events and he will include or delete info as required.
- * In future it may be possible to include a resource listing of books and videos and where these can be accessed, and an index of UNIMA articles from past newsletters and magazines.

Each member can have space within the site. This will include:

- one photo of the member and/or their work.
- location i.e. town and state
- contact telephone number, address, and e.mail address (it is advised that you do not publish your home address or phone number to avoid nuisance callers - remember this information can be accessed worldwide).
- up to 150 words about the individual or group.

Information about members will only be included at the member's request and it is up to each member to supply photo and blurb.

OTHER

Our quarterly magazine will *not* be published on the internet. Obviously this resource should be for the benefit of members only.

At this stage the site is for information/reading only. Interactive question and answer facilities are already available through established puppetry newsgroups.

Send your photo and info to Joe Sutherland:

1/31 Broadway
ELWOOD VIC 3184
Ph: (h) 03 9525 7595

HISTORY

By Richard Bradshaw

For this issue I've chosen to write about some Australian connections with North America: the girl from Randwick who made Howdy Doody, the Melbourne puppeteer who became president of the Puppeteers of America, and the puppet bunyip that had a T.V. series in Philadelphia.

Howdy Doody was the name of the marionette of a freckled-faced boy which appeared on T.V. across America in the 50s with the human presenter, Buffalo Bob. In the book "Howdy and Me" (1990) Buffalo Bob Smith tells how this famous puppet, the second version of a puppet of Howdy, was based on designs by two animation artists working with Disney. "We sent the composite to Velma Dawson, a fine sculptor and puppet-maker also with the Disney Studios. Velma made the actual puppet." At the 1993 festival of the P. of A., in San Francisco, John Lewis called me across to meet Velma, who lives in Palm Desert, California. What John had discovered in conversation was that she had spent her childhood in Randwick, Sydney, where her father worked as a doctor!

George Merten was president of the P. of A. in 1956-7. He was born in London, but served with the Royal Australian Air Force in World War II. After the war he was a founding member of the Puppet Guild of Australia, in Melbourne. In 1950 he moved to Canada where his work in teaching puppetry skills paved the way for the Ontario Puppetry Association. George Merten wrote two books, "The Hand Puppets" and "The Marionette". He was the first person living outside the U.S. to be president of the P. of A.

The following is based on a tribute to Herbert Lee Dexter by Paul A. Viso in the journal of the P. of A. of Summer, 1993. Dexter was born in Australia in 1905 and was working as a ventriloquist in Sydney and Melbourne from the age of 16, this work helping him to pay his way at Melbourne University. After performing in South Africa, England and Canada, Lee Dexter moved to the U.S.A. in 1936. He worked on vaudeville circuits with people such as George Burns, Eddie Cantor and Bob Hope. While serving with the U.S. Navy in World War II he met and married a tap-dancer, Marie "Sunny" Scullin. They moved to Philadelphia where, in 1950, they began presenting the T.V. puppet show, "Bertie the Bunyip", a series which continued until 1966. From a photo, Bertie was a "mouth puppet", while the other characters such as the Terrible Twins, Fussy and Gussy,

and the villainous fox Sir Guy de Guy seem to have been glove puppets with moving mouths. Dexter, who seems to have been a highly talented and creative performer, continued working with puppets well into his 80s.

There is some doubt about that 1936 date for his move to the U.S. Dexter is also mentioned in Valentine Vox's book "I Can See Your Lips Moving". He had an earlier marriage to a blues singer, Sally Osman, in 1932, but she divorced him two years later citing Charlie, his ventriloquist dummy, as a co-respondent! In court Osman told how Charlie, the dummy, had ridiculed her with ad-libs in their new stage act and had even hit her quite violently so that she had grown to "hate Charlie so deeply that homicidal thoughts began to haunt my mind". What eventually happened to Charlie is not recorded, but in 1940 Dexter's dummy was Jerry McGinney.

POSTSCRIPT:

If you saw "Quantum" on A.B.C. T.V. on 13 March you would have glimpsed Annette Mills with Muffin the Mule! "Quantum" had been presenting a series from the U.S. and this episode dealt with the possibility of communication with beings elsewhere in the universe. The presenter told us that early T.V. broadcasts from Earth had already travelled some 50 light years and the clip of Muffin was used to illustrate the point. (The second clip was of Winston Churchill.)

Cont. from p.17

If anyone was going to view this piece as comedy, given that the context of the performance was a comedy festival, they would probably be disappointed. This piece was too direct to be seen as comic relief. The performance was strong, but the point of it a bit confusing; should we be wary of dark haired men with black moustaches? or beware the babe might be armed with a banana!

Richard Hart

REVIEW

WAKE BABY

BY COMPANY SKYLARK

Dramaturg
Director
Puppetry Director
Designer
Composer
Lighting Designer

Gillian Rubinstein
 Nigel Jamieson
 Peter Wilson
 Richard Jeziorny
 Jeffrey Evans
 Philip Lethlean

Puppet Maker
Crew

Production Manager Al Martinez
 Stage Manager Stuart McKenzie
 Assist. Stage Manager Tania Gristwood
 Heidi Brennan

Cast

Orfe
 Dizzy
 Puppeteers

Sofia Gibson
 Paul O'Keeffe
 Megan Cameron
 Jeremy Davies
 Peter Wilson

What do you get when you cross one of Australia's leading writers for young people with one of Australia's leading puppet companies? In this case, a pretty damn good production.

Gillian Rubinstein's participation in Skylark's *Wake Baby* has given the show what many modern visual theatre productions lack - a strong structure and a focused script. This is a script without dialogue (often the best kind) but there is nonetheless a strong narrative, and clear relationships are developed between the characters.

According to the programme notes, "*Wake Baby* explores the way we first move out into the world, building relationships with ourselves, the physical world around us and other people." The story follows the progress of the child Orfe as she (he?) makes discoveries and judgements about the world she lives in. These discoveries aren't always accurate the first time around, and Orfe finds out that the objects and people she meets can have more than one dimension.

Technically, the show is excellent. What a joy it is to see black theatre where the puppeteers actually stayed invisible! I've always thought if you can't hide the puppeteers properly, then you might as well have them as a fully visible part of the show - I'm an all or nothing kind of gal. Congratulations to both Phil Lethlean and the puppeteers for making it work so well.

Praise also goes to the crew (and cast!) for providing some extremely good flying effects, which enhanced the production enormously. This is a show which needs to be in a theatre with proper flies and the ability to create all the staging, and I hope Skylark will maintain this approach wherever they tour the show.

Performances were good all round. Sofia Gibson was wonderfully believable as Orfe, with transparent emotions and a clarity of focus which gave the character great depth. Paul O'Keeffe was charming as Dizzy, who appears quite late in the story as a foil for Orfe. Both Gibson and O'Keeffe have strong physical theatre skills, and they created some moments of acrobatic agility which were very impressive.

The puppetry skills were also up there in the "excellent" category, I'm pleased to report. Manipulation was tight and well-timed, and although there were one or two tiny mishaps, it was obvious that the performers have set themselves very high standards indeed, and are mostly achieving them. Since the black theatre worked so well, I have no idea who did what - so praise will have to be equally shared.

If I did have any doubts about the show, it was a suspicion that the story was an adult perspective on the phenomenon of childhood. But my doubts were dispelled by the enjoyment and enthusiasm shown by the kids in the audience. It happily manages that rare achievement of working at different levels for different ages, and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it.

Janet Dalglish

REVIEW

LITTLE PIGGIES AND A SAUSAGE WENT FOR A WALK

BY SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE

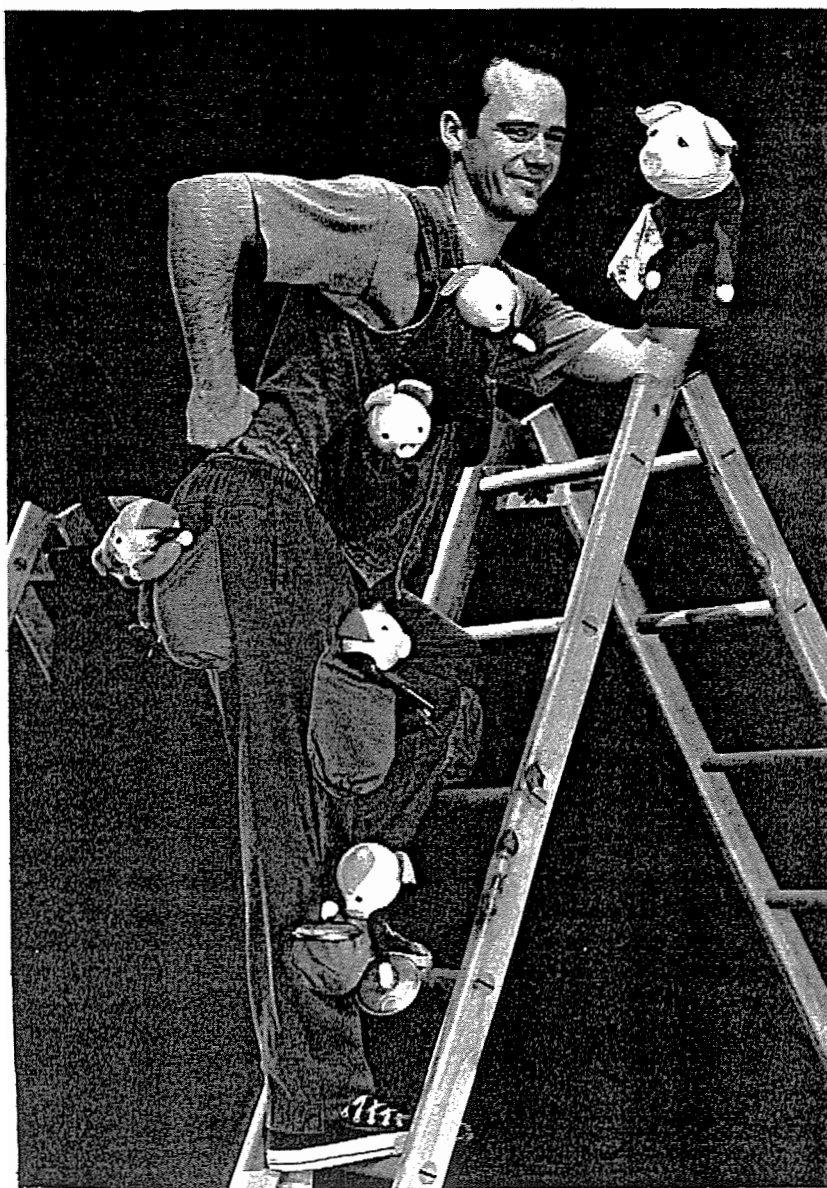
Puppeteer Michael Barlow

Little Piggies written by Paul and Sally Morgan, based on the Fremantle Arts Centre Press book.
A Sausage Went For A Walk by Ellisha Majid and Peter Kendall based on the Fremantle Arts Centre Press book.

Adapted and Devised by Peter L Wilson.

Designed by Trish Oldham

I saw this Spare Parts production performed under very difficult circumstances. The venue was a small tent in the Alexandra Gardens, in Melbourne, as part of the Moomba Festival.



Unfortunately, the show had to compete with a lot of noise from other Moomba events and the nearby Grand Prix. However, Michael Barlow gave a brave and focused performance which kept the very young audience's attention most of the time. Barlow was both actor and puppeteer in the two stories and he maintained a clean separation between the two functions at all times. His delivery was sometimes a little forced, but this may have resulted from the situation I've just described.

A Sausage Went for a Walk is a simple tale, told in puppetry and rhyme, of a little boy's breakfast running away. The food puppets were cute and varied, including a glove-puppet fried egg, a chorus line of baked beans and a nicely jaunty sausage; although children (and myself) had difficulty remembering what the cornflakes were once they left the context of their bowl.

Once the little boy discovers that his breakfast is gone,

the play seems to come to a logical end, but there is a second half which I felt had been added simply to make the piece longer. A bird eats each piece of food and then the original poem about the 'escape' is repeated. Our lack of emotional investment in the food was highlighted by the fact that it wasn't very upsetting to see it gobbled up. Perhaps it would have been better to keep the story very short or to lengthen it through more character development and interaction.

The simple set transformed quickly for *Little Piggies*. This script also had a good rhythmical quality and after a slow start it built well towards a wild and silly party. Barlow began by making pigs out of pillows, shaping the nose and eyes with rubber bands. This was quite effective, but as it took time, was soon relaxed into slapping pillows on the set to represent more pigs. This may have worked had they ever been animated but in this case they just looked like pillows.

The variety of pig 'sets' which followed were the most engaging puppets in either show. Each had a lovely surprise and was well integrated with the set and Barlow's costume.

Overall this is a simple, well balanced piece of work but it needs a little spark of something to lift it. Some of the puppets for example, were a little dirty and worn. While this slightly homely look had a comfortable, unthreatening feel, I don't think it would harm the show's integrity to spruce up the characters a bit. Also, it should not be necessary to tell the audience "That's the end". The play itself had reached an obvious and joyful climax, delighting the audience with streamers and party music. I'm sure that the whole production would work more successfully in the intimate setting of a childcare centre or kindergarten.

Jenny Andersen

Opposite: Michael Barlow in Spare Parts' "Little Piggies"

THE WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PUPPETRY ARTS

This is a UNIMA project that has been pending for many years. UNESCO has now agreed to co-publish the Encyclopedia with the Polish State Publishing House of Scientific Publications. It will be coming out next year.

The World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts (WEPA) is an opportunity to promote the Art of Puppetry and report on its current status around the world. Scientific and research articles on a wide range of Puppetry have been commissioned. There will also be headings by geographical area looking at the work of puppeteers all over the world.

For this last category we need material for our Australian section. If you would like to be included in the WEPA, you will need to write a short history of your work, future directions, accomplishments etc. There is no set format or particular length. Space will be at a premium, so the shorter your article, the better your chances of inclusion. The WEPA Editorial Board will edit all entries.

You are welcome to submit a photograph as well. The photo must be clearly identified and have no copyright restrictions on it. Send two copies of all material (but only one photo) to me no later than 31 August 1997. My address is on the front of the magazine.

Dennis Murphy

REVIEW

BELOW THE BELT

Presented by Handspan Visual Theatre

Directed by David Bell

Performed by Liss Gabb, Katrine Gabb, Heather Monk, Rod Primrose and John Rogers

Performed at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, March 1997

Below the Belt was the umbrella title for three quite different pieces, each lasting between 15 to 20 minutes. Their common subject matter was very aptly expressed in the title which should have included "...And Above the Knees". Two of the pieces were very explicit in their treatment while the other was much more poetic. How the three worked together had the overall effect for me as being interesting and unsatisfying; it's what you get when you add up one that sinks, one that flies and one that floats. As they were all separate pieces in their own right, I shall give my impressions of each as they appeared in the programme.

WAITING

by Heather Monk

Performed by Heather Monk and Liss Gabb

Music by Pascal Comelade and Hughes Le Bars

This piece left me a bit confused about its content. It is set in a bar or licensed café. A strange yet mysteriously motivated character sits at the table. The result is, after playing with the utensils on the table, the character has desperate sex with a lobster.

I thought Heather's performance was good, but it seemed the whole piece needed more development. There was good use of facial expression, some very interesting ideas and as an example of bent theatre it had a lot of potential; if it wasn't for the bends in the road we'd always be going on a straight path. This was the one that sank, as it lacked the buoyancy that I'm sure more time would give.

GILDA

by Rod Primrose

Performed by Rod Primrose and John Rogers.

Music by Erasure, Kylie Minogue, Eartha Kitt, Portishead and Hugh Wayland.

I reviewed *Gilda Under Glass* a couple of years ago when it was performed in a city

shop window. Since then I've been keen to see it in a theatre and on both occasions it worked very well. It is about a man who wants to be a woman. It was presented and performed beautifully with a few nice changes added.

This is a strong example of good puppet theatre. The performers, though often in full view, never upstage the puppet. They are always there to serve its purpose. The manipulation is excellent, the puppets and sets are great, the music works well and the fish tank scene is such a beautiful thing to watch.

This reminds me of what I think is an important distinction between visual theatre and puppetry. Puppetry can be visual theatre, visual theatre can be puppetry, but a puppet is something that "LIVES" on stage whereas a visual image or object without that intention remains what it is, or changes its meaning by being a visual symbol for something else, or becomes part of the overall image.

This distinction is very clear in *Gilda*, but a little unclear in the preceeding and following performances. This was the piece that flew.

SUGAR ON TOP

by Liss Gabb

Performed by Liss Gabb, Katrine Gabb and Heather Monk.

Music by The Reverend Horton Heat and L7

The title *Sugar on Top* is an evocative one. In this piece about a stripper, the male characters who manipulate the female puppet are also her audience and would obviously like to get on top of her. On the other hand, the stripper character would also like to be on top of them to the point of squashing them into the ground.

This version was a very smutty one by comparison with the one I saw a couple of years ago. I thought the manipulation was good and the co-ordination between performers very smooth; the stripper is a life size puppet operated by three puppeteers.

Cont. p. 13

REVIEW

MURPHY'S LAW OF PUPPETS

Performed by Dennis Murphy

Murphy's Law of Puppets is a performance intended to be an introduction for the young audience to puppetry in its many styles and forms. To this end the piece was quite successful. Dennis demonstrates all styles from finger and hand through to marionette and body puppets.

The puppets are quite beautiful and appear to be very well designed and certainly quite functional. The performance occurred in a school basketball hall with the show's set standing very cold and lonely at one end of the vast space. The set was very basic, consisting of a table-like playing board about two metres wide with a high curtain and frame sitting atop the table on one side.

After a brief introduction Dennis disappeared behind the screen and a leprechaun, using the head and hands of the puppeteer, appeared as the curtain was opened. The character claimed to be a magician and introduced his magic box. Dennis then stepped away from the body puppet and explained to the audience how they too can create a simple cut-out puppet of the same style. This format was repeated where a puppet would do a small performance by way of introducing themselves and then we would hear an explanation of their style, type and sometimes relevant techniques.

The quality of the manipulation was generally excellent although at times the undefined performance space led to an unfortunate lack of grounding with some of the puppets. The roller-blading clown was a highlight in the show but unfortunately it seemed to go on for too long.

There was a great variety of puppets and characters in the show including a dragon, who wasn't clear on how to be a dragon; an Italian harlequin with clear references to Punch and Judy; and a marionette monkey, who didn't want to come out of the box.

This show is very raw, and deliberately so. Dennis describes himself as a comic puppeteer and indeed the style of the show reflected this with many attempts at "the one-liner", many of which were quite successful on the young audience.



He indicated that he felt it was difficult to have anything of a dramatic content within the context of a school hall; "you really need a proper theatre." These are not ideas that I feel comfortable with and I feel lead to the primary problem with the performance.

Due to the repetitive cycle that formed the structure of the show, I had to keep asking

myself "is this a performance or a demonstration?" and I think the latter is the accurate description. I am not trying to suggest that you need sophisticated lights or sets but this show didn't seem to have any through line at all. The show was exploring different types of puppetry, which then of course made me wonder why the magic box kept interrupting throughout the entire performance. While often related to the magician's black illusion, surely the magic of puppetry is something quite different. It is this element, the true magic of what you can do with a puppet that to me seems important.

The magic of story, and truth and honesty, all of these elements were missing from the performance. There was no story, there was no adventure, there was no dream.

As an overall impression I felt **Murphy's Law Of Puppets** was at times delightful, at times disappointing, but of course the real judge has to be the target audience, and they certainly enjoyed their "time-out" from usual class.

Craig Gillespie

REVIEW

THE LITTLE PRINCE

By Antoine de Saint Exupéry, adapted for puppetry by Chris Dickins

Polyglot Theatre, April 1997

Director - Chris Dickins

Cast - Kym Tonkin and Mischa Long

Puppets - Rod Primrose and Philip Millar

The Little Prince, the well known (not necessarily children's) story by Antoine de Saint Exupéry has been adapted for puppetry by ex-artistic director of Polyglot, Chris Dickins.

A pilot, who crash lands in the Sahara desert, is besieged by the endless questioning of a child-like character, a little Prince from a tiny, distant planet. Their discussions move from the Prince's descriptions of the characters he met on the way to earth to philosophical thoughts on friendship and beauty.

Two performers, Kym Tonkin and Mischa Long, manipulated a number of characters around a relatively static set of a profile of a crashed plane with a backdrop cave of dark blue, and yellow/golden silk to denote sand draped from the plane to floor level.

This was the opening production at Polyglot's refurbished theatre in South Yarra, Melbourne. I wish I could applaud Polyglot for this production, but I can't. The rare event of seeing capital spent on any small theatre, let alone a theatre for young people beckoned for a much more exciting opening production.

From the comments and the restlessness of the mixed age audience (3 year olds to grandparents) I wasn't the only confused audience member. The narrative of the book was not cleanly delivered yet the director seemed content to lift the pictures off the page, being illustrative without supporting the drama and beauty of Saint Exupéry's poetic prose. Much of the dialogue was stilted and unconnected and the abstract language was not supported by any emotional empathy between the characters. There was certainly no empathy between the characters and the audience.

Unfortunately, this wooden performance showed little directorial muscle. I'm sure, given prodding, the performers could have delivered more vitality, more nuance and more vocal range.

Some books are perhaps better left in that medium and not exploited for stage. To use a well known title can make good economic sense, making the show easier to sell. This interpretation, disappointingly, didn't make good artistic sense.

Sue Wallace

DISTELFINK - CINDY SOUTH-CZABANIA

I was recently given the assignment to go down to Distelfink, to check out an exhibition of puppets. Distelfink is situated in a prestigious Armadale location very near Sotheby's. I could have been forgiven for thinking that these puppets were relics of another century. Cultural artifacts in good condition. Antiques.



Cindy South-Czabania is a puppet maker. The puppets that she makes give a resonance of another age. Distelfink is a gallery whose central philosophy is to promote Australian contemporary craft and in Cindy's work one can see that fine craftsmanship is still very much alive. Rita Kornhauser, Director of Distelfink, tells me that Cindy started as a dollmaker, working in procelain. Her grandfather was a carpenter and she eventually became interested in working in wood.

The works on display were all hand carved out of English lime. Their faces have character drawn in, some more than others. Some were very smooth, long faces that had a naive, primitive feel to them like African masks. They were rod puppets and many had articulated wrists and/or ankles. One puppet of a figure of a traditional Indian woman had no feet, just rod arms with a central body rod and garments that came to the

Above: "Phillipe Louis Mentreaux" English Lime Found Object by Cindy South -Czabania

base. Another figure of a traditional native American Indian male figure was around 1 metre high; most were around the 50 centimetre mark. The scale of heads, hands and feet was slightly larger in proportion to the body as is the case with many puppets designed to be used in the arena of public performance. As they were still on display in the gallery I did not get an opportunity to see how they were weighted.

The really extraordinary thing about them was Cindy's treatment of textiles. I was particularly taken with a figure that appeared to be a European explorer with the monocle and the pith helmet that wasn't quite a pith helmet. This figure, fold-up chair attached like an appendage, was like a visual essay about colonialism. Using natural dyes and fibres, Cindy's fine needle work gave the garments the look and feel of a nineteenth century artefact. On the sleeve of the man's shirt was fine handwritten text, a minute, fascinating detail that looked as if it had come from a scientific book from that century. The figure, not looking quite the cliché I might expect to see, made me wonder if I might be viewing the figure through the eyes of a native looking at a white man for the first time. Fine craft-work and attention to detail were consistent throughout the exhibition.

Rita has indicated that she may still have one or two pieces in her storeroom and if any interested people want to go down to the gallery she is happy to show the puppets. They are fascinating in their intricacy of detail, and Cindy if you read this, I'm saving up so that I can have one on display in my living room. They're beautiful art objects and things to truly marvel at.

Jen Pfeiffer

WHAT'S IN A NAME?: HANDSPAN IN THE YEAR 2000

by Jen Pfeiffer

David Bell took over as Artistic Director of Handspan in October 1996

The eight months he has been there have gone very quickly because they have been very full. It has been a time of taking stock, making plans and restructuring the company.

David has a background as a designer. For ten years he had a set of diverse experiences working in different styles and genres, including contemporary music theatre and opera, before moving on to directing. His directing experiences again took him into diverse areas, from the scale of working with the Queensland Theatre

Company and Opera Queensland to working with Rock n' Roll Circus and La Boite Theatre. He saw Handspan's *Secrets* in the early 80s which left a lasting impression, as it did for many of us. David comes to Handspan with his own distinctive style and a mutual desire with company members to refresh the company and re-vision it into a state of vigour that will see its first steps into the 21st century.

While we can surely appreciate the contributions, the expertise and craft of dedicated puppetry practitioners and artists like Noriko Nishimoto of Spare Parts, Peter Wilson of Company Skylark and Gilly McInnes of Polyglot, it is true to say that in this country we

are not burdened with the weight of history and tradition. The innovation that inter-disciplinary work and cross-fertilisation offers is an exciting prospect, although not without its hazards and risks. This is something that David Bell is looking forward to tackling head-on.

David's style sounds like a daring eclectic mix of combining different elements. One of the company's major aims over the next few years is to develop new audiences, particularly in the 15-25 year age group. Although wanting to ignore demographics as such, David wants to produce work that will appeal to anybody who is open to experiences. Hence a feature of the work will be that it is accessible and inclusive.

My interpolation would be that there is an aim to eradicate the distinction between so-called high and low art by making art popular, especially with teens and young adults. He plans to do this by introducing ideas and showing things in a different way that will entertain and win his audiences. He describes his work as low-tech, but as that which uses technology much as another tool in a tool-box; familiarity with the tool is a contingent feature of its usefulness. There will be some experimenting and developments with new media over the next 12 months.

So, in developing this mass appeal, Handspan wants to raise the company's profile, not just within the puppetry community nationally and internationally, or within the theatre industry, but with people at large. Mmmmm...Handspan as a house-hold name? Handspan - icon of the 21st century! How could this be?

As for the company restructure, for the first time the Artistic Director at Handspan has total creative control. This means that the risk of works of seemingly disparate ideas appearing in a haphazard way are lessened, and collective work will have a unifying eye.

Handspan has taken on a new name: Handspan Visual Theatre. This has come about as a solution to a perceived problem in explaining to people outside the industry the complexities of just what it is that Handspan actually does. Handspan have never confined themselves to using only representational puppets and the term "visual", it is hoped, will serve as a flag to suggest the kind of work they do. There is also a perception that the word

"puppetry", the "P-word" as David described it, comes with a set of assumptions: that it is marionettes, that it is for children exclusively, that it is a mite twee, and with the young and cynical even an object of derision much like the term "mime" has come to be.

*... the word
"puppetry", the "P-
word" as David
described it,
comes with a set
of assumptions ...*

We can expect to see more ventures from Handspan that are collaborations and co-productions. David wants to introduce new creative influences, and at the moment that definition is extremely wide and open. Jenny Kemp will be coming to do a creative development. On October 17, 12 months after joining the company, we can expect to see David Bell's first offering. This piece, *Raised by Wolves*, is a contemporary spin on *The Satyricon*. It will take place for the Melbourne Festival at Shed 14, an 'air-plane hanger of a place' at Victoria Docks that will accommodate an audience of 2000 people. Look out for it because there will be 6 performances only. Described as a "low budget spectacle" that will sweep audiences up, it will involve an ensemble of 8 people; a mix of puppeteers, actors and performers. The band *Regurgitator* will be playing live music as well as the taped original music of Darrin Verhagen (other wise known as Shinjuku Thief). It will then move on to the Adelaide Festival. This project is hoped to be the next push forward and sounds like it is geared to net the club and

ware-house party set, with an aim to turn puppetry, or should I say visual theatre, into a public forum.

These sound like ambitious and visionary aims. But visionary dreams are what fuelled the company in the first place. Handspan's original tale is about a handful of people who had very little money but some wild ideas. I admire such risk-taking and, personally, I wish them success, because I think their success is everybody's success. If puppetry can manage to elicit mass appeal, regardless of what it comes to be called, then it changes and broadens the arena, and theoretically there should be more opportunities for all. It is also true that puppetry forms, traditional and otherwise, do need continued support for their survival. Handspan's perspective may not be very palatable for some, but David has raised some points that are important observations and could affect us all; points that we can't afford to dismiss, and that we will eventually have to address in some way. Roll on October 17.

REMEMBER !

**A NEW
EDITOR IS
NEEDED FOR
THE
SEPTEMBER
1997 ISSUE.**

**SEE
EDITORIAL
FOR DETAILS**

FESTIVAL UPDATE

Four months have passed since I presented an idea in the December issue for a puppetry celebration here in Canberra in 1999. Well overdue I might add. The proposal put forward by Dennis Murphy for a festival in Cootamundra has had very little interest shown in it and perhaps has bitten the dust by now. And with the disappointing puppet event held in Byron Bay last year, one does wonder, as so eloquently put by Sean Manners in the last UNIMA issue, can the puppetry community at large be simply not bothered in such an event? I trust not.

I've approached a number of companies and practitioners in the past few months to rally interest in the Canberra event in 1999 and have had a fair...ish result. All major funded companies have indicated their interest. A number of individuals and smaller groups have also come forward with their support.

At this stage I have not spoken directly to every practitioner in the country, nor will I be able to over the next few months. This magazine I hope will act as the spokesperson for further developments with setting up this festival.

Setting up such an event is a huge task, more so if done in tandem with the full time running of a company. At this point I have the energy to propel the ideas for such an event forward.

Discussions with several key organisations in Canberra have indicated strong support for such an event. I am currently writing to the ACT Cultural Council and the Australia Council presenting them with a puppet festival proposal and will keep you folk informed of further developments.

I also hope to write to some of the smaller companies in the future about the festival. If there is further comment or interest towards this point, I would welcome your support. Congratulations to Sue Wallace on her appointment as President of UNIMA Australia.

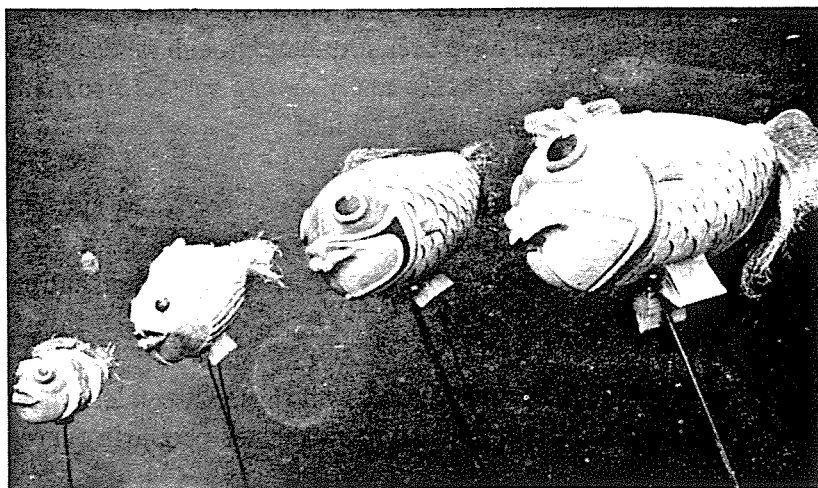
Yours in Anticipation,

Peter Wilson

P.S. Letters can be addressed to me at

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A.C.T. 2608

Ph: (61) 6 247 1132 Fax: (61) 6 247 1160
email: skylark@peg.pegasus.oz.au



Puppets by Teatrong Mulat/Mulat Theater, (Philippines)

POLYGLOT AUDITIONS

Puppeteers for ALMOST A DINOSAUR

Rehearsal 3 weeks, starting Aug. 18
Schools tour 6 weeks, starting Sep.
8, plus a 2 week holiday season in
the Cromwell Rd Theatre.

Also: **General Auditions** for
puppeteers, designers &
composers who would like to show
or talk about their work with Gilly
McInnes, the new Artistic Director.

June 12, 13, 14 (a.m.)
Strictly by appointment.

Ph: Polyglot - 03 9827 9667

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Above: "The Giant" by Carouselle Puppet Theatre

