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INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION

UNIMA CENTRE AUSTRALIA

MARCH 1993

edited by peter grasshopper



Dear UNIMA Member,

I am contacting you now because I have recently recieved information from Quebec about a Puppet Festival which they are planning to hold from 2-9 July 1994. Anyone wanting to take part in this Festival, must send information to Quebec before March 12th '93. The information required includes the type of puppets, the style of the Show, age of audience and its size, number of puppets involved etc.

Anyone wanting further information should contact me and I will send a copy of the questionnaire to be completed to apply, by return of post.

I have also recieved information about the International Puppet Festival to be held in Bielsko-Biala, Poland in May 21-28th 1994. The do not specify a closing date for Applications. Again, anyone interested can contact me and I will send further information.

The pamphlet from the School at Charleville-Mezieres has just arrived and I will send it to anyone lucky enough to be going to France this year. Activities there commence in June 1993. Registration must be returned by April 30th.

We will include any further information about proposed Festivals in the next UNIMA Newsletter.

Wishing you the best of good fortune in your puppeting.

Yours,

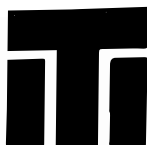
Jennifer Davidson

11/2/93



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI. (UNESCO)



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.

* Snippets from December American Theatre: the primal power of animated objects is discussed in a report on the International Puppet Festival - the first festival of adult puppet theatre in New York, which was supported by the Jim Henson Foundation. Baltimore Theatre Project's internationally minded director, Philip Arnoult has initiated a 3 year exchange programme between the Netherlands and the US, where 3 Dutch companies (dance companies Onafhankelijk Toneel, Truus Bronkhurst, and ex-patriate Australian, Neville Tranter's Stuffed Puppet Theatre) will undertake long term stays in the US and perform in 4 major venues around the country.

* Adelaide Fringe & International Workshop Festival's Malcolm Blaylock has been overseas visiting the Edinburgh and Canadian Fringe Festivals. He came back with glowing reports of the Edmonton Fringe ("companies actually make money at it") and the possibilities for Australian performers on the Canadian Fringe Circuit that starts in the east in Montreal and ends in the west at Victoria on Vancouver Island. *

Puppet personality, Peter Wilson (Victoria), has also received an individual development grant to look at puppetry training institutes all over the world. From April to June, Peter will visit the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, Creative Workshop and Henson Workshops in London, the Institute of Marionettes in Charleville-Mezieres, France, and schools in Prague, Paris and Barcelona.

* And Peter Wilson (WA) has just returned from New Zealand where he has been developing a trans-Tasman collaboration between Spare Parts and New Zealand Puppet Theatres. *

December 1992



Whoopie!

- a new Editor ! - an Editor with a computer !
- an editor who has a computer with windows

and doors, and what's more, loves using it! (no more reading the faded type of a portable Olivetti Lettera 32)

And what's EVEN more - 3 UNIMA members offering to edit the Newsletter - well done !

Thanks so much to the 2 Queensland and Victorian members for offering, and to Jennie Pfeiffer for taking on the fun job as Newsletter Editor.

Jennie will be editing the next (June) Issue, so hurry your Copy to:

Jennie Pfeiffer
17 Miller Street
West Melbourne
VIC 3003

tel. (03) 329-9481



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

My wife and I recently returned from a brief visit to Europe where we caught up with some puppetry in Amsterdam..... Garry Fuhrmeister

Neville Tranter, expat Australian with 17 years based in Holland was premiering his adult theatre production "The Nightclub". Neville, who was Brisbane born and Toowoomba educated, held the audience for eighty minutes in an exhausting one man performance. Neville played the part of a failing vaudeville performer and was supported by four well developed puppet characters. The 200 seat venue was packed on the Thursday night we attended.

Amsterdam Marionette Theatre (see next month's issue)

David and Sally Poulton. David is off to W.A. in March for their rollicking musical, "Blinky Bill". April sees two weeks in Taiwan followed by two in Sydney. During May/June period David will be presenting "Wok & Wal" in Canada and U.S.A. He will be performing in school venues, festivals, plus participation in a Showcase of 100 artists seeking further work in the US.

Queensland Marionette Theatre. "Peter and the Wolf" in rod, glove and string puppets is being performed in 98 towns through N.S.W. and Victoria from March to August. Director, Philip Edmonston is touring with three other puppeteers. During a season of "Peter" in Brisbane some years ago Philip enchanted the audience with his violinist.

Mark Tietjens, nephew of David and Sally, will be performing a Bunraku version of "Peter and the Wolf" in Northern N.S.W and New Zealand early this year. Mark, who doubles on clarinet during the performance and his puppeteer colleague Darcy Norton, doubling on keyboards, have won a contract with the Queensland Arts Council for terms 2 & 3.

The ETC Company (Educational Theatre Collective) in Brisbane received a creative development grant last year from the Australia Council and Pat Zuber received one from the Qld State Arts Division. Together, these grants enabled the collective to bring master puppeteer, Noriko Nishimoto (courtesy of Spare Parts Theatre, Perth) to Brisbane for 4 weeks. Writer, Val Foley, was also brought on board to work with Pat Zuber, Florence Teillet, Kath Porrill and Pamela Harris. Noriko and Val assisted the all woman team to develop four 15 minute individual pieces which drew on their various skills in puppetry, object theatre, clowning and mask work. Further funding is being sought to produce the show, which aims to encourage a more open attitude among young Australians to Asia, its cultures and people. If all goes well, the show will be performed in Brisbane for a two week season at the end of this year, followed by an Arts Council tour of Queensland schools in 1994. Wish them luck!



*Basil and Janet
Smith.*

From 1st January 1993
C/o Murphy's Puppets
79 Binalong Road
OLD TOONGABBIE
N.S.W. 2146

CHRISTMAS 1992

Phew!

1992 is almost over as I pen these lines. What a hectic exciting year it has been. We heralded it in along the delightful yacht infested waterfront at Hobart's Summer Festival. Our puppets went on holiday with us, Jock McLegg (with his extra leg) doing a grand Auld Lang Syne to '91.

Then we were straight into it back in Sydney preparing the Rocks Puppet Cottage for the Grand Opening which took place in March. 4 shows a day, 5 days a week took their toll on us and we finished at the Cottage in October. During that time tens of thousands of visitors tasted the magic of the little sandstone cottage in the heart of Sydney's original village. The exposure of both puppets and puppeteers from 10.00 till 5.00 every day had a draining effect on us all. We had a great time but were glad to pass it all on to our puppeteer friends.

The climax of our sojourn was the Puppeteers Picnic when the Australian Puppetry Guild supported us and the Rocks in a great magical day of puppetry.

But the day after we finished at the Rocks we were straight into many festive bookings up to Christmas ranging from the Blue Mountains in the West, the National Park in the South and the Central Coast North. Our little caravan home has never rested, trailing behind all the conglomeration of our itinerate Puppet Show. We now live on the road and have allowed fate to direct our paths over the foreseeable months. We can always be contacted through our friends Dennis Murphy & Janice Edwards who have supported us in all our comings and goings and have kindly allowed us to use their mail box (so please note the change of address). We also have a mobile phone now, (018 263 475) a real necessity in our lifestyle.

God has granted Janet and I great health in 1992. Though tired from our hectic year we are happy now in our wanderings. The big decision as we leave Sydney is, do we go North or South around "the block"? Either way its great to be up, up and away.

"Time you old Gypsy man
will you not stay.
Put up your caravan
just for one day....."

Kushti bok!



DUTCH PUNCH & JUDY

Jerry van der Veer is known around Kempsey NSW as a Punch & Judy man but his Punch is actually the Dutch puppet-hero '*Jan Klaasen*' - presented in English for an Australian audience.

Jerry was born in Leeuwarden, Friesland in the north of Holland. At an early age he watched the entertainers that came to town each year during carnival. On St Nicolas Day when he was seven, he was given a set of puppets and was soon doing his own version of *Jan Klaasen*, based on the shows he had seen performed by Leeuwarden's Jan Klaasen puppeteer, Rob Noorbruus.

At eleven, Jerry, his parents and six brothers emigrated to Australia. Jerry joined the Manly Boys' and Girls' Library where he learned English largely through his puppet shows.

At fourteen, his mother banned puppets as 'he shouldn't be playing with dolls'. It was ten years, a wife and two children later before the subject of Puppets came up again. His wife, Dawn, one day mentioned she had seen a puppet show at the local fete. Jerry then told her of his earlier experiments with puppets.

The next day Perth puppeteer, Peter Hartland, walked into Jerry's signwriting shop and asked him to paint a proscenium. By the next day Jerry was back into puppets.

He performs mainly around the Kempsey area but once a year comes to the Sydney Dutch Festival to perform *Jan Klaasen*.

Last year an elderly gentleman came up to Jerry after the show. The man told Jerry how thrilled he was that not only was *Jan Klaasen* still being performed but that a Leeuwarden-style one was still going. The man was afraid that when he retired and left Holland that would be the end of the style.

Jerry asked him his name. It was Rob Noordbruus.

* * * * *

THE FERALS

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The ABC TV Children's department is producing a new series which will feature puppets. The series will be called "*The Ferals*" and will revolve around the exploits of a gang of feral animals in an urban environment. The Ferals interact with human actors and other puppet animals.

The design and construction of the first puppets are being co-ordinated by Tina Matthews in Sydney and Rob Matson in Melbourne.

Five Sydney-based puppeteers will be employed full-time with the possibility of some casual work as well. Auditions were in February: rehearsals and pilot shooting in March. Shooting on the series will run from July to November to produce 15 episodes.

PUPPETEERS' SUMMER SCHOOL

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A group of Sydney puppeteers organised themselves into a Puppeteers' Summer School, rented a house in the Blue Mountains and had a week of relaxation and workshops in early February.

Grasshopper came up from the South Coast and taught woodcarving techniques. Ann Davis took everyone through her method of using Plastic Wood; she also demonstrated some of her more complicated marionette controls. Dennis Murphy gave a talk on Commedia puppetry and showed videos of traditional Italian glove puppetry.

Basil Smith talked about the history of Punch and Judy while Jerry van der Veer discussed Holland's Jan Klaasen. Another workshop taught the basics of Bellydancing. Colin Schumacher, ex-director of the Queensland Theatre Company was guest lecturer. He ran a workshop on Commedia dell'Arte mask performance.

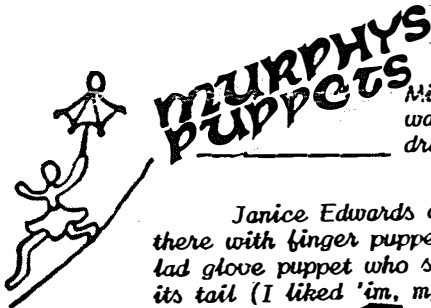
There was ample time to sit on the verandah and discuss Puppetry or to vanish into the bush for a break from it all.

The whole thing nearly ended in tragedy. As Sue Wallace took everyone through voice production she used mimicry of surrounding sounds. One sound was that of a helicopter that passed by looking for a lost bushwalker. All imitated its sound. The next day came the news that the helicopter had crashed. No one was injured but there was no doubt the helicopter had been 'sung down' by the class.

MR PUNCH'S PUNCHLINES!

Cor blimey! what an exciting Christmas and school holiday time I 'av 'ad. Saw "The Muppets Christmas Carol" twice - and Judy had two good weeps.

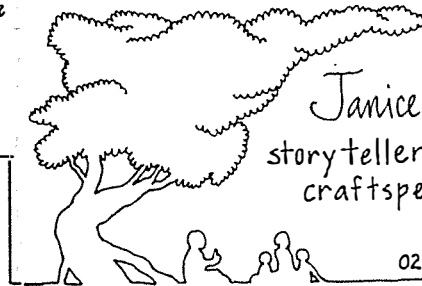
Visited me old 'ome at The Rocks Puppet Cottage about four times. Great to see Steve Coupe's "Billy Goats Gruff" and a grea "Squassage" circus (wish I could say sausage). Steve 'as 'ad his contract renewed there for another "free" months at weekends in The Cottage - congrats.



Dennis Murphy's mob was there during the week; caught up with Miss Cotton Sash-Corde (I fancy 'er, a bit skinny though). The star was Augusto, a "gormless" skater who made me 'larf'. Spike the baby dragon was as bright as ever (bit more meat on 'im).

Janice Edwards did a storytelling week there with finger puppets and with a young lad glove puppet who swung a cat around by its tail (I liked 'im, my sort of bloke).

sydney THEATRE company
THEATRE of IMAGE
The Happy Prince.



Janice Edwards
storyteller
craftsperson

02 6310613

Went to the posh theatre an saw "The 'appy Prince" - some great puppets (shadow, glove, etc). Sue Wallace was one of the puppeteers. Once again Judy had her 'ankie out - she woke me up wiv 'er sniffing Zzz - it ended quite well for me - they all died.....



SCAT!
CAT!

Then we wus dragged over to the Carousel Centre at Bondi where Phillip Einfeld had a great four weeks doing his show. Old Scat Cat had sore paws sketching hundreds of cartoons - he did my portrait at the top - great profile eh?

Not satisfied wiv all this gadding about our boss Basil (he thinks he is!) took us hup the Central Coast for a Teddy Bears Picnic - soppy stuff. Down to 'omebush for a week at the Sports Centre - too much activity for me zzz. Over to Glebe Market, cor' that was 'ot. An we ended the mumf at the posh theatres in Parramatta. That there air conditioning was great - wonder if "his nibs" will ever install it in our little booth? An to cap it all a posh newspaper - The Ostralian - did a hin depth hinterview for publication in Feb. Gee! I made their hair curl - told 'em a fmg or two..... He! he! he!

Thats the way to do it!

PSST. If you wants me I'm on
(018) 263 475.

Punch
1993



SUNSET SILHOUETTES IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

Nestled amongst the mountains of Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan is the small town of Inasa, known for Satsuma oranges, hand held fireworks and more recently, puppetry. Once a year the town manages to attract both amateur and professional puppetry groups from all over the country to show and share. These, in turn, attract the people who come to enjoy them.

One of the companies central to the festival has its home in the town of Inasa and is, no doubt, responsible for the great interest the town folk have taken in puppetry in recent years. This company is *Gekidan Yuyake* (Sunset Silhouettes).

When I discovered them at the festival they were presenting a workshop. I sat amongst an audience of children who were fresh and beaming, fidgeting with enthusiasm and bristling with energy. The woman up front had a smile that involved her entire face and within moments the children were following her lead in twisting, flexing and stretching fingers, hands and arms to make creatures. Here's a crab, now a dove, a swan, a frog and look, see his eyes move! Soon the children were eagerly volunteering to become the puppeteers and musicians for a shadow puppet performance that they proudly presented within minutes.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about *Gekidan Yuyake* is that the woman with the smile, the principal player both behind and in front of the shadow screen, is a New Zealander named Rowena McGill.

Rowena McGill came to Japan twenty years ago for a year. She says she never really decided to make Japan her home, she just never decided to leave. When she arrived in Japan she learned the language, trained as a kindergarten teacher and during that time was introduced to some of the wonders of puppetry. Having some misgivings about the kindergarten system in Japan, Rowena left it to join a puppet company called *Gekidan Tsunobue* (Hornpipe). From this she branched out with two of her colleagues to form *Gekidan Yuyake* to take the magic of shadow puppetry to kindergarten children.

An ongoing search for inexpensive rehearsal space near Tokyo led the group to consider moving further out. Three years ago that decision coincided with an offer of assistance from the town of Inasa for artists interested in establishing themselves in the area to help promote community arts. The two interests met and this was the beginning of a happy liaison.

The community of Inasa has enthusiastically embraced puppetry and now more than ten amateur puppet groups exist in the area. Most of these focus on shadow puppetry.

Rowena McGill and Kenji Muto are the only two remaining members of the company. Although, with Muto-san pursuing studies, Rowena largely manages the company on her own these days. Over the last twelve months she has employed the assistance of an Australian puppeteer, Adam Bennett. Adam heard about *Gekidan Yuyake* whilst following his interests in the area of puppetry in Britain. There's something quirky about the idea of a Kiwi, an Aussie and a van full of puppets touring the countryside of Japan. Together they toured their show from the northern island of Hokkaido to the southern island of Kyushu. The company survives solely on ticket sales but after years of breaking ground, *Gekidan Yuyake's* reputation precedes them and there is never a shortage of requests for performances.

I caught up with the show at a kindergarten in Tokyo. After an introductory workshop giving the children hands on experience with shadow puppets, the show began. It was a traditional Japanese story about a boy, a monk and a witch with glowing eyes, who filled the children with delightful terror even before she ripped through the shadow screen. The manipulation and animation-like images were impressive and later behind the screen I could see the means of it all, a veritable cache of intricate and ingenious devices, projectors, lighting and sound gear.

Rowena is currently devising a solo show for the next round of tours. She has in mind the image of the woodblock print and a message about the environment. Not surprisingly, she's decided to dispense with unwieldy gear and is harkening for simplicity. Perhaps even something portable enough to squeeze alongside herself into a Tokyo train. No doubt it will allow this creative Kiwi the freedom to cover even more miles casting her sunset silhouettes in the land of the rising sun.

Jo Raphael

Tokyo, April, 1992.

(Thank you Jo for the wonderful
articles you've sent us -
please don't stop - Ed.)

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In the December Issue we ran the first page of Katy Bowman's travels with Michele Spooner, to the Ljubljana - here we continue page 2.....

KIYOHIME MANDALA, a performance by a Japanese company called DONDORO, performed by Houichi Okamoto.

This piece was performed at the Clej theatre where Michele and I performed. Although I read the program note prior to the performance I ended up constructing my own internal story which is a bit convoluted to relate.

The performance started with the ritual lighting of 4 candles set to define the performance space. This was the only laboured moment of the whole piece, it seemed to go on for ever. I later realised that it must have been incredibly hard for the puppeteer to see what he was doing as he not only had a black hood over his head but underneath was a full face mask with only tiny eye holes! The life sized puppet was clipped to the puppeteer's waist, the head operated by one hand the other arm being used as the puppet's. Dressed in a kimono, the puppet appeared to have no legs but at times the puppeteer slipped his feet into the shoes of the puppet to create tension in the body.

The performance piece was a wonderful synthesis of dance and puppetry, the puppeteer being a visible and distinct character, the action centring around the relationship between the two.

The opening sequence of this piece revealed the puppeteer wearing a mask of a young girl, the puppet appeared to be an old monk the relationship which unfolded was exquisite in terms of the definition of movement and the range and quality of emotions. This sequence was very tender the old man through the course of events stumbles and collapses, the young girl (the puppeteer) soothes him, this leads to a wonderful transformation, as the 'Young Girl' takes the hat of the old man she reveals the head of a beautiful woman, the puppeteer's mask is removed revealing him, white faced, bald and butoesque. He starts to undress the puppet woman shedding in the process his own previous costume, a semi erotic, sexual dance begins between them. He (the puppeteer) wants her, and advances aggressively pulling at her clothes, she resists and her hair piled into a bun is released and in her despair and anger, she flicks and lashes the air with it. This sexual struggle culminates in an extraordinary dual strangulation - pushed to his knees the puppeteer reaches up, hands around the neck of the puppet - her hands (the folds of her kimono) push down on his throat until he is bent completely backwards his head touching the floor, she looking down crazed at him - chilling!

It was very exciting to see such subtlety of movement and the range of emotions expressed, I completely lost track of the puppet/puppeteer they were both real!

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Katy Bowman page 3

MISERIA Theatro de Marionetas do Porto, solo performance by Joao Paulo Dardoso.

I saw this piece at the Arrivano del Mare festival in Cervia Italy. The indoor component of this festival is centred around an old salt factory on the banks of a canal running to the sea. The story goes, that the inaugural festival was intended as an outdoor event, the performers arriving by boat to the town centre, unfortunately it rained and all the performers congregated in the old factory for shelter. The factory is an old brick building subdivided by huge arch ways into six 'cells' each cell has a low platform installed and raked seating set in front of it. Because there are no dividing walls between the separate auditoria only one show can be performed at any given time and the night we arrived all six stages were being rigged simultaneously so as brief rehearsals could be held the following day prior to opening night. The space has a wonderful dank atmosphere and contributed a lot to some of the performances I saw there.

MISERIA is a solo performance piece performed with miniature rod puppets on a 'table top'. When I entered the theatre and looked at his set up I groaned internally, it all looked a bit twee to me but as the opera performance started I became absorbed. Performed in Portuguese (I was helped by scanning the French program notes) Joao Paulo Dardoso's vocal skills and extraordinary focus made the piece come to life.

A simple tale about a miserable old man whose only joy in life is his nut tree, granted a wish by Saint Peter he asks that any one caught climbing his tree would remain prisoner unless released by him. When death comes to get him, he makes a pact with the devil to sell his soul for another 20 years of life, when those 20 years expire death comes again but Miseria tricks her and she becomes a prisoner in his tree. Life comes to a standstill and in order to save the world he releases death on the condition that he be granted eternal life, which he is but the nut tree eventually dies and Miseria is condemned to his solitary existence forever.

The performance was completely self contained - illuminated by 2 miniature theatre lamps - the puppeteer from where I sat appeared to be in control of both lights and sound. Touches like the fire lit to cook the soup, which the puppet 'ate' and to heat the metal for him to work at his anvil with his tiny hammer helped to create a strong sense of the divisions in the old man's solitary day.

The puppets were almost doll like, no fancy mechanisms, just a small rod at the back of the head, the arms and legs if I remember correctly were directly manipulated with the fingers.

The table top was divided into three spaces - the forge where a fire was lit and later smouldered, the interior of the house, a table and a bed) and a dividing wall with window overlooking the tree. The puppeteer was plainly visible and narrated the story as it unfolded what struck me was the tenderness and delicacy of his manipulations and commitment to the story and the character. The piece was slow paced, which fitted the story, but never lagged. I was surprised but I loved it!

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Katy Bowman page 4

PINOCCHIO DRAK THEATRE, DIRECTED BY JOSEF KROFTA
DESIGNED BY PETRE MATATEC

This piece was loosely based on the tale of Pinocchio, using it as a metaphor for the father son relationship and the making of a man.

There were so many lovely touches in this piece but what excited me most, apart from the energy, and fabulous execution of the piece was the design. Deceptively simple - I suggest that the engineering was anything but - the basic set element was composed of a series of rigging ropes and pulleys which hoisted 3 large panels which became for me the sides of a circus tent, this formed the backdrop of the early scenes - beautifully lit to create interior and exterior action through the use of shadows. Partly narrated by a 'rough around the edges' MC the carnival atmosphere was completed by festooned coloured light globes suspended from the proscenium. The rigging device was later used to 'crucify' Pinocchio - his legs and arms splayed out in a giant X form - as the riggings slackened he moved through space in distorted spasms - a long distance marionette.

The other main set piece was a multi-purpose wagon on which Pinocchio is set alight - a fabulous moment - the puppet in flames screaming to be put out! The wagon then turns into a well with a trap door, into which Pinocchio falls to emerge in an under water scene beautifully executed in slow motion. The cart also becomes a door and a wall, the transformation of these simple set elements contributed to the magic of this piece, the lights, sound and set were co-ordinated so beautifully that the shifts from one reality to another were not unlike quick, slick edits in a film. I nearly decapitated a number of people as I left the theatre with my waving arms because of my excitements. I was also convinced that the music for the performance had to be live as the timing for some of the action was so spot on - I was later to discover that it was taped and was further surprised to hear that Krofta had erupted after the performance due to the slackness of the performers!

Another lovely scene was created by using a huge square of lycra pulled taught, the broken bits of Pinocchio were then manipulated separately, the puppeteers behind the fabric, this enabled funny combinations of limbs and some clever illusions of stretching and coming together to occur.

SOME ODDITIES

CLAUDIO CINELLI - Mani Opera - This was a very funny cabaret show that I saw at the festival club in Ljubljana. Bringing to life famous opera arias through the use of his essentially bare hands, with the aid of a few feathers and a couple of ping pong balls. Sitting on a fine line between kitch and surrealism Claudios extraordinary hands assumed caricatures of opera singers, thumbs becoming tongues, gulping adams apples and ping pong balls bulging eyes, the relationships that he created between the male and female singers was delightfully funny.

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Katy Bowman page 5

Hugo and Inez also did extraordinary things with parts of their bodies, a knee became the head of a character, a shirt pulled up the calf, a body, hands slipped into the shirt sleeves the arms and a red clown nose defined the face. A very simple device of shifting the nose higher on the knee, gives the impression that the character is looking up at the puppeteer. Inez did a lovely piece with her foot, the toes becoming the hair, a nose placed mid sole defining the face, her arm it's arm. Another piece performed by Inez was a piece using bathe unadorned hands joined to form a tiny dancing lady, breasts and all, performed to a ballad sung by the Beatles.

Another oddity performed with various parts of the body was a performance I saw in Italy the performance wasn't interesting in particular but the technique had something going for it. Using a video camera and monitor she created instant animations, first using her chin and mouth, the camera was set in an upside down position so that the reversed perspective gave a distorted impression of the forms. She created various FX by placing coloured pieces of glass between herself and the camera, she also introduced the end of her plait to alter the image. The close up nature of the filming exaggerated the form of her mouth and chin and at times it appeared to be a huge whale like creature she actually did and under water piece performed with her fingers submerged into a series of glasses of water. I really have no idea of what the piece was about, it anything but felt that the technique had something to offer.

PUPPET SCHOOLS

A feature at both the UNIMA and the Arrivano del Mare festival were performances by some of the European Puppet Schools. I particularly liked the work of the school from Prague, I managed to see 4 of their performances and was struck by their energy skill and commitment. Their Faust, utilising traditional rod marionettes was particularly engaging, it was the first time I have seen this style of puppet really come to life, part of the appeal is their use of live music, song and acrobatic skills, but what I found most engaging was the raw and energetic theatricality. The work of the students of the Prague school sat in stark contrast to that of the Charle Ville Mesieres school whose work was slightly produced but twee.

Their production of Petroushka started off with a bang, upside down stilt walkers, nice set etc. but this quickly petered out into a groaning rendition of a classical ballet from miniature marionettes performed in a very pretty miniature proscenium theatre, a bevy of white frocked performers read on the floor before it acting delighted - cringe. Unfortunately Stravinsky's music was used and the tiny puppets with limited movement could not sustain interest or compete.

The Birds, designed and directed by Roman Paska wasn't much better, again it was beautifully produced nice set, nice objects, the puppets a little bit too finished for my liking, but no energy no heart the students unfortunately didn't have a handle on the material and the piece suffered for the lack of commitment.



Meher Contractor, puppeteer, dead

By A Staff Reporter

AHMEDABAD, September 27.

MRS. MEHER CONTRACTOR, a renowned puppeteer, died here yesterday. Mrs. Contractor, who was the head of the Puppet Section of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts here, was to leave for Pakistan in a couple of days to take part in an international festival there.

Mrs. Contractor, who won the Sangeet Natak Akademi award with excellence in puppetry in 1983, began her experiments with puppets in 1955, when she was in the Shreyas experimental school at Ahmedabad, teaching art. She won almost immediate recognition both in India and abroad and within two years was elected to the Presidium of the Union International de la Marionette at the UNIMA Congress in Prague.

In 1958, she represented India at the First International Puppet Festival in Bucharest, where she was also a member of the international jury. Her lecture demonstrations and workshops took her all over the world, where she addressed and performed for international congresses, technical workshops, theatre research groups, libraries, museums and well-known professional festivals.

She had contributed her mite to a puppeteer's villa, a training centre at Mehrauli near New Delhi in the mid-sixties and worked for a while as project director for the Bharatiya Natya Sangh.

In 1964, she was named Vice-President of UNIMA, a rare distinction, and in 1976, Third World Chairman at Moscow, in recognition of her remarkable contribution to the nurturing and development of puppetry.

In 1968, Mrs. Contractor joined Darpana and taught hundreds of students the fascinating intricacies of her art and in the process experimented with the revival and revitalisation of this traditional form. Her teachings, exhibitions, demonstrations, and writings on the subject inspired an entire generation of young students to experiment with this versatile form.

She also worked as a researcher for the National Centre for Educational Research and Training and for the Centre for Cultural Research and Training. In 1972, she was awarded the UNIMA Bronze medal for her work on puppetry in India. She received the State Natya Nritya Akademi award for puppetry in 1988. She was also elected Vice-President, UNIMA and Chairperson, UNIMA Asia Pacific. In 1983, she formed the UNIMA-India Bharatiya Putli Sangh.

Among her 35 productions were: *Karnavati* (A 13-episode television serial on the story of Ahmedabad, 1988), *Ramayana* (Traditional revival of Andhra Pradesh shadows, 1965-66), *Panchatantra Tales* (Educational and moral stories in all based on ancient tales in glove, rod and shadow puppets, 1966-70), *The story of Ahmedabad* (Historical play, in rod puppets, 1968-70), *Dalo Tarwadi* (Gujarati folk tale, 1973), *Dhulasa* (A Gujarati folk tale, 1975-76), *Tido Joshi* (A Gujarati folk tale, 1987) and *Environment* (Environment and preservation of trees: a workshop cum performances in villages, 1990).

(In the December Issue we carried the news of the death of Mrs. Contractor, by way of a letter from her sons. This Article, accompanying their letter is printed as a tribute to the work of this great person. Ed.)

NEDERLANDS PUPPET INSTITUTE

For those of you responding to Katy Bowman's call to send promotional or documentary material (Dec. Issue) to the above, please note the following changes:

The Netherlands Puppetry Institute will cease to exist at the first of January 1993. On this date our institute will be merged in the Theater Instituut Nederland, together with the institutes for mime and dance.

This means that in future all our activities will be performed by the Theater Instituut Nederland and that all our publications will be cancelled.



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BOOK REVIEW

BYROM, Michael, *Punch in the Italian Puppet Theatre*, London, Centaur Press, 1983

Though the title refers to Punch, this book is really about Pulcinella who, though an ancestor of Punch, bears little real resemblance to him in spirit. It is a history of the hey-day of the Italian puppet shows with particular regard to the Neapolitan character Pulcinella.

But which Pulcinella? It gets a bit complex as there was a masked Pulcinella (live actor), a marionette Pulcinella (here whole scripts are still in existence) and of course, the glove puppet Pulcinella. A scarcity of detailed historical records and the use of the word 'mask' in Italian to mean 'character' seem to be reflected in the author's sometimes confusing mixing of the three media.

As a marionette, Pulcinella was often a secondary figure providing comic relief to the melodrama. This corresponds closely with his position in the live theatre. The marionette show was really a simplified version of the legitimate stage play whereas the *burattini* {glove puppets} have a style of their own due to the limitations of the medium. It is as a *burattino* that Pulcinella became the star.

The author sees technical reasons for the glove puppet's penchant for cudgeling. "Having no legs and weak little arms, the *burattino* is a poor deformed creature compared with his comely brothers and sisters the marionettes. As a dancer he is handicapped by the fact that he has no legs; and if he does have legs like the English Punch, they are merely paralysed appendages, dangling from the waist. Apart from his speed, his only real physical asset is the possession of a pair of strong shoulder ideal for a fight."

It was in the *burattini* shows (as opposed to the mask and marionette shows) that satire came into it. As noted in 1885, "Brighella and Pulcinella, caring nothing for the well-being of their down-trodden showman, hurled words of defiance at the throne and the altar." or "He excused nobody, neither the prelates, nor the cardinals, nor the Pope; and he placed his show boldly underneath the windows of those whom he had picked as the targets of his satire." At one puppeteer's trial, the offending puppet itself was labeled "*corpus delicti*".

The book is full of eyewitness accounts of shows and theatres, giving descriptions not only of the show but also of the auditorium itself, backstage goings-on, working conditions, etc. It's a treasure trove just for that. But there is also a wealth of anecdotes. I quote my favourite:

"There was no eclipse for the puppet Pulcinella in Naples as there was in the rest of the Italian peninsula; his popularity being illustrated by the well-known story about the preacher in the Largo del Castello who, deserted by the crowd for a *burattini* show, held up a crucifix and exclaimed, 'Look! Look! This is the true Pulcinella!'"

The book is an excellent guide for anyone interested in Puppet history. A certain amount of reader's knowledge regarding *Commedia dell'Arte* is presumed. Thankfully it does not get bogged in speculation about Atellan farce origins as do so many books about *Commedia*. [I suspect that many people who believe that *Commedia* descended from the Ancients also believe that the Egyptians could not possibly have built the Pyramids themselves - must have been spacemen.]

-Dennis Murphy

THEY COME FROM THE SEA

'ARRIVANO DAL MARE' is an annual puppet festival held in Cervia, Italy. Cervia was the centre of a salt industry and the old brick salt magazine is used as the theatre venue for the festival. The long building allows 5 productions to be set up at the same time, though they must be performed singly as the performance areas are only separated by partial walls.

The theme for the 1992 festival was 'Euro-Marionettes'. It featured puppet folk heroes from all around Europe. These included:

Mr Punch - Great Britain
Polichinelle - France
Guignol - France
Petrushka - Russia
Vasilache - Romania
Laszlo Vitek - Hungary
Kasperel - Austria
Don Cristobal - Spain
Dom Roberto - Portugal
Pulcinella - Napoli & Bari
Arlecchino(Harlequin) - The Veneto
Stenterello - Florence
Sandrone and Fagiolino - Reggio-Emilia

These shows were presented in their natural setting - the street. It must have been an organisational nightmare to bring all these traditional puppeteers together for one week in one place but it was done. Unfortunately at the last minute it was nearly undone.

Venues for the performances were altered at the last minute. We were wandering the street, programmes in hand, trying to figure out where all the shows were. Even office staff were not told of the changes. Sometimes the puppeteers themselves were unsure of where and when they were to perform. It all seemed to run on rumours. It was a great pity.

I had only one performance so with perseverance and luck I managed to see most of the outdoor shows though I had to sacrifice some of the theatre shows to do it. The thing that struck me most about these traditional shows was the large amount of language involved. Except for Pulcinella and Dom Roberto, who both used swazzles only, the puppets did a great deal of talking - usually in dialect. A great source of their humour was verbal.

One show featured local puppet heroes Sandrone and Fagiolino in a play about Columbus's voyage to America. The two characters signed on as deck hands and comic relief. The master puppeteer does all the voices but in the huge sailing ship/stage, it meant that often he was not manipulating the puppet that was speaking and so the lip-synch was flagrantly uncoordinated. But on the whole the shows were of a very high quality.

The traditional puppeteers were, without exception, characters themselves. The wit and banter were almost overwhelming. There was wonderful camaraderie and repartee: every meal turned into a feast. Sleep was put off until Australia. At the end of a week in this environment I really left I was parting company with old friends.

The puppeteers were very open and helpful to me in my research. Having acted as interpreter for the Italian puppeteers at the UNIMA festival, I had met most of them before I got to Cervia. In particular I am indebted to Paolo Papparotto, Maurizio Corniani, the deMarchi brothers and Mauro Monticelli (fifth generation puppeteer!) for their help and encouragement.

There was a good variety of theatre shows available. Among the more remarkable were:

BOCCASCENA by Giallomagre (Italy) Boccascena means proscenium opening, literally 'mouth of the scene'. This show took place in a mouth. A video camera focused in on the operator's mouth and showed an upside image on a large monitor. Eyes were pressed against the chin to form a face with a huge mouth. Coloured or patterned glass was passed in front of the lens for scene changes. It was bizarre and captivating.

SEPPELLITEMI ai FORNETTI by Antonio Rezza (Italy) This was 'material theatre.' As a backdrop there were sheets of material hanging like ragged drapes. The material had various sized holes at varying heights. Antonio would slip his head through a low hole in the black drape, put his hand through the other two smaller holes and become a little widow complaining about a noisy neighbour in the flat above. One hole had blond pigtails around it so he could play a little girl. Lots of ranting and raving in dialect. The show was hilarious, judging from the audience reaction. I understood little and felt like a first year English student at a Spike Milligan concert.

LA TRAVIATA by Claudio Cinelli (Italy) Using eyeballs, feathers and fancy cuffs, Claudio's otherwise bare hands sang opera. One singer's face formed with two hands split to two singers in profile when the duet started. Very stylish.

LE AVVENTURE di GINOCCHIO by Hugo & Ines (Italy) Using their bodies they created puppets. Picture a bare knee with a shirt pulled down over it and a clown nose on the knee to make a busker. With a small woman's head and her bare hands Ines made a naked lady. Incredibly effective and fairly indescribable. No words.

MISERIA by Teatro de Marionetas (Portugal) An old blacksmith confronts Death and tries to trick him. Small rod puppets in a jewel-like miniature village setting. In Portuguese.

LA TENTATION D'EXISTER ou LA COMIQUE ILLUSION by Circubu (France) A play about Polichinelle. The puppeteer's life too closely parallels the adventures of his puppet. Huge set that transforms from French drawing room to a puppet booth standing majestically on a small hill with sky and clouds behind. (Took a truck to carry it all.) In French.

A SPASSO by Papily (Slovenia) Presented somewhat like a shadow show but with coloured folded paper (paper, papier-mache and origami) appearing in the window/proscenium, lit by a single spot aimed up at it from below in front. It was the story of Goldilocks. Beautifully designed and the colours were lovely. Lots of play with proportions. No words.

POST TERTIUM DIEM by Institut del Teatre de Barcelona (Spain) This was a student production and I was wary as so many puppetry students don't include puppetry in their work. (That's what I said!) But its director promised there would be puppets in it so I went. It was brilliant. Four Boccaccio stories were presented in four styles using puppetry and object theatre techniques. Full of stark images and dramatic tableaux. In Italian.

I had a very good time and ate well.

Dennis Murphy

SOLOIST PUPPETRY
and the acquisition of
CHOCOLATE PUDDING
IN SLOVAKIA

Dennis Murphy

Tomas Plaszky is a very talented and versatile puppeteer in Kos'ice, (Czechoslovakia). He uses marionettes, object theatre, glove and arm puppets. He worked as both puppetmaker and performer for the Kos'ice State Puppet Theatre until leaving to establish his own company "Divadlo v Kufri".

He is an independent soloist puppeteer in Slovakia: writing, building and performing his own shows. His current repertoire holds eight productions and Tomas performs them at schools, cultural halls, festivals and night clubs.

"Little Flame" is a glove puppet play done in a folkloric setting. "Hansel and Gretel" is also in folkloric mode using marionettes that have heads to the head while the rest of the body is strung. (There must be a word for these puppets. They are found throughout Czechoslovakia.)

"Janko the Bean Boy" is mainly object theatre. Tomas enters dressed as a peasant, playing a guitar and carrying a shoulder bag. The peasant sits at his table and takes out his lunch. He wishes for a son even if he is not larger than the bean in his soup. The wish comes true and Janko appears. A hat, the guitar, the soup bowl and spoons double as characters in the play. For example, Janko accidentally insults the king (the guitar wearing the peasant's hat turned inside out to reveal a crown). Janko is imprisoned (there is a small door in the back of the guitar and Janko is seen in the guitar's hole with the strings acting as prison bars).

Tomas performs "Janko" in Slovak, Hungarian and Esperanto. He will soon be playing it in English - once I get time to translate it.

"The Violin Quartet Story" teaches about classical music and involves some very clever shadow techniques. For cabaret he presents "Clowning About" and "Solo For Piano". The latter is the best marionette-at-piano act I have ever seen. Through a series of foot pedals, the piano and the stool are animated. The piano dances, collapses, sings, reveals a coloured fountain and catches on fire. (In his "Variety Show", Tomas has a fire-eating puppet.)

"The Clown Story" is autobiographical reflecting the situation Tomas faced while working for the State Theatre. The Clown suggests an idea for a show which the arrogant Director (another very clever shadow puppet) rejects. The Clown then produces the show himself and when it is a success, the Director wants to put it on. But the Clown says no, he'll do it himself.

That show was rejected by the censors on 'technical' grounds. They said it was impossible for one puppeteer to perform it. It became Tomas's first independent production when all censorship was dropped after the Velvet Revolution.

Of course in Australia solo puppeteers are not an unusual sight. But a soloist in Slovakia faces a very different situation.

To illustrate this, let me tell you about a chocolate pudding I bought in Tomas's city, Kos'ice. I was having a look at a typical Slovak department store; dimly lit, dingy and dusty. In the food section I spotted a chocolate pudding. I failed to get any of the five clerks' attention then realised I would have to queue for service. (I had hoped to point rather than pronounce "Čokoladný pudín".)

I queued until I reached the first clerk. She went and got my pudding but instead of giving it to me, she wrote the price on a slip of paper and gave that to me. Another clerk took my pudding to the cashier. I continued in the queue until I was the second person. It was at this point that the two clerks running the cash register began counting its contents.

I stood there not believing what I saw. They were balancing their books, counting every coin, in the middle of the lunchtime rush!

After ten minutes I rebelled and in a plaintive voice I asked loudly for my pudding, PLEASE! -I was ignored. By this time the queue was so long people couldn't even place their orders so the other three clerks had nothing to do. My second louder outburst got me my pudding and instigated the woman in front of me to demand her food. But the woman behind me patiently waited and the counting continued.

After eating my pudding I saw the two clerks were still counting, the other three clerks were idle and a total of 23 people were waiting.

What has this to do with Tomas's situation? Everything. It is this same basic "old system" that makes the life of an independent puppeteer there so difficult.

For example: when a new telephone exchange was put in, the prefix to Tomas's telephone number was changed. When this happens in Australia anyone dialing the old number gets a recording advising them how to reach the new number. In Slovakia the caller just gets a busy signal. All of Tomas's old contacts are lost.

You could write Tomas a letter and it will probably reach him despite some confusion. The street where he lives had its name changed as it was named after a Czech communist. The authorities changed the house numbers at the same time. All this is done by authorities who never consult the public and who have no concept of what it's like to run a business.

Leaving the country can take Tomas anything from half an hour at the border to three hours, depending on the power games played by the frontier police and how jealous they are of people leaving Czechoslovakia to, they believe, make a lot of money abroad.

Despite Tomas's ability to find work, the economy has reduced people's ability to pay. Puppetry, once considered to be an integral part of the culture, is now seen as an expensive luxury. The professional companies continue to receive state funding but the many vigorous amateur groups have lost theirs. This was a source of income for Tomas who directed a local group.

While Tomas has outstanding talent and the business acumen needed to succeed, he seems to be doomed to waiting until Slovakia can catch up with him.

After seeing Tomas's situation, I feel very lazy and lucky. Mind you, I still whinge about people undercutting the actor's award - but now I feel like a wimp doing it.

<Tomas Plaszky, Jantarova 10, CS-040 01 Kos'ice, Slovakia>
<Tel 095/679647>



editor's erumpents

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

This month I have tried to exhaust the backlog of International News - hence its dominance, I hope you have enjoyed it.

1993 SUBSCRIPTIONS

For only \$20 for individuals and \$60 for Companies you can continue as a member of UNIMA - if you have forgotten to re-new please hurry your Subscription to the Treasurer David Poulton (address on front cover) or this will be the last Newsletter we can mail you.

1993 AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS DIRECTORY

This is now out, and a beauty - Puppet Companies feature well. Available from 'Performance Media' p.o.box 1796, North Sydney 2060, ph. (02)929 8028, fax (02)955 0036, \$40 + \$5 post & hand.

1992 COMPANY REPORTS

What a great idea from a Member calling for each Company to send a report of 1992 activities (this includes 1-person Companies) - 1/2 page would be fine - your joys, heartaches & progress over 1992 - have 2 Reports to hand - look forward to receiving yours !

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks so much for your contributions to this Edition (and for the last 2 years), thanks also to Garry Fuhrmeister and Dennis Murphy and Basil Smith who compile Regional/State news.

Still a little bit of material being held over for June Issue.

DEADLINE for JUNE COPY is - 16 MAY

and please mail to our new Editor:

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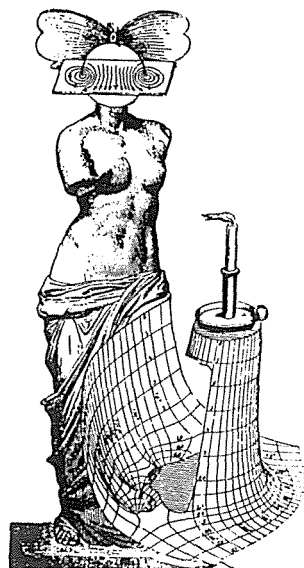
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Happy performing, cheers,

Peter grasshopper

grasshopper



Max Ernst, Paramythe

