



PRESIDENT:

Jennifer Davidson
62 York Street
Sandy Bay TAS 7005
tel: (002) 23-6546

SECRETARY:

Dennis Murphy
79 Binalong Road
Old Toongabbie NSW 2146
tel: (02) 631-0613

TREASURER:

Garry Fuhrmeister
28 Arkose Street
Eight Mile Plains QLD 4113
tel: (07) 341-5028

INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION

UNIMA CENTRE AUSTRALIA

MAR'95

SECRETARY'S
REPORT



Ed: Jennie Pfeiffer
12 La Rose Street
Brunswick, 3056, VIC
Ph: (03) 386 6831

1995 is well and truly underway. But before we finish off with 1994 I would like to welcome the 25 (yes, 25!) new members who joined (or re-joined) UNIMA-Australia last year. That is a 20% net increase in membership over 1993. I think we can declare our recruitment campaign a rousing success thanks to all those who urged their friends to become part of UNIMA. Keep it up.

WELCOME also to our new Newsletter Editor : Jenny Anderson of One Toe Theatre. Richard Hart has volunteered to help as well. Jennie Pfeiffer who has been Editor for the last two years will maintain a keen interest in the Newsletter so we can expect a smooth transition.

Many thank, Jen, for all your hard work.

Thanks also go to Noriko Nishimoto at Spare Parts for generously agreeing to monitor UNIMA-Japan's newsletter for us and report on any items that might be of interest to Australian Puppeteers.

REMINDER: Subscriptions are DUE. Check your address label for your current status.

Could we please ask you to use the renewal form enclosed in the last issue? Thanks.

NEWS IN BRIEF: Slovenia, sight of the 1992 UNIMA Festival, is establishing a biennial puppet festival. PUPPET ART 95 will run from June 12 to 18 and will feature both Slovenian and International puppet companies at various venues around Ljubljana.

The next UNIMA Festival and 17th Congress will be in Budapest from 23 to 30 June, 1996. \$120 US will get you performance admission tickets, programme brochure, public transportation tickets, admission tickets to museums, sightseeing excursions and closing gala. No free steak knives but you'll receive a T-shirt at no extra cost. They can also arrange your accommodation.

Francis Ford Coppola is working on a film about Pinocchio. No Gothic castles or forests; this is a post-punk Pinocchio. According to the illustrator, Roberto Innocenti, Pinocchio will "live on the periphery, faced with all the temptations of the young: sex, drugs and rock'n' roll. He spends his time between low-down bars, taverns and advertising signs."

Speaking of films, my partner wanted a break from Puppetry so she went to see the Zhang Yimou film, "To Live". It turned out to be about a man that becomes involved in a Chinese shadow theatre. Janice said it showed how the theatre operated and revealed a lot of the shadow techniques. She recommends it as a 'busman's holiday'.

Thanks again to all of you who made an effort to recruit new UNIMA members.

Happy Puppeteering

Dennis



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

NSW NEWS

An annual "*Edith C Murray Memorial UNIMA Dinner*" is being considered for Sydney. Edith was the 'grandmother of Australian Puppetry', founding member of UNIMA Australia and the Clovelly Puppet Theatre once the oldest continuously running puppet theatre in the Commonwealth. The first dinner will probably be in July but ONLY if sufficient interest is shown by members. Please ring me now if you have sufficient interest.

"DIG" is Ross Browning's new show about mining. Ross wrote and performed the show with puppets built by Garth Frost who designed The Ferals puppets. Sydney Electricity sponsored holiday performances at the Earth Exchange, Sydney's geological museum.

Jerry van der Veer's Dutch "*Punch and Judy*" appeared at Manly Corso and on the Wharf. Jerry and Dawn now lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle driving a camper van and pulling a caravan/stage. They also carry a fit-up for indoor shows. They have been working the agricultural show circuit as well.

The Sydney Festival finally had some Puppetry in it. The Wierszalin Theatre of Poland presented "*Roll-a-Pea*", an adaptation of a biblical story. It was done in a lovely rustic Polish setting with puppets that were like statuettes with no more than one moving part. But the Puppetry was very effective without moving eyes, servo-mechanisms and the like.

The actors in the then state-run theatre had the chance to buy their production when the system in Poland changed and workers were encouraged to privatise their factories. Wierszalin is now the largest private company in Poland with 12 members and, unusual for Polish companies, they have no physical theatre to operate from.

Also visiting Sydney were Elizabeth Paterson from Canberra; she's been working on a street theatre project and Richard Hart from Melbourne where he just finished building a rainforest litter segment for Gardner's Puppet Theatre.

One Toe Theatre (Jenny Anderson & Kym Tonkin) came up from Melbourne and presented their object theatre piece "*BIN*" as part of the first Sydney Fringe Festival at Bondi Pavilion.

Also at Bondi Pavilion, Grasshopper premiered his new primary school show, "*Hoopla*". It features circus skills and, for the wild animal sequence, object theatre. It starts touring in March when Grassie gets back from a Queensland Arts Council tour of *The Overcoat*.

The Rocks Puppet Cottage had a total of 177 performances of seven productions over the holidays provided by Sydney Puppet Theatre and Murphys Puppets. Thanks to visitors coming through I had the chance to catch up on the latest political news from South Africa and Slovakia; I met two retired puppeteers from New Zealand and a footsore London grandmother who was quite happy to spend half an hour coaching me on my Cockney vowels while her grandchildren played with puppets.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Treasurer's Desk

Twenty four 1995 Subscriptions received to date, so there are still quite a few of you out there who need to get your annual fees in. Please make it soon to ensure your name is recorded at UNIMA France as financial.



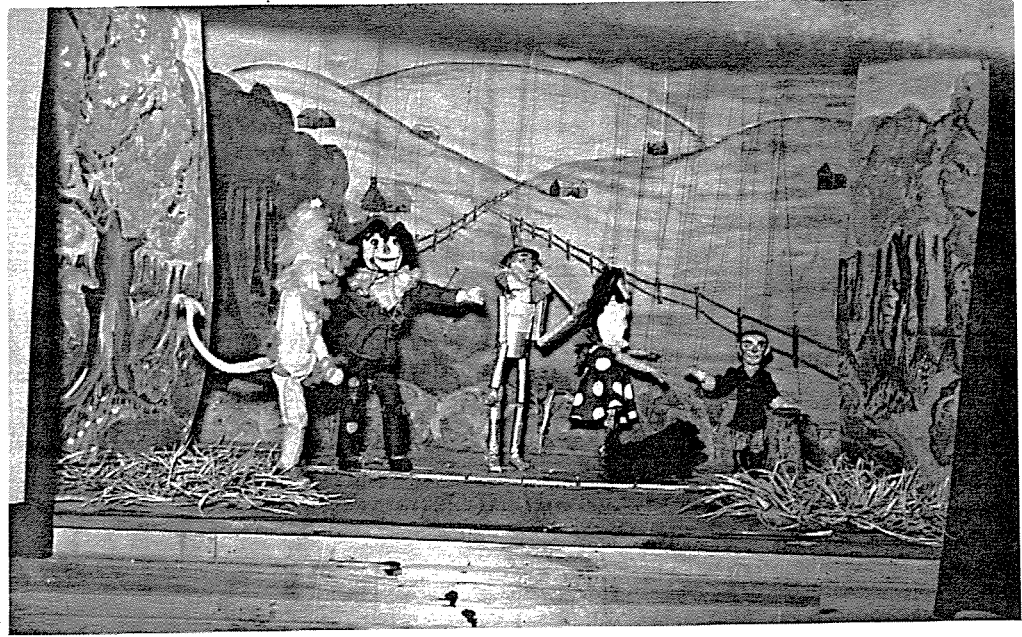
Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre

The festival committee, chaired by Pat Zuber, have advertised and received applications for the position of co-ordinator. It is hoped that a satisfactory appointment will be able to be made soon. Once the co-ordinator is in place, the committee are expecting considerable progress on event planning. The Noosa Shire Council have suggested a festival date of early June, 1996.



Turoa Walmsley and Norman Hetherington at
UNIMA dinner, Sydney, November '94

Wizard of Oz believed to have been staged in the 1950's at Clovelly Puppet Theatre. Does anyone recognise this production?



0585 137402

SMIFFS PUPPETS

Basil and Janet Smith's new caravan in England along with their telephone number if anybody is feeling extravagant.



TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

1995 promises to be a dynamic year full of puppetry adventures.

Dagmar Zuzanekova, a design student from the school of puppetry in Prague has arrived, and has been a colourful addition to the Terrapin team. Dagmar has been observing rehearsals, assisting in design, construction and painting our strange Australian trees! She's off to Skylark for the opening of their new show, then to Sydney Puppet Theatre to visit Steve and Sue, and then to Carouselle and the Come Out festival in Adelaide. Dagmar ends her adventures here in Hobart, observing rehearsals of Jindra Rosendorf's new show and other puppetry/theatre experience with my Artist in Residence programme.

"Jump Into the Picture", our latest show for K-Grade 6, is an adventure into the crazy world of fairytales, objects and puppets.

Moments of real danger are experienced by our own little Red Riding Hood as she meets the wolf (an actor morphing into a garbage bin) and a thermos with health problems. Loads of laughs make "Jump Into The Picture" the highlight of our schools touring program.

"Jump Into The Picture" is a company devised production comprising Sue Giles (alias Shaken and Suspicious from Melbourne), Annette Downs (Artistic Director), Ruth Hadlow (Designer), Philip Mitchell (Director), Lynne Kent and Melissa King (Performers), and commences touring on the 6 March.

"Freedom of the Heart", fresh from winning a Human Rights Award, is off to Queensland in July for 6 weeks touring as well as an inaugural performance at the IDEA Conference in Brisbane.

"Desires", Terrapins adult show for the year, will open in November and negotiations are underway with the ABC to produce a television version of "Desires" after this run.

If you're in Tasmania visiting or performing, give us a call - we'd love to meet and chat.

PHILIP MITCHELL

Lesley Trowbridge' Puppet Opera gears up for the Pakistan Festival in Lahore in 1996, 10-20 Oct, with Il Crociato in Egitto. He is about to send two more of his video's to Scott Base(NZ) Antarctica. He has been busy over Christmas making raspberry and plum jam and hand sewing Westland tweed and Japanese brocade trim to his Emperor's coat costume. he complains however that the hot weather is not so good for his top A's



BRITISH UNIMA : DISASTERS

Contrary to some speculation following alarming television pictures of flooded streets at Charleville, I can confirm that the Institut de la Marionette is not using the basement studio theatre for performances with water puppets! However, some of the staff are having to sleep at Institut because their homes have been affected. The flooding was restricted to the lower parts of the town near to the Meuse river, and I hear that the Musée Rimbaud is submerged. At the time of writing they say that they are passing the water on to Holland (like the Olympic flame). Our friend Ruth van der Steenhoven, whose house theatre at Papendrecht is below the water level of the nearby dike, tells me that he does not expect danger there. NIHON UNIMA, in response to my inquiry, tell me that they do have members in the Hyago prefecture (Kobe, Awaji) which they have tried to contact with no response. They hope they are with survival camps or with relatives. However, in spite of the severe damage and the high death toll, the disaster is restricted to a very small area of southern Hyago. Although Osaka and Kyoto are nearby they did not suffer so badly. Puppeteers in that area have been contacted and found to be alive and well.

News of these events puts our own recent disaster (the theft of our box-trailer containing staging for two of our three shows) into a pale light. Nevertheless, I have been considerably heartened by offers of assistance by other puppeteers. It helps to restore faith in other puppeteers who often seem to be squabbling over petty matters. I don't rule myself out!

Best wishes
Ray daSilva



PUPPETEER'S SUMMER SCHOOL / RETREAT IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS.

For a week in late January / early February, last, a group of nine puppeteers and similar performers all enjoyed a series of half day workshops, performances and discussions in the beautiful Blue Mountains, N.S.W.

It was a live in event with shared cooking, cleaning and lots of stimulating interaction for those participating, including the tutors, who stayed at least one night each.

The first workshop was in scriptwriting lead by Richard Tulloch. It started with the basic, universal principles of narrative writing, looking briefly at qualities of lead characters that engage our emotions. These distilled to:

They are the victim of some undeserved misfortune.

Or:

They are good at something.

Or:

They combine the above to various degrees.

It almost goes without saying that there appears to be a strong predisposition, whether culturally, genetically, or both, that humans have to being carried away by certain characters and plot structures and that these have been understood and used for centuries by storywriters/tellers. Richard saw much benefit from reading books on scriptwriting including Hollywood movies in order to understand basic structures that work.

We finished off with a couple of exercises; choosing a setting and developing a brief synopsis, without being too precious about it. Not much is lost at these stages if you decide to start again.

Day two was a shapes workshop with Sue Wallace from the Sydney Puppet Theatre. Six or seven 3D plastic shapes were used by the group to devise their own short performances. It was an excellent exercise and a lot of fun.

Day three and four touched the DADA and ABSURDIST movements, de-mystifying both thanks to the lucid and entertaining approach of Colin Schumacher.

The final workshop was in Basel masks lead by Ross Brown from Newcastle. Ross commenced with some very useful body exercises before introducing the larger than life masks. Due to their size, Basel masks require much more exaggerated body movement like a puppet or cartoon character. There is also no dialogue, thus testing mime skills, and only four or five stock characters based on power relationships.

During the evenings was a time for participants to show each other their work and this was a very good opportunity to get expert feedback on work in progress. On the final night, people were invited from outside to view puppet performances, storytelling and experimental work devised during the Summer School period. In short, I thought it was a great event and congratulations to the organisers.

by RICHARD HART.

puppetry, perspective and "Roll A Pea"

One of the great things about puppetry is that it can re-define the size of the world. The most common example of this is when the audience accepts that a small figure represents a human being. But we can also use a huge hand, say, to indicate the whole body of a giant. Alternatively, it could show a 'close-up' on a piece of action by a figure that we have previously seen to be quite small.

People often say that modern audiences want theatre to be more like cinema, with quick, short scenes. I think they are wrong, not just because it implies that audiences are incapable of concentrating for more than thirty seconds. Actually, puppetry often does resemble cinema, but in a different way - in that its unique juggling of perspective is so much like filmic shot-size.

A 'close-up' on film focuses attention on a specific object or actor's emotional state. Conversely, a long-shot sets the general tone and creates a background which may be in harmony or conflict with the close-up. By cutting between these shots, the film-maker can manipulate the way we read a situation. Eg: A battle scene can look seductively choreographed in long-shot, but a close up of a soldier being stabbed can abruptly cut into this romanticism.

I was reminded that puppetry has a similar power when I saw "Roll-a Pea" performed by the Polish Wierszalin Theatre Company at the 1995 Sydney Festival. The show was a very simple folk-tale told through minimal dialogue and traditional folk songs. The puppets were simple wooden dolls which mostly only had movable arms. The bare plot was made meaningful by the way the performers manipulated and interacted with the puppets, constantly leaping between the individual and the general. Here are some of the ways this was done:

- Each puppet, representing a core character, could stand independently of the performers, who played extra characters around them. eg: two puppets stood as the bride and groom while the cast acted the wedding congregation.
- The puppets could be manipulated in a conventional manner, where the puppeteer directed all their energy through it.
- The performers, (responsible for one puppet each) could act the part of their puppet characters, completely apart from the figures.
- The puppeteer could hold the puppet and act the emotions it would have been feeling. In this case the puppet was like the public face of the character, and the actor provided the inner life.
- As the chorus, each performer played variations on a stock character to which their puppet belonged eg: all Over-Virtuous-Young-Women.

Instead of implying that the puppets were too primitive to perform anything subtle, this style actually made them more powerful. Here's an example: in one sequence, the Young Sinner crawls the many miles back to his parents' home, rolling a pea before him. The puppeteer moved the puppet jerkily across the table while 'acting' the agony of the journey. Interspersed with this, the rest of the cast sang a liturgical chant. As stock village characters, they enacted (what seemed to me to be) a painful procession of religious repentance. The puppeteer then smeared blood haltingly and painfully on his puppet's knees. The orthodox Christian ceremony thus provided a cultural backdrop for the situation, while the puppeteer-as-actor gave the symbolic blood-smearing an immediate and emotional physical depth. Strangely, the juggling of perspectives ultimately focused attention on the puppet, who I felt was the 'real' character.

Folk tales sometimes seem irrelevant to modern life. "Roll-a Pea" showed that by using puppets in an imaginative and intelligent way, it is possible to tell a simple story that has a devastating individual portrayal, within a clear social context. And it was all in one take.

:Jenny Anderson

ROY AND JULIE McNEILL OF REAL FANTASY THEATRE have a new address and can be contacted at 95 Mt Crosby Rd. Tivoli, 4305 PH: (07) 282 7935. Roy and Julie will be working at Easter in Brisbane at City Hall for the Brisbane City Council and the promotion of their recycling program. Roy is also on the organising committee for the PUPPET FESTIVAL to be held in Noosa.

Roy McNeill, a puppeteer of 27 years experience intends to write a series of articles which will broach types, styles, practicalities and philosophy of puppetry. The first article is on marionettes which he is writing from the home of marionettes, Queensland.

When I first joined the Marionette Theatre of Australia in 1968 they were performing "The Explorers" at the Hunter Theatre in Newcastle. The show was loosely based on the adventures of Burke and Wills, with human looking dogs called Colonel Poodle and Clancy. the poodle was a pompous British sort of chap while Clancy was your common-man sort of mongrel.

As far as I can remember there were four poodles: No1 pulled out pocket binoculars, No2 pulled out a pocket watch, No3 had no legs. All he did was crawl through a marsh. No4 was very small as he was supposed to be in the distance. .

The puppets, bodies, arms and legs were made by the company. Torso and abdomen were made

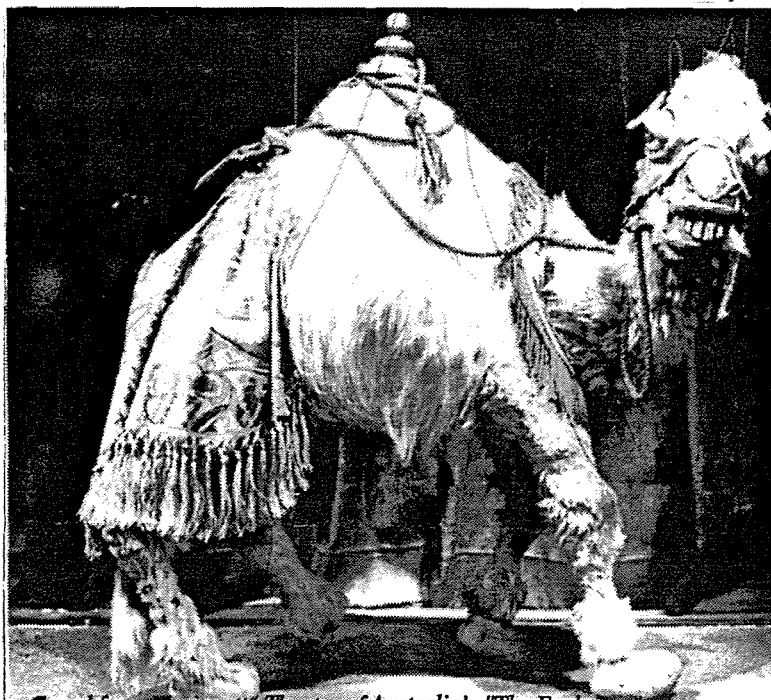
from squares and rectangles of ½" wood. Flocking covered with canvas and tacked in place helped to round out the figures. Arms were made from sausages of canvas stuffed with flocking. Legs were ½" rectangles joined at the knee by a metal hinge. The pin of the hinge had been removed and a thinner piece of wire was inserted and oiled to facilitate ease of movement. All the parts were joined by two strips of canvas webbing doubled over and tacked in place.

Heads were made by sculptors out of clay and two or three plaster cast copies were made from them. These casts were coated with petroleum jelly and aluminium foil. A product called 'Sylastic', which was canvas impregnated with glue, was bathed in

acetone to soften it and moulded into the two halves. Before being joined, a triangle of three loops were placed at the bottom neck and either side of the head. This was joined with Sylastic. Sylastic works like paper maché; one or two inch pieces are put on in layers which are worked into each other. This was lightly sanded and covered in fur or feathers where required. The faces had a base of pearl wood glue and whiting, painted on and sanded. the features were then painted on. Most of this as done by the puppet master, Ygor Hyczka.

Ygor also carved the hooves and made the mould for the paws which were cast in fibreglass en masse. The costumes and skins were made in the wardrobe department of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, of which the Marionette Theatre was a member. Some of the characters which they wished to humanise and civilise wore Red Robin children's shoes.

The show was a group of specialty puppets cleverly woven into an adventure story. There are some characters: like weeping hen with water squirting out of her eyes who cries so much that she lays an egg, and puppets riding horses and a bucking camel.



Camel from Marionette Theatre of Australia's "The Explorers", from Maeve Vella and Helen Rickards' book, Theatre of the Impossible.

All the puppets were very long string marionettes operated from a standard aeroplane design control, (this seems to be the norm in Australia rather than the vertical style commonly used in England and the US.). They were an adaptation of the Sicilian marionette with a rod through the top of the head and point shoes with springs in

them.

T bar control was strung with the head strings on the outer front edge. Canvas webbing was tacked to the control to assist stringing in the dark. In between the head strings and the centre of the T were the arm strings and in the centre of the T were the mouth strings. At the sharp end of the T

were the back strings. A loop of spring wire in the shape of a bow was attached to the front of the T-bar and along the edge of a separate leg bar so that the bar could be taken off and replaced in the dark. Animals that retained their four legs were operated by a long fat H-control as though to T-bars had been joined end to end. The legs were cross tied from the end of the T's and rocked to walk the puppet. Usually these puppets had a separate head control to accommodate eyes, mouth, lips, and sometimes jaws. These puppets never if ever had to be fixed, except for strings, that were linen covered with beeswax.

The bridge which the puppeteers worked from was 4 yards above the ground and 3 yards above the stage. Working on the front and back of the stage gave depth and perspective. A painted scrim, when lit from the front looked quite solid, but disappeared when lit from behind. This was sometimes strung under the bridge. At the back was a cyclorama lit by a ground row.

The show used a human narrator (Penny Everingham nee Hall) dressed in a nineteenth century costume to add to the historic nature of the piece and to relate with the audience.

The company generally comprised: 5 puppeteers, 2 stage managers, Ygor the puppet master and a manager. All the shows were performed to tapes and travelled with 2 or 3 batons full of lights. The light wooden stage plus light and sound system, sets and puppets weighed about three tons!

The Marionette Theatre of Australia did similar shows plus Australian classics like "The Magic Pudding" up to the mid 70's. The baton was taken up by the Marionette Theatre of Queensland who continued the vignette story style of marionette show.

Down south in Melbourne and Hobart the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre and Pilgrim Puppet Theatre used marionettes to tell classic and original tales.

The Pilgrim Puppet Theatre was and still is unique as it was the first puppet company to have their own theatre venue and not to tour.

Pilgrim's main innovation was a stage that slid sideways so that the sets could be changed without closing the curtains. The flooring of part of the stage could be removed to expose a pit from which rod and marionettes could be operated. The puppet controls were also quite innovative and were a combination of the horizontal and the vertical styles. I think they were developed by Bruce Binzer and Robert Atkins. They worked like

a standard horizontal but they had a floating shoulder bar connected with screw loops halfway down the back T. This helped with the posture of the puppet. The other innovation was the hand strings which were in the same place but pivoted on a lever. This meant that small hand gesture could be given while walking.

The heads were carved by Carol Bertuch from polystyrene. They were covered with industrial paper maché with the addition of P.V.A and water. This was sanded and painted white.

Nancy Aitkin carved the legs, bodies, hands and feet from balsa wood. Shoulders, wrists and elbows were hinged with leather. Hips were wired through a slip groove through the thigh, knees were carved, tongue and grooved, and reinforced with "Araldite". Most of these puppets worked beautifully and looked just as good.

Any fine balsa parts had to be reinforced. One of the jobs that nobody liked was pushing the darned needles down the fingers of the puppets. The leather hinges had to be reworked quite regularly as they stretched when attached to large areas. We also weighted the feet with lead and covered the soles with leather.

It was while working at the Pilgrim that a child came up to me and said, "Great movie, Mr." "Thank you but it wasn't a movie, it was a puppet show." to which he replied, "Is there another movie later?"

The Pilgrim, like the M.T.A. used pre-recorded tape for the voices. I am afraid I know very little about the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre's marionettes. Until I started looking around Queensland I thought that the marionette was virtually dead including the recently demised Marionette Theatre of Queensland, but as I look around I have never seen so many marionette shows. All of the puppets made in their own unique styles have controls which have not developed from the basic Sicilian style, and most seem to be performed to a tape. I think it would be good if these puppeteers found their own voice so that the puppet communicates directly with the audience.

I found a voice in the late 70's while working with Handspan. They employed a voice teacher who taught Alexander Technique. We all really enjoyed it, and later my own company, Real Fantasy Theatre also employed Lyndie Davies for classes. It's very simple and can be taught in a few lessons. Finding the characterisations came while rehearsing for shows. The puppet warm-up exercises I now practice are very similar to the body and voice warm up Joe Newy taught at Pilgrim - a -e -i - o -u . **:Roy McNeill**

**SUE WALLACE
SYDNEY PUPPET
THEATRE**

National Performers'
Conference
Malt House, Melbourne
October 29 1994

What I'm going to talk about today is a marriage of animation, computer and puppetry techniques. This marriage of techniques is already leading to a new area of employment for puppeteers, dancers and actors.

In August this year I was accepted into a three week course at the International Institute of Puppetry in France. The course was titled Traditional Techniques\New Technologies. My area of expertise is puppetry.

This was the first time a course like this had been undertaken and the 20 participants came from 11 different countries with a variety of skills from computer and cinema animation, design, architecture and puppetry. Our principal reason for being there was to lend an artistic vision to experiments in MOTION CAPTURE that is a breakthrough technology for 3-D computer animation.

So what is Motion Capture?

Motion Capture is the recording of movement for computer character animation for immediate or delayed analysis and playback. Using sensors whose positions in space can be detected and mapped into the computer the human motion can actually

control the motion of a computer character.

I won't go into the techniques of the systems and I'm certainly no computer specialist. What I want to do is to give you a mental picture of the work. At the end of the course we gave a public presentation of our experiments and I will give you some examples of the works.

Firstly, imagine me with 4 sensors attached to my body with cables going from them to the computer. What I am linked (or calibrated) to is a sunflower in a flower pot that I can see on the computer screen. The flower has a stem, two leaves and the flower head.

What I am looking at is a full colour 3-D computer environment. I have one sensor taped to my navel that will control the movement of the leaves; one on my head controls the movement of the flower head and I have one taped to each hand - these are for two bees. What I actually had were sausages. The computer technician hadn't got around to designing the bees. I can control the movement of the stem by changing the relationship between my head and my navel.

So I could create a story with the flower, and between the flower and the sausages/bees. If I want a bee to visit the pollen on the flower head, I "fly" my hand up to my head. If I want to bounce a bee from a leaf, I work my hips and hand together. I'm working in a virtual environment. I don't actually have any leaves

attached to my body and I'm watching the animation being created in real time in the computer.

Why not use a puppet, a puppeteer and film it?

Two reasons I can see immediately -

1. With puppetry it is very hard to disguise the method of manipulation.
2. In the 3-D computer environment you have a 360 degree camera so you can view the character and the action from any angle.

The Course director was Sally Jane Norman, an ex-pat New Zealander who has studied and lived in Paris for the last 18 years. She is a research associate at the Performing Arts Laboratory at the National Centre of Scientific Research in Paris which was using motion capture. They had an actor linked to the sensors recording movements for a character. When it was necessary for the character to fly, they unhooked the actor and remarked that now they would have to revert to a more arduous and less precise method of computer animation. Sally couldn't believe that they hadn't considered using a puppet and puppeteer to continue using motion capture for the flying scenes.

I'll give you another example of our experiments. When we did the presentation we had a large 2 metre square screen onto which the computer screen image could be rear projected. So a large image was available to the audience.

Imagine there are two puppeteers standing at the side of this screen with a sensor in each hand. They are about to control the movement of a virtual towel (this is the

computer character). Again they have no real character to work with - just the sensors and the figure on the computer screen. So they monitor the figures' movements by watching the screen.

I created a short performance piece in front of the screen with a real towel. Then, imagine the towel beginning to pull itself, with me attached to behind the screen. As it disappears, the virtual towel appears, bigger than the original. Now I can play a game with the virtual towel- IN REAL TIME. In fact, as long as the puppeteers can see me, we can improvise. So non-verbally I challenge the towel to a dancing duel. It can do pretty good "towel" impression of my movements. Then it challenges me - it jumps up and down a few times and I follow. On the last jump it stays up in the air. Now unless I get some people to hold me up in the air, I cannot imitate the towel's movement. So I go to the side of the screen and beckon the floating towel to me. As it gets close I blow into its side. The puppeteers react by moving the sensors in such a way that it appears to be blown right off the screen. At this point someone else is cued to throw the real towel back onto the stage.

This towel could have beautiful fluid movements and you could put it into a variety of environments eg. a room, the beach, on a road, in space. We also experimented with making a character 'talk' by the operator using a microphone and experiment in making patterns on screen by using either vocal or instrument sound frequency changes. For

example, one of the puppeteers had 4 sensors taped to a flexible tube doing the same movements. Another person was playing the guitar into a microphone that was linked into the computer. As the frequency of the sound changed the tube emanated sparkly crystal-like patterns.

What are the current and potential uses of this technology?

Apparently the technology is already being used in the production of video games and in advertising. We also saw a French animation series called *Insectors* where motion capture is used in conjunction with other computer animation techniques.

I saw a video on the making of an advertisement for a petrol company where 2 cars were tangoing with each other. The cars' movements were controlled by 2 dancers who had about 8 sensors each. Their movements were choreographed and recorded in real time as they danced with each other. Obviously there were cables all over the place so the cables had to be hooked out of the way above the dancers.

There are also possibilities for live motion capture: integrating the technology into theatre performances, rock concerts, nightclubs and other live events.

I have seen footage of a dance party where a dancer behind the scenes was wearing sensors and controlling the movement of a dragon. The dragon was projected onto a large screen and could move with the

music. The technology is so much fun to work with that I can see people paying, in a dance party setting, to be linked to a computer character and have the party watch them animate their chosen character.

As far as I know there are sensor systems in Australia but they are not yet being used in the Arts. Hospitals are using them for sports medicine and physiotherapy to monitor the rotation of limbs. An aeronautical company is also using the technology for flight simulation. I was very surprised to learn that the slower system can be purchased for as low as \$4000, and can be run on a PC. The faster system needs more sophisticated hardware. Of course you also need the software to support the motion capture system.

The puppeteers' knowledge of movement will be very useful to production houses investing in this equipment.

(Sue Wallace gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Australia Council and the Australian Puppetry Guild.)

And a special thank you to Janet Daigleish. Her networking skills were responsible for my being asked to give a paper.

Written by Sue Wallace,
Sydney Puppet Theatre,
Tel: (02) 550 6457
SYDENHAM, N.S.W. 2044

The first time I played a high school was with my primary school show booked as an introduction to Puppetry. 150 students came in and their attitude to puppets was obvious; each tried to sit along the back wall. They were expecting the worst.

I couldn't help myself; I donned a vest and straw boater then jumped out and in my best tone of condescension said, "We're going to have a puppet show, boys and girls." The room winced. "That's what you're expecting, right?" That broke the ice and I went on to explain that they would be seeing what I do in Primary school. In the end they laughed in the same places the younger kids do. When you are surrounded {and dwarfed} by high school students, you need to remember that they are still only kids.

Here's the high school audience profile: They are too old/cool for puppets and may feel insulted that they have to watch you. Being peer-conscious, they won't laugh unless they are sure others are laughing first. Usually they are fully prepared to hate the show. They are an unnatural audience being a same-age group and in a school environment.

It's imperative to make a quick strong impression. If you don't get their attention and respect straightaway you aren't likely to ever have it. You almost need to catch them unawares. (*See Murphy's 9th Law of Puppetry: High school audiences will allow you up to 25 seconds to establish your credentials and gain their respect. There are no second chances.*)

Aim to get the kids in the back row onside. They are usually the 'cool' ones. If they laugh the others will too. The real troublemakers don't come simply by 'forgetting' to bring their \$2.50.

The show needs to be tuned to their interests or at least to their sense of humour. Luckily for me *Commedia dell'Arte* appeals to generation Y. It's fast, it's gross, it's street theatre.

As I also do Mask in the show I was concerned about glove puppets onstage competing with Mask characters that have gone right out into the audience. With a short introduction the change of scale is accepted. I leave the front cover off the stage for the more technically-minded to watch how it is done.

By this stage of the show they have laughed and relaxed. I have them on my side and they'll go along with me - for a short while anyway. I have shown myself NOT to be a teacher and I have entertained them. (*See Murphy's 7th Law of Puppetry: A puppeteer is not a teacher and does not have to behave like one.*)

The downside to doing high schools shows is the appallingly disorganised nature of the administration. Finding teachers and venues can be very frustrating and can cut deeply into your set-up time. Remember "Jonquil Temple's Three Rules for High School Performing":

Rule Number Three: The High School Office staff will not know you are coming and will not know where the teacher is who booked you.

Rule Number Two: If the Office staff can persuade you to "have a seat" they will feel that they have dealt with you.

Rule Number One: Don't sit down!!

- Dennis Murphy

Anita Sinclair - THE PUPPETRY HANDBOOK

Anita Sinclair is a practising artist who has a teaching background of forty years experience. She has taught at the level of Primary, Secondary, teacher training colleges and Universities. She has also run seminars at International Festivals of puppetry. Her time spent at Melbourne state College as a drama teacher educator allowed her the opportunity to specialise and explore puppetry as a medium for communication.

Described by Anita as an introduction to puppetry, that includes basic concepts and techniques, THE PUPPETRY HANDBOOK fulfils its promise. The book's scope is extensive. For the drama teacher, I would describe it as a 'must have', and an invaluable personal resource. Anita suggests that the book acts as a spring-board to inspire ideas and in this capacity works as an excellent resource and reference book

Anita introduces chapters with a set of ideas or questions that puppeteers might keep in mind regarding the reasons and aims of the performance. These are excellent reminders concerning our aims and responsibilities to an audience that most of us need to remind ourselves of regularly. What do you aim for? And how do you plan to achieve it? Integral to this book is a collection of drawings and diagrams that clarify her descriptions.

It covers all aspects of puppetry including references to different styles and genres, designing, making and building. Her instructions in using different media are quite detailed. She goes on to discuss generating performance work, focusing particularly towards children, with attention given to puppetry sets and venues. No aspect of puppetry is neglected and, although rudimentary, she includes lighting and sound as an element to be considered in a puppetry performance. While not covered in great depth, the inclusion of these features lends a context and brings focus to the way these elements might work to advantage for an overall effect.

The suggestions offered in the book avoids formula, being prescriptive and opens the possibilities for personal exploration.

Anita has also made a set of illustrated broadsheets covering 9 basic categories of puppetry references designed to be hung up in the classroom or workshop. They are currently available and enquiries should be directed to Richard Lee Publishing, PO. Box 828, Castlemaine, VIC, 3450. Include a self-addressed envelope for an illustrated leaflet and price-list.



THE PARIS PUPPET THEATRE - 1995 Season

The Paris Puppet Theatre presents programs of works by major national and international companies. The performances range from the traditional to the avant-garde, with shows for adults and children.

Other events at the theatre include:

- a programme of untried and innovative works by young artists
- workshops (focussing this year on object theatre).
- demonstrations (eg: one on traditional sculpture, ritual, costume, song and culture in Togo and how it relates to one company's puppetry).
- a season celebrating objects, shadows and puppets in 100 years of film. This included workshops in film animation.

This is all open to the public; what a shame it's in France!

The publicity for the Dutch company, Figuren Theatre Triangel, who seem to be retiring this year), included this quote from its founder, Henk Boerwinkel:

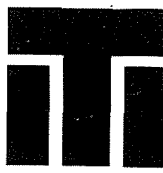
I don't think of puppet theatre as illustration to a text or piece of music. Instead, I try to create a particular atmosphere for the audience; a spiritual state, uniquely in a world of stillness and motion: ancient images of forgotten dreams, places of the unconscious, planes of poetry, always in touch with life and death.



Haim Navarro with "Leopoldo Fregoli"

Soul Of Puppet - Heart of Europe

Theatre Minor, The Theatre of Actor and Puppet in Prague are offering workshops from 1-23 June. Applications did close on 28 Feb but anybody truly interested can Fax Theatre Minor on (02) 242114304. The closing date for an advanced deposit of 450 DM is not until 31 Mar. The workshops include theoretical and historical perspective in the form of lectures and visits to various of Prague's theatres and practical exercises, which includes a weekend woodcarving course. Anyone wanting more specific details should ring me (Jen Pfeiffer) immediately and I can furnish telephone numbers and application requirements.



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.

EVENTS

in Australia: **Festival of Contemporary Arts**, 1 Oct -'95, Canberra ACT: a new festival supported by the ACT Cultural Council, will be a fringe alternative to one of the major Canberra festivals. Organised by Gorman House, the festival is planned to run for two weeks....**Mallacoota Festival**, 5-16 Apr'95, Mallacoota, VIC: the theme for next year's festival is 'Art in the Melting Pot' acknowledging the International Year of Tolerance. Festival director Darren McCubbin promises 11 days of stimulating arts. Expressions of interest are invited from performers and artists.

Overseas: **Amateur Theatre days**, 4-7 May, Rudolstadt, Germany: will feature stage theatre, street theatre, physical and movement theatre companies, pantomime, cabaret and puppet theatre. Participants from several countries have been invited to work on a joint workshop project which will culminate in a performance....**International Puppet Buskers festival**, Gent, Belgium: to be held during the European summer is in its 4th year. The festival generally attracts thousands of spectators and welcomes groups from all over the world. This year there will be an addition: Figueuro Solo, a section of the event with three outdoor stages for soloists to present their shows. There will be an 'in' and 'off' section for both festivals.

MOVEMENTS

In: Performing Arts Board: of the Australia Council has announced changes to the funding structure. All current activity will still be available but the PAB will broaden the 'categories' under which support is provided. In late Jan they will announce the new categories & closing dates for '95 in the PAB newsletter. The first closing date will be 15 May....**Russ Stevens:** one of Britain's foremost illusionists will be on tour in Australia in Mar. It is claimed by his publicists that he can make an audience participant's head appear to fly across the auditorium. It has to be seen to be disbelieved....**Carouselle Theatre:** has a new administrator, Phil Callaghan. The company's series of workshops with Josef Krofta of Theatre Drak (10Feb-27Mar) are filling fast. Krofta will be guest director of 'Don Quixote', Carouselle's 10th Anniversary production to Come Out 95....**Handspan Theatre:** have moved! Their new address as of February is 33 Jessie Street, RICHMOND VIC 3221, Tel: 03 427 8611 & Fax: 03 427 8944.... **Jenny Newman-Preston:** left for France a few weeks ago to study with puppetry/movement theatre masters Compagnie Philippe Genty, who visited Australia last year. She will be working with them for four months before doing some training with the Institut de la Marionette.

OPPORTUNITIES

Festivals Australia: a new program announced as part of the federal government's Creative Nation package, designed to fund high quality arts activities touring to Australian regional festivals. Festivals Australia will be administered by Playing Australia who are currently in the process of preparing the guidelines.

CONFERENCES

Overseas: **World ITI Congress**, 23-30Jun, Caracas, Venezuela: The theme will be 'Education and the Future of ITI'. Australia delegates are sought! We have no money to offer, but if you can afford it & and you are interested in attending the Congress as an Oz ITI rep, please contact us. We have also been asked to supply posters of Australian productions to be displayed at the Congress/festival. Please send us some!

RESOURCES

In Australia: **Mime, Mask & Mask Making:** 3 educational videos recently released by Hush School of Mime & Non-Verbal Theatre. Price \$85 dollars each

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

Overseas: **CSU Summer Arts:** 3-30Jul, California, USA: at Humboldt State Uni has an interesting program: Masterclass with Ming Cho Lee, one of America's most influential stage designers. The workshop will focus on the collaborative process between designers and directors. Collaborative Theatre and new Play Development with a professional playwright yet to be determined. Diablolmundo and Collaborative Theatre, the Argentine ensemble, specialising in puppetry and mask work, commedia, music and dance. Costume design with Phyllis Miller, Richard Donnelly & Georgia Gresham examining several software packages which allow designers to create, manipulate and combine images from conception to pattern-making.

From the Editor

A new year and I hope exciting new projects for you. As you know this is the last issue of the newsletter for which I take responsibility. So I'd like to introduce you to Jenny Anderson, of One Toe Theatre who are currently based in Melbourne. I have recently seen several of Jenny and Kim's performances and can recommend their work as imaginative and humorous object theatre. Jenny has some exciting visions for the Newsletter, and I look forward to helping her realise them, along with Richard Hart. Tentatively, I'll say that the deadline for the next Newsletter will be, Wednesday, May 24 and remember to send your copy to:

**Jenny Anderson, 33 Bent Street, Northcote,
VIC, 3070. Ph: (03) 482 3292.**



However, if any of you would still like to correspond with me, I'd be very happy to hear from you and my address and phone number is on the front of the Newsletter.

Please don't hesitate to use the magazine (I use this expression because all going well the newsletter moves towards this next step in its metamorphosis). to promote your work. It's possibly, along with word of mouth, the chief way that puppeteers in Australia get to hear about each other. But in making my final words as editor I would like to share some of my observations (and I realise perhaps opinions) with you. I'd heard a lot of things before I became editor about puppeteers being whingeing, sniping lot. I'm not going to say that these rumours have been confirmed, but I have noticed a prevailing attitude, not of inter-state rivalry as I had feared, but of a dichotomy between funded and independent but un-funded parties. I don't really want to make any judgements, but just to attempt to bring a little perspective here. We need to bear in mind that we don't have an ideal system. Nor could we ever have an ideal system because **any** system carries advantages and disadvantages. It's impossible to please everybody. Personally, I'm still idealistic and naive enough to believe that hard work brings its own rewards, and to work towards excellence in your own work is a laudable ambition. What goes around comes around (I'm sorry about these platitudes, but...). To any puppeteers that are interested in developing experimental work or work that requires personnel numbering more than 2 or 3, and have managed to do it without funding, congratulations! That is no small achievement. But I do want to remind you that UNIMA is about communicating and using your art-form to promote harmonious relations regardless of race, religion or political beliefs. Remember? This means that a certain amount of tolerance is required. Sometimes circumstances prevail where it's better to think of the art-form rather than individuals and as a united body or dare I say, community we're in a better position to serve the art-form, moreover don't forget, for the art-form to serve us. Don't waste and dissipate your energies. Save it for things that are worthwhile. I'd just like you to think about that - and to take some responsibility for it.

Now comes the time to thank all the people who have helped me keep the newsletter going, and for those of you who by ringing or writing have kept me going

I haven't left myself enough space to list you all, but you know who you are and I know who you are and I thank you.

Best Regards,

Jen Pfeiffer.