

UNIMA AUSTRALIA

MARCH 1996



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"MAESTRO"

A marionette created by
THE SYDNEY PUPPET THEATRE;
Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe.



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

EDITORIAL

As everyone receives this issue, I am reading my copy in Adelaide, where I'm wallowing in culture at the Adelaide Festival and Fringe. The later stages of this issue have been put together by Jennie Pfeiffer and Richard Hart, while I have been performing **There's a Moon in my Room** with Denise Rundle and Kym Tonkin. Thank you very much Richard and Jennie!

Since December, the Puppet '96 Festival has unfortunately folded. This is a terrible shame, especially for the committee members who put so much work and time into creating a programme and applying for money. Despite the disappointing lack of funds, at least it has been shown that puppeteers are enthusiastic about a national festival, and very supportive of a masterclass programme to develop their skills. Ongoing training is very important for artists of any kind, so it is good to see the initiatives taken by Polyglot and the Sydney Summer School group (see this issue).

I have received more offers of material for this Magazine than ever before, which is wonderful! Thank you; it is good to be sharing ideas and keeping each other up to date with our work. Please keep it coming ... especially the photos!

I hope to have some reviews of the puppetry in the Adelaide Festival in the next issue. If anyone wants to write one, please contact me in Adelaide on 08 331 0107.

Regards,

Jenny Andersen

Please remember to notify the Treasurer of any change of address as soon as possible so that you receive your UNIMA Magazine without delay.

The final Report for the UNIMA Asia-Pacific Commission is completed and is available. The cost of a copy of this 30 page bound document including postage will be \$12. If you would like to place an order before April 30 a copy can be forwarded to you. Send your written order and cheque/money order to the UNIMA Treasurer. The address is on the front cover of this Magazine.

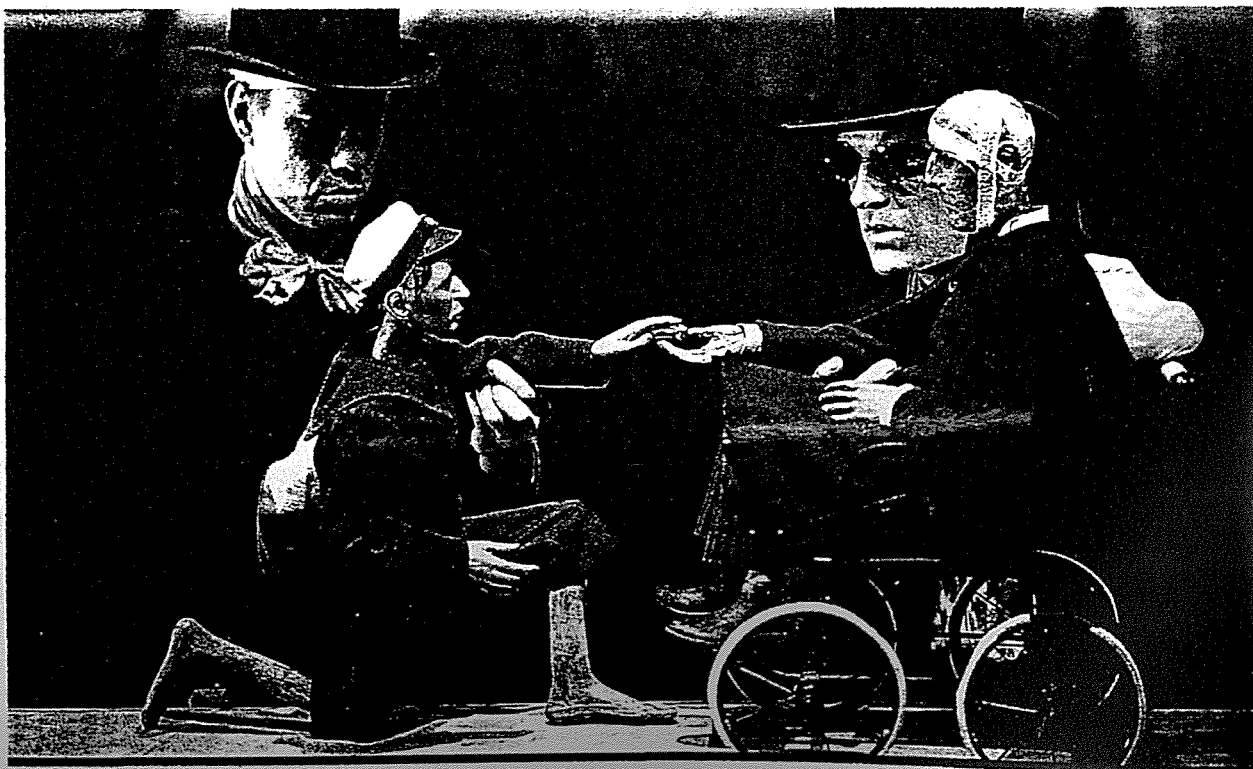
Jennie Pfeiffer's new address is 25 Marshall Street, Flemington, VIC, 3031

Fax/Phone: (03) 9376 9725.

Richard Hart and Jennie Pfeiffer

A quick note about deadlines: The copy deadline for each issue falls on the 24th of the month before. ie: on May 24 for the June issue.
August 24 for Sept issue.
November 24 for Dec issue.

GHOST SONATA adapted and directed by Roman Paska, Stockholm
Puppet Theatre, 1992. (see article on pg.14)



MODEST FESTIVAL REPLACES PUPPETS '96

A scaled down festival to be known as "**Aqueous '96**, festival of puppetry and visual theatre" will replace **Puppets '96**. Confirmation of funds by Festivals Australia for the revised project has enabled the more modest regional festival to be held in Noosa from 31 May to 10 June 1996. The festival is also being supported by the Noosa Council Enterprise Group, The Regional Arts Development Fund, Noosa Waters Pty Ltd. The box office is being underwritten by a group of local business people.

Aqueous '96 will feature many of the same elements as **Puppets '96** however the master class program has gone along with the tent theatre and the international performance program. Performances will be staged in existing venues and the community program will take a higher profile. A conference and advanced workshops will be held but the focus will be regional rather than national.

Major companies in the performance program are Terrapin and Carouselle, both of whom then fly on to Budapest for the UNIMA Congress. Performances will also feature independents Ross Browning, David Poulton, Annie Heitmann and Roy McNeill.

The community puppet building project will commence prior to the festival and will result in an event at the festival demonstrating built puppets and learnt manipulation skills. The project leader will be announced in early March.

The community workshop program will be streamed for novice and advanced puppeteers. Tutors for the advanced workshops will be drawn from the visiting companies and include Wojciek Pisarek, Jindra Rosendorf, Philip Mitchell and Greg Methe. Tutors for the novices workshops will be recruited locally.

The conference will explore the cross over of the puppetry artform with animation, animatronics and digital art manipulation and other issues of interest to puppeteers in the region.

The festival exhibition **Hand To Eye** will feature works which will explore the concept of the puppet and related themes including control, manipulation and anthropomorphism. **Hand To Eye** will be staged at the Noosa Regional Gallery. Proposals are currently being sought. For further information contact Gallery Director Kevin Wilson on (074) 49 0555

For further information on **Aqueous '96** contact the Festival Coordinator John Lamb at the ETC Company Inc. PO Box 753 Noosa Heads or by telephone on 074 74 8188

THE THIRD ANNUAL AWARDS FOR FILM/VIDEO PUPPETRY

In 1993 UNIMA-USA created the awards category "Citations of Excellence for Puppetry in Recorded Media". The original awards for live theatre puppetry were established by Jim Henson 20 years ago, and are still awarded annually. The next awards will be given out at the Lincoln Centre as part of the Jim Henson Foundation's International Puppetry Festival in 1996.

Puppeteers in film or video may submit their work directly to the Citations committee, which consists of a panel of experts in the field, or may be nominated by 3 or more nominators.

Work must be submitted on 1/2 inch VHS cassette. Send with your name, address, phone number and main production credits, to the Citation committee chairman. There is a \$50 entry fee (payable to UNIMA USA) to cover handling, tape duplication and distribution to the reviewing committee.

In the case of an episodic or series production, a Citation will be considered for the series rather than one episode. Up to two episodes of a series may be submitted. Cassettes must not be copy-protected and become the property of UNIMA-USA.

Entries or inquiries: Danny Burge, Citations committee chairman, UNIMA - USA, 6180 Darleone Place, Alexandria, VA 22310. Inquiries can be faxed to 703-924-9233, or by the Internet on DanB315@aol.com. Entries close April 16th 1996. Only work originally produced for recorded media is eligible; live theatre productions recorded for archival or marketing purposes are not eligible.



SECRETARY'S REPORT

I have again had a member needing something URGENTLY and "could you fax it to be before Monday?". Faxes seem to help disorganised people stay disorganised even closer to their deadlines. Please note I will be away from Home from May until September so if you need UNIMA information, please plan ahead.

I had a very enthusiastic phone call from Janet McAllister. She was just back from **Myanmar** where the UNIMA Delegate, Puppetmaster U Ye Dway, had practically adopted her, giving her letters of introduction and a lot of his time to help her in her research into Burmese Puppetry. That's what UNIMA is all about!

The depressing news in the Puppetry Community has been, of course, the cancellation of **PUPPETS 96 Festival**. I have tried to rescue something from this major setback.

I am very grateful to John Lamb for sending me a list of all who had expressed interest in the Festival. I identified 167 people who were not UNIMA members. In January each was sent a letter inviting them to join UNIMA and get behind us in ensuring that the **PUPPETS 96** type of catastrophe never happens again.

The **UNIMA CONFERENCE** planned for **PUPPETS 96** will now take the form of state-based conferences in Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane. *{The conferences coincide with my touring. Sorry, Tassie and WA.}* Scheduled for Sunday afternoons, the conferences will give us the option to continue the conversation over an evening meal at a local restaurant. It'll be a chance for puppeteers to get together and talk about UNIMA, Puppetry, communications, lobbying etc. Non-members are welcome, too. Feel free to invite fellow puppeteers. We are even laying on a bit of entertainment.

The Sydney Conference will be at 3pm on Sunday 31 March, RSVP to Turoa Walmsley on
(02) 635-4107.

The Adelaide Conference is at 3pm on Sunday 12 May, RSVP to Carouselle Theatre Company on
(08) 362-0288.

Melbourne's will be in August and Brisbane's in October. Details to follow.

Meanwhile, we must keep stirring the ashes of **PUPPETS 96** in the hopes that a bright new flame may burst forth. So if you have not yet written to complain to Arts Queensland and the Australia Council, please do some stirring forthwith.

Those addresses again:

Ms Julie Wran, Chairperson. Performing Arts Board, Australia Council,
P.O. Box 788, Strawberry Hills 2010, Fax (02) 950-9111
The Hon Matt Foley, Minister for the Arts, GPO Box 149, Brisbane 4001
Fax (07)3220-0289

NEXT ISSUE: the results of our 1996 Data Base questionnaires.

Meanwhile, I hope to see you at a UNIMA Conference.

Dennis



TREASURERS REPORT

Hello readers and UNIMA members.

Well, I'm the new treasurer for UNIMA, Australia, and you are keeping me very busy at the moment, which is good. When the membership list was sent to France, (mid February) we had 94 members and the membership has been steadily increasing since.

Welcome to our 14 new members, which includes a new company! A complete list of members will be published later in the year. You might be surprised to find a member lives nearby.

Thanks for your fantastic response to the data base questionnaire, so far I've received over 30. Please keep them coming, the data should present some very interesting reading next issue. The following financial statement was prepared by Gary Fuhrmeister, thanks Gary.

Keep those subscriptions rolling on in folks!

RICHARD HART.

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE OF UNIMA

STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE 1995

INCOME

Opening balances:

Working a/c	2,187.94
Scholarship a/c	5,357.20

Membership subscriptions	1,880.00
Joining fees	80.00
Scholarship fund	130.00

Interest earned:

Working a/c	27.69
Scholarship a/c	65.67

\$9,728.50

OUTGOINGS

Japan Delegate subsidy	750.00
Magazine expense	1,033.46
Postage & envelopes	47.00
UNIMA France subs	373.63

Bank charges:	
Scholarship a/c	14.64

Closing balances:

Working a/c	1,101.54
Scholarship a/c	408.23
" Term Deposit *	6,000.00

\$9,728.50

* Term deposit \$6,000 @ 8.1% p.a.
Lodged Commonwealth Bank
Commenced 18/05/1995
Matures 11/02/1996

FROM THE ASHES

The depressing news in the Puppetry Committee has been, ofcourse, the cancellation of PUPPETS 96 Festival. I have done what I could to try and pull something from the ashes.

Sue Wallace, Jonquil Temple and I met with John Baylis at the Australia Council to try and discover what went wrong with PUPPETS 96 and why no money went to any of the masterclass or research applications for Puppetry. (All money for Puppetry went to four funding-dependent companies.)

My overall impression was that the Australia Council's basic system is unworkable: all decisions are made at a marathon five-day meeting. The lesson here is: without strong lobbying, you lose out.

Sue, Jonquil and I looked at bringing out Henk Boerwinkel ourselves while he and so many of us had the days blocked off in our diaries. We worked out full cost recovery but in the end we decided we just didn't have the time needed to set it all up and feared too many puppeteers wouldn't be able to afford it.

I am still wanting to do a workshop with Yang Feng, the Fukien glove-puppeteer. *{See Sept 95 issue for background}* I am privately looking into bringing him out to Australia. It must involve minimal bureaucracy and cannot be reliant on Australia Council funding. This will ONLY happen if I have the robust support of the Puppetry Community.

If you would be interested in training with Yang Feng in the second half of 1997, *you must let me know NOW*. That's Now! If I have a healthy response by 15 April, I'll go ahead. Otherwise, I will exercise the Simple Option: drop the project and fly myself over to California to do the workshop there. *{Please; don't make me go back to that awful place!}*

Dennis

NSW NEWS

A group of Sydney-based puppeteers again this year organised themselves into a "Puppeteers' Summer School" in the Blue Mountains.

This year one guest tutor was chosen to do workshops for the entire week. Japanese-born puppeteer, Noriko Nishimoto, flew over from Perth to take us through some manipulation exercises and improvisations. After four hours each morning doing that, everyone got together again in the evening to view and comment on other people's shows and works-in-progress.

Noriko was very generous with her time. I was very impressed with her teaching style that was both humourous and flexible enough to meet the needs of the person she was instructing.

Noriko managed to very quickly perceive that we were an unusual lot. She adapted her teaching so that it fitted the requirements of puppeteers who devise, write, build and perform their own shows, often on their own.

It was a delightful week in which we all learned a lot.

It was extremely unfortunate that the Australia Council did not see fit to grant the \$865 needed to keep costs down. At full cost recovery, we found that three of the four interstate puppeteers we invited could not afford to come.

Dennis

SUPPORT FOR GREATER UNIMA INVOLVEMENT IN FUTURE PUPPET FESTIVALS

by John Lamb

A survey of opinion following the cancellation of Puppets '96 suggests that a festival should be held every two years in rotating venues and organised either by UNIMA or a new organisation such as a national centre for puppetry with the support of UNIMA. But it is not that simple as there were many qualifications offered in support of the answers.

There were 50 responses; 12 each from NSW and Victoria, 6 from W.A., and 4 each from Queensland, South Australia, ACT, NT and New Zealand. The responses to each question were as follows:

How often should a national festival be held?

46% every two years; 34% every four years; 8% annually; and 12% had no opinion or favoured another option such as three or five years.

Who should run a national festival?

32% UNIMA; 32% a new organisation such as a national centre of puppetry; 16% Ad Hoc; and 16% offered other options such as a local government authority arts agency or no opinion. It should be noted that most of those who favoured a new organisation expressed the view that UNIMA should be involved with the new organisation and the festival.

Where should a national festival be held?

60% in a different place each time; 40% in the same place each time.

Should the "national" festival in fact be Australasian

58% one national festival for Australia and New Zealand

42% separate festivals for Australia and New Zealand.

Interestingly of the four New Zealand respondents three favoured one national festival.

Should the national festival be an 'international' festival?

56% every time it is held; 28% every second time it is held; 16% less frequently or not at all. Judging by the comments on many of the responses I do not take this to mean support for a full on international festival every time but rather an international component of a national festival as envisaged for Puppets '96.

Willing to meet costs to attend the festival conference and master class program at an estimated cost of \$1000 plus travel costs.

36% Every second year 18% Every fourth year 26% Not at all; 20% offered no response .

The 13 people (26%) who indicated that they did not wish to participate in a master class program then indicated that they would be willing to meet the

festival costs without master classes estimated at \$450 plus travel costs as follows:

10% Every second year; 4% annually; 4% occasionally, 2% Every fourth year, 2% Every fifth year 4% not at all or no response. (Note these percentages total to 26%)

This response was particularly encouraging as it indicates that 64% of respondents would meet the costs of attending a festival every four years and most of them would attend the master class program.

Overall the survey indicates strong support for a national festival and it would seem to me that a move in this direction should be made with 1997 or perhaps 1988 in mind.

Two basic scenarios emerge. One is to establish a festival in one place and build it up over a period of time. This case was cogently argued by a number of the respondents. It has the advantage of being able to establish a firm basis for support in a local community to build up an event with continuity of support from funding authorities, sponsors and underwriters. Clearly Aqueous '96 could serve as a starting point for this depending, of course, on the success of the festival and evaluation of support within the community for the process to continue and post festival evaluation of the suitability of the location. The difficulty with the one location scenario is that it disadvantages those who are remote from it.

The other approach is to set dates at regular intervals either two or four years and identify locations where it appears support may be forthcoming and which, over a period of time, can spread the burden of the tyranny of distance.

On the question of the relationship with New Zealand it would seem at the very least that any planning should be done in consultation with PINZ and its membership so that festivals held on either side of the Tasman are complementary. It is clear that in the festivals context with Australia and New Zealand that we are dealing fundamentally with one market.

Whether a festival is sited in one place or in rotating locations, in either case it is quite apparent that UNIMA or a UNIMA encouraged body, such as a national centre for puppetry, needs to be involved in the process. This should provide a national perspective within which the planning and development of any festival is carried out. (The same comments apply to establishing professional training in puppetry) Certainly the national conference and master class committee established by the ETC Company Inc for Puppets '96 provided an invaluable framework within which nearly all of the programming decisions were made.

It is hoped that the survey and the commentary provided will facilitate the discussion necessary to moving puppetry forward through the necessary mechanisms of festivals with associated conferences and master classes.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

OVERSEAS FESTIVALS DIGEST:

- MAY 1996 19/5-1/6 Theatre in a Satchel Festival, Lomza, Poland
 3 -5 Pupparium Spectaulum, Huergenwald, Germany
- JUNE 1996 6-9 Puppeteers of America Regional Festival, Ontario
 6-10 Gala Internationala A Recitalurilor, Romania
 12-16 International Micro Festival, small international puppet theatre groups,
 Dordrecht, Holland
 13-21 Skupova Plzen, National competition for children aged 7-10 years, Pilzen,
 Czech Republic
 **** 23-30 International UNIMA Congress and Festival, Budapest**
 25/6-4/7 Buskers Fare, New York
- JULY 1996 1 -5 Puppet in My Pocket, soloists & small companies, Sarospatak, Hungary
 1 -6 11th Intl Puppet Festival, Bekescsaba, Hungary
 1 -7 International Marionette Festival, Nyirabator Hungary
 2 -6 The Moon is Blue Festival, San Minato, Italy
 5-14 Semaine Mondiale de la Marionette, Jonquiere, Quebec
 21-28 Figueuro Solo, Gent, Belgium
 26-4/8 Festival Internacional de Titieres, Mexico City
 TBA Loutkarska Chrudim, National festival of amateur companies, Prague
- AUGUST 1996 17-25 Festival of Traditional Glove Puppetry, Italy
 18-27 Arrivano dal Mare Int'l Puppet Festival, Italy
 27-4/9 Festival Du Parc Pasteur, Orleans, France
 30-4/9 PIF Int'l Puppet Festival, Zagreb, Croatia
- SEPTEMBER 1996 5 - 8 Baden Figura Theatre Festival, Baden, Switzerland
 9 -20 Bottroper Marchentage, Bottrop, Germany
 11-22 Intl Festival by Henson Organisation, New York
 28-4/10 Rencontre Internationale, Performances, workshops, debates etc,
 Charleville, France
 30-10/4 10th Puppet Festival, Banska Bistrica, Slovakia
- OCTOBER 1996 1 - 8 The Golden Dolphin Int'l Puppet Festival, New forms and modern
 achievements in the development of the puppet art (held once every 3
 years), Varna, Bulgaria
 10-20 Third Int'l Puppet Festival, Lahore, Pakistan
 22-27 18th Internationale Puppentage, Mistelbach, Austria
 23-2/12 Visions 96, festival of international animated theatre, Brighton, UK
- NOVEMBER 1996 23/11-2/12 14th Festival Internacional de Marionetas, Tolosa, Spain

For details on any of the above, write to the Secretary

REPORT FROM MYANMAR

Puppet Master U Ye Dway's

GOLDEN GONG



PUPPET THEATRE (MYANMAR TRADITIONAL MARIONETTE THEATRE)

Janet MacAllister went to Myanmar last November to research Burmese Puppetry. Armed only with the name and address of the UNIMA Delegate, she managed to cover a lot of ground. Her particular interest was the actual working conditions of the puppeteers. Here is some of what she had to report.

"Today the proprietor of the troupe usually owns all the necessary marionettes for a production. The exceptions can be the prince, princess and elderly prince regent which are supplied by the vocalists. These puppets are manipulated for the vocalists by puppeteers. Sometimes the clown manipulators own their own marionette.

One of the difficulties, apart from engaging a sufficient number of experienced manipulators is finding singers able and willing to participate. Traditionally all the voices, male and female, are very high, just as they are in classical Burmese theatre. There are not many trained in this style and it is very expensive to hire them for live marionette productions. The slightly less costly alternative is to record the voices.

Today nearly all of the marionette sounds come from tape. There are also some treasured recordings on vinyl that are used for special occasions.

In U Ye Dway's home in Yangon (Rangoon) the front room has been converted into a puppet theatre called the Golden Gong. Here he presents shows on a regular basis. The production requires six manipulators.

In Mandalay I saw the Traditional Marionettes of U Tahn Nyunt and Daw Ma Ma Naing. In their theatre they present an entire programme of Burmese culture including Puppetry.

I was told that one of the reasons other companies don't perform regularly is a lack of financial resources. I think a good deal of their survival has depended on their own hard work and dedication as well as good management, despite adversity.

Recognition of the value of the marionettes and their place in the cultural life of Myanmar was demonstrated last year by the introduction for the first time of a Puppet Master section in the annual Performing Arts competition in Yangon.

This was won by U Pan Aye from the Traditional Marionettes and he now wears with much pride the gold medal he received. There are plans for the competition to be extended to include younger puppeteers who have not yet reached the status of Master.

I saw a performance on Mandalay TV of the local marionettes and was impressed by the amount of time it was allowed, the detailed coverage and the very clear English voice which accompanied it. As TV is available in many homes, as well as the hotels and guest houses in both Yangon and Mandalay at least, it was being seen by locals as well as tourists."

If you would like to know more about Janet's research contact her directly:
Janet MacAllister, 9 Explorers Road, Glenbrook
NSW 2773

UNIMA

JOHANNESBURG

(Ed:) UNIMA Australia is now swapping magazines with UNIMA centres in South Africa. I have received some information about a few South African companies from UNIMA Johannesburg and it is summarized below. If anyone would like further details, you could write directly to: Alida van Deventer

Chairperson,
UNIMA Johannesburg
28 Pallinghurst Rd
Westcliff, 2193
Johannesburg, South Africa.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AFRICA

Africa is a vast continent with many different countries, all with different problems and crises. But there is something special about Africa...The open spaces and wide scenery, the warm weather, the fascinating cultures, the harshness and the gentleness. The possibility to be close to nature and to see many animals. And lately the changes that are taking place in South Africa with its first black president Mr Nelson Mandela.

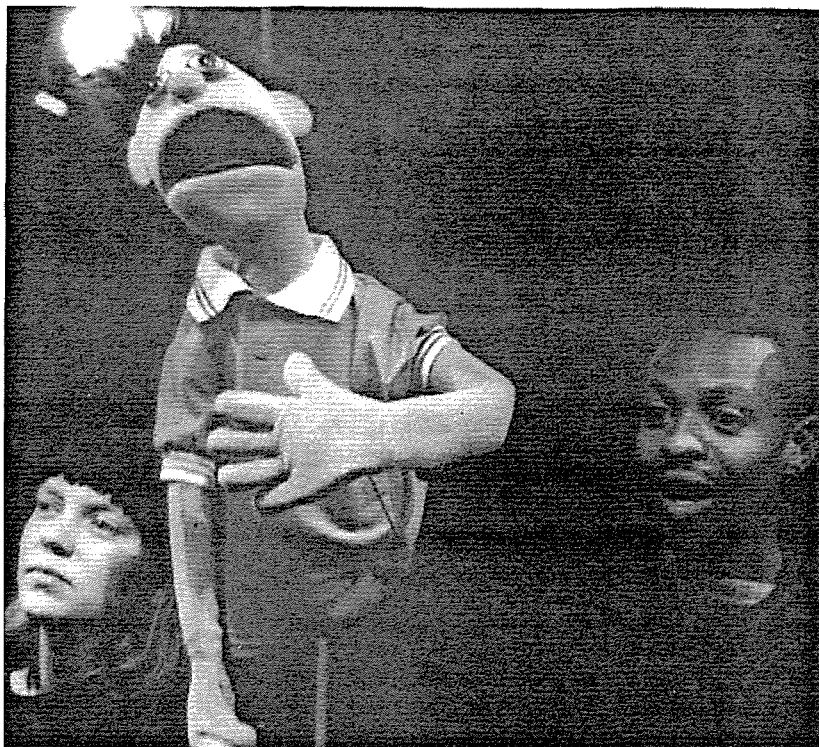
Puppet-wise it is difficult to find out the history in Africa because for ages nothing was ever documented. The oldest puppets are probably Egyptian. In West Africa in Mali carved rod puppets can be found, that are used for entertainment. They are carved in typical African style and dressed with batik costumes.

But for us, living in South Africa it has mostly been impossible to travel to these countries, so we know very little about them. South Africa has also been isolated from Europe; not always a negative factor, because it can create a situation where you have to design and invent without the influence of other countries, and this often results in a different style and technique.

In South Africa, I have never seen any indigenous puppets. The peoples have mostly been nomads, and only the basics were carried along. To me it looks as if the Africans don't actually need puppets because they have a natural talent for story telling, dance and music. They are able to create exciting theatre out of nothing. Black South Africans were initially frightened by puppets and actually ran away when I took a marionette out of a box. But today there is more exposure to puppetry through the media and maybe more materials and money available, and African children take to puppets like ducks to water...and adults too for that matter.

ALIDA VAN DEVENTER

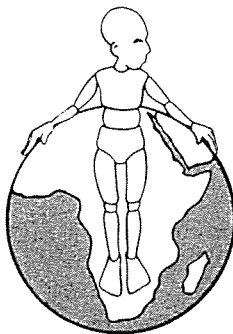
Alida is probably the oldest and longest-active puppeteer in South Africa. She is self-taught and works mostly with string puppets. She is inspired by nature and her puppets are mostly animals, insects and other creatures who do a silent mime or dance to music.



Alida helped establish the first full time Marionette theatre in 1968. She also loves shadows and uses them mostly in churches to teach Bible lessons. She has a theatre and a small puppet museum in her house.

HANDSPRING PUPPET COMPANY

Founded in 1981 by Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones, Handspring use rod puppets and employ only Black manipulators to give them an opportunity to learn puppetry. Their plays have highlighted the problems of Black people and the wrongness of apartheid. They often combine live actors with puppets or have a puppet replica of an actor to suggest distance. They perform regularly in Europe and will be at the 1996 Adelaide Festival.



AREPP

AREPP was founded by Gary Friedman in 1987, with the aim of creating an education and puppetry training programme. It has several very successful puppetry shows about AIDS awareness for adults, teenagers and re-adolescents. The puppets (giant parade-size, glove, rod) are grey, to avoid identifying them as a particular race. They are particularly successful in communities where there are cultural taboos against speaking about sex.

AREPP also runs workshops to teach puppetry skills all over Africa, and has recently added shows about violence and self-empowerment to its performance repertoire. During the first democratic elections in South Africa, AREPP produced a voter-education series for TV in which the puppet-host even interviewed the presidential candidates! ➡

JOAN RANKIN

Joan is a very versatile artist who uses collage, drawings, illustrations, and little wire figures with fascinating costumes made of handwoven materials, feathers and pom poms. Her show, "The Widlow Bird" is a combination of puppetry, weaving and music with elements of many fairy tales. She is in great demand as an illustrator of books, in which her characters often look like puppets.

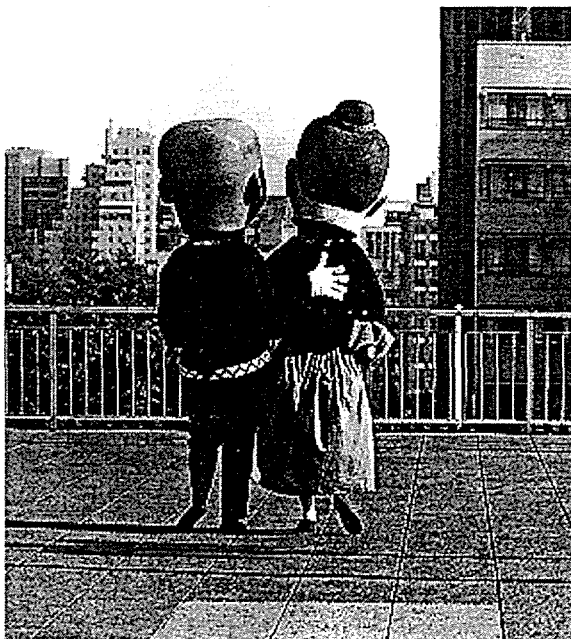
BRENDA SHAFIR

Brenda performs striking shadow puppetry which reflects the African landscape. She performs African legends, fairy tales and Bible stories from the Old Testament, travelling from school to school with a folding booth.

MACHTELD VAN NIEUWERK

Machteld works with glove puppets, performing popular and Bible stories in schools and for special festivities. He rehearses and performs around a basic plot, without actually scripting the whole play.

by Alida van Deventer
(ed. by Jenny Andersen)



PIF

The 30th Jubilee of PIF (International Puppetry Festival of Zagreb, Croatia) will be held from 29th August to 3rd September 1997. It is too late to apply to be part of the 1996 Competition, but entries are open for 1997.

Some expenses are paid for by the Festival, including travel and accommodation within Croatia. If you would like a copy of the entry form, please contact Jenny Andersen.

THE GOLDEN DOLPHIN

The 10th International Puppet Festival "The Golden Dolphin" - Varna '96 will be held in Varna, Bulgaria from 1st to 6th October, 1996. The festival organisers are asking countries to appoint 'the theatre which is able to present the best achievements of the puppet art in (their) country in the last few years'.

Accommodation and expenses will be paid for by the festival, but companies will have to pay for their own travel to Bulgaria.

If you think you fit the bill, and you would consider putting on a Bulgarian play, please contact Jenny Andersen for details.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER ACADEMY

with Prof. Albrecht Roser

TECHNIQUE MEETS FANTASY -
FANTASY NEEDS TECHNIQUE:
STRING - PUPPETRY

DIE MARIONETTE

Bau - Bewegung - Spiel - Inszenierung

International Summer Academy for professional puppeteers or people of an advanced stage in puppetry

5th - 30th August 1996

Course language: English and German

Organisation and information: Studio Roser,
Urbanstraße 49

D-70182 Stuttgart, Deutschland

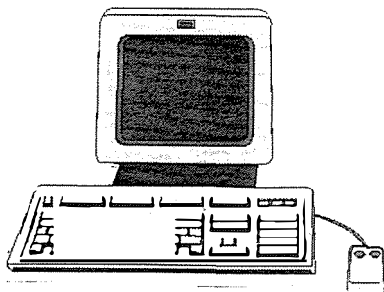
Telefon 0711-2263509

Telefax 0711-2262586

in conjunction with Studiengang Figurentheater
of the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und
Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart.

Registration deadline March 15, 1996





Puppeteers in Cyberspace

Janet Dalglish

(with apologies to Rose Sage for the title)

With so many technological advances in the puppetry world, it seemed high time someone took a look at puppetry on the Internet, so a couple of weeks ago I got hooked up and went for my first dog-paddle. I have to say, I was impressed.

My first port of call was the Puppetry Home Page. This wonderful resource is run by Rose Sage, who works for Stanford Medical School, California as a computer programmer, and is also a keen amateur puppeteer. Every employee at Stanford is allowed space on Stanford's Web server (see the article *[What is the World Wide Web?](#)*), and when Ken Davidian, who originally set up the Home Page, was unable to continue, Stanford allowed Rose to use her space as the site for the Puppetry Home Page.

The Home Page itself looks a bit like the contents page of an enormous magazine; on my last visit, I counted over 170 different links to other sites. These links are organised into headings and sub-headings to make navigation easier, and cover an amazingly broad range of topics. You can look at puppet companies by country (Australia is currently represented by Spare Parts and Ross Browning - see Ross' article *[Hooked on the Web](#)*); you can read fascinating debates over curly theories of puppetry; you can visit the fan pages for Gerry Anderson's Supermarionation; you can read about a US company specialising in Guignol; you can read about traditional companies (Awaji in Japan) and puppets (Karagoz in Turkey); you can visit the Home Pages of some of the newest motion capture and computer animation companies; you can read scholarly papers on wayang; or you can send an email to a puppeteer on the other side of the world.

Many of the sites have links within them which can take you to other sites, not necessarily puppetry-related. I decided to see how far I could go by starting out at the site which gave this article its name.

Rose Sage's *[Pigs in Cyberspace](#)* is a tribute to the Muppets, including photos of some great Muppet merchandising, a short article in praise of Jim Henson and his Muppet creations, and several links to other Muppet-related sites, including the *Babe* official page, the Henson Interactive official site and various fans' own tribute pages. I decided to go to the *Muppet News Flash* page for the latest news about the Muppets. Here I found articles about all the new Muppet productions, including *[Muppet's Treasure Island](#)* (in which Miss Piggy is worshipped as a pagan queen-goddess), and the new *Muppet Show*, whose guests will include Michelle Pfeiffer, Billy Crystal and Paula Abdul. But the link I chose to follow next was the one about Kermit the Frog being the next Marshall of the Rose Parade. I was taken to a site with a detailed resumé of the well-known amphibian (rather than the well-known puppeteer), and from there I went exploring and discovered all sorts of things about the Tournament of Roses, the City of Pasadena and the weather conditions in California. As you can see, it isn't difficult to get sidetracked, but it all adds background colour.

I have two other favourite resources on the Net aside from the *Puppetry Home Page*. One is a newsgroup dedicated to puppetry, which is a bit like a big notice board. Individuals simply post notices there, ranging from simple requests for advice on foam latex through to itineraries for touring companies. You can reply to any notice with your own posting, but if you say anything controversial you must be prepared for people to respond! There's no way of knowing how many people read the newsgroup, because anybody anywhere can visit at any time.

My other regular is a mailing list called **PUPTCRIT**. If you're interested, you simply subscribe to this list by sending a command to the mailing list server (computer). When anyone sends an email to this server, it gets forwarded to all the subscribers on the list. It's a useful place for lengthy debate, since you can respond either publicly or privately to any of the emails you receive. Lately there has been some fierce debating about the value of government arts funding, which has been particularly interesting since it's given me a real insight into how our US colleagues have to deal with this issue; on the whole I think Australian puppeteers may actually be better off.

Perhaps this is the greatest attraction for me. Although we no longer have the Puppetry Festival to look forward to this year, I can exchange ideas and concepts with other puppeteers; although I can't see their performances, I can see pictures of their puppets; and although we may not see eye to eye on the hows and whys and wherefores of puppetry, I can truly feel myself part of a global community of artists. For this Australian puppeteer, the tyranny of distance has just lost its meaning.

Some addresses you might like to use:

Ross Browning's email:
puppetease@peg.apc.org

Ross Browning's Home Page:
<http://www.odyssey.com.au/uspecies/puppetease>

Janet Dalglish's email:
jdalhsim@netspace.net.au

Puppetry Home Page:
<http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~rosesage/puppetry/puppetry.html>

Hooked on the Web

Ross Browning

I managed to jump on the Internet bandwagon 12 months ago, just before the recent wave of media hype, hoping to pick up interest in my "product" from far afield. By and large this has been successful, and I have received enquiries from all over the globe. There have been no direct sales as yet, but lots of interest and friendly email which has led to wider contacts. Email in particular has been a revelation to my communications with friends and colleagues far afield in remote corners of the world, and I can say I'm an email addict. I just love it!

If you have a product or service to sell to an international marketplace, then Web pages could be for you. They are ideally suited to mail order-type business activities, because customers can have their desires fulfilled immediately by returning an email response/order form. Although there are lots of different ways people can make their own Web pages, not everybody has the computer hardware & software, or the time and money needed to do it. The really good Web pages tend to be those set up by specialists or people who spend many hours at the computer because they are being paid to do what they love. Professionally produced pages can be at least as expensive as the setup costs of full colour brochures. Once your pages are produced, ready to go online, then you will usually be charged a monthly fee which depends on how much space your page(s) take up; although some ISPs provide a small space for a Web page as part of your service connection account.

It is another advertising medium which can potentially be seen by a very large audience from anywhere in the world. Like all good marketing, it will be useless unless addressed to the right audience. You therefore need to pay attention to how and where your pages are linked. If you want people to find you, the puppeteer, then you'd better make sure your business address and description includes keywords which make it easy to be found under relevant subject headings (eg, puppet, theatre, school shows, animatronics, etc)

There are some downsides of the Internet. Limitations of the bandwidth (how much information can travel at once) mean that when the lines are clogged with traffic, it takes much longer for your computer to load the images and text. This relates to your hip pocket, since your Service Provider will usually be charging by the hour. Sometimes it's so slow I just log off in frustration. Media hype about the Internet has, I believe, led to some unrealistic expectations.

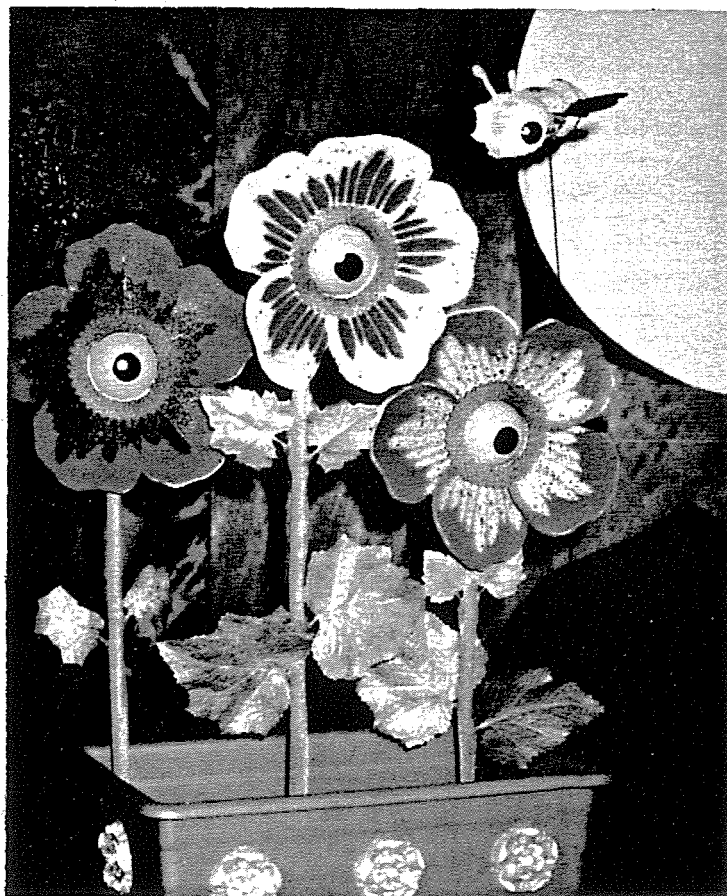
To me, Web pages are just another way of reaching an audience. However, like so many things to do with computers, they do have the potential to suck a lot of valuable time which I sometimes think I would rather spend performing!

What is the World Wide Web?

The World Wide Web, part of the Internet, is a network of linked resources such as pages of text, images, sounds, movies, or even software you can download. If you have a modem and an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP), your computer can use a Web browser to navigate easily around the Web, and your ISP account will often include space on their computer (Web server) for you to set up a Home Page for other people to visit. (See Ross Browning's article Hooked on the Net) Many groups and individuals will set up a "Home Page" for themselves on the Web, and you can use these as jumping-off points to visit other interesting sites.

Any page on the Web, can have links to other pages. In practical terms, you look for a section of text (often a name or title) which is in a different colour, click on it with the mouse, and the instructions are automatically sent to your browser to go to that linked site. This is how you can surf from one site to another, finding endless sources of information.

If you don't have a computer but would like to try out the possibilities, you can visit a cybercafe, where you can get coffee and snacks, and use the computers for an hourly fee (usually around \$12-\$20). Some libraries even have limited free access for very short periods, which will at least give you a taste.



THINGS WITH WINGS
Sydney Puppet Theatre.

PUPPET THOUGHT, PUPPET-SPIRIT

by Roman Paska

Like all that we call 'art', puppetry begins and ends in the soul, and everything that fills the space between souls is 'text'.

But usually, in the theatre, a written text means a *spoken* text ... and puppets don't really speak. Dialogue can be a wonderful illusion in puppet theatre (the hardest illusion of all for the puppeteer), but in their natural state puppets are mute and their speech is fake, a simple trick of synchronisation. The most instinctive and natural means of expression for a flesh-and-blood actor is *unnatural* for a puppet.

Writing for Puppetry

Given our traditional association of the dramatic arts with words, since Antiquity we have been ill-disposed to add to our written works. Rather, we now manufacture works. Create, perhaps. Compose, even. Personally I prefer the expression 'put together' which suggests that writing, for puppetry authors, is an act of assemblage. We don't write *for* puppet theatre, we write puppet theatre. Like the history of the human species in earthly paradise, all of our plays begin with clay.

As you would expect, there are no 'great classic works' in puppetry. Not a single literary masterpiece, not one perfect prototype. Puppet theatre is, above all, written to be shown. And puppets are always things to be shown (even when they have nothing to say) because the puppet theatre text is always determined and circumscribed by the composition and movement of the visuals. It is a script of movements, gestures, colours, and shapes. A script in space ... a script which cannot exist outside the performance.

Historically, in the West, puppetry has been thought of as a deviant theatrical form, by virtue of the fact that it doesn't conform to classical or neo-classical Aristotelian rules. Puppetry is fundamentally *non-Aristotelian*. This is one of the main reasons for the anti-puppet prejudice which has dominated Western theatrical tradition and thought. It explains to a large degree why puppetry takes refuge in the fairground, and why puppet-theatre practitioners are still often thought of as naive and archaic by many other theatre artists. The picturesque offshoots of popular entertainments thought that to create illusions or imitations of life was a primary aesthetic goal of art, a sad tendency responsible for the universal and persistent confusion between puppetry and parody.

But just as puppet theatre, even in its less figurative incarnation of 'object theatre', can never quite escape its relationship with illusion, it would be wrong to think of it as a figurative or representative medium. Like a poem, a puppetry text is not supposed to depict, describe or copy reality, but to play on our ideas of what reality could be. That which the puppet play evokes, through its very puppet-nature, is a grasp of the pure state which constitutes our primary response (even if it is unconscious) to any theatre of shapes and objects. The issue of performance doesn't come up till later.

Puppet theatre is to theatre in general as poetry is to literature; in its structure and its spirit. It refuses to accept a narrowly utilitarian vision of reality where theatre, like all other forms of art, of language and of religion, is supposed to evolve towards the sole goal of communicating or representing the material needs for survival.

Interpret or Simulate

The puppet character itself is determined less by its shape than by its gestures. This explains why, to be sure, any old object can become a puppet. And like the whole play, the actual object-puppet has as its goal, *interpretation*, not the representation or simulation of reality. Not even an imaginary reality. Puppets which are used exclusively to create an illusion of reality aren't really puppets (and, in fact, are much less common in puppet theatre than in cinema where they often function as special effects tools in fantasy films).

As the puppet is first of all gestural, and not anecdotal or figurative, it should therefore suffice that a single puppet constitutes a complete puppet theatre. The puppet is not just a fictional character, created simply on which to hang the framework of a story or particular myth. The puppet as such doesn't rely on any narrative context for its existence, and neither is the puppet theatre a narrative *form* in any essence (even if it is often the *vehicle* for narrative).

When we write for puppetry we think firstly of the puppet as a *thing to do*, an object to sculpt, assemble or find; a procedure of conception and realisation which can exist independently

of its identity and development as a character. A character will always be exclusively fictional, but the puppet, once made, becomes real in a concrete sense; a real object, a real *thing*, an actual fragment of concrete reality and everyday life that may or may not resemble a living being, or even a common puppet-image. Even when we are talking about dolls or found-objects, these are actual real things which don't acquire their 'puppet' character until held; the puppet being always the *form*, whereas the object is the *material*.

Real Object, Imaginary Character

It is here that the puppet-drama begins. As an object, the puppet is real; as a character it is always imaginary. To satisfy its desire to become a sort of perfect, absolute puppet, to become a complete puppet-object-character, we put it in the theatre where we inscribe its hypothetical fragile existence in the space, filling the space with signs of life so that the puppet itself continues to balance above the abyss between two realities; concrete and imaginary; between the object it *is* and the character it would (really) *like to be*.

And because it never resolves this, the puppet's condition is in a state of continuous development. That is the tension inherent in all puppets and the drama in all puppet plays - the perpetual struggle of wanting to be.

There is therefore a sub-text to puppet theatre, even in its most trivial or banal incarnations. Puppet theatre cannot deny its identity as a 'hidden' theatre, because the puppet, by nature, always has something to hide. I would like to believe that it is for this reason that in careless or inexperienced hands, the puppet always tends to move in a frenetic, panicky way. By staying too quiet it risks revealing, betraying, its big secret that (despite all illusions) it always lacks life, and along with life, death (the biggest secret of all).

Puppetry is not only a discipline, a medium, a technique, but another way of perceiving the world, based on a philosophically different reality. Makers of puppet theatre are obliged to think like puppeteers, and puppeteers to cultivate a 'puppet-mind'. If we are to write *puppet theatre*, not just write *for* puppet theatre, we must become 'puppet-thinkers'. Only 'puppet-thought' can produce real puppet theatre.

Puppets don't speak themselves, and we don't speak a common language anymore. We have lost the grammar, thrown away the dictionaries. We no longer have inherited laws for governing the construction of figures, plus formulas, prescriptions and proscriptions applicable to all texts written for puppets. It's the end of the millennium. There are no rules anymore.

We can only listen to the deep primordial murmurs and whispers we glean from the origins of our art. Not in the aim of making a new set of norms or rules, a new puppetry language, but to rediscover the primitive spirit (pre-logic, pre-linguistic, and pre-narrative) that we possessed from the first yearnings to create with puppets; the force which we have set in motion through the creative process. From conception to reception. From the spirit, to the spirit.

A Magical Thought

We must rediscover how to make puppet-theatre belong to a way of thinking which is literally pre-historic, but which still drives forward linear thought and narrative. A way of thought where, in effect, the notion of reality is nothing but an historical human fabrication, of humans 'after the fall', invented to separate the natural world from our own imaginations.

Historically and logically, the puppet cannot be natural for humans, but it cannot be imaginary either because it exists in a concrete form. It embodies the sort of paradox which becomes unthinkable, except that puppet-thinkers don't separate reality from the imagination. In 'puppet-thought' there is no artifice which cannot become real, no product of the imagination which, once thought and uttered, cannot be made real. The real and the imaginary are interactive and interdependent and for the puppet-thinker, the proof is in the puppet.

In the final analysis, it would be inconceivable that puppet theatre could be anything but a theatre of animation, a theatre devoted to simulation, to false semblances, which wants above all to pretend that inanimate objects can be like living beings. Because for a puppet-thinker, *nothing* is really inanimate. Puppet-thought is not just theoretical, another passive means of re-experiencing the world, albeit distinguished by this clouding of the limits between concrete reality and the imagination. Puppet-thought is penetrating, energetic and intrusive, a very practical and creative means of facing, ordering and even intervening in reality; very close, in effect, to what anthropologists like to call pre-scientific or magical thought.

If, by consequence, Western societies continue to manifest hostility or indifference towards puppetry, it is because of their attitude when confronted with puppet-thought, this apparently primitive, philosophical point-of-view which is in all puppet activity. The real history of puppet-thought remains to be written, but it has already survived the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment (two eras which were particularly 'dark' for puppet-thought) and now, with the very real decline of Western civilisation, it is beginning to have a little renaissance of its own. ➡

⇒ We are puppet-thinkers at birth. But the centuries of Western civilisation wipe out the traces, superimposing systems of logical thought and order fundamentally unfavourable to puppet-thought. Puppet-thought occupies a little room in the spirit which is usually closed, sealed and forgotten in the course of the civilising processes of our childhood education. This is without doubt why so many audiences persist in seeing puppet theatre through a prism of nostalgia, like something associated with childhood, a phenomenon more appropriate to the psychologies of children and primitive humans

There are already too many examples of shows with puppets written or created in the total absence of puppet-thought, and they are always easy to spot as imitations of plays that they would like to be, but never will be. It's not enough for a text to include puppets as characters to be a puppetry text. And not all shows that use puppets are automatically puppet shows. It's more a question of attitude and intention than of technique. It's the state of the spirit.

Real puppet-theatre cannot be written (nor put together, made, created or composed) other than by puppet-thinkers, who may or may not be puppeteers in the strictest sense. For the uninitiated, that is to say - break the lock and enter this dusty, forgotten little room in the spirit. It is an even more extraordinary and risky venture than exploring an Egyptian tomb. It may signal the end of the world, the end of civilisation as we know it. For some, there lurks malevolent or ill-intended curses, puppet-mummy-curses. It could lead to madness or to death. For others, to a new means of expression, the *magic* of puppetry.

Roman Paska is a writer/director of puppet theatre, who teaches at the Eugene O'Neill school in the USA and at the National Puppetry School of Barcelona. He is the artistic director of Theatre for the Birds. In 1996 Roman Paska will be working with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, on a production of Moby Dick. This article was first published in the French puppetry magazine, PUCK. Translation by Jenny Andersen.

BOOK REVIEW

IN SEARCH OF AESTHETICS FOR THE PUPPET THEATRE MICHAEL MESCHKE, MARGARETA SORENSON

Pub. New Delhi, 1992

In Search of Aesthetics for the Puppet Theatre has been written by Michael Meschke in collaboration with Margareta Sorenson. It does appear to be heavily weighted with Michael Meschke input, so I hope I may be forgiven for treating it as predominantly his work and words. This book has been translated from the Swedish by Susanna Stevens.

In his preface, Michael Meschke describes this book as a 'blend of personal notes and more objective suggestions for a working language'. He later directs the reader to 'use with caution!', generously, and with the perspective of a good teacher, impressing upon the learner the need sometimes for his assertions to be questioned and contradicted, if this will serve the coming generations best. Thus the words may 'fill the function of stimulating mental activity and (creating) new formulations, since the lack of formulated analysis is a handicap'.

**Meschke writes from
a very strong
personal position,
backed up by
phenomenal
experience.**

Meschke writes from a very strong personal position, backed up by phenomenal experience: in theatre, in a life richly lived, in teaching, in support of the puppetry world and in an enjoyment of communication at many levels. This personal position drives everything he writes. He writes with conviction and clarity. The 'common language' he argues for is a plain, usable one, not all words I, for one have heard before, but words I will certainly employ again in teaching or directing and for the focusing of concepts at the time of evolving new work.

In this book the puppetry worker will find a treasure chest of stimuli, of precious gems of observation, not fallen upon at the beginning of Meschke's career, but derived from many years of thoughtful consideration.

Meschke is comfortable recounting his mistakes, whether in past choices of construction materials or in conceptual decisions. He is strong and confident about his position in theatre - he knows what he WANTS to do and therefore cringes not in the face of his shortfalls. What do small incidences of failure matter in the company of so many successes? Meschke can afford, as we in the arts can all afford, to laugh at the occasional banana skin that has been slipped on. The alternative: to be afraid to venture forth on the road at all, means death to the creative individual. ⇒

⇒ Michael Meschke has travelled and will travel. He offers us some useful words from his journeys; words, names, titles that we may now reuse, both for ourselves and in our teaching. He works to contribute towards a common language for Puppet Theatre. So important in the development of a discipline is the existence of a usable,

accessible language of that art or science. We do need the words for our work, for our learning and teaching, especially if we care at all about growth in the artform, now, around us or in the future, for our 'descendants'.

During the 1950's, the author studied at the school for theatrical movement conducted in Paris by Etienne Decroux. He says, 'I have extracted the knowledge that has seemed to me particularly relevant to puppet theatre. I have fused this with my own experiences working with puppet theatre ... The distillate can be regarded as a training programme and a method of analysis for the puppet player'.

Meschke's studies with the artist who trained such as Marcel Marceau have injected into the puppetry vocabulary such words and concepts as 'Toc-fondu' and 'Retabli'. More important for the director and player, he, as a puppeteer, applies this new language and makes it immediately serviceable for us.

Let me offer you some of Michael Meschke's chapter headings and sub-headings. One of the subheadings under *The Puppet*, Chpt 2, is *Tradition and Innovation*. Meschke says 'Tradition is the soil in which the living artist plants new flowers ...' Under Chpt 5, *Movement*, we have *Movement Training, Cause-and-Effect and The Arms, The Zero State, Scope, Dynamics, Counterbalance, Reaction Eyes, Following Eyes, Inward Directed Eyes, Authenticity*. Chpt 6, *Directing*, includes *Choices to be Made*, under which he says, 'First we seek an answer to the question WHY' Chpt 8 gives us *Dramaturgy*.

Once in a while the nature of the English translation may puzzle a beginning puppeteer. They can well afford to skim past such small events. The strength of Meschke's conviction and the extent of his energy and love of his work shine out of every page and inform, instruct, inspire at every paragraph.

This book may be dropped open at any page and will immediately present a key heading, sentence or paragraph that will focus thinking for the puppeteer and feed the language needs of the teacher. Buy this book and you will read it many, many times. Read the words and take on what can be absorbed from a lifetime of daydreaming, designing, translating, travelling and communicating!

I heartily recommend this reading for both potential and fully professional puppeteers.

by Anita Sinclair

Prof. Micheal Meschke is Director of MARIONETTEATERN and MARIONETTEMUSEET, Stockholm. He is head of the Department of Puppet Theatre at Turku School for Art & Communication, Finland.

This book can be ordered from DaSilva Puppet Books, 63 Kennedy Rd, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX68BE, UK PH/FAX 1869 245 793. Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard accepted. Cheques payable to Ray DaSilva. Cost: about \$29.95

IN SEARCH OF AESTHETICS FOR THE PUPPET THEATRE



MICHAEL MESCHKE
MARGARETA SÖRENSEN

MARIONETTES AND MERLIN IN SYDNEY, 1853

A Royal Marionette Theatre opened in Sydney on 11 April, 1853 in the former Olympic Circus at the rear of the Painters' Arms in Castlereagh Street. This site was in the vicinity of the present Imperial Arcade, in the block "pinpointed" by the Centerpoint Tower. It claimed to be the company of the same name which had opened in London in the previous year. (The use of the word "marionette" in England seems to date from then.)

Advertisements told how the building had been refitted to house Mr Albany Browne and his Company who were to appear in the burlesque *Bombastes Furioso*. This was the play which opened the London counterpart on 12 January, 1852, and Mr Albany Brown (no 'e') was there too. What was not obvious from press reports of the London opening was that Mr Brown was a marionette, and I suspect the imitator in Sydney may not have realised this.

I wanted to find out who this person was. His name was not in the ads, but in those days you needed a licence for theatrical performances and in the N.S.W. State Archives I found that this had been issued to one Henry Murlin. There was a photographer working in the N.S.W. goldfields in the early 1870's whose name was Henry Beaufoy Merlin, so I wondered if they were the same person.

Henry Beaufoy Merlin had gained posthumous fame when glass negatives of photos he and his assistant had taken were discovered in a shed in North Sydney in 1951. These photos form the Holtermann Collection in the Mitchell Library, and include the photos of Gulgon which were used for the design on the old \$10 note featuring Henry Lawson. Keast Burke had written *Gold and Silver* (1973) around Merlin and his patron, Holtermann, but the only information he had on Merlin's early life came from the death certificate of 1873 giving his father as Frederick Merlin, his mother as "Anne Harriet...", his birthplace England, his age at death 43, and his marriage in London at 33. It stated that he had been in N.S.W. 24 years.

The breakthrough came in 1984 when I found that a Mrs Ann Harriett Murlin had married a Mr Forster, a widower with five sons, in Sydney in 1851. The newspaper announcement revealed that she was the daughter of Benjamin Beaufoy, R.N.A. Mrs Murlin and a Mr Murlin (in that order) had arrived in Sydney on 8 December, 1848. In the electoral roll of 1859-60, I found a Henry Murlin living at an address which the *Sand's Directory* listed as the residence of Mrs Forster, "artist in wax

flowers". (Mr Forster had died in 1856 and his last will of 1854 makes no mention of his second wife.) As more evidence appeared I became satisfied that Henry Murlin was Henry Beaufoy Merlin.

It appears that Merlin had been responsible for a performance of animated scenes at the Royal Hotel in Sydney on 14 September, 1852: an Irish port, Rome, The Alps, Tartary and the Great Exhibition in London. This was also advertised as the Royal Marionette Theatre, although the "upwards of 200 Mechanical Figures" were unlikely to be true marionettes. It seems very possible that Merlin had conceived this performance before the arrival from London of reports of the opening of the Royal Marionette Theatre earlier that year. One was in *The Times* and another in *The London Illustrated News*, and carried a picture of the puppets in *Bombastes Furioso*.

When Merlin, with the backing of the publican Peter Hook, opened his theatre in 1853 marionettes were only part of the show. There were also singers and, later in the season, a magician as well as animated scenes. Although there are many press reports there is not much information on the puppets except that they were "wood, wax and pasteboard", "of considerable size", and "all most superbly dressed". *Bombastes Furioso* was "a very laughable affair". It seems quite likely that Mrs Forster had a hand in making the puppets.

At the beginning of the second week someone broke into the theatre after midnight and tried to set it on fire, although fortunately an alarm was raised and the flames were put out before there was too much damage. Shows continued through the week and the theatre was closed for the third week. It reopened with *Tom Thumb* added to the programme.

Henry Fielding wrote the burlesque *The Tragedies of Tragedies: The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1730) and Kane O'Hara later adapted it for a "burletta", or "burlesque opera". Neither version of *Tom Thumb* had been in the repertoire of the Royal Marionette Theatre in London, but Fielding's version had been performed first by large puppets at Sothwark Fair in 1734, and O'Hara's version was performed by puppets in Dublin in 1777, three years before its premiere with live actors. Merlin the Magician is in both versions, but in O'Hara's he reappears at the end to revive the dead who litter the stage.

The last performance in the Castlereagh Street theatre seems to have been on Thursday, 12 May, and on the Friday and Saturday performances (requiring a second licence) were given in Parramatta. On 21 May a third licence was issued to Henry Murlin to give performances outside Sydney and on 24 May the Royal Marionette Theatre opened in Maitland. An advertisement for ➡

⇒ it on the 1 June for the first time listed the proprietor's name, but it was not Henry Murlin....it was Henry Muriel!

There is good evidence that he had changed his name to Muriel, and was known by this name until at least 1857. It was the surname of a prominent auctioneer in Sydney, and it's almost an anagram of "Merlin"; you need to turn the "n" upside down to make "u". It is not difficult to imagine that he had been plagued by taunts about his name and it looks as if having Merlin as a character in *Tom Thumb* was the last straw. The characters for the play are listed in the advertisement of 1 June, but instead of Merlin there is "John, a wizard"! (I suspect this is an in-joke to coincide with the name change to Muriel, and that the magician Merlin was not called John in the performance that night.)

On 8 June the company began a tour of the district, and opened in Newcastle on 25 June. (In those days Newcastle was less important than Maitland.) The gave a performance there to benefit the hospital on 4 July and that is where I lose trace of the Royal Marionette Theatre. But not of Henry Muriel!

Henry Beaufoy Merlin, as Henry Muriel, exhibited a mechanical theatre with scenes from Crimea in Maitland in 1855. (Mrs Forster was advertising courses in the art of wax flowers in Maitland at the same time.) In 1856 he opened the Queen's Theatre there. It burnt down a week later and was rebuilt with the help of public subscription. After a letter appeared in the paper criticising his acting he moved onto Newcastle where he was responsible for that town's first theatre, which opened behind Crofts Hotel on 4 February, 1857. He was back in Sydney in May of that year, exhibiting "panoramas", and in July was listed in the cast at Our Lyceum Theatre.

As stated above, he appears as "Henry Merlin" in the 1859-60 Electoral Roll. He married in London in 1863, giving his occupation as "artist", and returned to Australia with his wife, Louisa, who was 15 years younger. His career as a photographer begins now, and that has been written on elsewhere. It seems that he had at last managed to avoid any embarrassment about his surname by using Beaufoy Merlin. There were four children of whom two daughters are believed to have gone on the stage in Canada and London. In addition to his excellent photos, he also wrote articles for the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, the last appearing on 27 September, 1873, the day he died from a lung condition.

Now that he has revealed himself to us, we have a great deal of information on this pioneer puppeteer. We have photos of him; we know the names of distinguished cousins in England (including an MP., a scientist and a wealthy London distiller); we know he is buried in the Pioneer's Memorial Park near Leichhardt Town Hall; we have letters from him (requesting licences); and there is even a copy of an 1847 pantomime by Horace Mayhew which seems to have been copied out in the handwriting of the young Henry Murlin!

Many of Merlin's photos were displayed at the N.S.W. stand in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. At that same exhibition another Royal Marionette Theatre was playing which had just toured Australia, leaving behind three puppeteers who formed their own company here. But more about that later!

Richard Bradshaw

(For further information see: Richard Bradshaw, 'The Merlin of the South', *Australian Drama Studies* #7 {October 1985} pp. 81-130)

VISUAL THEATRE MASTER CLASSES

..... POLYGLOT PUPPET THEATRE LTD. A.C.N. 005 118 052
27A CROMWELL ROAD SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141 AUSTRALIA TELEPHONE (03) 9827 9667 FACSIMILE (03) 9826 1937

April 23 - Noriko Mishimoto -
Puppetry.

April 30 - Graham Clarke -
Voice.

May 7 - Katy Bowman -
Image - body - object.

May 14 - Robyn Sedgwick -
Anatomy.

May 21 - Bradley Hulme -
The actor.

May 28 - Chris Dickins
Text.

Polyglot

June 4 - Reflections - Aspirations.

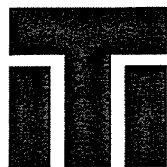
(Appraisal and future projects)

The intention of the master classes is to provide an artistic 'spa-bath' for performers who specialize in visual theatre.

The tutors are all highly regarded specialists who provide professional development and extension work for personal and artistic growth.

Limited places available -
\$ 200 : 00.

Apply - Chris Dickins, Artistic Director -



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.

Arts Management Advisory Group.

Melbourne, Vic: will continue its monthly meetings with guest speakers and discussions: 'Putting the Punch into Publicity' in Feb; 'Fundraising, Marketing and Development' in Mar; 'Human Resource Management' in April.

Digital Media World Australia 96,

1-3 May, Sydney, NSW: expo including computer graphics, animation, film and TV production, interactive entertainment, virtual reality, simulation, visualisation, multimedia, publishing and design.

Drents Poppenfestival,

6-12 May, Meppel, Nds: international festival of puppet and object theatre.

Golden Gate Awards,

18 April-5 May, San Francisco, USA: the competitive section of the San Francisco Film Festival is open to short narratives, animation & documentary genres. Films must have been completed in the last year.

Images,

31 Oct-10 Nov, Arnhem, Nds: the largest international festival of puppet & object theatre in that country, presents companies from around the globe.

International Micro Festival,

12-16 Jun, Dordrecht, Nds: puppet theatre festival specialising in small manifestations of the form.

The Brothers Quay:

are among the most original filmmakers working in Britain & among the most extraordinary animators in the world. They will be here in March. Tim & Steve will do the Adelaide Film Festival & hold seminars at VCA in Melbourne. Their most well known animation films include 'Street of Crocodiles', 'This Unnameable Little Broom' & 'The Crumb'.

Australia Council:

is seeking expressions of interest from a wide range of people willing to help in peer assessment. The Register of Peers, reflecting national demographics, will be part of the new structure the Council will adopt in 1996. Those on the Register need to, through their knowledge or experience, be able to make fair & informed assessments of artistic work and grant applications.

New Work '96:

NIDA is planning a range of activities this year to encourage small theatre groups, dance or movement co.'s & young

directors to create new work. If you are planning a new productions for '96, NIDA may be able to assist you with a suitable venue, managerial support, some technical personnel & theatre staff, rehearsal room time & other in-kind support.

American Puppetry Conference,

8-16 Jun, Waterford, USA: the 6th annual event to be held at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre features a puppet theatre ensemble production directed by Eric Bass; participants' projects; a dramaturgical development workshop; a marionette seminar & new 'page to stage' programme offered for rehearsal-ready productions.

Australian Performing Arts Market,

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

Moorabbin Arts Centre,

Moorabbin, Vic: offers free hire of theatre space for your performance in exchange for a 50/50 cut on gross box office takings. The state of the art venue has a sprung floor, fabulous acoustics & seats 100 people. Conditions apply.



AUSSIE PORTA PUPPETS
Margot Siemer, Cottesloe, WA.

PUPPETEASE

ROSS BROWNING

The information about the UNIMA-USA film and video competition in the International News section of this issue came from Ross Browning, off the Internet. (UNIMA-USA /Puppetry Home Page: Rose.Sage@forsythe.stanford.edu). Ross suggests that communication between puppeteers could be speeded up by using the Internet, so if anyone is interested, give him a flash on his screen (see below for details).

Ross Browning is a multi-talented performer. He is an actor, writer, puppet master and pianist-composer with a taste for jazz with more than 20 years experience creating educational performances for young people.

From 1984-1991 Ross played Blinky Bill on the popular ABC Children's Television puppet series "The Adventures of Blinky Bill". He has written, acted in and composed music for many puppet shows produced by TV channels, film houses and film schools, puppet theatre companies and museums. In 1987 the AFTRS commissioned Ross to devise & direct the world's first Television Puppetry Techniques workshop (a 10 day hands on workshop for industry professionals).

PERFORMANCES:

PUPPETEASE is an interactive action packed hour of puppetry, jazz and blues, jokes, sight gags, audience participation and puppetry making demonstrations.

It is a very well travelled and enthusiastically received show, suitable for K-7, plus special performances for HS Drama.

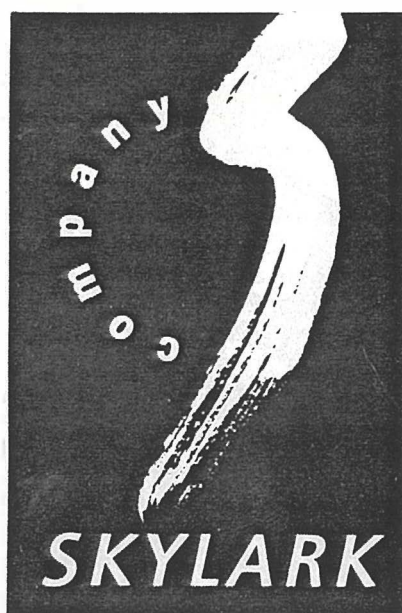
FUNKY FINS was created by Ross, with puppets by Gareth Frost, for the Australian Museum's exhibition Shark! It is available for schools touring in 1996.

DIG! is Ross's latest show, (also created in conjunction with Gareth Frost) for The Earth Exchange Museum, where it had 4 seasons of performances. It is a show about mining and energy for years K-6.

PUPPETEASE
PO Box 101 Pymble NSW 2073
PH (02) 488 8038
Fax (02) 449 9569
Mobile Ph: 0411 245 665
Email: puppetease@peg.apc.org
World Wide Web: <http://www.odyssey.com.au/uspecies/puppetease>



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Braddon
A.C.T. 2601

P.O. Box 963
Civic Square A.C.T.
2608 Australia

TEATER TAPTOE

Teater Taptoe's founder and administrator, scenographer, actor and puppeteer, Luk De Bruyker, was awarded during the 2nd International Karagöz Festival in Bursa, Turkey, with the title "Hayali". From now on he is the only non-Turkish puppeteer who has the right to call himself "master Karagöz player".

Luk de Bruyker was instructed in Karagöz technique by Hayali Torun Celebi. He performs Karagöz and Hacivat techniques in two Teater Taptoe productions: "From Pierke to Karagöz" and "A Journey into the World of Figures".

THE SKYLARK LOWDOWN

In October 1995, Peter Wilson, Artistic Director of Company Skylark, was presented with the prestigious 1995/1996 Canberra Times **Artist of the Year Award**; for his contribution to the cultural life of the Australian Capital Territory. Gary Humphries, ACT Arts Minister, presented the award to Peter.

Peter was also announced as the winner of **The Canberra Critics Circle Award** for "Inside Dry Water"; *in recognition for his artistry and achievement of a fruitful symbiosis of art and puppetry.*

1996

Inside Dry Water recently gained 'Special Mention' for an outstanding contribution to Australian Culture, at the Centre for Australian Culture Studies Award ceremony.

The Skylark performance season officially kicks off in April with **Pocket Size**, which first appeared at the 1994 National Festival of Australian Theatre. It is a series of short illusionary sequences targeted at secondary level students and families and will appear at the Ralph Wilson Theatre in Gorman House, Canberra, between 17-20 April.

Following **Pocket Size**, Skylark presents **Salty Seagull Takes Off** for preschoolers. One of Skylark's favourites, **Salty**, has entertained children for the past six years with in-school and public performances. **Salty** is a delightful puppet show which explores the need to trust our ability to make the right decisions. Children will easily relate to the timeless friendship established between Salty and his friend Dolphin and adore the colour, fun, thrills and song. **Salty Seagull** appears from 13 May until 28 June.

Wake Baby, a co-production between Company Skylark and the Queensland Performing Arts Trust, will premier in June at Brisbane's internationally acclaimed Out of the Box Festival prior to its season in Canberra.

Wake Baby is visual theatre celebrating childhood. Through the eyes of a child, it gently explores the source of creativity and hope. This production is targeted at pre-schoolers and lower primary school children. Dates to be confirmed.

In late July, Company Skylark presents **Charlotte's Web**. This classic tale about the spirit of friendship is beloved by children everywhere. **Charlotte's Web** broke box office records when it appeared at the Canberra Theatre in 1992. Prior and after the Canberra season, **Charlotte's Web** will tour nationally. The tour/season kicks off between 23 June and 31 August.

Inside dry water looks to tour once again, only this time, the company has been invited to participate in the New Horizons - India - Australia program which will see **Inside dry water** tour Bangalore, Madras and Calcutta in November of this year.

Dessi Gounden

Marketing Co-ordinator, Skylark.

AT THE COAL-FACE

THE BREATHING HAND

Of all the exercises in this booklet (*Movement in Puppetry Performance*), the "breathing hand" is the most important. It gives life to the puppet. The difference that this seemingly simple movement can make to the quality and believability of your puppet performance is startling. Don't expect, however, to accomplish this movement overnight. It takes time and concentration to do well. Once you have begun to understand it and make it work for you on the floor you are ready to work with it with a puppet. The BREATHING HAND is the key to the life of the puppet.

BREATHING HAND FLOOR EXERCISE:

Kneel and place one hand on the floor palm down with fingers spread in front of you. Keeping the heel of the hand and the finger pads flat on the floor, contract and lift the palm up off the floor. Think of a string attached to the first joint of your middle finger pulling up. Place the palm back down on the floor. Contract and lift again. Repeat several times.

Concentrate on the contraction of the palm, then straighten your fingers during the palm contraction letting your fingers bend slightly as the palm touches the floor.

Work on doing this contraction-release of the hand using the "undulation stroke" of previous hand exercises (Ed: see *Hand Exercises:2* in Dec. 1995 issue). The movement **must** begin in the palm of the hand. Your fingers simply follow along.

ADDING BREATH:

The preliminary floor exercise gives you the mechanics of the "breathing hand". To make it breathe add your own breath. Breathe in when the palm contracts and out when the palm stretches towards the floor. Breathe fully and deeply. Concentrate on your breath. Vary the tempo in which the hand breathes. Try to see the hand as being detached from your body. Observe the hand and its breathing. Try to make the hand become some sort of creature that has a life of its own. Let it crawl around and watch it.

If you push it around from your arm and shoulder you are defeating the purpose of the exercise. Think of the arms and shoulders as appendages of the hand. The life, movement, and motivation must **seem** to come from the hand itself. ➡

Practice this exercise with both hands. When you finally do it right you will know.

This "breathing hand" exercise is an excellent one to do just before doing a puppet show. It starts the life flowing for the puppet and helps you to centre yourself on the job you're about to do.

From *Movement in Puppetry Performance* by Nikki Tilroe

FREE EQUITY SEMINARS BY JANET DALGLIESH

The Victorian branch of the MEAA (formerly Actors Equity) will be holding a series of seminars this year. Of particular interest for puppeteers is an all-day seminar called "Puppetry - Burning Issues" on Thursday March 7th. It's free to all members of the MEAA, although if there are spare places, non-members may be able to attend as well. The agenda isn't finalised yet, but topics for discussion may include health and safety for puppeteers, business skills for the independent puppeteer, working in film/TV, your rights as a working puppeteer, copyright issues and funding for puppetry.

This is a great opportunity to get together with other isolated, individual artists out there to discuss common issues, concerns and solutions. If there's enough interest shown, it may also be the beginning of a regular sub-committee set up to look after the special needs of professional puppeteers, with access to the union's valuable resources. We already have two puppetry people on Branch Council in Victoria, as well as a puppeteer working part-time as a union employee, so now's our chance to have our say!

Some of the other seminars available early this year are "Actor's Rights", "Financial Planning", "Family Law" and "Funding". If you'd like a brochure, please contact the MEAA immediately for up-to-date information.

If you have a burning issue which you'd like your union to address, and/or you'd like to book a place at any of the seminars, please call Training Officer Daphne Stitt on (03) 9279 0500 during business hours. Remember, book early to avoid disappointment!

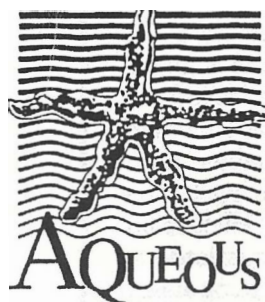
artists are invited to propose works for the exhibition

hand + eye

Noosa Regional Gallery
May 31 - June 23 1996

an exhibition that explores the concept of the puppet and related themes such as control, manipulation, anthropomorphism, and the subject/object duality. Proposals for 2 and 3 dimensional artworks as well as electronic, and interactive works welcome. This exhibition is part of puppets '96, the Australian Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in association with the Noosa Aqueous Festival.

for more information contact Kevin Wilson on
074 490 555
or write to Noosa Regional Gallery
PO Box 141
Tewantin Qld 4565



AQUEOUS'96

Puppetry & Visual Theatre
May 31 - June 10



AQUEOUS'96
Puppetry & Visual Theatre
May 31 - June 10

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