

MARCH 1997

UNIMA AUSTRALIA

EDITOR
Jenny Andersen
99 Bent St
Northcote
Vic. 3068
Ph: 03 9482 3292

TREASURER
Richard Hart
20 Coleman St
North Fitzroy
Vic. 3068
Ph: 03 9489 8337

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

PRESIDENT
Sue Wallace
75 Palace St
Petersham
NSW 2049
Ph: 02 9568 2785



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929, MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

EDITORIAL

UNIMA Australia is gradually taking on more initiatives to help communication between its members and to strengthen the puppetry art form. In this issue of the magazine Mary Sutherland puts forward an exciting (and clearly outlined) proposal for getting UNIMA on the Internet. I think it's a great idea, especially as it has been backed up by an offer of technical help by Mary's husband, Joe.

A couple of times in the past year UNIMA has helped to organise workshops with various master puppeteers. With our membership contact lists, we are in a good position to round up extra people to fill classes, or to organise them from scratch. Opportunities for workshops with highly skilled artists don't come around every day, so if you think you can smell one coming, contact UNIMA, and at the very least, we can give you a list of phone numbers in your state.

Thank you to the many contributors in this issue and to Richard Hart (for the cover), Kym Tonkin (for proof reading) and Jennie Pfeiffer (for computer disk conversions).

Jenny Andersen

CONTENTS

- p.3 - **Secretary's Report** by Dennis Murphy
- p.4 - **Letters to the Editor**
- p. 5 - **Business Matters** by Dennis Murphy
- p.6 - **Photo** - Polyglot Puppet Theatre
- p. 7 - **National News** - Terrapin Puppet Theatre
- p. 8-9 - **National News** - Spare Parts Puppet Theatre
- p. 10-11 - **A Small Theatre with Big Ideas** by Anita Sinclair
- p. 11 - **New Members.**
- p. 12-13 - **Water Puppets In Canberra** by Elizabeth Paterson
- p. 14-15 - **An Independent Puppet Maker** by Tessa Wallis
- p. 16 - **Puppet Cottage Reminiscences** by Dennis Murphy
- p. 17-19 - **International News**
- p. 20-21 - **ITI News**
- p. 22 - **Book Review** - *The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre* Reviewed by Dennis Murphy
- p. 23-24 - **Review** - *Pakistan Third International Festival*. Reviewed by Jenny Andersen
- p. 25 - **Review** - *The Fork* Reviewed by Eleanor Downes
- p. 26-27 - **Review** - *Dreamer* Reviewed by Craig Gillespie
- p. 27 - **Asia Pacific Commission Report**
- p. 28-29 - **Cyber Gossip** - *A Virtual UNIMA Centre?* by Mary Sutherland
- p. 30-31 - **Peter Scriven's World** by Anne Kirker
- p. 32-33 - **History** - *The Salici Marionettes* by Richard Bradshaw
- p. 34 - **Puppet Designer and Maker Questionnaire** - Sue Wallace
- p. 35 - **Total Theatre** by Kym Tonkin.
- p. 36 - **Treasurer's Financial Report** by Richard Hart

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Gentle readers,

We have had a close UNIMA election for a new President with two excellent candidates, Skylark's Peter Wilson and Sydney Puppet Theatre's Sue Wallace. The majority of votes went to Sue Wallace. So congratulations, Sue, and welcome aboard.

Our outgoing President, Jennifer Davidson, merits a hearty vote of thanks. It was her generosity in donating the airfare that allowed UNIMA Australia to be represented at the Asia Pacific Commission and she has been very supportive of UNIMA over many years. Thanks again, Jennifer.

An incident with Telecom last October put me in mind of the "puppet" debate: ie. whether to drop the word "puppet" from company names and descriptions of their work. This is due, mainly, though not always, to concern over the reputation of puppetry as "just" a children's art having poor production values.



"Söibluemebüebli"

Above: Michael Huber's *The Dandelion Boy*. (review p. 23)

When I rang Telecom to get my phone fixed, I was immediately informed that they are now "Telstra - the Full Service Network". It then took four call-outs over 10 days before they found the fault and managed to fix it. I gently pointed out to them that it was a waste of tens of thousands of dollars for them to take a new name and logo but still give the same sort of poor customer service as the old Telecom.

I suggested that they would be better off putting their time, energy and money into improving their services (and hence their reputation) rather than trying to run away from their reputation by changing their name. I think there's food for thought in there for us puppeteers and visual theatre workers, too.

Anyway, I must get down from my soapbox now and schlep the puppets off to Mount Isa, Hobart and intermediate points. I had to agree with Richard Bradshaw when he said, "I see myself basically as a driver who occasionally does puppet shows."

Drive carefully out there and wave to each other as you pass.

Dennis.

LETTERS

From Axel Axelrad, Olinda.

I just want to point out that what you read in the paper is not always fact, even if printed in the UNIMA Newsletter, December 1996. I enclose a copy from a previous Newsletter which states all about the Scholarship Fund, perhaps it could be printed in the next Newsletter?

Extract from JUNE 1990 UNIMA Newsletter:

"Victorian News

MEETING OF VICTORIAN PUPPETEERS - This was held at Handspan on 4th April and some good ideas were brought up and the opinion of other UNIMA members would be interesting.

1. UNIMA Scholarship was discussed as most knew little about it. UNIMA Headquarters asked all Centres to start a Scholarship Fund to help young puppeteers and presumably suggested that it should be open to puppeteers between 18 and 25. Vic. puppeteers think this age limit should be removed, as there are not many puppeteers under 25, and provided they meet the criteria set by the judges, there should be no age limit. Michele Spooner said how disappointed she was at not being chosen for a course in Charleville because of age, her qualifications were not considered at all.

All considered \$5000 was a good figure as Capital and the interest from this should be used for the Scholarship. It was suggested that a further line be added to our Renewal Form for donations to the Scholarship Account with a suggestion of \$5 - and those who did not want to contribute need not. This way we might eventually get to \$5000. 3 years was thought fair to have been a member of UNIMA before being eligible to apply for a Scholarship. Judges to be appointed when the time comes."

* * *

*From Sean Manners,
PELICAN PUPPETS*

RE: NATIONAL UNIMA FESTIVAL 1998

APATHETIC - That's ~~Pathetic~~ with a very large **A** or maybe we just can't be bothered. Three letters of support to Dennis Murphy and one other printed in the December 1996 issue of

UNIMA. That's not even enough people to make up an audience.

As puppeteers we are in the business of communication. Of putting a point of view or story across to others. Why is it then that we are seemingly unable to put pen to paper to support our own artform. Are we all so busy chasing dollars, funding, dreams, our own tails, that we are unable to give a little time to enable us to get together in one place at one time to discuss, perform and watch puppetry from around the country or overseas? From reading the current issue of UNIMA it is clear that a number of people could find the time and money to travel the long distance to Hungary and the rest of Europe. Was Cootamundra, NSW further?

As I travel around Australia it strikes me that puppetry in this country is splintered into lots of factions and there is very little motivation to get together, forget differences, nurture new puppeteers or generally give momentum to puppetry in Australia at the present time. A UNIMA festival could have done wonders to address this. Do puppeteers in Australia want these issues addressed?

It is also interesting to note that in the same magazine that publishes the death of one festival proposal that another proposal comes to life. I hope that this letter stimulates some comment and feedback.

* * *

From Richard Bradshaw, Bowral.

In Janet Dalglish's Cyber-Gossip page of the Dec. 1996 UNIMA Newsletter there is a mention of the double marionette bridge in Bil Baird's theatre in New York. In 1974 I performed my shadow show in Bil's theatre ... it was an honour that had only been extended to Albrecht Roser ... and I remember going up on that bridge and feeling I was walking the plank! I had grown up on bridges with leaning rails but there was no such comfort in Bil's theatre. The bridge level would have been about 6 feet above the stage. One narrow section was immediately above the proscenium opening and the puppets were mainly worked between that and the main section, which was a bit wider. Seasoned manipulators were able to step across from one to the other so that their marionettes could chase in circles. The gap was just a bit too wide to step across without making a commitment,

and even without a puppet I found the experience daunting.

"Hasn't anyone ever fallen" I asked. "Oh, yes," came the reply. "Bil fell once and had to be taken off to hospital with a chipped vertebra!"

The lengths of the strings of the marionettes were chosen to suit different puppeteers.

Frank "Sully" Sullivan stood straight to work his characters so they had longer strings than the puppets worked by Bil, who crouched down low.

Incidentally, Bil was often asked what happen to the other "I" and would reply that he gave it to Meredith Willson (who wrote the words and music of "The Music Man").

BUSINESS MATTERS

BY DENNIS MURPHY

THE INSURANCE BUGBEAR

Insurance for puppeteers and other performing artists has always been difficult. Performers get classified as 'entertainers' and are considered to be too great a risk. One theory is that they must think we are all sword-swallowers performing on flaming tightropes.

In those rare cases that a puppeteer actually has an income to protect, Income Protection Insurance is virtually impossible to get.

I'm pleased to say I have managed to find an insurance broker who managed to find an insurance company that will look at puppeteers on an individual basis. So it is now possible to acquire sickness and accident benefits as well as what is called Capital Benefits, ie. a disability insurance. (My right hand is insured for \$50 000. Think of how that will look on future press releases!) For more information call Brad Robson on (02) 9929 6011.

Public Liability Insurance is readily available but I have heard of puppeteers paying exorbitant premiums. The rates fluctuate wildly. A muso put me onto a firm called The Hannon Group after he got a remarkable policy that included insurance on his sound gear. They can also insure puppets and equipment. Ring Kylie Miller on 1800 882 317.

I am not getting any commission on this. But if you make a big saving on your Public Liability thanks to this tip, may I suggest you donate 25% of it to UNIMA Australia? We could use it to upgrade our computer system. Thanks.

ADVERTISING ON THE NET

I have been approached, as I'm sure have other puppeteers, by salespeople wanting me to advertise on the Internet. It's sexy, but is it worth the money?

I'd say not.

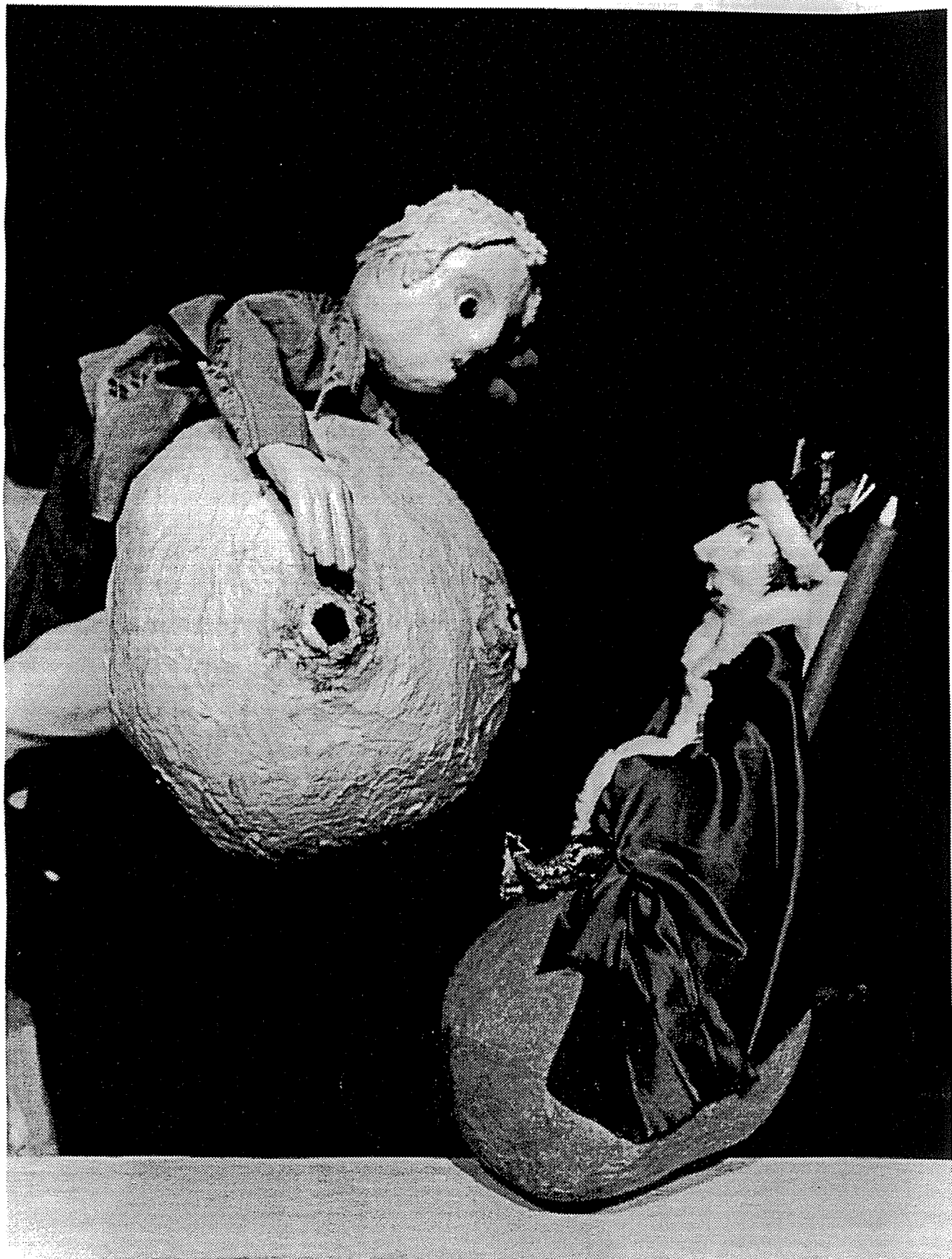
According to a 1996 Georgia (USA) Institute of Technology report:

80% of net users do so only for browsing and entertainment.

36% surf the net as an alternative to watching TV.

Only 14% use it for shopping and 84% of them are in North America or Northern

Europe.



The Little Prince by Polyglot Puppet Theatre. (Puppets by Rod Primrose)

TERRAPIN CELEBRATES A BUSY YEAR WITH PUPPET PICNIC



The Terrapin Puppet Picnic is the company's largest free community event and a chance for company artists, staff and friends to get together and celebrate the year's achievements and create some puppetry magic with the children of Hobart. The third Terrapin Puppet Picnic will be held on March 8 in beautiful St David's Park in Hobart. The hive of activity at Terrapin over the past twelve months, including its first overseas tour, has given the company good cause to celebrate.

Terrapin performed its evocative four piece production *DESIRES* at the UNIMA festival in Budapest, at the Aqueous festival in Noosa and staged a return season in Hobart. Earlier in the year the company created a new play for primary school students, *THE HUNT*, and restaged a favourite children's show from 1995, *JUMP INTO THE PICTURE*, both touring extensively to schools throughout the state. Hot on the heels of all this activity was *THE FORK*, Terrapin's most recent adult production, which premiered at the Theatre Royal in Hobart in

January 1997. *THE FORK* is a black comedy about love, lies and procrastination and was created in conjunction with Sue Giles and Ian Pidd of *Shaken and Suspicious*.

A cavalcade of Terrapin puppets will be at the Picnic to meet the children. Youngsters can learn from professional puppeteers how to make their own puppets, and if repairs are needed the Puppet Hospital and the Puppet Doctor are nearby. Iain Lang's popular performance of *Punch and Judy* will feature as will the *Jumping Castle*. *Life Be In It* games and face painting. This year's picnic will include a *Shadow Puppetry* tent where children can make and perform against a back lighted screen.

Terrapin hopes that plenty of old and new friends will bring their picnic baskets along to the park to celebrate in a carnival atmosphere of puppetry, entertainment and games. The Picnic takes place between 11 am and 3 pm with entrance and all activities being free.



Left: 1996 Puppet Picnic. Photo by Helen Crawford.

Above: 1996 Puppet Picnic. Photo by Annette Downs.

SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE



Exciting changes are afoot at Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. 1997 begins with a new Artistic Director, Noriko Nishimoto, a new General Manager, Linda Martin and 30 new company associates who will be involved with the company's future activities. This new team, with administrator Caroline Harding, are excited about the company's future events.

The company will continue to produce innovative and high quality family/children's shows at the Short Street Theatre during the school holidays and school terms every year. Spare Parts will also continue to tour their popular schools shows throughout the year. In addition, the company will actively develop co-productions with other artforms in WA and puppet/visual theatres from the eastern states. These major collaborations will be performed for family audiences and will participate in festivals such as the Festival of Perth and the Awesome festival.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre will also extend their artform to a youth market. This exciting new development aims to have shows performed during the Artrage Festival in 1998, 1999 and 2000. These productions will be directed by three potential trainee artistic directors - Joanne Foley, Jane Davies and Peter Jagger - who are involved in the company's future programme planning for two weeks of this year, under Noriko Nishimoto's supervision.

The company will also produce a creative development workshop, which explores new possibilities of this artform. There will be a presentation for a new youth audience every year.

Throughout 1997 Spare Parts School of Puppetry will commence as a community project. This project will be part of the company's three year plan. Workshops will take place for children, youth and adults every Saturday from March to November 1997. The company will engage the skills of coordinator Joanne Foley and tutors Jane Davies, Peter Jagger, Michael Barlow, Warrick Williams, Paul Johnson, and Zoe Atkinson. This project aims to develop peoples interest and understanding of puppetry in the community and develop the puppetry artform for the future.

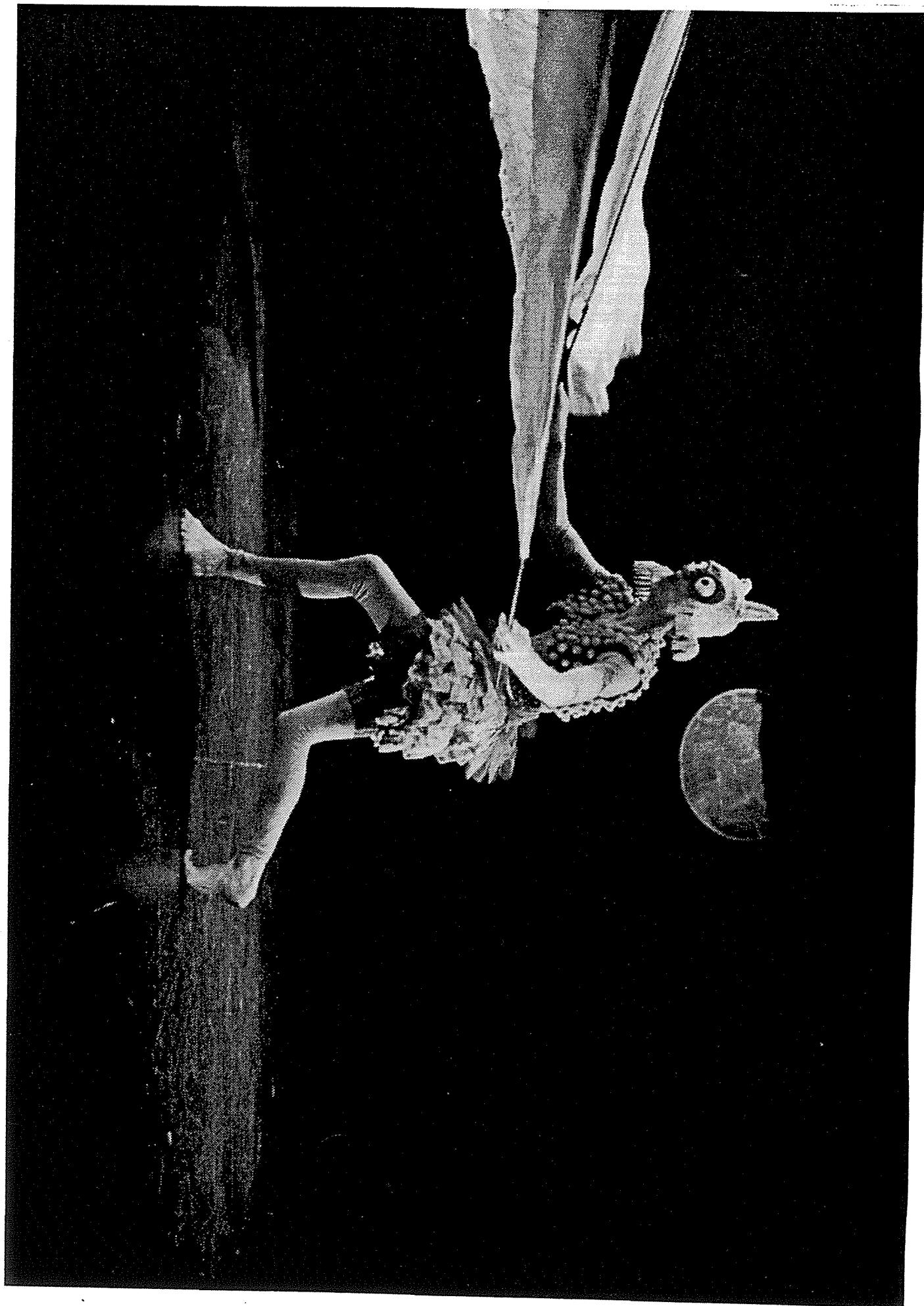
This future planning encourages the company to broaden and increase its audience base amongst children and families, youth, as well as cross-culturally. Spare Parts Puppet Theatre also aims to extend its profile nationally and internationally, through touring and festivals.

The company and company associates are positive and excited about Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's future and look forward to working in a fresh environment. The puppet exhibition in the foyer has already been redesigned, and the Board, the company and company associates welcome the public to visit the new Spare Parts.

Opposite: "Cat Balloon" by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. Photo by Photomoderne.

MARY SUTHERLAND was funded by the Australia Council last year, to attend the 17th UNIMA Congress and Festival in Budapest. She has posted a copy of her Artistic Report on the Internet, so it is available for anyone to have a look at. It includes good photos and interesting information, and only a lack of space prevented it from being reprinted in this magazine issue. You can find the report on Joe Sutherland's homepage:

<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~jbs1528/ArtisticReport.html>



A SMALL THEATRE WITH BIG IDEAS

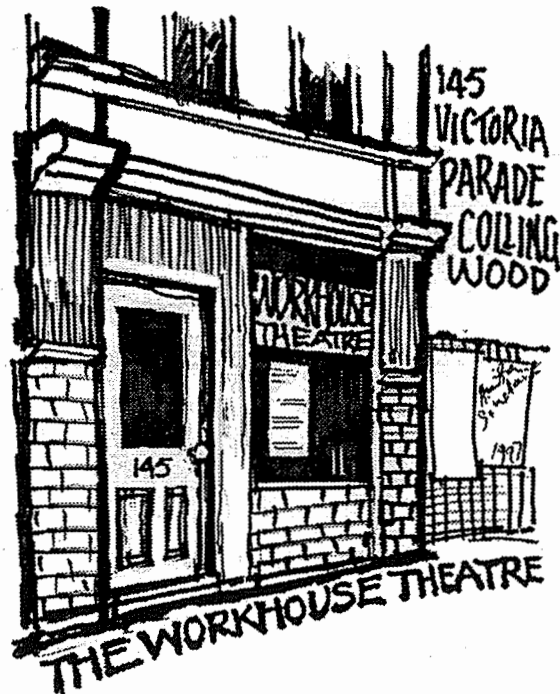
PUPPETEERS LEAD THE ACTION AT THE WORKHOUSE THEATRE

BY ANITA SINCLAIR

After eleven months of promises, Workhouse Theatre is finally ready to start operating. Eleven months of building, painting, disguising, repairing and generally turing a sow's ear into a silk purse, the Workhouse is actually mounting a show. Important to me and important to Melbourne, the pioneer performance at the venue will feature puppetry, with Richard Hart's new production DREAMER setting the pace for highly visual, highly polished small scale theatre presentations.

With a basic stage area of about 3.5 metres by 3 metres, the physical size of the performances will be small by some standards, but happily it's possible to mess around with this a bit - by switching to a 'theatre-in-the-round' set-up, by shutting an intrusive door, or by reversing the orientation of the room. Small though it is, the theatre seats 40 people in comfort and provided Front of House facilities, coffee and wine lounge, outside paved courtyard (smokers please) and a visually stimulating, welcoming atmosphere. A dimmer board and access to sound equipment will help out where required.

The Workhouse Theatre has a history, dating back to times spent at different intervals in Paris. Many times I travelled to Paris, staying there till my money ran out. Every night I went out to hear beautiful music, watch superb performers. Every night they gave me pleasure, but the thing that stunned me the most was THE AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR. The audience was paying attention! On my return to Australia after one particular trip, I set up a small venue in Richmond, Living Room, intended to create a certain kind of audience behaviour; to create, orchestrate, an audience that was paying full attention to the performer. An audience that was supportive of the performer and was in attendance for no other reason but the performance. Other small venues of the time, with the exclusion of La Mama, were invariably cafés with the inevitably noisy table service and the performer poked into a corner. Poets competing with cappucino machines, guitarists unheard over chatter.



Living Room, now long gone, pioneered the small, concert seating, theatre styled stage with accompanying coffee lounge out back. The Workhouse Theatre is now poised to pick up where Living Room left off. We are dedicated to:

Creating a sense of occasion.

Making the space accessible to all kinds of audience members.

Supporting our performers and protecting their space.

Properly 'framing' our performers.

Mounting shows according to their excellence rather than (necessarily) their commercial viability.

We, Prodos and I, co-managers of the Workhouse, are not opposed to making money, so we expect performers to expect to do so, but what we will offer our artists will be support rather than big bucks.

Both Prodos and I love visual theatre, puppetry, mask, mime, images of all kinds. We get excited about music and other sounds. We will be carefully combining and setting visual pieces, singing, instrumental solos, groups; clowning, magic et al. Generally performances will be acoustic, but we'll be starting with an exception, since Richard Hart's performance of DREAMER is backed by taped music. Richard will be joined on the night of the Workhouse debut (on Friday 14th March at 7.00pm) by two wonderful Bel Canto singers, Anne Hedt and Gena Marie Richards. This show will open on Saturday 22nd March and be repeated on Saturday 5th April, 19th April and 3rd May, at 8.00 pm.

Readers of UNIMA Magazine are invited to check us out, join us for coffee and talk over possibilities for the future and of course, be audience members. Speak to myself, Anita, if you have a performance to discuss. I'm on (03) 9417 1211, Fax (03) 9416 1616. Let's make it work!

DREAMER is presented by Dream Puppets and performed by Richard Hart. Ring Richard on (03) 9489 8337 for information. The Workhouse Theatre is at 145 Victoria Parade, (near Hoddle St), Collingwood.

NEW MEMBERS AND CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Welcome to our new members:

Amida Jones	55 Silvan Rd, Wattle Glen, Vic. 3096
Keira Lyons	9 Karen St, Highett, Vic. 3190
Katy Bowman	107 Arthur St, Fairfield, Vic. 3078
	Ph: (03) 9489 8475
Rebecca Harbison	179 Gladstone Rd, Highgate Hill, Qld. 4101
	Ph: (07) 3844 0451
Eleanor Downes	50 Adelaide St, South Hobart, Tas. 7004
	Ph: Hm - (03) 6223 8738, Wk (03) 6228 1192

New Addresses:

Denise Rundle	P.O. Box 5008, Middle Park, Vic. 3206
	Ph: (03) 9529 4092
Real Fantasy Theatre	M.S. 1020, Fernvale. Qld. 4306
	Ph: (07) 5426 6393
Peter Grasshopper	P.O. Box 1385, Strawberry Hills, NSW. 2012
	Ph: 018 60 43 70 Fax: (02) 9698 7173
Murray Raine	P.O. Box 103, Glebe, NSW. 2037.

New Phone Numbers:

Please refer to the instant call guide at the beginning of this year's yellow pages.

If you change your address, or are about to do so soon, please notify the treasurer, Richard Hart (address on front cover) as soon as you can. This will ensure that you receive the magazine and your details are kept up to date should another member wish to contact you.

Thank you
Richard Hart (Treasurer)

WATER PUPPETS IN CANBERRA

BY ELIZABETH PATERSON

"Water Stories" is a collaborative show between Canberra Youth Theatre and Song Ngoc Water Puppet Troupe from Hanoi, with live music composed by Le Tuan Hung (in Melbourne) and played by the Canberra Youth Wind Ensemble. It is the result of a couple of years' administrative preparation and a couple of gruelling months of creation.

The adventure began in earnest in January last year when Roland Manderson, director of Canberra Youth Theatre, and myself visited Hanoi for 2 weeks (funded by the Australian Embassy in Hanoi) to meet with the Song Ngoc company to investigate the possibility of doing a joint show with them. We had a fabulous and exhausting time. The learning curve was steep and at times hilarious - a bit like the steps in the hotel. We laughed every time we went up and down the stairs because it was so unfamiliar to have every step a different size!

The long and short of our visit was that although the Song Ngoc would have liked a grand tour of Australia with their large company, they were prepared to accept that we could only bring out a few of them to work with us in creating a cross-cultural show. In what was to become the hallmark of this project they showed a great flexibility in adapting to the reality in front of them. By the end of the 2 weeks we had come up with a very sketchy proposal of how we could work together.

We came back to Australia determined to make the project happen because we really liked the people and really wanted to return their incredible generosity and hospitality. What we appreciate now is how effective that hospitality was - it creates real pressures that motivate one to respond appropriately!

Once back in Australia, Roland and I were soon under pressure to make some fast practical decisions in order to get the funding process rolling. The amount of paper work generated to make this project possible has been phenomenal. And the final bits of funding didn't fall into place until the last minute, leaving us with about two and a half months to create the whole show. This included organising a 9 metre diameter above-ground pool; a manipulation house with 2 large curved corrugated iron roofs, and metres and metres of tarpaulin to black out the backstage area; housing for the 18 member Canberra Youth Wind Ensemble; and designing and making 20 odd puppets and related objects, as well as the sets and costumes, for the Australian items. Plus there was the logistics of shipping everything up to Sydney, as we were opening out-of-town at the Sydney Festival; and the bulk of the work had to be done over the Christmas/New Year period. Talk about a scenario for a nightmare! Fortunately the nature of the project was such that it generated an enormous amount of good will. So many people thought it was a good idea and wanted to see it succeed that we got a lot of encouragement and incredibly generous help from lots of people. (But, yes, it was a nightmare.)

Briefly, the reasons why we wanted to collaborate with a water puppetry troupe were: their art centres around scenes depicting everyday life; their shows use a format of short items or vignettes, rather than a continuous narrative; the charm and ingenuity of the puppets themselves; the context of working out of doors and away from our conventional theatre setting (though some of the troupes in Vietnam perform in indoor theatres nowadays); and the opportunity to work with a traditional art form that is alive and well within a contemporary context.

The Song Ngoc sent us the specifications for the manipulation house and the requirements for the amount of water they need to work in, and they brought the traditional decorations with them for putting on the manipulation house. The visual integrity of their traditional forms, of both the water house setting and the puppets gave us a secure basis to work within. As the designer of the show this gave me a very secure starting point and context. It also gave us the security of knowing that at least there was something in the show that was going to work and be liked by an audience! After a thousand years of shows you know there must be something that they are doing right.

We also decided from the start that we had to keep our items as simple as possible. This proved to be a godsend, because the whole project was so logistically huge to organise it was essential that our artistic work had a very clear focus.

How did we approach our side of the show? Firstly we decided that there was no way we could expect the Canberra Youth Theatre kids to operate the traditional water puppets. The necessary strength and skill couldn't be acquired in the time available. So we had to invent our own way of working around the water's edge, while the Song Ngoc members worked from behind the bamboo curtain towards the back of

the pool. We also decided to work within the traditional format of several short items. It was logical, then, to have a programme that included some traditional water puppet items, some items with the Youth Theatre kids doing scenes from everyday Australian life, an item of contemporary Vietnamese life, and a joint item where the two worlds meet. This is sort of what we ended up with, though not exactly ... flexibility being the name of the game.

This project has made me aware of how I expect myself to keep reinventing the wheel for every new show. The Song Ngoc have done some of their items hundreds of times before, and even the new items contain variations on old themes. They use the same fig wood, the same basic mechanisms, every time. Within these certainties, though, they are happy to use whatever they need, such as plastics, bicycle chains, polystyrene and old car tyre rubber, to help solve the problem at hand. Indeed one of the reasons we wanted to work with this particular company is because they are open to new ideas and directions to take their work in. For us, however, everything had to be created from scratch. Figuring out how to water proof the puppets and objects was difficult. There were the inevitable mistakes. I would do it differently now - but it's in the nature of our cultural context that I will probably never have the opportunity to do another water puppet show!

My big regret it that we haven't had the time to create puppets together, although I have learnt quite a bit coincidentally along the way. For example, I hadn't realised at first that all their human characters have white painted skin. I eventually adopted this solution myself because it is so eminently practical - it makes it very easy to see the face of a small puppet from a distance, and it is very quick and easy to paint. They also paint on all the 'clothing' of the puppets ... which is very useful when the puppet goes swimming.

I have learnt a lot about working cross culturally. It is time consuming and exhausting! Unfortunately last year was incredibly busy for both Roland and myself, so neither of us had time to learn any Vietnamese, which means that we have to rely on interpreters and the little bit of English that a couple of the Song Ngoc members have. Also, one can never really know what the other side are thinking; what are the considerations that they are juggling behind the decisions that they make? It's a constant proces of having to readjust and reevaluate what everything means and how one's communications are going. And as such it means that the work is full of surprises. (Postscript: I just noticed the Song Ngoc painting pink faces on their policemen for the new Waltzing Matilda item. Time to review above statement about white skin!)

We are now gearing up for the Canberra Festival (March 10-17), making changes to improve on the show. In the meantime the Song Ngoc are making a mini version of Old MacDonald Has A Farm, performed in a portable paddle pool, to take to schools, as well as making the new Waltzing Matilda item for the Water Stories show (both of them their suggestions). We now know that Austalian wood mills don't deal in logs or fig wood. Fortunately a local government pruning service has produced quite a few logs of wood, which as Kien said, are "not good, not bad, but quite good". Once again flexibility and survival prevail.

Where this project will lead to in the future is an interesting question that I can't really answer right now. I suspect it will influence my own work in many different ways, both practically and conceptually. And I know that Roland is hoping that this project is just the first step of many more to come.



Right: Song Ngoc Water Puppet Troupe

AN INDEPENDENT PUPPET MAKER

TESSA WALLIS

*"I've got no strings to hold me down
To make me fret or make me frown
I had strings, but now I'm free
There are no strings on me."*

Jimminy Cricket

Like the puppet in the song, I am experiencing a new sense of freedom. Since I began making puppets, I have not only found an outlet for my creative urges, but I have also escaped from rigid timetables, bureaucratic bumbling and male domination. At last I have untied the knot, cut the apron strings and burnt the bra.

The desire to maintain my new found freedom prompts me to work independently. Space constraints reinforce my resolve. My studio "Masks and Puppets Plus" at the Meat Market Craft Centre is located through an alcove door in the corner of the coffee shop. Some people would consider it more like imprisonment than freedom, but I am happy among the creative chaos and I achieve a great deal of work in a relatively small space.

Puppet making seemed an attractive alternative after many years working in publicity, marketing and promotion. The first puppet I made in later life provided the impetus to change. He is a wise old man who seems to watch over me as he "sits" in his old oak carver. He has an expression of tolerance and understanding and his eyes appear to follow whoever looks into them.

Because I have studied sculpture and anatomy, I have a tendency to build "Human" puppets. I enjoy making expressive faces and I can translate a drawing or photograph into a three dimensional model. It is always a thrill to create a character for a performance after interpreting a script. "Gobble and Gerp" are two large hand puppets I made for a play about environmental recycling. They have no teeth, long necks and big pumpkin shaped tummies so they can readily digest soft garbage, but no cans, bottles or other hard recyclables.

It is over five years since I changed direction and I have made all sorts of puppets; Body puppets, shadow puppets, rod puppets, hand puppets, marionettes and finger puppets. There is a range of sizes available in most categories and, as I make to order, there are limitless opportunities. Many of the puppets are made from latex, but I use foam rubber, paper, textiles, plaster, leather and "found objects".

There are so many new products around that it is difficult to keep up.

Commissioned works are stimulating. I encourage clients to discuss their ideas so we can work together to formulate exactly what is required to best do the job. Naturally the budget is taken into account. I try to determine the needs of a client, then satisfy those needs. According to those in the know, this is the way to achieve success in small business. It also means that there is great variety in my work, and very few short cuts.

I can think of nothing nicer than the freedom to create whatever my imagination dictates, rather than be dollar driven. For most craftspeople, total creative freedom is like achieving Nirvana. For most of us this goal can only be reached through financial security. One of the steps towards new business and greater income is promotion. My direct mail campaign, my postcards and leaflets have helped establish a larger client base.

Conducting children's workshops is a challenge I enjoy. Studies in Child Development and Psychology have proven valuable, and although I have no formal teaching qualifications, I feel great empathy with children. Most respond well to puppets and it is amazing to see how expressive they are when their imaginations are allowed to take over. The more time available, the greater the possibilities for making spectacular puppets in a workshop. But if time is short, I design simple but effective items which can be completed quickly. I have conducted workshops for children of all ages. Some of the most recent include:

The Academy of Mary Immaculate - 16 year olds made dragon masks for Asian Week.

The National Gallery Society - Children aged between 6 & 12 made large hand puppets with talking mouths.

Canterbury Primary School - Preps made puppets that could be easily operated with tiny hands.

When Channel 9 asked me to make an Australian salmon wearing Mickey Mouse ears for the Anniversary edition of *Hey Hey It's Saturday* filmed in Disneyworld, Florida, I

jumped at the chance. Two of my masks were worn in a product promotion on Channel 9 and in the same week I was interviewed on *Today* *Tonight's Most Wanted* segment on Channel 7

I have worked hard to establish my credibility in this competitive field, often putting in extremely long hours. Exhibitions help to raise awareness and I have participated in those at the Performing Arts Museum, the Meat Market Craft Centre, East West Arts and the Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne University. Ishka, Melbourne High School and the Royal Melbourne Show are some of the other venues.

I am fortunate to have the freedom to travel overseas and I never waste an opportunity to research puppet shows, companies and museums. One of the most inspiring puppet shows I have ever seen was *Don Giovanni* performed by the Salzberg Marionette Theatre. Magnificent! Richard Techner's work in Vienna took my breath away as did

Theatre Toone in Brussels. The Puppet Centre at Lavender Hill, Battersea (out of London) is a must for puppet people. It was wonderful to see a performance at the "Little Angel" and to go backstage afterwards. One of my friends is a puppeteer who really knows the ropes. She is now operating marionettes on a barge on the Thames.

Venice is a feast of sumptuous masks, costume and puppets. Florence is the home of Gepetto and Pinocchio, and wooden marionette versions of this most famous of all puppets dangle from doorways in quaint stone shops throughout Tuscany. Puppet makers around the Côte d'Azur live in the most idyllic circumstances. Ancient stone cottages atop steep sided rocky mountains rising from the azure seas. The views are awe inspiring.

Nearly all the puppets in my studio were originally made for a performance or exhibition. From Punch and Judy to dinosaurs and dragons, I have tried to provide something for everyone. There is a range of over 20 latex finger puppets. Each has carefully modelled features which gives them more personality than conventional finger puppets. Many of my puppets go into private homes where children and

adults can explore storytelling together.

I believe puppetry is a tradition that should be encouraged to flourish and grow in Australia. I plan to expand my work in this field and exercise my new freedom. There is so much to be done. I feel I haven't even scratched the surface.

If you're in North Melbourne, but don't want to visit a Meat Market, don't let the name put you off. No, the Meat Market Craft Centre is not full of chops and sausages. It does not smell like dead animals or drip with blood. It is a delightful example of early Melbourne architecture where quality gifts can be purchased. In the coffee shop, delicious light meals are available for economical prices. Meet a friend, sip an aromatic coffee, indulge in a slice of something you wouldn't make yourself. But after you've finished, visit "Masks and Puppets Plus" It's a feast for the eyes.

Below: Tess Wallis with some of her puppets



PUPPET COTTAGE REMINISCENCES

BY DENNIS MURPHY

On the 2nd February this year, the Rocks Puppet Cottage closed its door just one month short of what would have been its fifth birthday. Opened on 2nd March 1992, the Puppet Cottage was the result of the Sydney Cove Authority seeing Basil Gypsy Smith's colourful caravan and Punch and Judy show.

The Authority offered a job to Basil and Janet - to set up a place of enchantment for children to come and experience the magic of Puppetry, admission free. The Smiths set to work with signwriters and painters to come up with a colourful atmosphere for the newly renovated sandstone cottage they had been given. They bought, begged and borrow puppets and after months of preparation, it was ready for its Grand Opening by the Sydney Lord Mayor.

The Puppet Cottage was such a good idea, no one expected it to last. There were rumours of it closing before it even opened. In October that year Basil and Janet moved on. Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe of Sydney Puppet Theatre became the new Resident Puppeteers. I was asked to be the Guest Artist in school holidays.

Over the years the Puppet Cottage became very well known and not just to Sydneysiders. A French couple from Tahiti was told by

a neighbour there to include the Cottage when they visited Sydney. My father in Arizona told a friend to stop by when he got to Sydney. A family from Saskatoon, Canada visited and a few years later, on a return trip to Australia, made the Cottage their first port of call.

The Puppet Cottage was such a good idea, no one expected it to last.

With 20 performances a week, it was a great place to run in a show. I premiered "Big Mama's Cabaret", "Murphy's Law of Puppets", "Jungle Bob's Wild Animal Puppet", five Harlequin glove puppet comedies and several new acts. There were always people passing through between shows too so I managed to get in some rehearsal in front of an audience.

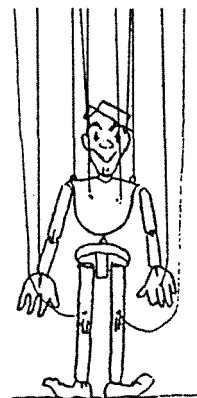
One school holidays The Rocks had featured on 2 lifestyle TV shows and we were swamped with visitors. At each session we had a full house up to an hour before the show started. The people who had missed out on getting into the pantomime next door were not going to take any chances. Keeping them all entertained was quite a challenge

There was always plenty of opportunity to talk with

visitors and I got in a lot of foreign language practice. I threw in a bit of Serbo-Croatian when Bosnian refugee children visited. I discussed the election in South Africa with South Africans. An El Salvadorean couple told me all about their historic cease fire. A Cockney grandmother drilled me on my vowels while her granddaughter played with puppets.

But it's the 'regulars' that I miss the most: the kids I came to know. Anthony who used to drag his poor mother in several times a weeks, Margaret and her grandchildren, Young Andrew, Nicola, Alexander the Chatterbox, 'Front of House Tawni, etc., etc. More than a few carried away the inspiration to become puppeteers.

As I presented my 570th and last Cottage performance, I thought of all the fun times I had shared with thousands of people over the years. What a place of enchantment and magic it has been. What a privilege to have been a part of it.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

FESTIVALS

(List kindly provided by Axel Axelrad)

May 7-11

Pleven (Bulgaria)
People and Puppets Int. Puppet Festival.
Orhan Tair, State Puppet Theatre, PO Box 189
14 Tsar Simeon Str.
Pleven 5800, Bulgaria
Tel & Fax: 00359-64 24 121

May 7-13

Magdeburg (Germany)
VI International Puppet Festival
Städtisches Puppentheater
Frank Bernhardt
Warschauer Str. 25
39104 Magdeburg
Tel & Fax: 0391-40 48 164

May 23 - June 1

Evora (Portugal)
International Biennial of Puppets.
José Russo,
Teatro Garcia de Resende
Praca Joaquim A. De Aguiar
7000 Evora, Portugal
Tel: 00351-66 23 112/25 533
Fax: 00351-66 74 11 81

June 25-29

Dordrecht (Netherlands)
International Micro Festival
Damiet van Dalsum
Buddingh'plein 20
NL-3311 BV Dordrecht
Netherlands
Tel: 0031-78 61 40 342
Fax: 0031-78 61 41 453

July 7-11

Erfurt (Germany)
Synergura
Peter Fischer
Theater Waidspescher e.V.
Domplatz 18
99084 Erfurt
Tel: 0361-59 82 912
Fax: 0061-64 30 900

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER ACADEMY

with
Prof. Albrecht Roser

TECHNIQUE MEETS FANTASY - FANTASY NEEDS TECHNIQUE: STRING PUPPETRY

*International Summer Academy for professional
puppeteers or people at an advanced stage in
puppetry.*

"Bross' system may be described as
the consummate possibility of
performing out of the centre of
gravity ... I might describe the
goal of my work as a unity of
"construction and performance" or
"of technique and art", that is:
Technique must serve expression."
Albrecht Roser.

Course Content: Technique - Building a string
puppet, applying the aims of the workshop in
creative design & construction principles.

Performance - Basic exercises
with ball & string, cloth & rod; hand training;
theatrical possibilities from basic practice to the
detailed scene; dramaturgy; role of the
audience as part of the performance.

Course dates: August 10 - September 6, 1997,
5.5 days/week

Course language: English and German

Course Cost: 1800 DM (materials & tools incl.)

Closing date for applications: May 15, 1997

Application form: Contact Jenny Andersen

Organisation and Information:

Studio Roser
Urbanstr. 49
D - 70182 Stuttgart, Germany
Tel: 0711/2263509
Fax: 0711/2262586

In connection with Studiengang Figuren
Theater of the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik
und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart



NEW PUPPET BOOKS

RAY DASILVA has sent UNIMA Australia his new catalogue of puppet books. There are a huge number of interesting books, magazines, scripts and videos from all over the world available. The selection is broad enough to include books in foreign languages, texts about film animation and even novels such as Russel Hoban's *Riddley Walker*. Each title is accompanied by a brief, clear description of the contents. The prices are very reasonable and you can buy by credit card.

It's nice to know, too, that Australian puppetry (as described in the summary for *Theatre of the Impossible*) "does not mean 'out-of-touch' or naive efforts of a penal colony' Australians are just as advanced as anybody." Ta very much.

If you would like to borrow the catalogue, please contact Jenny Andersen. If you'd like your own copy, contact Ray DaSilva at:

63 Kennedy Rd
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX68BE UK
Tel/Fax: 01869 245 793

THEATRE ANTONIN ARTAUD

THEATRE ANTONIN ARTAUD has been running an international puppet festival in Southern Switzerland since 1979. This year the festival will be run in a new way. It will become an **International Meeting of Animation Theatre** and will offer shows and workshops, some for amateurs and some for professionals, which will lead to a final collective performance. The theme is the Heritage of Tradition and the company would like to host the most important representatives of this tradition, and especially those who are ready to transmit their knowledge to the new generations of puppeteers. Applications can be mailed from now. The event's dates are 2 - 15 September, 1997.

A new **International School of Puppetry** has opened in Ascona, Switzerland, to teach the art of high level professional puppetry. Teaching (in several languages) is directed by Michel Poletti, director of Theatre Antonin Artaud.

For details: PO Box 566
CH-6612 Ascona, Switzerland
tel: 004191 791 85 66

CAN YOU HELP?

Jenny Davidson has received the following letter from the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture. If anyone can be assistance, please contact:

Swanzy Ahaligah
Programmes Officer
W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Centre for
Pan African Culture
PO Box C975 Cantonments Accra.
Ghana
Tel: 233-21-776052
Fax: 233-21-772031

APPLICATION FOR ATTACHMENT

I do hereby apply for attachment to your puppetry company to enable me study the art of puppetry for my 'Puppets With A Right' project which is to be carried out in Ghana in conjunction with Unicef Ghana. I am a Ghanaian and a graduate in Drama and Theatre Arts and keen on bringing my Theatre skills and knowledge to Puppet Theatre with the objective of executing the above project for the development of children in Ghana.

Ghana as a developing country has numerous problems inhibiting the growth of children. Most of these problems have been outlined in the following documents:

a) The Convention Of The Right of the Child (a UN charter signed in 1990 which sets out a unique spectrum of rights for children).

b) Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances eg: wars, female genital mutilation, asrape victims etc.

c) Facts for Life eg: immunisation, breastfeeding, AIDS, safe motherhood etc.

As a communicator, I deem it a communication challenge to use puppetry as a universal medium to empower children and parents with knowledge which can save and enrich lives. For the past two years I 've been involved with working with children, through the community Youth Cultural Centre at Maamobi, a deprived community if Accra, on assisting parents to take their children from the street and back into the classroom. 'Puppets With A Right' will be carried out in the rural communities of Ghana, a venture Unicef Ghana is eager to support. Through this puppet for development network for children which you and me are about to establish we will be contributing our advice and skills to the rights of the child survival, protection and development of the child in Ghana.

Yours faithfully,
Swanzy Ahaligah



arepp

P.O. Box 51022
Raedene 2124
Johannesburg
South Africa
Tel: (011) 483-1024/5
Fax: (011) 483-1786
email: arepp@pixie.co.za

Some of the information printed last year about the African Research and Educational Puppetry Programme was out of date - here is a more current report.

In Southern Africa "Puppets Against Aids" has become synonymous with dynamic HIV/AIDS Education and "The AIDS Puppets" are known throughout the country from Johannesburg to the remotest rural village.

Believing that the use of drama and puppets helps to break down racial, cultural and language barriers, the shows are the brain child of the African Research And Educational Puppetry Programme which is run by a dedicated group of performers. Their aim is to reach every community in Southern Africa with their highly effective educational theatre programmes.

The current AREPP repertoire consists of two adult programmes, *Our Street*, which deals with issues of domestic violence, emotional abuse and rape, and an HIV/AIDS show called *Check Your Mate*. Utilising the direct interactive format of a game show, and mixing it with puppetry, *Check Your Mate* tours the entire country, performing to audiences of 500+ per show, between 10 & 15 times a week in the relevant local languages.

AREPP also presents shows in schools for different age groups, dealing with HIV/AIDS and sexual awareness, life skills and self-empowerment, respect and care for one's body and how to recognise "Stranger Danger". The shows are constantly evaluated and updated to ensure that the messages remain focused, current and effective.

Report on Puppetry in Education Workshop, Umati Family Planning Association, Morogoro, Tanzania by Brigid Schutz, Workshop Coordinator:

Annette Brokensha and I were in Tanzania for three weeks to conduct a basic puppetry in education training workshop for UMATI, an NGO actively involved in addressing the reproductive health needs of the youth in their country. They were interested in having their youth project staff incorporate puppetry into their teaching methods. There were 22 adult participants who divided into groups according to regions and designed shows for their specific educational requirements.

It was very encouraging to work with a group of people who were clearly determined to ensure that the workshop was only the beginning of an on-going and sustainable programme. In general, the group was committed and focused and all shared a common aim - the promotion of family planning and sexual reproductive health awareness.

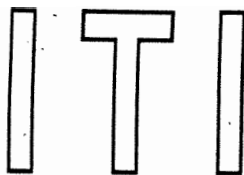
It was however, difficult to determine where to pitch the workshop as the levels of understanding among participants was so vastly different. At the outset, some people did not even know what a puppet was, let alone how to make or use one or what relevance puppetry had to their work. On the other hand, some already had vast experience in theatre and the use of drama in education. In spite of this, the varying skills of participants complimented each other well and the scripts, puppets and final performances were of a high standard.

When it came to puppet construction, it was frustrating for us that the primary colours were unavailable in paint. But it was a good lesson (especially for the facilitators) in adapting and making-do with the materials available to us.

It was interesting to note that there is no indigenous puppetry in Tanzania. Like many of the participants, many of the audiences they encounter will never have seen a puppet, know what it is or how it works. It will therefore be essential to evaluate the success of the programme in terms of whether the newness of puppetry is a hinderance or an aid to the message.

Late next year I shall return to conduct a more intensive puppetry workshop and a training of trainers course. Ultimately we would like UMATI to have a group of puppetry trainers working with community based puppetry teams and work towards a permanent travelling puppetry group whose sole purpose is to provide supplementary education in conjunction with the work already being done by UMATI.

For a group of people, most of whom have never had to do anything like this before, the UMATI staff have shown tremendous enthusiasm, commitment and dedication. Many discovered skills they didn't even know they had. I feel sure that this project can only go from strength to strength.



**INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE (AUSTRALIAN CENTRE)
AUSTRALIAN ITI NEWS**

Return Address: 4/245 Chalmers Street, REDFERN NSW 2016 AUSTRALIA

Telephone: 61 (0)2 9319 0718 (9:00am to 5:00pm)

Fax: 61 (0)2 9698 9428

61 (0)2 9698 3557

Email: artslink@magna.com.au

Netsite: <http://www.artslink.com.au>

Bellingen Global Carnival:

Oct, Bellingen, NSW - is calling for expressions of interest for this event to be held in early Oct. The planned focus is stage and street theatre by small & innovative companies & they wish to showcase some of the more bizarre & unusual works which are being developed by Australian performance artists.

Loud - is the name of the forthcoming National Festival for Young People, happening in Jan '98.

Take Over - Australian Festival for Young People:

21 Mar - 6 Apr '97, Adelaide, SA: is centred on 'Capital City', in Elder Park. It will feature performance tents, pavilions, cafes, computer & adventure playgrounds, a kids' village with hands-on activities for under-12s, a technology site, and environmental & design centre, the Allwrite! tent, media centre, sculpture park & totem installations, artists & more...

Arts Privilege Card:

introduced by Canberra Arts Marketing, the card gives access to concessions & privileges from Canberra arts & cultural venues, restaurants & services. The card may also be used at selected Sydney venues.

NSW Campaign for the Arts:

is a new lobby group launched by Bob Carr, NSW premier & minister for the arts, which will monitor the impact of gvt policy on all artforms in the state. President Marion Jacka says the campaign's initial focus will be on the impact of arts funding cuts in the last federal budget & the enquiry into the film industry.

Jessica Wilson: has been awarded the 'Lord Mayor's Fellowship for Young & Emerging Performing Artists' to travel to

Europe next year to research visual theatre process & puppetry.

Peter Wilson: former Artistic Director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has gone off to greener pastures - New Zealand.

'97 Churchill Fellowships:

deadline has closed (28/2/97) but here is some information for next year. The fellowships are for Australians of 18 yrs & over who wish to undertake an overseas study project that will enhance their usefulness to the Australian community. They cover the cost of return airfares, a living allowance & any fees. They are usually worth about \$14 000 for a duration of 3 months.

Artflight WA: is a new initiative from Arts WA to give financial assistance for travel interstate & overseas to promote or develop new work or participate in significant conferences.

Artstart: is a programme offering women in the arts an opportunity to work with a mentor who has an established arts business. The 6 month programme includes business skill workshops covering such areas as arts taxation issues, marketing and arts law.

Australia Japan Scholarship:

assistance of up to \$10 000 is granted. Preference is given to artists who can meet some of their own costs. Deadline: 31/3/97.

Multimedia: The Australian Copyright Council is gathering information about licensing content in multimedia & would like to hear from people who have been involved in creating a multimedia product or have contributed material for use in a multimedia product. This info. will be used to serve the industry

by identifying emerging trends & industry practices.

Performers & Artists: who would like to give workshops in their field can submit their details to the Arts Council of NSW, which will include them in their database, and then make this information available to local arts councils. Each edition of Country Exchange (the Council's newsletter) will feature the work of 1 performer or artist. This service is FREE.

NSW Festival & Events Association:

is building a performer database to be circulated to members. This may help you get work at events such as the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

97-98 Bunkacho Fellowship:

a study opportunity offered by the ITI Japan to a person wishing to undertake a training programme in Japan for 3-10 months. Applications need to be made through the ITI Australia Centre. Contact ITI for details.

The Famous Spiegeltent:

is a cabaret & music venue operated by Australian David Bates at the Edinburgh Festival. It is an original 1920s art nouveau dance salon mirror tent which has spent its life touring European festival. David is keen to hear from Australian performers looking for a venue at the festival in '97, after which he will be touring the Spiegeltent through Australia.

Uchimura Prize, Japan:

is an annual prize awarded by the Japanese ITI Centre, as a way of stimulating or encouraging initiatives taken by a group or artist outside Japan, leading to an action or project featuring relations with Japanese theatre. The prize is worth approx. 500 000 Yen. Deadline 30/6/97.

The Performance Space's Studio Space: in Sydney is available for hire from 1/6/97. It is 12.4m x 4.4m. The ceiling is 3.56m & made of pressed tin. It has white walls & a wooden floor. Hire is \$300/week for rehearsals, \$500/week for performances.

Truck for Hire: in Sydney, at below commercial rates. Isuzu NPR Crew 250 Dual Cabin Truck, 18 mths old, registered to seat 7, plus secure pantech 2m x 2m x 3.4m. Available by the day or longer.

National Theatre Drama School in Melbourne: offers a series of youth drama courses, including an introduction to professional puppetry skills with Ingrid Maganov.

Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre: in California, USA offers summer workshops in June/Aug. '97 & include vaudeville & street performance, movement, clown, women's myth & movement, self revelatory theatre, mask making, women in comedy & commedia. Also offers a 2 month programme in Bali including Balinese mask dance theatre &

mask carving & shadow puppetry taught by Balinese teachers. Also, an exploration of the links between the Dell'Arte training & the ancient Balinese forms.

American Puppetry Conference: 14-22 June, Waterford, USA. Held at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre, features ensemble productions by Teodora Slipitares & Jon Ludwig; marionette seminar; dramaturgical development workshop; & participants' projects.

Next Wave Festival: 13-31 May, 1998, Melbourne, Vic. Proposals invited for Victoria's Youth Arts Festival. Deadline 31/3/97.

Animated Film Competitions and Festivals: There are listings for many of these, all around the world. Please contact ITI for more information.

Australia Council: is seeking expressions of interest from people willing to help in peer assessment. Artists on the Register of Peers, through their knowledge or experience, need to be able to make fair and

informed assessments of artistic work and grant applications. Nominations may be submitted at any time.

All Australian Promotional Video: the Youth Performing Arts Australia Committee is compiling a tape with which to help promote Australian theatre for young people at international events. Any company with film or video clips wishing to be included should contact the YPAA office (Carclew, Adelaide).

Contact ITI for more information on any of the above notices.

Ed: ITI has recently sent me an interesting article from *American Theatre* entitled *The Life and Death of Puppets* (by Eileen Blumenthal). It lucidly discusses what makes puppetry special, and why (and when) it's worth using these 'created performers'. There was not enough space to publish it in this issue, but if anyone would like a copy, please contact me.



Above: Rita Halabarec in *Minds Eye*, a co-production between Back to Back Theatre and Handspan Theatre (at the Lonsdale St Power Station, Nov/Dec 1996)

BOOK REVIEW

PETRUSHKA

The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre
by Catriona Kelly, Oxford University Press, 1990

Besides going into great detail about Petrushka, this book also gives a fascinating insight into 19th century Russia and in particular the fairground entertainment of that time.

There was puppetry in Russia long before the Italian Pulcinella arrived. Terracotta finger puppets have been unearthed and are believed to be what itinerant puppeteers used in their makeshift booths. The booth was worn like a skirt that they would pull up over their heads to operate the puppets over the top.

The southern Italian puppeteers brought a different style that was quickly adapted to Russian tastes. Pulcinella shed his white costume and assumed the reds and stripes of the Russian clown. There was already a type of servant-clown called Petrushka so the name was transferred to the new character. A very Russian Petrushka began appearing on the fairgrounds around 1830.

The fairground booth was a tent or building that offered various types of shows and charged admission. Petrushka also appeared as street theatre busking. His shows more closely resemble the Punch and Judy show rather than the Italian comedies. Petrushka, like Punch encounters a series of

characters whom he beats, kills or chases away.

Petrushka was the voice of the people. He was well understood by his public and he knew his public. Scholars and intellectuals on the other hand, did not understand him at all - and didn't want to. Fairground entertainment was dismissed out of hand by serious scholars so records are sparse and those that do exist have been cleaned up and taken out of the context of performance. Ironically, it was the 'concept' of Petrushka that was taken up and turned into ballet while the real Petrushka stayed in the booth.



Petrushka was also taken up by another class that did not understand him - the Communists. After the Revolution, Petrushka continued his shows but now he beat Soviet soldiers and Soviet police. Harsh regulations were passed by the Party to stop these shows. Then it was decided that Petrushka could be of help to the State; that his satire could be directed at educating the masses and correcting their behaviour.

But the Communists

understood Petrushka no better than the other intellectuals. While he was satirical, Petrushka was also an anarchist. He derided people's behaviour to ridicule them not to correct them. He had no political standpoint that he was recruiting for. The authorities soon realised they were up against a subversive. As Sergei Obraztsov wrote, "The services of anarchic boot-boys were no longer required. The more the legal system gained in strength, the more senseless and even harmful Petrushka's arbitrary quarrelsomeness began to seem; it perverted all conceptions of law, of human moral norms and of right social behaviour." The Red Army Petrushka Groups were soon disbanded and Petrushka virtually disappeared by 1930.

This book was written in 1990 so I'll add a postscript. Since 1990 Petrushka has thought it safe to stick his head up again. His personality has changed somewhat but, then again, Russian society has changed during his absence and he has always been in touch with his public.

As long as Petrushka remains in the hand of puppeteers who understand him, like the Siberian company, Kuzin's Petrushka House, he'll live on.

Dennis Murphy

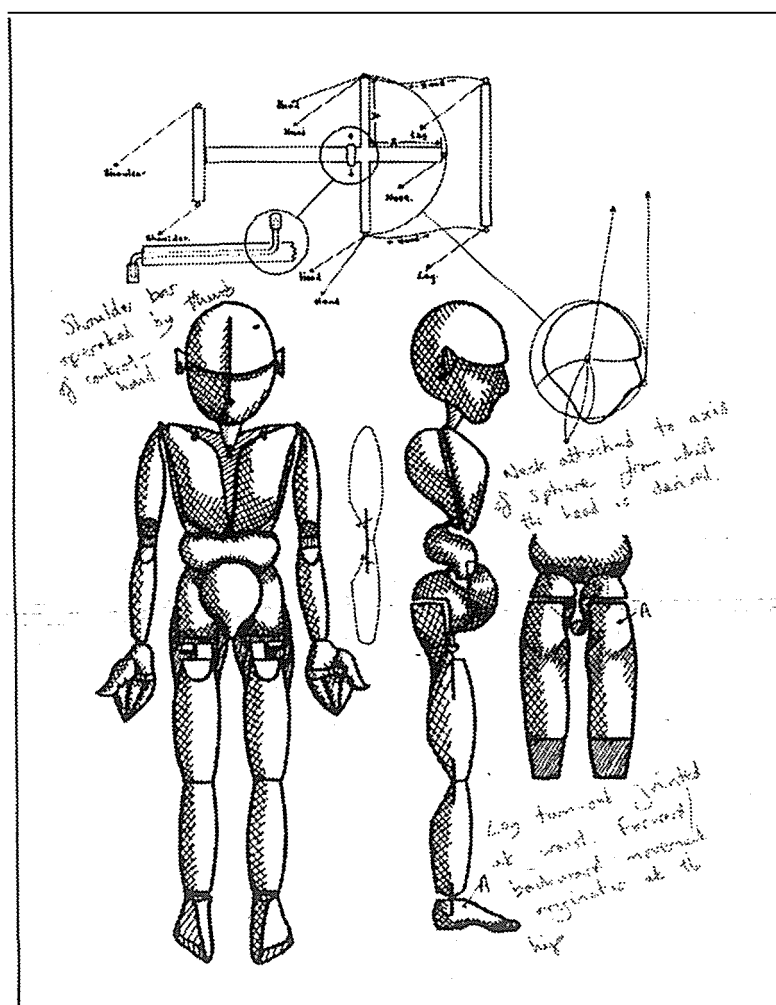
REVIEW

IN SUSPENSION by Stephen Mottram and THE DANDELION BOY by Michael Huber

There were many memorable shows at the Third International Puppet Festival in Pakistan last October and it was hard to choose which ones to review in detail. The two I've picked stood out because they both exemplified for me the essence and versatility of puppetry. Although they were both one-man shows, they could not have been more different in style or content. I loved them both, not the least because they each shook up some of my own personal puppetry-prejudices.

In Suspension by English puppeteer Stephen Mottram began with a moment of pure theatricality. A highly polished green wooden figure lay on the stage. It breathed, crawled, then pushed up with its arms to a standing position. That's all, but what beauty and expectation was created by Mottram's exquisite manipulation! Soon the marionette was performing complicated acrobatic routines, to be followed by four other figures, each with their own circus speciality.

As the trapeze artist flipped gracefully through the air I could feel the weight on the back of its outstretched thighs, and I wasn't the only audience member to gasp as it swung backwards between its own shoulders and the bar from which it hung. The mechanism seemed to have momentarily melted away.



Counterbalanced Marionette designed by Stephen Mottram

The show was actually six wordless vignettes which mainly used marionettes, and some glove puppets. Each piece created a unique mood with a sophisticated original soundtrack by Glyn Perrin, Simon Waters and Pete McPhail. Rather than being a mere accompaniment or filling in dead spots, the music was integral part of the action, sometimes leading, sometimes enhancing, and sometimes commenting on it. Likewise, Ken Parry's lighting was imaginative and effective without ever dominating the action.

While each section was very different, they were linked by the idea of transformation, superb puppetry and a delightful sense of humour. In one piece, a man was bothered by a fly in the hot Indian sun.

He finally dozed off, and as he snored (unaided by the puppeteer) a gorgeous, glittering fly shimmied across the stage. This sexy Katha-Kali gracefully wiggled her hips and all six arms waved independently before detaching from the body at opportune moments. It was bizarre, beautiful and very funny.

Mottram's understanding of, and fascination with the human form was demonstrated especially well in a piece where two hands, two feet and a head made an endlessly changing figure in our imaginations. There was no body, but even when the extremities were in an anatomically impossible configuration, our minds kept trying to construct one in the gaps. (Apparently in a better black-out than was available in this theatre the audience can even see a ghost image of the figure when it disappears.) The essence of puppetry could be said to be a suspension of disbelief which allows an inanimate object to be invested with life. Here, negative space was held 'in suspension', existing only by virtue of our desire to make it whole.

The final piece was a lovely, funny magic show, using glove puppets. It was a fitting end to a performance about which I am still thinking "And how did he do *that*?"

From one extreme to another ... Swiss puppeteer Michael Huber broke all the rules with his intimate, deceptively simple show **The Dandelion Boy**. Not much happened, the puppets were virtually tiny rag dolls on sticks, and there was quite a bit of talking from a hidden puppeteer. But this artless little piece of almost anti-puppetry was completely engrossing.

Huber is a brave man to do so little on stage. He says he is trying to draw children towards the important, fundamental aspects of theatre, and of life, by not distracting them with unnecessary tricks and trimmings. In this piece, spring has begun, and the Dandelion Boy is sent by his father to wake up his uncle who is asleep on the still-shady side of the hill. Along the way he meets a beetle and the Strawberry Girl, who guides him through the dark, unfamiliar woods. Within this simple structure Huber touches on many ideas - the Dandelion Boy's fear of going somewhere new, making friends and the gentle rhythms of nature. Many moments capture the fascination of squatting in the grass watching the miniature life teeming there. A beetle, stricken with the work ethic, drones on endlessly and comically about how "you just have to keep on walking just keep on walking till you get there" and I was reminded of making up imaginary personalities for a handful of worms I'd dug up as a child.

Huber constantly challenged the audience with simplicity. The Dandelion Boy performed a somersault, then another, and another ... and then asked the audience should he do another ... and then yet another. The audience had to engage with the piece and decide for themselves when they'd had enough of this cute little trick. This was truly "on the edge" theatre, where the puppeteer not only risked boring the audience, but also invited comment on it! It was interesting for far longer than you'd expect, especially when an audience member asked the Dandelion Boy to try a backwards roll. Huber risked it and publicly discovered a limitation to the puppet's movement.

Huber was thus completely "exposed" by the very simplicity of his puppets. They were cute and floppy but couldn't really *do* anything. Even the legs wouldn't stay in place nicely. But by paring action and design right back to the essentials, he made the audience focus on the basic elements of the drama. Thus I discovered that I cared deeply whether or not the Dandelion Boy would complete his mission. It was a lovely moment when his dandelion -uncle "woke up" and stretched out in full bloom. It worked not because it was a particularly beautiful puppet but because Huber had made this and other characters real to me. There is so much cynicism and weariness in theatre which sees meaningless frenzied activity as the only way of keeping the audience awake. But here was a refreshing willingness to say that the ordinary can be wonderful. And it was.

Jenny Andersen

Cont. from p.25

The Fork, although disappointing, is a brave and genuine attempt at large scale puppetry and visual theatre. It does successfully demonstrate the potential of combining a variety of skills and experience plus a collaboration of ideas between puppetry, comedy and design. The play offers a funny and entertaining night at the theatre, confirming the potential of puppets and visual theatre to win a mainstream audience - something we hope to see more of in the future.

Eleanor Downes

REVIEW

THE FORK

Terrapin Puppet Theatre with Shaken & Suspicious
Theatre Royal, Hobart. January 1997

Writer: Sue Giles with Julianne O'Brien and Ian Pidd

Director: Annette Downs

Designers: In Cahoots - Greg Methé and Ruth Hadlow

The Fork is the result of a collaboration between Terrapin Puppet Theatre, design team In Cahoots, Greg Methé and Ruth Hadlow, and performance team Shaken & Suspicious, Sue Giles and Ian Pidd. *The Fork* was written by Sue Giles with Julianne O'Brien and Ian Pidd after a creative development period which involved all of the above players. This collaboration of skills, backgrounds and experience should bring a wealth of ideas and experimentation in the areas of puppetry, humour and design.

Described as concerning the fork in the road, the moment of decision making and the consequences of those decisions, with 'forks' used in many more ways than one, the play tells a rather simple tale. This is for me one of its weaknesses, the stretching out of a thin idea to meet the requirements of a full length play. Consequently, particularly in the middle of the play there are sections which would benefit from editing and quickening of the pace. We have two main characters, Sharona who is terrified of life and its decisions and Jimmy who revels in risks. The two decide to turn Sharona's timid and almost reluctant butchers shop into a restaurant, 'The Bloody Brasserie'. What follows is a black comedy as the two battle, with the help of their guardian angels, forces bigger than their own.

My other major concern was the choice of theatre. The production is Terrapin's first in the company's fifteen year history to be staged at Hobart's historic Theatre Royal, a large proscenium arch theatre. Being familiar with the work of Shaken & Suspicious over the last 8 or so years, one of the strengths of their style is their own relationship and their rapport with the audience. As Annette Downs comments in her programme notes,

"I loved the immediacy of their style of theatre, the magic between them as performers on stage ..."

For me it was this immediacy and magic which was lost in the vastness and space of the Theatre Royal. The choice of theatre goes against the performers' own style. They were dwarfed by the scale of the theatre, particularly in moments on the stage on their own. I would like to see *The Fork* in another theatre space offering more immediacy and intimacy between performer and audience.

The Fork does demonstrate some excellent puppetry, including the exploration of manipulation: of puppets, of objects, of the characters in terms of the story line and of the actors, as puppets themselves. It playfully explores the relationship between the puppet, the puppeteer and performer.

A variety of puppetry styles are undertaken during the performance - black theatre; a marionette, the largest ever created by the company; small scale table top object theatre, its impact quite diminished by the Theatre Royal's scale and size; and Mr Big, a large scale mask puppet worn by the puppeteer, creating a very naughty and wicked but also highly amusing character whose facial expression and movement were a credit to both designer and puppeteer.

Kirsty Grierson and Philip Mitchell play Jimmy and Sharona's guardian angels as well as the puppeteer seen and unseen during the play. The guardian angels manipulate the story and the characters to meet what they see as their own ends. A nice touch for me was that the guardian angels do not speak for nearly the entire length of the play, creating a focus on the power of their actions and methods and not on their words. When they did speak it diminished some of the spell they had created but this is not to undermine their performance or their skills.

Cont. p.24

REVIEW

DREAMER

By Dream Puppets

Devised and performed by Richard Hart

Music by John Grant

Dreamer is a character, perhaps half bird - half puppy, perhaps nothing in particular, perhaps just a dream in itself,

but whatever the character is, the production of DREAMER by Richard Hart's new company Dream Puppets was well received by an appreciative audience of young and old. Particular praise was given unanimously to the fine design and craftsmanship that is clearly obvious within this work.

The production begins with John Grant's music, which is already playing as we enter the auditorium. A synthesized sound of strings sets a mood of relaxed expectation and is an ideal introduction to the "dream" theme. The blackened puppet theatre waits in the centre of the space until a lighting shift signals the beginning of the performance whereby a multi-coloured whizzing shape appears. Reminiscent of Dorothy and her tornado the whizzing, like a whirlpool, begins our dream ride. Not a roller coaster ride but more like a scenic railway.

I first saw a scene from DREAMER at the UNIMA conference at Polyglot in 1996 and I remember the moment where Dreamer ascends the stairs as being one that was exquisitely executed and enchantingly beautiful in its simplicity. Unfortunately, in the full production this moment, which is our introduction to the character, did not work with the same delight. It seemed to have been rushed a little - however, the quality of the design concept saved the moment for, as the stairs were about to descend into oblivion, Dreamer engaged the assistance of his magical puppy-like ears and flapped them in a visual delight, flying away in what was a true "pay off" for the scene.

The production has a loose relationship to a story but really moves from moment to moment much in the way a dream might move from image to image. Within the overall theme of dreams other issues are presented such as the obvious ones of beds and sleep, the sun and the moon dance their way through time, and

half a dozen multi-coloured bouncing slinkies flash through the sky like lightning.

At times I felt the music was fantastic, particularly at the beginning, but after the performance had established itself I felt it did not develop and move with the journey. This had the effect of pulling the show down, making it feel a little sluggish. During the storm the music changed most dramatically with a colourful variation which incorporated water sounds. This emotional whirlwind was the dramatic high point of the show and unfortunately the same degree of energy was not reached again. The sound of the water and the introduction of the duck sound, before the duck puppet appeared, are elements the young target audience clearly responded to and it seemed a shame that this variety was not explored further.

Another element that I felt was left out of the sound track was that of silence. The sound track, being continuous, was always at risk of being monotonous and moments of silence and stillness would have allowed more dramatic tension to be explored.

The ocean and water is the main environment around which DREAMER is played. The water seems to be a perfect medium and suits the flowing nature of the entire production. A row boat, submarine, desert island and a duck all sit comfortably in the show and assist Dreamer in his voyage of discovery.

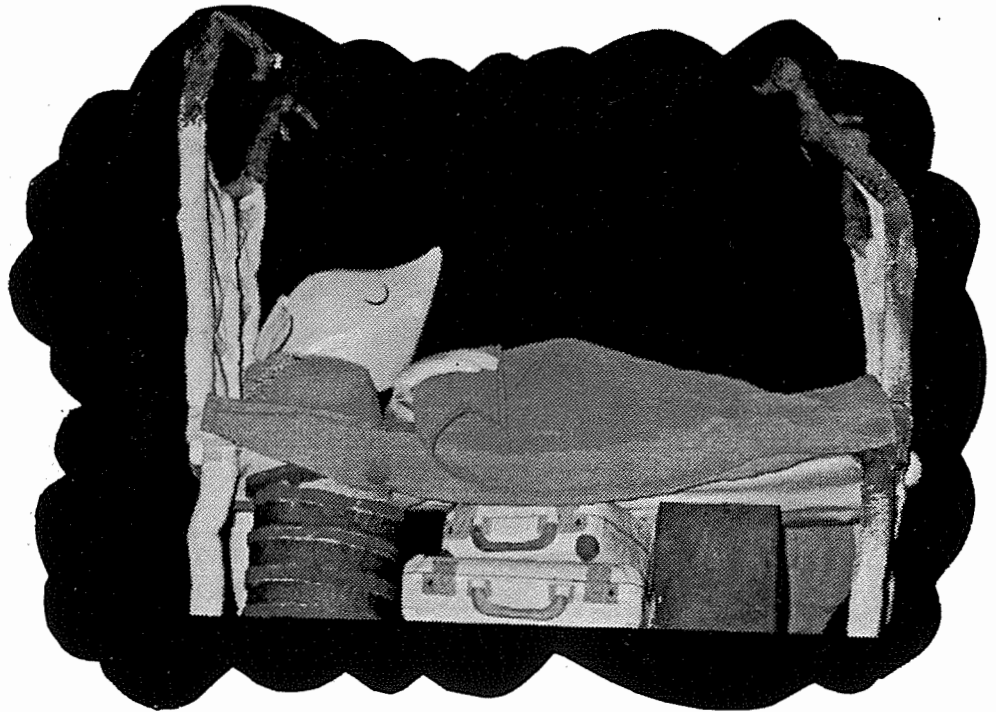
Clever devices of perspective are utilised to portray distance and travel and at times the whole work has a Gentyesque flavour. The solo performer has a huge task in this work mainly due to the technical issues. Several times there were short gaps of time where the performer was preparing for the next scene and the audience were waiting.

The complexity and design of the puppets is part of the magic of DREAMER, yet at the same time there were moments when this same complexity actually got in the way of the performance. The timing and rhythm of the puppetry at times lacked subtle sensitivity, no

doubt a problem that further performance and rehearsal is likely to solve.

DREAMER is a voyage of fantasy, a journey of discovery, a scenic railway, and whilst it does perhaps need a few more hills and valleys and tight screaming corners, the open ended nature of the work leaves the audience to decide what their own dreams can lead them to discover.

The work has been developed over several years and there is little doubt that it will enjoy a long life in front of audiences filled with dreaming children and parents.



Above: DREAMER Photo by Richard Hart.

Craig Gillespie

ASIA - PACIFIC COMMISSION

As Jennie Pfeiffer was the only the only member nominated, she will continue to fill the position of Australian representative to the UNIMA Asia-Pacific Commission. This forum was established to help encourage links between puppeteers in the region. In August 1995 Jennie Pfeiffer attended a meeting of Asia-Pacific UNIMA centres in Japan. Several objectives were discussed, including the setting up of an Asia-Pacific newsletter and the importance of cultural exchanges between countries. In order to make these good intentions a reality, Jennie will be working on encouraging the other countries to develop an efficient way of producing the newsletter regularly. She therefore needs lots of information and welcomes ideas from Australians.

Let Jennie know what kind of work you do, and any thoughts you may have for cultural exchanges or interactions. Do you know of any organisations that Jennie could contact, whether they be venues willing to promote Australian work, or funding sources for projects or touring? Do you know of any puppeteers in the region who would like to work in Australia, touring their own work or creating co-productions with Australian puppeteers? Could you host a puppeteer from the Asian region?

At the 1996 Melbourne UNIMA meeting Michele Spooner took up a collection to help provide training for young puppeteers in India. If you know of similar projects that UNIMA could support, let Jennie know.

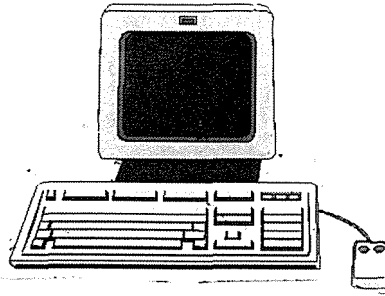
Simply passing on contact addresses for puppeteers you know in the area can be useful. UNIMA often gets requests for lists of puppeteers in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and other countries. If they are all in the one place, UNIMA can be more helpful and efficient in passing on and sharing the information.

And of course, the more information Jennie has about you and your work, the more she can pass it onto the representatives from other countries.

Thankyou Jennie for your hard work over the past 18 months, especially in writing up the huge report of the first Asia-Pacific Commission meeting. UNIMA Australia is fortunate to have you continue as our representative.

A VIRTUAL UNIMA CENTRE?

By Mary Sutherland



When I had the good fortune to attend the 17th UNIMA Congress in Budapest last year (my thanks to the Australia Council) and heard reports from UNIMA Centres from around the world, I was struck by the realisation that Australia has no identifiable home base for our Centre. It is in the nature of our country and community that we are decentralised and separated by great distance.

We do have a number of concentrated communities in each of the big cities but hundreds or thousands of kilometres separate each of these communities. There are also many other smaller groups and individuals still more isolated. Our isolation is not only national but international. It is very easy for European and North American UNIMA members and delegates to meet in person; not so with us. The cost is prohibitive except for the lucky few who can attend the Congress and Festivals. There have been suggestions over the years that centralised archives and resources would be of benefit to us all in addition to some sort of office as a communication centre where enquiries could be made and notices to members could be posted.

The major stumbling blocks have always been the cost of renting premises, the cost of staffing, running expenses and a convenient location to allow access by as many members as possible. Until now there has never been an ideal solution. I believe that a viable solution would be a VIRTUAL UNIMA CENTRE. - by this I mean a home page on an Internet Service Provider (ISP) eg. OzEmail.

I expect by now some of you will be having visions of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* or Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, or simply 'beam me up Scotty'. Don't despair - it is really no more difficult than using the phone, fax machine or microwave - actually, I haven't mastered the microwave myself.

To enable access to the VIRTUAL UNIMA CENTRE all an individual would need is the web address and access to a computer with a modem and an account with an Internet Service Provider. Before you say "Impossible, I don't even have a computer", know that there are, sprouting up all over the country and the world, Internet Cafés with computers set up specifically to serve the technologically disenfranchised, as well as services provided by school colleges and local libraries.

A VIRTUAL UNIMA CENTRE would also have benefits for those members who don't as yet have easy access to the Internet:

- * It would help lift the profile of our organisation with Government bodies, Educational Institutions and the general public in Australia and Globally (as they say in Information Technology circles).
- * It could be set up so that anyone who types in PUPPET, while 'surfing the net' would be able to visit our site.
- * Future events could be publicised to enable visitors to any state to easily find out what's on and whom to contact.
- * Access is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anyone who has tried to exchange detailed information with centres in Europe and elsewhere, constantly trying to catch brief windows of opportunity when both parties are at work, will appreciate the advantages this could bring, and at little more than the cost of a local call.
- * Ease of communication may enable us to realise and respond to opportunities to follow our organisation's prime objective - to use the art of puppetry in the pursuit of human values such as peace and mutual understanding between peoples (eg. Information and resources for disadvantaged communities).

What I am proposing is that we would have a UNIMA web site with an introduction to UNIMA Australia and a number of links to other topics.

Some of my suggestions for the links would be:

- * A history of UNIMA Australia.
- * A programme of up-coming events
- * A notice board publicising employment opportunities, parties etc. This could be limited to access by members only if desired.
- * An archive of published articles.
- * A membership list with links to additional pages containing biographical and contact information (1 to 2 pages as desired) and a photograph of their work. It is even possible to put up video clips but the expense would need to be borne by the individual.

There are probably many other possibilities that I haven't thought of yet.

What is a Web site and how does it work?

OzEmail (one of Australia's largest ISPs) allows its members to host a web site with up to 5 MB (megabytes) of data on their server (active computer), for the cost of a normal subscription.

The cost would be \$25 joining fee, which includes 5 MB of data storage and 5 hrs free access. The cost of extra access is \$5/hr 7am - midnight and only \$2.50/hr midnight - 7am. In the case of a UNIMA Web site, access on behalf of UNIMA would only be needed for updating and maintenance and only for a few minutes at a time if done correctly. Otherwise the person visiting the site pays the cost of accessing the site, like the cost of a phone call at the above rates.

It would be possible to have some of the access limited to members only if desired.

If we wanted to store more than 5 MB of data terms must be negotiated with the Internet Service Provider. Likewise if the site starts getting a lot of hits (visits) again extra costs may be incurred (this would be unlikely in the near future).

This is an example of how much space in megabytes a document takes up. I had a 32 page document with 7 high resolution scanned photos that in MS Word took 1.1 MB of space. When converted to HTML, the text took 0.031 MB, and the pictures took 0.4 MB (note that a picture takes up a lot of space).

There should be space for approximately 83 documents of about 0.03 MB + 1 photo each.

I expect this proposal will provoke much discussion and I am aware that there are many issues to consider, but I hope it will be received in the spirit it is offered - to help promote communication. I do not think it would in any way conflict the the role of our now excellent magazine. It would have a large permanent component, the histories and the personal pages and a small section of headlines promoting events, displays, workshops and, who knows, possibly one day even a festival. This section would need vigilant updating.

Joseph Sutherland, professional computer guru, and husband of Mary Sutherland has volunteered his time to build and maintain the site if the offer is accepted.

If you have any questions about the information please contact Mary Sutherland c/o the Editor, or at ibs1528@ozemail.com.au and we would be pleased to answer them. It's Joe who knows, I'm just doing my best to explain in language the rest of us can understand.

UPDATE:	Ross Browning of Puppetease has new computer addresses. <u>Email:</u> puppetease@peg.apc.org <u>WWWWeb:</u> http://www.firehorse.com.au/puppetease/wecome.html
----------------	---

PETER SCRIVEN'S WORLD

(BEYOND THE TINTOOKIES)

by Anne Kirker

Peter Scriven is an important figure in the development of Australian Puppetry. He established the Marionette Company in 1952 and toured extensively in Australia and overseas with his shows. These included *Tintookies* (1957), *Little Fella Bindi* (1957), *The Explorers* (based on the Burke & Wills saga) and *The Magic Pudding*. He also worked on the ABC TV series *Sebastian the Fox*, and various films and stage musicals.

The following article is by Anne Kirker, Curator at the Queensland Art Gallery, who met Peter Scriven in Manila, where he now lives.

Peter Scriven, the self-elected exile, describes himself as 95% Asian despite his European ancestry. Melbourne-born and reared in privileged circumstances, he fraternised with the creative personalities of Sydney's Paddington and the 'Cross' during the fifties and was himself a force to be reckoned with in theatrical circles. It's a 'from riches to rags' story with no pathos intended.

Scriven has written a vast autobiography of an uncommon life, recounting a childhood protecting his mother, and a confused searching for his own vocation. He recounts with humour what obviously for most would have been a daunting challenge; that of establishing a career in Australia as a puppeteer and theatre manager. Scriven's debt to women such as Elsie Bier (one of the 'Formidables') in championing drama in what was then a culturally young country, and his admiration for the playwriting of Ray Lawlor and the acting skills of such talents as Ray Barrett is outlined in his as yet unpublished text. But it is his receptive response to the need of children to cultivate a fantasy world which made his company of marionettes, "The Tintookies", such a success.

Prickly by nature, Scriven was a hard taskmaster, but like those men his temperament resembles (Robert Helpmann and Patrick White) he maintained a dedication and integrity to the field which attracted him. Manipulating strings to bring papier-mâché identities to life was his passion and his craft. He had an uncanny ability to identify talent for the company; Igor for instance, the marionettist from Buenos Aires with a troubled past, Hal Saunders the songwriter and Kurt Herweg, composer. When the 'Tintookies' came under threat, Scriven diversified and tried out musicals, art writing in Tokyo, and rather risqué films (for the money of course).

His peripatetic lifestyle continued into the sixties and the puppets were resurrected to go on an 'eventful' tour in India, Burma and Laos. The gruelling itinerary went on for months. In Australia Scriven got to know the legendary Norman Lindsay through adapting his book 'The Magic Pudding' for puppet theatre and was forced to confront the high-handedness and what he calls 'treachery' of cultural institutions.

By the seventies Peter Scriven had evolved into an expatriate. The East, not the West was now his touchstone. He'd learnt his trade in the world of rough entertainment during the 'deadly' fifties and kept his hand in with the art of the miniature stage animated by fantasy characters, but through necessity this passion was interspersed with other activities. Close contacts with diplomatic circles in parts of South-East Asia have now assisted this talented, multi-faceted individual in retaining his chosen residence in the Philippines.

A colourful outsider in any society, this gentleman has learnt to temper a need for personal seclusion with the reality of Filipino sociability. It is untenable to the Filipino mind for someone to live apart and manoeuvre his way alone through the characteristic chaos of Manila.

Imagine a hybrid culture which is a maelstrom of effects from colonising forces - first the Spanish then the American, followed by Japan. Volatile by nature and with a love of spectacle and the grand

gesture, the Luzon dwellers have fallen prey to Western capitalism and the dictates of Roman Catholicism. They know it, and the 'educated poor' (middle-class by all appearances, until you dig deeper) deplore the deep chasm left in the Marcos' wake. This is a chasm which divides the wealthy habitués of Makati (Manila's 'business' and foreign tourist centre) from the extreme poverty of dwellers in the shanty-towns which punctuate this complex city.

Scriven navigates both these territories with an agility honed by years of living off his wits, and survival instincts - an Anglo-Saxon living precariously in Asia.

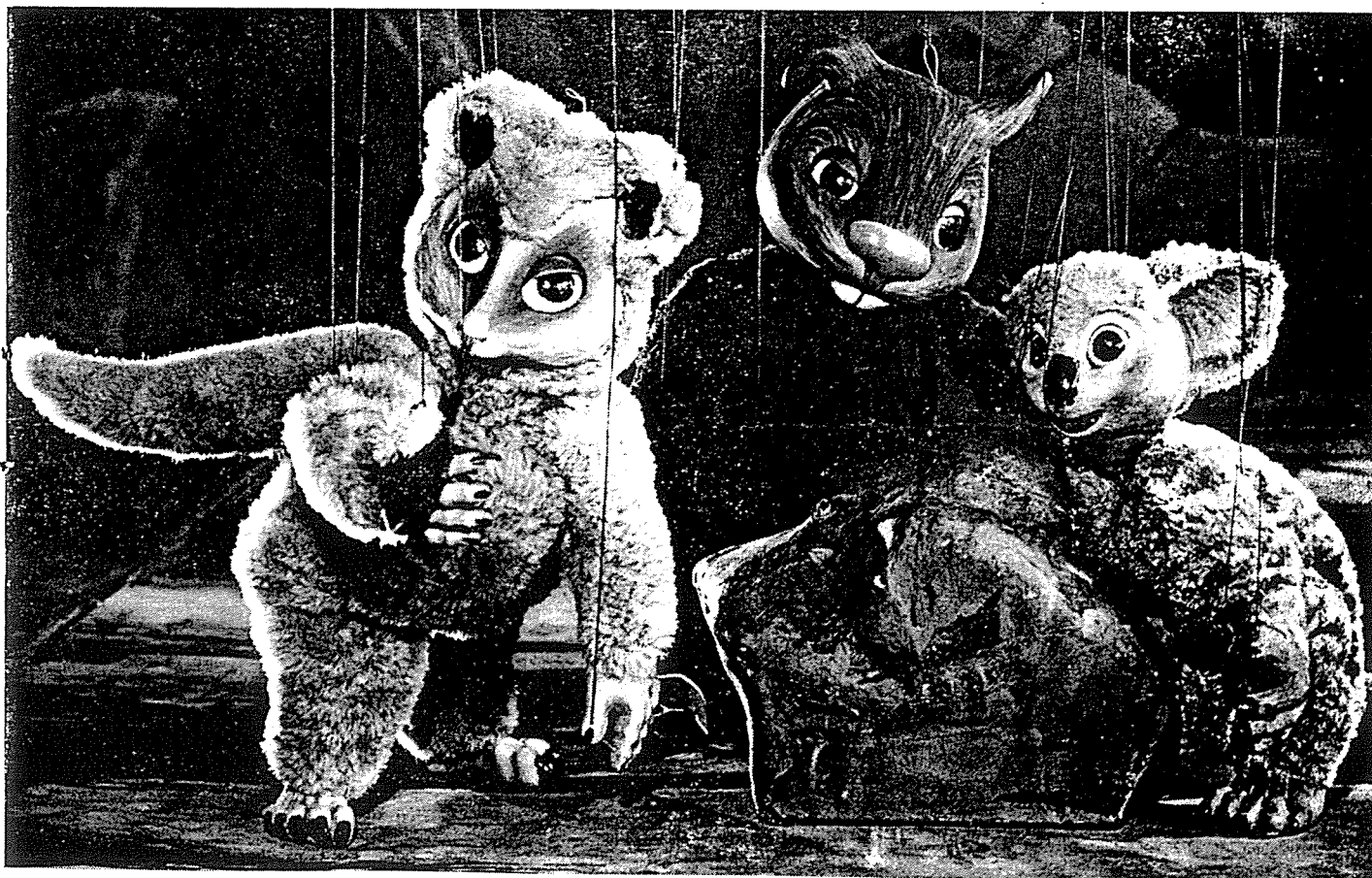
One wonders how he feels about his present circumstances. Riding the Love Bus from Makati to Divisoria, we suffered the congestion of traffic and toxic air which is immobilising and poisoning the city. Commuting by road vehicles in Manila is an anxious, nerve racking process, however Scriven appears to accept this as commonplace. What is not lost on the once master of puppetry in taking a jeepney ride around the markets was the boisterous display of comradie between the driver and his front seat companions and glimpsed instances such as the refined, beautiful movement of a fluttering fan being passed between school girls to disturb the thick humid air.

The old skills of observation which made his marionettes live are still present. It was Scriven who pointed out the small child asleep in a rough cart filled with vegetables; the flamboyant transvestite bedecked with wig and stiletto heels; the elderly couple sedately riding a 'calesa' through the throng and a coffin with mourners waiting until the last relative arrived to pay respects before burial.

An encounter with Peter Scriven's world at this point in time allowed for a reflection on Sydney, especially in the fifties, a creative milieu which eventually turned sour for him. It conjured up a journey through his unpredictable and highly popular puppet shows in Australia and parts of Asia. More directly, it provided a chance to see Manila from a citizen's perspective and also to learn of an insightful play in the making by Scriven on Australia's 'fatal shore'.

I learnt about Scriven's dream to realise his play set in the early days of white settlement in NSW. Characteristically for this trouper of old, it indicates a canny alertness to Australia's political climate in the nineties and a pragmatic grasp of production requirements. Like the unorthodoxy which has always informed his life, Peter Scriven once more attempts to reinvent himself, revising standard historical accounts to stop us in our tracks and re-evaluate the present.

Below: Photo from a programme for TINTOOKIES at the Princess Theatre.



HISTORY

THE SALICI MARIONETTES

By Richard Bradshaw

Members of the great Italian family of puppeteers, the Salicis, brought their marionettes to Australia in 1889, 1939 and 1955.

Enrico Salici, whose grandfather had been a puppeteer in northern Italy, was the leader of the company which came to Sydney and Melbourne in 1889-90. He was billed as 'the greatest Marionette Artist alive'. The company was the New Imperial Marionette Company and it was brought to Sydney by Signor and Signora Fabris, two Sydney-based singing teachers. Signor Edgardo Fabris himself managed the electric light effects for the show. The first performances were at the New Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street, in a season which lasted just over a week.

There were a hundred 3-foot-high puppets in the show which included the ballet "Excelsior", with original music by Cavalier Manzotti, "the finest ballet composer in the world", and a marionette "gymnastic clown", Signor St. Clair. The opening performance was very well attended, but there were technical problems and also long waits between scenes. One reviewer noted that there were clever dances and acrobatic feats which were sometimes loudly applauded, but felt that the show would be mostly appreciated by young people.

They appeared in Melbourne in early 1890 at Kreitmayer's Waxworks and Museum where they seem to have been better received and played for a few weeks. "The Age" reported that the figures were so skilfully managed "that dramatic representation becomes as perfect almost as living actors." For part of this season they shared the bill with Jungun, an Aboriginal albino who lit fires with a stick and sang "in the native manner".

In "The Puppet Theatre in America" Paul McPharlin writes that Enrico married Ada Feri on his return to Italy from Melbourne, but a Sydney ad. said the show was directed by Signor and Signora Salici. Enrico and Ada went

with their family to live in the U.S.A. in 1934, working their way up to the States through South America and Mexico. They presented a half-hour variety programme in cinemas and, from comparing McPharlin's description with that of the Australian magician Charles Waller, it seems this was the show that came to Australia in 1939.

The head of the company this time was Gino Salici, a son of Enrico and Ada. According to the Sydney Morning Herald he was assisted by four brothers, a sister, and the wives of two of his brothers, although McPharlin lists only two brothers, Adolpho and Edgardo, and a sister, Belinde. They shared the bill with a revue, "Funz-a Poppin" and ads claimed there were some 500 4-foot-high marionettes. (I would doubt both numbers.)

For a musical scene, two vociferous comic puppet stagehands wheeled in a grand piano. The puppet pianist sat down, and after some "nervous preliminary fiddlings" gave a very convincing show of playing "The Maiden's Prayer", the actual sound coming from a real piano offstage. After this the puppet pianist took a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his brow and fastidiously dusted the keys before putting the handkerchief back. He then accompanied a puppet soprano who sang the Mad Scene from "Lucia di Lammermoor" with suitable flourishes, and tremours on the high notes ... all done with much wit. The show concluded with a puppet bicycle race on a circular track. At the end the proscenium curtain rose to reveal five operators. For an encore, one of the puppeteers (probably Gino) appeared with a marionette who walked forward holding a cigarette which it lit with a lighter. It then started smoking it, puffing out smoke as it did so.

I remember seeing that same puppet at the end of the Salici's performance at the Tivoli in Sydney in 1955. They were in a show called "Laugh Around The Clock". (Also on the bill were two young Sydney performers, Gordon Chater and June Salter, who had been appearing in Phillip Street revues and seemed

a bit out of place in this Tivoli show.) Once again the pianist was there with various singers and the comic stagehands and there was also a lively item with ... if I remember correctly ... Brazilian dancers. It was a very energetic number and the puppet stage itself began to rock to the rhythm as the sturdy marionettists moved about.

In 1994 the English puppeteer John Blundall recalled the Salicis:

"They travelled a very large fit-up covered with bottle green crushed velvet. It had a large column in the centre - this contained the various props which swung out onto the playing area through the curtains surrounding it. This central column supported a very high bridge. The

puppets performed items similar to Podrecca's, including the familiar pianist and singer."

(Vittorio Podrecca's company never visited Australia, but one of his former puppeteers lives in Sydney and has had a strong influence on marionette theatre in Australia. Igor Hychka, who was born to Russian parents in Poland in 1914, spent four years with Podrecca's touring Teatro dei Piccoli, mainly in Argentina. He arrived in Australia in 1954 and became puppetmaster for Peter Scriven's "The Tintookies" and subsequent shows. On a one-off tour with Edith Murray for the Arts Council (N.S.W.) Igor introduced items based on Podrecca's. In more recent years he helped make puppets for the late Phillip Edmiston. Igor, who lives in Darlinghurst, is our living link with the great era of Italian marionettes.)

cont. from p. 34

We have a good workshop - but you can always have more wonderful equipment. Our work is very creatively satisfying because we see the projects through from conception to finished performing product... but this often involves long, long hours!

11) What piece of work are you most proud of? Why?

GRANNY - my first puppet who is still performing 11 years later (full size, moving mouth), a number of marionettes, & FAIRY - a rod puppet, tiny but very flexible and expressive.

12) What was your 'training' in this field. Do you think there are adequate training opportunities available to aspiring designer/makers? Do you have any suggestions?

Short workshop with Beverly Campbell-Jackson - being around Ross Hill and most importantly, from doing it - set the task - read the books, feel and study puppets, ask questions, make some mistakes - some puppetry is taught at NIDA... theatre courses are a possible source for training - Art colleges?? - don't always have an understanding of these "moving" sculptures.

13) Other comments, of any nature:

I like to build puppets well, take a little extra time on the workings and the finish - a) because it's satisfying and b) because sometimes repairing can be more difficult than building well to begin with.

I don't see myself so much as a designer though I do design - I rarely have found a designer or writer who understands the medium - it's flexibility and complexity/simplicity.

PERFORMANCE DATES

There will be a number of puppetry works on in Melbourne during March and April:

Spare Parts will be performing *Little Piggies* and *A Sausage Went for a Walk* and **Company Skylark** will present *Wake Baby* for the first Melbourne Moomba International Children's Festival. (Information Ph: 1902 241 187)

Handspan Theatre members will present *Below the Belt*, a 'trio of twisted tales' at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. (Melbourne Town Hall, 27 Mar - 20 Apr, Tues - Sun 11 pm, \$21/\$15, Bookings - Ticketmaster BASS 11566)

Polyglot Puppet Theatre premieres its new production of *The Little Prince* at the Cromwell St Theatre April 12 - 27. Bookings - 9827 9667

PUPPET DESIGNER AND MAKER QUESTIONNAIRE

Editor's Note: A few months ago I sent out this questionnaire to several puppet makers. As a bit of an introduction to our new UNIMA President here are Sue Wallace's responses.
P.S. If anyone else would like to respond to these questions, I'd be happy to publish your thoughts in future issues.

1) What do you think the main function of the puppet designer/builder is?

To build/design puppets which are as comfortable as possible and which do, where possible, what is called for.

2) Do you see the puppets as being a vehicle to illustrate the script, or do you think the script should come out of the puppets?

Both - it depends on the way the group or company works. Often with puppetry the script needs to be flexible enough to change with the "surprises" both positive and negative that the puppets propose.

3) How do you see the relationship between the script-writer, director, performers and yourself?

I do all these jobs so we are in constant communication.

4) What would be your preferred method of working, in regard to the previous question?

Although this doesn't usually apply to me - I think communication is vital and performers need some understanding of the constraints of building - Builders/designers need to listen to performers and try to fix any points causing the performer distress.

5) Is this ideal ever achieved? If not, why?

Sometimes. If not - usually it's the result of deadlines.

6) What are the differences between working in the theatre & for T.V.?

Obviously close-ups are important - and textures - some textures just don't work on T.V.

7) What are some of your favorite materials? Why?

Fibreglass - strength
Latex - flexibility
Foam - multiple uses
Wood - perfect for some jobs

8) What/who have been some of your main influences? Why?

Ross Hill and Beverly Campbell-Jackson and Richard Bradshaw - because of their talent, willingness to try new materials and ideas, and their understanding of puppetry.

9) What would be your dream project to work on? Why?

The slow project - where you have time to let the work evolve.

10) Do you have any suggestions for how your job could be made easier, more efficient, or more creatively satisfying? If your work is already all of the above, how did you achieve it?

cont. p. 33

TOTAL THEATRE

By KYM TONKIN

What is important, is where does (live) puppetry fit into the scheme of things these days?

ITI provides a n invaluable service to people working in the performing arts in Australia. Apart from the "puppetry highlights" reprinted here in the UNIMA magazine, you can, if you are a subscriber (\$25 per year), receive the ITI news every 2 months. This is an extensive list of forthcoming Australian and overseas theatre and music related conferences, seminars, publications, workshops, festivals, funding opportunities and artists' comings and goings. I've noticed that a lot of people involved in puppetry have skills, careers and interests that overlap into other areas of the performing arts so if you are one of them it is an excellent resource.

The most recent ITI NEWS mentioned an English magazine called TOTAL THEATRE which deals with "mime, physical theatre and visual performance". I contacted ITI and they kindly offered to lend me a copy.

TOTAL THEATRE magazine is a product of the Mime Action Group who seem to be in the process of broadening their horizons and changing their own name to TOTAL THEATRE. The emphasis is on work which "arises from actor centred and devised theatre processes eg: mime, physical theatre, visual performance, non-western forms, mask, Commedia dell'Arte, bouffons, clown and object animation." I'd say that's a pretty good definition of the

areas I'd like to see theatre heading - but where does puppetry fit in here? Under object animation? Visual performance? Has the term puppetry become so unfashionable that it has to be avoided at all costs? Of course it may just be that TOTAL THEATRE thought puppetry was sufficiently dealt with by other organisations like British UNIMA or publications like ANIMATIONS. I don't pretend to know much about the politics of the British theatre world, and I suppose it's not that important to us here in Australia.

What is important, however, is where does (live) puppetry fit into the scheme of things these days?

In fact, puppetry clearly is part of Total Theatre's world view. In the Autumn '96 edition there is an article under the sub-heading "Puppetry" called "Breaking the Muppet Mould". It's basically about the Visions '96 festival of animated theatre. Like almost every other article ever written about puppetry aimed at adults, this one begins by reassuring us that puppetry doesn't have to be old-fashioned, something you do at birthday parties or "like the Muppets".

The Visions '96 Festival (held in Brighton every 2 years) is depicted as a showcase for a renaissance in the world of puppetry, a "new puppetry". It talks of a new breed of performers and directors -

"Unaware and uninterested in puppetry's traditions, they have been re-inventing the language and prising it open" (TT vol 8, pp.13).

An article on the "British Festival of Visual and Devised Theatre" (London) doesn't mention the word puppetry although the festival no doubt includes puppetry in its programme. The emphasis of the festival seems to be on work that doesn't rely on the written text. The Artistic Director (Tom Morris) expresses an interest in "Theatre that couldn't happen if it weren't live" and theatre which is "playing with the live relationship between the audience and the stage". Presumably David Williamson's newie wouldn't get a guernsey. How much of the puppetry we see around us would?

Yet another article in the magazine is called TOTAL TRAINING and is written by the puppetry course tutor at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. That school's Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Theatre Practice seems intent on engendering a more collaborative approach to theatre, with an emphasis on visual, physical and devised theatre. Puppetry is in there with voice, movement, life drawing and scale model-making, Noh Theatre and stand up comedy. Sounds like a big ask for a one year course (presumably you get

to specialise) but perhaps this is the way forward for theatre practice and education. Surely there's potential for a type of theatre that is alive to all the possibilities of live performance. Why shouldn't actors or dancers devising a piece of theatre explore the possibilities of puppetry or

"object manipulation" and why shouldn't puppeteers see themselves as part of the wide world of theatre? Some of them do, of course, and

we see examples of it here in the work of groups such as Snuff Puppets or Back to Back's collaboration with Handspan last year.

That doesn't mean we need to reject "traditional" or "pure" forms of puppetry. If they're good enough, they'll stand on their own as they always have. And the term puppetry will probably be around when terms like Visual Theatre or Animated Theatre have fallen from grace. But Total Theatre sounds pretty sexy to me,

and I don't think it would hurt puppetry to get a bit promiscuous.

STOP PRESS:

As of April 1997 ITI News will be published monthly in a new improved form and with a new name - **Arts Link News**. The subscription price will also increase - Individuals \$ 50 , Organisations \$120. Contact ITI for details See ITI News this UNIMA Magazine issue for address & phone no.)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Australian Centre of UNIMA 1996. Period: 1/196 - 31/12/96.

Working Account

Income

Subscriptions:	\$2 317.80
Joining fees:	\$ 200.00
Donations/advert.:	\$ 55.00

\$2 572.80

Expenses

Postage:	\$628.85
Magazine printing:	\$870.00
Unima brochure:	\$150.00
Satationery:	\$231.88
Phone:	\$189.92
International Subs:	\$511.67
Puppet Centre UK:	\$ 76.71
Puppeteers of USA:	\$ 86.82
Photocopies/screens:	\$ 41.05
Unima Conference:	\$ 66.82

\$2 853.72

Defecit: \$280.92

Note: Extra expenses for 1996 were:

a) Membership drive	\$ 90.00
b) New brochure/application form	\$150.00
c) Joining Puppeteers of America	\$ 86.82
d) Unima conference	\$ 66.82
(and Increased size of magazine)	

\$393.64

Opening Balance \$1 101.54

Closing Balance \$667.45

Scholarship Fund:

Contributions:	\$ 852.55
Term Deposit:	\$6,822.80
Scholarship account:	\$ 408.23

\$8 083.58

(9 months @ 5.65%, matures 2/8/97)

Indian Scholarship Fund: \$35.00

Comments: 1996 was a year of expansion for UNIMA in both membership and quality of services. We saw the magazine increase to over 30 pages and welcomes 49 new members. Our current working account balance is **\$1 858.72** at 28/2/97.