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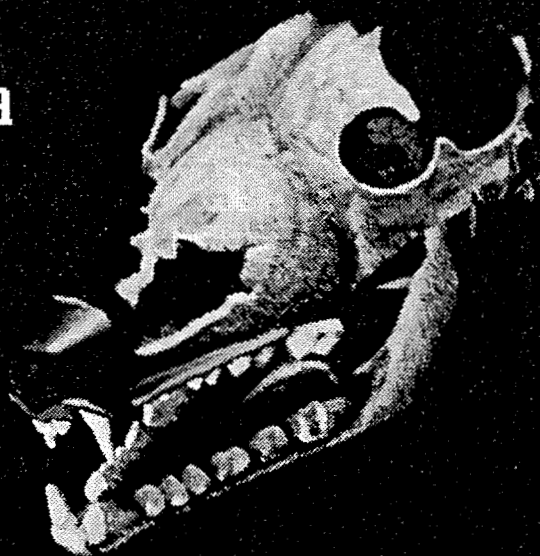
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INTERNATIONAL PUPPETRY ORGANISATION

UNIMA
AUSTRALIA
September
1996



Michael Butcher in Handspan Theatre's Dante - Through the Invisible Photo by Ponch Hawkes



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929. MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

EDITORIAL

On August 25th there was a Unima conference held in Melbourne and for the first time in many years, the whole executive was able to be in the same place at the same time. The occasion was used very productively, to talk about Unima's future and to make some exciting decisions.

In this magazine you will find proposals about a Unima Australia festival, and the launch of the Unima Scholarship fund. There are many details to be worked out with both issues, so if you have any comments/suggestions, please send them to Dennis Murphy or, if you'd like your opinions to be made public, send them to me **before 24th November**.

The conference attracted a pleasing number of old and new members, contributing performances, reports, questions and suggestions around the theme "What do we want from Unima?" Apart from a general consensus about the value of holding a festival, other issues were brought up such as - increasing our involvement in the Asia-Pacific Unima Commission (and possibly hosting a meeting of the Commission alongside a festival), and encouraging greater Australian membership of Unima. If you would like a copy of the minutes, please contact me before 13th October, as I will be going overseas from then until 24th November.

A theme that has been running through reports from the Budapest Congress, and our own conference is that Unima needs an *active* membership in order to do anything. If we want a festival, it will have to be organised by lots of people, not just a few. This is especially the case now that Commonwealth Arts funding is being reduced across the board. It can be done - the Iida Puppetry Festival in Japan began as a very small volunteer-run event and now it is huge.

Individual members can initiate anything - recently Michele Spooner started to take up a collection to help provide a year's training for an Indian puppeteer. It will only cost \$300. This is an action truly in the Unima spirit. (See also p.8 of this issue, regarding the Pakistan Museum of Puppetry.)

The magazine itself gets more and more interesting because members are sending such great articles. Thank you all very much!

The most basic way to be active is to pay your subscriptions on time, to save Richard hours of work in chasing them up, and to increase the funds we have available to organise events such as workshops and ... perhaps even a festival!

Jenny Andersen



**DECEMBER MAGAZINE DEADLINE
24th NOVEMBER, 1996**

NOTICE BOARD

EMPLOYMENT ALERT!

Expressions of interest are invited for the position of **Artistic Director** of **SPARE PARTS** - a vibrant, innovative puppet company.

For further details ring
(09) 335 5044

or write to
The Chairperson
PO Box 897
Fremantle WA 6160

THE WORKHOUSE

In the last UNIMA Magazine there was a brief mention of a new small theatre which has opened in Melbourne called **THE WORKHOUSE**. It is located at 145 Victoria Parade, Collingwood and the official opening was on 1st September. The director, Anita Sinclair, says that the space can be used for any kind of small theatre production, and she is receptive to any inquiries (PH: 03 - 9417 1211).

In the last issue I incorrectly wrote that Anita used to run a theatre called The House. It was actually called Living Room. (Ed.)

CONGRATULATIONS!

... to **Murray Raine** who has won the 1996 **Mo Award** for best visual act in Australia. It is the first time a puppeteer has ever won this prestigious award which is named after the character name of famous Australian comedian Roy Rene. May it lead to many new and wonderful opportunities, Murray!

EQUITY

A few Victorian Equity members have been meeting to organise some informal information nights for members, run by members. The aim is for ordinary members to inform other members about the Industrial Relations bill and how it will affect us and what we can do to minimise the impact in our industry. The meeting will also provide a forum to find out more information about the union or to share your secret gripe about the union.

Equity section does have paid organisers but, if you've ever tried to talk to one of them, you would know they are pretty busy. One of the major aims of the IR bill is to reduce the rights of unions to organise members. The only way to counter that is for us ordinary members to talk to others in the industry and encourage membership and sticking together. That is the only way we will maintain what we have and have any chance of achieving better conditions.

You may have received a letter if you are in the trial group. If you haven't and would be interested in knowing more, contact Denise Rundle on (03) 9529 4092 or Janet Dalglish on (03) 9459 1121.

Denise Rundle

LESLIE TROWBRIDGE PUPPET OPERA

Leslie Trowbridge performed at the Noosa festival. He has been unable to film his performances recently, due to his photographer being ill and is looking forward to getting back to video-production soon.

ELECTIONS

Jennifer Davidson is resigning as President of Unima Australia, after 3 years at the helm. Thankyou for a wonderful job, Jennifer.

A delegate is also being sought for the **Asia-Pacific Commission**. The post has been occupied by **Jennie Pfeiffer** since July 1995. Jennie has done some wonderful work in establishing this important fledgling alliance. In Budapest, Dadi Pudumjee (Unima-India President) officially applauded Jennie for her hard work in compiling the minutes and writing a summary of the Asia-Pacific Commission meeting in Iida last year.

Nominations for both positions are open to all members. If you would like to nominate someone, please let them know first, then send your nomination, plus the name of a seconder, to Dennis Murphy by **24th November 1996**. (Dennis' address is on the cover of this magazine). You may nominate yourself. The nominations will be published along with ballot forms in the December issue.

If you would like some details about the jobs, please contact Dennis, or the relevant Jennifer!

A GOOD BOOK

The newest issue in *faber and faber's PROJECTIONS* series of interviews with film-makers focuses on animation.

There are interviews with the 'father figure of stop-motion animation', Ray Harryhausen, and two great modern innovators, Nick Park (of Wallace and Gromit fame) and Henry Selick (*Nightmare Before Christmas*). The book is edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue and is a fascinating read (see pictures p.19).

MORE CONGRATULATIONS!

... this time to **Annette Downs**, artistic director of Terrappin Puppet Theatre, who has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study puppetry techniques and traditions in Japan, France and Spain.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Axel Axelrad has been awarded Life Membership of Unima International. He was presented with the award by President Jenny Davidson at the Unima conference in Melbourne in August.

Axel has been a long-time member of Unima, a past president of Unima Australia, and he also established the Unima Australia Magazine. **Congratulations!**

UNIMA BARBEQUE

Richard Hart will host a Unima barbeque at his house on Saturday 16th November.

BYO food and drink to 20 Coleman St, North Fitzroy, from 1pm onwards.

WORKSHOPS

Polyglot Puppet Theatre is proposing to hold a week of workshops with Noriko Nishimoto in the first week of December, 1996.

If you are interested in taking part in these wonderful classes could you please contact Chris Dickens at Polyglot on (03) 9827 9667 so that he can get an idea of numbers early on.

Skylark
Theatre Company
Association
Incorporated

E Block,
Gorman House
Arts Centre
Ainslie Avenue
Braddon
A.C.T. 2601

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



Here are some press comments so far...

"Charlotte is a magnificent spider"
The Sydney Morning Herald

**"...grab your kids, nieces, nephews or
neighbourhood brats so you've got an excuse to
catch them next time."**

Rod Lewis, 3d Radio

Company Skylark's production of **"Charlotte's Web"** has been seen by over 25,000 people so far during the 1996 national tour. This classic tale of everlasting friendship between Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider blended puppetry, acting, skill and imagination into an enchanting hour of entertainment.

"Charlotte's Web" is set to tour again in 1997 so keep a look out

"Salty Seagull", the perennial favourite of Company Skylark audiences will be appearing at Floriade this year for two shows only on Sunday 15 September. Visitors to Floriade, Canberra's spring floral festival, will adore the colour, fun and songs and easily relate to the timeless friendship established between Salty and Dolphin.

Company Skylark will also be appearing at the Performing Arts Market in Canberra during the National Festival of Australian Theatre. The Market is a great opportunity to meet Peter Wilson, Artistic Director of Company Skylark, and to see some of the Company's work.

The company is now finalising an exciting programme for 1997 - final details should be available early next year. The programme is sure to include a season of Company Skylark's newest work **"Wake Baby"** that premiered at the Out Of The Box festival in Brisbane this year.



Charlotte's Web - Templeton (Sean Masterson),
Goosey (Catherine Mann), & Wilbur (Matthew McCoy).

AQUEOUS '96 - PUPPETRY AND VISUAL THEATRE - MAY 31 - JUNE 10

by Melina Henderson

During a week of glorious sunshine, Noosa played host to the 1996 **Aqueous Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre**. A programme of workshops covering manipulation skills, design and directing for puppetry and visual theatre, and community arts incorporating puppetry, was augmented by performances by Carouselle Theatre (S.A.), Terrapin Puppet Theatre (Tas.), and the Wakamatsu Puppet Theatre from Japan.

In the lead-up to the festival Ian Cuming co-ordinated an eight week community arts project where participants constructed and learnt to manipulate large scale puppets. Other events included art exhibitions, puppet-making for school children, and a puppet parade at the Cooroy Main Street Festival.

To conclude the workshop programme, an afternoon conference addressed future directions for puppetry and visual theatre in Australia. The panel (including Rod Whissler, Head of the School for Arts and Innovation at QUT, Annette Downs, Artistic Director of Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Wojciech Pisarek, Artistic Director of Carouselle Theatre and John Cox, award winning animatronics engineer of "Babe" fame) led discussions on avenues for training, the role of multi-media in visual theatre, and the changing scope of the artform.

From the seminar it is apparent that the lack of accredited, institution-based puppetry training in Australia

remains an industry concern. Responding to the question of the role of animatronics and related forms in puppetry and visual theatre, John Cox said he believed they remain discreet artforms. In particular visual theatre is often involved in communicating abstract themes and concepts where the 'reality' (not to mention the expense) of animatronics is not needed.

*... smaller, regional
- based Festivals
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Theatre, where all
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represented.*

A diverse range of teachers, community artists and puppet performers/makers attended the conference and workshop programme. Greg Methe and Ruth Hadlon of "In Cahoots Design" reported an enthusiastic response to their design seminar which focussed on their individual approaches to design, as well as a collaborative process where intention is the springboard for creative development.

Philip Mitchell's manipulation workshops explored the essence of puppetry movement and manipulation skills, with particular focus on improvisation and object theatre. The workshops

proved very popular in addressing a desire for hands-on experience.

Wojciech Pisarek from Carouselle Theatre ran a seminar exploring the role of the director in puppetry and related theatre, through a perspective of his own approach. Wojciech highlighted the fact that since Australia is not tied to any particular tradition in puppetry and visual theatre, it has a distinct advantage and an important role to play in the creation and exploration of theatre which extends the boundaries of the artform.

Terrapin Puppet Theatre and Carouselle Theatre brought a programme of school and adult shows to the festival. Terrapin presented "The Hunt", a new production exploring the relationship between object, puppet and performer, for primary students; and "Desires" which will tour to Budapest for the 1996 UNIMA Festival.

Carouselle performed their production of Josef Krotta's "Don Quixote" (also touring to UNIMA 1996 and for little kids "Dragon Dance", a tale about a dragon and his friend told through a range of puppetry styles.

As well as participating at the 1996 International UNIMA Congress in Budapest, Terrapin and Carouselle will attend the Plzen Festival in the Czech Republic where Carouselle will perform "Waiting for Beckett". It is hoped the presence of both companies at these major festivals will raise the profile of Australian Puppet Theatre on the world stage.

Congratulations to John Lamb, Festival Co-ordinator, The Festival Organising Committee, and Festival Underwriters for their hard work in organising **Aqueous '96**.

Local press coverage during the week of the festival was excellent, however both Terrapin and Carouselle experienced disappointing audience levels, perhaps due to the low visual presence of the Festival in Noosa, or too short publicity lead-up to events.

A notable exception was *Puppet Follies*, a one-off gala night which played to a packed house and featured a variety of cabaret puppet, mask and mime pieces, including David Poulton's "Wok 'n' Roll" and Ian Cumming's Punch and Judy.

Finally in the wake of **Aqueous '96** it seems that smaller, regional - based Festivals highlight the ongoing need for a National Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre, where all sectors of the industry are fully represented.

Melina has worked with Terrapin as a performer for over two years. She is a member of the touring ensemble which will present "Desires" at the 1996 UNIMA Congress in Budapest. She is now based in Sydney and works with the visual theatre group "Etcetera".

cont/ ... from p27

DO YOU WANT A FESTIVAL?

It's too early to ask who wants to perform. For now, please write to me before **31 October** with your comments, criticisms and suggestions. I again stress that the overwhelming MAJORITY of members must be behind the festival if it's to happen. The result will appear in the December magazine issue.

TERRAPIN IN BUDAPEST

The Unima 1996 Festival in Budapest was an exhausting and exciting experience. As performers we were inspired by fellow artists who had travelled from 27 different countries to perform at the prestigious event.

The was Terrapin's first international tour and we were determined that our production, **DESIRES**, should stand out among the 150 or so other performances in and around the city.

Before we arrived in Budapest we had toured to the Aqueous '96 Festival in Noosa, Queensland, and then the Plzen Puppet Festival in the Czech Republic. It was an excellent warm up to the Unima Festival. By the time we got there on June 20, we were more than ready to show the rest of the world the kind of work we do at Terrapin.

Little did we know that on the day of the performance we would have to wait for two hours for the freight to arrive. It was a tortuous wait. (all compounded by a decision to re-pave the only road into the theatre on the day). The boxes containing the puppets and sets from **DESIRES** got to the theatre literally with minutes to spare. After a very stressful bumpin, we did the show at 5pm. All things considered we think it was a fairly hairy performance with improvised lighting and one of the four pieces having to be deleted. The audience, however, responded enthusiastically. The second show three hours later was much more satisfying from our perspective. One of the best compliments was that the local crew chose to stay and watch our performance,

finding it refreshing after witnessing a series of very traditional performances. Indeed two of them snuck out from behind the curtain to watch the show from the front. The difficulties were put behind us and we gave it everything we had travelled so far to give. The theatre, which was Budapest's largest, was full, with people standing in the aisles to see our show. Their thunderous applause at the show's end made every moment we had put into perfecting **DESIRES** worthwhile.

People were curious about Australian puppetry. Not only about the style of puppetry, but also the design. Several artists, when admiring our puppets, actually sniffed the wood they were made from. Huon pine, being native to Tasmania, had never been seen in Budapest before and some found it quite frightening.

Some highlights of the festival for us were the Opening Parade in which students, performers and the general public made music, dressed up in costumes and paraded noisily through the streets of Budapest.

Witnessing the many and varied styles of puppets and puppetry from around the world in exhibitions and performances was a wonderful learning experience for us. We had hoped to be left breathless by seeing the best in the world. Unfortunately we were largely disappointed by the conservative programming by the local UNIMA President. Highlights and inspiration were few and far between. However, just being there and showing what Australian puppetry can offer was worth the journey.

**Kirsty Grierson, and
Lynne Kent,
Terrapin Puppet
Theatre.**

BUPAPEST WORLD CONGRESS

Michele Spooner has brought back several interesting publications from the Unima Congress in Budapest. They include:

Report on the Unima Commission for Teaching and Professional Training 1992-1996

The Unima International Directory of Scholarly Researchers of Puppet Theatre

Breaking Boundaries - American Puppetry in the 1980's

Sutradhar - the Unima India magazine (March 1996 issue)

Das Andere Theater - Jan 1996 issue, which includes a special on German Puppetry.

Ethics and Aesthetics - Papers given at the congress by seven international members- the speech by Michael Meschke reprinted in this issue is from this set.

My Plea My Hope - An address on The Interaction of Different Cultures on the Puppet Theatre by Dadi Pudumjee, President of Unima India.

A guide to the UNIMA World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts - includes schools, research papers, companies, festivals, individual artists, terminology, national articles, styles, history etc.

If anyone would like information on these publications, please contact the editor.

UNIMA International is compiling a world calendar of puppetry events for 1997. We have been sent an entry form, so if there is a puppetry event (such as a festival) that someone wants included, please contact the editor.



PAKISTAN MUSEUM OF PUPPETRY

Call for exhibits

The organisers of the Third International Puppet Festival Pakistan (The Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop) are in the process of creating a permanent Museum of Puppetry in Lahore. A makeshift museum was set up at previous festivals ('92 and '94) and visited by tens of thousands of people.

The permanent display will consist of puppets from all over the world, a video library, print material, posters and slides. The museum will also be a centre for lectures, workshops and seminars and will be a valuable asset for the advancement of puppetry in Pakistan.

The Festival Director and Museum's founder, Mr Faizaan Peerzada has requested that festival participants and puppetry practitioners from around the world contribute to this effort by donating puppets to add to the collection. Company posters and posters of past shows would no doubt also be greatly appreciated.

ONE TOE will be attending the next festival in October this year. Because our work has been 'object theatre' based we don't have a great deal to offer in the way of puppets for the museum. However, we'd love to see Australian work represented, and of course it would be great for people to have their work displayed at the site of an international festival.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the museum display please let Jenny Andersen or myself know as soon as possible (before October) so we can take it with us to the festival, or arrange for it to be sent. Our phone number is (03) 9482 3292.

Kym Tonkin.

THE JOURNEY

by Wojciech Pisarek of Carouselle Theatre

In four weeks we performed 12 performances of *Don Quixote*, *Dragon Dance* and *Waiting for... Beckett* in four international puppetry festivals. One year of planning, hundreds of letters and faxes, funding submissions, technical details, tickets, visas and cargo arrangements finally resulted in four weeks of exciting and spinning-like kaleidoscope events.

Aqueous 9 6
Puppetry festival in Noosa was the first attempt after 8 years to revive the national gathering of Australian Puppetry. Mainly due to insufficient funding the event was scaled down (but) to compensate, there was a lot of colourful activities performed by local students with their own puppets on the streets and in community venues. A very encouraging sight! Our shows of *Don Quixote* and *Dragon Dance* were received very favourably by the audience and the press and as a result we were offered a six week contract to tour QLD with *Dragon Dance* in 1997.

Two days after we finished in Noosa we boarded the plane and headed for Vienna. The 'Drak Theatre' minibus and truck were awaiting us, and the actors were taken by road to Hradec Kralove. At Hradec Kralove Jola and I enjoyed the hospitality of Josef Krofta and the company was placed in a newly renovated hotel belonging to Drak International Institute at the old city square. It was great to be with Josef and Jana again, and he did everything he could to provide us with a lot of exciting activities and technical help.

First we had to check the condition of our props and puppets. Very soon it occurred to us that the cart axle was missing, *Don Quixote* had lost his head and one box had nearly disintegrated. All that was quickly fixed by the Drak Theatre technicians and we were truly amazed at their speed and professionalism.

The following day was our first performance of *Don Quixote* at Hradec Kralove as part of a mini festival of Drak Theatre international celebrations. Josef was so busy that he was not able to come to the rehearsal and I was a bit nervous because I had made some changes to the performance on my own. The show was performed in front of a capacity audience at Beseda Theatre, who applauded our *Don Quixote* for a long time, but the best comment came from Josef who said that the show was better, much better than when he saw it the last time in Adelaide. This was followed by another banquet with lots of Czech beer, an Australian style barbecue, creative discussions, goulash soup and much singing.

On 19th of June we set out for the 21st International Puppetry Festival Skupova Plzen - a town famous for puppetry and beer. We performed *Waiting for... Beckett* in an overcrowded and hot venue and the next day, *Don Quixote*. Our confidence rose significantly after we received some great feedback about both shows. Finally we found out that we won two awards at this prestigious festival. Josef Krofta was given an award for directing *Don Quixote* and

Peter Green was awarded the best actor of the festival for his roles in *Quixote* and *Beckett*. Everybody was over the moon. We were able to see many interesting shows from various theatres from the Czech Republic, Slovak, Great Britain, Norway and USA. What stays in my memory is an hilariously funny show by the students of the Prague Academy called *The Story of the True Man*. The story is a terrible propaganda novel by Boris Polewoj which I had to study in my early years in Poland. These young people did a mockery of this literary rubbish so strongly that one can only ponder how it was possible to read it seriously only a decade ago. It was great fun leading to some deeper reflections - something that I regard as very precious in theatre.

The next Sunday we finally moved to Budapest to take part in the 17th World Festival of Puppetry. First we presented *Don Quixote* at the beautiful UJ Theatre in the heart of Budapest. Our actors had nine curtain calls - a truly enthusiastic response. The show's philosophy and references to the totalitarian system spoke very strongly in Hungary, still battling its communist past. The Beckett performance attracted such a crowd that for about five minutes we were asking people to move out from the performing area. Hungarian TV recorded the show and did an extensive interview with me about its meaning and creative process. But the greatest reward was a conversation with the Honorary President of Unima Mr Henryk Jurkowski, who found our Beckett to be a strong and sophisticated

piece of theatre. Jurkowski saw our *Breakdown* performance four years ago in Poland and was impressed by the company's development.

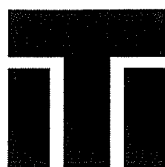
For the next five days we watched others. The festival was big, too big in my opinion. Apart from 24 officially invited companies, there were many others performing in the Budapest Fringe and quite a lot of Hungarian puppetry - all together 88 performances in 13 venues. Organisers overestimated their ability to manage such a big event and there were a lot of complaints about food quality and accommodation standards. Similar remarks were heard about congress proceedings, a lack of preparation and chaotic discussions. But sense of humour and a great feeling of togetherness among puppeteers from every part of the world made the unofficial life of the festival bright and prevailing. Against the background of good, average and some weak shows, one made an incredible impact on us. *Night Visions* (or everybody gets the demons he deserves) was based on the life and writings of Max Jacob, a Jewish author who died near Paris in 1944 while imprisoned by Nazis. It was a grotesque fantasy symbolising incidents from Jacob's life, surrealist in style and satirical in black humour. The performance was faultlessly executed by one actor and puppeteer Frank Soehnie, and we cried with real tears and made no attempt to hide them. Why? We don't know - it is the mystery of Catharthis. Otherwise my general observation is that the strongest in the festival were individual artists or small groups. Big, well-established companies proved to be technically perfect but somehow empty, with nothing to say, with no reason for doing puppetry.

The Budapest 96 Festival ended with the biggest party I've ever seen. Afterwards, when we moved outside to dance, we noticed big, familiar robotic figures coming from the darkness. What a surprise! The Knee High Puppets from Adelaide! "Look everybody" we shouted, "this is Australia coming".

We all gained invaluable experience performing so successfully at international events and being able to observe a variety of puppetry ideas and techniques - it compensates strongly for the lack of formal puppetry training in Australia. We made a strong mark on the international puppetry stage, attracting interest from festivals in France, Greece, Norway, Poland, and New Zealand. And we proved to be a well organised, friendly group, helping each other in very stressful conditions. And we also had a lot of fun. None of this would have been possible without generous sponsorship from South Australian Youth Arts Board, S.A. Department of Arts and Cultural Development, The Australia Council, Malaysia Airlines and Living Health.



Above: Wojciech Pisarek with two of Carouselle's puppets



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE — INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

The Australian Centre of ITI is a performing arts information service that promotes international exchange. The following is reprinted from the ITI NEWS ROUND-UP, the Centre's bi-monthly newsletter. For further details on these items or other ITI services contact: 8A/245 Chalmers Street, REDFERN, NSW 2016. Tel: (02) 319 0718. Fax: (02) 698 3557.

National Performance Conference, 1-3 Nov., Melbourne, Vic. Will feature information sessions, plenaries, masterclasses, workshops, performances, screenings 'hypotheticals' and more. Scheduled to coincide with the Melb. Festival, it will progress with issues raised at the first conference in 1994 and focus on 3 main themes: Asia & Australia, New Technologies & The Performer & the Writer. Sue Wallace will be presenting a session on New Technologies.

ASSITEJ World Congress, 1-8 Oct, Rostov-on-Don, Russia. Includes a festival of international performances for Young People.

Artrage, 21. Sept-12 Oct, Perth, WA: a n annual festival of new & innovative arts. Artrage offers a high level of assistance to participating artists.

Awesome, 2-8 Dec, Perth WA: Perth's 1st International Children's Festival aimed at 8-12 yr olds. Will include performances, workshops, & visual feasts, based at the Subiaco Theatre Centre. Co-ordinated by Gary Chard.

Melbourne Fringe, 29 Sep-20 Oct, Melbourne: an open access festival presenting the work of innovative & independent artists.

Handspan Theatre appointed David Bell as the new artistic director. David was previously working with the Queensland Theatre Co. as freelance director.

Spin FX: made up of puppet & visual artists, Bob Daly & Kalyna Flowerpott has been invited by the Lahore International Puppet Festival in Pakistan to prepare the festival grounds prior to the event in Oct. Bob & Kalyna worked with the Lahore Festival organisers in 1994, installing an entrance way to their puppet museum.

Stowaways, the acclaimed production created by Philippe Genty with an all-Australian cast will tour to France, beginning with a nine-week season in Paris.

Professional Development Grant: The ACT Arts & Cultural Development Unit offers assistance for ACT artists to attend a conference, seminar or course of specific value to their careers. Applications should be lodged

with ACDO at least 15 working days before a decision is required.

Partnerships for Excellence, UK is the focus of the British Council's revamped facilitating & initiating scheme. Priority areas include the arts & New Images projects. Priority will be given to professional exchanges in the area of contemporary arts practice & staff/student exchanges.

Theatre of Nations 1997, Aug-Sep, Seoul, Korea: is looking for expressions of interest to perform at the festival. The convenors are looking for work that has already generated a high level of respect in its country of origin & is artistically unique. The biennial festival will be held in conjunction with the ITI Congress, & 2 other festivals.

Theatre Beyond Words, 30 Sep-2 Dec, Perth: is a mime, visual & movement metaphors workshop with director of HUSH School of Mime, Kroszta Bodonyi.

National Playwrights Conference, 22 Sep-6 Oct, Canberra: annual event organised by the National Playwrights' Centre, looking at scriptwriting for film, radio & theatre. It will feature masterclasses, craft courses for writers, play-readings, forum discussions & a marathon viewing of plays.

Festival of Contemporary Arts, 2-20 Oct: held at the same time as the Performing Arts Market, will feature cabaret, video, multi-media, virtual imagery and much more. Expressions of interest sought.

International Meeting on Artistic Education, 27 Sep-4 Oct, Charleville-Mézières, France: production, exhibitions & concerts will enable schools to share their work & results of recent research. Masters from traditions in which theatre is still taught by transmission from master to disciple (Bunraku, Kabuki, Wayang Golek) will run workshops.

International Festival of Puppet Theatre, 11-22 Sep, NY, USA: presented by the Jim Henson foundation & the Joseph Papp Public Theatre. Focus this year is on contemporary, sophisticated puppetry & a section 'Just for Kids'.

Images, 1-9 Nov, Arnhem, NlDs: International object, visual & puppet theatre festival with particular emphasis on productions in which different disciplines come together.

International Puppetry Festival, 1-10 Nov, Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso: This year's International Festival of Theatre and Marionettes will include activities, exhibitions, performances & seminars by & for women working in the performing arts in West Africa.

Curtains Up! is an Asian theatre for young audiences publication. It encourages the networking of theatre for young audiences organisations in Asia & provides information on events, festivals, groups etc

I've got the grant! Now what?, Oct, Brisbane: A practical workshop by the QLD Community Arts Network for individual artists. It will cover revising & monitoring your budget, becoming an employer, being auspiced,

insurance, contacts, copyright & acquitting your grants.

Making your dialogue work on stage, 2 Nov, Perth: One day workshop with Heather Nimmo and theatre director Leith Taylor for writers with a draft playscript or well developed outline. Focus will be on enriching the texture of the dialogue and shaping characters out of language. Deadline 22/10/96.

**For details of ITI information,
PHONE 02 9319 0718
or FAX 02 9698 3557**

FESTIVAL DIGEST

Unima receives the International Festival Digest, which is getting to be too big to reprint in this magazine. If you will be overseas, and would like information about festivals in a particular country or at a particular time of year, please contact the secretary, Dennis Murphy.

LETTER FROM FINLAND

Dear UNIMA Australia,

What an incredible week I have had at my first UNIMA congress and festival. I will talk at length about the congress at a later date - for now, what I have seen: I came to Europe hoping, expecting to see some of the most innovative, mind-blowing theatre I have ever seen. On the whole I have been surprised to find most of the work presented is of a very established traditional kind. The pick of these that I have seen are the Bulgarian State Puppet Theatre, VÁRNA with a play of lights and shadows - lyrical and technically excellent - a beautiful ballet of hands and bodies with clever illusions; CHAOZHOU JINSHI of China - a very traditionally styled piece done with delicate and exquisite 3D puppets developed from a shadow theatre form - spectacularly skilled. And from Finland, NUKKETE TEATERI VIHREÄ presented Aladdin and the Magic Lamp. This was performed with beautifully designed rod style puppets.

Now my ultimate puppet experience at the festival: FIGUREN THEATER TÜBINGEN of Germany - "Night Visions" - an evocation of French writer Max Jacob who died in a concentration camp in 1944. Although it sounds heavy, this is black comedy at its finest. The most accomplished piece of puppetry I have seen for some time. A masterful synthesis of performer/puppet, light and sound-score. Without words the content is very strong, complex and accessible on many levels. It is totally engaging, and moving. Bravo Frank Soehnle cast (solo), designer and co-director!!

Regards,

Mary Sutherland

SNUFF PUPPETS

by Pauline Cady

Under Everyone's Skin is Bones

The bare bones

Snuff Puppets started in Canberra in 1988 as part of the outdoor spectacle wing of SPLINTERS INC, and experimental theatre company. In 1992, after touring extensively around Australia with Splinters, we decided to go it alone, moved to Melbourne and started a new company, Snuff Puppets Inc. Our roots have always been firmly in mediums other than puppetry - street theatre, experimental and environment based theatre, and more recently in the local band scene where the Snuff Puppet Band makes regular appearances. I suppose having a fairly narrow understanding of what puppetry is led us away from identifying ourselves as puppeteers. That plus the inevitable prejudice in audiences who assume that puppet shows are only for children.

Our inspiration for using puppets and puppetry in our work comes from many different sources; cartoons, the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the work of the Welfare State, from La Claca (in a show that drew its inspiration from Miro's paintings), carnivals in South American countries, the Mexican Day of the Dead, Russel Hoban's novel *Ridley Walker*, the personification of abstract concepts from mediaeval times, and classic magic tricks.

When we started we found that there is not much of a tradition in Australia for the use of giant puppets, outside roving and processional performance, or in spectacle or fire events. This led to a misinterpretation of what our puppets are for. We wanted to construct a troupe of giant puppets who are like actors, performing different characters in each show. And invent a Snuff Puppet World for them to inhabit.

Our puppets are rough but oh, what a power of life resides in them. Their patched and homemade skins are a wordless reproach to the smooth, technologically engineered surfaces of the '90s. Our puppetry style is very rough and that is what we like about it. We appreciate the intricacy and delicacy of the manipulation of smaller puppets; all styles of puppetry are alike in striving to create tangible, believable life in the creatures that we animate. But as people we come from a Western tradition of individuality, of lack of tradition. Our puppeteering style reflects this. It is haphazard, individualistic. It has been a perplexing struggle to work out exactly what our puppets are for; who they are and how to give the audience a context for our work. We are big on the element of surprise, the illusions we use are more about magic tricks and scary gags than trying to conceal strings or operating mechanisms.



**Left: Snuff Puppets -
Family Portrait
Photo by Andrew Mack**

Puppetry is to us a means of being able to get away with being naughty. It's a way to make theatre accessible to a larger audience. It seems like a religion sometimes, we create god or gods in our own image and then believe in them. We create life that can't die (and death that can live).

It's an act of subversion and an act of love.

We are hopelessly, head over heels in love with our puppets.

We try to challenge our own and society's perception of good and bad, ugly and beautiful, clever and stupid.

We see so clearly that implicit in puppetry is the potential for social comment, political expression, humanism, irreverent and fearless satire.

We look for ways to reach right down to an audience's bones, bypass those mild fleshy differences; race, age, gender. We are looking for the elemental human, the one you can frighten, awe inspire, arouse, overwhelm with joy.

We seek ways to make our puppets integral to the theatrical expression of the company and to expand the possibilities of puppetry by performing outdoors and indoors, for children and adults.

To us, no other form of entertainment can possibly compare to live performance.

If you were in my skin.

It's a question of the never ending struggle between skin and bones. In our bones we are all the same, but in our skins we are utterly different. It is our skins that eternally keep us separate. It is questions of skin that cause wars and misunderstanding. It is fear of eventually becoming bones that unites us.

It seems to me that a quiet revolution is taking place in street performing; street theatre cross art form performances, puppetry, visual and physical theatre forms are blossoming. What all of these things have in common is that they don't rely on language as the primary method of communication. Perhaps this is a reflection of Australian society, of multiculturalism weaning us away from one dominant culture.

Pauline Cady

*Anne Waldron Neumann is a Melbourne writer who is looking for puppeteers interested in producing her puppet play, **The Magic Puppet Theatre**. A synopsis is printed below. The show would require 2 forms of puppetry - the cardboard toy theatre and 3D puppets of some kind. Anne can be contacted on 03 9499 1271, or write to her at: 148 Marshall St, Ivanhoe, Vic, 3079.*

THE MAGIC PUPPET THEATRE: A PLAY FOR CHRISTMAS

Synopsis

The single setting is the interior of wicked Herr Drosselmayer's toy shop and the snowy 19th century German street before it. The shop's toys include an old-fashioned puppet theatre, whose cardboard-cutout puppets are almost the size of the animated puppets outside it. Each time Herr Drosselmayer grudgingly demonstrates his theatre to wondering children, including orphans from the orphanage, some of them are turned into cardboard silhouettes and trapped inside the theatre in ever more threatening scenes. When the Bishop comes to investigate the mysterious disappearances, the theatre shows a cruel dungeon in which children shrink from fluttering red-paper flames and capering imps. The bishop deplores Drosselmayer's cardboard captives, as that long-ago bishop, the good St Nicholas, miraculously resurrected the dismembered children from the wicked butcher's barrel of salted pork. But, the Bishop sighs, the age of miracles is past. Children must make their own miracles in these crueller times, by imagining for themselves how they would like their story to end.

When next we see the mysterious puppet theatre, the children must have imagined a happier ending as the bishop suggested because this time the scene shows them celebrating Christmas. We soon learn this happy ending is real: the children have indeed returned. But Herr Drosselmayer has been missing since Christmas day! Asked to mind the shop till he returns, the orphanage's matron unlocks the door and recoils in distaste. The puppet theatre shows the dungeon again and, encircled by flames and imps, an evil wizard who strongly resembles Herr Drosselmayer. "Such gruesome scenes will never do for children" Matron cries. And she plucks the cardboard wizard from the theatre and throws it into the stove.

The Magic Puppet Theatre helps its audience reflect on theatrical illusion. Do events inside the toy theatre seem less "real" than those outside it? Can children - especially children who readily consume truly gruesome scenes on television - be empowered, like the children in the play, to take charge of their media consumption, and to imagine and enact happy endings in their own lives?

PUPPETSCOPE

After completing a NEIS course in May this year, I paid the \$70 business registration fee to Mr Kennet and established PuppetScope. PuppetScope offers early childhood inservice training, puppetry performance and storytelling.

I am focusing my work in kindergartens and child care centres (if there are any left after little Johnny Howard's budget cuts). Combining my background in both puppetry and child care, I run training in storytelling, child drama and Kodaly music programmes with child care workers. My puppetry storytelling sessions are informal interactive ones for children aged 0-5 years called *Esme: Duck Day* and are suitable for child care centres, kindergartens and community days/street stuff. This is still in development and will be available at the end of the year and as part of the Polyglot touring programme early next year.

I have recently finished performing *There's a Moon in my Room* with ONE TOE (a.k.a. Jenny Andersen and Kym Tonkin) and hope to feel encouraged enough by the market, ie the audience, to create a new two-hander show. I would love to establish a large enough "market" to be able to contract other artists to perform while I develop new work.

Further down the track, I am interested in collaborating with other independent artists to form a Co-operative of Independent Artists - the CIA. The aim of the CIA would be to facilitate the successful production of independent artists' work by providing freelance administration, marketing, bookings phone etc. You know, you are putting together a show and you *should* do another mailout, or make some media calls, or negotiate with the venue or festival but your brain is in OVERLOAD. The CIA is all a bit of a pipe-dream but who knows? The acronym is catchy. If the idea of a CIA interests you, give me a ring.

My big dilemma now is to decide whether or not I want to do birthday parties. Apparently there is a market but how do you cope with hyped-up children coming off sugar highs?

Denise Rundle
PuppetScope
Ph: (03) 9529 4092



Denise Rundle with Esme

AT THE COAL-FACE

A SHORT RADIO TAIL

BY PHILIP MILLAR (PUPPET VISION)

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of freelance puppetmaking is being presented with unusual and novel requests for unconventional puppets. My most recent experience of this was in the form of a disembodied wagging tail. The tail features in a short story filmed by the ABC TV Children's department, to go to air sometime in October. The tail had to appear to converse with a variety of people in a wide range of settings. It was important for the tail to have a life of its own and to appear in settings where it would be impossible to hide a puppeteer.

From these demands, it was clear that some form of remote control was necessary. Initially I thought of using cables but the producer wanted to be able to show the puppet being handled and carried without being tied down. The most obvious solution was radio-control.

Given the show's limited budget, I was unable to splash out on a huge new multi-channel system with numerous functions. Instead I used a simple two-channel system. I made a fairly straightforward side-to-side wagging mechanism basically identical to those toy segmented snakes that seem to wave about by themselves. Using two servo motors to control movement at the tip and the base of the tail it was possible to for "s" shapes with the tail, wiggle just the tip or create a broader wagging motion.

As the tail could only move in one plane it was important that it be held correctly in relation to the camera in order for the movement to read. During shooting it became apparent

that the more subtle movements were effectively invisible. Big and bold was the go.

Purist puppeteers who cringe at the current obsession with animatronics and computers will be delighted to hear that the radio-controlled tail was only used for a few shots in the end. I made a basic rod-controlled duplicate tail (in a fraction of the time) for "stunt" shots which proved to be both more expressive and more versatile than its expensive double. The puppeteer for the shoot, Richard Mueck, was able to rig the rod-control version to do most things the director requested. The radio-controlled tail spent most of the four day shoot in its box. Never mind. It was fun to build and certainly adds variety to the folio.



Right: Hänschen by W. Tietz (1993)
Figuretheater Regenbogen
Photo by R. Jäkel

PUPPET/PUPPETEER CONVENTIONS

by Jenny Andersen

A few months ago there was an article in the *Bangkok Post* about traditional Thai puppet theatre - *hun lakhon lek*. The article focused on what it says is the last remaining traditional troupe, led by Sakorn Yangkiawsod and made up almost entirely of his family members. The puppets are similar to Japanese Bunraku puppets in that they are small, and are each manipulated by three puppeteers, to create realistic and refined movements.

The most interesting aspect of the piece to me was the explanation of some of the performance conventions. Unlike puppetry in many other cultures, the Thai puppeteers are brightly and luxuriously dressed, and are an integral part of the performance. They have highly stylised facial expressions and movements (based on traditional Thai dance), unique to each character in the *Ramayana* epic, which is the only story performed. The *Bangkok Post* quotes Sakorn as saying "The audience is able to discern the puppets' emotions from the puppeteers' expressions.... when the puppets are angry, we too express anger. This is how we bring the puppets to life."

It struck me that this is a convention which I haven't seen before. Of course, there are plenty of productions where the puppeteers are visible, unmasked, or even not dressed in black, but conventional wisdom seems to be that puppeteers should keep their faces and movements as neutral as

possible. Emotion is internalised and channelled through the puppet. Of course, when the puppet dances the puppeteer has to create the movement in their own body first, but the audience isn't meant to notice.

Maybe there is scope for lots of different 'puppeteer-etiquettes'

I think many puppeteers would agree that an intense, but subdued focus helps to direct the audience's concentration (and eye line) on the puppet. However, it doesn't necessarily follow that a more noticeable puppeteer detracts from their puppet. Last year for example, I saw the Polish Wierlizen Theatre perform a piece with wooden dolls. The dolls had very little scope for movement, but they were invested with a great deal of life and pathos through the puppeteer/actors' quite extroverted performances.

The dynamic in most Western theatre is based on narrative; in what is going to happen next. Although there are 'classics' they are not performed all that much, and there are even fewer traditional stories which are retold in Australian puppetry. In a culture where the same story (the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*) is told in every production, the focus needs to be on the way the story is performed; how well are the puppeteers dancing, what new jokes, songs or pieces of business have been

added? This is closer to our expectations of circus, or classical ballet, or music, but not puppetry. In the June 1996 issue of *LOWDOWN Youth Arts Magazine*, Elizabeth Paterson wrote:

"We were floored to realise that the principles of manipulation that we take for granted, were not the same. There was no emphasis on eye focus, stillness, relationships between characters etc. Rather they seemed to focus on sequences of rhythms and patterns, the choreography of the moving objects and the water."

This year I was performing "There's a Moon in my Room" (by Denise Rundle, Liss Gabb & Peta Murray) to children aged 3-8. We were unmasked, and in full view of the audience. Adults often commented on how expressive our faces were and I wasn't sure how to take this. Did it mean that my manipulation was being swamped by my acting? Some of their remarks were "I think your expressions provided cues for my 3 year old to follow", "Your face did exactly what the puppet's did" and "I liked watching you as much as the puppet". These seem to me to be welcome responses. So, maybe there is scope for lots of different 'puppeteer-etiquettes', any number of which will be accepted by the audience so long as they have an internal logic within the context of the play.

(P.S. For my next production the puppeteers will be dressed in black fish-net body stockings.)

REVIEWS

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

by Company Skylark

Original script adapted by Gilly Farrelly from the novel by E.B. White.

Directed by Christine Anketell

Alexander Theatre, Monash University

Wilbur is the runt of the litter and therefore is doomed to die a death of starvation via the ethos that the strongest survive. Fern steps in and rescues the young piglet, taking over the role of mother as she wraps him in nappies and takes him for walks in her toy pram. And so begins Gilly Farrelly's truthful adaptation of E.B. White's wonderful tale of Charlotte's Web.

The central themes of family and place, with particular emphasis on mothering, have been clearly explored in Skylark's production. Whilst relatively simplistic, the script seemed to take on board these main issues and only lost sight of them at the very end. Rather than having only one of Charlotte's children remain to take her place and the rest blow off in the wind in search of a new home, the director has left us with the image of all the baby spiders clinging to the web. Thus the cycle which began with Charlotte arriving in the barn on the back of a gust of wind is not completed. Charlotte's death in the novel is also the birth of a new life cycle and this doesn't quite ring true in this production.

Whilst the adaptation seemed to be quite successful I felt the production itself did not quite lift to the same standard. Overall the pacing seemed to be one of the main problems. This was highlighted by the decision to have nothing occurring on stage whilst Charlotte spun her web of literary wisdom in the dark. So on several occasions we waited in darkness for what seemed like an eternity (probably 20 seconds). Generally the set, designed by Caroline Jones, appeared to be quite functional although the clumsy scene change from the barn to the fair was laborious. Young audiences are not very forgiving when they are expected to sit and watch people in semi-darkness go about a set change that takes several minutes.

Other technical problems included very inconsistent sound levels where characters were occasionally speaking over music and nothing could be understood. Catherine Mann, as Charlotte, used a microphone and it worked fantastically; the superior status of her character, with the voice coming from what seemed like anywhere in the sky, added clarity and significance to the role. Unfortunately,

when the sheep, the most insignificant character, spoke with an equally amplified voice, it destroyed any chance of maintaining poetic significance.

The design of the three puppets that portrayed Wilbur at different ages was at the root of some of the staging problems apparent within this production. I did not envy Matthew McCoy as he appeared to struggle with Wilbur who was very difficult to move about the large stage. Only when Wilbur responded to the call of the web to be RADIANT did the puppeteer take the opportunity to really extend and explore the movement possibilities of the puppet. The radiant dance, with the help of Jeff Evans' music score, developed a strong rhythm and suddenly this pig was moving about the stage with great zest and energy. Suddenly we were looking at SOME PIG. Unfortunately, once the music stopped, Wilbur returned to his usual lazy static sitting with the occasional effort to struggle to walk.

The performances varied throughout the show with Mary Brown playing a delightful Fern, although there were some moments when I felt she was not totally committed to the emotional moment that her character was placed in. Catherine Mann doubled as a very well spoken and polished Goosey who was forever mothering almost anything that moved and constantly returned us to the essential maternal nature of the story. Sean Masterson was disgusting as the all farting, burping, stinking Templeton the rat. Templeton's exploits at the fairground in gorging himself on the contents of a rubbish bin delighted the audience and made good use of Chris Paterson's lighting design and Peter Wilson's puppetry direction. Neil Roach played Fern's brother Avery with a childlike enthusiasm that clearly developed the sibling rivalry.

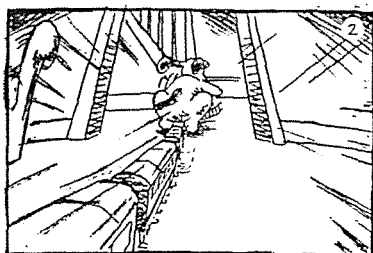
Two scenes appeared to be unwarranted in the show. Firstly, the gum boot and mop dance, whilst it was one of the more energetic and colourful scenes, the decision to move away from the essential elements of the script to include a scene which really struggled to have relevance either in design or narrative content, was for me a major drawback. Secondly, it concerns me that the director was not able to recognise that the audience would

lose interest when two actors sat in two chairs at the front of the stage, in front of the set, and had a friendly chat about whether or not animals can talk. This scene which had Fern and Avery's father seeking advice from a Doctor could have easily been played out in the barn and thus the action would not have come to a halt. Except for a telling line or two about the value of his own profession ("I'm not very good at listening") I still feel the Doctor and his scene should have been left on the cutting room floor. The disinterest of the audience indicated that they probably agreed.

Unforgettable moments in the show included the child in the audience who said "it's

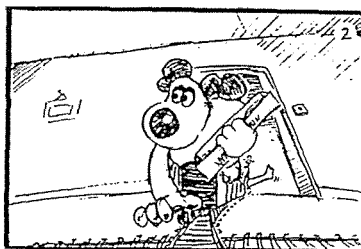
a bunny rabbit, no I think it might be a dog" when seeing Templeton for the first time. And then there was the mother, obviously in tune with the maternal themes of the show, who during Charlotte's dramatic death scene crawled across in front of her two children and said "Do you want a sandwich? Do you want jam or ham and cheese?" Theatre for young people is without doubt the toughest arena for any performer, especially when parents think they're at a beach picnic or watching a video. Maybe success would be assured to the first company who designs a show that includes a pause button.

Craig Gillespie



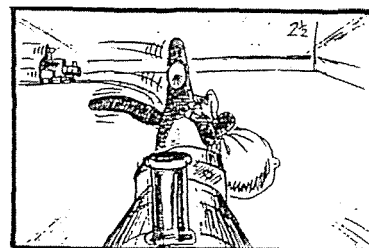
Sc 64 Shot 1. LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY. NIGHT

WALLACE P.O.V. OF GROMIT ENTERING HALL
TRAIN DISASTERS AROUND WALL AND WALL
PASSES CAMERA



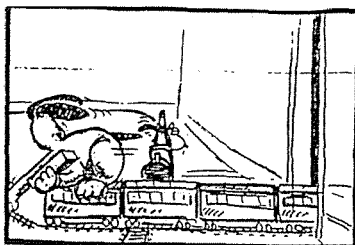
Sc 65. Shot 1. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

GROMIT SPEEDS OUT FROM HALLWAY INTO THE
DINING ROOM. LOOKS TO FRAME RIGHT.



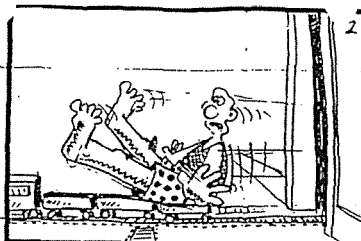
Sc 65. Shot 2. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

PENGUIN COMES HURLING ROUND THE BEND
TRIES TO BRAKE.
ALMOST GROMIT'S P.O.V.



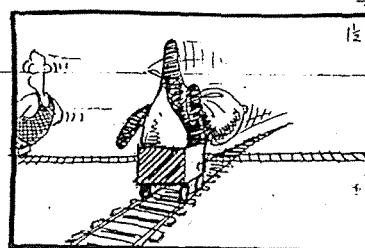
Sc 65. Shot 3. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

GROMIT CROSSES PENGUIN'S TRACK,
PENGUIN ABOUT TO COLLIDE WITH TRAIN.



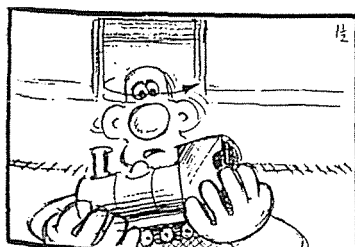
Sc 65. Shot 3 continued.

WALLACE TRIES TO GRAB PENGUIN...



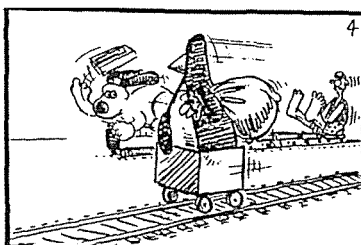
Sc 65. Shot 3 continued.

...BUT PENGUIN TRUNDLES ON ENGINELESS.



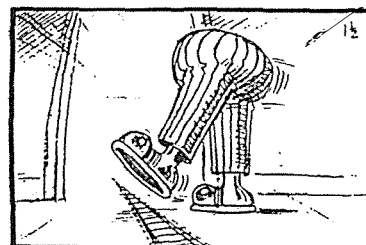
Sc 65. Shot 4. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

WALLACE HAS GRABBED THE ENGINE
TRACKING SHOT.



Sc 65. Shot 5. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

GROMIT'S TRAIN CURVES AROUND TO COME
UP PARALLEL TO PENGUIN'S TRACK.
GROMIT RUNS OUT OF TRACK AND DISARDS



Sc 65. Shot 6. INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

PENGUIN'S P.O.V. TROUSERS STEP ON HIS
TRACK. (WERE HEADING FOR KITCHEN)

TRACKING SHOT

Storyboard from The Wrong Trousers by Nick Park

DANTE ... THROUGH THE INVISIBLE



Reviewed by Janet Dalglish

Inspired by Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy
Created by Mac Gudgeon, Ken Evans, Carmelina Di Guglielmo and Lizz Talbot
(with dramaturgical assistance from John Romeril)
Director/Designer: Ken Evans
Lighting Design: Philip Lethlean
Composer: David Chesworth
Sound Design: Peter Jago
Performers: Winston Appleyard, Michael Butcher, Carmelina Di Guglielmo,
Andrew Hansen, Lizz Talbot.
Set/Puppet Construction: Trina Gaskell, Craig Hedger, Rob Matson,
Michele Spooner, Mary Sutherland.

I truly wish I could find more positive things to say about Handspan's production of *Dante ... Through the Invisible*. But I have to 'fess up to finding it an evening (it felt longer) of almost unrelieved boredom, frustration and eventually migraine.

On the positive side, the set and suit character designs were very powerful, although I would have liked to just once see the set in full light. The performers worked extremely hard, and Michael Butcher's performance as Dante was wonderfully focussed. There were some extraordinarily strong visual images - Butcher being "unborn" was a marvellous moment - but unfortunately, such moments were few and far between, and marvellous moments do not make a show.

I gather from the programme notes (read after the show, on my strongly held principle that a show should not need to be explained by notes beforehand) that the play relates to the inner spiritual journey of Dante; yet we were never shown the inner emotions of Dante. When played by Butcher, he was simply a tortured victim of the characters he met along the way. When played by a puppet, he became totally impassive, a helpless bystander to the events around him. It was like watching the dissection of a dead frog - it's a bit of a shame for the frog, but really, who cares now that it's dead?

The only chance we had to observe Dante's real inner agony was at the end, after the nightmare journey is over, and Dante weeps and laughs for his experience. Sadly, by then I'd lost interest in the character, and the headache was clamouring more loudly for my attention.

In fairness to the show's creators, there were sections of the soundtrack which included speech, and it may well have been that these sections helped to give a context to the events on stage. Unfortunately, the soundtrack was so poorly mixed that the dialogue was swamped by the music and effects, and rendered incomprehensible. I've no doubt that directors and others familiar with the words could understand it, but to the untrained ear it was just a blur. And it was just way too loud. It started loud, it stayed loud, and it just didn't have anywhere to go but EXTREMELY LOUD - hence the headache.

In fact, the whole show was technically disappointing. Phil Lethlean did his usual brilliant stuff with the lights - but I found it a bit too brilliant. There was some clever use of lamps attached to rods and manipulated by the puppeteers, but at times the lights were shone straight into the audience. As a contact-lens wearer I found it physically painful, and literally couldn't see the show for the next five minutes while my eyes adjusted. It seems like pretty basic stagecraft to me, to make sure you're not blinding or deafening the audience beyond the threshold of pain, but perhaps I'm getting too old for theatre - give me rock 'n' roll any day.

The most disappointing aspect of all was the puppetry. While the designs were strong, for set and puppets alike, the puppets were used more like sculptures than characters. It was sad to find that the most involving and moving character was Dante in his last five minutes, played by the actor. Only slightly less involving were the suit characters brought to life as dancers in a grotesque ballet. But a long way behind came the puppets. Static, impassive, unmoving and wooden - the kind of "pterodactyl-on-a-stick" puppetry which leaves me cold.

There was no sense of the relationships between Dante and the two recurring puppet characters who accompanied him on the journey. The programme explains that these two are his guide, the poet Virgil, and the love of his life, Beatrice, but they were ill-defined and meaningless as personalities, and didn't move me because I didn't understand what they meant to Dante.

The programme notes express the hope that this production will "resonate within the 'image bank' of the mind and psyche of our audience". Somehow, I feel almost guilty that it didn't, and that I didn't understand what the show was about until I read the programme notes, and that I didn't feel anything at all for Dante during his journey. But at the end of the day, the responsibility for how well a show communicates (whether it be emotions or information) lies fairly and squarely with the company. You've probably guessed by now that in this particular instance I don't think the company succeeded.

THERE'S A MOON IN MY ROOM

Reviewed by Michele Spooner

Venue: Adelaide Fringe Festival, The Banana Lounge

Presented by DUCK & CO with ONE TOE

Written by Peta Murray, Liss Gabb & Denise Rundle

Directed by Heather Monk - 1st production

Liss Gabb - 2nd production

Puppets by Rod Primrose

Performed by Denise Rundle, Kym Tonkin and Jenny Andersen

Although I could find nothing to suggest why the venue was named 'The Banana Lounge' it was to my taste - old and atmospheric. Exposed rafters, wooden liner board walls and poles strategically placed throughout the room which encouraged you to be innovative in your decision making about where to sit. This was not a proscenium arched venue but the environment was sympathetic and the set was appealing. Meg's bedroom was how you'd expect a mother to decorate her daughter's bedroom and the window doubled as a shadow screen.



There is going to be a birthday - Meg's birthday. Birthdays happen over time and time is the concept we will be dealing with. Well when the Moon sneezed and blew itself and the stars out of the sky, and the clock sprouted wings and flew after it, time not only stopped it disappeared. The sun was left holding the bag and unless everything was put back into perspective Meg was not going to get to celebrate her birthday.

Time means different things when dealing with an age range of 3-10 and the script dealt with it beautifully. It was further enhanced by the very honest and energetic performances by Kym, Jenny and Denise, although sometimes I wondered about the singing. Puppetry skills levels were high and the show in all its aspects had integrity. Well done

Left: "Wenn ich ein Riese wär" by Peter Kirsch (1984), TANDEM THEATER.
Photo: Gerhard Amos

A few months ago I sent out a questionnaire to puppet designers and makers, asking them about their work - their aims, influences, working methods and conditions. Philip Millar has written an article about his work in this issue, so I have printed his responses as a 'companion piece'. Other responses will be published in forthcoming issues, so if you have a questionnaire, you can still send it to me. And any comments on the interviews are also most welcome. (Ed.)

PUPPET DESIGNER AND MAKER QUESTIONNAIRE

with Philip Millar of PUPPET VISION

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

The designer/builder must strike a balance between the visual and kinetic elements to create a functional object which serves both the overall design and the puppeteer

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?

The script is the foundation upon which a show is built. The puppets are the physical manifestation of the ideas within a script more than they are illustrations. Work created purely through workshoping (ie "out of the puppets") I believe runs the risk of being too formless and lacking a strong basic structure (unless the script is also being workshoped).

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

As I have at various times performed in all these roles, this is a bit tricky. Above all the puppet designer/maker must create functional rather than purely decorative objects. It is often a challenge to present work which is finished enough to look impressive and unfinished enough to accommodate the inevitable changes which are requested.

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

Ideally all people concerned should be aware of the enormous possibilities offered by the puppet and also understand the limitations. Given clear guidelines, unreasonable demands are less likely and the process of creating the object is appreciated.

Is this ideal ever achieved?

"To dream the impossible dream ..."

Given the turbulent nature of theatre and those involved in it there are almost always changes, surprises, mistakes and so on. It's human and puppet nature.

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

Money, money, money. And audience. A puppet I make for TV will generally be worth two or three times its theatre counterpart and will be seen by several thousand more people. However, the dynamics of live performance are extremely difficult to match on TV.

What are some of your favorite materials?

Rubber and leather, lycra & Friendly Plastic: for durability, flexibility, stretchiness and versatility. My favourite materials vary from project to project because I love to experiment.

Who have been some of your main influences?

Jim Henson & Frank Oz have been profound influences through the Muppets. Gerry Anderson for Captain Scarlet and Thunderbirds. Ron Mueck for his amazing sculpting & fastidious attention to detail

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

I have several "dream projects" in development, each one focussing on a particular favourite subject, style, sense of humour and so on. The dream is to see them into production.

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?

More money goes a long way to making a designer/maker happy. Being able to inject something of yourself into a project and to be given due credit is nice. Clear direction from the relevant decision makers equals efficiency. As I mentioned earlier, perfect working conditions tend to exist primarily in dreams.

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

I am pleased with the dinosaur puppets I made (with Priscilla Johnson and Andrew Harding) for "The Lost Planet" on Star TV, Hong Kong. From initial rough sketches to final puppet the character was clear and expressive, the job paid well and the producers were happy.

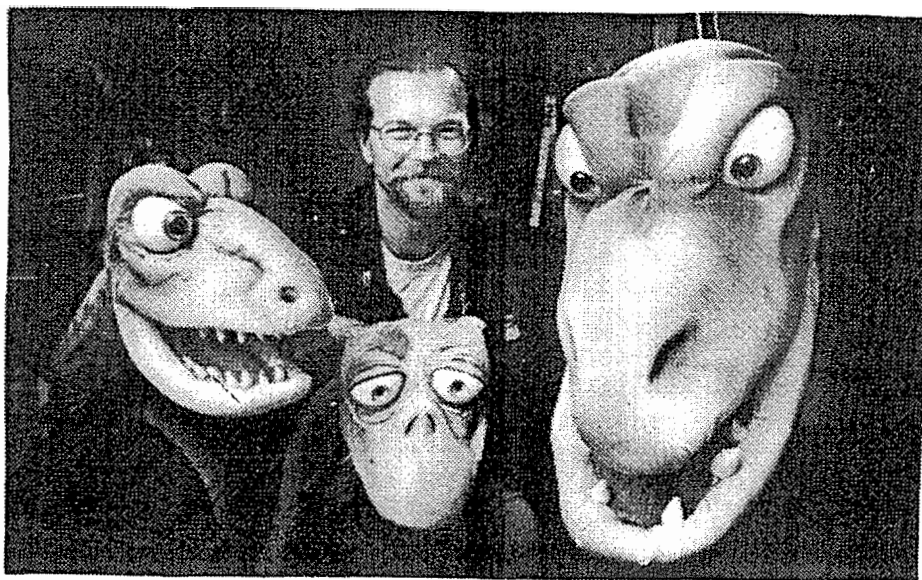
What was your 'training' in this field. Do you think there are adequate training opportunities available to aspiring designer/makers? Do you have any suggestions?

Training in this field tends to be a combination of make it up as you go along, nicking good ideas when you seen them, talking to lots of other makers and paying attention to criticism from puppeteers who have used your puppets.

There is only on the job training as far as I can see. As in most things, nothing can substitute for experience. Would-be makers must actually be making something in order to learn, rather than just express a desire to do so.

Other comments, of any nature?

Don't get me started: the devaluing of the word "puppet". For some reason the word "puppet" is seen as too limiting or childish or old-fashioned by too many professional practitioners. I love puppets. I love the images created by the word. It has Magic. In comparison, I find the term "visual theatre" redundant. I design and make puppets in a range of styles and material for a range of media. Everything that I make is best described by the word **PUPPET**.



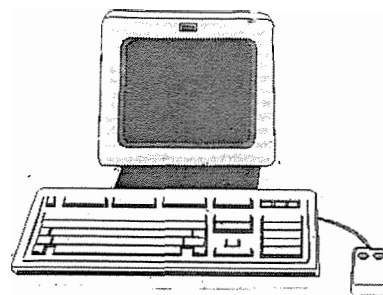
Philip Millar with dinosaur puppets. Photo - S. Scluter

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The next issue will contain a full list of members' names and addresses. Please ensure that Richard Hart has your current details.

CYBER-GOSSIP

with Janet Dalgliesh



Well, another couple of months have gone by, and I blush to confess I haven't been back to visit Rose Sage's wonderful Puppetry Home Page through sheer lack of time. But I've been keeping up with the puppetry debate on the mailing list, through thick and thin.

The Olympics was a favourite topic, with many theories about how the inflatable dancing puppets used in the closing ceremony were built. One very observant puppeteer pointed out that if you watched the video in slow motion (glad he has so much spare time), you could see the fans underneath each puppet keeping it aloft. I was questioned intensely about the inflated cycling kangaroos - mainly by puzzled Yankees who couldn't see why so many Australians were embarrassed by them.

We've had some very interesting information passing back and forth on casting Neoprene, which I'm afraid I phased out of fairly early, makers' jargon flying dangerously close to my poor frazzled brain.

I've also had contact with a new puppeteer in New Zealand, by the name of Ray Cooper. He's very keen and enthusiastic, and I've been promised that when I scrape up the money for the airfare I've got a great place to stay. That's the advantage of being in touch with the international puppetry community - I now have places to stay in the Catskill Mountains, Canada, New Zealand, LA, New York, etc.

The big news on the Internet is that we've established a weekly puppetry chat channel. To get onto a chat channel you'll need the Internet Relay Chat software suitable for your computer. To find the puppetry chat channel and meet the gang, the server address is:

`irc.eel.ufl.edu`

When you log onto the server, type `/join#puppetry`, and there you are! The channel only runs once a week, one Thursday at noon, Australian Eastern Standard Time (ie Melbourne in winter).

The most regular contributor to the channel, and in fact the guy who set the whole thing up, is a fantastic puppet maker by the name of Steve Axtell. In addition to his own Home Page, which is worth a visit, he has a page dedicated to information about the chat channel if you need any more help. From there you can visit all of Steve's other pages.

I'd like to welcome Lorrie and Harry Gardner to the cyber-puppetry community - their company's been around for ages, but they've only recently got their web site set up. It's great to see Australian puppeteers getting in there. Both Lorrie and Ross Browning now have excellent Home Pages for their puppet businesses, although they couldn't be more different if they tried! It's interesting how a web site can reflect the owner's unique style.

Addresses:

| | |
|---|--|
| IRC server for the puppetry chat channel: | <code>irc.eel.ufl.edu</code> |
| Steve Axtell's IRC Web page: | <code>http://www.axtell.com/pupirc.html</code> |
| Ross Browning's Home Page: | <code>http://www.odyssey.com.au/uspecies/puppetease</code> |
| Gardner Puppet Theatre Home Page: | <code>http://www.infoweb.com.au/gpt/</code> |
| Janet Dalgliesh : | <code>email jdalhism@netspace.net.au</code> |

HISTORY

WEBB'S ROYAL MARIONETTES THE AUSTRALIAN PUPPETS THAT VISITED RUSSIA IN 1883 by Richard Bradshaw

Charles Webb was arguably the most important Australian marionettist of the Victorian era. He was born in England in about 1842, and had worked with the travelling marionette troupe of his grandfather, Charles Middleton. The Middletons were a celebrated family of marionettists in England and, later, in the U.S.A. The puppets of great-grandfather Middleton had appeared at Bartholomew Fair in the 1830's.

Charles Webb married a Miss Wiggins in 1868. She had been invited to tour with his grandfather's company for the good of her health and worked as a singer. Webb had frequent arguments with his grandfather and he and his wife were finally dismissed, together with a young cousin of Webb, Richard Barnard. The three found work for a short while in Ireland and Devon with Springthorpe's Marionettes, but the company folded in early 1873. Later that year the Webbs were recruited by William Bullock as members of a second company of his Royal Marionettes which began touring in America under the management of McDonough and Earnshaw. The show consisted of Fantoccini, Minstrels and "Little Red Riding Hood".

In early 1874 when McDonough and Earnshaw broke away from Bullock, Charles Webb and his wife went with them. A new set of puppets had to be made because Bullock's agent, McLaren, had won custody of the others. McLaren formed a new company, which was later joined in the U.S. by Bullock's English company (which now included Barnard) so that in April 1874 there were three Royal Marionette companies each playing "Little Red Riding Hood" at the same time in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Brooklyn!

Charles Webb and his wife came to Australia from the U.S.A. in 1875 with McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes. They left that company in Adelaide later that year and in December they joined Smith's Combination Troupe for a tour of New Zealand. Charles Webb's marionettes were part of a variety show and presented several "fantoccini" acts. This show played in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland a month or so before the Royal Marionettes played in those same cities after their Australian tour.

The Webbs returned with Smith's company to Sydney in March, 1876, and appeared with another variety company in Sydney and Melbourne. When this company in turn embarked on a N.Z. tour the Webbs remained in Australia where they were joined by a third member of the original company from the U.S.A., Charles Trotter. They formed Webb and Trotter's

Royal Marionettes which soon became simply Webb's Royal Marionettes, although Trotter was with them until at least 1885.

Webb and Trotter's Royal Marionettes opened in Melbourne in mid-1877 with a show based on Bullock's original one, including "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Babes in the Wood". They advertised that they were "the original manipulators of Marionettes" that had been in Melbourne in 1875, but did not receive the same glowing reviews. They moved on to Bendigo and Ballarat where they were at pains to dissociate themselves from a company called Levity's Royal Marionettes which had provoked a riot there in April!

Two days before Webb's Sydney season in 1878 an Italian Marionette Theatre had appeared, but with limited success because the text was in Italian.. Webb warned the public that the "Original Italian Marionettes" were "frauds, and in no way connected with the Original Royal Marionettes". The Webbs also played at the 1878 Sydney Exhibition and the second half of the year was spent on tour in New Zealand. In 1879 they were again in Melbourne and at the Sydney Exhibition. Frank Fowler had become their Musical Director and was to remain with them throughout their travels until 1884. And what travels they were!

John Phillips, a London friend researching Victorian marionettes, has located advertisements placed by Webb in "The Era" in 1883 which help to trace activities in the period 1880-84. It would appear that in 1879, or early 1880, the company left Australia on its way to England, giving performances in India, British Burmah (sic), Ceylon, Singapore, Suez, Port Said, and Alexandria. I have been able to confirm Ceylon performances in Colombo in April, 1880.

In January 1881 they appeared at the Guildhall, Cambridge as "The Royal Australian and Indian Marionettes", with minstrels, fantoccini and "Little Red Riding Hood". John Blundall has a copy of a program printed for this season. Webb and Trotter are listed as the proprietors. Webb is Director, Trotter is Stage Manager, and Frank Fowler is Musical Director and Pianist. Mrs Melville and Mrs Middleton are vocalists and there is a band. The manager was Mons. A. Thiodon.

Performances in and near Norwich followed. (It is possible that they had chosen to perform in East Anglia because Mrs Webb's mother lived in Maldon, Essex.) Reviews were good, but the lack of further information from England at this time leads me to suspect that they soon sailed to the Continent.

In Europe they apparently gave shows in Germany, France, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia! In June (1996), Penny Francis was in St Petersburg and made contact for me with a researcher. Anatoly Kulish, who has confirmed the performances there. These were in Lent's Museum in the first months of 1883. (Winter!) In April they moved on to give shows in Moscow and planned to be back in England by July.

[It's worth noting that Thomas Holden's Marionettes were at Lent's Museum in St Petersburg at about the same time, 1882-3. The Holdens had worked with the Webbs in the U.S.A. but had left the Royal Marionettes before the Australian tour. In the meantime Holden had become a celebrated marionettist in Europe, and I have two French books on puppet history which each devote a chapter to Thomas Holden. He also appears in Bil Baird's "The Art of the Puppet"]

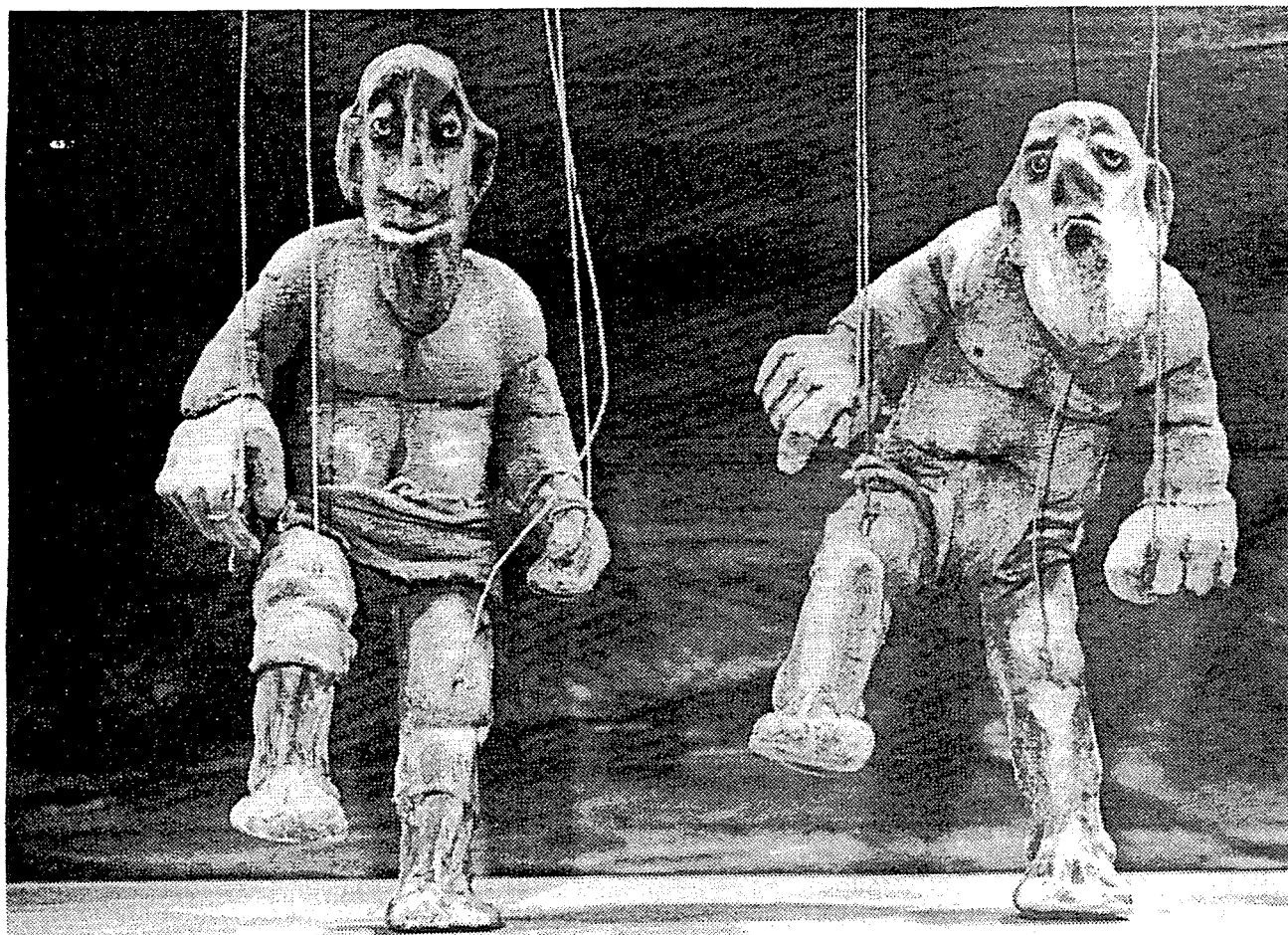
Mr and Mrs Charles Webb, Charles Trotter and Frank Fowler left London at the end of 1883 on the "Lusitania" bound for Australia, arriving in Adelaide six weeks later. Four days later they opened in a theatre leased by Tommy Hudson, with the pantomime of "The Beauty and the Beast" now added to the repertoire. (Hudson was later a business manager for Melba.) Webb's Royal Marionettes became Hudson's New Surprise and their new business manager, Henry

Santly, had been a fellow passenger on the "Lusitania". Although she was not listed as a passenger, Webb's sister, Miss L. Webb was certainly with the company when it left Adelaide and from then on was with her brother to the end.

Hudson toured the company to Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, Maitland, Brisbane and places north but the tour was marred by tragedy. On 24 April, 1884, halfway through the Sydney season, Mrs Webb died. She was 40. Performances continued as usual. Her first names don't even appear in the death notice, but I've reason to think they were "Mary Anne".

In September 1884 they began an intensive tour of New Zealand in Auckland, reaching Dunedin by the end of February, 1885. They then sailed to Tasmania, where they gave performances in Hobart, Launceston and Latrobe reaching Melbourne in May, 1885.

Webb's Royal Marionettes were in Brisbane January, 1886, then Toowoomba, but Charles Trotter seems to have left by then, with others who were with them in New Zealand. Miss L. Webb continued to tour with her brother, Charles, and was travelling with him when he died of a liver complaint in Java on 4 October, 1887, at Probolinggo. He was 45. When a death notice eventually appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald it had been placed by F.H. and R. Lyons, cousins of Webb living in Sydney.



Das Tapfere Schneiderlein by Jürgen Wicht and Klaus Frenzel, after Grimm (1994)
Puppen bühne des Mecklenburgischen Staatstheaters Schwerin
Photo - Siegrid Meixner

PROPOSAL FOR A UNIMA PUPPET FESTIVAL 1998

By Dennis Murphy

Many members are looking to UNIMA to do something about organising a puppet festival. In answer to that I am proposing a modest Unima festival in keeping with the Unima spirit. That is, it will be more on a puppetry community basis and presented as a promotion of the Art of Puppetry and a chance to get together and see each others' work, not to be seen solely as an opportunity for puppeteers to pick up a booking. It will have to be 'our' festival or it won't happen. It will have to be 'funding proof', in other words it will happen with or without arts funding. A conference on puppetry will be a part of it.

LOCATION

Cootamundra is 400km from Sydney, 500km from Melbourne and an hour and a half's drive from Canberra. It is serviced by train on the main Sydney-Melbourne line. Cootamundra has a catchment area population of 38 000 drawing from Young, Temora, Harden, Gundagai and Junee.

PROPOSED DATES:

22-29 September 1998, last week of School Term 3 and first weekend of NSW school holidays. This will allow opportunities for school shows to be presented. July 1997 overall deadline to ensure puppeteers are free.

UNIMA-Australia Secretary, Dennis Murphy, to be Festival Director. Workshop leaders and performances to be chosen by him. Shows sought are to be a mixture of school, pre-school, adult, and general public shows. Also need workshop leaders.

Community workshops - Making puppets
 Theatre workshops
 Manipulation workshops
 Performance workshops

Masterclass workshops for puppeteers - Unima to apply to Australia Council for funding overseas puppeteer (Henk Boerwinkle?). Failing this, an Australian tutor. Some funding ex-Unima Scholarship fund(?) Conference funding may also be sought.

Evening venue as festival club for puppeteers to gather and chat and as venue for experimental and Potpourri performances.

"Puppets in the Park" day - with wet weather alternative venue.

Unima to ensure Australia Council presence at the festival, inviting them to speak about applying for grants.

ADMINISTRATION:

Cootamundra Tourism to provide administration including booking shows into schools in the area; organising venues and accommodation. We will have an administrator paid for by Cootamundra. They will apply for funding from Tourism Board, sponsorship and Festivals Australia.

PAYMENT to puppeteers:

ALL box office and grants to be pooled into a general fund. Payment will be a share of the profits based on points earned for giving performances and workshops. The number of performers involved and the distances they had to travel may also be taken into account. This will mean a certain amount of entrepreneurial risk to participants as they will be responsible for their travel and living costs without knowing how much money they will eventually receive for their efforts. But they will not be paying for venues and advertising like at a fringe festival. This system of payment will ensure that the festival will go ahead with or without arts funding or sponsorship.

AT THIS POINT we are seeking feedback from you, the Unima members, about the proposal. This is a big project and we must ensure that the overwhelming MAJORITY of members are behind it. Otherwise we are wasting our time.

cont/...p.7

UNIMA SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Unima holds \$6500 in its scholarship fund. The money is currently in two separate accounts and will be combined into the one term deposit, to be rolled over every six months.

There will be a call for applications in the December magazine, but in the meantime, here is some information about how the fund is to be administered:

Who is eligible for a scholarship?

a) Applicant will demonstrate a body of work that indicates a commitment to puppetry.

b) Applicant must be an active member of Unima of at least two consecutive years duration. In the event of a group benefiting from the scholarship, all recipients must be Unima members. However, only applicants making the submission need to have been active members for two consecutive years. Members of the Unima executive are ineligible to apply.

c) Applicant must submit:

- Plan of future development
- C.V.
- Budget
- Repayment schedule
- Report to Unima Australia on completion of planned activity.

What amount is available?

An initial amount of \$1000 will be offered in the form of an interest free loan.

What can it be used for?

It can be used for travel expenses in Australia or elsewhere, course or workshop fees, bringing a specialist to work with individuals or groups, and any other proposals that are articulated in writing, meeting the eligibility criteria that the Executive deems worthy.

How often will it be available?

Annually. A decision regarding a policy for emergency applications is yet to be determined.

Financial accountability?

a) Applicants' proposed budgets

b) Applicants' contract of repayment schedule

c) Thinking of ways to increase the scholarship principal amount.

d) Review after a suitable trial period.



**Right: Carouselle Theatre's
*Don Quixote***