

1997 Issue \$4.95

# PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



*the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media*



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# PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

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issue no. 3

Independence Day .....	2
100 Years of Ubu <i>John Bell, Massimo Schuster and a Photo Gallery</i> .....	5
Amy Trompeter <i>by Arnold Wengrow</i> .....	8
Lee Breuer <i>by Stephen Kaplin</i> .....	14
The Puppets Take Manhattan! International Festival of Puppet Theater #3 .....	18

## THEATRE

Presenting Adult Puppetry <i>with a special introduction by Norman Frisch</i> .....	24
A Divine Collaboration <i>by Jovonna Van Pelt</i> .....	30

## FILM

Pinocchio <i>by Justin Kaase</i> .....	36
--	----

## MEDIA

Eduard Bersudsky's "Sharmanka" <i>by Andrew Periale</i> .....	34
Rajasthani Puppet Video <i>by Peter Manuel</i> .....	36
Puppets at the Summer Olympics <i>by Vince Anthony</i> .....	38
Puppetry Awards <i>by Danny Burge</i> .....	40

*On the cover:*

The Miro-Man by Harry Kramer from exhibit at the International Festival of Puppetry (see article, page 20)

photo: credit

*Back cover:*

From The Red Book, a film by Janie Geiser; will be shown at the International Festival of Puppetry (see page 18).

photo: Janie Geiser

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*Editorial*

# Independence Day:

*changing paradigms in American puppetry*

The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the rise of the conservative right in American politics, though radically different processes, have a common thread. In both cases the message to artists has been: "Look over there! See that federal support for the arts? Wave 'bye-bye'!" In this country, the process has caused a lot of suffering and not just for artists. People on welfare, people on farms, people on the streets... a lot of folks will be waving a lot of money good-bye in the coming years as the mood of the country shifts. In particular, the gutting of the National Endowment for the Arts is presenting both artists and cultural institutions with new challenges. As pitifully as this situation reflects on the state of American politics, meeting the challenge will certainly make us stronger in the long run.

The changing scene in federal arts support may, in fact, be largely responsible for the new paradigm in American puppetry: forge new partnerships, connect with new audiences, build new bridges to the old ones. This new attitude is completely in line with the national movement back toward "community" represented by the new popularity of, for example, co-housing and communitarianism.

In addition to our recognition of the 100th anniversary of the premiere of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, this issue is full of new paradigm puppetry—artists like Amy Trompeter (page 8) and Lee Breuer (page 14), who are endlessly building new bridges in their work—between cultural traditions, between artists, between artistic styles. Arts presenters, too, are creating new partnerships— with new audiences, new artists, new sources of funding (see "The Puppets Take Manhattan", page 18 and "Presenting Adult Puppetry," page 24). Though this may not seem like a radical concept, Vince Anthony (director of Atlanta's Center

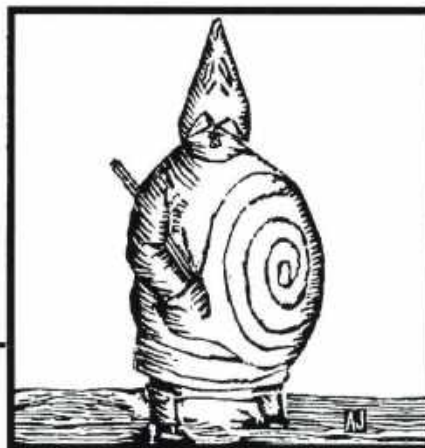
for Puppetry Arts) sees it as a sea change. "The model in the '70s was people who'd been drawn to puppetry earnestly working on the techniques by which to express themselves in the medium. In the '80s a lot of new artists were drawn to puppetry from other disciplines and there was a lot of wild experimenting going on—a lot of 'pushing the elastic boundaries'. Now in the '90s artists are interpreting more—really trying to communicate with their audiences."

Though the NEA money which made it easier to develop risky (at times even obscure) work is largely gone, it has left a legacy of artists who are equipped to continue without it. Whether or not they will is still an open question.

When we look at how many Russians now long for the good old days before perestroika, we get a quick reminder of the difficulties of real independence. Humans are an ingenious species. I remember hearing Buckminster Fuller address this, pointing to a man who, in need, turned a floating piano crate into a life preserver. That does not imply that a piano crate is necessarily the best design for a life preserver. We tend, though, to cling to what works, whether it is the best solution or not. The NEA surely kept many artists afloat in its time. Now the budget cutters, be they anti-art fascists or merely sincere Conservatives, are prying our fingers loose from our make-shift life rafts.

No doubt some will drown, some will thrash about until they happen on a new bit of floating debris, and still others will put time and energy into designing a more efficient life raft. But for those who've used their time afloat in a process of growth and development, it's Independence Day: the time has come to jump in and swim straight for shore.

—Andrew Periale



"King Ubu" by Alfred Jarry



100 Long Green Candles, or,

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY, UBU

by John Bell

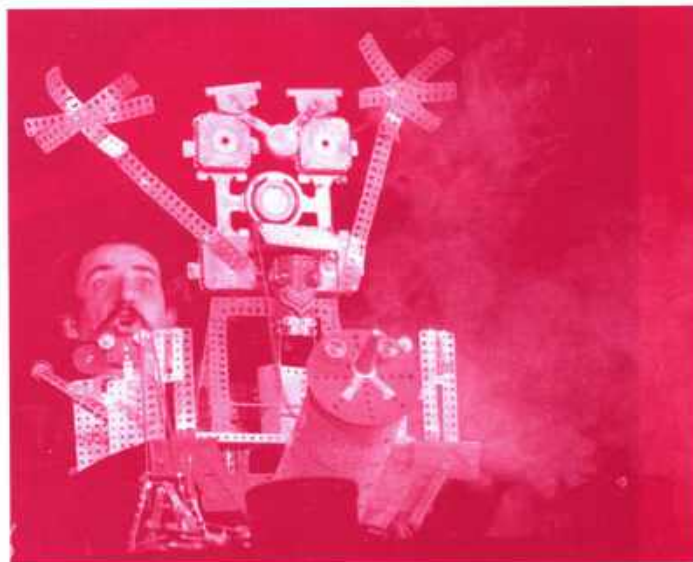
for the exhibit brochure accompanying "Puppets and Performing Objects in the 20th century" at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts as part of the International Festival of Puppet Theater. Reprinted with permission of the author and the Jim Henson Foundation.

In the late 1880's an eccentric French youth named Alfred Jarry got together with his school-boy friends in Brittany to perform an outrageous and absurd puppet epic in their homes. These shows, featuring a bizarre king named Ubu (a satirical caricature of the boys' teacher), were performed with marionettes characteristic of centuries-old northern French puppet traditions. By the time he was twenty-three Jarry had migrated to Paris, where he became involved with the *Théâtre d'Art*, dedicated to the new movement of Symbolism, and its concrete representations of abstract ideas. *Théâtre d'Art* director Aurelien Lugné-Poe produced all kinds of new plays, from Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* to Maurice Maeterlinck's brooding, puppet-influenced gothic dramas. Symbolist painters and poets made theater there as well, combining paintings, music, and poetry into new forms of performance art. Jarry, still obsessed

with his puppet play, persuaded Lugné-Poe to direct a new production of it, and on December

10th 1896 *Ubu Roi* was performed. In the puppet tradition of comical satire,

Jarry's Ma and Pa Ubu are an amoral and ruthless, but also comic and human couple, who take over Poland in the manner of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The manner in which Ubu was performed riveted Parisian attention. The actors wore masks and rode hobby horses, objects were endowed with symbolic powers, and the whole play took place in a single, surrealistic landscape that included a bed and a fireplace through which characters made their entrances. Before the show, Jarry himself addressed the audience to prepare them for the experience. "A few actors," he said, "have agreed to lose their own personalities during the two consecutive evenings by performing with masks over their faces so that they can mirror the mind and soul of the man-sized marionettes that you are about to see." While most of the spectators, accustomed to symbolist productions incorporating poetry, dance, paintings, and music, relished the show, some audience members were shocked and outraged, perhaps most of all by Jarry's puppet-based aesthetics: objects on stage were as important as human actors.



*Ubu Roi*, directed and performed by Massimo Schuster. Puppets designed by Enrico Baj, a well-known Italian painter and former protégé of Marcel Duchamp.

photo: Brigitte Pougaise

Although the precedent-setting production of *Ubu Roi* was only performed twice, its influence was, and still is, remarkable. Jarry continued the Ubu cycle with a marionette theater he made with his artist friends, and a hand-puppet version of Ubu he made for Émile Labelle, one of the most active turn-of-the-century puppeteers in Paris. In succeeding decades *Ubu Roi* has maintained its influence, inspiring many remarkable productions including those by Swedish puppeteer Michael Meschke and American puppeteer Amy Trompetter. Catalan director Joan Baixas incorporated Ubu-inspired puppets and masks designed by Joan Miró for Teatre De La Claca's production *Mori El Merma*.





*Ubu Roi, by Hystopolis Productions, is an offering of the 1996 International Festival of Puppet Theater*

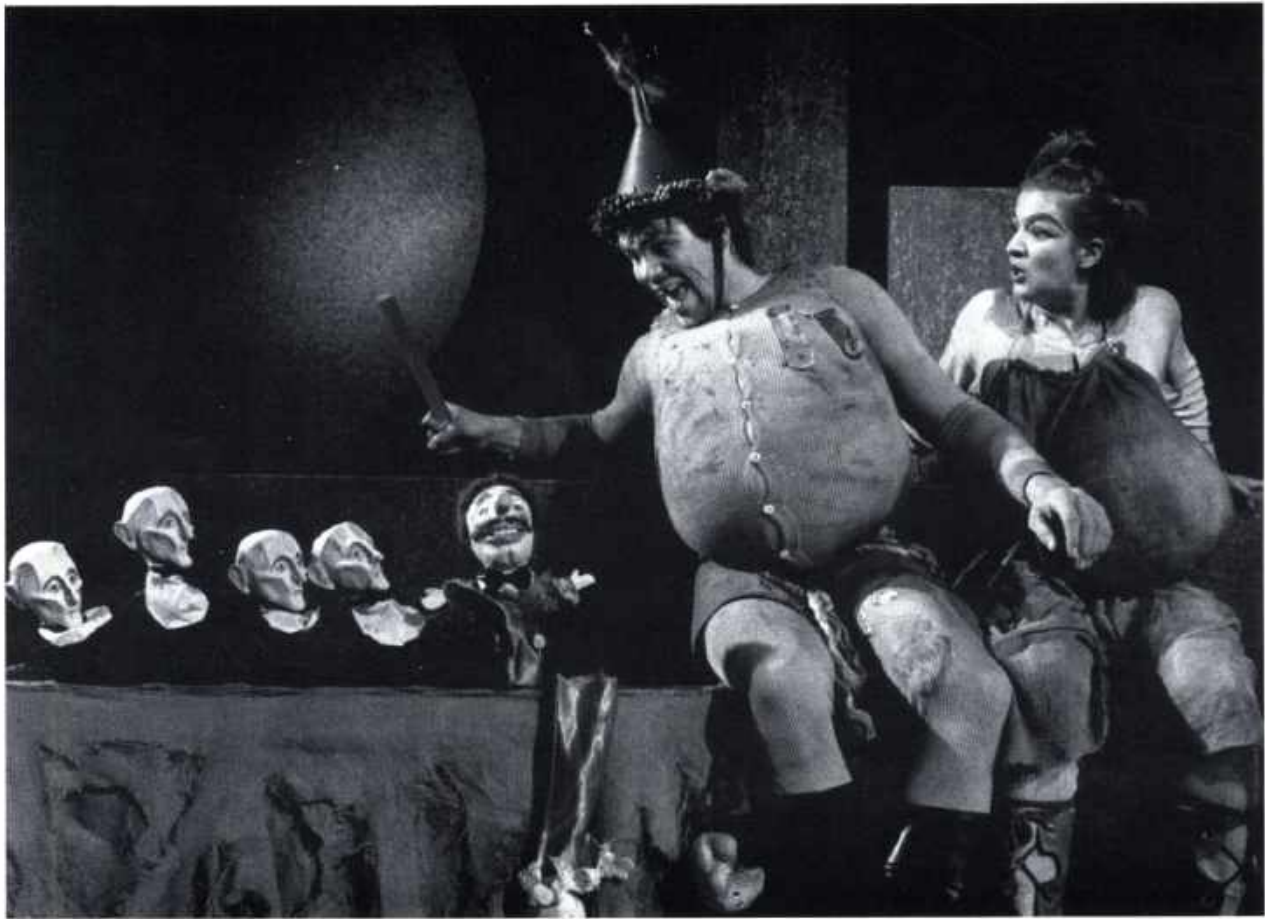
photo: James S. Chlopek



*"My Ubu Roi was first performed at the festival Les Semaines de la Marionette à Paris in 1984. It toured extensively through 36 countries in Europe and Asia. The last performance shall take place next September in Sarajevo"*  
—Massimo Schuster

photo: Brigitte Pougeoise





*The 1988 production of Ubu by Boston's Beau Jest Theatre. Libby Marcus was mask/puppet designer and co-directed the production with Davis Robinson.*

photo: Roger Ide



*Ubu the King at Barnard College;  
Amy Trompetter's students in rehearsal*

photo: ©Dolores Lusitana



*Michael Meschke's Ubu Roi,  
with Sweden's Marionetteatern,  
is one of the best known Ubus  
of modern times. It was  
remounted in 1988 for the World  
Festival of Puppetry in Japan.*



photo: B. Bergstrom



# What 'Pataphysics' is, is not easy to say

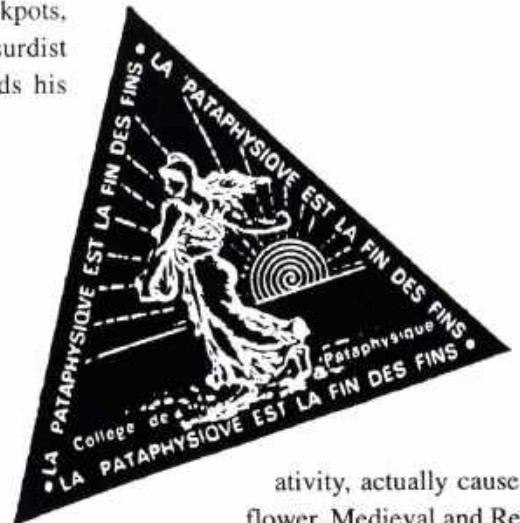
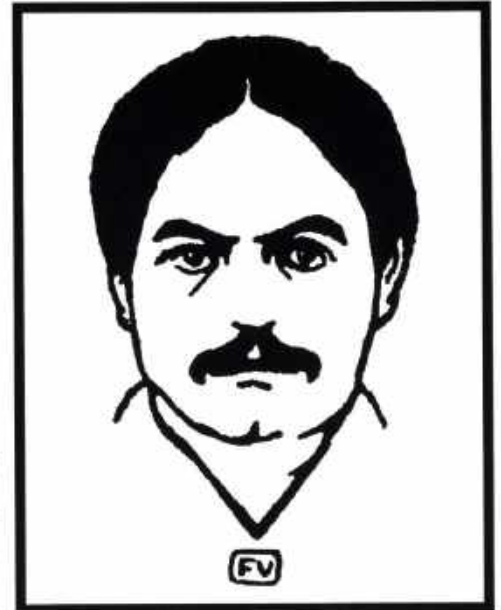
Massimo Schuster is a puppeteer, anarchist, and member of the College of Pataphysics. Along with the photos he sent from his 1984 production of *Ubu Roi* was a copy of his book *Ave Marionnette*. It is both a history of his puppet company—Arc-en-Terre—a philosophical and political manifesto, and an explication of the science of 'Pataphysics. 'Pataphysics, though it has existed for millennia, was first codified by Alfred Jarry. Obsessed with his first and best-known play and later with its sequel—*Ubu Enchainé*—the volume of notes scribbled in the margins of the two texts eventually formed “an entire system of thought, a sort of philosophy, even a science, of which Père Ubu was at the very center.”

What 'Pataphysics is, is not easy to say. Schuster refers to it as “the science of imaginary solutions, concurring symbolically with the features of things described by their virtuality.” It is a science of alternative universes, where the world one imagines is more important than the world one can describe in logical terms. It is the science of life as one dreams it.

The College of 'Pataphysics was created in Paris on May 11, 1948—50 years after the publication of the definitive edition of Jarry's book *Gestes et opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien*. Among the college's highest dignitaries—the transcendent satraps—are Jacques Prévert, Max Ernst, Eugene Ionesco, the Marx

Brothers, Joan Miro, and Man Ray. Perhaps the most central and elucidating act of the college was the creation of a new calendar. The Perpetual 'Pataphysical Calendar has 13 months of 29 days each. Each week begins on a Sunday, in order that the 13th of each month falls on a Friday. The 29th of the month is called *l'hungyadi*. The months bear such names as Ha Ha, Decapitation, Shitr, and Spiral. Every day of the year is either a celebration of a Saint (Lewis Carroll, for instance) or a Festival (of copulation, for another instance).

But lest you think the College of 'Pataphysics is merely an eccentric theme park for exceptionally creative crackpots, we must say that, despite the absurdist overtones, Massimo Schuster ends his monograph on a sincere and fascinating note: among the subcommittees of the College is one called Ou Li Po—Ouvrier de Litterature Potentielle [workshop of Potential Literature]. More or less mathematical constraints are placed on the creation of a work of fiction. [George Perec, for instance, wrote an entire book without using the letter “e.”] These constraints, argues Schuster, far from inhibiting cre-



ativity, actually cause it to flower. Medieval and Renaissance art patrons made many very detailed compositional demands of the painters they commissioned, yet this did not prevent the greatness of, say, Giotto or Leonardo Da Vinci; quite the opposite. And so there now also exist workshops of potential painting, potential detective novels, potential cooking and the latest addition: the workshop of potential puppets.

—by Andrew Periale



# Amy Trompetter Makes Puppets and Theatre Grow

by Arnold Wengrow

It's hard to say whether Amy Trompetter is a puppeteer who is also a scenic designer or a scenic designer who is also a puppeteer. It might be more accurate to call her a designer, director, and dramaturg who orchestrates a total theatre of language, gesture, and image. Like Gordon Craig, she employs *Übermarionetten* to seek the mythic meaning behind a text.

Ask Trompetter to define herself, and she says simply, "I feel like a theatre worker." Her response bespeaks her commitment to what she calls "people in the street." Since her college days in the ferment of the 1960s, Trompetter has seen theatre as a force for social change and community consciousness-raising.

Her activist philosophy and her puppetry were honed during a twenty-year association with Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, during which she rose from apprentice to assistant director.

Since the mid-80s, Trompetter has moved easily among the different worlds of academic theatre, professional theatre, and theatre in the community. She has also moved among different world theatres, from Europe and the U.S. to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, adding a complex international texture to her work. "Other cultures have a lot to offer American theatre right now," Trompetter says. "I want to expand the definition of theatre."

She's doing that currently with three new children's puppet operas for the Arts at St. Ann's series in Brooklyn Heights. Expanding audiences for opera as well as enlarging theatre's definition is the goal. *Ferdinand Faithful*, based on a Grimm's

fairytale, premiered last May with school performances sponsored by the Orchestra of St. Luke's Children's Free Opera project. The second and third operas will follow over the next two seasons.

Trompetter's collaborators for *Ferdinand* were composer Greg Cohen and librettist-lyricist Steve Friedman. Cohen has worked with Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed, Woody Allen, and Tom Waits. Friedman, co-founder of Modern Times Theatre in New York, is a former resident playwright with the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

Trompetter grew up in Dayton, Ohio, in a Catholic home which encouraged her interests in visual arts and theatre while nurturing a concern for social justice. Her father, an executive in the family plumbing and heating business, was a frustrated portrait painter who channeled his talents into designing bathrooms and shower curtains. Her mother, Trompetter says, was "one of those extremely organized persons" who worked at a credit bureau. "She could actually draw quite well, but we didn't find that out until later." Trompetter clearly manifests her parents' organizational skills as well as their aesthetic sensitivities.

While studying at the University of California at Berkeley, Trompetter volunteered at a Catholic Worker storefront in Oakland. There she became involved in street theatre as a means of neighborhood activism. After getting her undergraduate degree in humanities, she went to New York for graduate work at the Bank Street College of Education. She was

headed towards teaching, but searching for something that would bring together her concern for people in the street with her strong impulses towards painting, sculpture, and theatre.

The connection came when she saw Bread and Puppet Theatre. "It was at the time of the Vietnam War, and three people had immolated themselves in protest. One was a Catholic Worker. That impressed me very strongly. I saw a piece Bread and Puppet did called *Fire*, which was dedicated to those people. It was done without spoken words. It had seven titles, which were the days of the week. It went from daily life to the horror of war and then self-immolation. It was done in a little tiny loft with people squeezed together. The piece was a revelation to me. It expanded the definition of theatre for me. I saw that theatre could encompass so much that the form could be radically different from what I knew up until then."

Trompetter's first involvement with Bread and Puppet came during the 1967 Angry Arts Festival. "Peter Schumann was doing a piece in which these gray ladies grew and were then shot down, interspersed with a Bach cantata. There was a call for volunteers to build the puppets, and that was my entry." She continued to apprentice with Bread and Puppet while writing her master's thesis on making theatre in the community, then joined the company for an association that lasted twenty years.

In 1971, Trompetter moved to Maine and formed her own company, Blackbird Theatre, which toured in the U.S. and





Ferdinand Faithful

*"I had the idea of using string manipulation on a single-sized puppet..."*

photo: © Dolores Lusitana



Ferdinand Faithful

*"I want to strike something deep in the spirit..."*

photo: © Dolores Lusitana

Europe. Study and travel in Asia further enlarged her vision of theatre and puppetry. "In Japan I fell in love with the scenics in Kabuki. You have the possibility for the scenery to be an element that can contribute strongly in its own voice. The scenery is used as a character. In the Japanese theatre, one wears the locale. The robe is also the garden in which the event is taking place. Character and prop and scenery become intermixed. Puppetry is flexible enough to allow that."

Attracted first to puppet theatre for its forceful visual means of telling stories, Trompetter has recently become intrigued with text as her starting point. She has also added to the density of her style with other performing arts. "All the theatrical elements are so rich and juicy for my desires right now. I want to fill my palette. My primary strength is the visuals, then the concept, then putting it together, assembling all the parts. I like the collaborative richness of having a choreographer, a writer, and a composer."

Trompetter came to opera-making by accident. Arts at St. Ann's invited Peter Schumann to produce a puppet *Barber of Seville* in 1983. Schumann didn't like Rossini, but suggested his former assistant director Trompetter might. "The pleasure of finding a visual way to express that *buffa* text opened the door," she says.

"I am experimenting with how the text comes in. One way is to start with the visual and then find the text, letting the visual dominate and provide the dramaturgy. Then the text becomes an element equal to music and sound. Another way is with these operas. There the text is a given. I try to find a language that can parallel the text, not be dominated by it. I don't take the position that the visuals should illustrate the text. The visuals go along with it in a parallel way, in a liberated way, and express the text as they best can do it."

Trompetter's approach to *The Barber*

exemplifies her efforts to illuminate rather than illustrate text. When Count Almaviva sings of his love for Rosina, he holds a red heart on a stick while balancing on a tightrope. When Rosina dreams of the Count, her arms and legs detach from her torso and float in the air. When Don Basillio proposes a devious scheme, his tongue flows from his mouth to entangle everything on stage.

Music critic Edward Rothstein, writing in *The New York Times*, said Trompetter found "a shape that would be welcome in our biggest houses." Noting that opera with puppets thrived in 17th and 18th century Europe, he said, "The balletic dance of limbs and objects, the presence of multiple forms of the same character gave the production an ecstatic element. Love was something that disrupted the body and mind, sending it into another state; surprisingly, this suited Rossini's lyricism perfectly."

In *Ferdinand Faithful* Trompetter employs a similar vocabulary. Ferdinand seeks to marry a princess who grows from small to medium to huge as her power grows. A giant materializes as a head filling upstage center, with arms extending from stage left and stage right. Ferdinand's nemesis, the evil Ferdinand Unfaithful, is a flat Javanese-style puppet who appears in profile with distorted buttocks. "I wanted his behind to show every time," says Trompetter. "There were six relief puppets for him. The multiplication of figures showed that he was ganging up, using magic arts to get what he wanted."

In a 1992 production of Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses* at Antioch College, Penelope was incarnated as a chair, a bed, and a house "I wanted to show her "stuckness" as the wife who waits. She's a face mask in a chair which moves across the stage when she sings her aria of waiting, so you see her plight. Then she's a house with Venetian blinds that open, and we see the suitors inside the window,

which is inside her."

Opera is not the only venue for Trompetter's expansive view of theatre. In the Bread and Puppet tradition of political engagement, she creates what she calls community interventions: pieces about migrant labor in Maine, forced relocation in South Africa, campesino workers in Nicaragua. "I like to move between community work and professional theatre. Bread and Puppet taught me that you can make good theatre with people who don't normally do theatre. Working in community, you come across talents and materials you can work with in the way we think of jazz. You strike a theme and then improvise."

Trompetter achieves her distinctive style through layering and juxtaposition. An anthropologist at heart, she mingles Western puppet and theatre traditions with techniques from Noh, Kabuki, Kyogen, Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, the folk drama of Africa and Latin America, and European carnival. She captures different aspects of a character's personality with multiple figures. She mixes puppets of different sizes, types, and dimensionality. Small flat, profile characters appear alongside towering figures with human actors inside. Hand puppets join cloth rod-puppets. "Marionettes are my least favorite," says Trompetter, "because they take so much virtuosity. The delight of a marionette is to imitate human movement, which is less interesting to me."

Massive, misshapen heads turn Trompetter's human-inhabited figures into menacing totems. Their gnarled appearance is the key to Trompetter's aesthetic. "I want to strike something deep in the spirit," she says. "If it's not refined and drawn out in detail and smoothness, there's room for the eye and the soul to respond, the way you see a ruin. You read into it what you need to. There's room, there's air around, there's space, there's negative space, it breathes. So there's an ambiguity,





Ferdinand Faithful

*Ferdinand Faithful with nemesis,  
the evil Ferdinand Unfaithful*

photo: © Dolores Lusitana



Ferdinand Faithful

*Choreographer Patty Hernandez  
with cast members in rehearsal*

photo: © Dolores Lusitana

where a person can come to it as an active observer. As a theatre viewer, I'm not interested when everything's spelled out or when it's completed. The incomplete is, for me, the attraction."

Trompetter's startling contrasts in scale derive partly from her delight in the process of puppet-making, partly from her investigations into world theatre. "I'm an avid builder, so I love to build large, medium, small, and use all those in one context. The liberty to do that was demonstrated to me, I'm sure, in my early work with *Bread and Puppet*, and then by looking at performances of carnival in Europe, with giant puppets and small hand puppet shows and fairground theatre. In Asia, the scales aren't mixed in the same production, but in picking from among these different traditions, the vision that these things can co-exist is clear."

Trompetter keeps her hands on the actual building of her puppets, although for a large project, such as *The Barber of Seville*, which required over 100 figures, she enlists assistants. "Even if I design them in advance, I actually design them as I build. I feel that the clay dictates what they should look like. I might do sketches and a storyboard to get the whole picture and a feel for the vision. Then, with the materials, I might totally abandon those ideas as other, better ideas or images come. Working with the clay is the strongest moment. To find the sculpture, that's my touchstone. That's the one realm that I reserve. The basic language for me is the sculpture."

In harmony with her "rough theatre" aesthetic, Trompetter sticks to simple means of manipulation, "I keep things very low-tech. The attraction is the continual opportunity to change. The piece can evolve right up until the performance and even through performance, so the piece can dictate its needs and remain flexible to changes."

Technology, she finds, is confining, rather than liberating. "You can get locked in. You might say this doesn't work, but we've spent several thousand dollars on the mechanism, so we're stuck. Or if you throw it out, that's difficult as well. I like to admit at the beginning that we're in an exploration to find the piece, and it's going to reveal itself as it goes. We don't know what it is, so it's going to tell us, and remain open to it through the process."

The Princess in *Ferdinand Faithful* is an example of Trompetter's process of exploration. "I radically changed her whole body five days before we opened. First of all, she was the wrong puppet. I had the idea of using string manipulation on a single-sized puppet, and we worked so hard to get that. But it just so clearly didn't work. I was using a puppet who had been made for another purpose, and that was expediency. She finally said, 'I'm in the other show, I'm the wrong actress.' Time was running short, and then I had the inspiration to have her size change, to go from a little tiny cute princess, to medium size, to the gigantic one who can cut off the head of the king. I let proportion be the definition of her character, I could do it because I was working in low-tech, with cloth and *papier-mâché*."

With *The Barber* Trompetter's choices for manipulation defined the psychological perspectives of the characters. "If Rosina was the adored one, then her floating limbs and dreaminess could be from Count Almaviva's point of view, this larger than life love, this fantasy. Assembling her floating limbs into a giant piece of architecture showed that she was entrapped. You could see her then from her point of view, being stuck in her patron's house. So the manipulation can express the state of character or the dynamic of relationships. At one point, Don Bartolo has a big hand, and she's a tiny little being in the palm of his hand."

For her operas, Trompetter is drawing on myth and fairy tale. "The everyday world is based on rational cause and effect. For me theatre can approach that realm of the unknown or the illogical. One of the gifts this art form can give us is access to areas that we can't know and communicate with in logic and linguistic cause and effect. The liberty, to me, in myth and fairy tales is to explore realms that we don't have commerce with in daily life."

Trompetter has directed and taught scenic design at Antioch and Bates colleges and now teaches and oversees a world theatre program at Barnard College. "I want to bring students a familiarity with world theatre performance from the people who actually perform. I'm bringing in a Chinese opera performer, a Noh theatre actor, and an Indian Kathakali specialist, to present to students these rich art forms that have sprung up in cultures where perhaps the text wasn't the primary dictator of the piece. In Western theatre, the text is the strong and beautiful element, and the visual is quite apt to change in each generation, but in Asian theatre especially, the refinement of the visual has remained constant, along with movement and gesture, until it's perfect. It's such a powerful language."

*Arnold Wengrow is a theatre director and writer who teaches at the University of North Carolina at Asheville.*





Ulysses

*Penelope incarnated as a horse*

photo: Mark Sussman



The Barber of Seville

*The devious Don Basilio*

photo: David A. Korman



From The Barber of Seville

*"The basic language for me is the sculpture"*

photo: David A. Korman

# Animations— the Puppet Theater of Lee Breuer

by Stephen Kaplin

Few American theater directors have been as dedicated to the exploration of the complex interplay between puppet, manipulator's touch and actor's voice as Lee Breuer. While other directors, such as Peter Schumann and Julie Taymor, may make puppets an important aspect of their *mis-en-scene*, none seem as fascinated with the complexities of the puppet's presence on stage as Breuer. In his close to three decades of writing and directing with the Mabou Mines theater collective and on his own, Breuer has made the puppet into a tool for realizing his formalistic, nonmotivational brand of theater; part of his arsenal for deconstructing behavioral language; and a staging device for uniting visual and verbal narrative structures. He has made puppets into a spiritual and literary metaphor that lies at the center of his six-play epic cycle of animal fables entitled "Animations."

This high esteem for the puppet as a dramatic literary form is unusual in this corner of the planet, to say the least. With few exceptions, Western playwrights write their texts for actors—there are no Chikamatsus here. Breuer, in his dual role as author and director, is in the unique position to fuse Asian literary and theatrical technique with Western avant-garde sensibilities and iconoclasm. It is a natural outgrowth of both his Pacific Rim fascination with Asian theatrical forms and his love of Brecht and Meyerhold. Indeed, like Brecht's and Meyerhold's encounter with the classic Chinese theater techniques of Mei Lang Fan, Breuer's original inspiration grew out of seeing a performance of a Japanese Bunraku company at a theater festival in Paris in 1968.

Breuer attempted to capture the magic

interplay between text, voice and puppet that characterizes Bunraku theater in the 1978 production of *The Shaggy Dog Animation*. With no real knowledge of puppetry technique, Breuer had designer Linda Hartinian build two puppet effigies of the main characters to be the focus of what he calls "an eclectic improvisation:"

I tried to recreate aspects of Bunraku puppetry in *The Shaggy Dog Animation*. But it was very confused because I hadn't studied enough... I mean sometimes there's a Bunraku idea, sometimes there's a mask and sometimes you wear the puppet on your back... It was fine and we had a really nice idea... I just didn't know enough about classical technique<sup>1</sup>

Breuer's next play, *A Prelude to A Death in Venice* was an extension of *Shaggy Dog*, expanding on the final monologue of Rose the Dog's human owner and lover, John Greed. The solo on-stage actor, Bill Raymond, operated a puppet modeled to be a cross between himself and Breuer. During the play, the Breuer/Raymond/Greed puppet carried on simultaneous conversations on two voracious pay phones, trying to swing some mysterious business deal before time and quarters run out. The puppet constantly bums change from Raymond, making psychic as well as financial demands on its performing partner and manipulator, entangling him in its own convoluted business dealings. At one point Raymond has to hide John from the police because the puppet has been charging

overseas calls to the local precinct house. In the end, Raymond "kills" the puppet by biting its neck, Dracula-style, before concluding a deal with an equally vampirish talent agent.

The style of puppetry in *Prelude* is modeled after the old vaudeville ventriloquist routines. Indeed, Greed's relationship to Raymond seems to invoke the cantankerous rebelliousness of Charlie McCarthy to Edgar Bergen. While exploring the relationship between the puppet and its manipulator directly, and serving both as a multiplying lens for Raymond, and a means by which Breuer himself could metaphorically present himself on stage, the puppetry technique remains somewhat rudimentary, balancing itself to Raymond's on-stage performance.

Following a series of music theater collaborations with the composer Bob Telson, including the acclaimed *Gospel at Colonus*, Breuer's next effort in the field of puppet theater led him straight back to the source of his obsession, the classic Japanese Bunraku theater. Like many Western theorists, such as Edward Gordon Craig, Roland Barthes and Gautam Dasgupta, Breuer is fascinated by the tension between the stage illusion, magnified by the presence of three visible puppeteers, and the heightened sense of psychological realism created by the puppets' gestural language. It is this tension that makes Bunraku a perfect medium for a post-modern theatrical endeavor. In *The Warrior Ant*, the next in the "Animation" cycle of plays first presented in 1986, Breuer decided he

<sup>1</sup>All quotes from conversations with the author.



needed not a Bunraku-style of puppetry but the actual, authentic presence of Bunraku as the central facet of the production. Thus, the lead role of the Ant and his nemesis, the Death Moth, were portrayed by exquisite puppets on loan from the National Bunraku Theater of Japan, along with the two star manipulators, Yoshida Tamamatsu and Kanju Kiritake. Breuer kept many of the traditional conventions of Bunraku performance, but added greatly to the form's native complexity by surrounding the puppets with layers of cross-cultural friction. As performed at the 1988 BAM Next Wave Festival, in addition to the artistry of Tamamatsu and Kanju, with Barbara Pollitt as chief assistant puppeteer, there was an astonishing pageant of musicians and performers from every corner of the Globe, swinging to the world-beat rhythms of Telson's music; a giant 20' ant puppet mounted on a golf cart like a carnival float; and various other theatrical devices more in keeping with Radio City than with a downtown, avant-garde performance.

Breuer did not just appropriate the forms of the Bunraku theater, he collaborated with the puppeteers to create a genre of performance that could exist between the conventions of East and West. To make this work, he needed a strong dose of parody and humor. Tamamatsu's specialization in comic character roles gave the Japanese artist enough freedom from convention to make the cultural leap into Breuer's conceptual universe. For example, in one memorable scene, when the Death Moth was unable to consummate her love for the Ant without causing him instant death, she expressed her frustration in a passionate monologue. Tamamatsu imbued the puppet with both the histrionics of a Hollywood *femme-fatale*—cadging a light for her cigarette from the narrator and throwing herself down on the playboard in violent paroxysms—and the traditional Japanese stage signifiers of heightened passions and grief, such as chewing on a lock of hair and biting the sleeve of her kimono.



Julie Archer with Peter from *Peter and Wendy*

photo: Jay Peck



Rose from *An Epidog*,  
puppet by Julie Archer

The appropriation of Asian puppet forms was repeated subsequently with *MahabarANTa*. This much more intimately staged production was built on a scene from *Warrior Ant*, in which the Ant descends into Hell to visit his long lost father. It was staged as a traditional Balinese shadow show, with Dalang I Wayan Wija as master puppeteer, and Fred Neumann and Ruth Maleczek acting as narrators of Breuer's parodic and mock-epic verse. Wija used a mix of stock Balinese shadow figures as well as some specially designed comic figures representing Western corporations and art funders, which the Ant confronts on his journey through the circles of Hell. The ironic quoting of traditional puppet forms is, according to Breuer, part of his interest in the science of deconstruction. But perhaps more so, it points to his fascination with the narrative, literary style used by traditional forms such as Bunraku and wayang puppet theater. Bunraku theater, for instance grew out of the fusion of the storyteller's art with that of the puppeteer's. In the eyes of a Japanese connoisseur, it is the "tayu", or storyteller, that leads the performance. The puppet becomes a means of physicalizing the narrative and universalizing the text in a way that the actual words, bound by the specifics of language, can not:

[This] also connects up with my idea that, since Grotowski wanted to experiment with a narrative theater, a storytelling theater, I wasn't interested in doing scenes... I wanted a storytelling theater because of the flamboyance, because of the fact that you can paint pictures. It goes back to the old Chinese storytellers—the next step is storytelling with a dancer; next step is storytelling with a puppet, then a storytelling theater. So I think that all this stuff connects up to my idea of wanting to write as a storyteller. Because I like to write narra-

tive. So the idea of evolving a storyline and a storytelling technique, it started all the way back with the *Red Horse Animation*. That's been my whole "shtick".

Breuer's last two projects, *An Epidog* and *Peter and Wendy*, build upon this concern, but each using a different strategy to unite the narrative voice with the puppet. *An Epidog*, first performed at HERE in the winter of 1996, is a sequel to *Shaggy Dog Animation*, focusing on the death, post-death and recollections of life of Rose, the Dog. As in classical Bunraku, the psychological depth of the puppet character grows out the interplay between the manipulation of the puppet, led by Barbara Pollitt, with Basil Twist and Terry O'Reilly, and the vocal performance of the narrator, played by Ruth Maleczek. The resulting complexity rightly deserved the Obie award it received, the first time ever a puppet character has been so honored. Maleczek recounts:

Initially, in all the rehearsals, the attempt was for me to try to speak like what they were doing. Then gradually, as we came to understand one another's instincts better, it was able to become much more of an exchange. So now it's much more difficult to separate... you know, is this something Rose the Dog initiated through the person of Barbara Pollitt and her co-puppeteers, or is it something where the energy comes from the vocal performance and then they kind of internalize it into the puppet? Now you can't really tell anymore...

I never take my eyes off the puppet. I never look at Barbara. I never look at anything else that goes on on stage, only Rose.... It goes, well I don't know where it starts, but the

circle is: Rose-audience-me- Rose-audience-me, and so on.

The focal point of this energy flux was the puppet designed and built by Julie Archer, which acted as the physical manifestation of author Breuer's poetic characterization. Archer described the process of trying to make the leap from Breuer's textual concerns to the physical materials that she was working with alone in her Minneapolis studio:

I was working on [Rose's] head and trying to get her soul and who she was. And I would keep calling Lee up and I'd say, 'Describe her again. Just give me adjectives about her again.' So he would rattle off these adjectives about Rose and I'd write them down, and then I'd have them next to me as I'm sculpting the clay. And it worked in that way.

Like a Bunraku puppet, Rose's body is essentially structureless, a silk and fabric skin hanging from a shoulder block which is in turn supported by the main control rod to the head. This loose, boneless configuration allowed the puppeteers almost unlimited freedom of movement—a definite asset for a character that had to act as both animal and human, slurp water from a bowl, lecture college students, make love, die, perform yoga and martial arts exercises, as well as confront the intricacies of Breuer's text without any facial or mouth articulation.

*An Epidog* represents Breuer's most intensive effort at creating a Western equivalent to the Japanese Bunraku. But there is nothing classical about his approach to any given genre. As in *Warrior Ant*, the various Asian genres morph and blend at the edges. The narrators Maleczek and Neumann are rolled about the stage in wheeled office chairs, dressed in glittering garments, with white bunny ears and stylized face painting inspired by Indian Kathakali dancers. At one point in the second act, a Chinese opera singer, Xin



Zhang, playing the goddess Kuan Yin rides in on a red Suzuki motorcycle. And as if all this were not enough, computer animations designed by Karen Ten Eyck were projected on the backdrop. As Breuer comments; "It's a joke.... As long as you laugh, you don't die."

*Peter and Wendy* is Breuer's only puppet theater work that is not based on his own writing, nor part of the "Animations" cycle. The project was originally conceived by producer/dramaturg, Liza Lorwin. In adapting the material, she emphasized the storytelling aspect of the text by using the book version of J.M. Barrie's original text, with its sober, maternal, narrative voice threading through it, instead of the more flamboyant and campy stage play. Lorwin's careful splicing of the text gave the final play script a poly-vocal effect that works well with Breuer's multi-layered directing style.

Yet *Peter and Wendy* is distinctly different in its narrative approach from *An Epidog*. In the latter, the primary focus is on Rose— while the narrators, whirling around on their rolling chairs on the periphery of the action, direct their energy inward toward the puppet. In *Peter and Wendy*, it is the narrator Karen Evans-Kandel's tour-de-force performance that is highlighted. She projects the vocal text/score outward towards the audience, as does the *tayu* of the Bunraku theater. But unlike the *tayu*, Kandel is not just a disembodied voice. She inhabits the same plane as the puppets. Indeed they often clamber over her like kids on a jungle gym, using her body as an extension of the set. Breuer comments:

...If you look back to what Karen Evans-Kandel is doing, she's just an enormously complicated version of a storyteller. She's taking fifteen or twenty different voices. but she's still a storyteller... You know, if you look back at say a South Indian shadow puppet show, you've got the singer, the lead singer; you've got two

musicians behind them, they're singing the story; and you've got a bunch of puppeteers doing it. That's basically what we're doing. It's a two thousand year old form of theater. We're just doing it with a few technical additions.

According to Breuer, the play takes place in a five-year old's imagination, or rather in the mind of a mature woman emotionally calling herself back to the time she was five, in order to recreate the time when she had this imagination and could "fly." The puppets are her long lost toys, emerging from the dusty trunk of her memory, reanimating her own childhood fantasies:

...The best way to look at it realistically is that Wendy has not touched her room, and it became [her daughter] Jane's room. She steals into Jane's room one night and starts meditating on when she was five. She looks at Jane's toys. She sits down and reads the book. And all through the night she meditates on what it was like to be Jane's age and have the really live fantasy of Peter Pan in her life. And then Jane wakes up and realizes that the fantasy lives on... Anybody who has a kid relives their life through the kid.

The puppets, with their fluidity and their incorporeality, contribute to this evocation of childhood's dreamtime. So do John Cunningham's haunting live Celtic music and Julie Archer's magically transformable stage sets and props—the pop-up Victorian house and the pirate ship created by bed sheets—the whole fluid geography of Neverland manufactured out of childhood's accouterments.

In some ways, *Peter and Wendy* could be called Breuer's most conventional work for puppet theater, with its simplicity of

language and staging that contrasts markedly to the three-ring circus effect of *Warrior Ant* and the textual convolutions of *An Epidog*. And yet, at the same time, it culminates his search for a theatrical narrative form that can glide easily between live actors and the animated puppet, between the narrator's vocal presence and the puppet's silence, between the techniques of European theater and the traditional forms of Asian puppetry. While the synthesis is oftentimes deliberately jarring, it consistently reaches beyond boundaries, genres and conventions in the search for a truly universal theatrical form.

Breuer conceives of theater as primarily a sacred activity. Despite the scatological references and worldliness of his texts, he adheres to the idea that creating theater is inherently a religious preoccupation, as it is for the Balinese Dalang and the Zen Bunraku puppet master. The whole of the "Animations" cycle is modeled both on the wisdom tales and fables that religious teachers have used for millennia to underscore their moral lessons, and the grand epics of sacred literature, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata*. He has found in puppets something that can span the most primal mysteries and the wildest post-modern investigations. Perhaps Ruth Maleczek's words express it best:

It's a great mystical experience. It's one of the great mysteries. Here is this inanimate object, piece of wood and cloth. And then someone puts their hands in it and suddenly it's very alive. And then someone gives it voice, and suddenly it's an actor. It's amazing. It's very much what an actor does with words on a page that she is going to personify, except that it's generated into this wood and stuff. •



## The Jim Henson Foundation's International Festival of Puppet Theatre

# The Puppets Take Manhattan!

Cheryl Henson, Executive Producer; Leslee Asch, Producing Director; Anne Dennin, Associate Producer

The first two installments of the International Festival of Puppet Theater left audiences and critics wanting more. On its third time out, The Jim Henson Foundation has given its festival lots more: more venues, more partners, more artists and



films, more free performances, and more multi-cultural connections. There will even be a world film premiere, some special events and a festival website—

<http://www.iie.org/ai/henson>.

Since the beginning, The Jim Henson Foundation has had The Public Theater as a partner for the festival, and this year is no exception— all six of its theater spaces (including one for films) will be dedicated to puppetry this September 10-22. In addition, PS 122 is back (hosting the late-night puppet cabaret) as well new partners La Mama E.T.C., Dance Theatre Workshop, and The New Victory Theater. Three of the festival artists will also participate in the "Works and Process" program at the Guggenheim Museum. The importance of

these partnerships rests not only in the enhanced institutional strength which comes from such networking, but in the tangible presence of the highest caliber puppetry over a wider area and for an ever more diverse audience. Other partners include UNIMA-USA, which will host a symposium entitled "What Makes a Puppet Play," and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, once again the site of the Festival Exhibition.

There is a multi-cultural dimension to the festival which should also help to bring new audiences to this artform. Mexico's Tinglado Theater will give one of its performances of *The Repugnant Story of Clotario Demoniak* in Spanish. The Amoros and Augustin/Ki-Yi Mbock co-production *Sunjata* is presented in a mixture of three African dialects and French. Drawing out a new base of community support, this sort of programming not only enriches the festival experience for audiences, but has helped draw financial partners (like the Rockefeller Foundation) to the enterprise.

Puppetry of the Czech Republic is represented in a substantial way at this festival by two very different puppet companies and a renowned filmmaker. The filmmaker is Jan Svankmajer, arguably the most important surrealist in the world today. [see *Puppetry International #1 for interview*, and *Puppetry International #2: "Faust and Dada"*] The festival film series will feature a world premiere of *Conspirators of Pleasure*, a new work by this venerable and venerated artist. Frantisek Vitek and Vera Ricarova were once part of the great theater DRAK in Prague. Now on their own, they will be presenting *Piskanderdula*, an "anti-theater" piece using wooden puppets, found objects and mechanical musical instruments. The Forman Brothers (sons of well-known filmmaker Milos Forman) present, on a miniature replica 18th

century opera stage, a work which is billed as "a poetical, philosophical and deviously polemical commentary on life in the pre- and post- Soviet east bloc..."

One of the most exciting aspects of this festival is the national touring



program, which has been in development since 1984 and continues to expand. This year four different foreign companies will tour to Chicago, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, North Carolina, Oregon, Massachusetts and California. This outreach may end up being the Jim Henson Foundation's greatest legacy for American puppetry; as ever more audiences are exposed to the world's great puppetry, the artform will be held in greater regard, American artists will be held to a high standard of excellence, and audiences across the country (like those who have come to the Festival of International Puppetry in New York) will want more, more and MORE! •





Roman Paska/Theater for the Birds  
in a scene from *Moby Dick* in Venice

photo: Josef Astor

"Punch" from *The Repugnant Story*  
of Clotario Demoniak by Mexico's  
Teatro Tinglado

photo: Pablo De Aguinaco

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## The Jim Henson Foundation

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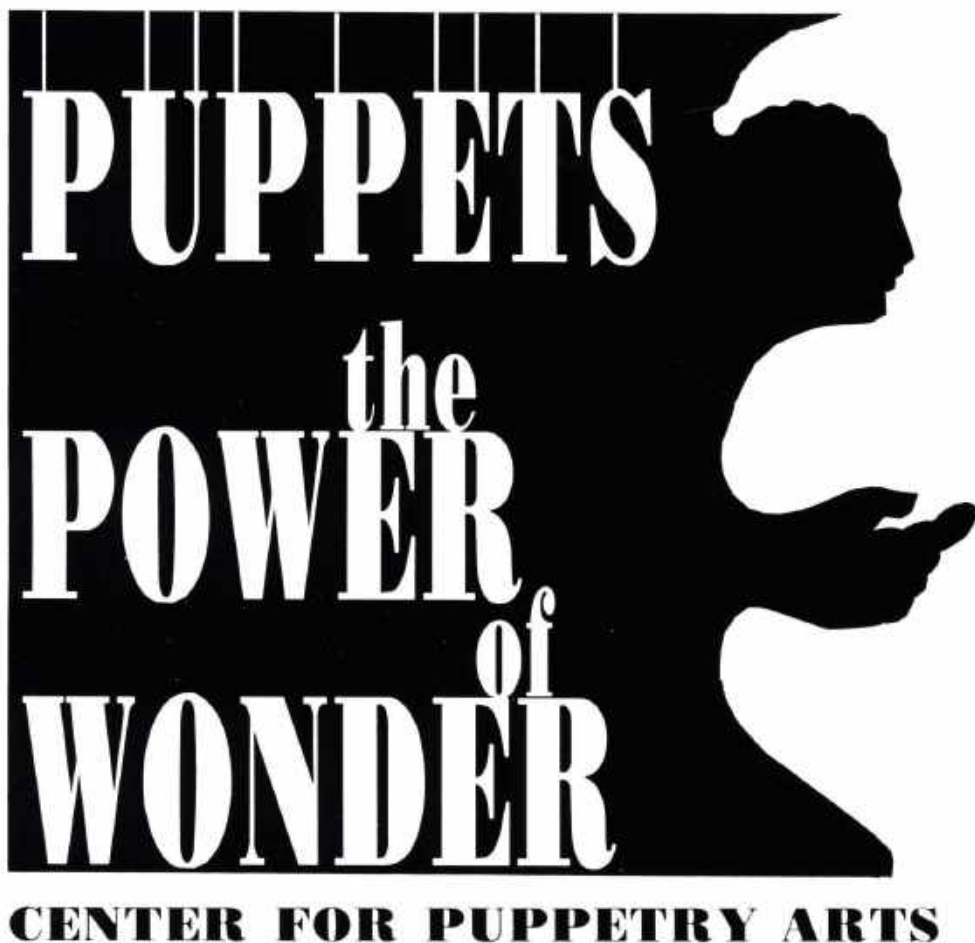
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# COME SEE WHAT'S NEW IN ATLANTA

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# Puppets & Performing Objects

in the 20th century



Alexandra Exter  
"L'homme Sandwich"

*Exactly one hundred years ago the course of modern theater was changed*

when Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* brought the world of puppets, masks, and other performing objects onto the centerstage of western theater. Over the past century Jarry's seed has blossomed in the appearance of puppet theater in all forms of performance. The performing object, whether it appears as one of the traditional forms of puppet theater, or as a new form of abstract, found-object, or mechanical theater, has proved central to the development of twentieth century performance. This exhibition unites examples from the various fields of puppet theater, avant-garde performance, visual arts, and projected and broadcast media to examine what they all have in common: the performing object.

Performing object is a descriptive term for all material images used in performance, and puppets and masks are at the center of performing object theater around the world. But the term performing object has a broader scope and includes techniques of performance not normally labeled puppetry which nonetheless share the same basic approach.

*by John Bell for the exhibit "Puppets and Performing Objects in the 20th century" at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, part of the International Festival of Puppet Theater*





*Basil Mikovsroff's  
Seaweeds Flowering*



*Handpuppets by  
Paul Klée*



# Presenting Adult Puppetry

## *Theatre by the numbers*

Something has happened this year—mysteriously manifested, suddenly apparent (although long in the making): the presentation of “adult puppetry” in America has come of age. Indeed, it may already be entering its prime. For decades it’s crawled, it’s toddled, it’s travelled, it’s learned, it’s flexed its young muscles, and now: it’s off and running. The awkward indicators of adolescence have fallen away, and the entire field stands revealed as a rather splendid young adult. Food (\$\$\$) is scarce, but it has already demonstrated a tremendous ingenuity for being invited to sit at other people’s tables.

It’s organs and limbs are fully formed and have developed a remarkable strength: networks of artists, both national and international; networks of presenters; centers for study and performance; archives; festivals; and (as you can see) publications. All the elements of a healthy and vigorous field are present. And most importantly, everyone it meets is fascinated by it, attracted to its extraordinary artistry, its exotic parentage, and to its vaguely foreign manners. America remembers this creature from its own childhood, and is ready to be seduced by it. Puppeteers, make hay—the turn of the century belongs to you!

*Norman Frisch is a presenter who has curated arts festivals in New York, New Haven, and Los Angeles.*

## 1 The Center for Puppetry Arts, Atlanta Georgia

The Center for Puppetry Arts is unquestionably the largest and most diversified puppet center in the United States, including several theaters, a museum, an education department and a resident puppet troupe. “Presenting adult puppetry has been an important part of the Center’s mission since its inception, says Vince Anthony, the Center’s Executive Director. “Bread and Puppet Theatre did a residency here in our very first season.” That residency was followed by MacArthur fellow Bruce Schwartz, who was invited back year after year in the early 1980s, drawing large audiences for his virtuosic performances. Anthony mourns the virtual demise of NEA funding, which allowed the Center great latitude in fostering new artists and risk-taking. In those years, the Center not only brought in established artists like Schwartz and Paul Zaloom, and remounted works by known artists such as Theodora Skipitares, but brought new artists to adult puppetry.

A number of these new artists found their voice through XPT (the Experimental Puppet Theatre workshop) [see “XPT” in *Puppetry International #2*]. These artists include the likes of Jon Ludwig, Janie Geiser, Catherine Jane Shaw and Suzie Ferriss, who have since achieved a measure of critical acclaim on their own.

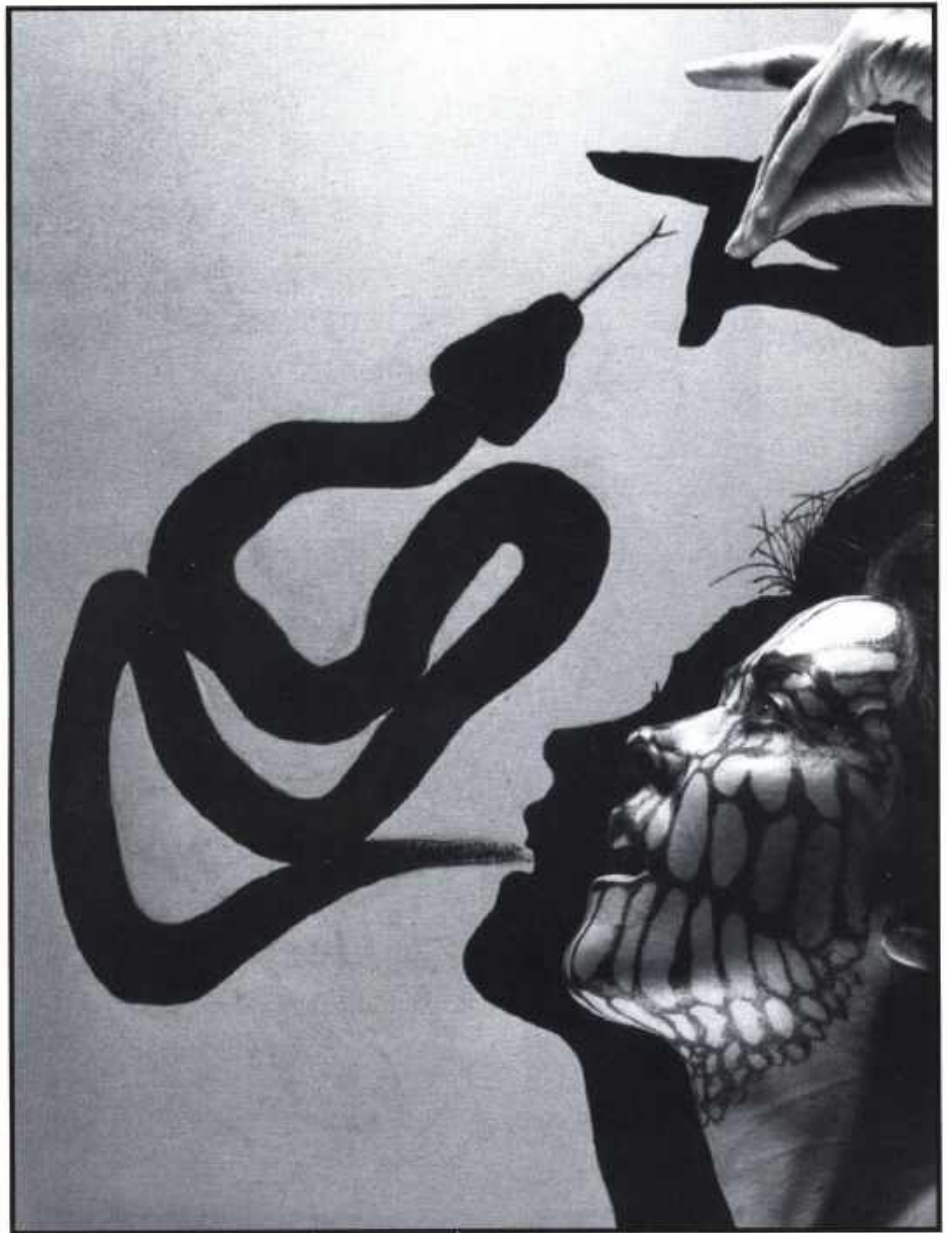
Over the years, the Center has moved from presenting adult work as a theatre season to more of a concert series, where patrons have freer choice in selecting when they will come to the theatre and which works they will see.

What Anthony sees as the responsibility of the presenter is to serve both ends of the equation: for the artists, the Center provides a space, financial as well as emotional support, and an audience; for the audience, the Center provides not only the full range of adult puppetry, but for pieces where the meaning might be obscure, a degree of access to the work. One of the most successful ways in which the Center has brought audiences and artists together has been through a program called “Footnotes”—a post-performance discussion with the artists. Also very popular has been “Preview Night” when, at the beginning of the season, the public is invited to an evening of slides and videos of upcoming performances. Attendees can “shop around” for pieces which most appeal to them.

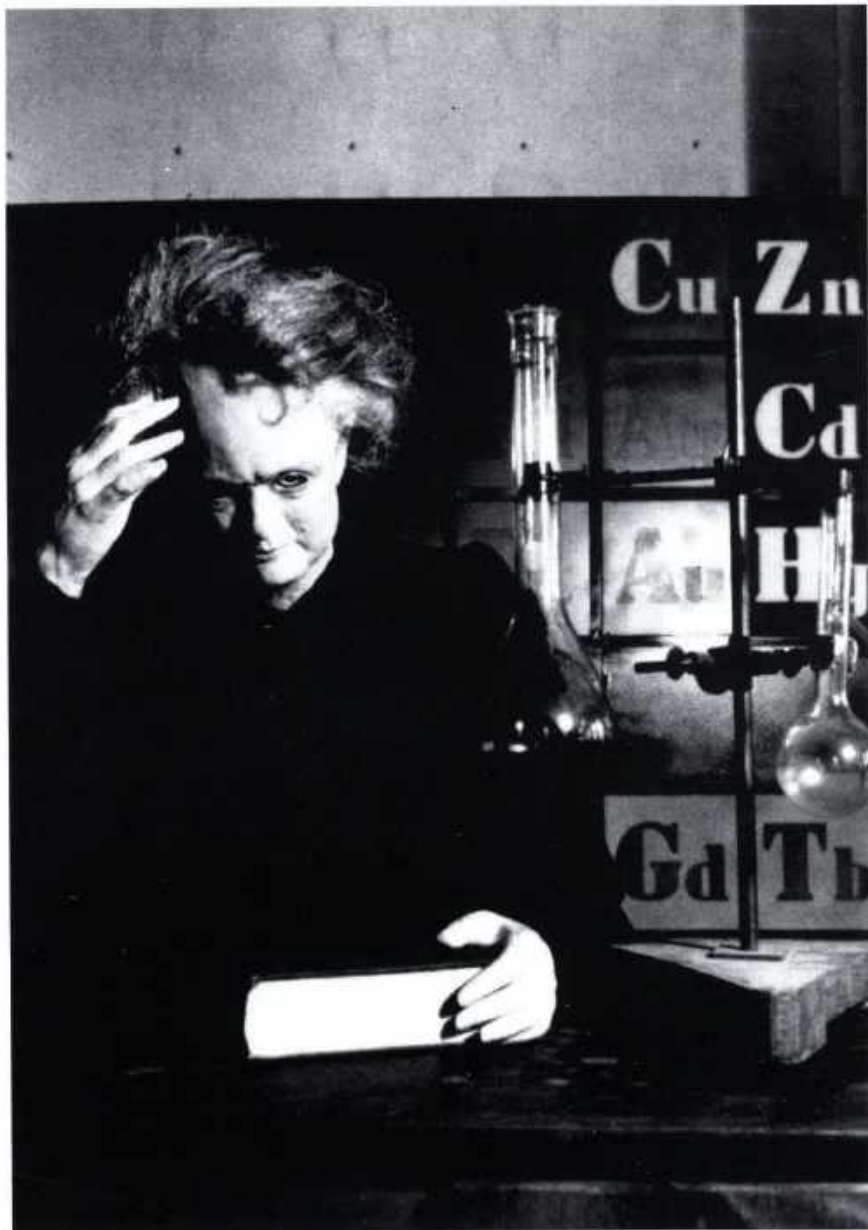
At a time when NEA funding is no longer available to catalyze the production of risky theatre, Anthony recognizes the Center’s responsibility to find alternative means of support for artists with vision. One way is to harness the synergy of Networking—presenting touring groups which have new works available, establishing partnerships with local foundations and businesses, as well as by serving the needs of audiences with specific interests in their own cultural heritage, their specialized profession, or in a passion for a particular sort of theatre, for instance. Partners must also be found in the local media—both broadcast and print—to serve as active sponsors for specific projects and as advocates for special constituents.



*Verdad  
from the company Imago*



*Bruce Schwartz with figure  
from Marie Antoinette Tonight*



*Marie Curie in a scene from  
Defenders of the Code,  
by Theodora Skipitares. Part of the New Directions  
Series for adult audiences at the Center for  
Puppetry Arts in 1990.*

photo: Cynthia Friedman

*Puppet characters from Amoretto di  
Gazelle, part of the puppet trilogy  
"Bilzy La Fever's Kingdom of Passion"  
presented at Climate Theatres  
Festival Fantochio*

photo: Joegh Bullock





## 2 Sandglass Theater, Putney, Vermont

Eric Bass and Ines Zeller Bass this year have opened a small (60-seat) theater next to their home in a picturesque rural village of only 2,000 souls. They are running a spring and summer season on weekends, with family shows during the day on Saturdays and an adult show in the evenings. Performances have ranged from their own shows, to regional favorites like Perry Alley Theatre, to internationally-known Frantisek and Vera (Czech Republic). Does it make sense to be presenting risky or symbol-laden work in a small rural town like this? Though the Basses have not yet been able to assess the economics of their venture, the adult shows have drawn full (or nearly full) houses. And audiences haven't been walking out scratching their heads, either. "Our audiences are less likely to feel set adrift by symbols, myth, and so on, than some urban audiences," says Eric Bass, and he points to local cultural institutions, the high level of alternative education and the rich fabric of local artisanry as possible reasons for this. Not new to this challenge, Sandglass Theater produced an international puppet festival in neighboring Brattleboro in 1988 and will produce another next year. They have also produced performances at nearby Marlboro College. The Basses recognize the importance of partnerships with other local organizations, as when, for instance, they need a larger venue for a

full-stage production. Why did they build a theater with only 60 seats? "60 seats felt... in proportion to the [local] area," says Bass. "Just as when you're performing, you must move and breathe in proportion to your puppet. Maybe puppeteers develop a keen sense of proportion."

## Hystopolis Puppet Theatre, Chicago, Illinois

We're mainly a touring company now," says Larry Basgall, producer of Hystopolis Puppet Theatre. Hystopolis (which has been favorably compared to Chicago's other "edgy" company: Steppenwolf) did have its own theater space 1988-92 on North Avenue in Chicago's oldtown. "Our family shows definitely helped to finance [Elmer Rice's] *The Adding Machine*, which was the adult piece we were presenting in those years."

Hystopolis still produces a four-day annual "Puppet Fest" in partnership with Rosary College of River Forest, Illinois. Though largely for family audiences, this year they did add performances of their new adult piece: *Ubu Roi*. And although NEA funding is on the wane, Hystopolis enjoys support from the city of Chicago, the Illinois Arts Council, and various foundations. They have also been looking to private groups to sponsor individual performances.

## 4 Imago, Portland Oregon

Started by former members of Tears of Joy Puppet Theatre, Imago has, over the years, developed a reputation for producing beautiful, original work. They have their own facility (which includes two 250-seat theaters), but their long-running family show *Frogs, Lizards, Orbs and Slinkies* has toured nationally and internationally and has gone a long way toward financing the development of their cutting-edge work for adult audiences. Though not strictly a "puppet theatre," most of their adult work does include some amount of mask work, puppetry, shadows, or other manifestations of what might broadly be called "visual theatre". Imago's annual season runs from September through May. Their adult works are primarily original, though recently they mounted an adaptation of Sophocles' *Ajax*, and are currently working on a new piece by contemporary NY theater artist Richard Foreman.

Imago has enjoyed NEA funding in the past. They are also forging partnerships with corporations and private foundations.

## Climate Theater, San Francisco, California

Climate Theater has for a number of years produced Festival Fantocchio—an annual, two-week celebration of adult puppetry. About six years ago, Climate director Joegh Bullock formed a partnership with longtime puppeteer Mike Oznowicz for help in producing Fantocchio. Oznowicz (who happens to be the father of Frank Oz, film director and the voice of Miss Piggy) brought a decidedly international aspect to the venture, bringing companies from

France, The Netherlands, Spain and elsewhere. In a given year, Fantocchio may include 15 to 20 companies. Attracting large audiences to this festival has not been easy. "Adult puppetry, as you know, is a bit of a hard sell," says Oznowicz, a fact which, however, has not caused him nor Bullock to play it safe in the selection process. Priority is given to work which is difficult, risky and at times even untested. "Risk-taking is very important," asserts Oznowicz, "even if sometimes we lay an egg."

Originally, the festival was able to find funding easily enough. As one might expect, this has diminished, though they still get some grants (curiously, funding has not dropped for Solo Mio, Climate's annual festival of solo theater-artists, in September). Bringing in foreign companies has actually helped the festival financially, as foreign governments will often pay the cost of sending their theater companies abroad. Oznowicz and Bullock have been trying to expand the audience for this "avant garde" puppetry by reaching out to special communities—Hispanic, gay and Asian, among others. They hope, in the future, to have more success coordinating booking schedules with other presenters in order to provide more good work for more good puppeteers, which, says Oznowicz, "is also part of the idea."

In its sixth year, the festival experienced a financial loss which forced its organizers to take a year off. Expensive lessons were learned, but they are already planning for the next festival in April of 1997 which will include robotics and computer animation.

# 6

## Educating the Presenters: The Dartmouth Symposium

With the potential for a huge impact on the state of adult puppetry in New England, New England Foundation for the Arts, in partnership with New England Presenters and Dartmouth College (and with help from the Jim Henson Foundation), is presenting a one-day symposium for the education of presenters of performing arts. Featured speaker will be Cheryl Henson, President of the Jim Henson Foundation. Also speaking are Leslee Asch, producing director of the International Festival of Puppet Theater;\* Lisa Booth, promoter of the Henson Festival on Tour; Vince Anthony, executive director of the Center for Puppetry Arts. In addition to the speakers, symposium guests will see a performance of the French/African co-production *Sunjata*, meet the artists and attend the panel discussion, "How to Successfully Present Puppetry." If the symposium is successful, it could certainly be used as a model for events in other regions of the country.

*\* For more on this festival, which must be considered in any serious discussion of presenting puppetry for adult audiences, see "The Puppets Take Manhattan," page 18.*



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# A Divine Collaboration

by Jovonna Van Pelt

What follows is a "review" of Perry Alley Theatre's *Return to the Divine*, not at all in the sense of a critical assessment of performance, but instead a recollection of experience.

At the very beginning, there was Bonnie and the idea for a dance. Months ago she called to ask if there was any interest in working with her to bring this idea to performance. I was delighted to be recruited, as were more than twenty of us in the process... composers, musicians, dancers, puppeteers: visionaries and human beings. We understood that the process of shaping this work was as important as the work itself, and we would participate in the *Divine* as both creators and creations... just like life. How could any performing artist resist such an invitation? So it began.

The story of the dance is our spiritual history. Earth, Air, Fire, Water: at the very beginning, we feel an elemental connection to the Deity everywhere in evidence. Body, Mind, Spirit, Soul: the Woman and the Goddess are connected. Our lives, our bustling human activity in pursuit of other things, disrupt that connection. We are separated from divinity and each other; the Woman is alone. We despair. In the struggle to survive and make sense of the loss, we find a memory of the sacred. We make a new mythology. The Woman teaches the Man, he teaches her and together they remember Goddess and God. In the end, as we celebrate our return to the divine, we feel the bond and see the sacred again, mirrored in all that surrounds us

Bonnie crafted the ritual, the dance, the mythology from our personal stuff. The Goddess music grew and formed from

Barbara's heart in her organic way. The human chorus was carefully composed, and revised, and rehearsed by Tom. Perfect fabric for the earth blanket appeared in front of me on the store shelf. Andrew designed engaging two-dimensional puppet soldiers to march noisily through the calm center. The ancient language of Cambodian Court Dance in Somaly's form became the Goddess incarnate. The choreography of Bonnie's interpretation was the Goddess revealed. As we worked apart and together, we lived the story.

Over the months the dance became whole, out of the separate phone calls and meetings and rehearsals. Margo Rose\* watched the first primitive run-through in her living room and smiled at us. By then we knew that we would actually perform it— where had not been important before— at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, July 16th, the last program in the Summer Arts Festival there.

The trip to Washington was a combination arts residency and house party; lots of sweat, not much sleep, stimulating material by talented people. The prior weekend was reserved for rehearsals: Saturday the first full cast run-through and Sunday principals only with musicians, which lead to dress rehearsal on Monday night at the cathedral itself. After all the weeks spent working at a distance, it seemed too short a time together, and Tuesday night came quickly.

We performed in the Chapel of Saint Joseph of Arimethea, which seats about 200 in the round: a much more suitable venue than the main sanctuary of the sixth largest Gothic cathedral in the world, magnificent as it is, and overwhelming. There was a packed house for the first half

of the evening— from Perry Alley Theatre's puppetry repertoire—the haunting *Ondine the Water Sprite*. Some of those who had brought small children departed at the intermission, the rest remained for the second half and *Return to the Divine*. In 45 minutes or so, it was done.

I have no objectivity. We performed well, I think. I remember the coolness of the stone floor and the echo of our water sounds in the vaulted spaces. The Goddess was a shimmer of gold in traditional Cambodian costume, the Woman in humble dance blacks.

Movement and voices and drums suspended time, and there was only Somaly and Bonnie and the dance... amazing, beautiful, holy. The audience gasped when the marching puppets appeared and cried with us when the human spiral brought us all to closing. Smiles and tears and sparkling confetti made the celebratory benediction and marked our return to the divine: "ever-growing circles of stillness, mirrored, mirrored again in all that surrounds us."

Remember and return.

*Jovonna Van Pelt is a writer, designer, Medieval reconstructionist and performer in Eastern Pennsylvania.*

\*Margo Rose, who began her puppetry career in the 1920s and, with her husband Rufus, was a charter member of the Puppeteers of America, has been and remains a friend and inspiration to generations of performing artists

[Ed.]





photos: Jack Douthitt

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL 1996 SUMMER FESTIVAL  
presents

The Perry Alley Theatre

In St. Joseph's Chapel

Tuesday July 16, 1996, 7:30 PM

*"The Return to the Divine"*

a ritualistic dance-mask-puppet piece

created by  
Bonnie Periale

in collaboration with  
Moly Sam, Ann Gerstenberger,  
Tom Meier and Andrew Periale

dances  
Bonnie Periale and Somaly Hay

music  
Tom Meier and Barbara Engel

puppets  
Andrew Periale

costumes  
Jovonna Van Pelt

corps musicians  
Kathryn Alleman  
Susan Day  
Ann Gerstenberger  
David Jackson  
Cate Johnson  
Chris Line  
Kathy Makris  
Marcia Tatum

corps puppeteers  
Judith Cotter  
Michael Cotter  
Linda Linton  
Joe Pipik  
Lynn Raybuck  
Jeannie Wall  
Carol Wolfe-Boquet

rehearsal director  
Jovonna Van Pelt

videographer  
Elizabeth Periale

[Although the piece described here was conceived by one of the magazine's staff, this project was a collaborative effort of so many diverse artists with such a strong cross-cultural element, that we felt its inclusion here was appropriate. —Ed.]

## FILM

Review of Steve Barron's

# "The Adventures of Pinocchio"

To start life as a puppet— without a heart, common sense or social graces— and to become, through the hard work of surviving life's inescapable cruelties and hard knocks, a real person, is a metaphor which has spoken to generation after generation, and which has made Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* one of the most successful stories of the past century.

In *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, writer-director Steve Barron and producers Donald Kushner and Peter Locke attempt to bring the true grit of Collodi's oft-sanitized tale to the strange and expensive world of the Hollywood blockbuster. It is a road littered with corpses, and in making the journey Barron's opus suffers a few bruises along the way, but is nonetheless, I think, a film well worth seeing. In the plus column, one must include the marvelous puppetry which makes the wooden boy so compelling to watch, the overall production concept which tries to stay true to the spirit of Collodi's story, and much of the acting.

The figure of Pinocchio, thanks to the talented crew at the Henson Creature Shop, is a marvel. It appears to be wood, yet it flexes and moves like a living thing. The manipulation, effected by five puppeteers working as a team below the figure (and by remote control for the facial expressions) is remarkable. Sets for the Pinocchio figure had to be built 4'6" off the floor and, for outdoor locations, puppeteers worked from holes in the ground covered with shingles, and camouflaged with sand.

The Czech locations, cleansed of all reminders of the 20th century, add a layer

of exoticism and street-grime which transports one into the realm of the Romantic fairytale, where animal magic and talking puppets seem possible. Barron succeeds especially well in the realization of Terra Magica, the amusement park where boys are turned donkeys. The balance there between the makeshift tackiness of a carnival midway and the "way cool!" appeal to young boys was beautifully maintained. The translation of book to film always requires changes to fit the story to the new medium, but much which is essentially Collodi was kept: that the world, though beautiful, is also filled with cruelty, trickery and pain, and that growing up takes work, sacrifice, love and daring. One change for the film which I thought worked particularly well was the consolidation of three of the story's major villains (the puppet theater manager, the owner of Terra Magica, and the sea monster) into a single villain, Lorenzini. This helped focus the story for the shorter timeframe.

The acting of the major players added greatly to the film's success. Martin Landau as Geppetto was a wonderful and complex portrayal of a man nursing an ancient wound. His counterpart, Leona, played by Genevieve Bujold, was a refreshingly strong woman— no damsel in distress here! Other notable performances were given by Bebe Neuwirth (Felinet) and Rob Schneider (Volpe)— a delightful pair of bumbling miscreants— and by Dawn French as the baker's wife who manages, in her attempts to catch Pinocchio, to destroy an entire roomful of pastries. (With her great heaving bosom,

French has done for cream puffs what the film *Tom Jones* did for candle-lit dinners.)

Not all nods to blockbusterdom were entirely successful. One of the most egregious compromises to commercialism was certainly the soundtrack— in particular the songs sung by Pinocchio took the film by the throat and yanked it rudely from Collodi's world into a rhinestone-encrusted phony sweet-dream land. These jarring moments made an otherwise sympathetic little puppet sound like he was auditioning for the lead role in *Annie*. This stuff should have been anathema to Director Steve Barron and I actually hope the soundtrack was engineered for crass commercial reasons and not because he considered the songs integral to his artistic vision.

Though Udo Kier's portrayal of the puppet Impresario Lorenzini was wonderful, and the realization of the puppet theatre and all its Baroque machinery and sets absolutely stunning, many elements— from Lorenzini's physical appearance, to the actual set pieces to the use of the play as a foreshadowing of events to come— bore perhaps too striking a resemblance to portions of Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen*, although the scene in question was absolutely delightful in both films.

My final criticism, and perhaps it is more an observation than a criticism, is that the animatronic puppetry realized in the film borders on being *too* good. Pepe, the cricket who serves as Pinocchio's conscience, was a computer-animated character (and a delightful one at that). Pinocchio, was an actual puppet, yet, if I





if I had not read this in the New Line Cinema press material, I wouldn't be sure that Pinocchio was not also a computer-generated image. Perhaps when foam rubber is made to look so life-like, when puppeteers and cables and strings are so perfectly hidden, when an inanimate figure's movements so nearly mimic those of the living, then the impact of the puppeteer's art is lost. When the technical effect is so perfect, it becomes less astonishing because we take it for granted that Pinocchio, in this case, can walk and talk like a real boy (or a computer-generated cricket). In the end, his transformation into a flesh-and-blood boy seems less a triumph, because he did not have that far to go.

For all that, I enjoyed the film very much and suspect other adults will too. Children? There were lots of them at the matinee I attended; they loved it! •

*by Justin Kaase*



*A classic comes to life in The Adventures of Pinocchio; never has foam rubber looked so good.*

©1996 New Line Productions, Inc.

*Martin Landau stars as Geppetto in The Adventures of Pinocchio*

©1996 New Line Productions, Inc.

photos: P. Bazilou/ New Line

## MEDIA

# Eduard Bersudsky

**H**aving seen only photos of Eduard Bersudsky's fantastic kinetic sculptures, we were delighted to receive a videotape recently which showed the figures in action. For a long time these complex assemblages had been the star performers in a singular little theatre called Sharmanka. Sharmanka, prior to Glasnost, was housed in one of the many 1950's-era apartment complexes in Leningrad.

The videotape turned out to be a compilation of three separate encounters of the British media with Sharmanka.\* The first bit was a brief visit by Monty Python member Michael Palin to the actual theater in Leningrad (though uncredited, we believe this to have been from his BBC mini-series "Around the World in 80 Days"). Watching one of the sculptures in motion, Palin commented, "Stalin wields his ax amongst a crowd of goblins and hobgoblins, whilst Lenin rants and raves from his pulpit. This was once very strong stuff." An illuminating remark, for the level of political commentary built into the pieces would be obscure to most westerners. This was certainly not the case for Soviet audiences, for whom such interpretation was an integral part of most cultural outings. With the coming of Glasnost, audiences no longer needed to read between the lines to glean the artist's intent; attendance at this Symbolistic theater dwindled, and Bersudsky closed its doors to tour internationally with his creations.

The piece pictured here is part of the construction "The Time of Rats".

Intriguing as it is, the impact of the piece in performance is increased exponentially by the addition of light and sound. The music, different for each sculpture, gives a context for the piece. Musical selections are evocative of the carnival, the dance hall, or elsewhere, and are often distorted as if they were very old recordings played on even older phonographs. The music is then overlaid with human voices (perhaps making political speeches) and the sounds of the sculpture itself— gear noise, clicks, and the jangling of bells. The addition of light casts shifting shadows on the walls and ceiling, multiplying the effect of the work in eerie fashion. The apparent three-dimensionality of the second-hand shadow theatre would have greatly pleased the late Basil Milovsoroff, American puppetry guru (another Russian expatriate) who always championed the cause of experimentation with shadow theatre. I am certain, in Milovsoroff's Vermont workshop, Bersudsky would have felt entirely at home.

The second item on the video featured Bersudsky's figures on display

at the McLellan Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1994 (a year after he left Russia). This gave us a good look at a number of the pieces in turn: "The Dreamer in the Kremlin", "The Time of Rats", "Babylon Tower", "The Castle", "Titanic"... .

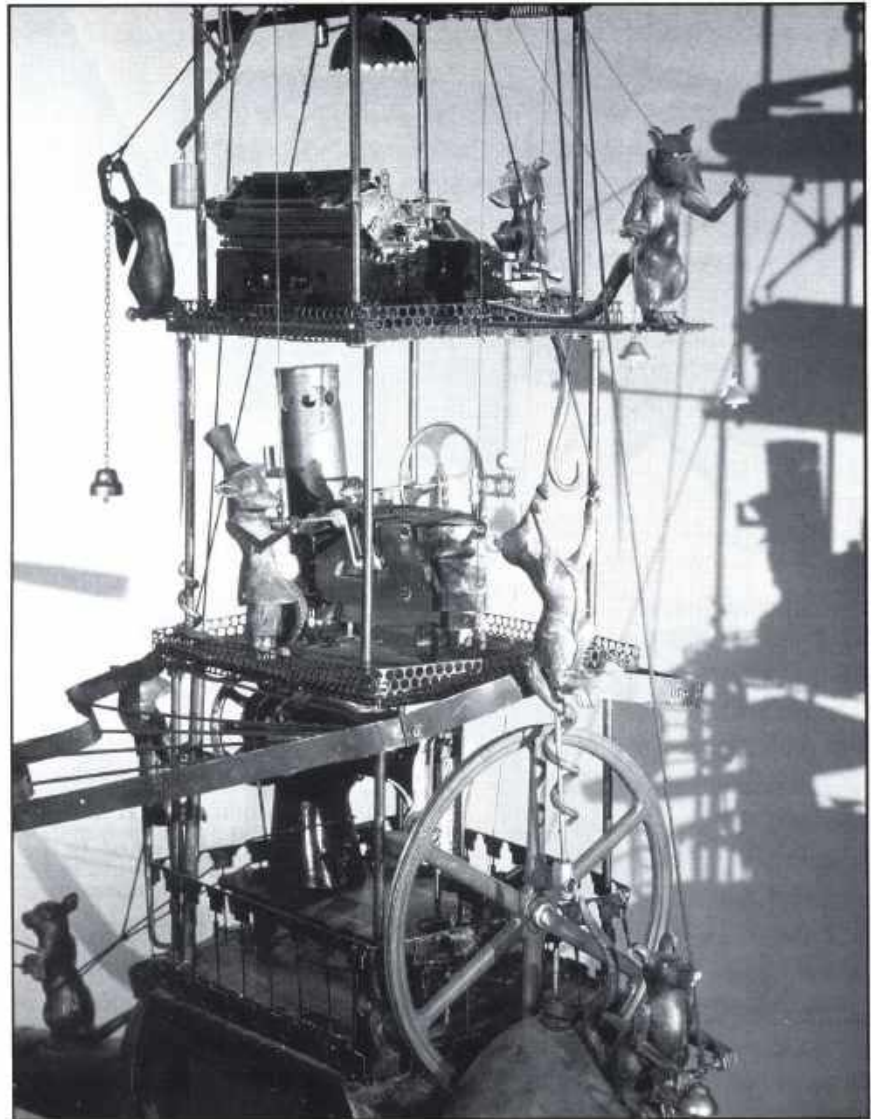
The third item was shot soon afterwards at the City Art Gallery in Manchester, England. This bit showed an entire performance of Sharmanka for an audience of school children, and Bersudsky himself answering the children's questions following the show. They were clearly intrigued by Bersudsky's works and, although the artist's symbolism was beyond them, they readily came up with interpretations of their own— a testament to the elastic nature of good art.

Bersudsky's pieces set his beautifully carved, jointed figures of humans and animals in fantastical landscapes constructed from material salvaged from Leningrad's junkyards. The overall effect is both whimsical and chilling— a postmodern Breughel set in motion by an unseen hand. "Sharmanka" means "barrel organ" and one of his large constructions appears to be turning the handle of a barrel organ. Everywhere,



though, small wooden figures seem to be turning handles— not in order to make music, but rather to keep the machinery moving. These are the mindless “apparatchiks” who for so long kept the wheels of the old order turning: wheels of industry, wheels of bureaucracy, wheels of the infernal machinery behind it all. The irony here, of course, is that it is ultimately the machinery which is keeping the people in motion, not the other way around. Everything changed with the break up of the Soviet Union. Even the trash changed. Said Bersudsky with a hint of wistfulness: “Now in Russia, no one throws anything away any more. All I see in Russian dumps now are hungry rats.”

And so Bersudsky has moved on with his remarkable machines to the more promising trash heaps of Western consumer economies, for he is not surviving merely as a curator of his own touring exhibit; he has already begun transforming British trash into theatre/art pieces. Who knows, eventually we may even see our own pop icons turning Bersudsky’s barrel organ.



*Eduard Bersudsky's kinetic sculpture "The Time of Rats"*

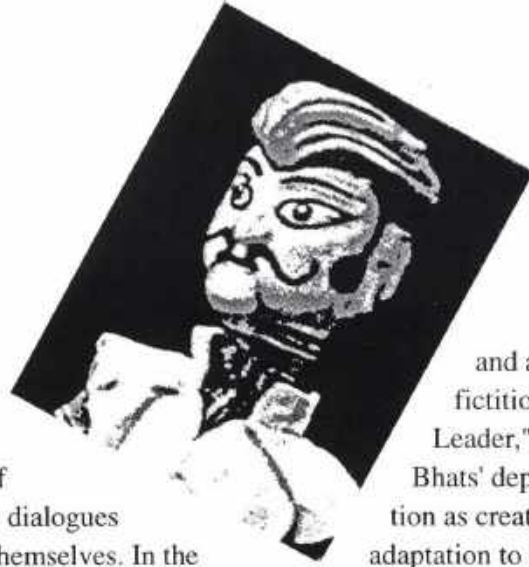
\*There were several hours of the figures in action included in the tape. These were used in the preparation of the final bit of reportage.

## MEDIA

## TRADITIONAL RAJASTHANI PUPPETRY



film is that the narration consists of imaginary dialogues



***Retooling a Tradition: A Rajasthani' Puppet Takes Umbrage at His Stringholders.*** Video, VHS, color, 47 min., by Nazir Jairazbhoy and Amy Catlin. 1994. Apsara Media (13659 Victory Blvd., Suite 577, Van Nuys, CA 91401).

*This review "Musical Narrative Traditions of Asia" is reprinted with permission from Asian Music Volume XXVI-2 Spring/Summer 1995.*

For several years producers and critics of ethnographic documentaries have sought ways to counterbalance the aridity and implicit ethnocentricity of the standard voice-over narrative format. Nazir Jairazbhoy and Amy Catlin, in their recent film "Retooling a Tradition," present one highly original and successful alternative to this norm, while offering at the same time an informative and entertaining look at modern Rajasthani folk puppetry. The primary, but not sole novelty of the

by the puppets themselves. In the first section, one of the Bhat puppeteers' stock characters, a deposed Muslim nawab, laments the decline of feudal ways and complains about the puppeteers' tendency to portray most of their Muslim character as laughable, in contrast to the more staid Hindu figures like Amar Singh Rathor. In the process, the viewer gets glimpses of some of the stock characters and techniques, including the film-influenced dance of the courtesan, the incorrigible and unstoppable drummer Karbar Khan, and the acrobatic antics of the juggler, and of the horse and rider.

Subsequently, another stock character, the courtesan Anarkali, chides the nawab for his negativism, pointing out (with accompanying footage) that the Hindu Bhats, far from being bigoted, sing at Muslim weddings, perform Muslim devotional *qawwali*, and in general portray their Muslim puppet characters with considerable affection and charm. Anarkali

and a third character, a fictitious "Puppeteer Guild Leader," go on to defend the Bhats' departures from tradition as creative strategies in adaptation to changing patronage forms, audience tastes, and competition with commercial cinema. We see the puppeteers performing advertisements for Lifebouy soap and state-sponsored skits promoting family planning. We also glimpse some of the recent technical innovations of this thoroughly grassroots folk art—the use of seven strings rather than the traditional four, puppets that vomit and exhale smoke, and various new characters (including Bombay yuppies, Chinese leaders "Chou and Mao," Gujarati *ras* stick-dancers, and Chinese circus acrobats). Eventually, the nawab seems persuaded that the current trends in puppetry are perhaps not so bad after all.

The novelty of the narrative technique is complemented by that of the visuals, which combine much straightforward footage of puppetry with snippets of village life, Bhat musical performances, a scene from Arnold Bake's films from the 1930s, and relevant shots of a popular Indian





comic  
book  
version  
of the

Amar Singh Rathor story. Various technical effects -the use of metallic hues, high-contrast, inserts, and superimpositions -combine to give the entire film a refreshing postmodernity and; as it were, a seamlessly and consistently disjointed fabric. Indeed, the whimsicality of the narrative and the entire approach seem ideally suited to the endearing humor of the Bhats' art itself.

In accordance with the idiosyncratic nature of their approach, Jairazbhoy and Catlin call their work a "fictive documentary." In doing so, they deny the pretense of presenting an objective, unbiased documentary, while allowing free rein to their own inclinations toward whimsy and innovation. The result is a film that is uniquely successful on several levels. It is, at the least, entertaining and visually rich: in spite or because of its



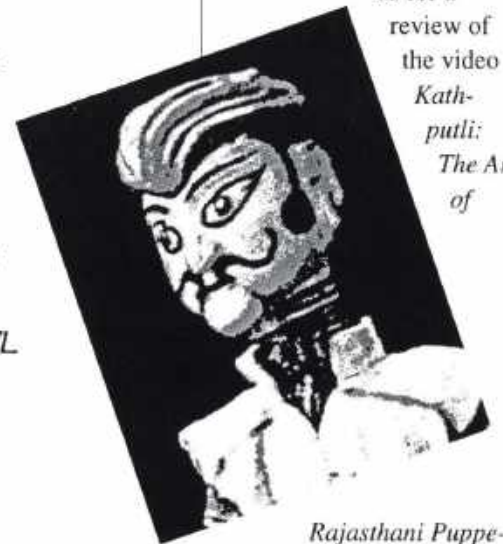
idiosyncratic approach, it provides a rich and informative view of how a living folk art is adapting to changing circumstances. Like the best postmodern discourse, it makes no attempt to mask its own subjectivity, but in the process provides a uniquely objective sort of ethnographic commentary.

BY PETER MANUEL

Our editorial opinion of *Retooling a Tradition* is that it is a delightfully successful look at a folk tradition virtually unknown in this culture. It is also very useful in the way it places this tradition within a larger cultural context. For more information, see the Spring 1990 issue of *A Propos*\* for

Gayle Goodman and Michael Schuster's excellent article "The Changing Kathputli of Rajasthan" (complete with bibliography), as well

as for a review of the video *Kathputli: The Art of*



*Rajasthani Puppeteers* produced by the Office of Folklife Programs at the Smithsonian Institution (for which Nazir Jairazboy also prepared an accompanying monograph.

—Editor

\*A *Propos* magazine, like *Puppetry International* is a benefit of membership in UNIMA-USA. For more information see the inside of the back cover.

# Puppets “Go for the Gold” in Atlanta

by Vincent Anthony

The Center for Puppetry Arts has presented four years of programs for the Cultural Olympiad. Each year we have tied eight or more guest companies into a special exhibit. The exhibits have included Marionettes (curated by Jim Gamble), African/African-American puppetry (which went on to tour for two years nationally), *Uniting Nations* (featuring new international acquisitions) and “*The Muppets in Atlanta: The Vision of Jim Henson*”. Artists have included Paul Vincent-Davis, Bob Brown, Cathy Piper, David Syrotiak’s National Marionette Theatre, and many more. We have been so very privileged to be included in such high-profile international activities for such a long time.

In this Olympic year, we were specifically asked to develop southern themes and to present southern artists during the Olympic Games (July 12- August 3, 1996). Therefore we chose new work by Applause Unlimited

of Richmond, Virginia (*Kudzu Jack*) and Grey Seal (*Bathtub Pirates*) of Charlotte, NC, as well as southern artist Jon Ludwig (*Frankenstein*). These companies and six others, as well as the special exhibit, were seen by people from all over the world from June through August.

In addition to our artistic programming we have radically improved

the Center facility. This includes a new atrium, a new 150-seat theater, and a multi-purpose room or gallery for changing exhibitions.

All of the programming at the new spaces, complemented by our association with the Olympics, has repositioned us in Atlanta in terms of visibility and credibility. This, in turn, repositions us nationally and internationally. In all this has been a wonderful four years culmi-



The Dragon and Sir George and More by Pumpnickel Puppets of Worcester, Massachusetts. Sir George decides if he will slay the friendly and loveable Great Green Dragon or if everyone will live happily ever after.



nating in a very spectacular Olympics summer. Virtually all our shows have sold out and the museum exhibits "Power of Wonder" and "The Muppets in Atlanta: The Vision of Jim Henson" have been near capacity. Reviews have been wonderful. It was especially gratifying to have *Newsweek* magazine refer to our Center's own Jon Ludwig (after seeing his production of *Frankenstein*) as directing "...one of the most exciting companies in America theater...".

*Vince Anthony is executive director of Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts and general secretary of UNIMA-U.S.A.*

\* This exhibit runs through January 4, 1997.



Frankenstein  
by Jon Ludwig

*Frankenstein's monster offers an exploration between humankind and birth/death.*

*Presented by the Center for Puppetry Arts as part of the Olympics Arts Festival in collaboration with the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games Cultural Olympiad.*

photos: David Zeiger

1995/1996

# UNIMA-USA Citation Recipients

## Live Theatre Category

### 1) Mr. Ug- Caveman

Leon Van Weelden  
Chameleon Puppet Theatre

Committee Reviewers said:

"The manipulation held our attention through action rather than dialogue."

"A highly colored, satirical and 'sassy' show which held the attention of a diverse and challenging audience, and provided an excellent foil for issues of social satire."

### 2) When the War is Over

Robert Smythe  
Mum Puppettheatre, Ltd.

Committee Reviewers said:

"Robert Smythe has taken colossal risks in producing this piece, which is about as personal as a theatrical performance can get."

"Not only do you become involved with the story of his grandfathers, but you cannot help but think of your own ancestors. More than one audience member wept openly from the cathartic nature of the material. A very effective piece."

### 3) The Hans Christian Andersen Storybook

David Simpich  
The David Simpich Marionettes

Committee Reviewers said:

"Never have I seen a performer who is more talented at scriptwriting. David's personal presence on stage is riveting. His attention to detail is unmatched in my experience."

"Every detail is perfect, and the voice work, marvelous. This exquisite piece of theatre involved layers of meaning that made it increasingly more profound as it developed."

### 4) Between Two Worlds

Tears of Joy Theatre  
and Mark Levenson

Committee Reviewers said:

"A timeless love story fraught with mystery and passion, which is both beautiful and atmospheric in design, and evocatively and sensitively performed."

"This full proscenium piece was beautifully staged and the design and costume work was exquisite. I have never seen such fine ensemble work in this country before. The skill of this group of performers working together greatly augmented the point of the show."

## Recorded Media Category

### 1) Under the Umbrella Tree

Noreen Young  
Noreen Young Productions, Inc.,  
C.B.C. television

Committee Reviewers said:

"High quality production values—exceptional characterization through voice and movement."

"A delightful and charming cast. the show has a depth and warmth not often seen. The writing is to the point, gentle and humorous. The educational values strong but not overplayed. The puppet design is clean and fresh."

### 2) Beakman's World

Mark Waxman (Executive Producer)  
Robert Heath (Producer)  
Columbia Pictures Television  
Columbia Tri-Star Television Distribution

Committee Reviewers said:

"The penguins Don and Herb are simple, funny, and, yes, hip."

"Entertaining presentation of scientific principles such as why a toilet flushes."

### 3) The Puzzle Place

Cecily Truett, Larry Lancit, and Stephen Kulczycki (Executive producers)  
for Lancit Media Productions,  
KCET- Los Angeles,  
P.B.S. Television

Committee Reviewers said:

"It's quite remarkable the way they frame the puppets in the camera shots on different levels. It's not easy, and rarely is it done so well."

"The show demonstrates the power of puppetry to bring people of different backgrounds and ethnic groups together. Long live the puppet!"

"The quality of performers and techniques is outstanding. Series centers on problem-solving through cooperative efforts. The message is clear, that we must all work together for a better world."

### 4) Shining Time Station

The Flexitons" Craig and Olga Marin  
Britt Allcroft  
Rick Sigglekow (Co-producers),  
P.B.S.

Committee Reviewers said:

"These are the best puppets I've seen on television lately. I love their characters and how the puppeteers work with their limitations. I find it refreshing to see someone using more 'traditional' hand puppets in such a nice way."

"Some really wonderful/original use of marionettes, both in manipulation and the design."

"Funky... refreshing... spontaneous fun! Not cute for a change. Variety of multi-ethnic music and characters."







## *UNIMA-USA Encourages Puppeteers to Apply for Nation's Only Awards for Film/Video Puppetry*

In 1993, UNIMA-USA, the American center of the world's oldest theatre organization (the *Union Internationale de la Marionnette*—affiliated with UNESCO), created the new awards category "Citations of Excellence for Puppetry in Recorded Media"—the nation's only honors program specifically for puppetry in film, video and other recorded media. The first Citations under the new program were awarded at a Lincoln Center reception in 1994. Applications are now being accepted for the 4th annual awards for the new program. The original awards for "live theatre" puppetry, which were founded by the late Jim Henson more than 20 years ago, are also still awarded annually.

Under the expanded program, puppeteers in film and video may submit their work directly to the Citations committee for consideration. The committee consists of a national panel of experts in film and video puppetry. When a production receives three or more nominations, it earns a Citation.

To submit work, applicants should transfer their work to 1/2-inch VHS cassette and submit it, together with their names, addresses, phone numbers and main production credits, to the Citations committee chairman. Each application must also be accompanied by a \$50 fee (payable to "UNIMA-USA") to cover handling, tape duplication and distribution to the reviewing committee. In the case of an episodic or series production, a Citation will be considered for the series rather than for a single episode. Up to two episodes of a single series may be

submitted for consideration as a series entry. Cassettes must not be copy-protected and become the property of UNIMA-USA.

Entries or Inquiries should be addressed to: Danny Burge, Citations committee chairman, UNIMA-USA, 6180 Darleon Place, Alexandria, Virginia 22310. Inquiries can also be faxed to 703-924-9233, or E-mailed to: DanB315@aol.com Only work originally produced for recorded media such as film or video is



eligible; live theatre productions recorded for archival or marketing purposes are not eligible. Works must be North American productions. All entries must be received by April 15, 1997 to qualify for 1996/1997 awards. Early applications are strongly encouraged, to ensure reviewers have ample time to review each tape for consideration!

*Chonen studies the holy books from Between Two Worlds by Tears of Joy Theatre and Mark Levenson*

photo: Newel Stickney

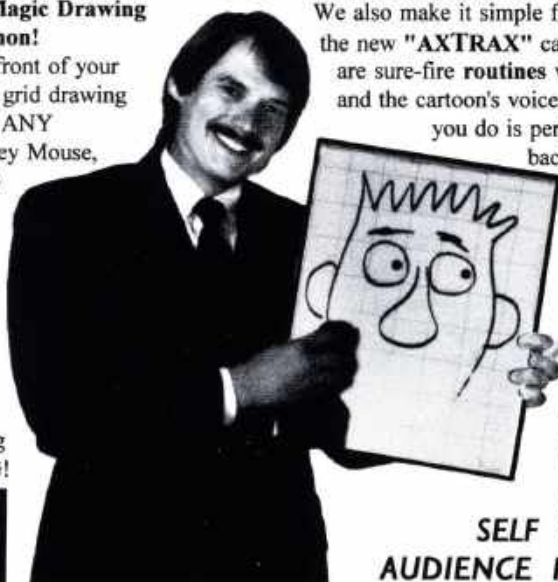


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