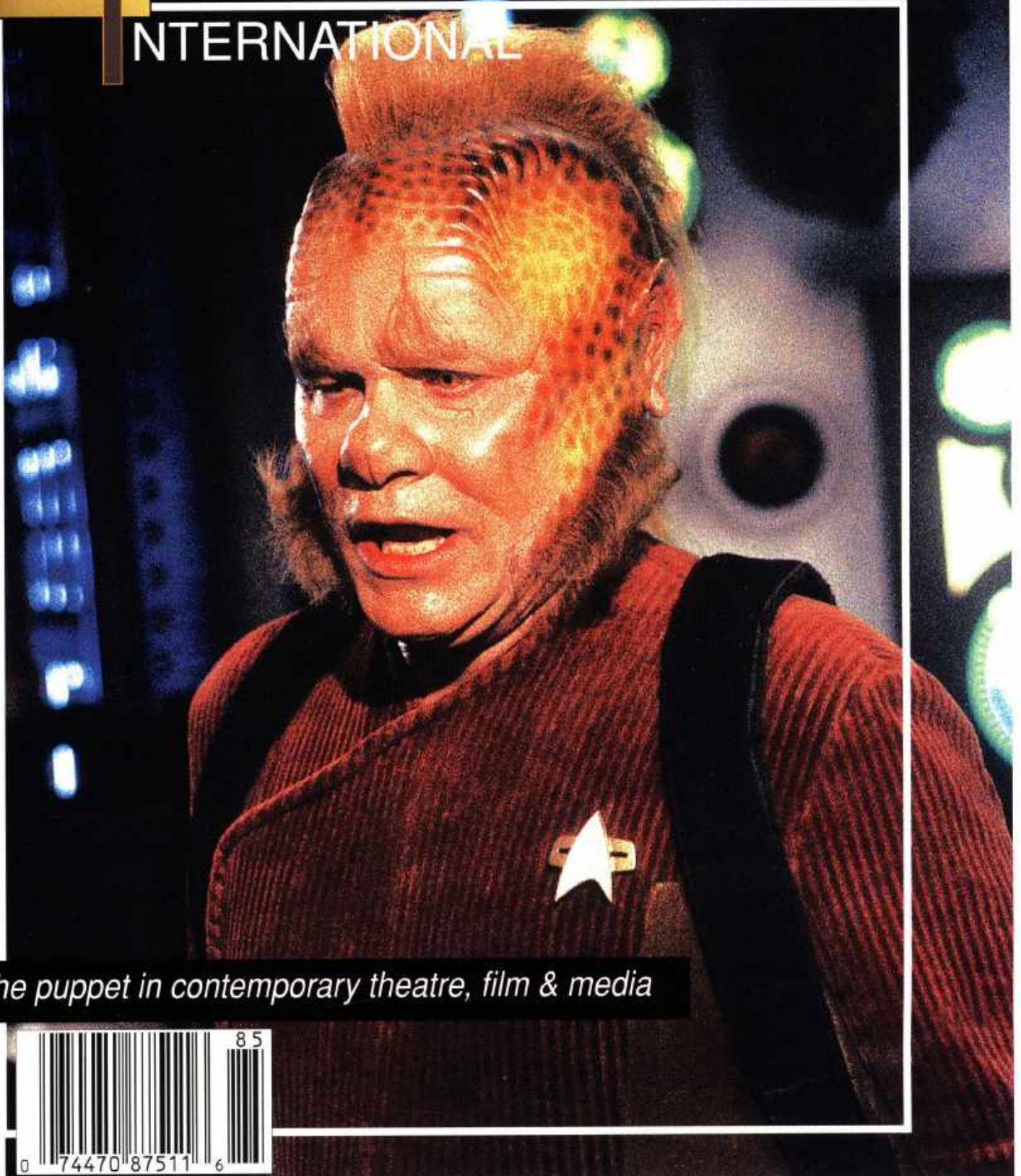


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PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media





Osume or Musume; Awaji, Japan; c. 1940. Gift of the Caroline Lutz Collection, Westhampton College, University of Richmond. Photo by Richard Termine.

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PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

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issue no. 4

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photo: Danny Feld

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Editorial—

Good-bye, America's Rose

Maybe we are not the best people to be writing about Margo Rose- after all, she lived to be 94 years old and we'd only known her since she was 81! Still, we loved her, and she us, and I guess that's reason enough. Many times, when we'd be working on a new show in our tiny little cottage in Waterford, she would have us set up our puppet booth in her living room. When we'd finished rehearsing for the day she'd say, "Just leave it set up, it won't be in the way." Then, in the years after we'd moved away from Connecticut, whenever we were in the area, there'd be a bed waiting for us. Those evenings would be spent sitting around the table near the woodstove, telling stories or going through the old photo albums which chronicled her early days of touring with Tony Sarg's company and later with her husband Rufus and their Rose Marionettes, or working on commercial films with Bil Baird and others, or the films they shot in their own living room theater. Over many a cup of herb tea we learned the history of an era of puppetry by one of the pioneers who helped make it. During the years when the Institute of Professional Puppetry Arts was running (the mid- to late- 80s) the monthly performances by professional puppet troupes were inevitably followed by a soirée at Margo's. Artists came from all over and many memorable conversations lasted well into the wee hours of the morning, yet Margo, well into her eighties, never seemed to tire. For her 90th birthday, instead of a big ceremony marking the



occasion, she had us come down and perform a puppet show at her church in place of the Sunday Sermon. When Bonnie wanted to learn sculpting, Margo just told her to come on over and they'd play with clay together. (When she sculpts today, Bonnie still hears Margo's voice gently reminding her that "sculpting is 90% LOOKING.") Even in her 94th year, when Andrew was having trouble with a marionette we were designing for a commercial client, he gave Margo a call. "Bring it on down," she said, and they spent the whole afternoon fussing with the string placement, control, and body weight. We were sure the project was hopeless, but Margo managed to find that little puppet's soul and learned how he wanted to move.

I know that whatever stories we could tell about Margo could be told similarly by many others- she was a good influence on generations of puppeteers as well as on her community. She raised three fine sons and thousands of the rest of us. As many years as she'd logged, she never did get to be an old lady; she was still learning new things, still teaching us about our craft and about life with a generosity of spirit which will ever continue to inspire us.

I remember her telling us about her first professional job, in the late 1920s. She'd come from Iowa to New York City to work for Tony Sarg. She climbed the long flight of stairs to his busy puppet loft, "and when I opened the door . . ." she paused momentarily, for effect, and then, with a look of absolute rapture on her face- "... I was in Heaven!"

God bless you, Margo.

Andrew + Bonnie



Star Trek: Voyager

A Visit to the Outer Frontiers of Puppetry

*by Michael R. Malkin
and Joshua Malkin*

There are many ways to conceptualize puppetry. Artists have always borrowed, refined and shaped the ideas of others in order to inspire and evaluate their own work in useful and inventive ways. Many of the designs and materials used in the complex film and video prosthetic make-ups seem to bear certain kinships to puppetry. In order to explore the subject in greater detail we visited the set of the syndicated television series, *Star Trek: Voyager*, at Paramount Studios in Hollywood.

We asked *Voyager*'s make-up artist—Oscar-winner and nine-time Emmy Award winner—Michael Westmore, for some comparisons between the prosthetic applications that he and his team create and the art of puppetry. He looked through shelves,

entire heads, and produced three small, beautifully-crafted hand puppets with full hand articulation. "These are about it," he said. "In the ten years I've been here, these little guys are the only 'puppets' per se, we've done."

"Nonetheless, there are lots of projects that fall into the hands of Hollywood make-up and special effects artists that could, just as accurately, be termed 'puppetry.' In fact, some of these puppets are among the most expensive and technologically sophisticated in the world, whether they are articulated by means of rods and strings or complex systems of servos and hydraulics."

What Westmore typically designs for a series like *Star Trek: Voyager*, however, are all sizes of non-mechanical prosthetics applied directly to performers' faces and bodies. These creations seem to have more to do with masks than with puppets until they're seen first hand.

cases and trunks filled with intricate latex hands, ears, brows, even

To produce and animate their creations, Westmore's team uses a broad array of techniques drawn from sculpture, painting, casting, drawing and puppetry. The actor is given a tremendously powerful transformational tool, if he or she is able to animate ("puppeteer") it effectively.

Michael Westmore began to talk about the relationships between his work for *Star Trek: Voyager* and puppetry. "Even though we don't use many 'puppets' on the show, the prosthetics and masks are sculpted and painted much like puppets. Several of our characters are full overhead masks and have very limited articulation—except for the mouth and eyes. Others are more subtle and complex in terms of how they can move."

We asked Westmore to comment about the factors that most effect his work and how he collaborates with the show's producers, directors and writers. He smiled and said, "The single biggest influence and factor is time. The second biggest factor is money. The col-



laboration process here is expensive because consultations and conferences can slow things down a great deal. I'm in a somewhat unusual position in that the make-up team functions more or less autonomously. The producers trust me to come up with designs and expect us to work very quickly. Often we've finished designing a character—sometimes even finished molding it—before we know who has been cast to play the role."

"Inspiration itself comes from everywhere... books, magazines, and especially the animal kingdom. For example, the producers came to me and said they wanted a race of characters that were based on dinosaurs. So we researched lizards and dinosaurs; scale patterns and colorings. Actually, I never stop looking through magazines and books, looking for new ideas. I keep a massive clippings file."

While wandering through the offices and trailers, we noticed that small magazine clippings were indeed pasted, pinned, and laying everywhere; on make-up mirrors, in the shop, and on Mr. Westmore's desk.

Westmore continued, "The physical traits of certain animals lend themselves to certain feelings; for instance, rats are often associated with "sneakiness." For *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, we used some rat-like qualities in the creation of the race of beings that you wouldn't want to turn your back on. I don't think people saw the make-ups and thought 'hey, that's a big rat!' Instead, they saw some of those rat-like traits in the characters... furtive, opportunistic, untrustworthy, sinister. We also use color and painting schemes to suggest feeling: cool colors for evil characters, warmer colors for sympathetic characters."

"The scripts also, obviously, have to be a primary source for inspiration. Writers of the individual episodes don't usually give elaborate physical descriptions of creatures. They'll give quick impressions like 'warm and

gentle' or 'cruel and humorless.' Every script is carefully read so that each character's action, behaviors, manner and temperament can be analyzed and taken into account. Is the character confused? Is he or she ultimately redeemed? This type of information influences the design process, helps in the determination of what forms are researched and incorporated, and how the sculpture is rendered. For recurring characters, there's usually a bit more information available, but we're still responsible for the overall look and feel."

We asked Mr. Westmore if he thought that some actors were better equipped to handle the challenges of 'performing through the make-up' than others. Did he see any relationship between acting with prosthetics and puppetry?



“This show doesn’t use any mechanics per se. There just isn’t the time or money. As I mentioned, many of the pieces we use are quite subtle; finger extensions, foreheads, brows, teeth, contact lenses. All of these appliances are articulated and given life by the actors. Some of them are really excited by this process. Most performers feel that it gives them challenging new tools and poses interesting limitations. Others feel it is restraining. They have a fear of the process... of being able to ‘act through the make-up.’”

“The expressive and mobile qualities of a particular character are largely anticipated in the design, sculpture, and application of the prosthetics. For example, a dour character will be sculpted with dourness in mind. Facial lines may be sculpted down to accentuate the jowls or frown lines. A good actor will familiarize him or herself with the expressive range of the design. Sometimes one of our team has to do a bit of coaching— letting an actor know what the make-up will do and won’t do. Using

this hypothetical ‘dour creature’ as an example, if the actor was to smile too broadly, he or she may be fighting the expressive capabilities of the sculpture.”

“For CD-ROM, the producers wanted to re-create one of the more famous creatures from the original Star Trek series, called a

Gorn. We built a torso and head. The mouth was supposed to be articulated by the actor’s jaw. The actor could move the mouth but it was much more expressive when controlled as a hand puppet. On screen, the character looked and functioned much better that way. In that specific case, a ‘mask’ ended up becoming a ‘puppet’ because a technician’s hand was more mobile and provided a better means of control.”

We asked Mr. Westmore, “What are the biggest creative challenges and greatest satisfactions in your work?”

“The biggest challenge is working against the clock. We work to challenging schedules. We have to work very quickly. In addition, this year it looks like we’ll only have a couple of weeks off. The greatest thrill is seeing it all come to life. On paper and in the molds, it’s still rubber. But it’s really great to see it come to life on the actor and then, ultimately, on the screen.”

After talking to Michael Westmore, we visited Westmore’s associate, 1996 Oscar nominee and Emmy Award winner, Scott Wheeler, in the show’s make-up trailer. “I’ve done some puppet work and I’ve done prosthetic make-ups and there are a lot of similarities between them.” He begins to elaborate. “In a sense, prosthetic make-up is like a puppet applied onto, and controlled by, the human face. With both puppetry and prosthetics, I pay a lot of attention to how make-up design helps to define a character. In order to allow performers to become more efficient and creative animators, I’ve had to study the mechanics of the human face. I spend a lot of time looking things up in anatomy books to discover more about how human and animal faces move. In fact, I spend a lot of time thinking about the relationships between animal and human facial movements because I’m sometimes called upon—in a very literal and technical sense—to overlay the one onto the other. Any time a prosthetic make-up moves unnaturally, it destroys the illusion of life... of reality. I try to be very careful about how the mechanics of a prosthetic make-up can complement, exaggerate or extend facial movement in ways that will enhance the character.”

“I’ve also learned what materials to use in specific circumstances. For instance, I know that foam rubber is relatively light and stretches like skin, whereas silicone is heavier and more difficult to paint but compresses like skin. In two-dimensional work, the make-up always moves— because it is skin— but with prosthetic make-ups you need to know what needs to move in order to create the necessary effect.

Wheeler recalled how the Star Trek: Voyager character, Neelix, was designed. "It was jointly created by my boss, Mike Westmore, and me. We were given imaginative but relatively brief character descriptions... things like 'he's the concierge at a one-star hotel.' We adopted a kind of prairie dog/mischievous rodent/hedgehog motif. We even gave him the worn flat teeth of a vegetarian rather than the pointed, more savage-looking teeth of a meat-eater or predator. The eyes were made to look like those of a marsupial. The painting scheme goes from darker tones in the back to lighter tones in the front. The character was created and designed before the role was cast. Neelix's face is not human but suggests humanity and exaggerated forms of human expression. The facial applications were all made intentionally thin to encourage the greatest possible range of expression."

"Even with the most extreme alien characters, the performers need to be able to create and the audience has to be able to interpret clear, believable, and fundamentally natural emotions and sensibilities. Ethan Phillips, the actor who plays Neelix, was recommended to us as an actor with an extraordinary ability to make his complex make-up seem extremely natural and expressive."

Since our conversation occurred between takes, he was in full make-up. He began by saying that "I'm a character actor... that is, basically, I wrap myself around the traits of other people... but I'm not a chameleon who completely changes his personality and appearance. I can't comment on the relationships between what I do and performing as puppeteer because I have no experience as a puppeteer. On the other hand, I can describe what I do and let readers make their own connections."

"I'm in my fourth season on Star Trek: Voyager. I assume I was cast because my auditions showed traits that suited the writers' and producers' pre-existing ideas about the character. When I first got the part, I found myself experimenting with the prosthetic cheeks, the eyebrows, even the ears—which I discovered I could move. The look is not completely distinct or separate from me. I use the prosthetics to make them a part of the me who is the character. With the Westmore style make-up, my real features come through. Neelix is one of a number of "T a l a x i a n" characters. Although we are clearly members of the same species, each of us is individualized. These are not masks. It's my real mouth and my real chin. Under the contacts, it's my real eyes. Neelix is more

a morph—a physical transformation—of me than it is a mask. I guess, in that sense, he's very much like a puppet. It's part of my responsibility as an actor to animate the externals in ways that reveal the character. This," he gestures

with both hands at his head, "is how Neelix looks!" It is a great illusion. I don't fight it. I accept it."

Phillips paused a moment and shifted intellectual gears. "There's something else at work here in a very practical, career sense. As I've men-



tioned, I'm a character actor. Television eats guys like me up. Our gestures, our facial mannerisms can become too familiar. These prosthetics allow me to stand out while, at the same time, remaining anonymous. I suppose this too may be very much like the relationship

between puppeteer and his or her character. In a way, the make-up is an extreme, yet, at the same time, very personal and physical and emotional transformation of me. When I take the prosthetics off at the end of the day, I'm no longer Neelix."

As Phillips spoke, I realized that there was a mirror behind my head. While speaking, as if by instinct, he experimented with slight movements of an eyebrow or cheek. It was fascinating to watch.

He developed his thoughts: "Mike Westmore and Scott Wheeler are very talented guys. I let their make-up do all the 'alien' work. This frees me up and allows me to concentrate on telling the truth. That's a very helpful and liberating thing. My job is to take control and possession of this fantastic external form and animate it with inner life and truth."

"This is not just a mask that's glued to my head. It's a specifically designed, remarkably evocative creation that imposes certain limitations but also gives me a surprising range of expressive capabilities. In addition, the mechanics and design of the make-up influence my performance in a lot of ways. My posture, gait, physical mannerisms and voice are all affected—often in extremely subtle ways."

As we concluded our day on the set, we were left with some persistent questions. What are the boundaries between make-up and prosthetics? Between masks and prosthetics? Between prosthetics and puppetry? Between masks and puppetry? Is there a practical point at which distinctions between such

"forms" cease to be clear or even important? Michael Westmore and Scott Wheeler both have an impressive range of skills that certainly defy easy categorization. In whatever way we define their work, however, it's implications are fascinating.

A boy slides a set of plastic fangs into his mouth and

"becomes" a vampire. This simple prosthetic is a catalyst that affects his whole body and creates a specific mindset. The child hisses, slinks, flaps his arms, and preys upon unwary siblings. Without the fangs, his younger siblings would have simply giggled. With them, they flee in terror. The fangs are much more than a simple visual aid. They're a psychologically transformative tool; for both performer and viewer.

The sophisticated prosthetics created by Westmore's shop transform an actor's psychology as well as his or her appearance. His team often goes even further by creating appliances that literally metamorphose the entire human body. The physicality of the performer is re-invented. The actor's real body and face become control mechanisms for animating a completely new being. They are the collaborative creations of designers, sculptors, painters. When put under the control of expert and dedicated performers like Ethan Phillips, such hybrid characters are capable of a



tremendous range of expression.

Perhaps this type of work will become a highly specialized performance niche in its own right... deconstructing any preconceived notions of what a "character actor" or "puppeteer" is supposed to be. Who knows; maybe the Los Angeles trade papers will soon feature ads exhorting actors to enroll in "prosthetic puppetry" classes.

Whatever the future may be, we are persuaded that the best and most effective examples of the prosthetic make-ups we've seen can easily be thought of as puppets created by skilled designers, and animated—not by rods or strings—but by the muscles of an actor's face. Of course, ultimately, the question of whether prosthetic make-up is puppetry isn't important. The point is that drawing relationships between puppetry and sophisticated work in closely allied fields can serve to expand consideration of what puppetry is and can be. •



Yaya Coulibaly: *Malian Contemporary Artist and Puppeteer* by Mary Jo Arnoldi

Yaya Coulibaly brings his considerable talents as a sculptor, puppeteer, and playwright to bear in creating his thoroughly engaging puppet plays. This past April I stopped by Yaya's house in Bamako and was immediately swept up in a whirlwind of activity that always seems to surround this talented artist and one of Mali's preeminent contemporary puppeteers. I happily settled in for a pleasant few hours to catch up on all the news, to see Yaya's new puppets, and talk to him about this work. Yaya was, of course, at the center of the whirlwind, animated and carrying on several different activities without ever missing a beat. No one was immune, and everyone seemed swept up and buoyed by his energy.

The house itself was a work in progress, with puppet storage rooms, an art

gallery, and the family's living quarters all in various stages of construction. Out of the storage areas came a stream of large and small puppets, string marionettes, and rod puppets, all beautifully carved and colorfully painted. I immediately recognized characters like the wily billy goat and the elegant antelope, the ferocious lion and the beguiling Bamana woman, the African colonial soldier and the dignified village chief, the Mande king and the seductive water spirit with her long flowing hair. Krounko Doumbia, a member of Yaya's troupe, was sorting puppets and packing them into trunks in preparation for a performance that coming weekend in the neighboring country of Burkina Faso. A photographer from the French Cultural Center was setting up backdrops and shooting puppets for the catalog to accom-

pany Yaya's exhibition at the Center in September. Other puppets were being passed around and duly and audibly admired by several prospective clients, who had arrived at Yaya's gallery/home just minutes before me.

Yaya's deep and abiding passion for Malian puppetry has its roots in his early years growing up in the town of Koula in the cercle of Koulikoro. Born in 1959, Yaya was initiated into the magical world of puppetry at age ten when he became a member of the community's youth association. For the next decade, Yaya learned the secrets of constructing the puppet and masquerade costumes, and the techniques for animating the various rod puppets and masks.

Yaya Coulibaly surrounded by his puppets.

photo: courtesy of the Centre Culturel Français, Bamako, Mali

Traditional puppet masquerades have a long history in and around Koula where Bamana, Bozo, and Somono communities have performed the theater since at least the mid-nineteenth century and probably much earlier. Each year, following the harvest, young men organize a festival which combines masquerade, puppetry, dance, song, and music in a spectacular event. Everyone in the association participates in the event which begins in the late afternoon and lasts throughout the night. One by one throughout the evening, rod puppets and masqueraders, representing bush animals and spirits and characters drawn from daily life, appear in the dance arena and perform for the assembled villagers. Women sing the puppet songs, which are songs of praise for the individual characters, and young men dance with the characters as they move through and around the circle.

When Yaya left his home town in 1977 to pursue formal art studies in Bamako at the National Institute of Arts, he took his passion for puppetry with him. It was during this period that he decided to pursue puppetry as an art form and as a profession. In 1980 he founded his puppet troupe,



A Bamana man

photo: courtesy of the Centre Culturel Français,
Bamako, Mali

Groupe SOGOLON. In 1981 he received his degree in drawing and the plastic arts from the Institute and his senior thesis was dedicated to a study of traditional Malian puppetry.

In 1981 he joined the staff of the youth division of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Art and Culture, and between 1981 and 1984, he spent several years working in the northern regions of Mali. In 1984 he returned to Bamako and began working at the National Museum in Mali as a graphic artist and an educational outreach specialist. I met Yaya in 1987 at the National Museum and, at that time, he was performing regularly in venues around Bamako.

Yaya and I traveled together for several weeks to Koulikoro as part of my research for a book on Mali's traditional puppet masquerade theater. Together we visited a number of different communities and spent hours talking to blacksmiths, who are the traditional sculptors in Bamana society and who make most of the traditional theater's masks and puppets. We interviewed women who are the theater's singers, and we recorded a number of puppet songs. We also interviewed elders about the history of the theater, the repertoire of masks and puppets, and the meanings associated with the various characters. Yaya clearly was already very knowledgeable about the theater, but what impressed me was the great respect he showed local sculptors and puppeteers, and his eagerness to learn more about puppetry from them.

In 1988 Yaya traveled to France and received a diploma from the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières. That same year he was also appointed artistic director of the National Marionette theater of Mali. In 1989 he collaborated with the filmmaker Mambaye Coulibaly on the film "Segu-Janjo La Geste de Segou," based on an episode in the epic history of the Segou empire. Yaya created all of the puppet characters for this award-winning film. As artistic director of the National Troupe, Yaya organized over 50 performances within Mali and abroad. Yaya sees marionettes as one of the most effective ways of

teaching urban Malian children about their rich cultural heritage. For him, marionettes are the umbilical cord of Malian cultural patrimony because they bring all of the different art forms together in one event.

While Yaya recognizes that traditional Malian puppet theater is an important source for his own art, he does not slavishly copy the older form. He has created a new and dynamic contemporary puppet theater for Mali. His performances mix traditional rod puppets and masks with newer string marionettes. His plays, unlike the traditional puppet masquerades which have no narrative structure, combine puppets, songs, music and words to tell a story.

Traditional folktales and legends and episodes from Mali's epics have always held his interest, but he also culls Mali's colonial history and contemporary life for inspiration for his plays. Traditional folktales serve as morality plays, through which he makes commentary on contemporary Malian life. In these tales, classic characters—like the hare, the guinea fowl, lion and hyena—act out the full range of human virtues and foibles. He has also written a bittersweet play about the bravery



Yayoroba, the beautiful Bamana woman

photo: courtesy of the Centre Culturel Français,
Bamako, Mali



The Lion Masquerade

photo: courtesy of the Centre Culturel Francais,
Bamako, Mali

and sacrifices of West African soldiers who fought for France in the two World Wars, and their fate following the wars. Another recent play speaks to the suffering which many Africans, including Malians, have endured at the hands of corrupt political regimes since African independence in the 1960s.

When, in 1992, the National Troupe was disbanded due to lack of government funding, Yaya decided to strike out on his own. He turned his considerable talents to creating puppets, to writing plays and to developing his troupe, Groupe SOGOLON, as a profitable private enterprise. It was a bold move, since it is still extremely

difficult in Mali for an artist to make a living outside of government patronage. It has certainly not been an easy transition from civil servant to private performer, but his continued commitment to his art is a credit to his considerable talents, his deep love of puppetry and his unshakable determination. Many of the extraordinary puppets that Yaya creates and uses in his plays, he exhibits and sells through his own and other commercial galleries in Mali. These sales provide him with the necessary funds to develop new plays, to support his troupe, and to meet the basic financial needs of his family. As he so eloquently stated in an interview published in the

catalogue of his September exhibition at the French Cultural Center in Bamako, "Mari-onettes are everything to me; they are my mother, my world, my bank, my egg and my chick."

Note: I would like to thank Yaya Coulibaly and the staffs of the Centre Culturel Francais in Bamako and the American Cultural Center in Bamako for their help with photographs and logistical matters in preparing this article.

Mary Jo Arnoldi is the curator of African Art and Ethnology, Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

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Kukla, Fran & Ollie's 50th Birthday

As TV shows go, it was one of the best. And one of the first. Burr Tillstrom and his Kuklapolitan Players premiered in October of 1947 and stayed on TV, in one form or another, for the next 30 years or so. As a kid in the '50s, I got to watch the last few years of their original series (which ended in 1957) on the first "go 'round." PBS produced another 26 episodes in the early '70s, followed by 13 more from NBC. This last series of shows was produced by Martin Tahse, who eventually bought the rights to all 39 of the final episodes. He is releasing them

on the New Kid Home Video label—and just in time for the 50th anniversary of the company's debut!*

Tahse was an experienced producer, though he found working with Tillstrom and Co., well, different:

"It was scary, because none of the shows were scripted, and everything I'd done up to then had a script. They didn't even rehearse, except for the songs. They had a theme, an idea of where they were going, but how they got there was completely improvised.

It was also one camera, which meant

if anything went wrong, you had to start all over, and who knows what marvelous things you might never be able to capture again.

It took me four shows just to relax in the booth, but by the sixth, I was able to lean back, have a drink and enjoy it. Burr had been doing this for so long, he had such a rapport with Fran, the shows they did were seemingly effortless, and always came in exactly on time."

—Tahse quote from a 1996 interview by David Cuthbert in the Times Picayune (New Orleans)

It is difficult to conceive, in this era of sophisticated TV technology, how two performers and a suitcase full of simple handpuppets could have produced SO MANY seasons of shows, all of which were essentially improvised. They did, though, and were not only successful, they were adored. Burr was beloved among puppeteers (as elsewhere), not only as a puppeteer, but as a warm and genuine person. Below are some personal remembrances by puppeteers who knew him, written especially for *Puppetry International*:



A young Burr Tillstrom, c. 1936

One day in the mid-1980's, as I was helping Burr pack up the Kuklapolitan puppets, Burr related a sage bit of advice. While he and Kukla were starring in the Broadway show *Side by Side by Sondheim*, they sometimes played to houses that weren't packed. Some of the chorus performers would often grumble about this, backstage. Burr recalled that he always pointed out to them "Focus on the people who ARE there, not the people who aren't." It is a philosophy I have re-heard in his voice many times while performing with my own puppets to a sparse cabaret audience in New York City.

That bit of advice was indicative of Burr's whole upbeat outlook on life. At the time of his death, he was negotiating a revival of an Off-Broadway stage show at Lincoln Center in New York, an animated series starring the Kuklapolitans was in the works (he had already recorded the voice-over soundtrack for this), and he was very much looking forward to being inducted into the Television Hall of Fame (which he was awarded posthumously and accepted by Fran Allison). I found Burr to be an extremely kind, quick-witted gentleman with a touch of Beulah Witch's wicked sense of humor added to the brew.

—Todd Stockman

*To get "Kukla, Fran and Ollie" TV shows on video, see ad elsewhere in this magazine.



Kukla, Burr, Fran and Ollie. photo: Chicago Historical Society

After opening the 1979 Puppeteers' of America Festival

at Kent State University in Ohio, Burr Tillstrom went out for a bite to eat with me and Vince Anthony, President of P of A at the time. Burr started discussing the performance, which he had improvised, as usual, as if he were another member of the audience. He asked if we

agreed that Madame Ooglepuss was in good voice that night. He mentioned one of Ollie's quips and said he thought what Kukla said in response was very funny. So did we, and found it delightful that Burr took such joy in recapping the antics of the Kuklapolitans as if they were independent beings. They were very real, individual personalities, even to him.

Jim Henson once told me he learned puppet characterization from watching Burr's shows. We all learned to love each and every one of his creations, even Beulah Witch, and the lovely man who brought them to life.

—Nancy Lohman Staub

I first met Burr Tillstrom at a party in Holland, Michigan. The hosts had asked me to perform one of my puppet shows as part of the festivities without mentioning that Burr would be there. I showed up on a bicycle, wearing the stage, and there he was. It was somewhat on the order of casually informing an actor who is about to present a Shakespearean monologue that Laurence Olivier is in the room. As it turned out, Burr liked the show and invited me over to his place in Saugatuck the next day to visit with Kukla and Ollie.

Arriving at his place, my first thought was, "So, this is what a puppeteer gets if he lives a good life." Burr had a small, barn-like house at the end of a quiet street. There were lots of bird feeders and a tiny staircase for toads to climb up onto the patio. He was quite the animal lover, although he did draw the line at squirrels in the ceiling. Anyway, we sat around and talked puppets for awhile, when suddenly he said, "let's have a look at Kukla and Ollie." He brought out a small, sturdy packing case in which the Kuklapolitans resided between shows. "Here," he said, "Try on Kukla!" Then he insisted I try Ollie on. Puppeteers can be pretty sensitive about other people handling their characters, so I hardly dared to move. An interesting thing about Kukla was that he had no sleeves. Look closely at a picture of Kukla in performance and you'll notice that between the leather gloves that are his hands and the cloth that is his body, you can actually see Burr's thumb and middle finger. The gloves were held in place by ribbons that attached to a small leather pouch that Burr held in his hand inside the puppet. As for Ollie, the inside of his head is all leather,



Buelah Witch, Cecil Bill, Ollie, Kukla, Colonel Crackie, Fletcher Rabbit and Madame Ooglepuss photo: Chicago Historical

polished and contoured from years of use. It felt like a well-worn saddle.

After trying on the puppets, we went out to his garage. Burr set up a small, portable stage and started doing shtick and explaining his ideas on puppets and performing. It was basically an informal master class in puppetry. Burr had started his puppetry career in Vaudeville and had gone on to be the youngest puppeteer in the WPA Puppetry Unit during the great depression. His first puppetry work was with marionettes, inspired by Edith Flack Ackley's book *Marionettes*. Kukla was created at a hand puppet workshop Burr attended at the very first Puppeteers of America Festival. He had actually worked with all the people whose books I had read. Working with him there in the garage, I felt that the great 2,000 year-old tradition of puppetry was being passed on to me.

—Clay Martin

From the early days of television there was great publicity about "Kukla, Fran and Ollie" being spontaneous and unrehearsed. What the public did not know was that the Kuklapolitans had been perfecting their improvisational format for ten years B.T. (Before Television). Burr was the consummate "commedia" cast playing all the parts himself; sometimes with a person out front, sometimes not. Whatever Burr did in real life, each Kuklapolitan was invisibly present, taking a highly personal attitude about the event.

When Marlin Perkins, Director of the Lincoln Park Zoo, was a special guest on the show, he brought a skunk

*The Chicago Historical Society
celebrates
Kukla, Fran and Ollie's 50th Birthday*

who was displayed on the playboard where the Kuklapolitans could observe at close range. The interview was cut short when the skunk became restive and uncooperative. Perkins tried to restrain the animal, and it bit him. The skunk was hustled off camera, but not before it had left a mess on the stage. The outline for the day's show flew out the window at this unexpected turn of events, and moved into an extravaganza of invention. The Kuklapolitans coped with this unfortunate accident with a brilliant combination of good taste and hilarity. Burr's genius made it a gem.

— George Latshaw

Maybe it was the late

1970's. Nancy Staub was visiting me at the time. The phone rang—the caller was Burr Tillstrom, who was visiting the L.A. area. He was promptly invited to dinner at our house, and he showed up with his dog. The dog met my beagle, "Missy", and they became fast friends. To his embarrassment, Burr's dog had a little accident on the carpet. For a moment he was not sure how to apologize— then suddenly, the answer— "I know, Beulah will do it for me!" Burr brought in all of his puppets from the car. A Ping-Pong table was brought up from the basement storage room and turned on its side for a stage in the living room. Burr performed for about an hour— an evenings' entertainment with Burr!

— Gayle Schluter

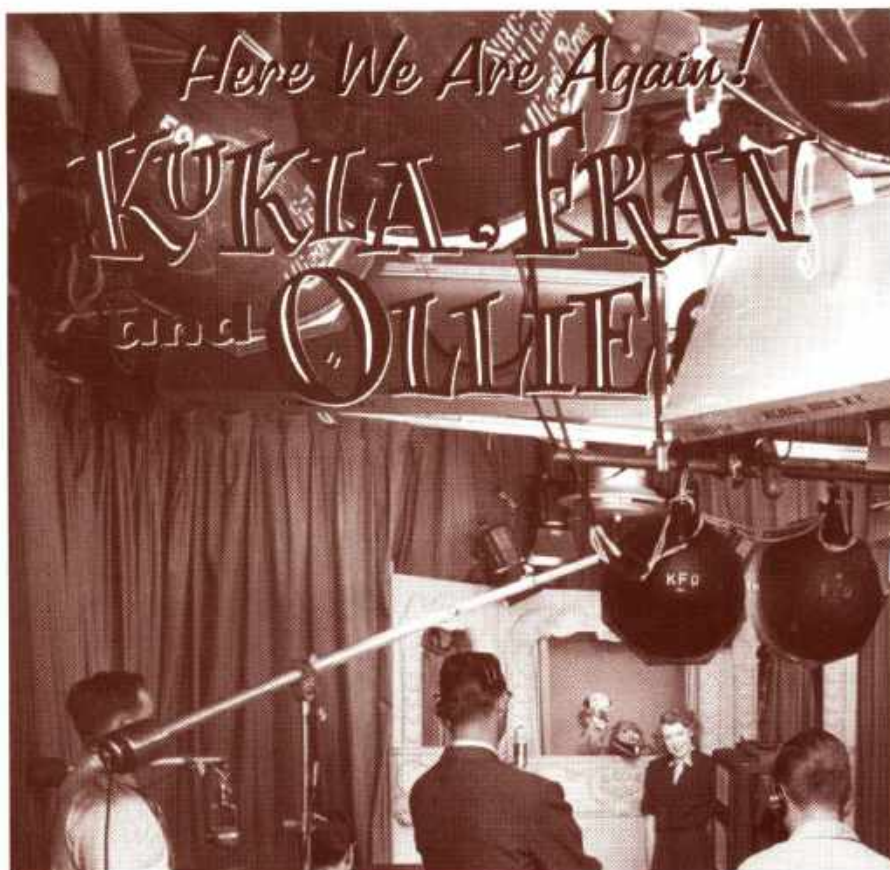


photo: Chicago Historical Society

(Chicago, August 20, 1997)
"Kukla, Fran and Ollie" turns 50 this year! Chicagoans who recall Kukla, Ollie, Buelah Witch and all the other Kuklapolitans will be delighted to learn that Chicago Historical Society is celebrating the birthday of the beloved band of puppets with a comprehensive exhibit featuring the original puppets and the programs that endeared them to grownups and children alike. The exhibit will open October 4, 1997 and run through mid 1988.

The puppets will be displayed on stage, as if in a television studio during a live broadcast. Original props,

costumes, scenery and music will add to the feeling that a show is underway. The presentation will include a selection of original fan mail and gifts, including a telegram from Tallulah Bankhead and letters from Mayor Richard J. Daley, Marlon Brando and other well-known figures.

Visitors will have a chance to see for themselves why the show was so cherished; clips from original Kukla, Fran and Ollie programs will be aired in a 1950's style living room.

The show made its broadcasting debut October 13, 1947 on TV in Chicago, under the name of Junior

Jamboree. Fran Allison was the only "real" person in front of the stage.

The Kuklapolitans worked together for years in live performances before becoming TV stars. Kukla was the "founding member" of the troupe, followed soon after by Oliver J. Dragon. Eight of the original puppet characters will be included in the exhibit.

By January 1949, the program, now titled Kukla, Fran and Ollie, was carried on coaxial cable to cities in the Midwest and the East Coast. Soon it was broadcast nationally on the NBC network. For 10 years, it was broadcast (for many years, five days a week) live, unscripted and essentially unrehearsed.

The popularity of the Kuklapolitans remained high over the years. From 1969 - 71, PBS carried the show; from 1971-79 it was aired on CBS. In addition, there were numerous specials, guest appearances and live performances.

Burr Tillstrom and Fran Allison were active performers until their deaths: Tillstrom died in 1985; Allison in 1989.

Admission to the Kukla, Fran and Ollie exhibit is free with admission to the Historical Society.

The Chicago Historical Society, located on the corner of Clark Street and North Avenue in Chicago, is open daily from 9:30 AM to 4:30PM and Sundays from noon to 5. For more information, call 312-642-4600.

The 1972-73 school year was spent assembling, developing and rehearsing "Kukla, Fran and Ollie:

A 25 year Retrospective" which opened the 1973 Hope Summer Theater season. For this multi-media mix of live performance, slides and kinescope film of the early T.V. shows, I was Burr's backstage assistant in charge of packing and unpacking puppets, turning music pages, taking notes, passing props and dealing with emergencies. I also did a lot of watching.

It was fascinating to watch Burr in action, to see him bring the Kuklapolitans to life, to experience a creative process which was, for the most part, spontaneous and to feel part of the joy he obviously felt, knowing that the audience was loving every minute. This was the kind of theater for me.

I later assisted Burr when the retrospective was performed at the 1973 Puppeteers of America Convention in East Lansing, and I was on hand when the show was reassembled for a performance at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. Also at this time, with Burr's guidance, I began working on my own Punch and Judy puppet show.

I recently visited Margo Rose who remembered watching a young Burr perform on closed-circuit T.V. at Marshall Fields department store in Chicago. She recalled the days when she and Rufus, and Martin and Olga Stevens would tour with their marionette troupe. Burr came along on one of those trips and he brought with him his new friend, Kukla. Rufus was impressed with the way Kukla entertained the touring truck and passers-by as well and predicted that this little clown could well become America's Mr. Punch.

This is the legacy of inspiration which has been passed on by puppeteers like Tony Sarg to Rufus and Margo Rose, and Martin and Olga Stevens to Burr Tillstrom and finally to me. I know that this is not a straight line of inheritance but rather one with many branches and off-shoots. Yet that doesn't make me feel any less privileged.

It's fortunate that much of Burr's work has been preserved on film and video tape. No doubt Kukla, Fran and Ollie will continue to inspire other puppeteers for years to come through the medium in which Burr Tillstrom was a pioneer. But I saw what the camera never could, the intensity, the emotion, the eagerness to share, excite, enthrall— all channeled through arms and hands into pieces of cloth and stuffing on the other side of a scrim.

Excerpted from "Legacy of Laughter: Burr Tillstrom and the Kuklapolitans," by Brad Williams, from the Spring 1986 issue of The O'Neill, the newsletter of The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.

[Ed. note: Brad Williams passed on a great deal of that magic before his untimely death in 1992. Among his many accomplishments, he was co-founder of the Pandemonium Puppet Company in Connecticut, and designed and constructed puppets for "Pinwheel," a popular pre-school children's show on Nickelodeon.]

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In Praise of Wobbly Technology

by Robert Lepage

Elsinor represents a moment from a “work in progress” which uses *Hamlet* as a starting point, not the final version of this very ambitious project. It has been greatly simplified since its creation in Montreal in 1996, and will likely be simplified yet again. As an actor, my interest in *Hamlet* goes back a long way, but this is not simply a matter of proposing yet another interpretation. My challenge is situated, rather, on the level of narration: I would like to “recount” *Hamlet*, rather



Robert Lepage, *The Seven Streams of the River Ota*, 1994

photo: E. Valette

than play it. I would like to enter the play through a different door, in order to see how the new technologies—and at the same time the simplest, most ancient ones—lead us to a new reading of the text. At times the meeting of text and technology is a happy one, at times it is not: I still have more to do, I think, in order to find my *Hamlet*.

A New Intimacy

I am interested more and more in technology, even when it repulses the spectators, because I find that the form and the essence are complementary. The use of new technologies makes us discover that perhaps the play recounts things which we could not imagine. I use the new technologies a

little bit like a new sort of musical instrument, that composers or musicians want to explore to see which new sensibilities can be expressed with it. When they invented the cello, the spinet or piano—there must have been many attempts and many false steps before finding their true “personality.”

The fact of being alone on stage and of playing all the characters has led me to stress certain themes: those of madness, of schizophrenia, of incest (all the characters played by a single actor’s body is already expressive of a side of incestuousness). I have had to neglect other aspects—the political aspect, for example, which, at this point, the play doesn’t appear to me to demand. Given the breadth of the character of *Hamlet*, first of all, but also with the breadth of the other characters, I attempt to put on stage that which touches me personally. The more I am hidden behind the makeup, the disguises, the distortions and the multiple images, the more easily I can speak from myself, because the technical means utilized makes contact with the audience very intimate.

The idea of working with screens on stage, or using a two-dimensional design (which gives the appearance of three-dimensionality) comes from the necessity of obtaining that new form of intimacy with the audience.

Today, for economic reasons, performance halls are enormous: one must sell ever-greater numbers of tickets to amass ever-greater numbers of spectators there

in order to make back one's investment. Twelve years ago, for my show *Solo*, I was already using mechanical support to project images (a series of titles). The play was presented in halls for two or three hundred people. The intimacy was given, therefor, by the presence of the actor who spoke, and by his voice, at times amplified. A second solo piece, *Needles and Opium*, with which I toured for three years, was a bit more ambitious, technologically: shadow puppets were projected



Robert Lepage, *Elsinor*, 1996

photo: E. Valette

on screens (close-up renditions of my head or hand, or of certain small objects) with an amplification of the cinematographic sort. This experience has led me to develop the utilization of screens in a way that will draw the viewer in. At that time, I had the need to speak, to whisper, to recount those things which are very close to me, very intimate. In *Elsinor*, I have multiplied the screens. I wanted them to be mobile and flexible, in order to explore a set which moves, and which permits the approach of images now on the diagonal, now on the vertical. The projections are frontal, but as the screens move one has the impression of seeing the images in three dimensions.

Show the Imperfection

I've never been tempted by the theatre of images. On the contrary, I consider the stage setting as a character who enters into dialog with my own body, my own energy as an actor. The more the theatre approaches perfection, the more it becomes cinematographic, the less it merits being presented on stage. We must not forget that "mixing it up" a little is what draws people to the theater. They want to be where they can smell things cooking; savor the repast which is being prepared, before all that is nourishing is drowned in the sauce. The presence of video on stage does not erase direct contact with the audience, even if they see huge images

on the screen, or a large-scale head. I believe the theatrical remains intact.

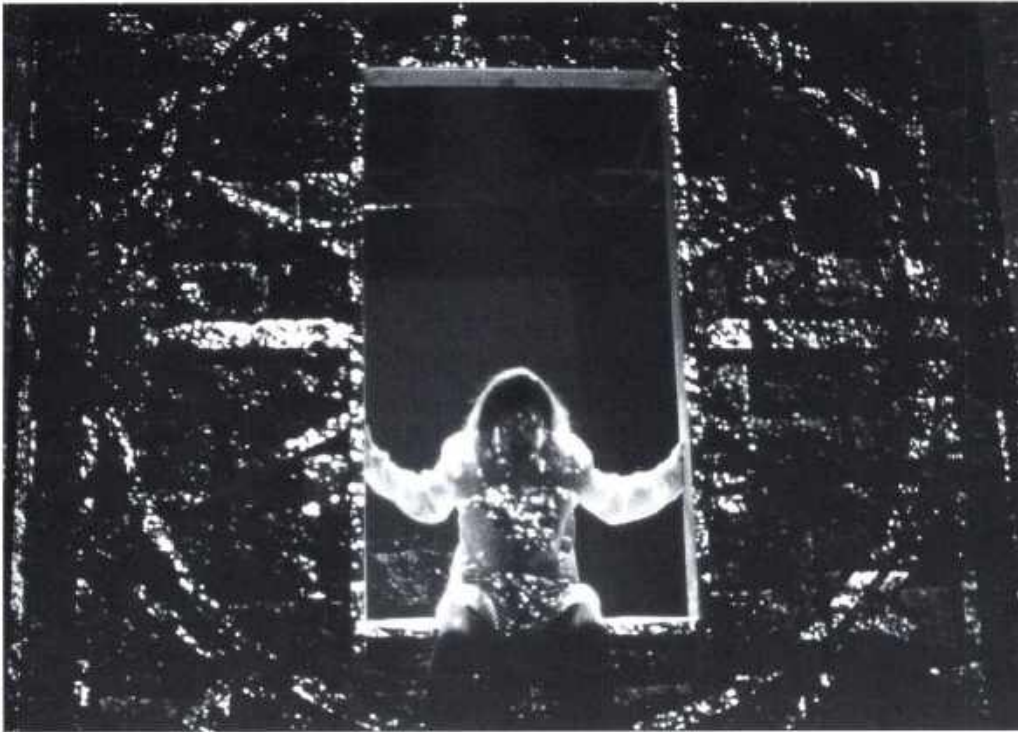
In Japan, I've taken part in many demonstrations of high-definition television. This technology will lead to enormous changes because all the details or defects of a face, normally imperceptible, are amplified. When one shows a close-up of an opera singer on T.V., the make-up, grimaces, gestures designed for viewing from a distance become untenable and grotesque. Personally, I am not shocked. I say, so much the better if the public perceives the image, not as an illustration of reality, but as an abstraction. In Japan, they are in the process of inventing new stuff in order to create the effect of "real life." In my opinion, on the contrary, high-definition TV will

necessarily lead us to show imperfection, to show how things actually are. In *Elsinor*, I know that I am not in make-up, disguised, and I know that I am not acting in a manner adapted to the camera. I love that, in large-scale, the audience will see the spirit gum on my mustache or on my fake beard; we will see the perspiration. These days, in the theatre, everything is too perfect, too tidy.

Picasso said that Art is a lie used to better tell the Truth. In my opinion, that is the definition of Theatre as well: There must be things which appear false in order for us to communicate truths. The play must, in some measure, show its wobbly side, with machines which, at times, make noise, fall down, or don't work. It must show that there is danger and that the danger is real; that things aren't perfect, that technique is not perfect, that nothing is resolved.

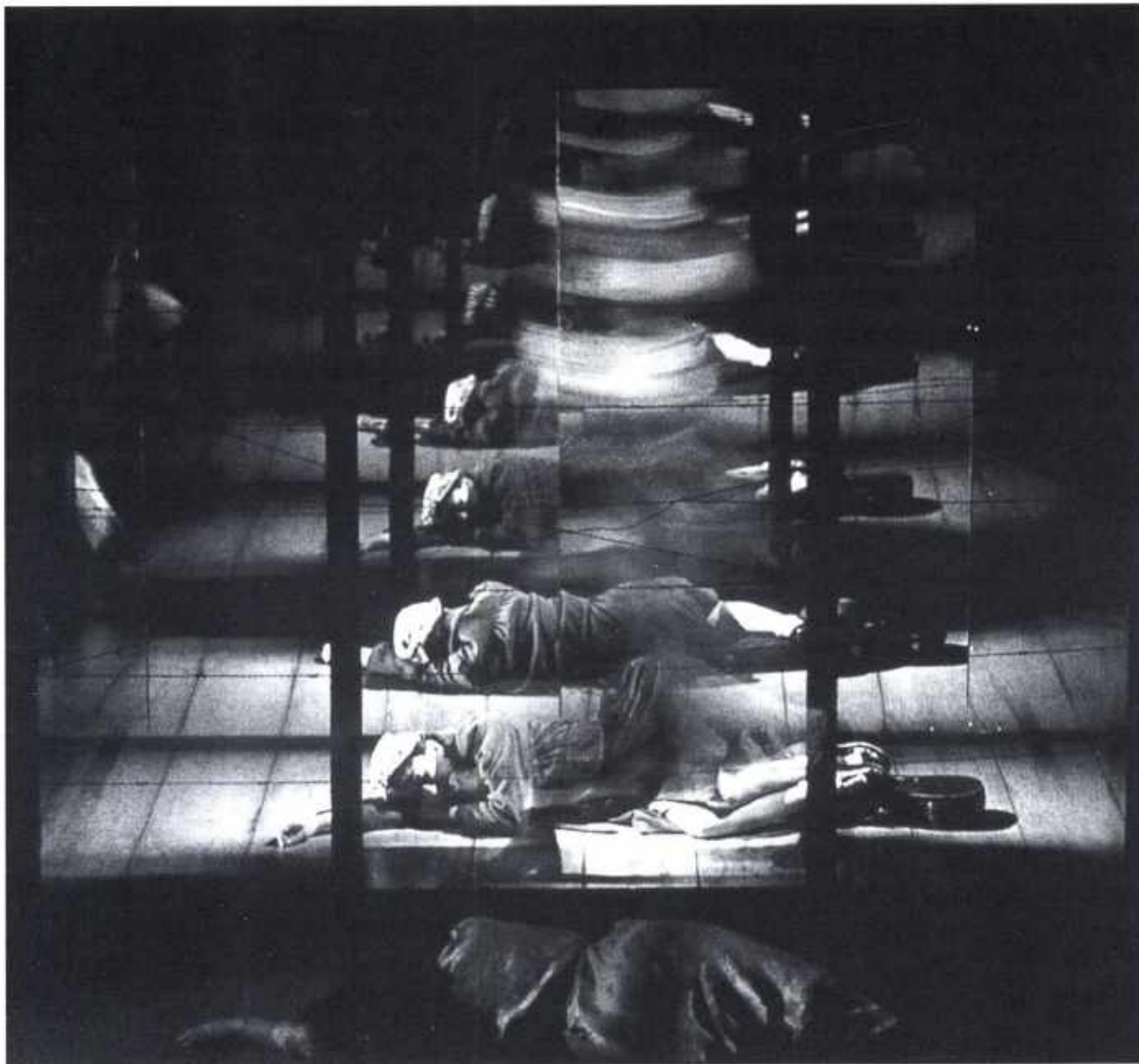
Virtues and Constraints

The utilization of new technologies also touches the play of the actors, to whom I have always posed certain challenges: Act using only your back, or while physically off-balance. That demands a different body consciousness of them, and



Robert Lepage, *Elsinor*, 1996

photo: E. Valette



Robert Lepage, *The Seven Streams of the River Ota*, 1994

photo E. Vilette

demands acting without complacency. For me, the art of theatre is to observe how the actors can abandon themselves to the character, and at the same time control everything which happens in the hall, on stage, and backstage. At the opera, the singers abandon themselves to the emotion of the music, while watching, out of the corner of an eye, the conductor, in order to follow the score. In Stockholm, when I mounted a production of *The Dream Play* by Strindberg, I put the actors in a space so steeply raked that they couldn't stand

upright without falling over. They understood that they had to reinvent their gestures, to transpose them in order to give the illusion of reality.

In *Needles and Opium*, suspended in mid-air in a harness with two straps attached at the hips, I played a Jean Cocteau who flew and spoke, but my physical equilibrium was non-existent: I scarcely moved a hand and my entire body tipped forward, changing my equilibrium. At first, I was panicked, but, little by little, my body learned what to do, where to go, how to recover its stability. It established an organic consciousness and I no longer needed to concentrate on anything but my text. In *Elsinor* it is more difficult, as my body is not a constant prisoner of the machinery. At times I am quite free in terms of the body, but I know that I am in need of a prison, of a constraint, in order to regain my freedom.

translated by Andrew Periale

Robert Lepage is a director and actor in Montreal. "In Praise of Wobbly Technology" first appeared as "Éloge de la technologie bancale" in PUCK #9 published by L'Institut International de la Marionnette, 7 Place Winston Churchill, 08000 Charleville-Mézières, France. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Way-High-Tech Puppetic Images Found in Hollywood

by *Steven Ritz-Barr*

photos by *Mark Rappaport*

High-tech puppets are primarily used in the Television and Film genres. Puppets that depend on modern technologies rather than traditional methods for their operation, include: 1) radio control (RC), where the radio waves act to control certain functions of the puppet's movement; 2) cable control, where multiple cables control the puppets movement; 3) hydraulic or pneumatic controlled puppets who work with the aide of computers; and finally, 4) that 'bastard' of the puppet world: motion control, where a puppeteer's movements are recorded and imprinted on a computer generated image.

But first, to set the record straight, let's face it— from the performer's point of view, high-tech puppetry stinks! I know of no puppeteer who gets as much satisfaction tickling RC joy sticks or pulling cables compared to the good old days of sensual contact with the puppet. Most of the time I can't even see the actual puppet anymore— it's image is transmitted via monitor (which alters the real image significantly). I remember too well the days when the neurotic artist (me) poured his energy into a puppet object. Subsequently, life was

transferred into it, a very human idea was communicated, and the artist/puppeteer felt better and temporarily

able to give it a semblance of life. The recorded-image genres of film and video are more interested in reality



relieved his angst. But wait, do not let me be sidetracked by my own nostalgic indulgences... high-tech puppets do have their rightful place in this new world puppet order. They exist in order to more effectively communicate to very large audiences because most often they are recorded performances (video or film). They allow the audience greater ease in suspending their disbelief concerning a puppet's existence. The technology 'fools' the public because it enables the puppeteer to be far away from the puppet while still

subjects than in abstract or stylized images as traditionally communicated by puppets.

Therefore most high-tech puppets attempt to be real. I mean real— not illusions of reality. Beginning with casting an actor's physical body in plaster, remaking it in foam latex, then making it look like a perfect copy of the real actor with paint; then adding a metallic structure (an armature) that will be activated to move with either

RC or cables (depending on the puppet's needs); then filling the non-moving body parts with foam and "voila"—an exact replica of an actor. The only problem is that it looks like a dead body. And when the puppeteer makes it move, it is like animating a corpse. Later this corpse will be beaten, or blown up, or somehow revealed as a robot-alien (like in the films *Terminator 1* and *Terminator 2* and countless others).

I have had the pleasure and frustration of working on a number of so-called low budget comic book theme films (1-2 million dollars): *Prehysteria 1, 2, 3*; *Puppet Master 1-5*; *Subspecies 1, 2, 3*; *Doctor Mordrid*, *Pet Shop*, *Magic Island*, and others I have forgotten as quickly as I walked off the job. These films employ many puppets—rod, hand, string, RC, and cable as well as a combination of stop-motion and go-motion effects and CGI (computer generated images). The style of puppet used has a lot to do with the film's budget.

As a puppeteer, the process of operating a high-tech puppet is the same as learning to operate any kind of puppet. One must understand the limits of the technique by experimenting with the control system, then putting these movements at the service of the director and the script. Usually not a lot of subtlety is achievable. The eyes are closed or open, the arm goes up or down. Often the shots last only for a couple of seconds. The precision is phenomenal.

For the puppeteer, the financial rewards of this modernization may outweigh the lack of sensual delight in creating or animating a high-tech puppet. One thing is for sure—there is a market for it—although only a commercial market.

The longest running job I had in Los Angeles was an example of a good conceptual utilization of the high-tech puppet. The television show was called

and a battery powered unit to make it 'go'. No one had to touch it, except to fix it (it broke down frequently over the eight months). The dummy was lying around on the couch like a child's doll then all of a sudden it came to life. This idea lends itself well to high-tech puppetry because of the element of surprise.

Buzz cost about \$100,000. to make and the salaries of four union actors



What a Dummy, and it was about a ventriloquist's figure that had a life independently from the puppeteer. My job consisted of operating the lips (via two RC joy sticks) for Buzz, the dummy, who was operated with three other puppeteers (and he still couldn't walk). This puppet had 22 Futaba servo motors (almost all facial features) to give the illusion it was moving by itself. It had a hard wire electric hookup

(puppeteers) per week @ \$2,000. to operate. It was owned by a wealthy producer who had somehow "acquired" the Native American ceremonial items with which the marble floor of his office were strewn. Allegations of massive tax evasion have since caused him to "relocate" to the Cayman Islands. Perhaps the drives for high profits and self-aggrandizement are the same qualities of character which were behind the high-tech wizardry of *What a Dummy*. The concept was good, the show, unfortunately, was not.

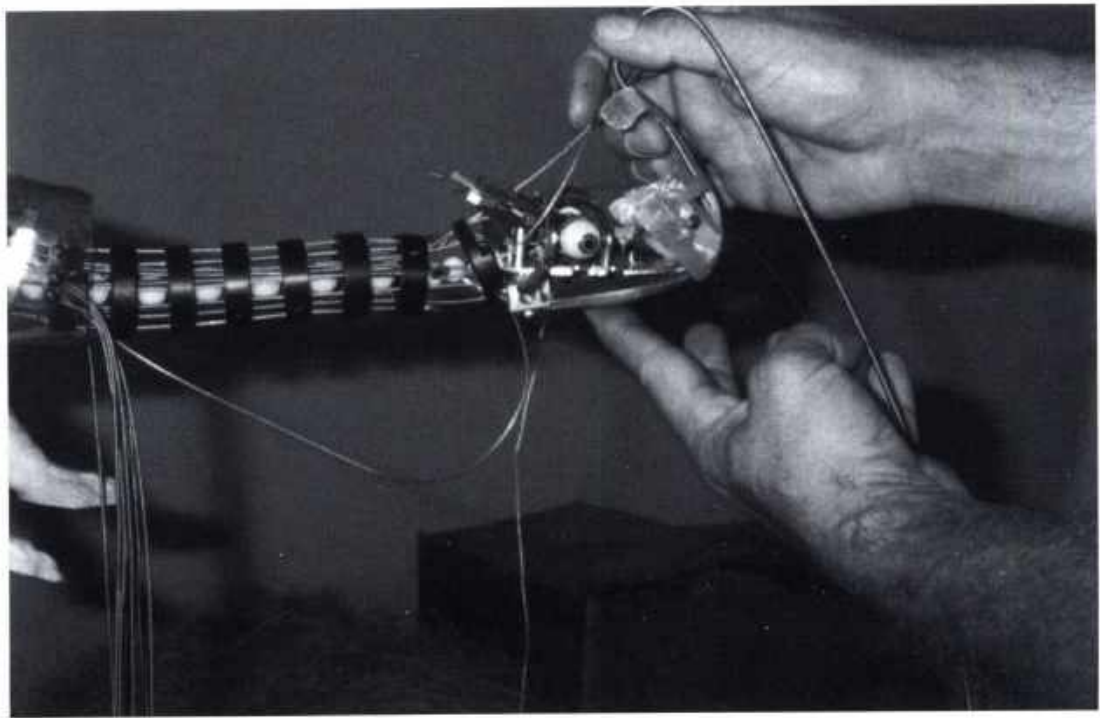
Puppets in Hollywood are often created by committees. They are conceived by writers, not puppeteers. The idea is then bounced around by the production development team until finally it gets an "OK." It is then designed and constructed by visual artists (usually not by a puppeteer). Then it is animated by puppeteers. It is no wonder these puppets have no soul.

In May 1997 I worked on *Alien Resurrection*, the new *Aliens* Four that will be released later this year. It is directed by Frenchman Jean-Pierre Jeanet, who directed the brilliant art films *Delicatessen* and *City of Lost Children*. A company called ADI was responsible for the extensive and expensive make-up effects. Most of the puppet work in this film is Theme Park Puppetry. The giant Queen puppet needed ten persons to operate. It was a combination of hydraulic, cable, and radio control. The sheer weight of it lent itself to hydraulics. The New Born creature had several manifestations, one costing more than a million dollars. This puppet was purely pneumatic, meaning oil operated the machinery. It was built on a motion picture crane and lifted onto the sound stage by a forklift. It's general movements were programmed by computer, but still needed about eight puppeteers to give subtle movements. All in all it was impressive, although the movement of the creature was not always right because the

operators did not understand movement very well (my usual complaint).

High-tech puppetry costs a lot of money, but stop-motion and CGI (computer generated images) cost even more. These techniques often are competing between themselves during the production of a film. I worked for several weeks on a high budget feature film (over 80 million dollars) called *Men in Black*. Rick Baker, a very talented special effects make-up artist,

needed to complete the realism of these creatures. The producers were even prepared to forego completely the \$400,000 puppets if they weren't "just right." Fortunately for me and the other real-time puppeteers, the puppet version passed the tests. They decided to use CGI only to fill around the puppet-work rather than the other way around. Then they only used a fraction of the footage that was shot of these creatures.



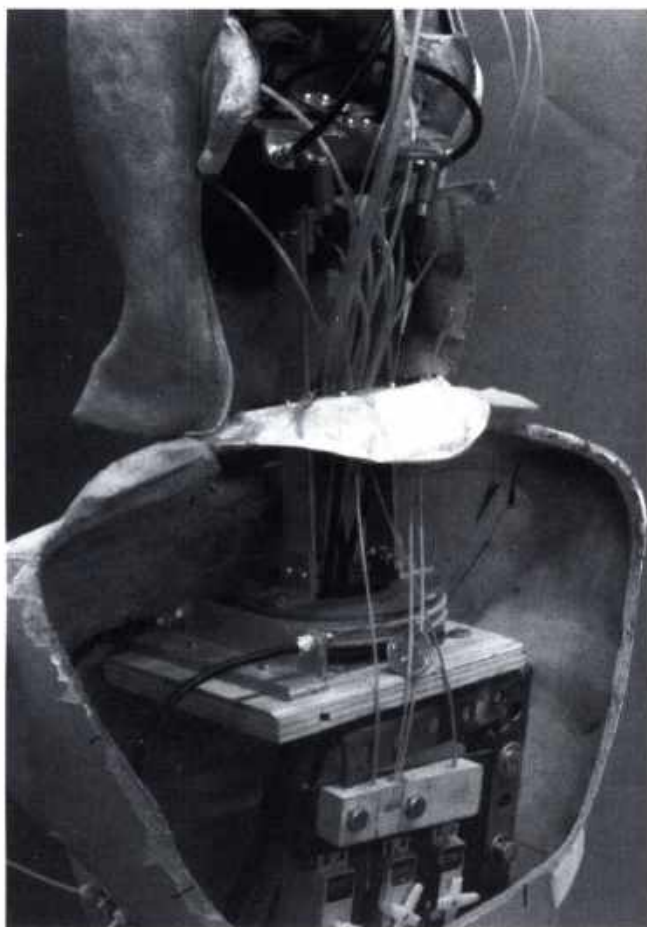
was behind the effects. Baker's company made several cable-operated giant squid-like creatures to be controlled by ten puppeteers per creature (no locomotion) who sat at the giant control panel at the alien government detention center. A month before shooting this scene, the producers did a test with one creature to determine the extent of CGI

To further illustrate the combination of effects used in the high-tech world... in January 1996 I got a contract to head a job for Mattel's new Barbie dolls for the Toy Fair in New York in February. Mattel had wanted to do the spot entirely with CGI but they were cramped for time (money was not the limitation). We had two test days using figures we had fabricated as rod puppets for a previous job. Test passed. Then we had six days to make a fully cable-operated Barbie along with special props. This took the hiring of

three mechanical engineers and two others to complete the Animatronic Barbie. We then had five days to shoot the 30 second spot. It was later edited with 12 seconds of CGI sequences to complete the 'Barbie Entrance' to the Toy Fair. Next to the CGI, our realism looked much more appealing (because the doll looks just like our puppets) and we did it for half the cost. But, since the release of Toy Story, the "industry" wants to be seen able to afford the latest technologies; even if they are not better, producers want to be seen on the cutting edge. Ironically with the release of James and the Giant Peach, the opposite was learned.

James is a live action/stop motion film released by Disney in 1995. I read in an interview in the Los Angeles Times with director Selick, "After a handful of shots, I decided the puppet James did not look right, that it was too realistic. We fell into a trap where we filmed the live action boy and fell in love with him and his charm. I think we were pushing the puppet more and more to look like the live-action boy rather than as a caricature. It wasn't working because he was too real. It had to be pushed back into the cartoon world. We simplified him, so he became more like the other puppets. We gave him button eyes, like early Mickey Mouse. The audience will find

more emotion in him without all the details. I'd say that was a super-critical change. Without that, the movie wouldn't work."



Finally, the puppet "bastard" called motion control. This technique depends on computers to generate an image (real or animated), then the movement of the image is transmitted through the movement of an actor's body (sometimes a puppeteer's hands operate the facial features). A company called Media Lab is trying to convert the entire animation industry to using this method. Because there are so many variables to consider while using this

technique, few productions are willing to invest in this system. I am certain as the technique develops, this technique will become more widely used. It is more an animation technique rather than puppet technique.

Incidentally, Disney is producing The Lion King musical on Broadway soon. Julie Taymor, (an ex-LeCoq student), has been named director. I'm sure when it is completed you will see lots of high-tech in all its glory on stage. I only hope we will not see a host of animated corpses singing those Elton John songs.

The cost to create high-tech images will remain high, keeping them almost entirely in the realm of the recorded image. They are no substantial contribution to the art form of puppetry; it is puppetry that has made a contribution to the art form of cinema.

Ritz-Barr resided in Paris from 1978-1989. He attended L'Ecole Jacques LeCoq, then worked for Jean-Loup Temporal, Alain Recoing, Phillipe Genty before designing puppets three years for the dance companies of Alexander-Witzman-Anaya and Herve Diasnas. Later he worked on Les Guignol de l'Info (now in its eighth year) and served as consultant on Les Bebettes Show (a show that ran 12 years). Since 1989 he has lived in Los Angeles, California and works as writer-producer-puppeteer for his own RITZ-BARR PRODUCTIONS and DIDGERIDOO FX, INC. as well as working on other productions using puppets.

This article appeared, in an earlier form, in PUCK #9, published by L'Institut International de la Marionnette, 7 Place Winston Churchill, 08000, Charleville Mézières, France. It was translated and updated for *Puppetry International* by the author.

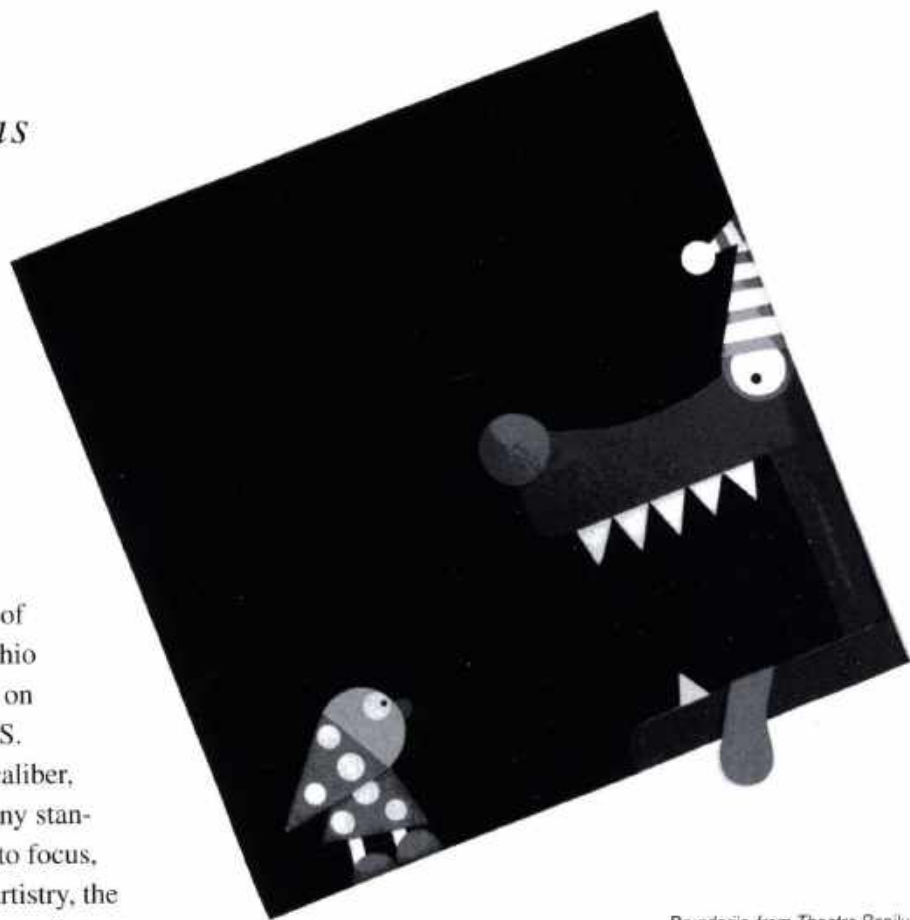
Holy Toledo!

National Festival has International Flair

Though it might well be argued that the main purpose of a national puppetry festival should be to showcase the country's best talent, broadening our definition of the art form by bringing in troupes from beyond our borders should also be part of the mission. The recent National Festival of the Puppeteers of America (Toledo, Ohio July 27-August 3), scored high marks on both counts. Most, if not all, of the U.S. productions were of an international caliber, with several being extraordinary, by any standards of professional theatre. I'd like to focus, though, on the foreign troupes: their artistry, the different sensibilities they bring to our audiences, and their potential long-term impact on the future of American puppetry.

Japan's Theater AOTENT (blue tent) presented *Tamachan's Dreadful Adventure*. It is a simple story: Tamachan accidentally drinks the doctor's shrinking serum and, at 2" tall, must battle cockroaches and vacuum cleaners and such as she searches for a way to return to her normal size. It is rather like watching one of those delightful old serial adventures which were a weekend staple at the movies, with a few important differences: the performers can play to their audience; also, all the special effects are achieved by such simple means that the viewer's imagination must be fully engaged for the illusion to have any believability—a most satisfying state of affairs. Like the old movie serials, the piece ends with a cliff hanger: Tamachan ends up in the vacuum cleaner, with the doctor pondering the solution to this perplexing problem and a sequel promised by the year 2000.

An important cultural difference was immediately clear to puppeteers in the audience. Performing in a blue, family-size camping tent which accommodated about a dozen audience members, with another dozen or two able to look on from outside the door, the show would quickly bankrupt any American touring puppet troupe, which typically builds shows capable of playing to young audiences of 350 or more. The economy demands it. While I could have done with less of the cockroach, it was a delight to see something played in this micro-scale.



Brundarija from Theatre Papilu

Brundarija (the grumbling), by the Slovenian troupe, Papilu, was presented entirely with puppets made of paper. The bright colors and clean graphic look of the figures seemed typical of the Central European design sensibilities of the '50s and '60s. The story, played to a weird, computer-generated soundtrack with few words, seemed long and rambling. Afterwards, I found out that it was, in fact, a compilation of several different stories, including "Little Red Ridinghood" and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Despite its dreamlike pacing and psychedelic visual and aural dimensions, the piece had an economy of means and a peculiar originality which was absolutely captivating. In a "meet the Artists" session, co-creators Maja and Brane (pronounced "Maya" and "Brahne") explained that they made their shows to emphasize their strengths (design, materials, manipulation) and downplay their weaknesses (voice and acting). It is a formula which has worked for them.

Images of China, by Dragonmaker Productions was a collection of several distinct pieces. The three performers (all originally from China, now living in the U.S.) are headed by Emily Yuqin Wang (a veteran performer), her husband, Rocky Chu, and Jen Yang (a sixth-generation puppeteer and daughter of Chinese expatriate puppet master, Yang Feng). Adding a unique twist to the company is Dimitri Carter, puppeteer since childhood with the Carter Family Marionettes, who tours with them and also serves as the company interpreter.

"Tortoise and Crane"
by Dragonmaker Productions



photo: Richard Termine



Cueva Pintada

photo: Richard Termine

Scenes included “Tortoise and Crane” (a standard for Chinese troupes), a solo dance piece, “The Hat Seller,” and an extraordinarily goofy ping pong match. All the vignettes are performed without words, using traditional Chinese rod puppets. For myself, it was a nice little show— not profound, but professional, entertaining, and probably a great success with youngsters, who are presumably it’s target audience.

La Fabula de la Raposa (The Fable of the Fox) by Los Titiriteros de Binefar is a rustic gem of a production. See “**What’s so great...**”, next page, for a more complete review.

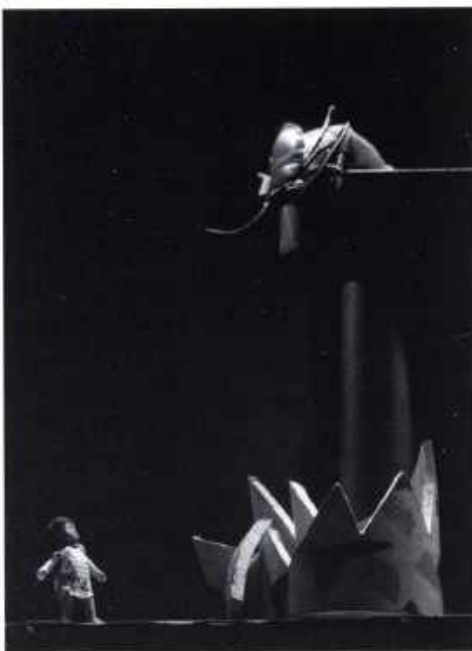
Sigi, the Antelope is a heterocultural co-production between Seattle’s Carter Family Marionettes, and Amma and Kofi Anang (formerly of Ghana). It is a collection of three African folktales— two from Liberia and one from Sierra Leone. The production shows off all the performers’ diverse skills to advantage: drumming, dancing, stiltwalking, puppetry and singing. The Carter’s innovative staging (the life-size antelope transforms into a puppet booth), and their characteristically easy-going delivery and sense of humor help the show transcend the purely traditional feel of folk art, and give the performance a contemporary edge.

And so, as the National Festival is that rarity in the world— puppet festival by puppeteers for puppeteers— it is not merely entertainment, nor glorious reunion, nor collegial trade show, nor packrat swap meet. It is also puppet school. There is much to be learned from our American cousins, as it were, but as we share a common culture and economy, and play to audiences with more-or-less common expectations, the exposure to artists from

Cueva Pintada

elsewhere can really show us new things: new relationships to our audience (AOTENT), new materials and aesthetics (Papilu), new ways of collaborating (Titeretes/Puro Teatro and Carter/Anang), new ways of manipulating (Dragonmaker), and the power of catharsis (Los Titiriteros). Congratulations are in order for festival directors Joyce and Chuck Berty and their staff, for helping assure the health and dynamism of American puppetry into the next millennium. —Justin Kaase

The Puppeteers of America is the force behind this great happening, which takes place in a different part of the country every other year (the 1999 festival in Seattle, WA is already being worked on). In the off years, three- or four-day regional festivals are held. For information on joining the Puppeteers of America (which includes four issues of The Puppetry Journal magazine, annually) contact: Gayle Schluter, 5 Cricklewood Path, Pasadena, CA 91107.



Tamachan's Dreadful adventure, Theater AOTENT

photo: Richard Termine

(Painted Cave) is a collaboration between the puppeteers Felix Diaz and Rosario Fernandez (Compania Titeres of Tijuana, Mexico) and the director Luis Tornel (Puro Teatro Company of San Diego, CA), taking as their inspiration the ancient cliff paintings found in the Baja California desert. During five months, with the sponsorship of the Tijuana Arts Council, they developed a bilingual piece of sweeping and mythic proportions using a story from a weaver/artist of a boy and girl saving their tribe through great personal sacrifice. Large puppets, masks, dance, creative uses of lighting, costumes, and the bilingual text make this a very exciting piece of theater.

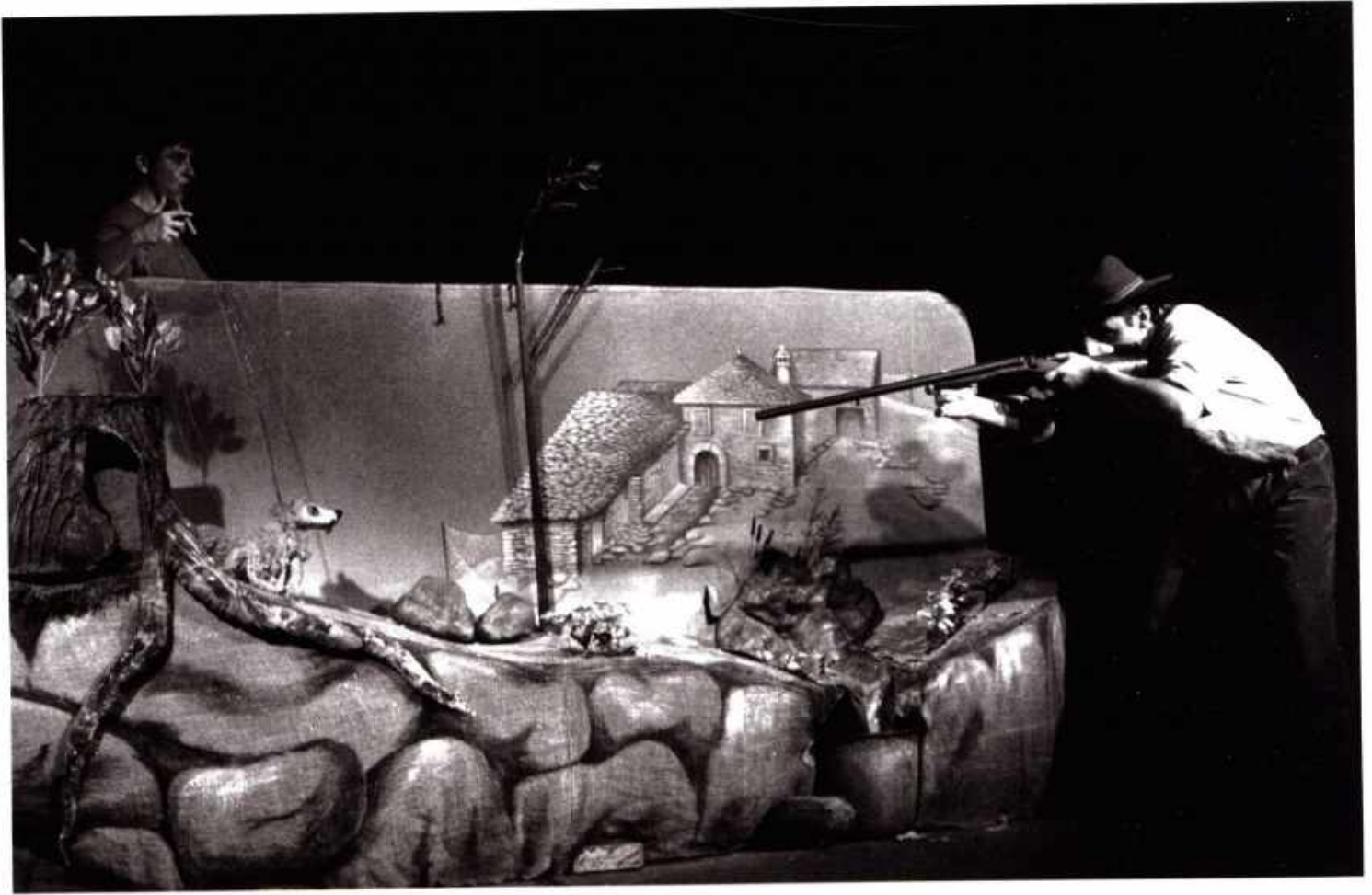
I was astounded to learn that Cueva Pintada plays on a stage three times larger than that of the Doermann Theater in Toledo. Part of the children's programming in Tijuana, in the 1000 seat house for which it was designed, it plays to over 250,000 children per year! This collaboration becomes a cultural bridge between the people of the San Diego and Tijuana regions and must have an extraordinary artistic impact on the audiences. The powerful opening—an empty stage, white mist, strange, unworldly sound, and the slow, furtive entrance of the primitive tribe seeking some place of shelter and safety in a barren landscape—haunts me still, as do the giant moving figures and masks in the dream and ritual sequences. I hope that there will be many collaborative productions from this talented trio. Their use of puppetry, action, sound and all theatrical elements is ideal for the development of a strong bi-national culture.

—review by Allelu Kurten

What's so great about theatre?

La Fabula de la Raposa (The Fable of the Fox) was performed by Los Titiriteros de Binefar (Spain), a company made up of the family and friends of Paco Paricio and Pilar Amoros. Performed without spoken text by two puppeteers using rod marionettes, the show looked at first like a simple, folksy retelling of an Aesop fable. At a certain moment, though, I somehow became emotionally invested in their floppy little figures. When the character of the farmer, who is trying to do the foxes in, finally discovers the core of his humanity in a grand and very pregnant moment of reconciliation, I simply burst into tears. When the house lights came up, I found I was not alone in this catharsis; all around me were weeping puppeteers.

At the risk of giving away the plot, the ending of the play was not tragic, but joyful. Also, many of the audience began weeping well before the play's climax. Was this alchemy? Sorcery? Emotional manipulation? I'm not sure, but I think it was something else. The etymological root of "sad" may be traced to the Latin "sat" thence to the Indo-European "sa" meaning "full" (also the root of "sated" and "satisfied"). To be sad is not, therefore, to be unhappy, but to be filled, like a cup, up to the rim, even beyond the rim until the excess spills in big, "satisfying" salty streams down the cheeks. *La Fabula de la Raposa*,



La Fabula de la Raposa (The Fable of the Fox) was performed by Los Titiriteros de Binéfar (Spain).

photo: Richard Termine

which gives hope of a rediscovery of one's soul through a reconnection with the natural world, thus, was sadly satisfying in a way which few other puppet shows have been for me. Perhaps it is because it is more common nowadays for playwrights to choose a path which makes its impression by means of remarkable puppets, fabulous manipulation or voice work, ingenious design, "hot" social or political issues, avant-garde irreverence or rapier wit. While such qualities may make for productions which enlighten, entertain and impress audiences, even touch them, how many puppet theater productions have honestly filled our hearts to overflowing? Los Titiriteros left me feeling simultaneously full, drained, and ultimately transformed because they have chosen, I think, a path with heart. In so doing, they have reconnected with theater's power and greatness.

Over the years we have followed with keen interest the work of Grzegorz Kwiecinski's Theatre of Fire and Paper. Here is a review of his latest spectacle—

In front of us we can see the asphalt square surrounded with rope, furnished with unusual figures made of paper presented on metal frames. You can recognize quite a large bird, a circus acrobat jumping through a ring, a man climbing a string ladder, and winged chairs. The darkness is slowly growing thick, as is the crowd of people gathering round the square. Suddenly I notice Grzegorz Kwiecinski flitting by. "Can I smoke?" I ask, timidly. "It is necessary," he answers with a smile. An unnamed rock band is practicing their instruments in the background. I learn that Kwiecinski will set a fire in a minute and we will fly away. It is cold, dark and raining. Everybody is staring hopefully at a lone burning torch placed by an actor in the middle of the square. You can hear the raucous but interesting music composed by Bogdan Szczepanski. An enormous fire-bird flies down from the sky and lands gently in front of a kneeling girl dressed in a black robe, waking her up from a praying contemplation. The rest is done by a demiurge armed with a torch. He sets fire to the wall of a wooden house that falls to pieces with a crash. A wonderful fiery tongue licks and swallows the crashing windows like an impatient lover who greedily catches the body of his submissive partner. Without a safe shelter, the girl accepts the power of the magician, now dressed in his working robe—a black gown and a hood resembling the hangman's. On his command, she starts circling among the paper victims performing acts of destruction. The cardboard man will never reach the top of the ladder. The remains of the acrobat land on the black asphalt, then the winged chairs are covered with flames and their pieces move and fly away in the hot air. The



"A Passage Through the Fire"

An outdoor performance by Grzegorz Kwiecinski

**August, 1996
Pabianice, Freedom Park, Rifle-range Square**

A theatrical performance of Fire & Paper

Flight II

**starring
Fire and Water
with
Grzegorz Kwiecinski,
Joanna Solik,**

**a local athlete,
an unnamed rock band**

deed of destruction is crowned by the victim of the man resembling a horrible pagan or even satanic rite. It is getting really hot.

The black magician burns the line separating him from the crowd and disappears in the nearby forest. We can see the flame of his burning torch shining among the trees for some minutes. Someone from the crowd remarks that he has probably gone away to punish the local athlete who, being completely drunk, tried to act in the performance. He boldly crossed the fire limit (the limit of decency as well), he moved among the burning pieces of the construction, took them by the hand and so on. Most of the spectators waited in suspense, expecting the uninvited performer to literally burst into flame, and not only because of his great interest in the play. However, their hopes were useless—the gentleman was busy with the fire long enough, but unfortunately the fire did not affect him. He suddenly got bored, left the ritual ring and vanished in the darkness.

When we suspect that the performance is nearly over because there is nothing left to burn, a small girl with a ball appears on the stage. She plays with the woman who has stayed in the square but their cheerfulness shows the element of melancholy. "The magician left the woman with the girl" I hear from the darkness. The remains of metaphysical elements of the performance, and cigarette ends, glow in the dusk.

Coming back home I close my eyes for a while; I still see this unusual performance by Grzegorz Kwiecinski and his fascinating images painted by fire.

—by Witold Jablonski

BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS

Here are some books reviewed by puppeteers. They were chosen because the reviewers really liked them. They all have something to do with puppetry. The publishers' names are noted for recently published books; others may still be found in bookstores, but can easily be located in used bookstores or libraries. Enjoy!

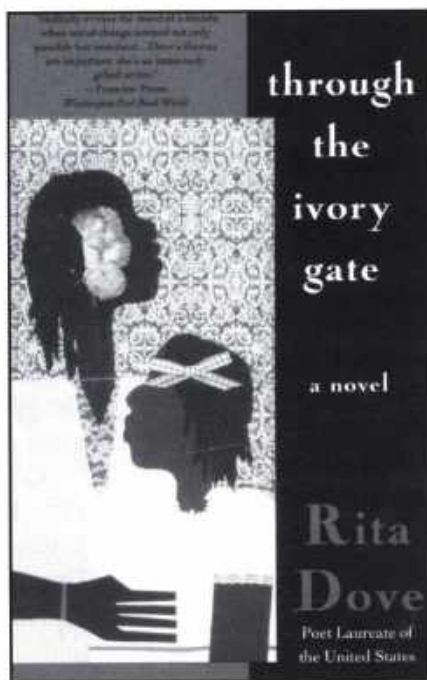
Through the Ivory Gate

by Rita Dove

If you are a puppeteer who works in the schools or performs on the street, you will find this book especially appealing. Although Virginia King's career as a puppeteer is not the novel's major focus, you will recognize your own early puppet experiences mirrored in hers. You will chuckle as she tackles the same problems you did. You will be tempted to offer advice. You will grin in rueful acknowledgment of common misconceptions about the art form. You will applaud her attempts to explain her fascination with its magic to parents, teachers, and even her own family.

But you don't need to be a puppeteer to enjoy this novel. Entwined in the concrete events of a month in her life as an artist-in-residence at an elementary school, is Virginia's far more important journey, as a young black artist (actress/musician/puppeteer), back to her roots, and forward into her life. Her dreams, her aspirations, her choices, her past and future weave a powerfully compelling tale. 1993 United States' Poet Laureate, Rita Dove, eloquently explores the artist's experience, the black experience, the human experience. Her title, taken from Homer's *Odyssey*, alluding to the source of "dreams of glimmering illusion", is particularly appropriate to Virginia's search for understanding and direction... in her life, in the theatre, in the world.

book review by Lynne Jennings



Helen

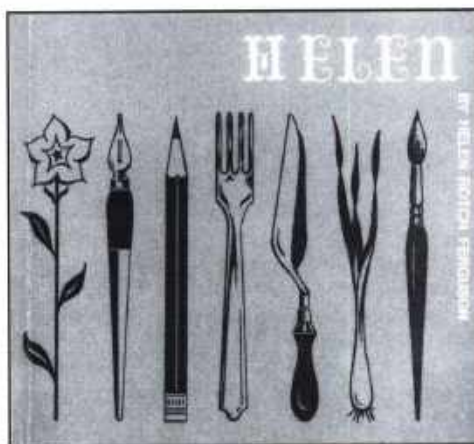
by Helen Rotch Ferguson

Journey; (Winston Salem, NC:1996) 108 pages; \$9.95

Heidi Ferguson found the manuscript for this book stashed in a closet in her parent's house a few years after the death of her mother, Helen.

Helen was a puppeteer, writer, wife, mother and church-member. In those roles and through them, she never ceased searching for what had real value in life. The most valuable lesson she learned (and it is a lesson which she needed to relearn again and again) was to listen— really listen— with love.

This small volume is full of Helen's reflections— on her childhood, her marriage, the growth and eventual departure of



her children, on meetings with famous people, as well as those unknown outside their small community— always with an eye toward understanding life's lessons, and understanding herself. Her puppetry is no exception; her characters each seem to expose facets of their creator's personality: the Princess, the Old Queen, the Mother, the Dragon. Helen thoughtfully weaves her puppetry throughout the book.

I knew Helen, more as a colleague than a friend, and was fortunate to have enjoyed her hospitality at the 200-year-old farmhouse where she, her husband Bill, and all her puppets made their home. In reading her little memoir, I thought she was being awfully hard on herself with all of the self-analysis this writing engendered. But then, Helen was an artist, and that is what is required. The tone of the book sounded to me, at first, a bit homespun and quaint, even naive, but this was Helen's way of expressing wisdom— clear, unadorned, almost self-evident (as wisdom should be, no matter how hard-won). I found it quite moving, and will certainly be getting a copy for my Mother!

book review by Andrew Periale

BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS

Julie Taymor: *PLAYING WITH FIRE*

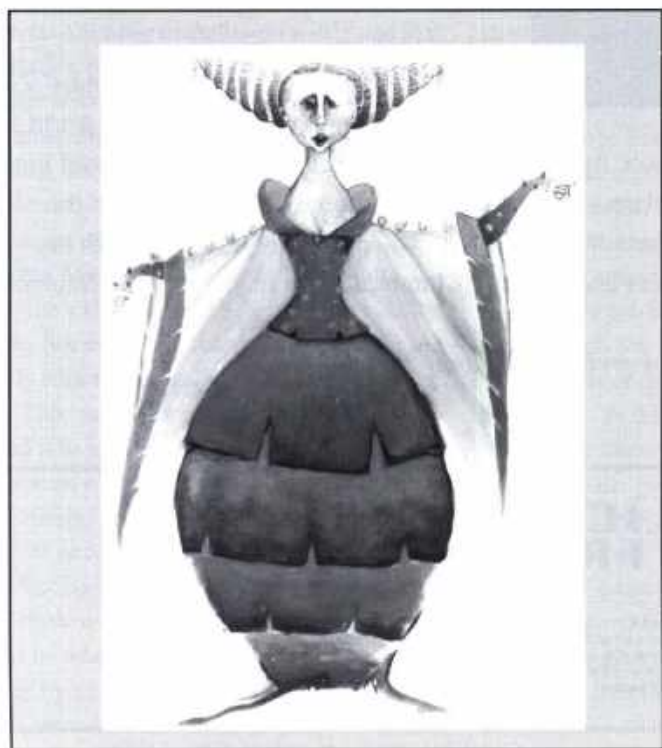
by Eileen Blumenthal and Julie Taymor

Harry H. Abrams; 208 pages, \$49.50

Where is the American Theatre going? What is American Puppetry? For that matter, what is America? Perhaps the best way of talking about *Julie Taymor: Playing With Fire* is to answer the last question first. The best of America is represented by its mixture of cultures, ideas, philosophies, dreams and expressions. American puppetry has always been a reflection of this blending. In the past 30 years, with the encouragement and support of UNIMA-USA, artists like Eric Bass, Ralph Lee, Larry Reed and Julie Taymor have enriched and deepened that reflection by consciously reaching out to embrace world cultures while integrating various disciplines of expression. *Julie Taymor: Playing With Fire* is an inspired work. Full of gorgeous design and production images, the book involves the reader as a participant in the intimate thoughts of creation and its response.

Where is the American Theatre going? As it attempts to leave behind "kitchen table reality" and continues to explore the use of image as a means of expression, Julie Taymor will be a guide.

book review by Bart P. Roccoberton, Jr.



Morgan's Passing

by Anne Tyler

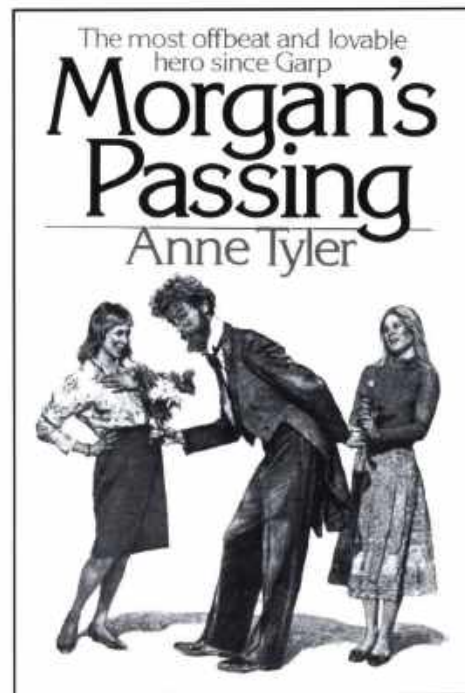
Morgan is, as Tyler puts it, "...a man who had gone to pieces, or maybe he'd always been in pieces...". At 42, Morgan is a sort of chameleon, passing through a seemingly endless series of hobbies. He effortlessly transforms from role to role—now a cobbler, now a street priest; anything but manager of one of his in-laws' hardware stores, which is what he, in fact, is.

It is a puppet show, however, which changes his life for good. The puppet show, performed by Emily and Leon Meredith at the annual Presbyterian Easter Fair, is cut short when Emily goes into labor. Morgan (as "Doctor" Morgan) delivers her child and, after accompanying the young family to the hospital, slips away unnoticed. What even Morgan doesn't suspect at the time is that this Easter also marks his own rebirth: as a puppeteer!

Morgan's process of shedding his old life and emerging into his new one is delightfully unfolded by Anne Tyler, author of such best-selling novels as *The Accidental Tourist* and *Breathing Lessons*. Though published in 1980, *Morgan's Passing* may still be found occasionally in bookstores and certainly in used bookstores and libraries. For

puppeteers, who will find much in the tribulations and triumphs of married-couple-as-touring-puppet-troupe with which to relate, the search will be worth the effort.

book review by Justin Kaase



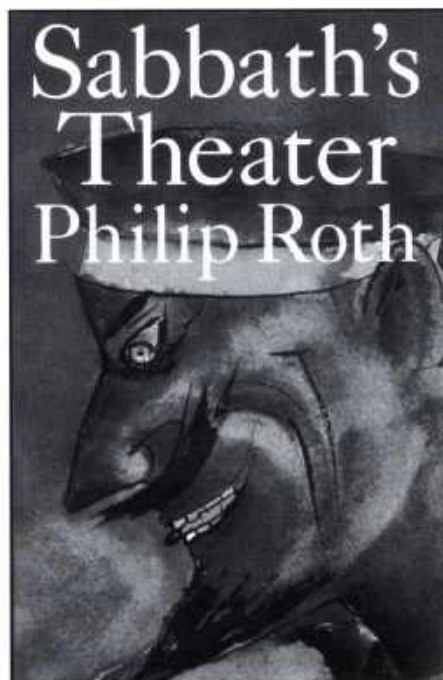
BOOKS • BOOKS • BOOKS

Sabbath's Theater

by Philip Roth

Sabbath's Theater is the story of Mickey Sabbath—a puppeteer who places a formidable intellect almost entirely in the service of his even more formidable libido. Sabbath's carnal lust is almost boundless (did you notice? Another "almost"; Sabbath is driven, but not lacking in dimension), and he is quite capable of destroying others' lives (two wives, among others), as well as his own, in order to achieve his degraded lubricious ends. Even in his early sixties, his age at the novel's outset, this balding, bearded, arthritic barrel of a man is still a force of nature—a wanton hurricane of flesh.

And Sabbath was a puppeteer. Though no longer a performer, he is still the master manipulator of those around him, eternally improvising his lines, turning the potentially disastrous scenes of his life into first-rate entertainment and, almost always, "getting the girl" in the end. When Roth does bring the reader back to Sabbath's days as a street performer in New York City, though, he gives us an uncannily credible solo performer: "Her [Roseanna, his second wife] first puppet was a bird, a hand puppet with feathers and sequins, nothing like Sabbath's idea of a puppet. He explained that puppets were not for children; puppets did not say 'I am innocent and good.' They said the opposite. 'I will play with



you,' they said, 'however I like.' " Such finger play eventually got him busted on obscenity charges. Later: "Puppets can fly, levitate, twirl, but only people and marionettes are confined to running and walking. That's why marionettes always bored him: all that walking they were always doing up and down the tiny stage, as though, in addition to being the subject of every marionette show, walking were the major theme of life. And those strings—too visible, too many, too blatantly metaphorical."

The writing is exquisite. I recommend it highly with one caveat—this book is not for the squeamish. Feminists of the 12-step variety are also likely to hate Sabbath, if not Roth for unleashing him. There are a number of strong women in the novel, though. Drenka, for instance, Sabbath's most cherished and highly sexed significant other, unhampered by Sabbath's salacious intellect is, if anything, even more a force of nature than he.

In a manner reminiscent of Camus' *The Stranger*, Sabbath triumphs: if the world is a prison, then the depth of his freedom will be measured in the thickness of its walls, the profoundness of his joy in the degree of loathing with which he is regarded by both his jailers and his fellow inmates. Viva Freedom! Viva Sabbath!

book review by Andrew Periale



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Japanese Theater in the World

October 21, 1997 - February 1, 1998 at the Japan Society
 March 4 - May 24, 1998 at the Museum Villa Stuck, Munich



Ebisu Dance by Awaji Puppet Theatre (performing at the Japan Society, November 14 and 15, 1997)

Japanese Theater in the World will be the first exhibition in the West to show how Japanese theater traditions have been a strong and cumulative cultural influence not only in Japan but also, during this century, on theater around the world. Co-organized by The Japan Foundation in collaboration with the Tsubouchi Theatre Museum of Waseda University, Tokyo, the exhibition is the centerpiece of the Japan Society's fall season, and will fill the newly refurbished gallery and public spaces.

This groundbreaking exhibition is divided into nine roughly chronological areas, each with a Western and a Japanese curator. Previously, specialists would concentrate on just one or two of the diverse theatrical genres, but the Japan Society exhibition represents the whole world of Japanese theater as a spectrum in which each genre is strongly influenced by its predecessors. Close to 700 items from over 100 lenders in Japan, the United

States and Europe will illustrate the way in which successive forms of the tradition have interlocked.

Japanese Theater in the World uses costumes, masks, puppets, musical instruments, stage-set models, videos, posters, vintage photographs and playbills. It traces the history of the world's oldest continuous theatrical tradition from its pre-Buddhist roots in the 4th century through the development of the classic drama forms of *bugaku*, *noh*, *kyogen*, *bunraku* and *kabuki*, to the latest in contemporary and avant-garde theater. It is the creative power of the past on the present that sets Japanese theater apart and makes it an enduring cultural force today. Elsewhere in the world, ancient theater forms have occasionally been resurrected, but in Japan they never died. Virtually all the major classical genres still continue to be performed and to exert their influence on contemporary theater forms.

CATALOGUE

A fully-illustrated, scholarly catalogue in English will accompany the exhibit. Catalogues will be available for purchase at the front desk in the Japan Society lobby during the exhibition. To order a catalogue during or after the show, please call Paragon Book Gallery at (312) 663-5155.

RELATED PROGRAMMING

The exhibition is the centerpiece of a season-long program of events under the banner *Japanese Theater in the World*. Live performances will feature *noh*, *bunraku*, *kyogen*, contemporary theater and *butoh*. There will be a series of films with theatrical themes, a symposium and lectures, all examining different aspects of this rich theatrical legacy. The *Japanese Theater in the World* project is a new development in Japan Society programming with every part of the Society highlighting the same major theme throughout the season. For further information on other programs please call Lydia Gomersall or Melissa Markoff in the Japan Society press office at (212) 715-1255/1205.

LISTING INFORMATION

Japan Society Gallery is located at 333 East 47th Street (between 1st and 2nd Avenues), New York. Hours are Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, closed on Mondays. Suggested contribution \$3. Guided tours are available with advance reservation. There is no charge for school groups and not-for-profit senior-citizen groups. For more information or to schedule group tours, please call (212) 715-1253.

The exhibition, co-organized by The Japan Foundation, is funded in part by the Lila Acheson Wallace/Japan Society Fund, established at Community Funds, Inc. by the co-founder of Reader's Digest, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Friends of Japan Society Gallery.

UNIMA-USA Citation Recipients 1996/97

The UNIMA Citations for Excellence in the Art of Puppetry were started by Jim Henson and are North America's only award recognizing individual productions. A citation is given based on recommendations of an anonymous panel of reviewers.

LIVE THEATRE CATEGORY

"The Araneidae Show and Other Pieces"

Basil Twist

panel reviewers said:

"a wonderful, unique vision using a variety of puppet forms— very entertaining."

"a positive adult variety show— a dark, twisted through-line." "several vignettes— some funky, some funny, some moving, some even shocking. Brilliant manipulation of objects and the audience."

"one of the most brilliant works I have ever seen."

"Flatlands" A romance of Many Dimensions"

Hanne Tierney

panel reviewers said:

"a dramatization of Hanne Tierney from the story of E. Abbot— conceived by Tierney and sculptor, Jenett Highstein. This romance of geometrical shapes is very witty— satirical."

"the innovative use of flat cut-outs."

"a hauntingly beautiful story and abstract images moved from above. This was Hanne's best and most powerful piece."



The Seagull by Anton Chekov. Constructed and performed by Hanne Tierney

UNIMA-USA

Citation Recipients 1996/97

"The Nightingale"

Figures of Speech Theatre

panel reviewers said:

"a full-stage production using rod puppets, giant puppets, shadows and live performers. ...a beautiful dream with glorious music and just the right magical treatment for the nightingale's story."

"imaginative and well-conceived with much humor that was sophisticated and subtly woven."

"the designs for the show were masterful in their use of light and sound to sculpt and add texture and atmosphere to the scenic elements."

"Peter and Wendy"

Lee Breuer / Mabou Mines

panel reviewers said:

"one of the most innovative, poetic and moving theatre-puppet productions I have seen in several years." "an interpretation of Barrie's classic novel."

"this is marvelous, played as children play— fancifully, with figures under the bed, in and out of the toy box. The performing ensemble moved as smoothly as choreographed ballet. It had magic."

"magical spell of Gaelic music and visually poetic imagery. Puppets emphasized the idea of never growing up. A bittersweet tale of lost childhood by Wendy as well as Peter."

"high level of artistry."

"virtually every aspect of this production is right... a most welcome treat and revelation."



Terror as Usual by Great Small Works



Zoe perd son temps by Theatre de l'Oeil

photo: L. Gniwesch

"The Seagull"

Hanne Tierney

panel reviewers said:

"although abstract, moving—a real feat. Powerful. Unique. The quintessential version of the Seagull by Chekov."

"Hanne, with new forms, makes me see and feel a well-known drama in rich and different ways."

"Travelling Toy Theatre Festival"

a collection of shows by Great Small Works

panel reviewers said:

"inventive"

"theatre space— funny— poignant— wonderful!"

"outstanding variety, originality, spontaneity and charisma."

"Zoe perd son temps"

le Theatre de l'Oeil, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

panel reviewers said:

"a young girl, while searching for her lost watch, 'falls' into an altered space/time/meaning warp where nothing is as expected. After several adventures, she returns to the present"

"this mature and multi-talented company combines arresting images, masterful manipulation, creative storytelling and a delightful sense of the absurd to create a stunning production."

"the puppets were wonderful, staging unique and effective, and the total concept beautifully executed."

"four puppeteers in Bunraku-style presented in French... audience was given an outline of the plot so the language was no barrier. Very high production values."

"the audience was completely captivated by this imaginative fantasy which begins in a school washroom and ends up in the land of Crazy Time."

"Colorful characters, humorous script and wonderful shifting sets all contributed to a wonderful evening of professional theatre."



Davy Jones Locker, *Bil Baird Marionettes*

RECORDED MEDIA CATEGORY

“Davy Jones Locker”

a Joseph Jacoby film starring Bil Baird’s Marionettes

panel reviewers said:

“this film really works for me. It has superb production values: camera work, sets, lighting, sound and manipulation. It has charm and humor— a real winner. Bil’s puppets are really the stars.”

“high quality production values meet the unique artistry of Bil Baird in the application of an early Baird work. This recaptures for posterity a large portion of the delightful gruffness, humor and magic of the Bil Baird Marionettes.”

“this achieves a high level of ‘magic’ by substituting flashy special effects with heart, wit, charm, whimsy, and unpretentious storytelling. I found it refreshing to see the strings and appreciate the simple theatricality. It is pure old-fashioned good taste.”

“Sesame Street”

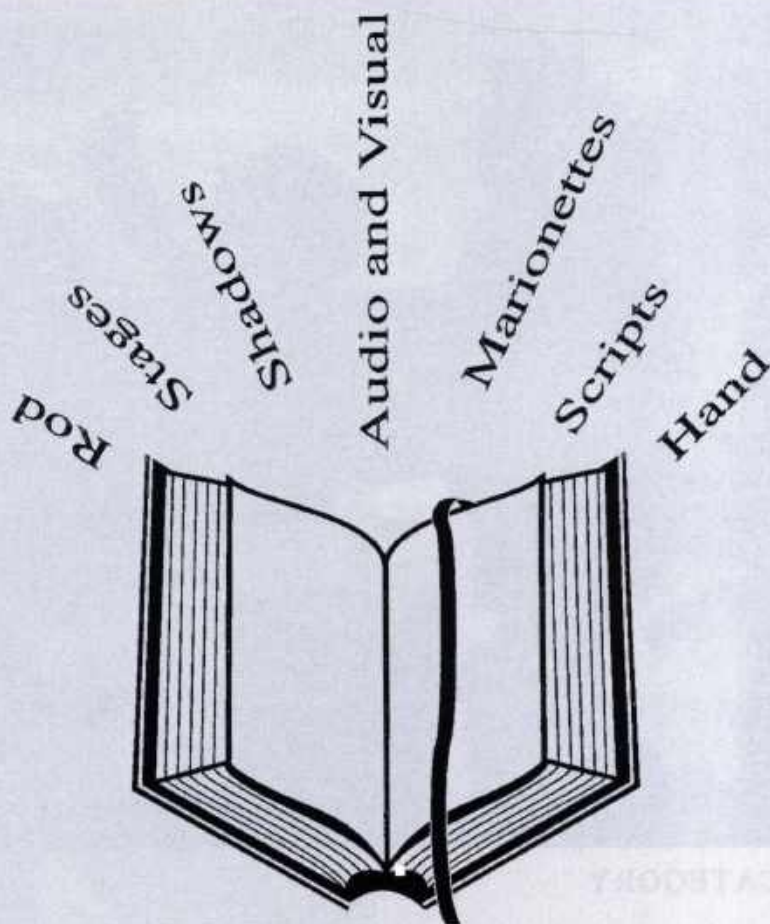
C.T.W. / Michael Loman, Exec. Prod.

panel reviewers said:

“this pioneer program in instructional television remains innovative and fresh through super use of now legendary puppet characters and the infusion of new ones. A trend-setter in television and puppetry, it thrives in sustained excellence.”

“I consider these puppet works to be exceptional for their concept through design to the finished product.”

“puppets become real personal— not archetypes— especially Big Bird and Oscar. Performers quality— outstanding. Scripts and songs— highest possible.”



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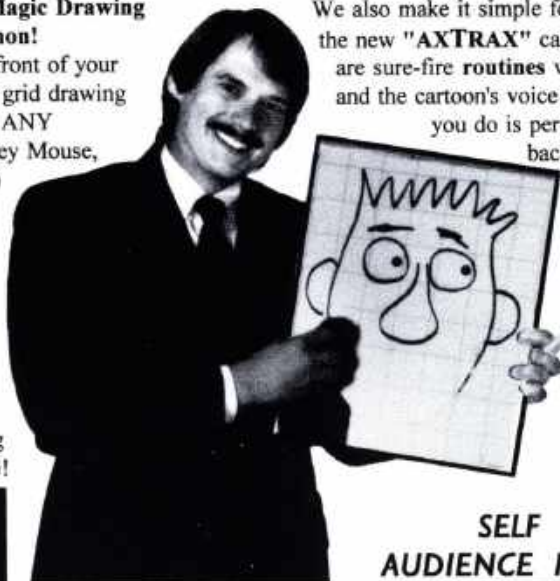
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An Historical *FAUST* Lives Again



One of the great puppeteers of the century, the German professor Harro Siegel (1900 - 1982) created a *FAUST* performance after World War II with refined string-puppets made by himself, which one can see in most quality books on puppets.

In the early fifties, Michael Meschke of Sweden was Siegel's young pupil and took part in the few performances of *FAUST* which Siegel managed to show in the harsh post-war era. As Siegel had to abandon puppetry, Michael Meschke took care of the marionettes for *FAUST* and has displayed them ever since at the Marionette Museum of Stockholm. In 1997, Siegel's string-puppets finally came back to "life" in a renewal of Siegel's production, now performed by the young company of Marionetteatern directed by Michael Meschke.

As an homage to the artist Harro Siegel, this *FAUST* will be permanently available at Marionetteatern in Stockholm, as well as on tour.

Elisabeth Beijer
Marionetteatern/Marionettmuseet,
Stockholm, Sweden

Faust and Mephistofeles

Faust at Walpurgisnacht





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Artistic Director

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE 1998 COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION WORKSHOPS:

- **Ensemble Productions** will be directed by acclaimed puppet artists **Janie Geiser** and **Andrew and Bonnie Periale**
- **Participants' Projects** will be led by resident playwright **Annie Evans** and puppet artists **George Latshaw**, **Martin P. Robinson**, and **Bart Roccoberon, Jr.**
- **The Dramaturgical/Playwriting Workshop** will be guided by resident dramaturg **Lenny Pinna**, assisting writers in the development of new scripts for the puppet theater.
- **Marionette Seminar**, instructed by **Jim Rose** and **Fred Thompson**. Participants will create a marionette from concept, through construction to presentation.

Application Deadline: April 1, 1998

For More Information:
Bobbie Nidzgorski, General Manager

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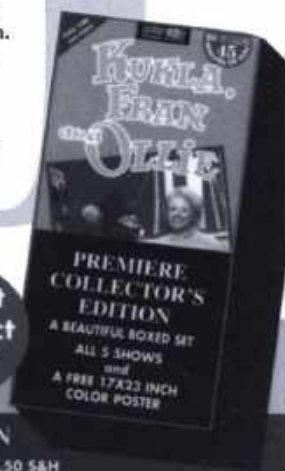
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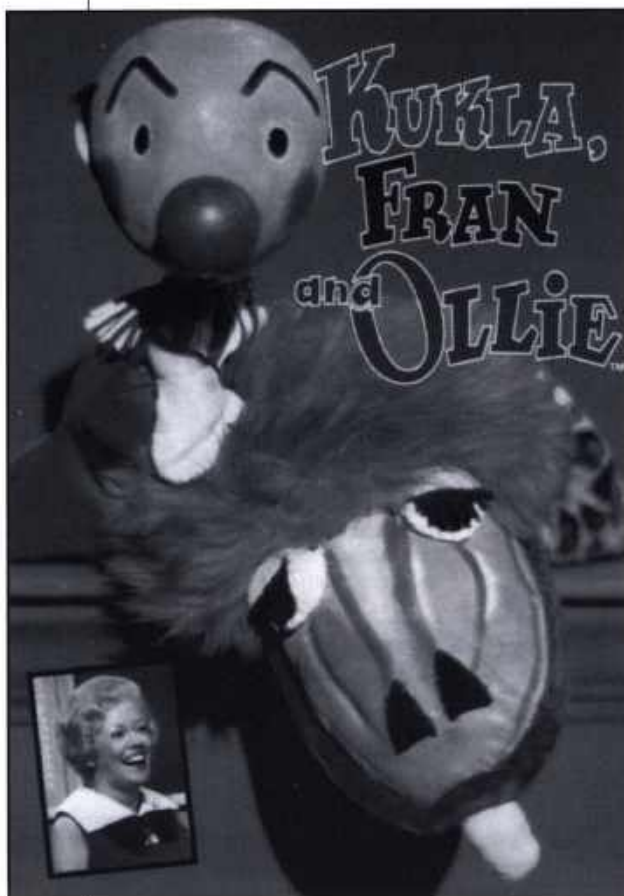


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UNIMA-USA

NEWS UPDATE

Fall 1997

<http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~rosesage/puppetry/UNIMA/unima.html>

New Board/New Officers

UNIMA-USA has a new board and new officers. Results of the Summer '97 mail-in election were announced at the annual membership meeting held July 30 at the Puppeteers of America Festival in Toledo, Ohio. Newly elected board members are: Randel McGee, Lynnie Raybuck, and Steven Widerman. Continuing board members are: Bonny Hall, Jane Henson, Lynne Jennings, Bart P. Roccoberton, Jr., Joann Siegrist, Michael Malkin, and Pix Smith. Michael Nelson was appointed to fill the remaining term of Danny Burge. Rose Sage and Jim Gamble were appointed consultants to the board. Rose Sage will advise the electronic committee and Jim Gamble will take over distribution and ad sales of Puppetry International. The new board elected officers are: Joann Siegrist, President; Michael Malkin, Vice President of Procedures; Lynne Jennings, Vice President of Committees; Bart P. Roccoberton, Jr., Secretary; Bonny Hall, Treasurer. A special thank you goes out to retiring board members Monica Leo, Roman Paska and last but not least, Mark Levenson!!

Toledo UNIMA Activities

A highlight during the Puppeteers of America Festival week was our Symposium, UNIVERSAL LANGUAGES: International Performance. With the help of moderator Bart P. Roccoberton, Jr., panelists discussed their vast experiences when performing internationally. The main focus of the discussion was how to choose performance material for touring, and what decisions are made in this process.

Panelists included:

Maja Solche, Theatre Papilu, Slovenia
Michael Nelson, Magical Moonshine Theatre, USA
Randel McGee, USA
Paco Parisio, Los Titiriteros de Binefar, Spain
Felix Diaz, Company du les Titeret, Mexico/USA
Dori Smith, Translator
Transcripts will be available in the near future.

ALSO- Transcripts from the Fall 1996 Symposium, "What Makes a Puppet Play?" held at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center (in conjunction with the Henson International Festival of Puppet Theatre), are now available. Members will be receiving a copy with the fall mailing, but copies purchased in bulk for educational and promotional use are available for a discounted price. Contact the UNIMA-USA office in Atlanta for more information.

Puppets, Prizes and Partying

An evening reception to honor and introduce international guests and performers attending the Toledo Festival was given by UNIMA-USA. Past board members and past General Secretary Allelu Kurten were introduced along with General Secretary Vince Anthony and our staff members Lisa Rhodes and Deb Cayz. A slide show presentation for all citation winners accompanied the awards ceremony, as well as video selections shown for winners in the recorded media category. A large thank you goes out to Joyce and Chuck Berty, Bev London, the Board of Trustees and the entire Puppeteers of America organization for

allowing us to conduct our activities and this reception in Toledo.

Nine Shows Selected for UNIMA CITATIONS

The following productions were awarded the UNIMA-USA "Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry" founded by Jim Henson:

Live Theatre Category

-Figures of Speech Theatre

"Nightingale"

-Great Small Works and Michael Romanyshyn

"Travelling Toy Theatre"

-Mabou Mines

"Peter and Wendy"

-le Theatre de l'Oeil

"Zoe perd son temps"

-Hanne Tierney

"Flatlands: A Romance of Many Dimensions"

-Hanne Tierney

"The Seagull"

-Basil Twist

"The Araneidae Show and Other Pieces"

Recorded Media Category

-Children's Television Workshop

"Sesame Street"

-A Joseph Jacoby film starring Bil Baird's Marionettes

"Davy Jones' Locker"

A special thanks to Danny Burge, Chair of the Citations Committee, Lynne Jennings, Mark Levenson, and the West Virginia University students for helping with the reception: Kristi Badger, Karen Gibson, Jenny Ferruso, and Carolyn Smith.

International Performances Stateside

Many members at the annual meeting asked to be informed of the international performances that are available to tour. We will begin to list these opportunities for you here in this newsletter column as promised. If you are interested in a performance at your location, please contact the people listed below.

Available Summer 1998

Center for Puppetry Arts, contact Jeanene Williams (404) 873-3089 x36 or Fax (404) 873-9907.

"Cuddle At Sea" by Poppentheater Hans Schoen of the Netherlands, a family level show.

"The Fable of the Fox" by Los Titiriteros de Binefar of Spain, a family level show (seen in Toledo).

Available Fall 1998

Jim Henson Foundation's 1998 International Festival of Puppet Theatre

On Tour Program, Lisa Booth Management (212) 921-2114 fax (212) 921-2504.

"Flamingo Bar" by Figuren Theater Tubingen of Germany, an adult level show.

"The Fable of the Fox" by Los Titiriteros de Binefar of Spain, a family level show.

"Kafka" or "The Search Goes On" by the Teatron Theater of Israel, an adult level show.

"Kwaidan" by Ping Chong in collaboration with Jon Ludwig and the Center for Puppetry Arts of Atlanta, adult level work.

"Never Been Anywhere" by Eric Bass of New Hampshire-adult level work (seen in Toledo).

"Pepin y Rosa (Dick and Jane)" by Agua, Sol Y Sereno of Puerto Rico, a family level show.

"Short Stories" by Teatro Hugo and Ines of Peru, a family level show.

"Ubu and the Truth Commission" by Handspring Puppet Company of South Africa, adult level show.

"Wayang Listrik/Electric Shadows" by Larry Reed of San Francisco in collaboration with I Wayan Wija and I Dewa Berata of Indonesia, adult level work.

"Volga Song" by Rezo Gabriadze of Georgia (Russia), adult level work.

Available February 1999

Center for Puppetry Arts, contact Jeanene Williams (404) 873-3089 x 36 or Fax (404) 873-9907.

"The Baroque Opera" by the Forman Brothers of the Czech Republic, a family level opera (seen at the '96 Henson Festival).

Scholarship Opportunities

UNIMA-USA has long offered a scholarship program to help US puppeteers attend the International Puppetry Institute of Charleville-Mezieres, France. Now the scholarship program includes other qualified professional study opportunities overseas. Applications for the 1997-1998 Scholarship Grants for International Puppetry Study are now available and must be completed by mid December. An applicant must be a member of UNIMA-USA and be recommended by an UNIMA-USA member. For application information, contact: Joann Siegrist, Scholarship Committee Chair
Division of Theatre and Dance
PO Box 6111
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV 26506-6111.

The American Center of

UNIMA-USA, Inc.

Union Internationale de la Marionnette

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Dear UNIMA-USA Member,

October 1997

Enclosed is your complimentary issue of *Puppetry International* 1998 as part of your 1997 membership benefits. It is the most innovative and inspirational magazine that puppetry has to offer. Articles include puppetry of Mali, high-tech puppetry, Burr Tilstrom, book reviews and more. You will read about scintillating new work in puppet theatres in Poland, Canada and Mali.

If you wish to purchase *Puppetry International* 1998 for re-sale or to simply hand out as a gift, we are making it available to you for \$3.50 each with a minimum purchase order of ten, plus shipping and handling. That's almost one-third off the single copy newsstand price. Additionally, we have back issues of *Puppetry International* 1997, 1996 and 1995 available at the same rate of \$3.50 per order of ten plus shipping and handling. So, start your library collection now! Students, audiences, educators and sponsors can also benefit from the gift of *Puppetry International*.

Please use the form below to order your copies today and to let us know if you would like more information about UNIMA-USA, the national chapter of the world's oldest theatre arts organization. Return your order to UNIMA-USA, 1404 Spring St., Atlanta, GA 30309, or via FAX at (404) 873-9907 or via e-mail at unima@mindspring.com.

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the billy goat by Yaya Coulibaly