

FALL and WINTER 2005 Issue #18

PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



PUPPETRY and DANCE

- Christopher Williams • Snappy Dance
- Walking Naked

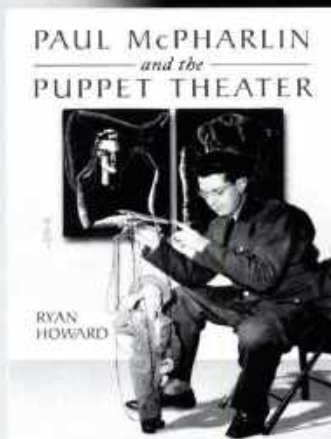
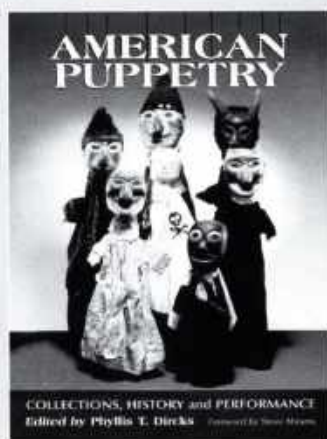
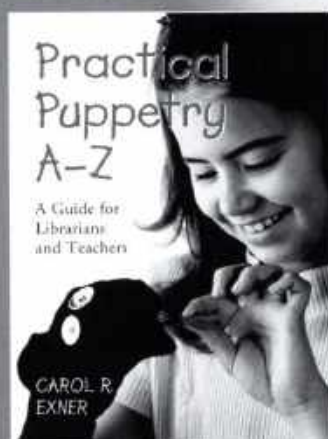
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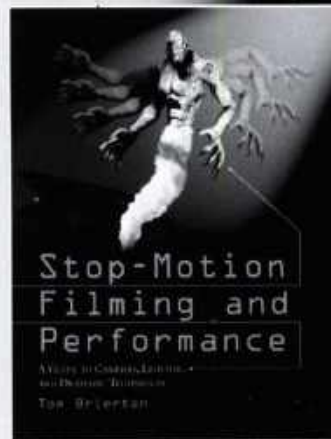
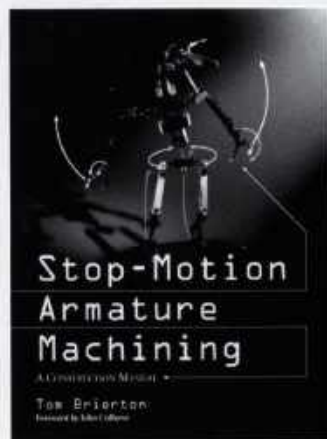
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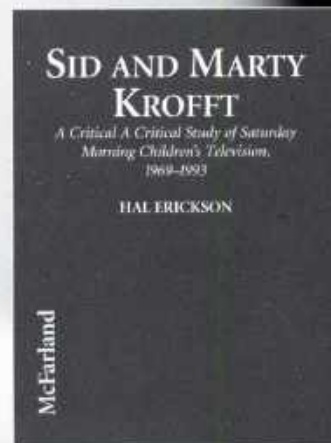
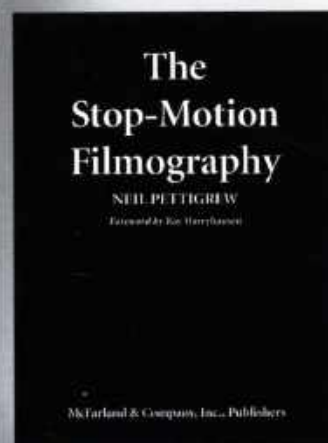
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the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

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The Editor's Page 2

PUPPETRY AND DANCE

Christopher Williams, interview	4
Integrity Designworks/Wasau Dance Theatre	8
Wayang Wong by Kathy Foley	10
Dutch Treat: Pavia and Quade	15
Walking Naked by Matthew Cohen and Rolande Duprey	16
Genty and Underwood	21
Buyo's Ningyo-Buri by Larry Komúz	22
Vancouver Moving Theatre	25
Heinrich von Kleist by Hanne Tierney	26
Snappy Dance by Bonnie Duncan	28
Notes on Dance and Puppetry by Steve Abrams	30
"Coda," from the New Book by Eileen Blumenthal	32
West African Puppets and Masks	39

HISTORY

Unconscious Grace by John Bell	44
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REVIEWS

Book: Eileen Blumenthal's <i>Puppetry: A World History</i> review by John Bell	36
DVDs: "Pioneers of Puppetry" review by Mark Levenson	46

TRAINING

A Master Class with Albrecht Roser by Robin Walsh	40
From UConn to NPC, Aki's <i>Rose Blossoms</i> by Rolande Duprey	48



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ON THE COVER:

Front: Gitanjali Kolanad in
Walking Naked

(see page 16)

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EDITOR'S PAGE —

“I will never be a dancer,” said Bart Roccoberton, wistfully. Looking at him, I supposed this was true (though, for one so solidly built, he was remarkably light on his feet). “With a puppet, though, I really *can* dance!”

That was in 1984, when we performed together in Pandemonium Puppet Company (of which he was also the director). Now, as the head of UConn’s puppetry program, Roccoberton spends a lot less time performing. Hand him a puppet though, and he’ll still plié and twirl with the best of them.

The universes of puppetry and dance have many galaxies in common. There are, of course, puppets that dance, but there are also dancers who consciously try to imitate puppets. There are productions in which characters are by turns played by puppets, and by dancers who are manipulated as puppets (when done well, the audience will be unable to tell which is which). There are dance troupes that integrate puppets or shadows into their dances, and puppet troupes that integrate dancers into their plays. There are so many combinations and permutations of the dance/puppetry equation, that at some point a reasonable person will simply say, “To heck with it!” and leave the naming of names to scholars whose fastidious work it is to prepare specimen slides for the microscopes of posterity.

What we have tried to do here is assemble a sampler, a curiosity case, the contents of which represent a wide range of work being done both in the US and abroad. Our hope is that out of all these motley scraps, a picture will begin to emerge of a fantastic world of color and choreography, of metaphor and movement.

A seminal essay in the consideration of puppetry and dance is Heinrich von Kleist’s “*Über das Marionettentheater*.” Hanne Tierney throws new light on this old chestnut [page 26]. Von Kleist’s name pops up a number of times, particu-

larly in our History column by John Bell, who also reviews the important new *Puppetry: A World History*, by Eileen Blumenthal [page 36]. Blumenthal’s latest work is surely destined to become a standard reference work. We include a portion of the final chapter, which highlights the relationship between dancer and puppet.

It is on the stage, though, rather than in books, where the rubber hits the road (or where the tutu hits the tarmac). Christopher Williams is a young NY choreographer whose work at times veers so far from the mainstream that the mainstream itself is forced to shift [page 4]. Rolande Duprey and Matthew Cohen document the fascinating journey of Gita Kolanad, from teenage runaway to master of *Bharatanatyam* (one of India’s classical dance forms) and beyond [page 16]. Boston’s “Snappy Dance” has often integrated objects and puppets into their work, as explained by company member (and puppeteer) Bonnie Duncan [page 28]. Wasau Dance Theatre’s recent production *Alice in Wonderland* is only their latest collaboration with Integrity Designworks—a company started by UConn Puppetry Program alums [page 8].

We have our scholarly writing as well (though not of the dry, Petri dish variety). In addition to the aforementioned Bell, Blumenthal and Tierney, Kathy Foley introduces us to Indonesian *wayang wong* [page 10], and Larry Kominz to Japanese *buyo* [page 22]. These are both forms of dance based on traditional puppet movement. Steve Abrams leads us through the work of such well-known choreographers as Martha Graham, who’ve been influenced by puppetry [page 30].

You don’t need to be a Martha Graham, though, to work in the world of dance. Take a lesson from Professor Roccoberton and pick up a puppet. Now: “Right hand to the heart-a; left hand to the heart-a; sink, slide, coupé!” (Repeat.)



Just a few days ago Nikki Tirroe left us.

“The body is dying,” she smiled
“but the spirit is strong.”

As a dancer, she was enchanting.

As a puppeteer, sublime.

As a friend, she will be missed by many.



Puppets and Dance, an integral part of shows with Wassau Dance Theatre, Compagnie Philippe Genty, and Carter Family Marionettes

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

THE (UNUSUAL) WORD MADE FLESH

Ever since the theme of this issue got out, people have been giving us excited reviews of the work of young choreographer Christopher Williams. Dance critics seem to agree. In *The New Yorker* (2005/08/08 and 15), Joan Acocella, describing his *Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, placed him among the best of the new wave of surrealist choreographers (a group whose imagery is more ambiguous than the earlier wave that included Martha Clarke and Pina Bausch).

Williams brings to his work not only his background as a dancer (he has worked for Tere O'Connor and others), but as a puppeteer. It was not surprising to learn that one of his mentors at college was dancer/puppeteer Dan Hurlin. He has also worked for Basil Twist.

In a recent conversation with Christopher Williams, I asked him about his reasons for using puppets in his dances, as well as what he thought were puppets' strengths relative to flesh-and-blood dancers, and how he saw the relationship of the puppet to its animator.

In the context of making dances, I see puppets both as unique entities of their own and more often as possible extensions of the human dancers' bodies. While both dancers and puppets have certain limitations in their range of movement, puppets, in many forms, arguably surpass the human anatomy in their ability to appear to defy gravity, to change scale, and to undergo metamorphosis before the eyes of the viewer, for example. To watch a dancer perform a solo with a bird puppet hovering around her may give a scene a more heightened sense of movement than if she were dancing alone. The bird puppet, while maintaining its unique identity, has also served to augment the movements of the dancer's body and



provide her with a charged, dramatic space or context. This occurrence of the puppet providing the dancer with a heightened dramatic playing space can also work in reverse. In *Virgo Genitrix*, for example, it was the dancers' bodies (with the addition of prosthetic pregnant bellies) that provided a kind of human, fleshy proscenium stage for two baby puppets representing Saint John the Baptist and the Christ Child leaping in the wombs of their mothers.

In Basil Twist's version of the Ballet *Petrushka*, he employed figurative puppet dancers instead of humans for the three main characters with great success. My experience with them was that they could perform many high, gravity-defying leaps and other steps especially with ease, while turns or spins and other non-frontal steps proved a bit more difficult (though not impossible) due to the fact that they



were manipulated from behind by hidden puppeteers. I have not yet explored the possibility of presenting a figurative dancing puppet against a human dancer, with the possible exception of a scene from *Virgo Genitrix* in which one of the dancers is visited by a fairy-like archangel Gabriel apparition. The ensuing duet exploited the strength of the puppet to hover or fly above her companion, while the dancer could spin and turn easily on the floor below hers. Puppets can be built specifically to accomplish one certain effect, while human dancers constantly strive to push the boundaries of their ultimately finite movement vocabularies. This is why, as a choreographer working from a base of innate love of the living human body in motion, I more often than not see puppetry as a sensitive way to allow a dancer to appear to breach the boundary of his own physical limitations.

The role of puppet to its manipulator depends greatly upon the approach I am exploring within a particular work. I try to make nothing arbitrary in this choice. I employ additional puppeteers (or not) in my dances in order to most thoroughly flesh out a particular idea or vision of mine.

In the case of *Mandragora Vulgaris*, the mandrake root baby puppets are meant to seem as if they had grown out of the tangled root garments that the dancers wear. Here, I specifically wanted to explore the possibilities of the dancers themselves fulfilling the role of puppeteer. As a result, the role of puppeteer to puppet became a metaphor for the mother to her spawn through parthenogenesis or some other mysterious and spontaneous form of reproduction. In this way, the wild woman or Amazon mother to baby relationship justifies the need for puppets.

In the case of *Virgo Genitrix*, however, in keeping with apocryphal legends of the medieval cult of the three Marys, I was interested in maintaining the strict illusion that the puppets were separate, supernatural entities visiting or plaguing the dancers. Six veiled puppeteers and light curtain techniques were employed to maintain this effect.

The kind of puppet I choose to employ also has a great significance for me in each work. In *Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, the choice to include a lamb marionette in the solo of Saint Agnes was intended to create a poetic harmony with her early iconography, with her name's sake, as well as with that of the marionette itself, whose name comes from its iconographic use to depict the virgin Mary in early Christian mystery plays.

For me, a certain beauty lies in the flexibility of the roles of puppets to their manipulators as well as the multiplicity of puppet forms, and I plan to continue to challenge this relationship as I create more work.

Describing *Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, Acocella also praises the costumes and the music, but her final words are reserved for the choreographer:

P.S. 122 should be congratulated for producing this show, but "Ursula" deserves to be shown in a larger theatre, or just a theatre with more seats. The four performances were completely sold out, with people on the sidewalk, crying for tickets.

For more images and information, visit Christopher Williams's web site: www.threehandstar.org



*Christopher
Williams*

the (unusual) word made flesh



A MATTER OF TRUST



Alice in Wonderland



geographic barriers, though, the two seemed not only destined to work together, but the work of each has come, to some extent, to define the artistry of the other.

Wausau Dance Theatre grew out of the Central Wisconsin School of Ballet, founded by Waltraud Karkar some thirty-four years ago. Karkar came to the United States from Darmstadt, Germany, when she was eighteen and continued her dance studies with well-known teachers, both here

and abroad. Moving to Wausau because of a work opportunity for her husband, she began giving a few private ballet lessons, which grew into classes that eventually took over the house, and finally blossomed into a school of world-renown in a large downtown facility. Her professional students have gone on to work at the Joffrey, the Kirov and numerous other prestigious troupes.

Wausau Dance Theatre is the non-profit performing branch of the school. It was initiated and run by Waltraud's daughter, Annaluna Karkar, and her son, Patrick Kaspar. Annaluna, after working for years as an actress in Los Angeles, returned to Wausau. Her father showed her some videotape of a *Nutcracker* done by the Hartford Ballet. She was absolutely struck with the

Despite the geographic barriers, though, the two seemed not only destined to work together, but the work of each has come, to some extent, to define the artistry of the other.

INTEGRITY DESIGNWORKS AND WAUSAU DANCE THEATRE



Carnival of the Animals

design work and masks, and set about the task of tracking down the artist responsible. The designer in question was Joyce Ritz. Together with her husband Bob (*Alice's* set designer, and theater professor at Eastern Connecticut State University), she owns and runs Integrity Designworks in tiny Ashford, Connecticut. Joyce's background, though, is anything but homespun. She has an MFA in costume design and puppetry from the University of Connecticut (UConn). She also works with some of the best and brightest to come out of the UConn program. These alums—such as David Regan, Carole Simms and Susan (Doyle) Tolis—are not only craftspeople, but are also performers, and they make masks and puppets that not only *look* good, but work. Nothing goes on stage before they have thoroughly tested it and are satisfied that it is truly “performance-enhancing.”

We stick to the highest standards of workmanship,” says Joyce Ritz, “so that the kids get to know the best that is possible.”

The masks are extremely dancer-friendly,” says Annaluna Karkar. She sees the change in a dancer as soon as the mask (or puppet) is donned. “Dancers are taught to use their faces as means of expression. When you take that away, they have to learn to use bigger gestures.” Kids, she notes, pick this up more quickly than adults.

After a number of collaborations, Joyce and Annaluna feel more like next-door neighbors than artists working 1,000 miles apart. When a design question comes up, Annaluna has been known to say, “Oh, you know what I like.” Now that’s what I call *trust*. •



"HUMAN PUPPETRY" IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COURT DANCE: PUPPET MASTER KINGS AND WELL ORDERED COUNTRIES

BY KATHY FOLEY



Amir Hamzah is a refined King in *wayang golek cepak*.

In Southeast Asia, the form and aesthetic of dance-drama are attributed to puppet theatre. Prior to World War II in Java, hundreds of dancers might participate in stories of epic clashes between the five heroic Pandawa brothers as they staved off their hundred greedy cousins. Dressed in headdresses and clothing like the puppet figures, performers would execute their scenes in a flattened plane, as if the dance had to "fit" the ground plan of the banana log stage in which puppet rods would be fixed as figures. Though the shadow screen was gone, dancers would still move slightly for their dialogue, emulating the practice for the shadows of *wayang kulit purwa*.

In Java, this human dance drama, called *wayang wong* (literally, "human puppetry"), was introduced after 1755 (Soedarsono 1984, 15). Prior to that time puppetry was the premier dramatic form. Due to the split of the princely house of Mataram, engineered by the Dutch colonial government who sought to divide and conquer, the newly established court of Yogyakarta needed to create a unique artistic identity that could distinguish it from the older branch of the house in Surakarta, the older capital. Mangkubumi, the new ruler, decided to create *wayang wong*, with dance, music and repertory drawn from the puppet theatre. Mangkubumi (reign 1755-

92) was raised to the sultan title to appease him and his followers who felt that his half brother, the ruler (*sunan*) of Surakarta had caved in too easily to Dutch power. For him, the *Mahabharata*—an epic which talks of internal fighting between two sets of cousins, and the woes the unjust cousins cause—was the preferred source for material.

The drama reflected the political and social mood of the time. For *wayang wong*, a *dalang* (puppet master, but now merely a narrator) was present. But instead of moving all the puppets and intoning all their dialogue, the puppet master might only cue the orchestra and provide narration and mood songs, while the dancers spoke for and moved themselves. But dancers did not use their natural voices, for they were still regulated by the conventions of puppet theatre. They spoke with the puppet theatre's high-pitched voice resonating on the hard palate if they were a female or with the distinctive stutter of a particular clown when they played his role. The "green room" or staging area was called *kotak* (puppet box) and the monarch sat on a seat, which was roughly analogous to where the puppeteer would sit for a puppet performance in relation to the playing space. Dancers would enter on his right or left from the same positions that would



Ben Arcangel dances the hero Gatotkaca in human puppet (*wayang orang* or *wayang wong*) style.



Putri is a refined prince in *wayang golek cepak*.

have been the case if they were refined characters floating gracefully on the right hand of a puppet master or rough characters who ambled in on his left. Dance battles, where the forces of the right overcame those who followed the left hand way, were the choreographic climaxes of this exquisite form. "The sultan selected the stories to be performed and collaborated with his court literati in writing them. . . . Many dancers were selected by the sultan himself." (Kam, 33)

Wayang kulit purwa can have hundreds of puppets in a puppet chest, and *wayang wong*, likewise, used hundreds of retainers to represent the epic action. Extensive documentation of the court displays comes from reports by Europeans who enjoyed these entertainments from the eighteenth to twentieth century (Soedarsono; Holt 1967; Kam 1987). Performers rehearsed for months under the direction of the royal family with close relatives of the ruler often taking the major roles.

The solo puppeteer as center of a universe was the image that the Sultan Hamengkubuwana I ("lap of the world") activated. His descendants continued this tradition of lavish puppet-influenced dance dramas and soon their Surakarta relatives were trying to outdo their dance dramas. Anthro-

pologist Clifford Geertz coined the term "theatre state" to describe the princely courts of Bali and Java where monarchs defeated all comers by devising the best dance displays. Who needed to fight on a battlefield when it was apparent to all that the ruler who had the best trained dancers and fullest aesthetic sense was the winner? Power was in the dance, and only a great monarch could, like a puppet master, animate display without seeming effort.

Courtiers refined themselves in the schools of dance that were part of court education. At displays for the anniversary of a coronation or other state event, a prince would sail across the stage effortlessly like the refined puppet Arjuna in the dance move called "flying" (*trisi*). As the prince smoothly catches the arm of his foe, the jerky demon Cakil ("fang"), the gamelan accelerates for the moment Arjuna kills Cakil with a dagger. The demon's twists and turns stop, as he dies beautifully—the moment of death always landing perfectly on the stroke of a gong. The dance of these human puppets displayed the perfect order of the kingdom ruled by a living exponent of refinement—the sultan or the *sunan*. Great displays continued in both Yogyakarta and Surakarta until the 1930s and wherever Javanese culture went—to Sunda in West Java and Surabaya and Malang in East Java—*wayang wong* was introduced into the smaller courts of *bupati* (regents). The style of dance could change; in West Java (Sunda), for example, the wooden rod puppets were more popular, so the *wayang wong* there uses the conventions of the rod puppet theatre, Sundanese *wayang golek*.

Wayang wong remains important to the present. Hamengkubuwana IX, when he was the Vice-President of Indonesia in the 1970s, revived aspects of these mammoth displays. But performances were more modest, and only episodes were presented rather than the extended stories (*lakon*), which in times past would take multiple days in the great dance pavilions that are part of the palace. The floating quality of the Javanese dancer, the setup of a scene, the iconography of costume for each performer, the gestures of a fight sequence, and the music—all were and are structured by puppetry. A good dancer embodied the quality of the puppet that he or she represented.

From the early twentieth century in urban areas, dance troupes set up and started selling tickets in cities at amusement parks. Sriwidari, a *wayang wong* company in Surakarta is a government-supported troupe which continues to present *wayang wong* to the present. Most of the other companies have closed as audiences turned to modern media in the 1960s and 1970s. But dance academies and private groups, some of which are still attached to palaces, may still present *wayang wong* style performances on an occasional basis. In Yogyakarta one may still see pieces of *wayang wong* dance choreography which were created by R. W. Sasminta, Mardawa, the major choreographer of the palace tradition in

the last half of the twentieth century. Nor is Java the only place where people are judged by how good a puppet they can be.

In Thailand, Prince Dhaninavat (1973) argues court mask dance (*khon*) evolves from shadow puppetry (*nang yai*) after the fourteenth century. In the late nineteenth century rod puppets (*hun krabok*) evolved from the *khon* and took their iconography and dance into popular theatres around Bangkok. If you watch the stiff and sidelong movement of the mask dancers you can understand how they may have developed their art by first playing the "feet" of the monkeys and heroes of the 3'x4' leather picture panels. The aesthetic of dance, performance structure, and music come again from puppetry. Once again the performers are the aristocrats of the palace. Thai puppetry and mask dance supposedly originated as part of the annual ceremony where brothers and followers of the monarch swore their loyalty to the king. One of the ways they did this was honoring him in great puppet shows and dance displays which were modeled on the leather puppets.

The monarchs were often the authors of the versions of the *Rama* story (*Ramakien*) which the narrators sang. The event, with its elaborate preparation, was rather like Louis XIV's ballets about the "Sun King." Followers praised the *cakravartin* (the Buddhist righteous king) Ram and the living exponent—the king—by dancing these episodes. Aristocrats had little time to rebel when their efforts were subsumed in this dance of beauty, power, and righteous rule. If you are in Thailand today in December you can still see performances of mask dance (*khon*) and puppetry (*nang yai*) where hundreds gather to honor Rama IX the present monarch, Rama IX, who continues a tradition of righteous king honored by the dance of his followers.

Other areas of Southeast Asia show, a similar relation between puppet and dancer. In West Java, when I was learning how to dance, my teacher, Abay Subarja would shake his head at my ludicrous efforts; to improve my technique, he would demonstrate the wooden jerks of the *wayang golek* puppet to help me see what I must do. I was "too human" and needed to become "like a puppet" to transform my attempts into art. Watching the puppets and the mask dancers who wear the puppet's face, I learned the puppets energy and forgot myself in the "bigger than life" figures that inhabit the *wayang*. The moves of the *wayang golek* puppet and the dancer are the same.

A Burmese dancer, similarly, learns by watching puppets to hang weight from his/her shoulder yoke, approximating the *yokthe pwe* marionettes. The dancer swings limbs like the puppet to let them fall with gravity. The repertoire of Burmese *zat pwe* (*jataka* plays/dance drama) is borrowed from puppetry. Puppet theatre was the only art form allowed to do the important *jataka* stories—those which tell the



The dancer's masked face and movements are shared with the puppet character Klana in Indonesian *topeng Cirebon* dance.

former incarnations of the Buddha, until the fall of the monarchy to the British in the late nineteenth century disrupted tradition and the *zat pwe* with humans began. The puppet leads and the dancer tries to follow its model.

The idea that puppetry is a central art and that the human actor-dancer emulates the puppet is not confined to Southeast Asia. A.C. Scott notes it could be the same in China (Brandon 1993, 27). Indian scholars note the head of a Sanskrit Drama troupe is a *sutradara* (puller of strings) and say the 2000-year-old Indian genre may have been modeled on puppetry. Koreans note that the puppetry and mask dance, the two oldest dramatic forms, share characters and scenes. Japanese scholars know that as *ningyo* (doll) *yoruri* (which we have come to call *bunraku*) and *kabuki* interacted, for a hundred years from the early eighteenth century. In those days puppets were the "art" and *kabuki* the lower class "entertainment" which borrowed one third of its repertoire from the puppet model. (Brandon, 149) The best performers could dance with the style of the puppets.

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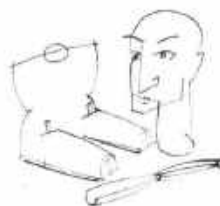
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photo: P Struijk

WALKING NAKED:

The story of Mahadeviakka told through dance and puppetry

BY MATTHEW COHEN, PH.D., AND ROLANDE DUPREY

Based on interviews with Gita Kolanad and Phillip Zarrilli in 2003 and in 2005

Walking Naked is a piece of story-theatre with puppets and dance, based upon the life and poetry of the saint-poet Mahadeviakka. It was devised by Indian-Canadian dancer Gitanjali Kolanad and American director and actor trainer Phillip Zarrilli, drawing extensively upon a number of South Asian performance practices, principally Bharatanatyam, as well as experimental theatre techniques. The music and recorded vocals are by Babu Parameshwaran, a Madras composer, now living in Los Angeles.

This solo piece has been performed all over the world—from Asia (Korea, Singapore, India) to the U.K., to the U.S. and Canada.

Beginnings

The beginnings of *Walking Naked* can be traced to a chance encounter by Philip Zarrilli, who was then a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Gitanjali Kolanad, a professional dancer then living in Singapore, at a Theatre in Education conference in Brisbane, Australia.

Kolanad is a dancer, choreographer and director, as well as the author of a travel guide, *Culture Shock!: India* (1st printing 1994). She was born in India (in Kerala), and moved to Canada as a child, where she studied piano, ballet and modern dance.

In 1970, when Kolanad was 16, she ran away from home.

When I left home my parents realized that the situation was very desperate and they said, "Fine you don't have to go to high school. How about going and spending a year in India?" And that was more tempting. I had a couple of months of living on the streets in Toronto and it was starting to be winter so I thought, "Oh, well that sounds like a way to save face." You know, I didn't have to come back home. So off I went to India.

Kolanad enrolled in Kalakshetra to study Bharatanatyam. Bharatanatyam is a new interpretation of traditional temple dance that in the past was performed exclusively by hereditary sacred dancers or *devadasis*.

In 1989, Kolanad moved to Singapore with her (second) husband, a German radio journalist. Living in Singapore, which is 2.5 hours from Madras by plane, allowed her to spend all her holidays in India. She choreographed large-scale work for the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, a school for the arts (founded 1949), and studied with the school's Sinhalese teacher of Bharatanatyam, Shanta Ponnudurai. (By chance, both Kolanad and Shanta Ponnudurai now live in Toronto and continue to collaborate.)

During the 1990s, she occasionally performed classical programs, but increasingly focused on her own choreography and dance-theatre.

Her new pieces during this period included an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Seven Deadly Sins* for three dancers, one actor, dummy horse dancing and video that she adapted, choreographed and directed. This piece, commissioned by the Max Muller Institute in Madras, used both Bharatanatyam and film dance vocabulary and was considered quite radical by established standards of Bharatanatyam.

She also collaborated with a Singapore-based American video and performance artist, Ray Langenbach. They created new dance, theatre and installation work dealing with censorship, the construction of gender and homosexuality.

In 1998, she returned to Canada with her husband, settled in Toronto and embarked on a series of collaborations with a Canadian violinist.

Kolanad met Zarrilli shortly before her return to Canada, at an international theatre educators conference in Brisbane,



photo: P Bregg

Dancer Gitanjali Kolanad

Australia around 1992 or 1993. Kolanad knew Zarrilli principally as a scholar, from his first book on the South Indian theatrical tradition of Kathakali, *The Kathakali Complex* (1990). Both Kolanad and Zarrilli had also trained in the Kerala martial art of kalaripayattu, which is the pre-expressive basis of Kathakali as well as a rigorous and precise discipline in its own right. Kolanad had studied kalari while living in Delhi, and Zarrilli had been studying and writing about kalari since the 1970s.

What Kolanad appeared not to know about Zarrilli was that in addition to being a theatre scholar, he is also a theatre practitioner and actor trainer. Much of his work is based on psychophysical acting techniques, a hybrid of tai chi, kalaripayattu and other Asian expressive and pre-expressive traditions, with his own devices and Western theatre heritage.

Zarrilli and Kolanad spoke tentatively at the Australia conference about the idea of collaborating. Subsequently, Zarrilli obtained a Creative Artist Award from the University of Wis-

consin to develop new artistic work. This supported expenses for production and travel for what eventually became *Walking Naked*.

Zarrilli traveled to Singapore to do some exploratory discussion and decided that they could actually work together. The collaboration continued, spanning three continents. Kolanad traveled to Madison to work with Zarrilli at his home university and then later went to Wales to continue the process. (Zarrilli had since moved to the U.K. and was a professor at the University of Surrey.) Final rehearsals were in Madras.

It was Kolanad's idea to create a piece dealing with the life and poetry of the 12. c. Karnataka poet-saint Mahadeviyakka.


Mahadevi, whose short poems or *vacanas* in Kannada free verse, are exquisite jewels of oral tradition. *Vacanas* literally means "saying, things done." These sayings were only written down posthumously. Some 200 years after her death, a biography of sorts was compiled. This biography, known as the *Sunyasampadane*, is a hagiographic text that collates the sayings and poetry attributed to Mahadevi with a telling of the story of Mahadevi's life.

Sometimes referred to simply as Akka (which means "older sister"), the poet was said to have run away from her arranged marriage in order to remain a devotee of Siva, whom she called Cenna Mallikarjuna. She was discovered "walking naked" by a community of Siva devotees, who questioned her commitment. When asked by Allama, the saint, why she was naked, she replied enigmatically, "unless the fruit inside is ripe/ the outer peel won't lose its shine" (from the A.K. Ramanujan translation).

For bhakti devotees of Siva, like Mahadevi, "Siva is perpetually immanent in the individual as the soul of the soul, but yet is other than souls in his transcendence." Mahadevi's quest to fully *know* Siva thus simultaneously (and rather paradoxically) involves self-knowledge and self-transcendence.

Kolanad had been thinking about doing a piece based upon Mahadevi's poetry and life for many years, since reading the poems collected by Ramanujan in *Speaking of Siva*.

She's so incredible, such a romantic personality. She died very young. She was this woman in a male-dominated world. I imagine her to be something of a superstar [...] to have that kind of almost rock superstar personality.



Kolanad had been interested in creating a piece about Mahadevi for years but had been unable “to find the right way” to perform it. A simple use of *abhinaya*, the highly codified symbolic language of expression of Bharatanatyam, would make it “banal.”

I wasn’t finding the way to work with it until I met Phillip and then Phillip created this beautiful structure, all the puppets, the images of disillusion. I don’t have to pretend anything really. The puppets are Mahadevi and I’m just there letting them show what’s happening to them. [...] Everything theatrical about this performance is Phillip’s.

The text she used was an as-yet-unpublished manuscript translation by Judith Kroll of the *Sunyasampadane*. Kroll was a good friend who lived in Delhi at the same time that Kolanad was living there. Kolanad presented the materials she had collected from Kroll and others to Zarrilli. Zarrilli stated:

I found the material quite interesting. [...] It’s a pretty remarkable story of this figure. She’s a pretty radical figure of the 12th century—the way she makes all the choices that she makes. [...] In my reading of the materials, clearly this was revolving around the body and dematerialization of the body in some way. So how could we work with this with Gita’s dance?

Zarrilli and Kolanad made the choice to present the text in English, “because people who go to dance performances, even in Madras, speak English [...] and Gita wanted the challenge of working with text.” There was a lot of time in developing the score, the script, sitting at the computer, getting up, trying some choreography, semi-devising. Kolanad was thinking choreographically around certain images and a set of performing objects. “We thought it was important that [Mahadevi] become manifest through the performance,” said Zarrilli. “If Gita was just paying attention to technique and choreography, the figure could become very secondary to the choreography and here we were trying to keep some balance.”

The Puppetry:

It was Zarrilli’s idea to use puppets.

The world-view in her poetry is so much about transformation. After discussion on how to represent this, we decided upon using puppets. Each of the three puppets represent a different poetic phase of her life. We were doing a kind of life story, so we selected key poems as aspects of her biography.

There were four performing objects present in the piece, three puppets and one spear.

The spear dance was in response to a very specific argument Akka Mahadevi had with Allama, a leader of the Virasaiva community. The poem speaks of one-pointedness “The guru gave a spear called linga into the hands of one fully concentrated.” She becomes one-pointed, as a spear, after the argument with Allama.

The question was, “How do affect a state of consciousness where you are one-pointed?” The text itself was extremely war-like:

I fight, I win

A man called Kama (desire)

Krodha (anger) and others

Were defeated and ran away

Since the spear was very deep inside me and vanished...

They decided upon using a literal spear. Gita begins the sequence by balancing it on her head, (there are many folk traditions of balancing things on your head such as Teyyam, Kavadi). Soon the spear it self becomes a partner in the dance, moving with and by Gita as she twirls around the floor, playfully rolling it around her body.

Each of the three puppets used had “points of departure” (PZ) from Asian traditions of performance, though no real attempt was made to copy something. They were used to represent ideas of dematerialization, a theme also present in the texts.

The first puppet presented in the 50-minute piece is a small rod puppet whose body is made of ice, and melts over the course of the show.

In order to develop the movement criteria for the second puppet (out of cloth), GK went to Japan while working on *Walking Naked* and watched a lot of bunraku. “I tried to get the feeling [with the cloth puppet] where the other person is on stage but it is the puppet who is really alive which is what you have in bunraku. You see the puppeteer the whole time but you have the sense that they’re not important, that they’ve infused every bit of their life into the puppet. I tried to get that same sense of putting everything into the puppet.”

Eventually, she succeeded: “The cloth puppet would take over, I would feel as though I disappeared and the puppet would come to life; with the other puppets, it was more about



me making them come alive...” The cloth puppet, operated directly from behind, has texts pulled out of the chakras of the body.

The third and last puppet presented in the piece is covered exquisitely with paper that is set on fire, revealing a brass skeleton. Kolanad then crawls into it, balancing it on her shoulders as she dances. This shape was specifically influenced by Teyyam, which was important choreographically for Kolanad as a point of inspiration.

It wasn't necessary for me to go back and incorporate any exact traditional art. It wouldn't be right. I could use them as a subliminal memory.

The poetry spoke of “The God of desire burnt to ash” ...For some Indian women, in a feminist reading, it could be the story of molestation. Indian audiences questioned this part – How could it be beautiful? But for Akka Mahadevi, it was about the transformative experience – not a molestation, but a positive change.

In coaching Gita Kolanad for the work with puppets, Zarilli asked Kolanad to extend her energy into the objects. As in weapons work (in Kalari), the weapon is used to extend the energy of the warrior. Kolanad has had some Kalari training, though no weapons work. This particular aspect took a while for her to incorporate into the performance. “It’s not the movement but the quality of the movement, which comes from being centered and focused, which is what kalaripayattu teaches you...”

Performing with puppets requires the performer to sublimate his/her ego in order that the puppet may be fully realized as a character.

The brass puppet I needed to invest everything in.... It was very top-heavy, being balanced on my shoulders, it was about the shift of weight. I had to let the movements happen without losing control.

If she moved too far in one direction it would topple, so she had to play a double balancing act: the puppet as well as getting as much movement out of it as possible within the limited range.

The puppets, therefore, were challenges on numerous levels. Kolanad found the ice puppet to be very restrictive, but the others were more accessible, since they were connected directly to her body: “They take on a life of their own. The nature of each puppet demands a certain kind of movement.”

The “South Asianess” of Walking Naked

Mahadevi herself wrestled with the problem of the communication of rendering her own sense of Shiva. This sense was “the Experience” or *anubhava*, “an unmediated, immediate, and unpredictable experience.”

Thom Brooks, in a recent article on Mahadevi comments that “Certain kinds of knowledge may only be transferred via experience, with knowledge of Siva’s divine presence being but one example of this. In this light, Mahadevi chooses well in using *vacanas* in the effort to share with us the object of her experience. Through the use of prose she may employ various metaphors and perspectives to make her point. Indeed, poetry uniquely gives her the opportunity to attempt to cross the impossibility of sharing knowledge she has gained via her subjective experiences with those who have not had the same experiences.”

Walking Naked reinforces this experiential knowledge through theatre’s unique capacity to engage spectators in a variety of semiotic channels. The puppet made of ice that melts continuously throughout the play, the cloth puppet, the spear, and the puppet set on fire are all powerful signs that are universally recognized. But, there are certain other signs within the piece that are specific to India and Indian belief systems.

Someone who doesn't know South Asia won't see some of the subtleties in the piece" says Zarilli:

...including the chakras that are part of the wire puppet design, or the Kanada text that is pulled out. The triangle design that is marked on the floor surrounding the performance area is a tantric design—the vagina of the world. All the imagery has a unity to it in the Shaivite Siva-Shakti realm. All of that's there and it's available if anyone knows it. A lot of people in the West will just look at it and it will just be maybe, *maybe* an interesting design and interesting objects. Hopefully, though, they'll get something from the text and the dance that suggests some of the elements that have more resonance to people with more knowledge.

Rolande Duprey is a frequent contributor to PI. She has her MFA in puppetry from UConn.

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The complete article, which includes much more of Kolanad's personal journey in the world of Indian Classical Dance, can be found at our website.

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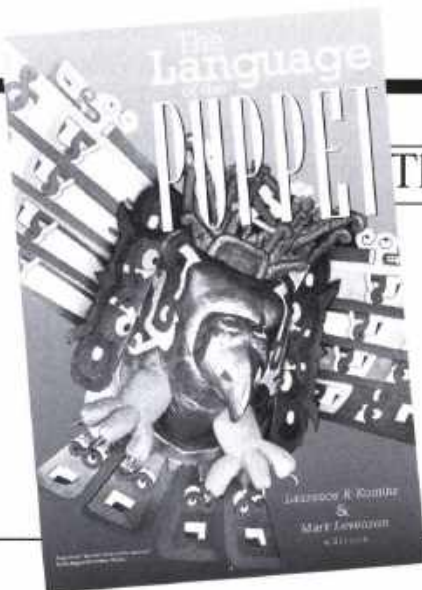
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PUPPET LANGUAGE, HUMAN BODY:

The Imitation of Puppets in Classical Buyo Dance

LAURENCE R. KOMINZ

Buyo is the classical dance of Japan's *kabuki* theatre. Its origins are remarkably diverse, including folkdance, the solemn dance of the *no* theatre, the erotic and burlesque dances of early *kabuki*, martial arts traditions, farcical dances from the *kyogen*, and the stylized movements of puppets. Today, *buyo* is performed not only by the all-male actors of the *kabuki* stage, but also by thousands of professional teachers and more than a million amateur students. Off the *kabuki* stage most *buyo* dancers and teachers of dance are women.

Nowhere is the affinity between puppet and human performer more apparent than in *ningyo-buri* dances. *Ningyo-buri* is a relatively recent development, dating only to the mid-19th century, 80 to 100 years after the emergence of the dance drama (*shoshagoto*) as a form that actors could use to attain the pinnacle of fame and fortune. Actors and the choreographers competed to present ever more splendid and dramatic dances. In the early 19th century they turned to *no* and *kyogen* for exciting conflicts and interesting characters, but most popular were *henge mono* or spirit transformation pieces in which individual dancers change character numerous times using exciting quick changes of costume. *Ningyo-buri* provided the audience with yet another form of virtuoso dance and spectacular effects.

Dancers in *ningyo-buri* pieces imitate almost every sort of puppet or doll. In *Kyo Ningyo* (The Kyoto Doll) a static doll comes to life, in *Sanja Matsuri* (The Three Shrine Festival) the dancer plays a mechanical puppet (*karakuri ningyo*) from a festival carriage, and the often performed *Ayatsuri Sambaso* (Marionette Sambaso) features the imitation of *bunraku* puppets. Some dances have both standard and *ningyo-buri* choreography, others are performed today only in puppet style. Three dances stand out as particularly popu-



Yaoya Oshichi (1666-1683), upon whom the play *Yagura Oshichi* was based, seen here on a woodblock print and (opposite) as puppet.

lar and dramatic: *Yagura Oshichi*, *Hidagawa* (The Hidaka River), and *Yaegakihime* (Princess Yaegaki). *Gidayu* music and texts closely adapted from *bunraku* accompany all three pieces and all three feature a heroine who must deal with being thwarted in her desperate attempt to join her lover. The choreography for all three calls for three dancers to play puppets, but with modifications to the lead dancers' choreography fewer, "puppeteers," or none at all may be used.

The choreography of *bunraku ningyo-buri* entails numerous features not found in any other type of *buyo*. One of the biggest challenges the dancer faces is to keep her face, and particularly her eyes, expressionless. The dancer

should fix her gaze ahead, try not to blink, and not allow her eyeballs to move. The head should be thrust forward slightly, and arm movements should not originate at the shoulder, as is characteristic of *buyo*, but from the elbows. Fingers must be held tightly together and only bent at one joint. Because *bunraku's* female puppets have no feet, the dancer's feet are pinned to the inside of her kimono, so as to remain invisible to the audience.

Spectacle is one of the major attractions in the *ningyo-buri* dancer. The first thing that amazes the spectator in the *bunraku* and marionette *ningyo-buri* dancer is the remarkable unison in timing that "puppeteer" and "puppet" are able to achieve without looking at each other. They manage this by following drum cues and *kakegoe* (the musicians' rhythmic shouts). The "puppeteer" establishes the identity of the lead dancer as a puppet by manipulating first the arms, then the head, then the whole body of the puppet, in moves so

reminiscent of *bunraku* puppets and marionettes that the audience is amazed. For “marionettes,” the strings connecting arms and head to the “puppeteer” are imaginary and unison is achieved by timing movements to drum cues. The “puppeteer” raises the “marionette’s” body for the first time by actually lifting it, then leaves the lead legs high when she walks and stamps “on air.” She cannot simply stop moving, but has to sway slowly to a halt, as if suspended by strings.

Bunraku “puppet” arms can either be manipulated physically or moved by imaginary rods. The main “puppeteer” is usually in contact with the small of the “puppet’s” back and often lifts and carries the “puppet,” usually with the aid of a second “puppeteer.” The “foot manipulator” (and for “marionettes,” the lone “puppeteer”) stands to the side, stage right, and stamps rhythmically for the “puppet,” whose walking and stamping is always silent. In *bunraku ningyo-buri* the lead dancer’s walk and gestures while “speaking” have to convey her puppet nature. The cooperation between *bunraku* “puppeteers” and lead dancer is impressive. She must dance with two people in almost constant physical contact and still appear graceful. At points in the choreography, she must actually become a puppet, allowing her “puppeteers” to physically manipulate her hands and arms or to carry her about. Then at precisely the right moment, she must reassume motor control, perhaps using her former manipulators as human pedestals. The most spectacular moves occur at emotional high points in the dance, when the “puppeteers” lift or carry the dancer to create poses that closely resemble *bunraku* and are unique to *ningyo-buri*. These lifts and carries are not used in other choreography for women characters, and are used only in the most dramatic ballet choreography for males.

What does *ningyo-buri* provide that other choreography cannot other than spectacle and remarkable virtuoso dancing? The best *bunraku ningyo-buri* pieces express female devotion, desperation, and hysteria in a manner more chilling and more graphic than would be possible with conventional *buyo* choreography. *Yagura Oshichi* is an excellent example. It is midnight in Edo, a blizzard is raging and Oshichi, a teenage girl, is in a desperate situation. If she cannot get to her lover tonight and give him an heirloom sword she has managed to recover, he will be forced to commit suicide. The gates at the neighborhood borders have closed for the night and no desperate pleading will convince the guards to open them. They will open only in the event of fire to let the fire brigades through. But the penalty for a false alarm is death by burning.

In her desperation, Oshichi resolves to sacrifice her own life to save the man she loves. Oshichi’s desperation, hysteria, and resolve are dramatically expressed in the lines of the *yoruri* text, by the chanter’s voice, and in the dancer’s movements. As in many forms of dance, the audience sees parts of the dance as expressive of meaning, expressive of emotion, or purely decorative or acrobatic, or sometimes as fusions of meaning, emotion, and aesthetic pleasure. One of the best moments in *Yagura Oshichi* follows:

The dance approaches its climax. The chanter sings, “But I’m more than ready to burn to death for the man I love. It’s nothing to me. Turn me to cinders! Turn me to ash!” And with the strength of purpose that is a woman’s heart, she tightens her sash and pulls up her hem. The blizzard accompanies the transgressor. (Long instrumental interlude.) “The snow has hardened to ice, and she slips and falls.”

The “puppeteers” remove Oshichi’s upper outer garment and loosen her hair, letting it fall free. They treat her more roughly than they would the usual dancer in a costume change. Oshichi throws her head forward in a wild gesture, culminating in a dramatic pose. She does an energetic, rhythmic kneeling walk backward. This is accompanied by the “foot man’s” stamps and loud wooden clappers. She begins to climb the tower, but part way up she falls off it, backwards, and is caught by two “puppeteers” in a move so apparently dangerous that the audience gasps. She is carried in a prone position downstage right and is deposited there. She again proceeds to the fire tower.



The effect of the lifts, carries, and the spectacular fall, as well as the numerous sections where the “puppeteers” aid the lead dancer or actually control her movements, demonstrate that Oshichi’s rational will is no longer in control of her body. That she tries to fly like a bird, and rises some distance off the ground, shows that she is not her usual self. She is in the power of subconscious forces beyond her control.

How does the *buyo* version compare with the *bunraku* scene it is based on? The text and music are virtually identical. In both versions the spectacle consists of Oshichi becoming hysterical. Her movements become progressively more wild and exaggerated. Oshichi's transformation in the *buyo* version is somewhat more dramatic because the *ningyo-buri* dance is framed by two sections of dialogue and conventional choreography. This enhances the metaphor: "*ningyo-buri* staging equals loss of control." In *bunraku*, Oshichi must of course remain a puppet before and after the climactic fire tower scene. The physical spectacle is greater in the dance because of the perceived difficulty and danger that the human dancer must confront. The *bunraku* audience, even if it weeps for the characters it sees, knows that puppets are puppets. The puppet theatre presents a bit of mechanical spectacle that cannot be duplicated in dance. The tower is rigged so that one puppeteer can go inside it and remain invisible while single-handedly manipulating the Oshichi puppet up the ladder. In the dance, the disappearance of a "puppeteer" is no great feat, rather it signals a change in personality for Oshichi. On her second climb up the ladder Oshichi is without manipulators. She has accepted what she must do. The "puppeteers" now leave the stage. Now that she has chosen death, Oshichi can coolly calculate how to save her lover.

Meaning and emotion in *buyo* are created in the relationship between choreography, music and text. Dances are meant to tell a story, and to also be visually and musically pleasurable to audiences. Dancers are conscious of telling a story when they dance. They imagine



Dancer Bando Tamasaburo. In the first act of the Kabuki play *Kagamijishi*, a young palace maid dances with a lion mask as part of the New Year's festivities. She becomes possessed by the mask as she dances (seen below as a doll).

the emotions of the characters they dance and they enjoy the physical creation of beautiful forms, both mimetic and rhythmic/decorative. *Ningyo-buri* requires the occasional surrender of physical control to manipulators—at these moments the performer *is* a puppet, an "object" whose movement and voice are generated by others. The transformation of human to puppet is easily understood by the audience as a metaphor for the loss of rational control that accompanies hysteria or insanity. Even more than in most *buyo* dances, the dancer must become an "egoless" part of a perfectly designed form. She must imagine what Oshichi is feeling, but not show it on her face because she is a puppet. She must, on cue, give her body to her teacher to manipulate as he sees fit. She must do a graceful, but terrifying, back dive from the tower, trusting unseen hands to catch her, despite only three practices of the move. *Ningyo-buri* turns *buyo* into an exercise in teamwork and trust, a surrendering of the ego that only *bunraku* could inspire, and rewards the audience with some of the most exciting and evocative dances to be seen on the Japanese stage.

Laurence R. Kominz, Ph.D.
(Columbia University) *Japanese Language, Literature, and Drama*. Professor Kominz has his Ph.D. in Japanese literature.

This is part of a longer essay from *The Language of the Puppet*, edited by the author and Mark Levenson. A wonderful collection of writings by some of puppetry's top writers and practitioners, the book is available through UNIMA-USA (see ad, page 21).



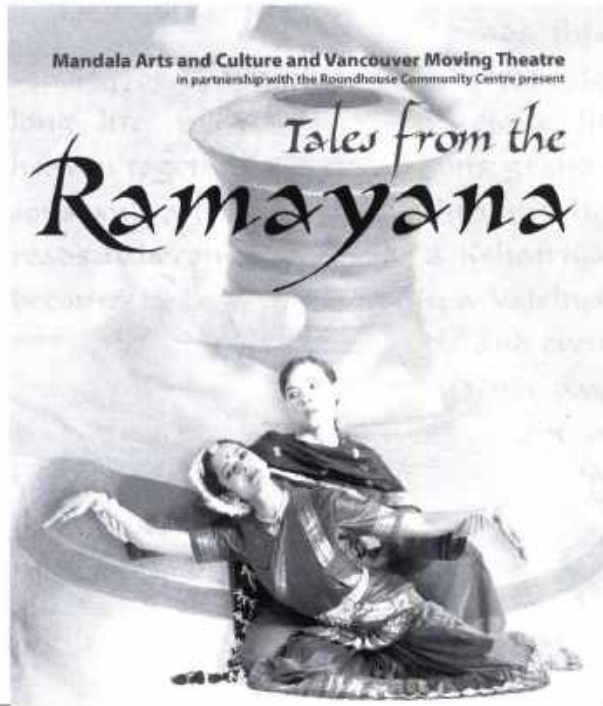
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PUPPETS AND DANCE



Since graduating in anthropology from Stanford University (USA), Savannah Walling has worked as a playwright, director, choreographer, musician, dancer, and educator, touring four continents. She collaborates with artists of many genres, techniques and traditions to create accessible interdisciplinary theatre influenced by Vancouver's Pacific Rim culture. As artistic director of Vancouver Moving Theatre, she has created or co-directed over 40 productions since 1983. Currently, she is working on *The Shadows Project* featuring images, puppets, storytelling and music— a play for the whole family about addiction (Fall 2006).

"ÜBER DAS MARIONETTENTHEATER" *Partly Genius, Wholly Kleist*

BY HANNE TIERNEY



For the last two hundred years, dancers and puppeteers have read and interpreted Heinrich von Kleist's essay, "Über das Marionettentheater," quite differently: the former as valuable advice and the latter as an affirmation of their art. For puppetry, the essay is an essential part of a meager canon, but for dance, von Kleist's thoughts on the nature of movement have been of great importance. Isadora Duncan comes to mind as a dancer who took the essay seriously. Comparing the movements of a dancer with those of a marionette gave von Kleist the means to air his criticism of the stiff and formal dances being performed at the time. It also gave him the perfect metaphor for his musings on consciousness, self-consciousness and innocence, favorite subjects for poets of the Romantic.

The essay, now not often read by anyone but scholars, from the time of its publication served as a bible for every aspiring dancer, and from a passing reference in the memoirs of Nijinsky's sister, the choreographer Bronislava Nijinska, it was required reading in every dance academy. Far from imitating what is thought to be the stilted movement of puppets, as in *Petrushka* for example, or in Meyerhold's biomechanics, it was hoped the essay would urge dancers to try and approach the unselfconscious gracefulness of the movements of the marionettes in von Kleist's essay.

He begins the essay by describing a meeting and conversation he has with a well-known dancer.

I had noticed him on several occasions at a marionette theater in the local market place, which entertained the townspeople with short dramatic burlesques, interspersed with song and dance. I told him how surprised I had been to see him at these performances, but he assured me that the marionettes were a source of great pleasure to him, and that a dancer who wished to improve himself could learn a great deal from observing them.

The protagonist argues that self-consciousness takes away innocence, and it is through innocence and lack of awareness that purity and beauty in movement can be achieved. It follows that a dancer can never equal the graceful movement of the mechanical figure, a being without con-

sciousness. But, in the marionette, the puppeteer can activate the soul of the puppet, its center of gravity.

"Each movement," he said, "has a center of gravity, and it is enough to activate this from inside the figure. The limbs, which are nothing but dead pendulums, will, in a mechanical way, follow on their own. This movement is really quite simple," he continued. "Each time the center of gravity is moved in a straight line, the limbs start to describe a curve, and often, when simply shaken in an arbitrary manner, the whole figure assumes a kind of rhythmic movement that is identical to dance."

Shaking a marionette in an arbitrary manner, albeit through its center of gravity, is not something a puppeteer usually does, on the contrary, it's the fine art of gesture, carefully planned and executed, that is perfected in the performance of marionettes. Throughout the essay, von Kleist's interest in the marionette never goes beyond its metaphysical uses, whereas dance interests him in a very practical way.

"Take for example the dancer P," he continued. "When she dances *Daphne* and is pursued by *Apollo*, she looks back at him and her soul is located in the vertebrae of the small of her back; she bends as if she were about to break. And look at the young dancer F. When he dances *Paris* and stands among the three goddesses and hands the apple to *Venus*, his soul is located precisely in his elbow, and it is a frightful thing to behold."

The essay very much belongs to its time. Born in 1777, the playwright Heinrich von Kleist grew up with the excitement of the recently discovered supremacy of reason, taught by enlightenment thinkers and philosophers. In 1801, the year he gives for his meeting with the dancer (although the essay was not written until 1810), von Kleist's intellectual equilibrium received a severe shock when he read the work of Emmanuel Kant. Kant's assertion that man, unable to know the true nature of things even with the power of reason, is left to rely only on appearances in the world, forced von Kleist to reevaluate his worldview.

Hanne Tierney is well-known for her large-scale abstract marionettes. She shakes them in a very non-arbitrary manner, in Manhattan.

He took on the task of giving unselfconscious passion and feeling their due, again, to regard them as significant elements in the actions of human beings. His subsequent writings certainly bear this out. In his plays the main characters follow their passions and inevitably end up in conflict with the demands of reason. It's quite interesting to read von Kleist's implied criticism of dance in the essay as his own criticism of pure reason. Dance here represents reason—form carefully arranged into more form—whereas the marionette stands for the power of feeling. By activating its center of gravity, its soul, everything about it becomes unplanned, graceful and rhythmic movement.

Perhaps von Kleist began to equate reason with a kind of intellectual affectation, an artificial construct of the mind for which feelings and passions, these expressions of the soul, have no need, and of which a puppet is completely ignorant.

"In addition" he went on, "these puppets possess the virtue of being immune to the force of gravity. They know nothing of the inertia of matter— that quality which above all is diametrically opposed to the dance— because the force that lifts them into the air is greater than the one that binds them to the earth. We dancers, he said, need the ground to rest upon, and recover from the exertion of the dance: a moment that is certainly no kind of dance in itself, and with which nothing can be done, except to make it disappear."

As an example of the dangers of self-consciousness the dancer in the essay then tells of a youth, who unknowingly imitated the charming pose of a famous statue. After being made aware of the resemblance, he could no longer reproduce it. Self-consciousness had taken away his innocence, and over the next few years the poor youth wasted away his strength and his life in an unsuccessful effort to replicate the pose. And after this sad moral lesson, von Kleist ends the essay with the ultimate compliment of equating puppets with god.

"And now, my excellent friend, you can understand what I am saying. As self-absorption becomes stronger in us, self-consciousness takes over, and natural grace disappears. Therefore, grace only appears at its purest in those two forms that have no consciousness at all, the mechanical puppet, and the form that has infinite consciousness, the god. That means," I said, "that we would have to eat from the tree of knowledge again, in order to find our true innocence." "Most certainly," he smiled, "and that is the last chapter in the history of the world." •



dancing a puppet show

by Bonnie Duncan



I cross a dim but vast stage, costumed as a young girl, and disappear behind a giant opaque curtain. Suddenly, I reappear as a shadow on the screen. I am surrounded by sprawling plants with thorns and tangled branches. They close in on me as I shrink. Their shadows reconfigure into chair-like plants, oddly beautiful. I sit on one innocently and it tickles me, taunts me, and then gobbles me up. It spits me out and I rush to another plant, and climb inside. It energetically bashes my head side to side and then shoves me out. I search the garden until I find a mountain to climb. The mountain grows to be twenty feet high as I ascend it. When I reach the top, the mountain throws me in the air and then suddenly pulls me inside. I disappear.

The Evil Garden is a shadow puppet show made for dancers. It was created by Snappy Dance Theater, as part of a full-evening work inspired by the illustrations of Edward Gorey. We, as dancers, became the shadow puppets and the main shadow character. Dancers were costumed in flexible foam thorns to conceal the humanness of their bodies. Mul-

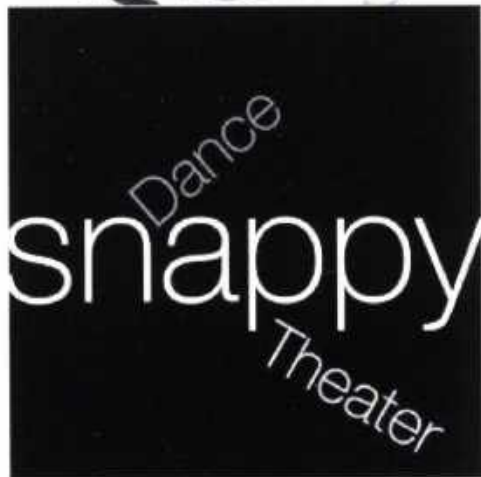
tiple dancers moved together to become carnivorous plants, bending and contorting their bodies into masses that appeared to be one plant or a field of grass. They stood close to the light and their shadow legs became enormous trees that shoved the young girl all over the stage. The dancers were definitely puppets. But, they were also puppeteers—manipulating light, dimension, and space.

Dancers can be excellent puppeteers. The extension of the body as delivered through an object comes naturally to many. The skill of making that object come to life is compatible with bringing a shape or line to life using movement.

A few years ago, the Mathmos company donated six of their light-emitting “bubbles” to Snappy. These soft silicone balls, when squeezed, glow blue or green. When they arrived in the studio, we turned out the lights and played. We explored how they lit our bodies, how they became characters through movement, how several of them made an entire creature or shape or face if we all worked together. We played with how our bodies and movement affected the tone and

character of the bubbles. In the performance, we became invisible puppeteers (complete with puppeteer blacks), manipulating the bubbles into glowing characters, geometric shapes, and small insects. We made these characters and shapes using dance. We climbed on each other's shoulders to make a creature larger than life; we bounced and wiggled close to the floor with the bubbles tied to our knees and neck for a tiny animal; we created a chorus line of bubbles, complete with the can-can. Again, the dancers were puppets and puppeteers. We danced a puppet show.

If you want to blur the lines even more, take *Pants*. I perform this duet for two pairs of legs where I play both pairs of legs—an adult's (complete with black heels) and a child's. My legs play one pair; my arms, the other. As the piece unfolds, the audience sees an unruly student taking a dance lesson from a firm but kind teacher. The audience gets so wrapped up in the story of the two characters that they forget that there are no torsos or heads seen at all. When dancers see the piece, the first thing they always ask is "How did you make the legs so alive?" When puppeteers see it, they ask you "How do you bend over that far?"



Is this puppetry? As a performer, it feels like puppetry because I am showing a story between two characters at once. Is it dance? It feels like dance because it is a story told through movement choreographed to music. For the audience, they



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see only a story of learning to dance. I have a feeling they don't care whether it is dance or puppetry—they only experience effective, moving theatre. As a performer, I find it particularly rewarding to work in this area between two forms.

I joined Snappy in the fall of 1999. I am a puppeteer. But, I am also a dancer and actor (like most puppeteers, I have lots of theatrical interests). Sometimes, I am a pure dancer making movement. Other times I am an actor in a story or situation, and when the right time emerges, I am a puppeteer—bringing objects and characters to life.

Snappy Dance Theater, directed by Martha Mason, is a collaborative company based in Boston. Dancers, actors, acrobats, cheerleaders, clowns, stuntmen, and puppeteers have been shaping Snappy's work since 1997. Visit their website for more information and 2005-2006 national touring dates.

www.snappydance.com

Bonnie Duncan, depending on the circumstance, can be classified as: a dancer; a puppeteer; an aerialist; an actress; a triathlete; a costume designer; an artist/educator.

NOTES ON DANCE AND PUPPETRY

BY STEVE ABRAMS



Nijinsky as *Petrouchka*

Forty years ago, Burr Tillstrom presented his "hand ballet," *The Berlin Wall*, to a national television audience. The context was a program of political satire called *That Was the Week that Was*, sort of *The Daily Show* of its time. The three minute masterpiece was abstract but completely understandable. It was political but

deeply tender and personal. The beauty and precision of Burr's hand movements offered a powerful narrative that was simultaneously dance and puppetry.

The worlds of dance and puppetry nourish each other in unexpected ways. Award winning puppeteers including Shari Lewis, Nikki Tilroe, Bob Baker, Tony Urbano, Carl Harms, Lea Wallace and Phillip Huber all have impressive backgrounds in dance. Phillip Huber (*Being John Malkovich*) recently unveiled a new work: "The Contortionist." The golden, muscled marionette has the theatricality of a gymnast from Cirque du Soleil. The illusion of muscular tension is created with a puppet that seems to be pushing his great physical strength to the limit and perhaps a little beyond. Another such wonder is Albrecht Roser's famous flamenco dancing scarf marionette. Flamenco dance is about feet percussively slamming down on the floor, and physical passion. Albrecht's gossamer trifle of a marionette somehow miraculously captures the energy and fire of the dance.

Puppets and puppeteers dance. Is a dancer a kind of puppet? The first year of *Dance in America* (PBS-TV 1976) Martha Graham introduced her work called *Frontier*. If I remember correctly, she quoted a line of poetry, "I took the puppet, which was myself, and threw it against the sky." A trained dancer spends years in the studio molding and shaping their own body into an expressive tool. The dancer is then costumed down to the last detail so that fabric accents and enhances each movement. For dancer Loie Fuller and puppeteer Basil Twist, exquisitely lighted, flowing fabric is a touchstone of their creative work. Just seen at the Puppeteers of America National Festival (St Paul, 2005) was a performance of *Company of Angels* by In the Heart of the Beast. The second act opened with a powerful dream sequence. The artist, Charlotte Saloman, is portrayed by a masked performer who made the audience feel the pain of depression by perfectly executing a series of what appeared to be Martha Graham contractions, an expressive pulling in and then releasing of the abdomen that pulsates through the entire body.

One of the greatest artists of the 20th Century, Martha Graham was once asked how she decided to become a dancer:

I think I did not decide, I think it just happened. I had no dance lessons as a child; I wasn't subjected to dance... My mother's people came from a strong Puritan background where such levity was not encouraged, and I knew nothing about the theatre. Then one day we went to Atlantic City for a holiday; I think I was about four...and there was a Punch and Judy show. Well, that was the complete revelation of the world. It meant there was another world; it meant there was a window onto something. I can remember sitting in a Victorian drawing room in the hotel, on one of those green—they're always green—velvet poufs with my legs stuck straight out in front of me; it's almost a photographic memory—and seeing Punch and Judy.

(*The Dance Makers* by Elinor Rogosin)

Graham eventually choreographed *Punch and the Judy* (1941) for Erick Hawkins, herself and Jean Erdman. Paul Taylor also performed with the Graham company. Taylor played with puppets as a boy. In 2004, Taylor choreographed *Le Grand Puppetier* to Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*.

The dancer Nijinsky created the part of *Petrouchka*, the puppet with a human heart, in the original 1911 Paris production by Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. It was not Nijinsky's legendary classical technique that moved audiences but rather his expressive and distinctly non-balletic puppet-like movements. The puppeteer or "Charlatan" as he is called in *Petrouchka* was played by the ballet master of the Imperial Russian Ballet, Enrico Cecchetti. Cecchetti owned over 200 marionettes and used them to teach and work out details of choreography (*Puppetry Yearbook 1938*).

The cool, abstract choreography of modern dance innovator Alwin Nikolais is the extreme opposite of narrative ballet, but Nikolais was also a puppeteer. He ran a marionette company in Hartford, Connecticut before studying dance. Nik's protégé, Murray Lewis, created a dance work *Guignol* (1977). Moses Pendleton founded both Pilobolus and Momix, modern dance companies that were highly influenced by the Nikolais aesthetic. Pendleton choreographed *Opus Cactus* (2001) with huge puppets by Michael Curry as a major feature.

Over the years, prominent dance critics (more than drama critics) have been receptive to the overlapping nature of puppetry, dance, and theatre. John Martin became the first professional dance critic in the USA in 1927. Before he came to NY, Martin was active in Chicago's Little Theatre where he met Hettie Louise Mick, who worked with puppeteer Tony Sarg. John Martin married Hettie Louise Mick and even made a few puppets for her, long before he helped explain the revolutionary work of Martha Graham to readers of the New York Times. *Puppets and the Puppet Stage*, Cyril Beaumont (1938), was the first book with a world wide collection of puppet photographs. Beaumont is best known as a dance critic and scholar. He began his puppetry book by writing: "Future historians of the development of theatre in the twentieth century will record at least two great influences of particular interest: the extraordinary popularity of ballet and the renaissance of puppetry." Another dance critic, Walter Sorrell, wrote that his first theatre experience was seeing Richard Teschner's puppets in Vienna. His perceptive work, *The Other Face: the Mask in the Arts* (1973), includes an excellent chapter on puppetry. Deborah Jowitt is considered the dean of American dance critics. Writing for the *Village Voice* since 1967, Jowitt has reviewed Bunraku, Indonesian shadows, Bread and Puppet, Julie Taymor, Basil Twist and many others. She is one of a very few critics in New York to write consistently and intelligently about puppetry.

Dance and puppetry are intimately connected but not precisely the same. Dance is the oldest and yet the most ephemeral of the arts. The only equipment required is a body. Puppetry uses more equipment but it is nearly as ephemeral, especially if no text is used. Dancers, puppets, puppeteers, and—oh yes—actors, are vulnerable. A strained muscle, a cough, or even a donut and coffee at the wrong time of day can completely alter a performance. The exact moment that a dancer or a puppet soars or plunges, vanishes as it happens. Perhaps it is the joy of sharing that moment with an audience that is the deepest connection between dance and puppetry.

Steve Abrams is a dance-trained puppeteer, and past president of Puppeteers of America. He currently does the Hokey Pokey in Philadelphia.

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AN EXCERPT FROM THE FINAL CHAPTER OF EILEEN BLUMENTHAL'S NEW BOOK*



Arjuna, a "human puppet," played by a Javanese prince, circa 1920

Sometimes the game works in reverse: Instead of puppets pretending to be alive, live actors pretend to be puppets. This peculiar role reversal has come in various guises.

Live performers may cash in on certain puppet stars' popularity by playing live versions of them. In Turkey, human actors have staged Karagöz skits, costumed to ape the odd physiognomy and anatomy of the shadow-screen's Karagöz and his cohorts. The *Théâtre du Grand Guignol*, founded in Paris in 1897 by Oscar Méténier, began as a live-actor version of the Guignol puppet theater.

Or artists may take well-known puppet personae as raw material for their own live-actor works. In the ballet *Petrushka*, by composer Igor Stravinsky and Choreographer Mikhail Fokine, dancers took the roles of the famous puppets. Martha Graham's comic dance *Punch and the Judy* (1941) presented a battling married couple, with Graham playing the wife. In his 1967 opera *Punch and Judy*, the British composer Harrison Birtwistle adapted the familiar cast and scenario into a ritualistic expression of cycles of destruction.

Sometimes, though, live performers do not merely play characters originated by puppets, but actually pretend to *be* puppets. Like the boy actors in Shakespeare's England playing women disguised as boys, humans play puppets that are playing humans. In parts of China, since the Song dynasty a millennium ago, children perched on the shoulders of adults have performed as "puppets in the flesh," copying movements from and sometimes sharing the stage with life-size rod-puppets. In certain Japanese kabuki plays, especially those adapted from the bunraku repertory, emotional climaxes are presented as *ningyo buri*, that is, live performers acting like bunraku dolls, with black-clad "puppeteers" pretending to move them around.

Human faux-puppets have played in Europe as well. The eighteenth century English actor-dramatist-producer Samuel Foote tried using cardboard figures on stage to circumvent the egos of live actors, but when audiences hated the experiment, he had live performers appear on stage behaving like puppets. Early Grand Guignol sometimes presented its actors as marionettes with string fixed to their heads and hands.

Live performers may act like puppets to make a political, social, or even metaphysical statement. In Jan Svankmajer's film *Don Juan* (1970), the main characters are played sometimes by actual marionettes and at other times by actors disguised as marionettes—making the play's moribund world seep from the patently make-believe into a world closer than the one the film's viewers inhabit. Dario Fo has had live performers move like marionettes, sometimes controlled by visible "manipulators," to show their subjugation or absence of will. In his 1994 staging of Rossini's *Italiana in Algeri* in Pesaro, Italy, an "ideal wife," a marionette built from vegetables came to life: The actress who played the role was costumed to look like the puppet and mimicked its gestures. Fo played a drugged pope in *The Pope and the Witch* (1989) using mechanical movements to show his lack of con-



Shadow puppet of Dewasrani

trol over his actions. The contemporary American Director, Richard Foreman, had actresses in *Maria Del Bosco* (2002) move like mannequins to evoke the living-deadness of slavery to fashion and image.

Generally, though, the motivation for creating live faux-puppets is to heighten theatricality rather than to make a particular point. The device offers a system for setting stage behavior apart from everyday life. Using puppets as models, live actors find ways to perform that are more formal, comic, focused, extreme, or otherwise expressive than normal human behavior.

The search for artistic form in theater has always been a tricky problem. While poets can shape language with tools such as meter, rhyme and alliteration, and musicians organize sound-worlds with meter, modes, harmony, and polyphony, the raw material of theater is behavior. How can behavior be set in relief from everyday life, made more keenly expressive than everyday life, and given a pleasing artistic form without making it into fundamentally different behavior—that is, without distorting what one was trying to show in the first place? This conundrum has occupied stage artists since ancient times. Before the Greeks settled on masks to distinguish stage characters from real people, the theater pioneer Thespis reportedly tried covering his face with leaves or red-wine dregs. Classical French theater adapted its gestures from the stylized manners of the royal court. And around the world, over the centuries live-actor theater traditions have evolved directly out of puppetry, keeping the spirit and style of the original. In Java, the progression from painted story-cloth (*wayang beber*) to leather shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) to three-dimensional rod puppets (*wayang golek*) continued with even more fleshed-out actors: humans, called *wayang wong* or *wayang orang*, literally, "human puppets."

Even when puppet traditions do not directly spawn live-actor theater, they may help to shape it: The human actors adopt or adapt a general aesthetic of specific traits from puppets. Turkey's live *orta oyanu* folk comedy seems to have

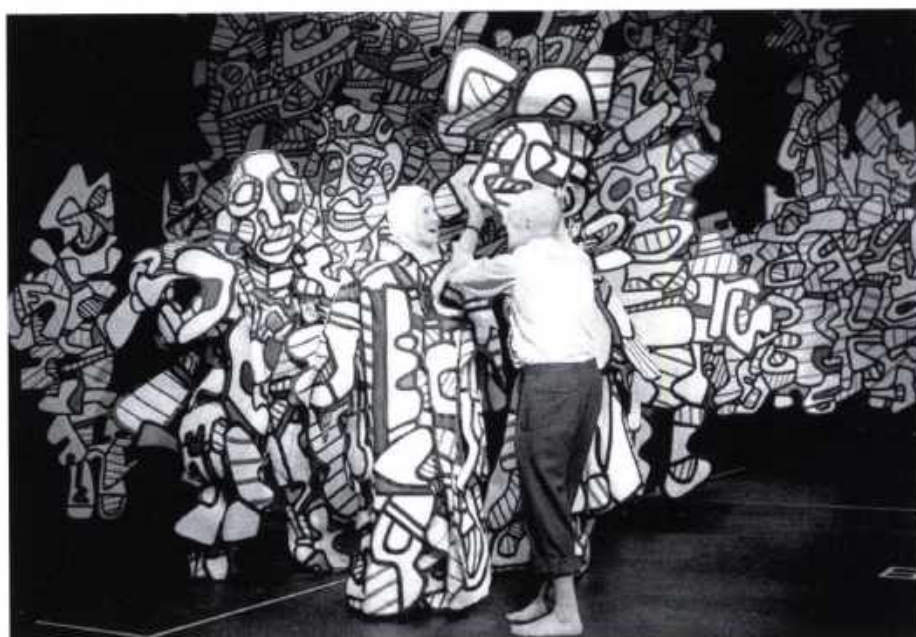
traded influence back and forth with Karagöz puppetry for centuries. The indigenous *yoke thay* marionette stage of Burma, which dates from the eighteenth century, helped to shape the *zat* live-actor drama, whose performers still move in the manner of puppets. As Japanese Kabuki theater competed with the often more popular bunraku stage during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its live actors adapted not only plays but, probably, stylization and broad gestures from the dolls. Some China scholars believe that the extreme make-up and movement style of traditional theater reflects Song dynasty puppets.

Closer to home, puppets helped to re-theatricalize Europe's live-actor theater after it had been flattened by realism. Artists at the turn of the twentieth century drew on puppets indirectly and directly. Besides borrowing from non-Western live actor stage traditions that were influenced by puppets, besides using actual puppets, beyond, even, creating live versions of specific puppets à la Grand Guignol, artists called for live actors to mimic the unabashed *theatricality* of puppets. Alfred Jarry announced before the infamous 1896 production of *Ubu Roi* at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre that the (live) performers about to appear were "man-sized marionettes." Russia's Vsevolod Meyerhold recommended that live actors learn their art from puppets—and not from just any puppets, but from the sort that "embrace a wonderland of make-believe" rather than merely copying humans. Plays by Maurice Maeterlinck and Paul Claudel were presented by actors using the broad stage movements and distorted voices of puppets.

Innovative American directors as well have asked actors to copy puppets as a way of heightening the stage reality and separating it from workaday life. In 1967, director/choreographer Jerome Robbins brought members of his repertory company to see the Little Players' *Romeo and Juliet*—and then told his actors, "That is exactly what I've been trying to get across to you people for months." Since the 1970s, actors in Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theater have used stylized mechanical gestures and long freezes to help create a distinctive stage reality—the elegant, expressionist incarnation of his inner world. In Lee Breuer's "animations"—including *The B-Beaver Animation* (1974), *The Shaggy Dog Animation* (1978), and *Ecco Porco* (2000)—characters often have been multiple-cast, incarnated both by puppets and by live performers acting like puppets. Playing Rose the Dog in *Ecco Porco*, actress Maude Mitchell even was suspended marionette-style by ropes.

This may be the ultimate, ironic genius of puppets. Time and again, inert actors have breathed new life into the live-actor theater. So great is the power of puppets to show ourselves to ourselves that even flesh-and-blood actors, who would seem to have the advantage in imitating real people, have taken cues from constructed beings.

Finally, all art—in fact, everything human beings design—both reflects and helps to shape our sense of who we are. Puppets, with their peculiar ability to make us believe they are us, are surely among the canniest, and uncanniest, of human creations. •



Jean Dubuffet outfits an actress for *Coucou Bazar* (1973).



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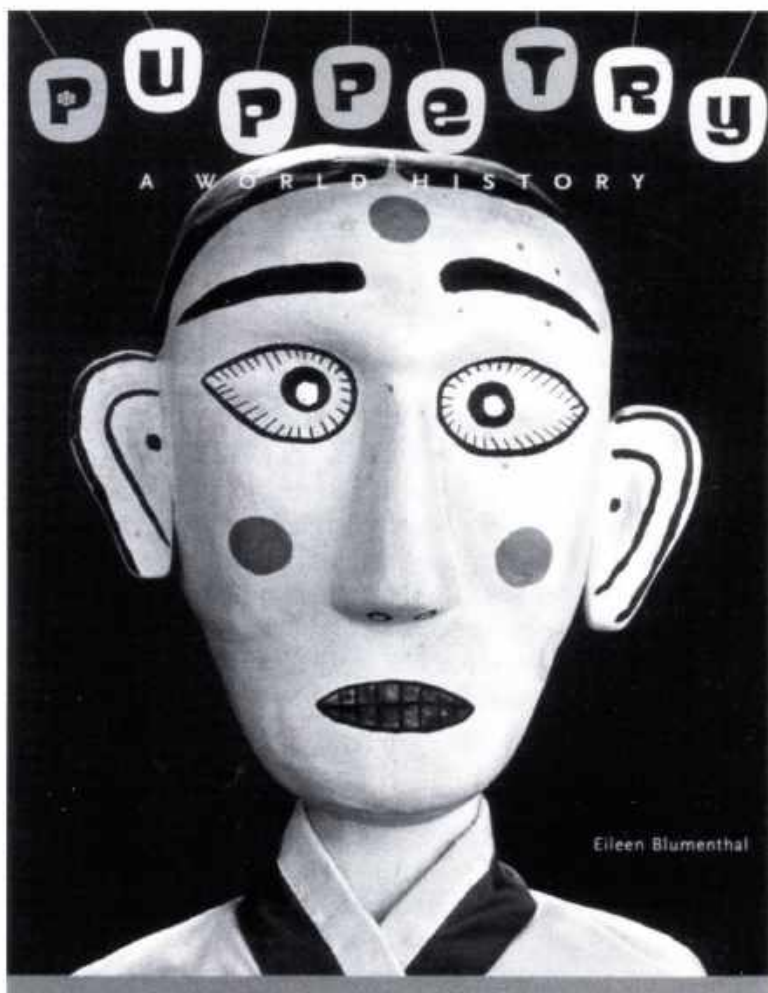
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A New Standard in Puppet Histories—



A BOOK BY EILEEN BLUMENTHAL

271 pp., 350 illustrations.

New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005. \$65.

Writing the history of puppet theater—especially in the United States—is harder than writing art history or theater history, essentially because of puppetry's low status in Western culture. Puppet theater is not usually considered an essential element of the liberal arts, and so most Westerners not only undervalue the form, but also know very little about it, especially its pre-twentieth century roots and its amazing non-Western practices. Consequently, puppet theater historians face greater challenges: they need to prove to general audiences that, in fact, puppetry *is* (and has been) worthy of serious consideration and analysis, and show that the range of puppet techniques is vast, both geographically and chronologically.

Henryk Jurkowski's two-volume *History of European Puppetry* does this the old-fashioned way, by marching through the ages chronologically and geographically, with hardly any illustrations. Paul McPharlin's still-unsurpassed 1948 account of American puppetry, *The Puppet Theatre in America*, enlivened things with

his puppeteer's point of view and his inspired drawings. Since 1973, Bil Baird's *The Art of the Puppet* has been the most successful, even indispensable, example of the form, in large part because Baird filled the book with hundreds of images: historic prints, modern photographs, both in color and black-and-white; a brilliant if not obvious method of explaining what is, after all, primarily a visual form. But now comes Eileen Blumenthal's *Puppetry: A World History*, which supersedes Baird's book and is destined to become the new, indispensable standard, despite its hefty \$65 price.

Just paging through *Puppetry: A World History* is exciting, because Blumenthal seriously understands puppet theater in all its forms and varieties. While the images on its pages do inevitably echo (and sometimes duplicate) what Baird and others have done, there is much more, such as rare photographs of Chinese puppets, Brazilian puppets, and European avant-garde puppetry that the knowledgeable puppeteer has always known about, but hardly ever seen. Most of the images are stunning and thought provoking, and Blumenthal's wide and deep knowledge of puppetry confidently covers all the essentials, as well as the interesting peripheries of puppet history. She looks not only at such subjects as classic *wayang kulit*, Punch and his European brethren, and Jim Henson's Muppets, but also Erwin Piscator's 1920s use of life-size cutouts, and Mabou Mines' use of miniature figures in Samuel Beckett's *Lost Ones*.

Part of the challenge of puppet histories is the necessity of defining and delineating an art form that is as old as humanity, and far more widespread than such related performance techniques as actors' theater. Puppet historians need to spend at least a couple of chapters defining the different types of puppets, their manipulation techniques, and the dominant traditions of particular cultures and eras. Blumenthal follows this tradition skillfully in the first two chapters of her book, but then, instead of continuing the well-worn path which pursues puppetry's global history century by century and continent by continent, she strikes out into new territory by organizing her analysis according to specific themes: the different abilities and natures of puppets, and their different roles in particular societies. Along these lines of inquiry she examines puppetry's various ways of creating illusion; the versatility of puppets to do what human actors can't; the ways in which puppet shows

PUPPETRY

A WORLD HISTORY



A rare image of a portable Chinese handpuppet theater in Yunnan Province, in 1917 from *Puppetry: A World History*.

create their own particular universes; and the persistent connections between puppets and sex, violence, politics, education, ritual, and death. For example, in only two pages of her examination of the puppet's world-creating abilities, Blumenthal deftly considers works by Maurice Sand, *Bread and Puppet Theater*, Julie Taymor, Janie Geiser, Larry Reed's *Shadowlight Theater*, and the Balinese *dalangs* I Wayan Wija and I Made Sija—an amazing array of examples.

Blumenthal's knowledge and understanding of puppetry is considerable. The bibliography she includes at the back of the book is formidable and complete, and a vital source for anyone considering further pursuits in puppet history. But Blumenthal is also a vivid, thoughtful writer with a sense of humor and a confident manner. This is no dry-witted, academic exercise, but a labor of love by a person who thinks a lot about theater and its many functions, and is

able to convey those thoughts in provocative and perceptive prose.

The wide range of any world history of puppet theater is also its Achilles' heel, because the sheer volume of material threatens to overwhelm analysis. Simply referencing the vast variety of global puppet forms, even without attempting any sort of analytical context, is a task that would take hundreds of pages. Blumenthal takes a chance by eschewing cultural and historical milieus in favor of her thematic, context-blind approach. This allows her to connect specific puppet forms across centuries and continents, but the jumps can be confusing. For example, in one paragraph of her chapter on puppets and sex she considers Gelede copulating puppets from Africa, the Spike Jonze movie *Being John Malkovich*, an official ban of puppet theater during the Song dynasty, seventeenth-century English Puritans, the lewd Don Cristobal handpuppet theater of the eighteenth century, and the French colonial censorship of Karagöz plays in Tunisia. (The analysis is even more complex, because the accompanying photographs show sex-oriented productions by Roman Paska and Philippe Genty.) One admires the agility of the feat, and what it means about Blumenthal's rich understanding of puppetry, but the effect is also dizzying, and there's not much room for sustained analysis—the examples are juggled exquisitely, but tend to float, unanchored, in the reader's mind. These theoretical acrobatics are typical of almost every page in Blumenthal's book.

In another tricky choice, Blumenthal has invented the term "constructed actor" to use in place of the word "puppet." Although she doesn't explain why, it would seem that Blumenthal uses the term as a means of expanding traditionally strict definitions of the word "puppet" in order to avoid being confined in discrete categories, and to facilitate useful connections among a wide variety of forms. (Frank Proschan uses the phrase "performing object"—a much clunkier term!—for similar reasons.) A problem with this terminology is that "constructed actor"

not so subtly asserts a relationship in which the human actor is the ideal upon which the existence of the puppet is based. This is a hierarchy in which the puppet can never fare better than second best, since the puppet's essence is its existence as dead matter. In fact, though, it is only recently, with the advent of Western realism, that the aesthetics of precise human imitation have been so closely prized. In non-Western and in popular, low-culture Western traditions the existence of puppets as dead matter has been assumed, and the magic of making that dead matter move has been frankly considered to be a valuable action of thought-provoking performance. In other words, what's most interesting about puppets is that they are *not* "actors" nor do they wish to be.

It may be that I am reading too much into Blumenthal's neologism. And it's also quite clear that the purpose of *Puppetry: A World History* is not to pursue in depth the philosophy and aes-



Life-size cutout puppets based on William Hogarth's engravings, from Theodora Skipitares's *A Harlot's Progress* (1998)

thetics of puppet theater, but to open doors—for both the uninitiated and for those who thought they knew puppets well—into the world of puppetry, which have never before been presented in such rich and elaborate detail, with such a sure hand and eye.

—REVIEW BY JOHN BELL



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PUPPETS AND MASKS OF THE BAMANA AND THE BOZO (MALI)

WEST AFRICA



Kono, the Holy Bird, announces the rains

Traditional African programs typically blur the boundaries between puppetry, mask, dance, and music in outdoor settings where performers and public may freely merge.



Ceremonial mask of the Bobo people



Mali Bush Spirit, Eastern Burkina Faso



BAU UND SPIEL:**A MASTER CLASS WITH ALBRECHT ROSER:**

BY ROBIN WALSH

What's better than studying at the studio of a world-renowned Master? DOING IT AGAIN!

Spindelshanks. Mask and puppets by Matthew Brooks

In February-April of 2005, I was fortunate enough to participate in *Bau und Spiel (Construction and Play)*, a second, unplanned Master Class with Albrecht Roser. The original in 2004 was an evolution of Roser's International String Academies previously held at the at the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Puppetry Department and the National Theatre in Varazdin, Croatia. An offer for a select few to further their talents in an intensive and intimate manner, it became an experience where, much like a potato chip, one is never enough.

My part in this story began in 1989, when I read Roser's first book *Gustaf und sein Ensemble* at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia. The museum curator needed

some passages translated for a puppet exhibit, and I just happen to speak German. I went to the small but incredibly well stocked library, and opened the book. I quickly read the required short passages, but then hours passed and I found myself unable to stop reading. In these pages were some of the most eloquent, scholarly and unequivocally artistic thoughts on puppetry that I had ever read. I had found a kindred spirit in Albrecht Roser, but one whom I wouldn't meet for another eleven years. I finally saw him at the Henson Festival in 2000. When the opportunity came to attend the 2003 String Academy, it was a dream come true.

For those who haven't had the luck to meet, or the good fortune to see him perform, Albrecht Roser is truly one of a kind. With the mind of a technician, the heart of an artist and the curiosity of a child, he and his Clown Gustaf have delighted the entire world for over fifty years. Roser uses the scientific principles of gravity and motion in the construction of his marionettes, creating puppets out of a technical and artistic unity. These ideas, learned from his teacher, Fritz Herbert Bross, have allowed Roser to develop and invent in the search for the ultimate goal where "technique serves performance." By reducing even the most complicated movements of a string puppet to their simplest common denominator (on the control and its operation), the puppeteer can allow all of his or her concentration to be on the performance. Manipulation becomes, therefore, a matter of intuition, rather than one of repetitious practice. In fact, one does not so much "manipulate" the puppet, as work with the puppet as a partner in the performance.

Indeed, with all of these thoughts and theories, it is only natural that Roser would eventually work in a teaching capacity. That path began in 1977 when he was invited to teach at UConn's Department of Puppetry. Fortunately, his connection with UConn proved to be a long one, and in 1996 he began offering the International String Academy there. For several years, the String Academy consisted of a two week session, split between performance training (utilizing Roser's scarf marionette and the most basic of string puppets, a ball on a string) and the construction of a new, unique marionette by each of the participants.



Tvrko and Egg, M. Brooks and R. Walsh.



Robin Walsh and giant scarf marionette.



Spindelshanks figure



Front: Albrecht Roser, Sarah Frechette. Back: Robin Walsh, Emily DeCola, Martha Rudolf, Nate Wilson, Matthew Brooks, Alice-Therese Boehm, Dan Luce.

In 2003, things changed, though. Roser extended the workshop to three weeks to allow the full, in-depth attention marionettes require. He also pre-designed an entire cast of puppets for a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. These changes allowed the students to train on finished puppets right from the beginning, allowing them to more fully understand Roser's theories. And rather than creating their own puppets, the participants copied those of Roser, also allowing for a faster grasp of techniques. But something else also happened. A few of the participants took to marionettes like proverbial ducks to water. Unknown talents were discovered and known ones blossomed under the skillful tutelage of Roser and his co-instructors, Ingrid Hoefer and Alice-Therese Boehm. And so an idea was born— a Master Class.

In February, 2004, Roser invited the best of the participants from UConn and Croatia to attend the first Master Class at his studio in Germany. Five performers made their way across the globe to the winding, picturesque hills of Buoch, Germany, and for the next four weeks we cooked, ate, slept, built, learned and rehearsed together in an intensive, intimate atmosphere of creative openness. The instructors were the same, with the addition of Michael Mordo, a long time student of Roser's, now an instructor at the School for Puppetry in Stuttgart at the University of Music and Dramatic Arts

(which Roser help to establish). Mornings at nine we would greet the day with ball training, eventually moving up to scarf puppets and then to head and shoulder marionettes. This class was followed by body and mask training and then a communal lunch. After that, it was building time, as each participant designed and built his or her own head-and-shoulder marionette. Roser was on hand during the afternoon sessions, always ready with answers, hints and often more questions, to spur us to find the solution on our own. Evenings, often lasting into early morning, were spent developing and rehearsing short pieces to perform in the final show.

The most enlightening part of the day was coffee time. More than just a break to fuel us with caffeine for our long nights, we would meet to critique the days work, or to discuss various ideas or the state of puppetry today. For Roser believes that in order to further puppetry as an art form, there must be an open, frank dialogue between puppet artists— an activity he often

finds lacking in puppet circles today. So he instilled in us a desire to critique honestly, and move past the automatic response "It was nice" to someone's work. For without hearing honest criticism, how can we evolve and grow? This and other theories wound their way into everything we did. At the end, we performed our exit show, said our tearful good-byes and headed back to our various homes.

As luck would have it, the four Americans all lived near New York City, and would occasionally meet to reminisce. Soon the discussions grew into talk of returning. At first it was just for a visit, but soon we began to realize we wanted more. Then one fateful night in November, the four of us met by chance at a puppet theatre show in Manhattan, and we knew— we had to go back. And so, with hands together in a football huddle, the Master Class II was born. All that remained was to inform the host of his unknown, yet impending, house guests.

Fortunately, we (and the idea of a second Master Class) were welcomed with open, if somewhat surprised, arms. I say "somewhat" because when we arrived in Germany, we found beautiful new workstations in the attic, seemingly built just for us. But Roser had made them over the summer and fall, thinking they might be useful one day— and they were. Early in 2005, four of the original students, plus three new ones, headed to Studio Roser.

Master Class II: Bau und Spiel was very similar in form to the original. The day was structured with classes, meals, building and rehearsals. But there were differences. The second timers received the new work-spaces upstairs, gaining a large degree of autonomy, while the newer students stayed downstairs. More time was allotted, this workshop running almost two months. For puppet construction, we concentrated on creating full body marionettes, so this was a continuation of the previous year. Performing, however, was quite different. Watching the newcomers was like watching a mirror into the past—reflections of ourselves and where we had been, including our mistakes and discoveries. It was the rare gift of seeing how far we'd come.

Most importantly, this second class gave us the opportunity to truly comprehend Roser's theories of performing which we had only barely grasped before. Much of the first year's class was spent searching for his way of performing, while the second was spent learning it. Earlier I mentioned the puppet as a "co-performer" rather than a figure that is moved about on stage. This is meant more literally than one would think. We learned that, for a puppet to truly work on stage, it must achieve that moment where, despite the knowledge that it is an inanimate object of wood and cloth, the puppet comes to life in the mind of the audience. The triangle of puppeteer, puppet and audience work together toward that moment of belief. Truly, the puppeteer becomes as much a member of the audience as anyone. In that moment of watching, the puppet moves of its own accord. The puppeteer must no longer expend his or her energies deciding on how to manipulate the puppet. As a co-performer, the puppet informs the puppeteer, and the performance becomes a matter of concentration and meditation rather than conscious choice. These theories extend into his way of puppet construction as well. Roser describes his way of working with materials as contemplative, allowing the qualities inherent in the material to manifest themselves—letting the creation lead the creator. You humble your own ego and arrogance, and let the material or puppet become what it wants to become. The character is evolved, rather than produced.

Then, as with all things, the Master Class came to an end. But this time, we were prepared. Armed with marionettes, corresponding shows and a better grasp on puppetry theories, we

went back into the world with *Meisterklasse*, a cabaret-style evening of the pieces created at the workshop (performed several times since in New York City). We find we still have the same yen for drinking coffee and discussing, but now with more knowledge of theories of life—be it the life of a puppet or our own. Just as when Roser created Gustaf and then followed Gustaf's lead, we followed what was created in the first Master Class and understood in the second—the quest for balance in gravity, motion and life.

If all this sounds more like Zen than puppet instruction, it's not by chance. Roser's favorite book is Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*, which gives an exact description of this intense type of "concentration" that plays a major role in Roser's work and life—and now, my own. As we look to the future, teacher and students have parted. Wise to our ways of self-invitation, Roser has instructed us to strike out on our own paths, to take what he has taught and develop, invent... For myself, the greatest discovery was that Roser does not teach puppetry. He teaches Zen, furthering the art of puppetry as he goes.

Robin Walsh discovered puppets on her first day of college, and has never looked back. From sock puppets to Hollywood movie monsters, she's worked on: Team America: World Police, Men In Black, and Graveyard Jamboree; Book of Pooh and Bear in the Big, Blue House; and a host of solo and group theatre projects.



photo: F. Grote

Roser's studio

HISTORY COLUMN—

BY JOHN BELL

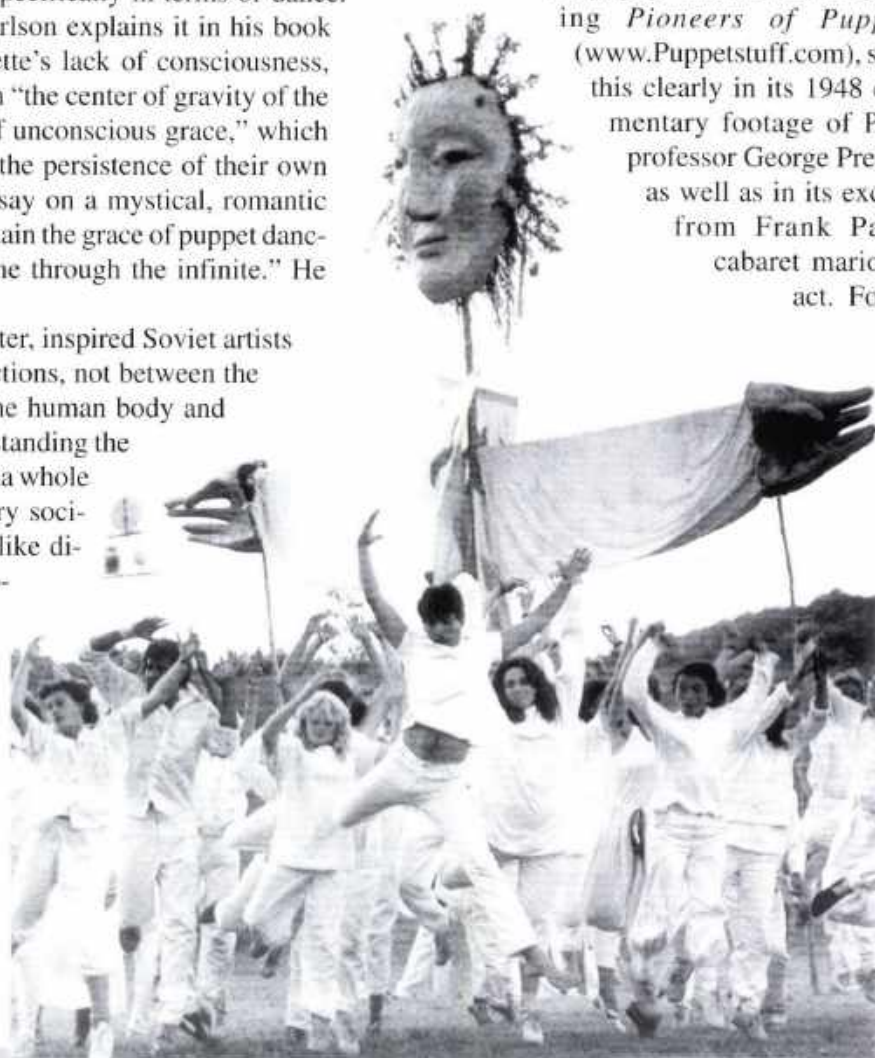
Thinking about the complicated nature of puppet theater often leads one to consider its connections with other performance forms: masks, found objects, actors' drama, film, machine performance. There are all sorts of links between puppets and these other forms, but none so fascinating and apt as those between puppets and dance. As a primarily visual form based on the performance kinetics of material objects, puppetry has a hard time really linking up with actors' theater, and especially the theater which sees its job as the faithful voicing of a playwright's words on stage. But dance—that is the form which links up with, parallels and matches puppet theater most exactly.

Still the most profound (and difficult) analysis of puppetry in the modern West is Heinrich von Kleist's 1810 essay "On the Marionette Theater," which championed the puppet specifically in terms of dance. Kleist felt, as theater historian Marvin Carlson explains it in his book *Theories of the Theatre*, that the marionette's lack of consciousness, combined with its technical dependency on "the center of gravity of the moment" allowed it to attain "moments of unconscious grace," which dancers can only attain rarely because of the persistence of their own human consciousness. Kleist ends his essay on a mystical, romantic note, asserting that human dancers might attain the grace of puppet dancers "when knowledge has, as it were, gone through the infinite." He doesn't explain how this might happen.

The Russian Revolution, a century later, inspired Soviet artists and technicians to consider similar connections, not between the dancer and the marionette, but between the human body and the moveable parts of the machine. Understanding the body and the machine as connected parts of a whole (the "whole" being a modern revolutionary society) led early twentieth-century Russians like director Vsevolod Meyerhold to explore Biomechanics, a movement technique which (like Kleist's essay) sought to understand the body's anatomical movement possibilities, not so much in search of unconscious grace, but in search of a functional model of man/machine relations for the twentieth century. And Meyerhold, unlike most directors of contemporary actors' theater, was fully willing to consider how puppets might point the way in this search.

It has often been pointed out (most recently in Eileen Blumenthal's *Puppetry:*

A World History) how puppet movement has served as a paradigm for human movement, not only Java's *wayang wong* dance drama, which imitates *wayang kulit* shadow theater, but also across the globe in southern Italy, where actors of the nineteenth-century popular theater aped the stilted leg movements of Sicilian marionettes in order to mine the *gravitas* of that form. Blumenthal points out how modern directors and choreographers, including Alfred Jarry, Mikhail Fokine, Martha Graham, Jan Svankmajer, and Ariane Mnouchkine, have all used puppets as models for actors theater. Looking at these links from the viewpoint of puppet performance itself, one realizes that any good puppet show is above all a piece of choreography. The new DVD recording *Pioneers of Puppetry* (www.Puppetstuff.com), shows this clearly in its 1948 documentary footage of Punch professor George Prentice, as well as in its excerpts from Frank Paris's cabaret marionette act. For me,



THE CONSCIOUS PURSUIT OF UNCONSCIOUS GRACE



both performances reiterate what I saw so clearly in a handpuppet movement workshop lead by Teatro Tinglado's Pablo Cueto, for a class of Rhode Island School of Design students: that puppetry at its core is the dance of the body inspiring the dance of a material object.

This understanding is profoundly embodied in the work of Bread and Puppet Theater's director Peter Schumann, who came to his life's work not through the conscious pursuit of puppetry, but as an artist split by disparate passions: dance, music, painting and sculpture. Schumann's first gesture towards performance, in Moosach, Germany in 1959, was the creation of the *Gruppe für Neuen Tanz* (the New Dance Group), which sought to break out of the constraints of both classical ballet and German expressionist dance traditions. After creating works for modern ballet contests, and particularly after seeing works by Merce Cunningham, John Cage, and Anthony Tudor (who toured Germany for the U. S. State Department), Schumann was drawn to the United States itself, where one of his first connections to American avant-garde performance was to study dance composition with Robert Dunn, the influential choreographer who taught in Merce Cunningham's New York studio. "Cunningham attended sometimes," Schumann told me in a 2000 interview; "Cage sometimes, and Remy Charlip and [Yvonne] Rainer, Trisha Brown, and Simone Forti, all these folks who later made names for themselves."

The sense of Schumann's work as dance theater is key to an understanding of Bread and Puppet, not simply because it links that work to other instances of the puppet/dance connection, but because it helps one realize that even as political theater (the reductive term most often used to easily categorize Schumann's work), Bread and Puppet performances are primarily concerned with the aesthetics of movement.

I know this personally from my long experience as a puppeteer with the Bread and Puppet company, and especially within the process of show development. Schumann's theater pieces usually begin with the selection or construction of puppets or masks, and the choice of a theme or story. But then, after Schumann has explained his concept to his collaborators, there has always been a brief (or lengthy) period of pure movement experiments. Context and character are momentarily set aside, and the puppeteers simply invent movements. I found these moments to be the most exciting periods of creation, because our focus was limited strictly and purely (or as "pure" as any art form might be!) to the connections we might make between our bodies and those paper-maché or Celastic objects we held with our hands or wore on our heads or bodies. Knowledge of the show's theme was really useless here, because what counted was the discovery of the successful movement for a particular mask or puppet. Typically, we would all start moving with our puppets, sometimes taking turns to step out and view the proceedings, and wait for Schumann's eye to see something that connected, that seemed...right. Most of our movement inventions were not immediately useful, but some of them—somehow—would click, at which point Schumann might say "Let's all try *that* movement." After a few years of working in this manner, one's skills in inventing puppet movement developed, and one could make this method of invention a process which was less than random. When this process did actually *work* for me, I would find myself trying to avoid conscious analysis, to instead concentrate on what patterns and poses my body and the puppet were making, and to feel and imagine what those successions of poses might look like. (And actually *seeing* what you were doing, as for example in a mirror, was unnecessary.) If you thought about the process *too* much, or, worse, tried to make the puppet do what you thought it *should* do for the purposes of dramaturgy (say, to look sad, angry, or funny), the results were abysmal. I learned that works, and, in other words, what is essential, is exactly the attempt to achieve a moment of "unconscious grace." If you think too much about it, you lose any possibility of attaining it.

Schumann has always realized this, and it's probably the same thing that the inventors of postmodern American dance (with whom he worked, along with Robert Dunn, in the 1960s) knew. Ultimately, this sense of puppetry as dance—and dance as the paradoxically conscious pursuit of unconscious grace—is what allows puppet theater to become affective and inspiring art. •

DVD REVIEW—

PIONEERS OF PUPPETRY

60 minutes, black and white, \$24.95

Bil and Cora Baird: Four Early Films.

18 minutes, color, \$24.95

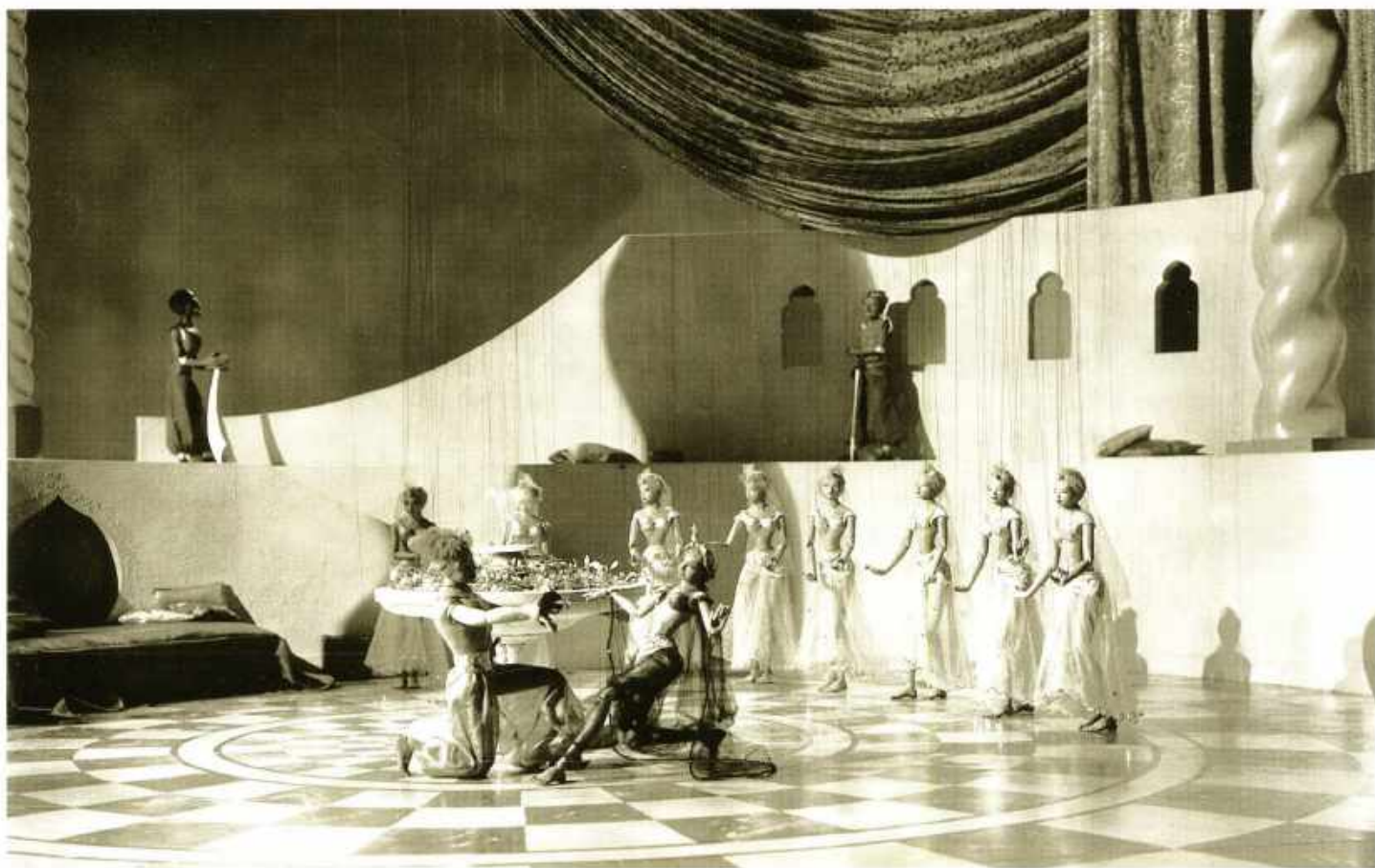
My friend Larry Engler has produced two DVDs that belong in the collection of every serious puppetry collector and enthusiast. *Bil and Cora Baird: Four Early Films* and *Pioneers of Puppetry*, are available from Engler's www.puppetstuff.com web site, provide fascinating glimpses into the history of the art. They are precious visits with remarkable talents from a time long gone, rare footage in most cases unavailable elsewhere. If you are interested in the history of puppetry or in early or unusual film, if you're curious about names that are legendary but whose work you may not be old enough to have seen—the newest of these segments is at least 50 years old—then these DVDs are for you.

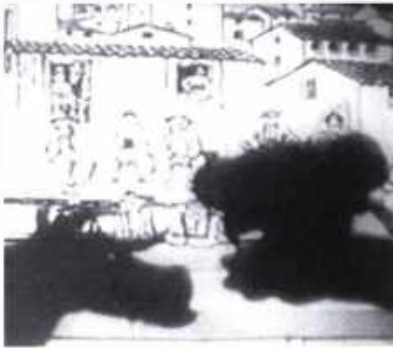
The more unusual, and varied, is *Pioneers of Puppetry*, which shows off Engler's remarkable abilities to locate material that others might not have known existed. The names

of some of the artists in this collection—e.g., Rufus & Margo Rose, Frank Paris—remain well-known to many puppeteers. Others—e.g., George Prentice and Richard Teschner—are names that people may have heard, or think they should know, but can't quite place. Now's their chance to place them.

Prentice was a Punch "professor" who performed on Broadway and around the world from the 1920s at least through the 1960s, entertaining some 50,000 people in a single performance in New York's Central Park. The brief Prentice Punch performance captured here is characteristic of the mid-century American show, complete with a powder-spewing skunk that would have been news to Cruikshank. Intended for children rather than adults, the film nevertheless manages to convey flashes of charm and talent that were surely hallmarks of Prentice's work, such as beautifully executed double-takes between characters.

With so many puppeteers having outed themselves long ago from their puppet stages to perform marionettes, hand puppets, and virtually every other type of puppet in full, direct view of the audience, one might think it was ever thus. One would be wrong. Frank Paris was the first to work in what became known as the "cabaret style" of marionette performance. Perhaps the only way you will see Paris perform his signature Carmen Miranda puppet, as well as his highly realistic Sally Rand fan dancer, and others, is on this rare





film. Beyond a glimpse at Paris' performance, the film itself is a novelty: a film loop called a "soundie" produced in the 1940s for coin-operated film viewing machines called "panorams." Some of the titles are reversed—not a mistake in the digital transfer but, rather, a requirement for legible viewing in the original medium.

Engler's "way-back machine" also makes a couple of stops for a five-minute newsreel of San Francisco's Toy Theatre and a two-minute newsreel of the Swiss "Jovanni Family Shadow Puppets." The Jovanni style is fascinating: cardboard cutouts plus the performer's hands create remarkable, highly animated silhouette figures. The images are performed at a fast pace that suggests simplicity, while the design and perfection of these figures must have been anything but simple.

Richard Teschner, a giant of pre-World War II European puppet theatre who introduced Javanese-style rod puppets to the West, is represented on the disc by an eight-minute nativity play. The puppets move with the elegant head motions made possible by Teschner's sophisticated mechanisms, and their stately movement resembles that of automata, imparting an appropriate gravity to the proceedings. The film is completely uncredited. Credit goes to Engler for spotting a final shot of Teschner's signature, circular stage and recognizing it for what it was.

The final segment on the disc is *Jerry Pulls the Strings* by Rufus and Margo Rose. This 37-minute film from 1937, produced for the American Can Company and sometimes called "The Story of Coffee," is credited as the first industrial film to use puppets. Joining the Roses to work the puppets were Bil and Evelyn Baird, Martin and Olga Stevens, Frank and Fania Sullivan, and Sylvia Meredith. Of little intrinsic interest today because of a lugubrious pace, the production nevertheless has notable details that run so counter to anything one would encounter in a contemporary film. For example, during an extended conversation between two characters in a rural setting, a slow, irregular procession of people and animals can be seen in the background. Today, most budgets would not allow for the detail or, if they did, the background action would be played for self-aware parody. Here, it's just part of a drive toward verisimilitude.

Complementing *Pioneers of Puppetry* is the second disc, *Bil and Cora Baird: Four Early Films*. Baird, of course, was one of the monumental figures of 20th century puppetry and any recording of his work is noteworthy. Not that these are "just any" recordings. Engler transferred these films from Baird's own copies of them; in some cases he did the transfers with Baird himself years ago. The result is as crisp a transfer as one could want.

Happily, one can watch these shorts not merely out of a sense of duty, but for enjoyment, as well. Whether Baird is just having fun or doing educational films (two of the films were done for the Bell Phone Company, one for the *Oficina del Coordinador de Asuntos Interamericanos*), his humor shines through—and remains amusing today. Moreover, Baird's humor is inherently visual: In these films, painted portraits do double-takes at the action taking place in the rooms in which they're hung (it happens in several of the films; Baird obviously liked the gag), giant bugs send a gardener fleeing, and a gaggle of gossips act like frenzied geese.

Those gossips belong to *Wee Cooper O'Fife*, the most consistently charming of the four films. A young Burl Ives (he's seen briefly) sings the comedic ballad as Baird's marionettes act out the story of a country husband who learns how to get the attention of his beautiful but shrewish wife. Baird may have pioneered the technique of using several interchangeable heads for a character in order to get varied facial expressions in different shots. Certainly the technique is used to great advantage here, giving the puppets a sense of facial animation that is not otherwise possible.

The Bell Company films are dated—imagine an educational film on the use of telephone party lines!—but are enjoyable nonetheless not only for their humor, but also for their sometimes stunning set design, for the sophisticated and instantly recognizable stylization of Baird's figures, and for their precise manipulation.

Each of these discs contains important and rewarding material that would not be widely available but for Engler's acts of preservation. Puppetry owes him a debt. If you have a puppetry collection, these DVDs belong in it.

THE WILD ROSE:

How a Work of Puppet Theatre Developed into a Piece of Hand Mime

BY ROLANDE DUPREY

Aki Shinozaki is a puppeteer from Japan, who came to the U.S. to study puppetry at the University of Connecticut. This past spring, she finished by directing and designing her Masters of Arts thesis project, *The Wild Rose*.

The Wild Rose is a 1920 story by Nimei Ogawa, which tells of two soldiers guarding a remote border between their warring countries. They slowly become friends, the elder teaching the younger how to play chess, and both sharing the care of a wild rose that grows on the border. But the war finally comes to them, and rather than kill his friend, the elder asks that the younger shoot him, which he is unwilling to do. The young soldier is killed in battle, leaving the elder to mourn his friend, discovering that the wild rose has died.

In planning for the production, Ms. Shinozaki originally wished to design it as a *Pepu Sato*, or Paper Theatre piece. Paper Theatre is a traditional Japanese storytelling technique, which uses two-dimensional figures within a tabletop or laptop theatre. The figures are often painted in two poses—one on each side. The storyteller quickly switches the figure in order to depict the action. For example, in one pose a man holds out his hand, on the opposite side, he has caught a ball. The action can sometimes be fast and furious, the storytelling very expressive. It is a solo art form. Ms. Shinozaki performed a paper theatre piece at the 2004 O'Neill Puppetry Conference called *The Old Man Who Made Flowers Bloom*. After working with *The Wild Rose* for eight months, though, Ms. Shinozaki decided against the paper theatre style: "The story required more of a distance between the storyteller and the puppets. It is a hard story, and easy to get over-emotional about it. It is also too dark for the style," she stressed.

She felt the story needed to be shown as a puppet play so that the audience would not be emotionally manipulated, but could, rather, be free to use rational judgment on the story (as with Brecht's so-called "alienation effect").

Ms. Shinozaki studied acting at Toho Gakuen University. Before coming to the U.S., she had performed puppet theatre for over a dozen years in Japan, working primarily for Hitomi-Za Puppet Theatre. She also performed Otome Bunraku, and did a variety of commercial work. She considers herself primarily a performer, rather than a designer or builder. At the University of Connecticut, she has learned a great deal about the design and building process. For *The Wild Rose*, she had to design and build the set, puppets and costumes for the performers. It was also her directorial debut.

The final production used two tabletop puppets, with actors in full view of the audience, reflecting the emotions that the puppet characters expressed. Two unseen puppeteers operated the other incidental rod puppets (butterflies, bees, leaves). A fifth performer played the mountain that was the border between the two countries, and held the wild rose.

Aki Shinozaki, being relatively new to speaking English, had some obstacles to overcome in order to direct American performers.

Since I had no confidence in my English, I used my body a lot when I explained things to the cast or the musicians. I had drawn a storyboard, but I am not such a great artist that I could show all the elements I needed to through pictures.

In doing so, she developed a kinesthetic understanding of the dynamics of the play. She was, however, very unsatisfied with the final outcome.



photo: R Termine

They had had to change the style of the puppets ten days before performance, and she felt that though the cast did well, they could have used more time. In addition, there were many technical difficulties with the sound and lights.

TRANSFORMATION INTO HAND MIME

During her study at UConn, Aki had occasion to see videos of some great hand mime pieces, "The Wall" by Burr Tillstrom, and "Show of Hands" by Tim Lagasse and other students at UConn. In addition, she studied movement a full year with Jean Sabatine. Sabatine teaches a movement for actors discipline called "essence theory" in which emotion or intent is reduced to its "essence" in movement. It was a revelation for Aki, whose movement background included traditional forms like ballet and Japanese comic theatre (Kyogen).

I'm really thankful to have worked with Jean Sabatine. The final assignment was to create a short piece involving something we were invested in. I used yarn as my performing object, transforming it into a telephone, using it to express joy, and finally complication—I tied myself up in it... Showing the inside of emotion through the object gave me some ideas for this project—I didn't need to make puppets, and could still show something that people will understand...

I'm not a dancer. *Essence* was a big thing for me.

So, at the O'Neill Puppetry Conference this past June, Aki proposed to create a hand mime piece based upon *The Wild Rose*. She came with a few moments mapped out already — the mime of the rose, of the old soldier, the young soldier.

Richard Termine, the director of the Emerging Artist Series at the O'Neill, and one of the mentors for the participants, took on the task of directing Ms. Shinozaki:

Aki came with an existing complex story, and our challenge was to find (semiological) signs, as well as hand signs, that would keep the integrity of the piece, while simplifying it. She knew it so well, it was essentially a matter of problem solving. We were able to combine familiar signs, like that of a hand becoming a gun, with that of the soldiers who carry guns. In effect, the soldiers became their guns.

At the moment when the war front comes into the borderlands, Aki begins stomping her feet. Until that moment, everything is silent, focused on her moving hands and pensive facial expres-

sion. The stomping really surprises and shocks the audience. It almost sounds like bombs.

"In Kyogen (Japanese comic theatre related to Noh), one's center of gravity is lowered, one's knees are slightly bent. This is very natural for me. Stomping the feet was a natural choice," Shinozaki said.

"We were also able," said Termine, "to use her presence at the point where the soldiers decide not to fight each other in the final battle. She pointedly focuses her eyes upon them and forces them into battle. At that moment, she embodied the war. She was the controller of the world."

In creating the ten-minute hand mime, Aki Shinozaki used her movement background, her kinesthetic understanding of the play (forced on her by her level of English proficiency) and "essence theory."

There was an economy of gesture, and an economy of puppetry here. Sometimes when you work through a limitation, you triumph because the limitation itself causes you to focus, to use what you have with greater imagination. That's when something exciting can happen.

We worked on making each detail of the story as clear as possible, so that the subtlety would exist. The audience may not perceive each and every last detail, but it all adds up, and becomes an emotional connection to the whole.

Everyone brings his or her own associations of war to the story. During the performance the story turns around to become a story of peace. In the final moment, when the two hands that once were the two soldiers come together to form a dove, a symbol of peace, flying away, it is a moment of wonder, of awe.

But, isn't using hand mime defeating the purpose of using puppets?

"I'm not thinking about myself as a storyteller," says Shinozaki. "I'm a performer, and today my puppets are my hands. Even if I wanted to tell the story with words, it would be different now."

Since hand mime is rare in Japan, it will be interesting to discover how this piece is received.

Aki plans to spend a month or so learning about how the Puppet Showplace in Brookline, Massachusetts operates. She is hopeful that all she has learned will help her company when she returns to Japan, this fall. •

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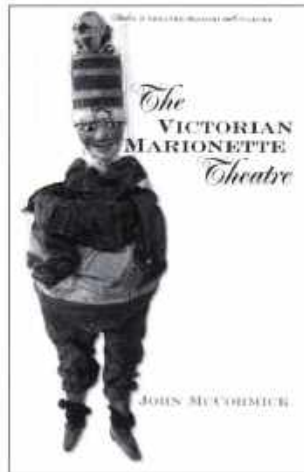
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PHOTO: Salzburg Marionette Theatre



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PHOTO: David Zeiger

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