

FALL and WINTER 08 Issue #24

PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL

CROSSING BORDERS
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the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

What's new at the Center for Puppetry Arts?



FOR FAMILY AUDIENCES

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Oct 2 – Dec 7, 2008
Adapted by Jon Ludwig, directed by Clint Thornton
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Nov 20, 2008 – Jan 4, 2009
Adapted by Jon Ludwig
- **Weather Rocks!** (pictured at left)
Jan 8 – Mar 22, 2009
By Jon Ludwig
- **Jack & the Beanstalk** (pictured at bottom right)
Feb 17 – Mar 1, 2009
By Nappy's Puppets
- **Old Man and the Monkeys & other Chinese Tales**
Mar 3–15, 2009
By Dragon Art Studio
Stay after the 3pm show on Sun, Mar 8 for
"Dragon Art Studio Backstage Tour"

FOR TEEN & ADULT AUDIENCES

- **The Ghastly Dreadfuls II:**
Handbook of Practical Hauntings and Other Phantasmagoria
Oct 16 – Nov 1, 2008 • Ages 16 & up
By Jon Ludwig & Jason von Hinezmeyer
- **Don Quixote** (pictured at bottom center)
Feb 3–15, 2009 • Ages 12 & up
Adapted by Bobby Box
in collaboration with Manuel Morán of Teatro SEA

FILM SERIES • Newly Expanded!

- **An Evening of Stop-Motion Puppet Films**
Sat, Jan 17, 2009, 8pm (pictured at bottom left)
Curated by Alan Louis
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Sat, Feb 21, 2009, 8pm
Directed by Yelena Demikovsky

TEEN & ADULT EDUCATION SERIES

- **"American Puppet Modernism" Lecture & Book Signing**
Sat, Nov 15, 2008, 8pm
Presented by Dr. John Bell

MUSEUM & SPECIAL EXHIBITS

- **Puppets: The Power of Wonder**
Permanent Exhibit
- **Jim Henson: Puppeteer**
On long-term display
- **Jim Henson: Wonders from His Workshop**
Sept 16, 2008 – Sept 13, 2009
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Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin
Nov 4, 2008 – May 31, 2009



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PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

issue no. 24

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American Center of the
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Promoting international friendship and understanding through the art of puppetry.

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ON THE FRONT COVER

Wroclawski Teatr

(see page 16)

BACK COVER:

Big Nazo in Bali

(see page 6)



This project is supported, in part, by an award from
the National Endowment for the Arts.

"Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth... (Genesis 11:1-9)

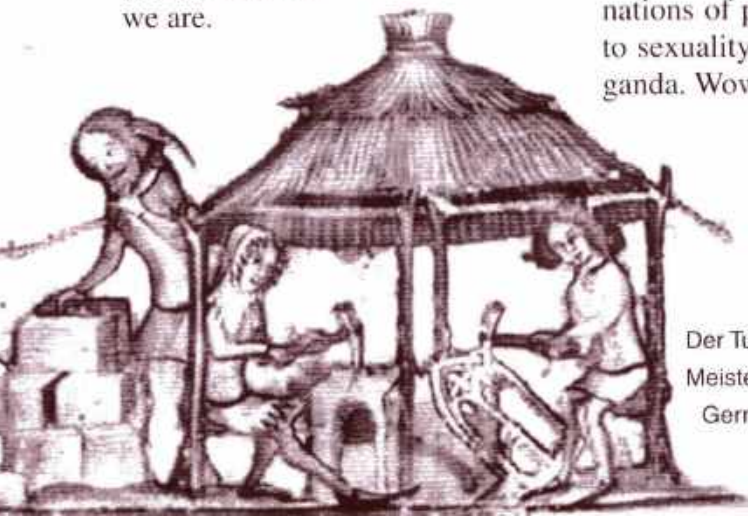
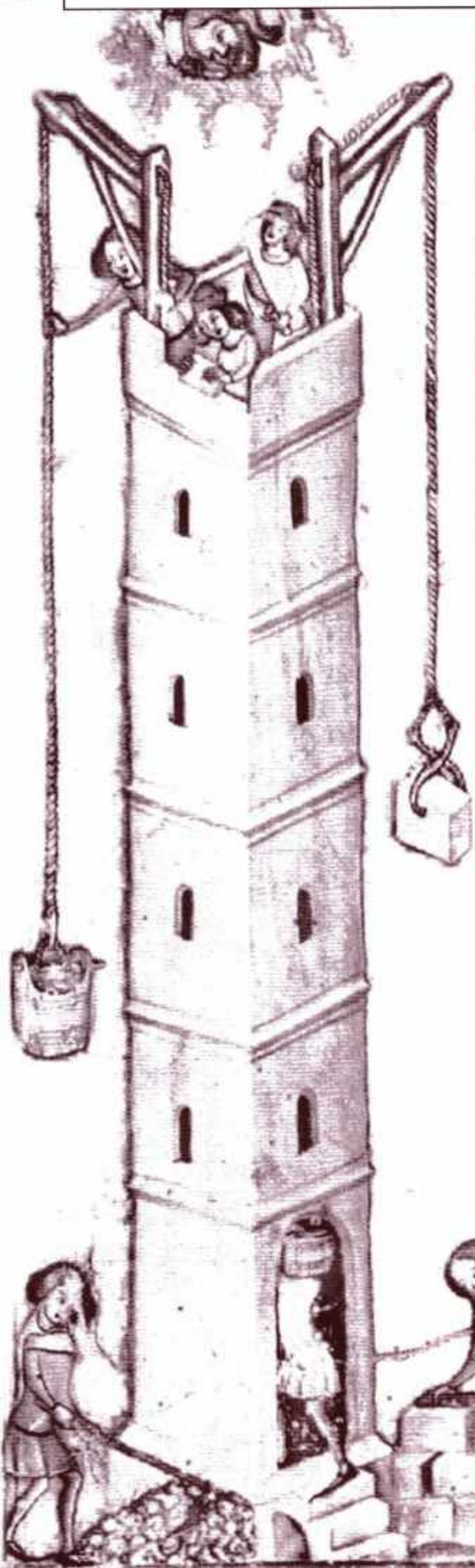
A dark day for international relations.

Even darker when one considers that Babel was conceived by Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah, great builder of cities in what today is primarily Iraq. There are many dark places in the world today, and for many years Iraq has been one of the darkest. Bruce Reges was recently deployed there. He found a way of bridging the cultural and linguistic divides by distributing puppets to Iraqi children. [see page 10]

As our name suggests, *Puppetry International* has always promoted exchange across borders—both cultural and geopolitical. The very mission of UNIMA (the international theater organization of which we—UNIMA-USA—are a member) is to foster "international friendship and understanding through the art of puppetry." The artists featured in this issue represent this mission splendidly, but look back through past issues of *PI* and you'll find so many more. No matter what theme we're working on, crossing borders is always at the core of who we are.

Reading about Bruce's experience in Iraq reminded me of e-mails Jim Gamble sent back from a tour to Iran several years ago. Thousands of people showed up for his marionette performances. The warmth and eagerness of the Iranian people to meet this American puppeteer was something I found deeply moving at the time. How is it that one man could so quickly accomplish what governments have been unable to do in decades? Does his success speak to the power of puppetry, of art? Yes, but even more than that, I think, is that he crossed the border—he went there. He gave of himself and people responded in kind.

Our announcement that we would be doing an issue on the Crossing Borders brought in more submissions than we've ever received on a single theme. This was a surprise—that international travel should evoke more passionate response than our previous examinations of puppetry's relationship to sexuality, spirituality or propaganda. Wow!



Der Turmbau zu Babel,
Meister der Weltenchronik, 1370
German: World History in Verse

It makes sense, though. Travel is not primarily an intellectual, philosophical or contemplative pursuit: It is about survival. One's mettle is tested against an environment of strange language, strange customs, strange foods, unfamiliar roles, taboos and laws. It can be intimidating, confusing and enormously exciting. It presents the sorts of challenges that allow us to understand humankind and ourselves a little better.

Above all, it puts us in touch with people with whom we'll work or study with great intensity; within our differences we discover a common humanity.

Based on the articles, essays and interviews we received, this seems to be a universal experience. Certainly for our writers it has been very profound. Perhaps crossing borders is our way of reversing Babel.



Andrew Periale

May 8, 2008

Hello Bonnie and Andrew:

I do not write this type of letter often enough. But, after reading PI #23 I must thank you for such an informative issue concerning the voice. I always find the articles in PI of interest, and appreciate the amount of work that is involved in collecting materials and articles on puppetry related issue. And, you folks do a great job.

Fred Putz

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MY MENTOR IN PUPPETRY



Outside PUK Puppet Theatre in Tokyo, 1976 (L to R) Taiji Kawajiri, Edith Murray, Jean-Paul Hubert and Richard Bradshaw

My mentor in puppetry, Edith Murray (1897-1988), was a warm, outgoing person who delighted in the company of puppeteers. She was the founder of the Australian Centre of UNIMA (1970). Nevertheless, because of the memory of World War II, which had a profound effect on Australia, she found it very difficult to feel warmly towards Japan and the Japanese.

This all changed when she travelled (by sea) to Britain in 1963. It was her first time out of Australia but, like many of her generation who had grown up in the British Empire, she said she was "going home." She was based in England and Scotland for two years and attended UNIMA Festivals in Colwyn Bay [Wales], Karlovy Vary [Czechoslovakia] and Leningrad [U.S.S.R.]. I travelled with her for the latter two festivals.

At these festivals, she met Taiji Kawajiri, the Director of PUK Puppet Theatre [Japan], travelling with another Japanese who was able to translate into English for him. Mr Kawajiri was a very special human being ... a warm, charming gentleman ... and Edith quite forgot any anti-Japanese feelings in his presence.

Some years later, Rowena McGill, a shadow-player from New Zealand who was then living in Japan, visited Australia with a member of PUK and Edith was delighted to have them visit her charming little cottage in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

Then, in 1976, when I was doing my first tour of Japan for PUK (with Jean-Paul Hubert of France), PUK

also invited Edith to Japan as their guest and paid her return air-fare from Sydney. Edith was then 79 and it was her first time in an aeroplane. She had a wonderful time in Japan, and travelled with an interpreter provided by PUK and some of the company members. Her tour was separate from ours, although we were together for a welcome party at PUK's theatre in Tokyo, the Bunraku in Osaka and sightseeing in Kyoto. Edith now found it easy to feel warmly towards Japan and the Japanese. In fact, she became an enthusiastic fan!

What she didn't know at first, but was delighted to find out, was that PUK was founded by Taiji Kawajiri's brother, Toji Kawajiri, in 1929 and its members had to go into hiding during World War II because they were opposed to it. PUK has always had a very strong international sentiment reflected in its very name which comes from Esperanto: La Pupa Klubo. Their first performance was *Rip Van Winkle!*

Richard Bradshaw has performed his shadow puppetry all over the world, as well as being featured in a documentary by Jim Henson. From 2004-2008 he was president of UNIMA-Australia, which this year organized the international puppetry festival (in Perth) associated with the quadrennial UNIMA Congress.

BY RICHARD BRADSHAW



Heather Henson's IBEX Puppetry is an entertainment company dedicated to promoting the fine art of puppetry in all of its various mediums, nurturing work for a myriad of venues including stage, film, and gallery.

IBEX PUPPETRY

Performances

Environmental Spectacles

The latest show, *Parade & Crane* begins touring Summer 2016

Backstage live puppetry
Henson's artwork is "primarily beautiful and hypnotic"

Exhibits

HANDMADE PUPPET DREAMS GALLERY

Crafting eye, a puppeteer's artistic eye, is displayed in the Handmade Puppet Dreams film series. The gallery exhibition features a selection of puppetry art that moves the viewer beyond the camera's eye, giving an up-close and personal look into each detail.

"This exhibition is about the art of the process in creating an independent puppet film. It's interesting to witness the crafted sculpture and see the puppet in the flesh."

- Heather Henson

Heather Henson presents

HANDMADE PUPPET DREAMS

Handmade Puppet Dreams Film Series is a collection of puppet film shorts by independent artists exploring their handmade craft specifically for the camera. The series has been screened throughout the country.

HMPD Film Series consists of:
Volume I
Volume II
Volume III
For Kids
Highlights

www.handmadepuppetdreams.com

Presenting

ORLANDO PUPPET FESTIVAL

The Orlando Puppet Festival brings puppetry to the forefront in Central Florida, exposing local, regional, and national talent. The festival includes a variety of puppet experiences including performances, films, and exhibits with workshops and talkbacks. The shows and events are geared towards a wide range of audiences, including adults, families, and children.

www.orlandopuppetfestival.com

www.ibexpuppetry.com



BIG NAZO ON THE RUN

Director's Notes on a Touring Theatre

BY ERMINIO PINQUE

Everything about travel is what made the work and the process what it is: an open engagement with the forces of chaos and a search for meaning. Arriving at the destination was never what mattered most; it's always been about the trip itself. The trip always had more meaning in the rear view mirror; the growth and evolution were always evident once you passed through that rough stretch of road or topped the painful climb up the hill. -EP

Traveling overseas to see art and make art along the way, set me in motion. The anonymity of being a stranger with a strange form of expression made it bearable to put myself out on a limb.

In 1985 I traveled to Europe with my favorite hand-in-mouth over-the-head puppet character in a backpack and a one way ticket that brought me to London. My goal was to get to the International Puppet Festival in Charleville-Mézières, France, and then head down to Italy to reunite with relatives I hadn't seen for many years.

At the Festival in Charleville, I attended up to five puppet-related productions per day. The variety of shows completely reinforced my feeling that puppetry could bridge all art forms and every kind of theatrical expression.

By the time I traveled onward to Italy, I was excited at the prospect of combining the physical with the verbal. I spoke Italian, but not fluently enough to make the mistake of focusing on exposition and gab. I began to perform in the style that still defines BIG NAZO: a fusion of visual spectacle, Commedia-like improvisational dialogue and audience interaction in unconventional spaces and contexts.

The street culture in Italy allowed me to nurture and blossom as a performer in a way that would not have been possible in the downtowns of most northern East Coast cities. In America, people on the street were rushing to be someplace or insisted on knowing what the performance was "selling" and/or why it was even happening ("what is dis for, anyway?").

In Italy, all kinds of people went out before and after dinner to walk around the piazzas and streets in order to meet and greet one another and to enjoy watching others pass by. In this environment a giant, green, bald, weird puppet persona was a welcome addition and the audience had no qualms getting directly involved in the action.

I partnered with other street performers and formed an act with some medieval renaissance musicians who began to play rock & roll and blues on their lutes and mandolins in order to complement the irreverent carnival barker of my character. We began to play in exchange for room and board and put out the hat to collect the money that was thrown at us.

The world trip I was taking had turned into my first working international tour!

EARLY PADOVA: 1985-86

MAKING PUPPETS FOR I FANTAGHIRO

Working and living in one town and interacting with people on a daily-life level transformed the way I viewed the duty of a performer. I looked up some performers I had met in Charleville and ended up living with members of the Padova-based puppet group, I Fantaghiro. I became their foam puppet designer/builder for their show, *Quando L'Orso se ne Va* and accompanied the group's Director, Serena Fiorio, to the elementary school where she taught.

The act of creating puppets and props for a stage show and teaching the craft to kids rounded out the activities that comprise the bulk of the duties of BIG NAZO to this day.

I returned to Providence soon after that, inspired to re-create in the streets of Providence and the US, the atmosphere of wonder and fantasy that I'd experienced in Europe. I gathered up some crazy friends and we started to make public mischief in foam-rubber costumes (wrestling in traffic circles, riding public buses, etc). The experience of doing strange stuff when no one is expecting it was a new kind of "testing" zone that seemed almost more valuable than the European Street theatre experiments.

HALIFAX: 1987, 1989, 1992, 1996

FIRST GROUP OUTING, FORMING AN ACT

BIG NAZO had been doing spontaneous Street Theatre in the Providence, Boston and NY areas. We'd head down to Washington Square Park and mess around. When the producers of the International Busking Festival in Halifax Nova Scotia contacted me to invite my "troupe" to be part of their festival, I told my collaborators that we were now officially a performance group, not just a group of crazy, unemployed artists with a taste for the absurd. We had to step up to the challenge of whipping ourselves into a well-oiled street theatre machine.

At the Festival, we learned invaluable lessons in the skills of drawing a crowd, engaging volunteers and setting up a good "pitch" line which would inspire the crowd to put money in our hat. World class sword swallowers, jugglers, animal and music acts gave us tips and encouragement. The festival had drawn performers from around the world in search of the top

best-of-festival \$10,000 prize. Competition was fierce. BIG NAZO was the only fully masked and costumed act, and during the two weeks of six shows a day, we had to solve myriad problems ranging from where to get dressed into costume, how to keep the wind from knocking over our backdrop, how to deal with the loud honking bus next to our spot, the best ways of contending with hecklers and (no joke) drunken sailors.

The Canadian public seemed to appreciate street performers in a way that I had not experienced in the US. They were generous and laid back and seemed fascinated by the strange, grotesque, dysfunctional-yet-lovable characters. BIG NAZO won third prize: \$2000.

JAPAN: NAGOYA & OSAKA 1992, 1993, 1994, 1998

TRANSLATING FOR NEW CULTURAL VALUES

BIG NAZO was invited to perform at the World International Performance Festival. Apparently, some world traveling performers who had seen us in Halifax recommended us as an unusual act. Walking the streets of the crowded Osaka entertainment district for the first time felt like walking through a video game. It was truly a different world and we felt like beings from another planet, just like our characters.

During our first tour of Japan, we performed as the BIG NAZO Band and played rock & roll, blues and funk. At home, our tunes were not what would be considered cutting edge, but in Osaka and Nagoya, the crowds went wild. There was a ravenous hunger for American R&B and Rock, and the combination of giant monster go-go dancers and masked musicians made us a huge hit with audiences.

When we returned to Japan with a new show about a film director who wanted to combine the stereotypical cultural samplings of the American Western with the Japanese Monster movie, we confronted the reality that what we thought was funny was completely different from our audience's idea of humor. The satire and irony that we thought was so clever was not going over well with the audience.



We watched Japanese TV that night and observed that there were plenty of visual gags and slapstick (which usually centered around humiliating some poor game show contestant) and we re-worked our show to feature what was most interesting to the large crowds: we “showed” them what was happening instead of narrating or commenting on it. We simplified, introduced more Japanese into the text and expanded our interaction with the audience.

The daily act of translating between English and Japanese and working to communicate across linguistic and cultural differences deeply inspired the BIG NAZO troupe’s desire to create universally understood performance art that would transcend language.

BALI: SEPTEMBER 10-17, 2001

We woke up in Bali, Indonesia in the town of Ubud to learn that the World Trade Center had been attacked and destroyed while we slept. We had already arranged to perform at a small Jazz Club later in the week and the decision of how to deal with our feelings of dismay, confusion, sadness and dread had to be made. How could we justify performing with irreverent mirth when global events were affecting us so deeply? I looked at the serene, beautiful landscape around us, the quiet routine of the rice farmer on the side of our compound, the sounds of children playing, dogs barking, trees swaying and thought of the peacefulness of our surroundings. I came to a realization that our huge world was home to peace as well as war, life as well as death and decay. We made the choice to affirm life by continuing to fuse art, theatre and music in the way that had always had significance to us. We did the show and many people came up to tell us how much it meant to them. Reflecting on that experience makes me realize that the most important thing about performance may be the zone of shelter it can create.



wrong.

Erminio Pinque continues to relish things that go wrong. He’s still directing giant puppet creatures from the BIG NAZO LAB, the storefront studio across from Providence City Hall.

www.bignazo.com

For the full version of this account (and color pictures)



WWW.UNIMA-US.ORG/PUBLICATIONS/INDEX.HTML

ENGLAND: MANCHESTER 1999, MILLENIUM DOME 2000
In the year 2000, BIG NAZO Strolling Characters were hired to perform at the Millenium Dome in London. Visitors from around the world crowded into the attraction and many of them had encounters with us as they walked about. We went on to tour the rest of the country, but were invited back to do another week at the Dome in August. The rest of the group was weary from being on the road so long and opted to head home. I stayed behind to recruit performers to form a BIG NAZO crew that could do the Dome strolls with me.

It was a thrill to search for talent in London and to gather a troupe of actors to train and transform into NAZOs. This time, the cast of characters was made up of Londoners. They spoofed English society and added all kinds of exciting and peculiar new nuances and details to the characters they played. I realized then the value of swapping characters with other performers in order to expand expression and motives. This is a process peculiar to the puppet and mask arts, where bodies and faces can be temporarily inhabited by others who bring their own fresh perspective to the mix.

At one of our first festivals in England, we arrived with missing props and puppets. The airline had misplaced some of the bags containing costumes for the show. At twenty minutes before show time, we hastily shifted gears, doubled up on role responsibilities and made adjustments in the script that could accommodate the absence of certain characters.

The scramble to reassign the sequence of events and performance roles led to some interesting new juxtapositions and challenges that made the swapping of roles and puppets something worth repeating as a creative exercise. This incident in England forced us to acknowledge the creative value of things that go



UNIMA-USA is proud to announce that Vincent Anthony was named a Member of Honor at the International UNIMA Congress XX Perth, Australia.

Every 4 years UNIMA international allows national centers to submit a nomination for this distinguished honor. Vincent Anthony has served as General Secretary of UNIMA-USA since 1992 and he served as international vice president from 2000-2004. He founded the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta in 1978.

The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry
at the University of Connecticut



Left: Rufus Rose and Bil Baird (1938)

Right: Tony Sarg's inflatable Blue Hippopotamus (1931)

The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry is an exciting cultural resource for the history and preservation of global puppet traditions. Our collection of over 3,000 puppets, and our library and archives offer the general public, students and scholars the opportunity to discover the rich possibilities of puppetry. Museum tours and puppet workshops are available for all ages.

The collection includes works by twentieth-century American puppeteers such as Bil Baird, Rufus and Margo Rose, Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin, Frank Ballard, Charles Ludlam, Tony Sarg, Dick Myers and Sidney Chrysler, as well as puppets and masks from around the world.

See our exhibition, *Puppets through the Lens*, April 27 - November 30, 2008, featuring puppets in film, television and on the internet.

—John Bell, Director

The Ballard Institute is located at the University of Connecticut's Depot Campus in Storrs, Connecticut, 25 miles east of Hartford, off I-84

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BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN IRAQ

PEACE THROUGH PUPPETS

BY BRUCE L. REGES

Of course we were concerned; scared is too strong a word. Maybe I was the one who was "concerned;" certainly I felt the weight of lingering in a street in Abu Sayda, Diyala Province, Iraq. We were there to see the mayor and the city council; afterwards we went on a battle damage assessment tour. This is where damage caused in battle is evaluated and, if warranted, compensation is paid to the owner of the damaged property. So there I was outside in the street with other soldiers waiting for the Captain to finish his assessment. This little girl kept looking at me and smiling from the doorway of one of the houses on the street. She kept peeking, then dodging back into the family compound. Who were these soldiers in her street, what did they want? Why was the biggest one smiling all the time? One of her family picked her up to meet this big soldier with the smile; she screamed in terror, she cried, she looked away. It is one thing to see something from a distance, quite another to meet that something face to face. I tried to say soothing words in English. This did not help. I tried to look reassuring; however, all that body armor and the weapons gave a different impression.

I reached into my cargo pocket and took out a puppet, a small white one, and tried to give it to her...she cried. Her uncle or family friend put it on his hand and tried to coax a smile...nothing but tears. They went back into the courtyard of her home and closed the door. I felt defeated in my effort to bridge the gap of language, culture, and fear. My friends said to me "You lost that one." They had seen the magic of puppets before— how the world seems to stop, a child smiles, and then the parent smiles and the barrier goes down.

I saw another child at the end of the street with a toy automatic weapon, just like the ones that are used against us. I warned the other members of the team about the child; no one needs to have a mistaken incident in such a street when we are there to help. I heard the door open behind me; a different man came out with the child. Obviously he was the father. She was not crying now, and he held the puppet in his hand. She would look at me and smile and then hide her head in the neck of her father. He smiled; I think he brought her out to thank me. I didn't need thanks.



Bruce Reges- top, right photo

I could see from the expression on her face and his that I had won one more small victory in my small part of this operation.

All I could think of as we moved along was the difference in those toys; one to build trust and understanding, the other reflective of the killing and violence surrounding this small town. My friends laughed and said it turned out for the best in spite of my fearsome image. We went from site to site and cautiously, carefully made friends and demonstrated that U.S. soldiers do care, and they do understand. "Peace Through Puppets" developed through

a need I had to communicate with the children I was meeting. Contrary to what they had been told, we soldiers were not to be feared, we were there to help. I was asked once by a teacher why Americans only kill and destroy everything they come in contact with. I had no answer. I vowed I would demonstrate every chance I could that we were not that image; we were also compassionate human beings that acutely felt the pain and suffering of the common people. My mother, a lifelong puppeteer, came to the rescue. I asked for some small hand puppets I could carry in my slash pockets to help me communicate with children

and their parents. She came through magnificently. Puppets began to arrive, and other soldiers wanted them too. I cannot describe adequately how much it meant to me to see fear transformed into smiles, and children laughing and happy. We are good as soldiers in giving away things, and soccer balls will always take priority over puppets. However, when you have a parent tell you that their children thanked a U.S. soldier for those wonderful puppets as they went to bed, I knew that I was winning my small part of this war. Thanks to so many giving people in the U.S., I was able to bridge an important gap, and make peace in my own small way. §



Bruce Reges has been an Army Reserve soldier for the last 29-1/2 years. He is a Master Sergeant, though in Iraq he was a First Sergeant. He lives outside Big Rapids, Michigan, working at Ferris State University as an Adjunct Professor teaching student teachers how to make books with children to inspire them to read. He is married and his wife is expecting their first child. He turns 59 this year.



A FRENCH PUPPETEER IN KERALA

An interview with Brigitte Revelli

BY CLAUDIA ORENSTEIN

Brigitte Revelli is a dancer, painter, sculptor, and puppeteer from France, who has lived and worked in Kerala, India for fifteen years. Several years ago she started her own puppet company there called *Minnaminungukal*, which means fireflies in Malayalam, the language of Kerala.

I met Brigitte in January of 2008, when I took a group of Hunter College students to study *kathakali* dance-drama at the Kerala Kalamandalam Performing Arts Academy in the small town of Cheruthuruthy. The region of Kerala is a center for *kathakali* and several other important Indian performance traditions including *kuttiyattam*. There are also two continuing indigenous puppetry traditions from this area: leather shadow puppetry, *tolpava koothu*, which continues to be practiced by the Pulavar family, and a tradition of glove puppetry known as *pavakathakali* or *pavakoothu* practiced by artists from the village of Paruthippully. *Noll pava koothu*, a string-puppet tradition, is no longer practiced.

Brigitte studied *kathakali* for two years in Delhi and for four years at the Kerala Kalmandalam. Since then, she has devoted herself to her visual artwork and to creating a new, contemporary puppet theatre that draws

on members of the community for its performers and performs throughout the region.

CUNY doctoral student Boris Daussa, who helped plan our study abroad to India and had been to Kerala several times already, introduced us to Brigitte, who graciously welcomed my students and me into her home. A beautiful old structure, the three-story building had once housed the caretakers of the temple next door, but now stood in some disrepair from that summer's unusually heavy monsoon. Many of Brigitte's puppets and art materials hung in sacks, suspended above the floor, to protect them from where there had been flooding. In her yard stood a low roofed platform, which served as a theatre space for local performances.

Brigitte let us wander through the house, which, in Indian style, was mostly empty of furnishings. Nonetheless, each room greeted us with Brigitte's artwork in the form of puppets and related constructions. On the second floor, she introduced us to some of the early hand-puppets she had made based on *kathakali* characters by performing them with the help of Ram Kumar, a young actor beginning to work in both puppetry and drama.

A hanging screen transformed her attic into a little shadow theatre. Brigitte demonstrated the many shadow creations she uses in her shows, and let the students entertain each other with them. Our handy flashlights and running commentary on the puppet action took over when the daily power-cut plunged us into darkness and shut off the recorded classical music Brigitte had provided for the demonstration.

We were all impressed with Brigitte's generosity, her artistic talent, and her adventurous spirit in coming to settle in Kerala and trying to carve out a living, creating contemporary puppet works in an area still very much shaped by traditional cultural practices.

The following narrative was written in response to questions I sent to Brigitte Revelli concerning her career, dreams, and the challenges and rewards of founding a contemporary puppet theatre in a foreign country steeped in traditions. I've combined her answers and translated them from French.



“

Since childhood, dance has held a pressing and central attraction for me, without my knowing why.

The window of my childhood bedroom overlooked the sea. That vast, beautiful plate, either silver or set afire by the setting sun, witnessed the unfolding of my first choreographies. I don't think anyone around me suspected that these mental images occupied all the space of my dreams, even though I didn't know anything about dance. I gazed outside and, without moving, I danced. I believe it was the emptiness of that space and its light that inspired me.

Later, I had the opportunity to take some dance classes at school and right away I recognized my interests: discovery of the body, enjoyment of space, construction of languages, envisioning compositions. It was the exploration, the work that interested me; performance was always secondary. Later I sensed that the creative dimension of dance that attracted me was present similarly in all forms of artistic expression, and I felt myself pulled toward all of them, reluctant to choose.

As an adult, when I had the means, I devoted myself to dance and joined a contemporary dance company. Professional dance work being so demanding, I had to keep my other interests on hold for a while, and I was happy to give myself over completely to this single art.

My encounter with *kathakali* opened up the path of theatre to me, while allowing me to stay in the realm of dance. I studied and practiced it for six years in India. *Kathakali's* stylization in gesture, costume and make-up, certainly contributed to my subsequent work in sculpture.

As for the visual arts, drawing and painting has accompanied me here and there since my childhood, without my having given them much attention, undoubtedly because these were such solitary activities. However, this attraction took on new vigor when I came into contact with India and *kathakali*. Propelled by a double impulse from dance and my cultural displacement, I undertook the project of transcribing the world of *kathakali* into terra cotta sculpture. Dance and sculpture nourished each other.

I came to Kerala, India without any intention other than to study *kathakali* for a little while. The centripetal force of this art held me, fascinated me, until it became evident to me that there was no room in the world of professional performance for a foreign artist—an outsider—in this ethnically specific art.

It was with a certain reluctance that I pulled myself away from the life of this vibrant tribe of night-owls. After a stint with sculpture, through which I sought to represent the microcosm of *kathakali*, its language and atmosphere, I put myself to work making puppets modeled after the typical *kathakali* characters.



Starting my own puppetry company in Kerala? Contemporary dance, theatre (*kathakali*), sculpture—the three veins of experience that have run through my life—converged: at the point of their convergence, a small tribe of puppets was born, having already begun to mature. The desire to put these puppet figures on the stage, and the need to speak through them was the initial force that drove me to seek performance partners. It was unbearable to simply accumulate these prostrate bodies, when I sensed that they were rich with speech. Without some new situation, an essential aspect of their being could not reveal itself. After the clay, the paper, etc... the human psyche became the new material I had to work with in my role as the director of a company.

Puppet theatre being almost non-existent in Kerala, I had to dig out or train suitable individuals... I observed that, among the contemporary theatre actors from which I drew my company members, only some of them were attuned to puppetry. The others, as actors, could not project their art through the puppet. The intimate relationship between manipulator and puppet is indispensable, and on par with that of an actor and the character he portrays. So I re-organized my work into stages in which I employed certain actors as puppet builders. This worked for some of them, but not all.

Our first production, straddling the centuries, took as its theme the meeting of two great works, that of Jean de LaFontaine (a French 17th century poet, who wrote fables after the style of Ae-

sop) and the Panchatantra (a very old collection of Indian tales with animal characters), eyewitnesses to the persistence of human conflict and of our present age. The piece questions the idea of "progress." The main puppets were built from voluminous bamboo structures and were attached to the body of the manipulator and projected enough in front of him so that the puppet could be distinguished from the human. The body of the figure appeared in black light and the faces were lit autonomously (a style of puppet I created that I call "transparencies." They seem to float like spirits in the obscure space of the imaginary.) They required a vigorous physical engagement—dance-like—and an unnatural and unrealistic way of moving in relation to the physical form. Stylistic and rhythmic relationships existed here with *kathakali*, although they would have been indiscernible to the uninitiated.

The subject of the second production was taken from a Daoist legend, which was presented as a tale of initiation by the French writer Marguerite Yourcenar. This one deals with education, the power of art, commitment, a subject that concerns us as artists.

The hide and seek game of shadow theatre gave the basic structure to the scenic language for this production. The same characters were presented by shadows and puppets by turns, and sometimes by masked actors. The work of the actor-manipulators as they changed roles and activities throughout the play, was very demanding and complex.

The first production team consisted of six actor-manipulators, one lighting person, two musicians (a singer and a percussionist), while I worked on artistic direction and sound. The presence of the live musicians had a great influence on creating the unique character of each show, but it became difficult after the initial development to count on their availability for each performance. We went to recorded sound when finances obliged us to.

The audience regularly, and for every production, was surprised by the innovative aspects of our shows and by the revelation of the potential of an art considered minor and often ignored.

I only staged one piece with the *kathakali* puppets. It is a continuing intention of mine, on a long list of urgent projects, to work again on this rich but touchy material. I am interested in risking the friction created between a traditional form and a contemporary dynamic.

As regards technique, I am open to everything, depending on the needs of each production. I don't worry a priori about settling on a single scenic language or technique of manipulation for a production. Obviously, I have particular sympathies and moments when I choose to stop and explore certain areas further. But generally I am listening, observing, and I let myself be guided by my visions.

For the moment, we work together when we have shows, but lacking financial means, I cannot manage to offer regular training, which is, nonetheless,

my goal. With this in mind, I chose for a while to focus on pedagogical activities around puppetry in order to enlarge the public for the art and create a pool of amateurs.

The greatest rewards?

In regard to the work: when it reveals us to ourselves.

In regard to performances: when people are moved in ways that they didn't expect.

In regard to the workshops: when buried speech emerges through the puppets.

The struggle against local (tropical?) inertia, and then accepting my solitude in the face of the responsibilities, not being able to express oneself in one's mother tongue —these are our challenges.

Organization in Europe certainly has its advantages in contrast to Indian laxity, but in excess it is asphyxiating.

When I'm in Europe I have the impression that there is a saturation of artificial consumer goods, in which are included, against their will, cultural expressions. Here in India, in many situations, there is a screaming urgency for the arts to exist, to share in the struggles.

My advice to future travellers: values, ways of thinking, of loving, of meaning, everything is different and to some extent "foreignness" does not erase itself with time and one has to accept it.

As an outsider, there is a level at which one is not exactly affected by local problems that one observes, and there might be an indiscretion or an incompetence in involving oneself in them. It is a delicate matter because the facts and accidents

of history make us who we are. I don't know if there can be one specific response to the world of puppetry, other than an individual one.

I hope to establish a center for puppetry in collaboration with a small local group of passionate and committed people—one that would be visited by guests and artists from all over. India's climate makes these efforts particularly difficult. I hope to have enough energy to sustain them.

I have enormous admiration for what remains of certain traditional forms, but I have little hope that they will be reborn from their ashes. Nonetheless, they constitute a powerful and precious font of memory. A contemporary movement, distinct from but respectful of traditions, is emerging in the world of puppetry in India. Even if I personally don't worry much about making distinctions between theatre and puppetry, it seems to me that it is necessary that this art is recognized as its own art and that specific cultural events are organized around it.

”

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Puppet from Tunisia, gift of Miguel Arreche

A POLISH BEAR HUG

BY ROBERT SMYTHE



The man in the leather jacket growled at me, his thick mustache hiding his teeth. Beside him, Anna translated from Polish:

“Who are you? What do you want?” At least Anna smiled, showing her teeth, even as the bear beside her glared.

That, actually, was a really good question. I mean, I had traveled several thousand miles and many hours to arrive at the red velvet upholstered office of the director of the Wroclawski Teatr. He was smoking a cigarette, pinching it between thumb and forefinger and staring at me

“Uh, international understanding?” It was all I had.

“Tak!” cried Aleksander Maksymiak, nodding vigorously. “Tak, tak!” It was enough. I was “in.”

Thanks to an international travel grant from the Theater Communications Group—the national organization of non-profit theaters—I’d planned a trip to Wroclaw, Poland, to a world-class puppet theater. I carefully arranged my trip with Anna Hejno, the marketing director and foundation officer for Wroclawski Teatr Lalek.

It is a matter of hotly contested conjecture which puppet theater in Poland is older, bigger or better: Wroclaw or Warsaw. What I can tell you about the puppet theater in Wroclaw when I was there is that Aleksander Maksymiak was in charge of the seventy people who work there full time, ranging from ticket takers and coat check people to janitors, actors, truck drivers, puppet builders, lighting and sound engineers to cleaning ladies. In a country still trying to catch up to market economy thinking, he had the responsibility of finding the money to keep this relic from the communist days, with its bloated payroll, afloat. One of his chief challenges was to find as many ways as possible to infuse hard currency from other sources into his theater.

Now, in his office, he was giving me precious time to prattle away about puppetry. “Is there much puppetry in the United States?” he asked through Anna. In all his

years of work and in running the theater, he had never had an American visitor before and was not all that charmed by his first. The work and focus of puppeteers in Poland, I learned, was on performing and competing at puppet festivals held throughout the country. Resulting prizes meant prestige; prestige meant more students in the theater classes, working to get the certificates that would enable them to get jobs. More students meant an easier job of getting money from the local city government.

At this exact moment, he told me, the company was in Warsaw, at a festival competition. It would be impossible for me to see them. What a pity. When Anna finished translating, her smile was a little less bright, a little more sad.

“But Pan Maksymiak,” I cried, using the ultra polite form of address for him, the equivalent of “sir,” “I have come all this way—”

“—The schedule changed.” He shrugged. “But while you are here you can visit the shops and the puppet makers. Nice to meet you.”

So I spent the rest of the week on the basement level of the theater, visiting the puppet makers, none of whom spoke English, my Polish limited to my Berlitz pocket guide. I saw extremely raw materials transformed: a massive block of Styrofoam carved with nothing more than a very sharp kitchen knife; a bolt each of silk and cotton fabric dyed as needed to match Pan Maksymiak’s designs for *Beauty and the Beast*. While I didn’t get to see them perform on this trip, I was intrigued by the evidence of their work: an exhibition of puppets from past shows was set up in the marble lobby of the theater. These puppets were clearly from some place different than what is normally seen in the United States: while most American puppet theatre focuses on creating the illusion of life, Wroclawski Teatr Lalek uses puppets to create characters that seem to straddle life and death.



I also got to see Pan Maksymiak in action, teaching a class to students training for their certificates. In Poland, it is impossible to get any kind of job, I was told, without a five-year certificate of some kind of training. There were students in the class who only wanted the certificate; others who hoped to work as puppeteers someday. With a limited number of places in the state puppet theaters and a number of certified puppeteers graduating every year, landing a job is nearly impossible.

Given that Poles are not used to paying very much for tickets, and all state support goes to maintaining theater buildings, it is next to impossible to start one's own theater. So the class I observed was an exercise in frustration, and I didn't need my Berlitz guide to translate Pan Maksymiak's growing irritation at students who wouldn't or couldn't follow his instructions, or students losing heart while rehearsing with puppets from a theater repertoire they knew they would never perform. Through it all I recognized Maksymiak's drive and passion as my own: like a badly dubbed film, I could supply my own dialogue, filling in what I knew he had to be saying.

Maksymiak was my kind of guy.

When I returned to Philadelphia, I had an idea. Working with the Lang Center for the Performing Arts at Swarthmore College, I wrote to the Cooper Foundation (a private college foundation), proposing to bring Wrocławski Teatr Lalek to the college community and then to Philadelphia. The Foundation generously provided all the funds necessary to bring the eleven members of the company to the United States to perform *Ostatnia Ucieczka* (The Last Escape), Wrocławski Teatr Lalek's signature work. It is based on the writing of Bruno Schulz, considered to be the greatest Polish writer of the 20th century.

Thanks to the leadership of the Cooper Foundation, Wrocławski Teatr Lalek was able to book other engagements in the United States, including a week at the Disney Center for the Arts in Los Angeles. Even more than the prestige of a tour of both coasts of the United States (the previous appearance at La Mama had only been to New York), the

trip would provide the theater with badly needed cash. They would open the show at Swarthmore College, perform for a week at Mum Puppettheatre in Philadelphia, fly to California and perform for a week there, then return east to perform in New York again before returning home. This show was a massive hit at the box office and at puppet festivals in Poland, but would it play in Pennsylvania?

There is a moment in any kind of foreign travel that involves performing where, just as the plane is being exited, you think, "My god, what have I done? I've flown halfway around the world to do puppets in a place where I don't speak the language. My own countrymen don't understand me: what hope do I have here?" I discovered in this project that similar thoughts run through the mind of the producer while he watches his guests pass through the doors of immigration. "Oh, god, what have I done?"

To drive eleven Poles around a major American city you need a very large van. As I herded my group of international visitors through the airport concourse, I gained the distinct impression that Pan Maksymiak did not truly remember who I was. Leather jacket thrown over his shoulders, he walked straight ahead without really saying hello. Anna was there, of course, and I was grateful for her translating every bit of tourist information I threw out at them in the van. Pan Maksymiak sat directly in the center of the bench behind me, looking as Caesar might have looked during his triumphant return to Rome.

It was clear to me that Pan Maksymiak did not feel that the Artistic Director of a puppet theater could be driving a van around Philadelphia. Therefore, if I was driving the van, I couldn't be the Artistic Director, and he spoke to me as he would any driver back home, which is to say not at all. I decided that I would continue to address him as "Pan" since it was clear that the American custom of using first names would be a non-starter. "So much for international understanding," I muttered under my breath.

The Last Escape is very heavily text based. Screens had been set up on either side of the stage to show the projected translation



of the text. "I hope to god this is good," I thought as the audience entered the auditorium at Swarthmore.

Out of the eleven people who were touring with Wrocławski Teatr, only four performed on stage, but it became clear why there were so many in the company. Seamless transitions of sound, light and staging had been accomplished in just twenty-four jet-lagged hours. The subtitles were not always easy to follow: there was simply too much text. It was possible to follow what was happening on stage, for the most part. But when the specificity of language was needed, the text was crucial to understanding not just the action on stage, but its deeper meanings as well as why Schulz is the author he is. One scene where a stack of books becomes a dovecote of fluttering pigeons (aided by incredibly smooth sound effects) was astonishing. The throaty, dusky singing of Jolanta Goralczyk in the background of many scenes, accompanied by (recorded) accordion, was achingly touching, even without knowing a word of Polish. But it was the scene that took place through a broken window, where a mother and her small boy are looking outside. That proved that while visual theater is universal, language is not.

"Come," she says to her son, "a storm is coming." They turn and the lights fade to the sound of thunder and rain.

This is the end of the play, and, reading the words on the screens, the entire audience was immediately struck by their meaning: these two are not just looking at the weather—the Nazis are on their way to Poland.

Strike immediately followed the performance; everything had to move to Mum Puppettheatre in Philadelphia's Old City neighborhood and re-open in just two days.

As we were loading the last bit of luggage that would fit into the van, I was about to get into the driver's seat when Pan Maksymiak grabbed me by the shoulder.

"No, no!" he cried. "Anna!"

Great, I thought, what now? Anna hurried over and Maksymiak laid a huge hand on her shoulder, speaking rapidly and intensely.

"Pan Maksymiak says that tonight was a great success for him and for the company. He says thank you."

"Tak," repeated Pan Maksymiak.


"And," said Anna, "it is impossible that you should call him 'Pan.' You must call him—"

"—Aleksander," said the Director, pulling me into the biggest bear hug I have ever survived.

Their last night in Philadelphia, before they left for what would become an incredible run at the Disney Center in Los Angeles (sold out shows and added performances), we all sat in Mum's lobby, drinking vodka and beer. We were old friends, barely able to communicate through language but eloquent in our shared understandings of a life spent in the theater. I hadn't imagined that a man who commands a squadron of theater professionals, who has won the highest accolades in his own country and who leads the theater that has helped create the very notion of serious puppetry could care about the reception he would get in America. But we all want to be liked. We all want that big bear hug of acceptance.

Robert Smythe is the founder of Mum Puppettheatre in Philadelphia, which closed earlier this year after a rich twenty-three year history. He is now a University Fellow in the graduate playwrighting program at Temple University.



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CIRCLING BORDERS

BY KUANG-YU FONG (WITH STEPHEN KAPLIN)

The border between Chinese and Western theaters is a good place to study the fluid movement of cultural and aesthetic influence. When two separate and distinct cultural streams interact, the chain of connected influences is circular in movement, spiraling back to its source, but at a later stage of development. It's like the whorls and eddies in a rocky stream or the cyclones fringing the opposing bands of clouds on Jupiter. But the fluid motion of human culture is much slower. Each cycle can take many centuries.

This particular cycle began in the early 20th century with a wealthy Chinese aesthete and theater lover named Ru-Shan Qi. He was concerned about the future of Chinese opera, since the Imperial system that had nurtured and patronized it for several centuries had finally collapsed. He had been exposed to the work of Western playwrights and directors whose work was grounded in the aesthetics of realism, such as Ibsen, Shaw, Chekhov and Stanislavski. He traveled extensively in the West and, upon his return to China, he became convinced that the traditional operas should be superannuated. But he reconsidered this position after seeing a performance given by Lanfang Mei, a young rising star who was already making a stir in Peking and Shanghai, as a performer of the female "dan" roles. Qi started working with Mei, first as a critic, later as a mentor and eventually as a collaborator in reinventing and re-energizing the art form. Qi was insistent that the Chinese opera had to be understood in the West, so he helped pave the way for Mei to tour internationally.

Mei's worldwide tours during the 1920s and 30s succeeded in astonishing audiences, academics and artists on every continent. In 1935, in Moscow, his path crossed that of Bertolt Brecht, the exiled German director/playwright. Brecht saw a demonstration of Mei's technique as a concrete example of the style of counter-realistic, "alienated" acting he was developing. Writing about it much later, Brecht states, "The Chinese artist never acts as if there is a fourth wall... He expresses his awareness of being watched."

When Peter Schumann came of age, after World War II had ripped apart Europe, he had naturally been exposed to Brecht's theater writings. While agreeing on the need for the artist to be politically engaged, they differed in the direction of their travels. Brecht had left the U.S. hurriedly in 1948, after being called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He returned to East Germany as a cultural hero. Schumann, in contrast, decided to relocate from West Germany to New York City's Lower East Side and East Village. There he found a lively arts scene that was bursting apart the



old boundaries between painting, poetry, music, dance and theater. Together with like-minded colleagues, he formed the Bread and Puppet Theatre in 1962 and began making epic spectacles that layered Brechtian political engagement with Christian and pre-Christian iconic references. Some of the best examples of this fusion were the seasonal Nativity shows at the Judson Memorial Church.

Twenty years on, Bread and Puppet had relocated to the hills of Vermont. But they still did these Nativity shows at Judson Church every Christmas season. That is where I first crossed paths with Peter Schumann. I worked on occasion with the company in New York and then began going up to their farm in Glover during the summer to be a guest performer in their Domestic Resurrection Circuses. I would present Chinese Opera scenes and give training to the puppeteers. Once, Peter told me that his theater has always been very much influenced by Chinese theater via Brecht. When I asked if he knew the name of the great Chinese opera star who had influenced Brecht, he didn't know who the actual artist was. (Brecht didn't cite Mei by name in his essay "Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting.") I told him that next year would be the 100th anniversary of Mei's birth and, since I had been invited to present a paper on his art and life at the American Museum of Natural History, I would like to read and present the videos to all the other puppeteers on the farm. Peter was very happy to accept. At that time, I never thought I could be instrumental in bringing Peter's work back to China where this particular cycle of influence began.

In the traditional theatre milieu where I was trained, every element has already been decided and fixed long ago: each detail of how you move your arms, fingers, or eyes; what costume and make-up you wear; which corner you stand in or exit to. There are endless regulations, the product of the finest craftspeople piling up their wisdom for generations. A performer was expected to adhere to the traditional methods and aesthetics.

When I graduated from the Chinese Theatre Department at the Chinese Cultural University, I worked as a T.A., helping my master teach basic training and standard classical repertoire every day. One day Mr. Shi-Jie Jing, the director of the Lan Ling Experimental Theater (the first Taiwanese avant-garde performance group) asked me to play a role in one of their original productions. I turned him down because, having never performed in anything other than a traditional opera character role, I was scared. After that, I began to think that, if a person loved their art and wanted to become the best possible artist, they couldn't just mimic the past. I knew that I had to get beyond Chinese opera, but it just wasn't possible to gain a deep understanding of Western theater in Taiwan. So I felt compelled to leave and come to New York.

Breaking aesthetic and cultural boundaries is never easy. The first time I saw a Bread and Puppet performance, I was completely puzzled—their work challenged everything in my aesthetic universe. I wondered how they could have possibly become world famous if their actors had no technical training, were wearing dirty, white street clothes with no fashion, and were manipulating crude, cardboard puppets with no finesse. I assumed that either Western artistic standards had slipped very low, or that I was missing something. The first time I tasted Peter's heavy, dark sourdough rye bread, I spit it out, thinking that it had gone bad. Looking around, I thought that everybody else was just being polite to not mention the moldy bread. Because I could not understand any of this, I decided to work with them. Sometime later, when I was working on a show called "Josephine the Mouse-singer," one of the members of the Lan Ling Company, Mr Yi-Heng Chen, who had seen the performance with his wife, came up to me afterwards and asked, "What are they doing? I have no clue." I invited them to a nearby coffee shop and spent an hour talking on and on about the show. Suddenly I realized how much I now finally understood about Peter's work.

The experience of working at the Bread & Puppet farm taught me much. Besides participating in the big productions that Peter directed, I witnessed how the whole community of individual artists could function to create something of great meaning and value out of practically nothing. They built the stage out of branches and junk. We would be rehearsing and prepping for the circuses and pageants all day, and then in the evening the puppeteers would still find the energy to work on their own sideshow productions in small groups. Besides that, every few days they would put on an after dinner cabaret for their own amusement. It was a non-stop flow of creative energy. And I could see how the audience responded so enthusiastically to all this energy also. In this atmosphere, I felt comfortable doing something that was not perfect, but was a work in progress. It is okay to try out something, to improvise, to express emotions, to say what you need, or want, to say. The vitality of the Bread & Puppet community inspired me



Photos from rehearsal and performance of "Yellow Earth," Judson Church, 2006

to make several shows that later became complete touring productions for our own company: Chinese Theatre Works.

When I first asked Peter to work with me on Chinese Theatre Works' production of "Songs from the Yellow Earth," which involved shadow puppets blended with Chinese opera, his first reaction was, "I have never done shadow theater before." But I told him that I had learned so much about the dramatic expression of pure light and shadow from his work, "You certainly know a lot about shadows, you've just never used them exclusively." He agreed to do the project with us. The core of "Songs from the Yellow Earth" takes place in the historical time period between the Chin and Han dynasties (about 200 BC). I had wanted it to include a particular opera scene, "Farewell, My Concubine," which had been one of Mei's signature performance pieces. I tried to get Peter to understand these historical references, but he said that he was not interested in recounting all the details of an old, tragic love story. "If you want me to direct it, then you have to let me handle it. Otherwise, you can take the puppets I made and make your own story." So we dropped the dancing concubine and her swords and any references to actual dynastic history. But he did want to know what made me choose this particular story to work with him. I said that I thought the story's theme of the human cost of war would be of interest to him. He agreed. He was interested as well in elaborating on the Chin Emperor's obsession with Great Walls. He wanted to relate that theme with the walls being built in Israel and Palestine, and between the USA and Mexico.

We began working on this project in 2006, thinking we would be able to put it together in two or three work sessions and then bring it to the International Shadow Theatre Festival in Tangshan, China, in 2007. I thought, knowing the speed at which Peter generally works, that this would be enough time to develop the complete work. (The Tangshan Festival has since been delayed indefinitely. Instead, "Yellow Earth" will be performed in November, 2008 at the Yunling International

Puppetry Festival in Taiwan. A company of ten made up of both CTW and Bread and Puppet members will travel there, thanks in part to support from the Asian Cultural Council and the Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan.) At last count, we've had seven work sessions and one public performance, and we have still not put it into its final shape. For Peter, this project has been boundary-breaking, trying to translate his graphic puppetry style to a two dimensional shadow screen. Stephen Kaplin, who has worked a great deal in shadow theatre throughout his career, has been able to support the technical needs of the show, which greatly shortened our development time.

For me, working with Peter has been a revelation. I have had to translate and mediate between Peter and the Chinese opera performers, Huixin Bai, Jing Shan, Lili Yang, Ying Zhang and musician Bao Gang Liu. All these artists had gone through the major training academies and had been leading members of provincial companies before they made the great leap to the West. I had to help them adapt their traditional choreographies, gestures and vocal techniques to suit the needs of shadow performance. It was also difficult to get them to understand that Peter's circuitous exploratory process had real purpose and was not just a waste of their time. I was very grateful for their patience. After all, I had confronted Peter's style of work gradually over a period of many years and after much preparatory exposure to other forms of Western

thought, theater and language. But I had shoved these brave Chinese artists headfirst into the fire. It was fortunate that they were strong enough to withstand the shock. I was especially moved by the musical improvisations that coupled Peter's wild fiddle playing with the chanting recitations of the text from a 3000 year old Chinese poem: "Woe to the Soldiers. Once we Were Men."

I think my experience in framing Chinese performance inside an American cultural context is useful. Even though I have left Taiwan behind and am now at home in America, I am able to look back at the Chinese opera with a new perspective. Recently I heard a new term, "cross-country immigrant." In the past, people would go from one country to another and, upon arrival at the new place, do their best to blend in, change names, languages and customs. But now things are different. Since travel and communication are so easy, many people who immigrate maintain their connections with the old country from wherever they happen to be on the planet. In my work with CTW, I am concerned with making a structure here in New York City that is able to support and sustain Chinese cultural values. Still, when you go across boundaries, you must choose carefully what to keep and what to give up. Sometimes it's impossible to reconcile the two sets of values and cultural imperatives. These conflicts remain challenges and inspirations to those who have chosen to make a living by circling back and forth across borders. §



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TSUNAGARI: CONNECTIVITY

BY GREGO



Sim Woo Sung, Asian Monodrama Festival

Sometimes a tad bold about tempting the fates or pushing my luck, I'm going to skip around the subject of little animated beings for now, and talk about a musical instrument. If violins mated with zithers the offspring might be *bowed psalteries*. If you have no idea what a bowed psaltery is, you're in good company. Of European origin, it's one of the many types of instruments I've mixed with puppetry in my hybrid performance work. The puppet I brought to Asia to perform with twenty years ago had a baby doll face, and her hands worked a toy violin while I played the psaltery.

While preparing for a busking set in Tokyo's Ueno Park one afternoon, my concentration was broken by a man's voice. "Is that a bowed psaltery?" His name was Watanabe. A musician and tinkerer himself, he had encountered psalteries during a stay in Vermont. He showed me a special edition newspaper headline; there had been an incident that morning at the democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Shared concern over events and an affinity for folk arts fostered what would become a lasting friendship. A few years later, he beamed while recounting the wonders of the "Puppet Festa" in a mountain town called Iida.* Guest

performer Philip Huber had inspired Watanabesan with elegant puppetry and a warm, friendly nature. My buddy then proceeded to get me the materials necessary to apply for the festival gig. It was at one of those festivals that I first saw the Korean shamanic ritual-based puppetry of Mr. Sim Woo Sung. Now, after many years of performing in Iida, I'm a bit embarrassed to find my face, and a newer version of the psaltery puppet, on the poster for the festival's thirty-year anniversary extravaganza. This year's theme, "Tsunagari," roughly translates as "connectivity."

Another day in Ueno Park, I was approached by a Mexican man and the Japanese woman he had just befriended. Attracted by my puppet, they introduced themselves. He was Daniel Loeza, loved the world over for his astounding frog pianist marionette. I felt like we bonded instantly, but now suspect that his charm, empathy, and sincerity make a lot of people feel that way. His new friend was Lumi Takabatake, daughter of Taiji Kawajiri, the artistic director of Puppet Theater PUK. PUK was founded by Taiji san's older brother, Toji Kawajiri, and has the first dedicated modern puppet theater ever built in Japan. "Is that a bowed psaltery?" Turns out Lumisan's father has one. At her invitation, I soon find myself meeting him at PUK. That playhouse has, over the years, hosted not only an amazing roster of puppeteers from around the globe, but also activist folk art luminaries such as Pete Seeger. The Kawajiri brothers had socialist leanings, and had opposed the march to war in the lead-up to World War II. For this, Lumisan's father had spent time in prison.

His Korean friend (father of the aforementioned Mr. Sim) who was deeply involved with puppets, masks and folk ritual in Korea, had been a political prisoner as well. Sim Junior went on to found the Kongju Folk Drama Museum. He also produced an annual solo performance festival.** California-based Sha Sha Higby was the first Caucasian ever to be invited to what had formerly been the "Asian Monodrama Festival." Having witnessed a stunning performance by Mr. Sim at the Iida festival, I shyly introduced myself to him. Now I'm an occasional performer at the Mondrama festival. I didn't know until she showed up there as a visitor that Lumisan was pals with the boss.

She continues to work at PUK, which now shares its building with UNIMA-Japan.



Kongju Folk Drama Museum

Born Greg Dana in Southern California, Grego studied and worked in various aspects of folk based performance arts—including folk and ritual dance, mummery and music—during a long association with the Living History Center (CA). He designed a solo music and puppet show specifically for street performing and spent twelve years busking through Europe and Asia before settling in Japan.



Miss Sakura, Grego and Junior

Daniel and his frog continue to inspire rumors and sightings, wherever they are, (last seen on the streets of Barcelona).

Watanabe san, a closet puppeteer, has been building and messing with marionettes for quite some time now, and is constantly on the verge of coming out.

Some of us pull strings, some pluck or bow them. Some feel invisible ones weaving us like colorful patterns into a fabric unimaginable in its breadth and beauty. I don't imagine my tales to be at all unique in our so actively networked little world. But having gone further afield than some, I can testify that the long distance lines are open, the world is waiting to take your call and friends you never knew you had (in places with names you wouldn't know how to pronounce) are eager for your company. Establishing *tsunagari* is easier if you have a cool puppet. But I suspect you already know that—you're reading *Puppetry International!*

*reviewed by Corey Stevens in *The Puppetry Journal*, Fall 2005

**reviewed by Sha Sha Higby in *Puppetry International* #13, 2003

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TRAVEL TALES: VIT HOREJS AND THE CZECH AMERICAN MARIONETTE THEATRE

BY ROLANDE DUPREY



Vit Horejs has crossed many borders. Before immigrating to the U.S. in 1979, he worked as Assistant Director to Adam Hanuskiewicz in Warsaw in 1977 and 1978; as an actor at Theatre de la Gronde in France, he studied mime with Ella Jaroszewicz.

After immigrating, one of his first jobs in New York City was as a cab driver, where he quickly learned the city's layout and how to get around. Driving, he was able to glean a great understanding of the nature of New York's different neighborhoods and cultures. The Upper East Side, for example, was at one time the center of a thriving Czech and Slovak community. Jan Hus Church is on 74th street – and on 73rd, the Bohemian National Hall.

Like many Czechs, Horejs had played with puppets as a child. He had been deeply affected by Theatre Drak performances he'd seen in the 1970s, in which live actors and puppets both shared the stage. In New York, he began working as Associate Director of Ta Fantastika, a black light theater troupe. They toured to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and all over Europe – Monaco, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Switzerland.

He also began storytelling, and soon incorporated antique Czech marionettes into the stories he told. He traveled all over the U.S., being booked in schools with National Schools Assemblies. He performed at schools on several Native American Reservations. In 1984, after a program he performed at Jan Hus Church, they showed him a trunk of puppets they had found in the attic – the church used to have a puppet theater!

The idea of the Czech-American Marionette Theatre was born. Horejs and another Czech immigrant, Jan Unger, with a couple of American puppeteers, mounted *Faust* in 1990.

Since then, CAMT has mounted several shows, and toured to many places. Besides locations in the U.S., CAMT has been to the Czech Republic several times, Poland, Turkey and Pakistan. Along the way, it has received excellent reviews from some of the most discerning minds in theatre.

I joined CAMT in 1992, performing in *The White Doe*, and then later in *Rusalka: The Little Rivermaid*. Vit and I spoke recently about the experiences we've had traveling with puppets.

Hamlet, in Prague in front of a 14th Century wall

Stephan Kolbert as Hamlet, Deborah Beshaw as Ophelia

photo: Stefano Zazzera



Vit Horejs and company photo: David Schmidlapp

RD: It takes a lot of work to do shows abroad – why do you do it?

VH: Remember, I am Czech. To me, playing in the U.S. is also playing abroad. I have a passion for discovering new countries. When I was younger, I used to hitchhike all over Europe. I like meeting theater professionals from other parts of the world, talking with them about theatre.

RD: I was amazed at the different reactions we received to the work from different parts of the world. When we did Rusalka in NYC, the scene with the crutches always seemed so full of pathos – you could hear the audiences weeping. But in Pilsen and Prague they laughed.

VH: Well, a marionette on crutches is funny.

RD: Perhaps American audiences reacted more to the story, while the Czech audiences, having had more experience with puppets, reacted to the situation of a puppeteer putting crutches on a puppet.

VH: I always thought Rusalka was a good international show, without language.

RD: Yes, but in Pakistan they thought the gibberish we invented was Czech.

VH: Still, they enjoyed the show.

RD: But I'm not sure most of them understood the story. Whereas in Prague, especially the children's audiences, people really understood everything. They even called out the names of the characters! It was so obviously part of a deeply ingrained cultural identity.

VH: The puppeteers in Pilsen called it "Post-Modern Puppetry." One guy said he thought it was the future of the puppet theatre, and yet they were also puzzled by it. It didn't fit their

idea of puppetry. For them, it was a sample of "what they do in the U.S."

RD: You've done a lot of site-specific shows, like The White Doe and Twelve Iron Sandals that was performed throughout the ruins of Bohemian National Hall, or Bass Saxophone at the Grand Army Arch in Brooklyn.

VH: My favorite was performing Hamlet outdoors at the Prague Castle, with the backdrop of a fourteenth century wall. We had a great entrance where puppets and puppeteers came over the ramparts. We most recently performed it at Jane's Carousel in Dumbo (NYC).

RD: You also took Hamlet to a festival in Turkey.

VH: It was a Karagöz festival. There were all kinds of Karagöz performers, and it was very easy to understand the shows, since it was like cartoons. The audiences knew the story, but didn't understand the language of the play. Shakespeare can be difficult even for native English speakers.

RD: Does it bother you that different audiences see and react differently to the productions?

VH: You don't know what's going to happen; it's always a leap of faith. If anything, the foreign audiences are more forgiving. Rather than saying, "I don't like it," they will say that they didn't understand it because of language.

RD: I like the story of the little Hopi girl that came up to you after a show at her reservation school...

VH: She asked me if the puppets were Kachinas. At the time, I said no, but later I realized that, yes, that is what they are.

RD: That word is used in many different ways.

VH: So are puppets. §

CAMT's new show opens this fall in NYC and is based on the story of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.

Rolande Duprey performs her own shows, and works with other theaters in the U.S. and abroad. She is a frequent contributor to Puppetry International and has her MFA in puppetry from UConn.

*Rusalka: The Little Rivermaid
photo: Jan Frank*





HAVE STRING, WILL TRAVEL!

BY YVETTE EDERY

Foreign travel has been the single most transformative experience of my life.

When puppeteers leave behind their daily concerns and immerse themselves in a completely new environment, they have no choice but to commit to the experience. By taking away the elements of familiarity and control, puppeteers become subject to their passion. No more are techniques or experiences of importance; they've come to learn something new. This is a time to make friends with people who barely speak the same language, but who share their all-consuming passion, which, somehow, makes them family. You recognize yourself in your foreign counterpart and, as there are so few of you in the world, there is a mad rush for show and tell, storytelling, and immediate bonding.

Each place has created its own brand of puppetry. When you travel abroad to study puppetry, you are studying the place as much as you are studying puppetry. To separate the puppeteer from their home is as great a fallacy as trying to separate a puppeteer from the puppet. Albrecht Roser's puppetry is German puppetry. To study with Albrecht, as I did, on a partial UNIMA-USA scholarship for five months, is to study the work of the man who carries the torch passed to him by Bross. Albrecht started the first school of puppetry in Germany and has launched the careers of more of Europe's greatest puppeteers than perhaps any other Master of the form. Now I am carrying that torch.

Albrecht is a product of Germany's history; studying with him, one begins to engage in his work habits, which are characteristically German—relentless. Albrecht is still up at 2 AM in the workshop, experimenting with materials and making new controls for every puppet (no two of his controls are alike). As his student, I was given the opportunity to sleep in the apartment above his own workshop. If at 6 AM I had a flash of inspiration, I was no more than a flight of stairs away from my destiny.

So began my real entry into a personal journey of transformation. The mill that would refine my puppetry had come into view.

When UNIMA International gave me a grant to go to the International Puppetry Festival of Seville, and offered me the opportunity to fill in as Peter Schumann's personal translator for twelve days, I mistakenly thought that my fluency in Spanish was going to carry me through. I was shocked to find myself attempting to simultaneously translate Peter, who speaks with so much passion that he seems not to take a single breath in half an hour, and who uses words like "Freedom" and "Democracy" that are not even real words in English, much less having cognates in Spanish.

No, there was no saving me at all. I was faced with thirty-five highly aggressive protest puppeteers, many of them Communist or Socialist, from some of the world's

poorest, most disrupted, war torn countries. They had either come because they idolized Peter, or had simply not done their homework and knew nothing about Peter's Bread and Puppet Theatre. There was quite a bit of confusion.

Once rehearsals started, things calmed considerably. Peter then handed me the text he wanted translated for the following day. Anti-American sentiments spilled across the pages and Peter wanted to shout this text all over Spain in English, and he wanted me to shout it in Spanish right after him. It is in a situation like this where you learn most about puppetry by learning most about yourself. I helped to lead the workshop for the next twelve days and we put on a massive spectacle for the public. I learned to project my voice for miles and Peter showed me there was something inside me that was far larger than I had ever been encouraged to express. Peter's radical courage to say and do as he pleased only really dawned on me the last day. Although I may disagree with *what* he says, he is a living example of one who bows to no outside authority and to no fear.

Beyond the radical transformation of work habits and self-image, foreign cultures have greatly influenced my aesthetics. UNIMA-USA gave me a second partial grant to study the marionette in Prague for six weeks and the Academia dell'Arte in Arezzo gave me almost a complete scholarship to study the marionette in Italy for two months. In Prague, the puppets are like little organic copies of the architectural style of the buildings. With long noses, deep brows, and great lines, dark colors despite a swirl or flash of color in one particular spot, they are like miniature soldiers of Prague. Deeply reflective of their long history of woodcarving, the puppets are rough and built to withstand a great deal of abuse, perfect for solo storytelling, which I love. The marionette of Italy is quite different. With its smooth skin and soft lines, it is like a miniature marble sculpture. Its ability to appear like a

statue in motion, a marvel of human-like anatomy, is positively gorgeous. I fell in love with the dark aesthetics of Prague and vowed to find a way to combine it with the elegance and decadence of Italy's marionette.

Later, I would begin to experiment with combining German engineering to create a puppet easily performed and well crafted (using German technique), deeply engaging and compelling in its aesthetic (using Czech design), and overwhelmingly romantic and tactile (using Italian sensibilities). This began with one of my first creations—Mish Mosh, a rock star marionette—made with an Italian head and hands (carved by my teacher Edoardo Scullino), a Czech control and Czech body, with joints and other engineering in the German style.

How my work and worldview affected my hosts in turn was clear and overwhelmingly positive. Many times I was told—in Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Germany, and later Canada, the UK, Ireland, and Croatia (also sponsored by UNIMA International scholarships)—that I was not a typical American, and that my kindness had renewed someone's hope in the world coming together, not under one superpower's

rule but rather as a human family. I have no doubt that it was because I had learned to embody the role of an ambassador. I went beyond the borders of the festivals I was attending and spoke to regular people in their own languages. My friendships with Beth McMahon of Indirect Object (an Australian puppeteer I met in Prague), Edoardo Scullino (Italian Master Teacher), Ronnie Burkett (a Canadian I met in Manchester, England), and Albrecht Roser are the most important of both my personal and professional lives. These people revived me. The great reward for all my efforts spent obtaining visas and funding, was meeting people who understood that the puppet is not separate from the puppeteer.

Indeed, global experience furthers international understanding via puppetry, not only of the art form but also of the artist. During the six weeks I spent with Albrecht the first time I was in Germany and the three and a half months I spent there the second time, I would typically sleep four hours a night and work seven days a week. I did not take off Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's, and during that time I completed five marionettes—a portrait of my entire family. Albrecht was the only one who understood my need to create



so much; not merely to produce, but to explore myself as a person, as a soul. He was the first person to ever tell me my international study was important and that he was proud of me and of my work. Albrecht supported my private study and he had no belief system he would not allow me to counter. I was totally supported by him in finding the ways that made the most sense for my way of working. He watched as I sanded away an entire head with sandpaper from the raw block to the final sculpture, rather than carving it out of the foam, because my fingers needed to feel my mother's face. Albrecht's wife and partner, Ingrid Höfer, physically molded my performance of the marionette, every day, over a period of months. She nurtured my performance in the way only a woman could, with patience over time, as though it were a living thing. I owe them more than I can say. They are in my heart always.

UNIMA has provided partial funding for five of my nine international journeys and the impact that aid has had on me is clear. I am a professor of puppetry at New York University in the Tisch School of the Arts where I teach both the theory and appreciation of puppetry as well as the practical production of the art. I run my own specialty production company, ArtistrYE Puppet's Magic Lantern Pictures, where I produce and perform puppetry for companies needing someone with great international skills and experience managing people. ArtistrYE also serves as a vehicle for producing my own projects for film and theater and has given me the means to apply for more funding to support international travel and the creation of new work. UNIMA has supported puppetry through supporting this puppeteer and as a result I have become a presence in the international puppetry scene.

Once you have it mastered, international travel not only becomes much less intimidating, it opens the door for you to become one of a new breed of diplomat. A great example is Jacques Trudeau, the new General Secretary of UNIMA. Jacques accepted my application to come to Canada for the Festival of Jonquierre, and invited me to sit in on the UNIMA meeting. They needed a secretary bilingual in English and Spanish. I offered my services and was elected an official collaborator with the North American Commission. This would not have happened if it weren't for Jacques. He is not only a diplomat, he shows the world what the new breed of diplomat is: a member of a global community and a well-rounded human being. It is due to UNIMA's support that I can claim to be on the same stage. UNIMA, both in the U.S. and internationally, understands that puppetry lives through puppeteers and their collaboration, cooperation, and mutual support. For the moment, I live in New York City, but thanks to UNIMA, the world is mine.

Yvette Edery received her Masters in Puppetry from NYU's School of Individualized Study. She has been an O'Neill Conference Emerging Artist, performed with Basil Twist, CAMT, Drama of Works, and Mabou Mines.
www.artistrye.com

May we recommend:

Philippe Genty's MAN 




Philippe Genty Puppet Theater
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQOVHltBfMA>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-l19IUf-0o

Czech Puppetry
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgUT118dDjo

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ELECTRIC PASSIONS

BY IRINA NICULESCU

...build fragile castles made of cardboard, wood and light, where the actors will exchange words for the others, they will make comprehensible and poetical gestures for the others, and they will transmit to people the human metaphor, in its full glory and fragility. For their joy, their knowledge, the doubt, the love and even the anxiety...

Giorgio Strehler

Through my studying, teaching and creating puppet theatre, I have been crossing borders my entire life. I have been inspired and enriched by our cultural differences, and surprised by our similarities. Years ago in Bucharest, I interrupted my studies for medical school and took a sudden turn to puppet theatre. I had no idea where it would take me. All I knew was that I wanted to create powerful theatre and touch people's hearts. I was nineteen. A long, invisible path opened in front of me. I have traveled the world since, making shows and teaching. I will mention here a few of the important places on my itinerary and define what "crossing borders" has brought me.



Fleurette, "Electric Passions"

PRAGUE – DAMU

When I started, there were very few schools of higher education that offered a Master's Degree in puppet theatre. The school in Prague was one of them and I went to study at the Academy of Theatre and Music there. The confrontation with a puppet theatre culture, which was very different from mine, was crucial and marked my first steps. The Czech avant-garde was seeking to renew puppet theatre; while looking for inspiration in the vigor and juicy humor of traditional Bohemian puppetry, directors and designers were working together searching for new forms. In the center of this research were the questions "what is the puppet?", "what does it stand for?" and "what is the relation between the puppet and the puppeteer, what forms can it take, what metaphors can it invest with life?" The extraordinary richness of experiments and the passionate confrontations between old and new provoked my imagination, trained my critical skills and helped me make personal choices. Four years later, I went back to Bucharest. In my suitcase from Prague, I brought:

- a great curiosity to explore the theatrical and poetical qualities of the different materials from which puppets can be made
- the interest to play with a diversity of sizes like very big and very small and explore the type of impact they produce on the audience
- the need to work with pluridisciplinary performers and continue exploring the relation between the actor and the puppet
- the aesthetic option for a theatrical space, which is non-realistic, non-illustrative, metaphoric, surprising and playful
- a desire for a direct contact with the audience

My years in Prague, in the center of Europe, exposed me to a rich international student life. My friends and colleagues were from Bulgaria, Tunisia, Croatia, Greece, Peru, Japan, Vietnam, Poland, Chile, France, Uruguay, Ghana, Syria... I went back to Bucharest with the utopian dream of establishing an international puppet theatre company, creating shows and touring the world. I created a research laboratory in Tandarica Theatre, where I started my theatre career; it was a defining period and my first shows were born from that research.

OSLO – RIKSTEATRET

In 1987, I was invited together with my husband and artistic partner John Lewandowski to create a three-year professional training program for puppet performers at Riksteatret in Oslo, Norway. The final goal was to build a new puppet theatre company for Riksteatret. We were given total freedom to conceive and direct the project. We made auditions and, of fifty candidates, we chose eight, who were going to compose together the colorful palette for a theatre company. We initiated a complex cultural and experiential training program. We created a student club. We made an exchange project between our Oslo program and the School of Architecture in Bergen. We went to Bergen where the students first performed for each other and then created a one-day project together. We closed our exchange with a meeting where teachers and students from both programs discussed their approach to work and evaluated the project. In Oslo, we invented public events that aimed to integrate our Norwegian students in the Norwegian puppet theatre world. It was an extraordinary challenge! At the start, we did not know Norway and the Norwegian people; it took time to discover and understand them, and to situate ourselves in this new culture.

We brought to Norway our theatre vision and work style oriented toward investigation and creativity; we trained artists who became important performers, directors and teachers in Norway. Later on, John invited the team to perform for two weeks at Marionnettes de Genève, in Genève Switzerland, and to be introduced to the Swiss theatre. My suitcase from Norway contained a great teaching experience, new ideas I experimented with while working with the students, incredible images of the sunrise and sunset in Oslo, and the discovery of the relationship between Norwegian landscape and the Norwegian character. This experience inspired many of my workshops and shows and led me to become a member of the UNIMA International Commission for Education and Training.

GENEVA – MARIONNETTES DE GENÈVE, "ELECTRIC PASSIONS"

In 1990, John became the Artistic Director and General Manager of the Theatre des Marionnettes de Genève, where he worked until 2002. I knew the theatre since 1995, when I directed a show that marked the opening of the new theatre house. The integration in Geneva took me several years. The puppeteers were skilled and sensitive manipulators with some acting intuition. Their work was highly technical and precise:

no acting background, no creative autonomy or collaboration. It took us a long time to get to know each other and build the confidence necessary to make good theatre. I conceived a series of training programs that had two goals: to open the puppeteers to acting and stage movement, and to initiate actors in the skills puppetry requires. The work with young actors, who did not know much about puppet theatre, gave me the opportunity to develop my exploration of the relation between the actor and the puppet and invent new forms. It brought the actors new performing skills and inspiration. In Geneva, John and I initiated several multilateral cultural exchanges. The longest and most original project we realized was the cultural exchange between Marionnettes de Genève in Geneva and Tandarica Puppet Theatre in Bucharest, two experienced puppet theatre institutions with very different practices that had one thing in common: their love and great experience in performing with marionettes. John and I wished to touch all theatre levels, and we built a project with several lines:

- a professional exchange of practices between administrators, with the goal of finding the most efficient work methods and creating a common professional language. This included a program of study of international work laws and their implementation in the theatres in Bucharest
- a professional exchange between cultural administrators of the two cities, discussing practices of financial support, as well as autonomy issues concerning the relation between the sponsor and the institution
- an exchange and professional training of technicians and artisans. The puppet sculptor/builder and the costumer from Geneva spent time in the theatre workshops in Bucharest and studied their construction practices and work patterns. Two lighting technicians from Bucharest came to Geneva to work with new computerized lighting tools
- an artistic project: the co-production of the show for adults, "Electric passions," bringing together artists from both countries

It took two years of fundraising in order to have the means to begin work. The project lasted three years. I conceived, planned and managed the artistic part of the project and I directed the show. The writer and the designer were from

Bucharest, the director (I), the composer (John) and the choreographer were from Geneva. We had two casts, one Romanian and one Swiss, so that both Theaters could have the freedom to program and perform the shows independently. Each cast was composed of five actors and one musician. The play "Electric Passions" was a tragicomedy about the corrupting effect of power on the individual, the form was vaudeville with miniature puppets, the puppets evolved in and out of the booth, on the big stage, and sometimes descended into the audiences to share their passions and disillusionments with the spectators. The story started sometime in the "belle époque" and ended in our era.

When the two sets of puppets and scenery were ready, the Swiss team went to Bucharest, where we started rehearsals. We lived and worked in Bucharest for three weeks. This was the research part of the process and the two casts worked together. We worked a lot on improvisation, explored the visual material, the text and the imagery we could create. The choreographer accompanied us and made a program of physical training. It was interesting to see the two teams work together and observe their differences. The Romanian actors were spontaneous; the Swiss actors were precise. The Roma-

nian actors explored first and analyzed later, the Swiss actors wanted to know "why" first. One of the goals of our project was to get to know each other's culture. The program I made included going to the Romanian National Film Archives and seeing old documentary films (this was part of the preparation for the show), going to see performances in the great theatres of Bucharest, seeing museums and visiting cultural sites out of the city. The same thing happened when we all moved for six weeks to Geneva. At that point, I separated the teams to allow them the freedom of creation. Once a week we all met, watched each other's work and discussed the similarities and the differences. I hoped that there would be differences, but the performers built a beautiful professional complicity and they took from each other what they found best. In the end, the two versions were one. Of course, there were differences in the acting style and temperament. Both openings took place in Geneva, and the Romanian team had a second opening in Bucharest.

The project was a great human adventure; the professional and human exchange was profound, the participants were deeply touched. I think that their view and understanding of each other changed forever. I ended the project with a suitcase full of hope, strength, and with the renewed faith in the power of theatre.

I have done many projects since: Norway, Spain, Romania, Switzerland, Montreal...many suitcases! There are still borders to cross. Some are more difficult than others. They say that what does not kill you makes you stronger. A few years ago, I came back to the United States and opened my bags in Cincinnati. It has been a long time!

I am still discovering how much happened here while we were away, and how many things are still the same.

Irina Niculescu now lives in Cincinnati where she has dreams of opening an experimental theater.



Gaspard, "Electric Passions"

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A MASK MAKER ABROAD

BY ERIC BORNSTEIN

I look back upon my sojourns to Bali, Indonesia and the Veneto region of Italy where I studied the ancient ways of Balinese mask carving and *commedia dell'arte* leather mask making, respectively, with a hint of embarrassment. For weeks in each country, I immersed myself in the ways of the masters, in their culture, in their traditions. Then, each time I returned home to America, the trance was broken. I've yet to open my box of Balinese masks, made some twenty years ago now. And I've yet to replicate any of the leather masks I crafted while in Italy. But do I regret such journeys? Not on your life!

For the first time, my eyes were opened to worlds where mask makers are not seen as, well, lonely, eccentric artists. Rather, they are respected members of centuries' old village cultures, or they may constitute an entire class of creative, almost avant-garde artisans.

Tradition ruled the Balinese way of mask making, but I found myself more creative than ever, having left behind the worries of my daily life for the peacefulness of a small village. There, mask makers spend eight hours a day pounding wooden blocks held between their legs, eating *gado-gado* for dinner and gazing at the sacred volcano, Gunung Agung.

In Abano Terme, where I learned from famed mask maker Donato Sar-

tori, we also tried to imitate the old ways. But we were also encouraged to explore outside mediums, formats and influences. Mask makers from all over the Euro-American world gathered there to celebrate not only their commonality but their diversity.

Embarking on such formal training sessions in foreign lands was a thrilling opportunity for a hungry, developing artist. I had begun mask making in 1980 with an MFA in studio art, but without formal training in mask work. I was drawn to theatrical productions where masks would be used, and I would always make these masks as part of my involvement, along with choreography, performance and graphic art. Early on I had traveled to New York to meet with Julie Taymor, the only American mask maker I had ever heard of. We chatted a bit about mask making, and I left feeling some hope for a career in mask work. I continued developing my craft, eschewing the then popular Celastic for my own recipes for sturdy, light-weight mask materials, which I developed over several years and now teach to mask makers from as far away as Basel, Switzerland.

The mysticism and sophisticated artistry of Bali had always intrigued me, and I planned a journey to Southeast Asia. I arrived in the village of Mas, near Ubud, known throughout the island for its fine mask makers, in April, 1987.

(clockwise from bottom)

Master mask maker,
Donato Sartori

Students, Sartori
workshop, Italy, 1990

Leather masks by
students, Sartori workshop

Eric Bornstein, Ary Puja
studio, Bali, 1987

Pascal LeCoq working on
leather mask, 1990

My teacher was Agung Suardana, at the Ary Puja studio. Though only in his thirties, he was already a master at his craft. Mask makers in Bali are not restricted by caste or nationality, and although the art is often passed on through the family, an apprentice system ensures that all talented young artists, men and women alike, have an opportunity to gain training. I joined one other young trainee on a floor of the family compound. Sitting in our *sarongs*, with the blocks of wood held between our feet, we worked for eight hours each day for two weeks and completed several full face masks. I watched earnestly from the moment the stump of *pule* wood was split with an ax, and participated to the final application of paint and straps.

During the process I would ask many questions. My teacher always answered generously and without mystery. Awed by his dexterity, I once asked him, "Do you ever make copies of Japanese or other masks to explore new designs?" He looked at me, puzzled, and simply replied that he makes traditional Balinese masks. The idea of carving masks from other traditions hadn't even occurred to him.¹ He knew exactly who he was and what was expected of him as defined by his culture—a far cry from what I'd experienced as a mask maker at home, where I'd had to invent most of my techniques and character designs based upon a director's interpretation of a performance.

The Balinese tools and materials were perfectly honed for the tasks required of them. A chisel used to carve a wooden nose, for example, was forged with a curve to match the slope from bridge to cheek. Still, I could see how new materials were utilized by the Balinese mask maker: gouache was mixed with locally found pig's bone ground up for painting; toning of painted pieces was accomplished with underbody automotive tar mixed with gasoline; straps were fashioned from strips of old bicycle inner tubes. Even in a culture steeped in ritual, I learned to my surprise that today's innovation might become tomorrow's tradition.

The mask making experience, I also learned, relied not only on one's carving skills but also from a critical assessment of the masks when in use.

We viewed regular performances of masked theater like *topeng pajegan*, where a virtuoso performer switches masks when switching characters, often donning a dozen masks before the play's end. We listened to the magical gamelan orchestras of gongs and metal keys, which produced a mesmerizing cadence transporting the listener to the realm of the gods. All of this is performed in the natural splendor of rural Bali, with backdrops of temple ruins and terraced rice paddies.² The long, lovely hours of unbroken focus on the mask making process is a respectable profession among these open, generous people, where art-making is a sacred form of personal and group worship.

This setting, I found, is inseparable from the Balinese process. This is a lifestyle—working with wood and crafting the traditional Balinese faces—which would be difficult to reproduce in a busy urban environment, where each day is broken up into many different tasks. This was a sane life, close to nature, with great singularity of purpose. My time there awakened an appreciation and longing for a simpler life closer to nature, with less concern for enormous urban living expenses. Of course, I never did end up living my life this way, but I've always tried to keep the idea of it inside me, and it has become an important part of my internal process, as I create my own paper, cloth and metal-framed masks for the world here in Boston.³

My studies in Italy came three years later, when I enrolled in a month-long class at Donato Sartori's studio. The classes were in the spa town of Abano Terme, outside of Padova, the ancient city of Galileo, Giotto and Donatello. My group

Clay sculpture of Arlecchino mask. Bornstein, 1990.



numbered about a dozen students, mask makers primarily from Italy, Germany, France, England and the United States, all gathered to learn the techniques of leather mask art from the world's leading master of the Italian method. This technique, based on interpretation of medieval and other historical documents, including old texts on shoe-making, was developed by Sartori's father, Amleto, who together with Jacques LeCoq revived the forgotten art. The elder Sartori focused on the making of the masks, while LeCoq developed his renowned movement techniques for actors, which are still taught at his Paris school today.

In the Italian method, the matrix upon which the wet leather would be formed was carved from wood. To provide the proper measurements for the matrix, we sculpted in natural clay and measured our faces to accurately capture the wrap of the face and the distances from eyes to upper lip. We then cast a solid plaster image that we would use as our guide for the wood. The details of the wooden image needed to be a little more deeply incised to allow for the thickness of the leather. For days we carved on tables set up outside. We worked standing up, using Western carving tools, and I found myself thinking back to Bali, where I also spent hours focusing only on a piece of wood, tuning in to the rhythm of the grain.

I was treated to master performances here as well, including a well-known performer of *commedia dell'arte* who demonstrated the concept of "mask/contra mask," in which an actor changes his character's personality – from boasting to cowardly, for example – while wearing the same mask. (Carlo Mazzoni, the late, acclaimed director of the Dell'Arte School in California was a regular visitor.)

Both the Italians and Balinese used natural materials, as well as tools and materials borrowed from other arts or crafts. (Italians, quite naturally, borrowed from cobblers.) But while the Balinese remain true to Balinese characters only, Italian mask makers view themselves as members of a wider community, where they will be called upon to come up with novel designs along with traditional Italian characters, *commedia* or neutral masks.

Perhaps the most striking feature of my Italian stay was the discovery of a community of mask makers to which I felt I belonged. Pascal LeCoq, the daughter of Jacques LeCoq, was

there, along with dozens of other prodigiously talented mask artists – again, from all over Europe and the United States. Together we learned our new craft, exchanged ideas and critiqued our work. For the first time since I'd chosen this strange profession, I found some real colleagues who pushed me to better my craft. Beyond that, I had finally found a personal link to the long tradition of Western mask makers stretching back to ancient Greece – something I'd just never felt while slaving away alone at home in my workshop.

Two very different countries: two very different steps in my career. Both have shaped who I am as a mask maker today. In Bali, I tapped into their sacred connection between the mask and society¹, and in Italy I found myself among a family of artists born from Euro-American roots that spoke more directly to my theatrical *raison d'être*.

Who knows? Maybe one day I will become the master wood carver or leather crafter I trained to be. For now, I'll continue to be the mask maker that I am, learning from everyone I can.

¹ Not all Balinese share his view of eschewing foreign designs, and there is opportunity within the Balinese tradition to create new characters with masks called *bondres*, the clowns who represent the distinctive village personalities and deformities.

² Of course, Balinese mask theater is studied and performed in educational institutions in Denpasar, Bali's capital, but the natural outdoor settings are where the dramas have the most magic.

³ See Bornstein, Eric, *The Masks and Performance of Topeng Pajegan*, Harvard Extension School student essay, 1995.

⁴ While they greatly value their traditional approaches, the Balinese are a dynamic part of the international dialogue around mask and theater. Since my trip there, I have seen Balinese performers learning Western theatrical conventions to help bring about a greater international dialogue and understanding of different approaches. As a result, Balinese mask drama has become less "foreign" as time passes, while losing none of its magic.

Eric Bornstein holds a Master of Liberal Arts from Harvard Extension School. He has designed masks professionally since 1982 and his principal activities since then have focused on Mask Theater. While working as an actor, dancer, and teacher, he founded the Behind the Mask Theatre. His masks have been used by artists from all over the world.

www.behindthemask.org

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for fall—
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The UNIMA-USA Citation recognizes excellence in the art of puppet theatre. Citation-quality shows exalt- and exemplify the best of- the art of puppetry in North America. Through these awards, UNIMA-USA seeks to stimulate and reward excellent puppet theatre.



photo: Notelsie

CITATION RECIPIENTS (2008)

LIVE THEATRE CATEGORY

Sock Puppet Serenade

Kurt Hunter - The Hunter Marionettes

There's a Dinosaur in the Closet

Luman & Arlyn Coad - Coad Canada Puppets

Behind the Lid

Basil Twist and Lee Nagrin - Tandem Otter Productions

Legend of the Banana Kid

Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers

Lovesick Sea Play

Janaki Ranpura - JJ Trinket's Double-Jointed Festival Series

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf

Paul Mesner - Paul Mesner Puppets

Duke Ellington's Cat

Jon Ludwig - Center for Puppetry Arts

Fabrik: The Legend of M. Rabinowitz

Wakka Wakka Productions and Nordland Visual Theatre

A Walk in the City

Great Small Works

Natalie and "The Widow"

Valerie and Michael Nelson - Little Blue Moon Theater

RECORDED MEDIA CATEGORY

Faust

Steven Ritz-Barr - Classics in Miniature and Metropolitan Puppet Authority



THE 20TH UNIMA CONGRESS AND WORLD PUPPETRY FESTIVAL: *A PERSONAL JOURNEY*

BY KAREN SMITH

3:20 AM, March 31, 2008. I board a plane from New Delhi airport, having spent a month in India with friends, many of whom are puppeteers and former colleagues. I am flying to Perth, Australia, excited and a little apprehensive: my country is about to host an important international puppetry event — The 20th UNIMA Congress and World Puppetry Festival.

So, why should I feel some trepidation? When we travel outside our country's borders, we are challenged. We enter a new realm and are confronted with differences both obvious and subtle. Whether we come away enriched or alienated depends on our personal skills and strengths. Here I was crossing a border from a new home (I now live in California with my American husband and children) to an old home, Australia.

My perspective has also changed because I had lived in Asia for twenty-five years before I settled in the U.S. in 2005. Not only was I returning to the country of my birth, I was also changing my UNIMA country of allegiance, having previously represented India. I have been fortunate enough to attend one other Congress and several annual UNIMA festivals. So I knew many of the delegates from Asia and Europe. Most UNIMA folk knew me in my

Indian guise, and quite a few had even considered me an Indian! I must admit, part of me wanted to stay that chameleon: Karen the Indian, who happened to be Australian. Now, as a recently elected UNIMA-USA board member, I was part of the U.S. delegation. How, then, should I present myself at this quadrennial? In a way, I felt a triple representation — American resident, Australian citizen, adopted Indian.

What most concerned me was whether my birth country could produce a memorable UNIMA festival. This, for me as well as for the other Australians involved, was the crucial question. Will we get through the next two weeks successfully? International eyes were upon us, especially European eyes! Perth is one of the most remote cities in the world, yet it is also a very pleasant and convenient city to negotiate. In the past, the chance to visit countries “behind the iron curtain” was, for Americans, a special and unique opportunity. To see, in person, the puppet theatre greats — Obraztsov, the Czech and Polish puppet maestros — this was what drew large delegates from the USA. Australians are aware of the more marginalized place they hold in the imagination. Perth residents feel even more estranged from the outside world. So, I believe, there was a lot at stake for the Australian organizers.



(left, from bottom)

Compagnie de Terre,
Belgium

Chinese Rod figure, Puppet
Carnival Day

(top) Puppet Carnival Day

photos: Kostas Korsovitis

THE CONGRESS

This was the third time since UNIMA's formation in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1929 that a Congress has been held outside of Europe (Washington, DC, in 1980, and Nagoya, Japan, in 1988), and the first time it has been held in the southern hemisphere. It was only the second time it has been held in an English-speaking country. UNIMA is growing as an international organization, with relatively new national centers in several countries each in Africa, the Middle East and South America. For the first time in UNIMA history, neither the newly elected President nor the General Secretary is European: Dadi Pudumjee is from India and Jacques Trudeau is from Canada.

For me as an adopted Indian and a resident of North America, this is wonderful! I am especially excited that Dadi Pudumjee, a long-time member of the executive committee of UNIMA, is now the organization's president. My own introduction to puppetry was through Dadi. In 1982, I joined the New Delhi puppet company, Sutradhar, that he directed. I also worked and performed with Dadi twenty years later, when he had formed his own company—Ishara Puppet Theatre.

I am also delighted that an American, Dr. Manuel Moran, was elected to the UNIMA Executive Committee, following a line of great Americans who have served on the international board. Manuel has his base both in his native San Juan, Puerto Rico, and in New York, directing a Spanish-language puppet company in both cities as well as expanding similar puppet companies in other U.S. cities. His whole life has been about crossing borders. Manuel is young, dynamic and bilingual. Indeed, he was nominated for the executive position by the Spanish national center. This is an important border crossing for the USA, to be acknowledged, not as a monolith, but as the multinational, multicultural nation that it is.

THE WORLD PUPPETRY FESTIVAL

The theme of UNIMA 2008 was "Journeys." Philip Mitchell talked about "a puppetry journey that celebrates the traditional to new forms of expression in an art form centuries old." Traveling across the planet to reach Perth was certainly one of the greatest challenges faced by all who attended.

The Perth quadrennial festival featured the modern and the experimental. The Artistic Director of UNIMA 2008, Philip Mitchell (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Fremantle), told us at the inaugural address to "Expect the unexpected, the digital, the universal,

the adult and cross-cultural..." Accordingly, the festival portion of UNIMA 2008 emphasized object and actor-dominated theatre, digital technologies combined with the visual arts, and surprisingly few actual puppets. For the ticketed segment of the festival, thirty productions from ten countries were presented. Seventeen were Australian. The Czech Republic, South Africa, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Korea were each represented by one production. Belgium had three productions, while Canada and Japan each had two companies representing them.

What all of us who attended UNIMA 2008 may have been, at least subliminally, aware of was the number of border crossings that were on offer at the festival. This could be a matter of performance/audience crossings or the fusion of many art forms, which is a kind of crossing. Modern puppet theatre is the art form that perhaps best exemplifies the breaking of boundaries and is, in turn, quite the master at crossing borders. A few examples of the festival shows may suffice to illustrate this.





A modern country made up of Indigenous* and immigrant peoples, Australia has a history of headlong clashes when borders are crossed. *Headhunter* is a collaborative production of Ilbjerri Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-op and Melbourne-based Polyglot Puppet Theatre. The production was created for student audiences, and workshopped with children from the Glenroy campus of the Victorian College of Koori Education. The show's concept and design was based upon the young people's own stories, drawings and memories of family events. Authenticity of experience is reflected in a script that is well written and conceived. *Headhunter* is funny and upbeat, poignant and thought provoking.

Another Australian play that was both educational in intent and, in content addressed issues related to border crossings is *Turtle and the Trade Winds*. There is the symbiotic relationship between animals (turtles) and humans, and the interrelationships and cooperation between two different cultures (Indigenous Australian and island Indonesian). *Turtle and the Trade Winds* by Sandpiper Productions is a Western Australian production designed for school children. The production succeeds in exposing its audiences to information and history that is most probably unknown to the average Australian. This educational

aspect of the production is very well integrated into the telling of a story that takes us back into the distant past, the centuries-old trading and resource-sharing relationship between north coastal Aboriginal peoples of Australia and seafaring peoples from Indonesia.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

In the Professional Development segment of the festival, I facilitated a discussion called "Cross Cultural Journeys." We began with the premise that puppetry has always "freely plundered" folk material from around the world. We then moved on to explore from these artists' own work the sorts of things that happen when a deeper exchange occurs between those of differing cultural backgrounds and values, and what skills we need in order to develop work with or about another culture.

Massimo Schuster from France talked about his work in Ethiopia and India, of working with local artists on, respectively, Ethiopia's founding myth of Solomon and Sheba and Hindu India's *Mahabharata*. He asks himself, what is it about these great stores of tales and wisdom that keep their cultures together? Massimo talked of the need to steep oneself in the other culture, to do extensive study of the sacred texts and cultural icons of the other culture

before attempting any collaboration. Massimo believes that great art makes people understand that we are part of one large family.

Sam Cook, executive producer of Australia's leading Aboriginal theatre company, Yirra Yaakin, in some respects contradicts Massimo. Crossing borders can be a devastating and destructive force. Sam stressed that what she and her fellow performers are doing is creating work "For us by us--to share with the world. Up to now, it has been non-Indigenous people in Australia who have 'spoken' for the Indigenous, and this is exploitation—a desecration." Now is the time to begin a process of healing and to arrive at a new voice. As a provocateur, Sam "explores authentic Indigenous Australian expression through a self-determined model of living cultural practice as a catalyst of social change."

Nori Sawa of Japan spoke of the relationship between the traditional and the modern. Nori is presently a guest instructor at Prague Academy. He has been collaborating with Czech puppeteers for several years. He began his panel talk by looking at some of the differences and interesting similarities between Western and Eastern puppetry traditions, and then reflected on the new artistic bridge between traditional and modern puppetry in Europe and Japan.

Joan Baixas, dramatist, director and painter, former director of Teatre Claca, Spain, has spent extended periods in Australia, working with Indigenous communities. On his first visit, he was aware of the lack of ceremonies within the Indigenous community he lived with. He worked with local elders and members to create performances that would address this need. Joan is very much aware of the difference between collaboration and appropriation. Foreigners, he believes, have an important role to play if they enter into another culture with humility.

REFLECTIONS

It is the prerogative of all host countries to showcase their own country's productions. In the past, Australia has been represented at UNIMA international puppetry festivals by only a few master puppeteers and companies. This year provided a singular opportunity for Australians to cross another kind of border and show the world their work.

In spite of my extensive travels, I was reminded there are always more borders to cross and negotiate when entering that larger world. We cannot presume to know or understand the inner workings of another culture, or share the same or similar sentiments on political, cultural or aesthetic matters. For me, the festival was a rare opportunity to see a broad selection of Australian puppet theatre. Besides enjoying myself thoroughly, I also found myself wondering how the international community, including the U.S. members, viewed Australia and Australian aesthetics, self-image and purpose. What did I learn from this rather self-conscious experience? Most of the time, I felt at home with the thematic concerns and the styles explored in the Australian theatre. I could quite easily relate

to what was happening on stage and accept the fundamentals. I could recognize differences—some subtle, some more obvious. At other times, it felt a little foreign, too.

Crossing borders is a wonderful yet loaded challenge. Naturally, as UNIMA expands, the fact that not everyone can be well or equally represented at each event will be accepted. This is perhaps one of the major border crossing issues—the complexity of acknowledging home country, cost, expectations and representation. As we think more in global terms for the good of puppetry, the borders become more porous. We may even move away from the focus on national and regional identification.

* "Indigenous," when referring to native Australian tribes, is now capitalized and has largely replaced "Aboriginal."

Karen Smith is the current president of UNIMA-USA. She reminds us that The 21st Congress and World Puppetry Festival will be held in Chengdu, China, in 2012.

IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST PUPPET AND MASK THEATRE

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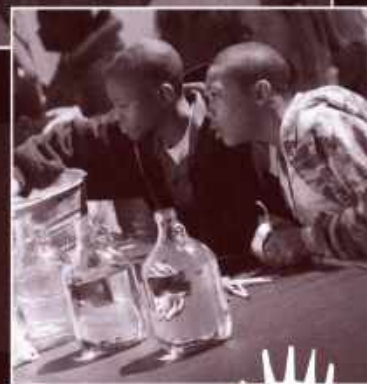
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PUPPETRY IN MONTREAL

THE NEW WAVE

by Irina Niculescu

A new dynamic animates the puppetry movement in Montreal. The motors of this movement are three organizations, CASTELIERS, UQAM (the University of Quebec in Montreal) and AQM (the Association of Quebec Puppeteers), which collaborate to produce rich and diverse activities. In the fall of 2007, UQAM opened a two-year puppetry program under the direction of Marthe Adam, which focuses on the study of contemporary puppet theatre. Eighteen students were admitted in the first year. The birth of this high-level program enables a long-term intense training both practical and theoretical, and marks the beginnings of a new generation.

Last March, I was invited to the third edition of the festival *Les trois jours de Casteliers* (The three days of Casteliers). I went with the desire to rediscover Canadian puppetry. The festival takes place every year and is produced by CASTELIERS and artistic director Louise Lapointe. The choice of shows offered a diversity of theatre forms and an interesting dramaturgic research. The co-existence of known forms and experimental forms opens a window on contemporary puppetry. The festival is the meeting ground of the three organizations mentioned above. The program included a variety of shows, among which were three new creations. There was a workshop given by British artist Gavin Glover and organized by AQM. Additional offerings included the Oscar-nominated animated film "Madame Tutli-Putli," an exhibit of Punch and Judy, a series of installations by the students of UQAM led by Zaven Paré, an imaginative workshop for children and a round-table on the theme "Puppetry in the XXI century." Artists from Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, USA, France and England participated in the festival.

Louise Lapointe, founder and director of the festival, knows in depth the international puppetry movement through her work for UNIMA Quebec, UNIMA International and AQM. Between 2001 and 2004, she worked as Artistic Director for the International Puppetry Week in Jonquiere. Through her many activities, Louise built relations with outstanding artists all over the world. Enriched by her experience and animated by her great passion, in 2005 Louise started her "dream project": CASTELIERS, an association devoted to the promotion of puppetry arts presenting shows, exhibits, films, and organizing national and international meetings around the arts of puppetry.



Says Louise:

Casteliers responds to the need long time expressed by the professional milieu, to have an organism dedicated to puppetry...We present the work of masters and young artists from Quebec and from the whole world...Casteliers defends the notoriety of puppetry and its recognition as a total theatre art (a part entière).

The workshops, the conferences and the professional encounters organized by the AQM, the events and links created between show promoters and artists by CASTELIERS, the puppetry program at UQAM contribute to the development of the theatre and of the public. The alliance between CASTELIERS, UQAM and AQM, their hard work and their opening to the world makes of Montreal a new center for puppetry— a place to meet, study, research, a place for creation and exchange.

CASTELIERS: www.casteliers.ca

AQM- *l'Association Québécoise des marionnettistes:*
www.aqm.ca

UQAM- *l'Université de Québec à Montréal:*
www.uqam.ca



Images of Marcelle Hudson's "Poursuite"

BREAKING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN "TRADITIONAL" AND "MODERN"

BY JOHN BELL

Puppeteers in the West over the past hundred years seem to be constantly pleading their case, asking to be taken seriously as artists making contributions not only to children's entertainment, education, and advertising, but also to the edifice of contemporary culture in general. One of the strongest arguments in favor of this quest is that puppets, masks, and performing objects span the globe as consistent elements of performance culture in all epochs. In other words, puppeteers can argue that we're worth paying attention to because our art form links Asian, African, European, American, and Australian cultures through the languages of sculpture, movement, sound, text, and story. Puppeteers are the original cross-cultural, globalized performers, far more so than actors, and especially those in the West, whose devotion to Stanislavsky-based realism is at odds with the historical acting traditions of all the rest of the world.

The Western rediscovery of Asian, African, and Native-American performance traditions beginning in the late nineteenth century was among other things a cultural immersion in puppet techniques, as European and American anthropologists and other researchers attempted to understand *wayang kulit*, *wayang golek*, *ningyo Joruri*, *chau* dance, *tolu bommalatta* shadow theater, Bamana puppetry, Kachina performance, Karagöz shadow theater, and dozens of other unfamiliar forms which, upon reflection, could be seen to have ties with European popular forms long ago delegated to the lower rungs of the Western cultural ladder. Ever since the times when images of Sri Lankan shaman masks and Egyptian shadow puppets adorned the pages of Wassily Kandinsky's *Blue Rider Almanac* in 1911, Western puppeteers have sought connections to non-Western puppet forms. Bread and Puppet's adaptation of Bunraku-style black hooded costumes in the 1960s, Julie Taymor's first-hand connections to Indonesian puppetry, and Handspring Theater's interplay with African puppet forms are simply late-century examples

of border crossing that has characterized Western culture for the past hundred years. You would think that after 100 years of such global inter-culturalism there would exist a kind of mutual understanding and mutual respect of forms, but the example of the 20th UNIMA Congress and World Puppetry Festival in Perth, Australia in April, 2008 revealed that vast cultural gaps still exist, particularly between Asian and European puppetry.

Part of the excitement of the UNIMA Congress in Perth was its assemblage of delegations from every continent, and the fact that the event itself was far from Europe, where it is normally held. The presence of numerous African representatives and a large Chinese delegation underscored the fact that UNIMA itself is the United Nations of puppetry. The concurrent World Puppetry Festival, however, organized by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, reflected a very different sense of global puppetry whose implications are worth serious consideration as an example of "crossing borders." Although Spare Parts organized a program "of over one hundred puppetry performances, exhibitions, master classes and conversations," as its festival website stated, there was a great disparity in the ways that Western and Asian puppet companies were presented.

Festival-goers were given a thick booklet describing the festival and all its performances. The thirty featured festival productions, twenty-seven of which were by

Australian, American, or European companies, each received a two-page spread in the program, in which photographs and press release prose described each show as an exciting experiment in modern puppetry. There were three featured Asian companies--Triangle and Puk from Japan, and Moon and Child Theater from South Korea—who, like the Western companies, also presented "modern" shows rather than traditional Asian puppet forms.

There was a place for traditional Asian puppetry at the festival, but it appeared in quite different context, as



Burmese marionette



Karakuri hero

part of a day-long “Carnival Day” of simultaneous performances, fair-ground style, at the Perth Concert Hall, a modernist Lincoln Center-style cultural edifice. The festival termed the event “the world’s largest puppet party,” largely because of Spare Parts’ attempt to assemble one million puppets in one place. The Carnival Day featured over 35 different groups performing cheek-by-jowl throughout the Concert Hall, and here is where you could find not only “modern” Asian puppet shows, but also traditional Asian puppetry: the Guangdong Puppet Troupe and the Quanzhou Marionette Troupe of China, *dalang* I Made Sidia of Indonesia, the marionettist Ye Dway from Myanmar, a Chinese Lion Dance performed by an Australian Kung Fu school, a Sri Lankan marionette variety show, and a spectacular automaton performance by Chiryu Karakuri Puppet Preservation Association from Japan. As part of the day-long, simultaneous carnival of delights, featuring clowns, balloons, a cacophony of sound, and an atmosphere above cultivated as family-friendly, these seven traditional Asian puppet shows inhabited a very different niche than the featured productions. While the featured productions were each given a separate theater with a full stage and allowed full-length evening performances presented as high puppet art, the traditional Asian shows were for the most part presented on makeshift stages within earshot of each other, and generally given 15 to 45 minutes to perform. The Sri Lankan variety show, at 50 minutes, was the longest.

I rushed into a cool auditorium for the featured Asian show, the Chiryu Karakuri Puppet Preservation Association’s *Battle of Ichinotani*. I had seen *karakuri ningyo* festival automata years ago in New York City at the Asian Society, and had long been fascinated with this Japanese tradition of string-powered robot performance, and “The Battle of Ichinotani” did not disappoint. Although performed by “amateur” puppeteers who approach the work as an essential element of an annual community festival, the show was a marvel of roughly hidden mechanics, in which the complicated exertions of hidden manipulators create astounding puppet movements: a young warrior’s

Tarzan-like progress from tree limb to tree limb, and then his prowess with a bow and arrow; a fantastic one-on-one sword battle between two generals, and at the end a magic transformation as the warriors morph in an instant into an old couple, thus signaling peace. This was all, as we learned, an excerpt from *The Tale of Genji*, a classic eleventh-century work sometimes considered the world’s first novel.

The Quanzhou Marionette Troupe also presented excerpts from classic works, including the exploits of Zhong Kui, a Tang Dynasty folklore hero who was named “Master Demon Chaser” by the God of Hell. The internationally acclaimed Guangdong Puppet Troupe was given an outdoor space under an overhang, where a handful of its skilled puppeteers performed excerpts from Chinese operas and “Journey to the West.”

Ye Dway’s solo performance of spectacular Myanmar marionettes took place in a tent on the Concert Hall plaza, where this fascinating puppeteer and puppet historian exhibited various characters from Myanmar epic spectacles, which clearly were connected to the South Asian migration of such Hindu epics as the *Mahabharata*. The Sri Lankan marionettes, in a magnificent stage set up outdoors only a few feet away from Ye Dway, performed a bizarre variety show of trick marionettes that jumbled East and West with an African-American jazz band, a Sri Lankan lovers’ duet, a German folksinger, and a demon dance that could have been part of an episode of the *Ramayana*. And on a makeshift stage set up in a lounge, Balinese *dalang* I Made Sidia performed a twenty-minute succession of Topeng masked dances (another example of South Asian epic performance linked to Hindu epics) for a crowd of mostly children.

In other words, embedded in the “Carnival Day” of family fun were examples of the classic art of Asian puppetry which, in the preceding centuries, have been presented not so much as children’s entertainment, but as the performance of the central stories (and thus histories and beliefs) of the most populous regions of the world. I remember that after the Chiryu Karakuri automaton show had ended, the epic battle between two generals

having suddenly transformed into a peaceful evocation of Buddhist enlightenment, a father sitting behind me turned to his young son and asked “did you enjoy that?,” the same way a parent would hope for satisfaction from the creation of a good balloon sculpture. My consternation about that moment—and about the entire presentation of these classic works of Asian puppet theater at the Festival—has to do, I think, with a gap in our thinking as Westerners. To me, the assemblage of brief excerpts of traditional Chinese, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Balinese, and Myanmar performances seemed akin to bringing together short selections of classic Western works—the Bible, *Hamlet*, *Faust*, and *Don Giovanni*, let’s say—so that a children’s audience could stave off boredom with an afternoon’s entertainment. After all, think of it: God, devils, sword-fights—what fun! But while such an event would probably make fine children’s theater, one would hope that somewhere, somehow, an audience interested in the ideas at the root of these works, the fundamental cultural ideas of Western civilization, might somehow be given a chance to see them played out as well. That was what was missing (for Asian culture) in the Perth Festival: a serious consideration of Asian art forms as cultural signifiers.

I think that Spare Parts Theatre has deep respect for Asian puppetry. And perhaps the Asian companies themselves have long found it more profitable and convenient to market their work in short excerpts (battles, love scenes, dances) which catch the foreign eye and ear more deftly than the full-length performances that, perhaps even in their home countries,

are no longer as popular as, say, television. But even so, if Westerners are serious about the form of puppetry, and desire it to be taken seriously as a living cultural treasure, shouldn’t we take the opportunity of such international events as UNIMA Festivals to encourage the performance of classic puppet traditions?

It’s difficult. The old forms are crusty, out of touch, out of date, and definitely not “modern.” This is why, for example, the many Henson International Festivals of Puppet Theatre, that so changed the landscape of American puppetry at the end of the last century, never included traditional puppetry from any culture. The emphasis was on “state-of-the-art puppetry,” as the Festival put it, and that seemed automatically to rule out everything from traditional Punch and Judy shows to *wayang kulit*.

But a different approach is possible. When Peter Sellars directed the 1990 Los Angeles Festival and chose to focus the event on Pacific Rim cultures, he brought together everything: not only his own avant-garde production of the John Adams opera “Nixon in China,” the postmodern spectacle of the Wooster Group, and the political puppetry of Bread

and Puppet Theater, but also an all-night outdoor Javanese *wayang kulit* shadow show, a classic Chinese *kun* opera, and a Korean shaman ritual. He even presented contemporary hybrids of old and new, such as a new dance work by Los Angeles artists based on the *Mahabharata*.

In other words, what Sellars was able to show was not simply respect for classic Asian performance forms, including puppetry, but also a sense that the classic forms are not separate from us, and need not be stripped down, simplified, and re-packaged as carnival entertainment. Sellars showed how this could be done eighteen years ago, but his all-encompassing vision, as the Perth Festival showed, is still a rare occurrence.

I very clearly recall seeing a Javanese dalang and the Indonesian Consulate gamelan perform excerpts from the *Mahabharata* in a *wayang kulit* show in St. Ann’s Church in Brooklyn Heights in the 1990s. The majority of the show was “classic” *wayang*: court scenes, battles, and love scenes. But when the clown Semar appeared, the time frame suddenly shifted, the dalang began to speak in English, and Semar explained how, that very day in Manhattan, he had almost been hit by a taxi on Fifth Avenue! This mixing of the ancient and modern, of course, has always been a feature of the temporal elasticity of *wayang*, in which past, present, and future mix in a limitless imaginative world. In other words, the performance was both traditional and modern, and had no trouble accepting each. This, I think, could also be an example for festival organizers and all of us as we attempt to understand and explain the global significance of puppetry. §

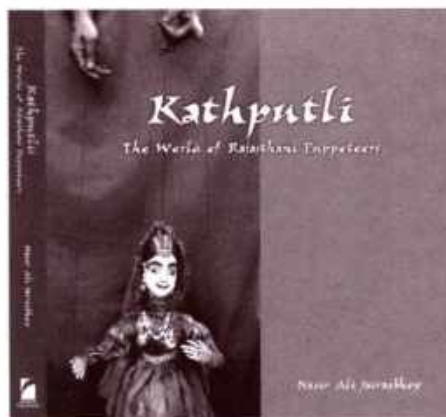
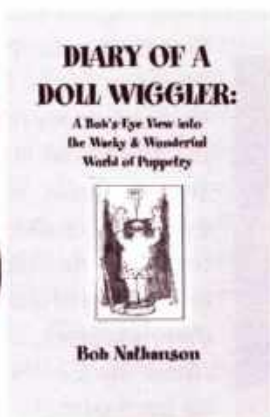


Karakuri spear

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Punch, Polichinelle and Pulcinella: Miscellaneous Punch-Ups and Reflections

by Michael Byrom

143 pp. Millbrook Press, 2007. £16.95.

El teatro de títeres durante el porfiriato: Un estudio histórico y literario

by Yolanda Jurado Rojas

292 pp. Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, 2004.

One of the fascinating things about puppet history books is that there are so few of them that each one exists as a kind of precious stone, individual in its approach to its subject. It was only in 1852 that Charles Magnin started things off with his *Histoire des Marionnettes en Europe*, the first book in the West to show that there really was a history of the form to be told.

The 160 years since then have seen a comparatively scant output of puppet histories, especially in the United States, where Paul and Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin's *Puppet Theatre in America* (the revised 1969 edition, which includes updates Marjorie added to McPharlin's original 1948 work) laid out the territory, which has since been filled in here and there by Bil Baird, Eileen Blumenthal and others. There has been a recent upsurge in puppet histories, especially supported by Luman Coad's ambitious and invaluable work with his Charlemagne Press, but the method of puppet history writing has yet to be defined. How should such histories—which need to deal with personalities, puppets, stage design, scripts, aesthetic theories, social contexts and economics—attempt to cover their subjects?

Two recent puppet histories from abroad offer two fascinating and somewhat parallel approaches. Michael Byrom's *Punch, Polichinelle and Pulcinella* tackles (very much in an NFL sense of that verb) the complex and obscure intercultural history of puppetry's most famous character, while Yolanda Jurado Rojas's *El teatro de títeres durante el porfiriato* tracks and analyzes the history of the most influential Mexican puppet theater of the twentieth century, the Rosete-Aranda troupe of Tlaxcala.

For me, Byrom represents the best kind of British writing: highly literate, deeply knowledgeable, passionately engaged, and yet never with-

out a reserve of humor. *Punch, Polichinelle and Pulcinella* is mostly a collection of magazine pieces Byrom has written, which might suggest a grab-bag of interests. But no! What we have here is an unrelenting exploration of the roots of Punch, which Byrom argues are to be found ultimately in the Italian Pulcinella, the puppet version of a *commedia dell'arte* character whose origins are to be found in southern Italian farce of the pre-Christian era. Byrom's passion here is refuting the claims of other puppet historians (Keith Potter and Hans Purschke in particular) about puppet antiquity, and he does so with such gusto, conviction and glee that the reader is carried along in the excitement. In Byrom's world, nothing could be more crucial than establishing the correct history of a handpuppet named Punch; and the success of his writing is that he carries the reader along with him, catching you up in a conflict which, in the pages of his book, is as dynamic and intense as the Yankee-Red Sox rivalry here on the East Coast.

Potter, you see, has argued that "the Punch and Judy show is of English origin but that the figure of Punch is derived from Polichinelle his French counterpart, who is a wholly French creation," as Byrom puts it, whereas Byrom himself argues that the Italian Pulcinella handpuppet figure influenced both the French Polichinelle and the English Punch. The fight is on! In a debate of articles appearing in British puppet publications such as *Animations* in the 1980s and 90s (although we only see Byrom's contributions), we see the arguments develop, the evidence presented and interpreted. For a puppeteer, this is fascinating reading, since the sources to be analyzed include old scripts, newspaper accounts, diary excerpts, and images from the popular press (there are 27 illustrations, many of them rare, and all fascinating).

For example, in a retort to Potter's proposal that Polichinelle is a wholly French creation, Byrom writes: "The simple fact is that 'Polichinelle' is only a Frenchman's attempt to pronounce 'Policinella', as he was then called, in the same way that 'Punchinello' is the Englishman's. Each variant figure developed its own national characteristics and Punchinello had a long history of development in the



PUNCH POLCHINELLE
AND
PULCHINELLA



MICHAEL BYROM

English fairs before he emerged as a glove-puppet at the end of the 18th century.” Shifting from Punch’s etymology to an analysis of European popular culture of the 1700s, Byrom in his next sentence turns to 18th century imagery, writing that Punch “owes very little to France except his garb. Punch’s hat in most of the 18th century prints is either some sort of slouch hat or a stunted topper; the latter depicted in the illustration of Samuel Foote’s marionettes which he presented in Haymarket in 1773.” I find this writing immensely satisfying, like watching a skilled athlete, musician, or, uh... puppeteer, because the writer is using all the tools he has available, bringing them to bear in succinct and skillful fashion, and most of all pursuing the whole project because he thinks it is extremely important. No, more than that: absolutely essential!

It seems to me obvious that the Italian Pulcinella must be the origin of his French and English relatives, but that doesn’t make Byrom’s passionate defense of this point any less interesting. He is on the lookout for any new sources that can offer a clue, and thus we are introduced to all sorts of European puppet research most of us would never run into otherwise. We have all probably experienced moments when history was a deadly bore, and when pursuing some story you find really interesting is hampered every page by dull writing. Byrom never lets this happen, and each page of his book ripples with barely suppressed enthusiasm, indignation or glee. Byrom makes puppet history read like an insider’s biography of Madonna.

Yolanda Jurado Rojas doesn’t match Michael Byrom in creating palpable excitement about puppet history (few people could!), but her analysis of turn-of-the-century marionette theater in Mexico City reveals many hidden riches that most people in the United States have never heard of or considered. Between 1860 and 1906 there were an astonishing sixty-eight different puppet theaters active in Mexico City. They played an important role in defining Mexican culture and politics in the years of change marked by the rule of Porfirio Diaz, who was President of Mexico from 1876 to 1911 (except for a three-year hiatus in the early 1880s). The *porfiriato*, in other words, was the threshold of modernity in Mexico, just as it was in North America and Europe.

In this way, *El teatro de títeres durante el porfiriato* (Puppet Theater in the Porfirio Diaz Era) is a fascinating counterpart to John McCormick’s *The Victorian Marionette Theatre*, which covered parallel developments in English puppet theater. Mexican puppet theater, although it lived through and reflected some of the same kinds of social and cultural changes taking place in European and North American cities—urbanization, the growth of a middle class, the introduction of modern technologies—was different from English or American

puppet theater because it had to take into account the majority population of indigenous Mexicans (mostly poor) and the mixed race or *mestizo* population, as well as a higher class that looked more European. Race

and class played an important role in all nineteenth-century theater in Europe and the Americas, but Mexico’s situation was unique because a persistent indigenous culture emerged from below through all the numerous cracks in the European cultural overlay.

Jurado Rojas’s book is essentially based on her doctoral dissertation, and it carries with it many traits of the form. There is a certain nervousness with the scope of the project, as Jurado Rojas faces the daunting challenge of taking into account a vast field of knowledge. Part of the fascination of Jurado Rojas’s book is that she has done her homework. Her analysis is grounded in the puppet history work of writers like Henryk Jurkowski and George Speaight, and theater historians such as Patrice Pavis, and she has done formidable research in the daily newspapers of the late-nineteenth century, and in the archives of the National Puppet Museum in Huamantla, where she examined documents, scripts and other archives.

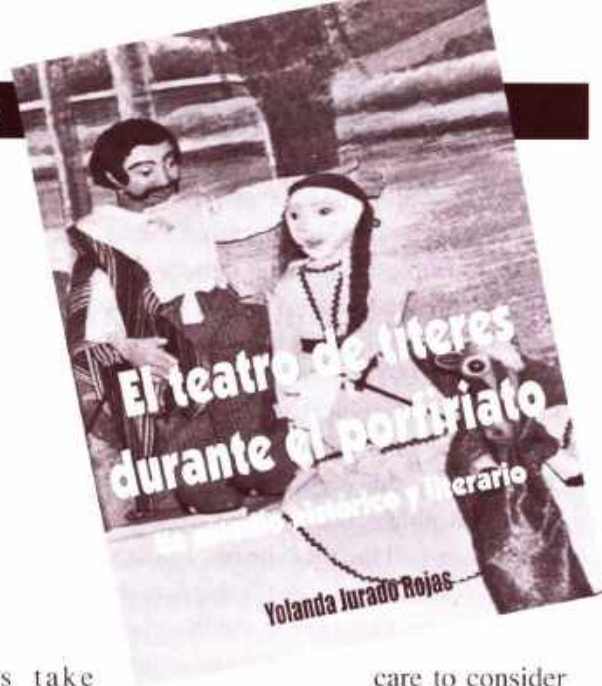
Jurado Rojas starts with an analysis of turn-of-the-century puppetry in general, but then hones in on its most famous and long-lasting example, the Rosete Aranda company, which began in 1835 and lasted many generations until 1957. It is a long story, and Jurado Rojas approaches it from a variety of perspectives: the history of the puppeteer families and the historical moments in which they lived; the puppet techniques they developed (this section charmingly aided by Jurado Rojas’s sketches of marionette design and stringing); and finally by an analysis of four Rosete Aranda scripts: *Un baile en arroyo Jíbaro* (A Dance in a Rustic Gutter), *El Borracho mexicano* (The Drunken Mexican), *Las Coplas de Don Simón* (Don Simón’s Ballad) and *Un asalto Zapatista* (A Zapatista Attack). The scripts (which Jurado Rojas copied from the original manuscripts) are also included, and are a rare treasure indeed.

In analyzing these scripts, Jurado Rojas falls prey to a typical problem for puppet history: how to consider dramatic literature that only makes sense in the context of, and in service to, moving sculpture. The most fascinating aspects of her analysis here deal with the rich textures of Mexican language of a century ago, and how popular slang, the voice of the lower classes that made up the Rosete Aranda audience, emerged as the colorful representation of that culture. The puppets themselves also reflected popular culture in all its racial and ethnic varieties, and such characters as Don Folias, a long-nosed and rebellious trickster, offer fascinating and specifically Mexican parallels to the European descendants of Pulcinella, Petrushka and Guignol. And yet Jurado Rojas's analysis of the plays seems basic and generalized—relatively brief, not too much in depth and devoid of the passion and startling insights that continually mark Byrom's work. Jurado Rojas seems to recognize this, herself, and promises to pursue deeper and more complete analysis in a later book.

I realize that many *Puppetry International* readers won't be jumping up to find a Spanish-language history of Mexican puppet theater, but I find *El teatro de títeres durante el porfiriato: Un estudio histórico y literario* worth mentioning because, like Byrom's *Punch, Polichinelle and Pulcinella*, it approaches its subject with deep respect and fascination. Both

books take a variety of approaches to the material (Byrom's study, like Jurado Rojas's, also includes play-scripts), and it is clear that Jurado Rojas has opened the door into a rich treasure chest of puppet history. Mexican puppet theater, while its forms look familiar, has had a radically different history than its neighbors to the north, and we gringos would benefit enormously from knowing more about it.

review by John Bell



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AMERICAN PUPPET MODERNISM

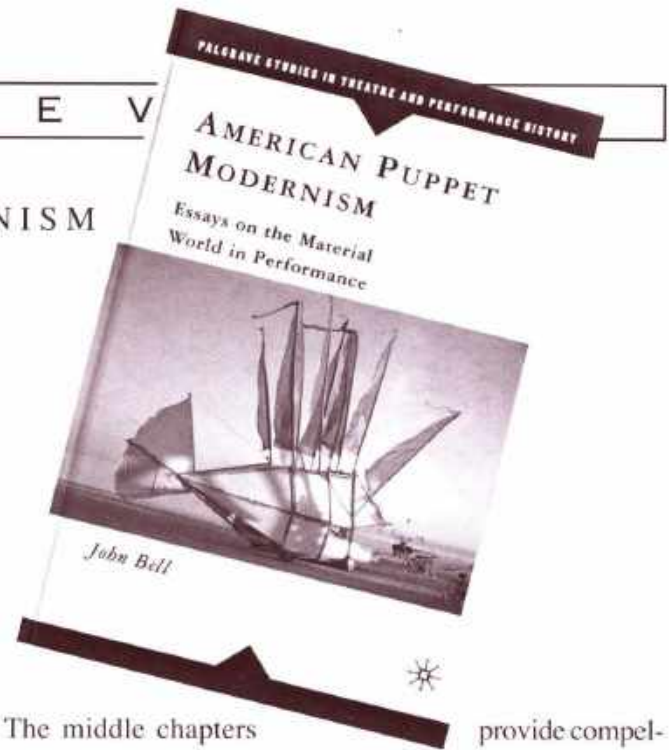
Essays on the Material World in Performance
by John Bell

From Palgrave Macmillan
Pub date: Jul 2008
292 pages
\$89.95 - Hardcover (1-4039-7981-2)

American Puppet Modernism by John Bell presents an absorbing look at puppetry in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The work is a collection of essays, each covering a kind of puppet performance, linked by the theoretical framework of American modernism. The common ground shared by the wide-ranging topics is a well-conceived and well-articulated premise of the puppet as performing object and as material mode of cultural expression. Bell's meticulous historical scholarship and insider's understanding of the form leads to a collection that offers a significant contribution to the study of object performance and insight into the cultural consequence of "the material world in performance."

The opening essay, "Playing with Stuff," situates object performance within performance theory, while simultaneously distinguishing puppetry with a conceptual model of performance. Bell offers a view of object performance that reveals the performer and spectator both placing attention on the object rather than each other, contrasting the give and take of the live actor/live audience paradigm. This idea is vital to the work as a whole, as it seems that a defining characteristic of puppet modernism is the relationship of performer to object, allowing for less traditional reads of "puppet," such as the automobile. Bell's introduction offers a useful description of the "Implications of Object Performance" that gives the reader a common frame for the various kinds of puppetry Bell chronicles – both as performance and as cultural expression.

In the first two performance traditions addressed, Bell illustrates object performance as cultural spectacle. The significance of the nineteenth century rolling canvas the *Sioux War Panorama* is discussed in terms of its role in the cultural dialogue. Similarly, the treatment of the Shalako performance of the Zuni considers the mode of performance, but is particularly attentive to the ethnographic responses to this tradition. These are historically the earliest traditions in the book, yet, in addition to a chronological structure, these early chapters reinforce the idea of object performance as cultural statement.



The middle chapters provide compelling views of puppets on American stages and American streets in the early twentieth century. Bell's essay on the Little Theatre Movement reveals much about the transformation of the American theatre at that time, shown through object performance and its pronounced connection to the avant-garde. How puppetry developed in conjunction with experimental and political theatre, and vice versa, is a particularly engaging topic. The essay focusing on puppets and political theatre is of particular interest and Bell skillfully displays connections between the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Russian mass spectacles. Yet it is the attention to the materials used as objects of performance, and the object as political statement, that make this kind of puppet modernism particularly potent. "Puppets and Propaganda" is the most precise demonstration of "puppet and object theatre as twentieth-century American culture." (105)

The final four essays each have some contemporary reference point, though very different kinds. The piece describing the puppet spectacle shown in the Hall of Pharmacy at the 1939 World's Fair displays a new kind of commercial use of object performance – advertising. The notion of object as tool of marketing is so familiar to a culture saturated by promotion that the various reactions to this use of performance is especially interesting to read, and Bell tells the story well.

The collection of essays is linked as "the material world in performance," and the two that focus on mechanics and technology push the boundaries of puppet the furthest. The essay on mass media includes some effective illustrations of puppets as materials in the creation of special effects, an interesting look at the introduction and use of CGI, and a fascinating perspective on motion capture. Bell does not make significant distinction between performing objects live versus

on film, though he asserts that the nature of mass media itself means “all film, television, and computer performances are object performances.” (148) The softer distinction between live performance and the object performance of mass media is supported by the emphasis placed on the relationship of the performer to the object mentioned earlier, yet this essay seems to stir the most questions about the nature of performance.

Bell refers to those doing object performance who would not necessarily have specified their work as such, and he writes about mechanisms that would not typically be classified as performing objects. The look at monster trucks and fighting robots comfortably fits into the suggestion of object performance. However, custom cars and automobile performance seem to stretch the bounds of performance, although Bell makes a convincing case for the car’s connection to self-expression. In terms of object performance as mode of communication, the significance of the car as cultural artifact is undeniable, and is intriguing, the object as expression – the auto as vehicle (so to speak) of identity.

The most extensive assessment of puppet modernism is of Peter Schumann’s *Bread and Puppet Theatre*. Bell places the performances alongside a history of American foreign policy in the twentieth century, immediately privileging the subject/purpose/commentary of the political performance over the material of those performances – the puppets. Essentially, the example of *Bread and Puppet* is less about the relationship between performer and object as between object and idea, or perhaps, object *as* idea. Bell’s familiarity with *Bread and Puppet*, as well as personal reactions he includes, makes this a particularly vivid chapter. The detailed rendering of *Mr. Budhoo’s Letter of Resignation from the IMF* is espe-

cially valuable in looking at the material of political object performance, or, puppet modernism.

The book concludes with a discussion of the literal materials of object performance and the power/threat/influence of material performance. It includes a provocative look at the protests of ACT-UP in the 1980s and 1990s, including the framing of a dead body as a performing object. This is undoubtedly an idea and a chapter that will inspire discussion. John Bell has delivered a thought-provoking and well-conceived contribution to the study of object performance, and has raised some compelling questions about the nature of performance as cultural communication.

review by Theresa Lang



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STEVE ABRAMS, *UNIMA-USA Vice President and former President of Puppeteers of America, has done extensive research on the incidence of foreign puppet companies at U.S. festivals, and U.S. companies that have performed at foreign festivals. He looks at trends and the influence of politics on international touring in an article on our website.*



Sergei Obraztsov



Bil Baird



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Here are some excerpts:

In the world of puppetry, 1963 marked the year that the isolation imposed by international politics truly began to melt away. Under the same “cultural exchange” program that brought the Bolshoi Ballet to the USA in 1959, a trade was announced. The Bil Baird Marionettes would visit the USSR and the Sergei Obraztsov Company would visit the U.S. Americans had been reading about Obraztsov’s innovative work for thirty years, and for the first time they could actually attend a performance. While the Obraztsov Company was playing on Broadway, they were also seen by a national audience when they appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show. ...

Also in 1963, the United Kingdom had its first international puppetry festival. George Latshaw and Daniel Llords became two of the first performers from the U.S. to be invited to perform at a festival abroad. In the U.S., Puppeteers of America President—and festival director—Jim Henson invited Mane Bernardo from Argentina to perform at the national festival in Hurleyville, NY. He also invited two Italian-American Sicilian marionette companies. Peter Schumann, recently arrived from Germany, attended that festival, and he has written that the Sicilian marionettes had a huge impact on his work. ...

In August, 1968, two thousand tanks entered Prague to suppress political liberalization (“Prague Spring”). UNIMA X had already been set for 1969, and the festival was held in the occupied city. Don and Ruth Gilpin, two well-known television puppeteers from Atlanta, GA, were tour leaders of a group of forty puppeteers who made the journey to Prague. This was also the year that Bread and Puppet Theatre made its first tour to Europe. A year later, Sesame Street went on the air. Jim Henson and Peter Schumann became the first puppeteers from the U.S. to have a profound international impact. ...

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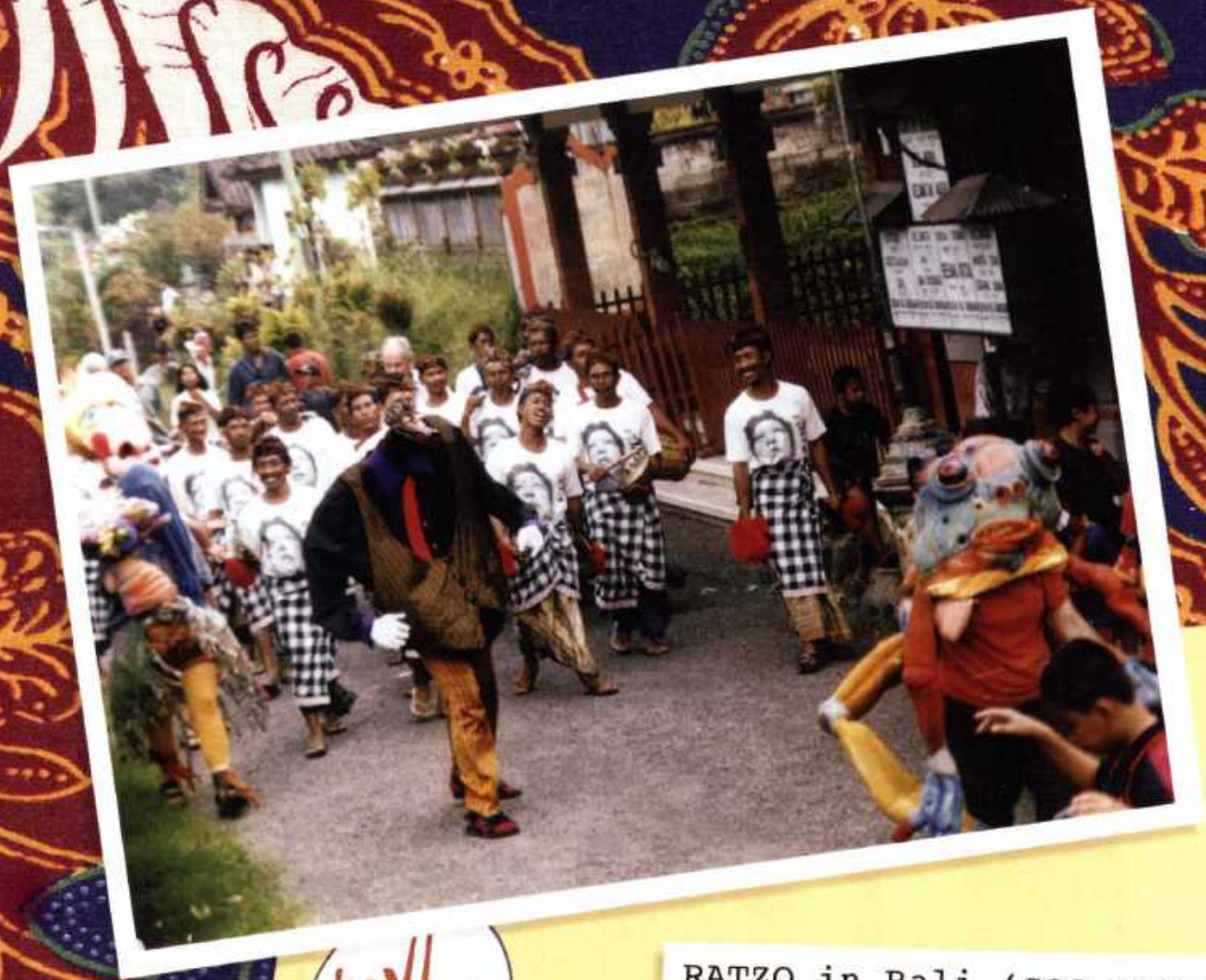
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RATZO in Bali (see page 6)

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