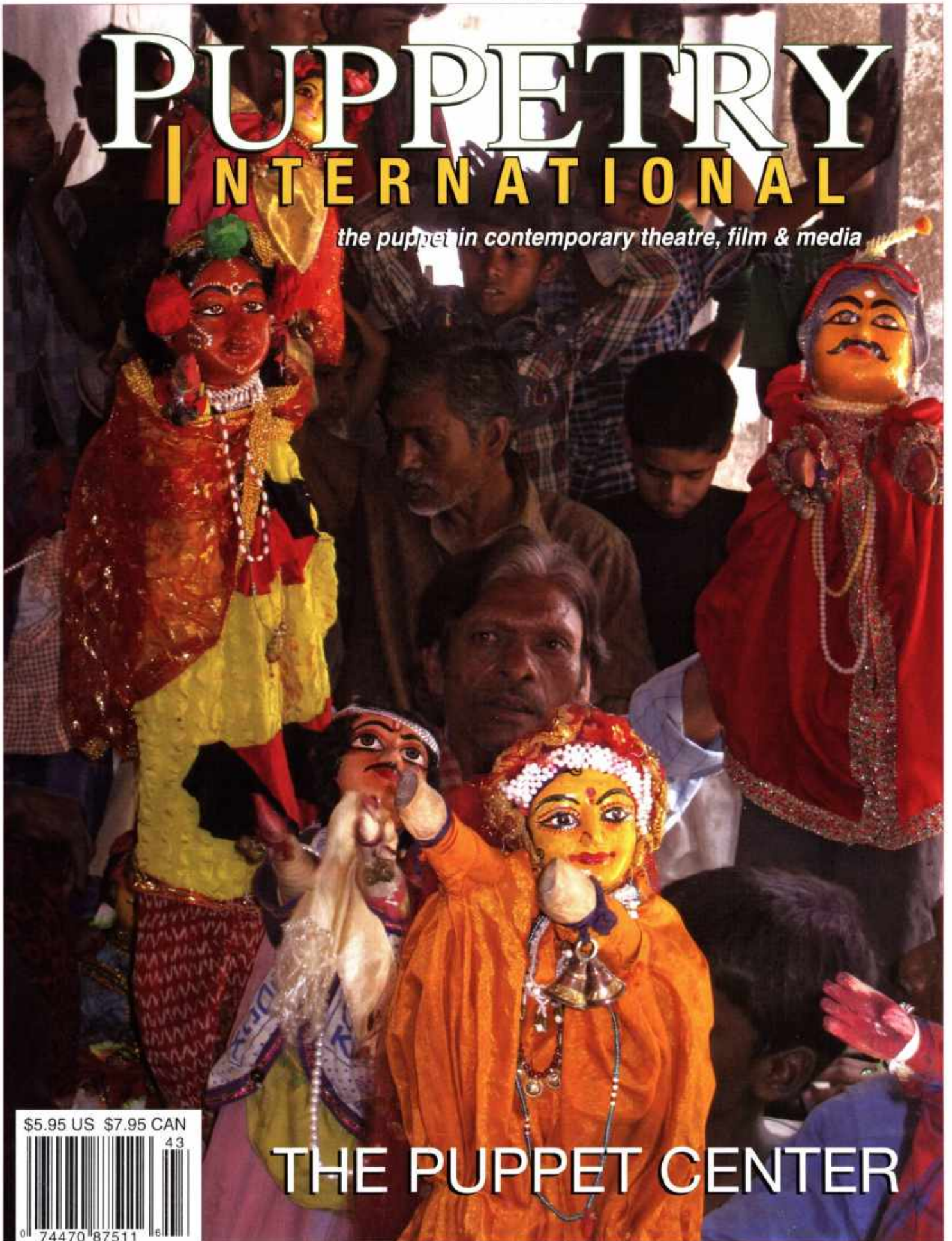


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Arts

# WE'RE READY TO BUILD

Set to open in 2015, our newly expanded museum will feature a comprehensive collection of Jim Henson's art as well as an expansion of our renowned collection of international puppets.

[puppet.org/believeinmakebelieve](http://puppet.org/believeinmakebelieve)



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issue no. 36

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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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Atlanta, GA 30309 USA 404-873-3089 [www.unima-usa.org](http://www.unima-usa.org)

On the COVER:

Hand puppets, West Bengal

(see article, page 16)

*Editorial*

While on tour last year, I made a stop at Madcap Puppets' headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio. The director, John Lewandowski, took me on a tour of the former Bell Telephone Exchange Building, which was about to be completely refitted as Madcap's new home, with a 200-seat theater, a community education center and an exhibit hall. Clearly this would be more than just a home base for a touring company — it would be a "puppet center." John remarked that, in Europe (where he'd worked for many years), you didn't find this model of "puppet center." Well, what did one find in Europe? Asia? The Middle East? I had a feeling that the answers to these questions could easily fill an issue of *Puppetry International*. It turns out I was right!

If you are reading this, then chances are good that you already know something about puppet centers. Here in the United States we are blessed with a number of institutions that combine multiple functions in one entity, which might

include producing original work for the puppet theater, presenting the work of outside troupes, housing a museum of puppet artifacts, offering professional training for puppeteers and workshops for the general public, archiving materials of historic significance and so on.

Madcap is not the only institution that is growing: Vince Anthony brings us up-to-date on the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, our nation's largest puppet center, and the new construction there that will make this one of the premier centers for puppetry in the world. We also have thumbnail portraits of the Puppet Showplace (Boston) and the Great Arizona Puppet

Theater (Phoenix). John Bell writes about the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts program. Other US centers that we didn't have room for here (but are well worth a visit) include the Northwest Puppet Center (Seattle), the Puppetry Arts Institute (Independence, MO), Owl Glass Puppetry Center (West Liberty, IA) and In The Heart of the Beast (Minneapolis).

Centers from around the world were happy to chime in, and we have articles from Cuba, Great Britain, France, Spain, Russia, Iran, China and Japan. Claudia Orenstein was recently in India and gives us a fascinating look at a number of puppet centers there. Whereas centers in many countries are housed in large buildings, a center in India might well be located in the basement of a puppeteer's home.

So whether you spell it "Center" or "Centre"\*—and you'll find both of them here—the puppet center seems to reflect the puppeteer's desire to create a place where all the aspects of puppetry are available to the public: its history, its many forms, its use in education and therapy, and the ephemeral nature of its primary manifestation: the live performance.

*- Andrew C. Periale*



\*Center? Centre? Originally, everyone spelled it "centre," until Noah Webster's Spelling Reform. Webster tried to make spelling more logical. Many Americans adopted his spelling of "center," so that, today, about 92% percent of Americans use this spelling. The number drops in other countries, with the smallest numbers of "center" spellers in Great Britain (19%) and Australia (18%). We may be grateful that not all of Webster's proposals stuck, or we might have "wimmen" complaining of "akes"!

A Publication of  UNIMA-USA

**PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL** *welcomes submissions*

SPRING 2015 - THE FUTURE OF PUPPETRY. What will the field look like in 2025 and beyond? What do you want it to look like?

FALL 2015 - WAYANG. All forms considered, as well as wayang's influence around the World.

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Dassia Posner, Northwestern University

## Peer Reviewers

John Bell, Boston College

Eileen Blumenthal, Rutgers University

Dawn Tracey Brandes,  
Northwestern University

Bradford Clark, Bowling Green University  
James M. Cherry, Wabash College

Matthew Isaac Cohen, Royal Holloway,  
University of London

Kathy Foley, U. CA Riverside

Claudia Orenstein, Hunter College/Graduate  
Center, City University of New York

Colette Searls, University of Maryland,  
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UNIMA-USA is happy to announce our annual scholarship of \$1,000 that will be awarded to American puppeteers to attend training workshops abroad. The deadline for applications is November 30, 2014 for study in the year 2015.

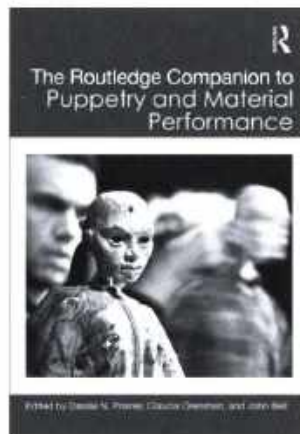
For more information, go to:

[www.unima-usa.org/scholarships](http://www.unima-usa.org/scholarships)

[www.unima-usa.org/publications](http://www.unima-usa.org/publications)

## Visit our website!

On the Puppetry International section of our website, you'll find lots of additional color photos, as well as longer versions of several articles (Iran, Japan, China), and an article on South Africa's Handspring Trust.



## Congratulations

to Dassia Posner (peer review editor), John Bell (historian and book review editor) and Claudia Orenstein (head of Publication Committee, UNIMA-USA)! They are the co-editors of *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry & Material Performance*, new from Routledge and Focal Press, a fabulous collection of scholarly papers on puppetry. We will have an in-depth review in our next issue.

Many an issue of *Puppetry International* has been planned over hot cups of tea at either John or Dassia's dining room table, and it is a much richer resource thanks to their ideas, contacts and knowledge of the field. Claudia has served as an advisor in her role on the Publications Committee and is a frequent contributor to *PI*.

## Editor

Andrew Periale

PO Box 252  
Strafford, NH 03884  
[aperiale@gmail.com](mailto:aperiale@gmail.com)

## Designer/Assistant Editor

Bonnie Periale  
[bperiale@gmail.com](mailto:bperiale@gmail.com)

## Historian/Book Review Editor

John Bell\*  
[john.bell.puppeteer@gmail.com](mailto:john.bell.puppeteer@gmail.com)

## Webmaster/

Consultant for Electronic Media  
Donald Devet

## Advertising

Honey Goodenough  
[ads@unima-usa.org](mailto:ads@unima-usa.org)

## Production

Terrie Ilaria, Lillian Meier  
STEINWAY STUDIO

## UNIMA Membership Services

Lyrrie Jackson  
[LyrrieJackson@puppet.org](mailto:LyrrieJackson@puppet.org)

## Controller

Lisa Rhodes

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\*UNIMA International Councilor



# TOUCHING LIVES THROUGH THE ART OF PUPPETRY

by Vincent Anthony, Center for Puppetry Arts

Thirty-six years ago, I had a vision to create a place where people could gather to be inspired, entertained, and educated through the art of puppetry. I shared my vision with my good friend Jim Henson, who encouraged me to continue following this dream, which he'd be glad to help support. On September 23, 1978, with Kermit the Frog and Jim cutting the ceremonial ribbon, we opened the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, GA.

Originally, my idea was to have a theater space for my own company as well as touring troupes, a display of puppets from around the world, and classes that would help people learn by making puppets and expressing their thoughts and ideas. As we grew, so did our staff, but our mission didn't change.

Today the Center for Puppetry Arts is the largest nonprofit organization in the United States dedicated to the art of puppetry. We focus on four main areas: Performances, Museum, Education, and Distance Learning, each of which offers multiple types of programming provided by more than 70 artists, educators, docents, and administrators, in addition to interns and volunteers. The overall Center experience ties each of its programmatic elements together with one supplementing another and all reinforcing shared lessons; it takes many people, in multiple departments, to make the Center thrive for our patrons. We are also the headquarters of UNIMA-USA, the American branch of the international puppetry organization Union International de la Marionnette, the oldest theater organization in the world.

The Center's Production department offers more than 600 performances each season, including performances for both family and adult audiences. The year-round Family Series presents new works and original adaptations of classic stories in a variety of puppetry styles. Typically, the Family Series includes four to six works pro-

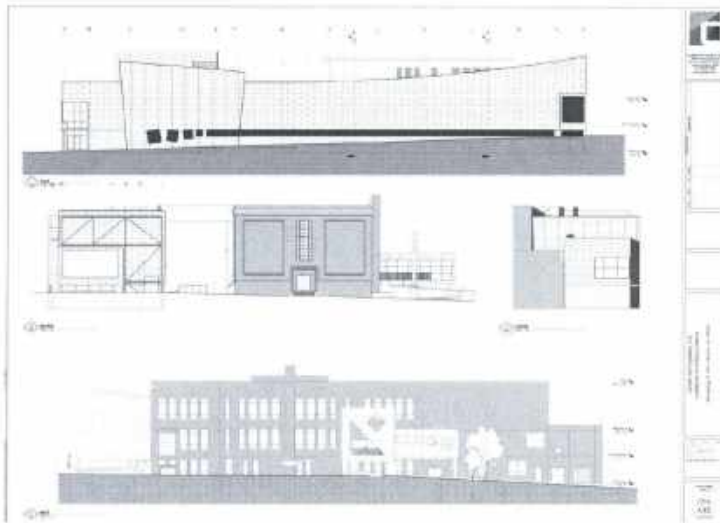
duced by the Center, and we host another seven to ten productions in the Family Series from guest companies from around the world.

We believe there can be a misconception that puppetry is just for kids, as that is often a primary experience with the art form. Our New Directions Series for adults and teens includes works by both Center and guest artists that address more mature themes and subject matter such as our 2012 production of Calvin Alexander Ramsey's *Ruth and the Green Book*, which told the story of an African-American family as they travelled through the Jim Crow-era South. Now in its 31st year, Xperimental Puppetry Theatre (XPT) is designed to give a voice to artists by encouraging them to develop, direct, and perform their own short works of puppet theater.

The Center employs a host of directors, designers, composers, builders, technicians, and more to create and present performances. Center for Puppetry Arts performances and artists have received a record 13 UNIMA Citations of Excellence. Additionally, Artistic Director Jon Ludwig recently received the 2013 President's Award for outstanding contributions to the Art of Puppetry from the Puppeteers of America.

The Education department at the Center for Puppetry Arts provides arts-infused learning opportunities via more than 1,000 workshops, lectures, demonstrations, panels, residencies and intensives offered annually for children and adults. Create-A-Puppet Workshops, taught after each Family Series performance, allow participants to become artists and puppeteers as they make and perform with a puppet relating to the show, all the while reinforcing curriculum subjects such as science, social studies, and language arts. This total immersion experience makes the Center one of the few arts venues where children take the theater back home to their family and neighborhood.

# PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL



Outreach workshops are offered at schools, organizations, and many community events throughout metro Atlanta, the Southeast, and the country as well as international trips to Bahrain and Honduras. For teens and adults, the Center offers classes on various topics, which are taught by puppetry professionals (collectively called the “Explore Puppetry Series”). Offered both onsite and via the internet, these are great ways to get even more involved in learning about puppetry.

The Center believes in the importance of using the arts as an educational tool. Unfortunately, the need for arts in the schools and the support for it are often at odds. Many children face school days without any arts-based opportunities—this makes it important that we offer arts and arts-education opportunities that are accessible, affordable and engaging. We are proud that our Fieldtrip Sponsorship program helps provide almost 70,000 reduced or free admissions annually to underprivileged schoolchildren.

In addition, our Educational programming highlights include corporate training sessions (training that celebrates the power of creativity, play and team building through puppetry), Discovery Days (intimate, immersive programming highlighting global puppetry traditions), Preschool Puppetry Playshops (literacy-rich puppetry experiences for the youngest of students and artists), theater workshops (classes that encourage actors to explore puppetry as a synthesis of all aspects of the theatrical arts), and intergenerational/senior programs (inviting the use of puppets for story creation and memory activation).

But we don't limit our educational offering to just what we can do in person: Founded in 1998, the Center's award-winning Distance Learning program uses interactive videoconferencing technology, a webinar platform, and recorded video modules to provide interactive performances, on-demand content, and hands-on curriculum-based workshops to schools, libraries, and other organizations in 49 states and four other countries. Programs are interdisciplinary and infuse the arts into classroom curricula such as science and STEM-based content, social studies, health and nutrition, and language arts.

With the growth of the Center, Distance Learning will continue to develop programs using a variety of digital media while exploring content throughout all areas of the Center. It's worth mentioning that Distance Learning has earned an impressive array of awards including five consecutive CILC Pinnacle Awards, seven consecutive Berrien RESA Teacher's Choice Awards, the 2008 Microsoft Tech Laureate Award, and The Jim Henson Company Community Honor.

Founded by Nancy Lohman Staub, the Center's permanent museum collection is one of the largest puppetry collections in the U.S. and includes puppets, posters of historical and cultural significance, books and periodicals, and audio-visual recordings documenting puppetry throughout the world. In 2012, we honored Nancy for her commitment to preserving puppet traditions from around the world by naming the Nancy Lohman Staub Puppetry Research Library after her; Nancy's commitment to our craft continues to inspire us all.



Recently, we were thrilled to announce details of our highly anticipated expansion. The project, set to be completed in 2015, will include a new museum with a Global Collection and the world's most comprehensive collection of Jim Henson's puppets and artifacts. Project highlights also include a new library and archival space, a renovated entryway, and many other upgrades to existing spaces that will ultimately enhance the experience for Center for Puppetry Arts' visitors.

"We are thrilled that the Center for Puppetry Arts is able to expand their facilities to house this amazing and comprehensive collection of Jim Henson's work, as well as the work of artists across the globe," commented Bonnie Erickson, Executive Director of The Jim Henson Legacy, while at a press conference announcing the Center's expansion plans. "Jim Henson saw puppetry as an art form that engaged people of all ages and all cultures. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Center, its mission and its position within puppetry's international community. He was inspired by his world travels just as the world has been influenced by his creativity. The Center's new museum presentations and exhibits will make it possible to experience his contributions to the world of puppetry and to share the power of his art, his imagination and his positive view of life with generations to come."

A celebration of puppetry traditions in major cultures from around the world, the Global Collection will be displayed in a gallery adjacent to the Jim Henson collection. Highlighting the history of puppetry in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, the Global Collection will also demonstrate the use of the art form as a teaching, healing and communications tool. This gallery, curated by Bradford Clark, will be organized by continent with artifacts displayed within rich contextual backdrops alongside additional materials to help showcase varying artistic and cultural styles.



JEFFREY ZWARTJES, DISTANCE LEARNING PUPPETEER & TEACHING ARTIST

Since 1978, the Center's goal has been to create a world-class experience for our guests. We have grown to present award-winning productions and educational programs, as well as reaching out through emerging technologies to be able to present to audiences across the world. Now, with these physical changes to our facility, along with the new puppet exhibits and our expanded puppetry research library, our museum will truly reflect our vision for the future of the Center, allowing our patrons the chance to gain a deeper appreciation of puppetry's past, its impact on today's cultures, and its influence on the art of tomorrow. We would never have been able to reach this milestone without the support of our Board of Directors, numerous donors, friends, colleagues, volunteers and audiences.

Vincent Anthony is the General Secretary of UNIMA-USA.



## CONFERENCE IN CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES

Puppetry & Power: censorship, propaganda, resistance (XIX-XXIth centuries). November, 20-22nd, 2014, Charleville-Mézières (France). International conference organized by the Institut International de la Marionnette / ESNAM, with the support of Passages XX-XXI (Lumière-Lyon 2 University), Textes et Cultures EA 4028 - Praxis et esthétique des arts (University of Artois), and Reims-Champagne-Ardenne University, in partnership with the French National Library and THEMMA (French UNIMA).

*See more : [puppover.hypotheses.org](http://puppover.hypotheses.org)*



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# TOPIC:

## A PUPPETRY CENTRE IN BASQUE COUNTRY, TOLOSA, SPAIN

by Idoya Otegui, Co-Director

TOPIC is a project on which the CIT (Centro de Iniciativas de Tolosa) has been working for over twenty-three years. It has been an arduous and difficult task, on which Miguel Arreche and Idoya Otegui (with the help of Enkarni Genua and Manolo Gomez) have worked tirelessly. Though there have been moments of despair, as of November 27, 2009, the dream of TOPIC, the International Puppet Centre of Tolosa, has been a reality.

This is a unique project: TOPIC is the only comprehensive puppet centre in Europe that has a 250-seat theatre, a creative space for productions and co-productions of puppet shows, a museum, a temporary exhibition hall, a documentation centre dedicated to the puppet (in which all the material is digitized and much of it accessible—depending on copyright restrictions—through the internet), workshops for teaching puppetry to children, teachers and professionals from the puppetry world and, finally, a small residence for artists, researchers or teachers.

We speak of a Centre open to all puppeteers, researchers or puppet enthusiasts who wish to dig a little deeper into this fascinating art as old as humanity itself. TOPIC's greatest treasure is its puppet museum, the primary focus of which is the puppeteer heritage conservation worldwide at the local, national and international levels. One goal of the Museum is to emphasize the importance and to protect the works of puppetry's great artists, unknown to the vast majority of the public. It is our duty to avoid the sort of losses we've experienced in the past of plays, theatres, puppets, etc., in short, of all the knowledge of a life completely dedicated to this ancient art. TOPIC thus contributes to the conservation of heritage from puppetry playwrights and artists still active or deceased.

Although most of TOPIC's holdings are interesting creations from the second half of the twentieth century, it is noteworthy that

the collection of Chinese shadows dates back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and collections of Chinese string puppets, and Chinese and French glove puppets, are from the nineteenth century. Despite the age of the pieces, TOPIC prioritizes the life a particular artifact had prior to becoming part of the museum. Therefore, although the antique, artistic value, etc. are very important criteria for the protection and exhibition of its puppetry heritage, of fundamental importance is the essence of the puppet itself: its "life" as a puppet and educating the public about its contribution to puppetry's history and heritage.

TOPIC affects different aspects of this ancient art. It deals with heritage preservation through its Museum, which has over 1,800 pieces, and its Documentation Centre, fully digitized to become a place for researchers interested in this art form. Another cornerstone of the Centre is the educational area, from which the puppet adds value both in its artistic form and its educational, therapeutic and integration roles through workshops designed specifically for it. TOPIC is also open to the creation and testing of new shows, making available the space required to those companies interested in this, including a residence that provides creators the needed atmosphere to create new shows. Finally the last major aspect of TOPIC's project is the diffusion of puppetry by programming a puppet show "season" aimed primarily, but not exclusively, at children—our present and future audience.

Since its inception, TOPIC has made significant achievements, including the signing of an agreement with the National Drama Centre in Madrid to design and produce a season of puppet shows. This is a milestone because to date no official centre in Madrid has had a "Puppet season," while of course there are "Theatre Seasons" with actors.

TOPIC IS LOCATED IN THE BUILDING THAT FORMERLY HOUSED THE OLD LAW COURTS AND PRISON ON TOLOSA'S EUSKAL HERRIA SQUARE.



ENTRANCE TO THE MUSEUM, WITH LIGHTED MAP OF THE WORLD

### AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2010 - ASSITEJ National Theatre Prize

2011 - Special Mention Awards of Tourism of the Basque Government

2012 - Silletto Prize awarded by the European Museum Forum, an award that qualifies us as one of the four best European museums of the year 2012. This award was in addition given to us by the Museum itself, for its important social involvement and volunteer work therein.

2013 - III Iberoamerican Award Education and Museum in its category 1. Competing for that prize were 49 museums from 12 Latin American countries. Latin-American Award for Education and Museum is an initiative of *Ibermuseos* that aims to reaffirm and amplify the educational capacity of museums and cultural and natural heritage as transformation strategies of social reality. The winning projects become part of the Latin-American Bank of Best Practices in Educational Action, which is available at the Ibermuseos Portal.

2013 - *Cascabel de Oro* from ONCE (National organization of blind people) for having adapted the only comprehensive centre for puppetry throughout Europe with brochures and signs in braille. This award was given to us also for making the Centre accessible for the blind people collective in specific workshops tailored for them, visits, and bringing them closer to the reality of an art space that allows them to share their experiences.

2013 - TOPIC became part of the "Excellence Club of Museums" of the organization The Best in Heritage.

2014 - Rosa María García Cano Prize for the best initiative of educational programs and promotion of the scenic arts for children and youth. The jury highlighted the work of TOPIC, which labels it a "unique project" because of its "great initiative for the promotion of the puppet art." They also recognize that from "this International Puppet Centre, unique in Europe, great educational work is being done, starting with education and training in this discipline for all ages and interests." Likewise, the jury highlighted TOPIC for its "great store of theatrical documents digitized and a museum with more than 1,800 puppets."

### LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

In its five years of existence TOPIC has set the standard for Puppet Theatre in Spain. These figures should serve as proof:

13 exhibitions- 10 of which were produced here (Mali, China, Indonesian Wayang, Colorín, Titiriteros de Binéfar, Gelede Masks, Mariona Masgrau, Txotxongillo Taldea, Routes of Punchinello, Water Puppets from Vietnam) and 3 produced by others (Animated Dolls, Arketal and Pinocchio)

9 exhibitions outside TOPIC, both in Spain and abroad  
65,000 visitors

120 workshops in schools

17 workshops for adults

7 trainings for teachers

over 200 Workshops "A la carte"

over 3,000 videos and DVDs of puppet shows worldwide

85,000 pictures

documentation on some 4,000 companies worldwide

4,800 Posters

1,400 books

7 creation residencies

6 research residencies

participation in 7 congresses or symposia, national and international

edition of 11 exhibition catalogues

co-edition of 3 books

over 200 performances from nearly 100 companies, both domestic and foreign

### FUTURE

The future of TOPIC looks promising and exciting; we must ensure that the fledgling puppet theatre season at the National Drama Centre becomes stable and durable over time. TOPIC cooperates with CIT on hosting its annual international puppetry festival, established in 1983. But perhaps the most exciting project in which we are engaged, along with UNIMA and the city of San Sebastian as the European Capital of Culture, is the organization of the World Festival and Events accompanying the 2016 UNIMA Congress.

We are working hard to ensure that the activities accompanying the UNIMA Congress mark a before and after in the Puppet Theatre in Spain.

We are not only working on this event for 2016, but also on the annual meeting of the "European Museum Forum," which for the first time will be hosted at a Puppet Museum.

Also in this future, we will continue to showcase the puppet show in its various forms at TOPIC theatre, a theatre that excites both children and adults. Our audiences will also participate in workshops we organize, aimed both at young and intergenerational groups.



New exhibitions will continue to come to the temporary exhibitions hall and with them our loyal audiences, eager for such new sensations as we can offer through these exhibitions. Many of these expositions, after being at TOPIC, travel to other destinations, both domestic and international.

Our Residence building will house new artists who find in the Centre the ideal place in which to prepare their works in harmony and tranquillity surrounded by a conducive environment. Moreover, when they present their work in TOPIC's theatre, the world premieres turn audiences into supporters. •

# Puppets on Film 2014

October 24-26

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Me + Her (2014)  
Directed by Joseph Orlowski

BAMcinématek



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are awarded to American productions, based on getting recommendations from three anonymous reviewers. The Award was instituted by the late Jim Henson, first president of UNIMA-USA.

### *Citations for 2013/2014*

#### **LIVE PERFORMANCE:**

*Baby Universe*  
Wakka Wakka Productions

*Billy the Liar*  
Toy Box Theater with Cripps Puppets

*D-Generation: An Exaltation of Larks*  
Sandglass Theater

*Lunatic Cunning* – James Godwin

*Swing Dance* – Jessica Simon

#### **RECORDED MEDIA:**

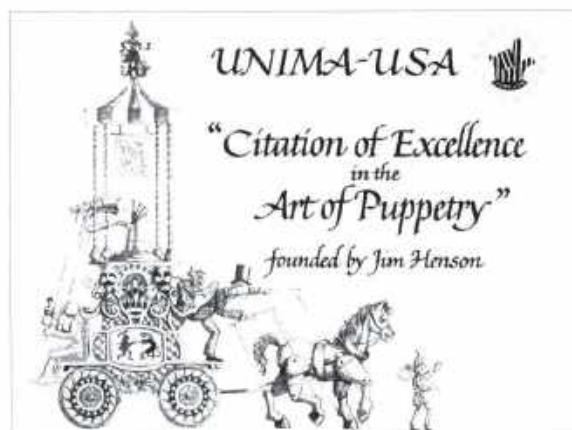
*Yama Song* – Sam Hale




LUNATIC CUNNING



BILLY THE LIAR



UNIMA-USA 

“Citation of Excellence  
in the  
Art of Puppetry”

founded by Jim Henson



## PUPPET CENTRE:

### BRITAIN'S NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUPPETRY ARTS

by Matthew Isaac Cohen and Penny Francis

Puppet Centre, formerly known as the Puppet Centre Trust, is Britain's national centre for the development of the arts of puppetry, established in London as a registered charity in November 1974, and since 1996 a company limited by guarantee (Francis 1992: 71-72; Charlton 2007). It originated as an advocacy body to encourage the Arts Council of Great Britain, the arts world, and the general public to consider puppetry as a discrete and important art form. It claims to be the first of all such centres, inspiring the founding of many others in Europe. Since World War II puppetry had been regarded either as a mere add-on to the skills of an actor or, on television, classed as a technical job sometimes performed by an untrained studio hand. Puppet Centre aimed to change such preconceptions.

An immediate precursor of the Puppet Centre was the National Puppet Theatre Centre Committee, made up of representatives of the three established membership puppetry organizations and which organized a season of British puppetry - Puppet Theatre 72 - in two London venues in March 1972. This festival was in response to a negative report commissioned by the Arts Council on the state of British puppetry written by Helen Binyon, a highly-regarded educationist and experimental puppeteer based at the Bath Academy of Art. The festival aimed to provide a more accurate assessment of puppetry in the UK by showcasing the best of British companies and thereby demonstrating that the field was worthy of attention and support. Enthusiastic press reports were brought to the attention of the Arts Council, which responded by including puppetry affairs as part of the remit of one of their theatre officers, starting in April 1972.

At the forefront of this cultural intervention was a small group of puppetry activists and enthusiasts, prominently Penny Francis (who earned her MBE for services to puppetry in 1998), David Currell, educationist, university lecturer and well-known author of books on puppetry, and Maurice Stewart, theatre director and businessman.

A constitution for the Puppet Centre was drawn up by founding members including these four: theatre historian George Speaight; puppeteer Ray DaSilva; puppeteer A.R. ("Panto") Philpott, leader of the Educational Puppetry Association, and puppet director John M. Blundall of Birmingham's Cannon Hill Puppet Theatre. The constitution stated that the Centre's core aim was "to promote, maintain, improve and advance education, especially artistic and aesthetic education and the encouragement and public appreciation of [...] the arts of puppetry." Other aims laid out in the founding document included establishing public displays of puppets, producing puppet performances, organizing courses of study, promoting experimental work and research, publishing works on puppetry, and lending out puppets for the use of the general public. Ambitious as these aims sounded, most were in fact realized, with funding from the Inner London Education Authority, the Greater London Council, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Wandsworth Borough Council, the Television Fund (associated with the independent television channels or ITV), the British Council, the Arts Council, the Greater London Arts, and, later, the London Boroughs Grants Unit, among other donors.

From the beginning, Puppet Centre has been based physically in the historic Battersea Town Hall in southwest London, which was cleared of its council offices after the merger of the Battersea and Wandsworth boroughs. Puppet Centre was offered two multi-functional adjoining rooms at a "peppercorn rent," which over the years have housed a stream of visitors, a dedicated puppet library, exhibitions, workshops, performances, and meetings. For the first few years Wandsworth Council ran it as a community arts facility which later became an independent body and renamed Battersea Arts Centre (BAC). It achieved fame under a series of artistic directors including Jude Kelly, Tom Morris, and currently David Jub



as a producing house for experimental theatre. Puppet Centre has had a variable relationship with the BAC, both benefitting from each other's offerings and events. Notable among these, in 1988, 1989 and 1992, BAC hosted three Vision Mix Festivals produced by Puppet Centre which included puppetry on stage and on screen. In exchange, Puppet Centre has always advised on puppet programming and collaborated with the arts centre whenever invited to do so.

Wandsworth Council also provided storage space for Puppet Centre's growing collection of figures. These included "handling" or practice puppets commissioned with Craft Council funding from top-notch makers such as Christopher Leith, John Wright, Jane Eve, and Stefan Fichert. Archival puppets were obtained by donation and loan from puppeteers including Barry Smith and Derek Francis. Puppets were exhibited in the Puppet Centre and in travelling exhibitions.

If Puppet Centre aimed to raise the profile of the art form and underpin the artists and their work, it achieved this very successfully. From its beginnings, however, it was a controversial presence in Britain's sometimes parochial puppet world. The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild and British UNIMA alike were initially suspicious of Puppet Centre's ambitions. Both organizations served primarily to support the work of amateur and professional puppeteers, but lacked public, outward-facing engagement. In the event, they soon came 'round to support Puppet Centre. A more immediate institutional supporter was the Educational Puppetry Association under A.R. Philpott, which closely collaborated with Puppet Centre in educational endeavors. Puppet Centre also housed EPA's library of puppet books (later greatly expanded with the acquisition of the Erwin Hauser collection). With the death of Philpott and the agreement of its members, Puppet Centre absorbed the EPA in 1979 and established an Education and Therapy Unit to continue its work.

From the start and under the leadership of Currell and Stewart, the Centre ran an impressive range of courses for professional puppeteers, students, amateurs, children, teachers, and artists from other disciplines. These included three international master classes in the interpretation of dramaturgies by Polish puppet historian Henryk Jurkowski, Margareta Niculescu (Romanian director of the International Institute of Puppetry (IIM) in Charleville-Mézières) and Josef Krofta (director of Prague's groundbreaking puppet company, DRÁK). Adult educational classes were offered under the auspices of the Inner London Education Authority until this organization was abolished in 1990. A very successful bursary scheme established by the Centre and the Arts Council's Training Department in 1981 has annually enabled one to four established puppeteers to take time off to develop their skills, at home and abroad. Its recipients have included some of the UK's most celebrated puppet artists including Martin Bridle, Sue Buckmaster, Faulty Optic, Stephen Mottram, and Terry Lee of Green Ginger. Mervyn Millar's 2003 bursary took him to South Africa, where he worked on and documented Handspring's *Tall Horse*; this connection was later resumed when he contributed over several years to the development of the phenomenally successful *War Horse* (London's National Theatre and Handspring Puppet Company, 2007 and still running).



PHOTO CAPTIONS

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PUPPETRY IN OPERA, 2012  
A NATIONALLY STRATEGIC  
INITIATIVE- PRESENTATIONS,  
WORKSHOPS AND PERFORMANCES  
PHOTO: DAI WILLIAMS

P 13

MASTERCLASS ON DIRECTING FOR  
PUPPETRY, 2013  
MERVYN MILLAR, JOY HAYNES  
AND LIZ WALKER  
PHOTO: GLENN EDWARDS

BIG IDEAS, 2010

A CONFERENCE-EVENT ON LARGE-  
SCALE ANIMATION WITHIN STREET  
ARTS AND CARNIVAL

Publications were also an important function of Puppet Centre. The bi-monthly magazine, *Animations*, starting in 1976, disseminated information and discussion about the puppet arts nationally and internationally. A directory of professional puppeteers was first released in 1977 and updated annually until circa 2000. (It is now published online by the puppetry umbrella organization known as Puppeteers UK or PUK.) There were occasional pamphlets and booklets such as *How to Run a Puppet Workshop* (1978), *Starting a Puppet Company* (1987), and the education pack *Alive and Kicking* (1991). Most important for the puppetry world at large was the anthology of essays by Polish puppet historian and theorist Henryk Jurkowski, *Aspects of Puppet Theatre* (1988). Jim Henson contributed to the costs of the printing of *Aspects* and for a time of *Animations*.

Funding cuts and the establishment of another national networking organization (Puppeteers UK in 1999) forced a refocus of Puppet Centre. *Animations* as a paper publication ceased and was replaced by *Animations Online*. Activities that had been national in scope became more London-focused. The redevelopment of the BAC and its expansion to all parts of the Town Hall in 2007 resulted in a downsizing of Puppet Centre's physical footprint. The puppet collections were sent northwest to the storage facilities of the National Puppetry Archive in Shropshire, under the curatorship of Michael Dixon and Puppet Centre stalwart Ray DaSilva. Many books were housed in the library of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, which has maintained a close relation to Puppet Centre since 1992, when Penny Francis was invited to establish there a Post-Graduate Diploma in puppetry, later morphing into an integral part of an MA in Advanced Theatre Practice.

A series of short-term directors appointed in the 1990s and early 2000s had left Puppet Centre without a clear sense of direction, with no ongoing plan for development, no policy on work to be done or which audiences to work with, and no funds to be relied on. Linda Lewis, an arts administrator, manager, and programmer who had been exposed to puppetry through running the Visions Festival of Animated Theatre in Brighton, was appointed as director in 2009 and quickly developed a policy and strategy for Puppet Centre, returning it to its origins as a dynamic development agency for the art form.<sup>1</sup> Critical to this was the creation of a database, building or renewing relationships with funders and artists, and developing a program of innovative workshops and events, often run in collaboration with other arts organizations and disciplines. *Animations* shifted from being a quarterly stand-alone magazine to being a clear extension of Puppet Centre and its website, and offered opportunities for new writers to contribute reviews and news items. Social media and a monthly newsletter were introduced; a residency scheme for pup-

peteers to work in theatre spaces and museums was developed; large-scale conferences including *Big Ideas* (2010; on outdoor puppetry arts), and prestigious symposia such as *Puppetry in Opera* (2012) were mounted. Through the success of these and other enterprises Linda Lewis attracted funding and respect for the Centre.

Linda Lewis retired from her director's role in the spring of 2014 after five years of service. With the present (and it is hoped temporary) decline of support from Arts Council England and other sources, Puppet Centre is increasingly challenged to earn its keep. Some say it has been a victim of its own success; puppets have moved from the margins to the mainstream in Britain; puppetry is taught in higher education and it is now commonplace to see actors including puppetry skills in their CVs; puppets have found their way into mainstream theatre, musicals, opera, and dance; it is ubiquitous on television and film. Opportunities abound for learning the basics, from afterschool classes for children, sessions for teachers and adult education courses, to advanced work in colleges, placements and internships. The internet and new publications have made once-scarce information available to everyone. Puppet Centre will need, as in the past, to continually rebrand and identify what Lewis calls its "unique selling point," in step with the times so that it can continue to be "recognized and greatly valued by puppetry artists and theatre practitioners in England who will in turn recognize its value and promote their Puppet Centre."

Matthew Isaac Cohen is a Professor of International Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is also a *dalang* in the wayang kulit tradition.

Penny Francis has been a puppetry consultant and tutor at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, and is author of *Puppetry. A Reader in Theatre Practice*.

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#### Endnote

1 Information on Puppet Centre's activities and policies in 2009-2014 is based largely on an e-mail interview (Lewis 2014).

### ADVERTISING IN PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

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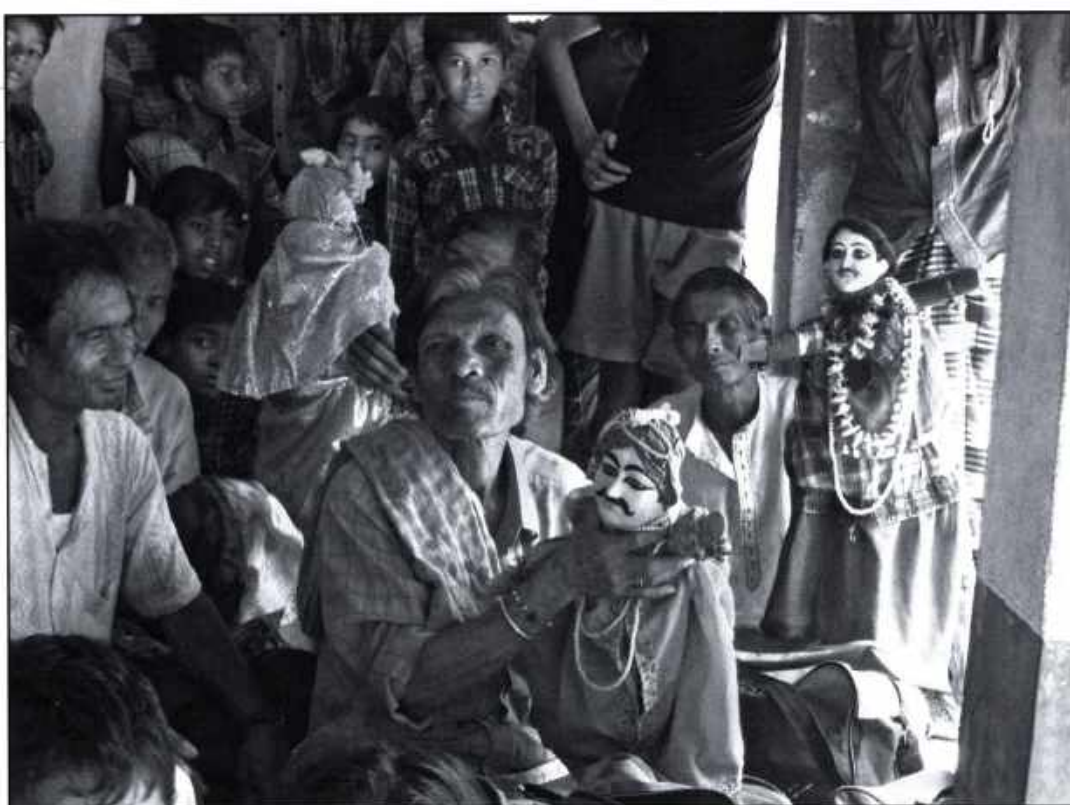
Dolly Wiggler Cabaret, Jen Lynne, Photo: Doug Wong

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## FINDING THE HEART OF INDIAN PUPPETRY

by Claudia Orenstein

The very notion of an artistic “center” invites questions about what settings, institutions, and circumstances can support an art and help it thrive. The lack of puppetry centers in India, therefore, speaks to the concerns that haunt puppeteers there today, as traditional artists attempt to keep established forms alive within transformed cultural and economic circumstances, while contemporary-style puppeteers strive to forge new performance contexts receptive to innovative work. Although India has for centuries been home to puppetry traditions of every kind, and may arguably be the birthplace of the art itself, today it is commonplace for Indians to view this great heritage simply as a “dying” art. This perspective, however, does not do justice to the many talented Indian performers I have met, both traditional and contemporary artists, committed to puppetry and eager to make it flourish. While there are institutional supports for puppeteers in India, usually within larger schemes or projects for preservation of cultural heritage, it is not completely clear that these structures and systems best serve the needs of the art, at least in the sense of investing in vibrant cultural expression. In my experience, it is more often artists themselves and the energy they put into their work and endeavors that breathe life into Indian puppetry. Performers’ homes often serve as dynamic artistic centers, sometimes put to public use, where one grasps Indian puppetry’s true potential.

Indian institutions have assuredly devoted space and support to puppetry, but not in a comprehensive way and generally not spearheaded by puppeteers or focused specifically on puppetry

so as to create a “puppetry center.” For instance, Sampa Ghosh and Utpal K. Banarjee’s book *Indian Puppets* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2006) lists 15 museums in India containing puppets, but they also state that, “Unlike many Western countries, India does not have an established system of archiving its rich traditional heritage of puppetry” (p. 295). Some of these institutions also host performances, rightly understanding puppetry as “living heritage.” Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal in Udaipur, Rajasthan, for example, offers regular performances of Rajasthan’s kathputli (string puppets) and Dakshina Chitra, “a center for the living traditions of art, folk performing arts, craft, and architecture of India with an emphasis on the traditions of South India” ([www.dakshinachitra.net](http://www.dakshinachitra.net)) located in Chennai in Tamil Nadu, presents shadow puppetry by local artists like Seetha Lakshmi (Andharah Pradesh style shadows) and Selvaraj (Tamil style). The puppet shows in this context are truncated highlights from the traditionally longer programs that now rarely take place. Srimanta Sankaradev Kalakshetra in Guwahati Assam, with a lovely exhibit of puppets and masks and regular puppetry performances, also serves as a connection to Assam’s main puppeteers including Abino Kanta Sharman, Narayan Deka, and Bani Kanta Berman.

Sangeet Natak Akademi, India’s National Academy for music, dance and drama, organizes festivals and other opportunities for presentations throughout India, but especially at its headquarters location in Delhi. It also provides grant opportunities for artists



and facilitates other projects. In 2011, Sangeet Natak Akademi held its 6th National Putul Yatra puppetry festival at the Kalakshetra in Assam, showcasing puppeteers from all over the country.

Only presenting puppetry within festivals of traditional arts may contribute to the commonplace view of the work as museum fare rather than thriving immediate art. Additionally, the cultural discussion around puppetry in India can get stuck at tabulating the elements of tradition and pondering how to save “dying” arts. These discourses, while necessary, may be as deadly to the arts as economic deprivation.

So where in India do we feel puppetry’s strong beating pulse? And what kinds of “centers” might contribute to keeping this life stirring?

Many Indian puppetry forms have been the purview, not only of particular families, but also of specific castes, and puppetry’s soul lies in the hum of daily life of groups that have long sheltered and grown up with the art. For example, the bhats are a caste of once itinerant artists who perform kathputli, magic acts, music, and acrobatics. Most have now settled down in the bhat colonies that have grown up in cities like Jaipur and Delhi within the last fifty years. These slums, like Delhi’s Shadipur colony, are sometimes identified as blights in India’s push toward development. The Shadipur colony, home to nationally celebrated and internationally known puppeteer Puran Bhat, has become a cause célèbre due to the bhats’ fight to keep the land they have squatted on, which the government has sold out from under them to housing developers. The excellent documentary *Tomorrow We Disappear* by directors Jimmy Goldblum and Adam Weber, offers a full and clear account of the bhats’ struggle and negotiations to save not just their homes, but their way of life. In one telling moment, Puran Bhat reads his letter to the government describing how the modern, fully equipped apartments they propose to build, will not fit their lives and work: Where will his friend the high stilt-walker practice in these apartments with their low ceilings? he asks. Where will his musical colleagues put their enormous kettledrums? In the film, Puran Bhat offers an alternative proposal for the land. It incorporates appropriate housing, workshops, and performance: a vision for a true center for puppetry and other bhat arts. But the government is not interested.

The painful paradox for most traditional puppeteers in India is that development (the byword for the newly elected government) is as great a threat to their arts as their current economic struggles. Embracing development generally means moving their children into careers in technology and finance, and, in so doing, releasing them from the hold of inherited performance traditions. These other fields promise more lucrative futures than are available to those hanging on to “dying arts,” but puppeteers moving into them may deal traditional puppetry its death blow.



PHOTO CAPTIONS

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HAND PUPPETS, WEST BANGALORE

P 17  
ANUPAMA HOSKERE’S MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE,  
BANGALORE

PUPPETEER IN ASSAM

PHOTOS: C. ORENSTEIN



PHOTO CAPTIONS

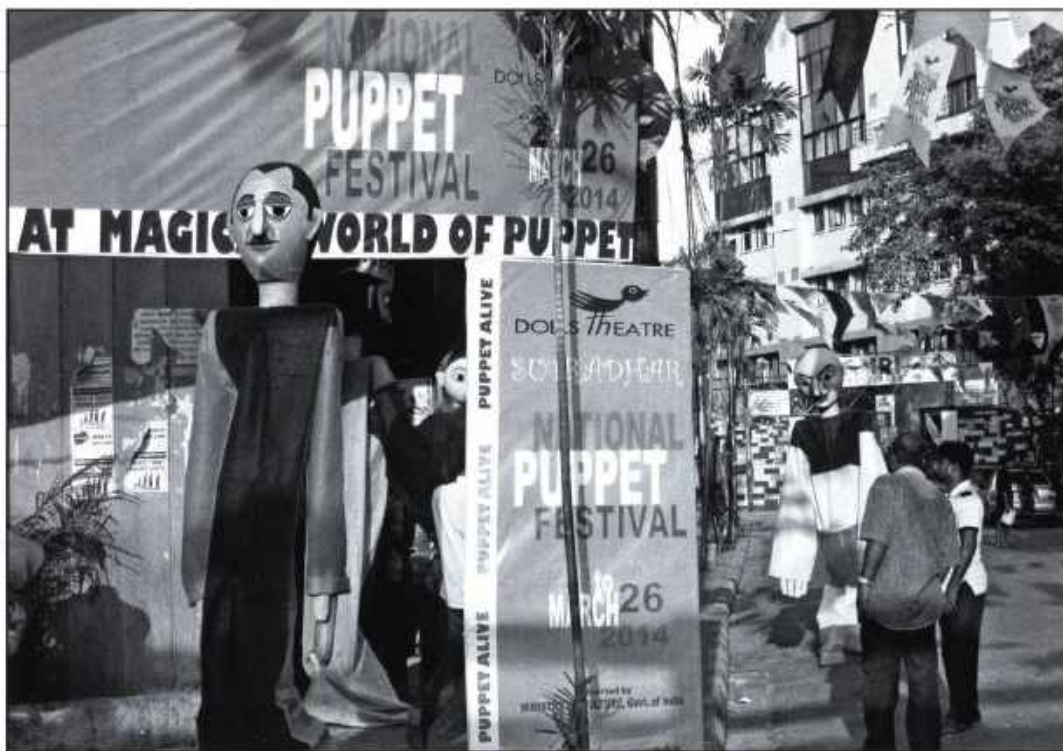
P 18  
ANURUPA ROY'S WORKSHOP SPACE,  
NEAR DELHI

TOP  
PURAN BHAT IN SHADIPUR COLONY,  
DELHI

P 19  
PUPPET FESTIVAL IN KOLKATA

Thanks to Atasi Nanda Goswami, a scholar of West Bengal folk culture, I was introduced to Padmatamali village in Midnapore District, West Bengal that is home to a community of traditional beni (or bene) putul hand puppeteers. It is not unusual in India for an art or craft to be connected to a particular village famous for the work. As Nanda Goswami tells me, in the past whole families participated in the form; Today each family has maybe one puppeteer who still values and pursues the art. Nonetheless, the heart of beni putul lies here, enveloped within lush stretches of green fields, a five-hour drive from Kolkata's congested streets. The puppeteers, who have formed a collective, gather weekly at the local schoolhouse to rehearse and share their work, plans, and struggles. They each build their own colorfully-attired hand puppets and compose lyrics and music for the musical stories they sing, either traditional, focusing on the love of Krishna and his consort Radha, or on contemporary social themes. They are also now teaching the art to a younger generation to insure its survival. This incidental "center for puppetry" is a mixed blessing, keeping puppeteers connected to each other and to the village life, but remote from the bustling urban centers that might offer them more lucrative opportunities. But nothing can compare to the joy that erupts when they are offered an opportunity to perform, and they pull out their beautiful puppets, and break into music and song. The gathering of this community is a puppetry center.

In Dharmavaram village, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, shadow puppeteers are inching towards creating a more formal type of center for their art. They have formed the Bharat Leather Puppetry Artists Mutually Aided Cooperative Society and, near the brand new home of puppeteer S. Arjaneyalu and his sons Hanumantha and Chandra Shaekar, they have built a space for meetings and performances. The simple one-room structure, with a small, elevated stage covered by a large shadow screen at one end, accommodates Andhra Pradesh's large-scale tholu bommalata shadow figures. Arjaneyalu's sons, like others here, concentrate on making puppets for sale rather than performing, but are now using this new space to allow their elders to bring performance skills to a new generation. This new venue, where there is space for performances and possibly workshops, where puppeteers can gather and share their knowledge and love of puppetry as well as their problems and concerns, is another Indian puppetry center in embryonic form.



Sometimes an individual puppeteer works to build a center for the art around his own home. In Shornur, Kerala, tolpavakoothoo shadow puppeteer Ramachandra Pulavar's family home has become the Krishnan Kutty Pulavar Memorial Tolpavakoothu and Puppet Center, named in honor of his late father. Kerala's shadow shows can last all night for performances that go on for 7, 14, 21, 41, or 72 consecutive evenings. But in the 1970s, this particular family created a one-hour version of their show to take outside the temples. Today, groups can commission and watch this shorter performance in the upstairs room of the family home that functions as a performance space, and also hosts workshops. A downstairs room houses handcrafted puppets, CDs, books and other items for sale, while a small, enclosed case in the main room acts as a personal "library" of memorabilia and books on the tradition. The family home offers an intimate, welcoming setting where one may also be invited to a home-cooked meal while chatting with the artists. Ramachandra has filled a vacuum by transforming his home into a puppetry center for his family art. The homes of many Indian puppeteers serve a similar function. Where no puppetry centers exist, in these personal spaces of families, artists share their work, the history and personal archives of their craft, and their hospitality.

In Bangalore, Anupama Hoskere (after completing a degree in engineering in the US) also puts her home at the service of puppetry. Her company, Dhaatu, is based in the large basement area that houses her steadily increasing output of hand-carved wooden string puppets, and an outdoor workshop space. The large interior hall has hosted rehearsals, performances, workshops, an on-going class Hoskere runs in the hope of creating future puppeteers, and a puppetry training curriculum. Her home is the center that gives her the liberty to expand and share her work as she pleases.

In Delhi, the nexus for puppetry—especially contemporary puppetry—revolves around three people who have been the pillar of the contemporary puppetry community in India, and its outreach to the rest of the world, for many years: Dadi Pudumjee, Ranjana

Pandey, and Anurupa Roy. Delhi's center for puppetry is wherever these three support each other to make things happen for puppetry, like Pudumjee's annual Ishara Puppet Festival. When this festival erupts, its performance venue becomes a temporary puppetry center: Puppets are sold, information about puppetry is given out, and workshops are sponsored. Anurupa Roy's company, Katkatha, also has a studio at a farm outside Delhi where they rehearse, build their puppets, host interns, and run workshops. Ranjana Pandey no longer runs her groundbreaking puppet company, Jan Madyam, but out of her home, she single-handedly produces UNIMA-INDIA's new magazine, *Sutradhar*.

Sudip Gupta of Doll's Theatre hopes to take on a similar role, in Kolkata, putting his energy into events that can give focus to Kolkata's many talented contemporary puppeteers. Choiti Ghosh, with her company Tram Theatre, is working her way to taking the leadership role in creating a home for puppetry in Mumbai.

India doesn't have any official puppetry centers, but instead many ways of accommodating the needs of puppeteers and their aficionados, sometimes through established institutions, but most often through individuals whose energy and personal homes provide a focus for puppetry activities. This arrangement makes sense in a place where families and communities have long been the bearers of tradition and where the art currently suffers from economic deprivation. However, it also often increases the disconnect between rural puppeteers and growing urban populations, potential audiences. More established centers could serve many functions and help to uplift the art, but would need to accommodate India's expansive territory, its diverse communities, and puppetry traditions.

Claudia Orenstein is an associate professor at Hunter College, NYC, and has her PhD in drama, directing, and criticism from Stanford. She is a former board member of UNIMA-USA.



## KANOON THEATRE AND PUPPET THEATRE CENTER, IRAN

by Salma Mohseni Ardehali

The Kanoon Theatre Center was founded in December, 1971 with a focus on children and improvisational theatre. The primary goal of this center was to produce stage performances for children and young adults and to offer children theatrical training. The center was inaugurated in January, 1972 (Bakhtiari 128). At the outset the educational activities started at the site of the Central Library and some other libraries with theatrical training and rehearsals of plays like *Radish* and *Kooti and Mooti* by Bijan Mofid as theatrical samples. The team began acting under the supervision of a director of American origin, Don Laffoon, who was assisted by an assistant director and five actors. In 1975, after two years of activity, the center decided to apply a new educational method known as “theatre with kids” that was for the first time implemented in all Institute libraries. The first group of highly skilled trainers at the Theatre Center – all of whom were theatre graduates from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Faculty of Dramatic Arts – were employed in that year to start forming theatre classes for children and young adults at Kanoon libraries.

The method of “Theatre with Kids” was practiced under Ardavan Mofid’s supervision. The main goal of these training courses for this particular age-group – besides dramatic education of teens and filling in the gap of theatrical literacy – was to enable teenagers to write stories and plays, direct plays and finally bring them on stage. Along with *Radish* and *Kooti and Mooti*, the play *Rise Up Please, Lady Sun!* by Reza Babak, was performed as touring theatre in 21 libraries of Tehran and 17 libraries of other cities (Bakhtiari 129). Apart from libraries, there were also special performances at hospitals, nurseries and other charitable institutions.

Another important initiative by Kanoon for promotion of theatre in small towns was the “Travelling Theatre Trailer.” The vehicle was

brought in from Germany by the Institute in 1973. The trailer had all facilities to perform any type of performance and even screen movies. In August, 1974 the first performances were staged on the trailer in the northern regions of Iran and covering a large number of cities and villages.

The Center for Puppet Theatre was created in 1972. Under the supervision and direction of a Czech puppeteer, Oscar Batek, this center organized the First Iranian Puppet Festival in 1975 (Rubin 269). The first puppet show – *An Accident in the Puppet Town* – was directed and staged by Batek. It was restaged a while later at the 25<sup>th</sup> Shahrvivar Hall and then toured to libraries. Batek’s second performance called *The Cloak of a Thousand Tales* premiered with the first professional cast of puppeteers (Bakhtiari 135). Center for Puppet Theatre of Kanoon has played an important role in the development and preservation of Iranian puppetry over the years.

In 1977, Behrooz Gharibpour – who had gained some experience as an actor in children’s puppet theatre – directed some classes for young people in acting, directing, playwriting and criticism (Rubin 268). After the revolution in 1979, there was just Kanoon, which would produce some puppet shows for children and adolescents and send them to its branches in Tehran and other cities of Iran and sometimes to other countries. In 1979, the first permanent venue for children’s theatre was established by Gharibpour in Kanoon by staging *Koroglu-ye Chanli Bael* at the Institute’s central library. The theatre launched under the name of Markaz-e Teatr va Teatr-e Aroosaki (Center for Theatre and Puppet Theatre) first with one hall and then, in 1981, a second venue was inaugurated. Gharibpour has been the manager of this center for nine great years (1980-89).

In the years after the Islamic Revolution, puppet productions have been one of the main concerns of Kanoon. Some of those that



## KANOON THEATRE PUPPET THEATRE

by Salma Moh

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were working as directors in children's theatre and some of their productions include Nosrat Karimi (*Unwanted Guest*, 1985), Behrooz Gharibpour (*Grandpa and Radish*, 1986), Ardeshir Keshavarzi (Stories from Kalilah and Dimnah and Rumi's *Masnavi*, 1981), Hasan Dadshekar (*The Sparrow Ashi-Mashi*, 1998), Hamid Abdolmaleki (*Lily, Lily, Little Pool*, 1990), Kambiz Samimi (*An Eye for an Eye*, 1979), Adel Bezdoudeh (*Hey, who are you?*, 1993), Davood Kianian (*The Distressed Cockerel*, 1993), Yadollah Vafadari (*Little Lantern*, 1980), Javad Zolfaqari (*The Goat with Three Kids*, 1983), and Vida Ghahremani (*The Fish*, 1995).<sup>3</sup> And among the new generation we can mention some names such as Soheila Ahmadifar, Simin Amirian, Mohsen Imankhani, Afsaneh Zamani, Fahimeh and Sima Mirzahoseini, Maryam Kazemi, Hamed Zahmatkesh, Ali Pakdast, Maryam Eghbali and others.

### Joining ASSITEJ and UNIMA

Kanoon attended the 4<sup>th</sup> ASSITEJ (the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People) meeting in Albania in 1972, and applied to join ASSITEJ. In 1973, Kanoon joined ASSITEJ and participated in ASSITEJ congress in West Berlin in 1974. Since then Kanoon has tried to be an active member, introducing the children's theatre and puppet theatre of Iran to the world. Kanoon also was the first Iranian member of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette - International Puppetry Association). It joined UNIMA as a company in the 1970s.

### Conclusion

Long after the revolution, Kanoon's Theatre Center was the most active theatre and puppet theatre center in all of Iran. During the 1980s and early 1990s, puppet theatre for children was nearly the only application of puppetry in the country and many brilliant works were created at that time. Gradually, opinions evolved and a greater interest in puppetry for adults flourished.

Although there are still some great works occasionally produced and staged at Kanoon Theatre and Puppet Theatre Center, this center is really far from its glowing golden days. We can relate this wane to different factors such as mismanagement, lack of funding, devaluation of the importance of children's theatre, new tendencies in puppet theatre for adults, an inability to compete with today's mass media culture, a misunderstanding of audience expectations and so forth. As Kanoon has been active for some four decades in the field of cultural productions it has been regarded by Iranian schoolchildren, teachers and parents as a trustworthy name; the brand of "Kanoon" has been a guarantee of a quality product. Authorities, managers and artists should be aware of this important point: People expect Kanoon to produce perfect artworks. Now Kanoon Theatre and Puppet Theatre Center are struggling for survival although it might not be able to regain its power yet—neither to its primary state prior to the revolution, nor in the years following the revolution—but it is still a bright star in the dim sky of children's theatre and the puppet theatre of Iran.

(NOTES ON PAGE 46)

Salma Mohseni Ardehali is an Iranian Puppet scholar, Puppet Director and Manipulator. She has been a board member of Mobarak UNIMA since 2009.



#### PHOTO CAPTIONS

P 20  
THE STORY OF THE MOUNTAIN MAN

ABOVE  
HEY, WHO ARE YOU?, 1993

*Ms. Ardehali's entire article on Kanoon, including more photos in full color, may be found on the Puppetry International page of our website: [unima-usa.org](http://unima-usa.org)—Ed.*





# CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES:

## THE WORLD CAPITAL FOR THE ARTS OF PUPPETRY

by Irina Niculescu

Charleville-Mézières is home to several organizations dedicated to the arts of puppetry. The city hosts the General Secretariat Office of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette), the Institut International de la Marionnette, ESNAM (the National Higher Education School in the Arts of Puppetry), and the World Festival of Puppet Theatres. Each organization has a rich line of activities, which has made Charleville an effervescent meeting place for artists, theatre scientists, and puppetry lovers—a real “world capital of puppetry.”

### THE BEGINNINGS

The birth of this important puppetry center started about forty years ago and was intertwined with the history of its founder, Jacques Felix. In 1961, Jacques decided to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his puppet company, “Les petits comédiens de chiffons,” with a festival. The mayor of the city André Lebon gave his agreement. Encouraged by the success, Jacques dreamed of a big international festival in the spirit of the festival organized by Margareta Niculescu in Bucharest in 1958, which brought together companies from all over the world. His dream became reality in 1972. The five continents were represented and the festival was a great success. I will use his words:

It's simple. The birth of the Institut followed on naturally from the first international festival in Charleville, in 1972 [...] which coincided with the eleventh congress of UNIMA: 800 participants came from all around the world !! [...] They received a warm greeting from the people in the town, and the atmosphere was extraordinary! [...].

after this great success we did it again in 1976. Lots of people wanted to take part. [...] The idea of a permanent venue was mooted. [...] In 1979 there was another festival. It opened with *Til Eulenspiegel*, presented by the Tandarica Theatre from Bucharest. The mayor, a member of parliament, and a senator were there in the theatre. They were convinced of the validity of an international project. A meeting was organized where I was accompanied by representatives of UNIMA. And so it...became the Institut International de la Marionnette. [...]. I brought in André Lebon, the mayor of Charleville, Margareta Niculescu and Henryk Jurkowski, representing UNIMA as founder members. An outline agreement was signed, in which UNIMA undertook to support training. We were careful to gather around us the Centre National de la Marionnette, whose president was Christian Chabaud, UNIMA-France.\*

Jacques Felix – interview with Eveline Lecueq

### The beginnings of the Institut International de la Marionnette (IIM)

In 1981, in complicity with his friends from UNIMA and with local political support, Jacques Felix creates the “Institut International de la Marionnette.” It is the first place in France dedicated entirely to the many-faceted art of puppetry: some of the world's greatest



masters will come to teach. Margareta Niculescu proposed the program and in 1985 she was named the director of the Institut. Professional training was the program's first focus. The Institut went on to become an essential place of exchange and research, a place open to the world, sharing practice and knowledge.

In her book *Passeurs et complices/Passing it on*, co-authored with Lucile Bodson, Margareta Niculescu wrote:

...I cannot forget the important congresses and gatherings held at the IIM – the Rencontres – or the energy and passionate desire for exchange and discovery expressed by their participants. These events are for working, but it is clear that they generate a real pleasure in being together. There is a real festive spirit.

These international gatherings are organized on a thematic basis and take in all the Institut's many activities, combining discussions, demonstrations, performances and exercises, all reflecting and sharing the experiences of the participants. This multi-disciplinary principle can also be seen at work in the Rencontres Internationales des Enseignements Artistiques, held in 1996 and 1999, the idea of which was to bring together schools working in the different artistic disciplines, and also to stimulate new research on teaching after a long period of inactivity. The Institut has thus become an important creative hub, generating the magic of new shows.

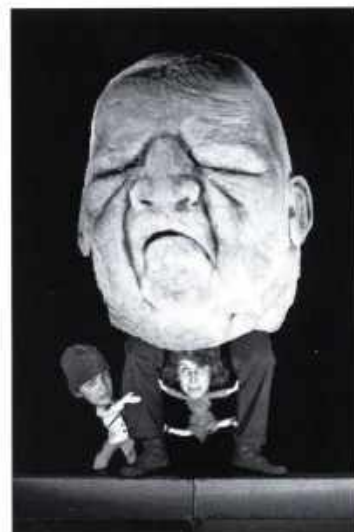
## KEY PROJECTS

### The publications

In 1988, the Institut responded to the gaps in the bibliography on puppet theatre, creating an annual publication, *Puck-La marionnette et les autres arts*. Other publications specializing in history and theory would follow.

### The Villa d'Aubilly

In 1996, another key project was the foundation of the project la Villa d'Aubilly. With its residence, library, and media center it is an important resource for researchers, artists, and university teachers wishing to carry out in-depth work on the practice and theory of puppet theatre. A system of grants has been put in place to facilitate residencies, while the Institut's resource center is regularly enriched by the acquisition of new and longstanding titles and also produces its own visual documents based on master classes and workshops held at the school, productions by ESNAM students and new shows.



### PHOTO CAPTIONS

P 22  
INTERNATIONAL SUMMER WORKSHOP,  
PAPER MATERIAL: AT THE JUNCTION  
OF DRAMA WITH STORYTELLING AND  
PUPPETRY  
DIRECTOR: ALAIN LECUCQ  
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE LOISEAU

P 23  
INTERNATIONAL SUMMER WORKSHOP,  
APPARITION: CREATION OF A  
LIFE-SIZED PUPPET  
DIRECTOR: NATACHA BELOVA  
PHOTO: FABIEN LEGAY

ESNAM 9  
"PLUIE" ("RAIN")  
COLLECTIVE REALIZATION  
DIRECTOR: SYLVAIN MAURICE  
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE LOISEAU

Guided by a spirit of complementarity and partnership, the IIM has set out to join forces with other resource centers and libraries by creating the Réseau International des Centres de Ressources, which is designed to foster international contacts, document sharing, joint research projects and to organize conferences.

### The École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette (ESNAM)

There was a meeting with Christian Chabaud, François Lazaro, Jean-Pierre Lescot, Alain Recoing, from the Centre National de la Marionnette, and Jean-Loup Temporal and myself for UNIMA. We discussed the future of the Institut and, implicitly, the possibility of creating a school. All kinds of ideas and propositions were put forward, evoking the utopian spirit of the past, the dream of a school-cum-laboratory or school-cum-manifesto, and the Bauhaus. Once the ESNAM teachers' committee had been set up, in 1987, Henryk Jurkowski, François Lazaro, Jean-Pierre Lescot and Alain Recoing, followed later by Claire Heggen and Jean-Luc Félix, all helped me think these issues through. Together, it was our job to find the answers to the many questions facing the school.\*

—Margareta Niculescu, *Passeurs et complice/Passing it on*

The creation of the ESNAM (École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette) in 1987 consecrates definitively Charleville as the world capital of puppetry. The school and its mother body, the Institut International de la Marionnette, now form an entity that has no equivalent anywhere in the world. The school is entirely financed by the French Ministry of Culture. It is the official gesture of recognition given by the French political authorities to this art. Margareta Niculescu, co-founder and first director of the school, brings a new vision to puppetry training and builds a three-year, multi-disciplinary

program that aims to integrate practice, knowledge, and creativity, exposing the students both to traditional forms of puppetry and to the newest contemporary forms, encouraging them to define their own creative capacity.

“The essential thing was to come to grips with theatre globally, to confront the student with all the disciplines... so he can learn them all or find self-definition in just one of them... The school, then, emphasizes contact with artists who pass on their ideas about theatre and recount their paths and experiences. For the pupil this means a treasure-trove of information to draw on in choosing his personal creative field and itinerary. It may be that the best kind of teaching is triggering and maintaining curiosity. ... The school's aims and objectives are to train puppeteers as top-level professional artists capable of practicing puppetry in all its formal diversity; of responding to its contemporary demands; of handing on a métier and an artistic experience in which learning and research go constantly hand in hand; of facilitating the development of new creative energies; and of bringing the instructive and the creative together in performance. My view of theatre and of the performing arts in general led me to entrust the shaping of the curriculum to creative people. Teaching takes place via transmission, learning, creation – and also improvisation. All of which serve to bring out the student's personality.\*

—Margareta Niculescu, *Passeurs et complice/Passing it on*

Margareta Niculescu was the director of the Institut from 1985 till 1998, and co-founder and director of the school from 1987 till 1998. After her departure the reins of the Institut were entrusted for a short

ESNAM 9  
PUPPET OLYMPIC GAMES  
PHOTO: PATRICK ARGIRAKIS





ESNAM 9  
"LES ANIMAUX INELUCTABLES"  
("THE INEVITABLE ANIMALS")  
BY JURATÉ TRIMAKAITÉ  
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE LOISEAU

time to Roman Paska, American artist, puppeteer, director, and in 2003 to Lucile Bodson, who previously founded and was the director of *Le Théâtre de la marionnette à Paris*, also producer of two festivals. The exuberant activity of the Institut was made possible with the complicity and enthusiastic support of Jacques Felix, who acted as President of the IIM and President of the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes until 2006.

The collaboration between Jacques Felix and Margareta Niculescu was the cornerstone of the international center for the arts of puppetry built in Charleville.

### The structure of the IIM

The activity of the IIM develops around two poles: professional training and research.

#### Professional Training

The training is provided by the ESNAM—a three-year program open to French and foreign students that is assessed by a State Diploma. Lucile Bodson implemented programs aimed to integrate graduating students into a professional life.

Committed to promoting the sharing of experience and opened to other art forms, the Institut proposes high level workshops given by French and foreign masters.

#### Research and Transmission

Established in 2012 by Lucile Bodson, the Research and Documentation center coordinates the heritage, documentary, scientific and editorial activities of the institute. Evolving since the foundation of IIM, it has been also influenced by the work of the Portal of the Arts of Puppetry. The Research Center works with a view toward continued international and interdisciplinary openness. The documentation center keeps documents in all languages of the world; every year dozens of nationalities follow its courses, residencies, and symposia:

We strive to build multilingual work tools. To reflect on puppetry, to understand its practices, but also to nourish them, we have to [connect those] in performing arts with the skills of researchers in linguistics, sociology, psychoanalysis, ethnology and anthropology, philosophy, science education, therapy, and even explore the resources of robotics, neuroscience, nanotechnology, and all the disciplines of physics and chemistry. We facilitate these meetings by organizing research residencies, laboratories, conferences, making publications, and developing networks.

says Raphaële Fleury, Manager of the Research Center. The Portal of the Arts of Puppetry hosts the archives of different nationalities and it should become trilingual by 2016.

Another line of activity is producing exhibits, while a permanent post is devoted to contact with the education system creating special projects such as visits and workshops. The *Petit Festival* organized in partnership with the schools presents the work created by students and professional puppeteers.

### THE WORLD FESTIVAL OF PUPPET THEATRES

Jacques Felix, founder of the festival, directed it until 2006. The festival became bi-annual in 2009. At present the festival expresses the vision of its new director Anne-Françoise Cabanis and president Jean-Luc Felix. For director Cabanis:

The festival is primarily a large gathering of artists and enthusiastic amateurs, all lovers of this surprising and incongruous object – the puppet. It's a festive time during which all forms of puppetry arts meet, mix, and invent the future. Our engagement is to keep alive the interest for puppet theatre and draw attention to its evolution....

For ten days in all the auditoriums, in all the streets, city squares and shop windows of Charleville, puppetry exposes itself and...takes risks! With 500 companies, on and off, in and out, small shows and big shows, speaking all languages, the festival is an essential event for puppeteers and puppet lovers.

\*Many thanks to Lucile Bodson, Raphaële Fleury, Anne-Françoise Cabanis, Jean-Luc Felix, and Margareta Niculescu for their collaboration to this article. Certain paragraphs were taken from Margareta Niculescu's book *Passeurs et complices/* passing it on with her permission, namely from her article "On the path of experimentation."

Useful links related to the Institut and World Puppetry Festival in Charleville may be found on the Puppetry International page of our website: [www.unima-usa.org](http://www.unima-usa.org)

Irina Niculescu is an internationally known director, creator and teacher of puppetry. She currently serves on the board of UNIMA-USA.



# THE MADCAP CENTER:

## A REPERTORY THEATER, EXHIBIT HALL AND PRODUCTION HOUSE

by John Lewandowski

How do we move puppet theater on to the repertory stage? What conditions does this offer the creative process? How is it different than the touring business model that is so ubiquitous in the United States? How do we build and maintain an active subscriptions series, for families as well as adults? And, if not now, when?

I've asked myself these questions many times.

After many years working as the artistic director of Marionnetes de Genève, a repertory theater, more than a few years as co-director with the Underground Railway Theater, and many smaller projects in Norway, Romania, France and Taiwan, I've brought my experience and hopes back to the USA and Cincinnati to build and establish a permanent repertory theater in the heart of the Midwest. Building on a strong base and existing body of work, Madcap Productions became the perfect institution, ready to move up to a new and exciting level of activity and engagement.

**THE BONES:** Madcap Productions has a solid touring program and extensive educational services, which are the bones on which to build a repertory theater. Currently, Madcap performs over 700 shows each season with the majority of those presented in schools across the midwest. An active youth concert and opera program has attracted partners such as the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra. Audience development and bringing puppet theater to the major stages of the region have given the company a strong innovative brand, recognized by children, parents and adults. Reaching more than 200,000 spectators each season, Madcap has spread the desire to see puppet theater "in its

own habitat" with expanded production values. Complementing the performing market, Madcap's educational services and outreach programs have let kids and adults "get their hands dirty" and build puppets and stage simple stories. As the company transitions to its new home, the strength of an existing body of work and direct, personal contact with future audience members assures that we'll hit the ground running.

**THE PROGRAMS:** Having the artistic strength and experience to imagine a repertory series, I asked the support of Irina Niculescu with her success in repertory theaters across the world, and the professional development she has undertaken in this arena. It builds considerable excitement within the team to know we will have the ability to use production equipment and design elements that are often too expensive to tour. Controlling the entire experience from the moment an audience member enters the building to the final bows makes the repertory theater experience unique and rare in the puppet theater community. Training and developing the audience and the need for diversity in programming is a constant challenge. Giving the subscription series a diverse pallet of shows requires Madcap to look beyond programming only in-house productions.

**THE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Administrative structures needed to support a repertory program are well known in the theater community. Relying on existing better business practices gives the operational side of a repertory puppet theater plenty of local and regional models to emulate. Better business practices of modern theaters will need to be in place so that the new repertory puppet theater does not try to reinvent the wheel.



The artists, designers and directors and their needs are critical to success. The ability to experiment and fail, to bring the audience in on the process will give a feeling of ownership and investment. Open the doors, but only when you're ready. Professional and trained actors are the clay to mold strong puppeteers. In the realms of basic training and the puppet, partners like Northern Kentucky University bring the form and exigency to the training of the actor.

**NEW WORKS: WRITERS, DIRECTORS AND DESIGNERS:** The lack of experience artists have in creating repertory puppet productions demands that experimentation and a laboratory for personal development be a permanent part of the structure. Our model is that of the director leading a team (of designer, writer and composer) in the conception process. The demands of puppet theater in the production process are critical.

Connecting with the world, fighting provincialism: Invite in the audience to witness the process and results. This is not to get artistic feedback, but to train the audience in how to understand and appreciate the resulting work. Include the media and press in the process to also develop an understanding of how to evaluate and "review" the resulting productions. Building a new language and references that media can use to report on puppet theater is an important step in preparing for success.

**THE COMMUNITY NEEDS:** *Creating a destination and evaluating the economic impact of the arts.*

Studies have demonstrated that visitors to arts and culture events and venues spend more than attendees to other types of events and venues. On average, for every visit to an arts event such as a Madcap show, visitors spend an additional \$26 in the neighborhood – provided there are amenities. Non-local visitors spend even more than local visitors, averaging \$39.96 per event, in addition to tickets. According to Americans for the Arts, non-local attendees typically spend \$32.99 on food and accommodations and \$6.97 on retail. (Americans for the Arts, 2012, from the Economic impact study created by Elizabeth Bartley, University of Cincinnati Department of Art, Architecture and Planning.)

Having the metrics and tools to demonstrate the resulting community growth and economic impact is critical today for acquiring the capital support necessary to build and maintain a modern repertory puppet theater.

The next few years will be critical for Madcap's artistic staff, the board of trustees and the Cincinnati region. When the doors open and lights go down, it will be the puppets that must do their job and create those magical moments that parents and children of all ages will remember for a lifetime. •





# EL ARCA PUPPET THEATER MUSEUM

## CULTURAL FACILITATOR IN HAVANA'S HISTORIC CENTER

by Maikel Rodríguez de la Cruz, Dramaturg, and Liliana Pérez Recio, Director of the Theater Hall

### El Arca and its Reason for Being

Facing Havana Bay, sponsored by the City Historian's Office (Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad, OHC) with support from the UNDP and UNICEF, **El Arca Puppet Theater Museum** opens its doors to all. Since 2010, the building (originally constructed in 1624 by the Pedroso family) shelters **a museum, a performance space, and a theater group**. The theater museum was founded by a group of artists to preserve the memory of the puppet and to use the language of figure animation to create a theatrical institution that would promote social, educational, and cultural action.

El Arca is comprised of three entities, each with well-defined objectives, yet united in one unified organization. It is a cultural project making a strong social impact in fields that include education through art, popular education, patriotic education, socio-cultural promotion, and project management. In response to the development strategies set forth by the Havana City Historian's Office and the National Council on Theater Arts, these general objectives were established:

- To offer programs for children, teens, and adults utilizing animated figures to reach a diverse public, recognizing the individual forms of perception of each group.
- To develop animation techniques, in all their variety and experimental nature, in the Theater Group's work as well as in the art of the invited artists who work at the theater intermittently.
- To collect, conserve, and exhibit material that illuminates and preserves the history of the puppet, both nationally and internationally.
- To facilitate collective construction and preservation of knowledge through historical and critical study of the puppet theater movement.

- To establish a center that will actively contribute to the documentation, research, and publication (in digital format) of content related to animated figures.
- To create and maintain spaces for learning and dialogue about figure animation through workshops, conferences, and collaboration with entities that share these goals.

### Museum in Motion

El Arca promotes the collective construction of specific knowledge that is extremely fragile: the memory of the animated figure. And **animation** is the chosen subject of its exhibitions. The curators have emphasized the puppetry techniques with which the interpreter transforms an object into a character.

The collection consists not only of puppets as museum pieces, but also preserves recordings, correspondence, designs, sketches, photos, posters, handbills, programs, librettos, musical scores, costumes, models, backdrops, prototypes of mechanisms, publications, testimonials, and, to sum it all up, everything related to puppet theater, its history, and its protagonists.

With educational goals in mind, El Arca takes the visitor on an **interactive journey** that invites the public to understand the tasks of the puppeteer through a living understanding of "how it is done." To come into contact with the museum opens a space for dialogue in which the public directly contributes to the enrichment of the exhibit and actively passes down its memories. For example, some of the contributions and donations that formed part of the legacy of various families and groups<sup>1</sup> who, having come into the orbit of the museum, have then generously contributed to the development of its collection.

# PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

The **universal collection** is essentially didactic. The **Cuban Collection**, meanwhile, is organized according to criteria of age, authenticity, importance, and the state of conservation of the pieces as testimonials to the role of the puppet in national theatrical practice.

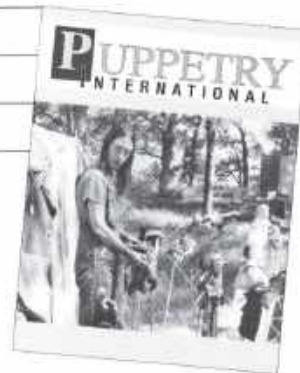
The museographic project is an act of immersion: The environment and setting present the collection in a decidedly theatrical manner, sending the visitor through the set, recreating the environment in which the puppets are constructed, protected, and rehearsed.

The cataloging, restoration, and conservation of a growing collection demands detailed

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The **universal collection** is essentially didactic. The **Cuban Collection**, meanwhile, is organized according to criteria of age, authenticity, importance, and the state of conservation of the pieces as testimonials to the role of the puppet in national theatrical practice.

The museographic project is an act of immersion; The environment and setting present the collection in a decidedly theatrical manner, sending the visitor through the set, recreating the environment in which the puppets are constructed, protected, and rehearsed.

The cataloging, restoration, and conservation of a growing collection demands detailed and dynamic research to find analogous experiences that can be used to understand the nature of the puppet. Before inaugurating its permanent exhibit, the museum found ways to use the puppet as an educational tool, moving schoolchildren from their community into a theatrical world, and into the world of art in general. In this way, the museum contributes to the education of a person who finds in art an authentic mode of personal expression, play, reflection and emancipation—a person who will be sensitive to the “cultural product” found in art.

For example, “Paper Theaters and Photography on Manufactured Paper” is a workshop funded by UNICEF and the Historian’s Office within the framework of a plan called “Participation of Children and Teens in Havana’s Historic Center, 2008-2012.” This workshop found a way to connect earlier creative experiences using paper theaters as a nexus. The workshop identified the subjects as the authors of their own social transformation, people who developed their abilities in an extracurricular environment in pursuit of artistic creativity; it facilitates education based on values such as solidarity, creative interchange, personal growth and increased ability in group communication, in addition to disciplines and techniques such as history, theater, dramaturgy and photography.

## Performance Space

Theater is a highly political, expressive language. A performance space is, in itself, a facilitator of culture; so which culture, or cultures, is it preserving? El Arca, using puppetry as a link, has created space for an intercultural artistic dialogue in which the spectator encounters problems, ways of thinking, technical support, and subject matter that arise from local groups, provinces, and nations—issues that contain and project a cultural truth.

By providing conditions that can be used to promote diverse techniques for creative animation and experimentation, the performance space has, to date, provided opportunities to 25 national and international groups, and has offered an average of 130 public events each year, with an average audience of more than 4,000 spectators. It has hosted diverse workshops on figure animation, conferences, interviews, master classes, and thesis defenses for the Instituto Superior de Arte.

## The Ones Who Pull the Strings

The team consists of Yudd Favier (theater studies), Maikel Rodríguez de la Cruz (dramaturg), Mario David Cárdenas (designer), and puppeteer actors under the general direction of Liliana Pérez Recio. The team focused their research on the need for phenomenological understanding of the puppet with the objective of permitting the animator to come closer to the properties of the object through figure animation, which is viewed as a dramatic discipline, as a method of grasping and comprehending life.

In a little over three years, the group has staged five productions, for which they have studied shadow theater, inclusion of digital projection media, interaction with audio-visual products, the link between the animated object and contemporary dance, and puppet and scenery design based on the visual arts (particularly recordings). Furthermore, the team has been able to help preserve basic techniques, such as the hand puppet and the rod puppet, both of which are widely found in Cuban theatrical tradition.



### PHOTO CAPTIONS

P28  
LILY’S CAT, 2010

ABOVE  
PAPER THEATER  
WORKSHOP WITH CHILDREN  
PERUSO, 2014



FACING HAVANA BAY

The El Arca Collective's task of cultural promotion, specifically regarding the theater group, is not just a collateral result of artistic production. The best method to approach this work is through real-world experience. *Brazos Caídos* (Fallen Arms) gave rise to a workshop for students at the Trade School (Escuela de Oficios), a school created by the OHC to preserve traditional trades in danger of extinction. After trainings and improvisations about the life stories of these young people, a script emerged that united participants and company professionals in a presentation that came to fruition some ten months later as performance art.

During October and November 2012, El Arca presented programs aimed at pre-college students. After each event, dialogues took place that led the young people to reflect critically on such relevant issues as drug use, sexuality, friendship, anger management, ethics and, in particular, their social conscience as young people growing up in circumstances that show signs of "a fracture of cosmovision between the goals proclaimed in important speeches about the future of the country, and the ideas about the future that today's Cubans have formed for themselves." (Guanche, César Julio: 2012, page 45). These debates were not one-sided. They had an impact on all the parties who met with this goal in mind: To use the *mise-en-scène* as a means to view the past in order to comprehend the present and actively intervene in the future.

### Full Steam Ahead

Cuban political culture has arrived at a stage where it is making small changes in its socio-economic models, although this has existed in special cases since the nineties. Thanks to a "domino effect," these small changes have had a gigantic impact on the social and cultural order of the country. We can now envision new forms of property, contracts, and businesses (mixed, corporate, etc.). The very concept

of "non-agrarian cooperatives" presumes a change in the design of organizations for, from, of and by the culture. In the midst of these circumstances, after the important role culture has played in the "Cuban social order," the impact of an institution like El Arca is significant in terms of artistic production and cultural life, not only in its own community, but in the artistic, cultural, academic, and educational development to which every individual in Cuban society has an indisputable right.

El Arca, in all its three entities—museum, performance space, and theater group—always does its artistic work in parallel and simultaneous with its work as a social, cultural, and educational promoter. Cultural promotion should not be seen as the consequence of artistic work, but rather as the epicenter that provokes, dialogues with, and redefines the boundaries of artistic, museological, and scientific tasks, catalyzed by the very nature of the puppet as a cultural phenomenon and its vocation as a perpetrator of the history of humanity. The potential every individual implicitly possesses to a greater or lesser degree should be developed. This will be the inevitable result of viewing the world aesthetically and ethically and growing from this condition into a new civil state of freedom.

### Endnote

- 1 Maria Gattorno, active contributor and founding member of the Friends Club, donated two puppets created by Tomás Sánchez and sketches by Juan Francisco Elso Padilla.

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# FOUNDATION MODERN PUPPET CENTRE

—excerpts of an article by Fumiko Matsuzawa

## ASPECTS OF JAPANESE PUPPETRY AND “FOUNDATION MODERN PUPPET CENTRE”

Foundation Modern Puppet Centre was founded in 1968 by Puppet Theatre Hitomiza. We like to say that puppetry is thriving in Japan more than anywhere in the world. More than two and a half million theatregoers every year enjoy the puppetry of some eighty professional puppet companies. There are no associations, so we don't know exactly how many amateur puppet groups exist in Japan, but there could be as many as two or even three thousand. Led by Bunraku, there are also many traditional puppet shows—puppet show activity is lively in Japan. Though only Bunraku is well known among them, there are six or seven professional traditional puppet theatres with about 200 traditional puppet theatres active overall.

According to the researchers, there are extant documents and puppets from some 770 troupes. In these circumstances, we at the Foundation have been engaged with traditional puppetry as well as with modern puppet performances; we have introduced and invited puppet shows from Japan and other countries; we have produced original puppet shows, workshops, and exhibitions. The mission of the Centre is: to publicize the art of puppetry and its extreme attractiveness; to create puppet shows and pursue deeper artistry in the genre; and, to establish the role of puppetry in society.

## PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

In our Foundation, we are doing the planning for two groups: Hitomi-za Otome Bunraku and Deaf Puppet Theatre Hitomi.

### Hitomi-za Otome Bunraku

Hitomi-za Otome Bunraku presents traditional Japanese puppet shows, Ningyo Joruri; the group has presented performances and workshops in Japan and other countries. While a bunraku puppet is manipulated by three male puppeteers, an otome-bunraku puppet is performed by a solo female puppeteer. In the sense of a young woman as “young girl,” the term literally means “bunraku by women.” In appearance it is similar to a bunraku puppet, but its mechanism has been restructured to fit the solo puppeteer. The three-puppeteer style enables rich and delicate expression that is highly recognized worldwide today; on the other hand, otome bunraku is the method by which a solo puppeteer can achieve the same effect. Otome bunraku performances are performed by gidayu, just as with bunraku. And just as otome bunraku is performed by women, gidayu music is also played by women. A gorgeous stage setting is also a feature.

### Deaf Puppet Theatre Hitomi

Founded in 1980, here deaf persons and the hearing collaborate on the art of puppetry. With the special abilities of deaf persons, who are not bound by spoken language, the company was established in order to seek new avenues for expression in puppetry. The project's goals are to have a positive impact on both social welfare and theatre arts. In our world, such a puppet group is a rarity, and it has received numerous awards. The quality of their shows improved, and it has performed in Japan and other countries.

Hitomi has created more than twenty productions since its founding, with more than fifty performances a year. These are enjoyed by the deaf as well as by hearing audiences of all ages. Many types of workshops are offered each year, and these are popular with both the deaf and hearing communities. Past subjects have included Experiencing Sound, Communicating Without Spoken Language, and Representing the Poem in Sign Language.



YOSHITSUNE AND THE ONE THOUSAND CHERRY BLOSSOM TREES  
PHOTO: HITOSHI FURUYA



HAKO/BOXES A MUSIC BOX OF GRANDPA  
PHOTO: AKIHIRO KATO

Fumiko Matsuzawa is the Director of Foundation Modern Puppet Centre.

*Please visit our website for the complete article on Foundation Modern Puppet Centre, including color photos. —Ed.*



## UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT AS A PUPPETRY CENTER

by John Bell

Frank Ballard's creation of puppetry studies at the University of Connecticut in 1964 set an important national precedent for instruction in the puppet arts, and in 1987 the Puppet Arts Program was augmented by the establishment of what is now the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, chartered to "provide the people of Connecticut and others a source of entertainment and education through the art of puppetry"; to "preserve the heritage and tradition" of puppetry; to "share information and educational tools; [...] provide a continuing source of puppetry experience to students of all ages"; to preserve the puppets created by Frank Ballard, and to expand the Institute's collection "to include new acquisitions created by other puppeteers."

Created by friends and colleagues of Frank Ballard to preserve his legacy in the face of the challenges posed by his Parkinson's Disease, the Ballard Institute benefitted from grassroots support in the UConn and nearby Mansfield communities. The Institute was first based in three former group homes at the old Mansfield Training School, two miles from UConn's Main Campus, and volunteers spent long hours creating storage, exhibition, archive, and office spaces. In 2007 the Ballard Institute was fully integrated into UConn's School of Fine Arts, as an outreach program and research institute. In March 2014 the Institute moved to its current home, a 4,000-square-foot

storefront space in Mansfield's new Downtown Storrs development, a commercial district with a Town Square located just across the street from UConn's Main Campus.

UConn's Puppet Arts Program, directed by Bart Roccoberon (himself a student of Frank Ballard) offers BA, MA, and MFA degrees in puppetry, and since 2013 has expanded its faculty to include Margarita Blush, trained at the Bulgarian National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts; Paul Spirito, also a Puppet Arts alumnus, who teaches puppet design and construction; and John Bell, director of the Ballard Institute, whose initiation into puppetry through his many years of work with the Bread & Puppet Theater was augmented by his doctoral studies in theater history at Columbia University.

UConn's pairing of its educational and outreach programs constitutes a puppet center in the northeastern United States with a wide array of possibilities. The Puppet Arts Program teaches new puppeteers in its three degree programs and regularly produces new works for puppetry from student work and productions at the Dramatic Arts Department's Connecticut Repertory Theater. An ongoing *UConn Puppet Slam* series features student and professional work, and the student-produced *Summertime Saturday Puppet Shows*, are both co-produced with the Ballard Institute. Beginning in Fall 2014 the Ballard Institute is initiating a monthly performance series in its black-box theater.



At its new home in Storrs Center the Ballard Institute continues its public programming for adults and children, the UConn community, and the general public. Its new museum space includes three high-ceilinged galleries and display cases that look out into the UConn Co-op Bookstore just adjacent. The Institute features exhibitions drawn from its permanent collections of Frank Ballard's work and world puppet traditions (over 2,600 puppets in all), as well as displays of work by such contemporary puppet artists as Amy Trompeter, Blair Thomas, Anne Cubberly, and Eric Bass. The exhibitions are augmented by the Institute's *Puppet Forum* series of talks by scholars and practitioners about the history, theory, and practice of puppetry, and week-end cross-disciplinary scholarly symposia about such topics as Chinese Shadow Theater, puppet dramaturgy, and theories of object performance. Puppet Arts students teach puppet-building workshops to elementary school classes, summer camps, and, occasionally, adults. The Institute also organizes outreach workshops and performances featuring such puppeteers as Sara Peattie and Amy Trompeter, connecting with community groups from Hartford to the nearby city of Willimantic.

The Ballard Institute's archives include letters and papers of Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin, Rufus and Margo Rose, Frank Ballard, and other significant American puppeteers of the twentieth century. In recent years, the Institute has received audio-visual archives from the Puppeteers of America, Tom and Mark Mazzerella (makers of the acclaimed documentary film *The American Puppet*), and Jeff Farber's outtakes from his film about Bread & Puppet Theater: *Brother Bread, Sister Puppet*.

The growth of the Ballard Institute into its splendid new home in Storrs Center opens the door to multiple opportunities for the creation, study, and appreciation of puppetry as a global art form with ubiquitous roots and great possibilities for twenty-first-century innovation. The challenge the Institute faces is to carefully marshal its community connections and limited resources in order to grow into and take full advantage of these new opportunities.

John Bell is the director of BIMP, a founding member of Great Small Works, and is the book review editor and historian for *Puppetry International* magazine.



PHOTO CAPTIONS

P 32  
MANSFIELD PARADE,  
FROM A COMMUNITY WORKSHOP  
LEAD BY SARA PEATTIE

P 33  
ROD PUPPETS BY  
FRANK BALLARD; THE RING OF THE  
NIBELUNGEN

JERO MAGON MARIONETTE:  
YANK, FROM EUGENE O'NEILL'S  
THE HAIRY APE.



## THE LIN LIU-HSIN PUPPET THEATRE MUSEUM: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS, PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

by Robin Ruizendaal

The economic boom of Taiwan in the 1980s also led to a renewed interest in its own culture and roots. Puppet theatre always had an important status in Taiwan, because of its many companies (over 300 professional companies), its puppet television station and puppet film industry. Collectors started to move into China to collect puppets on a large scale. Some of these collectors were inspired by puppet museums in the West, such as the former Kwok On museum in Paris of Prof. Jacques Pimpaneau, which had one of the most fantastic collections of Chinese puppets in the world (now in the Museo do Oriente in Lisbon). Paul Lin, a Taiwanese art collector, traveled the world to buy exclusive works of art for his collection. One day, in a museum in Japan, he came face to face with a beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century southern Chinese glove puppet; being confronted with the puppet was a moment of awakening for him. Paul Lin decided to focus all his collecting energy on the puppet theatre of Taiwan (and soon including the rest of Asia). The collection grew steadily to almost 10,000 puppet theatre artifacts from all over Asia, with an emphasis on China and Taiwan. Taiyuan Arts and Culture, founded by Paul Lin, attracted a number of specialists to take care of the collection.

In the 1990s, a planning committee started with analyzing the function of a modern puppet theatre museum in an Asian/Chinese cultural context. We were faced with the following problems:

- How to promote (traditional) puppet theatre inside Taiwan, where the youth is mainly interested in televised entertainment and their game consoles?

- How to design exhibitions that inspire the audience to get really involved in puppet theatre?

- How to preserve over 10,000 puppets made of a wide range of materials?

- How to promote Asian puppet theatre around the world and preserve its heritage?

Our first action was to create a puppet theatre company that would integrate traditional puppet theatre, as well as find new and innovative ways to present it. The Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company was founded in 2000, and its members were the old master Chen Xihuang (eighty-three), young puppeteers and modern theatre-trained actors and designers. The first two plays that were created—*Marco Polo* and *The Wedding of the Mice*—used traditional techniques and puppets, but with modern stage techniques and design. These shows proved to be a great success and, to date, each show has been performed over a hundred times in over thirty countries around the world.

The Taiyuan Company also started an outreach school educational program. In 2000, the Tao-Thiu-Thia Puppet Centre (TTT Puppet Centre) was founded as an experimental puppet center to study what kind of exhibit could inspire visitors. All exhibits in this center were accompanied by a DIY installation where people could operate and play.

Rehearsals and puppet making were all done in the exhibition



space. The very interactive nature of the exhibits, combined with solid academic research of different puppet traditions, resulted in a very successful mini-museum. As a private organization, the center was able to generate 60% of its income from performances and educational activities. The rest was provided by the government and the Taiyuan Foundation. At the time there were four full-time staff.

In 2005, two buildings in the old part of Taipei were donated to the foundation by Ms. Shi Jinhua to commemorate her husband, the physician Lin Liu-Hsin. The Lin Liu-Hsin Puppet Theatre was founded with a four-story museum and puppet theatre. Later another office building and storage facility were added. The museum continued with its style of interactive exhibitions and in-depth research. Fieldwork and exchange programs were conducted with most Asian countries and the collection continued to grow. The Taipei City Government Arts Education program stipulates that all second year elementary school students have to visit a puppet museum and see a traditional performance. Over the past few years this has led to huge influx of visitors (and income). The museum focus is not only on the younger generations, and the exhibits provide information for all different levels of visitors.

The museum now has the most complete collection of Asian puppet theatre artifacts in the world, with an emphasis on the puppet theatre traditions of Taiwan and China. This resulted in the publication of the book *Asian Theatre Puppets* by Thames & Hudson in 2009. The collection policy is based on obtaining complete sets of puppets from the different Asian traditions, including stages, scripts and instruments, complemented by fieldwork and research.

The conservation department of the museum now consists of two experts, who are responsible for the conservation tasks, as well as the preparations of artifacts for exhibitions. The museum now has two floors of completely climate-controlled spaces for the storage of the different puppets. Continuous study and research is conducted in the best way of preserving the many different materials from which puppets are made.

The museum and the puppet theatre company together now have a full-time staff of fourteen, as well as volunteers and interns from around the world. At present, the company performs over 250 shows a year and generates 60-70% of the total revenue. Donations and government support account for 30-40% of the total income. The innovative approach of the museum and theatre company has inspired numerous other companies to follow in its footsteps and create new ways of presenting traditional culture. At present, there are several local and municipal puppet theatre museums and centers in Taiwan, as well as a national elementary and high school puppet competition. In the finals, there are over 120 school companies competing! The Lin Liu-Hsin Puppet Theatre Museum is but a small part of this wonderful tradition, but is continually inspiring people to embrace the art of puppet theatre.

Dr. Robin Ruizendaal is the director of the Lin Liu-Hsin Puppet Theatre Museum.

*Note: The entire text of Dr. Ruizendaal's article, originally intended for publication in PI #34, may be found on our website, unima-usa.org, complete with color images. -Ed.*



**PHOTO CAPTIONS**

P 34  
INTERACTIVE VIETNAMESE  
WATER PUPPETS

P 35  
MUSEUM ENTRANCE

GLOVE PUPPET FROM THE  
COLLECTION OF  
DE GROOT, 1880S  
PHOTO: R. RUIZENDAAL



## PUPPET SHOWPLACE THEATER

by Roxie Myrum, Artistic Director

Puppet Showplace Theater first opened its doors in 1974, transforming a small storefront space into a vibrant regional puppetry center. Visionary founder Mary Churchill wanted the theater “to serve both city and suburban fans of puppetry,” and vowed to “welcome visiting puppeteers” to perform, teach, and inspire one another’s creative work.

After forty years of operations, Puppet Showplace still remains a welcoming home for puppeteers across New England and beyond. Each year we present over 50 unique productions in more than 300 performances. More than 24,000 patrons cross our doorstep, and we reach thousands more through touring performances, school residencies, and community outreach events. Aspiring artists of all ages can participate in workshops, summer camps, puppet slams, guild meetings, and other “gateway” activities. In everything we do, we look for ways to expand our puppetry family.

In recent years, we have worked with larger theaters and cultural institutions to increase puppetry literacy and awareness. When major presenters brought large-scale theatrical puppetry productions to town, we partnered with them to offer post-show workshops, demonstrations, and backstage tours. In collaboration with Boston’s StageSource, we hosted panels for playwrights interested in puppet characters and recorded an informational podcast about puppetry arts. Responding to a demand for puppetry expertise, we developed puppet coaching services for theaters, universities, and other producing entities. We continue to look for ways for our center to link the broader theater community to the world of puppetry arts.

When I became Puppet Showplace’s artistic director in 2010, I observed that many of our veteran companies were nearing retirement age. Master puppeteer Paul Vincent Davis had stepped down as the theater’s resident artist after performing this role for over 35 years, and a talented young puppeteer named Brad Shur was now stepping into this position. Paul and Brad developed a powerful and productive mentoring relationship, with the younger artist learning to perform several of Paul’s classic shows while simultaneously beginning work on his own productions.



At the same time, we were trying to figure out how to energize “Incubator,” our remarkable drop-in program where artists of all interests, levels, and abilities could stop by on designated evenings to share ideas and swap skills. Incubator was effective as a gateway to the art form; however, it was difficult for this informal group to motivate emerging professionals to tackle the challenge of creating full-length shows.

Recognizing that both mentorship and community were essential to artistic success, we recalibrated our Incubator program to support emerging companies who seemed ready to embark on an entire production process. Every January, we now present two world premiere Incubator productions as part of our “New Year, New Shows!” series. We provide these artists with start-up funds, rehearsal space, fiscal sponsorship, works-in-progress showings, and “outside eye” reviews. While the artists themselves retain ownership of their productions, we continue to partner with them through long-term presenting relationships.

Partnering with individual artists and with larger cultural institutions has allowed us to extend our reach far beyond the confines of our small storefront space. After forty years, our doors are still open, and we welcome whatever the future may hold! •





## GREAT ARIZONA PUPPET THEATER

by Nancy Smith, CEO/Artistic Director



In the early 1970's, the final link of Interstate Highway 10 was in the works. The proposed route went right through central Phoenix and there was much discussion about how to gracefully take a 6 lane divided highway through the heart of the city. A plan was worked out to take the highway through a tunnel and build a park on top of it.

The highway department bought everything in the path so they could raze it all and build the freeway. But wait! That beautiful old Mormon Church! You can't knock that down! Concerned community members rallied to place the Phoenix LDS 2nd Ward Church on the National Register of Historic Places. This tactic saved it from destruction, and rerouted I-10 to curve around it, but the highway department still owned the grand old building and let it fall into disrepair.

Enter Great Arizona Puppet Theater founders Nancy Smith and Ken Bonar. "We started as a touring company in 1983," Smith explains. "In 1988 we rented an old fire station, fixed it up, and sold tickets. We put a lot of work into it and then the landlord wanted it back. To establish longevity and continuity, we needed to buy."

The old church, a "fixer-upper," was all they could have hoped for— high ceilings, adequate parking, plenty of room, central location, lovely architecture, historically significant and right across the street from a park that focused on cultural connections.

The 10,000 square foot building has a 250-seat auditorium with flexible seating in the church's old "Social Hall." The former chapel is the lobby, gift shop and exhibit area. "Peter's Party Room" is a place for parties, rehearsals, classes and meetings. On the second floor, a former Sunday School room was converted to a Guest Room for visiting guest artists. Other rooms are devoted to sewing and painting, workshop, storage and a Puppet Resource Library.

The theater's resident company maintains a busy performance schedule, with audiences of 75,000 people annually at the theater and in the community. National and international guest artists include outstanding puppeteers from China, Mexico, India, Germany, Canada, Uzbekistan, Romania, Indonesia, Russia, Greece, Japan and all regions of the U.S.

Visiting puppeteers perform for family audiences and at adult-oriented "puppet slams" and present workshops and Master Classes for the Phoenix Guild of Puppetry. The Phoenix Guild meets monthly at the theater and co-produces the National Day of Puppetry. Alan Cook has mounted several exhibits in the exhibit area.

"Our puppet center is a bridge between cultures and we've seen it time and again with our young audiences. Having a big old building can be daunting but we couldn't do what we do without it." Smith admits that the last few years have been rough, but: "Things are looking up. We're excited about coming collaborations with our neighborhood school, the Japanese Friendship Garden, Irish Cultural Center, Jewish Heritage Museum and the Hance Park Conservancy." •



# INSIDE THE OBRAZTSOV STATE CENTRAL PUPPET THEATRE MUSEUM

by Maria Ilina, Curator, GATsTK Museum Archive  
Translated by Dassia N. Posner

The Obraztsov State Central Puppet Theatre (GATsTK) was founded on the initiative of several leading Soviet Russian puppeteers. In 1930, participants of the Union-Wide Conference of Puppet Theatre Workers created the Central Puppet Theatre as a laboratory of puppet arts, the experiments of which could be used by all Russian puppeteers. The new theatre, headed by variety performer Sergei Obraztsov, was to integrate the best ideas and define puppetry as a fundamentally new art form that treated old puppetry forms anew. Among the discoveries of GATsTK were the round rotating screen, the use of rod puppets, and plays with a serious literary foundation written specifically for puppets and based on minimal words and maximal action. Until the mid 1950s, plays staged at GATsTK were sent out for production at puppet theatres in Russia and former Soviet republics. GATsTK's current building on Sadovaya-Samotechnaya Street (opened 1970) has become a benchmark for the construction of theatres in other cities. Many talented directors and artists who trained at GATsTK later headed puppet theatres in Russia and Eastern European countries.<sup>1</sup>

The GATsTK Puppet Theatre Museum, which opened in 1937, was the first USSR research institution dedicated to the study of puppetry. The museum was charged with the task of collecting and studying materials on the history of traditional puppet theatre. Its mission was to exhibit puppet theatre from various countries from its origins to the present day.<sup>2</sup> Another was to report on contemporary professional directing and repertoire. And naturally the museum needed to reflect the creative path of S. V. Obraztsov and other outstanding puppetry masters.<sup>3</sup>

GATsTK actor Andrei Fedotov took on the challenging task of creating the museum. World puppetry was little studied at the time. Traditional puppets of various peoples were held in ethnographic collections; puppet theatre was regarded as an aspect of folklore and not as an independent art form. There was a small quantity of objects in Nikolai Bartram's Toy Museum, where puppetry was regarded as an aspect of child's play. Fedotov went from library to library, browsing old periodicals and popular prints (*lubok*). Studying Soviet theatre was somewhat easier. He became acquainted with puppeteers, recorded their stories, and photographed their puppets, studying the theatre contemporary to him through the words of those who created it. The professional puppetry community also played an important role in establishing the museum. GATsTK corresponded with directors of the puppet theatres that had opened all over the Soviet Union, receiving new information and sometimes objects for the museum in return.

After 1948, the theatre began touring internationally, upon which the museum began to collect foreign puppets.<sup>4</sup> After a trip to China in 1953, it acquired a carnival dragon (he now adorns the theatre lobby), shadow figures, and more. The *Soviet Puppetry* collection was almost entirely acquired at meetings organized by members of GATsTK, during which puppeteers shared their experiences.<sup>5</sup> After the disbanding of Bartram's Toy Museum, puppets from his collection were transferred to the theatre's museum. The theatre's workshops also served as a source for expanding the collection. When outdated productions are removed from the repertoire, their puppets are given to the museum.<sup>6</sup>



The museum now has rich collections. Puppets are its foundation, but it also holds screens and set models – about 5,000 items. The *Three-Dimensional Collection* brings together puppets and designs. This collection preserves puppets from traditional folk performances of Europe and Asia – among which are Indonesian *wayang-purwa* leather figures, Indian and Burmese marionettes, exquisite Chinese and Japanese puppets, Eastern European vertep puppets, satirical glove puppets from many countries, and Native American, Asian, and African ritual masks.

The *Soviet Puppetry* collection contains puppets from the 1920s to 1990s, including puppets from 1920s and 30s agitprop shows, satirical front-line WWII programs, and films and variety shows. Along with puppets from professional theatres are amateur and mass-produced puppets, including prototypes developed for the Soviet toy industry in the 1920s. The *Film and Photography* collection preserves photos and film of all GATsTK's activities, photographs, negatives, and films from theatres in Russia and abroad, and digital photos and video recordings of contemporary shows. The *Graphic Sources* collection holds designs, posters, advertisements, and other illustrative materials. Finally, the *Archival* collection includes the personal papers of performers, reviews, and documents about the work of GATsTK, translations of puppetry history books and articles, puppet play texts, memoirs, and puppetry conference materials. The collection contains material on former USSR puppet theatres from their origins to the present day, and the personal archives of Soviet puppeteers like Nina and Ivan Efimov, Petrushka-player Peter Lubaev, Lenora Shpet, founder of the Department of Children's Theatres, and Isaac Barkhash, the first Soviet puppetry historian.

The museum has an adjacent library, the world's first specialized library of puppetry literature. In the museum's early years, the library's holdings were part of the museum's collection, but the subsequent enlargement of its holdings prompted their separation. Currently, the library's collection consists of nearly 4,000 items, half in foreign languages, including pre-revolutionary Russian art journals and complete runs of periodicals on puppet theatre. In the *World Puppetry* division are agit-prop Petrushka plays from the 1920s and 30s, puppetry how-to guides published in Russian and foreign languages, books on puppetry history, artistic literature for children and adults, reference books, and encyclopedias.

From the museum's early years, conservation has been an acute problem. Initially, the museum did not have a special conservation space. Historically valuable items were on display, while the remainder was stored right in the museum hall. Exhibits were placed in cabinets with glass above and wooden doors below. The upper portion served the function of exhibit cases; the lower was designed for storage. Under such circumstances it was impossible to comply with preservation procedures; often it was not even possible to clean the objects. This situation continued while the museum was in the building on Mayakovsky Square. It was resolved only in 1970, when the theatre moved to its present location on Sadovaya-Samotechnaya Street. In the new building, provision was made for repository space, though now it accommodates the growing collection with difficulty.



#### PHOTO CAPTIONS

P 38  
MUSEUM EXPOSITION IN THE  
THEATRE'S OLD BUILDING ON  
MAYAKOVSKY SQUARE  
PHOTO: ANDREI AMELKIN

P 39  
MUSEUM OF THE STATE CENTRAL  
PUPPET THEATRE AS IT LOOKS TODAY  
PHOTO: ANDREI AMELKIN

CLOCK ON FRONT DOOR  
OF GATsTK

The first exhibition, which opened in 1937, was displayed in the lobby and in a converted theatre audience balcony.<sup>8</sup> Its exhibits were grouped by country with an attempt to interrelate the puppetry traditions within each. For example, in a display case devoted to Indian theatre, puppets from a nineteenth-century *Ramayana* performance were placed with puppets from an amateur collective from Madras; a section on Italian theatre contained medieval figures from Nativity performances, a Sicilian knight puppet, and Pulcinella, “brother” to the Russian Petrushka. In addition to puppets, the exhibition also included set models from traditional forms, including Javanese shadow theatre and Romanian folk theatre.<sup>9</sup> Drawings explaining the technical control of different puppet systems, the construction of screens, and images of masked carnival performances (Tibetan Cham dance, Chinese carnival lion and dragon dances) were posted in the museum’s great hall.<sup>10</sup>

In the mid-60s, a plan was developed for a new exhibition; in the new building, work began on its gradual implementation. The current exhibition opened in 1970. In it, the objects are presented according to various themes: puppets from religious performances, folk epic heroes of Europe and Asia, satirical characters of different peoples. The exhibition also reflects the diversity of the professional puppet theatre and the history of GATsTK.

The oldest part of the exhibition is devoted to puppets from religious performances. It includes a Tibetan Cham dance mask, Iranian Tazieh figures, and an Iranian dervish figure. Puppets from Christian nativity performances occupy a separate case – fifteenth-century Italian Magi figures, Belarusian *batleika* puppets, and puppet stages for nativity performances (*vertep*). A special case is dedicated to Asian shadow figures. Another is devoted to medieval secular performances, including Sicilian *opera dei pupi* puppets of Charlemagne’s warriors and a copy of a drawing by abbeß Herrad of Landsberg (twelfth century) that shows how medieval puppets were manipulated.

Another section presents traditional Asian puppetry, especially Chinese puppetry. Chinese marionettes are dressed in richly embroidered costumes and have a complex control; strings are attached even to their fingers. Nearby are glove puppets from satirical Chinese performances. In the exhibit hall is a magnificent screen of a Chinese puppeteer with a background pagoda embroidered by hand. Called “theatre on a yoke,” it attached to the puppeteer’s shoulders.

In “Satirical World Performances” are Petrushka and his foreign satirical comedy “brothers”: the German Hanswurst, Uzbek Palvan-Katchal, and many others. A special case is dedicated to the “last Russian Petrushka player,” Ivan Zaitsev; it displays his Petrushka, his marionettes from *Circus on Stage*, and a show booth decorated with glass beads.

“The First Soviet Puppeteers” presents the Efimov theatre’s *Krylov’s Fables* and *Macbeth*, the first Russian Shakespeare production staged with puppets. The same case contains puppets from the Studio (the workshop at Tairov’s Kamerny Theatre, the first institution in the country to train puppeteers), marionettes by Vladimir Favorsky and Peter Pavlinov, and the first puppets from Evgeny Demmeni’s Leningrad State Puppet Theatre. Especially diverse is the portion devoted to contemporary Russian and foreign puppet theatre, which includes over 200 puppets from around the world.

“History of the Central Puppet Theatre” displays puppets from Sergei Obraztsov’s variety numbers *Ballads with Puppets*.<sup>11</sup> Puppets

from his parodic numbers have a particular place of honor. Several cases contain puppets from children’s performances, as well as puppets and set models from productions for adults, including the first variants of puppets from *An Unusual Concert*.

In early 2012, the museum acquired another exhibition space: the lobby of the Maly [Small] Stage, which, for many years prior, was leased by a restaurant. The new space was inaugurated with the exhibit “Gogol: The Realm of the Puppet” in collaboration with the Anastasia Chizhova Gallery (March-June 2012). On current display is “GATsTK in Puppets and Set Models,” in which particular attention is paid to productions that have played on the Maly Stage.

Shows are an important aspect of the museum’s exhibit work. Since 1975, the museum has organized shows in galleries and clubs and traveling shows that accompany the theatre’s tours. Their geographical range is extensive: France, Spain, South Korea, Iran. Shows are often timed to coincide with puppetry festivals. Additional GATsTK shows, mounted in Russian cities ranging from Moscow to Khabarovsk, generally focus on various world puppets. The museum also organizes themed exhibits. “Puppet Theatre in World War II” includes puppets from front-line shows and from GATsTK’s *The King Stag*, staged in 1943 during the evacuation. Other themed shows include: “From Sketch to Production,” “Demons and Dragons (Traditional Asian Puppetry),” “Russian Fairy Tales and Epics,” etc.

Since 2012 the museum and theatre have been involved in a unique project for family vacations. Aboard the cruise boat Sergei Obraztsov is a Russian puppetry history exhibit called “From Petrushka to Obraztsov.” Puppets from GATsTK’s best productions are displayed on the main deck. During the cruise, passengers watch a chamber production performed by actors from the theatre or participate in the master class that concludes the show.

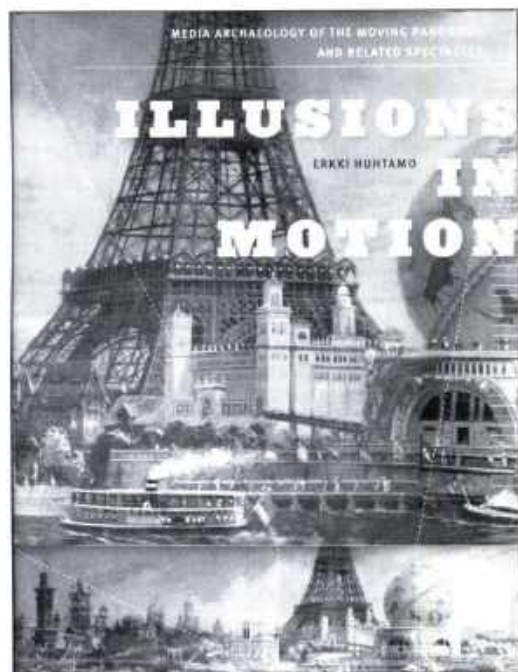
The Puppet Museum’s doors are always open to students, journalists, and scholars of Russian and world puppet theatre.

Maria Iliina is the curator of GATsTK Museum Archive.

#### Endnotes

- 1 B. P. Goldovsky, *Academia Obraztsova*, Moscow: Dizain-Khaus, 2007, 6-11.
- 2 A. Ia. Fedotov, “V muzee,” Tekst doklada na zasedanii Partbyuro, 1962. GATsTK Museum Archive.
- 3 Primernyy plan ekspozitsii, 1965. GATsTK Museum Archive.
- 4 Fedotov, 19.
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- 6 Protokol khudsoвета ot 14-03-1962. GATsTK Museum Archive.
- 7 T. F. Murav’eva, *Biblioteka GATsTK im. S.V. Obraztsova // Muzei teatral’nykh kukol GATsTK im. S.V. Obraztsova*, Moscow: Buk-Khaus, 2005, 179-191.
- 8 S. V. Obraztsov, *Po stupen’kam pamiati*, Moscow: 2001, 144.
- 9 A. Ia. Fedotov, “Muzei teatral’nykh kukol. Putevoditel’,” Moscow: 1957, 7-17.
- 10 Ibid., 20-23.
- 11 Also sometimes translated as *Romances with Puppets*.

## AN ASTONISHING CHRONICLE OF “PANORAMANIA”



Erkki Huhtamo, *ILLUSIONS IN MOTION: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013. 464 pp. \$48.

The rolling scroll, “crankie” or panorama, is a device frequently employed in the mash-up of contemporary puppetry. So, puppeteers: Take note of this astonishing chronicle of the panorama, principally its 19<sup>th</sup>-century heyday—a period known as Panoramania. The author, Erkki Huhtamo, a media archaeologist, is searching for, amongst other things, the conditions that set the stage for the emergence of film and television in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He presents compelling evidence for this case and in doing so he has unearthed a history, which puppeteers will recognize as our own.

Huhtamo’s exhaustive research is replete with images of various scrolls, their mechanisms, etchings and broadsheets (though unfortunately reproduced only in black and white). The end-of-chapter footnotes, the appendix and the bibliography (itself 36 pages!) are treasure boxes of delights.

The book has histories and anecdotes about the many precursors and variations to the panorama. These include the *Eidophusikon*, an invention that later inspired the 19<sup>th</sup>-century mechanical theatre movement; *the circular panorama*, an architecturally designed rotunda room with a continuous painting on the wall, sometimes with the audience on a rotating platform; *transparency scrolls*, watercolor paintings on China paper hand-cranked on a television-sized box; and the *Myriopticon*, a product of Milton Bradley which allowed the public to re-enact panorama shows in the privacy of their own home. It was sold with a lecture text, a handsome broadside and a set of tiny entrance tickets.

But ultimately it is the peristephic panorama that becomes the focus of the book—a scroll stretched between two vertical spindles and turned with a crank. When coupled with a dynamic interlocutor, the peristephic panorama became a performance sensation of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Huhtamo profiles several Barnum & Bailey–styled impresarios of the period, such as the self-taught artist John Banvard who claimed that his 1846 panorama of the Mississippi River was over three miles long. Huhtamo recounts the performances of the former slave Henry Box Brown who began his *Grand Panorama of American Slavery* by leaping from a shipping box as a demonstration of how he himself had escaped from slavery.

Most interestingly, Huhtamo reveals various techniques of panorama construction, detailing exact scroll dimensions and mechanical designs for full rigs installed in theaters to smaller mechanisms designed for touring. He examines compositional aesthetics used in the paintings and the dominant role representational images came to have throughout this period. Audiences of the time craved verisimilitude—they expected panoramas to recreate the sensation of being in a real place and witnessing the events that actually happened there. Huhtamo describes how the Pearson Brothers promoted their *Grand Historic Mirror of the American War*—an account of battles of the American Civil War—by “claiming that the moving panorama was updated weekly, based on sketches and reports from ‘distinguished artists’ at the theatre of war.” Huhtamo adds that “[w]hether this was true or just promotional make-believe, it demonstrates an aspiration to newsreel-like dissemination of visual information.”

Huhtamo sets a high bar for scholarship for such neglected fields of research. He skillfully follows the threads of this fringe history into the fabric of our collective culture, ultimately validating the role storytelling-with-objects has played in this period of history.

—review by Blair Thomas



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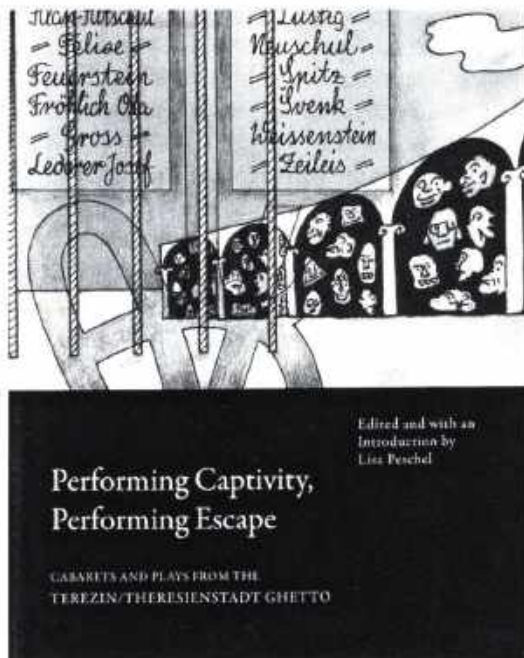
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## PUPPET PLAYS FROM A CONCENTRATION CAMP

Lisa Peschel, ed., *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezín/Theresienstadt Ghetto*. London: Seagull Books, 2014. 420 pp. \$25.



One approaches the subject of concentration camp performance with a mixture of amazement and horror. The fact that inmates made art, music, and theater in camps throughout the German Reich in the 1940s suggests a clichéd image of indomitable human spirit, but also rubs in our faces the shocking truth that a modern state and its people conceived, built, and managed a vast system of institutionalized murder.

The concentration camp in the Czech fortress town of Terezín (or Theresienstadt, as German-speakers referred to it) was an unusual site for two reasons: First, it was not a death camp, but a holding site for Jews in transit to other camps like Auschwitz; second, it functioned in German propaganda as a “model ghetto” for Jewish incarceration. As Lisa Peschel points out in her introduction, over 30,000 Central and Western European Jews passed through the camp, and were exposed to a “vigorous cultural life” there: “Adults and children drew and painted, composed, played and sang musical works, wrote poems, essays, and plays,” all of which reflected the rich artistic life of the cities from which the prisoners were taken.

Puppetry was a regular feature of life there. The young poet Georg Kafka wrote a puppet version of *The Golem* in 1944, soon before he perished, but that manuscript is not extant. However two very different puppet plays have survived—one by an adult and one by an adolescent.

Arthur Engländer’s marionette play *The Treasure* appears at first glance to be the more “normal” of the two plays, since it draws on Czech domestic puppet theater traditions. In the early 1930s Engländer and his brother Otto had created a home theater in Otto’s Prague apartment, where they built and performed marionette shows for their daughters. When the war began Otto escaped to London, but Arthur, his wife and daughter were deported to Terezín in 1942. He died in Auschwitz in 1944.

Engländer’s Terezín puppet plays continued the tradition of the brothers’ pre-war entertainments for children with the same kinds of stock characters and exotic situations typical of the form, such as a puppet *Circus* for which Engländer was the technical director (a poster of which Peschel reproduces).

Like his *Circus*, Engländer’s *The Treasure* also features familiar puppet characters: not only the famous trickster Kašpárek, but also the popular Czech puppet heroes Spejbl and his son Hurvínek, whom Josef Skupa had created in the 1920s. Engländer spins out a fantastic adventure tale evoking Czech farm life, the wonders of modern technology, and the exoticism of “primitive” life in far-off Africa; but every innocuous element of this puppet show for kids takes on an uncanny heaviness. An initial scene depicting the Czech farmer Vojan harvesting his wheat crop is not only a romantic evocation of rural life, but also a meditation on food in a place where hunger prevailed. Kašpárek, playing an urban visitor to the country village, thrills the inhabitants with tales of the wonders of the modern city: electric lights, automobiles, radios, running water, cinema, and even airplanes that could fly to Paris in four hours.

Kašpárek convinces Hurvínek and a young girl, Liese, to go to Africa with him in search of riches; and there they meet a tribe of clichéd African natives. The trio finds treasure, but not gold or jewels—instead, a cache of enchanted potatoes. They return home, plant the “earthapples,” and as a result, Liese says, “Now everyone, even the poorest people, can grow earthapples and they won’t be hungry anymore, even if they don’t have any bread.” What in Prague before the war might have been a spectacular but somewhat inconsequential entertainment, in Terezín must have assumed vastly different proportions. The young heroes’ desire to feed “even the poorest people” becomes a call for justice and equality in a place brutally imposing the opposite. Kašpárek’s evocation of the mechanical wonders of modern life is deeply ironic in the environment of the concentration camp, but still evinces faith in the power of modernity to solve any problem. And finally, most simply, the idea that a solution to the problem of hunger could be miraculously found becomes an assertion of hope in a hopeless environment.

Hanuš Hachenburg’s stunning puppet play *Looking for a Specter* (which Gary Friedman adapted and produced as *Looking for a Monster*—see *Puppetry International* #20) stands in stark contrast to Engländer’s cautious and subtle drama. With the audacity of an adolescent 14-year-old, Hachenburg analyzes precisely what is going on in Nazi Europe, and skewers the maniacal absurdity of



Text:  
Loudky:

Technická  
výprava:

Kulisy:  
Kostýmy:

Jan Dubský  
Walter Freud

Ing. Art.  
Engländer

Gusenberg  
Orienter

Hitler's regime with barely disguised, scathing references to the Führer, the SA and the SS. Hachenburg's searing tale centers on a King who seeks to keep his rebellious subjects in line by creating concentration camps and recruiting Death herself to intimidate the populace. "I'll construct a skeleton to scare people, which will certainly meet all the requirements of modern society," he tells his underlings. The King draws upon the complicity of the Catholic Church, and even a Jewish leader, Mordechai; but the populace refuses to be intimidated, and laughs at Death, who finally kills the King in a dance of death. The brute comedy of this play can be compared to Alfred Jarry's 1896 *Ubu Roi*; but it is more concise than Jarry's rambling work, and more powerful, as a response to the failure of modernity represented by Terezín.

There is no evidence that *Looking for a Specter* was performed before Hachenburg was sent to his death at Auschwitz in December 1943, and apparently no sign if the young artist engaged in other puppet performances at Terezín. Yet this drama is one of the most profound puppet plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a deeply moving testament to the power of puppetry to respond with subversion, sophisticated analysis, humor, and even joy to a rotten situation.

—review by John Bell



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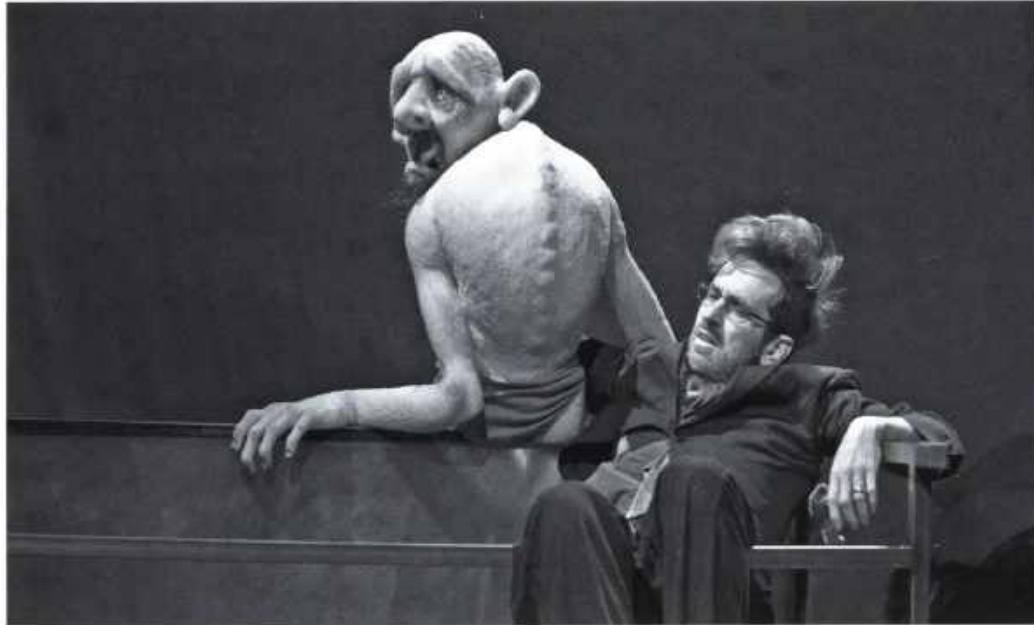
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MAY 2014, BOCHUM, HERNE, ESSEN



DUDA PAIVA, *BASTARD!*  
PHOTO: JAKA IVANC

I was fortunate to be invited to one of the many Visitors' Programs run by the NRW KULTURsekretariat of Germany, this one associated with the 2014 FIDENA International Puppetry Festival. FIDENA offered up provocative puppetry fare in a locale where embracing artistic experimentation has become a regional economic project. Once Germany's industrial heartland, the region is now committed to artistic growth as its economic engine, in a way that strives to preserve and highlight local industrial culture and the region's heritage.

In the grand opening spot was *Mystery Magnet* from Belgium's Miet Warlop. It is an extremely abstract history of experimental art told as an initially fun party gone terribly wrong. It begins with a pure white backdrop and black floor, an untainted three-dimensional canvas, which, by the show's end, is an exhaustive mess of paint splatters, torn walls, liquid foam, and scattered objects. Among the many events that take place during the performance, red and black mop-headed figures, their wigs dribbling black and red, splatter paint across the back wall, leaving Jackson Pollack-like drippings behind, then throw chemicals into bottles, which comically spew brightly colored foam across the space.

Germany's Eva Meyer-Keller's *Pulling Strings* and Russia's AKHE Engineering Theatre's *Gobo. Digital*

*Glossary*, took place at PACT Zollverein, part of the former coal-mining complex. In a small, bare, functional room, *Pulling Strings* made the work-a-day things and structures of the traditional theatre space the stars of the show, sometimes supported by accompanying music of Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" and Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." Like Warlop's objects, these exude both playfulness and menace.

*Gobo. Digital Glossary* also engages with the threatening potential of objects. In a surreal experimental laboratory of sorts, two somewhat clown-like characters submit each other to unusual acts, include one performer being strung upside down, shot with a toy gun, hit on the head by an ingenious Rube Goldberg device that requires a live flame to get started, having his head held under water in a fish tank as a puppet swims by, and punching himself with a puppet boxing kangaroo, to name a few. Continually energetic, surprising, and engaging, the show unmoors spectators from any traditional theatrical anchoring.

In *Count to One* from Yas e Tamam, in Iran, three soldiers take handfuls of clay and shape them in front of us, continuously transforming the images we see, moving from destructive to peaceful ones. The show expresses how we can imagine new futures by concretely





AKHE ENGINEERING THEATER (RUSSIA)  
GOBO DIGITAL GLOSSARY, AN EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN  
PHOTO: VLADIMIR TELEGIN



YAS E TAMAM (IRAN)  
COUNT TO ONE, AN ANTI-WAR PIECE, ITS FIRST GERMAN PERFORMANCE  
PHOTO: MANI LOTFIZADEH

constructing them through art, a weighty message within today's Iranian context.

Other offerings of the festival include *Whip*, by choreographer Bourne Schweigman from the Netherlands, *What Do You Mean and Other Pleasantries*, commissioned by the festival from Belgian artist Maarten Seghers and *Horrible Facts*, by Needcompany.

[www.fidena.de](http://www.fidena.de)

Overall it was difficult to take the temperature of the local population's engagement with these new creative projects, even as they hope to reap the economic benefits of them. Yet, the overall idea that art can be an engine for economic growth, and that puppetry, stretching itself to meet other arts, can be a part of that, remains a highly enticing one.

—excerpts of a review by Claudia Orenstein

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BALLOON by Padraic Colum  
MFA Production by Megan McNerney

photo by Gerry Goldstein

KANOON THEATRE, PAGE 21

Notes

"Kanoon" is a Farsi word meaning "center."

These facts and figures are based on IIDCYA's different websites such as [www.kanoonintl.com](http://www.kanoonintl.com) and will change over time.

These people have been the most active and effective artists and there have been a huge number of productions. For further information see the book, *20 Years of Children Theatre (1979-1999)*" by Tayyeb Eshandiyari, 2002.

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Exclusive conversation with Behrooz Gharibpour on Kanoon and puppetry of Iran, 2014.

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[www.hodhod.ir/](http://www.hodhod.ir/)



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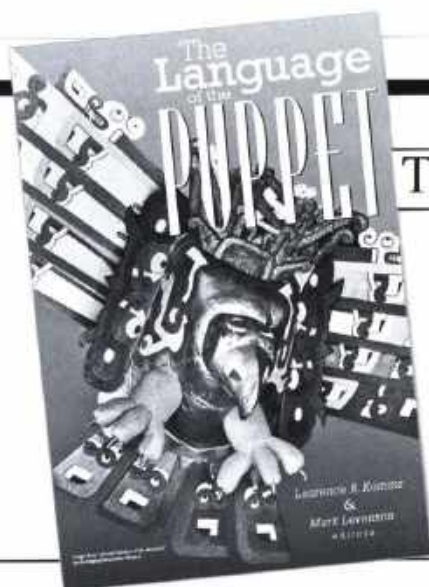
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