

PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

93



1998-99 UNIMA-USA CITATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ART OF PUPPETRY

The Citations For Excellence were conceived by Jim Henson in 1975 when he was President of UNIMA-USA. It was his intention to recognize and reward high standards in puppetry in North America. UNIMA-USA retains a committee of approximately 60 reviewers throughout North America. The reviewers submit nominations for shows that: "... touch their audiences deeply, that totally engage, enchant and enthrall. Citation-worthy shows are also prime examples of excellent theatre."

The Citations are given in two categories, Recorded Media, and Live Theater. There are no Citations for Recorded Media this year.

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE by Basil Twist, New York, NY

Review panelists said: *An abstract meditation on the Berlioz score using objects, light and manipulation to create a magical world, and all performed within a small tank of water. Mr. Twist has gone where no puppeteer has gone before, and where many are likely to follow. And: The only way I can describe it is slow-motion puppet fireworks! Absolutely glorious!*

ISIDOR'S CHEEK by Ines Zeller Bass, Sandglass Theater, Putney, VT

Directed by Eric Bass, design and construction by Jana Zeller. Review panelists said: *The Puppeteer/narrator used small dolls and props on a revolving circular table to illustrate a story about a child who lost his red cheek. The simple adventures of Isidor searching for his cheek transform his mood from gray to a rainbow of colors. The small group of diminutive audience members learn a transformational message in the process of entertainment. The lovely design and music supplement the charming personality of the performer superbly.*

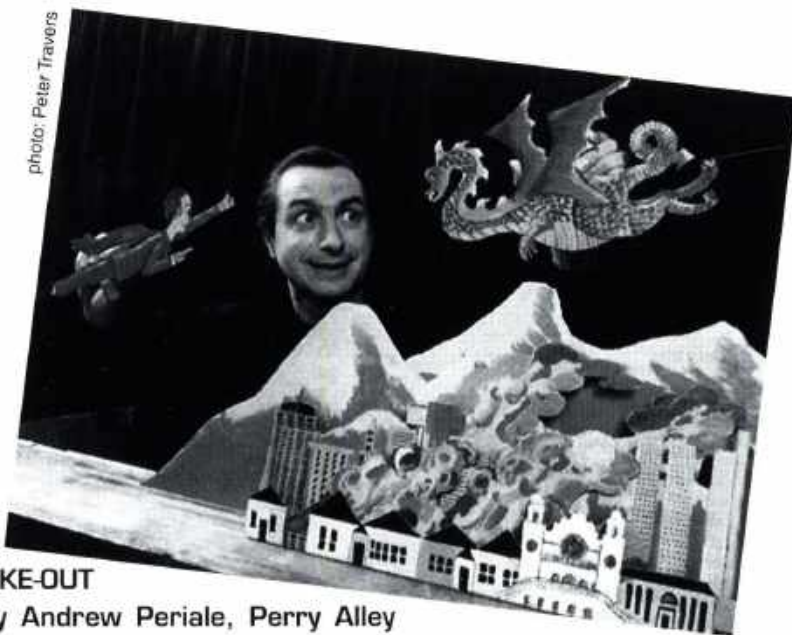
AN ARABIAN ADVENTURE by Tanglewood Marionettes, Newton, MA

Review panelists said: *These two performers have crafted a wonderful show with a great intro and marvelous way of changing the setting by turning the pages of a large book. The puppets and sets are fine and the show keeps the audience interested and excited throughout.*



photo: Tanglewood Marionettes

photo: Peter Travers



CHINESE TAKE-OUT

THEATRE by Andrew Periale, Perry Alley

Theatre, Strafford, NH. Review panelists said: *Our host takes our order from a menu of Chinese food names, and then serves us up our order in the form of several vignettes. We end our meal with the wheel of fortune cookie. A brilliant conceptual piece, unique and fully developed. The pieces range from whimsical to bawdy. Another new direction for a talented company that is always exploring.*

THUMBELINA by Oregon Shadow Theatre, Portland, OR

Directed by Deb Chase. Review panelists said: *'Thumbelina' has everything that fans of Oregon Shadow Theatre expect— exquisite, colorful puppets, lively live music, a strong script and great good humor— combined with something they don't expect: a "Fractured Fairy Tales" spin that tells the story through a punningly awful medley of 60's song hits. It's a clever idea that works and that provides fresh reason to revisit this classic story.*

TINKA'S NEW DRESS by Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes,

CANADA. Review panelists said: *A fable based on Czech puppeteers performing during Nazi occupation. This is the puppet theater's version or answer to "Life is Beautiful,"— expertly staged and performed. Raucous and sublime at the same time... Exquisite puppets, they were alive even without their puppeteer, you could feel them breathing. Exquisite artistry— Ronnie was visible, was a part of the show, but you felt it was the puppets themselves who were doing it. Exquisite experience— powerful story made stronger and more touching in the telling.*

In addition to the Citations, UNIMA-USA proclaimed **George Latshaw** to be a "Dean of American Puppetry."

For more information about the UNIMA-USA Citations, visit our web page: www.unima-usa.org/citations.html

Congratulations to all of the Recipients!
Steven Widerman
Citations Committee Chair

1998-99
UNIMA-USA
CITATIONS
FOR
EXCELLENCE
IN THE ART
OF
PUPPETRY

Recipients of this year's Citations For Excellence In The Art Of Puppetry were announced on Monday, August 2, 1999 at the General Meeting of UNIMA-USA held at the Puppeteer's of America National Festival in Seattle, Washington.



PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

issue no. 6

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On the cover:

Postcards from around the globe attest to puppetry's universal popularity

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Back cover:

Albrecht Roser, one of the world's great puppet artists, and a frequent guest professor at the University of Connecticut (see page 12)

photo: Ingrid Höfer

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Editorial--A stylized logo for 'Y2K' where the '2' is a large, bold, black number. The 'Y' and 'K' are also bold and black, with the 'K' having a unique, angular design. The letters are arranged in a way that they appear to be overlapping or stacked.

has undoubtedly been oversold as an event of cosmic- or technological significance. That the stroke of midnight at year's end should sound the death knell of all computer-driven systems, I am sure is untrue. That it should mark the "End of the World," I *hope* is untrue. Here at the Puppetry International offices (... office... well, more of a spare bedroom, actually), we view Y2K (or "aughty-aught," as we prefer to call it) as a swell excuse for a party, and as the beginning of the era of two issues of *Puppetry International* each year, instead of the customary, pre-aughty-aught single annual issue! For those of you getting PI as a premium of membership in UNIMA-USA, you will continue to enjoy the ever-growing services and publications which the organization offers. Those who get PI at the newsstand will see an increase in the

cost of a single issue, but there are now SUBSCRIPTION RATES for the magazine which will match or beat the old pre-aughty-aught price! *[see insert]*

Our focus in this issue is on the education and professional training of puppeteers— in Japan, Poland, France and the U.S., as well as through the international meetings and exchanges which will exert, we believe, ever more of an influence on post-aughty-aught culture worldwide.

You will also find reviews of some fabulous books, and a consideration of Roman Paska's puppetry in John Turturro's brilliant new film, *Illuminata*.

Our wish at the end of this year, as ever, is that more people may live in peace in the new year. The goal of the organization behind this publication is that puppetry itself be an instrument of this peace.

Amen,
Andrew Periale

Teaching Puppetry as the Theater of the Future: An Interview with Roman Paska

by John Bell

The École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette, in the city of Charleville-Mézières, 120 miles northeast of Paris, is perhaps the best-known puppetry school in the world, even though it is only twelve years old. A program of the Institut International de la Marionnette, which itself was only founded in 1981, the Charleville puppet school has attracted students, teachers, and researchers from around the world who are interested in a truly international sense of puppet theater and a particularly modern sense of the possibilities of the form inside and outside traditional puppet techniques. *Puck*, the brilliantly visual historical and theoretical journal devoted to puppet and object theater, is the Institute's major publication.

According to the school's publications, its goal is "to form professional puppeteers of high caliber capable of understanding and practicing puppet theater in all its diversity of expression, and to respond to its contemporary challenges." Every third year a new class is admitted to the school's three-year program, which teaches techniques of puppet manipulation, theater history, plastic arts, acting, movement, voice and music. By the third year of the program, students complete their final projects by focusing on one of four fields: dramaturgy, directing, design, or performance. So far, the only American graduate of the program has been puppeteer Basil Twist.

Romanian puppet director Margareta Niculescu ran the school from its inception in 1987 until last year, and in January of 1999, American puppeteer Roman Paska took her place as director of the Institute. Paska is one of the new wave of American puppeteers who took to the form following the innovations of the 1960s and 70s.

Early in his career Paska performed with Bread and Puppet Theater in Europe, but soon established himself in his own work, beginning with one-man shows and then extending his scope to include larger productions such as his version of Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata*, produced at Stockholm's Marionetteatern. Although Paska has long been based in New York, his work is much more well-known in Europe, where

his puppets are prized for their classic attention to fine sculptural detail, and his dark, but often comic dramaturgy is recognized for its relations to Beckett and other masters of the modern dramatic idiom.

As the new director of the Institut International de la Marionnette, Paska faces the daunting task of building on Niculescu's foundation and developing the work of the school to reflect the challenges of a new century. Already, in the French press, Paska has said he would like to expand the school's teaching cycle by recruiting a new class not every third year, "but every other year, in order to create a sense of dialogue and exchange" between the classes. Paska is also involved with expanding the profile of puppetry as an art form within the context of traditional art school education. The Institute's "Encounter of Schools of Art," initiated by Margareta Niculescu, brings together art schools from around the world to examine both traditional and innovative art forms: "the visual arts, music, dance, theater, circus, multimedia," in Paska's words, "and, of course, the puppet." All of the arts, says Paska, "are at a particular historical moment where the traditional boundaries between disciplines are becoming more and more fluid." At the Institute's Encounters, Paska says, one can see "painters involved in performance, sculptors creating theatrical installations, theater people presenting exhibitions."

Roman Paska himself projects a wry and fascinating persona. His wire-rimmed spectacles, long hair, and tailored suits evoke a decidedly intellectual image, and in fact in many ways Paska resembles the photos of the young Edward Gordon Craig. This past June, by means of a trans-Atlantic hookup from Brooklyn to Paska's cell phone (first in a Paris café, and then on a beach in Portugal), I asked him what he might be planning to do as the new director of the Institut International de la Marionnette.

John Bell: *Could you briefly describe the program of the Institut International de la Marionnette?*

Roman Paska: Well, I only took over in January, so just about everything that's happened during the first half of this year was set in motion before my arrival. With the director's chair I inherited a number of activities and events—the conclusion of the latest three-year cycle of the conservatory program, a festival of arts training schools and several publications... so my time has been roughly divided between respecting the past and imagining the future. The real transition will only begin this summer when I can actually start to implement the changes that I'd like to see take place over the next couple of years.

JB: *What do you want to do differently?*

RP: I mainly want to re-emphasize the centrality of the puppet. In recent years the approach of the Institute has reflected a commitment to raising the standard of practice of puppetry by focusing on training in a number of contributing disciplines.

The students take acting, dance, movement, mime, voice, music and visual arts courses, with the idea that in the end it will all come together in the practice of puppet theater. But the challenge and the difficulty in such an approach is not to lose sight of the specificity of the puppet, so maybe the program needs a stronger through-line.



JB: *How would your idea translate into a different approach for the three-year program?*

RP: It may be a little soon to say specifically: I'm still currently reworking the curriculum. I do intend to preserve the multidisciplinary character of the school, and performance will continue to be central to the training because the main objective of the program is to produce performer-puppeteers. But since the visual arts aspect of puppet theater has not been as developed as certain other areas, we are completely overhauling the puppet workshops so that, in addition to guest artists from the various performance disciplines, we can welcome visual artists as well— designers, sculptors, video and installation artists, and so forth.

From a similar perspective, we're creating new spaces to exhibit the collections of the Institute that will function both as a museum for the public and a library of objects, where students, artists and researchers can consult the puppets, sets and other items in the collections in much the same way that they would consult a document or a book.

JB: *Sort of like the puppet collection at the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris?*

RP: Yes, I had that collection in mind, as well as the Munich City Museum. But in Charleville we might also allow some objects to be handled.

JB: *What kind of a puppeteer does the Charleville program want to produce?*

RP: I'm not sure I know myself what I even think being a puppeteer really means. When you do something yourself, you don't often question what you're doing or why, because you're too busy doing it. But again, I think the really critical issue is to try to come to grips with the specificity of the puppet— what it is about puppetry that makes it unique, an art form in its own right.

JB: *How does this translate into specific changes in the curriculum?*

RP: Well, for example, there has been a recent tendency in the school to move the performance training closer to a classical actor's training program, and I'm a little uncomfortable with that, as I am with the notion that puppetry needs to justify or redeem itself by adapting to the conventional dramatic actor's repertoire. While, for example, classical voice training is ultimately an asset, when you first set off to be a puppeteer, you are probably more likely to start breaking all the rules, doing everything you can to distort, deform or maybe even destroy your voice from a classical point of view.

JB: *How is the Charleville-Mézières program different from those of older European schools of puppetry?*

RP: Charleville has always had a very open and progressive approach to puppetry and was one of the first schools in Europe—or for that matter, the world—to promote the idea that puppeteers are the artists and creators of a new kind of visual theater, not just puppet makers or manipulators of naturalistic figures. And consequently, many students who come out of the school tend to be original creators as well as performers.

JB: *How did you, an American puppeteer, become head of this school?*

RP: Well, that's a difficult question for me to answer, because I can only imagine what went on behind closed doors. Let's just say I was flattered and surprised.

JB: *What in particular marks the program as French, or European?*

RP: When the conservatory program was first set up 12 years ago, it was recognized and supported by the French Ministry of Culture as an accredited "École Supérieure Nationale," where the students receive a French state diploma which is more or less the equivalent of an MFA degree in the United States. At least half of the students in the school are French, and French is the primary language of instruction, so all international students, if they don't speak the language already, are required to take a crash course before being admitted.

The language thing is sometimes an issue for foreigners at first, but believe me, it's not insurmountable— my own French is getting better by the day... And then, there are the festivals, conferences and special summer workshops which tend to be more polyglot.

JB: *Do you get any Asian students?*

RP: Students come to Charleville from all over the world— Asia, Africa and the Americas, as well as other European countries... As do the teachers, professional artists and researchers who congregate at the Institute for various lengths of time.

(continued on page 38)

THE BUNRAKU APPRENTICES:

A LIFETIME OF TRAINING

by Michiko Ueno-Herr

*reprinted, with permission, from PUCK magazine, No. 7,
revised September 1999*

Donald Keene, reflecting the point of view of most Japanese scholars, artists and audience, describes bunraku as "a form of story-telling, recited to musical accompaniment, and embodied by puppets on stage". The importance of story-telling is beyond question, but the ranking of the shamisen player and puppeteers seemed to have been subordinate to that of the narrators. He also points out, however, that "bunraku owes to the puppets, its most distinctive feature, the high reputation it has won at home and abroad".

*Woodblock print:
puppet/joruri performance
Theater Museum of
Waseda University, Tokyo*

During its continuous history of almost four centuries, bunraku had been the foremost mainstream theatre until the late 18th century when it was overpowered by the popularity of the kabuki theatre performed by human actors. Yet, perhaps few other puppet traditions have been performed and appreciated with such intensity as bunraku. Through most of the history, there were always several puppet troupes in the major cities, competing with skills and styles. In 1805, Uemura Bunrakuken began managing a troupe of puppeteers who performed in shrine precincts. His descendants carried on the management, and in 1872, a newly-built theatre was named after Bunrakuken. The

puppet show at the Bunraku-za (literally, Bunraku's theatre) was so popular that its name, bunraku, came to mean this type of puppet performance. Before this term became standard, the puppet performance was called *ningyo joruri* (literally, puppet story-telling).

Not all Bunrakuken's descendants were able managers. In 1909, the Bunraku-za was taken over by the Shochiku Theatrical Company. Meantime, bunraku faced losing ground to cinema and other modern entertainment. The troupe under the management of the Shochiku Company had become the only active performers of bunraku. After World War II, under the influence of the occupation army's plans to institute labor unions, bunraku artists split into two groups—one adhering to the traditional management style maintained by the Shochiku Company, and the other favoring the unionization in hopes of improving their economic status. In 1964, the non-profit organization Bunraku Kyokai (Bunraku Association) was established, taking over the management of performers from the Shochiku Company, and brought all artists together as a single entity. In 1984, the National Bunraku Theatre opened in Osaka, and bunraku found a permanent home in the same district where puppet theatres sprang out competing with each other, some four hundred years ago. Since 1955, bunraku has been designated as "an important intangible cultural property" of Japan.

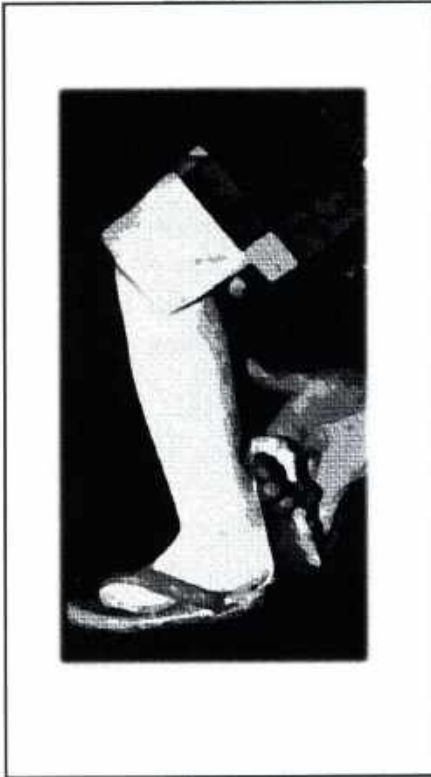
● BUNRAKU,

in regards to transmission of the art, can be distinguished from some other traditional performing arts of Japan—such as *kabuki*, *no*, and *kyogen*. In the case of these other arts, succession of prestigious stage names as well as the acting styles and roles that are associated with the names is allowed only to the descendants by blood. For example, the famous kabuki actor's name Ichikawa Danjuro is carried on to its twelfth generation by the direct descendant of the first. The star status would not be feasible for a kabuki actor who is not from a family of pedigree. This predicament evidences a belief that the power of purity and spirituality transmitted through blood is the utmost qualification for carrying on the tradition. It also ensures the privileges of such acting families. But the privileges are not without high expectations of the named descendants. The strife of each actor to match the greatness of his ancestors, so that he deserves the name, empowers the continuing tradition.

In the case of bunraku, the disciple does not have to be a relative of his master to be a successor to the art. A boy from any background can enter apprenticeship with the master of his choice, and the possibility lies that someday he could be a star. If the disciple has developed enough skills, he can qualify to carry on a prestigious stage name. Promotion in the ranks depends solely on the performer's efforts and improvement in performance, which must be acknowledged by all senior performers in the troupe. This practical view may be reflective of Osaka, the city of commerce, where bunraku developed. A practical merchant may think any aspiring artists should be given the chance to prove themselves and their efforts should be rewarded. It should be pointed out that efforts of the countless souls that carried on the tradition in Osaka have been truly noble.

It is said that the bunraku apprentice must train in the manipulation of the puppet's feet for ten years, the left hand for ten years (or sometimes fifteen), and the puppet's head for ten years. This adds up to more than thirty years of training to become a master puppeteer of bunraku. Even before beginning the training of the puppet's foot manipulation, however, the apprentice must spend a few years helping with backstage chores such as tidying up the dressing room and folding the master's clothes after he dresses for the stage. The apprentice also assists the performance, handing out and clearing the stage properties needed in the scenes. While working at the periphery of the stage, the apprentice learns the plays in the bunraku repertoire by listening to the narration, and the puppetry technique by watching his master's and senior apprentices' performance.

When the apprentice is judged ready to begin training as a puppeteer, he is assigned to operate the puppet's feet of a minor role. He spends ten years operating the feet of many different roles. The apprentice receives no formal instruction. He must learn the techniques from observing other puppeteer's performance. The Japanese expression for this method is *mitte oboeru*, or 'learn by observation'. If the main puppeteer who operates the puppet's head and right arm is not satisfied with the apprentice's



The preceding part of this article is no more than a brief introduction to today's bunraku artists as one fulltime, professional company—as public as any of the most important representatives of the Japanese culture, yet as exclusive as any professional theatre company which strives to maintain its own unique style.

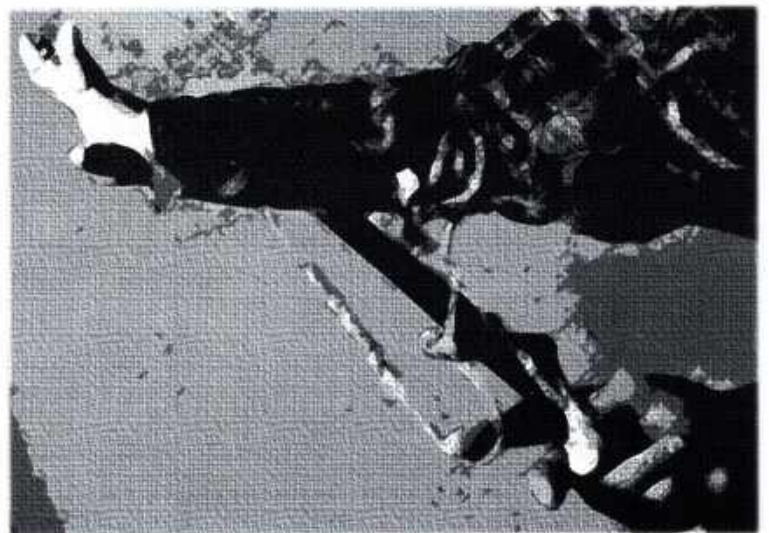
manipulation of the feet, he may kick the apprentice in the shins. This way, the apprentice learns when he is not doing the right thing. Today, such physical punishment has been replaced mostly with verbal scolding.

After he has mastered the feet, the apprentice spends the next fifteen years or so manipulating the puppet's left hand, and it is another ten years before he is recognized as a mature puppeteer. It may not take so long just to learn to move the puppet's feet or the left hand. What the apprentice must do during this long training period is to develop the versatility to perform many different role types, and the adaptability to work with different masters who may have different personal styles. The master does not deliberately teach the apprentice. The apprentice must learn the techniques from observation, and find his own way of manipulation. They say the apprentice must *get o musumu*, or "steal the art" from the master. In other words, the apprentice is responsible for his own training. And in order to train properly, he must have sharp intuition, clear perception and an honest attitude.

Some artists entered apprenticeship when they were seven or eight years old and many began training in their early teens. These apprentices received traditional training, as described above. The cultural and social environment has changed enormously in the last half century, and children are not exposed to the traditional arts or the traditional way of living so much as they were before. In 1972, the National Theatre of Japan began a training program for bunraku, patterned after the program in kabuki. This program provides a new alternative to choices young men can have for their career. During this two-year training program, prospective apprentices learn the basics of the story-telling in the bunraku style, shamisen performance and puppet manipulation. The classes are taught by master performers. In addition to the three disciplines of bunraku, the stu-

dents also study tea ceremony, kyogen acting, and codes of proper manners to supplement their education in traditional arts and culture. After the first six months, the students choose the area of their concentration. Every six months, they are tested for their suitability for the profession. Once they complete the program, they begin a more traditional method of apprenticeship with masters. The program is subsidized by the Japanese government and the students receive a stipend. It is intended to train committed professionals who are determined to make bunraku their lifetime career. The program admits young men from any background, but the applicants must be under 25 years of age.

The practical reason for beginning the training at an early age is to take advantage of a young person's physical flexibility and adaptability. While their bodies are flexible, puppeteers can strengthen their own arms and legs and build up stamina and physical discipline. Musical sense and timing can be acquired more precisely by young children. Master puppeteer Yoshida Tamao who is designated as an Intangible Cultural Asset (also known as "National Treasure") says that, as he grows older (he was born in 1919 and still the most active puppeteer today), he has become forgetful but still remembers very clearly everything he learned when he was a young apprentice.





As a regular practice, every apprentice serves a certain senior puppeteer as his own master. The apprentice is often responsible for the feet or the left hand of the puppet manipulated by his master, but there is no set rule for this. It is considered professional virtue to be able to work with any other puppeteers and perform any roles.

Versatility is highly respected. There has been an exception to the rule: one of the most notable puppeteers, Yoshida Eiza I (1872-1945) did not attach himself to a particular master. Perhaps because he lived during a turbulent era for bunraku when there was a considerable movement of performers among various troupes. He took every puppeteer he worked with as his master and experienced a wide range of roles.

Traditionally, a young disciple becomes a "live-in apprentice" and helps the master and his family with their daily household chores. Sweeping, pouring tea... everything must be taken as an opportunity for study of roles who sweep or pour tea in the scene. Today it is rare to find an apprentice who actually lives in the master's house. Instead, the apprentice frequents to the master's house to perform his duties. He helps the master with his personal errands and remains on call for all services requested by him.

To be alert and ready to serve the situation at any moment is the point of the training. In performance, the main puppeteer leads the movement of the puppet and he is free to perform any way that suits the timing of the particular moment, which could be different day to day. The bunraku performance is often compared to a fight with real swords. Except for a few standardized scenes, there is no set choreography or blocking for the puppet's movement. The main puppeteer is free to sketch out his own movement. Yet he is not totally free to perform what he has planned since every movement of the puppet must be in accordance with the delivery and timing of the narration. The feet and left hand manipulators must be ready to follow exactly any spontaneous changes of the puppet's movement the main puppeteer decides to make. With no time to think about the movement during the performance, the apprentices must also have keen instinct and intuition for the main puppeteer's lead. Thus, the apprentices must be totally willing to submit themselves to their master and execute the move as intended by him. Serving the master in daily life prepares the apprentice for his role on stage.

Submitting himself to his master comes easy when working with a true master who is trained and tried in the traditional method. The masters who are alive today and those before them truly deserve the respect they receive. Most apprentices would testify that they have decided to dedicate their life in training because of the *shitei kankei*, or master-disciple relationship, in bunraku. Their master is a living example of thirty or fifty years of training. By setting a time frame of three decades to reach a certain level of accomplishment, the apprentices are provided with plentiful opportunities for observation and 'trial and error' to learn the techniques and refine their performance skills. The master is also a mentor in all aspects of life. The apprentices appreciate the opportunity for their personal growth and maturity while in training with other apprentices and through their interaction with the masters. A number of puppeteers did not go to high school, but they are well educated culturally and socially, and are indeed highly sophisticated individuals.

Though the mechanism of the manipulation techniques was not explained in this article, it can be summarized: It solely relies on the working relationship of the three puppeteers manipulating one puppet. It is not a simple coordination but a synchronization based on the apprentice's intuitive reaction to the master's lead, with respect to his art and absolute hierarchy. As it may be obvious from the simple construction, it requires the intricate techniques and refined skills for the bunraku puppet to function in performance. In short, bunraku is an embodiment of the master-disciple relationship. •



paintings based on photographs from
BUNRAKU: The Puppet Theater,
 Tsuruo Ando, by Bonnie Periale

PASSING THE TORCH:

The Puppetry Arts Program at the University of Connecticut

by Stephen Kaplin

How does one become a puppeteer? Few other career choices require as wide a variety of special skills. To be a successful professional puppeteer one needs to be a creative decathlon, with craft skills in painting, sculpture, pattern making, wood and metal working, technical theater, costume fabrication, to name a few of the requisite skills. Also one needs broad ranging performance abilities, plus the critical faculties of a director and the administrative acumen of a small businessman. No wonder puppeteers are rare birds. To accumulate such a broad collection of skills requires intensive, focused training. This article discusses one of few training programs for professional puppetry available in the United States, the Puppetry Arts Program at the University of Connecticut.

For those of us who have tried to enter the field, it's often been a hard road. There are few maps or markers—each person has to carve his or her own individual path into the profession. Perhaps the surest route is to be born into a family of puppet performers and spend the greater part of childhood backstage or playing in rehearsal halls and prop shops, absorbing the entire process from beginning to end deep into one's bones. In parts of Asia, Africa and Europe puppet skills are passed down through generations of performers for centuries. Even in the US, it is not uncommon for children of puppeteers to end up in the field themselves—Frank Oz, Peter Baird, Ba-

sil Twist (a third generation puppeteer,) Brian, Cheryl and Heather Henson, Tamar and Maria Schumann, are just a few examples.

Given the scarcity of puppeteers on Earth, though, total immersion from birth is a rare and exclusive privilege. So if one hasn't the signal honor of being born in a puppet trunk, the next best thing may be an early apprenticeship with a

company or a master puppeteer. A model for this type of training is the National Bunraku Theater in Japan, where young boys (always boys) begin as young as seven or eight to serve a master and assist backstage. The long and onerous training regimen intensifies over the course of decades until, as middle-aged men, they are in a position to become masters, themselves.



In America, with few large puppet theaters or state supported institutions, apprenticeships are less formal or long lasting—more like on-the-job vocational training

For most of this century, American puppeteers learned their craft in this way, but the lack of opportunities for higher training in the field was certainly hurting the development of the art form. Until recently, however, the idea of training students in puppet theater with the same rigorous academic and technical curriculum as in a good acting or theater design program, had little or no support from theater academics. It was not until 1954, when Mel Helstien began teaching at UCLA, that any American theater department offered an in-depth puppet program. And, except for Aurora Valentineti's program at the University of Washington, there were no similar attempts until the Puppetry Arts Program at the University of Connecticut was established in 1968. The UConn program was the first in this country to offer an integrated puppetry curriculum designed to lead students into professional careers. In the more than thirty years that it has been active, the UConn Puppetry Department has had a powerful effect on the field, training hundreds of individuals for careers in stage, film and TV. It has also inspired similar programs elsewhere, such as the University of Hawaii, which offers the only PHD in puppetry in the country, and, most recently, at CalArts under Janie Geiser.

The University of Connecticut has its main campus set up high on rolling hills in the bucolic village of Storrs. As an institution of higher learning, it was renowned more for its School of Agriculture than for the strength of its liberal or fine arts programs. It was, and still is, a massive, egalitarian school designed to service the large body of middle and working class students of the state. How

this unremarkable state school ended up with the country's longest surviving puppet department is a testament to the dedication and stubbornness of Frank Ballard and his successor, Bart Roccoberton.

Frank Ballard was born in 1929 and grew up in the small town of Alton, Illinois. At that time, the typical professional puppet company was a touring marionette theater managed by a husband and wife team. When he was five years old, he saw such a company, Romaine and Ellen Proctor's outfit out of Springfield. After the performance, he managed to get invited backstage to look at the puppets close-up, and when he got home that night he declared that he was going to become a puppeteer. His parents must have been impressed by this avowal, for the following Christmas, they gave him a present of a small puppet stage with a set of puppets built by his Aunt Peg. He taught himself the basics of the craft through a long apprenticeship, gradually building up experience with methods and materials and making connections, and connecting with other puppeteers. He studied theatrical design, and opera, sometimes combining all his interests together, as when he worked briefly at Chicago's famous Kungsholm combination restaurant/puppet-opera theater.

In 1956, he came to the University of Connecticut to teach scenic design. The establishment of the puppetry program came about some time later through a series of flukes:

"We had a new graduate drama department, and we had an undergraduate art and undergraduate music department. And the three departments wanted to band together to form a School of Fine Arts.... They didn't have enough material for the graduates, so they asked all the instructors in various departments to make a list of all the things they would like to see taught in a new situation. We

were told to put down our wildest dreams, whatever.... So why not? I put in puppetry.... I never expected then to actually teach a course in puppetry until one time, when the head of the department, who was very much a New York theater man and looked down his nose at puppetry, went on a sabbatical leave. And his associate, who took over, thought it would be fun to see what I could do and allowed me to teach a class and also direct a production—which was *The Mikado*. And it was so popular that we put in two more courses, two more sections. We had three sections in the beginning of it, and had a waiting list. And the head of the department came back and found puppetry going great guns, he was furious. But it was too late. The die was cast. And the rest was history, as they say...."¹

In time, Ballard designed a program that included three degrees, BFA, MA and MFA, with a curriculum that included classes in puppet theory and history, as well as studio sessions in puppet construction. Students were expected to participate in the design and the production of one main stage show each year, usually in the spring semester, plus help with individual student projects and take part in workshops with visiting artists. In addition to puppetry work, the Program required courses and practicum credits in all the areas of design, production, technical theater and performance. MFA candidates had to design and direct a show and then write a thesis on the process. Ballard kept the enrollment to twelve students—it was all he could handle. From the beginning, there was a substantial waiting list.

The material Ballard chose to design and direct as main-stage productions reflected his love of all types of musical theater. He felt that a strong musical score was key to staging puppet theater, so in-

variably, he chose material that stressed this element: including works by Gilbert and Sullivan (*The Mikado*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*), high opera (*The Ring of the Niebulungen*, *Love of Three Oranges*, *The Magic Flute* and *The Golden Cockerel*), classical ballet (*Petrouchka* and *Carnival of the Animals*), and Broadway shows (*Carnival*, *Kismet*, and *Two by Two*). This choice of material represented the practical considerations of finding works large enough to keep dozens of students busy in production for the duration of a semester. It also reflected Ballard's desire to build a solid audience base, using familiar classics, thereby offering proof of puppet theater's commercial viability. In their grand scale, the work he created had more akin to the large state-run puppet theaters of Soviet-era Eastern puppet theaters, than with mainstream American puppetry. Free from the tight economic strictures faced by commercial touring companies, Ballard created extravagant productions, that used dozens of performers. For example, *The Ring of the Niebulungen*, a 1980 production that was a feature at that year's International UNIMA Festival in Washington, D.C., was a three hour redaction of Wagner's five opera cycle, had a cast of over 20 puppeteers operating 75 3-5 foot tall rod puppets, and used six overhead projectors to make complicated animated shadow sequences. In his last major production before retirement in 1989, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, he created 69 marionettes and rod puppets for a show that has only 18 characters.

Despite the popularity of the UConn puppetry department's productions, an anti-puppetry bias within the administration of the University continued. Most directly, this opposition was felt around the issue of studio space for the puppetry department:

"I think it was almost an attempt to discourage me, by saying that I could have the straw, if I could weave it into gold. I had to find a way to do that.... At first, we had the paint room at the theater. We sat on five-gallon drums, and had a plank over our laps, and that's how *The Mikado* was built, on this plank on a five-gallon drum of acetone. And then we had a classroom upstairs in the theater for a time and we started building *Love of Three Oranges*, which was our second show and every time a class came, we had to pack up everything into the back of the room- which was almost every other hour... And then we had the Dean's conference room. He was tired of hearing me complain about having no place to make puppets. And *Petrouchka*, which was our third show, was built in the Dean's Conference Room. Once a week we'd have to move out so the Dean could have a conference....

...And we had a classroom in the basement of one of the dormitories. We just got settled in that classroom when they moved us next door into another dormitory basement, which was smaller. And it seemed like they were always trying to throw monkey wrenches in the way. They don't know that puppeteers are also stubborn. In spite of it all, we prevailed."

It is hardly a mystery why the university administration's opposition remained constant through the decades. A minuscule department with twelve students, that cost an inordinate amount of money and required large studio space, could never find much support with the bureaucrats of a large state school. Any college campus suffers from conflicts and jealousies over space and prestige. But that the world renowned UConn Puppetry Department, after thirty years, still

finds itself ensconced in a dormitory basement (even while the University built a new fine arts building and a huge, multi-million dollar sports complex), is another indication of the low esteem in which the art of puppetry is held in this culture.

In the mid-70's, Ballard began to exhibit symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, a degenerative nervous condition that slowly causes the body to lose muscular control of the body. It was a heartbreaking condition for one who relied on his hands for a living. Tremors gradually worked up his fingers and limbs, but his mind remained clear and he was able to continue designing and teaching of teaching at Storrs. It was obvious, however, that his days there were numbered, though questions remained as to the continuation of the program after his retirement. The State and the University, using the pretext of saving money, sought again to kill the program. Only a concerted letter writing and phone-calling campaign by alumni and puppeteers from around the world convinced the University to keep it going. Ballard stayed on an extra year while the search for a successor went on. It took time to find a candidate with all the technical, scholarly and theoretical knowledge, performance experience, and stature to face down a reluctant, hostile university bureaucracy, but in the fall of 1990, he officially turned over control of his beloved Puppetry Department to his one-time student, Bart Roccoberon.

After his retirement, Ballard turned his attention to another issue, preserving the hundreds and hundreds of puppets that had been built by his students over the course of his twenty years of activity. These had been crammed into various and sundry attics and storage rooms around the campus, leaving them prey

to moisture, extremes of temperature and other injurious elements. A permanent home for the collection was sought, but as usual, the university was not forthcoming. Another furious lobbying campaign by alumni and interested outside parties was needed to get the gears turning. Eventually, Ballard was offered a small building about four miles off the main Storrs campus in a defunct State Training School. It was not a perfect solution, but it was good enough to keep the puppet collection out of serious danger. It became the home of the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, or BIMP.

In contrast

to Frank Ballard's slight, angular physique, Bart Roccoberton has a towering, bear-like body with an expressive, open grin. A tireless workaholic, an expert multi-tasker, a consummate puppeteer, who nevertheless came rather late to the field, Roccoberton fell into puppetry by a series of fortuitous encounters. He grew up in New Jersey, had been a member of a rock band and attended Drew University before deciding to transfer to Montclair State College to study technical theater. In order to make up some credits lost in the transfer, an advisor told him to build some hand-puppets and do a Punch and Judy show. Never one to believe that puppets were just entertainment for kids, Roccoberton decided instead to make some marionettes and did a piece by Brecht. After leaving Montclair, he



worked professionally for a time, developing his love for things technical and getting more chances to design and build puppets. He discovered the UConn program while casting about for a grad school

where he could continue studying tech theater.

While a student of Ballard's he learned the craft of puppetry in the classroom and in the large, mainstage productions. This experience he put into immediate practice by founding the Pandemonium Puppet Company with fellow program member Brad Williams. On top of all this outside work and the demands of the classroom, Roccoberon endeavored to create the National Puppetry Institute as a conduit for bringing visiting puppet artists to UConn for extended workshops and residencies. NPI's first guest was the great German marionettist, Albrecht Roser. Roser had absolute mastery of the difficult art of solo string puppetry, both as a prodigious performer and as a designer and builder of the figures. He had perfected a technique of sculpting expressive puppet heads and hands with folded and curved paper, which had a powerful effect on Roccoberon's personal style. Roser's extended stay at UConn opened Roccoberon's eyes to other possibilities inherent in the art form, far different from Ballard's massive productions—as did other NPI guests, such as Dick Meyers, Margo Rose, Felix Mirbt and Bruce Schwartz.

Roccoberon's final project was a program featuring work by two modern music masters, Darius Milhaud's *Creation of the World*, and Igor Stravinski's *A Soldier's Tale*. Two contrasting production techniques were used—in the Milhaud piece, abstract geometries, transmuted balletically, materialized and dematerialized into thick darkness, using European "black theater" style of manipulation inside a small porthole-shaped proscenium. The *Soldier's Tale* featured expressionistic rod puppets with Roser-style paper-sculpt faces that played on a long playboard, and shadow figures and backgrounds projected on overhead projectors.

After successfully mounting his final project, however, and completing all the requirements for an MFA (except for the written thesis), Roccoberon became disillusioned with the Puppetry Department. His own identity as a puppeteer had grown stronger, and his focus had begun to shift to ongoing touring with Pandemonium, and with other projects outside the school. He did not finish writing the thesis to officially earn his MFA for almost ten years.

After leaving UConn, Roccoberon tried to reshape the National Puppetry Institute and give it an identity and life separate from the University. The idea was to create a training program that would be a complement to Ballard's, and that would function as a safety net in case the UConn program was cut. He felt that the focus at UConn on large-scale musical productions was not realistic and that students needed to learn a style of production that was closer to how small puppet companies actually worked in this country. He felt strongly that the program should be geared towards helping developing artists find their own voices. So, in 1984, with the help of Albrecht Roser, Margo Rose, and other interested parties, he managed to hook up the Institute with the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. It was rechristened The Institute of Professional Puppetry Arts.

...I don't set forth to create artists.

I don't believe that a teacher can create an artist. My goal is—and it's very much like the Bauhaus of Weimer [Germany]—I know that I can teach the students how to work with tools. I know I can teach them about materials. I can give them theory, I can teach them some history. From there, I need to give them as many opportunities to mix it all together and apply it. And if in an individual I see the spirit, the flame of art, I can fan it. I can cause it to grow. But I can't light that flame. And so, my bottom-line goal is that I'm creating craftsmen. In the people who have left us, there were a number of artists—there were also a number of craftsmen. And the fact is, they all work. So I feel pretty good about the process.

— B. Roccoberon

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is a remarkable place. A former farm estate in the home town of the celebrated playwright, it looks out over the waters of Long Island Sound. The property includes a large mansion that is used for offices, dormitories and workshop space, and a big barn that had been converted into a theater by Rufus and Margo Rose. Roccoberon modeled his program after the National Theatre Institute, with an intense, conservatory-like emphasis on developing and sharpening professional skills. Class sessions were three and one half hours, three sessions a day, seven

days a week. Each semester would concentrate on a specific style of puppetry—marionettes, hand puppets, shadows. And everything—acting classes, directing classes, design—all focused on that one element. Because of the heavy work load imposed, each student was assigned a specially designed wooden workbench/tool cabinet, so that they would feel more at home in the workshop.

Building on the idea he developed at UConn with the NPI, Roccoberton invited many professional puppet artists to share in the training process—not just as teachers-in-residence, but as active participants in an ongoing process:

“ I decided that the program shouldn't be just for students. What we needed to do was have a three-level focus, that we were dealing with students, professionals and the audience.... The professional was a teacher, at the same time, the professional needed creative rejuvenation.

And so we looked at ways of doing that as well as spending time working with the audiences, to train them to understand what we were doing, so that they could be a better audience.... We brought in professional artists every month, two of them every month. And the students were the crew. So they not only got to see how the puppeteer performed, but how the stage was set up, how they carried it, how it was made, what sort of truck they drove. And what was nice there, was that a lot of professionals invested themselves, just became part of it.... ”

Some of the artists that came in to teach in IPPA workshops included: Roman Paska, Margo Rose, John Lewandowski, Irena Niculescu, Larry

Reed, Peter Lobdell, Cheryl and Jane Henson, Paul Vincent Davis, Larry Engler, Carol Fijan, Brad Williams, Nikki Tilroe, and many others.

When news of Ballard's imminent retirement reached him, Roccoberton did not consider himself a candidate for the position. He had not yet even officially graduated from the puppetry program, because of his unfinished thesis. But at the urging of Albrecht Roser, he finally did the required work and was awarded his MFA. Shortly thereafter he was invited to Storrs for an interview—somewhat surprisingly, because he had not submitted his resumé. His reluctance to return to academia was mitigated by the urging of friends and supporters of the Puppetry Arts program, who felt that his IPPA experience and familiarity with the Storrs scene, made him the fittest candidate to take over from Ballard. He took the job provisionally, but soon employed all of his boundless energy and enthusiasm to get the Puppetry Arts Program headed in a new direction.

When Frank Ballard began the Puppetry Arts program, he had no model to work from, except for Helstien's UCLA program, and he had no experience in trying to teach college level puppetry courses. When Bart took over the department in the fall of 1990, he had his own experience under Ballard, plus years of

running the IPPA program at Waterford. He tried to apply both experiences to the task of reshaping the Puppetry Arts program. One of the problems was trying to cram the intensive conservatory approach of IPPA into the shorter class periods and scattered focus of the University:

“ With memories [of IPPA] and the desire to give my current students that possibility, I do what I can here to challenge them that way... Frank developed the classes out of necessity in a way that I'm continuing, which is what I refer to as "consummate training." Within each class, the students get theory and history. They learn to conceive ideas and design them, to build and perform them... So in a hand puppet class, that class is primarily about performance, you learn to use your hands. But we still need a puppet, so we're still building a puppet.

In the paper sculpture class, the whole idea is the concept of design through this piece of paper. But a puppet's not a puppet until it comes alive. So the final project in the sculpture class is a performance. And what this has done, I think, for all of us who have gone through it, whether with Frank or with me, is that it has given us a very broad understanding of the form.... ”

Roccoberton made a number of changes in the focus of the program. He concentrated classes on necessary skills for professional puppeteers such as techniques for film and television—since so many of the UConn students end up with



David Regan in *The Puppetmaster of Lodz*,

thesis production of UConn student,

Deborah Glassberg

careers in these areas. He continued his practice of bringing in outside artists, especially Roser, who still comes to Storrs at regular intervals to teach paper-fold sculpture and marionette techniques. He produced fewer large mainstage productions, so that students had more time to work on their own projects. He felt that smaller productions could better highlight an individual student's work.

His first UConn production, **A SHOW OF HANDS**,

received an UNIMA Citation Award for Excellence. Bart also made efforts to get other theater faculty members involved in the designing and directing of puppetry productions, part of an attempt to integrate the puppets into the curriculum of the rest of the Theater Department, and to end the feeling of the alienated "secret society" that the program had acquired.

Under Roccoberon's leadership, the Puppetry Arts Program has been flourishing. During the first semester, there were seven students, each supplied with one of the wooden work stations he had built for the O'Neill Center. The following year, he had to build seven more. And for each of the past four years, the program has had an enrollment of twenty eight students—which is the maximum number of work stations that can be packed into the cramped, subterranean Puppet Lab facilities (still located in low-ceilinged basement of a 1930's era dormitory building.) Even with this increase in enrollment Roccoberon has to turn away upwards of twenty five applicants a year. There is no question that, at least for the foreseeable future, the Puppetry Arts Program at UConn will continue to thrive.

Stephen Kaplin is a graduate of the UConn program (BFA, 1979), and has worked for many of the foremost artists in the field, including Peter Schumann, Julie Taymor and Michael Curry. He is a member of the NY based Great Small Works, and is a frequent contributor to Puppetry International.

(1) All quotes taken from author's interviews.

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The Education of Puppeteers in Poland

by Henryk Jurkowski

The debates over training of puppeteers in Poland began with the founding of the first puppetry school, Cracow, 1949, by Janina Kilian Stanislawska. That first experiment lasted barely four years. Other establishments, more or less ephemeral, followed.

Actor-Puppeteers for the State Theatres

During the Communist era, all such schools had as a goal the preparation of puppet performers and puppetry directors for employment in the State Theatres. Students therefor received a professional specialization, as did those future scenic designers and puppet builders.

That objective was clearly visible in the program at Wroclaw as well as Bialystok. The desire was to develop the puppeteer, as one would develop an actor. The accent was therefor on both acting (with or without mask) and the four "classic techniques" of manipulation: rod (wayang), marotte, marionette, handpuppet. At first, the schools served the Polish theatre well, training several generations of puppeteers who took part in the creation of theatrical works of great quality, particularly under the direction of Jan Wilkowski.

During this time, and starting early on, certain cracks began to appear in this beautiful facade. For young graduates, confronting the harsh realities of day-to-day existence in the puppet theatre understandably led to frustration. Many abandoned puppetry for the "live theatre"; others were overcome by the passivity and professional routines in which they found themselves immersed.

The Puppet, a specific genre?

It was in this era that the organizers of the theatre conferences in Bialystok asked me to address the problems of professional training ["One More Time on the Training of Puppeteers," *Teatr Lalek* #3, 1985]. Influenced by my international experience, I proposed a definition of puppetry as a genre unto itself, more in the realm of the sculptural arts than of the dramatic arts, the realm of dramatized images rather than the text-based theatre. For that reason, I indicated my preference for training the puppeteer in a way distinctly different from that of stage or film actors.

There was not really a response to my proposal. Only Jan Wilkowski, challenged by the editorship of *Teatr Lalek* [the magazine of UNIMA-Poland, ed.] expressed his disagreement with my suggestions. He found that this new religion, of which I had declared myself High Priest, was out of step with Polish puppetry practices, which derived from a theatrical tradition, rather than descending from acrobats or mimes. He couldn't

see the necessity of changing a system of training which had proven itself ["I Shatter the Wall of Silence," *Teatr Lalek*, #2, 1986, p.3].

It is not the system which decides the results. It is the people who work in it," he affirmed.

And again:

It is through literature that the puppet breathes; it is the Word which derives naturally from its movement and which simply must be expressed, pursuant to that action.

Wilkowski, mindful of his creative freedom, did not wish to participate in the creation of charter for professional training. He believed above all in the virtue of talent. While he was a professor, he also fashioned, according to his own ideas, the nascent artistic capabilities of his students. His personality sparkled. He knew this and used it to his advantage.

The following position was seized upon by the editorship of *Teatr Lalek* at the time of the international discussion which they organized around the subject ["Can One Teach Puppetry?", *Teatr Lalek*, #3 1986, pp 2-8]. Participants evoked the state of Polish theatre, the idea of the puppet... but very little was said about the system of professional training. Krzysztof Rau approached the subject saying:



École Nationale Supérieure de Theatre, Wrocław, Poland. Caprichos, after Goya. Director- Bohdan Gluszczyk

Let us accept, all the same, for the clarity and purity of all our principle definitions, that puppet theatre consists, first and foremost, in how the puppet "plays." That is going to depend on the way in which classical forms are utilized, which today seem anachronistic, but which in thirty years could be

back in fashion. But the central definition which underlies this theatre seems to me to be clear. Contemporary art has enlarged the notion of "puppet" so that it must be considered, at times, a sculptural sign. Well, now, it is important not to forget our origins. On the other hand, at some point, we will find that we are once again... nowhere.

It seems again that we must choose between two ideas: the actor-puppeteer, an artist capable of acting with both puppets and masks, or the puppeteer trained in visual theatre. Me, I vote for a puppeteer able to do everything, able to change everything, able to make music on all instruments: a puppeteer who is a total theatre artist."

(continued on page 24)

Puppetry training in an institutional setting is all well and good, but puppeteers can educate themselves in solitude as well, as Ian Cuming demonstrates in this delightful lesson in looking and opening.

Sugar Ant Marionette

by Ian Cuming

Steps for the creation of a large wooden Sugar Ant marionette.

Step 1

Find a Sugar Ant. These are the orange and black ones. They measure between 20 and 30 mm. Spend some time with it. Learn what you can about it, first hand. Do so without interfering with the creature itself. Make mental notes of its behavior. Record your impressions. Draw it from memory. Draw the moment. File it.

Step 2

Read about ants. What food do they eat? How do they reproduce? Are they nocturnal? What else is known about them? Just ask. See what is known. Sift the information for clues. A clue is anything that interests you. Clues give you something to go on.

Step 3

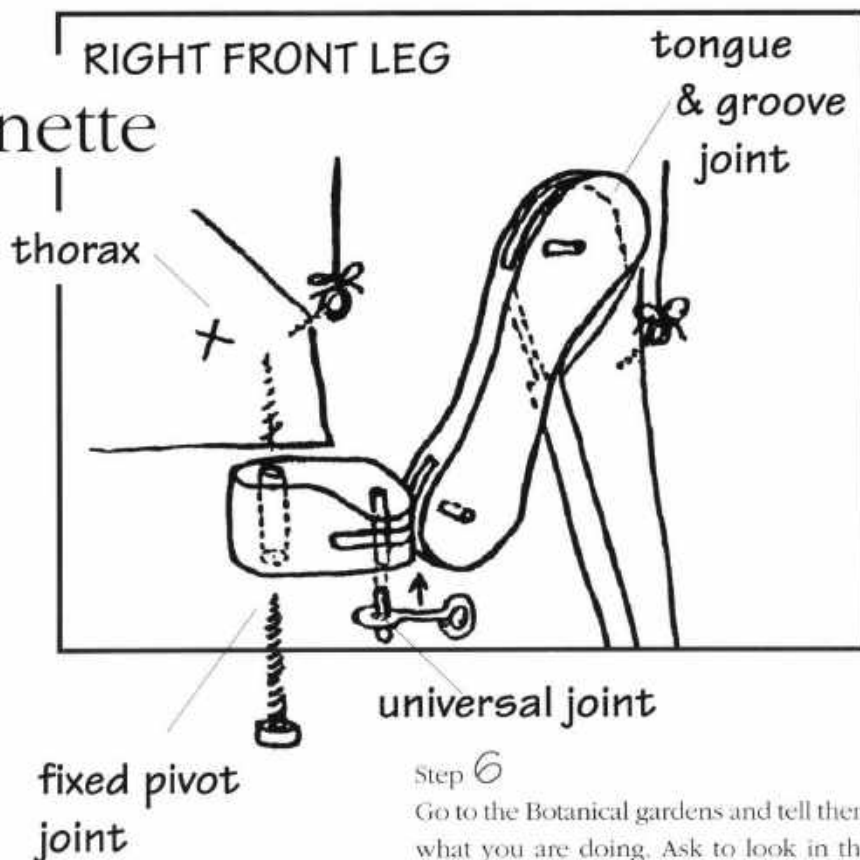
Return to the place where you first found the ant. Take a glass jar with a lid and a plastic ruler as well as a notebook and pencil. With great care, catch the ant and put it in a jar. Measure the length, height and breadth of every part through the jar. Note any features. How many body parts? What is the scope of movement in each joint of each leg? Note the colors, textures and shapes in every detail. This is detail that will help you make choices about the puppet you create. Release the ant exactly where you found it. Honor the moment with silent wonder. As it leaves, you may make a note of any emotional reactions to the experience. Record your own feelings. All of this will feed into the total process. It will!

Step 4

Make a model in newspaper. Remember always with this process that the creature itself is magnificent and the best you will ever do is to approximate the living thing. Let this be the case. Accept that the object of the exercise is to express something for yourself. The greatest result might be to create in your puppet the illusion of life. If you attempt to imitate the ant, then you will surely be disappointed. You will have failed before you began.

Step 5

Set yourself up with a large piece of paper on the kitchen table. Rework your field drawings. Scale them up sixty times. Do it perfectly. Include all of your measured detail. Rewrite your notes so that they can be clearly read. Pin all of this to the wall. Ponder it.



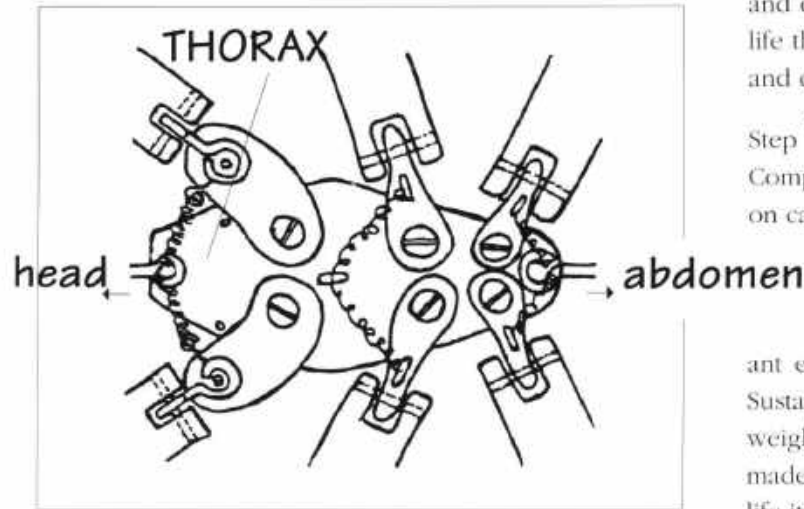
Step 6

Go to the Botanical gardens and tell them what you are doing. Ask to look in the prunings pile. Find a piece of wood big enough to make body parts. Hardwood will be necessary for the smallest leg segments. Pine will do for the rest of the legs. Transpose the information contained in your drawings onto the log and the other timber. Pencil in the lines of your proposed cuts. Cut the shapes with a hand saw. Cut boldly. Work steadily and cut all the pieces you need. Take your time. Leave the cuts rough. Live with the choices you have now made. Hollow the head and the abdomen with a pneumatic chisel. Reduce the weight as much as you can without losing strength. Leave the thorax solid as this is where the legs attach. Lay the freshly cut shapes out on the floor.

Step 7

Join the segments according to your diagram. There are also specific grooves to be cut, and holes to be drilled. Design each one as a reduction of the actual ant's joints, with a view to replicating the

movements you observed. Read through this process three times at your leisure until you settle into a steady flow with it all. Follow through with just one stage and accomplish a single step. Let the movement be free at first as long as the joint itself is strong. Limiting the scope of movement in each joint will be necessary in the end to get clarity of movement. Return to the ant itself. Be guided by your feelings. Puppetry is an emotional occupation. Develop a tolerance for mystery. Step by step. The initial project for me spanned nine months.



Step 8
 Along the way you may begin to talk to people about ants, and find that everyone has a story to tell. Ant mythology is global and every culture has some way of referring to them.

Step 9
 Stringing starts with a main bar that is as long as the puppet. The body suspends from this. The main bar is one simple piece that is held in one hand or two. It is an extension of your hand.

Step 10
 Screw-eyes are fixed into position for *balance* on the body and for *lift* on the legs. Springs on the underbelly (of the puppet) provide an automatic return-swing in the leg movement. Trial and error is the way to go. Locate approximate positions by referring to the various diagrams here.

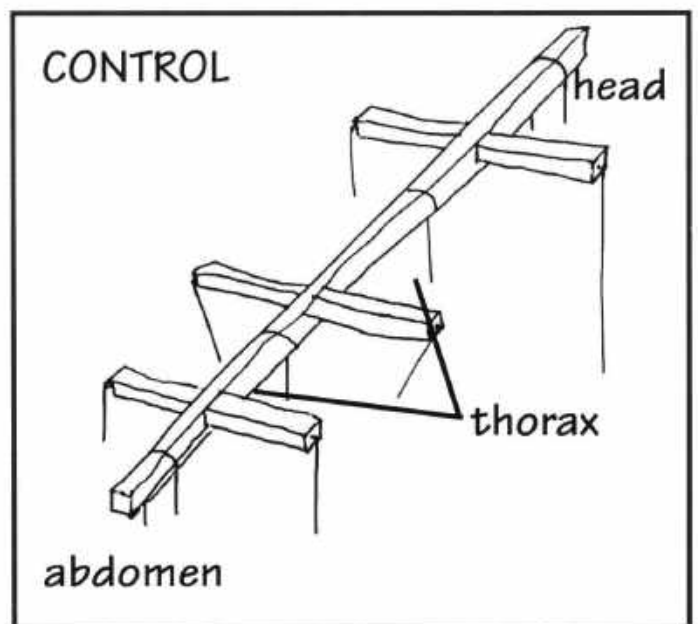
Step 11
 Cut grooves around the main bar and at the end of each cross-bar. Suspend the body parts using waxed linen thread. Determine the length of the stings now, starting with the head. Hold the main bar at shoulder height and tie one string that drops double to the screw-eyes at either side of the head. Repeat this at the front of the thorax. Tie a single string to the back of

the thorax. Double one again for the abdomen. Attach the six leg strings to the legs; draw up the knee of each as you set the length, and tie them off. The middle leg-strings cross. Fiddle and adjust until you are happy. The horizontal body floats just above the ground. The legs, when at rest, touch the ground.

Step 12
 Fine-tuning is an on-going process. Limit unwieldy movement in any way you can. Play with springs and pins. Preserve with functional problem-solving. Move things around for balance and ease of movement. Play with the puppet and reverse the life that is there. Enjoy the discovering how it hangs. Dangle and drag it. Rock it. Roll it. Tangle it. Explore it. Put it away.

Step 13
 Complete the construction with small wire toe-nails for grip on carpet and earth. Install antennae of coat-hanger wire, being sure to bend the ends around for safety. Oil the whole thing with linseed. Acquire a trunk to house the ant. Take it to a market and walk it. "Release" the ant every time you play. Follow the ant wherever it goes. Sustain the attention you give it from the moment you take the weight to the moment you put it down. Critical observations made by the maker will serve the player. Respect the play of life itself. Honor your own and other people's ability to wonder at a miracle. Much of the work is letting go.

Ian Cuming has specialized in puppetry for 20 years. He is a skilled performer, builder and teacher, working extensively in community arts and education.



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(continued from page 21)

Janusz Ryl-Krystianowski preferred the first option, and formulated his opinion along fairly radical lines:

I consider that the play of the actor constitutes the basis for all genres of theatrical art. In the puppet theatre, however, we have actors who know, respect, and comprehend the specific nature of their performance genre. And if someone is a puppeteer in their soul, they will find an opportunity to achieve their desires under the best possible conditions at a school.

Krystyna Mazur, critic and specialist in theatrical diction, made the same point ["To Open the Actor," *Teatr Lalek*, #3-4, 1990, p42]:

I consider that the action of an actor (whether stage-actor or puppeteer) achieves completion at the level of spoken language. All the motivation for the characters' comportment presents itself in the subtext, in the intonation, and it is for that reason that utilization of the text in the puppet theatre must pro-

ceed from the same principle as in the theatre of actors. Even if the psychology of the character is framed in a different way, it must respect its similarity to human be-

ings. For actors to be able to speak on stage, they must be free of the fear of speaking there. They must have the desire to express themselves, to communicate with others.



École Nationale Supérieure de Theatre, Wrocław.

Poland. Osmedeusze, by M. Białoszewski, 1990-91.

Prof. Anna Proszkowska.

An Evolution Dictated by Reality

Still, the particular ideas and visions soon came face-to-face with the minutiae of daily life and the unfolding of political events. The change of regimes-- and thus of the system of financial support for the theatre-- brought an acceleration of the evolution of thoughts on the professional training of puppeteers. The interviews with dean Wojciech Kobrzyski (Białystok) given to Joanna Rogacka ["Are We Being Overrun by Routine?", *Teatr Lalek*, #1-2, 1992, p7], demonstrates this well:

Until now, we have prepared actors and directors to work in the State Theatres. Now, we must take into consideration the fact that only a small number of our graduates are going to be involved in this type of theatre. The rest, then, must possess the tools to go out and pursue their career outside the institution. That is to say, we find ourselves obligated to prepare our students to be able to create their own productions. Our graduate, therefore, must be an actor, a sculptor, an author to do everything which is required. It's simply life which obligates us to this course of action...

We are conscious of the fact that our current program has become petrified, that we have been overrun by routine, and that we are only teaching the artisanal side of things. We don't teach the creative side.

There are times, when all the professor/practitioners have declared that the current program doesn't address the reality of the situation: it is focussed on training actors for the big companies, for performing in huge productions. From the first year, students are under the control of a director, without the chance to create anything on their own, no exceptions.

We would like to arrive at a program of training which gives a chance to the individual... . The first year will be preparatory. The students acquire a knowledge of the various means of expression, and how to use them. The success of the program will depend on the willingness of the students... .

It's in the second year that the student will approach certain areas of specialized study. Which ones? That will depend on his or her interests. The choice of subject will determine the means of instruction.

Up until now, it has been just the opposite. The new program exacts a special kind of work from the students. Before completing the school, they must produce two shows of their own. It is a way for them to begin their professional careers.

The professors at Wrocław are less concerned with the problem. For several years the program had a hugely charged atmosphere, thanks to the new circumstances of Polish puppet theatre, expressed by Anna Helman-Twardowska, the dean at Wrocław, in response to Joanna Rogacka ["On Creation in the Studio," *Teatr Lalek*, #1-2, 1992, p10]:

Yes, our school trains students with the new model of theatre in mind. It's an integral part of the program, but there are also workshop/seminars directed by the top artists in the field. Students also have the opportunity to grow by spontaneously organizing teams which receive aid from the school. Thus, the "Puppet Clinic" group formed by the students in their first semester continues to be active outside of school.

To return again to a phrase of Jan Wilkowski, one could say: "See- the world has taken form, and the form has exited the puppet booth..." This time, it is in the very functioning of the schools of puppetry that the metamorphosis has occurred. •

Dr. Henryk Jurkowski is the author of many books and articles on puppetry, including A History of European Puppet Theatre (trans. Penny Francis).

The New COTSEN CENTER at California Institute of the Arts

seriously embraces puppetry and recognizes the puppet's proper place among the Arts.

As is now evident, at this, the end of the twentieth-century AD, the puppet is showing signs that it is evolving or mutating, following closely in its human creator's footsteps.

Definitions of the word *puppet* have been expanding at an amazing rate. From traditional forms of hand puppetry, to manipulating computer imagery through digital animation, the word encompasses it all. What our next generation of artists will consider puppetry, we can only imagine. And thanks to the year-old Cotsen Center for Puppetry and the Arts at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), there is a new, exciting, training school for the puppet theater artist of the future.

CalArts is a four year, fully accredited private institution offering BFA and MFA degrees in six core artistic areas: dance, film/video, music, theatre, visual arts; and critical studies. More than just interdisciplinary, the school uses the term multidisciplinary to describe their approach; students are encouraged to traverse the various schools on campus and develop a range of skills in their exploratory projects. This seems like a healthy approach, especially for the puppetry artist, who combines visual arts, theatre and the lot, to create the complex art form we recognize today as puppetry.

According to Susan Solt, Dean of the CalArts School of Theatre: "The art and craft of puppetry have acquired particular significance in the contemporary theatre. Puppet theatre and its techniques have contributed to the revitalization of the American avant-garde and will be seminal in defining the theatrical terrain of the next century... Actors, directors and designers will now have the opportunity to be exposed to this unique work and, if their interest so leads them, to develop essential skills and aesthetic principles through direct practice of puppet theatre. With the creation of the [sic] center, this ancient and elemental art takes its rightful place as a resource in the training of theatre artists." These are strong words of encouragement for the puppet, from what is widely recognized as one of the best theatre design schools in the country.

Chosen as director for this exciting new center was Janie Geiser, who is recognized as one of the most creative puppet-artists in the country. She began her career as a visual artist, focusing on the medium of painting. In 1981 she began directing and designing her award-winning theatre pieces, and since the early-nineties she has also been winning praise for her animated short films. Geiser also has a successful career as an illustrator—her work is often seen in the New York Times Book Review. Her diverse talents, combined with her uniquely powerful vision and style, serve to make her the perfect choice as the head of a program that wishes to impart practical skill, and encourage the individual voice of the artist. Ms. Geiser states in her director's statement, "it is my hope that we will create a rigorous and exciting laboratory for groundbreaking experimentation in the art of puppetry, with an emphasis on aesthetics, ideas, and interdisciplinary exploration."

"CalArts is the ideal home for the establishment of such an interdisciplinary, innovative approach to this ancient art form. With its history of experimentation, its faculty of practicing artists, the diversity of disciplines concentrated under one roof, and its creative student body, CalArts has the resources to become a major laboratory for the development of puppet artists. In addition, the Cotsen Center has the potential to become a vital and important forum for the exchange of ideas among practicing artists, a site for the development of new work by established resident and visiting artists in collaboration with the students, and a significant international presence in the exploration of puppetry."

Future guest artists include Larry Reed (fall 1999), Ping Chong (fall 2000) and Michael Sommers (spring 2000), among others yet to be decided upon.

Highlights of the 1998-99 program included: classes and workshop of an original work with Resident Artist, Roman Paska; Found objects and performance with Paul Zaloom; and lectures by Visiting Artist, Jane Henson. The year culminated with the development of a large-scale, original work by Center Director Geiser. Her piece *Ether Telegrams* was created in collaboration with a cast, technical and design staff made up of students.

Given that this was the first year of the program, these are amazing opportunities for students, to say the least.

Given the amount of talent in the center's faculty, the opportunities for hands-on training, and the enthusiasm of Director Janie Geiser, the students should have the tools necessary to tell us all, in a few years time, how the puppetry arts are going to mutate next. Keep your eyes peeled, some new art form is bound to crawl out of this laboratory—a strange fusion of robotics, computer-generated imagery and *mâché*, perhaps, but most certainly a puppet.

Janie Geiser & Co.
Evidence of Floods, 1994



photo: Dona Ann McAdams

Jonathan Cross is director of Cosmic Bicycle Theatre in NYC, which has performed to great acclaim both in the U.S. and abroad.



About



This film begins with an ornate proscenium, the stage obscured by a painted olio curtain. A circular section of curtain is removed, and a face looks out at ... me? The curtain is entirely removed and actors appear in ornate costumes. Or... wait a moment... these actors have rods attached to their arms. Their faces are entirely human, they appear to breathe, but they are puppets. The altered scale is disorienting, but I'm not disappointed; I'm fairly vibrating with anticipation.

John Turturro (and his company) has created in *Illuminata* something of devastating beauty. It is rich in visual splendor, in metaphor, in human emotion; it is a great entertainment and, in my opinion, work of art. Though all aspects of the production warrant discussion, the only thing I will consider here is the film's use of puppetry—its appropriateness, its effectiveness, and its relationship to other puppetry in contemporary American films.

A Victorian-era theater is the primary setting for the film's action. As audience members, our relationship to characters in a film is generally one in which their apparent lives are much more interesting than our actual ones. In *Illuminata*, this is taken one step further, since the lives these characters portray when they are on the stage within the film, is a still more vibrant reality than that of their lives off the stage. The puppets (stunningly crafted and manipulated by Roman Paska), create yet another level of existence in which the theatre itself is abstracted. In this layer of model theater, the complete absence of the flesh-and-blood actor brings the film to an even

more profound level, because of the puppet's ability to speak simultaneously to our conscious and subconscious minds. Roman Paska is more than the film's puppeteer, though. He and his longtime collaborator Donna Zakowska, are the conceptual designers of the entire film (Zakowska also designed the gorgeous costumes for the actors and, I presume, for the puppets). This was arguably Turturro's canniest decision; in evok-

ing the live theatre, there are no people like show people. They understand that every detail of a production's design should support the meaning of the text, and they understand that Art is a subtractive process—a notion long out of fashion in Hollywood. The use of puppets, then, was appropriate. The film would probably have played well without them—still a fine entertainment, but a poorer work of art.

film review by Andrew Periale

So, what was it that made the puppet sequences so effective? I believe it was due in part to the multilayered design of the production. We know, for instance, that the film actors have a life outside of the film. We see this reflected in the characters who are stage actors in the film: at night, on stage, this one is a confident braggart, by day, perhaps, an insecure fop. The puppets, though, do not straddle two worlds—they are as artificial as the stage they inhabit. The illusion of life they inspire is a tribute not only to the puppet master's skill, but to the animistic part of our minds which, when we were children, believed that all objects were to some extent alive—that magic really happened.

The puppets are not a part of the story, which is to say, there is no puppet booth backstage at the theatre—no actor from the troupe who moonlights as a puppeteer. Rather, they serve to frame the action, comment upon it (wordlessly), and place it in a larger context of the worlds within worlds, in which there is a creator, and those who enact the creation. It cannot be a coincidence that the puppets are the very image of Paska. Ultimately, all art is self-portraiture at some level, and *Illuminata* seems the very embodiment of this principle: a theatre troupe enacts a work which is the portrait of the love of its resident playwright for the company's leading lady; the playwright is acted by John Turturro, and his love-interest is played by Katherine Borowitz—Turturro's wife. This represents just a few of the layers in the film, and the puppets are highly effective at adding a most satisfying complexity to its structure.

There has been much use made of puppetry in film over the past few decades, but very little use of puppets *as* puppets. Rather, the audience is implicitly asked, in films like *Gremlins*, or, more recently, *The Phantom Menace*, to accept the puppet creations as inhabiting the same world as the human actors. The techniques of manipulation are made so invisible through processes both painstaking and expensive, that, though we know, for instance, that gremlins do not exist, we nonetheless accept them as cast members. Ironically, this high-degree of realism does *not* make them more amazing. Paska's puppet figures in *Illuminata* seem to breathe, observe, think. The fact that their big, fat arm-rods are clearly visible does not make their beautiful movements less astonishing: Quite the opposite.

Puppets have been used as puppets in other films. In *Lili*, the puppets were used in the natural context of a puppet act at carnival, and they served to facilitate communication in what was initially a *very* dysfunctional relationship. Several decades later was Bruce Schwartz's star turn in *La double vie de Veronique*, where the performance (presented by the puppeteer at, what else, a school assembly) mirrored some of the protagonist's inner life. Even closer to what is attempted by Paska in *Illuminata*, was the puppetry by the Minneapolis-based In the Heart of the Beast in the film *Tarantella*, in which scenes from the character's past are enacted with very nonrealistic, though beautiful, puppets.

The technical difference between the use of "puppets as puppets" and "puppets as 'people'" in film may be clear, but what is its significance? Perhaps where advanced technology is successful, we accept the film personages as real, where as when puppets are presented as objects, we are forced to understand what they represent, what they "mean." I find the use of puppets-as-puppets in mainstream cinema as exciting a development as its inverse—the use of projection video in live puppet shows. Of course, techniques are only tools, but in the hands of an artist, they can be a means of creating something fine and enduring. And *Illuminata* is a fine thing, indeed.

I beg of you: If you love theatre at all, see this movie while it is playing in the cinema, or you might be forced to search for it on the remotest shelf of your local video store—that dusty corner it is likely to share with other such illuminating fare as Jan Svankmajer's *Faust*, *Vanya on 42nd Street* and, yes, even *Waiting for Guffman*. ☺

A History of Mexican Puppet Theater

Piel de Papel, Manos de Palo: Historia de los títeres en México

[*Paper Skin, Wooden Hands: The History of Puppets in Mexico*]. Sonia Iglesias Cabrera and Guillermo Murray Prisant,

México, D.F.: Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, S.A., 1995. 223 pp.

A great advantage of the late-century resurgence of interest in puppet theater throughout the world is the increasing number of books which try to figure out the histories of puppet traditions in a particular country. Over the past fifty years Paul McPharlin, Francis George Very and George Speaight have written puppet histories of the United States, Spain, and England (respectively). Cabrera and Prisant's *Piel de Papel, Manos de Palo* takes on this task for the truly fascinating and varied culture of Mexico.

One of the interesting aspects of Cabrera and Prisant's book is that the history of puppets in Mexico so closely parallels that of Europe and other parts of the Americas: the early (and continuing) use of sculpted images as powerful religious objects; the development of puppet theater as entertainment; and the persistence of politics, religion, and instruction in puppet plays during the past two centuries. Of course, on second thought, this isn't so much of a

surprise since such events correspond more or less with the changes all across western culture from medieval times to the present. What's most at issue (and most interesting) in the Americas is the particular development of mixed cultures in its different regions.

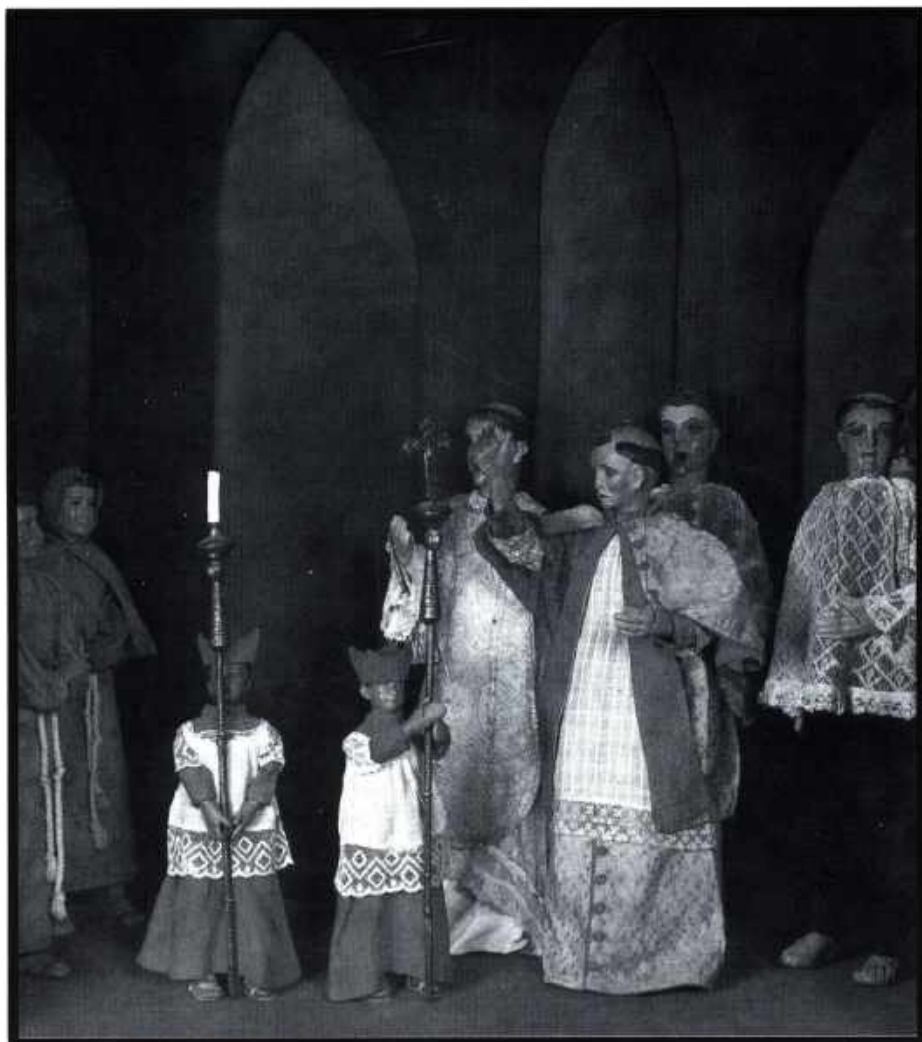
Cabrera and Prisant start by examining the evidence of pre-Colombian puppet performance, and of course a problem here is that the idea of "puppet theater" is so much a western concept, at odds with, say, a Mayan, Aztec, or Toltec sense of ritual objects taking part



Juanjuanillo and Nana Cota, 19th century

in seasonal performances meant to reflect and influence the societies in which they take place. Cabrera and Prisant quote Roberto Lago's 1980 book *Teatro guiñol mexicano*, in a passage where an inspector from the Secretary of Public Education interviews Don Nico, a Mayan farmer. Don Nico has sculpted a figure from clay (El Canacol) in the middle of a cornfield, placed a rock in its hand, and then proceeded to whisper happily in its ear. When the inspector asks why Don Nico has done all this with a puppet, Don Nico replies "It's not a puppet; it's El Canacol." The passage points out the persistence of Mayan culture in object performance, but also the difficult relationship such performance has with the European concept of "puppet." Just as mask and puppet performance are often relegated to the early chapters of theater history books as "primitive" ritual forms, so indigenous Mexican performing object forms are centered in the pre-Columbian chapters here.

In other words, Cabrera and Prisant's informative and colorful approach throughout the book covers the major events of Mexican puppet history, but its definition of "puppet" remains centered on handpuppets, marionettes, and rod puppets. There is not much room for a consideration of, say, the over-life-size papier-mâché "Judas" figures which figure so prominently in Easter celebrations, of such ritual objects as hobby-horse bulls in traditional dance festivals, and of course not the fabulous mask traditions which Donald Cordry examined in *Mexican Masks*. Cabrera and Prisant tend to focus on puppetry basically as an art form which arrives in Mexico from Spain, and then develops in the particular atmosphere of the Mexican environ-



The puppets of Rosete Aranda

photo: Pablo Méndez

ment. This is not to say that *Piel de Papel*, *Manos de Palo* lacks excitement or fascination: its stories of particular puppeteers and their work are engrossing, especially as they underline unique aspects of the Mexican experience of puppet theater; for example, the influence of Arab puppet theater on the Spanish puppet traditions which came to New Spain with the conquistadors, or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's delightful seventeenth-century description (in verse) of magic lantern performance.

Two Spanish puppeteers, Pedro López and Manuel Rodríguez, accompanied Hernando Cortez in his first voyage to Mexico, but this fascinating cross-cultural development was not simply the initiation of Mexican puppet theater as droll entertainment. Instead, it was the beginning of an evangelistic effort organized by Spanish priests and missionaries to repress indigenous puppeteers and institute a puppet theater which hewed to the original meaning of the word "propaganda" by propagating



photo: Pablo Méndez

Theater Rosete Aranda at the Museum Rafael Cornel, Zacatecas

Catholic doctrine. Luckily, as was the case throughout Europe in the same period, the world of itinerant puppeteers, acrobats, and jugglers seemed inevitably to produce iconoclastic, anti-authoritarian ideas, and hence the history of Mexican puppet theater is also (as Peter Schumann put it in "Radicality of the Puppet Theater") best discovered in government records, to which Cabrera and Prisant often refer. Those records mark the never-ending official attempts to control the unpredictable puppeteers, and, as the authors put it, "the political and social critique which emerged from the mouths of their puppets."

After its consideration of pre-Columbian puppet performance, *Piel de Papel*, *Manos de Palo* chronicles the development of various puppet forms in the colony of New Spain, in the newly independent nation of Mexico, and then through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Puppet performance devel-

oped in the Colonial era with the brief entertainments of travelling entertainers who performed brief dances and scenes rather than full-fledged dramas or comedies. These efforts, according to Cabrera and Prisant, inexorably expressed a spirit of nonconformity at odds with the rigid rules of colonial law. They cite the 1730 trial of Antonio Farfán, a magician and puppeteer whose un-Christian and otherwise suspicious activities caused him to be thrown in jail. Later in the century, further problems developed when actors used their spare time offstage to stage puppet shows in their rooms. In retrospect, this can be seen as the precursor of the many resident puppet companies which began to characterize performance in Mexican cities in the nineteenth century. At the time, though, it was considered a menace to be controlled, ultimately by prohibitions, in 1794, against any puppet performance within the limits of Mexico City.

It's hard to summarize the cascades of fascinating, enlightening material which fill the pages of the book, but some forms emerge consistently: for example the development of marionette theaters in Mexican cities, which climaxed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the amazing career of the Aranda family of Huamantla, in the state of Tlaxcala. Matching the growth of urban, often high-culture marionette shows was the continuing work of itinerant handpuppet performers such as Juanjuanillo and Nana Costa, who traveled in the poorer communities of Mexico in the mid-1800s with a burro and a handful of puppets. *Piel de Papel* shows how this form of Mexican puppet theater was an integral part of the *carpa* (tent) theaters, and the whole tent theater aesthetic which is such an important element of Mexican and North American popular performance.

The Costas performed with puppets designed particularly as Mexican characters, and another consistent theme of this history is the invention of even more such local types (which is, of course, another common aspect of puppet culture around the world). The nineteenth century saw the creation of the marionette character Don Foliás, an extremely long-nosed European gentleman with a humpback, who, as early as 1816, was found guilty of making "three cutting remarks" about the mayor of Mexico City. At end of that century "El Vale Coyote" appeared in the Aranda marionette theater. El Vale Coyote was dressed like a campesino, and in long, poetic monologues offered "great political truths." The Arandas also produced another legendary marionette character, Doña Pascarroncita, a flamboyant woman of a certain age, known for her recitation of satiric couplets poking fun at contemporary society. In addition to these stories of the creation of cultural icons, Cabrera and Prisant also provide fascinating glimpses of such popular puppet entertainments as toy theater, the Mexican version of which included booklets and images drawn by the great popular artist José Guadalupe Posada.

Piel de Papel charts the development of puppet theater in Mexico as an extremely popular modern entertainment and art form, but it's also interesting to see how religious and political material persistently turns up in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century work. The amazing Aranda family, whose marionette spectacles were a sort of national living treasure for decades, very early included detailed, extremely realistic depictions of such events as a rural village

procession celebrating the Immaculate Conception: miniature visions of spirituality and folklore at a time when massive changes were creating strong rivals to rural village life. But there was also an Aranda procession commemorating Mexican independence which featured 600 different marionettes (including whole companies of soldiers), and culminated in the appearance of President Porfirio Díaz in a tiny steam-powered car as the band (the Aranda company featured an eleven-piece string orchestra) played the national anthem. It's interesting to think that around the same time across the Atlantic the Chat Noir Cabaret in Paris was presenting similar patriotic processions on its shadow theater screen.

The high artistic sculptural and dramaturgical qualities of the Aranda family continued well into this century, in the work of Emilio Espinal Villegas, who performed, even on television, into the 1950s. The appearance of film early in the century dealt a heavy blow to the popularity of Mexican puppet theater, especially in the cities, leading to a sharp diminution of artistic quality. However, a fascinating new sense of puppetry emerged in the 1930s, as politicized artists decided to use puppets for the grand tasks of teaching literacy and health. Inspired by the political puppet theater of the Soviet Union, an important group of leftist Mexican artists and intellectuals decided to use handpuppets (which are categorically termed *guñol* in Mexico) as an educational tool for the social development of Mexico. These artists and intellectuals (including Roberto Lago, a central figure in twentieth-century Mexican puppet theater) formed three state-supported companies: El grupo Periquito,

Comino, and El grupo Nahuatl, which created new forms of didactic puppet theater combining indigenous and modern idioms to present images of an emerging, modern Mexico of literacy, good health and intelligent appreciation of culture and ideas. Lola Cueto, the idealistic leader of El grupo Nahuatl, also documented popular Mexican puppet forms throughout the country in a wonderful series of watercolors, which are a great feature of this book. Cabrera and Prisant follow this deep artistic and cultural appreciation of puppetry in Lola's daughter Mireya, the current grand dame of Mexican puppet theater, and her own son Pablo, now the director of Teatro Tinglado, which has performed to great acclaim here in the United States.

Piel de Papel, Manos de Palo is so chock full of fascinating pieces of puppet history that it does not always give the reader an analytical view of what's going on, and what all these pieces together mean for the culture of the Americas. Cabrera and Prisant often offer over-long citations from official documents, without a strong sense of their context, and on the other hand, avoid citing documentary sources and providing footnotes or an index. All of these features could help the reader better grasp the material. The fact that the book is not in English will deter many readers, but this history is definitely worth the attention of North Americans: it offers so many clues about essential elements of Mexican culture and performance, which are so important to our shared American heritage. •

R *review by John Bell*

Attention's Loop

A Sculptor's Reverie on the Coexistence of Substance and Spirit

by Elizabeth King

This gorgeous volume should be of great interest to puppetophiles; consideration of the coexistence of substance and spirit is at the very core of puppetry. In this extended rumination on perception, "...size, dirt, artifice, work, and eye" are chewed over in what the author calls: a play of overlapping loops. Fittingly, the book itself is a series of loops, whose turns are sources of both light and delight.

The puppeteer is an animator, but she has no monopoly on this craft: alchemists animate homunculi, rabbis golems, mechanics automata, children dolls and so on. Through the act of animating, we lend the inanimate a crude semblance of spirit, thus approximating, we suppose, the loan of spirit by which we ourselves are moved.

King's book is filled with photos of her sculpture "pupil" (a word meaning both "student" and the "black of the eye," related to the words for "pupa" and "puppet"). The various meanings of "pupil" overlap and transform as King considers Tom Thumb, Adelaid of Bath, Giacometti, memory, scale and the senses. King animates "pupil" even as she sets our trains of thought down various loops of track.

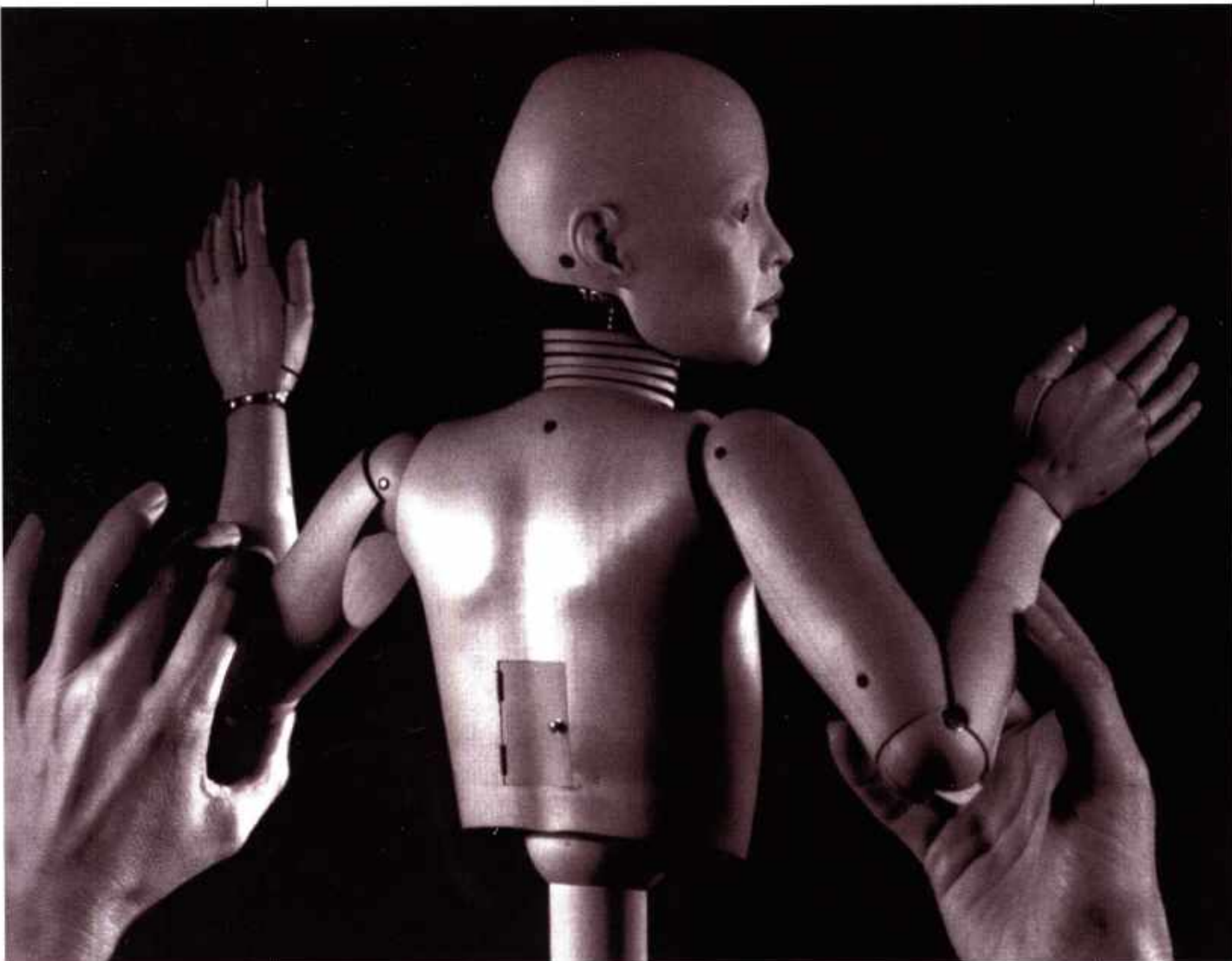
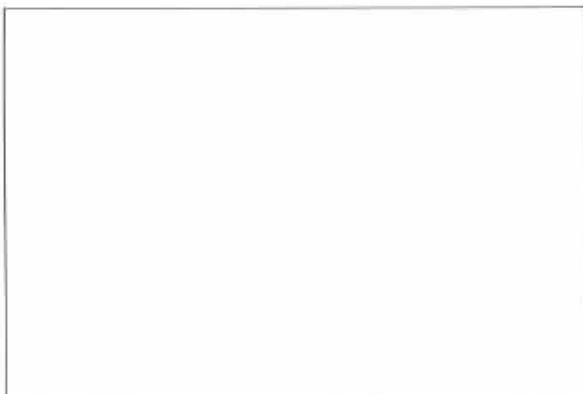
A small man made by artifice. If zealously schooled, the alchemist's homunculus-pupil held the promise of becoming a special kind of agent, able to perform tasks beyond the mere powers of ordinary humans. Not unlike Tom Thumb, who was also coming of age about this time, only he was of woman born. And fed a great deal. He is the poet's homunculus.



Figure 5

The book itself is a reflection of King's "loops." The sculpted work of art- "pupil"- we do not see. "Pupil" was photographed by Katherine Wetzel, and beautifully. But the work of the photographer we also do not see; we see the printer's reproductions of the photos (many of them in glorious tritone). These prints we see, but only in the context of Judith Hudson's stunning book design. These loops, which are only animated by the attention of the reader, are just the beginning. *Attention's Loop* is, on so many levels, a gift to humankind.

—review by A. Periale



photographs by Katherine Wetzel



Bibliographie Internationale de la Marionnette

Thousands of French Sources for Puppetry

Geneviève Leleu-Rouvray, Gladys Langevin, and Bernard Grelle, eds., *Bibliographie Internationale de la Marionnette: Ouvrages en français, 1945-1996*. Charleville-Mezières: Institut International de la Marionnette, 1996. 775 pages.

This reference book published by the *Institut International de la Marionnette* is an invaluable research source for all aspects of puppet theater, from how-to books to historical analyses and theory. The *Bibliographie* is a sophisticated, thorough reference source listing over two thousand books and other sources on puppet theater written in French since 1945. (It is the companion volume to an earlier Institut bibliography of works in English, which I have not yet seen). An aid to the interested English-speaking reader is the abundance of helpful translations of titles and subjects throughout the book, and an English Table of Contents.

The hefty volume, which deserves a place in any library interested in puppetry, is meticulously ordered according to different subject areas, and cross-referenced in an index which makes finding particular works easy.

Puppetry International

is accepting proposals for articles for the Spring and Fall of 2000:

Issue #7 SPRING:

- Traditions and History

Issue #8 FALL:

- The Modern Age

Contact the editor
(see table of contents)



The challenge here is logical and easily understandable classification, and the editors do a commendable job of ordering a whole array of sources in a manner which makes sense: general reference works, various thematic approaches to puppetry (linguistics, ethnology, etc.), repertoire, techniques, the artistic and educational uses of puppetry, and the appearance of puppet theater in literature. There are individual sections for particular countries, and for particular puppet heroes (Guignol, Karagoz, Lafleur, and Tchanchès), as well as all the different forms of puppet theater, from automata to water puppets and wayang golek, and a special section on shadow theater.

In my random searches through the volume I was able to locate references to puppet theater in sub-Saharan Africa, to a puppet play by August Strindberg ("Le Mardi Gras de Polichinelle"), to a book about Russian film animator Ladislav Starewitch, and a synopsis of the puppet theater content of Anne Tyler's novel *Morgan's Passing*. There was an interesting reference to the puppet elements in Anne Ubersfeld's theoretical *Understanding Theatre*, and a whole section on George Sand's nineteenth-century puppet collaborations with Frederic Chopin. The bibliography also features sections on the giant puppets of northern France, and on puppet theater in the Arab world.

What is exciting about all this (and I realize it may sound odd to find a bibliography "exciting") is that it shows just how much activity is going on in the various fields of puppet theater. For a long time, as Roman Paska points out elsewhere in this issue, puppetry was on the outside of cultural history and identity. The *Bibliographie Internationale de la Marionnette* shows how much has changed in the past few decades, as puppet theater has more and more been recognized as central to historical and contemporary cultures throughout the world.

—review by John Bell

No Go the Bogeyman

Scaring, Lulling & Making Mock

by Marina Warner

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998

A puppeteer's bookshelf is filled with all kinds of publications not directly related to the puppet theatre. Scan the spines and you may find reference books in the fields of art, music, dance and sculpture that serve a useful purpose when developing new work. Look carefully and you may come across Marina Warner's *No Go the Bogeyman*, a reference book of a different kind.

Beginning with the ancient Greeks' Orphic myths all the way through Hollywood's *Men in Black*, Warner traces, through stories and art and pop culture, the many forms of one of the most common but least examined human feelings—fear. In some fashion, fear plays a role in most stories. When we examine fear's origins and manifestations, and then use that knowledge to shape the puppets we build and the stories we tell, puppet theater becomes richer in meaning.

The things that scare us haven't changed. Ghosts, witches, spiders, snakes and all things with an appetite for human flesh qualify as bogeymen. A wolf has long sharp teeth and wants to eat you—these facts haven't changed. But over time our attitudes toward the wolf have. In Charles Perrault's seventeenth century version of Little Red Riding Hood the wolf is presented as a clever villain whom we secretly root for. This perverse and ironical nursery tale has survived in spite of recent politically correct "improvements." When the wolf gobbles up the caped heroine, children and adults still take satisfaction in its grim and ironic conclusion.

Designing puppets and writing scripts that are scary, but not too scary, is a tricky business. It's all too easy to either make the teeth too big or the comedy too broad. But Warner's careful researching of the roots of folkloric icons such as the "wolf" uncovers clues to this delicate balance between fear and fun.

Fear has always played some part in amusement. Carnival side shows of the nineteenth century depicting the monstrous and grotesque (bearded lady, fish boy, Elephant Man) always drew a curious crowd. Today the popularity of slasher films (*I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Bride of Chucky*) testify to the fact that fear is no longer a sideshow. It is now the main attraction. Today's children's culture is populated with a visual lexicon of monsters, from Disney's musical version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to a giant fly trapped in a translucent bar of glycerine soap.

In cultural history the bogeyman has taken many forms—ogres, giants, dwarfs, dinosaurs, cannibals and even the puppetry world's most sacred of characters, Mr. Punch. With his crooked back, red face and toothy grin, Punch takes on the strangeness of the bogeyman. His violent assaults on his baby, his wife and even Death itself are met with shrieks of laughter rather than just plain shrieks. Children instinctively make fun of Punch's antics no matter how gruesome. I once saw a version of a Punch and Judy show that ended with the couple eating their baby. Expecting the audience to recoil in horror at this blatant act of cannibalism, I was surprised to witness their con-
doning applause.

Even though we live in very different times than our ancestors, the myths they created resonate in our most contemporary specters. When we adapt or invent a story, it's important to dig deep into the origins of our cultural images to appreciate their true origins. For example, why are so many bogeymen and women imagined as single outsiders? According to Warner, the answer lies in their motivations. The Cyclops in his remote cave and the witch in her gingerbread house in the deep forest can't have children. They envy those who do. Revenge is their underlying motive for raiding cradles and devouring infants. With that knowledge in hand, a puppet theater adaptation of Hansel and Gretel could provide the witch with the richness of character she has been denied for so long.

But it's not always the villains who have sordid pasts. Sometimes the most innocuous characters can be traced to bogeyman stories. For instance, why does Pinocchio have a cricket for a counselor? Why a cricket? Warner takes us back to Homer's *Odyssey* to find the answer. Circe, the goddess/witch, turned Odysseus' men into swine. One of his crew, "Gyrillus," preferred to remain a pig rather than return to Greece. (Latin borrows heavily on Greek vocabulary, and Grillus is the Latin word for cricket.) Even though pigs and crickets have little in common, both were associated with gluttony since the Greeks did not distinguish voracious crickets from voracious locusts. Aristotle added to the cricket mythology by setting forth the belief that only those animals with voices are endowed with a soul. Aesop, LaFontaine, Keats and Hans Christian Andersen continued to infuse the cricket with folkloric prowess until in 1883 Carlo Collodi introduced *il Grillo Parlante* (the Talking Cricket) into his moral fable, *Pinocchio*.

—Look for full reviews of these books in our next issue

Nancy Staub recently made us aware of: *And from George Latshaw:*

Chandavij, Natthapatra and Promporn Pramualratana Thai Puppets and Khon Masks, Thailand: River Books, 1998. ISBN 974 8225 23 2

Primarily a book of visual documentation with excellent color photographs by Mark Williams, this book describes the interrelated major puppetry and mask traditions of Thailand. The English text is illuminating and succinct. The history, cultural background, content, performance and construction techniques are well covered. American Distributor: Weatherhill at (1) 1-800-437-7840. Cost: \$39.95 plus shipping.

Theatre of Wonder: 25 Years In The Heart of the Beast is a spectacular view celebrating a milestone for the Minneapolis group. Co-published by University of Minnesota Press and Weisman Museum, it is a dramatic and stunning volume with 30 pages of color photos. (softbound, perfect binding)

By facing fears through games, lullabies and stories and even by scaring ourselves, we can begin to imagine how our ancestors were able to cope with unknown terrors. Our "existential anxieties," as Bruno Bettelheim calls them, are dragged into the light and intelligently defused. Overcoming the objects of fear by naming them is as old as the story of Rumpelstiltskin. As Warner reminds us, this aspect of secular magic has roots in both pagan rituals and Christian principles. Words make things real. Words make things happen. Once endowed with life, fears can be annihilated.

Ultimately, it is comedy that triumphs as the chief defensive tactic against fear. Stories, songs and jokes transform anxiety into pleasure. But no matter how successful we are in exorcising the demons, there are always new fears on the horizon. Even though Warner's book does not speak directly to the puppet theater, she helps us develop our work with more insight into the power of the bogeyman, his dangers as well as his rewards.

—review by Donald Devet

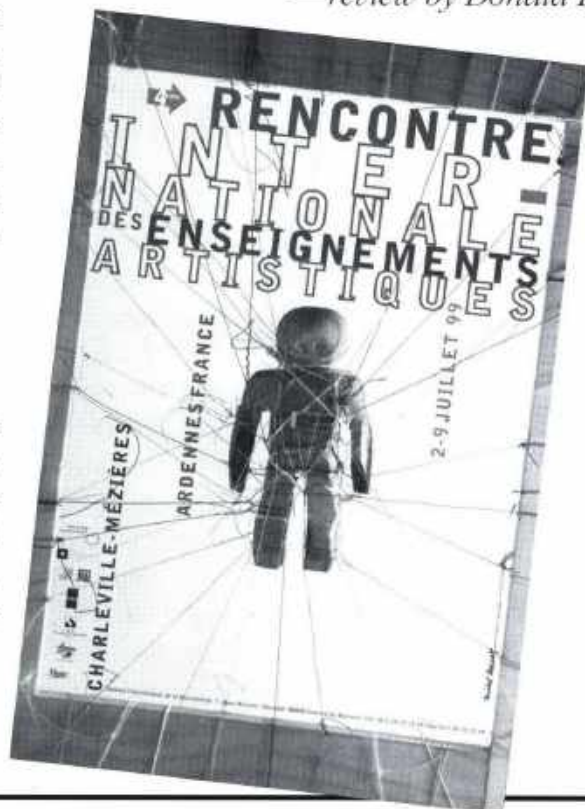
PASKA INTERVIEW (continued from page 6)

JB: *What kind of a place do you see for American students in Charleville?*

RP: Hopefully an important one... A number of Americans have already taken workshops in Charleville. In addition to myself, Jim Henson, Peter Schumann, Larry Reed and Julie Taymor have all taught there, and there are always American companies at the triennial World Festival. But I'm hoping that my being an American of sorts will widen the bridge between the United States and Europe in general, and Americans can make more of a presence than they may have in the past.

JB: *What kind of future do you see for puppeteers in the 21st century?*

RP: Hm, I'm a little reluctant to try to predict the future, but I'm willing to go this far: In a world in which almost all traditional boundaries are becoming obsolete, puppetry, with its openness to a large number of disciplines, may be the one art form that both can and will accommodate all others. Until quite recently, puppetry has always been on the outside looking in. Now it's looking more and more like the theater of the future. •



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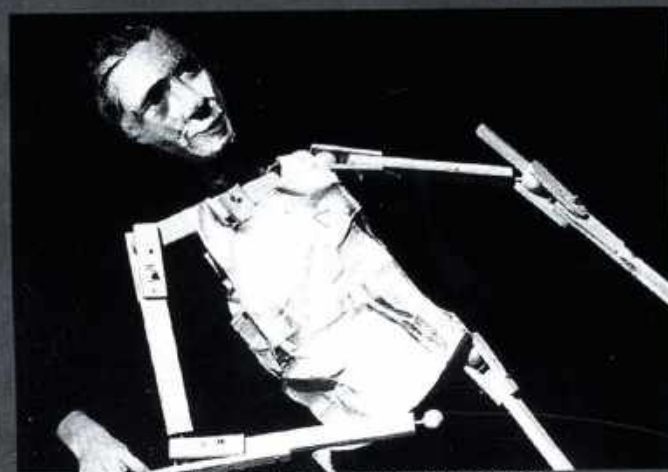
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Ether Telegrams directed by Janie Geiser

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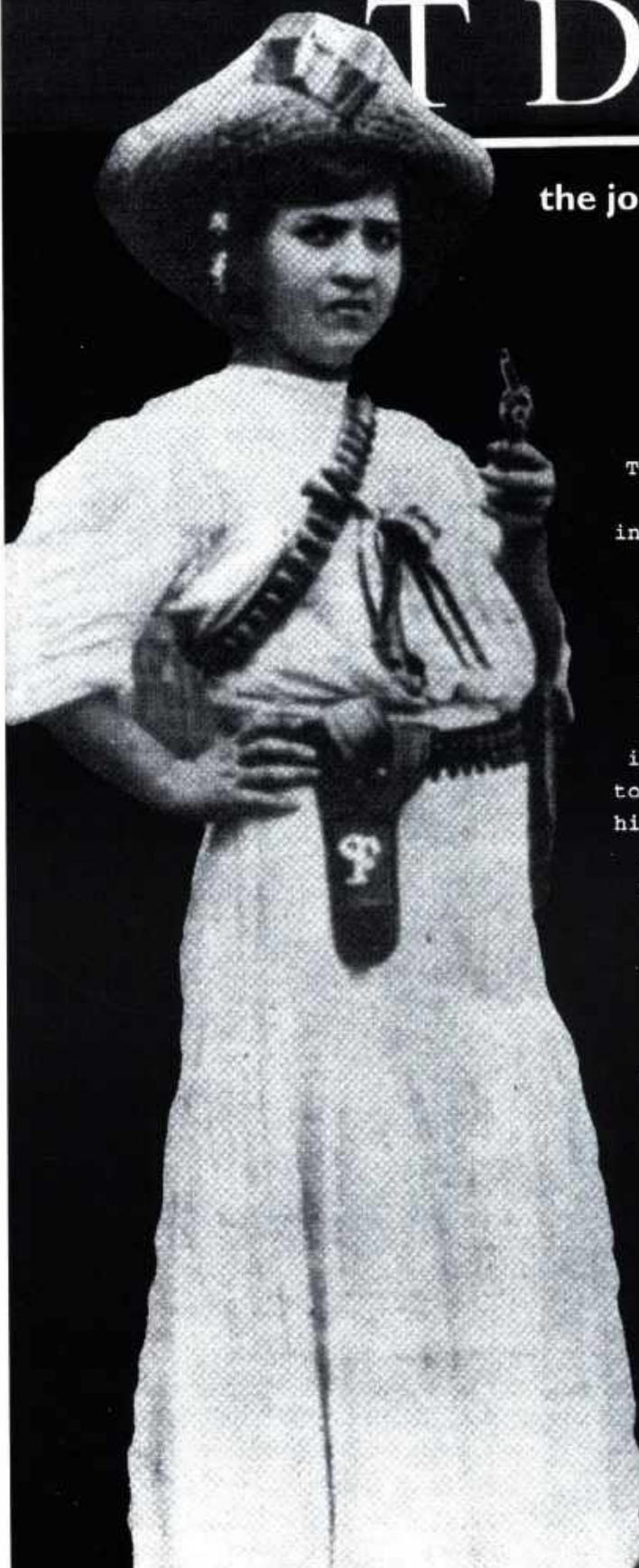
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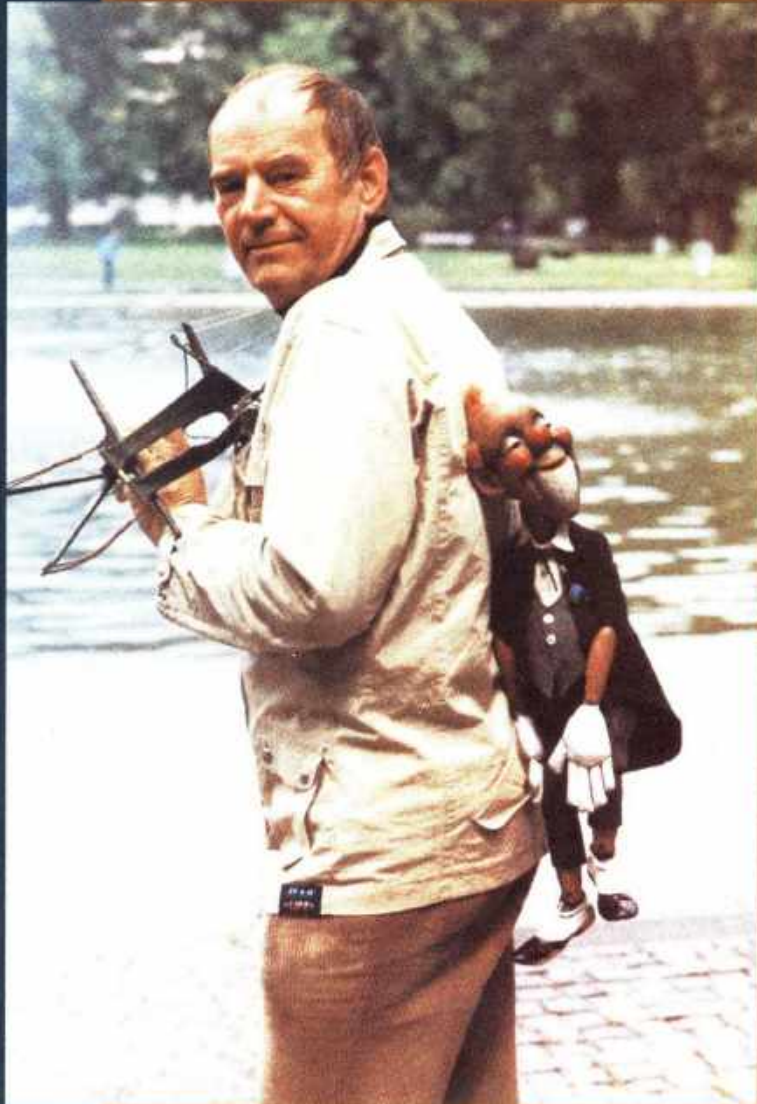
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