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PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



TECHNOLOGY AND PERFORMANCE ISSUE

- Mega-Puppetry • Automata • Shiva vs. Jesus
- John Ludwig's *Wrestling Macbeth*

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media



Theatre of the Ears

by Mark Sussman

And the advantage this puppet would have over living dancers? The advantage? First of all a negative one, my excellent friend; namely, that it would never be affected. For affection appears as you know, when the soul (vis motrix) is found at any point other than the movement's center of gravity.

—Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theater,"
translated by Roman Paska

Where is the soul in THEATER OF THE EARS? And who, or what, is affected? Kleist's 1810 parable of life and death, animation and affect, raises questions posed by this company of artists working in Paris, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Lenox, and Valencia— where is the center of gravity of this electronic puppet show? In puppet theater most explicitly, "vis motrix" and "vis directrix" operate at a distance. In THEATER OF THE EARS, the operator— manipulator of the puppet's pixilated face, and controller of the three mobile audio speakers that race across the stage floor like a circus of R2D2s— works in the upstage shadows, behind a scrim. (That's me. When the piece was created at the Center for New Theater at CalArts in Fall, 1999, I was teaching at Janie Geiser's invitation at the Cotsen Center for Puppetry and the Arts, and I joined as puppeteer. My performing background with GREAT SMALL WORKS in New York, and as a Performance Studies scholar writing about automata, suggested a good fit as the designated live body.)

Valerè Novarina's collection of rants, manifestos, and essays conjure a theater without actors. Who, or what performs? A puppet, yes. But the center of gravity is multiple, dispersed in the small, black proscenium: Gregory Whitehead's voices animate Novarina's words. Zaven Paré's puppet blinks, gulps, breathes, turns its gaze. A body that is both somewhat virtual and extremely visceral comes into view.

"Strange anatomy," writes co-director Allen S. Weiss. "The mute face of Novarina, the manifold voices of Whitehead, the electronic borborygmi of Migone, the cosmic hands of Sussman, the cruel eye of Paré, the esoteric ear of Weiss. Who's there? A monster, of sorts. No phantasms, but frozen mutations of language, following Novarina's declamation, 'articulatory cruelty, linguistic carnage.'"

THEATER OF THE EARS began as this extraordinary collection of texts, this linguistic carnage, by Novarina, adapted and translated by Artaud expert Allen S. Weiss, Weiss and designer Paré conceived a radiophonic play for electronic marionette— a puppet with the face of Novarina himself projected on to the rear of a thermaform lifemask and controlled by a homemade computer. Gregory Whitehead scored Novarina's words for a chorus of voices that animate the stage space. The result: a dense, hallucinatory piece of theater whose soul is everywhere and center of gravity is nowhere. •



PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

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UNIMA-USA

c/o Center for Puppetry Arts
1404 Spring Street, NW
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404-873-3089
unima@mindspring.com

Production Assistance

Terrie Ilaria, STEINWAY STUDIOS
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ETHOS Marketing & Design
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ON THE COVER:

Puppets "pile on" in *Wrestling Macbeth*
(see page 22)

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Editor

Andrew Periale
HC74 Box 307
Strafford, NH 03884-9622
perryalley@rscs.net

Designer/Assistant Editor

Bonnie Periale

Editorial Advisor

Leslee Asch

Book Review Editor

John Bell

Media Review Editor

Donald Devet

Advertising

Shari Aronson

Distribution

Carol Epstein-Levy
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Advisors

Vince Anthony
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Editor's Page —

FASCISM & PUPPETS IN THE

CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

[Puppetry] is also, by definition of its most persuasive characteristics, an anarchic art, subversive and untamable by nature, an art which is easier reached in police records than in theatre chronicles, an art which by fate and spirit does not aspire to represent governments or civilizations, but prefers its own secret and demeaning stature in society, representing, more or less, the demons of that society and definitely not its institutions.

—Peter Schumann, 1990
“The Radicality of the Puppet Theatre”



Puppets march in protest— but not in Philadelphia. WiseFool puppets in Los Angeles.

Most puppeteers, I think, wear these words like a badge of honor, as if to say to the world: Yes, we may be small, but we are saying something both important and dangerous. There was for myself, until recently, something slightly quaint about Schumann's words, which conjured up images of 19th century Guignol players, staging their satires in little cafés in

order to avoid detection by the local gendarmes, or perhaps of a Czech troupe in the 1980's finding ways to insert their political barbs between the lines of their censor-approved scripts. This all changed for me during the recent Republican National Convention, when Philadelphia police (with the alleged participation of federal agents) arrested dozens of pup-

peteers who were planning a protest march. The police seized and destroyed the puppeteers' tools and personal belongings, along with over 300 puppets, with all the zeal of their fascist counterparts in what we supposed were less peaceful times, less civilized places.

I can't with confidence give details of the puppeteers' arrest and confine-

ment; the truly horrifying accounts of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of police and prison personnel are plentiful, but as yet uncorroborated. Even without knowing the details, though, it is clear that many people from the local community, who had shown up for a peaceful protest, were denied their basic civil rights. In the midst of this scandal, word arrived about a puppet show in Pakistan:

"Lahore; June 18, 2000:

Famous puppet performing group Theatre Junction performed "Jhoot ke Palende" (Bunch of Lies) in Al-Hamra Arts Council from June 15 - 19.

Imran Shah, a young writer graduated from the National College of Arts, rewrote this play in October, 1999 inspired by the Army takeover on the 12th August, 1999. Shaheen Jadoon joined hands with him in direction. Play was finally staged . . . on June 15, 2000.

This production features The Army Chief, Mr. Sharif and Ms. Bhutto as Puppets, who challenge each other in the telling and taking of power (and spotlight). . . . And it conveys a strong message to the people of Pakistan: never to give in.

There is certainly no place for daring truth in the history of this nation. Performance was scheduled to carry on until June 19, but it was shut down on the 2nd night when the theatre was mob attacked by PML political party workers. Imran Shah was injured and was admitted to Meo hospital, Lahore where he was treated and released later. Shaheen was abducted and tortured by a group of

party workers who were angry at the disclosures of their leaders' dirty secrets."

Here in the United States, Pakistan seems a long way off, with political institutions which, if democratic, are still more reactionist than our own. The treatment of protesters in Philly, though, raises some disturbing questions. Steve Abrams, President of the Puppeteers of America, lives just a few blocks from where the arrest was made. When he heard about the impending police action, he hurried down to witness the event:

" . . . The people in the puppet-making warehouse seemed to offer no resistance as they were handcuffed one by one. Large parade-style puppets were clearly on view through an open garage door. Reporters from the national press said that the search warrant cited contraband items were in the warehouse including PVC pipe [as possible bombmaking material. — ed.]. In my own car parked a few blocks away, was my very own puppet stage made of PVC pipe. . . ."

Got PVC?

Suddenly Pakistan doesn't seem so far away, and the question from the reporter there seems more than a little relevant:

"The question to ask ourselves is what has happened to our values of democracy. What is the measure of decency, and what is the price an artist needs to pay for speaking truth?"



Wise Fool— www.zeitgeist.net/wfca

Those irrepressible folks at the Henson Foundation have done it again— The International Festival of Puppet Theater is back in New York City! In this issue, we are fortunate to have several of the Festival's symposia presenter's offer their thoughts on technology and performance. Elizabeth King writes a fascinating account of a 16th-century automaton [p 4], while Mark Sussman introduces us to a performing robot [inside cover] from *Theatre of the Ears*. Leslee Asch considers the difficulty of futurist predictions for puppetry in a world with such rapid technological change [p 11], and Kathy Foley presents two views of what "puppet" means [p 14]. Finally, high-tech whiz Michael Curry, also a symposium panelist, has his work on the *Times Square 2000* celebration contrasted with Low-tech guru Peter Schumann's Domestic Resurrection Circus in Stephen Kaplin's essay on megapuppetry [p 28]. There's more, too— book reviews, technology at the Center for Puppetry Arts, the unique Cirebonese Wayang, and Jon Ludwig's *Wrestling Macbeth!* So, read on, Macduff!

—ANDREW PERIALE

CLOCKWORK PRAYER: *A Sixteenth-Century Automaton*

by Elizabeth King



*"El movimiento se demuestra andando," we say in Spanish:
You demonstrate movement by moving.* Carlos Fuentes¹

In the Smithsonian Institution is a sixteenth-century automaton of a monk, made of wood and iron, 15 inches in height. Driven by a key-wound spring, the monk walks in a square, striking his chest with his right arm, raising and lowering a small wooden cross and rosary in his left hand, turning and nodding his head, rolling his eyes, and mouthing silent obsequies. From time to time, he brings the cross to his lips and kisses it. After over 400 years, he remains in good working order. Tradition attributes his manufacture to one Juanelo Turriano, mechanician to Emperor Charles V. The story is told that the emperor's son King Philip II, praying at the bedside of a dying son of his own, promised a miracle for a miracle, if his child be spared. And when the child did indeed recover, Philip kept his bargain by having Turriano construct a miniature penitent homunculus. Looking at this object in the museum today, one wonders: what did a person see and believe who witnessed it in motion in 1560? The uninterrupted repetitive gestures, to us the dead giveaway of a robot, correspond exactly in this case to the movements of trance.

An automaton is defined as a machine that contains its own principle of motion. In the history of European clock technology, the automaton developed from the striking jacks of the great medieval town clocks, eventually becoming a class of ma-

chine in its own right, with the task of modeling the motions of living things. One can trace the history of this machine to its height in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment with Vaucanson's famous duck and the great Jaquet-Droz writing automata. Today we tend to think of an automaton as a toy, as indeed the nineteenth century saw a flourishing trade in the antic Guignol-like entertainments of mechanical musicians, drunkards, clowns, and barmaids. The monk, made so many centuries before all of these figures, is more ambiguous. This is an early and rare example of an automaton whose mechanism is wholly contained and hidden within its body, requiring no cabinet or stage to conceal the clockwork. It could thus perform on any table or floor, in a variety of possible social contexts, including those where its appearance might be unexpected and seemingly unframed. In the world of sixteenth-century Catholicism, Counter-Reformation, Inquisition, and alchemy, it is difficult to believe this automaton was viewed as a toy in any sense of the word. It is not charming, it is "fearfully and wonderfully made," and it engages even the twentieth-century viewer in a complicated and urgent way.² It has *duende*, the dark spirit Federico García Lorca described.³ Here is a machine that prays. Can we look back past our own postmodern distrust of machines, and our own definitions of prayer, and the very museum vitrine that safely confines it now, to see what kind of an object this once was?

The monk was purchased by the Smithsonian from a Geneva antiquarian in 1977, provenance uncertain. Among the papers that accompanied it was a letter written in

1975 by Father Servus Gieben, Director of the Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini in Rome, who had been contacted by the broker for an opinion about the religious nature of the figure. The Capuchin brotherhood is the most orthodox branch of the Franciscan Order, and Servus Gieben a respected scholar of the history of the Order. In his letter, Father Gieben confirms that the monk represents a Franciscan friar, whose shaved head, cross, and rosary are the iconographic emblems of San Diego de Alcalá, a humble and illiterate Spanish brother who died in 1463, canonized as Saint a century later in 1588. Could this automaton have been a portrait of Brother Diego, made as a votive offering on the occasion of the miraculous cure of the young prince Don Carlos, son of Philip II, as Father Gieben suggests?

The story of this illness is a tale indeed, as the protagonist is none other than the corpse of Brother Diego, preserved to this day in Alcalá de Henares, east of Madrid. In this university town in 1562, the prince lay dying in the aftermath of a head injury. Inflammation and then infection had blinded him, swollen his head to an enormous size, and sent him into delirium. For many weeks the most illustrious physicians of the Spanish court, including the great anatomist Andreas Vesalius, had ministered to him without avail, attempting every kind of probe (alas nonsterile) and unguent (...[the doctors] went on



figure 2

placing upon the exposed portion of the skull a powder made of iris and birthwort, and on the lips of the wound a mixture of turpentine and egg yolk.¹⁴). At last, in desperation, the townspeople of Alcalá gathered at the Church of Saint Francis, and with Franciscan friars in the lead, they unlocked the vault containing Brother Diego's remains, and carried the body through the streets to the prince's sickroom, where, in the presence of the kneeling King, they laid it beside the dying boy on the bed. And that very night the fever peaked and then subsided, and a sudden recovery

commenced. Don Carlos himself later reported an apparition he experienced the same night; a figure dressed in Franciscan habit, carrying a small wooden cross, who spoke to him and assured him he would live. In the aftermath of the ordeal, all attention came to focus on Fray Diego de Alcalá, with a groundswell of feeling that here was the agent of a miracle. Both father and son vowed to work for the canonization of the friar. It took Philip II, the Franciscan Order, and the Spanish people 26 years of respectful petitions to four consecutive popes to bring about the institutional confirmation of the miracle of Don Carlos' recovery.

The name of Juanelo Turriano, clockmaker and engineer to Emperor Charles V, and to King Philip after the emperor's death, is itself associated with numerous legends

that touch on the near-miraculous, or in some cases on dangerous wizardry. Described as a huge and physically ugly man, he was the designer and maker of one of the most advanced astronomical clocks of the Renaissance. Tales of his mechanical ingenuity extend beyond what we can historically document to include numerous devices made to astonish the aging emperor, who loved instruments of all kinds. These include armies of tiny soldiers on horseback who beat drums, blew trumpets, and engaged in battle with lances. Or a set of small wooden birds which flew about the room, out the windows, and back in again, "to the great disapproval of the Father Superior, who considered them to be works of the devil."⁵ Turriano's friend Ambrosio de Morales, court analyst to the king and professor at the University of Alcalá, recorded in 1575 a description of an automaton made by Turriano — a dancing lady with a tambourine — that closely resembles a surviving figure now in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The clockwork of this figure is very similar to that of the monk, and so Turriano's name, which has hovered around the lady, has come to hover now around the monk. David Todd, Conservator of Timekeeping at the Smithsonian, has made an extensive study of the animating mechanism inside the monk, and has dated it indeed to the second half of the sixteenth century. The history of technology in this case coincides remarkably with the history of theology, in the *mise en scène* of the sixteenth-century Spanish court: a dying child, a holy corpse, the bedside miracle, the royal vow, the brilliant clockmaker. The mechanical monk walks a delicate line between church, magic, science. And theater: Todd points out a hidden lever to be used secretly by the operator of the automaton: once wound, the machine would only begin moving after the release of this lever (just visible in fig. 3, tilting up from the back). The spectator was not meant to observe the act of winding the drive spring.

Yet precisely none of this attribution of the monk can be verified. In no historical source have we found any reference specifically to such an automaton, nor apparently does the monk appear in the royal inventories of the emperor or his son. The story remains an exquisite hypothesis, though one with so strong a life of its own that it animates the figure as surely as the mechanism inside it. Reasons to disbelieve it include an argument that the figure could have been made in south Germany, a thriving region of clockmaking virtuosity in the sixteenth century. There are, in existence, two other monkish

automata, in museums in Munich and Budapest, (musical figures: instead of the strict motions of solitary penitence, each has or had a tiny glockenspiel inside it that generated the sounds for small bells held in the hands⁶). What a welcome study a careful comparison of these three figures would be. So many different kinds of skills were required to make such a thing — the sensitively carved head and hands, perhaps portrait work, the miniature cassock and rosary, even within the clockwork mechanism itself the manufacture of the drive spring, the handcut gears and cams, the wooden fusee — that a compelling case can surely be made for several separate makers of a single automaton.

In the absence of documentation, our relationship to the object itself only becomes more urgent. The monk is, like all automata, a recording, a kind of artificial memory. What can *he* tell us? David Todd winds the mainspring and we watch the monk perform on a table in the museum conservation lab. The internal mechanism propels the figure forward on three hidden wheels, the two feet stepping forth from beneath the cassock. The figure turns approximately every 20 inches to walk in a new direction. The head is moving now to the left, now the right, now straight ahead; the eyes roll right and left independently of the head but they also look towards the cross when it is raised. The mouth is opening and closing as if repeating the *Mea Culpa* or the Hail Mary. While we both agree that this is a serious object, a haunted object, Todd believes his purpose was to intimidate and warn. I believe he instructs by example. Todd thinks the eyes and head move to make confrontational contact with onlookers. "You! You! And you!" I think the eyes are rolling in the head in trance. The mechanical repetition? But the monk enacts something that is repetitive by mandate, by definition. Though I have to admit, when he advances in my direction — comes at me — it is with such steady and unswerving forward momentum that my animal flight urge stirs. Just when I ruefully smile, he turns away, finished with me. I nervously postulate that the square path of the walk is the invisible cloister around which the monk shuffles in prayer. Todd thinks this is the clockmaker's device to "keep the fellow from falling off the table and knocking his head. (!)" He reminds me that some of the musician automata walk in squares too. The monk moves slowly — unnaturally so. I think: this is what the monk possesses that the Hollywood robot or the wax museum figure lacks: something seriously wrong right away. The paradox is that it holds our attention longer. In fact, the very constraints on the clockmaker, which include things like limits on speed and range of motion to preserve center of gravity and thus stability on three wheels: these very limitations give rise to qualities we interpret on a completely differ-

figure 3



figure 4



ent level. The slowness becomes loaded, as if the figure marshals a kind of extreme concentration. Once we are willing to invest a thing with independent agency, and this is where the starting shock ignites our credulity, our very faculty of rational thought, once ready to detect the deception, suddenly skips a beat and is arguing instead for the utterly implausible. And out of this slowness, the automaton brings the cross to its mouth and kisses it. This last gesture involves a more complex motion of the left arm and shoulder, together with the lowering of the head and an abrupt motion of the lips. All this in a self-regulating internal assembly of iron cams and levers about the size of your open hand. (How much does he weigh, I suddenly wonder, this 15 inch tall homunculus? When the play is over, I ask Todd if I may pick up the actor, a bold request to make with so antique a clockwork. Over a cushion, with museum gloves, and absolute concentration, I lift him with both my hands by the torso, like a baby... just for the space of a second. He is heavy! But not in the way of an organic thing, more like a little tank. All those iron parts...) Would the measure of the monk's power have come from the sight of a king setting him in motion? But Todd and I agree the power flows in the opposite direction, so that once the tiny man is

seen to move independently, the operator's status takes a leap, *he* becomes a kind of god. Either way there is a mutual transfer of authority and magic. Might an unsuspecting viewer long ago have believed it to be alive, this small figure moving on the table? Certainly the same beliefs that animated the corpse of a friar with the power to heal could likewise animate a miniature man seen to be performing the familiar and highly authorized gestures of orthodox devotion.

A storyteller once said, to secure the immediate attention of children, begin a story with a contradiction. It hypnotizes them. The puppet itself is a contradiction: while one part of our mind carefully observes the techniques of the illusion, another part fully, involuntarily, participates in the masque. Looking at the monk, there is one particularly important contradiction. It has the shape of a man, and a very individual one at that, with delicate, protruding ears and direction-finding nose — but it's much too small. And this miniature size, coexisting with the immediacy and purpose of the monk's motion, is a combination that holds ancient, almost primal, anxiety for us. He can play to only so large an audience, but his relation to a spectator is *personal*.

And if we can't be sure the automaton represents an image of the saint, then perhaps he resembles San Diego's remains. He is, himself, now no more than a set of remains, with his cracked paint and clouded eye... but like the saint's, an effective set, a working set.

This article is a condensed version of a longer study of the monk, "Clockwork Prayer: A Sixteenth-Century Mechanical Monk" forthcoming in 2001 in the anthology *Reconceptions: New Ecologies of Knowledge*, Martin Davies, Marsha Meskinmon eds., J. B. Tauris, London. My special thanks to David Todd, Conservator of Timekeeping at the Smithsonian Institution, for his generous input and his expertise.

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<http://www.kfs.ocaw.ac.at/DLI/mech/Turriano.htm>. It is like listening back through centuries.



red portrait of San Diego de Alcalá, from
tableaux Espagnols du XIIIe au XVIIIe
a-Diego. Los relojes y automatas de

in, c. 1560; National Museum of
on, D.C.

Drive train and linkages to the head; photograph by W. David Todd, National Museum of
American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

opposite:

Photograph by W. David Todd, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, D.C.

above:

X-ray of the interior of the monk's head revealing the mechanism of the eyes, mouth and
neck; National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

— Notes —

1. Carlos Fuentes, "Velázquez, Plato's Cave and Bette Davis," *The New York Times* 15 Mar. 1987.
2. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made," Psalm 139, Verse 14. The phrase "in a complicated and urgent way" is borrowed from Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) p 153. "The devotional image is often a special case because acts of devotion involve urgent and complicated kinds of expectation and desire [...]"
3. Federico García Lorca, *Deep Song and Other Prose* ed. and trans. Christopher Maurer (New York: New Directions, 1980) "Play and Theory of the Duende."
4. L. J. Andrew Villalon, "Putting Don Carlos Together Again: Treatment of a Head Injury in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26.2 (1995): p 354. Of the many versions of this story, Villalon's is the most recent and thorough, and I borrow from his account in the details that follow.
5. Silvio A. Bedini and Francis R. Maddison, *Mechanical Universe: The Astrarium of Giovanni De' Dondi* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1966) pp 56-8; a short biography of Turriano.
6. Ambrosio de Morales, *Las antigüedades de las ciudades de España* (Madrid: 1575) pp 91- 3.
7. One can even hear a recording of the Budapest automaton playing its bell over the internet from the *Phonogrammarchiv* of the Austrian Academy of Sciences: <http://www.kfs.oeaw.ac.at/DLI/mech/Turriano.htm>. It is like listening back through centuries.

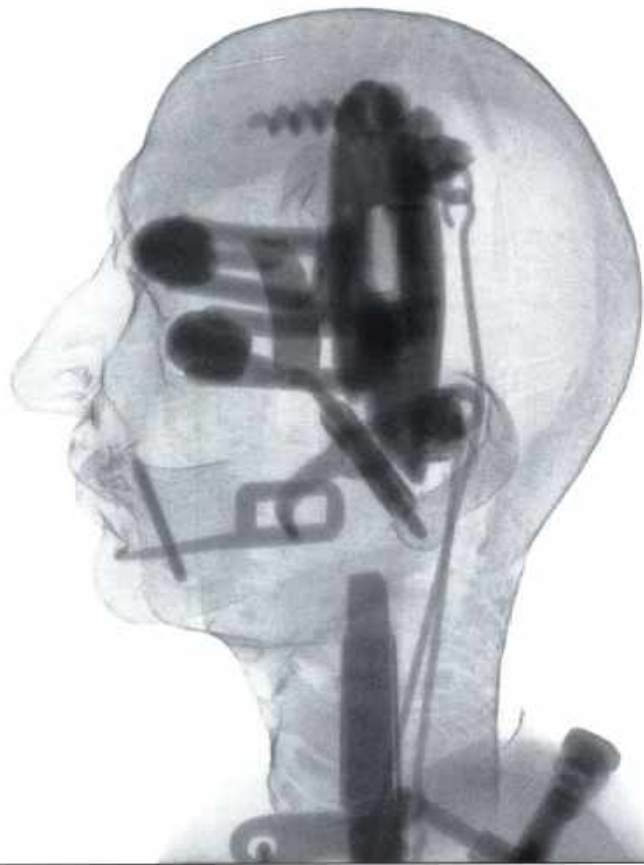


figure 1:

Comparison of the automaton's head with an engraved portrait of San Diego de Alcalá, from the auction catalogue *Très importante collection de tableaux Espagnols du XIIIe au XVIIIe siècle [...]* (Geneva, 1976) p 84; rpt. in José A. García-Diego, *Los relojes y automatistas de Juanelo Turriano* (Madrid, 1982) p LXI.

figures 2 and 4:

Automaton figure of a monk, South Germany or Spain, c. 1560; National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

figure 3:

Drive train and linkages to the head; photograph by W. David Todd, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

opposite:

Photograph by W. David Todd, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

above:

X-ray of the interior of the monk's head revealing the mechanism of the eyes, mouth and neck; National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

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PUPPETRY IN THE MEDIA AGE

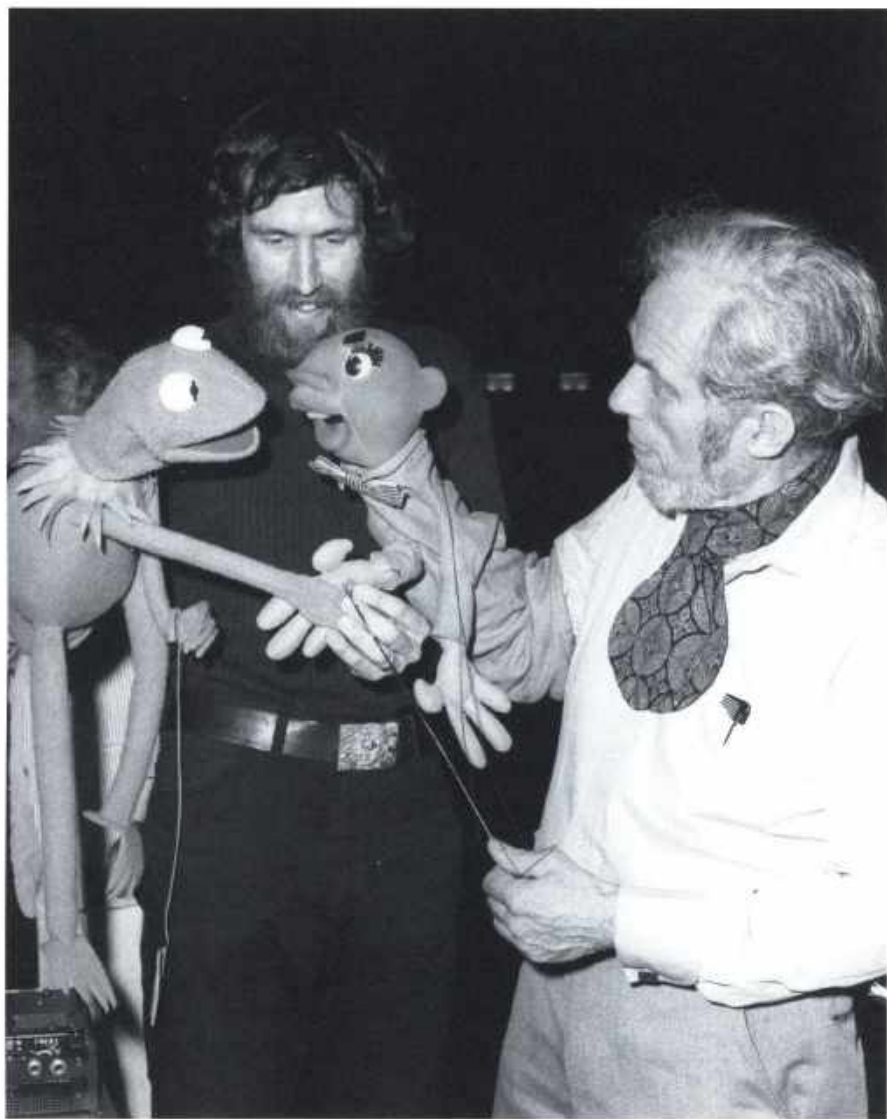
BY LESLEE ASCH

Standing at the dawn of the next millennium, it has become a preoccupation to look ahead in an attempt to envision the future, but we must also look back to gather some understanding of what has transpired in the last century alone. The media explosion has been so fast and so profound that it is difficult to achieve perspective. As we reflect on the directions of our art form for the next millennium, it is important to realize that television, a major worldwide force, is barely 60 years old. Technologies, like internet communication, that were unheard of ten years ago are now considered everyday work tools. The world is in a period of extremely rapid change.

While puppet theater can be traced back in many cultures throughout the centuries, what we call "the media" has only existed in the 20th century. Puppetry has always been international, but now we call it global. I was struck by a New York Times Magazine article (January, 1998) reflecting on the difference in the impact and level of expressed stardom between the tragic deaths of Princess Grace in 1982 and Princess Diana in 1997. They noted that in those 15 years "the media" had grown from three networks and two news cycles to news around the clock, with NBC alone encompassing three networks. They termed this "media magnification."

Happily, puppetry has consistently been at the forefront of new technological developments.

From the 1930's radio shows of Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy to the present day blockbuster films, puppets have had a vital presence.



JIM HENSON AND BIL BAIRD WITH THEIR PUPPETS

photo: Gary Boynton

The wonders of television were introduced to wide audiences at the 1939 New York World's Fair in an exhibit sponsored by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). Bil Baird, who was performing at that same 1939 world's fair described those early days of television as a time of excitement, hope, and experimentation. There was suddenly a lot of time to fill and the networks' realized they needed to let artists test ideas to learn what worked.

Fortunately, one of the first artists to begin to "fill time" on television was Burr Tillstrom, creator of the popular and brilliant *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*. This show was performed *live* and much of the material was tailored and adjusted in response to fan mail. Burr and Kukla were joined by other pioneering shows of the time, including *Howdy Doody*, and Bil Baird's *Life with Snarky Parker*. The proliferation of variety shows offered additional venues for puppet guest appearances on shows such as Ed Sullivan, Jack Paar and Sid Caesar. Puppets were even there as we began the race for space. (Bil Baird's puppets created the Apollo space simulations.)

Television and film exponentially increased the audiences from hundreds or thousands at a time to millions, tens of millions, and beyond. These numbers are growing, as is the speed with which global connections are made.

Beginning in the mid-50's a young man, pursuing his love of the new medium, changed the face of television puppetry. Jim Henson was inspired by the work he saw, but had a unique advantage in that he was not adapting the work he had already created for the theater, but was starting fresh, creating specifically for television. He quickly learned how to set the frame to allow the screen to be his stage. His early guest appearances, commercials and local Washington, D.C. television shows expanded to his work on Sesame Street and the Muppet Show which achieved a huge international viewership.

Jim then expanded the frontier, and the Muppets entered film. There, they could continue to experiment with animatronics for feats like Kermit riding his bicycle. In developing the groundbreaking puppet-only film, *The Dark Crystal*, Jim not only created the characters, but the entire universe they inhabited.

From its early beginnings with the pioneer Starevitch, artists like Jiri Trinka elevated puppet animation to the level of a high art form. This occurred in many countries— most notably the Czech Republic and Poland. Puppet animation has also made it's way to Hollywood in the hands of the talented Tim Burton, in films like *Nightmare Before Christmas*, and *James and the Giant Peach*.

Special effects puppetry and animatronics have been used from the early monsters of Ray Harryhausen to such modern day films *Babe*, *Star Wars* and *The Phantom Menace*. Some of these applications are clear and others remain hidden.

These techniques have now been further expanded by video, computer generated images, motion-capture, and work being created not just for the internet, but in live-time on the internet. Some artists are experimenting with the integration of film and "high-tech" into performance and other ways of mixing techniques. These may yield interesting results, though they are still at very early stages of experimentation.

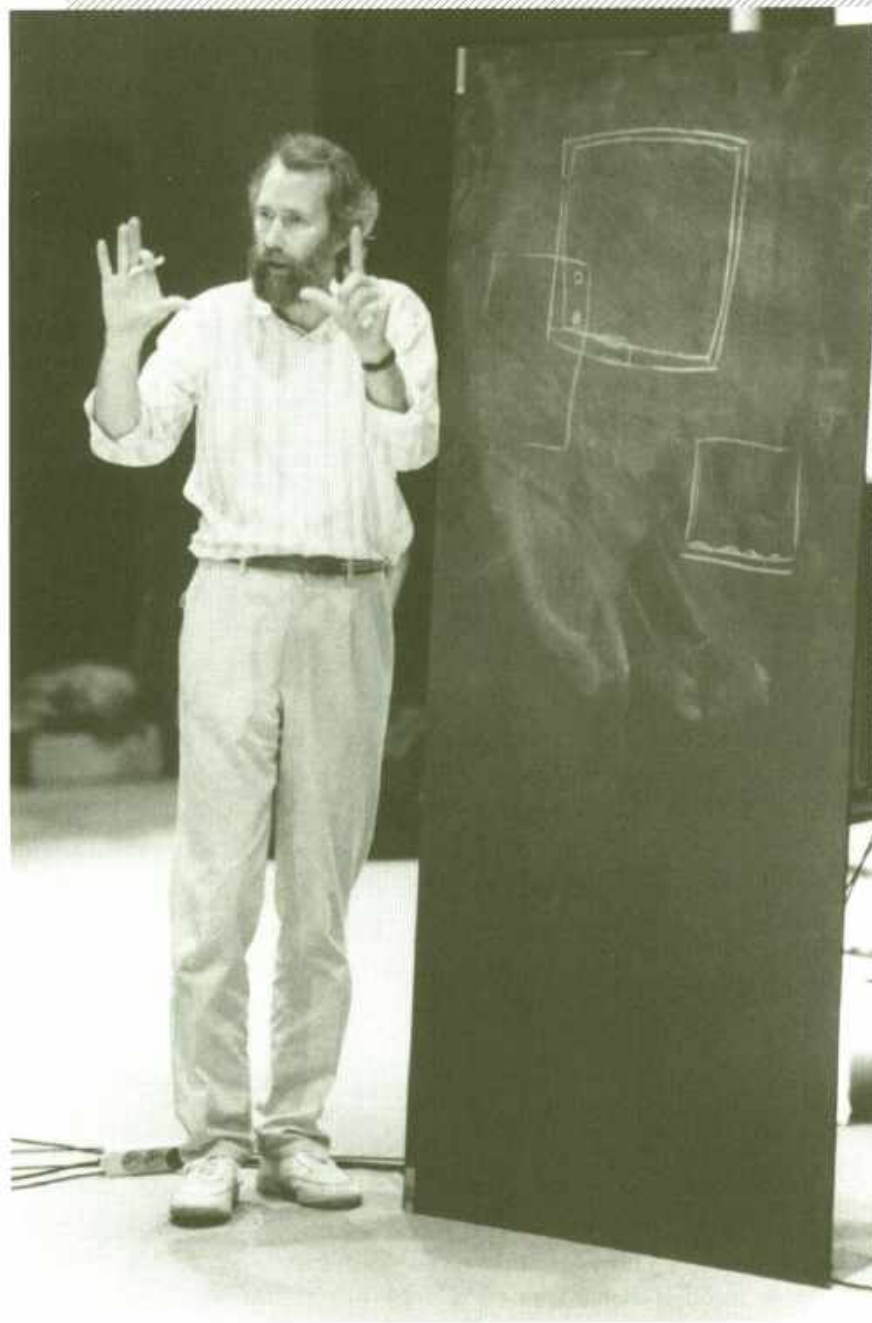
As we've all learned, television, film, and the internet, while innately powerful, provide the hardware for expression, but not the artistic content. As the most expansive and flexible art form, puppetry has always intrigued artists from many disciplines, and has allowed an amazingly broad framework for expression. It will be more and more interesting as artists pursuing these divergent paths find ways to share their enthusiasm and knowledge. It is my belief that puppetry is in a unique position to lead these changes in a positive direction and that the inherent intimacy of the live puppet theater performance need not be lost.

With care, technology can be used to great effect. As with other forms, though, it takes artists to make cutting-edge technology serve an artistic vision, not define it. Perhaps as the 20th century's love affair with technology peaks, we will be able to move forward understanding first what we want to express, and then the means we will use. We must help lead the way.

Leslee Asch is the Executive Director of The Jim Henson Foundation and Producing Director of The International Festival of Puppet Theater. She considers herself extremely fortunate to have worked for two geniuses in her 20-plus years in the field of puppetry. The first was Bil Baird, one of the pioneers of puppetry for television and the author of the as yet unparalleled text, The Art of the Puppet. The second was Jim Henson, who changed forever the scope and understanding of puppetry and achieved truly global recognition for himself and his beloved characters.

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JIM HENSON TEACHING

photo: Richard Termine

The Dancer and the Danced:

Approaches toward the Puppeteer's art

by Kathy Foley,
University of California, Santa Cruz

I would like to articulate two contrasting approaches to puppet theatre which, while not definitive, recur and may help explain some of our thinking about puppetry. One approach focuses on the puppet *qua* object obediently carrying out the intention of the puppeteer. The second sees the puppet as having a life, law, and logic of its own which it imposes on the manipulator. Anyone who has plied their rods or pulled their strings will realize that there is truth to each of these viewpoints. In the building of puppets, form can be easily compressed or expanded in a way that a human body cannot, and, given practice in manipulation, the figures can move as one desires, albeit within constraints. Puppets die better than actors—when the show is over you throw them in a trunk and, perhaps best of all, they don't talk back. As Craig noted, they are the artist's perfect tool for self-realization and the puppeteer is the god of his own little world.

In contrast, the second stance recognizes that the puppet imposes laws. A string figure will move differently from a shadow puppet, and the set visual form crafted into an image will predetermine the figure's affective potential. The puppeteer enters a world where wood, leather, plastic or fabric define the possibilities. In object theatre, human energy is refracted in ways that it never could be, or would be, if the performer's own body was used for the scene. The characters do not replicate life (a task better served by the actor); stylization is a core principal. Puppets are bigger or smaller, louder or softer, scarier or sweeter than humans actually are. Since the identity of the mover is uncoupled from the object moved, constraints of gender, age, and identity are removed. So the female puppeteer can be male, the octogenarian can be a youth, and the race can be chosen. Puppet action is expansive. Figures can fly through the air with the greatest of ease, transform from male to female with the flip of a skirt, or materialize demons that would otherwise exist only in the human imagination. Puppetry gravitates toward the supramundane, content tends toward the mythic, sound swells toward music, and movement morphs into dance.

The "puppet-as-object" stance sees the puppet as a robot or automaton ruled by the maker who is god to his creation. While there is some rejoicing over the omnipotence that the maker has in relation to the creation, there seems to be some essential hubris in this. In narratives, the puppet or creation will often turn on the maker. Pinocchio is NOT going to stay a good boy and Frankenstein IS going to come lumbering after his maker.

Where humans work to create the perfect reflection of their own will, things seem bound to go awry. Of course this tendency toward mythopoetic disaster when man plays god is not confined to puppetry. This is a recurring theme that emerges in discussions of technology from the Renaissance on. The machine, the computer, the internet—whatever *homo faber* makes remains, in the depths of our thinking, just that: man-made. We pride ourselves on programming things, but we keep worrying that over the long-term our creations may be programming us. Can it be that the sadomasochism in the uneven balance of power between us and our creation pushes us to make our stories tinged with questioning?

The second position I will call microcosmic thinking, using the neo-Pythagorean analogy of micro- and macrocosm. In this way of thinking, men can master or understand the larger world by constructing a miniature cosmos. In this world, the puppet offers the performer vistas to which his access would normally be limited—financially, technically, imaginatively. Working small, we can do what we cannot achieve working large. In contemporary theatre, the microcosmic approach has come to the fore in the training of Lecoq and those who have worked with or been influenced by him. While the work is more often described as a variant of the mime tradition, with maskwork and clowning, Lecoq training invites the performer to look for rhythm, movement, and sound from all of nature, in order to begin with the imaginative intention that breaks down the preconceived world. Microcosmic thinking is also seen in the work of those who have explored non-western puppet traditions. Julie Taymor, creator of *The Lion*

King, may be the best known representative of this tendency at present. Her time with Lecoq in Paris and study of Asian forms, from Indian kathakali to Javanese wayang kulit, shows in her work. From her early *Way of Snow*, which turned computer cards into the image of skyscrapers and used translucent wayang to portray a verdent world of calm, her work has had a kind of animism. Objects are not just moved by the manipulators, but rather the puppeteers seem to be moved by their imaginative embrace of the object, the other, or the unknown in a way that allows us to re-imagine our world. This school of thought finds art a way of imaginatively stretching the boundaries of consciousness. It often turns to puppets and masks for their ability to expand the puppeteer, allowing him or her to become that which he or she is not. The manipulator is danced by a reality that is not his/her own by being forced into another way of moving, becoming a person, animal, thing she will never be.

I believe these two positions derive from historical-cultural conditions. The first approach seems native to Christian climes and the second position crops up periodically around the globe, but seems most clearly articulated in areas where Mahayana Buddhism has had considerable impact. Saivism, Tantrism, Sufism Pythagorism, Alchemy, Daoism articulate related ideas. Where these traditions have had importance, puppetry and mask work become popular and persist, even when the religions recede. I will point out some of the implications that may flow from each of these two views. Finally, I will argue that some of the emerging puppet-object theatre appears to be switching from the "robotic" toward the "microcosmic" stance as a result of some of the intercultural theatre work which has been popular since the beginning of the last century.

For the purposes of my argument I am going to reduce vast religious complexes into simple terms. The Judeo-Christian tradition begins with the premise that the

divine is divorced from matter. If I had to write a headline for Christianity it would be "GOD BECOMES MAN!" The divine is "out there." Once, in Jesus, it temporarily inhabited material form. Ultimately, though, the only way to get there (the divine) from here (the world) is to get out of the body. The material world in this view becomes suspect, as it ultimately differentiates us from the disembodied divine.

In the Hindu-Buddhist world, by contrast, the headline might read: "MAN BECOMES GOD." One sits down and centers toward enlightenment. Here material form and the divine are yoked. There is no way to get there without the here. In this worldview the epic journey of each human is movement toward potential divinity. In this worldview, the material world gives us access to the divine.

In Christianity, the body is the problem, while in Buddhism it is the solution. How does this apply to puppetry? The Christian worldview takes an ambivalent position toward the physical: we have to die (abandon the body) to join with the divine. The Hindu-Buddhist approach admits the destination is not the physical, but sees the physical as the prerequisite for transcendence.

Where Christianity prevails, puppetry, defined by its material base, will, I believe, always have some struggle. Disembodied arts, words and music where the creator and the creation appear more separated will be given precedence. They are closer to the divine model. In cultures where the material world is the tool that gives access to the divine, puppetry, dance and the theatre arts will get higher marks.

If we go to the theoretical literature we will see that in the canonical text, those of Heinrich Kleist and E. Gordon Craig, have some relation to these ideas. The puppet is deemed superior by each of these thinkers to the human actor in that it more purely carries out the intended action or idea of the maker/mover. Kleist, with a dancer's eye, notes that there is a precise



Shadow figure: Cambodian angel

correlation between the manipulator's prompt and the figure's action. Not driven by the transient impulses of the moment or ego, the puppet finds a center of gravity that relates directly to the string pullers, creating a union of mover and moved that borders on the divine. Craig, who has,

like Kleist, little practical experience with puppetry, praises the *Übermarionette* as an antidote to the emotional excesses of the actor. He hopes that the theatre of the actor, with all its pomp and works, can dissolve into a theatre of the director/author/scenographer. Kleist, influenced by German Romanticism, has traces of microcosmic thinking. Craig is pragmatically embracing the robotic.

Modern mask and puppet work is of many variants, but I find the most compelling pieces come from an elemental place. I believe that this sense of the supramundane comes out of the practice of puppetry itself: if you set people to experiment with objects and they can open themselves to the energy implicit therein both literally and figuratively, something happens. They find what the material can do. The robot does have life— not human life, but life as material form. The visual form of the object has a rhythm and energy that the puppeteer cannot deny. It has nothing to do with him, so he goes out of himself to meet it. By playing different characters, the myth of the unified self is shattered and the potential multiplicity—to be the other and not the self—is apparent. Other worlds can be created and stories far from our own space and time are ours. This is the space of imagination which makes puppetry magical. The genre itself invites us to free ourselves from the laws of "reality" and explore other worlds. When this



moment arrives, the puppeteer shows what it is to be a godlike creator of a whole new world. When one knows this, one can use all the animatronics and virtual tools one likes, for one recognizes that the work is not about subjugating the image to our will, but, rather, putting vision into material form.

The Dark Crystal, in my opinion Jim Henson's masterwork, is a good depiction of the kind of imaginative leap that this work can take. It explores a mythic domain that fits the animated figure. The Celtic spirals of Mystic patterning contrasted with the overwrought rococo of the Skeksis. The version shown to the preview audience eschewed English for a composed language. The attempt to offload easily understood language in favor of visual storytelling, took the implication of puppetry to its limit. As Punch with his swazzle or the Rajasthani puppeteer with his boli squeaks with an otherworldly voice, puppets invite voices that the world has yet to hear. The rumbling overtones of the Mystic chant and the squawks of the Skesis set up a soundscape of the world of the film. The more realistic Gelflings supply us "humans" with which to identify, but perhaps they are ultimately less successful for the very reason that their human-like form cannot push us as far into this imaginative universe as we want to go. Movement is magnified and distorted from the slow steady walk of the Mystics, to the light step and flight of the Gelflings, to the jagged energy of the Skeksis. This film is clearly the work of a group that has delved deeply into the possibilities of the puppet. It shows us what it is to be other, transformed, mutable. Rather than fearing the revolt of the robots, we see what it is to be danced by forces other than our own. •

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IN THE
**HEART OF
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PUPPET AND MASK THEATRE

Shiva vs. Jesus: Wayang Kulit in Cirebon

by Matthew Isaac Cohen, Ph.D

Enoch, son of Seth, is engaged in deadly struggle with his brother Anwar—soon to become the first sanghyang or Hindu deity. Solomon, King of Israel, his seal ring stolen by a former jinni servant now under orders from Anwar's grandson, Sanghyang Wenang, roams the earth in poverty, not recognized by even his own subjects. The child Jesus, son of Mary, models a poisonous bird and sends it to combat Divine Guru (also known as Shiva), grandson of Sanghyang Wenang.

The chain of personages from Adam through the Jewish patriarchs, matriarchs, and the kings and prophets of ancient Israel are not only known to Jews and Christians, but also form an important part of Islamic understandings of history, recounted and elaborated upon in the Qur'an and other religious texts. Tales concerning the Islamic prophets (nabi) were transmitted in the 13th-17th centuries to insular and peninsular Southeast Asia (including Java) by Muslim traders and clergymen. They were combined there with older story cycles and motifs. In Islamic Java, stories of Adam (Adam), Seth (Sis), Enoch (Anwas), Noah (Nuh), Solomon (Suleman), Jesus (Ngisa), and other personages were integrated with Javanese Hindu stories regarding Shiva and his ancestors and inscribed in poetic Books of Tales (Serat Kandha). These synthetic stories, and variations upon them, today



Lord Gurn gazes down upon Mary and the infant Jesus

form an important and distinctive part of the contemporary repertoire of wayang kulit in Cirebon, a major cultural area of the northern littoral of western Java.

Wayang kulit in Cirebon, which I have been studying actively as a puppeteer-scholar since 1993, differs from the internationally famous wayang kulit of Surakarta (also known as Solo) and Yogyakarta (Yogya) in almost all respects—puppet iconography, manipulation techniques, musical accompaniment, dramatic structure, repertoire, language, ritual features, and patterns of sponsorship. While little known outside of Java, Cirebon's wayang kulit is immensely popular in its "home" area (roughly the strip of Java's coast running

from Cilamaya in the west to Brebes in the east), disseminated through village performances, radio broadcasts, and commercially produced audiocassettes (Cohen 1998, 2000).

Audiences demand that Cirebon's dhalang, or puppeteers, master a large repertoire of tales with dialogue extemporized in performance. Cirebonese wayang kulit devotees with an interest in "history" (including what most Americans would classify as mythology and legend) or sponsors of an Islamic bent sometimes call upon dhalang to enact the encounters of Hindu gods and Islamic prophets, plays never

performed by the puppeteers of Solo or Yogya. Perhaps the most commonly enacted of these tales in contemporary Cirebon is known as *Wisnu Guru* or *Wisnu Sabda Guru*, "The Education of Wisnu." This episode was issued as a three volume commercially-produced audiocassette recording by Mansyur M. circa 1978; it remains one of Mansyur's best-known recordings. I have seen it recounted by different puppeteers in 1993, 1994, 1996, and 1999; the episode is universally known in all its details to all Cirebonese dhalang. Most contemporary tellings are based, at least partially, on a redaction penned circa 1860 by Ronggawarsita, court poet of Surakarta, in the *Paramayoga* volume of his *Universal History*.

The story goes something like this. Wisnu (known in the Sanskrit tradition as Vishnu), son of Divine Guru (Shiva), tells his father that he has heard about or received a divine inspiration concerning a new form of mystical knowledge (*ngelmu* in Javanese) being taught in the land of Israel. He wishes to descend from the Himalayan heavens to study at the feet of Usman Ngaji, the head teacher of this *ngelmu*. Guru vehemently refuses to give his permission, as he himself is the king of gods and master of the world. For Wisnu to study this new *ngelmu* would



Mary (with her hair up in a bun) holding baby Jesus in her arms

amount to a challenge to his father's authority. But Wisnu is persistent, leading to a fight between Wisnu and his brothers and cousins, the *sanghyang* and *dewa*. Wisnu escapes capture with the help of *Sanghyang Munged*—Guru's older brother, the trickster who later becomes *Semar*. Wisnu descends to earth to present himself at the feet of Usman Ngaji.

Usman Ngaji, in some versions the uncle of Jesus, in others a rebel son of Adam turned sage, in others Jesus's father, is the representative of little Jesus (*Ngisa*, in Javanese), charged with caring for and educating the flock in the years before the son of Mary achieves maturity.

Wisnu tells Usman Ngaji about his desire to taste the delights of the new *ngelmu*. The sage refuses to admit Wisnu to the fold, as he fears a confrontation with the Hindu gods, Guru and the *sanghyang* and *dewa*. Usman Ngaji feigns death, releasing his subtle self into the astral plane. Wisnu is not deceived, however, and follows in his own astral form. Usman Ngaji, seeing that Wisnu cannot be deterred, reveals to him the secrets of heaven and hell. They both then return to the earthly plane.

Meanwhile, Guru has descended to earth accompanied by his chief wazir, Lord Narada. They observe Usman

Lord Guru (right) sits humbly before Mary

Ngaji at prayer. The little Jesus sits nearby. Guru points disrespectfully at Usman Ngaji with his foot. The holiness of Jesus causes a metamorphosis. Guru is unable to retract his foot, the result being permanent distension. (Subsequently, he assumes his characteristic pose on the back of a cow to hide his crippled condition.) Guru, however, still has not learned his lesson. It appears from a distance as if the praying Usman Ngaji has four arms, as



mud again, and restores his cousins and brothers to life. Having been disgraced by Jesus, and bearing indelible marks of his defeat, Guru relocates his palace from the Himalayas to the island of Java.

The story, as a living oral

repository of Hindu and monotheistic tradition, is unique. The Hindu

his robe is draped over his shoulders. Guru tells Narada that he too can transform himself in such a way, and promptly sprouts an extra pair of arms in mockery. (The dhalang replaces the two-armed puppet representing Guru with an inarticulate four armed puppet.) Again, the holiness of Jesus causes Guru to become permanently disfigured; Guru is unable to return to his bibrachial state.

Humiliated and intent on revenge, Divine Guru wages a full-scale war against Usman Ngaji, Jesus, and the disciples. The forces of the dewa and sanghyang are repelled however, by a poisonous bird, playfully crafted from clay by the little Jesus. None can defeat the bird and the gods retreat to a distant mountainous region. They are greatly parched from the combat. They see a volcanic lake and drink from it. But the lake has been poisoned by the bird of Jesus and all the sanghyang and dewa fall into a deathly swoon. Only Divine Guru himself is saved, though his throat is scorched, resulting in a permanent burn mark on his neck. Guru runs to Wisnu to ask for his assistance. Wisnu agrees to help, but with the condition that Guru suspend his campaign against the forces of Jesus. Guru agrees to his son's condition. Wisnu shoots an arrow at the bird, which then becomes

iconographic features of Shiva— his multiple arms (symbolizing power), the divine mark on his throat, his standing up-on a cow (symbolizing authority)— are re-interpreted in the Islamic Javanese world as disfigurements and signs of weakness. Jesus's proclivity for modeling birds and his ability to breathe life into them with God's leave, a motif present in both the Qur'an (III: 43) and the apocryphal gospels (e.g., the Gospel of Thomas), is interpolated into a tale of religious war. "We enter a theatrical world of paradigmatic, associational links shaping cycles into nested structures playing description, dialogue, and action off against each other in shifting paces, tonalities and hierarchies... [With its] aesthetic of plural voices, [...] realms of sensual demons, dignified ancestor heros, distant deities, and pragmatic clowns coexist and bring the timeless and the timely into conversation" (Boon 1984: 158). In *Wisnu Guru*, we see clearly how wayang kulit's aesthetic of plural voices is made manifest, we understand the precision of the coincidental event of contrasting epistemologies interacting in performance (Becker 1979).

Enacting *Wisnu Guru* is as seductively fun as summarizing and discussing it (what other theatrical medium allows one to convincingly depict travels to the astral plane, a

metamorphosis from a two-armed to four-armed state, or a battle between a bird and a pantheon of Hindu gods?), but its realization presents special pragmatic challenges for a dhalang. The absence of the mainstay characters of wayang kulit—Arjuna, Gatotgaca, Drona, and the clown servants (Semar and his family)—means that puppeteers cannot rely on their most practiced formulae nor upon easy audience familiarity. It also requires from puppeteers an intimate knowledge of

mysticism—for Usman Ngaji is represented as a teacher of mysticism, not of Christianity. Islam maintains that Jesus was a prophet, conceived without a father, but definitely not the son of God. "The Messiah, the son of Mary, was no more than an apostle: other apostles passed away before him. His mother was a saintly woman. They both ate earthly food" (Qur'an V: 75). Most puppeteers are not scriptural experts, and some refer consequently to the trinity (tritunggal in Javanese) or deny Jesus's miraculous conception—both violations of normative Islamic theology. The play opens up puppeteers to criticism from Muslims more knowledgeable of sacred scripture than they are. Some puppeteers study up before performing this play, purchasing or borrowing books on the lives of the prophets, as the dhalang Basari did before he recorded the wayang kulit play featuring King Solomon. But more often than not, a dhalang cannot be certain precisely which story he will enact before the night of the performance, and there is consequently little sense in

Wisnu (left) sits humbly before his father, Lord Guru (right)



preparation for a particular show. It speaks volumes about the confidence of Cirebonese puppeteers, symbolically the incarnation of the patron saint Lord Stage in performance, that they not only readily agree to audience requests to enact *Wisnu Guru*, but decide on their own to perform it—thereby demonstrating and honing their mastery of wayang kulit's nested

structures of religion, history, and myth in performance.

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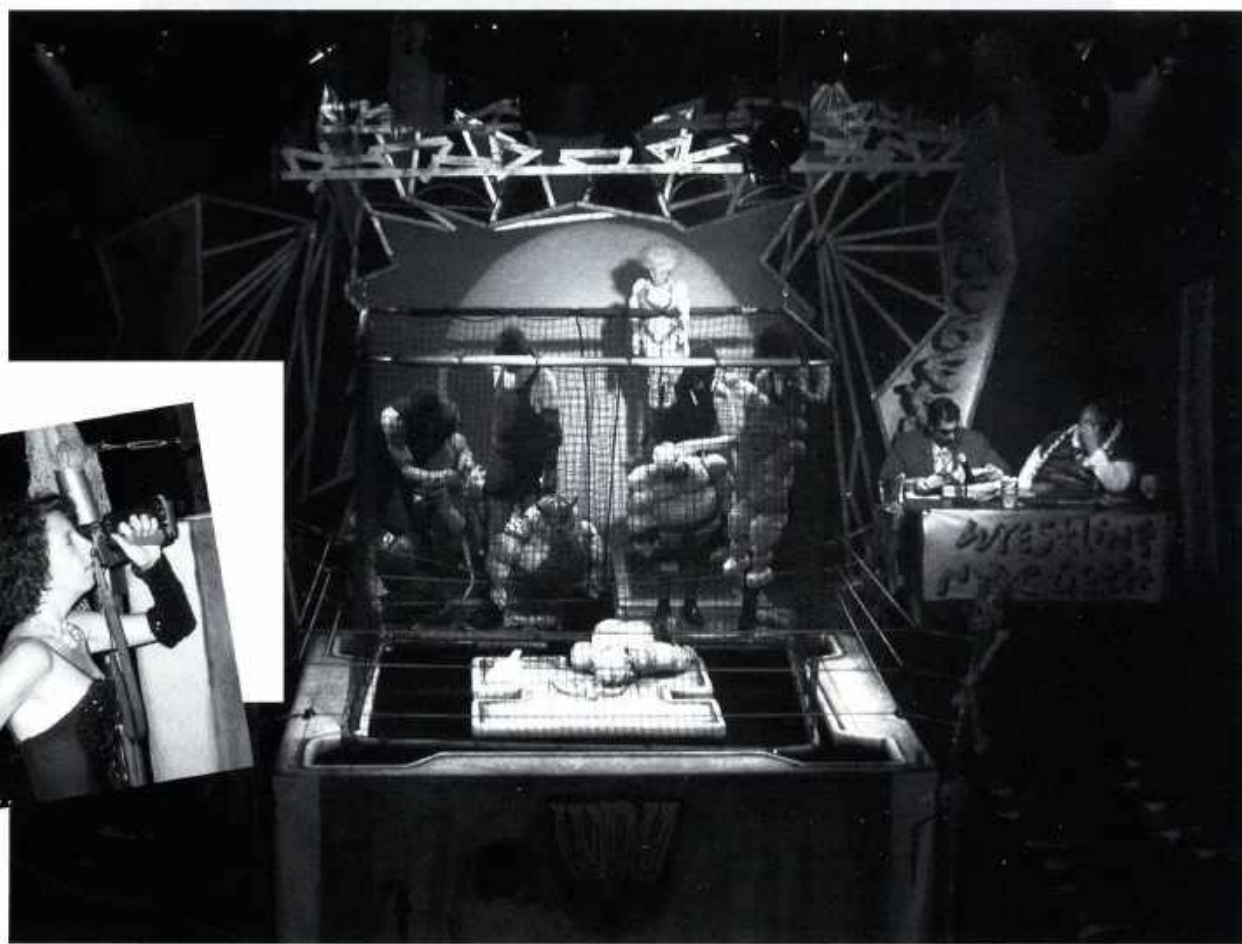
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Matthew Isaac Cohen is an American cultural anthropologist (Ph.D. Yale University, 1997) and a Javanese dhalang. In 1998-2000, he was a postdoctoral research fellow in the performing arts at the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands.

High-Tech Gets Low Down!

SHAKESPEARE IS DOWN FOR THE COUNT AT ATLANTA'S CENTER FOR PUPPETRY ARTS

by ANDREW PERIALE



Raylynn Hughes (inset) works "live feed" video of puppets in the "Giant Street Cage"!

SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH* AND PRO WRESTLING:

clearly a match made in Heaven . . . or in *Hell*! Jon Ludwig's *Wrestling Macbeth* brings about this unholy union in a wild "head-banging" extravaganza that is so far over the top it fairly escapes the pull of gravity. The technical challenges to succeeding in an enterprise of this sort are legion: the dramatic material must be thoroughly analyzed, sliced, diced and reassembled into a coherent whole; the high-tech wizardry which makes pro wrestling the dazzling spectacle it is must be per-

fectly realized; the puppets and puppetry must be up to the task of making the *ballet brut* of body slams and flying mules credible. And then, of course, there's the matter of Art.

It is impossible, surely, to mount a production of *Macbeth* without showing violence used as a means to an end. Polanski's film version showed the dominant role of sex in driving Macbeth to his inevitable doom. Ludwig has pursued both threads to their logical conclusion and there he found pro wrestling. What

else *is* pro wrestling but a clownish ritual battle between the dark and light forces of our most primitive selves? Shakespeare already ritualized these struggles in the overblown characters of the sexy bloodthirsty Macbeths, their royal and noble victims, the soothsaying hags and the *Übermensch* Macduff. Ludwig removes the characters one step (or perhaps more) further from reality by portraying them as the outlandish buffoons of the modern arena: the men and women who are all costumes, biceps, breasts and buttocks, locked in mock battle for ultimate dominion. You might think that Macbeth's conquests staged as a succession of wrestling matches would be a joke worn quickly thin, but Ludwig's script keeps the action moving along. Much of the intact text, as well as the "Cliff Notes" annotations, is spoken by fight announcer "Screamin' Andrew Aguecheek" and color commentator "The Voice," a Jesse Ventura caricature. The wrestling bouts are also broken up by a series of commercial breaks and other novelty acts. This treatment of the accursed tragedy, while admittedly stomping the life out of the Bard's poetry, somehow succeeds in capturing the play's psychological reality. By the play's conclusion, the entire audience was screaming in mock bloodlust. Our complete involvement was not the result of mere spectacle and antics (after all, we could go to "real" pro wrestling for that), but because the translation of metaphors from Scottish fiefdom to wrestling arena felt so complete.

The use of technology in performance is not new. The masks worn by players of Greek tragedy some 2,400 years ago involved technology for amplifying the voice, and the design of their amphitheatres foreshadowed the huge speaker stacks of '60s rock concerts. *Wrestling Macbeth* employs a passel of high-tech tricks: explosions, fireworks, chemical smoke, strobe lights, disco multiplex, heavy metal music played with deafening intensity. A rear projection screen displays layered images from slide, overhead and video projectors. In another production these effects might seem gratuitous, but in a parody of pro wrestling, this "glitz" is integral to the idiom's meaning. That all this high-tech wizardry contributes to a rollicking good time is clear, but does the "party hearty" ambience simply mask the fact that there is nothing much going on below the surface? As my wife observed: "This is a serious work of art, but the audience doesn't need to know that." It's true—there's plenty for the literati to chew over, but an intelligent analysis of the material is not necessary in order to be thoroughly swept up in the madness. An example: much of the play's action, particularly the wrestling

matches, is videotaped as it occurs. The action is simultaneously projected on the large, rear screen. This technology is now commonly used in professional sports, and does not seem strange to an audience reared on television, where changing camera angles is as easy as pushing a button. On one level, this is simply another amplifier, turning the pint-sized combatants into battling giants. On the other hand, the video camera becomes a sort of observer; the Macbeths' murders cannot be perfect crimes because someone is always watching (not least of which the inner eye of the conscience). If you find your eyes beginning to glaze over at this point, don't worry: Shakespeare knew how to play to the groundlings *and* the royal boxes, and so does *Wrestling Macbeth*.

No degree of dramaturgical shrewdness nor special effects are sufficient to rescue a production from the perils of bad puppets or, worse, bad puppeteers. Neither problem plagues *Wrestling Macbeth*. The puppets look great and work well. The puppeteers are all veterans of the Center's productions. They've all worked together before under Ludwig's direction. There is a "chemistry" here which is a delight to experience. The choreography of the fight scenes is lightning fast at times, with puppets flying through the air as they are tossed from one puppeteer to another. This looks like pro wrestling, but it's actually much harder. Consider: a human wrestler has only one bout to contend with in an evening and the choreography is worked out during the match, whereas these puppeteers need to know the precise choreography for eight bouts, often hopping the five feet from the floor to the stage *while reciting their lines*. It seems a super-human task, and it is no wonder that the players are all drenched in sweat by play's end.

All the elements are in place then: a coherent script, the high-tech razzle-dazzle, the puppets and the puppeteers. Is all this sufficient, though to turn high concept into high art? No. Fortunately, Ludwig and his crew have been able to add that indefinable "something" which elevates a theatre piece to a level beyond the merely clever. It's the little things—the rapport between the wisecracking announcers, the unexpected (and unexplained) arrival of a cat carrying a suitcase, and so much more—which help make *Wrestling Macbeth* unique because, let's face it, this ain't Shakespeare. It ain't even pro wrestling. *Wrestling Macbeth* takes you on a journey, and once you return, you'll never look at Shakespeare *or* wrestling in the same way. Ever. •

THE CAST

Producer... LIZ LEE

Written by JON "@IX" LUDWIG and THE COMPANY
with recognition to WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Director/WPU Commissioner... JON "@IX" LUDWIG

Puppeteers/WPU Wrestling Trainers:

JULIE "MAD DOG" DANSBY... Lady Macduff, Fleance, Norway

LORNA "HELL CAT" HOWLEY... Lady Macbeth

LEE "CRASH" RANDALL... Duncan

"DEAD SMILEY" (Fred Reiley III)... Macbeth

JON "@IX" LUDWIG... Banquo, Malcolm

Actors/Commentators:

TONY BROWN... Screamin' Andrew Aguecheek

MATT "THE MOTOWN MAULER" YATES... The Voice

Camera Operator... RAYLYNN "ZOOM" HUGHES

Puppet Designer... CHRIS "BONECRUSHER" BROWN

Costume Designer... FANNIE SCHUBERT

Scenic Designer... ROCHELLE BARKER

Lighting Designer... LIZ LEE

Sound Designer... BRIAN KETTLER

Head Puppet Builder... KATIE GEORGE

Production Manager... JOHN SCOTT ROSS

Stage Manager... BRENNAN "BRONCO BUSTER" BETZOLD



"THE CENTER"

Keeping Up with the Times

by
Justin
Kaase

photos:
B. Periale

Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts is well-known as a presenter of puppetry, as a source of imaginative and experimental work and as a center for documentation and preservation, but is also becoming a leader in the use of sophisticated technology across the full range of its activities.* Technical support of performances is becoming state-of-the-art. Fully interactive television allows for educational outreach across the U.S. All computers at the center are becoming networked. Museum and library functions will benefit from new computer and video technologies. An increasing presence on the internet is opening new frontiers and drawing *huge* crowds.

The Center for Puppetry Arts, founded by its current executive director, Vincent Anthony, has grown in its 21 years from a modest arts organization into a respectable institution with an annual budget of 3 million dollars and a wide range of activities. The Center presents puppetry from around the world, but one of its most important contributions to the field is the original work developed by Jon Ludwig, Bobby Box and others.

Like many puppet artists, they know how to do a lot with a little, yet thanks to a talented technical staff and some creative funding solutions, new possibilities are always being explored. The tech staff is headed by production manager John "Scott" Ross, veteran of many theaters in NY and elsewhere, and Liz Lee, one of the premier lighting designers in the Southeastern U.S. Since his arrival at the Center last year, Ross has overseen the gradual investment in professional quality equipment. The Center now owns five state-of-the-art minidisk players (two for each theater, with the additional player available for more complex shows). Why so many? Partly for redundancy, says Ross, in case of failure of one of the units, but also to be able to layer sound and bring another level of complexity to the shows. The Center has very good computerized "ETC" lighting boards, but they still wish to upgrade to the premier model "Obsession" board. Again we ask, "Why?" "Because, frankly, we can use them," says Ross, candidly. His assertion is not mere braggadocio—on the day we



Brenna Betzold has her hands full in the tech booth

arrived at the center, a sudden electrical storm blew a dimmer board, forcing the cancellation of a performance of *Wrestling Macbeth* [see review, p. 22] and the loss of thousands of dollars in ticket revenue. "Obsession," with its superior safeguards, would have withstood the lightning strike. The show would have gone on. These upgrades are funded through the center's annual capital campaigns, a portion of which is always earmarked for equipment purchases. Not everyone finds this sort of technology, in and of itself, particularly interesting. In the hands of a good designer, though, it can support the intent of a playwright, a director, a puppeteer, opening new layers of meaning to an audience.

The use of interactive television in the Center's outreach efforts was documented last year in the *Puppetry Journal* [Fall, 1999]. The original program, part of GSAMS (Georgia State Academic and Medical Service) allowed classrooms, particularly in underserved communities, to participate in Center workshops. A workshop leader can work simultaneously with five classrooms in five different communities. Students can ask questions at any time, and the workshop leader can solicit responses from specific individuals or classes. Since the time of that re-

port, the distribution of this program has broadened dramatically, with subscribers in NY, NJ, OH, MI and FL, and more are ready to come on board as funding becomes available. Program director Patricia Petrey Dees says that last year these interactive workshops reached about 12,000 students (with performances going out to another 38,000 through the same channels). This may not yet be up to the level of the face-to-face workshops (100,000 last year) the Center offers, but clearly the potential is enormous. Though the technology is expensive, Georgia schools get the GSAMS workshops for free. Out-

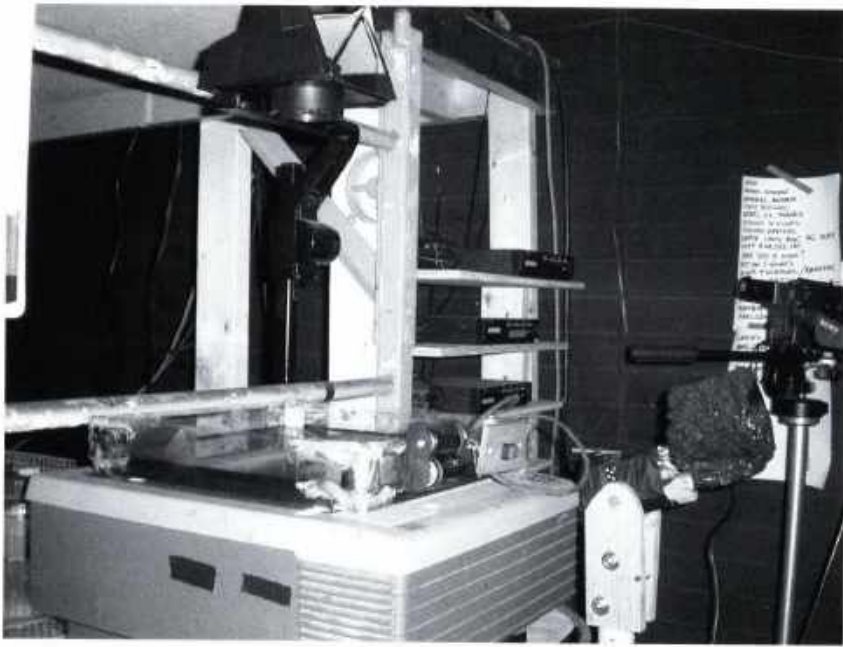
of-state subscribers must pay for the workshops, but in return get a 1:1 classroom to workshop leader ratio. Petrey Dees says that the Center is already looking ahead to technologies currently being de-



Good enough, until "Obsession"

veloped which will further expand the possibilities for "distance education." The current gateway system, which uses phone lines for the transfer of different types of media, will eventually be superseded by wireless and satellite technology. Availability of increased bandwidth will make it possible to use streaming video, and go directly to the internet. The center is also working on installing video cameras throughout their facility, making virtual tours possible.

*For more on the Center for Puppetry Arts, see article by Reay Kaplin, *The Puppetry Journal* (Summer, 2000) p20.



A variety of projectors create dazzling effects

That many Center employees use computers should not be surprising—the personal computer has become an inescapable fact of daily life. That all the Center's computers are now being integrated into a single network is another example of its visionary style of capital investment. This should be a great time-saver, considering how the Center's 50+ employees often need to share information which might only exist on one harddrive—but which one? Now all information will be accessible through a single server to any employee who needs it.

The library and museum are also making increased use of technology. The library's electronic database, when complete, will be much more useful to researchers. The museum hopes to make more use of things like "touch screens," to show puppets in their proper performance context, rather than as mere inanimate artifacts. The exhibits will also be available through the "distance education" program to which we previously alluded.

While the Center has a webpage, Jon Ludwig recently mounted a distinct site for his show, *Wrestling Macbeth*. In the first few weeks of its existence the site registered 10,000 hits. This may be

small potatoes compared to, say, www.hooters.com, but is not bad at all for a show which uses puppets to interpret a Shakespearean tragedy. Clearly, the World Wide Web can be an effective instrument for publicizing a performance, but the implications for its use in areas of education and research have not been lost on the center staff. Local high tech firm IXL has pledged a sizable amount of cash to the Center as well as expertise for increasing the Center's internet presence, and getting all Center employees connected to the internet.

Perhaps the question which needs to be asked has to do with the quality of the experience: Does this workshop truly excite students about learning; does this exhibit open new doors of perception; does this performance move, even transform us? A great puppeteer, on-stage with nothing but, say, a hammer can move us to tears (and not just by whacking us on the head with it). From what I can see, The Center for Puppetry Arts is using technology in the service of the noble goals of improving the human condition and making the world a better place to live. For all my luddite sympathies, I guess that's technology we can live with. •



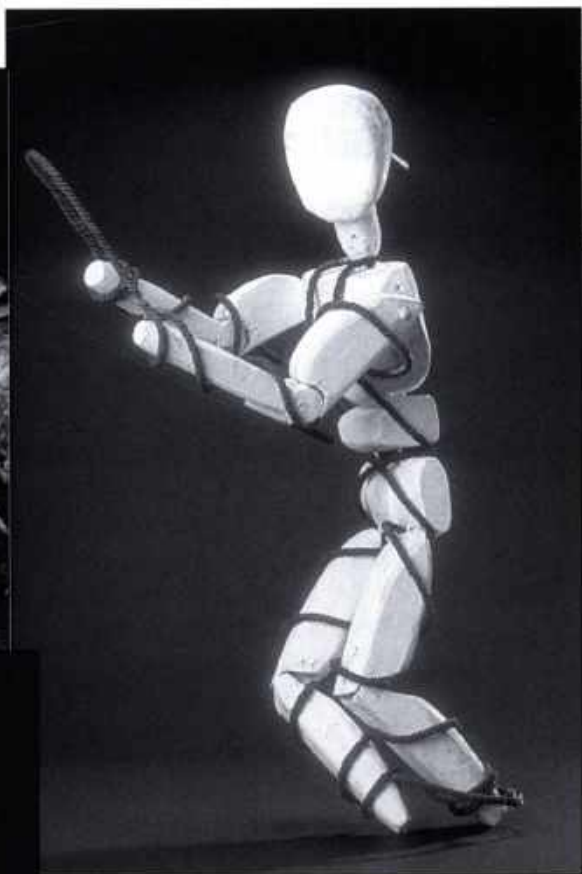
Theresa Snyder works lights and sound from the booth

We take you to the edge!

Photograph by David Zeiger



Photograph by Richard Termine



Photograph by Richard Termine

For over twenty years, the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta has been dedicated to preserving and displaying puppetry - from the traditional to the avante garde.

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MEGA-PUPPETRY:

the gods' voices yelling

by Stephen Kaplin

The puppet is a mechanical contrivance that, unlike flesh-and-blood actors whose sizes and shapes are relatively fixed, can be designed and built to any dimension, to fill any sized performance space, small or large. While most traditional and popular forms of puppetry around the world opt for practical reasons to use puppet figures that are diminutions of the human body, there are also ancient traditions of giant puppet figures pervasive to many cultures around the world. And some of these venerable traditions remain vibrant today, having sprouted startling new contemporary correlates.

A puppet's essential function as an iconic object, operated before an audience at some distance from the performer's own physical center of gravity, remains constant whether the object is a giant puppet in performance on a grassy hillside, a city square or stadium arena, or its smaller cousin, operating inside a box, booth or proscenium. Even though a shift in scale does not alter the nature of the puppet's iconic function, it does profoundly affect the relationship between the object, the performer and the audience. Any puppet figure over 12' in height most likely needs several operators to move effectively— not just to comfortably distribute the weight among several operators, but also because the arc of motion for each limb grows to the point where it requires its own manipulator. Enlarging the puppet further increases the number and presence of the manipulators below or behind it, so that their massed presence begins to contend with, or at

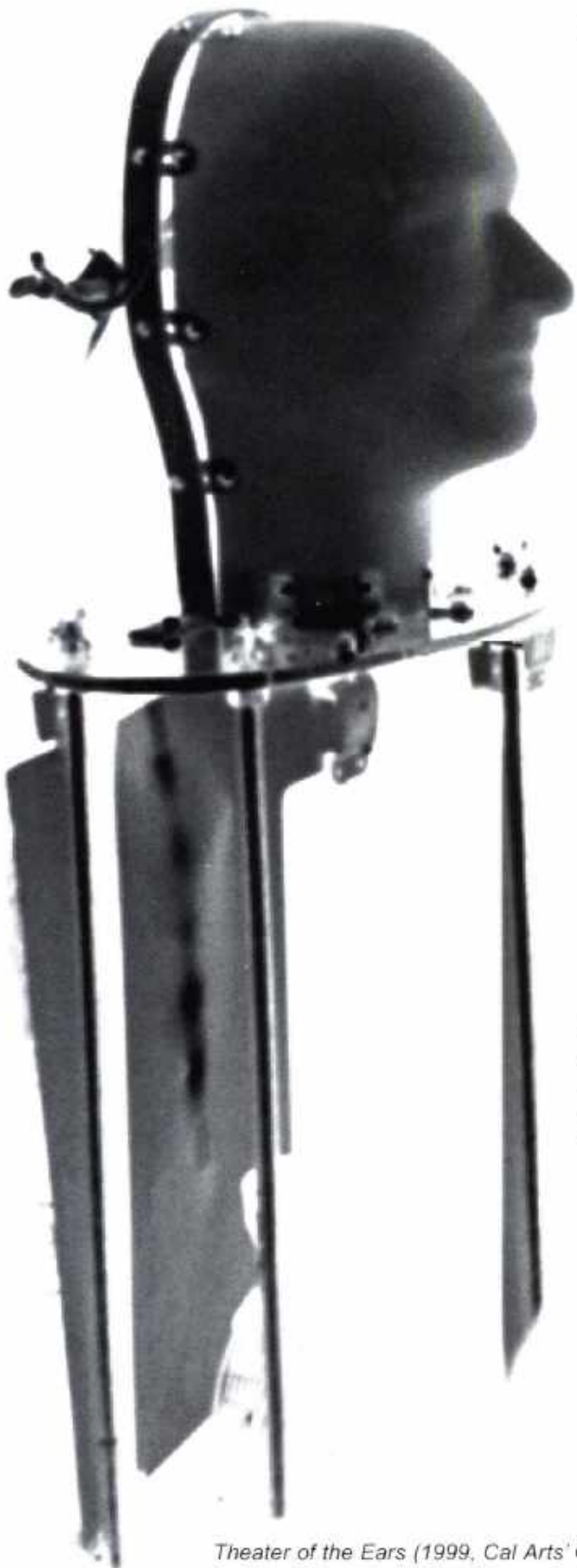


Bread and Puppet Theatre

least modify, the giant puppet's iconic stage function. Further magnify the puppet figure so that it must be performed outside the confines of a theater— in a large city square, arena or open space— and the chorus of operators starts to merge with the audience. Titanic figures of this magnitude can only be viewed drifting over a sea of human bodies. They only come alive when they can draw upon the agitated Brownian motion of a massive throng, when the roar of multitudes provides a polyglottal voice. When thousands, even millions, are thus participating directly in the performance, witnessing the event firsthand, or viewing it from afar via broadcast, then the puppet becomes something more than a mere theatrical device— it becomes an

embodiment of a larger social construct, a temporarily inhabited body-politic.

This is the performative context of the "mega-puppet"— a theatrical event that utilizes performing objects of superlative size before immense crowds, on a scale massive enough to overflow traditional theatrical boundaries and disrupt normal social routines. This definition helps to differentiate mega-puppetry events from theatrical performances that merely incorporate large puppets, in that it refers not only to the scale of the performing objects, but also to the size and relationship of the audience to the performance. Mega-puppetry shares these characteristics with other forms of religious or civic pageantry and spectacle— and indeed in most extant examples of mega-



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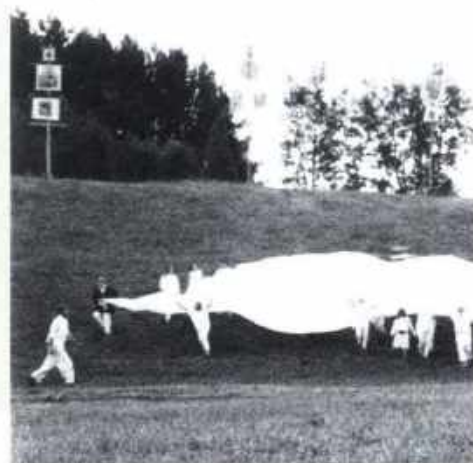
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puppetry around the globe there is either a direct connection to religious ritual and processional activity, or to its politicized and secularized descendants. Modern examples of religious mega-puppetry spectacle are found across Africa; in Asia, in the Indian Ramlila and Japanese Karakuri Ningyo; in Carnival and mardi gras festivities across Europe and the Americas; and also in the many local variants such as the Gigantes and Tarasca of Spain, Giglios in Italy, the Geyantes of France and Belgium, and the Zozobras and Judas Figures of Southwestern United States and Mexico. Examples of contemporary secular spectacles that feature mega-puppetry include: political rallies, May Day parades and agitprop street pageants; sports events such as opening ceremonies for the Olympics or the Super Bowl halftime entertainments; parades, such as the Rose Bowl, Macy's Thanksgiving Day, The Village Halloween and New Year's Eve First Night; annual art/performance events such as Burning Man, Bread and Puppet Theater's Domestic Resurrection Circus, and In the Heart of the Beast Theater's May Day Pageant.

In late 20th century United States, there has been a strong resurgence in the use of behemoth performing objects. In part, this is due to a new generation of lightweight, yet sturdy materials that made possible the engineering of and operation of larger puppet figures— but more importantly, this resurgence can be seen as an unintended by-product of the virtual triumph of global capitalism, and the resulting rise of giant media and entertainment conglomerates, which revel in and foster all forms of mass spectacle. Indeed, giant corporations and commercial concerns (such as Disney and Macy's) have taken over the job of underwriting and producing mass spectacle from the religious institutions, royal houses, professional guilds and mass political parties. Of course, not everyone is pleased with this particular cultural development, and, as a result, mega-puppetry in the U.S. today has evidence of a peculiar bifurcation. On one hand are the lavish corporate sponsored spectacles that feature multimillion dollar budgets, sweeping media attention and television coverage, and that receive official sanction and tactical support from municipal agencies on every level. The other strand of mega-puppetry in stark contrast is produced locally with a modest budget, relying heavily upon volunteer support and community commitment, achieving only limited official support and media attention, and fostering a libertarian, green or socially progressive agenda. They use the devices of mass spectacle and ritual to build a sense of social connectedness, rather than to sell product and push name brand recognition.



A recent event that best illustrates the most advanced strain of high-tech, corporate sponsored spectacle is the Times Square 2000 Pageant which featured puppets designed and directed by Michael Curry. The Bread and Puppet Theater's annual Domestic Resurrection Circus in Glover Vermont best exemplifies the other strand of mega-puppetry in its full, counter-corporate glory.

While the TS 2000 and the DRC are polar opposites in terms of their political orientation and their embrace of advanced technologies, they are quite similar in many of the practical production aspects. The remainder of this article shall compare the means by which these two paradigms of mega-puppet spectacle are produced, with emphasis on the technologies involved in the creation of the puppets, the organization of the event itself, and the performance and dissemination of the images of the production. I shall first discuss the Bread and Puppet spectacle, as this event has closer ties to historical mega-puppet precedents of sacred ritual and political agit-prop spectacle.

Much has been written concerning the Domestic Resurrection Circus.¹¹ It was, until its unfortunate demise after the summer of 1998, the nation's longest running annual puppet event. Presented on the rolling hills, meadows and forests of Peter and Elka Schumann's farm, high up in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, the DRC brought together each year a community of dedicated artists and volunteers to produce a weekend of massive puppet and performance spectacles for audiences that numbered in the tens of thousands. Peter Schumann, the company's founder and artistic director, was responsible for much of the overall design and shaping of the event, while



Bread and Puppet Theatre *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus*, 1994 photo: R.T. Simon

Elka would oversee the administrative and daily organizational duties of running a well functioning collective. Assisting them was a core group of 8-12 dedicated, year-round company members, who would take charge of the myriad tasks and duties involved in producing the prodigious event. They would oversee a crew of 30-40 volunteers, who participated for a month or two in all aspects of the production and performance. Several hundred local volunteers with varying degrees of time commitment also performed in the larger productions of the Pageant and the Circus, and provided needed support services on the days of the event.

The main performance area consists of about twelve acres of hay fields which slope southwards down to an old gravel pit, which has grassed over to become a large J-shaped amphitheater. The gravel pit has level playing space equivalent to several football fields.

In Schumann's writings about the DRC, he stresses the connection between sacred spectacle and the natural environment:

The most evident fact of our life is: we are surrounded by sky, wrapped in weather. Stones speak, hills laugh, worms sing. The great beauty of the universe makes us dizzy. Puppetry is a simplification device to make these incomprehensible riches accessible. Or, puppetry is a form-giving technique that makes it possible to respond to creation.¹²

Schumann helped make this connection explicit in his choice of medieval Passion and Morality Plays, circus, and folk performance genres as a model for the Domestic Resur-

rection Circus. Even in its early days in New York City, when the company was involved in protesting U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Bread and Puppet routinely used reworkings of Medieval Passion Plays to reflect on the contemporary social and political conflicts—Herod's armies were armed with bombers and cacophonous machines with which to slaughter Innocents. After he abandoned the city and led the company north to the green hills of Vermont, Schumann turned again and again to this archetypal struggle between light and dark universal forces, making it the thematic core of the DRC climactic performance—the Pageant. Each year the particulars varied, yet the Pageant's overall structure remained constant. It began with a "Creation Piece," a hymn to the creative power of the living universe, and a "general thank you show" in which the natural world order, as represented by a harmonious human community accompanied by the denizens of the animal and spirit realms, lived under the watchful gaze of a flower bedecked "God face." In the next phase of the Pageant, this idyllic community was invaded by dark, driven, mechanized hordes. Forces of modernity might be portrayed by oafish, clowning "salesmen," or featureless bureaucrats in plain white faceless masks and suits, or they might be identified as "The IMF" or "The Group of Seven." However they were represented, their arrival was accompanied by some monstrous giant puppet figure, a Judas or a golden calf, a dragon, a demon-faced airplane, a 20' tall empty business suit or some other icon. This giant figure and its cadres brought with them noisy, disruptive technologies which they applied to uprooting the God face and massacring the natural order. At the height of the resulting chaos and carnage, the gigantic

figure of "Mother Earth" or an equally immense figure named "Domestic Insurrection" appeared in the far distant meadow and made her way slowly to the center of the playing area just as the light of day was fading. In one of her huge hands she carried a torch which, after sweeping all the performers up into her arms, she used to set fire to the figure of evil, creating a huge leaping conflagration that pushed back the shadows of the night, as the players and puppets exited the field.

In keeping with the antitechnology theme of the performances, both the technical aspects of the production and puppetry construction were kept simple— not much changed, in fact, from traditional giant puppets of Europe, Africa and Asia:



In the early years, the heads of the largest puppets and most important masks were made of celastic, a plastic colloid on a heavy fabric base, that was activated with acetone to become an extremely light and durable shell. By the early 80's, though, the price of celastic had risen astronomically, and the health effects of using gallons of acetone were becoming apparent to company members. It was therefore abandoned in favor of older techniques of papier maché for puppet heads, hands and masks. Wherever possible, natural products were used for all other parts of the puppets— poles and rods of maple saplings, bamboo or, for heavier center poles, white pine or cedar trunks. From their earliest days on the streets of New York's Lower East Side, Bread and Puppet artists were inveterate scavengers and recyclers. Production costs were kept low by reliance on donated, recycled and scavenged material: scrap lumber from the local saw mill, bolts of fabrics salvaged from an out-of-business upholsterer, large sheets of cardboard from furniture factories, heavy brown paper for papier maché in huge, 7' wide rolls from cardboard manufacturers. All sorts of farm machinery, carts and trashed vehicles were used in puppet building. Production technique for Bread and Puppet figures was invariably rough, even crude— operator comfort was sacrificed for expediency and economy. Unfinished surfaces were the norm, with only a minimum of Peter's vigorous, expressionistic painting style for surface decoration and to help define features from a great distance. Color was likewise used sparingly to help make large groupings of puppets and performers cohere visually.

Music and sound also played an important role in the mostly wordless dramas, and here again, the law of simplicity was in force. Never was there any use of vocal or instrument amplification— nor was there much need for a sound system since the main playing area had the marvelous acoustics of a Greek Amphitheater. A single voice or instrument could be used for subtle effect, while more important blocks of text were delivered by a chorus, or by multiple text-readers standing at regular intervals along the base of the crowd. Often times, elaborately engineered noisemaking contraptions and homemade junk instruments would be built to accompany the larger puppets or mass groupings of characters. The pairing of sounds with the stark visual markers of the giant figures and smaller puppet, mask and choral groupings, on the vast canvas of meadow, hill and sky, let Schumann orchestrate and block the complex movements of the Pageant effectively. He himself often played a pair of battered silver hunting horns, using them as a kind of cuing system, since their



deep braying twin voices could be heard a quarter of a mile away by puppeteers hiding round the bend of a road, or over the lip of the hill. Because of these aesthetic choices, the giant puppets and the large shifting populations of performers could be read quite accurately, even from great distances. This was an older and simpler language, one that was less prone to lies and double-speak, a language less corrupted by corporate and commercial interest.

It has always been Schumann's intent to use the spectacles of the DRC as a means for "making the gods' voices as loud as possible."³¹ This was played out not just in the propagandistic sense of creating moving and pointed works of socio/political criticism, but also by demonstrating how a collective endeavor like the DRC could become a matrix for creative social regeneration. The event managed to survive for so long because it fed back some real social and economic benefits to a rather poor rural area. Even while taking exception to the overtly politicized rhetoric of the shows, the predominately

conservative local population took full advantage of the financial windfall that the DRC brought annually to the region.

For the voice of the gods to penetrate, though, it must be heard over the prevailing media static. This requires keeping a healthy distance from mass media and preserving the immediacy of the audience/performer bond. Thus, while the DRC attracted critical attention from artists and theater cognoscenti world-wide over the years, the avoidance of mass publicity for the DRC was a matter of policy of the theater to keep the audience numbers from mushrooming out of control. Similarly, camera crews from network media were not allowed into the circus field to film the event. Despite these precautions, the buzz on alternative cultural channels about the DRC routinely drew record-breaking crowds over the past several years— the 1998 DRC was attended by an estimated 50,000 people. That made Glover the third largest city in the state of Vermont for Circus weekend.

Concerns about the deleterious affects of technological mediation on the authenticity of the DRC also affect how the event was documented. Since it was the presence of the performers, and the audiences in the living landscape beneath the elements that gives the event its meaning, little effort was put in preserving each year's DRC pageant for posterity. Those films and books, photo-documentation and articles concerning the DRC which earned the Theater's sanction, are mostly those made by individuals with a personal connection to the Theater, or who participated directly in the performances— and never for commercial or publicity purposes.

Even without mass media attention, the Domestic Resurrection Circus has been a sustained yell that has profoundly influenced numerous other theater groups around the country and the World. In the Heart of the Beast, Arm of the Sea, The Puppeteers Cooperative, and Great Small Works are just a few companies producing similar types of community-based pageants in the United States.

If Bread and Puppet's DRC represents an extreme of non-commercial, community-based mega-puppet performance, then the Times Square 2000 event is perhaps the clearest example of the hyper-commercialized form of mega-puppetry. While the TS2000 event is clearly the ideological polar opposite to the DRC, it was similar in the way in which it used the dynamics of the mega-puppet performance to shape and define its given community. In this case, however, "community" has been defined by the corporate underwriters of the production— including Disney, Time-Warner, Viacom, Morgan Stanley, Dean Witter, Conde Nast and The New York Times, among other large financial and media outfits— who unite under the name "The Times Square Business Improvement District." Their vi-



sion of a global unity
ness is the
In this sense,
the elaborate
for James I in
Versailles, in
which the political powers-that-be glorified themselves and celebrated the triumphs of global commerce and colonial empire-building. Like the masters of revels in the old European royal courts, the large multinational corporations that make up the Times Square BID used the singular event of the passage of time from one thousand year cycle to the next as a means of celebrating their own cultural ascendancy and power, while incidentally providing a lavish entertainment spectacle for the mass of common folk. The Official Program modestly touts the event as:

The Global Celebration at the Crossroads of the World...TIMES SQUARE 2000 celebrates the peoples and cultures of the world's time zones in a multimedia spectacle spanning 24 hours. With special effects, more than 150 processional puppets, hundreds of costumed performers and oversized Panasonic Astrovision screens displaying live pictures of New Year's Eve festivities from around the globe, TIMES SQUARE 2000 will be the largest public gathering in Times Square's 95 year history.¹⁴

The program and press clips from the newspaper delight in the blizzards of superlative numbers: "tens of millions of fluttering confetti pieces, more than a thousand pyrotechnic bursts and millions of watts of dazzling light," 20 miles of cable that link the 61 spotlights, the 18 speakers, 17 generators, the 7 Giant Astrovision screens and the numberless cameras of the "Media Village" to 28 domestic and foreign television networks. The focal point for all the hardware is the "Temple of Time," a 35 foot tall, three-tiered staging area built on the



technologically enhanced, and economic connected-core of the event thematically, the TS2000 is a kindred spirit to masques and pageants produced in England, or for Louis XIV's court in which the political powers-that-be glorified themselves and celebrated the triumphs of global commerce and colonial empire-building.

traffic island at Broadway 45th and 46th Streets, for the 2 million spectators in and Square, and the other 1-2 billion around the planet, all for a budget (excluding police and sanitation work-

Times Square itself makes for a very awkward performance arena. Its long, narrow hourglass shape can funnel breezes into gale force winds. The already constricted playing area was cut down further to accommodate the massive crowds, with narrow twelve foot wide fire lanes around the stage area barricaded off by police lines. In addition, the sheer visual noise of its garish computerized advertisements and moving billboards that sheath the surrounding buildings, and the volume of traffic—vehicular and human—caused great technical difficulties. The only time that Broadway and Seventh Avenue could be closed to traffic was between the hours of midnight and 6 AM, so all rehearsals and technical production had to take place in the cold, wee hours in the week before the event.

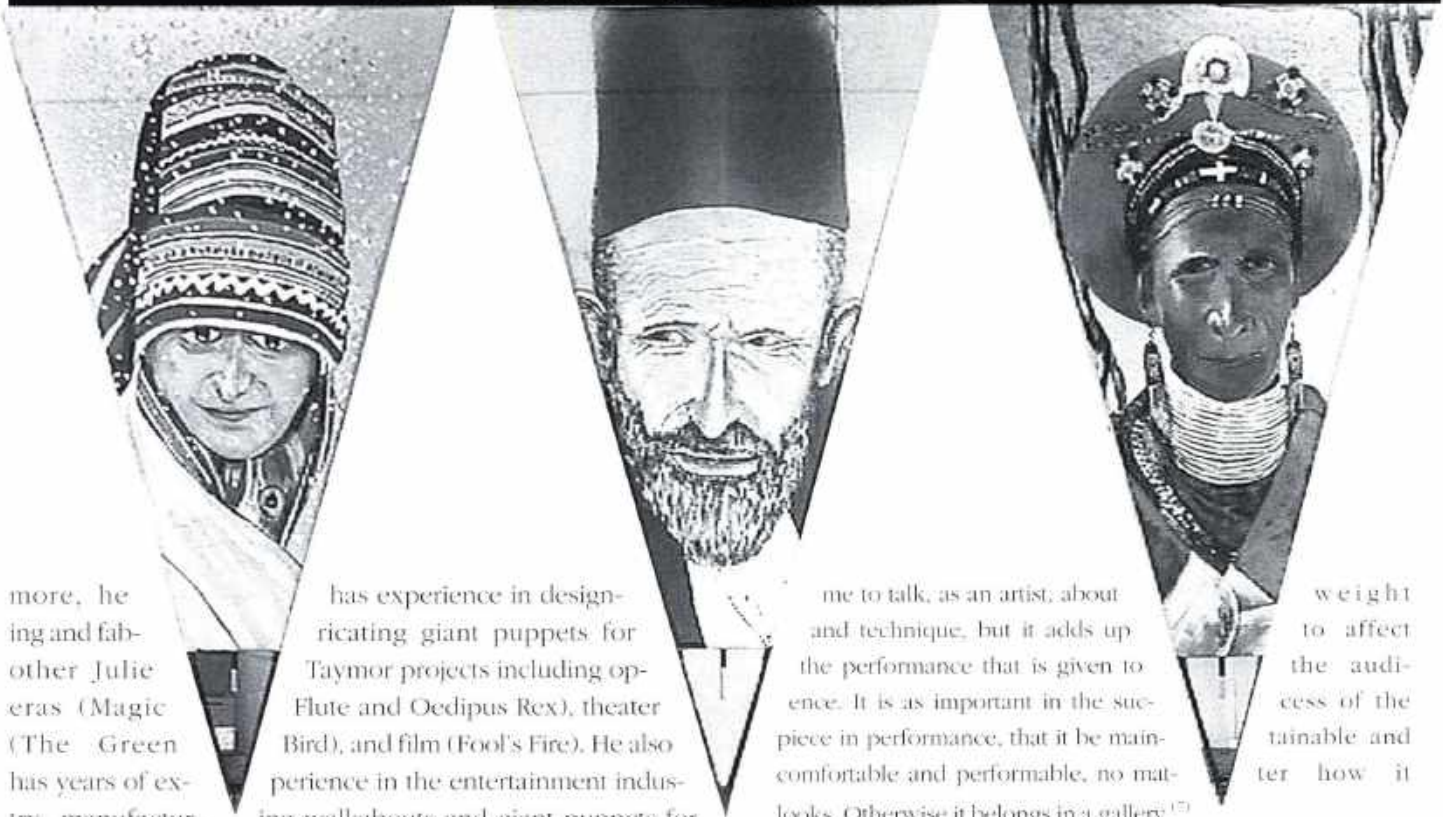
To realize an event on this stupendous scale, a consortium of corporate, municipal and artistic power players needed 4 years of planning and effort. The production team was led by executive producer, Peter Kohlmann (the Vice President for marketing for the Times Square BID), and included Creative Director Geoff Puckett (a creator of giant, outdoor spectacles for the Olympics and for Disney-Paris), Artistic Director and Puppet Designer Michael Curry (whose credits include Las Vegas spectacles for Siegfried and Roy, Disney Theme Park shows and puppet design and construction for Lion King), and choreographer by David Parsons.

It is hard to imagine anyone more suited for the task of designing, constructing and directing the sequence of giant puppet pageants than Michael Curry. His Tony award winning Lion King puppets are already a fixture in the Times Square neighborhood at Disney's New Amsterdam Theater. What's



between
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watchers from
of \$5-7 million
ers' overtime).¹⁵

awkward performance arena. Its long, narrow hourglass shape can funnel breezes into gale force winds. The already constricted playing area was cut down further to accommodate the massive crowds, with narrow twelve foot wide fire lanes around the stage area barricaded off by police lines. In addition, the sheer visual noise of its garish computerized advertisements and moving billboards that sheath the surrounding buildings, and the volume of traffic—vehicular and human—caused great technical difficulties. The only time that Broadway and Seventh Avenue could be closed to traffic was between the hours of midnight and 6 AM, so all rehearsals and technical production had to take place in the cold, wee hours in the week before the event.



more, he ing and fab- other Julie eras (Magic (The Green has years of ex- trity, manufactur- corporate spec- tacles and industrials, for Disney theme parks, for Las Vegas shows and for the opening ceremonies of the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics.

Curry credits childhood exposure to designers, engineers and crafts people as being key in the development of his unique mix of technical acumen and artistic skill:

I'm a very good mechanical engineer from having grown up around men who built sawmills. My father was a self-trained engineer and inventor, quite extraordinary, so I grew up with no inhibitions about developing and inventing... How I got started in the puppetry field was by coming through the back door from the fine arts. I'm trained as a fine artist and a sculptor...¹⁶⁰

Both the engineer and the artist are involved in the complex process of designing giant puppet figures. According to Curry, knowledge of materials, industrial processes and commercial production techniques is key to solving aesthetic problems of designing and fabricating mega-puppet figures large enough to be seen by massive crowds, yet still manageable enough to be operated with some finesse:

Simply put, the biggest challenge you have in large scale puppetry is engineering and its weight requirements. I get better response from pieces that feel lightweight even though they're massive in their dimensional size.... But weight has been my first concern and I actually get a really strong emotional pleasure out of lightweight things... People think it's out of line for

me to talk, as an artist, about and technique, but it adds up the performance that is given to ence. It is as important in the suc- piece in performance, that it be main- comfortable and performable, no mat- looks. Otherwise it belongs in a gallery.¹⁷¹

weight to affect the audi- cess of the ainable and ter how it

Curry's obsession with weight is real (he can quote a puppet's weight down to the ounce) but the results of this quest for lightness, like a parasail craft or a bird skeleton, can be quite beautiful.

Another technical problem of giant puppet design is dealing with increased surface area, which means greater wind resistance, and large areas of deep shadow that can obscure the modeling of the figure. Translucent fabrics and meshes address these problems simply and elegantly, by letting the wind bleed through the surface, and by allowing painted surface detail to be illuminated as if from within, when it is backlit by the sun.

For these reasons, most of Curry's largest puppet figures—the "Father Time," the 90' long Chinese Dragon, the 100' Amazonian Serpent, or the group of Arabian Horses whose rear portions melt into a long desert panorama—are skinned in meshy fabrics stretched tight and glued over spring steel wire frames. Welded aluminum armature structures anchor the steel frame and rod attachment points. Rigidity of the larger forms is maintained internally by crisscrossing guy wires. Control poles are made from sections of 30' telescoping "Black Widow" surf fishing poles or from heavy-walled aluminum tubes.

For all of Curry's advanced design and engineering, his magnificent puppets were not the most spectacularly high-tech objects on display in the TS 2000. That honor must go to the Ball itself. Though only six feet in diameter, its design and timely motion at the stroke of midnight is the true glittering

focal point of the entire Pageant.[...] Linked by means of a satellite hook-up to an atomic clock in Boulder, Colorado— which according to the Daily News gave its descent an accuracy of within 1/1000 of a second—⁸¹ The Ball became [a] totemic emblem of the entire TS 2000 event. Its distinctive faceted image was featured as a logo on all festival publicity materials, posters and ads, as well as on all the wool caps that were distributed to volunteers and crew members.[...] The Times Square Ball [is an icon] of the wired and technically driven World Globe that the corporate sponsors of the event are hoping to foster.[...]

Since mega-puppetry events by definition involve disruptions in normal social routines, dealing with the unpredictable is a significant aspect in their planning. Towards this end, the TS 2000 event had a contingent of 4000 police officers and backup units to regulate the flow of the massive crowds, to direct traffic around the car-free "dead zone" in the midtown neighborhoods surrounding the event, and to enforce a ban on alcoholic beverages in the Square itself. An event of this scale is a political event by its very nature, and political events from anywhere on the planet's surface could have been played out catastrophically in the Square. Much press was given to the ways that the police and the security departments dealt with the threat of a terrorist attack on the event; the security web stretched out to the nation's border, where several well publicized interdictions were made; huge sanitation trucks full of sand were parked at strategic intersections to thwart car bombers; manhole covers in the vicinity of the Square were welded shut; and special police teams trained in biological and chemical warfare countermeasures were stationed nearby. It gave the whole event an underlying sense of paranoia and anxiety that was further heightened by the uncertainty of whether the Y2K bug would somehow spell a complete, global techno-meltdown. Talk about unpredictable! Luckily for the sponsors, and for Western Civilization as a whole, everything went smoothly, and even the midwinter weather behaved itself for the duration of the event.

In contrast to the massive security forces present at TS2000, the Bread and Puppet DRC generally had two state troopers posted along the highway entrance to the Circus grounds, whose main duty was to keep traffic flowing, and a volunteer ambulance unit on the performance grounds. Yet despite the lack of any police or security presence, the DRC was a laid-back affair that generally policed itself. The biggest threats came from heatstroke, hornets, unsupervised dogs on



the playing field and chemically overstimulated hippies. Even a mellow crowd of "Bread-heads," though, is subject to the unpredictable and darker impulses of human nature. In the 1998 DRC, an inexplicable altercation by a drunken individual in one of the jam-packed campgrounds surrounding the Circus grounds led to the death of a spectator. Reacting to the tragedy, the company decided that it could not in good conscience continue to produce future Circuses—the death signified that the DRC had simply grown beyond the point where it could be safely managed.

Comparing these two mega-puppet events, so diametrically opposite with respect to the use of technology, it becomes easier to see the role such events play within a society or culture. As mega-puppetry events invite—even require—civic participation in their planning and performance, they become exquisite models of the local political and social structures. The Bread and Puppet Theater's political message was reflected not only in the diatribes against the IMP, World Bank and the other corporate villains which infused the performances, it was also reflected in the flexible command structure of the core artists, rotating kitchen crews, the spirit of improvisation and volunteerism in the myriad components of the process, the porous nature of the barrier between spectators and performers, and in the fact that every spectator shared the same loaves of sourdough rye bread and garlic spread.

Conversely, the TS2000 event reflected the vertical social structure of its political and corporate sponsors. The principal producers and designers and their staffs, the union workers, the volunteer participants each had rigidly defined roles and degrees of control. Spectators too, had degrees of access that varied depending on whether their social status earned them access to one of the numerous private parties that took place in the office "sky boxes" surrounding the Square, or allowed them only a spot on the street, behind the blue police barricades. While the wonderful representations of nature that Curry created—Amazonian rain forest denizens, snakes and dragons, Indian elephants and peacocks, sea creatures of all shapes and sizes—delighted the frenzied crowds in the Square itself, their televised images seemed pale and displaced in the hyper-reality of a glass-and-light architectural environment, festooned everywhere with corporate logos. The upbeat universalism of Curry's pageant figures could not displace the commercial underpinnings that event's producers (and the Times Square environment) imposed upon the event, nor could the Times Square BID producers, for all the breezy triumphalism of their press announcements, totally airbrush out the political tensions that threatened to crack the unity of its global vision.

In addressing the larger socio/political aspects of the puppetry craft, Peter Schumann ruminates on the cultural need for such massive spectacle:

What is this puppet *theatrum mundi*?... [it] is made possible through the special talents of puppets and the special graces of things... derived from the magicians, from the time when art was votive art...

Naturally, the *theatrum mundi* of puppetry is no medicine against the ordained Bureau of Consumption. We who don't really suffer so badly from our permanent overconsumption also don't need a medicine against it. What we need is very simple: a new world.¹⁰⁹

The massive spectacles of mega-puppetry are a necessary part of any culture's definition, or re- or counter-definition of itself. Their full use of, or rejection of, the prevailing technologies reflect their ideological stance towards the prevailing social order. Of course, most mega-puppet spectacle falls somewhere between the two poles discussed in this article, but the dynamics that make these events such extraordinarily unique cultural singularities are the same, no matter where on the social spectrum they might lodge. A mega-puppet spectacle is a demonstration of how a culture embodies its world, and an opportunity for the reigning gods to speak to a culture's aspirations in awe-inspiring voices.

NOTES:

1. See John Bell— "The End of Our Domestic Resurrection Circus." (1999, *The Drama Review*, vol 43 #3 [T-163], pp 62-80); Landscape and Desire— Bread and Puppet Pageants in the 1990s—(1997, Bread and Puppet Press, Glover, Vt.); "The Nineteenth Annual Domestic Resurrection Circus" (1987, *Theater*, vol. XVIII, #3, pp 34-42) Also see Stefan Brecht— *The Bread and Puppet Theater*, Volume 2, (1988, Routledge); and Susan Green— *Bread & Puppet, Stories of Struggle and Faith From Central America* (1985, Green Valley Film and Art, Inc.).
2. Peter Schumann— Introduction to *Bread & Puppet, Stories of Struggle and Faith from Central America*, pg 10.
3. Peter Schumann— *The Radicality of the Puppet Theater—* (1990, Troll Press, St Johnsbury, Vt.), pg 14.
4. From *The Insiders Guide to the Global Celebration, Times Square 2000— The Official Program*, (1999, Times Square Business Improvement District).
5. *Ibid.*
6. From conversations with the author, Jan 10, 2000.
7. *Ibid.*
8. David Kushner, "This New Years Eve Technology Will Drop the Ball," *New York Times*, Thursday, Dec. 30, 1999, Section G, pg 1.
9. "Theatrum Mundi" refers to a genre of mechanical performance that was popular in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, that featured cleverly automated miniature figures representing historical events, mythic oddities or geographical curiosities. Peter Schumann gave the 1990 Domestic Resurrection Circus the theme of "Theatrum Mundi," so that the dozen or so small side shows built by teams of puppeteers that year to precede the larger performance events were modelled after this historic antecedent.
10. Peter Schumann— *The Old Art of Puppetry in the New World Order*, (1993, Troll Press, St. Johnsbury, Vt.) pp 5-6.

A Rare but Disappointing Analysis of Edward Gordon Craig's Masterpiece

The Mask:

A Periodical Performance by Edward Gordon Craig.

By Olga Taxidou

199 pp. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998.

In a 1981 *Puppetry Journal* interview, veteran San Francisco puppeteer Ralph Chessé was asked what advice he would give to young, would-be puppeteers. Chessé recommended practical stage experience, the willingness to develop one's craft in whatever way one chose, and finally said this: "A good puppeteer must study THEATER in all of its phases and read Gordon Craig." The enormity of Edward Gordon Craig's influence is hard to measure. For puppeteers his importance is inestimable, because he was the first real English intellectual from a high-class theater background to champion puppet theater as a legitimate cultural activity. More than that, in his semi-abstract, symbolist-inspired writings in the early twentieth century, he seemed to say—wait, he did say!—that puppets might be more important than actors! That puppets might be the model which actors should emulate!

I can clearly remember how, in my graduate theater studies at Columbia University, the name Edward Gordon Craig seemed to send palpable shivers down the spines of some drama professors so invested in actors and realism that they had no interest in or understanding of puppet theater. Craig's famous essay "The Actor and Übermarionette," with its utter putdown of realistic acting styles seemed to flummox many academics: Craig's premise (which to me only seemed logical) was to them so outrageous as to cancel out any kind of rational response. Instead, a kind of rote litany emerged as a rejoinder: "Craig wanted to get rid of all actors!! Craig never built or used his 'Übermarionette'!! His system of moveable screens for the Moscow Art Theater Hamlet in 1917 fell over!! He never accomplished anything onstage!!" It was as if Craig were some kind of Antichrist of the theater, the very mention of whose name required an elaborate malediction—instead of rational argument. Pretty powerful effect for someone who's been dead for quite a while.

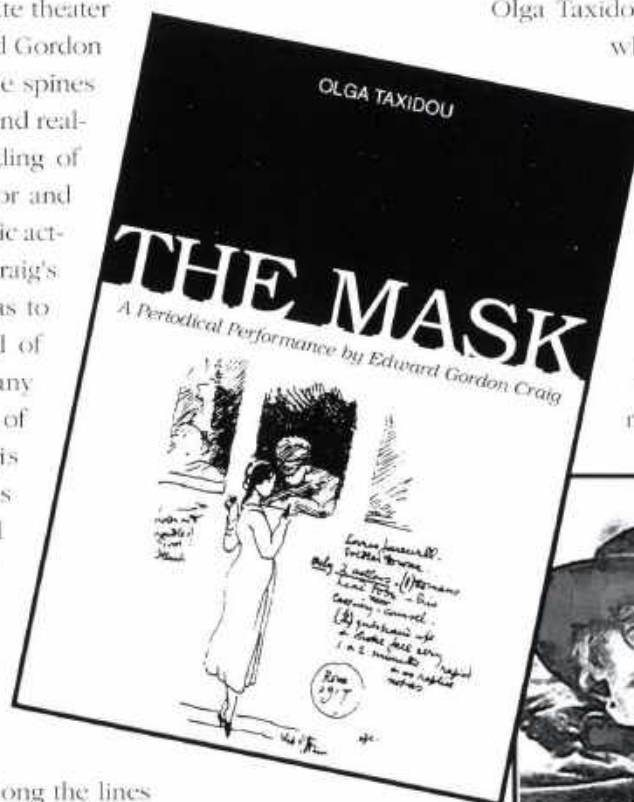
Well, my silent or vocal responses were along the lines that Craig was an elliptical writer, not someone to be taken literally all the time: his championing of the puppet didn't

mean he wanted to replace all actors with puppets, but that the stylized gestures of puppets could be a model for actors (like Peking opera, or Brecht's sense of gesture), instead of Stanislavsky-style realism. And, anyway, hey, Craig's "Screens" *did* stand up for a hundred or so performances at the Moscow Art Theatre! They only fell over in rehearsal!

It is true that Craig did not accomplish on stage as much as other directors of the time, like Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, or Reinhardt (whom he accused of pirating his ideas). Moreover, Craig was a very difficult, even unpleasant person. He was an outspoken, virulent misogynist, and an open supporter of Mussolini and fascism (although Henry Ford was as well, we might remember). What do we make of this man, who, despite all the controversy, was probably the single most important writer on puppet theater in the twentieth century?

Olga Taxidou has a good idea of

what to make of him in her book, *The Mask: A Periodical Performance by Edward Gordon Craig*. Her central argument is that Craig's long-lived periodical *The Mask* was, in fact, his magnum opus, his greatest



single achievement, his greatest performance. And she is probably right. *The Mask* was an extraordinary project, important not simply for Craig's incendiary essays, but for the seriousness with which it studied all sorts of theater: Italian Renaissance theater, commedia dell'arte, Tuscan popular rituals, English toy theater, marionette theater, Javanese shadow theater, Bunraku— in short, pretty much all the non-realistic forms known to the West at that moment. Craig popularized the various streams of arcane knowledge of Asian theater sprouting up in the West, and more importantly proposed that the Asian forms could— no, should— be models for western theater. This gesture of bringing to the public's attention the riches of world theater was a stupendous achievement for the first quarter of the twentieth century, roughly the span of *The Mask*.

If you think that considering a magazine a performance smells of postmodernist theory, you would be right, for an important aspect of Taxidou's thesis here is to put Craig in the context of modernism. In fact, Taxidou sees Craig as a particular kind of modernist, an "idealist" who, unlike the "materialist" Meyerhold or Brecht, could not achieve his goals. Craig, you see, lacked an "ideology" and a "meta-language" that would have helped him succeed in his high-falutin' ideals.

Taxidou looks at Craig's *Mask* from extremely rich contexts: as an aspect of the late-nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts Movement, which prized beautiful book design; as an aspect of symbolist aesthetics; as manifesto (a particularly modern literary form); and as an aspect of the West's fascination with Asia—"Orientalism." Taxidou makes all sorts of insightful analyses of Craig's work, but one slowly realizes that the author has come to hate Edward Gordon Craig for being a major jerk (which he probably was). Moreover, it becomes clear that because Taxidou has realized he was a jerk, it is extremely hard for her to see very much good in his work. Halfway into the book one realizes that the weight of her dislike of her subject will color all of her analyses. Craig's brilliant collaborator, Dorothy Nevile Lees? What's important for Taxidou is that Craig used her as his lover, dropped her after she bore his child, and did not give her work proper credit. Taxidou's fury at Craig does not allow her to give us a good sense of Lees' actual work: her brilliant and original descriptions and analyses of Tuscan folk plays, which in fact did appear under her byline. Similarly, the enormity of the fact that Craig brought Javanese Wayang Kulit and Japanese Bunraku to the attention of most of his European and American readers for the very first time is less important to Taxidou than Craig's misunder-

standing of Asian theater, despite the fact that probably all Europeans who wrote about Asian theater misunderstood it. In short, at the center of any and all of Craig's achievements, Taxidou finds egregious faults. For example, after analyzing the enormous breadth of Craig's research into the history of puppetry, Taxidou takes Craig

to task for his obsession on being original, on floating his own vision of a "theater of the future," and thus not building his own puppets or being interested in actual puppet practice. "Craig's obsession with originality and his loathing of copying," she writes, "did not allow for notions of borrowing, influence, reference, appropriation and in general intertextuality." (But how could Craig have allowed for intertextuality, a theory invented in the 1960s?) Again and again, after noting what she considers Craig's faults, Taxidou is not at all able to recognize his achievements (nor his sense of humor for that matter). Yes, Craig had an egotistical, obsessive temperament, and yes, he treated people badly; but unfortunately, hundreds of "great artists" have done so; it seems to go with the territory. Without ignoring these faults, the question still remains, what do we make of the contradictory mess of achievements those artists made? Taxidou is so focused on fitting Craig into a grand scheme of "idealist" and "materialist" artists, into a wide-ranging analytical system of measuring modernist success, that she can't afford to approach Craig on his own terms— at all. While offering a number of important insights into Craig's work, Taxidou ultimately writes him off— he wasn't Meyerhold; he wasn't Brecht. And so, Taxidou's book, while a welcome addition to the thin ranks of critical writing dealing with puppetry— and about Edward Gordon Craig— will not help us understand why Craig was so important to Chassé, and to so many generations of twentieth-century puppeteers. Which is something of a disappointment.



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— review by John Bell

Henryk Jurkowski

A
History
of
European
Puppetry
Volume Two:
The
Twentieth
Century

Collaborating Editor: Penny Francis
527 pp. (plus 100 pages of photos). Lewiston:
The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998.



*Henryk Jurkowski's detailed tour
of European puppetry continues
into the twentieth-century*

In his extremely thorough look at twentieth century European puppetry, Henryk Jurkowski relates the history of the puppet arts with a wonderfully entertaining narrative style that captures both the expertise of an art historian and the folksy charm of a superb tour guide. The second volume of Jurkowski's *History of European Puppetry* follows a similar format to the first, with the author spinning out numerous stories about the growth and development of puppetry in twentieth century Europe. In this installment, the author has the luxury of examining a mere century or so of puppet history in the span of just over 500 pages (not including the 100 page photo spread), as opposed to his first volume, where he covered nearly 2,500 years of puppet history in less space. This allows Jurkowski to present his history in much greater detail than in his initial

volume, and the resulting tome provides a fairly complete view of his subject. There are, however, more than a few "bumps in the road" during the author's deliberative history of Europe's fascination with the puppet.

One problem with this work lies in the layout, which links hundreds of short, very descriptive and yet diverse stories about puppet performances and companies. These "snapshots" detail important moments in the lives of a significant number of puppet artists, but they don't always flow together in a coherent direction. The disjointed quality of the hundreds of stories that Jurkowski tells makes it difficult to digest the contents easily in one sitting. The author makes some very rough transitions from one concept to the other. For example, in chapter one, Jurkowski describes a Polish szopka performance in one paragraph, and a seemingly unrelated German cabaret show in the next. This creates a very choppy flow of information that hampers an otherwise revealing metanarrative.

It is precisely Jurkowski's attempt at creating a metanarrative concerning the history of the puppet arts that makes his ambitious two-volume series so interesting. There is very little pretense of fashionable academic theory in his work, and this is particularly refreshing when dealing with the subject of puppet performance. Jurkowski is a master storyteller and his enthusiasm for the subject combines with his sharp wit to create one of the most informative and entertaining books to come out on the subject in the past decade.

In keeping with the tenor of the times that he is examining, Jurkowski organizes his chapters around both the artistic movements prevalent in the period and the geographic regions within Europe with which he is concerned. His first chapter looks at a large number of performances loosely relating to European modernism. This provides an overall concept which links the various narrative passages, but it does limit the text in a serious way. Jurkowski's book, particularly in the first chapter, is much more about theories of performance that include puppets, rather than the puppet performances themselves. Jarry, Craig and Meyerhold make their obligatory appearances, and one is struck by the constant dichotomy of "actor vs. puppet" that appears in their theories. It

is clear from Jurkowski's narrative that the vast majority of puppet and theatrical performances were working in separate worlds for the same bourgeois audience. Jurkowski's descriptions of this audience are excellent, and oftentimes his stories tell much more about the contemporary audiences than they do about the performances.

If there is a fatal flaw in the format of Jurkowski's book, it is the absolute separation of the photographic images from his compelling narrative. Jurkowski includes 160 intriguing photos in the "picture book" section of his text, but they have no observable connection to the written portion. Instead, the reader must rely on his or her memory to determine which of the plethora of artists they have just read about connects to the randomly selected photographs located in the middle of the text. Maintaining a link between image and text is only possible when the reader is willing to spend time flipping back and forth between sections of the book.

Only three of Jurkowski's selected images appear in color. These vivid depictions stand out and present the kind of potential to which his puppet history should aspire. Jurkowski clearly did not set out to create a photographic history of puppetry, but the images are essential to an understanding of the concepts, and if his book is to be

the standard in the field, it must do a better job of integrating image and text. Jurkowski's two volume work is, as John Bell pointed out in his *Puppetry International* review of volume one, a "great event," as his important work fills a void in puppet history. But Jurkowski and The Edwin Mellen Press would be wise to format their history in a style consistent with other survey histories in the arts. Success in this type of endeavor can be found in the major histories of the two arts to which puppetry owes the most: theatre and visual art. Jansen's and Brockett's works, to cite two popular examples, both do an excellent job of summarizing vast amounts of information while providing excellent black & white and color images that coincide with the current thread of the historical narrative. This encyclopedic approach could work well with Jurkowski's history.

Despite these problems in Jurkowski's text, his two volume history of the puppet arts in Europe is a vital tool for scholars interested in puppetry, the theatre arts, and the history of European cultural and artistic movements. His bibliography, containing a wealth of multi-lingual sources, is a veritable treasure-trove of information for the interested scholar. This work should find a place on the shelf of every puppetry aficionado.

— review by James M. Brandon

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PUPPET

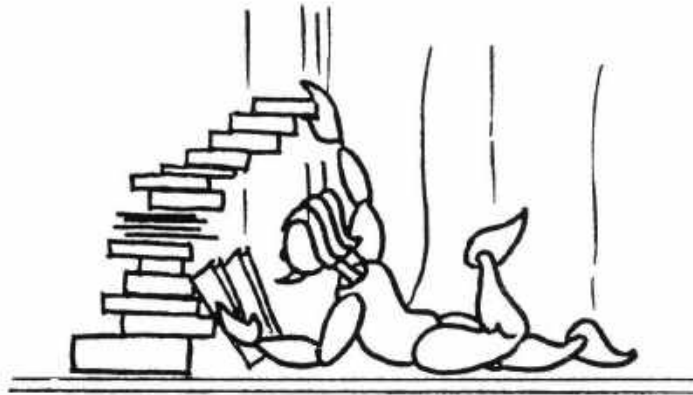


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Ray and Joan DaSilva send greetings to all readers of *Puppetry International* and especially thank those UNIMA members who visited their bookshop at the Magdeburg festival.

We hope that your new books will provide good inspiration for your forthcoming productions. Meanwhile, we will continue to search for puppet books worldwide in order to provide you with the latest works and some oldies at sensible prices. News of good books you find on your travels is appreciated.

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1999-2000 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, September 18, 2000, at the General Meeting of UNIMA-USA held at the Henson International Festival of Puppetry in New York, NY. The Citations 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 theater."

The Citations are given in two categories:

LIVE THEATER CATEGORY

Up Please! - by Luman Coad, Coad Canada Puppets - N. Vancouver, BC, CANADA Review panelists said:

"A sheer delight with a minimum of words. A beautifully designed show matched with delightful puppets manipulated with inordinate skill." "Every nuance just right - deft, spare, precise, gentle, funny - seemingly so simple - and that is where its genius lies." "A simple tale told with great good humor and perfect timing... the last collaboration by this extraordinary husband and wife team."



Suspended Animation by Phillip Huber and David Alexander, The Huber Marionettes - Pasadena, CA

Review panelists said: "The best marionette manipulation I have ever seen." "Phil Huber is the leading practitioner of the traditional marionette variety act. His work not only demonstrates virtuoso technical skills, but he is the consummate performer."

RECORDED MEDIA CATEGORY

Men In Black - Producers Walter F. Parkes and Laurie MacDonald. Lead puppeteer Tony Urbano, Rick Baker and the puppet engineers, and the team of more than 35 puppeteers who worked on the film. Review panelists said: "Very entertaining. Flawless puppetry, masks, special effects. All interplanetary creatures seemed truly alive with expressive movement and individual personalities." "The not-quite realistic use of puppets as alien beings is stylistically consistent with the tongue-in-cheek humor of the film. An outstanding use of Puppetry in a film."

Being John Malkovich - Producers Vincent Landay, Sandy Stern, Steve Golin, and Michael Stipe

Puppet creation and manipulation by Kamela Portuges, Lee Armstrong, Luman Coad, Timothy K. Miller, Mary Hildebrand Nagler, Phillip Huber and David Alexander. Review panelists said: "More than any contemporary film, this story has brought 'puppeteer' to center stage in the public's consciousness." "Finally a movie about a modern day puppeteer. The puppets were well crafted, the manipulation was creative and precise. But more than that, it's cultish appeal and quirkiness helps to open up a new breed of puppet appreciates-people giving puppetry a second thought."

Congratulations to all the recipients!

Steven Widerman, Citations Committee Chair

Large-Scale Installations from Key Productions of Visionary Designer & Director

JULIE TAYMOR

at National Museum of Women in the Arts, November 16, 2000 - February 4, 2001

Washington, D.C.—Julie Taymor: *Playing with Fire* will showcase the career of this extraordinary multidisciplinary artist, whose fertile imagination and genius for storytelling in theater and opera productions and on film have drawn acclaim from audiences and critics, worldwide. Taymor's first major retrospective will have its sole East Coast venue at the National Museum of Women in the Arts from November 2000-February 2001.

As a designer of costumes, sets, masks, and puppets, and a director of theater, opera, and film, Taymor combines and adapts performance techniques from Asia and other cultures to convey her exceptional vision. The multimedia exhibition, organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts, will feature scene recreations, puppets, masks, costumes, video clips, set designs, special effects, theatrical lighting, drawings, paintings, and music. It will offer an up-close look at the evolution of Taymor's artistry as she explores what it means to be human.

"Julie Taymor's work appeals to people of all ages. This is a wonderful exhibition, offering many avenues for cultural education, and General Dynamics is proud to sponsor it in the Washington area," said Nicholas D. Chabreja, the company's chairman and CEO.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the illustrated book, *Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire*, has been updated and expanded to feature Taymor's most recent work. It documents 20 projects since 1980, and includes Taymor's production notes. Co-published by the Wexner Center and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., the 230-page book is available in the MNWA Museum shop (\$49.50 hardcover, \$35.95 softcover), or by mail order by calling 1-800-222-7270.

figure from Fool's Fire
photo: Van Sickle



About the Museum

The National Museum of Women in the Arts, founded in 1981 and opened in 1987, is the only museum dedicated solely to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing, and literary arts. Its permanent collection contains approximately 2600 works by almost 700 artists, including Judith Lyster, Maria Sibylla Merian, Mary Cassatt, Camille Claudel, Georgia O'Keefe, Frida Kahlo, Elizabeth Catlett, Lee Krasner, Helen Frankenthaler, and Louis Bourgeois. The museum also conducts multidisciplinary programs for diverse audiences, maintains a Library and Research Center, publishes a quarterly magazine, and has 22 state committees. Since 1984 nearly 200,000 people have joined as members in support of the museum and its mission. The women's museum is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, in an historic building near the White House. It is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, noon-5 p.m. For information, call 202-783-5000, or visit the museum's website, <www.nmwa.org>.

☐ Shadows, Puppets, Action!

Sunday, November 19, 2000, 2-4 p.m.

After looking at the many styles of puppets in the exhibition *Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire*, families learn about puppet and storytelling traditions around the world.

☐ Julie Taymor: Fire on Film—Fool's Fire

Wednesday, November 29, 2000, 7 p.m.

Adaptation, direction, and costume/character design by Julie Taymor, based on "Hop-Frog" by Edgar Allan Poe; music by Elliot Goldenthal; 1992, 60 mins.

☐ Family Festival: A Taymor

Theatrical Extravaganza

Sunday, December 3, 2000, 12 noon - 4 p.m.

Families can discover the magic of Julie Taymor and explore her many influences as they create shadow puppets and masks.

☐ Character and Environment

Sunday, Dec. 10, 2000, 1-3 p.m.

Role Model Workshop with Constance Hoffman and Christine Jones

Costume designer Constance Hoffman and set designer Christine Jones discuss their theater backgrounds and the process of working with Julie Taymor on her recent Broadway production, *The Green Bird*.

☐ Flights of Fancy: Costume and Julie Taymor's Theatrical Vision

Monday, December 11, 2000, 12:30 - 1:15 p.m.

Constance Hoffman, Tony Award-nominated costume designer for Julie Taymor's *The Green Bird*, as she discusses the memorable role costume plays in Taymor's productions.

☐ Panel Discussion. The Creative Vision of Julie Taymor

Monday, December 11, 2000, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Panelists explore the many facets of Taymor's creative vision, including her artistic influences, sources of inspiration, and innovative staging.

☐ Julie Taymor: Fire on Film—Titus

Wednesday, December 13, 2000, 7 p.m.

Adapted and directed by Julie Taymor
Based on William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*
1999, 165 mins.

☐ Julie Taymor: Fire on Film—Titus

Sunday, December 17, 2000, 2 p.m.

Call the museum for details:
202-783-5000

Providence Puppetry Festival Perishable Theatre

—brings internationally-acclaimed puppeteers to Providence

PROVIDENCE-Kicking off Perishable Theatre's 2000-2001 Stage 2 Season with a huge start is the Providence Puppetry Festival, featuring the most innovative and visually stunning puppeteers from the local, national and international scenes. The Festival will take place from September 15-October 8th. Although all performances are geared for an adult audience, the subject matter and presentation would be appropriate for children over the age of 12. Call Perishable Theatre at 401-331-2695 for more information and to make ticket reservations.

September 15th
BLOOD FROM A TURNIP

Rhode Island's only late night puppetry salon. An ongoing series, *Blood From A Turnip* brings to Providence up-and-coming puppeteers from NY and throughout New England.

September 19- 24
WOMEN'S SONGS, White Goat Theatre with The Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater

Known internationally for their exquisite miniature puppets, Victor Plotnikoc and Natasha Tsetkova's magical Russian company creates intimate scenes of stunning beauty. Critics have praised their work as "magic and emotion in micro-tragedies that defy the laws of presentation".

September 28-October 1
ECHO TRACE, Heather Henson

This multi-talented puppeteer uses performing light, shadow play, gesture, sound, animation and forms to explore the extraordinary beauty and spirit of the natural world. Henson presents *Echo Trace*, a piece which celebrates themes of universal rhythm and the place of the individual within these cycles. Ms. Henson's work has been praised by *Backstage* as "pictorially beautiful" and "hypnotic".

October 5- 8
RUBBERNECK & NIMBOD, Big Nazo

Big Nazo, the international Puppet-Creature Touring group known for squishing together visual theatre, music, comedy, unconventional surgery techniques and audience-interactive improvisation, perform an intimate new show that celebrates grotesque beauty, bizarre friendship, and the interpretation of twisted dreams.

Under the direction of Mark J. Lerman, Perishable Theatre is now entering into its 18th year. Perishable is a Theatre Arts Center which brings together artists from all media and provides them with the opportunity to perform and develop their craft. All of their programming responds to today's pressing issues and concerns, and strives to open a dialogue with their audience.

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Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire

November 16, 2000 - February 4, 2001



Sketch of Señor Toledo from *Juan Darien: A Carnival Mass*

Explore the art of puppetry in the work of visionary designer and director Julie Taymor, whose productions include Disney's *The Lion King* on Broadway.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

1250 New York Avenue, NW

www.nmwa.org

For tickets and information call 1.800.222.7270.

Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire was organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University. The exhibition is made possible by a generous gift from Ford Motor Company. Major support is also by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The exhibition at NMWA is made possible through the generous support of General Dynamics.

Call 202.783.7370 for details on exhibition puppetry programs for children and adults.

Kwaidan Tour

Produced by the Center for Puppetry Arts and Jon Ludwig in collaboration with Ping Chong of NYC and Mitsuru Ishii of Japan, Kwaidan played at the Henson '98 Festival and then on tour. It will now go to the following locations this fall.

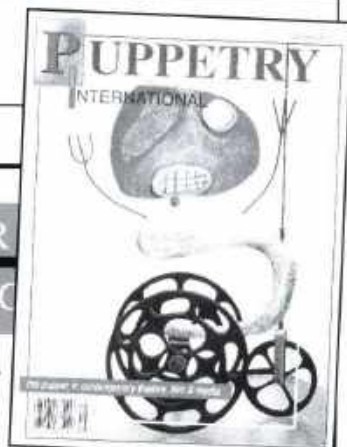
London, England, Pit Theater- The Barbican Centre, Sept. 27-Oct.7

New York City- New Victory Theater, Oct. 25-Nov. 5

Washington, DC- The Kennedy Center, Nov. 8-12

Pittsburgh, PA, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust- Byham Theater, Nov. 17-19

Los Angeles, CA- UCLA Performing Arts, Freud Playhouse, Nov. 30-Dec. 3



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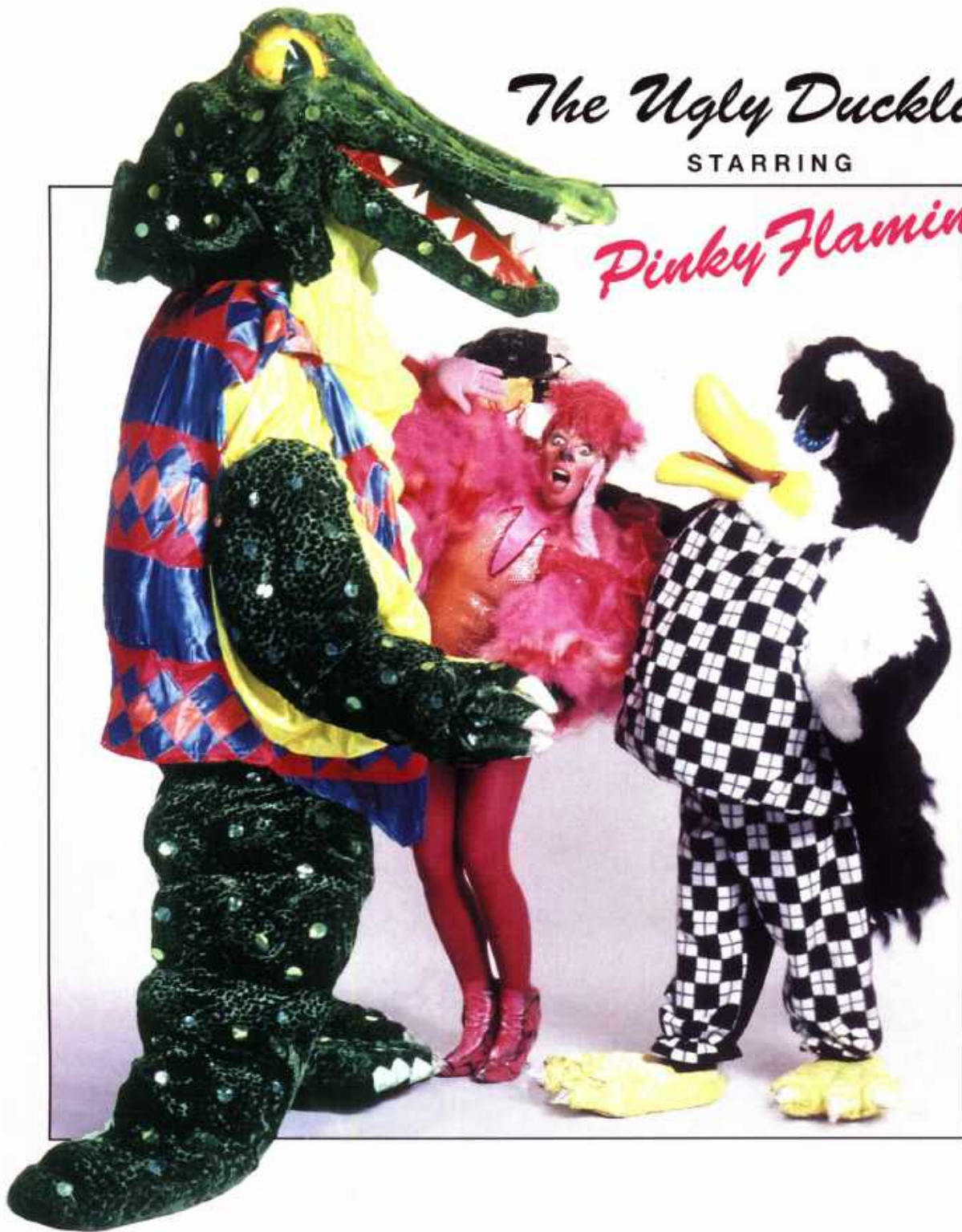
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