

# PUPPETRY

## INTERNATIONAL

*the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media*



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# PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

issue no. 15

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## EDITOR'S PAGE—

## VIVA LA EVOLUCION!

Anyone who has been watching the lineup of shows on Broadway over the past few years, or has taken a gander at preprandial Public TV, has seen an explosion in the use of puppetry—to educate, inspire, and enchant audiences of all ages. Traditions and genres within the world of puppetry, though, are a little bit like the families and genera of the Animal Kingdom: each "species" is distinct, and they come and go over time based on their response to the forces around them—adapting, evolving, flourishing, or simply disappearing into the shifting sands of time.

There are many forces at work on puppetry—economics, political oppression, religious prohibition, changing tastes, changing technology. In order to withstand these forces, a puppet company must be adaptable, resilient and flexible. Some strengths can also be liabilities—a company dependent on the vision of a single artist, no matter how charismatic the individual, is unlikely to survive a sudden loss of leadership. Other theatres—or entire genres—once so woven into the fabric of a society that their survival was taken for granted, have been wiped out by the unlucky confluence of several large events.

This is what happened to the dinosaurs—a changing climate and the evolution of new fur-bearing species (coupled with the impact of a large-ish meteorite) and *Tyrannosaurus Rex* was *Tyrannosaurus "Ex."* I would *love* to have seen a real live dinosaur. It is one of my few disappointments at having been born into the modern era. (The Jim Henson Company made some dinosaur puppets for "The Flintstones," but by the time "Jurassic Park" rolled around, CGI technology had already made those creatures extinct! A case in point.) Scientists tell us, though, that to see a dinosaur, we need look no further than our own birdfeeders. My little chickadee may not look much like a pterodactyl, but the dinosaur lives on in her blood, her bones, her victory over gravity. And in those squishy puppets who live on "Avenue Q," or in the



"The Puppet Master" by Robert Austin,  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

dazzling dexterity of Ronnie Burkett's marionetterry are the bones of *our* ancestors—the fertility puppets, the leather shadows, the god masks.

These then are the questions which so many puppeteers have asked themselves: To evolve, or not to evolve? To eke out a living on society's margins, or flourish in its great halls of culture? To adapt to current tastes (or other external forces), or simply throw in the towel? There are countless variations possible, depending on the time and place in which the options are being considered. Puppeteers who avoid the question, though, do so at their peril, leaving some conniving Claudius or vengeful Laertes to answer for them: "Not to be!"

In this issue, then, we look at the ways in which puppeteers and puppet theatres respond to the forces around them—struggling like protozoans on a petri dish in order to survive and (quite literally) preserve their culture. Our struggle as artists is not merely to move good

DNA into the next generation, but to preserve our cultural identity, to enrich both the intellectual and emotional lives of our public, to be the "keepers of the lore" and tell a few good jokes along the way, in short, we must "take arms against a sea of troubles" and let the chips fall where they may.

Some of the most regrettable losses seem to come from third world countries with unstable governments, and cultures which are moving almost overnight from water buffalo and elephants to satellite phones and high-speed modems. Puppet companies which were virtually unknown to the outside world have vanished with scarcely a trace. In other places, long-standing theatre traditions which were on the verge of extinction have returned to good health, and we have many examples of these in this issue: Chinese shadow puppetry [page 4], Italy's *Opera dei Pupi* and Pulcinella [page 18], and a glove puppet theater from Kerala, India [page 20]. *Wayang Arja* is a Balinese form combining opera and shadow puppetry. A mere decade after its debut in 1976, it seemed to be breathing its last until a student took it on as a project and, after a little "genetic engineering" to make it more engaging and less strenuous, it seems to be recovering nicely [page 16].

The Soviet Union is now a lost world, and its many state-sponsored puppet theaters—giant behemoths which once ruled that part of the earth—are much diminished. The new theatres there have had to adapt to changing conditions, and they compete with the new species—like Kung Fu movies and Rock and Roll—in order to find their niche. St. Petersburg's Puppet House Theatre is one such oasis where a handful of artists does everything needed to make wonderful theatre [page 10].

Finally, Stephen Carter brings Gustave Flaubert's *Temptation of St. Anthony* out of obscurity and translates one of the old fairground texts which inspired it [page 38].

Would I love to have seen those old Soviet-style puppet theatres? You bet! I would love to have seen a Brontosaurus, too. When I am tempted to mourn such losses, though, I have only to look around to remember that they live on in all the brightly-feathered beauty which surrounds me.

— ANDREW PERIALE

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Subject: Punch's sexuality  
Date: Fri, 19 Mar 2004 14:01:51 -0000  
From: "The Punch and Judy College"  
<enquiries@punchandjudy.org>

Hi, I enjoyed Paul Zaloom's liberating piece on the Punch tradition but I can say he's mistaken in thinking that the Punch and Judy College of Professors says that Punch is not gay. We don't take a view on Punch's sexuality or the sexuality of the performer. Punch is whatever he is and you can make of him whatever you can make of him. I don't think it was from us that he had a letter of rejection as I can't find his application anywhere on file. Perhaps it was from another Punch society. He'd get turned down by us for not using a swizzle (because that's what we think distinguishes a Punch and Judy Show from any other puppet show that has a Punch character in it) but not on account of gay issues. And as for his "Screw you, English assholes" we'd say "Stop talking out of yours, Paul."

Glyn Edwards.



# INDELIBLE SPIRITS:

## THE SURVIVAL OF CHINESE SHADOW THEATRE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



**BY STEPHEN KAPLIN  
AND KUANG-YU FONG**

The company of Mr. Lee Tuo Chen performing for Pauline Benton in the mid-1930s. Photograph from Benton's unpublished book, "China's Colored Shadow Plays."

At the turn of the last century, the great German collector and anthropologist, Bernard Laufer, was on a mission to collect Chinese shadow figures for the American Museum of Natural History. Searching the city of Peking (now called Beijing) he uncovered only one old man who still made the traditional shadow figures, but who refused to make him a full set of figures, since a year and a half of labor was involved. Laufer managed to track down a shadow theatre troupe that was willing to sell their entire stock of over 500 figures, plus stage, musical instruments and texts for the sum of \$600.

"So the *ying-hsi* (shadow theatre) will soon be a matter of the past in Northern China, and I saved them in the last hour." [private correspondence from Beijing, 1902, reprinted in *China's Puppets*, Nancy Stallberg, China Books, 1984, p. 90]

Some thirty years later, Benjamin Marsh, an expert in Chinese culture and art, came to Beijing on a similar collecting trip for the Detroit Institute of Arts. Marsh was also able to purchase a complete set of figures and stage equipment from an ailing itinerant troupe for a relatively small sum. He brought these back to Detroit, where Paul McPharlin used them to present the first English language performances of Chinese shadow theatre in America. But concerning the future of the art form in its native land, Marsh wrote:

In 1927 several shadow companies might be called upon for entertainment in [Beijing]. In 1931, there was but one, and that was a troupe of four men who were not below middle age. The young men were thinking of other things.

[Benjamin Marsh, *Chinese Shadow Figures and Their Making*, Puppetry Imprints, 1938, pg. 14]

About the same time that Marsh was passing through, another traveling American scholar, Genevieve Wimsatt, was in Beijing conducting an interview with an old shadow master, To-chen Li. Li, who as a youth studied at a mission school, was one of the very few Chinese shadow puppeteers who could speak

English. He was a primary source of knowledge in the field for many Western visitors— including Pauline Benton, the founder of the Red Gate Players, who took photos and detailed notes of his performances. He may also have been one of Marsh's informants. In Wimsatt's interview, he relates ruefully:

"Only four companies now operate in [Beijing,] all in the hands of white-headed old fellows like myself... I have no pupils to continue the old traditions, to make my shadows dance when I am gone. I do not know who then will love my little players and cherish them. My stock will be scattered in curio shops and picture stalls, sold for a few coppers as toys for children, or to foreigners who do not know Kuan Yin from the Dragon Princess." [Genevieve Wimsatt, *Chinese Shadow Shows*, 1936, Harvard University Press, p. 33]

Some 35 years later, at the height of Cultural Revolution's frenzy, another Western expert foresaw the imminent demise of the traditional shadow theatre. Dr. Brunhild Korner, writing an introduction to an exhibition catalog of Pauline Benton's collection of Asian shadow figures :

"In the China of today, it is to be feared that the cultivation of this intriguing art may more and more disappear. The original parchments of the figures are replaced by crudely colored synthetics, as the contents of the historical plays oppose new ideologies, they are replaced by revolutionary plays. The performers can no longer bestow on the figures their former elegant mobility..." [Catalog for "Shadow Figures of Asia from the Collection of Pauline Benton," 1970, Minnesota Museum of Art, p. 5]

How is it that these Western scholars all came to the same conclusion— that the tradition of Chinese shadow theatre, many thousands of years old, was about to go extinct in their time? Perhaps their status as outsiders made it easier for them to dismiss the strength of the traditional cultural forms. Obviously, the shadow theatre didn't die out as predicted, but continues to flourish. How has it managed to survive? By analyzing our conversations with contemporary shadow puppeteers, we will try to enumerate some of the tactics they used to ride out the violent political and cultural fluxes that characterized Twentieth Century China. It makes for an interesting study in strategies for artistic survival. Prior to writing this article, we talked to several directors of shadow troupes from both the Mainland and Taiwan; Hai Lu, a sixth generation shadow performer and the retired director of the Beijing Shadow Show Troupe; Jianguang Da, co-director of the Tangshan Shadow Play Theatre of Hebei Province;

Liming Liang of the Liao Nan Shadow Theatre of Liaoning Province; Yufeng Shi of the Kaohsiung Cultural Center and Shadow Theatre Museum, in Taiwan; and Fukuo Chang (also a sixth generation puppeteer), director of the Tung-hua Theatre in Taiwan. The Lu family saga best illustrates the challenges facing traditional puppeteers trying to navigate the choppy waters of wars and revolution. Their family tree stretches back 12 generations, but the story begins when the sixth generation patriarch, Guangcai Lu, joined a shadow theatre company during the waning years of China's last dynasty. This was a period when the shadow theatre had reached a high point in refinement and popularity. Public festivals, weddings, birthdays and private rituals would almost always include a performance. The repertoire, a repository of religious belief, social custom and historical narrative similar to those of other Chinese performing arts, included: the epic adventures of the demon-quelling Monkey King; the tempestuous affairs of the magical animal spirit, Whitesnake; or the deeds of the great heroes from the Three Kingdom Period. In every city, town and village, itinerant troupes would play in private homes for audiences of women (who were not allowed to attend public theatres,) or contract their services to teahouses. The ruling Manchu clans and the imperial families of the Qing Dynasty were themselves great patrons of the artform and their household staff included resident shadow companies on call. Numerous regional styles developed. The form around Beijing was called the Luanchou style, after a nearby town, and it was further sub-divided into highly refined Eastern and somewhat coarser Western styles.

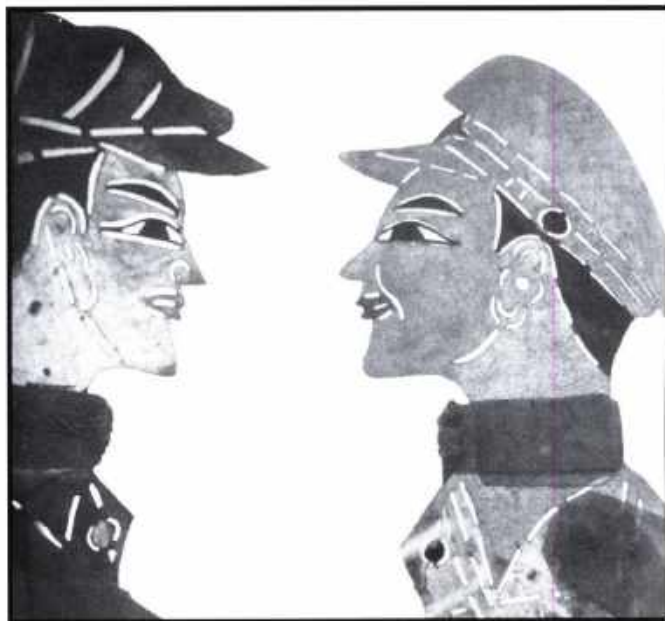
But as the Qing's authority began to wither away, they came under attack from the gunships of the Western power in the east, and from roiling civil unrest within. The fortunes of traditional shadow troupes changed dramatically during this period. A rebellious religious sect called the "White Lotus" had persuaded people that they had magical powers to make armies of soldiers and horses out of cut paper figures. Ever cautious, government officials feared that the rebels might be able to achieve similar results using parchment shadow figures; the Qing banned the obvious threat to National Security and started arresting puppeteers. Locking up the puppeteers had the added effect of dispersing the crowds that would gather night after night to watch their popular performances, a natural breeding ground for all sorts of treasonous plots. To escape this persecution, Guangcai had to flee into the mountains. Sometime later, when danger was past, his son Dercheng started a shadow theatre company of his own, which in time was taken over

by the grandson, Fuyuen. By now it was the turn of the Twentieth Century, and the Qing Dynasty was in its final death throes. The disastrous Boxer Rebellion had been brutally suppressed by a coalition of Western armies, warlords ruled, and famine, epidemics and civil breakdown was rife. In this situation, traditional shadow companies, who had been dependent on popular patronage, lost their livelihood, since uprooted villagers and poverty stricken townspeople had no cash to spare for entertainment. By the time Laufer came along, many of the troupes were so destitute they'd sell their stocks of figures to foreign collectors for whatever sum they could get.

In 1911, the last Emperor abdicated, bringing 4000 years of dynastic rule to an inglorious end. After some more years of chaos and turmoil, a republic was declared and a brief period of relative stability followed. During this transitional period, China sought to assimilate outside political, social and artistic influences. New technologies such as film (known as "electric shadows" in Chinese) began to be seen in the big cities, and to compete directly with the traditional shadow troupes. Some of the surviving shadow companies had to adapt to these changing circumstances. They replaced the old, sooty oil lamps with electric light bulbs, which meant that the color of their parchment figures could be seen much more vividly. They began using modern dyes to stain the hide and made other technical improvements to their craft. They also introduced new repertoire and designed new figures that represented the realities of the modern urban streets: rickshaws, bicyclists, motor cars, foreign types and regional caricatures, vendors hawking every conceivable item or service. During this time, the Lu Family Shadow Troupe managed to prosper. Fuyuen passed the company onto his son, Yuefong, who renamed it the Der Shuen Shadow theatre. He had five sons, all of whom were active in the company (the three daughters were forbidden by tradition). They followed an old saying, "E zhuan, san huei, ba rung"—a puppeteer needs one strong mastery, three strong skills, plus be able to handle eight different backstage jobs. So they each took charge of a specific aspect of production and/or character role. Yuefong managed the company, played percussion and did female voices; Eldest son, Jinquei, played *sansien* (a three-stringed instrument) and performed the clown

voices; Second son, Jintong, was chief manipulator and performed martial arts (especially the Monkey King) voice rolls; Jinda, third son, designed and carved the figures and also manipulated; Jinping, fourth son, played *sihu* (four-stringed instrument) and performed painted-face characters; and the youngest son, Jinan, wrote the plays. In the early 1930s, Jinda (the master puppet designer) was commissioned to make a set of figures for Pauline Benton, which she brought back home to use with her company, the Red Gate Players. These figures are considerably larger than the typical Luanchou figure (15-18 inches tall as opposed to 8-12 inches). They survive today in collections at the University of Minnesota and with Chinese Theatre Works.

The period of time when Marsh, Benton, and Wimsatt were visiting China was soon after the death of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the recognized father of the Chinese Republic. Civil



Shadow figures from 1950's revolutionary shadow plays. One figure, a young Red Army captain, the other, a Japanese soldier.

Courtesy of Simon Wong, Ming Ri Theatre, Hong Kong.

war had broken out again, this time between the Left and Right wing parties. The rightist Koumingtang, under General Chiang Kai Chek, battled the Communists, who, inspired by the successes of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, sought to foment similar revolts in China's newly industrialized coastal cities. Both sides battled each other and the warlords, while Western interests played the many factions off one other, and the Japanese stepped into the power vacuum to occupy the northeastern province of Manchuria. This turned out to be a prelude for a full scale invasion, which marked the first round of the global carnage known as World War II. The Koumingtang and the Communists called a truce so that they could unite in battling the Japanese. During the invasion and war, the Lu family continued to perform, though under extremely difficult circumstances. The Japanese were actually very appreciative of the traditional repertoire and Yuefong was even invited to bring the troupe to Japan. However, he refused to collaborate, so in response they kidnapped the two eldest sons, Jinquai and Jintong. While on their way to Japan,



the two brothers managed to escape, though they injured themselves jumping from a moving train. World War II had hardly sputtered to an end when the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists was reignited. A Communist military victory in 1948 led to the exile of Chang Kai Chek's Koumingtang to the island of Taiwan, where they formed an American-supported counter-government, which is the source of much regional friction to this day. The new Communist regime altered the entire social ecology of the country. Since belief in God was proscribed, shadow theatre performances at temples in honor of the deities' birthdays became taboo. Instead, the Communists used shadow troupes to propagate their new social and political order, just as the Soviets used Petrushka and other folk theatre forms to spread messages to the illiterate peasants in the countryside. Using their traditional techniques, shadow artists created figures representing the new generation of revolutionary heroes and villains. Some of the old style family troupes were given status as big national professional companies, with large artistic and administrative staffs, training and support facilities. The repertoire also changed to suit the new social conditions. In addition to all the usual classical material, performances now included simple animal fables, creating shows specifically for children and young audiences.

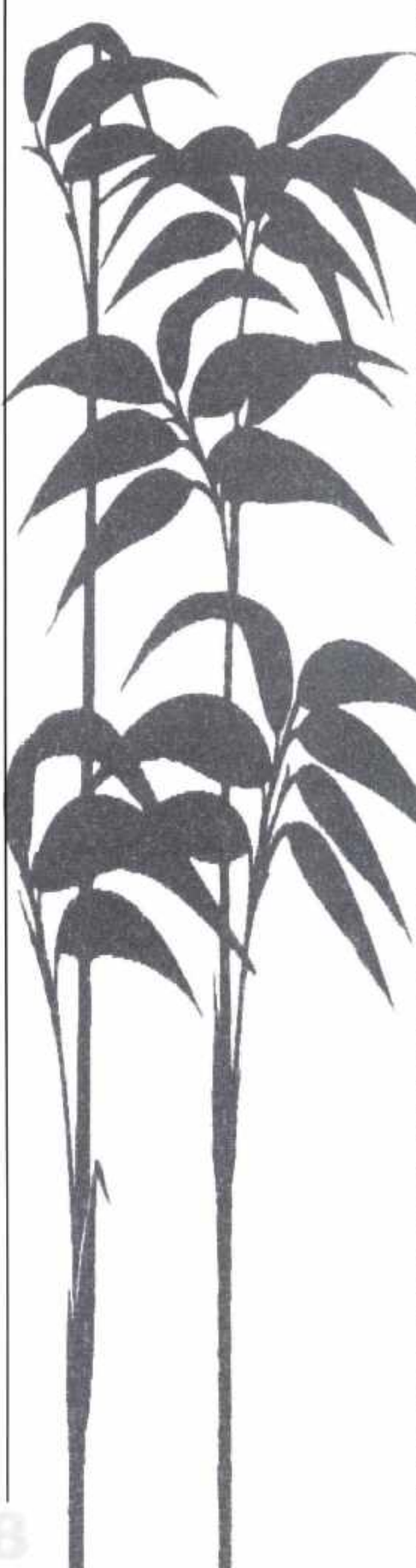
The Der Ruen Ho troupe of Hunan Province, pioneered this new direction by creating shows such as *Crane and Turtle*. Their success (and the lack of copyright law in China) insured that in short time every shadow company in China included this piece in their repertoire. Yuefon and his sons supported the new regime's cultural activities by creating propaganda shows touting specific government programs, such as the "National Patriotic and Sanitation Movement," or tips on how to become a good work collective. They did shows about international events (an anti-American shadow show, *The Worries of Ike*, dealt with the explosive situation in Korea). Later, they did shows about Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Given any subject matter, the five brothers could create a new show overnight and perform for audiences the next day. During the Korean War, Yuefong had the five sons go to the front to do shows. They performed in the tunnels that were dug beneath the DMZ. When they came back, the Communist party rewarded their service by making their company a nationally sponsored troupe. It was renamed the "Xuen Wu Shadow Company" (Xuen Wu was the name of their County), though other shadow artists still knew them as the "Lujianban," the Lu Family Shadow Troupe. As an officially sponsored company, they received government subsidies for all production expenses, administration and artist salaries.

Support from the central government, though, while giving the troupe a degree of stability, came with strings attached. This was most sharply illustrated during the calamitous period known as the Cultural Revolution. As Mao's power

began to slip in the mid 1960s he unleashed cadres of radical young Red guards to terrorize political opponents and uproot anything smacking of pre-Communist or foreign influence. The results were uniformly disastrous. Almost all serious intellectual and artistic activity ceased for its ten year duration. Chinese theater companies were restricted to presenting eight new plays that had been officially sanctioned by Mao Tse Tung's wife. Every other play was banned as counterrevolutionary or purveying superstition and "old thinking." The Lu family, too, suffered greatly during this period. They ceased performing altogether and the company scattered.

Mao's death brought an end to this tumultuous period, and eventually the Central Party asserted its authority and disbanded the Red Guard cadres. The cultural groups that had lain dormant began to re-establish themselves. The Lu family also began to perform again. However, the ten years of chaos had serious repercussions for their work. Connections between traditional patterns of culture had been severed and a whole generation of young people had grown up forcibly alienated from these older cultural forms. So the Lu family had to struggle to rebuild their shattered audiences. The government once more stepped in, hoping to repair some of the damage of the previous decade's iconoclasm. Like other shadow companies at the time, they began adapting to a large screen format, using a fifteen foot wide screen—a style of staging that had been pioneered in the 1950s as a means of playing to larger urban audiences. The size of the figures doubled to almost three feet tall. Later they realized that such huge figures were clumsy to manipulate, and they scaled them down to about two feet. The light source was also changed—instead of a single incandescent light bulb—the puppeteers used banks of up to 12 four foot fluorescent bulbs, which bathed the wide screen in a bright, even light. The figures had additional rods attached to the feet, giving them more realistic articulation. The design of the figures changed, too. They were now painted on clear plastic in garish, translucent colors (rather than carved and delicately perforated animal skin) in a style modeled after that of cartoon animation.

The Xuen Wu Shadow Company continued to operate during the 80s and 90s. But as the Central Government began to drastically cut back artistic subsidies, they had to seek new ways to finance their work and develop audiences. The company's management was taken over by a large commercial entertainment group that has been given a monopoly to run all the small theatres and cultural groups which the local city government no longer wanted to support. While the management group covers about sixty percent of the shadow company's expenses, the other forty percent must come from box office receipts and touring revenues. Most of their performances are for children and foreigners at the new China Puppet Art Complex, or in their own theatre space inside the



Beijing antique district. As China cobbles together a new market economy, though, it has become increasingly difficult for them to make ends meet. Our informant, Hai Lu, retired a few years ago from directing the Xuen Wu troupe. He was invited to Liaoning Province in the northeast, where he works in the local cultural center. While his own son knows how to carve figures and has some basic performance skills, these are not up to the artistic level of proceeding generations. So, with an eye to the future, Mr. Lu's interest is in educating young people in shadow theatre technique and also exhibiting his large collection of shadow figures. In this way, he is insuring that the accumulated experience of generations of puppeteers gets passed down to younger artists.

Other contemporary shadow companies have followed similar trajectories as the Xuen Wu Shadow Company. We talked to Jianguang Da, who is a co-director of the Tangshan Shadow Play Theatre in Hebei Province. Tangshan has historically been a center for shadow theatre, and their company is based solidly on this 600-year-old tradition. Mr. Da started learning from puppet master Yunghen Qi. Their relationship was not just master/student, but almost father/son. Like the Lu family company, the Tangshan troupe was also unable to perform during the Cultural Revolution. They didn't disperse, however, so when performances were once more allowed, they were able to reconstitute the troupe very quickly. Unlike the traditional family-run small companies of the past, the Tangshan troupe is quite large, consisting of almost fifty members. With the generous and stable government support, the troupe could support its members comfortably. But, even when in recent years the government began cutting back subsidies, they were able to support themselves through their touring activities, still performing over 400 shows per year—about half of them in Taiwan and

Japan. Last year they won the first National Golden Lion Competition Award for the best shadow performances.

One reason for the Tangshan troupe's success is their flexibility in creating productions for all types of venues and audiences. Depending on the situation, they can do shows with anywhere from five to sixteen performers. They have adapted the large screen/large figure format which allowed them to play for audiences of up to 5000 people in countryside villages. They tailor their material to suit audiences' tastes. When playing in villages, they use all the traditional songs and recitative, but when playing the same material for urban or foreign audiences unfamiliar with the traditional style, they would eliminate the singing and just use dialogue. They are also adding English language plays to attract international audiences.

Adapting the traditional repertoire for contemporary audiences, adding repertoire for children, exploiting modern technical innovations and management practices has given new, dynamic life to many of the established shadow companies. Another popular strategy used by companies struggling to find a base of support for their work, has been to focus on tourist productions. The Liao Nan Shadow Company based in Anshang City in Liaoning Province is a good example of this approach. The company director, Liming Liang, learned the craft from Hai Lu. They have their own theatre as part of the Qianshan Community Cultural Center, but their troupe of nine or ten also performs in local villages and schools. In addition to traditional repertoire, they do a lot of propaganda shows dealing with such subjects as drug abuse and agricultural practices. One such show, *Monkey King Fights the Lady Drug Pusher*, received a provincial award. However, despite their solid reputation, the company has had trouble maintaining itself. They have trained three groups of shadow performers, mostly teenagers. But each time the training process is complete, the young performers leave because the salaries are

too low. To keep the company on track, Mr. Liang has had to invest a lot of his own money into the company (over \$100,000). The company is now trying to establish itself as a hook for the local tourist industry. Last year, they had planned to host a large international shadow theatre festival which was to include five or six international companies, an equal number of national companies and ten local companies.

Unfortunately, the SARS epidemic squelched their plans. This year, they plan a shadow exhibition with figures from ten provinces. In Taiwan, a different cultural pattern developed which reflected a very different constellation of political and social forces. Relatively free of government interference, the older forms of shadow puppetry managed to maintain themselves with a degree of purity. Five traditional shadow troupes, originally from the Mainland provinces of Guandong or Fujian, settled in Kaohsiung County in the southern part of the island. Each of these companies is a family run operation with up to three manipulators and from three to seven musicians. They typically present twenty to forty performances a year. The Tung-hua Shadow Theatre, directed by Fukuo Chang, is typical of these Taiwanese troupes. The company has been in existence for over 200 years and has in its repertoire 500 traditional plays. They perform at temples for festivals and deities' birthdays, for weddings, private functions, theatres and schools. Still, they had to make allowances for contemporary conditions. In the 1950s and 1960s they increased the size of their figures from about one foot to around two feet in order to accommodate larger audiences. Mr. Chang also developed a technique of using multiple incandescent bulbs to illuminate the larger screen surface. To help support these companies, the Taiwanese government established a shadow theatre museum in the Kaohsiung County Cultural Center. Also, the Taiwanese government often helps subsidize companies touring abroad as a means of backdoor diploma-

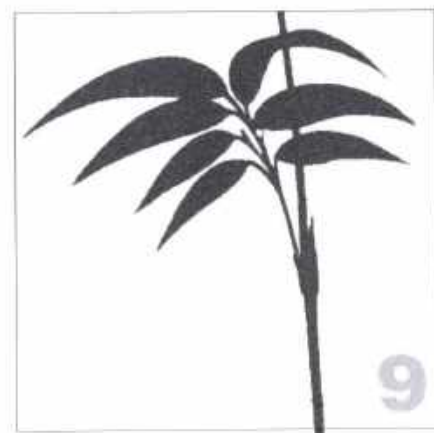
cy, since they do not have formal diplomatic relationships with other countries.

Chinese shadow theatre has always been deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the nation, a fact which has enabled it to survive all sorts of political and social upheavals. A contributing factor to the shadow theatre's survival has been the interest of outside scholars and artists. The quotes at the beginning of this article from Laufer, Marsh and Wimsatt reflect that profound interest, as does the whole of Pauline Benton's career with the Red Gate Players. Benton's work provided inspiration for others, such as Jo Humphrey— founder of the Yueh Lung Shadow Theatre (later known as the Gold Mountain Institute for Traditional Shadow Theatre and now as Chinese Theatre Works)— to make the preservation of the artform a lifelong occupation. Humphrey had been working at the American Museum of Natural History, cataloging and cleaning figures of the Laufer collection. During the Cultural Revolution, when shadow theatre once more seemed to teeter on the verge of extinction, she began creating performances, using copies of the Laufer figures that she cut herself. Later, when half of Pauline Benton's extensive collection of shadow figures was given to GMI, she spent years exhaustively cleaning and refurbishing these figures.

Humphrey always felt that her work was that of a caretaker, and it had to be eventually returned to the Chinese people. Her work has influenced and been an inspiration to a younger generation of Chinese artists. In the mid 1990s, a young theatre director from Hong Kong, Simon Wong, came to New York City to study Chinese shadow technique with GMI. He brought this knowledge back to Hong Kong and applied it to his own company, the Ming-Ri Theatre. Later, when Hong Kong was returned to Mainland government control, Wong began to collaborate with Chinese puppeteers in neighboring Guanzho Province, where he has become a major conduit of information for the Chinese troupes who are trying to learn the mod-

ern management and administrative techniques necessary to survive in a marketplace economy without government support. The China Guandong Puppet Troupe, under the direction of Yu Chao Li, has since taken a leading role in organizing UNIMA-China. Recently, Wong and Li have been campaigning to get Chinese shadow theatre officially recognized by the United Nations as a World Cultural Treasure. Such a designation would greatly increase the art form's status within Chinese government circles, and in the eyes of the rest of the world. Wong's work completes the circle of influence that began with Western admirers of the art form such as Benton and Humphrey, and has ended back in China helping to reinvigorate active shadow companies there. While scholars and purists may argue about the decline of shadow theatre in today's contemporary cultural environment, their dire prognostications underestimate the ability of traditional artforms to adapt to changing conditions and move in new directions. This, and the commitment of China's shadow artists to transmit their knowledge and skills to the next generation, make it likely that the shadow theatre will continue to flourish.

*Stephen Kaplin and Kuang-Yu Fong direct Chinese Theatre Works. Kaplin is also a member of Great Small Works, and Fong is on the Board of Directors for UNIMA-USA.*



# A SMALL TROUPE THRIVES IN POST-SOVIET ST. PETERSBURG

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMUEL WOOTEN



Russia has been known for its marionette groups since the 17th century. In Saint Petersburg, Peter the Great regularly hosted Italian, German, and French puppeteers at his court and for his personal entertainment.

Today, Saint Petersburg is still home to the best puppet theater school in Russia. It offers a five-year program and is known for its world-class, innovative puppeteers.

Amongst the best groups is the Puppet House Theater, founded in 1992 by a trio of artists with immense talent, creative and poetic motivation. The director, Alexander Maximychev, the set designer, Tania Melnikova and the actress, Elina Ageeva are all artists in their own fields. Their repertoire, in this musical miniature genre, makes use of classical music and literature which are vivid in form and symbolic in content. Four such pieces are the core of their repertoire: Cinderella, Thumbelina, Sleeping Beauty, and Carnival. The group has already received two Golden Mask awards—the highest national theater distinction—and has been nominated again for April 2004.

The Puppet House works out of a small flat in the Vassilievski neighborhood of Saint Petersburg. Wooden frames, wires, open trunks, feathers, fabrics, masks, and puppets in every stage of evolution decorate almost every inch of the rooms. In the efficiently used space, the artists create and bring to life the outstanding puppets they have managed to present around the world (they just returned from a tour in Australia). At a table under a low ceiling surrounded by bookshelves, art objects and awards, Alexander, Tania, and I speak about their work over a glass of vodka. "A characteristic of our work is that we do everything ourselves. First, we develop an idea for a show, make drawings, then gather materials wherever we can and only as a last step go on to create the puppets themselves."

In the three performances I attend in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, the engineering and decoration of the puppets and sets by Tania is genre defying, but so are the infinite details in the movements, emotions and life Elina brings to them so gracefully.

Elina, who often chants, sings, acts and dialogues with her puppets, and usually pulls all the strings alone, brings unusual— and often comic—twists to traditional tales: in *Cinderella*, the wicked sister getting dressed for the ball appears as a Carmen Miranda look-alike with peachy round breasts, provocatively accentuated by Elina's experienced hands.

Further along, unable to find Cinderella, the bored Prince interviews potential wives from different parts of the world: a Japanese geisha with flowing pink gowns flies around him but scares him off with her huge black block shoes; the Persian belly dancer hypnotizes him but when the cobra on her head comes to life and stares him down, he runs away. The most successful candidate, however, is the local Russian beauty who entices him to dance to traditional folkloric tunes. He is almost won over until the bride-to-be does a 180 degree vertical flip and turns into a typical Russian balalaika-playing bear. ...

In *Sleeping Beauty*, Beauty's body itself is "assembled" through the gifts of the four fairies. Each offers a different body part: the bust, a body of beauty in which a lovely heart will beat; the head, this beautiful, bright head, intelligent and fair, with eyes like stars. In the same tale, the Princess's suitors are presented on a spinning table: the snotty Frenchman, the Botero-like greedy German, the blood-thirsty Knight and the Oriental Pasha in search of a gem for his harem are all turned down.

When I ask whether the work is meant for children or adults, Tania answers: "The essential for us is that the work be beautiful and it doesn't matter whether a child or an adult is looking. The texts require almost no translation and, thanks to the imagery and expressiveness of the performance, are understandable and interesting for both children and adults. It's puppet pantomime. For us, movement and bringing life to the puppets is essential. And then if the artist is good, the spectators will forget him/her."

In a more recent piece, *Faun's Dream*, the mastery and poetic finesse of the Puppet House's work is spell binding. Themselves "inside" the play, Elina and an assistant portray archaeologists who stumble upon an unexpected treasure: ancient puppets. Layer upon layer of them are gently coaxed back to life by a flute-playing faun: the enticing Balinese dancer



makes dangerous back-breaking moves on the edge of an amphora; the wrestlers fight with gigantic penises; the lyre-bodied melancholic poet unravels a long white shroud revealing a beautiful female figure made of wire.

In the finale of the play, which wallows in the romantic mood created by the musical score of famous St. Petersburg musician Rogalev, the archaeologists find the tomb of an actor with his favorite puppet. It comes to life, but the "human" is dead. Hesitating between freedom and remaining with the master, the puppet chooses eternity with its creator.

"Art will always live on," says Tania, "and that is the point."

Thanks to Elina's expert string-pulling and expressive hands, all of the figures have a life of their own that has the spectators entranced for the 60-minute shows. As Tania says, "The puppet is only alive when it moves."

After this year's Golden Mask Awards in Moscow in April, the Puppet House is considering touring the United States. Would anyone be able to help in the process?

### PUPPET HOUSE THEATER

Alexander Maximychev, director  
Elina Ageeva, actress  
Tatiana, Melnikova, set designer  
Vasily Ivanov, general manager

vassili@mail.wplus.net

—Samuel Wooten is a photographer living in San Francisco.



## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PUNCH

KONRAD FREDERICKS

I am a professional street Punch showman. I work mainly in Covent Garden and South Bank, London, and principal cities within a two hour drive of the city. I am not paid a fee for this work. I rely on a collection taken during the show by my bottler (collector) and outside man, Ian Carter. I also perform internationally at a wide variety of venues; under contract and busking. I am the only showman in Britain performing Punch on the street for a living, and one of the few professional traditional street puppeteers in the world.

The play consists of comic and tragic episodes; events that happen to Punch on the road. The play is not text-based. I perform in London to large crowds, many of

whom do not speak English, and often with a very high level of ambient sound. I do not use amplification. Punch speaks a secret language understood by all. He is able to pronounce almost any word and conduct a conversation. Punch is also a very good singer.

Each working day I give approximately six presentations, or three and a half, to four hours work. Performance times vary between fifteen and fifty minutes, depending on many factors. I pay my assistant thirty percent of the bottle after our expenses. The role of the outside man and bottler is crucial to the success of the show. He provides security and collects money. This is a very difficult job.

I first saw a Punch and Judy show as a child, on a beach in the South of England. My show grows from that experience. I tune my swazzle to the sound I remember from that day. It was a professional show and everyone was expected to pay. (This show was performed by Frank Edmonds.)

In 1969, I was able to buy a set of figures made by Fred Tickner. I still use them today. Throughout a lifetime in the professional theatre as a performer, technician and designer, I would perform Punch when there was no other theatre work, always at paid venues, usually children's parties, never in the street. This was easy work: Punch is very strong, and all English people know and love him. I developed a friendly family puppet show.

In 1994, I became a full-time street showman. I discovered that there is a fundamental difference between a paid children's birthday party and earning a day's wages (for two men) in the street. I have heard it said that "a Punch show is an excuse to ask people for money"—absolutely correct! London is a hard city, and people do not visit the city centre to give me money. I have to take it from them. A street show must have a hard edge and a dark side to succeed with a sophisticated crowd. I do not present a children's "Punch and Judy show." Why? Because children do not carry money!

London is the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Thirty-three million people pass through Covent Garden each year. I am, therefore, very experienced at engaging large audiences of all ages and nationalities. Over thousands of performances, under the harsh conditions of the street, I have been forced to develop communication techniques and "tricks" unique to this profession and of ancient origin. I have to create a drama that is universal, or, archetypal.

A very important element in achieving the "universal" is reflection (of the crowd). I have to step away from my "self"—no opinions, age, gender, no politics: Punch belongs to everyone. The old showmen referred to themselves as "Punch workers," not puppeteers. They referred to Punch as a doll, or figure, not a puppet and I believe this is correct. We work the Punch; the audience and Punch create the drama. Gradually, in this reflective process, archetypes develop subconsciously and it feels as if the show runs itself. Over a long period, one's brain becomes a store of seemingly limitless "business" and repartee, to be used over and over again, often at great speed, always in a new way and always with one aim: to give each individual a dramatic experience deep enough to justify asking them for money.

Aristotle said in his *Poetics* that for a tragedy to succeed, the emotions "pity and fear" are essential. This has been my direct experience. I would add that for a comic-tragedy, hunger and love also seem to be essential emotions for a successful street show. By successful I mean, of course, a show that makes money.

I would say that a Punch is authentic if it earns the showman a living wage, in the centre of the city, where the human soup is at its thickest and richest; clean money, most of it freely given, in exchange for a glimpse in the mirror.

As for the future—the House of Punch is very old. By comparison, the noblest of the noble barely hold their heads above the common crowd and that is why Punch will never die: he's too old.



## THE LAST SREET PUNCH IN LONDON?

BY ROLANDE DUPREY

Through all the reality shows, the celebrity tell-alls, the true-life stories with which our culture is beset, we still hunger for that which is *authentic*. Genuine folk and traditional art forms resonate in our own times by virtue of popular demand, cultural need, and a strong sense of this elusive authenticity.

Among the ancient forms of folk theatre, the Punch and Judy show still survives. Why is it still so popular? Why does *the form* still resonate as it did centuries ago? How has Punch survived? Perhaps part of the answer lies in the way it is presented.

## PUNCH PERFORMERS

have consistently revised the plays as a response to their times. Each performer, in remembering the shows of their predecessors, and adding their own spin, sends the play into the future by performing it for other would-be Punch men. It is a centuries old refining process. Old drawings and prints show Punch's puppet booth surrounded by people of all ages and classes. Presented at markets and town squares, or on feast days, when there were sure to be people about, this was a street show.

The play's character-driven scenarios, unique for each performer, have a form that allows a wide scope for interpretation and improvisation. Slapstick, wordplay, and interaction with the audience help give the plays their unique flavor. Most Punch and Judy shows retain this basic entertainment value. They owe their existence to the street entertainers of the past. A street show was the crucible that formed Punch. In order to survive, an entertainer proved and perfected his show over thousands of performances.

In Britain, Punch is most often remembered fondly as a summertime seaside entertainment: "There are probably no more than a dozen resorts left with a resident Punch show on the beach, promenade or pier," is the complaint registered on the website [punchandjudy.com](http://punchandjudy.com). In Henry Mayhew's interview of a Punch and Judy man in *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1851, he describes a performer who is one step above a beggar, working the crowds at fairs and on the street, and at the beach in summer. At that time, Punch performers made their living at beaches, markets, squares and fairgrounds all over the country. In this age of media entertainment, the living Punch and Judy "Professors" still ply their trade. They have refined their scenarios so as to be able to perform in schools. Venues such as shopping malls, libraries and sponsored special events will often hire a Punch and Judy show.

Inspired by Mayhew's interview, I sought out Konrad Fredericks, who performs the only street Punch in London (in Covent Garden and elsewhere). Covent Garden was the first documented place where the show was performed. A plaque commemorates the 1662 event, noted by diarist Samuel Pepys.

A unique feature of Konrad Fredericks's London show is that it is *not* subsidized by any organization. The money Mr. Fredericks earns comes directly from the audience. Since he and his bottler have been able to make their living entirely from the street show, he stands apart from other Punch and Judy performers.

Like other street entertainers, Mr. Fredericks tries his best not to limit the audience appeal. He has played in all kinds of weather, for all kinds of people. Assiduously watching the faces of the audience, he plays to the crowd, who pay the bottler during the show.

Most street entertainment, even in Covent Garden, is illegal. Police and city officials have simply tolerated them. Street entertainers claim their "pitch," sometimes amidst much conflict. At first, Mr. Fredericks received a permit to perform from the management of Covent Garden. But, one day, a patron complained that he was asking for money from the audiences! When he refused to stop, the management revoked his permit. He, in turn, moved his pitch to another spot in the square that was just outside the management's jurisdiction.

Until recently, the primary threat to this small arena has not been a legal one, but something far more insidious. Large, noisy, crowd-collecting rides were paying the rent for well-positioned spaces. Musical groups with amplified sound disturbed the show. Though his show is more action-oriented than text-based, the noise disrupted his audiences nonetheless. (Fredericks does not use any amplifier. His swazzling cuts through normal street sounds quite well.)

Another unfortunate repercussion of our modern culture is that the tradition of paying street entertainers is being lost. Perhaps people assume that someone else is sponsoring the performers. Or, they disbelieve the authenticity of the production. Patrons—particularly Americans—often come up to the bottler asking him, "How's it done?" Mr. Carter will confess (with a straight face) that it's all remote control—the dolls are operated by a little button in his pocket!

Covent Garden's unique street-fair ambiance, having roots in the ancient markets and fairgrounds, is also threatened by its own fame. So many tourists flock to the square that panhandlers and pickpockets have also targeted it. Shop owners on James Street complained that people couldn't make it inside their doors. This past December (2003), the police began to crack down on everybody, no matter who they were or what they did, including Punch. Mr. Fredericks went directly to the superintendent of police for the community and asked what could be done. "You've been swept up in the net," the superintendent conceded. Most recently, when Mr. Fredericks appealed to the officials at Covent Garden, he was told that they may be charging street entertainers twenty-five to thirty pounds a day to work their pitch.



So, though nowhere else is there quite such an affable and profitable pitch as Covent Garden, Mr. Fredericks has been on the look-out for other venues— something quieter, with good pedestrian traffic. On a day in April 2003, I accompanied him to South Bank. There, on the sidewalk in front of the Royal National Theatre, Mr. Fredericks set up his Punch and Judy booth. He did the show gratis both to "test the waters" and to allow me to document the event on videotape.

People recognized the booth and stopped, and decided to wait. As it was a warm, sunny day, there were a variety of different people coming by. There were young mothers with tots in strollers, a few tourists, students, and many working people taking their lunch by the river. The show began, and more and more people were attracted to it. Some slowed down from a fast walk to stop and laugh at Mr. Punch's antics. Some stopped, then sat on the pavement, fully engaged. Most were adults.

Mr. Fredericks knows London and its history well enough to understand the culture of the place and its changing populace. But, when the audience is assembled, they don't care about history or culture or the right color and shape of Punch's hat, or what type of hanging the executioner exhibits. (Fredericks bases his version of the hanging on those done before 1820.) After all, this is not a symposium on "The Authentic Punch of Eighteenth Century London." This is a show. It is entertaining. It works.

Both because of the difficulty of finding a good pitch (and lower revenues), Mr. Fredericks has taken his show abroad, performing in festivals throughout Europe and Asia. One doesn't need to understand English in order to enjoy the show. The visual, action-based routines have been tested over and over again. Each show is a new event, a response to a new audience. Because of this, he does not allow audience members to videotape the show. When someone turns on a video camera, Mr. Punch ducks and calls out to the bottler to stop the camera. Sometimes the crowd forces the cameraman to shut it off!

This arousal of the audience has led to many run-ins with police throughout the history of Punch. It is not that Punch incites violence, but some people have had intense reactions to the show. The most modern twist on this theme is that of parents wishing to protect children from the violence in the play. Many Punch and Judy men have therefore developed shows that censor or tone down the slapstick violence. The advantage of a street Punch is that the audience has a choice to watch it or not.

On this bright and sunny day in April, no mother denied their child the chance to see Punch and Judy. Indeed, one mother told me it was the best show they'd seen. On the balcony of the Royal National Theatre, people gathered and watched. But someone inside did not like the fact that a street Punch was upstaging the RNT, even though there was nothing going on inside. Someone sent a security guard to get Mr. Punch off the premises.

He came up shyly, almost apologetic, saying that his bosses did not want Punch and Judy performed on their property. Mr. Fredericks refused to fold his theatre until he could face his accusers, and answer their criticism. He went off with the guard while I stood watch over the booth.

Mr. Fredericks came back a few minutes later, with a grin as wide as Punch's. It seemed that the National was out of line asking him to move. In celebration, he did another show, knowing that this particular spot was safe, and perhaps a good location for the future.

While actors aspire to play Hamlet, few want to learn Punch. Most Punch and Judy "Professors" can make a good living from sponsored events, and don't need to do street work. Needing to answer to sponsors, though, somehow goes against the character of the anarchistic Punch, and his undeniably *authentic* soul.

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*My interview with Konrad Fredericks was videotaped, as was the day on South Bank. This documentation is in the possession of Mr. Fredericks as his sole property. It will not be released without his wishes. —RP*

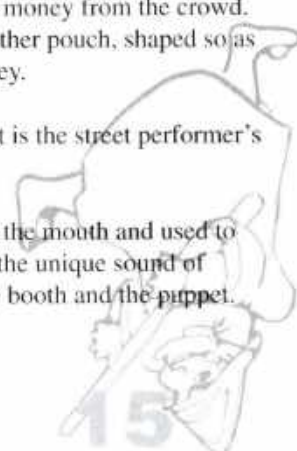
Glossary:

—A *bottler* is the person who collects the money from the crowd. Originally, he carried a bottle-shaped leather pouch, shaped so as to prevent thieves from stealing the money.

—A *pitch* refers to the part of the area that is the street performer's territory.

—The *swazze* is a small device placed in the mouth and used to change the voice. The British recognize the unique sound of Punch's voice as much as the look of the booth and the puppet.

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# WAYANG ARJA:

## *A story of Survival and Change*

BY I NYOMAN SEDANA, PH.D.



The story of *Wayang Arja* is emblematic of a very distinct artistic genre becoming moribund, only to be brought back from the brink through the efforts of a few interested practitioners. What makes this a good subject for study is that the entire cycle of birth to death to rebirth took only about 20 years.

*Wayang Arja* (essentially puppet opera) integrates the aesthetic elements of the *wayang* puppets and the *Arja* "opera"—a human dance-drama. *Wayang Arja* was first performed in 1976 in Gianyar Palace. The late mask-dancer and *dalang* Ketut Rindha originally proposed the creation of *Wayang Arja*, but the work was performed by his student, *dalang* Made Sidja.

The establishment of *Wayang Arja* Shadow Puppet in 1976 was cheerfully applauded by local community and government, especially the local Bali Puppetry Foundation and the Cultural Consultation and Development Council Fol-

lowing its surprising debut. *Wayang Arja* developed little, and was employed by few *dalangs*.

After a decade, the genre was in serious decline, and the Indonesian State College of Arts in Denpasar allowed seven students to learn *Wayang Arja* as an independent study. This was in 1987/88, and I was one of those students. After studying with the creator of *Wayang Arja*, *dalang* I Made Sidja, for about five months, we performed on campus before some faculty members, without a public audience. That was the first time *Wayang Arja* had been performed by a student *dalang*, namely, myself, accompanied musically by the six other students. Through a number of intensive rehearsals, I eventually mastered the artistic methods and began to feel confident in performing *Wayang Arja*, whether for a final project on campus, for a ceremonial show in a village temple, or for secular shows, such as the Bali Arts Festival and the 50<sup>th</sup> Indonesia Anniversary.

Through my research, which began in 1986, I discovered the artistic elements and performance methods which hindered the development of *Wayang Arja*. Here are a few of the primary causes of the form's decline:

—*Wayang Arja* uses stock characters: The characters are based on the genre of *Arja* instead of a play or narrative. Presenting the quintessence of a character type is more important than presenting the dramatic character him/herself. In other words, epitomizing a character of a prince (*mantri*) is more important than presenting a dramatic character of, for instance, Ferdinand or Hamlet. As a slow form of storytelling, *Wayang Arja* easily bored the contemporary audience, especially children.

—Singing the voices for all characters while manipulating puppets and cueing musicians for more than two hours is quite exhausting for a single *dalang*. Unlike performing *Wayang Parwa*, which

depends more on spoken dialogues and less on singing. *Wayang Arja* gives no time for the *dalang* to rest his voice.

—The dance drama form was more interesting than the puppet form. While the *Wayang Arja* simply features black silhouettes, the dance drama form features a great variety of interesting audio and visual imagery.

—Once the *tembang* is sung to convey a dialogue, say, between a prince and a princess, the *punakawan* (courtier) has to translate, interpret, and comment on each line in the appropriate context and linguistic social level while maintaining the distinctive manner of speech and diction of each character. The difficulty lies here: After providing a translation with a *punakawan* puppet, a *dalang* tends to forget the continuing melody of the next line.

After about a decade, *Wayang Arja* was not being performed, and the fans began to forget it. In 1986, the Government of Bali put the puppets in the Bali Museum, Denpasar. That seemed to be the death of the *Wayang Arja* show.

*Wayang Arja* integrates highly developed music, dance, and drama. Amazed by the rich artistic components which form the structure of *Wayang Arja*, I began to learn, and had ideas of how to modify it. In 1988, under the supervision of I Made Sidja and my academic advisors, I performed a revised 45-minute version of *Wayang Arja*.

The main difference in my short performance was to move *Wayang Arja* more toward the shadow puppet theatre than the *Arja* dance-drama form. Other important changes or revisions included compressing the artistic elements, carefully constructing a more stimulating

dramatic plot and, finally, creating a dozen decorative and animal puppets and reconfiguring some of them to be more expressive.

Although the duration of the *Wayang Arja* was reduced, the extent, depth, and source of the story remained the same, based on the Malat or Panji cycles.

In 1991, Nyoman Candri of Singapadu village began to perform *Wayang Arja*. As the third winner in the 1980 Women *Wayang Parwa* Competition, Candri is better known as a refined dancer and *Arja* dance-drama instructor through her affiliation with the National Radio Station in Denpasar. Therefore, she certainly was a great asset to *Wayang Arja*.

After carving the *Wayang Arja* puppets for Candri and having been inspired by her performance, the well known *dalang* I Wayan Wija also revived, modified, and performed *Wayang Arja*. He first performed this genre in August of 1994, at the Pura Desa village temple, enacting a story derived from Panji cycle.

After holding the 1995 *Wayang Cupak* Competition, the Bali Cultural Council held the 1996 *Wayang Arja* Competition (December 4 - 29). They then authorized each of the nine regions to establish a *Wayang Arja* company to compete in the all-Bali puppetry competition.

Thus, through an academic vision and mission to conserve and develop cultural arts, the local Art College found a way to revive the "dead" *Wayang Arja* shadow theatre.



For the sake of artistic innovation and experimentation, campus students were supported in their desire to shorten the show from more than three hours to only 45 minutes, a practice that would have been strongly frowned upon in a village. In cooperation with Bali TV, the winner of the competition now presents a quite different version of *Wayang Arja* Shadow Theatre in a weekly broadcast, often less than 20 minutes long, and using only two to five characters. On campus, however, the current students are still taught the original version of more than three hours, because each student first needs to master the rich, rigorous artistic concept and the fastidious methods which are integrated in this genre.

*The entire text of this article, including many variations of verbal humor employed, is available on our website:*  
[www.unima.usa.org/](http://www.unima.usa.org/)



## PULCINELLA & ORLANDO FURIOSO

*Two ancient Italian puppet theatres, once poised on the edge of extinction, are back and better than ever.*

**BY ANDREW PERIALE**

The rebirth of Pulcinella, puppet hero of Naples, is largely attributable to the efforts of Bruno Leone. In the late 1970s, Leone was working as an architect in Naples. In a decisive moment, he gave up a promising career to become a puppeteer in this ancient tradition.

At that time, the only living performer of Pulcinella (or Pullecenella in the local dialect) in Naples was Nunzio Zampella. Already an elderly man in 1978 when Leone first got to know him, Zampella had just retired, having contracted an illness which affected his vocal cords. He had recently given his final performance at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, and had dumped everything there—lock, stock and barrel.

This is the point at which Leone intervened: "When I met Nunzio—remember—he had nothing left. I reconstructed all the tools of his trade, above all so that he could begin again. After a while, in the face of my obstinacy, and my decision to revive the art form even without his help, he was finally convinced, I think, to act—primarily as my teacher. From 1979 until his death in 1986, we worked together as partners."\*

The partnership was a fruitful one. They put the hapless Pulcinella once more in the public eye, and began in particular to draw the attention of certain younger artists. New elements

were introduced—first by Leone, and then by others—in an effort to keep Pulcinella vital, and deeply meaningful to contemporary audiences.

"The constant in my work is that, in reality, all themes, even when they are tied to particular facts, events or customs, take on a universal character: war, revolution, love, treason are presented as archetypes, common and recurring themes in the exorcising ritual of the hand puppet show."

Anyone familiar with Punchinello, or Mr. Punch, would be struck by the many things he has in common with his Italian cousin. In fact, in his large extended family, Punch has many Italian cousins. Some of them are as old as Pulcinella. The clever servant, Fagiolino, for instance, is still thrilling audiences on the very capable hands of artists like Otello Sarzi and Teatro del Drago's Mauro Monticelli. Other cousins are quite young, creations of artists who felt the need for a hero who would speak in the local vernacular, like Walter Broggin's Pirù—a Lombardian through and through—or Tonino Murru's quintessentially Sardinian Areste Paganos.

Italy's Italians, an ever shrinking portion of the overall population there (the Italian birthrate, now the lowest in the world, is causing a population decrease, while at the same time the country is taking in huge numbers of immigrants—from North Africa, the Balkans and elsewhere), are still a tremendously diverse people. This should not be surprising, given that the numerous old regions and city states, with their own dialects and customs, were only united in the 1860s. These puppet characters, like Pulcinella and Pirù, are not only powerful symbols of regional pride, but are repositories of local culture and language. They help preserve a sense of place which is being eroded by such standardizing influences as mass media.





Another reason for a resurgence in the popularity of traditional puppet forms can clearly be seen by looking at the contemporary state of the Sicilian *Opera* (or, locally, "*Opra*") *dei Pupi*. This genre, which employs large rod marionettes (sometimes weighing over 100 pounds apiece), recounts the many adventures of Orlando Furioso (Mad Roland, one of Charlemagne's knights). There are hundreds of episodes, which were performed in serial form night after night in a number of Sicilian cities (Palermo, Catania, Caltagirone, Siracusa). Prior to World War II, Sicily was still a very traditional and isolated place. After the war, Sicilians began to see themselves as part of an international community, and many found things like the *Opera dei Pupi* to be an embarrassing reminder of their provincialism.

One of the most important of these theaters, in Palermo, nearly died out altogether. It is through the efforts of Mimmo Cuticchio, the son of a puppeteer, that the "*Opra*" there has come back from the brink of extinction.\*\* Cuticchio saw the very regional particularity of this genre as a strength, and time has proved him right. The audience has returned, although it has changed its character. No longer solely the province of the older men of the community, the theater is now popular with tourists, scholars, young people—all those who hunger for a taste of authentic Italian culture.

Cuticchio's success has certainly helped the popularity of some of Sicily's other puppet theaters, and the *pupari* (puppeteers) have formed an organization to aid in the development of their art form. In 2001, the *Opera dei Pupi* was one of 19 institutions worldwide to be identified by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.



Cuticchio has retained the form's traditions, though there have been a few adjustments to modernity (the battles with the Saracens, in which heads were severed by the invariably triumphant Christian army, is no longer performed). In Leone's plays, Pulcinella has also retained his traditional form, yet there are often contemporary themes and plot elements. Pulcinella has taken on the G8, military campaigns, Silvio Berlusconi, and has even plumbed the mysteries of love. Where his mentor, Zampella, was resigned to Pulcinella's demise, Leone is helping to secure Pulcinella's future. Not only has his work influenced other artists to take up Pulcinella, he has started a training institute, whereby aspirants can learn the secrets of the art. Last summer, at a puppet festival in the small northern Italian town of Grugliasco (and there are many such festivals all over Italy), I saw a Pulcinella performance by Gianluca di Matteo—one of Leone's students. If that was any indication, then Pulcinella will be around for awhile.

\*Bruno Leone quotes, as well as the story of his relationship with Nunzio Zampella, were gleaned from an article by Renato Rizzardi. Other details are from conversations with a number of

Italian puppeteers—Tonino Murru, Walter Broggin, and Damiano Giambelli, among others.

\*\*Information about Mimmo Cuticchio comes from similar conversations, an article by Maurizio Scaparro (*I Pupi Siciliani*, "Patrimonio Immateriale dell'Umanità"), and other articles and reviews.

See also "La Compagnia dei Pupari Vaccaro-Mauceri," PI #13.

## PAVAKATHAKALI

*The glove puppet theatre of Kerala—struggling for survival*

BY NIRMALA KAPILA VENU

Pavakathakali, the glove puppet play, came into vogue in Kerala several centuries ago through the influence of the famous classical dance-theatre form, Kathakali. By taking inspiration from the techniques of Kathakali and re-modelling the puppets based on the various characters in Kathakali plays, the already existing glove puppet theatre of Kerala developed into "Pavakathakali." ("Pava" means puppet.)

From the very beginning, Pavakathakali was meant chiefly for the benefit and amusement of the young. Puppeteers went from house to house or performed at public festivals and the spectators were mainly children. The main purpose of such performances was to make the children familiar with the stories and characters from the two great Indian epics— Ramayana and Mahabharata— and also to instill in them important morals and values. It also made the children better acquainted with Kathakali and helped to develop an interest in and capacity to appreciate the arts.

No specially built platform or stage was used, since it was mainly performed in the courtyards of private homes. The main musical accompaniments are the same as those used in Kathakali, such as the Chenda, Chengila, Edakka, Iathalam, Sankhu, etc.

Reviving Pavakathakali was not a simple procedure. In 1981, when we began to revive this dying artform at Natanakairali, only three puppeteers were still surviving. They had in their possession a few worn out puppets, but they were not really professionals of the first order. They were not capable of performing even one story in full, and did not know how to make new puppets either.

After conducting a detailed study on the available information and collecting as many old puppets as possible from Parithipully— the native village of the puppeteers— six villagers were selected and trained intensively for two years. This training included puppet manipulation, Puppet making



A puppet of Duryodhana  
from the play, *Duryodhanavadham*

and music. At the end of these two years, the play *Kalyanasaugandhikam* was revived in full form. This was just a beginning, however. This group has continued working together and several old plays have been revived. In addition, new plays have been introduced into their repertoire.

The present condition of the art and artists, though, is rather pitiable. Income from performances is so low that puppeteers are forced to seek other means for livelihood. There is also an urgent need to train a new generation of artists to carry on the tradition. A younger generation will be enthusiastic to carry on this precious tradition only if they are assured of a financially secure future.

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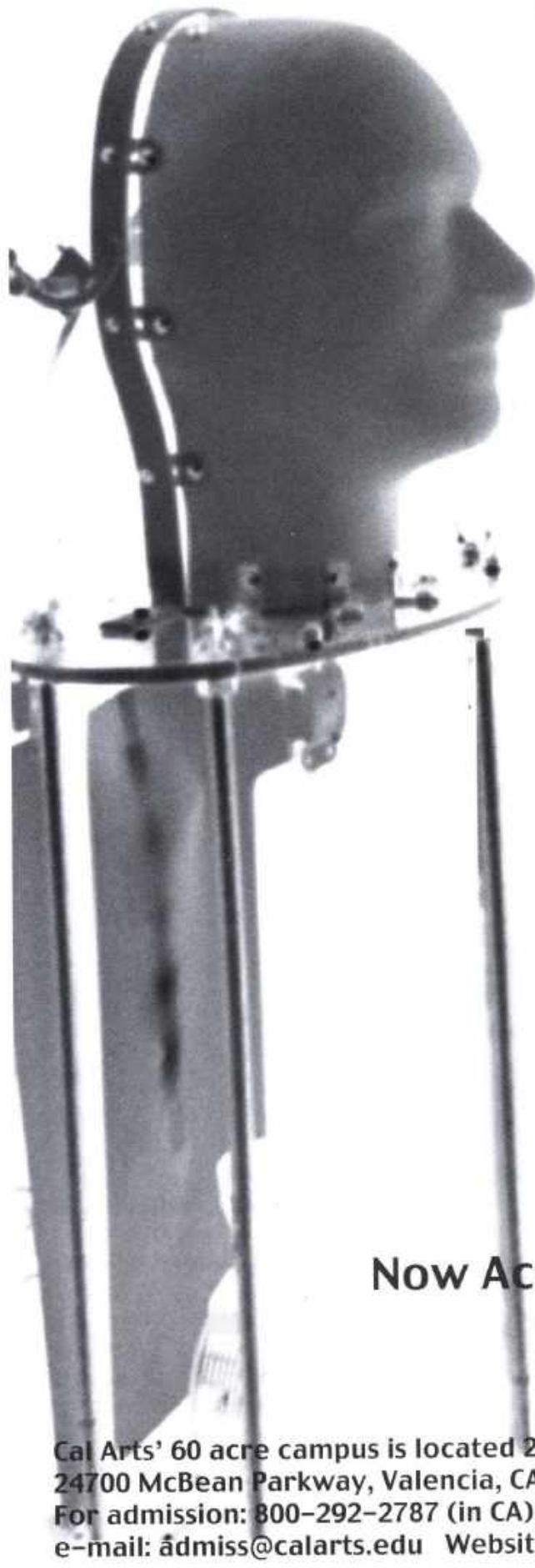
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# NINGYO JORURI BUNRAKU

*A Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*

BY NANCY LOHMANN STAUB

UNESCO named Ningyo Joruri Bunraku a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. Ningyo Joruri Bunraku is one of the most refined performing art forms in the world. It is a unique puppetry tradition of Japan consisting of three elements: ningyo (puppet), joruri (narration), and musical accompaniment on the shamisen (a three-stringed instrument played with a plectrum). The three-person puppets, manipulated in view of the audience, enact the text vocalized by the tayu (narrator). The music adds essential emotional and rhythmic dimensions. In 1872, a ningyo joruri theatre took the name Bunraku-za from its manager, Uemura Bunrakuken IV (1812-87). Since the early 20th century, the style of puppet performance originally associated with Bunrakuken has been referred to simply as Bunraku.

Bunraku maintains the highest standards of aesthetics. One of the greatest playwrights in the world, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), wrote masterpieces for ningyo joruri, which are still popular today. A contemporary of his, the tayu Takemoto Gidayu (1651-1714), developed his own unique style of chanting, later known as gidayu bushi. The puppet manipulators achieve incredibly exquisite movements with the large, beautifully designed three-person puppets, which were invented in the mid-18th century. The visibility of the performers produces a creative collaboration between them and their audiences. The tension of the codified but improvisational interplay between the manipulators, narrators, and musicians, all in service to the poetic texts, projects emotions so powerfully that performances can move audiences to tears.



Yoshida Minotaro, who, in April 2003, assumed a new stage name Kiritake Kanjuro, which once belonged to his father.

Ningyo Joruri Bunraku vividly preserves some of the cultural heritage of Japan to the delight of audiences around the world. It provides important research information, especially on life in the Edo Period (1603-1868). It inspires amateur and professional artists in Japan and in many other countries. Bunraku deserves and enjoys international recognition for its unique aesthetics and cultural contributions.



Puppetry in Japan goes back at least as far as the 8th century to wandering players from the Chinese continent. From the 15th century, puppeteers manipulated hand-held puppets in full view to illustrate the stories of Princess Joruri and other tales. They were originally sung without puppets by itinerant blind balladeers accompanying themselves on the biwa (lute). The biwa was replaced by the shamisen, which became popular after it was introduced from Okinawa in the 16th century. In the 17th century, this form of storytelling with puppets and shamisen accompaniment became known as ningyo joruri. In 1684, the great tayu Takemoto Gidayu founded Takemoto-za, a permanent theatre in Osaka for ningyo joruri performances. He collaborated with master puppeteer Tatsumatsu Hachirobei (d.1734).

Ningyo joruri developed in the designated pleasure quarters side by side with Kabuki. They became rivals for the commercial audiences of the 18th century with the puppets sometimes enjoying greater popularity than the actors. In 1703, Chikamatsu wrote *Sonezaki Shinju* (The Love Suicide at Sonezaki) based on actual incidents and contemporary town life. Some scholars suggest Chikamatsu ceased writing for the Kabuki stage to write exclusively for the puppet theatre after the 1703 success, because the narrators were more faithful to the texts than Kabuki actors were. As a puppeteer, I prefer that to the theory that Chikamatsu left Kabuki after Sakata Tojuro passed away, and he did not see a worthy successor to Tojuro in the grand Kabuki. In any case, Chikamatsu continued to write for puppets. Ironically, the Kabuki actors adapted some of the puppet plays to benefit from their popularity. Narrators with shamisen accompaniment perform the poetic narrative parts of these Kabuki plays as in the puppet performances. Competition from a new puppet theatre, Toyotake-za, founded in 1703 by an apprentice of Gidayu, Toyotake Wakatayu, led to a period of popularity, productivity and technical development of ningyo joruri.

Historical records of 1734 credit Chikamatsu Kuhachiro for inventing a puppet manipulated by three persons. However, it is probably not until towards the end of the 19th century that the technique of three-man-manipulation known as sannin-zukai became a common practice. Some scholars theorize that three manipulators distracted the audiences from the puppets, so at some point, puppeteers began to wear hoods. The head operator now generally appears unhooded, as in the 16th century storytelling with puppets from which Bunraku developed. Moving eyeballs, eyebrows, mouths, and fingers were developed over time, but used sparingly for emphasis. Elaborate scenery with elevators, trap doors, and revolving stages were invented and adopted by the competition, the Kabuki actors' theatres. By 1767, both puppet theatres, Takemoto-za and Toyotake-za, closed, perhaps partly from the expense of the elaborate scenery.

In 1805, Uemura Bunrakuken I came from the island of Awaji and founded a ningyo joruri theatre in Osaka. During much of the 19th century, through three generations of Bunrakuken's descendants, the theatre relocated to various quarters in the city of Osaka. In 1872, Bunrakuken IV opened a new theatre in the Matsushima District (western outskirts of Osaka city) and named it Bunraku-za (literally, Bunraku Theatre). The rivalry between the performers who regularly appeared at Bunraku-za and those who performed at other theatres such as Hikoroku-za spurred vitality in this genre of performance.

After the influx of Western culture and with the introduction of motion picture films to Japan in 1896, interest in Bunraku and other traditional performing arts traditions waned. In 1909, Shochiku, the giant entertainment production company, bought the rights to Bunraku-za from the Uemura family. Through the difficult times of the world wars and the post-World War II era, Shochiku continued to produce the performances at Bunraku-za. In the meantime, the performers split into two groups, one supporting the traditional system of management and the other supporting the principles of a labor union. In 1950, the Japanese government enacted the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties to preserve, disseminate, and transmit designated art forms. I suggest that the devastation of World War II served as a catalyst for support of national cultural identity. The government took progressive steps to support the revitalization of traditional performing arts, including Bunraku. It was designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property, and the two groups of performers split over the management systems were recognized collectively as the keepers of the tradition. Today, six performers are individually recognized as Important Cultural Assets, or so-called Living National Treasures.

Despite those efforts, the interest and support from the contemporary audience was not sufficient to maintain Bunraku as a viable commercial venture. In 1963, Shochiku relinquished the management of Bunraku to a non-profit foundation called Bunraku Kyokai, established by the collaboration of the national, prefectural and municipal governments.

The government opened the National Theatre in Tokyo in 1966, including a specially designed space for Bunraku. A government subsidized training program for the art of Bunraku began in 1972. In April 1984, the government established the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka to present and preserve the tradition of Bunraku. The full-time professional members of the Bunraku Kyokai perform all year around. The total of six months are dedicated to the regular billing at the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka; four months to the regular billing at the National Theatre in Tokyo; the rest of the two months to nationwide tours sponsored by public entities such as the Ministry of Education. International tours earn

appreciation and recognition abroad and at home. The government sponsors video recordings of live performances for the National Theatre Archives and for broadcast.

To reach new audiences, Bunraku artists have made several experiments. They produced Western opera and Shakespeare. They created a special show for children. They collaborated with modern Japanese artists including Butoh dancers and rock musicians. Rock singer Uzaki Ryudo recently revived his "rock-cum-Bunraku" version of *Sonezaki Shinju* in Tokyo with puppeteers Kiritake Monju and Yoshida Bungo twenty-two years after its premiere. They appear as guests on television programs. They sometimes appear in feature films. Most recently, modern filmmaker, Kitano Takeshi, rendered homage to Bunraku in his 2002 film *Dolls*, inspired by the Chikamatsu text *Meido no Hiyaku* (Courier of Hell.) He included a scene from a traditional Bunraku performance of the play. Bunraku artists are reaching out to the contemporary audience without abandoning their traditional art.

Today, there is only one professional traditional ningyo joruri troupe other than Bunraku. Awaji ningyo shares similar repertoire with Bunraku, but the puppets are slightly larger than those used in Bunraku. The Awaji troupe employs female performers whereas Bunraku keeps to its tradition of an all-male troupe. Bunraku puppeteers have taught and set examples for many amateur troupes. According to Nagata Kokichi, there were 120 amateur three-person puppet traditions recorded, of which 61 were still extant in the 1960s. (Ueno-Herr: *Puppets in Japanese Territory*, page 23) These amateurs presumably help popularize Bunraku.

There are some other Japanese puppetry traditions inspired by Bunraku. For economic reasons, Yamagishi Ryukichi (1825-1897) developed a way to manipulate Bunraku dolls by one person who sits on a rolling stool with the feet of the puppet attached to the manipulator's feet. (Ueno-Herr: *ibid.*, page 22) Known as kuruma ningyo (wheels puppet), this tradition continues to this day and has been designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset. Another tradition inspired by Bunraku is otome (young lady) bunraku, in which a Bunraku-style doll is attached to one performer, head to head, and feet or kimono to legs. A supporting pole is fixed to the puppeteer with a metal band around her waist. This tradition started in Osaka over 80 years ago. Hitome-za of Kawasaki City has revived this form with a teacher from the tradition. The kuruma ningyo and otome bunraku troupes perform nationally and internationally. Bunraku has also inspired modern Japanese puppet companies and artists. La Clarté puppet

troupe of Osaka produced a Bunraku influenced version of Chikamatsu's puppet play *Kokusenya Kassen* (Battles at Coxinga) in the 1980s. Tsujimura Jusaburo makes exquisite prize-winning dolls, which bear some similarity to Bunraku puppets, and incorporates puppetry in his theatre work. Hori Hiroshi dances with dolls that he modeled after Bunraku puppets. Okamoto Hoichi, known as Dondoro, creates haunting solo shows that draw on elements of Noh and Bunraku.

Bunraku is one of the best-known and most refined forms of performing arts in the world. Few puppet traditions have reached its height of internationally recognized artistic quality. The visibility of the masterful manipulators makes the illusion of life aesthetically unique and creatively satisfying as collaboration between the artists and the spectators. Bunraku is a living preserve of cultural heritage. Developed in Japan of the 17th and 18th centuries, it continues to enthrall and inspire audiences and artists all over the world. It crosses cultural boundaries while remaining true to itself.

Thanks to the dedicated artists and staff of Bunraku and government support, the immediate future of Bunraku seems assured.

©2004, Staub. Nancy Lohmann Staub is a frequent contributor to PI. She is a director, and is also a Member of Honor, UNIMA-USA.

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### **The Carolina Plays**

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# PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING CULTURES

BY LESLEE ASCH

This past year, 2003, I curated two exhibitions. For the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center, I curated the exhibition "Puppetry of Shadow and Light." Soon after the close of the Lincoln Center exhibition, I installed the exhibition "Shadows and Strings: Puppetry Around the Globe" at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT. Both these endeavors helped to expand my understanding (and appreciation) of puppetry's importance as a means of cultural transmission.

My collaborators on "Puppetry of Shadow and Light" were Stephen Kaplin and Barbara Cohen-Stratynier. The starting point of the exhibition was the passing along of the extraordinary Pauline Benton collection to Chinese Theatre Works. Ralph Lee (Mettawee River Company) was actually responsible for initiating this idea, and I was delighted to be part of the team that explored it. The exhibition focused on the intertwining histories and beauty of the shadow form, and was divided between traditional and contemporary forms. It was, I believe, the most comprehensive exhibition on the form, to date.

What emerged, in the end, were two themes: puppetry's role in the preservation of cultural traditions; and the ways in which subtle differences in the traditional text and characters of a region can reflect national and religious distinctions. With regard to the preservation of culture, two stood out—the Chinese figures of Pauline Benton and the Cambodian figures built in a wartime refugee camp.

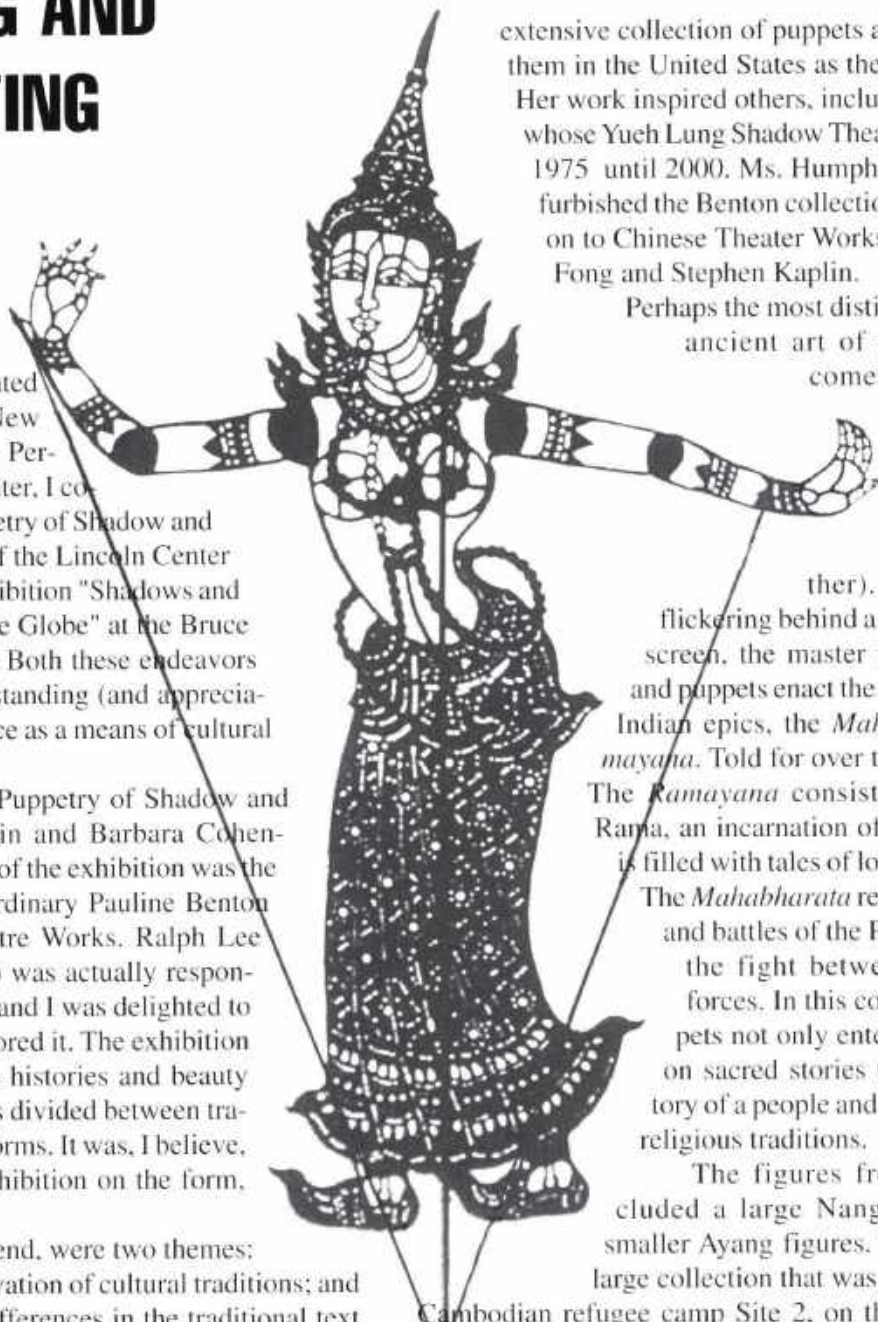
In 1923, Pauline Benton saw a shadow puppetry exhibit at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, which inspired her study of the shadow theater. During her father's tenure as president of the University of the Philippines, Ms. Benton frequently visited her aunt, who was a schoolteacher in Beijing. Ms. Benton studied with a shadow master in the Luanzhou region of China. She amassed an

extensive collection of puppets and performed with them in the United States as the Red Gate Players. Her work inspired others, including Jo Humphrey, whose Yueh Lung Shadow Theater performed from 1975 until 2000. Ms. Humphrey rescued and refurbished the Benton collection, and passed them on to Chinese Theater Works, led by Kuang-Yu Fong and Stephen Kaplin.

Perhaps the most distinctive image of the ancient art of shadow puppetry comes from the night-long performances of the Indonesian wayang kulit (literally shadows of leather).

With a gas lamp flickering behind a translucent shadow screen, the master puppeteer (dalang) and puppets enact the timeless tales of the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Told for over two thousand years, The *Ramayana* consists of stories about Rama, an incarnation of the god Vishnu. It is filled with tales of love, honor, and duty. The *Mahabharata* relates the adventures and battles of the Pandawa brothers in the fight between good and evil forces. In this context, shadow puppets not only entertain, but also pass on sacred stories that define the history of a people and express secular and religious traditions.

The figures from Cambodia included a large Nang Sbek figure and smaller Ayang figures. These are part of a large collection that was built in 1989 in the Cambodian refugee camp Site 2, on the Thai/Cambodian border. The figures, the only set of its kind in the United States, were based on the memory of the Venerable Pin Sem, head monk of the Prasat Serei Temple. This 15-year effort to revive and archive the art form, initiated and directed by the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, is part of an ongoing project within U.S./Cambodian communities in Massachusetts. The center's director, Richard Mollica, worked with Svang Tor and Marguerita Reczycki to help these refugees reconnect with an important aspect of their heritage. On my trip to Cambridge, I was able to select a grouping of figures that would depict one of many stories drawn from the *Reamker*, the Cambodian version of the *Ramayana*. The scene portrayed the story of the "Theft of Neang Seda" (Sita).



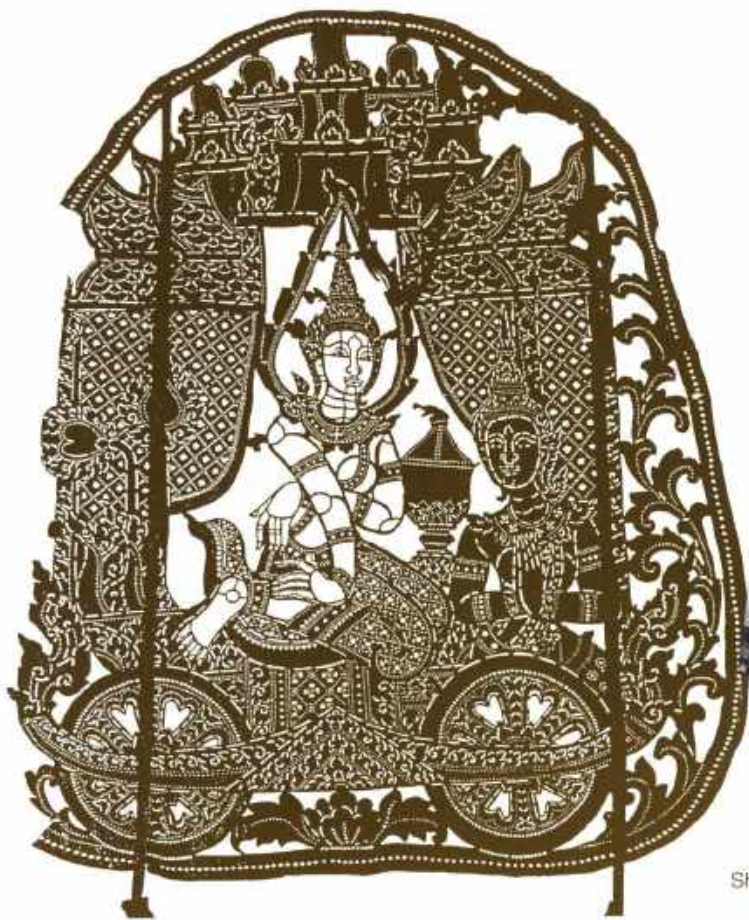


photo: B Periale

Classical Cambodian Dancers Chan Moly Sam and Somaly Hay in a scene from *Reamker*.

Shadow puppet depicts the same characters.

In "Shadows and Strings: Puppetry Around the Globe" at the Bruce Museum, the goal was to go even further in the exploration of national and religious differences as reflected in the texts and images of the puppet theater, and to focus on the role of puppet theater as a means of telling the great epics, thereby transmitting cultural values and knowledge. The key findings on the shadow figures from the previous exhibition were included, but as I was now able to include all puppet styles, I began with Pre-Columbian articulated clay figures, a Native American reveal mask, and masks and puppets of Mali and Nigeria. The selection of Asian figures was expanded to include marionettes of Myanmar (Burma), Vietnamese water puppets, Japanese bunraku figures, Chinese hand puppets, Indonesian rod puppets and Indian marionettes.

In the process, I began to understand the interconnections of national character, religious beliefs, and the puppet theater. The classic Indian Hindu texts not only migrated throughout Asia, but they were made new and relevant to each culture. The forms of the puppets and characters from the Indian epics took on regional names and characteristics as they migrated. In Java, the Islamic restriction against portraying human forms has led to a very stylized form of figure, while in Hindu Bali, the

human form can be more realistically portrayed. Similarly, the Wayang Golek (rod puppet) tradition is not as ancient as the shadow tradition. It is thought to have been invented by a Muslim Javanese ruler during the late 16th century, and tells stories of an Islamic hero, Amir Hamzah. In the 5th century A.D., Buddhism was introduced to Burma by Indian missionaries. In 1767, Burma conquered Siam (Thailand) and brought the entire Siamese court back to the Burmese capital. It appears that puppetry began in Burma during the "Age of Triumph" (1752-1819) with Siamese influences, and it is likely that the puppet theater predates live theater there. Puppet plays were drawn largely from the *Jatakas*, moral tales relating the past lives of Buddha. When the British annexed Burma in 1886, many of the old traditions began to die out. By 1929, there were only two troupes left in Burma, though in recent years, the tradition has seen something of a revival. The themes of cultural transmission and preservation were further supported by examples of the puppetry of Vietnam, Europe and Mexico.

A great deal of my time now is devoted to creating connections between the arts and public policy, so it was exciting to have the opportunity to explore, through these exhibitions, puppetry's historical and cultural significance.



# PUPPETS APPEAR, DISAPPEAR



## RE-APPEAR

BY JOHN BELL

A discussion with Ravi Gopalan Nair, a producer and puppeteer from Kerala, India, came to mind when the subject of this issue of *Puppetry International* emerged. Ravi had described to me in the year 2000 how some contemporary shadow puppet performances of the Ramayana by South Indian puppeteers might be seen only by the god Rama himself, because the traditional village audience for the show might be far more interested in the modern shadow-screen delights of television. While I first understood this situation as yet another shocking example of how traditional (and to me, exotically "non-Western") forms of performance were being displaced by electronic mass media (the proverbial villain of such developments, which I of course associate with the West), Ravi had a much more sanguine point of view about the situation; he was somewhat amused and perhaps unconcerned about this puppet show only for a god. Although we didn't pursue the subject (we were no doubt preparing for a Bread and Puppet performance at the Seven Basic Needs Pavilion of Expo 2000 in Hannover, Germany), my sense of it now is that, to Ravi, the South Indian shadow puppeteer's devotion to his art as a ritual offering to Rama outweighed the pesky problem posed by the lack of an audience. Maybe the point is, if puppeteers persist in thinking that there's something important about their live puppet shows, the work will continue, and (eventually?) find an audience.

Figures from the collection of the Musée National des Arts  
et Traditions Populaires, Paris, France,

A San Francisco Airports Commission Exhibition, 1996

Ever since Romantic poets and 19th century anthropologists started to note the persistence of traditional puppet forms throughout the world, there has been a concomitant worry that the old forms are in constant danger of being supplanted by new (and especially technological) ones— a worry which has more or less been realized. As Henryk Jurkowski's *History of European Puppetry* and John McCormick and Bennie Pratasik's *Popular Puppet Theatre in Europe, 1800–1914* both show, a very rich culture of puppet theater (for example, the dozens of Tchanches marionette theaters in 19th century Liège, or the Petrushka tradition) suffered serious decline over the course of the 19th century, as new urban entertainments defined puppet theater in a new context: as an old-fashioned and definitely un-modern (pagan, primitive, low-culture, religious, political, carnivalesque) form. In some countries (India and Japan for example) there have been concerted efforts to support traditional puppet theater forms at government expense, in recognition of their importance as cultural heritage. Various puppet schools and academies tend to teach older forms while often encouraging new innovations.

New technological media make their own connections to the old methods and purposes of puppetry. A *New York Times* story of 16 February 2004 ("An Insolent Puppet Roils Canadian Politics") explains how Robert Smigel's "Triumph the Insult Comic Dog"— a handpuppet appearing on the NBC television show *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*— touched the third rail of Canadian politics "by, among other things, telling the Québécois they ought to learn English, since they live in North America." (Let us note that the name of the puppeteer, who is surely the most important figure in this news event, does not appear until paragraph thirteen of the *Times's* story.) It is as if Smigel's dog puppet (despite the willful insensitivity which characterizes its supposedly ultra-hip humor) somehow reincarnated the insouciance and anarchist rebellion of Punch and Ubu Roi, especially those two characters' maddening refusal to keep their insults within bounds.

But whether or not Smigel's puppet insults offended all of Quebec, I wonder if Smigel might be aware of his fellow puppeteers who are part of Quebec's lively puppet theater scene. For example, *Le Petit Théâtre de l'Absolu*, a Montreal-based puppet theater whose founders, Hermine Ortega and Gabriel Levine, have been re-inventing toy theater shows

as a means of performing politicized history plays about the Paris Commune and Baron Haussmann's radical urban renewal of Paris.

In 2003, *Le Petit Théâtre de l'Absolu* took some of their toy theater shows on an absurdly improbable, sometimes dangerous, and almost impossible tour of Palestine and Israel. Ortega and Levine chronicled their experiences there, and Levine's were transmitted on the internet to hundreds of interested readers. I think there are at least two things interesting about this situation. First, that the *Petit Théâtre de l'Absolu* decided to focus precisely on making live performances of a puppet show which could be seen, at most, by only eighty people at a time; in other words, they eschewed mass media and, in so doing, connected to the older form of puppetry as live performance for a small audience. Secondly, that Ortega and Levine then deftly used a different form of mass media—the internet—to explain what they were doing to a much larger audience of readers. These two choices successfully combined 19th century puppet technology with cyber literature.

While not wanting to sound foolishly optimistic about the problems of endangered puppet species and puppeteers— which have been with us for over a century— it does strike me that new forms of live puppet theater seem to sprout up all the time, and this must be a good thing. Just after the end of World War Two, dramatist and critic Eric Bentley went on a tour of Western Europe to see what remained of theater in the war-torn countries. In Southern Italy, as he writes in his book, *In Search of Theater*, he saw performances of Sicilian marionettes, part of a tradition which, for Bentley, was barely a thing of the present— "an echo from the past"— and yet Sicilian puppet theater, which Bentley saw fifty years ago as headed for extinction, still somehow persists.

# DRAGON DANCE THEATRE'S SEVEN ANGRY MEN

*Montpellier, France*  
*October 31, 2003*

BY JEROME LIPANI

In Dragon Dance Theatre's *Seven Angry Men*, three generations of Rockefellers—incarnate in one Frenchman—strut the stage in pajamas, slippers and a cane. We follow this Rockefeller as he gleefully despoils the environment while decimating his enemies until—quite literally—all hell breaks loose. The work was created and first performed as part of a community theatre festival near Queretaro, Mexico in April, 2003, and then further developed in the Dragon Dance summer season in Middlesex, Vermont. Now reworked for its third production in Montpellier, France, it is being played in an arboretum under the natural canopy of ancient trees.

The production has changed significantly since its premier. It is sharper, clearer, and more poignant now. At this moment in the play's rather unusual process of development, Dragon Dance Theatre has seized opportunities for alchemy of time, place, human personalities—even the weather—while sustaining a unifying theme. Dramatic elements encounter one another like distant stars colliding, and the official versions of historic events are blown to smithereens.

*Seven Angry Men* begins with a thumbnail history of the exploitation of oil in America. Rockefeller's monologue (played by Michel Faucherre, also the show's producer) begins with a description of how, initially, he drove the small-time businessmen who discovered oil in 19th century Pennsylvania out of business. He goes on to say that his biggest problem as a businessman was to convince the consumer to pay for this natural resource, because it



was like water or air; "It's everywhere—it bubbles up out of the ground. Oil is a natural resource—a national resource—but we used the law and the government. I had those senators in my pocket. We forced the public to buy their own oil! Brilliant, isn't it!?"

In the historical rivalry between capitalism and communism, the anti-communist propaganda used by Rockefeller and his cronies, as depicted in *Seven Angry Men*, goes something like this: "These communists were proposing to socialize the natural wealth. They said the natural resources of a country belonged to its people. Ridiculous! My idea was to socialize the risk and privatize the profit: that is, put the profit in my pocket." Subsequent scenes detail the purposeful ruination of public transportation, the cozy relationship between American business and the Nazis, and the relationship of Rockefeller and the Military (depicted as a rollicking sado-masochistic spank-fest). Certainly, documentation exists which would support all these depictions (for the spirit of the latter, try Hannah Arendt on the Nuremberg Trials or the work of Jean Genet). It is amazing how little time it takes

Dragon Dance to recreate in miniature the essential elements which have so much influence over our lives. If only it were as simple to liberate ourselves from the muck in which we are mired!

Finally, the scene shifts to Rockefeller's imagined death— a version of the classic St. Peter scene, in which the soul of Rockefeller is interrogated at Heaven's Gate: "Are you the Rockefeller who financed the eugenics studies? Who made personal profit on the God-given natural resources of the American public? Who destroyed the Diego Rivera mural because it contained a portrait of Lenin?" St. Peter sends him to Hell, and the public must follow him on his voyage! The significance of this is left up to audience members to decide. Does it indicate a certain complicity? After all, we passively and without protest consume endless amounts of fossil fuel. By candlelight, the audience and actors walk together through the Gate of Hell. In the French production, the gates of Heaven and Hell have been made out of locally-found bamboo. Masks (the images of the seven angry men of the play's title) made from natural items gathered on expeditions by the actors— bark from trees, wild grasses— are hung on the wall of the two gates. Devils enter to toy with Rockefeller while he is being interrogated. Eventually, they escort him through the Gate to the Underworld.

In the dark, the audience is led to the base of a great tree, where they hear a poem called "Homage to Babylon," written by Katah, a Dragon Dance principal. This poem is an elegy for the loss of the artifacts and knowledge of an important and ancient civilization as a result of the recent American invasion of Iraq. In Montpellier, it was



performed in English and French by Sam Kerson and Didier Jean, and at its conclusion, they embraced.

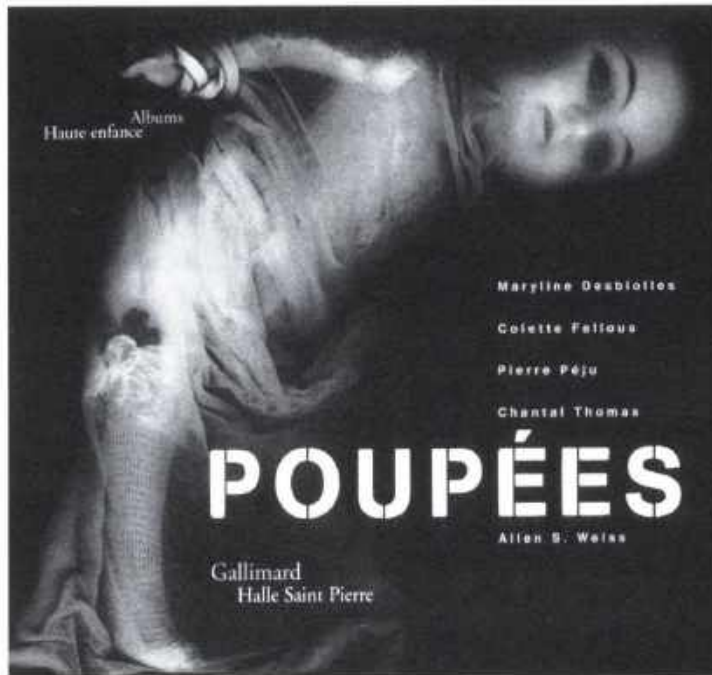
The next scene features a Lucifer played by two actors— one plays the head, the other the body. The premise of this scene— which embodies the tragic message of *Seven Angry Men*— is that the devil will show the public "the president's trick, a fantastic magic trick, straight from Baghdad, in which seven angry men will kill each other in mid-air without having any ill effects on the citizens below." Lucifer calls them from their nether worlds one by one, like contestants in a daytime TV game show, asking each if he is armed and ready to go to his battle station. The other actors— representing the Voices of Industry, the Military, the American Media Monopoly— perform various texts in the background simultaneously. The din is composed of little understood but vitally important pieces of information from actual military texts— the specs for such weapons as tomahawk missiles, the American bombing of the central market in Baghdad and, later, a collage of George Bush's State of the Union speech and Israeli televised coverage of the bombing of Saddam Hussein's compound— all to a tango accompaniment (music: Daniel Roth and others) and devil dances (choreography: Kirsten Eckstein).

Finally, an innocent person is sought, and an Iraqi mother and her child are found. She is initially enticed with the promise of an American refrigerator. The matter-of-factness of this blatant colonialist insult is underscored when it becomes understood that this ordinary woman is actually an incarnation of the ancient Sumerian goddess Inanna, the mother of the world. In the apocalyptic moment that follows, in which fireworks represent a major battle, the masks of the seven angry men ignite, in turn setting the goddess ablaze. The event is a distillation of the horrors of war. In this European setting, the wall of fire which enveloped the innocent woman— her child in her arms— reminded one of Dresden, of Guernica.

By way of postscript, the devil reappears and apologizes to the audience, assuring them that the woman and her child were merely collateral damage, and that he will try the president's trick again in another country, like Syria or Iran, or "even a little country near you." One more round of fireworks goes off in the distance— a bad omen, certainly. Once again it is the powerful imagery created by Dragon Dance Theatre which has given us a fresh look at some of the ethical and moral dilemmas which flow through our history like oil, like blood. #

# SHORT NOTICES ON NEW PUPPET BOOKS

BY JOHN BELL



Here are short reviews of a number of new (and new to this book editor) books on puppet theater and related forms.

## 1) PUPPETS IN THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES

Dorlis Grubidge, *Sue Hastings: Puppet Showwoman*. North Vancouver: Charlemagne Press, 1993. 240 pages.

Nina Efimova, *Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theatre*. North Vancouver: Charlemagne Press, 2003.

Bonnie Nelson Schwartz and the Educational Film Center, *Voices from the Federal Theatre*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. 218 pages.

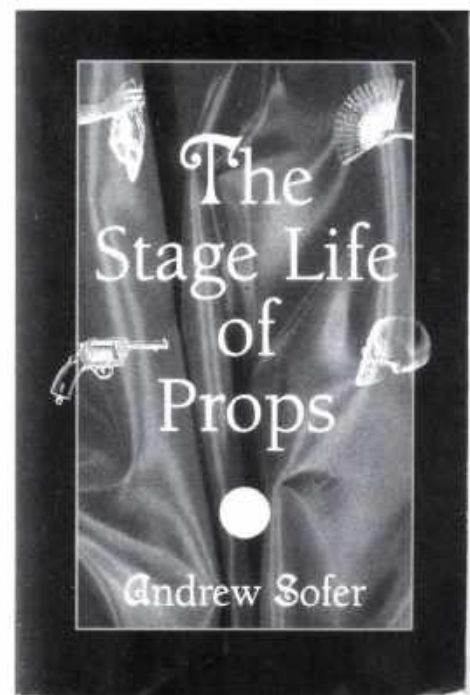
The 1920s and 1930s continue to assert themselves as seminal decades in the development of 20th century puppet theater—perhaps more important than the much-touted “rediscoveries” of the sixties through nineties? The resurgence of puppet theater in European avant-garde forms, the persistence of Asian, African, and Native American puppet theaters, and the excited experiments with all sorts of puppets in North America point to a world-wide consciousness of puppet theater far more pervasive than the spotty recognition of puppet theater over the past three decades.

In the United States alone, for example, the 1930s marked a particular peak in American puppet theater as mainstream and “adult” entertainment, as well as an important part of the emerging performance technologies of film and television. *Voices from the Federal Theatre*, the companion book to the PBS special *Who Killed the Federal Theatre?* particularly focuses one chapter on Bob Baker and the Los Angeles Marionette Unit of the Federal Theatre Project, but its fascinating interviews (for example with *Revolt of the Beavers* star Perry Bruskin) point out how easily and readily puppets were accepted as a central element of FTP shows. This book doesn't point out how Remo Bufano, Paul McPharlin, David Lano, Burr Tillstrom, Bil Baird, Don Vestal, Carl Harms, Ralph Chessé, and the multi-racial Buffalo Marionette Project (among other puppeteers) were all part of the FTP, but its attention to Bob Baker's work on the West Coast helps fill in part of the story.

Dorlis Grubidge's study of Sue Hastings is another revelation about 1930s puppetry. Unlike the puppeteers listed just above, puppeteer Sue Hastings would have nothing to do with the Federal Theatre Project because by the time that government program got off the ground, Hastings and her multiple touring companies were some of the most successful puppeteers in the United States, and were suspicious of government-subsidized competition. Grubidge's biographical study is fascinating in the way it chronicles Hastings's puppet career, from her early days at Columbia University (where Paul McPharlin also studied, and where Professor Brander Matthews's collection of puppets had to have been an influence on Hastings's understanding of the form), to her studies with Tony Sarg, and then her independent breakout into her own, an impetus which led to the founding of Sue Hastings Marionettes, a commercial company so successful that it continued after Hastings herself retired. Drawing on Hastings's files and letters, Grubidge shows how this great American puppet impresario created not only a stable of successful marionette shows, but also "fashionettes" (high-fashion marionettes which exhibited new styles for *Harper's Bazaar* and other magazines); essential puppet scenes in Broadway shows; large-scale corporate performances for the 1939 World's Fair and other advertising venues; special live-puppet tie-ins for the Walt Disney Corporation and Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios; and night-club spectacles. Hastings's work constitutes a rich field indeed. Just Grubidge's account of Hastings's collaboration on Yip Harburg's 1937 Broadway social satire *Hooray for What* is fascinating enough, both because it points out how consistently puppets have been part of Broadway traditions, and also how consistently they have been invisible. "It is an unfortunate fact that the reviews [of *Hooray for What* and other Broadway shows with puppets] did not give credit to the puppeteers and their efforts," Grubidge writes, "but the press's reluctance to discuss the aesthetics of the puppet actor was consistent with a long tradition." A tradition which lasts to this day!

The Charlemagne Press published Grubidge's study of Sue Hastings, and has also just republished a classic account of puppet modernism, Nina Efimova's *Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theatre*. Efimova was one of the important women artists of revolutionary Russia (along with Alexandra Exter, Ludmila Popova, Varvara Stepanova, and others), and amazingly enough, Paul McPharlin had the foresight and inspiration to publish her short memoir (translated by Elena Mitcoff) in 1935, almost immediately after it was written. Efimova's account of how she and her husband made puppet shows before, during, and after the Russian Revolution is not well-

known in mainstream theater history circles, but it's a revealing and immensely valuable document of a moment when politically committed artists thought they could make a positive contribution to a rapidly changing society by means of puppets. This new edition includes Efimova's short play *Pensive Puppets* (also translated by Mitcoff, and published by McPharlin in 1937), a sort of metatheatrical response to puppet theory by two "blackamoor" marionettes or shadow puppets; and also a chronology on Russian revolutionary puppet theater by this book editor, as well as many photographs.



## 2) DOLLS AND PROPS

Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. 278 pages.

Allen S. Weiss, ed., *Poupées*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004. 200+ pages.

A persistent problem with puppet theater is the definition of the form: what exactly is a puppet, and what's not a puppet? Actors seem to be the most obvious form of non-puppet, but any other material object used in performance seems loosely

or tightly connected to the well-known traditions of puppetry. Andrew Sofer's scholarly *Stage Life of Props* is a compelling study of material objects in European plays from the medieval era to the present. Although he takes pains to separate his own theorizing from the substantial contributions to puppet theory made by the Prague School in the 1920s, he remains indebted to Bogatyrev, Veltrusky, Honzl, et al. as he pursues the meaning of *scudari*, skulls, fans, and guns as they appear in both well-known and obscure plays of the Western canon. Sofer's insistence upon defining these objects as props— that is to say, as objects whose stage life is always secondary to and dependent upon the primary importance of the actor— prevents him from making any kind of connection to related and contemporary forms of puppet and object theater from the periods he studies, but his insights into how these objects work onstage, cleverly deduced from the context of dialogue and stage directions alone, are a new contribution to our understanding of the visual elements of Western drama.

Allen S. Weiss, a professor and writer who splits his time between New York University's Performance Studies Department and Paris, curated an exhibit of dolls at the Halle Saint Pierre in his adopted city for the first seven months of 2004, and edited a compelling catalogue of the exposition. Like Andrew Sofer's subject (—err, objects—), Weiss's interest here is not puppets per se, but dolls, although the French word "poupées" translates into both terms. Weiss's assemblage of traditional dolls from around the world, as well as various modern "artistic" forms, from Hans Bellmer's disturbingly erotic constructions from the 1930s (that decade again!); to Michel Nadjar's richly textured fetish inventions, and Billy Boy\* and Olivier Rebufa's responses to Barbie, show how powerful, simple, and ultimately inexplicable dolls and puppets are.



### 3) CULTURAL LEAPING

Kuang-Yu Fong and Stephen Kaplin, *Theatre on a Tabletop: Puppetry for Small Spaces*. Charlottesville: New Plays Incorporated, 2003. 122 pages.

Poh Sim Plowright, *Mediums, Puppets, and the Human Actor in the Theatres of the East*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002. 250 pages.

The last two books in this review are really quite different from each other, but both include revealing insights into Asian puppet forms. Poh Sim Plowright's *Mediums, Puppets, and the Human Actor in the Theatres of the East* is a complex treatise touching on— but not limited to— puppets as female figures, gestural performance, shamanism, and the complex array of different Asian theoretical and philosophical approaches which consider women and the image of the puppet.

Kuang-Yu Fong and Stephen Kaplin's *Theatre on a Tabletop* differs radically from Plowright's study because the Fong-Kaplin collaboration is a how-to book, albeit buttressed with theoretical underpinnings. It draws on the methods Fong and Kaplin (Chinese Theater Works) have developed in puppet workshops done both in Asia and North America, and benefits from both lucid prose, clear explanations, and a generous amount of diagrams and photos (this book editor contributed a blurb to the book, which of course skews my subjectivity squarely in its favor).

The combination of high theory and down-to-earth practicality shown by these two books is, in fact, typical of puppet literature at least over the past 150 years, and makes puppet literature unusual for its steadfast commitment to both the practical and theoretical aspects of the puppet. The how-to elements of puppetry keep us from becoming too abstract, and yet the theorizing of puppets reminds us that, ultimately, the form is inexplicable. #

# PUPPET MANIA: THE WORLD'S MOST INCREDIBLE PUPPET MAKING BOOK EVER!

BY JOHN KENNEDY

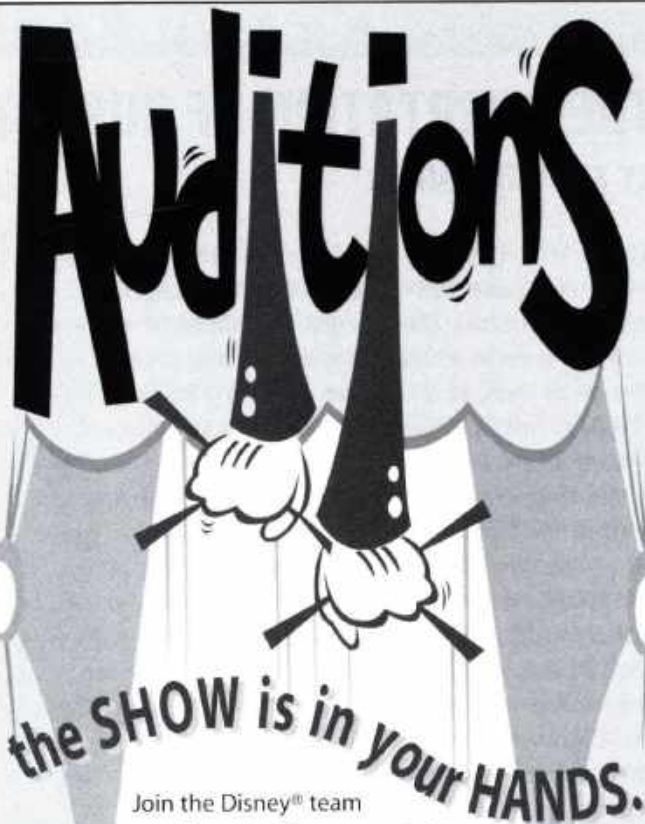
ISBN 1581803729 Publisher: North Light Books,  
Cincinnati, Ohio Publication date: February 2004  
Price: \$14.99 (US) £9.99 (UK) \$22.99 (Canada)

This is a great basic puppet book with lots of those cool tips for the intermediate puppeteer. The designs and directions are very well thought out, along with really clear photos to illustrate what he is describing for the construction of the puppets. I also like his short primer on "bringing the puppet to life." The patterns could be adapted for other more advanced puppets and he does give some suggestions on expanding from the simple puppets he is presenting. He starts with a simple "coaster" puppet and moves onto more complex designs of hand, rod, and hand-and-rod puppets. With each of the designs, he gives a little history as to how and why he came up with the puppet.

The author uses mainly hot glue to hold the puppets together, but then you don't need sewing skills to make the puppets. He does warn about leaving the puppet in a hot car or other extreme temperatures. Some of the directions do really need the photographic illustration to fill out what you need to do. It took me a few readings to sort out how the mouth on the "Spoon Chicken" was constructed. Some of the materials used can only be found at a decent crafts store, but he has suppliers listed in the appendix.

This is the kind of book that I would recommend to teens who want to learn to build a variety of puppets, teachers that want to use puppets in the classroom, and puppeteers who enjoy learning how other puppeteers create puppets.

REVIEW BY KATHLEEN DAVID



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# THE TEMPTATION OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

BY STEPHEN CARTER

The year is 1833—seventeen years after Napoleon met his Waterloo, twenty nine years before the American Civil War, about the time that the Morse telegraph and the modern pedal bicycle were invented. The sound of a drumroll dismisses classes at 4pm, and Gustave Flaubert, twelve years of age, rushes as fast as his legs can carry him away from his oppressive, military-style boarding school towards the Fair of St. Romain which arrived every November in Rouen, and, along with it, the traveling puppet booth of Père LeGrain. In another twenty-four years, Flaubert would be prosecuted for offending public morality with his scandalous novel, *Madame Bovary*. Today, his goal appears to be more salutary to his soul. Père LeGrain's rod marionettes will be presenting *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, an ever popular subject with the Catholic showmen of Belgium and Northern France. Gustave viewed the show every year, repeatedly. Later in life, he would bring his friend and mentor, George Sand, with her son Maurice. (Maurice operated his own hand puppet stage at the Sand family home in Nohant.) Eventually, Flaubert would write and publish his own version of *La Tentation de St Antoine*.

Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) was the son of a successful provincial physician. The family inhabited an apartment at the rear of the public hospital. As a child, Flaubert was not unfamiliar with the sight of his father casually smoking a cigar while dissecting human cadavers. Revealing his vocation at an early age, he wrote and staged macabre plays on his father's billiard table, using skulls and femurs from the hospital cabinets as props. From eleven to eighteen years of age, his parents sent him to the boarding school from which he fled to see the puppets. After graduation, his father sent him to law school, but Gustave's lack of interest, and the onset of occasional seizures resembling epilepsy, put an end to a law career. He was brought home for convalescence.

When his health had improved, the Flaubert family made an excursion to Italy. In a Genoese palazzo art gallery, Gustave was transfixed by a painting by Pieter Breughel the elder of "The Temptation of Saint Anthony."

Throughout his life, Flaubert was a perfectionist, almost unwilling to publish. He wrote in private and confided in only a few literary friends. Nevertheless, he harbored an adolescent craving for notoriety, and he wanted to arrive on the literary scene with the force of an explosion. The *Temptation* was intended to be the work that secured his fame. He labored over a year and a half, researching obscure theological and cultist sources, set to writing feverishly, and finally, in 1849, called his confidants, Louis Bouilhet and Maxime DuCamp, to hear him read the manuscript aloud eight hours a day over a four day period. Upon concluding, Flaubert urged them to be frank in their judgment. Louis pronounced gravely, "We think that you must throw it on the fire and never speak of it again."

He didn't throw it in the fire, but he respected their judgment and refrained from publishing it at that time. He was to rework it in 1856 and again in 1874 before publishing it at only a third the size of the original manuscript. Heeding his friend's advice, he wrote his next work in a more realistic vein, using a contemporary setting: *Madame Bovary*.

What was Père LeGrain's show like, I began to wonder? How does it compare with Flaubert's version, and with Breughel's? Recently, I acquired several French and Belgian versions of the puppet play from the library of George Speight, which he has been selling off through puppet book specialist Ray DaSilva. One is a pamphlet printed by the *Musée de la Vie Walloon* in Belgium. It contains much information which is only hinted at in other books. There are three complete texts for the play from different showmen in French and in quasi-French,

semi-literate Belgian dialect. There tend to be lots of repetitions and run on sentences in the manner of oral tradition. Like the Punch show, there is a recognizable core, with individual variations tacked on by each puppeteer.

The first text I examined has an intriguing history. Leopold Achille Bouret, born in 1909, recited it from memory to an interviewer who visited him and his wife in their touring trailer in 1977. The show and puppets were inherited from Leopold's father (1875-1968), who, after a pit mining accident which crushed his hand, had acquired the show from Aimable Mortelle. Aimable (1861-1923) himself died in a pit mining accident, and had inherited the show from his fa-





pet pig symbolizes the appetites of the body in the iconography of the Saint, as Anthony triumphed over lust and gluttony. It's the parallel of the Buddhist symbolism where Monkey King and the Sage Tsan Sung are accompanied by Pigsy. Though the theological intent is to overcome sensuality, in the popular tradition, pig is easily a best-loved figure, and the people interpret Anthony's pig as a beloved pet.

An amusing piece of correspondence between Flaubert and George Sand exists vis-a-vis the quality of the music. Gustave had taken George to see the sights of the fair, which included a bird-eating spider, foetuses, bearded ladies, a crocodile, and the puppet show of Père LeGrain.

"...I had the company of one man and a couple of women [on the train] whose loud and affected stupidity reminded me of the music that accompanied the puppet show the other day, e.g. 'When I looked at the sun it seemed to leave two spots on my eyes.' Husband:

'That's what they call sunspots.' And so on for an hour without stopping." [Sand to Flaubert, Nov 10, 1866]

Pratasik and McCormick also note that enthusiastic audience participation was an element of the *Saint Anthony* and other shows. Many of the booths were covered with wire mesh to mitigate the impact of fruits and vegetables on the puppets. Our friend, the late Mike Oznowitz, began his association with puppetry as a child, sweeping up the fruit and debris in a prewar Belgian puppet booth. Apparently when the puppet devils destroy the hermitage, the children would hurl the benches around, chanting "*demolisons, demolisons!*" ("let's demolish!"). And we thought puppetry was rough today! An attempt by one Belgian theater to screw the benches down was so detested by the public that the management relented and returned to the former loose benches.

When Flaubert eventually did publish *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, he inscribed inside the front cover a refrain from the puppet show as a dedication: "Messieurs les demons, laissez-moi donc!" (Good sir demons, let me be!).

The 1874 published form of Flaubert's *Temptation* is a metaphysical rant which makes (for most people) fairly dull reading. George Sand viewed it kindly, as she loved Gustave, and Victor Hugo professed admiration. The majority of critics tended to view it as a mistake, as did Gustave's friends

ther Aimable Mortelle, Sr. (1818-1880). The senior Mortelle had deserted from the French Army in Morocco, drifted to Belgium, where he performed a curious act in a circus in which he suspended himself from a trapeze by cocking his head back over the bar while he beat a drum. This Mortelle had acquired the Saint Anthony show from the Damart Brothers about whom less is known. The text appears to conform with other traditional models and gives us an excellent idea of what Flaubert, Madame George Sand and her puppeteer son, Maurice Sand would have seen at the Foire de Saint Romain.

Père LeGrain might have been similar to the Bouret and Mortelle families in taking up puppetry as a less hazardous livelihood than other grim industrial trades. Often, they bought the complete show from another showman and had little other repertoire. The show opened with a musical number and a "jigging doll," an exchange of repartee with a Polichinelle figure, which would, it was hoped, entice the public into the booth for the performance of *La Grrrrrrrand Tentation de Saint Antoine* done with rod marionettes. This was followed by "fantoche"—trick string puppets like Chinese bell dancers and jugglers. Some troupes followed St. Anthony with a short burlesque of *The Imaginary Invalid*. According to Pratasik and McCormick, there was a little song that went with St. Anthony, which was slightly licentious. If it was the little ditty, "Give me back my piggy" it should be noted that the

Louis and Maxime. I confess to speed-reading certain sections. It is presented in the format of a play, though really it is an epic poem—utterly unstageworthy. The setting described by Flaubert with a little chapel and the pig rooting nearby while Anthony weaves mats, is reminiscent of the puppet staging. Saint Anthony has little to say. The pig makes a few remarks. Mostly it is a smorgasbord of antique gods, fantastic creatures, heretics, philosophers, the seven deadly sins (to which Flaubert adds Science and Logic), Zoroastrians, Hindus, Skeptics, Epicureans, Manicheans— you name it— up to and including the cult of Cybele who parade before the saint and display their wares. The Devil takes Anthony on his back for a winged tour to the far reaches of the universe— an element sometimes staged by puppets, and also seen in the paintings of Hieronymous Bosch. That the work is a kind of perverse catalogue of the universe is in keeping with the painted imagery of Bosch and Breughel. All in all, one must admit—the puppet version is more fun.

The puppet text with its formulaic rhymes and songs seems to be derived at least partially from a Parisian vaudeville-opera penned by one Michel-Jean Sedaine (1719-1797) on the subject of Saint Anthony which is more deliberately risqué:

"On the divan, a she-devil in lace  
regards to all you young rakes:

"Won't you come discover two pretty mountains so round."

Anthony, fleeing from the diabolical ring-around dance, hides under the covers only to find:

"A pretty little tart, a real tender morsel,  
her traits had plenty of attractions.

A concubine, t'was Proserpine (Persephone).

What a poke, this bacchanale,

having seen he'd break his crutch,

And some Infernal behind

had made caca in his hutch.

Fearing a tumble into temptation

our saint grabs his blessed sprinkler

and douses those astonished demons:

'Here's Holy Water up your noses!'"

The famous puppeteer, Seraphin, presented *The Temptation of St Anthony* also with his shadow puppets, and more literary versions were presented at the Paris cabaret *Le Chat Noir*. There is a version still performed by Toone in Brussels which was written by Michel de Ghelderode.

A high point of the fairground versions was when St Anthony's constant companion, the little pig, runs around with his tail on fire. Sometimes the pig was a marionette, but more often a real piglet was used. When the devils torment the pig, a smoking fuse was tied to his tail. Leopold Bouret explains that they would take care not to overfeed the piglet to dis-

courage rapid growth, but that he would also receive his weekly ration of a litre of gin! Although the pigs inevitably outgrew their parts, they were fond of the little piglets which learned their roles perfectly in a few weeks and could be trusted to enter on cue to cavort with the puppets without prompting. One of their piglets, "Bibi," once caused great mirth by following the puppeteers into church on Sunday.

With a voluptuous sequined she-devil, exotic Egyptian settings, live piglets, and demon hordes, the climactic destruction of the monastery, and choirs of plump cherubim descending in garlands of flowers accompanied by showers of benghal fireworks— clearly this was a viable piece of fairground theatrics. While it may seem atypical today, in the 18th and 19th centuries *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* was such common fairground puppet repertoire in France that puppet shows were simply referred to as "temptations."

Gaston Baty reprints a version of the play which purports to be handed down from Père LeGrain himself, the puppeteer seen by Flaubert and Sand. Although it is slightly longer, and the order of the scenes differs, it is very similar to the Bouret version. Some of the stock phrases are identical. My translation is of the Bouret version, but I have included some of the stage directions from the LeGrain version.

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# "LA TENTATION DE SAINT ANTOINE"

*The Temptation of Saint Anthony; a puppet play of Picardy, script of Leopold Bouret, as recalled from memory.*

TRANSLATION BY STEPHEN CARTER



Song: Sing, demons sing  
today your torments end  
refill the wine skins  
sing 'till day begins  
raise up your glasses  
to all dolts and asses  
to our masters health  
gaily we sing  
cheers to the old man  
Satan tonight in his great hall  
shall host a magnificent devilish ball  
if you haven't got a drum  
beat the time upon your bum  
pat-a-tappety tam, pat-a-tappety pam  
come one, come all  
to Satan's gala ball.  
Long live Satan!

Landineau: Silence, my friends, silence. I hear the master of us all arrives. Each of you to his place! Here comes the King of Hell!  
*Viva Pluto!*

## SCENE 1

*[Hell, a sulphurous cavern with licking flames and boiling pots]*

All the devils together: Pluto, King of Hell! *Viva Pluto!*

Prime Minister Landineau: It is I, Landineau, Prime Minister of Hell. My voice alone makes the denizens of the earth to tremble. Where I walk the earth flexes, but it seems to me that someone is missing among us; Farfade, who is always ready to follow me. Make haste to call him.

Chanted by all devils: Farfade, come back quick to earth. Appear this very instant!

Farfade *[enters singing]*: Here am I, here am I, here am I. For you all, what shall I do to tempt you? Wherever someone is tempted or jealous. There am I, there am I!

Landineau: But Farfade, it seems to me you are late!

Farfade: Oh yes, dear Master. It's just that in descending the great stair I got stuck behind the fat soul of a prosecutor who died last night while trimming his nails.

Landineau: Indeed? He should have known that a real prosecutor never trims his nails. Very well my friends, as our master is not yet here, let us sing and dance the Galop Infernale!

All together: Yea, let's sing and dance.

Pluto, King of Hell: Silence, my friends, silence. You make a racket. What a devilish din! You can't hear a thing in this Hell-hole. Bravo, my friends, bravo. This is the way I like to see you all. I am the great Devil. I like to see you obey me, and even better to fear me.

All: *Viva Pluto!*

Pluto: I have been noticing of late that the heat has been turned down, and my spits are turning more slowly, and my empire is diminished. You there Landineau, what do you know of all this? You as Prime Minister of my kingdom must know something?

Landineau: Sire, I know all, and I understand all- but I'm afraid to tell you as I fear you will get angry and lose your temper.

Pluto: Am I in the habit of getting angry and losing my temper?

Land: No sire, but sometimes...

Pluto: Very well then, why don't you speak?

Land: Sire, there is this monk converting people everyday, since a great many years now, and this monk is costing us big-time.

Pluto: And this monk, what's his name?

Land: He is called the great Father Antoine *[St Anthony]*.



will unleash upon you all the beasts imagineable of my kingdom, and within three days not a shred of your body will remain on this earth.

Antoine: But Pluto, you know that your empire is shrinking, your spits no longer turn, your boilers grow cold. Listen well, Pluto. Go and tell Beelzebub and all your infernal gang that Father Antoine fears you not! *[He reenters his cell.]*

Pluto: Oh Antoine, oh you fear me not, Antoine, but you will come to fear my wrath when all my diabolical demons from my infernal kingdom come to tempt this great Saint Antoine, because I want his body reduced to ash and cinders. Ahhhh you fear me not, but you will fear my vengeance, for I have a devilish temper, a horrible rage, oh I feel it coming - rrrrrrrrrrr!!!

*[Devils arrive, singing]:*  
We're going to catch the piglet  
of lucky Saint Antoine  
We'll make him into sausages  
And thanks to this old monk  
We'll eat him up with corn meal mush  
We'll eat him though he tries to fuss  
We've caught your little piggy  
Old Greybeard we caught your pig  
We got your little piggy, old man, rrrrrrrrr!!!  
*[Devils set the pig's tail on fire.]*

St Antoine: All you villainous demons. Bigger off, you ruffians!  
He is my prize, my poor little piggy, my sole companion in misfortune. He alone amuses me. He alone consoles me. Pray to our Lord Jesus Christ to please return him to me!

*[He sings]:* Give me back my piggy  
If you please sirs  
Give him back oh please.  
He makes me so happy  
He's as sweet as he can be.  
Give me back my piggy  
If you please sirs  
Give him back oh please!

If you don't give him back right now I shall come and wrest him from your villainous clutches. Come little piggy, here little piggy, soooooee, soooooee.

Devils *[sing and destroy the hermitage]:*  
Crash and break, smash his hermitage.  
Make a mess till nothings left.  
Too bad for you, Father Cappuchin,  
too bad for you.  
We destroy, we destroy  
the hermitage, the hermitage.  
Once again we smash his house  
Crash, Smash, Bam.

*[Traditionally, during this section children would bang the theater benches about and create an uproar, chanting along with the devils.]*

Antoine: Ahhh, you villainous devils, you damned villains, you smashed and broke my hermitage. You haven't left so much as a single board intact.

Devils: That's for you!  
Ring around Anthony.  
We dance around,  
We drag you down,  
We got you  
And your little pig too!

Anthony: Ah, flee from here, fly away you bad villains! You try to make me dance and jump around like a young fellow?  
At my age of 98 years, that's a big mistake, an abomination! But what's that I see in the distance? Angels, Archangels, I see the Angel Gabriel who descends from the sky- no doubt to bring me some good news. Let us prepare to receive them.

Angels *[descending]:* Antoine, Antoine, God is well pleased with your perseverance. He has reserved for you a place in the kingdom of Heaven. Come, fortunate Antoine, take your place that is reserved in the kingdom of the chosen. *[They place him in a heavenly chariot.]*

Antoine: So be it, Antoine, Good Saint Antoine, ascend to the end of your dreams.

*[Song finale]*  
And you've gone, and you depart  
You depart from us and you've gone....

*[A curtain descends painted with mer-angels with fish tails.]*



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The Los Angeles Public Library has acquired the archives of the Turnabout Theater, a well-known adult marionette venue from 1941 to 1956. The cabaret-style shows featured opposing stages with old railroad seats designed to "turn about" at the end of the line—as well as during intermission—so as to face the other pre-set stage. The Turnabout, popular for its satires and guest stars like Elsa Lanchester and Odetta, marked the culmination of the careers of the Yale Puppeteers: Harry Burnett, Forman Brown and Richard Brandon. The LAPL collection includes photographs, documents, props and costumes.

Go online to take the 20-page "Turnabout Theatre Virtual Tour" by clicking on the following address:  
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NOTE: Though it will be too late to get in on this residency, it sounds like this will be an ongoing program. We recommend getting in touch with them —Ed.

Museum of Puppetry, Lahore

**Seeking Resident** for Residency Program at Museum of Puppetry-Lahore, Pakistan

The **Museum of Puppetry**, Lahore, the first and the only one of its kind in South East Asia, was inaugurated in January, 2004. The Museum's main objective is to preserve and promote the dying puppetry art form in Pakistan via Puppet Displays, Puppet Shows and Educational Programs in the Museum.

To sustain and achieve these objectives, we need the services of Apprentice Residents—preferably females—to work with, help and assist the Museum Curator with Workshops, Solo Puppet Performances and General Museum Developmental Work.

The Residency begins in March 2004 and lasts for three months, with a payment of local per diem, housing, food, transportation and round-trip air fare.

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**Our Mistake!**

In our review of Bruno and Darlene Frascone's *The Art and Technique of Marionette Making (PI#14)*, we erroneously identified Bruno as "Bruce." Our apologies.

**also**

On page 30, the correct spelling of review's name is Hanne Tierney.

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Many important puppet theatres and theatre movements owe their existence, in whole or in part, to the vision and persistence of some very extraordinary women. Their efforts have often been less well known than those of their male counterparts—until now!

#### Spring '05 – Genre Benders: The Thoroughly Post-Modern Puppet

Though puppetry has a long history of breaking boundaries, there is currently an unprecedented level of fusion, collaboration, and synthesis in contemporary work. Pulcinella travels to Brazil, wayang screens are lit up by lasers, and young urban puppeteers are redefining vaudeville. Artists from different cultures— even different disciplines— split a bottle of wine and—POOF!—a new collaboration has begun. Fellow travelers, tell us what you have seen!

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# What's new at the Center for Puppetry Arts?

The New Directions Series for adult audiences offers diverse performances to enthrall the imagination and engage the mind. If you're part of the opinionated and the intelligentsia, don't miss *Experimental Puppetry Theater (XPT)* or the new show this fall by Jon Ludwig & Jason Hines: *Avanti Da Vinci* or *The Adventure of Leonardo Da Vinci* (pictured at right).



It's the summer of true love, princesses and cave men! Shows for families through August 2004 include the classic fairy tales *Beauty & the Beast* by Jon Ludwig (pictured at left); *Cinderella* by Tanglewood Marionettes; and *Sleeping Beauty* by National Marionette Theatre. The season also includes a more recent tale: *Mr. Ug, Caveman* by Leon Van Weelden.

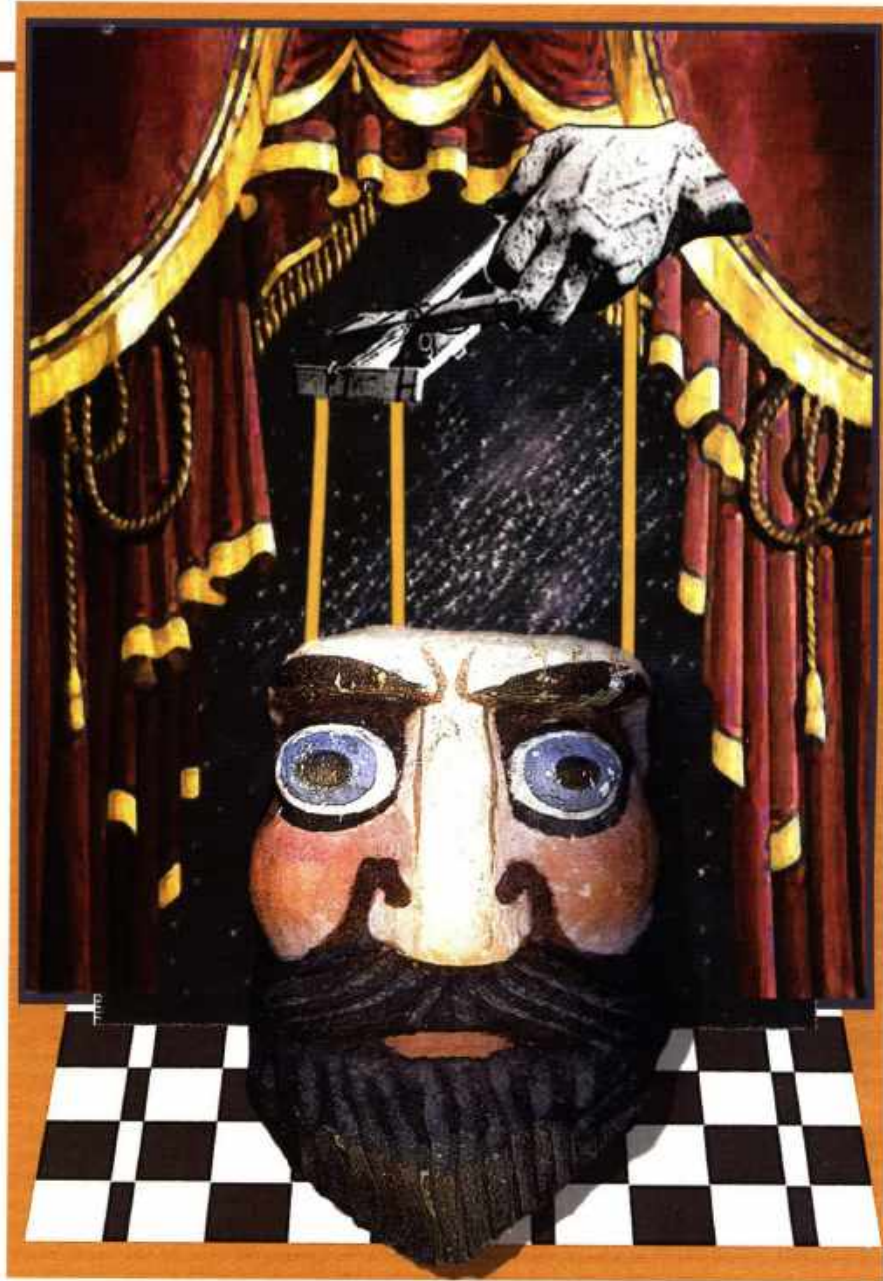
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*[He sings] : Give me back my piggy  
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Give him back oh please.  
He makes me so happy  
He's as sweet as he can be.  
Give me back my piggy  
If you please sirs  
Give him back oh please!*



—THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

*(see article on page 41)*