SPRING and SUMMER 08 Issue #23

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PUPPETS AND THE VOICE

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Vincent Anthony, Barbara and Bill Wylly Executive Director • Headquarters of UNIMA-USA • Constituent of Theatre Communications Group

PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

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issue no. 23

Puppetry International is a publication of UNIMA-USA, Inc.

American Center of the
UNION INTERNATIONALE de la MARIONNETTE

Promoting international friendship and understanding through the art of puppetry.

c/o Center for Puppetry Arts 1404 Spring Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309 USA 404-873-3089 www.unima-usa.org

Production

Terrie Ilaria, Lillian Meier
STEINWAY STUDIO
603-664-2991

Printing

Gary Stratton
EDISON PRESS
207-324-5410

ON THE FRONT COVER
Paul Zaloom
(see page 3)

BACK COVER:
Painting by Sam Kerson
(see page 39)

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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

From the Editor–

–Andrew C. Periale

SPEAKING FOR THE DOLLS:
five puppeteers, six opinions

It had been a long and brutal competition, lasting all summer. But now it was over, and Ferry Tater won by unanimous acclamation—he was now the Most Talented Performer in America. It was the voice that did it, the ventriloquial pyrotechnics, that gave him the edge over all competitors. It later came out that Tater had studied opera, a fact that ruffled more than a few feathers at one of the annual puppetry powwows.

"Why, when I was first wiggling the dollies," proclaimed Droll LaZoom, "we'd play to millions in a gravel pit—no microphones! Try singing '*Nessun Dorma*' down in the pit for a few days and see how the judges like your voice!"

"Oh, can it!" snapped Lonnie Corbett, Toronto's bad-boy of the short-string set. "I never use a mike, even in the largest venues, and my voice still flows like honey off hotcakes."

"Good vocal technique is not a crime," chimed in Pam Slurr, "Why, when I studied at Juilliard--"

"Juilliard, Schmooliard!" yelled LaZoom. "Social justice should not be the whipping boy of the Conservatory!"

"Now, kids," purred Mme. Kitty-Kat, "Ya'll seem to be missin' the point. Good voices are everywhere—old record albums, nursing homes, mega-churches, Cajun shrimp boats. Why, ya'll just need to open your ears and carry a tape recorder wherever you go."

"Mme. Kitty-Kat," said Corbett gently, but firmly, "performing to a recorded sound track may work for you because you're a genius, but for the rest of us a great and versatile voice is our stock in trade. Now, Ferry Tater here may have won a national talent competition, but he was competing against breakdancers, quick change artists and a man who trained cats—no offense."

"None taken," said Kitty-Kat.

"I'm not sure I can say the same," huffed Tater, or the gremlin perched on his right forearm, it being hard to say who spoke for whom. "You think my golden pipes can't stand up to the likes of your, your nicotine-ravaged rumble chute?"

"Damn straight" yelled LaZoom. "You and me, Tater, mano a mano."

"Name your weapon."

"Old Woman character voice at fifty paces . . .on a windy day."

"I want a piece of that," said Corbett.

"Me, too! Me, too!" chirruped Slurr and Kitty-Kat with glee.

And so it was that a contest was organized. A panel of critics was assembled to judge round after round of monologs, dialogs and even trialogs by this collection of some of the great voices of the North American puppet scene. The Old Woman character voice was followed by Clever Servant, then Little Girl Peasant, a variety of animals, monsters and even well known B-movie robots. After eight hours of shouting, squeaking, snorting, snarling and harrumphing to beat the band, none of the puppeteers had managed to establish a clear lead.

A young girl showed up with a pitcher of cool pink liquid, that the performers' flagging spirits and overheated voice boxes might be soothed.

"Punch, anyone?"

What happened next is unclear, and witness accounts vary greatly. My own recollection was of a squeaking sound like... like Led Zeppelin played at 45 rpm, like a hundred dentists drilling a hundred teeth simultaneously, like a platoon of spider monkeys fighting over the last banana.

A red-nosed, humpbacked dwarf rushed into the midst of the exhausted competitors, swinging a great stick like a Shaolin monk hopped up on Red Bull. Tater was the first to fall, but the rest were quickly dispatched. Adults in the audience looked on in horror at the scene; severed puppet limbs were everywhere. It was as if a brand new show had bombed really badly. All the children laughed.

Someone whispered, "Punchinello!" as the misshapen demon stuck a gloved hand into his mouth and pulled out a strange looking device—a reedy thing of cloth and steel—and said, in a strong, clear and resonant voice: "That's the way to do it!"

* * *

One thing we learned in assembling this collection of essays and articles on Puppetry and the Voice is that our world is full of wonderful artists, each of whom has found their own vocal "way to do it." We hope you find the wide range of opinions and techniques regarding the care and feeding, recording and modification, tradition and transmission of the human voice as satisfying in the reading as we did in the gathering.

Punch & Judy figures: Edmund Wilson papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Zaloom voicing the entire cast of "The Mother of All Enemies" photo: Howard Wise

Warbling Wigglers

by Paul Zaloom

Ah, the glorious voice. What would we puppeteers do without our sweet and valuable warblers? We may think and talk of our digits as the primary tool of our trade, but perhaps the snotty old vocal folds should figure in there, too.

Back in the day, of course, we puppeteers relied on our voices to be heard above the hubbub on the street or the rude and drunken clods in the theater. We had pipes for miles, able to project to the cheap seats, even hidden behind our elaborate stage rags and drapes, because if the public couldn't hear us, they wouldn't pay us.

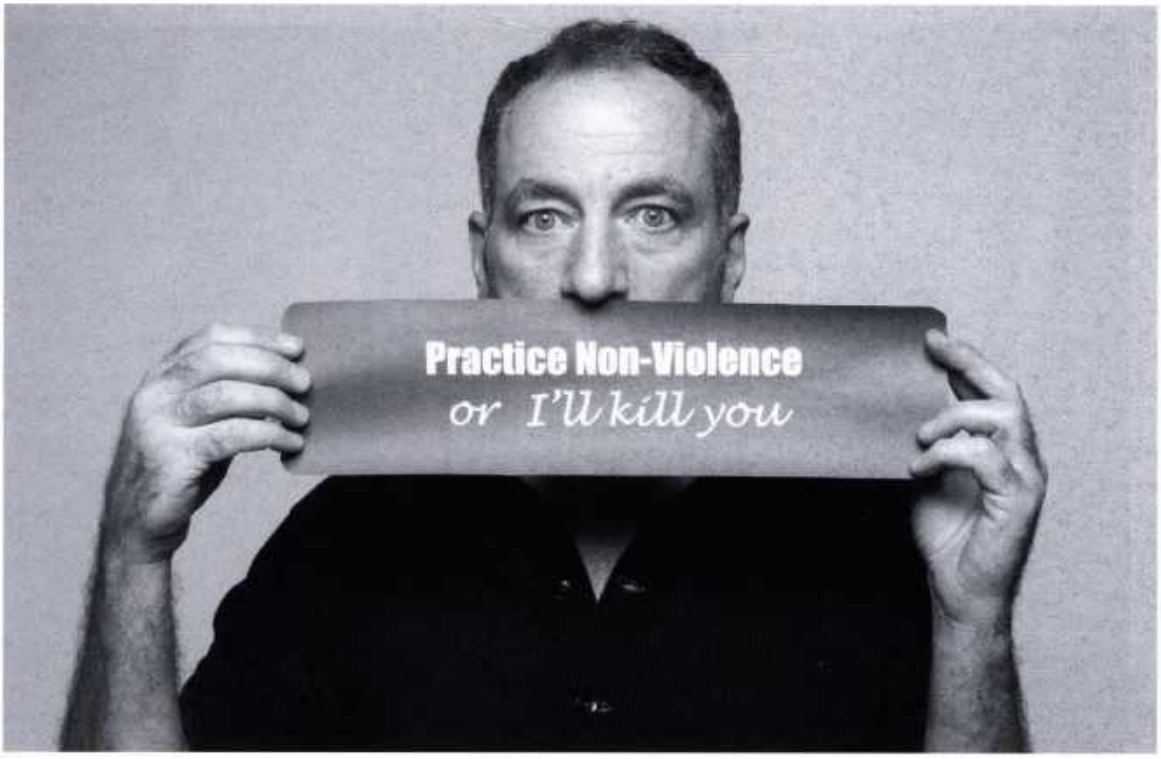
Then along came the blessed/cursed microphone to make the lazy amongst us – me, for example – even lazier, if such a thing is possible. I have all sorts of lame excuses why I use mics; I won't list them here because of the shame, the shame.

OK, I will:

1. I don't want to wait for the laughs to die down before I continue with the next line. You are thinking, "What laughs?"
2. I'm often stuck behind something that acts as a barrier to sound, like a screen or some cheap velvet.
3. Often the mic can help make some cool effects, if you cup it or get closer to it. I'm referring to Lavalieres and headsets, as a handheld is a handful for most of us.

Ideally, the amplification only augments natural projection, so that the audience can barely tell the show is being amplified. You often hear this in Broadway type venues, where the sound technicians are so skillful and systems so advanced, you just cannot figure it out.

Still, there are plenty of reasons not to use a mic, the best being that the scale of the amplified voice often



does not match the scale of the puppet doing the talking. In other situations, the idea of amplified sound works against the whole concept of a show, as in the Bread and Puppet Domestic Resurrection Circus, our giant outdoor spectacle, where we regularly performed to 25,000 people out of doors, never using mics. This required lusty, diaphragm-busting projection but was fun as hell for the sheer macho insanity of it all. But I almost always lost my voice after those glorious gigs.

Even with a mic, I've often lost my voice, as I tend to project a lot anyway, and if I do not warm up for each and every rehearsal and show, I'm screwed. During my last run at the Redcat theater in L.A., I had to go to the Ear, Nose, and Throat doc; after having a camera shoved down my gullet for only 450 clams, I was told my golden pipes are fine, drink this tea, and go away.

I once advised the great crew of puppeteers at the Center for Puppetry Arts that gargling with hydrogen peroxide, salt, and really hot water was a great way to clean the vocal chords of phlegm and warm up the whole mess. Well, that was really bad advice, and please don't do it, because the Ear, Nose, and Throat guy says there's no need to gargle with anything. The legendary tea, honey, lemon, and Wild Turkey recipe, while it may improve your mood, is also *verboten*, the doc says.

Let's get the rest of the good doctor's pricey advice out of the way:

• Throat Coat tea, made by Traditional Medicinals, is a great way to warm the warble tube prior to show time. Two flavors: Regular and Feh!

• Grether's Pastilles, "Swiss made...Original English Formula," whatever the hell that means... (What, did the Limeys get tired of making them?) Made from *glycerine et cassis*, these yummy and stupidly expensive lozenges are great for keeping your throat hydrated, one key to a healthy and happy set of pipes. Black Currant is my favorite flavor. At nine smackers a tin (yes, they come in a tin...that's so WASP! Hey, I can say that 'cause I am half WASP!), they had better be good. Go to www.eurochoc.com; I got mine at the famous Schwab's Drugstore in Hollywood, where legend has it Lana Turner was discovered (not true).

• Drink water. Duh. Your goal is to provide more hydration for your throat and cords.

• The warm up. Do a routine that a voice coach or your parakeet has taught you, or take a voice class where you can learn a nice 15-minute warm up. If you are in a situation where you cannot sing scales without driving everyone murderously insane, then softly hum. (I lived in a loft in NYC above one such warmer-upper, who spent 6 agonizing hours a day baying like an insane, syphilitic moose).

As you hum, feel the buzz on your lips; i.e., make sure the sound is in the front of your mouth, not down in your throat or lodged firmly in your spleen.

• Artificial saliva. Yes, such a revolting thing exists; it's for people who take meds that make their oral cavity dry. I use the stuff to hydrate my motor mouth; since I constantly yammer like a deranged nut job in my shows, I do not have time to drink water or even swallow much. The artificial saliva, which

can be purchased at a drug store and tastes lemony-limey, can be quickly sprayed into your yapping pie hole to keep everything nicely moist. Writing this is making me nauseous.

• And lay off the bong, the crack pipe, and the Winstons.

Now for the more fun aspect of this vulgar rant, I would like to pompously expound on the Creation Process for Fabulous Voices in the Puppet Theater:

• Make a list of voices you can do now. If you cannot remember how they sound, then give the descriptions of the voices' various written characteristics that will help you recall them.

• To assemble this glorious list, you can begin by strutting around your workspace or closet, imitating the voices of various friends, actors, cousins, the Fuller Brush man, and my favorite category: anyone upon whom you would like to exact revenge. Let these character voices carry you away, leaving your own miserable personality in the dust and allowing them to seize your body in some kind of Linda Blair escapade. You will be surprised and scared to death by the depth and quality these characters will take on as you appear to be possessed. As you ad-lib in character, you can have that character write his or her lines, too, which saves you the trouble.

• Quietly imitate voices you hear out in the world, muttering under your breath, and steal them for your own.

• Some resources: listen to the great genius puppeteer-without-puppets, Lord Buckley, whose virtuosic voices and sound effects are layered fast and furious, and are hellishly funny. iTunes has them for 99 cents; buy "The Train," "Governor Slugwell," and "Murder," as well as others. Also purchase Fred Neumann's legendary how-to book, *MouthSounds* (Workman Publishing, 245 pages, demo CD included, $13.95), and you can learn over 150 sound effects you can do with your mouth.

Sometimes I theorize that the whole focus on virtuosity in our profession is quite overblown, and content suffers as a result. So hypocritically, once again, I declare my love for stunning vocal trickery and gum-flapping skills!

One of the virtuosic things we can do with our voices is turn on a dime, so to speak: i.e. shift from one character to another at the speed of light (again, Buckley is the go-to guy for this). Audiences love this rapid voice changing and back and forth, so let's give them what they want so we can get them right between the eyes with exactly what they do not want.

How can one learn to shift back and forth between two or more voices? For one thing, look at the puppet who speaks, and focus all your attention on that particular dolly. Then when the other one blabs, quickly look at that wooden-headed fool. Back and forth, with laser-like attention...and love every second of it, my friends, because it's fun, and your love will be contagious.

Finally, puppet voices are often weird, odd, intense, shrill, scratchy, or falsetto. We are not opera singers, who must have open and relaxed throats to do their thing. When we are doing some crazy witch voice, which requires we constrict our throats to make the sound, we are doing exactly what the voice teacher tells us we shouldn't do.

I took a series of classes with Kristin Linklater, the renowned voice teacher who invented her own eponymous technique. I learned a bunch of stuff and had lots of fun. A year or two later, Kristen came and saw my show at the Majestic Theatre in Boston. After listening to me constrict and abuse my pipes for an hour with puppet character voices, she just shook her head at the hopelessness of my case, saying, "There is nothing I can do for you."

Yup, we puppeteers break all the rules, and have for eons; to stay out of vocal jail, we will warm up and drink tea and use lozenges and pray to the show-biz gods to be with us. Then we pray to the parking gods to give us a good space by the stage door for easy load out. Amen.

A recipient of an OBIE, a BESSIE, an American Theater Wing design award, an L.A. Weekly Theater Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, Paul Zaloom *has written, designed and performed 12 solo puppet spectacles, including* Fruit of Zaloom, Velvetville, *and his latest,* The Mother of All Enemies.

Zaloom has co-created a toy theater puppet version of Sandow Birk's Dante's Inferno*; the film premiered at Slamdance in January, 2007, and is currently touring film fests all over the continent.*

Mr. Punch and the Swazzle

by Martin Reeve

Mr. Punch has an incredibly rich vocabulary of odd little sounds that only the swazzle can make (Edwards 2000: 55).
Don't imagine that any voice will do for Punch, it has to be a certain tone to fit the character (de Hempsy 1945: 22).

The swazzle is a voice modifier used by Mr. Punch in the Punch and Judy show. It is one of an extensive range of voice modifiers found in folk and traditional puppet forms across much of the globe. Frank Proschan identifies upwards of ten traditions which use such devices, including forms of Chinese and Korean puppetry that use a bamboo pipe, the Turkish Karagöz show with its kazoo-like *nereke* and the Rajasthani *kathputli* form in which a *boli* is held cross-ways between the front teeth (Proschan 1983: 531-532). Different modifiers are situated differently in the mouth with varying degrees of intelligibility. In this respect, Punch's swazzle is most closely related to other European forms: the Italian Pulcinella with his *pivetta*, the Russian Petrushka with his *pischik* and the French Polichinelle with his *sifflet pratique*. Punch historians suggest a genealogical association between these forms (Speaight,1970, Byrom 1972, Leach 1985, Stead 1950), and it may well be that the very precise similarity with these other European traditions is the result of a common ancestry.

Performers have long drawn attention to the apparently familial connection exemplified by the sound of these puppets and, of late, have been very active in promoting this association amongst themselves and in the public arena. Leading British Punchman and self-declared Punch "activist," Professor Glyn Edwards, has been central in the dissemination of the practice. Over a number of summers in the early 2000s, he taught the swazzle, as well as other parts of the tradition, at Bruno Leone's *Scuola de Guarattelle* in Naples, a school for Pulcinella performers. He was also instrumental, along with another leading Punch performer, Professor Clive Chandler, in organizing the Dynamics festival in Birmingham, England in May 2007.

Whilst this month-long event included a wide range of puppet styles, shadow, marionette and glove, one focus was on the swazzled tradition, and at the weekend culmination of the event, billed as a "Puppet Extravaganza," there were performances from Professors Chandler and Edwards and a chance to see the Petrushka company, *Tut i Tam*, from Moscow. Along with these traditional forms, Daniel Raffel presented a more recent innovation in swazzling with his glove puppet *Pepe*. Pepe is a French street artist who sits in a black, strolling booth, sketching members of the audience. Raffel says that he finds the "soul" of Pepe in the voice of Punch.

A one-day symposium there addressed (among other things) the relationship between the traditional puppet fool and the swazzle. This is part of a wider project intended to give the populist Punch tradition a visibility and a cultural and historical legitimacy. The promotion of the swazzle as an indissoluble part of the tradition is central to that project.

This relationship has always been a marker of the form and is indeed embedded in its very grammar. In one of the earliest documents on Punch and Judy, Henry Mayhew's 1851 interview with a Punch performer, the Punchman refers to the swazzle as a "slum" and to the associated objects, the puppets, the props, even the booth, as "slummareys" (Mayhew 1968 [1851]: 48). It is a lexicographical connection that places the swazzle at the root of the show. This defining centrality is echoed in the dialect peculiar to early showmen (Leach,1985, 1983, 1980), a mixture of English and demotic Italian in which both the swazzle and Mr. Punch are called "swatchel," and the performer himself is a "swatchel omi," or swazzle man. This intimate connection in the nomenclature has a curious physiological parallel in the mythology; Punchman John Styles, only half jokingly, suggests that "you're not a proper Punchman till you've swallowed the swazzle" (cited in Adams and Leach 1978: 28).

The almost cabalistic association between the swazzle and its frame, the puppeteer and his accoutrements, is underscored by the veil of secrecy behind which the instrument has traditionally been masked—a secrecy policed sometimes rigorously by performers. Stories of how the knowledge has been handed on often revolve around a beguiling sense of intrigue and the forbidden. One or two Punchmen have told me that the performers they learned it from would only give them the briefest glimpse of the instrument in an unclasped fist, and that the rest they had to work out for themselves. Influential Punchman Sydney De Hempsey, writing in his *How to do Punch and Judy*, in the 1940s, tells how his informant took some persuading to give up the secret and would only teach it to him in the privacy of his lodgings, where, he feared, the landlady would think they were strangling cats (de Hempsey 1976 [1945]:21).

Even now some performers claim that so central is the mystery to the practice that to divulge it is to dilute the tradition. However, the degree of secrecy that attaches to the swazzle seems to depend on its audience. Always on the look out for the main chance, performers will divulge the secrets at a price or to the right people. De Hempsey, after telling us how difficult it was for him to

get the secret, seems only too happy to publish it in his book, with instructions. A similar ambivalence is evident in Glyn Edwards' *Successful Punch and Judy* (2000). In a chapter not ironically entitled, "Secrets of the Swazzle," he gives considerable information about making and using the instrument, down to what kind of tape to use and where to place the tongue in the mouth, after which he warns, "Remember [...] what a magician keeps up his sleeve or what a Scotsman wears under his kilt are secrets not shared lightly. How Mr. Punch speaks is just such a secret. Play your part in keeping it" (2000: 54).

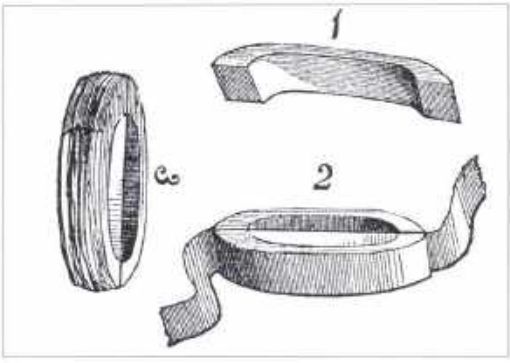
This inconsistency about the mystery of the swazzle seems as much a part of the tradition as the tradition of secrecy itself. Mayhew's Punchman, after declaring the swazzle an "unknown secret" and telling us that his master was "werry partickler in keeping [that] secret," goes on to describe how he "sells them to gennlemen for a sovereign a piece," and that included in the price is "a receipt how to use them" (1949 [1851]:431). With the advent of the internet the "secret" is well and truly out, and it is possible to buy a swazzle on e-Bay for a few pounds, along with an instruction booklet. The balance between keeping the tradition alive by disseminating it and maintaining its potency by guarding it is a difficult one to manage, and for whatever reasons, performers are finding themselves relinquishing the secret.

What many performers are less willing to relinquish is the belief that the swazzle authenticates Punch, that without it, in some essential way, he ceases to *be* Mr. Punch. This view is inscribed in the constitutions of the world's two leading Punch and Judy organizations. The Punch and Judy Fellowship is an association of performers and "friends of Punch"; the Punch and Judy College of Professors is a group of some twelve or so performers whose explicit aim is to "promote and encourage the highest standards in the performance and presentation of traditional Punch and Judy... ." Article three of the College's manifesto states: "The College considers Mr. Punch should speak with his authentic voice, and that the use of the 'unknown tongue' is what distinguishes a 'Punch and Judy Show' from a glove puppet play featuring Punch."

To state the fact that the swazzle is central to the tradition is an easier task than to say *why* it is. Some commentators see the use of the voice modifier as essentially the solution to practical performance challenges. Performers operating, for economic reasons, in ones and twos, yet speaking for a cast of perhaps a dozen, would naturally grasp any help they could get in distinguishing one character from another. The most effective way to do this might be, they suggest, to mechanically distort the voice. Yet this is not entirely born out in practice. The late Punchman professor Joe Beeby, used a swazzle for both Punch and Judy, as he had seen Victorian Punchmen do; and in the Dom Roberto tradition in Portugal, the modifier is used for all the characters. In both cases it must lead to some confusion, and there must be some greater reason to use it. It may be that performers working outdoors, often in busy streets, market squares or beaches would find the piercing noise of the swazzle an effective way to compete with the encroaching soundscape. They use it to draw attention and to announce the show much in the way that the ice-cream van in Britain with its jangling tune, travelling from street to street, instantly draws children from their houses. The noise of the swazzle itself may be thought of as providing an aural equivalent to the bright spectacle of the booth, though the introduction of electronic amplification—now almost universally used by Punch performers—has done nothing to diminish the use of the swazzle.

Proschan goes some way to explaining its persistence at a deeper level when he points to its value in a multilingual community. In the formation of the tradition in Europe, puppeteers were predominantly itinerant, working across language divides and needing to be understood by a variety of audiences. The solution was to produce an oral mode that transcended the codes of any particular language. Proschan suggests that the modified voice is a *lingua franca*, a system for mutual understanding which forgoes culturally specific refinements, and indeed challenges the centrality of those refinements to communication (Proschan 1983: 546). The puppet voice becomes a signifier that the puppet play is art rather than reality (*ibid*). From this, we can infer a level of communication that opens up a realm of possibilities available to the puppet not available to its culturalized human counterpart.

The ontological distinction between puppet and human has been discussed at length by semioticians (see especially Tillis 1992), and where the puppet was once seen as imitating and refining the human (Kleist 1981 [1810]; Craig 1921), it is now often regarded as occupying a space which parodies more than mimics, if it imitates at all, and which suggests that the relationship between human and performing object is a



more complex one than, for example, Shaw articulates in his conventional eulogy to puppets, where he, "[...] holds up the wooden actors as instructive object lessons to our players" (Boehn: 1972 [1929]:vi). The puppet is not an imitator of the human but occupies an adjacent reality.

Punch inhabits a land of lost content, a prelinguistic realm closer to the pre-moral irresponsibility of childhood than to the thoughtful, ethically responsible world of the adult, a realm where to be is to do, where the function of language to *mean* is secondary to its function to *be*. Punch simply is. His voice privileges feeling above thought, though it refuses the responsibility of feeling. It is the consequence of its material origin (Katz and Gross 1995: 3).

The connection between the determining materiality of the swazzle and the resultant ethical positioning of Mr. Punch was brought home to me very directly when I stood inside the booth and started to learn the show myself. The swazzle is a very intimate thing; it has to be lodged in the most precarious place in the mouth, just in front of the soft palate, precisely at the place where it is most in danger of being ingested. It is held in place in the roof of the mouth with the tongue so that all the breath passes through it; the tongue acts as a seal. Like most reed instruments, it needs a good deal of concentrated breath to get it to make a sound, and this breath is pushed up from the diaphragm, the centre of the body. The breath is the engine of the voice, but where, ordinarily, that engine is directly related to the habitual negotiation of meaning through the shaping of lips and tongue, here the swazzle acts as interloper, restricting and distorting the range of possible articulations. In order to produce any sound more complex than a primeval gurgling, chattering squeal, it is necessary to force the lips and tongue to over-articulate, as if accommodating a foreign tongue. The sound that is produced is not the sound of one's own voice and carries none of its familiar characteristics. You have the sense that, to paraphrase Derrida, you are not speaking your words, but that your words are speaking you; or, more accurately, Punch's words are speaking you.

Performers often say that Punch has a life of his own—that he takes over the show. Experiencing the physiological connection between the voice and the object for myself, it became clear to me why they say this: the intimacy of the glove puppet on the hand and the carnival shape of Punch himself. In using the swazzle, I found myself expressing an immediate, unrestrained response to Judy, the baby, the policeman, the crocodile and so on, a response that is more like singing than speaking, and one which is mediated through rhythm more than syntax. What is compelling to performers and audiences is a carnivalesque, Bakhtinian eruption whose immediacy reminds us of the contingency of speech itself. As Professor Edwards suggests, the swazzle operates as a "feedback loop," putting audiences and performers in contact with the past and bringing the past into the present. I have seen many Punch and Judy shows, and in every case the audience's thrill of recognition on first hearing the swazzle has been palpable; it is impossible to imagine Mr. Punch without his voice. §

Swazzle engraving from Bellow's "The Art of Amusing," GoogleBooks.com

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When honors are being bestowed, when fellowships or grants are being passed out, when theatres are being canonized as "Intangible Cultural Treasures" or "Historic Landmarks," who gives a voice to the puppet? Foremost are the puppetry organizations. In this country they are UNIMA-USA (publisher of *Puppetry International*) and Puppeteers of America.

This past January, the boards of both organizations—as well as a few invited guests—met at Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts. Thanks to skilled facilitator Kathie deNobriga, the group identified opportunities for cooperation and other ways to benefit the entire field. Puppets need artists to lend them their voices, but they also need powerful individuals and groups to speak for them.

The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry

at the University of Connecticut

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

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

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—John Bell, Director

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Left: *Rufus Rose and Bil Baird stringing marionettes for "Jerry Pulls the Strings" (1938), a production for the American Can Company demonstrating the story of coffee, and the first full-length film using marionettes*

Right: *Tony Sarg's giant inflatable Blue Hippopotamus, for the 1931 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*

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Let's Make a Puppet Show Sound Track!

by Miss Pussycat

The prerecorded puppet show sound track is a unique art form. It is a craft, not a performance. Unlike recording a rock band or other types of music, it is rather DYNAMIC in volume and tone, perhaps going from a quietly creaking door to a bellowing donkey and a door slamming. You are not trying to get the audience to dance or fall asleep, you are trying to get them to visit a secret world.

Engineering the sound track for a puppet show can be as much fun as making the puppets and sets. One moment you are Sam Phillips or Joe Meek, recording your latest discovery, the next moment you are a paranormal researcher in a haunted house with a parabolic microphone recording a bunch of ghosts!

An interesting sound track can even stand on its own, without a show. Consider all the magical children's records that have been made. "David Seville and the Chipmunks," "The Crickets," "The Grasshoppers," "Mother Ghost Nursery Rhymes," "The Ghost from Outer Space," "Rag Doll's Adventures in Animal Land," "Tom Glazer and Dottie Evens Space Songs"... The list goes on and on. There is even an exclusive category of puppet records: "Little Marcy," "Squinty and his Friends," "Howdy Doody," Bil and Cora Baird's "Man in the Moon." The Muppets even put out a disco album called "Sesame Street Fever." They are all very inspiring. And if you end up getting a record that stinks you can always just melt it in the oven for just a few moments and turn it into a bowl. Just shove it into a mixing bowl when you take it out, and let it cool. They make great Christmas presents.

This is a basic overview of how I record a sound track. First, let's talk about equipment, and later on we will talk about technique. My main recording device—one that I could never live without—is a cassette 4-track. It is a TASCAM 424. I always use hi-bias tapes. Warm fluffy analog. I am sure lots of people are using computers these days, but I am sticking with my cassette 4-track until further notice. One of the reasons I like using a cassette 4-track is TAPE MANIPULATION. It is the gateway to joy when recording! Speeding up a voice or other sound to make it higher and faster, or slowing it down to make it deeper and slower. I will talk more about this process later on. Basically, the 4-track is like an oven that you put everything else into, and when it is finished you have a delicious sound track (or maybe a melted record).

KEYBOARDS are a great ingredient to use in a sound track. Cassios, Hammond organs, Moogs, Optigons. Keep your eyes peeled at thrift stores and pawnshops! My favorite acquisitions are a Casio SA-5 from a thrift store - $2. 95, fourteen years ago and it is still going strong, and a MOOG ROGUE from a pawn shop in Antlers Oklahoma for $50.

DRUM MACHINES are fun—I like the Rhythm King and the Rhythm Ace, but Zoom makes a lot of good ones also. There is an ocean of drum machines out there. It is nice for setting the pace of a show, adding excitement, a bit of filler when the puppets are chasing each other around in a circle.

A recordable MINI-DISC player is very useful. They are small, and the recording quality is good for the price. It is a digital recording. I am currently using a Sony MZ-N707. Minidisc can be used for "field recordings," like ducks quacking or trains whistling. But even more importantly, it is excellent for recording another person's voice when they can't come to your studio. Because it is so portable and unassuming (they even run on batteries) you can go to a person's house or business to quickly record their lines. Then you can mix it into the rest of the sound track at home, going 'line out' of the headphone jack into the 4-track. In this fashion, you can effectively record yourself having a conversation with someone who isn't even there.

One thing about mini-disc, though. You need to use an external microphone with it. I use a Shure Beta 58 - a wonderful all-purpose and inexpensive mic. There is a great web site for mini-discs: www.minidisco.com. They have all kinds of cords, adapters, discs, etc. that you can buy online.

Sound effects are enchanting to record. Use anything you can get your hands on! Eggbeaters, slide whistles, kettledrums, trombones, gongs, harmonicas, record players, kazoos, turkey calls. We keep a special suitcase around that is full of noisemakers, swazzles, bells, shakers and toys. The texture of the sound track will be rich if you use lots of different types of sounds—digital and analog, electric and acoustic.

A good rule for any kind of writing is, "show me, don't tell me." This is certainly true in a puppet show. Consider the economic use of dialog as your friend. The fewer words you use, the more memorable they will be. Show the puppets chopping down a tree; don't just say "... and they chopped down a tree... ." And sound effects can help do this! Sound effects are images that you hear. Record yourself sawing some wood, then a pause and a loud thud. No words or dialog are necessary to explain what happened.

Sound effects are my favorite thing to record. I got a rechargeable drill for my birthday and the first thing I did with it was a recording. You can even make your very own Sound Effects Library. Mini-disc is great for cataloging this if you are careful about labeling the tracks. Water running, light bulbs being dropped, the cork coming out of a wine bottle, neighborhood lawn mowers, your cat purring—all delightful sounds, that can be used in a puppet show.

Timing is very, very important in the prerecorded sound track. Will the audience get bored if you go too slowly? Can they understand you if you go faster—especially if the voices are sped up. You can't adjust your pace during the show, as you might if it were done with live voices. Everything is predetermined. Oh well, that is fine, just think it through. You may find that sped up voices need a few pauses so that the audience can catch up. Another issue is—do you have enough time to grab the next puppet or change the backdrop? These moments of "change" can seem less tedious with the right music—maybe a few bars of the Bossa Nova beat from your drum machine.

Compression can be very helpful. For years I have been recording sound tracks that get played through a rock club PA . Sometimes it sounds great at home but terrible at a large venue. All the different volumes in a sound track are part of this. A little compression helps regulate the density of the sounds. I mix down to a digital format, which helps me get some compression.

Of course, the sound track is nothing without the voices and the dialog. The room that a voice is recorded in affects the way it sounds later. A small room with a low ceiling and carpet and puffy furniture and a pile of pillows will give much better results than a large empty room.

As far as voice actors go, my personal favorite is elderly people. They have better voices, and regional accents. Heavy smokers sound good, too. I am always listening to the way people talk, thinking about who they might be if they were puppets. My parents have both been recruited.

There is nothing in the world like innocently getting your father to read a few lines for you and then speeding it all up so he sounds like an elf. My neighbors and co-workers are also favorite voice actors. Who can resist the allure of being offered a once in a lifetime chance to be the voice of a PUPPET? And hearing the voice of my boss come out of a fluorescent pink bear is MAGIC!!!

I like working with unassuming voice actors for another reason that is not so obvious. The more clueless they are when reading the lines, the better. I know that sounds harsh, but it isn't. There is something about some people when they just read the lines—they are not acting or trying to sound like a fluorescent pink bear, and it is perfect. Colloquial syntax is natural talent.

Bad guys are the most fun voices to record and they must have very special voice actors. One of the greatest achievements in my life thus far was recording the voice of the recently deceased Sheriff Harry Lee of Jefferson Parish, as the villain in *North Pole Nutrias*. He was somewhat controversial, and a bigger than life character in real life. He sang with Willie Nelson at Jazz Fest, he had his deputies shoot Nutrias when they were on duty, he had a Mardi Gras float and threw out little plush dolls of himself.

Somehow, through a friend of friend, Harry Lee agreed to do a voice for the puppet movie we were making! He even sang a rap song, "Bad Guy Power." When he saw the lines he almost backed out, but somehow I convinced him that it was for the good children of New Orleans and he did it.

I knew going in that it would have to be a simple set up and every line would have to be done in one take. I recorded his speaking lines on to a mini-disc, with him reading them off a piece of paper —large print.

The song "Bad Guy Power" was also printed out for him, but for this he was recorded directly onto my 4-track. I had already laid down a drum beat and a scratch track of myself singing it (which was then erased). This way he could wear headphones and simply try to sing along, while I held the 4-track in my lap at the police station. Just imagine how hilarious this was—no one else could hear the prerecorded drum track and he was bellowing away with his headphones on while his staff looked on in horror. It was a stellar recording, and his character, "The Virus," is adorable in a rather uncanny way.

Another thing I do when getting other people to do voices is make fresh-squeezed lemonade, or a pot of tea, and cookies for them.

Using tape speed manipulation can be a creative process. When I speed up my own voice, a lot of times I will try to talk an octave lower. And sometimes if I am doing a slowed down voice, I shout the lines as fast as possible in a deep voice. It is astonishing what it sounds like when it is slowed down and played back.

However, if I am getting someone else to say lines—like Mrs. Gabriel from the hardware store—I coach them a little, but mostly just to get them to speak slowly enough and pause for punctuation. Then when I get home, I mess with the tape speed a little. When recording actors in the field, you should watch out for the "P" sounds and, if you need an emergency "wind screen," just take off your panty hose, put them over a coat hanger, and hold it in front of the mic. You can even draw a smiley face on it.

Another fun thing about recording with tape is BACK MASKING. For this satanic sounding endeavor you simply record something, then take your tape out of the 4-track and flip it over and press play. The end will be at the beginning. Experiment! There is no telling how many hours I have spent listening to things backwards. Just for fun sometime try recording yourself singing something—like "Jingle Bell Rock." Then play it backwards and write it down phonetically as it sounds. Then record your self again, singing it backwards. Then play the recording backwards! And it is forwards and sounds uh... very, very special.

Have fun recording your puppet show sound track! You may be inspired to do a whole show based on the sounds you can record. An interesting phenomenon is that once a character has an established voice, it is much easier to write dialog. Then they have a life of their own. They start telling YOU how the story ends. Just make sure you are recording it.

Miss Pussycat (also known as Panacea Theriac) lives in New Orleans with her husband and creative partner, Quintron. Their late night performance at last summer's National Puppetry Festival (Puppeteers of America) in St. Paul was quirky, stylish and brilliant. They followed the show with a two-person rock and roll joy-fest that had puppeteers of all ages boogying like Nutria on Benzedrine.


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THE NAKED VOICE

by Ronnie Burkett

Ours is a craft of scale, not only visually but also vocally. Like lighting design, a vocal performance draws us into the puppet character and tells us where to look. How to look. Suppose the very interesting puppet on stage left is not well lit, but stage right is awash in light. Well, we wouldn't really look at the puppet, would we? And if we did, we'd be straining. That's my experience in most amplified puppet shows. I see the thing – the puppet character – moving onstage, but I'm hearing it from the speakers on either side or from the cluster above me. It's an unfocused, split perception and as a result, I don't connect to the dramatic idea that puppet is intended to convey. And unfortunately, more often than not—given the previously mentioned access to the cheaper technology that puppeteers have embraced—it's usually not the best equipment. Without a sound mixer in the house, the amplification is strident, unbalanced and completely at odds with what the puppeteer is trying to say.

I admit, I'm a bit of a snob when it comes to the debate of live voice versus enhanced voice. I'm also fully aware that more voices are on the other side of that debate, since one rarely sees an unamplified vocal performance anywhere these days, much less in a puppet show. True, the realities of performance for many puppeteers do not allow the lofty discussion of how the unamplified voice is better, purer, cleaner than the microphoned alternative. A lot of puppeteers still work – by choice or circumstance – in non-theatre environments such as schools, malls and outdoors, which simply are not conducive to a pure, unadulterated vocal performance. So, snob or not, I understand the need by certain practitioners to bump up the vocal reach of their live performances with amplification. But with advances in technology making amplification smaller, cheaper and widely available, puppets, on the whole, have gotten really, really loud.

And therein lies my problem with amplification. We suddenly have a lot of volume in puppetry, with less and less subtlety in the actual production of the sounds. To my ear, amplification has become a crutch to the vocally weak, allowing untrained voices to rise above the crowd, so to speak. If the crowd is outside, okay, I concede, you might need or want the volume. Yet I've experienced many live puppet performances amplified in theatre venues. And in general, I don't think it's necessary or beneficial.

Aside from those personal observations against amplification, my experience performing live and vocally unassisted has given me a heightened awareness of how powerful and compelling the naked voice can be.

When I refer to the voice as naked, I mean without the benefit or encumbrance of microphones and amplification, although this vocal nudity is not to imply a voice unsupported. A trained voice, with air control and proper enunciation and delineation between varying characters, can not only ride the peaks and valleys of text and interpretation, it can draw the audience into that specific realm of the puppet character for one simple reason: breath.

It is often stated that if a puppet can appear to think, it appears alive. I suggest that if a puppet appears to breathe, it is living. Breath is the shared life force between performer and audience, and if there's a puppet between the performer and the audience, that static little icon is getting so much breath around it that it becomes the encounter.

I have a little technical vocal device I use, one that developed quite accidentally and in the moment of performance and is now part of my vocabulary. A character was about to confess something in a direct-to-audience monologue, and during the slow preamble toward the confession I found myself speak-

ing for the character on one breath, which then was held in silence for the few seconds before the final revelation. The character then exhaled fully and drew new breath. At that precise moment, I heard the audience inhale as well, and I became aware that during the previous moments wherein the character spoke on one breath, they too were holding their breath until the confession. The audience, unbeknownst to them, started breathing for the puppet, even if only for a few moments. They had suspended their disbelief because of the living, breathing quality of the puppet. In a world of loud, in a time of noise and chaos, I personally live for the moment when in softness and in silence an audience and I can hear one another breathe. It is not only what makes theatre vital, it's what makes puppet theatre magical. And that magic is attainable through technique.

It's commonly thought that in order to corral the audience's attention, the performer needs to be louder than they are. This results, at best, in a lazy assurance in the audience's mind that they aren't expected or required to fully focus, and, at worst, in a war between performer and audience for volume supremacy. But the best moments I've had in the theatre are not when I'm being my loudest, my most outrageous, belting a song or whipping through fast-paced multi-character dialogue (all of which I do). The best moments have been when I've turned the volume down and trusted the audience to listen for a heartbeat.

My work is text-based. As such, it requires that I speak many characters for two hours a night. Language is at the heart of my work, and thus interpreting text onstage is one of my primary roles. Naturally the design, the construction, the staging are all key elements, but it all is in service of the manipulation and speaking of the characters, which, at this point, are one inseparable activity. Breath in text supplies the impetus for movement or stillness. By being physically onstage, most often directly in contact with the speaking character, my voice originates from the same physical place onstage as the character. If I were to be amplified, the intimacy of that would be stripped away, and voice would come from elsewhere.

At various times I have played against this, but purposely so. By leaving characters still-in-repose onstage I can disembody their voice and have thoughts separated from the physical icon of character. Similarly, when characters are left alone, other voices commenting on or speaking to them place the visual focus on the static non-speaking puppet, imbuing it with life. This is possible because I control the breath, the pitch and the volume. Even with the most sophisticated sound technology, that breath would be processed and out of scale for my work.

It's true that I travel with a sound operator as part of my crew, and her mixing board is in the theatre, not the booth. We use a great deal of music and sound, and in order to balance my live voice with those recorded elements, it's crucial to have another human being listening and responding. While cues and levels are indeed "set," live performance is exactly that, and the variables of theatre construction, size of audience, physical health of the performer, dryness or humidity all greatly affect sound. In addition, while I strive to be word perfect each night, hit every cue and manipulate consistently, there is another variable which more than anything else keeps me performing without amplification and that, quite simply, is the temperament of the audience.

One of the great lessons I have learned was courtesy of an Irish audience when I performed at the Dublin Theatre Festival. This is a culture that loves language and storytelling, and so my wordy little puppet show was received with attentive ears. At one point in the play, I was performing an intimate scene between two puppet characters, and I could feel the audience leaning in. I found myself almost whispering the text. The quieter I got, the more they leaned in. The scene became sweeter, sadder and more fully shared not only between the characters, but between audience and performer. The quality of listening affected the quality of the speaking. This was another moment held on the breath.

I knew nothing about jazz until a few years ago when a singer explained it to me, saying that, essentially, you honor the lyrics and improvise around the music. Confronted with a long run of another show in a city where I found the audiences inconsistent to the point of maddening, it occurred to me one night that all I had to do was use the jazz model. I had a story to tell, so I needed only to honor the text and improvise around the energy or temperament of the audience. If they were quiet and undemonstrative, then I would scale down my acoustic assault; if they were energized and vocal, then I would meet their energy head on and wait for the moment when the story seized them and made them mine. This approach marked a distinct change in how I vocally engage the audience. And surprisingly, it made going to work every night a true and fun challenge.

I must stress that, in order for the naked voice to command an audience, the performer has to have vocal training. Everyone can yell and most will lose their voices unless they know how to roar. The meek and the timid can whisper and never be heard. But with vocal training, the puppeteer can not only hit the last row of the theatre, they can confess and whisper audibly and cause their audience to literally lean into the puppet. In my occasional dealings with institutions that teach puppetry, vocal training has been nonexistent or low on

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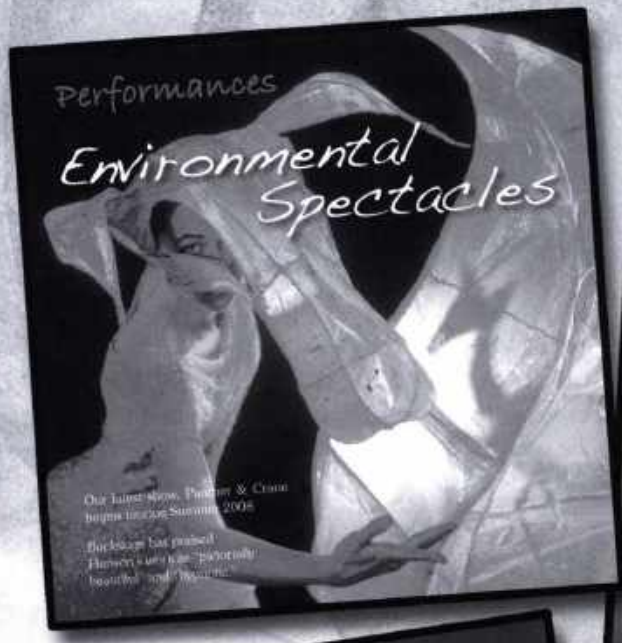

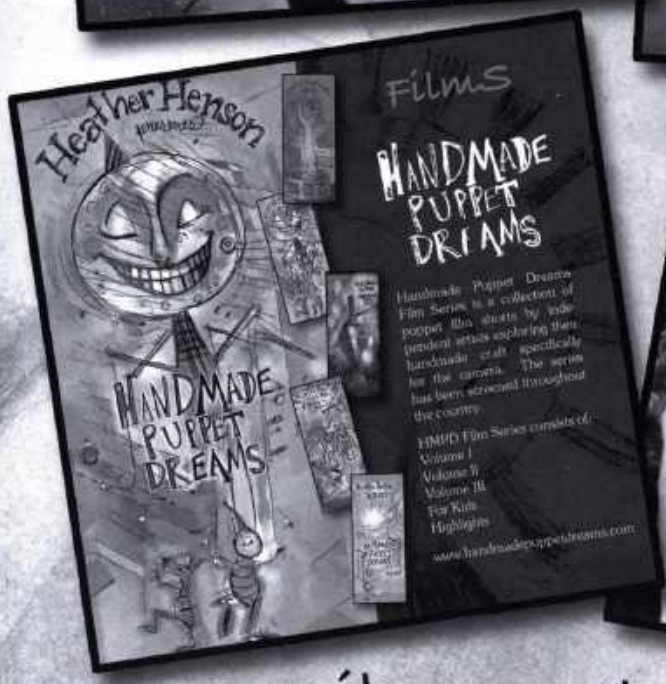

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the list of priorities. So, along with the other generally dismissed practices of writing and text interpretation for puppet theatre, it seems that young puppeteers aren't encouraged to learn how to find and maintain their voices.

I have been training my voice since I was fifteen years old, and I've used it my whole career, abused it for great periods of my adult life, fretted and worried and obsessed about it as others pamper their cars or their children or their pets. I admit, I began with a naturally elastic range, and by vocally mimicking everything around me as a child, I was armed for solo puppetry with the skills to pull off polyphonic performance. But middle age not only affects the waistline, it changes the vocal range. My reaction to this natural occurrence has not been to strap on a microphone but, instead, to retrain the natural equipment and protect it in ways youth did not require. When I started writing seriously, my vocal chops were there to back up the interpretation, and subsequently I started becoming a much better actor. Now that I know "how" to write and "how" to act, the vocal equipment needs different attention to ensure that all I have to say will indeed be heard. It all connects and it's all important to the ultimate goal of performing a puppet onstage.

It's frequently suggested that in this digital age, live performance may become redundant. To the contrary, I have felt a renewed resurgence of audiences who—too easily e-mailed or text-messaged or voice-mailed—long to sit in the dark with real live people for the simple, primal act of listening to an acoustic voice telling them a story. And personally, when I sit in the theatre and see an actor or a puppet onstage but hear the sound from a speaker somewhere else, I rarely make it through the whole show. At least at home I can turn on the TV and control the volume while watching two dimensional actors and puppets moving about. And that, in reality, are what amplified puppet shows become—two dimensional, missing the third element of *breath*.

At the Puppeteers of America Festival in St. Paul, Minnesota in July 2007, there was an evening of Toy Theatre presentations. That alone was the revelation of the entire Festival for me, and I loved every single one of the performances I saw that night. But it was the presentation of the late Jon Bankert that affected me most. No more than forty of us sat on the floor of a classroom while Jon sang his Toy Theatre production of *Tales of St. Francis* to a pre-recorded accompaniment. It was a performance that moved me, that literally got inside of me. Was it Jon's singing? Probably not. Was it because this was one of the few unaided vocal performances of the entire week? Maybe. Or perhaps, simply, it was the sheer integrity of that lone, unamplified voice reminding me how powerful, how beautiful and how fine it is when puppeteers bare themselves to the minds, and hearts and yes, to the ears, of their audience.

This is why I perform naked, and why I will continue to work "unplugged," while the rest of my tribe don the personalized headbands for their wireless mics.

***Ronnie Burkett** is the author, designer and performer of many critically acclaimed productions. Awards include an Emmy, a special citation from the OBIE Awards, a Chalmers, two Doras, four Elizabeth Sterling Haynes and numerous UNIMA Citations.*

Bunraku in Boston

by Dassia Posner

This past October, the National Puppet Theatre of Japan went on tour to Boston and four other U. S. cities. It is difficult to say precisely which moment of their bunraku presentation at Boston's Cutler Majestic Theatre was the most delightful. Audiences were enthralled by the skill of three puppeteers gliding across the stage, manipulating a single puppet in perfect unison. Likewise, they watched with intense interest as puppeteers gave an intimate look at how bunraku heads are constructed. Perhaps the most spectacular moment, however, was during the performance of a scene from *Oshichi's Burning Love- The Fire Watch Tower*. As Oshichi climbs the tower ladder to sound the alarm and save her lover, she seems magically to be moving on her own, even though the audience can see the puppeteers' arms guiding her from slits in the tower itself. This moment exemplified the most compelling element of this performance: the deliberate tension between the rational and the fantastical, similar to Samuel T. Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief," as there were elements of the performance that intentionally defied realism, yet persuaded us to believe in them anyway.

Every aspect of the performance was extraordinary in its professionalism, while remaining accessible to audience members who inevitably had varying levels of familiarity with bunraku conventions. The theatre performed *Oshichi's Burning Love* in order to show the extensive range of movement of a single puppet. They followed this with a behind-the-scenes look at the individual elements in this "theatre of threes," so dubbed not only because of the three puppeteers who manipulate each puppet, but because of the triad of performance elements: puppets, chanted narration, and shamisen music. The theatre concluded the evening with a second scene that reinforced the audience's appreciation of the information gleaned from the demonstration.

In the central lecture, although the performers illuminated some of the practical fundamentals of their craft, such as how a puppeteer manipulates a female puppet's kimono to create the impression of knees and feet despite her lack of legs, they also addressed larger theoretical issues. Much of the lecture

Osato pleads with her husband, Sawaichi.
Lead puppeteers- Yoshida Kazuo and Yoshida Tamame
The National Puppet Theatre of Japan

focused, for example, on how voice conveys character in bunraku performance. The tayu, or chanter, explained that the purpose of his vocalizations is to express the emotions and, to use his words, "inner motions" of all the characters, thus playing counterpoint to the external movements of the puppets. Naturally the chanter adjusts his voice to ensure that each character is aurally distinct from the others, but, more importantly, his voice portrays what is most essential about each character through the use of stylization and exaggeration. By way of example, he performed a trio of sharply contrasting voices: a boastful samurai whose words erupted powerfully, a woman whose voice was characterized by gentle, flowing cadences, and a young boy, whose high, staccato intonations conveyed "the acuteness of a child." The tayu's voice was complemented by the shamisen, an instrument which seems to sing and even breathe in its musical interpretation of action and emotion; it, too, aims to convey inner essence rather than external realism.

photo: Mario Gerthom Reyes, courtesy of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC)

Dassia Posner, PhD, teaches at Tufts University, and is an advisor and peer reviewer for this publication.

The final performance in this evening of threes, an excerpt from *Miracle at the Tsubosaka Kannon Temple– Sawaichi's House and The Mountain*, provided the audience with a satisfying opportunity to recognize and appreciate the principles illuminated in the lecture. The unbroken harmony between the undulating notes of the shamisen, the emotionally charged intonations of the tayu, and the gentle convulsions of a puppet weeping into her handkerchief were all the more magical since the audience had seen everything taken apart and demystified. In the scene's final moments, Osato discovers her husband Sawaichi's lifeless body at the base of a cliff and hurls herself after him, unable to live without him. The lovers are brought back to life by the goddess Kannon and dance with joy, a fitting conclusion for an evening during which the audience had witnessed these puppets animated, dismantled, and animated once more.

This remarkable event was the National Puppet Theatre of Japan's first performance in Boston in over two decades. Let us hope that we do not have to wait so long next time for them to return.

Speaking for the Dolls

by Faith Bach

Oshichi climbs the fire watch tower.
The National Puppet Theatre of Japan

When we were little girls, we all made voices for our dolls. Little did I know back then that I would someday have the privilege of doing it professionally, on the other side of the world, in a culture quite beyond imagination. Japan's classical puppet theatre, bunraku, is voiced by the powerful tayu narrators after lifetimes of training and centuries of formative tradition. But nowadays, when a non-Japanese patron goes to see the dolls, the voices they hear will often be mine, and will be in English.

Bunraku was designated an Intangible World Heritage art by UNESCO in 2003 and the following year began providing English-language commentary service at its home base, the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka. At the same time was introduced a system of projecting the entire libretto in "surtitles" above the proscenium arch, so that the Japanese audience might read along with the narrative chorus (*tayu* singer and shamisen player) as it progresses. These innovations came only after long deliberations between the performers' management union (*Bunraku Kyokai*) and the artists themselves. While no artists seem to have raised serious objection to the English service, it was the surtitles that offended the more conservative narrators. These men felt strongly that the Japanese audience should be able to understand by ear alone the obscure classical syllables they hurled from their mouths at astounding speed and volume, without benefit of having them spelled out. Fortunately they were overridden or convinced by the more market-savvy union, and an influx of new audience resulted. Now the theatre is still the only one offering simultaneous commentary in English anywhere outside Tokyo.

Earphone Guide Co., Ltd., which furnishes theatres with commentaries on a concession basis, began its English-language earphone service at Tokyo kabuki theatres in 1982, having previously provided Japanese earphone commentaries for visiting foreign troupes and for classical Japanese genres. Only these Japanese-language services have ever turned a profit for the company, the English service being maintained for prestige and because it is requested by the theatres, whose ticket sales to non-Japanese increase when English earphones are on offer.

Tourists have been coming to bunraku since long before the English earphones, and were presumably going home happy. The technical prowess of the three puppeteers as they move in perfect synchronization to make the facial features and the feet and fingers of the doll move with near-human articulation is a feat that must be seen to be believed. It is mesmerizing, spellbinding, literally breathtaking to watch a bunraku doll come alive. The bravura of bunraku stagecraft, too, with its moving sets, resplendent costumes and colorful inventory of flora and fauna, is a joy to behold and largely self-explanatory. Many tourists —maybe many Japanese as well—ooh and aah over the amazing life-like characters, buy some souvenirs and go home satisfied, having had a visual experience extraordinaire and quite worth the price of the ticket. It is possible for the novice to enjoy a bunraku play without even looking at the tayu, let alone understanding what he has to say. The tayu is the voice of the puppets, of course, and also the voice of the playwright; the ghost in your earphone, then, must extend the voice of the tayu. How do we proceed?

Let it be said at once that composing an earphone guide for bunraku is far more difficult than for kabuki. Simply put, living actors are able to convey more physically, facially, vocally and telepathically to their audiences than dolls are. They are further aided by having both voice and movement coming from one place, as it were, rather than split between

photo: Mario Gerfhom Reyes, courtesy of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC).

puppeteers and chorus. Earphoning an actor only requires translating or explaining him when what he is saying or doing is not obvious to the eye or ear: not more than half the time, usually much less. An actor weeps, he smokes a pipe, the earphone need not describe what he is doing. When a puppet weeps, its face does not get wet; smoke does not come out of a puppet's pipe. Furthermore the Japanese pipe is long and thin with a tiny bowl, not a recognizable object to the Western eye, so if smoke does not come out, it must be named.

The tayu will tell us that a pipe is being smoked, or that tears are being shed. The art of the tayu goes back long before the puppets came onto the scene, when all the narrative art consisted of was a performer and an instrument. The singer sang the action as well as the dialogue, and for centuries that was enough. There are still thriving puppetless genres of *joruri* narrative performance, as well as other traditional troubadour arts such as *rokyoku, kodan* and *rakugo*. The voice preceded and determined bunraku puppetry; the tayu did not appear in order to give the dolls voice, rather the dolls joined the tayu to illustrate his tale. Bunraku began with the voice. In the beginning was the word.

Of these words, and of bunraku's multiple and competing dimensions, the Earphone Guide must make some sense. It is not only a problem of explicating history and the alien worlds of feudal protocol and Buddhist doctrine. There is also the problem of the poetry, always allusive and multi-referential in Japanese, which describes ordinary actions in oblique and symbolic terms. She is not a frightened fugitive, hurrying down a country road in winter looking over her shoulder for the law on her heels. She is instead a rare frail blossom peeking from between the pampas grass, dainty head aquiver in the icy wind. A balance must somehow be struck between initiating the earphone audience into the mysteries of the rich textual imagery, and letting their own pictures spring to mind as they follow the fugitive down the road, feeling her fear in the tayu's voice and seeing it in her movements. The art form must be appreciated, yes, and for that it must be taught. Finally, though, a puppet only comes to life to the extent that each audience member invests it with life based on his or her own store of experience and memories. We individually provide a doll with heart, or else it does not live for us: a delicate position for the earphone.

Essentially the earphone problem, as I define it for myself, is one of degrees of proximity to the play. In my own work, I use four separate earphone "voices," which can be seen to occupy varying degrees of distance. The closest to the play is the Actor voice. This is the puppet speaking. It is only used when the tayu can be heard recognizably to be speaking in the character's voice, and then sparingly. The earphone says: "Then it was nothing but a lie from the beginning, and I believed you!" On hearing this, the audience is right onstage with the dialogue, inside the play. It was a lie! They have been deceived! My second persona is the Chorus, replicating the tayu's narrative function. "He realizes with a shock that it was all a lie..." or "Unbeknownst to him, it is a lie..." or "He lights his pipe." This puts the audience on the tayu's platform, off the playing stage proper, but with a close view of the action, giving some psychological distance. Off the stage entirely, in the seat next to you, whispering in your ear, is the voice I call the Stage Manager. He explains technical devices and historical background: information apart from the play but necessary to understand it. "The lead puppeteer operates the head and right hand of the doll, with two hooded assistants for the left hand and for the feet." "He is dressed in the costume of a Buddhist pilgrim." "Head inspection scenes abound in bunraku and are supreme dramatic moments, for they almost always entail a substitution, of the kind perpetrated here..." In fact, my head inspection commentary in the detached Stage Manager mode has been criticized by colleagues for distancing the audience too far from a dramatic climax -- specifically, someone about to open a box containing a severed head to verify it is, in fact, who it is supposed to be, while knowing all along it might be someone else—most likely their own spouse, parent, sibling or child, substituted to save the life of a higher ranking personage. At this grisly feudal moment, does the audience really need to be any closer than Row 12? Earphoning entails constantly making judgments for the good of the audience, for better or worse.

Last is the omniscient voice, who sounds a lot like Walter Cronkite. He sits up in the clouds and can see all of history. "Michizane survived less than two years in exile. Twenty years later, his son Kanshusai petitioned the emperor to reinvestigate his father's alleged crimes. Michizane was exonerated, and all his ranks and honors were posthumously restored to him." Walter speaks rarely, and always after the curtain falls.

There are a variety of earphone styles, depending on the commentator, which achieve greater or lesser degrees of success. The audience, after all, are not all coming for the same thing. Many have English as a second language, some are happy with the barest outline so they can connect to the performance on their own, and a rare few want a non-stop, word-for-word translation with extensive history thrown into the pauses. It is not possible to please them all and everyone will prefer one commentator to another. Because bunraku is such a supreme art of expression that pulls so much out of each individual heart, my chosen duty is to give my audience the closest theatrical experience they can have to what the creators of the play intended. The ghost in the earphone is always a part of the play, whether we like it or not. For our

voices to give voice to the tayu who in turn gives voices to the piles of rags that rise up in their masters' hands in order to give voice to the poet-playwrights of past ages who have given voice to the ancient heroes and to the little people of the town in whose lives and deaths was the stuff of tragedy.... It is a tall order.

There have been experiments in other media to replace the earphone service, which is financially and logistically difficult to produce, requiring recording and editing, daily operating to cued scripts from theatre broadcast booths, and the serious equipment and personnel all this entails. A recent U.S. tour took English surtitles along, requiring only a Power Point set-up at the back of the theatre. The Stage Manager and Cronkite voices were not appropriate to titles, which should appear to be translations, in the tradition of film subtitles. So only those voices actually sung by the tayu, the Actor and the Chorus, could be used. Also titles must be brief and far between, not to take up too much eye-time when the eyes are needed to take in information that foreign-language ears cannot absorb. A simpler but less satisfactory job than earphones, yet titles might be the wave of the future, cost-efficient and sterile as they are. There is a new generation of theatre-goers now from those of us who started Earphone Guide, who are more used to looking at writing on screens.

But the Japanese have always known there is something to a voice that is more than the sum of the letters on the page: *Kotodama*, the soul of the utterance as the sacred syllables of the ancient prayers were called. The sound itself is magic. A theory exists that Japanese narrative and theatre are a kind of prayer ritual to pacify the restless spirits of the tragic heroes and heroines depicted in the tales. Prior to a production of one of the true love-suicide plays, puppeteers will often visit the graves or monuments of the lovers, together with a priest. They take the dolls along.

Sometimes I go to the graves myself, in some miniscule corner-lot temple off an Osaka shopping street. We need to keep the voices audible for them. Their spirits must rest easier each time the mighty tayu gives voice to their stories, and the earphone tells their stories to a whole new world.

NOTES

§ The word *ningyo*, literally "human-form," means in Japanese either doll or puppet. There is no special word for puppet.

§ The narrative chorus sits on a stage extension downstage left.

§ Producing an Earphone Guide starts with the commentator receiving the libretto, usually about three weeks before opening, along with a DVD of a previous performance of the play from the National Theatre archives, if there is one. The libretto is exactly what the tayu sings, and contains no stage directions or specific dialog markings. The commentator writes a script of individual numbered comments of varying lengths, which she then records in the company studio on digital equipment. (In the early days it was reel-to-reel.) From a broadcast booth at the back of the second floor, which overlooks the stage, the operators send out the comments, timed to the commentator's numbered libretto "cue-sheet," to the earphone headsets, which are transistor radios tuned to the broadcast room frequencies, either English or Japanese. There is only one stage rehearsal for bunraku and kabuki, which the operator and commentator attend for a test run of the commentary so that inaccuracies can be re-timed or re-recorded. A full play runs about three hours and will take 250 to 300 comments.

***Faith Bach**, D.Phil.,Oxon., has been an Earphone Guide commentator since 1982. She has an MA in classical Japanese poetry and a D.Phil. in kabuki theatre, on which she has published variously. She teaches Japanese culture at university level in Kyoto.*

photo: Earphone Guide Co., Ltd.

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America's Got Talent I would go over my routines without producing sound—just practicing the movements.

Doing three shows a day was really hard on my voice. Even if you warm up for the first show, the throat cools down, and you need to use it for two more shows. One of the best things about winning America's Got Talent is that I don't have to do three shows a day, and it's a lot better for my voice.

Terry Fator is always developing new characters, new routines. His contract with NBC will insure that we will see more of him and his unique talents in the future.

Rolande Duprey has her MFA in puppetry from the University of Connecticut. She is a frequent contributor and advisor to Puppetry International.

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photo: Earphone Guide Co., Ltd.

Terry Fator's Got Talent

by Rolande Duprey

When Terry Fator was six years old, he memorized Bill Cosby routines from the LPs his family owned. "At parties they would ask me to entertain them with the routines." He memorized not only the words, but also Cosby's inflections. At age eight, he was doing magic shows. At age ten, he read Paul Winchell's book, *Ventriloquism for Fun and Profit*. Then he saw Jeff Dunham perform. Dunham showed him some of the tricks of the trade. By age eleven he was getting paid doing birthday parties and other gigs as a ventriloquist.

As a teenager, he began singing in church, learning tunes by using the Christian music tapes without the singer's voice. He worked at singing the songs just as the original artist had sung it, copying the singer's style, inflections and vocal patterning. He studied opera with a singing coach.

But opera wasn't his calling. He formed a band, playing eighties and nineties cover tunes, once again mimicking the singing style of whoever had done the song. He would bring out his ventriloquist dummy in-between songs. Then he went solo as a ventriloquist, touring all over the country, at state fairs and other events, often doing as many as three shows a day.

Two years ago, Terry merged the various skills, and began doing impressions of famous singers with his puppets—Roy Orbison, Natalie Cole, Johnny Cash. No ventriloquist had ever done such a thing.

Last summer he won a million dollars on NBC's "America's Got Talent." Along with the fame and fortune, he got gigs. Big gigs. He's now performing for sold-out houses, and will be headlining at the Las Vegas Hilton. There's talk of a TV show.

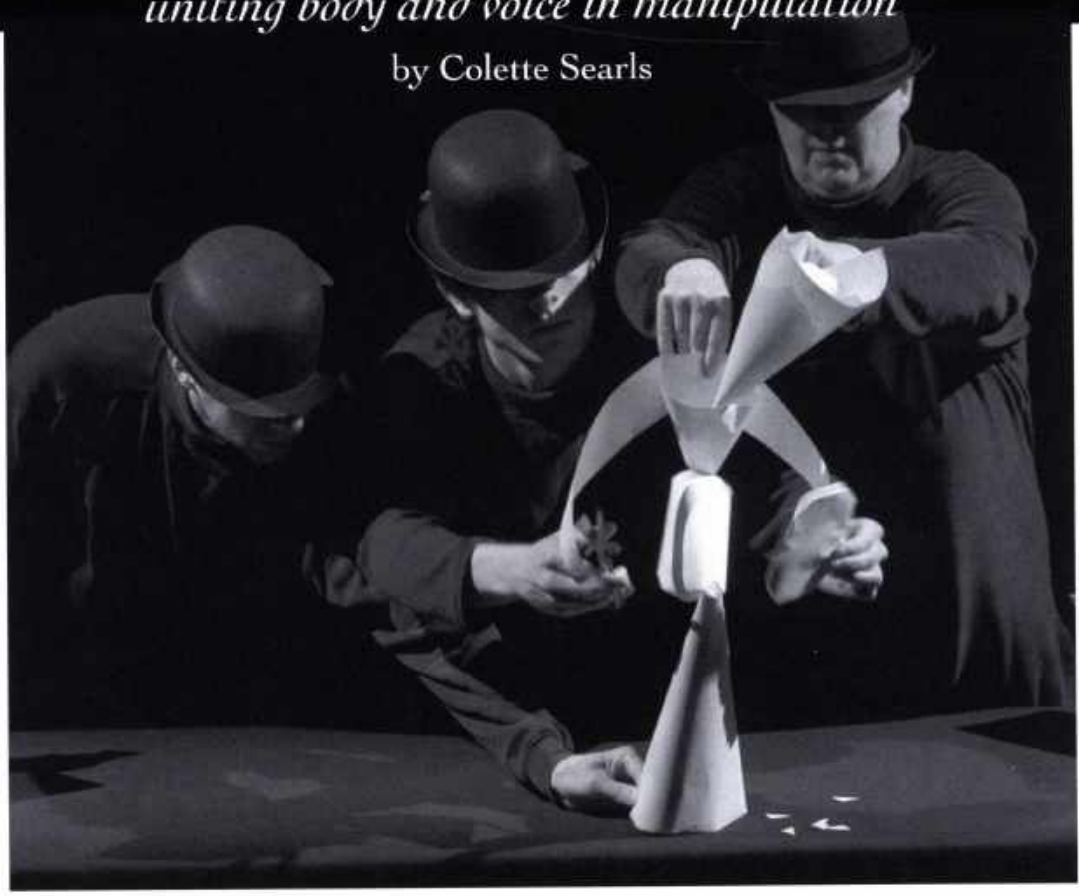
> The opera training taught me to control my voice, stay on pitch, and learn to use my diaphragm. Any vent will tell you that it's the diaphragm that's the most important part of your body—the word ventriloquist means speaking from the stomach, the diaphragm.
>
> Even so, I push my throat to the limits doing both impressions and ventriloquism. Producing sounds that are not natural to your own voice puts a tremendous strain on the vocal cords. The distance voice is the most taxing. When I was rehearsing backstage at America's Got Talent I would go over my routines without producing sound—just practicing the movements.
>
> Doing three shows a day was really hard on my voice. Even if you warm up for the first show, the throat cools down, and you need to use it for two more shows. One of the best things about winning America's Got Talent is that I don't have to do three shows a day, and it's a lot better for my voice.
>
> I warm up before every performance, doing scales and practicing my distance voice. I also drink hot tea before the show—I don't drink any soda or coffee, since caffeine is bad for the voice. I practice the entire routine once or twice making sound, but then work on it without sound. That saves my voice. But the main reason I can do what I do is because of a strong diaphragm. My biggest advice to anyone who wants to do ventriloquism is to develop your diaphragm. That's the key. It's where the support comes from, and without it you can really hurt your voice.
>
> Last year, Mr. Timmerman, my opera coach, came to see one of my performances. I was really nervous that he would hate it, since he always wanted me to go into opera. But he was proud of my success."

Terry Fator is always developing new characters, new routines. His contract with NBC will insure that we will see more of him and his unique talents in the future.

Rolande Duprey has her MFA in puppetry from the University of Connecticut. She is a frequent contributor and advisor to Puppetry International.

Vocal Work and the Puppet:
uniting body and voice in manipulation

by Colette Searls



Paper sculpture puppet from MOLTA, O'Neill Theater Center, 2004 photo: Richard Termine

In professional theatre, a vocal director[1] makes a broad range of contributions related to speech, text, and vocal production. Depending on a director's vision and needs, the vocal director's contributions might include coaching for dialect or heightened speech, helping actors adjust to the acoustics of the theatre space, or advising with special extremes such as wailing or shouting in a fight scene (Houfek 3). I have always held a profound respect for this discipline within theatre; it is not my area of expertise and I am continually awestruck by the results of the vocal director's often-multifaceted approach. In my puppetry experiments, I have been particularly excited to discover how principles of voice work can meet the needs of productions where characters are not portrayed by the actors themselves. I have found that paying attention to vocal technique can help a puppeteer find a unique sound for a puppet character, avoid unnecessary tension, and achieve more fluid and truthful manipulation.

My first puppetry collaboration with a vocal expert was with puppets made from light. It was a short piece, one of several acts from *Fanto... A Mysterious Vaudeville*, a variety show I conceived and directed at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC Theatre) in 2003. This experience helped me recognize how character relies on voice even when the puppet is not "speaking" in the traditional sense. The actors created these amorphous creatures by deflecting tightly focused light (filtered through colorful glass gobos) against the upstage wall with flexible mirrors. I did not want the puppets to speak recognizable English, but to communicate with a created language of sighs, grunts, and hisses. At the same time, I hoped to avoid high-pitched squeaks that have become associated with some small puppets—and which actors new to puppetry often use as a starting place. Vocal director Lynn Watson, also my colleague at UMBC, helped us develop the sound for these characters. She coached the puppeteers to play with a much wider range of pitch, tone, volume, rhythm—as well as new vowel and consonant sounds—so that each "light creature" would be distinct, yet collectively otherworldly. The results were far more imaginative than our original experiments. She also helped us translate into puppetry the principle that sound emission is kinetic, and that convincing physical action—by a human or an object—requires attention to the union of body and voice. This connection is especially important when puppets are communicating without words. In the *Fanto* performance, the actors moved these shapes of light almost as if they were dynamic color graphs, visually expressing the vibrations of sound.

My second collaboration with Watson at UMBC was with a larger cast of actors-turned-puppeteers manipulating a range of found-object and humanoid puppets. Here too, her expert attention to the puppeteer's voice advanced my own vision. *BURIED* was a puppet play I wrote about the spirits of war victims which used mixture of puppets and human characters. I cast a woman as the head puppeteer for a doll-like puppet built to the shape of a young boy by artist Don Becker. Again, I wanted an authentic voice for this character yet was a not-so-innocent child who communed with tortured ghosts. Watson worked individually with this actress, seeking a pitch range and tone that would advance the richness of character—but also sound believable for his age and size. The voice/body integration techniques included having the actress perform the boy extensively herself (without the puppet) in rehearsal. Their work resulted in a voice both spooky and believably child-like for this diminutive character.

A puppet's size and shape also pose challenges to vocal production from a physical standpoint. Puppeteers necessarily assume very awkward stances as they position their bodies above, below, or behind their puppets for long periods. A group of two or three bodies must often move together while crouched, bent, or hyper-extended to operate a single character (here the movement coach is also an important collaborator). Poor vocal technique is dangerous to any actor's voice, but puppetry brings the added perils of habitually straining the body in unusual ways. Excessive tension impedes an actor's expressiveness as well as her attention to impulse and emotional vulnerability—it is the enemy of organic performance. And because puppeteers are a step further removed from their characters, they must physically channel that openness and vulnerability through the puppets' inorganic bodies. Lynn Watson led the *BURIED* ensemble, alongside the production's movement coach, in exercises that would help them discover healthy positions to facilitate freedom and avoid tension. And in the most emotionally heightened scenes, where characters wailed or cried in pain, Watson coached each actor towards safe, well-supported and repeatable vocalization.

"Boy" from BURIED, UMBC Theatre, 2004 photo: Damon Meledones

Much of what the *BURIED* actors achieved came from their acute attention to breath—and here lies the most important connection between vocal technique and puppetry. The late Nikki Tilroe, a widely respected manipulation instructor and professional puppeteer (*Muppets, Fraggle Rock*), often talked about breath as the foundation of convincing manipulation for both the puppeteer and the puppet character. In 2004, she coached the movement of my actors in a tabletop, paper-sculpture play in which the puppeteers were silent, but the flow and *timing* of breath associated with vocal production was key to their fluid manipulation. The three puppeteers had to not only collectively operate these delicate puppets, but also silently transfer them from one set of hands to another as the puppets moved through their score of actions. Tilroe's insistence that breathing is timing (which she credited in part to her work with Marcel Marceau) gave the ensemble and me a shared language to help build the choreography.

Her beliefs about breath have proven intimately linked to my work with undergraduate actors-turned-puppeteers. Lynn Watson is an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework[2], an approach that emphasizes breath as the nexus for the integration of voice, body and thought. Understanding breath in this practice is critical to vocal freedom, creativity, and safety. UMBC's B.F.A. students learn these demanding and highly effective techniques in Watson's studio courses. In training and rehearsing actors for *BURIED,* Watson and I drew on the actors' evolving understanding of breath in their physical manipulation of puppets. The two or three puppeteers working with a single puppet learned to use breath as the signal for marrying voice with movement (all limbs in conjunction) in physical action/reaction. In other words, the head puppeteer would initiate an action —a reach, a step, or a vocal expression —with an inhalation. The puppet, as well as the other puppeteers, would share this breath and take it as the signal to begin speaking or moving on the exhale. This tactic, which helps puppeteers move gracefully as a unit, is common to performers working in styles inspired by the Japanese bunraku's three-puppeteer hierarchy. In our case, the actors' conception of breath came from their shared vocal training.

Fitzmaurice describes breath as the beginning of the impulse itself:

> "Inspiration" denotes both the physical act of breathing in, and the mental act of creating a thought. The expiration (breathing out) or expression of the thought is likewise both physical and mental (Fitzmaurice 248).

In training actors to puppeteer, I treat the physical impulse the same way—it begins with literal inspiration, a thought triggering action in the body. Breath is key to suspending disbelief in the incarnation of any inanimate object (indeed, it is the *anima*).

The puppet's voice—its language and expression—is intimately connected to the performer's own understanding of an actor's vocal practice. Voice work for the actor has its own tools, techniques, and body of experts. Using those experts (and actors who have trained with them) as a resource, can help a production achieve the degree of illusion that makes puppet theater at once magical and profoundly moving. §

Colette Searls is a stage director specializing in puppetry. She has received grants from The Jim Henson Foundation and Puppeteers of America for her work with found objects, and serves on the board of directors for UNIMA-USA. She is Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

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Footnotes

[1] In theatre, vocal directors are variously referred to as vocal coaches and vocal directors. More detailed information about the work of vocal directors/coaches can be found in "The Theatre Vocal Director in the U.S. and England," published in Voice and Speech Review (see Works Cited).

[2] Fitzmaurice Voicework is a registered trademark owned by Catherine Fitzmaurice.

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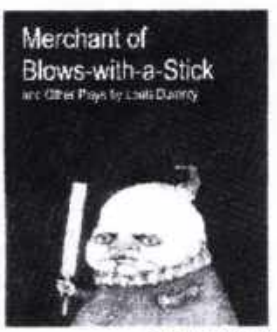

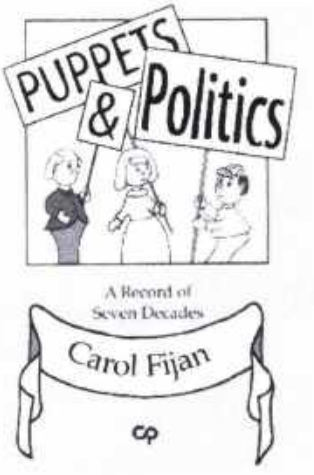

PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA

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THE PUPPET DIVAS by Suzanne Pemsler

A large van, speeding in the wrong direction, hurtles toward me. A screech of brakes, and the crunch of metal on metal.

I am trapped in my car with all the music for my year's concerts and several of the PUPPET DIVAS. Opera scores and art-song volumes scatter willy-nilly. Adele, a puppet made for the opera Die Fledermaus, *plummets from her perch on the back seat and lands in my lap, unbroken.*

Does my life in song and puppetry race before my eyes? It does.

I see my chalk-throwing, ruler-hitting third-grade teacher soften, and even smile, when she hears me sing. "Remember," she says, "I discovered you!"

She is kind to me after that. That's when I learn the power of song.

Now I'm studying voice at Juilliard, graduate school. I see my teachers and mentors—Louise Talma, Roland Hayes and Arthur Wilson— my opera roles, solo concerts at the Gardner Museum, and many hundreds of classical vocal concerts for adults and children, called, "Follow the Lieder."

In 1973, I'm asked to add puppetry to my Ethnic Omniform Arts workshops in drama, movement and song for children and the elderly, sponsored by the Boston Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs. Puppets? I didn't know enough about them. Puppet Showplace Theatre becomes my home-away-from-home, Paul Vincent-Davis and Mary Churchill my guides in puppet making and manipulation. I am smitten by the art. At the end of the summer of 1974, PBS uses my puppets in three long-running shows for children and I entertain at the Chinese Moon Festival to enormous audiences with my little stage and homemade hand puppets. My puppet muscles are just beginning to develop some definition.

I hear a chance comment—"Why don't you combine puppetry with your singing?"

Will a stage full of puppets be my way to make classical music accessible to audiences of all ages? Will puppets bring added dimension, a heightened sense of drama, humor and whimsy to songs and arias in different languages? Will their presence on the stage visually brighten the aura of a serious vocal concert? Will audiences understand art songs and arias in many languages without having to follow translations? I am sure the answer to each is "yes."

The concept of joining classical singing with puppetry feels right. Each song or aria will become a mini-drama, drenched in color on the stage. My people-sized puppets called PUPPET DIVAS, soon fill concert stages and school auditoriums on stands and chairs, poised to emote. The few smaller puppets are set up on brocade-covered tables. I work without a stage, always visible, aware of audience reaction.

Although I make most of the puppets myself, a few of the more glamorous divas are made for me. Our aim is to have the puppets visible at a long distance, yet perfect in the smallest detail —one boasting long red fingernails, others flaunting baubles on their hands, hair and clothing, one waving a frothy, expressive handkerchief.

Twelve life-sized puppets appear on stage—Manon, Carmen, Tosca, Lauretta, Gilda, Madama Butterfly, and others in costumes of velvet, tulle and silk, exemplifying the spirit of the character.

It is magic when the puppets convey veiled concepts in foreign language texts, heighten the humor or deepen the pathos of the songs. Audiences become larger and I travel nationally and internationally with the show housed for the trip in four huge black trunks, the kind vaudeville houses used when they transported costumes and g-strings.

A singer has to stand with good posture. The puppets are made to allow for that. Many of the largest puppets are on stands, have moveable heads and arms move with rods. One particularly round-bodied puppet with a moveable mouth and arms attaches to me via a flag-pole rod and straps. Another puppet is created of two tubes and opulent fabric with a sinuous skirt movement and a mouth that opens vertically. A large, soft-sculpture puppet sits on my lap so I can sit up straight while singing with her. My arm goes into her sleeve allowing me to use my own hand to manipulate. So simple, so miraculous to me.

I feel glad I waited to perform the two arts together. Puppets and singer must breathe and phrase as one. I need a secure vocal technique to manipulate the puppets while singing. Even when I sing difficult long pianissimos, toss off the coloratura high notes expected of me or wrest long phrases, I can't leave the puppet stranded. We're in this together.

In Florence, Italy, I forget to bring Hans and the Rose to a performance of Schubert's *Heidenröslein*, and use only my hands.

Unexpected things do happen. On tour in India, while singing "Un Bel Di" from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, I lose puppet concentration at an impassioned high note, thrust my hand through Butterfly's kimono sleeve and keep on going...and going...until my full bare arm appears. I, too, have to keep going, but I feel my face turning red. In a performance in Norway, the large crystal teardrop in the poignant farewell aria from Donizetti's, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, doesn't gracefully, quietly flow down on a hidden runner. Instead, it stays in place, loudly plunking on her cheek throughout the aria. I see people dabbing at their eyes, and not because they are saddened.

The PUPPET DIVAS lead to Puppet Opera-tunity, the creation of comic-puppet operas with youngsters in month-long residencies in Louisiana, Massachusetts and Montana. Everyone is smiling, especially me. After a performance with the PUPPET DIVAS, I bring out a Magic Box of found-object puppets. The children go home to raid their houses, make puppets, find personalities for them and bring them in to school. Together, we create a libretto and songs using their puppet characters. Creativity, energy and laughter are what I remember most—and funny librettos.

Suddenly, there is banging on the side of my car.

My musing is over. Help has come at last. My car and I are both broken in places, but I sit smiling and calm when the emergency workers finally break through the door. They register surprise at my demeanor. I don't explain that Adele, my lap partner, has helped me through this crisis. In her aria, dubbed "The Laughing Song," she counters annoyance and irritation with humor and charm. And I don't tell them that the puppet Adele's shiny, many-hued garb reminds me anew of the colorful life I've led since the marriage of puppetry and song in the PUPPET DIVAS. That's a lot to smile about.

In addition to her distinguished singing career, Pemsler is a long-time member of the Boston Area Guild of Puppetry.

Mastering the Theatrical Voice in INDONESIAN WAYANG KULIT

by I Nyoman Sedana, PhD

Out of the five major artistic elements of wayang—story, puppet manipulation, musicianship, the *kawi dalang* (creativity), and voice (vocal arts, speech, diction, puns)—it is the voice that most significantly transmits the dramatic element of the puppet show. Narrative detail, character, wit and critique largely come from the voice; a *dalang* (puppet master) who lacks a strong, trained voice will never succeed.

Among the five different performers who invariably play the main role in a ritual celebration—priest, dalang, musician, mask dancer, and singers/chorus—the priest is the most soft-spoken, tranquil, and introverted in his demeanor. In this he is unlike a Christian preacher, who publicly shares his knowledge in Sunday church sermons and public readings of religious texts. Of the remaining artists, the dalang is perhaps the most well-trained in religious and moral issues; he is expected to speak publicly about issues of significance ranging from the comic to the tragic, from the profane to the holy. What the priest silently executes on the eternal plane, the dalang voices for the mundane.

Voice Training Technique

Like most of the Indonesian teaching methods in theatre art, voice training also employs imitation, repetition, and emulation. The student imitates examples given by the instructor, especially examples imitated from nature: wind, wave, fire, water, earthquake, and what ever else is needed. Vocal representation of monkey, horse, goat, tiger, lion, dog, pig, duck, bird and so on requires imitating the sound of each animal. Training the voice to represent monkeys has been an absolute prerequisite for a dalang before enacting any part from the fourth canto (*Kinskenda kanda*) to the seventh canto (*Utara kanda*) of the *Ramayana*. Most dalangs can imitate the voice for a single monkey, but those who receive big ovations are dalang who can voice numerous monkeys, especially to support the popular story of *The Death of Kumbakarna*.

In the process of learning, the imitated vocal pattern is repeated, eventually enhancing dexterity. After such emulation comes refining in which the student attempts to modify and improve upon the existing example. To help obtain the right vocal texture, the guru would typically instruct students to shift the source of the voice from one cavity of the body to another. For example, the student is first asked to recite any syllable from the throat cavity, and then shift it into the bowels or head area, making the voice significantly different. Next the guru would tell the student to shift the voice from that simple syllable to a word, and then a phrase or a sentence, and finally a dramatic paragraph. Such vocal training by shifting vocal placement goes on and on. Soon, the voice may be altered with regard to dynamics (intensity), mood (excited, reluctant), volume (loud, medium, soft), tempo (slow, medium, or fast), and range (bass, tenor, alto) until the student truly understands that the voice is magically and excitingly transformable.

All images by Peter Buurman from his book WAYANG GOLEK (A. W. Sijthoff, Amsterdam: 1980)

ABOVE: Pandawa section of Mahabharata from behind the screen (dalang unknown)

The theatrical voice (*munyi lebeng*) as opposed to daily voice (*munyi matah*) is one of the most significant elements in wayang. To master this voice is imperative, and one of the biggest challenges on the path to becoming a good dalang. A student's father once told me:

> I wish my son to major in puppetry in order to become a good dalang, as that would likely give him a better chance to succeed, but he would have a hard time mastering the *lebeng* voice. That is why I let him to register in ethnomusicology, as his musicianship is already developed.

Many beginning students are indeed discouraged from enrolling in the Wayang Department of the Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI), Denpasar, or drop out before graduation, unable to master voice and other challenges of this exacting art.

The difficulty of mastering the standard voice for wayang has been a perennial reason why the Puppetry Department always has the smallest number of students. Public opinion and concerns on voice are equally strong as those among the practitioners and beginners. Public critical expression may occasionally suggest: "His dalang artistry is already good enough, but his voice still needs some more work."

In the government-sponsored schools, a number of voice-based lessons include: *wacana* (formerly *retorika*, the rhetoric), *bahasa dan seni suara* (speech and diction), *vocal Pedalangan* (vocal arts of dalang), *tatembangan* (song and sung lines on instrumental music or its varying collaborative patterns with the pairing of music instruments), and *pratik pagelaran* (performance practices). In those classes, the instructor teaches students required voices for wayang, which include vocal arts, as well as speech, diction, and puns.

The local term for diction is *seni suara*. Diction employed in Balinese theatre is specified by the essence of stock character rather than by the named dramatic character itself. Each stock character has its own distinctive diction, which may only be shared by characters of the same type. In other words, there is a typical diction that is appropriate to a certain character as a king (*raja*), a prime minister (*patih*), a prince (*putra*), a princess (*putri*), a demon (*detya, denawa*), a priest or sage (*rsi, bhagawan*), conventional male and female court attendants (*panasar, panyruan*), and for folk characters.

If I were to present a demon king in wayang, no matter the source of the story, whether the demon king is Rawana from the *Ramayana* or Detya Baka from the *Mahabharata* or Watakwaca from the *Arjuna's Wedding*, my diction is the same for this average demon king. A slight modification is necessary for a demon-like Kumbakarna, who requires a "snorkeling" breath in between his words, or when he inhales as he sleeps. This snorkeling lets the comic servant comment on his stinking breath.

So too, who and whatever prince is enacted, the character type's diction is the same—a prince. Characters would share the same diction with slight modification. Thus, mastering the basic diction of those stock characters would enable a performer to enact any dramatic character of the potential narrative reservoir.

Stock characters in wayang have long been popular in Bali, so people throughout the island are familiar with the stylistic diction of each character type. The instructor does not need to tell the student which character speaks quickly or slowly. They have known this since childhood. What they need to know is how to train the voice and master conventional diction. In my experience, the most practical way to master diction of major dramatic character is by deeply and thoroughly perceiving and then internalizing the shape of the mouth, the nose, the teeth, the eye, and the gender of the character, and imagining its stomach and the general shape of its body.

Each guru in the villages and in the government-sponsored schools can give various tips for developing the voice according to his and her experiences. One suggested we first free the voice simply by singing and speaking loudly on a river, a beach, or in a place close to a waterfall. We might

ABOVE: Adipati Karna and Prabu Baladewa, from the Kurawa section

also allow the stream of water from a spout to drop toward our mouth while yelling (to compete with the noise of water). The main goal of this training was to increase the loudness of the voice. Such techniques may be discouraged in the western vocal training where one trains the voice without force, but in Bali, screaming builds power. We puppeteers were known for being obstreperous students, because we often practiced our wayang diction and songs loudly while taking showers in the dorms.

Food matters, too. In high school in Bali, majoring in Pedalangan puppetry, we were told to eat a specific banana, namely *biu kayu* "banana wood," steamed with coconut milk. Eating it after intense rehearsal would remedy and sooth our throats and help the vocal cavity, *pita suara*. In addition, another instructor suggested we eat papaya and banana, minimize the intake of oil, and avoid the thorny-skinned *salak* and *durian* fruit, sugared ice drinks, and coffee.

Patterns or "families" of voices for characters can be perceived. The late mask dancer Ketut Rindha once taught me about four basic voices that belong to the four ever-present court attendants of the wayang, noting that out of these four, all voices could be understood. The following characters are the models: the fat black Twalen, the pompous braggart Delem, the quick, sharp Wredah, and the skeptical Sangut. The tones of their voices are associated with the names of four different root plants: *Gamōngan* (herb), *Jaē* (ginger), *Cekuh* (kaempferia galanga), and *Kunyit* (turmeric).

The slow-loose-big-low-pitch voice for Twalen should conform to the pronunciation of *Gamōng*, a relative of ginger. The tone of the syllable *ōng* corresponds to *Ndong*, which is the tone of the biggest key, located on the extreme left of the Gamelan Gender music instrument, which accompanies the puppet performance. This tone becomes the standard voice for the priest, sage/Rsi, and demonic characters. The major source of this voice is in the throat cavity.

The fast-sharp-big-medium-pitch voice for Delem corresponds to *Jaē!*, ginger. The tone of vowel "_" corresponds to *Ndēng*, which is the tone of the second biggest key, the second key from the left of the Gamelan Gender music instrument. This low tone is also the identifying voice for a grumpy character or soldier, such that it is comparable to puppets with round eyes (*mata deling*). The major source of this voice is in the chest or upper abdominal area.

The fast-sharp-high-pitch voice for Wredah corresponds to the sound of *Cekuh* or *Kencur*, white turmeric. The tone of the vowel *u* in the syllable *uh* or *ur* corresponds to *Ndung*, the tone of the third biggest key, the third key form the left of the Gamelan Gender music instrument. This tone identifies the voice for a character such as the refined king, like Arjuna or Kresna, and other puppets with tiny eyes. The major source of this voice is in the area of our head.

The slow-loose-high-pitch voice for Sangut corresponds to *Kunyit*, turmeric. The tone of vowel *i* in the syllable *nyit* may be associated with the tone *Nding*, the tone of the highest key, at the extreme right of the Gamelan Gender music instrument. This tone is also the identifying voice for major female characters. The source of this voice is derived from the tongue.

In this four voice model for puppetry, the tone *Ndang* is missing. Although there is no clown to represent this fifth tone—the voice *is* part of the repertoire. This tone is used for the majority of folk or commoner characters. The priest assistant, Baru, has a normal speed and pitch, which is not shared by the four court attendant characters mentioned above. The appropriate voice for Baru corresponds to *Bawang*, or onion. The vowel *a* in the syllable *ang* exactly matches the tone of *Ndang*, this missing fourth key. The major source of this voice is between our lips and mouth cavity.

Hence, the speech diction of wayang may be developed from the five basic voices of the "clown-servant" or commoner characters of wayang theatre: Twalen, Delem, Wredah, Sangut, and Baru. These clowns and common folk are often considered indigenous characters, predating the influence of Indian Hinduism and Chinese Buddhism in Bali. These dramatic characters do not exist in the source dramatic literature of *kakawin*, neither in the *Ramayana*, nor in the *Mahabharata*, yet they always appear in wayang performance as servant characters that translate and provide commentary throughout the performance.

So it may be that this idea did not come from outside Bali with the borrowing of world religions and their myths. These voices, which need first to be heard, then emulated and finally mastered, were already inside Balinese bodies and culture. The training that a puppeteer undergoes helps the student to learn how to release them. While use of complex language, singing, puns, and other aspects of vocal practice that I call *Kawi* dalang (puppeteer's language) need still to be developed, understanding the theatrical voice (*munyi lebeng*) is an important step in becoming a puppetmaster.

I Nyoman Sedana is professor and former Chairman of the Theatre Department at the Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI) in Bali. He earned his Ph.D from the University of Georgia and MA from Brown University. Sedana has taught widely in the United States, and is the recipient of major awards like Asian Fellows Award, Freeman Research Award, and an award from the Asian Cultural Council of New York. Sedana co-authored Performance in Bali (by Routledge), publishes frequently and has performed all over the world.

WAYANG GOLEK

by Kathy Foley, photographs by Peter Buurman

I perform in the tradition of *Wayang golek purwa*—a rod puppet genre of West Java, Indonesia. While I play many characters and multiple epics, the range of voices that I use for the various character is actually quite limited. The tessitura of the four major voices are governed by two notes—the one and four of the Sundanese *slendro gamelan* scale—though the octave may change. The voices correspond to character types: *lenyapan/alus* (refined male or female), *lenyap* (semi-refined male or female), *punggawa* (strong male), *angkara-murka* (emotionally uncontrolled and demonic). Each character uses a slightly different resonance, rhythm, or register.

The *lenyapan* character's voice hovers around the lower note of 4 on the *gamelan* scale. The character starts talking on a 4 (cued by the saron, a metalophone in the *gamelan*), moves a couple of notes up or down in the body of the speech and returns to 4 at the end. The back of the mouth is rounded and used as the major resonator. The tuning phrase, "Masaman," with its delicious "m" vibration in the mouth and lips, may start the speech. A slow, even rhythm marks the measured wisdom of the refined hero or his loyal wife. Gender is made evident by whether the round sounds generated in the back of the mouth are focused down toward the chest resonator (male) or up toward the nasal resonator (female). At the points when the *dalang* (puppeteer) speaks as narrator, he basically uses this *lenyapan* voice, but uses the chest resonator more distinctly.

The *lenyap* character starts and ends on the higher note (1) and the rhythm is a fast and even staccato. The resonator is dental and the sound can even be a bit nasal. When my students first try it they often lapse into something like Alvin the chipmunk, but with effort smooth it out. The female character is often just a bit faster than the male and instead of returning to the polar note 1 at the end of a sentence, it moves up a note on the scale.

The *punggawa* character is a strong male and the note is the same 4 as is used for the *lenyapan*, but the vocal cords are tightened creating a rasp as the sound is caught at the glottis. The downward press of breath makes it echo in the chest. The tuning sound to begin this character's speech is "greurum," a sound that approximates an animal's deep growl.

The *ankara-murka* is a demonic character who begins on the 1 used by the *lenyap* character. The character's voice moves widely over an octave as the speech is delivered. The top of the skull and the nasal bones are all activated as resonators on the higher notes, while chest resonance is used for the low tone.

With slight variations in rhythm or some more comic distortions for clowns, demons and special figures, these four simple voices can be used to deliver the dialogue of a multitude of characters. None of these voices are "normal;" they are all musical and rhythmical distortions of the dalang's voice. To find these voices, the puppeteer plays different parts

Clown scene: Cepot, Semar, Arjuna and Petruk (dalang Pandji)

Clown scene: Cepot (dalang Pandji)

of the body. The larynx is his flute, the vocal folds are like a swallowed reed, and the chest-throat-nose-skull are his resonators. By using the architectonics of his instrument—the human body—the dalang creates multiple voices that are never like real male or female voices, and yet they give the illusion of being "right" for these varied figures—from the svelte, long-armed prince to the bulbous-eyed, red-faced demon.

Where do these voices come from? One could argue that the growling voice of the *punggawa* is evident in the performances of many related shamanic and mediumistic forms. We find it for example in the sound of *pansori*, the Korean narrative tradition. We find it with the *ching* (painted face character) in Chinese opera, the *aragoto* (strong) samurai voice in *kabuki*. The high voice of the *lenyap* is related to the sound of the *dan* (female impersonator) in Chinese opera in both its human and puppet forms. The medium voice and its slower balance remind us of the chanting we hear in Chan, Son, Zen Buddhist forms and the sonorant chant of the *shite*—the main character in Japanese *noh*.

Does this mean these genres are related? This would be difficult to prove through an examination of the historical record. But that idea of moving the voice out of the everyday remains the potent principle. Stylized characters, masks, and puppets are related—they demand a voice that reflects their "otherness." With the choice of a puppet, walking moves toward dance, sound rises toward music, and the voice of the puppeteer moves from its normal range toward something entirely theatrical. These sounds and voices, suppressed in our everyday lives, are there in our throats, chests, noses, and heads and are just waiting to break through.

Kathy Foley is a dalang and professor at UCSC. For a more in-depth version of this article GO TO:

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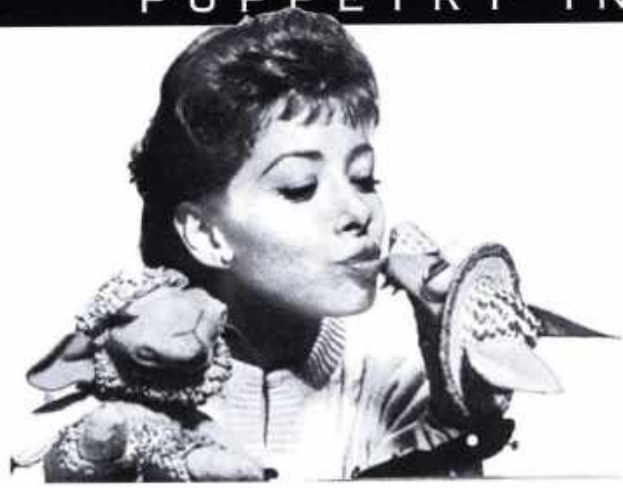


What voices are so vivid...

by Steve Abrams

...that I can recall the feelings, time, place and exact words and intonation? What voices are treasured memories?

In the world of puppetry, one of the greatest tag lines of the last fifty years is, "What a surprise!" Without saying another word, hundreds of readers who love puppetry will instantly hear the voice of **Albrecht Roser's** knitting, grandmother marionette.

The song "Super Kangaroo" immediately evokes a delighted, knowing smile and a memory of **Richard Bradshaw's** solo shadow show. The vocal qualities I think of first with Richard Bradshaw are perfect timing and crisp diction. More than the showy accoutrements of an opera singer's velvet tones or the authority of a James Earl Jones, Bradshaw sustains an evening of puppet theatre with a voice that is subtle, refined and a perfect match for his deceptively simple puppetry.

Ronnie Burkett's superb writing and sculpting help to establish his characters even before they speak. His best characters are usually female. His grande dame, deep-voiced divas are scene stealers. His quieter, wiser females, like Tinka, require great nuance in vocal performance. The humanity of Tinka or Edna Rural are at the very core of his art. Burkett's work has so much emotional power that I entirely forget to notice his vocal technique, but I certainly can hear Edna Rural saying, "Lord love a duck."

Sergei Obrazstov's flawless solo show was filled with Russian songs. Much of his comic work had a quality described as lyrical irony, however two of his most loved vignettes were lyrical without irony. "The Lullaby," sung to a puppet of an infant, totally enveloped the audience in paternal tenderness. Tchaikovsky's deeply Russian and deeply poetic "By the River" is a beautiful art song that contributes to the passion of the exposed hands and fingers of Obrazstov's most famous work.

David Simpich has beautifully modulated vocal gifts. Many of his voices evoke a Victorian era theatrical style. When his ugly duckling marionette looks up and says to his creator, "I don't think I like your stories, Mr. Hans Christian Anderson," Simpich deconstructs the great author with vocal mastery.

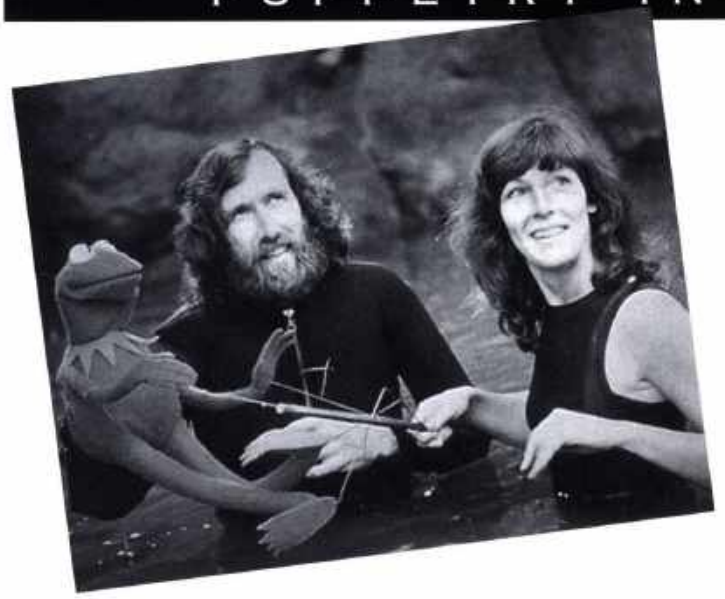
John Tartaglia earned a best actor Tony Award nomination for his work in *Avenue Q*, where he portrayed both the leading man (puppet) Princeton, and the closeted gay character, Rod. Princeton sets the tone for the show, singing, "What do you do with a BA in English?" He leads the entire cast in one of funniest of songs, "It Sucks to be Me." Tartaglia's voices for Princeton and Rod are not enormously different from each other, yet the two characters remain entirely distinct.

Basil Twist's breathy, lyrical rendition of a 1942 pop song, "I Had the Craziest Dream," seemed to be the life force that lifted an elongated abstract marionette right into the air.

Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop were an act that was polished to perfection. Lamb Chop had a great range of moods. The voice could rise to be girly and flirtatious, drop to create a mock moment of grandiose drama or deliver a triumphant zinger. Shari and Lamb Chop rapidly traded lines in their virtuoso rendition of the song "Rumania." The performance inspired me to try a puppet duet, alternating voices for each phrase and for the final line, attempting to do alternate voices for every other word.

Carroll Spinney's Big Bird is one of the most recognized of all puppets with over 3 million google hits. The voice for Spinney's other legendary character, Oscar the Grouch, was inspired by a New York taxi driver. Big Bird's "ABC-DEF-GHI" and Oscar's "I Love Trash" were both on the first (and still the most popular) of all the *Sesame Street* recordings.

Above, L to R:
Shari Lewis, David Simpich, Jim Henson and Kathryn Mullen, Fran Allison and Burr Tillstrom with Jack Fascinato



Kathryn Mullen is perhaps one of the least recognized truly great puppeteers. Her work includes the lead character in *Allegra's Window*, the part of Leona from *Between the Lions* and the voice of Kira in *Dark Crystal*. As Mokey Fraggle in *Fraggle Rock*, Mullen gave us a character that was strong, confident and entirely feminine. Perhaps in an effort to present a consistent and instantly recognizable voice, some voice-over artists keep a vocal creation within narrow boundaries. Mokey Fraggle's voice had an uninhibited range of expression. Like a true artist, Mokey led us to refine our vision and open our hearts. "Show me the light in a butterfly's eye. Show me the things I like to explore. Show me more."

Although not a puppeteer, I think the ultimate master in vocal characterization was **Mel Blanc.** After nearly seventy years, "What's up, Doc?" is still the most recognized of all cartoon signature lines. Bugs would be enough to assure Mel Blanc's immortality, but he also created the voices of Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, Yosemite Sam, Tweety Bird, Sylvester Cat, Pepé LePew, Road Runner's "Meep Meep" and even Barney Rubble.

More than Kukla and Ollie or Bugs Bunny, the voices on *Rocky and Bullwinkle* were the ones that I worked to imitate. Everyone in my family could do lines from the show. **June Foray's** Rocky the Squirrel had qualities of optimism and forbearance. She was a perfect "straight man" in contrast to the more extravagant Bullwinkle. My personal all time favorite from the show is the voice of Natasha Fatale. "Boris, dahling, moose and squirrel escaped. Vhat is plan B?"

For me, the puppeteer that comes closest to the achievement of Mel Blanc or June Foray is **Frank Oz.** Burt, Sam the Eagle, Grover, Cookie Monster, Animal, Fozzie Bear, and Miss Piggy all have memorable voices. Yoda gets over 16 million hits on google! Yoda's advice could be useful to anyone attempting puppet voices: "No. Try not. Do... or do not. There is no try."

Jim Henson's characters have become a shared cultural experience for millions and millions of people. The loopy, rollicking voice of the Swedish Chef from the *Muppet Show* is sometimes in my head when I chop vegetables. There is a cheerful, bouncy quality to many of the Henson songs, like Ernie's "Rubber Ducky." "Rainbow Connection" has a bright sound. A great favorite is Rowlf's song "Cottleson Pie."

Rowlf's voice has a rasp that is quite distinct from Kermit. The ballad, "Bein' Green," is a rare jewel that provides just a momentary glimpse of underlying complexities. Kermit's voice is hesitant as he ponders his place in the world, and builds to a stronger sound of quiet acceptance. Henson perfectly matches his voice to the emotional arc of the words.

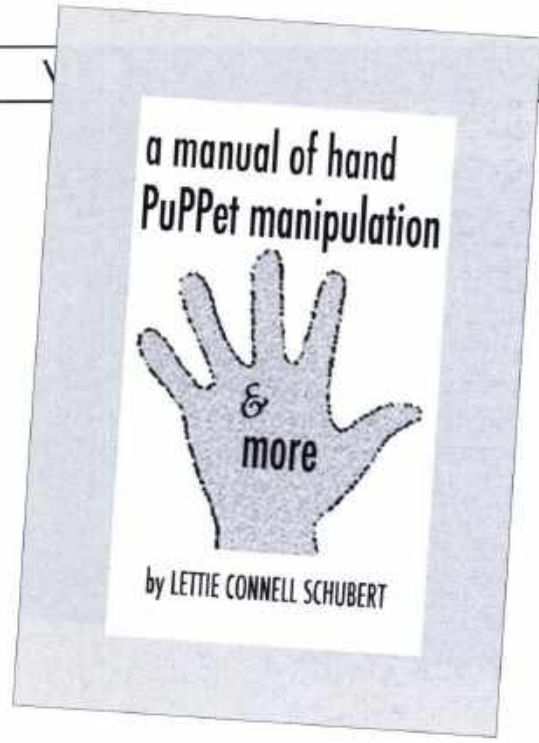
When legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini was introduced to **Burr Tillstrom**, he greeted the puppeteer as "Maestro," a rare, almost unprecedented accolade from the reigning master of classical music. Kukla, Ollie, Beulah Witch and Madame Ooglepuss each had very distinctive sounds. Beulah's rendition of the Rogers and Hart standard, "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," had all the strength and wonder, and subtle sub-text that only the finest of interpretations could supply. When each one of the Tillstrom puppets spoke or sang, the voice seemed to be the spontaneous expression of who the character really was.

To prepare this gallery of vocal favorites, emotional memory provided the guide. Reviewing the choices again, it seems that memorable voices most often come from memorable characters. For a quiet moment in *Gypsy*, Stephen Sondheim wrote tender lyrics for "Little Lamb," a song about a young girl's forgotten birthday. Burr Tillstrom gave the song to Oliver Dragon for a very fine version and later to Kukla for the Broadway show *Side by Side by Sondheim*. When the androgynous Kukla— part clown, part innocent child, part wise old sage—sang "Little Lamb," the make-the-best-of-it resignation in his voice somehow broke your heart and healed it all at the same time. §

A Manual of Hand Puppet Manipulation and More

by Lettie Connell Schubert

234 pp. Charlemagne Press, 2007. 13 b/w illustrations. $20.



Anyone who ever attended one of the late Lettie Connell Schubert's performance critiques realized she had a rare talent for easy-going yet cogent analysis. Not surprisingly, *A Manual of Hand Puppet Manipulation and More* is tactful and discriminating. For instance, she succinctly differentiates between *practice* – achieving skill with the *instruments* (puppets, staging, lighting; everything that comprises technique) and *rehearsal* – achieving mastery of the *script in performance*.

When she talks about why people go into the business of puppetry Schubert lays out some common, underlying considerations, such as the following:

> For whom do you WANT to perform? Children? Do you really enjoy them? Or do you think that their lack of sophistication makes them easy to entertain? Or are kids' shows a way to make a few bucks so you can do the kind of show you really want to do? Do you know what amuses or intrigues children at various ages? Do you know the length of attention span for each age level? Do you know the appropriate material, vocabulary and concepts for various ages? Can you sense how your young audience is reacting? Do you have some good techniques for keeping an audience under control without stopping the show or threatening the audience? Where will you perform? Homes, restaurants, schools, libraries, museums, theatres, hospitals, parks or picnics? Where can't you perform? Can your work play well out of doors? Can you say no to the unworkable kind of set-up, or the inappropriate age group for your show?

She reminds her readers that, no matter how cleverly built or beautifully made, a hand puppet is not a little person. Its comparatively limited range of movement and expression is an abstraction of human movement and expression, related to the traditional acting techniques of pantomime. Puppet pantomime, she writes, "is the simplification and amplification of movement to convey clearly an idea – the idea encompasses the physical and mental state of the character being mimed. Is it a he or a she? Human or animal? Young or old? Happy or sad? Sick or healthy? Calm or excited?"

Schubert developed such concerns into exercises for hand puppeteers that fine-tune muscular strength and awareness while building creative flexibility and aesthetic control. Because they are distillations of her many years as a performer, teacher and keen observer of the arts, these exercise/workouts are straightforward, clear, useful and refreshingly free of intellectual or aesthetic pretension. She concludes her chapter on puppet pantomime with a section titled "Finalization," which includes the following advice:

1. First of all, a puppet should be constructed to work well.
2. Practice characteristic movements.
3. Simplify and eliminate so the imagery is clear.
4. Practice and add movements to build character.
5. Edit and check to make sure added movements aren't distracting or irritating or overly repetitious.
6. Try it again – with an outside view, if possible. Do less rather than more.

The essays that are the heart of the book take up only 91 pages. Nonetheless, the book is extraordinarily specific and practical. For instance, she advises touring puppeteers to: "Avoid 'bungee cords' with their fearful hooks, for your safety and that of the bystander. Velcro and straps are safer."

In fact, reading the book is a lot like having a talk with Lettie. Her charm, wit and diplomacy could almost make you forget you were dealing with an enormously gifted, remarkably discerning and broadly experienced professional.

The author's original *Manual of Hand Puppet Manipulation* was first released as a 19-page handbook in 1974, and in 1980 the author published a revised edition. Schubert's *Manual* has often been described by booksellers as a "how-

to" book. For some, that designation connotes an easy-to-read book that purports to confer instant expertise on casual dilettantes. But that isn't necessarily so. *A Manual of Hand Puppet Manipulation and More* is for those who want to be, or already are, professional puppeteers. The chapters cover manipulation, characterization, blocking, design, puppet making, stage construction, playwriting and business practices.

No less importantly, throughout her essays, Schubert humorously implies that puppeteers should become dedicated, curious and informed audience members, as in the following passage:

> A puppet show! I go. It starts. And does the magic happen? Do I believe? Do I care what happens? Is my attention held? Is my knowledge of technique overcome by emotional involvement with the characters who are moved upon the stage? Or am I aware of beautiful/badly done figures, appropriate/unartistic sets, well-written/awkward dialogue, perfect/inadequate sound, convincing/distracting movement?
>
> Why can I go to a lavish, sophisticatedly spectacular, expensively conceived production and feel bored and cheated?
>
> Why did I come away a different person from something I went to only because it and I were in the same geographical location at the same moment and it was convenient to go, and I went because I supposed I really should, but didn't really want to, and I sat there snobbishly scoffing at first and then my whole consciousness was painfully pulled into a state of complete attention and involvement, and I felt love and pain and horror and peace and I furtively wiped away tears lest my neighbor catch me feeling moved.

Considerably more than half of the book consists of the texts of Schubert's plays for hand puppets. The best of these illustrate the points in her essays regarding dialogue, plotting, characterization, scope for blocking and so forth. Because there are a lot of illustrations and photographs as well as ample white space, the book can be read in less than a day.

Perhaps, in future editions, the relatively frequent typos will be corrected and Alan Cook's excellent introduction on Lettie Schubert's life and work can be expanded. But these are minor caveats.

With the publication of this book, Lettie Connell Schubert's family and Charlemagne Press (the imprint of Coad Canada Puppets) have done the field a considerable service. *A Handbook of Hand Puppet Manipulation and More* is well worth reading and re-reading. Its combination of wisdom, wit, brevity and detail is extraordinary.

review by Michael R. Malkin

Sam Kerson's Dragon Dance Theatre

has been featured many times in P.I. The theatre embodies UNIMA's ideals of international friendship and understanding through the art of puppetry, having created spectacles in France, Argentina, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatamala, Canada and the U.S. Sam and his partner, Katah, have also maintained careers as visual artists. This image, and that on our back cover, were created in 2005 in Trois Rivières, Quebec. The series, "Weapons of Mass Destruction," is a memorial to the 1946 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These are Sam's charcoals, digitized and colored by Katah.

www.samkerson.com
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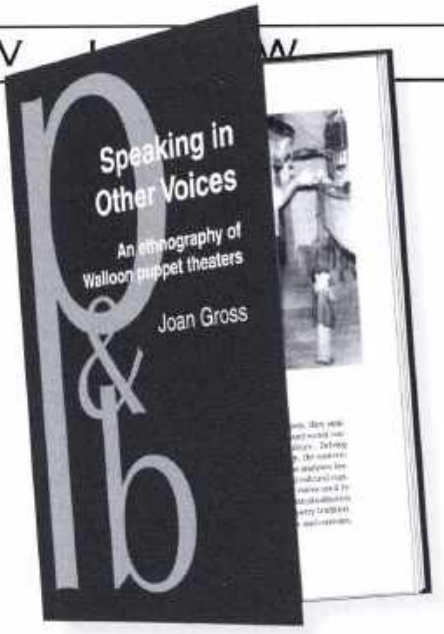
Speaking in Other Voices:
An Ethnography of Walloon Puppet Theaters
by Joan Gross



337 pp. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001. $162.

In *Speaking in Other Voices*, anthropologist Joan Gross offers a detailed ethnographic study of puppetry in Wallonia (the southern part of Belgium bordering France) with a particular focus on the function of voice.

As local puppeteers manipulate their puppets, Gross argues, they similarly manipulate the deeply historical and social construction of the Walloon language and culture. Delving into the history of rod puppetry in Liège, the easternmost province of the Walloon region, Gross analyzes language usage in terms of social power and cultural capital. Her sociolinguistic analysis of the voices used by urban working class puppeteers finds contextualization within 19th century medieval texts, puppetry tradition, and contemporary Belgian speech patterns and customs. Analyzing the linguistic and tonal choices made by the puppeteer voicing an entire cast of characters, Gross untangles a web of meaning steeped in a rich history of identity struggles, class conflict and imperial tension.

Heavy in theoretical discourse, Gross's book is not geared toward the casual reader; instead, it provides rich fodder for scholars of anthropology, linguistics, and sociology. In many ways, Gross uses the puppet theatre of Liège to critically examine issues fundamental to linguistic anthropology. Early in the book she explains,

> An investigation of Liège puppet theaters allows us to clearly see heteroglossia [the use of different voices] as the nature of language and mimesis [the imitation of aspects of the sensible world] as the cornerstone of cultural transmission. In daily life outside of performance frames, heteroglossia and mimesis are more subtle and dispersed, but in the puppet theater of Liège, they are condensed and exaggerated and show their devices to the world.

Building upon post-structural discourse, Gross explains her project as the examination of "how metadiscursive entextualization of 'the tradition' establishes the authority of puppeteers,"

The book is divided into ten chapters, each presented with a thorough foundation in linguistic theory and anthropology. Gross acknowledges the potential pitfalls involved in her study, linking her scholarship with the form at hand: "Whatever model one follows," she writes, "representation confers power and control on representers (puppeteers or anthropologists) because they determine the voices of the others Introducing her project in Chapter One, Gross focuses Chapter Two on the historical relationship between the French and the Walloon as compared to the Flemish and the Dutch.

Gross hits her stride in Chapter Three, entitled "Class and Culture in 19th Century Liège and the Rise of the Puppet Theater," in which she examines the political economy of the early rod-puppet tradition. Through lenses of symbolism, nationalism, and regionalism, Gross considers political manipulation and historical conditions of material production and audience generation from 1830 to World War I.

With a hearty nod to Mikhail Bakhtin, Gross links popular culture to dominant culture as she examines the evolution of the puppet theatre following the adoption of the form by the bourgeoisie. She discusses the role of the servant both in daily life and in the puppet plays as mediator both between the bourgeois society and the working class, and between the puppeteer and the audience. Gross describes the enduring popularity of the puppet character Tchantchès, a servant who was seen to "speak the minds" of the Walloon people in the face of Flemish oppression. While Gross situates the adoption of the puppet's name as a pseudonym employed by the satirical press in relation to Punch and Guignol in the mid 19th century, she neglects to reference even earlier servant ancestors who performed similar functions in the *commedia dell'arté* or even Greek and Roman comedies.

In Chapter Four, "Manipulations and Transformations," Gross describes the increasing commodification of the puppet theatre in the hands of the middle class between World Wars. She paints vivid pictures of the experiences and influences of Joseph Maurice Remouchamps, who relentlessly preserved puppetry documentation and practice as head of the Museum of Walloon Life; Rodolphe de Warsage, puppetry ambassador for Liège; and Thomas Talbot, champion of the form's working-class roots. Gross then presents qualitative research concerning the work of contemporary practitioners Gaston Engels and Adrien Dufour as it relates folklore and Walloon history.

Her research is rich in detail and thoroughly presented.

Gross moves to the present in Chapter Five, linking social communication and puppetry practice of the 1980s with elements of a much earlier past. She considers the consciously deep roots of genre, tradition, and style identified within Walloon puppetry, connecting contemporary practice to the past through folkloric stories, written texts, and the puppets themselves. She then discusses both traditional and unconventional paths taken by successful contemporary puppeteers in Wallonia.

Chapter Six emphasizes two concepts at the heart of Gross' study: "entextualization" and "intertextuality." Both conceptual frames place Walloon puppetry as performed at a given time and place in dialogue with deep social meaning resulting from layers of evolving puppetry traditions and political and economic influences. Gross illuminates these ideas by analyzing multiple productions of the Nativity play in 1982. She compares and contrasts the work of three puppeteers belonging to different performer lineages: Jean Pinet, Adrien Dufour, and Henri Libert.

Continuing her work with the Nativity play, Gross focuses Chapter Seven on generations of performance within a single performer lineage: the Verrées-Dufour-(Deville)-Ficarrotta line, chosen for their emphasis on preservation and replication. Gross moves beyond the written script to link decades of performance through rhythm, noise, and musicality in performance grounded in a craftsman's intuition nurtured and continued through oral tradition.

The final three chapters of *Speaking in Other Voices* are devoted to the representation of complex social issues on both sides of the stage. Chapter Eight addresses how Walloon puppets capture identities concerning economic status, gender, age, as well as personality and folkloric qualities in relation to the qualities embodied within the puppeteers themselves. Chapter Nine contextualizes representations of religion and war throughout the history of Walloon puppetry. In Chapter Ten, Gross addresses the complex embodiment of social politics including the role of women, class issues, immigration and labor, and language.

Speaking in Other Voices provides a rich local history of Wallonia in relation to the rest of Belgium and indeed Europe. Pointing to developments in puppetry forms, Gross makes a convincing case for the theatre's microcosmic reflection of a culture in transition. Gradual changes in the puppet theatre in Liège represent evolving societal structures grounded in the local economy, politics, language, and class. Although her book focuses on history and practice specific to Wallonia, the ethnographic framework Gross employs may serve as a model for scholars of puppetry and performance in other regions and cultures. review by Virginia Anderson

PUPPETS & POLITICS:
A Record of Seven Decades

by Carol Fijan

92 pp. Charlemagne Press, 2007. $20.

Carol Fijan's *Puppets & Politics: A Record of Seven Decades* chronicles the political dimension of Fijan's illustrious and varied career as a puppet theatre director, performer, educator and, as this text reveals, political agitator. As Fijan recounts, she began her puppetry career rather "unimpressed" by the first puppet performance she saw, but her interest grew when she discovered puppetry's potential to "express ideas of social value." Drawing on Webster's Third International Dictionary's definition of politics as a "division of moral philosophy dealing with ethical relations and duties of government or other social organizations," Fijan focuses in this text on the way politics, thus defined, have guided her work in puppetry.

Fijan's most recent book, then, unlike her earlier, more explicitly instructional texts, *Making Puppets Come Alive* (co-authored with Larry Engler, and published in 1973 by Taplinger Publishing Company) and *Directing Puppet Theatre* (co-authored with Frank Ballard, and published in 1989 by Resource Publications), is biographical insofar as it concentrates on her involvement in puppets and politics throughout her life. Much like her previous texts, however, this more biographical work is also instructional – it provides descriptions of constructive puppet theatre storylines, images of unique puppet characters, and snippets of witty scripts that will inevitably spark the imagination of puppeteers interested in staging provocative plays on a wide variety of topics.

This engaging and conversational volume is comprised of twenty short chapters ordered chronologically and divided by theme. Each chapter provides a snapshot of a particular political or social issue that has been targeted by Fijan's puppets. For example, in a chapter entitled "On the Streets," she describes how, in the 1940s, she used puppets to help raise money for war relief, to critique "McCarthy-like investigators" who pursued her socially- and politically-active puppet group, and to give voice to working class concerns. In chapters such as "Wee and Uss," she documents her work in the 1950s and 60s using puppets to combat racial, religious, ethnic and gender discrimination as well as discrimination against persons with disabilities. In the 1970s through to the 90s, as she records in the chapter "Roasts Come Aboard," she tells of taking on various national, state, and local issues, including the need for affordable medical care, continuing arts curricula, and accountability in local politics.

Finally, Fijan recounts her collaboration with fellow members of the Puppet Guild of Long Island on a retrospective play entitled, "60 Years of Puppets and Politics," which was performed at three different Puppeteers of America festivals in the 1990s. While Fijan's text is in large part retrospective, she concludes by looking ahead to the social and political issues facing the 21st century and resolves, with her group of puppeteers, to "keep the legend of Punch and Judy alive." *Puppets & Politics* – both for what the reader learns about Fijan's personal experiences, and for the ideas a reader will be able to apply to his/her own puppet practice – certainly demonstrates that, throughout Fijan's seven-decade career, puppets have carried on their "historic role," as she puts it in her Introduction, "to teach various religions, to [politicize] governments and their heads, and to inform people about health, wealth, and other subjects, and to ENTERTAIN." In my view, *Puppets and Politics*, like her puppetry practice, takes on serious issues with an ever-present sense of humor, emphasizing that what is most important to ethical relations, no matter what one's politics, is an engagement in respectful dialogue.

review by Petra Hroch

CHINESE SHADOW THEATRE:
History, Popular Religion & Women Warriors
by Fan Pen Li Chen

343 pp. McGill-Queens University Press, 2007. $74.99.

It is a rare occasion for scholarly studies on Chinese shadow theatre to be published in English. Those that do get published are often marred by shoddy research, narrow partisanship and personal vendettas. Thus it is a cause for celebration to come across Dr. Fan Pen Li Chen's new volume, *Chinese Shadow Theatre: History, Popular Religion & Women Warriors*.

Dr. Chen, a professor of Chinese studies at SUNY-Albany, has previously translated an anthology of traditional shadow plays, *Visions for the Masses: Chinese Shadow Plays from Shaanxi and Shanxi*, published by Cornell University's East Asia Series in 2005. But this new volume is a more ambitious attempt to place Chinese shadow theatre into the cultural and social contexts in which it has developed over the span of several millennia. Relying on extensive field research in remote villages in seven provinces and interviews with performers and company members as well as her familiarity with the research literature in both Chinese and the European languages, Dr. Chen is able to trace these historical roots as far back as written records allow. Along the way she uses careful analysis to clear up some of the knotty scholastic tangles that have arisen over the centuries due to faulty information or simple mistranslations and which, through repetition by later writers and researchers, have become cemented as "facts" or accepted wisdom. Dr. Chen's familiarity with the original historical and literary material has given her a powerful tool to trace these errors back to their sources.

The core of the book is Dr. Chen's in-depth research into the relationship that the traditional shadow theater has maintained with Chinese religious practices and cultural values. Much of her work is based on primary source material gathered from interviews with troupes of many remote regional and rural shadow companies, not only the troupes and artists centered around the Beijing urban area and surrounding Hebei province, who were the primary informants for many of the Western scholars in the early 20th century. By framing information on contemporary and traditional shadow theater practices within the context of this historical research, Dr. Chen is able to draw a concise picture of the development of Chinese shadow theater over the centuries. She notes, for example, that the three oldest plays in the repertoires of rural shadow companies from Shaanxi, Shanxi and Gansu provinces (all located along the Yellow River in China's ancient heartland)—*The Investiture of the Gods*, *Three Blessings* and *The Eighteen Layers of Hell*—are all ritual or liturgical in content. This links the contexts of Chinese shadow theater with other South-Asian shadow forms that are rooted in Hindu and Buddhist cultural traditions. It was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries (a time of great social and spiritual upheaval) that Chinese shadow plays were recast as popular entertainments specializing in secular themes. *Chinese Shadow Theatre* includes Dr. Chen's translations of the three above-mentioned plays, which she based on the troupes' own hand-copied play scripts.

Perhaps the most intriguing chapter of the books deals with women warriors in the shadow-theater repertoire. Dr. Chen traces the origins of these powerful characters (who often have supernatural magical powers as well as superlative martial arts abilities) back to actual historical figures. She attempts to square the wide-ranging popularity of the woman warrior in popular drama and shadow theater with the very different actual status of women in Chinese culture. Chen notes that many of these fighting women were from "barbarian" tribal groups who lived outside the tight social strictures which very literally hobbled and bound mainstream Han Chinese women until well into the last century. Although they often appeared in the guise of rebel leaders or barbarian princesses in operas and shadow plays, archetypal women warrior characters in fact upheld the cardinal virtues of Confucian orthodoxy and patriarchal principles. The fact that the last imperial dynasty—the Qing—brought into power one of these "barbarian" tribes—the Manchus—may have contributed to the appreciation of the powerful women characters at a time when the popularity of shadow theater was at a peak. Dr. Chen closes this section of the book with descriptive biographies of a dozen or so warrior women from the traditional shadow-theater repertoire.

Dr. Chen's book is not designed for the typical puppet practitioner, nor is it for the lay reader looking for a quick and colorful tour of exotic Asian art forms: the language is sometimes thick and academic, the book is short on photos and visual material, and the language is sometimes thick and academic. It does include an extensive bibliography of books and articles in both Chinese and European languages, and other extremely useful appendices. Despite the book's academic style, Dr. Chen's passion and love of the shadow theater is evident throughout the work. Dr. Chen has made an invaluable contribution to the field of puppetry research and a worthy addition to the well-stocked puppet bookshelf.

Review by Stephen Kaplin

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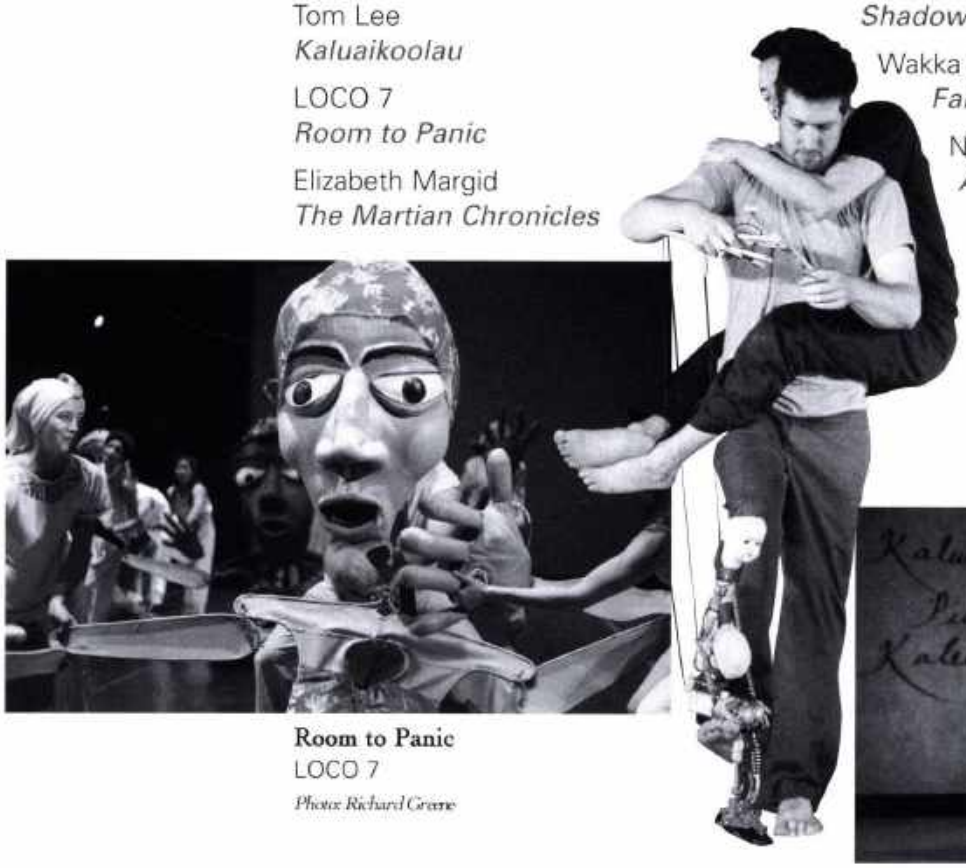

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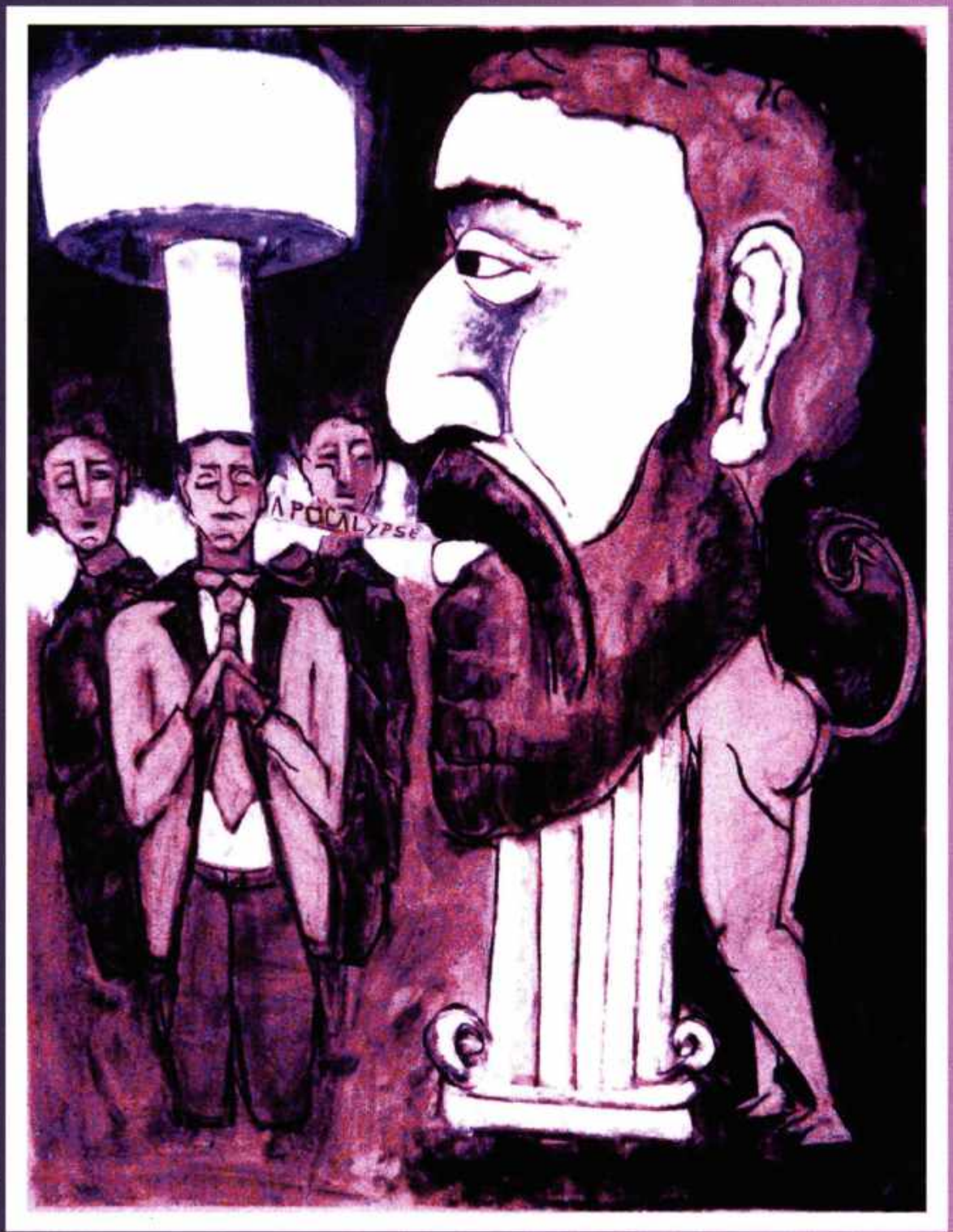

"Apocalypse," by Sam Kerson *(see page 39)*