

SPRING and SUMMER 09 Issue #25

PUPPETRY

INTERNATIONAL



40 UNDER 40
QUICK TAKES ON YOUNG MASTERS
WORLD-WIDE

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the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media

What's new at the Center for Puppetry Arts?

Jim Henson: Wonders from His Workshop

Highlighting some of the performance and design contributions Jim Henson and his collaborators have made to the world of puppetry, this exhibit features the technological advances behind *Fraggle Rock*, *Labyrinth* and more. Come and experience past and current innovations that continue to inspire puppeteers and audiences around the world. On loan from The Henson Family Collection courtesy of The Jim Henson Legacy and The Jim Henson Company.

Jim Henson: Puppeteer

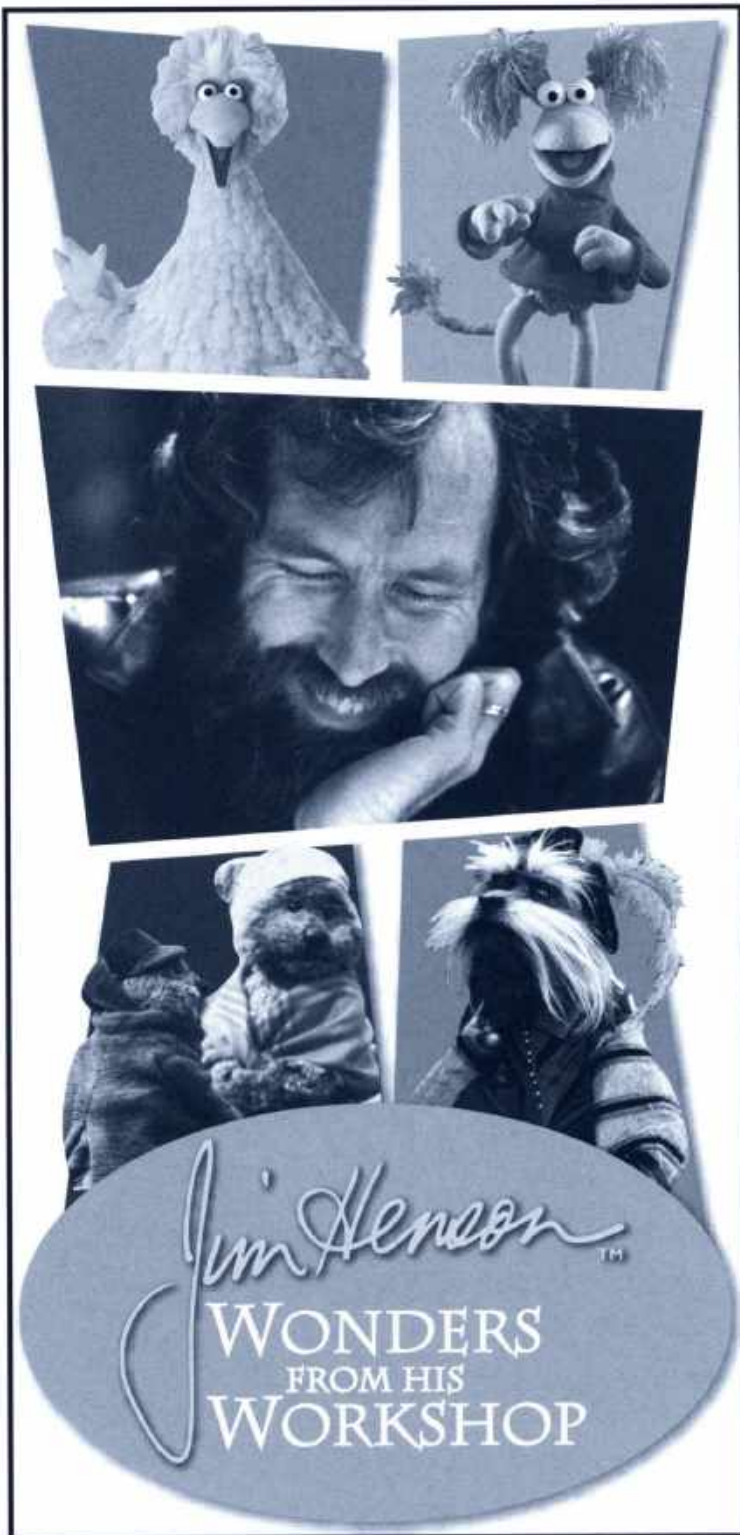
Drawn from the extensive collection of the Henson family and The Jim Henson Legacy, *Jim Henson: Puppeteer* includes Rowlf the Dog, Ernie, the La Choy Dragon, Dr. Teeth, The Swedish Chef, Bugsy Them and others. The exhibition presents photographs, design reproductions and a selection of the many puppets Jim performed during his lifetime. On loan from The Henson Family Collection courtesy of The Jim Henson Legacy.

Jim Henson: A Man & His Frog

Jim Henson: A Man & His Frog profiles Jim Henson and his most famous puppet. This display inaugurates a series of preview exhibitions leading to the future Jim Henson Wing of the Center for Puppetry Arts. On loan from The Henson Family courtesy of The Jim Henson Legacy.

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PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

issue no. 25

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American Center of the
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FRONT COVER
Rats by Allison Daniels for
The Nutcracker, The House Theatre of Chicago
(see page 9)

BACK COVER:
Morgan Andrews' work
(see page 24)



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



How old is a puppeteer?

That is, how old is an artist who's puppetry is sufficiently notable to be profiled?

Bob Nathanson (see review, page 36) took his first puppetry workshop in his thirties. Benji Nelson, on the other hand, was honored with an UNIMA Citation (for excellence in the art of puppetry) at the age of sixteen, and Dmitri Carter (see profile, page 27) began performing with the Carter Family Marionettes before he turned five. Carter's son, age seven, is already performing.

We Baby Boomers grew up with some venerable role models: Marjorie Batchelder, Margo and Rufus Rose, Basil Milovsoroff, Bil Baird, Paul McPharlin, Martin Stevens, Jero Magon, Forman Brown, Harry Burnett and many others. Yet, as Steve Abrams (UNIMA-USA board member and archivist) reminded me, when these giants were forming Puppeteers of America back in 1936-7, they were *all* under 40. Jim Henson, when he became UNIMA-USA's first president, was only 30 years old.

Why 40 under 40?

If a thirty-something can be a relative newcomer or well into mid-career, then aside from the alliteration and symmetry our line in the sand is admittedly random. AND YET . . . we do believe that one of the tenets underlying creative enterprise is this: make a random choice and commit to it. Because then you don't know how it will turn out. Because then it becomes a journey of discovery. With this issue of *Puppetry International*, as always, we put the word out and waited to see what came in. We put a little bug in the ears of puppeteers around the world: What is fresh, who is making a difference, who is (dare I say it) *blowing your mind!*? The only constraints we imposed were that the artists in question be under the age of 40 at our established deadline, and that we would only print 250 words per profile.

The past two decade's graduates of the UConn MFA program alone would have filled our issue, as would those of Charleville's *École Supérieure National des Arts de la Marionnette*—several times over. Many worthy young artists are missing, but work your way through this issue and you'll find lots of surprises—from Indonesia, India, Mexico, Russia, as well as Atlanta and LA. You'll find college students and leaders in the field.

These profiles give just enough detail to peak one's interest. In every case, you are invited to go to our website for more images, more text (for some), and links to the artists' websites, blogs, YouTube videos and all sorts of other virtual "portfoliana" that didn't exist back when we were under 40. Our website features additional artists who are not profiled in our pages. We've been working with our webmaster, Donald Devet, to increase our "electronic footprint" as a way of making *Puppetry International* an even more useful, and more pleasing resource despite harsh economic times. So twitter us, google us, follow a link from your iPhone. We're there for you 25/7.

ONLY ON THE WEBSITE— Find profiles for Beth Nixon, Dani Keil, Vanessa Gilbert, Yvette Edery, Astrid Kjaer Jensen, Alexander Tretiakov, Maxim Udintsev and other young artists.

 **GO TO:**
WWW.UNIMA-USA.ORG/PUBLICATIONS/

Also find links to materials that supplement or complement the profiles that appear in this issue of PI.

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Heather Henson

Heather Henson's first exposure to puppets was the work of her parents. Unlike other puppeteers, however, her parents happen to have been two of the most influential figures in American puppetry. Born into a heritage that includes the Muppets—and still an ardent advocate for the Jim Henson Legacy—Heather has worked to find her own vision for the puppetry she performs.

Of her latest work, *Panther & Crane*, Heather says, "It is uniquely mine, but highly inspired by working with the Jim Henson Legacy

and seeing the more raw work my mother & father did at the start of their career. I think by working with the Legacy, I have grown more confident to follow my own heart in my work, as my father so clearly did in his."

Heather's confidence is shared with her fellow artists through her curatorial role in *Handmade Puppet Dreams*—a series that highlights puppets on

film, ranging from the hilarious to the exquisite to the alarming. Her interest in puppet films began with her father's masterful experimentation with the medium, but Heather endeavors to find art

that reflects a different technique for using film and puppets. To date, *Handmade Puppet Dreams* has presented three different festivals of short puppet films.

Heather supports the Puppet Slam movement (and any underground puppet efforts) and is the Executive Producer of the Orlando Puppet Festival, which features work for audiences of all types, as well as puppet films and a gallery exhibit.

[by Jennifer Stoessner]



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Another contribution Twist makes is through the Dream Music Puppetry Program at HERE Arts Center, commissioning new works and developing them. This program allows artists the freedom to explore and expand on their ideas in a well supported environment. Twist renovated a theatre space at HERE for puppetry. In the lobby are marionettes made by Twist's grandfather, an orchestra leader who used them in his performances. As final evidence of the importance of names, Twist named the theatre for his grandmother, Dorothy B. Williams, who showed him the puppets and got him interested in the art form in the first place.

[by Jennifer Stoessner]

www.basiltwist.com



MASTER PETER'S PUPPET SHOW

PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

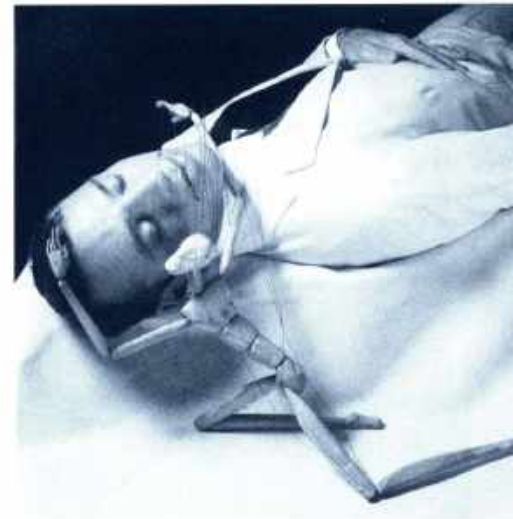
Basil Twist

In literature, names mean things; they are carefully selected to reflect the character's nature and temperament. No writer could do better than this artist's parents in selecting a name to evoke playfulness, creativity and innovation. The only American to graduate from the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières, France, Twist presents challenging and thought provoking puppet theatre, winning awards such as the UNIMA-Citation for Excellence, the Bessie and the Obie Awards. His underwater interpretation of *Symphonic Fantastique* gained international attention.

Twist has also been expanding on the interests of other performing artists, such as director Lee Breuer, composer Ushio Torikai, playwright Paula Vogel, the Houston Grand Opera, the Atlanta Opera and Joe Goode Performance Group. Through these and other collaborations, Twist integrates puppetry into the language of performance, helping to introduce it into the dialogue about contemporary art and interdisciplinary approaches.

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[by Jennifer Stoessner]



www.basiltwist.com

Michael J. Vetere III

Michael Vetere holds the position of Assistant Professor at Illinois State University (ISU). He teaches courses in Puppetry and Creative Dramatics and has been identified as "Outstanding Teacher" by the Illinois State University Student Education Association.

Vetere received his BFA from West Virginia University in Creative Dramatics, Puppetry, and Youth Theatre. Later, he achieved an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in Theatre Pedagogy. Vetere has presented at the national Association of Teacher Educators and American Alliance for Theatre in Education conferences, as well as other local and regional conferences on puppetry in education and creative dramatics, taught acting at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and received several grants ranging from \$300 to \$200,000. Several of Michael's performance credits include: The Puppet Co., Spectrum Puppets, and independent productions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Love of Three Oranges*. Michael has received diverse training and opportunities to refine his puppet-acting. He trained at the Banff Puppet Theatre Intensive, Sandglass Institute of Puppetry, and the Prague School of Puppetry.

www.cfa.ilstu.edu/mjveter/creativedramapuppetry/



Currently, he directs the Saturday Creative Drama/Puppetry program at ISU and is working with the Normal, IL Children's Discovery Museum to institute a puppet and human theatre for young children. Michael also co-teaches a course on Puppetry in Education at Slippery Rock Univ. with his mother, early childhood professor Mary T. Vetere, EdD.

Jana Zeller

Jana Zeller started painting at an early age. At 15 she began working for her parents' Sandglass Theater as a designer and builder. Throughout her twenties she was a portrait artist, set painter, and designer. Her own paintings were story-like images filled with characters and puppets in theatrical settings. On a yearlong road trip through the US, she created her first puppet show with her partner Zak Grace—a full-length toy theater production based on the true

story of Tom Thumb. With puppets drawn in pen and ink and the backdrops painted on a scrolling canvas, this piece was a bridge between Jana's imagistic painting and her animating visual work in a theatrical form.

Now performing full-time, Jana's approach to theater remains visual. She has moved from the toy theater style to exploring three-dimensional puppets in original stories. During her training at the Sandglass Puppet Institute, many cabarets and local performance events, and collaborations with dancers and circus artists, Jana continued to explore on stage the world she had already seen as a painter. Her second full-length piece, *Egg Noir*—a bizarre chain of events initiated by object puppets in a retro-futuristic tale about the creation and destruction of the human eyeball—celebrated its premier at the International Puppet Festival in Mexico City in 2007. Jana's newest piece tells the story of a fortuneteller and her sea-voyaging lover, whose only means of communication is through the sewage system under the toilet of a German folk puppet. Jana lives and works in Brattleboro, Vermont.



www.sandglasstheater.org

Taira Jo

The Taira Jo experience involves puppet and object manipulation of seemingly endless variety and versatility, always with the man himself in the spotlight.

Jo's parents were both artists. Early exposure made his entry into the world of performing arts as natural as learning to walk and talk, leading to his puppeteering debut at age 12. During his high school years he studied pantomime, Japanese traditional dance, jazz dance, voice, acting and puppet construction.

After high school he left his hometown in the northern island of Hokkaido for Tokyo. There he quickly made a name for himself, one that now sells out venues and has people lining up after the show to have him sign his photos.

A late night potpourri type event at a puppet festival provided my introduction to Jo's work. His 15 minute fairy tale had me and the rest of the 1,000 seat hall howling with laughter and screaming approval of his antics. My next Jo experience was of a more serious sort. He was the youngest person ever to win Japan's national puppetry organization's silver award for his adaptation of the play "Kegawa no Mari". Jo turned this play about a drag queen diva into an intensely personal full length solo spectacle for adults. It cemented my notion that there was genius at work here.

Among his other awards, Taira Jo has been recognized by the Japanese government for contributions to children's cultural enrichment.

[by Grego]

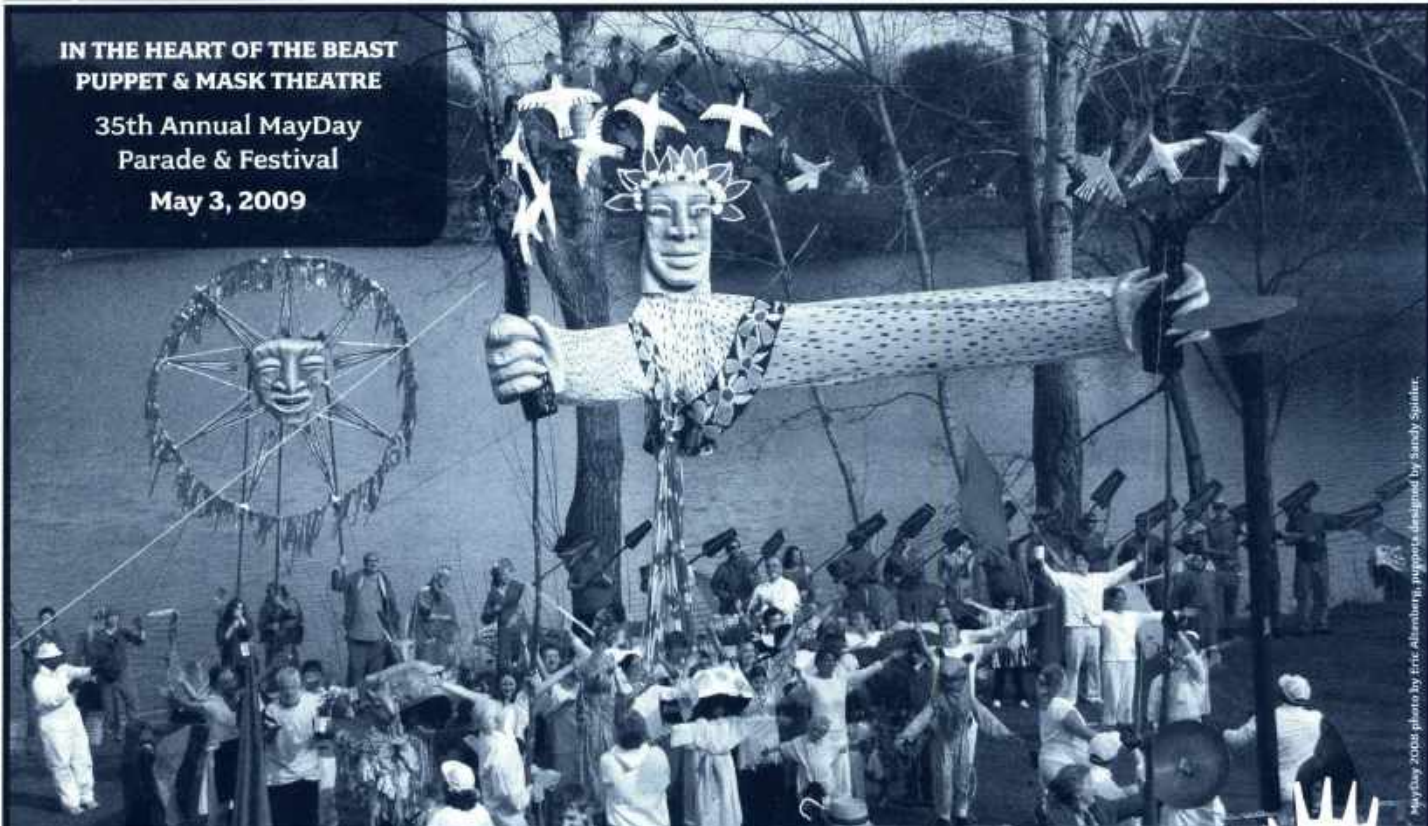
Taira Jo's website is in Japanese, but there are navigation hints in English.
<http://tairajo.com>



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Allison Daniel

Allison Daniel is a freelance puppet designer, builder, and performer in the Chicago land area.

Though enamored with puppets at a young age, she has only pursued puppetry as a career for the past few years. Allison's professional training has included an internship with Bread and Puppet, Sandglass Theater's manipulation intensive and Miroslav Treitnar's wooden marionette workshop.

Now twenty-four years old, she routinely works with many of the major Chicago production houses, including Chicago Dramatist's *10 Virgins*, and Blair Thomas's production, *The Ox-Herder's Tale*. She has also worked for The Joffrey ballet, The Marriott Theatre of Lincolnshire and Redmoon Theatre. Last spring she was nominated for a Non-Equity Joseph Jefferson Award for her puppet design of *The Nutcracker* with The House Theatre of Chicago. Her puppets are as varied as the performances for which they were created, from 18" toy characters, to a six-and-a-half foot tall body



puppet, to many in between and beyond.

When not working for theatre companies, Allison develops her own works. She performs her pieces using a combination of found and built puppets such as paper plates, mud, a man made out of sponge, a Starbucks cup and umbrellas. In these pieces she comments on such themes as impermanence, the mentalities of modern lifestyles, the nature of communication and perspectives on time.

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www.OneFleaCircus.com



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Jason von Hinezmeyer

A multi-talented artist in the field of puppetry, Jason von Hinezmeyer possesses a driving energy. Yet it is the unique combination of master craftsmanship and bold innovation that sets him apart as a truly valuable contributor to the field of puppetry.

After attending the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts program, Jason joined the Center for Puppetry Arts in 2002 as Resident Puppet Builder. Since that time Jason has contributed puppet designs for two UNIMA award-winning productions: *Anne Frank: Within and Without* and *Duke Ellington's Cat* and has served as co-creator, designer and performer for the critically acclaimed *Avanti, Da Vinci: The Secret Adventures of Leonardo da Vinci* and *The Ghastly Dreadfuls: Compendium of Graveyard Tales and Other Curiosities*.

Jason has created work for Actor's Theater of Louisville, California Shakespeare Festival, Cartoon Network and Comedy Central. He has also served as a builder and consultant for the Georgia Institute of Technology's Electrical and Computer Engineering department.

Independently, Jason continuously investigates new techniques, including work in robotics, electronic



THE GHASTLY DREADFULS

music and filmmaking. *Clobber*, his marionette punk rock band, was voted *Stomp and Stammer's* "Best Band in Atlanta," garnering a cult following with performances at art events, clubs and wrestling arenas. His film, *In Private*, was included in Heather Henson's *Handmade Puppet Dreams III*. He has also created memorable puppet works for Atlanta's puppet slams and the Center's *Xperimental Puppetry Theatre* program.

Jason's insatiable curiosity, unique talent and strong dedication to craft promise to make him an influential figure in the future of puppetry.

[by Vince Anthony]

www.puppet.org



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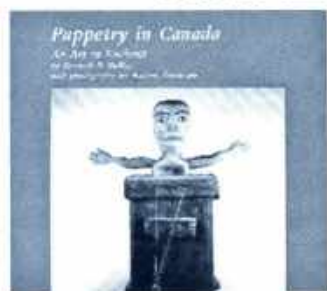
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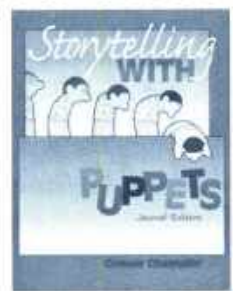
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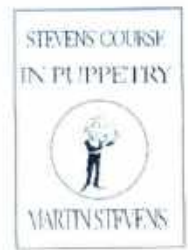
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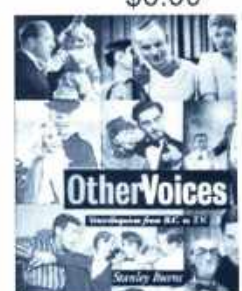
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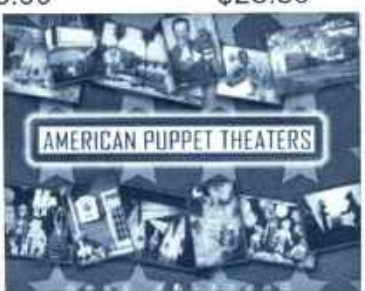
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Jim Napolitano

I first saw Jim Napolitano performing at the O'Neill Theater Center a few years back with the infamous photo of Eugene O'Neill in the background. The show totally knocked my wooly socks off. I'd never seen a shadow show that was as well put together as Nappy's irreverent, sly, and wickedly funny spectacle.

Here was a guy with great looking puppets, a plethora of goofy, rich voices, lots of really cool physical gags, and a sensibility that wows adults as much as children, much like *Fractured Fairy Tales* or Warner Bros. cartoons. The twisted spins on familiar songs in his *Sing-A-Long* show drives the kids nuts and gets all the cynical adults to sing along, too. His puppet voices have a kind of droll swagger, while the truly great manipulation is enhanced by expert design and construction of clean-lined, economical, and wittily expressive puppets.

Seeing Jim's terrific show inspired me on the spot to do a shadow puppet show myself. In exchange for a performance of my *Punch and Jimmy* at his guild meeting as a benefit for the O'Neill scholarship fund, he offered



to help me build my own stage (I basically handed him tools) in an act of amazing generosity that I will never forget.

There's nothing this guy can't do with a shadow puppet and his subversively wise-ass sense of humor. Jim often cites Richard Bradshaw as his biggest influence and favorite shadow player. I've got news for Nappy: he's every bit as great an artist as the legendary Australian.

[by Paul Zaloom]

www.nappyspuppets.com

Amaranta Leyva

Amaranta Leyva was born in Mexico in 1973. She is an actor, puppeteer and playwright. Puppet theatre has been her means of expression, in particular, writing and directing for children's audiences. In her own words: "To explore a child's world allows me to find my most hidden, profound and intense emotions of being human."

She comes from a theatre family and was exposed to puppetry at a very early age. Her early relationship with the puppetry world inspired her to explore and develop this art form. Since then, puppets of all styles have influenced her life and writing. She has become a

leading playwright in Mexico, writing for children's theatre and puppet theatre. Her stories speak of children and their dreams, desires, fears and happiness.

She has been a member of the Mexican Puppetry Company, *Marionetas de la Esquina*, since 1989. This puppet troupe is one of the leading puppet companies in Mexico and has extensively toured internationally. They are the producers of the *International Puppet Festival Titerias*, a very successful annual event that joins many Mexican and international puppet companies in Mexico City.

Her work has been viewed primarily by the Mexican public but has been taken abroad as well. These include: *El cielo de los perros*, *Dibujame una vaca* (featured at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC), *Mia* and *El Vestido*, which was awarded the National Award of Theatre for Children in Mexico. Her books have been published and they are part of the National Program of Reading in Mexico.

[by Manuel A. Moran, Ph.D.]

For more images and links to Amaranta's work, go to www.unima-usa.org/publications





Mouthatip Suksopha

Mouthatip "Tip" Suksopha is the director of Wandering Moon, a shadow theater company she founded in 1998 in northern Thailand. Although Thailand is the home of its own classic *Nang Yai* shadow traditions, Tip's own developing forms of shadow theater draw on both Western and non-Western traditions, and incorporate improvisation and inventive techniques created by the Wandering Moon ensemble, rather than basing their productions on classical Thai traditions. In this way, Tip's work is particularly innovative, and embodies a global perspective.

Born in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 1973, Tip pursued university studies in English and Religion, and then began work as a filmmaker and actress, spending "four years with community theater and experimental theater before falling in love with shadow theater in 1999." Since founding Wandering Moon that same year, Tip has traveled extensively in Southeast Asia, the United States, and Europe, where she studied shadow theater with Fabrizio Montecchi, director of Italy's famed Teatro Gioco Vita. Tip's work has led her to collaborate with numerous NGO's (non-governmental organizations) concerned with community development and community theater. They are currently engaged in a project involving six schools for autistic and mute children in Thailand's

northern provinces. Working in challenging conditions in the under-funded schools, and learning sign language to communicate with the students, Tip and her colleagues are creating shadow theater productions with and for the children. "At the end of each shadow performance," she writes, "my heart was overwhelmed with delight because we saw the light from those small eyes."

[by John Bell]

www.wanderingmoontheatre.com





Karen Zasloff

When she was a child, Karen Zasloff spent many hours behind a wooden puppet stage, playing with Indonesian rod puppets and a Punch and Judy set sewn by her mother. At eighteen, she entered a giant puppet with RedMoon Theater, then spent formative summers in the Domestic Resurrection Circus. Those months of coaxing dreamlike

figures from papier-mâché and fabric inspired her to grapple with the Bread and Puppet aesthetic in a senior thesis at the University of Chicago.

Karen's original puppet works of the past ten years center on the revelation of interior experience. She has focused on shadow puppetry, with nine shadow shows, but her repertoire includes toy theater, masks, giant puppets, and set design (studied in the Tisch MFA program). Karen's shadow sequences rarely directly illustrate text, but invoke the subconscious and invite audiences to draw connections between word and image. For P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Karen performed *A Story of Porridge*, which addresses the theme of voyeurism through the layering of a short story and mock academic essay. An artist and educator for the New York City Housing Authority, she was commissioned to create the giant puppet show, *Broccmaster C's Nutrition Mission*, for a citywide health festival.

Karen's current project, *Dimensions of Kigali*, received funding from the Jim Henson Foundation and combines giant puppets, shadows, dance and video. Based on her recent trip to Rwanda, the performance explores survivors' experiences and the role of testimony as an anchor to truth.

Anurupa Roy

Anurupa Roy is already a force in puppetry, and not just in her native India. After earning two degrees in history (New Delhi) she went on to get her diploma in puppetry at the Dramatiska Institutet at The University of Stockholm, Sweden where she worked under such luminaries as Micheal Meschke and Arne Hogsander. She got her diploma in *guarabelle*—traditional glove puppetry—from La Scuola Della Guaratelle (School of Traditional Glove Puppetry) in Naples, Italy under Bruno Leone in 2002. She was a research fellow at the Institut International de la Marionette in Charleville-Mézières, France.

Roy has created and directed numerous shows and has been awarded many grants and honors, including Fellow of Peace – WISCOMP for 2005 – for working on a puppetry for healing project in the village of Beejbehara in Kashmir. This project entailed three trauma therapy workshops over seven months using puppet, mask, storytelling and theatre exercises. The project aimed to reclaim folklore and oral tradition relating to the syncretic culture of Kashmir with the young women of Beejbehara. The stories collected from Kashmiri women from varied backgrounds were then woven into a performance.

In 2007 Roy was a lecturer at UCLA. From 2004–2008 she was on the Executive Committee of UNIMA, the international union of puppeteers.



She has participated in major international festivals of puppetry and was assistant festival coordinator for Putul Yatra at Sangeet Natak Akademi which included puppeteers representing all eighteen living traditional forms of puppetry from across India.

[by A. Periale]

WISCOMP Special Projects explore innovative approaches to peace and security using art, theater, film, dance and workshops.

www.wiscomp.org/publications

Rogue Artists Ensemble

Rogue Artists Ensemble has a reputation for creating fantastical, thought-provoking projects full of puppets, technology, whimsy and mayhem. Not just a puppet theater, Rogues create *Hyper-theater*, a term the group has coined to describe their unique hybrid of puppetry, mask work, dance, music and modern technologies.

The group was conceived in 2001 by then 23-year old director Sean T. Cawelti, who recruited fellow University of California, Irvine students to form an edgy ensemble of theater artists. Inspired by other ensemble-based theater companies such as Cornerstone Theater Company and Improbable Theater Company, Cawelti established a designer-based, not for profit organization comprised of talented artists, designers and musicians. In their inaugural year, local theater critics dubbed the troupe "the youngest, most buzzed about theater company in Southern California."

Rogue Artists Ensemble continues to be a process-centric arts organization focused on developing stories using language and design. With an emphasis on collaboration, the ensemble's pre-production process demands months of intense design work, story revisions and contributions from all involved.

Today, the 31 year old Cawelti and the Rogues have experienced success with productions including *The Comical Tragedy*



or *Tragical Comedy of Mr. Punch*, based on Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's graphic novel; *The Story of Frog Belly Rat Bone*, a touring children's show based on a delightful book by Timothy Basil Ering; and "*Frankenstein!!*" their collaboration with the Long Beach Opera. Planned are *Gogol Project* and a not-for-children adaptation of the classic Italian *Pinocchio* tale.

[by Joyce Hutter]

www.unima-usa.org/publications



VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY

PHOTO: RICH RIGGINS

Colette Searls

Colette Searls is a stage director who found her way into puppetry by making creatures out of trash. She has received grants from The Jim Henson Foundation and Puppeteers of America for original works in "disposable puppetry" and vaudeville-style productions that mix actors and dancers with anthropomorphic objects. Her company, Searls Puppetry, often collaborates with visual and performing artists such as puppet designer Don Becker and choreographer Doug Hamby.

Searls received a BA from UC Berkeley and her MFA from UC Irvine, where she studied with Robert Cohen. She also had the advantage of working with puppetry artists like Nikki Tilroe, Paul Zaloom, and Martin P. Robinson at the National Puppetry Conference.

Ms. Searls has published articles in *Puppetry International* and *The Puppetry Journal*, and currently serves on the UNIMA-USA Board of Directors.

Searls views herself as an artist straddling the theatre and puppetry worlds. In a recent interview she explained: "When I'm working with puppets, I try to use principals of strong stage directing and actor training as the building blocks. I also like working with theatre artists who know nothing about puppetry and helping them bring puppetry into a theatre production otherwise composed of human characters. And I like to work with puppet companies who need an outside director who understands puppetry."

More recently, Searls has begun collaborating with computer animation artists to create live electronic puppets using video game technology.

[by Rolande Duprey]

www.unima-usa.org/publications

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Scene from *Le Petite Macabre* by Caitlin Lainoff

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Adelka Polak

Adelka Polak is a Slovak-American performance artist. Her work combines puppetry, dance and videography. Satire is pervasive. Her most recent creation, *LumberJill*, is a pointed look at femininity and manual labor in the modern age.

She has collaborated with many artists. This past summer, she performed with Larry Hunt in his *Blues, Blues* at PuppetFest 2008.

Her most ambitious work to date is *Anthropic Bathing*, a site-specific work dealing with nature, technology and the human body. It was performed at the Sculpture Barn in New Fairfield, Connecticut in 2007. The video premiered at the Stinger Café in Tokyo, Japan this past year.

She often credits her heritage for her interest in puppetry. "It's in my blood," she says. While building puppets for Randy Carfagno in New York City, she heard of the Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theatre and auditioned. She performed and choreographed pieces for their production of *Once There Was a Village* (presented at La MaMa, etc. in 2007).

Polak lives on a farm in Northwest Connecticut.

[by Rolande Duprey]



“ My work and life are one and the same, really. I know that I speak of being distracted, but we all deal with that. And frankly, as much of a distraction as the little chickens and farm issues can be, they really are all a part of the big package. The chickens, for example, allow me to study movements and sounds of dinosaurs while also conjuring up thoughts of political relationships. Everything works in sync: Art, Life, Love and the Struggle to keep it all afloat. ”

Ben 7. Matchstick



Ben Matchstick acquired his unusual last name (he was born Ben Majchrzak) while hitchhiking with his *Jack the Giant-Queller* handpuppet show in Maine. A talented and energetic puppeteer, actor, musician, producer, and community organizer, Matchstick is the founder of the Cardboard Teck Instantute, and currently works as a children's librarian at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier, Vermont. An instigator of enormously popular puppet-friendly theater events in Central Vermont and other northeastern locations, Matchstick has created vaudeville-style productions whose titles give a sense of their spontaneity and inspired lunacy: *Mystery Fun Night* (a monthly themed interactive theater), *X-Mess Fest*, *Geek Week*, *The Combustible Puppet Cabaret*, *The Kvikezek Family Medicine Cabinet*, and *Toast and Jam: A Cabaret for Kids*.

Born 34 years ago in the Midwest, Matchstick studied at Northwestern University, and then worked as a puppeteer with two of Chicago's famed alternative theater companies: Victory Gardens Theater and Redmoon Theater. Beginning in 1998, Matchstick puppeteered with Bread and Puppet Theater in Vermont, helping create and perform *World on Fire*, *Dirt Cheap Opera*, and *How to Turn Distress into Success*, which toured across North America, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Matchstick founded his Cardboard Teck Instantute workshops, he says, "to study the multiplicity of applications of cardboard, both practical and impractical," and "to show how cardboard can be used as a resource towards the betterment of planet E, to contribute to the accessibility of the arts, and to replace recycling with re-use and re-thinking production."

[by John Bell]

Lindsay McCaw & Adam Cook: The Dolly Wagglers

Lindsay McCaw and Adam Cook, together with “an assortment of co-conspirators,” as McCaw puts it, perform as The Dolly Wagglers, a group that uses traditional (and even old-fashioned) puppet forms in new ways to connect with audiences pondering the nature of progress in the twenty-first century. Now based in Viroqua, Wisconsin, they have been making shows together for six years and with others for longer. Cook comes from Mystic, Connecticut and was half of the Insurrection Landscapers, a legendary DIY (do-it-yourself) puppet troupe. Lindsay comes from Iowa and has ties to the art community of northern Wisconsin. They met at the 2001 Puppetropolis Festival in Chicago, and have worked frequently in and around Vermont’s Bread and Puppet Theater, and Bedlam Theatre/Barebones Productions of Minneapolis.

As The Dolly Wagglers, McCaw and Cook make and perform hand, rod and flat cardboard puppets for proscenium stages; cantatorias, crankies and occasionally ventriloquist dummies; and shadow puppets. They describe their shows as “lowbrow and crude,” but their work can also be described as a twenty-first century return to classic puppetry and popular theater traditions like circus and vaudeville. Dolly Wagglers shows, as McCaw puts it, “rely heavily



OLD RELIABLE HORSEDRAWN SPECTACULAR, PLAINFIELD, VT

on live, homemade music, cheap humor and old gags while addressing contemporary issues.” Driven by “the delight and relief people seem to find in live, imperfect and unmediated performance,” McCaw says, The Dolly Wagglers “are committed to making puppet shows till we finally keel over.”

[by John Bell]

For the full version of John Bell’s profile, go to:
www.unima-usa.org/publications

Ananto Wicaksono



Ananto Wicaksono (known commonly as *Nanang*) was born in the city of Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia in 1985. Brought up by his grandfather, the famous children’s puppeteer and puppet maker Ki Ledjar Subroto, Nanang started performing shadow puppetry publicly at the age of three, specializing in both traditional *wayang kulit purwa* (based on the Mahabharata and Ramayana) and the children’s puppet theatre known as *wayang Kancil*, which uses animal fables to promote

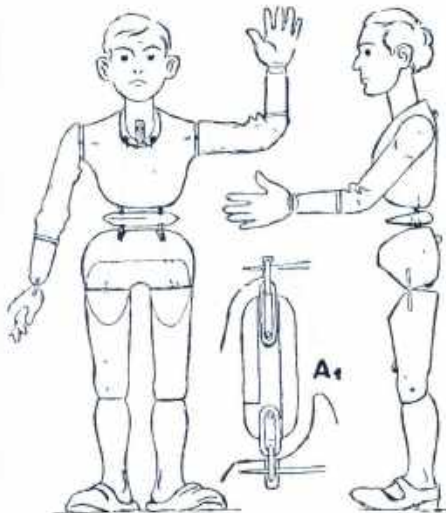
ecological awareness. He gave his first all-night wayang performance in 2001, while a student at Yogyakarta’s high school for performing arts (SMKI). Since 2002 he’s been pursuing a puppetry degree at ISI Yogyakarta, the local conservatoire.

Wayang in Yogyakarta was dependent on tourism until 1997, when political unrest and terrorist attacks in Bali decimated the industry. Since 2003, Nanang has been at the forefront of restoring interest in wayang. “Being a puppeteer today means more than just giving shows,” he says. “One has to be able to give workshops, facilitate discussions, leave audiences with positive messages.” To build urban audiences, Nanang initiated a “wayang goes to schools” programme in 2003, with the support of the Kelola Foundation and the Yogyakarta puppeteers union (PEPADI). Since 2006, Nanang has been creating *wayang animasi* – short films combining wayang and computer animation that have been shown there and in the Netherlands. He will launch a web-based wayang Kancil game, created with a Germany-based colleague, in 2009. Foreigner puppeteers who have studied wayang Kancil with Nanang include Tamara, Sarah Bilby and Anna Ingleby.

[by Matthew Cohen]

<http://laboratoriumwayang.multiply.com>

The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry at the University of Connecticut



L: Marionette design by Dr. Jan Malik

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.

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—John Bell, Director

R: Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin with one of her experimental rod puppets (late 1960s)

The Ballard Institute is located at the University of Connecticut's Depot Campus in Storrs, Connecticut, 25 miles east of Hartford, off I-84

For further information:
www.bimp.uconn.edu john.bell@uconn.edu 860 486 0806

Subject: New Puppetry Website
 Date: Thu, 29 Jan 2009 13:00:49 -0800
 From: "Luman Coad" <coadpuppet@shaw.ca>
 To: "Andrew Periale" <ab2periale@metrocast.net>

Hi Andrew,

This morning I was notified that the Canadian Museum of Civilization has officially opened a puppetry web module - in English and French. I've only had time to skim some of it but am very impressed.

www.civilization.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/

Ronnie Burkett is currently performing Billy Twinkle: Requiem for a Golden Boy in Vancouver and my house has become a motel for visiting puppeteers. ... It is a very impressive show. Most of the performances were sold out before Ronnie opened.

Cheers, Luman

New York Slam Queens

Kate Brehm and Gretchen Van Lente leap-frog hosting puppet slams at Brooklyn's Galapagos Art Space. Kate runs "Slutty Puppets" and Gretchen takes on "PUNCH" — both to critical acclaim!

Art Space. Kate runs "Slutty Puppets" and Gretchen takes on "PUNCH"

— both to critical acclaim!

Gretchen Van Lente

Gretchen Van Lente directs, designs and performs puppetry in New York City and all over the world. She is an avid teaching artist and international puppetry advocate (a former UNIMA-USA president). Gretchen runs Drama of Works, an internationally award-winning puppet company that focuses on adult adaptation, as well as children's shows. DOW began in 1999 with a group of college friends, after Gretchen took a class with Ralph Lee. In 2005 Galapagos asked her to take over curating their puppet slam, PUNCH. "Puppet slams can be a vital way of keeping puppetry hip and current. Without them where would the average thrill-seeker get introduced to new artists? And where would those artists try out new material? Where would those new trends get started?" She believes people are hungry, in fact, for puppet slams: "In this age of *Avenue Q*, people are starting to really sit up and listen to puppetry as adult entertainment. It's an affordable escape in these rough

times. Drink beer and watch some raunchy puppetry? Bring it on!" That is the nuts and bolts of running a slam, after all: searching for acts, hoping they don't flake out and trying to get the word out about the night—what's a slam without an audience? But all the hard work is worth it when the evening comes and the audience leaves exultant.



www.dramaofworks.com



PHOTO: RAYMOND SMITH

Kate Brehm

Kate Brehm directs, designs, and performs adult puppetry and experimental theatre. Her puppet shows and multimedia performance have been presented in Bangkok and London, as well as in New York and around the country. She has taught Puppet Manipulation in NYC and at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. Kate runs a company called *imnotlost*, founded in 2003 at the same time she started hosting the puppet slam *Slutty Puppets*. For her, age is relative: "I feel like I'm 25 years old in general, my age (33) when people talk to me like I'm 20 (I look really young), and 5 years old when I teach 5 year olds." She got the puppet bug in 1994 in college when *Bread and Puppet* came to her school. "We performed *Mr. Budhoo's Letter of Resignation From the IMF*. I suddenly realized there was a whole world of visual theater that could be huge or tiny, with people or alone, abstract or representational." As *Slutty Puppets* is housed at a bar you must be 21 to attend. (Also, it's "slutty.") After that, though, the audience's age varies from about 21- 50, which is just fine with her, as long as everyone's had a few beers. Kate began *Slutty Puppets* to present work where the audience was really relaxed. An "anything goes" kind of show, the audience talks back to the puppets as children do: "Don't go in—there's a monster!!!" Seems Kate wants us all to feel like kids again!

www.imnotlost.net

Erik Finck

Erik Finck is a puppet artist soon to graduate from the UCLA School of Theater. His puppet design and direction for the newly developed show “Mukashi Mukashi” were selected by the Geffen Playhouse as its official outreach show to LAUSD public schools. He has puppeteered at venues such as the Skirball Cultural Center, Farmlab, the LA Times Festival of Books, the LA Puppeteers’ Guild at the Bob Baker Marionette Theatre, and the Getty Museum. His work aims to introduce puppets into public spaces, emphasizing improvisation and direct interaction with audiences. He works with mixed forms and likes to build with affordable and alternative materials—often producing large, multi-person puppets. Finck uses puppets to address sensitive social issues in an approachable way, and much of his work has been with the MAKE ART/STOP AIDS initiative—resulting in performances for lectures, symposia, community groups, galleries, and a piece designed for upper elementary students entitled “Is It OK to Touch?”, which he also wrote and co-directed. Cultural exchange and understanding is an important aspect of his work in shows such as “Scarecrow” and “The Plover and the Whale.” He is very grateful to his generous and talented mentors, including Anurupa Roy, Leslie



Kitashima Gray, and Chris Green. His plans after graduation are to travel to India to apprentice under esteemed master puppeteers in New Delhi, and to apply this knowledge to continue his quest to bring puppets into public spaces and address important issues in inviting ways.

Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers



BRIAN, ROBIN AND ERIK TORBECK

This is the story of a boy named Torbeck...

In 1993, Bonnie and I were in residence at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. Among our puppetry students, Erik Torbeck was a stand out—a talented sculptor and athletic performer with a knack for turning any subject into social satire. After graduating, he recruited his brother Brian to help him with a show at a Renaissance Faire. A year later, Brian went to the

Dominican Republic with the Peace Corps (where he gave puppet workshops, giving several local puppeteers their start!). In the meantime, Erik recruited his sister Robin, who was still in college. By the time Brian returned, his siblings were re-established in Bar Harbor. Naming their company for a local hill, Frogtown Mountain became a threesome, even sharing a bedroom in their small house so that they’d have room for a studio.

They all have their own houses now (and plenty of studio space), but still perform together as one of the funniest puppet companies in America. After a lifetime together, they share a sense of humor and comic timing to an almost eerie degree. They’ve already performed at two national puppet festivals and are regular guests at Atlanta’s Center for Puppetry Arts. It makes us smile to know they are taking their hilarious “Adventures of the Banana Kid” or “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” to the same places we were performing back when Erik was our student. It gives us hope for the future.

[by Andrew Periale]

www.frogtownpuppets.com

PHOTO: BOB MAHONEY - WWW.BOBMAHONEY.COM

Vlada Tomova

For me, Vlada Tomova is to music what puppetry is to theatre. One of the fundamentally alluring aspects of puppetry is that it combines multiple art forms in one place, merging movement with painting, singing with sculpture, historical tradition with emerging narratives. Similarly, Tomova's singing fuses transnational traditions, blending vivacious jazz improvisations, undulating Bulgarian dissonances and rippling Middle-Eastern strains. Her voice is liquid magic, drawing listeners into a world of theatricality, shifting unexpectedly, yet seamlessly, into croons, murmurs, scat, lullabies and whoops.

Perhaps, then, it should not come as a great surprise that Tomova has long been drawn to the theatre. She joined Luna Theatre in 1999, initially providing all the narration and live vocal accompaniment, then quickly shifting to puppeteering, often singing simultaneously. Her contribution to Luna is perhaps best described using corporeal analogies: one review, for example, referred to her "phenomenal vocal acrobatics" (Denise Taylor, *The Boston Globe*, 10 Jan. 2002).

Tomova has applied her love of theatricalized music in numerous collaborations. Her musical experiments include vocal work for the 2006 Winter Olympics, compositions for *Dora the Explorer* and work with various musical ensembles and her Bulgarian women's choir, Yasma Voices. In puppetry collaborations, she co-created a shadow adaptation of Octavio Paz's poem *Las Armas del Verano*



PHOTO: KALIN ROUGICHEV

with Karen Zasloff at Brooklyn's BRIC Studio, and, more recently, performed as a singer/puppeteer/actress in Erin Orr's and Rima Fand's *Don Cristobal*, inspired by Lorca's puppet plays. Tomova lives and works in New York City.

[by Dassia Posner]

For the web site companion to this article go to
www.unima-usa.org/publications



FROM THE PUPPET LOVE! FESTIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO
 PHOTO: MICHAEL MALONEY

Janaki Ranpura

I saw Janaki perform at the Puppeteers of America national festival in 2007, and left the theatre in a state of euphoria. She is inventive, smart, irreverent and just plain fun to watch. This performance (of *Lovesick Sea Play*) garnered an UNIMA Citation of Excellence in 2008.

Ranpura graduated from Yale in 1998 in Humanities, with a cross-disciplinary focus in Medieval Studies—perfect for a career in theatre, and speaks to the breadth of her curiosity. She is a fine artist, whether working on small shadow figures or large parade-style puppets.

After graduation she studied at the École International du Théâtre Jacques Lecoq. She has worked with Bedlam and Heart of the Beast theaters in Minneapolis and the fabulous Islewilde festival on Vashon Island, off Seattle.

Her own company is J-J Trinket's Series. Her inventive shadow work has been influenced by Larry Reed's groundbreaking work based on waying kulit, but I feel sure Janaki Ranpura will continue to explore this genre in ways that surprise and inspire her audiences.

[by A. Periale]

web.mac.com/jjtrinket/iWeb/



Michael Haverty

Haverty could qualify as prime example and unofficial spokesman for both Atlanta's vibrant community of puppet artists and the larger national trend as the art form comes of age.

—Curt Holman, Creative Loafing

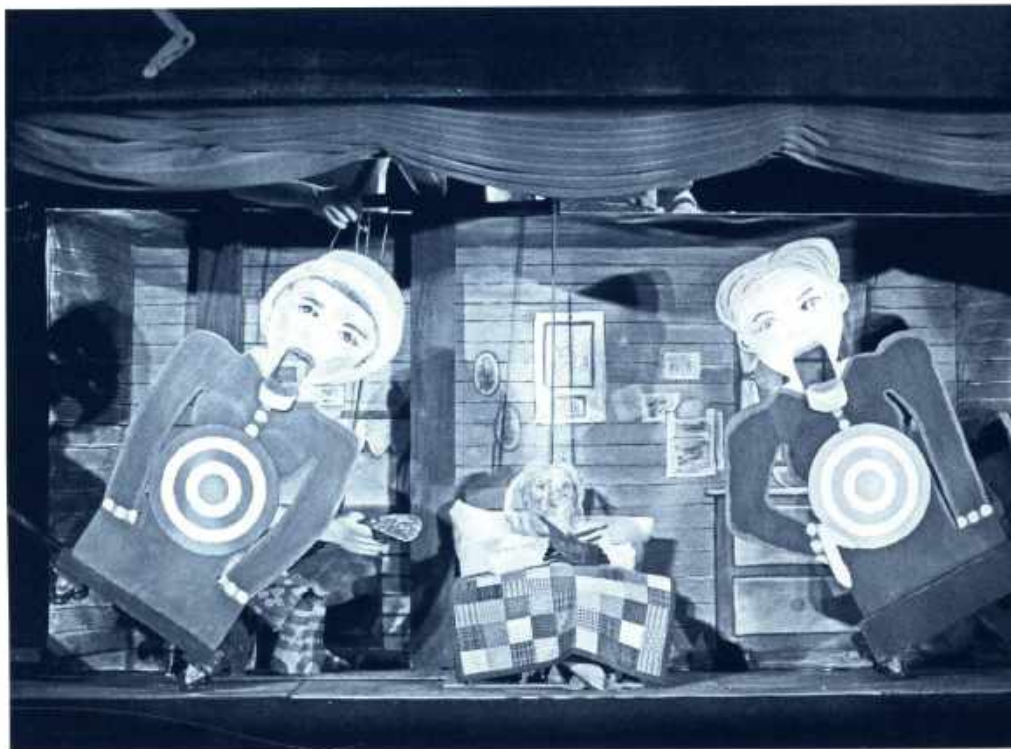
Michael Haverty is a director and puppeteer based in Atlanta, GA. Michael has performed extensively at the Center for Puppetry Arts (CPA). For the past five years he has served as the director of the CPA's 'Xperimental Puppetry Theater' program and in 2008 he began to direct for the CPA's Family Series.

In 2004, Michael founded Haverty Marionettes as Atlanta's first and only theater company dedicated solely to the creation of puppetry for adult audiences. Haverty Marionettes works to expand and strengthen the puppetry community in Atlanta through innovative adaptations and original works that challenge and entertain. *Gilgamesh* brought the ancient epic to life using Bunraku-style puppets along with live actors, shadow puppets, and large, animated Persian paintings. In 2006 Haverty Marionettes premiered two original marionette plays, *Put-In at Orient*, and Samuel Beckett's *Nacht und Traume*, presented as part of the city-wide 'Year of Beckett' festival. In 2007 the company's new adaptation of William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*, employed a carnivalesque design, hand-carved Sicilian-style marionettes, costumed performers, animated two-dimensional portraits, silhouette film, and live musicians to evoke the story's farcical-heroic journey to the graveyard. Coming in March 2009: *The Phantom Limb*.

Michael studied puppetry with Dan Hurlin at Sarah Lawrence College, and in Ireland at the Samuel Beckett School of Drama. He attended workshops with Miroslav Trejtnar, Zdar Sorm, and Albrecht Roser. Haverty Marionettes has been awarded project grants from the Puppeteers of America, and the Jim Henson Foundation.

[by Kristin Jarvis]

www.haverty-marionettes.org



FAULKNER'S AS I LAY DYING, 2007

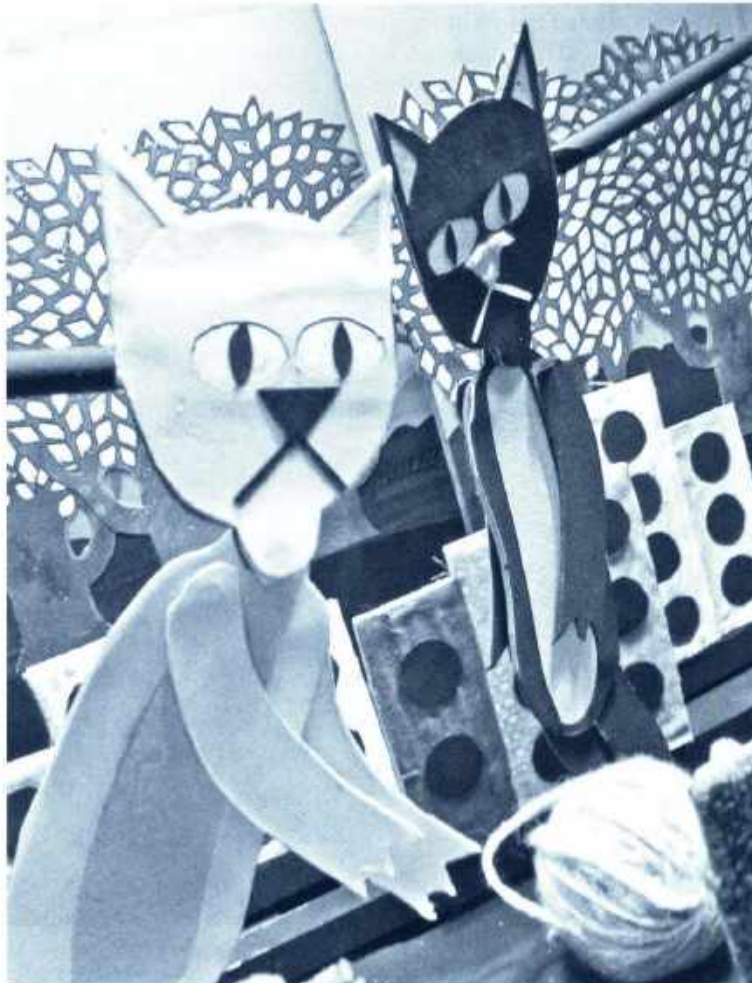
Morgan FitzPatrick Andrews



Morgan has a gift of bringing people together. He realized there were many puppeteers in Philadelphia who had not met each other. He threw a potluck supper and, out of that, Puppet Uprising began in June 2000. The name was chosen because puppets can rise up and appear almost anywhere in any form. Still going strong, Puppet Uprising, very much like a puppet slam, has presented six or seven events every year, attracting new local artists and performers from as far away as Canada and Japan. Morgan and his collective have created a loyal, enthusiastic audience that regularly fills a 200-seat theatre. Puppet Uprising is part of a network of alternative performance spaces that have cropped up, much in the way punk rock once developed new venues.

Seeing a performance of *Moby Dick* by Redmoon Theatre in Chicago launched Morgan's involvement in puppetry. Back in Boston in 1996 Morgan attended Bread & Puppet's summer gathering and he has returned to Bread and Puppet many times. In Philadelphia in 1998 Morgan started his company, Shoddy Puppets, creating small shows that could be performed in basements, coffee houses and festivals. The texts of his shows might come from a word, a personal experience or social issues. His work is distinguished by humor and inventiveness that engages his audiences. He has performed at Chicago's Puppetropolis, Pittsburgh's Black Sheep Festival and in NY at PS 122, HERE and the Toy Theatre Festival. He has performed as far away as Brazil and India.

[by Steve Abrams]



Dimitri Carter

Dimitri Carter is a founding member of Carter Family Marionettes. He began performing before turning 5 and needed a special extra step on the marionette bridge to reach over the back-drop with his characters. Ever since, he has toured throughout the world at countless theaters, festivals and school cafeterias. Notable venues include: The 18th century Palace Theatre of Frederick the Great in Potsdam, The Kennedy Center in D.C., New Victory Theatre in New York and The Uzbek National Puppet Theater in Tashkent.

He most frequently performs in Carter Family shows but has also worked on collaborative projects with other artists. In 1996, he began working full-time at Northwest Puppet Center and now serves as Executive Director.

Dimitri also has an interest in puppetry research. In 2003, an award from UNIMA-USA assisted with a trip to China to learn from Huang Yi Que, master of marionettes in Quanzhou. In 2005, he was the sole puppetry specialist cataloguing hundreds of puppets for a national museum initiative managed by MIT's Office of the Arts. Dimitri was honored in 2008 by The Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission to be among five in the nation receiving The Creative Artist Residency Fellowship. He recently returned from several months in Nagoya, witnessing the religious spectacles of *karakuri ningyo*. Back in Seattle again, Dimitri is leading an effort to reorganize the puppet center's research library and preparing for the family's tenth marionette opera. His son, Francisco Yang Carter, is now seven years old and has already begun the vagabond life of a puppet showman.

www.nwpuppet.org



JAPANESE KARAKURI NINGYO



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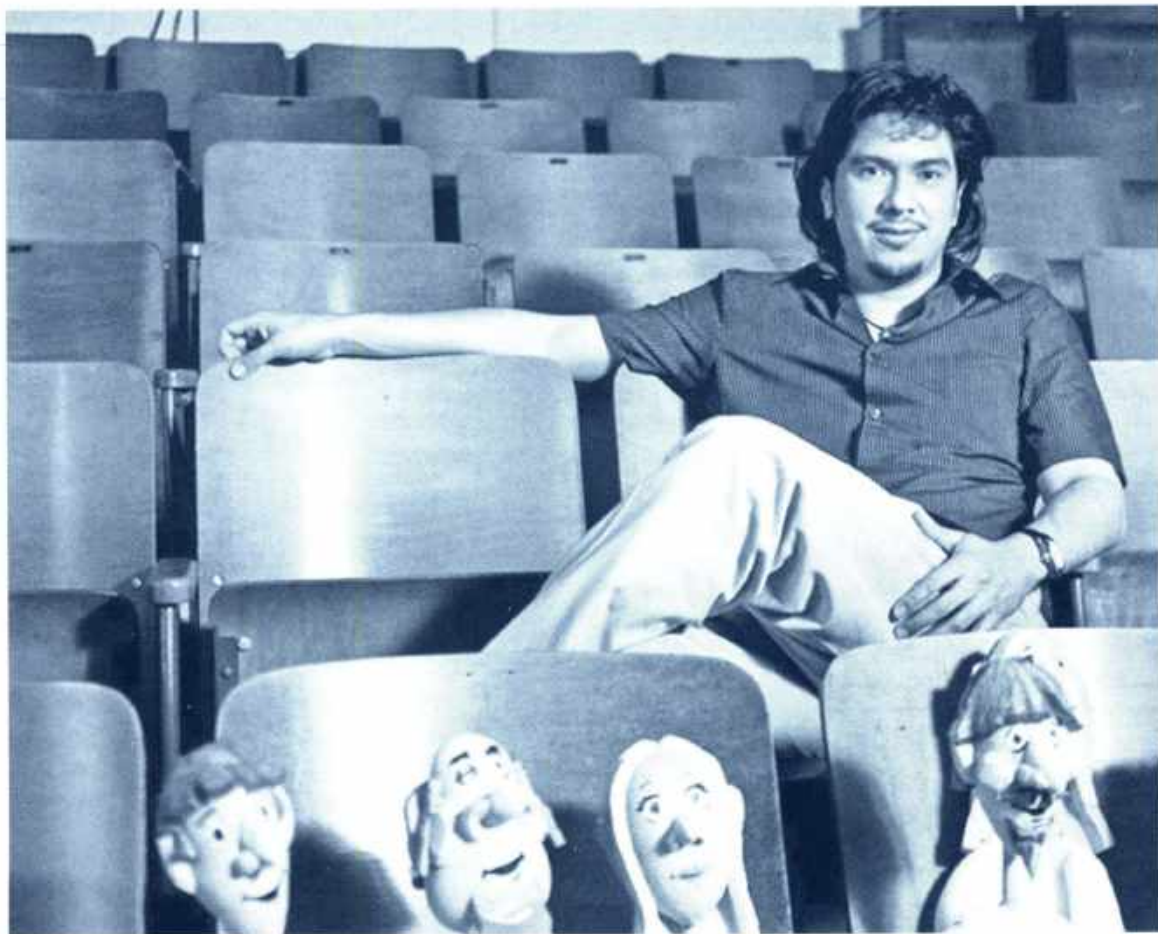
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Manuel Moran

Manuel Moran has passion, charm, a love of theatre and great organizational ability. In 1985 Manuel founded the Society of the Educational Arts, Inc. (SEA). As Executive Director of SEA he is responsible for creating programs that bring the arts to Hispanic/bilingual students and communities in their native language. Manuel has built a diverse artist/teacher staff that represents over twenty-two countries. Dr. Moran opened Teatro SEA @ Los Kabayitos Puppet & Children's Theatre on Manhattan's Lower East Side in August 1999. Teatro SEA is New York's *only* professional Latino Children's Theatre.

Manuel divides his time between New York and Puerto Rico where he directs SEA/Puerto Rico which is currently working throughout the island. Overall, SEA's programs are reaching over 100,000 individuals each year.

Born in San Juan, Manuel earned a Ph.D. in Educational Theatre from New York University. His real passion is creating and performing musicals and puppet theatre, and he has built a repertory of eighteen shows for children and adults which tour throughout the US and Puerto Rico. He was the writer and on-screen host for *Planeta SEA*, a weekly children's television segment on Telemundo 47.



Dr. Moran was honored by his hometown, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, and he recently received the "El Award" that recognizes the most prominent Latinos in New York City.

As an International Counselor and UNIMA-USA board member, Manuel traveled to Australia for the 2008 World Congress of Puppetry. He was elected to the UNIMA International Executive Committee and appointed President of the North American Commission.

[by Steve Abrams]

www.manuelmoran.com

Kat Pleviak

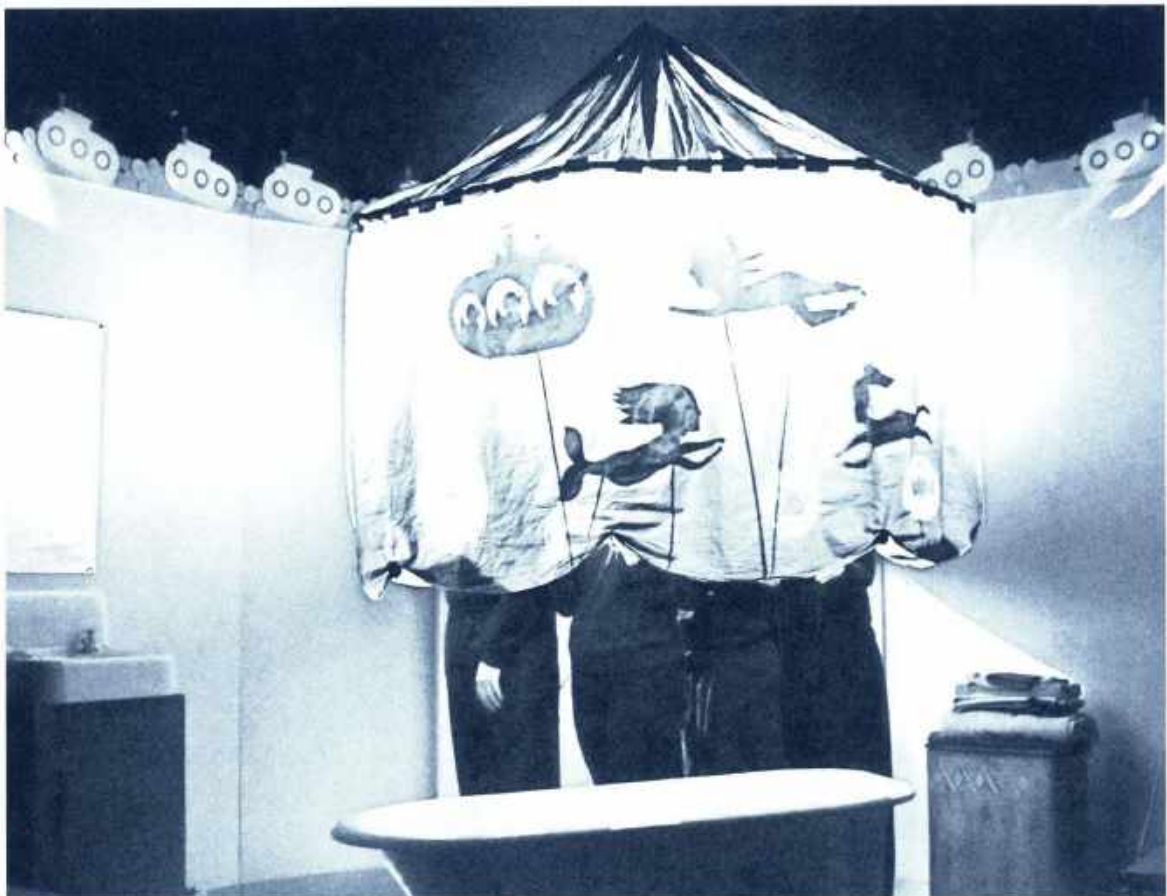
After working as a puppet designer in Chicago, Kat Pleviak relocated to Honolulu, Hawai'i to pursue her MFA in Youth Theatre and Puppetry. For her thesis production, Kat wrote, designed and built an original puppet play titled *Snow Day*. For this production, Kat combined traditional puppetry forms, including tabletop, shadow and hand puppetry with a number of unique puppets such as life-sized, animated, hobbyhorses and a variety of helium balloon puppets. Combine this wide array of puppets with alternative staging techniques, such as performing in the round and using moving shadow screens, and the innovative work of Kat Pleviak emerges. The entire space is transformed into the world of the puppet, in which her audience becomes a participant.

By encouraging creativity and wonder in her audience while reinforcing positive traits such as responsibility and empathy, Kat creates work that is both entertaining and educational. She incorporates actors with her puppets to help young audiences learn to distinguish between the worlds of imagination and reality, while respecting and appreciating both. While Kat's focus is Youth Theatre, she strives to create productions to which people of every age can connect. Kat regularly participates in puppetry conferences and was named an Emerging



Artist at the 2008 O'Neill Puppetry Conference. Kat is currently teaching puppetry at the University of Hawai'i and will receive her MFA in Youth Theatre and Puppetry, this May. She will return to Chicago this June as Artistic Director of Sea Beast Puppet Company.

[by Elise Sanders]



Anna Sobel



In some ways it's a shame that for most of her performances, Anna Sobel is hidden under a stage or behind a curtain. Her bright eyes and wide and ready smile are infectious carriers of enthusiasm, enjoyment, and an encouragement to let inhibitions go. Sobel's passion for puppetry has brought her all over the East Coast, but most exotically to India, as the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship. During her nine months

there, she studied puppetry as a tool for social change and education, collaborating with Indian puppeteers and visioning her unique style of puppetry. She brought this distinctive style back to New York City to found Talking Hands Theatre, a company that serves the tri-state area's schools, libraries, parks, theatres, hospitals, and homes, making educational topics fun through shows as well as puppet making workshops. Sobel has also presented shows to adult audiences, blending humor, insight, and new twists on old stories as she entertains with her colorful handmade puppets. Sobel has come a long way since she was originally fascinated by puppetry in 1998 at Bread and Puppet's last big circus. Since then, her venues have included The 92nd Street Y, The New York Public Library, The Brooklyn Children's Museum, and The Jewish Museum. In 2008 she was honored as the Laura Adasko Lenzner artist in residence at the Bank Street School for Children (where she studied early childhood education). And if that isn't enough, she also rocks the stage with the Jewish performance troupe, *Storahelling*, and is currently pursuing an MA in educational theatre at N.Y.U.

[by Gila Lyons]

www.puppetree.com

Ruslan Kudashov

Ruslan Kudashov, who staged Platonov's story, "The River Potudan" while still a student at the Saint Petersburg Academy, immediately became an outstanding figure in Russian puppet theatre. Since then, the majority of his works deservedly have been nominated for Golden Mask awards. The founder of the theatre Potudan (the first show's title gave the group of kindred spirits its name) now directs the legendary Bolshoi Puppet Theatre in St. Petersburg, trains students, and directs in theatres in Russia and abroad.

Kudashov is a philosopher. He feels close to the mysticism of Gogol, the lyricism of Pushkin, and the rationalism of Tolstoy. He has turned to these, his favorite authors, more than once. The strangest work in Russian literature, "Viy," became, for Kudashov, a way to discuss "the downfall of a soul," where evil is hidden within man himself. In contrast, Tolstoy's "Strider" was subtitled "Chronicle of a Soul's Salvation." An animal, through suffering, atones for its sins and goes to heaven. Humans are represented as headless mannequins, while the other horses, who don't ponder the meaning of life, are but carnival carousel toys or chess pieces. Even the jovial, gluttonous Winnie-the-Pooh is, in Kudashov's treatment, above all a thinker and poet, while the ubiquitously known Little Prince least of all resembles Saint



Exupéry's drawings. An infant with wise eyes, it seems he knows everything. While traveling, he does not get to know the world himself, but helps others to. Kudashov, in many ways, resembles this prince, as well as another, a Danish one, Hamlet, too, directed his gaze straight into the soul.

[by Aleksei Goncharenko]

(translated by Dussia Posner)

www.potudan.ru/

Emmy Bean

I first saw Emmy Bean's puppet work among other pieces in an experimental performance festival at Perishable Theatre. Her piece, *War Bride*, explored the human capacity to deny grief and move on through the lens of the phenomenon of young women married to soldiers during WWII. Emmy Bean played the War Bride of the title as well as her puppet alter ego, a rabbit named Cynthia, who apparently had taken up knitting for the Red Cross. The piece, rather than presenting a linear narrative, layered image upon image, using various forms of puppetry, live actors and song to create an impression, a lasting one. Since charming me completely with her work, Emmy Bean and two friends have purchased an old dairy barn in Montague, Massachusetts, where they are continuing to layer multiple art forms and to incubate their own work as well as that of other performing artists.

Her current projects reflect her expansive nature. With filmmaker and artist Naima Lowe, Emmy is developing *Mary and Sarah and You and Me: A Series of Tiny Spectacles*, a performance/installation about two lesser known women from Montana, that employs puppets, film and video. She is also working on the ambitious-sounding shadow puppet show, *The Man Without*



PHOTO: NAIMA LOWE

a Shadow, with digital animation by Jacob Richman. The ways in which Emmy combines media, collaborating with new media artists, while continuing to mine history, makes her an artist to keep an eye on.

[by Vanessa Gilbert]

Read about Vanessa Gilbert on the UNIMA publications site and at www.perishable.org

Marsian DeLellis

A giggly grinning ice cream cake flies lonely five year old Linda off to Planet Birthday, where she is briefly happy and loved. Moments later, Linda stares in horror as a piece of her new friend is cut and served to her on a plate. Its sugary severed mouth hisses up at her, "You let them kill me!" So begins fictitious ice cream heiress Linda Carvel's long troubled relationship with food, as told in a psychedelic puppet fantasia by Marsian DeLellis.



Marsian (he pronounces it like "Martian") is finishing his Master's degree at Cal Arts this year. With his shock of pink hair and oversized silver boots, he resembles an anime character, and there is a cuteness to his fleecy neon-colored puppet world. It is also a dark and very adult place, teetering between comedy and nightmare. The people in Marsian's plays distort their bodies in a search for love, or something like it. Linda becomes grotesquely fat, while in *Bride of Wildenstein*, a socialite grows fur and claws in hopes of recapturing the attention of her game hunter husband.

Marsian draws inspiration from breaking news, 12-step lore and pop culture. He is an eclectic experimenter who has played with cantastoria, bunraku, pop-up books, toy theater, shadow puppets, costumes and video. His productions can feel like a crazy hall of mirrors, flashing bits of a story from multiple angles. Yet, the chaos is held together by a strong, idiosyncratic personal aesthetic. And lots of fake fur.

[by Lynn Jeffries]



Kentaro Sunaga

When Kentaro Sunaga decided he wanted to study puppetry, he tucked right into it without reserve. Enrolling in Japan's puppet institute Toramaru Ark assured he would study with seasoned pros, and get a well rounded introduction to a variety of styles and techniques. After completing the two year program, he signed on to work for Puk. One of the most established puppet companies in Japan, Puk has a TV division that had Kentaro out on national broadcast right away.

Fulfilling other people's creative dreams left his own wanting attention, so, "Sayonara day job." As of a couple of years ago he was doing just enough part time work to finance his endeavors, and has devoted his energies to creating variations on his chosen themes. From the simple concept of bendy wire wrapped with colorful yarn he has given us a psychedelic cast of fantastic creatures.

These home-grown escapees from Sunaga's subconscious are posable forms, lending themselves nicely to stop-motion animation.

He has made some intriguing video clips, and he dreams of one day having his own stop motion studio. Slideshows of his creations, and some wicked bits of video, are online at his "myspace" web site.

In early '08, Kentaro's work bagged the top prize in the Modern Art Competition at the The Artcomplex Center of Tokyo. Part of that prize is a trip to New York to show his stuff in a gallery this year. That exhibition is scheduled for June 29th - July 2nd, at the AG Gallery. (107-A North 3rd Street, Ground Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11211 718-599-3044)



[by Grego]

www.aboutglamour.net
www.myspace.com/iemotomaster

FAUST—a classic in miniature

This beautiful production was written and directed by Steven Ritz-Barr, with gorgeous Czech-style marionettes by Russian master Eugene Seregin and a haunting original score by John Greaves.

There is no spoken text in the production. The occasional narrative or speech is presented through the florid calligraphy of the silent film title card. Despite their simplicity, the puppets are very expressive. Music underscores all the action in a style that fuses the prominent accordion of a Nino Rota Fellini score with a “techno” fusion and the glorious spookiness of the saw and theremin.

The film begins and ends in the puppeteer’s workshop, and while the puppeteer/God metaphor may be a bit hackneyed in general, it is perfectly apt for this sensitive re-imagining of Goethe’s *Faust I*, which begins



in Heaven and ends with the Almighty stepping in to snatch Faust from the jaws of Hell.

Faust is one of the most enduring stories of the last millennium. Unlike the early versions, in which Faust is dragged off to Hell for having truck with the supernatural, Goethe gave the tale a redemptive twist. Ritz-Barr has done the same in his highly distilled version. The scales fall from Faust’s eyes in one final act of sacrifice, so that the final image of Faust and Gretchen hanging side by side in the puppeteer’s atelier feels very, very right.

review by A. Periale

The 30-minute video is available at www.classicsinminiature.com for \$19.95. Its realization received support from many sources, including two of puppetry’s most significant champions: Nancy Staub and Heather Henson [see page 4. —ed.].



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Tom Sarver

Pittsburgh artist and puppeteer Tom Sarver has been a core organizer and curator of the Black Sheep Puppet Festival since its inception in 1999. The Pittsburgh festival, which features experimental and activist puppetry, celebrated its tenth year in October of 2008.

Tom's vision in presenting a festival of emerging and established talent from across the country has helped to establish a strong puppetry community in Pittsburgh. Featured artists at Black Sheep have included Laura Heit, Blair Thomas, Morgan Andrews, Beth Nixon and Paul Zaloom, to name a few.

Tom's puppet company, The Tom Sarver Puppet Express, performs wacky tales of fish, birds, humans and mythological creatures. The group performs at museums and arts events throughout Western Pennsylvania. A self-taught puppeteer, Tom began his first public performances at Black Sheep. His colorful handmade characters and whimsical low-tech gadgetry are trademarks of his performances. From September 2006 to June of 2008, Tom's puppets and shows were featured in **The Tom Museum**, an installation and performance exhibition that he created and lived in at the Mattress Factory Museum of Art. In 2007, Tom was awarded The Pittsburgh Mayor's Award for Public Art for the project.

[by Michael Cuccaro]



The Black Sheep Puppet Festival's web site:
www.blacksheepuppet.com

The Tom Museum's web site:
www.tommuseum.com

Anna Viktorova



Anna Viktorova is by training an artist, by profession a director, by nature a mystifier and myth-creator from Saint Petersburg. Her show, "The Horseman *Cuprum*," which evokes motifs from Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman," also relates the legend of the founding of the Russian northern capital, the world's most artificial city. "Petersburg was founded not on bones, but on love;" this is the thesis, successfully proven by Viktorova. The beautiful megalopolis's most famous buildings float through the water: crosses of cathedrals, spires of ministries. Marionettes, struggling with the elements, remind audiences of Pushkin himself,

of Tsar Peter, and of a young Nabokov, enthralled even then by butterflies. The show is performed at Viktorova's theatre, Puppet Format. Contemporary young directors and artists prefer studio work over work in large state theatres; Viktorova is no exception.

In continuation of their myth-making, the young theatre staged Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. In Russia, schoolchildren all write essays on "Dostoevsky's Petersburg." Viktorova created a theatrical essay that borders on the absurd. Thus the quantity of unpleasant old ladies killed by the student Raskolnikov seems, in one scene, to multiply endlessly. These are references to another Soviet, Saint-Petersburg cult figure; Daniel Kharms is popular largely thanks to his tale about grandmothers pouring out of a window.

It may seem that Viktorova does not work for children. On the contrary, her *Robin-a-Bobbin*, based on English poetry, has earned several prestigious Russian theatre awards. Two actors lightly and animatedly perform a domestic show: thus a lad gives a present to a lass. It turns out that nonsense (how a crocodile met from the head of a rooster of a rooster from the head of a crocodile) is no less interesting to Viktorova than the mysteries of her native city.

[by Aleksei Goncharenko]
 (translated by Dussia Posner)

www.kukfo.ru
 and in English:
www.kukfo.ru/eng/main.php



Michael W. Bush

An emerging artist in the field of puppetry, Michael Bush combines his fine arts training in crafts and fiber design with innovative craftsmanship, performance, design.

Before attending the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts program, Michael trained at the College for Creative Studies where he gained valuable skills in sculpting, filmmaking, puppet construction, textile design. He was recently recognized by the National Puppetry Conference for his work on *Icarus* and by the Michigan Television Broadcaster's Association for his puppet creations in the "Traffic Chickens" promos.

Collaborating with director Stefano Brancato, Michael has designed and built over sixty puppets for their adaptation of *Icarus* at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre. Here he endeavored to deliberately show the mechanisms of the puppets, many of which are human scale. His efforts are intrinsically woven into the fabric of the play's story, providing the lush environment and magical world of the production. His puppets intermingle effortlessly with the actors—never hiding the actor/puppeteer—and fuse movement, music, performance, spectacle in this new ensemble-based work.

Michael has served as a puppeteer in the forthcoming Wes Craven film, *24/8*, the Puppet Technical Director for *Little Things* at Connecticut Repertory, and has worked on puppet mechanisms for Puppet Odyssey Design.

His passion, vision, ingenuity, optimism will surely establish him prominently in the field.

[by Adrienne C. Macki]

www.icarusonline.webs.com



Stefano Brancato

Dynamic, collaborative, fearless, and experimental describe director, designer and performer Stefano Brancato whose magical and imaginative artistry points to this rising artist's tremendous potential in the field of puppetry.

Before completing his MFA at the University of Connecticut's Puppetry Arts program, Stefano trained at Marymount Manhattan College, Nimble Arts Circus School, Sandglass Puppet Institute. He has worked at the Ballard Institute of Puppetry and as a design specialist with Cass Daily Designs.

The O'Neill Puppetry Conference recently recognized Stefano as an emerging artist for his workshop production of *Icarus*. His work has appeared on stage and film with shows at Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Company MUDD, which he co-founded, and Flying Fig Productions in New York.

As director and co-creator of *Icarus*, an adaptation of the Greek myth with puppet designer Michael Bush, Stefano integrated puppetry, acting, masks, movement, spectacle, music in this Connecticut Repertory Theatre production offering an exciting, magical synergy of theatrical elements that draw on various performance styles and techniques. In this energetic ensemble-based show with puppet elements, the company is compelled to tell the story as if enacting a lost ritual or an act of storytelling in hopes of uniting us with our collective tragedies.

A self-avowed risk-taker and dreamer, Stefano sees the stage as a way to connect with society in a very direct way. This impassioned artist remains committed to finding new ways of telling stories that bravely engage audiences and simultaneously unify performers and spectators in refreshing collective, collaborative experiences.

[by Adrienne C. Macki]

www.icarusonline.webs.com

Seonaid Goody

Seonaid Goody received a Masters degree with distinction from the Central School of Speech and Drama in London in 2006 and has been working constantly as a freelance puppeteer ever since. Exceptionally versatile, Seonaid (pronounced Shona) is a talented and creative maker and performer, and a musician.

In 2007 Seonaid was the recipient of one of two apprenticeships offered by the Little Angel Theatre, set up to mark the centenary of John Wright, the theatre's founder. She worked with distinguished practitioners, including Lyndie Wright and Peter O'Rourke, learning how to operate string marionettes. Following six months of intensive training, Seonaid toured with the Little Angel's production, *Give Us a Hand*, with writer and "Children's Laureate" Michael Rosen. Following this Seonaid helped devise and perform in *The Princess and the Pea*, directed by Joy Haynes of Banyan theatre for the famous Polka Theatre, a show in which projected pictures were animated with the objects and puppets.

Seonaid was puppet maker and performer on a site-specific production *Zephyrus Dreams*. She has just completed puppeteering, acting and singing in the Little Angel Theatre's very successful production of Roald Dahl's *The Giraffe, The Pelly and Me*.



Throughout her packed career to date, she has been the director of several shows and led development workshops for new work. Seonaid is an exciting and excitable young puppeteer who loves good stories and laughter. Her ambition is to form her own company within a few years, and to create great shows that tell stories in new and engaging ways.

[by Penny Francis]

Kevin Menegus

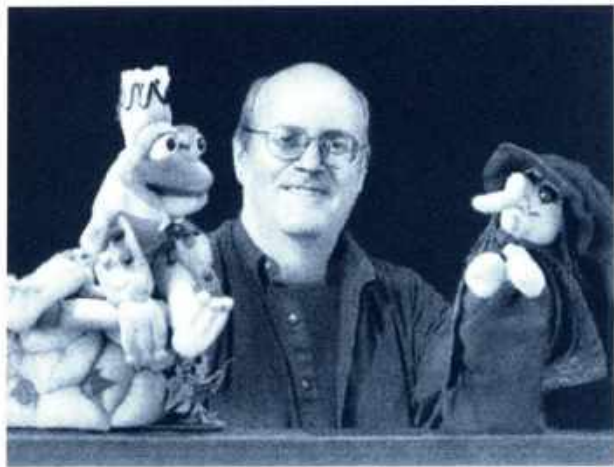
A talented young puppeteer based in Northern California, Kevin Menegus is producing clever marionette productions in both the variety and story format throughout the western United States. His interest in puppetry began around age 6 when he was introduced to the English-made Pelham marionettes. This early fascination with puppet theater eventually led Kevin to apprentice and study with several prominent California puppeteers—Lewis Mahlmann, Randall Metz, Bob Baker, and Tony Urbano. From these masters, Kevin acquired a solid base of practical theatrical knowledge that has been further enhanced by his equally impressive musical background that includes a Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music.



In 1989, Kevin founded his own company, The Fratello Marionettes and currently works with puppeteer partner, Fred C. Riley III, performing for schools, libraries, fairs, festivals, and private parties. Kevin's freelance work has included performances for theme parks (Children's Fairyland), film (*The Game*, starring Michael Douglas), cruise ships (Silver Sea, Crystal, Holland America), and music videos (*Facing the Void*, for General Electric). Although his current style of construction and performance has been greatly influenced by the puppeteers with whom he worked, Kevin's own unique artistic voice is coming to the forefront, revealing the great potential of this youthful performer.

[by Phillip Huber]

Diary of a Doll Wiggler: A Bob's-Eye View Into the Wacky & Wonderful World of Puppetry



by Bob Nathanson. 162 pp. Charlemagne Press, 2008. \$20.

Bob Nathanson's *Diary of a Doll Wiggler* is a spirited, funny, incisive look into the life of a contemporary professional puppeteer—an account that is actually incredibly valuable as a record of what this old profession has been like in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In a way it reminds me of Nina Efimova's *Memoirs of a Russian Puppet Theatre* (also published by Charlemagne Press) because Nathanson's view into the everyday world of birthday party and elementary school puppet performance is just as much a snapshot of these aspects of contemporary American culture as Efimova's book is a snapshot of puppetry in revolutionary Russia.

What's more, Nathanson's book is hilariously funny and an engaging page turner. His comic style (which many puppeteers have seen in Potpourri performances at national puppet festivals) is dry and self-deprecating—a kind of *Seinfeld* or Jon Stewart of the puppet stage—and since Nathanson came into puppetry late in life, he is able to view his often fantastic experiences with a certain critical distance that allows for valuable insights into the deeply meaningful absurdity of adults playing with dolls in the 21st century.

Diary of a Doll Wiggler is written as a series of diary entries, starting in 1979, when Nathanson (then 32) and his wife Elise Handelman are inspired to learn puppetry by an anonymous marionette performance on the streets of Manhattan. They have the good fortune to take Lea Wallace's puppet class, and, despite Nathanson's painful shyness in public, soon find themselves plunged into the world of puppetry. Nathanson's accounts of his first performances, and the vicissitudes of backstage mishaps and the challenges of terribly young audiences, are extraordinarily entertaining and instructive, even though they don't take the form of a puppet handbook. Nathanson took care to learn from

some of the best puppeteers around: Carol Fijan, George Latshaw and Lenny Suib, in addition to Lea Wallace, so his attention to his craft is nuanced and thoughtful. This in no way reduces the hilarity of Nathanson's experiences performing for the daughter of a Mafia don on Staten Island; among clothes racks in a Manhattan department store; or losing his pants backstage because of a too-successful diet. These accounts are best experienced with the full flavor of Nathanson's superb comic timing, wry turns of phrase and ever-present wisdom.

review by John Bell

DIARY OF A DOLL WIGGLER:

A Bob's-Eye View into
the Wacky & Wonderful
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Bob Nathanson

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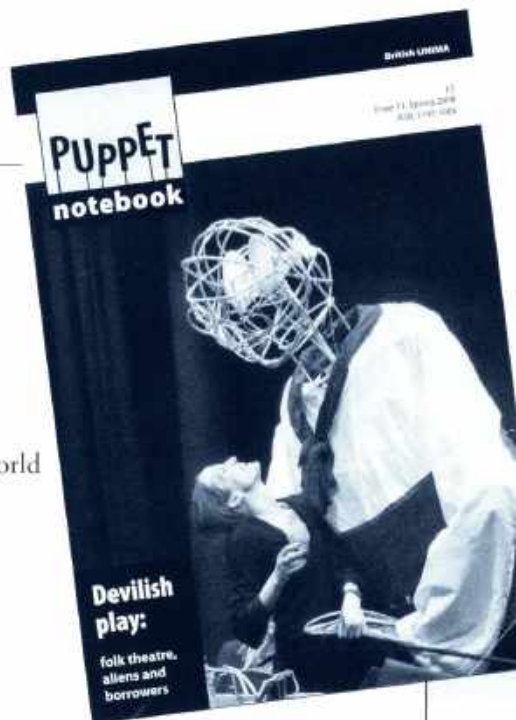
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Opera House Arts
Quarryography II: Habitat

Rogue Artists Ensemble
Gogol Project

ShadowLight Productions
Ghosts of the River

Susan Simpson
Exhibit A

Skysaver Productions
*The Travelling Players Present the
Women of Troy*

Underground Railway Theater
Galileo 2009 Project



Man of Steel
Frank Maugeri
Photo: Sean Williams



Photo: Lucina Saugen

My Dear Lewis
Kyle Loven

CHILDREN'S SHOW GRANTS (\$5,000)

Blair Thomas & Company
Moby-Dick

Circus Minimus Puppetry
The Gnip Gnopera

Hamumu Theatre Collective
Echo

Dallas Children's Theater
The Tale of Peter Rabbit

Strings & Things
Who Speaks for Wolf

Teatro Sea
Viva Pinocho

Thistle Theatre
The Tale of Two Bad Mice

SEED GRANTS (\$2,000)

Matthew Acheson
Dirt Project

Michael Bodell
La Sonnambula

Jean Marie Keevins
The Adventures of Liverwurst Girl

Kyle Loven
My Dear Lewis

Amanda Maddock
Do Elephants Dream of Eclectic Sheep?

Erin K. Orr
Don Cristobal, Billy-Club Man

Red String Wayang Theatre
The Struggle for Justice

Joseph Silovsky
Send for the Million Men

Luis Tentindo
La Escalera

Trouble Puppet Theater Company
The Jungle

Eric Van Wyk
O the Sky!

Karen Zasloff
Dimensions of Kigali



Photo: Joyce Hunter

The Struggle for Justice
Red String Wayang Theatre

Photo: Courtesy of the artist



Who Speaks for Wolf
Strings and Things Puppet Co.

Don Cristobal, Billy-Club Man
Erin K. Orr

Photo: Chris Green

2010 GRANTING CYCLE

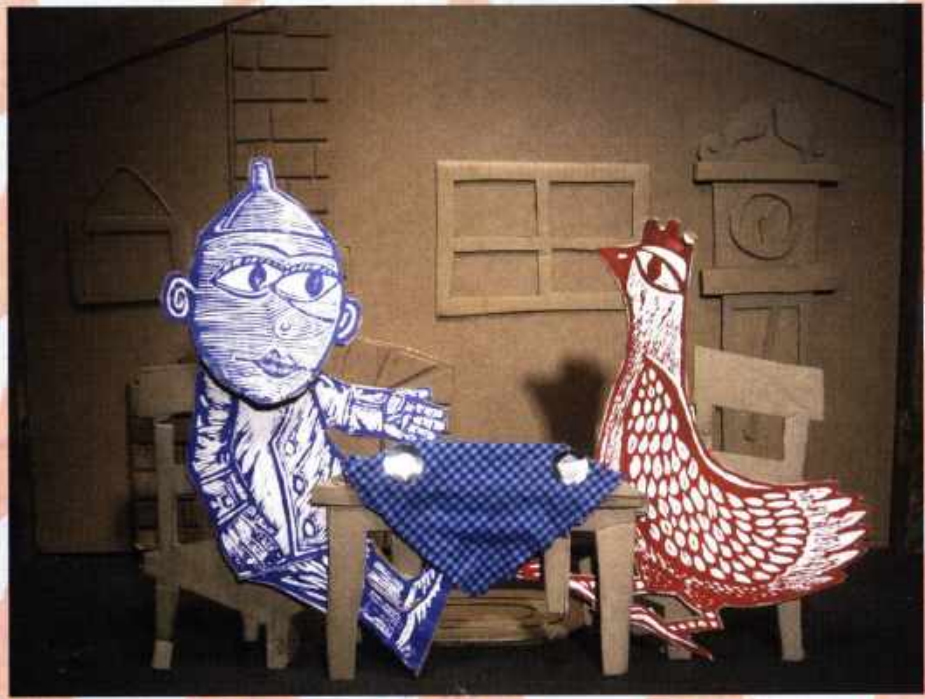
The Foundation awards grants at the end of each year for the creation and development of innovative and contemporary work for adult and family audiences. The postmark deadline for letters of intent is April 24th, 2009. Guidelines are available at www.hensonfoundation.org

To request an application by mail, please contact us at our office:

627 Broadway, 9th floor
New York, NY 10012
Phone 212.680.1400

Fax 212.680.1401

Email info@hensonfoundation.org



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