

PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media



THE PUPPETRY IN EDUCATION ISSUE

PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

issue no. 42

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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.

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PUPPETRY IN EDUCATION

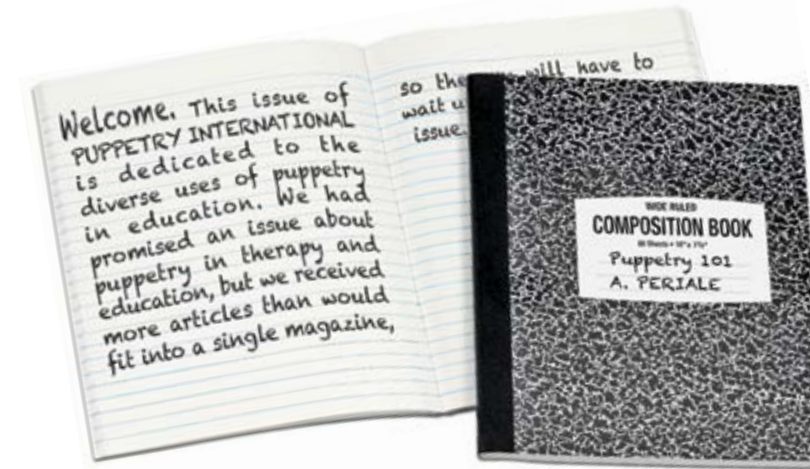
Welcome. This issue of *Puppetry International* is dedicated to the diverse uses of puppetry in education. We had promised an issue about puppetry in therapy and education, but we received more articles than would fit into a single magazine, so therapy will have to wait until our spring issue.

Growing up in the 1950s and -60s, and despite the popularity of puppetry on the new medium of television, I don't recall seeing a single puppet show during the twelve years spent toiling my way through ten public schools in four states. Forced to rely on my own resources, I made a series of shadow puppets that would pop up uninvited during the then prevalent genre of presentation known as the "film strip" – analog predecessor of Power Point. I didn't know my 2D actors were called "shadow puppets" thanks to the sorry state of puppetry in education, but you know what they say: If you build it, they will come." What they don't say is: If you build it and use it in class, you will get suspended from school (but maybe that's okay, I mean, we learn by doing, not by parroting aphorisms). And so I became a puppeteer. Perhaps if we'd had artists-in-residence back then, or puppet-wielding teachers, I would actually have learned calculus, or I might even have emerged less socially maladjusted. We'll never know.

What we do know is that there is a lot of puppetry used in schools today, as well as teacher training, and we bring you a number of reports on the subject from here and abroad. Carol Sterling tells us about her presentation at a conference in India in which she provided resources for teachers of special needs children. Judith O'Hare, who has for years led a summer program for teachers called Puppets: Education Magic, tells us how presenting at a conference in Hong Kong has gotten her invited to other conferences all over the world. Kuang-Yu Fong, co-director of the New York based Chinese Theatre Workshop (with Stephen Kaplin) tells an unexpected tale of returning to her native China to teach Chinese shadow puppetry to the Chinese!

Jennifer Goodlander recently observed a workshop in Myanmar, in which young Burmese were reintroduced to their own cultural heritage after decades of harsh military rule. This was also an opportunity to rebuild an audience for a tradition of puppetry that goes back some six centuries.

There are some domestic programs represented as well, including Michael and Mary Vetere's look at the efficacy of puppets and objects in the intellectual and behavioral development of children. Marc Kohler has been working with school populations for nearly fifty years, and shares with us his method and some of the transformations he has witnessed as he introduced puppetry to young children.



We've mentioned in a previous issue the exemplary "distance learning" program at Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts, but this seems like the right time to check in on the latest developments there as both the theories and technologies are so rapidly evolving.

There are, as always, a few choice items off topic: Jamie Ashby has a peer reviewed article looking at the way waves of Canadian puppetry have mirrored those in the US. Linda Ehrlich reviews Jennifer Goodlander's new book on female *dalangs* in the wayang kulit tradition. Alan Cook has also come out with a gorgeous book that looks back over his long career as a collector of puppets (and stories about their makers!). Finally, we have written about an international puppetry festival in Canada about which everyone should know: FIAMS.

– Andrew Periale

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PI #41 CORRECTION:

We have been alerted to two errors in our AFRICA issue. Heather Jeanne Denyer's article on the Giant Puppets of Boromo. In one of the photos on page 15, Idrissa Zongo is misidentified as his nephew Joel Zongo. In another, Bomavé Konaté is misidentified as his nephew Yakobo Konaté.

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Major donors are named on page 13.

THE DISTANCE LEARNING DEPARTMENT

AT THE CENTER FOR PUPPETRY ARTS

by Sara Burmenko

By now the world has become accustomed to amazing puppets that are viewed as shadows, float on water, move remotely, are digitally animated, fly through the air, are gigantic in size, are composed of household objects that talk and creep, crawl, change shape before our eyes and perform a million other surprising stunts.

Welcome to our world here at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia. But keep reading because in addition to being entertainers, we're educators, and there is so much more than manipulated puppets going on here.

Let me introduce you to the department I manage: Distance Learning. In the beginning (1998), we took as our mandate the desire to enhance classroom curricula. We believed that a puppet was a useful vehicle through which subject matter could be enjoyably transmitted. Although ideal, it would be time-consuming, complicated and expensive to move a classroom of thirty or thirty-five children to our facility, but we had a way to move ourselves into the classroom: videoconferencing. In fact, currently we have moved into schools in forty-nine states and nine countries, and we do this via two videoconferencing studios, with two part-time and one full-time educator/actor/entertainer/puppeteer.

We started slowly and carefully, aware that we were doing something completely unique. At first, we focused on Georgia schools, financially enabled by GSAMS (Georgia Statewide Academic and Medical System). The Center saw the potential of our technology to expand its service to students who were unable to benefit from its arts education services in person. We became the first theater arts organization in the state to offer this programming. For the first few years, the Distance Learning program primarily served Georgia schools and worked with more than thirty school systems statewide to provide workshops. As word spread about our workshops, our program services expanded to a national, then an international, audience. And we're still growing.

Previously, schools had to possess videoconferencing equipment in order to access our offerings. This was costly and cumbersome and prevented many schools from connecting to us. Fortunately, a few years ago a new product emerged that offers the same quality as a videoconferencing connection (H.323), a cloud-based platform. Now, we have the ability to connect to any schools, nursing homes, children's hospitals, boys and girls clubs and libraries with an internet connection.

We offer two different options. Amazingly, we can provide both of these options to up to seven sites simultaneously.



OPTION NUMBER ONE:

We provide fifteen different subject-matter-based programs. We suggest certain programs for specific age groups.

Here's how it works:

A teacher contacts the Distance Learning department and tells us he/she's teaching a unit on Native Americans and would like to book our program on that subject. Once we schedule the program, we send the teacher a link to our study guide, in which there is a materials list and templates for the related puppet-building activity. In our point-to-point connection, we are "in the classroom," interacting live – and unscripted – with the students. In the Native American program we discuss the nature of cultural groups, how natural resources define those groups and then we focus on one specific tribe, the Hopi. We take

breaks during the program to make a puppet version of a Hopi Kachina doll with the class, and then we continue talking with the students about the lesson. This particular program takes 60 minutes, and is a lot of fun.

OPTION NUMBER TWO:

Distance Learning offers off-site audiences a connection to four different live, interactive puppet shows, all created to work within our studio space. A major benefit to schools of arranging to view a show remotely is that an entire grade level can experience it together. In addition to performing, the puppeteer demonstrates to the class how the puppets are manipulated and how they are constructed and answers any other questions. These shows, including a Q & A, last between 45 and 50 minutes.





Here's how it works:

All the pre-K through second graders in the school go into the lunchroom or library to see "The Little Red Hen and the Grain of Wheat." The puppeteer introduces him/herself, teaches the students a song that will be repeated throughout the show, and they begin the performance. During the show, the puppets elicit interaction from the students, including singing the song. After the show, the Q & A allows the puppeteer and students to talk.

In order to work with differing time zones and school schedules, all of our programs are booked on demand. Every attempt is made to accommodate the needs of our users. We also solicit feedback and suggestions.

Our department can be seen as a mini-Puppetry Arts Center, providing a remote connection to the types of programming the Center offers on-site. To students all over the globe, we bring the world of puppetry to them. We are the largest non-profit organization in the United States devoted to puppets, and the only one with an award-winning Distance Learning Department.

A new offering from our department is a live virtual tour of selected portions in our new museum spaces, and this is being expanded. In addition, we are reaching out to life-long learners with programming geared for adults. New technology and increased input from participants encourage our department to dream, expand and create useful and entertaining programs that can make a difference.

To find out more about our programming, please visit us at <http://uat.puppet.org/programs/distance-learning/>.

Sara Burmenko started her career at the Center in 2000, after receiving her degree in Education. Throughout her time at the Center, Sara took on many different roles, finally settling in the Distance Learning Department. Working under the direction of Patty Dees for the past 8 years, Sara was able to help build the department into what it is today. Sara took over the department last year.



ADDITIONAL INFO PROMISED IN THE PRINTED MAGAZINE:

Links to a number of Marc Kohler's videos:

I have written a short book about the method that I use at:
<http://www.marcwkohler.com/introductory-handbook-to-kohler-puppetry-method/>

There is a talk about it that I gave at the 2015 Puppeteers of America Regional festival: www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=vXqnxtwpplg

There are two videos of the workshop in action:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJAXo64mmG4&t=120s
www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8FyCDEvXlo&t=1606s

Here is a video of puppet shows from single session and multiple session workshops: www.youtube.com/watch?v=doEoWPXes_A&t=1462s

These ideas also work well for those with special needs:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEOGDmBz4X8&t=172s
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZV5Vr6rbTE8&t=1207s

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 Meader was a pioneer in using puppetry in education, and toured with her puppets throughout the Great Depression:
www.startribune.com/puppetry-lifted-st-paul-woman-from-poverty/434699503/

RIDING THE WAVE, ENDURING THE TROUGH: HISTORICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS IN CANADIAN PUPPET THEATRE HISTORY

by Dr. James Beauregard Ashby

Only a few years ago, puppetry in English-speaking Canada seemed to be riding the crest of a wave.¹ For example, one could not ignore the continued success of five major nationally and internationally touring Canadian puppet theatre companies—The Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Famous People Players,² Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes, Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, and, until as recently as 2012, when the company stopped “accepting bookings” (“Coad Canada”), Coad Canada Puppets—at a time when such endeavors were becoming increasingly difficult to undertake.

This heartening sense of vigor in the Canadian puppetry community was shared by its counterpart to the south, as American puppet theatre scholar and practitioner John Bell reveals:

At the turn of the twenty-first century, a renaissance of puppet theater appears to be underway. In the United States during the 1990s, a theatrical production of Disney’s *The Lion King* showed that a mask and puppet spectacle could become a runaway hit on Broadway, and the Jim Henson Foundation’s series of bi-annual [sic] International Festivals of Puppet Theater³ began to expose new audiences to the richness and variety of innovative theater based on puppetry. (7-8)

Bell clarifies that these developments, while significant, had only been possible because of the groundwork laid earlier by several highly influential artists, including Henson himself, as well as Peter Schumann of the Bread and Puppet Theater, which had helped to cultivate “a new appreciation of puppetry as a theater capable of conveying profound artistic, social and political ideas, stories and emotions” (8).

Bell in fact goes on to assert that “the appearance of a puppet renaissance” in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was “somewhat deceptive, for puppetry is an art that sees fit to renew itself continually, as new generations of performers, sculptors, painters, writers, and audiences discover the possibilities of playing with material objects in performance” (8).⁴ Canadian puppetry has experienced several such renewals, each of them also taking place in the United States at approximately the same time. The first of these, to which Bell refers as “the first wave of puppet modernism,” lasted in the USA from 1915 until 1936, when “it reached a certain culmination with Paul McPharlin’s American Puppetry Conference” (81). In Canada, the arrival of this “first wave” was signaled by Rosalynde Osborne Stearn’s 1923 production of *Punch and Judy* of Long Ago, with “the first Canadian puppet conference at Hamilton in May 1939” (McPharlin 349), also organized by Osborne Stearn, marking its end.⁵



GEORGE MERTEN AT OTTAWA NORMAL SCHOOL, PUPPETRY COURSE (1952)
PHOTO: NEWTON, OTTAWA
CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY
DOCUMENT F3-F141.001.001, IMG2008-0048-0002-DM

The “second wave of puppet modernism” as it manifested itself in both Canada and the USA could also be described as a process of institutionalization. In the latter case, it was tied in with the “boost given [to] puppetry by the Federal Theater Project, part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), from 1935 to 1939” (Bell 81). It would not pick up steam in Canada, however, until after the Second World War with George Merten’s workshops in Ontario in the 1950s (McKay, *Puppetry* 65). Merten, “a professional puppeteer and cultural impresario [sic] from Great Britain,” arrived in Canada, Kenneth B. McKay writes, “in 1950 and was employed by the Ontario Department of Education’s Community Programmes Branch to present a series of puppetry demonstrations through the province” and to conduct “leadership courses for puppetry instructors.”⁶ His work sparked an explosion of puppetry-related activity, including the founding of a number of guilds within the province. Indeed,

“[i]n 1955 it was estimated that Ontario had some 3,000 adult puppeteers⁷ in over 160 communities.” Merten was in fact one of the founders of the Ontario Puppetry Association (OPA), which was formed in 1956 as “[a]n umbrella organization” to unite the various guilds that had been established in the early 1950s.⁸ This was therefore an important period of organization, and its most significant outcome, the founding of the OPA, resulted in a force that continues to advance the art of puppetry in Ontario to this day. Merten’s “work drew large numbers of amateurs into the art, thus building audiences, raising the general standard of performance, and, inevitably, attracting some young people who would eventually turn professional” (*Puppetry* 65). The OPA honors this tradition, welcoming both professional and amateur puppet artists into its ranks.



MERTEN SHOWS WOMAN (ROSALYNDE OSBORNE STEARN?) A DISPLAY OF MERTEN MARIONETTES (1953)
CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY
DOCUMENT F21A-F3.001.033, IMG2008-0140-0021-DM

Keeping an organization such as the OPA active and relevant is no easy task, however. Various puppetry organizations in Canada have been established, reshaped, dissolved, and resurrected over the years, and the labor involved in all of this institutional activity has largely been of a volunteer nature. These organizations have nonetheless had a significant impact on the development of puppet theatre in this country at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. At the same time, these organizations have in turn been shaped by the artists who compose them, as well as by historical trends in puppetry.

The Canadian manifestation of the “second wave of puppet modernism” (Bell 81) was a period strongly characterized by this type of cross-influence. Although Merten was initially very much at the center of this system of exchange, it soon began to gather momentum of its own. Consequently, as a result of Merten’s emphasis on marionettes in his outreach work, “the construction and use of marionettes was long the basis of the amateur puppetry scene in Ontario and remains an important element today” (*Puppetry* 67), McKay explains. Before long, however, puppet artists were “experiment[ing] with new and different techniques and materials” (67-68), some of which were first encountered “at festivals in the United States and even Europe,” which were, for the most part, put on by still other puppetry organizations. Thus, puppetry organizations, both here and abroad, made this fertile ground for the diversification of puppetry in Ontario possible, so that by the time McKay’s book was published in 1980, practitioners could “be found working with all forms” (68).

Although there is often some overlap between such historical epochs, one can still discern, as Bell does, “a third puppet revival” (99) commencing in the 1960s, led in the United States by Schumann’s Bread and Puppet Theater and Henson, and in Canada by the second generation of puppet artists in the Keogh family,⁹ who “inaugurated Ontario’s

first ‘permanent’ puppet theatre, in a summer-season tent at Brooklin” in 1961 before moving “two years later . . . [to] a concrete-and-wooden theatre on one of the Toronto Islands.” There “they performed for three summers until deciding that frequent vandalism and a poorly chosen site made the operation impractical” (McKay, *Puppetry* 63). This third revival proved a promising counterpoint to the second, as, while amateur puppet theatre and puppetry organizations flowered during the earlier revival, artists such as the Keoghs helped to further the professionalization of the art during the later one.

Some aspects of these previous “waves” may now seem incredible. Gone are the days, most likely for good, when an individual directly supported by the government could travel throughout a province, spreading the good word of puppetry and winning over thousands of converts to the cause, for example. Still, even though there is no obvious candidate for the title of “Merten for the Millennials,” there are tools at our disposal now that Merten and other early members of the OPA could not possibly have foreseen. Whether these digital strategies are superior to the older, more material ones in every context remains an important question.

The OPA already exists as a largely virtual entity. Even so, one could definitely argue that the OPA lost a “focal point” (Smith, “Report” 2) when its Puppet Centre, first established in North York in 1980, closed in 1994. The Puppet Centre once housed the most comprehensive puppetry collection in Canada.¹⁰ The Puppet Centre also presented “festivals, weekend series for young audiences, [and] workshops and promoted the development of new works in puppetry arts” (Smith, “Professional Puppeteers” 7). Still, the collection (as well as part of the archives of the organization) is now housed at the better funded and more centrally located facilities at the Canadian Museum of History, and the OPA has greatly reduced its overhead.¹¹

PUPPETS UP!
INTERNATIONAL
PUPPET FESTIVAL,
2007
PHOTOS: ASHBY



The OPA now holds its live events and meetings in rented or donated spaces, relying largely upon its website and e-mail to keep its membership informed about them. These relatively infrequent live meetings are supplemented with virtual meetings conducted by means of Skype and conference calls, which reduces travel costs. Even the official newsletter of the organization, the OPAL, has been available as a PDF file since the Spring 2008 issue, which facilitates electronic circulation.

This “digital turn,” however, is not without its concomitant complications. To be sure, the ease of communication offered by the Internet can allow organizations like the OPA to survive primarily in virtual space, eliminating the need to search for grants or sponsors in order to fund the construction or renovation of a series of offices or buildings. At the same time, this can lead to such an organization being perceived as “just another” online entity—but one that has the temerity to charge a membership fee! In a situation that parallels other recent digital developments that have called into question the merit of credentials and experience—is there a need for professional journalists when anyone with access to a computer and the Internet can cover the news, for example—young and emerging puppet artists might understandably doubt the value of belonging to a professional association. Indeed, the very structure of such an organization—with specific roles, responsibilities, and, perhaps most damning of all, meetings—has little immediate appeal when compared with the breezy quality of social media sites, to which many puppet artists at all levels now turn for inspiration and information related to the art of puppetry. “More of us might profit by the opportunity to know what the rest of the world is doing” (246), as Bil Baird declares, and the Internet does offer the promise of this kind of “opportunity” but without necessarily providing sufficient context. Moreover, there is the

question of what can be overlooked; not everything has been digitized. Thus, while one certainly can find some images of Osborne Stearn’s creations online, how could one determine how her work fit into the history of Canadian puppetry more broadly or how it might have influenced one’s own work somehow, however indirectly? How would one know to search for her name in the first place?

Consequently, if, only a few years ago, Canadian puppetry seemed to be riding the crest of a wave, perhaps we have now slid into a trough. The repercussions of this apparent disenchantment with institutions formerly regarded as critical sites of legitimacy and authority—many still regard them as such, of course—can be discerned in loci outside (and more popular than) puppetry organizations. For instance, it seems more than a coincidence that, as the OPA strives to remain relevant, the Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival, hitherto hosted by the small Ontarian community of Almonte, has been cancelled for the first time. As is emphasized on the website for the festival—ironically enough, it continues to have a life online even now—“[f]or 12 glorious summers, Puppets Up! has been a highlight on the social calendar, a chance for old friends and new to meet, an opportunity to celebrate the strength of our community and the beauty and diversity of the art of puppetry” (“2017”). Since the festival was oriented primarily towards the general public (especially family audiences), most of these “old friends and new” were simply spectators. Nevertheless, Puppets Up! gradually developed into both a forum and something of a family reunion for puppet artists as well. This transformation was catalyzed by a confluence of deliberate measures (such as workshops being presented



PUPPETS UP! INTERNATIONAL PUPPET FESTIVAL, 2007

before the festival proper began) and more organic tendencies (including performers running into one another in the limited number of restaurants available in such a small community). Eventually, the festival had become such an institution—with other organizations, including the OPA, planning their own schedules around it—that it had come to be taken for granted.

While a great number of puppet artists and past audience members are undoubtedly hoping that the festival will make a triumphant return in 2018, that does not seem probable, at least not on the same scale. According to the festival organizers, they are planning on “taking some time to think and refocus . . . [their] efforts so that . . . [they] can continue to participate in the community, and to spread the love of the art of puppetry in some new ways.” That said, since their “board has concluded that in all likelihood, . . . [they] cannot present a summer festival in following years” (“2017”), they appear to have a much more limited scope in mind: one of the “new ways” is a hospital fundraiser.

An explicitly and radically more local focus is conceivably just what the “festival” (if it can still be accurately referred to as such) needs at this stage in its life cycle, however, especially considering that its organizers have cited “long[-]term financial circumstances as well as a steady decline in all revenue streams, including paid

attendance, grants and sponsorships” (“2017”) as the primary factors taken into account by the members of the board in rendering their decision. The inclusion of “paid attendance” in this list is particularly significant in the present context, as those members of the puppetry community who had come to take the festival for granted could all too easily justify forgoing the festival for a year (or even a few years) if other opportunities arose. After all, upon their return, would they not find the festival right where they left it?

Regrettably, the same can be said of puppetry organizations, which can also begin to wither on the vine, even if members simply drift away from them; although disillusionment with established institutions is an obvious challenge that those institutions must face, benign indifference is ultimately more pernicious. Furthermore, given that an organization is bound to be perceived by those outside it as increasingly inactive as members wander off for various reasons, this phenomenon becomes a vicious circle; thus, the repercussions of this skepticism should be considered causes as well.

With the foregoing in mind, we should expand on Bell’s “wave” theory slightly to add that, for every apparent wave of interest in puppetry, a trough must presumably follow. A trough, however, is not an abyss. Accordingly, just as any excitement or optimism evoked by “the appearance of a puppet renaissance” (Bell 8) should be tempered with an awareness of previous similar revivals but not completely (and cynically) dismissed, so too should any anxiety or even despair be assuaged at least to some degree by the realization that so much ground was gained over the course of the last wave that there is little chance of losing it all. UNIMA-Canada, once again a truly national organization,

continues to expand, with three regional sections (Québec, Ontario, and Atlantic) now operating. The Puppetry Intensive program at Humber College, one of the rare signs in English-speaking Canada that puppetry is beginning to penetrate mainstream educational institutions, has already begun to influence the Toronto puppetry community, despite having been in existence only since 2013, running for just under two weeks (“Humber”), and not being a degree- or diploma-awarding program. These are but two examples of advances that have been made over the past few years that are in no evident danger of being reversed.

If we accept that we are currently in a trough nonetheless, a consequent question must be answered: Is there anything that could (and should) be done to precipitate the next wave? The simple answer is “No,” since the quietude of such lulls can prove advantageous. Following the example of the organizers of Puppets Up!, “taking some time to think and refocus” would be prudent. For an organization such as the OPA that is already explicitly regional in focus, however, tightening that geographical focus further would probably not be a well-received response, particularly since, in the case of the OPA, events and companies in and around Toronto (predictably and somewhat understandably) already tend to be emphasized. That said, before the clamor for a new festival or grant program begins to grow, now would be the time to address those matters that so often get brushed aside as “housekeeping,” such as revising funding policies, updating membership lists, adjusting budgets, and so forth—that is, those tedious yet critical (not to mention frequently contentious) tasks that, during busier times, one can always find excuses to put off.

To frame and phrase it differently, then, the emphasis should therefore not be placed on attempting to hasten the

arrival of the next “puppet renaissance” (Bell 8). As visionary and influential as their work was, neither Osborne Stearn nor Merten was probably consciously thinking of launching a new wave of fascination and experimentation with the puppet as a goal in itself. That notwithstanding, one must also keep in mind that neither of these individuals (initially, at least) was responsible for running a large puppetry organization either. Doing so requires that priorities be set, schedules be coordinated, volunteers be recruited—in short, a plan of action has to be devised and agreed upon. Even so, coming up with ideas with respect to what a puppetry organization could do next is dangerously easy; ensuring that they are evaluated rigorously and implemented as appropriate is much more challenging. So, is the solution to squash them all, then? Of course not, but, particularly when there is an appreciable dip in the “buzz” surrounding puppetry, a mantra of “Choose one new thing and realize it” would be advisable. Much can eventually come of one new thing, as painfully glacial as such an approach can seem at the time. Still, even impassioned verbal daydreaming has its place; after all, at the very least, it demonstrates that people still care. Genuine apathy is surely the greatest enemy of all.

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PUPPETRY INTENSIVE,
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PHOTOS: FAYE DUPRAS

Endnotes:

- 1 Some of the material for this article has been taken from the author’s PhD dissertation (see list of works cited).
- 2 In the company’s current publicity material, its name is rendered as Famous PEOPLE Players (Dupuy).
- 3 This festival was held every other year from 1992 to 2000 (“Henson”).
- 4 That puppets need be wholly “material objects” (Bell 8) with which one plays, which would seem to imply that they must be wholly inanimate, is an assumption that should be challenged, as they may also be wholly animate (such as a performer’s hands being isolated and objectified as characters in their own right) or even include both animate and inanimate components (humanettes, for example).
- 5 Osborne Stearn was one of “the outstanding artistic pioneers” (McKay, *Puppetry* 61) of twentieth-century Canadian puppetry. In 1923, she and her company, King Cob Puppeteers, “staged *Punch and Judy of Long Ago* with hand-puppets” in Hamilton. They were “hoping to bridge the gap between the *Punch* shows familiar to most British Canadians and the newer puppetry in this play by Mary Stewart,” according to Paul McPharlin. Unfortunately, he does not

elaborate on what he thought made this puppetry “newer.” He does emphasize the broader importance of this production, however, writing that *Punch and Judy of Long Ago* was “the first production of the new era” (348) of puppetry in Canada.

6 McKay’s seminal book *Puppetry in Canada: An Art to Enchant*, published in 1980, remains the only full-length text on Canadian puppetry in general that has been published to date.

7 McKay now concedes that this number, which he obtained from a contemporary newspaper article, is potentially misleading, as it is “hard to tell” how many of the approximately 3,000 individuals that Merten had taught by 1955 continued to pursue the art after their respective courses were finished, as for many of them, puppetry was undoubtedly only “a short-term interest” (Telephone interview, 2 May 2006).

8 All of these guilds have since disbanded.



9 Dave and Violet Keogh, who founded this remarkable—and, as far as I know, unique, at least in the Canadian context—“dynasty of puppeteers that continues into the present” (McKay, *Puppetry* 61), were contemporaries of Osborne Stearn and thus also part of the first puppetry revival in Canada. John, their son, and Linda Keogh later became “[p]erhaps the busiest puppeteers on Canadian television” (140) during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as respected live artists. Their daughter Nina Keogh, who represented the third generation of puppet artists in this family, would come to work with them in both of these contexts, although it is for her work in television that this now-semi-retired puppet artist is primarily known. Indeed, in 1991, the Alliance for Children and Television conferred on her the Outstanding Contribution Award for her career in television programming for young people (Keogh 24), as Shelley Scott notes in the introduction to her interview with Keogh.

10 At its largest, the collection consisted of approximately 1,600 items (“Puppet Collection”).

11 Tom Vandenberg, who was elected president of the OPA shortly after the original Puppet Centre closed, reveals that, by the time the Puppet Centre closed, the OPA had accumulated over eighteen-thousand dollars in debt (Telephone interview). The North York Board of Education had provided the physical space for the first Puppet Centre, which had been located on the lower floor of the Glen Avon Public School. The Board did offer the OPA a new space, the Cornelius Public School, but the location was

rather remote, and the OPA was unable to acquire the funding necessary to install the air-conditioning system—the Glen Avon School was already air conditioned when the OPA moved in—required to preserve its puppetry collection. McKay claims that neither the Ontario Arts Council nor the provincial Ministry of Culture and Recreation was interested in helping to maintain the puppetry collection and support the educational programmes offered by the Puppet Centre, a situation that was exacerbated by cuts to the funding available to schools for arts-related activities, which had limited their ability to arrange bus trips to the Centre for guided tours of the puppetry collection and workshops for some time (Telephone interview, 2 May 2006). Although the funding bodies were still willing to sponsor performances at the new Puppet Centre by visiting puppet artists, the loss of revenue that the Puppet Centre was suffering due to the inability of the institution to store and exhibit its collection permanently at the new facility meant that keeping the Centre open was no longer “financially . . . viable” (Telephone interview), as Vandenberg reveals. Consequently, although the collection was stored at the Cornelius Public School for approximately six months (McKay, Telephone interview, 9 May 2006), it was never publicly exhibited in full. The Board of Governors of the Puppet Centre, having consulted with representatives of the funding bodies that had been assisting them, recommended to the Board of Trustees of the OPA that the puppetry collection be donated to the Canadian Museum of History—then known as the Canadian Museum



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of Civilization—along with a significant portion of the OPA archives and resource library. McKay asserts that there were in fact no exhibitions presented at the second location whatsoever (Telephone interview, 9 May 2006), while Vandenberg recalls that “there were some displays,” but these were “likely only the ‘travelling’ cases[,] which Ken [McKay] probably [sic] doesn’t consider an ‘exhibit’ . . . [.] certainly not on the Glen Avon scale” (“Re: Puppet Centre Funding”). Vandenberg also claims that “a programme of . . . performances” was presented at the Cornelius Public School, although it was “an unmitigated disaster financially” (Telephone interview), due to poor attendance. This was unfortunate, but according to Julia von Flotow, who began working at the Puppet Centre in 1986 as an administrative assistant, eventually becoming the administrative head of the Centre as executive director, “it takes five years to build . . . [public] awareness” of a new facility, and the OPA simply did not “have the money to . . . refurbish” the new location. Moreover, Flotow and the Board of Governors of the Puppet Centre did not “have enough time or resources to . . . develop a programme . . . and a whole operating plan for this . . . new situation,” as all they “could cope with was . . . relocating” (Flotow).

See *WORKS CITED* on *sdeparate* page.

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