

SPRING and SUMMER 2018 Issue #43

# PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

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issue no. 43

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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.

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

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HAITI: “THE MAGIC IS IN YOU” FILM SERIES-  
LITTLE SISTER SPEAKS

see page 4

PUPPETRY IN  
THERAPY



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“Art Therapy” may seem at first glance to be an oxymoron, following the modern ethos of “art for art’s sake,” ie. that art is not a means to an end but exists independent of any topic on which it might touch. Historically, however, this is not the only view of art, in particular the theater arts, which likely began in religious ritual as a way of mediating a connection with the divine. “Therapy” has its roots in Ancient Greece (*therapeia* means “healing”), where the great tragedies aimed to heal the maladjusted through emotional catharsis.

As career artists and arts educators, we know that it can be incredibly irksome to incessantly be required to justify art’s efficacy as a life-enhancing balm. Art is a way in. It circumvents our habitual ways of being-in-the-world. It comforts the afflicted, enriches community, connects the lonely, assails the wicked and restoreth the soul. Where would our designer, Bonnie, be had she not, as a teenager, been tasked with choreographing the high school musicals? Where would “we” (which is to say your editor) be, had his public speaking teacher not marched him down to the auditorium to audition for the junior class play? One shudders to think.

This issue is packed with articles attesting to the power of art (in this case the art of puppetry) to heal those in need of healing, whether from personal trauma [Kaliana, page 8], or massive natural disasters [Mullen, page 4], the criminal justice system [Telnova, page 12] or serious childhood illnesses [Slonimskaya et al., page 30]. Some conditions cannot be healed; Riku Laakkonen has been creating bedside performances with hospice patients [page 38] while Konstantin Mekhryakov has created a theater troupe of children with a range of mental, developmental and physical special needs whose performances help reduce the sense of “otherness” that so often dogs them [page 35]. Along the same lines, Richard Bouchard is the co-founder of ENAM, a training school in Quebec

for adults with special needs. ENAM uses puppetry as a way of helping them overcome many of the problems that have made their lives so challenging: unemployment, depression, addiction [page 20]. Joanne Ousseren’s theater is using shadow puppetry as a way of keeping senior citizens engaged with life and with each other [page 24]. Art can be made for art’s sake alone, but that doesn’t mean it won’t be life-enhancing, helping to make individuals whole, and society a more inclusive, welcoming community.

We also have a number of reviews: Claudia Orenstein reports on Korat, a recent international youth puppetry festival in Thailand. Jieun Lee reviews *Hamlet Cantabile*, a most interesting Korean take on the Bard’s blockbuster, and Jungmin Song, John Bell and Bradford Clark review some intriguing new books.

Happy reading!

– Andrew Periale



SIM SHIRLEY AND LIN TRAN, TWO OF THE MANY PUPPETEERS WHO RECEIVED *PI* AT THE KORAT FESTIVAL IN THAILAND (PAGE 48)

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– Cariad Astles

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Major donors are named on page 29.

AND THEN  
THEY SPOKE



"THE MAGIC IS IN YOU" FILM SERIES – THE CARNIVAL BAND

The two little girls had not spoken for several years. Not since they had been pulled out of the rubble of the 2010 Haitian earthquake. Both their parents and most of their relatives had been killed so they now lived in an orphanage. The staff there had tried to help, but the two sisters still could not, or would not, speak. Then one day their school class was shown a little puppet film. The story was about a brother and sister whose parents had been killed in the very same earthquake. The little boy in the film was sullen and angry. He acted out, constantly picking fights and making himself disliked and shunned by the other children.

He had no friends, but he didn't care. He only cared about one thing... his little sister. She was all the family he had left in the world and she had not spoken since they had dragged her out of the rubble. Even worse, she had recently begun to hide under a bed and was now refusing to eat. He was terrified that she would starve and he would be left alone. He wanted nothing more in the world than to hear her speak to him.

One day, a Carnival band arrives in the schoolyard.... out of season and therefore strange. Stranger still, the Band Leader seems to know all about the boy and what he desires most.

by Kathryn Mullen



(L) FRENCH WORKSHOP MANUEL - "THE MAGIC IS IN YOU" FILM SERIES (TOP) WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS WORKING ON HAND WASHING SCENE IN HAITI (BOTTOM) AFTER A SCREENING OF "WASH" VIDEO IN HAITI, A YOUNG GIRL EMOTES WITH A GERM PUPPET



He asks the boy if his little sister had an object that she loved. It turns out that she had a doll that her mother had made for her. She lost it!

"Very good," says the Band Leader, "if you want her to speak to you, you must make her a doll!" The boy is non-plussed. How can he possibly make her a doll? Nevertheless, if it will cause her to speak to him... he will find a way! He makes a little doll out of a plastic bottle, a ball, some rope, cardboard and buttons. Sure it's a doll made of junk, but it's a doll! It's also what we puppeteers might call a tabletop puppet. Most children could do that... make a figure out of trash. It just takes a little imagination, motivation (and permission) and some trash. Trash seems to be available in most places.

In the film, the boy takes the doll into the room where his little sister hides under the bed. What now? The Band Leader reveals a little plastic heart. "This is a magic heart," he says, tucking the heart into the pocket of the doll. "It will allow the doll to speak to your sister. Your sister will then speak to the doll and soon after that, to you. But in order for that to happen, you must speak FOR the doll until the magic begins to work and the doll can speak for herself." Of course, the boy must

puppeteer the doll and speak its lines until the magic begins or perhaps until HE creates the magic himself.

As the little puppet boy tries to reach his sister through the doll, magic does indeed happen... he begins to reach himself. With the doll as his surrogate he is able to speak his anger, his pain and his guilt, as he has never been able to before. The speaking of it breaks through for him and he is suddenly able to feel his anguish. Feeling the terrible pain that has been locked inside for so long is the beginning of the healing for both the boy and his sister. It is the beginning of the healing for our two REAL little girls as well.

The day they saw that film, was the day they spoke! How? Why? What on earth happened? Well, I'm a puppeteer, not a psychiatrist, but I think they identified with that little puppet boy. They felt what he felt and their protective wall of silence was breached just as his protective wall of anger was. Somehow, because the character was a puppet, it did not threaten them or push them further into their silence. They saw that it was all right for the boy to feel. He didn't die. His sister didn't die! They were okay! They were better! Not all better, but better!

We all protect ourselves from pain. After a huge trauma, that protective wall can be a real monster and incredibly hard to penetrate. Sometimes no one even knows there is a wall behind which trauma lurks. We usually think that people are just shy or the kind that keep to themselves. To witness someone see a puppet show that reflects his or her own situation or feelings and then react so directly is quite stunning. If you were still wondering if puppets help... you know the answer. It's why many therapists use puppets, especially with kids. It's also why No Strings is a PUPPET company. We know what puppets can do. Even if we ourselves have never used puppets to heal, we've seen how children automatically reach for the puppet in our hands. We know that when the puppet speaks, the child will listen. Even if we've never studied puppetry as therapy and maybe have never even thought about it, we can SEE that it works.

Things happen that show us. Like what happened in one of our workshops. FYI we accompany all our films with workshops to teach staff members from the NGOs (non governmental organizations) that commission the films how to use them in the field with children. We also teach the workshop participants simple forms of puppetry to help their teaching process and to use with the children they will be working with. These participants come from all over the areas that the films have been made for, Uganda, South Sudan, Indonesia, Madagascar, Cambodia, the Phillipines, and devastated places like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. At one of these workshops a young Syrian woman in her early 20s, who had gone through the entire workshop without speaking much, was saying goodbye to our No Strings staff when she suddenly picked up one of the rudimentary mouth puppets they'd been using to practice with. In a tiny voice, through the puppet, she told her new friends how she and her father were stopped at a checkpoint and she had watched in horror as her father was dragged out of their car and shot to death in front of her eyes. The puppet said it. She was unable to. The young woman was surrounded and hugged as she cried. Can we prove that puppets help with trauma? Do we have to?

There are so many benefits of using puppets. The mere fact that a puppet is NOT a real person but can represent a real person allows the puppets to address things that are hard to talk about. When we were doing a series of short films on HIV/AIDS for Eastern Africa and were generating story ideas, we were told that we couldn't talk about certain things... meaning sex. Since sex is one of the main means of HIV transmission, how in the world do you do a story that doesn't talk about it? Well, you don't! You just have to do it gently and with taste AND with puppets.

There are so many taboo issues that simply MUST be talked about! Things like sexual abuse and trafficking and dozens of other gender issues. How about outdoor defecation?

Yup... a lot easier with puppets! And it doesn't matter if the puppets are on video or live, both work. Kids see an entertaining video in their own language and then get a chance to make and perform their own puppets and tell their own stories... MAGIC! When a personal story is particularly sensitive or taboo it really helps to be able to hide behind a puppet, especially in cultures where speaking out is simply not done. Interestingly, after the HIV films were produced and went into the field, our team was often thanked... for finally talking about these things.

As most of us know, puppets can also cross cultural divides. In another workshop, the male participants weren't exactly participating. They just sat along the wall with their arms crossed. It seems they felt that this sort of playing with dolls was for women. It was a cultural thing. They were supposed to be at the workshop learning the messages in the films and learning puppetry, but it was just way too outside of their male arena. But, hey, puppetry is also FUN! The women were having so much fun the men began to be jealous! Maybe they could just try a little building over here in the corner, then maybe a little puppet manipulation. Pretty soon the men were fully involved and having as much fun as the women. Eventually they were dancing and lip syncing with their own puppets. At the end of the workshop several of the men thanked our trainers for allowing them to do this amazing thing called puppetry.

Yes, it is an amazing thing! And, yes, it does help!

Kathryn Mullen is Co-Founder and Artistic Director of No Strings Productions. In addition, she is an actress, voice actress and puppeteer who has appeared in many films and television shows, particularly those associated with Jim Henson.

No Strings is an international, not-for-profit organization that makes and distributes educational puppet films for at-risk children, worldwide. It consists of two sister, non-profit organizations... one in the USA that creates and produces the films and one in the UK that runs the workshops and does all the in-country field work.

---  
In 2016, No Strings International was the recipient of Villanova University's Adela Dwyer Peace Award, "For outstanding contributions to the understanding of the meaning of justice and peace in human communities."

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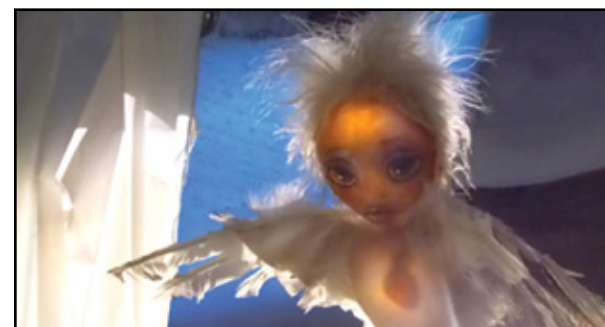
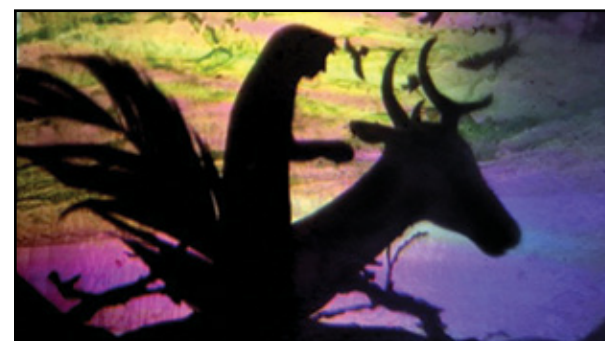
LOVE VS TRAUMA REHEARSAL PHOTO: RAVEN KALIANA PUPPETS

by Raven Kaliana

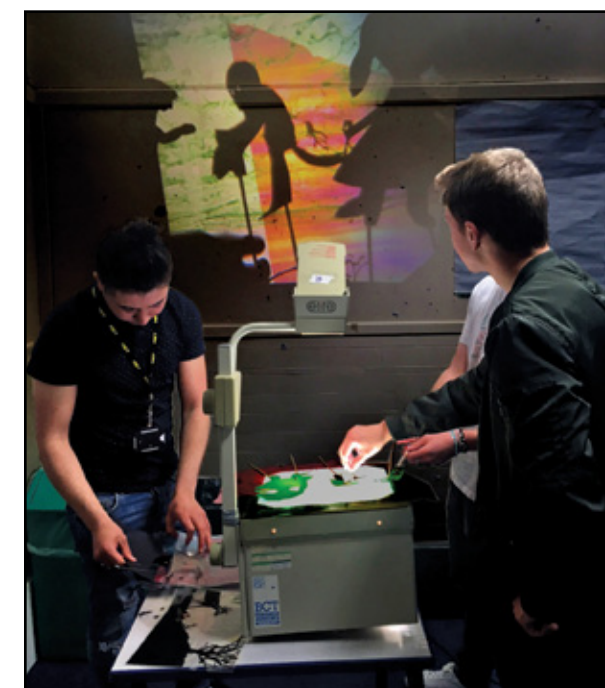
The *Love vs Trauma: Puppet-Based Resilience Project* was initiated in response to a core problem we face as a species – everyone experiences trauma at some point – and it can effect every aspect of our lives, from our family relationships to world politics. The body’s trauma responses make it harder to intellectually evaluate a distressing situation, to reach out for support, and to respond pro-actively.

A longtime professional puppeteer, puppet maker, and director, I’m also survivor of human trafficking. My process of recovery has consisted of escaping my abusers, establishing a healthy and loving “chosen family,” connecting with a supportive professional community, processing the emotional effects, and nurturing joy and self-expression in my life. It feels so meaningful to me now to reach out through the medium of puppetry, to teach the next generation techniques for peer support and resilience, and to help adults learn approaches for intervention, prevention, and recovery. ([love-vs-trauma.tumblr.com](http://love-vs-trauma.tumblr.com))

My organization, Outspiral ([outspiral.org.uk](http://outspiral.org.uk)), has been developing the project since 2015. It has been quite wide-reaching in scale, consisting of two parts: *Love vs Trauma*, a live shadow play with a post-show discussion, and an associated workshop, Rehearsing Resilience, which can be paired with the performance, or stand alone.



THE REHEARSING RESILIENCE WORKSHOP AT PRINCE’S TRUST PHOTO: MARLYZOHREHIE



*Love vs Trauma* is a 45-minute live shadow theatre production for adults and teens, followed by a 30-minute post-show discussion. Using 3-dimensional puppets in shadow with moving lights and reflective effects, the show illustrates the isolating dynamics of abuse upon a child. The audience witnesses the child’s mental escape through dissociation, then sees her discovering a sense of self-worth, gathering support, and ultimately moving on to build a better life. The distressing events in the story are abstracted enough that the family’s dysfunction can represent a wide range of situations involving interpersonal trauma.

During a work-in-progress performance, the audience made it clear that the shadow imagery, so colorful and entrancing, underscored the necessity of finding a way to convey the practical information clearly. For the next version, I re-wrote the script as lyrics to help the audience understand the inner experiences and recovery processes of the child. The characters are each represented by a different musical instrument. Each part is sung in a distinct and emotionally evocative way by Kate Daisy Grant ([katedaisygrant.com](http://katedaisygrant.com)), who also composed and performed the music. Additional music and mixing were performed by Nick Pynn ([nickpynnmusic.com](http://nickpynnmusic.com)), who recorded the post-show discussion as well.

My company, Puppet (R)Evolution, developed and premiered the show at Little Angel Theatre in London ([littleangeltheatre.com](http://littleangeltheatre.com)) with the support of their Incubate artist residency as well as their Firsts launch programme. The audience discussion was phenomenal: “If I had seen this when I was in school and stuck in [the abuse], I would have been absolutely heartened. At that time, I couldn’t have seen an end to it.” The feedback afterwards was also very positive:

...a terrible childhood does not have to mean a terrible adulthood. It was beautiful, evocative, imaginative beyond belief, and the beautiful moving words sung so enchantingly stung and soothed straight to my heart. The emotional message of the story is crystal clear, probably because Raven herself has been through and survived the trauma herself. All I can say is Wow, thank you...

We plan to tour this two-handed live show around to venues in the United Kingdom and international puppet festivals in 2018.

The Rehearsing Resilience workshop forms the second part of the project – a 2-hour shadow puppet-based workshop on resilience and trauma recovery, mainly aimed at young people. This component has been supported via an artist residency through Artists Access to Arts Colleges (aa2a.org) and City College (ccb.ac.uk), and was developed



interactively with input from participants aged 16-25 at Prince's Trust (princes-trust.org.uk). Many participants on the Prince's Trust program have trauma backgrounds themselves, so their feedback proved very insightful.

In the Rehearsing Resilience workshop, students learn about the effects of trauma and stages of recovery, peer support, reclaiming personal narrative, and together enact a scene in which a character must seek support to manage the situation. Trauma freezes language, so puppetry can serve as a way to share experiences with others without verbal explanations – breaking down the barriers of isolation. In his book *Resilience*, Boris Cyrulnik states, "Bond and meaning...make resilience possible."

The lively experimentation with shadow puppetry helps to counterbalance the serious subject matter, giving a "one-step-removed" effect, which allows the students to deal with the topic with some emotional distance. One student thanked me for "coming in to teach a workshop about trauma, and for sharing about your own life." Another wrote, "The workshop has changed the way I think about trauma and resilience by thinking in a positive way." In terms of which parts of the workshop were especially useful, one student wrote, "All of it." Feedback in regards to the use of puppetry was, "It was very fun and helpful."

The Rehearsing Resilience workshop has been adapted as well for training staff members of charities and agencies working with children and families. This version features some drama therapy techniques and empowerment approaches inspired by Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. This version of the workshop has been developed with the support of Folkmanis Puppets (folkmanis.com), which makes beautiful, soft animal hand puppets. These cuddly and well-made characters pres-



ent more options for working with younger children.

The Rehearsing Resilience workshops will be offered to a wide range of national and international charities working with young people, and we will seek funding to tour it to secondary schools across the UK. A pilot program in London on trauma education in primary schools

has recently been launched, with some participating organizations having booked Rehearsing Resilience training events for their staff members.

The ability to manage trauma is a crucial hurdle we must cross in order to survive as a species. Animals commonly respond to trauma with "fight or flight," which fuels immediate action. Humans, on the other hand, most often suffer trauma from other humans, and since we are dependent upon each other for survival, we will flip into a "freeze" response to preserve our social fabric. The freeze response is what produces post-traumatic stress, along with making a person vulnerable to a host of other ill-effects such as anxiety, depression, substance addiction, heart disease, cancer, ADHD...

The freeze response entraps the physical trauma reaction in such a way that the body can't recognize that the danger has passed. In an ever-vigilant effort to protect ourselves, our bodies will unconsciously re-enact the traumatic events in our lives. Unless these trapped responses are recognized and processed, parents, for instance, might reflexively respond to stressors by replaying the ways they themselves were treated as children. Unhealthy patterns from frozen trauma repeat, not only into one's family dynamics, but also into one's workplace, community, political choices, economic structure, and the way we mistreat the planet.

In order to shift towards an economic and social structure based in environmental stewardship and social justice, as opposed the current economy based on the exploitation of human beings and natural resources, we need to look at the role of trauma, and how that tends to be replayed when its not consciously addressed.

Our world urgently cries out for healing. It's hard to imagine a different way of doing things, and to picture – much less to build – processes that would

help to: repair the damage we have done to the environment; mitigate war; establish social justice. As puppeteers, however, we have a lot of practice with building new worlds: self-organizing, collaborating, supporting each other, and sharing our vision. We can lead with the heart and empower others through our imaginations.

The current economic system relies on the illusion of isolation and urges us to think of ourselves as things or commodities – cogs in a machine – rather than as precious human beings, deserving of respect and tenderness, beaming with an inner universe. Through trauma, we lose touch with our inner resources – creativity, emotions, empathy and sense of self-worth – and that reinforces demeaning cultural messages. Puppetry illuminates the inner life of objects. It can help to restore connection with our own core strengths, while the cooperative aspect of the art form can heal victims' sense of having been abandoned or not protected by their communities... One of the musical refrains in *Love vs Trauma* is, "We all deserve care, we all deserve care."

Puppetry, like child's play, allows us to rehearse an alternative scenario, a different outcome, and new potential

realities before we try them out in the real world. For an audience, the puppeteer restores the soul back into objects, thawing our hearts in unexpected ways. I believe that the invitation for both personal and societal healing can be offered in beauty, in love, in compassion, and in joyfulness. We can help to re-write the story.

For inquiries about the *Love vs Trauma* play and Rehearsing Resilience workshops, please contact Raven Kaliaana at [puppets@ravenkaliaana.com](mailto:puppets@ravenkaliaana.com)

Raven Kaliaana is the writer/director at Puppet (R) Evolution, works as a puppet maker and puppeteer, and founded Outspiral - providing public education on child protection issues through the medium of puppetry. She's presented *Hooray for Hollywood*, her puppet-based show on human trafficking, to audiences at Oxford University, New York University, United Nations events in Switzerland and New York, and at puppet festivals in Kazakhstan, Denmark, France, Poland and America.

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Evelyn Baird building puppets for *Jerry Pulls the Strings* (1938)

# EFFECTIVENESS OF PUPPET THERAPY IN CHANGING THE SELF-IMAGE OF ADOLESCENTS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

by Larisa Telnova

Adolescence is a time of intense, complex shocks when a teenager changes mentally, emotionally and physically. The formation of a positive self-image is an indispensable condition for the formation of stable values with regard to the world around us and about our own self in adolescence. Adolescence is the pivotal stage of laying a life foundation – self-determination, and the formation of the self-image.

However, the problems of unhappiness within the family, lack of teenagers' leisure-time organization and living outside the family entail a delay and inadequate formation of a teenage notion of themselves and the world – their self-image and the formation of psychological "ill-being" of the person. These consequences are exacerbated when an adolescent enters a penal institution.

A teenager who has stumbled needs help. Currently, psychologists have sufficient tools for psychological support and help. However, puppet therapy is used very little.

Art-therapy classes were held as part of the project "Creation of an Art-Therapy Workshop" in a colony for minors. Puppet therapy took center stage.

This preferred way of correcting self-image is based on an understanding of this construct. Self-image is a meaningful perception of oneself, and it can't develop in isolation from the self.



Body-image is the leading component of self-image and the source of the self-conception development. The image of the body in this case is studied best by using a self-fashioned figure of a person; A puppet is the most effective means of conveying ideas about oneself, one's feelings and attitudes.

According to E.N. Vasina, a puppet as an art product stands in its identity as a part of them that is directed to the outside, on the subject of reality. "The theme of integration of order and chaos, the search for identity and its expression through the creation of an expressive object for reflection is addressed in the creation of the doll every time," writes another Russian psychologist E.V. Burenkova.

In addition, we took into account that adolescents with a delay in mental development have scant speech and an undeveloped capacity for self-analysis.

Each meeting with juvenile offenders began with an art-therapeutic exercise ("Image and plasticity of mood," drawing scribbles, etc.). Tuned to work, the



guys studied the world around them using its modeling from plasticine. The central part of the training was the puppets production from craft paper, sculpting a person from plasticine, manipulating puppets, shooting a cartoon film.

The use of Kraft paper has allowed the "fear of the blank page" to fade with regard to expressing one's feelings safely for oneself and others.

The modeling of a person's physical being was used as a tool for self-examination and correction of the self-image.

For example, one of the juvenile offenders modeled himself sitting in a chair with numerous weapons: rifles, sub-machine guns, grenades. "To protect from attack," he said. Manipulation of the puppet showed that numerous weapons make a person unwieldy, rigid, constrained in the ability to move and develop. The need to get rid of this burden was based on an evaluation by the teenager in terms of meeting the needs for security and development. The final decision at this stage was to relinquish the weapons, but leave the puppet in the chair.

Another teenager, through a puppet, realized his long-held dream – to play the violin. "When I was making a musician, I heard a melody in my head," he said, and he was surprised to learn that even as an adult, he had the opportunity to learn how to play the violin. At the end of his stay in the colony, he will be directed to a place where this can happen.

Another member of the group discovered his talent as a miniaturist. Being quick-tempered, restless, inconsiderate, he could nonetheless sculpt a face for a long, concentrated period, capturing every wrinkle in order to achieve the exact expression he desired.

When the optimal variant of the image for each puppet was found, the teenagers wrote the script and filmed the cartoon.

The work was in full swing.

The teenagers, previously cautious and believing themselves inept, plunged into the process with pleasure and energy.

A cartoon of forty seconds was shot in three hours.

It received, in my opinion, a very symbolic name - "Plasticine Olympics." In it, teenagers told about their victory through the medium of 3-D animation.

We used the following tests for evaluation of the effectiveness of puppet therapy: the Piers – Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, the "Who am I?" test (M. Kun, T. McPartland, modification of TV Rumiantseva), and the "World assumptions scale" (R. Janoff-Bulman, modification of M.A. Padun, A.V. Kotelnikova).

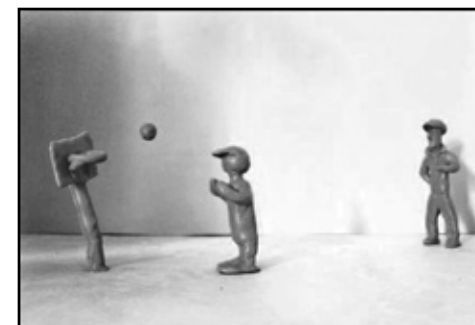
27 juvenile offenders with a delayed mental development between the ages of 15 and 17 took part in research of the puppet therapy effectiveness. The minors were randomly divided into two groups. 13 adolescents who did not take part in puppet-therapeutic classes entered the first, control group. 14 teenagers entered the second, experimental group.

Evaluation of the puppet therapy effectiveness was carried out through repeated diagnostic procedures in the control and experimental groups, with a comparative analysis of the results in the statistical program SPSS 11.05 for Windows using the Mann-Whitney test and the Wilcoxon test. A comparative analysis of the results showed changes in several components of the teenagers' self-image involved in puppet therapy.

The juvenile convicts' tendency to give socially acceptable answers decreases after classes, which is to say they become more honest. Evaluation of their own behavior becomes more realistic. The perception of the school situation changes from neutral to more positive. In addition, the self-esteem of minors becomes more realistic. The perception of oneself as a member of a group of friends and the evaluation of interaction with people increases, and the level of physical identity grows. It is likely that the borders of the realized inner world expand. Among minors, the participants' desires, intentions and prospects manifest (and are, perhaps, realized).

Juvenile adolescents with developmental delays who took part in the puppet-therapeutic classes exhibited a growth of values in their basic beliefs. Adolescents begin to perceive

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19)



Ms. Telnova's essay is based on her earlier article: "The Change in the Self-Image of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law during Art-Therapy," written together with Olga Vladimirova.



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## FINDING ONE'S VOICE: PUPPET AS CHANNEL OF CONNECTION TO SELF AND COMMUNITY



### ACCESS AND THERAPY FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS (LANGUAGE) LEARNER

by Meredith Carver

Growing up I was shy and had low self-confidence paired with anxiety when speaking in front of many people, especially in school, in which a mistake could be associated with me and be as embarrassing as it would be scary. My silence was a form of self preservation; It was natural for me to be more observant, reserved and careful, speaking only when I really had something to say. After years of teaching, and being in a position where I could observe students who were not vocally participating, I realize that I had experienced a form of social anxiety. The American classroom and other learning environments can place a great importance on vocally active participation. With a focus placed on active, vocal participation, one who is not as inclined as others to access speech or language can be at a significant disadvantage.



My personal hesitancy to express myself vocally in the past was partly from sensing a pressure to speak in a culture, especially school culture, that placed so much value on this behavior in order to have a sense of participation. Among those who are not inclined to speak, whether through lack of self esteem, natural predisposition, easing into a new culture, language or speech difference, a teacher strives to include all of the voices in the class in some way that is, hopefully, enjoyable for the learner/group participant—how do we include all voices and in some way build a stronger sense of self, rich experience and growing to learn about oneself or target material? How do we create channels of communication for all we work with to access tasks and experiences?

I remember the feeling of being “at home” in art class. Something evolved as a result of the positive recognition I felt when expressing myself visually and with a project-based task. Making art was something I enjoyed and was told I was good at. I had found my voice through art and it was ok to be quiet there vocally, but I still had a voice through an alternative way of expression. Different from other environments at school, I felt a kind of “go ahead” from adults when I expressed myself through art and developed a sense of “belonging,” in turn, shaping a self-confidence that grew stronger over time. I didn’t

just have this affirming experience with visual art, but also with theatrical elements (character, song, movement/dance). I remember in middle school (a time of drastic individual self-discovery in human development), I had fallen in love with musical theatre and took a risk that surprised even myself (along with my teachers) when I dove in and auditioned in front of fifty people for the school musical production! I felt that those in the audition and I were all together in our grappling for translation of a character, and in a way, my strong interest and sense of this group “togetherness” offset direct attention on me and motivated me to take a chance.

I was encouraged by teachers to continue to express myself through these methods, and this recognition and positivity was something I adopted when shaping how I viewed myself. In turn, this confidence flowed into me taking risks with vocal participation in the classroom, leading to impressive grades on speeches and presentations required for success in school and general access to the curriculum. Over time and practice, I learned to advocate for myself and others; Voice was/is found! Tapping into artistic ways of communication was a therapy I needed beyond the conversations with adults and counselors inquiring about “what is wrong?” Just as much as they wanted to understand me, I wanted to understand myself.

### Channels of Communication: Growth Through Puppetry Expression

A significant anxiety can come along with being designated and/or feeling like you are different. A deficit/negative mind-set to this “difference” can be looked at as a “disability” and can be taken on by a person, leading to a lack of self-confidence. It is helpful for us to guide someone toward discovering who they are and the realization of a “growth mind-set.” We need to understand how they access material and experiences based on their individual needs. Environments that place an emphasis on vocal expression or certain mobilities can make someone feel at a loss, including anxiety conditions like selective mute—a vocal silence resulting from high anxiety usually experienced by language learners. There are so many kinds of accommodations needed to enable individuals to access learned material among special education groups, and these groups often also require accommodations for learning language as well as having other special needs. The reality is that it can be very difficult for an educator or someone working with a group to accommodate all individuals at one time.

From years of experience teaching special needs students art and language with curriculum needs (literacy focus), I have found work with puppetry to provide more opportunities for communication “risk-taking” and development of channels for communication as well as growth to discover one’s self/voice. I have worked with individuals with cognitive differences and audio/visual processing challenges, autistic and Asperger spectrum students, highly distracted, emotionally disturbed and differently mobile students from elementary school through adult and geriatric populations. These “learning different” populations and individuals have demonstrated a magical transformation of accessing their voice and expressing that with others, starting with creating the puppetry object and establishing a relationship to their own voice along with the discovery of their character’s voice. Puppetry, functioning as extensions of the self, helps to establish pathways of communication that can assist in healing traumas, shocks and building a sense of trust. This self-growth can then transfer to other areas (as it did in my own life).

### Puppetry for One and All: Response to Individual and Group Needs

There is a need to provide opportunities for all types of learners. We each learn differently; some of us learn more easily through certain senses than others. Taking in and expressing information can be done through the way puppetry combines senses (visual, movement, sound, etc.) and not only supports literacy and academics, but builds a sense of voice, confidence and movement which can be adjusted to the needs of the individual. Such sensory expression and creation-varied projects that puppetry offers also allows for practice with fine-motor skills (work with hands) as well as gross-motor ability (full, large gesture with the body) movement practice. Adding this element supports the development of dexterities, flexibilities and strengths with which some may need greater practice.

I find that “talking puppets,” or puppets that have movable mouths, encourage speaking and its results can surprise. Even small movement (eyebrows and other parts can be made movable with string or rod), noises or a face made for the puppet by the puppeteer can be added as expression of feeling and idea. Paper plates, folded paper, paper bags and socks are friends for this kind of work with individuals as they are easy to find and can be adjusted easily to work with individual abilities and goals. Aside from the need for accommodating those less inclined to speak (for whatever reason, i.e. cultural difference, language access, lower confidence, etc.), there are other special needs to consider when adjusting materials to engage and benefit all students and group members.

Other material support I have found to create more open ways of communication for those needing help expressing or organizing their thoughts, is the use of small whiteboards,



which offer a less anxiety-inducing way for a student to begin drawing or writing. Adding onto this idea would be to use a drawing or sketch of a puppet or scenery in the puppetry-object-and-scenery-story creation process. This way of participating in the puppetry process can lend an opportunity for labeling



the drawing with new vocabulary. It can also be used repeatedly throughout the puppetry process toward learning and assist in helping someone learn to express their ideas through putting words and visuals onto paper/whiteboard. I have found small whiteboards decrease hesitancy to participate among many kinds of learners. You

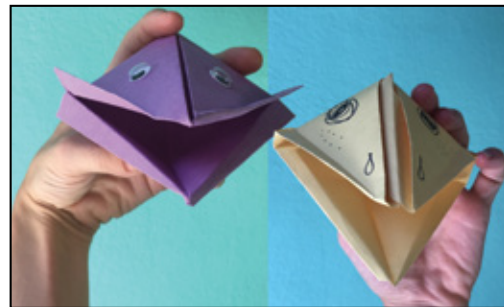
can even dictate ideas onto paper/board or, if working with someone who is less- or non-vocal, dictate by asking yes or no questions. You might also have the person act out their ideas if the puppeteer is having trouble writing their thoughts down. Text affixed to the back of a puppet can bolster student confidence, as can a puppet booth that hides a student from view. A message can be shared through drawing or words and can put students at ease when contributing their ideas without feeling overwhelmed with permanency or that they have to spend a lot of time erasing. The act of erasing a lot or seeing many marks of correction to change can make a person feel really down on themselves; We want to do the opposite for them while supporting their growth.

For people with ADD/ADHD and those needing to move, including those who are more kinesthetic learners, puppetry facilitates movement, different senses and concentration on central tasks. These tasks are also repeated when practiced, and this repetition of material is a benefit to language learning in particular. Repetition of material also serves as a meaningful and positive method to assess and a way of including correction the student has received. I have had students who are very sensitive able to not take correction personally. They also had an easier time taking in and applying this correction through making it a part of their puppetry practice.

Physical action can also be limiting for some with a range of differences, such as for those with cerebral palsy, arthritis and any impairment of a limb, etc. Puppetry offers visual and movement forms that are open to interpretation and can be adjusted to accommodate the actions or built in extensions on a chair or table, propping a piece and depending on the individual's ability, adjusted to provide a stake in the expressive experience. Even a simple piece of fabric and/or light plate can be manageable

and impactful. Shadow puppetry can use light-weight materials that can be attached to rods and taped to extensions of chairs and tables. Rods affixed to puppets onto chairs and walkers etc. can be an option as well. A potential benefit is the physical or occupational therapy offered in the stretching and exercise of creation, the movement of theatrical character and story interpretation according to individual need and consultation of specialists.

Another asset offered through puppetry's project-based artistic experience can lend a social support of a collaborative community. The group mindset of the creative troupe/team creating, adapting and practicing together forms a supportive bond that can translate into a growth in confidence. If a student/participant is needing to build social practice (as with those on the autism spectrum or individuals needing emotional support or practice with social cues) this puppetry small group can lend that opportunity.



In education and therapy, learning and socio-emotional growth goals are individually driven. Puppetry offers a way of establishing pathways of communication with self and others toward reaching these growth goals as

it can be changed using various combinations of sensory parts (visual, movement and sound, etc.) that provide alternative ways of expression and can take direct focus off of vulnerable individuals. The puppeteer group/troupe offers ways of working with others in supportive, small groups settings. The human need to connect with one's voice, even just for one's self and to self-advocate is very important, especially for those who learn differently. If we can assist someone to reach their goals of connection to self and with outer communities in order to access their world, then we position people to have a better quality of life. Sharing what works with other professionals and learning about the individuals you work with will enhance the ways we use methods like puppetry to be as supportive as it can be. We learn and grow as they are learning and growing – all voices included.

Meredith Carver is currently teaching and creating in New York City, the Washington D.C. area and internationally. Her background is Art Education and English as a Second Language educational practice and research. She enjoys traveling and learning languages in addition to continued personal practice and empowerment of others through puppetry, theatre, dance and fine art.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)



the surrounding world as more benevolent and equitable; the conviction in their own ability to control the events happening in their lives and to be successful increases. Probably, the growth of anxiety is associated with changes in one's own self-image; however, anxiety remains at an adaptive level.

In general, while remaining positive, the self-image becomes more realistic.

Juvenile delinquents from the experimental group evaluate their interaction with people more highly as opposed to teenagers who did not participate in the classes. The perception of one's physical identity is significantly increased. In my opinion, the modeling of a person's figure at the classes helps this.

Teenagers who participated in puppet therapy, in contrast to minors who did not take part in it, are more convinced of the safety and wellbeing of the surrounding world, its fairness and controllability.

In general, puppet therapy changed the perception (cognitive component) of one's own behavior, of the school situation and self-esteem, the perception of identity, the perception of the surrounding world and self-relationship.

This is, however, only the beginning of the teenager's ongoing work on him- or herself. I believe that puppets are a benevolent mediator, able to find harmony and establish relationships with people for children with deviant behavior.

Larisa Telnova is a psychologist and a Deputy Director of the Youth Camp "Elochka."



I thank the psychologist Olga Vladimirova for assistance in the research.

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## A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

As a music therapist, I was intrigued by the topic of the current issue of P.I. It was fascinating to read about the use of puppetry with such a wide variety of people, in terms of their ages, disabilities and physical and mental conditions. Not surprisingly, I found many parallels to my use of music with these same populations. Thank you for expanding my knowledge of the arts in therapy.

Terrie Meier Ilaria,  
Proofreader, *Puppetry International* magazine

Over the course of her 40+ years in the music field, Terrie has been a music therapist, piano and voice teacher, theater orchestra director and performer, and recital and concert accompanist in New York City, CT, NH and ME.



by Richard Bouchard  
translated by Jocelyne Girard Bujold

**ENAM** (L'École Nationale d'apprentissage par la marionnette) is a non-profit community organization founded in 1990 located in the city of Saguenay, Québec. It offers an alternative learning and development program for adults affected by various mental health issues that prevent them from participating in the workplace. ENAM has the support of several ministries of the Québec government including Education, Health and Welfare, Labor, the city of Saguenay and a few private sponsors.

Our Mission and Objective is to see how far we can go using the art of puppetry to help those affected with mental health issues. Our program title is: "Say it with Puppets" (des marionnettes pour le dire), which promotes the use of the puppet to break the isolation of people experiencing severe mental health problems, in order to better channel the emotions they experience daily. Teamwork as well as individualized follow-up makes it possible to reach each individual in developing their personal skills and social interactions. Participants need to feel that they are being listened to in order to be helped and stimulated to improve their condition and mental balance, and to eventually attain their autonomy. Our ultimate goal is their complete social integration through various means of expressions and learning, by linking culture, education, health and work.

**A therapy based on the arts of puppetry to achieve real social integration?**

Puppet theater is a great way to achieve this goal; each day we see it by working on the creativity of the participants in a context of co-creations. All participants are enrolled in a process of creating puppets shows for twenty hours a week. What better way for each person to develop their creativity than this fascinating universe that the puppet offers with all its possibilities of cultural diversity. The puppet theater brings together all the arts and makes it possible to talk about all subjects. In small groups of 2 to 5 participants, they choose a theme, write a scenario and create a sketch. They then construct the puppets and sets for a performance in front of the audience. This process takes place under the supervision of an art therapist, a school educator, a puppeteer and a social worker (if required). This allows participants to experience a unique and meaningful learning experience – to overcome their isolation by communicating with the group and thus be able to appear before the public.

In a discussion with Nancy Staub and other members of UNIMA in 2015, Henryk Jurkowski mentioned that: "ENAM deals with psychotherapy and adaptation to social activities."

A presentation by participants of ENAM provides a concrete example of the efficacy of this work. It is called *The Faceless Man*. The faceless man wants to regain his personality. This text highlights the benefits of puppetry as a medium of expression and communication in a social context.



**THE FACELESS MAN**  
by Catherine Dufour

*scene 1*

Everything starts with the sadness of a man. So sad that he lost his eyes, his nose and his mouth. In reality, it was the loss of his sight, his sense of smell and his words that compelled him in his inner sadness. Unlike other nomads, he was not included in the pack. He represented a sort of denunciation because he perceived the world around him differently.

When his face muttered, it was the final blow: They no longer even granted him the effort of a look or a word. Rich in sadness and poor in communication, he retreated into himself. A desire formed within him to find his face, in order to better be accepted. It took the form of a "presence": The nasal voice of a small creature arose.

ENVY: Oh you poor you! Look at your loneliness and look at how the tribe is doing better without you. Look how you're left behind. If you want your redemption, you must look at what makes you so envious. Envy is me and it is you, too. It wants so many things that you no longer have. See how beautiful it would be to be accepted even a little.

The poor man does not try to express anything. He lets his ears down, convinced of the veracity of what Envy suggested to him. But you know, you can retrieve your face. It's the only solution. Be like them, the same, and so you will be praised for the affection you seek, even if only a little. Go into the turbulent desert and face your fears to touch the finger of that which you envy.

The faceless man flees blindly through the sandy hills. An uncontrolled desire to put himself into action began to beat in his heart. A laugh escaped in the air around him. Victory! Envy had imposed his perverted way of seeing things.

A storm breaks out. The sand swirls around her silhouette and the sound makes the eardrums twitch. Blind in all his senses, he crouches on the ground and gives in to his discouragement. A new presence appears. A sweet heat invades it, preventing the winds and the hot sand grains from hitting him. A voice rises soft and patient.

TOLERANCE: Use your evil to recover yourself. The storm will come to an end.

In his head, the man's various fears jostle each other. "I can try, but I would fail." "I cannot do anything about it." "I miss him so much, compared with others." That was the sound of his thoughts: a nostalgic and devouring sadness. The warmth around him finds a larger area in his heart while he is listening.

scene 2

TOLERANCE: I embody tolerance towards others, but especially towards oneself. Accept your weaknesses to build your strength. You will then follow your heart towards the quest that burns in you.

ENVY: Envy can be a motivation, but not an end.

That was enough; she was right about tolerance. He straightened up and held out the eyes – one of the only sensory qualities that remained. Slowly he discerned something other than the pitiless sound of the wind, a hollow sound belonging to a surface set against the storm. He groped his way along the ground under the skin of an animal. He pulls it around him and covers himself. Tolerance remained always at his side and did not hesitate to whisper a few words filled with wisdom: "Follow your actions and reflections in your own rhythm and harmony. Envy is treachery, filled with quick actions and meaningless. Find what you want and take control of your grief."

The faceless man regains his courage and acquires a new will. As if by magic he sees the storm suddenly fall silent. It is as if a curtain drops, giving way to the great spectacle of life. A few winks later, he becomes aware of all that surrounds him. Beyond his makeshift shelter he sees Tolerance. She is nothing like a ghost, that is to say, pale and almost invisible. On her face there is nothing but a magnificent smile and a gentle light of glowing heat that surrounds the two silhouettes.

TOLERANCE: Now I think you need a name. You are no longer faceless, you are Courage or Will, you are True, the one who will brave an adventure for a quest of the heart, who wants each one to surpass even at the risk of failure. You just forgot to believe in your inner strength.

It was at this moment that he understood certain important and vital things. While he was thinking about how he could express himself, a mouth appears on his face, a mouth expressing a grateful smile and a clear word.

FACELESS: Then Will is my name, and I will not forget who I am. It is true, that is why the other nomads do not accept me. They are afraid of change, also afraid to open up to the world around them. I have only lost sight of my own abilities, and these are worth more than gold.

This little moment of respite and inner peace does not last. Not far from them, between two hills, a mountain of gold appears. At its summit a humanoid creature stands, whose figure is elongated and deformed. His eyes look malicious. At the sound of his voice, Will recognizes Envy, the violent being that had led him into desert dangers. The large silhouette opens its mouth, baring long, sharp teeth.

ENVY: Will you want the other things you have greatly envied? Be like the others! You are still missing a nose and without it you will be rejected. But ... I can give it to you in exchange for your most precious but useless possession: your Will. Abandon it and give it back to me, and you will be like the others.

scene 3

FACELESS: "Like the others" means losing what I have so dearly cherished. My answer is definitely, "No." I want to keep my integrity and assume the loss of my nose. I will compensate by caressing the food more with my eyes and it will satisfy me as much as to smell it.

Envy was overwhelmed by the vehemence of his words. Will repeated them before the speechless creature.

FACELESS: I now have a name, I know what I like and what I do not like, but also what I am capable of. No thanks for cravings and empty treasures filled with avarice. I say Yes to Me as someone unique who will live in harmony and with tolerance for others ... and especially for myself.

end

**Catherine's struggle is certainly universal.**

Catherine was experiencing psychosis and a major addiction problem. She participated for two years in the activities of ENAM. Through the process of awakening and awareness, the non-judgment of others, confidence set in, recognized its voices and the characters that inhabited her. The fact of creating characters and metaphors allows her to project herself in a work of control of her voices, to tame them and to dismiss them. Catherine already had an artistic approach to life. She had written and entertained children with a clown character.

Very recently she came back to our school. I asked her what was left of this metaphor. She confirmed that "Tolerance and Envy" still lived with her. Tolerance still helped her to avoid her power loss and the recovery of her own life. She managed her stresses and fears well. Thanks to



recent psychotherapy, she also managed to get out of her addiction problems. Catherine seemed to have completely recovered her face and her mental balance.

She positively confirmed that she had gotten her dreams back, as well as her complete confidence in the future. Currently, it is her intention to enroll in an academic training program with the objective of finding work as a nursing assistant.

We observe the impact and consequences that our program can have on the lives of our participants, It is undeniable that this type of therapy in the domain of mental health meets an urgent and crying need in our society. It is in our best interest to understand and realize how the puppetry arts can enable people to regain a better mental balance in order to achieve social integration.

Richard Bouchard is a puppeteer and the co-founder of both the "École Nationale d'apprentissage par la marionnette" (ENAM) and the Festival International des arts de la marionnette de Saguenay, Québec (FIAMS).



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NICK HUBBARD, SCHWÄBISCH GMÜND, GERMANY, 2012

# SHADOW THEATRE

## A SUITABLE MEANS OF DEVELOPING THE TALENTS OF THE IMPAIRED ELDERLY

by Joanne Ousseren

For five years now, Stichting Droomtheater has been producing interdisciplinary puppet theatre, and organizing presentations and workshops featuring shadow theatre. In conjunction with various narrative techniques, this ancient Chinese art form offers great possibilities for small-scale theatre shows and workshops for special target groups. The audiences are easily captured, fascinated, and motivated to participate in the creative, interactive sessions following the theatre shows.

Driven by my personal interest in the benefits of shadow theatre for special target groups, I set out together with puppeteer Frans Hakkemars to roam the city of Rotterdam, the continent of Europe, and indeed China with my Dream Treasury, my portable shadow theatre, as the most important luggage. Since 2012 we have been working in theatres, libraries, community centers, care centers, and penitentiary institutions. Depending on client and audience, we choose a theme and subject matter, and we use shadow theatre in combination with other art forms such as dance, music, videos, cooking, and different narrative techniques such as slam poetry and prose.

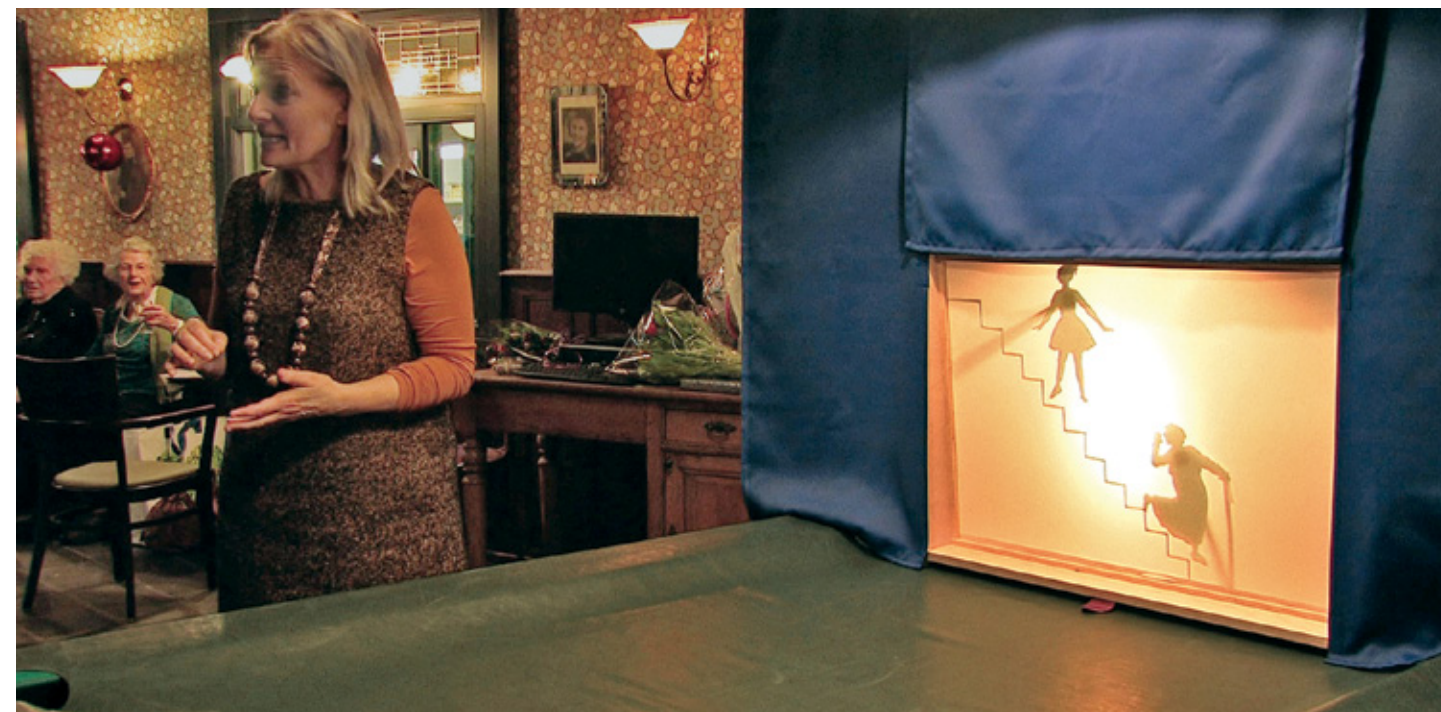
### Working together

Having departed on our venture as autonomous puppeteers, directors, and storytellers, we gradually became more and more involved in the shared social responsibility of artists, politicians, stakeholders, and volunteers, for the care and well-being of our fellow man. The elderly in our society are becoming more and more vulnerable and their needs are pressing, because they themselves are often responsible for maintaining their own social networks of friends and acquaintances, their networks of caregivers, and for initiating new contacts. Over the years, we have become increasingly convinced of the importance of collaboration, of sectors such as care, health care, art, and welfare, joining forces in caring for the growing number of elderly in our society.

More and more partners now realize that active participation will keep people involved, independent and fit. A theatre show we did towards the end of 2012 prompted a very special request. It was a shadow theatre show of Saint Saën's Carnaval des Animaux, which we did for the residents of care center De Steenplaat in the Feyenoord quarter of Rotterdam. It involved the participation of children, and the music was provided by a professional chamber orchestra. After the sequence of shows, the volunteer coordinator of De Steenplaat asked us to continue our sequence, this time in the living rooms of the care center, for an audience of residents with dementia.

### The Dream Treasury

In a special masterclass, Hansuëli Trüb has been able to introduce his Dream Treasury, a small, portable shadow theatre, in the Netherlands. We added to this concept a contemporary version of the ancient Chinese shadow techniques, and we were surprised to see how making the shadow puppets, and making them "come to life," could activate and stimulate the elderly. According to the care center's activity coaches, the Dream Treasury approach and



THE AUTHOR WORKING WITH SENIORS

procedure led to more communication and activity among the residents. During the sessions, we saw how passive attendees transformed into active participants. Only the very few who did not feel like doing anything, did not join in.

Every event that is out of the residents' ordinary routine is a welcome distraction. Projecting images on a screen and accompanying them by poetry, prose, music, movement, and dance evokes fun and enthusiasm. And when, after a Dream Treasury show, the participants start to draw and cut out characters, and tell stories, their fantasy and imagination are challenged even further and this creates a very special, new energy. Participants become involved with one another, and interested in one another, in a way that is different from the usual, daily contact.

### Telling stories

Droomtheater's product – a theatre show followed by activities – offers an essential element of intercultural communication. It always leads to surprising and original associations and conversations.

Also, during the puppetry sessions, when the shadow puppets are being used, interesting themes and topics may be brought up. Sometimes the caregivers attending, for the first time in their lives, see their loved one coloring to his heart's content. Or the nursing staff hear special memories and thoughts from their clients that they never knew about before. A new way of looking at each other's personal past develops, and opens the door to new conversations between participants. Anything may come up, from favorite flowers, transport by taxi, Donald Trump, the second World War, Indonesian or Chinese folk stories, to travelling, tropical birds,

elephants in the circus, chicken, mice, and windmills, but also topical, social issues such as politics, elections, and the care for the elderly.

Telling a simple story can give existential value to the narrator and to the listener(s).

The ways of telling stories and the approach of Droomtheater vary and are used to suit the different occasions and audiences. And thus, a story can be part of a program that includes a walk in the park followed by a meal and a show. Or the breaks in the show may be used to bake and decorate cakes that match the theme of the story.

### Social media

To reach out to as many people as possible within the organizations we visit, we pay a lot of attention to our presence on social media.

In close co-operation with photographers and filmmakers we record and document our events. This allows us to communicate optimally with all the echelons in an organization: caregivers, volunteers, nurses, activity coaches, and other employees, and to show them exactly what we do. We also maintain contact with those outside the care centers, such as policy makers and stakeholders. We aim at using the appropriate medium to reach the people we want to reach. When we send photos to caregivers after an event, we send them by email or snail mail, whichever makes it easiest for them to respond. This approach has really furthered the development of our artistic, interactive projects. Droomtheater is often invited to attend national as well as international congresses and festivals.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 28)



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Congratulations to the 2018  
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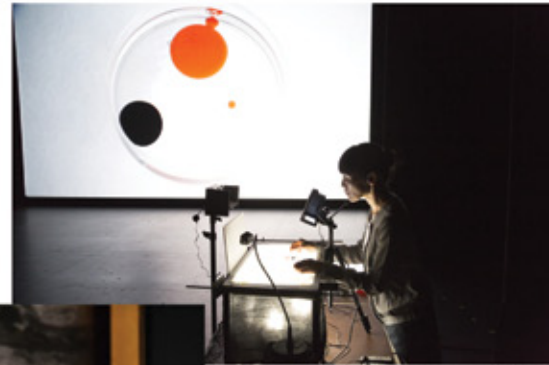
Janie Geiser/Automata  
*Here/There*

Frank Maugeri  
*Surprise! Death is not the End*

Nekaa Lab/Sachiyo Takahashi  
*Everything Starts from a Dot*

Phantom Limb Company/  
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Lake Simons  
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Everything Starts from a Dot  
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Frank Maugeri  
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Go Home Tiny Monster  
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*The Little Red Fish*

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*Go Home Tiny Monster*

Hamumu Theatre Collective  
*Our Serpant Guide*

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CREATURE: A Wretched Frankenstein  
Zach Bramel & Deva North



Harkness Calls  
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2018 Grant Review Board: Cheryl Henson, Richard Termine, Pam Arciero, Melissa Abbott, Leslee Asch, John Farrell, Roxanna Myhrum, Carol Sterling, Blair Thomas, Hanne Tierney

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25)

### One single move

Just as the elderly in our society can be divided into different groups, those who are suffering from dementia can be subdivided into different categories and phases as well. Due to diminished brain activity, neurological disorders, and/or heavy medication, the response to our shadow theatre may merely consist of just one, slight twinkle in the eye. Albeit a minimal response, it is exactly what we want to achieve.

Whereas the original goal of a puppeteer is to bring dead material to life, to breathe life into lifeless objects, this special kind of theatre – shadow theatre with the elderly dementia patient – breathes life into a brain that is gradually becoming numb, and activates the emotional experience of an audience whose moments of pure joy are few and far between. Sometimes that little sparkle of joy, manifest for only that split second, is such a unique and rewarding experience, it stays with us for days.

### Conclusions

The change processes which are activated by using shadow theatre have their effects throughout an organization, and trigger creativity in its different departments. People, whether residents, staff, or caretakers, encounter a range of unusual emotions such as endearment and amazement, a new rapport develops between people, and between them and their surroundings. The shadow images shown, the music, poetry, prose, and slam poetry produced by guest performers, they all inspire. There is something in it for everyone, and the atmosphere is enhanced in a way that is felt by everyone throughout the organization.

The following objectives are paramount:

- The change-inducing powers of art and culture are based on participation, motivation, and inspiration. By intensifying collaboration and communication, new developments will be initiated which will offer more opportunities for artistic practice.
- The frequency of the activities organized is often too low and the current situation requires a higher one.
- The change-inducing effects could increase if not only individual artists would be involved, but projects would also be attracted in collaboration with other organizations such as festivals,



theatres, museums, art schools, and nursing schools, so that more of the lonely elderly will become involved in activities and be inspired more often. The involvement of more volunteers requires the involvement of more professionals to coach them, and to structure and monitor the activities.

- Sharing the experience and knowledge gained in shadow theatre for the dementing through different media, will generate a wider reach, more input, and more enthusiasm.
- Professional experience in cultural transfer, and an increasing knowledge of it, are vital to the enhancement of the quality of community arts. Of course, the involvement of volunteers is important, but more professional expertise will improve the quality, and will facilitate sharing assets and skills in a network collaborating to help the lonely elderly.

Joanne Ousseren studied at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, NL. She is the director of Stichting Droomtheater.

web: [droomtheater.com/](http://droomtheater.com/)

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*Their generosity is greatly appreciated.*



# DOCTOR-PUPPET

## AN APPROACH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AID FOR SICK CHILDREN

by Alexander Gref, Larisa Sokolova, and Elena Slonimskaya  
Vagrant Booth Theatre, Moscow, Russia

translated by Dassia N. Posner

Vagrant Booth Theatre was founded in 1989 by Alexander Gref as a children's studio. Today it is a professional theatre-laboratory. We focus primarily on traditional crafts, music, and folk puppet theatre. We are driven by the idea that it is possible for traditional culture to thrive in the modern world, if only we do not lock it inside national borders; therefore our efforts are focused primarily on seeking common traits that connect national cultures.

An important part of our work is our approach to providing psychological aid for seriously ill children with puppet therapy, music, and art therapy. We were among the first to develop these programs in Russia, in the early 1990s. Our methods are described in various articles and in two books: *The Bedside Studio*, on art therapy techniques based in ancient crafts, and *Doctor-Puppet*, on the work described in this article.

We developed the Doctor-Puppet approach in the 1990s and used it in a variety of children's oncology clinics and in children's hospice from 1995 to 2015.



### Description

For hospital work we use a visibly manipulated puppet, 90 cm tall, that represents a doctor and a clown simultaneously. The puppet works twice a week individually with sick children for 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the concrete goal of psychological support and the child's condition. Before each visit Doctor-Puppet consults with the doctor, psychologist, and other specialists.

### Goals

The primary goal of this work is to provide emotional and psychological support to seriously ill children. During treatments accompanied by painful and unpleasant procedures, young patients develop persistent fear, hostility, and mistrust of the adults who are "causing them pain;" aggression sometimes arises. Doctor-Puppet helps children adapt to the clinic and find a common language with doctors and medical staff.

### Typical Situations

One important task that the Doctor-Puppet performs well is helping children during the first days of their hospital stay. For a small patient frightened by the mere fact of having come to the clinic and the perspective of staying there, meeting a character like this is very significant: It gives the treatment and hospital stay playful undertones.

As an instrument of puppet therapy, Doctor-Puppet does very well when a seriously ill child is being prepared for operations or special procedures, playfully explaining to patients how to behave during the procedure, playing out their fears and negative expectations.

Doctor-Puppet is very helpful when a child has an extended hospital stay, which is very psychologically and physically difficult for the patient.

Doctor-Puppet works wonderfully in one of the most difficult situations that comes up during treatment—when aggression arises. In several situations, Doctor-Puppet was the only one who could handle physical aggression.

In individual work it is possible to address several of the small patient's personal troubles—for example, feeding a child who lacks appetite due to chemotherapy or helping a foreign child adjust to the language.

While these are typical situations in which Doctor-Puppet works, we should not fail to mention one of its most important characteristics: The puppet-clown's arrival is a holiday for the child! Therefore, using various holiday, celebration, and show elements is ordinary, natural work for Doctor-Puppet. In this case he sheds his lab coat and wears his bright, holiday clown outfit. And he performs a show: with singing, dancing, and tricks!

Another important area of Doctor-Puppet's work is psychological support for the parents in the hospital with their children.

### Specifics of the Approach

Our puppet is approximately the size of a child. The goal was to create a character that would be a small, amusing, yet serious little person, a doctor that would be close to the child, almost the same size, a character that at first glance would evoke the trust and sympathy of small patients. This is a very challenging artistic and technical task, as the puppet works in direct proximity to the patient.

The puppet is visibly operated; the puppeteer is not disguised. The design allows the puppeteer to operate both hand and head, or both hands.

It is important for the Doctor-Puppet to communicate with, engage with the personal problems of, and adapt to the individual needs and condition of each child. In order to achieve these goals, the Doctor's meetings with the patient must be regular, lasting for the child's entire hospital stay, seeing the small patient through all the difficult situations of a challenging treatment.

This approach calls for virtuosic puppet animation and for the puppeteer to be able to improvise—the primary way of communicating with the child. A puppeteer working with Doctor-Puppet must have a broad spectrum of varied skills—for example, playing musical instruments, knowing nursery rhymes, being able to make a toy out of any object, including medical instruments. The puppeteer must be prepared to change the improvisation instantaneously,

depending on the child's reaction.

Working with the puppet is not "set in stone." When necessary, the puppeteer is free to set the puppet aside to "watch" the performance. Interestingly, children often continue to treat the puppeteer as the puppet's representative and call the puppeteer not by his or her name, but by the puppet's.

Children who are used to visits from our Doctor await him with impatience.

An unexpected effect is that children often become sincerely attached to Doctor-Puppet, as to a living person, showing real friendship, trusting him with outpourings of the soul that they don't reveal to anyone else. Sometimes during extended contact the child and Doctor-Puppet write each other letters. Below are excerpts from the diary of Larisa Sokolova, who worked for several years with Doctor-Puppet in a Moscow clinic.

This is an account of the first medical examination: using a large wooden thermometer with painted numbers to measure temperature and the length of a smile, and taking body temperature under the arm, under the knee, and even under the pillow.

### September 18... Alyosha K., age 12

The length of the smile is 36.3 degrees Celsius to the square millimeter. Doctor-Puppet explains that the smile can't grow shorter; only longer. Alyosha tries to smile even more: "Look, it's already grown!" Indeed—now it's not 36.3, but 36.5!

The units in which smiles are measured can be absolutely nonsensical: meters per cube, centimeters per ball, degrees Celsius per cubic millimeter, etc.

### September 19... Nastya S., age 5

DK: "How are you?"

Mother: "High temperature!"

DK: "Let's blow the fever away." Makes a paper fan and fans them: "Cooler?" Places the thermometer under [Nastya's] knee. "36.6 degrees long! Now we can all sing a song!" – The girl and puppet sing together with delight.

Sometimes the Doctor dances: the child manipulates his legs, which are placed on a chair, and if she can get out of bed, she dances herself.

Interestingly, when the doctor saw Nastya, her temperature really had decreased from 38.4 to 37.9.



Lost smiles can be returned with the help of a clown nose, ears, glasses with eyeballs, a clown hat, and a mirror. Often some of these props remain with the child. Sketches played during Doctor-Puppet's first meetings with a small patient often are used in further interactions: Sometimes the child asks to find a smile or to take a temperature; often the mother asks to repeat a sketch. It's very interesting to observe when the child herself plays clown sketches with her toys.

The traumatic effect of fear has been described often; one of our main tasks is to help the child overcome fear that arises when preparing for an operation. Here we use props that mimic medical instruments and devices: large and small syringes, a wooden thermometer, a stethoscope, jars, tubes, hammers, tweezers, etc. Doctor-Puppet demonstrates an operation or a procedure: "draws blood," "gives an injection," "changes a catheter," "takes a spinal tap." The child helps all along, doing what Doctor-Puppet asks for. The procedure is less frightening after the merry puppet doctor has shown it, if he was the one who said what to do, to whom and how to listen during the treatment. This game is important both before and after procedures: We often noticed that children themselves treated their toys.

Doctor-Puppet also tells children about the complexity of the human organism, explaining with drawing and stories what is happening inside in the case of illness and how the body fights it, how the treatment works. Doctor-Puppet gradually prepares small people for the changes that will occur to them and their appearance during a prolonged, difficult, painful, aggressive treatment.



### November 9... Vika G., age 8

Getting ready for the first spinal tap. She hugs her straw-hat-wearing bunny and doesn't look up.

Doctor-Puppet: "You hugged your bunny. Does something hurt him? Is he scared?" Vika nods. "You and I will help him!" The doctor opens the case: "Let's spread out a towel and put bunny on his tummy." Vika puts the bunny on its tummy. "We'll stroke his back and you rub oil on him." She rubs the bunny's back. "We need to find out why your lovey has gotten sick. We'll do a SPECIAL analysis. Stroke the bunny. And I'll get the tiniest syringe from the case. Here it is. Listen to how the syringe sings." Doctor-Puppet plays a children's song on the syringe. "Now take it and give your bunny a little poke. It won't hurt him: He's lying flat, his arms and legs are straight, he isn't wiggling his ears. Right here." Vika pokes the bunny with the needle. Vika: "He didn't cry..." Now bunny needs to lie down for two hours, it's good to rest. You'll see, he'll be hopping again soon!"

Back again after an hour and a half. Vika is waiting: "Bunny is hopping!" Mother: "And we didn't cry at all!"

Among Doctor-Puppet's props is an object with a huge, fairly independent role in preparing for procedures and operations: a "fear-erasing clown hat." Doctor-Puppet's ordinary three-kopeck clown hat became a "fear-erasing clown hat" accidentally. Once, having no way to comfort four-year-old Lenchka S., who was crying at the simplest procedure, a catheter bag change, Doctor-Puppet put a cardboard clown cap on her head and, in a fit of inspiration, said: "It's a present! Wear it for the procedure... It will soak up all your fear!..." From then on the hat became the most useful tool in the doctor's work! When Lena was being prepped for a procedure again some time later, Doctor-Puppet noticed her walking along the corridor wearing the hat as she waited for the nurse. She saw me and shouted, pointing at the hat: "I'm not afraid anymore!"

One very important element of our approach is that at some point the Doctor-Puppet becomes a patient and the child a doctor. And the child treats Doctor-Puppet using his puppet props. This is possible with prolonged interaction; after Doctor-Puppet treats the child, they treat other puppets together, and, finally, the child treats Doctor-Puppet. In this case, children act out all their experiences they have had in the clinic, their fears and aggression. Most children with whom Doctor-Puppet interacted regularly began to treat him zealously within a month. Often the play was accompanied by very aggressive efforts. Almost all the children gave Doctor-Puppet injections.

### March 15... Nastya V., age 6

Seconds into the meeting I hear: "The Doctor's nose is yellow! We have to give him 100 injections in the nose!"

She takes a big syringe out of the case and very "painfully," with full force injects the puppet doctor's nose with a steady but increasingly violent hand! The girl's face is very tense. She doesn't know how to count to 100, but when she thinks it's the last injection, she strains her whole body: "Oomph!... THAT'S IT! Phew!" Sighs with relief.

### September 6... Vitalik B., age 11

Today we met after an interval during which we were only allowed to exchange notes and say hello through the window: a complex stage of treatment was under way.

Cheerful and energetic, Vitalik laughed and waved to Doctor-Puppet through the window even during a hemorrhage... Hugging the puppet like an old friend, Vitalik finds that the doctor isn't feeling well. He operates precisely and sequentially with a real catheter in his hands: "I'll be the anesthesiologist." He writes out the prescription: "Laughter, 1 kg, twice a day."

Lack of appetite due to overall weakness, low spirits, or a previous aggressive treatment during which food caused nausea and vomiting is not uncommon in our practice. Sometimes neither mother or doctors can feed the child. What doesn't work for them sometimes does for Doctor-Puppet. Feeding techniques vary unpredictably - from the story of the "poor little lonely tummy-tum" to having the puppet and child share a meal at the same table.



### May 13... Zhenya G., age 5

"Poor appetite," says the mother. We start to play. Doctor-Puppet does not interfere in the direction of the game. Zhenya plants potatoes, apples, onions, oranges. When everything is "ripe," he makes soup for the Doctor. Feeding Doctor-Puppet...

Two hours later, his mother came up to the Doctor in the hall: "Thank you, Doctor-Puppet. Zhenya ate well."

Alexander Gref is author of the Doctor-Puppet program. He is the founder (1989) and Artistic Director of Vagrant Booth Theatre. He has written over sixty articles on the history and theory of puppet theatre. He holds a PhD and associate professorship in Chemical Sciences.

Larisa Sokolova is co-author of the Doctor-Puppet program. She is an actor with Vagrant Booth Theatre, a musician, and a music teacher. She specializes in working with preschool-aged children.

Elena Slonimskaya is an actor with Vagrant Booth Theatre, a musician, and a music teacher. She specializes in using folk crafts and music therapeutically in work with sick children.

*NOTE: There is now a booklet about the Doctor-Puppet program that Vagrant Booth brings into hospital settings that you may download for free (33 pages): [http://booth.ru/dokt\\_kuk/dok\\_kuk\\_a.doc](http://booth.ru/dokt_kuk/dok_kuk_a.doc) We will provide a link on our website: [unima-usa.org](http://unima-usa.org).*

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## PUPPET THERAPY IN THE INCLUSIVE CHILDREN'S PUPPET THEATER NADEZHDA\*



by Konstantin Mekhryakov

An inclusive children's puppet theater was born in 2013. Five families with special children of different ages (3-15 years) and different characteristics (autism, Down syndrome, deafness) gathered together. First, children learned to thread a needle. They read plays, chosen for their suitability for the entire group. They then drew characters, made sketches of glove puppets, made puppets, props, scenery (with the help of parents, of course). They learned puppet control on a screen and rehearsed their roles. A play—*How a Kitten Learned to Meow*—was arranged after a year of work. Parents did not believe that their special children would overcome their fears and lack of skill, but it was a good experience and, as it turned out, the first of many.

The second year was active too. The children performed their plays for special needs audiences in social service centers, rehabilitation centers and elsewhere. Then, more diverse audiences appeared. And not only children, but adults as well. Their reaction to us and our business showed that we were on the right path and gave us the confidence to continue. We participated in various competitions and festivals in Izhevsk. We also began the preparation of the second play, *Teremok*, using masks.

The third year was marked by a trip to the Festival in Cheboksary, where professional puppeteers from all over the country performed shows for special children. We were the only team where special needs children were the artists. We were recognized and loved. A trip to another city proved to be another huge step in our development. The following spring we went to the Festival in Tyumen, where we gave a charity

performance at the center "Family" in addition to the competition program of the Festival. We held a Jubilee concert, "Playing with Beams of Light," on the stage of the Udmurt State Puppet Theater at the end of the season.

### This is how the story of our unusual theater began

The main topic is interaction. A person with autism is a person who has no prior interpersonal or social relationships; the theatre builds these relationships. I was very afraid about how people with autism would react on the stage, in front of an audience. But I discovered a very simple thing empirically: People with autism are people of ritual, repetition. And in this they find the theater a very comfortable place; they enjoy rehearsing and repetition (unlike many professional actors).

\*HOPE



We can see that each of them reveals more and more of their features today. A girl with autistic disorder plays with her character very emotionally and with a unique nature of playing, but performing in a mask in front of an audience is a completely different experience for her, and she had to re-learn how to play this hero in front of an audience. But this is a victory for all of us, when her new character in the mask starts to live on stage.

Another of our actresses could not find friends outside the group. Recently though, acting at the Lyceum in front of students, she was able to organize the other kids for a joint game. In the theater—in our collective—she learns to communicate with people of different ages and to listen and hear them. Interaction within the team is based on the principle of equal opportunities. Everybody is included in the process and everyone does the same warm-ups, exercises, and tries to perform them to the best of their abilities.

The character of the hero is built on the characteristics of each child, on his or her personality. We emphasize the strengths of children and try to minimize their weaknesses. Thanks to our director, you can see absolutely curious characters: a wolf that growls and wants to eat everyone or a bunny that jumps and makes tricks.

**Our main audience is children, and we play for them**  
Our stories are simple and understandable for audiences (and to the actors



themselves!) and the kids can transmit and tell them through puppets and masks. But adults do not remain indifferent after watching performances and communicating with our children. Young audiences create friendly images of disabled people rather than as something terrible or dangerous, and we teach children to be kind and tolerant.

In the literature you can often find the concept of “puppet therapy,” implying the playing out of different life situations by using puppets. The child often says things with the help of puppets that he or she cannot say directly. In our case, I would give another name to what we do: “scene therapy”— the revealing of a child’s abilities through a stage role. Our kids learn how to behave on the stage. They may get flustered before the performance and wait for the approval of the audience. They, like all of us, feel support and want to communicate their role to those who came to see them. Socialization of children takes place not only through theatrical activity, but also through what accompanies it: trips to other cities, performances on other stages, joint trips to the cinema, theater or the outdoors. Thanks to this, we form the ability to get acquainted and find a common language with new people, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, the ability to help each other and much more (for example, to help to prepare food, share toys, help learn the lessons). Through these theatrical activities there is a comprehensive development of the



child, and it becomes much easier for them to adapt to the conditions of life in society. Most of our children subsequently have an easier time coming into contact with “healthy” peers and adults. We believe in our children, we love them and are ready to support them.

**In conclusion, a few words from the parents of our “special” actors:**

“It was important for us to find communicative, like-minded people—those who were looking for the opportunity to form new skills in children. Probably no one thought about socialization, going to the real stage, but by the end of the first year of our creative career we had a product that we could show to friends and relatives, the play: *How the Kitten Learned to Meow*. And even then it became clear that to go out and play with puppets is a great victory for our children. Some of them did not speak well, someone could not remember their words, and many were not heard at all. But that first performance gave each parent a confidence in the capabilities of their children. I believe that the main task is to give children and parents the opportunity to believe in their strength.”



“She (Tanya) has difficulty making friends outside, but at the theater it all comes easy. Previously, she was afraid of long trips, trains, water—and now these fears have gone away (she even bathed in Tyumen!). Also, it is only in the theater that she tries to live with other children—to play, to study, to listen to them—at home it is still problematic even for her brother Sasha to find a common language. This, perhaps, is the main thing.”

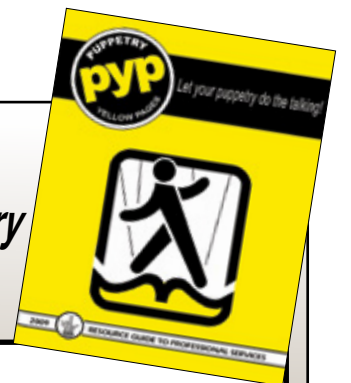
“Sonya has a problem communicating to the audience today, with speech, so my first priority is improvement with the help of the theater. And in the future, of course, communication with children with whom she has common interests.”

“Our children need a lot of time to explore, experience and discover this world for themselves. They are easily distracted, and therefore they need to be constantly sent to one or another activity. Such children forget the instructions of adults, not in order to resist their will or to annoy them. They really forget. Therefore, in the theater, from rehearsal to rehearsal, they learn to concentrate and they explore new opportunities. It is enough just to direct our children in order to find them ready for cooperation. With the help of the theater, they gain self-confidence and become much more responsive. They also learn to understand the feelings of others. Our children “tell” society that each of them is unique and special from birth (healthy Rita does not differ from the rest of the children!). Each has their own special talents, each has unique tasks in life, so parents should not just tolerate the characteristics of their children but also accept them. In our theater

this happens. Parents, working together with children on a common business, accept them as they are and help them evolve. And in our theater we learn caring and trust. Care is a willingness to always come to the aid of anyone, a concern for their well-being, an interest in their personality, the desire to make them happy, and to show compassion for their pain. In our theater, every adult can take care of any of the children and the children, seeing this, will be able to do the same. To trust means to believe that a child always does the best that he or she is capable of, even if at first glance it seems that it is not. We believe in our children and they each get to play their parts better, even without rehearsals!”

Konstantin Mekhryakov is an artist-puppeteer in the State Puppet Theater of the Udmurt Republic. He graduated from the Ekaterinburg State Theater Institute, specializing in the arts of drama and film.

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# PERFORMING OBJECTS IN PALLIATIVE CARE

by Riku Laakkonen



## Introduction

I am a puppeteer, drama instructor, actor and social circus instructor. I have been utilizing theatre and puppetry for nearly twenty years. I began this work in one juvenile prison where for two years I was leading a multicultural theatre group. The year was 1997. We made new adaptations of old fairy tales such as “Little Red Riding Hood.” My time with prisoners set in motion my own exploration: how to use theatre and puppetry when meeting people. Since that time, I have worked with refugees, mental rehabilitators, people with dementia, homeless people and many other groups. Each time, I have tried to discover ways to use theatre and puppetry among those marginalized groups. I am now writing my Masters thesis, the subject of which is: Performing Objects in Palliative care.

## Background

My journey in palliative care started four years ago. I was working in a private nursing home that provides housing services for seniors. The staff members there were quite young, and the head of this home was a bit worried how these young nurses would interact with dying people. I suggested that we could try puppetry as a tool to discuss dying with these nurses. So we did, and I planned and held a puppetry workshop that was really interesting. I started to think that I would like to try puppetry among palliative care patients. I called Koivikko Hospice, which is one of the four palliative care units in Finland, and they were interested in exploring new ways to meet their patients.

According to Nigel Hartley and Malcolm Payne there are four main reasons to include arts in palliative care.

1 *Art and creative work are vital human activities. This objectivity sees art and creativity as integral to a good quality of life and therefore appropriate as an element in a service that seeks to provide such a good quality of life for people approaching death.*

When I interviewed Koivikko Hospice’s CEO Riikka Koivisto, she told me that nowadays patients in hospices get a good nursing quality but they are dying too soon socially, mentally and culturally. So there’s a lot to do for artists.

2 *Art and creative work enhance emotional stability, personal enrichment and self-fulfillment.*

My own astonishment has been how openly and willingly these dying people have spoken with me.

3 *Art and creative work can offer a diversion from depression or difficulty. This objective is sometimes rejected as a purpose for creative work on the grounds that day care provision should have an active treatment philosophy.*

4 *The arts as a therapy – both social and psychological. This approach sees art as a phenomenological creative process enabling therapeutic interaction to take place, focusing on the development of hope and meaning in traumatic situations.* (Hartley&Payne 2008, 12)

## PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

Virginia Hearth, who works as a community artist in a St. Christopher’s Hospice, says that creativity is not a panacea but provides a means of transport into the imagination, where anything is possible, where even the most difficult issues and emotions can be addressed. The arts can help to demystify death and dying. They can act as a vehicle for expressing the inexpressible courageously and without censorship. The arts offer us a way of making sense of the

world and help us to define who we are and who we have been. (Hearth 2008, 142)

It’s very hard to describe all the elements that are present in those meetings I had in Koivikko Hospice. I’ll try to relate some aspects of my work by sharing the model that I have developed for interacting with dying people. I will do this as if I were writing a letter to one of the patients I worked with.

### Dear Mrs. S,

*I met you in Koivikko Hospice’s living-room. We introduced ourselves and I explained what I was doing and why. I asked if you would like to try out puppetry with me. I told you that everything is voluntary and confidential. You said yes and then we agreed on a time when it would be good for you to meet again.*

### Free chatting – to get to know each other better

*When meeting again we continued to get to know each other. I find it very important to start a dialogue before anything else happens, because all my work in Hospice is based on dialogue. I told you more about my background and the performing objects.*

*After free chatting I opened my suitcase, which was full of everyday objects.*

- **Introduce basic elements of performing objects**

*I picked up a key fob and showed the basics of object animation in order to give you a picture of what it’s all about.*

[I prefer talking about “animation” instead of “manipulating” or “operating.” I think the verb “to animate” leaves you more open possibilities and, in some cases, objects have been animated without moving them at all.]

- **What is your story?**

*After giving a short introduction into the world of performing objects, I started to ask you more specifically what story you would like to see? I listened to your story very carefully and wrote it down:*

*Me and my husband, we would have liked to travel in a warmer climate. It was our dream. Maybe the Caribbean. We never had the time or money. So I would like to see a story where my husband and I are flying to the Caribbean. In that story I would like to see us at the airport. My husband is nervous—he always is when he has to travel. He is worried about having his passport with him. He is nagging at me. We have a quarrel. He says he is sorry. When we land we see the blue sea, white sand and our luxury hotel. It’s all beautiful and perfect.*

- **Choosing characters and other necessary items**

*Then I picked objects one by one from my suitcase. You decided which object would perform and in what role. You were like a co-director for the upcoming performance. Because your role was so important I have started to call you **spect-animator**. Just for you to know, Mrs. S, this term I have modified from Brazilian Forum-theatre inventor Augusto Boal, who calls audience members spect-actors because of their active role in Forum-theatre.*

*In your story we needed these objects:*

*A small candy box represented a glorious hotel. That object had glamour  
A used tea-light that was sprayed golden represented a luxury bed  
Dried birch bark became a palm tree  
A thick yellow ball of yarn played the husband’s role  
A potholder played the protagonist’s role*

- **How different characters move, speak, etc.**

*Then I started to try out how the story's characters would act. When you were satisfied, the performance started.*

- **Performance and stage**

*Because you were tired and lying in the bed, I had to figure out where objects could perform. I used a small hospital table with wheels – one that I could move and get close enough to you, then I started to perform. When the performance was over we had a discussion.*

- **Discussion: could it have gone other than the way it did? Does a spect-animator want to change something or try something different?**

*You were satisfied. You especially liked the role of your husband and the way I animated his character. I asked if there would have been some things you would have wanted to change but, no, you were happy with it.*

- **Closing conversation and getting feedback**

*After an object performance, I still wanted to talk with you and pack my things in peace: 1) To make sure that you have had time to say everything, and 2) To have feedback – how are you feeling. Finally, I had to say:*

- **Thank you and good bye**



### Some thoughts

*Before starting to do object animation in Koivikko Hospice, I used to think that it is you as a spectator whose responsibility is to remember a performance that you saw. Now that you have died, I feel it is my responsibility to remember and to tell. All this raises ethical questions, and when seeking words that describe my work, I have turned to philosophy – especially that of Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber, who have thought about the quality of being dialogical.*

*Martin Buber says that being dialogical postulates that a human's otherness is acknowledged fact. A purpose of dialogue isn't to eliminate difference but to humanize it. And Emmanuel Levinas is saying that it's a question of an all-purpose human feeling of existence where the Other retains his otherness. (Hankamäki 2002, 62,87) The art of animating objects is one possibility whereby one may open and remain in a dialogical relationship. I wonder what you, Mrs. S, would have said into that?*

*After you died I heard from the staff that you had talked many times about our meeting in Koivikko Hospice. Maybe animating your story helped you when facing death? I can't know that for sure. Feedback that I have*

*gotten from the staff is that moments with performing objects have helped them to recognize and to know things that are meaningful to patients, and in that way it helped them better connect with their patients.*

Riku Laakkonen is a puppeteer, director, actor and teacher. After studying in DAMU in Prague, Theatre Laboratory ECS and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, he has been working with both professionals and amateurs. Over the years he has used applied puppetry as a working method with prisoners, refugees, and those recovering from mental illness, among others.

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### *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet.*

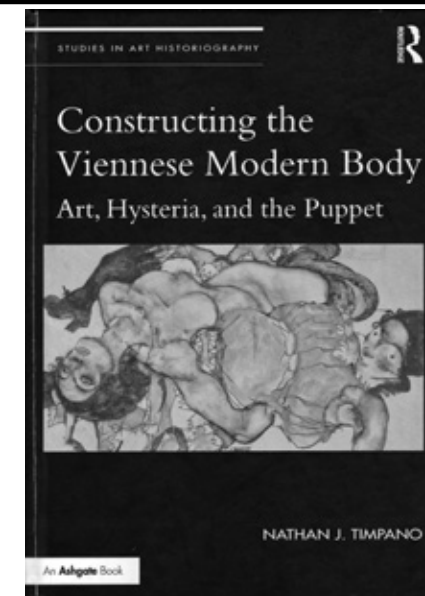
Nathan J. Timpano.  
London and New York: Routledge, 2017.  
xi + 209 pp. \$149.95

*Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet* argues that Viennese figurative art of the turn of the century has been underestimated compared to abstract art of the same era. Art by Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele, the author states, are significant as representations of the modern body, in concord with theatre and performance—including puppetry.

Timpano underlines a tension between inner vision and optical vision, which he traces back to Kokoschka's notion of "the semblance of things." Kokoschka's portraits were often criticized as merely depictions of diseased and ugly people, but in Timpano's estimation these "pathological" bodies are articulations of the inner spirit of modernity, much like the hysterical women who formed the central subject for the discipline of neuropsychology from its emergence in France in the middle of the nineteenth century through the importation of the discipline to Vienna by Jean-Martin Charcot's disciple Sigmund Freud. Timpano reads Freud on hysteria as a contemporary of the stage characters Elektra, Isolde, and Salome, who, as interpreted by directors like Hermann Bahr and Max Reinhardt, embodied hysterical theatrical gestures.

Vienna, at the turn of the century, was afflicted by a "crisis in language." Words could not express the emotions and drives. Visual artists responded by recognizing the limits of language and searching for new ways of expression through the body. Puppets provided a means for visual artists to overcome the limits of language as their inanimate bodies could be expressive in a way that verbal language could not. Timpano analyzes diverse writings such as Hoffmann's tale "The Sandman," Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theatre," and Rilke's *Elegies*, to foreground interest in puppets as a medium of expression prevalent in Vienna at the turn of the century. Beyond that, artists of that time were fascinated and inspired by Indonesian puppets, which were being imported into Europe in increasing numbers in the early twentieth century.

Timpano devotes some space to the puppet master Richard Teschner, and his *wayang golek*-inspired Viennese puppet theatre. He is particularly interested in the visible genitals of Teschner's puppets, as they appear in pages of contemporary magazines. The most evident influence of *wayang*, and puppetry more generally, on Schiele is upon his self-portraits.



He takes on puppet-like poses and pathological attitudes and gestures. Kokoschka had an early interest in shadow play but more interesting for Timpano is the puppet-doll of Alma Mahler commissioned from German maker Hermine Moos. This lifeless object uncannily summoned Kokoschka's absent lover. In both its appearances in Kokoschka's paintings and in his social life, it gave voice to "unspeakable" yearnings and lent to him the puppet master's power over puppets.

Timpano writes with confidence and authority on art history, but has limited knowledge of puppetry. There are many errors in his descriptions of *wayang* and Teschner's practice. For example, he seems to think that both *wayang kulit* and *wayang golek* are performed behind a cotton sheet (p. 135). A photograph of *wayang kurucil* on page is mis-captioned as *wayang kulit* (p. 136). Luckily, such errors do not damage his general arguments about Teschner's use of puppets as a medium of expression. Timpano's art history perspective on some of the better known developments in twentieth-century European puppetry will be of interest to readers of *Puppetry International*.

—review by Jungmin Song,  
independent scholar

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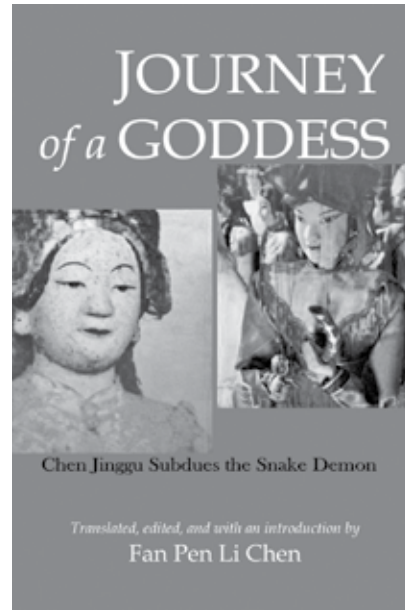
*Journey of a Goddess: Chen Jinggu Subdues the Snake Demon.*

Fan Pen Li Chen.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017.  
133 pp. \$75.

Dr. Fan Pen Li Chen has, perhaps more than anyone else in the past half century, ceaselessly labored to make Chinese puppetry understandable to scholars and puppeteers in the U.S. Although American puppeteers tend to have a general sense of the overwhelming wealth of Chinese hand, rod, marionette, and shadow puppet traditions, Dr. Chen's books, including *Visions for the Masses: Chinese Shadow Plays from Shaanxi and Shanxi* (2004) and *Chinese Shadow Theatre: History, Popular Religion, & Women Warriors* (2007) have made it possible to delve more deeply into the techniques, aesthetics, dramaturgy, and social and religious contexts of the largest puppet culture in the world.

Chen's latest book, *Journey of a Goddess: Chen Jinggu Subdues the Snake Demon*, continues in this vein, but now in terms of string marionette traditions from Fujian Province



in southeastern China. In fact, Chen's book is more about the deep cultural and religious background to Fujian marionette theater, because it focuses on the nature of another woman warrior: Chen Jinggu, "a historical

shaman priestess" (as the author puts it) from the 8th century C.E. who became the center of a cult as a result of her legendary prowess fighting the female demon known as White Snake. Following a thought-provoking and thorough introduction to the world of Chen Jinggu, Dr. Chen's book turns to its centerpiece, her translation of a late 16th-century novel, *Journey of a Goddess*. This mythological tale of Chen Jinggu's adventures with and against various divine and terrestrial powers follows the popularity of other Chinese travel novels of the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644) such as *Journey to the West*, an epic that also looms large in Chinese theater history. The two puppet plays that conclude Dr. Chen's book are both brief, but to a puppeteer they are the climax of the study. Recorded from the memory of Fujian puppeteer Wu Naiyu in the 1990s, the two marionette dramas, as Fan Pen Li Chen writes, "provide a window to the practices, ritual structures, beliefs, and hagiography of a local cult relatively little recognized by the elites, but of great influence among the populace in southeast China."

One of the challenges in understanding world puppetry is to recognize what particular puppet shows mean (or meant) in their original surroundings. A continuing challenge for young U.S. puppeteers—despite a century's worth of Western puppetry created with serious theatrical, social, and political ideas in mind—is to understand how puppetry could possibly exist as more than either comedy or children's entertainment. *Journey of a Goddess* shows exactly how this can happen in Fujian marionette traditions as Chen lays out in fascinating detail the multiple cultural, religious, and historical aspects of an exciting epic full of



THE TAISHUN COUNTY TROUPE'S PUPPET OF LADY CHEN JINGGU  
PHOTO: FAN PEN LI CHEN

conflict, battle, familial devotion, power politics, and the complex dealings of gods and humans.

These Chen Jinggu stories are fascinating not simply due to the excitement of two female superheroes battling each other in martial arts face-offs often susceptible (as in Greek mythology) to divine intervention. More than that, as Dr. Chen carefully points out, the conflict between Chen Jinggu and the Snake Demon reflects the history of religious and historical influences in China. Snake cults, dragon mythology, human and animal sacrifice, and the complex relations of four belief systems--Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Shamanism--all figure into the Chen Jinggu stories, and her victory over White Snake, as Dr. Chen sees it, represents the displacement of an older belief system, focused on snake cults, by newer tenets of Buddhism, and the supplanting of blood sacrifice by offerings of incense and candles instead.

Dr. Chen states that Chen Jinggu's continuing popularity "probably derived from the niche she occupied, as a protector of women during pregnancy and childbirth, and for the safe upbringing of children." Even now the goddess is the subject of "ritual incantations that are still being used by the priests of the Lüshan Sect, of which Chen Jinggu is the chief deity." Dr. Chen notes that some Chen Jinggu marionette shows are also much more than entertainment. A performance of *Lady Chen the Fourteenth* that Dr. Chen saw in 2008 was "a sacred play" for which the puppet master Xu Maobao "had to cleanse himself ritually and also have an altar table with offerings set before the stage prior to

the performance." One can see from the two plays Chen includes how puppetry can be a successful medium for dealing with such fantastic stories. Journeys by boat, magic transformations of cattle into tigers, swarms of belligerent hornets, and above all a stunning succession of battles between armies or solo heroes all seem eminently suitable for realization via the techniques of marionette theater, much like the dramaturgy of the Sicilian *opera dei pupi*.

Chinese shadow puppetry was recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2011, but *Journey of a Goddess* makes one wonder if this status should also be extended to Chinese marionette theater as well, since traditions like the Chen Jinggu plays are, as Dr. Chen shows, so profoundly intertwined with the richness of Chinese cultural history. Like Javanese *wayang*, such Indian forms as *Tolu Bommalata* shadow theater, and Sicilian marionette theater, the Chen Jinggu puppet plays offer a window of understanding into the ways that popular entertainment can connect directly to cultural history in theatrically stunning fashion.

—review by John Bell,  
University of Connecticut

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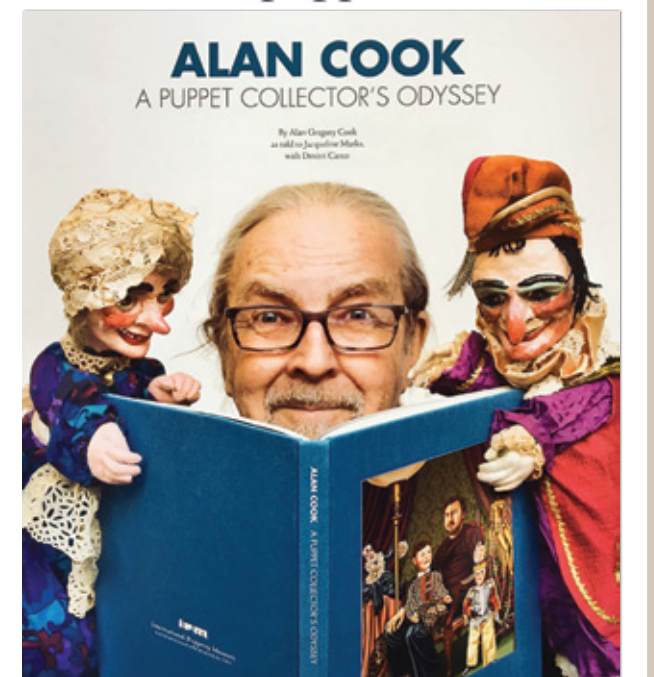
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# HAMLET CANTABILE

by Jieun Lee

Before *Hamlet Cantabile* begins on stage, one of the actors—already in character and wearing grotesque makeup—walks among the audience asking random spectators if they would help sew a white garment to a wooden stick as if to make a flag. This flag-like object is then used at the beginning of the play by this same character who draws enigmatic scribbles on the garment, eventually revealing their meaning: Hamlet. The act of writing a deceased person's name on a paper is part of a Korean funeral ritual in which the living commemorates the departure of a soul into the afterworld. This ritualistic activity at the very beginning of the performance sets the tone for the entire production. It renders the audience witnesses to, if not participants in, a Korean shamanistic ceremony, which here bridges the world of stage and that of the audience—the world of fiction and that of real life—as the four actors who portray clownish shamans prepare to send off Hamlet's soul into a hopefully better hereafter.

In this Korean-language production, the story of *Hamlet* is told and sung by two actresses and two actors portraying shamans, sporting identical ghost-like white faces, dark lip makeup, and dressed in shabby gray costumes. Crossing the boundaries between clown and shaman, between storyteller and actor, singer and puppeteer, the performers recount the story of the character of Hamlet. This type of storytelling is part of a Korean shamanistic ritual called *Jin-hon Gut*: It is meant to communicate with disembodied spirits through a shaman's body, voice, and movement. The purpose of this ritual is to console the deeply distraught spirits of the dead and tell the untold stories related to their sorrowful lives.

In *Hamlet Cantabile*, the retelling of *Hamlet* begins when one of the shamans, Bobiri (Hye-ran Hwang), finds Hamlet's diary. The play's narrative structure is built around the four characters who envision their own imagined space of Hamlet's private inner life from what



he wrote in his diary before he died. The plurality of roles in Shakespeare's play is maximized by the fluid aspect of the performance as the four actors randomly enact any of the roles such as Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, etc.

However, instead of merely impersonating these other characters in order to convey the story of Hamlet, the actors take on the characters' personae through the use of puppetry. The disembodied spirit of Hamlet is a hand puppet of his head which is kept in a small movable wooden box carried by the four characters. Whenever one of the four shamans takes out Hamlet's puppet-head, she or he becomes Hamlet. In the scene where Hamlet decides to avenge his father's death, the hand puppet is passed from one shaman to another, each taking turns being Hamlet, accentuating the intensity of vengeful emotions. Hamlet's wooden puppet-head is also mutable depending on the prosthetic attachment to its body. When Hamlet agonizes before deciding to take revenge, Bobiri becomes a puppeteer and uses a common outdoor portable chair for Hamlet's body parts which are extended and retracted, mimicking the appearance of his limbs. The various and ever-changing sizes of the chair's configurations reflect Hamlet's agony of indecisiveness and fluctuating state of mind. As the shamans turned actor-puppeteers take on the spirit of Hamlet, the latter's visual aspect is rebuilt through the personification of objects, and Hamlet's physicality becomes distinguishable: It is as if we are actually seeing Hamlet speak and act. At the end of this particular scene, Hamlet's puppet-head is connected to an oversized red color garment which makes him look huge and powerful. This transformation—from a severed head to a giant shape—reflects the power of his fury reaching a climax as he takes over the entire stage and towers over the audience. In another scene in which one of the shamans, Eun-geun-jja (Su-jin Choi), speaks as the puppet of Ophelia, Bobiri manipulates a watering can to become Hamlet's body, re-enacting his past behavior and following her like a dog with the nozzle of the can acting as its tail. In other scenes, the performers handle a miniature umbrella and even a wine opener to become Hamlet's body. Transformed by the various objects that embody him, Hamlet's varied sizable body not only goes beyond the realm of representation, but also visually intensifies his uneven inner space, his unsettled physical embodiment, and the fragmentation of his body and soul.

HAMLET CANTABILE - WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY  
YO-SEOP BAE PERFORMANCE GROUP TUIDA  
BAEK SEONGHUI & JANG MINHO THEATER, SEOUL. 20 JUNE 2015

EMAIL: TUIDA@TUIDA.COM



As the title of the play indicates, *Hamlet Cantabile* incorporates music, underscoring the inner spheres of Shakespeare's characters. Upstage, there are a pianist, a cellist, and a percussionist playing live music throughout the play. The sonic field of the music echoes the Korean shamanistic ritual element of using music to contact souls. This insertion of ritualistic sensibilities is vividly shown when Ophelia's puppet-head is attached to a long stick and walked across the stage three times by the shaman Moo-ryong-tae (Jae-young Choi) performing the Korean shamanistic ritual that helps a soul depart from the world of the living to that of the dead. After the third time around the stage, all four shamans put Ophelia's puppet-head into the wooden box. At the end of the play, Hamlet's puppet-head is also put in the same box as Ophelia's in a symbolic tomb to fulfill the characters' wish that they should live peacefully together in their next lives.

Engaging with commonly found objects to materialize the spirits of larger than life characters as fragmented puppets, TUIDA's *Hamlet Cantabile* creates a purgatorial world where theater and ritual meet for spectators to participate in a shamanistic ceremony to alleviate the pain of tortured souls, even if they are fictionalized ones.

Jieun Lee is a PhD candidate in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Georgia.



# INDIAN PUPPETS—THE GREAT



by John Bell

Without a doubt the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta houses the best puppet museum in the U.S. The Center's most recent addition, the *Jim Henson Collection*, has become a landmark destination for Muppet fans and puppeteers across the country, presenting a rich, detailed, and thoughtfully nuanced tour of the work of Henson and his collaborators. For students of world puppetry in general, the stunning—and stunningly complete—centerpiece of the museum is its *Global Collection*. Carefully curated by Nancy Staub, this permanent exhibition presents significant examples of major forms of puppetry from all continents. Its compact and powerful array ranges from Vietnamese water puppets to Handspring Puppet Company's life-size Tophorn puppet for *War Horse*, and from pre-Columbian ritual figures to Tony Sarg. Even a cursory tour of *Global Collection* impresses the museum visitor with the formidable history—and hopefully the rich future possibilities—of puppetry's various forms.

A smaller gallery at the Center housing rotating exhibitions is currently (through July 15, 2018) the site of *Indian Puppets: The Great Stories and Dancing Dolls*, an equally rich and intense tour of puppet riches from the Indian subcontinent, whose object performance traditions have developed over thousands of years. Curated by Asian theater experts Kathy Foley and Karen Smith, in consultation with Claudia Orenstein of Hunter College and Michael Schuster of Hawai'i's

East-West Center, as well as with contemporary Indian puppeteers such as Dadi Padumjee and Anurupa Roy, *Indian Puppets* brings together even more puppets from the Center for Puppetry Arts' collections (mostly donated by Staub and the late puppetry scholar Melvyn Helstein), as well as puppets especially lent for the occasion.

India, as Foley points out in one of the exhibition's text panels, is "the second-most populous country in the world," with "29 states, 22 officially recognized languages, and 111 official dance forms. It is the birthplace of 4 major religions, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The country also has the second largest population of Muslims after Indonesia." Undaunted by the vast scope of the subject, *Indian Puppets* proceeds with eminent self-confidence to present a rich overview of forms.

One is struck by the wide variety of puppet techniques on display. These include such (relatively) familiar forms as Kathputli string marionettes from Kerala; Tolu Bommalata shadow figures from Andhra Pradesh, and Danger Putul Nach rod puppets from West Bengal; but also new surprises, such as the Gombeyata puppets of Karnataka, which are operated, marionette-style, by strings attached to a ring on the puppeteer's head and rods attached to the puppet's hands; and the Nokku Vidya Pavakali ("eye skill doll play") puppets of Kerala, which female puppeteers balance on yard-long rods from their upper lips.

# STORIES AND DANCING DOLLS



PHOTOS: CHRIS HUNT

In a scholarly paper about the exhibition presented last November at an American Society for Theatre Research conference, Professor Foley pointed out that the paths of Indian puppetry are diverse, overlapping, and sometimes in conflict. While many westerners (aided by early puppet scholarship based on colonial perspectives) tended to look at Asian puppet traditions as monolithic and timeless, Foley asserts that the reality of current Indian puppetry is more interestingly complex, and can be roughly divided into three genres: Traditional, Modern, and Post-traditional. Familiar traditional forms of Indian puppetry, like the Kathputli marionettes and Tolu Bommalatta shadow figures in the exhibition, represent "local genres" showing "the range and diversity of the country but came primarily from relatively low-caste performer/makers." These are augmented by varieties of "unabashedly modern" puppetry, created by "object theatre artist[s] linked to international puppet theatre discourses" such as Dadi Pudumjee, Ranjana Pandey, and Anurupa Roy. Such puppeteers, Foley explains, do not come from "traditional puppetry backgrounds," but instead are highly educated, often abroad, and "use traditions (or not) for technical ideas or narratives as they chose." Pudumjee, Pandey, and Roy's work, the exhibition shows, might take the form of life-size paper-maché and fabric characters familiar to fans of Bread & Puppet Theater or In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theater, or Muppet-influenced hand and rod puppets made of feathers, faux fur, foam, fleece and felt. The third genre, of "post-traditional" puppetry (a term invented by Matthew Cohen in reference to Indonesian forms), is represented here

by the work of Puran Bhatt. Bhatt, as Foley explains in an exhibition wall label, "comes from a traditional puppetry family" performing Kathputli string marionettes, but in his own work "combines family tradition with his own innovations, adopting new stories and larger figures for a contemporary audience."

Adding to the fascinating complexity here are some forms of object performance that might not be traditionally termed "puppetry." These methods include the Nokku Vidya balancing puppets mentioned above; a mask representing a lion-man incarnation of the god Vishnu (collected by Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin in the 1950s!); a long, vertical story scroll from West Bengal about the snake goddess Manasa; and a small Kāvad "story box" whose multiple doors open to reveal painted panels divided into comic-book style quadrants depicting scenes from the life of Krishna (another incarnation of Vishnu).

*Indian Puppets: The Great Stories and Dancing Dolls* is extraordinarily compact, taking up just one small room in comparison to the rich sprawl of the other two exhibitions at the Center. It is, as I have suggested above, organized with expert thoughtfulness and insight, and the meticulous selection of objects on display is augmented by entirely helpful graphic displays and labels. In the end, of course, it is the puppets themselves—overwhelmingly bright, colorful, and fascinating in their variety of technique and affect—that make this powerful display well worth seeing.

Dr. John Bell has been the Historian and Book Review Editor for *Puppetry International* since issue #1.

# ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PUPPETRY IN THAILAND: THE KORAT INTERNATIONAL YOUTH PUPPET FESTIVAL 2018

by Claudia Orenstein



I had the privilege of taking part in the 2018 Korat International Youth Puppet Festival in Thailand from January 11-14, which encompassed Thailand's Children's Day, January 13th. Korat, the nickname of Nakhon Ratchasima, is about a four-hour drive from Bangkok, and stands as the gateway to Isan, Thailand's northeastern region. With new developments and construction, it is making a bid to be the Bangkok of the northeast, a destination for shopping, with several enormous malls, and seeks a reputation as a city for the arts. The festival, organized by Semathai Marionette, based primarily in Bangkok, but with a new outpost in Korat, was generously supported by Thailand's Minister of Culture, Vira Rojpojchanarat, who presided over the opening ceremonies beside local officials. They were treated to an extravaganza that brought all the companies onstage together in a joyful explosion of puppets and puppeteers.

The festival was not the first such venture for Semathai Marionette; the group was instrumental in planning Bangkok's Harmony World Puppet Carnival in 2014, in conjunction with

World Puppet Carnival organizers, as well as the Harmony World Puppet Festival in Kanchanaburi in 2017. They are committed to creating events that promote puppetry, notably in workshops that encourage young people around Thailand to see puppetry as an opportunity to express their own artistic voices, drawing on local materials and local stories to create unique, regional forms. One highly successful model of this idea came from the Province of Maha Sarakham, where a new kind of puppet, made from traditional woven baskets, emerged from workshops engaging youngsters in puppetry, using whatever was available. Mor Lum Hun Dek Thevada represented this style of puppetry at the festival.



THE COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE STONE CASTLE PHIMAI AT NAKHON RATCHASIMA PROVINCE

PHOTO: NAKHON RATCHASIMA CULTURAL BUREAU

The festival's focus on youth puppetry offered opportunities for school groups and young puppeteers from across the country and abroad to perform on three free open-air stages set up around Ya Mo square, the central plaza of Korat, dedicated to local warrior heroine Ya Mo (Thao Suranaree), credited with leading Korat to victory against the Lao army in 1826. The festival featured over thirty companies, many from Thailand, but also international participants Lunar Marionette Show from the Philippines, The Lao National Puppet Theatre, My Puppets from Taiwan, Htwe Oo Myanmar Traditional Puppet Theatre, Paper Monkey Theatre Ltd (Chinese-style hand puppets) from Singapore, and two companies from Vietnam, Baby Style Productions, using various types of plush puppets, and the Vietnam National Puppetry Theatre with traditional water puppets. A pond in Ya Mo square became the stage for the water puppets, allowing spectators a close-up view of the carved

figures of villagers and mythic creatures in their water dances, as well as a rare peek at the more workman like activities backstage. The opening parade brought the companies through the

streets of Korat, dressed in national attire, marching behind their country's flag, all led by a huge processional cart puppet representing the blue-grey cat native to and symbol of Korat.

The festival also brought the puppeteers to various schools for performances and workshops, as well as to stages set up within the shopping malls. It was heartening to see these edifices of consumerism transformed into community spaces, especially on Children's Day when they were packed with families engaged in art activities and watching the shows.

Organizers Nimit Pipitkul and Stephen Thomas (an American actor based in Bangkok, fluent in Thai) served as MCs for most of the events, bantering back and forth and providing simultaneous translation into English (a common language for most of the foreign performers) as they not only introduced the acts, but interviewed young performers about their work. They also took every opportunity to invite young audience members onstage to try out the puppets. These added interactions turned the presentations into opportunities for learning and exchange, further encouraging youngsters in the art. (Organizer Piewnam Chalermmyart worked equally hard behind the scenes

keeping everything running smoothly.) Several of the foreign companies, family troupes, featured their own children: Lunar Marionette Show highlighted 9-year old Eli, and Htwe Oo Myanmar Traditional Puppet Theatre teenagers Thet Thet Htwe Oo and Thet Paing Oo. Semathai Marionette has understood that, if puppetry as both a traditional and contemporary form of art is to flourish in Thailand, it must appeal to young people and help them see how it can become a path to personal expression. Youngsters seeing other young people perform and creating and presenting their own shows are central to this project.

The festival included a trip for the puppeteers to Phimai, an archeological site from the same era as Cambodia's Angkor Wat, with similar architectural remains. At the site museum the puppeteers exchanged puppetry techniques. My Puppet's master carver, Mr. Hsu, gave a detailed presentation of his carving process for his highly valued Pili figures. This program was followed by a magical evening of puppetry at the archeological site itself, the ancient towers and walls as backdrop.

Among the companies representing Thailand was Young Joe Louis, trained by the celebrated Joe Louis

Puppet Theatre, with a large-scale, dazzling spectacle combining dance and elegant bunraku-style puppets. As the adult company, temporarily displaced, currently only performs brief presentations at a restaurant in Bangkok, this was an amazing opportunity to see the full richness of the troupe's aesthetic executed by highly trained, young performers in exquisite costumes. Wat Ban Don, one of only three temples, along with Wat Sawang-arom and UNESCO heritage site Wat Khanon, that still houses traditional Thai *nang yai* (large shadow puppets) and supports performances, offered an energetic presentation of three scenes from the *Ramakien*. Each of these three remaining *nang yai* troupes relies on local youngsters as performers, leaving the continuation of the tradition in their hands. The youngest member of Wat Ban Don, Toto, age 7, who started performing at 4, is an inspirational standout, keeping up with his mostly teenage colleagues. *Nang yai* puppeteers hold the large, heavy, intricately cut figures high above their heads by two bamboo poles, often climbing on each other (using no hands) to place their figures, images from the *Ramakien*, into battle poses. Nohra Khelai Phrammet, its members



(LEFT) THET PAING Oo FROM HTWE OO PUPPETS OF MYANMAR, DEMONSTRATING MARIONETTE TECHNIQUE FOR THE ALCHEMIST FIGURE

(RIGHT) NOHRA KHLAI PHRAMMET





THE BASKET PUPPETS OF MOR LUM HUN DEK THEVADA

decked in glorious beaded outfits, combines graceful Nohra dance from Southern Thailand, whose roots lie in shamanic ritual, with a bunraku-style puppet wearing the same emblematic dress. Phuket Marionette, aiming to create another puppet hub in Phuket, brought their family company and an affiliated school group using a mix of homemade puppets. S. Subsansin Sith Ka Bk Khun Phung was one of several companies performing in the tradition of Thailand's *nan talung* or small shadow puppets, akin to Indonesia's *wayang kulit*, and gave a masterful comic performance with live music. Nimit Pipitkul feels that it is important for traditional, contemporary, and youth puppetry to come together under one umbrella.

The festival did an excellent job of creating a sense of community among the puppeteers, especially the foreign participants who ate, travelled, and watched each other's performances together. Thailand currently has no UNIMA chapter. Its puppeteers are in the process of defining how their puppetry community describes and constitutes itself. The Korat International Youth Puppet Festival celebrated the present and future of puppetry of every genre, inspiring and supporting the next generation of puppeteers.

Claudia Orenstein is a Professor in the Theatre Department, Hunter College, CUNY



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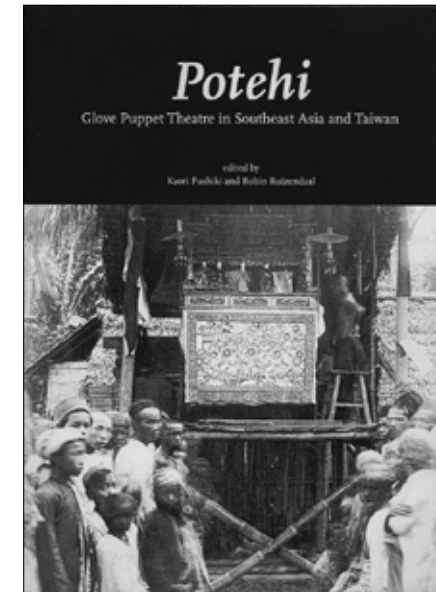
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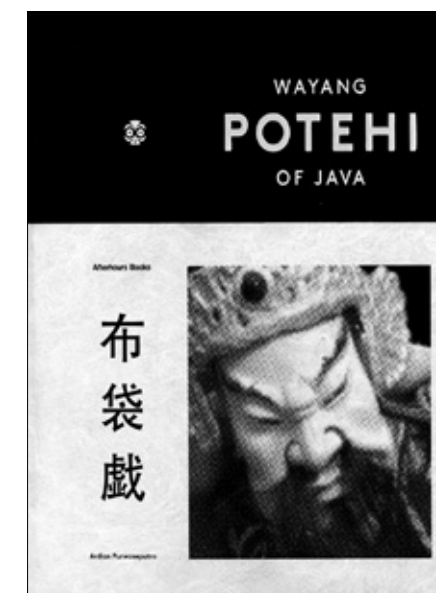
*Potehi: Glove Puppet Theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan*

Kaori Fushiki and Robin Ruizendaal, eds.  
Taipei, Taiwan: Taiyuan Publishing, 2016.

ISBN 978-986-7860-11-8

Paperback; 93pp (English)

[www.taipeipuppet.com](http://www.taipeipuppet.com); [admin@taipeipuppet.com](mailto:admin@taipeipuppet.com)



*Wayang Potehi of Java*

Ardian Purwoseputro

Jakarta, Indonesia: Afterhours Books, 2014.

ISBN 978-602-97507-9-9

Hardback; 289pp.

<https://afterhoursbookshop.com> and Amazon

China's long history of economic emigration resulted in the founding of expatriate communities around the globe. Along with religion and other cultural elements, the diaspora carried puppetry with it, which has been passed down to later generations. The most dominant genre has been the glove puppetry of southern Fujian province, now well established in Taiwan and in other parts of S.E. Asia. In *putonghua* (Mandarin Chinese), the form is called *budaixi*, but in the Hokkien dialect common in Fujian and Taiwan, it is pronounced *potehi*. While scholarship regarding regionalized *potehi* has previously appeared, several books and articles have been published in recent years that extensively document the history, evolution, and migration of *potehi* throughout SE Asia.

*Potehi: Glove Puppet Theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan* is a collection of essays that emerged from a 2014 international *potehi* research symposium in Tokyo. Published by Taipei's Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum, the bilingual volume (English and Chinese) is filled with both historic and contemporary images in a beautifully designed format. While the English section covers about 100 pages in total, the amount of material is equivalent to a special edition of an academic journal, and comprises an extremely thorough examination of its subject through the multiple perspectives of its authors.

One chapter focuses upon *potehi*'s origins and development in mainland China (Fujian province) and its spread to Taiwan, where it has become a source of great pride and a symbol of Taiwanese cultural identity. Written by co-editor and Taiyuan director Robin Ruizendaal, the chapter also provides an especially informative discussion of Taiwan's Golden Ray (*jinguang budaixi*) puppetry, which began in the 1950s and led to the development of the internationally successful television productions of Pili International (best known in the U.S.A. from the film *Legend of the Sacred Stone*). With characters drawn from popular, heroic stories rather than those of classical literature, early Golden Ray figures could often be identified by heads that were larger than those of their traditional cousins. Other authors look at *potehi* in Penang, Malaysia (Tan Sooi Beng); Singapore (Caroline Chia); Indonesia (Josh Stenberg); and the now-dormant tradition in Myanmar (Ma Si-yuan, with Ruizendaal), featuring material provided by its last practitioner. Co-editor Kaori Fushiki, who conceived of the project, wrote the introduction.

The book takes an essentially descriptive approach towards its subject, profiling companies and individual performers, training approaches, the character categories, acquisition methods, and creation of puppets, commonly staged narratives, associated religious rituals, and the musical aspects of performances. An interesting aspect of international *potehi* is the degree to which regionalized

versions reflect both their Chinese origins and localized adaptations. Introduced to new countries via performances that reflected classical models, they adapted to the needs of their local communities as well as to contemporary political and economic realities. The performances are still closely connected to their roots in temple performances. The survival of *potehi* within the diaspora is an ongoing issue, with some countries often only supporting a few companies. All in all, the volume provides both an excellent introduction to *potehi* as well as an in-depth examination of several of its most important regional expressions.

*Wayang Potehi of Java* presents a more focused study of Indonesia's own *potehi* tradition, located in eastern and central Java. References to Indonesian performances of *wayang Cina* predate the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author argues that these almost certainly referred to *potehi*, though the name later included Chinese-influenced shadow puppetry, which still exists today along with Chinese-derived string puppetry.

The realities of Indonesia's recent political history are reflected in the story of *wayang potehi*, originally performed as part of Buddhist temple ceremonies and festivals that served the Hokkien-speaking ethnic Chinese community. The culturally repressive practices of the Suharto era led to anti-Chinese demonstrations and a general suppression of Chinese-Indonesian culture (thought to be associated with disloyalty and communism). As a result, *wayang potehi* was banned between 1967 and 2000, with only sporadic temple performances taking place during that period, with most Hokkien dialect and Chinese symbols eliminated. Many ethnic Chinese *dalangs* left their professions, and in the 1980's, *wayang potehi* came to be primarily performed by *dalangs* who were both ethnically Javanese and Muslim – a fascinating development. Contemporary performances are now offered almost exclusively in Indonesian, with shorter sung and chanted sections presented in Hokkien, which audience members rarely understand. These texts must be written in romanized form, since the *dalangs* themselves do not read Hokkien. While traditional temple performances take place, with daily performances that can take a month or so to complete their stories, others have moved outside of the temples and can now be seen in secular venues such as hotels and shopping malls. But *wayang potehi* is still an endangered form; as of 2013, only three groups were performing.

The book's format is similar to that of an exhibition catalog, with about a third of its pages consisting of descriptive essays accompanied by historical photographic documentation. Major sections include the history and development of *wayang potehi*, contemporary performance contexts, profiles of carvers, and author/ photographer Ardian

Purwoseputro's photographic portfolios of their creations. Puppets were initially brought to Java from mainland China or Taiwan. A very small number of Javanese carvers now produce *potehi* figures based upon earlier models, though sometimes with localized design variations.

Purwoseputro points out that carvers frequently cannot identify the characters that they are carving; for that matter, the character names used in Java can be quite different than those used elsewhere. The book identifies the included figures and provides short character profiles as well, greatly adding to our understanding of *wayang potehi*'s narratives, which include standards such as *The Journey to the West*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *The Investiture of the Gods*.

An Indonesian-born citizen of Chinese descent, Purwoseputro's position is clearly that of an enthusiast; the book is a labor of love intended to increase awareness of the form. His research is extensive, based upon previously published articles, archival searches, and personal interviews.

While there is some overlap, the two books actually complement each other very well. Both books tell stories of individual troupes (performers, carvers and musicians), and the extensive lists of performers and their familial and professional lineages in *Wayang Potehi of Java* are likely to be of tremendous importance to researchers. Forms such as *potehi* continue to exist in our world because of heroic efforts by such practitioners to adapt, survive, and pass on knowledge to new generations while still maintaining their integrity in a modern mediated age. Attention must be paid, and thankfully books (and researchers) such as these do so.

—reviews by Bradford Clark,  
Bowling Green State University



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