

FALL and WINTER 2018 Issue #44

PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

the puppet in contemporary theatre, film & media



THE SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

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On the COVER:
Palestinians march with white bird in Ramallah
see page 14

Welcome to Puppetry International #44,

an issue full of articles about puppets and puppeteers who are working for social justice on many fronts. There are a few notable absences. Vermont's Bread & Puppet Theatre is well known for its work on behalf of the powerless. For this reason (among others), they have been included in many issues of PI, and we wanted to bring some new voices to this issue. We do, however, consider B & P's Peter and Elka Schumann the Godparents of socially conscious theatre in the modern age (post WWII).

Another group often seen in these pages is Dragon Dance Theatre, headed by Sam Kerson and his wife, Kata. These two (and the many others they have brought into their projects) have produced enormous works in Mexico, Central America

and elsewhere. Recently they have been working with refugees in Europe in a multi-year program called "Artist as Witness." You'll find more information at www.dragondancetheatre.wixsite.com/dragondancetheatre/artists-as-witness, and we will include this link on our website. Their work and their commitment to social justice is truly remarkable.

Not all of us can commit to traveling the world for social causes. But we can be witnesses through our own work, and we can educate ourselves to be rational and caring voices in a world benighted. We can – one act, one word at a time – reduce the polarization in our society that so often devolves into unproductive name-calling. "Change" is not a city on a hill. It's here and it's happening and you're just a page away from reading all about it.

a following, and it really is something to see these puppet characters out in a boat, motoring up a river through miles of wilderness, or hunting a moose.

The Bighetty brothers bring their puppets into communities all over the province, many of which are beset by problems of addiction, high rates of suicide or the remnants of trauma stemming from the cultural suppression common among indigenous tribes whose lands were appropriated. They don't call their work "performance," they call it "visiting." These "visits" have an impact. They make people laugh. They ease pain.

The brothers take their puppets into the woods and do "tobacco ceremony" regularly, occasionally smudging the figures as well; these are at once goofy puppets and sacred objects.

I met the Bighetty brothers at the Puppet Power Conference* in Calgary, Alberta, a weekend of workshops and talks and collaborative storytelling at which I was delivering the Keynote address. On Sunday, the "boys" were

or library. They costumed them as goofy looking northerners and each one was named and developed a personality of its own. But this is not a puppet company in the usual sense. Each of the Bighetty boys has one puppet, a sort of alter ego that they inhabit, and which allows them to occupy the realm of the fool and say whatever comes to mind. I soon noticed that the puppets all spoke with a lateral lisp, and I presumed this was a Cree way of speaking. "Actually," said Danny, "when one brother and a cousin were kids, they were taken down south where they had all their teeth pulled out. When they came back, they talked funny so we all started talking that way to make fun of them."

There is a kind of truth that is expressed through this stream of merciless teasing that has been their way since they were infants. Some time after they began using puppets, they started recording their interactions on cellphones and, eventually, one got uploaded to YouTube. They have developed quite

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.
- Elie Wiesel

I recently met the Bighetty Brothers

in Calgary, BC. They have long legs, these Bighetty boys, broad shoulders and round faces. Danny Bighetty's thick hair is gathered into a long, black braid that hangs halfway down his back and swings almost imperceptibly as he walks. He and two brothers and a cousin are Cree.

"They say we're really isolated, but to us it's just where we live," says Danny.

They are very noticeable, these big men in plaid shirts, who grew up hunting and fishing, hearing stories from the elders and, oddly, playing with puppets. To hear them tell it, though, it makes sense. "The only electricity in the village is from a diesel generator. When the fuel runs out, there isn't much to do but make up stories and play." Growing up together in this large tightly-knit family, the boys played together all the time.

"We played everything," says Danny. "We even played cowboys and Indians." And then he adds, "We only had one cowboy."

At some point they found some mouth-puppets in a local council house



BIGHETTY BROTHERS PUPPETS

gone all day. They returned late in the afternoon before our last meal together and got out their puppets.

"We drove out to the mountains," Danny said. These were the Canadian Rockies. "We climbed up a mountain. It was really beautiful."

"You told me we were going to shee the mountain," lisped a puppet. "You didn't shay we had to climb it. You lied to me."

"We had to do the ceremony."

"The hike was sho long I had to poop on the mountain."

"That's goin' out on YouTube."

"I wash really shorry to have to poop on the mountain."

Their brother, Russell, died the previous week. They needed to do a ceremony for his puppet. It had to be cleansed of his connection. They put tobacco on the ground and undressed the puppet. They needed a new name, a new costume and personality for it. There was an upwelling of empathy for these big men, these Bighetty men. And then Danny pulled his brother Russell's former puppet out of a bag. "Look – a naked puppet!" The pathetic looking little figure had fluffy stuffing popping out of a split seam in its crotch. The whole room erupted in laughter. Danny's timing was impeccable, and I felt deeply the power of these puppets to ease suffering.

Maybe we should have written about the Bighetty brothers in our "Puppets and Therapy" issue, but much of the trauma from which their indigenous brothers and sisters suffer are a result of having been displaced persons, stripped of their languages, having their children taken away and adopted out to the European population that now ruled. So when their "visits" have a therapeutic effect, it is social engagement, and when they perform for the white population and disarm us with their wit and deep humanity, perhaps they are moving us closer to social justice.

- Andrew Periale

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*The "Puppet Power Conference" happens every other year in Calgary, British Columbia, thanks to Wendy Passmore and WP Puppets:

wppuppet.com

THEODORA SKIPITARES'S TEXTUAL BODIES

by Felice Amato

There was something that absolutely caught hold of me and I just kept thinking about it and thinking about it and eventually it became *There's Blood at the Wedding*. Two years ago now (that would have been July 2016) was the day that Diamond Reynolds livestreamed the death of Philando Castile. I remember feeling that it was a watershed moment and that things would never be the same. And in a way, I guess, things are not the same. But I thought that, with that sort of shocking documentation, that there would be major changes across the country. She livestreamed it! There was the live spectacle of watching that which was unlike anything we had ever seen before. And her composure, her politeness, and her lucidity in the moment... and then the horrific reality of what was happening in that [same] moment just continued to stay with me.

(Skipitares, Personal Interview 22 June 2018)

Theodora Skipitares, American puppet artist, describes the inspiration for her most recent work, *There's Blood at the Wedding*. She has been responding theatrically to inhumanity since high school when her first impromptu public performances were staged. She has continued for the past thirty years to shift people's consciousness around social justice and other complex issues with a body of work characterized by her aesthetic sensitivity, innovative approaches to construction and manipulation, and irony. Skipitares could not stop thinking or speaking to people about Diamond Reynold's Facebook Live broadcast of the killing of her boyfriend Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota by police officer Jeronimo Yanez. So many things struck her about it, connecting to concerns she already had about lives ended as a result of police violence. In the piece, performed in May of 2018 at La Mama in New York, Castile's story, and others', intertwines with Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, which Skipitares was directing at the New School as this new piece "simmered below the surface" (Skipitares Personal Interview 22 June 2018). Weddings and love are at the center of several of the stories, linking them to the Lorca play, but also underscoring the way death disrupts the lifelines of all involved. Skipitares emphasizes this severing of love and of life by visually echoing Lorca's red wool yarn metaphor throughout the piece.

In *There's Blood at the Wedding*, the visage of Kadiatou Diallo, the mother of Amadou, floats ethereally above the scene of her son's killing, subtly animated through projection on fabric's shifting drape, she transcends materially as she delivers lines that transcend thematically: "If there is anything worse than taking away a man's life, it is taking away his story. Now we must open up the book." (Skipitares)

Bodies and stories—what more is there to puppetry, really? But there are myriad ways that the presence of a body—freed from an actor's corporeality—can be summoned by a puppet artist to tell a story. Skipitares tells these stories by layering text more than she does through action. Real dialogue from primary source material, facts, statements and more, allow the audience to understand how events are constructed, recorded, and easily forgotten. Juxtapositions with literature and history create echoes of injustices across space and time. Justice as a bodily issue is at the center of *There's Blood at the Wedding* and those who have been victims of police violence join the many other bodies Skipitares has addressed in her work: bodies poisoned by polluted water, women's bodies in reproductive labor, and bodies subjected to eugenics and bad medicine. The puppet bodies in her work become vessels of text; they contain it, carry it, and deliver it to us, sometimes spoken and sometimes sung. In this article, which comes out of several interviews with Skipitares over a few years, I explore the unique ways she asks audiences to listen and be present with her subjects while she brings their stories and bodies into the space, summoning them through a range of visual approaches.

In *There's Blood at the Wedding*, bodies are at times solidly present and, at other times, ethereally evoked, like the mother of Amadou Diallo and the other mothers of the dead. When examining Skipitares' dramaturgical and artistic decisions, one uncovers an intuitive logic with regard to materiality and it is through her sophisticated decisions about representation that she creates powerful and poetic interdisciplinary explorations. For example, in *There's Blood at the Wedding*, the allegorical and poetic figures taken from Lorca's work show up as a variety of folkloric puppets of various scales with bodies that exist firmly and even colorfully in space. In contrast,



"WHAT'S LEFT OF A MAN," *THERE'S BLOOD AT THE WEDDING* 2018 (WITH ALEXA JORDAN AND ERIC TAYLOR) PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

none of the deceased, the real victims of real violence in our country and time, have such corporeality. Neither Castile, Sandra Bland, or Eric Garner appear as puppets that can be animated like actors in a drama because they will not and cannot undergo a transformation during the play. They are not locatable as protagonists. Rather, they are lost and remain lost. They are pieced together during the performances for us through the use of flattened, frozen, iconic images from social media; projections, staged anecdotes and memories; objects that evoke their humanness; and bits of story and song. Castile, for example, is *fleshed out* for us through a collection of objects found in his car at the time of his shooting which are taken from a list Skipitares found published in a local newspaper after the investigation concluded and Yanez was found not guilty. We come to know Castile through his things that all point to *another* (another day, another dinner... work shirt, drawing for the refrigerator, and trip—maybe to the Black Hills). Skipitares is making memories for the audience and the sense of absence is palpable.

People's stories told in their own words form the basis of her playwriting and the lyrics written by Sxip Shirey, the composer and lyricist with whom she has worked with on several pieces. There is a faith in letting their actual words not just tell the stories—but also *shape* the work. In fact, she is touched and delighted that Shirey has inserted a personal note in the final lyrics he wrote for the song about Castile, singing at one point: "I don't know why but this is when I cried." She says, "He was completely documenting his composing process!" (Skipitares Personal Interview 22 June 2018)

Many have remarked about the text-driven nature of Skipitares' work both positively and, at times, critically.

Skipitares says, "I have received so much criticism about that. There are people that say, 'Don't use the puppet as a megaphone—as a microphone'" (Skipitares Personal Interview 28 February 2016). Rather than submit to *rules* about puppets, Skipitares has made these textual bodies a hallmark of her work in puppetry where "show don't tell" is a mantra.

Making this kind of work suits her. Skipitares is a scholar and a primary source treasure-hunter. For example, she was in residence at the University of Iowa in the 1990s and took advantage of their medical library, unearthing material from rare books:

I always begin with a broad and compelling subject—genetics, American invention, the twentieth-century city, women's prisons. The next step for me is library research, including special collections and archival material, and conversations with experts in the field. Then I go into the studio, where I explore the subject in a more tactile way, building puppet figures, objects, and environments.

(Skipitares *Under the Knife* 93)

While most of her research is done online now, her process is still similar:

I often think when I collect material it is like this big container, this big bucket that you put information in and often there will be images that go with that, images that I see or images that I make, it's the collection phase.

(Skipitares, Personal Interview 22 June, 2018)

Skipitares' work has made a unique contribution to puppetry and, in doing so, has changed the genre. Puppeteer and scholar, John Bell, includes Skipitares as one example of a new tradition of late twentieth century New York puppeteers who were thrust "de facto, into the world of puppet theater" because of their "desires to see their artworks move, speak, and transform themselves in performance." (Bell 97-98) In the rich cultural landscape of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, this spirit of rule-breaking made it possible for Skipitares to move from sculpture into performance art. Even as a performance artist, her work was always very heavily driven by elaborate sets, objects, costumes and masks as well as text and projection. Eventually, the sets and the objects began to come alive and she transitioned into "puppetry." She is still drawn to the challenges of structures and movement as well as aesthetics, as she looks for "containers" for the stories and ideas she has collected.

In the fall of 2017, Skipitares found the container for *There's Blood at the Wedding*. She was taking a class with book artist Robbin Silverberg and says, "As I was learning about different [book] structures, I would choose one of the people's lives I had researched and I would try to tell a story in that form. (Skipitares Personal Interview 22 June 2018) One could sense her excitement about the challenge of creating enormous "performing books":

There were different parts of the stories of each of [the people killed] that compelled me. For Philando it was the car itself where the incident happened and the odd space that the Facebook video gave you. I was very focused on the car while I was learning how to make a tunnel book and I thought that would be a physically interesting way of going *into* the car. The Philando book also had fact cards and a [separate] meander book that opens in several ways and had a lot more information.

(Skipitares, Personal Interview 22 June 2018)

The car is an eloquent example of Skipitares' sensitive inventiveness. She responds to the strange theatrical space of Castile's car from where Reynolds livestreamed the death, heightened by cyberspace's fish-eye curve. She takes advantage of the way a book can give the space architecture that shifts, opens, flattens, and layers information. The puppeteers carefully open the enormous car book and they inspect it, revealing the layers—figures and their emotions: Diamond despairing, her daughter withdrawing, and finally

Castille, dying, each frozen and flattened out, like our recall of the event. From the car, the puppeteers take the objects from Castille's list of personal effects and begin to suspend them, exposed to scrutiny, from red cords like Lorca's red wool yarn.

The organized group of mothers of the victims that have taken on activist roles around police violence reminded Skipitares of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina as well as the mothers in Lorca's plays. She gives them voice throughout, including a song based on a Facebook post made by Castile's mother after the verdict:

There was a circle of mothers that met and went to meetings together. They were eloquent representatives for their children... The mothers I got to know... they were fighters and organized and they knew this struggle would be with them for the rest of their lives.... I asked [Sxip Shirey] to write a protest song based on the language of the mothers. I collected all the things these mothers had said (two to three pages) and he worked off of documentary material.

(Skipitares, Personal Interview 22 June 2018)

Skipitares is a reflective practitioner who struggles to meet all the challenges she lays out for herself as a politically engaged and ethically committed artist while creating aesthetically beautiful pieces that push and expand the possibilities of contemporary puppetry:

When I collect all this material and think about how I am going to animate it for a live performance, there is a struggle to reach – or a *hope* to reach – an expression which possibly has metaphor and something larger than the literalness of the material and I think that is an area where I feel challenged a lot and where I would like to develop more and where I sometimes fall short. And that is keeping the documentary material still bound in its literal way and yet expand it for some sort of larger resonance.

(Skipitares, Personal Interview 22 June 2018)

DR. FELICE AMATO, an artist and educator, is an assistant professor of art education at Boston University.



LORCA MOTHER AND SON, *THERE'S BLOOD AT THE WEDDING* 2018, WITH CHRIS IGNACIO AND JANE CATHERINE SHAW PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

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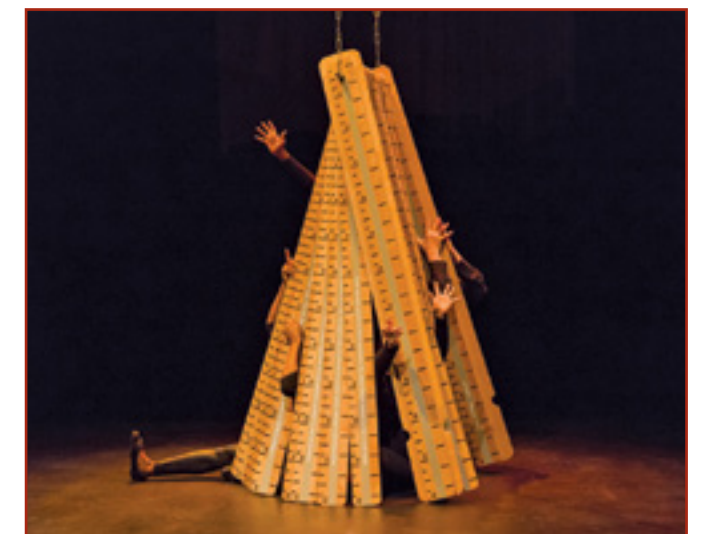
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"THE BOOK OF AMADOU DIALLO," *THERE'S BLOOD AT THE WEDDING* 2018 PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

PLAYING THE REFUGEE GAME WITH SANDGLASS THEATER

by Andrew Periale

In the winter 2018 issue of *The Puppetry Journal* (vol. 69, no. 1), I wrote a review of Sandglass Theater's *Babylon* (page 22, "Babylon"), an exploration of the plight of refugees, and the challenges they face when attempting to settle in the United States. Though the performance I saw was presented as a "work in progress," it was already an extremely compelling production, created in ensemble and based on many conversations with new US residents (facilitated by the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, or VRRP). My assessment at the time was that this was a show that needed to be seen by everyone, as it raised awareness of a massive challenge to countries all over the world. Since its premier, it has developed into a more encompassing program in which there is no longer merely an audience – everyone participates. When we talk about refugees, we need to realize that we are not discussing a "them," we are talking about OUR neighbors, OUR family.

There are a number of things that might cause people to leave their homes: War and political instability, ethnic cleansing, extreme poverty, ecological disaster – but the effects are the same: misery, poverty, exploitation, prolonged homelessness and fences. Especially fences, whether of the physical or political sort, erected to let the displaced know without a doubt: WE are in, and YOU are out. There isn't space here to get into every aspect of the problem of displaced populations worldwide, so let's just look at the people represented in *Babylon*. There are seven refugees, five of whom are from Syria, Afghanistan, El Salvador and Burundi. None of these accounts were biographical; They were composites arrived at through many meetings with resettled refugees who, over time, came to know and trust the artists and gradually shared their stories. Nonetheless, the characters represented a range of people facing a range of challenges. We recognize the causes, and the painful effects, as these stories have a very "ripped from the headlines" feel to them. Another topic that has been very current in contemporary art making is this: Is this my story to tell? Whatever one may think of "cultural appropriation," it is a question we need to ask ourselves, and Sandglass certainly did. Director Eric Bass says: "If we invest in the arms that have impacted the conflicts that have caused displacement, racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, then, yes, to that extent it is our story, too."



ENSEMBLE MEMBER KEILA K. CHING

Sandglass, which was founded by Bass and Ines Zeller in Germany, has now been in Vermont for over thirty years and their productions have often dealt with the subjects of antisemitism, community and inclusivity. For this production they formed a new ensemble, intentionally diverse. The cast members themselves have had the experience of hitting those fences that separate the insiders from "others." Because all the cast members were involved in creating the play, the resulting work necessarily reflects their own challenges and priorities, a fact that certainly added to the production's power. They sang as an ensemble, the puppets were manipulated on tabletops or in relation to several units of fencing with the puppeteer/actors in plain sight.

A great deal has changed in the year or so since opening night. "The fences are gone," said Eric in a recent conversation I had with him and Shoshana (Babylon cast member and daughter of Eric and Ines). There is now a lot more consciousness of the puppets *as* puppets, and less focus on the personalities they represent. This was a result of things they learned from performing the piece. They began asking: "Where did the refugees come from, and what did they leave behind that they wouldn't have left if they hadn't been forced out? The Afghan woman, for instance, takes a fifty-pound bag of flour with her – she is the nurturer, she feeds people. One thing that they noticed was that, if the texts are spoken by refugees, then the argument against refugees instantly becomes cynical. I took this to mean that for the audience to be placed in this position could be seen as adversarial and therefore alienating. To be inclusive – to bring audience members in despite their diverse opinions on the matter – arguments were always spoken by someone other than the puppet. The focus of the action is always the puppets, who do not speak. Only at the very end

does the puppet representing the Syrian man speak. He speaks in English, and we learn, among other things, that he has a master's degree. It challenges our preconceptions and, coming at the end of the play, makes us re-examine everything we have seen up to that point.

The major change, though, is that Sandglass no longer envisions booking this as a performance, but as a portion of a week-long residency. One of the main activities in the residency is "The Game of Refugee Resettlement." This is a board game, developed at first by VRRP's Laurie Stavrand. She hadn't quite finished it, so Sandglass Theater member Jana Zeller redesigned it. Cast members were trained as facilitators and further refined it. There was a prolonged back-and-forth between members of Sandglass Theater and the VRRP to develop the ideas. It works like this: the game lasts 45 minutes. There are five games going at once, and at each table there are four players and a facilitator. Participants become refugees trying to get asylum and be resettled. Cast members have said that it is more intense to play the game than it is to do the performance, because in the game only one person gets on the airplane at the

end, and sometimes not even that. The game is followed by a "talk back" – there are no observers, everyone participates; It helps people get more deeply into the show and allows the performance to resonate more deeply and for a longer period of time.

"The process of devising Babylon," said Eric, "was a process of becoming comfortable talking about race – all of us, not just the white people in the cast – and how to not tokenize (none of us speaks for 'our people')." It's been a great training ground for the cast. They also went through a process called Conflict Transformation training.

The ultimate question of *Babylon* is: What if it were me? Telling these stories forces us to engage and see the refugees as individuals. Because the actors remain witnesses, the puppets become empty vessels that audience members can fill with their own "what if it were me." The show, the game: this is the sort of social engagement that no longer has me simply saying, "See this show," but, "Come to the table."

See a video of selected scenes at sandglasstheater.org/babylon





PUPPETRY INTERVENTIONS

by Linda C. Ehrlich

Paperhand Puppet Intervention performances present the everyday and the unexpected, the familiar and strange. Now in its 18th year, PHPI uses stilt dancing, large masks, shadow puppets and a wide range of other objects made mostly from found materials to create “pageant-play-extravaganzas.” Each summer production, for all ages, features an original story and musical score. Current years have drawn up to 16,000 audience members to productions in several (outdoor) venues in the Triangle and Triad areas. In 2017 they won a “Best of the Triangle” award.

Their studio is housed in the beautifully remote town of Saxapahaw, NC, 19 miles west of Chapel Hill, nestled in row after row of white pine trees. When you enter the area, you feel that magic is about to happen.

And indeed it does.

In their human-scale, but also larger-than-life, productions, the Paperhand stories move from an everyday focus to wide-scale wonder. As one of the directors, Jan Burger puts it: “We want the performances to not be too scary for a three-year-old but also engage a ninety-year-old.”

At age nineteen, one of the PHPI founders, Donovan Zimmerman, saw a performance of Bread and Puppet Theatre in Vermont, and never looked back. Donovan describes himself as a “maximalist puppeteer and maker who believes in trying.”

“We are all grandchildren of Bread and Puppet,” the other founder, Jan Burger, reminds. He notes that many puppetry troupes (like Paperhand) are known locally but not nationally. Jan describes his work as that of an “activist/

artist” to contribute to causes in a visually positive way. In his words: “Performing live for people is a form of activism.” In addition to his work for Paperhand, Jan sometimes makes banners and puppets that he takes to the streets with activist groups around the country, such as the Peoples’ Climate March in D.C., the NC Climate Justice Summit, or the 1999 Seattle puppet convergence protesting the World Trade Organization. He is interested in creating a show that deals with issues local to North Carolina, like those related to Duke Energy and climate justice.

In its first venture overseas, the troupe has also conducted workshops in the Virgin Islands, thanks to Department of Education support.

The name? A lot of the puppets are papier mâché and the emphasis is on the handmade rather than the mass-produced. And “Intervention”? This part of the name was inspired by San Francisco’s Wise Fool Puppet Intervention troupe. It is a “heads up” that the puppet performance will be surprising and “intervene” between what is expected and something new. Donovan explains: “I thought of a giant papier-mâché hand reaching down from a cardboard cloud and tapping (or slapping) someone on the head and saying, wake up! Our work is a call to action not just an entertainment.”

Paperhand productions focus on environmental protection, the corruption of politicians, and those stories are often told through the lens of ancient myths and legends. In PHPI productions, there doesn’t tend to be any purely Evil character (although there are certainly ones depicted as buffoons and obstacles).

PERFORMANCE SITES AND DATES

The Forest Theatre (an outdoor amphitheatre) on the University of North Carolina campus is what Donovan describes as “an elemental space” that connects the community of viewers. Donovan and Jan prefer to hold their performances outside to take advantage of the shadows during twilight and then as darkness descends. Utilizing the growing darkness, shadow puppets are often brought in near the end of the performance.

Each summer pageant involves about 30 performers (puppeteers and musicians) while 100-150 people help to build the shows. A group of children have grown up with the company, changing their roles as they grow larger. Rehearsals tend to start in mid-June in preparation for a launch of performances from August 1. As the 2009 documentary *A Puppet Intervention* (dir. Mark Barroso) reveals, a lot happens at the last minute!

To point out the “intervention” aspect, I’ll highlight three PHPI productions:

ISLANDS UNKNOWN (2010)

Paperhand’s 11th production offers the intriguing juxtaposition of a room full of books, a whimsical little girl with knee socks searching for her own story, and an elusive, bespectacled goat eating through the delicious paper. We sense the sheer magic of what it feels like to open the pages of a book and enter into a story. Hungry caterpillars, pirates, furies, and a series of islands populate this library stage. The little girl opens one book and figures from Picasso’s recreation of the horrors of aerial bombing, the painting *Guernica*, explode onto the stage.

As the little girl and the goat journey (on stage) in their small boat, they encounter islands of wealthy politicians who fight off islands of pirates (stealing from each other). Fortunately they also come to more peaceful islands where leaves grow out of large mountains, lit from within with a soft golden glow.

Particularly inventive is Chapter 5 (this play has chapters like a book) entitled “The City with no Past” in

which amoeba-like creatures inhabit a city with no history or memory. A Cyclops creature (reminiscent of “No Face” in Miyazaki Hayao’s animated film *Spirited Away*) wanders the town, always isolated, desirous and hungry. In exasperation, the girl utters one word: “Enough!”.

“Enough!” is a message that permeates all of the Paperhand productions over the years.

The little girl’s (now solo) journey continues. In Chapter 6, gyres filled with plastic clog the suffering ocean that weeps black tears (“new continents made of trash”). But the magical ending of *Islands Unknown* shows “broken pieces of a fragmented world” coming together. Here’s how Jan describes the process:

Our amazing engineer Chris Carter built an icosahedron (a 20-sided object made of beveled wooden triangles stretched with fabric) that comes together with magnets. We painted it like the earth and had to rehearse over and over again (in gale force winds because the next day was opening night and we hadn’t gotten it to work yet.) When it finally did come together it was a graceful dance that ended with the final piece snapping into place. That last piece triggered a contact switch that lit up the glowing earth from within, which we carried up through the audience in the darkness.



WITCH FROM *CITY OF FROGS*, 2012 PHOTO: LEE CAPPS

GOAT IN A BOAT ON A SEA OF INFORMATION FROM *ISLANDS UNKNOWN*, 2010 PHOTO: LEE CAPPS

THE BEAUTIFUL BEAST (2016)

At the beginning of *The Beautiful Beast*, the off-stage narrator asks “Who are the most frightening creatures?” The answer: not the slimy green-tentacle one under the bed nor the jelly-fish-like “Wumpaflump” made of discarded plastic bags. Rather, the most frightening creatures are the politicians with oversized head masks and one pointing finger who do harm to the world through their greed.

The second piece in *The Beautiful Beasts* reinvents the Gilgamesh legend as a plea for environmental protection. The fearsome Humbaba of the legend is reinterpreted as a positive force, a protector of the sacred cedar forest. (Humbaba is created as a large head puppet with two long extending fabric arms maneuvered by puppeteers behind trees.) Weary Humbaba’s efforts are in vain as Gilgamesh and his friend, the beast-man Enkidu, sunder the trees from the earth and chop Humbaba into pieces on stage—a scene with a surprisingly visceral effect.

The coda of this play is also magical as a young girl decides to spend a night in the woods (projected as a silhouette landscape à la Lotte Reiniger). There she meets La Loba (Wolf Woman, akin to Baba Yaga) searching for wolf bones. As the elderly woman works through the night assembling bones, there is an impressive simulation on stage of the light and sounds of a fire. Particularly wonderful is the moment when the girl finds the last missing wolf bone and a skillful puppeteer makes the skeleton of a wolf move, morphing into a pack of wolves with shiny, hypnotic eyes. To even greater effect, a gigantic puppet of the Cosmic Mother (enormous head, two expressive hands, and a glowing core) moves majestically through the audience. The message of reverence for the environment is powerfully projected into the now pitch-black night. The offstage narrator tells us:

Our stories help us find each other when we are lost...When we tell our stories, the world grows larger.

OF WINGS AND FEET (2017)

Of Wings and Feet is an exploration of “bird-ness,” with delicately prancing flamingoes, small brown birds learning to fly, and two monumental turtles (each manipulated by two people) who caress each other’s neck (constructed of stretchy cloth). Donovan explains: “The wings are symbols of freedom, but also possibly are weighted down and heavy.” *Of Wings and Feet* has three main sections I would categorize as: (1) pageantry, (2) the carnivalesque, and (3) the transcendental.

On the cover of the program of *Of Wings and Feet*, there is a quotation by Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Rise like lions after slumber...” The poetic phrase goes on to remind us that “We are many—they are few!”

Outrage at greedy environmental destruction seeps through the seemingly light-hearted second part of *Of Wings and Feet*. A bloated Trump-masked man marches petulantly across the stage, muttering to himself. He acts as a foil, messing up the joy of the circus. Self-important business people stamp around on stage with boxes on their heads. “There were a few noisy departures in the audience after the Trump puppet exited,” intern Kelly Washtaka noted, thinking back to the 2017 season. An older couple sitting next to me in the N.C. Museum of Art amphitheatre made a hasty departure when the Big Business puppet started to “buy out” the stilt-walking Statue of Liberty. (No words are spoken on stage in this second part, but there are written words on cloth, which are read aloud by the audience.) One of the many traditions Paperhand draws on is the street theatre tradition of *cantastoria*, where a “story-singer” tells a story while gesturing to a series of images. Sometimes the Paperhand performances include moments that remind me of the Japanese *kami-shibai* (where stories are told to changing pictures that slide in and out of a frame).

As the night deepens, the deep “exhalation” of the third part of the performance lingered most in my mind. Giant puppets rise up and come out to the audience, in slow, dreamlike movements. Father Sky towers over the low-lying Ocean (reminiscent of Brancusi’s sculpture “Sleeping Muse”).

One reason Kelly Washatka decided to join as an intern with Paperhand was because it seemed a “politically poignant time,” with the U.S. elections having just taken place. She knew the PHPI takes a strong stand for the protection of the environment and against the greed of narrow-minded politicians. “It did not disappoint.” Kelly recalls rapturously being in the back of the giant glow-turtle in the final scene.

STORYWRITING

Donovan and Jan start the scenario writing around January. In general, they stay away from depicting violence, cursing, and sex in their scenarios, but they don’t hesitate to take on tough political/environmental themes or unresolved paradoxes. The two men toss ideas back and forth, talking over a sketchbook, writing and drawing at the same time. “Sometimes we never agree and one of us just gives up!” Donovan murmured, with a shrug.

MUSIC

The music “brings the puppets to life...almost as if the music were causing the puppets into being” (Donovan). Multi-instrumental, multi-vocal musicians also assume the voices of some of the puppets. These ever-busy musicians “change hats” with remarkable facility, and with an obvious enjoyment of the challenge. Many come back year after year.

“Why puppets?” I asked Jan when we met in the café in quiet Saxapahaw. “Their physicality, they are made by human hands,” he replied. “The act of bringing something to life as a physical manifestation of our intentions...For a child, a puppet is no more surprising than a dog, but for an adult, it sets up a conundrum. A new space is created.” Jan went on to comment: “The empathy viewers feel watching the animal-puppets goes beyond a Disneyesque anthropomorphizing of animals.” In the documentary, we see a wondrous moment when scores of children reach up their hands to touch the head of a large cow-like beast puppet that is dipping down to them in the audience. As he was helping to



OWLS FROM *DROP IN THE BUCKET* 2015 PHOTO: LEE CAPPS

manipulate that large puppet, Donovan recalls feeling tearful when one little Indian girl approached the beast with hands folded in prayer.

Since 1998, Paperhand Puppet Intervention has used giant puppets, stilts, painted flats, shadow and rod puppets to create works that (to me) offer a synergy of Brecht and the Marx Brothers, with considerable seriousness mixed with whimsy. Radical Puppetry for all ages.

Thanks to Donovan Zimmerman, Jan Burger, Kelly Washatka, Alan and Jill Goldman, and Ryan Chamberlain of the Chapel Hill Public Library. For more information, go to www.paperhand.org

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<http://braidednarrative.com>



THE RAT FROM *THE PAINTED BIRD*, 2014 PHOTO: JOSH GIRA

PLAYING WITH DOLLS IN THE WEST BANK

text and photos by Clare Dolan

I am a puppeteer, but I also work as a nurse in the intensive care unit of the small regional hospital that serves my corner of northeastern rural Vermont. I know that there's a generally accepted belief among many of my art-making colleagues about the power of art to shape culture, and culture to catalyze political change—the kind of change that “saves lives”—but as a nurse I have developed a practical understanding of what kinds of things save lives, and this makes me skeptical of assertions about the importance of art to the nuts-and-bolts survival of the human race. I find I am continually needing to convince and re-convince myself of the potency of art-making and puppetry against the crushing mechanisms of political power. For me, making things, particularly ethereal things like performance, and foolish things like puppet shows, feels intimate and personal – a way of thinking through a problem or communicating a feeling or reacting to a circumstance that I encounter – rather than a practical tool for real social change.



But as a veteran of the Bread & Puppet Theater, having spent the better part of my 20s and 30s performing with the company in political street parades, demonstrations, politically-themed pageants, circuses and puppet shows, I am often asked about the relationship between art and activism, the role of puppet theater in the struggle for social justice. “Why bread?” “Why political theater?” “Why puppets?” are the all too familiar questions asked by many a journalist, eager young theater student, not-quite-convinced activist or friend of a friend's mother. Why indeed. What can a puppet show do for a cause? What does a papier mâché tiger or horse, a giant washer woman, or a fabric boat have to do with the hard work of fighting an unjust law, unmasking a racist institution, exposing a corrupt legal system or dismantling a misinformed, ignorant set of beliefs? How do objects speak to people, and how can interaction with this certain kind of object – a puppet – alter human experience and create change? Over the years I have been forced to think into and around these questions again and again, but nowhere has the relevance of the serious and not-so-serious art of puppetry to real problems of social justice so thoroughly come under scrutiny than the times I have been involved in puppetry projects in the West Bank.

I've worked in Palestine three times in the past 11 years, each time as a representative of the Bread & Puppet Theater, each time with my B & P colleague, Genevieve Yeullaz, a French actress who lives in Paris, but who has had a long and deep working relationship with Bread & Puppet since 1976. The first time we worked together in Palestine, in 2007, we were assisting Bread & Puppet Founder and Director Peter Schumann, who had been invited by Ramallah's Ashtar Theater for Training and Performance to build and direct an original outdoor puppet show with Ashtar's company of actors and theater artists. The second time, in 2009, we returned alone, to build puppets and create a parade with arts academy students for the Festival of Arab Culture taking place in Jerusalem and Ramallah. In 2014 we returned again, to work in Beit Sahour in collaboration with the activist group Combatants for Peace, to build puppets for use in demonstrations and create a parade/street action in a town near the separation wall.

The West Bank is, obviously, a complicated place, and the first time we went there so many basic things took time to understand—the strange web of restricted highways surrounded by high cement walls and chain link fences twisting between settlements and cities, on which only people with certain IDs are allowed to drive; the network of small roads and byways that snake under and around these highways that the rest of the population must



RAMALLAH WORKSHOP 2009, CANTA 7

use; the checkpoints that turn what should be a 15 minute drive into a half day commute; the featureless cement separation wall, winding its way across the landscape, slicing towns in half and cleaving farmers from their fields; the exigencies of a state in which a man could wave to his brother's family living in the apartment building within sight across the street on the opposite side of the Wall, but could not walk across the way to meet and hold his new nephew. I was struck by the contrasts: olive groves and garbage dumps, the

empty, dusty hills in the distance against the construction cranes everywhere in Ramallah, breaking up the sky. Gradually these “contrasts” resolved themselves more clearly as symptoms of a fractured, multi-layered reality – different sets of rules and probabilities applying to different sets of people in the same space, every street, every building, every field, each rocky hill containing within itself multiple names and multiple meanings and histories. How to navigate creative collaborations in this situation?

CLARE DOLAN is a director, painter and performer of cantastoria, toy theater, outdoor puppet pageantry and stilt dancing, and is the founder and director of the Museum of Everyday Life (www.museumofeverydaylife.org) while simultaneously living a secret double life as a nurse in a small Vermont town.

To read the entirety of Clare Dolan's moving article on her experiences working in the West Bank – and more photos – visit our website: www.unimaUSA.org

ATTENDING TO THE “ILLUSION OF LIFE”: REIMAGINING MEDICINE THROUGH THE ART OF PUPPETRY PRACTICE

by Marina Tsaplina, Jules Odendahl-James and Torry Bend

The pedagogy of suffering is my antidote to administrative systems that cannot take suffering into account because they are abstracted from the needs of bodies. When the body’s vulnerability and pain are kept in the foreground, a new social ethic is required.

—Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller* (146)

Puppetry is defined as the manipulation and animation of an object to create the illusion of life.

—UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette)

The profound questions of life and death that the experience of illness calls to the surface are unable to be understood through the language of biology and capitalism. This is the work of Art and the Humanities, and puppetry and theater artists have an active role to play.

Medicine in the United States is in crisis. There is an epidemic of physician burnout, with 46% of physicians reporting “a physical or mental collapse due to overwork or stress.”¹ “Physician heal thyself” has never taken on a more relevant and necessary cry for the safety of patients and the profession as a whole.² American healthcare continues to be plagued by entrenched racial, gender, and economic inequity. Doctors (a majority male³ and white⁴) sit at the top of the organizational pyramid, with the remaining members of a healthcare team (e.g., nurses, social workers, physician’s assistants, and a host of other professionals) not to mention the persons-in-care marginalized in their authority. In response, patient and disability communities over the past three decades have organized their voice: strengthening the assertion of one’s own agency in the lived experience of illness⁵.



PHOTOS: ROBERT ZIMMERMAN AND BEN SHEPARD

Yet can we ask individuals to heal themselves in a system that doesn’t create conditions for flourishing? There is an overarching crisis that impacts all the multifaceted layers of twenty-first century healthcare: the *erasure* of healthcare provider, caregiver, and patient bodies and voices. The for-profit healthcare industry reduces human beings to biological entities, legal liabilities, dollar signs, and administrative burdens. Physicians, despite their “top of the food chain” status, have become figureheads, their agency constrained by bureaucracy and the “technologization” of medicine’s delivery. Bodies-in-care and diseases become objects to be examined, contained, and categorized according to insurance coding. Additionally, medical education shapes future healthcare providers through engagement with the hard sciences predominantly if not exclusively, forming a mechanical view of the body.

In the summer of 2018, the authors created a ten session module titled, “Puppetry and Embodied Imagination” for pre-health undergraduate students at Duke University as part of a new program: Reimagining Medicine. As home to one of the top ten medical schools in the United States, half of Duke’s incoming undergraduate class plan to pursue pre-health coursework.

The brainchild of pediatric oncologist and writer Dr. Raymond Barfield, Reimagining Medicine’s goals are to foster the strength of character, practices, and philosophical foundations needed to work in contexts of human suffering, loss, and death.

The centrality of the arts to this endeavor is exemplified by Dr. Barfield’s collaboration with puppetry artist and patient activist Marina Tsaplina in the formation of the program. Inclusion of puppetry was the central vehicle for exploring not just creative imagination or storytelling but embodiment itself, embodiment as evolving and



collaborative within the contexts of the experience, diagnosis, and treatment of illness.

We engaged in a discovery of how puppetry’s practices cultivate **presence, attention, and imagination.** These three dimensions engage future healthcare providers in a practice that holds healing at its core. These dimensions are being extinguished in healthcare, leading to the vocational crisis and violations of human dignity cited at the opening of this article.

FORM AS CONTENT

Creating the “illusion of life” in puppetry demands a contract between puppeteer and audience. A puppet is a material site of pure imagination, where the artist sets up the rules of play in anticipation of an audience’s recognition of the object’s behavior, its “life.” When the illusion is successful, the “object” becomes a “subject” that is able to hold and expand the audience’s relationship to it. It is this identification that leads to responses of profound beauty, sorrow, laughter, and joy in puppet theater. When its poetic capabilities are invoked over narrative specificity, the same story can hold multiple interpretations.

We found three purposes in the limited medical scholarly literature⁶ on puppetry’s use in healthcare:

1. to convey health or medication information to *patients*;
2. to teach empathy or interpersonal skills to healthcare *professionals* or *students* or

3. to fill in representational gaps, particularly about individuals with disabilities, in the telling of stories about illness for patient groups and the larger public.

Such materials detail a use of puppets within medical contexts focused on messaging and explanation – the “illusion of life” provided by the puppet/object strives for shared meaning and purpose above all. Puppetry in medicine effectively includes bodies and stories too often left out of diagnostic narratives.

However, as puppetry artists/scholars Purcell-Gates and Fisher argue, “puppets, as bodies that are materially constructed, can both reinforce and rupture [cultural] constructions [of the disabled body].”⁷ Similarly, we were resolute in our conviction that we should not offer the predominantly able-bodied students of Reimagining Medicine an “illusion” of a life of illness, where the object/puppet is a mechanism by which to perform disability. Instead, we hypothesized that focusing on puppetry’s *intrinsic construction* of the illusion of life, essentially peeling back the layers of the art form itself, would offer ways to perceive *body* and *being* as a *process*. Instead of a puppet being directly representational of “patient with condition X,” we asked students to engage with a body/being on its own terms. This brought into question fundamental notions of what it means to be a body in the world at all.

Such a hypothesis required us to articulate the dimensions of an “illusion of life” within the clinical encounter. In that context, the person-in-care possesses a life that has been disrupted or complicated by medical need. Within the doctor’s visit there is a similar artist/audience contract being negotiated between patient and physician where the question arises: Who sets the boundaries of this world?

Medical sociologist Arthur Frank argues the testimony of the patient is not simply an account of the things that are happening/have happened, e.g. a report of unquenchable thirst, which may be a symptom of elevated blood sugar in diabetes. Rather, illness stories are told by “witnesses [who] are what they testify.”⁸ Illness stories are stories *of being* as well as stories *about being*. Similarly in puppetry, one must negotiate *material objects* in tactile ways that offer a unique realm of experience. Objects have their own demands. The process of puppet/object manipulation offers a kind of direct access to the struggle over definition and being present in the clinical encounter. The goal is for all members to arrive at a shared definition of the patients’ lived conditions based on representations of symptoms, “illusions of life.”

POETIC BODY

We did not begin our unit with puppets, but with the students’ own bodies. The cumulative eighteen-hour workshop series wove together a tapestry of exercises pulled from diverse theatrical pedagogies that hold the body at the center: Margolis Method, Linklater, Pochinko Clown, Action Theater Improvisation, and Sandglass Theater.

The assertion was that presence and attention are *vehicles* of imagination that cultivate an awareness of personal embodiment through which students begin understanding the story (the

testimony) of their own bodies and the bodies of others. The work focused on practices in relation and tension within self and between self and others, locating imagination within and through the body: the body personal and collective, human and puppet, social and historic.

After three and a half days of embodied practice, we introduced simple foam-ball-and-rod puppets, modeled off the training forms of Sandglass Theater. The students’ practice was to stay in breath and connection with this object, as they worked their imaginative reach to “see” through it and find its response to stimuli. A simple *story-pattern* was offered: Enter, breathe, see something, respond, exit.

Puppetry as a form renders presence palpably visible: there is no hiding. Those students who struggled the most to come into presence and connect to their own bodies treated the puppets as mere sticks with balls, passing quickly through a rather mechanized enactment of the story-pattern. Others created more elaborate scenarios, eager to evoke the amusement of the audience. They were steered back to breath by the directive “build with more attention not action.”

We then introduced a series of multi-person puppets, with leather snap-joints based on the design of Hansjürgen Fetting. Finding the new realities that emerged from switching puppet body parts illuminated the nature of illness/disability, asking each group of “puppeteers” to find the forms’ new ground of being, questioning the idea of “normal” and “baseline.” The use of snap-joints was not an anatomical “trick” but rather exposed anatomical function. The healthy body is presumed given and transparent, until it somehow doesn’t “work” anymore, and its constructs become visible. Thus the “story” became moving from one set of coherences to another, finding the life of this amalgamation of forms.

One set of these snap-joint puppets came from the students own visualizations, following a movement-meditation that generated imagery that emerged from the body. These visualizations were built by Torry Bend and Marina Tsaplina into a collection of *design-gestures*: individual puppet body parts that were then composed into four puppets. This now brought the personal imagined experience each student had into palpable form that existed in relationship with other students’ embodied imaginations. These puppets became negotiations of a collective imagination, pushing and pulling individual meaning into a coherent whole that, because of the presence of the snap-joints, always carried the possibility of being disrupted again.

(W)HOLISTIC MEDICINE

Each clinical encounter requires delicate negotiations over the definition of reality, between what a healthcare professional tells the person-in-care about condition X, and what that person understands and experiences of condition X. This *negotiation* between the person-in-care and the physician becomes newly visible in puppetry. For Reimagining Medicine, it is this more complex understanding of illness that is productive for pre-health students. In our puppetry unit, the scientific materiality of the body that students learn through chemistry and biology is now met with metaphoric understanding. Breath/vocal work, clowning exercises, and puppetry work (albeit nascent) cultivate poetic materiality, an integration of how breath, body, voice, emotion, thought and imagination create meaning. This new perspective on materiality was not necessarily in the service of a medical narrative (e.g. using puppets to enact stories of empathy between doctor and patient). Instead, we used puppetry to emphasize structures of being (alone and in relation) that were abstract and

fragile even in their uncompromising *materiality*. We pressed students to ask: What is in this object in front of me? How does it want to move and be? The goal was to illuminate the unique ways objects speak and negotiate through their own physical demands, beyond language, making manifest dynamics that are found in clinical encounters.

We asked students to focus on embodiment *stripped* of overt healthcare context. The puppets didn’t have wheelchairs or IV tubes; these were not overtly suffering bodies. Instead, students spent time considering their own involuntary and voluntary breath, producing collective action without words, and moving a puppet “body” from one place to another, manipulating that object outside of but in concert with their own bodies. These practices offered them an incremental, iterative consciousness of being a body in the world. They did not engage objects to tell stories *about* being but to create a coming *into* being. A critical intervention in healthcare delivery with social justice at its foundation is this: fostering a cultivated attention to the human being in front of you as the human being that you are.

The practice of a disembodied medicine has produced a crisis in twenty-first century healthcare. Our focus on puppetry and physical theater *practice* as medical humanities research technique is unique to Reimagining Medicine. In the closing circle of our sessions, one student said: “What I am carrying away with me is that wholeness does not mean there is no brokenness.” We are encouraged that such a consciousness in a prospective physician marks our work’s potential to heal some of the personal, social, and civic fractures in the body of medicine.

MARINA TSAPLINA is a puppetry artist and scholar working in the field of the medical/health humanities. She is an Associate of the Trent Center for Bioethics, Humanities and History of Medicine at Duke University where she serves as co-director of Reimagining Medicine. As a patient activist, she is part of the #insulin4all movement for affordable medicines in the United States. Her current interdisciplinary puppetry project is *Illness Revelations: The Bodies of Medicine*.

JULES ODENDAHL-JAMES, Ph.D, MFA is a professional dramaturg and director. She is an adjunct lecturer in Theater Studies at Duke University where she also serves as the Director of Academic Engagement for the Arts and Humanities. Most recently a Kienle Scholar in Medical Humanities at Penn State College of Medicine (2016-2018), she specializes in work by women playwrights; developing new collaborations across the arts and the sciences; and creating performances about science and medicine.

Puppetry artist and scenic designer TORRY BEND was a collaborator and faculty on Puppetry and Embodied Imagination. She currently serves as Department Chair of Theater Studies at Duke University.



Endnotes

- ¹ <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/774827>
- ² <https://catalyst.nejm.org/physician-well-being-efficiency-wellness-resilience/>
- ³ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/14/why-are-there-still-so-few-female-doctors>
- ⁴ <https://news.vice.com/article/why-are-there-so-few-minority-doctors-united-states>
- ⁵ We use “illness,” “disability,” and “condition” interchangeably, as it is beyond the scope of this article to articulate the nuances of apparent/non-apparent disabilities, chronic vs. acute conditions, and interconnections between physical and mental health. We are discussing *health* in the broadest sense of the term.
- ⁶ Some examples, “Using puppetry to elicit children’s talk for research,” *Nursing Inquiry* (2008); “A review of the literature – The use of interactive puppet simulation in nursing education and children’s healthcare,” *Nurse Education in Practice* (2017); “Using Puppets to Teach Schoolchildren to Detect Stroke and Call 911,” *Journal of School Nursing* (2016). See also Tsaplina’s work in THE BETES Organization.
- ⁷ “Puppetry as reinforcement or rupture of cultural perceptions of the disabled body,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* (2017).
- ⁸ *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* second edition. 140.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AS IT APPEARS IN IRANIAN PUPPETRY

by Salma Mohseni Ardehali

Iranian traditional puppetry was an itinerant folk theatre performed typically in public places like alleys, marketplaces, and squares; when the troupes were forcibly settled (at the beginning of the 20th century), they performed in coffee-houses (*qahveh-khaneh*) as well as in enclosed front yards and porches, or inside the houses. These became places to talk about social issues. Their main subjects and story lines were to a large extent established. Main characters like Mobarak¹ and Pahlavan Kachal² try to establish justice by fighting cruel rulers and demons. Except for the main story line and specific musical pieces and songs, other parts could be completely based on improvisation and could change based on the time, place, and the makeup of the audience. Characters could talk about the most complicated current economic situations and social and political issues in between their zany and caustic humor and mockery. Most of the time they tried to reflect public problems (like the oppressors' injustice) to attract the audience's attention and their financial support. They criticized tyrants who punished poor people, and mocked their wealth, power, and self-indulgence. But this social critique did nothing to improve conditions: first, there was no research or study on the issues involved, they simply mocked class differences and economic problems and emphasized the comic aspects of society's problems; and, second, the laughter and satisfaction evoked by their satires did not heal the ills of the lower and middle classes, but instead worked like a sedative, causing them to forget about the deep gap of class differences, if only for brief moments."

In the Qajar era, erotic and vulgar comic side-stories were added to the plays based on the preferences of the royalty and supporters of that time. During the first Pahlavi era (1925-41) these nomadic groups were settled and marginalized in order to apply more oversight; they were considered retrogressive forms and the government was pursuing reform in performing arts by replacing indigenous forms with Western style theatre. During the second Pahlavi era (1941-79) these traditional plays were revived as museum pieces, which cleared the way for their inclusion in universities and international festivals. In the last fifty years, old and young groups with various levels of knowledge are active for a range of audiences and are trying to make a living from performing these traditional puppet plays. The social and critical aspects of these plays depend entirely upon the performing groups' tendencies and knowledge in these fields.

Today, other outdoor puppet performances try to work more on environmental and social issues like combatting drought and protection of water resources, animal welfare, child labor and so forth; they work less directly on political subjects. Indoor shows are more poetical, philosophical and fictional, based on folklore or ancient and modern literature for both adult and young audiences. They don't directly address issues that reflect the social/political challenges of contemporary society, but incline toward legends and myths with a poetical language and political sparks that resonate with current conditions.

In the author's opinion, the wave that has provided a consistent critical expression in social justice and the political situation of contemporary society, is that of Behrooz Gharibpour's puppet operas based on the lives of some of the greatest Iranian poets, such as Rumi (13th c.), Hafez (14th c.), Saadi Shirazi (13th c.) and Khayyam (11th c.) as well as Ashura (a religious story). Gharibpour has tried to narrate their stories in a social context in order to reflect the social and political situation of the era in which they (the poets) lived. But as history seems to repeat, he wisely references current social conditions in these multi-layered works. It is as if he considers "history" a living creature that achieves justice on its own. I offer as proof three scenes from the puppet operas; Rumi (2009), Hafez (2012) and Saadi (2015) and also one from Ashura (2008).

SCENE 1 FROM RUMI

*Parde-khani*³: Iran, after the Mongol invasions. Two Naqals (storytellers) stand in front of a Pardeh (painted curtain), which shows the Mongol crimes, and start singing and narrating. People start to gather around them to watch. As they pass by, young Rumi and his father also stop. The storytellers point at the images and sing: "Death will pass on your world as well – your boom time will pass as well. Suddenly, autumn wind of the lousy time – will pass your gardens as well⁴..." This scene is one of the most impressive scenes of the show. People, damaged and distracted by war, are watching one of the ancient forms of Persian theatre in order to forget their pain and sorrow for a little while. It reassures them that their intruders will meet a terrible fate in the future. Naqals encourage people to patience instead of revolt. Passing time and history per se can sweep up injustice like an autumn wind that sweeps up dry tree leaves.



PHOTO: ROUHOLLAH YAZDANI

SCENE 2 FROM HAFEZ

Obeid is tortured in the prison/Book burning: Scene of a jail. Obeid Zakani (Iranian poet of the 14th century) is strapped and being tortured because of his critical poems. At the same time, the poetry book of Hafez is being burned by order of the ruler, Amir Mobareze-Din, as the empty words of an infidel poet. Watching this gloomy scene, Obeid tells Amir: "Don't burn the book! It is not profitable. Faith doesn't have scent, it's not musk or incense."

SCENE 3 FROM SAADI

A drunk in a mosque: A drunk man enters a mosque to repent and talk to god. The servant of the mosque calls him a dirty dog and wants to evict him. The drunk says this is the god's house and god is his friend. Servant gets mad and wants to attack him. Drunk says that he is ready to be killed for god and starts to Sama (Sufi whirling). He whirls and whirls until he dies.

SCENE 4 FROM ASHURA

Ashura can be interpreted as a complete manifestation of social justice. Ashura is about the battle of Karbala, which took

place in 680 AD in Karbala, in what is now Iraq. The unequal battle took place between a small group of supporters and relatives of Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein, and a larger military detachment from the forces of Yazid, the Umayyad caliph. Liberty, tolerance, and establishing peace and justice were the main messages of Imam Hussein and his supporters.

Finally, whenever artists have taken on the subjects of social problems, social justice and the consequences of political situations in social life, they have been suppressed, censored and restricted. They have had to find other indirect ways to express themselves effectively. One of these ways is through the use of humor and irony. Another way is to narrate a poetical or mythical or just a simple story, and simulate real situations in an imaginary world or to find a piece of history that contains within it an echo of the challenges found in current society.

SALMA MOHSENI ARDEHALI is an Iranian puppet artist, puppet scholar and university lecturer.

Endnotes

¹ Mobarak is the comic character in the marionette theatre of Iran (Kheimah shab bazi); with his black face and red costume.

² Pahlavan Kachal (bald hero) is the main character of the glove puppet theatre of Iran.

³ *Parde-khani* (literally: "reading off the curtain") has been one of the most widely practiced forms of storytelling in Iran and is still occasionally performed.

⁴ A poem by Saif Farghani; Persian poet and sufi, from 13th-14th century.

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SANCTUARY:

THE SPIRIT OF HARRIET TUBMAN (1985) AND THE NEW SANCTUARY MOVEMENT (2018)

by Wes Sanders

When we launched our puppet-and-actor troupe in 1978, Debra Wise and I called it “Underground Railway Puppets & Actors” (URT), to signal that we intended to continue the work of that great movement in our own way, with theater.

In the first twenty years, URT took up social issues in a serious but playful spirit, devising the adult plays from research and improvisation in collaboration with playwrights. We knew from the very start that, with our name, the time would come to tell Harriet Tubman’s story. Sure enough, in the early 1980s, stories of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees fleeing north to escape death at the hands of their governments began to hit the front pages of *The Boston Globe*. These governments, cynically leveraging Cold-War paranoia in the Reagan Administration, used the specter of communism to get money and weapons for suppressing dissent. Dictator-generals like Rios Montt of Guatemala sent death-squads to kidnap citizens who were agitating for land-reform, worker’s rights and other social causes inconvenient to the ruling class. It was at this time that “disappear” became a transitive verb and the awakened poor became its direct objects. Reagan not only sent money and arms to these regimes; he made it policy to deny political asylum to fleeing refugees from these countries. Sound familiar?

When word that applications for political asylum from refugees fleeing Central America were being systematically denied at the border, some churches in the U.S. responded with civil disobedience, invoking the ancient law of sanctuary, which forbids the state from entering sacred space to seize fugitives. Congregations all over the U.S. met refugees at the border, helping them to apply for political asylum with *pro bono* lawyers at their side, then—when they were released on bail—took them to sanctuary in Quaker Meeting Houses, synagogues and churches that had opened their doors. Thus was the Underground Railroad resurrected. I was able to join a sanctuary caravan through a nun who was on fire with the cause. Traveling north from the Arizona border with a van full of refugees and U.S. activists, I interviewed in particular one Joachim, a Guatemalan musician, who, at the end of the caravan’s journey, took sanctuary in a Vermont Quaker meeting.

When I got back to Cambridge with a full notebook, we hired as our devising playwright Donna Kate Rushin, a talented black actress-poet whose work we already knew, setting to work immediately on a play that would explore the parallels between the old and new Underground Railroads.

The first act told the story of Tubman’s own escape from slavery and her work as a “conductor” on the original URR, narrated by the actress playing Tubman. In addition to acting-scenes, we used black shadow-puppets on landscapes of saturated acetate ink, rolling by on an overhead projector. The puppet-scenes were underscored with spirituals, sung by a gospel or church choir local to each performance-site, an artistic strategy that was also a good way to get black churches to connect their struggles for justice with those of Latino refugees.

At the climax of Act I, a monumental 3-D puppet of Tubman’s head rose above the set, in profile; the puppet’s giant hand also rose, pointing north. The Tubman puppet remained during Act II, framing the parallel story of Joachim’s acceptance into sanctuary by the church where Mary, the black cook in the restaurant where Joachim was a busboy, was a member. The actress who had played Tubman also played Mary.

HARRIET TUBMAN PUPPET WITH ORIGINAL CAST OF *SANCTUARY* (1985)
FROM LEFT: VALERIE STEPHENS JOHN LEWANDOWSKI, DEBRA WISE,
WES SANDERS, JORGE ARCE

DESIGN & PAINTING: DAVID FICHTER
PHOTO: KENNETH MARTIN PHOTOGRAPHY



DESIGN: DAVID FICHTER

Joachim's story, based on my notes from the sanctuary caravan, in combination with the memoir *I, Rigoberta*, describing genocidal attacks against the Guatemalan Indians, was told in flashbacks and puppet-scenes, as Tubman's back-story had been in Act I, the puppets—both large and small—being 3-D in this act.

When, at the end of the play, Joachim had thanked Mary's church for agreeing to shield him from the INS, the cast began singing Walter Robinson's song, *Harriet Tubman*, the last verse of which pictures refugees

*Fleeing their homes / In Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador
Fleeing the prisons and war
Right up through Mexico to our door.*

As the actors sang these lines, the immense head of the Tubman puppet turned slowly toward the audience. Harriet's face—a transformation-mask—broke open like a flower, revealing the face of a Guatemalan woman, framed by the vivid designs of her indigenous culture.

Sanctuary: The Spirit of Harriet Tubman was unabashedly an organizing play. One Quaker meeting brought the play to help them decide whether to declare sanctuary (civil disobedience carries the risk of jail). They called the next day to thank us for helping them get to yes.

The *Sanctuary* play is as relevant today as it was in the 1980s; in fact, there is a strong *historical* link between the refugees of the 1980s and today: when the wars of oppression were over, they had left a legacy of unemployed, armed

ex-soldiers & police, many of whom fled illegally to the U.S., where some formed gangs, especially in Los Angeles (M-18 and MS-13). When some of these men, who had known only violence, were deported back to their countries of origin in the Northern Triangle of Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras—they continued the violence that had been their way of life, now plying blackmail and the drug-trade to survive. The murderous policies of D'Aubuisson in El Salvador and Rios Montt in Guatemala profoundly corrupted those governments' ability to govern, so that today *both* the police *and* the gangs are a threat to ordinary people. One Salvadoran refugee, Christopher Cruz, interviewed recently by the *NYTimes* (1 July), reported, "That is the reality of El Salvador. You are scared of both, the gangs and the police."



TUBMAN ON THE WAY NORTH – SHADOW-PUPPETS IN A WOODCUT STYLE ON LANDSCAPES WITH A QUILT-MOTIF ARTWORK AND PHOTO: DAVID FICHTER

In the face of gang-threats and beatings by police of all young men who might be gang members, people like Christopher Cruz are now being terrorized into again fleeing north. It is not, in other words, the *members* of gangs like MS-13 who are fleeing to the U.S.-Mexico border, as Trump asserts; it is the *victims* of these gangs.

If URT were adapting *Sanctuary* for today's situation, it would need to address both the current plight of refugees at the border, and the New Sanctuary Movement's response to deportations by ICE of immigrant families already living in the U.S. The Central American refugees in the play might now be a family—of Guatemalans, Hondurans or Salvadorans, fleeing from gangs, police or domestic violence trying to join relatives already in sanctuary in the U.S. The sanctuary group, instead of being a congregation, might be a group of mothers in NYC, or a non-profit in San Francisco. The immigration issue is substantially the same as in the 1980s, but the challenge to those who would speak truth to power manifests on two fronts—the border and the interior. Harriet's story will never change, but the inhumanity of the party in power is a beast with many heads. The trope uniting the border and the sanctuaries inland would entail resistance to the Trump Administration. URT would do again what it

has always done best: use the imaginative tools of the theater to make the connections that encourage action.

WES SANDERS was a co-founder of what is now Underground Railway Theater.

DEBRA WISE (also a co-founder) is the current artistic director of URT, which is now a resident company of Central Square Theater, Cambridge, MA.

centralsquaretheater.org, [click on URT](#)

A full description of *Sanctuary: The Spirit of Harriet Tubman* can be accessed in the free 2017 ebook, "Underground Railway Theater, Engine of Delight & Social Change," (Smashwords Publishing) written by the company's founders. Available as a download at bit.ly/URTeBook or bit.ly/URTKindle, this ebook includes chapters on 22 other URT productions. With 13 videos and 100 photos, it tells the story of URT's first 25 years, including early projects with Julie Taymor at New York's Public Theater and The Kennedy Center, as well as such commissions from The Boston Symphony as "The Firebird" (UNIMA citation) and Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

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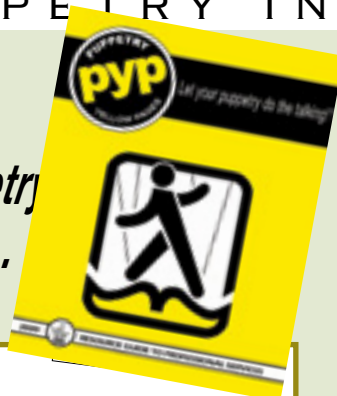
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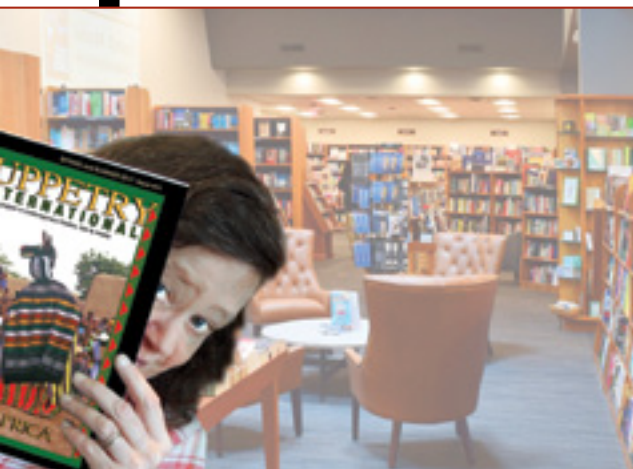
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Recipient of a 2017 Production & 2014 Workshop Grant
Photo: Kay Bosh

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TEATRO GIOCO VITA DESIGNER NICOLETTA GARIONI LEADS A LECTURE ON COLORED SHADOW PUPPETS. HERE, SHE DEMONSTRATES THE USE OF GLASS PAINT ON POLYCARBONATE. PHOTO: D CURTIS



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OPEN BORDERS! SAFE PASSAGE!

THE POWER OF PAPIER MÂCHÉ: GIANT EFFIGY PUPPETS

text and photos by Eric Bornstein



BOB MARLEY

Jamaica is an unlikely location for a puppetry project. The Caribbean island is known as a popular tropical resort destination, for its lively reggae music, and its omnipresent Ganga. Tourists flock to Montego Bay and Negril for a tropical weekend getaway, but not me: I traveled to Kingston for an artistic mission and life-changing experience. The reason for my visit to Kingston, Jamaica was a Fulbright residency grant to revive and re-invigorate the art of effigy-making for the parading of giant puppet heads representing national heroes and

cultural icons, which hadn't flourished on the island culture for about fifty years, all for the occasion of the 55th anniversary of Jamaican independence at the annual national celebration. Effigy is the term for the oversized puppet head likenesses used to celebrate well-known and important personages. In some cultures, effigies are constructed to represent reviled characters, burned in symbolic rituals. In Jamaica, this social ritual reinforces for residents their heroic history – the visionary men and women who helped create this unique culture.

I have been a professional mask maker for over thirty years, garnering a number of awards in my quirky field. Though I feel strongly about many social issues, most of my work has expressed my interests in mythology, folklore, fantasy, and fairy tales. The more aware I become of the socio-political problems in our society and the world, the more I have felt an aching need to address them with my artistic efforts.

I have also become known for my *mascarones gigantes* – giant parade puppet heads expressing archetypal or larger than life ideas. Recently, I built three high quality giant effigy puppet heads of rappers Jay Z, Kanye West, and Li'l Wayne for an Atlanta Christian hip-hop musician, J. Monty. In 2016, I was commissioned by an L.A. charity to build giant masks of presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, and for the last two years, I have also worked with an Iranian human rights group to design and build giant puppet heads representing the major contemporary villains in their lives – President Hassan Rouhani and the Ayatollah Khomeini, who have been responsible for thousands of brutal deaths of artists, activists, intellectuals, and other dissenters.

My reputation reached the government of Jamaica, and I was contacted by the senior adviser to the Minister of Culture to build a set of masks that celebrated the first set of ten political heroes and cultural icons. I read with delight the achievements of each person, and prepared myself to create inspiring symbols of greatness.

Originally, the project had been a straight commission for the giant puppet heads. When it was discovered that shipping costs for these five-foot-high, full head-pieces would be prohibitive, the idea was born to apply for a Fulbright award to help fund the mission, which would take place over two months. Typically, each giant puppet head takes one month to complete, so this schedule

seemed impossible, but it was the only workable time frame for us both.

Then came a string of misfortunes. The wife of the executive director of the national celebration died suddenly. Two weeks before my flight, the long-time executive director himself died. My flight was delayed for weeks. Then on the night before the next flight, we were delayed another month. When I did finally arrive in Jamaica, anxious to get to work on this near impossible project, now shortened by two weeks, I faced delays in gathering supplies and the team.

My contact with the Jamaican Cultural Development Council (JCDC), which is the local arm of the Ministry of Culture, was Mr. Glendon Watson, who was designated to be my facilitator, driver, and interpreter of all things Jamaican. His first accomplishment was securing our studio in the ample green room of Ranny Williams Performance Center, a prominent venue for music, theater, and dance on royal property between the estates of the Prime Minister and the Governor-General. Mr. Watson had gathered the team: Only two were professional artists, Richard "Skaleesha" Atkinson, a puppeteer and visual artist (painted paper pulp Jamaican scenes), and Oshane, an event display artist, who worked primarily in draped fabrics. The second of the two artists with any experience with figurative work was

Kenny, who had a keen mind and had studied art in college. The others had no art experience at all. Of the two women, Antoinette was the cleaning person at the performance Center, and Ava was a painfully shy eighteen year old, who could barely stammer her name while looking down at the floor. Later, we would add her cousins, Demar (who studied some art in high school) and Mara.

Mr. Watson and I built the three armatures with his personal tools and partially foraged hardware. On the third day, OShane was the first intern to arrive and help out. The next challenge was to find 1000 pounds of clay. I spent considerable time researching and drawing sketches of the subjects of our work. When we had the full team ready for sculpting, I and the other two experienced sculptors led the three stations, with the others filling in, cutting wedges, and smoothing clay. I would spend the second day refining the designs, and preparing the piece for direct casting. Each day I introduced a new technique, and each day the interns learned and improved. The Jamaican heat was unbearable for me by 8AM and I needed air conditioning in the workspace to endure the long hours of continuous labor. Others regularly helped us, especially during the days of non-stop layer by layer application of small paper strips over



the clay sculptures. I also wrote a mission statement to describe the project, both for the many visitors who came in to this bizarre landscape, and for the interns, to help them focus their understanding of the big picture of their involvement, [the core of which was]:

The mission of our project is to reinvent and reinvigorate the art of Jamaican effigy-making for the national celebration, on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of Jamaican independence.

We will be creating giant papier mâché effigies of ten national political heroes & cultural icons: Marcus Garvey, Alexandre Bustamante, Norman Manley, Paul Bogle, George William Gordon, Nanny of the Maroons, Sam Sharpe, Robert Nesta (Bob) Marley, Usain Bolt, and Louise Bennett Coverley (Miss Lou).

When a group of people of different genders, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-political backgrounds are packed together in a high-pressure work environment for an extended period with few breaks, many conversations and social dynamics will be expressed. I was leading a very difficult project – one that needed to produce high quality results in a very short amount of time. I needed everyone to be 100% on board, so it was important that the team rally behind me, become invested in the project mission, and hold themselves to the highest standards of personal and professional behavior. Team members received only a small weekly stipend, which also had to cover transportation, so they were still financially stressed. I needed to establish myself as an authoritative expert in my field, as well as a loyal, dedicated team leader. I knew there might be issues with language, race, and culture. Jamaica is a largely patriarchal society, and has a problem with rape and violence against women.

There was so much to love about each of the interns. Antoinette was bold and bawdy. She and I teased each other regularly. Richard was extremely likeable and personable. Uncommitted at first, he became a major force in the last week. Oshane was handsome, a great dancer, and wanted quick glory. Mara was quiet and moody, there mostly to be with her cousin Ava, but she grudgingly appreciated my efforts to keep her engaged in art activities. Ken engaged passionately, with very conflicted emotions, and we debated daily. My special affections went to cousins Ava, the shy woman, and Demar, a quiet young family man with two babies, who was the sweetest of all. We played music all day, often breaking into dancing, even me, which was highly amusing to all present, and we talked about everything. I was open to every topic, just like in my home studio, and urged an openness of thought as part of the artists' way.

The workload was huge, and each day new visitors came to inspect the strange and wondrous activities. School groups delighted in having photographs taken with Marcus Garvey and the others. JCDC staff were enlisted to join in with papier mâché work. I made it a point to make the work accessible, and to create a welcoming environment. Jamaican pride in the project swelled, and many were thrilled to have had a hand in the building of these tributes to their national political and cultural heroes and icons. When the first set of heads was almost done, and sat atop giant stands that he had built, Mr. Watson came in with his drum and played a ritual tribute to their births, filling the studio with joyous sound, chanting with his full heart, recognizing our creations as spirit-houses, and joining our hearts to the future of these creations.

Everyone was pushed to their limit by the rigorous demands of our production schedule. Tensions flared between certain team members. Mr. Watson was tiring from the double load he carried – as our production manager, as well as from his other duties in the JCDC, and I was feeling edgy and fatigued from working non-stop. We had a passionate conversation in the studio, and, fortunately, in the end we renewed our commitment to each other. One evening after work, Mr. Watson came in with Robert and Linval, and set up a karaoke machine in the studio, and brought a bottle of rum. He made sure that we had a fun evening. I was invited to several day trips away from the studio, which really refreshed my energy. Mr. Watson took me out to the National Museum of Art for a big reception, where I met with the Minister of Culture, who was delighted with our miraculous progress. The long-awaited documentary crew finally arrived, and we shot strong material. At one point, the cameras were on Ava, stationed in her studio apron, in front of a giant sculpture. I watched as she authoritatively described and demonstrated the techniques she had learned and later taught. She stood up straight, eyes right into the camera, and as she spoke, tears flooded from my eyes.

We were thrilled to have two female characters included in our giant tribute group. Nanny of the Maroons, a leading slave revolt leader was the first. After much debate, the beloved Miss Lou, the beloved storyteller, comedian, and television performer, who brought the unique Jamaican patois into prominence, was chosen as the final member of our grouping. The representation of these female characters was particularly meaningful on this island where women still faced disproportionate violence and discrimination. During the Minister's visit, she had me help her try on the giant Nanny mask herself! Our press conference was broadcast nationally, and I found myself feeling a flood of satisfaction, accomplishment, and intense pride, not just for me but for our entire team, which had risen to the challenge.

Our celebratory party, on the night before my flight out of Kingston, was a joyous affair. We were all out on the outdoor covered stage, while a powerful tropical storm raged with lightening, thunder, and sheets of heavy rain. Mr. Watson planned and prepared the festive event, as well as serving as the MC and DJ. The giant puppet heads were all in a line, mounted on stands, and draped with cloth, a buffet line offered seemingly endless Jamaican delicacies, and strong white rum flowed, as we conversed and danced, and ran through the rain to the sound of glorious Jamaican music. Each intern presented a testimonial about me and the project. I was given presents from the team and the JCDC staff. I was even declared an official honorary Jamaican citizen! Though I had an early flight to catch, and had planned to retire early, we celebrated together until late in the night. On the flight home, I sat next to a middle-aged Jamaican woman, who grew very anxious during the flight. She held my hand, and leaned her head on my shoulder as I softly sang over and over the words of the Bob Marley song "Three Little Birds," *Don't worry 'bout a thing 'cause ev'ry little thing gonna be all right...*

ERIC BORNSTEIN continues building new masks and puppets, including five highly secret new mask designs for Fortnite by video game giant Epic, and a workshop segment for PBS to be featured on their popular kids' show, *Pinkalicious and Peterific* in the Fall. His works in progress celebrate messages by murdered and marginalized activists and luminaries from around the world.



USAIN BOLT

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by Nancy Lohman Staub

Legends and historical documentation describe puppets advocating social justice and ridiculing injustice for hundreds of years. They include the clowns of *wayang kulit* in Southeast Asia, the Bamana Youth Society Masquerade puppets and masks of Sub-Saharan Africa, Karagöz of the Middle East with his relatives Aragoz in North Africa and Karaghiozis in Greece, and by all the European cousins of Mr. Punch. Many of them have migrated to the Americas. Recently, giant figures pop up in political protests all over the world, and the electronic media utilize the power of the puppet in political and social satire available internationally. Puppeteers have defied authorities and sometimes paid the price of repression, detention, imprisonment, torture, or worse.

Since UNIMA (*the Union Internationale de la Marionnette*) was founded in 1929, the issue of social justice has emerged on several occasions. At an UNIMA Council Meeting, I opposed the motion to boycott Iran UNIMA due to the Salman Rushdie fatwa, which I had thought was defeated. At a reception, I befriended the delegates and introduced them to President Sirppa Sivori-Asp. She graciously accepted their invitation to a festival in Tehran. I have since been told that Jacques Félix, UNIMA General Secretary, wrote a letter of protest to the Iranian Minister of Culture, which caused loss of travel funding to UNIMA meetings for Iranian representatives. Issues can be very divisive, and actions can have unintended consequences.

At the 2003 Executive Committee in Delhi, the members discussed whether UNIMA should censure the invasion of Iraq by the USA and NATO member allies. Due to international access through the internet, the heated debate went viral. In the digital age, cultural and political differences can create widespread chaos and enduring animosity. We must make careful deliberations.

At the 2016 Congress of UNIMA in Tolosa, Spain, Idoya Otegui, the General Secretary of UNIMA, proposed forming a Social Justice Commission (SJC), which she felt was long overdue. After approval by the Council members of the Congress, the Executive Committee (EC) appointed Dadi Pudumjee as President to form an SJC. He chose as members: Mr. Knut Alfsen (Norway), Mr. Michael Meschke (Sweden), Ms. Idoya Otegui (Spain), Ms. Marjan Poorgholamhossein (Iran), Ms. Yasuko Senda (Japan), Ms. Nancy Staub (USA), and Mr. Jacques Trudeau (Canada). They communicated

extensively for two years grappling with the complexity of determining the appropriate role of UNIMA in promotion of social justice and assistance to victims of injustice. Their current resolution can be seen on the SJC page of the UNIMA web site: www.unima.org/en

Some delegates to the 2016 Congress made motions apparently prompted by the presence of two Spanish puppeteers who had recently been arrested for a show allegedly proselytizing for a Basque terror group. They protested that it was a misunderstanding. They were at the Congress selling T-shirts to raise money for legal fees. Their case had yet to be prosecuted, so facts were not verifiable. It was moved by Knut Alfsen that each case must be carefully analyzed individually before UNIMA should take action, and the motion passed. Cariad Astles proposed: "We ask Executive Committee and International UNIMA to strengthen the links with UNESCO for the protection of puppeteers and puppetry art over the world." The meeting minutes show that the Congress voted in favor unanimously.

UNIMA's current statutes declare the organization and art form of puppetry "allows us to promote the noblest human values such as peace and mutual understanding between people regardless of origin, political or religious convictions and differences in culture, in accordance with the respect for fundamental human rights as defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

UNIMA is not a partner of the UN, but an official non-governmental organization (NGO) partner of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which:

...is known as the "intellectual" agency of the United Nations. At a time when the world is looking for new ways to build peace and sustainable development, people must rely on the power of intelligence to innovate, expand their horizons and sustain the hope of a new humanism. UNESCO exists to bring this creative intelligence to life; for it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace and the conditions for sustainable development must be built.

I believe in positive action rather than censure. The SJC can effectively support individuals and organizations in the world of puppetry that promote and practice social justice. The commission agreed to award certificates of merit, because official recognition often garners further assistance. UNIMA members in over 90 nations throughout the world should be encouraged to advocate for social justice within their own cultures and make award nominations to the commission.

The members of the new commission also discussed the difficulty of responding to social injustice complaints as in the case of the two Spanish puppeteers. I understand that official letters of protest were submitted on behalf of imprisoned puppeteers over the years. I do not know if those were simply on the initiative of officers of UNIMA or approved by the Council. Complex legal and cultural differences require knowledge and cultural sensitivity. Many nations, including the USA, legally curb freedom of speech relative to libel, obscenity, pornography and hate. SJC members agreed to refer individual requests for assistance to effective pertinent organizations such as Amnesty International (AI). It is a global movement of more than seven million people with extensive resources. One department of AI deals specifically with detention and imprisonment:

Since we began in 1961, Amnesty activists have been ready to spring into action for people facing imminent danger in detention, from sending faxes and tweets to making phone calls or taking to the streets. "... The phone calls to the police during my arrest saved me from torture and rape. The police station was so swamped they stopped picking up the phone," says Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)'s co-founder Jenni Williams. While there have been thousands of victories, systemic change is harder to come by, and far too many people are still languishing in isolation, incommunicado, in fear.



Another referral would be the United Nations (UN) itself, which created agencies to investigate and enforce its Declaration of Human Rights. The term "human rights" was mentioned seven times in the United Nation's founding Charter, making the promotion and protection of human rights a key purpose and guiding principle of the Organization. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights brought human rights into the realm of international law. Since then, the Organization has diligently protected human rights through legal instruments and on-the-ground activities.

For further details of the SJ resolutions beyond promotion of good practices and connecting injustice complaints with effective agencies, please look at the SJC web page of UNIMA for details. Promoting social justice and peace at the same time is a difficult balancing act. The commission is open to suggestions.

Nancy Lohman Staub currently serves on the UNIMA Social Justice Commission and as Chair of the Center for Puppetry Arts Museum Consultants' Committee. She considers the Global Collection at the Center in Atlanta to be her legacy in the art form.

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BRAZILIAN MAMULENGO & PUNCH PUPPET REBELLION

by Amy Trompetter

2018 WORLD PUPPETRY FESTIVAL IN BRAZIL

Fast forward to the March 2018 Bonecos de Todo Mundo Festival in Brazil and my excitement at being invited. The international festival featured five Mamulengo shows and three related hand puppet traditions: Pulcinella from Naples, Italy, D. Roberto from Portugal, plus my British/American Punch & Judy. Indoor performances were held in Teatro Sesc Poulo Autran; outdoor shows at Taguaparque; and an ongoing puppetry exhibit and conversation at Ponto de Cultura Invencao Brasileira.

Chico and a team of organizers set the festival in Taguatinga, a working class neighborhood. Performances in the auditorium of a school and cultural center attracted families with small children, independent groups of teens and elders. A generation ago, laborers and their families came down from impoverished areas of north-eastern Brazil to build the adjoining capital city of Brasilia. Today, Taguatinga feels lively, relaxed and thriving.

In boldly colored attire and indigenous painted face, Chico opened the festival with wild dancing accompanied by singing, accordion and percussion music called *forró*. On his solo tour without musicians in Storrs, CT, we had watched as Chico's intuitive exchanges with the audience transformed what might have seemed a language barrier into a liberating adventure. At home Chico mesmerized young and old with cheeky repartee, provocation and response that continued as he slipped behind the puppet booth.

The hero/anti-hero of Mamulengo was a shiny black, wood-block and cloth hand-puppet, Benedito. The name was a carry-over from proselytizing priests who used crude puppets and referred to a black Saint Benedict. Benedito's wife, Margarita, was a pregnant cloth doll stick puppet. She wore a skirt that Benedito dove under to alert us that the baby was ready. The wooden bull served as ambulance. Other traditional characters were the Anaconda snake who swallowed and later regurgitated a cigarette smoking Captain and long-necked African grandfather trick puppet. Chico easily won suspension of disbelief, then turned the tables. For example, in Connecticut, when the audience alerted Benedito that a monster was about to eat the baby, Benedito sweetly showed us that the limp white-bone skull was "just a puppet." Benedito then exited while blessing the audience with his newborn baby peeing liberally and a bull farting smoke. Chico excels in breaking rules to celebrate life!

After Chico performed, there was a long intermission and change of audience. Next came Bruno Leone credited with saving the Neopolitan Pulcinella glove puppet street performance from extinction. In Naples, Bruno runs a school in woodcarving and performing puppets with swazzle for voice, training new generations of Pulcinella hand puppeteers. Show titles reflect



ITALY. PULCINELLO NARRATOR & PUPPETEER
PHOTO: DAVI MELLO

A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON MAMULENGO

In 1980 at the World Puppetry Festival in Washington D.C., many Bread-and-Puppeteers saw an eye-opening Mamulengo puppet exhibit. I remember how we admired and related to each little puppet and graphic design. We recognized a power coming from simple materials that we identified with Peter Schumann's Bread & Puppet Theater. Mamulengo, we learned, was a puppet form using humor to overcome the physical torments and psychological indignities of slavery. This was the voice of the people breaking taboos to survive during the most difficult of times. How could we find out more?

Clues came from the D.C. festival publications. A well-researched PI article by Isabella Irlandini, Fall/Winter 2011, recounted one of many legends about the origins of Mamulengo. Her research exposed the legacy of survival and the continuation of Mamulengo in Northeastern Brazil. However, I finally "got it" by seeing Chico Simões perform his Mamulengo hand puppet show outdoors for the closing of the 2016 National Puppetry Festival in Storrs, CT.



BRAZIL. MAMULENGO'S CHICO SIMÕES PHOTO: JOALEY ALMEIDA, PORTUGAL. DOM ROBERTO PHOTO: DAVI MELLO, USA. PUNCH & JUDY PHOTO: DAVI MELLO



Bruno's responsiveness to world crises, Pulcinella in Palestine, Pulcinella and the French Revolution. Like Benedito, Pulcinella was irreverent, disrespected the clergy, outsmarted the executioner and triumphed over death. Scenarios were gender fluid and sometimes reminiscent of Tiepolo's Pulcinello drawings. Bruno's brilliant festival piece ended with Pulcinella laying a giant egg and giving birth to multiple little Pulcinellas. Bruno shared a theory by the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, who wrote that the irrepressible Pulcinella is most needed when the world is at its worst.

On another evening we saw Joao Costa's Compaigna Marionetas. The Portugese Teatro Dom Roberto scripts have been passed down from 16th century Commedia del' arte and were forbidden mid 20th century. Whole plays were lost since only short scenarios were performed in the street, making it easier to escape the police. At the festival, Joao used a high pitched swazzle and small, brightly painted wood and cloth hand puppets. The show was fast paced, high spirited and nothing could be taken seriously. After Dom Roberto argued with and killed his friend, Joao informed us that he must wait until someone in the audience shouted "He is dead!" and then Dom Roberto laughed hysterically. We are all complicit! Next came priest, policeman, devil and finally death. Dom Roberto outsmarted them all.

Our indoor festival included 2 additional and compelling Mamulengo presentations. Master puppeteer Carlinhos Babau is a versatile poet, singer, composer and teacher of traditional Mamulengo from Rio Verde. Babau is a follower of the late Padre Cicero, and continues his ministry by keeping Mamulengo traditions, generous communal feasts and celebratory gatherings alive in poor communities in Northeastern Brazil. Rafael Teixido, founder of Teatro Alpagata Titeres in 1989 in Buenos Aires, Argentina sees his venue as South America and the world. Music and puppetry are his chosen languages connecting us all. Rafael is now touring his Mamulengo puppet shows in northern Argentina by bicycle! For our concluding open air festival on Sunday morning in the park, we were joined by two additional accomplished Brazilian puppet companies: Mamulengo Sem Fronteiras in Taguatinga, Brazil was coordinated by Walter Cedro, and Mamulengo Alegria, a popular theater group from Northeast Brazil, was under the direction of Josias Wanzeller.

MY JOURNEY TO BRAZIL

Back in February, I pulled out my "Punch and Judy" bag-with-skirt-as-stage to get ready for this festival. I had performed an adaptation of the British "Punch and Judy" in many languages and in many countries while on the international touring circuit with Bread and

Puppet and my own Redwing Blackbird Theater in the late seventies and early eighties. Working in languages I barely knew, I shortened my script to twelve minutes. On international tours, the show was well received. As a woman performing macho aggression, the POV seemed clear. However, living in the Hudson Valley above New York City, I have performed "Punch and Judy" less frequently over the past two decades.

Approximately three weeks before flying to Brazil, I took up the challenge to prepare a sequel, lengthen my presentation and celebrate a female hero. I altered old hand puppets. On departure day, needing more time, I included staple, pliers, glue gun, sewing kit and acrylic paints in my check-in luggage. In Brazil, I skipped a few lunches to complete Part Two, despite being chided by my newly met colleagues. Fortunately I was last on the indoor performers schedule and my translator, Cléria Costa, was dynamite!

Before leaving for Brazil, I had learned about the tragic, fatal gunning down of Marielle Franco, popular Rio de Janeiro city councilor, human rights activist and rising political star. Thousands of mourners filled the streets of major Brazilian cities, giving this a significance reminiscent of Martin Luther King's assassination in the US. I took up the challenge to find a way to respectfully honor Marielle Franco's memory, which I describe step by step below.

MY SHOW IN BRAZIL

Part Two comes directly after my traditional “Punch and Judy” hand-puppet-show-with-skirt-as-stage. Cléria Costa translates. Presidents Trump and Temer have a contest to see who is the most unpopular, the most sexist, the most racist and who is married to the most luscious beauty queen. Trump proclaims himself winner and Temer exits. Trump sees Punch wrapped in a net. Punch says he came out of the poop hole of the alligator in the swamp. Trump offers to free Punch in exchange for his soul. Punch wonders if puppets have souls, thinks probably not and agrees to the deal. Punch gets a share in the worldwide market in exchange for his soul. The policeman arrives with a hook to remove the net. Homeland Security captures Punch’s exhaled soul in a tin box. Punch goes his merry way and meets an ancient woman. She tells him he is in big trouble and had better get his soul back, the sooner the better. He asks how. She says, “Have a baby, and if it is a girl it will be faster.” Punch runs to his girlfriend, Pretty Polly, to have a baby. The baby grows quickly and speaks from inside Polly’s belly. She says “I won’t come out unless I have full control of my life.” Punch refuses. Polly reports that the market has crashed and Punch has lost everything. He relents. The baby pops out and grows up immediately. She asks for her father’s favorite horse and rides off. The horse begins to talk and tells her that Marielle Franco is coming to speak with us. Marielle Franco appears with tiny flashing lights and says: “Today I have the last word in this puppet show. This little light is for you. Take it! Take it to the women who are disappeared. Take it to the raped. Take it to the abused, to the wounded and to the dead. And tell each and every one of them that she is not alone and that you are going to fight for her.” (This speech was inspired by the closing words at the Zapitista Women’s Gathering, 2018.)

As the show ended, young adults crowded around me and said they had felt hopeless and helpless, and that they would

remember this evening for the rest of their lives. Several youth tried on the puppet-skirt-as-stage. A young man gave me a necklace with a rose quartz gemstone. I have not taken it off. As a closing note, I was the only female performing with seven male hand puppet soloists. Next year, Chico proclaimed, it will be a women’s puppetry festival. Cléria and I are now organizing and fundraising!

2019 PUPPET FESTIVAL CELEBRATING WOMEN

After the highly successful 2018 Bonecos de Todo Mundo Festival in Taguatinga, we all knew that our next festival needed to celebrate women puppeteers. In the first place, there were eight performers and only one was a woman. Secondly, the world is in an extremely dangerous place as we ruin our environment, legalize unbalanced distribution of wealth and weaponize high tech warfare.

This upcoming women’s puppetry festival in Brazil is building on puppet forms featured in the recent Bonecos de Todo Mundo Festival. Several Brazilian and Argentinian women puppeteers are paying homage to Mamulengo, first as a historical tactic to survive slavery’s brutalization, and then casting a spotlight on modern times. Women from Spain, France and the U.S. are bringing another voice to Pulcinella, Punch and/or Dom Roberto, who break laws with glee and get away with it. We know, from childhood throughout life, that there is truth in this nose-thumbing. Political correctness might rise up when the threat level is highest. Yet our puppets are irreverent and transgress, not in order to offend, but with the urgency to reaffirm our spiritual dignity.

We applaud spotlighting women puppeteers, such as those cited in PI Fall/Winter 2004 issue on “Women.” We want to create multiple platforms so that “women puppeteers” are not an anomaly. As a stepping stone, we envision a follow-up women’s world puppetry festival that includes Japanese, Indonesian, African and/or other forms, some of which have been performed traditionally by men. Our choices anticipate necessary transgressions in critical times. We join and look forward to an outburst of international puppetry festivals that boldly move into uncharted territories.

AMY TROMPETTER creates giant puppet operas, hand puppet shows, parades and pageants in the U.S. and internationally. She is founder of a puppet workshop and performing space in Rosendale, NY.

<http://redwingblackbirdtheater.com>



FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS JOÃO COSTA, AMY TROMPETTER, CLÉRIA COSTA, RAFAEL TEIXEIRO, JOSIAS DA SILVA, JOSIAS WANZELER, JOÃO ROCHA, BRUNO LEONE, CHICO SIMÕES, WALTER CEDRO

DREW COLBY:

CREATING COMMUNITY WITH HIS BARE HANDS

Interview by Bonnie Duncan

I met Drew Colby, a hand shadowgrapher, in Turkey at Izmir International Puppet Days in March 2018. We shared adventures around the city, sugar-drenched baklava and a lot of laughter. We spoke about our work, what puppetry means to us and how important it is to reach new audiences. I was really struck with his thoughtfulness and passion for the art form and for how important live theater can be for disenfranchised communities.

I asked him about his career.

Across a period of thirty-three years I have worked with all forms of puppetry. I particularly enjoyed working with long string marionettes in the big productions we created while I worked for the Playhouse in Durban, South Africa. On my return to the UK my passion for object theatre developed into a love of the theatre of the “uncreated” i.e. where everything in the show is seemingly created there and then. Hand shadow work, which is my major technique, is the ultimate in the “uncreated.”

My recent work hasn’t been theme-led. I have allowed the technique of hand shadows to dictate form and content,

although I consider very carefully the attention span of the wide age range of my audiences – often the show can play in front of a mix of babies, eleven year olds and grandparents! Circus Bear was about exploitation and freedom; The Ugly Duckling was about self-awareness; Carnival of the Animals was about collaboration; My Shadow and Me is about our shadows as a constant friend.

Some of the most interesting places I have performed include a medieval vaulted convent room in rural Germany, a very old barn in the countryside in Sussex, and up at the top of the Shard in London. The secret, fabulous marble Masonic Temple under the Andaz hotel in Liverpool Street was another highlight – as was the night I projected gigantic hand shadows onto the wall of the citadel at the end of the promontory in Alexandria, Egypt. For a TV shoot I had to train Donald Sutherland to make a shadow bunny – then on location I stepped in to be his hand shadow “stunt double” and made the shadow bunny for the close-ups – seated at a table in a five-star restaurant with Donald Sutherland and Hilary Swank as the cameras rolled!



FROM “MY SHADOW AND ME” (2017) PHOTO: TERESA GARRATTY, WWW.SHADOWGRAPHY.CO.UK



When I met Drew in Turkey, he was far from a TV sound stage. He was doing shows in a Syrian refugee community. I asked him about these performances.

In 2017 I was at the festival in Izmir and an organisation called Kapilar (“gates” in Turkish) approached puppeteers from the festival about doing shows for Syrian refugee children. The show I was performing at the festival (Carnival of the Animals) wouldn’t have worked in a community environment as it required the use of a piano and a very large space and screen, so I took a number of short routines and made an informal performance. The show had to be non-verbal, as most of the children would speak a mix of Arabic and Turkish.

When I found out I was invited to the festival again this year (2018) I got in touch with Kapilar. They were excited to have me perform again, and also got me to perform at another organisation – TIAFI – so I gave two performances in two different spaces. One of the challenges when creating shadow theatre is having a dark enough space to perform in. In both venues the volunteers and staff did a great job of blacking out the windows – although in one venue in order to turn off the lights during the show I had to reach up to the ceiling and twist the fluorescent tube so that it disconnected!

In the classroom where I performed for Kapilar, there was nothing to hang my screen on (it is a large sheet of lycra that is stretched dead flat by attaching it to a lighting bar or hooks on the walls). My contact (Montaser) took me down to the nearby bazaar and we bought some heavy duty hooks (while I had an interesting conversation with the shopkeeper in broken German). Then a friend of Montaser’s brought a drill to make holes for the hooks. The drill cable was too short to reach the wall to drill one of the holes, so the friend’s child (who had seen my show for Kapilar the previous year) went and got an extension cord – which had no plug, just bare wires. No problem. The wires were pushed into the plug socket, and the

hole was drilled (while someone held a Hoover up to catch the dust coming out of the hole).

The show that I performed was the same one I was performing in the festival – more adaptable than “The Carnival of the Animals,” “My Shadow and Me” is a fun 45-minute performance with lots of laughs, changes of mood and texture and short cartoon sequences all made with dark and light, a bit of string and a newspaper. It has a strong connection with its audience, so perfect for connecting with audiences whose language I don’t speak. It is playful and really an exploration of my relationship to my shadow – using the shadow at times as an antagonist with me as the protagonist.

I was enamored with Drew’s simple and extremely portable set-up and the fact he can perform literally anywhere, way beyond the walls of theaters. I asked him about his perspective on how puppetry engages communities who might not ever make it into a theater.

Puppets over the centuries (because they are without ego) are capable of tackling taboo issues; hand shadow puppets are particularly pure and innocent – almost primitive in their simplification of shape into silhouette – something we can all invest in as we all have shadows. They speak a stylised visual language easy to engage with. An audience can invest their own details into the blank shape of the hand shadow. The portable nature of hand shadow theatre means it can be performed relatively quickly in almost any environment so it works well in schools (an environment where there will be many audience members who have never been to a theatre). Indeed, sometimes a theatre space is a daunting prospect for very young children. To have to sit still in the dark in a dark space with strange technical equipment all around – so taking a show into the child’s familiar environment makes the experience less threatening.

PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

Theatre of the very best quality should be available to everyone – just as clean drinking water, food, shelter and healthcare are essential. This should in part (or fully) be funded by the state – we are living in times of increasing isolation – people glued to tiny screens living in a bubble – a person can have access to all the information in the world without leaving their home – but theatre is a community event – a communication (live) between performers and audience, a magical focal point for a large group of people and a space where people have to come together. Festivals such as the International Puppet Days in Izmir (funded by business sponsors, local government and schools) give opportunities for the disenfranchised to experience interesting and powerful theatre. At one of the private schools in which I performed in Izmir the teachers told me they are partnered with poorer schools in the neighbourhood – so a large percentage of the audience were children from less advantaged backgrounds.

Live theatre (compared to film / television, etc.) has the unique quality of interaction – from the standard responses of applause and laughter to audience members becoming part of the performance. This interaction enhances community, communication, and social involvement. The refugee children in Izmir had a fascinating response to the show – after the first routine with music, the soundtrack comes to an abrupt end and a blackout. It is a moment that invites applause. When I got to this moment in the show there was a momentary silence

from the audience, then, as one body, a burst of applause from all of the children like an ocean wave crashing on the beach.

At the end of the show all of the children came up to the screen and made shadows in the light – a fantastic moment of the children owning the theatre and the technique and being engaged socially with the performer, each other and their imaginations.

While standing in line for a festival show, Drew delighted children with a spontaneous series of hand shadows projected onto the floor, using just the natural light sources of the room. From his twisting fingers, a succession of animals sprung to life – I vividly remember his shadow cat, twitching its tail away each time a child tried to step on it. I was deeply touched: Drew connected with a family who did not speak his language with puppetry, an open smile and a lot of heart. This type of personal connection is what hooked me on this art form.

Drew Colby (born in Britain but bred in South Africa) is the only full-time shadowgrapher in the UK. His work takes him all over the globe where he performs for all ages.

BONNIE DUNCAN is a performer based in Boston and heads up The Gottabees. They recently won an UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence for their show Squirrel Stole My Underpants. Their new show, Go Home Tiny Monster, will premiere this fall and aims to engage the audience to take action both during the show and in their communities afterwards.

www.thegottabees.com

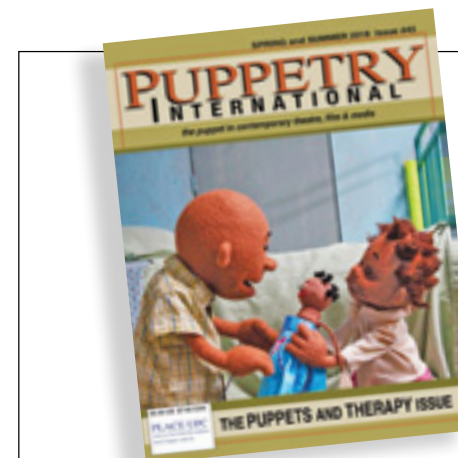
ADVERTISING IN PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL

AD deadlines:
for fall-
August 1, 2018
for spring-
February 1, 2019

AD submissions or inquiries:

HONEY GOODENOUGH
ads@unima-usa.org

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE - PI #43



In John Bell’s review of the exhibit of Indian Puppetry at The Center for Puppetry Arts in PI #43, the author incorrectly stated that the Center’s Global Collection was “carefully curated by Nancy Staub.” While Ms. Staub founded the Center’s museum and has worked tirelessly on its behalf, the collections in both the Global and Henson wings were curated by Bradford Clark, a member of the theater faculty at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

As regards the Indian puppetry exhibit, it was also brought to our attention that certain new pieces from contemporary artists were donated by the Indian Council on Cultural Relations and the Consulate General of India in Atlanta, along with figures given by Vir Nanda and Karen Smith.

“THE PUPPET BUG”

text and photos
by Paulette Richards

*Rendez-les moi mes poupées noires
qu’elles dissipent
l’image sempiternelle
l’image hallucinante
des fantoches empilés fessus*

Give me back my black dolls
That they may dissipate
The eternal, hallucinatory image
Of stacked up, big bottomed puppets

—Léon Gontran Damas “Limbe” 1937



Throughout my career I have wrestled with representations of African American identity. As a scholar based in university English departments I did research and produced publications on how African Americans had represented themselves in literature and the visual arts, but I was really more interested in creating my own images by making video and dolls. When I was selected as a 2013/ 2014 Fulbright scholar assigned to the Université Gaston Berger in Saint Louis, Senegal, I looked forward to teaching African American Studies in Africa during the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Senegalese university system was on strike for most of my fellowship tenure, however, so I ended up serving as an artist in residence at the Institut français.

Along with offering French classes and basic literacy classes, the Institut français runs the only public library system in Senegal. Branches of the Institut français also function as community centers screening films, hosting theatrical performances, and musical concerts. In Saint Louis, the Institut mounts art exhibits in the Gallérie du fleuve, a former warehouse on the banks of the Senegal River. When the wide doors to the gallery are open onto the busy street, all kinds of passersby are likely to drop in. Thus this gallery attracts a much broader spectrum of patrons than a typical art gallery. Alongside the classes of school children whose visits to the gallery were part of an academic curriculum, groups of street children would also come in to view the exhibits and participate in our workshops. Before long, without realizing that I was doing puppetry, I found myself designing workshops that invited patrons to work with performing objects.

For example, in conjunction with a photography exhibit, I wanted to give visitors the opportunity to explore digital photography using the six iPods I had brought with me. Since I didn’t want my iPods to leave the building, I had to come up with interesting subjects people could shoot inside the gallery. “Aha! Selfies,” I thought. Ideally children should have the opportunity to make their own masks, but our art supplies were very limited so I brought in some left over Christmas themed paper plates, and Alioune Kébé, the gallery director, made them into a series of characters that reflected traditional mask styles.

THE GOAT

Shooting selfies gave participants control over their own image. Many of them made numerous attempts until they had created an image of themselves as they wanted to be seen by others. Although we didn’t use the masks in a theatrical presentation, they represented characters that were familiar in Senegalese culture such as the lamb and the goat. Choosing one of these masks for a self-portrait was therefore a way of performing identity.

THE CHINESE LADY

The most popular character was the Chinese lady. Chinese corporations are investing heavily in Senegal, and communities of Chinese immigrants own many businesses. There is some resentment of the Chinese as a new imperialist power so it was interesting that men and women, children and adults were drawn to imagining themselves as Chinese. Yet young and old alike were even more drawn to the collection of black fashion dolls I had brought with me.

If a little Senegalese girl is lucky enough to own a doll, it will most likely be white. Consequently girls often name their dolls “Bébé Toubab.” Since toubab means “foreigner,” it applies to black Americans like me as well as to Europeans and Asians but, outside of the display dolls made for the tourist trade, there are almost no manufactured dolls that look like people of African descent available in Senegal.

I saw the lack of black dolls as a disturbing residue of colonialism. The “doll test” research that psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted with African American school children in the 1940s helped convince the Supreme Court justices hearing the Brown v. Board of Education case that racial segregation had a damaging impact on black children’s self-esteem. “How does the lack of black dolls affect Senegalese children?” I wondered. Before I arrived in Senegal I had been using dolls in my own videos because they were cheaper than live actors. As mobile devices like iPods gained more and more powerful image capture and video editing capabilities, however, I realized I could teach children to produce their own narratives instead of remaining passive consumers of images that did not necessarily empower them.

I had an opportunity to test this idea when the staff of the Institut français in Saint Louis decided to present a workshop at the 2013 international book fair in Dakar that would initiate the public into the use of digital tools. I brought my mobile media lab (the six iPods) to the Institut français booth at the fair. Then I conducted workshops with different groups of students over three days. Each group began by composing a script in French. Then the voice actors recorded their dialogue while other students manipulated the dolls and captured video files.

There were two main pedagogical goals. One was for the students to compose a story in French. While French is the official language of Senegal, most Senegalese speak other languages as their first language. Many don’t begin to learn French until they start school. Encouraging students to express themselves in French was an effective use of puppetry in education. Indeed there were some students in the classes who had only recently enrolled in school and were therefore not able to communicate in French. They

nevertheless contributed their ideas as we were developing the stories.

The second pedagogical goal was to introduce students to technology for producing digital narratives. At the time, only the wealthiest people in Senegal had smart phones capable of capturing, editing, and distributing video through social media sites. Smartphone penetration has continued to advance throughout the world, however and by the time these students—who ranged from about 8 to 18 years old—complete their education, the ability to produce digital narratives will be a necessary professional communication skill. After the book fair, I edited the sound files and video clips into short narratives and then completed “The Digital Book” (http://youtu.be/IE_m5mT_MV0), a short documentary about the digital storytelling workshops.

I was intrigued when my contract with the Institut français specified that I would bring my “poupées marionettes” as well as my iPods to the workshops. Indeed the distinction between dolls and puppets is not always neat. Typically dolls serve for individual play while puppets perform before audiences. Since the dolls “performed” in videos destined for an audience, they functioned as puppets while helping students bridge the linguistic and digital divide and see themselves as people who could use digital technology to communicate their own ideas and viewpoint to the wider world.

BLACK FASHION DOLL WITH CUSTOM AFRO WIG

I had dressed the dolls in outfits that reflect contemporary Senegalese fashions so the students fully identified with the characters, and even the high school classes who might have considered themselves too old to play with dolls were fascinated. Some of the men in attendance actually asked me for the name of the tailor who made the male doll’s shirt!

TAILORED SHIRT

Black fashion dolls available in the United States usually come with long silky hair that does not represent the natural texture of most black hair. Consequently I routinely pull all the hair out by the roots and replace it with wigs in a variety of Afro, braid, and lock styles. The Senegalese especially appreciated this cultural detail, so much so that later the doll with the darkest complexion and the most traditional costume and hairstyle disappeared from an installation in the Institut’s art gallery. Since black



Explore Puppetry series, and I revived my research skills by processing The Little Players and Bonnie Erickson collections in the archives. More importantly, I found generous mentors who encouraged me to apply to produce a short film for the spring Xperimental Puppetry show. Sage advice from my mentors also helped me get accepted into the O’Neill Theater Center’s 2016 Puppetry Conference pre-conference soft sculpture workshop with Lisa Lichtenfels, a noted doll artist.

When I took the opportunity to ask Lisa about the difference or relationship between dolls and puppets, she had a very interesting answer. She said that in German tradition “Puppe” [plural: Puppen] is the reflection of yourself that you see in the pupils of another person’s eyes when you are looking intimately into their eyes. A doll is a still version of the Puppe while a puppet is a moving image. So I concluded that a Puppe/ poppet/ puppet reflects both the image we have of ourselves and the image of ourselves we want others to see.

Unfortunately, during the period of enslavement people of African descent lost the power to create such images. Fearing the impact “heathen idols” would have on their ability to control the enslaved, slaveholders in the United States prohibited the creation of figurative objects that represented an African-derived worldview because they realized that performing objects had been important elements of spiritual and community-building rituals in African societies. Worse still, the immense popularity of minstrel-style puppet shows from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century inculcated generations of Americans with stereotypical images of blacks.

Léon Gontran Damas’ call for the return of black dolls that could counter the image of big-bottomed minstrel puppets has resonated strongly with me since I first encountered the poem “Limbé” in my high school AP French class. The puppet bug that I caught in Senegal has infected me with a powerful antidote to such caricatures – the will to animate my own “living objects.” I am currently serving as co-curator with Dr. John Bell of “Living Objects: African American Puppetry,” an exhibit that will open at the University of Connecticut’s Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry in October 2018. This exhibition and catalogue will therefore present the strategies that African American performers and puppet builders have used to represent the image we have of ourselves and the image of ourselves we want others to see.

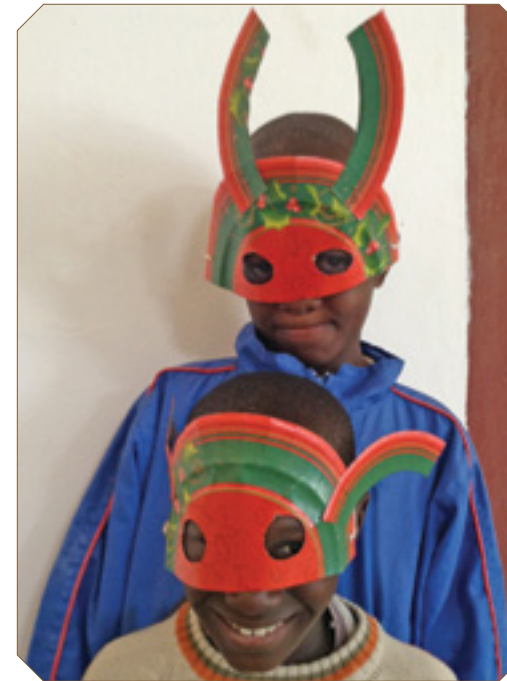
PAULETTE RICHARDS is a teaching artist who uses animatronic puppetry to introduce K-12 students to basic robotics concepts. She has taught animatronic puppetry workshops at the Friends School of Atlanta, Decatur Makers, the Dekalb County Public Library, the Center for Puppetry Arts, and the Puppeteers of America 2017 National Festival.

children in the U.S. often reject dolls with darker complexions, I consoled myself with the thought that her new owner had coveted her as an aspirational self-image.

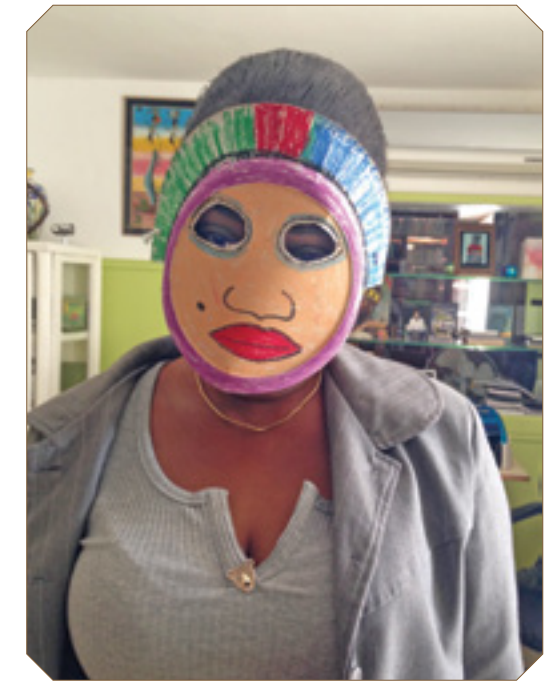
I survived ten months in Senegal without succumbing to malaria or intestinal parasites but somewhere along the way the puppet bug bit me hard. When I returned to the U.S. I produced several “princess” movies with groups of children who drew from my multi-ethnic collection of fashion dolls to cast and script their own “happily ever after” tales. A group of middle school girls collaborated on “Already Beautiful” (<https://youtu.be/n3uO-YSBv6I>), the most successful of these narratives. I was especially impressed that girls at this vulnerable age were confident enough in their own beauty to produce a humorous affirmation of natural hair.

My sojourn in Senegal made me more determined to develop an audience for my creative work. I realized that using dolls representing trademarked characters in my films would create problems with intellectual property rights so I decided to make my own figures. Once I completed my first film featuring figures I had made, I finally understood that I had shifted from the realm of dolls to the world of puppetry. “You need to learn more about puppets,” I thought. So I registered for the 2015 Puppeteers of America national festival and, since I live in the Atlanta area, I volunteered to serve as a docent at the Center for Puppetry Arts.

The Center for Puppetry Arts proved an invaluable training ground. I got to demonstrate lip synching technique in the TV studio gallery the day the new Worlds of Puppetry museum opened. I took as many classes as I could in the



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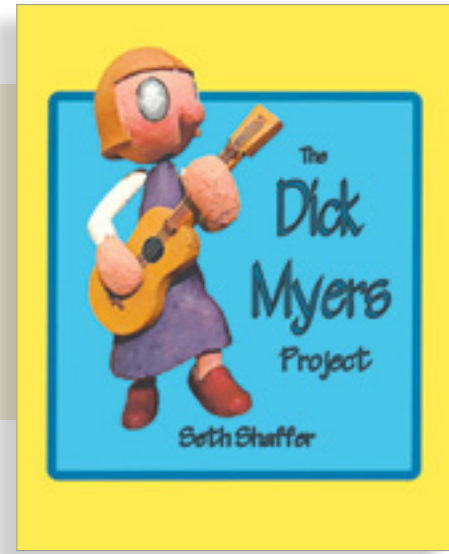
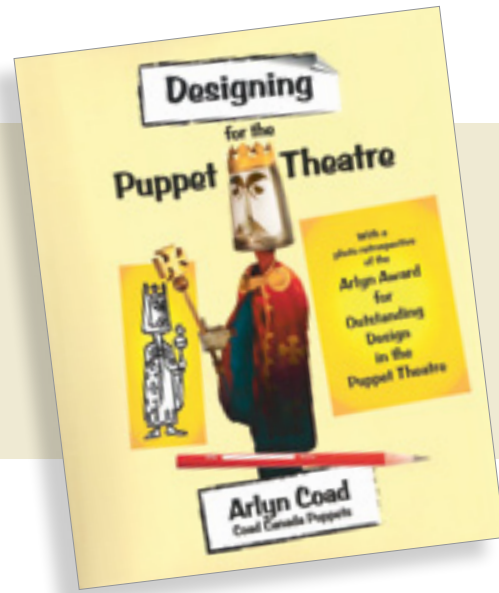
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INSIGHTS INTO TWENTIETH-CENTURY PUPPETRY FROM CHARLEMAGNE PRESS



Arlyn Coad, *Designing for the Puppet Theatre*. Garden Bay, B.C.: Charlemagne Press, 2018. 118 pp. \$35. Seth Shaffer, *The Dick Myers Project*. Garden Bay, B.C.: Charlemagne Press, 2018. 212 pp. \$40.

Luman Coad's Charlemagne Press has for over twenty years published indispensable books about puppetry and mask performance – over 30 so far – that provide information available nowhere else. Texts by and about Tony Sarg, Paul McPharlin, Pauline Benton, Carol Fijan, Sue Hastings, and so many other noteworthy puppeteers are available due to Coad's labors, and we can now be thankful for two more: Arlyn Coad's *Designing for the Puppet Theatre* and Seth Shaffer's *The Dick Myers Project*.

PUPPET DESIGN AND THE SPACE FOR IMAGINATION

Arlyn Patricia Hill was born in London in 1927, and immigrated to Canada at the age of 19 to study visual art in Vancouver, B.C. She returned to Europe to continue her studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she met and married Georges Kuthan, a Czech-born graphic artist. They came back to Vancouver, and started to raise a family with three children, but Kuthan died in 1966. Californian puppeteer Luman Coad moved to Vancouver the same year, met Arlyn, and the two decided to form Coad Canada Puppets. They married a few months later, and soon became internationally renowned for their performance work and for Arlyn's exquisite designs. In the late 1980s Arlyn Coad began writing a book articulating her philosophy of puppet theater design, but had already contracted myelofibrosis, a degenerative disease that finally took her life in 1999. Luman Coad assembled her existing texts as well as disparate notes and ideas, and *Designing for the Puppet Theatre* is the result.

Arlyn Coad's writings are deceptively simple and direct: exactly the kind of wisdom and fully articulated aesthetic opinion that puppeteers share with each other offstage, and thus of extraordinary value. One realizes upon reading Coad's guide that she had a comprehensive and in-depth sense not only of what makes puppetry work, but also what constitutes good theater and good art in general. The consistency and clarity of her insights do not simply explain her own work for Coad Canada Puppets, but offer an analytical and practical model for all forms of puppetry.

Acknowledging that many how-to books have been written about puppetry, Arlyn Coad points out that "there are few resources for the person learning puppet related design"; in part because "puppetry is still not widely seen as a theatre art." Keeping in mind this significant gap in Western arts thinking, Coad gamely proceeds to fill it with her wide-ranging approach to all aspects of design for puppetry. "Starting from a realistic visual concept," she writes, "the designer must select,

eliminate, simplify, exaggerate, interpret, communicate, and leave space for the input of each spectator's own imagination." Emphasizing the non-realistic essence of puppetry, Coad approaches each element of puppet creation in turn: script analysis, research, the elements of design, materials, sketches, character development, props, scenery, lighting, and methods of critique. Her specific suggestions are all spot on, concise, and useful, whether she is discussing color, fabric, light, gesture, and expression, or any other aspect of puppetry that practitioners are sure to encounter. If there is a challenge related to puppet design and the creation process, Coad has thought a lot about it, and (as these pages show) has good advice to share.

Coad's vision is refreshingly expansive. While contemporary puppetry can sometimes be quite parochial (each of us deeply committed to our own forms, methods, and approaches) Arlyn Coad's vision is expansive, whether she is talking about the specific advantages of fake fur over real fur, or broader issues regarding the nature of art. Above all, she is deeply invested in what works as dramatic art, writing that "[a] sense of what is theatrical rather than realistic should be developed because in puppet theatre, the audience must suspend reality and take part in the world of imagination." A "key to good design," she concludes, "is to develop a sense of what to take out as well as what to put in."

Designing for the Puppet Theatre is full of Coad's sketches, as well as photographs of her puppets and sets, which all give a rich sense of her work, and foster a desire to see more of it. The book's extensive Appendix is a list of all the winners of the Arlyn Award for Outstanding Design in the Puppet Theatre, a prize established in her memory by the North Shore Arts Commission in 2001. The illustrations of the award-winners' work are a positive endorsement of Coad's design principles, and offer heartening encouragement that good puppet design has a strong future.

ROD PUPPETS, ENGINEERING AND THE SOLO PERFORMER

Seth Shaffer's *The Dick Myers Project* is a fascinating study of one of the most enigmatic and innovative American puppeteers of the 20th century. Originally written as the culmination of his MFA degree in Puppet Arts at the University of Connecticut, Shaffer's study is a comprehensive look at Myers' unusual life, his *sui generis* innovations in rod puppetry, and his award-winning and wildly popular shows: *Dick Whittington*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Simple Simon*.

Enigmatic, idiosyncratic, and something of a loner, Myers emerged from the Midwest (he was born in 1921), apprenticed with some of the greatest of lights of American puppet modernism, and developed his own unique system of rod puppetry that inspired admiration among puppeteers across the U.S. and around the world.

Myers saw Rufus and Margo Rose as an elementary school student in Elkhart, Indiana, and apprenticed with Martin and Olga Stevens in Middlebury, Indiana before getting an engineering degree at Tri-State College. Following a short stint in the Navy, he studied drama at the Art Institute of Chicago, and then fine arts at both Washington University and the University of Cincinnati. By 1946 he had attended his first Puppeteers of America Festival, and was performing with the Stevens company again, as well as developing their sound and lighting equipment.

While the Roses and the Stevenses worked primarily with marionettes, Myers was fascinated by rod puppetry, whose indirect manipulation possibilities offered an alternative to strings. For the rest of his life, Myers found immense satisfaction in designing and building mechanical controls for rod puppets that he operated from below in a booth stage. Deeply appreciated in the puppet community for his sound and lighting innovations, Myers continued to work for other puppet troupes (and

learned cinematography on the side), and began to pursue his own work in 1956 in a studio in Woodstock, New York.

In the early 1960s Myers made money as a photographer for the federal government, and as "an airline pilot, flight instructor, and a certified airplane mechanic," as Shaffer puts it. Myers labored over the construction of his meticulously detailed shows, but by 1966, after years of preparation, was ready to perform *Dick Whittington's Cat* at a Puppeteers of America Festival. It astounded audiences, and led puppet scholar Melvyn Helstien to term him "a puppeteer's puppeteer."

Arising in the puppet world around the same time as such innovators as Jim Henson and Peter Schumann, Dick Myers was equally ready to make a break with existing U.S. puppet norms and try something new. His formula would seem to have been perfect for the times: he re-interpreted well-known fairy tales with a skillful dramaturgical sense and wry Midwestern humor; designed and built simple but effective mechanical operations for his puppets; created his own distinctive sculptural style using simple geometric forms; and synchronized his shows to expertly crafted sound tracks featuring his skillful puppet voices. Puppeteers loved it all. In a 1967 review of *Dick Whittington*, Lea Wallace wrote: "The charm that radiates from this well thought-out production, is one that typically qualifies [as] the *raison d'être* for puppetry. This production proves that neither animation, nor movies, nor human actors could realize the uniqueness contained in this show."

Jim Henson was re-inventing American puppetry for the television camera, and Peter Schumann was re-inventing American puppetry as avant-garde performance; why not a re-invention of traditional American fairytale shows with contemporary lighting and sound systems, as well as the most advanced rod-puppet manipulation techniques since Richard Teschner's

early 20th century experiments in Vienna? Certainly Myers finessed this challenge, but unlike Henson's successes with the Muppets in television and film, and Schumann's successes with Bread & Puppet Theater as activist avant-garde performance, Myers' work never really reached a large audience beyond the passionate aficionados at Puppeteers of America Festivals. Why?

One reason, as Shaffer points out, is that Myers was an idiosyncratic and at times difficult personality. When Myers's relationship with Martin Stevens came to a sudden halt, the latter wrote cryptically "Ah yes -- Myers. Bless his heart. I dunno; but God does." Like many solo performers, Myers kept to himself and was protective and somewhat secretive about his work. Luckily, he found Allelu and John Kurten who, like so many other puppeteers, were awestruck by Myers' work, and offered him "a place to stay if he was ever in their area of Hyde Park, New York." Myers moved in for the next 13 years, but the Kurtens didn't seem to mind.

Myers was particular about his work and how it was presented. He never allowed it to be filmed, and he often became impatient with producers and touring possibilities. He achieved acclaim in Europe and Japan, but turned down a chance to play at the groundbreaking 1980 International Puppetry Festival in Washington, D.C. because he was "frustrated with American puppeteers." With the help of the Kurtens and others, Myers found ways to keep performing his shows, but even the Puppeteers of America

audiences began to find fault with his 1975 show *Simple Simon*, which placed more emphasis on mechanical tricks than plot. Myers took a step into the avant-garde world of puppetry being explored by Peter Schumann, Robert Anton, Bruce Schwartz, Theodora Skipitares, and others when he created the more experimental *Divertisement* in 1977. Working in a radically new black and white palette, and eschewing familiar fairy tales for abstract vignettes inspired by vaudeville and absurdist sensibilities, Myers searched for a new direction, even including music by the great avant-garde composer, John Cage. But it did not work. *Divertisement*, Shaffer writes, was "decades before its time," but the venues and audiences for the show were not a good fit. Myers might likely have received a more positive response at La MaMa Theater or other downtown New York performance venues.

Myers' spirit seems to have been broken. He returned to his earlier shows, creating a "greatest hits" assemblage of scenes from different productions, but basically retired in 1983. He continued to perform sporadically, and tried to preserve and revive his shows, but contracted Alzheimer's disease in 2004, and died the following year, not far from his long-time friends the Kurtens.

Luckily for us, Myers' exactitude, technical proficiency, and faith in his own work caused him to write meticulous notes about how his shows should be performed and to record audiotapes with stage directions added to his soundtracks. Allelu Kurten inherited all

this material, as well as Myers' puppets, stages, and sound and lighting equipment and gave it all to the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts Program, trusting that Myers' work would thus somehow survive. Puppet Arts Director Bart Roccoberon realized that graduate student Seth Shaffer might be the perfect person to bring Myers' work back to life.

He was right. The preponderance of *The Dick Myers Project* focuses on the creative and intuitional methods that Shaffer used to study, learn, repair, remount, and ultimately perform Myers' work, as well as create a comprehensive Dick Myers exhibition at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry (which I was lucky enough to oversee). Shaffer, an inspired and resourceful builder and performer, learned the details of Myers' mechanics, restored some of the old puppets and stage pieces, dove into rehearsals, and finally emerged with performances that were as warmly received as Myers' originals.

Both *The Dick Myers Project* and Arlyn Coad's *Designing for the Puppet Theatre* are extraordinarily valuable. Coad's insights are carefully wrought jewels of wisdom derived from her relentlessly practical aesthetics, based on years of her own thoughtful work. Myers was never driven to explain his work to others, but Seth Shaffer has unlocked Myers' secrets and spread them out before us. Both of these books help reveal how late-20th-century puppetry in North America re-invented itself for a new era.

— review by John Bell

LA MAMA PUPPET FESTIVAL NOVEMBER 1 - 25, 2018



WUNDERKAMMER:
CABINET OF CURIOSITIES
Created & Performed by Alice Therese Gottschalk, Raphael Mürle and Frank Soehnle (Germany)
NOVEMBER 1 - 3, 2018
Thur & Fri at 7pm, Sat at 3pm & 7pm

Step into a place of wonderment, inimitable allure and weightlessness - *Cabinet of Curiosities* reveals a perception of a world in which history, art, nature and science all fuse to create oneness.



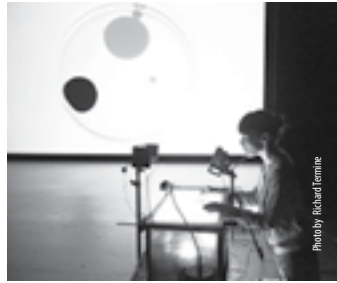
TIAN WEN: *HEAVENLY QUESTIONS FOR MODERN TIMES*
By Visual Expressions
Directed by Hua Hua Zhang (China)
NOVEMBER 3 - 5, 2018
Sat at 8:30pm, Sun at 3pm, Mon at 7pm

Based on a classic Chinese poem, *Tian Wen* is a collection of dreams of the East and West that Hua Hua Zhang has experienced during her artistic journey in America.



BLIND
Concept by Duda Paiva & Nancy Black
Direction by Nancy Black (Dutch-Brazilian/Australian)
NOVEMBER 8 - 11, 2018
Thurs & Fri at 7pm, Sat at 8:30pm, Sun at 3pm

Duda Paiva suffered an illness that blistered his body and left him temporarily blind. *Blind* transforms this experience into a metaphor about disability, rejection, and resolution. Often interacting with the audience, it is funny as well as moving.



EVERYTHING STARTS FROM A DOT
Concept & Design by Nekaa Lab/ Sachiyo Takahashi (Japan/USA)
NOVEMBER 8 - 10, 2018
Thur and Fri at 8:30pm, Sat at 7pm

Inspired by a Wassily Kandinsky quote, *Everything Starts from a Dot* is the story of a humble dot. An inhabitant of two dimensions, the dot escapes from its familiar environment and encounters microscopic yet cosmic territories in itself and beyond.



EXODUS
Théâtre d'Un Jour (Belgium)
Directed by Patrick Masset
NOVEMBER 15 - 18, 2018
Thur & Sat at 7pm, Fri at 8:30pm, Sun at 3pm

Exodus is a multi-disciplinary performance based on the stories of four refugees, who tell about their dreams of freedom, wash up on the shores of a "free" country, and find themselves facing "the European fortress."



FOOD FOR THE GODS
Written and Directed by Nehprie Amenii
NOVEMBER 15 - 18, 2018
Thur at 8:30pm, Fri at 7pm, Sat at 8:30pm, Sun at 5pm

Food for the Gods is inspired by the killings of Black men. This work uses object and puppet performance to explore "human value," light, invisibility, and, well...the dehumanization of it all.



JUMP START
A PRESENTATION OF WORKS-IN-PROGRESS
NOVEMBER 23 - 25, 2018
Fri & Sat at 8pm, Sun at 5pm

Puppeteer and theatre artists get a chance to showcase their new works.

FEATURED WORKS BY:
Tom Lee and Lisa Gonzales, Loco7 Theatre, Maiko Kikuchi, Concrete Temple Theatre, Torry Bend, & Sova Theater.



SPECIAL EVENT PUPPET SLAM
Curated by Jane Catherine Shaw
NOVEMBER 5, 2018
Mon at 8pm

Puppeteer and theatre artist Jane Catherine Shaw will curate a one-night only *Puppet Slam* featuring contemporary short-form puppet and object theatre from both emerging and veteran puppet artists.



SPECIAL EVENT CELEBRATING RALPH LEE COFFEEHOUSE CHRONICLES
Curated by Michal Gamily
NOVEMBER 10, 2018
Sat at 3pm

Renowned puppeteer Ralph Lee is the focus of *Coffeehouse Chronicles*, an ongoing program at La MaMa that explores the history and development of Off-Off Broadway. Part artist portrait, part creative event, part history lesson, part community forum, it is an intimate engagement with art.



FAMILY EVENT DON QUIXOTE TAKES NEW YORK
By Loco7 Dance Puppet Theatre
Re-Imagined & Co-Directed By Federico Restrepo & Denise Greber
NOVEMBER 10 - 11, 2018
Sat at Noon, Sun at Noon & 2pm

Don Quixote and his friend Sancho Panza travel the five boroughs of New York City on a quest to save the world from evil forces and protect Lady Liberty. Come follow Don Quixote on his quest for love, honor, liberty and justice for all. Ages 4 & up — fun for the whole family!



FAMILY EVENT CHICKEN SOUP CHICKEN SOUP
By WonderSpark Puppets
NOVEMBER 17 - 18, 2018
Sat at 2pm, Sun at Noon

Chicken Soup, Chicken Soup is a puppet show based on the beloved *PJ Library* book by Pamela Mayer. The story revolves around two grandmothers, one Jewish and one Chinese, who come up with elaborate ways to show their granddaughter that their cultural heritage (their chicken soup) is the best.

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Nov. 1 - Nov. 19 any 3 shows \$60

2 SHOW PACKAGES
Sept. 11 - Oct. 31 any 2 shows for \$35
Nov. 1 - Nov. 25 any 2 shows \$40

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This Fall at the Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry

Living Objects

African American Puppetry

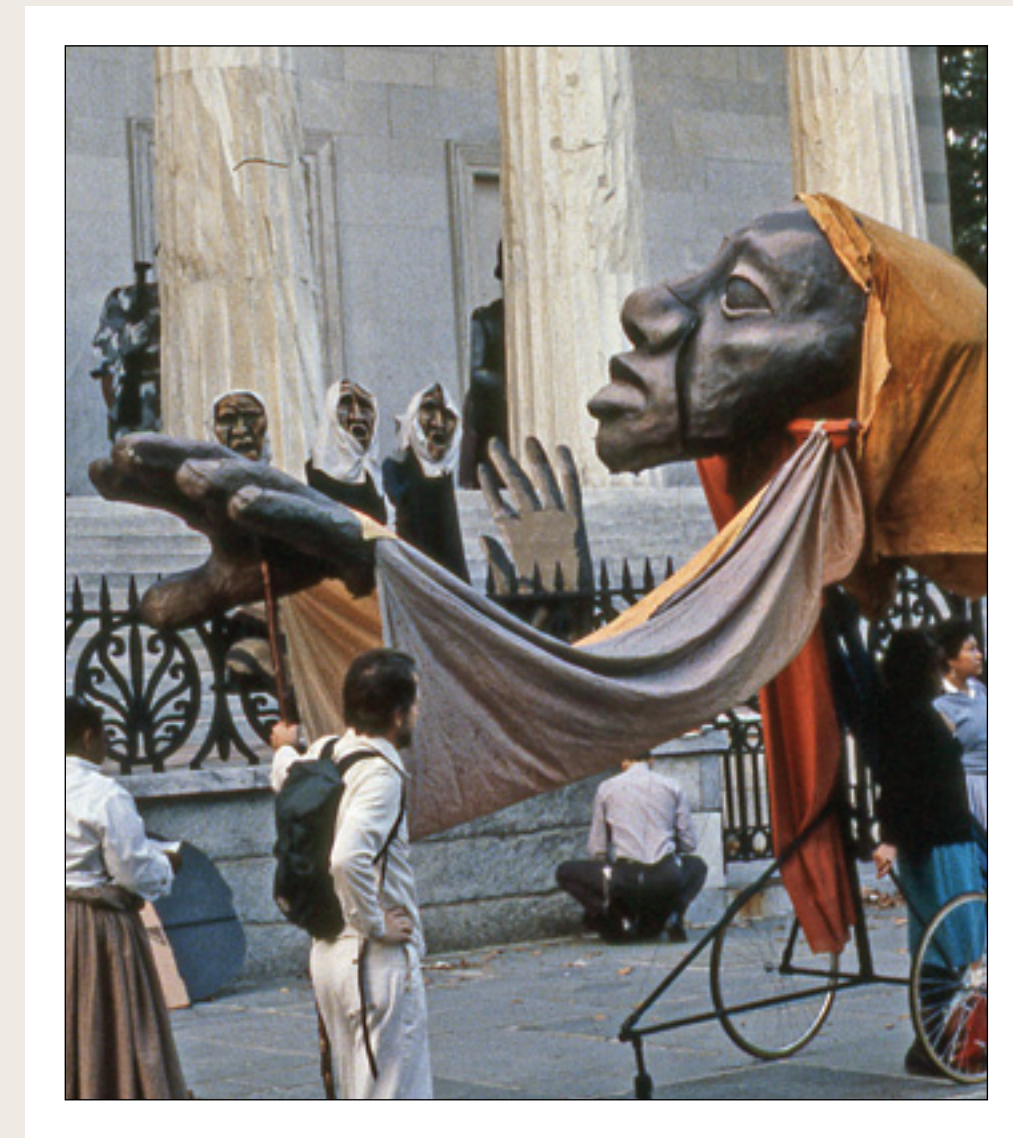
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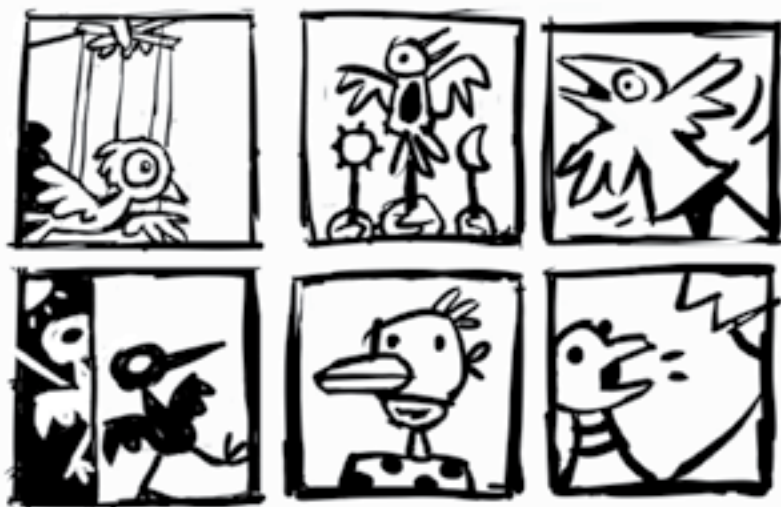
Schroeder Cherry with Curtis Entrepreneur.



SANCTUARY: THE SPIRIT OF HARRIET TUBMAN *SEE PAGE 22*

Puppeteers of America

**2019
National
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Conference
July 16 - 21**



University of Minnesota, Minneapolis