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In this Issue: *Puppetry*



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Front cover photo: A Toby Olié puppet, photo taken by Mic Kemp; from *Curtain Call*, 2006

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Inside front cover photos: Taken from Doug Bishop's Facebook pages

To submit material or comments for future issues please email Sally Robertson on sallyr@ista.co.uk

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Puppets... [from Old French, *poupette*]... Bunraku, Chinface, Finger, Hand, Glove, Human-arm, Marionette, Marotte, Object, Paper, Pull String, Push, Rod, Señor Wences, Shadow, Sock, Supermarionation, Ticklebug, Table Top, Ventriloquist, Wayan Kulit...



INTERVIEW WITH INTERNATIONAL PUPPETEER GARY FRIEDMAN

When did you first become interested in puppets?

I remember as a three-year old entertaining the other kids at kindergarten. Even my nursery school report said that I sit and play with puppets all the time. It seems to have been hard wired in me right from the beginning.

What did you want to be when you were at school?

I was never good at the academics at school. I don't think that any one really understood me. I was quite shy and my creativity was never encouraged. I guess puppetry was the one safe way through which I could express myself. It is a powerful metaphor, which enabled me to say things that I wouldn't have had the courage to. It was a natural progression then, as I grew up during those dark Apartheid days back in South Africa, to express issues that even actors wouldn't be allowed to get away with. *'Puns en Doedie'* (*Puppets Against Apartheid*) opened many doors for me both for self-expression and as a political tool. Many subsequent educational programmes like *'Puppets Against Aids'*, *'Puppets in Prison'* and *'Puppets for Democracy'* also proved the medium ideal for discussing often sensitive or taboo issues, in an open and humorous way.

What did you do after school?

After studying drama at the University of Cape Town, I travelled the world, performing in cabaret venues and on the streets of Europe and the United States. In 1981, I was granted a French Government scholarship to study at the International Institute of Puppetry in Charleville-Mézières, France. Puppet masters were recruited from all over Europe and we studied everything from puppet history, scenography, design and construction to the language of the marionette. Our first course was focused on string puppetry, where we discovered the secret language of the puppet as 'the disabled performer' who is given life by the puppeteer. For the following six years I followed many short courses at the institute, with my final course in 1987, with late-Muppet legend, Jim Henson. This got me started on puppetry for film and television and many years later inspired my career in producing children's puppet television in South Africa and later teaching my own courses in 'Puppetry for Film, TV and the Web' internationally.

When did you leave South Africa and what took you to Australia?

I left in 2002. Everything was collapsing around me in South Africa at the time. The Golden Age of Nelson Mandela had ended and crime was becoming an issue that really affected our daily lives. A friend saw a notice at the Australian Embassy advertising the granting of Unique Talent visas to migrate to Australia. As a joke I applied for the visa and six months later I found myself flying to Sydney.

At that time, I was working on a puppet satire about immigration and exile. *'The Lash 'n Horror Show'* tells the story of a Jewish and Zulu family living next door to each other in Johannesburg. The Jewish family were packing for Perth, while the Zulu family were migrating to the United States, because they couldn't stomach the crime any longer. It was all a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy!

How has your work developed?

My most fulfilling work has been in education and development. This has taken me through Africa and around the world from the Arctic to Fiji, focussing on democracy, corruption, abuse and Aids amongst others. Today my work seems to cover education in more institutional settings. I believe the education system we have, needs urgent change. I see it as an exciting challenge to therefore bring my passion and experience into 'the system', facilitating and role modelling a more creative, rather than merely didactic approach to learning. There have to be ways of changing the archaic and outdated education system that we find around us. It's vital for our youth to learn literacy and numeracy but it's equally important to foster a culture of creative thinking. This just isn't being addressed in most schools. A fascinating fact (highlighted recently by educationist, Sir Ken Robinson) is that 70% of all jobs that will exist in 20 years time, don't exist today. This highlights the necessity of entrepreneurial thought and creative problem solving. My entire life I've struggled as a learner. I've had to rely on a more kinaesthetic, practical and experiential approach to optimise my abilities. Ironically, it is these very institutions with whom I struggled, who are now employing me to share my insights and expose faculty and students to a more creative way of thinking.

Can you tell me a little about this University work?

We were recently approached by Nanyang University in Singapore to run a pilot project with a group of engineering, IT and business students and faculty to inspire them to think in new ways.

Part of the project is working with 'start up' business entrepreneurs. This is very exciting, seeing as the university wants to expose them to the importance and power of thinking 'out the box' as a tool to success. Our work is fundamentally about exploring their latent creative ability, enhancing confidence and risk taking. We always use humour to put messages across and bridge the gaps for communication. That's what puppetry is all about. We use storytelling, which encompasses listening to each other, empathising and expressing emotions in a safe and nurturing environment. It's novel and it's fun. It's learning with ease.

And other work your company has done, in other parts of the world?

For the past six years, we've done work with in the high school system all over the world. We conducted a Primary School project earlier this year for the first time and it was very interesting. I've always been weary of Primary School work. I never thought I'd have the patience, but having a small child of our own now makes a huge difference. We are currently working with Primary and High Schools in South East Asia.

Can you give us an overview of the Primary School project?

We set up an artist in residency programme from January to March this year, working in three Sydney schools. Students ranged from grades 3 to 6. We used puppetry to enhance their literacy outcomes, (developing narratives and characters amongst other objectives). Brain Gym movements and guided visualisation exercises helped to

activate, focus, calm and integrate their brain, senses and bodies prior to performance. We worked with the media of paper and every-day objects to enable them to express themselves in telling their stories.

Why do you choose to work with paper?

It's a beautiful and simple medium. It's cheap and easy to create characters very quickly. In 30 seconds you can build a puppet, which is ready to perform. You manipulate the paper, crinkle it, make it soft, mould it and suddenly you have a character. It is also very exciting to be able to morph characters as the story progresses, allowing characters to change personalities, wax and wane as the story demands. You only require one simple spotlight and you have light and shadow, which immediately creates the most magical character and facial expression.

A favourite project?

I had the fortune to interview former President Nelson Mandela as well as the other South African politicians as part of the first democratic election campaign. The footage went out on national and international TV. My character had carte blanche to say what he wanted, seeing as we filmed, edited and went to air all with in a matter of hours, on a daily basis. No one else saw the footage before broadcast- I haven't had that kind of freedom before or after. This was definitely one of the highlights of my television career.

What ambitions do you have?

We are in the process of developing school resources to complement our workshops. These will also serve as stand-alone instruction manuals which include video footage and a handbook of the techniques and skills on which we base our work. This will allow our work to have a further reaching audience.

I'd also like to start performing again. I haven't performed for a while. I'd love to put a show together, which we can tour internationally.

My other short-term goal is to develop the education component of the 'Looking for a Monster' project that I began about ten years ago. This programme is based on a puppet play created by a 13-year old boy, Hanus Hachenburg, during WW2. It is beautiful and profound work and has pretty much grabbed my soul and won't let go! I've been around the world about three times gathering any information I could glean to develop a documentary based on this boy's life and the extraordinary environment in which he and his friends lived. I performed Hanus' show as a theatrical piece in South Africa and filmed it recently, using Czech marionettes. These elements as well as relevant snippets of the documentary will all be part of the resources linked to the education wing of this project. This is not a typical Holocaust story. In fact it uses Hanus' story as a springboard to encourage students to explore how the arts can be used to change their world. Multicultural acceptance and tolerance is highlighted and students are provided the opportunity to tell their stories and explore meaningful issues in their world, using the medium of puppetry.

Who has inspired you the most?

My first teacher from the Drak theatre in the Czech Republic, Jan Dvorak, instilled in me a love of free improvisation. In fact I am most inspired by artists who improvise on the spot and create great work. I love satirists in general, who cross the boundaries into the unexpected. I gain huge insights from the scientists, philosophers and educationalists on TED. Nelson Mandela was a calm and inspiring force in my life as an activist, using my work for socio-political change. Jim Henson of course, was a man of great integrity and a visionary in the world of puppetry.

For further information and films of Gary's work, visit our website: www.puppetrynews.com



LOOKING FOR A MONSTER©

PROPOSAL FOR 2011 PILOT EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME IN SCHOOLS

Sydney Australia, September 2010



Hanus and his friends...

Everyday heroes using the arts to change their world

"I had to confide in someone, so I confided in paper. Paper is silent, it can take anything. I could pour out my anger, I could weep, and I could rejoice."

Hanus Hachenburg

Our Vision...

To create a world where everyone is valued as a significant member of the community, and where artistic expression is a communication tool to reflect, challenge and bring about change when required. In this way we can all be everyday heroes and change our world for the better.

Through this project we shall provide the youth with the tools for artistic expression, with which they can express their feelings, opinions and stories, on an individual level and within their community. We plan to use the story of Hanus and his friends, as an artistic springboard to promote re-silience, empathy and healthy communication skills. This will act as an

example in which young people use the arts to change their world.

Historical Background

*Terezin (Theresienstadt) is a fortress town sixty kilometres north of Prague in the Czech Republic. During the 2nd World War, the Nazis used it as a holding camp. The so-called "paradise ghetto" of Terezin was promoted to the world as a cosy residence for Jewish families, when in reality it was a hellish existence, where all were destined for the death camps.

Cultural resistance was virtually the only weapon of the human spirit available in Terezin, where the prisoners created unique literature, music, theatre and art. Even the children resisted the Nazis in this way, under the guidance of these great minds of art, music and philosophy.

The Boys & Vedem...

In 1943 in Terezin, a group of boys, among them Hanus Hachenburg, published a clandestine children's magazine 'Vedem', which miraculously survived the war. The 'production' of this

magazine was a culmination of the boys' poetry and prose: Their attempt was to concretise their ideals and change their life for the better: "... we no longer want to be an accidental group of boys, passively succumbing to the fate metered out to us. We want to create an active, mature society and through work and discipline transform our fate into a joyful, proud reality.... We shall not allow our hearts to be hardened by hatred and anger, but today and for-ever, our highest aim shall be love for our fellow men, and contempt for racial, religious and nationalist strife." Every Friday night they would gather to read their week's literary contributions, providing a forum for discussion and cohesion.

Sixty Years later...



In 1999, South African master puppeteer and film-maker Gary Friedman discovered Hanus' original puppet play in a Jerusalem archive. Being a social activist himself, he was drawn to the text as an extension of his own work. In 2001 Friedman performed the puppet play for the very first time.

Since 2002, award-winning Australian documentary film producer, Rod Freedman joined Gary Friedman in documenting survivors throughout the world who remembered Hanus and his writings.





A Message for Today

This project's message is as relevant today as it was in 1943. Recurring themes of 'fear' and the continued threat of 'contemporary monsters' still haunt our world in the 21st century. As Hanus critiqued his society, we want to encourage our audiences, especially youth to be questioning and critical of their world, trusting their intuition, identifying their own fears and expressing their views creatively.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME IN SCHOOLS

Our Aims

To provide primary and secondary schools with support materials for this project, which will complement the Australian school curriculum and involve the local community's participation. The educational outreach programme will include a DVD mini-version of the documentary film, a teacher's study guide, as well as creativity-based workshop sessions exploring the themes of the chosen stories and their applications for students today.

The Study Guide

The teacher's study guide, together with the DVD will be offered to the schools at least one term before the creative workshops commence. This will provide teachers and students the necessary time to read background literature, as well as follow curriculum-linked exercises set out in the study guide (*creative arts, drama, literacy, HSIE, history amongst others*). Certain exercises will involve the students' families and community, as the students research and gather local stories of how

members of their community have used the arts to make a difference in their world.

Puppetry Workshops

The creative pilot workshops will run for the full second term 2011, once a week at each of the selected **Primary & Secondary Schools**. The creative base of the work-shops will utilise the medium of puppetry. Puppetry is renowned for breaking down barriers and opening doors of communication, like no other art or communication tool.

With in the introductory session of the pilot programme, we focus on Hanus, who at the age of thirteen, was already an established writer, contributing leading works to *Vedem*. Hanus' story reveals his passionate desire to understand his world, unleashing itself on paper in poetry, prose and a single puppet play *'We are looking for a Monster'*.

Through the story of Hanus and his friends, we aim to inspire children, to find ways in which they can reflect and change their world, and tell their story through the arts.

The pilot project will culminate in separate finales at each of the participating schools (open to members of the school, family, community members, members from funding and evaluation bodies). This finale may include an exhibition of visual artworks, po-etry, prose and/ or video footage from the study guide exercises, as well as puppetry performance pieces from the workshop sessions.

Our website, www.lookingforamonster.com will be an

integral part of the educational component. Some of the Central Themes to explore

- Children's Rights
- Responsibility: Global and personal action vs passive bystander
- Collective Leadership & Democracy
- Monsters: Global and personal bullies
- Empathy, acceptance, curiosity vs Prejudice, discrimination and judgment
- Resilience and healthy living
- Every-day heroes
- The power of the arts to get our message across
- Puppetry: The magic and the metaphor Agents of social change Communication of sensitive issues

Partnerships

At present we are forging partnerships with in local and national education institutions. These include interested public schools; organisations that produce study guides, as well as museums and organisations involved in interfaith and cross-cultural school experiences.

For further information, please contact Gary Friedman:
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www.lookingforamonster.com



ENGAGING LITERATURE AND LITERACY THROUGH PUPPETRY: AN ARTISTS IN RESIDENCY PROGRAMME, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 2010

By Gary Friedman (in collaboration with North Sydney Demonstration School, Sydney, NSW, Australia)

Brief overview of the project:

Working closely with a puppet artist over 11 weeks, students will holistically, affectively, and cognitively deepen their engagement with literature and personal storytelling. This is a meaningful and unique extension of the research into process drama work begun between the partner schools and the University of Sydney in 2009.

Background:

In 2009, North Sydney Demonstration School was involved with a number of research projects that aimed to enhance literacy outcomes via the Creative Arts syllabus, in particular, the first large-scale quantitative study that examined how drama practices such as Readers' Theatre can boost students' reading comprehension skills. These studies established a learning community that brought NSDS into a close working relationship with teachers from numerous other primary schools across Sydney. Our focus on the rich and diverse opportunities provided by the Arts to enhance learning in other subject areas will continue in 2010.

Project description:

This project will see stage 2 (years 3-6) students from three partner schools, work with the artist (Puppeteer Gary Friedman) to create a body of work that integrates many aspects of the English syllabus - creation of narratives and characters, explanations of the artistic process, the use of talking and listening skills in group work - with the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) syllabus. Students will work for 11 weeks towards a performance piece at an inter-school puppetry festival. The creative processes of puppet design, creation and performance (both as a visual arts and drama opportunity) will deepen their recognition of who they are in relation to others within a community of learners. For struggling readers and writers, the project will open up opportunities in which they and their teachers can work to reconnect and build literacy outcomes. For teachers, this

creative process will be part of a genuine 'turning around' in which they recognise their students as creative artists and active learners: full of agency and capable of significant design tasks. As part of North Sydney Demonstration School's partnership with the University of Sydney, fourth year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) students studying an Integrated Arts subject will observe and participate in the school-based processes. This will build these future teachers' technical skill base in CAPA and extend their existing practicum experiences.

The artistic rationale of the work:

This project will assist students to take on the 'disposition' of the creative artist and create a significant puppetry performance work. It will give students an authentic design and construction task and a focused context for the acquisition of dramatic devices and skills. The presence of a professional creative artist will act as catalyst for this process for students and teachers alike. In addition to the creative processes curriculum, we would like to bring attention to puppetry as a specific art form, one that has an important place in the history of performance both in popular and high cultural forms. The puppetry focus will therefore also provide a content unit that creates classroom opportunities to examine puppetry in different cultural settings and offers rich territory for a classroom investigation of the language of metaphor and symbolism.

The how, when and where of the project:

Classes involved in the project will work with the mentoring artist for half a day each week for 11 weeks. We will build the field, initially, through an appreciation of the history of puppetry in diverse cultural backgrounds, progressing through short workshops in paper manipulation and found object manipulation. The middle section will focus on the development and design of puppets and then lead into a play-building process. Classroom teachers will consolidate and develop the project in

terms of literacy outcomes between artist sessions.

The artist's role:

The artist would initially partake in the project as performer, where students appreciate the art of puppetry and the multiple skills (literacy, design and performance) that go into the creation of a puppetry performance. After an initial series of teaching workshops, the artist takes the role of the mentor / guide for the students' continuing development and creation of their own narratives, characters, puppets and dramatic skills for performance. The artist would also attend the final puppetry performance festival and the roundtable discussion.

How the project will be integrated into the school's curriculum planning and assessment and reporting processes:

Student work, achievement and engagement in the project will produce work samples to fulfill indicators in both the NSW English syllabus: reading (about reading and how to read), writing (about texts and in the creation of texts, narrative and authors' craft) and talking and listening (working collaboratively to create literacy works for performance) as well as the NSW Creative Arts Syllabus, Visual Arts (making and appreciating) and Drama (appreciating and performing). This data can inform reporting processes for first semester reporting in all schools for multiple key learning areas.

Visuals from the workshops and final performances as well as outcomes and interviews from the project can be found with in these short films:

Schools Puppetry Programme launched in Australia: <http://www.viddler.com/explore/puppetrynews/videos/1/>
Artists in Residency Puppetry Interview: <http://www.viddler.com/explore/puppetrynews/videos/5/>
Curl Curl North Puppetry Project 2010: <http://www.viddler.com/explore/puppetrynews/videos/4/>
High School Programme from Vienna 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u76pWsb4aYU>



Gary Friedman Productions

A World of Paper

Puppetry & Creativity Workshops for primary and high schools



For bookings & information:

info@puppetrynews.com

www.puppetrynews.com



Workshop Films: www.youtube.com/user/puppetrynews

A workshop to awaken creativity using the unique medium of paper to create short improvisation pieces and perform stories

This workshop:

- Enlivens the Creative Arts and English syllabi
- Enhances lateral thinking & out-of-the-box problem solving skills
- Encourages originality, imagination and resourcefulness
- Boosts confidence, motivation and self-esteem
- Stimulates improvisation skills and spontaneous performance
- Facilitates non-judgmental listening skills
- Develops team-building and leadership skills
- Improves concentration and focus
- Awakens eyes, ears and brain for optimal creativity
- Teaches relaxation and de-stressing techniques

Primary and High School workshops

Facilitated by:

Gary Friedman - Master Puppeteer & Puppetry-in-Education consultant
Sharon Gelber - Occupational Therapist & Learning-Movement consultant

What participants say about our workshop:

"This type of creativity is showing students that they can reach their potential - that they can have confidence in whom they are and that they can do anything they set out to do.... It develops resilience and gets them to think and articulate their thoughts."

Jan Warhurst, Deputy Principal, Curl Curl North Public School, Australia

"I completely energized myself, exhausted myself, took a lot of creative risks, had a lot of fun, laughed a lot and by the end of the day I felt more alive than I've felt in a long time."

Mhairi MacInnes, Head of Drama, Vienna International School

"It provided the students an opportunity to tell their stories and share parts of themselves that they never get the opportunity to share. All sorts of stereotypes dissolved; boundaries broke down and personal and performance limits soared."

Sile Ni Bhroin, Teacher, Prague International School

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