

PUPPETRY: ITS HISTORY AND ITS USE IN THE SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

Where there are human beings, there is also the human need for some sort of emotional outlet. In view of this fact we find that the puppet show has long been a favorite pastime of man, and it is the purpose of this thesis to trace its history--penetrating remote ages and places for its source, and following its triumphal progress to the present time. Though many incursions have been made into its past, we are not yet in full possession of all the facts. An attempt will also be made to find, whether or no, puppetry has been found educationally valuable as a project in the activity programs of certain schools, both elementary and high, where it has been lately introduced.

Coming as it does, from the pages of antiquity, the story of the puppet or marionette is an old one, and a continued one. Its varied career, in spite of its intermittent periods of penury has evidently had a very definite appeal to the dramatic instinct in man, for the degree of responsiveness that the puppet show still engenders, seems proof conclusive, that it has a universal and lasting quality by which man's inherent emotional tendencies find satisfying expression.

The marionette has charmed the imaginations of rich and poor alike. We hear of such celebrated personages as Goethe, Voltaire and George Sand writing puppet plays, and also producing private shows for the entertainment of guests. Numbers of other celebrities have been the delighted patrons

of the public booths well nigh everywhere in Europe, and now, in our own country enthusiastic puppeteers are emerging in all the large cities and even invading the schools and making their art a part of the regular curriculum. It is safe to predict that the future of the marionette is even brighter than its past, for there seems to be no tendency toward atavistic degeneration. The lauded crimes of Punch, and the vulgarities of the Oriental show have not been imported, for the writer has, so far at least, heard of no revival of these types in America. Those who recognize the magnitude of the task of educating the young are rendering innocuous the enervating influence of coarse jokes to which public opinion of Europe has long been lethargic, by substituting in their places qualities inherently American, and making the marionette subserve the function of education.

CHAPTER I

PUPPETS OF ANTIQUITY

There is some disparity of opinion among authorities with regard to the birthplace of the marionette. Some believe the marionette originated in Egypt, while others claim it owes its origin to India. P. Ferrigni whose history of puppets has appeared in various issues of THE MASK asserts that in Egypt, before the Pharaohs, great idols were made to move their hand and mouths, and after the advent of the Pharaohs these great idols were made to speak. It was believed that they were endowed with souls obtained from the divinity they represented and were consulted by the rulers on matters of state, the images indicating approval by voice or sign, or if approval was not forthcoming, they remained silent and immobile. "Such miracles were reputed to be of divine origin . . . but in practice the speech and movement were the results of human intervention . . . the entire Egyptian temple was built to serve as an abode for an articulated puppet in whose name a priest spoke, and of which he pulled the wires."

Egyptian tombs dating back to ancient Thebes and Memphis have revealed jointed dolls of wood and ivory, that

1

P. Ferrigni. The Mask.

2

Sir G. Maspero. Manual of Egyptian Archaeology. p.126.

may possibly have been children's toys, and were made so that their parts could be moved by pulling strings. A crocodile was also found which moved its jaws on a pivot, and its feet on hinges.

The Boston Transcript in 1904 contained an account of an article by A. Gayet, originally in LA REVUE, in which was given a description of a puppet theater excavated at Antinöe from the tomb of Khelmis, a singer of Osiris, during the Coptic period. Here a little wooden barge was found which contained a stage hidden behind two ivory doors. Above the stage there extended a horizontal rod from which light wires were still hanging, and which were probably the means used for manipulating the figures on the stage. It is believed that the little theater was used in some religious ceremony, since paintings on the walls of the tomb depict scenes of religious rites.⁴ The SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN in 1905 substantiates this account by a similar one relating to the same discovery by the eminent Egyptologist, and the objects found may be seen in the Louvre. The founding of Antinöe dates back to the time of Emperor Hadrian, and was built by him in memory of his favorite, Antinous. Within a tomb M. Gayet found a plaster-covered wooden case which held a mummy, supposedly that of Khelmis, for on the case was inscribed, Khelmis, the precious singer of the Osiris Antinous". The
(erratum - continues on p. 4.)

³

Mills and Dunn, Marionettes, Masks, and Shadows. p.2.

⁴

Helen H. Joseph, A Book of Marionettes, pp.16 and 17.

article continues as follows:

Very curious is the miniature bark containing a marionette theater. It has a set of movable figures which are mounted upon pivots and which were made to move by means of strings. The latter were still visible at the time when the tomb was opened. The sacred bark contains a small platform in the center, mounted in front of which is an upright panel. The panel has a square opening which can be closed by two shutters. In the foreground are the movable figures, crudely carved out of wood, and these can be seen from the front. They seem to represent Isis, accompanied by Osiris, with the sacred tree and the emblem of Horus. The bark containing the miniature theater⁵ seems to have been used in celebration of the deity.

In tracing the validity of these inferences, it is interesting also to note the statement made by Sir G. Maspero, Director-General of the Service of Antiquities in Egypt, in his MANUAL OF EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY that these sacred barks were commonly used in religious services. In shape they were like a boat, the symbol that indicated the daily course of the sun around the world. The naos which was a small shrine of wood or stone and served as the dwelling place of the deity, occupied the center of the bark. Little images of lesser gods made up the crew, and a miniature figure of the king maintained a kneeling posture before the door of the naos.⁶ Maspero further states, however, that none of the statues of the deities have been found, but that what they did and of what they were made are facts already established.⁷

⁵

Scientific American.vol.XCIII. p.342.

⁶

Sir G. Maspero, op.cit.,p.126.

⁷

cf. Note 2.

Another note of interest is an account of an Egyptian ceremony given by the Greek traveller and historian, Herodotus, to which he was himself an eye witness:

To Dionysus(Osiris), on the evening of his festival, everyone offers a porker which he kills before his door and then gives to the swineherd himself who has sold it, for him to take away. The rest of the festival of Dionysus is ordered by the Egyptians much as it is by the Greeks, except for the dances, but, in place of the phallus they have invented the use of puppets a cubit long moved by strings, which are carried about the villages by women. . . a flute-player goes before, the women follow after, singing of Dionysus. There is a sacred legend which gives the 8 reason for the appearance and motions of these puppets.

The claims of India as the home of the marionette has a staunch supporter in Richard Pischel, former rector of the University at Halle-Wittenberg, who, after careful research came to the conclusion that the puppet play is everywhere the most ancient form of dramatic art, and since India has long been recognized to be the birthplace of the fairy tale,⁹ it is probable that the puppet-play springs from that source. Furthermore, through a study of the SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST, he learned that ancient Indian puppets were made of wool, wood, buffalo-horn and ivory, and served as playthings then as at present. Even adults found in them an entertaining pastime. Vatsyana, an ancient writer, in his TREATISE ON LOVE, even suggests that the young men join the young women in this gentle pastime to insure the acceptance of their amorous advances, and again he mentions a game for adults in which the voices and actions of puppets were mimicked by

⁸ Herodotus, Book II. Sec. 48.

⁹ Richard Pischel. The Home of the Puppet Play. p.5.

10
 the players. Whence it was merely a step to introduce talking puppets on a stage. There is an interesting old legend which tells us about the god Siva whose wife Parvati had made herself a doll of great beauty. Fearing that her husband might become enamoured of it, she carried it to a nearby mountain where she played with it daily. Siva, however, became curious, and one day stole after her. On seeing the lovely doll he immediately fell in love with it and bestowed upon it the gift of life.¹¹

Another story in the KATHARSARITSAGARA collection by Kashmiri Somadeva of the eleventh century of our era, is an adaptation of one of the oldest group of fairy tales, the BRHATKTHA of Gunadhya. This relates how a celebrated mechanic Asura Maya by name, made a basketful of mechanical wooden puppets for the Princess Kalingasena, which disported themselves and spoke in ways peculiar to their internal mechanical construction.¹²

Adaptation from the tales in the great Epics, the MAHABHARATA and the RAMAYANA were favorite themes of the later dramatists. The story of Rama as found both in the Ramayana and in a long episode in the MAHABHARATA tells of a god, who, after assuming human form by being born of a mortal mother, is destined to slay the demon, Ravana, since only mortal man could inflict a fatal penalty. Rama grew into a glorious youth and won the earth goddess Sita for wife. Although heir apparent

10

Richard Pischel. Op.cit. p.7.

11 Ibid. p. 6.

12 Ibid. p.6

to his father's throne, he was, by intrigue, forced into exile for fourteen years, and his half brother Bharata placed in the line of succession. Accompanied by his wife, Rama proceeded to Dankaka forest where Sita was stolen from him by Ravana and carried away to Lanka, (Ceylon). Thence Rama followed with an army of apes, succeeded in vanquishing the demon, and husband and wife were reunited. This incident is used by Rajasekhara, a dramatist of the tenth century, greatly distorted, to be sure, in the fifth act of his ¹³ Balaramyana. Here several jointed puppets made by the mechanic Visarada, a pupil of Asura Maya, represented Sita, her half-sister, and Ravana. When Ravana embraces Sita he exclaims, "This does not feel like a woman!" whereupon he invites all the puppets to his place to entertain him. ¹⁴ By way of comment Pischel adds:

Absurd as this incident is, we must yet be grateful to Rajasekhara for it. It is the only passage in the whole of Indian literature where puppets appear on the stage in Sanskrit drama, and what is still more important we learn from it the name for puppet-player in the tenth century, sutrahara, i. e., threadholder, which corresponds with the epithet sutraprota, 'attached to threads' applied to puppets in the Mahabharata. ¹⁵

In the Mahabharata, where is found mention of puppets moved by threads, men are likened to puppets, having no will of their own, but acting merely as servants of God and controlled by him. ¹⁶ Puppet plays find frequent mention in both ancient and modern writings, but the KATHAKOSA contains the only detailed description of an ancient puppet play, as it was performed be-

¹³ Keith and Carnay, The Mythology of all Races, p.127.

¹⁴ Richard Pischel. op.cit. p.8.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.7.

fore King Sundara and his son Amracandra on the latter's
¹⁷
 wedding day.

Although the common name today for puppet in Sanskrit is putrika, the puppet player is still called Sūtrahara, i.e., threadholder, and is also used for designating the manager of the theater. Sometimes there was an extra manager called Sthapaka, whose duties included all the business of puppetry except manipulation and is a direct derivation from the name of that class of priests who set up and arranged the images of the gods for worship.¹⁸ From this fact we may reasonably assume that puppetry preceded performance by human actors, the name of the puppet manager continuing by virtue of adoption to any stage-manager, even though he manipulates no threads.¹⁹ The appearance of a buffoon in Indian drama is quite characteristic. His technical name is Vidusaka, and is usually presented as a bald-headed dwarf with protruding teeth and a humped back.

Javances puppets also date back to ancient times, when the WAYANG PURWA, the celebrated drama of Java, was frequently enacted. It is only more recently that round puppets have been made, being superceded by shadow puppets. Religious observance made it unlawful to imitate any living thing, so the crafty Javanese circumvented the restriction by making flat figures of buffalo hide, often hideously grotesque, manipulated

¹⁷

Richard Pischel. Op. cit. p.28.

¹⁸

Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁹

Ibid. p. 12.

by slender connecting rods from below, while throwing shadows on a lighted cloth screen. "The Dalang, or showman, today, is a person of great skill and versatility",²⁰ operating dozens of figures during the interval of a complete show, speaking for them, and doing any other business contributing to the success of the performance.

The rounded puppets are made of wood, almost as fantastic in design as the shadow figures. These are also manipulated from below. The eighteenth century brought in an innovation that has continued in great favor. This was acting done by human actors, dressed like puppets and imitating their abrupt movements as closely as possible, while the Dalang read the lines.

The Siamese have made very beautiful shadow figures of transparent materials, beautifully colored, and more realistic in design than those of Java. They also have rounded puppets of more recent origin, but their favorite presentations are adaptations of the stories from the Indian epic, RAMAYANA.

The Turkish shadow play is the chief form of drama in Turkey, having for its main dramatic figure one similar to the Roman Maccus and the Italian Pulcinello, called Karagheuz, meaning (Black Eye). Sometimes these shows were obscene beyond description, all depending upon the type of show-man. These shadow puppets are, like those of Siam carefully made and colored so that the general effect of the light pouring through the transparent colors produces a beautiful, luminous

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H. H. Joseph, Op.cit. p.27.

effect, and, at the same time, observe the Mohammedan tradition that angels will not enter houses that harbor either dogs or figures representing human beings; the transparency and perforations of the shadow figures making human likeness impossible. It is probable that the Turkish shadow play was an importation from Persia because the Turks have named the shadow stage after a Persian by name of Shejx Kuschteri, who came to Turkey in the fourteenth century, bringing with him the older traditions of his native country. ²¹ Two centuries before Omar Khayyam had written his RUBAIYAT containing the familiar lines:

We are no other than a moving row
 Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the sun-illum'd Lantern held
 In Midnight by the Master of the show.

The Persians, however, have never carried the art of puppetry beyond its early crude stage, and although the figures were often delicate and beautiful the wandering showmen have scarcely been able to make a living from them; their plays being too low in taste to interest the cultured classes.

The Chinese have, early in their history brought their puppet performances to a high degree of perfection, according to legends that have come down to us. It is said that Emperor Muh of the Chow Dynasty, 1000 B. C., at the conclusion of a visit into Turkestan, invited to China a number of skilled craftsmen, among whom were marionette makers, to

²¹

H. Anderson, Heroes of the Puppet Stage. p.144.

teach his people the arts in which each was accomplished. In due time he ordered a showman to entertain his household with his puppets. In an effort to please the Emperor's wives the showman's puppets became so highly complimentary that the old sovereign in his jealousy almost annihilated both showman and puppets. The fellow only saved his life by tearing his figures apart to prove they were not human.²²

Another legend surrounds the siege of the City of Pin, the stronghold of an Emperor of the Han dynasty in the year 262 B. C. by Mao-Tun and his warrior-wife Lady O. Knowing of the jealous disposition of the Lady O, the Emperor's crafty advisor had caused a gorgeously dressed female puppet to be placed on the wall of the city in full view of the besieging army, and there made to dance in a most voluptuous manner, whereupon Lady O, fearing that her husband might fall in love with this alluring and supposedly living creature,²³ raised the siege, and returned to her wou province.

In China today, one may see the strolling puppetman carrying his box-stage on his shoulders, and when he sets up his stage he stands beneath, completely enveloped in a curtain that hangs down from the floor of the box. His puppets are usually manipulated by inserting his hand into the garment with three fingers controlling the movements of the head and hands. This type of puppet-show is called a "linen bag play". There are also marionette theaters built expressly

22

M. Anderson. Op.cit. p.144

23

H.H. Joseph, Op.cit., p.40.

for puppets where plays are presented similar to the spectacular ones of Italy and France. "The plot is generally the old one of an enchanted princess guarded by a dragon and rescued by a prince; their marriage ceremony furnishes the occasion for the spectacular display."²⁴ Marionettes have also been a popular form of entertainment for guests at the emperor's court, where often the puppet-player was himself of high official station.

The Chinese shadows, however, excell all other types in China, and the French in spite of their inventive genius have only in recent years been able to imitate them in beauty and dexterity. Like the Turkish figures, they are made of translucent hide, very skilfully designed and colored so that the effect on the curtain is entrancingly gorgeous. With these they enact every type of play from everyday themes to the historical, mystical and fantastic, sometimes most subtly delicate in portrayal. "Although the shadow puppet plays were known as Chinese Shadows, the Chinese were not the originators of the shadow drama. They only brought it out of India and carried it to the Mohammedan countries."²⁵

The logical introduction of puppets into Japan is from China, but the Japanese have ventured far beyond Chinese efforts in perfecting the rounded marionette. "Indeed, so powerful a factor has it (puppetry) been that living actors in the classic drama have accepted the conventions of the puppet stage and are trained to the gesture and manner of the

²⁴H.H. Joseph. Op.cit. p. 414.

²⁵M. Anderson, op.cit., p. 154.

ancient marionette."²⁶

The stages of the marionette theaters are large in order to accommodate their large figures. These are about three feet high and made as realistic as possible. They are gorgeously and expensively clothed; and it has been said that an especially elegant costume is set off with lights placed deliberately before it to solicit the admiration of the audience. The inner mechanism of these dolls is so ingeniously and elaborately constructed that fingers move at articulations, eyeballs move, and even eyebrows are made to lift. The manipulation is done by means of rods, and the showman works in full view of the audience in a costume of bright colors. Sometimes it takes two men to operate a single figure, and only their agility prevents the stage from becoming cluttered. A gidayu or chanter, speaks all the lines from a book while seated at the left of the stage in accordance with an established and unique custom, to the accompaniment of the Samiseu, a three stringed instrument. Sometimes, when occasion demands, the gidayu is assisted by a large chorus of chanters who speak in unison, and it is not unusual to find them sipping tea during an interval when speech is not demanded of them.²⁷ While this procedure might seem disconcerting to us, in Japan it is accepted with unperturbed attention.

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H. H. Joseph. Op. cit., p.44.

²⁷

Ibid., p. 46.

"Most of the epic dramas in which the live actors now appear were written for marionettes, and so the verses which the chorus chants describe all the changes of expression on the actors' faces.²⁸

There is a legend in Japanese literature which ascribes the beginning of puppet history to very remote times. In this legend an ugly child, after having been set adrift in a boat, died, and his spirit so troubled the sea, that storms prevented fishing. One day a man named Dokun came and built a temple to the gods, and the waters became quiet again. But after Dokun died the temple was neglected, and the sea remonstrated in anger. Then came one Hiakudaiyu, bringing a puppet into the temple for the pleasure of the dieties. At once the sea became calm and fish plentiful. Hiakudaiyu was then summoned to the court to perform before the Emperor, who was so well pleased that he created a new office in which it was made the duty of Hiakudaiyu to play before all the sacred shrines in Japan. This became a custom which was continued long after his death.

"The Japanese do not care for realistic art; they prefer conventional acting and decorative painting,"²⁹ and the general effect of their plays is of so high an aesthetic tone, that they seem almost like poems; indeed many are poems, but so clear and simple in expression that the illiterate may understand them. The story of O-Some and Hisamatsu, has attained a popularity similar to that of Shakespeare's Romeo

²⁸
M. Anderson, Op. cit., p. 161.

and Juliet. It is one of the epic plays that is shown almost daily in some theaters, and "continues from six o'clock in the morning until nine at night"³⁰. The similarity lies in the sadness of the life story of two youthful lovers and in the tragic death that was the culmination of their loyalty. Shinju is the Japanese name for a play of that type, and this one is a part of the epic of THE SONG OF JUDGEMENT AND PUNISHMENT, written by Chikamatsu Hanji, a poet of the eighteenth century, and pupil of the great Chikamatsu Monzayemon, the Shakespeare of Japan.³¹ Monzayemon is reputed to have written such effecting shinju plays ending with double suicide compacts that an alarming number of sad young lovers found the solution of their problems in the same final tragedy of death.³²

Before this period, epic plays were called Joruri dramas, after a play written by a lady of the court some time between 1607 and 1688, and these were later used in the puppet theater.

In 1685 Takemoto Gidahu established a stationary marionette theater in Osaka called Takemoto Za, Za meaning marionette theater, for which Monzayemon wrote his plays, and Chikamatsu Hanji his play about O-Some and Hisamatsu, writing altogether over a hundred plays for puppets. A second theater known as the Toyotake Za, was established in the eighteenth century, about 1703, and by this time two other dramatists,

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M. Anderson. Op. cit., p.162.

³¹

Ibid., p. 162.

³²

Ibid., p.163.

Izama and Sosuki, were contributing to the plays produced in both theaters. A half century later found the center of puppet performance removed to the town of Yeddo, the two more important theaters being called Hizen Za and Take Za. At the present time only the newer theaters in Tokyo and Osaka are flourishing, the others having been outshone by the cinema.³³

The wandering puppet-man, however, is still to be seen, soliciting coppers on the streets and byways.

The period which we designate as ancient Greece has preserved few records of the puppet show of that day, tho the number of articulated dolls, made of terra-cotta that have been excavated in the Greek temples, substantiates the fact of their early existence. Some writers also aver that the statues of the Greek gods, like those of the Egyptians had certain articulations that admitted of a degree of manipulation by the priests concealed within the hollow bodies. The interest of the Greeks in mechanical contrivances can be traced back as far as the "Iliad" of Homer who lived about 800 B. C. According to the translator, William Cullen Bryant, Thetis comes to the house of Hephaistos and:

She found him there
Sweating and toiling, and with busy hand
Plying the bellows. He was fashioning
Tripods, a score, to stand beside the wall
Of his fair palace. All these he placed
On wheels of gold, that, of their own accord
They might roll in among the assembled gods
And then roll back, a marvel to behold.³⁴

³³ H. Jacobs, Op.cit., p.48.

³⁴ Homer, The Iliad, Bk.XVIII. line 467.

It is supposed that the tripod was a stool or a table, and was sometimes made to support a caldron. Webster's Dictionary includes the following lines in the definition:

On such a stool in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, the Pythian priestess sat to give responses to those consulting the Delphi Oracle.

We hear later that eminent mathematicians were enlisted in perfecting the mechanism of the dolls until, as Apuleius wrote

Those who direct the movement of the little wooden figures have nothing else to do but to pull the string of the member they wish to set in motion, and immediately the head bends, the eyes turn, the hands lend themselves to any action and the elegant little person moves and acts as though it were alive.³⁵

Two centuries before Christ, Heron of Alexandria described how he and Philo of Byzantium had made the ingenious mechanism for two kinds of puppet shows, namely those for a movable stage and those adaptable to a stationary one requiring a division of the play into acts and movable sets. He mentions the APOTHEOSIS OF BACABUS AND THE TRAGEDY OF NAUPLIUS, the latter probably depicting scenes from Homer,³⁶ very elaborately staged. It is safe to assume that the puppet theater was not common until after 480 B. C., that is not until after tragedy had reached a high artistic form, was comedy recognized as legitimate theater fostered by the state, and the following line from THE DEIPNOSAPHISTS of Athenaeus, dated about 225 B.C., seems to corroborate this opinion:

³⁵

H. Joseph, op. cit., p.18.

³⁶

Ibid. p. 19.

The Athenians yielded to Patheinus the marionette-player, the very stage on which Euripedes and his contemporaries performed their inspired plays.³⁷

Another interesting reference to puppets is found in the SYMPOSIUM of Xenophon. At the time of his writing, about 380 B. C., Xenophon was living quietly in exile from Athens on the western side of the Peloponnese and amusing himself with recalling the events of an evening's gaiety supposedly to have been sponsored by one, Callias, for the entertainment of his distinguished guests, among whom was Socrates. A Syracusan puppet-player had been hired to entertain the company with his marionettes, and as Socrates had launched a philosophic discussion that brought forth the confession of each man's source of pride, he inquired of this Syracusan the basis of his pride, to which the man replied: "'Fools, in faith. They give me a livelihood by coming to view my marionettes.' 'Oh!' ejaculated Philip (the jester) 'that explains the prayer I heard you uttering the other day, that wherever you were the god would grant you an abundant harvest of grain but a crop-failure of wits!'"³⁸ Whereupon the puppet-player followed this statement by an impersonation in pantomime of the story of Dionysus and Ariadne, that was received with great favor. There is no absolute proof however, that this particular pantomime was performed by marionettes, because Xenophon mentions the presence of the Syracusan with his "troups." Besides, the

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Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists I, p.19e.

³⁸

Xenophon, Symposium, IV, p.55.

whole story may be fictitious, the reference, however, serves its purpose in establishing the fact that puppet performances were a familiar form of entertainment.

The Romans, it seems, had contributed little to the dramatic forms adopted from the Greeks, but the puppet shows retained their erstwhile favor throughout the Roman period. Roman writers have mentioned them frequently, and the Emperors have sponsored the performances by establishing richly furnished theaters for them.³⁹

About the year 540 A. D. The Romans introduced the style of improvised plays which were called Atellanae, with type actors, the principals commonly designated as Maccus, Pappus, Bucco and Casnar. Maccus was a lively, insolent fellow, with crooked nose, arched back, and large mid-gerth, and made much of his witticisms. A special accomplishment was his ability to imitate bird calls with a pinetta, an instrument similar to that used by the Greeks when wearing masks, in order to be heard from the stage.

It is probable that Maccus is the prototype of the Italian Pulcinella, that name having been adopted because of his birdlike cries, a possible contraction from Pullus Gallinaceus.⁴⁰ There is a little bronze figure supposed to be a likeness of Maccus now in the Capponi Museum which was unearthed in Rome in 1727, and is enough like Pulcinello to

³⁹

W. Mills and L. Dunn, Op. cit. p.8.

⁴⁰

Maurice Sand, The History of Harlequinade, v.1. pp.107-109.

establish the lineage.

After the fall of Rome the puppets were destroyed by the Iconoclasts and almost entirely forgotten, but during the middle ages, they became popular again in religious representations in the Catholic churches, known as the mystery plays. The little figures were carved from wood, painted and dressed in rich robes. They became a popular substitute for other forbidden forms of pleasure, and the simple folk bent their efforts toward making ingenious devices by which to manipulate the figures, and consequently, the religious fervor which at first enlisted the interests of the people in religious drama, wore away, and puppet plays for pure entertainment resulted with their ultimate banishment from the churches. Outside the church then, the Miracle Plays gained popularity, but the dignitaries of the church continued to harass them throughout the sixteenth century, and finally the puppets were obliged to take to the road, where they often met with engagements in noblemen's houses.

41

W. Mills and L. Dunn, Op. cit., p. 10,11.

CHAPTER II
EUROPEAN COUSINS

As was indicated in the foregoing chapter Roman decadence and subsequent papal intervention during the Middle Ages almost ended the history of the puppet. Yet we learn they survived even the mandates of Savanarolla and the decree of the Council of Trent which expelled them from the churches in 1550, because these religious fantaccini, as they were called, smacked of idolatry.

The forerunners of the Italian fantoccini were the religious images used in the early Christian churches, which were gradually supplemented by other figures used in Mystery Plays on special occasions, with stages set up temporarily in the naves. Sometimes, however, puppets and living actors appeared together. "It was before the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem that the greatest of the early passion plays were given by marionettes. . . and greatly loved by the devout pilgrims."¹

Once outside the church, Miracle Plays gained favor and continued for a time in favorable locations, but the erstwhile religious fervor of the people waned, and the proximity of the puppets to the informal life of the countryside resulted in an injection into the plays of a large

¹
M. Anderson, Heroes of the Puppet Stage, p.10.

degree of human interest material and hero plays which was often burlesqued to heighten their entertaining quality. The market places and fairs were favorite resorts and never complete without them. During this period, the sixteenth century, the puppets continued to be subjected to many indignities by the prelates of the Catholic Church, but they survived because of the sheer love of the people for the pastime in which they found such whole-hearted delight. The Italian people love music and gaiety; their country is the land of song and dance, but wholesome withal, and their puppets reflect the characteristics of the people. Later as they wander to other European countries we find they adapt themselves to their new environment readily and are absorbed as one of their new kin.

The Italians have had several names for puppets. Helen Joseph offers the following definitions:

From PUPA, meaning doll, is derived PUPAZZI. From FANTOCCIA, also signifying doll, we have FANTOCINNI, or little dolls. From FIGURA, statue of figure, comes FIGURINI, statuettes or little figures. BURATTINI comes from buratto, cloth, being made mostly of cloth. MARIONETTE is a modification of MARIA the Virgin, meaning little Maries from the early statuettes in churches.

The names pupazzi and burattini were commonly used to designate hand-puppets, while the string and rod-operated ones were generally spoken of as marionettes. There is a story that Venetians love to tell which gives a different version of the origin of the name marionette. In the year 944 there

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Helen Joseph, A Book of Marionettes, p.55.

was celebrated in Venice a festival in which twelve comely maidens were to be married in the church of Santa Maria della Salute. As the procession approached the church a band of Barbary pirates overtook it and carried the maidens away with them. The young men of Venice swiftly followed the pirate ship and after some brave and desperate fighting rescued the brides. After that Venice instituted a yearly celebration of the event which was called the FESTIVAL OF THE MARIES. The climax of the festivities always occurred on the last day, when twelve maidens were married to their respective grooms. The city's gift to each bride was a beautiful wedding gown and an ample dowry, but after a time these prizes engendered so much jealousy and ill-feeling that the custom was abandoned and life-sized wooden images were substituted in symbolic processions. "By and by, the Venetian toy-makers began to make little figures that were exactly like the large figures, to sell as toys for the children. These were called LITTLE MARIES, or MARIONETTES."³

The pupazzi or burattini were entirely manipulated by hand, that is, the hand was thrust into the skirt of the puppet with the fore-finger reaching into the hollow neck, and the thumb and middle finger into the sleeves, thus controlling the hands. This type of puppet was necessarily manipulated from below the floor of the playbox, while the stringed marionette was manipulated above and behind the

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W. Mills and L. Dunn, Marionettes, Masks and Shadows. p.14.

proscenium where the operator stood upon a bridge hidden from the audience just as it is today.

Tales of heroes have always been favorite subjects for presentation, such as the legend of the COURT OF CHARLEMAGNE, with the hero Roland, now over three hundred years old, the legend itself being a favorite one for storytellers as early as the tenth century. The longest of their plays is the story of the seven Paladins, ORLANDO FURIOSO, which takes a year to present in its entirety, with a different episode each night.

Orlando is the most heroic puppet of them all.

"Orlando is the Italian name for Roland, King Charlemagne's Paladin--the glorious hero of THE SONG OF ROLAND. . . The puppet showmen find the plots for all these plays (episodes) in the metrical romances of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They have dramatized Biordo's ORLANDO INNAMORATO, the ORLANDO FURIOSO of Ariosto, Tasso's JERUSALEM DELIVERED, and Pulci's Life and Death of the Giant, MORGANTE MAGGIORE, all filled with romantic and heroic exploits for the gallant puppet Orlando."⁴ He is usually made larger than the other puppets in order to appear nobler, and all of them can pull down their own visor, draw swords, hold up and shift their shields, among many other gestures done by means of the strings. All this requires great skill on the part of the operators, but these men have been puppeteering since child-

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M. Anderson, Op. cit., p.231.

hood, as well as their ancestors.

These Charlemagne legends were just as popular in Spain as in Italy it seems; indeed, they were played in well-nigh every state in Europe. It was the story of THE DELIVERANCE OF MELISENDRA that Don Quixote is reputed to have seen on his travels and became so wrought up over. Melisendra was supposedly the daughter of Charlemagne held in captivity in a tower by the Moors. Don Gayferos, her husband, rescues her but is pursued by a band of glittering cavalry. At the crucial moment they are spared by the intervention of the sympathetic and infuriated Don Quixote. A quotation from Thomas Shelton's translation of DON QUIXOTE will not be amiss here, where Sancho says to Don Quixote:

'And now let us go see the motion (puppet show) for I believe we shall have some strange novelty'. 'Some strange one!' quoth Master Peter, 'this motion of mine hath a thousand strange ones. I tell you, Signior, it is one of the rarest things to be seen in the world!' Don Quixote and Sancho...went where the motion was set opened, all full of little wax-lights, that made it most sightly and glorious. Master Peter clapped himself within it, who was he that was to manage the artificial puppets, and without stood his boy to interpret and declare the mysteries of the motion; in his hand he had a white wand, with which 5 he pointed out the several shapes that came in and out.

And then Cervantes goes on to relate how Don Quixote, being completely carried away by the theme and infuriated by the pursuit of the Moors, came himself to the rescue of the royal maid, and swinging his sword about the stage, demolished the Moorish puppets and almost beheaded poor Peter himself.

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M. de Cervantes, Don Quixote, v.II. p. 365.

Spain also introduced puppets first into the churches, but they became elaborate and vulgar and were consequently expelled. Emperor Charles V after his retirement to a monastery of Cremona beguiled the hours in making marionettes which brought much consolation to his sad and clouded mind. It is said that Torriani, the great scholar worked with him out of friendly sympathy.⁶

From Italy, puppet players ventured to other countries of the continent during the Middle Ages often serving the world in ways other than pure entertainment. They were often used as government spies, or as secret messengers, their messages being delivered by word of mouth by the puppet during the course of a dialogue, and only noticed and understood by the persons for whom intended.

Concerning the origin of Pulcinella, who is the prototype of our Punch, most scholars agree to his direct descent from Maccus, the Roman buffoon of the Atellanæ players, because of his proximity and of his strong likeness to that comedian. In an article upon the Italian comedy written by George Sand in 1852, is the following statement:

The most ancient of all types is the Neapolitan Polichinelle. He descends in direct line from Maccus of the Campagna, or, rather, he is the same character. The ancient Maccus did not appear in regular comedy, but in that very ancient kind of satirical drama called Atellanæ, from the name of the city of Atella, which had given it birth. A bronze statue discovered in Rome in 1727, can leave no doubt on the identity of Maccus and Polichinelle.⁷

⁶W. Mills and L. Dunn, Op. cit., p.18.

Louis Riccaboni, after a careful study of Pulcinelli's origin also came to the same conclusion. At the end of his HISTOIRE DU THEATRE ITALIEN there is a reproduction of the little image.

After the destruction of the pagan theaters, the Atellanæ were still being performed, but during the Middle Ages were suppressed. Then "in the sixteenth century, upon the renaissance of the theaters...a comedian named Silvio Fiorello...introduced Pulcinella into the Neapolitan shows. Fiorello was the leader of a troupe of comedians. He himself played under the name of Captain Matamoros, and entrusted the role of Pullicinello, as it was then called, to Andrea Calcese...who imitated to perfection the accent and ways of the peasant of Acerra, near Naples." ⁸ Then, soon after, came the personification of Pulcinelle in the form of the wooden puppet, who has grown so dear to the hearts of the Italians. He has wandered to France where he was baptized Polichinelle, with the southern section partial to the name Guignol; to Germany, where he is known as Hanswurst and Kasparle; to Holland, where he is called Hans Pickleherring; and to England where he is the famous Mr. Punch. But Mr. Punch's wit is more trenchant and vulgar than is his Italian cousin's who "represents the Neapolitan bourgeois type in its natural grossness," ⁹ and is somewhat less of a ruffian.

In his PICTURES FROM ITALY, Charles Dickens describes

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Maurice Sand, Op.cit. p. 112.

⁹
Ibid. p. 119.

a marionette show he visited in Genoa, for which he expressed great admiration. He writes thus:

The Theater of Puppets or Marionetti, a famous company from Milan, is without any exception, the drollest exhibition I ever beheld in my life. I never saw anything so exquisitely ridiculous. They look between four and five feet high, but are really much smaller ...They usually play a comedy and a ballet...The comic man has extra joints in his legs; and a practical eye, with which he winks at the pit, in a manner that is absolutely insupportable to a stranger, but which the initiated audience, mainly composed of the common people, receive..quite as a matter of course, and as if he were a man. His spirits are prodigious...And there is a heavy father...who blesses his daughter in the regular conventional way, who is tremendous. No one would suppose it possible that anything short of a real man could be so tedious. It is the triumph of art.

In the ballet...the way in which they dance; the height to which they spring; the impossible and inhuman extent to which they pironette; the revelation of their posterous legs; the coming down with a pause on the very tips of their toes, when the music requires it; the gentleman's retiring up, when it is the lady's turn; the final passion of a pas-de-deux; and the going off with a bound!-- I shall never see a real ballet with a composed countenance again.

I went another night to see these puppets act a play called ST. HELENA, OR THE DEATH OF NAPOLEON... There was no plot at all except that a French officer disguised as an Englishman came to propound a plan of escape and being discovered...was immediately ordered off by LAW to be hanged...Napoleon was so affected by this catastrophe, that he fainted away on the spot and was carried out by two other puppets. Judging from what followed, it would appear that he never recovered the shock, for the next act showed him in a clean shirt, in his bed, where a lady, prematurely dressed in mourning, brought two little children who kneeled down by the bedside, while he made a decent end, the last words on his lips being "Watterloo".

It was unspeakably ludicrous...Law was especially fine at the last, when, hearing the doctor and the valet say, "The Emperor is dead!" he pulled out his watch and wound up the piece by exclaiming with characteristic brutality "Ha! Ha! Eleven minutes to six! The general dead! and the spy hanged!" This brought the curtain down triumphantly.¹⁰

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Chas. Dickens, Pictures from Italy.

About the year 1630 two brothers, Giovanni and Francesco Briocci, puppet showmen of Italy came to Paris with their burattini, and by 1649 had established the first puppet theater in that city by the side of the Porte de Nesle. By 1677 they had become "well-known figures on the streets of Paris",¹¹ though by that time the name Briocci had become Brioche as the French were wont to call it, likewise, their Pulcinella became Polichinelle. They were very clever and resourceful, these two men; Giovanni quick with his witticisms and repartee, and Francesco skilful at carving heads for their puppets out of wood and constructing mechanical devices. Madge Anderson does not agree with the above mentioned relationship of the men, but contends that the two Brioche were Jean and François, father and son, and that the father was a dentist as well as puppet-player, plying his trade between shows.¹² Paul McPharlin corroborates her statement with the following observation:

Notice of them (puppets) is first found in 1590. The busy Pont Neuf attracted them; at its end on the left bank, in the Place du Chateau--Gaillard, Jean Brioche showed Polichinelle and pulled teeth about 1649. His son François continued with the marionettes near the old stand until 1695 and after; it was he who entertained the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, at St. Germain-en-Laye in 1669.¹³

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Joseph. Op. cit., p.82.

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M. Anderson. Op. cit., p. 248.

¹³

P. McPharlin. A Repertory of Marionette Plays. p.6.

Winnifred Mills offers another view-point by asserting that after the Brioches became established, the French picked up the art, among them a dentist, who managed his shows on the Pont Neuf, one of the principal bridges, and extracted teeth during the intervals.¹⁴

A favorite story with Frenchmen is one about their poet, Cyrano de Bergerac, and Fagotin, the trained monkey belonging to Brioche, that collected the fees for the shows. A contemporary writer gives this description of the pet animal:

He was as big as a little man and a devil of a droll. His master had put on him an old Spanish hat whose dilapidations were concealed by a plume; round his neck was a frill a la Scaramouche; he wore a doublet with six movable skirts trimmed with lace and tags; ¹⁵ and a shoulder belt from which hung a pointless blade.

As Cyrano passed the puppet booth he noticed the monkey's grimaces, and construing them to be aimed at him because of his large nose, a feature of which Cyrano was extremely sensitive, he drew his sword to frighten the animal, whereupon the monkey, taught to respond to a similar trick gesture also drew his little blade with an air so dignified that it was ludicrous, but Cyrano, beside himself with rage, with one sweep slew the poor animal.

It was in 1669 that the marionettes of Brioche made their debut at the place of Louis XIV where he had been summoned to amuse the Dauphin. For this service Brioche was paid

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W. Mills and L. Dunn. Op. cit., p.16.

¹⁵

H. Joseph, Op. cit., p.84

1365 livres, as the royal accounts show. That royalty became deeply interested in puppet shows is further attested by Helen Joseph:

The following year a French showman, Francesco Datelin, was similarly summoned to entertain the Dauphin with his puppets, "a'raison de 20 loyres par jour". The royal interest in marionettes extended still farther, for some years later, Francesco Brioche and his little wooden figures were protected by a special order of the King himself to the Lieutenant General of Police. And indeed they probably needed such protection for their popularity seems to have stirred up enmity against them. Besides they were often meddling and impertinent and deserved the wrath they incurred.¹⁶

The vicissitudes of the puppets nevertheless, were many. In the turbulent times of the Louis, they were continually taking sides with the hostile factions, making their own existence precarious, but the people continued to clamor for the puppets especially at the fairs of Saint Laurent and Saint Germain, and so they managed to hold their own against the many threats to abolish them. For a time, however, they were "restricted to mere farces of one scene for not more than two characters, only one of whom was allowed to speak and that . . . through a little contrivance which the showman put into his mouth when reciting to produce the shrill squeak characteristic of Polichinelle..."¹⁷ but they always found ways and means to circumvent the restrictions placed upon them, and it so transpired that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were in reality golden years for French puppets, for the intrigues

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H. Joseph. Op. cit. p. 36.

¹⁷
Ibid. p. 37.

of the day proved to be a great stimulus for puppet wit, and the more trenchant it became, the more the people patronized the shows. Sometimes these greivous days were punctuated with miniature guillotine scenes, in which members of the royal household were beheaded, or sometimes Polichinelle himself. The dominant note, however, of the puppet plays at this time was one of passionate protest against the inequalities of the existing system of society and government.

Among the many marionette theaters that have attained a degree of fame, was an early one built at the fair at Saint Laurent by Alexandre Bertrand, who also founded a line of puppeteers. Beginning about 1701 and for over fifty years, together with his son-in-law Bienfait, he "performed in the grand manner, with subjects drawn from classic legend.¹⁸

In the last quarter, beginning about 1784, the Palais Royal was the nucleus of puppet activity. Among the names that made this place famous are M. de Comte de Beaujolais and his Petits Comediens, Caron and his fantoccini known as the Theatre des Pygmees, Dominique Seraphin and his Ombres Chinoises, Ambroise¹⁹ shadow-figures called the Theatre des Recreations de la Chine, and Mme Montansier who showed Puppi Napolitani.

In the meantime Guignol was active in the public gardens where he may be seen today in the gardens of the Tuilleries and Champs Elysees. The most celebrated of these

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H. Joseph. Op. cit. p. 90.

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P. McPharlin, Op. cit., p. 7

was the Vrai Guignol in the Champs Elysees, founded by M. Anatole who was something of an artist.

Guignol is not exactly the counterpart of Polichinelle but rather a twin brother. "Larousse, in the DICTIONARY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY explains that Guignol was a popular type, but above all a local type; that the real Guignol was Lyonnais, and that the name came from an essentially Lyonnais word 'C'est guignolant!'" But in another statement made in the GRANDE NATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIE, Larousse contradicts himself saying that Guignol is derived from Chignol, as coming from China.²⁰ He also states that Guignol's popularity was due to his introduction by one, Laurent Mourguet, who made his plays so attractive that the Magistrate of Court, at Lyon, attended all the plays and served to add so much to Guignol's prestige that a number of his plays were published in 1815 as THEATRE LYONNAIS DE GUIGNOL.²¹

It was about this time that Voltaire was present at the castle of the Comte d'Eu, when a company of marionettes was brought in which the Comte delighted to operate himself. Now Voltaire had had no friendly feelings toward the burattini ever since they had burlesqued his MEROPE AND ORESTE, but curiosity overcame him, and he tried his skill at manipulating. This intimate contact with his erstwhile enemies resulted in his composing for them, for he now realized that

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D. C. Calthrop, Punch and Judy, p.23.

²¹.

Ibid. p. 24

they could be made an admirable vehicle for clever and witty lines. He even invited companies to his home, Cirey, to amuse him.

By 1750 the names Nicolet, Fourre, and Levasseur had been associated with noted theaters, and the younger son of Nicolet, during the third quarter of the century "presented harlequinades derived from the comedia dell'arte.

Another enterprise of note was that of Lemercier de Neuville, who began his long career about 1863. He had had no theater of his own, playing only in available buildings from time to time, but he was soon drawn in with a group of his artistic friends, and at 54 Rue de la Sante (now Saussure) operated a private theater called ²²Theatron Erotiken. To this little theater were attracted all the musicians, artists, and literateurs of the day. The stage was about seven feet wide and as completely equipped as could be in that day for every type of puppet, but de Neuville himself worked almost exclusively with pupazzi, and the modelling of his figures was exceptionally fine. His ability to mimic his friends and other celebrities reached the point of artistic perfection, and although the theater was short-lived, his fame extends to our time.

De Neuville was also greatly interested in the shadow play. Fifty years before, Seraphin's Ombres Chinoises had been the first shadows of any importance, remaining in great

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P. McPharlin. Op. cit., p. 8.

favor even after the Revolution when his descendants continued the art and improved it in many ways. De Neuville's contribution was an enlargement of the scope, but he made no changes in the principles.²³

There evolved a little later more wonderful shadows known as Ombres Francaises who made their home at the "Chat Noire", the famous cabaret of Montmartre, the haunt of artistic Bohemia. Here Caran d'Ache "invented perspective in shadows, using masses of figures in different planes and producing a sense of solidarity and immensity,"²⁴ which was very impressive.

Henri Riviere went even further into the mysteries of the shadows, using two lanterns to dissolve the views in such a way that changes would be effected without the knowledge of the audience. Helen Joseph quotes from a contemporary article by Rehm which will serve to describe the genius that was exercised to execute these plays:

We saw the sun setting into the sea, the forests trembling in the morning breeze; we saw deserts stretching out into the infinite, the oceans surging, great cities flaming up in the evening with artificial lights and the moon silvering the ripples of the rivers upon which barges were silently and slowly gliding along. He (Riviere) employs everything from the picturesque style of water color spread on with a brush to the imitation of Japanese color prints, pen sketch and poster style, Gothic and Pre-Raphaelite characteristics and naturalistic impression".²⁵

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H. Joseph. Op. Cit., p. 98.

²⁴

Ibid. p. 99

²⁵

Ibid., p. 100.

George Sand was also a great enthusiast of the puppet theater. Indeed, she established one of her own at her estate, Nohant, in 1847 and christened it Theatre des amis. It grew out of an amateur attempt by her son Maurice, and was developed according to her own theories, to a high degree of artistry. She preferred hand-puppets to stringed-marionettes, and for thirty years displayed those exquisitely made little figures in skits with a very subtle humor to the delight of her distinguished friends.

From time to time puppeteers appeared who were more interested in the mechanics of the theater, and actually produced shows that were triumphs of ingeniousness. Thomas Holden in 1875, Dickson and John Hewelt, were the chief men who in this period produced startlingly life-like figures. It seems however, that mechanical perfection was not what people found most attractive in puppets, because what drew the crowds to them was not the intricate movements simulating exactly those of humans, but the distinctly marionette-like gestures "so perfectly timed that they achieve an authenticity suggesting a living-will in the marionette."²⁶ Also in the content of the play, if meaty lines were not forthcoming, it mattered not how spectacular the show might be, it declined in favor.

Another theater which flourished between 1889 and 1892, and immortalized by Anatole France was Le Petit Theatre de

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Meyer Levin. Theater Arts Monthly. p. 145.

M. Henri Signoret, where the art lovers might see the finest of the dramas produced in a serious and sympathetic manner. A large group of men from the artistic circles combined their efforts in making the venture a success. An innovation in this instance was the moving of the figures on rails in grooves, the arms and neck being wired and manipulated by pedals from underneath. Helen Joseph quotes the following from the pen of Anatole France:

I love the marionettes, and those of M. Signoret please me particularly. These marionettes resemble the Egyptian hieroglyphics, that is to say, something mysterious and pure, and when they represent a drama of Shakespeare or Aristophanes I think I see the thoughts of the poet being enrolled in²⁷ sacred characters upon the walls of the temple.

There are at the present time so many puppeteers in every European country that they cannot all be named here, nor those now found in Paris alone. One experiment well worth mentioning is that of the Russian artist, Alexandra Exter. She is reviving in a sense the old *Commedia dell'arte*, but her puppets perform in pantomime. They are modernistic in design, impressionistic and therefore not nearly life-like or human. They resemble rather geometric forms, playing in rhythmic motion, and are made of a variety of materials.

In this field belongs also the *Arc-en-Ceil* theater of Paris. New materials, lighting effects, combined uniquely with sound and motion are being shown. Much of the experi-

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H. Joseph. *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

mentation so far has not produced great art, but M. Blattner's theater, and the Manchester Ark also are producing plays of various kinds and seem to be flourishing. "Among the more successful experiments have been the costume models of Kolos-Vari, mounted on sticks and danced across the scene to musical rhythms... M. Blattner's stage is so built as to be usable for all forms of mechanical theatre. The wing-screens serve for hand-puppet shows; stringed marionettes may be operated on the lower stage of the show box, while shadow-plays are presented on the upper stage."²⁸

Like the puppets of other countries those of Germany first appeared in religious plays, and when the church prohibited acting in the theatres, the puppeteers seized the opportunity to house their puppets within, and renamed them "Kasperle Theaters". They had been happily excluded from what religious authorities considered theatrical, and through the dark period of the Thirty Years' War it was they who spared German drama from extinction. In 1794, however, several puppet theaters were closed in Berlin because of their vulgarity but more probably because of spreading the revolutionary propaganda carried over from France.

The puppets were just as popular with the Germans as with the French, and like their neighbors often played before the nobility, who sometimes formed companies of their own, and therefore were inclined to foster the puppet's protection.

Hans Wurst was very much like his English cousin, Punch, but when he grew coarse he was banished from the theaters, and Casperl, more delicate in wit and behavior, supplanted him. Casperl was really Harlequin come to Germany, and by adopting German habits soon won the hearts of the people. In the days of the mystery plays, Harlequin had often played the part of Casper, the King, and finally the name clung to him. Casperl, is an affectionate term, meaning "dear little Casper" and in Austria he is so common a figure that the price of admission to his plays is called a "Kasperle."²⁹

Casperl's most important role was in the play of Dr. Faustus, which was first told as a legend by the ballad-singers, but no one knows when Faust was first played by puppets, since no evidence points to any presentation before the eighteenth century.³⁰ The doctor might possibly have derived his name "Faust" from the German for "fist", which operates the puppet, "faust" also meaning the same as the Greek work for pigmy.

The Faust puppet play, is however, less like the German legend than the play of FAUSTUS written in Shakespeare's day by the English poet, Christopher Marlowe, who took the plot from the legend. The play, very likely, was brought over from England to Germany at an early date by traveling puppetmen, for they were quick to grasp any new material they could, and

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M. Anderson. Op. cit., p. 296.

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Ibid. p. 298.

commercialize it. As early as the seventeenth century the Germans were familiar with Marlowe's play, for English troupes of actors were then playing it in every European country. It is possible that German puppet-players simply adopted the Marlowe version after seeing it produced, at any rate, they presented it more accurately than did English puppetmen.

Geisselbrecht of Vienna is one of the earliest mentioned puppet showmen. He was the father-in-law of Herr Tandler, who became the father-in-law of Paul, "The Puppet Player." It will be remembered that this same Geisselbrecht was the model around which Theodore Storm wrote his POLE POPPENSPÄLER,³¹ and it was his production of Faust that inspired the writing of Goethe's FAUST poem.

As a boy Goethe had been greatly interested in puppets. He writes with tender reminiscence of the puppet theater his mother had given him for a Christmas present, when a boy, an incident that he wove into his WILHELM MEISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP. An excerpt from this work will serve to show his appreciation:

I never can forget that happy Christmas day. I see it still before me...mother seated us before the door that led to the other room. The door opened, but not, as formerly, to let us pass; the entrance was occupied by an unexpected show...Trembling with joy I entered and beheld on both sides of the framework the puppets all hanging in order, as they were to advance to view. I considered them carefully, mounted the steps which raised them above the scene and..not without reverence did I look down between the pieces of boards..

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H. Joseph, Op. cit., p. 121.

...over that tiny world. I surrendered myself to my imagination; I built a thousand castles in the air.³²

When Goethe was about twenty years old he wrote a delightful, satiric play called THE FESTIVAL OF PLUNDER-SWEILEN, which he himself produced in Weimar.

What lent great impetus to puppetry in the seventeenth century was the fact that acting as a profession had fallen so low in repute after the Reformation that actors, out of necessity, became puppet showmen or readers. Moreover, after the Thirty Years' War, the Italian, French and English showmen came to Germany and combined their efforts to entice the public to their puppet shows. In 1657 Italian puppet players established the first permanent theater, in Frankfurt, and ten years later another was built in Vienna which thrived for forty years. The third earliest was the Kaspertheater in Leopoldstadt patronized by the Emperor Joseph II.³³

Toward the end of the seventeenth century an innovation was introduced which combined puppets and line actors on the stage. In this wise did the ostracized actors find their way once more to the stage, but they wisely confined their plays to religious types. Near the close of the eighteenth century when Gottsched and Lessing brought fresh impetus into poetry and drama, the actors once more returned to the theater, and the marionettes, though still popular, were for a time out-shadowed.

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J. Goethe. Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.

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H. Joseph. Op. cit. p. 123.

Again in 1851 marionettes experienced another revival in Berlin. At the castle of Eisenstadt in Hungary, Prince Nicholas Joseph von Esterhazy established a very elaborate private theater, for which Joseph Haydn composed musical numbers. THE TOY SYMPHONIES and THE CHILDREN'S FAIR are charming symphonies he wrote for this theater, and to the number he added five operas, namely: FILEMON AND BAUCIS, GENIEVRE, DIDONE, VENDETTA, and THE WITCHES' SABBATH.³⁴

In Munich one may visit today two famous marionette theaters. One was built as a token of appreciation by the people of Munich, for an old puppet showman known as Papa Schmidt. Seventy-three years ago Herr Schmidt installed his first puppet theater, his first play being one written for him by a nobleman, Graf Pucci which he called PRINZ ROSENROT AND PRINZESSIN EDELWEISS. Today the same puppets with many others are housed in the modern theater situated in a park where his daughter, since his death, now conducts the shows.³⁵

The other theater is THE MARIONETTE THEATRE OF MUNICH ARTISTS organized by Paul Brann. Artists of the locality have built, decorated and equipped the theater until it presents a picture that is perfect in every way. Herr Brann emphasizes rugged simplicity in modelling to give a touch of the noble and naive to the characters.

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H. Joseph. Op. cit. p. 127.

³⁵

Ibid. p. 129.

Baden-Baden boasts of another marionette theater managed by the artist Ivo Puhonny whose versatility is seen in the variety of characters he makes and impersonates. He accomplishes this effect of variety of facial expression through chiaroscure modelling, and he strives for symbolic rather than realistic conception.³⁶

Everywhere in Germany puppet theaters are springing into being. The young people particularly, are venturing into hitherto unknown paths, and their inventiveness is producing unique and attractive effects. A few of the names that are already being mentioned along with the older professionals are: George Zink in Karlsruhe, Erehrodt in Freiburg, Thomas Schuch in Sölln, Maria Janssen; Arthur Ganzauge in Dresden, and Clara Popp in Hamburg.³⁷

Richard Teschner, of Vienna is one of the most outstanding puppeteers of today. He is both a painter and sculptor. Each puppet is a work of art in design, finish and mechanical adjustment, moving with grace and ease by means of rods that are manipulated from below. Even the little doors that take the place of a curtain open to the tinkling of music. His theater is, however, private and only a few of the elect ever see him play.³⁸

Today, all visitors to Germany who have been imbued with the puppet tradition, make the pilgrimage, so to speak, to the theater of Anton Aicher in Salzburg. Though not far

³⁶ H. Joseph. p. 132.

³⁷ ibid. p. 134.

³⁸ W. Mills and L. Dunn. Op. cit., p.21.

from the famous theater of Max Reinhardt people crowd daily into his little theater. His repertory is extensive, for he aims to please the taste of all types of theater-goers.

Anton Aicher was, for thirty years, a teacher of sculpture in Salzburg, and widely appreciated, when he became interested in the puppet theater operated by Papa Schmid. Being dissatisfied by the limitations of those puppets, Aicher worked for three years at perfecting their system of motions, surmounting difficulties until these tiny people could express emotions in the synchrony of word with gesture with marvelous ease and dexterity. Then Aicher established his own theater in old Borromaun, where he has played since 1913. Visitors to his theater have described the charming curtain as coming from the studio of the late Leo Reiffenstein, the artist. The proscenium is a simple but tasteful frame carved by Aicher's own hand. The construction of the upper stage, the scene of the action, is such as to enable the players to prepare the next scene while the play is in progress. The swift change is made possible by means of a practical and easily manageable sliding board. The space below the stage is reserved for the speakers and singers, and an ingenious installation directs the acoustic waves towards the stage, thus producing the illusion that the figures themselves are actually speaking. This device affords a great advantage over former puppet theaters. The latest in electrical apparatus and technique has also been acquired for facilitating stage work and lighting.

The management of the puppets requires four puppeteers, directed by Anton Aicher's son, Hermann. For scenes requiring many puppets there is a special contrivance for hanging them up. The figures are worked by strings and are only about eighteen inches tall, each head beautifully carved from wood by Anton Aicher himself with superb skill. The costumes have been cleverly executed by Frau Aicher. The scene and sets have for the most part, been supplied by other art-loving people in Salzburg.

Aicher produces a variety of plays, but among the older comedies, he followed Joseph Schmid's advice and chose only a few that were wholesomest. It was fortunate for the puppet theater that Count Pocci, who was painter, musician, poet and court official turned his numerous gifts to account for the pleasure of the people and, above, all, of the children. Being a man of refined artistic taste, he unconsciously raised the puppet-show from its low standard to literary perfection. Truth is more willingly accepted when it appears under the mask of a jest, and the home-truths uttered by Kasperl in his amusing way have greater influence than many a sermon on morals, because beneath the bright humor with which Pocci invests the figure of Kasperl, lies the deep seriousness which cannot be sufficiently appreciated. Pocci's comedies gain in value by the fact that they combine the rather drastic comical element with the poetry of a fairy life. His rich imagination has revived a whole series of beautiful fairy tales. Pocci has found a follower in Hans Seebach, a poet of Salzburg, who has written several humorous

plays for Herr Aicher's theater. The subjects are also from fairy lore.

A recent venture has been the addition of several comic operas, professional singers being employed for them. Only those who have seen how naturally the movements and music blend, can fully appreciate the charm of these performances.

Other European countries are not without their puppet-shows. In Switzerland, Dr. Max Scherer is responsible for a revival of the marionettes. His shows are for the most part for children, with a wide latitude of subjects, following the traditions of Graf Pocci and Papa Schmidt. Each program is presented "in a simple, unsophisticated style just as folk lore should be presented to the native public". In Zurich we find another Schweizerisches Marionetten Theater operated by Alfred Altherr, who has been influenced by Appia and Gordon Craig. His shows are highly stylized. His puppets are very modern, and sometimes grotesque, and emphasis of his presentations is on those lively qualities that smack less³⁹ of realism than of characteristics peculiar to the marionette.

Russia also has travelling puppet-men, and even the well-known actor Vladimir Sokoloff occasionally exhibits a group of marionettes of his own making, quite outstanding for their rhythmical motion and gestures, and we have already mentioned the work of the Russian artist Alexandra Exter in Paris. Poland is still presenting religious puppet plays.

³⁹

H. Joseph, Op. cit., p. 136.

In Czecho-Slovakia there are at least ninety-five itinerant puppet showmen, each boasting of his lineage of puppet-players. There is also a Czechish Kasper who is called Kasperek, and the little rogue may be seen in almost every play. Prague is almost infested with puppets. One prominent artist there, Volkmann, the sculptor, and another by name of Sucharda, are now operating ⁴⁰ puppet theaters for children.

In Pilsen, Jan Skupa has produced so fine a repertory of puppet plays that the city has extended its support with a permanent theater. It is said his puppets are so extremely fantastic in design that they are most fascinating.

The drama in England too, first consisted of mystery plays, because here, as on the continent it also began in the church. Before the Bible had been printed much of religious instruction was received by the masses through dramatized Biblical stories that were acted in pantomime by the priests within the churches. "As the plays grew longer" writes Madge Anderson, "and more elaborate, they outgrew the space in the crowded churches and were moved out into the porches and finally to the church yards, and the townspeople were allowed to take some of the parts."⁴¹ Gradually puppets were introduced in the churches and the mystery plays were continued in pantomime by these wooden actors through the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries. When the Protestant faith, however, began to manifest its influence, both the images and the puppets were removed from the churches, and they were henceforth

⁴⁰H. Joseph, *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴¹M. Anderson, *Heroes of the Puppet Stage*, p. 102.

obliged to continue their "motions," as such exhibitions were called, at the country fairs.

Now the guilds assumed control of these dramatic presentations, vying with each other to make their part more effective than all the others. Our play of Saint George is one of their Saint's plays, called at that time, THE HOLY MARTYR SAINT GEORGE, but the Mysteries continued to be popular. "In the larger towns the guilds acted their scenes on pageants, movable stages that followed the Corpus Christi procession through the streets and stopped before the stands where the audience waited."⁴²

Then, somehow, Punch made his appearance and became a necessary adjunct to these plays, and "some historians claim that Mrs. Judy got her name from Judas, and that Punch himself is descended from Pontius Pilate, who was always a clown in the Mystery plays."⁴³

The people delighted in their wooden actors, and the nonsense that supplanted the place of former preachments was less dull and therefore far more acceptable. Now there came a change in English thought and drama, and the puppets began to take on new characters, chosen from legendary heroes, and took part in the outdoor festivals that now became popular, with Punch in the center of it all.

Just how early Punch came to England, nobody seems to know. Puppets jerked by strings were known to the boys in

⁴²

M. Anderson. Op. cit. p. 105.

⁴³

Ibid., p. 107.

the twelfth century, before Punch was heard of. It is generally conceded that the English Punch was the Italian Punchinello, shortened to Punch. Madge Anderson has found an entry made in 1666 and 1667 in the overseer's books of St. Martin's Church for money, which states: "Punchinello, ye Italian puppet-player for his booth at Charing Cross."⁴⁴ These were the days when Italian actors were invading all countries of Europe. F. J. McIsaac tells us of an earlier date in a letter dated July 14, 1575 in which the Lord Mayor of London, authorizing "Italian Marionettes to settle in the city and to carry on their strange motions."⁴⁵

During the quarrel between the Puritans and the stage the English theaters were closed in 1642 by Cromwell, and for a time, only the puppet shows continued their activities unmolested. The actors of the time keenly resented the fact that the puppet-players were usurping not only the stage, but turning all the dramatic material available into plays suited to puppet presentation. In C. Hindley's MISCELLANEA ANTIQUA ANGLICANA, is an excerpt taken from a contemporary pamphlet dated 1643 which reads thus:

The Actor's Remonstrance of Complaint: For the silencing of their profession, and banishment from their several Play-houses. In which is fully set downe their grievances, for their restraint: especially since Stage playes only of all public recreations are prohibited; the exercise at the Beares College, and⁴⁶ the motions of Puppets being still in force and vigor.

⁴⁴

M. Anderson. Op. cit. p.113.

⁴⁵ F. J. McIsaac. The Tony Sarg Marionette Book. p. 19.

⁴⁶ C. Hindley, Miscellanea Antiqua Anglicana. V. III.p.548.

The Restoration subsequently restored the actors privileges, with the pendulum swinging to the other extreme.

There is frequent mention of puppet play in the literature of this time. Two instances from Shakespeare give probably the earliest reference to puppets, namely, in THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, the clown, Speed, in an aside says:

O excellent motion! O exceeding puppet!
Now will he interpret to her.⁴⁷

And in THE WINTER'S TALE, finished about 1611 Autolycus (the rogue) who pretends to have been beaten and robbed says to the clown about his supposed malefactor:

I know this man well...he compassed a motion of the
Prodigal Son.⁴⁸

In the introduction the editor states that the germ of the Romance was probably an actual incident in the fourteenth century annals of Poland and Bohemia.

Ben Jonson, a commanding literary figure, whose span of life paralleled that of Shakespeare, actually brought puppets into his plays. In BARTHOLOMEW FAIR he has Lanthorn Leatherhead, dressed as a puppet showman say:

O the motions that I, Lanthorn Leatherhead have given
light to...!

And in scene III, when standing before a puppet-show booth, Choke says:

How now! What's here to do, friend?

47

W. Shakespeare, THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, Act.II, Sc.1.

48

W. Shakespeare, THE WINTER'S TALE. Act.IV.sc.III.

And Sharkwell answers:

'Tis a motion, an't please your worship.⁴⁹

Again in EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOR, acted for the first time in 1598, with Shakespeare taking part, Asper is made to say in the induction:

Will show more several motions in his face
Than the new London, Rome, or Nineveh.⁵⁰

And in A TALE OF A TUB, Medlay says to Pan:

Now, sir, this tub I will have capt with paper
A fine oiled lanthorn paper that we use...
Which in it doth contain the light to the business
And shall with the very vapor of the candle
Drive all the motions of our matter about
As we present them.

The significance here lies in the fact that Jonson was familiar with the shadow play, such as is mentioned in the Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyam, and is so far, the first record of the possibility of their existence in England.

THE DIARY of Samuel Pepys contains many illusions to the puppet shows of his time. His first mention of them in 1661 is not favorable, but as he continued to partonize them, he succumbed to their spell, as did everyone else. On September 7, 1661, the advent of the Restoration, he writes:

...And here was BARTHOLOMEW FAIR (By Ben Jonson) with the puppet-show, acted today, which had not been these forty years, it being so satirical against Puritanism, they durst not till now, which is strange they should already dare to do it, and the King to countenance it; but I do never a whit like it better for the puppets, but rather the worse.

49

Ben Jonson. Bartholomew Fair, Act V.sc.1.

50

Ben Jonson. Every Man in his Humor, Induction.

51

Ben Jonson. A Tale of a Tub. Act, V.sc.III.

Nine months later, May 9, 1662 he writes with mild appreciation:

Thence to see an Italian puppet play, that is within the rails there, (Covent Garden) the best that ever I saw, and great resort of gallants.

A few weeks later we find him expressing a whole-hearted enjoyment along with the common people and nobility that were now frequenting these shows, for on May 23, 1662 he enters the lines:

My wife and I to the puppet play in Covent Garden, which I saw the other day, and indeed it is very pleasant.

On October 8, 1662, he makes an entry which establishes the fact that these intriguing little people found themselves basking in the royal favor:

At night by coach to my Lord's again, but he is at Whitehall with the King, before whom the puppet plays I saw this summer in Covent Garden are acted this night.

By September 21, 1668, his last mention of the puppets in his diary, some years have passed, but he confesses here complete submission to the charm of these fascinating wooden creatures:

To Southwark Fair, very dirty, and there saw the puppet show of Whittington, which was pretty to see; and how that idle thing do work upon the people that see it, and even myself too!⁵²

The most famous Punch in the days of Queen Anne, was the one owned by a humped-backed dwarf, known as Mr. Powell, who had a stationary theater at the southeast Piazza at Covent Garden, just across from the portico of old St. Paul's Church. Near by were the Coffee Houses, where the fashionable of London gathered to discuss literature and politics over

their cups. For these wits, the two newspapers of the day, the TATLER, edited by Richard Steele, and the SPECTATOR, edited by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, afforded amusement by way of fictitious accounts of Punch's tendencies to behavior. Both of the men were active supporters of Powell's show, but they often used poor Punch as a butt for their witticisms, or for making political and social criticisms that they cared not to express otherwise. Punch set himself up as a censor moral and gained no little reputation as a political oracle. "But if Punch grow extravagant, wrote Addison in his facetious vein on April 9, 1711, "I shall reprimand him very freely."⁵³

It was Mr. Steel's pleasure at times to write letters to himself through his paper which he would answer in the next issue. It gave him opportunity to satirize on London life. On one occasion he printed a letter, coming supposedly from the sexton of St. Paul's Church. It appeared in the SPECTATOR of March 16, 1711 as follows:

Sirs:

I have been for twenty years under-sexton of this parish of St. Paul's, Covent Garden...till this fortnight last past, during which time I find my congregation take the warning of my bell...to go to a puppet show set forth by one Powell under the piazzas ...there now appears among us none but a few ordinary people...I have placed my son at the piazzas, to acquaint the ladies the bell rings for church and that it stands on the other side of the Garden; but they only laugh at the child. I desire you would lay this before all the world, that I may not be made such a tool for the future, and that Punchinello may chuse

hours less canonical. As things are now, Mr. Powell has a full congregation, while we have a very thin house; which, if you can remedy you will very much oblige.⁵⁴

In the meantime, however, Steele discovered that Powell had been contributing a part of his proceeds to the poor, and he hastened to apologize for his mistake:

Mr. Spectator:

I am sexton of the Parish of Covent-Garden and complained to you sometime ago...that crowds of people of quality hastened to assemble at a puppet-show on the other side of the garden...I now am convinced of the honest intentions of the said Mr. Powell, and send this to acquaint you that he has given all the profits which shall arise tomorrow night by his play to the use of the poor charity-children of this parish. I desire you would publish this voluntary Reparation which Mr. Powell does our parish...⁵⁵

Mr. Powell's theater, however, was not the only large puppet playhouse London had known. Two others, one at Holborn Bridge and another at Fleet Street had been much patronized during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The actor-poet, Colley Cibber also established an elaborate theater in St. James' Street, and the Indian Kings were to be found in King Street near Covent Garden, and besides these there were two famous theaters outside of London namely at Eltham and at Brentford.⁵⁶

Henry Fielding, the English novelist when he wrote his story of TOM JONES, A FOUNDLING to counteract the effect of

⁵⁴

J. Addison and R. Steele, The Spectator, #14, p.57.

⁵⁵

M. Anderson. Op. cit., p.86.

⁵⁶

Ibid., p. 91.

the previous works of the sanctimonious Richardson, describes a puppet show encountered by Jones and his companion while on their travels. Thus the incident is related:

The puppet show was performed with great regularity and decency. It was called the fine and serious part of the PROVOKED HUSBAND, and it was indeed a very grave and solemn entertainment, without any low wit, or humor or jests; or to do it no more than justice, without anything which could provoke a laugh. The audience were highly pleased..."I would by no means degrade the ingenuity of your profession(said Jones) but I should have been glad to have seen my old acquaintance Master Punch...and by leaving out him and his merry wife Joan, you have spoiled your puppet-show." ..."The landlady now...fell upon the poor puppet-mover ..."Nothing can be learned by such idle shows as these. I remember when puppet-shows were made of good scripture stories, as JEPHTHAH'S RASH VOW...and when wicked people were carried away by the devil. There was some sense in those matters."⁵⁷

There were periods after this Golden Age for puppets when we hear very little of them. They were kept alive it seems, by the itinerant showmen as in former periods of depression, and we find a full description of one in THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, as Charles Dickens knew them; the same box, with the same Punch, and the same plays, with the same methods of attracting or following the crowds to play to, and similar players may be seen today wandering through the streets of London. One of these is Clumn Lewiss, with a set of genuine old dolls, that he has manipulated for fifty years.

A group of expert players that now move from place to place are the Wilkinsons, a family interested in preserving the old type of show, presented in a very up to date manner.

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H. Fielding. History of Tom Jones, V. II. p.112.

Then there are the Ilkely players, a group of girls, offering revivals of the old classic productions.

Since Gordon Craig has deserted England, Willaim Simmonds is probably the most outstanding puppeteer today. His puppets are exquisite creations like those of Teschner's, which he exhibits only occasionally in London, when not in his studio in Far Oakridge. They are so nicely jointed and balanced that a few strings skilfully manipulated are all that is necessary to make them expressive. His plays are all in pantomime, and he is the sole actor behind the little stage.
58

Gordon Craig, as everyone knows, has interests that transcend the puppet-stage, but he has been an ardent disciple, nevertheless and has accomplished effects such as no one else has been able to do. He makes the puppet to suit the gestures it should play, in such a way that it will respond to his touch only in a particular way, and no accident can alter it, thus the results are never miscarried. Although his system requires duplicates of puppets in order to give a character a variety of gestures, each duplicate figure having different articulations, it is possible to surmount almost every difficulty in the presentation of a play.
59

58

H. Joseph, Op. cit., p. 158.

59

Ibid., p. 162.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN COUSINS

The marionette tradition is now being zealously fostered here in America. Our response has been feeble in the past but the earnestness with which amateurs now take up the cause bids fair toward making our own country a center for puppet activity.

Before our European cousins had ever communicated with us, our own native Indians were making and employing puppet images in their religious ceremonial dramas. The Hopi Indians of Arizona present annually the GREAT SERPENT drama, always in the month of March. It is acted in the evening by six sets of actors, and nine different rooms are used simultaneously, each showing a different episode to a different audience. By the end of the evening each act has completed the rounds, thus making in all nine complete performances. It is all symbolic of their religious notions, and very elaborate, with great puppet serpents playing an important part. Sometimes Marionette Corn Maidens are also presented, who grind corn to the rhythm of their swaying bodies as they kneel.

Another exhibition of figurines was given by a medicine man of an eastern tribe. This Indian sat on the ground with a blanket wrapped about his feet. He first drew forth two little jointed figures, and with the aid of an assistant who sat a few feet away chanting charms, the figures were made to dance. This performance was intended to inspire awe through

the mysterious movements of the lifeless images, but Mr. Hoffman in the Nineteenth Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892, writes that he had observed that the figures were connected by dark threads extending from one man to the other, the ends being looped around their toes so that the hands were free. Thus by moving the tows slightly the figures danced. This record is probably the best instance of any approximation to our puppets as we know them.¹

There seems to be no accounts extant of marionettes in the United States before the latter half of the nineteenth century, but now-a-days one can even find foreigners presenting plays in their native tongue in the quarters of the large cities where their countrymen congregate. In Cleveland, the adventures of ORLANDO FURIOSO are now as much at home in the Latin quarter as in Italy, and in the Greek quarter is the Turkish shadow comedy with the genuine Karagheuz,² slightly naturalized.

In the foreign quarter in New York City at 109 Mulberry street, the ADVENTURES OF ORLANDO FURIOSO also hold nightly exhibits. It is entirely a family organization belonging to the house of Manteo which has been puppeteering for the last eighty years in Italy first, then the Argentine, and now in New York. There are in all, mother, father, three sons and a daughter, and all employ their time to the success of their show from which they derive their livelihood. The Manteos have at least 450 marionettes and their play lasts two years, with a different entertainment at each performance. The

¹H. Joseph, Op. cit. p. 172.

²Ibid. p. 174.

audience consists usually of laboring men and children, who respond with boisterous laughter that is at times almost ribald. "We all work", volunteered one of the Manteos. "Little Johnny is only seven years old, but he can read the stage notes to my father already. My father just speaks the lines out of his head. The story is taken out of that book, the REALE DI FRANCIA. Every night we sit around the table and read a chapter. Then my father writes a few things in a notebook, like this: 'Very tough looking man says he is going to kill the prince. Then on the stage he makes up the talk.'³"

Perhaps the first of our modern marionettes have been those of Ellen Van Volkenburg, who before the war was directing a group of puppeteers at the Chicago Little Theater. It was here that the word puppeteer was coined. These players have long since disbanded, but they have carried their enthusiasm into puppet shows of their own organizing. Lillian Owens, Hettie Louise Mick, and Carrol French are three of the names that helped to make this venture successful. Some of the plays produced were THE DELUDED DRAGON, of Chinese origin, THE LITTLE MERMAID, COLUMBINE, and a remarkable presentation of a MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. All the figures were made with exquisite and poetic finesse, and the entire atmosphere of the theater was so enticing that patrons were lured there night after night. Ellen Van Volkenburg, (Mrs.

³

George Tichenor. Theater Arts Monthly. Dec. 1929.

Maurice Brown) after-wards directed puppeteers at the University of Utah, and then at the Cornish School in Seattle. She is, with her husband, producing shows now and then in the eastern states.⁴

The Cleveland Play House can boast of being also among the pioneer puppet experimenters. Raymond O'Neil who organized it, had been deeply influenced by E. Gordon Craig, and when he chose for his first production *THE DEATH OF TANTAGILES*, he permitted only a frugal handling of color and line in his sets, but these he brought out to strong significance by clever lighting, thereby obtaining a unique and deeply expressive effect. Helen Joseph has since then produced plays in the same theater, for children and grownups too, and so far has its influence reached that every school in the city has finally made a puppet stage of its own. Even the city permits the school children to produce their plays before the public in the auditorium of the Cleveland Art Museum.⁵

One of the most widely known and greatly admired artists in this field is, of course, Tony Sarg. Though he was, before the war, living in London, in the "Old Curiosity Shop" made famous by Charles Dickens, and where he entertained his friends with his first puppet shows that had become a hobby with him, he went to New York to carry on his work as illustrator, and incidently as puppeteer. From boyhood he had been collecting old toys, and then one day the idea

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H. Joseph, Op. cit. p. 176.

⁵
Ibid. p. 177.

occurred to him to make marionettes, but, as there was no literature available that explained their construction, he was obliged to work out a system of his own. Many of the novices he has trained since then are now free-lancing with signal success. Mr. Sarg travels no longer with his shows, but the thorough training that his players receive from his hand equips them so completely that leadership is no longer necessary. This troupe produced several shows in Los Angeles ten years ago that were amazing examples of what can be done with puppets. Thackeray's THE ROSE AND THE RING dramatized by Hetty Louise Mick, seems still to hold its own as the favorite of all his plays, but it has a close rival in TREASURE ISLAND.

After experimenting with puppets three feet tall, he decided that they were too cumbersome and too expensive to handle, and since then he has confined their height to eighteen inches, with articulations so skilfully worked out that they can be made to pick up articles, smoke pipes, play musical instruments, and even transform old faces into young ones.⁶

Three other early New York puppet shows were begun by Remo Bufano, who produced in true Italian style, and was recently awarded the Guggenheim scholarship to go abroad to study; Michael Carr, who had worked for some years with E. Gordon Craig in Florence, with a decided modernistic bent; and Lillian Owens, mentioned above, who now is occupied in making puppets for others use.

⁶F. J. McIsaac. The Tony Sarg Marionette Book. p.1-9

Detroit may well boast of its Tatterman Marionettes that compose a group of companies managed by two talented young men, Edward Mabley and William Duncan. These companies are especially equipped for travelling, and they play before many cultured audiences. Since they have an extensive repertory of charming plays that children both delight in and receive educational benefit therefrom, they receive frequent requests to play to school children.⁷

San Francisco was, for a time, the home of Blanding Sloan's puppets. His was essentially an art theater established on a good business foundation, but just as it was becoming to be spoken of as an indispensable institution, Mr. Sloan was obliged to abandon it because of his health. Fans of the puppet theater are anxiously waiting for his return.

Another San Francisco artist who has produced plays of a high literary order is Ralph Chesse. Mr. Chesse had been affiliated with Blanding Sloan's theater, and there learned the trick of making and designing puppets and sets. His are slender, aesthetic figures, dressed in exquisite color harmonies, and they seem to fit admirably into the characters of Shakespeare's tragedies and other plays of a serious vein.⁸

Perry Dilley is a name always associated with those

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H. Joseph, Op. cit., p.186.

⁸

Ibid. p. 189.

charming fairy tales that all children love. He has traveled up and down the Pacific coast many times, playing also the fantastic Guignol plays, and others composed by himself, and their naivete lends them a charm that is extremely appealing. His puppets are either very dainty or very grotesque, according to their character, and are made to be operated from below the stage floor. One who has seen THE DRAGON WHO WOULDN'T SAY PLEASE will never forget the charming little princess who tried to improve the Dragon's manners.

Last but not least of all these ardent puppet-players to be considered in this chapter are the Yale Puppeteers, who have a well-founded theater in Los Angeles, situated in the colorful and picturesque Mexican quarter. It is the Teatro Torito, and how comfortably it nestles among the adobes of old Los Angeles!

These four talented young men, from the classes of Professor George Pierce Baker, of Yale University, Harry Burnett, manager, Forman Brown, clever linguist, composer of music and lines for their shows; Richard Brandon and Robert Bromley have caught the fine note of satire that so admirably suits the characteristic movements and atmosphere that make the marionette what it is.

In the workshop behind the stage the visitor can see boxes of materials being converted by intelligent fingers into puppets and stage properties, and if you are the one out of a thousand you will be privileged to stand behind scenes when a show is going on and be a first hand witness to the systematic and dexterous handling of the puppets.

Manipulation is by strings only, and these, when played upon by those well-trained fingers seem to imbue the wooden images with life.

The curtain always rises on the Hadyn Trio, three musical gentlemen in wigs and velvets of the Georgian Period or of the Louis. The pianist flirts his coat-tails over the bench until the results just suit him; the violinist takes his place with dignified posture in front of the tiny red laquer piano, and the cellist is seated opposite, tuning up, and when they take the signal to begin, how earnest and energetic they become, and how respectfully attentive is the audience! They are a remarkable trio, and one would like to see them perform over and over again. One of the long plays that received much applause last winter was a burlesque on UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, called UNCLE TOM'S HEBBN, and the hounds that pursue the fugitive were, in this instance, two frowsy haired dogs minus the true hunter's instincts, one large and the other small, and judging from their conversation, they were considered, in the canine world, husband and wife. In the middle of the stream the female of the species starts an argument relating to their marital discords and despite the fact that they are sitting on a cake of ice, the temperature rises until the female wins the day. The incident is ludicrous to the extreme and serves here only as a hint to the versatility of the players.

Another fine feature of their programs is their portrait work of the motion picture people. They have done Charlie Chaplin, Marie Dressler, Gloria Swanson, Lawrence

Tibbet, Alfred Hertz, George Arliss, Greta Garbo, Ruth Chatterton and even Albert Einstein who laughed heartily when he was suddenly confronted by his miniature self.

Just how far these venturesome puppeteers will advance in their art is well worth watching, but there are those who already say that Harry Burnett, more than any one else has caught the true spirit of the marionette.

CHAPTER IV

PUPPETS IN SCHOOL

Everyone knows that the art of the drama is a very old one, since gestures or sign language doubtless superceded the spoken word, and enabled primitive man to convey his thoughts to others, and possibly in his leisure moments, to express the inventions of his imagination, in order to satisfy his dramatic instinct. In his struggle with the natural forces around him, he must have been deeply affected by them, and prone to translate--since he could not explain them--into unnatural phenomena that prompted the beginnings of his religious awe, and found expression in crude religious pantomimes. It was probably this impulse to understand the world that inspired man to create a language and a literature.

All normal children are inherently dramatic and live in a world of make-believe. At first they imitate the actions of those with whom they are closely associated, but soon their vivid imaginations carry them a step toward creating something expressly their own. No effort of impersonation--of putting themselves in another's place--is required, and usually no reaction of self-consciousness is present, since they can act with or without an audience with equal interest, and nothing else will engender in them so easily the sympathy for, and human understanding of, their fellows as this method of approach, for there is scarcely any activity that holds the attention and interest longer.

Educators, of course, have long been cognizant of this fact, but to bring the idea over to all the teachers has been the great difficulty. By ignoring the fact that native instincts express themselves through the body we stifle the best natural method of learning--that by doing, with emphasis on the dramatic method. To train instincts presupposes an understanding of their nature, and how they are trained determines character. Herein lies our great hope, because right ideas and ideals instilled at the right time can modify deep seated emotions. Self-expression must, however, be absolutely free and individual in the child's activities, aided by suggestions perhaps, but not by telling him how to act, lest his initiative, which is his driving power, be destroyed. No one can say, arbitrarily, what the child shall think or do--but he can provide opportunities for creating modes of expression and kinds of attitudes and thereby either satisfy the desirable tendencies or transform the others.

In this way he learns most quickly and most genially, and though at first, he is not so much interested in abstract virtues per se, he is desirous of enacting characters that have the desired qualities. Here the teacher again directs the child's imagination, so that the indefinite notions in his mind become clear pictures, and he is able to analyze and entertain these coveted qualities. In this machine age it becomes doubly imperative to rescue imaginative power from utter desiccation, since it is the only faculty which can preserve a balance between materialism and idealism.

the selection of a story for dramatization, reading for a proper knowledge of background, which includes time, place, customs and costumes, and discussion with the teacher and the group to help make characterization easier, composing the lines, and finally rehearsing for expressive rendering.

In this sort of activity a highly finished production is not the aim. It is whole-hearted participation that counts. The puppet-show not only insures this, but also a development of a natural and spontaneous expression, because the actors, not being seen from the front, are less liable to inhibitions due to stage fright. The puppet, being the center of interest, puts the child at his ease and he is concerned only with the cleverness of the manipulation.

Dr. Arnold Gesell made the following statement as early as 1912.

The puppet play is a lost art which the primary schools could well restore to childhood. The wonderful educational and recreational possibilities are as yet untouched. Children take a keen delight in miniature productions of life. They are attracted and compelled to interest by moving objects, which they immediately endow with life. The puppet play is irresistibly fascinating to children, because it combines motion with a suggestive reproduction of the human form, voice, and mimic gesture. The tiny, grotesque figures which look up from behind the curtain are so crude and flexible that each child may give free play to his imagination and endow these miniature men with a personality in keeping with his own temperament and experience. The curtain helps, too, by adding an air of mystery to the source from which these tiny people come, and their coming and going is so humorously abrupt, that every child attends while the elemental emotions of wonder, curiosity, imitation, fear, love, joy, humor, are aroused in a crude form of drama which is profoundly childlike...Aside from the delight, the puppet show may be of pedagogical utility to the elementary school. It may be used to advantage in the reproduction of stories, dialogues, and current events which it is desirable to emphasize. The reproduction is so simple

that children may work up programs of their own. This will encourage constructive thinking and the use of good English. The children can easily make all the paraphernalia needed, for the construction of the puppets, curtains, etc. is quite within their manual skill and will furnish excellent opportunities for the handwork...It will be found that the success of all dramatic work depends upon the degree of organization with which the stories are attacked, and the freedom and spontaneity with which the children are encouraged to interpret character and action. The playing of the stories can be made the most serious work of the day, and there are endless opportunities for reading, writing, spelling, and language lessons in connection with it. The word "play" has frightened a great many educators, but we are beginning to realize that the play spirit is the art spirit, and that the hardest work is often the most delightful. Play with little children is a mood, a method of attack, and has little to do with energy or effort, except that a child puts forth his best effort, when he is in a playful, happy, creative mood.

Miss Grace Barnes, of whom mention has already been made, directs a class in puppetry at the Beverly Hills High School. This class meets in a pleasant room under the stage of the auditorium, and for one hour each day the members are initiated into the mysteries of puppet making and manipulation. Each student makes one complete puppet, beginning with an original design, sawing out the wooden parts, painting, costuming, and finishing up with strings and controller. The next step which naturally follows is learning how to manipulate this puppet, first to make the movements ordinarily necessary for true portrayal of the character of the puppet, and next for special tricks, the latter necessitating special strings.

Besides working with the pupil-made puppets, Miss Barnes teaches the students how to manipulate many of her

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Arnold Gesell, The Normal Child & Primary Education. P.155-8.

own puppets that have played to many delighted audiences.

The usual culmination of the year's work is the puppet show presented to the student-body, and an interesting innovation marks this event. An original skit is composed by the students, each being responsible for some contribution to the lines, and considerable ingenuity is sometimes required to build a logical plot that will engage all the puppets of the class. Besides this phase of the work, training in stage management, stage-lighting, making and care of properties, habits of order and precision are all involved. "That pantomime precedes voice," Miss Barnes avers, "is never learned so thoroughly as when the pantomime itself is preceded by the pulling of strings. This anticipation of the puppet's actions trains the human actor to be alert to crosses and other business when he is impersonating on the stage ...Clearness of enunciation, beauty of tone, changes of pitch and tempo--all these receive thoughtful training...but the best reason for its existence (the puppet show) is that it gives infinite joy to those who, possessing a play spirit, find in marionettes an outlet for imaginative expression in artistic form."

This last year an extra activity was added to the course in the form of a skit in one of the acts of the opera NAUGHTY MARIETTA, presented last May by the school. It was delightfully rendered and attested the fact that marionettes do lend

themselves to artistic production of a high order even in school.

Another enthusiastic puppeteer is Mrs. Virginia Church, head of the English department at the Franklin High School in Los Angeles. Within the last few years her classes have presented a number of puppet plays, several of which found their origin through the literary efforts of the students themselves. Among the plays produced have been PIRATES OF PENZANCE, a Gilbert and Sullivan opera employing twenty figures; THE ROMANCERS, by Edmond Rostand; SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE LENTILS BOIL, by Steward White; THE MIRACLE PLAY, MOON MAIDEN, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, and BLUEBEARD dramatized by Mrs. Church herself.

Mrs. Church believes that in every respect the puppet project is a desirable one, and that it lends itself admirably to a correlation with other subjects, such as, history, English composition, and music, and as to the furthering of the growth of the students in vocal and stage technique the work is invaluable.

In the Frances Willard Elementary School in Long Beach two auditorium teachers, Miss Butts and Miss Ortman have done some very interesting things with their puppet projects. Each teacher has brought one show to completion every semester, presenting each time a group of plays. Among these have been THE STORY OF THE PILGRIMS: IN ENGLAND, HOLLAND AND AMERICA: TURNKLING FEIT'S LAUGH: THE BROWN DWARFS OF RÜGEN: THE MOUNTAIN EAGLE, an Albanian story; SHIPPETAIRO, a Japanese fairy tale; PEACE PAGEANT, with Uncle Sam and characters from foreign lands.

Another important phase of educational dramatics of which PUPPETRY is a part, is the fact that a true notion of democracy can be so easily instilled in the immigrant child, when his dramatic instinct is exercised in some patriotic play to help him visualize the people and events in our history, that have played so great a part in the shaping of our ideals.

Now, the immediate aim in teaching dramatics to children is to develop creative interpretation. The power to appreciate is greater than the power to express, and is utilized as an aid to cultivate self-expression and promote spiritual growth and expansion. Thus, by linking the child's past experiences--the things he can already appreciate with the thing we try to teach him, we evoke an interest that supports the new problem. The puppet show project offers one of the most ideal means for sustained interest, and induces coordination of mental with manual activity. Children delight in making things with the hands--and if, perchance, they are put to some immediate use or have a close relation with other lessons to be learned, so much the better.

For the puppet show the children make the puppets, which, though not too difficult necessitates progression through a number of steps to the final product; then there follows practice in manipulation, and the making of stage furniture and scenery, poster designs, programs, and costumes. These complete the manual work. In the high school the students even build the puppet stage. The mental activity consists of

In every instance the children made all the puppet characters.

The first step, however, was to read widely for a suitable story for dramatization, and after a tentative selection was made by the children, they carefully discussed the possibilities and difficulties of characterization and presentation. After that, further research was necessary to develop the time, place, customs and costumes relative to each story--in books, pictures and other objects available as visual aids. It is interesting to note that the children did not choose the dramatized versions, nor memorize the lines found in books, but preferred to improvise as they rehearsed, which procedure naturally prevented exact repetitions of the performances, and besides developed a kind of responsiveness that brought into play originality of thought and expression, and alertness to each new situation. Although the lines of some of the plays were composed in the home room in conjunction with English lessons, the above procedure prevented an absolutely memorized and stilted representation since every change was welcomed so long as it contributed to the improvement of the play. With regard to the casting of the characters, the children were allowed to choose their own parts in some of the plays, and in others tryouts were held, the children voting for the child best suited for the part.

Of the various types of plays developed in the auditorium work, the funny fairy stories seemed to be the best liked, and the time and energy spent on them were well compensated

for from the standpoint of sheer pleasure and ethical value. The historical plays, however, proved to have the greatest educational value, for they not only helped to fix in mind facts of history, but developed an understanding of persons and conditions and the consequent significance and implications that inevitably follow events. In almost every way the puppet project proved to be of great value in this school, for the children not only responded enthusiastically to every venture, but quite obviously developed habits of patience, and of tolerance with regard to the mistakes of others, and became amenable to suggestion and cooperative in spirit and action throughout.

Two years ago Mrs. Lillian Gray introduced a puppet project in the sixth grade at the Thirty Sixth Street School, Los Angeles. It was an entirely new venture in this school and Mrs. Gray was desirous of making it one of highly educational value, and proceeded accordingly in as pedagogical a manner as was practicable.

Without making any reference to puppets, she placed a dozen books or so dealing with the subject on the browsing table, for the children to look over during free periods. In due time curiosity drove the children to asking questions, but instead of answering these, Mrs. Gray wrote them on the blackboard, as items to be traced down by the pupils if possible in the literature at hand. The nature of these questions were similar to the following: Who started making puppets? How many kinds are there? Can anyone learn to make them? In due time, one boy volunteered to relate what he had

read, and a very enlivened account it was. Interest grew rapidly, and day by day the long list of questions grew shorter. Finally the opportune time arrived for discussing the making of puppets and the possibility of presenting a play.

The class now divided itself into a group of committees in order to organize in as efficient a manner as possible the work necessary for the production of a puppet show.

After considerable reading for a story that should lend itself to the purpose, ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON was decided upon and also CHRISTMAS AT BOB CRATCHIT'S, as a special seasonal offering. This was followed by a contest to see who could render the stories into the best dramatized form, the winner having his version accepted for production. By this time a great deal had been learned of history, geography, vocabulary and language usage.

Next was begun the manual work of making the puppets, and of manipulating them, which necessarily preceded the rehearsals.

Every step had been so carefully worked out that not a single plan miscarried. The show was a decided success. As for educative results, they were also most gratifying. Reading had a purpose, vocabularies increased, language usage improved, general information was doubled, and besides, there was a noteworthy development in self-control, cooperative spirit, neatness, and judgment formation. To check up on the progress made, Mrs. Gray employed standardized tests

such as the Stanford Achievement Test for vocabulary and comprehension reading, and the Los Angeles City Language Test for punctuation and capitalization, etc., before the activity began, and again at its close at the end of the semester, and these revealed the fact that in the work tested, an average of ten month's work had been accomplished in five.

CONCLUSION AND FORECAST

Taken as a unit of work in the school, the puppet show offers the child many opportunities to satisfy the needs pertinent to the normal activities of his period of growth. It is a project that not only supplies present needs, but also furnishes stimulation for more and larger ones. It affords something that the pupil can carry into his normal activity outside the school. The material necessary for its successful accomplishment can be easily kept at hand, and the group as a whole can work together from the first steps of preparation to the final line that closes the production.

Individual differences in children are also taken care of, for, in so broad a range of activities, provision can be made for the exercise of each child's particular choice, or the superior child's full capacity, after he has participated in several related activities through directed choice. Always he is made to feel his responsibility for some contribution to the finished project.

Being so highly motivated, because so vitally appealing in itself, the puppet project needs no artificial establishment of a felt need, but on the contrary stimulates desire to increase skill in the use of tool subjects, such as learning to read better, speak better, use reference material to better advantage, or to solve arithmetical problems incident to the construction work involved. The interest the child takes

in the project creates sufficient readiness for these skills, makes him well disposed toward cultivating them, and thus reduces irksome to pleasurable application, and he finds in the achievement of these skills, that satisfaction in all his succeeding activities is enriched in so far as they are helpful to him in meeting successfully the problems encountered in his own child life and the subsequent ones he shares in the life of the community.

The teacher at all times bears in mind the objectives sought and directs the work to align with child tendencies, the different growth levels of the groups that occur at different ages, and different stages of the work, so that a degree of continuous improvement is made in standards of individual and group achievement in both intellectual and physical activity.

She cannot, of course, scientifically evaluate all the educative results, nor apply absolutely objective standards to growth, but by comparing samples of work from time to time, she can direct the child to develop the power of self criticism and thereby discover for himself whether or not more effort must be expended to obtain a desired result, and thus gradually he paves the way to an intellectual understanding of values.

Moreover the puppet show has a larger influence than intellectual and manual achievement alone. The knowledge gained is transmuted into character, for it develops a sentiment, an ideal of beauty which is the best investment man can make,

for nothing but that, in its broadest sense stands between man and the reckless exercise of his competitive appetites; in other words, the beauty imbibed from the art of puppetry becomes an admirable means of sublimation. Illusion has often the force of the actual, and there logically follows that actual participation in emotional situations in plays evokes desirable emotional responses in the individual, and his appreciations thus quickened, grow apace with his ability to synchronize and turn his expressiveness to creative ends.

As in all educational dramatics for the young, the purpose is to select, control, and develop the impulses of the child which naturally and spontaneously find expression in dramatic activity, direct them toward life processes and make them subserve to greater social usefulness. Here the refining influence is continuously at work to achieve our ultimate aim, the art of living.

"Drama consummates the range of fine arts," writes John Dewey, "because in dramatic form we have the highest ideal of self, personality displaying itself in form of personality. The ideal and the mode of embodiment are both personal, and beyond that art cannot go, for in this man finds himself expressed."¹

¹
John Dewey, Psychology. p. 232.

FORECAST

Having followed the lineage of the marionette from remote times to its present renaissance in the theater, the home, and the school, we may rest assured that the art of the marionette is creatively alive. Until recently the revival has, to be sure, been absorbed in reproductions of old plays carried down by word of mouth in most instances, but there has come into the marionette theater an impulse toward new creation.

This new effort is in the field of modernistic experiment, and as such, is even a wider departure from the old puppet play than the modern satiric representations that are valid theater. A keen interest is manifesting itself in the adaptability of the marionette in expressionist drama by a number of European enthusiasts among whom the most outstanding puppeteer is M. G. Blattner. Meyer Levin predicts the status of the puppet theater in the following words:

One may come to expect important developments in the world marionette theater within the next few years. New companies are constantly coming into being. Those who soon exhaust the novelty, and the historical appeal of the puppet begin to seek for more significant material. Marionette plays and shows are developed to meet this demand.

Now there follows in the wake of all this amazing activity a prospect of an international congress of marionettes to be held at the Chicago World Fair in 1933. The Unima

^I
Meyer Levin. Theatre Arts Monthly, Feb. 1931. p. 146.

Congress held at Liege, Belgium, last September proved to be an instigation to greater unity among professional puppeteers, and it adopted a resolution to meet American puppeteers in Chicago in 1933, and combine in a marionette festival. To make this event an indelible record in the history of the theater, a season of entertainment is being planned that will be outstanding in artistic merit, and the best professional talent will be engaged to conduct the shows.

All the leading marionette theaters of each country will be invited to this World's Fair, and it is hoped that these will include the Piccoli of Italy, Braunn's Munich Art Theater, Teschner's troupe from Vienna, Symond's of London, Skupa of Pilsen, Harro Siegel of Berlin, Miss Blackham's Birmingham Theater, the Arc-en-Ciel of Paris, a leading Japanese, a Russian theater, and our own favorite American groups.

The decade of pioneering is past. The first seed that was planted in far away Egypt or India has grown into a great tree with firmly established roots and branches, and who shall say that the fruits thereof may not nourish the wide world.

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