



# Around the World With Mr. Punch

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Friends of Punch and Judy](#)

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Editor: [Glyn Edwards](#) (England)



Online Editor: [Diane Rains](#) (United States)

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## Editorials

## FROM THE U.K.

**WE** know it's not usual to put an Editorial on the front page – but so much of importance has happened recently in Mr. Punch's little UK world that these are clearly momentous times for Old Red Nose. It would be quite understandable if Profs were to start swazzling 'The times they are a changin' alongside 'That's the way to do it' as we take the tradition into the 21st Century.

Firstly – and with great sadness – we must mark the passing of George Speaight: a towering figure in the history of Punch and Judy. He led such a full, varied and satisfying life and died at such a ripe old age that words of grief are less appropriate than words of celebration for such an inspiring journey. Tributes have been posted in full in the Features section of the Puppeteers UK website at [puppeteersUK.com](http://puppeteersUK.com). Your Editor's own contribution – penned upon first hearing the news – is reprinted here. We are also grateful to have a hitherto unpublished tribute from fellow author Michael Byrom, whose own publications on the origins of Punch and Judy are an essential part of our knowledge of how the show came into being.

Coincidentally the day of George's magnificent funeral saw the official launch of a million pound British government cultural website initiative in which Mr Punch was proclaimed to be an official Icon of English Culture in the same category as the traditional English cup of tea and London's red buses. This watershed moment in the struggle of Punch versus the forces of Political Correctness gives to Old Red

## FROM THE U.S.A.

**I** never had the pleasure of meeting George Speaight, but I'm sorry for his passing and grateful for his life. Twenty years ago, when I was just starting out in puppetry, it was pretty hard for a clueless American to find meaningful sources of information about the Punch and Judy Show. The Internet hadn't yet burst into the public realm, and unless one could cross the Big Water and meet Old Red Nose on his native soil, references were readily found only in the dusty stacks of libraries. So George Speaight, Michael Byrom, Robert Leach and (make of them what you will) Collier/Cruikshank were, vicariously, my very first Punch mentors. (Soon after, I made the *actual* trek to England, so that I could study with Professors as well as scholars.)

Nowadays we Yanks have it much easier. Advancing technology opens door after door, and knowledge marches in. A few months ago I taught a Broadway actor how to swazzle. I did it from 1000 miles away, using a cell phone. The Internet places an incredible bounty of Punch information at our fingertips. New books have been written, as well, including Glyn Edwards' gem of practicality, *Successful Punch and Judy*. International exchange has brought vibrant British performances to American festivals. The Worldwide Friends and this journal have, I like to think, disseminated Punchiana far and wide, too.

These are modern successes, but I think they also represent the strong continuity of the Punch tradition. Well, that's what tradition is; culture that

Nose a form of protection from unthinking petty censorship by formally designating him to be of cultural worth and part of a shared English cultural identity. The full story is contained within.

At the same time events were also in motion to begin a once-in-a-generation academic survey of Punch and Judy performance and continue where previous historians have left off. This initiative between the Punch and Judy College of Professors and Royal Holloway University of London will see a three-year doctoral studentship in Contemporary Punch and Judy in Performance, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. If you share your Editor's irritation when reading supposedly authoritative books on puppetry or popular culture in which Mr. Punch is portrayed in cliché form as a Victorian relic full of violence, then share his joy that fresh scholarship will take soon be taking account of how us Profs have kept the tradition in tune with the world of today. In due course this will filter out to the next generation of cultural commentators who can then ditch the old clichés.

Any one of the above topics would have made for a bumper issue. All three at once marks this issue out as something special – and accordingly the balance between text and pictures is a little more weighted towards the former than is usual so that we also have room for other items of interest (including an excerpt from a fascinating Polichinelle script in translation).

Given that George Speaight was also the author of 'Bawdy Songs of the Early Music Hall', he would doubtless have appreciated the item of Punch and Judy erotica also to be seen

flows in a continuous stream from one person to another, one generation to the next. There are eddies and backwaters, of course, but the stream goes bubbling on.

It's partly this momentum that makes Punch such a reliable icon. He is so very hardy and recognizable, and has been for quite a long time. Of course, there's been an awful lot of misinformation perpetrated about him over the centuries, but the truth endures, too. I'm delighted to hear that England has formally embraced it, and made Punch an official Cultural Icon.

Of course, on this side of the Pond Punch has always been an icon, too – among puppeteers, anyway. Punch and Judy are fashionable puppet symbols. The red-nosed couple are frequently stuck in logos for puppetry events, and many American performers try some version of the show at least once in their career. Some of these apples fall a good long way from the tree; i.e. far, far from an authentic show, what a pity. But most are respectfully attempted.

I have a small collection of special Punch memorabilia – stuff that I acquired from local puppet guild members who have passed away. (Everyone in our guild knows I'm a Punch Prof, so when a member dies and the guild inherits their puppets, the Punch items are usually sent my way.) Much of it is just touristy store-bought souvenirs, but there are some handmade Punch show puppets, too. I particularly like having these. It's a way for me to feel connected to puppeteers that our guild has lost; unique people who are gone but certainly not forgotten. I like knowing that those puppeteers, a generation nearly gone, knew and cared about Punch and Judy. I like thinking that

within. George was a keen reader of, and contributor to, the original printed version of 'Around The World with Mr. Punch' although as a (then) octogenarian he didn't come to terms with the internet and later means of communication. This issue is lovingly dedicated to his memory as an undisputed immortal in Punch's Hall of Fame.

~ *Glyn Edwards, Worcestershire*

the next generation will care, too. It gives me a cool and soothing feeling of continuity. Like wading in a favorite stream.

~ *Diane Rains, Wisconsin*

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# On The Death Of George Speaight

by Michael Byrom

*GEORGE Speaight, who died on 22 December 2005, is remembered here by Michael Byrom - whose own Punch and Judy Its Origin & Evolution is one of the classic works looking into the true origins of the traditional show. Michael's personal tribute to George includes an on the record acknowledgement of the extent to which their separate theories duly became reconciled...*



*George Speaight at the 1974  
Bankside Punch and Judy Festival*

**T**o those who are curious about the history of puppet shows in England the demise of George Speaight is a knockout blow. It leaves us on the floor because the old cliché about standing on giant's shoulders is nothing else but the truth. His knowledge was the edifice upon which our own speculations are founded.

Yet there was nothing Olympian – nothing patronising about the

great man. In my own case, he was always helpful, obliging and even encouraged criticism of his published ideas on the origins of the Punch show. In the last paragraph of the final letter I received from him ten years ago almost to the day, he wrote: “I put my theories strongly in the hope that it would provoke some response. You have provided the response. The rest of the world does not seem to have taken much interest in the controversy, but perhaps when we are both dead a third or fourth view may be put forward.” Similarly, in the first communication I had received from him (dated November 11th 1962 on the well-known picture postcard showing the Roselia Punch) he wrote: “Thank you for starting a new train of thought.”

Back in 1984 when I was subjected to a blistering attack by Dr. Hans Purschke, I can honestly say that it was G.S. who came to my rescue. We had ‘crossed swords’ as George later put it, over the German historian’s contention that there was no puppetry in the ancient world. I had attempted to retaliate but not having read the lecture delivered in German to the conference in Moscow, I did not know what I was talking about – not for the first time; not that is until G.S. sent me the text of the address. Had he not done so, I would have been duly humiliated by the worthy Doctor.

Although Dr. Purschke and myself were never reconciled, it is fair to say this was not the case vis a vis George Speaight, who in his later pronouncements on Punch origins came to favour my view. In that last letter (Dec. 27th. 1995) he spoke of having found “the clues that have hitherto evaded me.” “I think the difference between us is that you have sensed that the P&J show came from Italy, which – up to a point – I have now accepted.” So in the end there was no difference between us at all. (vid. *The Origin of Punch & Judy: A New Clue?* By George Speaight (Theatre Research International, vol. 20, no. 3).



# George Speaight: Punch's Patron

*by Glyn Edwards*

**G**EORGE was my hero. I was in awe of his unparalleled combination of scholarship and showmanship – and of the great age he attained whilst still enjoying himself in both these spheres. I first met him at the Tercentenary of Mr. Punch in 1962 where I found being in the presence of someone who not only knew all about Mr. Punch but could even organise public events in his honour was an intoxicating excitement. Then I saw him at the Little Angel Theatre performing ‘The Miller and His Men’ and at last understood what ‘Toy Theatre’ was really all about.

*Young George Speaight at  
Alexandra Palace (home of  
BBC TV) in 1947*



and Judy College of Professors.

George was pivotal to the Punch and Judy tradition as it has currently developed. The linking of Covent Garden with Punch and Judy is known round the world. There isn't a ‘Prof’ who doesn't know that Punch's ‘official birthday’ is May 9th because of Pepy's diary entry of that date in 1662. Nor is there a ‘Prof’ who can't, in the face of criticism, defend the tradition by quoting Charles Dickens opinion that the show was but “an outrageous joke”. B. G. (Before George) this was not so and these facts languished in profound obscurity. George gave us the history of our own tradition so that we might take it and help it blossom. I was never more thrilled than when he accepted an invitation to become Patron of the Punch

I have two memories of George that are special to me. One is his masterful appearance in the guise of Samuel Pepys as the central attraction amongst 150 ‘Profs’ at the 325 Celebrations in Covent Garden in 1987 (marking 25 years

after the Tercentenary Plaque was unveiled). The other is when we temporarily lost him in the ruins of Pompeii ('we' being Mary Speaight, myself and Mary plus Dan and Gemma Bishop). We were the Punch and Judy delegation at a puppet festival on the Bay of Naples and had gone sightseeing. George – a septuagenarian impatient with our slow progress – kept walking and was soon lost to view. We hunted for him high and low before the looming deadline of evening performances meant that all but Mary Speaight had to return to the Festival site. Dan and I were convinced we would become a footnote to Punch's history as 'The Profs who lost George Speaight'. He wasn't, of course, lost. He'd gone off to find the building that housed the notorious 'frisky frescoes' – which is where Mary located him.



*George and Mary Speaight at George's 90th birthday celebration*

What long and fulfilled lives both of them led – and how impoverished we all are by their passing.



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*(Note: Photos on this page are courtesy of the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild archive.)*

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# Iconic Status

*by Glyn Edwards*

**T**HIS may sound bizarre to our global readership, but here in England there is a great debate about our cultural identity. Joe and Josephine Public can get quite confused about the difference between Great Britain and the United

*Glyn Edwards' Punch show at  
the Aberystwyth Festival*



Kingdom, and asking the question often leads to puzzled head scratching. In fact Great Britain comprises England, Scotland and Wales, whilst the United Kingdom is all these plus Northern Ireland. There are further complications but, believe me, you don't want to know. All variations are

covered by the umbrella of British citizenship.

For historical reasons the traditional top dog in all this has been England which, of course, irritates the Scots and Welsh like fury – without even getting into the issues of Northern Ireland - but has also left a legacy in which the non-English parts of the United Kingdom have kept a clear sense of their individual cultural identity whilst the English themselves haven't seen the need to. Until now! In the modern culturally diverse society with immigration from nations around the globe the English have suddenly realised that they have no consensus about what 'English' culture actually is. This, then, is the backdrop against which the British Government has set up **ICONS**: a million pound online scheme to promote discussion of what it means to be English, and to define English culture. A committee of the great and the good was set up to devise a list of English icons in order to start the ball rolling - and Punch and Judy Shows were on it.

As the **ICONS** team themselves expressed it *“Two of the first 12 official ‘Icons of England’ to be announced are Alice and Wonderland and the seaside favourites for children everywhere, Punch and Judy. They are in good company because the others are: Stonehenge, the Routemaster double decker bus, the S.S. Empire Windrush, Holbein’s portrait of Henry VIII, the FA Cup, the Spitfire, the King James Bible, the Angel of the North, A Cup of Tea and Jerusalem.”* The team goes on to explain that *“The idea is to stimulate debate. Even familiar subjects like a cup of tea will stir things up because, of course, it isn’t English at all in origin. Neither are Punch and Judy, who started life in southern Europe. Even the best-known stone in the Crown Jewels is the cursed Koh-I-Noor, which came from the Maharajah of Lahore. We will tell the stories of tea-clippers and bone china and Italian puppet-theatre and murdered Mogul emperors that lie behind the icons we hold most dear.”*

An Official Icon has to be symbolic and *“uniquely important to life in England and the people who live here (and) represent something in our culture, history or way of life”*. The scheme is an ongoing one in which, says the team, *“**ICONS** will identify what makes England what it is, for children as well as adults. Hundreds more nominations from the public are expected and ‘waves’ of new “Icons of England” will be announced each quarter, as the online collection grows bigger and richer in content. Already, other ‘iconic’ nominations of particular interest to children, which will be considered as future ‘icons of England’, include: Winnie the Pooh, Robin Hood, Cricket, Doctor Who, Wembley Stadium, Eastenders, Pantomime dames, Notting Hill Carnival, Lord of the Rings, St George, the H.M.S. Victory and the ice cream van! Teachers will also be interested in*

*the rich historical and cultural references on the site and the **ICONS** educational programme being launched fully in Spring 2006.”*



*Clive Chandler's giant puppets in Aberystwyth*

Of course the whole scheme – not to mention the choice of icons – met with suspicion in some quarters. It is, after all, a central government initiative promoting a social agenda

and is aimed at tackling ignorant assumptions and simplistic myths about England’s long and complex history. In line with its role as a promoter of debate the site carries ‘anti’ as well as ‘pro’ comments but the implications for Profs, however, are enormous. At a stroke it has put Mr. Punch beyond petty censorship by ignorant critics. It has put him where we all believe he belongs: as a folk drama that is part of a cultural heritage. No longer is it the lone voice of Profs defending Mr. Punch with this argument – the whole weight of the government’s cultural establishment has been thrown behind it. Whether it’s a school needing reassurance that they can book a Punch and Judy Show without allegations that they are promoting domestic violence to their students, or a Town Council wondering if they can book a show for the Summer carnival without complaints, pointing out Punch’s approved status as an Official English Icon will make an enormous difference. Similarly Punch performers in other countries will be able to show how their own national variation has grown from this tradition – just as Punch himself grew from roots in Italy. It’s a most timely re-affirmation of the Punch tradition as it moves forward in the new century.

You can find the site at [icons.org.uk](http://icons.org.uk). Its scale and ambition make it not the easiest site to find your way around but the quickest route to Mr. Punch is via [icons.org.uk/theicons](http://icons.org.uk/theicons). Profs John Styles, Mark Poulton and Clive Chandler are all featured in some way on the site (Mark also performed live at the launch party) and you can even access a section of John’s show on video.

*Editor's Note of Amusement: The spellchecker for this article queried Winnie the Pooh and offered replacing it with 'Wino'.*



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# Academic Scholarship in Punch and Judy

*by Glyn Edwards*

***NO ONE** would take seriously any publication that discussed music, drama or literature as if nothing fresh had occurred since Charles Dickens died. With *Punch and Judy*, however, it sometimes seems that the opposite holds true as there is still a great deal of outdated cliché in circulation based on the dubious Payne-Collier script and the musings of Mayhew's Victorian showman. Since the turn of this century the *Punch and Judy* websites have had an enormous impact in getting the current views of the *Punch* community into wider media circulation but they have had less impact upon the cultural commentators who write books (even books on puppetry). Authors of such works rely more on other books, or on unpublished theses, for their source material and so at this level a vicious circle of outdated stereotype is perpetuated until fresh original scholarship updates the record. So far as *Mr. Punch* is concerned the last major field research of any significance was conducted in the late 1970s and early 80s by Robert Leach for his book "*Punch and Judy: History, Tradition and Meaning*". It was an era when Jimmy Carter was in the White House, Margaret Thatcher was the new kid on the block and Yuppies were just around the corner. *Space Invaders* and *Pac Man* were ushering in the video game era and the BBC was showing the door to its long running blackface TV series *The Black and White Minstrel Show*. *Mr. Punch* was well over a century past his Victorian glory days and Political Correctness was just about to*

*become mainstream. It was a cliff-hanging moment at which to leave the story.*

*In an initiative to get the next chapter written The Punch and Judy College of Professors recently teamed with Royal Holloway, University of London in an application for funding for new research into what is taking place in Punch and Judy performance today. The application was successful and a three-year doctoral studentship is due to start in September of this year. Whilst its primary focus will be the UK tradition, it is intended that Punch's links with kindred traditions will not be ignored and clearly this will be of interest to Profs outside the UK. This journal will keep readers informed of progress so that any relevant information can be shared. In the meantime you can read below the official outline of who is being sought, and academic details of the proposed programme of research.*

**Arts and Humanities Research Council:  
Collaborative Doctoral Award  
Doctoral Studentship in Contemporary Punch and  
Judy in Performance**

Applications are invited for a three-year doctoral studentship, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, to be held jointly at Royal Holloway, University of London and the Punch and Judy College of Professors, starting in September 2006. Applicants will work closely with the select professional puppeteers who are members of the Punch and Judy College to produce an ethnographic study on Britain's traditional puppet theatre as it is practiced today. Research will be jointly supervised by Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen of Royal Holloway, University of London, and Clive Chandler of the Punch and Judy College of Professors. The successful candidate will be based at Royal Holloway, University of London, and will partake in all training courses and review procedures for postgraduate students in the Department of Drama and Theatre. Applicants should be holders of a good first degree (at least 2:1 or equivalent) from any university in one of the following fields: puppetry, theatre and performance studies, cultural studies, anthropology or closely related disciplines. A relevant MA, completed or close to completion, would be an advantage.

## CONTEMPORARY PUNCH AND JUDY IN PERFORMANCE: PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Fieldwork-based studies of puppet theatre in Asia (particularly Indonesia) are not in short supply, but traditional puppet theatres much closer to home have been generally neglected. This project is an ethnographic study of Punch and Judy glove puppet performance in Britain intended to account for performance processes informing Punch and Judy as it is practiced today. Through participant-observation, the constraints and freedoms available to professional Punch performers (known as ‘professors’) and the sorts of cultural, social, economic and political issues with which they contend can be documented and analysed. Punch has come under significant pressure in the public sphere in recent decades as it is seen as encouraging domestic violence and engaging in racist caricaturing. However, such gross impressions are out of synch with performance practices of professors who delight mixed audiences of children and adults with slapstick comedy, social commentary and metatheatrical hijinks.

Punch is burdened in the public mind by an acute sense of nostalgia. A caricature thumbnail view has it that Punch spent the eighteenth century capering about as a marionette and enjoyed his heyday in the nineteenth century in an art form of the streets performed by rough, subaltern showmen, immortalized in Payne-Collier’s ‘serious jeu d’esprit’ *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of*, and Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). Performers were often dynastic ‘swatchel-omis’ who conserved trade secrets and scorned outsiders; George Speaight speaks in *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* (1955) of ‘an old tradition that there has never been a Jew in the business.’ During the twentieth century, Punch traded off his past glories with the possibility of future revival and revitalisation dwindling away like other bygone pastimes. Punch has always been an inspiration to other creative artists—from the eponymous magazine’s founders to Harrison Birtwistle—but it is inevitably the nineteenth-century Punch which they (in common with the average journalist) use as their source material. Victorian Punch also informs how Punch is

represented by media scriptwriters and how Punch is viewed in the public sphere. Such dominant stereotypes call for rectification by new scholarship.



*Punch and Judy College of Professors members:  
(L-R) Geoff Felix, Rod Burnett, Tony Clarke,  
Reg Payne, Brian Davey and Dan Bishop  
at the College's Festival in Aberystwyth  
organised by Clive Chandler*

The proposed study will focus on the last two to four decades of practice. Punch entered a new era starting in the 1980s with the establishment of Punch and Judy societies, publication of how-to books and later websites and videos, and a general reorganisation in the transmission of tradition. The swatchelomis play no discernable part in perpetuating the tradition today; contemporary Punch professors have heterogeneous training and individual orientations to the field which call out for ethnographic investigation. Rather than being passive tradition-bearers, professors have actively taken charge of their tradition. The dynamic centre of this movement to explore and refresh the show is the Punch and Judy College of Professors, which is made up of the most highly regarded Punch professors in Britain: like the Inner Magic Circle, membership is by invitation and dependent on peer recognition of excellence. The organisation is made up of predominantly full time professionals with an agenda of keeping the tradition moving ahead, and has had an impact on defining the future of Punch disproportionate to its (intentionally) small number of members.

The College and its members have been responsible for the most interesting of experiments to update Punch, including *At Home with Punch & Judy* (1997) and Ken Campbell et al's *Attack of the Clowns* (2004). This reinvention of tradition by Punch performers is linked to an upsurge of interest in European folk puppet 'cousins' in their home countries. Professors travel widely and mix with their European colleagues at international events, observing their peers' work and informally exchanging ideas. The proposed ethnographic study thus must situate developments in the British field within international contexts.

Other issues articulate more clearly in terms of national agendas and projects. Practitioners of this popular art are often at odds with those in the puppetry sector who patronise Punch to elevate the status of their art form to a more elite sphere. Such contentious relations need careful and sensitive exploration. Professors necessarily wrestle with the fact that their art calls for puppets committing slapstick upon one another in an era lacking an easily recognisable mainstream equivalent along the lines of the Three Stooges. How audiences can relate to this humour without the enforcement of its conventions in other domains needs to be probed from the perspectives of both audience and performer. Another topic deserving scrutiny is how Punch as a trickster located at the cultural margin manages to maintain dramatic integrity in a time of shifting margins. That Punch survives at all in the current clime of political correctness and moral surveillance is remarkable. Some professors have defined their calling as maintaining the spirit of anarchy and freedom of expression in a society torn by politico-religious contention.

The last major academic study of Punch and Judy, Robert Leach's *The Punch & Judy Show: History, Tradition, and Meaning* (1985), is now two decades old. As with any living theatre, much has changed in the interim. It is intended that this ethnographic study will bring new understanding to Punch and Judy by treating it as a living cultural field, rather than an oddity from the past. Among areas of investigation are:

- A profile of who is performing Punch and Judy today in Britain, based on interviews and perhaps questionnaires. This will include information on training, economics,

ideology. How did performers come to Punch? How do Punch and Judy performers make a living? What other work do they? Why do they perform?

- An outline of Punch and Judy organisations. How are they organised? What are their purposes? How do they interact in practice?
- A description of Punch and Judy pitches, festivals, venues and audiences.
- Descriptions of current ‘best practice’ by highly regarded performers, with close performance analyses.
- Fields of innovation within the tradition – new figures, new jokes, new technologies.
- New theatrical work based on Punch and Judy— At Home With Mr Punch (1997); The Sid and Nancy Punch and Judy Show (1999); Ken Campbell et al’s Attack of the Clowns (2004); Karagoz Comes to London (2005)
- Debates and polemics in Punch and Judy today – the Slapstick Symposium banning and censorship.

Punch and Judy internationally. How do British performers travel? Where else is Punch and Judy performed? What sorts of rhetoric and imagined histories are evoked to bring Punch together with other glove puppet traditions? What sort of networking and exchange of ideas is happening?

The partnership of the Punch and Judy College of Professors will give the student privileged access to the members of the College, and allow him or her to document the work of these highly regarded professionals in a manner formerly unknown.

The student will be shadowing members of the Punch and Judy College, attending public and private performances in their company, recording and transcribing performances, conducting and transcribing interviews. The student will be a participant-observer in the field: organising archival materials on behalf of the Punch and Judy College, writing brochure text and assisting in publicity, perhaps even acting as a ‘bottler’ on occasion. It is anticipated that the final product will include not only a written description with photographs in the form of a dissertation, but also an accompanying DVD or analytical DVD-Rom compiling footage of members of the Punch and Judy College of Professors, and possibly others performers as well. The research will also be disseminated through Punch and Judy and general

puppet websites and puppet publications.

The continuing interest, both positive and negative, of the public and the media in Punch and Judy demonstrates that this centuries-old comic drama of mayhem and destruction retains a significant place in the national imaginary. It is a ritual of rebellion in which many of society's demons (infanticide, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, breakdown of law, racism) are outed and ultimately mocked. It is a space for playing with ideas in a time of increasing political correctness. The cooperation of the Punch and Judy College with academic students of theatre will allow an understanding of how professors are pivotal in remaking the tradition, attuning it to the moral needs of the new century.

#### ABOUT THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR

Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Drama and Theatre, Royal Holloway, University of London. He is an anthropologist, performance ethnographer and theatre historian. His primary expertise lies in puppets and popular theatre; he has been studying puppetry as a practitioner and scholar since 1988 in the US, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Britain and elsewhere. He is a member of British UNIMA, reviews puppet books for Puppet Notebook, reviews puppet plays for Animations Online and is the curator of an online video archive for PuppeteersUK. He has organised conference panels on puppets at international conferences in the US, Singapore and Britain, and was one of the organisers of 'Inventing Masks, Puppets and Performing Objects: A Season of Cultural Diversity', a series of workshops and performances held in Glasgow in 2003. He is the organiser of a PALATINE workshop on teaching puppetry in higher education, and is developing a new research project on traditional puppets in global contexts.

Among his many publications on puppet theatre are:

1998 *Demon Abduction: A Wayang Ritual Drama from West Java*. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation.

2000 *The big man and the puppeteer: a transcultural morality tale from West Java*, *Indonesia*. Puppetry Yearbook 4: 103-156.

- 2000 *Shiva vs. Jesus: Wayang Kulit in Cirebon*. Puppetry International 8: 18-21.
- 2002 *Reading Suluk Wayang: Javanese shadow puppets, nalan-vision, private self, bodily self*. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3, 12 (2): 167-186.
- 2002 *Entrusting the scriptures: wayang kulit, cultural politics, and truly popular art in New Order West Java*. In Puppet Theater in Contemporary Indonesia: New Approaches to Performance Events. Edited by Jan Mrazek. Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 109-123.
- 2003 *Details, details: methodological issues and practical considerations in a study of Barikan, a Cirebonese ritual drama for wayang kulit*. Oideion 3: 73-93.
- [<http://www.iias.nl/oideion/journal/issue03/cohen/1.html>]
- 2005 *Wayang kulit as a contact zone: tradition in global flux*. In Ethnicity and Identity: Global Performance. Edited by Ravi Chaturvedi and Brian Singleton. Jaipur, India: Rawat, 423-441.

He has also published broadly in related areas of Indonesian theatre and performance.

#### ABOUT THE PUNCH AND JUDY COLLEGE OF PROFESSORS AND CLIVE CHANDLER

The Punch and Judy College of Professors is a professional association aiming to promote and encourage the highest standards in the performance and presentation of traditional Punch and Judy, to nurture and develop the UK tradition and to promote links with similar folk puppet traditions world wide. The College does this by means of mounting public performances, exhibitions, festivals, occasional publications, special events, visits overseas, and by seeking to co-operate with like-minded organisations and individuals.

Individual members of the College have also written practical handbooks-- such as Glyn Edwards' *Successful Punch and Judy: A Handbook on the Skills and Traditions of Performing with the UK'S National Puppet* (DaSilva Puppet Books, 2000), produced video documents, trade journals, websites and colloquia.



*Clive Chandler*

conducting what the Arts Council terms 'action research projects,' in which the College has had funding to carry out research leading to puppet productions and new ways of delivering them in education settings.



Clive Chandler, the project's non-academic supervisor, is a full member of the College. In addition to his professional puppetry work, he has been involved in

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# Punch and The Maid and the Magpie

*by Keith  
Potter*

I was interested to note in Vol.8 No.3 the piece entitled 'Punch's Address on his Master's Recent Imprisonment 1825', in which it was implied, that a new Punch 'storyline' had been discovered entitled the 'Maid and the Magpie'. However when the facts are viewed in their historical context I think this is probably not a correct assumption.

By 1825 Punch was still very widely known as a 'live' actor on the stage and fairground booth, he was also still well known as a marionette; indeed Robert Southey (in 'The Doctor' published in 1834, though written earlier) informs us how he saw Punch appearing as a baker in "the celebrated tragedy of Jane Shore". The baker takes pity on Jane and offers her a loaf of bread, and for this act of kindness "Punch died a martyr to humanity by the hangman's hands." These puppet shows, often scriptural in content, bore little or no resemblance to the glove puppet show we have come to know. It was the glove puppet format itself, together with popular culture at the time, which dictated how the show became structured. Punch in the solo glove puppet booth became a succession of easily recognised characters and situations and the restraints this format imposes on performance dictated the development of the show. Fast action, slapstick and comedy, were the requirements for a successful glove puppet show – not wordy dialogue and 'moral' tales. So we should not confuse these very different aspects of Punch's early persona when we look at the specific example referred to in the doggerel verse in question.

In the summer of 1815, the public was much taken by the unfortunate case of Elizabeth Fenning, a domestic servant who was hanged for supposedly poisoning her master and mistress. Because the evidence against her was circumstantial and flimsy, the case was seen as an horrendous miscarriage of judicial power.

By coincidence that year, a popular melodrama entitled 'La Pie Voleuse' was being performed in London. This featured a maid wrongly sentenced to hang for stealing her master's silver. The evidence against her is damning - thanks to an outrageously unlikely series of plot events - but luckily she is saved from the gallows when it is discovered that the silver was taken by the family's pet magpie!

William Hone immediately saw the parallels between the melodrama and the real life events and decided to publish a pamphlet entitled 'The Maid and the Magpie' (1815) about the case. Hone wrote the text and George Cruikshank provided the illustrations, including one of a magpie being hanged by the neck. The pamphlet caught the public mood and sold in large quantities.

For about a century after this, the story of the Maid and the Magpie became associated in the popular mind with miscarriages of justice. It was widely performed as a play and Benjamin Pollock even produced a Toy Theatre version. See Here:-

<http://pollocks.trishymouse.net/maidandmagpiecover.jpg>

Getting back to the doggerel in question, it will be recalled that a Punchman named Middleton was arrested in 1825 for performing without a licence and sent to the treadmill. I think it unlikely that Middleton performed a version of 'The Maid and the Magpie' in a glove puppet Punch booth, though it is very possible that marionette versions of the play were performed and Punch could have appeared in these as a string puppet. In the context of the rhyme though, I think 'Punch' is informing his readers that he put on such a play of his own volition, in order to emphasise that Middleton's detention was a miscarriage of justice and that the Magistrate who ordered it is the one with the wooden head!

So it is probable that the reference by Punch to the play is just a literary technique of the author to underline the unfairness of the judicial process towards Middleton, rather than to suggest he actually performed the story himself.

*Editorial Postscript: Subsequent correspondence led to the following additional information from Keith: "I've just looked up Rossini's Thieving Magpie on Google and find that it came out in 1817 and the story featured a serving girl who was accused of stealing a silver spoon - which is exactly the same plot as our play!"*



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# Duranty's Polichinelle

*by Sean Keohane*

*It is interesting to see a puppet variation within the long tradition of using the tutor/pupil relationship as a vehicle for comedy (which includes both Moliere's farce 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' as well as the Marx Bros vaudeville sketch 'Fun in Hi-Skule'.) Sean Keohane has translated a number of the Polichinelle plays published by playwright/puppeteer by Louis Edmond Duranty in 1862. He believes that apart from the 'The Cask' (in Bil Baird's 'The art Of the Puppet') they have not appeared in print in translation. He is currently seeking publishers who might have an interest in such a book and would welcome suggestions. The full text of the script from which the following extract is taken is due to be published by UNIMA USA's Puppetry International. Sean is due to give a performance of one of the Duranty plays at a Puppeteers of America Regional Festival in North Carolina. We hope to report further on this in due course. Co-incidentally Prof. Dan Bishop is hoping to bring to the UK a French puppet company who have recently been performing Duranty's 'The Cask'.*

## **POLICHINELLE PRÉCEPTEUR**

By Louis Edmond Duranty, 1862  
Theatre of the Marionettes, the Tuileries  
English Translation by Sean Keohane, 2005

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Polichinelle

Pierrot

Cassandre

Harlequin

The Gendarme

The Devil

*(A public place amongst some trees;  
Cassandre and Pierrot, center.)*

(Our extract begins where Polichinelle – who has been hired by Cassandre to tutor his son Pierrot – is continuing with his lessons.)

POLICHINELLE. Now... what is a city?

PIERROT. I don't know.

POLICHINELLE. A city is a big market-place, where, if you're hungry or

thirsty, you can just take whatever you want from your neighbor's house. As long as he's not at home. You're going to remember all this?  
(*He gives Pierrot a blow with the stick.*)

PIERROT. Ow! *Oui, oui!*

POLICHINELLE. Then we will dispense with the pop quiz. All right, as you've mastered geography, let's teach you calculus.

PIERROT. With or without blows of the stick?

POLICHINELLE. That depends on how you apply yourself. Now listen: if you take 20 *sous* from your father --

PIERROT. Good!

POLICHINELLE. And 30 *sous* from your uncle --

PIERROT. Good!

POLICHINELLE. What does that make?

PIERROT. It makes for two poor relatives.

POLICHINELLE. My boy, it makes what you need to buy wine, pies, and firecrackers!

PIERROT. It does? I never thought of it like that.

POLICHINELLE. That is an example of both addition and subtraction. I will now teach you, in just one blow, multiplication, division, and the rule of three!

PIERROT. The rule of three!!!

POLICHINELLE. *Oui*. First, you take all the money hidden in your father's desk.

PIERROT. *Oui*.

POLICHINELLE.. Then you sneak a basket of wine up from the cellar of your aunt....

PIERROT. *Oui*.

POLICHINELLE. And finally, you steal your cousin's watch. You see? Three operations in total. Then we divide the loot into three equal shares & I take two of them!

PIERROT. No, one and half!

POLICHINELLE. Ah, you rascal, you've known arithmetic all along and just played dumb, eh? All right. Your education is nearly complete. (*He gives Pierrot a blow.*)

PIERROT. Hey! Why did you hit me, then?

POLICHINELLE. To encourage you. Now, let us pass on to ethics. Are you listening? (*He gives him a blow.*)

PIERROT. *Oui, oui!*

POLICHINELLE. Then here's ethics: so long as nobody sees you, take anything that isn't nailed down! When you eat, eat so much you give yourself a bellyache. Never loan your money to anyone. Never let anyone take it from you. And, when you're stronger than the other guy, fight like a tiger. When he's stronger than you... run like hell.

PIERROT. Say, good morals make for good advice! Ha, ha, ha!

POLICHINELLE. I knew you'd be a quick study! And your father said you had a hard head.... (*He caresses Pierrot's skull with the club.*) Now you can be launched into the world! (*Striking Pierrot on the back:*) Go!

PIERROT. Aiii! I'm going!

POLICHINELLE. Oh, we forgot a subject!

PIERROT. Are you sure?

POLICHINELLE. Fencing! The man who cannot deliver proper blows with a stick is not a man. I am going to give you the last and most essential lesson. Watch closely! First there's the wind-up... 1, 2, 3! And, *voilà!* (*He nails him.*)

PIERROT. Aiiii!

POLICHINELLE (*striking him with each word*). The right.

PIERROT. Aiii!

POLICHINELLE. The left.

PIERROT. Aiii!

POLICHINELLE. In front -- behind -- the tippy-top -- the "saw" -- the turn --

and the (*spins*) return! All right? Time for your test.

PIERROT. I've had my fill of this! (*He takes the stick.*)

POLICHINELLE. Come on, then! (*Pierrot misses.*) Try again. (*Pierrot misses.*) Not even close! (*Taking the stick.*) Watch how it's done! Dodo, dodo! (*Striking him.*) Catch! (*He tosses the stick to Pierrot.*)

PIERROT. Hello!

POLICHINELLE. Do you think your father will be happy with your development? All you have to do now is join the practice with the theory.

PIERROT. I like that idea. In theory.

(*Cassandre enters.*)

CASSANDRE. How now, *monsieur*? Has my son made any progress?

POLICHINELLE. He's a little prodigy!

PIERROT. Papa, I learned fencing!

(*He strikes Cassandre.*)



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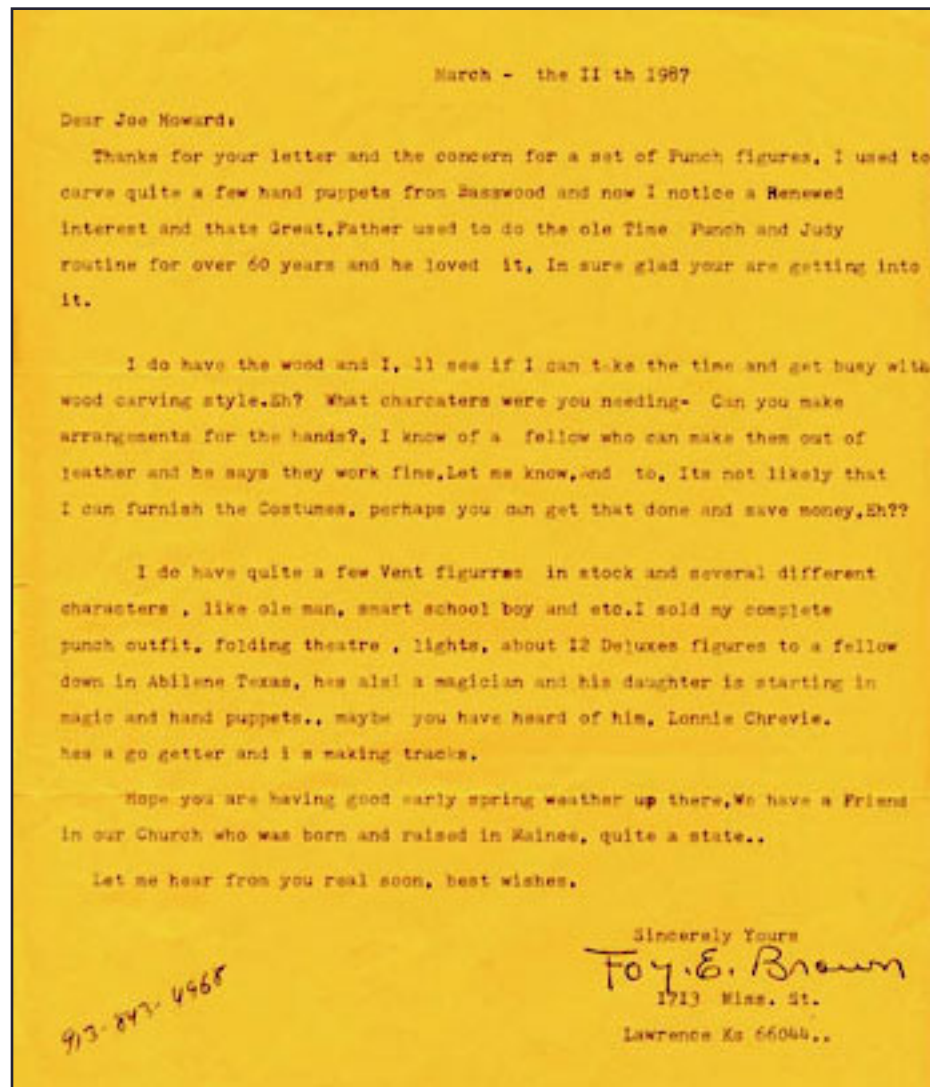
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## Punch's Postbag

**Foy  
E.  
Brown**

Hi  
Editors,



Thanks, as always for the great work you two do on the Around the World With Mr. Punch !!

Re: Foy E. Brown as mentioned in Punch's postbag (Vol 8#3),

I have a bunch of Foy E Brown heads and hands that I got years ago, (not from Foy directly) and I have a letter from him dated March 11, 1987 which I am attaching. I do know that he [was a] fireman in Lawrence Kansas and passed away in April of 1989 at age 91. It's interesting to note in his letter to me that his father performed for over 60 years. It's too bad Jay is gone, he would have more info.

If you like, I can take photos of the figures and send them along. All his figures (including his vent figures) had a distinctive look to them.

Kind thoughts,

Joe Howard

*Yes please, Joe, our Journal likes to keep a note of these things so that they don't get completely lost for posterity. Ed.*

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## **ebay Profits Prof**

Dear Editors,

On returning home after touring with our Halloween puppet show, I had a call from Punch & Judy Fellowship member Brian Gore. He advised me that I may be receiving some enquiries about a lightweight latex Mr. Punch puppet that was up for sale on EBay.

The story is as follows.....Brian bought a set of P&J puppets from THE SUPREME MAGIC CO. but after years of satisfactory service he decided that his Mr. Punch needed replacement. Initial research led him to believe that I used to supply SUPREME with lightweight latex P&J puppets, shortly before they ceased trading. When I confirmed that I was indeed the maker he promptly placed an order for a new Mr. Punch puppet. In due course the new, improved, Mr. Punch arrived and Brian had no further use for his old puppet so decided to see if he could sell it on EBay. Brian watched the bids rise with surprised anticipation. I am sure you will be as amused as I was to learn that his old Mr. Punch did sell.....for considerably more than the brand new one he purchased from me!!!

Prof. Brian Davey  
THE PUPPETREE COMPANY ([www.puppetree.co.uk](http://www.puppetree.co.uk))



# Red-Nosed Miscellany

## HE'S BEHIND YOU! e-bay Punch erotica

**PROF** *Martin Bridle spotted this on ebay and forwarded it for wider circulation. The sellers were Courtney's Curios and Antiques and their description explains the full story. The starting bid was £680.00 but, alas, we have no record of what it fetched. Maybe it's even now in the home of one of our more affluent readers!*

Fabulous Napoleonic period French Prisoner-of-War Bone Caricature of Erotic Punch and Judy

This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to buy an absolutely genuine example of a Napoleonic period French prisoner-of-war carved bone novelty item of exceptional quality, wonderful design and superb condition. Items of this type are rarely found outside of major international auction houses where they invariably command astronomical prices.

All Napoleonic prisoner-of-war work, even that of simple design or unimpressive quality, is now highly sought-after because of its historical importance. Examples date from the last decade of the 18th and the first two decades of the 19th century when large numbers of French prisoners held in British prison hulks or jails produced these hand carved bone trinkets to sell in order to supplement their meagre rations and perhaps buy a little tobacco or alcohol. They used bone from their salt-beef or mutton diet as it was the only material readily available and produced a variety of items including gaming pieces, trinket boxes, and models of sailing ships, spinning jennies and guillotines. Not all bone was from that source though, for at Dartmoor – a prison with the highest mortality rate in the country – the shallow graves of dead French prisoners were roused for the bleached bones of what was often termed 'Dieppe' ivory. The British jailers, who purchased the finished items from the French prisoners for a pitiful sum, then sold them on to the public for many times the price.

This item, as you can see from the photographs, is a caricature of a man and woman, almost unquestionably meant to represent Punch and Judy although the former lacks the hump with which he is usually depicted. Their hooked noses, headwear and attire are however what one would expect of the traditional puppetry pair. I think you can also see quite clearly from the photos that the couple are enjoying an act that would not be part of a conventional Punch and Judy Show. Perhaps it represents the conception of the baby that Punch eventually bangs on the head to stop it crying, before tossing it to the audience!

The interesting thing is that although representations of the sexual act in this manner are quite common in eastern art throughout the centuries and to a lesser extent in the western world in more recent times, this must have been highly risqué in Britain around 1800. It would almost certainly have found its way very discreetly into the hands of a wealthy and respectable gentleman who could enjoy this piece of amusing erotica, along with like-minded male friends in the privacy of his study. Well-bred Georgian ladies would have fainted at the sight of such an outrageously explicit item!

Both figures, as you can see, are exceptionally well carved for this type of bone work and there are no chips, cracks, or other damage. The hinged bone handles are equally sound and are spring-loaded to bring the couple into - as it were – a happy union.

Approx height 8.5 inches (215 mm)



# Toby's Tailpiece



## The Reverend Mr. Punch.

**ACCORDING** to the Arts Council of England guidelines Morris dancing, moving vehicles and religious services are all exempt from the new Licensing Bill. As I can't dance and can't drive, I signed up online to become a minister in the Universal Life Church of California (they'll ordain anybody since there are tax-break opportunities for ministers in the USA) and as the Rev. Edwards, I now have official accreditation. The sole creed of the Universal Life Church (est 1959) is 'To do that which is right', and as Mr. Punch has difficulties in this area, his drama is clearly a morally instructive tale. **The Commedia Congregation** (affiliated to the International Headquarters in Modesto, California) is thus now formally established in the UK "*in order to celebrate belief in the universal power of laughter through the shared performance of Punch and Judy*". It's a belief I hold strongly and I look forward to presenting my ministerial accreditation for inspection when asked by officialdom if I have a licence. I'm not founding yet another Punch society - but any Prof seeking guidance along the path of laughter is welcome to contact me. [glyn@punch-and-judy.com](mailto:glyn@punch-and-judy.com) ” ; and when a chaise came in sight, all was prepared to testify their joy, but it was discovered to be the chaise containing the Overseer, who certainly received very strong expressions of dislike from the persons then and there assembled. Ultimately the poor performer was taken into Minster in triumph, the chaise being drawn by the people.

*(reprinted from the Puppeteers UK Newsletter)*



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