



# Around The World With Mr. Punch

The Online Journal of the worldwide friends of punch and judy Volume 6 No 1 December 2001

## Punch's Brazilian Cousin



It's always nice to meet relatives you didn't know - and to find they share the same characteristics as the rest of the family. If you haven't met Benedito and Margarida before (and I certainly hadn't) then please be introduced to them now. Benedito is the one pictured on the left checking out the pregnancy of his girlfriend Maragarida. As performed by Brazilian puppet maestro Chico Simões, this fast and funny routine led to an offstage birth followed by a classic 'baby routine' in which the infant is swung in a hammock and gets to spray water about the place when he (she?) needs a nappy change. We're certainly in Punch and Judy territory - but South American style. Benedito moves and (being non-swazzled) sounds like Speedy Gonzales. The routines - as played by Chico - are at breakneck speed and peppered with all manner of sight gags, sound effects and ribald gusto in the style of Pulcinella.

In an interview conducted in fractured English and broken Italian, I learned from Chico that the character of

Benedito is that of a (former?) slave. The Brazilian popular puppetry tradition he springs from is called *mamulengo* - with an evocative derivation from the words 'mano' and 'molenga' which means it translates as 'floppy hands'.

Watching Benedito perform a wildly funny routine with his bull (like Punch with his horse), and seeing a Banana Republic style Generalissimo have a laid back and fateful encounter with a snappy crocodile (like Punch's croc and Pulcinella's dog) all served up in what I assume to be Brazilian Portuguese was a wonderful demonstration that the spirit of Punch/Pulcinella is indeed truly global and rooted in many cultures.

Sitting amongst an audience of Italian puppeteers who were helpless with laughter at the verbal gags as well as the sight gags, this was one of those occasions when you knew you were in the presence of a supreme puppet master. Beat your way to Brazil to sit at the feet of Chico Simões (*pictured below*) and learn! And let's welcome Benedito into that anarchic clan of folk-puppets with attitude which spans the globe.

*Glyn Edwards*

If any of our readers know more about the *mamulengo* tradition then please post your information on the Punchlines message board (within the WorldwideWebring)

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# Mr. Punch's Postbag



*What better way to start the first online mailbag page than with a picture of Prof Clive Chandler's Giant Processional Mr. Punch (and unofficial mascot of the Punch and Judy College of Professors) in a publicity shot taken to launch the UK Punch and Judy 2001 stamp issue. This image was featured in the Sept 14th issue of **OK!** magazine: the mega-circulation UK glossy magazine devoted to celebrities and their lifestyles. It's probably the nearest that old Red Nose will get to rubbing shoulders with Nicole Kidman rather than with Judy.*

Dear Sir,  
I expect that this isn't the sort of email you get every day, and so maybe this will strike your interest. I'm working on a Christmas show in New York, specifically in charge of the pre-show entertainment. One of the ideas we had this year was to incorporate a Punch and Judy show into the repertoire-there is a cart that is part of the stage set though not used in the full performance, and we thought

## STAMP NEWS UPDATE

By happy chance there is a Mr. Punch on the US Christmas Mail 2001 Stamp! See Toby's Tailpiece at the end of this issue.

that it could be a great addition to the fun before the feature performance. The problems are that I myself am not very familiar with Punch and Judy (we get less of them in America, sadly), and the people who would be performing are not trained puppeteers. If you'd care to take pity on a few entertainers trying to find another way to live up to our name, then I'd really appreciate any advice you could give on what we should be paying attention to or anyway where I can get more detailed information on how to mount a good show. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.  
Many thanks, *Max Montel*

*Your Editor pointed Max in the direction of the WorldWide Friends webring. If any of our USA readers hear any more about this venture, then do pass the information on. Punch is not forgotten in New York!*

Dear College,  
My name is John Dean, I'm an actor/director currently working in Italy with my wife, Bianca Mastrominico, who is an Italian writer, actor and director. I'm writing to let you know about a theatre show we're currently producing, based on the Piccini text, in an adaptation for two live actors, at the Teatro Sancarluccio in Naples. As far as we are aware, it's the first attempt to stage the text "live" (although maybe you can correct us on this), and certainly the first time a human Punch has performed in his ancestral home! We hope the return to masked commedia roots will bring out the best in him. The show will be in Italian/Neapolitan dialect, as in the Pulcinella shows, and we will be producing a "test" English version in Devon in January. The show should generate a lot

of cultural interest here: we're organising a mini-conference (date to be confirmed) on the Punch/Pulcinella relationship to tie in with the show (called "Lo spettacolo comico-cattivo di Mister Punch"), which runs from 14th November to 9th December 2001. We'd also like to organise a Punch exhibition here in the theatre, in order to diffuse Punch culture to people who know nothing of him, but naturally it's hard to get hold of material from this end - do you think you might be able to help us in any way? In any case we will be showing slides of Cruikshank's prints, and we'll also have a computer available to access material, including your web site (which, incidentally, has been invaluable in our research for the play).

*As you can see this was actually addressed to the Punch and Judy College of Professors - but as it's affiliated to the WorldWide*



*Friends who's quibbling? John Dean was also pointed towards the new Webring. The idea of doing a live version of the Piccini script hadn't come my way before and is - to say the least - an interesting concept. John has promised an article for the journal when the project is underway. At present it has been postponed a while as the re-decoration and re-opening of the venue was behind schedule. Meanwhile John has been put in touch with Bruno Leone - the Worldwide Friends contact for Italy and a Neapolitan of note. The Teatro Sancarluccio - it transpires - was home in the 70s and 80s to performances of Pulcinella by the Fratelli Ferraiuolo from Salerno, an excellent family team who've been performing Pulcinella for generations. John has supplied the below archive photos from this era.*

Hello, I am master student (Theater-puppet) in Tehran university. I want to perform a play of the Punch and Judy for 5th puppet Theater Festival at Nov 2001. I searched many pictures and articles in Internet and I know many things about it but I don't know (a) Punch's voice (b) Judy's voice (c) Music ( what kind used in play). If you help me I will have an excellent play I am the first performer Punch and Judy in Iran. With the best wishes.  
*Fahimeh Mirzahosseini*

*Fahimeh, her sister Sima and her brother Amir have since been in more email contact in pursuit of their answers. They said "We are working together to introduce our country to the world and the universal art to our country. We will be very happy if you can help us. We are also going to introduce an ancient Iranian puppet to the world. His name is Mobarak and is a little unknown." I offered to help them in exchange for information about Mobarak - which they supplied as below.*

Mobarak's voice is very similar to Mr. Punch and uses the same instrument. It is a marionette but at its traditional form it has only two strings. One is wrapped to its head and the other is tied to its back. With such a moving mechanism it can do simple fast works but move easy. His face is black and his dress is red, black face because he has gone to cemetery to fight with the devil of evil and illness and red because he has killed the devil and the blood of that monster has splashed on his dress and he has come to bring the message of happiness and joy.

*Fahimeh and Amir have promised photos of their work in due course. How truly global our tradition is!*

# editorial

Welcome to this Brave New Online World for our journal. We are learning the new technology 'on the job' so please be lenient with any teething troubles (whilst letting us know what they are!) Any readers who have followed us here from its previous Snail Mail incarnation will know that twenty issues have preceded this one at a rate of four per year for five years. Now we are in our new online home having divested ourselves of the enormous labour of printing, collating stapling and mailing. We will have lost many readers as Punch enthusiasts as a group are not noted for being in the vanguard of technological change. A strange thing when you consider how Punch himself has piggy-backed on new inventions down the years in order to keep himself in front of his public. Did Victorian Punch enthusiasts, I wonder, lament the new-fangled railways that took their hero from the urban street corners to the new seaside resorts? To new readers who find us for the first time we are pleased to offer our wares with the benefit of added colour photos - something that was denied us in our previous incarnation. In due course we hope to post online the back catalogue of issues for the benefit of historians and scholars. Meanwhile we are happy to take our place within the new *Punch and Judy WorldWide Webring* (for which all honour and credit is due to Prof. Freshwater - aka Diane Rains of the USA - for code-warringing it to fruition.) If you have questions to ask, comments to email, lines of enquiry to pursue or trivia and gossip to exchange then consider the *Punchlines* forum within the webring as the online postbag for this journal. We look forward to hearing from you. *Glyn Edwards*

*PS. Eagle eyed readers will have spotted that, in some quarters, the previous issue was described as Vol 4 No 5. Since - even with global warming - there are still only four seasons to a calendar year, that should have been Vol 5 No.4.*



Booths, fit-ups, stages, theatres - call 'em what you like they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The photograph above was forwarded by USA's Shirley Schaaf who says it was displayed at the Puppeteers of America Festival in 2001 in Tampa, Florida. It seems to show a scene of Punch 'down below' in Hell with the Devil. It's a good piece of theatre - although I wonder how it works in performance. Meanwhile readers who followed the two part description in previous issues in which Basil Smith (Australia) showed how to construct a walkabout booth will be interested to see Basil himself below demonstrating the framework of the booth.



# pepys answered

*An article in the UK's Sunday Times of Oct 14th gives a fascinating alternative glimpse of Samuel Pepys London - including a reference to Punch! It is reproduced here with all due acknowledgements to the copyright holders.*

## Puritan's diary is darker shade of Pepys

*Nicholas Hellen*

Historians have unearthed a crumbling 17th-century diary that reveals the darker side of the flamboyant society portrayed by the diarist Samuel Pepys. For 14 years, Roger Morrice, a Puritan clergyman who lived in the West End of London, wrote a scathing commentary on the debauchery of Restoration England. It eventually filled 1,500 pages and ran to more than 1m words, much of it in a now unused shorthand. Historians have just begun to decipher the diary, which will contribute to a sweeping reappraisal of one of the most turbulent periods in English history.

To his many admirers, Pepys was the master of the telling phrase; his accounts of the great plague and the fire of London read like vivid journalistic dispatches.

But according to Mark Goldie, the Cambridge University historian in charge of deciphering the diaries, Morrice reveals the violence and

divisions of the age. "It is the most important unpublished British diary of the later 17th century," he said. He reveals his scoop in the forthcoming edition of History Today. The diary is being deciphered by Frances Henderson, an academic at Oxford University who is believed to be the only person capable of understanding it. Morrice was born in 1628, the son of a north Staffordshire yeoman farmer. Educated at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, he became vicar of Duffield in Derbyshire in 1658. Two years later, however, his Puritan world view was turned upside down when Charles II returned from exile, ushering in the exuberant but high church Restoration era. Morrice was expelled from his parish in 1662.

The early part of his diaries - begun in 1677 - is dominated by the Popish Plot investigations into the rumoured coup by the Catholics. England's gradual slide to Catholicism over the following 25 years drove Morrice to show his distaste for what he saw as the collapse in the country's morality. An entry for January 19, 1682, describes with relish a rebuke by the Moroccan ambassador to English courtiers who offered to fix him up with a prostitute. Morrice wrote: "When some of our English gentlemen had too neare a conversation with some ladyes and urged him to receive a whore into his bed, hee said to our great rebuke and shame, 'My religion forbids whores, does not yours?'"

Another entry, for February 12, 1684, shows his distaste for the amusements of his fellow Londoners on the frozen Thames during the "little ice age". He describes "all manner of

debauchery", including bull-baiting, skating and the roasting of a whole ox on the ice.

Morrice's England was also highly militarised, destructively litigious and deeply partisan, with the Tories cast as the villains of a savage period of religious repression.

Every anecdote tells a moral tale. A Punch and Judy show comes to an abrupt end when Lord Spencer cuts off Punch's head with his sword, justifying himself by saying Punch looked like one of James II's most hated lieutenants.

According to John Spurr of the University of Wales, Morrice may have acted like a journalist, providing a handwritten newsletter for a group, including his patron Sir John Maynard, that needed to predict every twist in its political fortunes. He describes details of voting records in parliament, summarises speeches and gathers intelligence from around the world.

The course of his life could hardly have differed more from that of Pepys, who chronicled with relish the high life of Charles II's court. Pepys was 26 and a young man on the make. By the time he abandoned his diary in 1669, he was a rich man who had enjoyed countless amorous adventures. Morrice, who died in 1702, remained a Puritan to the end. Most of England's leading anti-Catholics turned out for his funeral. He named 180 people in his will, from a senior politician to a wheelwright in Stepney, East London.

# oz sl apstick symphony fal l s sil ent

Sean Manners, a Prof from Australia who has been a long-time member of the WorldWide Friends came up with an inspirational way to celebrate Punch in Oz. If you missed his email shot - here's what he had to say!

*Calling all Punch People! Please read the following re: the Slapstick Symphony in January 2002 and become involved. Should be a lot of fun!*

*Dear Punch Person,  
There has been a very enthusiastic response from people interested in, or involved with Mr. Punch and his cousins that enables the Slapstick Symphony to move another step forward.*

*Now we would like to invite you to participate in the Slapstick Symphony on the 25th, 26th, 27th January 2002.*

*Be part of the first coming together of Antipodean Punch people. Join the Slapstick Symphony, a fringe event of the One Van International Puppet Festival.*

*Celebrate the occasion with a grand Punch & Judy opening*

*Perform in the Punch tent situated in the beautiful grounds of the One Van venue!*

*Visit the One Van festival Supper Club for lunch or dinner!*

*Receive 15% discount on tickets for any One Van Puppet performance! Participate in the only international puppet festival in Australia! Feel free to have someone bottle the crowd!*

*The location of the Slapstick Symphony and One Van festival is in the town of Blackheath situated*

*in the beautiful World Heritage Listed Blue Mountains National Park, NSW about 120km's west of Sydney The festival is held over the Australia Day weekend 25/26/27th January 2002.*

*But it was not to be! Sean's final message was to say*

*I am sorry to say that after very good initial expressions of interest when it came to the crunch not enough people were interested enough to make this event a reality. It is a shame. There was good feedback from some interested parties but not enough to make it a viable part of the One Van Puppet Festival. There was also good support from Punch and Judy people overseas who were taking a great interest from afar. Thank you to those people and the Punch and Judy people in Oz who replied positively.*

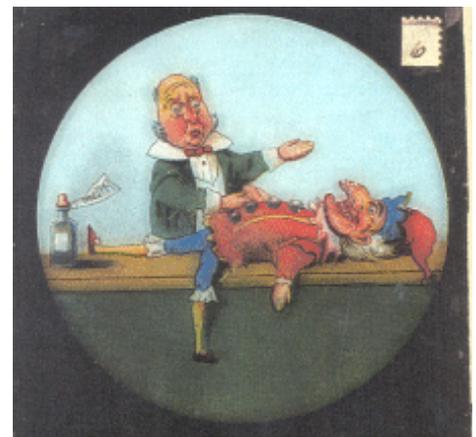
*Hopefully at some point there will be enough interest by enough Punch and Judy performers and interested parties that it will happen. It can only make the industry stronger.*

*Please come along to the One Van Puppet Festival anyway. It is after all the only consistent puppet festival that Australia has. Well worth the effort to visit.*

*Sean Manners  
Chief Conductor ( with a broken slapstick)*

Sean is to be congratulated for trying to get the event off the ground. It took many many years in the UK (where there is a bigger base of performers to draw on and the country is pretty small) before things got going. The distances involved in networking in Oz - where there are few performers - makes Sean's task pretty awesome!

Meanwhile - in discussions around the Festival idea - the Worldwide Friends came up with the idea of a Travelling Slapstick (modelled on the Olympic Torch) that could be sent to Punch events round the world as a tangible symbol of our shared aims. Already a slapstick from the 1987 celebrations of Punch's 325th 'birthday' in Covent Garden has travelled to the USA for the 1999 Punch and Judy May Fayre in Seattle. Either this one - or a new one - can take up the role of roving ambassador of mayhem to Punch events around the globe. It can only be a matter of time before Oz comes up with its first such event - Old Red Nose's Festival may be down Down Under but - like Punch himself - it ain't out!



Lantern Slide image courtesy of Diane Houk (USA)

# An Old Time Bit of Biz

*Ray DaSilva (UK) has forwarded this item from correspondence with a book-purchasing client of his. It is self-explanatory and gives a glimpse of some long ago but but vividly remembered performances in London. The 'Bit of Biz' it reveals is some harassment that Punch wouldn't be allowed to get away with in this day and age - but which might lend itself to a modern treatment with a bit of thought. If anyone comes up with an appropriate twist on the version in the article (it comes towards the end) then let us know! Meanwhile get ready for a nostalgic trip to a little boy's lost past.*

It may be of passing interest to you to learn just why I - in my 70s - have this belated fascination with Punch and Judy history. As a young child in London, my mother's parents lived in the same house. Grandfather (who, I learned in due course, was a first-generation son to be born in Britain to Austro-Jewish parents who had fled the continent in late Victorian times) had an infrequent visitor, a corpulent but tall man always known to us as 'Uncle Pudden' which he accepted with a broad smile and a loud laugh. Whether he was related - even distantly - I never knew. I rather think he had been a fellow-traveller on the journey across Europe which had cemented a lifelong friendship.

But on his occasional visits he would bring with him a battered and bulging large case, haphazardly tied with cord, that contained - to my young delight, the striped canvas booth which he erected in our front parlour (its only use apart from Christmas,

such was the custom of the mid-30s!). From no doubt long practice Uncle Pudden could put together the various struts mechanically while talking nineteen to the dozen with Grandfather and catching up on each other's news and casually dismissed health problems.

And of course, from the depths of the case, now came the show's characters that I imagine were papier-mâché. (It was only years later, having by then seen the typical gaunt figures of those carved wooden finials much beloved on wine-bottle tops from Switzerland and Germany, that I made the possible assumption that Uncle Pudden too was originally of European stock, though he and Grandfather were moderately Cockney in speech, even to the odd rhyming-slang term.

Memory fails me, all these year's later, to identify some of the minor character figures that I've not otherwise seen in British performances, and the sheer delight of being given what was virtually a private showing to the combined family rather over-rode my critical faculties towards the finer points of the show at the tender age of six or seven. One 'stranger' to the normal cast we are used to does come to mind as the only adversary - apart from the Policeman and the Hangman - who stood up to Punch's bad manners and handiness with his staff, was a charming little milkmaid who bore, from a yoke over her shoulder, two buckets (probably of carved wood). When Mr. Punch annoyed her, despite her shrill protests, by trying to flick up her dirndl skirt, she twirled rapidly and clonked him soundly on the head so that he lay on the front shelf of the booth complaining crossly. My young cheers always provided an encore, and

then another, before the action proceeded!

No doubt it regularly did elsewhere, but just where Uncle Pudden might have held his public shows I never knew, nor by what name he was known 'in the profession'. As one does at that time of life, I rather imagined that every other boy or girl in the world had an uncle who was a Punch and Judy man.

Evacuation - for me - and the bombing of London lost me my Grandparents, so that there were not only larger issues to resolve after the war (I never went back) but even with the return of 'normality' there was no trace of Uncle Pudden - supposing he had survived - because I had never known his address.....

I'm sure you can understand, with such happy and poignant memories, why I was so pleased to come across Michael Byrom's book and begin to delve back through the years to the sweet innocence of open-air afternoons and the shrill ring of "That's the way to do it!" as the hook-nosed, hunch-backed little man cracked another skull!

*Don Green (East Sussex, UK)*

# Toby's Tail pieces

Toby has two tailpieces for you this issue and he hopes you enjoy them.



Our USA readers have gleefully seized on the fact that their Xmas 34 cent stamp bears an image of Santa who - in turn - has a Mr. Punch draped across the top of his sack. It may be a bit difficult to spot Old Red Nose on the actual postage stamp by the time it has been franked in the mails - but this postcard sized version shows him pretty clearly. What a festive surprise!

*On the surface this next item may appear to have nothing to do with Mr. Punch - but nevertheless it offers a micro-masterclass in rhythm, timing and nonsense: all topics which are basic to delivering a good Punch and Judy Show. It is reproduced - with acknowledgements - from an advertising feature in the New Yorker magazine of Dec 3rd 2001. The feature is advertising Mel Brooks Broadway musical 'The Producers' which is - in itself - an inspiration to Punch performers by producing cult comedy from outrageous plotlines. The words below are by Thomas Meehan who co-wrote the book with Mel Brooks.*

To be any good a comedy writer has to have an ear for rhythm and the soul of a drummer. Or, as a friend of mine used to say about creators of any sort of art, "You've either got it or you ain't". And Mel, of course, is right. Comedy writing is not only about rhythms, but also about primitively simple, almost atavistic rhythm and sounds that for mysterious reasons make almost everyone laugh. The drummer's basic da-dum-dum. That's why "Hackensack" is funny and "Newark" isn't. Why "Yo-Yo Ma" is a funny name and "Søren Kierkegaard" isn't. Mel, by the way, is uniquely qualified to compare comedy with playing drums because, at the age of fourteen, he broke into show business as a Catskills hotel fifteen-dollar-a-week drummer - self taught with a little help from Buddy Rich. He was the drummer for two summers until one night when the hotel's comic emcee took ill and he leaped up to the microphone and instantly became a stand-up comedian. The first joke he ever told, Mel shamefacedly admits, had to do with his very thin girlfriend. "She's so skinny that when I took her to a restaurant last night the maitre d' asked me "Check your umbrella?" A cheap shot but its comedy rhythm's absolutely right on the beat.

While Mel and I were working together on the book for the musical 'The Producers' - a job that took us nearly two and a half years - we were constantly breaking up at our own lines - a number of which were nothing but pure rhythm. For instance, while she was simply Ulla in Mel's classic 1968 film version of "The Producers", we decided for our own amusement to give the blonde, Swedish bombshell a more elaborate moniker in the musical. "My name," she explains to Bialystock and Bloom upon showing up at their office in search of as job "is Ulla Inga Hansen-Bensen Yonson Tallen-Hallen Svaden-Svanson" "Wait, what's your first name?" Bialystock demands. "That *was* my first name, you vanna hear my last name?" replies Ulla. Comedy Writing 101. Hackensack, Yo-Yo, umbrella, da-dum-dum.