



Around The World With Mr. Punch

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MR. PUNCH IN IRAN



Amir Abolhassani (in white shirt) with student colleagues

Amir Abolhassani from Iran has produced a Punch and Judy Show for a puppet festival in his country. He has an interest in similar folk puppets and explains a little here about his own national puppet - expanding on a short piece from an earlier issue. I have left the article mainly as Amir wrote it - merely tidying up the grammar in one or two places. When Amir speaks of a 'parawan' like that of Mr. Punch I believe he is referring to the swazzle. I have emailed for additional information but communication is sporadic. I'm sure Punch enthusiasts will be fascinated at this glimpse of a very recognisable variant.

I am going to introduce a traditional puppet named "MOBAARACK", it is a marionette and is almost always played with just two strings and the system of movement is very simple. Sometimes, however, there are many strings and a complicated system of movement. The puppet has black face and red (bloody) garments. His face is black because he has gone to the cemetery and fought with the ghouls (ogres or devils) of abomination who want to annihilate happiness and destroy beauty. His clothes are red because he has killed the devil and the blood of the devil has splashed on to them. He comes to give glad tidings to people about that and to inform them about the return of beauty, the victory of goodness. He has many stories but only some of them are told

regularly. He has a love named "Tyare Khanoom" (*khanoom* means Mrs. or Miss in Farsi) who is a beautiful white girl. There are some other characters in his stories who play according to the chosen story, but it can be played with just two puppets. He has a *parawan* like Mr. Punch. There will be two men standing out of his booth, one named "Morshed" who will be called "baba" (baba Uddy) by the puppet and who acts as a showman and the other is a man who plays the "Kamanche" (a kamanche is a kind of musical instrument with a sound similar to violin and played in a similar way). Morshed, himself plays the "Tonback" which is a barrel-shaped musical instrument but known as the most complete one. In some cities "Mobaarak" has changed to a glove puppet like Mr. Punch but it is played in his traditional way in most cities and is known as a marionette in public. Mobaarak was used in so many times as a coquettish tongue who will tell the things that could not be told regularly because of laws or the government. I have written some plays about this character myself and some of them are going to be published. I am ready to answer any question about this puppet to give any more information if you need.

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Group of Iranian puppetry students

MR PUNCH AT GLASGOW FAIR

Martin MacGilp of Inverness (puppet historian and Treasurer to BrUNIMA) has unearthed (amongst other material) this excellent historic account of an 18th Century Punch show in Scotland: one so vivid you can almost see the performance itself. He introduces it as follows:

An interesting description of a Punch performance from the late 1700s appears in a book on Old Glasgow written by Robert Reid (1773-1865). Reid was a Glasgow merchant who wrote under the pen-name "Senex". He published a number of articles and books based on his own recollections and also from his examinations of early records. Among his writings are accounts of various shows he witnessed on Glasgow Green, the location of circuses, booths, etc during Glasgow Fair. The performance of Punch's Opera he describes appears to have taken place in the last decade or two of the 18th Century.

The next show, however, which I attended, was one of a different kind, as it yielded me the most intense pleasure and delight, without any fear of being worried and devoured. This was the celebrated puppet show of Punch's Opera. It was, however, after all, but a paltry, itinerant exhibition, or children's penny show, and had not even the advantage of any scenic decoration, for the performances were confined to a small open space in a wooden structure, little larger than a common soldier's sentry box. In the lower part of this box, the operator of the movements remained ensconced and invisible to the audience, while the upper part of the said box formed the exposed theatre, where the puppets were

exhibited. On this occasion there were only four figures as dramatis personae, viz, Punch, Joan (his wife), little Judy, and the Devil. The operator certainly possessed considerable comic powers and a great share of low humour, by which he kept the company in a constant roar of laughter. The imitations of the voices of Joan and of Judy were excellent, and his buffoonery, by making the figures the vehicles of his scurril mirth and vulgar jests, showed great talents for ridicule and burlesque. The Devil (as usually represented) had two horns on his head, a jet-black face, and flaming fiery eyes. If at any time he popped up his head from a corner of the stage to take a sly peep of what was going on, Mr Punch never failed to give him a tremendous thwack on the crown, which sent him headlong to the lower regions, amidst the immense cheering and loud plaudits of the audience. Our music consisted of various tunes from a small barrel-organ, and of a few humorous songs, such as the "Taylor Done Over;" also of some infantile recitatives, as-

**"Yin-erie, twa-erie, tick-erie, seven,
Alibi, crack-erie, ten or eleven,
Pin, pan, muskie dan,
Tweedle-um, twaddle-um,
twenty-one,"
&c, &c**

For nearly a month after having seen this show my leisure hours were wholly occupied in manufacturing Mr Punch and the above-mentioned puppets, and exhibiting them at home to my companions and others, from a pavilion and stage got up for the purpose with chairs and old carpets.

This is a vivid description, with an

intriguing reference to Punch, Joan, and little Judy, but we must bear in mind many decades had passed since he witnessed this particular show. It is possible that he confused the names from the Punch & Joan of his youth and the Punch & Judy of his present - or have there been other references to the baby being named Judy?

For many centuries showmen on Glasgow Green were not charged any rent - this changed with the introduction of ground rents in 1815. In 1822 James Clelend, the superintendant of public works, wrote to the council informing them that "during the last eight years I have collected £689 6s 6d" from the show people. In 1822 he collected £91 13s. Unfortunately no records of individual showmen were kept, or else have not survived. In connection with Ayr Races (a little South-West of Glasgow), a newspaper advertisement in 1792 declared 'Each perfon erecting a Stand or Booth to pay Five Shillings to the Clerk of the Courtfe.'

Another reference to Punch at Glasgow Fair from the same period is found in the song "The Humours of Glasgow Fair" by John Breckenridge. Breckenridge was born in Glasgow circa 1790, and died around 1840. He was employed as a handloom weaver at Parkhead and enjoyed making up rhymes for the amusement of himself and a few friends. He has been described as "one of the blythest and best of men." It appears he never allowed his rhymes to appear in print. "The

"Humours of Glasgow Fair" was published against his will. The whole piece is around 120 lines long - here is part of it...

**"The carles, fu' cadgie, sat cocking
Upon their white nags and their
brown,
Wi' snuffing, and laughing, and joking,
They soon cantered into the town;
'Twas there was the funning and
sporting;
Eh! lord, what a swarm o' braw folk,
Rowly-powly, wild beasts, wheels o'
fortune,
Sweetie stan's, Maister Punch, and
black Jock.
Lilt te turan an uran, etc."**

It is worth comparing the Senex description above with the Punch reference in John Galt's fictional "Annals of the Parish", published in 1821. This work has a reference to the first appearance of Mr Punch in Dalmailing, Ayrshire in 1770. The relevant passage from the book was quoted in "Around the World With Mr Punch" Vol 4 No1.

Acknowledgements:

Old Glasgow and Its Environs by Senex.

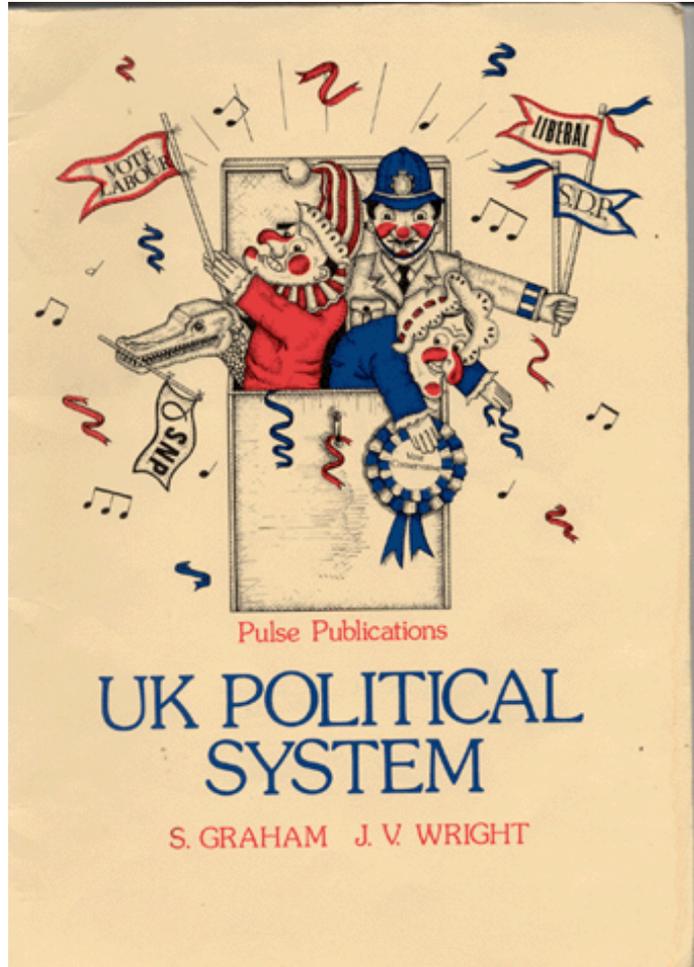
The Humours of Glasgow Fair by John Breckenridge. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow. (11 volumes) The Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

Annals of the Parish by John Galt. Mercat Press, Edinburgh.

The Glasgow Courier. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

political punch



Martin MacGilp also forwarded this booklet found in a second hand shop and originally published in the 1980s by Pulse Publications, 26 Burnside Gardens, Clarkston, Glasgow G76 7QS. The graphics were designed by Aird Graphics, Helensburgh. The illustration again demonstrates how the petty knockabout of the Punch and Judy Show is a constant source of material for political cartoonists.

EDITORIAL

Welcome again to those of you who have followed our adventure into online distribution. After a techno-lag caused by the changeover, material is once again flowing in for publication. Thank you to all contributors for this. Material is always welcome for publication. As ever the journal tries to balance practical information for performing Profs with glimpses into other aspects of Punch's tradition from around the world and from that other country: the past.

One of my recent tasks has been to meet with a representative of the Arts Council of England (as part of a wider UK puppetry initiative) in order to make the case for Mr. Punch to the highest level governmental arts purse-holders in England. This was not a simple task - as Punch and Judy is widely regarded (not always unfairly) as being a poor quality entertainment confined to the hands of children's party entertainers of little skill or imagination. In meetings such as this it is of great help to bring to Mr. Punch's defence some of the many fascinating snippets contributed by readers over the years and to use them as demonstration that the Punch and Judy Show is a living tradition with an honourable pedigree and immense vitality. Where all this will lead who knows, but my own belief is that Mr. Punch is heading for even greater things in the 21st Century and I expect that readers of this journal will play no small part in this.

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IDENTITY PARADE

Paul Brooks of Dallas, Texas says "I purchased these from an estate lot and I honestly had never heard of them and did not know that they were even included in the sale. There are six of them and three of them have Sotheby's New York auction tags on them from where they were purchased several years ago. When I called Sotheby's I was informed that they did sell them (with a tin mechanical bank that reads The "Daily" Mail Savings Bank) for \$800.00 but were appraised at much more. She followed up by telling me that for \$75 dollars she could tell me the previous appraisal amount (Give her a raise!)

Having acquired them Paul is understandably keen to find out more. This is certainly something outside your Editor's sphere of knowledge. Does anyone out there know anything about these figures. Given that the current sum of our knowledge is zero - anything will be an improvement.



WIRED FOR SOUND : 2

The previous issue promised a look into 12v battery sources for powering PA systems and your editor has spent some time online (helped by Prof Google and his apparently limitless wisdom). This was not purely a selfless task as locating a good lightweight re-chargeable system is (like finding good swazzle tape) an on-going quest for many Profs.) Here are my findings.

As readers of the old printed version of this Journal will recall, Prof Dan Bishop of Lands End, UK recommended an ingenious solution in a previous issue. Dan's method is of particular interest to Profs travelling beyond their home shores where nasty technical questions concerning power supplies in different countries disturb the peace of mind of those simple minded 'plug and go' persons such as myself. Dan's elegant method is based on the fact that torch batteries (in all their variety) are more or less universal. Thus the 'extended flashlight' device of Dan's calls for vandalising a torch so as to extend its length in order to take nine 1.5 volt batteries. Flick the switch and a maximum of 13.5 volts are at your command - which is what is what most 12v battery powered amplifiers will take. I've been using the *Edwards Mk2 Sticky Tape 'n' String* model for a test run most of this season so far - and it has been a triumphant success. If it falls apart during a forthcoming

overseas trip I'll report back! The ingenuity behind Dan's device is that you can use either re-chargeable batteries or standard ones inside the casing. Thus in the event of an incipient PA power failure at - say - the Ulan Bator Festival of Folk Puppetry and Yak Wrestling - you can pretty well guarantee that there will be a trading post selling torch batteries within shouting distance. A telephone poll (no pun intended) of Prof acquaintances reveal Dan's method to be in use elsewhere alongside professional equivalents.

Of these equivalents (which are manufactured for leisure activities such as camping and caravanning as well for car owners needing a jump-start power option) many UK Profs relied on products from Kingavon Ltd. Sold at auto supply shops - mine was purchased from a now defunct retailer called *Carnography!* - the Kingavon Power Station PS7 was a lightweight (3kg) re-chargeable 12v sealed power source that was the ultimate in practical portability. The model has now been discontinued but a phone call to Kingavon tells me that a *400 series* has replaced the *700 series* (of which the PS7 was a part). For further information UK callers can telephone Kingavon direct on 01473 21913.

For readers outside of the UK the website at www.power-sonic.com offers an intriguing range of professional re-chargeable batteries. It would need someone with more

technical expertise than myself to assess the different models on offer or to work out exactly what their actual intended use is. This is a global corporation with listed contacts in many countries but looks a good source of enquiry for anyone wanting to track down the ultimate solution.

Meanwhile back in the UK there is the Argos catalogue (global readers will apply this to the catalogue shopping culture of their homeland). Prof Brian Davey of Lyme Regis, UK draws our attention to the *Clarke Jump-Start 900* (Cat.No. 750/5546) which has all the rugged looks of one of the earlier sturdy Kigavon models and has a cigarette-lighter socket for easily accessing the power without needing any jump start sized crocodile clips.

If anyone has any other tips on battery power do email and share them.

Glyn Edwards.

(editor@punchandjudy.org)



The *Clarke Jump-Start 900*

JUDY GETS THE SWAZZLE

This is the transcript of an item broadcast in an arts programme by the BBCs music station Radio 3 (and if the station means nothing to those of you outside the UK, it is Highbrow with the largest capital 'H' you can find - whilst attempting to modernise by programming occasional features on World Music and Jazz). They have recently run a series called The Verb - aimed at putting Writers and Poets (as opposed to writers and poets) on the airwaves. As a jolly jape by a wacky academic I expect the script below would have them holding their sides in the Senior Common Room and (being charitable) I expect the broadcasters assumed it was saying something intelligent about the Punch tradition. From a less rarified viewpoint it is a standard variation on spoof Punch scripts from a 'knowing' perspective. Its biggest howler - other than arguing a pseudo-feminist line actually written and presented by two men - is in making the punchline (and presumably the reason it was commissioned) the transferring of the swazzle to Judy. A little more knowledge on the part of the writer (pictured from his website on page 7) would have prevented the error, as Judy has often been a swazzled character in the past. The obituary of one of those to use this old style can be found on page 9.

Professor Guido Pringelli's
Alternative Punch & Judy
presents

JUDY GETS THE SWAZZLE
the script of the show as
broadcast on BBC Radio 3
(The Verb, 10 pm, Saturday 18
May 02)

Mr PUNCH: Gizzakiss Judy!
[several times on swazzle,
demanding, cajoling, etc. Then
in his own voice, wheedling...]

Go on, give us a kiss.

JUDY: Ooo not now Mr Punch,
not in front of all these boys
and girls. They'll laugh

PUNCH: You'll not laugh will
you boys and girls?

JUDY: Oh yes they will!

Oh yes they will. You know, on
beaches and at fetes and at
Jubilee galas all over merry
England there'll be kids this
summer laughing at Judy, the
ditsy doll.

I mean what sort of relationship
is this? She calls him Mr Punch
and he calls her Judy. It's an
outmoded 20 th century
genderlect.

JUDY: An outmoded
genderlect? You mean I need
to abandon my pre feminist
linguistics, my polite excuses,
and say, " Give you a kiss?! In
your dreams, you hunchback
rednose sot."

You've got it, Judy. "Not in front
of all these boys and girls" is
something he can argue with.
Watch.

MR PUNCH: You'll cover your
eyes with your fingers won't
you boys and girls and you
then you won't see us going
kissy kissy kissy and you won't
laugh and of course you won't
leave a little gap between your
fingers will you, like this, and
peek?

JUDY: Oh yes they will.

Oh yes they will. He's turning
them into voyeurs. But we've
moved on from this, this Coy

Mistress male seduction
technique. He's as outdated as
this hooded and blindfolded
gentleman here, the show's
original hangman.

HANGMAN: As the miner to his pit
so am I to the gallows: redundant
since the repeal of capital
punishment. The old show, when I
tried to hang Mr Punch for the
murder of his wife and child and
he ended up hanging me, the
hangman, - quite hilarious really,
the chutzpah! - never recovered
from that. I've tried several
professions since - actor, I can
give you Abhorson from the
Problem Play "Measure for
Measure"...

"You must arise and be hanged
Master Barnadine... " but there's
not a lot of call for it. I'm available
for hire as a kiddies' entertainer.
I'm an impressionist [his phrasing
is accurate, more than the voice] -
"it's me, Ian Macmillan and on the
verb tonight from a seaside near
you, reworking the great oral
traditions as we like to, here on
The Verb, we bring you the
alternative Punch & Judy." The
show without violence, or hanging.
The old order changeth, I
suppose.

[The Alternative show begins]

JUDY: Hello I'm Judith and I'm
cooking vegetarian sausages and
minding the baby.

What do you mean shouting "look
behind you" boys and girls? "A
crocodile," you say? Oh where?
There? Oh no, that's my sausages
gone. That crocodile! I'll have to
go and buy some more. [calling]
Punch!

PUNCH [from below, swazzled]:
That's the way to do it.

JUDY: Oh he's got that swazzle in
again, that empowering linguistic
device that Punch pops in his
mouth to declare with such
messianic self righteousness that
that's the way to do it. You can
spit that swazzle out or I'll give

you a kiss.

PUNCH: Oh no, not big wet slobbery lips, not kissy kissy kissy, not in front of all these boys and girls, they'll laugh.

JUDY: Well then, you look after the baby while I go and get some sausages. Make sure he's good to the baby boys and girls. Give me a call if he's not. Bye bye.

[she goes]

PUNCH: Now then sonny. I'm going to teach you to walk. This is the traditional walky walky scene. Did you know that walky walky are the first words new professors, that's Punch & Judy performers, learn to swazzle?

PUNCH: [swazzles] walky walky. No I'll do better than that. I'll teach him to run instead. He'll be the first baby in the world as can run before it can walk. Shhh boys and girls, stop calling for Judy, you're spoiling the fun. Now sonny, I'll put you here. Punch places the baby at one end of the playboard and himself at the other. "ONE TWO THREE," he says, the baby runs - that always gets a laugh, then he runs some more and, because he doesn't know how to stop - he can't even walk yet let alone stop - the baby goes running off and disappears out of the booth.

PUNCH: Oh no he's gone! Don't tell Judy.

And Judy comes back with the sausages

JUDY: Here, where's my baby?

PUNCH: er... a crocodile came up and ate it.

JUDY: What - a crocodile ate my baby?

[she sings]

I've got the blues, I've got the blue Judy blues.

I had a little baby, he was everything to me,
He was my alphabet, my A right thru to ZEE
And along came Punch, that

badman Punch

And he gave my little baby to a crocodile for lunch.

I've got the blue joo blue joo blue judy blues.

But I tell you something sister, things round here is gonna change,

I ain't no Mariana stuck in no moated grange,

I'm the thinking woman's Judith with a strong post feminist twist
And I'm gonna give that "Mister" Punch some strong post feminist fist.

I've got the blues etc.

At which point, smelling sausages, the crocodile returns.

JUDY: Here, have you eaten my baby?

CROC: Snap snap snap

JUDY: Oh you're a vegetarian are you? You don't eat babies.

CROC: Snap snap

JUDY: Very alternative, a veggie crocodile. What's that you're shouting boys and girls? Behind you? What's behind... Oh it's my baby, running!

And now we see the baby, as Judy says, running, right across the back of the playboard.

JUDY: Punch taught him did he boys and girls. Men! Crocodile, catch him in your jaws can you, very gently, just use your gums and not your teeth.

And here comes the baby again, like a formula one racing driver, out the side of the booth, disappearing, suddenly reappearing out the back and over the top of the booth, the children shouting "behind you, over there" and Judy shouting "where?" and the crocodile snapping his jaws, very gently (snap snap)... and eventually...

JUDY: [the crocodile has caught the baby and hands him over]

Thank you crocodile. And crocodile, can you pop downstairs and get Punch's swazzle for me. Use your teeth this time if you have to.

PUNCH [from downstairs] Here,

give me back my swazzle

JUDY [as crocodile returns]

Thank you Crocodile. Now I'm in charge... 'ere Crocodile, where are you going with those sausages?

Too late he's stolen them again!

Punch, come up here, I've an errand for you, you're going down the deli. I'm looking after the baby. I'm going to teach him to walk, and when I've done that I'll teach him to crawl.

[she swazzles] Walky walky.

That's the way to do it!

END



Richard Hoyes aka Guido Pringelli.
(Photo downloaded from web)

My Punch & Judy is more like Judith & Punch. Judy's in charge. And there's no violence, no devil and the crocodile's vegetarian and doesn't eat babies.

But if "politically correct" means dull it's far from that. My show is not preacherly and it's full of chutzpah. The show is available for hire – private parties, fetes, galas, cruise ships, wherever... There is also an adult version (that's "adult" as in grown-up, it's not the Blue Punch & Judy) and shows can be customised to suit individual needs. Improvisation is of the essence. School visits are also possible, and the show can be geared to the National Curriculum. Children can be encouraged to write their own versions, which Professor Guido Pringelli is happy to perform. The show has been described in TheTimes Educational Supplement as "Punch & Judy with a post feminist twist."

On May 18 an adult version of the show, with an emphasis on gender linguistics, was broadcast on Radio 3's late-night word-cabaret The Verb. The show, fully swazzled, is available for hire at reasonable rates. I come with booth, loudhailer and with three different stories to tell. That's the way to do it!

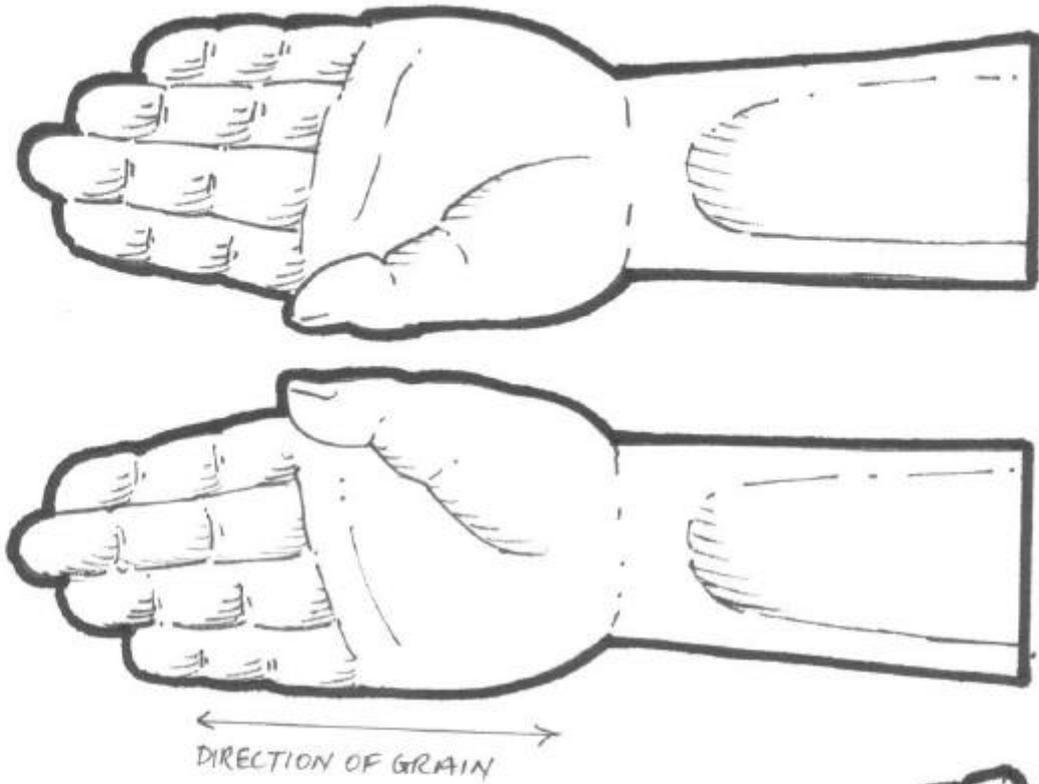
When more appropriate than the regular fee, Guido Pringelli takes donations for the NSPCC.

CARVING HANDS AND FEET

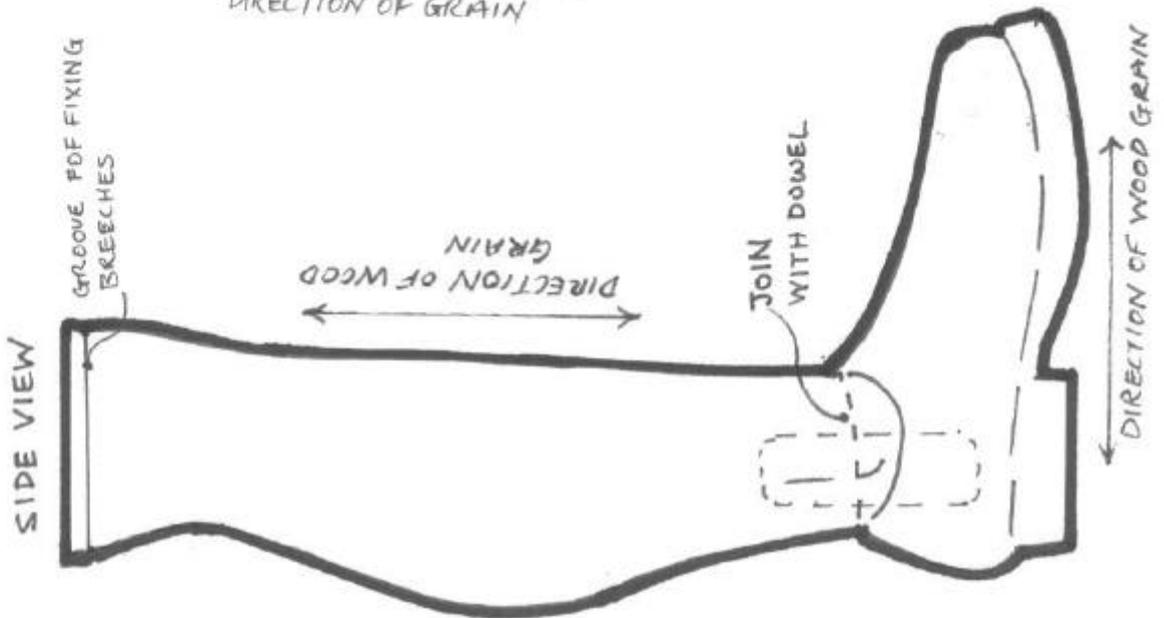
Brian Davey writes...

For those of you intending to have a go at carving your first Mr. Punch, but haven't quite got around to it, you may find these drawings an incentive. The previous issue gave drawings for the head. here now are drawings of the hands and feet to complete the set.

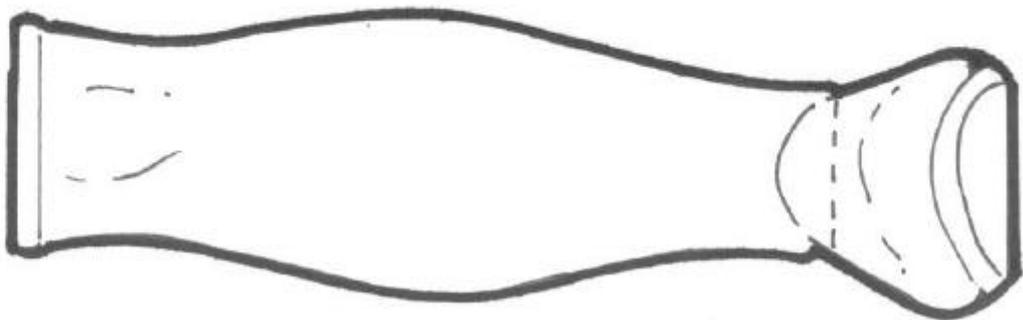
HANDS CUT FROM APPROPRIATE THICKNESS OF WOOD



Brian Davey

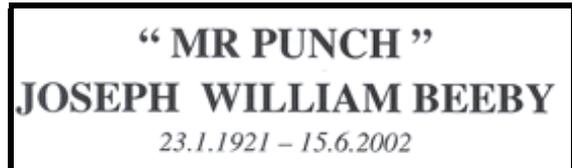


RIGHT LEG FRONT VIEW



FAREWELL JOE!

The UK Punch community recently said good-bye to one of the jewels in its crown with news of the death of Joe Beeby - a Prof who carried the true spirit of the 19th century show through to the 21st. The subject of Geoff Felix's book 'My Life With Punch' (sadly now out of print) Joe could have sprung from the pages of Dickens: not as a self-invented 'character' playing the part of the old time showman - but as a genuine original whom Dickens would have recognised at once. After fifty years of performance Joe hung up his puppets last year and has now taken his leave of us. There is no-one who can fill the gap he has left. Joe was the last of a kind and we are all the poorer for losing him. Below is the speech given at his funeral by Geoff Felix which is re-printed here so that a global audience may glimpse a little of a man who meant so much to the British Punch tradition where his name will live forever.



On a park bench in Folkestone there is a plaque, and with a simple phrase it describes the person to whom it is dedicated: "of simple piety,, he hitched his wagon to a star." Joe liked to quote that because it was describing a Punch and Judy man, but it could have been describing himself. The vicar will be pleased to know that he had a faith that never wavered. Early on he had addressed the great question of life and had reached a conclusion based on the teachings of many people. He believed in Jesus and tried his very best to live a Christian life. I don't think he had an unkind or mean bone in his body. He accepted people for what they were, and valued anyone who showed him kindness.

One example of this was how he cared for his friend Olga during her declining years. She would give him lists of things to buy and woe betide him if he couldn't account to her for every penny. One day he told me that he had to go to Shepherd's Bush to buy her some new knickers, navy blue, with gusset. He said that as she was just the same waist measurement as him, he would know what size to buy. Well, I wondered whether the stallholder would believe this. But he didn't care, he wasn't embarrassed at all: she had been good to his mother and that was it.

In 1926, Joe saw a Punch and Judy show. It was one of those life changing moments and proof that Art can lift the human spirit. The old showmen didn't know what was happening, they were just trying to give a good show. But the alchemy was there: the spirit, the light, the power of the performance was being passed on. Those of us who do the show can only hope that there, in the crowd, is a child like Joe. He accepted the gift they offered, and repaid them. And for fifty years, he kept their show alive.

Laughter, and especially the sound of children's laughter, makes the world a better place, and through his show, Joe gave laughter and joy to thousands. With wooden figures and a call, he played The Ancient Drama, he re-lived that precious moment.

I'd like to think that as Joe wanders up to The Pearly Gates, with a jacket full of pictures and a bag of boiled sweets in his pocket, that there to greet him are all those that meant so much: his parents, Olga, Lil, Barbara, Lord Soper and the two old Showmen.....and standing behind them, a whole army of other showmen, whose names were never known, but who had seen what he had done and were applauding him one last time.

You showed us how it should be done Joe, you led the way - and we thank you for it.

the youngest prof?

Just as Joe Beeby 'caught' Punch and Judy whilst watching a show as a lad in 1926 - so the story repeats itself. The following item arose as the result of an enquiry about swazzling. The enquirer was the father of a nine year old 'Prof' who contributed the following information upon request.

We live in East Sussex and so far all of William's performances have been within a 15 mile radius of our village. At the age of 4 he had a birthday party in our house where the main attraction was a locally based children's entertainer called Ray Sparks. Ray is not only a biker like me (top fellow) but in addition to magic tricks he is also a Punch Professor and this proved to be the major hit of the day for William.

From then on Punch and Judy became something of an obsession to the boy such that for Christmas that year I made him a booth (an interesting challenge for my skills as a professional Signwriter) and several relatives gave puppets as presents.

Like most children William has lots of toys, games, computer distractions etc. However Mr Punch has stood the test of time and is the one passtime which is returned to again and again. Last year my son entered a talent contest at school where he performed his first Punch and Judy show for people other than family and close friends. I am pleased to say that he won first prize for his efforts and this gave him the confidence to practice further to the point where he was asked to take part in our village's Golden Jubilee

celebrations on the 3rd of this month. He was rather nervous before starting as the audience was the biggest he had ever performed to- some 100 strong. He stole the show! Luckily for William's ego the fulsome praise heaped upon him has mostly been out of his earshot!

His next performance this week (with special permission for absence from school given by his teacher who considered the experience will be educational) is on Friday morning at a local "special needs" school. Perhaps his most challenging audience yet? We aren't "pushy" parents but both me and my wife are very happy for William to pursue his "apprenticeship" to Punch professorship providing he keeps his feet on the ground and continues to have as much fun as he has so far.

toby's Tail piece



Forwarded by Steve Newton of Devon, UK, this is from a souvenir postcard of the nursery of painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901). And in the centre of the nursery Toulouse-Lautrec's own 'Guignol' theatre.