



Around the World With Mr. Punch

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The Euro Punch

by Keith Potter

IT is always interesting to contrast and compare the various branches of the 'Punch' family tree, but there has long been a problem following the Dutch connection due to language difficulties. It was therefore very pleasing to read John Morley's scholarly and objective account of Jan Klaassen in Vol.7 No.4.

The similarities of the various European Punches are most striking, particularly when compared with the German equivalent. The first sighting of our hero in Germany came in 1649, in Nuremberg, where 'Polizinell' was performed by an itinerant Maltese showman called Blasius Manfredi. 1649 was also the year that the Franco/Italian showman Brioche was first noted performing 'Polichinelle' in Paris. In England, in the 1660's, the first references (by Peyps and others) to the Punch puppet by name, were to 'Polichinelle' or variations of that name. (The one exception being a single visit to this country in 1662 by Signor Bologna, who performed "alias Pollicinella", but who does not seem to have been connected with the later Polichinelle puppet performers). Morley states that Jan Klaassen may have developed from Polichinelle and this is almost certainly correct. The early Dutch engravings of Polichinelle are of the same character who appeared in this country and in France. The history of Punch in England, and on the Continent, is the history of Polichinelle.

Morley also suggests "Hanswurst [or] Pikelharing" as possible immediate predecessors of Jan Klaassen; but we can dismiss this idea since we know that Pickleherring and Hanswurst were both originally introduced into Germany from England by troupes of English comedians at the time of Shakespeare. Hanswurst was introduced in 1597 as Jack Sausage, but was so popular with the locals that they adopted him as their very own folk hero; later the Austrian Laroche developed him into the character of Kasperl.



The 1848 'Bilderbogen' shows the body of the 'Mysterious Beast' which is clearly no crocodile or dragon.

Thus Kasperl has Anglo/German/Austrian roots, quite distinct from Polichinelle. For many years the Germans had two puppet heroes, Kasperl and 'Polichinel', who were quite different in appearance, until gradually Kasperl began to take over the mantle of glove puppet hero when he became highly Punchlike, though, like Jan Klaassen, he did not retain the hump. There are many similarities between the Jan Klaassen and the Kasperl/Polichinel shows: both featured the stretching neck figure (the Germans called him 'Langhal' or longneck) and both featured a Monster, similar to our Crocodile, popping out of a tin can (the Germans called him 'Geheimnisvolle Tier' or mysterious beast); both also featured the Jew and the Recruiting Officer. The tin can idea was certainly not unique to Jan Klaassen since a picture strip (or 'Biderbogen'), entitled 'Polichinel-Spiel', published in Germany in 1848 shows Kasperl struggling with both the Devil and the Mysterious Beast in a tin can, and in May 1841

Albert Smith wrote an article describing Jim Crow popping up from a tin caddy in a London Punch show. (In the same article Smith also mentions seeing a 'Spectre' with an enormous red mouth – the first sighting of a crocodile-like puppet in the Punch show!).

All these similarities have led modern historians (such as McCormick and Pratisik) to conclude that it is not reasonable to talk of national puppet types since they are all international! Further, the idea that the Italians were somehow responsible for introducing all the different variants of Punch cannot stand up to scrutiny. Morley mentions that the Dutch were once regarded as the best puppeteers; this may be a reference to 'A Second Tale of a Tub' (1715) where the author described the Dutch as being: "the most expert Nation in the World for puppet-shows". However prior to this Ben Jonson had praised the skill of French puppeteers who could make their figures' eyes move and the English introduced a new type of puppetry into Germany, using larger than normal figures, which for generations later became known in

that country as " The English Puppets". Of course the Italians visited other countries with their Pulcinella figure, but it should not be assumed that Pulcinella and Polichinelle were merely the same character by a different name. In fact it is a highly contentious issue as to how much of Polichinelle is of French development and how much is of Italian descent. The two characters are in fact remarkably different; let us consider these differences:

(1) In terms of temperament Punch/Polichinelle is bold, brazen, clever, contumacious and cares not for the consequences of his actions. By contrast Pulcinella is a cowardly buffoon, a stupid dolt (though sometimes with low cunning) and a lying braggart.

(2) In terms of appearance Punch/Polichinelle has a large 'banana' nose, a grossly pronounced chin coming up to meet the nose (hence giving him the classic nut-cracker profile, a humped back, a coloured tunic (usually predominately red and yellow) and a forward pointing fool's cap (or bicorn in the case of the French version). By contrast Pulcinella has a smaller hooked (or 'Roman') nose, his chin is not so prominent so he lacks the nut-cracker profile, he has no hump, he wears a white or light grey smock and a conical hat.

(3) As a glove puppet, Punch/Polichinelle is a large puppet with a large head, he has practicable legs which he can waggle about and dangle over the playboard, he is invariably performed by one person in a solo booth and he has no face mask. By contrast Pulcinella is a small puppet who darts about the booth, he has no legs, he was sometimes performed by two people in a double booth (allowing four puppets at a time to be shown) and he usually wore a black half mask.

(4) Although solo Pulcinella performances did sometimes involve characters familiar to similar shows throughout Europe (e.g. the Devil, Death, a Policeman and a girlfriend with whom he danced) generally the storylines were very variable and you did not get the same consistency of incidents that repeated themselves in all the Polichinelle derived shows (examples of which were discussed above).

All the Polichinelle derived puppets share similarities not generally found in the Italian Pulcinella, and it cannot therefore be said that the Italians were responsible for their development. The Italians were an important part of the story but they were certainly not the whole story and to argue otherwise belittles the contributions of all those Flemish, Dutch, French, English, German and other puppeteers whose work so greatly enriched the heritage of European puppetry.



The Magician with prostrate Kasperl.

Signs of the times

PUNCH & JUDY HAND PUPPETS

Punch and Judy Hand Puppets. Re-enact the classic story of Punch & Judy! Set includes Punch, Judy (with baby), the Policeman and the Crocodile Age: from 3 years



TWO products currently on sale widely in UK are a good indicator that the public at large do not see Punch and Judy with the same kind of fanaticism as the occasional Politically Correct fundamentalist. There's little doubt that neither of the products would have been launched into the High St. stores nationwide if the large companies involved in their production and distribution felt they were too sensitive for the mass market. The

hand puppets are on sale at Early Learning Centre, branches of which can be found in most large towns and provide a major source of toys and games for the very young. Similarly Punch and Judy toothpaste, which has been around for a very long time, has been given a major relaunch and can be found in High St. chemist shops. Here, in their own words, is how the design company went about their task...

International brand design consultancy Design Bridge has re-designed Punch & Judy Toothpaste packs on behalf of Roche Products Ltd. Punch & Judy, an established children's toothpaste with over 20 years heritage has faced increasing competition from mainstream

toothpaste brands. Specifically formulated to care for children's teeth the brand needed updating making it more relevant to today's more discerning kids.

Design Bridge's new design brings the Punch & Judy theme into the 21st century. New cartoon characterizations of Punch, Judy and the infamous crocodile have been created in a contemporary style, allowing them to sit more comfortably amongst newer, popular, cartoon characters. The toothpaste carton has been given entertainment value by re-creating a Punch & Judy tent in miniature, a striped tent reminiscent of seaside puppet shows. A cut-out panel in the pack allows the toothpaste tube to be seen, with either Punch & Judy on one side of the tube, or the crocodile on the other being visible. The pack can be utilised as a play aid once empty.

A Victoriana style font reflects both the heritage of Punch & Judy characters and associations with British seaside holidays. Increased shelf standout is provided through the use of colour and imagery, creating a wall of colourful stripes. Flavours, orange and strawberry, are represented by pack colour-ways and on-pack fruit illustrations.



Punch and Judy toothpaste.

Ian Burren, Design Director at Design Bridge, comments " ...it has been a great opportunity to work on such a novel brand that many of us remember from our own childhoods, and bring it bang up to date. We have created an exciting range of characters which we envisage having life on and off pack and appealing to all ages of consumers..."

Old Red Nose continues to be a merchantable icon.



Editorials

FROM THE U.K.

WELL, here we are again. Welcome to the eighth volume of our Journal. Dedicated readers will now have followed the news and views through twenty eight previous issues and a couple of major format changes. Not bad going really and something which shows the remarkable appeal that Mr. Punch still exerts over a far flung group of folk. It is only fit and proper that the twin foundations of this enterprise (with copy gathered from the UK and webmastering of the end result done from the USA) should henceforth be reflected in twin Editorials from either side of the Atlantic. Lest this become solely an Anglo-American project, contributions are also still warmly welcomed from other nations. Mr Punch has a lot of brothers and sisters — all of whom are entitled to their say. UK Festivals have recently hosted visits from Portugal's Don Roberto (a tradition in which all the characters are swazzled) as well as from France's Polichinelle (undergoing a revival in the hands of a couple of companies after centuries of eclipse at the hands of Guignol) and in European puppetry circles there is a general heightened awareness and appreciation of the old — once despised — folk puppets. There's life in the old

FROM THE U.S.A.

ONCE upon a time, I was a lonely American Punch Professor. (This almost sounds like a movie title, akin to "I Was A Teenage Werewolf.") Oh, I had plenty of puppetry friends and colleagues in my local guild and elsewhere. But there was no community of Punch enthusiasts to which I could belong. The Worldwide Friends of Punch and Judy changed that. I will always be grateful to Glyn for his marvelous, visionary idea of a Punch organization accessible to people all around the world. It is an honor to serve as webmaster and now, online editor, for this unique association.

When Glyn decided to make *Around the World With Mr. Punch* an online journal in 2002, I was delighted to help. There were some growing pains that accompanied the switch from paper publication to a downloadable PDF format. A few readers just couldn't make that journey. But many new members have joined us.

Now we are again changing the journal's format in the hoping of improving accessibility. Those of you who had trouble downloading a PDF file in the past will no longer have to struggle. You need only visit these web pages to have the wit and wisdom of *Around the*

traditions yet and that's cause
enough for celebration as we start a
new phase in the life of 'Around
the World With Mr. Punch'.

~ *Glyn Edwards, Worcestershire*

World With Mr. Punch unfold
before you. Here's to the future!

~ *Diane Rains, Minnesota*

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Still Hilarious After 400 Years

This article originally was originally published on July 21, 2004 in the Baltimore Sun and appeared under the byline of Sun staffer Patricia Meisol. It is not just an interesting account of one American 'Prof,' but also some good publicity for Old Red Nose.

IN an age of sophisticated amusements, a Bel Air man enchants children with magic tricks and the antics of 'Punch & Judy.'



If you can imagine a child today who refuses to be swept away by Harry Potter, you can imagine what Mark Walker must have been like as a youth.

At 51, he remains interested only in what others are not: the uncommon, the old, the antique. But like children of every age, he most loves to laugh or, better still, to hear kids laughing so hard they hiccup, roll on their sides and squeal so that, soon, the adults are laughing, too.

That was the scene at the Randallstown library recently, as more than 250 kids enjoyed Walker's performance of what he believes is America's oldest continuously running Punch & Judy, the farcical puppet show featuring a battling married couple and a cast of characters who end up in slapstick situations and interact with their audience.

In a half-hour, he demonstrated that even in an age of television and other electronic amusements, kids go wild for trick voices, surprise entrances and a comic's apparent befuddlement. In sum, there is nothing like a lone creative man and a 400-year-old puppet show.

"It obviously takes a lot of practice," said Jasmine Hall, 11, a Garrison Forest School

student at the library show. "These seem so realistic."

In July, to reward summer readers, Walker takes his act to Baltimore County library branches, playing a hurdy-gurdy, enticing kids to pull endless lengths of silk from a red velvet bag and staging Punch & Judy shows.

He has four or five sets of British-made wooden puppets, a range of voices for his characters, a velvet stage to hide behind, and a stage name: Professor Horn.

It takes him one hour and five trips to unload his car — and nearly killing himself to finish his year-end numbers as senior financial analyst for the Johns Hopkins Health System to take time off for puppet season.

He loves his job, he says, but Punch & Judy is an adventure:

"Your life isn't ordinary when you do this."

You could argue, as his wife sometimes does, that Mark Walker's life was never ordinary.

At 5, he was performing magic tricks for his friends and, five decades later, he is the unchallenged authority and author of books on magic in Baltimore.

It pains him when unique art and people disappear. Like a good magician, he yearned to bring them all back to life. He had the chance to preserve only one — the Punch & Judy show that has been played for children in Baltimore since 1897.

Walker was in his 30s when his mother called one evening to say the Englishman John Styles, one of the greatest Punch & Judy performers then working, was on TV. As Walker watched, he experienced a flashback to the 1960s when he was 10, at a school picnic in Patterson Park eating hot dogs and playing dodgeball. A man named George L. Horn performed a Punch & Judy show at the picnic that intrigued Walker enough that he spoke to Horn and promised to visit. He never did.

But Walker remembered his name, and when he found Horn in the phone book, he hired him to play at his niece's birthday party. Horn was a funny guy, Walker says, and like Walker, a magician. The two became friends, and Walker took him to magicians' banquets and dinner every few months.

For 60 years, in an old amusement park during the Depression, in parks throughout the Mid-Atlantic states in the 1950s and '60s, and at Baltimore's Club Charles into the 1980s, Horn performed Punch & Judy.

Horn had learned the show in the 1930s from Edward Ross, whose stage name was "Professor Rosella" and worked into his 80s. Walker thought he would like to similarly

inherit the show from Horn when he retired and carry on the Punch & Judy tradition.

The show had been around forever, it seemed to Walker, and the thought of it not being around was overwhelming. "I can't let it happen," he said.

Punch & Judy, after all, had been in America since before the White House was built. The shows are mentioned in the earliest references to puppetry in this country. While other puppeteers have performed Punch & Judy shows for a few decades, Walker says no one else has handed down essentially the same show for more than a century, preserving many of the same lines, from one puppeteer to the next as Ross, Horn and he have done.

A Punch & Judy expert agreed. "I can't think of any other," said Glyn Edwards, editor of World Wide Friends of Punch & Judy, a British Internet journal, and himself a puppeteer in Britain.

Punch & Judy dates back to the 1600s. Originating in Italy, the puppet show was made famous in England. Walker loves all things British and finds London "very nostalgic." A few years ago when he visited Broadstairs, the preserved Victorian beach town where Charles Dickens wrote David Copperfield, he had to pinch himself. "You were like in another time zone," he says. "I didn't want to leave."

With his fair skin, thin pointed nose, rosy cheeks and sandy hair curled at the brow, the Bel Air man could pass for a Brit himself.

British tradition holds that performers of this show title themselves "professor," and Walker borrowed Horn's name in a tribute to the man, who was plenty pleased. Horn died in January at age 98.

The show requires mastering five or six voices and puppets, and at first, Walker says, "I didn't think I could do it."

But he kept practicing. In 1987 he went to England to meet Styles and others who perform the show and they became friends. Horn, too, had coached him.

His first performance at his daughter's birthday party in the early 1990s was unnerving.

By 1994, Walker had new puppets made by Styles and a bunny rabbit house he bought "for a price" from another British children's entertainer.

While he still uses some of Horn's lines, some of Walker's humor is topical, and some is thrown in for adults. At a Fraternal Order of Police show last Christmas, the cop puppet spun a line about indicted former Baltimore police Commissioner Edward E. Norris's woes that had people howling.

By now Walker has performed in a courtroom, a store window, in front of a heat pump when it was 100 degrees, inside a funeral parlor (there were no bodies), at the Baltimore Museum of Art's Victoria & Albert exhibition, at the annual Fells Point and, for the past seven years, in the city's St. Patrick's Day parade.

This is in addition to plenty of parties, in the poorest neighborhoods and in the richest houses.

"I come home every week when I am doing a show and I tell my wife, 'Let me tell you what happened,'" he says.

Often, he is accompanied by his son, Victor, 8, who calls himself an MIT — magician-in-training. After seeing 500 shows, the child could take over now if he had to.

"When you have in your mind a picture of the good old days, whatever they are, I hate to see those end," Walker says. "The Peabody Book shop. I miss that a lot. Sometimes, it's just the people: Dantini the Magician. When he died, it really hurt!

"To me, Baltimore is about the people who are here. I've always felt that way. The tourism people are always trying to promote the place. We've had a lot of unique people here."

But Walker hasn't given up trying to preserve the old.

In Fells Point where he works, he has gathered a handful of people to try to save the recreational pier; he thinks it could be restored the way Covent Garden market was in London. The pier, he says, is one more thing that separates Baltimore from other cities and makes it unique.

And so does he.



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Punch and Judy Life-Size

This review by Andreas Rossmann of a German play appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of May 28, 2004.

WHAT it means to perform a *coup de main* on the stage can be marveled at in the prologue: Two bare hands appear behind a white net curtain, they fight and hit each other, topple over and collapse, get up again immediately and continue to mumble in another language — short-wave knockouts, flailing and funny. But then the cloth goes up, and a big white sack falls down with a splat and buries everything. The scene ends, and with it the scale. The Schauspielhaus theater in Düsseldorf has given the big stage over to "Punch & Judy" by Martin Jacques and "The Tiger Lillies." Yet the amusing pair cannot feel at home here straight away, although director Michael Simon, who has done his own scene painting, provided them with a prefabricated house that looks as if it is straight out of a catalogue. Punch is a descendant of Pulcinella from the Commedia dell'arte, which had come to England with the Italian puppet theater, as Samuel Pepys noted in his diary on May 9, 1662 and made a checkered career for itself there. When the distinguished London society grew tired of his pranks at the beginning of the 18th century, he made his livelihood at the country fairs, took a wife, who was initially called Joan but soon named Judy, and bumped her off without further ado as he did with everyone who got in his way — whether child, priest, doctor, policeman or executioner — until he himself was carried off by the devil. However, "Punch & Judy" cannot simply be imported just like that as showpiece English clowns. Even in a Europe without borders, humor is still dutiable, and the theater in particular makes a loss on it. The Schauspielhaus in Düsseldorf is paying dearly for the attempt, for the very fact alone that it is on much too large a scale.

Michael Simon's production blows up the glove puppets to life-size proportions and situates them in an open-sided bungalow in which the first weapons that Punch and Judy

seize are in the bathroom and the kitchen — they fight a noisy duel with electric shaver and mixer. "Life is cruel, and we cannot choose our parents," croaks the androgynous devil with the yellow cloven hoof, and so the story takes its course. Punch sits in front of the tube, and Judy has her baby in the bathtub. However, when the television explodes and the "Daaaaarling" squeals even more loudly, he gets a clip round the ear and is banished to the cellar. The screaming child is hurt and takes his revenge. Young Punch murders his parents and locks them in the cupboard, from which they come back as priest, doctor and assistant, policeman and whore, and make life difficult for him. He picks up his girl in his car, and the story begins to repeat itself, although the kitchen furniture is new: wedding, lust of love and a child that screams and falls down into the cellar. "Life is cruel, and we cannot choose our parents," becomes the leitmotiv of a "family soap" of the less distinguished kind. What could develop a certain charm and keen edge in a smaller format turns into a monstrous choreography that drags on, pregnant with meaning and illustrated by video, on an overlarge scale, despite Anna Eiermann's original costumes, which put the characters into flesh-colored naked garb with stuck-on cloth genitals and hair made of black thread. The joke flees to the prop room, which makes the household gadgets spit fire, and the corpses in the cupboard are not the only ones in the theater.



Work in Progress

AT the time of writing it is just over a month before 'Punch and Judy Episode 2: Attack of The Clowns' opens at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (or 'the

Mac' as it generally known). It's one of those projects which (once the idea had insinuated itself into my brain) just had to be done so as to stop it pestering away in the back of my mind like an unscratchable itch. In a way its premise is a 'parallel universe' thought (not that the performance treats it literally in this way). Suppose Mr. Punch hadn't taken a path that led him into the role of roguish children's entertainer. Just suppose there'd been the conditions in place that let him continue developing his show as an entertainment for adults. What themes would have made their way into the show? What modern characters might be portrayed? How would the show actually work within the normal conventions of a Punch booth and the typical pace, rhythm and style of a knockabout hand puppet show? What – in fact – would a 21st Century Punch and Judy Show for adults be like? That was the challenge and the reason why I figured that it would need the talent of an offbeat cult theatre guru allied to the skills of a couple of working Profs to try and create it. Many people have done 'adult Punch' over the years – but not usually from within the tradition. Generally it's been actor based or non-Prof puppeteer based – and you can't get inside the Punch tradition within the space of a three or four week rehearsal period anymore than you could go from learning a folk instrument to extending the standard repertoire for it in the same short time.

Ken Campbell – the only writer I would have considered trusting Mr. Punch to - is a magnet for all manner of the bizarre. His recent one man show was on the history of ventriloquism and his subsequent project was about a tribe of self-proclaimed time travellers dwelling in a hollowed out mountain in Italy. I wasn't surprised, therefore, when he unearthed an essay about Punch written by the decadent Victorian writer Eric, Count Stenbock whom his acquaintance the poet W.B. Yeats described as "scholar, connoisseur, drunkard, poet, pervert and most charming of men." Stenbock, whilst deploring contemporary Punch with its newly introduced incidents involving sausages and an alligator, made a couple of tantalising



references to Punch (or Punch related) scenes he had seen as a child. These – we felt – would give us a reference point for looking backwards and sideways at Mr. Punch's world for the benefit of an audience who might know (or care) nothing about where Punch came from. It would then let us look forward to what a 21st Century non-children's version might contain. Working from Ken's draft script Martin Bridle and I started to plot out the bits of business that would go hand-in-hand with the dialogue and, as with any creative process, we horse-traded over re-writes and possible new ideas and the practicalities of how many new puppets could be commissioned and how to make sure that Mr. Punch was updated but still remained Mr. Punch. It's a process that's still in progress and the results will be fed back into these pages after it's up and running. But however it all finally turns out we're having a fascinating time during the 'creative laboratory' phase and discovering things about Mr. Punch that we never ever knew. So far we'll settle for that...

~ *Glyn Edwards*



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The Language of Punch

by Glyn Edwards

This is an extract from an article written for the British centre of UNIMA where the question had been raised of whether performers of Punch and Judy played at European Festivals should do so in English, or should make attempts at the language of the host country. In other English speaking countries the debate has a different relevance – hence a final paragraph has been added to consider this.

IN traditional performances the national tongue of the puppeteer is of vital importance to the rhythm of the show. It has its surface role in conveying basic plot information and carrying out the non-stop stream of banter, doggerel, street repartee, pun and nonsense that keeps the performance tripping along – but below the surface it is the heartbeat providing the very pulse of the show. Underneath an authentic Pulcinella show is the beat of the local tarantella and tammuriata folk rhythms around which flows the natural music of the Italian language – modified here into Neapolitan dialect. For a UK analogy imagine Pulcinella as a Scot, with the rhythms of his show summoning the skirl of the bagpipes and his language cadences echoing those heard in a Glaswegian pub. In his own particular way Lyonnaise Guignol is shaped, too, by his regional dialect, Vitez Lazlo trills Hungarian folk rhythms and the quick to and fro exchanges of his dialogue are tailored to the pattern of his language. And the other national puppet traditions all use their native tongues in the same way – including Mr. Punch. You should detect behind every good Punch and Judy Show echoes of Music Hall and Pantomime, of thumping Brass Bands and the “I say I say I say” rhythms of baggy



trousered comedians. That's the kind of English his cast speak - and that's why all of these traditional performances stand to lose more in translation than they gain. They are speaking not just a language but a whole culture.

Considering the above in the context of this journal, raises the interesting issue of Punch and Judy performed outside the UK. I can recall seeing Punch shows in the USA in which the snappy one-liners of the American comic tradition, the classic conventions of their sit-coms and cartoons all worked to create a distinctive language in which the All American Punch Show spoke. I would hazard a guess that an Australian Punch Show would have its own language too which reflected its own culture. This is – of course – all to the good. It's important for Punch to speak the language of the present as understood by the culture that he's operating in. Of course this has to be tempered by what the 'Prof' is selling to the public – which, in the main, will have an exotic, heritage connection. But we shouldn't get hung up on 'authenticity' on the assumption that what Payne-Collier or Mayhew wrote, or what Cruikshank illustrated, represent a standard text set in stone. They were playing out a living tradition in one historical era and in one location. We're all playing that same living tradition in our era and in whatever location we live. And we don't have to worry excessively about Mr. Punch making the transition for, as the old performers used to say, "He is too old to die".



My Toby

by Diane Rains

For many years, Professor Bert Codman's Punch and Judy Show in North Wales featured a live Toby dog. The dog, a beloved local celebrity, performed well into her 16th year. She died in 1969. Bert died two days later.

I'M a dog person — always have been. I love everything about dogs — the panting enthusiasm, the soulfulness in their eyes, even the smell of their fur on a rainy day. So it's surprising, really, that I was a Punch Prof for over fifteen years before I thought of adding a live Toby to *Professor Freshwater's Punch and Judy Show*. One day the idea just struck me, and I couldn't let it go. It took a little lobbying to convince Stu, my bottler/musician husband, that our golden retriever needed a small "sibling," and our show needed a canine actor. But Stu soon came around, and a very sweet, three

pound Papillon puppy took over our lives. We named her Koiratähti, which means "Dog star" in Finnish. We made a [web site](#) (complete with her own [blog](#)), to announce our grand intentions for her life.

Over the months that followed, we devoted great chunks of our lives to caring for and teaching the puppy. Koira was the smallest, daintiest little dog I had ever had. Her capacity for learning amazed me, yet her brain couldn't be bigger than a walnut! We learned as much as she did: how to use reward-based training to get the behaviors we wanted; how to promote harmony in our dog pack of two; how to keep Koira safe from roaming dogs, hawks and other perils to which such a small animal (now all of six pounds) could fall prey. We took her with us to Punch bookings. At first she just tagged along and got used to audiences. Then we had her demonstrate her trained behaviors at the end of the show. She danced on her toes, spun in circles, bowed, nodded/shook her head, played dead.



Finally, when she was almost a year and a half old, we felt she was ready for her acting debut. It went well. Then the next time it went better, and better yet the next. Audiences adored her. I took a three week intensive class in advanced animal training techniques. With that knowledge, Stu and I fine-tuned Koira's routine even more. At an August 11, 2004 library performance, she absolutely shone like a little dog star.

This was a pinnacle moment in our Punch and Judy career. We had set out to help revive the tradition of the live Toby dog, and we had done it — at least, in America. Ideas for expanding Koira's bit popped into our minds: we could add music to her dance sequence. She could jump through a hoop. The sky was the limit! I felt a satisfying kinship to Bert Codman and all the Punchmen before me who have shared their fitups and lives with special little dogs.

Then Koira's star fell. On August 23, for no apparent reason, our tiny Toby had two back-to-back grand mal seizures. Over the next week, she lost vision in her left eye, her left foot flopped under, and she had intermittent bouts of hind limb paralysis from which she would recover moments later. Something sudden — something awful — had happened in her brain.

We sought the help of a veterinary neurologist at the University of Minnesota. Over the course of the next five weeks, Koira underwent extensive testing: a full blood workup, CT scan, spinal tap, MRI. The results were perplexing. Scans revealed a very large area of diffuse lesions in her left cerebral cortex. This is extremely rare in young dogs. And inexplicably, within two weeks of her seizures, all of her outward symptoms disappeared. Yet her brain was clearly injured.

For a week, our neurologist's best guess was a brain tumor. That diagnosis wouldn't mean "Might she die?" but, "How long does she have?" I'm not ashamed to say that I fell into a deep, dark pit of grief. (At the time, Stu was away in Europe on a business trip. That was terribly hard for him, for me,

and for our two canine "kids." Stu is just the most devoted doggie daddy imaginable.) While I waited for the neurologist to consult with other colleagues, I thought about a lot of things.

When we decided to train a live Toby, I expected that the dog's presence would add a new level of energy and excitement to our Punch and Judy Show. I was spot-on about that. I always knew that a live dog would add extra risk, too. She might not do everything just on cue. We'd have to protect her from over-anxious toddler hands. And so on. The risk I didn't anticipate was my own emotional vulnerability. When Koira became our Toby, our show changed forever. For us, she is woven into the atoms of the Punch and Judy Show. If we lose her, our show will simply never be the same again. Oh, yes, we will surely go on. I may possibly decide to train another Toby at some point. I will undoubtedly love that dog, too.

But that dog won't be our Koiratähti, Dog star. So I try to savor every moment that I have with this little girl — even the annoying ones. Because it's not just the Toby in her that I cherish. I love the way those ridiculous ear fringes dip into her food, slip along the dirty ground, and pick up leaves like gaudy earrings. I love the way she taps my legs with both front paws when she wants to be picked up for a cuddle. I love it when she wields her little, blue Nylabone like a cudgel and prances up and down by our deck door snarling at squirrels: "Tremble before me, rodents, for I am the weapon of your mass destruction!"

No definitive diagnosis has yet been reached for Koira. The brain tumor theory has now been discounted, to our great relief. Most likely she has suffered an attack of parasites in her brain, or she has a malformation of cerebral veins and arteries. If the former, her health crisis is probably over. If the latter, it might all happen again, and she may require major brain surgery. Fortunately, dogs can function well after the removal of even large chunks of brain. (But they don't usually go on to have brilliant stage careers.)

I've worked long and hard to train this Punch and Judy dog. But she's not really my Toby. She's only on loan from biology, fate, circumstance, God — whatever you care to call it. But every day I wish upon my dog star that this loan is long term.



One thing I have learned: the more you invest, the more you stand to lose, but the return is almost always worth the risk. Such is the accounting of the heart. The wise among us remember this as we venture into marriage, or have a child, or face the inevitable fact that parents age. Or train a little dog among puppets. Species, it seems, does not alter the grand equation of love. Not true love.

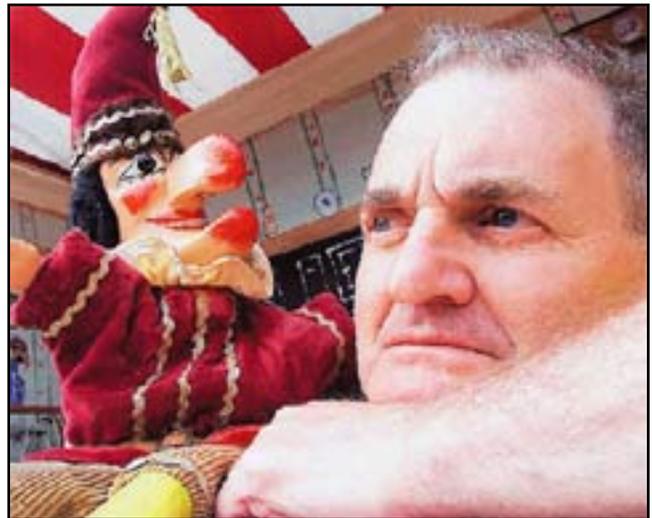
Bert Codman, I think, would have agreed.



Footnotes from the Wacky World of Mr. Punch

Two of the most unusual UK 'silly season' media stories about Punch so far this Millennium

"A blind puppeteer from Crewe says he is the victim of 'political correctness gone mad' after a landmark decision banning his Punch and Judy show." So ran a story in the Crewe Chronicle newspaper in May this year. The story continued, "Ken Walmsley, 64, is furious after his show was deemed 'inappropriate' by bosses at Vale Royal Borough Council. The council is the first in the country to ban the puppet show, after hearing that Mr. Walmsley was booked for the Winsford Town Festival. He said: 'They say Punch and Judy promotes domestic violence, but I think they are trivialising a very serious issue by linking the two. I have been doing this for over a decade and never once had any complaints. 'They have taken a foolish and simplistic view, which puts my livelihood on the line. 'No one is forced to watch the show. It is political correctness gone mad.' The show sees Mr. Punch hitting his wife with a stick and tossing a baby in the air. It is a regular attraction at seaside and features on Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council's street entertainment programme. Mr. Walmsley, who has been blind from birth, added: 'The show does include violence but it is part of the slapstick humour.' The Punch and Judy College of Professors challenged the Mayor and her Chief Leisure Executive over this and the Mayor confirmed that whatever the particular circumstances



may have been there was, in fact, no official ban on Punch and Judy. This saved the council from an official College response 'twinning' them with Piltdown-On-Sea, the fictional town whose self-important local councillors are the subject of scorn in Tony Hancock's film 'The Punch and Judy Man.' A full text of the reply is on the Media Page of the College's website at www.punchandjudy.org

Meanwhile, Mr. Punch was in trouble in Wales for not speaking Welsh. Here's what the



BBC's World News website for Aug 5th reported: "Mr. T. Ricks, whose Punch and Judy show was being translated into Welsh at the National Eisteddfod in Newport, south Wales, had been invited there by a charity. Eisteddfod officials said the performance broke its all-Welsh rule, which stallholders had been told about. But the entertainer said he was angry the rule was being so strictly enforced in what is largely an English-speaking area. He said he could have

understood it if the annual festival, which moves around from place to place, had been in a part of Wales where the Welsh language was widely spoken. "I've seen things where they have been trying to get non-Welsh speakers to come along to the Eisteddfod this year because it is in Newport," said the clown, who had been working for SNAP, a charity which supports families of children with special educational needs. "But this doesn't seem to be the way to do it," he added. The clown said he was told to stop in mid-performance on Wednesday because it was being staged in English only. During his second performance, a translator was brought in to make the show bilingual but the show was stopped again. "We made the performance bilingual but it still wasn't good enough for the officials," he said. "It is a real shame because we had a lot of children watching the shows and they were all enjoying it."

But Eisteddfod Director Elfed Roberts defended the decision. "At the Eisteddfod, all the performances should be through the medium of Welsh," he said. "It is in the rules and the stallholders should have realised this before they booked him. "They signed up knowing that all activities should be through the Welsh language. "It is a simple case of rule breaking." Tecwyn Roberts, who works for the charity which hired the clown, said: "Its is awful that we have been restricted like this - especially for the children. "We had about 50 children watching the show yesterday and we made it bilingual so I simply cannot understand why they wanted us to stop," he added.

Stallholders nearby said that they were dismayed that the performances were halted. One said: "Everybody was enjoying the show. They were clapping and cheering and all of a sudden they had to stop." Ceri Phillips, a regular eisteddfod goer, translated the Punch and Judy show into Welsh. "I just don't understand it, we were offering both languages

and everyone was having a good time," he said. "I've never seen anything like this happen before." It looks as if Mr. Punch will have to invite an Eisteddfod Druid puppet into the show – and conduct a 'language of the slapstick' lesson all of his own.



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