



# Around the World With Mr. Punch

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## Devils, Babies and Osama bin Laden

*by Glyn Edwards*

**READERS** will know that I've been working with fellow Prof Martin Bridle on an adult Punch and Judy show commissioned by us from UK theatrical maverick Ken Campbell. The show has been received exceptionally well, we are pleased to say, and the whole project of releasing Mr. Punch from his children's entertainer golden ghetto back into the wider community for a walk on the wild side will be moving into a second phase in 2005.

I thought a journal intended for the readership of fellow Profs (and Punch enthusiasts) would be the best place in which to document for the project as a whole. It had always been a disappointment seeing non-Prof's grapple with the familiar source material when producing films, books, or plays (with the shining exception of Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*) and it was with an enormous amount of trepidation that Martin and I (along with actor/ventriloquist Josh Darcy) took the plunge and previewed the work at London's Little Angel Theatre – where Steve Tiplady, the current artistic director, is reviving the interest in adult puppetry. (The Little Angel company itself has just had the most enormous mainstream artistic and critical success in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company and a 'masque for puppets' of Shakespeare's poem 'Venus and Adonis'. How often do you get puppets topping the bill with the Bard in Stratford-upon-Avon?) It is hard to explain the exhilaration we felt at the non-stop waves of laughter our show provoked. Here were adults behaving exactly like the child audiences we were used to. It exceeded our wildest expectations and showed that Mr. Punch had lost none of his primal power despite toning it down for children over the past century and a half.

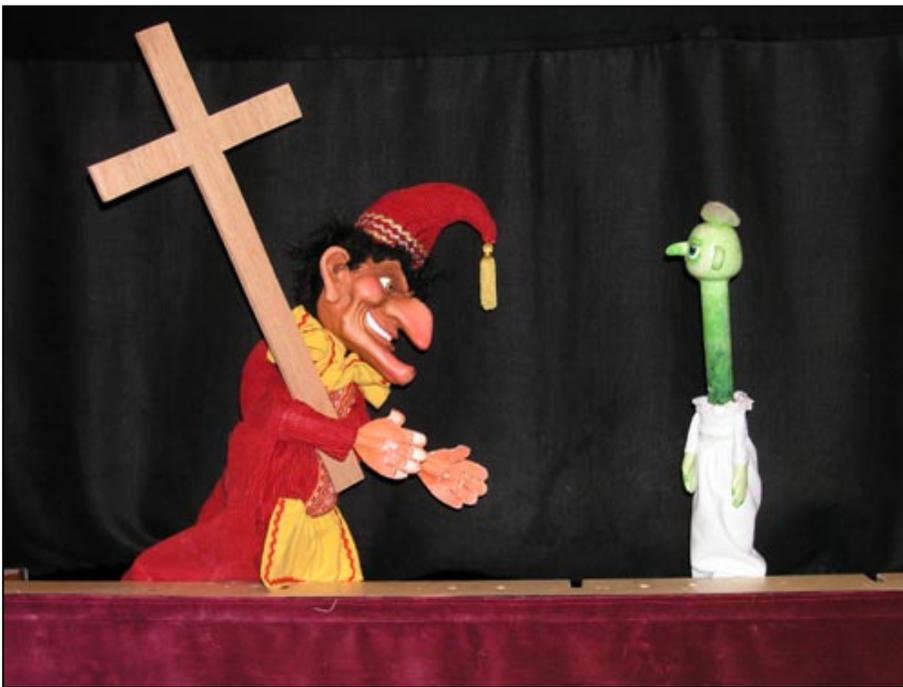
The creative process for the show had been complicated. Ken knew little about Punch and Judy beyond what most theatrically minded Brits might know – but he has a brain that moves in different dimensions to most people. He and his circle of collaborators produced, as a first draft, an enormous scrapbook of suggestions, ideas, scraps, notes and jottings based round what they all knew about Punch. My role was to make sense of it. I decided I would choose the twenty ideas that I liked best (any one of which could have been the foundation for a play) and send the ball back over the net. I didn't want to put the ideas in any set order – as this might be taken as a list in order of preference – so I wrote each idea on a post-it note and taped each note to the back of a playing card. Thus we could deal the deck at random and discuss each idea on its merits. This we did over a lengthy cappuccino session with Ken and his companions. By now I'd been working on the project on and off for a year and a half – persuading the funders to back the idea, getting a key Arts Centre involved, and negotiating with Ken's literary agent. The show was to open in October, it was now February and the clock was beginning to tick loudly. This wasn't a show that actors could devise with a writer in rehearsal – the actors first needed making in somebody's workshop, and making the cast would in itself take time.

By now Martin was in the loop. He'd been part of the decision making process about which twenty ideas we backed and we had jointly agreed the final selection (plus a few reserves) that Ken would start writing. There was still no format. Was this an 'event'? A play? A lecture? Then Ken came up with the idea of basing the structure round the intensive script-doctor seminars that aspiring screenwriters pay top money to attend in order to beef up their product so as to pitch it better to Hollywood. This would allow us to have an outsider (a ventriloquial Bear as it turned out) going through the Punch story bit by bit to suggest updates, amendments and improvements for the 21st Century. Martin and I would be acting out the ideas using our respective booths.

A first working draft of the script was created which (contractually) had to be approved within a certain time span. Martin and I got together for the serious job of working out if we could actually turn the script into puppet routines. Ken had seen videos of our shows and expressed total confidence in our judgement. If we said a scene would work as a Punch routine it stayed in – if we didn't see how we could make it work, it went. Martin and I spent two days going through all the scenes discussing what we'd need to make each work from a Prof's perspective. This was sheer delight (although daunting). One of the ideas we'd bought into was that Judy should have had fertility treatment and produced quins. The planning of 'bits of biz' based round IVF treatment and the babysitting of five babies (one of whom was demonically possessed) made us realise how far we were from traditional subject matter – but how near we were in terms of what you need to make a comic glove puppet routine work. By now Ken had also come up with his masterstroke. He'd 'discovered' Eric, Count Stenbock. Thus we had the writings of a genuine Victorian eccentric to tap into when looking at Punch's history (we had to assume that an adult audience would need reminding of their basic Punch and Judy if they were to get the point of some of the updatings of it). One of Stenbock's references was to "The Oriental Punch (which is) is chiefly obscene". Given that an 'adult' Punch and Judy show would have to make some nod in the direction of Mr. Punch's phallic connections this seemed the best place to do it. But how? Well, gentle reader, I can only tell you that we laughed ourselves sick trying out the possible options. And with funding from Arts Council England, too.

By the end of our two days of routining we had a road map of the journey that would get us to the rehearsal period. The next thing was to commission the cast.





The puppet requirements broke down into traditional figures, trick puppets and topical puppets – not to mention how to give a new look to Punch and Judy themselves. There were also budget implications in how many we could afford to have made. We could use our own Punch characters for the historical parts and also make use of existing figures such as a set of Pulcinella characters I own. We put the trick figures in the hands of Ted Beresford – a traditional puppet maker who positively relishes the challenge of figuring out the mechanics of how to make a puppet or prop do what is required of it. (His Triple Devil and the Quins are featured in a separate technical article) Mary Edwards (relation) made the ‘obscene oriental Punch’ characters and anything else I suddenly realised I’d forgotten. Brian and Alison Davey of the Puppetree Company created the topical characters of Tony Blair, George Bush, Ken Dodd (a Brit comic of the old school), Gordon Ramsey (Brit celebrity chef) and Kylie; Craig Denston created the Punch and Judy heads and Mary dressed the figures. Craig also made a stunning Osama bin Laden (which he needed to get out of his system!) Jim Duncombe made the zillions of individual props and Kay Wilton made the celebrity sausages which formed a key part of the final frenzied climax to the play. Martin’s son Leo – an animation student – was drafted in to create a techno-Mega Mix of traditional Punch music. A whole lot of co-ordinating needed doing to keep this all on track and on budget (plus liaising with Ken over subsequent drafts of the script – including the key question of how a 21st Century Punch and Judy Show should end.)

Up until now Ken had been writing with a view to creating material that would fit the constraints of a solo Punch booth. Martin and I suggested that it would be appropriate for the 21st Century to update the presentation to widescreen. We figured that we could set our two booths on stage about six feet apart and then join the two with a playboard running the

distance between them. The effect would be similar to a castle wall with a short tower at each end. On this bigger playing area we could then perform the show with two pairs of hands. This gave us the final structure for the show. Act 1 would be the script-doctor workshop and Act 2 would be the resulting performance. We’d also worked out how to end the show – that was a great relief all round.

*This is the first part of a two part article.*



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## In the Workshop

**TED BERESFORD** created the trick puppets for *Punch and Judy Episode 2: Attack of the Clowns*. Here are a couple of those that were called for. The triple devil recreates a long-lost routine from a Bavarian Kasper show once seen by Eric, Count Stenbock. After attempting to defeat the devil with a frying pan and the help of the audience, Kasper seizes the devil's own pitchfork. Using this three-pronged fork backfires on Kasper, however, as it results in the creation of three devils in place of one. It was too good a piece of visual business to stay lost – so nearly a century and a quarter after Stenbock first saw it, Ted attempted to replicate the effect. For reasons of production design this particular Devil needed to have the 'Mephisto' look once favoured by a certain kind of magician. The puppet also needed to be workable with one hand.

As you can see from the pictures there are two hidden heads which spring up either side of the original head when a catch is released by the operator's thumb. The swirling cloak-like costume masked this mechanism from the audience when the first Devil was being operated. The Devil's arm and fist were attached to the puppet in such a way that the pitchfork appeared to be held – but was actually designed to make it possible for the Kasper puppet to take it away from the Devil with ease.

It would have been simpler to have conceived this as a two-puppeteer routine but we were interested in seeing if it could be done within normal Punch and Judy solo constraints.



The Twins routine, however, was intended to capitalise on two pairs of hands being available. The permutations were that much greater, and the opportunity for bits of business greatly extended. We settled on one puppeteer operating Punch and one baby (in this instance a Exorcist-style possessed baby with extending neck, rotating head and ability to vomit). That left the second puppeteer with two pairs of twins to operate. The workshop brief to Ted was that the twins should be able to start fighting each other when Punch's back was turned and spring to innocent attention when he started turning round again. By the time Punch had to separate two intermittently fighting pairs of twins – with eventually all four fighting each other – there was plenty of room for 'biz'.

Ted positioned each twin on the end of a carefully designed V-shaped 'squeeze' control. Squeezing this control caused the twins to turn inwards to eyeball each other. When done at speed, free-swinging arms gave the additional appearance of the kiddies furiously walloping each other. Letting go of the squeeze mechanism caused the babies spring back to face the front in unison. When all four babies did this together the effect was more than twice that of a single pair doing it!





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## Editorials

### FROM THE U.K.

**THIS** is one of those editions which manages to look backwards, forwards, sideways and overseas and is exceptionally representative of the perennial appeal that Mr. Punch has for all manner of people. The letters page alone is a wonderful journey down the hidden byways of Punch footnotes. I hope readers will excuse a number of articles by your Editor that arise from his and Martin Bridle's '21st Century Punch and Judy for adults' project. This is not (I hope!) prompted by vanity but out of sheer interest in sharing with you

### FROM THE U.S.A.

**MR.** Punch is keeping up. Not one to rest upon his 300+ years of laurels, Old Red Nose is trying out new venues for mischief in the 21st century. He seems to find them to his liking, and we, his fans and servants, are the lucky beneficiaries of his experiments. Recently one could attend Glyn Edwards' and Martin Bridle's mainstage Punch production for grownups. Today we can watch the slapstick ballet of *Santa Claus' Punch and Judy* on an online [blog](#). Soon radio listeners will hear a BBC play of a comic book novel built around Punch and Judy.

As marvelous as these new formats

some of the fascinating things that came to light during our researches. Of similar interest, too, is Dan Bishop's presentation of the case in favour of incorporating the national host language when performing Punch overseas. Everyone is invited to this debate and to any others you feel like starting. Where else can Punch enthusiasts let their hair down for some shop talk that other puppet journals would find too obsessively 'anorakish'? (possible American translation for this is 'wonkish' I believe.) And what about Punch in the USA and UK during WW2? More extracts from that archive source will follow in the next Journal. The review of Fred Greenspan's re-working of Punch shows that he is continuing a long tradition of fitting Mr. Punch to American circumstances. We look forward to receiving readers contributions too. There are no restrictions on what's appropriate – other than it being Punch related. Everything from the trivial to the esoteric has a place in the Journal. Meanwhile it is time to wish everyone well for 2005 and to hope that you may all enjoy the fun and laughter of which Mr. Punch is a constant source

~ *Glyn Edwards, Worcestershire*

are, there's still nothing like a good old, live, in your face Punch show. And there's no better way to learn about Punch than face to face with a master Punchman. Next summer, puppeteers in the United States will have a rare chance to do both of those things. Our own Professor Glyn Edwards will both perform and teach at [Puppet Fest 2005](#), the national festival of the Puppeteers of America. Mary Edwards, Glyn's wife and champion carver/Punch-maker, will also be there to lend a hand. Co-Workshop Directors, Shari Aronson and Chris Griffith (himself a fine Punch performer and a member of the Worldwide Friends of Punch and Judy) will keep Glyn very busy during the festival week of July 24-30, 2005. Professor Edwards will present a series of workshops in the finer points of practical Punchology: First Steps in Punch and Judy, All Comers Swazzle Clinic, and a several-session master Class.

This is a golden opportunity to learn the mechanics of Punch performance from an expert! How did it happen? *Mea culpa!* Yes, in my other life I'm the Artistic Director of Puppet Fest 2005. I have it on good authority that this is the not-be-missed event of the U.S. puppetry year. A little red-nosed imp told me so.

~ *Diane Rains, Minnesota*

## Poet, Pervert and Most Charming of Men

*Eric, Count Stenbock is one of the oddest characters to have a footnote in Mr. Punch's story. He had a strong opinion on where Punch came from – and his one short article on the topic also lets us share tantalising glimpses of puppet shows he saw himself. The information below is from the **Make Multimedia History** group website ([www.mmhistory.org.uk](http://www.mmhistory.org.uk).) to whom all credit and acknowledgements are given. It is the most informative of the websites detailing information on this obscure and bizarre writer – who, even more bizarrely, chose to write about Punch.*



**THE** casual student of the Eighteen Nineties might easily come to believe that Count Eric Stenbock is an urban legend. Contemporary references are slight, published letter collections of his friends contain no references to him, two of his poetry books were never deposited at the British Library and unlike Oscar Wilde there is no popular movement devoted to his memory. The only biography, by John Adlard, is a limited edition that went out of print in the 1960's. But, amongst a few devotees of weird fiction, he is an underground cult figure. His books are re-published by small esoteric presses, Jeremy Reed includes a chapter about him in his classic study of artistic outsiders *Angels, Divas and Blacklisted Heroes* and his grave in Brighton is kept

free of weeds by a local queer literary group.

Count Eric Stenbock (1860-1896) was a symbol of his age, poet, decadent, short story writer, a true member of the aristocracy who mixed with the Socialists and radicals of the late Nineteenth Century. In his time he was known as a '*drunkard, poet, pervert, most charming of men,*' a description which serves to confuse more than illuminate. Stenbock's life in Brighton, London and Estonia gives us a window on to the complicated worlds of literature, art and fashion which characterised the late Nineteenth Century.

His parents were Lucy Frerichs, daughter of a Manchester cotton industrialist, and Erik Stenbock, Count de Bogesund, Baron de Torpa. The Stenbock's were an aristocratic Swedish family with royal connections. The Count owned a small castle, Rottenstein, in Meran and was heir to vast estates in Estonia.

The young Erik was an Oxford dropout of considerable eccentricity. As befitting his status he had a personal servant and lived in his own suite of rooms. One huge room was wallpapered poppy red and he kept a menagerie of animals including snakes and a monkey. His huge bedroom was painted peacock blue and covered in the trappings of esoteric and occult beliefs. There was a pentagram over the bed and an altar over the fireplace dedicated to Eros. He also evolved his own religion comprising a mix of Buddhism, Catholicism and Idolatry.



He was a regular at Aubrey Beardsley's studio teas where he conversed with many of the movers and shakers of society including Alymer Vallance art critic and friend of William Morris, Mrs Patrick Campbell, the publisher John Lane, and artists Ricketts and Shannon. Eric often played the piano at these soirees and sang traditional Estonian folk songs.

Drink and drugs brought about his premature death and he was buried on 1 May 1896 in Brighton's Extra Mural cemetery. Before burial his heart was placed in a jar and sent to the family church in Estonia.

# The Myth of Punch

By Eric, Count Stenbock

*This extract from 'The Myth of Punch' is reprinted with acknowledgements to the journal Strange Attractor (Journal One, 2004) which has helped rescue the work from obscurity. Most of the short essay is taken up with Stenbock's musings on the possible origin and of the show his gloomy interpretation of what meaning it might contain. The Journal (which contains many articles of a quirky nature) may be obtained from Strange attractor, PO Box 961, Devizes, Wiltshire, UK SN10 2TS.*

**THERE** are four great subjects in the world: Faust, Tannhauser, Don Juan and Punch. Heinrich Heine tells us that the drama of Faust was first acted in a Punch theatre. Indeed, all the four above-mentioned subjects have one element in common--the triumph of the diabolical. It is in England, curiously enough, where the drama is or was performed in its integrity. So it is with the English Punch we will chiefly deal. The Italian Punch is comparatively amiable and innocent. He spends most of his time conversing with the musician, and does not kill his wife at all. The Russian Punch is also given to conversing with the musician, and is extremely amiable to all the people who come to see him, embracing them one and all, although he kills them all afterwards. And when the Devil comes to fetch him, he comes under the guise of a lamb, so that the amiable Petrushka begins to stroke him, and then suddenly starts up and shows himself in his true form. The Oriental Punch is chiefly obscene; the German, or rather Bavarian Punch, has a particularly trying time of it with the Devil, and asks the children standing by how he shall deal with him. They suggest various things, such as putting him under the saucepan, or hitting him on the head with a frying-pan, and such like. At last a brilliant idea occurs to poor Kaspar. He will hoist the Devil with his own petard. He takes a three-pronged pitchfork, and darts it at the Devil. For the moment it seems he has conquered; the Devil vanishes. But no! the Devil soon reappears, triplified - three Devils instead of one. Is it profane to say that this is suggestive of a certain parable in the Scriptures? Was there any serious underlying meaning in this? I think so.

Now Punch is comparatively seldom seen, and when seen, is very

much deteriorated. All manner of stupid and superfluous incidents are introduced, such as the alligator with the sausages; and Toby who is wholly extra-neous to the drama, and only comes in properly in one scene, where Punch has a quarrel with one of the many persons he kills, about the possession of a dog (which incident is quite unnecessary), is now made to take the chief part, to show off a performing dog. Often the drama does not finish at all. Let us rather describe the Punch of old days.

I remember - one of the first things that I can remember - an old tattered Punch, which began with a strange scene: Punch's father, who had something of the Punch type, making some compact with the Devil, delivering a thoroughly developed Punch-child into his hands. I remember that this then, though I was a very small child, filled me with intense horror. This possibly may be the key to the origin of the Punch drama, which, like Don Juan, may have arisen in the sombre imagination of some monk. But this is only one instance, and I may be exaggerating my reminiscence.



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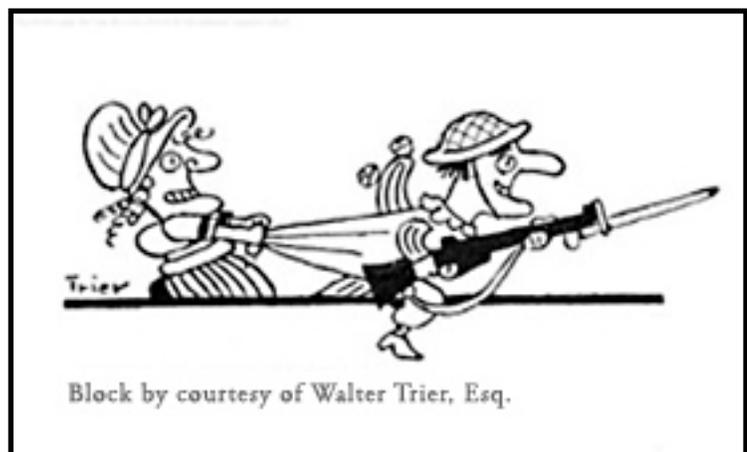
# The March Of Time

## 1945 American Presidential Election

*The following archive item is reprinted from a 1945 publication: The Seventeenth Wartime Bulletin of The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild (edited by Arthur. E. Peterson) and was contributed by Ray DaSilva. The photographs mentioned in it refer to the original newspaper article and, regrettably, were outside the scope of reproduction in the British magazine.*

**IT** is not inappropriate at the moment to mention how our American friends have made use of Punch for political purposes. As recently as last October the New York Tribune featured an article on "Puppet Show Tours City to Get You Out to Vote." There were two illustrations of the characters used in Punch and Judy, and the show had a well-built fit-up.

Perhaps I had better let the extract speak for itself. The portions in brackets are intended to be explanatory and did not, of course, appear in the original article. The material came from our good friend, W. R. Anderson, of Brighton, the well-known model theatre enthusiast, to whom I am indebted.



"The New York City League of Women Voters, drama-tizing its efforts to get out a large and intelligent vote [for the Presidential election] is touring the city with a political

puppet show. Although the league is non-partisan and endorses no candidates, it is unalterably opposed to the kind of politician portrayed in the puppet show by Hank, a back-slapping two-faced politician of the graft and favor school. The purpose of the play "Puppet Voting" is "to make people think about the election, and to make them weigh the acts and records of the candidates instead of their promises and speeches." [Hank delivers a typical blustering, wheedling speech, but his false face falls off just before its end, and he is revealed as a scoundrel].

"The league puppet show was organised and directed by Catherine Reighard, a league member and instructor in English at New York University, where she is director of the Puppet Workshop. This is the first time, as far as Miss Reighard knows, that puppets have been used in this country for political purposes." [The show, which lasted for fifteen minutes, was played in various settlements, schools and libraries. One of the illustrations shows Hank haranguing a typical group of citizens in the street, with others looking out of a window at the back; the other depicts two characters, Paul the Pilot, and Mrs. G. I. Joe, who is reading to him a heavily censored letter from her husband overseas urging her to vote.]

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## The Doodle Bugs

*The front cover of the same newsletter showed a picture of a group of children aged 14 and under in London's East End who – under the company name of the Doodle Bugs - said, in true Hollywood style, 'why don't we put on the show right here?' The words Punch and Judy may just be seen painted on the top of the puppet stage on the right.*

**DURING** the time London was experiencing the terror of doodle-bugs and V.2's, one of the many anxieties of mothers of young children was how to keep them amused and where to find them in case the alert sounded or a sudden emergency arose. To some extent this was solved by a group of youngsters in that savagely blitzed area of Devons Row, Bow, London, E., who, under the direction of two twelve year old boys, organised and successfully produced shows that included songs and dances, "Maria Marten, or the Murder at the Red Barn," written and produced by George Cooper (12 years old), he, of course being the "leading man"; "Cinderella and the Ugly Sisters"; "Red Riding Hood"; and a Punch and Judy Show.



The "auditorium " held about fifty at a pinch, with "gate-crashers" along the fence. Admission was a halfpenny, half of which was donated to the funds of the Red Cross. Three performances a week were given and there was a cast of seven. The Punch outfit was made out of material from the blitzed neighbourhood and was made by a boy called John Ward, the only one of the

children above school age.

The photograph illustrating this article, as well as a copy of the Church monthly, from which these particulars have been taken, were kindly loaned by the **Rev. J. W. Fitkin**, Rector of All Hallows, Devons Row, Bow, E.3, who interested himself in the matter and to whom our thanks are due.



## Red-Nosed Miscellany

### Golden Slapstick Award

***THE** Punch and Judy College of Professors* recently made their own small award

to founding member John Styles to mark his receipt of the MBE. The College award was in the form of a mounted certificate tastefully encircled by golden sausages, surmounted by a Golden Slapstick bearing his name. The wording on the certificate read as follows:

*In recognition of his outstanding achievement in being honoured by Her Majesty The Queen the celebrated Punch performer Professor John Styles MBE has been awarded the acclaimed Gleaming Golden Slapstick from his colleagues in The Punch and Judy College of Professors. This more humble honour is to express the respect of his fellow Professors and their appreciation of the accolade he has brought to the whole Punch and Judy tradition. It also serves as a timely reminder from MR. PUNCH himself that he is – of course – always on the lookout for new establishment targets to practice his aim on.*



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## Lore and Disorder

**I**N an outbreak of seasonal goodwill *The Punch and Judy Fellowship* and *The Punch and Judy College of Professors* are pleased to announce jointly that the community of ‘Profs’ has minted a new piece of traditional lore effective henceforth. They wish to let it be known that to see 2004 out with a collective and responsive raspberry to those petty minded individuals who increasingly burden the art form with restrictions, the Punch and Judy Professors of the United Kingdom declare the red stripe in the traditional red and white stripe canvas roundings of their booths to be dedicated as a perpetual symbol of the creeping red tape of

bureaucracy – and of Mr. Punch’s eternal disrespect for those jacks-in-office responsible for it.

*For the benefit of those outside the UK: 'Red Tape' is the commonly understood term to mean petty Government rules and regulations. It stems from the days when such official legal documents were parchment scrolls literally tied with red tape. The decision behind this act of symbolism stems from the current regulations that Punch Profs - and other performers – find themselves encumbered with. These include the need to provide evidence of Public Liability Insurance, the need to complete Risk Assessment paperwork to comply with Health and Safety Regulations, the need for any mains electricity PA system to carry a current Portable Appliance Test certificate, the need to provide an Enhanced Criminal Record Disclosure certificate to prove eligibility for working with children and – in the pipeline – the requirement to perform only on appropriately licensed ground. (Non-transferable licenses to be purchased six weeks in advance of performance.) The majority of this bureaucracy has arisen since the start of the 21st Century. Punch & Judy hasn't been singled out for special treatment. Public entertainment as a whole is affected.*

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## Scholarship and Forgery

**THE** celebrated script of Punch and Judy 'transcribed' by John Payne Collier from a show by Giovanni Piccini and illustrated by George Cruikshank has an iconic role in Punch and Judy lore. It is always worth remembering that Payne Collier went on to have a scholarly career marred by his forgery of original sources. A recent book - *Scholarship and forgery in the 19th Century.* (Arthur Freeman & Janet Ing Freeman. Yale. £100. 0 300 09661 5) – was reviewed by Frank Kermode in London Review of Books of 16 Dec 2004 from which the following passage is taken.

"The authors certify as Colliers 'earliest essay in deception' a fictive account of a Punch and Judy show written for the times from Margate; the deception lies not in the essay itself but in Collier's citing it 16 years later as a factual contribution to the literature of the subject – ***on which, however, we're told he remains a standard authority.*** (Emphasis added, Ed.) But he could not let the truth alone. His fabrications 'usually brief and often scattered amidst authentic testimony or text.... can be far more difficult to identify than large-scale imposture, and are more likely to corrupt or distort.'"



# Punch & Judy Overseas - and the Language of Puppetry

by Dan Bishop

*'Prof' Dan Bishop, whose Mr. Punch carries a small passport, has played in numerous countries and believes it imperative that the audience participation element of the Punch and Judy Show should be carried out in the host language of the country visited. Here he makes his case.*

**GLYN** Edwards (a fellow member of the Punch & Judy College of Professors) has written recently in British UNIMA's 'Puppet Notebook' about his impressions of a recent Italian puppet festival and his views - amongst other things - on performing traditional Punch & Judy overseas. He also published an extract from this article in the online journal 'Around the World With Mr. Punch', plus an additional final paragraph regarding performing in other English speaking countries.



Dan Bishop with his Punch and Judy

Leaving the 'other things' aside, his position, as a self confessed 'mono-linguist', seems to be that, for various reasons of rhythm particular to the English language which reflect the culture from which the tradition has emerged, the performance is more authentic when played exclusively in English, regardless of the host language.

The piece quotes Tony Clarke (another College member) as stating that "*Punch & Judy should be performed in our native tongue.*"

(I had also read Tony's article about some performances he gave in Slovenia some months ago, and - although his is definitely not my approach to touring overseas with Punch - I privately concluded that we are all at liberty to present our shows as we think best, and promptly forgot all about it. Each to their own, as they say.)

However, now a serious case has been made in favour of performing Punch & Judy *exclusively* in English to audiences overseas. As a 'multi-linguist' - so far as performances of Punch & Judy are concerned - I have to respond. There is another point of view. The gauntlet has been thrown down !

I am very familiar with the "Arrivano Dal Mare!" festival of Cervia in North Eastern Italy. Indeed, reading Glyn's account of the 2004 festival prompted a small pang of disappointment that I had been unable to respond to their invitation at very short notice that year. However, I'm glad Glyn was able to be there and I am in complete agreement with him when he asserts that the traditional shows he described having seen (Pulcinella; Dom Roberto; Vasilache; Vitez Laszlo; Guignol; etc.,) - given by performers I know well - these shows, with the possible exception of Guignol, do *not* require their audience to understand a word of their respective languages.

All of the above traditional street performances are easily understood by virtue of their action, and the 'music' of their respective languages does, indeed, serve to reinforce their national identities.

Punch, however, seems to me to be an exception.

Through examination of its early roots in Commedia and the English Fool, and careful study of the various extant scripts we have available to us, it is clear that - as it has progressed through the centuries - the style and language in the performance of Punch & Judy has necessarily undergone various changes, one of which - as Glyn rightly points out - is reflected through "echoes of music hall and pantomime" (this in the English understanding of the term) and which are still very much in evidence in current times.

Indeed, practically all the Punch & Judy performers I have seen - and I've seen a few - incorporate a high degree of audience participation.

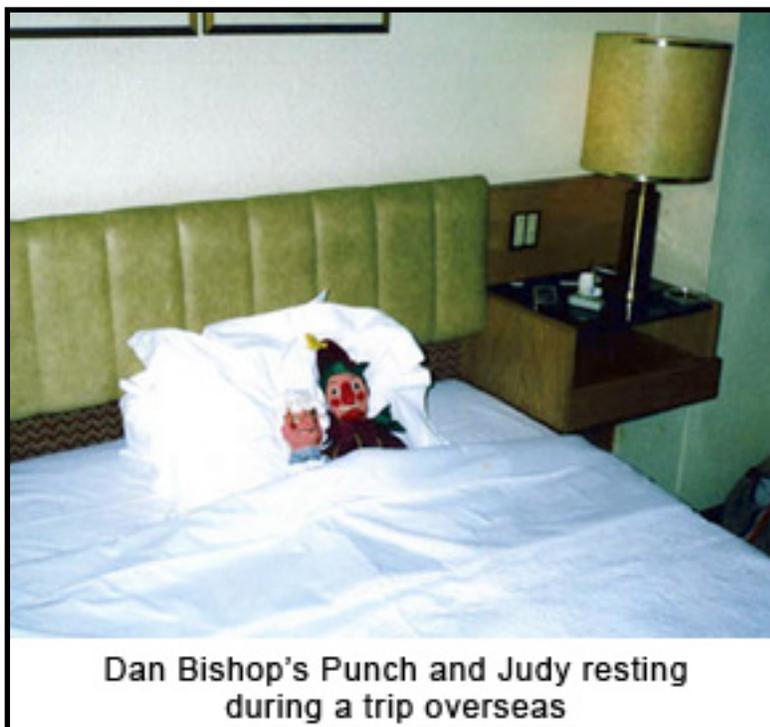
"Oh no they don't !" "Oh yes they do !"

Why else will any complete stranger you meet (when they learn that you're a Punch Prof.) feel immediately compelled to mimic Mr. Punch's voice and squeak: "That's the way to do it !" ? It's ingrained in the British psyche.

So, when travelling overseas, how is this vital aspect of our tradition possibly to be conveyed without some kind of verbal exchange with the spectators? Surely this is an indisputable prerequisite. The alternative is to rely solely on the slapstick elements of the show and deny the audience access to this characteristically British aspect of Punch & Judy.

(I know that the French company, Theatre Pas Sage, during their recent performances of their new Polichinelle show at the 4th Aberystwyth Punch & Judy Festival, were delighted at the ease with which the audience responded to the English banter they had laced into the show. Georges Veters from Liege in Belgium, at the same festival, with his city's traditional hero Tchanches, ensured that his audience participated - as is the custom in Liege - by communicating in English.)

It seems to me a simple courtesy to try to offer a non-English speaking host the pleasure of participation in the performance - just as we do in Britain - and to hear, for example, an audience of Arabic, Croatian, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian speakers - whatever and wherever it may be - joining Mr. Punch in enthusiastic banter is music to my ears.



It would certainly be tempting not to bother with the considerable trouble one must go to to ensure one's hosts not only understand but are admitted into the fun that comes from participation. In my case, I prepare an A4 sized lexicon of memorized vocabulary, thinly administered as and when required rather like verbal Lego, throughout the show - the vast majority of which is performed in English. Sometimes, little or no such vocabulary is needed at all. It depends on the audience. I can soon detect - sometimes even

before the show starts - the degree of understanding the audience has of English and adapt the show accordingly.

I think it was Rod Burnett, (another College colleague) years ago, who put me onto the alternative to trying to translate "Oh yes he did !", etc.

That to alter the context to a simple: "No ! No ! No !" countered by "Yes ! Yes ! Yes !" was a far more simple way to introduce a foreign audience to this aspect of the tradition.

Having worked side by side with me in Italy some years ago, when I performed my show using a smattering of Italian, Glyn is aware that my approach is different to his. Whilst I fully understand & respect his & Tony's wish - and right - to maintain their Englishness in their own way, I don't agree at all that the English identity of our show is jeopardized by learning enough of the host language to allow an audience to *participate*.

Some years ago, during a puppet festival in the Canary Islands, my wife, Gemma, and I spent some happy times with a Dutch couple - puppeteers - and their two young children. The festival was based in Santa Cruz de Tenerife which is quite a large city, but, after performing in the morning, we had all decided to take a bus out of town to visit a small village. It was the end of the line for the bus, so the driver turned the engine off and we made a note of the departure time for the return to Santa Cruz. I thought the driver looked slightly askance at us as he strolled away for his break.

We enjoyed a relaxing hour or two of walking around, and finally made our way back to the bus. The children wanted to show their parents something they had found in a shop, so they all wandered off to see what it was. Gemma and I took our seats on the bus as the departure time was approaching and the driver was already sitting in the driving seat. We got quite anxious as it was almost the time for the bus to depart and there was still no sign of our friends.

Quite suddenly the bus driver started the engine at which point I jumped up in a panic and called out: "No ! No ! No !" Then, I caught the driver's wicked grin in his rear view mirror.

"Si, si, si....", he said. The bus didn't move.

From my very first days with Mr Punch, I have always known there's an unfathomable depth to his world - open to all of us. But then, there's always a danger of getting too serious about it. Gemma is often telling me: "It's only a Punch & Judy show !"

All the same, it was her who told me that on many a street corner, in many countries she has time and time again seen care-worn passers by - the weight of the world showing in their long faces - families, intellectuals, office workers, street cleaners alike - pausing in the street to look at what is animating the crowd as they connect with Mr. Punch. For a time, as they drop their guard, their preoccupations fall away. Their mouths slowly opening in anticipation as the crocodile opens his jaws. Their faces breaking into broad smiles to see Mr Punch dealing with all their private demons - just as he always has. Just

as he always will.

There have been certain moments when, suddenly, the rapport developing between the puppets and the spectators was not simply a translation into another language. Certain occasions and places: a particular square in Ljubljana, a park in Magdeburg; a spot by the Danube in Budapest; in the Piazza Pisacane, in Cervia

It's not just that a group of children could understand what the puppets were saying. Or seeing the precious naiveté that hides in every adult mind liberated in the absurdity of their excited children's urgent explanations to the puppets on my hands - who seem to them to comprehend every word.

Something unexpected happens. A kind of communion, an intense moment of connection, transcending mere language.

What Glyn failed to quote from Tony's article about his Slovenian trip was the following: "My second show was blessed with an English family who lives and works in Slovenia." Later, he says: "...*The (English) children shouted back at the correct times at the performance, which helped the native children to follow suit, so it made for a better show with the traditional audience participation we are all used to. A great show for me and ensured I ended on a great note...*" (My emphasis).

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*A monolinguist replies: Dan's emphasis on "the traditional audience participation we are all used to" is timely. We may be used to it now but it's not a feature of any of the Victorian scripts. My original 'thinking out loud' was inspired by the contrast between some fast, funny and universally comprehensible traditional puppetry which transcended the language barrier and some verbose, modern intellectual puppetry in which language was a millstone round the neck of the performance. Given that 'real' Punch scripts usually look pretty dead on the page (whilst the ones that read well on the page look pretty wordy from a performer's viewpoint) and given too that the 'call and response' element of modern performance practice has only grown alongside Mr. Punch's career as a childrens' entertainer, my true interest lies in the basic role of language in the Punch show. How performers use it to shape their audiences' expectations and then subvert them (or not), and how they use it to play games with them beyond basic peek-a-boo and Hi-de-hi, is a topic I hope to look into in a future issue (with readers' help!). How performers then attempt to achieve this in one or more other languages is really a footnote to this – one in which there are probably as many viewpoints as there are performers.*



# Punch's Postbag

## Baseball Trivia

The baseball world refers to weaker, fast, slap hitters as 'Punch and Judy hitters'. Where does this come from? From 'Punchlines'

*Here in the UK we are always as mystified by this as Americans are by obscure cricketing terms. The best guess from Brit Land is that it possibly derives from the way that Mr. Punch (or indeed any glove puppet) holds a stick. It's a bit similar to how a human would hold one if they were not allowed to grasp with anything below the wrist. Whilst this method of grasping/hugging a stick allows puppets to wallop each other with glee - it's a pretty ineffective position from which to deliver a good hit to a baseball (or a cricket ball for that matter). It was probably a good description of a less than perfect hitter at a time when most Americans knew their Punch and Judy Show and picked up on the reference. Ed.*

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## More law lore

Further to items concerning Punch and the Law. In 1852 Albert Smith wrote: "We cannot, however, disguise the meloncholy fact, that Punch is on the decline. It is true that he escaped the notice of the Metropolitan Police Act, and, whilst the dogs were emancipated from the trucks, he was permitted to bully and tease the hapless Toby to his heart's content; still, we fear his glories are departing." This raises a couple of points, firstly the fact that Punchmen honestly believed that the law requiring the pavement to be kept clear did not apply to them by virtue of some ancient custom sanctioned by the Crown; secondly, the influence of animal welfare groups on the decline of the live dog Toby (whose 'rights' are protected by law now!). Also in the early 19th century Horatio Smith wrote:

"But Punch, thou'rt ungallant and rude,  
In plying thy persuasive wood;  
Remember that thy cudgel's girth is fuller  
than that compassionate, thumb-thick,  
Established wife-compelling stick,

Made legal by the dictum of Judge Buller."

This refers to the judgement that allowed husbands to beat their wives, so long as the stick used was no thicker than a thumb. For some inexplicable reason Punch was exempt from this ruling!

And finally there is all the business of the legal aspect of Profs painting the Royal crest on the proscenium: "By appointment to His Royal Highness"... etc. (I suppose John Styles really can do that!).

Sincerely, Keith Potter.

*See also 'Lore and Disorder' in this issue. Ed*

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## **Crocodile Corner**

I am a zoologist currently writing a book on crocodiles. I am writing a chapter about crocodiles in art at the moment. I was wondering if you could give me any info on the crocodile in Punch and Judy. How did it come to be in the show. I recall reading that it was originally a dragon. Is this correct?

Many Thanks. ~ Richard Freeman.

*Diane Rains has an article posted on the web concerning this and we have covered the topic in a previous issue of this Journal. If my indexing were better I'd even be able to locate it! Ed.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*My brief Crocodile article can be found on [The Puppetry Home Page](#). It's certainly not comprehensive and doesn't mention all of the many theories that have been put forth. (BTW, the email address given for me in that article no longer exists.) For example, some say that the Croc sprang directly from the pages of Barrie's "Peter Pan." In an article appearing in Vol 4 No2 (Summer 1999) of *Around the World With Mr. Punch*, Michael Byrom discussed the origins of the crocodile. He finds some evidence that a Dragon was in use in historic Punch shows either before or concurrently with the Crocodile. In his opinion, the Crocodile first emerged in the *Polichinelle* shows of mid-nineteenth century France. Online Ed.*

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## Punch as Ambassador

I thought you and your colleagues might be interested in the following.

In 1989 I spent 3 months in Indonesia leading an expedition on behalf of Dr. David Bellamy to collect medicinal plants from the jungles of Sumatra. At the conclusion of the expedition I spent a few days in Jakarta, where I visited a museum of Indonesian shadow puppets.

One of the exhibits there was a complete Punch & Judy set including a booth and all the puppets, with a note that this had been presented to the Museum by the then British Ambassador who was, himself, a Punch & Judy Professor! Unfortunately I do not know when this presentation was made, nor the name of the Ambassador. But I found it most interesting that this should sit side by side with traditional Indonesian puppets.

As a parallel to this, a couple of years later I was invited to a demonstration in London of the traditional Indonesian gamelan orchestra, one of whose players was the then Indonesian Ambassador to the Court of St. James!

James A. Gilman

*All Profs are used to being ambassadors for Punch and Judy – but here is Mr. Punch actually in the hands of an Ambassador Prof. We hope our world wide intelligence gathering Punchiana experts can shed some light on this fascinating revelation. Ed.*

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## Classic Films

I recently saw the original version of the film "Gone to Earth" which was filmed in Shropshire during the late 1940's. One scene has a country fair and a P&J show. Any idea who the professor might have been? The Punch had a red ponytail.

Regards, Trev Hill.

*This was a classic British movie. It's a David O. Selznick production, produced and directed by Powell and Pressburger. It's been described as "one of the most beautiful films ever to be shot of the English countryside, and in all its moods". Trev Hill has supplied links to two websites ([Gone to Earth](#), [About Gone to Earth](#)) which give a glimpse into the filming – but no information about that ponytailed*

*Punch. Your Editor was also interested to note it was filmed in and around Ludlow – which is about fifteen miles down the road from Far Forest and the Editorial Office.*

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Hello!

I thought you might like to know: We recently uploaded a dvd-quality mpeg of [Santa Claus' Punch & Judy](#) (1948) to the Internet archive.

You probably have this film already, but if not, you surely need it!

Cheers! Germaine Fodor

*Well, I've got it and I expect many of you have too. If not you've been missing a treat. It's a strange show very strong on speedy manipulation and short on logical plot. It's also obviously been edited down from a longer version which adds to the confusion. It's not a Punch show as most of us know it – but it's certainly a virtuoso piece of vaudeville-style solo puppeteering. Is it swazzled? Or is that a good 'clothes peg on nose' fake? It certainly whips up a storm of audience reaction. Who's the puppeteer?*



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# REVIEWS

## **Punch and Judy Episode 2: Attack of the Clowns**

**reviewed by Jane Savage of Leicester  
(reprinted with acknowledgements to [www.puppeteersUK.com](http://www.puppeteersUK.com) )**

Punch and Judy, three little words which provide heated arguments all over the place. Or, as in the case of one American Showbiz Bear named Edgar, Punch and Judy seems like an old fashioned show in need of updating. So Edgar (“story structure theorist and script doctor”) and his ventriloquist pal Josh Darcy decide to see for themselves what Punch and Judy is all about and give it a new direction. We meet them on stage flanked by two Punch and Judy booths. With the co-operation of Professors Glyn Edwards and Martin Bridle “Episode 2: Attack of The Clowns” is created before our very eyes. Out goes old mob-capped Judy, in she comes, peroxide ponytail poking through her baseball cap, still the eternal nagging wife. Now Punch is left baby-sitting with the quins, who are the result of a brilliantly demonstrated contemporary issue. No subject is too sacred to be spared the attack of the clowns. The puppets unflinchingly expose our fears, turn them into farce and make us laugh – laugh heartily – because we know we shouldn’t.

The puppet makers (Ted Beresford, Brian and Alison Davey, Craig Denston and Mary Edwards) provide a wonderful cast of characters from Kylie on her mobile phone to the mounted policeman and his horse in riot gear. The Punch Professors kept the action going at a fast and furious pace (hands fully occupied? Try your knees!) The format of a ventriloquist, Bear and puppeteers may be difficult to accept and could do with some fine tuning, but it was a good device for presenting the argument. I will not describe any of the hilarious scenes because I hope you will see the show and laugh as much as I did. The myth, magic and mayhem are still there in abundance. The old demons are still with us in their current disguise. Punch rises to meet every challenge and, true to form,

emerges triumphant. Down with Political Correctness. Long Live Punch!

Quote Unquote:  
from Prof. Anthony Dean,  
Professor of Performing Arts,  
University College Winchester.

“The updating aspect of the show gave the audience an insight into the history of Punch and reminded us of the way in which popular entertainments always sought to comment on the issues of the day and act as a focus for popular opinion - the show linked the form of Punch and

Judy to more contemporary entertainments like Spitting Image and Bremner, Bird and Fortune...and it reminds us that this form is for adults as much as for children. The show was hugely enjoyable, funny, informative and satirical in equal measures - a Punch for the new millennium.”

from Steve Tiplady: Artistic Director: Little Angel Theatre.

“A sublimely obscene – and very funny – reconnecting of Mr. Punch with his ribald roots”



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## **Fred Greenspan's 'Tragical Comedy of Punch & Judy'**

**reviewed by Prof. Will, of Boston**

Prof. Fred Greenspan from New York presented his "Traditional Punch & Judy" outdoors before lunch Sunday as one of the closing acts of the N.E./Mid-Atlantic Regional Puppetry Festival held in the Summer of 04 at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, hosted by their Puppetry Arts Dept.. The show was well-received and incorporates many elements from tradition. Fred works hands in front of face in a small lazy tong booth covered with elegant patterned striped material. His usual venue for this show is museums, faires, and the like. He doesn't swazzle, preferring, as I do, to engage in wordplay and old jokes--and relevant comment. The hand-carved set of characters is based on antique Continental figures acquired a few years ago and augmented by additional characters, all with a rather genial look. To accomodate the PC problem, he disposes of Punch's stick in the opening sequence in an amusing routine which

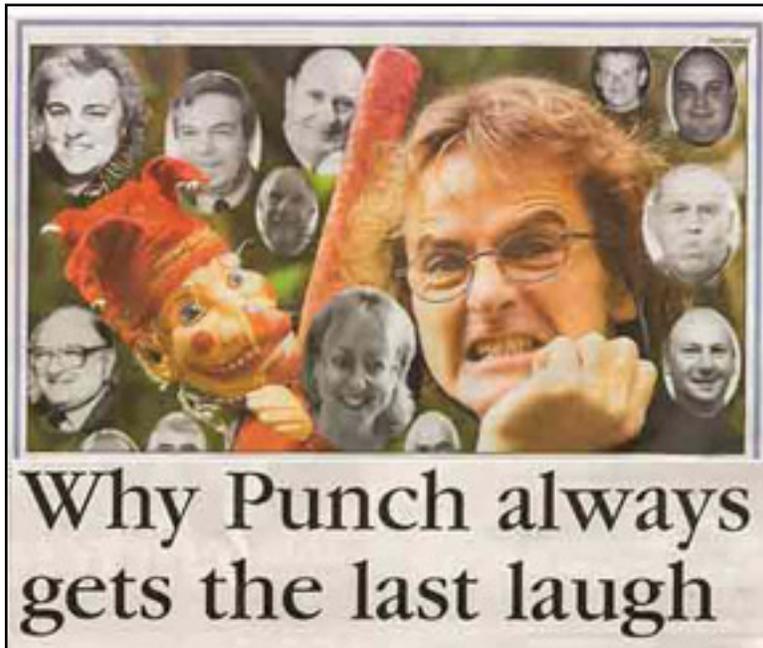
culminates behind the scenes with our old friend whacking the puppeteer, to get his favorite prop back, only to have it swallowed for good by the big green pussycat. "Squashages" become an reoccurring theme, causing stomach aches, and motivating the action. Prof. G's machine is simple with no protruding parts, whose operation is signified by a ratchet noisemaker. It serves to deal with both the Crocodile and Old Scratch.

Textural purists can still argue with Fred's rearrangement of the scene order, but his show is coherent, and for all its sanitization fits the tradition even when updating things. Joey has the extendable neck, which lets him get at the links. Hector the horse makes an appearance, but Toby has run away. The Distinguished Foreign Visitor is a magician who provides the sausage machine. The doctor has a Cherman accent; Polly has a touch of Barbie, and the Policeman is Irish with a hint of New Joisey. The Judge releases Mr. P for community service, and the loving couple ends the show dancing around with a string of devilishly spicey squashages. Everything packs up neatly and can be carried in fiberglass golf clubs travel case and duffle, which of course has wheels. Prof. Greenspan's variations of Punch, which have cast the old trouper as the hero in several popular stories over the past several seasons have born fruit back on the old turf. With no hitting, drinking or swearing, just a few gastric indiscretions. Well done.



## Having the Last Laugh

**“THE** good burghers of Bodmin must be wishing they'd never heard of Punch and Judy. The media bashing the town council has taken over its concerns for the future of the puppet show must have felt a bit like being hit by the painful end of Mr. Punch's stick". So said Westcountry paper The Western Daily News underneath a



'show and shame' image of the local councillors being made a laughing stock at the hands of Mr. Punch and puppeteer Reg Payn. Bodmin Town Council had become a national laughing stock when they endorsed a complaint against Punch and Judy by Bodmin Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre who were upset at what they claimed were "children...laughing at a man, woman and child whose only interaction

with each other is based on violence". Such was the outcry at the council's action that the naive councillors were forced to post a notice on their website saying "Contrary to recent press reports, Bodmin Town Council has NOT banned Punch & Judy." Instead they recommended "that the puppeteer be requested to perform one of his other puppet shows!" The claim not to have 'banned' Punch and Judy, merely to be telling the puppeteer to perform something else, was promptly dubbed a splendid example of gibbering council doublespeak by the Punch and Judy College of Professors who declared Bodmin henceforth twinned with Piltdown-on-Sea: the fictional backwater whose smug and shortsighted local councilors were lampooned in Tony Hancock's movie 'The Punch and Judy Man'. The College pointed out that the council's action endorsed an ignorant assessment of a many-layered moral folk tale of considerable pedigree which would earn a school student few - if any - marks in a GCSE Drama exam and which was certainly unworthy of a mature body of elected representatives who - on this evidence - probably thought that 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' was a story about squatting or that 'Romeo and Juliet' was a play about underage sex. Also threatened was a possible makeover for the show's traditional long-suffering policeman who could in future be known as P. C. Bodmin on the grounds that you clearly can't get much more PC than Bodmin. The College undertook this without disrespect to the Bodmin Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre whose legitimate concerns over ugly social ills it shared, but which it believed were only trivialized by an imagined linkage to a universal world of slapstick comedy and children's laughter.



# Toby's Tailpiece

## **PUNCH MAKES £162.5 MILLION FROM 'BOTTLE'**

**NO** connection with Old Red Nose sad to say – but the above headline was inspired by the following piece of news forwarded by Ray DaSilva from a financial news release dated Dec 2nd 2004. “*Punch Taverns, the UK’s second-largest pub company, has sold 545 of its less profitable pubs to Pubfolio, a private special purpose vehicle, for a cash sum of £162.5m (\$316m).*” Well, we can all dream can’t we?



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