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NEWS FROM THE O'NEILL

EUGENE O'NEILL THEATER CENTER ANNOUNCES

2008 NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE SEASON

PERFORMANCES ON JUNE 13 & 14 at 7:00 PM

Pam Arciero, Artistic Director of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Puppetry Conference, announced today the projects selected for the 2008 Conference, which features puppet artists from throughout the world who come to Waterford to collaborate on new puppet theater works. The National Puppetry Conference will culminate in two public performances on Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14. These popular performances, by conference participants and Guest Artists, are each different and emphasize the latest techniques and ideas in puppetry.

The National Puppetry Conference will be held at the O'Neill's Waterford campus from Saturday, June 7 through Sunday, June 15, preceded by three-day intensives from Wednesday, June 4 through Friday, June 6, featuring workshops, where participants are able to investigate one aspect of puppetry in concentrated master workshops. [Jim Kroupa](#), co-owner of 3/Design Studio, once again presents his master workshop "Creating Mechanisms for Puppets", where students use hands-on examples to design and build a puppet mechanism. Founding Artistic Director of Philadelphia's Mum Puppettheater [Robert Smythe](#) presents "Fundamentals of Puppet Performance: Performer, Instrument and Score" using LeCoq mime technique and other theatre exercises to develop performance skills; found objects to create hand-puppets and

Japanese-style bunraku puppets for instruments; and simple improvisational exercises to open the exploration of developing works for puppets.

2008 National Puppetry Conference Guest Artists [Luman Coad](#) of Coad Canada Puppets (Vancouver, B. C.) and [Paul Mesner](#) of Paul Mesner's Puppets (Kansas City, Missouri) lead "The Ensemble Productions", presenting master classes, and working side by side with participants to immerse themselves in the creative process through which work is refined. The resulting works may include one of the artist's choosing or individual works by the participants, and are presented as part of the public performances at the end of the conference. Luman Coad will address "Individual Production Development." This workshop, based on the premise 'Theatre is communication,' will rehearse and hone scenes from participants' own new productions. Through exercises, discussions, plus group and individual interaction, these scenes will be rehearsed and refined with the purpose of communicating through movement, the core of the puppets' characters. Paul Mesner works with participants to build a rehearsal rod puppet in "Spare the Rod, Spoil the Puppet!" While addressing rod mechanics and techniques of their use, participants will create, rehearse and perform an ensemble piece while exploring Mesner's process action, ideas, where he allows "chaos and some deviation from the subject matter, which sometimes leads to jewels that become the heart of the piece."

"Video Anarchy", an especially innovative and popular strand of the conference, explores the creation of new puppet forms and function using video. Led by [Tim Lagasse](#) and [Martin P. Robinson](#), participants learn basic filmed puppetry techniques, hands on, while being an integral part of the filming and editing of a puppet film. This year's project, written and directed by Robinson, is "The BOTTLE STOPPER PROJECT": Carved wooden animated bottle stoppers from Northern Italy, circa 1930... They are beautifully realized characters, distinct little personalities all... and they do things: they talk, tip their hats, kiss, thumb their noses, stick out tongues, whap each other with brooms. Having been designed for use in taverns as corks, they are, most of them, denizens of bar life. So; a small scale smokey traditional old bar, peopled with all the colorful characters you would expect to see there...until the small bottle stopper reality begins to cross over into the real world. Did my drinking buddy just get grabbed out of existence? Did he die? Was that a glimpse of God? Just how much wool actually IS over my eyes?

The "Artist In Residence" project provides invited artists the full support of the conference using both participants and selected puppeteers to further refine a work in progress. 2008 Artists in Residence present "Robert's Etude": **Ulysses Jones & Megan McNerney**, together as Puppet Odyssey Productions, have been developing two parallel projects: one, a study of Meyerhold's system of biomechanics and its potential for application to puppetry; and the other, the search for a fitting means of telling a specific, true story of the life and death of one man, Robert "Woody" Woodward. "Robert's Etude" is the nexus of these two lines of thought and an experiment in both.

Past artists in residence have included artists have been Ron Binion, Marc Weiner, Bonnie Remsberg, Richard Termine, and Heather Henson.

Other strands of the conference include "Marionette Performance and Construction", an audience favorite on performance nights, where participants construct a marionette or refine their performance techniques under the expert guidance of marionette masters [Philip Huber](#) and [Jim Rose](#); "Writing and Performing Music for Puppet Theater," led by composer, performer, and founder and director of the Tricinium community arts residency program, [Larry Siegel](#), encourages musicians and composers to create specific 'music scapes' for puppet performances; "Emerging Artists" invites previous participants to return to the conference under the guidance of former conference Artistic Director [Richard Termine](#), to further develop their works with the additional support of performers from the **Flock Theater of New London**, who have volunteered their talents for more than 10 years; and "Participant Projects," short works created by the participants apart from regular conference activities under the guidance of a staff member, presented to the whole conference on Saturday morning, from which a few are chosen for public presentation that evening.

Public performances of these innovative, exciting new works are scheduled at the O'Neill, 305 Great Neck Road, Waterford, on Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14 at 7pm, both evenings in the Rose Barn Theater (named in honor of Margo and Rufus Rose, pioneers in the art of puppetry) and in the Dina Merrill Theater.

Tickets to the performances are \$15 for O'Neill members, \$20 non-members. Tickets will go on sale Wednesday, June 4. Please call the O'Neill Box Office at 860-443-1238 for performance times, reservations or additional information. For more information about the O'Neill's 2008 National Puppetry Conference and artist biographies, please visit <http://www.oneillpuppetryconference.com>.

The O'Neill National Puppetry Conference was founded in 1990 by Jim and Jane Henson of The Muppets fame. The mission of the conference is to encourage puppet artists to create and communicate through the visual and kinetic form of the puppet, push beyond their personal boundaries and develop new works for puppet theater. Participants collaborate with renowned guest directors, puppet artists and playwrights to develop innovative productions conceived by guest artists, as well as presentations initiated by the conference participants. Hundreds of puppetry artists have attended the O'Neill National Puppetry Conference to explore this engaging and unique art form. Past conference participants have gone on to work in such puppetry venues as The Henson International Festival of Puppet Theatre (New York City), HERE Arts Center (New York City), The Puppet Showplace (Brookline, Massachusetts), The Sandglass Theatre (Vermont) The Center for Puppetry Arts (Atlanta), and Zeum (San Francisco) and on television shows including *Sesame Street*, *Between the Lions*, *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Blue's Clues/Blue's Room*, *Dave Chapell Show*, *Lazy Town* and *Crank Yankers*.

ARTIST BIOS – 2008 NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE

JIM KROUPA (Creating Puppet Mechanisms)

Jim Kroupa - of 3/Design Studio - has been designing and building puppet mechanisms for TV, films, and commercials for over 20 years. His numerous credits include *Eureka's Castle*, *Gullah Gullah Island*, *Between the Lions*, *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Book of Pooh*, *It's a Big Big World*, *Johnny T and the Sprites*, Jim Henson's *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Sesame Street*, *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, *The Producers* and more.

ROBERT SMYTHE (Fundamentals of Puppet Performance: Performer, Instrument and Score)

Robert Smythe is considered one of the foremost puppet artists in the United States, referred to as "an amazing amalgam of man and puppet." He has won prestigious fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and awards and honors from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the American Center for the Union Internationale de la Marionnette. He has four Barrymore Awards in the areas of choreography, design and education, and is one of the few puppeteers listed in "Who's Who." As the founder and Artistic Director of Mum Puppettheatre, he has written, directed and performed over 20 original productions using puppets, masks and human actors. According to the Philadelphia City Paper, his work is responsible for the "Philadelphia theater renaissance that continues to this day," and he is widely acknowledged to have changed perceptions about puppetry and theater throughout America. Robert Smythe has directed and created work for the Arden Theater, the Wilma Theater, Interact Theater Company, the Minneapolis Children's Theater, and the Independent Eye. He has created four original concert works with the Philadelphia Orchestra: *Swan Lake* won the 2003 Barrymore Award for Outstanding Collaboration for Mum. Robert has performed his work throughout Japan, Europe, North and Central America, and at many venues throughout the United States, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Baltimore Theater Project. His work can also be seen at EPCOT Center at Walt Disney World and on Nickelodeon.

LUMAN COAD (Guest Artist: *Individual Production Development*)

Luman Coad and his late wife Arlyn, founded Coad Canada Puppets in 1966. Their first major production was "Master Peter's Puppet Show" with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. The company has toured in nearly twenty countries around the world and received numerous awards including both the President's and the Trustees' Awards from the Puppeteers of America plus seven Citations of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-U.S.A. In 2006 Coad Canada Puppets were inducted as Pioneer Members in the British Columbia Entertainment Hall of Fame.

PAUL MESNER (Guest Artist: *Spare the Rod, Spoil the Puppet!*)

Paul Mesner, award winning puppeteer, author and performer, studied as a teenager with Lee Ridge in Lincoln, Nebraska before starting his own puppet theater in Omaha, and at the prestigious International Institute of Puppetry in Charleville-Mezier, France. He moved to Kansas City where in 1997 he founded the Paul Mesner Puppets. He still presents a full season in Kansas City and travels nationally to residencies, festivals and workshops, presenting lively performances of classic stories recast in contemporary terms. Audiences across the United States have delighted in the precise craftsmanship, dynamic presentation and joyful blending of humor and education in all his productions. Paul Mesner believes wholeheartedly in entertaining his audiences and doesn't mind including deeper meanings and life-lessons when no one is looking.

TIM LAGASSE (Video *Anarchy Director*)

Tim Lagasse is a professional filmmaker, puppet master, and designer/ fabricator. He works on television's many children's programs, including *Sesame Street*, *Between the Lions*, *Oobi*, *Blue's Clues* and *Chappell's Show* (okay, the last one's not a kid show). Tim also creates puppets (he designed and built the "Bababooie Puppet" for the *Howard Stern Show*), consults, and directs puppet films for strange people like PBS, MTV, HBO and Nickelodeon. He is a recipient of the coveted Union International de la Marionette Citation for Excellence in the Art of Puppetry, the Jim Henson Memorial Prize in Puppetry, the Broadcast Design Silver Award and two Daytime Emmy nominations for Outstanding Achievement in Single Camera Editing and one for Costume Design/Styling. He has created and performed puppets for the Sundance Film Festival's official trailers and their continuing online campaign "Keep It Free", and he's also a featured performer and director on the PBS series "*It's a Big Big World!*" and Disney's "*Johnny & the Sprites.*" He holds a BFA in Puppet Arts from UConn.

MARTIN P. ROBINSON (Video *Anarchy Director*)

Martin P. Robinson has been a professional puppeteer since discovering that it was the perfect link between acting and sculpture. A 1974 graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, he has worked for Nicolo Marionettes, Addis Williams, Bob Brown, Paul Ashley, Bil Baird, Jim Henson, and for five seasons of *Spitting Image* in England. As a puppeteer on *Sesame Street* since 1981 he has won Emmys for his characters Snuffleupagus, Telly Monster, Slimey the Worm, and those "Yip-yip" Martians. During his spare time he performed the Cat in the Hat on the Nickelodeon series; *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*. His company, Hairy Edge Productions has designed/performed *Allegra's Window* and *Blue's Room* on Nickleodeon and *Oobi* on Noggin. Teaching has become an important aspect of his professional life as the senior puppet coordinator for Sesame International, hiring and training puppeteers for productions in Canada, Mexico, Israel/Palestine, Egypt, Germany, Russia, Bangladesh, France, India, Indonesia and Ireland. Film credits include *Follow That Bird*, *Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Elmo in Grouchland*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

and *The Producers*. In 1982, Martin designed, built and performed the plant in the original Off-Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors* for which he received a Drama Desk and an LA Drama Critics Award. He provided the same services for the incarnation of the show that was recently on Broadway. Martin also designed for the production of *Frogs* at Lincoln Center, and two productions with orchestra for Carnegie Hall. Presently, there is a live production of Nickelodeon's *Go Diego Go* touring the country with twenty large scale jungle animal puppets and a huge talking tree from Robinson's shop. At the O'Neill's National Puppetry Conference Martin was twice a guest artist; developing "Jackstraws in a WindTunnel" and "PigeonHoled".

PHILLIP HUBER (Marionette Master)

Philip Huber is best known for his marionette manipulation in the 3-time Academy Award nominated film *Being John Malkovich*. However, his puppetry career has taken him around the world many times with performances in nightclubs; Lido, Paris, Casino De Monte Carlo, Monaco; on television, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Le Plus Grande Cabaret du Monde* (France), *Variete* (Chile); on stage, *Busker Alley* with Tommy Tune, *That's Christmas* with Sandy Duncan, *Christmas With Friends & Nabors* with Jim Nabors, *It's Magic* with Harry Anderson, *The Road To Hollywood* directed by Walter Bobby; at art museums, *Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty* with Tony Oursler and Dan Graham; and on 5-star cruise ships, *Crystal*, *Cunard*, and *Seabourn*. Mr. Huber most recently designed, built, & performed five marionettes in the recent award-winning film, *The Tillamook Treasure*.

JIM ROSE (Marionette Master)

Jim Rose, son of Rufus and Margo Rose, first performed with marionettes in 1943 in the Rose production of *Rip Van Winkle*. He has performed with his own hand puppets since 1947, when he saw Burr Tillstrom's Puppeteers of America Festival performance of Kukla and Ollie in *St. George and the Dragon*. Jim worked with his parents and with Martin and Olga Stevens on several film and TV productions, including the WGN-TV Peabody Award-winning *The Blue Fairy* and the Stevens-Rose film, *The Toymaker*. He was graduated from Antioch College in 1956. While a student there he appeared in over 40 plays, of which 14 were by William Shakespeare. At the Yale School of Drama, where he received his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1963, he created puppets for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and for adaptations of two of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Mr. Rose taught Drama, Art and English in high schools in Chicago and in Connecticut from 1956 until 1960. He taught, for two years, in the Theater Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and for 19 years at Antioch College. He has also led numerous workshops at Puppeteers of America Festivals and in the Rose Marionette Workshop at the O'Neill's National Puppetry Conference for many years. Since 1982, Mr. Rose has presented his traditional puppets in annual 18th century fairs in The Fair at New Boston, near Springfield, Ohio, at The Faire at the Forks, in Chatham, Ontario, at the Trail of

History in McHenry County, Illinois, and at George Washington's Mount Vernon in Virginia.

LARRY SIEGEL (*Director of Musical Composition*)

Larry Siegel is a composer, a director of theater and community arts residencies, and a nationally known player of traditional music, as well as Resident Composer at the National Puppetry Conference for the past eight years. He has created work with Dan Hurlin, Valeria Vasilevski, In the Heart of the Beast, Underground Railway Theater, Perry Alley Theater, and Lisa Sturz, among others. His Kaddish, a large choral work about the Holocaust will be performed internationally beginning in 2008. As a composer he has received many awards, including a McKnight Fellowship, Fellowships to Tanglewood and the MacDowell Colony, and support from many other foundations and arts agencies. As founder and director of Tricinium he leads residencies with communities, schools and organizations in which the participants create and perform original works of music theater about their own lives and experience. Visit them online at www.tricinium.com

RICHARD TERMINE (*Director of Emerging Artists*)

Richard Termine attended the University of Connecticut as an undergraduate and completed his M.F.A. in Puppetry in 1978 with a staging of de Ghelderode's "The Death of Dr. Faust." In 1980 he began his association with The Jim Henson Company as a puppet designer and builder for a variety of Muppet productions. For "Sesame Street" he designed and built the characters of Placido Flamingo and Wolfgang the Seal; his design work on the show was honored with an Emmy Award in 1987. Richard's own puppet productions have been presented in New York at HERE, at Arts at St. Ann's and at The International Festival of Puppet Theater, at the New York International Fringe Festival, and the Puppeteers of America Festival in Tampa, Florida. He received the UNIMA Citation for Excellence in 2002 for "Diary of a Madman", originally developed at the National Puppetry Conference in 2000. As director and teacher, he taught with Jim Henson at the International Institute of Puppetry in Charleville-Mezieres, France, and has been featured as an artist-in-residence at various colleges including the University of Maryland, California State University Summer Arts and The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Termine also served as the Associate Director of the Jim Henson Legacy Foundation for three years, and has served since 1987 as a trustee of The Jim Henson Foundation. Richard Termine was the Artistic Director of the National Puppetry Conference at the O'Neill from 1992 to 2001.

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