

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PUPPETRY TO THE ART LIFE  
OF LOS ANGELES

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A Thesis  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION OF TERMS, LIMITATIONS OF THE PROBLEM, SOURCES OF DATA, AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

From time immemorial the manipulation of puppets and the sight of them responding to the will of their masters has intrigued mankind. Every civilization, the world around, is a source of information concerning this art. Passing from one people to another, from Asia through Europe, puppetry has come to the United States and to Los Angeles, where it has been developed to a remarkable degree. Similarly, all the fields of the fine arts have pursued a like course through Asiatic and European ancestry to America and Los Angeles, which is now recognized as a center of enthusiastic art growth from both the standpoint of creation and of appreciation. Many opinions have been expressed as to whether the fields of art and puppetry were interrelated or merely two activities running independently of one another.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to show how the art life of Los Angeles has grown from the late nineteenth century to 1943; (2) to trace the development of puppetry in the city from the 1920's to 1943; and (3) to determine whether puppetry has played a real part

in promoting the growth of art life in Los Angeles.

Importance of the study. Research has been carried on in universities for some years concerning the development of puppetry in the United States and the rest of the world, its relationship to the theatre, to schools, and its adaptation to many uses. In spite of the resultant rather comprehensive coverage, the study of the contribution of puppetry to art has been meagre. In particular, no investigation has been conducted which deals with the interrelation of puppetry and art in any particular center. In this study an attempt has been made to trace the parallelism existing between the growth of art life and the development of puppetry in Los Angeles.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

For clarification a few terms should be defined as they have been used in this study.

Art. According to Webster's New International Dictionary, "Art is the application of a skill and taste to production, according to aesthetic principles, as in painting, sculpture, and architecture." Fields of art may also include drama, music, and the dance. Because so many institutions in Los Angeles have emphasized the craft and appreciation of painting, "art" as defined in the study has stressed that



field of art expression to represent parallel advance in other branches of visual and auditory arts.

Puppet. "Puppet" has been interpreted in its most inclusive sense. Webster's New International Dictionary defines a puppet as "a small figure often with jointed limbs, moved by the hand or by strings or wires, as in a puppet show." In general, this term refers to puppets operated by the hand, strings, or rod.

Puppetry. This field, as stated by Webster's New International Dictionary, is "the art of manipulating puppets or marionettes, or producing puppet shows." It has been used here to indicate any activity in connection with puppets, whether making, operating, or presenting them in a performance.

Marionette. "One of the most common classes of puppets is called in French 'marionettes.' These are images of the human figure, moved by wires or cord on a stage and made to perform little dramas, the dialogue of which is carried on by the person in concealment, who moves the figures."<sup>1</sup> Marionette refers to the type of puppet which is operated by strings from above, and of course includes all

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<sup>1</sup> "Marionette," The Encyclopedia America, 1941 edition, pp. 23-24.

types of figures, natural or imaginative. The term is used interchangeably with puppet.

Guignol or hand puppet. This type of puppet consists of a bottle shaped sack open at the base and provided at the top with a head and two hands. The puppet

. . . . is operated by drawing it on the hand in the manner of a glove, the arm held vertically upright, but so that the first finger provides a spine for the head, while the thumb and second finger each slip into a sleeve. . . . When the fingers are moved, the head, arms, and back are set in motion.<sup>2</sup>

### III. LIMITATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

Due to the tremendous scope of the problem, limitations have necessarily been imposed. Historical background to puppetry is so extensive that it cannot be reviewed here. Excellent material on the history of puppets may be found in Madge Anderson's The Heroes of the Puppet Stage,<sup>3</sup> Helen Haiman Joseph's A Book of Marionettes,<sup>4</sup> Max Von Boehn's Dolls and Puppets,<sup>5</sup> and Charles Magnin's Histoire des

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<sup>2</sup> Cyril W. Beaumont, Puppets and the Puppet Stage (New York: Studio Publications Incorporated, 1938), pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Madge Anderson, The Heroes of the Puppet Stage (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923).

<sup>4</sup> Helen Haiman Joseph, A Book of Marionettes (New York: The Viking Press, 1929).

<sup>5</sup> Max Von Boehn, Dolls and Puppets (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1932).

Marionettes en Europe.<sup>6</sup> The latter volume was unavailable to the writer but was highly recommended by many authorities. Paul McPharlin's Doctor's dissertation, "Puppets in American Life, 1524-1915,"<sup>7</sup> gives a comprehensive survey of puppetry in America.

Past functions of puppetry in Los Angeles have been limited to the information that was available; therefore, the period considered covered approximately twenty-three years (1920-1943). Only individuals and groups whose contributions to the puppetry tradition were notable have been considered in this work. Literature concerning puppetry in Los Angeles is meagre; consequently, interviews with persons who have been active in the field have been used as a basis for this survey. Statistics are not available to show the number of persons involved in puppetry in Los Angeles in 1920 as compared with 1943. Opinions of puppet leaders in the city must be taken as a basis for this estimate. Their conclusions necessarily are of a nature which cannot be exact; many are colored by personal feelings. In a manner, this has hampered the veracity of the findings; on the other hand, an evaluation of these reactions has been one means of reaching some conclusions, on the part of the writer.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Magnin, Histoire des Marionettes en Europe (Paris: Levy Freres, 1862).

<sup>7</sup> Paul McPharlin, "Puppets in American Life, 1524-1915," (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1940).

The period of time considered for the art life of Los Angeles is approximately fifty years, from the late nineteenth century to 1943. This span of years is necessarily more lengthy than the time reviewed for puppetry because the art institutions in the city have been a part of the older art movement in California. The puppet revival has taken place only in the last quarter of a century, beginning around 1920. Progress of art in Los Angeles has been determined by a survey of the peoples and institutions which have promoted its interest in the city. Little written material has been available; sources of information have been confined to newspaper files, publications of art organizations, and opinions of art leaders who could be reached for interviews. Art has been considered as growing if the forces fostering it and public receptance and participation have expanded. Because so many institutions in Los Angeles have emphasized painting, this branch has been stressed, rather than other fields of the arts. Due to the rapid growth of population in Los Angeles and the fact that art is a complex subject and reactions to it may not be judged on a mathematical basis, few figures have been cited to indicate its progress. Rather, objective opinions of public and art leaders have served as authority on this subject. Exact conclusions as to both puppetry and art developments have been limited because of the fact that progress is still going on, condi-

tions are constantly changing, and time has not elapsed sufficiently to obtain a proper perspective view of either situation.

#### IV. SOURCES OF DATA

The scarcity of written material on puppetry and art in Los Angeles necessitated personal contact with the leaders in both fields of endeavor. Though the information derived from these sources might be colored by personal bias, the close relation of these leaders to the subject has been a distinct asset. Their reactions have been authentic and have made it possible for the writer to make more accurate conclusions than might have been reached from the few books, pamphlets, periodicals, or newspaper files available. Some of the leaders could not be reached, due to having joined the armed forces.

Sources of data for the historical background to puppetry have been mentioned. Material for Chapters Two, Three, and Four has been gleaned mainly from the publications of local artists, periodicals, newspapers, varied types of literature published by art organizations of the city, and personal interviews with leaders of art and puppetry. Mr. E. Percival Wetzel<sup>8</sup> has made available his complete file of

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<sup>8</sup> Pioneer puppet leader of Los Angeles.

puppet shows, programs for the performances, personal contact with leading puppeteers of Los Angeles, and newspaper files from 1925-1943. Accounts from the newspapers and correspondence provided information when the artist was unavailable for interview.

#### V. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The growth of art life was traced in Chapter Two, giving a general background for growth of art in California as a whole and then for Los Angeles itself, as shown by the progress of institutions devoted to the causes of art.

The work of professional puppeteers was reviewed in Chapter Three. Contributions of individuals who have introduced puppets to Los Angeles, the Olvera Street puppet groups, including the Yale Puppeteers, the WPA puppets, Pasadena puppet groups, and independent artists was outlined.

Chapter Four indicated the part that puppetry had played in the Los Angeles schools, playgrounds, and the small civic organizations. The relation of puppetry to art was established as a result of research in literature and interviews with leaders in puppetry; predictions as to the possible future of puppetry were made, based on the same sources of information.

Conclusions as to the contribution of puppetry to the art life of Los Angeles have been placed in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### GROWTH OF ART LIFE IN LOS ANGELES--

#### LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO 1943

In considering the problem of "The Contribution of Puppetry to the Art Life of Los Angeles," it was necessary first to review the progress made in the art life of the city. This was best established by means of a brief study of the progress of California art in general.

#### I. CALIFORNIA ART

California art, as represented by painting, began around the middle of the nineteenth century, much in the same manner as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the East Coast, with a straggling procession of limners. These crude portrait painters came principally from Mexico, and plied their trade at the large haciendas and the cities of San Diego, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, San Jose, and San Francisco. They took the place of the modern photographer. Practically no work of value from this period remains.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frank J. Taylor, Land of Homes (Los Angeles: Powell Publishing Company, 1929), p. 321. Chapter XIII, "Growth of Art Life in California," by Arthur Millier, art critic, Los Angeles Times.

The start of a campaign to establish a permanent semi-public art gallery in San Francisco was launched in 1864; at the annual Fair of the Mechanics' Institute, a special building was erected to display works by American and European artists.

Portrait painting of a better order than in the days of the limners was becoming fashionable by 1865; W. S. Jewett, S. W. Shaw, and S. S. Osgood were leaders of this movement. In 1859 William Keith arrived in San Francisco, where he opened his art studio; he specialized in Sierra and Yosemite subjects. After leaving California to study in Germany for a year, Keith returned to paint the landscapes of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to San Diego. His work paralleled the development of George Inness with whom he painted in California.<sup>2</sup>

In 1871, two years after the first transcontinental train brought passengers to California, Virgil Williams founded the San Francisco School of Design which grew steadily into the Mark Hopkins Institute. This became finally the beautiful California School of Fine Arts which now has its own fine buildings, and operates under adequate endowment.

Artists of California had been attracted to the missions from earliest times. William Keith painted the missions

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 323-25.



in 1880; Ford of Santa Barbara completed his set of etchings of the Franciscan establishments in 1890. San Juan Capistrano in the south and Carmel in the north proved to be favorite subjects, probably because they are located close to the artists' colonies of Laguna Beach and Carmel.<sup>3</sup>

Outside conditions had a great deal to do with determining the course of art in California. The onrush of wealth after the Civil War, growth of transportation, and easy access to Europe made the picture-buying public well acquainted with the products of the Paris salons from 1875-1900. Dutch, French, and German pictures, done with a technical skill unknown to most American artists, could now be purchased from many art dealers. People admired American artists, but spent their money on products of the European brush.

During this period, collections of paintings and sculpture were being formed in California. William H. Crocker owned Millet's "Man With the Hoe," Corot's "Dance of the Nymphs," works by Rembrandt, and by Rubens. However, such art treasures were the exception to the general rule; most collections catered to middle class taste.<sup>4</sup>

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 332-33.

San Francisco in 1915, did much to stimulate the growth of fine arts in California. A simultaneous exposition at San Diego vigorously exploited Spanish Colonial architecture; this had a remarkable effect on the building designs of the following years.<sup>5</sup> At the San Francisco fair the arts of the painter and sculptor were employed on an unprecedented scale. Employment was given to many artists and students, encouraging others to enter the profession. Arthur F. Mathews contributed a mural, "Victorious Spirit," which was commonly admitted to be the finest on the coast. The exposition revived interest in murals and sculpture in all of California.

Exhibitions at the San Francisco Exposition buildings were continued for many years by the San Francisco Art Association. In this way the public was acquainted with contemporary art tendencies.

At the San Diego Exposition, James E. McBurney of Los Angeles and Chicago did mural decoration; later he decorated the State Exposition Building in Los Angeles. Albert Herter painted the murals of the Holy Grail in the San Francisco Hotel; he also completed a series of California historical murals in the Los Angeles Public Library. Julian F. Garney in addition decorated the interior of the building; murals for the great central hall were painted by Dean Cornwell.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

Diego Rivera painted murals at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1939, adding further impetus to the mural painting tendencies in the state.

Museums and art galleries throughout the state have helped further the cause of art. The M. H. DeYoung Museum, in the Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, has a collection of fine arts and decorative arts, well displayed. It was opened in 1919. The California Palace of the Legion of Honor, in Lincoln Park, opened in 1924, and boasts a large group of Rodin's marbles and paintings of the Old Masters. In San Marino the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, completed in 1920, has the finest single collection of eighteenth century English portraits in the world, in addition to Italian and Flemish Renaissance paintings, and eighteenth century French and English decorative arts. The Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art, opened in 1910, possesses a fine modern American and French collection of paintings. San Diego opened its Fine Arts Gallery in 1926; here are featured permanent collections of the works of many nations, particularly Spain and America.<sup>7</sup>

## II. ART IN LOS ANGELES

Art life in California had its rise in the northern

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 338-39.

sector of the state, centering in San Francisco, appearing later in the south in the city of Los Angeles. While San Francisco was rapidly covering its hundred hills with houses in the seventies and eighties, attracted by its gayety and the romance of its gold, its host of literary people and artists, Los Angeles was still a sleepy, half-Spanish town.<sup>8</sup>

By 1885, however, artists had begun to make themselves known in Los Angeles. Edith White, flower painter, Charles Ward, landscapist, and J. Bond Francisco were among the early artists. Francisco was a musician as well as a painter and is best known for his interpretations of mountain scenes with trees and his desert landscapes.<sup>9</sup> These artists, along with Helen M. Coan, Harley D. Nichols, and Regina O'Kane, formed at this time the Los Angeles Art Association. A skylit gallery was installed in the new Chamber of Commerce Building. Although this original organization no longer exists, a new one under the same name was formed in 1933 which has been very active in art circles.

Elmer Wachtel came to Los Angeles in 1883 and greatly influenced the southern California landscape school. He discovered first the beauties of the characteristic California dry arroyas, where color is pale under the strong

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with E. Roscoe Shrader, Dean of Otis Art Institute, December 16, 1942.

light, with purple shadows. Marian Kavanaugh Wachtel, his wife, painted similar themes in water color, revealing true strength in her understanding of color. Edgar Alwin Payne, Jack Wilkinson Smith, Benjamin C. Brown, and Hanson Puthuff were also members of the landscape school. These artists settled down to acquaint themselves intimately with the landscape of southern California. They chose small, rather than grand subjects, and sought for truth of appearance.<sup>10</sup> Their work continued into the beginning of the twentieth century.

William Lees Judson was the first professor of the School of Fine Arts at The University of Southern California, 1896 to 1918. The art courses were given at Garvanza, in Huntington Park. Mr. Judson was in charge of the academy, the location of which was chosen to take advantage of the landscape about the school. Later he founded the Arroyo Guild, a community of arts and crafts, overlooking the Arroyo Seco, between Los Angeles and Pasadena.<sup>11</sup> Judson specialized in portrait, genre, and landscape work; he was an excellent teacher and an influential artist. When the professor died, the art school moved to the campus of The University of Southern California in the southern part of Los Angeles, where it was relatively quiescent until its present character was established in 1925.

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, op. cit., pp. 333-35.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Nelbert M. Chouinard, founder and president of Chouinard Institute, October 6, 1942.

The Blanchard Gallery, directed by Everett Maxwell, was established in 1906 as the first attempt in Los Angeles to solidify and publically promote art in the city. The gallery was located on Broadway, between Second and Third streets, opposite the original City Hall; the entire building was devoted to music and art studios, with a music hall and a spacious gallery for exhibitions. Work of local artists was featured here. The Mason Opera House was between First and Second streets on Broadway, across from the Chamber of Commerce Building. At this time the Los Angeles Times newspaper was located at First and Broadway. The civic and cultural center of Los Angeles at that time was on Broadway, from First to Third streets.<sup>12</sup>

Art exhibitions at the Blanchard Gallery opened with brilliant receptions and were attended by many. Among the local artists whose work was displayed there were J. Bond Francisco, Martin L. Jackson, Franz A. Bischoff, Elizabeth Borghlum, Warren T. Hedges, Lillian Drain, Floriene Hyer, and Lita Horlocker, who is art chairman for the Friday Morning Club in 1943. During the following fifteen years (1910-1925), the artists specialized in water color and oil portraiture, landscape, still life, and design. Little opportunity was offered in the commercial art field; motion

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Everett Maxwell, Director of the Foundation of Western Art, December 15, 1942.

pictures were just beginning to be developed. Interest in art was more cultural than commercial. Community spirit ran high, and there were not so many smaller diverse interests to divide the direction of cultural life. Although many were interested in art for social prestige, there were more bent on making Los Angeles a real art center.<sup>13</sup>

William Wendt and his wife, Julia Bracken Wendt, settled in Los Angeles in 1906; they became an active influence in the art field for the city by helping to organize exhibits and assist artists with example and criticism. William Wendt helped reorganize the then existing Painters' Club into the California Art Club, still active in 1943. He pictured southern California more truthfully than other artists; his vision was sober, and his paintings constitute a record of the diversity of nature and weather in California.

The corner stone for the original Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art was laid December 17, 1910, followed by the formal opening of the red brick institute then known as the Museum of History, Science, and Art, on October 16, 1913. Everett Maxwell, director of the Blanchard Gallery, became the curator for the art section of the museum. This meant that the art center of the city moved to Exposition Park. To aid students in the preparation for a

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Maxwell.

professional career in the varied fine and applied arts, the Otis Art Institute was founded as a part of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art in 1918.

The Los Angeles School of Art and Design, at Sixth and Alvarado, was established about 1910; students of the school later became well known artists. This proved to be a force furthering the cause of art in Los Angeles.

By the early 1920's, the guiding personalities for art in the city were Katharyn Leighton, Carl Oscar Borg, William Cahill, and Mr. and Mrs. Wachtel. A younger group began to make its influence known from 1925-1930; these included such artists as Clarence Hinkle, Henri DeKruif, Laurin Barton, Mabel Alvarez, Roscoe Shrader, Ralph Holmes, S. MacDonald Wright, James Swinnerton, and Lorser Fietelson. At this time, many other creative artists and the expanded personnel of art interested groups created local centers or societies, adding monumentally to the totals of both stimulus and contact for the Los Angeles populace.

### III. SOCIETIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF LOS ANGELES ART LIFE

A. The Ruskin Art Club was planned to further the cultural study of the arts, rather than to participate actively in the creation of art. Organized in 1906, the club has continued active to 1943, with increasing member-



ship.

B. The California Art Club is one of the older and better organized of the Los Angeles art societies. When E. Roscoe Shrader, head of Otis Art Institute, became its leader in 1918, it met in the basement of the Normal School Building, where the Los Angeles Public Library is now located. As the club grew in numbers, it moved first to Chandler Hall in the Otis Art Institute, then to the Barnsdall House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and finally to the Hollywood Women's Club, where it convenes to date.<sup>14</sup> Due to the fact that the club has remained strong and has been under capable leadership for years, it has tended to solidify the interests of artists in Los Angeles to a remarkable degree. It has been influential in securing outstanding artists, as Robert Henri, Leon Bakst, and Elie Faure, to lecture in Los Angeles and to become acquainted with club members.

C. The Painters and Sculptors Society was organized for men only, in 1925. Representative members were Thornwall Probst, J. Duncan Gleason, and Edward Chiapella. Members are still meeting at the Stendahl Gallery on Wilshire Boulevard.

D. The Women Painters of the West, 1924-1943, has as its purpose the stimulation of the work of women painters. Mrs. Everett and Mrs. Wendt have been outstanding members of

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<sup>14</sup> Interview, Shrader.

the organization. The club has held many exhibitions of the work of local artists and has done much in this way to aid women painters in Los Angeles.

E. The current Los Angeles Art Association has played a long and important role in the development of art life in Los Angeles. Originally organized in 1925 as the Museum Patrons' Association, its purpose was to interest the public in the museum art exhibits. In 1933 it was reorganized as the Los Angeles Art Association, a perpetual corporation, with power to accept gifts of real and personal property. Members inspired the production of California art by exhibitions, commissions, and awards recognizing the talent of local artists.<sup>15</sup> They fostered the training of talent through art education in schools, and created collections of art study materials. Monthly shows of California art were sponsored at the Art Gallery of the Public Library and the Municipal Art Gallery.

From May 15 to June 15, 1934, the Los Angeles Art Association presented its All-California Art Exhibit at the Biltmore Salon. Among the artists whose work was featured were William Wendt, Paul Lauritz, Mabel Alvarez, Millard Sheets, Maynard Dixon, James Swinnerton, and Hanson Puthoff.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pamphlet, Many Ways You Will Enjoy Membership in the Art Association.

<sup>16</sup> Pamphlet, First Annual All-California Art Exhibition, 1934, Biltmore Salon.

The show marked a concerted boost for California art and revealed the strength of the work accomplished by California artists.<sup>17</sup>

Paintings from the Louvre, loaned by the French Government to the Los Angeles Art Association, were exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum, October 5 to November 5, 1934. Included among the famous canvases were works by Chardin, Lorraine, Clouet, Boucher, Poussin, Courbet, David, Delacroix, and Ingres. This gave Los Angeles art patrons a rare chance to see the original masterpieces from Europe.<sup>18</sup>

The next event of importance scheduled by the Los Angeles Art Association to further the growth of art consciousness in the city was the show it presented at the Town House from October 15 to December 15, 1937. During the first month a loan exhibit of international art of the Old Masters from Italy, Holland, France, England, Spain, and the Orient was featured. These art treasures were loaned by galleries, museums, and individual collectors, most of the owners being located in southern California.<sup>19</sup> On November

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Helen Wurdemann, executive secretary of the Los Angeles Art Association, December 30, 1942.

<sup>18</sup> Pamphlet, Paintings from the Louvre, Los Angeles Museum, 1934.

<sup>19</sup> Pamphlet, Los Angeles Art Association Loan Exhibit of International Art, 1937, p. 35.

15, the show changed, and for a month a loan exhibit of international art, featuring Barbizon School and Modern Masters, was displayed. These canvases, pieces of sculpture, and miniatures were also loaned by local art collectors.<sup>20</sup> This was one of the largest shows ever presented in the city. It served to show that southern Californians were investing in art of the highest character, and revealed the force, activity, and influence of the Art Association of Los Angeles.<sup>21</sup>

By 1943 the Art Association is sponsoring the purchase by the County of Los Angeles of the Earl property on Wilshire Boulevard, where the organization is now located. Plans have been made to erect here a fine "close in" art gallery and art school.

IV. GROWTH OF ART LIFE IN LOS ANGELES, AS SHOWN BY ITS  
UNIVERSITIES, SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS, GALLERIES,  
AND THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY,  
1900-1943

In order to gain an over all picture of the growth of art life in Los Angeles as shown by the progress of the institutions which have sponsored art, the time during which

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Interview, Wurdemann.

progress can be noted is divided into short periods.

A. 1900-1910. During this time very little creative art activity was being carried on other than that previously mentioned. The city boasted but one high school, Los Angeles High School, with one art teacher. Soon an art supervisor was appointed and some specialized art work initiated.<sup>22</sup>

The Henry E. Huntington Art Gallery, formerly the Huntington home, was completed in 1910, and Mr. Huntington began to collect the books which later were to make his library so famous.<sup>23</sup> During this same year the corner stone for the Museum of History, Science and Art was laid; this institution was later to prove to be influential in the art life of the city.

B. 1910-1915. The Los Angeles Normal School, predecessor to the University of California at Los Angeles, graduated its first class of thirty art majors in 1912. The present site of the Los Angeles Public Library was the location for the school. Anna Brooks Wyckoff, Louise Pinkney Sooy, and Nellie Gere comprised the art department at this time.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Jessie Miles Lewis, director of art for Los Angeles City Schools, July 19, 1943.

<sup>23</sup> Robert O. Schad, Henry E. Huntington, the Founder and the Library (Los Angeles: O. D. S. Publishing Company, 1940), p. 9.

Formal opening was made of the Museum of History, Science and Art on October 16, 1913; later it became the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art. The building consisted of three wings radiating from a central entrance rotunda facing on the sunken garden in Exposition Park. The museum had an available exhibition floor space of 30,000 square feet; exhibitions were changed monthly. At the first formal reception, on November 6, 1913, 1060 responded to the cards of invitation.<sup>24</sup>

During 1913 Mr. Earl Stendahl opened his first art gallery in Los Angeles; he was destined to be a force in the art life of the city for the next thirty years.

C. 1915-1920. Attendance at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art for the year of 1917 totaled 238,575, showing how the institution was gaining in influence. In the following year, the Otis Art Institute was founded as a section of the Los Angeles County Museum, to aid the education of workers in the fine and applied arts.<sup>25</sup> General Harrison Gray Otis presented his residences to house the school; these were transformed into studios, and later additional buildings were erected. The faculty consisted of twelve artists, and students numbered about

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<sup>24</sup> Pamphlet, Museum Milestones, 1910-1935.

<sup>25</sup> Pamphlet, Otis Art Institute, 1942.

forty-five.

In 1919 the Los Angeles Normal School moved to the North Vermont Avenue location (where it remained until 1929). Here it became the University of California, Southern Branch. At this location the art department steadily progressed so that the faculty numbers grew from three to seventeen.<sup>26</sup>

During this period Henry E. Huntington was adding to his collection of books, manuscripts, and art treasures. The Library Building opened at the beautiful San Marino site in 1920.

D. 1920-1925. The Chouinard Art Institute was founded in 1921 by Nelbert M. Chouinard for the purpose of giving a useful art education. The aim of the school was to equip the student with a well-rounded background in the fundamental crafts of art, and at the same time to point him toward a definite professional goal.<sup>27</sup> When the school started there were ten faculty members and twenty-five students. By 1925 the school had increased so much in influence and numbers that it moved to an adequate, well equipped, and attractive location at 741 Grand View Avenue where it has remained to date.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Professor Louise Pinkney Sooy, art instructor, the University of California at Los Angeles, July 19, 1943.

<sup>27</sup> Pamphlet, Chouinard Art Institute of California, 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Chouinard.

Previous to 1922, the Los Angeles City Schools had no junior high schools; during this year their organization was started. This was beneficial to the art interests of the city, for prior to this time only students in high school received art instruction from teachers who specialized in art. With the establishment of junior high schools, all students above the sixth grade enjoyed a guided art experience. Only teachers of specialized training were given these positions; art appreciation and the desire to follow the art profession were stimulated by this move on the part of the schools. In the years which followed, teachers who had majored in art at college taught also in the grammar grades where the budget and building facilities merited such a course of action.<sup>29</sup>

The Los Angeles Public Library, which has played such an important part in furthering the interests of art in the city, was housed in the Metropolitan Building, at Fifth and Hill streets, 1922-1926. Statistics of book circulation show the trend of art life in Los Angeles. In 1923 there was a 12 per cent gain in art book circulation over 1922. Here was an excellent collection of art books and publications for the use also of the research student, to augment those

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<sup>29</sup> Interview, Lewis.



in the university libraries and other research libraries.<sup>30</sup>

In 1924 the Biltmore Art Salon, at the Biltmore Hotel, was established as a corporation of artists and laymen. This proved to be one of the more regularly attended galleries of the city for many years to come, specializing in exhibits of locally and internationally known artists.

E. 1925-1930. This was a period when great strides were made in advancing the cause of institutions which were sponsoring art in Los Angeles. Mr. Dalzell Hatfield, prominent art dealer and critic for the next twenty years, established his first gallery in Los Angeles in 1925. He specialized in nineteenth and twentieth century French paintings and in paintings of local as well as internationally known artists.<sup>31</sup> During this same year the Museum Patrons' Association was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art in Exposition Park with the purpose of attracting the public to the museum art exhibits.

By 1926 the Los Angeles Public Library had moved to its attractive new location at Fifth and Grand Avenue. The art and music departments were housed in a separate spacious

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<sup>30</sup> Yearly report made by Gladys Caldwell, head of art and music department, Los Angeles Public Library, 1923.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Dalzell Hatfield, owner of the Dalzell Hatfield Gallery, September 19, 1942.

wing. Many rare and expensive reference books were added to the shelves. Book circulation for the music and art departments showed an increase of 11.7 per cent over the previous year.<sup>32</sup>

At this time the University of Southern California began to train groups of professional and semi-professional students in many branches of art. In 1925 the School of Architecture was organized, including in its curriculum courses in painting, sculpture, and design. Art history and art appreciation courses were added in 1926. Two years later a major sequence in fine arts was established, leading to the degree of A. B. in the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences; twenty-five art majors were following the course at this time, and there was a faculty of ten.<sup>33</sup>

In 1929 changes were taking place in the other university of the city. The University of California, Southern Branch, moved from its location on North Vermont to the spacious campus in West Los Angeles; hereafter it was known as the University of California at Los Angeles. Well equipped studios and lecture rooms were built at the new location to house the art classes. Training of art teachers was

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, Caldwell.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Professor Amy Woller McClelland, Advisor for Graduate Studies in Fine Arts, The University of Southern California, July 27, 1942.

largely the aim of the art department; consequently, it was organized as a part of the College of Education.<sup>34</sup>

When the University of California at Los Angeles changed its location, the Los Angeles Junior College was established at the vacated campus of the university on North Vermont Avenue. Two teachers comprised the art staff in 1929. The policy of the art department was to give the first two years of college work on such a high level that the student could transfer at the end of the junior college period to any university or professional art school. Painting and drawing, design, and commercial art work were featured.

Two additional units of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art were completed during this period, one in 1925, the other in 1929. On the latter occasion, 8200 guests attended the opening reception. These buildings provided over fifty exhibition halls, rooms, and galleries with an exhibition floor space of more than six acres in extent. Attendance for 1930 exceeded all previous records; 1,300,000 viewed the museum treasures of art, history, and science during the year.<sup>35</sup>

F. 1930-1935. Between 1930 and 1935 art life in Los

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<sup>34</sup> Interview, Sooy.

<sup>35</sup> Pamphlet, Museum Milestones, 1910-1935.

Angeles showed marked progress. Growth was shown by institutions already established and a new art school and gallery were organized.

The School of Architecture at The University of Southern California was reorganized in 1931 as a College; in addition to the five-year architectural program and the major in fine arts, the four-year professional curricula in the fields of design, painting, and sculpture leading to the degree of B. F. A. were established. In 1932 sufficient art history and theory courses were added to make possible an art history major leading to the A. B. degree. As a culmination of the increasing emphasis placed upon the fine arts, the college was changed in 1935 to the College of Architecture and Fine Arts. During the following year there was added the graduate curriculum in fine arts leading to the degree of Master of Arts with a major in fine arts. The degree of M. F. A. was established in 1935, with the possibility of following professional undergraduate work with a graduate program in painting, design, or sculpture. The faculty expanded to fifteen, and well known visiting professors were added to the staff during the summer terms, at which time the number of graduate students was greatly increased.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Interview, McClelland.

The Art Center School was founded in 1932 by a group of practicing artists and designers, and has established new high levels in modern art training, specializing in photography, industrial design, painting, and drawing. The policy of this school has been to train the ambitious student for professional art work.<sup>37</sup> Twelve faculty members and eight students comprised the school at its beginning.

As further aid to the art life of Los Angeles, the Foundation of Western Art was established in 1933 by Mr. Max Wieczorek for the purpose of maintaining selective exhibitions of work by outstanding western artists whose efforts have contributed to the cultural advancement of California and the Southwest over a period of time. The main objective of the gallery, aside from its exhibition features, has been to discover and encourage new talents in the arts. Western crafts and the graphic arts have been promoted at the Foundation of Western Art, and occasional one-man and small, selected group exhibitions to emphasize certain advanced phases in the development of western art have been featured.<sup>38</sup>

In 1933 the Museum Patrons' Association was reorganized as the Los Angeles Art Association. Under the new policy

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Marjorie F. Adams, counselor for Art Center School, December 3, 1943.

<sup>38</sup> Pamphlet, Foundation of Western Art, 1941-1942.

the association sponsored an All-California Art Exhibit at the Biltmore Salon, May 15 to June 15, 1934, which was well patronized by Los Angeles art lovers.<sup>39</sup> Later in the same year, October 5, to November 5, the association presented paintings from the Louvre, an exhibition of eleven canvases lent by the French government to the Los Angeles Art Association. This art treat was exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art.<sup>40</sup> During this period the museum boasted of a high point in its attendance record; in 1932, during the short time while the Olympic Games were in progress, 1,240,000 people visited the loan exhibition of international art featured by the museum.

Book circulation for the art and music department at the Los Angeles Public Library for 1931-1932 indicated a gain of 13 per cent over the previous year. Art courses in the city secondary schools showed increase since 1933, for then all high school students were required to take courses in the appreciation of art and music.<sup>41</sup> Mr. Dalzell Hatfield moved his gallery to the Ambassador Hotel in 1933.

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<sup>39</sup> Pamphlet, All-California Art Exhibit, 1934.

<sup>40</sup> Pamphlet, Paintings from the Louvre, Los Angeles Museum, 1934.

<sup>41</sup> Frederick P. Keppel and R. L. Duffus, The Arts in American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1933), p. 51.

G. 1935-1940. Private collectors had been assembling art masterpieces for some time in Los Angeles and by this period there were several noteworthy private collections. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Edward G. Robinson had an outstanding collection of the nineteenth and early twentieth century modern paintings; Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Arensberg had collected modern paintings and sculpture as well as the beginnings of a Pre-Columbian sculpture collection which today is well recognized; Dr. and Mrs. L. M. Maitland had assembled a group of contemporary French and modern American paintings.<sup>42</sup> The Paul Rodman Maybury private collection of Italian and Dutch Old Masters was presented as a gift to the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art in 1939. When the Los Angeles Art Association presented its Loan Exhibit of International Art at the Town House, October to December, 1937, most of the canvases, sculpture pieces, and miniatures were loaned by private owners as well as by galleries and museums of southern California. This was definite proof of the growth of art life in Los Angeles and of the wealth of the private art collections.

By 1935 the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art had more than twenty galleries and 62,000 square feet of floor space devoted to permanent and changing

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<sup>42</sup> Interview, Hatfield.

exhibitions of art objects. In 1910 exhibits were changed monthly; twenty-five years later the number of changing exhibits had increased 200 per cent. Art displays have ranged in size and importance from the small one-man show to great international expositions of contemporary painting that in importance, scope, and content have constituted these exhibitions of the first magnitude.<sup>43</sup> Yearly attendance for 1938 was 839,307.

The University of California at Los Angeles introduced some graduate work in 1939. No longer in the College of Education, at this time the art department was reorganized as the Department of Art in the College of Applied Arts. This allowed more students to enroll in art courses; by 1943 they were given the choice of majoring in art appreciation and history, drawing and painting, commercial art, industrial design, or costume and interior decoration.<sup>44</sup>

A new building for the college of Architecture and Fine Arts at The University of Southern California was completed in 1939, the gift of Mrs. May Ormerod Harris. This provided lecture and seminar rooms, studios for painting, sculpture, and design, laboratories for ceramics, metal working, industrial design, and a well equipped library. Con-

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<sup>43</sup> Pamphlet, Museum Milestones, 1910-1935.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Sooy.



nected with this unit is the Fine Arts Gallery, the building and its collections presented to the university by Mrs. Walter Harrison Fisher. The gallery includes three well appointed exhibition halls, two of which house Mrs. Fisher's collection of paintings. Loan exhibits of local artists, group showings, and a few one-man shows are featured here. The new site of the college buildings opposite the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art, in addition to the advantages of the Fisher Gallery, gives increased opportunity for art training as well as a stimulus to the public for further understanding of the arts.

H. 1940-1943. Figures can best tell the story of the progress of art in Los Angeles from 1900 to 1943. Increase in enrollment is shown by all the art schools of the city; some of this increase is due to the enlarging population of the city, but most of it represents intensified interest in the fine arts. Since the outbreak of World War II, attendance has dropped from one third to one half because of concentration on the war effort and enlistment in the services.

The University of California at Los Angeles, beginning in 1912 with thirty art majors, records a 900 per cent gain in students enrolled as art majors. This does not include the many students who are enrolled in art as an

elective or minor subject.<sup>45</sup>

Enrollment for art majors has increased over 1000 per cent since 1927 at The University of Southern California; students working for the B. F. A. degree in professional art fields equaled in number those registered in the cultural major toward the A. B. degree by the early 1940's. Not including extension division courses, 1113 registrations were recorded in art courses during the academic year of 1942-1943; this was several hundred fewer than before the outbreak of the war. One third of these registrations are students who are not art majors, and who either elect art courses or who enroll in art appreciation, following the university requirement of either art or music appreciation for all A. B. candidates. Fine arts courses increasingly lend themselves to cooperation with related departments, the most recent field being that of occupational therapy. There is ample studio equipment for professional work in the branches of industrial and interior design, crafts stressing ceramics and metal, and in painting and sculpture.<sup>46</sup>

Otis Art Institute, starting in 1918 with forty-five students, had gained 1000 per cent in attendance by 1942. The war has taken great numbers of the students, but by the

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<sup>45</sup> Interview, Sooy.

<sup>46</sup> Interview, McClelland.

summer of 1943 enrollment again is increasing.<sup>47</sup> In 1921 the Chouinard Institute had but twenty-five pupils; within four years it moved to larger quarters, and by 1942 its students had increased 2000 per cent in numbers.<sup>48</sup> Present enrollment of 500 students compared to the beginning enrollment of eight is reported by the Art Center School.<sup>49</sup>

In the Los Angeles City Schools there was one teacher of art in a secondary school in 1900; there was but one high school. By 1943 there are thirty-two junior high schools, forty-five high schools, all with specialized art departments, and 220 secondary art teachers, all graduates of art training institutions.<sup>50</sup> The Los Angeles City College was started in 1929, with two faculty members in the art department; by 1943 the faculty had increased to six, and 300 students were enrolled in art courses. The war has decreased this number by about one half.

There were 930 visitors at the opening of the north and south wings of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art on March 9, 1913; by July 30, 1932, 30,122 people viewed the museum exhibits in one day; this was while

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<sup>47</sup> Interview, Shrader.

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Chouinard.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Adams.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Lewis.

the Olympic Games were in progress.<sup>51</sup> During 1917 the number of visitors for the year was 238,575; in 1942 the record was 410,333. Attendance at the Biltmore Art Salon has increased approximately 500 per cent since it was founded in 1924.<sup>52</sup> The Stendahl Art Gallery, started in 1913, reports a gain of 400 to 500 per cent in attendance; if the exhibit is one to attract unusual attention, 1500 may come to view it one day.<sup>53</sup> The Los Angeles Public Library recorded the book circulation in the music and art departments for 1923 as 62,158, a gain of 12 per cent over the previous year. By 1932 the circulation was 183,432, a gain of 13 per cent over 1931. Use of the library facilities decreased because of the war in 1942; 160,780 books were circulated, a loss of 21 per cent over the year before.<sup>54</sup>

Such institutions as the motion picture industries and commercial firms in Los Angeles hiring artists, designers, or research people in the fields of art have been omitted, as the scope of their influence extends outside of the areas concentrated on in this study. They serve to

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<sup>51</sup> Pamphlet, Museum Milestones, 1910-1935.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with A. S. Cowie, owner of Biltmore Art Salon, September 19, 1942.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with E. L. Stendahl, owner of Stendahl Art Gallery, September 19, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Caldwell.

attract artists and art students to the city, however, and help to account for the numbers working in professional-training institutions.

Twenty small galleries, salesrooms, and showrooms of art exist at the time of this writing. Women's clubs which are actively studying the arts, department stores which have cooperated with the Los Angeles City Schools in displaying student work from the school art departments, and home decoration salons in the large retail establishments show that the public is more aware of art than ever before. For obvious reasons of brevity the many libraries open to the public, serving special functions such as costume research, architectural, and industrial design research, have not been listed; nor have lists of public lectures been studied other than to note a consistent increase in number and kind as well as placement.

Articles concerning art in local publications have grown in interest and circulation; murals and public art projects during the period of Federal art sponsorship have drawn large numbers of persons newly awakened to the fields of art. With the period of depression, there was an upswing of art interest on the part of the general public; during the years of prosperity, before and after, the purchasing and sponsorship of art by social leaders was heightened. Decreases in the percentages of people interested in the

units studied were not great since December, 1941, and were not commensurate with the numbers of people and activities directed at that time to the war effort. This enables one to conclude that the professional and cultural aspects of art were solidly entrenched in the city.

## CHAPTER III

### PROFESSIONAL PUPPETRY IN LOS ANGELES

In order to show how puppetry has contributed to the art life of Los Angeles, the progress of art as shown through its many institutions was first reviewed from 1890-1943. During 1920 to date, puppetry in Los Angeles simultaneously developed and expanded. To be able to make any conclusion as to the interrelation of the two movements, it was necessary to study puppet activities in detail. This study was not exhaustive by any means. Puppeteers sometimes failed to report their work or had long periods of doing other things besides puppetry. When these groups disappeared, it was difficult to find clues of them. Many of the minor professional companies and school groups were not aware of the nation-wide puppet movement being carried on; some did not have other puppet activity brought to their attention, and their existence may have been known but to a few.<sup>1</sup> However, even the large number of puppet shows that have played in Los Angeles is sufficient to show that they have made an impact on the art life of the city.

Puppets were never so popular and numerous as in the

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Paul McPharlin, publications editor for the Puppeteers of America, February 22, 1942.

past twenty-five years. The revival of the puppet play in London and on the Continent in the early twentieth century spread to several cities of the United States, where groups of artists made the marionettes and produced their plays. During this revival, the most notable work in American puppets was done in Chicago under the direction of Maurice Brown and his wife, Ellen Van Volkenburg. She developed the art, carried her work from Chicago to New York, and across the continent to San Francisco and Seattle in 1918-1919. Here she founded puppet groups and worked with Nellie Cornish at the Cornish School of the Theatre. Ellen Van Volkenburg and Nellie Cornish were responsible for training the first group of professional puppeteers on the West Coast.<sup>2</sup>

#### I. PROFESSIONAL LOS ANGELES PUPPETEERS

Among the outstanding students trained in the art of puppetry at the Cornish School of the Theatre was Grace Barnes, one of the first professional puppeteers in Los Angeles. She toured with puppet shows on the Pacific Coast during 1914-1923. While traveling in the north, the company was known as the Cornish Puppeteers; later the name was

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Ellen Van Volkenburg, pioneer American puppeteer, August 3, 1942.



changed to the Grace Barnes Puppet Group. By 1924 Grace Barnes and her associates played at the Gamut Club in Los Angeles. A circus show, "Peter Rabbit," "Aladdin," and other acts were presented. Among the features of the shows were the beautiful puppets which Ellen Van Volkenburg had purchased in Europe; she allowed Miss Barnes to use them for her performances. During 1924-1925 the puppet group stayed in the city, giving shows, vaudeville acts, and playing interludes in motion pictures.<sup>3</sup>

Another leader who served Los Angeles by introducing to it the art of puppetry was Ellen Galpin, one of the first women to tour nationally with puppets. In 1923-1924 Miss Galpin was associated with the Los Angeles Playground Department; puppet plays were conducted at the different city playgrounds, and performances were changed monthly. The program was a part of the Municipal Theatre Program, under the Los Angeles Playground Department. When buildings which had housed some of the shows were condemned, a stage was built on a truck; by this method puppets and stage equipment were easily transported from one location to another.<sup>4</sup> The stage-on-a-truck proved to be most successful;

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Grace Barnes, pioneer professional puppeteer of the West Coast, January 20, 1942.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ellen Galpin, first to introduce professional puppets to Los Angeles playgrounds, February 7, 1942.

shows were given in auditoriums where available; otherwise the truck stage was utilized. The shows, assisted by members of the different playgrounds, were mainly a result of experimentation, perseverance, and hard work. Traditional plays, such as "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Hansel and Gretel," were rewritten and adapted to the puppet stage.

After living in Alaska during 1925-1926, Ellen Galpin returned to Los Angeles, bringing with her puppets dressed by the native Alaskans. They were so beautifully made and so authentic that they have been preserved in the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. Miss Galpin toured the United States in 1929-1931, presenting puppet shows based on folk stories. This tour was made at the height of the depression; yet it played to packed houses. Frances Arrington and Gladys Meredith were the assistants. So professional was the group about its work that a ballet scene was rehearsed for three weeks, eight hours a day, to bring it to desired perfection.<sup>5</sup>

E. Percival Wetzel has been a pioneer in professional puppetry in Los Angeles. His puppet workshop was opened in Hollywood in 1918; here he gave courses on the history of puppets, their construction, manipulation, and the designing of their costumes. Stages and settings were planned and

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Galpin.

built; puppet plays were written or adapted. Students interested in the art of string actors were able to develop an activity program centering about marionettes or to join a troupe. The workshop, called "El Club Titerero," had a number of puppet stages, unlimited equipment, and a large collection of puppets of various types to inspire those interested in the work.<sup>6</sup>

In 1935 the workshop was moved to Culver City, where the same type of work has been carried on to date. Naturally this has been a splendid means of acquainting the student of fine arts with the modern marionette; because of Mr. Wetzel's excellent professional standing, many teachers in the public schools have trained with him; they have in turn used the knowledge gained to advantage in the classroom, introducing the subject to several generations of school children.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to conducting teachers' courses in puppetry, Mr. Wetzel made puppets in 1931 for the "Mad Genius," starring John Barrymore. He presented shows at the theatres of Los Angeles and neighboring towns, organized troupes of players which toured all over California, and did all he

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<sup>6</sup> E. Percival Wetzel, El Club Titerero, Puppet Progress and Instruction, pamphlet.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with E. Percival Wetzel, pioneer Los Angeles puppeteer, December 16, 1942.

could to aid the cause of puppetry in Los Angeles. By 1943 his studio in Culver City is a veritable storehouse of puppet lore, with several puppet stages, innumerable puppets, and a completely equipped work shop to stimulate the student of the marionette. Most of the stages are portable and his puppets are in condition to perform at a moment's notice.

## II. OLVERA STREET PUPPET GROUPS

Olvera Street, in the old section of Los Angeles, has been reconstructed into a little street reminiscent of the early days when the metropolis was young. Puppet shows have been presented there most of the time since the street was opened as a tourist attraction in 1929.

A. The Yale Puppeteers started the tradition of puppets in Olvera Street. This group, headed by Harry Burnett and Forman Brown, performed at 27 Olvera Street for two years after the street was opened. Employing puppetry as a modern art medium, these talented young men first operated their Club Guignol at 6114 Glen Oak, in Hollywood; by the time they opened on Olvera Street in 1929, their reputation was established. Richard Brandon and Robert Bromley were added to the staff at the new location.

The Teatro Torito, as it was called, was described in one of the show bills as "Los Angeles' most unique and intimate theatre, presenting the 'Pageant of Los Angeles,' an

historical spectacle with 100 puppet actors, 2000 strings, a thirty-piece puppet orchestra, elaborate scenic and lighting effects, and music; instructive, educational, amusing, historical."<sup>8</sup> Private instruction in the construction of marionettes, guignols, puppet stages, and scenery was offered by the management. Due to the fact that Forman Brown and Harry Burnett had been students under Professor George P. Baker at Yale University and had spent six months in research in the European puppet theatres, they were well able to instruct others. Many teachers in Los Angeles began to use puppetry in the classroom, inspired by the leadership of the Yale Puppeteers.

In this venture, the Yale Puppeteers were attempting to make a commercial success out of a project that often had proved abortive. They also had the enormous disadvantage of being such a small group that the usual channels of paid publicity were closed to them. In their favor was the wide interest Olvera Street had attracted and the fact that they provided the only entertainment to be viewed therein.<sup>9</sup>

Before long the theatre became a popular rendezvous; many motion picture celebrities proved to be excellent patrons.

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<sup>8</sup> Program for the "Pageant of Los Angeles," presented by the Yale Puppeteers, at The Teatro Torito, Olvera Street, 1929.

<sup>9</sup> Forman Brown, Punch's Progress (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 185.

Portrait puppets of well known actresses added to the interest of the productions. One leading newspaper stated,

Puppets should have a definite and dignified place in our theatre. The Yale Puppeteers, now functioning on Olvera Street, and their contemporaries are doing their best to create such a niche in the hall of arts here. . . . These young gentlemen, interested in marionettes ever since their earliest days at the seat of learning whose name they retain, constitute the largest permanent repertory puppet show in America.<sup>10</sup>

One reason the Yale Puppeteers met with such success was that they attempted to present sophisticated entertainment for adults, rather than maintaining it on the juvenile level. Well known stories were adapted cleverly by Forman Brown to the puppet stage; his contemporarily sophisticated lines were a source of constant amusement and pleasure to the audience. "The Poetic Whale," "My Man Friday," "Julius Caesar," and "Mister Noah" were some of the shows presented.

After giving their shows in New York in 1932, the Yale Puppeteers returned to Olvera Street in 1933 to open with a repertory of musical comedies and novelties. At this time they were engaged to give puppet performances for the motion picture, "I Am Suzanne," starring Lillian Harvey.<sup>11</sup> Other tours of the United States followed; in 1939 they returned again to present "It's a Small World," a gay revue of

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<sup>10</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, May 10, 1931.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, op. cit., pp. 239-46.

twenty scenes employing life-like puppets of Mrs. Roosevelt, George Bernard Shaw, John L. Lewis, Helen Hayes, Mussolini, Hitler, and Emperor Hirohito.

In July, 1941, the Yale Puppeteers established the Turnabout Theatre of Hollywood. Richard Brandon was the business manager; Harry Burnett made the puppets and directed the performances; Forman Brown wrote all the material used in the theatre--puppet plays, sketches, and songs.<sup>12</sup> A combination of puppet and stage shows has drawn the crowds so that it is difficult to secure a reservation to the Turnabout Theatre. "My Man Friday," "The Pie-Eyed Piper," "Uncle Tom's Hebb'n," and "Mister Noah" are among the clever shows presented.

The Yale Puppeteers differed from all other puppet companies in their singleness of aim. Their ideal has been consistently to adapt the ancient art to the modern adult audience. Eschewing children's shows, they have evolved a type of entertainment that is unique in its appeal and that has put them in the ranks of top artistic puppeteers. Harry Burnett intends the group to remain in Los Angeles indefinitely; he believes the city is an excellent location for the group because here is found such a host of people interested

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<sup>12</sup> Turnabout, An Occasional Bulletin of Turnabout Theatre, Vol. II, No. 3, January, 1943.

in the puppet art.<sup>13</sup>

B. Monro Augur played in the Olvera Street theatre while the Yale Puppeteers were in the east during the summer of 1931. She was a sculptress and portrait painter who carved the puppet characters out of wood and designed the costumes and settings. She featured the "Pageant of the Founding of Los Angeles," which commemorated the 150th anniversary of the founding of Los Angeles on the site where it had its beginnings. It was an interesting, highly entertaining, dramatic puppet pageant. The show played for fourteen weeks and further established Olvera Street as a puppet center.

A few months later Monro Augur opened her Puppet Theatre at 6363 Sunset Boulevard. It was a theatre intimate in the true sense of the word, for it seated only one hundred fifty people. The audience was permitted to go back stage after the performances, when the puppets were shown at close range.<sup>14</sup>

C. The Olvera Puppeteers were next to carry on the puppet tradition at Olvera Street. This group proved to be the basis for other troupes which were to make puppet history

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Harry Burnett, director of the Turnabout Theatre, January 25, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> Interview, Wetzel.



for Los Angeles. When the Yale Puppeteers went east in 1931, Bob Bromley remained in Los Angeles and with Ray Smith, Nick Nelson, and Wayne Barlow, he organized the Olvera Puppeteers. By June, 1932, their shows were flourishing; their first offering, a musical revue, was an extremely decorative and colorful piece, with lyrics by Paul Gerard Smith and Leo Flanders. Dance numbers with chorines in filmy frocks vied for attention with satirical bits. Most interesting was the manner by which the pattern of the show followed closely that of a conventional musical revue. Emphasis was placed on costumes, effects, and music, rather than dialogue. Being pictorial rather than thoughtful, it was nevertheless charming.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to their work in Olvera Street, this group played for conventions, clubs, schools, and department stores. Later on, Wayne Barlow and Nick Nelson carried on the puppet tradition of the city in different troupes.

D. The Nikabob Puppeteers, headed by Bob Jones and Nick Nelson, established themselves in the Olvera Street theatre during 1934. Previously Nick Nelson had worked with the Olvera Puppeteers, and Bob Jones with his brother and sister had given very successful sophisticated marionette shows during the summer to enthusiastic audiences on Catalina

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<sup>15</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, June 16, 1932.

Island.<sup>16</sup> For the two years that the Nikabob Puppeteers operated at the picturesque center of Los Angeles, they presented performances for adult audiences rather than just for children. The shows were advertised as grown-up shows which children would also enjoy.

The puppets were constructed and manipulated on a highly professional plane; effort was made not to have the animation jerky; sometimes months would be spent in securing the perfect effect for which the puppeteers were striving.<sup>17</sup> One clever clown character danced so long and so well that he wore out several costumes. Comedies formed the bulk of the Nikabob performances; the puppets were kept in their most successful medium--funny, light, fast moving--and were perfectly synchronized with the accompanying music.

By 1937 the troupe had separated. Bob Jones gave sophisticated puppet performances at the Grauman's Chinese Theatre, the Ambassador Cocomanut Grove, and fulfilled several puppet contracts for the motion pictures, among them "Artists and Models" with Jack Benny, and "Pinocchio" with the Walt Disney Studio.

Nick Nelson and his mother, Nellie Nelson, have given

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Bob Jones, director for the Nikabob Puppeteers, March 25, 1943.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Jones.

performances at the children's section of Bullock's Department Store, Los Angeles, for eleven years. These charming shows for children are given under the name of the Olvera Puppeteers. They also perform at schools and clubs; many children have come to love the marionette through their work.<sup>18</sup>

E. The Blanding Sloan Puppet Club opened on Olvera Street in April, 1932; it was located at 530 Olvera Street, near the original location of the Yale Puppeteers. The club was upstairs in the building, reached by an outside stairway. Here Blanding Sloan, who had been associated as designer with Earl Carroll, presented his "Heavenly Discourse," "Rastus Plays Pirate," and Eugene O'Neill's "Emperor Jones." An opening was staged with five hundred invited guests to start the puppet club properly.

A portrait puppet of Clarence Muse, the negro singer, was a feature of the Blanding Sloan Puppet Club. This was a beautiful puppet; hours were spent in its construction and the perfection of its action; audiences loved it. This puppet could almost be made to smile, for one side of the face was carved to be sober, the other merry; by tricky lighting and clever manipulation the face would seem to change its

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Nick Nelson, director of the Olvera Puppeteers, May 19, 1943.

expression.<sup>19</sup>

Sloan's approach to the puppet was that of an artist; he carefully considered lighting effects, music, and mood; every detail was worked out with greatest care. His special contribution to the art of the puppet theatre was in establishing it more firmly as a medium for adult entertainment.<sup>20</sup> His presentation of the classics, "Macbeth" and "Emperor Jones," was among the most beautifully done puppet work on the Pacific Coast. Sloan knew that fantasy was the field for puppets; this explains why his "Heavenly Discourse" was so successful. He even created ultra-modern puppets out of wire and metal, such as were never before seen in Los Angeles. Remo Bufano, author of several books concerning puppets, believes that Blanding Sloan is one of the best producers of marionette shows in the country.<sup>21</sup>

F. The Walton and O'Rourke Company was the last group to bring puppet performances to Olvera Street, in 1936. These talented young men, Paul Walton and Carlyle O'Rourke, also made a contribution to puppetry in Los Angeles. Walton was a graduate of Otis Art Institute; he and O'Rourke

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Blanding Sloan, puppeteer of Los Angeles, April 14, 1943.

<sup>20</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, April 16, 1932.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Remo Bufano, author of several books concerning puppets, May 10, 1943.

presented their "Nite Club Puppets" in the Olvera puppet theatre. This demi-tasse revue was an effervescent miniature of musical nonsense, directed, styled, produced, and constructed by Walton and O'Rourke.

The producers sold the tickets to their patrons, ushered them to their seats, and then went backstage to manipulate the wooden actors.<sup>22</sup> They had a collection of thirty-five puppets, made by themselves over a period of two years. Behind the stage was established the workshop. Each puppet was hand carved from wood or molded from clay; these artists outfitted their actors with eyes that would roll expressively, eyebrows that twitched, and a mouth that could grin, smile, or leer. Each marionette actor required seventy-five to 200 hours for its construction.

### III. WPA PUPPETS

During the depression years the United States Government established theatre and art groups to furnish employment to many who needed work. Puppetry was a feature of this project established all over the United States. The movement greatly accelerated the growth of puppet knowledge over the country, furthered research in the field, introduced the work to many who had not previously known of it, and developed it

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<sup>22</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, May 19, 1936.

highly.

In Los Angeles, as elsewhere, this puppet interest was noted as a result of the WPA Theatre Project, 1932-1937. Artists were chosen to be leaders of these groups; consequently, the work was worth while and successful. Blanding Sloan, pioneer puppet-artist, was chosen to lead and organize the WPA Theatre Project, puppet division, for Los Angeles. Under his supervision were forty to seventy-five people. Their workshop was on Cole Avenue, between Beverly and Santa Monica Boulevards; in this large building the puppets were constructed and shows presented to the public.<sup>23</sup>

Because there were several Negro members of the puppet group, Blanding Sloan wished them to present something characteristic of their own race, an expression of their racial soul and background. As a result "Afrike" was written, the puppets constructed, and the performance presented to the public. "Don Quixote" was another project undertaken by this group; the horses in this show, as well as Don himself were beautifully constructed. Bob Larson and We Chang, who later did puppets for motion pictures, assisted Mr. Sloan in this production.

Music was written and recorded by the project members to accompany the shows. Sloan also developed the puppets,

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<sup>23</sup> Interview, Sloan.

script, and music for a "Genesis" play, a story of the beginnings of the world, from the Readers' Bible. This production was a work of art, with trick stage effects, beautiful lighting, and unusual puppet developments. Mr. Sloan left the project before this work was entirely completed.<sup>24</sup> Many of his plans were carried out by Ralph Chessie and Bob Bromley who succeeded Sloan as leaders for the puppet group.

Later the Theatre of the Magic Strings was established on Wilshire Boulevard, near Western Avenue, to present the WPA puppet shows. Ralph Chessie was one of the leaders at this time, along with Bob Bromley, formerly of the Yale Puppeteers. "Emperor Jones," "Captain Kidd," and "Petrouchka" were featured performances.

The WPA puppet theatre was successful in introducing puppets to people who previously had not been aware of the puppet revival movement; it broadened its scope and influence.<sup>25</sup> In New York the WPA puppet shows did much to increase theatre attendance. New uses for puppets in teaching laws of health and education were developed all over the United States; because artists were in charge of the projects, the WPA puppets attained new heights of artistry.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Sloan.

<sup>25</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, January 10, 1937.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, Sloan.

## IV. PASADENA PUPPETS INFLUENCING PUPPETS IN LOS ANGELES

Pasadena is so closely related geographically and culturally to Los Angeles that performances presented there have influenced the movement in Los Angeles. The Pasadena Community Playhouse has been the scene of many of these shows. In March, 1932, Mrs. Perry Dilley gave "Alice in Wonderland" and "Bobby Hans." The following year the same troupe presented "The Three Wishes" and "King of the Golden River" as a return engagement, according to programs for the show. The importance of these performances is that the puppets were of the hand puppet type, rather than the marionette type. String puppets were so common in Los Angeles and vicinity that these puppets made by Perry Dilley, puppet craftsman from San Francisco, were an innovation in puppetry for the south. Others had used this type of puppet, but the Dilley puppets were superior to those seen before because of the puppet heads which expressed so well the personality of the character portrayed. As a result, this type of puppet was subsequently used by some children-puppet groups.

The Children's Theatre of Pasadena was established to give children puppet shows on Saturday mornings in the recital hall of the Pasadena Community Playhouse. In 1932 the Franelli Players, headed by Frances Henry and Ellis Loxley, gave "Red Riding Hood" and a series of vaudeville acts dear



to the hearts of the miniature audience. These players presented a series of shows at the Pasadena location, introducing the art to many an enthusiastic child.<sup>27</sup>

Carolyn Woodhull of the Pasadena Junior College has done much to add to the artistic element of puppet production through her Pasadena Puppet Guild, giving such plays as "The Red Rose" and "Sleeping Beauty." The Beroju Puppets, at 1548 North Lake Avenue, presented extravaganzas in miniature; the puppets were artistically constructed and attracted sophisticated audiences. These Pasadena groups all added to the permanence and scope of the Los Angeles puppet movement.<sup>28</sup>

#### V. OTHER PROFESSIONAL LOS ANGELES PUPPETEERS

There are many other small puppet groups which have furthered the cause of the art. One of these puppeteers is Mildred Reed who with her sister, Gladys Wright, has given shows from 1922 to date. She received her early training with Grace Barnes; later the sisters formed their own group. Their contribution to puppetry in Los Angeles is the child-like simplicity of their shows which follow the

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<sup>27</sup> Interview, Wetzel.

<sup>28</sup> Loc. cit.

old folk-stories. Their equipment is simple enough so that it can be easily transported; they have performed before innumerable audiences. These artists feel that they have prolonged the life of our traditional fairy tales by presenting them through the medium of puppetry; they feel that it is an expression in which the children can participate themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Frances Arrington worked with Ellen Galpin for three years, 1928-1931; then she conducted her own puppet group until 1940. All work she accomplished has been on the professional level; performances have been given for schools, clubs, and parties. Most of Mrs. Arrington's shows were given in Los Angeles County. Children's stories and vaudeville numbers composed her repertoire; string marionettes were used. Mrs. Arrington feels that her contribution has been to give children a type of entertainment of artistic value suitable to their age. Music of merit has always been used, and Mrs. Arrington has tried to have the play as beautifully presented as possible. She feels that puppetry is an art, that well done it is an art that includes sculpturing, painting, music, dancing, and stage design.<sup>30</sup>

The Punchinello Puppet Players, or Hestwood Players,

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Mildred Reed, April 28, 1943.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Frances Arrington, May 8, 1943.

opened a season of marionette plays in July, 1931, at 1743 North New Hampshire. The manipulators who managed so amazingly the little people were Lois Hunt, Helen Viscano, Leon Wilson, and Keith and William Este. Helen Wilson directed; Robert and Harold Hestwood were also a part of the directing staff.<sup>31</sup> Their program featured "Gawpy," an adventure on Pelican Isle, in four acts. Thirty-six inch string puppets were used; scenery was most effective. Although this troupe was active for only a short time, it added another chapter to the puppet tradition in Los Angeles.

During 1931 the Hurdy Gurdy Marionette group presented shows at the Children's Book Store on Figueroa Street, and the Hurdy Gurdy Studio in Whittier. Directing the group were Romenia Loxley, Mary Frances Stout, and Lola B. Hoffman. Each of these women has been very active with puppets in southern California. They presented plays of fantasy; an additional feature was a class conducted in the art of making and manipulating puppets. Miss Hoffman had previously used puppets in the classroom with small Mexican children at an east Los Angeles school; she also maintained a beautifully equipped puppet studio in Whittier.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> From a program for the "Gawpy" show.

<sup>32</sup> E. Percival Wetzel, "History of Puppets in Los Angeles," Theatre Journal, August, 1936, p. 8.

The Franelli Puppet Players performed during 1932; leading the group were Frances Henry, Mary Frances Stout, and Ellis Loxley. Their work was planned for the child audience; shows were given during the Christmas holidays at stores, clubs, and at the Pasadena Community Playhouse, where a series of shows was presented. "Little Red Riding Hood," "Peter Rabbit," and "Rumpel Stilts-Ken" comprised the repertoire, according to the program for the show.

During this period the Albright Marionettes were active; five people comprised this group. Their main contribution was the fact that in addition to string puppets they were one of the few organizations to use hand puppets. Traditional Punch characters such as Punch, his Wife, the Devil, and the Doctor were fashioned as hand puppets.<sup>33</sup>

Musical fare for the sophisticated was the specialty of Joseph Finley and Gordon Grave's Hollywood Marionette Theatre. This was maintained on North LaBrea Avenue, where the decorative scheme suggested a stylized Arabian Night's dream. There was a fascinating verve in the manner by which these young puppeteers manipulated their creations, which were of the same calibre and towering proportions as the famous Italian Piccoli puppets. This was the only American marionette company endorsed by the world-famous Teatro dei

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<sup>33</sup> Interview, Wetzel

Piccoli of Rome.<sup>34</sup>

A well known professional troupe, headed by Isittorio Podrecca, manager of "Il Teatro dei Piccoli," was brought to Los Angeles in October, 1933, by L. E. Behymer to play at the United Artists Theatre. The notion that puppet shows might be exclusively for children was surely exploited by these life-like marionettes who embraced their performances with humor, satire, and sophistication.<sup>35</sup> In the hands of the manipulators, the actors moved with incredible dexterity. The ballet, the bull fight, and a final concert number were especially featured. This performance allowed Los Angeles puppet lovers to view the art of a well established professional group which had its origin in Rome over twenty years ago.

Tony Sarg's famous marionettes arrived in Los Angeles in April, 1935, to give a long remembered rendition of "Faust" at the Philharmonic Auditorium. The puppets were beautifully carved and dressed after the designs created by Sarg.<sup>36</sup> The presentation of the old opera "Faust, the Wicked Magician" was said to be the most elaborate puppet show Sarg had offered during his career of sixteen years as

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<sup>34</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, December 21, 1934.

<sup>35</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, October 11, 1933.

<sup>36</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, April 12, 1935.

a puppet showman. All the standard characters in the opera were represented; special electrically transcribed music adapted to large auditoriums accompanied the three acts and nine scenes of the performance. This gave Los Angeles an insight into the significant work accomplished by one of the most active puppeteers of America, and established new standards for local professional puppeteers.

Another world famous professional group came to Los Angeles in 1940, the Salici family; it had performed all over the world with its famous marionettes for six generations. Previous to the shows in Los Angeles, the Salici Puppets had played at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco. Puppets used were twenty-four inches taller than the ordinary ones, and required a stage eighteen feet deep. Many miracles on the stage were presented by these agile actors; the shows at the El Capitan Theatre were enjoyed by old and young alike.<sup>37</sup> These presentations helped raise the standards for Los Angeles puppet groups.

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<sup>37</sup> Program of the performance at the El Capitan Theatre, December 8, 1940.

## CHAPTER IV

### PUPPETRY IN LOS ANGELES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ART

#### I. PUPPETS IN LOS ANGELES PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PLAYGROUNDS, MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRIES, COMMERICAL FIELDS, AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Professional puppet groups in Los Angeles have done much to further the cause of puppetry in the city; in addition, schools and the commercial fields have acquainted many with the possibilities of marionette activity. Consequently, a survey of puppets in these organizations was carried on through interviews with the leaders of these groups, and information gleaned from newspaper files and available publications.

Puppets in Los Angeles public schools. Schools in Los Angeles have long been aware of the educational values of the puppet, and many teachers have used this classroom activity with success. It has appeared that any effort to introduce puppet shows widely and to develop them to the highest standards of art must, like most propaganda, begin with the child. A genuine love of puppets so often has taken root in childhood; without this passion there would be few puppeteers worthy of the name.<sup>1</sup> In this way it can

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<sup>1</sup> Bessie A. Ficklen, A Handbook of First Puppets (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1935), p. 206.

be seen why it has been thought so essential to begin the puppet movement in childhood. The importance of the public school contribution to the art of puppetry can thus be seen and evaluated.

Beginning with the simplest puppets in the kindergarten and lower elementary schools, it is possible to proceed to animated types, such as the hand-puppet or marionette, as the child develops. Given a bolt of cotton batting, a few yards of cheese cloth, a skein of yarn, and a little paint, the teacher has the makings of a troupe of little actors that can be as amusing and entertaining as an honest-to-goodness stage folk.<sup>2</sup>

The preparation and presentation of the puppets involves a number of arts and crafts; drawing and designing the puppet, selection of suitable materials and colors, sewing the costume, modeling or carving the head, body, and limbs, woodwork, painting, dramatic appreciation, and the speaking of verse and prose. There seems to be no end to the subjects involved, and these are not taught as lessons to be learned or as a duty to be done. The value of the information acquired is immediately realized by being put to use in what the child feels to be an exciting game.

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<sup>2</sup> Nina Efimova, Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theatre (Detroit: Puppetry Imprints, 1935), p. 15.



Puppetry at once trains the eye, the hand, the voice, and the mind.<sup>3</sup>

Teachers of puppetry in Los Angeles have learned that in order to teach the subject successfully courses should be taken to train them in the field, and that research in many books available on puppets is of great assistance. A simple portable stage which can be exchanged by the different rooms in the school has proved successful. Puppetry in the classroom costs the teacher many hours of extra time, but in the end the results are well worth the added effort. Nothing inspires pupils more than a keen interest on the part of the teacher in the activity being pursued.<sup>4</sup>

Jessie Miles Lewis, director of art for elementary and secondary schools in Los Angeles, feels that in addition to the art principles used in puppetry, the social values in the classroom are brought into play, such as cooperation, and subordination of personal desires to the good of the group.<sup>5</sup> Paul McPharlin warns against the didactic show in the school which presents a lesson more or less badly sugar-

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<sup>3</sup> Cyril W. Beaumont, Puppets and the Puppet Stage (New York: Studio Publications, Incorporated, 1938), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> James H. Butler, "A Point of View in Puppetry," Western Speech, 6:18-19, January, 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Jessie Miles Lewis, director of art for Los Angeles City Schools, January 27, 1942.

coated with puppetry. He believes the puppet can be used in an educational sense, either to give the child experience in the technique of designing, making and playing it, or to avail him of aesthetic satisfaction in an art. This is surely more fundamental and important than having a puppet teach children how to brush their teeth. According to McPharlin, a puppet show should be a professional matter, as well done as possible.<sup>6</sup> Los Angeles city teachers have kept puppetry on this desirable professional basis.

Elementary schools have used puppets with success. Puppets satisfy the innate love of the child for make believe. A world of realistic imagery in miniature arouses an ecstatic delight which, utilized by an understanding and skillful teacher, can be a gateway for important educational development.<sup>7</sup> Helen Odin took advantage of this opportunity when she taught puppetry in the second grade at Lockwood School, a training school for the University of California at Los Angeles, from 1925 to 1930. During the following ten years she planned her units of work to culminate in puppet shows at the Burnside School, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth

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<sup>6</sup> Paul McPharlin, "Aesthetic of the Puppet Revival," (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan, 1938), pp. 102-03.

<sup>7</sup> D. P. Harding, Glove Puppetry for Young Children (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), p. 8.

grades. Originally trained with Harry Burnett, Miss Odin was very successful with puppets in the elementary school and encouraged many others to follow in her footsteps. Plays were based on social studies units; pupils worked in groups to further the class project.<sup>8</sup> While Helen Odin taught puppetry at the Lockwood School, Lola B. Hoffman was accomplishing excellent results with Mexican pupils at the elementary level on the east side of town. The classroom was so planned that the pupils used moveable tables for work and adaptability, and a puppet stage was permanently built at one end of the classroom.<sup>9</sup> Many professional troupes have performed in the elementary schools, arousing interest in this type of activity.

Puppetry has been taught extensively in the elementary schools of Los Angeles from 1930-43. During this period the marionette type of puppet has been used. Meta Footman, principal of Rosemont Elementary School, says that although the marionette was used at first, it was later found that the time required to bring this type to the presentation stage was so long that it was preferable to use

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Helen Odin, teacher of puppetry in Los Angeles elementary schools, January 27, 1943.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Wetzel.

hand puppets.<sup>10</sup> These required less time for construction. Marionettes were used more in schools on the secondary level. Esther Stodel used marionettes in her sixth grade classes, correlating them with social studies, at the Willowbrook School, 1935-1939.<sup>11</sup>

Because correlation between different subjects has been so strongly urged in late years, puppetry has been particularly adaptable to the classroom. In the early 1930's teachers in the elementary schools and members of the curriculum division of the County Superintendent's office made an exploration of activities which might be an exceptionally good educational experience for children.<sup>12</sup> One group elected to work in the field of aesthetics; puppetry was selected because it offered genuine educational value. These upper-grade elementary teachers carried on exploratory work with puppets, under the leadership of Grace Adams, Curriculum Field Assistant in the Los Angeles County Schools. Many introduced marionettes into their classrooms as a result of this research, and their findings were of great

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Meta Footman, principal of Rosemont School, Los Angeles, May 21, 1943.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Esther Stodel, teacher of puppetry at Willowbrook School, Los Angeles, May 26, 1943.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Lonsdale, Puppetry in the Upper Grades of the Elementary Schools (Techniques of Instruction Series No. 211), p. 2.

assistance to those who knew only little concerning the art.

Junior high schools have found that puppetry fits well into their educational program. Professor Manley's Punch and Judy show was presented to an enthusiastic audience at John Burroughs Junior High School in 1933. Hand puppets were used. The traditional Punch characters were the performers.<sup>13</sup>

Florence Bevington used puppets in her eighth grade class at Park School, Alhambra, but her influence has helped to promote the cause of puppets in education in Los Angeles. Using marionettes, she collaborated with the English and art departments in Park School, Alhambra, from 1933-1943, to present shows on a professional level. Originally trained by E. Percival Wetzel, Miss Bevington adapted well known fairy tales to the puppet stage. Because the art department cooperated in these productions, the shows were of genuine artistic value.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Los Angeles Times,<sup>15</sup> interest in puppet shows was aroused by the work of the art department of the public schools. In 1934 an exhibit of puppets made

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, Wetzel.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Florence Bevington, teacher of puppetry, Park School, Alhambra, April 10, 1943.

<sup>15</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, February 1, 1934.

by school children was assembled at the Sentous Center, under the direction of Mary Gearhart, then head of the art department for the city schools of Los Angeles.

From 1939-1943 Ida Shapiro, head of the art department at Foshay Junior High School and Helen Luitjens at Emerson Junior High School have taught puppetry to enthusiastic students of the art. Miss Shapiro's students write their own plays; hand puppets are used in the seventh grade, marionettes in the eighth and ninth.<sup>16</sup> Marionettes are also used by Mrs. Luitjens in adaptations of popular folk plays in the eight grade.

High schools have used puppets for some time in their art program. The dramatic stimulus, the variety of the activity, the art experience, and the less formal teaching method have made the puppetry courses most popular.<sup>17</sup> Ellen Galpin taught puppetry at Lincoln High School before 1925; Shakespeare's "Tempest" was one outstanding performance.<sup>18</sup> Grace Barnes, a pioneer Los Angeles puppeteer, was presenting shows in high schools in the city as early as 1928. Later when she taught at Beverly Hills High School,

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Ida Shapiro, head of art department, Foshay Junior High School, May 19, 1943.

<sup>17</sup> Felix Payant, editor, A Book of Puppetry (Columbus: Design Publishing Company, 1936), p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, Galpin.

she collaborated with the art, music, and stage craft departments to give her excellent shows. The marionettes were beautifully made, and because of Miss Barnes' years of experience with puppets the shows were of professional calibre.<sup>19</sup>

Virginia Church, who received her original training with the Yale Puppeteers, conducted classes in the art at Franklin High School, 1935-1940. Her course was an art elective; students wrote or adapted their own plays; marionettes were ingeniously constructed; as a rule eleventh and twelfth year students took part in this activity. Because of the war the class has been temporarily discontinued. Later Mrs. Church plans to resume her puppet work and to publish a book of plays written in the classes she conducted. Several professional puppeteers have emerged from her courses.<sup>20</sup>

Puppets in Los Angeles playgrounds. Puppets were introduced to Los Angeles playgrounds as early as 1923 by Ellen Galpin. She organized puppet groups at the different city playgrounds and conducted the plays there, changing the bill each month. When auditoriums were unavailable, a portable stage was set upon the back of a truck; by this

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<sup>19</sup> Interview, Barnes.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Virginia Church, teacher of English and art, Franklin High School, May 28, 1943.

method great numbers were introduced to the joys of the puppet show. Mis Galpin had previous stage experience; consequently, her shows had a professional character.<sup>21</sup>

Margaret Shull, director of the Barnsdall Playground from 1927 to 1941, was inspired to work with puppets through the influence of Miss Galpin. By research, correspondence with Tony Sarg, and training with Harry Burnett, Miss Shull developed one of the finest puppet groups at a city playground. Working with those who lived in the vicinity of the playground, the director kept the little workshop busy at all times. This was especially true during the depression years when people needed something to occupy their time if they were unable to secure employment. Margaret Shull's enthusiasm for her work was so infectious that several of her pupils later established their own independent puppet groups.<sup>22</sup>

Puppets were an important part of the playground program at the Le Conte playground in 1930.<sup>23</sup> Marionette shows were an outstanding activity at all other school playgrounds throughout the city. Children performed all parts

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, Galpin.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Margaret Shull, director of Barnsdall Playground, 1927-1941, February 20, 1943.

<sup>23</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, August 7, 1930.



of the work, from construction of the little actors to the final stage presentation. Each child was allowed to choose his character and work it out according to his individual conception. The playground department provided courses of instruction for the directors of the puppet activity; consequently, the traditions they established were of a high order.

Isabelle Curtis, director of the playground at Palms School, has made puppetry an outstanding activity from 1938-1943. Children work in small groups to make their marionettes; they then build a dramatic story to correspond with the characters they have created.<sup>24</sup> These puppet groups all over the city have served to acquaint the public with the art of puppetry and to maintain its standards at a high level.

Los Angeles puppets in motion pictures. As time goes on, puppet audiences are growing because marionettes are being used so extensively in the motion pictures. So promising has this field become that even though it is in its beginning stages, many feel that herein lies the future of the puppet. E. Percival Wetzel constructed the marionettes for one of the first major motion pictures to use puppets, "The Mad Genius," starring John Barrymore. These exquisitely

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Isabelle Curtis, director of Palms School Playground, May 27, 1943.

fashioned puppets, made in 1931, were a real feature of the show. Mr. Wetzel duplicated the puppet ballet scene and the marionette show which constituted the repertoire of John Barrymore's troupe.<sup>25</sup> Making the characters suitable for the screen was a real problem, for usually a puppet audience is from twenty to two hundred yards from the stage.

The Yale Puppeteers returned to Los Angeles from New York in 1933 to make approximately two hundred marionettes which were featured in a sequence of Jesse L. Lasky's production, "I Am Suzanne."<sup>26</sup> Here the marionettes performed on the screen with human actors; they proved to be so agile and apparently conversed in such liquid tones that at first spectators found it difficult to believe the little creatures were not alive.<sup>27</sup> Rowland V. Lee, director for "I Am Suzanne," believed that humans and marionettes were very closely related, but that the puppets had one advantage over human actors--they could never change with age, as a human actor, and they could always be depended upon, for they were always in character and constantly in the proper mood.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> News item, Los Angeles Evening Express, November 28, 1931.

<sup>26</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, December 17, 1933.

<sup>27</sup> News item, Los Angeles Examiner, July 1, 1934.

<sup>28</sup> News item, Los Angeles Times, December 5, 1933.

By 1935 the Russian film, "The New Gulliver," appeared; here a fourteen year old boy and three thousand puppets were the performers. None of the satire was lost in the transmission to puppetry and the inclusion of modern mechanical devices. The puppets had no strings and were a forerunner of the present stop-motion picture now being developed. The artists made shot after shot, each showing a gradual change in the position and phase of the object.<sup>29</sup> Hand puppets were used in the film "Holiday," co-starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant.

Wa Chang has had much to do with puppets in motion pictures in Los Angeles. He first worked as an instructor in the puppet division of the WPA in the 1930's; later he made movie shorts employing marionettes with Bob Jones and Bob Bromley. By 1943 he is working with George Pal, doing research, designing, construction, and photography for the George Pal Productions. A background for this work was furnished when Wa Chang and Bob Jones made sets for Walt Disney's "Pinocchio."<sup>30</sup> "Puppetoons" are similar to cartoons, except that instead of using flat drawings, small animated wooden puppets and actual miniature sets are used.<sup>31</sup> Not

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<sup>29</sup> "Russia Films Gulliver with Puppets," Screen Magazine, November 2, 1935, pp. 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Wa Chang, constructor of puppets for George Pal Puppetoons, May 5, 1943.

<sup>31</sup> Marcus Keva, "Making Puppetoons," International Photographer, August, 1942, pp. 3-4.

controlled by strings, this version of the puppet has friction joints so it can stand alone, and it can maintain whatever pose in which it is placed. "The New Gulliver" used a similar technique, though not so well developed.

Charles Cristadora, also with George Pal's organization, makes puppets of unusual beauty for the films. Bill King collaborates with Wa Chang in constructing the puppet characters. His outlook is that of a true artist, and he has done much to further the cause of the puppet in the motion picture.<sup>32</sup>

George Pal is the only person in the world making puppet pictures in technicolor for regular theatrical release. By 1943 the pictures have passed the novelty stage. They have been booked in some six thousand theatres in this country and more in Great Britain, Russia, and Latin America.<sup>33</sup> Like the motion picture, the Puppatoons have proved that they are here to stay. Audience response shows that they have a place in the hearts of the theatre-going public.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Bill King, puppet maker for George Pal Puppatoons, May 6, 1943.

<sup>33</sup> Frank J. Taylor, "Pal of the Puppets," Colliers', iii:61, January 16, 1943.

<sup>34</sup> Marcus Keva, "Making Puppatoons," International Photographer, 14:4, August, 1942.

Blanding Sloan, pioneer puppeteer, believes that the puppets' future is in the motion picture. Too often the actor wishes to be himself, rather than the character he is chosen to portray. Instead, an artist can design and create a puppet which is the character needed to take the part; here there is no personality to interfere with the actor needed. Because Mr. Sloan believes the marionette to be limited in its scope, he feels the stop motion puppet will carry on the puppet tradition in the future. The field is yet undeveloped; new wonderful possibilities can still be achieved with puppets in motion pictures.<sup>35</sup>

Commercial puppets. Employment of puppets in advertising is a comparative innovation, yet its commercial value has already been proved. The explanation is to be found in the dramatized sales approach and the ability of the marionette to tell a story entertainingly. Efficiency is due to the fact that the puppet does not get out of order, is inexpensive to produce, is easily transported, and compels attention.<sup>36</sup>

Many Los Angeles business houses, realizing the unusual appeal of puppets, have provided free puppet shows to

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<sup>35</sup> Interview, Sloan.

<sup>36</sup> Cyril W. Beaumont, Puppets and the Puppet Stage (New York: Studio Publications, Incorporated, 1938), p. 31.

draw customers to their stores. The May Company Department Store has often used marionette performances, especially at the holiday season. A Punch and Judy show was given there in 1935, directed by Vera Von Pilat. The Albright Marionettes performed at the Broadway Department Store in 1932, presenting Tom Mix and his horse, Tony. A few hand puppets were used here in addition to the marionettes. Helen Haiman Joseph's famous troupe was at Bullock's Department Store in 1931. She used the guignols, or hand puppets, which were loved by all children present.<sup>37</sup> For the past ten years the Olvera Puppeteers, headed by Nick Nelson, have given Saturday matinees at Bullock's Department Store to children who eagerly have awaited the opening of the show doors.<sup>38</sup>

The J. W. Robinson Department Store has provided better equipment than most commercial houses for its puppet shows from 1934-1942. Wayne Barlow and Leslie O'Pace, directors for the performances, are employed yearly by Robinson's. New shows for children are given about every four months; often these are in cooperation with the Walt Disney studio.<sup>39</sup> The puppeteers are given a large expense account,

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<sup>37</sup> Interview, Wetzel.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Nelson.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Leslie O'Pace, assistant director of J. W. Robinson puppet shows, December 6, 1941.

a well equipped work room, and a five thousand dollar revolving stage, completely fitted with the latest sound and light equipment. Because the directors are given opportunity to experiment as they desire, these young men have developed new techniques of construction, design, and manipulation; they have given the commercial show a high professional standing.<sup>40</sup>

Elizabeth Arden Puppets performed at I. Magnin's Stores in Hollywood and Pasadena in 1934. Fred Franchi was employed to advertise Golden State Products. Bob Jones and Jack Shafton appeared in local night clubs, 1937-1943. The Richfield Oil Company used puppets to advertise its products at the automobile show in Los Angeles in 1935.

So long as commercial puppet productions are dramatically sound and artistically presented, with the sales message delicately conveyed, it seems that no objection can be taken to the employment of puppets as an advertising medium. But if the position is reversed and the marionettes are to be associated in the public mind with advertising of the most vulgar and blatant kind, then the whole art of puppetry will suffer and must inevitably decline for lack of public support and interest.<sup>41</sup> Up to the present time com-

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Wayne Barlow, director of J. W. Robinson puppet shows, December 10, 1941.

<sup>41</sup> Cyril W. Beaumont, Puppets and the Puppet Stage (New York: Studio Publications, Incorporated, 1938), p. 32.

mercial puppets have maintained professional standards and their contribution has helped rather than deterred the puppet cause.

Puppets in organizations. Several organizations in Los Angeles have sponsored puppet groups. Their influence has not been large; yet it has introduced the art to many and acquainted them with its possibilities. The First Congregational Church of Los Angeles included expertly directed puppet courses in its night school courses from 1935-1941. Nellie Wiley, head of the drama department for the school, reports that the classes were very worth while and well attended.<sup>42</sup> In its Vacation Bible School, the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles sponsored a puppet class. This was correlated with the unit of work being carried on at the school. A culminating program, featuring the puppets, was given at the close of the course. The project was launched in the summer of 1942 and will continue in the 1943 session, according to W. H. Grant, minister of education for the First Baptist Church.<sup>43</sup>

Girl Scout groups have frequently used puppets as

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Nellie Wiley, head of drama department, First Congregational Church, May 21, 1943.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with W. H. Grant, minister of education, First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, May 19, 1943.



their club project; the same has been true in children's summer camps. The Los Angeles Junior League shows featured puppet versions of well known fairy tales at the Bullocks-Wilshire store in 1930. Children's departments at public libraries have presented puppet shows to increase their circulation. Several displays of puppets made by children have also been assembled at the Junior Section of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art.

## II. RELATION OF PUPPETRY TO ART AND THE POSSIBLE FUTURE OF PUPPETRY

Relation of puppetry to art. Because this study was an attempt to determine whether puppetry had contributed to the art life of Los Angeles, a survey was made as to the relationship between them; if they were interrelated, the development of either field might readily aid the other. There is ample literature available, as well as opinion of leaders in both of these arts in the city to substantiate the thesis that puppetry and art are closely bound together.

Innumerable artists of the past few decades have esteemed the marionette an excellent medium of serious dramatic expression, possessing a poetic style and a conventionalized impersonal symbolism. Ernst Ehlert wrote:

The object of every work of art . . . is the attainment of the greatest possible emotional effect with the simplest possible means. What makes a work of art a

real delight is that it does not fully express but merely suggests and excites the imagination of the observer to help in the presentation of the reality. That is why a puppet play is not only more amusing but more artistic than a real one. . . . Puppets, moreover have style. . . . The manager of a puppet show has a free hand in the fashioning of such a company as best carries out his creative impulse. But with real actors it is impossible to make them other than they are, to subordinate them to the manager's will.<sup>44</sup>

The puppets are an art--a fine art--with ancient precedent in addition; we are today turning them into an applied art. They have served religious and patriotic purposes from early times, as exemplified by the Wayang hero plays of Java, for instance. Today, however, puppets are being used in education, for occupational therapy, in advertising, in the cinema, and for television broadcasts.<sup>45</sup>

Puppetry offers the artist an unbounded field, rich in originality, varying from grotesque caricature to the most delicate beauty. Puppets are so interwoven with history, legend, and music that the artist pauses, considering which will first engage his skill.<sup>46</sup> Blanding Sloan believes that the most definite proof of the interrelation of art and puppetry is the fact that it is only the real artist

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<sup>44</sup> Helen Haiman Joseph, A Book of Marionettes (New York: The Viking Press, 1929), p. 206.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>46</sup> E. Percival Wetzel, "Puppet Theatres, a Classroom Activity," Art and Education, 9:8, June, 1931.

who is able to make a successful marionette; puppets made by artists of background and trained ability are the ones to carry on the puppet tradition.<sup>47</sup> The efforts of the untrained artist puppeteer are usually realistic in intent; only the artist attempts fantasy in puppets. The untrained showman, however, may communicate some of the seriousness of this attitude despite the shortcomings of his workmanship.<sup>48</sup>

S. MacDonald Wright, technical consultant for the art phase of the war service program for the WPA, states that puppetry is a part of the fine arts, just as painting, sculpture, and designing are a part of it. In early times people sculptured cult figures; later they progressed from static figures to puppetry, animating what they had created. Mr. Wright believes that one of the purposes of art is to teach just as the Gothic cathedrals taught those who could not read during the Middle Ages; puppets also teach; therefore, they are a part of art.<sup>49</sup>

E. Percival Wetzel, pioneer puppeteer of Los Angeles, believes that the puppets themselves are only a small part

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<sup>47</sup> Interview, Sloan.

<sup>48</sup> Paul McPharlin, "Aesthetic of the Puppet Revival," (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan, 1938), p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with S. McDonald Wright, technical consultant for the art phase of the War Service program for the WPA, November 28, 1942.

of the puppet performance. The social values, knowledge of art, sculpture, photography, and drama are as important as the show itself. An interest in puppetry on the part of the real artist will open up vistas into the field of art history, sculpture, costume design, and drama. He believes that puppetry definitely is related to art life and that a professional puppeteer is a true artist as well.<sup>50</sup>

Margaret Shull, director of puppet plays at Barnsdall Playground, feels that puppetry and art are related in that each compliments the other.<sup>51</sup> Florence Bevington, successful puppeteer in Alhambra, has proof of the interdependence of art and puppetry; all her shows have been staged as a collaboration between the puppet class and the art department.<sup>52</sup> Frances Arrington, who worked with puppets from 1928-1940, states that puppetry is art. Well done, it involves all the other arts--sculpture, painting, music, dancing, and stage design.<sup>53</sup>

Opinion as to the relation of art and puppetry was expressed by Maurice Block, curator of the art collection at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. He is

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<sup>50</sup> Interview, Wetzel.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, Shull.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Bevington.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Francis Arrington, May 8, 1943.

convinced that art, the theatre, and puppetry are all parts of the same whole. Stating that the field of puppets is somewhat limited, he feels they are very closely connected with the theatre.<sup>54</sup> Robert O. Shrad, curator of rare books and administrator of exhibits, shared this same opinion.<sup>55</sup>

The possible future of puppetry. The determination of whether or not puppetry has advanced art life or contributed to it in Los Angeles can be aided if some prophesy of the future of the puppet is offered. If there is no future for puppetry, it cannot be considered an important influence; if an assurance of greater development to come is found, then one could be more sure of its importance as a contributing factor to the art life of Los Angeles. Consequently, a study was conducted to determine what the future held in store for the puppet.

One of the strangest things about the puppet is that it never seems to die; if it is forgotten in one part of the world, it re-appears later somewhere else.<sup>56</sup> M. Charles

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Maurice Block, curator of the art collection at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, April 10, 1943.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Robert O. Shrad, curator of rare books and administrator of exhibits, at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, April 10, 1943.

<sup>56</sup> R. B. Invevarity, A Manual of Puppetry (Portland, Oregon: Binfords and Mort, Publishers, 1938), p. 5.

Magnin, distinguished historian of the marionette, proclaims his unalterable faith in Polichinelle, the comic puppet:

Polichinelle will laugh and sing as long as the world contains vice, follies, and things to ridicule. You see very well that Polichinelle is not near his death. Polichinelle is immortal!<sup>57</sup>

Many artists regard the marionette as a medium of serious dramatic expression and believe that therein lies his future. Gordon Craig, who has done much to revive interest in puppets, goes so far as to say that the actor must go, and his place must be taken by the marionette. Craig feels that the stage is today devoid of genuine dramatic value, filled with players exhibiting their own personalities, rather than than character they are chosen to portray.<sup>58</sup> George Bernard Shaw has even suggested that the Academy of Dramatic Art obtain a marionette performance to teach the students that a very important part of the art of acting consists of not acting, but allowing the imagination of the spectator to do the greater part of the work.<sup>59</sup>

Authorities agree that the future for the puppet depends on the artistry of the showmen. Paul McPharlin says that the present fashion for puppetry may be extended in-

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<sup>57</sup> Helen Haiman Joseph, A Book of Marionettes (New York: The Viking Press, 1929), p. 205.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

definitely if the artistic puppeteer will use it skillfully and provide plays that are interesting to his audience, youthful or adult.<sup>60</sup>

Bill King, puppet maker for George Pal Puppets, states that the reputation of the puppet is often undermined by untrained showmen; if craftsmen of artistic ability operate the little actors, the future has unlimited possibilities.<sup>61</sup> Ivo Puhonny finds that the thoughtless puppet operator plunges the art of puppetry downward. The public does not charge the clumsiness of the puppets to the inadequacy of the worker, but imagines it to be an intrinsic part of the puppet performance. This gives little stimulation to the serious artist who is putting all his skill and knowledge into his production.<sup>62</sup> Frances Arrington, who has performed in Los Angeles for years, says she has seen many shows given that are cheap and crude, played in an amateur manner,<sup>63</sup> but all seem to agree that the future lies in having only the experienced artistic puppeteer present public performances.

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<sup>60</sup> Paul McPharlin, "Aesthetic of the Puppet Revival," (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan, 1938), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, King.

<sup>62</sup> Ivo Puhonny, "Physignomy of the Marionette," Theatre Arts Monthly, 12:510, July, 1928.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Frances Arrington, May 8, 1943.

At present the puppet has the acclaim of popular novelty. Audiences are being trained for it, both among children and adults. The fashion for puppets, like all fashions, is of the moment; however, its period of sway may be extended if the artist puppeteer, in whose hands is the fate of the movement, will find material to interest his audience. The puppeteer cannot continue to rely on the well-worn fairy tale for children's shows; airplanes and public enemies mean more to them than the bookish dragons and wizards. Adults cannot continue to be satisfied with the resuscitation of literary classics for puppets. They wish to see rather a commentary on their own world, or lampoons of political unpopulars, which the puppet does only too well.<sup>64</sup> Following these plans will assure the puppet's future.

Professional puppeteers should not try to make puppets act like human beings, if they wish their future to hold promise of success to come. No puppet can be made to walk like a man; he always has a peculiar gait. Puppets can be artistically sound by keeping them always in their own medium, never trying to make them seem like real people. Their great charm lies in their imperfection; the puppet

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<sup>64</sup> Paul McPharlin, op. cit., pp. 106-07.



should only suggest, and not attempt to be obvious.<sup>65</sup> This development of the real character of the puppet which is being furthered by the artistic puppeteer today means a real future for the marionette.

Organizations of professional puppeteers have helped to solidify and guarantee the future for the puppet. In 1936 puppeteers met in Detroit for their first American conference. Many saw outstanding performances, heard talks on various phases of their work, and dispersed with a new awareness of solidarity in their craft.<sup>66</sup> The Puppeteers of America, a society to advance the puppet cause, was established; representatives from Los Angeles attended. Paul McPharlin has worked tirelessly in this organization which will see that the future for professional puppetry is assured.

Richard Odlin, who worked with Ellen Van Volkenburg in her Chicago Little Theatre puppet group, believes that at present there is no vigor and imagination shown in the field of puppetry. He feels that most of the groups have standards of work that are sloppy, and the tendency is to cover up gross inadequacy with the attitude that puppets are "cute

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<sup>65</sup> R. B. Inverarity, A Manual of Puppetry (Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort, Publishers, 1938), p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Paul McPharlin, "A Quarter-Century of American Puppetry," Theatre Arts, 25:535-36, July, 1941.

little things." Instead of thinking in terms of what the marionette can do, they imitate human beings and suffer from comparison. It is excusable when puppets are used as caricatures, but even then the result is sterile and self-conscious. The blame lies not with the marionette, but rather with the type of people who exploit them and who are not equipped in any way to do so. If the marionette can be revived with vision, skill, and craftsmanship, there will be an important place for it.<sup>67</sup>

Harry Burnett, director of the Turnabout Theatre, believes that the puppet has a splendid future in Los Angeles, due to the fact that the motion picture industry is located in the city and so many artists have taken up residence in Los Angeles.<sup>68</sup>

The hope for the future seems to be in the work of experimenters who have never been satisfied with mediocre puppet performances and who employ only professional standards. Considering all the possibilities for the future of puppets in drama, art, the motion picture, education, advertising, and radio, there seems to be truth in the statement of Nina Efimova, "The puppet is as old as mankind, but its history is just beginning."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Letter from Richard Odlin, January 24, 1943.

<sup>68</sup> Interview, Burnett.

<sup>69</sup> Cyril W. Beaumont, Puppets and the Puppet Stage (New York: Studio Publications, Incorporated, 1938), p. 32.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

Puppetry is a branch of the fine arts, and as such can be considered a part of the art life of Los Angeles. While this study was based on the growth and appreciation of painting as a selected branch of the arts, it was recognized that the field of art embraced such branches as drama, sculpture, music, the dance, stage, and costume design. In considering the contribution of puppetry to the art life of Los Angeles, it was essential to determine how puppetry had added to the fine arts. The acceleration of puppet interest in the city took place during 1920-1943, and it was at this same time that art assumed its rightful place of importance in the cultural life of Los Angeles.

Figures best tell the story of the progress of art in Los Angeles during the period of such remarkable progress in the art of puppetry. Increase in enrollment was shown by all art schools and institutions of Los Angeles of 900-2000 per cent; some of this growth was due to the enlarging population of the city, but most of it represented intensified interest in the fine arts.

Los Angeles City Schools made large gains in art education during this period; in 1922 there were no junior high schools, and no specialized art departments below high

school level. By 1943 there were thirty-two junior high schools and forty-five high schools with two hundred twenty secondary art teachers, all graduates of art training institutions.

The Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art recorded about 250,000 yearly visitors in 1920; by 1929 two new units were added to the building and 1,300,000 visitors attended the exhibits during 1930. By 1943 there were four major museums and twenty smaller art galleries in the city. The leading commercial art galleries have reported a gain of 400 to 500 per cent in attendance since they were founded in the 1920's. The art department at the Los Angeles Public Library moved into larger quarters in the new building in 1926. Book circulation for the music and art department during 1923 was 62,158; by 1932 this had increased to 182,432.

Collections of works of art in painting and sculpture were assembled in Los Angeles by private individuals, adding to the wealth of the city's art life, and showing how popular interest in art had grown. Art was studied by women's clubs, and the motion picture industries, commercial firms, and war industries hired large numbers of artists.

This remarkable advance in the awareness of art and training in all branches of art aided the cause of puppetry, for it trained many artists to realize the possibilities of

the puppet show and equipped them professionally as well as artistically to present puppet performances of artistic value. In the production of a puppet show, it was necessary to utilize many branches of the fine arts, such as sculpture, drama, the dance, music, and stage and costume design.

There were only three leaders to introduce professional puppetry to the city in the early 1920's, when the puppetry movement started. These included Grace Barnes, who toured with her professional group on the West Coast and stationed the troupe in Los Angeles; Ellen Galpin, who introduced puppets to the Los Angeles City Playground; and E. Percival Wetzel, who gave puppet instruction in his workshop and organized small groups of professional puppeteers. By the latter part of the decade 1920-1930, Grace Barnes and Ellen Galpin began to teach artistic puppetry in two of the Los Angeles high schools.

The puppet movement in the city, combined with the art forces, grew as the Yale Puppeteers established a puppet tradition for the city at Olvera Street in 1930. Here, at their Teatro Torito, they presented sophisticated puppet shows for adult audiences. Following their success, high standards of professional puppetry were continued by a number of puppet companies employing artistic standards at Olvera Street, 1930-1936. These included the Monro Augur group, Olvera Puppeteers, Nikabob Puppeteers, Blanding

Sloan Puppet Club, and Walton and O'Rourke Company. They produced shows of artistic quality with careful manipulation and beautifully designed sets and costumes. Several of these troupes offered courses in puppet instruction to school teachers who in turn began to use the art extensively in the Los Angeles City Schools, from the lower grades through the secondary level. This spread the knowledge of puppetry and increased the puppet audiences.

During 1932-1937 the WPA Theatre Project in Los Angeles featured a puppet group, under the leadership of such artistic puppeteers as Blanding Sloan, Ralph Chessie, and Bob Bromley. This undertaking accelerated the growth of puppet knowledge, introduced the art to many who had not previously known of it, and developed it highly.

Puppets were introduced to the Los Angeles Playgrounds as early as 1923 by Ellen Galpin, but after 1930 they became a stronger force in the playground program than ever before. Most of these puppet leaders were trained by professional puppeteers; consequently, their work was on a high level; by this means adults as well as children began to work with marionettes.

Puppet groups flourished in Pasadena during the 1930's, presenting well planned performances for the child audience. At this time at least ten smaller independent individuals and groups were fostering the cause of puppetry

in addition to the professional groups. These entertained at clubs, small puppet theatres, and schools. Possibilities of using puppets in the commercial fields were developed at this time; several large department stores in the city presented marionette and guignol shows regularly. A number of internationally known professional puppet companies performed in Los Angeles, 1933-1940, thereby raising the goals of local troupes.

Between 1931 and 1943 the cause of the puppet was furthered by its use in motion pictures, either in combination with human actors, or in films using puppets entirely. "The Mad Genius," "I Am Suzanne," and "The New Gulliver" were among the more outstanding films to use puppets. George Pal's "Puppetoons," using puppets entirely, tremendously increased the puppet audience and served to show what could be accomplished by the artistic puppet showman in Los Angeles.

The Yale Puppeteers established their Turnabout Theatre in Hollywood, 1939 to date; the performances at this theatre have been synonymous with professional puppetry of a high calibre all over the United States. Some of their repertoire has been published in book form<sup>1</sup> and has become

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<sup>1</sup> Forman Brown, The Pie Eyed Piper and Other Impertinent Plays for Puppets (New York: Greenberg, Publishers, 1933).

a part of the tradition of the puppet world. The earliest plays written by the Yale Puppeteers have been greeted with enthusiasm for almost fifteen years. Puppets at present are entering the motion picture industries; authorities agree that this field has unlimited possibilities for assuring a brilliant future for the puppet.

Figures were unavailable to show the percentage gain in numbers of people working with puppets in 1943 as compared with 1920. However, considering that in 1920 puppetry on the professional level was just being introduced into the city, and that by 1943 puppets were used in the schools, playgrounds, puppet theatres, commercial firms, and motion picture industries, some idea of its gain in influence could be determined. Through these various agencies and at least a dozen professional groups, a real puppet tradition for Los Angeles was established.

Art and puppetry have grown simultaneously in Los Angeles, each contributing to the success of the other, each complementing the other. The spread of art in the city has aided the cause of puppetry; likewise puppetry has made an important contribution to the art life of Los Angeles. This kinship between the two movements was established by determining how puppetry employed principles of art. Naturally, all divisions of fine art endeavor were involved in this consideration. It has been proved that only a real artist



is a successful puppeteer. Drama, music, sculpture, design, and painting have all been a part of the well directed puppet show. Principles of art were necessary to the planning of the puppet costumes, carving his face and body, and painting the puppet actor. Rules of drama were observed in the speeches for the marionette which were so essential in establishing his character; this was particularly important, for the person who spoke the lines was in concealment and the illusion that the puppet was speaking had to be created. No puppet show was complete without accompanying music to set the proper spirit and mood for the production. Dance principles were utilized in many local shows featuring musical revues. Artistry was necessary to plan the scenery, lights, and properties for a marionette play. To create a successful puppet was a fine art in itself, employing rules of sculpture, wood carving, painting, and costume design. To manipulate a marionette required fingers as dexterous and expert as a harpist, and necessitated as much practice. Often a trip to the museum to study the paintings of the Old Masters or research in the art books at the public library was necessary to settle a technical point concerning a puppet costume or play. Here art and puppetry overlapped.

As the puppeteer became more deeply interested in his profession, he learned how essential it was that he be

well versed in the arts of sculpture, drama, art history, and costume design, in addition to being a clever puppet manipulator. Likewise, as the artist became trained in his chosen field of the fine arts, he could use puppetry as a means of expressing his art ability and often desired to lend his talents to puppet production. Thus it was established that art and puppetry were definitely related, that each was the part of a whole, and that in itself puppetry was as much a part of the growth of the arts in Los Angeles as any other branch from the creative viewpoint.

As has been shown, while the art life of Los Angeles was growing from 1920-1943, puppetry was taking its rightful place as one of the fine arts of the city. While people were becoming more aware of art through the schools, museums, libraries, galleries, and all forms of art endeavor, more fine art students were trained to appreciate the artistic possibilities of the puppet show and to contribute materially to its successful production. Likewise, because the fine arts were such an integral part of puppetry, as the art advanced, further stability and growth were accorded to many branches of the fine arts. Considering the close relation of the two movements, it was therefore concluded that puppetry had made an important contribution to the art life of Los Angeles.

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## APPENDIX

Birmingham, Michigan  
22 February 1942

Dear Mrs. Luitjens,

Your full description of the plan of your thesis gives me a much better idea of its scope than I had at first, and will enable me to help you more specifically.

. . . . .

I sent my Puppetry Bulletin because it gives you titles of works which you can consult for documentation. In my "Repertory of Marionette Plays" is a list of the majority of American puppeteers you will be concerned with between 1915 and 1929, with details of their productions. In my yearbook, "Puppetry," you will find this list continued year by year to the present. Thus you can trace, for instance, the travels of the Yale Puppeteers from the start. My lists are not, of course, exhaustive. Puppeteers sometimes fail to report their work, or have long periods of doing other things besides puppetry. When they disappear, it's pretty difficult to find clues of them. Many of the minor professional companies and school groups in Los Angeles may never have heard that a national society of puppeteers, a puppet yearbook, and a nation-wide puppet movement, all of which should be part of their consciousness, are much alive. Most of them haven't lasted long enough to learn such things. And of course, their existence has been known only to a few even in their own town. This is your research problem.

But much has already been recorded, hither and yon, so that you will not have to depend altogether on word of mouth. And once you have merely mentioned all the puppet shows that have played in Los Angeles, you will have to say no more to prove that they have had an impact on Los Angeles life.

You have probably read Joseph, Magnin, Maindron, von Boehn, and Beaumont, to give you the historic background of puppetry in Europe. My own thesis, "Esthetic of the Puppet Revival" (unpublished, may be borrowed from library of Wayne University, Detroit) traces the new movement in puppetry as a sophisticated rather than a folk art, both in



Europe and America. My dissertation, "Puppets in American Life, 1524-1915," (unpublished, library of University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) gives the broad outlines of American activity before the revival. This field is still almost completely unknown to public and puppeteer alike.

.....

I have not answered all your questions at length, but I think I've given you leads to keep [you] busy reading for some time.

Let me know how you get along.

Sincerely yours,

:

[Signed] Paul McPharlin

107 Waverly Place  
New York, N. Y.  
May 10, 1943

Dear Mrs. Luitjens:

I wish I could answer all your questions in full and thereby start you off on your thesis, but I am afraid that the very best I can do is to suggest that you take yourself to the library and delve into the files of marionette and puppet literature. For example look through the various numbers of "Theatre Arts" monthly. That magazine has done a great deal on puppets in this country over a period of years. You should find material about some of my most outstanding productions in it as well as any number of others. You might also look through a publication called "Mask" by Gordon Craig.

.....

Another source may be the New York newspapers which have, from time to time, written very extensively about one troupe of puppeteers or another. There is also a magazine called "Puppetry" published by Paul McPharlin of Birmingham Mich. In that you will find as complete a survey of puppetry in this country as you will anywhere. . . .

You mention Blanding Sloan. He has probably given you a great deal of data. Incidentally Blanding Sloan is one of the best producers of marionette shows in the country. . . .

Let me wish you lots of luck in your labor and I am sure you will find more material than you could possibly use.

Sincerely yours,

[Signed] Remo Bufano

2009 Beck Street  
Artesia, California  
May 8, 1943

Dear Mrs. Luitjens,

.....  
I worked with puppets from 1928 until 1940. I have done nothing with them since then. . . . I worked with the Ellen Galpin Marionettes, a professional troupe, for three years. Later I had my own puppet company. All my work has been professional. Most of it has been shows for school groups. I have given some plays before clubs, for private parties, and for entertainments for children in groups not at school.

Aside from the work with the Ellen Galpin Marionettes, which I presume you know all about, my work has been principally in Los Angeles County with a few shows in Fellows and Selma in central California. Childrens stories --mostly fairy tales from foreign lands were the type. In addition I had the usual vaudeville numbers--tap dancer, xylophone player, dancers, ice skater, etc.

.....  
I believe that puppetry is an art. Well done, it is an art that includes and combines all the other arts: sculpturing, in the modeling of the dolls; painting, in the painting of the scenery and in the features of the puppets; music, in the songs sung and the background music used; dancing, in the dances of the marionettes; even architecture in the design for sets. . . .

. . . Good luck to you with your thesis.

Sincerely,

[Signed] Frances Arrington

Commonwealth Hotel  
Kansas City, Mo.  
January 24, 1943

Dear Mrs. Luitjens,

Thank you for your nice letter. It has been so long since I had anything to do with marionettes that I feel that what I say will have little value--however, I have some very definite ideas on the subject.

In the first place, I felt that there is no vigor and no imagination shown in America in the field of puppetry. Most of the groups--mind you this is only my personal opinion, are delectante groups and their attitude toward marionettes is "precious"--the standards of work are sloppy and the tendency is to cover up gross inadequacy with an "aren't they cunning little things" point of view that to me is infuriating.

Instead of thinking in terms of what the marionette can do--they imitate human beings and suffer from comparison. It is excusable when puppets are used as caricatures --but even then the result . . . is sterile and self-conscious. . . . The blame lies not with the marionette but rather with the type of people who exploit them--and who are not equipped in any way to do so.

.....

There might have been a place in the entertainment world for marionettes, the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of the people who exploit them. They have been for the most part unfit to do so--and have killed any chance of making the puppet anything more than an amateurish little toy--amusing for a moment--but of no significance. . . .

As to the possible contribution to the art life of a city--there is a place for a children's theatre--but the standard for children's entertainment should be just as high as the standard for adults--and if the standard of the people who produce these shows is not first class, then the performances will not be.

.....

I'm afraid I sound a bit "sour" on the subject, but

I have seen so many crimes committed by eager puppet lovers that I can't even forgive their exuberance. They are the marionette's worst enemy--and will forever doom them to the amateurish place they now hold.

After all you wouldn't pick up a violin, take a couple of whacks at it, and then "perform" in Carnegie Hall. The marionette is as sensitive an instrument, and very few people can play it. . . .

The only great puppets aside from Miss Van Volkenburg's "Midsummer" production, at least in the European world, are Richard Teschner's figureens in Wein--they defy description and from every point of view are superb. His imagination is amazing, his manipulation and sense of theatre beyond anything I have ever seen. Here and here alone the marionette assumes stature and true greatness. Sad to say, there is only one Teschner, and sadder still, no one knows what the war has done to him.

Of course in Java, Bali, Burma, and all the East, the shadow show still has vigor and a cultural standard. If one may mention it, in Japan the marionette is a highly developed art form and exceeds in skill and scope anything in the field, aside from Teschner. But whereas Teschner speaks in a language that universal, music and movement, the puppets of Osaka are highly nationalistic and therefore haven't the same scope.

. . . . .

My last work with puppets was in a revue in London in 1931--I concentrated on "caricatures" and particularly on rhythm and manipulation, the only imagination being in the manner of presentation devised by Miss Van Volkenburg. Then I did a big production of "Alice in Wonderland," taken exactly from the text and drawings, and presented it with students of Dartington Hall in England. The show was in preparation and rehearsal for over a year, and the result was worth while. . . .

Perhaps if the marionette were left buried for a time and then resurrected with vision and skill and craftsmanship, there might be a really important place for it. . . .

Sincerely,

[Signed] Richard Odlin

3116 Via LaSilva  
Palos Verdes Estates, Calif.  
April 28, 1943.

Dear Mrs. Luitjens,

.....

Both my sister and I worked with puppetry from 1222 until now. First we worked in schools, then in clubs as amateurs, later professionally for schools, Bullocks Party Shop and clubs. The very first puppets of our own were from 1½" to 2" tall. They were made of matches, buttons and some dress weights. It was a circus with toe dancers, barkers, dogs, clowns, & a monkey that worked on a trapeze.

In our shows from that time on, we did fairy tales, feeling that children need simple, short true versions of the old folk tales. We continued showing these to schools, children's parties, clubs, and book stores.

.....

Because of our background in child education, my sister and I feel we have kept our stories within the span of interest of children because of their simplicity, action rather than talk, and short time for performance. None of our shows for children are longer than twenty minutes.

.....

Our stage is constructed of hollow pipes that slide into each other, hung with red velour; it has a four foot opening. We keep the opening of the stage and the puppets in proportion so that the illusion is one of space and life size puppets. Only two of us do the work, set up the stage, speak the parts, manipulate, sing play the piano etc. In our show of Pinafore we two sing for both choruses and all the soloists. The music is made with a music box or a toy piano. . . . We feel it is more in keeping with tiny puppets than a real piano or victrola. It has a very tinkly lovely sound. . . .

.....

Puppetry has contributed to the growth of art life in Los Angeles. It has prolonged the life of our traditional fairy tales by presenting them in a new wonderful medium. It gives children a new scope for their imagination,

animals alive, talking etc. It is not the same as the flat pictures of the movies and is an expression they can participate in themselves.

We are both in the Los Angeles City Schools, we have helped groups of children to create their own puppets, plays & productions.

If I can help you further, do not hesitate to call me or write.

Sincerely,

[Signed] Mildred Reed