



## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT FAMOUS PUPPET DEATH SCENES:

“one of the best shows of the year... not to be missed.”

The Globe & Mail

“brilliant, sublime and often hilarious... sheer visual poetry... engages an audience like few productions I've ever seen....”

Monday Magazine, Victoria

“...original...hilarious...breathtaking inventiveness...”

The Georgia Straight

“one of the wildest, wackiest, most inventive puppet shows you're ever likely to see.”

The Toronto Star

“visually stunning and endlessly entertaining.”

The L.A. Times

“Exquisite... boundless invention... virtuosity...”

Variety Magazine

“hilarious, beautiful and macabre... simply remarkable... too intense to allow its audience to catch its breath, too beautiful for them to want to.”

Fast-Forward Magazine, Calgary

“dramatically engaging and visually stunning.”

The Boston Globe

“no end of highlights... a great black comedy.”

The Calgary Herald

“...you simply have to catch this show... truly inspired.”

The Regina Leader-Post

## ABOUT THE OLD TROUT PUPPET WORKSHOP:

“Mind-blowing originality... [The Troutsl are boldly reshaping puppet theatre into sophisticated adult entertainment.” – Fast-Forward

“Nothing short of genius.”  
The Ottawa Citizen

“Pure joy. Great, great theatre.”  
Alvina Ruprecht, CBC Radio



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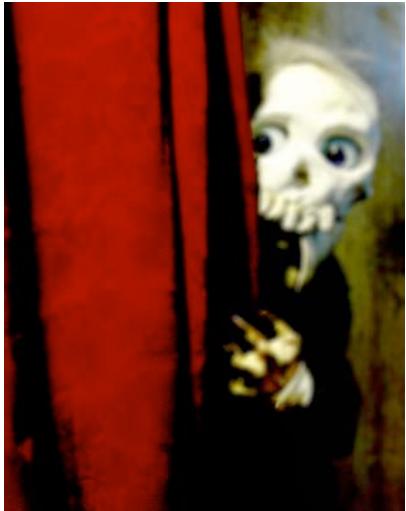
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## FAMOUS PUPPET DEATH SCENES

The Old Trout promise to cure your fear of death; no more anxiety about difficult choices, no more dreading birthdays, no more desperate pleas for immortality through fame, art, or progeny. Through a collection of famous scenes culled from the absolute best puppet shows in history, including Edward's Last Prance, from *The Ballad of Edward Grue* by Samuel Groanswallow, DungBeetle's Lament, from *Flap Flap Flap* by Lizzie Fook, *Why I Am So Sad*, by Sally, and the unforgettable Bipsy's Mistake, from *Bipsy and Mumu Go to the Zoo* by Fun Freddy, the Old Trout will deconstruct your traumatized psyche and reconstruct you so that death means nothing to you anymore. In a way, we promise ever-lasting life. Through a puppet show. That's right.

Famous Puppet Death Scenes is touring the world, changing lives. Don't miss it.



## SYNOPSIS

The show is a collection of short pieces which represent the collected death scenes from a (fictional) canon of famous puppet shows through history; each one is presented as if it is a scene from a real show, radically expurgated, so that we are seeing only the last moment of a main or sub-character. The broader plot of the shows from which they have been derived is left up to the imagination of the audience; the effect, we hope, is like viewing a painting in a gallery, finding an old photograph, or being parachuted into a four hour long opera, just at the climactic bit.

Sample scenes include: an existential brutalization in a German children's television show; a tragic murder in a Black Forest fairy tale; a Neo-realist play about the

Irish working class; a Science Fiction investigation into immortality; a funeral ritual from some forgotten Japanese island; a segment from a seven hour long Norwegian production in which nothing happens ("theatre of the insufferable"); and many others.

The Master of Ceremonies, who has collected these scenes, is himself a puppet. He has foraged through junk stores and garage sales to gather the actual puppets used by the original performers, and aims for historical accuracy and geographical breadth. He himself has been a puppet for many years, and senses his impending mortality; he has honed his craft, hoping to someday join the ranks of the hallowed. He will attempt the Greatest Death Scene Ever Performed at the end of the show. As it turns out, Death Himself lurks in the wings, and our host will not complete the scene he hopes will earn him immortality.

## PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Famous Puppet Death Scenes premiered in January 2006 at the PuSh International Theatre Festival in Vancouver. Since then, it's been performed around 150 times to more than 25,000 people.

It's played to sold-out houses across the country and into the United States: Toronto (twice), Victoria (twice), Edmonton (twice), Vancouver (twice), Calgary (twice), Regina, the Banff Centre, Whistler, Kelowna, Vernon, Boston, Providence, Columbus, Costa Mesa; the Festival TransAmériques in Montréal, the Magnetic North Theatre Festival in Ottawa, the ManiGanSes International Puppet Festival, and the Under the Radar Festival at the Public Theatre in New York City.

And now: Europe. It's off to Maubeuge, Creteil, and the NEXT Festival in Lille this winter. And Seville, Granada and Málaga next May.



## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HOST

These death scenes are taken from the greatest puppet shows in history – not merely the most famous, or the most popular in their time (for indeed true art is often far ahead of its own era) – but indeed the greatest, according to the judgment of one who has dedicated his entire life to the art of the puppet death scene: myself. My credentials in this regard are simply the choices I have made: judge for yourselves whether I have chosen rightly.



The scenes have been re-created as faithfully as possible to the originals. In many cases, of course, there is no published script to work from; instead I have had to rely on folk-memory, second- and third-hand accounts, traditional Italian field-hollers, court records, and in some cases my own surmises. Nevertheless, I believe they closely approximate the real shows. Of course, a show is

not an immutable thing; it changes with every audience, and these scenes were intended for very different audiences in very different places and times. To that extent, they must be viewed with a certain philosophical imagination.

I have gone to considerable effort to assemble the original puppets; some had been lost for many years, and many had long ago considered themselves retired from public life. Nevertheless, I scoured the world. For years I plundered mouldering crates, shadowed attics and ship bilges, trudged through craggy bleakness and jungle swelter, interviewed crazed witnesses, followed hastily scribbled maps, battled competitors, and spent a fortune thrice over, to pluck these noble ancients from the dried fingers of their grizzled makers, to summon them to the stage once more for you.

Allow me to anticipate some potential criticism. There are those who hold 'Dungbeetle's Lament' by Thingwald Singh as the apotheosis of the art of the puppet death scene, for example. I excite controversy no doubt in saying that it is shallow and manipulative, and deserves no place in the eternal canon. Some scenes, I admit, were impossible to reproduce – surely the climactic finale of Düsseldorf's 'Colossal Jesus' should take its place here amongst the hallowed, but the theatre is only so large and the practice of human sacrifice has largely gone out of fashion. If anybody has any clues as to the whereabouts of Schnebel and Jorge, the beloved puppets of Jan Schnink, please let me know. I would dearly love to include 'The Last Days of Don Santiago' in future productions, but I have been unable to track down their whereabouts. Schnink himself has been of no assistance, due to his current circumstances, which need no elaboration in these pages.

I have laboured long on this production; one might say it is the culmination of my life's work. The pieces are carefully selected so that they produce a cumulative effect that I believe sheds light upon the very nature of our art, and of our souls. When watching the show, I hope you will keep the following parable in mind: the well-known Eastern parable of the Elephant in the Bag.



According to the story, certain monks encounter an elephant in a bag. It's never been made clear to me why there is an elephant in a bag, or why it is not obvious to the monks that it's an elephant in a bag (perhaps they are blind?), but the monks endeavour to determine the bag's contents by sticking their hands into it and feeling about. One grasps the tail, and says it must be a paintbrush in the bag. Another grasps the trunk, and says it is a tree. We here assemble different graspings into a different bag with a different beast inside. That beast is ourselves, and it is we who do the grasping; what we find in our hands, and what we call it, is up to us.

Thank you for coming. It means so very, very much to me. Please enjoy the evening's entertainment as much as you can manage.

Yours, Nathaniel Tweak

## THE EVENING'S PROGRAM

*The Feverish Heart* by Nordo Frot: Act 1, Scene 3

*Das Bipsy und Mumu Puppenspiel* by Freulicher Friedrich: Episode 43 "Bipsy's Mistake"

*The Ballad of Edward Grue* by Samuel Groanswallow: Act 4, Scene 6

*The Modern Age (Part 3)* by Eamon Schloss: "The Staircase Scene"

*The Forgotten Dish* by Sterling Lowry: "The Winds of Fate"

*The Swede of Donnylarkan* by Sir Walter Pill: Act 3, Scene 2

*Why I Am So Sad* by Sally

*The Rise and Fall of Emmanuel Mauriac* by Sarah Phweet: Act 3, Scene 4

*The Feverish Heart* by Nordo Frot: Act 2, Scene 6

*La Nature au Naturel* avec Dr. François LeBoule: Episode 12

*The Cruel Sea* by Thorvik Skarsbarg: Hour 14

*Never Say it Again* by Linda Snuck

*The Beast of Muggditch Lane* by August Stainbrook: Act 1, Scene 1

*The Feverish Heart* by Nordo Frot: Act 4, Scene 14

*Funeral Ritual of the Sugawara Denju*

*The Last Whale* by Grover Bailwick

*How The Spirit Entered Me* by the Reverend George Foote: "The Ship of Faithlessness Flounders"

*The Feverish Heart* by Nordo Frot: Act 19, Scene 78

*Ice Age* starring Swan Roderick

*Lucille Arabesque* by Agathon Finley

*King Jeff the Magnificent* by William Dingo

*The Perfect Death Scene* by Nathaniel Tweak



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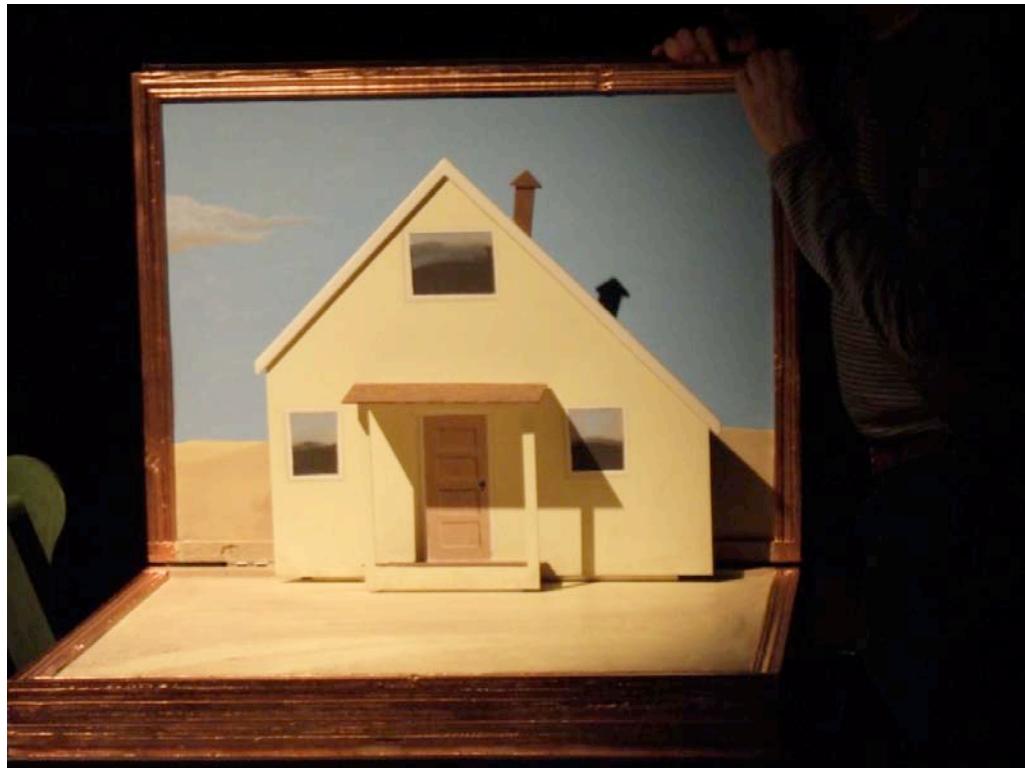
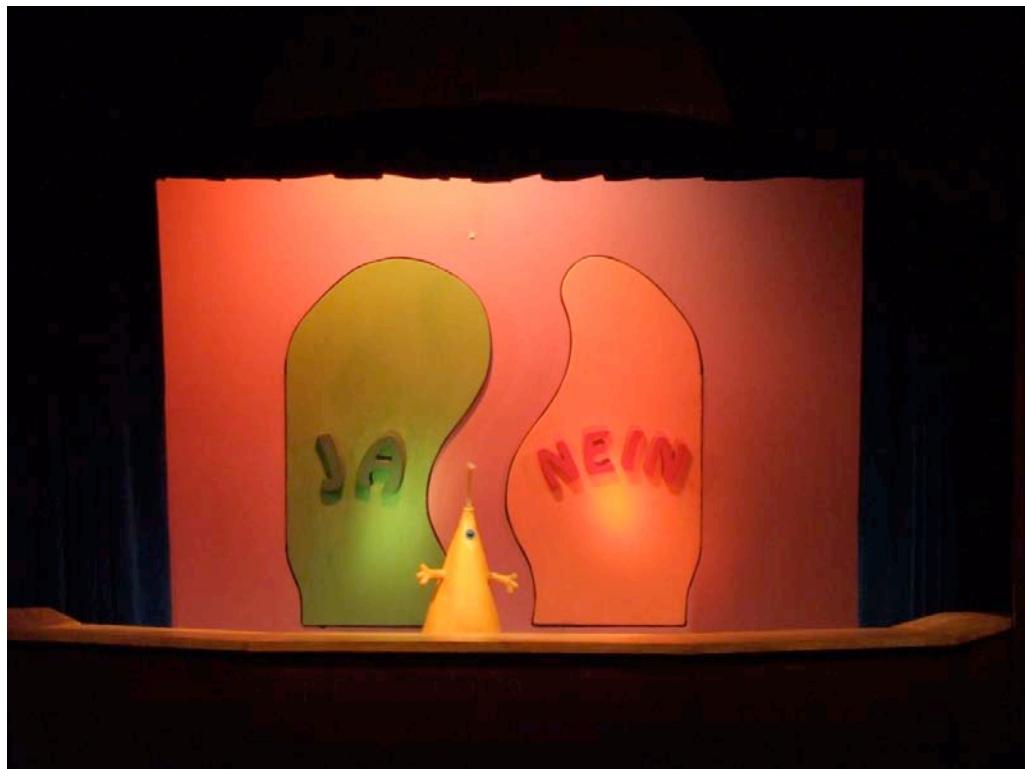
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