

HOW I DID IT

The World on a String

STORY & PHOTO BY ALLIE GOOLRICK

MASTER PUPPETEER LISA STURZ WORKED IN L.A. CRAFTING PUPPETS FOR BOTH DISNEY AND THE MUPPETS BEFORE MOVING TO ASHEVILLE AND FOUNDING HER OWN COMPANY, RED HERRING PUPPETS. STURZ SUPPLIES PUPPETS TO NUMEROUS ASHEVILLE VENUES, INCLUDING THE ASHEVILLE SYMPHONY'S PRODUCTION OF *PETRUSHKA*. RECENTLY, *BOLD LIFE* SAT DOWN WITH STURZ TO LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO BRING A PUPPET TO LIFE.



HOW DID YOU GET INTO PUPPETRY?

I really did start to do puppets as a kid. I took a puppetry class after school. In college I was a theater and a religion major and in my school [the religion department] was where you could study mythology and collective unconscious. I did my whole religion thesis as a puppet show. I liked working with different cultures and different ideas. There's that kind of thing about puppetry about the metaphor of God controlling man and man controlling puppet...and I just liked the non-verbal communication.

WHAT DOES RED HERRING PUPPETS DO?

We tour the country, mostly the Southeast, with puppet shows. We just opened a new show called *The Big Dipper*. It's all deeply rooted in curriculum. I'm a teaching artist; I teach teachers how to incorporate puppetry into the classroom. I'm really committed to arts in education, so the shows that I perform with Red Herring definitely have a lot of curriculum ties. I also build a lot of *Beauty and the Beast* costumes and rent them all over the country. We get inquiries from all over.

HOW MUCH TIME GOES INTO MAKING A PUPPET?

It depends on the show. Marionettes are definitely the hardest. They're all wood. It takes a long time to get it to work right. So you build it and you rebuild it and you restring it to get it to do what you need it to do. Marionettes take at least a month. And that's just building the puppets. There's writing a script, building a musical score, taking publicity photos, rehearsing. I think people have no idea how hard it is.

YOU HAVE A NEW SHOW COMING UP, *PETRUSHKA*. WHAT SORT OF PUPPETS ARE YOU USING?

The puppets for *Petrushka* are much different because they're huge so you want to go as light as possible. The main building block of these puppets is foam, and they're worked over our heads. They're giant rod puppets. This show will have shadow puppets as well.

WHAT IS THE SHOW ABOUT?

It's a collaboration between Red Herring and the Asheville Symphony. It's traditionally a Stravinsky ballet, but since it's a Symphony concert the orchestra will be on stage. So we wanted something visual but not try to recreate the entire ballet. We have our own interpretation of the score with these life-sized puppets. It's really a visual accent to what the Symphony is doing rather than being the main focus.

ASHEVILLE SEEMS LIKE IT HAS A LOT OF PUPPETRY GOING ON...

There's some energy here. We've got this Asheville Puppetry Alliance, so I'm not the only puppeteer in town. I've been able to benefit from other puppeteer's talents. We're all working together to make Asheville a puppet destination. **E**