



PUPPET
PLAYS

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PAUL McPHARLIN

PMCP

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Printed in Detroit

NINA EFIMOVA, translated by ELENA MITCOFF

Pensive Puppets

1 Scene, 2 Characters, Plays 10 Minutes

Suited to Puppets and Shadows

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Characters:

BLACKAMoor—No. 1.

BLACKAMoor—No. 2.

* PENSIVE PUPPETS

1 puppeteer adult

By Nina Efimova

Translated by Elena Mitcoff

As adapted and played by the Marionette
Fellowship of Detroit

Music, with tambourine. Everything mystical, tranquil, but inwardly agitated.

1. BLACKAMoor. Come here, Ozymandius!
2. BLACKAMoor (*appears*). What is it, Ptolemy?
 1. Come quick!
 2. (*runs toward him.*)
 1. I've made a discovery.
 2. What kind of a discovery? (*Jumps impatiently. Music stops.*)
 1. That—are we puppets? (*Points to himself.*)
 2. Well, so we are puppets.
 1. (*pointing to audience.*) And those—are—people?

2. (*leans over to look at them.*) Why yes, people.

1. We are all puppets impersonating people?

2. (*nods.*)

1. (*puts his arm around 2; they stroll.*) And now, listen please. I've been going around to the theatres and made a discovery. (*Loudly, jumping aside.*) Nowadays people are impersonating puppets! In Moscow they jerk as if pulled by strings, and call it "constructivism." In Berlin they do Shakespeare like cardboard cut-outs and call it "stylized." In London a chorus comes out and they all kick and bob together, as if they were on the same controller, and call it "Tiller Girls." In Hollywood they make magic lantern slides that grind away together with music boxes. People are afraid to act like people . . . What are you laughing about? (*In rhythm slaps 2's head with his hands.*) If we act like they act, nothing will be acted any way!

2. What can we do?

1. We've got to pray.

(They go thru identical postures during prayer.)

Music: Handel, Suite XI Sarabande.

BOTH. Lord of the puppets, who created us on the same day thou didst create mankind, who didst rock us in the same cradle with man; who soughtest many ages to make us, and to endow us, by the theatrical elixir of a Gordon Craig, with the eternal youngness of childhood; who gavest us an invulnerable body and a sensitive soul, who didst spare us from worldly troubles, give us power over mankind and bestow into our keeping almost the entire store of laughter; Thou, having created us whole after a terrific time of brooding, let us not perish now from man's neglect!

Music stops.

Answer us! *(Pause. They stand with uplifted hands. Suddenly trembling, as if they had heard something, they hide their heads in their hands.)*

2. (*lifting his head.*) Did you hear?
1. (*lifting his.*) Yes, can it be possible?
2. Possible that people are made of poorer stuff than we?
1. Not poorer; different maybe.
2. We are made of wood or wood pulp, while they—
1. (*angrily.*) While they—
2. Aren't made of anything at all!
1. (*harshly.*) See here, Nebuchadnezzar, they must be made of something!
2. Then what of?
1. Suppose you ask them. (*Points toward audience.*) Pick out some bright person. (*They choose, standing arm-in-arm, pointing with their free arms.*)
2. (*to somebody in front at side.*) What are you made of? (*To 1.*) He doesn't know.
1. And you? . . . That's his secret. And you? . . . Come on, tell us. I told all about myself. I'm made of

wood pulp, hollow for lightness, and brocaded silk imported from ——'s* basement. (*They knock their heads together.*) What? Of flesh? (*To each other.*) Doesn't that spoil after a while? And what are you coloured with? Your lashes are black, painted, I see, with an ink pencil; your faces—

2. But *all* of them! Are they all flesh, nothing but flesh? Aren't there ribs inside? (*Brightly.*) Some of us are made with umbrella ribs!

1. They are really all made out of the same material. Flesh, ribs. . . . What sets you in motion? Habit? (*Waits; no answer.*) No, isn't it someone's hand? (*Seems to hear an answer.*) Oh, a soul! Oh, oh.

2. A soul! And do you have a soul too? And you? And you?

1. Each has a separate soul to himself? Why, for the

*Insert name of well-known store.

hundred or more of us puppets there is only one! That's why we are all so harmonious. (*To 2.*) Now why are you crying?

2. (*stooping and hiding his head.*) Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo! I'm crying because they should cry and we should laugh. . . .

Sad music.

1. (*strokes the other's back and slowly raises him to his feet.*) This reminds me of the bygone age, long long ago, when people didn't condescend to us. They carried my grandfather in festival processions to Bacchus.

2. And in my great grandfather's head there used to sit a live starling that spoke in verse. How long ago it was! Five thousand years! He was taught to recite by the daughter of a puppet master. All this happened in India.

1. My father played in the comedies of Aristophanes.

2. "Zoe mou, sas agapol!"

1. That's Byron, not Aristophanes.

2. Did Aristophanes die?

1. Whoo, you! Two thousand three hundred and ten years ago!

2. I forgot because I remembered so well.

1. Quite recently there was Voltaire, and Goldoni and Goethe. Remember them? I was on very good speaking terms with them. They directed me, but I confess I taught them a thing or two about the theatre myself.

2. Did you ever meet any of George Sand's company? She had four hundred puppets, but—

1. Sh! She might be here listening. (*Peers among audience.*)

2. I don't think she is. She must be dead, or she *would* be here.

Music grows softer.

1. So many of our illustrious friends are gone—Ana-

tole France, Joseph Conrad, Lewis Carroll—

2. But we have a few left, Craig and Shaw and Jack Yeats.

1. What if something should happen to us?

2. What do you mean?

1. So we couldn't act any more. If there wouldn't be any more puppeteers who knew how to work us?

2. They'd put us in a museum maybe. How lonesome it will be, buried in a glass case!

1. That's all right. Perhaps we'll be put in with some nice African masks!

BOTH (*leaning toward audience*). Please, if any of you ever sees us there in the museum, just nod to us. That will be a sign that you saw us in the better days, and that we found a place not only in the museum, but in your hearts. (*Bow, exeunt.*)

STEARN
PM 1980
P87 no.8

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PUPPET PLAYS Edited by PAUL McPHARLIN—a List

- 1 **THE WOLF AT THE DOOR**, by Grace Dorcas Ruthenburg, author of the *Gooseberry Mandarin*. Linocut illus. by Paul McPharlin. How a poet worsts a wolf and pens an ode to the moon. 2 characters; 10 minutes; for puppets, marionettes or shadows. 25c
- 2 **LINCOLN AND THE PIG**, by Edgar Caper. Woodcut mask of Lincoln by Pablo Parlando. Wherein Abe Lincoln is altruistic and his horse Ned isn't; from the well-known legend. 3 characters; 40 minutes; for marionettes or shadows. 25c
- 3 **WEATHER**, by Forman Brown. Illus. by Bewick Cutter. Often played by The Yale Puppeteers. Mr. Rainy and Mr. Sunny effect a merger in making umbrellas and bricks. 3 characters; 15 minutes; for puppets or marionettes. 30c
- 4 **DE COURTIN' COUPLE**, by Weaver Dallas. Photo of scene as played by The Rag-Bag Alley Puppets. Southern Negro lore; Sis Goose is rescued from Brer Fox by "plain ole one and sixpence" Brer Dog. 4 characters; 25 minutes; for puppets or marionettes. 50c
- 5 **PUNCH AND JUDY**, a new version by James Juvenal Hayes. Woodcut illus. by Pablo Parlando. The old favourite in up-to-date dress; everyone should know this version. 11 characters; 25 minutes; for puppets. 50c
- 6 **COLUMBINE'S BIRTHDAY**, by Grace Stearns. Woodcut puppet portraits by Perry Dille. Pierrot, Polichinelle, the Apothecary and others in merry fracas about a birthday present. 10 characters; 35 minutes; for puppets. 75c
- 7 **ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON**, by Edgar Caper. The traditional legend told in witty verse, with a coy Princess, a bold Knight and a famished Dragon. 6 characters; 30 minutes; for puppets, marionettes or shadows. 50c
- 8 **PENSIVE PUPPETS**, by Nina Efimova. Translated by Elena Mitcoff. Two blackmoors converse with the audience, dance and pray, and tell something of puppet history with delightful charm. 2 characters; 10 minutes; for puppets or shadows. 25c
- 9 **THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE**, by Doris Stewart and Naomi Woll. Bill is learning magic from Professor Abdul, but attempts too much for a beginner, with exciting results. 3 characters; 20 minutes; for puppets, marionettes or shadows. 35c