

Entertainment

"You've got to move with the times, said God."
-Russell Hoban-

No strings attached

Roman W. Pawlyszka

Marty Gross takes a breath and leans back in his sparsely upholstered seat. We are in the boiler room/editing facility of his home film studio amidst stacks and stacks of silver film cans. With a childlike enthusiasm, he says, "It took 10 months of constant work to edit my film, but I loved it." Buried in a floppy blue sweater, the Toronto-based filmmaker looks so comfortable, it seems like he might have been born on an editing table.

The film Gross is referring to is *The Lover's Exile*, the young producer/director's first feature-length picture and, in many ways, a very unique one. Gross dedicated three years of his life to fulfilling his personal vision—a cinematic record of the traditional Japanese art of Bunraku, or puppet theatre. One of the three major theatrical arts in Japan, Bunraku is recognized around the world as the pinnacle of sophistication in puppetry. Yet few people outside of Japan have had the opportunity to actually see it performed. That is, until Marty Gross came along.

With Bunraku puppets, you don't have to worry about looking for the strings: there is no artifice or pretension that the puppets are real people. Each of the almost life size dolls is operated by three onstage puppeteers, two of them shrouded in black masks and one, the master puppeteer, remaining

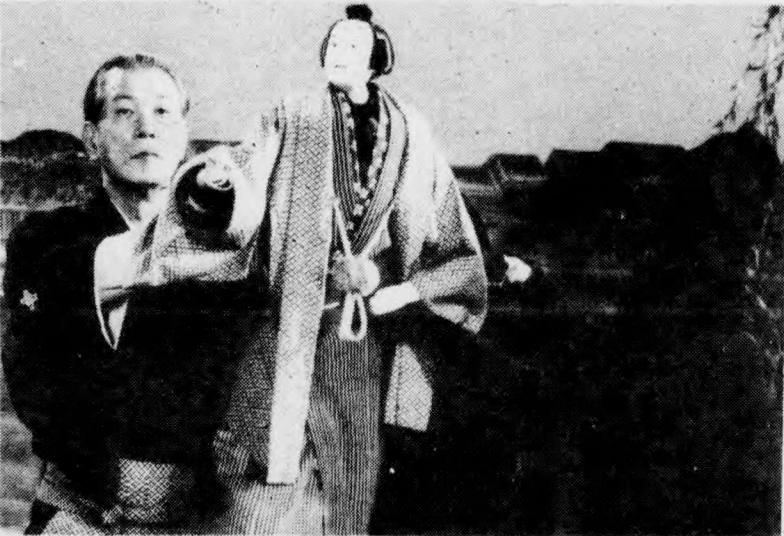
fully visible. The doll's lips do not move and their voices, as well as the narration and commentary, are all provided by a single man in a kind of sung recitation.

The remarkable thing about the dolls is the range of expressiveness of their bodies. "The dolls can look so believable because they can be more than one person can be," says Gross. "They have such complete freedom with their bodies, it seems that gravity is somehow re-invented in the dolls as they perform."

Gross first developed an interest in Bunraku when he spent several years in Japan as a potter's apprentice. Later, after turning to filmmaking, he went back to Japan to make the short film, *Potters at*

Work. This well-received documentary gave Gross the clout necessary to obtain the funding for *The Lover's Exile*. While raising the bankroll, Gross spent a year adapting and editing the original three-hour stage version (written in the 18th Century) down to a 90-minute screen treatment.

One major hurdle that Gross had to overcome was getting the Bunraku Ensemble of Osaka to agree to perform in his film. Firstly, they were a little leery of anyone attempting to film their art. As Gross explains, "They had appeared on T.V. and in segments of films before, and they had lots to complain about. I had to convince them that the way I was planning it was the way it ought to be done."



Secondly, there was the matter of Gross' age. In a culture where so much emphasis is placed on respect for elders, Gross had to confront the challenge of proving his credibility before people much older than himself. "People my age in Bunraku are running around on the floor—they're not directing anything."

After almost three years in the making *The Lover's Exile* premiered last year in Japan where, paradoxically, the English subtitles helped the audience to understand the antiquated text. The film has done well at several international film festivals and has been sold to French television. Gross is somewhat miffed at not being allowed to enter his film in the Genie Awards this year

because it doesn't meet the committee's standards for Canadian content. "There doesn't seem to be a category for Canadian filmmakers anymore, only for Canadian film, which is a different matter entirely," explains a dejected Gross.

But the Genies haven't heard the last of Marty Gross as he begins work on his next film later this year. This time, though, he won't be filling his stacks of silver film cans with footage from Japan. "I think I've come to the end of what I want to do in Japan," he muses. "At least for now."

(The Lover's Exile is playing this Sunday at The Festival Cinema, 651 Yonge, and is due to open shortly at The Fine Arts.)

Coriolanus—unsung sing

Jolanta Morowicz

The sun will shine on the unsung when the York Drama Department presents its upcoming innovative production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.

Although the play is originally set in Roman times, the director, Neil Freeman decided to place it in 1910 in order to give the play a more contemporary look. The production features approximately 65 actors in the cast and many more working behind the scenes. In fact, the technical aspects of the play involves an enormous amount of time and effort—a vital, though often disregarded, part of theatre.

being made for *Coriolanus*, ranging from a polar bear to skin rug to a roast turkey with real pineapple slices on top.

Stoley considers prop makers "jacks-of-all trades", artisans, carpenters and thrifty and imaginative shoppers. She feels that her job is to "encourage students to appreciate the craft of making props" and that "even actors should understand the work going into technical aspects of theatre." Often the technical crew remains the "unsung hero" of theatre: they focus on the details, which are essential to a complete and well-balanced production.

discusses with her his interpretation of the play. "In stage design you always have to expect the unforeseen, you always have to adapt things," underlines Kroon.

Gordon McLeod, the lighting designer, also must meet with the director and set designer to discuss their concepts of the show and to design appropriate lighting. The master electrician operates lights, hangs the lamps (there are 130 of them for *Coriolanus*), and later focuses them. McLeod stresses that "careful planning, and working around the architecture of the building is necessary to compliment the whole production with good lighting."

The *Coriolanus* cast will be using over 200 costumes, and 1,000 individual pieces such as ties, shoes, and hats. Sandra Crockard is the costume designer in charge of making all the costumes and accessories for the play. The women's costumes are being originally made, whereas the uniforms for men are borrowed from other theatres.

Coriolanus opens March 18 at the Burton Auditorium and will run for five performances. Tickets are being sold in Central Square and are \$1 each. A small price for a bit of Bill.

Tony rocks the wastelands

Steve Kelly

Live rock and roll has long been a primary source of entertainment in the Toronto area. Unfortunately for York students, there are few opportunities to see a live band perform in Downsview's barren wastelands. With the grand opening of Tony's Rock 'n' Roll West on March 12 however, this void will no longer exist.

Located directly across Keele from York, Tony's will feature



Bryon Johnson

Swan song

Paul Ellington

That fabulous team of Mingo and Knight who have so vigorously entertained us during their four years at York are performing what they dub their farewell show.

Yes, Cathy Knight and Pam Mingo are at it again for another night of satire and comedy.

This year their creative efforts are enhanced by the musical compositions of Joan Whynot, the choreography of Barb Gormley and the piano accompaniment of Jordan Klapman.

Mingo and Knight met during

their first year at York, and have achieved a degree of success on campus and hope for a breakthrough into the entertainment field. So, this cannot be the end for the dynamic duo.

This even sponsored by York Cabaret in conjunction with the Theatre Arts department takes place tonight and tomorrow at Mac Hall and the following week at the Glendon Theatre. The event is free and the liquor bottle runneth over. Judging by past performances it should prove to be a very stimulating evening.



In *Coriolanus* the authenticity and originality of costumes, props, staging and the quality of lighting will influence the success of the play as much as the actors' skill in interpreting their roles.

Gionilda Stoley, the prop supervisor of *Coriolanus* prepares props from drawings sent by the play's set designer. She apprenticed at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and is now a second-year student at York as well as a teacher of first-year students who alternate their studies between making props and costumes, and learning other aspects of stage production. There are approximately 50 props

Set designer Janice Kroon is second-in-command to the director. She has almost 50 people working on the set, building and painting it to create an authentic 1910 look. A graduate of the newly-formed M.F.A. Theatre programme, she believes set-building must be a well-organized effort with each student contributing something to this long and intricate process. Work on the set goes on until the last minute and, as Janice says is "a constant collaboration between different crews to present a play." She gets her original concept for the stage design from the director who