

# PENNY JONES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PUPPET THEATER

## DIRECTOR

Penny Jones has exhibited her puppets at National and Regional Puppet Festivals where she has also performed shows and presented workshops in puppet making.

Her puppets in medieval fresco design for **Thomas Dunn's Festival Orchestra's** rendition of *Master Peter's Puppet Show* performed at Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center.

**Barnes and Noble** featured her 12 foot wide pop-up book stage, along with the store's latest selection of pop-up books in two of its windows for the Christmas season..

For Earth Day the **American Museum of Natural History** featured her comic giant model of the Museum, constructed from 17 cardboard boxes, with 3 dimensional comic miniatures of dinosaurs, whales, totem poles etc. in appropriate 'wings'.

Her **Cloisters** Renaissance Festival workshop for apprentices and journeymen produced Lady Godiva on a horse, and assorted gargoyles.

Her original 12 foot wide **pop-up book puppet show** served as the culminating exhibit and lynchpin of the **Manhattan Laboratory Museum's** three month pop-up book design exhibition during which time she gave one hundred and seventy four lecture/demo/performances to school groups.

She was invited to double the size and length of this 15 minute pop-up book puppet show for inclusion in the **Henson International Festival**, where it was one of only four children's shows featured. This larger version remains one of the most popular shows in the company repertory.

She is the **author** of over 28 produced puppet shows, from miniature classroom tabletop to large auditorium, and of numerous articles on puppetry in various publications.

For her original puppet show, *La Donna Del Mare* using local children in Sicily she received the *Medalia d'Oro*.

**Commercially** Ms. Jones puppets were commissioned by **David Hockney** for the **Metropolitan Opera's Parade**, and by **Carol Channing** for a record cover of *Peter and the Wolf*. She was also commissioned to create a Dynamo detergent puppet and two rivals for a T.V. commercial; two

puppets for a Nestles documentary on the history of chocolate; wooden figures for magazine ads about Pepperidge Farm; a Santa to grace a Christmas catalog cover for Harrison Productions; four cover designs for American Judaism Magazine; and a set of Punch and Judy puppets for the CBS soap, “the Doctors”

**In schools** she has used her puppetry expertise to foster **Early Childhood Language Literacy** in a variety of ways:

---for **ESL and bi lingual groups** she has created an assortment of puppet theatre stimulants to learning; An engaging original puppet show performed by ESL third graders with rhyming lines to facilitate script learning by participants; **Small class workshops** using original or classic stories easy to empathize with about separating and reuniting with loved ones and traveling in unfamiliar places, followed up with craft work to foster self esteem; **Large, theme centered puppet musical pageants** enriching the curriculums of the several classes performing and making puppets, as well as their audiences. One such pageant was the dramatization of an official school board educational manual on Puerto Rican culture which included songs, dances, stories, history, and geography. Two others, the puppet plays *Perez and Martinez*, and *The Story of Ferdinand* were based on Hispanic literature and reflected the cultural heritage of the children.

-----Her **nursery rhymes with props** are very popular as classroom participation activities by preschoolers.

---Her **pretend TV station** brings out a variety of talents in children. In this pretend TV workshop, the ‘station’ is an empty picture frame attached to a bookcase and manned by the children with simple puppets, original stories, news flashes, math and science games, and kid created advertising. An entire year’s curriculum can be covered feeding information into this frame with the fun of performing and the creativity of making up programs to fit.

---For a **Special Ed class** she designed a pantomime especially tailored to utilize the limited body movements those children were capable of. They crumpled paper and then stuffed it into a giant muslin bag thus filling out the form of Abiyoyo, the giant in the story. They then pantomimed the narrated story. One child in a motorized wheel chair with a paper sun strapped to it was able to push-button across the stage thus moving the sun at the appointed time. Totally into her part this child arrived in school wearing sunglasses to protect her eyes from that sun prop.

- -With her **Shoebox Tabletop Shows**, Ms Jones has created a three part program for preschool through second grade designed to hold their attention, help them focus, maintain interest, respond with creative thinking, and remember. First, she presents a puppet show or reads a story, often including the children making crowd noises or sound effects. Then she leads a brief craft activity workshop to recreate some part of the story. Next, the children, with her help, retell the story using the artifacts they have just made. In this way they listen, respond, reflect while creating their artifacts, and then practice their language skills by repeating in their own words what they have just experienced. Finally they have their talisman artifacts to take home to remind them of the experience.

She has given **teacher training workshops** in puppet pageant making, pop-up book making, plastic bottle and polyfoam puppet head making, shadow puppet making with stationary and Sobo glue, the using of the pretend TV format as a tool for exercising communication skills, the using of recycled materials for props and set making..

She is the **Director of Penny Jones & Co. Puppets**, and The **Early Childhood Puppet Theatre**, a non-profit, 501c(3)tax exempt organization , and has worked for Suzari Marionettes, The NY Park Department Marionettes, Pickwick Puppets, Dozari Marionettes, Bil Baird, and Sesame Street .

## THE COMPANY

Penny Jones & Co. Puppets aka **The Early Childhood Puppet Theatre** specializes in informal puppet shows for children aged three to eight, puppet ballets with live music for adults, children or both, and a variety of school programs including puppet pageants with a cast of 30 to 90 school children and workshops for small classes interweaving puppetry, storytelling, movement, music and art.

The company performs in collaboration with chamber ensembles and orchestras. The repertory includes adaptations of classical works as well as original stories and scores. There are shows for professional musicians and for music students: complete works and shorter pieces that can be combined to create programs.

The company has performed in the Henson International Puppet Festival at the Public Theater, as well as at City Center, Avery Fischer Hall, The Museum of the City of New York, The Children's Museum of New York, Damrosch Park, Greenwich House Music School, the Washington Square Music Festival, the Music Barge, Casa de España, Mamaroneck Theatre, Village Gate, on television, with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at BAM, Fagment, and many, many, more...

The company collaborated with Greenwich House Music School to produce an original puppet musical, *The Lonely Loch Ness Monster*. Composer Natasha Ghent created a score to

accommodate the instruments of the children in her class and support Ms. Jones's original story. Ms. Jones then created puppets and sets to match. The student musicians accompanied the puppeteers for two weekends of performances. The production was later picked up by the Brooklyn Philharmonic who performed it with the puppeteers in their New Composers series, Tanya Leon conducting.

Another musical collaboration came with Benjamin Yarmolinsky performing Erik Satie's opera, *Genevieve de Brabant* at the Music Barge.

Manuel Da Falla's *Master Peter's Puppet Show* was originally produced in collaboration with Casa De Espana, and featured puppets and live singers, with Emilio Ros conducting. It was later performed with the New Philharmonic of New Jersey, Leon Hyman, conductor.

The company's outreach includes a four-year tour with the *Mother Goose Tales* puppet show bringing it to seventy-five day care and other early childhood centers in four boroughs serving over ten thousand children.

Reviewers of shows in the repertory (*NY Times, Village Voice, New York, Newark Star Ledger, Gannet Newspapers, WNYC, and Puppetry Guild of Greater New York*) have been uniformly laudatory:

\*\*\*I liked it that such care went into the making of these shows\*\*\*Very simple and perfect as an introduction to theatre\*\*\*warm, funny direct and charming\*\*\* real warmth and gentleness\*\*\*a knack for finding lesser known stories and distilling them to suit the tastes of the very young fans and keeping them fascinated with low-key make-believe\*\*\* inventive\*\*\* ingenuity and wit\*\*\*an intimacy, an honesty, a heart\*\*\* sets uncluttered, the story line direct \*\*\*engrossing (even for adults)The blending of the familiar and the foreign gives the 45 minute production an especially interesting texture\*\*\*The humor is never heavy handed. It respects the children's intelligence\*\*\*an utterly charming and exquisite show! The puppets are glorious\*\*\*beautiful blending of puppetry and music intermingled ingeniously with originality and true creativity\*\*\*

*A child's first experience with theatre is formative toward his future attitude about it. Theatre is one of civilization's major means of communicating its values, its knowledge, and its history. Participatory theatre allows the individual to help shape the process and to more fully realize his potential as a human being during the experience.*

For more information- 212-924-0525

*A child's first theatrical experience*

*shapes future involvement.*

*Quality counts*

