

Puppetry

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cannot replicate. Also, theater productions can redefine puppetry with freshness and creativity.

Professional puppeteer Pamela O'Conner spent time with the UNCA drama department last year, teaching object theater.

"Object theater is the idea that (puppetry) is no longer just cute hand puppets or the shadow puppet," said Facciponti, who is UNCA's director of the arts and ideas program.

"Object theater is basically big, gigantic puppets. It says you can take any singular object and say, 'This is a puppet, as long as you move it a certain way and infuse it with life.'"

Facciponti, 46, directed a UNCA production called "The Tempest" that specifically implemented object theater in 2008.

"Part of the center of our production was a giant piece of 30-square-foot fabric and we billowed it up and turned it into a giant ship, then turned it into a giant cape and many different things," she said.

Productions utilize puppetry to establish a sort of contemplative magic on stage as well as create a distance between an audience and heavy content, according to puppeteers and theater professionals.

"That distance allows you to deal with subject matter that you maybe don't necessarily want to deal with in a human life form," Facciponti said. "For instance, you can undress a puppet on stage and you can't undress a person on stage as easily."

Several years ago, UNCA faculty took 30 students to New York for a Broadway show entitled "Avenue Q," which is essentially a spoof on "Sesame Street," with the same set and nearly the same puppets, the theater director said.

"What they did was dealt with every single difficult subject matter that you would ever want to deal with on stage," she said. "We were like, 'Whoa, I think I just got insulted, but I'm not that insulted, because it's a puppet.'"

APA presents similar adult-content productions in Asheville at the annual puppet slam.

"You can say things with puppets that you can't say another way. You can use puppets to say something political or use innuendos for adults," Gabler said.

The National Day of Puppetry will be celebrated May 1 by the Asheville Puppetry Alliance at the Folk Art Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Drag Ball

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Caroline Wilson, another participant in Friday's show.

When Jozefowicz asked which Columbia, Wilson clarified that this was Columbia, New York.

"Well, actually Western and App are both having drag shows this spring," Doyle said.

One of the issues with the logistics of hosting two drag shows was the novelty of the experience for some of Alliance's members.

One of the newer members, Chelsea Beyer, said the best way overcome stage fright was to just go for it.

"This was a way to try to get rid of that, and part of it is trying not to care what other people think, really. When you're up there, you don't really have time to think about that," said Beyer, a freshman.

At Friday's show, the performances did not lack any confidence. Jozefowicz and Doyle both said it was partly because an open floor plan created a more intimate space.

"I think next year is going to be even better. I feel like we did a really good job and things that we were nervous about we know how to do better next year," Jozefowicz said.

Doyle participated in several of Friday's performances, dressing for some as

a man and for some as a woman.

"It was still a performance both ways, which was a lot of fun to experience, because it was gender, and it was the performance of gender in a polar structure," Doyle said.

Doyle said some of the makeup applications took an hour, and the shifting between traditional gender ideas was difficult as well.

"You definitely have to prepare your body," Jozefowicz said.

While some in the show have prior experience with drag, that isn't the case for the majority of the UNCA audience, which is part of why the Drag Ball happened. According to Beyer, the Drag Ball allowed people to establish a positive association with the practice of dressing in drag.

"With most people, if they're not exposed to drag, or anything like it, they're going to see someone who's dressed like a girl with a painted-on moustache. They don't know what to think of that," Beyer said.

It is very possible to do drag and be shy, like Jozefowicz. The rest of the Alliance group wanted to display his character Celine on a poster in the Alliance office, but Jozefowicz backed away from the idea.

Local food

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market," Jackson said.

Recently, more people have been asking about the local produce and how the restaurant prepares it, according to Jackson.

She said she understands the health advantages of organic produce, and she believes people now care more about the benefits of eating locally.

"I think that with time, the more green everybody becomes, the more that does help," Jackson said.

Organic produce, though, has not yet caught on at the WNC Farmers Market, she said.

According to Evans, eating organically is only important if people also eat with the seasons, which means avoiding foods at the grocery store that are not in season in their given climate.

"When I was growing up, and I'm 50 so that gives you an idea, if you found apples much beyond March, they were horrible," he said. "They had been stored, and they were mealy. You just didn't buy tomatoes in the middle of winter. Now with shipping you can, and strawberries come from Chile."

Evans said he uses his farm's seasonal vegetables to impress buyers. He grows his produce in non-heated greenhouses,

which helps buyers endure the long winter months without fresh produce. He said this technique allows him to start growing tomatoes and other fruits earlier than traditional growing methods.

"We've become a culture where it's easy to go into Greenlife or some other store that has produce, and buy things that are completely out of season. That's due a lot to our global transportation," Evans said.

As a small farm, it is hard to maintain financial stability through wholesaling, according to Evans. He said it does not make sense to sell goods at a wholesale price when there are customers willing to pay full price.

"We did a little (wholesaling) when we first started, but we've just found that for several reasons that we wanted to sell direct," he said. "Primarily, we wanted more of a relationship with our customers. When you wholesale, you don't really know who is eating it."

The North Asheville Tailgate Market, located on UNC Asheville's campus, opens April 17. The market operates from 8 a.m. until noon and features a variety of local produce, meats, baked goods, plants and more.

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