



Bricoteer Workshop

DATE: March 20, 2011
TIME: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
LOCATION: Open Door Designs, 1597 Dupont Street, Toronto ON M6P 3S8
AGE GROUP: Adults
DURATION: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (with an hour off for lunch)
COST: \$180
INFORMATION: www.opendoordesigns.ca/(416) 531-1290

Workshop Description

This storytelling workshop will allow participants to transform ordinary items such as newspaper, tape, and gift wrap into puppets in an exploration of the potential for imagination to transform and reshape the everyday world. James and Grey of the Bricoteer Puppetry Project will lead participants in a collaboration that will result in the performance of short sketches.

Beyond the specific skills of using ordinary newspaper, masking tape, and (optional) scissors, string, and wire to create fantastic working models (*maquettes*) of any imagined puppet, participants will develop skills in performance, design, narrative development, and the communication of ideas visually and intuitively. The unique capacities of puppetry, as compared to the theatre of human actors, will be explored.

Professional puppet artists, including those associated with the Bricoteer Puppetry Project, use newspaper to create *maquettes* of puppets while developing new work. *Maquettes* act as working models which allow artists to express, demonstrate, or test their concepts. Like a sketch in 3-D, *maquettes* allow artists to explore ideas quickly and inexpensively. They can also be enjoyable as an end in themselves and as a source of further inspiration.

This workshop will support participants in making newspaper puppets, creating a story using the new puppets, and learning about performing. Two groups or troupes will be formed, and each will prepare a sketch to present to the other, with the help of James and Grey. Participants who do not wish to perform are invited to support the performance in other ways. There will also be time to address the professional concerns of artists, educators, and caretakers and specific needs or adaptations. Participants will be encouraged to share these concerns during the workshop so that Grey and James can focus on what is uniquely important to them. Time will be spent discussing puppet-theatre theory and history, and a handout will provide suggestions on how to employ skills from this workshop in your work and find additional resources.

The Bricoteer Puppetry Project

The Bricoteer Puppetry Project was accidentally founded in 2003, when Grey Muldoon and James Ashby, complete strangers at the time, came together to design and build the puppets for the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama production of *The Grottesque Farce of Mr. Punch the Cuckold* by Ramon Maria del Valle-Inclan. They had some help, of course, but James and Grey

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soon became known for their rough-and-ready, sometimes bizarre, but always effective style of puppet construction.

Eventually they both wanted to take to the stage with their creations, so they developed the short and sexy object theatre piece *Fill Me Up* (2007), which concerns a lonely martini glass and an eager martini shaker. Determined to develop a full-length production next, they embarked on a perilous but rewarding journey in devised theatre. Along with collaborators Zoe Ludski and Lori Nancy Kalamanski and a small army of guest artists, James and Grey created the experimental, largely autobiographical *Home and Away* (2008), a movement and puppet theatre piece concerning memories and human migration.

Grey and James devised the name Bricoteer Puppetry Project for several related reasons: 1) to emphasize how they creatively use material available “at hand” to construct both stories and puppets, a tendency encapsulated in the critical term *bricolage* (*bricoteer* is an amalgamation of the words *bricolage* and *puppeteer*); 2) to declare openly that they are most interested in pushing the boundaries of puppetry, which in many ways already goes beyond what the theatre of human actors is capable of doing; 3) to inform others that theirs is an ongoing *project* that always welcomes new collaborators.

James Beauregard Ashby (Cofounder and Co-Artistic Director, The Bricoteer Puppetry Project)

James Beauregard Ashby is a PhD candidate at the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama at the University of Toronto, a puppet artist, a playwright, a director, a teaching assistant, and occasionally a professor. An advocate for Canadian puppet theatre, he has spoken at both academic conferences and puppetry festivals. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ontario Puppetry Association. His research interests include puppetry, particularly Canadian puppet theatre, devised theatre, dramaturgy, and new work development. His article “Bridging the Gap: The Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival” will be published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*.

Grey Muldoon (Cofounder and Co-Artistic Director, The Bricoteer Puppetry Project)

Grey Muldoon is an experientially taught artist, primarily in theatre and visual arts. Grey's work uses the association of ordinary objects to create meaning: ordinary pieces of glassware are animated to become the puppet-patrons of a singles bar; hardware becomes elegant jewelry; cliché becomes ritual. He transforms preconceptions of objects and spaces by altering them in surprising ways. Through challenging expectations and altering the audience's relationship to objects, he hopes not for novelty, but to make known the power and pleasure of paradigm shifts. Grey has given workshops for youth and adults on various topics and is also a student at the University of Toronto, where he studies Cinema, Religious, and Aboriginal Studies.

For more information about the Bricoteers visit the website: <http://web.me.com/jamesashby>