



THE OLD TROUT PUPPET WORKSHOP ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018



photo credit: Tricia Herbert

THE YEAR IN BRIEF

Here at the Old Trout Puppet Workshop, we strive to surprise – ourselves as much as our audiences. The thing that gets us up in the morning and keeps us awake at night is a relentless spirit of exploration, which is expressed in our company motto: we're a company of artists dedicated to reimagining the art of puppetry.

This season we've gone further, reimagining ourselves, as artists who go beyond puppet theatre – to create shows that don't even have any puppets in them (*TWELFTH NIGHT*), to dive headlong into the creation of a brand new opera (*GHOST OPERA*, premiering next season), and to collaborate with Indigenous artists on a lantern parade in the front range of the Rocky Mountains (*INISKIMM*). We're driving ourselves into new territory through new partnerships with larger organizations like Theatre Calgary, Calgary Opera, and the National Arts Centre, and by collaborating with the top tier artists in our country in theatre, music, and literature.

In the meantime our core activity – creating and touring puppet theatre – is flourishing: this year we toured in France and Spain and Canada, and for the first time performed at the Edinburgh Fringe, the world's largest arts festival. On top of all that, we launched a brand new show (*JABBERWOCKY*) to great critical acclaim.

It's been a season of expansion, as well, for the company itself; we trained a team of new puppet-builders through the *APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM* we founded this year, and had 81 people audition for 6 new slots in our touring ensemble.

The company is also thriving financially. Revenue-wise, we're projecting an all-time peak this year, which we predict will be even higher next year. This is partly thanks to the Liberal government's increase in funding to the Canada Council; we were also awarded a prestigious *NEW CHAPTER* grant – one of the largest single project grants awarded in the history of the Canada Council – and also received support from the National Theatre Centre's highly-competitive *CREATION FUND*.

We're considered by our peers as a vital part of the national arts community, and the people of Canada, Alberta, and Calgary have invested heavily in us. That's a responsibility we take very seriously. We'll give you more detail in the pages ahead. *Thanks for having a look.*



concept drawings for *Ghost Opera*

WHO WE ARE

The **Old Trout Puppet Workshop** was founded back in the blustery winter of 1999, with the dreaded Y2K looming, on a ranch in southern Alberta. We fed the pigs and collected the eggs for our rent, and our first show opened in the bunkhouse to an audience of cowboys and Hutterites.

Since those distant and savage days, the Old Trouts have grown to become an internationally renowned artistic ensemble: we've made puppet shows for both children and adults that tour the world, written and illustrated several books, crafted immense sculptures, taught eager young apprentices the secrets of our mystical art, and even made some award-winning films. On top of all that, we also run the **INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ANIMATED OBJECTS** in Calgary.

We're honoured to have received the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta Distinguished Artists Medal in 2013, the Doug & Lois Mitchell Outstanding Calgary Artist Award in 2015, and the Calgary Mayor's Award for Innovation in the Arts in 2008.



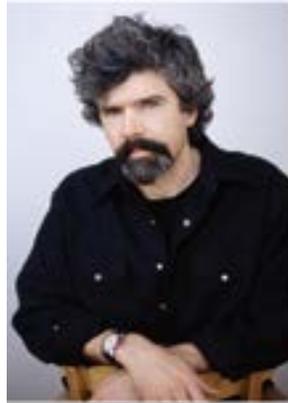
photo credit: Dana Wilson

THE TEAM

Peter Balkwill holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Washington in Seattle (2000), as well as a BFA in Theatre from University of Victoria (1997), where he also served as Head of Movement in 2008/2009. He's the director of the Banff Puppet Intensive as well as a co-director of the New England Puppet Intensive, the curator of the Calgary International Festival of Animated Objects, the head of the Canadian Academy of Mask & Puppetry, and has just been appointed Assistant Professor of Acting at the University of Calgary.

Pityu Kenderes is a sculptor, painter and puppeteer, in live theatre and for film. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design, and a Graduate degree in Fine Arts from the University of Calgary.

Judd Palmer attended Trinity College at the University of Toronto where he received a degree in philosophy, God help him. Besides making puppet theatre and films, he also writes and illustrates children's books, including a series called Preposterous Fables for Unusual Children and, most recently, a book called The Umbrella. He was the recipient of the Canada Council's Victor Martin-Lynch Award in 2015.



Grant Burns has produced many tours for the Old Trouts, across Canada and the US, as well as consulting for the company since 1999. Grant has also worked with One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre as General Manager and as the High Performance Rodeo Producer for eleven years and more recently as the Calgary Producer of The Magnetic North Theatre Festival.

Bob Davis is the General Manager for the Old Trouts. Career highlights include a BA (Political Science) and MA (Public Administration) from the University of Calgary, eight years as Executive Director at Rosebud Centre of the Arts, general management positions in tourism, community and business development in southern Alberta, and volunteer leadership roles with tourism, sports, community development and provincial credit unions.

Paul Tanguay is the European and Overseas agent for the Old Trouts. He's one of Canada's most respected agents, representing Compagnie Marie Chouinard and the Australian company Circa in addition to the Trouts. He was Executive Director of both Marie Chouinard and Lalala Human Steps for many years. Paul retired this summer, and so we're currently negotiating with a new agent named Philippe Dutheil.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2017/18

FAMOUS PUPPET DEATH SCENES

AT THE EDINBURGH FRINGE

A heart-wrenching evening of relentless tragedy: a collection of the greatest mortal moments from the most renowned puppet shows in history. Yes, you will weep. But you will also emerge transformed by the power of eternal art.

First created in 2006, *Famous Puppet Death Scenes* is our flagship show; it has been seen by over 44,000 people in 37 cities worldwide. It was a sell-out hit in Edinburgh, which is leading to unprecedented touring next season.

JABBERWOCKY

WORLD PREMIERE AND ITS MAIDEN TOUR

*The Old Trouts valiantly face the monster that lurks at the bottom of the hole in your sad, sad heart. No more lonesome nights, staring at the ceiling, wondering how it all came to this: witness the bleakly beautiful story of a rabbit who does need heed the frantic warning inscribed to us in the strange and ancient poem known as *Jabberwocky*: BEWARE.*

Our newest creation, *Jabberwocky* premiered in Edmonton in November, then played Vancouver, Calgary, Málaga and Granada in Spain, and the Nuits de Fourvière Festival in Lyon, France. Next up will be the World Puppetry Festival in Charlesville-Mézières, France in 2019.



“one of the best shows of the year... not to be missed.” [The Globe & Mail](#)

“visually stunning and endlessly entertaining.” [The L.A. Times](#)

“Exquisite... boundless invention... virtuosity...” [Variety Magazine](#)

“...original...hilarious...breathtaking inventiveness...” [The Georgia Straight](#)

“hilarious, beautiful and macabre... simply remarkable... too intense to allow its audience to catch its breath, too beautiful for them to want to.” [Fast-Forward Magazine](#)

“dramatically engaging and visually stunning.” [The Boston Globe](#)

“brilliant, sublime and often hilarious... sheer visual poetry... engages an audience like few productions I’ve ever seen....” [Monday Magazine](#)

“...inspired ... timely ... a fantastical visual world ... as bleak as it is funny.” [The Globe & Mail](#)

“... truly masterful ... mind-boggling ... entertaining on so many levels.” [The National Post](#)

“... a wild, imaginary world ... fresh, wholly original.” [The Georgia Straight](#)

“...unimaginable creativity and talent ... downright beautiful.” [Vue Magazine](#)

Photo Credits: Jason Stang Photography

TWELFTH NIGHT

AT THEATRE CALGARY

Inspired by a visit to a miraculously preserved Baroque theatre in a castle in the Czech Republic once owned by a mad baron who painted the whole town as a giant theatre set, the Old Trouts teamed up with Jill Keilley at the National Arts Centre a couple years ago to create a this exuberantly beautiful take on Shakespeare's great comedy of mistaken identity ~ a new era for the Trouts, since it's a show with hardly any puppets in it. Okay, a few. But not many.

Theatre Calgary remounted the show in February this year, and swept the Calgary Theatre Awards:

Best Costumes (the Trouts), **Best Set** (Trouts again), **Best Supporting Actor** (Chris Hunt as Sir Andrew Aguecheek), **Best Director** (Jill Keilley), and **Best Overall Production**.

IINISIKIMM

In collaboration with Indigenous artists and musicians, Trout Pete Balkwill created a lantern puppet experience outdoors at night in the front range of the Rocky Mountains, celebrating the return of the buffalo to Banff National Park ~ an event of mystical and historic significance. It was remounted for the Unison Festival in Calgary this May.



WHAT'S UP NEXT...

GHOST OPERA

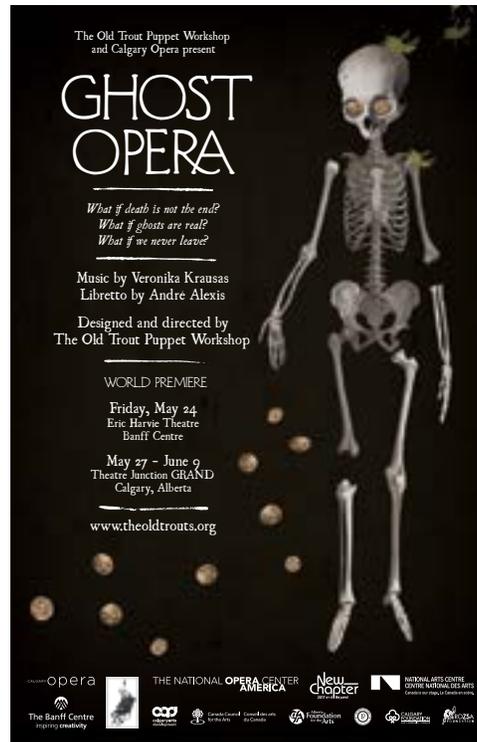
*Why do we have to die? What if we don't?
What if this doesn't end? What if we never
leave? What if ghosts are real?*

*It's a ghost story told by ghosts, inspired
by an Ancient Greek tale about an old
house on the outskirts of the city, for sale,
strangely cheap. But then again, all the
previous owners have all gone mad, and
there are dark rumours about something
that lives in the well.*

This season the Trouts have also been hard at work on their biggest production to date, scheduled to premiere at the Banff Centre in May of 2019: *Ghost Opera*, a collaboration with Giller Prize-winning author André Alexis and LA-based composer Veronika Krausas. There's going to be upwards of 27 people on stage, with puppeteers on stilts, suspended from the roof, flying through the air, and bringing a macabre tale of murder and madness to over-the-top operatic life.

HANSEL & GRETEL

Vancouver Opera commissioned the Trouts to design puppets, sets, and costumes for their holiday production of the classic 19th century opera *Hansel & Gretel*. It was a huge success, selling out an extended run, and is now slated for San Diego in 2019.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

The Old Trouts met each other long ago when we all worked at Camp Chief Hector in the Rocky Mountains outside of Calgary. The spirit of that place has always been a big part of the Old Trout ethos ~ one of the biggest ways those early days still live in the Old Trouts today is in our commitment to teaching the next generation of artists in our discipline. We teach workshops and intensives all over the world, and train new performers in our **APPRENTICE PERFORMER PROGRAM** ~ and this year we piloted our new **APPRENTICE BUILDER PROGRAM**, with gracious support from the Calgary Foundation, training several emerging artists with hands-on work experience in puppet building. And we've now formally created the Canadian Academy of Mask and Puppetry ~ or **CAMP** ~ which is currently gathering resources and strategizing towards the creation of the only post-secondary puppetry program in English-speaking Canada. We're well on our way.

And in the meantime, Pete teaches his bi-annual 2-week puppetry workshops:

**The New England Puppet Intensive
Summer 2018**

**The Banff Centre Puppet Intensive
Winter 2018**

THE OLD TROUT FILM DIVISION

FROM NAUGHTY TO NICE

We've been making films for many years, including several shorts for BravoFact and a music video for Feist – which won the **Juno Award for Best Video** in 2007.

Our most recent project was our first half hour TV production – *From Naughty to Nice*, a Christmas special co-produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

It's the story of Santa, back when he was a greedy, obstinate little kid. He had an army of elves making toys just for him, but still he wanted more... until one day a little girl named Martha arrived to the North Pole, and changed everything.

WINNER: Best Live Action Short, Audience Choice, Calgary International Film Festival 2014, AMPIA Award for Best Narrator 2015 .

We've been developing treatments over the past couple years that we're aiming to develop into our first feature film once we finish *Ghost Opera*.



UPCOMING FILM PROJECTS

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

A meditation on the Northwest Passage as myth, mystery, and metaphor, a history told from the perspective of Inuit hunters and gods, mad Spanish sailors, Basque whalers, Italian barbers, Grey Whales, and Royal Navy cannibals.

THE UNEXPECTEDLY FINAL PERFORMANCE OF GUNTHER GRUMM, THE GREATEST LION TAMER IN THE WORLD

The title says it all. A story about the friendship between a lion tamer and the lion he tamed, set in a circus tent in the middle of nowhere.

THE REDEMPTION OF JACOB MARLEY

Jacob Marley's ghost comes to save Scrooge in the story we all know – but we never do hear what happens to him in the end. Is he still doomed to wander the world in chains?

THE SHILL

Back in turn-of-the-century Paris, theatres would hire claqueurs, who were professional applauders. Some were experts in crying loudly, some at laughing boisterously, and some were experts at praising the play at intermission. This is the story of how an old shell game con-artist saves his daughter, and invents claque-ing along the way.

PHILANTHROPY: 2017-18

Rainbow Trouts (\$500+)

Grant Burns
CKAID
Johanne Daoust
Greg Francis
& Jennifer Koshan

Lara King
Doug McKeag
Marilyn Palmer

Bull Trouts (\$250 - \$499)

James Gottselig
Duval Lang
Chris Manderson

Speckled Trouts (\$100 - \$249)

Leanne Duke
Robert Ohlson
Ruth Kroon
Alli Marshall
Kelly Swart-Davis
& Loran Davis
Anne Underwood

Brook Trouts (\$50 - \$99)

Davo Brawn
Gerry Burger-Martindale
Sean Carter
Andea deJong
Michi Galvin
Nikki Loach
Leroy Parker
Steve Pearce
Ewa Piorko
Becky Scott
Adriana VanDer Heijden
Brigitte Von Rothemburg

Little Trouts (Up to \$49)

Amber Anderson
Allison Bernardin
James Bradbury
Marilyn Field
Amanda Froehler
Barb Geiger
Tyler Goudie
Elizabeth Hodgkins
Paul Kent
Chelsea King
Elvyra Krausas
Kye Kocher
Maria Meijer
Judi Meyer
Jesse Meyers
Jiehan Qu
Irene Rasetti
Pat Rozitis
Joshua Stretch
Heinz K. Unger
Teague Urquhart
Lynn Wilton
Iris Wong
Shelley Youngblut
James Zaback



The whole gang at the Banff Centre,
November, 2014.

Photo credit: Beautiful Stranger

OUR FUNDERS & PARTNERS



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS
Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Duval Lang - President
Leanne Duke - Treasurer
Andrea Shalanski - Secretary
James Davidge
Greg Francis
Jason Howse
Doug McKeag
Lara King

STAFF:

Bob Davis - General Manager

AGENT:

Tanguay Impresario

Contact Information:

Phone: 403-508-4929

Email: mail@theoldtrouts.org

Web: www.theoldtrouts.org

Studio Location:

102, 4632 1st Street SE
Calgary, AB
T2G 2L 3

FINANCIAL POSITION 2017/18

	2017 actuals (audited)	2018 projected (unaudited)
ASSETS	\$337,043	\$360,000
LIABILITIES	\$293,478	\$305,000
NET ASSETS	\$43,565	\$55,000
REVENUES	\$404,551	\$741,401
EXPENSES	\$390,901	\$741,401
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 15,469	\$0

MANDATE:

To promote and present puppet theatre, sculpture, and conventional theatre and to provide education in these areas.

To facilitate collaborative production of puppet shows, sculpture, theatre and other related art.

To provide a facility that encourages varied and eclectic artistic endeavors.

CORPORATE INFORMATION

Founded: 1999

Incorporated: February 29th, 2000

Alberta Corporate Society Number:
508773322

Years of Operation: 18

Year Ending: August 31st

Canadian Business and Charity
Number: 86702 1529 RROOO1



Photo Credit: Jason Stang Photography