



**RONNIE  
BURKETT**



Represented by:  
**JOHN Lambert & ASSOC., INC.**

# RONNIE BURKETT



**R**onnie Burkett has been captivated by puppetry since the age of seven, when he opened the World Book Encyclopedia to “Puppets”. He began touring his puppet shows around Alberta at the age of fourteen and has been on the road ever since.

“ Ronnie Burkett is one of the geniuses of the world... seeing his troupe every few years has just become a necessity of civilized theatregoing. ”

**THE VILLAGE VOICE**  
*(New York, NY, USA)*

Recognized as one of Canada's foremost theatre artists, Ronnie Burkett has been credited with creating some of the world's most elaborate and provocative puppetry. Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes was formed in 1986 and has stimulated an unprecedented adult audience for puppet theatre, continuously playing to great critical and public acclaim on Canada's major stages, and as a guest company on numerous international tours abroad.

Ronnie has received numerous awards in the Canadian theatre as a playwright, actor and designer for his work with Theatre of Marionettes, including the 2009 Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, and international recognition including a Village Voice OBIE Award in New York for Off-Broadway Theatre, and four Citations of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from the American Center of the Union Internationale de la Marionnette.

*Penny Plain* is the twelfth production from Theatre of Marionettes, following the international successes *Billy Twinkle*, *10 Days on Earth*, *Provenance* and the “Memory Dress Trilogy” of *Tinka's New Dress*, *Street of Blood* and *Happy*.

This 2011/12 season marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes.





# PENNY PLAIN





## CANADA

Place des Arts	Montreal, QC	April 12 - 21, 2012
National Arts Centre	Ottawa, ON	March 13 - April 1, 2012
Factory Theatre	Toronto, ON	January 20 - February 26, 2012
The Cultch	Vancouver, BC	November 17 - December 17, 2011
Alberta Theatre Projects	Calgary, AB	October 18 - November 6, 2011
Citadel Theatre	Edmonton, AB	September 22 - October 9, 2011

## What the critics are saying

“In *Penny Plain*, by the brilliant Ronnie Burkett, the slam of emotion these little wooden puppets will evoke will surprise you.”  
- *Globe and Mail*

“Full of wit, humour and humanity, *Penny Plain* is virtually flawless. At once funny and dark, *Penny Plain* is simply what we all look for as playgoers – a live stage experience that leaves us a little different at the end from the way we felt when we first took our seats. It’s great theatre.”  
- *The Calgary Herald*

“Masterfully, insightfully and gently told...there is intelligence, creativity, poetry and artistry here of the highest caliber. Burkett is, quite plainly, a Canadian treasure.”  
- *The Vancouver Courier*

“It’s a profoundly eerie, strange and strangely beautiful, experience; theatre at its most startling, moment to moment.”  
- *The Edmonton Journal*

“Plain brilliance. *Penny Plain*, the latest work from puppet master Ronnie Burkett, packs plus-sized emotional punch into its diminutive scale.”  
- *The Vancouver Sun*

“A wildly inventive gothic tale about the final days of the apocalypse that challenges the intellect even as it assaults the funny bone. Burkett is an unbridled genius.”  
- *The Calgary Sun*

“Ronnie Burkett’s *Penny Plain* is pure poetry.”  
- *The Georgia Straight*

“Ronnie Burkett is back with all guns blazing. The best of Burkett, *Penny Plain* will be definitely be at the top of the canon.”  
- *The Edmonton Sun*

“Like the best of any kind of theatre, *Penny Plain* will be in your ears and in your eyes for a long, long time...it carries the kind of weight that follows you out the door of the theatre and into your own life.”  
- *Avenue Magazine*

## BURKETT'S NEW SHOW STARTLES WITH LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG IDEAS

### *Marionette master creates eerie, beautiful experience at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre*

EDMONTON - For a quarter of a century now, Ronnie Burkett and his troupe of marionette actors have startled and provoked us, delighted and moved us, in a theatre of big emotions and big ideas.

There are strings attached, to be sure (and Burkett is a virtuoso at using them), but none to his ever-expanding creative universe, which is both free-floating and anchored to human expressiveness and truth.

With Penny Plain, his latest show, getting its world première at the Citadel, the country's most adventurous theatre artist dares to imagine the apocalypse, the end of human civilization. It's a profoundly eerie, strange and strangely beautiful, experience; theatre at its most startling, moment to moment.

The new play takes us to Penny's rooming house, three days before the great human finale. Penny is blind, so news of accelerating global chaos arrives via the media: the play opens with a flurry of dire reports of rampaging pandemic and flood, mass extinction, the end of the food supply, not to mention banking and money.

As "the outside world unwinds itself from the spool of order," Penny offers a biscuit to her companion Geoffrey, a dog who speaks with unusual gravitas and sits in a gentleman's chair to converse. Geoffrey leaves, in a heartbreaking little farewell scene.

At the last chapter of everything human, every goodbye might be forever; Penny Plain is full of them. In the case of Geoffrey, it's his last chance, he explains, to "try the world before it's done," to live as a man and see the world through his own eyes. Meanwhile, a gallery of grotesque, haunting or haunted characters arrive, in flight, in pursuit of last chances — or in the case of a number of potential Geoffrey replacements including a fast-taking Latino chihuahua and a white-trash poodle ("I'm here for the doggie position"), in hopes of employment.

Penny's own tenants exit on missions of their own, and re-enter with gruesome updates. And the house continues to sprout vegetation, as if nature is reclaiming something from man.

With Burkett it seems only right to talk about the play first, despite the unique theatricality of his diminutive company. His exquisitely sculpted puppets and the uncanny virtuosity that sets them in motion aren't on your mind, actually. The remarkable technique, this time challenged by extremely long strings, conceals itself; Burkett himself seems to vanish. Almost immediately you're in the play, watching dimensional characters played by actors who only happen to be marionettes, in an unfolding drama. Nobody in the world does what Burkett does.

The stage activity — orchestrated by the puppeteer from the dark top of his two-tiered glass-paned design — has a weird kind of domestic comic buzz to it. You flinch, a little, from words like "sitcom" or "screwball comedy" under the circumstances, but there it is. Burkett's playful wit, which has always had an appetite for the black knife-edges of things and entendres that are shamelessly double, takes to the apocalypse with a certain relish.

Jubilee, for example, in a furious avenging fury, stomps out of the house in full Joan of Arc armour on a holy crusade for silence, to rid the world of young women who yap unremittently into cellphones on "the petri dish of public transport."

Jubilee is the ferocious caregiver to her mom, the demanding, aged Queenie whose excremental rants, punctuated by slams from a walker, have a kind of apocalyptic fury of their own. Has the fraught relationship between a shrill but creaky parent and a resentful middle-aged child ever been set forth more vividly?

The most overtly riotous characters are a pair of American fundamentalist survivalists in flashy camouflage gear: Meet the Tittys, Mel and Barb (a grotesque vision of Barbie gone to bigger boobs and Botox). They've sneaked across the border illegally — in Barb's case in open-toed pumps — to inflict themselves on unsuspecting Canadians while they wait for Jesus. What if Canucks are tougher than they look? "Shoot, Mel, what are they gonna do? Cover us with maple syrup and lick us to death?"

Penny is a beautiful creation, from the alert forward lean of her old shoulders to her knock-kneed way of inhabiting a wing chair. Tuppence, a young girl on the lam from her murderously fanatic parents, seems neutral, till she takes up the position of Penny's new dog companion. I love the scene, the play's sole flashback, where they cuddle up in the chair together, the young one wonderstruck and the old one lost in memory.

Always with Burkett, the craftsmanship and theatrical accoutrements are impeccable. John Alcorn's otherworldly score, with its floating wisps of heartbreaking soprano voices atop full choir, is a highly original participant. So is Kevin Humphrey's lighting. And Kim Crossley's costumes, overcoats to brogues, have a mesmerizing detail about them.

There's poignance where you'd least expect it. Mr. Dollop, for example, is a banker with a heart who leaves the house in a dress to face the furious mob. There's a surprising and heart-felt reunion between a father and his estranged son. Gepetto, literature's most famous puppeteer, is here a beautifully conceived old man, hunched into his trenchcoat. He's renounced the magic child who fled to become ordinary, "a real live boy." Pino, all grown up, tracks him down to Penny's rooming house. And their fleeting conversation is all about the difficult, nuanced relationship between an artist and his creation, the strings attached to every relationship, and what it means to be human.

That's something that Burkett knows all about. "I like my world small," Gepetto says to his son. "Don't ask me to go out into the big world." Burkett has somehow figured out how to embrace both.

PENNY  
PLAIN



# Anything but plain

Marionettes mesmerize in a comical yet thoughtful tale of impending doom

## PENNY PLAIN

★★★★★

At 11:15 and Nov. 11  
STARTS  
Review by Louis B. Hobson  
and his marionettes

LOUIS B. HOBSON  
Calgary Sun

There is nothing simple, ordinary, average or mundane about Dennis Burket's new marionette production Penny Plain, currently running at Alberta Theatre Projects' Maitland Cohen Theatre.

It is a wildly inventive gothic tale about the final days of the apocalypse that challenges the audience as well as the tiny puppets.

Penny Plain is a liturgical winner who runs a household.

Some of her scenes have already premiered in the air-conditioned theatres that spruce neither man nor beast. The actors, like Penny, know their hearts are mechanical. It is the remaining few seconds and strangers seeking refuge who enrapture both Penny and the audience.

There's Penny's faithful companion, the talking dog Geoffrey, who seems to be his final days as a gentleman but he is in for a shock when he ventures into the ravaging, decaying world.

Puppets, a young girl on the run, pretends to be a dog so Penny will allow her

to fill Geoffrey's shoes and there's a young boy in a gas mask who's parents are falling.

One of Penny's friends is Hepatic, who like Burket, goes life to projects. Geoffrey's mother with his famous Picoche is fascinating for what it has to say about parenting.

Burket has never shied away from risque or even vulgar language and he goes full throttle this time with the talking mother/daughter duo of Queenie and Jolene.

To read a human and PEW it again Burket is an unrelenting genius.

He writes the script, designs the puppets and gives them such a distinct voice as he opens them from scolding about their hair color.

His talents have rightfully been lauded around the globe and he may have found himself with Penny Plain, both as writer and performer.

The show runs 120 minutes without intermission, yet I could have sat for come that long. I was entertained, entertained and mesmerized by the immeasurable talents of Dennis Burket.



# PENNY PLAIN

## IT'S DOOMSDAY, AND THESE ARE DEFINITELY NOT THE MUPPETS

Ronnie Burkett's puppet *visions are sometimes funny, but also terrifying and breathtaking*

Especially now, with the hype for the coming Muppets movie in high gear, the term "puppet show," for many, is going to evoke a certain expectation. Penny Plain is not that show. There are laughs, to be sure. But mostly it is terrifying.

Dark humour is nothing new for Ronnie Burkett. The Alberta-born, Toronto-based puppeteer has earned an international reputation creating smart, sophisticated works over 25 years with his Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes. In Penny Plain, which opened in Vancouver Thursday night following its world premiere in Edmonton in September (and a run in Calgary), there are significant emotional strings attached to the entertainment. Burkett is light on his feet as he operates his marionettes on the catwalk above, but on the stage below, things are heavy.

The show opens with a montage of news clips, making it evident that the end is nigh. The banking system has collapsed, Iceland is submerged, kangaroos are attacking humans. A global pandemic is killing millions, daily. The government has enacted a "Stay at home, stay safe" campaign that is upsetting gays and lesbians; they want to greet the end of the world with a party.

By the time the lights come up, it is clear these are very dark days indeed.

And then: a warm domestic scene: Penny Plain, an elderly blind woman, is chatting with her canine companion Geoffrey - both of them seated in wingback chairs. Despite the end-of-days situation, their conversation is civilized, not hysterical. But Geoffrey has some bad news of his own: He is going to use the apocalyptic opportunity to go out in the world and try to live as a man. He has arranged a number of potential companions to take his place, and be Penny's eyes. She's more interested in her ears. "Who will listen with me? Who will listen to me?"

The candidates range from an oversexed Chihuahua to a white-trash poodle to a wide-eyed orphan named Tuppence, who pretends to be a dog. She wins the spot.

Penny runs a boarding house, and her tenants include a murderous red-pencil-wielding editor and her demonic mother, a cross-dressing bank teller with a heart of gold, a woman approaching middle age who desperately wants a child, and an older puppeteer - Geppetto Jones - whose first creation, now going by the name Pino, has left him feeling betrayed.

These interactions become more poignant as the play - an hour and 40 minutes with no break (and it flies) - continues. One exchange - between Tuppence and Oliver, a boy wearing a prep-school blazer and a gas mask (removed for this scene) - is particularly moving for its awkward universality. Whatever is developing between these two will not be allowed to take hold. Time is not on their side.

The slam of emotion - when Geppetto and Pino embrace, for example - is a surprise; can little wooden puppets really evoke such reactions?

The marionettes are beautiful - small works of great art that, despite the long strings in this production, Burkett handles with shocking mastery. (And when he doesn't, he delights with an improvised line: "What's the matter with your head?" "I don't know. Must be opening night.") As many times as you might force yourself to look up into the shadows to watch him operate, your eye is always drawn down-string to the puppets into which he has so authentically infused life. His talent is simply extraordinary.

It's too bad he at times goes for cheap laughs (the "doggie position" double entendre was a particularly low point), but this is a minor irritant. The writing is for the most part brilliant, so effective that this rumination on what is natural - and how nature is changing - evoked real terror as I contemplated what we are doing to the planet, and where we might be headed.

"Dad, the world's gone mad," Pino tells Geppetto. "No one wants to see a puppet show now."

Wrong. This is exactly the time to see a puppet show. This puppet show.

Penny Plain is at The Cultch in Vancouver until Dec. 17 and later travels to Toronto's Factory Theatre (Jan. 20-Feb. 26), the National Arts Centre in Ottawa (March 13-April 1) and Place des Arts in Montreal (April 12-21).

PENNY  
PLAIN



## SPACE REQUIREMENTS:

- 36' wide x 30' deep x 14' high
- Set sits a minimum of 6' upstage of stage edge



## LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS:

- 65 Profile lighting instruments (ideally Source 4's); of these, 10 need to achieve 50 degrees (fixed degree or zoom); 2 of these are the instrument body only, the Artist supplies 90 degree lens tubes x 2; the remaining profiles will vary from 15 – 36 degree, depending on the venue.
- 4 @ 1000w fresnels with barn doors.
- 77 dimmers, not including venue houselights; 24 of these circuits are required at stage level for the instruments on the lighting stands (provided by the Artist), as well as set-mounted lighting.
- 9 iris units.
- 14 'B' size gobo holders
- Power from either a dimmer (set as a non-dim) or a dedicated circuit, for the Artist's 6 LED fixtures. These 6 LED's are at stage level. All 6 fixtures can be plugged into the same circuit or they may be separate, whichever is best for the venue. These fixtures require DMX cable, which the Artist supplies. The Presenter will supply DMX to either the DSR or DSL corner of the stage to connect the first unit.
- 12 to 14 adapters to convert from standard 15 amp u-ground plugs to the venues dimming system.

## SOUND REQUIREMENTS:

- The Artist provides the playback and back-up systems, which are run through the Presenter's mixing console from the house position. This system consists of two Mac mini's, two sound cards, 19" monitor, QLab, and all accessories to run the show through the Theatre's house speakers and console. The production is, ideally, run in 5.1 surround sound, but can also be run in stereo.
- The sound operator and sound system will be in a house position, outside of the control booth
- The Presenter will provide the main house speaker set up.
- The Artist must have access to adjust the output level of the main systems' amplifiers.
- The Presenter will supply two (2) CD players patched into the system as back up for sound cues, if the venue owns CD players; if not, these are not required equipment.
- The Presenter will provide 2 additional speakers to the house set up to be used as the Artist's monitors. The monitors must hang at a height between 11' and 12' from the theatre stage floor and hang in such a way that they do not interfere with lighting instruments. Placement for the monitors provided by the Artist.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE AND CREWING REQUIRED:

Please note – prior to the following four days, the venue will provide an advance hang of the lighting plot that must be hung, cabled, coloured and patched. The lighting plot will be provided in advance to accommodate the pre-rig. All masking must be in place.

<b>Day ONE TECH</b>	8:00 am	Cargo arrives- Load in Set-up (6 crew for a 5 hour call) Unpack puppets – Ronnie, no crew
	1:00 pm	Lunch/Set-up complete (Release set-up crew) Lighting focus (Head LX + 4 crew - 4 hours)
	3:00 pm	Sound Install (2 sound crew - 3 hours)
	5:00 pm	Dinner
	6:00 pm	Lighting focus (Head LX + 4 crew - 4 hours)
	10:00 pm	End of Day
<b>Day TWO TECH</b>	8:00 am	Lighting Levels (Head LX - 4 hours)
	12:00 pm	Lunch
	1:00 pm	Lighting Levels (Head LX - 4 hours) Sound System Prep (Head Sound - 4 hours)
	5:00 pm	Dinner/Sound Quiet Time
	6:00 pm	Sound Levels (Head Sound - 4 hours)
	10:00 pm	End of Day/SCENIC PAINTER TBD-Paint Call
<b>Day THREE TECH</b>	8:00 am	Tech Notes (2 crew TBD)
	12:00 pm	Lunch
	1:00 pm	Preset
	2:00 pm	Cue to Cue/Run Through (no viewers)
	5:00 pm	End of Day/OR Dinner
	10:00 pm	Continue work where required End of Day/SCENIC PAINTER TBD-Paint Call
<b>Day FOUR TECH</b>	8:00 am	Tech Notes (2 crew TBD)
	12:00 am	Lunch
	1:00 pm	Half hour
	1:30 pm	Media Call
	2:30 pm	End of Media Call/Break
	5:30 pm	Quiet Time (Artist and SM alone onstage)
	6:30 pm	Crew Call
	7:30 pm	Half Hour
8:00 pm	Performance	

**Day ONE** – 6 set-up crew x 5 hours; 5 LX Crew x 8 hours; 2 sound crew x 3 hours

**Day TWO** – 1 Head LX x 8 hours; 1 Head Sound x 4 hours

**Day THREE** – 2 notes crew x 4 hours – TBD

**Day FOUR** – 2 notes crew x 4 hours – TBD



**RETIRED**  
PRODUCTIONS

# RONNIE BURKETT



Factory Theatre	Toronto, Canada	2010
Alberta Theatre Projects	Calgary, Canada	2010
Place des Arts	Montreal, Canada	2010
Sydney Opera House	Sydney, Australia	2009
The Arts Centre	Melbourne, Australia	2009
Geelong Performing Arts Centre	Geelong, Australia	2009
Warwick Arts Centre	Coventry, UK	2009
Royal and Derngate Theaters	Northampton, UK	2009
The Lowry & queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	2009
BITE 09: Barbican	London, UK	2009
Vancouver East Cultural Centre	Vancouver, Canada	2009
National Arts Centre	Ottawa, Canada	2008
Citadel Theatre WORLD PREMIERE	Edmonton, Canada	2008

## 10 DAYS ON EARTH

Place des Arts	Montreal, Canada	2007
Wiener Festwochen	Vienna, Austria	2007
queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	2007
BITE 07: Barbican	London, UK	2007
Auckland Festival	Auckland, NZ	2007
Sydney Opera House	Sydney, Australia	2007
Vancouver East Cultural Centre	Vancouver, BC, Canada	2006
Theatre Network	Edmonton, AB, Canada	2006
Alberta Theatre Projects	Calgary, AB, Canada	2006
CanStage	Toronto, ON, Canada	2006

## Provenance

The Brighton Festival	Brighton, UK	2005
Kampnagel	Hamburg, Germany	2005
Sodra Theatre	Stockholm, Sweden	2005
Manitoba Theatre Centre	Winnipeg, Canada	2005
Great Canadian Theatre Company	Ottawa, Canada	2005
Queensland Performing Arts Centre	Brisbane, Australia	2004
Melbourne International Arts Festival	Melbourne, Australia	2004
Wiener Festwochen	Vienna, Austria	2004
queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	2004
BITE 04 (The Barbican)	London, UK	2004
Alberta Theatre Projects	Calgary, Canada	2004
CanStage	Toronto, Canada	2004
Vancouver East Cultural Centre	Vancouver, Canada	2003
Theatre Network (WORLD PREMIERE)	Edmonton, Canada	2003



## HaPpY

queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	2003
Brighton Festival	Brighton, UK	2003
One Yellow Rabbit/ATP	Calgary, Canada	2001
BITE 2001 (The Barbican)	London, UK	2001
Manitoba Theatre Centre	Winnipeg, Canada	2001
CanStage	Toronto, Canada	2001
Theatre Network	Edmonton, Canada	2000
Theaterformen 2000	Braunschweig, Germany	2000
Usine C	Montreal, Canada	2000
Du Maurier World Stage (WORLD PREMIERE)	Toronto, Canada	2000

## STREET OF BLOOD

The Tramway	Glasgow, UK	2002
queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	2002
Brighton Festival	Brighton, UK	2002
Södra Teatern	Stockholm, Sweden	2002
NYTP (Jim Henson Int'l Festival)	New York, USA	2000
CanStage	Toronto, Canada	1999
Theatre Network	Edmonton, Canada	1999
One Yellow Rabbit/ATP	Calgary, Canada	1998
Manitoba Theatre Centre (WORLD PREMIERE)	Winnipeg, Canada	1998

## TINIKAS NEW PINKS

Melbourne International Arts Festival	Melbourne, Australia	2002
Vancouver East Cultural Centre	Vancouver, Canada	2001
Theatreformen 2000	Hannover, Germany	2000
BITE 99 (The Barbican)	London, UK	1999
Theatre Bellevue	Amsterdam, Holland	1998
Images Festival	Arnhem, Holland	1998
queerupnorth	Manchester, UK	1998
Dublin Theatre Festival	Dublin, Ireland	1998
Jim Henson Int'l Festival (Public Theatre)	New York, USA	1998
Festival du Théâtre des Amériques	Montreal, Canada	1998
One Yellow Rabbit, The Secret Theatre	Calgary, Canada	1997
Theatre Network	Edmonton, Canada	1997
Belfry Theatre	Victoria, Canada	1996
National Arts Centre	Ottawa, Canada	1996
Canstage	Toronto, Canada	1995
Manitoba Theater Centre (WORLD PREMIERE)	Winnipeg, Canada	1994

# Billy Twinkle

## *Requiem for a Golden Boy*

**B**illy Twinkle is a middle-aged cruise ship puppeteer who dazzles audiences with his Stars in Miniature marionette niteclub act. His saucy burlesque stripper Rusty titillates the tourists, octogenarian Bunny invokes sidesplitting laughter with the inflatable balloon in his pants, Bumblebear juggles and roller-skates and steals the hearts of every audience, and society dame Bidy Bantam Brewster brings a bit of highbrow hilarity to the high seas with her drunken aria. Billy is the best in the business and on top of the world as he floats along through life.

Until he is fired by the cruiseline. Standing at the edge of the ship contemplating a watery demise, Billy is abruptly called back to reality when his dead mentor Sid Diamond appears as a hand puppet. Sid literally will not leave his side, and forces Billy to re-enact his life as a puppet show in order to remember and rekindle the passion Billy once had for puppets, people and the dream of a life that sparkles.

For anyone stuck in the middle – mid-career, mid-love, mid-life – caught between our own past and future, this requiem for a golden boy shines a little light on the wonder of youth meeting the wisdom of age with a kick in the pants to finish what we started.

BILLY TWINKLE *Requiem for a Golden Boy* premiered at The Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, October 2008. Subsequent touring included Canada's National Arts Centre (Ottawa, Canada), the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (Vancouver, Canada) the Barbican Centre (London, UK), the Lowry Centre (Manchester, UK), the Royal and Derngate Theatres (Northampton, UK), the Warwick Arts Centre (Coventry, UK) and will bring the production to the Geelong Arts Centre (Geelong, Australia), the Arts Centre (Melbourne, Australia), and the Sydney Opera House (Sydney, Australia).

### **Created and Performed by Ronnie Burkett**

*commissioned by*  
The Citadel Theatre (*Edmonton, Canada*)

*and co-commissioned by*  
Canada's National Arts Centre (*Ottawa, Canada*)  
The Vancouver East Cultural Centre (*Vancouver, Canada*)  
The Arts Centre (*Melbourne, Australia*)  
Sydney Opera House (*Sydney, Australia*)  
barbicanbite09 (*London, UK*)



# Billy Twinkle

*Requiem for a Golden Boy*





“ 10 Days on Earth is art of the highest order... Burkett is an artist. And having painted the marionette equivalent of the Sistine Chapel in all its flash and colour, he's now content to step back and show us the delight and humanity he can find in a single piece of stone. ”

TORONTO SUN  
(Toronto, Canada)

# 10 DAYS on EARTH

He lived alone with very little and more than enough, and preferred it that way. “Simply, simply” he was oft heard to say. He was alone, on his own, and that was okay.

Darrel is a middle-aged, intellectually challenged man who lives with his mother. When she dies in her sleep, Darrel does not realise she is gone, and so, for over a week, he lives alone. Tandem to Darrel's day to day routine are the adventures of his favorite children's book characters, Honeydog and Little Burp. Their search for a home leads the dog and duck duo to an understanding of family, while Darrel's ease in the world illustrates just how his mother has paved the path for him to be without her. Episodes from the past, like faded colour snapshots from a family album, illustrate this mother's love for her son in all its honesty and fierce, unwavering will. Simple, tender, funny and unapologetic, 10 Days On Earth asks –

*If you were alone but didn't know it, would you feel lonely?*

*The original production of 10 DAYS ON EARTH is co-commissioned by Canstage (Toronto, Canada), Barbican BITE:07, (London, UK), queerupnorth (Manchester, UK), and Wiener Festwochen (Vienna, Austria)*



Created 2006 - Retired 2007



# 10 DAYS on EARTH



“ The art of theatre doesn't get much better than this. ”

THE EDMONTON SUN  
(Edmonton, Canada)

# Provenance

A mysterious figure frozen in a painting, sold and stolen, displayed and desired over the course of a century, now hidden in a Viennese brothel by a madam on the verge of madness. Canada's foremost artist in puppet theatre, Ronnie Burkett creates some of the world's most elaborate and provocative puppetry. Bawdy, wry, witty and sentimental, Burkett's work plumbs the highs and lows of the human experience in a play that is tender, exotic, erotic and wonderfully beautiful.

*Provenance* examines notions of beauty, self-loathing and fear as it charts the journey of Pity (Pittance) Bean, a graduate obsessed with an enigmatic painting of a beautiful, androgynous boy titled "Tender". Her quest takes her to a brothel in Vienna where she makes startling discoveries about the origins and history of the painting while confronting aspects of her own identity and self-worth.

*Provenance* was initiated during the CanStage Play Creation group, 2002. Ronnie's participation as the CanStage Playwright in Residence was made possible by a Senior Artist Grant from The Canada Council for the Arts. Thanks to Iris Turcott and "the barrel of monkeys", specifically Judith Thompson, Joan MacLeod, Adam Pettle, Michael Miller, Martin Julien, Bev Cooper, Jonathan Garfinkel, Waneta Storms and Bonnie Green.

*Provenance* was a co-production with:  
BITE (London, UK);  
CanStage (Toronto, Canada);  
Melbourne International Arts Festival (Melbourne, Australia); queerupnorth (Manchester, UK);  
and Wiener Festwochen (Vienna, Austria).

The world premiere of *Provenance* occurred at Theatre Network in Edmonton, Canada on October 14, 2003.



Created 2003 – Retired 2005



# Provenance



“ (Ronnie Burkett) is a sophisticated, internationally renowned theatre artist who has pushed the concept of puppetry to new levels with rigorous, text-based plays that retain a sense of wonder and visual magic. ”

**TORONTO STAR**  
*(Toronto, Canada)*

# HaPpY

**H**APPY introduces us to the engaging title character, a “happy-go-lucky” veteran and pensioner who wanders through episodes of grief in other people’s lives. Writer and performer Ronnie Burkett examines the impact of cataclysmic sorrow in human existence and the on-going discussion of whether happiness is the lucky domain of a select few or the result of constant struggle and striving beyond the layers of human despair.

Tandem to the storyline presented by the character of HAPPY is the “grief vaudeville” of Antoine Marionette, a campy, otherworldly master of ceremonies. Within this glittering silver realm, “the grey area of life,” are arch presentations of sadness in song, pantomime and burlesque which mirror and parody the state of the central characters.

Exploding the commonly held belief that life exists somewhere in the subtle shadings of the grey area, HAPPY explores the possibility that there is no grey at all, and that life exists between the harsh black and white in a rainbow of colour and endless dimension.

Ronnie Burkett collaborated with composer and sound designer Cathy Nosaty. Visually striking and starker in design than previous THEATRE OF MARIONETTES productions, HAPPY, featured “reversed neutrals” with an all white set painted with colour by acclaimed lighting designer Bill Williams.

The world premiere of HAPPY occurred at the 2000 du Maurier World Stage Festival, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto. HAPPY was workshopped and rehearsed at The University of Calgary Department of Drama’s Reeve Theatre in March 2000

HAPPY, now retired, was a co-production with Harbourfront Centre (Toronto, Canada), Festival Theatreformen 2000 (Hannover, Germany) and The Barbican Centre (London, UK)



Created 2000 – Retired 2003



# HaPpY



“ What is remarkable about this show is the emotional and stylistic range it achieves... profoundly touching... hilarious...chilling...this puppeteer provocateur is one of the most daring theatre artists in Canada.”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL  
(Toronto, Canada)

## STREET OF BLOOD

When Mrs. Edna Rural pricks her finger and bleeds onto her sewing, she sees the face of Christ in a quilt square and the Shroud of Turnip Corners changes her sleepy prairie town forever. Having lost her faith, Edna refuses to acknowledge her grief, choosing instead to reflect upon her life in a series of memories as distinct and unique as each square of her quilt. Her controlled reverie is interrupted by the homecoming of her son Eden, a karaoke singing gay terrorist intent on revenge. With the arrival of Esmé Massengill, a has-been vampire actress seeking rejuvenation and fresh blood, the citizens of Turnip Corners fall in worship and sacrifice to their thirsty Hollywood goddess. Just as the bloodbath flows, the man in the quilt appears in the flesh to the odd trio, revealing that the bonds of blood are thicker and stranger than their individual thirsts led them to believe. And only through the deconstruction of their own beliefs and icons can Edna, Eden and Esmé find their personal redemption.

Intimate, gritty and political, funny and profoundly moving, *STREET OF BLOOD* confronts contemporary bloodlust, from the contaminated blood supply scandal, adoption, religion, AIDS and celebrity worship.

Written, created and performed by Ronnie Burkett and now retired, *STREET OF BLOOD* featured a soundscape composed by Cathy Nosaty and lighting design by Bill Williams.

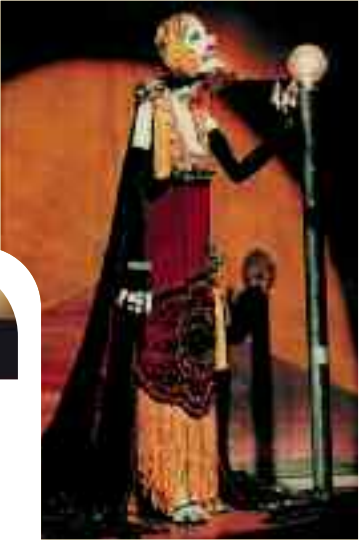
*STREET OF BLOOD* premiered at Manitoba Theatre Centre's Warehouse Theatre, Winnipeg in April 1998.



Created 1998 – Retired 2002



# STREET OF BLOOD



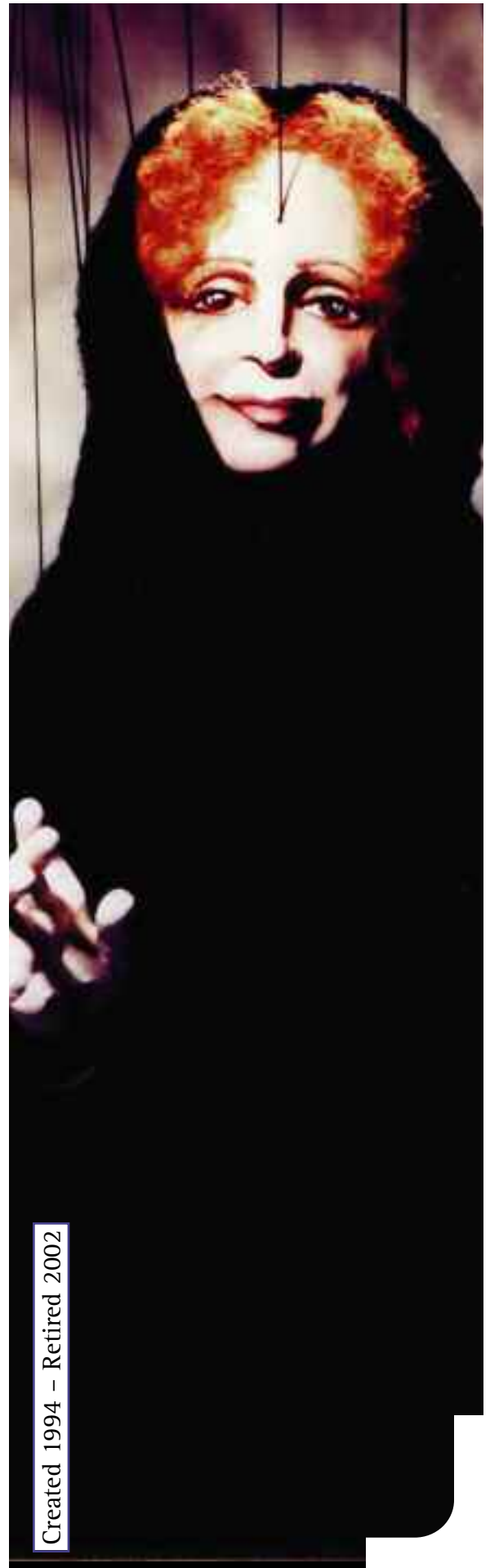
“ If theatre festivals are intended to represent the best international theatrical endeavors of imagination and style, then this show was in the right place. This is art as politics in its subtlest form; the call not to arms but to that most powerfully subversive weapon, imagination. ”

THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE  
(Dublin, Rep of Ireland)

## TINKA'S NEW DRESS

**T**INKA'S NEW DRESS is a fable for adults based upon the underground puppet shows of Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. Two childhood friends become puppeteers, each performing with the same beloved folk characters "Franz and Schnitzel". Fipsi, ambitious and naïve, aligns herself with the ruling government, The Common Good. Carl, headstrong and out-spoken, is forced underground as his satirical shows parody the censorship and oppression of The Common Good. More a commentary on the present than a glimpse into the past, *TINKA'S NEW DRESS* examines propaganda versus truth, compliance versus censorship, and the collective society versus the individual. *TINKA'S NEW DRESS* featured a cast of 36 breath-taking marionettes, a working carousel for the setting, and a haunting score by composer Cathy Nosaty. Adding to the immediacy of this allegorical tale, the two "Franz and Schnitzel" portions of the play were improvised at each performance.

Now retired, *TINKA'S NEW DRESS* was produced in the Calgary studio of Rink-A-Dink Inc. and premiered at Manitoba Theatre Centre in November 1994.



Created 1994 – Retired 2002



# TINKA'S NEW DRESS



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