

LinksHall

Chicago's Center for Independent Dance
and Performance Arts

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Hi-res digital images and artists bios available on request

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**With two days to go Links Hall Artistic Associates raise more than \$4,000 on
Kickstarter for *Banners & Cranks: a festival of cantastoria*, April 23 – May 9, 2010**

Chicago, IL - Links Hall presents *Banners & Cranks: a festival of cantastoria*, a three weekend exploration into the performance of paintings through song and story, April 23 – May 9, 2010, curated by Links Hall Artistic Associate Dave Buchen (Theater Oobleck) and Clare Dolan (Bread and Puppet Theater alum). A complementary exhibit of banners and scrolls from around the globe takes place at the Packer Schopf Gallery, 942 W Lake Street in Chicago, making it the first festival and exhibit of its kind in the United States. The Packer Schopf exhibit opens April 16 with a celebratory “cranky” happening featuring performances by Dave Buchen, Chris Schoen, Clare Dolan, Spiro Dousias and Meredith Miller. *Banners & Cranks* begins April 23 at Links Hall with a post-performance opening night reception.

Originating in 6th century India, cantastoria is the practice of storytelling (originally sung) before illustrated banners and scrolls - these original moving pictures evolved by way of Indonesia into hand-cranked banners before earning the name “cantastoria” in 16th century Italy and have recently enjoyed a revival across North America as a performance form.

Links Halls’ Artistic Associate curators are given a \$3,000 budget and free rein to engage local, national and international artists. Buchen and Dolan have augmented their festival budget through KICKSTARTER.com, an online funding platform for artists, and have raised (at date of release) \$4,229 (with 50+ hours to go) to support the festival/exhibit and the cost of producing an exhibit catalog. The catalog features essays by theater historians John Bell and Mark Sussman, anthropologist Michael Taussig, and original art by Buchen and Dolan and will function as a reference book, a catalog with information about the artists, and a work of art in its own right.

Banners & Cranks features the return to Links Hall of New York’s Great Small Works (after February’s sold-out toy theater weekend *The World Is Flat*), along with Vermont’s Bread and Puppet Theater and Clare Dolan, Pennsylvania’s Ramshackle Enterprises and the Shoddy Puppet Company, Wisconsin’s The Dolly Wagglers, Los Angeles’ Susan Simpson and Marsian, and Chicago’s Blair Thomas & Company, Meredith Miller, and Theater Oobleck. *Banners and Cranks* runs April 23 – May 9, 2010 Friday & Saturday at 8pm/ Sunday at 7pm at Links Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield Ave., Chicago, IL. 60657. Tickets are \$15 General Admission at the Door/ \$12 Online; \$10 Students at the Door/\$8 Online; Get \$30 Pass for all three weekends (includes a silk screened festival poster). For more information call 773.281.0824, or purchase online at www.LinksHall.org.

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Tradition & Reinvention: An exhibition of Sacred, Profane and Political Picture – Story performance from the Ancient to the Post-Modern curated by Clare Dolan runs from April 16 – May 18, 2010 with an opening reception April 16 5- 8 pm featuring live music, short films and performances at Packer Schopf Gallery, 942 W. Lake St., Chicago, IL 60607. www.packergallery.com.

“What I think is interesting about cantastoria is that it is making paintings come alive. Its roots are in pre-cinema and a desire to make pictures move. Having stories come out of imagery and their interplay with live performance” – Dave Buchen

~CURATOR BIOS~

DAVE BUCHEN - IS a performer, writer and printmaker living in Puerto Rico. He has been a member of Theater Oobleck for all of its 20 years and has worked as a puppeteer with Bread and Puppet and Redmoon Theater. With all three companies he has performed as a chair at one time or another. His cantastoria work includes the poems of Baudelaire, Natural History by Pliny the Elder and the continuing adventures of Baron Munchausen.

CLARE DOLAN – is a puppeteer, painter, and cantastoria aficionado currently based in Glover, Vermont. A veteran of the Bread and Puppet Theater and founder of the Museum of Everyday Life, she performs and gives workshops around the world in cantastoria, Toy Theater, stilt dancing, puppet building and parade-making.

~ARTIST BIOS~

MARSIAN DE LELLIS is a Los Angeles-based puppet artist, writer, director, producer, performer & visual artist, whose work teeters on the precipice of cute and abject and is informed by breaking news, 12-step lore and pop culture, sprinkled with a heavy dose of cyber-spirituality. Marsian's major works include *Growing Up Linda* and *Bride of Wildenstein - the Musical*, have been described as “a crazy hall of mirrors, flashing bits of a story from multiple angles... held together by a strong idiosyncratic personal aesthetic. And lots of fake fur” by *Puppetry International*. *Growing Up Linda*, an off kilter look at the fictitious daughter of a famous ice cream mogul has been performed at Theater For The New City, Mad Cow, and Perishable Theater and was noted by *Three Weeks* for its “fusion of trashy and glam” and its “debt to celebrity-obsessed daytime television” during its world première at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2008 (Visit www.GrowingUpLinda.com for more details). This year, Marsian is delighted to be returning to Chicago, where he presented *DateRape: the American Classic* at Poop Studios, *Day of Beauty and Ritual* with the Radical Faeries at Randolph Street Gallery and has made numerous appearances as a guest on *The Feast of Fun Podcast*.

~MORE BIOS FOLLOW~

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GREAT SMALL WORKS was founded in 1995 by six artists--John Bell, Trudi Cohen, Stephen Kaplin, Jenny Romaine, Roberto Rossi and Mark Sussman--who met through their associations with Bread and Puppet Theater. The collective strives to create theater of high artistic quality, and to keep theater at the heart of social life, drawing on folk, avant-garde and popular theater traditions to address contemporary issues. Great Small Works performs in theaters, schools, community gardens, libraries, museums, prisons and other public spaces, producing work on many scales, from gigantic outdoor spectacles with scores of volunteers, to miniature shows in living rooms. On any scale, Great Small Works productions seek to renew, cultivate and strengthen the spirits of their audiences, promoting theater as a model for participating in democracy. Great Small Works received an OBIE Award grant by the Village Voice and an UNIMA/USA Citation for Excellence in 1997, a New York Foundation for the Arts Community Assets Grant in 1998, the Puppeteers of America's Jim Henson Award for innovation in puppetry in 2005, and a second UNIMA/USA Citation for Excellence in 2008. <http://greatsmallworks.org/>

MEREDITH MILLER is a Chicago-based puppet designer and burlesque performer who is renowned for her combinations of the two art forms. She has been a frequent performer at Links Hall throughout the years, appearing in shows such as *The World is Flat!*, *3030*, *The Rustbelt Revival*, *The Winterroot Puppetry Festival*, *Radiant Darkness: a Festival of Shadow Puppetry*, and *Poonie's Cabaret*. She has performed locally in the *PACEdge Festival*, *Gurlesque Burlesque*, *Genderfusions* (Columbia College Chicago), *The Backyard Variety Show*, *The Belmont Burlesque Revue*, *Varietease Cabaret*, and *The Girlie-Q Variety Hour*, as well as touring both nationally and internationally. Meredith also appeared as a contestant in Comedy Central's revival of *The Gong Show*, on which she was gonged by Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, who is (ironically), a puppet. As a puppet designer, her recent credits include *Aladdin*, *Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Willie Wonka* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Rhymes with Evil* (Infusion Theater), *The Snow Queen* (in collaboration with Blair Thomas, Victory Gardens Theater), *The Addams Family* (assistant to designer Basil Twist, Broadway in Chicago), and collaborative work with Blair Thomas and Company on productions including *Moby Dick*, *The Cabaret of Desire*, *The Ox-Herder Tale*, *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, *A Rabbit's Tale*, and *Pierrot Lunaire*. Meredith holds a degree from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she studied puppet animation.

BETH NIXON is the human behind Ramshackle Enterprises. She builds puppets, masks, piñatas, parades, pageants, magical lands and other spectaculah, on her own, and in collaboration with other humans of all ages. She comes from Rhode Island, lives in West Philadelphia, and travels frequently to places where exciting building, performing or facilitating opportunities arise. Mostly she uses cardboard, science, and the imagination. She specializes in beasts and is a proponent of palindromes, bike helmets, cornstarch, tide pools, emancipatory pedagogy and snacks. For more on Beth's work please visit www.ramshackleenterprises.net

~MORE BIOS FOLLOW~

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THEATER OOBLECK is a Chicago-based company, 21 years old this year. Over those 21 years, Oobleck has launched 50 productions of idiosyncratic new works, all created and developed by members of the ensemble, working in concert to create a collective vision without an overseeing director. Oobleck has received consistent critical acclaim locally, nationally (*Theater Journal, American Theatre, the New York Times, Village Voice*), and internationally (*The Guardian* and *the Times* in London, *Maska* in Slovenia, and elsewhere). For more information visit Theateroobleck.com.

BLAIR THOMAS is a theater artist at the mid-point of his career. As founder of the highly successful Redmoon Theater, he spent a decade leading a vision to create large-scale Spectacle Theater. He was the principal creator behind productions such as *Frankie & Johnny, Moby Dick, Frankenstein, the Winter Pageant, and All Hallow's Eve* halloween parade until he left in 1998. Blair then served as co-curator for both of Chicago's International Puppet Festivals in 2000 and 2001 and became an Associate Adjunct Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2002, Blair founded this new organization to create a distinctive Chamber Puppet Theater. With the company, Blair has toured to Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Tampa, Atlanta, Phoenix, Madison, Bloomington, Mexico, and Spain, and has built a repertoire of work for adults and for children. He was awarded the Illinois Arts Council Fellowship for New Performance in 2002 and 2004, and was hand-picked to serve in the inaugural position of Jim Henson Artist-in-Residence at the University of Maryland in College Park for the 2006-07 academic year. He is a graduate of Oberlin College. For more information please visit blairthomas.org

SUSAN SIMPSON is an experimental theater artist, visual artist and filmmaker from Los Angeles. Simpson's work often involves intricate hand-made avatars and manipulated film and video projection. Her work has been presented at venues such as the HERE Art Center in New York, The Museum of Jurassic Technology and The Santa Monica Museum. A solo exhibition of her visual art and video work was presented at The Sheehan Gallery at Whitman College in 2009. Simpson is the co-founder and co-director of Automata, a non-profit devoted to the presentation of Puppet Theater, experimental film and other neglected art forms. Under its auspices she founded and directed The Manual Archives, a micro-performance space in Los Angeles for two and a half years. Simpson is on the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts School of Theater. She has received grants from the Durfee Foundation, The California Community Foundation, Creative Capital, Multi-Arts Production Fund, and The Center for Cultural Innovation. Her writing has appeared in the journals *Puppetry International* and *Double* and in *The Trench Art Tracer* (Les Figues Press, 2008).

~DETAILS FOLLOW~

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April 23 - May 9, 2010

Banners & Cranks: a festival of cantastoria

Three weekends exploring the performance of paintings through song and story

Curated by Links Hall Artistic Associate **Dave Buchen** with **Clare Dolan**

Get a POSTER PASS for just \$30 (includes a silkscreen festival poster)!

Weekend One ~ April 23-25, 2010 ~ *Without the Fluff*

Featuring: **Great Small Works, The Dolly Wagglers, Bread and Puppet Theater,**

Blair Thomas & Company and **Clare Dolan**

Crank those banners and bring out the brass band, violins, accordion and chorus for some post-modern cantastoria by Great Small Works ("The History of Oil" and "Happy Nourooz"), Wisconsin's The Dolly Wagglers, Chicago's Blair Thomas ("St. James Infirmary"), Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theater and Clare Dolan's "The Further Adventures of GoGo Girl."

Friday & Saturday at 8pm/Sunday at 7pm

Tickets \$15 (\$12)/ \$10 Students (\$8 online)

Weekend Two ~ April 30-May 2, 2010 ~ *Off the Cuff*

Theater Oobleck presents

6 x 6

Featuring performances by **David Isaacson, Diana Slickman, Jenny Magnus, Fred Lonberg Holm, Teria Gartelos** and **Danny Thompson** with scrolls by **Tim Portlock, Deborah Hunt, Blair Thomas, Javier Maldonado O'Farrell, Beatriz Santiago** and **Peter Schumann**.

Six performers improvise stories through song, storytelling, cello and Foley effects to the unfolding images of six never-beforeseen moving-picture crankies. Each night, each scroll will be interpreted by two different artists. Come all three nights and see three completely different shows!

Friday & Saturday at 8pm/Sunday at 7pm

Tickets \$15 (\$12)/ \$10 Students (\$8 online)

Get an Off the Cuff Weekend Pass for just \$20!

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Weekend Three ~ May 7-9, 2010 ~ *Brand New Stuff*

Featuring: **Shoddy Puppet Company, Ramshackle Enterprises, Susan Simpson, Marsian and Meredith Miller**

Projections and puppets and roughly cut cardboard – anything goes when stories come off their banners and walk around. The third coast's Meredith Miller performs alongside east coast world premieres by Philadelphia's Shoddy Puppet Co. and Ramschakle Enterprises and west coast wonders from L.A.: "Homesick for the World," "Growing Up Linda: Fudgie's Death."

Friday & Saturday at 8pm/Sunday at 7pm

Tickets \$15 (\$12)/ \$10 Students (\$8 online)

Banners & Cranks Silkscreen Posters \$10 each or all 5 for \$40

Poster Ticket (includes a silkscreen festival poster) \$16

Off the Cuff Weekend Pass \$20 (good for the second weekend)

POSTER PASS (good for all three weekends plus a silkscreen festival poster) \$30

For tickets and more information call **773.281.0824** or visit **www.LinksHall.org**.

Links Hall is located at 3435 N. Sheffield Avenue, Second Floor, Chicago, IL 60657—convenient to the BROWN, PURPLE & RED line stop at Belmont and RED line Addison stop in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood. For more information call **773.281.0824** or visit **www.LinksHall.org**

Links Hall is Chicago's Center for Independent Dance and Performing Arts.

Links Hall encourages artistic innovation and public engagement by maintaining a facility and providing flexible programming for the research, development and presentation of new work in the performing arts.

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