



## HAND STORIES

Yeung Fai

Artist in Residence

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

*'Sublime ... a rare glimpse into a beautiful, delicate art form.'* **Huffington Post**

*'A wonderful spectacle that delights and fascinates.'* **Le Figaro**

It starts with hands: his father's hands, his brothers', his countrymen's, and above all his own. Told through wordless, utterly playful scenes featuring hand puppets, poetic music, and striking visuals, *Hand Stories* is Chinese puppeteer Yeung Fai's deeply personal family history during the vast changes that swept China during the 20th century.

*Hand Stories* is a magical hour-long show that brilliantly inter- weaves modern multimedia effects with the ancient Chinese puppetry tradition.

Yeung Fai unravels his own autobiographical story, forced to leave China after the persecution of his famous family during the Cultural Revolution. Interweaving Yeung's epic family story with the fascinating history of 20th century China, *Hand Stories* combines traditional puppetry skills and modern multimedia effects. With skilful manipulation exquisitely hand-crafted figures, from tigers to dragons, concubines to clashing warriors, come to life before your eyes in a tale full of sadness and laugh out loud humour.

Yeung Fai is the fifth generation of his family to deal with the startlingly expressive form of traditional Chinese hand puppeteering. Hand Stories joins Fai with French puppeteer Yoann Pencolé and a creative team that includes the intense visual design of Taiwan's Yilan Yeh and with the original music of Colin Offord of Australia.

'*Hand Stories* first came to me years ago. At the time I was touring a show called "Scenes of Peking Opera", a piece which was handed down to me through my family. I am heir to five generations of Chinese glove puppeteers, and the last in a direct line of father-son puppeteers. It took me time to decide to do this piece, the time to discover what stories I wanted to tell and how to tell them. I knew I wanted to talk about transmission and that this piece would be both the story of my family, the Yeung family, and the more universal and a temporal story of Chinese Puppetry. This handing down of skills from father to son, from teacher to pupil, is an extremely fragile link, and in the case of my family it is a light which has often been in danger of being extinguished. Even today this body of knowledge is under threat and there is, to my mind, an urgent need to pass on this heritage which is not specifically Chinese, but belongs to everyone. The traditional hallmarks remain the same, but each generation adds its own touches, influenced by his own character and the particularities of the time. Traditional puppetry is too often disassociated from contemporary puppetry, and this piece shows how the ancient techniques are constantly changing. That's how I learnt the art, how I experience it and how I hope to pass it on to future generations'. Yeung Fai – 2011

## Company biography

Yeung Fai is an independent artist. His past creations were produced by Theatre Vidy Lausanne in Switzerland (*Hand Stories* / *Blue Jeans*) and Copagnie du Chemin Creux (*Teahouse*). *Hand Stories* was produced by T&T Productions, a Swiss company working with several artists in the field of puppetry, music, dance and theatre. T&T Productions is currently directed by Thierry Tordjman, who is also the artistic adviser to Yeung Fai for all his creations.

## Yeung Fai biography

Born in China in 1964, Yeung Fai is the fifth generation of a large family of Chinese puppeteers. The art of puppetry is one of the oldest traditional Chinese folkloric arts, dating back to the Western Han dynasty (206 BC – 24 AD). From the age of four Yeung Fai was trained by his father, a grand master of Chinese Puppetry who would be persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, and who left indelible traces of his art in the work of Yeung Fai.

Today he lives in Paris, practices his art tirelessly and has become the unquestioned master of puppetry and the making of puppets. He has toured his one-man show '*Scenes of Peking Opera*' in major puppetry festivals worldwide for over twenty years, taking it to Asia, North and South America and Europe. He has taken part in countless films for cinema and television and has spent many years teaching at the Zhanzou School of Puppetry. Yeung Fai now leads his own group of puppeteers.

In 2004 he participated in Grégoire Callies' stage adaptation of Guân Hanging's beautiful poem '*Snow in the middle of Summer*' for the Théâtre Jeune Public at Strasbourg, directing the manipulation of over twenty puppets whose creation he also oversaw. In 2005, he and a team of artists made the puppets for '*Don*

*Quixote*, a Théâtre Jeune Public premiere directed by Grégoire Callies. All the puppets, both glove puppets and held puppets (bunraku) were designed and made in China. Between 2006 and 2009 he participated in three plays, *'Odyssey 1-2-3'* directed by Grégoire Callies. In 2009, he created in the Theatre Vidy-Lausanne in Switzerland, the show *'Hand Stories'*, inspired by his own story and family of 5 generation of puppeteers. The show has been a huge success and has been performed over 200 times all around the world; New-York, Paris and all around France, Brazil, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Martinique, Taiwan, Hong-Kong, Belgium etc.

Three years later, Fai created the show *'Blue Jeans'*, a kind of fiction-documentary about the Asian workers in the textile industry. The show has had performances in different countries; including France, Germany, Taiwan, and Switzerland.

In May 2015, Fai created a show called *'Teahouse'*, about the life of Chinese puppeteers who were performing in the Teahouses of the past, a symbol of education and culture, that are today replaced with karaoke bars. The show will be created in Festival Passages in Metz and will be performed in Charleville Mezieres, Germany, France and Switzerland.

In November 2017, Fai will create a new solo, *'The Puppet-show man'* in collaboration with CCT Manège Maubeuge in France and Perth Festival, Australia.

Yeung Fai regularly teaches at the International Puppetry Institute of Charleville Mezieres (most important school of puppetry in Europe) and teaches master classes during his international tours. He's considered as one of the most important Chinese puppet masters.

## Colin Offord biography

### Original Music

Colin Offord is a singer, composer, multi-instrumentalist, inventor of original instruments, designer of musical theatre pieces and visual artist. Of Anglo-Celtic heritage, his extensive travels and collaborations have led him to a synthesis of the artistic and philosophical influences of western avant-garde and folk music, experimental Jazz, East Asian, Aboriginal Australian and Pacific island art forms.

Through a fusion of music, performance and visual arts, Offord's activities include solo concerts, ensemble performances, environmental works, cross cultural collaborations, the developing and building of original instruments, scores for theatre, new media, circus, film and dance, special events, concerts and workshops, community projects and exhibitions of visual art. Since his first public performance at Watters Gallery, Sydney in 1976, Colin Offord has performed at arts and music festivals, concert halls, theatres, galleries and schools throughout Australia and the world.

Offord has directed and staged many works ranging from large scale to intimate spectacles, installations, site-specific environmental events in volcanic craters, caves, beaches, gardens, and architectural settings and visual-music performances in concert halls, art galleries, theatres, churches, and in the digital realm.

He has given performances of his music in Belgium, Holland, France, Spain, Reunion Island, South Africa, Switzerland, Italy, Romania, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Ireland, England, South Africa, Japan,

Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, U.S.A. and throughout the island nations of the Pacific Ocean.

Offord has represented Australia at Commonwealth Arts Festivals in Auckland and Edinburgh and at World Expo's in Australia and Spain and for the Sydney 2000 Olympic bid in Monaco and in World Drum Festivals in Canada and on many cultural exchange tours throughout New Caledonia, Tonga, Papua Nuigini, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Spain, Scotland, New Zealand, Vietnam and Laos.

## Yilan Yeh biography

Video designer

Born in Taiwan in 1969, Yeh Yilan now lives in Macleay Island, Queensland, Australia. Yeh is a media artist and curator and has taught at several universities in Taiwan. She obtained a PhD in Media Arts from the College of Fine Arts at the University of South Wales in 2008. Her doctoral thesis was '*Dancing Brush: An Exploration of Taoist Aesthetics*'. Her research focusses on a re-evaluation of contemporary artistic, media and cultural practices perceived through the Taoist traditions. Her video installation '*Dancing Brush*' suggests that Chinese scroll paintings illustrate an infinity of time and space. This project creates a new form of modern urbanism where the principles of Taoism, traditional Chinese landscape paintings and calligraphy join the new western media aesthetics. During her investigation Yilan explored installation and video projection as performance landscapes.

In 2004 Yeh began a collaboration with the musician and visual artist Colin Offord which culminated in a film-concert '*Tyranny of Distance*' commissioned by the Théâtre du Maillon at Strasbourg. With the support of Screen-sound Australia the work combines Offord and Yilan's videography with the images of the 1923 film '*For the Term of His Natural Life*'. She also worked as production assistant and visual designer on Offord's project '*Island to Island*' in collaboration with the dancer/ choreographer Yogi Yu Chun Chan for the Crown Theatre Festival of Taiwan in 2005.

## Yoann Pencolé biography

Puppeteer

Between 1997 and 2005 Yoann Pencolé dedicated himself to training in the following disciplines: acting, movement (with Catherine Dubois at the Samovar), clown (with Marie Bout and Lory Leshin), jesting (with Marie Bout), and puppetry at the Théâtre d'Objet (with Arnaud Louski-Pane and Marie Bout).

In 2005 he entered the Ecole National Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette de Charleville-Mézières and studied the art of puppetry for three years. Training includes plastic art (with Jean-Luc Félix, Pascale Blaison and the Brazilian company Teatro Giramundo), movement (with Claire Heggen and Jo Lacrosse), voice work (with Alain Zaepffel), acting (with Jean-Christophe Barbaud and Stéphanie Farison), stage direction and dramaturgy (with Jean-Louis Heckel, Sylvie Baillon and Philippe Minyana).

He has worked with artists such as Bruno Leone, Fabrizio Montecchi (Teatro Gioco Vita), Massimo Schuster (Théâtre de l'Arc en Terre), Gavin Glover (Faulty Optic), Philippe Genty, Stephen Mottram and Alain Gautré. Yoann Pencolé works with the companies Restouelle and Zusvex as an actor and puppeteer. At the ESNAM he worked with Roland Schön, with Philippe Minyan and in the latest Royal de Luxe show. In 2006 he

directed and acted in the one-man puppet show *'Tout va très bien'* (Everything's Fine) based on a text by Perrine Griselin. Since his diploma he has worked as a glove puppeteer on the Chinese piece *'Odyssey 2'* directed by Grégoire Callies. He also acts in a devised piece using clown work and theatre of found objects, called *'Capharnaüm'*, directed by Alain Gautré.

Yoann Pencole is a part of several creations with Yeung Fai, *'Hand Stories'*, *'Blue Jeans'* and *'Lifelines'*. In 2016, he created his own show, *'Landru'* in France.

While in town Yeung will tour ***The Puppet- Show Man***, a new Festival commission across Perth for schools and community groups and share his skills with budding artists in a series of workshops co-hosted by Fremantle's Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. Together the master and his new apprentices will create a cabaret performance to turn your idea of puppetry on its head.

***The Puppet- Show Man*** will be produced by the theatre Le Manège – Scene Nationale de Maubeuge in France and co-produced by Perth Festival in Australia.

**Website:** [www.ttprods.com](http://www.ttprods.com)

**Videos:**

<https://www.theatre-video.net/video/Hand-stories-histoires-de-main-de-Yeung-Fai-extraits>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMaf2TIPZrI>

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2oe50i>

**For further information, interviews or images please contact:**

**WA MEDIA: Stephen Bevis**  
**+61 8 6488 8618 / 0448 927 281**  
[sbevis@perthfestival.com.au](mailto:sbevis@perthfestival.com.au)

**NATIONAL MEDIA: Miranda Brown**  
**+61 3 9419 0931 / 0411 568 781**  
[miranda@mbpublicity.com.au](mailto:miranda@mbpublicity.com.au)

### ***Perth International Arts Festival***

*Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, the Perth International Arts Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For 65 years the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with over 700,000 people each year.*

*Wendy Martin is the Artistic Director 2016 – 19.*

-ends-