

About Figures of Speech Theatre

John and Carol Farrell founded Figures of Speech Theatre to explore the interplay of actors, puppets, masks, and movement. Believing that audiences experience art most vitally when they are called upon to engage their imaginations fully, the company produces visual theater that emphasizes myth, transformation, and surprise.

A touring company since 1982, Figures of Speech Theatre has performed for audiences from Caribou, Maine to Lima, Peru. Presenters of their work have included Broadway's New Victory Theater, The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Trinity Repertory Company, the Smithsonian Institution, Festival Theater in Sofia, Bulgaria, Internationalen Puppentage in Austria, Japan's Hitomi-za Theater, and EXPO Vancouver. The company has recently collaborated on major artistic projects with several organizations in its home state of Maine including Portland Stage Company (*Peer Gynt*), Heartwood Theater (*Gilgamesh*), Bates College (*Dragon's Daughter*), and the Portland Symphony Orchestra (*Magic of Christmas*). FST also conducts extensive teaching residencies for all ages (www.figures.org).

Figures of Speech Theatre is a four-time winner of the coveted "UNIMA Citation of Excellence," the highest award in American puppet theater: in 1986 for its production of *Anerca*, in 1989 for *Cupid and Psyche*, in 1997 for *Nightingale*, and in 2001 for *The Beanstalk Variations*.

Figures of Speech Theatre
Durham Rd. Freeport, ME 04032
(207) 865-6355
www.figures.org
info@figures.org

*FST is a not-for-profit institution,
and contributions are tax deductible.*

FIGURES OF SPEECH THEATRE

presents

Jester Kings of Java

*A shadow play in the spirit of Indonesian
Wayang Kulit puppetry & the Ramayana*

Written by Carol Farrell & Ian Bannon

Designed & Directed by Carol Farrell & John Farrell

Performed by Ian Bannon

About *Wayang Kulit* Puppetry

The Indonesian art of shadow play or *Wayang Kulit* is a unique combination of ritual, lesson, and entertainment. Originating in Java one thousand years ago, it employs delicately pierced lace-like figures that are traditionally made from water buffalo hide and horn. Even though the puppets are made to be seen in shadow, they are brilliantly, intricately painted and even gilded with gold leaf.

Wayang Kulit plays – which are often based on religious texts such as the Hindu epic *The Ramayana* – are performed in royal courts and villages alike to mark momentous occasions. In Indonesia, the plays often go on all night, and the audience is free to wander, nap, watch the show and purchase food from vendors in a festival atmosphere.

In *Wayang Kulit* performances, one person called the dalang tells the story, manipulates all the figures (sometimes more than 100!), interprets characters and voices for each, and produces sound effects punctuating speech and movement. The dalang also sings, cues the musical accompaniment from the gamelan orchestra, speaks several languages, and blesses the performance and surrounding area with mantras. Most performances include poetic narration, clowning and slapstick, comment on current affairs, and struggles between good and evil inherent in the stories.

We have attempted to draw from this rich history while creating a show that is accessible to American audiences of all ages. From the sublime to the ridiculous, there's a little for everyone. Enjoy!

Other Productions in FST's Repertoire

Cupid & Psyche - The struggle to grow and change. Like an invisible rope connecting us intimately with the gods and people of ancient Greece, *Cupid & Psyche* celebrates the human spirit in the best kind of tale: a love story with a happy ending.

Nightingale - The Emperor of China experiences a moment of transcendence when Nightingale appears in his court. Though later he is enchanted by a jeweled mechanical bird and banishes his friend, Nightingale returns to open the Emperor's eyes and save his life.

Artist-in Residence Teaching Programs - FST's teaching programs use the art of the puppet to build confidence, enhance curriculum, and promote self-expression while having fun.

About the Artists

Carol Farrell began performing experimental theater in 1971 with the New World Energy Theatre in Switzerland, then moved to San Francisco to study dance. She earned her MA in Theater Design at University of Connecticut where she got hooked on puppetry. After 4 years on the University of Maine's Theater faculty, Carol co-founded Figures of Speech Theatre in 1982. She has studied Object Theatre at the Institut Internationale de la Marionnette in France, and *bunraku* puppetry in Japan. Carol's responsibilities as Co-Director of FST have included co-creating eighteen works of original theater, performing, designing costumes, and developing teaching residency programs.

John Farrell founded Figures of Speech with Carol Farrell in 1982 after an abbreviated course of law study. Since then he has studied directing for the puppet theatre with Josef Krofta of DRAK Theatre, and carving with Toru Saito, Japanese master puppet builder. John has taught at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, and is the proud father of daughters Delia and Alida. In 1999 he was one of five American artists awarded a six-month fellowship through the Japan-US Friendship Commission's Creative Artists' Program. The Maine Arts Commission awarded him an Individual Artist Fellowship in 2002. As Co-Artistic Director of Figures of Speech Theatre, John wears many hats from performer to director to puppet and set designer, to producer of World Puppets Portland, an international festival of puppetry arts.

Ian Bannon, Figures of Speech's Director of Education, came to Maine to study creative nonfiction at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies after graduating *cum laude* from Juniata College with a degree in Psychology & Theatre. Ian brings to his work experience from workshops in storytelling, puppetry, improvisation, and devising collaborative theatre. Ian is also a founding member of the new Celebration Barn Ensemble, based in South Paris, Maine. As FST's Director of Education for the past 6 years, Ian teaches puppetry workshops and performs *Jester Kings of Java*. For the past four years Ian has successfully directed The FOSSE (Figures of Speech Student Ensemble).

We wish to thank Mari Hook of Denmark, Maine, for generously donating her museum-quality Indonesian puppets to FST, without which this performance would never have happened.