

Breaking

## Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen to retire after 35 years in police service

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### 'Anthropomorphic' a puppet show that treats serious themes

By Chase Ferren Special to The Post and Courier Jun 8, 2017



Tim Young

Bunraku puppets from the Piccolo Spoleto Festival workshop performance of "Anthropomorphic," constructed by Tim Young with costume design by Arlee Chadwick and Jessica Lorence. (Tim Young)

#### If You Go

WHAT: "Anthropomorphic"  
WHEN: 7 p.m. Saturday, June 10  
WHERE: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 67 Anson St.  
COST: Free  
MORE INFO: [www.piccolospoleto.com](http://www.piccolospoleto.com); 866-611-4111

Timothy Edward Young doesn't have a degree in theology, but he talks about the Bible, the Quran and the Torah fluently. He doesn't have a degree in history, either, but he is equally comfortable quoting Andrew Jackson's "On Indian Removal" speech and George W. Bush's Iraqi WMD speech. Young is an actor by trade, but an unofficial scholar by way of his creativity.

Young's puppet show "Anthropomorphic: The Musical" will make its Piccolo Spoleto Festival debut on June 10 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Incorporating passages, stories and themes from the three Abrahamic holy books and American history, "Anthropomorphic" tells the story of a young boy's complicated relationship with his deeply religious mother.

The boy, Wesley, is gay, and his mother struggles to reconcile her love for her child with the fear she has for him because of her beliefs. The majority of the story is told in purgatory after Wesley

commits suicide.

"This is the true American story," Young said. "Woven throughout it are all of our religions, all of our challenges. What we do to people."

The performance will be a workshop of an abridged version of "Anthropomorphic," which is still in development and searching for funders, followed by a question-and-answer session. Because of the subject matter, audience members must be at least 12 years old.

"The musical is about the boy learning and discovering that he is someone to be loved," Young said, and learning to have faith in himself.

Young grew up in Summerville and attended Francis Marion University before moving to New York City to launch his theater career. While there, he said, he found a need in the community for educational theater and decided to start his nonprofit, Puppetry Arts, which now has a presence in New York City as well as Charleston.

Young also has a puppet show and program for school children called "Tuffy Tiger." But "Anthropomorphic," he said, is the story of faith he wants to tell. "If you boil down everyone's religious fighting, the bottom line is love," he said.

To tell this story, "Anthropomorphic" uses bunraku puppetry, a stylized Japanese tradition that requires multiple operators, and shadow puppets. But Young said he prefers to call the puppets "kinetic sculptures."

"One slight movement is like a stroke on an oil canvas," he said. "One stroke on an oil canvas can make the depth of that canvas or that painting look real or three-dimensional."

One of the actors creating these movements is Fernanda Perfeito. She hadn't had any puppeteering experience prior to joining Young's team, but is interested in "anything that can open people's minds and visions and make this life better," she said.

For Perfeito, who studied classical music and opera, the transition to acting through a puppet wasn't startling.

"It's just like a dance," she said. "If you look at the actors, they're really living the character."

Putting on an abridged production of a puppet show doesn't detract from the audience's experience, according to Puppetry Arts board member and "Anthropomorphic" production stage manager Matthew Miller.

"In some ways that's better than something with whiz-bang," Miller said. "They're going to get the story, and that's what matters."

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