



Taking on bullying through words, theater and the imagination

BY HEATHER J. CHIN
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Bullies, beware: love and faith will always persevere.

That is the message that Puppetry Arts' upcoming script reading for "Anthropomorphic" has at its core, both for the bullies and the bullied. Written by Puppetry Arts (PA) founder Tim E. Young as an anti-bullying musical theater project, the reading will introduce the play's story to a focus group of Brooklyn audience members, encouraging constructive feedback, discussion, support and awareness about both "Anthropomorphic" and PA, all while in a laid-back environment.

"Anthropomorphic" introduces a young man who has just attempted to take his own life and brings the audience into his mind as he is "drawn into a purgatory that pulls him on an epic journey to discover that he is someone to be loved." During that journey, major world religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam come into play in the conversations that the young man has.

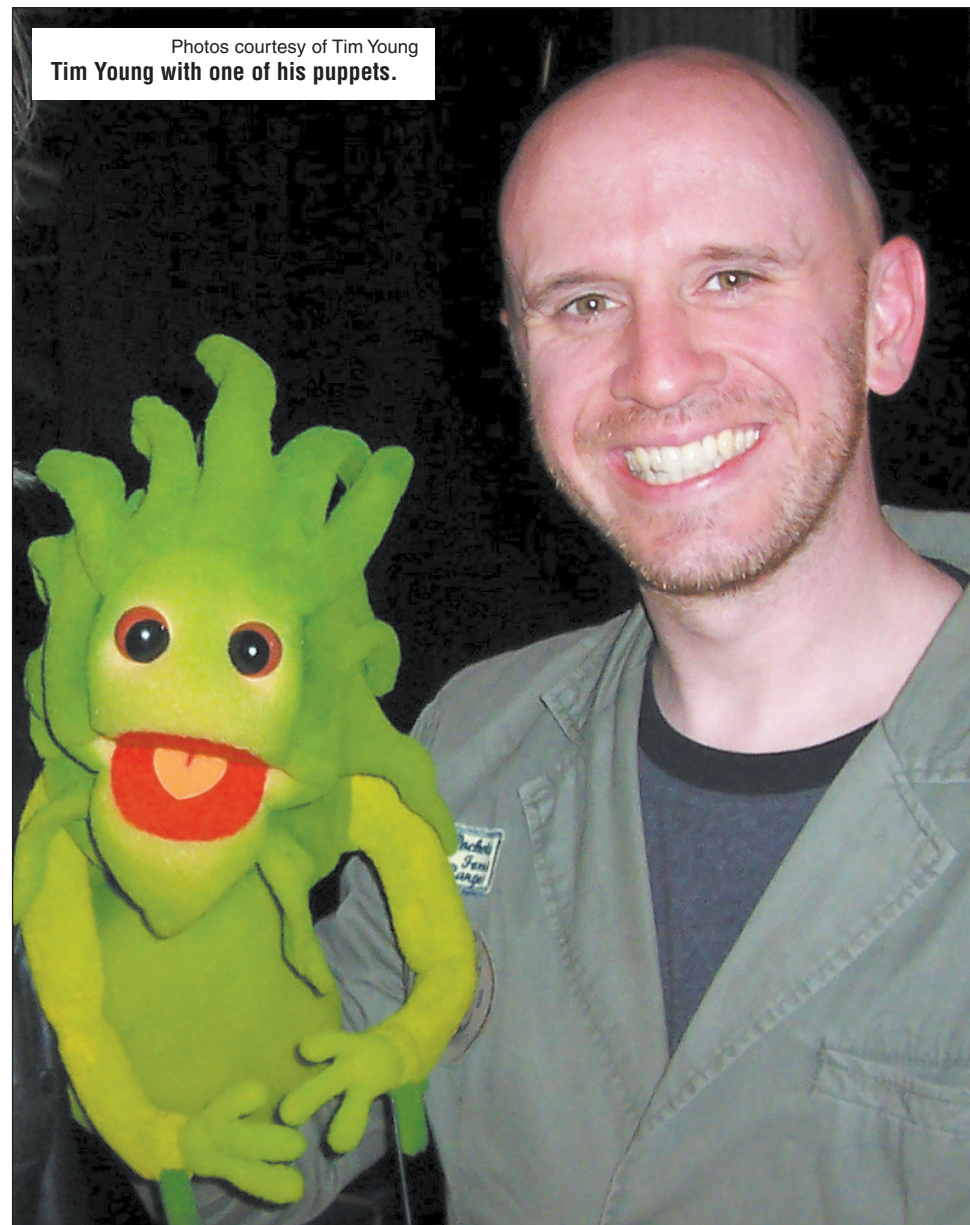
Part psychological drama, part exploration of the meaning of faith and humanity, the man's mind anthropomorphizes the characters in his life into giant non-human/human creatures—including spiders, ogres, horseshoe crabs and scorpions—as they lead him to the realization that faith "is a beautiful thing and no one can say what it is or should be or ever take it away."

"I hold this project very dear [to my heart]," said Young, who has been working on the script for eight to nine years. "It came about, as a theater project, because I wish to use theater as a means to stir conversation and to draw continued awareness about bullying and suicide rates, especially within the LGBT community.

"We're using [theater] as a tool to stir thought and emotion," he explained. "When I go to schools and teach about the Civil War and Revolutionary War, we are assistants to the teachers and the kids don't feel like they're being taught, but they are. The same thing goes with theater."

Young said he hopes that people come away from the reading asking themselves questions, thinking about how the show's themes made them feel and the nature of inner and social conflict.

Although the story starts with the protagonist attempting suicide, the message



Photos courtesy of Tim Young
Tim Young with one of his puppets.

is "not that committing suicide makes you embraced by love," Young emphasizes.

"Our message is that you are someone to be loved, life is worth living and you don't need to commit suicide," he said. "And if you can believe in yourself, then you don't get to the point of suicide.

"We hope that youth and other audience members recognize that and that they need to talk about it and not use faith as a tool for division. So it's not just a reading; we're engaging our community by saying this is an important message and would you like to have your voice heard and to keep this conversation going."

Although designed to eventually be a full-scale musical production with giant puppets, Thursday's free reading will only focus on the script. Previous workshops have showcased the music of "Anthropomorphic."

The performance is scheduled for Thursday, March 13 from 3-7 p.m. at Baluchi's of Park Slope, located at 310 Fifth Avenue. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails will be served, and dinner will be available for interested parties. The event is open to listeners age 13 and up.

For more information, email Young at info@puppetryarts.org.

culture briefs

COMPILED BY MEAGHAN MCGOLDRICK

SILENT FILM SERIES

Join the Brooklyn Public Library in celebrating Women's History Month through the performance of the Chinese film industry's beloved silent-era actress, Ruan Ling-yu. The library will screen "The Goddess," in which she plays the title character, a nameless, unmarried mother struggling to support her only son in Shanghai.

The film will be presented for free, with English Inter-titles, featuring live musical accompaniment by Bernie Anderson and curated and hosted by Ken Gordon, on Sunday, March 9 at 1 p.m. in the Central Library's Dweck Center (10 Grand Army Plaza). For more information, visit www.bklynpubliclibrary.org.

ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

Celebrate feminist art with the Brooklyn Museum (200 Eastern Parkway) as it marks the seventh anniversary of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art with special programs in March and April – including a special panel discussion on Saturday, March 14 at 3:30 p.m. with Piper Kerman, author of the memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, the basis for the popular Netflix original series.

During "Sentenced to Change with Piper Kerman," the author will lead a conversation with an inspiring group of formerly incarcerated women who have initiated criminal justice reform.

The discussion is free with museum admission and will take place in the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium, on the third floor of the museum. For more information, visit www.BrooklynMuseum.org.

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Join the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College as it concludes its 2013-2014 World of Dance Series with the internationally acclaimed Russian National Ballet Theatre's interpretation of "The Sleeping Beauty" on Sunday, March 23 at 3 p.m.

Based on the Brother Grimm's version of "La Belle au Bois Dormant," "The Sleeping Beauty" is choreographed by legendary Imperial Ballet Master Marius Petipa, and premiered in St. Petersburg in 1890.

Tickets range from \$36 to \$45 and can be purchased by phone at 718-951-4500 (Tuesday through Saturday, 1-6 p.m.) or online at www.BrooklynCenterOnline.org.