

Kelly's Corner

BY JAN KELLY



Madame

FROM NEW YORK TO PROVINCETOWN

Guess who's back! Madame! For those of you who remember the Madeira Club in the Seventies and Eighties, Wayland Flowers and Madame was the top act, so loved and always sold out. Ruth Buzzi, Dom DeLuise, Lynn Carter and so many more rolled us in and rolled us out with laughter. We crowded in for \$3.00 or so and laughed to liberty, freedom and a mindless state—true entertainment.

We matched the oppressed working class of years ago who laughed at vaudeville.

The Madeira Club is a legend. The army of stars returned season after season, in particular to watch Wayland Flowers, his beautifully symmetrical face juxtaposed to a more than character puppet, screeching, legs in the air, a wildly molded chin and nose, suggestive of male anatomy, coarsely spoken...and rude, all being manipulated by a perfectly groomed adult wearing a black tie.

Madame would shriek, "I'm Madame and this is Wayland. He's no ventroloquist and I'm no f--- dummy! And if the word F--- bothers you, you'd better leave now." At the end of a perfect show, Wayland would sing to Madame "I love you just the way you are." Saccharine smiles and tears throughout the audience.

Wayland could be seen into the late hours of the night dancing in whatever club...red cap, open shirt, barefoot, "out on his own," barely keeping us company on the dance floor. He could be seen unexpectedly riding down Commercial St in a convertible, Madame hanging out the side or jumping over the windshield, screaming obscenities at the passing throng. They loved it!

"Yell at me, Madame!"

"Let me take you out to dinner, Madame!"

Instant theater. You could see Madame hanging out of an upper story window, carrying on with whoever walked below. Fun is so easy. Just make it up. Wayland Flowers created so much fun for us. You could get the feeling that he lived his life for us. But when the long day was over and the door closed?

He never let us see the down side of continuous entertainment and the strain of schedules. Madame, delivered to perfec-

tion was joined by Crazy Mary, forever scratching her crotch and picking her nose, scoping the audience with her bull's-eye eyes. People couldn't sit still during this extreme humor. They would stand and sit down repeatedly trying to get enough oxygen to laugh harder.

Then add Jiffy the Harlem Hooker with her wild earrings, her green to orange chiffon garb, sideglancing a negative "Uh-uh." She thought Madame and Crazy Mary were beyond hope. She just had a job to do and those girls were reckless—the mad women of Challo!

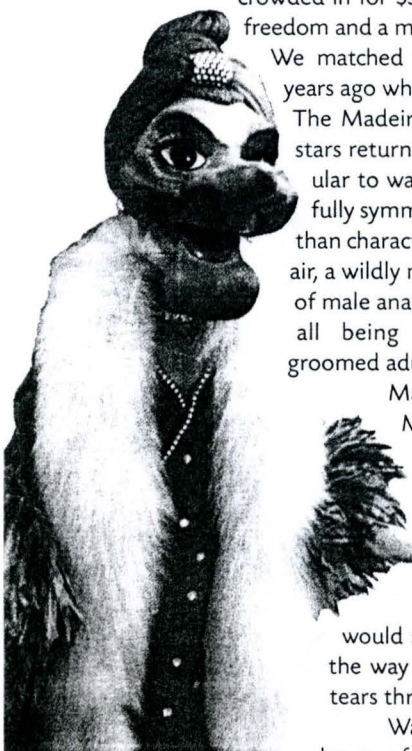
Well, all three are home again enjoying years and being supportive of newer and younger shows of puppetry. There are four Madames, made from a plaster mold of an elastic material. One is in the estate of Wayland Flowers held by Marlena Shell, Wayland's manager. The second is at the Center of Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, GA. The next was sold at auction in San Francisco, bought by an artist and donated to the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, in their permanent collection. The fourth was offered for sale when manager Marlena Shell was fundTMraising for the Wayland Flowers House for Terminal AIDS Patients.

Paddy Blackwood who now runs a standing Repertory Theater in Celebration, FL called a co-worker Addis Williams as to who would be interested in the exclusive purchase of Madame. Blackwood and Williams, Master Puppeteers from New York City, did "Alice In Wonderland" on Broadway, telling the tale with giant puppets.

They also worked at the Swiss Puppet Theatre in Central Park using city funds and performing next to Shakespeare in the Park. Addis Williams suggested Blackwood contact the "Judy Man" in San Francisco, now our own Will King of Provincetown. Addis Williams is Will King's mentor in puppetry. Blackwood wrote a gracious letter citing the idea of Madame sold for charity, "The Wayland Flowers House For Terminal AIDS Patients."

Marlene Shell and Will King set up an appointment in San Francisco and Madame travelled up from Los Angeles in a shopping bag and left the city in the same bag to travel by cable car to a new home. One year later, Marlena offered Crazy Mary and Jiffy so the girls were reunited.

Will King sold his San Francisco house and has moved to P'town. The girls have been in storage since December, encased in special showcases custom built for them. When they arrived in P'town, they couldn't be opened for two weeks for insurance purposes: "He who crates, shall uncrate...or no claims. The masons working on a wall project at the house dragged the weighty showcases. I was invited to visit the girls once uncrated.





They seem a little peaceful in their new setting, but not much. They are still outrageous. They are art pieces now. The show, the material, the image are copyrighted to the Wayland Flowers Estate.

"She's very happy to be home, Madame is," Will King smiled. "Wayland was in so many towns, but it was in Provincetown that he got his start. Paul Lynd who notably performed Broadway's "Bye-Bye Birdie," the TV shows Bewitched" and "Hollywood Squares" saw Wayland at the

Madeira Room and invited him to Hollywood and television. The films "Norman, Where Are You?" and "Madame Takes Manhattan" followed. Wayland and Madame went on to "Hollywood Squares" occupying the Center Square—the Whoopie Goldberg square. Wayland also had a prime time TV show "Madame's Place." She had a butler and a secretary and she ran a talk show. The show was about Madame's home life and work. It lasted a couple seasons, then Wayland returned to the cabaret act.

"But now she lives here. I gave her a home. It's appropriate; she's most at home in P'town. She has such a collection of one™liners and quotes and Mrs Judy needed roommates."

Last fall, Kelly's Corner featured an article on Will King and his puppet, Mrs. Judy. "These girls socialize a lot. When we come home there's always scurrying to get back into their cases and the place is a mess. When they go out, I don't want to know about it! Madame with that chin and nose! They love P'town! They love watching the 'tall ships' during Fantasia Fair. They miss Cher on her scooter. P'town is exciting and they were part of all that, maybe even started much of it. Tropical Joe's two years ago had a show of puppets from the Puppetry Institute in Georgia...

"These girls don't perform anymore, they're on S.S.I. They've done their thing. They brought so much peace into the world through comedy. They're making way for younger performers now. They're relaxing now when we go away. We have to leave a lot of whiskey around. When they get cold, they don't want sweaters. They want cocktails. Judy's upstairs still asleep...spent all night at the Old Colony Tap.

"So keep your eyes open. If you hear a high-pitched scream and see legs in the air, it's Madame. Crazy Mary is more low-pitched and Jiffy just keeps shaking her head 'Uh-Uh.'" She doesn't understand those two. She's too cool for all that craziness. They're roommates of Mrs. Judy but puppet companies don't mix. They are two different shows.

"Judy's company will be here soon. Pops, a retired green grocer who is now Judy's stage manager. They fight. He's always yelling, 'Keep you hands off the Pa-ma-gran-its!' Violet Azalea, Punch and Toby the Dog will be coming too. Oh when they all start talking, I go crazy! You'll know, you'll be seeing more of them. The disco-fun-happiness-craziness side of life...The puppet population of Provincetown!"