
CONADIAN MASQUERADE REPORT

by John Hertz

Co-directors Barb Schofield and Connie Lyon share no blame that Winnipeg fell into the recurring delirium of holding the Masquerade on Sunday and the Hugo ceremony on Saturday—backwards. This ruins the natural rhythm of the con, casts the Hugos as a warm-up act, and as the tech crews say “You want us to do the most technically demanding event a day *later* in the con? When we’ve had *less* sleep?”

It was a wonderful show. Kat Connery as Master of Ceremonies reminded me of first hearing Mendelssohn, so cheery that I feared she might cloy, but in fact she had pith and grace. Twelve of forty entries were re-creations, and coincidentally twelve awards were made, each of which I think a healthy proportion.

“Imperial Ground Assault Forces” was a smashing opener, a *Star Wars* Walker 5 feet high, superbly articulated, lumbering on evilly while a tiny doll dangled on a cord—Luke Skywalker. This was also the first in an avalanche of fine work from St. Louis. Two 1998 Worldcon bids brought gag entries, Baltimore’s “Queen and Pirates of Fenzance”, and Boston’s 4-part series about a Man Named Charlie, a neo repeatedly seized by a flying saucer, who rose helplessly in the hierarchy of concoms, and thus kept returning. *Aliens* returned in “The Bitch Is Back”, a Queen Alien meticulously built as have been most appearances of these terrible creatures, and a Power Loader with rotating grapples. Carol Salemi and Eric Cannon were “The Eagle and the Hawk”, Kachina-like with feathered masks and wings, Amerind dance steps and good timing. In “Tangorian Rebirth Ritual” two bulky creatures in blue and purple transformed a third into a dark-headed bird in yellow and gold, with strong use of vertical levels. “Rainstick Blues and Kazoo Blues” was based on Varley’s *Titan*, a maroon and red faun and a blue-and-white tiger-striped centaur with musical instruments.

Jacqui Ward, one of our best costumers, has been wrestling with detail. Her “Octopus’ Garden”, Best of Show at Chicon V, was in the ConAdian costume exhibit, where its fantastic profusion could at last be appreciated. Now she was “Ondine”: from a stone well rose a cloud-capped shower of rain, which parted as the water nymph appeared, lithely summoning harp music, and finally opening great transparent wings. This not only earned a workmanship award for appliqué, fabric texturing, and beads, but orchestrated them for the back of the hall. The Pettingers produced a chilling, finely choreographed “Blood of Eternal Life”. Over liturgical chant combined with rock’n’roll, pale frightening clerics jewelled in red, black, purple, and gold led on a girl in white. A cloth was placed on her left shoulder. A priest approached, bit her neck as her eyes rolled up, and caught the blood in a chalice, some splashing onto the cloth. As he solemnly raised the chalice and drank, his deaconess in a bat-wing headpiece threw back her head in corrupt joy.

Walter Thompson III as “Series W.T.3” danced energetically in leather straps, a helmet, and a sword, the best of this year’s naked-people entries. The “Klingon Diplomatic Delegation”, not in competition, kept a dozen people in character and in ensemble. Toni Narita’s “Afternoon Matinee” brought on a horribly laughing Baltan with lobster claws that shone dangerous rays; Ultraman arrived, eyes as goggly and glowing as

bright as his foe's, to trounce him with martial arts and moral beingness. Ed Charpentier as Weird Al Yankovic faced "Radioactive Hamsters from a Planet Near Mars", three furries bigger than he, blue, yellow, and pink in color-coordinated awful prints; they actually had built-in ice packs and fans. "Festival of Change" presented Whelan's Snow and Summer Queens. "The Borg" looked so impressive that we all oohed; this showed how well they had assessed the theater medium, as I later saw close up. "None of you will be assimilated," they told a house full of fans; "we have our standards."

"The 19th Century League of Futurians" began with a curtain displaying three symbols. From behind came a man dressed as Michael Strogoff, then another as Robur the Conqueror. The plummy voice of an old-time evening lecturer identified these Jules Verne characters standing by their emblems at right and left, then announced that the League's next production would be Verne's latest novel, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The center emblem was Captain Nemo's "N". Strogoff and Robur drew the curtain to reveal the *Nautilus*, waves lapping below, while Nemo on deck fought a giant squid, whose tentacles writhed! Kathy Sanders had followed all 3 books in detail, even taking music from their film versions (*Strogoff* 1937, *20,000 Leagues* 1954, *Robur* 1961). Her imagination continues to grow. "Carrousel Armor" was a lion and horse splendidly armed Roman-style in painted and appliqué fiberglass, the lion yellow and red, the horse green and blue. They danced to make the spear of one into a carrousel centerpole. We were enchanted. Then they took off their lion and horse heads.

Nora and Bruce Mai in "Xanadu" were Tabbé the cat (I don't make up these names, folks) and his sweetheart Fatima the fox from Lex Nakashima's comic books, Tabbé playing a tambourine, Fatima swaying her hips, wholly mastering fiber, foam, and articulated masks. In Kevin Dulle's "Forbidden Fruit" a scarecrow fed two giant spheres with Kickapoo Joy Juice and made them killer tomatoes, grinning wickedly and bounding over the stage to rap music. Krikor Ajemian was "The Only Good Romulan"—that's right, and his throes would have pleased Elizabethans. "Our Lady of Shadows and Dreams" by Deborah Jones closed the show. "Once upon a time, she said, and the world was created anew," quoted Connery from Jane Yolen. Came a majestic fairy, winged, unicorned, hoopskirted, drawing a train with stegosaur spikes. As she passed in profile, a dorsal fin opened. She turned to face us, laid a finger to her lips, and opened a book. The stage darkened. The pages glowed.

—John Hertz

BUCCONEER MASQUERADE

by John Hertz

Music, noble and frightening. Enter Marty Gear in white tie and opera cloak—Count Dracula the Master of Ceremonies, impeccable as at ConStellation, the previous Baltimore Worldcon in 1983. "Children of the night," he said, "shut up." This brought down the house. There were 51 entries, 17 awards.

Karen McWilliams, Best Novice in 1997, again explored dance and drapery as a blue and silver "Nightingale" (Poetry in Motion, Journeyman), superbly fluent and with

the poise to end on a quiet hand gesture. Gear's terrible vampire jokes were soon matched by Ellen, Paul & David Weingart, appearing to Disney music as a frilled pink foot loping round two red globes: "Bootie and the Beets" (Worst Pun, Journeyman). This was beaten—sorry—by Widya Santoso of Australia. He had built a 2001-style monolith, which stood ominously while Zarathustra played and the M.C. explained how, thirty years after the film and its sequels, the mystery still eluded us: what was the answer behind the monolith? The music peaked, Santoso turned, and on the back, in big white numbers, was "42", the Answer from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. This really brought down the house, his focus and timing perfect (Most Humorous, Novice).

Sixteen people were ""The 1,001st Night", which began as Middle Eastern tissue brocades, satin, and lamé, with scimitars and fans. Hypersaturated colors and gigantic turbans warned of something silly, which proved to be a Star Trek joke; nonetheless this earned three Workmanship Awards (Novice—fabric painting, Paula Rhule, stage mechanics, Richard Rader; Master—beadwork, handwork & detail, Amanda Allen, Faith Baker, Ann Stephens) and won Best Master. Joanna Brooks earned another (Journeyman—headpiece detail) for her "Summer Queen". She walked regally. Kathy Sanders' entry, "Yin and Yang" with Greg Sardo, was another triumph for this costumer, dark moon, blazing sun, rod-held face masks, the great halves of the monad turning, meeting, fitting (Most Beautiful, Master). "Magic of the Ancients", Lisa Ashton, Ming Diaz, Lance Oszko, was re-created from the 1997 Smithsonian catalogue, a golden Isis with deep blue wings, an eyed pyramid, a homunculus with outsize head, hands, and feet; the eye and the goddess' sphere glowed (Best Workmanship, Master).

Three spectacular Journeyman re-creations began with "True Reflections", Reagan, May & Sue McHugh, Travis Theune, Paul Sweatman (Best Re-Creation in Class), the Snow White queen splashing fury against her magic mirror with stroboscopic light. For an interlude, another many-player take-off earning a Workmanship Award (pressed foil and 3D painting, Diane Van Hekken), "Star Gate of Fortune" became the TV game-show wheel (Most Humorous, Journeyman). Second of the three was "Northern Lights", a calling card of the New England costumers' club by that name. Illumined by ultraviolet lamps hidden in pine trees, Jill & Don Eastlake, Dina & Ian Flockhart, Suford Lewis, and five others in black wore constellations of the northern sky, including the Big and Little Dippers, Cassiopeia, and Draco, all correctly placed, and floated silk chiffon banners of the Aurora Borealis shining green and lavender to Robert Service poetry and wolfsong. This was stunning (Best Concept, Journeyman). Best Workmanship—Novice was "Dockside Encounter", Amy & David Reineri, a C.J. Cherryh cat who took no guff from the M.C. playing a port bureaucrat (Guest of Honor Award). Marie Beasley, Brian Ledbetter, and Sunshine Weissinger (Workmanship Award for overall construction, Novice) were "Two Women of The Fifth Element", the two-fan-tall blue crooning Diva particularly fine. Last of the three, and awarded Best Journeyman, was "Green Army Men", Chuck Coates and seven others as the 1950's toy soldiers revisited in Toy Story, each striking its characteristic pose.

The show closed with "Sphinx, the Victory", Stephanie Carrigg, Rae & Craig Enslin, Marsy & Charles Sumner, a centaur bringing a jackal's head tribute, a furred and feathered sphinx (hind legs piston-driven!) who shielded her reward to him with her

wings (Most Innovative, Master; Workmanship Award for engineering). Best in Show, and Best Workmanship in Show, was “The Huntress”, Jeannette & Brian Healy (Master), gorgeous machine insectoids as if Brad Foster lived in Japan. Jeannette strode on, glittering, her wings narrow chrome; content with her rifle, she summoned an intelligent walking car. Its head turned, its eyes shone. It was slow. She ordered it to her. She climbed aboard. It lumbered away. Sensation. —John Hertz

Chicon 2000 Masquerade by John Hertz

Chicago hosted a strong Masquerade, to the credit of Masquerade Director Nancy Mildebrandt. As one wonder came after another, beautiful, surprising, funny, and strange, Jan Howard Finder next to me at the judges’ table kept muttering “It’s not fair! I want to go home!” Our colleagues were Northeast costumer Susan De Guardiola, the fine Master of Ceremonies at San Antonio Worldcon, and Roger Christian, the Hollywood design wizard of Star Wars and Battlefield Earth. Workmanship Judge backstage was Karen Berquist; M.C. was Greg Rihn. Tech was provided by the crew from Archon in St. Louis. Alas, hotel tangles rescheduled the show to Sunday, and forced a tiny hall that held fewer than 2,000 with no place for photographers; the written program never appeared; there was nothing for “half time”. A video feed was contrived for the many who couldn’t attend, and the pause while we judges deliberated was used for picture-taking on stage; we were good children and worked fast. Next morning’s newszine ran photos, but didn’t get the clerk’s report and printed some errors in the awards. Such was this con, its marvels marred.

Let there be an omen for costumers of the future in Melissa Knappenberger, whose “Magic Seashell” was Best Junior. She emerged a little mermaid from a giant clam, danced, and withdrew as the shell closed over her—having made everything, except for her dad’s help with a power drill.

A few minutes later, one of Chicago’s master fantasists was celebrated with “Hugh Heifer and Playcow” (Novice), Jared Dashoff and Heather Schultz; we weren’t quick enough to realize it from Jared’s surname, but this would prove only the first of nine cow jokes—another Chicago tribute—with the black and white Holstein markings in one form or another, the night’s running gag, each greeted with louder mooing than before: “Bovita Peron” (Journeyman; Joni Dashoff); “Cowltic Warror” (Journeyman; John Syms); “Royal Cownadian Moonted Police” (Most Cowrageous, Novice; Jay Meisner); “Elsie Borden” (Journeyman; Laura Syms); “Cowvalier” (Journeyman; Sandy Swank); “Cownan the Barbarian” (Journeyman; Andy Trembley); “American Cowboy” (Journeyman; David Rivers); and “Moona Lisa” (Journeyman; Victoria Warren). We found these the cream of the herd, and awarded them Most of Show.

Best Workmanship, Master, was “Poké-Brat” (why do people pronounce pokémon, a contraction of “pocket monster”, as if some Caribbean were saying “pokey, mon?”), Lance Ikegawa and David Sheets, a tawny behemoth who wouldn’t go back into

its poké-ball: a banner blazoned with eeks and grunts hid the scrimmage, then fell to show the monster victorious while the ball with the boy inside bounced off.

Best Novice, and Best Workmanship in Class, was “Galaxy Breast Bra”, Rachelle Hrubretz, Sallie Abba, Mandi Arthur, Diane Dunlap, Jeannette Roth, brave women in glistening shako hats and large adornment, posing fashionably, the last of them a humanoid quintuply mammalian.

George Richard, a fierce “Ming the Merciless” (Journeyman), got the house chanting Hail, Ming! then laughing as he dutifully did the conga until the M.C. apologized “Sorry, I meant King of the Cosmos.” Joy Day danced as “Spring Rain” (Most Beautiful, Master) in pastel robes with gauze banners that became wings. Most Original, Journeyman, was “A Mother’s Love”, Winston Howlett (“Morgana Blackwood”) and Juanita Nesbitt as a bad white harpy pathetically rescuing her babe from a good black woman whose magic could not avail.

Zelda Gilbert, queen of glitter, won Most Glamorous, Master, as a beaming man with hair swept up in a pompadour who doffed a brilliant cloak, opened his flying saucer to reveal a piano keyboard, put a candelabrum on it, turned round in a coruscating tailcoat, and began to play—“The Galactic Liberace”.

Two elaborate robots lectured us Earthlings on how unfit we were, then found from their computer they were on the wrong planet (“First Encounter”, Master; Tony Truitt and Mike Bolin).

Susan Eisenhour and Margaret Blakesley won Best Journeyman, and nearly stole Best in Show, as a harpist who brought a tree to grow a huge Entish face, then lift its roots like feet and dance, slowly, gigantically, in wonderful rhythm, “The Awakening”.

Best Master and Best Workmanship in Show, Jacqueline Ward’s “Ill Met by Earthlight”, compelling and bizarre, was an inhuman fairy from some other universe who appeared from a tree flag to Mendelssohn’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*; she he it blew a kiss, I think.

Alfred Richard and Margot Palmere gave “A Klingon Quiet Night, Part 3—Can You Dig It?” in which Worf, engaging the 1970’s Protocols again, found himself channeling John Shaft; this, which could have been silly camp, was so neatly executed, so well timed with blaster and black overcoat, so perfectly strutting, that it took Best Presentation, Master.

Zo Allen, Terry Cupples, Michael Fobbs, and Ju Marty, “Mother-in-Law of Gor” (Journeyman), also skimmed the edge as two warriors, one beefy, one beer-bellied, overpowered—for this show one might say cowed—by their soft helpless slavegirl’s mom. “You call yourselves barbarians?? When was the last time you got new shackles for my daughter? And don’t think I don’t know about that camel!” The men, by then wholly intimidated, could only each mime “That was him!” (Judges’ Choice of Gor).

Belle Davis as another nameless monster was second banana to Kevin Roche, a shimmering quilted spaceman changing to best vaudeville clothes like Robert Preston in *The Music Man*, unpacking a top hat and two canes, giving one to the monster, and both hoofing madly (“In Space, No One Can Hear You Tap”; Best Choreography, Master).

“Carneval 2047”, an ambitious homage to the surreal Carnival of Venice by Bill Ernoehazy, Gail Bondi, John Bondi–Ernoehazy, Tina Beychok, and Steve Bartlett,

brought on bright pastel colors, strange masks on sticks, and when the lights fell, flashing electronics (Honorable Mention, Journeyman).

A Pettinger production was rightly made the end, “Ancient Plagues” (Master), loosely based on television’s *Burning Zone*, Sandy and Pierre Pettinger, Julie Zetterberg, Greg Sardo, John Blaker, and Greg Abba, among whom strong religious faith has not prevented, perhaps has instead helped, in exploring images of evil. Sweeping, terrible, and spectacular, with at last Pierre Pettinger the Master Virus thrusting forward to make two shapeless hulks the signs of death, this was Best in Show, its blazing hues, its name, and like Ecclesiastes what it kept unsaid leaving a breath of hope.

—John Hertz

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