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# **Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters)**


*Steve Tillis*

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## **TOWARD AN AESTHETICS OF THE PUPPET**

**PUPPETRY AS A THEATRICAL ART**

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**Steve Tillis : Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Toward an

## Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters):

7 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Steve Tillis: A Legend in his own Time By A Customer It is not often that one earns the moniker of "legend" in his own time. It is even less often that that man is manifest in the humble corporeality of a Brooklyn dramatist, sheathed by the ubiquitous feathers of a denim jacket, peering out with pluck and aplomb beneath his Beat-styled painter's cap. That, folks, has happened, in the mythical, yet so human, figure of Steve Tillis. Has he been conferred to us by some divine diaphane, watching down from above, convalescing the languid state of contemporary drama, so thirsting for a savior? Perhaps. We can only know one thing: If the theatre has ever needed a superman, an *bermensch*, "someone it could lean on", Steve "The Chairman of the Board" Tillis, Steve "The Mick Jagger of the Stanford IHUM Department," is that man. Go out and buy this book. Trust me.

Societies around the world have their puppet traditions and puppetry remains a vital theatrical art; yet puppetry has received little attention in the theoretical study of theatre. The present study offers an aesthetic theory and vocabulary for practitioners, critics, and audiences to utilize in creating, evaluating, viewing, and describing the age-old, yet ever-new art of the puppet. Asserting that no satisfactory theory or descriptive vocabulary has yet been advanced for the theatrical puppet, Steve Tillis seeks the underlying principles through observation and analysis of puppetry in all its manifestations. He considers the disparate range of puppet performance and puppet construction to determine what is constant and what is variable and explores such theoretical problems as how a puppet is to be defined; how its appeal is to be explained, and how its performance is to be described. Reviewing standard responses to these problems in a thorough survey of the literature on puppetry, he then offers new solutions. In an interesting coda, Tillis discusses the power of the puppet as a metaphor of humanity and a term applied to particular people. This is an essential text not only for college puppetry courses but also for all serious puppet artists, as well as scholars and researchers in performance theory and practice, and more general audiences.

About the Author Playwright, performer, and director, STEVE TILLIS has worked professionally in the theatre since 1974. His article *The Appeal of the Puppet: God or Toy?* was published in *The Language of the Puppet*, edited by Laurence R. Kominz and Mark Levinson.