



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
Looking for updates and missed information?
Check for it at **SFBAPG.ORG**

SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization

September 2010



Guild members David Morley, Emily Butterfly (with Larry Schmidt peeking over her head), Valerie Nelson, Robin Stevens (in back) and Kevin Menegus pose in front of the Fairyland Puppet Theatre at the August Guild meeting and Day of Puppetry. Thanks to Eli Nash for taking the picture!

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Welcome to the "What I did on my summer vacation" issue. As you can see, guild members were busy traveling to festivals and workshops, and basically having a rip roaring time with puppets!

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Puppet-O-Rama

Sharon Clay

I hadn't attended a puppet festival in several years, and I had been a little disappointed when I attended a "smaller" festival in the past, so I was sort of hesitant about registering for the Northwest Festival "Puppet-O-Rama" to be held in Seattle July 30th through August 2nd. But, I grew up in Seattle and hadn't been there a several years, so I got brave and registered.

There is a new light rail from the SeaTac airport to downtown Seattle, and the festival had arrangements to pick people up in downtown and take them to the Festival venue at Seattle University. Everything was so convenient at the University, from the dorms to the ONE building where all the sessions were held to the nearby theater (Lee Center) where the performances were held. Add to that perfect weather. So, now if the sessions and performances were as good as the first impression, it would be very worth the trip.

And they were. The risk you take going to any festival is (1) Are you going to be disappointed by not being able to take all the sessions and learn EVERYTHING you want to learn. With a smaller festival you don't have as many choices, but at this one there were enough to give you choices in several directions; and (2) Will you be disappointed in the session you chose, having missed something else you wanted to do. The Program Book gave very good descriptions of each session leader and each session and each performance so you had a good idea if this session would be what you were looking for.

Michael and Valerie Nelson's Little Blue Moon Theater opened the Festival with the "Dracula del Lobo". The Lee Center was a little large for their intimate Toy Theater performance, but the audience was very enthusiastic and appreciative. Michael's description of "Behind the Scenes in Toy Theater" written in the program was very interesting and enlightening.

The workshops started on Saturday morning. Brian Kooser's Papier Mache' workshop was given in 2 sessions - Saturday and Sunday mornings. This was not a "hands on" get-your-hands-into-the-gunk and make something you had to find a way to take home. But, he did show how to make the papier mache' out of wallpaper adhesive, how to mix it, and work with it. Some people ventured to get their hands into it and make decorations for a stage. He had lots of examples of his work, and really let you see how versatile paper mache' can be.

Other sessions at that time were Annett Mateo - Finishing touches for your Puppet, and Jean Enticknap - Bunraku-Style Manipulation.

Session 2 - I attended Tony DeFilippis - Character Design Workshop. Tony is an incredible artist and showed us how to make our puppets have different expressions and shades that will show their personalities by simply looking at them. The other 2 sessions were: "Build a Puppet for Saturday's Shadow Jam" and Bernie Beauchamp - "Urban Busking Workshop". I had no idea what Busking was, so didn't attend the workshop. However, on Monday I went to the Seattle Center to see the puppet display, and ran into Bernie, who was wheeling his cart containing his stage and puppets across Seattle Center. He invited me to stop and see his show on the way back and I did. He is a very talented marionette artist who "hangs-out" at the Seattle Center and performs for



Performances galore: info at www.puppet-o-rama.org

donations. I also saw another street performer at Pike Place Market who was called “the Busking King”. So now I believe I know that busking is street performing.

Session 3 was on Sunday morning. I continued with the 2nd session of Papier Mache, The decorations made on Saturday were dry and we could see how they looked. He showed how to finish off the model you make and add other things to the basic form and apply paint, hair or finishing touches.

My second session that day was Deborah Skorstad - “Costuming for Puppets”. Deborah is a costumer for the Seattle Children’s Theater, Seattle Shakespeare Company and other production companies. She had many ideas on how to design and make costumes for puppets. There were lots of examples of her work. She also showed us how she actually created a costume for a puppet that needed one, and it’s not just “cutting down” a human size pattern. The two other sessions going on at the same time were “Making and Using Simple Hand Puppets” with Monica Leo, and “Adapting/Creating New Works” with the Rogue Artists Ensemble.

After lunch and a performance by Parasol Puppets “The Amazing Mysto’s Magic Show” we continued with session 4. Michael Earl - of TV’s Muppet Show was supposed to lead a session on TV Puppetry Workshop, but he got called away for a family emergency. Instead the session was led by Greg Ballora who trained Disney Puppeteers. He was great and the session was very enlightening. They did use a camera, and a video and let us all do video performance - like Lee does when she teaches a similar session. For some reason I haven’t used it with my team, but this session woke me up to trying it. At the same time Michael Nelson was leading a session on “Toy Theater”, and Janet Bradley did “Impacting Student Learning”.

There were performances between each session and one or two each night. Each performance and each company showed a different type of puppetry. These were terrific. Besides Little Blue Moon Theater, Parasol Puppets, there was also Rogue Artists Ensemble, Eulenspiegel Puppets, Night Shade, Leonidas Kassapides, Thistle Theater, Plasticity Now, Peter Allen, and Kyle Loven. Ronnie Burkett was the featured Guest Speaker.

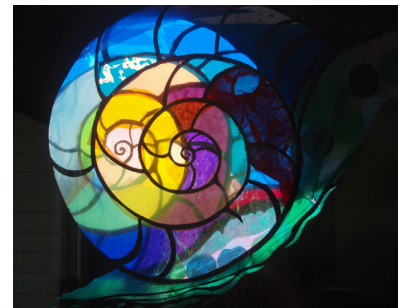
I always learn something at a Festival - and besides the sessions, I saw some wonderful performances of a great variety of puppetry. Yes, it was worth the trip.

I think another thing about this Festival was how it came together. There are not many people in the Northwest Guild, yet they were very organized, everything went quite smoothly, and they had quality sessions and performances. Most of them had never put on a festival before, but they did a good job.

Lots of Puppetry at the Ventriloquist Convention!

By Nina Dees (“TwinkieDeeStar”)

Every July in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, hundreds of ventriloquists gather at the Venthaven Convention. They share information on various aspects of performing with a figure, including scripting, music, marketing and as well as a plethora of other subjects related to the art. Glancing around the 300 or so attendees, our guild member Nina Dees, sees an abundance of soft figures, as opposed to the traditional hard-carved dummies that are to be expected, including many, many animal puppets. In fact, most people attending have puppets they perform with rather than hard figures. In many cases it is a matter of finances. Hard figures can run up into the



Performances galore: info at www.puppet-o-rama.org

thousands of dollars. In comparison, soft puppets can usually be custom made if you like, for under a thousand. Terry Fator, the winner of “America’s Got Talent”, uses many soft puppets in his performances. Jeff Dunham, who is a favorite on TV in “Comedy Central” uses soft puppets also, in addition to his hard figure “Walter” and the infamous “Achmed The Dead Terrorist”. Children seem to respond very quickly to soft puppets vs. the traditional dummies. A trend this year was several “look-alikes” (where the puppet clones the puppeteer or visa versa.) (see photo)

So how do we draw a distinction between puppetry and ventriloquism? It may not be as delineated as you think. When customers call up inquiring of my puppetry services, I am quick to explain I do not use a stage but perform more as the “puppet-as-partner” style. I also point out that we have many talented performers in our guild who specialize in stage performances and marionettes. The entertainment value of both is very high however with a walk-around puppetry or vent style act, ad-libbing & spontaneity as well as characterization are very important. In cabaret puppetry, the set, the music and if applicable, the pre-recorded music, and multiple puppets can be very complex. In both styles, fabrication is an art form in itself!

Regardless of what style of puppetry you favor, it is undisputable that puppetry holds a special place in the hearts of the public. Libraries are top of the list of those hiring puppet shows. A tip is to always relate your show to the library’s theme for the year. The Library Showcase, held in the Spring is an excellent way to sell your show for multiple bookings. Relating your show to a story is also recommended to reinforce the reading goal of the library. Cruise ships and comedy clubs seem to be a strong venue these days for ventriloquists. “Do beware if you go that route, it may not be as glamorous as you think”, according to Dan Horn. The security of a contract is not always there due to the loopholes.

It seems there is always a date overlap between the Annual Puppetry festivals and Vent Haven so it can be a challenge to attend both. Vent Haven is an affordable \$150 for 3 days (www.venthavenconvention.com), and the Puppetry Festivals vary in price depending on the hosts and location but seem to be a bit more expensive. In either case, you always benefit by attending these learning, social events that are so much fun. Getting to meet and talk to people who have established themselves is such a treat and so inspiring! Try to save away a dollar everyday and by next summer you should have a basic amount which can justify a puppetry business trip

Giant Bones Puppet Project at Exit Theatre, SF

Elaine (Lanie) Wieland

I spent a good part of the spring and early summer working on a really fun puppet project for a play that went up at the Exit Theatre in SF. The show was called *Giant Bones* and it was based on a book by the same name (though it will now be re-released as *The Magician of Karakosk*) by Peter S. Beagle. who is probably most famous for writing *The Last Unicorn*. *Giant Bones* was directed by Stuart Bousel (in association with the theatre company, "No Nude Men"), and it was primarily a play with live actors. I designed and created the puppets and props for the play. There were 5 puppets with quite a variety in functions. One was a hand-



Nina and Dan - Dan Horn and his puppet dog "Milo", have been entertaining with puppets for several decades, and had a TV show in Arizona. Currently he is an entertainer on Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and at various Comedy Clubs all over the U.S. He works with several characters and is a master of manipulation!



Here are a few of MaryAnnTaylor's puppet designs. She crafts them out of foam and can also do look-alikes. She learned her craft from the famous Verna Finley and her work is now in very high demand.

operated costume-type puppet (when the evil queen had a 10-second change to turn into a hideous, monster). There were 3 magical fish that were rod-puppets. And my personal favorite was the Giantess! The Giantess framed the story, was in the title of the play and had great significance to the world of the play. But she was only supposed to be on stage for a total of 10 minutes (mostly at the beginning and then very briefly at the end). Because of space limitations at the Exit, I had to design the puppet so she could stay on stage for the entire play, but become invisible when she was not featured in the scene. At first, the set designer groaned when I pointed this out, but we had a lot of fun working together. The text also specified that the Giantess' face was mistaken for a moon, so I designed her face to light up like a moon when lit from behind. During the rest of the play, when she was supposed to be invisible, she blended into the false support beam that we created. I covered her wire-frame face with a fabric that matched the rest of the wood beautifully, so it just looked like a knot in the wood. I also created hinged doors that opened to let her arms and hands come out. Two actors controlled these rods, and when they were finished, the arms tucked away back into the beam to disappear. This was a really fun project, and my puppets are going into storage now in hopes that the play will have another showing in another city someday soon!



*The Giantess could be invisible when not featured. Photo by Tim McGrath
tc@tcmcgphotography.com*

Wendy & Toby Froud Workshop in Petaluma

Sara Norgeot

.I had the pleasure, over the summer vacation time, to take a 3 day workshop from Wendy & Toby Froud in Petaluma at the Arts Center. Yes the legendary Froud family, known for collaboration on Jim Henson's Dark Crystal & Labyrinth. It was truly amazing! The workshop was based on "creatures" sculpted in the Wendy Froud fashion. First, we were taken through a guided mediation with Wendy at the helm. This mediation was to set the stage as to what we would construct. After wards, we were then set out to sculpt a creature that we had met in the mediation out of polymer clay. This is where the true fun began.

The first 2 days were spent sculpting our creature. The final day we worked with paints, fur and fabrics to finish it with the desired worn and believable aspects we were trying to achieve. Wendy & Toby worked exclusively with each participant (14), individually at different times during the workshop. Their hints and ideas were so helpful that any tiny alteration brought so much life into the clay and fur fabrics. Through their guidance I have found myself much more creative and a better sculptor & puppet fabricator. I now have a different eye to see with for developing my creations.



Photos (to right) - Above: Wendy Froud, Sara Norgeot, Toby Froud, and below, Sara and her creature.

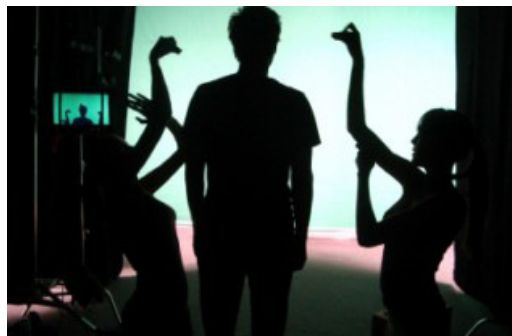
Images In Motion Lends a Hand to Hand Shadow Commercial

Hand shadows are a simple, yet challenging form of puppetry. Mekanism, <http://www.mekanism.com>, a San Francisco based creative production studio was seeking hand shadow puppeteers for a video commercial. They searched the Guild website and contacted Images In Motion. The team at IIM had done some simple hand shadows and were willing to brush up on characters. Mike Wick and Kamela Portuges researched hand shadows on line and through the Guild Library. They practiced a variety of animals and spent an afternoon at the Mekanism office shooting a demo for the client, AXE hair products. Months passed, concepts changed and the client decided to use the hands of two beautiful models fighting over a guy's hair.

Mekanism auditioned and hired two models who exhibited graceful hand gestures, Paloma Calhoun and Leah Wade. Lee Armstrong of IIM spent a day teaching Paloma and Leah the hand shadows needed for the commercial.

In the 30 second spot, ladies hands start off as cute woodland birds and squirrels and progress to aggressive moose and elk. In the end, a jaguar triumphs and hand hearts fill the screen as the girl and guy get together.

The next day, the ladies created the animals including transitions, in real time. Lee Armstrong stated, "It was difficult to learn all the shapes in a day. Paloma and Leah had great talent and aptitude for the work. They pulled it off beautifully." The completed commercial is being aired in selected theaters across America.



Hand shadows from shadow commercial.

Cuddly Tummy Puppet for Yakult Commercial

Mike Wick was hired by Kerner Optical of San Rafael to head the puppet team for a Yakult U.S.A. commercial. The "Love Your Insides.™" campaign, for their signature probiotic drink, Yakult, features a lovable puppet in the form of a cuddly digestive system.

The foam understructure of the puppet was covered in a custom dyed polar fleece. Cable control eyeblinks were added. The commercial was shot in two days, on location in various beauty spots in and around Sausalito. The three puppeteers, Mike Wick, Danny Wagner and Scott MacNamera had the puppet kite flying, lifting sofas and sharing magic moments in the sunset.

The commercial will kick off in 29 major designated marketing areas in both English and Spanish. Both versions of the commercials are formatted as 30 and 15 second spots and additional visuals of this puppet can be seen at <http://www.yakultusa.com/>.

Classifieds

Hand Puppets for Sale, all in very good condition \$5 each +\$1 shipping, If buyer buys all 13, *Free Shipping* & I will donate \$10 of proceeds to the SFBAPG. DeesignsCo@aol.com

CALENDAR

Storybook Puppet Theatre
Children's Fairyland - Oakland

The Petrified Princess - Storybook
Sept. 4-5
10 am, 2 pm, 4 pm
Children's Fairyland - Oakland

"The Petrified Princess." Baron Bullyrag wishes to marry the lovely princess. The baron owns most of the lands and the poor, indebted princess is being forced into marriage. When she refuses, he turns her to stone. The knight Puff Louse has twenty four hours to find the ingredients to reverse the curse. Join us as Puff Louse meets the Man in the Moon, the strange Wizard Wel-read, the Dragon of Brizee and tries to beat the Baron at his own game. Fun for everyone! Puppets by Benjamin Blake, and original story by Don Ingraham. Scenery by Annie Wong.

The Love of Three Oranges - Storybook

Sept. 11-12, 18-19, 25-26
10 am, 2 pm, 4 pm
Children's Fairyland - Oakland

Based loosely on the opera by Serge Prokofiev and the designs of Maurice Sendak, this delightful tale follows Prince Leandro on his mission to break a spell and find true love. A Commedia Del' Arte tale. Puppets and script by Lewis Mahlmann.

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Nick Barone
<http://nbpuppets.com>

Sept. 18 - 12:00 pm & 1:15 pm
"T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Revue"
Hayward Public Library
835 C Street, Hayward, CA

Sept. 21 - 3:30 pm
"T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Revue"
El Sobrante Branch Library
4191 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA

Sept. 25 - 3:30 pm
"T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Revue"
Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival
Old Mill Park, 300 Throckmorton Ave., Mill Valley, CA

Puppet Art Theater
www.puppetarts.com

Sept. 11-12, 18-19
11:30 am, 1:00 pm, 2:30 pm
AquaSmart Live
Long Beach Boat Show

Sept. 13 - 6:30 pm
Riley the Wiley Rabbit
Foster City Library

Sept. 18 - 10am
The Boy Who Cried Wolf
KidZone Museum, Truckee, Ca.

Sept. 25-26
TBA
Fairytale Town Book Fest
11:30am, 12:30pm, 1:30pm

"An Evening of Comedy Magic"/ Benny Bendini & Germar
, 09/17 & 18
Belrose Theatre, 1415 5th Avenue, San Rafael, CA
COST: \$20
TICKETS: Call (800) 838-3006
or online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/115924

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"The Mad Hatter strikes again." - Contra Costa Times "I
enjoy seeing your chapeau magic over and over again" -
Bob McKenzie, KTVU Channel 2

"Bay City Best" -S.F. Chronicle

<http://www.MagicCircus.com>
info@magiccircus.com



Kevin Menegus and Fred Riley perform at the Day of Puppetry/Guild Meeting in August.

DON'T MISS OUT ON FUTURE GREAT PUPPET EVENTS...GUILD DUES ARE DUE IN SEPTEMBER FOR THE NEXT YEAR. RENEWAL FORMS ARE AT sfbagp.org OR IN A MAILBOX NEAR YOU!



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