



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
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Check for it at SFBAPG.ORG*

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

June 2005



Art is a part of life. To me it is a way of life as necessary to my well being as the food I eat and the air I breathe. I believe it is impossible to separate life from art or to create any form of art which does not reflect life through the many phases of nature. (Former Guild member Ralph Chesse, 1900-1991)
Image courtesy of <http://chesseartsltd.com>

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Puppeteers from Albrecht Roser's Workshop Perform in New York City

By Kathy Dodge

I was lucky enough to be in New York City to see the excellent performance by six puppeteers who had just completed a two-month workshop with world-renowned marionette performer Albrecht Rose in Stuttgart, Germany. Jane Henson sponsored this performance and was there to enjoy it on Thursday evening, April 21st at the Carriage House in Manhattan. Cathy McCullough organized the event and was mistress of ceremonies. The puppeteers were Matt Brooks, Emily Decola, Sarah Frechette, Dan Luce, Robin Walsh and Nate Wilson.

The puppeteers presented more than twenty short vignettes that provided an excellent sampler of their skills and the kinds of projects they had developed in the workshop. The performances featured marionettes, masks and rod puppets. Each piece was so clever and so different that the audience sat spellbound.

The first presentation, entitled "Balzo," used a simple red ball on a string. Balzo was coaxed/commanded to jump over ever-larger hurdles of wood. Such drama and emotion from such a simple marionette! During a lively discussion with the audience after the performance, the puppeteers explained that this ball on a string represents the basic physical challenges a puppeteer faces when moving any object on a string. When asked how much time they spent studying and working each day, one puppeteer responded "from 9:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the morning."

The puppeteers performed in full view of the audience and many times became actors with their puppets. Albrecht Roser had taught them that the puppet should be a co-performer with

you, not something that you are manipulating. Emily Decola even lent her legs to her sultry cabaret singer-puppet. Emily wore black tights and leotard and held the puppet head near her waist. The puppet wore a small red neck scarf that draped over one of her puppet hands that was attached to the top of Emily's leg. Emily moved the singer's head and the other puppet hand (complete with cigarette holder) and danced slowly as the chanteuse belted out a moody jazz ballad of "It pleases me."

Robin Walsh used excellent people-sized props - a bathroom sink and an old-fashioned bathtub with a shower - to set the scene for her performance. She walked on stage wrapped in a towel and wearing a shower cap. As she turned on the shower, ribbons fell down like a spray of water from the showerhead. She noticed something in the bathtub and pulled out a very frisky scarf marionette. As she played with her newfound puppet friend, the puppet kept trying to pull her towel off. She managed to jump away several times but finally the towel started to slide. With a panicked look on her face she grabbed the scarf puppet, held it over the front of her as the towel fell to the floor, and ran off stage. It's a scarf, it's a marionette, it's a towel!!

As part of their workshop the puppeteers had studied masks with Alice Bohm. Several performances featured stories acted out with the puppeteers wearing brightly colored face masks with expressively chiseled features. One story featured a man wearing a face mask, carrying a brief case and, apparently, waiting for a bus. He looks rather dejected and continually checks the time on his



***Memorial Day Puppet Photo:** Soldiers in WWI were dazzled by puppet artistry as puppeteers (such as the anonymous performer pictured above) provided intimate entertainment for the men in uniform. (For those of you who thought a Roser scarf marionette photo would have been more appropriate here, I did not get permission to run it in time for print. So if you have photo archives let your newsletter editor know.)*

watch. Looking irritated when he notices that it's started raining, he takes out a bright green umbrella from his briefcase and holds it over his head. Remembering something he needs in his briefcase he sets down the umbrella and rummages through the briefcase. Another actor, wearing a huge head mask that features a grinning, cunning smile, sneaks on stage with only a newspaper for an umbrella. He spots the green umbrella on the ground and whisks it away. The plot develops with missed bus and further annoyances. The final scene has the reappearance of the

umbrella snatcher in the wonderful head mask carrying about 10 more umbrellas after his day's work is through. The movements and the masks were very puppet-like in their simplicity and effectiveness in conveying their meanings.

On a technical note, several of the marionette controllers had the hand-control bar detached from the main controller. This wire control bar was thin but very wide, maybe 18"-24", with large circles on the ends that held several hand strings. This allowed the performers to achieve very natural and expressive hand movements with their puppets. Many of the marionettes had no actual feet; the lower part of the body was suggested by a long piece of fabric. Because the "walking" movement was so convincing, the legs and feet weren't really needed. On the other extreme was the Slyph puppet, who was very long and thin with an extra joint in each leg and very long feet.

As I'm typing this a graceful, long-legged spider has just come down from the ceiling on a long thin string and landed on my keyboard. In my current state of mind it looks like a lovely self-propelled marionette.

A few quick highlights: a clown marionette that sits on eggs in a nest and hatches some tiny chicken marionettes, who peck their way out of the shells; and a belly dancer made only of a head and a very round belly with scarves draping over her who sings "I can't give you anything but love - chiacchi-cha!"

It was a great show and I even ran into Howie Leifer there. He's a former SFBAPG member now living in New York and he said to say hi to everyone. He was going to perform a piece the next day at the New York chapter's Day of Puppetry event.

Follow-up on National Day of Puppetry

Randal Metz

Hello Everyone. I would like to comment one more time on our Day of Puppetry held Saturday April 23 at the San Leandro Library. First I would like to thank those guild members who did a review of our day and shared their thoughts with us. However, more than the committee is responsible for our successful day. A few guild members (not on committee) have to be thanked. They are: Sharon Clay and her wonderful 4-H kids, Lee Armstrong, Michael Wick, and John Amos. I would also like to add my thanks to Ron and Barbara Johnson who traveled from Grass Valley to share their "puppet petting zoo." Thanks everyone, you made a difference in our event, and in our guild.
Randal.

Bits & Pieces: Storytelling Festival and Traveling Puppet Stage

By Elisheva Hart

Hi puppeteers, While I was at the Storytelling Festival, I saw Margaret Bloom and family, of Flying Teapot Puppets. Could she have read about it in this very newspaper??? Also, P & T Puppet theatre, Peter Brizzi, of Salinas, had a puppet sales booth. He has an interesting fabric puppet stage which folds up into a large frisbee shape and unfolds into a stage 32" wide X 24" high X 12" deep. The mechanism is similar to that in the new fangled camping tents which are thrown out into the clearing and erect themselves in seconds.

What really caught my interest is that it can be a walkabout stage by just poking your head in the back, letting the soft top sort of drape over your head.

There is a scrim already inside which will screen the face from view. No need for a backpack frame, a converted army helmet, or other such walkabout hardware. Although one might want to sew a skullcap and chin strap in the top, if necessary.

Do any puppeteers grab a handful of puppets, a backpack, and travel the globe anymore? This stage has potentials for adventurous souls, although I'm not sure how wind resistant it would be. (Mini bungee cords?) Although it is brightly colored, I'm sure our Guild puppeteers are clever enough to redecorate, if they want. The mechanism is the exciting part, to me. Price, \$43. Go to www.ptpuppets.com and click on puppet store. The item is "Pop-up Puppet Theater by Velcro. It isn't being made anymore and possibly this is the only place to buy one. My best, Elisheva

History of Radical Puppetry, Part 2

(Part 1 appeared in the May newsletter and can be found archived on the guild website.)

By K. Ruby

K Ruby is a visual and performing artist with 25 years experience in the arts as a performer, director, designer, consultant, builder, costumer and teacher. Ruby is one of the original members and current artistic director of Wise Fool Community Arts, a giant puppet theatre recognized for its dedication to community, celebration and social change. Since 1997 Ruby has been integral to the production of the annual PuppetLOVE!, Festival of Radical Puppetry. This text, and an accompanying slide show were developed in part for this event. If you are interested in hiring Ruby to present the lecture and slide show live, please contact her at wisefool@lmi.net.

Beginnings of Giant Puppets in Europe

Giant figures, mostly lightweight, non-articulated statuary, were used in civic and religious festivals in many parts of Western Europe starting in the 14th century.

In England, where giants were part of traditional folklore, the Giants of Guildhall, Gog & Magog were wicker statues representing the guardians of London. The statues were carried in Lord Mayors pageants starting in the reign of Henry V. Later they were used in other civic festivals to represent the professional guilds. Although not political in the contemporary sense of anti-authoritarian, as champions of the guilds the images represented the rise of the middle class, where previously only peasant and royal classes had existed. With the middle class came the overthrow of feudalism, a hugely important political and economic event.

There were also traditions of giants in many towns in Belgium. In 1530 following a victory against France, the basket makers guild of Douai made a wicker float called a Gayant to be part of the celebration. The next year the Gayant got a wife. In 1667 Douai was again conquered by France and pageants were cancelled not only because they celebrated French defeat, but because had become too profane, full of devils and dragons. The celebrations were revived in 1780 and banned again after the French revolution, this time because they were seen as too religious in nature and portrayed aristocrats. The gayants were then restored after Napoleon's defeat in 1815. They were destroyed and rebuilt after each world war and they continue to bless the streets of Douai today.

Throughout the southern parts of Europe festivals arose around the

religious holidays. Both Carnaval and the Feast of Fools belong to this lineage. Carne levale literally means 'to take away meat' or 'good-bye to flesh,' and is a period of indulgence before the fasting and penitence demanded by Lent. Lent begins, of course, on Ash Wednesday. Thus Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday, also belongs to this Spring tradition. The pre-Lenten festivals of the time (and still) were characterized by a subversion of established order, drinking, sexing and disrespect of authority, the reading of edicts containing biting social criticism, wearing masks and disguises. In Italy, Southern France (Nice since the 14th c.) Wicker giants borne as statues came out for the festivities which often culminated in a mock trial of the King, who is found guilty and burned in effigy. Carnaval festivities often became vehicles for local politics. The big Carnaval in Via Reggio, Italy is a modern day holdover which features large scale floats and themes of political satire.

In Spain one of the traditions of Giants centered on Corpus Christi, or the festival of the Body of Christ. Corpus Christi was officially recognized in 1263 in Italy. The festival arrived in Spain in the 14th century, beginning in Catalonia and spreading into many Spanish towns. Much darker and more fantastical than in England and France, the traditional puppet figures of Corpus Christi included Cabezudos (big heads), Mulasses (beasts), Diables (Devils) and Tarascas (dragons) accompanying the host.

Late 19th Early 20th Century

In the late 19th and Early 20th centuries there was a surge of interest in puppetry within the mainstream. Puppets were invited back indoors by the bourgeois. These tended to be marionettes

more than hand puppets, to explore the technical side of the art more than the thematic and to take place in a theatre where there could be complex staging and a comfortable setting for the audience. Because real estate requires patronage, these shows tended by default to serve those with money. They were operas and epics which sought to amaze and entertain with trick marionettes and hidden levers. Outside the walls, however, a movement of radical and experimental puppetry was beginning within the avant-garde.

In 1888 Alfred Jarry, the eccentric anarchist puppeteer performed an early version of Ubu Roi, a brutal and irreverent slap at bourgeois morality and stupidity. The play received instant notoriety, not the least of which was that the first word the king utters on stage is "shit!" The play debuted as a marionette piece and was later played by masked actors, retaining much of its original puppet quality.

Gerhardt Hauptman, foremost German dramatist of his time was asked in 1913 to write an appropriate theatrical work to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the German "wars of liberation." It was expected that he would write something of deep patriotic sentiment. The resulting work shattered audience expectation, creating controversy and scandal and making a mockery of the heads of state, including Napoleon, by showing them as puppets (literally & metaphorically) while honoring some of the real patriots of the time.
(to be continued)

June Puppet Horror Story

Elisheva Hart

I've had my share of self-inflicted horror stories (unprepared shows, a missing puppet...our dog discovered a candy bag left in my puppet box by the birthday child. "Fido" dragged away not only the candy but one puppet which was never recovered) etc. And I learned a lot by my mistakes. But the top 3 worse cases concerning the attending children were not in my control.

#3. The birthday girl had some sort of disability and the mother gave her "calming" medicine just as the guests arrived. The child completely collapsed and slept through the whole performance, which was enjoyed enthusiastically by her guests. Then Mom ranted at me because the girl slept, I wasn't dressed right, my show was stupid, etc. Dad tipped me off to the medicine when he walked me to the car.

#2. I was waiting to perform at a birthday when I overheard a guest's father furiously ranting on the house phone, obviously to the child's mother that, "I'm stuck here for two nonproductive hours WATCHING A PUPPET SHOW!" I did not take it at all personally, it could have been a clown, twenty seven angels on trapezes or whatever.

#1. Joining the Mother and the Father of the Year awards, is the Lifestyle of the Year presentation.

I traveled on the commute train from SF to Atherton (I think), lugging puppet stuff with me. I arrived at 11:00, and was picked up by the stock broker father, which obviously meant no lunch. The children and the performance were in the "castle" hall. The grownups had a merry luncheon in the "ballroom", where the kids were finally allowed in for cake. I snatched and stole a strawberry as I walked by the

buffet...the only food I had until I arrived back in SF, Atherton being a whistle stop with no crass vending machines of course. Their piñata was in the shape of an afghan hound. Nouveau Gauche is the word. But the heartbreaker was at the end when the guests were being picked up. A toddler accompanied one nanny and was seen by one of the four year old guests. She cooed at the toddler and then looked stricken. "Oh, to be a baby again", she almost wept, "And not to have to worry about getting into college." And she obviously meant it. The rule of thumb about hospitality of parents is the poorer they are, the more gracious, and you join the family and must have at least third helpings or hurt their feelings!

Have a Puppet Horror Story? A "It's a Wonderful Life" Puppet Story? Send them to your newsletter editor at mail@magicalmoonshine.org (or by mail: Box 2296, Yountville, CA 94599.)

Editorial:

Puppetry, A Healing Art Michael Nelson

Many guild members will remember the sad story of Polly Klaas, the little girl who was abducted from her Northern California bedroom in 1993. In the aftermath of that incident I happened to be talking to Ray Tater of the California Arts Council. I don't recall how the subject of Polly came up, but Ray said something to me that day that has stayed with me ever since. He pointed out to me that the work we do (as puppeteers) is a healing work. When a child's world is intruded upon by the harsh realities of the less savory things we human beings are willing to do to each other, a puppet show can be a renewal, a sign that life goes on, a celebration of life, joy, and a focus on the positive side of life. This does not mean negative aspects of life should be avoided in shows. Themes such as

death, abandonment, life quests, etc. are things that children are exploring in their psyches anyway, and bringing them into the open in the relatively safe environment of the puppet show gives the young audience member opportunities to see a different view of these themes, to ponder them, to have a chance to discuss them with a caring adult, etc. With our country at war and divisive political machinations added to media sensationalized crime and child-inappropriate films that feature violence as a solution to problems, it becomes all the more important that we puppeteers continue our work, even in this current art and education funding drought. (I think it is also important for puppeteers to be role models: not everyone is in it for the money, some are in it for the sake of our species!)

Have a puppet related item to sell or give away? Advertise it here!

GUILD CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED:

I'm currently looking for a new, experienced, very open-minded and fun-to-work-with puppetry partner to stage another fairytale of the Brothers Grimm in the Bay Area, possibly do a cool Halloween program. The Fairytale Theater has successfully been performing for over 2.5 years now. If you are interested in learning a bit more, please check out my website @ www.fairytaletheater.net and/or contact me, Herbert Lange, directly at lange.herbert@gmx.net. Let's stick our heads together and come up with a nice show! Hope to hear from you soon.

Calendar Listings, On-going events:

NEW EXHIBITION MUSEUM OF CRAFT & FOLK ART, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Puppets from Around the World, Wednesday, May 4 to Sunday, July 24, 2005 --*Puppets from Around the World* features a selection of more than 50 puppets representing puppetry traditions of North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Drawn mainly from the vast collection of Alan G. Cook, legendary collector and puppeteer. Museum of Craft & Folk Art - Fort Mason Center, Landmark Building A, San Francisco, CA 94123 - 1382 Entrance at Buchanan Street and Marina Boulevard - Tuesday - Sunday, 11am to 5pm; Saturday 10am to 5pm, \$4 for adults, \$3 for seniors, free for youth 18 and under. *Free the first Wednesday of each month and Saturdays 10am to 12pm*

Information: 24-hour recorded message, 415/775-0991

NEW EXHIBITION, ASIAN ART MUSEUM, 200 Larkin Street in San Francisco: "**Shadows, Masks, and Music: Aspects of the Performing Arts in Asia**," April 23, 2005 through January 22, 2006--"The Museum's sampling of artworks and objects related to drama, dance and music. Instruments, masks and shadow puppets highlight both the entertaining and the transformative aspects of performing arts in Asia." Tue. through Sun. - 10:00 am - 5 pm -Thur. evenings until 9:00 pm. \$10 adults; \$7 Seniors; \$6 youths 12-17 and college; free: members, under 12 and SFUSD students.

Upcoming Guild Meetings

June 25: Tour of Alan Cooks exhibit at Fort Mason (SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS!).

July: No meeting. National Festival (see bottom of page).

August: Children's Fairyland

September Theme is "Works in Progress". If you have a 7 to 10 minute piece to present to the guild please contact Tim Guigni. Include: what it is from (upcoming show, a doodle, an idea that has been swirling in your mind or ?), what type of puppetry, length, size of piece and any technical requirements that you might have. Send all of this information to me by July 20th. There are three slots available on a first come, first served basis.

CALENDAR LISTINGS!

What if you did a puppet show and nobody came?

If your puppet event is not listed here, you are missing out. It is easy to have your performances listed. Send info to mail@magicalmoonshine.org

Herbert Lange presents "Little Red Riding Hood" based on the original version by the Brothers Grimm. For the young at heart ages 3 +, Tuesday, June 14, at 4 p.m., at the Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Memorial Branch Library, phone: (415) 355-5601, 3555 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114--Library is located between Noe and Sanchez Streets.

NAPA, CALIFORNIA - Little Blue Moon puppeteers will come to Café Society for the first time Friday, June 17 for an evening of fun, glamour and sexy theater. Joined by Steve Ventrello on accordion, the Little Blue Moon puppeteers (Michael & Valerie Nelson - <http://magicalmoonshine.org/bluemoon.htm>) will take you on a journey to Paris, the jungle, and to the circus! (the world premier of **Cirque du Café**: a remarkable and astounding table-top circus where the performers are not what they seem nor what you would expect, along with toy theatre pieces **Natalie & Tango for Tarzan**, all with live accordion accompaniment.) Doors and an optional Prix Fixe dinner (\$17) are at 7pm; Performance (\$20 w/2 drink minimum) begins at 8pm (Please note, only 18 and older will be admitted).

Café Society is located at 1000 Main Street in historic downtown Napa, next door to the Napa Valley Opera House. For more information on special events and happenings at Café Society, as well as ongoing, visit <http://www.cafesocietystore.com>

PUPPET FEST 2005, July 24 – 30, 2005, St. Paul, Minnesota--If you haven't checked the website for the Puppeteers of America's 2005 national festival for a while, it's time to have a look at www.PuppetFest2005.org to see the latest exciting plans that are brewing.

Next SFBAPG meeting June 25, 2005 at 4PM

A special tour of "Puppets from Around the World" at the S.F. Museum of Craft and Folk Art, conducted by none other than the legendary puppet collector himself, Alan Cook. This fascinating exhibit features over 60 puppets from the Alan Cook Collection in Los Angeles. Following the museum tour, we will walk across the passenger bridge to Building C, Room 205 where Alan will present a 35-minute slide survey of more of his vast collection, and he will talk briefly about the Conservatory of Puppetry Arts (COPA) in Pasadena.

We will gather at the Museum at 4 PM and begin the tour at 4:15. If you cannot come for the tour, you're welcome to join us at 5:30 PM in Building C, Room 205 for Alan's slide presentation.

This is a reception for Alan Cook, as well as a Guild meeting! Also,

hopefully there will be some newcomers who have discovered the event through the newspapers. Please BRING SNACKS or DINNER-TYPE FOODS! Let's make this a party! (Drinks will be provided.)

Location: Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco's Fort Mason Center, Bldg. A (next door to Green's Restaurant)

The entrance to Fort Mason is at the intersection of Marina Boulevard and Buchanan Street, in the Marina District.

Driving Directions

From East Bay
Bay Bridge to Fremont Street Exit; on Fremont (100 yards north) take first right on Howard; left on Embarcadero and go 2 miles; left on Bay and go 2 miles; right on Buchanan. Cross Marina Boulevard and turn sharp right into Fort Mason Center.

>From North Bay

Golden Gate Bridge (US 101) to Marina Exit; Marina Boulevard (1.5 miles) to Buchanan and turn left into Fort Mason Center.

>From Peninsula/South Bay
US 101 North to 9th Street Exit; 9th across Market and left on Hayes; right on Franklin; left on Bay; right on Buchanan. Cross Marina Boulevard and sharp right into Fort Mason Center. An alternative route, usually with less traffic: US 280 onto 19th Street; go through Golden Gate Park; take Marina exit; drive along the Marina Green; turn left into Fort Mason Center (across from Safeway).

Muni Lines To or Near Fort Mason Center

#10 Townsend, #22 Fillmore, #28 - 19th Avenue, #30 Stockton, #47 Van Ness, #49 Van Ness/Mission, #82x Presidio/Wharves Express.

ELECTION BALLOT

The Nominating Committee (Michael Wick, Talib Huff and Lee Armstrong) is pleased to announce the following people are willing to run for the SFBAPG board:

Candidates:

- President: Tim Giugni
- Vice President: Elisheva Hart
- Secretary: Emily Guigni
- Treasurer: Valerie Nelson

Names can also be added at the June election meeting, if the person being nominated is present or has given written permission. There are some qualifications for officers. No person shall be eligible for election for officer who has not been a paid member for at least one year prior to the election and has attended meeting regularly. An elected officer shall serve no more than two consecutive terms in an office. After serving two terms, the officer may return to a previous office only after being out of that office for one term. The officer may be elected to another office after one or two terms in the original office.

If you are unable to attend the June meeting, your ballot (selecting this slate, or your write-ins) can be mailed to Michael Wick, 855 Allview Ave, El Sobrante, CA 94803 Be sure you are a paid up member of the guild and that your name is on the outside of the envelope so that your vote can be counted.



San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild
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Mary Nagler Accepted to UCONN Masters Program

Mary Hildebrand Nagler, long time Guild member from Santa Rosa, has been accepted to the University of Connecticut, in their Masters degree program in puppetry. Only three people from outside the university were accepted into the Masters program, selected from an extensive, 6 month process. Candidates were required to perform, create an improvisational puppet piece, as well as the usual written submissions.

Ms Nagler has been with Images In Motion, Sonoma, for over ten years and has shared her talents in puppet construction and performance in many IIM videos and projects throughout the years. She is also a Ringling Brothers trained clown and has a thriving independent clown and puppet business as Hoopla the Clown, performing and teaching in California and across America. She will be missed in the Bay Area.

UConn is one of only two universities in the country offering a BFA degree in puppet arts and the only institution in the country offering masters degrees (both MA and MFA) in the field. Bart. P.

Rocoberton, Jr. is the Director of the Puppet Arts Program. Graduates of the puppetry program perform and design for many theatres around the world. They appear in, build for and manage internationally recognized television programs (such as *Between the Lions*) and films, write books, design toys, teach children, and direct prominent schools and museums.

Congratulations to Mary and all the best in this next step in her puppetry career!