



The official newsletter of  
**San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild**  
*Looking for updates and missed information?*  
*Check for it at [SFBAPG.ORG](http://SFBAPG.ORG)*

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

**December 2010**



**Save the Date for the Guild  
Holiday Party. Saturday,  
January 29, (eve.) featuring  
Images in Motion new show,  
Water Works!**

**Inside this issue...**

- ◆ Guild 50<sup>th</sup> Coming, Help Wanted
- ◆ Terry Fator in Las Vegas
- ◆ Hands Up Review by Elisheva Hart
- ◆ How to Sell Merchandise at your Show
- ◆ Collaboration in NY
- ◆ Discount at Berkeley Rep's new puppet show
- ◆ Holiday Puppet Calendar

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## From Your President: Calling for Help

Friends-

In 2011, SFBAPG will be fifty (50!) years old. The Board has set a tentative March date and a budget for what should be a full-blast party celebration worthy of this anniversary.

Now we need helping hands, legs and brains, and we can't make 'em out of papier mache. We've started with a small Board committee, but we need a lot more help. LOTS more. So we're putting out the call.

50 years is a pretty astounding achievement, worthy of profuse celebration. AND that it can be a real energy spur in launching new Guild initiatives in the coming years. So don't be afraid to volunteer for fear of being the only person on the committee: if we don't have strong "buy-in" from the membership in terms of putting this together, it can't be done. With your help, it can. Think of it as payback for all the volunteer effort that's been expended for the past fifty years, and what it's meant for you. AND as a way to have a roaring good time this March!

We need members to help in one of four committees: Location, Program, Food and Promotion. And we need an overall Coordinator. We need to spread the responsibility so that any one person takes specific responsibilities only one arena, rather than depend on two or three earnest souls who work themselves to death. Of course coordination is necessary, and we'll encourage input & wild ideas from all quarters, but the actual legwork needs to be spread about. Basic jobs:

- Location - Scout possible locations for their facilities, cost, and accessibility. Handle arrangements with the chosen location, including setup and strike.
- Program - Develop ideas about what happens (performances? a prominent guest? music?) and follow up with contacts and handling all programming arrangements.
- Food & Drink - Research options (catered dinners? potluck plus deli? etc?) for what we ingest. Handle everything involved with making it happen.
- Promotion - Sending announcements to members, press releases about the Guild's 50th, news to the larger puppetry community, and any special invitations.

I'll volunteer to be Interim Coordinator until we can get the whole apparatus set up - hopefully in the next couple of weeks, as time is fleeting. So email me (or call 707-824-4307) if you have any questions. I'll pass everything on to the Board and to the subversive cells that start to form.

And if you have any thoughts, leads, suggestions about any of the above, please speak up. While keeping in mind that what we most need right now is PEOPLE.

Peace & joy-

Conrad Bishop  
President, SFBAPG

## Who's The Dummy Now Sharon Clay on Terry Fator's Las Vegas Show

Over Labor Day weekend, we had the opportunity of seeing the Terry Fator show in Las Vegas. Fator won the America's Got Talent TV show in it's second season. This was quite a surprise since Terry is a ventriloquist/puppeteer, and that is not the most popular talent seen in competition in recent years. But Terry is unusual. He is an impersonator as well as a ventriloquist and also a talented puppeteer. Simon Cowell described him as "One of the best entertainers on the planet" and Piers Morgan (one of the judges for AGT) says he is "The best ventriloquist I have ever seen." Terry is not an overnight sensation. He worked for more than 35 years, playing fairs, conventions, birthday parties, and corporate events. For most of his life, he tried everything to please his abusive father - to no avail. At age 9 his father taught him some magic tricks, but when his skills got better than his father's, the father lost



*Terry Fator in Las Vegas, Photo Sharon Clay*

interest in his talent. He gained praise in entertaining his family and friends. The praise and applause he got helped to make up for the disdain from his father. He got a book from the library by Paul Winchell on ventriloquism (quite by accident), and learned the basics after his father destroyed all of his magic tricks. He got his first vent figure from Sears which only allowed him to move the mouth with a string. Later, he got the Maher ventriloquist course, and his mother made him a more professional vent figure. It was many years of struggling, trying to advance his talent, please his father, and achieve praise from his audiences, he was barely eking out a living. He and his brother formed a band where he learned to perform in front of audiences, singing and doing some impersonations. In his book "Who's the Dummy Now" Terry goes into great detail of his struggles with self esteem and perfectionism in trying to be the best performer he could be. He also explains the backstage events that occurred between his audition for America's Got Talent, and his eventual win and prize of a million dollar contract at the Hilton Las Vegas. He only played a few days once a month at the Hilton, and the previous time I was in Las Vegas he wasn't performing. Then when Danny Gann died, the Mirage needed another act to fill the Danny Gann Theater. That theater is now the Terry Fator Theater, and Terry was given a 5 million dollar contract to play there. (Although I saw a recent internet headline that he was awarded a 100 million dollar contract).

The theater was full. There was a short introductory act, but then Terry came on and he performed for the full 1.5 hours with his Turtle, (Winston) his Elvis impersonation, his Garth Brooks impersonation with Walter T. Airdale and many other large figures. It was a delightful show. Incidentally, you know how it is at most shows - where you can't take any pictures, videos or recordings? Terry announced "now for the rules..... THERE ARE NO RULES". You could take all the pictures you wanted, but he did ask not to video a full segment.

Terry ends his book with "What happened to the boy who suddenly got everything he always wanted? He lived happily ever after". I highly recommend his show, now playing at the Mirage in Las Vegas.



*Terry Fator in Las Vegas, Photo Sharon Clay*

## Review of "Hands Up!"

by Elisheva Hart

I'm always very impressed by the ensemble performances of The Independent Eye (The Tempest, Descent of the Goddess Inanna, etc) with all their scope and grandness, way beyond what a pair or two of hands can accomplish. And I love "Hands Up!" their latest show, a collection of nine stories with no theme nor continuing characters to link the pieces together. (See Nov, 2010 issue of SFBAPG's Newsletter for a review by Valerie Nelson, pg. 6). Most puppeteers work solo or in pairs. Therefore, "Hands Up!", written and performed by Conrad Bishop and Elizabeth Fuller becomes a wonderful teaching tool for us, in addition to being tremendously entertaining. In fact a veritable graduate degree in "how-to- small-theatre" [For Dummies? With Dummies? If the



sock fits....] Really! about 100 combined years of experience worth. For instance, how DO nine dissimilar pieces keep an audience alert, oft laughing, frequently thinking, and eagerly anticipating the next one? Elizabeth explained that it is a matter of timing the intervals. Too long and the evening drags endlessly. Too short and the audience feels rushed without time to absorb the previous piece. Just right, the audience is keen on the next one. And the new cast of puppets and props are ready too. "The Weed", is excellent in the opening position because of its suitability for puppetry. The weed becomes as much a character as the gardener in this power struggle. Basically it is a mime piece, with "Bastard!" hollered at the weed [audience guffaws] and a slide whistle used to indicate its growth. The story is uncomplicated, funny and yet poignant in a twist away from the expected ending. If there were audience members who had never seen a puppet show, or doubted the art-ness of puppetry, this was an eye opener. The piece, "At the Prom with Kali" (the Dark Goddess of Hinduism), in my memory was the longest piece. It is placed at the pivot point of the program with four stories before it, an intermission, and 4 stories after that. This is a very complex piece story-wise and visually. I'm very keen to see it again. The reviewer's curse is the challenge to turn off her reviewer's perception and to switch into spectator-mode only. And this piece needs studying to grok the fullness thereof. One piece, "Doom"-in third position-our Guild saw at a Day of Puppetry at the San Leandro Library a few years ago. An unsuspecting housewife (played by a wide-eyed rag doll) opens the door to two messengers in black, complete with bowler derbies and Groucho Marx eyeglasses (complete with mustaches.) After the "Hand's Up!" performance, I asked if they have changed the ending, since I felt it was integrated so much better into the story now. Elizabeth says it has been changed and that they have been performing "Doom" for 10 years! Wow, what a mark of professionals, to keep on working and reworking this piece. Yes, folks, we are so fortunate to have these performing artists amongst us.

## **Working for the Sheer Love of It...**

### **Conrad Bishop**

Early November, Elizabeth and I spent two weeks in Brooklyn as collaborative consultants on *The Hobo Grunt Cycle*, a new piece by Kevin Augustine of Lone Wolf Tribe. Kevin was an actor with us in Philadelphia and premiered his first puppet piece, *Once Vaudeville*, at our theatre there. Now he's in New York with a string of powerful work behind him. He presented *Bride* at the 2009 P of A festival in Atlanta, with extremely mixed reaction, but it'd be hard to question the skill and intensity of his work.

So we've kept in touch over time, and he periodically sends us scripts or videos for comment. He was grieving that he had no director for his current show, which involves himself as a live actor and two additional puppeteers in a very complex story. Having one frequent-flyer pass and a bunch of friends we'd enjoy seeing, we said, "Well, if you can find us crash space, we'll come and work a bit."

So we did, nine days, seven hours a day. We worked on characters, clowning technique, the evolving relationship between the Tramp and his dog, dramaturgy, technical issues, the shape of scenes, and key dramatic questions: What does the Tramp find in Heaven that causes his fall back to Earth? What's the function of the Tramp's magic? What makes the near-dead dog revive?

When I feel a strong stake in someone's piece, I'm as vehemently analytic of it as with my own, and I was enormously grateful to Kevin for baring his throat to having a year of his work, with several work-in-progress showings along the way, dissected like this. Obviously, we respect and trust one another, and we were clear on the fact that we were there as midwives, not as directors. It still has more than two months to go before its premiere, and while we'll continue to respond to rehearsal videos, the decisions and the sweat are his.

It was joyous work, and we survived the couch-surfing around Brooklyn just fine, saw many friends in New York, Philly, DC and Baltimore. Most of my work with other puppeteers has been with actors who've never picked up a puppet, so it was lovely - and instructive - to work with skilled pros. Some of his foam-sculpting techniques will find their way into our forthcoming *Frankenstein*. So the work had its quid pro quo. (Ah, and en route, Elizabeth and I celebrated our 50th anniversary.) Above all, we had the rare experience of working for the sheer love of it. No credits, no money, no career advancement at stake, and no responsibility except to contribute every possible idea and then let go of it, spinning off others' ideas, trying everything. That vibrant interchange can be so easily clouded by a thousand anxieties, and it can be hard to remember that, well, you chose this profession, jerk. We must remember that as we plunge into *Frankenstein*.

*The Hobo Grunt Cycle* will open in San Francisco mid-February at the Exit Theatre, then play at the Kraine In New York and the Arts Bank in Philadelphia. Information at <http://www.lonewolftribe.com>.

## Business Tip

### Art Gruenberger

Several years ago I tapped into my communities Small Business Development Center sponsored by my local community college district. They had many helpful suggestions, most of which I put into action with great results. One suggestion given was to develop a product to sell at our live shows. At the time I thought this was a lame idea. How much time would I have to spend developing a product to sell? Would I be spending hour after hour making finger puppets or some other sellable item when I could be out making money performing?

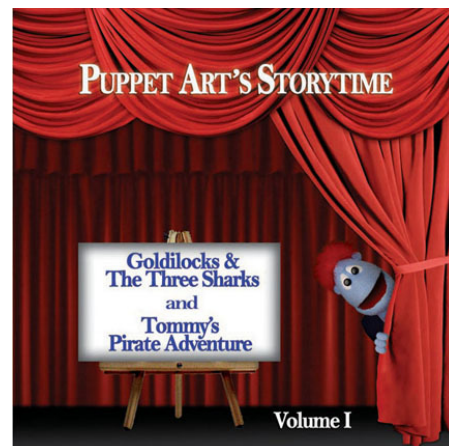
Even if I did spend the time developing a product I didn't want to spend twenty to thirty minutes at the end of each of my shows selling the doodad when I could be packing up and heading to my next paid booking. Time is money! And then there's the mother who is sure to sue my pants off when her two year-old chokes on some random part of the doodad. No thanks.

Fast-forward several years later. I'm in Paradise Studio doing voice-over work for some commercials and I find out the studio rents out for just \$600 a day including a brilliant recording tech. It would be so easy to go into the studio and record audio versions of a couple of our shows, have the recording tech add some music and sound effects, and then have the CD duplicated. After a little alteration work on the scripts to make them work without puppets I head into the studio and 8 hours later leave with a mastered copy of Puppet Art Theater Co.'s Storytime CD, volume One, featuring "Goldilocks and the Three Sharks" and "Tommy's Pirate Adventure." A little on-line research turns up Diskmakers (<http://www.discmakers.com/>), a CD and DVD duplication company. They crank out a thousand CD's for just under \$900. For the investment of a day in the studio (my time plus \$600) and the cost of CD duplication (\$900) I have a great product that people have been more than willing buy for \$10 after seeing one of our shows. At a cost of around \$1.50, each sale generates around \$8.50 in profits. In general we sell two or three CD's at our live public events, though there are some events where we sell more and some where we don't sell any at all.

I was needlessly concerned about spending a lot of time selling product at the end of my shows. Thanks to a handy display unit called the CD seller (<http://www.thecdseller.com/>) the customers can put their money into the locked box and take a CD. All I do is mention the CD at the end of my show. I've found it helpful to invite the kids up to the area where the CD's are to "Meet one of the puppets." This is very close to the technique of having candy in the checkout line of a grocery store. Kids see it, kids want it, parents buy it. My breakdown time is still the same as I leave the CD Seller up while I take down my stage. I keep a pocket full of "tens" for those parents who need change.

We've also had a small handful of sales on my web site (<http://www.puppetarts.com/cd-dvd.htm>). Click on the "Buy this CD" button and you are taken to "CD Baby" (<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/puppetart>), the largest online distributor of independent music. They take the order, process the credit card, take a small piece of the profit and ship my CD. All I do is mail them a few when they are running low. It's a pleasant surprise when I find a check in the mail from CD Baby.

CD sales haven't funded my retirement, but it has nudged up the profit line on my public performances.



*CD Cover*



*The CD seller*

## Berkeley Rep Offers Guild Discount to Giant Puppet Show in December

The show must go on? But the actor is mute, the director is crying, the dancer is lazy—and the composer is dead! This holiday season, the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre presents a spectacularly silly world premiere. [\*Lemony Snicket's The Composer is Dead\*](#) features text by the author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, a killer score, and an entire orchestra of gorgeous puppets by the groundbreaking Phantom Limb Company. When Geoff Hoyle pops up as an outlandish inspector bent on solving a murderous riddle, the show crescendos into comic absurdity. To the delight of children and adults alike, *Lemony Snicket's The Composer is Dead* comes alive on stage through January 15.

**SFPG members save 20-50%! People under 30 always save 50%** (see website for details), but SFPG members can also save 20% on regular priced tickets with the code **SFPG**. Bring the whole family and save big on the following dates:\*\*

- **Wednesday, December 1 / 8pm** (free night/OUT party for the LGBT community after the show)
- **Sunday, December 5 / 7pm** (with free tasting at 6pm)
- **Tuesday, December 7 / 8pm** (with free docent presentation at 7pm)
- **Wednesday, December 8 / 7pm**

Visit <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/season/1011/4529.asp> for more information, including a link to buy your tickets online. Discounts available online only.

\*\* (Editor's note: It looks like if you are under 30 and taking both discounts that you use the guild discount first, select your seats, then you get to add the under 30 discount...this info from your definitely "over 30" newsletter ed who didn't get to do that. Also, I think the discounts might be good for dates other than those above, but am not certain.)



*Actor Geoff Hoyle and puppets in Lemony Snicket's The Composer is Dead at Berkeley Rep with Guild Discount (see article to left.) The show is both a puppet movie and live show!*

## December Calendar

Santa Rosa Junior College

Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory

Based on the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl. Directed by Laura Downing-Lee (includes puppetry)

Grab your Golden Ticket and enter the gates of the most marvelous, magical, and mysterious chocolate factory in the world! With the eccentric Willy Wonka as their tour guide, five lucky children soon find themselves on a dazzling, delectable, and dangerous adventure, complete with Oompa-Loompas to see and lessons to learn. Adapted from Roald Dahl's classic children's book, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and the 1971 family movie starring Gene Wilder, this mouth-watering musical features all your favorite film tunes including "The Candyman," "Pure Imagination," and "I Want It Now!"

Recommended for age 7 and above.

This is a full-length, two-act performance.

Burbank Auditorium

November 26 December 2, 3 at 8:00 PM

November 27, December 4 at 7:00 PM

November 27, December 4 at 2:00 PM

November 28, December 5 at 12:00 PM and 4:00 PM

## CALENDAR, CONT.

Shadowlight Theatre

Monkey King at Spider Cave  
a film of Shadow Theatre by Larry Reed  
Saturday, December 4th, 2:00pm  
at the International Buddhist Film Festival  
at Rafael Film Center  
1118 Fourth Street, San Rafael, CA

Monkey King at Spider Cave (WORLD PREMIERE) documents both the front-of and behind-the-screen, stunning multidisciplinary work by director and Shadow Master Larry Reed in collaboration with Taiwan's Puppet and Its Double. Inspired by an episode from Journey to the West, this Buddhist parable of good/evil and struggle/perseverance depicts a Buddhist priest and his animal disciples in their quest to bring scriptures to China. Told in Mandarin with English narration and subtitles, this rare blend of tradition and innovation culminates in a remarkable work of shadow theatre.

Two other films, "Walking with Kukai" and "Alms", are on the same program, plus a discussion with Larry Reed and one of the other film makers.

\$12 general, \$10 seniors, \$8 Cal Film Institute members --Screening at Rafael Film Center, 1118 4th St, San Rafael, Ca Nick Barone Puppets  
[nickbarone@gmail.com](mailto:nickbarone@gmail.com)

"Holiday Treats"

Wednesday, December 8 - 10:30 am  
Richmond Main Street  
Nevin Community Center, 598 Nevin Ave.,  
Richmond

Saturday, December 11 - 10:30 am  
Manor Branch Library  
1241 Manor Blvd., San Leandro

Thursday, December 16 - 10:30 am  
Morgan Hill Public Library  
660 W. Main Ave., Morgan Hill

Saturday, December 18 - 2:00 pm  
Morgan Hill Public Library  
660 W. Main Ave., Morgan Hill

Monday, December 20 - 10:15 am  
Sausalito Park & Recreation Holiday Magic  
420 Litho Street, Sausalito

Tuesday, December 21 - 5:30 pm  
Children's Fairyland 699 Bellevue Ave., Oakland\*\*\*

Zanzibar Fairytale Puppet Theater Cinderella Saturday & Sundays, 2 & 4 pm December 4-5, 11-12, 18-19, 26 All seats \$12.00 [401 26th Street, Oakland, California](http://401.26thStreet.Oakland.California)  
[www.zanzibarpuppets.com](http://www.zanzibarpuppets.com) or call 510-891-1986

Here's some Public shows Puppet Art Theater Co. be doing in Dec.

12/9/10, 4pm  
Moraga Library  
The Boy Who Cried Wolf (Holiday Version)

12/11/10, 2pm  
San Carlos Library  
Dad and Me at the Library  
"Riley the Wiley Rabbit" (Made Possible by a Grant from Puppeteers of America)

12/18/10, 1:30pm  
Carmel By The Sea Library  
Jack and the Beanstalk (Holiday Version)

12/27/10, 10:30am  
Berkeley South Branch Library  
Tale of the Dragon's Tail

12/28/10, 11am  
Folsom Public Library  
The Boy Who Cried Wolf (Holiday Version)

12/29/10, 10:30am  
Livermore Library, Civic Center Branch  
Jack and the Beanstalk (Holiday Version)

12/29/10, 11am and 1pm  
Turlock Library  
Three Billy Goats Gruff

# **50 Years of SFBAPG**

## **On the Early Guild History**

**-from Lettie Schubert-**

**“It was always a rare and wonderful experience in those days when you found someone else with a mutual enthusiasm for puppetry. Our friends and relatives did not always appreciate this curious passion. We needed others who shared this great interest we had, so .... we got together and formed the guild.”**



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