



San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild  
**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!**

May 2013



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# Reviews and News

## OUR GUILD'S HAPPY HOLLOW ADVENTURE

by Elisheva Hart

Our Guild was invited by Judy Roberts, "Grand Puppet Poobah" of Happy Hollow Park and Zoo, to come to the South Bay (San Jose) on April 6, 2013, for a fun filled and jolly National Day of Puppetry, plus Guild meeting and workshop which were held after hours. The National event was begun by puppeteer Carol Fijan of New York decades ago, to help puppetry gain recognition.



### PUPPET SHOWS

Two daily scheduled and delightful shows were held in the Puppet Castle Theatre, entertaining the public and our Guild members. They were held in a shady outdoor amphitheater and performed by the Park puppeteers. Judy, guiding light of all things puppet, has instituted the innovation of having two different shows each day. This helps keep the public in the park longer, a desired effect.

At noon we saw "Reyna and Twig's Enchanted Adventure". Reyna, a young girl, gets lost in the forest and finds a witch's (maybe just a grumpy old woman's) caravan (she's lost too!) Witch trips on Twig, spilling her bucket of water. After Witch throws Twig out, the girl rescues it and together they try to leave the forest. The Witch tosses and frosts. Each time she frosts she bonks her head on an old lantern hung on her caravan. The sound effect was so perfectly coordinated with this repetitive action bit (something kids love to anticipate) that I am still impressed! Thus I am sure the dialog-and sound effect-were done live, not recorded.



Sitting in front of me was a great audience indicator of the effectiveness of the show. A 3 year old "ants in the pants" boy named Leon kept twisting around, eyeballing every bite of my lunch. The performance capturing his attention was an impressive feat! During the show lights dimmed as night fell in the forest. A tiny light flickered on stage. Reyna says in a normal pitched voice to Twig, "Oh, it's a little fire fly." Much to my amazement, Leon was actually listening. "A little FIREFLY", he screams, jumping up and down, responding in his whole body to the incidental "travel music" being played.

A white A-frame pup tent appears on stage with a silhouetted shadow figure within. (As a shadow puppeteer, I loved this! Also the use of a non-animated stick as one of the principal players. Only in puppetry....!)

A crow on an unarticulated rod, manipulated from below, was part of this scene. It flew straight in and about but from my perspective, seemed to fly backwards to exit. (Tip, if a manipulator is having trouble seeing which direction is which in the hustle and bustle of action, one help is to have a guide where the hand holds the rod. It could simply be a thin strip of vertical sandpaper or something like a bike handlebar grip which has finger placements if the rod is thick.)

One 4 year old boy exiting the show said, "Every time they do it better!"

At two o'clock, we saw "Pied Piper of Cheddarwiss", also at the Puppet Castle Theatre, and performed by the Park puppeteers. This is a prequel to the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" and used hand puppets based on a pattern developed by Lewis Mahlmann, Lettie Connell Schubert, and Marian

Derby. You can always tell this pattern, the puppets have elbows. The curtains opened to reveal a delightful and colorful façade of "ye Olde German Town", Chedarswiss. Rats on rods bob up and down. Enter Gerta carrying a stack of about a dozen cheese wheels stacked on a pole.

She struggles to balance them as she staggers around the stage. (Tip, I'd like to have seen at least one cheese wheel with an off center hole, which could revolve freely as she struggled. This would heighten the tension and anticipation for the audience. Incidental movement-like bobbing curls and loosely anchored feathers-add a lot without having to be directly manipulated.)

The town Mayor hires Pied Piper, etc. They negotiate the fee. Interestingly, even though a rat scurries up and perches on the mayor's head, bobbing about, the kids didn't scream "Behind you!" etc. like most audiences do. Except for Leon at the first show, most of the children were pretty subdued, but attentive. [They were more vocal during Randal's show, later.]

The rats are piped away, a group of cheeses (on one bottom control) and two single cheeses, follow. They were many shapes and shades of yellow and orange and yes, one "blu" followed also. (Sorry I may have some of the sequences out of order). The cheeses return-oops-in the bellies of the enormously fat rats. Mayor HAD demanded the return of the cheeses. The Piper is directed to go to Hamlin.

My fave was an old woman, creaking a 2 wheeled cart, although we have to imagine the second wheel, along the playboard. It is heaped with cheeses, followed by fat rats, one rolls along afterwards. 42 rats are used in this production and none are harmed, just bloated. Nor are all the town's children piped away, to vanish forever.

The puppeteers used excellent skills in warming up the audience and having them participate, such as stomping their feet for thunder.

Later we saw "The Puppet Circus", by Randal Metz of The Puppet Company who took a break from Children's Fairyland in Oakland to come to Happy Hollow. He performed in a grassy meadow and had quite a large crowd of families. This is a very well developed marionette and hand puppet variety show set within the framework of a circus. Some of the many acts include Disco Dancing Ducks grooving to Elvis' "Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear"; clowns; effalumps; clowns; tigers; the Dingaling Brothers Sideshow featuring a strong man; a Ringmaster who directed the audience, "Toss your imaginations right at the stage;" Igor the Lion who opens wide and says "Meow!". Finally Randal's trade mark.... a Squinting Object (this time an elephant) who hoses down the front two rows quite thoroughly! If you're at his shows and don't want to get doused, sit behind the "custard pie zone".

(Tip: Avoid having puppet costumes and/or hair which are the same color as the backdrop, usually black. The costumes, hair etc. become one with the backdrop, destroying suspension of disbelief and making visibility difficult. The hair could get lighter highlights or be coated with varnish to make that shiny "moose" look.)

## **PUPPET EXHIBIT**

The exhibit was assembled from the vast collections in storage at Happy Hollow. It filled a whole building, containing oodles of puppets, many which we hadn't seen before. Plus some old favorites were recognized. Their creators included Lewis Mahlmann (featuring the last 2 puppets he ever built, which were totally up to his usual excellence), Luman Coad the very first puppeteer at Happy Hollow, and a very sophisticated and wonderful set of paper bag puppets which puts Fandango to shame, designed by Judy Roberts.

The bare metal frame of a large pop up tent was cleverly used to hang marionettes from, with tables of puppets within this enclosure. A lovely small sized collie dog marionette with simple controls was available for kids and



others to manipulate, with guidance. Alas, today's youngsters have no clue who Timmy is, why he fell into the well (again), and ???Lassie???, also what are collies? SHOCKING!!!!

A well staffed (by the park) make-it-and-take-it puppet making workshop was doing brisk business in the courtyard helped families create simple puppets for themselves. It had 1 table with instructive demos, and 2 tables of supplies and work spaces. (Tip: Puppets are SO tempting to touch, not just look at, that a setup like the puppet petting zoo at Fairyland's Puppet Fair. which is provided and run by Ron and Barbara Johnson, with the rug covered space and a multitude of "touch me" puppets spread around is highly recommended.)

## **INTERLUDE**

The Happy Hollow Zoo is very special and fantastic and not too much to see. There is plenty of time to be leisurely and really observe the residents. The animals look very comfortable in their habitat large enclosures. Greenery abounds. There was much to enjoy and explore in the rest of the park. The lines at the food building were many and moved quite quickly. After the Park closed we had our Guild meeting in the courtyard, conducted by president Art, and a delicious abundant BBQ chicken dinner.

## **NEW BEST FRIENDS**

Attending Guild members made 4 New Best Friends after the meeting. The 3 who had 4 legs were touchable, not the winged guy. They are: Lindsey, the American Opossum; Moonda, a prehensile-tailed Skink; Nettle, the hedgehog (all the hedgehogs are given names from prickly bushes, like Briar), and Jeckel, the crow. Since then my book club picked the book "The Elegance of the Hedgehog" for our next read. I claimed bragging rights to not only having seen a live hedgehog, but got up close and friendly with it! My reader friends are suitably impressed. They have never seen one. Boy, we sure have connections in the Guild!



## **TOUR OF THE PUPPET CASTLE THEATRE**

Judy gave us a wonderful tour, front and back stage. In 2008 the Park was designated to be refurbished, but NOT the puppet theatre! So just before Christmas the San Jose Mercury News ran a Wish Book campaign to encourage public donations for the theatre. \$92,000 came in between Christmas and June! That signifies lots of satisfied parents, grandparents and kids. They reopened in March, 2010. They are the first theatre in the west to have all LED lighting. This helped Happy Hollow Park and Zoo to become certified green. The stage has a fly well and they can hang their 2 shows and easily rotate them. Daily. Their biggest problem is the ambient noise from a nearby ride called the frog hopper. It was not in service on the 6th.



We then went behind the theatre to see a giant puppet built by Judy in 2000 for a First Night Production. Her mentor is Betsy Brown of Southern Cal. and creator of many LARGE puppets. She taught Judy well. Her giant Jester is 12+ feet tall, depending on the wearer. She used, among other things, aluminum crutches and a hula hoop for the body and papier mache for the head of her creation.

## **WORKSHOP**

We wrapped up this full, full day with a hands-on paper workshop on making African style masks, presented by Camilla Henneman of Santa Cruz area, as promised at our Holiday Party. She teaches

art to about 500 kids per week in her local area, and has developed a lot of knowledge and experience in quick, highly effective puppets and masks. Also in using simple, inexpensive materials and tools such as scissors, colored construction papers and glue sticks for the masks. These can be used in a quickly developed readers theatre. The masks are spectacular on stage. As demonstrated at our Holiday party, she folds two papers of different colors lengthwise, makes simple cuttings and then using the positive and negative spaces and alternating colors, glues them together.



Some of her wisdom includes not to cut the mask's eyes out but fold and cut slits which are then pushed out in the folded V shapes. Also if you do papier mache with the children, don't paint the finished product, glue on colored paper instead. It dries quicker and doesn't get muddied by overly mixed paint. Every one was able to experience making this mask technique and have a marvelous sample to take home.

This final activity put a colorful "wrap" on the whole glorified day! Thank you so much Judy, Jesse, the performers, Camilla, zoo wranglers and other staff and the Happy Hollow Park and Zoo! It was a wonderful adventure indeed.

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## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The SFBAPG Nominating Committee is looking for candidates to serve on the Board of Directors. Do you have an interest in promoting the art of puppetry? Want to work with wonderful people towards a common goal?

Board of Directors must have been a Guild member for one year and are elected for a three year term.

If you or someone you know might be interested in serving on the Board, please contact your Nominating Committee immediately for additional information.

All the best,

Your Nominating Committee:

Valerie Nelson, 707 363-4573  
Sharon Clay, 925 462-4518  
Lee Armstrong, 707 738-5906

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## Jane Henson Passes

The following is taken from the Muppet Wiki page. As always, it is impossible to sum up the life of a wonderful artist in a few few facts. If any of our readers would like to share memories of Jane or how the Muppets influenced your life or work, we will run a compilation next month.

“Jane Henson (née Nebel; June 16, 1934 — April 2, 2013) was the wife of Jim Henson from May 28, 1959 until his death in 1990. She is also the mother of Jim Henson's five children: Lisa, Cheryl, Brian, John, and Heather Henson.

Nebel and Henson met in a puppetry course at the University of Maryland, College Park, where they were both undergraduates. In recent years, Jane Henson was a part of the Jim Henson Legacy Board of Directors. As president of The Jane Henson Foundation, she has donated to Sesame Workshop, provided funding to the Jim Henson's Fantastic World exhibit, and The Carter Center founded by U.S. President Jimmy Carter.”



## There's An App For That (A Semi-Regular Column Used To Fill Empty Space)

by Talib Huff

This month I'd like to tell you about three photography apps that I have been using lately. What used to take hours to learn and execute on Photoshop can now be completed in minutes with a few swipes and taps of your finger. In the examples below I'll show you the original and the completed projects. Please note: this is not intended to be a tutorial on these techniques, simply examples to whet your appetite.



*Original*



PS Express - Photoshop on the iPad. Good for quick, simple edits.



Portray - Best app for turning photos into sketches for those artsy fliers.



Goomifier - It's just weird. Not a lot of uses beyond playing around and making your friends look , well, weird!

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## Calendar

### **Fratello Marionettes**

May 19, 11:30 am and 1:00 pm  
"The Frog Prince"  
Mountain Play @ Mt. Tamalpais  
Mill Valley, CA

May 26, 11:30 am and 1:00 pm  
"The Frog Prince"  
Mountain Play @ Mt. Tamalpais  
Mill Valley, CA

### **Magical Moonshine Theater**

May 18, 10:15 am  
Puppylocks and the Three Bears  
Mt. View Library

May 28, 6:30 pm  
Puppylocks and the Three Bears  
Pleasant Hill library

### **Storybook Puppet Theatre**

Saturdays and Sundays  
11:00 am, 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm  
Grandpa Bunny's Egg-citing Day! April. 3-  
May 19

Have you ever wondered where all the colored eggs come from that the bunnies like to hide? Here is a delightful tale about the seasons, and how poor Grandpa Bunny discovers that he can use the colors of nature to paint eggs for children. Just watch out for Frisky Puppy! Scenery by Annie Wong. Puppets and script by Randal Metz.

The Elves & The Shoemaker, May 22-July 11

The shoemaker has a problem. Every time he leaves leather on his workbench to make shoes the next morning, someone beats him to it during the night. Who can be making these wonderful shoes? Join the Shoemaker, Cinderella, The Prince, Puss in Boots and the Witch of the North from Oz as they try to find out. Based on the popular Grimms' tale. Puppets and scenery by Lewis Mahlmann & Patricia Platt. Script by David C. Jones.

# May 2013

Special tear-out calendar! See Calendar listings for details on events. Due to space limitations, not all times or show titles are listed here.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
						Grandpa Bunny
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Grandpa Bunny						Grandpa Bunny
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Grandpa Bunny						Grandpa Bunny Puppylocks
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
The Frog Prince						Eves and...hoemaker
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Eves and...hoemaker The Frog Prince		Puppylocks				

San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild  
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## *Save the Date(s)*

The Programs committee has agreed on the following dates and locations for 2013:

- Summer Meeting/Puppet Faire on Saturday, August 24 at Fairyland
- A Mini-Meeting with Lee Armstrong for TV Puppetry and Movie Night is penciled in for September -North Bay
- Mini-Meeting to attend open dress rehearsal for “Driveway Follies” on Wednesday, October 30 - Oakland
- Fall Meeting on Saturday, November 9 -San Francisco
- Holiday Party 2014 on Sunday, January 26 -North Bay

If anyone has a suggested meeting place for the November meeting in San Francisco, please contact Jesse Vail.