



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 2015



*The SFBAPG had a HUGE showing at the Puppeteers of America National Puppetry Festival at the University of Connecticut in August, with 20 current members attending, and many past members. Attendees went to workshops on a wealth of puppetry topics, attended a large variety of performances from large scale spectacle giant puppets to tiny little toy theatre shows, visited exhibits of puppets and mechanisms, ate meals together, attended special seminars and panel discussions, watched puppet films, bought items at the puppetry store, got to visit the UConn Puppet Arts Complex (see photo, above), enjoyed the serene (and GREEN) beauty of the UConn campus and near perfect weather and had a wonderful and memorable time.*

### *Inside this issue:*

Wow! Thanks to all the contributors...we have reviews of the Day of Puppets at Fairyland, National Festival, Books, DVDs, upcoming events, president's message and a wonderful gallery of images. Take some time and enjoy!

### Guild Board and Officers

#### **Co-Presidents**

Lee Armstrong

[images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com)

707-996-9474

Michael Nelson

[mail@magicalmoonshine.org](mailto:mail@magicalmoonshine.org)

707-363-4573

#### **Treasurer**

Valerie Nelson

[magicalmoonshine@gmail.com](mailto:magicalmoonshine@gmail.com)

707-363-4573

#### **Vice President**

Judy Roberto

[judy.roberto@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:judy.roberto@sanjoseca.gov)

#### **Membership Officer**

Camilla Henneman

[camhenneman@gmail.com](mailto:camhenneman@gmail.com)

831-359-9761

#### **Secretary**

Olivia Huff

[ohuff@dcn.org](mailto:ohuff@dcn.org)

916-484-0606

Mary Nagler

[mary.nagler@gmail.com](mailto:mary.nagler@gmail.com)

707-303-0093

Lex Rudd

[lex@alexisrudd.com](mailto:lex@alexisrudd.com)

626-224-8578

Fred C. Riley III

[oddsavvy@gmail.com](mailto:oddsavvy@gmail.com)

707-235-6431

#### **Librarian**

Lee Armstrong

[images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com)

707-996-9474

#### **Newsletter**

Michael Nelson

[mail@magicalmoonshine.org](mailto:mail@magicalmoonshine.org)

707-363-4573

## From your Presidents

Lee Armstrong

It's an optimistic time for Bay Area puppetry! There was an amazing representation of SF area puppeteers at the National Festival at UCONN. We had great participation at annual Puppetry Day at Oakland's Fairyland. There's momentum in organizing a West Coast Regional Festival in 2016. Lots of exciting activities being planned by our Programming Committee, including rumors of an overnight shadow puppet workshop at Westminster Woods in Occidental. Puppeteers are busy with shows, workshops and building projects for theater and TV shows.

First, thanks to all Guild members for a great Annual Puppetry Day at Oakland's Fairyland on Sat. Thanks to Randal Metz for hosting and inviting the Guild to participate, for scheduling the shows, coordinating the exhibit and the countless other things he does to make this day so successful. Thanks to all the people who volunteered for the craft table, puppet demo, shows, exhibit, setup, cleanup and the myriad of work that goes into making a successful event. A special shout out to Mary Nagler and her Programming team for the Guild panel presentation of Puppetry in Education, filled with tips and tricks.

Under the able leadership of Olivia Huff and the Guest Subscription Committee, we are now able to offer Bay Area college level puppetry students a Guest Subscription. There are guidelines for this and it doesn't have all the "perks" of a regular membership. However we hope this opportunity encourages students to learn more about puppetry in the Bay Area, participate in Guild programs and consider joining as a regular member at the end of the one year "trial."

September is the start of our Guild membership year. Camilla Henneman, our membership officer, is busy sending out renewal notices. This new year is sure to be filled with exciting programs, including workshops, shows and film screenings. Please send your renewal forms back to Camilla. And if you have friends that are interested in puppetry, this is also the perfect time to let them know about the Guild.

## Fairyland Day of Puppets and Guild Meeting by Elisheva Hart

### *KUDOS TO GUILD FAIRYLAND FAIR VOLUNTEERS!*

Everyone was a big help all day long. AND it was a "misty, moisty morning" August 29th so the early bird Guild volunteers set up.... then had to move the outdoor puppet exhibits a total of 3 times to protect these precious actors from the elements. Randal is in awe of their help and dedication. Thankful too.

For each hour served the volunteers earned one ticket for a special "Volunteers Only" drawing, held at the end of our Guild meeting. Tia won the fantastic full-bodied green dragon puppet imported from last month's National Puppeteers of America Festival held at UCON. An unexpected bonus to the drawing was a bag of puppets donated by our popular local puppet factory, Folkmanis.

Super Helper Jennifer Kruss earned 9 tickets! She was able to choose 2 Folkmanis puppets for her extra help. One is a rabbit in a magician's top hat. Lorelei Arnold, one of our youth volunteers, selected a very large Snowy Owl when her name was drawn.



Sharon Clay beamed as she claimed the bright red, yellow, and green parrot puppet.

Meetings need helpers. For the "biggies" John Arnold sends out a sign up sheet to us. Reserve your favorite volunteer hours and tasks with this simple tool. Spur of the moment help is A-OK also and also earns hourly drawing tickets.

THANKS, ALL Y'ALL!

### ***SATURDAY NIGHT HIJINKS AT FAIRYLAND***

After an outdoor potluck dinner in Club Cinderella Party Palace, we had a short business meeting in the Puppet Theater workshop. Opening act before the panel began was a wonderful short skit performed by Mary Nagler and Jennifer Kruss to a slow and sultry version of "Shake it up Baby, Twist and Shout", as performed by the Mamas and the Papas.

An elderly couple are dozing in armchairs at the local "Old Folks Home."

The music awakens him, and he awakens her. She is reluctant. They dance together stiffly, re-enacting their youth. Funny and poignant-a great combination theatrically. And scientifically valid according to current research re music from the past and dementia patients. Our performers used a pair of table top puppets, no other stage.

Mary and Jennifer performed this gem at the UCONN National Puppeteers of America Festival last month. This was during the potpourri event, (which is also a relic, from before slams) where anyone can sign up to do 5 minutes or less. This was Jennifer's first Fest and first potpourri! This is a great way to become known to other attendees, receive feedback (it was well received) and establish a reputation. That's exactly the way our beloved Lettie Schubert did! The next year she was a featured performer at the Festival. You go Jennifer!



### ***BITS AND PIECES GATHERED AT FAIRYLAND***

A beloved part of our annual Puppet Fair was missing this year. The Puppet Petting Zoo (a shady area when children and parents can play with many puppets) provided by Barbara and Ron Johnson, had to stay home due to Barbara's ill health. They were greatly missed. A card was passed around at our Guild meeting for us to sign and promptly mailed to them.

Next year the Fairyland Puppet Theater celebrates a big 6-0 Birthday! Performances have been offered all those many years, making this the oldest continuously operating puppet theater in the US! Our SFBAPG history is tightly involved with that of Fairyland-being the site of our very first meeting in the 1950's- so we will all be looking forward to a HUGE CELEBRATION together next year at the annual Puppet Fair, August 27 and 28, 2016. Mark your calendars NOW. More details will be released as they materialize.

Yes, many Guild members don't realize that the Puppet Fair continues on Sundays, but without the intense participation of the Guild. We were represented this year on Sunday however, by Sharon Clay and her Alameda County 4-H Puppeteers. The audience was very receptive to their interactive performance, Randal reports.



## Library Corner from Lee Armstrong, Guild Librarian

### *New DVD in Guild Library*

Straight from the Stan Winston School of Character Arts to your Guild Library is "How to Build a Hand & Rod Puppet Part One: The Understructure." Learn to create hand & rod puppet understructures with BJ Guyer (THE MUPPETS, CRANK YANKERS, GLEE). In PART ONE of this 3-Part video course series, BJ teaches you how to create the "foundation" for your puppets. From design & planning, to mouth plates & arm rods, Guyer shows you everything you need to know to get your hand puppet projects off to a great start.

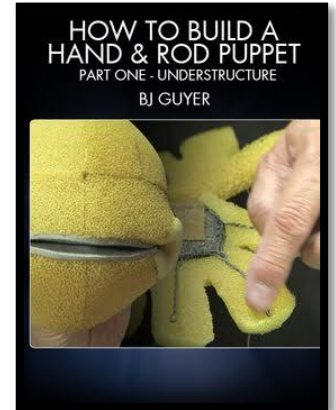
#### WEBCOURSE HIGHLIGHTS

- Patterning the Mouth Plate
- Working with Different Types of Foam
- Building a Hand Armature
- Carving Foam Hands
- Connecting the Hand & Arm

Approximate Run Time: 03:36:39

A preview at <https://www.stanwinstonschool.com/tutorials/how-to-build-a-hand-rod-puppet-part-1-understructure>

(A special thank you to John Arnold for suggesting the Stan Winston DVD's and providing a discount code.)



This DVD will be available for checkout, starting at the Aug 29<sup>th</sup> Fairyland Guild meeting. It will have a different checkout arrangement, of 2 weeks, with the member being responsible for the cost of mailing it back to the librarian. If you want to prebook this DVD, email the Librarian and she'll start a list. The 1<sup>st</sup> person on the list must be at Fairyland to pick it up. If people would like to view this together, let the Programming Committee know and we will try to schedule a place for a screening, with popcorn!

The Guild will acquire the other 2 DVDs in the series if interest is high.

Part 2 - [Fabrication](#): shows you how to flesh out your puppet understructures using a wide variety of foam fabrication, patterning and sewing techniques -- including creating head shapes, body forms, hands, ears and more!

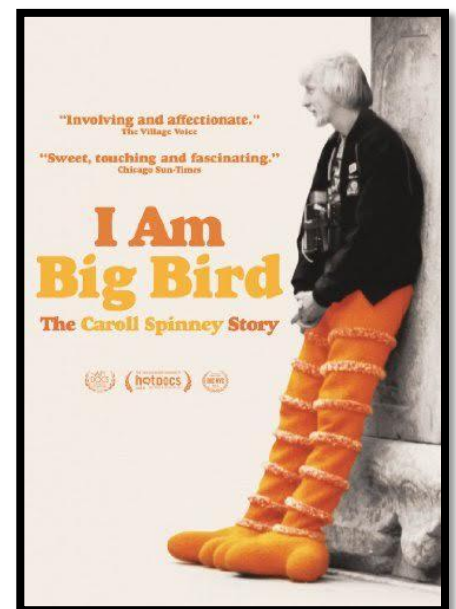
Part 3 - Assembly and Building Character: finish your hand puppets with character and style. From stitching & final glue down, to creating facial features and wardrobe, Guyer will give you the tools and techniques you need to let your unique creativity shine through your puppet creations.

### *"I Am Big Bird" DVD Available in Guild Library*

The "I Am Big Bird" DVD was shown at the National Festival with special guest Caroll Spinney, his wife Debra and Oscar the Grouch. The movie has excellent interviews, behind the scenes, archival footage and important insights on puppetry and life by a gentle, kind and inspiring puppeteer.

"For 45 years, Caroll Spinney has been beloved by generations of children as the man behind Sesame Street's Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch and at 80 years old, he has no intention of stopping. A loving portrait of the man in the yellow suit, I AM BIG BIRD features extraordinary footage of Spinney's earliest collaborations with Jim Henson as it traces his journey from bullied child to childhood icon. And as the yellow feathers give way to grey hair, it is the man, not the puppet, who will steal your heart." (Amazon review)

The Librarian would like to help arrange screenings around the Bay Area. If you would like to host a screening in your area (home, a library, school, etc.) contact Lee Armstrong at [sfbapglibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sfbapglibrary@gmail.com).



For NEW DVDs (recently acquired, i.e. "I Am Big Bird" & Stan Winston's "Foam Puppet Construction") the loan period is 3 weeks. The Guild member is responsible for return postage to the Guild librarian or to next borrower, if there is a wait list. If you would like to receive a recently acquired DVD before the next Guild meeting, contact the librarian.

*The Guild library has hundreds of books covering a variety of topics. Are you looking for books or DVD on a particular topic? Check out the Library List at <http://www.sfbapq.org/resources/library/>.*

*Books & DVDs are available for checkout at the meeting, to people who have been members for at least 6 months. Contact the Guild Librarian, Lee Armstrong, [sfbapqlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sfbapqlibrary@gmail.com), 707 738-5906, and she will bring related books to the next meeting.*

## Book Review, Elisheva Hart



"Three Stalks of Corn", written and illustrated by Leo Politi, originally published in 1976 and since reprinted, is a nifty suggestion for a Fall/Harvest/October puppet activity by/for/or with children. To be found in E(asy) part of children's libraries or purchased from Amazon.

The story is about a young girl, Angelica, who lives in Pico Rivera-a mythical (?) small Southern Cal town-with her Abuelita (Grandmother). Most of their neighbors are also of Mexican descent. The book revolves around family, neighborhood, school, food and the importance of having a garden (something more schools are doing today!)

AND Abuelita has a collection of small cornhusk dolls (illustrated) which she uses to tell stories to Angelica. These include an old man, a donkey, a dog, etc.-all of which have distinct personalities and stand on a base-as well as a witch who flies around on her broomstick, aided by 2 continuous strings (see Leo's illustration for how-to). The dolls could be used as table top puppets or become rod puppets with a chop stick either poking up from beneath or poking down from the top, depending on your staging. The rods make an easy way to control the puppets.

Incidental movement-bobbing hair, a floppy flower, fringe on clothing and the dog's tail, etc.-help bring these figures with limited movement come to life. Also using glittery black beads, especially faceted ones, really make puppets eyes become alive.

I don't suggest you adapt the book itself, but read it as a starting point to launch fun "actos", using corn husk puppets. Young children may not be able to make corn husk puppets but are thrilled if children older than them come and perform in their class room. Also the older children feel more at ease entertaining younger ones than their peers and are happy to do "easy" stuff which is above the creative capabilities of their young audience.

Where to get corn husks? 1. Eat a lot of tamales. 2. Look in the ethnic grocery stores or in the ethnic food departments of large supermarkets. 3. Order on line.

Use button and carpet thread or thin "kite style" string on your witch marionette, if she is not too heavy.

Small or arthritic fingers may have trouble grasping the "bare" continuous string which holds her up, even with a loop tied at the balance point for inserting a couple of fingers. If so, thread the string through a toilet paper tube before fastening the ends to the puppet, adding a few inches to the string to compensate for the length of the tube. [If possible use t p tubes from a school or industrial setting, they are super strong.] Fasten the ends of the string so that one end can be retied, making needed adjustments easily. Hold the t p tube horizontally and on the bottom side, make a half inch snip on each end. Wedge the string into this slit, pulling taut the part inside the t p tube. Yay! A handle which can easily be tipped to and fro to create flight patterns. Securely tie both ends of the string to the puppet, adding a drop of Elmer's glue to the knot to avoid disasters while performing. If the string pops loose from the tube ends, a little dab of duct tape inside the tube will do it! Have fun and send us photos, thanks!

OOPS! A SENIOR MOMENT-Elisheva Sorry, in last month's Puppetry Summer Reading Article, I forgot to include the author of "The Coroner's Lunch" and "33 Teeth" in the Dr. Siri series. The envelope please. TADA! Colin Cotterill.

## **Puppetry at the O'Neill by Daniel Gill**

### **The Language of Material and Objects: Movement and Experimental Puppetry with Alice Therese Gottschal**

Last June, I had the opportunity to participate in the 2015 National Puppetry Conference at The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT. I participated in the Pre-Conference Intensive, "The Language of Material and Objects: Movement and Experimental Puppetry." The course was taught Alice Therese Gottschalk, who studied in Berlin and Stuttgart and now lives in Stuttgart. The website for the O'Neill describes the course: "The Participants will have the possibility to discover the movement and stories of different materials and objects. They will get tools to animate persuasively in a direct or indirect way, serving as a basis for all kinds of puppet animation, manipulation and storytelling."

#### **Day One**

Using a large, plastic drop cloth, we worked as a group to manipulate a small puddle of water to land on each of our heads (as we took turns lying under the drop cloth). It was a magical entry into thinking and working cooperatively as well as "listening" and responding to the properties of materials and objects. We also began working with objects by exploring chairs as if we were encountering them for the first time. How could we interact with them using our bodies? What could we do with/discover about them as objects?

#### **Day Two**

Working with found objects, paper, apples on strings, and then feathers on strings, we explored the essentials of movement, an object's relationship to space, and elemental character formation. Concepts that we tried to integrate included speed, motion versus stillness, the performer's relationship to the object (and not drawing attention away from the object), contrast, height of movement (the top, middle, and bottom of space), adding breath to the character, and incorporating contrast into the work.

#### **Day Three**

We split into groups of three; each group worked with large butcher paper to make a puppet and then created basic choreography. It was an opportunity to practice the awareness of the performer as individual, the performer as part of the group, and basic theatrical elements: breath, movement, eye contact, and the puppet's relationship with space. The final night, we performed these pieces (and some others from our previous work) for the rest of the Conference participants. Following the performance, we met as a group to reflect on the class and the "Wall of Amazing Discoveries" - a large piece of paper on which we wrote our insights during the Intensive.

#### **Integrating My Experience**

I immediately implemented the experience of "listening" to materials and objects in my work with children (as a preschool teacher). Instead of taking a wooden block or a toy car for granted, I take more time to become present with the children and explore these "tools" with them, "listening" to both the materials and the way in which the child is using them. I have also become aware of the importance of establishing an environment of trust. The plastic cloth game we played set the tone for the class and created a safe environment for risk taking.

#### **Other Insights**

In reviewing my notes, I came across a list of inspiring concepts I heard in class:

- React to other actor/puppeteer
- Take time to be born with each step
- Take time to make the puppet alive
- Allow the puppet to look at an object before touching it
- The puppet can discover one part of their body at a time
- Make the puppet see
- Graduate gestures from small to big

- You can incorporate yourself into the scene when the puppet looks at you or uses your body
- When you have one movement that really works, give it a lot of attention.

In addition to describing her studies with Albrecht Roser, Alice also mentioned that some of her exercises have been inspired by the work of improv theorist Keith Johnstone and recommended his work, specifically the book "Improvisation and the Theatre."

### ***October 24 Puppet Ruckus Accepting Entries***

April's Puppet Ruckus was a smash hit and we're doing it again at noon, Saturday, October 24th at the Mira Black Box Theater in Vallejo. The artfully bohemian Mira Black Box Theatre at 51 Daniels Ave., Vallejo is a fantastic location with free parking, handicap access, stage lighting and optimally located for Sacramentans and Bay Area folk alike. Guild Members: \$10, General Admission: \$15, Kids age 4-10: \$4, Kids 4 and under and performers are FREE!

We're currently accepting entries for performing at the Puppet Ruckus. If you have a family-friendly (PG 13), amateur or professional production of 15 minute length or shorter (including setup time), please email me at [eo@ElizabethanDesign.com](mailto:eo@ElizabethanDesign.com) before October 1. All profits from the box office are split equally between the performing acts.

### ***Puppet Exhibit at the Mills Building in San Francisco***

A puppet exhibit entitled "So You Thought Puppets Were Just For Kids" is now open at the Mills Building in San Francisco until November 13. The exhibit write-up states "Contemporary puppetry...is a growing and vibrant art, made for either adults or children. In this exhibit you will see examples from around the world of traditional and contemporary puppetry for communities, for adults and for children. The exhibit was curated by Myrna Walton with assistant curator Margot Blum Schevill. Many of the puppets in this exhibit are available for sale. For more information please call Artsource Consulting at 415-399-0333, ext 15. The Mills Building is located at 220 Montgomery Street near Montgomery Street BART, open M-F 8AM to 6PM and weekends by appointment." The guild is represented by puppets made by Michael and Valerie Nelson, including puppets from Cannibal Island and a giant Earth Mother puppet.



**Puppetry Calendar:** Please check the guild website calendar for listings this month at <http://www.sfbapg.org/events/calendar/>

### ***National Puppet Festival, August, 2015, by Valerie Nelson***

We go to puppet festivals to be inspired, informed and involved in this amazingly diverse art form. We were not disappointed. Looking back at the performances that really stayed with me, I searched for common threads.

Live music! Lots of shows had musicians on stage. What a delight to see the musicians interact with the puppeteers. It lifts the whole performance up. No, it isn't practical, but it's great.

Story! I want an arc, a beginning, middle and end. I got it with all of my favorites.

Precision! This is the take-home lesson for me. The performers whose every movement was planned created a sense of dancing through the story. Well rehearsed, they could indulge in the joy of telling and being with the story and the audience.

### ***National Puppetry Festival Performance Review by Lee Armstrong & Kamela Portuges***

*Ed. Note: There were so many wonderful performances at the National Puppetry Festival. Lee and Kamela share one of their favorites.*



"The Existential Variety Hour" by Doppleskope at the Fringe Festival was described as "a trip down memory lane for someone with amnesia." This show was a highlight of the festival for us.



The two performers, Ora Fruchter and Christopher Scheer bring a variety of skills including puppetry, improv, music and clowning, to create an interactive show that is fun, engaging and a bit surreal.

The show is primed for success as Ora and Chris, in matching steampunk glasses and red noses display a checklist/program. The first item "Get An Audience" was checked off amid a round of applause. From this positive start, we moved down the list to "Welcome" a musical trio by Christopher, Ora and a joyful puppet. The performers moved from "Therapy" where a kangaroo despairs of dressing appropriately (and other life issues) to

"Magic" where an elderly, fiddle fashioned puppet engages the audience in a coin illusion centered tale of love. From the welcoming song to the bubble and confetti close, the show embraced the audience, sharing the innocence of childhood and the angst of adult life. Check them out at [doppelskope.com](http://doppelskope.com).

## Gallery of Images

Please enjoy some of the great images sent in by guild members of the National Festival and our Day of Puppetry, starting with the National Fest.



The festival offered many exhibits and opportunities to get up close and personal with a variety of puppet types and styles. Above, various puppets. To right, Heather Henson poses with one of her father's more famous Sesame Street characters.







And the Day of Puppets and Guild Meeting at Fairyland in Oakland August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015!



## EVENING PROGRAM AT AUGUST GUILD MEETING

The Panel- "How to Make \$ with Puppets" -continues with part 2: "Going into Schools and Teaching Puppetry".

Note: Every speaker had many terrific tips and experiences which they shared. Here are some highlights. Capitalized words are key points.

Mary Nagler: Fine Arts Day, younger kids-Groups of kids sample many different arts....in 15 minute segments! She PREPS basic cone bodies and head circles to make felt finger puppets. Then the kids can FOCUS on designing the CHARACTER. Two parent helpers are there just as voiceless ROBOTS to hot glue details onto the child's puppet without comment or suggestions or judgements (neither + or -). A favorite with both the kids and Mary is her famous GOULASH BOX full of decorative, miscellaneous geegaws, beads, ribbon snips, etc. which the kids can delve into and find bits to enhance their puppet's character. email Mary (see masthead page 1) for a copy of her handout.

Judy Roberto: Art on the Cart, mostly K-5th, sometimes older). Sets her STAGE up at the beginning for easy KID ACCESS as wanted. She works into each lesson the STATE STANDARDS for curriculum. Specializing in SHADOW PUPPETS, she preps before by mass cutting paper shapes of many kinds by using DIECUT PUNCHES. This speeds up the puppet making. (Just add a bendy straw control, a feather, 1" strips of precut tissue, and ta da!) EMPHASIZING PERFORMANCE is very important in any type of puppetry. Kids naturally gravitate to the screen to MOVE their creations, INTERACTING with other's puppets, figuring out the basics of MANIPULATION and STAGING while having fun! Judy's guiding book is "WORLDS OF SHADOW" by David and Donna Wisniewski. She encourages the kids to express the desired emotions and movements WITH THEIR OWN BODIES, before manipulating their puppets.

Lee Armstrong: Teaching puppetry at university level and adult education classes. [The luxury of many sessions with each group!] Surprisingly most of her university students are science majors! It's their "easy" course. At the beginning of either type of class series, she has everyone describe MEMORIES OF PUPPET SHOWS they have seen in their pasts. We had a mini-lesson from her about the 4 PUPPET MOVEMENT BASICS: LOOKING, BREATHING, WALKING, TALKING. We also practiced the Hand Warm-up EXERCISES, which had us all PERFORMING TOGETHER without leaving our seats! [This could become a great way to open our Guild meetings!] She gave us a quote from JIM HENSON: "The SOUL of the puppet is in the wrist." Lee gave us a handout which described what we had learned.

Valerie and Michael Nelson will share their experiences of teaching puppetry in the schools at another meeting due to lack of time and the delightful presence of their young grandchild, Sophia. She, along with the other young people at the meeting, received their pick of 3 different puppet making kits, also donated by Folkmanis Puppets. We are blessed (the kids, ditto friendly Folkmanis).