



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

April 2015



*Independent Eye is opening their King Lear --see
Elisheva Hart's review in this newsletter, and
check the calendar section for dates when you can
see this major work from one of the guild's finest
performing companies.*

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Inside this issue:

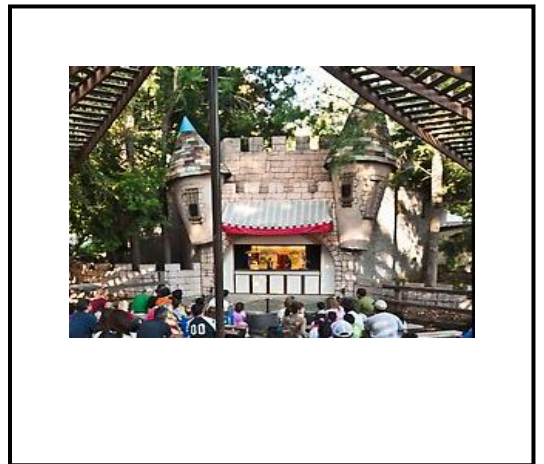
Elections for guild board, next guild meeting at Happy Hollow on May 17, review of "King Lear," review of "The Middle of Everywhere," "What Lives Inside," a history of silhouettes, Calendar, and more.



Elections coming!

We will be electing 3 new board members this summer. The board keeps the guild running. If you are interested in serving on the guild board of directors, or know of someone you think would be an asset to the board, please get in touch with the nomination committee. The nomination committee members are: Camilla Henneman, Jesse Vail, and Randel Metz. You can email inquiries and suggestions to me at camhenneman@gmail.com by April 10th. I will forward them to the other committee members.

Hello Intrepid Members of the guild! We are getting excited about our Day of Puppetry at Happy Hollow May 17th! The park and zoo open their doors to us and give us an opportunity to strut some of our amazing puppet stuff in public! Volunteers are needed for the day so if you have been wondering how to be more involved – here is your chance! Here are some opportunities to serve...



- 1) Come early (10:00 am) and help set up the puppet exhibit – a number of the puppets going on display this year are Nick Barone's puppets. Let's make it great! We will be helping with a Craft Table too! Kids will be making chicken puppets to use in the 4:00 performance in the Meadow! So we need early help to set the craft area up.
- 2) We need volunteers to man hourly shifts at the Craft table, assisting the Happy Hollow staff. This will go on through some of the performances so sign up for your favorite shift so you can also see the performances.
- 3) Come prepared with a puppet to do some walk arounds and help guide people to the shows -6 throughout the day! Puppet Extravaganza!
- 4) Help take down the exhibit and put things away
- 5) Help set up for the meal and meeting
- 6) Help clean up at the end of the day

Participation has dwindled down in the past, so please consider coming out to support Judy Roberto (Honored member) and the puppet program at Happy Hollow.

Sign- ups will begin at the Larry Reed meeting March 28, or you can email Mary Nagler: mary.nagler@gmail.com to sign up, or call 707 303 0093 Thanks!

Mary Nagler is sponsoring a **special raffle** in which you can win one of her really cool puppets! Tickets for the special raffle will be earned with one hour of volunteer service! Prize to be awarded at the evening meeting! **SIGN UP** soon before all the spots are filled! How's that for optimism? :o) Power to the puppet!

Do you need a ride to the event? Can you volunteer to offer a space in your car to help someone get there? Let Mary know so we can help you connect.

The Character Voices and Manipulation workshop slated (Tentatively) for April 18, will have to be postponed to a later date. March was a very busy month for everyone on the program planning committee and we were unable to get everything to work out in time Stay tuned we still want to cover these topics!

"KING LEAR", A REVIEW by Elisheva Hart

Conrad Bishop and Elizabeth Fuller of The Independent Eye, performed the 4th and last preview of their newest puppet production, a 100 minute version (no intermission) of Shakespeare's "King Lear" in their home studio in Sebastopol, on March 29th. This free offering was to help them prepare for an April run in San Francisco by obtaining audience responses, pro and con. This is especially useful because knowing what does speak to the observer gives them knowledge of what works, as well as tips about what doesn't.

-Artists' Note, from the program. "The best way to view 'King Lear', to our minds, is to see it as a dream and go with the flow. It's easy to get lost in the thicket of plots and proliferation of dukes and earls, but the power of dream is what's evoked by the images along the unmapped journey." Great advice. I have learned to enjoy watching ballet this way [No coherent plot, so what? Relax.] and never having read or viewed "Lear" before, this note proved excellent advice.

-Stage. The puppet booth is 3 sided, with a frame along the back and frames projecting forward on 2 sides, constructed with 1" square aluminum tubing. Elizabeth designed and built it to come apart, sized to fit inside their Prius, along with stage draperies, tech materials, puppets, costumes and so forth. The inside of this "puppet cave" is draped with purple and green plush. The front edges of the side panels and across the top of the opening are swathed with tattered natural colored burlap netting-probably discards from the Spanish Armada by the looks of it. This booth creates and contains a whole universe consisting of seated actors/puppeteers (Conrad and Elizabeth) and lots of puppets, no scenery (neither did Shakespeare), and a few props. The whole effect of the booth progressed as the show unfolded from looking like a Dark-side Fortune Telling Booth at the Midnight Carnival to Weird Waxworks Tableaux Awakening to Life! Very exciting.

-Puppets. A few "life-sized" ones with one of the puppeteer's hands holding it up and the other hand becoming the puppet's. Many "regular" size hand puppets completed the cast of 18 primary performers. The puppeteer's arm enters the rear of these puppets at about its waist level which is near the puppeteer's elbow. A flattened continuation of the puppet costume extends downward, like an apron. This design eliminates the need for the long sleeve or bag usually sewed to the bottom of the traditional hand puppet-which disguises the puppeteer's arm-causing the puppet dangling upside down while waiting to go on stage. The hand puppets we saw were lined right side up in a row-facing the audience-along both sides of the booth and held by the neck with "broom holders". This



gives an effect similar to shadow puppets from Bali and Java placed at the sides of their shadow screen, facing inwards, so they can "watch" the show. [We saw this effect in Larry Reed's presentation at our March Guild meeting.]

There were also 10 round heads, about the size of ping pong balls, used on bare puppeteer fingers for crowds, commoners, etc. All of the 28 puppets have sculpted heads and feature the glass eyes which are a trademark of The Independent Eye puppets. Conrad designed and built them. Plus a dozen or two soldiers in a row, joined at hands and feet and cut from folded newspaper like paper dolls. In the hands of the Fool, they make for a fierce battle scene-clashing together and ending up in pieces scattered over the area.

Elizabeth, playing King Lear's Fool-dressed in a natty 20th century clown costume with horizontally striped shirt. She is complete with skillfully made up white face, bushy "head band" of hair and a derby hat. Her puppet is a marrote, the stick with a head on top mimicking the king's scepter, which Fools and Jesters carry. She and her Marotte have conversations and sing silly songs and give the audience some chances to laugh. All of her 10 bare fingers occasionally wrap around her Marrote's handle, becoming expressive arms. Elizabeth greeted audience members at the door before the show, speaking in a gravelly voice. I did not recognize her, so skillful was her costume and makeup, until she asked me where Tia was. And I still couldn't recognize her! She was pleased. The various sizes of the actors and of the puppets depicted class and the ever important hierarchy. This reminds me of friezes in Egyptian pyramids and many drawings by young kids where the figures are sized by importance. In this production King Lear is tallest, the life-size puppets next, then hand puppets and the ping pong sized crowd heads. Fools have no rules.....so Elizabeth is unique in her own usual stature.

-Non black out blackouts! (some tech stuff). With a cast of 28, the puppets often need to be switched and racked from one side of the stage to the other, depending on who will manipulate whom next. Ditto the props also need to be repositioned. And there is no stage curtain. So there are brief moments when the stage lights are dimmed. Instantly firefly-like bursts of flickering colored lights appear, giving the puppeteers time and light to do their beautifully rehearsed prop and puppet swapping and racking dance. This offers the audience a chance to enjoy a bonus shadow-like performance.

Pulling this mini-interlude together is the wonderful music composed and recorded by Elizabeth. The music sets the mood of the moment (such as the storm) and includes appropriate soft sighing words, barely audible in the first interludes, getting more discernible each time, ending the play with whispers of "Father, Father, Father, Father."

-Shakespeare, 3 notes. He is a veritable font of oaths! Much more interesting and imaginative than multi-repetitions of the F-word. One in this script is "....A most toad-spotted traitor!"

It is always fun to catch familiar lines from his plays. A surprising one from this play is a partial quote that we know from Jack and the Bean Stalk. "Fe, fi, fo fum...blood of a British man."

Also, human-nature-never-changes category. Lear definitely viewed himself as Regal. At one place Lear says, "Who am I Sir? (to his son-in-law.)" Puppet answers: "My Lady's father." Lear: "My Lady's FATHER?" Roaring this, he beats the puppet in his indignation at the lack of acknowledgement of his Superiority. [As a teacher in preschools I have witnessed the crumbling egos of parents, great and humble, because in the eyes of the staff they are reduced to Jennifer's Dad, or Derek's Mom. One dad, a minor tv personality almost stroked out because I didn't recognize him...or care. I don't do tv.-I don't remember any of us getting assaulted over it though].

-King Lear. Throughout the play, Lear loses it. He descends into madness, dementia, or just plain disintegration of personality. Whatever we call it, he's sucked into the cyclone-like funnel of nightmare. Conrad, dressed in a flowing robe as befitting his rank and with a braided head band around his forehead, plays Lear brilliantly in all of his aspects. Finally Conrad plays a dual role, that of King Lear unraveling, unable to control the people and situations around him, and simultaneously the role of Conrad/Lear puppeteer/actor fumbling with his obstreperous troupe of puppets. [On purpose of course, not to worry.] Very similar to what my Auntie did in later stages of dementia with her precious [Beanie] Babies, rocking them, nursing them, casting them aside, shouting for them to return. Over

and again. A beautiful moment towards the end of the play is when Fool follows Lear into the storm. Lear has a flash of sanity, realizing the strong love between them-perhaps for the first time-and gathers Fool under his [invisible] cloak. Clinging together they stagger off where ever the merciless storm drives them.

-Poor Tom. One of my favorite puppets was Poor Tom who first appeared as a life-size sculpted head wearing a scarf tied pirate style around it and sporting an Errol Flynn mustache. He was all dirty white and grey, with smudges of black. He had shoulders and no other body. Tom wore ragged whitish drapery draped over his shoulders, with the puppeteer's hand poking through a slit in it to act as Tom's hand. Tom also appears as a hand puppet. He is compassionate to Gloucester, his blinded father, even though he had been cast out by him. Even though when Tom says "Let me show you the way" his father replies, "I have no way, therefore I need no eyes."

-Strange perception. In my perception after the storm started and for the rest of the play magically the puppets, the puppeteers, the actors all melded together-becoming one entity. Even Conrad's and Elizabeth's eyes became glassy and shiny like the puppets' eyes were. Watching this part of the performance was like a mind altering Polaroid snapshot in reverse, un-developing itself and retreating into fog and mist, leaving me with wonderings of who was manipulating whom as the players ebbed and flowed-merging also into audience/spectators.



Review: The Middle of Everywhere, Wonderheads Mask Theater, by Mary Nagler

Recently, I trekked north to visit with Quack and Wabbit Puppet Co, in the northernmost reaches of guild territory. I was up there to run a workshop, but somehow managed to forget a crucial box of supplies so we rescheduled the workshop and found ourselves with a free afternoon and evening. We walked the beach and in the evening they took me to the Arcata Playhouse to attend an offering in their Family Fun series: The Middle of Everywhere by the Wonderheads Mask Theater, of Portland Oregon! What a delight! Their performance brought back memories of my early work with the great Mime and Mask teacher Bari Rolfe, a beloved and long departed member of our guild. The story revolves around Winston, "a man of particular particularities" and eleven year old Penny who is running away from home. They meet at a bus stop but are catapulted through some magical technology into a series of adventures along the space time continuum. They struggle against history, fantasy and a big hairy monster to find their way back home. With minimal scenery – a lamp and bench you are transported to many places and experiences both humorous and frightening! Their exquisite, concise movement and clear wordless storytelling is something to be admired and marveled at. The over the head masks have "fixed" expressions, but in the tradition of puppet building, can be seen to change expression and show emotion with a tilt of the head, augmented by some rather spectacular lighting. They tour mostly up north, but I would love to see them at a festival here. Visit their website at www.wonderheads.com to see the great masks. Check out their "Curiosity" section for a two minute video showing 50 hours of work to make a mask! A great evening of theater!



On March 25, Dell /Intel posted the first of a 4 episodes adventure film/commercial on Hulu, introducing their new tablet to the public. The story revolves around a young man, (played by Colin Hanks) who recently lost his father, a TV Puppeteer, to death. Through a referral by Michael Nelson, Mary Nagler was approached to rent many of her puppets and shop paraphernalia to the studio. Not all the puppets are hers but many are. Mary wishes to thank the Nelsons for suggesting her and her work, it was a very interesting adventure! Go to Hulu and tap in "What Lives Inside" to take a look!

A Brief History of Silhouettes -Elisheva Hart

A silhouette often is a profile of a person's head, cut out of black paper. Sometimes it is a whole body figure or a scene. Nowadays these frequently are made with crisp laser cuts and mass produced for greeting cards. In France in the mid 1700's there was a real craze among the common people to have their portraits made by hand of black paper scissor-cuts, mimicking costly painted miniature portraits.

The Marquis Etienne de Silhouette was the Controller-General of Finance in Paris in 1759. He was to enforce severe economies because the finances of France were in a deplorable condition. He was well suited for this job as he was quite a tightwad by nature, having learned to cut out shadow portraits of his family and friends rather than pay for painted ones. To mock him, shadow portraits were nicknamed "silhouettes". Etienne de Silhouette

lasted 8 months in his position since his austerities did not resonate with the spendthrift splendor of the court circle.

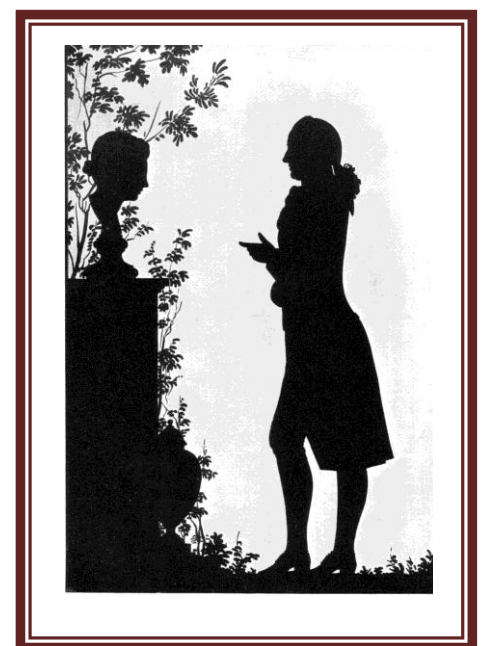
During the reign of Louis XV in France a showman named Seraphim in 1771 owned a little theatre at Versailles; the verse on his handbill begins:

Venez garcons, venez

fillettes

Voir momus a' la silhouette.

And he performed dancing shadows to amuse the boys and girls.



During the French Revolution professional silhouettists had serious work. One named Gonord set up a booth in the Palais Royal, rapidly cutting the portraits of the aristocrats as they arrived in the tumbrils and mounted the steps of the guillotine. These scissored portraits were later painted on ivory for setting in rings and brooches.

In my experience with shadow puppets, a black silhouette "carries" much better to the rear of an audience than does a translucent one-with colors-of the identical size. One of my favorite visual treats while performing with an all silhouette cast comes at the very end of the story. The main character enters with one touch of color-like a transparent red heart glowing in the center of her chest-thus making a terrific impact, creating thunderous applause.

-Two books were extremely helpful in writing this: "Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films" by Lotte Reiniger (although she called her movies 'Silhouette Films'); and a Dover book "Silhouettes A History and Dictionary of Artists" by Mrs. E. Nevill Jackson.

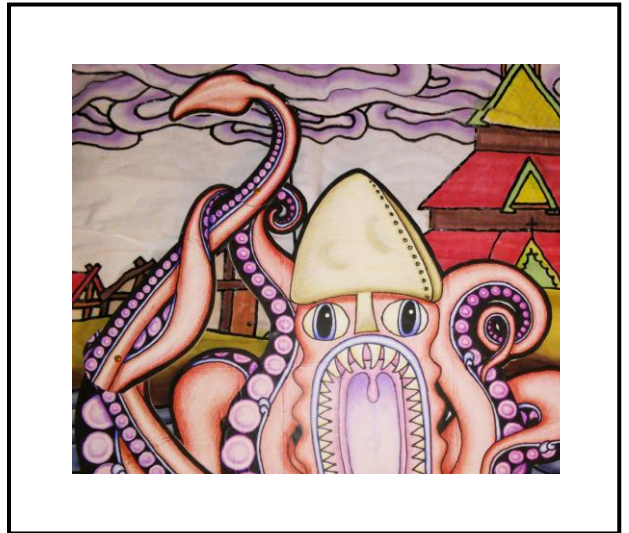
The Kraken Bell Brothers, Starring You!

If you enjoyed Noh Hands Puppet Theater's performance of "The Kraken Bell Brothers" at our guild meeting last November, here's your chance to be a part of the action. Elizabeth Leonard is casting guild members for a command performance of "The Kraken Bell Brothers" this fall. Rehearsals will be held in a location central to all participants. Previous puppetry/acting experience is not required- some non-speaking parts are available.

"The Kraken Bell Brothers" is a stick-puppet play about two medieval Scandinavian brothers who set out to lead very different lives. Good Holmstein wants to serve his community and save it from the evil Kraken.

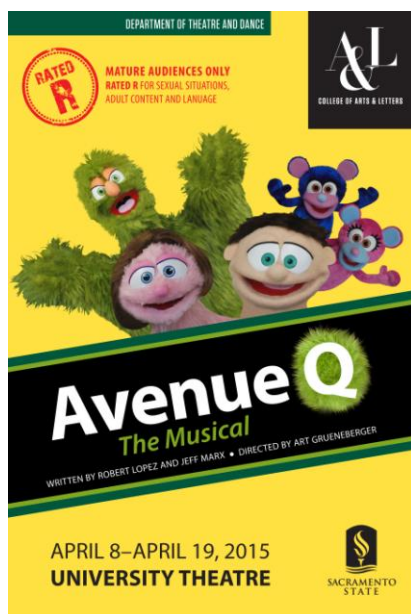
Bold Hallstein wants fame and plunder and is jealous of his brother's acclaim. In a sea-side village beset by peril, the Kraken Bell Brothers shape their fates.

Please contact Elizabeth Leonard at eo@ElizabethanDesign.com asap, for more information.



Calendar

In April Magical Moonshine Theatre will be performing Tales of Br'er Rabbit (the special "egg hunt" version) all Easter weekend at Fairytale Town in Sacramento, April 4&5, show times 12:30, 1:30 and 2:30 both days, Fairfax Library on April 16 at 3:30 (Three Little Pigs), April 17 Bolinas Library at 4PM (Coyote Sings), April 25 at San Leandro Library (Carnival Mask) at 11:15am, and Alameda Free Library at 1:00. For details check their calendar page at <http://magicalmoonshine.org/events-calendar.htm>-



DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

AVENUE Q

WRITTEN BY ROBERT LOPEZ AND JEFF MARX

DIRECTED BY ART GRUENEBERGER

PERFORMANCE DATES

WED, 4.8	8:00
THURS, 4.9	8:00
FRI, 4.10	8:00
SAT, 4.11	8:00
SUN, 4.12	2:00
WED, 4.15	6:30*
THURS, 4.16	6:30*
FRI, 4.17	8:00
SAT, 4.18	8:00
SUN, 4.19	2:00

*Discounted Tickets

UNIVERSITY THEATRE, SHASTA HALL

For tickets call 916-278-4323
or visit csus.edu/sfsc/ticketoffice

Free parking in Parking Lot #2 beginning
one hour prior to performances



Avenue Q

Written By Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx

Directed by Art Grueneberger

April 8-19, 2015

University Theatre

California State University, Sacramento

<http://www.csus.edu/dram/2014-2015Season/Avenue-Q.html>

Please note, the production is for adult audiences due to

mature content and language.



King Lear by Independent Eye

Premiere

[The Emerald Tablet Gallery](http://www.emeraldtabletgallery.com), 80 Fresno St., San Francisco (North Beach)

Fridays/Saturdays, April 10-11, 17-18, 24-25, 8:00 pm

Sunday, April 26, 2:00 pm

Reservations beginning March 15th

at brownpapertickets.com

(click [here for the previews](#) or [here for the San Francisco performances](#)).

\$25 general admission, \$20 seniors & students.

Puppet Ruckus, Saturday April 11 at 12PM (doors open at 11:30am) at the Mira Black Box Theatre in Vallejo.

Contact Elizabeth Leonard at eo@ElizabethanDesign.com for more information.

Saturday, April 11, Noon - 1pm (doors open at 11:30am)

Current SFBAPG Member Super Secret Discount Admission: \$7, General Admission: \$12, Kids age 4-10: \$4, Kids 4 and under are free

Mira Black Box Theatre, 51 Daniels Avenue, Vallejo, CA, Free parking

Visit us at: [Facebook.com/puppetruckus](https://www.facebook.com/puppetruckus)



Nick Barone's Memorial, a gallery of images



OVERHEARD: From Nick's 11 year old nephew when he and his dad (Gino Barone, Nick's brother) were sorting through the puppets. "It's very sad. All these puppets have lost their voice." That sums it up.



Nick's friends and family came from far and wide to celebrate his life and mourn his passing. Above, Art Grueneberger, Debbie and Peter Allen who came from Missouri, Stacey Gordon who traveled from Arizona, Anita Coulter (LA area) and Matthew McGee (from Wash DC), Marsha McGee (Hanford), Art, Mike and Valerie. Thanks to Matthew and Randel McGee for the wonderful photos.

