



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

June 2015



New Board Member Fred Riley III and friend greet the crowds at the May Guild Meeting at Happy Hollow. Attendees saw numerous shows, met and petted some live animals, ate a delicious meal, voted, and generally had a wonderful time.

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Inside this issue:

Elections results, Happy Hollow Show Reviews, interview with Joe Leon of Caterpillar Puppets, mini review of "Canterbury: Miller's Tale," opening of "I am Big Bird," photo essay on San Diego Guild of Puppetry's 21 Day Puppet Festival, Calendar and more.

From your president:

We had a wonderful meeting at Happy Hollow in May. There were puppet shows, and puppet interaction opportunities for all during the day, and then we had the opportunity to socialize over a delicious catered dinner. Many thanks to Independent Eye for their inspiring and thought provoking after-dinner entertainment.

We had our annual Board elections at this meeting. The Board welcomes our new Board members, Fred. C. Riley and Valerie Nelson, and welcomes back our returning Board member, Mary Nagler, who signed up for another term. In addition, the membership present at the meeting and those who voted via email and mail, overwhelmingly supported the Board's proposal to increase the membership dues by \$5 across all the membership categories.

Lots of good things are being planned for the summer, so read on in the newsletter!

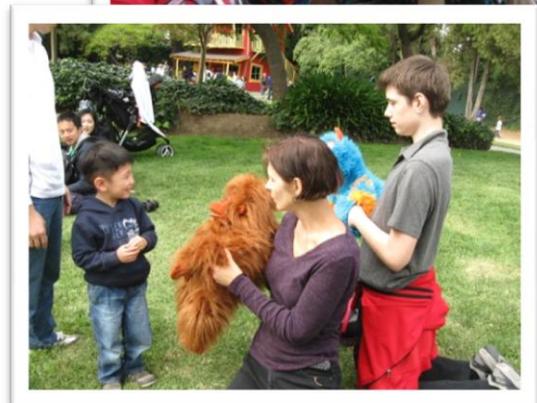
Olivia, President

Review of Daytime Happy Hollow Shows, May 17th. by Elisheva Hart

A feast of puppet shows was offered at Happy Hollow's Day of Puppetry last month. A bargain too, as Guild members had free admission plus parking passes, which benefited our members who came early to help out. "Itty-Bitty Variety Show" was presented twice, performed by long time SFBAPG member and guest puppeteer, Joe Leon, of Caterpillar Puppets. (See review of Joe and the show elsewhere in this issue).

Happy Hollow Puppeteers presented two shows which also were performed in the park's wonderful award winning Puppet Castle Theater. The first of their hand puppet shows was "Rumpelstiltskin". The children gasped in awe as the spinning wheel spun straw into a hay stack of gold! They eagerly applauded when the Miller's daughter, now the Queen, foiled the trickster and saved her first born babe by finding out his name.

The opening scene of this play had the Miller in the local tavern bragging to the guys about the spinning talents of his beautiful daughter. The Miller is a hand puppet. His two buddies are flat shapes, padded, and dressed, leaning against the end of the counter. One has his head in profile and can be manipulated to nod downward so he can guzzle his tankard of ale. (Or is it an ice cream soda? It has a straw sticking out the top and this IS a family show.) They played against a black



backdrop. The combo of the two types of puppets really worked for me!

The second show by Happy Hollow Puppeteers was a jolly good play entitled, "Old King Cole", but not the nursery rhyme version. The King, a lion of course, got a facial make-over by wishing for various additions to his "ordinary" face, such as an alligator snout. The children aided this process by shouting out THE magic word on cue. After several additions, and appearing sillier and sillier, the King wished them all away-but did they ALL disappear? See the show to find out. This show was totally done in rhyme, and Guild member Jesse Vail is rumored to be the author and builder! Good job indeed.



The traditional late afternoon meadow presentation was "Most Wonderful Egg Puppet Show" which Judy Roberto had developed as a library show and was presented by the Happy Hollow Puppeteers. Both the narrator and Joe Leon promoted the use of libraries to find the books from whence their stories came. Hurray for reading! This funny show stars three friend-hens who are each challenged by the King to lay the most wonderful egg in the kingdom! It is full of surprises and includes a parade of the children who eagerly had made paper bag chicken puppets at the craft center that day.



Four daytime puppet shows- plus one more in the evening after Guild elections, "Gift" performed by SFBAPG members Conrad Bishop and Elizabeth Fuller of "The Independent Eye". Such a deal! Here is a hint to the Guild members who walked with puppets around the park and zoo, interacting with the public and got tired feet. Go to the Castle Puppet Theatre to enjoy the shows, sit near the back, and you can meet and greet the kids and families as they enter and exit the seating area. Full bodied puppets are especially magnetic because they are more believable when lolling about in the puppeteer's lap, away from a stage. Folkmanis puppets are often full bodied, or create your very own.

THE CATERPILLAR PUPPETS REVIEWED AND REVEALED! by Elisheva Hart

Joe Leon and his wife Ronna, long time Guild members, have been entertaining people in the Bay area (and elsewhere) since 1976. At the Happy Hollow Day of Puppetry on May 17th we were treated to his one man performance, "The Itty-Bitty Variety Show", much to the delight of the audience. This show has a unique origin and format which was developed during the first of a five year run at Marine World/Africa USA in Vallejo (now the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom). Shows were repeated 4 times a day during the week and 6 times a day on weekends.

The first year-for both the park and the puppet show-was a big time learning experience. All events were on tight schedules and our friends had to learn THE RULE: how to help parents decide in 10 seconds to stay for the puppet show! The kids had grass to sit on, not benches. Continuously before the show "began" a puppet would do a brief pop-up bit, like the puppet baby bawling, "Puppet show! Puppet show". Or an old fashioned hand bell cavorting around, while Joe would announce "8 minutes until the puppet show!" or "6 minutes to the puppet show" etc. from back stage. The audience members join the Caterpillar Puppet Club, learning the club song complete with finger motions to turn caterpillars into butterflies. (See photo.) Then at the proper time a short play would happen like the familiar "The 3 Little Bla-Bla-Blas". Or "Gunnwolf", a not so familiar folk tale. The girl character cleverly has sun streaks throughout her black hair, allowing it to be seen in front of the black scrim.

Because of wind, (indeed stages can be blown down!) Joe and Ronna developed a stage consisting of 3 panels. The center one holds the proscenium (stage performing area). The other 2 panels fold to touch at the back, creating a triangle. Puppets can perform at 3 levels-within the proscenium, sitting on the stage playboard, or appear over the top of the proscenium. Changing levels adds a lot of variety and interest to a small performing space.

Joe performs standing within his stage behind a black scrim with black sequin designs on it. He can see through the scrim without anyone unintentionally seeing him. (The closed side panels help block light coming in from the rear which might otherwise silhouette him.) By seeing exactly how the audience is reacting he can interact with them, gage their energies, and pick volunteers.



Alas, just as puppets wear out over time and need fixing up, Joe's right shoulder needed an operation on his rotor cuff. How to perform post-op when weight and pressure was officially banished? Joe went off to Ace Hardware and easily purchased the supplies to create an "assisted elbow crutch" (see photo). From bottom to top are: crutch tip, length of pvc pipe, a wrapper of black duct tape to muffle sound where it bumps into the stage, a length of wire with a clip on the end (dangling from above the tape) which serves as a leash to anchor the crutch upright and available inside the stage-no oops!-and to top it all off, a black funnel which cradles his right elbow.

In the photo Joe demos his puppet "The Artist Mouse" who wears a black sleeve sewn to the opening in his body, which provides protective coloring over the puppeteer's arm. This puppet quickly sketches a volunteer's portrait, almost as good as Joe can! Joe's left index finger is pointing to the top of the funnel. He depended on this ergonomic arm aide for 6 months. Also, he stood on his packing box which raised him 6 inches, during this time, to help relieve the pressure. Healed now, Joe brings it along "just in case." He looks a VERY Happy Puppeteer!

Gifts by Independent Eye

Elizabeth Fuller and Conrad Bishop are two of the guild's most talented and experienced performers. They have performed together for over 50 years, raising a family "on the road" while touring their shows. Gifts is a dreamlike journey with familiar objects that lead us, the audience, into worlds created by the actors using their impressive talents and our own imaginations. The play starts starkly with a (real?) steering wheel and two chairs where the puppeteers sit with two puppets (in their laps sort of), and yet that is all it takes to propel us into a world that is a beautiful and moving and very funny portrait of a couple that find themselves driving down life's highway, having to deal with all that life throws at them on the fly (while looking for the right exit off the freeway.) As they drive along, they have kids, explore the meaning of existence, the kids grow up and, when they are old enough, get out of the car to start their own independent lives. The wife even has an affair in the back seat before while her husband continues to drive. This was one of three skits, each simply and engagingly performed. The show is one that Independent Eye performs as a house concert (they will come into your home and put up their simple set and perform for you and your friends.) What a wonderful evening that would be! Learn more at www.independenteye.org.



YE OLDE ADVENTURE TIME! by Elisheva Hart

On May 30th, four adult puppet performance lovers from CPC ("our" holiday party church) trekked with me across the marshes to the McCune Library in Vallejo. Goal: to visit the medieval world of Chaucer, recreated by Valerie and Mike Nelson's Toy Theater, which is visually inspired by the Library's collection of many illustrated books printed by William Morris, of the Craftsman Movement in the late 1800's.

We witness a joust and cheer our favorite knights, laugh and gasp at "The Miller's Tale" (and perhaps blush), purchase a special "Canterbury Tales" wine glass which magically spouts tasty FREE samples of Brew Master Mike's own Ale & Mead, and nibble on Baker Val's Authentic Garlic Pebbles and other



Delicious Tidbits. And ahhh! the music, both instrumental and vocal-some of which we audience members participate in-all of which is enjoyable beyond adjectives!

In the words of my four stalwart friends (one in kilts) : "Crazy Fun!" "Wonderful!" "Thanks for the great birthday present!" "Scenery was beautifully painted and with clarity!" "I loved looking through the windows [in the set piece] to the outdoors beyond!" "Yes, when the night sky was revealed, with its illuminated moon and stars, everyone in my area all gasped ooh!" "It kept getting better and better!" "So many layers of interest and events!" "The tubs were hilarious!" "He [Mike] really makes her [Valerie] laugh. I like that [unity] between them!" "The sculpted head of the Miller [hand puppet] really changed expressions as he moved around!" "Fabulous music and a clever joke too!"-You have to see the show to get the joke."-"The whole event was great, I saw a Gutenberg in the library collection!"

All y'all still have time to do YOUR Adventure Trek next weekend. And be sure to wear a Medieval Costume if you want. IT'S FUN!

IF YOU GO: Make sure to get tickets in advance, as the shows next weekend (June 5, 6, doors open at 7 for food, drink and visiting the rare books, and on Sat there is a 2pm matinee as well) are expected to sell out (a small, intimate venue.) Tickets start at \$20.00 and are available online at <http://magicalmoonshine.bpt.me/> Lots of free parking. More info at: <http://magicalmoonshine.org/canterbury.htm>

Beginning TV Puppetry Workshop

Can't go to the National Festival this year? We'll bring a workshop from the Festival to you! Here is "Beginning TV Puppetry."

If you want to learn the basics of TV Puppetry, this workshop is for you! Participants should have some puppeteering experience, as we will build on this to develop skills in front of the camera. This 4 hour class will cover Use of Monitors, Eye Focus, Breath, Mouth Synchronization, Walks, Armrods, etc. We'll put it all together in front of the camera. The class will also cover some of the important technical aspects, tips and tricks that make for a professional production. Please bring a mouth puppet (armrods, nice but not essential) to use or we will provide an assortment of basic workshop puppets.

Images In Motion, Media Inc. (IIM Inc.) specializes in puppetry for TV and film. The co-directors of IIM Inc, Lee Armstrong & Kamela Portuges, come from performance and art backgrounds and each bring over twenty five years of experience to TV puppetry. Besides producing IIM videos for various clients, credits include Fraggle Rock, Being John Malkovich, Monkeybone, many PBS shows and numerous commercials. More info on IIM at www.imagesmedia.com.

Date: Sun June 28 10:30-12:30 and 1:30-3:30
Images In Motion Studio, 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma
Cost: \$40 for Guild members, \$50 for non-Guild members
Minimum of 8 participants needed
Questions or to register: email Lee at images@vom.com
Questions? [707 996-9474](tel:7079969474)



For Big Bird fans!

I AM BIG BIRD is an affectionate portrait of the life and career of Sesame Street icon Caroll Spinney, the man responsible for bringing life to Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch for the last 46 years. We have already released the film on Cable VOD, iTunes and Amazon, as well as in theaters in New York City.

The San Francisco and Berkeley releases will start May 15, at the Balboa Theater and Rialto Cinemas Elmwood, respectively.



For complete release information, please visit www.tribecafilm.com/bigbird, as well as our Facebook page: (facebook.com/iambigbirdmovie).

Calendar

June 5, 6 Magical Moonshine's Canterbury Tales: Miller's Tale at McCune (see info in review elsewhere in this issue.) The show will also play for free at the Berkeley Library on June 7 but sans drinks, food, rare books, and preshow.

Sun. June 28, guild sponsored workshop on TV Puppetry (see info in article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Magical Moonshine Theatre has numerous free shows scheduled in Bay Area Libraries in June including all of the Sonoma Library system, St. Helena, San Carlos, Ross, Vallejo, Gilroy and Berkeley. For information on dates, times, etc., visit <http://magicalmoonshine.org/events-calendar.htm> or call [707-363-4573](tel:707-363-4573) for information.

Wonder why our calendar listing is so scant? There have been no calendar listings sent to the guild calendar since March. Remember, you are our eyes and ears. Let us know what you know about puppet shows, events, workshops, etc. so we can share it with our membership. Send your listings to sfbapgcalendar@gmail.com.



San Diego Guild of Puppetry just finished their 21 day puppet festival. A number of SFBAPG guild members were involved, including Independent Eye, Randel McGee and Groark, and Magical Moonshine Theatre who performed, and Alan Cook and Mary Decker (pictured above) who put together a wonderful exhibit of puppets from around the world. The festival included workshops for the public, a rooftop flea market and make a puppet event, with a snack bar and live music, a puppetry store and more. Congratulations to the San Diego Guild of Puppetry for putting on this wonderful event for their community!