



The official newsletter of  
**San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild**  
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*SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization*

## December 2015



*Anatomy of a fan dance. Members at the November guild meeting work on their act, with Lynette Pinto directing, and Daniel King, Betsy Claasson, Lee Armstrong and Gabriel Galdamez performing.*

### *Inside this issue:*

Next Guild Meeting, last guild meeting and cabaret, Day of the Dead in Petaluma, simple puppets in the classroom, Independent Eye update and more!

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## From Your Co-President (Michael Nelson, this time)

What a wonderful guild meeting and Cabaret we had last month. I'll leave details and reviews to the articles later in this issue but I want to try and thank the many, many wonderful guild members who volunteered and participated. There were so many of you helping that I worry that I am bound to miss someone, so I apologize in advance if this list is partial, but let me know if you see omissions and I would love to thank them publicly as well.

I must admit that my role as organizer of the evening cabaret interfered with my attending a lot of the guild meeting. I was in the same room but setting up curtains, lights, etc. for the evening show so for more details, please see Elisheva's write up on the meeting in this issue. Thanks to the program planning committee and especially



Mary Nagler who couldn't attend the meeting but did a huge amount of work organizing it, and to Lee Armstrong for taking over when Mary had to bow out suddenly. Our meeting presenters, Lee, Maria D'Souza Walters (and I said a few words, too) did a great job getting the guild prepared to create some great on-the-spot acts. Many guild members brought puppets, stages, and a lot of creativity, as well as the usual wonderful potluck. You all know that the guild is so great because of its members! Thank you all for your continued sharing of your creativity, great spirits and willingness to jump in and be a part of this group. You guys rock! Performing at the Evening Cabaret --We had both scheduled performers from the guild and also performers who surprised and delighted us with their acts put together spontaneously at the guild meeting that afternoon.

Jack Quevedo, Glynn Bartlett (Tree), Judy Roberto, and Michael and Valerie Nelson were on the scheduled program. Lee Armstrong, Talib and Olivia Huff, Daniel King, Peter Olson, Barry Needleman, David Holt, Stephen King, Maria Walters, as well as Trevor Allen (non-guild member) picked up puppets and "ran with them" working in various teams to put on skits. The audience was delighted with all of the outpouring of puppets! Thank you all so very much! You did the guild proud.

Between performers and volunteers there were around 30 people helping to make this event happen, so simple math says there were quite a few guild members who offered their support help in various ways. I saw Lynette Pinto helping to keep the food table up and running smoothly. Tom Crystal and Mary Beth Deenihan guided audience members in making puppets at the craft table. Elisheva was busy taking notes and photos for reviews and articles which you will see in this newsletter. John Arnold was our champion angel and seemed to be everywhere bringing out extra chairs (a constant activity at the start as the audience just kept growing and growing) and helping run and organize the house, as well as setting up the volunteer system before the event. Gabriel Galdamez couldn't stay for the evening show but was a great help in setting up the music cues for the show before he left. And saving some of the best for last, Stephen King ran our lighting cues, doing a great job even when we didn't tell him what the cues were. Rhys Wade (Lee's husband) ran our sound outstandingly. And my new hero, Maria D'Souza Walters, stepped in as stage manager and kept me sane, doing a great job of keeping things going, running a cabaret show with over 2 hours of multiple acts, a band, audience participation, all without even a tech rehearsal! A huge thanks to all of these great folks who helped make the evening cabaret such a great success! Take a bow, folks (below!)



## Next Guild Meeting

### **WHAT is going on here?!**

It's the SFBAPG Holiday Party 2016!

### **WHEN is this shindig supposed to occur?!**

Sunday, Jan 24<sup>th</sup> from 4-9 pm

### **WHERE can I meet up with these crazy fun people?!**

At Christ Presbyterian Church

620 Del Ganado Road in beautiful San Rafael, California!

### **Ladies and Gents!**

Please mark your calendars for this Guild traditional celebration of the Holidays and New Year.

This year's celebration will feature, for your viewing pleasure The Fratello Marionettes with their new show Aladdin. Join this exciting adventure with Aladdin, the most popular legend from "The 1001 Arabian Nights." Watch as Aladdin thwarts the evil sorcerer, discovers the magical lamp, befriends the powerful genie, and saves the princess. Traditional music and intricate costumes showcase storytelling from ancient cultures of the Far East. Utilizing dramatic staging, we present this magical tale as it has never been seen before.



### **EVENING POTPOURRI**

Do you have a short puppet piece, up to 7 minutes that you'd like to share at the evening potpourri? Perhaps you did a piece at the SLAM or workshop and would like to polish and perform again. If so, contact: Mary Nagler, mary.nagler@gmail.com

### **POTLUCK SUPPER**

Please your favorite dish to share with others. Appetizers for the Social and Main courses are always appreciated. Microwave and refrigerator available. Dinnerware will be provided.

### **ADOPT A TABLE & TRIM THE ROOM**

Individuals and companies are invited to adopt a dining table. Bring in any coverings and decorations to make it a wonderful table to dine at. There will be prizes for participation, but the greatest prize of all is knowing that you're lending your artistry to make the holiday party festive! To adopt a table, contact Lee Armstrong at 707 996-9474, images@vom.com. Also, holiday decorations for the room will be greatly appreciated. Doors open at 4:00, so bring in some decorations (no nails please) to trim the room. At the end you just take your decorations down and take them home.

### **GIFT EXCHANGE**

If you wish to participate in the exchange, bring a puppet related, wrapped gift to add to the pile (in the past, \$10.00 approximate value has been suggested.) All who bring a gift will receive one.

### **PUPPET DISPLAY**

Do you have a puppet that you've made, that you'd like to display? A table will be provided for an informal puppet exhibit, so bring your puppet (on a stand, if needed) and share your puppet(s) with others.

### **RAFFLE**

Puppet items, useful and unique are raffled off, with proceeds going to the scholarship committee.

### **GUILD LIBRARY**

The Guild library has hundreds of books covering a variety of topics. Books & DVD's will be available for checkout at the meeting, to people that have been members for at least 6 months. Are you looking for books or DVD on a particular topic? Check out the booklist at <http://www.sfbapg.org/resources/>. If you want the Guild Librarian, Lee Armstrong to bring a particular book or topic, email her at [sfbapglibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sfbapglibrary@gmail.com) or call 707 738-5906.

### **A Very Loose Schedule as it is a Holiday Party**

3:00	Setup, decorate a table, etc.
4-4:30	Meet & greet
4:30	Show "Aladdin" by Fratello Marionettes
5:15	Short Guild meeting



6ish Potluck supper

7ish Gift exchange

7:30-8:30ish Potpourri

### Directions to 620 Del Ganado Rd

From 101 North, just past the Civic Center exit, San Rafael or 101 South, just past Lucas Drive exit

Take exit 455, Terra Linda/Freitas Parkway, West, toward Terra Linda

Merge onto Manuel T Freitas Pkwy, 1.2 mile

Turn right at Del Ganado Rd, 203 ft

## NOVEMBER'S GUILD PUPPET SLAM WORKSHOP

Article and photos by Elisheva Hart



On Saturday afternoon, November 14th, an enthusiasm of Guild members gathered at "The Hub" art gallery and community space in Vallejo, the space where a Forbidden Puppet Cabaret was scheduled that very night. Guild members

had been invited to bring skit ideas, puppets, and/or just themselves to be developed for presentation in the evening's Cabaret.

But first.....Maria Walters, from Atlanta and new Guild member (AND excellent stage manager that evening) gave us a short, concise introduction to the puppet slam concept: Short. Adult. Simple drama. Few characters. Mike Nelson then described some of the impetuses which lead to developing a puppet skit:

1. Have a puppet character you want to do something with. Put it in a situation and see how it will react. Will it have conflict? Drama? Usually there is tension somewhere. Example: the puppet's hat blows off. Or the puppet meets a dog.

This is CHARACTER/personality DRIVEN. People are fascinated by puppets since the Life of a Puppet is different than that of the Life of Persons in the Audience! A free bonus for us puppeteers is the attention the audience uses to discover this difference.

2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. Our puppets begin to teach us who they are and what they "want" to do. This is where movement exercises come in (walking, sitting, jumping, falling, looking around, etc.) If what the puppet wants to do in the way of movement is done well, USE IT! Mike and Val work with mirrors so they can see the puppet from different angles. A video camera, either direct or recording, is also helpful.

3. CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT. Used to express an idea/concept: like life in space, with puppets and/or objects. Mike's definition of puppeting with objects is any object which you can manipulate to give it life IS a puppet. When the puppeteer ACTS like an object is alive, the audience will also.

Brevity was stressed for a Puppet Slam. Build (illustrate) the concept. Build it up to climax/peak. Get it over with.





How long? 1 or 2 minutes to 15 minutes max. Usually 5-10 minutes. A shout-out at the conference is

[make it] "Too short to suck!" Think of doing a novella, not a novel. Some ideas which can be done quickly are poems, jokes, songs, and very short stories. Also try odd ball news stories. Or an abstract piece. Let the audience create the story for themselves! As long as the audience keeps watching, the puppeteer keeps surprising them.

Lee Armstrong then reviewed Puppet Movement with us. This was a review of the workshop she did at Fairyland in August, plus more pointers: Pick the puppets [for the job]. When manipulating them TAKE TIME to extend the movement (and the moment). This allows the audience to 'catch up' with the puppets.

All puppets must BREATHE to give the illusion of life. Jim Henson emphasized that the puppeteer's wrist is the soul of the Muppet style puppet.

When the puppet enters take a breath before it speaks, the audience will too! Translate the movements you the puppeteer do, into movements your puppet can do. Creating a story board-like cartoonists and stage directors do-showing the puppet's movement through a scene or exercise can be helpful.

Lee then went over mouth movement, focus, and how things such as walking can define the puppet's mood [and vice versa.]

Eager puppeteers/producers/stage hands then discussed slam ideas: puppets/possible skits/the number of helpers needed. Lists were made, groups assembled, amazing intention, support and fun was had throughout the workshop space. Many people were not only doing their own thing, but also volunteering to be "spear carriers" in someone else's skit. Or becoming a spontaneous director. Or assembling as a spontaneous audience to view the work of the few people who reluctantly had to leave early.

We topped off the workshop with our potluck supper....although much chatter about our skits was carried on during the meal. This hands-on "Jump in and DO IT" workshop was terrific, productive, and our amazing "Cheer Leader Lee" lead the energy to keep it going throughout the afternoon. Amazingly at least 4 skits our group developed were performed that very evening at the Forbidden Puppet Cabaret! WOW. Let's do it again next year.

## REVIEW OF PUPPET RUCKUS reviewed by Elisheva

A friendly group gathered in Vallejo on Oct. 24, 2015 for another Puppet Ruckus, presented by Guild member Elizabeth Leonard.

Before the Ruckus, Mary Nagler treated the kids by introducing them to her -just finished-very large, very chocolaty brown, and very charming "life size" top-half bear puppet. The kids adored it.

In the hallway, one child was having her hand puppet interact with a 1 foot high skeleton, who was writing poems with a quill pen into a book overseen by Poe's Raven, "Nevermore." This was pre-Halloween, of course. One of the photos on display nearby included the Nelson's July 4<sup>th</sup> parade puppet of a giant white horse! We are everywhere. The Ruckus opening act was "Life Goes On," which had Elizabeth and her puppet "Pat-the-Lamb" leading familiar songs with the audience. She was paired with show-pleaser Dani Joy and her amazing ukulele. Azlan, an 8 year old Vallejo native with a very imaginative mind, presented an act with her blue haired mouth puppet called, "Meet Anabelle Jones".

The Kennedy Puppets, starring Ilene Cleveland-Kennedy and the Kennedy Puppeteers, performed a new take on "3 Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf." The MC puppet was a running-gag spoof on egotistical TV hosts being much more interested in their hairdos and makeup than in the show! The 3 pigs each had a good argument with the wolf before he blew at their houses-in fact he had the audacity to ask us, the audience, to help him blow down the immovable brick house! My favorite house was the yellow "shag rug" straw house. All 3 houses were innovative. I loved the wolf's accent, it really brought him to life!



Mary Nagler and her Whorls of Wonder Puppet Theater presented "Little Red Riding Hood", which began with L. Red walking through the woods. We all knew why, so the cut worked. She and the wolf tussled over her basket to great laughter. Wolf asked us not to tell L. Red what he's up to or the story will be SHORT! After much slapstick it all worked out, as it should.

After intermission, Dani presented her very first puppet show, "The Kingdom of Do" [as in ....re, mi, etc]. Each sound was represented by a simple cutout of media icons dear to the hearts of young children: My Little Pony, action figures, Elsa from Frozen, Malificent, etc. We were introduced to their relationships between each other in the Musical Land of Music Theory in a very unique way.

Dani Joy played "Adams Family Theme" and "Monster Mash" while the audience sang and mashed along with her.

Mary Nagler wrapped up the event with "Harlequin and the Gift of Many Colors", which she presented in August at the Fairyland Puppet Fair. (See review in our Guild Newsletter of October, 2015.) A great bit of impromptu dialogue occurred when Harlequin spots a puppet show at the Carnival. He asks the audience, "You guys like puppet shows?" A kid answers from the audience, "Yah, you're in one." H. replies, "I am? That's a very confusing concept!" [AIN'T IT THE TRUTH! Puppeteers sure can relate.}

The Big Finale was performed by most of the kids present singing "It's a Small World", with dancing sock hand puppets. Elizabeth then announced she is taking a year off from presenting the "Puppet Ruckus" events so she can work on her own puppetry and find a regular performance spot in the Sacramento area-where she lives-and wants to build up a network of puppeteers, and audiences. Good luck to you, Elizabeth.



Puppet Ruckus with Elizabeth Leonard and friends at the Mira Theatre in Vallejo.

## GIANT PUPPETS AGAIN INVADE PETALUMA FOR THE DAY OF THE DEAD!



A "large" number of enthusiastic Giant Puppets, along with some "life-sized" Skeletons and other People paraded and danced down a "short" 3-block-long route in Petaluma on Sunday, November 1, in the traditional Latino Day of the Dead Parade. This is the 15th year of public celebration in Petaluma and at least the 5th year of the parade. The Petaluma Historical Museum was the destination, with the street blocked off from traffic in front. A bandstand, dancing, food booths, etc. were located there. Altars in honor of loved ones who have passed were created within the Museum as well as in the windows of many local shops. In fact, walking tour guides to the altars were available. A jolly good time was had by all! Adios, Elisheva



## HIDDEN PUPPET CABARET REVEALED! by Elisheva Hart, photos by Stephen Jacobson

A large happy audience came to the "Hidden (Forbidden) Puppet Cabaret" in "The Hub" -a new, juicy Vallejo venue for us- on Saturday evening, November 14th. And some of the acts-created or developed during the afternoon's Slam Workshop-were presented along with the performers who were already scheduled. The evening was produced by Mike and Valerie Nelson of Magical Moonshine Theater.

As the audience arrived they were greeted with an opportunity to make simple black paper animals which would perform a shadow puppet parade at the end of the evening to the Cole Porter song, "Birds do it, bees do it, even educated fleas do it, let's do it, let's fall in love."

Also greeting the audience before, during and after the Cabaret was "The INSULTANTS OF SWING", played by Rob Crummett (Valerie's brother) and friends on bass, guitar, and violin. Excellent mood setting music! The violinist kept laughing and smiling at the puppets as she kept right on playing throughout. It doesn't get much better than this, folks.

The evening's running gag was 8 very BAD PUPPETS (commercial hand puppets of young kids, the kind which look like oven mitts). The audience loved to anticipate when they might swarm on stage-or not to-attack the current act.

(Don't worry, it was prearranged before the show!) We knew this and it didn't matter-huge fun!

{FYI When you see a \* before the name of an act, that means an act which came out of the afternoon workshop.}

Mike and Val opened the evening-all dressed in glitter with bib puppets down the front-and Val singing "I get a kick out of you!" First attack of BAD PUPPETS!



"I get a kick from champagne!"



Warren Peace, Canine Poet

WARREN PEACE, the prolific dog poet with his handler, Brian Narelle came next.

One of his hilarious popular poems is "The Shoe must go on!" Warren also covered politics, and a dog's view of people, ending with Q & A from the audience.

Guild member Jack Quevedo

presented a large mouth puppet of jazz man CAB CALLOWAY, who sang "Minnie the Moocher". He led the enthusiastic audience with call and response scat singing of "Hi De Hi De Hi De Hi!" in sync to rhythmic clapping. It was the cat's meow.

\*The band played a sultry song appropriately named "Quizas" ["Perhaps"] while 4 PINK FEATHER FANS did a synchronized dance routines over the top of a high screen. Very appropriate for a Forbidden Puppet Cabaret. Lee brought the fans and was assisted by Peter, Daniel, and Tree both in development of the routines and in manipulation. Lots of applause and cat calls. (see photo on page 1)

\* "LA LLORONA"- 'The Weeping Woman'- was sung in Spanish by Val. It is about a tragic woman who wanders about after drowning her children. Small hand puppet mutely enacted a scenario above the high screen. It

evoked a very sad feeling in many of the audience members. Puppeteers were Peter, Talib, Olivia, Michael and Daniel.



Cab Calloway and Jack Quevedo



\*"WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN" featured 2 white robed Egyptian dancing rod puppets-complete with their hands



Walk like an Egyptian

held at shoulder level. These are Judy Roberto's first puppets she ever made! Along with some other puppets they strutted their stuff to a recording named, of course, "Walk Like an Egyptian". Other puppeteers were Lee, Peter and Talib.

"Besame Mucho" ('Kiss me generously') was sung by Val as she manipulated 'MISS CARLA DARLING', a full length torch singer Muppet-style puppet who also suffered an attack of the BAD PUPPETS and exit stage R.

RUNNING GAG PART 2. A zany pest controller ran on stage with a cart of strange implements to rid the theater of the infestation of BP'S. He was a hoot and told this reporter his name was Earl Ray, but call him Bubba! I didn't check his Id and don't believe his answer. His extermination company is "The

Detanium) Works". Not in the phone book or on Craig's List. He would popup throughout the rest of the show. (Ed. Note: He bore an amazing resemblance to Shannon O'Hare of Obtainium Works. Past Forbidden Puppet audience members will remember Shannon as our Don Quixote with the mechanical/puppet horse who has attacked at least one act in each of our past Cabarets.)

After his antics, 'MISS CARLA DARLING' was able to return, singing "All of me, why not take all of me?" as she valiantly held on to her microphone throughout, after being flung on a gurney and having various body parts hacked off by Dr. Mike and an intern. One audience member cracked, "That was a killer act!"

\*THE PINK PERSIMMON TREE, a black and white shadow play was presented by Judy Roberto. Lee helped illustrate this traditional Japanese tale. Valerie read the rhyming script. The shadows were lovely and crisp and included a dog and a monkey, also elegant people, the tree and scary spider-like evil beings. [Lotte Reiniger, brilliant shadow film



"Take my legs, I'll never use them."



The Pink Persimmon Tree

maker, always suggested having puppets of animals or small children in a scene which needed enlivening, like when changing scenery bits or location. This draws the audience's attention away from stage business.

Another running gag from previous [adult, remember!] Puppet Cabarets involved penis puppetry, by our producers. The bawdy TRUNK SHOW offered costumes for the male puppet member, just in time for the holidays. Incredibly funny. You had to be there...



Tree's modern dancer

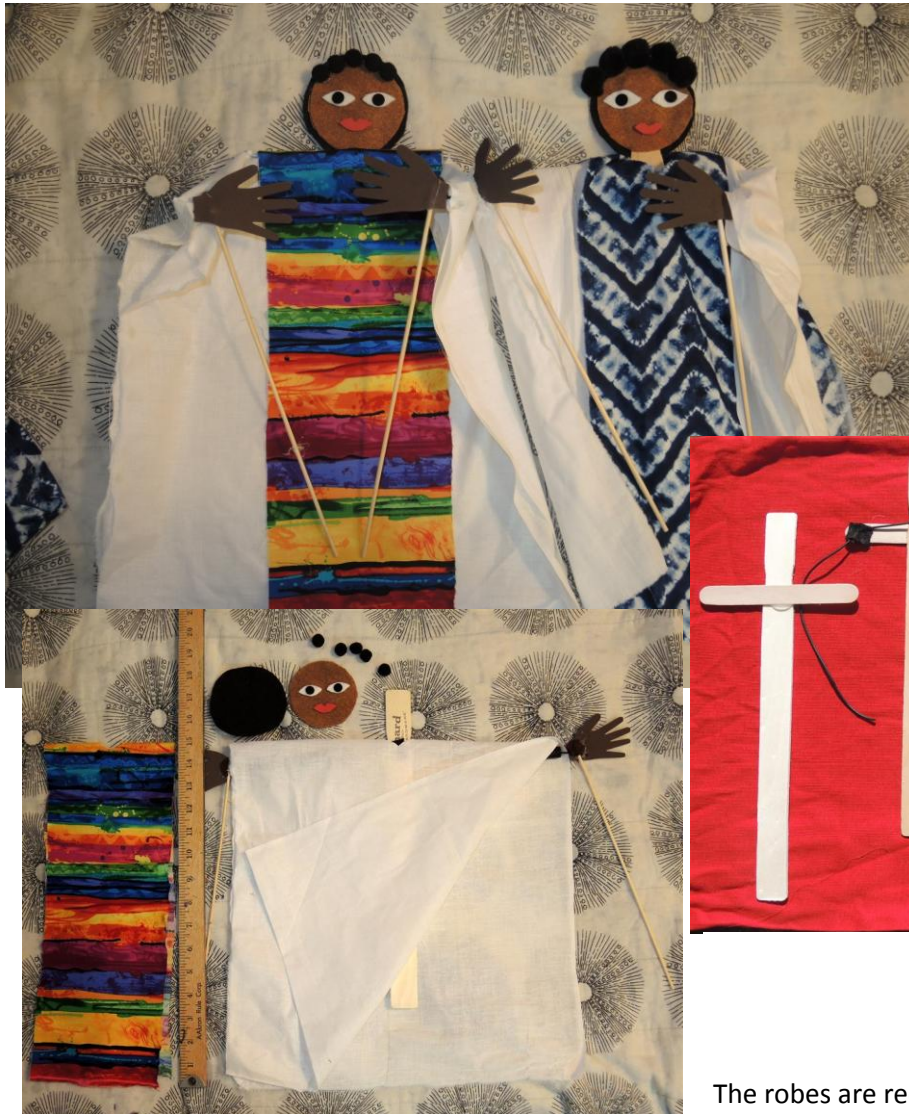


"MODERN DANCE" featuring the amazing marionette, "Dusty Dancer", was presented by Guild member, Glynn Bartlett, aka Tree. This was Tree's first real public performance with any of his puppets. And seemingly all the dance moves Dusty made were unique, non-repetitive, and totally choreographed to the fast paced music. Tree himself completely places his focus on the puppet, instead of showing awareness of the audience. > Read Glynn's article in our November Guild Newsletter about his incredible puppet adventure in South Africa, which he still may be on as you read this.

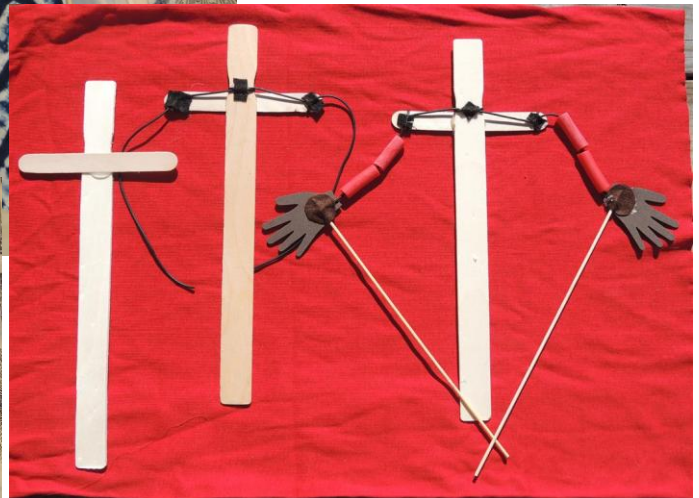
Oops a STREAKER/FLASHER (human type or maybe a big, brown bear) signified the end of the program except: the traditional audience participation by folks who had made animal shadow puppets. They paraded them across the screen on stage to Cole Porter's "Birds do it, bees do it..."

All in all, this was a grand evening in a new venue and a new part of town. And with a laughing full-house audience. HUZZAH!

### Simple Puppets for a Kwanzaa story by Camilla Henneman



My 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class is doing a puppet play of the Ghanaian folktale "Seven Spools of Thread" This is a tale that is used for Kwanzaa gatherings. We are making simple rod puppets using paint stir sticks, tongue depressors, felt circles, and foam hands (die cut, though you can cut out of foam or felt).



The robes are rectangles cut from fabric (30" x 15") with scarf strips cut from brightly colored fabric (30" x 5"). The sides are glued closed with tacky glue. Hot glue would work too. I put tubing pieces on the string for the arms to give them more shape, but it is not necessary. The rods are bamboo skewers with the points cut off.

## What are our members up to?

### Independent Eye (Conrad Bishop and Elizabeth Fuller)—

Very brief newsletter this month, having just returned from our six-week tour of *King Lear*: Denver CO, Norfolk VA, Towson MD, Philadelphia PA, Brooklyn NY, Bethlehem PA, Lancaster PA, Bloomsburg PA, Portsmouth NH, Milwaukee WI, and West Liberty IA — twenty shows, all well attended, all with fulsome response. The show has grown enormously, in part simply from security in doing it, in part from experimenting with some half-baked sequences. We made good money and many new friends.

Oddest sensation: performing in the Studio Theatre of University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee where, exactly 46 years ago to the week, we premiered *X Communication*, the first show of our first ensemble Theatre X, which opened the door out of academia and into the rest of our life. Both shows form bookends to the staggering amount of work in between, and responses for both were memorable.

### DamnedFool—

Amazing that while our writing mostly went into suspended animation on the tour, we actually managed to keep up with our blog DamnedFool.com, now in its 96th consecutive week. Check it out. Read my segment, read Elizabeth's, read the Fool's, or read all three.

### Up Next—

- Booking a *Lear* tour to the Pacific Northwest, another to the Midwest.
- Trying to find an affordable circumstance for performances on our home turf.
- Preparing a reading/performance of our new edition of *Rash Acts* for house concerts and small venues.
- Continuing work on our new novel *Akedah: the Binding* and starting to promote our first.
- Editing a *King Lear* video for DVD.
- Getting back to the gym, the garden, the ocean, and friendships.



**CALENDAR...JUST A TASTE- SEE MORE AT** <http://www.sfbapg.org/events/calendar/>

### Friday, December 4

Children's Fairyland: The Nutcracker Prince

### Saturday, December 5

Children's Fairyland: The Nutcracker Prince

Frosty's Magic Hat with Tony Borders Berryessa Branch Library 3355 Noble Avenue San José, CA 95132 Frosty is the world's coolest winter hero! Learn how the magic of imagination first brought Frosty to life in this show filled with frozen fun and cool magic! Puppets, magic, and ventriloquism! This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Library

### Sunday, December 6

Children's Fairyland: The Nutcracker Prince

### Friday, December 11

Children's Fairyland: The Nutcracker Prince

### Saturday, December 12

Children's Fairyland: The Nutcracker Prince

11:00am

San Carlos Library: Dad & Me- Puppet Art Theater

Out of room! For this month's calendar listings please visit: <http://www.sfbapg.org/events/calendar/>

**Send your Calendar listings to [events@sfbapg.org](mailto:events@sfbapg.org)**