



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

March 2017



Above, guild members at the Magic Flute guild event, pose for a goodbye photo with Mary Nagler (center left with hands ready for puppets!) Mary is leaving the Bay Area and will be hugely missed (see her note, in newsletter.) Behind the crowd is one of her elephant puppets from the opera (there were 2 elephants in the show!) with one of her Sonoma State puppet students on top.

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- Farewell to Mary Nagler (sad face here)
- Magic Flute and One Stone reviews
- Using Giant Puppets to inspire kids
- Mrs. Bandersnoot, Calendar, and more!

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Good Bye to Mary Nagler

Below is a goodbye note from guild and board member Mary Nagler. Mary has been a driving force behind the guild for years, active in many areas but perhaps most notably as current head of the programming committee. Under Mary's leadership, the guild has hosted an impressive number of wonderfully informative workshops, great performances, and events at various shows around the Bay Area. Her enthusiasm and energy have been unflagging and she had become so integral to the guild that she may have finally realized that the only way we would let her quit is if she actually left California. Alas, we WILL miss you, Mary. On behalf of the guild and the board I would like to thank you for your extraordinary service and wish you the very best in your future endeavors, and hope you know that we will welcome you back in a heartbeat should your path ever lead you back to SFBAPG! Farewell! (Michael Nelson, president, SFBAPG)

From Mary:

Great thanks to all the guilders, which came out to Sonoma State to enjoy *The Magic Flute*, on which I have labored so much this last year. It was a great delight for me to show the puppets up close and introduce you to my fine young puppeteers! Sharing what I learned through my guild scholarship at the National Puppet Festival at the O'Neill, on playwriting with Ronnie Burkett, was also a joy.

I will forever be grateful that I stumbled onto the guild while trying to get a job with Images in Motion. The festivals I have attended, and friends made, has enhanced my life and helped me develop as a puppeteer. I leave a piece of my heart here among you as a tether, to keep me connected, and I will try to schedule return visits with guild events. You will see me again! Mrs. Bandersnoot also wished to assure you she will continue her column, so send in your questions!

Special thanks to my dear friend Lee Armstrong, for putting together my Bon voyage. The cakes were delicious, and all the hugs and kisses from my dear friends are tucked away to go with me and keep me warm in the north. Sincerely, Mary Nagler

A REPORT OF SFBAPG'S GRAND 'BON VOYAGE' FAREWELL EVENT FOR MARY NAGLER and REVIEW OF MAGIC FLUTE OPERA WITH PUPPETS

Elisheva

Sunday, February 26th at Sonoma State.

Despite it also being Oscar Night, about 30 puppeteers attended. We know our priorities!

This wonderful event was in 4 Acts: 1. Watching the student performance of Mozart's last opera, "The Magic Flute", featuring large and/or life size puppets Mary and student crew had created. 2. Mingling with these puppet animals and their student handlers on stage. 3. Mary's pay-back to the Guild for our granting her



a scholarship to attend Ronnie Burkett's 3 day play writing workshop at a recent Puppeteers of America National Festival. AND 4. Yummy self-selected dinner at the student center "Kitchen", + an Encore: Dessert afterwards, featuring fireside farewells and hugs goodbye.

Act 1. "Magic Flute": Mary, with some assistance from students, built amazing life sized puppets, each representing one continent: timber wolf, giant tortoise, koala (up a gum tree), chamois antelope, crane, king penguins, plus a flock of birds, a baby elephant and a huge elephant which carried an actor onstage. (See bottom of page 2 in February's Newsletter to match the animals with their continents!)



Most of the animals were controlled by a stout rod or two which evoked leashes as the puppets were manipulated around the stage. Their handlers had perfected many moves which brought the animals to life. In the original opera the whole "herd" had less than 5 minutes total, appearing only in the beginning, and, surprise! were acted by humans.

Likewise these puppets were given the 5 minute treatment in the script, but soon some of their handlers were approaching Mary requesting bit spots throughout the performance. For instance, one handler asked if the crane and the antelope could accompany an actress as she strolled through a scene. Of course Mary proudly said, "Yes", since these requests for additions showed the students' creativity, and gave her beautiful puppets further integration into the play, plus more exposure for all that hard work and hours spent creating them. And the audience was delighted with these vignettes.. [Famed shadow animator Lotte Reiniger frequently said to fill pauses in action, allow the figure of a child or animals to appear. She herself did short shadow movies of the songs in "Magic Flute", a favorite opera of hers. They are on YouTube where there is a whole section of her work, although you need to search these songs out, as they are not entered consecutively.]



Mercifully the opera was performed in English, not in German, and had lyrics projected overhead during the songs. Sacramento member Pam Wade therefore was especially grateful because she has seen it 5 times (twice performed by the Salzburg Marionettes) and now she finally understood what the opera was all about, what the characters were saying, and could follow the action. Our sentiments indeed.

The stage was basically the large "Black Box", set up at first with clothes racks full of exotic, colorful-mostly Indonesian influenced-costumes. Quickly the black clad "invisible" stage hands whisked the racks off stage to make room for the play. One gown for the Queen of the Night had a train on the back which was 40 feet long! At one point her 2 attendants wrapped her torso around and around with all this fabric and then each held one of her arms, manipulating it like one might a Bunraku puppet's arms.



Scenery was minimal and suggestive, rather than literal. For instance, a door carried upright onto the stage would represent a whole building. Gauzy panels-one painted with flame colors and the other with colors of water-represented these elements. Thus scene changes were quick and imaginative. Being part of an educational system, the theater has "proper" fly space up above, as well as wings, so scenery can be lowered and raised as needed, should a graduate need these in the future.

A great special effect had the singer in the dark behind a scrim (translucent curtain fully stretched across the stage from side to side) with stage hands pointing large cell flashlights at her as they constantly encircled her. Really cool effect, totally visually and aurally awesome!

The animal show stopper was a realistic 18 foot high elephant lumbering onto the stage, with a tall performer riding on top! Mary, assisted by her student Jimmy, built it in an all nighter, just before the show opened.

The play was well acted, the principal singers had great voices, everything properly sorted itself out at the end plot wise, and the live orchestra, humorously named "The Wolf Gang" [Get it? Mozart's first name is Wolfgang!] played beautifully.

Just after the final curtain, Mary walked up the aisle towards us Guilders. We arose-shouting her name and whistling, otherwise applauding wildly-much to the astonishment (and hopefully the enjoyment) of the other audience members. Mary fully deserved our praise.

Act 2. "On stage with the beasties." We swarmed the stage once the other audience members had departed, to meet and greet and pet the animals and talk with their handlers. Both human groups quickly warmed up to each other. Interestingly some of the student handlers-previously "invisible" in their black duds-were a bit shy at greeting other "real" puppeteers besides Mary-for at least several nanoseconds. Then they began explaining the controls, telling us the names they had given the animals, posing their animal for photos, and we all were beaming with excitement!

Each student had made a sort of sparrow type bird. They were painted brilliantly and mounted on a rod, which had a trigger on the handle used to flap the wings for flying effect. Some of the birds were solo on one rod. Some were mounted on a rod which forked into 3 extensions, so it could hold 3 birds. Then, depending which and how many rods each puppeteer held, they could combine the rods into different "sets" of 1, 4, or 6 birds. The use of both hands were needed sometimes of course.

Mary was so pleased with her students that she offered 1 year SFBAPG Lite Memberships to 5 of the most promising of them! This is a special offer our Guild Board created a few years ago, at the request of those teachers who teach puppetry to adult students. The recipients are invited to our meetings, events, and workshops- receiving regular Guild discounts if needed- but cannot vote or check out our library books. Hopefully they will remain inspired and continue their association with puppetry through our Guild.

Of course we finished this Act properly with a group photo of Guilders and students dwarfed in front of the ginormously LARGE elephant!

Act 3. Mary Nagler's Scholarship Payback Time. We assembled in the comfortable theater lobby. Mary told how she suddenly needed to send a play which she had written to Ronnie Burkett before she could be accepted as a student of his intense 3 day writing workshop. A Play? OOPS. Our Mary wrote an acceptable one in just a weekend! She was 1 of the 8 puppeteers who were accepted to study with him.

Here are some of the inspiring gems he told them: "Be fierce! Be opinionated! Be joyful!" ""Unlock the secret in the story----have multilayers in the story." "A 'one man band' with a stage full of puppets becomes an 'orchestra'."

"You don't just write a script, you direct it within your head." "Don't wander off on a tangent, keep to the story."

"Put your ass in the chair and write! You can't edit a blank page!" And Mary contributed the words on a sign posted in Sonoma State's scene shop: "People with passion are the ones who do the good work."

We each received a 2 page handout entitled, "Ronnie Burkett Playwriting Exercises". One exercise Mary recommended to Valerie as a potential Cabaret workshop day, ending with a public performance. Mike then presented Mary with a wonderful farewell card he had made and we all had secretly passed around for us Guilders to sign. And Lee "modeled" the pretty chocolate cake which was destined, along with a lemon tart, to soon be our dessert! Mary was satisfyingly surprised and thrilled. As we were with her presentation. We certainly made a great investment with this scholarship money. No risk though as Mary always goes above and beyond and has enriched our Guild immensely. We cannot thank her enough.



Act 4. Those of us staying for dinner went around the corner to the student center's eatery, named "The Kitchen", which for a mere \$12 dollars offered up several types of wonderful multichoice food islands, all you can eat. Yummy too!

+ Encore. We smoothly moved next door after dinner for dessert cake and tart, firelight, farewells and Good Luck to Mary on her relocation to Vancouver, Washington (near Portland, Ore.) next month. Plenty of hugs too. A wonderful ending to a wonderful event. And. . . . no rain all day.

REVIEW OF WORLD PREMIERE of "ONE STONE" (EINSTEIN) by Elisheva

This grand opening was at the Cinnabar Theater in Petaluma on Friday, February 10th. The 75 minute (no intermission) play-with 1 actor, 1 puppeteer, and 1 violinist- was authored by Trevor Allen. Michael Nelson, Puppet Designer and Choreographer, was an essential part of the Creative Team. (Please refer to page 9 of SFBAPG's February, 2017 Newsletter for photos of the puppets and pre-show info.)

The poster for this innovative show includes a photo of Einstein himself and a handwritten quote from him, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." The artfulness of this play illuminates Einstein's explorations into the mysteries of science and the beauties thereof, while he searches for Order in the Universe.

For instance, during the opening, the use of one (real) stone dropped into (imaginary) water by Einstein-with the turbulence appearing on a "blackboard" rear projection screen-illustrates the starting point of his future projections about the origins and connections of, well, everything! {I hope that's what it meant.} A good ripple effect. This "blackboard" was used several times for various effects, including old newsreels, footage of Nazi troops, and some short shadow bits. The basic stage set (also including a different, free-standing blackboard covered with calculations, cabinets, desk and chair, podium) never changed but various locales were indicated by props, puppets and events.

I had the pleasure of seeing the Opening Night performance in the company of Mike and Valerie Nelson. Special thanks were also given to Val and the Magical Moonshine Theater in the program. Both weeks were sold out + one added Thursday performance which was almost full.



The 1 actor, Eric Thompson, was on stage full time as Einstein, narrating his life in chronological order, doing an amazing job with staying in his character. The 3 puppets were full bodied puppets of Einstein, as a young man, middle aged, and the familiar elder with wild-sprung white hair. All were directly manipulated in the hands-on style, resting their puppet feet on the desk or podium as needed. The three ages never were on stage together. They were manipulated by the 1 very busy puppeteer, Sheila M. Devitt, a SF actress who has worked with Lunatique Fantastique doing puppetry. She was dressed in basic black including a black ball cap to shield her face.

One of the strengths of this direct manipulation of the puppet/s is that it also enables the puppet to relate to and communicate with the live actor. The actor Einstein would trade believable glances with the puppet Einstein and vice versa. For instance, in the opening scene with the rock, the young puppet Einstein "picks" it up (Sheila's hand cups underneath the puppet's hand with the rock on top,) carries it across stage to give it to the actor Einstein. "Both" Einsteins ponder it together, then actor Einstein returns it to young Einstein who carries the stone back across stage to place it on the podium. The entire exchanges went smooth as glass and probably most of the audience didn't realize how beautifully this was done. Later in the show actor Einstein and older puppet Einstein are "rubber stamping" documents, side by side in unison. Mike's directing and the obvious practicing on the part of the participants really shines in these episodes.

Mike also directed puppetry which went far beyond the 3 Einstein puppets into a world of objects where papers, and a book folded in half, flew like flapping-winged birds to exit the stage. Also a crisp shadow figure of a mountain climber (designed by Mike) appeared on the rear projection screen. Ditto a cool souped-

up motorcycle in another episode. When Einstein got brilliant ideas, a hotel desk bell sounded and a huge cutout of the "idea light bulb" appeared above his head, accompanied by laughter from the audience. On several occasions black and white line drawings, in the style of 19th century engravings, appeared. Mike did not do the drawings but articulated an essential part, like a jaw or arm. There were cartoons of famous leaders such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, and a linked together row of school desks from Einstein's youth. A fun part was a scene, with young Einstein puppet inside a frame representing an elevator, while a small elevator, about the size of a candy box with sliding doors, illustrated that, while one is weightless jumping inside a runaway, moving elevator, you still go splat once it hits bottom.

One violinist—an amazing young woman—Jennifer Cho, played violin à la Einstein (only much better), using the music he actually played. She plays with in the SF Opera Orchestra and this was her first appearance in theater. During the play sometimes she played backstage. Sometimes she actually came on stage dressed in basic black and standing where the action was. And her most touching times were playing onstage at the opening and again at the ending of the play, both times garbed symbolically in a dark grey Japanese kimono. The latter time, actor Einstein mourned his participation in inadvertently endorsing the building of the first atom bomb. He felt the weight of this until his death.

While Opening Performance was wonderful, I went again 2 days later and the Nelsons again Closing Performance. We all appreciated how performing before live audiences strengthened both the individual and collective performances. This is a much needed element in developing our dramatic art to the Max!

Two other quotes from Einstein of interest to puppeteers and teachers:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

GIANT PUPPETS HELP CHILDREN LEARN COURAGE

Sandra Starr

When Dr. Carol Weyland Conner, a retired psychologist, launched a program for urban children^[1] from underserved environments to strengthen their self-esteem and courage, she knew that positive messages could be powerfully transformative when music, drama, and dance vividly awaken their hearts and minds.

She developed a series of original, interactive, musical plays with a famous central figure who must face tremendous hardships in life but prevails through steadfast courage, love, and service for others. The protagonist must confront "giant odds" to achieve an important goal for humanity.

During play development, Dr. Conner found that children were riveted by the use of puppets to show how "small can prevail." The giant puppets clarified at once, without words, the relationship between themselves and the live characters in their dramatic struggle. She used larger-than-life puppets to personify powerful authority figures—some ultimately kind, some dangerous—against whom the central character must prevail. The children learn that small is not powerless; to simply be themselves and stand with what they see and know without fear. You can be small, but fearless and victorious.

Children not only love these plays and the puppets, but get the inspiring message. They write charming thank you notes with every range of expression from: "Those big, fake people made me and my friend scream--it

was awesome!, to “. . . the play was magnificent and enlightening.” But mostly, they remember what they saw and felt long after the curtain comes down.

Puppets enrich our experience!

Francis in the Schools, www.francisintheschools.org



In a play about St. Junipero Serra, California children watch the malevolent Lieutenant Pedro LaFage and one of his soldiers attempt to run the native Indians off the California land.

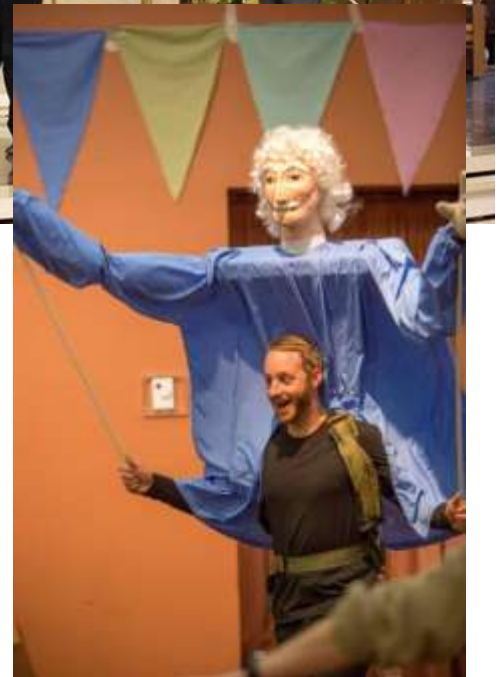
St. Junipero Serra, though small, tries to stop Lieutenant Pedro Lefage and one of his soldiers from mistreating the native Indians and running them off the land. (right)



St. Junipero Serra journeys 1000 miles lame and on foot from California to Mexico City to take his bill of rights for

fair treatment of the native peoples to the powerful, but kind, Viceroy of Mexico (right) who grants all 32 conditions.

(Left) In a play about the miraculous appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Juan Diego, a poor native man, tells the powerful Bishop Zumarrago of Mexico City of her appearance and her request to build a shrine for her on Tepeyac Hill. It is 1531.





Hello Mrs. Bandersnoot

I would like to make a much loved teddy bear into a puppet. Would this be unethical? If not, how would I proceed?

Signed, Repurposing childhood memories

Dear Repurposing childhood memories,

Unethical? Interesting question. As children believe their stuffed toys are alive, so I think I would start by asking your teddy's permission. If they agree then there might be some copyright considerations. But if your teddy is as old as mine, I'm guessing no one will care. My roommate Mary Nagler has decapitated, disemboweled and restructured many a stuffed toy in the name of giving them new life. She changes them up too so they are an "enhancement" of their former self. For instance, she trims the fur away from the eyes so they can be better seen (Eye focus is very important) or better yet, she pops the old ones off and replaces them with bigger ones so they read to the back of the house. She usually makes a foam "body" so she can add a neck sleeve to the head for a good head turn and then

rods the arms or makes foam tubes so fingers can operate the arms. This all depends on the size of the bear, and the style of puppet you want to make.

In the spirit of the Velveteen Rabbit I wish you and your teddy a second childhood full of fun and the avid exercising of your imaginations! Make a lovely show - It is always nice to share your toys!

Best wishes, Mrs. Bandersnoot

To submit a question to Mrs. Bandersnoot, please email Mary Nagler mary.nagler@gmail.com. (Mrs. Bandersnoot lives with Mary and she will relay the message!) Or, give Mary a call (707) 303 0093

CALENDAR

Masked Acts at UCSC includes Kyogen 12th Night, Butterfly Lovers (Chinese story in Malay martial arts style)



and Panji in wayang orang. Shadow puppets from China,

Thailand, and Indonesia do the preludes

to the story and some puppetry is

interspersed. March 3-12 Thurs.-

Sat. 7:30 and Sundays at 3 PM in the

UCSC Theatre Arts Mainstage Theatre. If

you are coming down and want to get

into the Thai mask and puppet exhibit

just let me know when and if I am not in class I will facilitate

Kathy Foley foley@ucsc.edu.



Playing throughout March:

Children's Fairyland: The Three Wishes

When Feb 11 – Apr 9, 2017

Where Children's Fairyland, 699 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610, United States ([map](#))

Description The Three Wishes - February 11 - April 9 In this classic German folk tale, Hummock the woodcutter is rewarded with three wishes after freeing an elf's beard from a tree. Although he is warned to use them wisely, things get out of control. Come see what happens. Adaptation and designs by Don Ingraham.

Marionettes by Lewis Mahlmann. Puppet shows are presented year-round, three times a day (11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m.) at the Storybook Puppet Theater. During Fairy Winterland they are presented at 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Thursday, March 23

11:00am

Rohnert Park Magical Moonshine: Golden Armadillo

When Thu, March 23, 11am – 12pm

Where Rohnert Park - Cotati Regional Library, 6250 Lynne Conde Way, Rohnert Park, CA 94928, USA ([map](#))

Description Audience members join us on stage to help tell this bilingual, Mexican folktale.

Do you know of upcoming shows? They can be yours or someone else's! Send the listings to events@sfbapg.org so everyone can enjoy our Bay Area's rich puppetry arts!

What are our Members up to?

Well, Ricki Vincent has opened a Puppetry Institute in Santa Cruz! Wow!

Mission Statement:

The Puppetry Institute will serve the Central Coast, and surrounding areas, giving all who walk through the doors a chance to experience first hand the beauty and wonder of an art form that encompasses all the other arts into one. We plan to do this through 3 different approaches

1. Education: workshops/classes/demonstration. Puppetry is more than just a sock with googly eyes it's design, construction, movement, masks, sewing and the list goes on. We will offer hands on experiences in everything from the sock with googly eyes to animatronic masks to rival any Hollywood FX shop. All classes will be fit for any skill level and offered on a sliding scale with scholarships for underserved/economically disadvantaged kids k-12 from through-out the Central Coast region.
2. Residency Programs: Puppetry on a global scale. Through my contacts I have access to puppeteers from around the world. Through the use of various grants, we would offer a residency program 4 times a year giving them a place to premiere new work. The public would be invited to assist the artist in bringing the project/performance to life, in a series of hands on design/construction sessions culminating in a show/performance with proceeds from ticket sales to help fund the next residency.
3. Performance/Outreach Programs: Create and produce traveling performances/workshops that would work with/perform for schools/institutions/ festivals/events throughout the Central Coast and surrounding areas, sharing our art and message with people outside of the greater Santa Cruz area.

Check out the great looking activities and plans for this brand new puppetry enterprise at <https://www.facebook.com/ThePuppetryInstitute>