



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

February, 2019



Larry Schmidt

1953-2019

The guild loses a long time member. Obituary below, in newsletter.

- Renew your membership now. Our new membership year starts January 1 (so you got 4 free months last year!!!) Stop reading right now and go to <http://www.sfbapg.org/membership/join/> to renew, then come back and read the rest of the newsletter!

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REVIEW OF OUR "WOW!" GUILD HOLIDAY PARTY, 1/26/2019

Our Party opened with a bang! "Chanticleer the Rooster" (the only family-appropriate story of the 24 stories written by Chaucer in the 14th century), was aptly performed by Michael and Valerie Nelson of the Magical Moonshine Theater. It is the second program in their Chaucer series. They are in partnership with the McCune Rare Books Collection in Vallejo to undertake turning these stories into theater pieces.



Live music-both vocal and instrumental-kept the plot going at a merry pace. Mistress Lizzy, an adapted overhead Bohemian-style cloth marionette, is a farm woman owning several farm yard (stuffed cloth) animals, also controlled by over head rods. They all have to figure out how to work together to rescue Chanticleer from the sneaky, hungry fox! Crucial scenes were done toy



theater style with small flat cutout figures of the cast and manipulated with rods. Thus there is more race-space at the top of the backdrop as well as through the barnyard and back.

Our Holiday Party, was held at the Bay Area Stage in Vallejo. The "Forbidden Cabaret: Summer of Love, 50 Years Old and Still Happening" was held at this venue a year and a half ago. Tickets to "Chanticleer the Rooster" were sold earlier to the local townspeople. Many lucky youngsters were thrilled to attend the performance! So were Guild members! Since space is limited, we Guilders also signed up with Brown Paper Tickets which were free to us. And it is very educational for performers

to actually be in an audience. Then we can take in the audience reactions, as well as watch the performance. For instance:

-As the pig was singing "Oinkie, oinkie, oinkie" the kids were almost rolling in the aisles with glee. Ahh, music to puppeteers' ears!

-Mistress Lizzy hopes to distract her pig from entering her house-telling it to wallow in the mud- "Pigs like to do this!" she says. And a young audience member shouts, "Kids do too!"

-When Fox is talking with Chanticleer, trying to persuade the rooster to stretch out his neck to make him easier to carry, a child shouts loudly, "OH DON'T DO THAT!" (This is just as effective as shouting to a movie screen, "Don't open that door!") Of course out stretches the Rooster's neck.

On June 4, 2016, the Bay Area opening of "Chanticleer the Rooster" was at the Claremont Branch Library in Berkeley. Tia and I were happy to attend this. I reviewed it in our July, 2016 Guild Newsletter (pages 5-7). The opening went very well, the audience was thrilled. And at our Holiday Party I was thrilled to see how this play has emerged from a skillful, well written and rehearsed performance into an alive entity, which has taken on a joyous life of its own.

Huge applause. Then the non-puppeteer audience members left us for home, or the ice cream shoppe, with children clutching the paper bag 'Imagination Puppets' they had created with the guidance of Judy Roberto and Tia before the show. September, 2018 Newsletter has an article about her method, "Children's Fairyland Puppet Fair-Puppet Making-Imagination Puppets Page 10 which Judy has written.

After the happy public audience left, we had our Guild meeting. Nicole Graverley (photo to R) was introduced as our new SFBAPG Board Member, replacing Peter Olson.

Mike Nelson asked for a show of hands to see how many Vallejo residents were in attendance, 10! He then issued a challenge to the rest of us to bring more people than 10 from each of our towns and cities to our next public performance.! He forgot to mention what the prize is. There's one sure way to find out, bring more than 10.



Ilene Kennedy of Kennedy Puppets in Vallejo, announced that she was able to obtain 301 donated puppets for Christmas presents for needy kids last year. She plans to start earlier this year and collect or sew at least 700 to distribute. Thank you for your time and compassion.

Larry Schmidt, long time Guilder and creator of the brilliant, "Driveway Follies"-his annual Halloween gift to his Oakland neighbors-passed away quite recently. Film clips of his marionette "Follies" were shown as a memorial. These clips included "Out of Breath and Scared to Death of You", featuring a female zombie. A longer clip was "The Skeleton and the [hand cranked] Roundabout." Amazing and funny work indeed.

Fred C. Riley III, who had worked with Larry on the "Follies", gave a very insightful and informative passionate talk about Larry. We are honored to have had such a person in our Guild. He will be missed.



Wendy Morton demonstrated the newest Folkmanis Puppets which she brought to donate to SFBAPG for the Annual Founders Scholarship Raffle, a traditional part of our Holiday Party.

Assisted by Lee Armstrong and Kamela Portuges, each puppet was manipulated and then, one at a time, passed through the audience, inviting us to also try the puppets out. An excellent way to increase raffle ticket sales! [Akin to having your surplus kittens/puppets stay at the neighbors, "just for this weekend!"]

Wendy explained that all of Folkmanis Puppets are specially designed to be easily and beautifully manipulated by amateurs, although many professional puppeteers also use them. Thanks, Wendy for your generosity.

Next, Conrad Bishop and Elizabeth Fuller of "The Independent Eye" performed their touching puppet piece, "Summer of Love". A young woman at Grandpa's death bed begs him to, for the last time, tell her his stories of being a hippy in San Francisco, 50+ years ago. He confesses they never happened-to him. She holds him. They sing "All you need is love" together.



One of the beauties of these "life time" partners and performers is they keep reworking their performances, sometimes in subtle and sometimes in bold ways. This is one of the benefits of performing with live, not taped, voices. So even if we have seen their expert performance/s before, YES! the material is fresh and alive! To see for yourselves, check 2 previous reviews of this piece in past SFBAPG Newsletters. October, 2017, #5 item on page 4, and also July, 2018 page 8, below the article's title "A MOST FABULOUS AND VERY ELEGANT BOOK LAUNCH!", the 2nd paragraph down.

Our President-Tree then displayed his Puppet-Tree with a solo performance of "Emotional baggage", (photo to R) wherein his well strung marionette keep dipping his face into an open case propped up on legs, with the open lid shielding our audience eyes from the contents. Each time his face dipped forward, a different solid color half mask (Lone Ranger style) appeared on it.



Each of the masks represented a new emotion. The marionette bodily expressed this emotion through movement and action. Then this emotion/mask was removed and tossed aside. The puppet would then place his face back into the case retrieving yet different colored mask, ending up with the calm yellow one.

[Question of the evening...how the heck did the puppet put on a new mask just by placing his face into the case while Tree's hands were holding the controls above?]

Gabriel Anthony plus 2 mystery manipulators who had their heads covered for the bows, performed "All I want for Christmas" using his clever rhythmic- colorful-bouncing-dancing tube puppets under

black light. All were in sync. And Gabriel's assistants had just learned the routine that afternoon! Who would have thunk it? What a happy ending to our entertainment this was.

A review of the Black Light Workshop Gabriel did for our Guild appears in the Nov. 2017 issue of our Newsletter, pages 3-5. This article has several photos of him and his work, but not the puppets he used at our party. So look for the color photo of similar dancers in SFBAPG Newsletter, September 2017, top of page 3.

Thus Endeth the Entertainment

We also had a fabulous potluck feast (which featured many chicken yummys-"Watch Out Chanticleer!"); drew for the raffle prizes; schmoozed with each other; returned and checked out puppet books from our Guild Library; and eventually Exited Stage Left! Thank you to all who planned, brought things, set up and cleaned up, performed and attended. It was a glorious night.



Thank You to Our Folkmanis Friends

Folkmanis Puppets in Emeryville, CA design the most amazing, award-winning commercial puppets. Using high quality materials, they have been creating engaging and innovative puppets since 1976.



Therefore, we were delighted when Wendy Morton of Folkmanis (Dir. Overseas Business Development) accepted our invitation to show some of the exciting new puppets of 2019 and some of her personal favorites at our annual Holiday Part last week.

As part of the evening program, Wendy's demo of Folkmanis puppets was excellent. It was wonderful to have her share information about the design and movement of the selected puppets. And to top it all off (and a complete surprise to our group) puppeteers could try on the demoed puppets. THEN (another surprise, aided by the thoughtfulness of Elaine Kollias, (Artistic Director) the puppets were donated as raffle items for the Founders Scholarship Fund. This fund is named after Lettie Schubert, Mike Oznowicz and Lewis Malhmann. Funds are used to help puppeteers attend P of A Festivals, the O'Neill Center and other places that teach puppetry skills. When scholarship recipients return, they give a workshop and share what they have learned. Having the Folkmanis puppets as raffle items was a huge boost to our scholarship fund. *(Editor's note: the raffle, ticket sales, and the performers honorarium donation raised over \$500 for the Founder's Scholarship Fund!)*

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that **you can renew your guild membership** on the guild website? Go to <http://www.sfbapg.org/membership/join/> or navigate from www.sfbapg.org to membership and then in the drop down menu to "Join the guild." Your dues can then be paid online with Pay Pal. Dues are due now (January!) and here's a BIG THANKS to the following members who used the guild website to renew. (If you mailed in your dues in December or January, look for your thanks in a future newsletter!) New and renewed members who paid online are: Nicole Graveley, Independent Eye, Hope Rodriguez, Ashley Moore, Sharon Clay, Gabriel Galdamez, Lex Rudd, Ann Gronvold, the Nelsons, Marisol Hernandez, Daniel Gill, Lynnette Pinto, Harold Head, Paisley's Puppets, Tree Bartlett, and our most far flung member (living in Germany!) Herbert Lange. CONGRATULATIONS to all of you. We will look forward to our association with you and your puppet friends!

Did you know that **you can find past issues of the guild newsletter** on the guild website? Go directly to <http://www.sfbapg.org/newsletter/> and choose which newsletter you want to view or print, or on the menu bar go to resources and in the drop down menu choose "newsletter."

Larry Schmidt 1953 – 2019

Obituary by Randal Metz

The San Francisco Bay Area Puppet Guild has lost another kind and generous soul. Larry Schmidt passed away on January 18. Larry was a third generation Californian, born in Berkeley on what he fondly calls "*The coattails of The Golden Age of Marionettes*". Marionettes were Larry's passion, and he produced some of the finest examples for his yearly Halloween show "*Driveway Follies*".



Larry grew up watching Ralph Chesse's *"Brother Buzz"* and *"Howdy Doody"* on television, while attending as many puppet shows as he could at Children's Fairyland in Oakland.

It's no surprise that Larry's inspiration was Tony Urbano, Ralph Chesse' and Bil Baird. His grandmother, who built puppets with him, was a puppeteer in the Oakland churches and underserved districts of Oakland. Larry also as a teenager, performed for children's birthday parties.

Larry received a B F A in fine art from The California College of the Arts in Oakland, made costumes for the Oakland Ballet, and joined the San Francisco Puppet Guild where he was further mentored by Lettie Schubert and Lewis Mahlmann. As a young man he studied Indonesian mask dance from Suzanne Suwanda, performed with Leonard Pitt, and then began building marionettes for a production of Stravinsky's Firebird. In 2007, he first presented *"Driveway Follies"*, an alternative "site-specific", as well as "calendar specific" marionette show in the driveway of his Oakland family triplex. The roof of his garages also featured a *"Halloween Haunt"* that was populated with animatronic Halloween "dark ride" creations that Larry had designed and sculpted himself.



"Driveway Follies" featured vintage trick marionettes and retro music from the 30s and 40s, with the puppets being designed in the style of classic marionettists like Bil Baird.

Working alongside Larry could be found puppet talents such as Robin Stevens, Kevin Menegus, Fred Riley III and Jesse Vail. All of them helping to supply a free puppet show in a Halloween safe environment. The show was in its eleventh year, and had received funding grants from many individuals and organizations such as the City of Oakland and The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco. Efforts are currently underway to try to keep Larry's dream alive and well in his Oakland neighborhood. Larry is survived by his many puppets and life partner and inspiration Carl Linkhart.

Videos of *"Driveways Follies"* can be found on Youtube.



FLASHES FROM THE PAST

By Jan VanSchuyver (Ed. Note: Jan responds to last month's article by Elisheva, sharing yet another reason guild membership is so important!)

Pam Wade sent me a copy of the January newsletter, and I was surprised and touched to find Elisheva's FLASHES FROM THE PAST article. I've been having a tough period lately--my sweet mother Marie died November 3, while we were taking care of a friend with cancer, who died a month later. I've been wondering "What's it all about, Alfie?" Once again, after all these years, SFBAPG to the rescue! Seeing that folks remember me, and that my 25 year-old puppet book is still being used really lifted my spirits. So, here's my Flash from the Past, a tribute to SFBAPG and a few of the folks who bring it to life...

In the 70's Lettie Schubert drove alone from Marin County up to Santa Rosa to see one of my early shows, adapted from the Grimm's fairy tale *Jorinda and Joringel*. After the show, we sat in my truck (today we'd be drinking lattes at a local coffee shop), and she gave me her critique. She made some great suggestions, all without undermining my confidence, which must have been tough. What I remember most clearly is her saying that when the girl turns into a bird, the bird puppet should resemble the girl, at least somewhat. (Duh!) I had no idea how to do that, and she brainstormed the solution with me. Over 40 years later, I still remember Lettie's generosity and kindness that day.

Joining SFBAPG in the early 70's was one of my best decisions ever. The friendship, support, information, and inspiration from Guild members was invaluable to my development as a puppeteer. After I quit working for the Sonoma County Library in 1977, I enjoyed over 20 years as a professional puppeteer, storyteller, and teacher of puppetry and storytelling. Probably wouldn't have happened without the Guild. I had so many mentors during those years, I want to acknowledge them all, but I'll restrain myself to a few stories. Molly McDermott taught me that with good voices and characterization, one could perform *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* using only one goat puppet. After the show, the kids would always ask to see the other goats and be astonished to see a single goat transform before their eyes from Littlest to BIG. Judy Sierra came to work at the library with puppets already built for *Why Cowboys Sing in Texas*, a story I was already telling. Soon we performed that show for a packed house of cheering parents and children, and it was the most fun I'd ever had. Judy's responsible for my decision to quit my job and go on the road. I never looked back. Pam Wade drove up to Foresthill to perform our shadow show for my family, some visiting California for the first time. They still talk about that show. Michael Nelson's walk-around stage took me and *The Three Wishes* from California to Alaska and on to Arkansas, where I've lived and performed since 1992. There's nothing like SFBAPG in these parts, although there are plenty of folks who love puppets. Jan Wolfe in Little Rock and Joanne Kaminski in Fayetteville carry on the tradition.

My last show *Seemore*, written and performed with my partner Cindy Parry, is based on a true story that happened on my Aunt Thelma's farm in Birdtown, Arkansas. We performed as a benefit for groups fighting the CAFO built on Big Creek, a tributary to our lovely Buffalo National River. The fight continues, it you care to get involved. Our lovely river can use all the help we can give.

<https://buffaloriveralliance.org/>

(Photo caption, R: Jan VanSchuyver and Cindy Parry with puppets from *Seemore*, a pig who wanted to see more of the farm where he lived. The backdrop is by Susan Raymond, the pig is a Folkmanis puppet, and Jan made the red-headed girl, chicken, and rat.)

My partner and I also wrote an original song we sang before each show, and you can see it here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGH3Y0fXRBc&feature=youtu.be>

Elisheva, if you still need help with your newspaper stalks, check out an old copy of *How to Make Flibbers, etc., A Book of Things to Make and Do* by Robert Lopshire (1964). After Jay Marshall's workshop, I found "flibbers" in the book, and used them to promote reading, as you saw in that vintage photo you spoke of in the January newsletter.

I'm shipping a small stack of puppet books and resources to Lee for the Guild Library. I can't think of a better home for them. Thank you SFBAPG!

SEND YOUR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES TO newsletter@sfbapg.org.
SEND YOUR CALENDAR LISTINGS TO events@sfbapg.org

