



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

July 2019



Giant Osprey puppet in the Vallejo 4th of July Parade. Each year guild members and community members work the puppets in the parade. More info at <https://artvallejo.org/events/vallejo-4th-of-july-parade-fireworks/>

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A Message from your President:

It is my privilege to be entering the position of president of the SFBAPG, a wonderful group of people of all ages, crazy about puppets. From novice enthusiasts to celebrated international professional artists, our membership is active and rich in the Puppet Arts. Keeping members informed and actively participating is the work of the nine Board of Directors. They volunteer their time for meeting, planning and producing many quality puppet events. This coming year the Board is dedicated to seeking ways and means to partner with individuals and organizations, to enrich experience and to increase our membership.



A personal note: In college, *a long time ago*, I discovered a Puppetry 1 class, with the *amazing* Betsy Brown. It was life altering. Her classes led to work in Community Services puppetry productions, libraries, schools, parks and private shows...and a long 1 day gig in *The Muppet Movie!* I joined Puppeteers of America, eventually becoming a president of the San Fernando Valley Guild. Puppetry gave me more joyful experiences than I ever could've imagined. In 2006 I began directing the puppet theater productions at Happy Hollow Park & Zoo in San Jose. For 11 years it was a wonderful opportunity, eventually delivering 3x daily puppet theater to 123,000 people a year!

If you will be attending the Puppeteers of America convention in Minneapolis, Minn., please email me at be_artsy@hotmail.com and I'll see you there!

Sincerely,

Judy Roberto

President's Award given to Two Members

At the last guild meeting retiring board members Lee Armstrong and John Arnold each received the President's Award for Outstanding Service to the guild. Besides her board duties as Program Committee Chair, Nominating Committee Chair, and other committee duties, Lee has been guild librarian for years and continues in this capacity. John has been Membership Officer, Webmaster (setting up much of our website as well as dealing with internet issues (and malicious attacks) on our website, has maintained our calendar, set up sign up forms, email systems and automated a lot of our member services to make life easier for the board and better for the membership. The guild gives a big THANK YOU to both of these outstanding members.

UNCLE JER'S TRAVELING BEE SHOW, a review by Elisheva Hart

"Come learn about the amazing society of honey bees, demonstrated by Ms. Ellen and Uncle Jer [a married couple] through storytelling and puppetry. Learn the bee dance, taste honey, and see live bees in a safe observation hive!" was the enticement and the date: Saturday, April 13, 2019 worked for me. So I brought my camera and reporter's note book and buzzed on down to the Petaluma Library.

Although recommended for ages 5 and up, there were several younger sibs who came too (nobody was carding them at the door) and were also enthralled by the program. Every child, no matter what age, was listening intently to the long scientific words and concepts-after all it was told straight from the Bees' Buzz!

They-plus the adults-were soaking up the information conveyed by Uncle Jer, who wore a bright yellow circular "geezer's" fishing hat (no fish hooks though). He had black stripes on the yellow cap, 2 big googly eyes in front, and 2 sticking up antenna. And he looked the part of a "Field Worker Bee". And he usually "wore" a large Folkmanis bee puppet, which alas is a discontinued model. (The new ones are smaller and don't fit an adult as well.)



Ms. Em's outfit includes a lovely honey colored top and a headband with jaunty antenna which have a pompom at the tip. She also wears a Folkmanis bee puppet-the same discontinued model. The puppets themselves have been accessorized, one with large goggle-type glasses and the other which is wearing a shiny curled pink ribbon.

Besides the bee puppets there were 2 safe flat, glass sided observation hives, each containing more bees than we could count, and also could be looked at as closely as we dared! We were amazed at the size of the queen and the constant, swirling attention of her attendants.

Yummy tastes of honey were available, straight from Uncle Jer's hives (he is a 2nd generation bee keeper) *****??? He told factual stories about bees, the bee puppets swapped stories about bee life with each other-illustrating the stories in small skits. The climax was when Uncle



Jer and puppet were self-referred to as the Worker Bee Representative and Ms. Ellen personified at THE Queen Bee.

These human bee-ings described why the bees dance-to inform the rest of the hive's worker bees of course where the best flowers were blooming thus producing pollen, and how far, in which direction, etc. Then the kids were circled up, shown some bee-type moves and all danced to "Shake your Booty" a giggle-full of wanna-bees in motion.

This was not an actual puppet show, but the use of the bees kept the children focused and capable of receiving the information as it was presented, plus provided the continuity from one area to another.

They gave out health tips, which I have applied. I peeled back skin on my hand while opening a locker, so I cleaned it and applied a bandage. I then asked a nurse neighbor to look at it. She applied dabs of honey which the hospitals use, and rebandaged it. Rapidly it was cured. The other health tip is to take a spoonful of local wildflower honey each night and morning to prevent hay fever. This gently accustoms the body to the various types of pollen. Works well with me.



Arriving at the program I asked permission, out of politeness if it was OK to take photos, explaining that I was interested since I am a puppeteer. She immediately said, "You should be teaching us! Not us teaching you." (Humm, I hope that doesn't make them nervous. Perhaps I should just take photos, all the parents are, and introduce myself later!) So after the show I asked Ms. Em if there was any puppetry tip she might need from me.

She replied that occasionally they were double booked and needed to get another set of the bees, but didn't know where to do this! I gave her a few suggestions from checking Amazon to writing a note to our Guild for the Newsletter, explaining their plight. Weeks later I received an email from her saying that she was able to get a pair of bee puppets, even larger than the original set of Folkmanis ones, and a friend had helped modify and decorate the new ones to fit their needs.

Here is a 6 degree of separation: Uncle Jer and Ms. Ellen have gone for many, many years to Garden Week at Children's Fairyland in Oakland, have seen puppet shows there, and recognized "Mr. [Randal] Metz!" He recognizes them also.

DLUX PUPPETS' MUSICAL "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" REVIEW---Part 2 : SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCES by Elisheva Hart

Why did my navigator Tia Smirnoff and myself get up very early May 4th, 2019, and drive to Walnut Creek, arriving at the Leshner Center for the Arts before 10 AM? Because we needed to be in the audience of "Alice in Wonderland" (henceforth designated "A-in-W") for their morning show, which was designated as a "sensory friendly show for children and students with autism and special needs."

A first for us and we were very excited. Plus we needed to also see the 1 PM show-for General Audiences [aka G/A] so we could learn about Sensory Friendly [aka S/F] performances as compared with the standard afternoon shows.

How did DLUX PUPPETS become involved in Sensory Friendly Theater?

Derek responded to my question. "We [Derek and Lauren-his wife and performing partner] had heard of sensory friendly performances in theater on the East Coast and in England where they are very popular. We decided to incorporate these after we also started working with the Taylor Family Foundation in Livermore, California. We were contracted by them to perform a series of private performances at their summer camps for children with illnesses and disabilities. Normally we don't do private performances but they were an early adopter of what we were doing as well as they financially contributed to the creation of Alice in Wonderland. They have a very wonderful mission and shortly after working with them we felt inspired to pursue sensory friendly performances." (Read the Editor's Note top of page 8 in the June, 2019 issue of SFBAPG Newsletter for the amazing credits and accomplishments of this terrific team..+ they are parents of 5 year old twin boys!)

Why are Tia and I so keen on witnessing this process in person? Her creds include decades of running an after-school care program for a Mill Valley Elementary School, leading a Girl Scout troop for years, and she also volunteers with Special Olympics. She is a parent and has grandchildren.

In the 1970s I toured with "Look What I CAN Do" puppet show in Santa Cruz Co., featuring a puppet, "Wheeler", in a wheel chair. This helped prepare classrooms of children in community schools for the mandated mainstreaming of hither-to-for children with disabilities. After working with preschoolers for decades, I now work with retired seniors with developmental disabilities. I also am a parent and grandmother.

[The following report on the play, auditorium, behavior expectations, different uses of space and activity, etc. is based on what I observed during these 2 performances-and my interpretations there-of. Before witnessing "DLUX PUPPETS" S/F performance of "A-in-W" my knowledge of working with people on the autism spectrum was limited to having no sudden loud voices and nix the strobe lights.]

The 10 AM performance was indeed Sensory Friendly. Far too often people of all ages with disabilities are left out of activities, forgotten, or side lined. Ditto their families. Sensory Friendly is inclusive of the whole family-many children with disabilities might have siblings, with or without disabilities, and these shows facilitate siblings and families joining in the fun..."SO HAPPY TOGETHER"...[The Turtles, 1967] just like the Tweedle Twins are!

Speaking of parents, this S/F space creates a safe place for all. No need for parents and caretakers (and sibs) to be embarrassed, apologetic, or defensive---just relax and enjoy the show!

Consider this. Different behavior expectations are acceptable in different places and environments. Rowdy and noisy behavior at a football game is A-OK while the behaviors of the audience watching a chess match are very low key--EVEN IF THEY ARE THE SAME VIEWERS! These "acceptable"circumstantial behaviors are learned. And because some people cannot cope, for one reason or another, S/F situations are guided by the needs of the participants/viewers. This enables many people to enjoy what would otherwise be difficult situations.

Even our friend Alice,once she was in Wonderland, had to cope with the uncertainty of knowing how to judge whether objects-like bottles with signs on them for example-and the characters-like the Cheshire Cat-were consistent with what she saw. A vanishing cat? A smoking caterpillar? Oh my. Many things seemed so topsy-turvy to her.

And in her other book, "Alice Through the Looking-glass, and What Alice Found There", Alice herself had 2 dyslexic-type moments! First was when she tried to read an open book while holding it up to the Looking Glass-

which reflected the letters backwards and going in the wrong direction. Ditto with the poem "Jabberwocky" ("Twas brillig and the slithy toves....") which also was viewed as a reflection in the Looking-Glass!

DESCRIPTION OF THE STAGE AND AUDITORIUM and HOW THEY WERE USED BY PERFORMERS and THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH AUDIENCE!

The DLUX puppet show of "A-in-W" was performed in an auditorium which had raked seats like the bleachers in high school gyms-only very elegant- with the performing area at the bottom of the stairs.. This arrangement gave everyone a great view of the puppets. Halfway up the stairs, to the side of the auditorium, were doors that the audience entered and exited through.

The performing area was a raised rectangular platform, with the longest sides presented towards the audience. The back side of the platform held the rear projection screen for virtual scenery. Dark drapes at both sides of the screen lead to the back stage area. There was no proscenium or front curtain.

During the Sensory Friendly performance the stage platform was treated by the performers (and the puppets) as if they were contained within an invisible glass aquarium. Therefore they totally kept within those boundaries. All entrances and exits were through the rear side curtains. This consistency soothed and helped reassure those in the audience who needed predictability, personal space, and might dislike being touched. It also helped prevent over-stimulation, especially in the front rows of seats, which were "safely" several yards away from the potential action.

In the S/F audience, each person in the audience is individuated. This includes parents, sibs, and caretakers because their personal involvement in the surrounding events and in the performance counts too! So, while the stage performance is totally and predictably placed on stage, much what happens in the audience is "predictably UN-predictable" non-standard behavior, which would not be endorsed by Miss Manners' advice column. However it usually is familiar to those who personally know the individual/s in question.

For instance one 3 year old tot became obsessed with dashing to the foot of the raised stage platform, turning to look into the audience with a delighted grin for a few moments, then running back to her family in the second row. Five minutes later she repeated this. Again. And again. And yet again. Fortunately because of the height of the platform and the short of her and the raked seating, nobody's view was blocked. Visually she added to the show.

There were occasional squeals and other noises from the back of the auditorium. The preschooler next to me tightly grasped a snack-sized baggie full of pretzels and crunchy cereal (undoubtedly gluten free), saving it for over 50 minutes until the curtain calls were made-well past his need for security. Then he dug in, after looking at Mama and getting her nod of approval.

Several children in the audience desperately clutched their Beloved Service Animals (AKA Stuffed Animals) to their chests. Others used different coping mechanisms ie rocking their bodies to and fro in their seats. AND the atmosphere was NOT chaotic! Just different from what someone would expect and need at a chess match.

What also was tremendously helpful was that the DLUX PUPPETS PERFORMANCE was ever so skillful and fun that all audience members were riveted to it, even if only a snatch at a time.

For the afternoon General/Audience shows-at 1 and 4 pm-the behavior patterns of both the audience and performance were flip-flopped from the behaviors at the S/F 10 o'clock show. The invisible glass aquarium surrounding the stage had vanished! Now the separation between actors, puppets, and audience was breached. For instance, the Red Queen in the S/F performance, like all the other puppets, had directly entered the stage from the side curtains. Now she unexpectedly swooped into the auditorium door, midway up the stairs, just where the audience had entered. She paused, danced a few steps with an eager young onlooker, and sashayed down to the stage.

Derek now spoke directly to the audience, (which would have been too intimate at the morning show), occasionally adding well prepared "ad libs". My fav went like this, "Adults, I think you know where this is going" and he began creating percussion on his body- the sounds of SLAPSLAP..... THUMP, (repeat) This is the opening rhythm to "We Will Rock You" (by Queen). He also stopped to chat with some children. All of which was unpredictable and certainly not orderly! Obviously there were no ad-libs and such antics from the puppeteer in the S/F performance.

This General Audience had predictable behavior. Miss Manners would not now be taken aback! The audiences had to learn to clap after a musical number. (Attending live musicals seemed not to be in the experience of either audience.) So I played "shill" and began the clapping with each audience, both demonstrating what was proper behavior and giving permission for them to also applaud. All of the G/A audience members stayed quietly in their seats, unless enticed by Derek and the puppets.

CONTINUATION OF THE AFTER-SHOW MEET-AND-GREET ON THE TERRACE (begun in the June issue...)
Alas, Tia and I didn't stay after the 1:00 show to witness this again, so the following is a more detailed description of what happened after the S/F show.

Look again at the top photo on page 6 in the June 2019 SFBAPG Newsletter. Notice that Alice (Lauren) and Derek (puppeteer) are both sitting cross legged on the carpet at just the perfect height for the Mad Hatter to stand up. AND now all 3 performers are the perfect eye level with the children's eyes. The children were allowed to approach as close as they want-or not! Their choice. Each child could chat with the performers, or not. Plenty of photo ops for the adults and a life time memory was recorded.

One knowledgeable Mom, with a 6 year old son who refused to join the cluster of waiting kids, used the Power of Distraction [a POWERFUL TOOL]. She helped him look at the passing cars, name colors on the flowers, etc-until they were the last to approach the performers. He was excited and eagerly ran towards them. Overwhelmed, veering away at the last second, overwhelmed, racing around the terrace, squealing for joy [his voice being recognizable from the rear of the auditorium!] and repeated this in smaller circles until he could actually permit himself to meet -and-greet! Mom then could snap a photo of his brave accomplishment.

Lauren, Tia and I chatted about the importance for children to re-enact what they observe as an audience, even if they only can march around flinging their arms. Lauren, having 10 years experience as a teacher, agreed that this activity connects the children with what they have seen and heard, which completes the circle of integration and learning.

I remember performing a circus in our backyard, after Dad took me to one. Also after seeing Ginger Rogers in the 1950 film, "Annie Get Your Gun", the girl down the street and I acted it out on our front lawn-she getting all the juicy parts 'cause it was her idea AND she was a year older!

Tia, later on remembered that years ago Nick Barone performed his puppet show "T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Revue" at her elementary school. That afternoon all the after-school-care kids searched out all the plastic dinosaurs from the toy bins and re-enacted Nick's show. They used table tops for the stages. Tia feels that this was the first puppet show many of them had ever seen, much less created one!

Thank you DLUX PUPPETS, Derek and Lauren, for this insightful, caring experience as well as loads of fun. We can hardly wait for:

Sunday, March 22, 2020 (NEXT YEAR)
DLUX PUPPETS is performing their musical adaptation of another classic, "PETER PAN". They are scheduled again at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek.

And they will premiere "TWO PUPPETEERS" an adult cabaret type of production for adult audiences, on Friday, November 1, 2019 (this year!)

also at the Leshner Center for the Arts., in Walnut Creek.

The back of the "Alice in Wonderland" program has a fun opportunity for the audience: Create your own Puppet!"

Create your own Alice in Wonderland paper hand puppet! Visit <http://www.dluxpuppets.com> to view the Hand Puppet Template and video directions to make your own masterpiece. Have fun!.....

And let Lauren be your Guide!

Puppet Attic, a New Guild Service

Hi. This is Ilene Cleveland Kennedy. I am doing a fun thing called Puppet Attic. All you guys can take and give me all the stuff that you have received over the years from Christmas parties and things like that that you do not want or craft supplies that that you don't need any longer. Someone else may be able to use it. I will put together a list of what is available and attach it to the newsletter, or send out a monthly notice. If you are interested in Puppet Attic and you want to take or donate puppetry and crafty items, I will bring things and collect things at the next guild meeting. My phone number is (707)731-3232. My email is hope922000@yahoo.com. Please put Puppet Attic in the subject line and I will get back to you. Hope everybody likes my idea, and I hope to hear from you.

Saturday, July 6, Magical Moonshine Theatre Bear Flag Show Puppet Exhibit, Meet the Artists (us), Performance, Make a Puppet at the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum

There's a new exhibit of the puppets, staging and sets from our Bear Flag Show at the Naval and Historical Museum in Vallejo right now. Puppets of such historical characters as Kit Carson, John Fremont, Mariano Vallejo and many more are on display. **There will be a special reception on Saturday, July 6, from 2-5pm with a make a puppet project, a performance of an early California story of How Coyote Brought Fire to the People, we will sing Happy Birthday to Mariano Vallejo (212 years old this July 4) and the giant Mariano and Benicia Vallejo puppets promise to make an appearance for the festivities. Admission to the museum is \$5.00 and includes all activities. More info at <https://www.facebook.com/events/753590341722917/>**



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