



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*

**December 2020**

**A CENTURY OF  
CALIFORNIA PUPPETRY**  
*"How the West was strung"*



**RANDAL J. METZ & KEVIN MENEGOS**

100 years of California puppetry is explored in this new book by Randal and Kevin! This is an amazing reference, put together by long time guild members and published by Luman Coad who was in our guild way back in its infancy! You can find it on Amazon or get it \$5 cheaper (with free shipping) right from the source at <http://www.charlemagnepress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=9780921845539>

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## Save the Date for the Annual Guild January Holiday Party

When: Sat., Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> from 3-5:00 PST

Where: Zoom – signup link & more info will be in our January SFBAPG newsletter

The Guild Programming Elves have been scurrying around the nation, virtually watching wonderful puppet shows. They are in the process of finding an inventive and joyful puppet show to share on Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>. It will be family-friendly, so you can invite others in your bubble to share in the fun. This headliner show will be selected soon, but until that time... Save the Date!

Loose Schedule, subject to change

3:00-3:30 Guild Meeting – meet & greet & puppet news!

3:30-4:15 Headliner Show with Q & A

4:15-5:00 Puppet Shorts & Surprises!



### Call for Submissions!

We are looking to showcase some of our member's work at our holiday party. The shorts should be 5 minutes long, or less. It can be a section of a longer piece, but we are asking that it be finished quality. It doesn't have to be family-themed, but please be family-friendly. The final selection will be chosen by a trio of noteworthy puppeteers from outside our Guild.

**Submission:** Please send your video to [sfbapglibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sfbapglibrary@gmail.com). If 10 MB or less, you can include it as an attachment. If over, please provide a link (i.e. Google, Youtube, Vimeo, DropBox, WeTransfer, etc.).

**Deadline:** Please submit your short video by Thurs. Jan 7<sup>th</sup> midnight. Selected shorts will be aired January 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of the annual Holiday Party.

## March Guild Meeting “The Ins & Outs of Live-Streaming Your Puppet Show”

When: March 20, Sat. 3-5 pm

Where: On Zoom – details to join coming soon

Join us for a Zoom Guild meeting, followed by a live streamed show of the “Three Little Pigs” and a backstage tour by Art Grueneberger of Puppet Art Theater.

### The Three Little Pigs

Three pigs strike out on their own looking to have fun and adventures. But first, they must build houses for themselves. Straw, sticks, bricks, and a huffing and puffing Big Bad Wolf add up to hilarity and mayhem in this adaptation of the classic story, “The Three Little Pigs.”

After the show Art will give a backstage tour of his virtual set-up and discusses the three ways he's adapted his shows to work as live-stream performances in the COVID Era. He will also discuss how he will use the live-stream technology post-pandemic.

### **Art Grueneberger**

Director, Puppeteer, Puppet Builder

Art became fascinated by puppetry in the early 90s while pursuing a degree in teaching. A puppetry course his last year of college took him off the teaching path and onto a successful career as a puppeteer. Under the mentor-ship of master puppeteer Richard Bay he began performing shows at theme parks and schools. An early opportunity to study with Jim Henson's Muppet Performers and hundreds of performances for Bay's company helped hone his skills as a performer. An invitation to be one of the first participants in the Emerging Artist Program at the National Puppetry Conference, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center helped develop Grueneberger's writing and production skills. These skills combined with a bit of luck lead to the formation of Grueneberger's Puppet Art Theater Co. in 1995. Today Puppet Art Theater Co. has eighteen productions that tour across California and beyond completing more than 600 live performances for family audiences every year. Grueneberger has become a master at developing marvelous puppet shows that delight audiences of all ages. Grueneberger took these skills and started Puppet Arts Creative which develops and tours fantastic educational programs for government agencies, corporations and other organizations that deliver important educational messages to targeted audiences.

In April Puppet Art Theater Co. pivoted from live performances to live-streaming shows. Since the pivot they've completed over 200 paid live-stream performances.

Loose schedule

3:00-3:30 Guild meeting

3:30-4:00 Show

4:00-5:00 Live Stream presentation & Q & A

If you have ideas for our Guild meetings and/or would like to be on the Program Planning Committee, please contact the Chairs: Lee Armstrong – [images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com) & Judy Roberto - [be\\_artsy@hotmail.com](mailto:be_artsy@hotmail.com).



### **Talib Huff writes about the development of his Father Christmas act.**

For over thirty years, in addition to performing puppets with my wife, Olivia, I performed individually as various holiday characters. Starting off as Santa Claus at a mall in the Bay Area when I was between jobs I discovered the joys of this type of performance. The next year Olivia made me my very own Santa suit and I was off and running. We started small with an ad in the classifieds section of our local newspaper and flyers around our neighborhood. As the years went on I began to expand my repertoire beyond in-home visits to include Saint Nicholas for festivals at Waldorf schools and King Winter for nondenominational craft fairs. But Santa Claus always had a fond place in my



heart.

However, as the years went on I found the original joy wasn't always there. I attended many parties where I was a glorified babysitter, or even worse, expected to be "Flirty Santa" at office Christmas parties. It was with this in mind that Olivia and I started casting about for another character I could perform to replace Santa. What we came up with was Father Christmas. For us, Father Christmas was familiar enough that people would know who he was while at the same time novel enough (at least here in the United States) to be someone we could rework in our own way.

To quote from our early publicity:

"From the tip of his curly-toed shoes, to the top of his holly-wreath crown, Father Christmas brings forth memories, both real and imagined, of a simpler, more joyful time. Inspired by images from Charles Dickens, J. R. R. Tolkien, and L. Frank Baum, the character of Father Christmas was created as an antidote to the more commercialized image of "Santa" that is too often seen everywhere, selling everything from soda pop to toy guns. Father Christmas, on the other hand, comes to spread good cheer, tell stories, pronounce a Christmas blessing, and add a traditional feeling to any celebration."

Father Christmas was well received at the events where he visited and became a well-known feature at the City of Davis winter celebration and the Harvest Faire Craft Show in both northern and southern California. But a serious illness 10 years ago (from which I've fully recovered) proved to be a speed bump that Father Christmas didn't recover from.

Until this year! A friend who knew this secret from my past contacted me, saying that she knew of a young autistic man who had become very distraught when he found out that he wouldn't be able to visit Santa in the mall. She asked if I'd be willing to don my costume and provide him with reassurance that even in the time of Covid, he would receive a visit from Santa on Christmas Eve. This (along with my dear and lovely wife) inspired me to take up the mantle of Father Christmas once more! But the days of classified ads in the newspaper and distributing handbills around the neighborhood are long gone. And this year, the possibility live visits is not to be seen, either. It is time to delve into the world of Zoom and webpages to bring Father Christmas up-to-date and out into the world!

So, here we are looking to see how things will go in this most unusual of times. If you would like to know more about what Father Christmas or King Winter is offering this holiday season, you can click here to find out:

<https://mailchi.mp/38cc036ed076/father-christmas>

## Quaranteaching

by Moddy Himmel

Language development, imagination, and motor skills have long been included in the list of benefits that puppet play can have on children. There's a new word that should be added to the list: resilience. I run a homeschool enrichment class where we focus on foreign language, science and writing. March 16th was the last day I saw my students in person. Since then it's been a bit of a scramble with a lot of trial and error figuring out how best to serve the families via the internet.



I initially took to Instagram Live with my puppet Alexa, a rambunctious 6 year old who is a “classmate” to my students. That live stream got us through the end of the school year and has evolved into a monthly live stream for Alexa’s Dinosaur Club. Summer brought the challenge of transforming my week-long summer camps into something that could be offered via Zoom. Then came the real test: Starting the brand new school year through distance learning, or as I call it: Quaranteaching.

I got my puppets ready to play their parts. There’s Florange, a simple small orange puppet with a tuft of blue fluff for hair who helps me teach French. Baby Chester our resident scientist who tests everything as only a baby can: dropping, pushing, pulling and tasting everything within reach with no regard for the consequences this might bring. And Alexa too, who helps give voice to the kid’s concerns. And concerns there were a plenty. Thankfully I was contacted by Derek Lux who provided a link to a project of his called “The Quarantine Time Machine”. A program that was developed to help children reflect upon their time in quarantine and provide support for the mental health and wellness of our youth.

It could not have come at a better time! I was able to go over each of the four topics during the first 4 weeks of school. My primary group (Kindergarten through second grade) were an easy fit for the material, but I’m glad I went through it with my intermediate group as well (third through sixth) I absolutely loved the conversations we were able to have as a result. The older students were also able to understand how the program was created and they were all so impressed to discover that the Lux family created this while they themselves were in isolation and were only able to work with one another! Resources were sent to parents as well. I received a lot of positive messages from parents who were very grateful for the at-home activities and that they were able to continue these conversations at home. What a wonderful resource this turned out to be with all the right tools to be able to look at our current situation patiently and positively and improve our little ones’ resilience

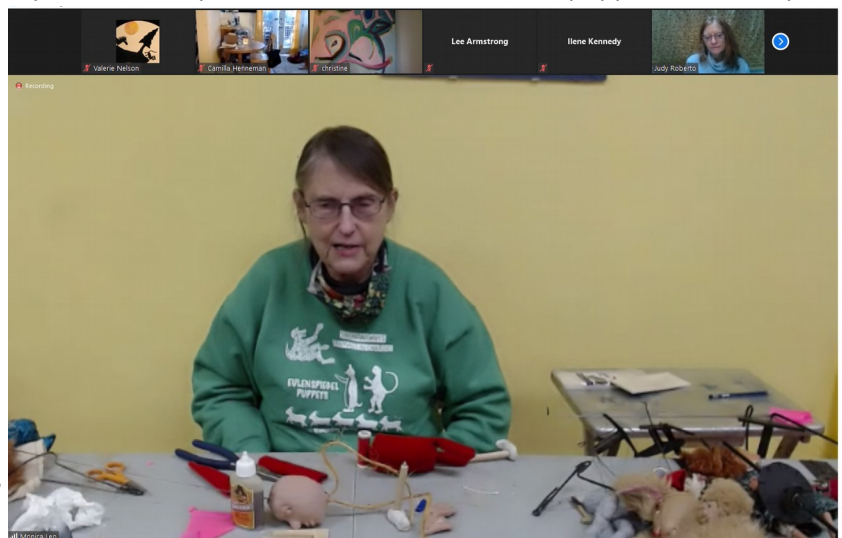
<https://www.quarantinetimemachine.com/>

## MONICA LEO'S BOHEMIAN ROD MARIONETTE WORKSHOP

Watching the building of a puppet in one hour is very fascinating! Well it was mostly made from scratch except the parts that needed longer time to dry, like the sculpted head and feet. Monica's puppets are mostly made with fabric and stuffing because they are the easiest for her to use.

She has built and used this type of marionette for 20 years. The first set were half the size of some of the ones she builds now. And always she plans the size of the stage which is needed, before she designs the size of the puppets.

Using zoom, each of the eager puppeteer audience have a table-side view of Monica's techniques and methods. This fostered an easy flow of questions and answers and tips



from our Guilders-for example-suggesting glues that have a quicker drying time than the glues which Monica demonstrated. This give and take was happily received by all of us, creating a teamwork feeling. Thanks Monica for your amazingly wonderful workshops.

Hopefully at our next Guild event we will have show-and-tell time to display our creations which are inspired by Monica's workshops, both pop-up book stages and Bohemian Rod Marionettes

To find the Guild's Pop Up Stage Workshop video (the entire workshop) search in YouTube for San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild. At the moment it's the only video on the Guild's new YouTube Channel, but look for more in the future.

## Documentary filmmaker seeking shadow puppeteer

Sheila Ganz, San Francisco-based producer, director, editor is seeking a shadow puppeteer to help tell the story about families with loved ones and persons living with serious mental illness. In a world that shuns people with brain disorders the feature documentary *PIECE OF MIND* delves into the complexities of severe mental illness. A devoted mother of a son with schizophrenia, and two sisters, whose sister with schizoaffective disorder was shot by police and survived, pursue treatment for their loved one in a failed mental health system that shuts them out. A man with bipolar disorder takes medication after attempting suicide and must balance emotional stability with side effects. Their intimate accounts expose the battle for compassion and a continuum of care vs. systemic neglect of this urgent public health crisis. For trailer and info: [www.pieceofmindfilm.com](http://www.pieceofmindfilm.com). The non-profit fiscal sponsor is Women Make Movies.

At the moment, I do not have a budget, but would like a short sample on spec to show to potential funders. Originally, I was a painter and sculptor. I am excited about the possibility that shadow puppetry will add a visual element to the film and bring the stories to life in a unique and meaningful way.

My sister lives with schizophrenia and that is what brings me to make the film, though our story is not in the film. This is my third documentary. Previous documentaries are Emmy-nominated *ON LIFE'S TERMS: MOTHERS IN RECOVERY* [www.onlifeterms.com](http://www.onlifeterms.com), and *UNLOCKING THE HEART OF ADOPTION* [www.unlockingtheheart.com](http://www.unlockingtheheart.com).

If you are interested, please send me an email with your info and link to an example of your shadow puppetry to: [sheila.ganz@gmail.com](mailto:sheila.ganz@gmail.com). Thank you and Stay Safe.

## News from the North

By Mary Nagler 11/29/2020

For the last two months I have had the honor and joy of taking Bernd Ogrodnik's Foundation Class in Puppet Carving. Learning to carve has been on my list of things to do in my lifetime since I was 8 and carved my first tiki in Girl Scouts. I have always loved wood.

I met Bernd At the First National Puppetry Conference at the O'Neill Conference center I attended in 2006. He was doing a Master class with a handful of the attendees (Myself included) that culminated in a performance. It was called "*Life of a Tree*." The performance included masks, puppets and manipulating fabric into the tree and other aspects of the story. I had never had a director like him. He was more collaborative and respectful of

his performers than anyone I have ever works with/for, before or since. He made us into a unit, a family and together we achieved a performance that we are all profoundly proud of to this day.

Bernd is from Germany but lives in Iceland where he serves as the Master Puppeteer of the National Theater of Iceland. Here is his website if you would like to see some of his work:

<https://worldsofpuppets.com/>

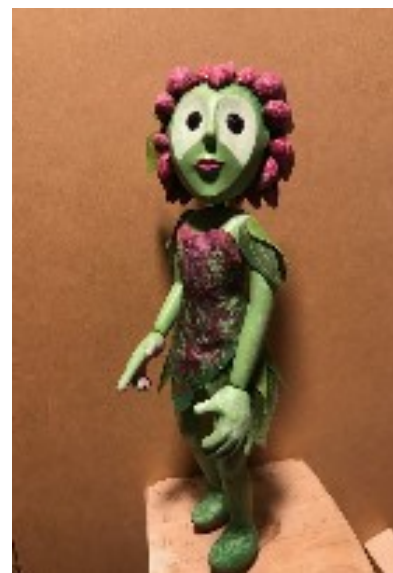
Bernd is best known for the amazing marionettes in the movie **Strings**. His skills as a carver are legendary, and his calm demeanor has been a quiet place to work in my psyche during these trying times. His opening the carving online class

was because, like so many of us, all his performances, classes and workshops were cancelled. It was his plan to build his Academy but thought it would be down the road in 10 years or so. The Foundation class was his first venture to teach out in cyber land. The classes followed a logical and concise course that started with building a little Workbench to clamp to a table and how to sharpen our tools. The Foundation course is a prerequisite to getting into the **Academy of the Wooden Figure** which starts up in February 2021 and is a yearlong course and commitment. I am planning to go forward. The Academy includes carving a hand puppet, rod puppet, Tabletop one-handed puppet, A small marionette and an advanced marionette like the ones featured in the film *Strings*.

Here is my “Buddy” puppet, carved in the Foundation class. She is a Wood sprite still looking for her name. She is shown here in her “before” and “after” paint posture. We also carved a stand for our characters. Working with Bernd has always been a fulfilling experience. If you ever wanted to learn to carve, I highly recommend the Foundation Course with Bernd Ogrodnik!







## **HURRAY! Forbidden Puppet Cabaret recently presented 'PuppetLove in the Time of Covid'.**

This was the first time Michael and Valerie Nelson-puppeteers and Cabaret Hosts- presented the Cabaret in a virtual format. Ultimately it was very satisfying to be a part of their audience as we stayed at home!

The streaming puppets, acts, and puppeteers were seen in our homes the night of November 21st. It was also the first time the acts and skits were performed immediately as the previous performance was through. This eliminated the time used moving equipment and people on and off stage so the next act could be rushed into place on stage.. .



And the money earned from ticket sales plus donations will not have to go to rent of a venue, but could go towards helping out the participants in the Cabaret financially. In this time of Tremendous Upheaval this is very welcome indeed.

Before this event happened, I was wondering how the new format would work.

Obviously there would be changes-some for the better and hopefully not too many unsuccessful ones. Would there be: puppets chanting or acting out silly commercials between the acts? Who will I chat with about the program since I live alone? (Audience interacting among themselves and mixing in with the puppeteers, staff, presenters [etc.is](http://etc.is) such fun when we are actually together in the same space),

Who will bring munchies and drink to us at intermission? Snack Bar Barbies? Or, will we actually have intermission? Will we still have "Make-it-Take it-But-don't-Break-it" opportunities? (Maybe we can fold candy wrappers into teensey, weensey origami figures to use with a tuna can shadow stage.)

OK, then I mentally made a list of advantages we might be blessed with while using this new mode of performing. YES, Each performer sets up and lights, and mikes their own show- no "Oops, I left the main character at home" problem. YES, no driving (there have been some rainy evenings for both puppeteers, hosts and volunteers, and the audience!) YES, stinky cheese can be on the snack menu,

YES, our whole "bubble" friends/family can come and be part of our own viewing group. YES. we the viewers can wear pajama pants (or not) while watching the show flow. YES, new "tricks" can be done with zoom which can't easily be done otherwise.

...To be continued in the January issue of our SFBAPG Newsletter. Elisheva

## Help Wanted

Needed: Someone with Zoom experience to help us with a live puppet skit that we need to have ready in March. There are 5 kids on the team (ages 9 to 15). At this time, all will be in different locations during the skit. We have not selected the puppets at this time or the script, but have a theme. We have lots of puppets available, mostly foam based moving mouth puppets. We just need advice on what the best way to put it all together. It will be less than 12 minutes. [sharonclay@comast.net](mailto:sharonclay@comast.net). Sharon Clay



## Hi everyone, from your writer on Our Amazing Puppet World.

I research famous puppeteers and write an article on that puppeteer. So I am always choosing who I want to write about so I thought that maybe you all might want to send me a suggestion for a famous puppeteer you would like me to research and write an article on. If you have a Puppeteer deceased or even living that I can interview just drop me a note or give me a call and I will put on my research cap and get busy. So here is how to reach me....Ilene Kennedy (vice president), (707)731-3232. Or Hope [922000@yahoo.com](mailto:922000@yahoo.com) and please put PUPPETS in the subject line. Thank you. Have a great holiday and a Happy New Year. But most of all be safe y'all my Puppet Friends.

## New Book in the Guild Library!

"A Century of California Puppetry: How the West was Strung" by Randal J. Metz & Kevin Menegus

You can check this out by emailing [sfbapglibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sfbapglibrary@gmail.com).

Want your own personal copy? Please contact for purchase on the publisher's website -

[www.charlemagnepress.com](http://www.charlemagnepress.com)

You can also purchase the book on Amazon (editor's note: Amazon costs \$40 and the Charlemagne Press is owned by guild member Luman Coad and the book from the publisher costs \$35 and the shipping is free too, and ours came very quickly!)

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/0921845537/?coliid=I2XGDT2CF5ACR3&colid=YOD575FUQ8P5&psc=1&ref\\_=lv\\_ov\\_lig\\_dp\\_it](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0921845537/?coliid=I2XGDT2CF5ACR3&colid=YOD575FUQ8P5&psc=1&ref_=lv_ov_lig_dp_it)

More than 180 artists, performers, builders, and theaters are featured along with 150 vintage and modern photographs. Tony Urbano also contributed a personal forward.

The list is far too long to include everyone, but some of the featured artists include: Bob Baker, Tim Blaney, Rick Lazzarini, Frank Oz, Walter Deaves, Perry Dilly, Harry Burnett, George Pal, Rene Zendejas, Pauline Benton, Art Gruenberger, Sid & Marty Krofft, Jerry Juhl, and many many more!

## Puppeteering is Play By Chase Woolner

When I first met Jane Henson - co-creator of the Muppets - I introduced myself with; "Hi, I'm Chase and I've been a puppeteer since I was 5 years old." To which she replied with, "Oh, what did you do before?" She was right! All children are puppeteers!

It's true, I had been playing with plush toys and action figures by myself my entire life.

And then my brothers were born. Twin brothers. Boom! Instant audience! I went from entertaining myself to entertaining a captive audience in a heartbeat. Two heartbeats!

Puppetry is play and play is intrinsic to how children tell stories. Children are innate storytellers and play - in this case puppetry - is a communication tool that helps enact, perform, and process our



realities. My definition of puppetry is broad. Puppetry includes any object that takes on performative life and has a story to share. This opens us up to a world of possibilities as well as childlike wonder.

In Sophie's [blog](#) she wrote about how teachers can use puppets in the classroom to engage. I'm here to write about giving students the time & space to play as puppeteers.

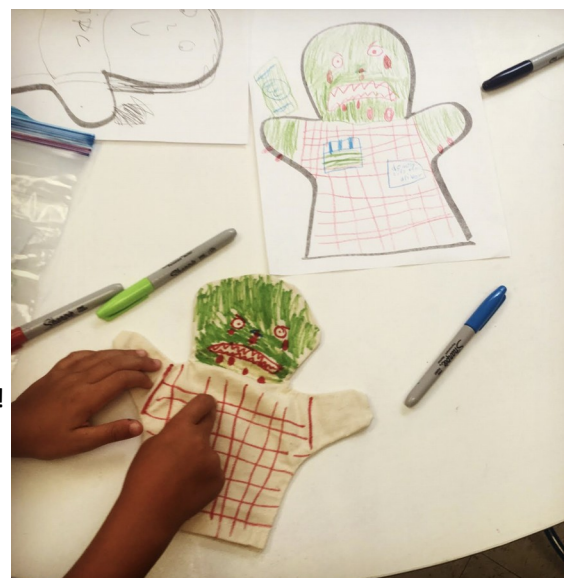
We can support our students and children by:

#### Setting the stage -

- Set aside time - this can be time for unstructured play. Play + Time = Creativity.
- Nearby objects can become characters - plushes, hand puppets, purchased or self created (see our video of how to make an easy puppet character here). One time I was in a classroom performing random objects and I grabbed a whiteboard cleaner - a bottle with a nozzle - and it became a character that had severe allergies and kept sneezing.
- Exploration - the characters/puppets can start to investigate the world around them. Stories unfold from exploration: "Where are we?" "What is this?..."
- Space - an area to play and perform in. Behind couches, inside closets, under tables or in a pillow fort - theatre in miniature can happen anywhere when space is provided. How do the characters navigate around the space?
- Puppeteers don't always have to hide - it's not a requirement. When students first start working with performing objects, they are their first audience. Allow them to watch and marvel at their own creativity and humor.

#### Noticing-

- If you notice students are puppeteering violently, intervene and ask, "How do you think the puppet feels when you do that?" or "Is there another way to show this emotion or action?" or "Tell me more about what's happening." This happens frequently in my experience (even in my class today!). In fact, it's usually the first exploration a student has with a puppet character: if the puppet isn't being hit, then they are hitting the character. In person, we often discuss personal space and not having puppet shows invade others' personal boundaries. It's not something to be scared of, just something to guide or show curiosity towards.
- If you notice your student or child is moving the puppet without talking, ask them, "What is your puppet thinking?", "How are they feeling, & how could they show that?", "What sounds could they make?" to extract pathos. **Often the way the puppet is feeling is how the child is feeling.** The object is an emotional carrier, which is one reason that puppets are used so often in drama therapy. Students will unprompted recreate moments of heightened emotion from their lives in puppet shows. For example, one student had a puppet character that was nervous about returning to the school campus amid Coronavirus and expressed those feelings to the mother character. We learn so much from our children from the stories they tell and how they interpret the world around them. It's our job to listen.
- If you notice a student is stumbling through a story & in need of support, you can consider saying, "Pause," and ask what they're imagining is happening.
- If you notice the play or show is nonsensical, it's okay! It's play!





### **Becoming an Audience Member-**

Having a daily audience in my twin brothers allowed me to practice, play, and perform. It made me feel good! Your students may crave an audience and want to perform for you. Stories and storytellers thrive on feedback and interest. Oohs and Aahs during a surprising physical feat, laughing at their jokes, peeking through fingers during a tense or scary moment - all reactions are welcomed and encouraged, except judgment. We want to create a safe space where students can express memories and interpret real emotions and actions. What you're watching is an interpretation of their world experience.



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