



The official newsletter of  
**San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild**  
*Looking for updates and missed information?  
Check for it at [SFBAPG.ORG](http://SFBAPG.ORG)*

*SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization*



*Every spring you have your chance to choose which candidates will represent you on the guild board of directors. You can find information on the candidates and instructions on voting in this newsletter! Big thanks to our Nominating Committee for finding such excellent candidates.*

*Also inside is information on the May Guild Event, an exciting virtual program put together by your dedicated and hardworking Programming Committee.*

*And, of course, lots more! Thanks to all our newsletter contributors who sent their articles and photos to [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org) (and you can too!)*

### **Guild Board and Officers**

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# May Guild Meeting: Presenting Stinky Tales® plus the Basics & Tips of Grant Writing

Sun. May 16 from 3-5 pm Sign Up At: <https://sfbag.org/2021/2021-may-guild-meeting/>

Times may vary slightly

3-3:30 SF Bay Area Guild Meeting led by President Camilla Henneman – Puppet News & Events!

3:30-4:15ish Stinky Tales® with Doug & Annie Zesiger + Q &A



5 minute Social Break

4:20-4:55ish Grant writing for Puppeteers with Jill Valavanis + Q & A

**Stinky Tales® with Doug & Annie Zesiger**

*“Doug is the child-whisperer. He has an amazing ability to connect with kids and Annie’s songs shine with simple truth. We are so fortunate that they’ll be sharing their talents with the Guild.”* Lee Armstrong, Guild Programming

Meet the dynamic duo, Doug and Annie Zesiger, producers of the video series Stinky Tales®. They will share how they produce their own videos, shooting in their home studio. Doug has a true gift for talking to children in an empowering way, a new Mr. Rogers and Annie encapsulates the show’s life lessons in her memorable songs. Their presentation will be filled with samples of their videos and what they have learned over the years about children and puppets.

Stinky Tales® is an interactive puppet show helping kids navigate the challenges of social emotional learning. Dillard the dragon and his friends often need the help of the humans in the audience to help them find their way. As the kids help the puppets, they also help themselves, cementing some pretty important life skills along the way. Check it out at <https://www.stinkytales.com/>.



**Doug & Annie Zesiger, Producers of Stinky Tales®**

Doug & Annie are both teachers who work live, on the web and zoom. “Stinky Tales is a project in the making for many years, Doug and Anne Zesiger voice the lead characters, their son sings the theme song and their daughter creates all of the graphics. Anne also writes and performs original music for each of the full episodes.

### **Plus Grant Writing for Puppeteers**

Jill Valavanis is an artist, educator and grant writer. She has years of experience in writing grants for the arts. She will share some basic information to get you started, some valuable tips and answer your questions.

Jill Valavanis completed her graduate work at California State University, Long Beach where she earned her Master of Fine Arts in Integrated Three-Dimensional Media, utilizing skills developed in working with fiber, metal, and wood. In addition to making and teaching art, she is a grant writer for a local nonprofit visual arts center. She recently joined the staff at the Sonoma Community Center as their Fine Arts Manager.



## **NEW!!!! Join our May Programming Meeting on Zoom**

Ongoing: Wed, May 12 from 7- 8 pm (and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed of each month)

Open to all Guild members.

We are passionate about having excellent programs for Guild members and welcome your input. What would you like to see at a Guild meeting?

- Join us for interesting discussions about program possibilities for Guild meetings
- Help us seek out exceptional performances and useful workshop ideas.
- Pitch in to organize meetings, events, puppet experiments and more.

Join Zoom at...

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87596314345?pwd=VVZpSVBUNEIISIFxUWF3cktZcS95QT09>

IMPORTANT: Email [programming@sfbapg.org](mailto:programming@sfbapg.org) for zoom password.

Questions? Please contact Lee Armstrong, [images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com), cell 707 738-5906, Judy Roberto [be\\_artsy@hotmail.com](mailto:be_artsy@hotmail.com), or anyone on the Programming Committee or Guild Board.

# VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!

Hello from Tree on the nominating committee. It's that time of year again where guild members are given the opportunity to vote for new candidates to fill spots on the board. Annually, we have board members that have either met up with term limits or have come to the end of their three-year commitment and choosing to serve our board again. We have an exciting ballot of candidates for members to choose from this year. Voting will be held in person (via zoom) at the guild meeting on May16. You can also vote by mail or email. If you are unable to attend the guild meeting to vote in person, and plan to vote either by mail or email, please send your ballot choices in before the May 16 deadline.

To vote by mail send to Lee Armstrong, 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma, CA 95476

To vote by email: [programming@sfbapg.org](mailto:programming@sfbapg.org)



The following are bios and photos of our slate of San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild candidates for 2021. We have three openings to fill on the board. Please vote for up to 3 candidates.

**Gabrielle Greenfield** is a children's nature educator, nature playwright and budding nature puppeteer based in Mill Valley, California. Gabrielle weaves in her theatrical background in Playwriting, Mask and Movement from a Dallas Arts Magnet and her love of nature with her B.A. in English Literature and Plant Science from Jim Henson's alma mater, The University of Maryland. Gabrielle's work strives to articulate plant's acute personality types based off of their functions, needs, and relationships in their local environment. Thanks for the nomination, I am so excited to be a part of this community and learn all I can from our talented and inspiring guild members.



**Marisol Himmel** is the founder and program director of Sacramento Spark Homeschool Enrichment program where

she teaches Spanish, French, Sign Language, science and drawing. She uses puppets in each of her subjects and has found puppetry to be a wonderful teaching tool. Marisol is also a ventriloquist and builds her own puppets in her spare time. She and her puppet, Alexa, have a Dinosaur Club with a monthly live stream “club meeting” via Instagram (@moddypuppets)

[ModdyPuppets.com](http://ModdyPuppets.com)

[SacramentoSpark.com](http://SacramentoSpark.com)



**Judy Roberto** was Puppet Theater Director at Happy Hollow Park and Zoo in San Jose for 11 years. She has been a puppeteer since attending LA Valley College, where she studied with puppet master Betsy Brown. She belongs to the Puppeteers of America, and has been president in California guilds in the San Fernando Valley, San Luis Obispo, and San Francisco Bay Area guilds.

(Photo credit: Elisheva Hart)

## Images in Motion in the Media

In April, Sean and Patrick Johnson of Swazzle ([www.swazzle.com](http://www.swazzle.com)) invited Lee Armstrong and Kamela Portuges, Co-owners of Images in Motion ([www.imagesmedia.com](http://www.imagesmedia.com)) to be on their “Lunch Break” podcast.

Here’s some history between these two pairs and companies. As teens, Sean and Patrick met Lee and Kamela when they were Co-Presidents of the SF Guild. Sean and Patrick were very active in the Guild and became Co-Presidents of the Guild (1999-2000) before they left for





Los Angeles to start a very successful career in TV puppetry.

Images in Motion has provided 3D modeling, mold & cast projects for Swazzle over the years. The latest venture is "Waffles + Mochi" for Michelle Obama's Netflix

show.

This fast-paced, half hour video podcast shares some fun stories of how puppeteers connect through the Guild, puppet productions and some 3D printing insights at



<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CN3Ei6LjDGu/?igshid=95que82sl8fy>.



There's also an interview that just came out by Theatre for Lifelong Learning (TFLL) where Lee Armstrong shares a bit about her love of puppetry, her work and teaching puppetry for all ages.

Theatre for Lifelong Learning (TFLL) promotes the emotional well-being of older adults and bridges communities together through research on theatre education, practice, and experimentation. TFLL provides tools for others to develop their own theatre practices in communities. To

learn more, see [theatreforlifelonglearning.org](http://theatreforlifelonglearning.org).

Lee's interview is at

[Theatre for Lifelong Learning Artist Interview: Lee Armstrong, Part I – Theatre for Lifelong Learning](#) and [Theatre for Lifelong Learning Artist Interview: Lee Armstrong, Part II – Theatre for Lifelong Learning](#).

# Our Amazing Puppet World

By Ilene Kennedy (Vice President)

## Jeff Dunham

Jeff really got into Puppetry at the age of 7 when he received his first puppet, Mortimer Sneed, for Christmas. He began practicing and performing during junior high school and high school. In high school Jeff was voted most likely to succeed!



It was during his high school years that Jeff began working as a Puppeteer. He took his ventriloquist act to the airwaves doing commercials for a local car dealership.

He continued this work until enrolling at Baylor University in the Fall of 1980. At college Jeff began perfecting his craft while working the local clubs. Jeff was earning up to \$70,000 a year during this time. Jeff also began building his own puppets while in college.

Other comics would criticize Jeff for not being a pure stand up comedian, because they considered his puppets to be props. Even though he was at the top echelon of his craft, this bothered him and so he began building all of the puppets in his act and putting even his own facial features into them to fight this perception.

He started with Peanut and then in 1986, the same year he graduated college he created Walter, everyone's favorite grumpy old man. Jeff packed up Walter and the others and moved from Texas to Los Angeles.

There he worked the club circuit and eventually appeared on the Johnny Carson show, after 10 long years of trying, in April 1990. After this Johnny Carson appearance Jeff really saw the bookings start coming in. He went from clubs and theaters to larger venues and arenas. All of the years of touring and playing the club circuit had built a very strong fan base, but it wasn't until the Comedy Central special *Arguing With Myself*, which Jeff financed himself after many unsuccessful pitches to Comedy Central, in 2006 that he catapulted to the top of his trade. That DVD sold a million copies the first year.

The following year Jeff released the *Spark of Insanity* DVD featuring Achmed the dead terrorist. That world tour saw Jeff perform in many countries, always pushing the envelope with Achmed and Walter.

In the following year Jeff released the Jingle Balls video on YouTube which resulted in death threats and the FBI getting involved.

I enjoy looking forward to future live performances and getting to go to another one of his shows or watching the newest DVD he puts out.

So everyone enjoy your Puppets and what you design. And puppet on. 'Til next time.

## COVID AND ME

By Sharon Clay

In February 2020, the Dublin 4-H Puppeteers performed their show "It's a Plastic World" for the Alameda County 4-H Presentation Day. They got wonderful reviews, a Gold Award, and expectations they would go on to Regionals and State Competition. Then came COVID-19, and we were stopped in our tracks. It was very disappointing to the kids who had worked so hard to do a good show with a great message, with wonderful Folkmanis puppets. But, there was nothing we could do.

So, this year, I wondered if we would have anything our puppet team could do. Would things open up in time for us to be able to perform at county Presentation Day, or Regionals, or even Fairyland. How could we do a show, when we couldn't get our kids together. I had 5 puppeteers who couldn't meet (both a 4-H rule and parent choice). Then I saw that other puppeteers were doing virtual shows. We were told that our Presentation Days would be virtual. How could we do a puppet show with 5 kids in 5 different locations? What about background? Scenery? Props? Theme? Two new kids with no experience - how could they learn the technique without being "in person"?

We got the team together via zoom, and started thinking about a theme, puppets we could use. 4-H is a "Learn by Doing" experience, and this is THEIR team, so I let them talk it over. They decided on a theme which expressed how COVID affected kids and families. We thought we might tell this with our animal puppets, maybe. Then I got to work on a script. We were still in the red tier, so everything was done by Zoom. We decided it was too serious a theme to try to do it with animals.

I wrote the script, and submitted it to the kids for revision, we selected our puppets from our supply, the kids picked them up and we started to practice. They practiced, via zoom, every week. I met with the new kids individually to help them with technique, and the rest all helped also during practices..

Then, just before they did their "show" for County, we asked Lee Armstrong to give her expertise to improve the final "cut". Her suggestions were wonderful to put the polish on the performance. And they got a Gold Award, and moved quickly to Regionals. They got a Gold Award at Regionals and will be going on to State on May 15th. I couldn't even be in the



"zoom room" with them for their performances, nor could I record it to show the Guild. But, maybe they will be able to do it for you "live" via Zoom in the near future.

As I think out the experience, it has some definite advantages. (1) no time spent getting out the stage, curtains, equipment. (2) No time wasted with team "interactions" that were not on tract. (3) we didn't have to put anything back in our puppet storage. Our usual hour and a half to 2 hour meetings were only 60 minutes.

## Invitation: An Evening of Puppetry with Jim Napolitano

How many of these songs do you know:

Little Bunny Foo-Foo?

Five Little Ducks?

The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly?

Five Little Monkeys Jumpin' on the Bed?

If any of these ring a bell then the LAGP (Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry) has an event for you!

Come join us for our special upcoming event "An Evening of Puppetry with Jim Napolitano". Jim "Nappy" Napolitano will be performing some of the silliest sing-a-longs known to mankind in his wonderful shadow puppet show.

This virtual live performance will be happening over Youtube, Facebook Live and on the LAGP website on May 8th at 6:30pm PT. This is a free event where donations are welcome!

Now you may ask yourself, do I know who Jim Napolitano is? Well, you may not recognize him but he is broadcast to millions of television sets nationwide. His television credits include Between the Lions on PBS, The Book of Pooh on the Disney Channel and the new cartoon Kirby, on Fox. Jim is a graduate of the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts Program and a native of Milford, Connecticut.

So now that you're in the know, come join the LAGP and enjoy a splendid show of laughing singing and, of course, puppetry!



# Adult Puppetry? An Open Letter to SFBAPG

From Anonymous Member

For a few years now I've read the newsletter, attended a few Guild meetings, and wondered why so few articles and demos on puppetry concern issues and puppet plays for adults. Serious issues like police violence, national elections, inadequate funding for education, the arts and healthcare. While puppetry for children is fine, and should be encouraged, in other parts of the world puppetry thrives as an art for adults, with plays about serious issues and artistic endeavors reflecting advanced, avant-garde and innovative, complex forms of expression.

Why, for example, don't we see a puppet play about the murder of George Floyd, or a play about the climate change deniers and affirmers, suitable for a mature audience? (Punch as policeman, George Floyd as his victim would be a brutal show. Maybe too violent!) I recall seeing one play by the Nelsons that was slightly "blue" and perhaps more comprehensible to adults than children, but that seems to be an exception. Am I wrong, or is the SFBAPG largely neglecting adult-oriented puppetry and its potential audience?

**CLASSIFIED:** My name is Samson Y Hiss, circus composer and theatre polluter. I'm looking for a puppeteer to direct, shoot and edit a short film I wrote and scored. The short film, which is more a silent film with music, is about a one-handed witch who loses her hand to an angry mob, tames wild beasts in the forest, and starts hustling the common folk and casinos for money. It is comprised of four different but related vignettes, each is timing out around five minutes. I imagine it being a puppet show of sorts with mixed media or something totally different but equally engaging. Since the score has already been written you could say we're working in reverse, or on a long music video, which is a fair observation. I have storyboards I can show, they're crude at best but convincing. Let me know if this holds any interest for you and we'll talk—no strings attached. You can reach me at: [hiss@samsonyhiss.com](mailto:hiss@samsonyhiss.com) or through my website: [www.samsonYhiss.com](http://www.samsonYhiss.com). Thanks, -Samson



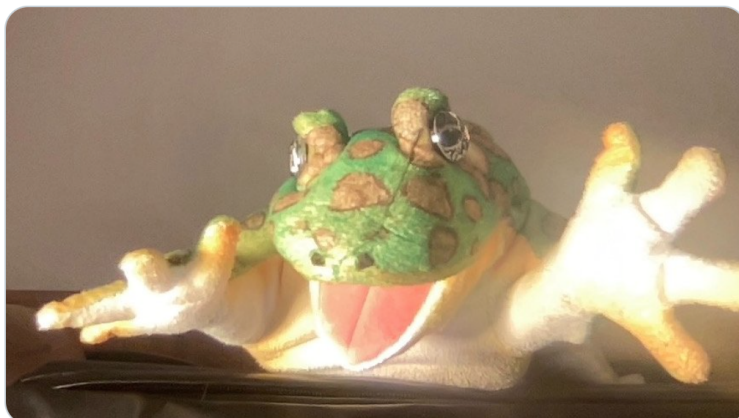
**Nature Nate** @N8ureNate · Apr 22

Kindergarten student after virtual field trip:  
"Were those animals real or was it a puppet show?"

Me: "Hmm, what do you think?"

Student: "When they were talking I thought they were real!"

Never underestimate the [#powerofpuppets!](#) [@Folkmanis](#) [#EarthDay](#) [#onted](#)



You and 2 others

Thanks to Wendy Morton for sharing this, with the comment, "Ultra adorable kid response to puppets, attached."