



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
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SFBAGP is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit tax exempt organization

July 2021 Letter from your President

Celebrating our 60 years as a chartered guild and I'm excited about the future.



I look back to what a challenging time the last 18 months have been for all of us, but I'm happy knowing what fun we had in the guild even under the circumstances. With so many unknowns and challenges doing everyday things, it was a highlight for me to meet with so many of us, including friends we haven't seen in a long while.

I'm excited for your new board and officers taking what we've learned, and are planning. I look forward to things opening up again, and life returning to something more normal, but leveraging the lessons and experiences the last year has taught us. With these changes we are planning face to face, in person events again at Fairyland, and we're looking at celebrating 60 years as a Guild as well. We will continue to support virtual meetings too and are looking at ways to include remote options for our in person events. We're also making more committee meetings virtual so that any member can participate. And don't miss out on online activities like our puppet experiments and social media, where we can build a larger community to interact, share, and support each other more.

Thank you Camilla for your leadership as President, and leading us in a very hard period. Thank you Gabriel for your enthusiasm and technical expertise. Thank you Lee for your leadership with programming and your continued support as librarian. Also a special thanks to our current board and officers for your work and support. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions please contact us.

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Puppet Experiment is now open for your submission!!

By Nao Kobayashi



What is the Puppet Experiment?

The PuppetExperiment is an online-shared-studio where you post/submit your work-in-progress puppet with a theme of the season, and share feedback with other people. It is a program to help us develop our inspirations and early ideas, and experiment how our ideas can evolve.

This is not a traditional contest to compete with others or complete a finished project, but a virtual studio to share your artistic development with other puppet friends. Any work-in-progress sketches and early ideas are welcome, so other people can see your inspiration and share advice.



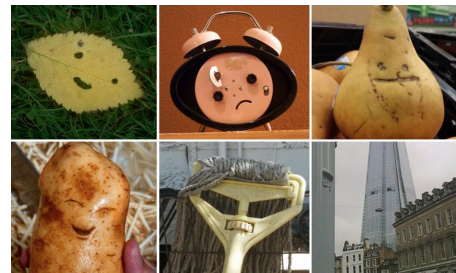
The Theme of July: Found Materials from your Natural Environment

The world has collapsed, and you managed to survive as an urban Robinson Crusoe. And now, you need to create your puppet project! You have to “hunt” your puppet materials in nature; wild nature, urban nature, your kitchen, storage,

recycling bin... Don't buy anything, and see what you have! What physical and mental materials do you find, and how do you make this puppet project?

Submission is OPEN : July 1st to July 26th!

The PuppetExperiment is designed to be a quick short Experiment. You do not have to spend days or weeks presenting your concept. You can also submit multiple stages of your progress, as your project proceeds, like weekly updates.



Who can Participate?

The PuppetExperiment is Open to World: With the Theme of the season, you can submit your work-in-progress project at your own pace, observe other participants' submission and comment through SNS. This project is open to anyone, anywhere!

How do I participate?

Share your project, ideas, etc to social media:

- Post your submissions or send a message to our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/SanFranBAPG>
- Post to our Facebook group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/140942569278006>
- Post to instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/sfbpag> with tag #SFBAPG #PuppetExperiment
- Post to twitter <https://twitter.com/sfbapg> and tag @sfbapg #PuppetExperiment
- Post to YouTube and tag #sfbapg #PuppetExperiment
- If you don't have access to social media, email our team puppetexp@sfbapg.org to share.

Submission: Sketch, photo, mockup, painting, song, music, scene, performance... Your project can be in any form of puppetry. Video submissions would be recommended around less than 10 minutes in length. Feel free to share your experiment in Facebook and Instagram Stories, but due to the temporary nature of stories, to be included, share as a post with appropriate tags.

We appreciate artists' finished paintings, yet sometimes early sketches are very inspiring. Presenting sketches is also an inspiring skill to communicate your ideas with others. And we would like this program to be a shared studio with an experimental mind. Feel free to take your risk and play, get out of your comfort zone, and if your project did not complete, that is also no problem at all! The important part is to spark your inspiration.



Our program team is planning 2 more PuppetExperiment for the year. Themes to be announced in the future!

If you have questions or submissions, contact us puppetexp@sfbapg.org

Programming: August Special Event – Featuring 3 Great Topics

Sun., Aug. 15th 4-5ish pm on Zoom.

The August newsletter will have more info & signup for zoom link.

Join us for an exceptional hour combining 3 areas of interest for puppeteers

1. an award-winning Zoom show performed by teens
2. highlights of July's Puppet Experiment submissions
3. a look at the current trend of short clips on TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube shorts

Covid & Me - Inventive teens tell it like it is in this 13 minute sketch performed by Sharon Clay's (former Guild Board member) 4-H youth group. These 5 young ladies won Gold at the County, Regional and State levels. It's a well-crafted show telling the story of a family of 5 and how life was for them during the height of Covid. Designed for Zoom, the piece is particularly powerful as puppets show the family struggles, fears and triumphs during the pandemic.

July Puppet Experiment Highlights - You won't want to miss a compilation of visuals gathered from our current Puppet Experiment. Last time we did this, we had offerings from across the US and some foreign countries, as puppeteers created intriguing puppet experiments with the theme "Ghosts." See what creative ideas are sparked with the summertime theme of "Found Materials from Your Natural Environment" and celebrate their work.

TikTok & More - An overview of video sharing and publicity in social media - What they are, how to sign up and create an account, how to get started, where to find out more, etc. How does the guild use these platforms? Bring your questions.



Save The Date: Day of Puppetry at Fairyland Is Back!

Sat., Aug 28 in person at Fairyland in Oakland,
<https://fairyland.org/>

In Person: Masks and distancing will be practiced at this annual outdoor event. Details of shows, activities and Guild meeting will be in the August newsletter



Fairyland "Day of Puppetry" is an annual event (except last year) filled with a variety of joyful puppet shows and activities. This day will be extra special, as Fairyland is also celebrating their 50th Birthday!

Our Guild will be helping with the festivities. We have been asked to do walk around puppets to meet and greet the visitors and demo how puppets work at the puppet exhibit area. There will be a signup in August if you'd like to volunteer. We'll have an outdoor Guild

meeting, which will be the 1st time we'll have been together (outside of zoom) in 18 months - Jan. 2020! So save the date and reconnect with puppeteering friends at Fairyland!

Join our July Programming Meeting on Zoom

Ongoing: Tuesday, July 13 from 7-8 pm (and the 2nd Tuesday 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=VVZpSVBUNELISIFxUWF3cktZcS95QT09>

IMPORTANT: Email programming@sfbapg.org for zoom password.

Questions? Please contact Nao Kobayashi, Programming Chair at programming@sfbapg.org or anyone on the Guild Board (contact info on front page) or anyone on the Programming Committee.

The Two Truly Best Questions Ever

by Karen Konnerth

www.karenkonnerth.com

So, I just came back from finally getting out on the road again for three out of town shows in an out of the way corner of the state - complete with driving through rainstorms, beautiful diversity of accents, and good food (south Louisiana of course). The shows were in large halls or gymnasiums at public community centers, one a VFW hall, full of Parks and Recreation Dept. campers. Zero theater ambiance. Brilliant overhead lights. One space with two huge blow-up bounce house things blasting away throughout the show.

And the audiences were totally focused. Totally - like they were starving and didn't realize puppet theater was exactly what they craved. And out of this, in post show meet-the-puppets and questions, I was asked the two best questions I have ever been asked.

1. Why do you make puppets?

I've been asked: How do you make puppets? (long story) What do you make puppets out of? (many materials) Where do you keep your puppets? (my studio in New Orleans) How many puppets have you made? (I don't know - a lot) Who else is backstage with you? (no one) When did you start making puppets? (before you were born) But never why. I answered the 8 - 9 year old boy with something like, "Great question! I make puppets to be able to tell stories in a way that lets you see the same characters that I imagine." But that wasn't really a very good answer. The puppet is far more than a model of a character. In performance, it is the channel, the instrument of communication. During the living performance, the puppet is the point where my mind and heart embrace the minds and hearts of the willing



believers. As I listen and feel the audience energy, I am acutely aware yet consciously oblivious to the current passing back and forth between us. Which brings me to the second question, asked by another 8 - 9 year old boy.

2. How do you make them alive up there?

This question asked AFTER I had brought several puppets out, shown them on and off my hands, so he was not asking how do you move them, because he had already seen that. And I had told them that I stand behind my black scrim curtain, holding my arms up in front of me. No, he wanted to know how they could be mere cloth puppets now, but have been actually alive during the show. I could only tell him that where they were alive was in his wonderful imagination - that I give them movement and voice, but he gives them life. And he asked, "So everyone does that?" as he gestured at the group. And I told him yes, every one of you does that. He nodded and seemed quite satisfied with that answer.

Our Amazing Puppet World

By Ilene Kennedy

Sergei Obraztsov - Born: 1901

Sergei was a man of many trades including actor, director, painter, Puppet theater writer and script writer. In 1921 he graduated from VKHUTEMAS (Higher Artistry and Techniques workshop). In the same year he won a competition at the Moscow Art Theater and was an actor there until 1930. During his student years he made several glove puppets & performing little skits in front of friends and later wider audiences. Obraztsov's Repertoire included sketches consisting of various techniques to make his characters mime to his singing. One of his best-known shows was the expressive performance of Tchaikovsky's Romance.



My Sideli Stabi (We were sitting with you) for which the faces of the men and women characters were wooden ball's with out features which he operated with his bare hand's.

Obraztsov's "Romance with Puppets" was immensely popular in Moscow during the 1930s.

He received invitations to act in VIP concerts before members of the Soviet government and Stalin personally.

In 1931 Sergei operative was invited to head the newly established Moscow Puppet theater that would in time be called the Gosudarstvenny Akademichesky Tsentralny Teatrkuylol Imeni SV.

Obraztsuva (Sergei Obraztsov State Academic Central Puppet theater).

He was an astute manager, he began with 12 collaborators and ended his career with the theater with a company of 350. Puppetry was a comparatively new for Obraztsov despite his previous solo acts in variety shows. He was not a puppeteer in strict sense of the word.



He treated the traditional Puppet theater with respect but never much interest. He claimed that the "New Puppet theater" should be special. It must have an independent existence, he used a method to teach puppetry that was developed by Konstantin Stanis Lausky (1863 through 1938) He was the founder of the Moscow Art Theater. This new method was a total new experience for the puppeteers. It was an emotional experience where the

Puppeteer would become one with the puppet rather than just manipulate it. He would create a life for the puppet and would work bringing the puppet to life and make it more realistic for the audience. The new theater that they were performing in was fully supported by USSR Government. It was a great success from 1940 on. In 1970 the government offered a new theater with more room, better sound and backdrops etc. In the new theater he got to collaborate with Valentine Andreevich from (1908 to 1985) Sergei also wrote books on puppetry from 1950 on and he also taught and directed puppeteers from 1970 to 1975 at the Moscow Academy Theater Of Art. He also became a member of the World Peace Committee and a speaker at Congress's. From 1976 to 1984 Obraztsov was president of the Union International De La Marionette UNIMA and later in UNIMA member of Honor. Sergei Obraztsov was the only Puppeteer given the highest Soviet distinctions of Hero of socialist labor and the USSR People's Artist.

Images in Motion Adds Scanner to 3D Business

by Lee Armstrong

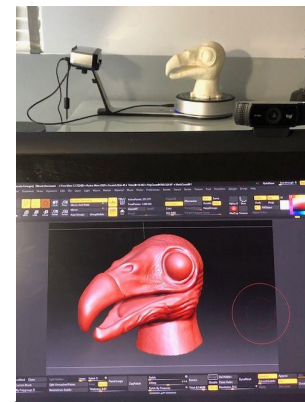
Images in Motion (IIM) moved into the 3D world in 2012, acquiring 2 gypsum powder, full color printers. Kamela Portuges-Robbins and Kieron Robbins learned not only the operations, but the repair of these finicky printers and started turning out product for Toy Fair a month later. They have 3D printed numerous sculptures for exhibits and gifts for two major Bay Area animations studios, the Academy of Science and others. IIM added a plastic and an acrylic printer which allows for a variety of options in the print world. They are currently doing work for Kuku Studios, a TV animation company in Berkeley and just added an EXScan by Shining3D to digitize Kuku's existing sculptures.



A 3d printed mold.



Closeup of 3d printed mold.



Scanner above creates a digital file below.

The EXScan has allowed us to scan existing puppet heads, modify the size, add additional features, etc., then print the head, or print a mold. Printing a mold is a relatively new approach. For an example, Kieron sculpted a Mother Vulture head. Kamela scanned the head and modified it to complete the family of Dad and Baby. Digitally the negative shape is sent to the printer and a gypsum mold is printed. The mold can be filled with a variety of flexible materials. The flexible casting can then be used as the understructure for the puppet, bypassing the print and molding steps, saving time and money. It is the wave of the future!

Celebration of Culture or Cultural Appropriation; an invitation for dialogue

By Michael Nelson

(A Note from your usual editor: As I will be camping over the newsletter deadline, our new guild president, John Arnold, has kindly offered to step in as guest editor for this issue (THANKS, JOHN!) so, for a change, I decided to contribute a bit of writing, which I don't usually get around to in my guise as editor. It calls for responses, if anyone is interested. Send your responses for printing in the next newsletter to newsletter@sfbapg.org and I'll see them when I get back from camping and include them in a future issue! Thanks.)

After yesterday's board meeting, Judy Roberto, Valerie and I had a very interesting discussion revolving around how puppeteers (and storytellers) choose what stories to share with their audiences. Almost 40 years ago, Valerie and I hit upon what turned out to be a career making choice of performance material for Magical Moonshine Theatre. Our subject staple was a series called Animal Folktales of the Americas. For over three decades we adapted and produced many shows based on stories told on the American continents. We shared African American tales, Latin American Tales, American Indian stories, Asian tales... basically any story that we could justify as being told on any American continent. We approached our stories with respect and with the goal of sharing and celebrating our multicultural American culture and our show offerings proved popular across the US and on many international tours. At that time multiculturalism was popular with U.S. educators and general audiences and many times we performed the stories for audiences made up of the people whose heritage was represented in the tales and received accolades and gratitude from the audiences for choosing tales from their cultural traditions to retell. It has only been in the last several years that the concept of cultural appropriation has come on my radar as I have attended artist roundtables that have brought up the subject, as well as heard from other puppeteers who are questioning the concept and looking back on their own work for the purposes of self judgement regarding the issue.

Cultural appropriation is an important issue and not a simple one. Here is one nice website that gives a pretty good overview of what it is and how one can avoid it:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-cultural-appropriation-5070458>. I was relieved to read it and determine that, at least for the most part, in my view, we have been respectful in our presenting of stories from other cultures, and maybe our approach to

choosing and telling tales has some merit as we have wended our way through decades of storytelling with very little cultural controversy (that we have been aware of!)

Our approach has been and still is that we take large amounts of time talking about a story we are looking to adapt to the stage. We strive to understand it from our own point of view, from the historical perspective and from the cultural perspective. Once we begin to get familiar with those diverse elements of the story we then strive to find the connections between the original intent of the story and our modern audiences. A storyteller tells stories to their current audience, and in some ways serves as a re-interpreter of those tales. Sometimes when an old story was first told, it had a very different meaning than it does to later audiences, and as an oral tradition, perhaps it has undergone many changes over the decades or centuries as storytellers suited it to the audiences they knew and told to. Valerie and I look to find why the story has survived to be retold to us and what sense it makes to OUR audiences. Can or should we reinterpret it to suit our listeners/watchers? And that raises the question of whether we have the right to do that to a tale that may not be from our own culture. And what is our own culture, especially as Americans? I grew up in the South, listening to Br'er Rabbit stories throughout my childhood, stories that are African-American in origin. Magical Moonshine Theatre's first Animal Folktales of the Americas production (1980) was a collection of Br'er Rabbit stories that we have performed every year, without exception until Covid. I felt that these stories were part of my childhood and part of me, but I can also see that the case could be made that I was benefiting from slavery and using stories that perhaps were not mine to use and benefit from. It is not something I thought about back in 1980 when we made that first show. We just loved the stories, but they would not have come to my attention if Africans had not been brought to America to be exploited as slaves. In our performances we pointed out that the evolution of these African stories into American (or African-American) folktales was a tradition that came out of slavery, and we strove to portray our characters in human rather than racist stereotypes, and I think we succeeded in that.

In many ways, as puppeteers and storytellers, we are curators of culture for our audiences. Where is the line between celebrating the joy of cultural diversity and using other cultural traditions inappropriately? I suppose each one of us has to answer this question for ourselves, possibly after some soul searching and attempts to understand what one is undertaking and how it might be viewed by others. What are your thoughts or musings on this subject? How do you approach what stories to tell for your audiences? This is one of those discussions that probably has no definitive answer but is definitely worth exploring.

Forrest Patten has passed (1954 - 2021)



Forrest G. Patten, puppeteer, ventriloquist, music provider and collector of vintage Bay Area children's television paraphernalia, passed away in the beginning of 2021. Forrest is best known for his work archiving and licensing music tracts to businesses such as amusement parks, television stations and personal projects. Since 1978, under the name of Kaleidosound, Forrest has

worked his music magic on many productions. During the 80s he was responsible for the dramatic opening music of the nightly news, as well as all musical backgrounds used at Marine World Africa U.S.A. Forrest also supplied unusual sound effects and bits of music for Lucasfilm and Pixar Studios. He found many SFBAPG guild members “hard to find” selections for countless puppet projects from amongst his thousands of LP records.

Ever since he made his first appearance at age 6 on KTVU’s 60s family show “Captain Satellite,” starring Bob March, he has held a passion for early children’s television props and momentos. Included in his vast collection was Captain Satellite’s show costume and helmet, Miss Nancy of “Romper Room’s” magic mirror and countless props, Captain Cosmic’s unusual costumes and of course all of Bruce Sedley’s “King Fuddle” vent figures and prop inventions.

King Fuddle and his co-horts have since found their way to the Storybook Puppet Theater in Fairyland, where Bruce and Forrest wanted them to eventually live, where they will be safely archived. King Fuddle and Bruce Sedley invented the Fairyland Magic Key and promoted it on Bay Area station channels KRON 4 & KTVU 2, where Bruce had Fuddle cartoon host shows.



Forrest was anxiously awaiting kidney transplants for many years, and had about given up hope, when just before Covid hit he received the transplants. Unfortunately it was not enough. Forrest lived in Moraga and throughout his career supported and loved his friends in the San Francisco Guild.

Randal Metz
Puppet Theater Director at Fairyland.



Photos:

- Forrest Patten, age 6, on Captain Satellite Show. 1960
- Forrest Patten and King Fuddle at Fairyland Puppet Fair – 2018
- King Fuddle hold court at his new home in the Storybook Puppet Theater.
- Bruce Sedley with his Vent Figures. Mr. Crafty, King Fuddle, Sir Sedley and Clarissa the Witch.

Please send future newsletter articles and photos to newsletter@sfbapg.org