



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
 Looking for updates and missed information?
 Check for it at *SFBAPG.ORG*

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

Upcoming Guild Meeting: October

October's Guild meeting is planned to be mid October with details to come soon. It will be a zoom-based event, with our special guest guild member, Swazzle Puppet Studio!



Swazzle virtual workshop tour and puppet building demonstration.

The puppet company Swazzle (<http://swazzle.com>) co-owners Sean and Patrick Johnson will give SFBAPG members an exclusive virtual tour of the Swazzle Puppet Studio. Participants will get an exclusive peek behind the curtain of the workshop that built puppets for Crank Yankers, Kidding, Waffles and Mochi and more! Sean and Patrick will help demystify the puppet building process as they show the tools and materials every puppet builder should have.

Following the tour Sean and Patrick will lead guild members in a special puppet building demonstration where they will illustrate an essential and often overlooked step in the puppet building process. Participants will learn how to turn a 2-D puppet design into a 3-D foam puppet mock-up. Understanding this process is the key to creating original characters out of patterned sheet foam.

Signup and more information will be available soon.

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Make sure your membership is up to date so you can join this exciting online event!

Swazzle's online posts are filled with building tips and inspirations!

<https://www.instagram.com/swazzlepuppetstudio/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/SwazzleAudreyTwo>

Puppet Mayhem on Lil' Avenue

By Lee Armstrong

Most insurance commercials are a bit staid, but not "The Bold Truth" produced by ad agency Medic, <https://www.wereamedic.com>. Be prepared for mayhem and puppet limbs flying at

<https://vimeo.com/509288518>.



Connections are always important in the TV industry. The Lil' Avenue set, a spoof on Sesame Street, was provided by JetSets, who just happen to be next door neighbors of Images in Motion in Sonoma. When Media was researching puppeteers and puppet builders, like a good neighbor, JetSets recommended us.



Medic contacted Images in Motion,



www.imagesmedia.com and worked with Lee Armstrong and Kamela Portuges on the puppet portion of the production. Kamela designed the colorful muppet-styled puppets with the understanding that Images in Motion would rent Medic the puppets for the shoot, then keep them for TV rentals. Nao Kobayashi deftly fabricated the two

puppets. Kamela puppeteered the lead character, Pierre and Lee puppeteered Diane, the “Influencer.”

Shot in one day during Covid, all crew were Covid-tested that morning. Talent stayed in the Lil’ Avenue set area and crew was segregated behind the camera. Regardless of the restrictions, it was a fun shoot.

Guild Logo Character Made Into Puppets

New puppets created by Ilene Kennedy of Kennedy Puppets (note that the images below are two different puppets of the guild logo!) Kudos to Ilene for bringing our little guy to “puppet” life!

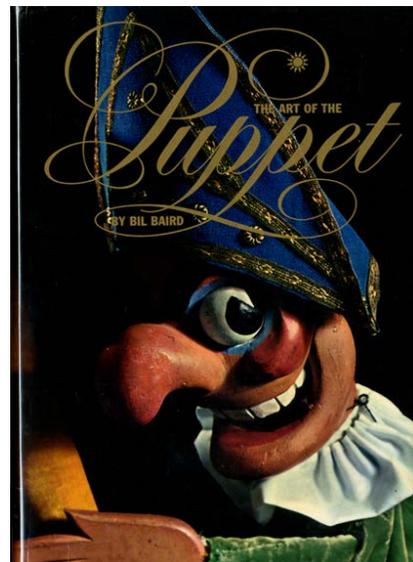


A PUPPETRY A-HAH MOMENT

By Elisheva

A few Sundays ago, I attended the church in San Rafael/Terra Linda where for several Januaries we held our Guild's annual parties. That Sunday our regular minister was driving her son to Illinois so he could return to his college, since it was finally reopened.

So the sermon was being delivered by a substitute preacher, one who flung her arms about as she



preached. "Hmm, looks like Punch and Judy!" I mused. (Our usual minister does not fling.)

If you ever were at our Guild Parties, remember where the puppet stages were generally placed--in front of a low platform which held a table with a podium on top of it. After I noticed the flinging arms,

I checked out the sub's face mask. It was made out of very stiff fabric, and was as still as if it had been carved from wood and colored beige....A-HAH!... Did the ambiance of our Guild parties influence the replacement minister...OR....open my eyes to an old tradition.....or what?

NOTES FROM "THE ART OF THE PUPPET" BY BIL BAIRD -is a beautifully illustrated book,



with many wonderfully written chapters. In chapter 4, ANGELS, DEVILS & EVERYMAN, describes the use of puppets in the Church during the 15th and 16th century in France, England, etc. Originally puppets were used in churches to

illustrate lessons and Bible passages because humans were too vulgar to do this. The wooden actors became so closely associated with the Nativity that they became known as "Little Marys" or Marionettes. (In many parts of Europe, etc. the word marionette still is the generic name for what we Americans call puppets.) Why did they stop performing in churches? They were kicked out because the puppets started becoming clowns and comedians and bawdy.. A lot of the audience members followed the puppets out of the churches as the puppets were expelled.

Puppeteer Mike Chin performs in 'Bacchae Before' at Joe Goode Annex in SF, opens 9/28



Mike Chin is a historian, writer, puppeteer and multidisciplinary artist based in Sacramento and Detroit. His work has appeared in a variety of venues including Dixon Place's PuppetBlok, Detroit Puppet SLAM! and The Massachusetts Review. He is also a member of the Classics faculty at the University of

California-Davis and a fellow of the American Academy in Rome. He has joined the creative team behind a new production scheduled to open in San Francisco on September 28 at the Joe Goode Annex. *Bacchae Before* is a dance theater project inspired by the tragedies of gender reveal parties and Anne Carson's *Bakkhai*, a new version of Euripedes' *The Bacchae*. The ancient drama tells the story of the murder of Pentheus, King of Thebes, at the hands of his



own mother, who has joined a cult of wild women bewitched by Dionysus. Chin's puppetry will serve as a scenic and thematic element for the production's cast of four actor-dancers. His concept for the production will be to use found objects-as-puppets, from toys to pine cones. "In the ancient world, there was a commonplace view that humans were like children in relation to the gods," said Chin. "Try as they might, humans were ultimately not in control of events. For *Bacchae Before*, I'm interested in creating tableaux that invite us into that kind of childish helplessness. I'm also interested in how the arrangement of objects can exert a power over our feelings, either reinforcing the emotional beats in a narrative or working in counterpoint to it."

For a taste of Mike's work, check out [this short minute-and-a-half clip](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MIScoLwleXkqwaOKRafJ9H5QvclNiNjk/view?ts=60f97b95) (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MIScoLwleXkqwaOKRafJ9H5QvclNiNjk/view?ts=60f97b95) from a film that formed part of an earlier iteration of the *Bacchae Before* project.

The production will run for five nights in person; the final night, Saturday October 2 will also be livestreamed. More information at <http://hopemohr.org/bacchae>



August Brings a Return to Fairyland

by John Arnold photos by Marisol (Moddy) Himmel

August has come and gone and we were fortunate enough to be able to return to Oakland Children's Fairyland and have an opportunity to meet in person. It was a beautiful day with a good breeze so we were spared the smoke and hot weather affecting so many other areas around the bay.



And We got to share the day with a number of new and old

faces in the guild and streamed some of the activities during the day. There were wonderful performances from Randal Metz performing in the Fairyland puppet theatre by himself to meet covid restrictions, as well as great performances from Fratello Marionettes with some new marionettes. Its always great to see the collection of puppets from the collection at Fairyland.

And as is usual we had some tables where members of the guild highlighted different types of puppetry with puppets they've built, molds for puppet heads, recreated puppets using foam, latex, and fleece, or puppets that kids can make from paper and cereal boxes. And the highlight of the event we have two versions of our mascot rendered in real puppets by Ilene Kennedy.



And a great addition to Fairyland was qGenevieve the amphibious Creature Quad built by the talented Baron Von Jabba.



Production Discoveries in Plastic!

By Mary Hildebrand Nagler

Whorls of Wonder Puppet Theatre

PART 1 (look for further parts in future newsletters!)

During the development of my MFA Production: “*Little Things*” at the University of Connecticut Puppet Arts Program (2008), I had the opportunity to play Mad Scientist with a number of plastic products I found useful in the making of puppets. Here are a few of my discoveries...

On the market today are a number of plastic casting products designed for industrial use that can also (In a secret life) be used to make puppets. These plastics are heated and stretched into forms that encase items for sale, are mixed and poured into molds or used to coat assorted surfaces.

Some of my experiments yielded harder and lighter puppet parts and props, colorful, tough, yet flexible Shadow puppets, and saved time and materials. I also got to use a Vac -u -form, on a large scale, to make some glorious microscopic creatures. Plastics were poured into silicone molds to make multiple, beautifully sculpted Chicken shins! Many of these discoveries opened a whole new world for me!

Like many, I have had the opportunity to attend Kevin Menegus' informative marionette building workshop at the Puppeteers of America Festivals. (See Festival of the Millennium, Seattle 1999) This is what got me started. Kevin would wrap carved Styrofoam body parts with masking tape, then brush on several coats of Quik-Cast, a pourable, two-part plastic. This process yielded light weight, durable puppet parts that could be drilled into, sanded, painted or fabric covered!

I was familiar with Quik-Cast, the two-part polyurethane plastic resin he used in his demonstration. It is available from Tap Plastics (www.tapplastics.com) and was used frequently in Silicone molds at Images in Motion, Sonoma, CA, where I worked for many years before I headed off to get my master's degree. The Quik-Cast formula is known by other names through other outlets, but under any name it is a very versatile product.

While purchasing some Quik-Cast to make a number of different sized chicken eggs for



my show, I noticed a new product called Ultra-Glo. This Polymer Coating is described as "...an easy-to-use pour-on finish for tabletops plaques, clocks, and figurines. Just one coat is usually required for a deep glass like finish..."

Sounded good to me! I thought I might use it for painting over my insect bodies, or final coating the eggs. One of its selling points was that it would stick to almost any surface.

This was a good quality, because I planned to splash it onto a

number of different materials and did! Along the way, many more applications were discovered; some, quite by accident!

Ultra-Glo, it was discovered, makes wonderful Paramecium skins. I would lay down a piece of tin foil, then a piece of plastic transparency, (The kind used for printing on). Over this I placed a piece of that popular iridescent sheer fabric that comes in many pastel shades. This fabric shows up in the fabric stores just before Halloween, as it is often used for the making of fairy wings. I painted the Ultra-Glo onto and through the sheer fabric adhering it to the plastic beneath and to the tin foil somewhat.

When dry (overnight), I peeled the newly formed sheet away from the tin foil and had a



material I could cut with scissors or with a round punch into disks. These disks were then sewn to the fabric covered contour frame of my



Paramecium character. Two colors of fabric were used to add a little variation.

The iridescent fabric shimmered through the shiny clear surface under the lights in a very effective manner, and the way the disks were applied allowed them to move against each other as the paramecium

undulated.

With this same process, but a slightly different technique, I made wings for my Rod puppet Bumble Bee. Forming the wing contour with a thin wire, I then sewed to the wire a single thickness of a shimmery amber sheer fabric. Painted with the Ultra-Glo, over tin foil, as

before, a light and strong wing was achieved. It was strong enough to attach to a motor for



flapping. The exoskeleton of the Bee was also coated in the Ultra-Glo, protecting the surface paint better than any spray coating ever could. Later, wing vein details were painted to the surface of the wing.

END OF PART 1

Send newsletter items to newsletter@sfbapg.org