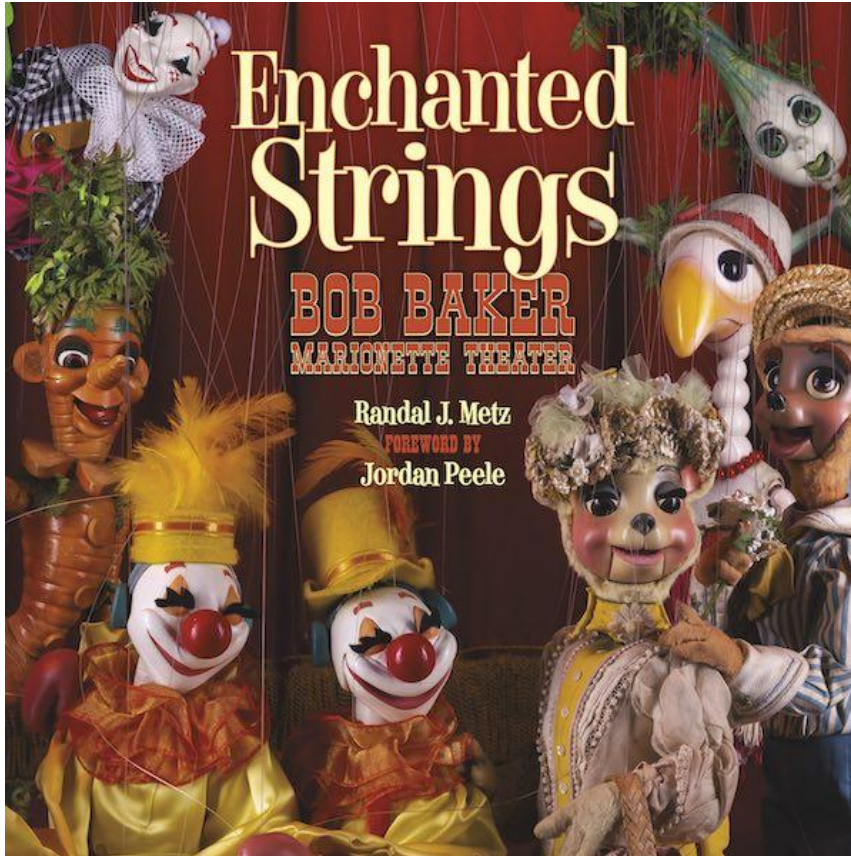




The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
 Looking for updates and missed information?
 Check for it at SFBAPG.ORG

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

FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER



New Book by Guild member Randal Metz coming out this month! See articles, below.

NEXT GUILD MEETING: April Fool's Puppet Showcase!

When: April 1st evening, PST time to be announced

Where: On Zoom – Signup will be on SFBAPG website, more info in March newsletter

Come spend April Fool's Day with us! You never know what foolishness will happen. We are planning a puppet showcase, featuring SFBAPG puppeteers and

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puppet companies, and you can be a part of it. This zoom event will present each artist's short puppet videos, so fans from the Bay Area and around the world can be your audience!

The April Fools meeting will include guild updates, door prizes and a Meet & Greet time to say hi to friends, old and new. More information to follow in the March newsletter.

CALL for SUBMISSIONS

-Puppet video - up to 5 minutes (if you have a longer piece, we appreciate if it is edited up to 5 minutes)

Create and submit your puppet video or slideshow to share at the showcase! The easiest way to share video files would be to upload .mov or .mp4 file onto a file-sharing site and send us the link and details to programming@sfbapg.org.

-Submission is open, spots are available on a first come basis, now until March 20th. For people who would like your piece publicized in the March newsletter, please provide your video, a photo of your video, a couple of sentences about your submission and your short bio., by Feb. 25th.



VIEWS OF OUR ANNUAL SFBAPG HOLIDAY PARTY

by Elisheva Hart

The December Holidays are over. The beginning of January is the time for us puppet people to rest from the hustle, bustle, cookies, and performances..... and then comes 1 more event-OUR Big Event -- SFBAPG'S SECOND ANNUAL HOLIDAY ZOOM PARTY, which manifests under the guidance of our super Planning Committee. Many thanks.

So we were invited to join our Guild in the zoom waiting lounge at 4:45pm, Saturday, January 22, 2022. Our attenders were from many many places in the world besides The Bay

Area. A Dress Code was optional. And suggested was: Dress for Success in snazzy-possibly glittery-outfits from the shoulders up, as befits polite guests....NO CONCERN about the rest of your wardrobe.

And those who arrived at this early time had chances to chat with friends, soak up the atmosphere, and overhear snatches of conversations from others. Or -oops- surreptitiously finish coloring their paper hummingbird puppet for use later in the program.

5:00 The Board members were introduced. We expressed our gratitude for their hard work in keeping the Guild together in these uncertain times. We all need contact with others to help us cope. Our Annual Party is a fabulous way to do this.

We invited 2 talented guest artists to perform for us via zoom. Myra Su is based in Chicago. Kara Morgan is based in LA. For the details of their creds, please consult page 3 of our January, 2022 SFBAPG Newsletter. It also has links to their websites, etc. Each artist's artwork uses lots of paper, but in totally different ways. And both presentations are made by filming, instead of being zoom copies of pre-covid-types of existing on-site performances, complete with alive persons in the audiences.



MYRA SU's FILM 'GOODNIGHT, SHADOW' traces the growth of a baby girl through childhood and adulthood into ELDERHOOD with 2 ABSOLUTELY LINKED characters-the Person + Her Shadow.



SPOILER ALERT The elderly woman carries STRAPPED TO HER BACK an old fashioned lantern complete with a real onfire candle stick--BUT NO SHADOW ANYWHERE! WE VIEWERS ponder what has happened. "Is this an ancient tale, wrapped in a modern world? Is this Karma? Enlightenment? Is she?????" We care very much about her after viewing her whole life so far.

Myra stated during her after-talk, "What can I do on film that I can't do in real life?" And she indeed has accomplished a goodly amount with this movie..

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION INTERACTIVE INTERLUDE: The Party Planning Committee created an activity to insert between the presentations of our two guest artists,. This opportunity encouraged our eager guests and guilders to become part of the show! It was suggested as a "game" by our Webmaster, Marisol Himmel (AKA Moddy) when she recalled the folktale "Flight of the Hummingbird".. Therefore January's Guild Newsletter contained a simple pattern for a paper hummingbird puppet for us to print out, color, and bring to our party.

Then each guilder and guest, one at a time, flew their puppet from their own zoom square into their neighbor's zoom square. These flights were captured by a screen recording and will be edited with voiceover to tell the tale of the Little Hummingbird's heroic flight. It will premiere at our next Guild meeting! And it was loads of fun for all of us to be included in the program's activities.

KARA MORGAN's SIDE SPLITTING EXPLORATION OF HER SELF IN "THE MAGNIFICAL SERIES" was also a fantastic filmed "gift" to finish the evening with. It also uses lots of paper. (Only differently than Myra Su does.) Her series "The Kara Morgan Show" explores herself through a tiny French-speaking, stop-motion animated alter-ego Tiny Kara... who sings/sneers/tells it like it is.... (mostly insults) to Big Kara (the Artist herself.) Tiny Kara lives in a doll house. Big Kara lives in the house that houses Tiny Kara's doll house.

We viewed 2 skits from this series.. One was about getting-or not-a ticket while driving her scooter, much to the confusion of the traffic cop. The other skit was filmed in a real church and Disruptive Kara (the full sized human) began singing in French, to the dismay of the choir which was singing but not in French. "I always wanted to see what goes on in there," Disruptive Kara tells herself while giving a sly, smug glance.

Kara is assisted by her cousin Amy in making these paper puppets EXCEPT for the heads which are done by Kara herself. She usually makes only 2 heads per puppet, with different expressions and emotions on each head.. The deliberately HAPHAZARD DESIGNS of the figures are perfect for their parts-- crudely cut out and painted and fastened together at shoulders, and other joints, with large, obvious, 2-pronged brads.

KARA'S WORLDS ARE HILARIOUS TO THE MAX!

There are a few more minutes for us party-goers to chat together, and then the party is over! For this year anyway.

To customize one of my Mom's Girl Scout Songs: "MAKE NEW PUPPETS , AND KEEP A FEW OLD. SOME ARE SILVER, THE OTHERS GOLD!"

Guild Member Randal Metz's New Book

The Bob Baker Marionette Theater releases an enchanting book By Randal Metz. While most people were staying indoors during the Pandemic staying away from work and social activities, I found myself amongst the fortunate to have been very busy. During the last two years I have spent my time working on my writing skills as well as creating several upcoming Children's Fairyland productions. The Storybook Puppet Theater itself opened again in April of 2021 and has remained a source of puppetry for the community since then. In 2020, Kevin Menegus and I published the book **A Century of California Puppetry, or How The West Was Strung!** The book published by Luman Coad of Charlemagne Press has been very well received and has gained popularity on Amazon and other outlets. This led to



the Bob Baker Theater asking me to write for them the official history of Bob's career and the monumental legacy of the theater itself. During December of 2020 I answered a call from Alex Evans and Winona Bechtle asking if I would be open to writing a coffee table book for them. I of course said that I was very interested. From 1986 to 1990 I was fortunate enough to be personally trained by Bob Baker at his theater, while still working simultaneously for Children's Fairyland. It was great fun, and I lived in Los Angeles and the Bay Area while absorbing Bob's lessons and techniques. I soon found out that I was one of the last puppeteers still connected to the theater from that time period. Alex was very



interested in going through Bob's vast archives and through my history with Bob, and what we unearthed in the library, finally putting in print the fascinating legacy and history of Bob Baker.

As you may know, Bob's original theater in Los Angeles's Echo Park Neighborhood closed due to financial difficulties after Bob's death in 2014, and was reopened by a new group of talented young puppeteers at the historic York Theater in Highland Park. Alex Evans is the Executive

Director and lead puppeteer for this thriving new business. I offered to write the book for a small fee, with all proceeds going to the Bob Baker Theater itself. Much like I have done in the past for Children's Fairyland.

Below, Don Sahlin, Juliet Prowse, Elvis Presley and Bob Baker with puppets from G.I. Blues (1960)



I am always amazed that I have been lucky enough to succeed in two of my passions from childhood. At the age of 10, I decreed I was either going to be a professional puppeteer or a history teacher. I managed to do both, Directing Fairyland's Storybook Theater and writing six books on puppetry and Fairyland. Angel City Press of Los Angeles offered to publish the book once written. With their amazing offer on the table we all rushed to complete the

final edit of the book in just 6 months! My friend David Trice, who I roomed with in L.A., and Elliot Kane who is Archivist for the theater spent several weeks with me combing through original artworks, photo press, job proposals and scrapbooks attempting to create the ultimate visual and spellbinding overview we could produce. Alex and Winona then spent many hours over the months correcting and fine tuning three different drafts of the book. We also combed through the archives of the Los Angeles Library, where Bob donated a great amount of his life's work. This library currently has a museum display of the work of The Yale Puppeteers: Harry Burnett, Forman Brown and Richard Brandon. The final book, edited by myself, Alex and the staff of Angel City Press turned into a visual feast for the eye.

The Foreword is written by Jordon Peele, famous comedian and filmmaker, who in his beginning career wanted to be a puppeteer! The artistic designer for the book, J. Eric Lynxwiler did a masterful layout and helped choose the final photos. Eric has written other books for Angel City Press about Southern California history and Knotts Berry Farm. The book takes us through Bob's early beginnings at age 5, through his mentorship with many of the top puppet talents in Los Angeles in the early 30s - 50s, and of course the entire history of Bob's famous marionette theater in Downtown L.A. There are also chapters on Bob's film career and work in Hollywood, as well as his decades long affiliation with Walt Disney and The Disney Company. The book also focuses on the countless artistic talents of Bob's company that comprised many famous puppeteers as well as talented draftsmen, artists and dreamers. For the first time their efforts are put in print and shared by name. The final chapter details Bob's theater being rediscovered by a new generation and settling in Highland Park to begin again. All of this is highlighted by more than 300 vintage and contemporary full color photographs.

Its title: **Enchanted Strings - Bob Baker Marionette Theater** - The book retails for \$40.00 and can be purchased through the Bob Baker website. It has already received ecstatic reviews from The Library Journal, The Hollywood Reporter, L.A. Magazine and many Los Angeles newspapers. This month I will be going back to L.A. where Alex and I will be talking at local bookstores, talk shows, and civic locations. Each talk will also feature a short show of the Bob Baker puppets. This will all culminate in a final weekend event in April, Bob Baker

Days, where a festival will be held honoring Bob and his puppetry. It has truly been a humbling experience untangling Bob's legacy and achievements. I hope you will get a chance to enjoy this book and help support The Bob Baker Marionette Theater.

Above: Bob Baker and Alton Wood and puppets 1956



PRESS RELEASE

Enchanted Strings: Bob Baker Marionette Theater to be published February 8, 2022.

One of the longest continually operating puppet theaters in the country, Bob Baker Marionette Theater has enchanted families in Los Angeles and beyond with delightful marionette performances since 1963.

Enchanted Strings: Bob Baker Marionette Theater by Randal J. Metz captures the visual history of this palace of puppetry from Bob Baker's earliest days to the theater's transformation into a thriving hub of creative culture. With more than 300 vintage and contemporary photographs,

Enchanted Strings gives the reader a behind-the-scenes look at Bob's amazing work for his theater, Walt Disney, and iconic Hollywood films, such as *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* and *A Star is Born*. Hand-drawn concept art shows the creative development of everything from Bob's earliest road shows, such as *Something to Crow About*, to iconic puppets made for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and the Figment puppet for the "Journey into Imagination" ride at Epcot.

Using archival images and ephemera, ***Enchanted Strings*** delves into remarkable visual artists and craftspeople who worked alongside Bob Baker, contributing their talents to build the theater, design the shows, and hand-craft more than two thousand incredible marionettes. A foreword by acclaimed writer and director Jordan Peele explains his life-long love of puppetry, and the role puppets have in awakening the imagination.

Throughout its history, Bob Baker Marionette Theater has set the bar for puppetry performances, and has achieved national recognition for its whimsical performances. Within Los Angeles, it has become an iconic center of cultural activity, as generations of Angelenos come to the theater for shows, grow older, and return with their own children. This book will be beloved by Bob Baker fans, theater aficionados, and anyone who is a child at heart.

Randal J. Metz is the founder of The Puppet Company, based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He and puppet partner Rhonda Godwin perform shows throughout California. Since 1991, Randal has been the resident puppet master for The Storybook Puppet Theater at Children's Fairyland in Oakland. The Storybook Puppet Theater is the oldest continuously running puppet theater in the United States. Metz has also authored several history books on Fairyland and the history of puppetry in California.

Jordan Peele is an Oscar- and Emmy-winning director, writer, actor, producer, and lover of puppets.



Puppet Art Theater Co. performed Three Little Pigs for 63 classes last week in their first Monthly Virtual Field Trip Program. We wanted to provide classrooms with an easy and affordable way to have a virtual puppet performance. We've picked one date in each month through the end of the school year to do a virtual field trip. Classes register for a very reasonable fee and then sign into our Zoom

Webinar event and watch a live show, see a behind the scenes look at our studio and engage in a Q&A with the performer. We still have many schools and classes booking us for their site only on a specific date and time. The virtual field trip is different in that it is a time and date of our choosing where we open up the virtual doors to any classroom that wants to join in from anywhere in the country. Last week we had tk-3rd grade classes from all over California and even a couple from New York.



Here's some of the feedback we received from our January Virtual Field Trip.

"The show was great! I was so happy to see them interacting with the puppets."

"Everything was loud, clear, and

hilarious. I should have taken a video for you of all the laughter and oohs and aahs!"

"Thank you so much for this wonderful play! My class loved it. They were engaged, telling the characters where to look, etc. I loved the question and answer session."

"My first graders absolutely loved it! They laughed and were completely engaged the whole time. (I could hear giggles from the rooms near me also.) Everything worked extremely well on our end, the volume was great and I loved the extra effects that you were able to add in as compared to the in-person shows."

"Kids were interacting with you and had tons of fun, they were 100 percent engaged. It really felt as if they were watching live. I posted their reaction on our instagram and facebook page."

"My students enjoyed the show today. They were fully engaged. Laughing out loud and shouting to the pig when the wolf came."

"Just want to let you know that my class truly enjoyed the puppet show!! Loved the "video game" pig with its silly eyes! After the show, we talked about different versions of other Three Little Pigs. What a great way to teach similarities and differences! My second graders waved when told, pointed to the wolf, and they were totally engaged with the production."

Photo: Screen Capture from the virtual field trip.

I'm really proud that our efforts to make our virtual shows as engaging as our live productions have really paid off. As you can see by the comments (and as we saw by watching teacher sent in videos of the kiddos interacting with the big screen like we were there in person) online shows can really have a live theater impact with children's audiences if done right.

At the beginning of the pandemic I felt like I had a blindfold and earmuffs on. I didn't realize how much I relied on audience reaction to guide the pacing and rhythm of my show. When it's just you performing into a little glass lens there is no audience guidance. This was terrifying for the first several months and then I began to feel a new confidence flow in as I realized I was relying on my own instincts as a performer (rather than reacting to audience interaction) to guide and pace the shows. I am surprised how much more I actually like the shows that I'm performing and how much more of a confident performer I am becoming.

I do look forward to returning to more in-person performances but I hope there will still be a desire for online shows even after the pandemic is over.

To check out upcoming virtual field trips visit: <https://puppetarts.com/virtual-field-trips/>

Also, please pass this website along to any pre-k-2nd grade teachers that might be looking into an affordable way to see a live puppet show virtually. The next virtual field trip will take place on Feb. 23 at 9am and feature a performance of Three Billy Goats Gruff.

Send future newsletter articles to
newletter@sfbapg.org.