



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*

**2022 2022 January 2022 2022**



**Editor's Note:** Welcome to 2022, All! The Covid years have not been record breaking years in terms of live performances for anyone I suspect. Many puppeteers have used the time to explore other media (like video and online platforms) and have found creative outlets in technology. Some have reported using the time to work on creating new performance material. And others have announced retirement from performing. As we get vaccinations and boosters and learn more about living with this situation, we can feel confident that puppets will continue their long, long record of survival and popularity. After all, they (the puppets) are fully immune and have been with us since the first cave dweller-hunter picked up skull and skin to recount the story of the kill to our suddenly enrapt ancestor audience (my fantasy of the start of puppetry.)

During the past 2 years our guild has marvelously adapted and flourished. Our Zoom meetings have had larger attendance than our average live meetings used to, and people are joining us online from other regions, time zones and countries around the world. Amazing! Your board and guild committees have done a fantastic job adapting to the new situation and finding ways to turn a potential deficit into an asset. I'd like to offer my thanks and admiration for these hard working volunteers who have continued to make this

**Guild Board and Officers**

**President**

John Arnold,  
 president@sfbapg.org

**Vice President**

Camilla Henneman  
 camhenneman@gmail.com

**Secretary**

Barbara Grillo  
 bgrillo@contracosta.edu

**Treasurer**

Valerie Nelson  
 mail@magicalmoonshine.org

**Membership**

Gabrielle Greenfield  
 membership@sfbapg.org

**Webmaster**

Marisol Himmel  
 webmaster@sfbapg.org

**Programming**

Nao Kobayashi,  
 programming@sfbapg.org

Judy Roberto  
 be\_artsy@hotmail.com

Ilene Kennedy  
 hope922000@yahoo.com

**Newsletter**

Michael Nelson  
 newsletter@sfbapg.org

**Librarian**

Lee Armstrong  
 library@sfbapg.org

guild one of the strongest puppetry guilds in the U.S. and who have continued our guild mission of supporting and promoting the art of puppetry in our communities. It has not been easy. And the usual rewards of volunteer service may be lacking a bit as we don't get to see and thank and congratulate each other in person so much these days. So right here and right now: **Thanks and kudos to all of you who have kept the guild growing and moving forward throughout this pandemic! Thanks for all your board and committee Zoom meetings, your head scratching as to how to adapt to pandemic times, your planning of fun and exciting events for us, your vision and plans for the future, your perseverance in the face of challenges. AND thanks to you guild members for your continued support and faith in your guild. Your membership dues help, of course (and it is time to renew if you have not done so already) and more importantly, your participation and your contributions to our favorite art form and our guild activities and events have served us all and made life just a little bit sweeter! And so we now step boldly (or tentatively) into 2022 with our hopes, our dreams and our puppets!**

## NEXT GUILD EVENT, SATURDAY, JANUARY 22

### Myra Su and Kara Morgan Featured at January Zoom Party

Happy holidays to you all! Traditionally, many puppeteers are busy during the Christmas season, so our post-December holiday gathering is mid-January. This year, we are taking the extra safe choice of a zoom-based gathering, to which you can invite friends from other physical locations...all over the world!

#### January Holiday Zoom Party

**!!!new date!!!** Saturday January 22,  
5pm-6:30 (PST) Link to come soon.

#### Waiting Lounge

4:45pm waiting lounge will be open. Come early and say "hi" to friends!

There will be a pre-party waiting lounge with our special host, where you can greet and meet, introduce yourself to other party members.



#### Video & Guest Artists

This new year, we are celebrating two talented guest artists, Myra Su from Chicago, and Kara Morgan from LA! Each artist will introduce their innovative short videos, and then will participate in a short Q&A. Their work is directed to a more teen and adult audience.

**Make and Join Our Paper Puppet Game**

We are planning to share a fun DIY paper pattern project with you, a few weeks before the event, online and SNS (social networks!) You can download and create your own puppet, and join the game together at the zoom party. More info will be released soon on SNS and in our newsletter.

**Guest Artist: Myra Su**

Myra Su is a storyteller, puppeteer, and puppet maker based in Chicago, <https://myrasu.com>. Her primary medium is shadow puppetry but her work also includes experimentations with video, crankies, and other paper-based media. Most recently, she was a recipient of a Handmade Puppet Dreams 2020 Quarantine Film Micro-Commission grant. Her short puppet film, GOODNIGHT SHADOW, debuted in February 2021 and was made under lockdown conditions. She is currently teaching puppetry workshops online as well as designing puppets for an upcoming music video. In addition to her independent work, she is a touring performer with Manual Cinema, with performances worldwide. She is also a co-curator for a quarterly puppet slam, "Nasty, Brutish & Short."

**Guest Artist: Kara Morgan**

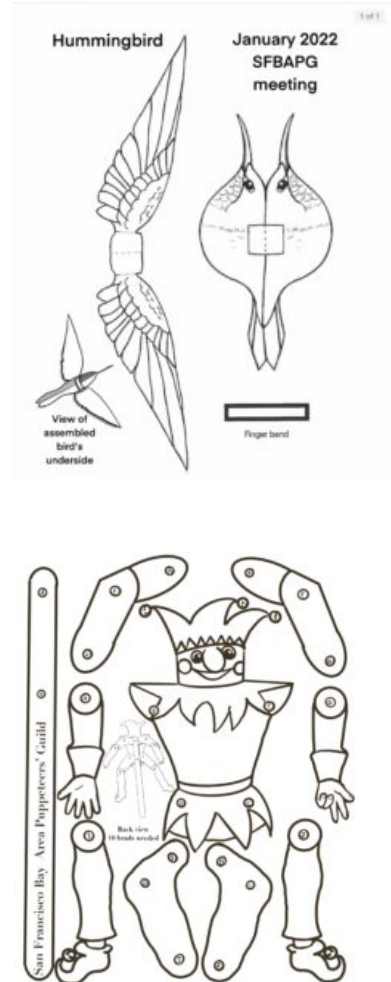
Kara Morgan is a comedic writer and performer who explores the hidden layers of the self through stop-motion animation and character based sketch comedy, <https://karamorgan.com>. Having begun her career as an opera singer, Kara interweaves her music and her singing into her creations. Her series *The Kara Morgan Show* explores the self through the device of a tiny French-speaking, stop-motion animated alter-ego, Tiny Kara. A student of the Groundlings Theater and School, Kara's current work comedically explores her mind's inner workings through her original characters The Perfectionist, The Inner Child, Anxiety, The Ego, The Diva and many more. You can see her work on Instagram or Tiktok as @karaleemo!

## Printable Paper Puppets (for January meeting)

Our upcoming January meeting, while still online (thanks, omicron) promises to be more interactive! Those who wish to participate will have the opportunity to create a hummingbird paper puppet that will be part of a short story performance. This performance will feature all of us and will be filmed during our zoom meeting. The story is based on a folktale called “Flight of the Hummingbird”. The idea is that we will each design our hummingbird and have it ready in time for our meeting on January 22nd at which point the little paper puppet will “fly” from one person’s zoom square into their neighbor’s square, left, right, above or below! A screen recording will be made and edited with voiceover to tell the tale of the little hummingbird’s heroic flight. We encourage you to print out and design your own hummingbird puppet and be present at our next Guild meeting to be included in this virtual collaboration.

You may download your copy at <https://sfbapg.org/printables/>

For added fun, you’ll find a Jumping Jack paper puppet of our Guild mascot that was created as a gift for all our Guild Members and social media followers. Happy crafting!



## REVISITING NOVEMBER 6 , 2021 GUILD MEETING

SOME MEMORIES OF PATRICK AND SEAN JOHNSON'S VIRTUAL PRESENTATION OF SWAZZLE, THEIR AMAZING PUPPET COMPANY! + OTHER MEMORIES OF THEM AS YOUNG MEMBERS OF SFBAPG, by Elisheva Hart

There was so much information crammed into our November Virtual Guild Meeting consisting of a tour of their workshop, puppets used as demos, and much discussion about almost everything concerning puppet building. Then many more demos, along with Questions from the Guilders, overflowed the 2 hours allotted for our program. And we Guilders were watching from near, and from as far as Hawaii and Germany.

There was so much presented that I couldn't take notes about technique. My first interest in attending this event was to see and wave at friends, many of whom I have not seen for months.

And also I was interested to see how the Johnson brothers have progressed during the years since they left our Bay Area to explore the puppetry in the Los Angeles area. They are now settled in Grass Valley, which is much closer to us. Hurray! Hopefully we can see them sometime when they can revisit our Bay Area in person.

They are truly amazing. Sometimes one can start a sentence then his twin brother can finish it without pausing. Seems a handy talent for puppeteers manipulating 2 puppets (or 3) at once!

Here are a few tips from them. "When dyeing fabrics or fleece, use Rit Dye because it is available "universally". Therefore easiest to match colors later if OOP'S it is necessary to dye more fabric" [Historical note-The tie-dye tee shirts from the Hippies of the 60's used Rit as it was available everywhere.. The highly fluorescent "Hippy" tie-dye tees are late comers, now that the bright colors are also very available! EH]

"Puppet arms can never be too long! They must be long enough to scratch the puppet's head. Then they will be long enough to pick something up." [It seems this would work beautifully with puppets who have rods manipulating the puppet's arms. Probably wouldn't work with sock puppets or hand/glove puppets. Their arms are naturally stubby. EH]

"Do both Performing and Building. This exercises both sides of your brain!"

Kamela Portuges was a very good friend of Patrick and Sean. Here is one quote from her that they have passed on to us. "Don't do it! Don't perform for 'NO PAY' aka 'just for exposure!' Remember you can die from exposure".

Before Sean and Patrick went South they were quite involved with SFBAPG, in fact being co-presidents. [The first co-presidents I can remember. EH]

Once we had a Guild meeting at Lettie Schubert's home in Mill valley. Kitty Adams, who told many stories with puppets at local libraries, had successfully gotten the Guild to vote \$25/per year for additional puppetry books for our library. The still young Johnsons shouted out in unison their approval by shouting out,"YES! Most of the books we have in the library are at least 15 YEARS OLD!" This brought down the house with laughter from us older members. There were not the amazing amount of puppetry books available then, as there are now! So we treasured the ones written by puppeteers from the past, even if they were decades old and some techniques outdated.

Back in the days when the Johnsons were still living here, one of our Guilders, Dan Winkleman, was a Park Ranger at Angel Island, in the SF Bay. He was very upset since he could never come to our Guild meetings because he was working, and living on the island. Then he decided to have us meet on Angel Island. This worked! So we went there periodically on the ferries! What fun! (He is retired now and moved away.)

Besides having day trips to Angel Island, at least twice we had sleepovers there in one of the original Victorian buildings in Angel Island's Fort McDowell. For this we had special permission. An alternative was sleeping outdoors if the weather was good . [Beware of the brilliant green grass lawns...I know from personal experience that their sprinklers automatically turn on at midnight! EH]

In the late hours, when others were already in their sleeping bags, we could hear Patrick, Sean, and Anita Coulter (who also became a Guild President) doing Puppet Slams together. The guys and their puppets were brilliant and quick at doing Slams-- where one puppet had to verbally "top" the other puppet/s.. Anita was good but lagged with her responses. Of course the Johnsons had done Slams with each other many times before and were in top form. This was also the time when Poetry Slams were in vogue, and therefore probably were the models for Puppet Slams.

Thanks so much Sean and Patrick for your fountain of knowledge-and of course-"Thanks for the Memories!"

## Thank You to Swazzle

It's not too late to say a special thank you to Sean and Patrick Johnson for the amazing zoom workshop they gave to the Guild in October, especially as the Guild Treasurer is announcing a "Swazzle Helps With Dues" in this newsletter.

Those that attended the October Guild meeting were treated to a tour of the Swazzle workshop. Sean and Patrick peppered their talk with tons of practical info on products, organization of supplies, tools, the business of making money, puppet history and a peek at their new laser which cuts fabric, foam and a host of other materials. Then, they demoed how they break down a design drawing into basic shapes. The next step showed how they patterned out shapes using a formula to create foam balls, spheres and other useful shapes. After labelling the shape, they save it to use again if a similar foam shape is needed at another time. This workshop was excellent on so many levels and there were take-aways for everyone, whether you were a beginner, or a professional puppeteer. That's not an easy thing to do!

Again, thank you so much for your generous gift of time and talent. And for your thoughtful donation of the honorarium, which you'd like to see help people who want to join or renew their Guild membership, but might not be in a position this year to send in their dues.

With great appreciation  
The Guild Programming Committee

**A note from your treasurer, Valerie Nelson:** *A big thank you to the Johnson brothers and Swazzle for their wonderful workshop. They asked that their honorarium be used to help anyone who wishes to renew or join but finds themselves short of funds. Just note on your application that you wish to use this source for your membership.*

## With Gratitude and Hope

By Lee Armstrong, Images in Motion

Companies thrive because people and businesses like their work and invest in their services. Reflecting on the overwhelming condolences we received when our co-owner Kamela Portuges passed away in Oct., we have such gratitude for all the people who have supported us this past year.

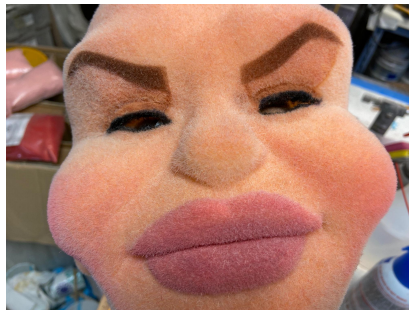
We'd like to thank the Sonoma Safety Pals, who trusted us to write, puppeteer and shoot their PSAs. Their Covid PSA, with its important message, won a national Telly. Sean and Patrick Johnson's Swazzle have always been a valued company and friends. We provided castings of mochi and waffles for them (Waffles + Mochi) and a radio control fish for Crank Yankers (*image to right, with Kieron*). We appreciated ad agency Medic, who invited us to build puppets and puppeteer on a very fun insurance commercial. Thanks to Chicago based METV who did a web search and hired us to build their cohost Toony, for "Toon In With Me." And not to forget Aran de la Peña from Pro Puppetmakers, who shipped us a dozen foam celebrity heads to be flocked and airbrushed for "Let's Be Real." We loved building a dog puppet for a very talented 13 year old ventriloquist. We are grateful for the talents of Nao Kobayashi, our fabricator, who built many of the IIM puppets with Kamela.



I'd like to thank Kathy Foley, for passing on her course "Jim Henson and the Art of the Muppets" at UC Santa Cruz to us. I taught "Jim Henson and the Art of the



Images, above from L to R: Dog Puppet, Adie Valavanis peeking from behind a silicon layer of the Gill-man, Nao Kobayashi flocking a mochi puppet for Swazzle



Images to L and above, from L to R: Toony for METV Chicago, Flocked Foam Puppet Head for Let's Be Real, 3D Print for Life on Earth Art--article continues, below.

Puppets for both the Spring and Fall quarters this year. With 250 students in these large lecture zoom classes, it's still possible to teach the basics of TV puppetry, especially as every student had their own zoom camera to practice with. Students made puppets, created a puppet video or submitted a Wikipedia page featuring a puppeteer. Kamela shared her animation and scriptwriting expertise in the Winter quarter with "Pixar: Story Matters."



For a puppet company, the Images in Motion mold, cast and 3D print division had a very busy 2021. We have just completed the 21<sup>st</sup> year of support for a Bay Area animation company which can't be named, as well as a large quantity of service awards for a similar unnamed animation company. We're happy to say that some of our castings were sent to the Academy of Motion Pictures, the Boston Museum of Science and our newest animation client, Kuku Studios in Berkeley, who are working on a TV series for Sony. Kieron Robbins now has the very capable and talented Adie Valavanis to work with him in the mold and casting section. One of their current projects is molding the original Gill-man from "Creature from the Black Lagoon" to make castings for a private client.

We value the work of Life on Earth Art, <https://www.lifeonearthart.com> which makes community art to ignite healing and change. Kamela was very involved in the 3D design of their artwork, and the shop 3D printed, molded and cast a variety of pieces for this meaningful project.

For continuing work with our favorite "unnamed" aquarium, we acquired the Peopoly Phenom Prime MSLA 3D Printer. It prints with a UV activated resin, has a large print bed and provides high resolution products. That, teamed with our new scanner, opens the doors to more 3D puppet fabrication possibilities.

We greatly miss our gifted business partner, Kamela. We're grateful to all our staff, friends, business associates and our Puppet Guild friends who have supported us this difficult year. We anticipate continuing onward. As well as client work, we want to shoot some of our own puppet works, finish art projects and teach puppetry locally in Sonoma and further afield. We look to 2022 with hope, and wish you all a creative new year.

## Mary Nagler Reports on Attending Bernd Ogrodnik's Academy of the Wooden Puppet.

Receiving the UNIMA travel scholarship in a Covid year, when we were all expected to isolate, has made it possible to have a life-changing and rich opportunity online, when so many other things important to my life have shut down. My sincere thanks again to UNIMA USA and the committee for funds to attend Bernd Ogrodnik's Academy of the Wooden Puppet.

I shared the Wood nymph buddy puppet I carved in the Foundation class in the Feb issue of the UNIMA newsletter. At conclusion of the Foundation Class, I received a Certificate of Completion, and signed up immediately to go onto the Academy.

The class is broken into 6 modules that build on each other. There is one month of classes and a month to do the work. There are also weekly Q&A sessions, so specific questions can be asked, and a monthly Live Zoom with Sir Bernd where we have a chance to show our work and put faces to our fellow students and ask questions. Also offered are “Treasure boxes” monthly, where Bernd goes into more depth on tools, woodlore, books and more; even taking care of the puppeteer!

Spending time each week during his clear, concise, well filmed, and informative classes, listening to his guitar softly strumming in the background has been a place of artistic challenge, encouragement, and peace for my soul. Our closed Facebook group of international students has built a community of mutual respect and encouragement and seeing their work, as they too develop, is an ongoing joy.

At this writing I am a bit behind, but Bernd emphasizes it is the journey that is more important than the final destination and to go at our own pace. He graciously gives us access to all the Academy teaching for a year following the conclusion of the course. I am catching up fast and planning to use the puppets I build in two future performances! Here are a few examples of my work in Module 1 and 2. More to follow...



**Once again, thanks to all of our great contributors to the newsletter. If you have articles, photos, tips, reviews, etc., send to [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org).**