



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)

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



## Happy Dia de los Muertos!

*The Mexican Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is traditionally celebrated on November 1 & 2 and these days can include puppet skeletons as well as other traditions.*

## Dec. Guild Meeting & Pam Severns' Writing Puppetry Acts for Puppet Slams

Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 7-8:30ish pm on Zoom

Join the fun in this one-hour workshop by LA-based Pam Severns. This workshop will be brimming over with ideas to help you devise, structure, and create characters for puppetry acts for puppet slams. We will discuss the types of acts we often see in puppetry and why they work. Students will generate a few of their own ideas to choose from and will create an outline for a new puppet act. All styles of puppetry and puppeteering skills are welcome.

### Guild Board and Officers

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**Note:** A Puppet Slam is an evening of curated short-form puppetry acts intended for adult audiences. The Puppet Slam Network fosters growth and diversity in puppetry through grant opportunities and community building.

Nice things people have said:

*"She has the physical expressiveness and luminosity of the great Carol Burnett."*

- The Puppetry Journal

"...renowned for her unorthodox take on classic puppetry"

- The LA Times

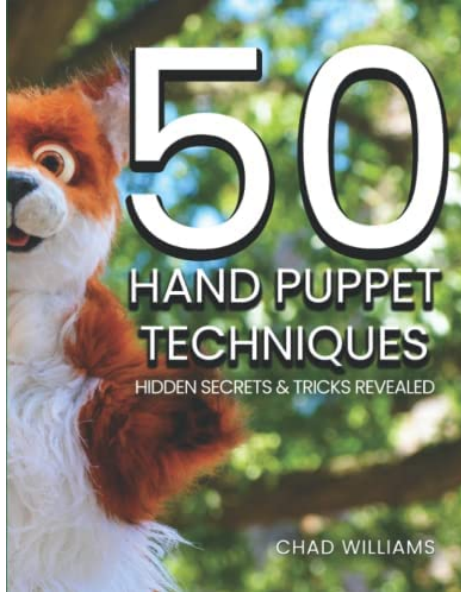
**Pam Severns** is a comedian and performer who has appeared on the stages of the Jim Henson Company stage in Hollywood, Coachella, and LA's most exclusive variety show, Brookledge Follies. She has also worked on TV projects with IFC, Amazon, MTV, NBC, and PBS. Pam is a recipient of a 2019 Jim Henson Foundation grant for her solo comedy show, Moving Pictures. Her film Bunny Love, which won Best Film at the 2019 National Puppetry Festival, is available on Amazon Prime and was made possible by a 2018 filmmaking commission from Heather Henson's Handmade Puppet Dreams. During the pandemic Pam managed the NYC-based Puppet Slam Network for Heather Henson, which funds puppetry artists all over North America.



There will be a brief Guild meeting to share information and puppet announcements.

## 2 Exciting New Books for the Guild Library

### 50 Hand Puppet Techniques: Hidden Secrets and Tricks Revealed



Paperback – April 1, 2022 by [Chad Williams](#) (Author)

Teachers, parents, actors and students can now learn 50 professional puppetry techniques from a hand puppet master. Learn ancient puppet secrets and skills while playing and having fun!

Your puppet will breathe, think, walk, emote and much more after reading this fun and easy to understand manual on hand puppet technique.

Puppeteer Chad Williams, Wonderspark Theater has performed thousands of hand puppet shows and studied under some of the most prestigious names in American puppetry. Combining techniques from European, Chinese and Modern hand puppet styles, he developed his own system and has taught it to actors, puppeteers, teachers, parents and others at universities and international festivals.

### Foam Patterning and Construction Techniques: Turning 2D Designs into 3D Shapes

1st Edition by [Mary McClung](#) (Author)

*Foam Patterning and Construction Techniques: Turning 2D Designs into 3D Shapes* explains how to create your theatrical prop, puppet, or costume design using the unique and tricky medium of foam. Step-by-step instructions, photographs, and explanations illustrate how to translate your design from paper to reality by creating custom "skin" patterns, followed by creation of a foam mockup. The book details how to bring your project to life with varied finishing techniques, including using fur and fabric coverings and dying and painting foam. Numerous supplies, tools, and safety procedures and protocols are also covered.

The Guild library is a treasure trove of puppetry information. You can request these





new books or books on any puppet topic by emailing Lee at [library@sfbapg.org](mailto:library@sfbapg.org).

Also, our Guild purchased a one-year subscription to the Stan Winston School of Character Arts. If you aren't familiar with this site, it's the world's premier online destination for learning the art and technology of character creation from Hollywood's leading artists and technical wizards. It has a puppet section with notable builders and performers. To get familiar with the puppet tutorials available, go to <https://www.stanwinstonschool.com/>. Then click on the search feature (magnifying glass on the upper right) and type in "puppets." However, you can also visit videos on creature fabrication, stop motion armatures, wiggling, making eyeballs and all sorts of interesting crafts!

After a busy month or two of checking out the Stan Winston courses, we've had no Guild activity. If you'd like to see this subscription continue, now is the time to show it by checking this subscription out. Contact the Guild librarian, Lee Armstrong at [library@sfbapg.org](mailto:library@sfbapg.org), and she will provide you with the password, on a first come, first served basis. If the subscription is checked out, you'll go on the waitlist for the next available check out. Each Guild member can request use of this subscription for up to 2 weeks, but if no one is on the waitlist, you can access it until there's a request. (This access time may change, depending on usage.) Have you checked it out once but would like to again? If there's no waitlist, you can use it a second time. Don't delay, contact Lee today!

If you'd like to get started immediately with these amazing tutorials and the Guild subscription is already checked out, you can sign up at <https://www.stanwinstonschool.com/> for a free 7-day trial. 100's of courses available. Try out...

Check out Pathways, <https://www.stanwinstonschool.com/pathways>, with groups of courses: Basic Design, Basic Painting, Molding and Casting, Mechanical and Animatronics, Filmmaking, Fabrication Basics, etc. These courses open new doors and possibilities!

## Weekend Workshop with Valentine Vox

The weekend of October 14, 15 and 16 I had the privilege of attending Valentine Vox's Vent-o-rama Workshop at the Scott Land School in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This was made possible by a scholarship from the Marc Dunworth Foundation of the Performing Arts; a non-profit organization founded in memory of Marc Dunworth to promote and encourage the performing arts, especially the puppetry arts, through grants, scholarships, performances, and education.

Friday the 14th we focused on the history of ventriloquism, its origins and the current landscape of ventriloquist acts. I





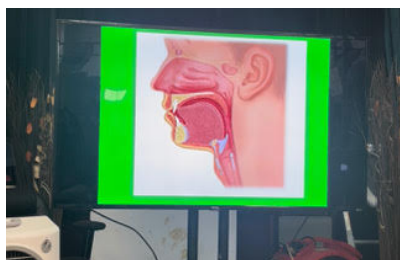
got to see and work a Señor Wences “Pedro” box, signed by Señor Wences himself!

Valentine was teaching from his scholarly book on the history of ventriloquism, “ I Can See Your Lips Moving: the history and art of ventriloquism”, which traces the practice



back some three thousand years. I had bought a copy online before the workshop but it didn't arrive in time for me to bring it along, so I purchased a book from Valentine himself, which he graciously signed.

After the morning's history lesson, and a delicious Thai lunch provided by the Scott Land school, we started work on our own vent figures, using a Braylu complete figure kit the size of a 4 year old child!



We used pro-proxy to modify and customize our figure's facial features. I “Moddy-fied” mine by adding eyebrows, slight jowls and wrinkles.



The following day we practiced both near and far voice, with Valentine going over each of the more difficult letters to pronounce in ventriloquism, and giving us

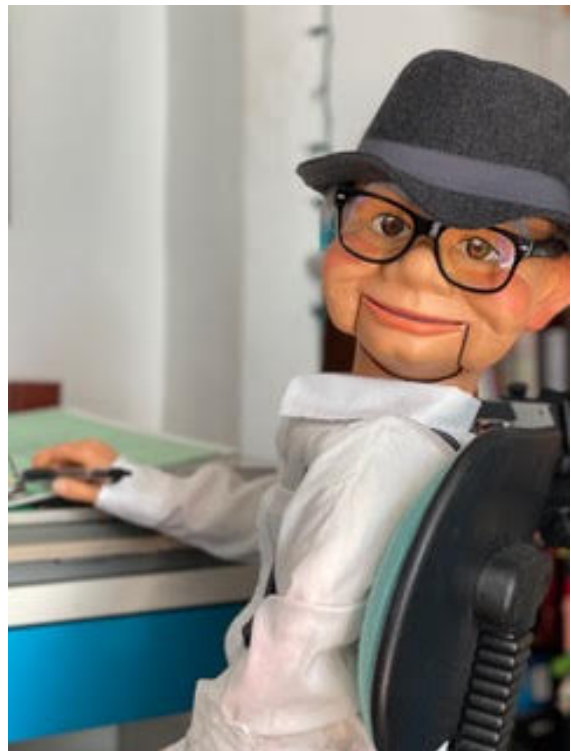


different methods, techniques and phrases to practice to improve our ventriloquy.

Work continued on our figures, with help from Scott Land who showed us how to put together the moving mouth mechanism.

On the third and final day of the workshop we learned Valentine Vox's life story, and what a life he's lived!

Valentine Vox is a British born American ventriloquist. At 84 years old, his career spans over 50 years appearing in venues around the world in theatre, cabaret and on television. Besides English, he has performed his act in Japanese and German languages. One of my favorite anecdotes was that of his appearance in the "To Tell the Truth" game show where a celebrity panel questions contestants in an attempt to determine the actual person associated with the story. Valentine was invited to be the main contestant. Two other men of similar age were also "contestants" who simply sat with their mouths posed as though they were doing ventriloquism. When one of the celebrity panelists would ask a question of any of the three contestants, Valentine would be the one to answer the question, regardless of which contestant was asked. The effect was so convincing that none of the celebrity panelists was able to determine who the true ventriloquist was!



In 1997, Vox became the director of the International Ventriloquist Association and organized annual conventions in Las Vegas from 1997 to 2003 where he brought together some of the world's top ventriloquists which included Jeff Dunham, Nina Conti, Jay Johnson, Ronn Lucas, Mallory Lewis, and Paul Winchell. He married his wife, Eyvonne, at one such convention; His puppet character, a fluffy red dog named George, serving as best man, and Eyvonne's baby puppet, Twyla, as maid of honor.

Vox took his name for the 1840 Victorian novel by Henry Cockton, *The Life and Adventures of Valentine Vox the Ventriloquist*

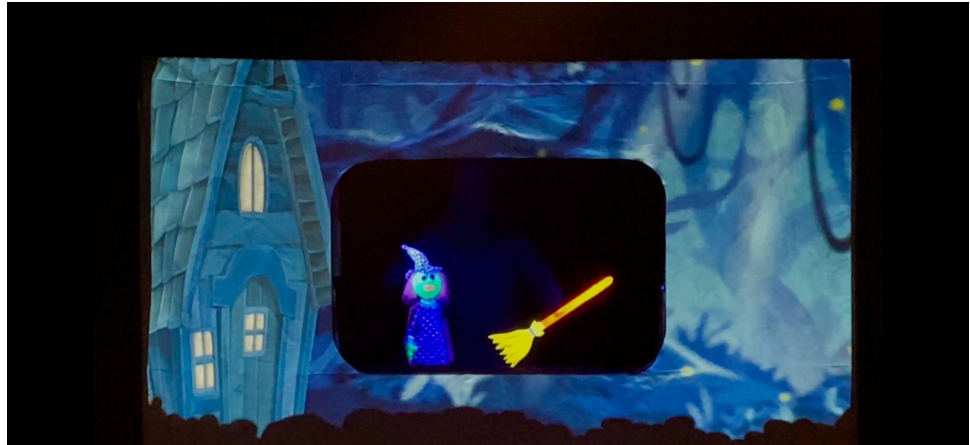
I had an enjoyable weekend where I grew in appreciation for the art of ventriloquism and the true artistry that goes into each vent figure or dummy. My finished figure, Frank Henderson, now sits in the office of my Homeschool Enrichment program, Sacramento Spark, and will be serving as "principal" of my little school.

## Puppets Speak! News from the Members

### Winnie the Witch Premieres in its Reimagined Form

From Art  
Grueneberger

Puppet Art Theater  
Co. began  
incorporating digital  
sets and animations  
into our  
live-streaming  
programs during the  
pandemic. As we  
began to return to

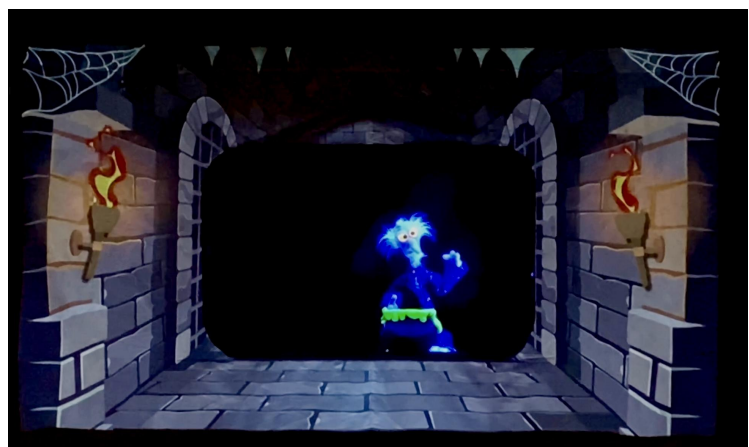


in-person performances I wanted to see if it would be possible to integrate these digital assets into our in-person shows. Our proof of concept was a new version of Three Little Pigs that we presented at the Puppet Love Festival in Seattle and the Great Plains Puppet Train Festival in Iowa. In “Pigs” we used a high lumen short throw projector to add sets, transitional animations and effects projected onto the front curtain of our puppet stage.

See clips from Three Little Pigs here: <https://youtu.be/s3ule5HsCLU>

There are plenty of obstacles using projections in a live show. Perhaps most challenging is finding a way to light the puppets without washing out the projections. The space we are in must be dark and none of the lights used to light the puppets can wash onto the front curtain/screen. We found workarounds for Three Little Pigs that allowed for great lighting of the puppets without compromising the projections, though the new tech adds an hour to our setup time.

For our second attempt at a “projection show” we re-imagined our blacklight Halloween show Winnie the Witch. In this table-top show the puppets are lit with blacklights so there wasn't any concern about visible light compromising the projections. While a dark space was still required, this greatly simplified the tech.





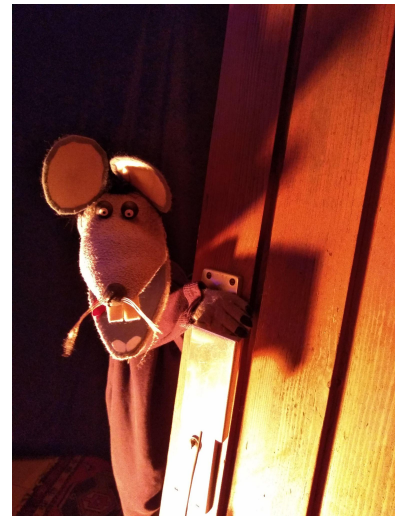
Clips from Winnie the Witch: [https://youtu.be/1\\_nSSIacK40](https://youtu.be/1_nSSIacK40)

The marriage of the blacklight puppets and projections has been a successful union, one in which we look forward to trying out in our other blacklight show.

From our Far Flung German Guild Member, Herbert Lange:



Finally, following Larry Schmidt's example of the Oakland DRIVEWAY FOLLIES, my partner Martin and I created our own little Halloween thing at our Suderburg door. The 10-minute-miniature play is about a witch and her mouse servant (plus a squid and a handsome boy devil) handing out treats to everybody even magically turning sweet candy mice into sherbet powder. We received



nice reviews from trick-or-treaters, their families and our neighbors alike. In fact, it was so much fun that we are definitely planning to continue this program next Halloween. BOO!



### National Puppet Theatre Free Bay Area Shows

From Steve Norman

The National Puppet Theatre will be performing a marionette Nutcracker Suite Dec. 16 at 7 PM and Dec 17 at 3 pm at Hope Community Church 2190 Peralta BLVD Fremont, CA

Admission is free. Show length is about 30 minutes The marionette Nutcracker Suite features traditional music by Tchaikovsky and beautiful handcrafted large size marionette puppets performed by The National Puppet Theatre.

Admission is empty recyclable plastic bottles or aluminum soda cans for African Massai Clean Water Wells.

The National Puppet Theatre has been creating and performing marionette shows throughout the country since 1950 at schools, fairs, theatres and television. This presentation is sure to capture the interest and imaginations of audiences of all ages.

<https://www.facebook.com/nationalpuppets>

## Vallejo Future Puppet Possibilities

From Guild Secretary CE Choy

Just heads up. I'm currently in a stage production of Sylvia in Vallejo. My next goal is to obtain access to direct future shows there. My hope is to bring puppetry more and more into shows and perhaps work on Puppet Workshops there.

## Great Plains Puppet Festival

By Camilla Henneman

In a sleepy little town in the Midwest magic happens. I confess that I love the intimacy of regional puppet festivals. Every puppet festival has had its own personality, but there are few to rival this year's Great Plains Puppet Train.

Monica Leo (again) has managed to pull together a brilliant collection of puppeteers and workshops, local and some from around the world.

The festival started off with a performance by Aretta Baumgartner and Thom Stanley of The Center for Puppetry Arts, **Down The Rabbit Hole**, A beautiful, silly, and touching shadow journey based on Alice in Wonderland's adventures.

Friday was workshop day. The lineup of workshops alone was one of the best I have ever seen, (worth making the trip for the workshops alone)

**Pop Up/Tunnel Book Puppet Theatre Creation** by Seth Eberle, **Meet Our Mentors** with Art Grueneberger, **Uppets: 2 Workshops** by Brant Bollman, **Building a Dynamic Parade Program** and **Building an Advocacy Puppet, Alexander Technique** by Mary Stuyvesant Eagle, **Puppetry in Theater Arts and Education** by Johanna Smithy, **CHOICES FOR VOICES: a play shop for vocals**, by Aretta Baumgartner, **Shadow Puppetry Demonstration & Workshop** by Jim Napolitano (**Ready, Set, GO! Running a Prosperous Entertainment Business** by Art Grueneberger, **We Came as Refugees: An American Story**; Video and discussion facilitated by Daniel Romano, **The Whys of Marionettes** by Kurt Hunter, **Little Maggie Pie & Marvelous Magpie Moon, performance-workshop** by Eva Adderl, **Structuring Story** by Meg Tominga





Friday morning's shows started with a hilarious performance of **The Three Little Pigs** by Art Grueneberger. Later, Mike Horner of Mesner Puppets performed his original show **How To Snag A Sea Monster**, a sweet, funny and inspirational tale about struggling to fit in.

Friday's evening performance was from Krystal Theater, a Kenyan puppetry group who performed **Tears By The River**. The performance blended traditional music, many types of puppetry including, masks, rod puppets, hand puppets and incorporated audience participation. The show celebrates the oral traditions of African storytelling. **Tears By The River** is a story about courage, about never giving up, and about honor. It was funny and touching. Puppeteers Fedelis Kyalo and Chrispin Mwashagha Mwakideu are both brilliant performers and accomplished musicians. I am writing an article on Krystal Theater for the Puppeteers Of America journal winter edition (so

watch for that around January).



The evening's puppet slam was held at the stage in Ron-De-Voo Park created through the efforts of Monica Leo. There was a wonderful surprise when Stephanie Vallez of Eulenspiegel Theater revealed a plaque that had been installed in the park dedicating the stage to Monica. Not too many dry eyes in the house park that night. The slam was full of terrific performances. One of the



standouts was Nancy Clark's knee puppet show.

On Saturday the festival teamed up with the annual West Liberty children's festival. There were performances in the park all day long. The show's lineup included **The Emperor's Nightingale** by Stephanie Vallez of Eulenspiegel. It was a beautiful and funny tale of obsession. I learned that Stephanie is an accomplished musician as well as a fantastic puppeteer.



**Magnificent Monster Circus** from Cactus Head Puppets was a lively, interactive show terrific for young children. Anne Newman performed a fun take on **Little Red Riding Hood** with hand puppets. David Hanzal and Leif Jurgensen presented, **Puss in Boots**, their show using rod marionettes about a trickster cat who uses her wits to outsmart a simple king and a wicked ogre.

We dodged a bit of rain in between eating delicious tacos. One of the highlights at the children's festival is the fantastic regional Mexican street food vendors.

The festival then moved indoors for an ice cream social and memorial slideshow of people the Midwest region has lost since 2018. The region has suffered some heartbreaking losses, including one of my dear friends, Stan Gulick.

For the evening's performance, Seth Eberle and Kallie Melvin performed **The Box King**, a show about two very different kingdoms joined together through marriage and calamity.

Sunday morning after cleanup, farewells and the delicious breakfast burritos at Owlglass Theater, we headed to The Strand where we watched the final performance **Spas, The Tiger Cub**, from Puppet Art LTD. Puppet Art LTD is a puppet troupe from Bulgaria. The performers created all of the sets and puppets from balloons. Aside from the brilliance of being able to pack up their whole show in their back pocket, the performers were hilariously funny and the show was touching and silly in the best possible way. At the end of the show all of the puppets and props were given away. Nobody went away empty-handed if they waited for a puppet. All in all I have to say that the 2022 Great Plains puppet train was one of the most enjoyable and well organized festivals that I have had the pleasure of attending.

One of the things that also made this event enjoyable for me was that I rented an Air B&B just a block away from the festival which I shared with an amazing group of old and new friends. It was lovely to have a place so close by to be able to sit up into the wee hours and share stories, or just get away for a few minutes and take a break between shows.

And finally, a heartfelt thanks to Monica and her crew! You did it again! Until next time.

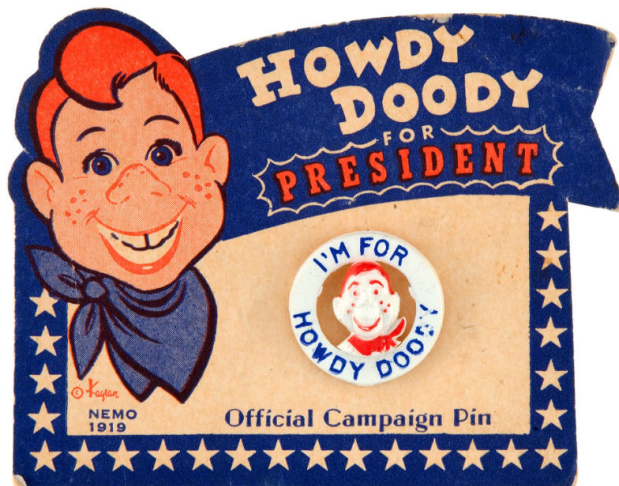
# Howdy Doody for President

By Elisheva Hart

Often the word puppet is associated with a political figure who is highly influenced and manipulated by someone who is behind the scene. Well, in 1948 there was a real puppet who ran for President....of the American Children..... and was broadcast daily on TV, which was still very new. (The real reason was to prove to sponsors that this audience could be lucrative!) A song was written:

"Howdy Doody for President.  
He's America's choice.  
He will never be hesitant  
To fight for the rights of girls and boys."

"Howdy Doody for President.  
In the White House he'll be.  
Howdy Doody for President.  
Let's speed him on to victory."



The show received a quarter of a million responses for the free campaign buttons...which was a high percentage of the number of TVs

being seen. Buffalo Bob commented, "If General Dwight D. Eisenhower hadn't led the Allied Forces to victory in World War II--and if kids had had the vote--Howdy would have defeated Ike that year!" From 'Howdie and Me', by Buffalo Bob Smith and Donna McCrohan.

Who would you have voted for?

## Puppet Podcast



New episode of the Under The Puppet podcast has arrived. My guest is Mallory Lewis, daughter of Shari Lewis and we discuss her new book about her mom: Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop: The Team That Changed Children's Television. This new interview is available wherever you get your podcasts or at [underthepuppet.com](http://underthepuppet.com)

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