



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*



## Who's the Fool now? (Happy April Fools Day)

Michael Nelson

The fool or jester has been an important character in many cultures throughout recorded history. Puppets and fools/jesters share many characteristics and, in fact, puppets readily and often play the role of the fool in performance. Like the fool, the puppet can be an anti-hero, using often inappropriate actions and words to satirize or comment on politics and culture. And the puppet can get away with it because it (the puppet) is of little consequence. Valerie and I once met a long time puppeteer from Argentina who told us that during the late 1970s, early '80s, when many, many "leftist dissidents" were being "disappeared" under the oppressive rule of the military junta, almost all theatre came to a halt in an attempt to stop the dissemination of ideas that were contra to the powers that be. However, our puppeteer was ignored and allowed to continue to perform and even to share contrary political beliefs because, as he said, "It was only puppets."

While puppet fools play a role in many Asian traditions (example, Indonesian puppetry) our best known Western puppet fool may be the English Punch. The Punch and Judy tradition began with the Italian theater tradition Commedia dell'Arte and went on to become rather synonymous with British puppetry.

### Guild Board and Officers

#### President

John Arnold,  
 president@sfbapg.org

#### Vice President

Camilla Henneman  
 vp@sfbapg.org

#### Secretary

CE Choy  
 secretary@sfbapg.org

#### Treasurer

Valerie Nelson  
 treasurer@sfbapg.org

#### Membership

Nao Kobayashi  
 membership@sfbapg.org

#### Programming

Marisol Himmel  
 programming@sfbapg.org

Glynn "Tree" Bartlett  
 gbartlett@sfbapg.org

Judy Roberto  
 jroberto@sfbapg.org

Ilene Kennedy  
 ikennedy@sfbapg.org

#### Newsletter

Michael Nelson  
 newsletter@sfbapg.org

#### Librarian

Lee Armstrong  
 library@sfbapg.org

Punch is familiar by other names in other countries such as "Polichinelle" to the French; the Germans call him "Kasperl", the Dutch "Master Jakel", the Egyptians "Aragolz", the Greeks "Karaghiozis", and the Turkish "Karagoz." Like Charlie Chaplin's famous Tramp character in the movies, he often plays the "everyman" who finds ways to succeed against the odds, often by breaking the rules of society. Judging by the frequency of this puppet fool in so many cultures, this character (the fool) struggling through life is not only a common shared experience, but one that we seem to need to help us keep our sanity in difficult times.

In the catalog from the 1991 exhibit on the Fool in Puppetry by the Center for Puppet Arts, we can read that, "The clown is a character found in all cultures. In some cases he might be a fool or a jester, he might be a wiseman with philosophical and metaphysical insights hidden behind his comedic responses, or he might be a god disguising himself behind a mask of low farce. When the clown meets the puppet theatre, he is imbued with special power and insight. This puppet acts out the reflections and thoughts his controller or puppeteer has on our society. The puppet clown has a special power to make us laugh at his buffoonery, wonder at his magical movements, and think about his satirical comments on our lives and social and political structures."

Perhaps this is why our San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild logo character is a very traditional fool image. Our guild and our art form celebrate the puppet fool and all of his power to mock, entertain and transform society. Long live the Fool!

## April Guild Meeting

Friday, April 21st at 7:00pm Grant Baccioco will be presenting "Making Money on Social Media with Puppets".

Would you like to learn how to make money on social media with puppets? Join us Friday, April 21st at 7pm via zoom for our Guild meeting with a special presentation by Grant Baccioco.

Sign up at the link below to receive the meeting ID and passcode. See you there!

<https://m.signupgenius.com/...>

Grant Baccioco is a SAG-AFTRA puppeteer who started his training with The Jim Henson Company in 2006 and has performed over 300 live shows with the company's Puppet Up! Uncensored including tours to Australia, Toronto and Las Vegas. His other puppetry credits include Earth To Ned, Wet Hot American Summer, The Muppets, Last Week Tonight and Mystery Science Theatre 3000 where he plays M. Waverly.

Grant is also the creator of Toiley T. Paper who has over 3 million followers on Tiktok and 230k followers on Instagram.



## Guild Scholarship Recipient Announced

The Founders and Mentors Scholarship Fund is pleased to announce its support of Daniel Gill. He will attend the National Festival in Baltimore this summer, with his registration paid by our guild's fund. The fund was begun many years ago to help our members get to puppet festivals and workshops, and then come back and share their new knowledge with us. With many gifts made in memory of Kamela Portuges Robbins, the board renamed the fund to include mentors like Kamela, who loved to share her incredible talents.

Interested in receiving a scholarship? Go to [sfbapg.org](http://sfbapg.org) to find the details. The deadline has been extended.

## Class offered: Puppet Monologues,

--Class Description

Title: "Words Come Alive--A groundbreaking class in writing, puppet-making and performing"

6 weeks (May 5 thru June 9), 10:00am to 1:00 pm Stagebridge Theatre Arts in Oakland, California

The creation of a written character is a formidable task. Starting with just twenty-six letters and a flat, empty page, a writer tries to conjure a vivid, solid, three-dimensional being. A puppeteer has the opposite problem. From an inanimate form with mass and volume and shape, they attempt to draw voice, gesture, meaning and soul.

In this class, writer Jeff Lee and artist Jessica Stanton will combine their talents and their art forms to give your words substance and life. You will create a character, shape them into a full-scale human puppet, craft their words and animate them through performance. Every Friday, you'll spend the first 90 minutes creating your character and writing a monologue in their voice. Then, in the following 90 minutes, you'll build a life-size, realistic puppet to serve as your character's avatar. By the end of the course, you will have created a complete performance that brings your character to life.

This class is a unique opportunity to expand your range as a writer, storyteller, actor or visual artist. However, the class requires no previous experience of any kind. All materials are included in the tuition fee. See [www.stagebridge.org](http://www.stagebridge.org) for more info!



New episode of Under The Puppet has arrived. My guest is Chad Williams of WonderSpark Puppets.

Chad Williams is the Co-Artistic Director of WonderSpark puppets. He has written, directed and performed over 15 solo puppet shows and will be presenting his show Fox Fables at the 2023 National Puppetry Festival. He's also the author of the book 50 Hand Puppet Techniques: Hidden Secrets and Tricks Revealed that just won an award from UNIMA. I talk to Chad Williams about all this and more on this episode of Under The Puppet.

New episode is available wherever you get your podcasts and at [underthepuppet.com](http://underthepuppet.com)  
<<http://underthepuppet.com/>>

Grant Baciocco, Puppeteer. Creator, [grant@throwingtoasters.com](mailto:grant@throwingtoasters.com)

MrGrant.com Twitter - @ToasterBoy Instagram - throwingtoasters

## Finger Puppets Commissioned in Likeness of Guild Members' Puppets

We have just commissioned a handmade set of finger puppets to be made in the likeness of our 5 core puppets. There is a team of makers, using felt primarily, working out of Ukraine. We found these builders on Etsy and they make gorgeous puppets. I was thinking that other puppeteers might want to commission puppets as well? We are going to sell them as merchandise at our shows when we get back up and running.



What do you think? Here are a couple of photos to give you an idea:

Doug Zesiger

Check out 'Stinky Tales'- A web series bringing big laughs while teaching empathy and confidence to 3-6 year olds.

YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/2M2IisC>

Website: [stinkytales.com](http://stinkytales.com)

(To right, finger puppet from previous page)

## Ronnie Burkett-Little Willie at Stanford last month

**Word on the playboard** is that while kudos are offered to Stanford for bringing Canadian puppeteer Burkett



back to the Bay Area, seating and sightlines were essential for the enjoyment of this exceptional puppeteer. Guild members who attended and sat in the front row had good things to say about the show. Others who garnered seats in row 6 reported that they could rarely see the marionettes and mostly could just see Burkett from the waist up as he operated the puppets on the stage floor. Too bad! And something that Stanford (and Burkett) should try to rectify for future engagements.



## ShadowLight Productions and Paul Dresher Ensemble at the Presidio Theatre last Month



*Sojourner ZY is an original play written by Eugenie Chan. Performed by ShadowLight Productions in their signature style of large-scale cinematic shadow theater. Featuring original music by Paul Dresher. Directed by Larry Reed.*

*The play was co-produced by Shadowlight Productions, New Performance Traditions/Paul Dresher Ensemble, and the Presidio Theatre.*

By Michael Nelson

This visually stunning shadow puppet production by guild member Larry Reed/ShadowLight Productions in collaboration with others (as noted in the artists' notes above) was attended by a number of guild members during its short run at the Presidio Theatre. A science fiction journey through many worlds and using beautiful space photographs from our current generation of space telescopes, the show featured ShadowLight's innovative style of combining puppets with dancers/actors in "headdresses" that seemed to turn the humans into shadow puppets. All of the shadow puppet effects took place behind a cinema size projection screen so that the effect was that of watching a movie even though the show was being performed live. As a fan of ShadowLight and a visitor backstage at other ShadowLight productions as well as being a performer myself I could appreciate the hidden dance of the puppeteers that took place behind the screen. I did, however, find myself wondering about the choice to make a live production that looked like a movie...why not make it a movie? Maybe I am missing some point here, but if it is to be a live show, I, for one, would have enjoyed seeing the projections behind the actors rather than in front of and screening them. I think the additional drama of seeing the large cast creating their shadow magic would have been exciting and engaging. This may be a specifically puppeteer's point of view but I suspect that non puppeteers in the audience had little idea of the ensemble work that was going on behind the screen.

## Winnie the Pooh in Sacramento, Guild Event

Organized by Olivia Huff

B-Street Theatre in Sacramento is putting on "Winnie-The-Pooh" with puppets designed by Rachel Burson of the LA Puppetry Guild.

Her website is here: <https://www.rachelmadestudio.com/>

Guild member, Olivia Huff, has arranged for the Guild to see the show on Sunday, April 15 at 1:00 pm with an opportunity to speak with Rachel after the show.



If you are interested in attending, please give the B-Street Theatre box office a call, 916-453-5300, and say you are with the San Francisco Bay Area Puppetry Guild or mention Olivia Huff's name to get your discount. Box office hours are 12-15pm, 7 days/week. Tickets to Guild members are \$21/adult and \$16/child. We have a block of tickets set aside for our Guild, however, you must purchase your tickets yourself and identify yourselves as Guild members or mention Oliva. Deadline to purchase tickets at the Guild discount is Wednesday, April 12.

Please let Olivia know if you have purchased tickets, so she knows who to be on the look out for ([ohuff@dcn.org](mailto:ohuff@dcn.org)—with "Winnie" in the Subject line), and to know whether she needs to release seats if we don't get 19 people.

The B Street Theatre is at: B Street Theatre, 2700 Capitol Avenue, Sacramento CA 95816

Synopsis: Christopher Robin has just moved into a new neighborhood and he isn't happy. Despite kids constantly knocking on his door and asking him to play, Christopher Robin would much prefer to stay inside and play with his favorite stuffed animals. To bring him out of his shell, his father AA Milne tells him wondrous tales of his beloved toys and their many adventures. Adapted from A.A. Milne's original story, Winnie the Pooh brings your favorite characters to the stage and shows audiences of all ages the importance of friendship. If you have any questions, please contact Olivia. [ohuff@dcn.org](mailto:ohuff@dcn.org)

## What is a Guild Event?

Any guild member can initiate and organize a guild event, just as Olivia has done, above. A guild event differs from a guild meeting in that it is not organized by the program committee or the guild board but rather by an individual guild member. If you wish to

organize a guild event you may determine the details of the event and then invite guild members to join you at the event. Often this is a good way to arrange discount tickets for a show as many theaters will offer a special price to a group. However, it is up to you as organizer to arrange this with the theater, keeping in mind that, while you may call this a guild event, you may not commit guild funds or make other such commitments without permission from the guild board. Think of it as you organizing a party on your own for guild members, inviting them to join you and then having a great time together. You can use the guild newsletter or email to reach members and it is a great service to the guild membership and helps members enjoy being connected through the art of puppetry. In the past members have set up guild events with discount tickets and guild members and non-guild members (invited by the organizer or other guild members) have attended (so not everyone has to be guild member.) If you want to discuss more involvement from the guild board or resources, you should contact the board with your ideas.

## Puppet Stage and entire show (puppets, sound track, etc.) looking for a home

Built and offered by Art Grueneberger

We wrote and built a show years ago for the Sacramento Symphony League. The president of the organization passed away recently and the puppets and a couple of stages have come back to us.

### **About the show:**

Timmy the Trumpet is lost and trying to find his family. A hard-boiled detective agrees to



help. Their journey to find Timmy's family takes them on an adventure where they meet all of the families of the orchestra (woodwinds, strings, percussion, etc.) until they find Timmy's family, the Brass.

The puppets look like they are in decent condition (see photo). A little touch up with a glue gun here and there might be needed.

It is a pre-recorded show, recorded in a professional



studio and there are several copies of the script and the CD with the recording.



There are two puppet stages (one was for another show the Symphony League was touring and one is for Timmy the Trumpet.) It took me 5 minutes to set each up. They are canvas flats with a wooden playboard and supports. They fold down and could easily fit into the backseat of a compact car. They look freshly painted and are in remarkable condition considering they are probably 20+ years old. Well built.

I have no use for either the stages or the show in my company. If you can use the show or the stages, they are yours. If I don't find a home for them soon I will chuck

them. You pick them up here in Sacramento. Contact me with questions.

[PuppetArtsSacramento@gmail.com](mailto:PuppetArtsSacramento@gmail.com)

## Guild Board Election Nominations Open

Guild Board Elections are coming up in May. If you are interested in nominating a guild member (yourself or someone else) as a candidate, please contact the nominating committee at [glynntree@hotmail.com](mailto:glynntree@hotmail.com) -- To be eligible to run for the board the candidate must have been a member for at least one year, be a current member, and (if you are nominating someone else) have their permission to be nominated. Candidates will be asked for a photo and short bio for the ballot. Board terms run for 3 years, starting on June 1 and are a great way to connect with the movers and shakers of the guild (and become one!) For more information you may contact any board member or the chair of the nominating committee, Tree Bartlett at [glynntree@hotmail.com](mailto:glynntree@hotmail.com)-

**Send future newsletter articles and other puppet related stuff to [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org) before the last day of the month.**