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Welcome to 2024! This will be a year of parties and celebration for the guild as we commemorate 70 years. We start with our guild party in February (performances, food, fun and more), followed by our usual array of great workshops, performances and meetings, moving into a summer with two (two!) puppet festivals in the Bay Area. Stay tuned and stay informed.

Watch the newsletter also for a series of articles on the history of our guild. What you don't know might surprise you!

And if you haven't renewed yet for 2024, do so ASAP so you won't miss any of the great events coming your way.

To renew, go to the website, and click Join (<https://sfbapg.org/join>)

Guild Board and Officers

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Newsletter

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UPCOMING GUILD EVENTS

- Tuesday January 2nd - programming meeting via Zoom 6:30pm.

Contact Marisol Himmel at programming@sfbapg.org for a Zoom link and time.

- Puppet Festival Planning Committee on Zoom, January 11 at 7 pm.
- Saturday, January 13th - Board meeting in Vallejo 10:00am

Contact president@sfbapg.org for the Zoom links.

Mark your calendars and save the date! Saturday, February 17th for the Guild Holiday Party and Tabletop Workshop (time of party TBD)

Location: Vallejo Naval and Historic Museum 734 Marin Street Vallejo, CA

A Holiday party in February? Yes, its tradition! The Guild waits until the new year to celebrate the Holidays, as December is often the busiest time of the year for some puppeteers. And what could be more traditional than a Tabletop Workshop to ring in the New Year? We will be introducing the guild to the Puppetathlon, a hilarious and fun table-top performance activity! Plus the Guild Holiday party includes a potluck, Guild library and other fun. And there's the museum as well, which current features a special puppet exhibit. So, save the date of February 17th for a great get-together! Please RSVP to this event no later than Friday, February 9th 2024 at the following link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4BAEAB2AA7FC1-47006623-holiday>

Hope to see you there!

Dear Puppet Guild Friends,

As we move into 2024, there are exciting things happening in our Puppet Guild. The Holiday party is coming up in Feb., with an opportunity to invite family and friends to this traditional and fun celebration. We're happy to host a Bay Area Puppetry Festival this summer, the first in many years. Announcements of location, date and more details will be in your Feb. newsletter. Can't wait? Contact a Board member or you are welcome to join the Puppet Festival Planning Committee on Zoom, January 11 at 7 pm. If you'd like to be in on the ground floor of planning this fun event, contact me at president@sfbapg.org for the Zoom link.

We welcome your involvement. Join a committee or suggest workshop and show ideas. Would you like a Guild meeting in your town? Suggest a meeting place and save yourself a drive. You are also welcome to join our very active Zoom Guild Programming Meeting, the 1st Tuesday of each month, where ideas for Guild events percolate into programs. The next one is Jan. 2, usually at 6:30. Contact Marisol Himmel at programming@sfbapg.org for a Zoom link and time.

And wondering what the Guild Board does? Our next Board meeting is Jan 13 starting mid-morning. Join us in person (Vallejo) or on Zoom. Contact me at president@sfbapg.org for more details and the Zoom link.

The San Francisco Bay Area Puppet Guild shares the joys of this art form with the SF Bay Area community and beyond. We can't do this without you! As you wrap up your end-of-year activities, please remember to renew your membership or give a gift membership to a friend or join if you want to be part of our puppet community.

Wishing you a creative 2024! LeeArmstrong SFBAPGPresident



Guild members across the Bay Area are readying their puppet athletes for the grueling ninja circus skillfest that is the Puppetathlon, premiering at the Guild Holiday Party on February 17 at the Vallejo [Historical and Naval Museum](#). Judging will be fierce, prizes will be coveted and the audience will be in a frenzy of entertainment. Each puppet entrant will need a cadre of intrepid manipulators to help the puppets make their way through the table top obstacle course.

Are you ready to join us!? We need you! Email newsletter@sfbapg.org and sign up today.



*Above, note the exposed musculature that will propel these puppet athletes to victory. Note the colors that will make each one distinct. Note the as-yet-undone construction that **WILL** be finished by the Guild Holiday Party!*



Above, puppetathlete builder Valerie Nelson (with non-assistant, Sadie) demonstrates how to coordinate your outfit with puppet head color. Also she shows us the inside out head with the baseball stitch (taught at guild workshop by Mary Nagler) that will disappear when the head covering is turned right-side out.

Exciting Scholarship Opportunity at The Puppetry Institute for 2024!

Ricki Vincent, Artistic Director—Santa Cruz

We're thrilled to announce our Special Effects Young Interns Scholarship, open to everyone regardless of your situation as this one is based on solely on your talent!. For 7 years, we've been awarding scholarships to kids aged 8-16 from underserved communities. Now, we're extending this opportunity to anyone aged 12-14 with a passion to pursue a career in the SFX, Puppetry, or Theater Tech industries. We will only be offering 2 of these scholarships so space is very limited.

Qualifications:

- Desire for a career in SFX, Puppetry, or Theater Tech
- Enjoy creating amazing art and being a part of a design team
- Availability for at least two days a week, Mon-Sat, 10 AM - 4 PM for 3 hours a day
- Present a portfolio or examples of your work

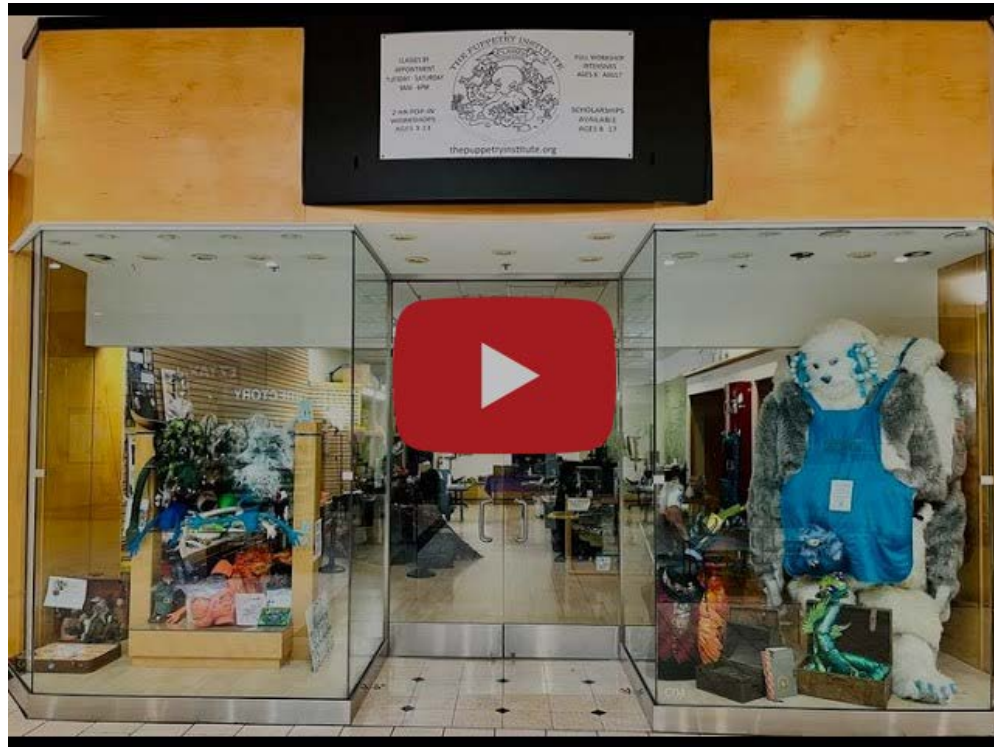
Awardees will receive:

- Free access to our diverse workshops until age 18
- Participation in a massive summer project, assisting in building and designing creatures

Application Details:

- Applications open Jan 2nd, 2024, and close March 2nd, 2024
- To apply, set up an appointment Mon-Sat from 12-4 PM by emailing the.puppetry.institute@gmail.com

Don't miss this chance to explore your passion and be part of an exciting artistic community. Apply now and let your creativity shine! #artismagic
 #ThePuppetryInstitute #SpecialEffectsArts #ScholarshipOpportunity #ArtisticTalent



Meet Our Members

Risa Dye is a thoughtful and creative puppeteer residing in Berkeley. She has always been interested in dance, theater, and visual arts. She also had training and a lot of experience in early childhood education. Therefore, it seemed natural to her to attend a 2-week intensive at Humber College in Toronto in 2014. She returned feeling that “Puppetry is a beautiful synthesis of all the art forms I had been using.”

Now, Risa not only teaches a multitude of creative drama/movement/storydance classes, she also performs puppet shows, leads educator training and is learning what life is like as a mother. Risa strives to bring high quality programming to early childhood education, integrating play and story while valuing childrens' creative input!

She likes finding natural materials and recycled objects and transforming them. From rod puppets and paper puppets to tabletop and direct manipulation, Risa explores a variety of puppet forms and is the proud creator of multiple puppet shows using crankies as backdrops. Her new show “The Whistler” leads audiences on an epic quest and her experimental piece will be finished next year. She’d be interested in sharing work-in-progress pieces in a “salon” environment and seeing the work of other puppeteers/education practitioners. More of her work can be seen at <https://www.jellyjamtime.com/puppet-shows> & www.possiblypuppets.com



Risa attended the Chicago International Puppetry Festival last year and found it to be a fantastic showcase of international puppetry. For details on the 2024 Festival, Jan18-28, check out <https://chicagopuppetfest.org/contact/>

Walking with Amal in Washington DC

Mary Nagler

You may have seen in the news, or on Facebook, the coverage of a twelve-foot-tall puppet depiction of an eight-year-old Syrian Refugee girl child named Little Amal. She is “Walking” across the world and is currently in America to bring attention to the plight of refugee children the world over. I learned she would soon be coming to the Washington DC area and would be walking down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol. I decided to walk with her, in support of her cause and in support of the puppeteers who are making this journey with her. The walk was sponsored by The Laboratory for Global Performance & Politics,

The LAB, along with The Collaboration on Global Children’s Issues. Each city on “The Walk” has a theme, and this walk’s theme was Little Shoes, Big Journeys. They were looking for people with performance experience to volunteer to help. They were asking for people to donate shoes, that would be sent to refugee children and parents in the refugee camps, and for people to come walk with Amal, not as a demonstration, or a protest but as a procession to welcome her to the city. I signed up to help.



En route, the Crowd would be making an “Ocean” for Amal to cross of silver survival space blankets that would later be donated to a homeless shelter. I could not make the rehearsals, so I went early on the big day and was tasked with taking hundreds of silver blankets, and their instructions, out of their little Ziplock baggies, so we wouldn’t leave a trail of trash to the Capitol! I handed out flyers and invited passers by to join us and soon a large crowd began to assemble.

There were about seven musicians playing Dixie tunes and when Little Amal appeared on the scene, the tone became very exuberant, and we started off. I waved my silver blanket as part of the sea and with everyone else tried to capture the moment with my phone! Little Amal stopped and danced a few times, and I was impressed at her presence and the astute manipulation by her stilt walking main puppeteer and his two assistants on her hands. Her main puppeteer was encased in her basket-like torso for good visibility and a welcome breeze. He was sunburned by the end, and I learned that he was used to being on her feet for usually a half hour to forty minutes, but we had passed that long ago. At one point along the route we made a storm with our blankets, and Little Amal held onto a streetlamp until it died down. Then we continued on.

At the end of the procession, multiple rings of shoes greeted us around a stage for the speeches. A Somali woman who had been a refugee as a child recited a moving poem of her experiences and three Senators greeted Little Amal personally. The Performing troupe, peopled by a number of new friends from the National Capitol Puppetry Guild (Of which I am a member) picked up small shoes and held them to their ears like they were listening to a phone call, as the voices of refugee children were heard talking about their experiences. It was a very moving experience. I was glad I came.

As the crowd dispersed and Little Amal left to give her puppeteers a well-deserved rest, I collected space blankets from the crowd and helped gather up the shoes. I was glad to have walked with Little Amal on this small part of her global journey and marveled at the unique experience her puppeteers have - traveling all over the globe doing a good work on behalf of the children displaced by so much unrest. Her presence was large and powerful and made me feel proud to be a puppeteer.

Puppets to the Rescue

Marisol Himmel

Have you ever had a moment in which puppets have come to your rescue? It sounds strange, I know, but I have. It was January of 2023, and I was stumped. I needed a way for the small group of homeschooled teens I tutor to connect with one another, or at the very least to interact. I had noticed an increase in their dependence on technology and a decrease in their interactions with one another and with me. They were each retreating to the screens on their laptops, tablets and phones, (sometimes all three at once somehow) even during snack breaks, with the added isolation provided by a set of headphones. They were blocking each other out, and locking themselves in.

I tried incorporating rhythm to get them in sync and tried some drumming exercises after they all refused to sing. The drumming resulted in a syncopated cacophony and turned out to be a sensory trigger for one of the students who ended up in tears. I had to find something else. These kids were failing to connect with their peers at a time in their lives when having those social interactions and forming those bonds is developmentally crucial!

Inspired by images shared by Michael and Valerie Nelson of Magical Moonshine Theater, and with their permission and guidance, my students and I created three tabletop puppets using recycled materials: paper lunch bags, paper towel tubes, mailing tape and plastic grocery bags. There was the typical teenage apathy at first, but curiosity got the better of a few of them and pretty soon they were all playing around with these funny little puppets. The students named them “Garbagio” “Patrasha” and “Trashton” respectively.



Once a week for the following month they worked in teams of three through a series of prompts to improve the puppets movements and expression. I mixed the teams up so they'd all get to work with one another and then let them choose who they preferred to work with. We ended the course with a puppet charades game where the other teams had to guess what the team was performing. The only phone out was

mine, recording the performance. A victory indeed for this tired teacher. Puppets to the Rescue!



I posted three videos about these puppets on my social media accounts and they became some of my most watched Reels on Instagram in 2023. I received messages and comments requesting a tutorial on how to make them. I am more than happy to share how we put ours together in the hopes that they might help someone else the way they helped me. That video tutorial is now available on my YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/MoodyPuppets>

Guild Library

Books, Books, Books & Videos



Our Guild Library is a treasure trove of books, from the history of puppets, construction, stages, to puppets in education and more. It's now easy to see what books are available by going to <https://sfbapg.org/library-online/>. Or if at www.sfbapg.org select Resources, then Library. Library borrowers need to have been members for 6 months (or you can deposit a check for the value of the book, to be returned when the book is brought back). You can peruse the catalogue then request books by emailing Lee Armstrong at library@sfbapg.org. They should be brought to the next "in person" event which will be the guild holiday party in February. If you have a library book to return, please return it at the next "in person" meeting or mail it back ASAP to Lee at 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma, CA 95476.

The Stan Winston School of Character Arts is free and available to all members. 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!

A Guild member can request a 10-day checkout, and repeat checkouts, if available. Contact Lee at library@sfbapg.org, and she will provide you with the password. If the subscription is checked out, you’ll go on the waitlist for the next available checkout.

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

PBS series Craft in America features Puppetry

Hello everyone at SFBAPG,

I am the Executive Assistant for the PBS series Craft in America. I am writing to let you know that our two new episodes, PLAY and MINIATURES feature puppet-maker/puppeteer Schroeder Cherry and marionette-maker Gustave Bauman.

You can view the entire episodes in the above links!

Gustave's segment begins at timestamp - 42:35

Shchroder's segment begins at timestamp - 26:18

(You can also use the chapter guide).

Another clip featuring puppeteering at The Skirball Cultural Center can be found [here](#), and a short segment on Schroeder Cherry [here](#).

Please feel free to share with you members and colleagues, as well as the attached ecards, and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

All the very best,

Terry de Castro, Executive Assistant CRAFT IN AMERICA



PLAY celebrates the power of imagination and the child in all of us.

FEATURING:

Roberto Benavidez, Schroeder Cherry, the Cotsen Children's Library, Calder Kamin,
 Noah's Ark at the Skirball Cultural Center, and Lorena Robletto



MINIATURES explores the world of small objects and big ideas.

FEATURING:

Gustave Baumann, Alexander Girard, Leandro Gómez Quintero,
 International Folk Art Market, and Mark Murphy

Tracing The Tangled Roots of Our “Puppet-Tree” and the San Francisco Bay Area Puppetry Guild (1954 -2024)

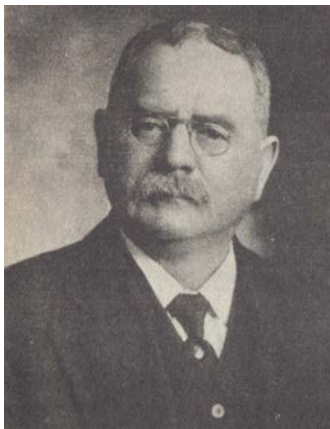
(Editor’s note” Guild Historian Randal Metz has kindly agreed to help us with the Guild 70th Celebration by offering a series of articles on the history of our Guild. Enjoy!)

Part 1 - 1870s - 1950s:

This year the S.F.B.A.P.G. will have reached 70 years of age. Although our guild was not chartered by the Puppeteers of America until 1961, the guild in effect began meeting in 1954 when a group of talented artists wanted to share ideas and philosophies about the art of the puppet. Puppetry has been active in the San Francisco area since the early 1800’s. And each successive member of our guild, has built their careers on the mentorship of the puppeteers who have gone before. A lot of our history has already been heavily researched during that “What can I do?” year of 2020. That’s when my first apprentice, Kevin Menegus, and myself looked at the history of puppetry for the entire state of California. If you care to delve deeper than the articles that will appear over the months to come, which highlight only the history of the San Francisco Guild, you will find a wealth of information and biographical studies in our book *A Century of California Puppetry or How The West was Strung!* (Available on Amazon) (End of commercial) Lettie Connell Schubert also wrote a wonderful beginning for our guild history in 1996, which I added to in 2010, titled “An Incomplete History of The San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild.” (See guild website). Our goal over the next 12 months is to highlight some of the artists and events that shaped puppetry in the Bay Area, as well as presenting articles by selected guild members sharing their careers and how the guild helped shape their visions. And so we begin...

In the 1800s puppetry was already being performed by practitioners of early “Punch and Judy” known as “Professors”, as well as in mining camps by the very popular Chinese “Shadow Shows.” And of course puppets were practiced even earlier by indigenous cultures all across our country. But when The Royal Marionettes traveled to San Francisco from England and the East Coast in 1876, puppeteers began to

flourish. (See Paul McPharlin's wonderful book: *The Puppet Theater in America: A History 1524 -1948* for more info.) Early San Francisco puppeteers who worked for this company included Edwin, Walter & Harry Deaves or Deaves Marvelous Manikins (1821-1920), as well as Daniel Meader (1876 - 1929) who created his own Royal Marionettes company. All of these early performers used marionettes and fashioned their companies after The Royal Marionettes style. The 1870s to the 1940s is generally referenced as "The Golden Age of Marionettes" since this style of puppetry was the most popular with the public, finding performance venues in beer halls, medicine shows, circuses and dime museums as well as Vaudeville and recognized stage theaters. With their successes, and others, puppetry began to flourish in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1916 Ellen Van Volkenburg (1914 - 1978), who founded the Chicago Little Theater, gave these fledgling performers the name we know today: Puppeteers. After all, if people who wrangled mules were called Muleteers, why can't people who wrangle puppets be called Puppeteers?



Walter E. Deaves, 1910

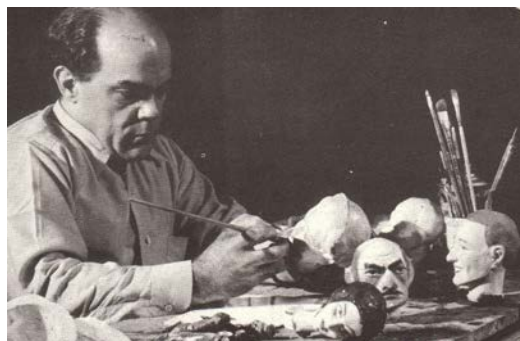


Daniel Meader, 1880



Ellen Van Volkenburg
(1914 - 1978)

And all of this brings us closer to the beginnings of our guild by the 1920s. One of our early members, Perry Dilley (1919 - 1968), began his career by studying the above mentioned performers in detail. He collected their puppets and paraphernalia. Daniel Meader was a mentor to Perry, although Dilley preferred hand puppets to marionettes.



Interestingly, Ellen Van Volkenburg asked him to build her a set of new marionettes for her 1924 San Francisco performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Perry and his wife Grace Stearns performed at universities, taught puppetry, and presented weekly shows in their San Francisco studio. Joining the cast of the "Midsummer" show were John Ralph Geddis & Francis Martin ((1924 - 1978), who joined to form the incredible Tantamount Theater company who had theaters in Santa Barbara and Carmel Valley during their half century career presenting puppet plays, dance recitals, poetry readings and film presentations. The Bay Area puppeteers began to perform classical theater in 1928 when Blanding Sloan (1919 - 1975) and a young Ralph Chesse'(1925 - 1991) formed The Marionette Guild (1928 - 1931). They presented "Hamlet," influenced by Edward Gordon Craig's theater thesis: "The Actor and the Uber-marionette." Blanding went on to a successful career in art, puppetry and stop motion with his foster son Wah Ming Chang, while Ralph went on to television and was the State Director of the puppetry unit for the Works Project Administration (1936 - 40) during the Depression. Also of note is Pauline Benton (1921-1974), who formed The Red Gate Players which presented traditional Chinese Shadow shows throughout California and Seattle and New York. They were amongst the first members of our guild, and each shared their talents with our expanding group of puppeteers.



Above, the Bay Area puppeteers began to perform classical theater in 1928 when Blanding Sloan (1919 - 1975) and a young Ralph Chesse'(1925 - 1991) formed The Marionette Guild (1928 - 1931).- Also of note is Pauline Benton (1921-1974) with shadow puppets.

And while all of these great talents were helping to build our San Francisco Bay Area puppet community, other things in the puppet world were happening back East that would effect our history. In 1937, Paul McPharlin was establishing a national organization of puppeteers that would eventually become The Puppeteers of America. By the time we reached the 40s, this national organization would begin to be made up of all sorts of unique artisans all across the United States. And now the puppeteers began to be connected through the Puppeteers of America journals and newsletters. By the end of the 40s, puppeteers would be hosting shows on that

newfound invention: Television. Wolo Von Trutzschler (1930 - 1989), a puppeteer, artist and television performer began his illustrious career in Los Angeles and then settled in the Bay Area after designing the vent figure Mortimer Snerd for Edgar Bergen, as well as writing many illustrated children's books. He will eventually open a toy shop in San Francisco called "Happy Things" where Lettie Connell Schubert (1945 - 2006) will perform puppetry in the shop's windows. Lettie, who we affectionately called the "Godmother of Puppetry" will go on to train many of our future young puppeteers, including Frank Oz (1956 - present) and Jerry Juhl (1956 - 2005) of Muppet fame. Trained by Ralph Chesse', Lettie had her own show on television, "The Looking Glass Lady," as well as working with Ralph on his "The Wonderful World of Brother Buzz" television show. She also was director for one of the oldest puppet programs in Oakland: The Vagabond Puppets, from 1954 - 1960. Speaking of Frank Oz, his parents Mike & Frances Oznowicz (1933 - 1998) had just fled from their homeland of Germany, and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area. The two of them would become a major force in our guild, as well as national puppetry, endlessly supporting the puppet as an important, respected theatrical art form. Of course there were many other puppeteers who also influenced our beginnings. And now we are ready to see how all of these individuals created The San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild.



Above, Wolo and Kitty (1950), the "Godmother of Puppetry," Lettie Schubert, and, pictured at Fairyland, Mike and Francis Oznowicz (parents of Frank Oz of Muppets.)

The 50s was a magical time for the art of puppetry. Television, schools, festivals and amusement parks, were all looking to make the puppet a part of their offerings. But all the puppeteers were wondering how to get together and discuss ideas without having to travel to a Puppeteers of America annual convention. They began in 1954 to meet monthly in their private homes and library settings. Each month they would entertain each other with new ideas and performances.



Lewis Mahlmann (1951 - 2014) a San Francisco artist, actor and doll maker, was using puppetry to present very theatrical presentations of plays, operas and symphonic masterpieces. He was an active member of the puppet society and would amongst many other things become the President of The Puppeteers of America in 1961 & 1963. And guess who his Vice-President was? Jim Henson!

These are just some of the founding members who established our guild. Whew! And now I've brought you up to the beginnings of our complex puppet organization. What happened next? You'll have to join us next month to see how this will all work out. See you then!

Bi-line: For 33 years Randal Metz has been the Director of the Children's Fairyland Storybook Puppet Theater, the oldest, continuously running puppet theater in the United States. He is also the creator of The Puppet Company which tours California. He has written two histories on Children's Fairyland, and four histories and puppet making books on the art of puppetry.

Send your future puppet news to newsletter@sfbapg.org



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