



February 2024

SFBAPG IS CELEBRATING 70 YEARS, starting this month with the guild holiday party and the World Premiere of the SFBAPG Puppetathlon. (Think “*American Ninja Warrior*” but with puppets!) Watch the newsletter also for the continuing 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>)

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UPCOMING GUILD EVENTS

- Programming Meeting Tuesday, February 6th at 6:30pm
email programming@sfbapg.org for link to join. We’d love to hear your ideas for future Guild Events!
- February 17th Holiday Party (see details below)
- March 22nd Show-and-tell (more details to come)

February Holiday Party!

“Name Your Favorite Holiday” Party

Vallejo Naval & Historical Museum, 734 Marin St., Vallejo

Sat. Feb 17th, 2 - 5 pm. (Party includes museum entry so come early and enjoy the museum and come early for the tabletop workshop, see below).

(Sign up today so we get a food count!)

<https://m.signupgenius.com/#!/showRSVPSignUp/8050E4BAEAB2AA7FC1-47006623-holiday>

A Holiday party in Feb? Traditionally, the Guild waits until the new year to celebrate the Holidays, as Dec. is sometimes the busiest time of the year for puppeteers. So come to the Name Your Favorite Holiday Party, where we'll celebrate all the holidays. This year's special event is the Puppetathlon, with a warmup Halloween show, as what could be more traditional than a Halloween Show to ring in the New Year? Also, the Guild Holiday party has puppet games, refreshments, raffle, Guild library and other fun. So, come and bring friends and family to this great get-together.

Puppetathlon- Tabletop Puppet Olympics!

Prepare dive right in and get your hands on these puppet athletes as they cycle through some obstacles on their way to a gold medal. You will have the opportunity to join a team of 3 to work these tabletop puppets and help your puppet-athlete run through the obstacles successfully! (Note free tabletop workshop starting at 1pm)



The Spooky Squeals Musical Spectacular

Short & Frightening Halloween Show by our talented teen, Hugo Shum



Rise from your grave to have a scary time watching the Spooky Squeals Musical Spectacular. Watch as we play Frankenstein's Favorites. We'll see Witches whirl, Dracula dance, and Ghosts getting down. You'll hear 3 frightful songs, accompanied by our petrifying puppets. Watch all of this happen at the Guild's Holiday Party! We're dying to see you!

Loose Schedule – as it is a Party!

- 1pm Tabletop Workshop or visit museum, help with set up. Free Tabletop Puppetry workshop (to prepare for the Puppetathlon performance which will take place at the party or just learn about table top puppetry) at 1:00pm at the museum. Sign up for workshop by emailing Michael at mnelson@sfbapg.org. Workshop leaders Michael and Valerie Nelson have over 40 years experience with tabletop performing, coast to coast in US and in 18 countries around the world. Hone your craft and join the tabletop team.
- 2pm Party starts, with all the trimmings and events, including food, shows, Puppetathlon and more.
- 4pm Museum closes to the public (we can stay)
- 5pm Party ends (so sad...) and clean up.

Location & Parking

Vallejo Naval & Historical Museum, 734 Marin St., Vallejo- The museum has a small lot behind the museum and there is lots of free street parking.

Raffle

Our guild holiday party traditionally has a raffle! We are excited to share some of our hidden puppet gems including (last year it was vintage marionettes, ballerina hand puppet, puppet books and more!) Your purchase will go to the guild's scholarship fund. Come and win wonderful things!

Puppet Exhibit

Show off your fabrication skills. Bring a puppet that you'd like to show and a stand (bottle, etc.) so you can display it on the table. Cards will be available there so you

can provide details such as puppet name, puppet builder's name, materials, etc. or bring your own description.

Refreshments - The guild is providing vegetarian and meat lasagna (so sign up (link below) so we know how much lasagna to bring!). We ask that you bring an appetizer, side or desert and a beverage (to share?) The Guild will provide tea and coffee and either a punch or water.

Amazing Library Books Plus Video Tutorials by Stan Winston

There will be books available to check out at the Holiday Party, but you can also request a specific book from the hundreds of books on puppet construction, manipulation, design, stages, scripts, education, etc. 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. Email library@sfbapg.org.

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 2 by Feb 15th. If you have a library book to return, please return it at the holiday party or mail it back ASAP to Lee at 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma, CA 95476.

The Stan Winston School of Character Arts is available to all members, including new members (no 6 month wait or deposit check). 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 check out.

Volunteers for the Holiday Party Needed

We are looking for volunteer friends who can make this holiday celebration special by helping us setup, greet, sell raffle tickets, cleanup and more. If you can help, please sign up at the link:

<https://m.signupgenius.com/#!/showRSVPSignUp/8050E4BAEAB2AA7FC1-47006623-holiday>

Even if you are not volunteering, please RSVP to this event (link above) no later than Friday, February 9th 2024 so we can plan the food for you.

See you there!



Hi Puppet Aficionados

Happy Holidays! We invite you, your friends and family to the Annual Puppet Guild Holiday Party! This will be a unique experience. Never before have we had a Puppet Olympics, or as we call it The Puppetathlon. Preparation started in November, when the great puppet fabricator Mary H. Nagler flew out from Virginia to help us construct our PuppetAthletes.

The Puppetathlon Prep Team is preparing the challenging course, which may make the bravest puppet quiver in its socks. Other Guild members are fabricating the prestigious awards for this year's best and brightest Puppet Manipulators.

On Feb 17th at our stadium at the Naval Museum in Vallejo, Puppet Manipulators will attend a rigorous (and definitely fun) training early in the afternoon. Later they will compete for the highest prizes. Please come and participate as a puppeteer (no experience required) or cheer on your favorite PuppetAthlete. DO NOT MISS THIS EVENT! I attended the Puppetathlon at the Seattle Puppet Festival and it was a hilarious highlight...and safe for children of all ages.

But wait, there's more at the Holiday Party! The Spooky Squeals Musical Spectacular by Hugo & Wing Shum, plus a puppet scavenger hunt, puppet exhibit, raffle, lending library, refreshments and more!

And don't forget other puppet entertainment this month. Check out...

- • Dalrymple and the Wild Daimons at the Nevada Theater in Nevada City
- • GLOP meets GLOG - The Glorious Ladies of Puppetry Meet the Glorious Ladies of Groundlings at Great Star Theater in SF
- • THE STORM presented by The Puppet Circle, as part of CABARET STYLE NIGHT at Cuttingball Theater, SF

(Information on the above shows in this newsletter)

And lots to celebrate this summer as we start organizing the Bay Area Puppetry Festival! Shows, workshops, a puppet exhibit, and more. Watch for dates and location in your next newsletter.

Looking forward to seeing you on Feb 17th!

Lee Armstrong, Guild President

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 mnelson@sfbapg.org and sign up today.

MEET THE MEMBERS: Adrienne Suzio

Adrienne Suzio (she/they) is a Guild member with many talents and wide-ranging experience. She has always been interested in and studied the arts, and grew up in a family immersed in non-profit organizations where she learned valuable management skills from an early age.

They graduated from Mill College with a BA in Studio Art and minor in Book Art and currently work for the non-profit Rise Economy <https://rise-economy.org/> which helps low-income and BIPOC communities fight redlining and achieve equity in financial services.

During college, she worked at Oakland Children's Fairyland where they got to be the Jolly Trolley conductor, throw a birthday party for an alpaca, and serve coffee in a giant pumpkin! But most fun of all was working in the Open Storybook Puppet Theater with Randal Metz of The Puppet Company, where they've continued to fill-in ever since. In 2015 she joined Larry Schmidt's Driveway Follies team as a marionette performer. Then she expanded her time commitment to assist the board year-round, which keeps Larry Schmidt's wonderful, professionally staged and family-friendly Halloween performances alive <https://www.drivewayfollies.org/>. As part of this team she helps with fundraising, education and much more. As Adrienne says, "I love Halloween! Larry's puppets are gorgeous and it's wonderful to have the opportunity to share his work and legacy."

If you haven't seen Driveway Follies, I highly recommend making the trip to Oakland at the end of Oct. A crew of eight puppeteers perform five acts over three nights. The repertoire celebrates and illustrates historic and cultural aspects of Halloween, some with an educational twist. Since its inception, a diverse audience of over 10,000 Halloween revelers has enjoyed the performances. And this amazing Halloween show is available because people like Adrienne volunteer to make this a reality.



Other Guild members that are currently involved with the Follies include Fred C. Reilly III and Randal Metz. Kevin Menegus and many other Guild members have performed there in the past.

Thanks to Adrienne for sharing her skills with Driveway Follies. She has little time between work and volunteering, but I hope she gets her wish, which is, "I'd love to perform more!"

PUPPET EVENTS



The Golden Thread – Dalrymple and the Wild Daimons

The Nevada Theater, Nevada City Saturday, February 3, 7:30pm. Sunday, February 4,

2:00pm. - A Mystical Puppet Rock Opera by Dalrymple and the Wild Daimons

<https://paulemerymusic.com/the-golden-thread-a-mystical-puppet-rock-opera-by-dalrymple-and-the-wild-daimons/>

GLOP meets GLOG - The Glorious Ladies of Puppetry Meet the Glorious Ladies of Groundlings.

Sunday, February 4th at the Great Star Theater in San Francisco:. 12:00-1:30pm
A puppet-tastic improv show for the whole family, showcasing women in comedy and puppetry! GLOP is focused on getting more women and diversity in puppetry. Ages 7 & UP

This has some top top names in LA Puppeteers, including...

Donna Kimball: a world-renowned puppeteer with almost 30 years experience, most recently (and notably) recreating the beloved character of Mokey Fraggles in the Jim Henson Company's "Fraggle Rock: Back To The Rock" on Apple TV+. Also with the Jim Henson Company, Donna was the voice of Aughra in "The Dark Crystal: Age Of Resistance" (Netflix), Franny in "Word Party" (Netflix), Unicorn in "Slumberland" (Apple TV+), Teacher Susie in "Sid The Science Kid" (PBS), among many others.

Donna is also a regular performer in Henson's late-night puppet improv show "Puppet Up!", recently named a "Los Angeles staple" by The Wrap.

Puppets on loan from our Guild members, Swazzle Puppet Studio www.swazzle.com.



Guild members will be there, so don't be shy about attending this hilarious performance.

Tickets <https://allevents.in/san%20francisco/glop-meets-glog-glorious-ladies-of-puppetry-and-glorious-ladies-of-the-groundlings/200025855148311>

@glopstagram glop.us #glop

#gloriousladiesofpuppetry #womeninpuppetry



MIXED METAPHORS: CABARET STYLE NIGHT.

The Storm by The Puppet Circle is 1 of 6 acts in this cabaret at Cuttingball Theater, SF Friday, February 16 at 8pm, Saturday, February 17 at 8pm, Sunday, February 18 at 2pm

- <https://cuttingball.com/productions/mixedmetaphors-vp24>.

THE STORM presented by The Puppet Circle

Step into a fantastical San Francisco, where our puppet hero faces a city that comes alive unexpectedly. Confronted with the choice to hide, escape, or confront the animated threat, a mystical encounter with a sea creature sparks a transformative journey. Now equipped with newfound powers, our puppet must navigate how to wield them in this enchanting tale of choice and power.



Daniel Gill - Puppeteer

Daniel Gill is an educational puppeteer, early childhood educator, and teaching artist living in San Francisco. Daniel is a teaching artist for Marsh Youth Theater, San Francisco Children's Art Center, and in Autism-focus classrooms for StageWrite's ADAPTS program. He has performed original puppet shows at the Skirball Cultural Center, and puppeteered for Possibly Puppets and the Bob Baker Marionette Theater.
@thepuppetcircle



Risa Lenore - Puppeteer

Risa Lenore is known for her creativity in arts education and in her puppet creations. She is the creator, writer, director, designer and builder for more than 8 family-friendly puppet shows which have toured the bay area since 2013. She recently received support from the Jim Henson Foundation for her company Possibly Puppets show premiering this October. possiblypuppets.com and @possibly.puppets

The Guild Loses a Long Time Member

Sad news, Gayle Schulter January 8, 1926 - January 23, 2024

Gayle Schulter passed away at the age of 98. For 24 years the home of Gayle and Don Schluter was the membership address for Puppeteers of America. Dues were sent to 5 Cricklewood Path, Pasadena, CA.

Gayle was the longest serving officer in PofA. She treated every member of PofA like they were all part of her family. Her husband, Don (1924-2017) donated his considerable financial skills to PofA. Over the years Gayle also served as a regional director, trustee, and festival director. Gayle retired in 1999. Gayle dedicated a huge portion of her life and her time to puppetry.



Above, Gayle, shown with puppet collector Alan Cook.

Gayle was a Life Member of SFBAPG, a designation reserved for those who have served

Bright and gracious, in addition to being a skillful (and funny) administrator, she was a generous, hard working, a skilled recruiter, a motivator and a great cook and hostess.

Condolences can be sent to Brad and Carrie Schluter 13616 Glenclyff Way San Diego CA. 92130. The family requests-no flowers

the guild and puppetry above and beyond the norm and for many years/decades.

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

Part 2 - 1950 - 1959:

I have to start this month by saying that the 50s were a time for the restarting of family life and values. World War II was just barely over, and the Korean War was going to end by 1953. When the wars were over, soldiers returned to the comfort of family strength...and television. Television was the “new thing”, and the first color T.V. was available in 1953. And so many puppeteers established shows and careers on the airwaves. Especially ventriloquists. Guild member Bruce Sedley (1956 - 2012),

or Skipper Sedley and Sir Sedley as he was known on stations K.T.V.U. channel 2 &K.R.O.N. channel 4, hosted cartoons in the afternoon with his vent figure King Fuddle. Bruce also created Fairyland’s historic Magic Key and storybook audio boxes. He was in good company with Ralph Chesse’, Wolo Von Trutzschler and Lettie Schubert who were already entertaining on our living room “Magic Box.”



Bruce Sedley, above

And if you wanted to learn more about puppetry, Ralph Chesse’ taught puppet classes at San Francisco State College from 1949 - 1951. Television had awakened America to the puppetry arts, and the puppeteers of the Bay Area were looking for ways to be part of that awakening. The 50s were also going to be the beginning of two popular and long lasting puppet institutions that were both located in the city of Oakland. In 1941, after the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) had ended, Ralph Chesse’ didn’t know what to do with all the marionettes that were built in his programs. Ralph had been director of the San Francisco and Los Angeles Puppetry Units from 1936 - 1940. Rather than the government storing them, he squirreled them away at the Oakland Rec. Dept. This was the start of The Vagabond Puppet Program, that toured recreation centers, libraries and city parks in Oakland from 1950 - 2015. The first director, Joyce E. Lobner, under the name of the Stardust Puppeteers, used

Ralph's puppets to produce summer shows from 1950 - 1953. And then Lettie Schubert took over the program, changing the name to The Vagabond Puppet Trailer, and also entertained at camps and schools from 1954 to 1960. The newly built puppet trailer stage was pulled by car from location to location. Soon the W.P.A. puppets were slowly being retired, mainly because many of them were too large for the trailer proscenium, and the director became responsible for creating new puppets for their shows. Many talented San Francisco Guild puppeteers sharpened their talents pulling strings over the years during this expansive program. Rather than giving a complete listing of all the puppet talents at this time, I will focus on the different guild members who ran the program in their historical time periods as the coming months pass. Each successive director was responsible for building the puppets and shows that were presented by the Rec. Dept. Legend has it that the W.P.A. puppets are still in storage somewhere in Oakland, while the puppets from 1954 - 2015 were all lost during the year of Covid while the Oakland buildings were unsupervised.



Above, 3 shows from Vagabond Puppets.

The second institution was the opening of The Storybook Puppet Theater (1956 -2024), now the oldest, continuously running puppet theater in the United States. In 1950, Oakland created and opened Children's Fairyland, a children's theme park dedicated to fairytales and literature.



Puppets were amongst the most popular entertainments performing at the park. Early guild performers at Fairyland were Ray and Betty Mount (1951 - 2009), who toured the states with popular renditions of puppet classics, as well as Marian Derby (1950 - 1969), whose Party Puppets charmed the small ones with their antics. Marian is also responsible for designing the most popular American hand puppet pattern, still in use today, with Lettie Schubert and Lewis Mahlmann. (Available on Amazon in the book Making Puppets The Fairyland Way.) Lettie Schubert and her Vagabond Puppets also

made appearances. The puppet theater debuted in 1956 and was designed by William Russell Everitt, the architect of Fairyland. He passionately wanted to build the perfect theater for puppet performances and so he consulted with professional guild members Ralph Chesse', Lettie Schubert and Wolo Von Trutzschler. They built a performance space for all styles of puppets. Frank and Dorothy Hayward of the Hayward Marionettes (1945 - 1959), who also had performed earlier at Fairyland, became the first directors. Each director over the years has been an Independent Contractor, and therefore has owned all of their puppets and shows built for the park. Unfortunately Frank passed away the first year of the theater, and Dorothy (who was pregnant at the time) was left to find shows quickly for the coming seasons. Three guild members, Roberta Mack, Lewis Mahlmann and Marian Derby, stepped forward and loaned their personal shows for the 56-57 seasons. In honor of Frank, Fairyland and the guild began the yearly tradition of The Puppet Fair at the park (1956 - 2024). The 1956 puppet fair is considered to be the official 1st large meeting of our soon to be chartered guild. (See 1956 Photo of Puppet Fair and Puppeteers, below.)



Guild members in photo: First row: Jenny Oznowicz, Frances Oznowicz, Mary McMahon, Pat Lavin, Dorothy Hayward, Jim Embree, Bev Philis, Helena Hayward. Second row: Lettie Connell Schubert, Marian Derby, Fleming Heegard, Jerry Juhl, Jim Chandler, Elva Aiken & Jack Aiken standing. Third row: Roberta Mack, Betty Mount, Ray Mount, Kay Ballan, Jan Ballan, Lee Donaghey, Bob Darling, Mike Oznowicz. Fourth row: Paul Miller, John LaPatra, (rear) Hugh Seyfried, Lewis Mahlmann, Max Benjamin. Not pictured, but there: Ralph Chesse', Tony Urbano, Nancy Cole and Frank Oznowicz.



Ralph Chesse' Performing Brother Buzz in Fairyland Storybook Theater 1956. Lettie Shubert is next to him



Clifford Coite & Beverly Philis w_ Frank & Dorothy Hayward and Hansel & Gretel - 1956

But there still remained the problem of who Dorothy Hayward was going to get to build her new shows. That was solved in 1957 when Bob Mills (1950 -1961) moved to Oakland from Hawaii. He used his own variety puppets to perform at the theater while helping to build new ones. Bob only stayed at Fairyland for one year. After seeing his show, Disneyland which had opened in 1955, offered him a job as puppeteer at the Tinkerbell Toy Shoppe in Fantasyland. For four and 1/2 years he did shows every day Disneyland was opened. Then he gave up puppetry and became a professional makeup man for film and television. Luckily for Dorothy, Tony Urbano (1940 - present) had left the military and started work designing and building puppets for her. In 1958 Dorothy will leave California and settle in Detroit where she will marry Gil Oden, the puppetry curator of the Detroit Institute of Art, where for the last three summers she had presented Fairyland puppet shows. Tony will then become the 2nd director of The Storybook Puppet Theater in 1959.



*Bob Mills & Dorothy Hayward _Circus
Marionette Varieties_ 1957*



*Tony Urbano & Rumpelstiltskin &
Millers Daughter - 1960*



*Puppet Performance 1954 - Marion
Derby - Punch & Judy at Fairyland*

All of this now brings us back to 1954 and the dream to form a permanent guild in the San Francisco Bay Area. Puppetry is such a diverse art form. Taking into consideration and adapting aspects from other sister arts such as: technical design, sculpture, carpentry and art appreciation, doll making, live and avantgarde theater, as well as animation and modern day graphics just to name a few. All in the hopes of bringing books and plays to life through the use of inanimate objects.

Puppetry was even being used by the Church to preach moral tales and lessons. Early guild members Roland and Verna Sylwester of The Marionette Theatre of the Word (1950 - 1998) brought their puppet productions to Sunday morning television, churches and spiritual events all across California. Their thoughtful puppet plays, well acted and crafted, only helped emphasize the need for a guild where we could learn and create with each other. Starting in 1954, our original group of members met monthly at the Oakland library. By 1955, it was decided that meeting at puppeteer's homes was a better choice for discussing the future and growth of the guild. In the early days the group was guided by a small majority of seven or so members. These visionaries managed to keep the group together over the the next six years. They included Pat Lavin, who would become our first provisional guild president in 1961, as well as Lettie Schubert, Lewis Mahlmann, Mike & Frances Oznowicz, Roberta Mack, and Marian Derby. Other members would frequent meetings as their schedules allowed. Although not an official guild, we considered ourselves one, none the less. When a majority of our fledgling members wanted to host the 22nd National

Puppeteers of America festival at Asilomar, Monterey in 1961, it became evident that we finally needed to be a chartered member of the Puppeteers of America to receive necessary funding. This led to many spirited discussions on whether to join the parent organization - pros and cons. Members William Stewart Jones, Lewis Mahlmann and Tony Urbano were already on the P. Of A. Board and began to pave the way for this process. Do we give up our freedom to do whatever we wish? Or... do we join and become controlled by the P. Of A. guidelines? Legend has it that Mike Oznowicz, who secretly favored joining the P. Of A, loved to play “Devil’s Advocate” and challenged ideas presented by members whether they were right or wrong. And so the process dragged on for continual puppet meetings. Join, or not? And then one night in 1960, when Mike excused himself to visit the restroom, a remarkable thing happened. And that was...oops I’ve run out of space. To find out this game changing event, you’ll have to join us for the next newsletter. But before I finish, I’d like to leave you with my favorite quote from Lettie Schubert that sums up the true meaning of our guild: ***“We gathered for fellowship and to share an interest. We have made contributions. We have received inspiration, involvement, training. We have gained from giving. We have gained by receiving. We have made lasting friendships. May we continue to receive, to give, to contribute, and most of all, to elevate the art of puppetry, as friends into and through the next millennium.”*** Lettie Connell Schubert.

Correction note: In the last issue, the name of Francois Martin of the Tantomount Theater was misspelled. This is the correct spelling. Ahhh, spell check.

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 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.

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