



Why Am I Getting Two March Newsletters?

This newsletter comes with a big apology.

Is the First March Newsletter Better?

Nope. Both are excellent and you should read both.

BACKGROUND: So many wonderful contributors send in materials to our newsletter. They are sent to newsletter@sfbapg.org where they enter an inbox on the guild website (not visible to you.) From there the website forwards the emails to your editor (me) and I create the newsletter from the newsletter@ emails that appear in my own personal inbox.

APOLOGY: After a frequent contributor inquired why his newsletter items were not showing up in the newsletter, your editor went on a deep dive to figure out what happened. Thus, yesterday I discovered that a disturbingly large number of emails sent to newsletter@sfbapg.org had never been forwarded to me. I did not know they existed. And this may have been going on for quite some time. **I would like to offer my heartfelt apology to any and all of you who sent in materials that I did not run in the newsletter. I do really appreciate all that you send, and, let me be clear, I do not purposefully omit puppet news that our members send in. I basically print everything** (sometimes something non-time sensitive will be bumped to the next newsletter because of space, but my policy is that it gets in.)

MARCH NEWS, PART 2 is an attempt to catch up on the many recent submissions that I never received. And, if in the future I do not run an article you sent, please let me know at info@sfbapg.org (which goes to several board members.) Thank you for your understanding. We are working on the problem. And now on to all the great news that we almost missed!

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Reminder, Program Meeting. The next guild programming meeting will be on Tuesday, March 5th at 6:30pm on Zoom. Anyone who would like the link can email programming@sfbapg.org

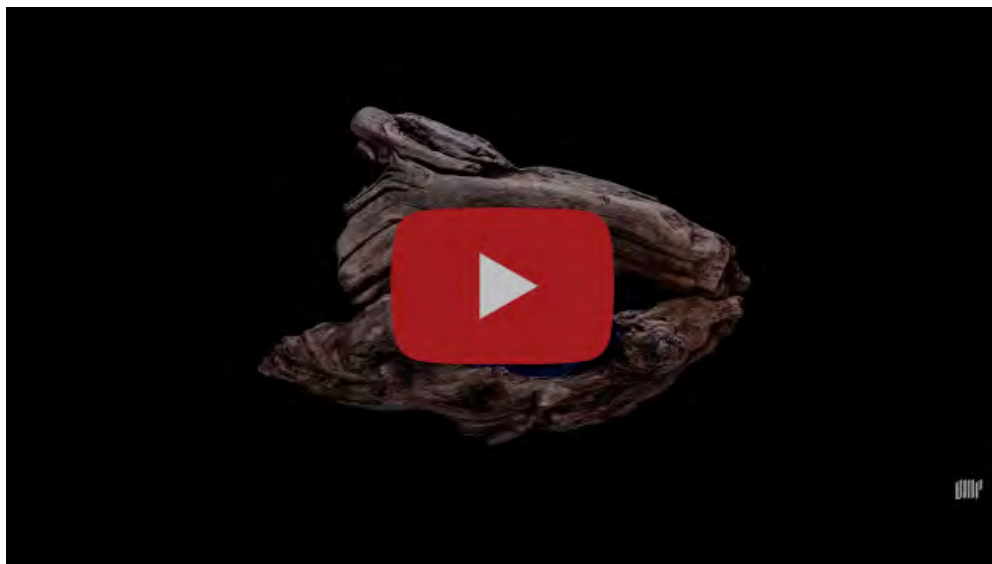
Basil Twist production coming to Stanford

Thanks to Kathy Foley for forwarding this info.

April 6 and 7 at Bing Performance Hall, Stanford. [Tickets and info.](#)

A daring new work by composer Huang Ruo and puppeteer/designer/director Basil Twist, *Book of Mountains and Seas* is a modern take on ancient Chinese creation myths, first transcribed in the 4th Century BC, yet strikingly relevant to our current struggle with climate change. An ensemble of massive puppets, as fanciful as they are terrifying, and the chorus of Ars Nova Copenhagen challenge us through music and stunning visual tableaux to consider the power of the natural world and our vital, yet tenuous, relationship to it.

Basil Twist is a third-generation puppeteer and object theater artist, renowned globally for his visionary adaptations of opera, dance, and theater. Chinese-born American composer Huang Ruo has been called “one of the world’s leading young composers” and was formerly Composer in Residence at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.





Students in a University of San Francisco theatre class prepare for a Presidential debate, puppets by Guild member Joel Schechter, photo by Florentina Mocanu. February 2024.



The February 2024 episode of Under The Puppet is here and it's all about the Glorious Ladies of Puppetry! Puppeteers Donna Kimball and Colleen Smith are the creators, directors, and producers of GLOP - The Glorious Ladies of Puppetry. Donna and Colleen, along with puppeteer Alice Dinnean, created GLOP to promote the many incredible Lady Puppeteers, Puppeteers of Color and Non-Binary and Trans puppeteers there are around the world. I sat down with Donna and Colleen to talk about the history of GLOP, the two seasons of the show they've produced, the live show spin off and much more on this episode of Under The Puppet.

Available now at underthepuppet.com or whoever you listen to audio!

Grant Baciocco, Puppeteer. Creator.

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Embrace the Drama: Why Dramatic Tension in Children's Puppet Shows is Cool for Kids

Art Grueneberger

I received an email from a teacher the other day. We'd performed our show "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" for the TK-2nd graders at her school and she wanted to book another production. She asked, "What is your least scary puppet show?" She went on to explain that two of the children in the TK-2nd audience got a little frightened. I wrote a very long email explaining how sometimes it's the noise and excitement of the audience that causes the anxiety and sometimes it's the idea of puppets themselves. I went on to explain how we make sure our "bad guy characters" are more goofy than scary and how dramatic tension (moments in the show where a character is in danger, like when the Wolf is chasing the Boy) can actually be beneficial to children, helping them mature emotionally. This is a huge pet peeve of mine and I blame Dora the Explorer. That's right, I'm coming after you, Dora.

So, let's chat about Dora the Explorer – she's like the cozy, no-surprise zone of children's TV, right? Sure, she's great for learning colors and shapes, but when it comes to drama, she's about as thrilling as watching paint dry. Unlike the roller coaster ride of mysteries in shows I grew up with like Scooby-Doo, where every corner hides a spooky surprise, Dora keeps things about as surprising as a game of peek-a-boo.

I deleted the entire email, re-wrote it suggesting Three Billy Goats Gruff as our least "scary" show and hit send. She didn't need a lecture from me just because she hit a pet peeve of mine. However, dear reader, you are going to hear about it, if you read on.

While traditionally seen as light-hearted entertainment, there's a growing recognition of the value of incorporating dramatic tension into children's entertainment, even for preschool and elementary school age children (kids 4-10 years old.) Contrary to common concerns ("Is the show SCARY?"), exposing children to moments of suspense or mild fear in puppet shows can actually be beneficial for their emotional development and overall growth.



Art about to be mauled by a Wolf.

Embracing the Thrill: Why Tension Isn't Bad

One might argue that puppet shows should exclusively focus on cheerful narratives to ensure children's entertainment remains entirely benign (Barf.). However, research suggests that a moderate level of tension or suspense can enhance engagement and cognitive development in young audiences. According to a study published in the *Journal of Media Psychology*, exposure to controlled suspense in storytelling can stimulate cognitive processes, leading to improved attention, memory, and comprehension skills in children.

Feeling a little scared or nervous during a puppet show can actually help children grow emotionally. Psychologists often emphasize the importance of children learning to navigate and cope with a range of emotions, including fear and anxiety, in order to develop resilience and adaptability later in life. Dr. Sandra L. Calvert, professor of psychology at Georgetown University, notes that exposure to controlled levels of fear in entertainment can help children learn to distinguish between real and imaginary threats, thus building emotional resilience.

Playtime for Building Resilience

Puppet shows are like emotional playgrounds where kids can swing from giggles to gasps in a snap – and that's totally okay. Unlike real-life dramas, puppet shows can be super-safe zones where kids can feel all the feels without any real danger. So, when they face a mini-monster puppet, they're actually learning how to tackle their fears head-on.

When kids get a little spooked during a story, their brains go into superhero mode. A study from the University of California, Berkeley, found that a bit of fear in storytelling helps kids become emotion masters. Exposure to mild fear in storytelling activates the brain's amygdala, responsible for processing emotions, in a way that enhances emotional regulation skills over time so experiencing controlled levels of tension in puppet shows can contribute to children's emotional development.

Plus, a Harvard University survey found that kids who get cozy with suspenseful stories are like social wizards – they're more empathetic and understanding! The study says children who were exposed to age-appropriate suspenseful stories exhibited higher levels of empathy and social understanding compared to those who were not. This indicates that exposure to dramatic tension in entertainment media like puppet shows can promote positive social and emotional growth in children.



Witch about to ZAP Hansel.

Wrapping Up the Puppet Party

Now, don't get me wrong, simplicity has its charm, especially for the itty-bitty ones. But let's face it, without those heart-pounding moments of suspense, where's the fun in building emotional muscles? So, while our pal Dora the Explorer might teach us to count to ten, Scooby-Doo's teaching us to face our fears!

So, let's celebrate those puppet shows that give us a thrill! They're not just about laughs and smiles – they're about building smart, strong, and emotionally healthy kids! Next time you're performing a puppet show don't worry if they squirm a bit during the tense parts –they're just flexing their emotional muscles and becoming the heroes of their own stories. By providing a safe space for children to experience and navigate feelings of suspense and fear, puppet shows can help cultivate emotional resilience, cognitive skills, and social understanding. Rather than shielding children from all forms of tension, we should embrace the benefits of controlled exposure to such experiences, recognizing the role they play in shaping well-rounded individuals.

Puppetry Institute News

Ricki Vincent

Three months into our fundraising drive TPI has raised close to a third of the funding needed to build our 5000 sq ft interactive Puppetry Arts installation, "MIDDLEOF" The creature build has already started and once we have reached a full third of funding we'll start work in the space located at the Capitola Mall! We are also looking

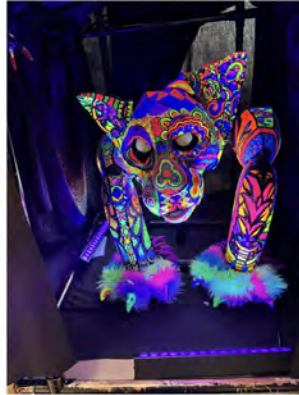
for artists interested in collaborating on the project. Interested parties should contact TPI at this email, For more info on the project feel free to visit our page at <https://www.thepuppetryinstitute.org/middleof>

<https://www.facebook.com/100002086822334/videos/pcb.7154779647934858/1329860791011301>

Ricki Vincent, Artistic Director, The Puppetry Institute of Santa Cruz
making the world a cooler place... one puppet at a time!

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

<https://www.thepuppetryinstitute.org/>



Building a Vladimir Zakharov-Style Wrist Puppet

By Greg Zollars

The year was 2018, pre-pandemic and I was contemplating a new puppet. I had not built a puppet in years and I wanted to get back to something I could use without a

stage. I did not want just any puppet, I wanted something fabulous, compact, agile, technically complex, and expressive. Think Topo Giggio, but operated solo.

My search led me beyond the English language to other cultures with rich puppet traditions. I used Google Translate to find puppetry terms in other languages. Intrigued by wrist-controlled puppets, I pasted from Russian, "запястье" (wrist) and "кукла" (puppet) into Google Images, and stumbled upon the magic of Vladimir Zakharov's theater in Tomsk, Siberia.

Zakharov's innovative thinking placed the marionette upside-down, so to speak, above the puppeteer's hand, the figure is controlled with rods, strings, and linkages. Hands, fingers, feet, head nods, eye blinks, and scanning gazes – all came to life with an imperceptible bend of the wrist or the slide of a lever.

Discovering Zakharov was a galvanizing moment in my search. His website included informative details, close-up shots of mechanisms, and video demonstrations. A comment asking how to build such wonders received a simple, "Come," – an invitation I couldn't fathom accepting at the time.

Though a trip to Siberia, wasn't on my immediate agenda, I scoured the internet for any scrap of information, local TV interviews, travel articles, and event news about his theatre ("Театр 2+KY"), anything to unlock his secrets.

Then, tragedy struck. On February 1st, 2019, a fire ravaged his workshop. Zakharov saved his puppets but perished in the process.

The following days were a blur of social media tributes from students, patrons, and a vibrant community. Among them, was German filmmaker, Ramona Gastl, who had captured Zakharov's spirit, his story, and his shows. Her work helped bring his theatre back to life and provided a bridge for my ambitions.

From the ashes, something remarkable arose. The community rallied, repairing the theatre and continuing Zakharov's legacy. Shows, live and filmed, pulsed with renewed energy. The theatre is thriving today, a testament to his impact.

Six Months after his passing, an "International Festival of Dolls on the Wrist", featuring Zakharov's students from around the world, filled his theatre with movement and life. Through social media glimpses, I took in the event from afar. I discovered other wrist-puppet builders with additional images and videos I could study to learn Zakharov's methods. I also reached out to the German filmmaker and soon was emailing back and forth with another puppet master Ramona introduced me to who was also making a Zakharov puppet.

The pandemic lockdown became my workshop. Obsessively, I poured hours into dissecting the details. While the original puppets were wood and wire, my love for 3D printing led me down that path, though it slowed my progress considerably.

A year ago, I performed my first show. The journey is still half-done, but the future holds moving eyes and mouths, true to the Zakharov style.

Inspiration and Resources:

- Vladimir's Theater <https://www.instagram.com/2plusky/>
- Ramona Gastl's Short Film about Vladimir Zakharov: <https://vimeo.com/191263996>
- An informative explanation - with photos - of wrist puppets by Coppelia Theater in Italy: <https://www.coppeliatheatre.it/language/en/portfolio/wrist-puppets/>

Greg Zollars

<https://www.instagram.com/gregzollars/>



This is "Scrap" - from the puppeteer's point of view - showing some of the mechanism that makes him work.



This is Angus - One of his hands is dextrous, He has feet that walk, and a head that turns, nods, and wags.



More photos of our fantastic Puppetathlon at the Holiday Party, sent by Ilene Kennedy.

International Puppetry News & UNIMA-USA (the U.S. branch of the international organization of puppetry)

By Kathy Foley

Puppetry International Research is being edited by Claudia Orenstein of Hunter college. You can get to the contents of the first volume which has lots of information on the Bali UNIMA-International Council meeting at the following URL <<https://pirjournal.commons.gc.cuny.edu/puppet-research-international-1-no-1/>>. Please check it once or twice a year (it will come out Winter and Summer) to see if there is something that strikes your fantasy.

This particular issue (Vol. 1, No. 1) will tell you a lot that is going on in contemporary Balinese puppetry but also has information about puppetry and protest in COVID lockdown China, the rise of ecological themes in current American puppetry,

representation of children's Holocaust experiences in puppetry, conferences on European puppetry and literature, and other material. Check it out and consider writing something to submit for future issues. The publication will be coming out twice a year. If you want to submit an article, report or review see the information below:

Puppetry International Research (PIR) is a global, interdisciplinary, academic journal dedicated to puppetry and the allied areas of masks, performing objects, and material performance. Published twice a year, its mission is to foster scholarship on puppet theatre and related arts as practiced in the past and present around the world and deepen historical and theoretical understanding of the field. Empirical and theoretical peer-reviewed articles, as well as critical book, performance, and exhibition reviews, and field reports will strengthen puppetry studies as an academic discipline. The journal welcomes submissions from scholars and reflective practitioners from all related disciplines. In collaboration with UNIMA-USA.

The Calling: The Transformative Power of African American Doll and Puppet Making.

Camila Bryce Laporte, curator and Phyllis May-Machunda, curatorial consultant was on display at the City Lore Gallery. N. Y., N. Y. 6 Oct.- 2023-3 Mar. 2024. While this version of this exhibit is closing, Paulette Richards who is one of the artists with work included says future iterations of this doll and puppet exhibit are planned for different cities. People may also remember the exhibit Paulette helped set up at the Puppeteers of America Festival last summer or have seen materials she and John Bell did on Black puppeteers at the Ballard Museum pre-covid which are now easy to access online at <https://bimp-exhibitions.org/livingobjects/>. (Paulette also encourages everyone to check out the YouTube versions of the Ellen Van Volkenbury Videos).

The current exhibit version entitled "The Calling" does give insight into how African American puppeteers and doll makers are using iconography in contemporary performance and gallery work. Though quilts and dolls are more numerous than puppets per se, the presentation is a good example of how folklorist curators approach display and the kind of events included with exhibit programs, for example Schroeder Cherry's presentation on the Children's Civil Rights Crusade of 1963 (which you can check out online).

I add a few of the urls for some of the panels on African American dolls/puppets (at the Library of Congress) and an online catalogue of a previous version of this doll/puppet exhibit in case anyone is interested in glancing at the material. It brings together issues of history, kinds of representation African Americans have experienced in dolls and on stage since the Civil War, and activism through doll and puppet representation at present.

Some Urls:

African American Dollmaking and Puppetry: Renegotiating Identity, Restoring Community, 2020. Library of Congress 3 Dec. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdJOd5XRE3Q> [also

<https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-9594/?locId=blogflt>, accessed 17 Feb. 2024.
Bryce-Laporte, Camila 2023. The Village of African American Doll Artist [Catalogue
Fredrick Douglas-Isaac Myers Museum Feb.-Mar. 2023]. Baltimore: Black Classic
Press.https://issuu.com/kibibiajanku/docs/the_village_of_doll_artists_catalog,
accessed 17 Feb. 2024.

City Lore 2024b [YouTube]. "The Calling: The Transformative Power of African
American Doll and Puppet Making Virtual Program," [Phyllis May-Machunda,
moderator], January 16, 2024. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=5WbeRM5B0Bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WbeRM5B0Bg)American Culture, accessed 21 Feb. 2024.

Hall, Stephanie. 2021. "African American Dolls and Puppets for Identity and
Healing" Library of Congress Blog, Feb. 4.
<https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2021/02/african-american-art-dolls-and-puppets>,
accessed 18 February 2020.

Shroeder Cherry. "Civil Rights Children's Crusade." PBS.org. Cherry's work
see <https://www.craftinamerica.org/guide/civil-rights-childrens-crusade>, for his
portfolio see <https://bakerartist.org/portfolios/schroedercherry>, accessed 19 Feb.
2024



Talking Stuff: The Materiality of the Puppet

(forwarded/shared by Kathy Foley)

<https://howlround.com/happenings/ellen-van-volkenburg-puppetry-symposium-0>

Noting that modern physics has demolished the tangible solidity on which Aristotle defined the "real" by splitting the supposedly indivisible atom, Manuel DeLanda calls for a new materialism.

The 2024 Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium series will therefore consider what materials and design enable material performance to express about material existence.

Artist Panels

Panel 1 – mechanisms

Invisible Cities by Matthew Gawryk and Dan Kerr-Hobert, The Hip Hopera of SP1N0K10 by Jeghetto, and Spleen by Michael Vogel make use of sophisticated digital projection technology as well as ingeniously designed controls for puppets. Panelists detail the technical processes they used to animate their material

characters. The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium: Artist Panel 1 on Saturday 20 January 2024

https://youtu.be/tiOTtC_osC8?si=z55XL4azyhUeLGeZ

Panel 2 – materials

This discussion explores the choice of materials for telling stories in Papermoon's Bucket of Beetles, La Liga Teatro's Beast Dance, and Hamid Rahamanian's Song of the North. What factors influenced the choice of materials? Weight? Durability? Flexibility? Price? Visual Aesthetic?

The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Artist Panel 2 on Sunday 21 January 2024 <https://youtu.be/61qx2sNNfxY?si=UeYzmFcE9jXZthn>

Panel 3 – construction techniques

Tita Iacobelli and Natacha Belova, and Basil Twist, and Yael Rasooly, describe the construction methods they use to create puppets. What difficulties had to be overcome in the process of building the puppets and getting them to perform as desired? Where did inspiration for the solutions come from? Trial and error? Research? Intuition and inspiration? Consultation with outside experts? The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Artist Panel 3 on Saturday 27 January 2024

<https://youtu.be/jPecahL4tZc?si=PUEOmiOsN-ej0RVc>

Panel 4 – manipulation

How does the material used to construct the puppet affect the manipulation technique used to animate it? How do the needs of the performance influence the choice of materials and manipulation techniques? Dagmara Sowa & Paweł Chomczyk of Grupa Coincidencia, Fedelis Kyalo, and Frederico Restrepo address these questions in relation to Krabat, Tears by the River, and Lunch with Sonia. The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Artist Panel 4 on Sunday 28 January 2024

<https://youtu.be/zaBSNeMmO9s?si=tcQc790uqo1moSWi>

Author Talks -Colette Searls – Galaxy of Things

The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium: Author Talk 1 on Friday 19 January 2024 <https://youtu.be/CK3TLxKjY40?si=Qzg86A5msexm5qdk>

Paulette Richards – Object Performance in the Black Atlantic

The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Author Talk 2 on Tuesday 23 January 2024 – <https://youtu.be/hFronINUSgo?si=-iqAck3pGBIFdjD8>

Claudia Orenstein – Reading the Puppet Stage

The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Author Talk 3 on Friday 26 January 2024 – https://youtu.be/-l_oWhOqJBs?si=OziFo-C3_0FmDaT5

Claudia Orenstein and Tim Cusack – Puppet and Spirit

The Ellen Van Volkenburg Puppetry Symposium Author Talk 4 on Saturday 27 January 2024 – <https://youtu.be/Ngq3baCA9T8?si=6yn9EcyQUSOCK3GI>

"A Puppeteer's Notebook"

Mark Segal an active puppeteer for 43 years until Covid (an East Coast member of our guild) has developed Journal writing/notekeeping books.

He has developed a couple that might be of interest to the puppetry community.

"A Puppeteer's Notebook" which contains 43 quotes about puppetry, theatre and creativity. It has a section of storyboards.

It was developed with invaluable input from Camilla Henneman.

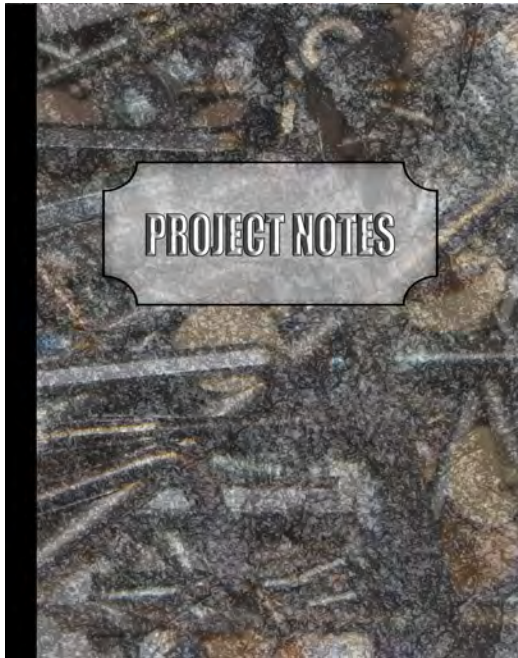
Here is the link: <https://therightjournalproject.com/a-puppeteers-notebook-details.html>

There is also a smaller book for taking notes on projects and keeping lists etc.

"Project Notes" link <https://therightjournalproject.com/project-notes-details.html>

There are more formatted books available and more are in development.

Please take a look: therightjournalproject.com



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