



In this newsletter you'll find lots of puppet events coming up, including announcement of two Bay Area Puppet Festivals with workshops and performances, member profiles, projects, a chance to weigh in on what you want from the guild, announcements, call for nominations and so much more! Read and mark your calendars.

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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70th Anniversary Bay Area Puppetry Festival and More

Rumors have been going around about a 70th Anniversary Bay Area Puppetry Festival.... and they are true! It's been seventy years since a small group of Bay Area puppeteers banded together for meetings, workshops and friendship. It's time to celebrate and what better way than with a puppet festival filled with workshops, shows and more! Additional info will be coming out in the next newsletters and social media, but pencil in Fri., Aug 2 and Sat. Aug 3 at the Sonoma Community Center. The Center, <https://sonomacommunitycenter.org> has a professional theater, classrooms, a garden theater and the staff are looking forward to having puppeteers take over their space and share their art form.

I find it exciting that another Puppet Festival will be happening in St. Helena July 27-28. Our goal is to encourage the art of puppetry and Puppet Festivals are a wonderful way to do this. Check out the "Meet Our Members" column to see what enterprising individual is organizing this festival.



Holiday Party Thank You's: Many thanks you's to the amazing team of members who made our annual Holiday Party so successful. It all started in November, when **Mary Nagler** flew in from Virginia to provide a workshop to build puppet Athletes for the Puppetathlon. A big thank you to the **Nick Barone Scholarship fund**, which helped sponsor this event, and **Tree Barlett** who hosted this workshop in his cozy Vallejo studio. These puppets were featured, with great success, in the 1st Puppetathlon Competition at the holiday party in February.

Thanks to **Hugo Shum** who, with the help of **Wing Shum** and **Joe Bly** carried his stage and puppets from SF to Vallejo on the ferry. They presented the show "Spooky Squeals!" which I thought most appropriate, as **Art Grueneberger** had performed his Halloween show at the previous year's Holiday Party. Thank you, Hugo and Joe, for this "scary" performance!

Thanks to **Michael & Valerie Nelson** for arranging the event at the Vallejo Naval Museum, picking up lasagna for the multitude, organizing the kitchen, and teaching the tabletop puppet workshop. Michael did a great job as MC at the Puppetathlon with very funny narration from the Commentators **John Arnold and Marisol Himmel**. Competition props were made by the Nelsons, Marisol Himmel and John Arnold. Gorgeous 3D printed awards were made by John. Thanks to all the intrepid performers who brought these amazing athletes to life!

The raffle was a great success, headed up by **Valerie Nelson** assisted by **Barbra Schora**. Thanks to the many who donated gifts for the raffle, which goes to a scholarship fund for our members to attend puppet festivals. Special thanks to **Folkmanis** who donated a magnificent Jack Skeleton walkaround puppet for the silent auction. And to all that bought tickets support this cause.

Thank you to all the behind-the-scenes workers, especially **Programming Chair Marisol and Programming members Uel McGinnis, Tree Bartlett and Ilene & Michael Kennedy**, with all the other helpful hands that setup the event and the ever important cleanup afterwards. And if we had a prize for the best table decorations, I would award it to **Heather Gobbe** for her Valentine Love theme, balanced on a hoola hoop.

A special thanks to **Trevor Allen and the staff of the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum** for hosting and making us all feel welcome (and solving various challenges as they arose.)

I know I'm leaving out some names, but much appreciation to all that helped and all that attended. So nice to see everyone at the party!

70th Anniversary Bay Area Puppet Festival Survey

This Puppet Festival is for you and we'd love to get your input. What would you like to see and do? Please help us out by taking a moment to fill out this quick survey at <https://sfbapg.org/70thFestSurvey> and share with anyone you think might be interested in coming to our Puppet Festival.

As we want to start booking shows and workshops soon, we hope you can do this today! However, we know you have busy lives. Therefore, if you can fill it out by March 15th, your thoughts will be greatly appreciated.



A few snaps from the Guild Holiday Party.

Heather Gobbe's "love" centerpiece was fabulous.

Hugo Shum and Joe Bly receiving applause for their performance.



The Puppetathlon was a huge success. Shown here are puppets working the obstacles and MC Michael revving up the crowd, sporting the Puppetathlon T-shirt, logo by Marisol Himmel.



Meet Our Members: David Garden and The White Barn Puppet Festival July 27-28

Guild member David Garden Jr. has had an adventurous life and has always been willing to try something new. The next new venture will be a Puppet Festival at the White Barn <https://www.thewhitebarn.org/>, in St. Helena - July 26-28. "Many events in the Napa Valley center around wine and food" he explains. "I want to do something different, and I see a puppet festival as a way to provide magical entertainment for families and people of all ages."

David's journey into the world of puppetry stems from a diverse background in the arts. He gained valuable experience as an editor and postproduction supervisor at Colossal Pictures in San Francisco, an animation/puppetry/ live action production studio.

This inspired him to make his first stop motion film, Mother of Invention, sparking his enduring fascination with puppetry's ability to suspend disbelief and evoke wonder. Furthermore, David's commitment to fostering artistic endeavors in the Napa Valley is exemplified through his tenure as an instructor at Nimbus Arts, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing community access to the arts. While there, he instructed kids in marionette making, hand puppets, and shadow puppetry workshops/films. He's a past board member of Nimbus Arts and the Arts Council Napa Valley

His mother, Nancy Garden, transformed a carriage house(The White Barn) built in 1872 into an intimate 75-seat performing arts venue without loss of its historic charm. David is the director, supervising a wealth of theater, music, dance, poetry, films, and of course, some puppetry.

This is where he'll host his festival. Attendees can expect a diverse lineup of performances, ranging from traditional marionettes to avant-garde showcases. The festival will also feature engaging workshops, a giant puppet parade, and more, all set amidst the inviting lawns surrounding The White Barn.

David would be interested in connecting with performers, builders, and puppet enthusiasts and can be reached at dgarden1@sbcglobal.net.

Call for Nominations for Guild Board of Directors

Do you share our common goal of promoting the art of puppetry in the Bay Area? If so, you might be interested in serving on the SFBAPG Board. If so, please contact the Nominating Committee: Beth Choy at cchoy@sfbapg.org, 707-365-5663, before April 15th for more information.

Eligibility: Candidates must have been members of the SFBAPG for at least one year prior to the elections.

Term limits: Each Board member shall serve for three years. Each Board member shall be allowed to serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. Each Board member must want to be an active volunteer, taking on such positions as President, V.P., Programming, Membership, Publicity & Social Media, Hospitality, etc.

Candidates need to provide a short bio and photo to the Nominating Committee, prior to April 20th, to be published in the May newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Your Nominating Committee

Beth Choy

Camilla Henneman

Michael Kennedy

Upcoming Guild Event, Sunday, April 21

The McCune Collection of Art and Rare Books is located in the basement of the JFK Library in Vallejo. They have a superb collection of rare books and area also fond of hosting puppet events! The next one will be on the afternoon of April 21 and will focus on toy theatre. Toy theatre or paper theatre is the perfect intersection of printing (the McCune's focus) and puppetry (the guild's focus.) Guild members Michael and Valerie Nelson will host the event and share some of their toy theatre collection and performances. The Nelsons have toured their award winning toy theatre productions across the US and at various festivals throughout Europe and Latin America. They also use toy theatre as a teaching tool for elementary aged children. Come and learn more about this Victorian era paper puppet form, explore some rare books, drink wine and enjoy snacks provided by the McCune. The event is free. If you have a short toy theatre performance to share, send into to the Nelsons. They'd love to see if it fits the schedule.

Exact time to be announced in the next newsletter.

Below, two of the Nelson's toy theatre prosceniums and a scene.



PUPPET EVENTS



GLOP - Glorious Ladies of Puppetry 48 Hr Film Competition

Submissions will be Airing March 2

Thank you, Hugo Shum for this tip. – Lee

Fun details about the screening and Award Ceremony.

We will begin both at 11am. Tune in Saturday to see all the films and then Sunday to see who won! Plus the Raffle!!! On Youtube at_

<https://www.youtube.com/@glop-gloriousladiesofpuppe9485>



**Ronnie Burkett,
Master Canadian
marionettist at
Stanford U in May**

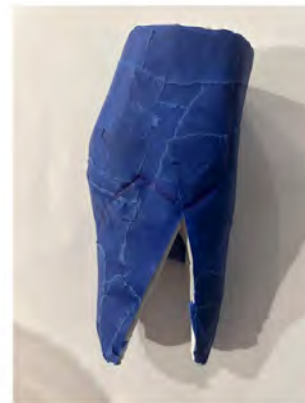
Thank you, Kevin Menegus for this tip. Ronnie's shows are always highly recommended! – Lee

Ronnie Burkett presents Wonderful Joe Canadian puppeteer Ronnie Burkett (Little Willy, The Daisy Theatre) returns with a new Stanford Live commissioned work examining the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Dark and poetic, yet magical, Wonderful Joe and his dog Mister go on a fantastic journey into the world in search of home. Info & Tickets [Ronnie Burkett](#) | [Stanford Live](#)

Building a Beetlejuice Snake

Built by John and Michelle Arnold

I have the good fortune to work with a local children's theater organization Poison Apple Productions in Martinez California, and they were asked to perform Beetlejuice in the new works showcase at the Junior Theater Festival West on February 11th. This 15-minute showcase had highlights from the junior musical theater version of Beetlejuice that MTI will have available for licensing soon. This was performed in Sacramento's Music Circus Pavilion, a large theater in the round that seats just over 2,000 people. With a theater in the round something like a dragon festival puppet was the inspiration. The goal of the project was to create a large sandworm/snake from Beetlejuice that could be manipulated by several of the dancers, and collapse down to be transported to Sacramento without taking a whole car.



Assembly and adjustments: Pattern, mockup, and middle-school math, I scaled my pattern and made a paper mockup first, then placed that pattern on the EVA foam

and cut away. Lessons relearned on this project included be prepare to make changes, and adjustments will likely be needed. Using the dog run saved me the effort of having to engineer an internal support system, so now I could just use the rip-stop nylon for a skin. I also didn't need to make hoops attached to the pvc for the polls, I could use the internal wire spiral. Also I opened the first of the dog runs I purchased and saw how long it was, checked in with the director, and one 18' long tunnel was enough, and what I thought would be a 40 foot with 6 people or longer snake/worm became a 25' long puppet with 4 people. This also meant I needed less nylon.

Adjustment number 2, the tunnel was blue and the white nylon was very thin, doubling layering the nylon helped, but I needed something to disguise the black strip that held the support wire. So we spray painted the tunnel with outdoor fabric paint. I used EVA foam clay to make the eyes some brow ridges, and smoothly connect the tube insulation lips. PVC pipe made the sheath for the bamboo poles in the body, and I installed an EVA pipe that I used a heat gun to bend to 90° and glued into supporting the head. Due to time and keeping it simple the mouth was also glued in place so it couldn't open and close. Instead I placed a welding wire inside poly foam for the tongue which gave the head some life and movement. My wife sewed lots and lots of 24"x75" panels together, and she used multiple microtex needles. Using copper welding wire I built the outer head frame that connects to the tunnel/body, and pointy tail. Using some rope and dog leash clips the head and tail connected to the body. We painted and wrapped the bamboo in sports wrap. Last the teeth were makeup sponges glued onto the lips.



The weekend before the performance the teens received the puppet. We walked through how to assemble and disassemble, then how to make a snake move. They then incorporated that with their already planned and choreographed routine to review with the directors from the festival. The following week they practiced and performed the showcase in front of over 2000 kids and families with theater groups from all over. The teens were a hit, and if you find the video online you can hear the crowd cheer even more when the snake comes on stage.



Shining Brightly: A Magical Collaboration Behind "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"



In a fun fusion of talent and creativity, Images in Motion and Stinky Tales have joined forces to breathe new life into the beloved lullaby "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." This collaboration has resulted in a heartwarming music video to entertain children and adults alike, showcasing the unique strengths of both companies in a joyful display of puppetry, music, and storytelling.

At the heart of this collaboration lies a shared vision between Images in Motion, www.imagesmedia.com, who specialize in TV puppetry, and Stinky Tales, www.stinkytales.com, celebrated for crafting engaging stories and songs that support social-emotional learning for children. This project was initiated with a desire to have a "calling card" that highlights the talents of Bill Ferguson's lighting, Anne Zesiger's

musical prowess, and the captivating puppets imagined by Doug Zesiger and designed and built by Images in Motion for a Stinky Tales production. IIM's Lee Armstrong & Kieron Robbins and Stinky Tales Doug & Anne Zesiger produced this musical short.

Bill Ferguson, Lighting Director at IIM, with decades of experience in the field, suggested the concept of a sky background illuminated with clouds and stars, providing a playful setting for the puppets. We discussed songs that are set in the sky and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" came to mind. We didn't find any puppet versions of this song on Youtube. Anne Zesiger, a multiple award-winning musician, penned lyrics for the puppets' adventures in the clouds, a redwood forest, and added an underwater scene, giving depth to the narrative. We simplified the shoot to "in the clouds" with the idea that if this were successful, we might shoot the other environments. Anne arranged, played the guitar and sang the main vocals, with background vocals and banjo by her children, Katie and Will Zesiger. Anne recorded and mixed the music in her studio, The Fort, in Pt Richmond.



The fun for IIM & Stinky Tales was in imagining the activities that two puppets could do as they play in a dreamy, cloudy twilight sky. Costumes out of clouds, cloud boats and cloud beds were all made of cotton batting. The "set" clouds had an ethereal look. To accomplish this, translucent plastic trays (from the Dollar Store) were mounted on C stands, then the trays were filled with batting. Bill lit the clouds from below, giving them an ethereal glow. All other set pieces were repurposed from past IIM productions. Only a few dollars were spent on cotton batting, art foam and plastic trays.

A cozy campfire set bookends the "up in the sky" set. The campfire was created with a small fan, which blew strips of iridescent fabric "flames" upward, complemented by uplights and a projection.

One shot was needed to show sparks from the fire drifting up to the sky. For this transition, the camera tilted up as golden glitter was poured from above. In editing, the shot was reversed to make it look like glitter "sparks" were flying from the fire up to the cloudy realm above.

Additional set pieces were repurposed from IIM storage from past productions. Both sets were elevated, starting five and a half feet from the floor. This allowed the puppeteers to stand and move around in the set.



*Photo, Left: (L-R) Uel McGinnis, Hugo Shum, Dillard, with Doug Zesiger, Anne Zesiger
Photo, Right:(L-R) Front: Lee Armstrong, Doug Zesiger, 2nd row: Anne Zesiger, Uel McGinnis, Kieron Robbins, Bill Ferguson, Vicki Pedersen*

Bill directed the production at the IIM studio in Sonoma. Kieron Robbins was the camera operator and later the editor. Lee Armstrong and Doug Zesiger brought Stinky the Cat and Dillard the Dragon puppets to life, assisted by Anne, plus Guild volunteers, Samuel “Uel” McGinnis, Hugo & Wing Shum. Rounding out the volunteers, Katie Zesiger, as our graphic designer, created the credit roll and watermark and Anne’s sister Vicki Pedersen was PA. The puppets were designed by Kamela Portuges and built by Mary Nagler.

One goal was to display appealing visuals, puppetry and music to other companies who might be looking for original programming. However, this project not only aims to showcase the creative talents of both companies but also serves as a testament to the versatility of puppetry and music in captivating audiences and enhancing viewer engagement.

This 2:30-minute video can be viewed at the Stinky Tales website, www.stinkytales.com, and on the IIM Youtube Channel at [Twinkle](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwinkle). If you like the video, please share the joy of this sleepy time adventure with friends on social media, spreading the magic for children as they journey towards a pleasant and peaceful bedtime.



Guild member Art Grueneberger is the most excellent host of the Puppeteers of America "Meet Our Mentors." He recently interviewed Valerie and Michael Nelson (other guild members, one of which is yours truly, newsletter editor). In the hour long interview we did not get to all of our great mentors along our career but there's a lot there if anyone is interested and Art does a great job as host.



From Ronna Leon- Puppetry in Toy Museum in Napa

Joe and I went to the Napa Toy Museum today. 964 Pearl St, Napa, CA Open Wed-Sat

It has just opened and shows the collection of antique toys a couple have gathered over their lifetime. Anyone who goes will be told all about the history of the pieces by this enthusiastic couple who are HAPPY to share what they love with visitors.

Here are just a couple of puppet related pieces. A Punch bank and a Punch tin toy. Ronna and Joe Leon, Caterpillar Puppets





Olivia Huff shared info about the Academy of the Wooden Puppet

Editor's note: This online workshop seems to be enjoying great popularity these days. Several guild members have been involved and had good things to say about it.

“These have been challenging weeks for so many, and I feel the need to focus on our common humanity, on what deeply connects us with each other. In politics, on social media and the news too often a division is propagated, and the trenches are getting deeper and wider.

To disagree is human and can lead to growth and prosperity if we don't forget to listen instead of only confirming our stance. We might need to admit that seldom are we able to see the whole picture or have all the information and higher truth reserved for ourselves. So, please let us keep the flame alive, the spark, warmth and light of our common humanity.

How to do it when it hurts so bad, and the news are unbearable?

Service! Serve your neighbor, serve your clients, serve your family, have the spirit of service in your heart and mind from the moment you wake up in the morning. It is the ultimate antidote to feeling helpless and paralyzed, it is a superpower that transcends all trenches. We can lift each other up!

I would like to share my perception of service regarding my own profession as a puppeteer. When I teach my students the Art of Puppet Making, I am repeating it like a sacred Mantra, that all the fine techniques, all the intricate ways of designing and turning pieces of wood into a delicate Puppet, have one fundamental underlying higher purpose called Service.

Puppets are the puppeteer's medium of expressing themselves, and to communicate to their audience an idea, and inspiration, maybe a well thought-through provocation, healing, a clever way of educating or just simply entertaining. When we try to communicate something, we hope to be understood. So, every technique we invest our time in when building and rehearsing with our puppets, all that hard work is done with one dominant goal in mind: the audience must be served, the audience must understand.

We are powerful beyond measure and most every minute we are given a chance to make a difference in somebody's life. So, on we go, let's raise and shine, and make a change for the better in our immediate environment ... it will spread on from there. May your creativity be the power of change you dream to see in this world.

Wishing you a fulfilling and creative week and sending you warmest regards from my valley here in Iceland, Bernd Ogrodnik”

For more information on the Academy of the Wooden Puppet:

Email: info@worldsofpuppets.com

Website: www.WorldsOfPuppets.com



A bit of Muppet Trivia, from interestingfacts.com

Do you know how to stop vampires? According to European lore, vampires suffer from arithmomania, the uncontrollable urge to count or calculate numbers. That's why many Europeans once scattered seeds or grain on their floors before tucking into bed at night, hoping to distract any intruding vampires by triggering their counting compulsion. Some Slavic fishing communities also draped nets on their homes, believing that vampires would stop to count the holes.

It's unclear why vampires would have a tendency to tally, but the idea has lived on with Sesame Street's Count von Count, the purple-hued vampire who helps children learn their numbers. Inspired by the lore, Sesame Street writer Norman Stiles created the iconic Muppet in the early 1970s based on actor Bela Lugosi's 1931 cinematic depiction of Count Dracula. The count made his Sesame Street debut on the show's fourth season in 1972, slowly morphing from a spooky character to the friendly, number-loving Muppet he is today.

The Guild's Colorful and Fantastic History will just be a little bit more historical when the next installment is posted in next month's newsletter. Our Guild Historian, Randal Metz has already sent the third installment of our history, but this newsletter got FULL so I'm giving him (and your editor) a little break by saving the next installment until the April newsletter (no fooling.) My apologies to those of you on the edge of your seat wondering what is going to happen next (or is it what has already happened next?) Just a bit more suspense (wait for it...) Until next month, your editor is signing off.

Send your future puppet news to newsletter@sfbapg.org



