



The Bay Area Puppet Festival Season is in full swing with the SF Puppet Summit * happening this weekend (ends Sunday, so get your tickets fast) in San Francisco, the St. Helena Puppet Festival on the weekend of July 27 and 28, and the Guild's own fest, the Northern California Puppet Festival taking place August 2 & 3 in Sonoma. Then head on up to Oregon for the Pacific Puppet Palooza August 14-17.

** Wait a minute, you say? There's a puppet festival this weekend in SF and this is the first I'm hearing about it? Remember, this is your newsletter. You provide the news and notices. Your newsletter editor can only present you with things that have come to his attention. **Send puppet news and events to newsletter@sfbapg.org.***

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From the President

Hi Guild Friends

Happy June! The Northern California Festival is our big Guild news, happening on Aug 2-3 in Sonoma. I want to take a moment to thank three committees...

Workshop Committee – Beth Choy, Heather Gobbée & Michael Nelson

Performance Committee – Lisa Zagone, Tree Bartlett & Valerie Nelson

Publicity Committee – John Arnold, Marisol Himmel & Uel McGinnis

Many others have contributed time and ideas, but getting the workshops and shows lined up, and publicity out has been a major undertaking. Thank you all.

Lee Armstrong, S.F. Guild President

Northern California Puppet Festival: Celebrating 70 Years of Bay Area Puppetry!



Aug 2-3 at the Sonoma Community Center

The Northern California Puppet Festival promises to be an exciting event with a great lineup of workshops and shows.

1. Workshops: 24 workshops focusing on different puppetry skills and techniques.
2. Educators Track: Special sessions on Friday tailored for teachers, librarians, and youth group leaders. (Editor's Note: If you know teachers that will be leaving on vacation soon, please share this with them before they leave! This will be an excellent opportunity for educators, librarians, camp staff, etc, to learn great skills for using puppets with youth and enrollment is limited.)
3. Five quality shows and one exuberant Slam event

There's lots of teaching talent from our Guild with workshops on performance, building, improv and more. Out-of-towners will be at the Festival to share their expertise. Check out "TV Puppetry" by Sean & Patrick Johnson, Swazzle Inc. Grass Valley/LA, LA's Grant Baciocco of "Under the Puppet" fame teaching "Social Media for Puppeteers" and "Shadow Puppet Intro" by expert Margot FitzSimmons.

With a blend of local and out-of-town talent, this festival aims to cater to both enthusiasts and professionals, offering valuable insights and practical skills.

Performances include...

"Personal Spaces" by Doug & Anne Zesiger of Stinky Tales

"Carnival of the Animals" by Fratello Marionettes, Kevin Menegus

"Los Animalitos" by Magical Moonshine Theatre, Valerie & Michael Nelson

"Tommy's Space Adventure" by Puppet Art Theater, Art Gruenberger

"The Green Parrot" by Oregon Shadow Theater, Deb Chase & Mick Doherty

"The Great SLAM Event" a curated variety of amazing puppet shorts

Friday Aug 2 schedule is at <https://sonomacommunitycenter.org/events/puppet-festival-friday-tracks/>. The website is under construction and Sat. schedule will be added soon. If you have a problem with the above link, please go to <https://sonomacommunitycenter.org/>, then Events/scroll down to Puppet Festival.

Day Passes: By purchasing a day pass, you have priority in workshop selection until June 15. On June 16, ticket sales will open up for individual workshop tickets.

Puppet Exhibit: "Celebrating 70 Years of Bay Area Puppetry" will be curated by Kevin Menegus and Randal Metz. Thank you Kevin & Randal!

Puppet Store: Camilla Henneman is at the helm at our puppet store. She's looking for items and you will see more store info in this newsletter. Thank you, Camilla!

Publicity: Help us publicize this exciting puppet event. Do you know...

- Teachers, Librarians and Youth Group Leaders (Youth Theater, Guides, 4 H, church, etc.)
- Puppeteers outside the Guild, friends that might be interested
- Teens: There's even a building workshop for them, taught by Guild teens (although 9 + and adults welcome too)
Teens are welcome to all workshops.

Let people know! Email them a link and share info about our Festival from our Guild FB page.

Volunteers: Yes, we need volunteers. There will be a Sign-up Genius as we look for help organizing, and during the Festival.

Connections and Logistics

We have set up a Facebook Group at <http://facebook.com/groups/northerncalpuppetfest>. Join the group, share information about yourself with others attending. You can ask questions, check on ridesharing, find a roommate, and more.

Travel: See the [facebook group](#) above for the Puppet Festival. If you can offer a ride or need a ride, join the group and let others know .

Accommodations: Many people will be commuting to this Festival. However, if you'd like to stay overnight, this is prime time for hotels in Sonoma. The downside of being a delightful destination spot is that rates are high. The least expensive places are Sonoma Creek Inn, El Pueblo Inn & Best Western Sonoma. Your best bet might be to find an Air BnB to share. You can post houses or hotel rooms you'd like to share, or post that you're looking to share in the [facebook group](#) above . Some people are looking at hotels in Petaluma, a beautiful 25-minute drive over the hills to Sonoma. For those who hope to camp, contact info@sfbapg.org.

Questions? Email info@sfbapg.org

Come help us celebrate 70 years since a small puppet group started meeting to share their interest in the art of puppetry!



Puppet Festival Vendors

Call to Vendors!

The 70th Anniversary Bay Area Puppet festival is going to host a pop-up store. We are looking for vendors. There are two options available. If you would like a vendor table of your own, which you would be responsible for staffing, there are a limited number of spaces available. The Sonoma Community Center has graciously allowed us to use a small space for a pop-up store in their music room. We will accept new or good condition used puppet related items that you would like to sell. This is a great opportunity to destash (Clear out your puppet shelves to make room for more puppets that you can

buy at the store.) We can accept new or good quality used: puppets, books, masks, toy theaters and other puppet related items. Folkmanis Puppets is donating a selection of puppets to the store. 20% of sales would be donated back to the guild. Vendors are responsible for delivering items before the store opens (Cam will coordinate that with individual vendors) and are responsible for picking up their items at the end of the festival. The store will be open between workshops and shows. If you are interested in offering items for the store, or volunteering some time to help staff the store, please contact Camilla Henneman camhenneman@gmail.com or 831-359-9761. (Its easiest to contact me by email or text)

VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!

Hello from Beth, Michael, and Camilla on the nominating committee. It's that time of year again where guild members are given the opportunity to vote for new candidates to fill spots on the board. Annually, we have board members that have either met up with term limits or come to the end of their first non-consecutive three-year term, choosing to run and serve our board again.

We have an exciting ballot of candidates for members to choose from this year. Please fill out your ballot choices and submit before the June 15th deadline.

The following are bios of our slate of San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild candidates for 2024. We have 3 openings to fill on the board. Please vote for our candidates **(YOUR BALLOT WILL BE SENT SEPARATELY)**



Talib Huff

Talib Huff has been a member of SFBAPG since the mid-80's. Along with his wife, Olivia, he has performed as Tinker's Coin Productions at libraries, Renaissance fairs, and festivals across the US and internationally. He recently retired after teaching for over 35 years and is looking for ways to get back into puppetry and become more active in our guild.



Elizabeth Leonard

I've been creating hand, rod and shadow puppet shows since 2007, celebrating multiple cultures and themes with audiences all over the Sacramento and Bay Areas. I just put on my 5th family-friendly puppetry slam, called Puppet Ruckus at The Stage at Burke Junction, in Cameron Park, and built a new 12-foot giant puppet to celebrate, named "Magical Mama Cat". I've also been a graphic designer professionally for 20+ years and would be delighted to use my tools and skills to help more folks find out about the guild and nurture excitement about our programs.



Doug Zesiger

Doug Zesiger is a teacher, storyteller and musician with a passion for helping children navigate the social-emotional world with humor and understanding. A father of four and grandfather to two, he's taught for the past 30 plus years at Marin Country Day School, where Dillard and his pals have become treasured characters on campus and beyond.

Saving Lives Through Puppetry- The Sukem Project

Camilla Henneman



I would like to share a project that is very close to my heart. Two years ago, I was researching folk tales from African countries. I was particularly interested in trickster tales like those of Anansi the Spider which have been the subject of many puppet performances. In the early 1900s, British Colonialist, Elphinstone Dayrell collected folk tales from the Igboland region of Nigeria. I had read some of the stories and was looking for more. It is a region rich in folklore and culture going back hundreds of years. I wanted to learn more about the folk stories of Nigeria that were passed down through generations by oral tradition. It is also an area where there is a long history of brutal conflict and violence over religion, land and resources largely brought on by British colonialism and the slave trade.

In my search, I encountered a young man from Southern Nigeria named Sukem who grew up in a village called Koshebe at the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Sukem's mother was not literate, but she was a skilled storyteller in the oral tradition.

Anyway, he has been recounting her stories to me. I am working on bringing them to an audience through puppetry. The stories are meant to be fun, but they also serve the purpose of instructing children concerning life lessons about honesty, friendship, and respect. The show I am creating a show will use a crankie and shadows along with music to tell some of the tales. Fedelis Kyalo, a well known puppeteer, director and teacher from Kenya is going to be narrating the stories. A woman from Nigeria, Adeoti Mayorwa Ross is going to sing some Nigerian folk songs and lullabies as a soundtrack for the show. I am attaching some of the images I have so far from Sukem's story, "The Story of Tortoise and Fowl."

The area where Sukem grew up is rich in storytelling, cultural festivals, music, dance and art. It is also a very dangerous area. It is close to Chibok, where 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014. The world's attention was on the plight of the girls for a little while but the violence against a civilian population as a whole has remained unchecked. In November of 2020, Sukem's village was attacked by Boko Haram affiliated militias. He was at the market when gunmen entered the village. They killed 150 civilians and kidnapped 15 women. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koshebe_massacre Sukem's family were among the victims. Sukem was able to escape because he was at the marketplace, a short distance

away buying food for their supper. Sukem made his way to a road that was used by trucks for commerce and found a truck driver who took pity on him and was willing to take him to safety. The driver was going to Awka, a city several hundred miles away from Koshebe, the village where he had spent his entire life up to that point.

I'm doing the show for two reasons. One is to bring Sukem's stories to life with puppetry. The other reason is to bring attention and help to the plight of someone who is in danger and let people know that the violence is not over. Evil thrives in the darkness. I hope in my small way to shine a light. If you are interested in knowing more about Nigeria's history from colonialism to the rise of Boko Haram, I recommend this article from Britannica, [Colonialism to Boko Haram](#)



Under the Sea...Cardboard and Me!

Heather Gobbée

This past month Heather Gobbée taught the first ever puppet workshop for KoKo NYC, alongside The Concrete Temple Theatre and National Endowment for the Arts Recipient Open Source Gallery in Brooklyn, NY.

On a previous trip to New York, Heather and Monika Wuhrer, Founder and Artistic Director of Open Source Gallery and KoKo NYC got to talking about the impact of Giant Puppets. Visually, puppets have the potential to speak artistic and social volumes, while holding space for their construction has the opportunity to foster inclusion and deepen connection within community. The Koko NYC motto is “Reuse, Rebuild, Reimagine” and strives to put actual tools into the hands of NYC children to bring their imaginations into reality. The Open Source Gallery's mission is to provide a “diverse and creative community for people of all ages and backgrounds with an emphasis on expression, experimentation, sustainability and social engagement.” The conversation led Monika to say “I think Puppets would be good for the children to build, let's try it!”

While the Concrete Temple Theatre took the older children on a Whaleboat adventure, Heather and the younger crew dove into a world of sea creatures, real and imagined. Using rescued materials, tape and cardboard, children and families created shadow, sock and junk puppets, learned to troubleshoot simple puppet mechanics and explored how their creatures moved.

"The children made three creatures with simple materials in a one day workshop...I am excited to think what they could build in one week with drills! I look forward to more Koko NYC puppet adventures in the future!" - Heather Gobbée



From Mark Segal-

Hello SFBAPG, :)

Went to a really good zoom program by POA Piet (puppetry in education and Therapy) here is the link. <https://youtu.be/i3R6zHheWYE>

Excellent, interesting and useful presentations.

Also, check out my book: therightjournalproject.com

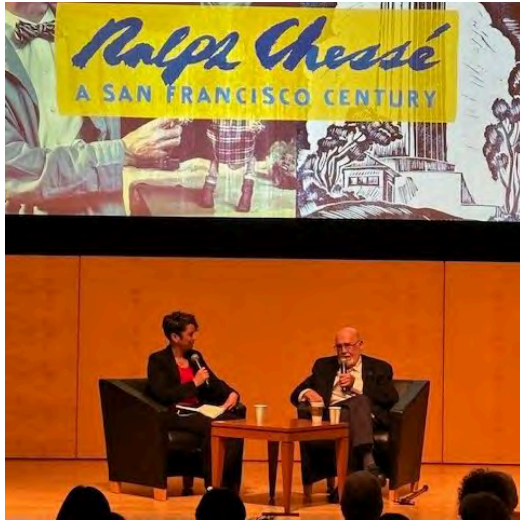
Besides a Puppeteer's Notebook there are 8 other books that might be of interest.

Especially "What You Mean to Me" which is a sweet little book for people in a love relationship.

Ralph Chesse Exhibit at SF Public Library a Huge Success

Open until Aug 18, SF Public Library Main Branch, 100 Larkin St.

Don't miss the Ralph Chesse exhibit, filled with puppets & paintings, a tribute to the work of this influential Bay Area puppeteer and artist. The opening crowd was an enthusiastic blend of the local public, friends and family of Ralph and the SFBAPG. A big thank you to the SF Public Library for mounting this meaningful exhibit and planning an exceptional Opening. Thank you to Fred Reilly III @odd_savvy for his wonderful puppet presentation featuring three distinctly different styles of puppets, and to [Marisol Himmel @moddypuppets](#) who led the conversation with Ralph's son, Bruce Chessé. This exhibition is free and open to the public through August 18th, so there's still plenty of time to check it out for yourself if you couldn't attend the opening.



Call for Puppeteers (a gig!):

Friends of Duboce Park, a non-profit organization in San Francisco, is starting to plan a 125th Anniversary Celebration of Duboce Park in September 2025. We are organizing a variety of activities throughout the day, including puppet shows.

While we are still finalizing the official date (tentatively set for Saturday, September 13, 2025), we invite interested performers to reach out. If you're available to perform, please contact Brittany Bersano at bbersano@me.com.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you! Thank you, Brittany

Events



The SF Puppet Summit is Happening NOW!

Explore the underground, obscure, experimental side of puppetry! With three days of ways to join in, this event is a bit like a conference, a showcase, hands-on studio making and learning time with our visiting artists, and wraps up with a joyous procession of puppets large and small.

Our Sunday Stroll is free to join.

Friday is gone, but still time to enjoy...

Saturday: 12-4pm Making Workshop, part 1 of 2 : Secret Alley, in the Mission, 17th & Capp.

Evening Showcase: 7pm with talks & slides from Featured Artist Pandora Gastelum, MC'ed by curator Charlotte Lily Gaspard, and selected performances. At the Secret Alley, 17th & Capp.

Sunday: 12-3pm Workshop part 2 at Secret Alley
3pm Puppet Stroll in the Mission! Free to All! Leaving from Secret Alley.

Ticketing and Details:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/puppet-summit-in-san-francisco-tickets-897538300217?aff=oddtcreator>

Website: sfiop.org/puppet-summit

Facebook Event:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/891020742825733/>



Guild Event, Friday June 14

Join us Friday, June 14th at 6:30pm Pacific for our next Open Studio Show-and-Tell! Signup now to receive the link to this virtual event. You are welcome to present or simply join the audience and offer feedback. Presenters may share their project (at any stage of completion) for three minutes. After all presentations, we will open it up for questions, comments, and additional feedback. We'd love to see what you've got cookin'!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4BAEAB2AA7FC1-49931615-open>



Imaginative Eye - A Special Exhibit of Theatrical Puppets -

Closing Soon

Sat, Apr 27 to Sun, Jun 2 Gallery Days & Hours: Saturdays & Sundays from 12-4:00 PM n

At the Art Gallery, Occidental Center for the Arts, 3850 Doris Murphy Court, Occidental, CA

For over fifty years, Elizabeth Fuller and Conrad Bishop have presented stage performances of Shakespeare and other plays performed by their unique, nearly life-sized puppets. They have generously donated part of their puppet collection to OCA. The puppets will be displayed and sold in the gallery and lobby. Conrad and Elizabeth met and mated as undergraduates in 1960 and have spent their lives as co-creators—professionally since 1971. “We write jointly and both perform. He’s the director, designer and puppet sculptor; she’s the composer, techie, accountant and cook” says Conrad.

“We’ve lived in Chicago, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Palo Alto, Columbia SC, and Lancaster PA, and we’ve performed on tour in 35 states plus Canada and Jerusalem. We’ve created more than 60 plays for our own ensemble as well as about three dozen other theatres, plus public radio series, puppetry, and videos. We have two grown kids, one in San Francisco, one in Italy—our closest friends. Most of our creative lives have been devoted to exploring how people working collaboratively can make fine things. The whole story, or a goodly portion of it, is in our memoir, Co-Creation: Fifty Years in the Making.” Browse their YouTube Library of short videos and trailers.

**KID KOALA PRESENTS 'NUFONIA MUST FALL' AUG 1-4 & KID KOALA
PRESENTS 'THE STORYVILLE MOSQUITO' AUG 8-11**

SF Jazz, Miner Auditorium, SF,

Renowned Montreal-based DJ, composer, and music producer Kid Koala returns with his enchanting adaptation of his graphic novel Nufonia Must Fall in a revolutionary multi-disciplinary performance that mixes live Puppet Theater and video projection with an ensemble of strings, piano, and electronic instruments.



The Puppeteers of America presents: PACIFIC PUPPET PALOOZA

Wednesday - Saturday, August 14-17, 2024

Western Oregon University, 345 Monmouth Ave. N., Monmouth OR 97361

Puppetry fans and professionals, educators, counselors and therapists, parents and youth are invited to a puppet retreat and professional conference at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon. The Pacific Puppet Palooza is a regional puppetry festival sponsored by the Puppeteers of America. With performances, workshops, and social gatherings, these four days will showcase the puppetry industry as a viable career option from Broadway to Film to Birthday Parties.

Western Oregon University's picturesque campus is less than 2 hours drive from Portland and Eugene and only twenty minutes from Salem, Oregon's capital.

Performances include "Winnie the Pooh" by Seattle's Thistle Theatre, "Dungeons and Decisions" by Dragon Theater, "Jack and the Dragon" by Oregon Shadow Theatre, "You Can Learn a Lot from a Bug" by Randel McGee and Groark from Utah, "The Hidden World of Puppetry" by Steve Overton, and "Multi-Faceted Capabilities for Puppetry Careers" with Nina Oberlin. Workshops include making a rod puppet to take home with Jason Ropp, Ventriloquism I and II with Randel McGee, improvising and participating in a potpourri performance, designing and building a giant parade puppet, and using puppetry as a tool in education and counseling. Experienced puppeteers can compete in the Puppetathlon with Puppet Athletes created by Mary Nagler.

This festival is produced in partnership with the City of Monmouth and funded in part by the Polk County Cultural Coalition and the Puppet Slam Network.

Full Festival Registration: \$385 Double Dorm food and housing: \$275

Single Room: \$310 Total \$660/\$695

Festival info and registration: <https://wvpuppeteers.weebly.com/pacific-puppet-palooza-festival-2024.html>

Contacts: Registrar pacificpuppetpalooza@gmail.com, Festival Director (458) 205-8570

Our Guild Library

The Guild Library is a treasure trove of hundreds of books on puppetry. History of puppets, construction, stages, puppets in 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.

To Request a Book: Peruse the online catalog then request books by emailing library@sfbapg.org. They will be brought to the next "in person" event. If you have a library book to return, please mail it back to Guild Librarian Lee Armstrong at 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma, CA 95476.

Note: The Library is a free service, but borrowers need to have been members for 6 months. If not, and you'd like to borrow, you can leave a check with the librarian for the amount of the book. When you return the book, you get the check back.

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

Randal Metz - Guild Historian

Note: Dates listed by names of puppeteers represent their careers in puppetry.

Part 5 - 1980 - 1989:

A new decade, a new challenge. With the invention of the personal computer, the Commodore PET in 1974, everyone began to wake up to the wonders of what technology offered. The 80s saw the rise of even more powerful computers, walkman cassette players and boom boxes. And puppeteers were quick to embrace these offerings and use them to create their art. And three early Imagineers were leading the way for puppeteers to create a career. The Walt Disney Company was hiring puppeteers to perform at their parks and venues, while George Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic, and his early company Pixar, began to employ puppeteers as designers, miniatures craftsmen, artists and performers. And don't forget Jim Henson, whose experience with animatronic puppets in "DarkCrystal" and "Labyrinth," brought technology even further into the evolution of puppetry. "Practical Puppetry" became the preferred form of the puppet used to create fantasy characters in real time with the actors. CGI was still in its infancy. Thank goodness guild member Tony Urbano, and Bob Baker in Hollywood, championed the Screen Actors Guild to create a niche for puppeteers in the Union by 1989.



And our guild had our lion's share of these new breed of puppeteers, many of them trained by Henson Studios. Jim was leading the charge to get puppeteers to create their own forms of the puppet, rather than copying the Muppet style. His 1985 puppetry specials, "Jim Henson Presents the World of Puppetry," showcased professional puppeteers all over the world demonstrating the varied forms of the puppet. And guild member Bruce Schwartz was one of those showcased. And our guild President at that time, Lettie Schubert who also worked in television, guided our members to all the opportunities available. Bay Area puppeteer Robin Goodrow (1977 - present), a guild member, storyteller, songwriter and actress, debuted the popular television show on KRON-TV "Buster and Me." The show featured Robin as she cares for two monkey children as they explore family problems. The show featured

guild member John Gilkerson, who made the puppets and played best friend Russell, Chris Pray as Buster, Christina Metcalfe as Vanilla, and Robin. The show aired for 20 years with Syndication.

Two other prominent Guild members who found us in the 80s are Canadian born puppeteer Lee Armstrong (1972 - present) and Kamala Portuges-Robbins (1983 - 2021), who founded Images in Motion in Sonoma. Images in Motion catered to puppeteers who needed puppets, video or commercial design for their projects. Lee worked with Jim Henson on "Fraggle Rock," as well as with Julie Taymor of "Lion King" fame on her production of "Haggadah." She and Kamala established Images in Motion in 1989. Kamala designed celebrity dolls, worked on the stop motion films "James & the Giant Peach"& "Monkey Bone,"as well as worked and designed puppets for "The Fly II" and "Being John Malkovich."



And, although technically not media or film, yet very reminiscent of a movie, guild member Larry Reed (1970 - present) was using modern technologies to present Balinese shadow puppetry at his new company of Shadowlight Productions. Larry is not only an established dalang shadow performer with the status of a priest, he is also a professional filmmaker and documentarist. Shadowlight still continues to train many professional shadow puppeteers in San Francisco.



With puppetry attracting more people to the art form, the guild decided they should help promote the puppet and also promote our guild. In 1983, working with member & curator Alan Cook of Los Angeles and our parent organization, The Puppeteers of America, our guild helped promote the largest display of puppetry ever produced. "Puppets:Art & Entertainment" was a national display of puppetry that toured eleven American cities from 1980 to 1983. The Oakland Museum was one of those selected for the tour. For four months, guild members supplied shows, workshops, lectures and helped docent this spectacular project. It was one of the most popular exhibits ever at the Oakland museum, and generated great interest in our guild. Everyone again wanted to be a puppeteer! Even Charles Schulz's popular comic strip "Peanuts," featured stories of Snoopy's prowess as a performer working four hand puppets at one time!



In 1985, the guild boasted 110 members. By 1986 membership rose to 124 members. Membership remains strong to this day.

Sidenote: Although many have forgotten, our guild took under its wing at this time, honorary member Tommy Roberts - The Puppet Man. An old gentleman who lived in the San Francisco Tenderloin and wandered the streets, neighborhoods and colleges entertaining with his band of rough-cut puppets carried in a paper bag and recitations of his poems and songs about kindness, history and everyone getting along. For 30 years this elderly puppet enthusiast entertained the downtrodden and worked his magic for the cost of a smile. Much like the original Punch and Judy man. He passed in 1996.

And now it's time to check in on what was happening in the Bay Area puppet programs and parks. It was 1981 and Oakland Parks and Recreation teacher, magician and puppeteer Blake Maxam, was about to begin his tenure with the Vagabond Puppets. Since 1976 Blake worked with previous director Earl Rhue, and was well trained on many Oakland Parks and Recreation programs.

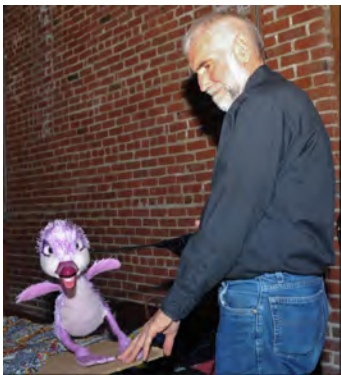
He officially took over the program in 1981, and continued as the director until 2016 when the program was officially be disbanded. Blake Maxam (1959 - present) is also an equity actor, professional magician and voice over performer. Blake has performed on cruise ships, and at the famous Magic Castle in Hollywood.



Except for three years, when Blake was on loan to the City Manager's Office, he was the longest running director of the Vagabond Puppets. During his three year absence, Randal Metz directed the program in 1985, while guild member Daniel Taurine of Geppetto's puppets performed the season in 1986. These two years were the only time a director did their own shows and the Park's Dept. did not own the puppets and rights. Earl Rhue returned with Fred Jackson to reunite for the 1987 season. The Vagabond Puppets became one of the longest running Park's Department programs in the nation, performing during the Summer months for 65 years: 1950 - 2015. Meanwhile at Children's Fairyland, Lewis Mahlmann continued to bring quality shows to the children of the Bay Area. And of course working with the guild each year, Fairyland held the annual Puppet Fair in August. It was during the 80's that the guild intensified presenting hands-on workshops and demonstrations, besides performances at the yearly event. These included puppet performance, construction, family activities and shadow play. At the Puppet Fair you could often find member Richard Stephen Weber (1969 - c2005) showing off his marionette skills and talents. Richard was an Emmy award make-up artist and prop maker for film and television, as well as being apprenticed by Puppet Masters Bil Baird, Bob Baker, Rene' Zendejas and Jack Shafton.



During the 80s, Happy Hollow Park and Zoo puppet theater, and the FairytaleTown theater were run by their Park's Department presenting shows by various recreation leaders in puppetry.



Also in the 80s, Fisherman's Wharf and Ghirardelli Square were the stomping grounds for weekly "pass the hat" performances by legendary guild puppet master Bob Hartman (1970 - present). Bob would stop traffic with his comical puppet venues of hap-hazard puppets and shadows. The Hartman Puppets have toured extensively, performed on the Disney Channel and PBS, as well as receiving an UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence. Bob was a favored performer of Frank Oz and Robin Williams.

And, of course during this decade our guild had its share of talented performers and puppet companies joining our ranks and offering their talents and puppetry skills. Michael & Valerie Nelson, with their son Benjie, joined the guild in 1981. Known as Magical Moonshine Theatre (1979 - present) they presented quality puppet theater using theatrical forms of puppets and table top puppetry, garnering three UNIMA-USA Citations of Excellence over the years. All live, with musical accompaniment. Michael and Valerie have toured internationally to many countries in the world, as well as serving countless years on our guild board as President, Vice-President, Newsletter Editor, Treasurer and Membership.



Steve Overton (1974 - present) and life partner Martin Richmond settled in Pacifica where they formed The Olde World Puppet Theater. Steve was known for his heavily influenced Renaissance form of marionette theater. Eventually moving to Oregon, they have performed as resident puppeteer for Macy's, built puppets for Disney World, children's video's and toured extensively

1982 saw the arrival of Robert Leroy Smith (1951 - 2001) and his performing partner Edith Hartnett. Known as Parnasus Puppets, they toured the Bay Area sharing their unique marionette stylings. Robert also published two books: The Fast and Easy Way to Make Marionettes and Marionette Construction.



Soon joining the guild were Jamie Keithline and Bonnie Hall (1980 -present) who formed Puppetwork in San Francisco. Using puppetry, masks, storytelling and mime their shows have received two UNIMA-USA Citations of Excellence. In 1989 they left the Bay Area and changed their company name to Crabgrass Puppet Theatre, working on the East Coast.



By 1984 Larry Schmidt (1967 - 2019) showed up at guild meetings soaking in the atmosphere that the guild had to offer. Very knowledgeable about many forms of theater, Larry wanted to master the art of marionette performance. He volunteered for countless jobs in the guild and finally in 2007, created "Driveway Follies," an annual Halloween puppet show for the Oakland community that features vintage trick marionettes. The show has continued in repertory due to the efforts of many of our guild members after his passing



Father and son team, Jack and Chris Fredericks, performed for years as The Walden Marionettes (1972 - present). Both Jack and Chris were mentored by Master Marionettist Albrecht Roser of Germany. The theater grew out of the Walden School that Jack formed in San Mateo. You can even catch Jack working with Muppet Traveling Matt in an episode of "FraggleRock."



Back in the shadows again, Wendy Morton (1976 - present) who was inspired by Margo Rose and Larry Reed, was using shadow puppets to tell her tales. Wendy loves all forms of experimental puppetry, and has worked for Industrial Light and Magic in their visual effect department, as well as Project Manager for Folkmanis Puppets.



Also of note is Howie Leifer whose Haight St. Puppet Theatre kept us laughing with his political and satirical use of puppets for street theater and political puppetry. And we can't forget Lucy Morton who formed the Rossmoor Miniature Theater in Walnut Creek. Her elderly troop of performers delighted Walnut Creek seniors with their antics.



There were also members of our guild who excelled in teaching puppetry and the educational use of the puppet. Talib and Olivia Huff who are known as Tinker's Coin Productions (1986 -present) have taught puppetry to children and adults at schools, museums, workshops and conferences. They have also taught internationally, and Talib has been known to show up at our Christmas meetings channeling his alter ego, Father Christmas.

And hats off to puppet master Kathy Foley, who in the 80s became a professor at U.C. Santa Cruz and shared her knowledge of Indonesian Wayang, Masks and Asian puppetry to inspire so many young puppeteers, and guild members, to pursue the multi-cultural world of puppetry!

It's easy to highlight those members who have run successful puppet businesses and venues, but not so easy to highlight the most valuable puppeteers of our guild. Those who pulled the strings to keep the SFBAPG running smoothly. I am referring to those who volunteer many hours and talents keeping our meetings and events interesting and functioning, without having their names highlighted on the programs. And so I would like to give you a listing of the many members who helped behind the scenes. I could talk at length about any number of them. And so...Our most sincere thanks to: Kitty Adams, Denys Adida, Pam Brown, Sharon Collier, Kathy Dodge, Rosemary Glenn, Al & Ina Herman, Carol Hironymous, Helen Lepley, Rochelle Lum, Pat Plant, Lisa Pletka, Terry Ryder, Jan VanSchuyver, Althea Sheehan, Tia Smirnoff, Betty Stewart, Ruth Stotter, Colleen Uhara, Pam Wade, Gail Warshawsky and Linda Zittle. And I'm sure there were many more, but these are the names of our friends who were "shouted out" in our newsletters that I found. We couldn't have done it without you!

The 80s were a time of discovery and growth for our guild, aptly guided by Presidents Lettie Schubert, Elisheva Hart, Pam Wade, Kitty Adams and Michael Nelson. Next newsletter we'll discover yet again a growth and sharing of puppetry as we delve into the infamous 90s, where the generational torch is passed to yet another youthful group of puppeteers. See you there!

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 also 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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