



The image of the life force spirit that is joined when the spirit departs.

*November in the Bay Area starts with many Day of the Dead celebrations. The above photo of puppet life force illustrates an element of passing to another realm and is from Mary Nagler's review of Paper Moon Theatre included in this newsletter. More photos and full text below, along with lots of other great newsletter submissions. Thanks to our November contributors!*

**IMPORTANT: Don't forget to click on the "view entire message" link at the bottom of the email or "view this email in your browser" link at the top to see the whole newsletter!**

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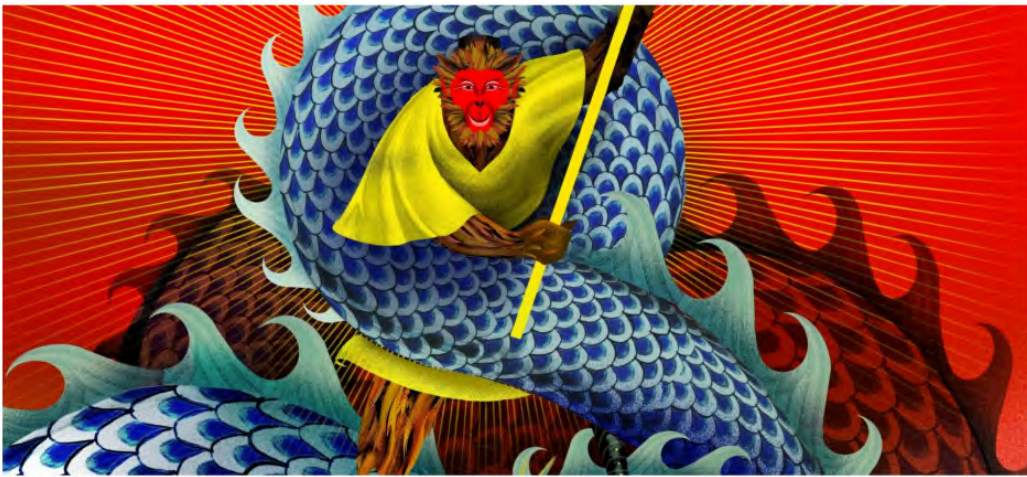
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## GREAT OPPORTUNITY "Monkey King" Workshops: The Art of Puppetry

Sunday; November 2; all day; starting at 10:30 AM, FREE

Asian Art Museum, Bowes Court, 200 Larkin St, SF

<https://calendar.asianart.org/event/monkey-king-puppetry/>



A day of family-friendly activities for aspiring puppeteers of all ages. Join us for Free First Sunday and step into a colorful world of puppets, crafting, and creativity inspired by the San Francisco Opera's upcoming world premiere production of "The Monkey King." No experience necessary — just bring your imagination. Presented in partnership with the SF Opera's Department of Engagement and Connectivity.

10 AM | **Pop-up Creature Puppet Demonstration** with Vinh G. Nguyen

10:30 AM | **Exploring the Art of Shadow Puppetry** with ShadowLight Productions

11:30 AM | **Pop-up Creature Puppet Demonstration** with Vinh G. Nguyen

12 PM | **Exploring the Art of Shadow Puppetry** with ShadowLight Productions

1 PM | **Exploring the Puppetry of "The Monkey King," Act 1** – Performance with Ramon Abad

1:30 PM | **Exploring the Puppetry of "The Monkey King," Act 2** – Puppet Movie Studio with Ramon Abad

3 PM | **Journey to Puppet Island** with Nao Kobayashi

Pop-up Creature Puppet Demonstration with Vinh G. Nguyen: Enjoy a whimsical puppet demonstration performed by theatre artist Vinh G. Nguyen of Carefree Puppetry. This exploration of movement and music features a menagerie of animals created from recycled materials. (10 AM & 11:30 AM)

Exploring the Art of Shadow Puppetry with ShadowLight Productions: A hands-on workshop introducing participants to the art of shadow puppetry. Make your own puppets using provided templates and materials to experiment with on a small screen. The workshop is led by ShadowLight teaching artist Jess Nguyen, who is also a puppeteer in "The Monkey King." (10:30 AM & 12 PM)

Exploring the Puppetry of "The Monkey King" with Ramon Abad: This family-friendly, casual drop-in workshop has two parts:

- Act 1 – Performance: Audience members are invited to form a three-person team to make a puppet move and dance. The puppets used are similar to those in "The Monkey King." (1 PM)
- Act 2 – Puppet Movie Studio: Everyone is invited to the Koret Education Center to make their own moving-mouth puppets out of paper. Afterward, participants are welcome to make short videos with their puppets using their own phones in front of backgrounds provided by Ramon. (1:30 PM)

Journey to Puppet Island with Nao Kobayashi: In this pop-up-style workshop booth, participants work together in small groups to create their own puppet scenes using miniature puppets and ready-made props including small animals, colorful paper flowers and leaves, fabric trees, and a glowing paper moon. Choose your setting and bring your story to life on a miniature pop-up stage. Record your scene on your phone and take home a unique video souvenir of your puppet drama. (3 PM)

### **About the Artists**

[Ramon Abad](#) is a proud Filipino American puppeteer and artist based in San Francisco. Since the mid-90s, he has directed and performed puppet plays throughout the U.S. and U.K. As a puppeteer/maker with Larry Reed's ShadowLight Productions, he performed in "Wayang Listrik," which toured in the Jim Henson International Puppetry Festival. For over 20 years, Ramon has been a member of Bindlestiff Studio, the epicenter of Filipino American arts in SOMA Pilipinas. Instagram: [@when.do.we.eat](#)

[Vinh G. Nguyen](#) is a theatre maker, director, and puppeteer based in New York City. He has directed, choreographed, and performed in many musical productions throughout the Bay Area and is the author of "Tales of Ancient Vietnam," a play featuring music and puppetry. You can see more of his work on Instagram [@Vinh\\_g\\_nguyen](#) and follow his puppet journey [@CarefreePuppetry](#).

Jess Nguyen is a teaching artist with [ShadowLight Productions](#) and a puppeteer in San Francisco Opera's "The Monkey King." She specializes in cinematic shadow theater, blending traditional techniques with contemporary performance and education. Jess leads multigenerational workshops that introduce the fundamentals of puppet construction, movement, and shadow play, helping participants discover storytelling through light, shape, and sound.

[Nao Kobayashi](#) designs and fabricates puppets and costumes for entertainment, art, education, and related productions. Originally from Japan and recently based in Northern California, she holds an MFA in Costume Design and Technology for Theater, TV and Film from San Diego State University. Her puppetry incorporates sketching, sculpture, fabric, and mixed media, while her background in martial arts and dance imparts an understanding of movement and the body; the influence of these various disciplines informs a range and depth of innovative artistic solutions. Instagram: [@nunofoo](#)

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## **October's Puppet Building & Performance Workshop by Images in Motion**

The fun of puppet fabrication was explored in Oct. at the Sonoma Community Center, led by Lee Armstrong of [Images in Motion](#) (IIM) . Much was accomplished with this great group!



*(L-R, starred for Guild member) Nicki Upson\*, Nina Gerety, Robin Dasler\*, Pam Personette, Aron Parker\*, Jason Lee\* (missing Jeremy Baker\*)*



Puppet builders worked from a kit provided by IIM and received a pattern for building. If you'd like this pattern (only used for non-commercial projects) please email Lee at [images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com). Also provided was a brief materials list, which included some suggestions from our lifetime member Mary Nagler. However, Jim Henson made the first Kermit the Frog out of his mom's old coat and some ping pong balls. You don't necessarily need to buy anything for a puppet. You can use a fleece blanket, a furry sweater, etc. Some fabric with a bit of stretch and nap, or fur can work just fine. Eyes can be white plastic spoons, eyes from a stuffed animal, etc... Mouth material can be heavy-duty cardboard, lightweight wood, plastic, packing foam, etc.

The fabric used for our puppets was blanket fleece or short fiber fur, with Nylafleece (Muppet fleece). We used a rubber sole material (listed below) for mouthplates.

### **Some companies that have puppet building supplies**

- Puppet Pelts: <https://puppetpelts.com/> foam, muppet fleece, eyes, patterns, etc.
- Puppet Pie: <http://www.puppetpie.com> Materials, workshops, etc. Also foam balls for eyes <https://puppetpie.com/collections/puppet-making-supplies-and-kits>. They're better than ping-pong balls because they won't get crushed, and you can easily slice them to your preferred shape/size with a utility knife. (Tip supplied by Mary Nagler) We didn't use these at the workshop, but they do work great. We used eye blanks and suncatcher eyes, listed below.

- MonkeyBoys: <https://www.monkeyboysproductions.com/> Sell materials, fur, muppet fleece, kits, etc. (Tip supplied by Mary Nagler)

### **Materials that might not be familiar which we used in the workshop**

- Eye blanks: at Puppet Pelts, 35 mm Half Dome Eyes with plastic fasteners.
- Suncatcher Eyes: on Amazon, 20PCS Glass Dragon Eyes 25MM/0.98INCH Large Glass <https://www.amazon.com/LLMSIX-0-98INCH-Cabochoon-Flatback-Findings/dp/B0CKSP2NC5>. (Tip by Mary Nagler)
- Muppet Fleece aka Nylafleece – Puppet Pelts & Monkeyboys
- Pupils for eyes: Black felt, adhesive backed, brand Stick'rz at Michaels
- Arm bones: 1/2" diameter wood doweling
- Topy Elysee rubber sole material (or others like Vibram), 1 mm & 1.8 mm (We used 1.8 mm) at your local shoe repair shops or order at Saderma Leather Co., by the sheet <http://www.saderma.net/>. They sell by the 2x3 foot sheet for about \$38, but shipping is expensive. You might want to see a local shoe repair person and order through them to help with shipping. I use Vinny's in Sonoma and Tony's in Mill Valley. Muppets used gasket rubber (plumbing) early on, but you want something that has a smooth side (covered in fabric for exterior of mouth) and a textured side (the interior of the mouth, so you have some grip)
- 1/18" welding rod – 2 pieces -16" each (or even wire coat hangers will do)

Barge was used to insert the mouthplates: It can be purchased on Amazon or at some hardware stores. Found in bottles, cans and tubes. This works well on foam, rubber, etc., but it is toxic and should be used outdoors or a well-ventilated area. However, other glues will work and it might be helpful for other puppet builders to chime in.

- **What glue products do you use for bonding specific materials?**
- **Do you have favorite puppet building products or tools?**

Send your suggestions to [images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com) and they will appear in the Dec newsletter.

### **Next up - Nov 8th by Images in Motion - TV Puppetry**

This will be held at the Images in Motion studio in Sonoma. This popular 5 hr class is full, but may be repeated at a later date.



## Programming & Board Meeting in Sept

Did you know that you are welcome to attend Guild committee meetings?

The guild Board meets every 2 months. The next meeting is **Mon., Nov 10 at 6:30** over Zoom.

Curious to see what the Board discusses and what is being planned for the future? Visitors are welcome. Contact Guild President, Talib Huff at [president@sfbapg.org](mailto:president@sfbapg.org) for Zoom link.

Our Programming Committee meets the 2nd Tues of each month on Zoom. The next one is **Tues., Nov 11 at 6:30**. Come, see what's happening and share your ideas. For zoom link, contact Head of Programming, Uel McGinnis at [programming@sfbapg.org](mailto:programming@sfbapg.org)

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## Your Guild Library

The Guild library is a treasure trove of puppet books. You can request a specific book(s) from the many books in the library, from the history of puppets, construction, stages, puppets in education, etc.

It's easy to see what books are available by going to <https://sfbapg.org/library-online/>.

Or if at [www.sfbapg.org](http://www.sfbapg.org) select Resources. Email Lee Armstrong at [library@sfbapg.org](mailto:library@sfbapg.org) and she'll bring your book(s) to the next "in-person" meeting. **Please bring back any borrowed books.** If you have a book and didn't return it at Puppet Fair, please mail back to Guild Librarian, Lee Armstrong at 720 Ladera Dr., Sonoma, CA 95476.

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# Review of Rumpelstilzchen's Fairy Gold

By Elizabeth Leonard



On Saturday, October 25, I drove up to the Nevada City Theater up in historic Nevada City, CA to see Dalrymple MacAlpin's *Rumpelstilzchen's Fairy Gold* and it was wonderful! The show blended live music, storytelling, and creative puppetry into a powerful and exciting performance. It had the magic and detail of classic European puppet theater, but with a fun, handmade style that felt fresh and original.

Puppeteers in the audience had a lot to enjoy. The show used marionettes, hand puppets, and giant puppets that appeared on stage, in shadows, and in projections. The biggest puppet, a huge Fairy Storybook about eight feet wide, was truly impressive. It changed from a normal book to a damaged one, and then into a talking book with lips and eyes that matched the voices perfectly. The shadow scenes added mystery and made the story feel like a dream.



The story told how Rumpelstilzchen became the character we know from the old Grimms fairy tale. Instead of being just a villain, he was shown as someone shaped by love and loss. His mother's care and his wood-witch grandmother Dorchen's tough love made him feel real. *Rumpelstilzchen's Fairy Gold* reminded me of the enchanting capacity puppets have for telling deep, moving stories that stay in your heart. I hope there is a sequel.

It's too late to see this beautiful production at the Nevada Theater, but there are rumors this show may go on tour! Check out their website for more info and to get on the mailing list for updates:



## Wylding Woods Review

**Brie Yarbrough**

Dahlia Yarbrough and I had the chance to experience an immersive adventure through the enchanted Wylding Woods on Sunday, the 20th. It brought us both back to when she was little, to the walks and adventures we used to take in the magical woods back home — only this time, with bonus guests appearing around every corner!

Seeing it all through the children's eyes was really fun. We loved watching fellow guild members, Lee Armstrong, Samuel McGinnis, Lisa Zagone, and Gabrielle Greenfield breathe life into their characters, along with SFBAPG's VP Beth Choy, who was fantastic in her role as Wylding Woods ranger! Prior to our journey, it was fun to see the children use their creative powers, as Beth helped them craft their own mystical "Wylding Stick" to help bring the woods to life. Led by Ranger Beth, the kids and their adults set along their quest to restore peace and harmony to Greenheart's Kingdom, by freeing the ethereal dryad Freeda (played that day by Eriette Atanante) from a formidable, thunder-voiced dragon (performed by Caitlin Gjerdrum) named Angora, whose imperious rule by magic is holding captive the lives of the creatures who live there.

From the playful banter between Lee's mischievous, story-snatching Neebling and the young forest-wanderers, to the chorus of children's voices conjuring woodland magic through spell-song led by Gabrielle Greenfield's fearless pixie Siena Sky, it was pure joy to watch the little ones connect with the puppets and their puppeteers out in the wild. I couldn't help but laugh (and feel a bit seen) when

Barnaby the riddle keeper, delightfully played by Uel, made sure to let those kids with gluten allergies (like me, haha) know there were cookie treats available for them too.

It was adorable watching the kids' reverence for Lisa's regal Greenheart, as they became new members of the Kingdom, and their eagerness to be bestowed a golden pinecone by Freeda - a relic to be used on future magical adventures through the Wylding Woods.

We would have totally loved to experience something like this when our kids were small. What a treat to be invited to see all that guildmember Matthew Purdon and his team have poured their hearts and countless hours into, come alive! Kudos to the performers and artists who created such a tangible, immersive world—one that inspires children to connect with the natural world in wonder and play. Wishing Matthew and the entire Wylding Woods team great success as they embark on the next chapter of this magical adventure!

**Due to a few shows being rained out and additional demand, The Wylding Woods has been extended to Nov. 8th and 9th. Use coupon code GUILDMEMBER for 20% off on tickets at [wyldingwoods.com](http://wyldingwoods.com)**

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## Paper Moon Theatre Review

Mary Nagler

Recently, I attended a performance at George Mason University Center for the Arts. The performance was a company called Paper Moon Theatre. They are from Indonesia and have a workshop in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in central Java.

From the program: “ With its mix of non-verbal storytelling , puppetry forms, evocative visual environment, and through -composed musical score, Puno: Sewing Memories carries the hallmarks of a Papermoon production. It incorporates several puppetry techniques including mask theater, the action of the primary characters is inspired by Kuruma ningyo, a bunraku form of manipulation executed on moving carts. Every element, each technique is selected with care to move the story forward.”

“*Kurumaningyō*, literally, “puppets on wheels”, also called “cart puppetry”, is a reference to the wagon on which the manipulator sits and is a variation of Bunraku. The aim of the former however is to limit the costs of the latter which involves the presence of three manipulators per figure. The first attempts were made in the 19th century at the initiative of a professional puppeteer – Nishikawa Koryu (1824-1897) – in the region of Saitama to the north of Tokyo. Many troupes adopted the technique, which permit a single puppeteer to control the movements of the figure.” (the article goes on to say it is only practiced in a small region of Japan, but apparently that is not so!)

I found it intriguing to watch one performer scooting seamlessly across a large stage, with a little girl puppet taking the tiny steps of a small child and incorporating all the subtle mannerisms of a little girl. The story revolves around the child playing in her father's tailoring shop, his advancing illness, eventual death, and her reaction to it all. The puppetry was exquisite and moving – all without a word. I teared up several times at the imagery brought through by the very concise and believable movement of the puppet. The theme is global – “life, love and loss.”

After the performance, we were invited onstage to talk with the performers, many of which spoke excellent English, and to see the puppets up close. I was impressed at how simple and roughly made they were, but so completely effective, For instance the little girl had a full range of head movement with no fancy ball joint, just a strip of nylon stocking attached to a dowel!

Through the performance the child plays with a little paper boat her father made, and at the end of the show a rope is pulled up with 40 paper boats of differing sizes. I learned from one of the performers that in their belief system the soul remains near the body for 40 days and then is transported to its final rest. There were many layers of understanding possible from the uses of metaphor and imagery. As we spoke, they said they are always interested and delighted to see how each audience member takes away something unique from their own experiences, because we have all lost someone we loved.

Here are some pictures to give you a taste!





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## Upcoming Events

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### Hamlet, A Finger Puppet Musical

Sunday, November 9 at 4:00pm  
at: Folklore, 1226 3rd St., Napa

**Cost: Suggested donation \$10** (all proceeds go to a local food bank)

Finger puppets get short shrift in the puppet performance world, but Hamlet is Tiny Globe Theatre's 4th Shakespeare play using *Unemployed Philosopher's Guild* finger puppets as cast members.

Guild members Michael and Valerie Nelson (Magical Moonshine Theatre) assist with the performance which includes live music as well as all the major soliloquies and the entire story (shrunk to finger puppet size, about 45 minutes.)

The venue, Folklore, in Napa, is a wine bar, cafe, vinyl record shop and live radio station. The performers boldly promise that it will be the best Hamlet you've seen done with finger puppets.

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## **The Monkey King**

**SF Opera, San Francisco**

**November 14-30, 2025**

Based on the classic Chinese novel Journey to the West, The Monkey King makes its much-anticipated world premiere at the War Memorial Opera House. This new, action-packed opera combines high-energy music and text with puppetry, dance, Peking opera, and Buddhist sutras to tell the tale of the Monkey King's beginnings.

Basil Twist is the Puppetry Director, Set, and Puppetry Designer for this production. He was responsible for creating the puppets and designing the overall visual world of the production, which transforms the stage with silks, puppets, and projections to bring the fantastical story to life. Guild members Esther de Monteflores and Fred Riley III are puppeteers in this production!

Very few tickets available: <https://www.sfopera.com/buy-tickets/>

Check out their Livestream option for Nov 18, Tickets \$25: <https://www.sfopera.com/operas/the-monkey-king/livestream/>

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## **Manual Cinema's "The 4th Witch"**



**Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley**

**Nov 22, 2025, 8pm**

**(very few tickets available!)**

The amazingly inventive visual storytellers of Manual Cinema return to Cal Performances with another meticulously crafted, gloriously handmade production.

The 4th Witch follows a young girl, orphaned during wartime, who becomes unwittingly apprenticed to the three witches from Shakespeare's Macbeth. As the truth of her family's fate is revealed, she must choose between paths of reconciliation and vengeance. Told without text—like a silent film coming to life on stage—the story explores themes of war and generational conflict through shadow puppetry, actors in silhouette, immersive sound design, and live music.

*“Manual Cinema has created a whole new art form. In a digital world, this beguiling analog throwback...has proved enormously popular”* (Chicago Tribune).

[About this Performance](#)

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New episode of Under The Puppet is here and my guest is Stacey Weingarten. Stacey Weingarten is a puppeteer, puppet wrangler, director, writer, and producer who got her puppet start studying with John Tartaglia and later went on to work on the show Johnny and the Sprites.

Since then she's worked The Muppets and Sesame Street where she won an Emmy for her work on the show's 50th season. She also has her own theatrical puppetry projects Rescue Rue and Runaway Rue that have played off Broadway and at the Hollywood Fringe Festival. I talk to Stacey

Weingarten about all these projects and more, including her work on the upcoming The Muppet Show special for Disney+! The new episode is available wherever you get your podcasts or over at [underthepuppet.com](http://underthepuppet.com) <<http://underthepuppet.com/>>



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