



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
*Looking for updates and missed information?
Check for it at SFBAPG.ORG*

SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization

August 2005



Puppets - Too Scary?

Why are puppets threatening to the powers that be? They have the power to change people and ideas.

*Photo of puppet from Alan Cook collection by
Tim Giugni*

**Transfer of Finances:
Guild Comes Face to
Face With Homeland
Security**

After 20 years of safeguarding the Guild's finances, retiring treasurer Pam Brown handed over the fiscal reins to new treasurer Valerie Nelson recently. The Guild's bank account at West America Bank was to be transferred to a West America Bank branch close to the new treasurer in Yountville. But times have changed since Pam first took charge of the money, and transferring the account to a new branch brought the Guild under the watchful eye of Homeland Security. As of this writing the Guild's finances are still frozen in spite of having provided the bank with a copy of Guild bylaws, a roster of our officers and a copy of our minutes. Negotiating past deadlines and threats of account termination, Valerie has struggled to meet government demands for information. *(continued on page 2)*

Inside this issue...

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- ◆ Calendar of events
- ◆ A History of Radical Puppetry. Part 4
- ◆ Kid's Project: Getting Started With Shadow Puppets

**2005—2006
SFBAPG Board of Directors**

President

Tim Giugni
(707) 963-8259

Tim@teatrocalamari.com

Vice President

Elisheva Hart

umatales@yahoo.com

415)472-1669

Secretary

Emily Giugni
(707) 963-8259

emily@teatrocalamari.com

Treasurer & Guild Roster

Valerie Nelson
Box 2296

Yountville, CA 94599
707-257-8007

Mail@magicalmoonshine.org

Email Coordinator

Mary Decker
(650) 361-1310

1116 Ruby St,
Redwood City CA 94061

marydeck@earthlink.net

Webmaster

Matt Baume
(310) 210-3985

Knowwhatimdoing@hotmail.com

Newsletter

Michael Nelson
PO Box 2296, Yountville, CA
94599

(707) 257-8007

Mail@magicalmoonshine.org

Homeland Security from Page 1

The frozen account now awaits the arrival of Guild secretary, Emily Giugni who needs to sign the minutes in person. Emily, along with Guild president Tim Giugni (coincidentally husband and wife) chose this of all weeks to attend the National Puppetry Festival (so far rumors of their being in an undisclosed location in Cuba have not been substantiated) but President Tim's palm pilot maneuverings helped delay the closing of the Guild account when he emailed a brief version of the minutes to Valerie to deliver to the bank. West America Bank representatives have apologized for the difficulties and for the temporarily frozen Guild funds, but their hands are tied.

SFBAPG Member News (Let the Guild know what you are doing; send your news to your Guild newsletter editor!)

From Margie Rex

The Palette Puppets are having their television debut in an art and puppet show called PuppArtry Place. It will run continuously on Santa Clara's Unified School station Ch. 26, a Comcast Public Access, but only available in the city of Santa Clara.

Also the Palette Puppets have recently performed at the Great Mall in Milpitas, and the Dr. Martin Luther King Library in San Jose.

They are planning a new terrific holiday show. They promise notices of the appearances at a later date.

From Ruth Macchiarini Poncho Polo Puppet Theater

The Poncho Polo Puppet's Theater will

be open to the public every Sunday in August from 12:00 to 5:00 PM at 625 Lighthouse Road in Petrolia, CA, 707-629-3478. Hundreds of marionettes will be on display. Demonstrations on how to manipulate them will be given. Visitors interested in performing short skits will be assisted to do so. Bring your puppets to play with our puppets. This is also a good occasion for a picnic at the beach or a swim in the river. This event is free to the public and located on California's Lost Coast, a beautiful place to visit.

August Puppet Horror Story

From Lettie Schubert

Two incidents very early in my performing career provided the seeds that years later were the basis of learning about the importance of puppet movement where mime carries the story. However what I learned later wouldn't have helped either of these appearances. A city wide arts festival was held in the Palace of Fine Arts in the Marina before it was totally rebuilt. The space was a huge cavern and all kinds of things were going on, demonstrations of techniques, displays and in one corner was a rather primitive seating area for a makeshift theater. I was invited to bring my puppet show (for free). In those days I just worked hand puppets in a small simple booth without lights and no sound. The organizers put a microphone outside the booth and had a spotlight on my booth. The puppets talked as they performed which worked well for birthday and library shows. I set up my stage on the platform. Unbeknownst to me about 100 yards away from the stage was an artist with a jackhammer demonstrating carving a figure from stone. When I set up he was on a break, but just after I started my act he fired up the jackhammer. No festival organizer was around to ask him to stop. There wasn't much of an audience and obviously they

couldn't hear me. I am afraid my first *big time* (bigger than a birthday party) opportunity didn't come to much. I didn't become the toast of the town. Fame and fortune didn't follow.

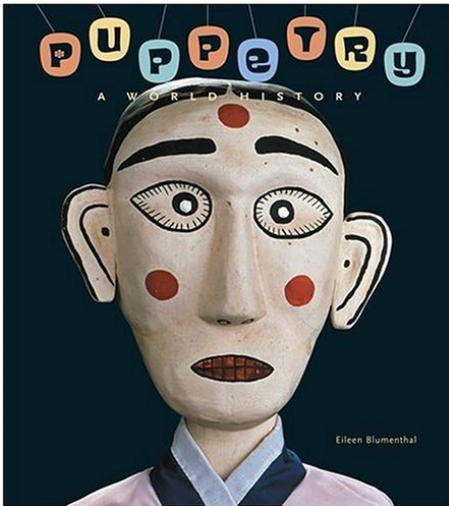


Puppeteers pursuing their art often find that they are made to dance much like their puppet actors.

Another time early on I was invited to perform at a Coast Guard family day at Government Island, lots of activities going on, food, games, rides, etc. I was given a small space in a corner. I had spent weeks building and rehearsing a Punch & Judy show. I set up my booth, and was beginning my rooti-toot-toot when I was completely drowned out by an announcement coming from a loud speaker hanging high over my booth, one of many around the grounds. Every time I would start up, there would be the announcement of Bingo, or a ride, or something. No one ever heard my show. A small gaggle of kids watched for a while and wandered off. I found the announcer, and he told me he would stop making announcements for ten minutes. I rushed back to my booth, and tried to gather an audience, but that took part of the ten minutes and once again I was drowned out. Despite the fact that I really didn't perform, I was paid the \$5 promised to me. That will tell you how long ago it was and how

green I was. Never did get another booking for the show. The only other bite was from a nun in a girl's school, but she felt P&J was not appropriate for her little girls.

It seems appropriate to end my first set of stories with a quotation from John Sculley "I have found that I always learn more from my mistakes than from my successes. If you aren't making some mistakes, you aren't taking enough chances."



Book Review "Puppetry, A World History" From Lettie Schubert

Eileen Blumenthal, co-author with Julie Taymor of *Julie Taymor- Playing With Fire*, has written *Puppetry, A World History* published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2005 ISBN 0-8109-5587-3. The price is \$65.00 U.S. but Amazon has copies for \$40.95. It has 350 photographs, 150 in color. The closest description I can come is to compare it to Bil Baird's *The Art of The Puppet*. I haven't read the text, but the pictures in this coffee table sized book are wonderful. It seems to be missing some fine artists - notably Coad Canada

Puppets and Ronnie Burkett. I will probably discover others when I next sit pinned down by its weight in a comfortable chair and have a chance to go through it more closely. Maybe you can check Borders or Barnes & Noble to take a look and decide if you want to spring for it. Lots of African and Asian material as well as South American and Mexican. French, Italian, Sicilian, it covers the world pretty well and much of the material is more contemporary than the Baird book. Baird and the Kuklapolitans are there. I think this handsomely laid out book should be in any collection of fine puppet books.

History of Radical Puppetry, Part 4

(Part 3 appeared in the July newsletter and can be found archived on the guild website.)

By K. Ruby

K Ruby is a visual and performing artist with 25 years experience in the arts as a performer, director, designer, consultant, builder, costumer and teacher. Ruby is one of the original members and current artistic director of Wise Fool Community Arts, a giant puppet theatre recognized for its dedication to community, celebration and social change. Since 1997 Ruby has been integral to the production of the annual PuppetLOVE!, Festival of Radical Puppetry. This text, and an accompanying slide show were developed in part for this event. If you are interested in hiring Ruby to present the lecture and slide show live, please contact her at wisefool@lmi.net.

WWI – WWII (continued)

Undisputed leaders of puppetry in Europe, the Czech puppeteers also had a tradition of radical puppetry. When the Czech language was banned by the Austrian Hungarian empire in the 19th c., puppeteers

continued to perform in Czech as an act of defiance. During Nazi occupation Czech puppeteers organized illegal underground performances in homes and basements with anti-fascist themes, called "daisies." Karel Capek, who wrote the famous anti-technology play *RUR* and coined the word *Robot*, wrote anti-fascist prose pieces for the puppeteers. Josef Skupa, a famous popular puppeteer known for his leading character *Spejbl*, did wartime tours of adult puppet plays with subtle allegorical points imperceptible to the censor. In the concentration camps, Czech women made puppet shows from scraps of nothing to keep up their morale. Eventually the Nazi's suppressed all Czech puppetry and over 100 skilled puppeteers died under torture in the camps. The United States

In the US avant -garde and political puppetry was also experiencing a surge. One artist quite active in both political and mainstream performance at this time was Remo Bufano, who was both a highly successful artist and puppeteer and also an activist. One of the key moments in his artistic career was the creation of giant marionettes for a 1931 performance of *Oedipus Rex*. Bufano also headed WPAs NY Marionette Unit, which employed scores of puppeteers and produced thousands of performances of over 47 full-length works. Bufano quit his position in 1937 protesting the "obstructive policies" that prevented him from mounting a production *RUR*, Czech Puppeteer Carel Kapek's play which dealt with the evils of technology.

In the early part of the 30s, however, art was politicized by economics and world politics. A new theatre movement was inspired by a sense of theatre as modern art

rather than entertainment, and imbued with a activist political zeal inspired by Marxist ideas. In this fervor, puppets and larger than life processional images played important roles as public articulations of leftist political views. Sound familiar?

The MayDay celebration in New York City in the 30s brought together many different radical factions in an international celebration of leftist solidarity, showing opposition to the rise of fascism in Italy, Spain and Germany. In 1936 Jackson Pollack helped design floats in workshop with Mexican artist David Siquieros, In 1937 amongst the political imagery was also a traditional maypole—calling attention to the other green traditional roots of the holy day. Some of the images from parades of this era include a float representing International solidarity against fascism—figures represent England, Russia, France and the US stretching out a hand against a tank representing fascism, a giant skeleton backpack puppet representing Nazi Germany, a group of backpack puppets representing cops and politician— wow, it could be today!! Following World War II, the end of the Federal Theater Project, need for economic survival and atmosphere of the cold war dampened political expression of the puppet theatre. In the 40s and 50s puppetry went the way of children's theatre, entertainment, publicity and advertising and television until renewed by social upheaval of the 1960s. Popular use of puppets in nightclubs and variety acts was common during this time. Most of it was pap, but amongst the popular entertainers of the time, some puppeteers still dared tread into the tricky waters of political content. One such puppeteer was Alfred Wallace, active in NYC from

the 30s through the 50s. Wallace used puppet to turn FDR into Punch's baby. He also depicted a US senator as a two faced puppet and this "tired world" rod puppet of the 1950s expressed public feeling between WWII and the beginning of the cold war.

The 1960's brought the beginning of movement of political puppetry as we think of it today. For most of us our knowledge of giant puppets in connection to radical or protest puppetry starts here with Peter Schumann. In 1961 the German artist, Peter Schumann came to this country and shortly after founded the seminal Bread and Puppet Theater with the motto that "theatre should be as basic as bread." Their work in protest of the Vietnam War put Bread and Puppet on the cultural map of this country. Later moving to a farm in Vermont, Bread and Puppet hosted their annual Domestic Resurrection Circus, a fantastic blend of spirituality, politics and pageantry which spawned a generation of puppeteers and which continues to influence the world of political puppetry today. On the left coast the SF Mime Troupe was prompting the beginnings of "guerilla theatre," This idea, was first articulated in 1965 by mime troupe founder RG Davis as part of a manifesto committing the Mime troupe to serve as a "movement vanguard in the nascent cultural revolution." After a Radical Theatre Festival in SF in 1968 brought the Mime Troupe together with Teatro Campesino and Bread and Puppet, The Mime Troupe started performing a series of vignettes they called Gutter Puppets—stage, props and actors that could all be packed into one car for touring. Gutter puppet shows included Digger style how-to skits—like scamming free parking, calling cards or food.

European notables from this time period are The Welfare State and Dario Fo. The Welfare State, founded in 1968 blends political street theatre, public spectacle and celebration and is a precursor to community art as we know it today, as well as to popular art events such as Burning Man. Seeking to re-establish popular theatre traditions of the working class Welfare State drew from Carnival, the Feast of Fools, the fairground, the mummers and the tradition of subversion as entertainment. Welfare State brought together theatre, food, fire, puppets, stilts, arts education and more. One of my favorite of their actions was their burning of a 60 foot crooked parliament on Guy Fawkes Day.

Nobel prize winner, Italian playwright and clown Dario Fo, together with his equally talented wife, Franca Rame, broke with mainstream theater in 1968, giving up substantial salaries and fame in the mainstream theatre and declaring he would no longer be a "jester for the bourgeoisie." He developed a kind of naïve clowning that enabled him to question statements of diplomats, generals and historians. Fo helped found a theatrical organization dedicated to the proletarian revolution, bringing theater to the people in factories, stadiums, villages and school dorms. He believed that theatre was the only means of freeing people from the tyranny of corporate mass media and sought a bloodless revolution of the proletariat. Throughout the 70s and 80s, Fo used clowning, puppetry, masks and humanettes in his satires of government and government intelligence. Fo's best known face, the Accidental Death of an Anarchist, based on police reports, documents and testimonies was so successful in exposing state

repression that his group were subjected to provocation and persecution of all kinds.
(To be continued...)

CALENDAR LISTINGS!

What if you did a puppet show and nobody came?

If your puppet event is not listed here, you are missing out. It is easy to have your performances listed.

Send info to

mail@magicalmoonshine.org

Nick Barone's Performances
(for updates on Nick's performances, check <http://puppetbuilder.com>)

Thursday, August 4 - 10:00 am
"Tales from the Enchanted Forest"
Noe Valley/Sally Brunn Library, 451
Jersey Street, San Francisco, CA
Nick Barone's Performances for August (cont.)

Thursday, August 11 - 10:15 am
"T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Review"
Westlake Branch Library, 275
Southgate Ave., Daly City, CA

Saturday, August 13 - 11:00 am
"Puss In Boots"
Fairfax Branch Library, 2097 Sir
Francis Drake Blvd., Fairfax, CA

Saturday, August 13 - 2:30 pm
"Puss In Boots"
South Novato Branch Library, 6
Hamilton Landing, Suite 140A,
Novato, CA

Thursday, August 18 - 2:00 pm
"Puss In Boots"
Lafayette Library, 952 Moraga Road,
Lafayette, CA

Sunday, August 21 - 1:30 pm
"Tales from the Enchanted Forest"
Children's Fairyland's 49th Annual

Puppet Fair
Children's Fairyland, 699 Bellevue
Ave., Oakland, CA

Magical Moonshine Theatre

Performances for August:

Thursday, August 4 - 11:00 am
"Shadow Tales" (Kipling's The Cat
Who Walks By Himself, & Does That
Scare You? - a Hmong folktale)
Rincon Valley Library, Santa Rosa

**Guild Event at
Oakland's Fairyland
Saturday, August 20
Guild Meeting
August 27, Fort Mason
(For details see box
below)**

Calendar Listings, On-going events:

NEW EXHIBITION, ASIAN ART MUSEUM, 200 Larkin Street in San Francisco: "**Shadows, Masks, and Music: Aspects of the Performing Arts in Asia**," April 23, 2005 through January 22, 2006--"The Museum's sampling of artworks and objects related to drama, dance and music. Instruments, masks and shadow puppets highlight both the entertaining and the transformative aspects of performing arts in Asia." Tue. through Sun. - 10:00 am - 5 pm -Thur. evenings until 9:00 pm. \$10 adults; \$7 Seniors; \$6 youths 12-17 and college; free: members, under 12 and SFUSD students.

Upcoming Guild Meetings & Events

August:

Guild Event at Oakland Fairyland, August 20

Final details are not available at this writing (due to organizers attending National Festival), but past Fairyland/Guild events suggest something along the lines of:

*Event begins 10:00 a.m. and runs until 4:00 p.m.

*Guild members need to bring puppets for the exhibit early in the morning.

*Puppet making table runs from 10:30 a.m. until 3:00 ??

*Guild members pay for parking (?) and get free entrance to the park. (Just say you are with the Guild.)

Il Teatro Calamari will be performing "3 Billy Goats Gruff" and Herbert Lange will perform "Little Red Ridinghood"

Check the website for updates as the event draws near.

The next Guild Meeting is on August 27th, 5:30 pm, at Fort Mason, San Francisco, and will contain a work in progress. The work in progress is for "1906" a shadow show for the centennial of the 1906 earthquake and fire. There will be a talk back session and if there is time people can play with the puppets.

September Theme is "Works in Progress". If you have a 7 to 10 minute piece to present to the guild please contact Tim Guigni. Include: what it is from (upcoming show, a doodle, an idea that has been swirling in your mind or ?), what type of puppetry, length, size of piece and any technical requirements that you might have. Send all of this information to me ASAP. There are three slots available on a first come, first served basis.

From Ruth Stotter, an Invitation for Creative Exchange

Interested in meeting for a day in September to make string figures? I am referring to making string figures like cat's cradle, only solo. All around the world they perform stories using the string to make shapes as they tell the tale. I have been collecting them in Fiji, Easter Island, from the Yupik Eskimos, etc. and suspect others besides Pam Brown and myself enjoy performing with just a piece of string. Anyone wanting to get together to learn about these and exchange ideas, call Ruth Stotter at 415-435-3568. email r.stotter@comcast.net

Getting Started with Shadow Puppets (a kid friendly project!)

From Magical Moonshine Theatre
Shadow puppets are a mysterious and wonderful kind of puppet. If you have ever made hand shadows (used your hands to make shadows that look like animals, etc.) on the wall or have seen shadows cast by a flashlight on a camping tent wall then you already have an idea of how shadow puppets work. What you need to create the magic of shadow puppets is a screen on which to project the shadows (-light must be able to pass through it--it could be a sheet, tent wall, big piece of paper, etc.) a

light source (could be the sun or an artificial light --flourescent lights do not work well) and a shadow puppet (an object that will cast its shadow on the screen.) Here is how it works:

The light must shine onto the screen; then anything placed between the light and the screen will cast a shadow onto the screen.



drawing by Stephanie Holdermann

Fig. 1 Note that the light shines on the back of the screen, showing the shadow of the puppet (held by the puppeteer) while the audience watches from the front of the screen, seeing only the projected shadow. **Shadow puppets are best viewed in the dark!**

Notice in the picture that the audience watches the show from the **other** side of the screen. They don't see the puppets, they just see the **shadows of the puppets** (that's why they call it shadow puppets!)

Making Your Shadow Puppets **What you will need:**

Heavy construction paper or thin cardboard (like a cereal box) or file folder type material
paper (to plan your design on) & pencil
scissors
hole punch
brass brads
sticks for the controllers (chop sticks, coathanger wire, popsicle sticks, or bamboo skewers)

glue or tape (to attach the control sticks) or string (for a moving control stick, see below)
black paint or marker (optional) if your cardboard is not a dark color

Let's get started!

First you must decide just what kind of character you want to make. Although you can make anything you want, let's try a duck just to get started. For the simplest of shadow puppets you can draw a picture of a duck on your planning paper, transfer the design to the cardboard, and cut it out and paste it to a stick. (When you are drawing the duck, remember that all your audience will see of the duck is the shadow, so any details you draw on the puppet will not show.)



Do you have a work in progress, completed work, workshop, lecture or know of a puppetry event that is happening in and around the Bay Area? Is there a location that could house a Guild Event or Meeting? Is there a mysterious 'other' or 'not listed here's presentation that you would like to deliver to the guild? If so, please contact Tim Giugni, *your* president and discuss the hows and whens you could present.

PUPPET FEST 2005, July 24 – 30, 2005, St. Paul, Minnesota--Share your impressions, reviews, photos, and thoughts in the next newsletter by sending them to mail@magicalmoonshine.org -

Figure 2. A simple duck cut out of cardboard with a stick glued on with which to hold it. Note that the stick (shown white) also becomes the duck's leg (helping to hide the stick in the shadow.) To make the eye you can cut a hole in the puppet head so that the light shines through (remember, if you just draw an eye, it won't show on the shadow!)

Now, let's say you want to make some part of your duck move. You are ready for lesson 2 in making shadow puppets. In order to make a moving part for your shadow puppet, you have to make that part separate from the rest of the puppet. Take your piece of paper and draw your duck outline again. Then make a copy of your duck onto another piece of paper (you can use tracing paper, carbon paper, or just cut out your duck while holding two pieces of paper together, so that you cut 2 ducks at once. Let's decide now what parts we want to move. Let's make this duck have a wiggly walk. To do so, we will make the duck in 2 pieces, with the front half of the duck separate from the back half. Part of each "half" of the puppet must overlap the other "half" with a pivot in the middle (this is where the brads come in handy.) Let's draw our overlap in the form of a circle on our duck drawings. (see figure 3)



Figure 3 shows the circle with the center hole marked that will be the overlapping pieces of your shadow puppet. When you cut them out, each half of the duck will include the whole circle with the hole (see figure 4, below). Transfer the two pieces to the

cardboard and cut them out.

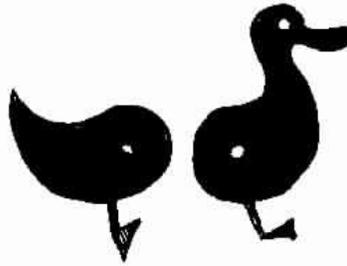


Figure 4 shows the two pieces of the duck puppet, each with the circle and hole, now cut out of the cardboard and ready to assemble. Poke your brad through the holes of both pieces and you have a whole duck again, but one in which the front half and back half can rotate independently from each other on the brad.

Now you are ready to attach the controls on your moving duck puppet. In the first duck (the non moving one) we attached one stick. For the moving duck we will need 2 rods to control it, one to hold the front half of the duck steady and one to make the back half of the duck move up and down for the wiggly walk. You can attach the first control rod to the leg and foot (and body) of the front half of the duck, just like in the first puppet. Next you want to connect the second control rod to the back half of the duck. This rod must be attached somewhere behind the pivot point (so when you move it, it pushes up on the back half of the duck, causing it to raise up. It is good (though not necessary) to attach this rear control rod so that it will pivot. Instead of gluing the rod directly to the cardboard, you can poke a hole in the cardboard and push a string through it. Tie a knot in one end of the string so that it will not pass back through the hole, and then attach the other end of the string to the rod (you can use glue or tape.)

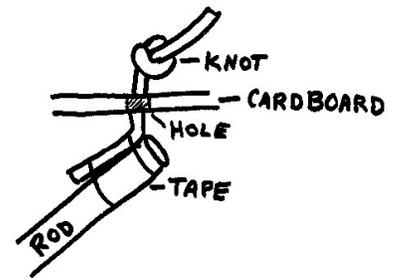


Figure 5 shows a closeup of the knot on one side of the puppet half, and the rod on the other. This gives you a nice, movable rod connection. Don't leave too much slack between the knot and the rod and you will have a nice, tight control.

Now, while holding the forward control still in one hand, use the other hand to move the rear control up and down. It should give your puppet a fun walking motion. Now do that while moving the puppet forward on your shadow screen. Your puppet walks.

Once you have the idea of how to design your shadow puppets you can make all kinds of different puppets with different movements. Even just using 2 pieces to make your puppets you can make a great variety of fun puppets. Use your imagination to make different parts move and enjoy the magic of shadows.