



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
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Check for it at SFBAPG.ORG

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

December 2006

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Young people and puppets changing the world! These young puppeteers work with Guild Secretary Sharon Clay in the 4 H group that she leads. Read more about Sharon and her young puppeteers in the article starting on page 2.

As the December holidays are traditionally times when we think of children and family, this December Issue is dedicated to Children and Puppetry.

Inside this issue...

- ◆ Working with Children and Puppets, by Sharon Clay
- ◆ Children puppeteers in Puerto Rico by Michael Nelson
- ◆ Enhancing Your Guild Experience
- ◆ Calendar, Classifieds, & More!

From Your President
**The Power of Puppets:
“The World According to
Sesame Street”**

Fellow Guild Members,

At the October Guild meeting we watched a marvelous, inspiring documentary that affirmed one of my core beliefs in puppetry, that puppetry has the power to change the world. In the film we watched teams of very dedicated producers go into several different countries with completely different cultures and work with local educators, puppeteers, and politicians to adapt the Sesame Street model to fit and serve the targeted culture. The goal of each group was to change the world for that culture; to give children the chance to learn, to grow, to think, to develop tolerance and understanding for their neighbors and the world around them. Just as the American Sesame Street started out color-blind (mixed races of people on the show, and muppets of many different types who all learned to deal with their conflicts and modeled behavior of learning to get along), so each foreign version of Sesame Street sought to raise awareness by showing children how perhaps their traditional enemy (the race or religion their family's culture was teaching them to hate) went to school, had birthdays, celebrated, learned and lived. You change the child and you change the culture. You change the culture and you change the world.

2006—2007
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The producers of Sesame Street in these other countries faced daunting challenges, working, for example, in what was essentially a war zone in Serbia/Croatia to try and bring traditional enemies together to help their mutual children with the goal that through education in a milieu of tolerance, these better educated children could have the potential for greater understanding about the lives and needs others living around them. In South Africa, the producers workshopping the Sesame Street concept ended up introducing an HIV positive muppet who is movingly shown exploring the memory box left to her by her mother who died of aids, and later a clip showing a lively song about how it's ok (and safe) to play with an HIV positive friend. In Bangladesh the producers battled floods, poverty and a political structure that ran the only television station in the country. Throughout the documentary we saw clips of children living in what we Americans would consider extreme poverty, laughing and watching with wonder as modest television sets, sometimes powered with car batteries, sometimes wheeled into a community park or gathering place in a decorated TV cart for all the community to watch, showed a collection of only vaguely familiar muppets set in a Sesame Street created especially to speak to their cultural needs.

What does such a documentary say to us as puppeteers? Puppets, especially when used with children, have an incredible power for cultural change. We already know that puppets have that power to engage, to fascinate. Even bad puppet performances will stop passers-by on the streets as people find themselves drawn to the strange, life-like beings of wood, cloth, fur. Good puppetry, thoughtfully and lovingly presented has the power not just to stop the passer-by, but to touch the heart and



"The shows we do are primarily for 4-H activities - though occasionally we do one for a library, or a senior home, or a children's facility. The 4-H activity shows are primary "moral" based - or health based - like no smoking, or no tobacco, or drinking, etc. Sometimes we do children's safety programs like the McGruff series. Often we do short songs or skits, and invite the

soul, and if you do that often enough (and maybe only once can be often enough!) you begin to develop new patterns in a person, or reinforce the patterns that were already there (hopefully the good ones) so that the audience member is changed, or awakened in some new way. Every once in a while, after I have completed a performance I think about the fact (and yes, I believe it is a fact) that some people will be or have been changed as a result of watching our shows. I accept that I may never know who I have touched and what form that change might be, but I know it has happened, and will happen again, because that is the nature of what we do as puppeteers. We change the world. One little person at a time. And we must remember to use our power well.

Working With Children and Puppetry

By Sharon Clay

One of the goals for P of A, I noticed, is to try to get kids interested in puppetry. As you may know, I lead a 4-H puppetry team. These are kids from age 9 to age 16. Each year the number of kids on the team changes, depending on who signs up for 4-H and for the project. Some years I have had as few as two kids and this year I have 6. Our primary focus has been performance. We mostly use foam based puppets which I have purchased, but this year I have kids who have been with me for two years, and I thought it would be good for them to find out what it took to actually build a puppet. Thanks to Mike Burroughs who has volunteered to help us, we are building 10 marionettes this year. These have involved building paper mache heads (which is probably more than their attention span can handle), and now we are working on the legs and arms. I am gaining a whole new appreciation of what it takes to

"create" a puppet. And this isn't any carving, molding, or even sewing (at the moment). Just the time it has taken to do the two coats of paper mache, with one more to go, was more than I expected. And the cost..... WOW. OK, you guys, stop laughing!!! The cost of these is nothing compared to what you put into your shows, I'm sure. And when I buy the foam based puppets, they are expensive also. I just thought that when you "make" your own puppets it would be cheaper. The cost of the materials - like the styrofoam, and the shoes, and the hardware..... surprised me. The shows we do are primarily for 4-H activities - though occasionally we do one for a library, or a senior home, or a children's facility. The 4-H activity shows are primary "moral" based - or health based - like no smoking, or no tobacco, or drinking, etc. Sometimes we do children's safety programs like the McGruff series. Often we do short songs or skits, and invite the audience to participate. The kids also play bells as part of the shows, and invite the audience to participate. Part of every show involves having the kids come out front to introduce themselves and tell a little about the show or the team - this gives them practice in public speaking. I have heard from parents who have told me that being involved in puppets has helped their child so much in overcoming shyness, and learning to have confidence in themselves that it has literally changed their lives. I got involved with the Guild because I knew very little about puppet construction or even performance, though I had performed with my church puppetry team. So, anything I can learn from classes or from festivals puts me one (or more) steps ahead of where I have been. Thank you all for your help in teaching and sharing your experiences and knowledge with me. If you would like to help with our team - please let me know. Sharon Clay, 925-462-4518.

Children and Puppetry in Puerto Rico, an Exceptional Program

By Michael Nelson

I am writing this article from Puerto Rico where the 8th Biennial International Festival of Puppets has just ended in Caguas. While this colorful Latin American festival held many delights, one remarkable one was the performances of the youth groups. The city of Caguas sponsors an extensive youth puppetry program for 70 - 90 children between the ages of about 7 to 16 (plus parents who were performing as well in the productions and older mentors who had been in the program before and are now helping out.) The after school program starts in January and culminates in performances for the Christmas celebrations of the city in late November/early December

of the next year. The puppets we saw this year were all made of foam, but there were mouth puppets, rod puppets, marionettes, body puppets and some combinations, all made by the children and their mentors. Black light was a favorite form, and often the shows and their extensive, full stage sets were painted especially so that when the stage lights were turned down, there were black light effects. The children researched the original plays which were mostly about local history and lore, and wrote them, recording the scripts which were then edited with music. Some of the shows featured live music (possibly by parents who were also musicians). The typical show had a cast of 25-35. It looked like smaller groups would research and build their own piece of the larger show. A common set up for this would be a narrator/storyteller puppet who is telling (for example) a bird stories of the area. Then each group presents one



This photo, taken before the Navidad (Christmas) parade in Caguas, Puerto Rico, shows some of the variety of foam puppets made by the children in the city's extensive puppetry program.

of the stories with the narrator tying each one to the next. But while a smaller group might work on one story, they often appeared to make enough puppets for the whole cast so that they would enlist help from puppeteers from other groups for the “bit” characters. This way they could have a garden with 30 flowers all animated. The shows worked very well, with better, more experienced puppeteers taking the heavier roles, and younger newcomers doing simpler parts. I believe that the program was offered at different locations, with each group meeting twice a week.

The subject matter of the plays was of interest as in one they portrayed the important history of tobacco production in the area, a topic that I think would have been skipped over in California schools. Other bits were about the conquistadores of the area, and slaves and slave trade. I am sure that the children learned an incredible amount from participating in these programs. Not only was local history and social issues covered, but all of the visual, literary, musical and performing arts inherent to puppetry (an entire arts curriculum in itself!) There are three full time staff managing the program as well as lots of mentors. It was a wonderful program that produced some very good plays and I am sure is an exceptional learning experience for the children involved.

Guild Experience Enhancement Department: Put More In, Get More Out

There are currently some new opportunities for you to enhance your guild experience while helping the guild and the art of puppetry in the Bay Area and getting to know some of your



More Caguas puppeteers and their puppets, showing some foam marionettes (including a conquistador on a horse), a giant head mask, some muppet like puppets (being worn like a hat on the musician’s head) and some talking clouds.

Guild Minutes for November Business Meeting

The Nov. Guild meeting in Mill Valley was lead by Vice President Mike Wick, for a small but enthusiastic group of 6 people. Mike introduced the list of committees that had been started at the October meeting and encouraged members to join a Guild committee.

In new business, meeting sites were discussed and members were asked to think of possible sites for Guild meetings.

Debra Netkin, Guild member and teacher, mentioned possible opportunities for puppeteers in the schools, as new funds have been given to schools for arts curriculum. She suggested that the Guild might want to write a paper on the importance of puppetry in the schools. This could be sent to schools, and would emphasize the fact that puppetry covers so many of the standards that schools strive to meet in the arts and other curriculum. She offered to do a little research. It was hoped that the Guild might be able to connect schools with puppeteers. Mike thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was adjourned.

(minutes submitted by Lee Armstrong, sitting in for Sharon Clay)

fellow guild members better (networking connections!)

The following groups were formed at the October guild meeting and seeking additional members. Members will meet in person or communicate by email (what ever works best or is most fun) and study their area of focus, coming up with ideas to share with the guild membership, or recommendations for the guild.

Library Group

Are you a book lover? Did you know the guild has a library of puppetry books, some possibly old or rare? It does! What should we do with it? Can a library work for the guild? Is there a way to make books easily available to the membership? Should they be online? Is a guild library an outmoded idea?

Should the books be given away to puppet centers? Sold? Should the guild develop a video library on the Netflix model? This group will address these and other issues and look for solutions to this literary problem.

Current members:
Kathy Foley, Lee Armstrong, Stephanie Holdermann, Michael Nelson

Hospitality Group

Do you like people? Do you think that eating (and drinking) can be (should be) a social activity? Do you prefer your drink in a cup, or your food on a plate? If so, the hospitality group could use you! Perhaps one of the most important positions in the guild, the Hospitality Hosts will make sure that there are good things to eat and drink at guild meetings (and things to eat them off of and drink them out of), facilitate name tags (in case you just can't remember the name of that guild member you met at last year's holiday

party) and generally make sure that everyone has a great time and is happy!

Current members:
Patty Wick, Valerie Nelson, Lee Armstrong, Anita Coulter, Michael Nelson

Procedures and By-Laws Group

Do you like all of your blocks in a line? Do you know where you put stuff? Do you hate the idea of making the same decisions over and over again, wasting all that time? The procedures and by-law group will provide an invaluable service to the guild by checking our by-laws (written before the electronic age), seeing if they are up to date (do they state what we are actually doing, or have we moved on?) and help organize the procedures so that the current and future boards will be able to easily find and follow the decisions that the guild has made.

Current members: Mary Decker, Anita Coulter, Michael Nelson

Public Relations Group

Ever hear about a puppet performance after it had already happened? Ever give a puppet show and wish that were more people in your audience? Every wish that you had more performances for your puppet company or that there were more shows to go to in your area? The guild should be able to raise the consciousness of puppetry in the bay area by putting a little effort into getting our work into the public eye. This very important group can help develop an online, universal puppetry calendar for the members and for the public, help promote the art form in the community and help guild members learn how to promote themselves and the art form, generating more interest in and demand for puppetry throughout the Bay Area. This could easily be our most important contribution to the art of

puppetry in the Bay Area. Any interested guild member can help, and those with public relations skills or background would be especially helpful.

Current members: Patty Wick, Anita Coulter, Michael Nelson

SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN ANY OF THESE GROUPS YOU ARE STRONGLY URGED TO CONTACT MICHAEL NELSON OR ANY OTHER BOARD MEMBER OR MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING. WE NEED YOUR HELP TO IMPROVE!

Classifieds

Puppetry classes in the SF schools?

Anyone interested in teaching puppet show classes in the classroom? There is arts money available for 10 visits once a week for several groups/day. Class should include creating puppets to act out stories (provide scripts) and a final presentation. 20 students per class / K-3 30 students per class 4-5.

contact Debra Netkin at Lawton Alternative School
debbruh@earthlink.net

Guild Meeting Minutes for the October Guild Meeting

Minutes

San Francisco Puppeteers Guild Meeting

Children's Fairyland in Oakland

Saturday, September 16, 2006

Secretary Sharon Clay could not attend the meeting. She asked Mary Decker to take notes.... The September 16 meeting was attended by 18 people. Two new members joined the Guild after the wonderful workshop conducted by Lee Armstrong. There was a brief business meeting run by Mike Wick. Everyone was encouraged to register for the national PofA festival to be held in Minnesota during July, 2007. Web site is www.puppetrampage2007.org. Mary Decker announced that t-shirts from the 2006 regional fest in Tacoma were still available to buy. Lee Armstrong presented a fabulous workshop on puppet manipulation and also demonstrated what she had learned at Shari Aronson's "Critical Response" workshop at the 2006 regional festival.

Minutes

San Francisco Puppeteers Guild Board Meeting, San Leandro Community Center, Saturday, October 21, 2006

The SFBAPG board meeting was called to order by President Michael Nelson at 3:45 p.m.

Present: Michael Nelson, President; Valerie Nelson, Treasurer; Mary Decker, Email Coordinator; Lee Armstrong, Program Coordinator for today's general meeting. Mike Wick, V.P., and Patty Wick arrived about 4:15 p.m.

Secretary's Report by Mary Decker, substituting for Secretary Sharon Clay: The September 16 meeting was attended by 18 people. Two new members joined the Guild after the wonderful workshop conducted by Lee Armstrong. There was a brief business meeting run by Mike Wick. Everyone was encouraged to register for the national PofA festival to be held in Minnesota during July, 2007. Web site is www.puppetrampage2007.org. Mary Decker announced that t-shirts from the 2006 regional fest in Tacoma were still available to buy. Lee Armstrong presented a fabulous workshop on puppet manipulation and also demonstrated what she had learned at Shari Aronson's "Critical Response" workshop at the 2006 regional festival.

Treasurer's Report by Valerie Nelson: The treasury has a balance of \$5,795.87. The new membership cycle began in September, but several membership renewals have not yet been received. 67 members have sent in their dues for 2006-2007. 30 have not. Valerie will send snail-mail reminders. Mary Decker will send email reminders.

President Michael Nelson presented a list of committees to be formed: Library

Committee, Procedures and Bylaws Committee; Hospitality Committee; and PR Committee. The purposes and goals of all committees were discussed.

The issue of what to do with the library was discussed at length. In September, Tim Giugni moved the library from his house into a storage unit in South Napa. Tim asked the Guild to pay for three months of storage, until another home could be found for the library. Lee Armstrong offered to make a motion about this later in the day, at the General Membership Business Meeting.

Mary Decker offered to chair the Procedures and Bylaws Committee.

Mike and Patty Wick described their idea to sell gift certificates during the holiday season for new memberships. A gift certificate would cost half the price of a regular membership and would allow cover membership in the Guild until the next dues renewal -- September 1, 2007. Mike offered to make a motion during the General Membership Business Meeting.

There was discussion about the type of software needed to do the newsletter and whether the Guild ought to buy something to help support the newsletter editor job. Mary offered to investigate the types of software available.

The November meeting will feature a show by Herbert Lange and a manipulation workshop by Lee Armstrong. Lee and Mary were charged with finding a venue for the meeting -- probably in Mill Valley where Herbert lives.

The board meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Calendar (not in order)

Tim Giugni will be in "Around the World in 80 Days" at the Sixth Street Playhouse in Santa Rosa, California from December 15th to January 20th. Guild members can get discounted tickets from Tim for Thursday and Sunday matinees . Go to <http://www.6thstreetplayhouse.com/seas0n0607/> for more.

FROM ALAN COOK:

In the Los Angeles area Sunday, December 17, OPEN HOUSE beginning at 2:30 p.m. at Conservatory of Puppetry Arts, 1062 N. Fair Oaks Avenue, Pasadena CA 91103 to see our new exhibit of toy puppets from many lands. We are in the Social Hall of St Barnabas Church. Parking from the alley or on Fair Oaks Disneyland' CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE offers the ongoing Muppet 3-D movie plus Waldorf, Statler and other animatronic touches, Disney Playhouse has BEAR in the BIG BLUE HOUSE with several puppets all aim at very young visitors, the Aladdin stage show (about 50 minutes) is a deluxe production with puppet elements Bob Baker Marionette Theater's NUTCRACKER is ongoing.

From Mary Decker:

Hello Puppet Aficionados -- members and non-members of Puppeteers of America! Regarding the upcoming P of A National Festival to be held July 17-22, 2007 in St. Paul, Minnesota: February 15: Postmark your registration before this date and get a \$40 discount!!! Visit the festival's groovy web site <http://www.puppetrampage2007.org> for more information.

READING THE~ WORLD IX is February 24 and 25 at the University of California. www.soe.usfca.edu/departments/ime/rt

[wconf](#). Among the speakers and presenters: Jane Yolken, Joseph Bruchac., Ashley Bryan, Teri Sloat and SPBAPG member Ruth Stotter.

Mark your calendars! **The David Simpich Marionettes** are returning to Palo Alto! Master puppeteer David Simpich and his thirty hand-carved marionettes bring to life John Bunyan's timeless tale of a fantastic dream -- ***The Pilgrim's Progress***.

Come into the spellbinding world of a burdened man who journeys from The City of Destruction toward The Celestial Gate!

This elaborate two-hour production portrays the classic visions found in the New World's first best-seller: the Slough of Despond; Vanity Fair; the River of Death; battles with demons and dragons; imprisonment by a giant; and colorful discourse with an array of wise men and fools. David Simpich has won four International Citations of Excellence for his work in puppetry and The President's Award from the Puppeteers of America.

Friday, Jan. 26 7:30 PM * Saturday, Jan. 27 7:30 PM * Sunday, Jan. 28, 4:30 PM

\$15 adults, \$12 children & youth (Not recommended for children under 7 years.) First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, California 1140 Cowper Street (corner of Lincoln) Tickets go on sale one hour before each performance, at the door. Call Mary Decker at 650-361-1723 for more info and to make reservations.

NICK BARONE'S HOLIDAY LISTINGS:

Tuesday, December 12, 2006 - 3:30 pm "Holiday Treats" Antioch Public Library 501 West 18th St., Antioch, CA
Wednesday, December 13, 2006 - 11:00 am "Holiday Treats" Sausalito Park & Recreation Gym Building 6, 600 Coloma, Sausalito.
Wednesday, December 13, 2006 - 7:00 pm "Holiday Treats" Morgan Hill Public Library

The SFBAPG's ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY is around the corner! Bring your holiday spirit and your favorite potluck dish to share!
When: Saturday, January 20, 2007 ** 5:30 PM. to 9:30 PM
Where: San Leandro Community Center - 15301 Wicks Blvd - 510-577-6081 (Classroom C for potluck dinner and Thunderbolt Room for performance) Festivities will include "The Christmas Travelers" - a wonderful Christmas performance by Kamala and Don Kruszka. Kamala and Don are driving all the way from Bakersfield to share their unusual story with us -- a blend of cars, planes and trains, and The Three Wisemen!
Kamala Kruszka is our hard-working Regional Director for the Pacific Southwest Region of The Puppeteers of America and her husband, Don, is running for election to the PofA Board of Trustees.
This is a POTLUCK, so please your favorite dish to share with the party guests. Microwave and sink will be provided.

17575 Peak Ave., Morgan Hill, CA
Thursday, December 14, 2006 - 3:30 pm "Holiday Treats" Los Gatos Public Library
110 East Main Street, Los Gatos, CA
Monday, December 18, 2006 - 4:00 pm "Holiday Treats" Walnut Creek Library
1644 N. Broadway Blvd., Walnut Creek,
Wednesday, December 20, 2006 - 7:30 pm "Holiday Treats" San Leandro Main Library
300 Estudillo Ave., San Leandro, CA

Herbert Lange: Fairytaletheater's production of Rumpelstiltskin, a fun show for all ages 3 +, Friday, December 8, 2006, at the Goethe Institute of San Francisco, 530 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94108, phone: (415) 263-8760
Parking: affordable garage on Sutter/Stockton. Admission free.
6:00 p.m. Happy Hour
7:00 p.m. show starts



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**Wishing you all the Very Best
of the Holiday Season**

