



# San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild **CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!**

April 2011



*Lewis Mahlmann  
Gullivers Travels*

## **Guild History Celebrating 50 Years of Puppetry**

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## SFBAPG Next Meeting



Date: June 5th  
Time: From 6:30 to 9:30ish  
Place: Zocalo Coffee House  
645 Bancroft Ave  
San Leandro, CA 94577  
<http://www.zocalo.com/>



*Zocalo's "living room"*

Zocalo Coffee House is one of the most amazing gathering places in the bay area. It is an independent, locally-owned coffeehouse and roaster. The name, a Mexican-Spanish word meaning "town square" or "town center", was chosen to reflect the goal of community building, focusing not only on the product, but on the place itself. It's not just about coffee or tea, it's about the community. Easily accessible from both the 880 AND the 580! You will fall in love with this unique shop.

### Show and Tell!

Please bring something to share with your fellow members. Do you have a puppet you are working on? A sketch of one? A new puppetry purchase you'd like to show off? Perhaps you have a new idea or script you'd like to share? Bring it! We wanna see it!

### Programming!

Guild election! Other programming to be announced!

### Refreshments!

Free coffee! (Espresso Bar drinks at cost) and various other sundries to be provided by the guild.

See you there!

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## Pictures From Our Last Meeting



## Reviews and News

### Upcoming Guild Election

The guild board election will be held at the June 5 meeting. There is a mail in ballot attached to this newsletter or you can follow the instructions to email in your choice. The following three board members' terms are expiring: Conrad Bishop, Randal Metz, and Barbara Grillo. Barbara is unable to serve another term due to other commitments, but Conrad and Randal are eligible and willing to serve another term. Alexis Rudd is our third candidate. Nominations are still open. If you want to run for the board, contact the guild Nominating Committee via Lee Armstrong, email images(at)vom.com, phone: (707) 996-9474 no later than May 15.



*This could be you!  
Ask someone to  
nominate you to  
run for the Board!*

#### Candidate statements:

Conrad Bishop is artistic director of The Independent Eye, based in Sebastopol, which has presented many styles of theatre throughout the USA since 1974. His work in puppetry for adult audiences goes back to 1970, and in the past five years has included DESCENT OF INANNA, RASH ACTS, THE TEMPEST, HANDS UP! and a forthcoming FRANKENSTEIN. As playwright in collaboration with Elizabeth Fuller, his plays have been produced Off-Broadway and by regional theatres around the country. He currently serves as SFBAPG president.

Randal Metz is a current SFBAPG board member, director of the Storybook Puppet Theater at Fairyland in Oakland, the oldest ongoing professional puppet theater in the United States. He has his own puppet company called The Puppet Company. Randal has been pulling the strings of the Puppet Company since the age of ten and has performed in circuses, libraries, variety shows, and many festivals and fairs. Randal has been trained by Lewis Mahlmann, Bob Baker, The Muppets and has worked at Disneyland building puppets. He brings children's literature to life through the puppet theater, specializing in tales from other countries.

Lex Rudd, owner and head designer at Primal Visions Design Studio (<http://www.primalvisions.com/>), creates custom creatures for stage, film and television. You can also see some of her creations for Folkmanis Puppets on finer store shelves everywhere. With degrees in Special Effects and Interactive Arts, she strives to bring the spark of life to her creations, going to great lengths to make her creature costumes and puppets highly performable in both fit and personality. In her infinite spare time, Lex can be found relaxing with a beer or befuddling Americans with her curious British ways.

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#### A review of "Being Elmo"

by Jesse Vail

I recently had the happy occasion to be invited to a screening of the movie "Being Elmo" at Pixar Studios in Emeryville. First of all, Pixar was exactly as cool as I thought it would be; a great open space of a place with food to eat, merchandise to buy, "life sized" sculptures to take pictures with, an art gallery's worth of concept art, and a bevy of hip looking people, who have the air of someone who knows, 24 hours a day, that they work at the coolest place in the Universe.

Lucky jerks.

I jest. They are all as cool as they look and are very welcoming and pleasant. And one of them was even nice enough to invite me to see this screening.

I loved this movie. I mean, I really loved this movie. You will love this movie. Not a movie about Elmo exactly but one about Kevin Clash, the puppeteer. And, in this way, it is also about us.

It in we meet a little kid who got the bug for puppetry and did everything in his power to learn more about it. You will recognize yourself in this curious little boy and you will understand all that it meant to him as his dreams started coming true!

From his experiences as a ten year old boy we go to his early performances to meeting Jim Henson for the first time and even meeting Elmo for the first time. This movie is filled with recollections of experiences that shaped this beloved entertainer and, ultimately, his little red monster friend. If you are a fan, you will be more of one. If you are not... you will be.

I was most enchanted by the insight into how Elmo came to be. Starting as a little-known, little-used background puppet with a deep gravelly voice performed, in turn, by Carroll Spinney, Brian Muehl and Richard Hunt, he was then given to Kevin Clash to see if he could do anything with the troublesome puppet.

Kevin instantly found Elmo's voice but needing to know how to create a lasting, meaningful character for him he went to Master Puppeteer Frank Oz for advice. Frank told him that with each character he performed he had one thought about their motivation in mind; with Fozzie he imagined a vaudeville performer, with Miss Piggy... a truck driver who wanted to be a woman. With this new knowledge, Kevin considered his feelings about what was needed for the show and what Elmo would be motivated by. At last he concluded, simply, that "Elmo loves you".  
 How great is that?  
 So, make sure you don't miss this gem of a film and pay close attention to the song running over the credits. At this point they are without a release date as they are still looking for a distributor but stay up to date via the website, [www.beingelmo.com](http://www.beingelmo.com).

**SFBAPG Scholarships** are available for help with Registration costs to Puppet Festivals happening this Summer. If you are interested in applying or would like more information please contact Art Grueneberger at [PuppetArt@aol.com](mailto:PuppetArt@aol.com). Applications will be due By April 1st.

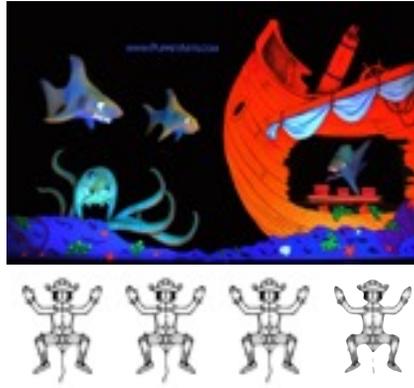
**Editor's note: after my call for "illuminating" articles, I received this. Very informative, actually.**

**From Nick Barone:**  
 I just replaced the 60w incandescent bulbs I've been using during my shows with Philips Ambient LED Dimmable A19 LED Bulbs. On my show, the bulbs are in clip-on lamps mounted on tripods standing about 18-24 inches away from the front of my stage. I tried a few different kinds and brands of LED bulbs and these had just the right color and diffusion I was looking for. These LED bulbs use about 12w and put out as much light as a 60w bulb. They look like yellow plastic doorknobs, but the give off a warm white light. There is no glass that can break - a good thing when working around children. They also don't get as hot as a regular bulb - also a good thing around children. Staying cool means they can be packed in the trunk after a show without having to wait for them to cool down. These bulbs are supposed to last over 22 years with 3 hours of daily use. They'll get a lot less use than that with a puppet show and will hopefully be the last bulbs I buy. At \$40 each, I sure hope that is the case! I purchased mine at Home Depot (Lowe's doesn't seem to carry these). Enter "philips endured 12w e26 a19" into Amazon's search tab to find them.

**From Alan Cook:**  
 It was a nice surprise to see that photo in the April newsletter. I took it at Fairyland Park during a Guild weekend Puppet event. And I was pleased that Lettie liked it enough to request copies. Lettie's wonderful performance was outdoors, so the lighting was dependent on Mother Nature. It is still one of my favorite shots..

The Huntington Library in San Marino CA has a fascinating sculpture exhibit by John Frame, which runs through June 20th, 2011 in the Boone Gallery. Since 2006, the artist has given his sculptural pieces movable parts, making them particularly interesting to puppeteers. The exhibit includes two short films of these animations. If any Guild members expect to visit the Los Angeles/Pasadena area before June 20th, this exhibit is worth a visit. Four of us visited the exhibit two days ago and we all recommend this exhibit. See [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org) and look for the link to John Frame.

**From Art Grueneberger:**  
 Puppet Art Theater Co.'s blacklight show "Goldilocks and the Three Sharks" has been invited to the 75th National Puppetry Festival in Atlanta this Summer! The show was seen at the Guild's 2010 Holiday Party.



**From Kathy Foley:**  
 May 21 UCSC at 7:30 in the Music Center Concert Hall will do a Wayang Orang (human puppet play). While there will only be a couple actual puppets (pig and orge) the whole performance of "Arjuna Wiwaha" Arjuna's Meditation will be in the style of puppet theatre. The dance of the actors emulates the style of the rod puppets of West Java and the music is drawn from the puppet repertoire. The story will tell of how the Mahabharata hero, through meditation shows himself the equal to the gods. The "goro-goro" (world in chaos /clown scene) will use story cloths and story boxes students created in a workshop with Amy Trompeter who works with Bread and Puppet Circus. Contemporary causes of world in chaos (wars, tsunamis, nuclear meltdowns, budget crises) meet cosmic battles of demons and gods that call on men to set the world straight. Tickets are \$10.

**Fanfarria Puppet Festival, Medellin, Colombia**  
**Magical Moonshine Theatre**  
**Michael Nelson**

Medellin is a large Colombian city set in a natural bowl of the Andes Mountains. From the surrounding mountains you can look down and see a huge modern city, and from the "bowl floor" you can look up all around you and see the cityscape rising up towards the peaks. At about a mile high, Medellin is called the city of eternal spring because of the subtropical climate. While we were there it was sunny and warm most mornings and rainy (sometimes with violent thunder and lightening) afternoons. Valerie and I were there to perform at the 20th Fanfarria Puppet Festival, a three week event that ended April 15th. Having never been to Colombia before, I was immediately impressed by how friendly and open the people are. Beyond the puppet and theatre community (hugs and kisses all round, throughout the day) the Colombian people greet and talk to strangers and foreigners with a surprising frequency, in a store, on an elevator, on the street, everywhere. The other impressive aspect of visiting was the economy, with, for example, a large multicourse lunch (hearty soup, steak or meat, salad, beans, fried egg, banana (or plantain), arepas (their version of the tortilla) and a fresh tropical fruit juice in a restaurant setting you back a mere \$2.50. Empanadas (a delicious potato and meat filled turnover that are a staple snack and light meal food go for about .10 or .12 each, making it easy to pick up the bar tab for a group of friends. ABOUT THE FESTIVAL: Jorge and Ana Maria are the long time members of the Colombian puppet company, Fanfarria, which Jorge founded 39 years ago. They have a permanent puppet facility in the city that has a large lobby/exhibit area, a 130 seat theatre space, a workshop, storage, offices, restrooms, green room, and a snack bar. Due to the mild climate, there is no glass in any of the windows (true for many buildings) and parts of the theatre are open to the air, in one case with a large tree growing from the dressing room area, out through the 2 stories of the theatre to the sky. And, of course, when it rains, the water comes right into the building, watering the orchids and draining out through the rocks on the floor. Quite exotic for us.

The festival was designed for the local community, with puppet performances spread over a three week period. We were there for the last 10 days of the fest with 8 performances, and as a result of the spread out dates of the fest we only got to see 2 other performances, one from Brazil and one from Bogotá (apart from us, the other performers were all from Latin America or Spain.) Our shows were very well attended and audiences were warm, enthusiastic, and in general reacted very much as we expected (always nice when you perform in a foreign country for the first time.) The Brazilian show that we saw was quite fun, with lots of live music and very rustic folk puppets. The style of puppetry was a specific tradition in Brazil and the puppeteers had brought an exhibit of puppets of this style and several times gave docented tours of the exhibit for festival goers. Apparently even Brazilian youth audiences are exposed to the full spectrum of life in the microcosm of the puppet theatre as some of the puppets had at least external sex organs (some of the male ones were even animated!)

The Bogota show was a shadow puppet show, with very beautifully cut shadows and lighting effects. After the show, puppeteer Jaime did a wonderful demonstration of shadow puppets using a portable, handheld screen and flashlight. Children from the audience were brought up to hold the screen and light and try shadow puppets...very hands-on and I am sure the children will remember how it worked to the point that they could try it themselves. One fun aspect of the festival was that performers were all given access to and lessons in use of the workshop tools, with some suggested projects consisting of wooden folk toys and automata (little figures that did things when a crank was turned.) It was a great way to get to know other performers as we cut, lathed, sanded and painted little wooden figures while drinking Colombian coffees as humming birds (they have 150 species of hummers) flew into the workshop balcony to see what was going on.

While security at the Medellin airport was strict, my fears of having our puppets cut open to search for smuggled drugs were not realized. Add to that the fact that the time zone is only 2 hours later than California and that Medellin is only about 3 hours from Miami made the travel experience fairly easy. Throw in the friendly people, good audiences, great tropical fruit and flowers, and a currency exchange that makes you a multi-millionaire when you get paid and I for one, would go back again.



*Fanfarria puppeteer Ernesto teaches Magical Moonshine's Valerie Nelson how to use a lathe in the Fanfarria workshop.*



*Shadow puppeteer Jaime Cifuentes from Bogota shows audience members how his shadows work*



*Jorge Luis Pérez Valencia, founder of Fanfarria Puppet Company, shows off a trick rod puppet where 3 puppets breath fire (you can just barely see the cans of fuel in the torsos of each puppet*

**From Kamela Portuges:**

**"What in the World!!!"**

Happy Spring everyone! The time of new beginnings. That being said, Images in Motion is launching a new show called "What in the World!!!" An original story of a creative young girl and how she helps save the dragons. The puppets are currently being sculpted from designs created by Kamela Portuges. The Dragon drawing on the poster is one of the characters from the show. "What In the World!!!" launches in June. Look for performance dates in the guild calendar.

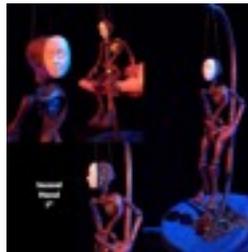


**"Second Hand" Marionette**

Kamela Portuges of Images In Motion was invited to contribute a piece of art for the Arts Guild of Sonoma's "Repro Art Show. The Arts Guild is the oldest, continuously operating artists' cooperative in the state of California. It's annual "Repro" show raises thousand of dollars for student scholarships and art education. This show challenges the creativity of participating artists, as at least seventy percent of the materials used in the piece need to be from recycled materials.

Kamela met the recycle challenge with an exotic scrap wood found at a garage sale and old clockworks that she had been collecting with the idea of reuse in an art piece. She carved the body from Jatoba wood, polished and assemble the parts. The face was sculpted, cast and then poured in porcelain. The face hinged onto the front of the wooden head. Opening the porcelain face revealed the gearworks inside. The marionette stood six inches high. It was a focal point of the show, being one of the highest items in the silent auction.

The success of this artwork marionette has insured that there will be more in the "Second Hand" series. Next up may be the "Mobius Stripper"!



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Guild member Kathy Foley has written an article on Little Blue Moon Theatre (also guild members) that has been published in the current issue of Puppetry International. [www.unima.usa/publications](http://www.unima.usa/publications) for more info. You can also see the article on Little Blue Moon Theatre's website at <http://magicalmoonshine.org/Blue%20PI%202011.pdf>.

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**Calendar**

**Tinker's Coin Productions**

June 5  
The Garden Show  
First Baptist Church  
305 N. California Ave.  
Palo Alto  
11:30 am

**Images In Motion**

"What in the World"  
June 27th  
Cloverdale Library  
2:30 pm

June 29th  
Sonoma Valley Library  
11:00 am  
Central Library (Santa Rosa)  
2:00 pm

June 30th  
Rhonert Park Library  
11:00 am  
Sebastopol Library  
2:00 pm

July 13th  
Cupertino Library  
3:00 pm

July 20th  
Healdsburg  
11:00 am

July 21st  
Santa Rosa Northwest branch  
2:00 pm

July 22nd

Guerneville  
11:00 am

July 27th  
Vallejo  
10:30 am

**R Stotter**

June 4-5: Enhance the Sending. Storytelling Intensive for new to experienced storytellers. 9 AM Saturday - 4:30 PM. 10 AM Sunday - 4:30 PM. Lunches provided. Through exercises and mini tales participants will leave with a tool-box of choices and techniques for freeing the written text from the printed page. This workshop has value for puppeteers as well. \$90. In Tiburon. Instructor Ruth Stotter is the retired director of the Dominican University Storytelling program and received the 2010 Lifetime Achievement Oracle Award from the National Storytelling Network. (Participants are welcome to spend the evening.)

**Puppet Art Theater Co.**  
[www.PuppetArts.com](http://www.PuppetArts.com)

May 1-8  
Three Little Pigs  
Fairytale Town (Sacramento)  
W-F 10:30 am, 11:30 am, 12:30 pm  
Sat-Sun 12:30 pm, 1:30 pm, 2:30 pm

May 11-12  
Tommy's Train Troubles  
Fairytale Town (Sacramento)  
W-F 10:30 am, 11:30 am, 12:30 pm  
Sat-Sun 12:30 pm, 1:30 pm, 2:30 pm

May 15  
Riley the Wiley Rabbit  
Half Moon Bay Library  
Noon

May 23  
Riley the Wiley Rabbit  
San Bruno Library  
7 pm

May 25-31  
The Boy Who Cried Wolf  
Fairytale Town (Sacramento)  
W-F 10:30am, 11:30am, 12:30pm

Magical Moonshine Theatre  
[www.magicalmoonshine.org](http://www.magicalmoonshine.org)

May 7-8  
Roseville Strawberry Festival

Placer County Fairgrounds in Roseville, 800 All American City Blvd. [www.FeedMeStrawberries.com](http://www.FeedMeStrawberries.com)

May 9  
The Puppet Man  
7:00 - 7:30 pm  
Sanchez Branch library, 1111 Terra Nova Blvd, Pacifica

May 22  
1:00 - 6:00 pm  
Sacramento Jewish Heritage Festival  
(two shows during the event)  
State Capitol West Steps

June 1  
The Puppet Man  
3:00 - 3:30 pm  
Antioch Library, 501 West 18th Street, Antioch

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**Storybook Puppet Theater**  
Children's Fairyland - Oakland

May 7-8, 14-15  
11 am, 2 pm, 4 pm  
Anansi the Spider. Have you ever wondered how all the stories on earth came to be? This is the African tale of a little spider who does three large tasks and is rewarded for his effort. Nyame, the Sky God, gives Anansi all the tales of the world to bring back to the people on earth. Scenery by Lewis Mahlmann & Annie Wong. Puppets by Randal Metz.

May 21-22, 28-29  
11 am, 2 pm, 4 pm  
The Reluctant Dragon. Kenneth Graham's fanciful tale of dragons and old England come to life in the grand Fairyland style. Everyone except a little boy, believes that a terrible fire - breathing dragon lives "up" on the "downs". They are so scared they send for St. George, the famous dragon killer, who really couldn't hurt a fly, while our terrible dragon writes poetry and sings opera! What's a village to do? Puppets by Patricia Platt, with scenery by Lewis Mahlmann.

Due to time considerations, your Tear out calendar was not included this month. Look for its return next month.

San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild  
5137 Robertson Ave.  
Carmichael, CA 95608



### GUILD ELECTIONS FOR SFBAPG BOARD OFFICIAL BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS

Election of 2011 board members for the San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild. Lee Armstrong is the election teller. You may send Lee EITHER a hardcopy ballot, an email ballot, or you may vote in person at the June 12 SFBAPG meeting.

How to vote via hardcopy:

- (1) Each single adult or youth member is entitled to ONE vote. Mark the ballot below.
- (2) Each family or couple membership is entitled to TWO votes. Copy the ballot below in any reasonable, legible manner and mark TWO ballots.
- (3) Put the ballot(s) in an envelope addressed to Lee Armstrong, 423 720 Ladera, Sonoma, CA 95474.
- (4) Put YOUR NAME on the envelope -- in the return address.
- (5) Postmark the envelope on or before May 27.

How to vote via email:

- (1) In the subject line, type YOUR NAME and "SFBAPG Ballot" (i.e. "Kermit the Frog -- SFBAPG Ballot").
- (2) In the body of your email, type the names of the candidates you want to vote for.
- (3) Send your email to images(at)vom.com (substitute the "@" symbol for the "(at)" in the email address) on or before June 3.

How to vote in person:

Come to the June 5 SFBAPG meeting at Zocalo Coffee House, 645 Bancroft Ave, San Leandro (see newsletter for info.)



**Lex Rudd**



**Conrad Bishop**



**Randall Metz**