



San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!

July 2012

*Congratulations to our
new Board Officers!*

Welcome aboard!

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- Puppet Slam
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- Reviews of Warhorse and Thumbelina
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- And a little bit of other stuff...

While the new board officers have been elected, and the results announced (see inside for the results), this newsletter is being produced on the road using an iPad. Consequently, you will need to wait until next month for the brand new, fully formatted, Board Officer List

New Officers on the Board

Election of Guild officers:

Art Grueneberger, President

Randal Metz, Vice President

Conrad Bishop, Secretary

Gregory Hayes, Treasurer

Lex Rudd, Membership Officer

Talib Huff, Newsletter Editor

Lee Armstrong, Librarian.

The Board President appointed Jesse, Elisheva, Lex and Randal as Program Committee.

News and Reviews

The next Guild meeting is on August 25 at Fairyland in Oakland. If you have any ideas for program items, send them along to Randal at puppetcomp(at)[aol.com](mailto:puppetcomp@aol.com). (Replace the (at) with @).

Puppet Slam Network for the Bay Area **Michael Nelson**

The Puppet Slam Movement has finally reached the Bay Area. Puppet Slams are about the pure art of puppetry. They are about artistic expression, political and social commentary. They can be avant garde, raunchy, high brow, funny or tragic, with any form of puppetry. The Puppet Slam is like an open mic for puppetry, with various artists performing short acts in a theatrical or cabaret type environment. Puppet Slams have been sweeping across the nation and there is a National Puppet Slam Network. Finally Slams have reached the Bay Area. Did you miss the April 1 Puppet Obsession Slam in SF? Don't miss any more! Get on the Bay Area Puppet Slam Yahoo Group by emailing magicalmoonshine@gmail.com and join the SF Bay Area Slam Network on Facebook. Keep informed on the cutting edge!

The O'Neill
Lex Rudd

I was lucky enough this year to be invited to attend the National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. This conference is very popular and receives a lot of applications, and only a percentage of these are accepted. This was my first year applying and a lucky year for me, as I was accepted to both the main conference and the pre-conference.

The pre conference had a choice of a few exciting classes - including an object and movement class with a German master of the art, and traditional Chinese rod puppetry with a master from China. I opted for a class on mechanisms with yet another master of his craft - Muppet builder and performer, Jim Kroupa. Words do not describe how amazing this class was. Jim had a table full of mechanisms at the side of the room from past classes and projects, and also books of images of mechs that he had made for famous puppets which were available to look at and photograph at any time. The class itself was one overlying project which cumulated in a performance to showcase the mechanism... in the bar on the last night. The project for this year was a small bug on a rod which could move his head from side to side, and up and back down again in any combination of movements. We learned about materials, suppliers, tools and the basic principles of making achievable, functional mechanisms. I made a cool yellow and red bug with great movement which I was able to take home. Our performance at the bar was a play on the movie "A Night At The Roxbury" where the bugs (bedbugs) bounced their heads from side to side in various combinations in unison. There were about 14 of us in the class and it was all we could do to fit behind guild member Artie Poore's stage to run the scene to an audience of participants who had taken the other strands. We were also able to watch their performances to catch a glimpse of what the other groups had been up to while we were making bugs.

The main conference runs for a week and at the end of this we first perform for our peers taking the other classes, then for a real paying audience.

For my master class I opted for Marty Robinson's group which very mysteriously only described itself as "expanding your skills in puppetry".

The class started by each member talking about their puppet performance needs and experiences - again there were about 14 of us, chosen from a pool of almost 50 people. We then experimented with many different kinds of puppetry.



Artie Poore and Jim Kroupa with the unfinished Fox and Bear puppets



Myself explaining fox construction to class members



Marty's Class

We started with tabletop puppetry which I had never tried before, attempting to make cloth dolls look believable walking across tables, then expanding our skills to swap puppets between performers mid scene, giving them personality and writing short pieces with them. Then we moved on to tv puppetry and learnt how to play to camera, lip synch, give life to the puppets and hit our marks. We also played with object puppetry wherein we made experimental short play pieces starring random objects lying around the room. Artie and I only worked together once in this class but we created a very memorable piece where some tools, paper cups and a rubber glove became an underwater story of danger, stillness and love. We did not choose our final performance piece, nor even decide that we were going to perform until Thursday afternoon. Considering that the first performance was Friday afternoon, this did not leave much time. We chose notable pieces from our experimentations and refined and performed them. We also added two short ensemble pieces at the beginning and end - to begin we pulled a large length of cloth across the whole of the stage and threw a large ball upon it. We manipulated the spinning ball across the length of the theatre, back again, then back to center where we folded it into the shape of a creature who introduced the acts. The final piece was a giant talking face made from 11 performers. Artie and I both became cheeks. His piece for the show was "Dancing Queen" a very involved piece of tabletop involving 6 people manipulating two puppets in a nightclub dance scene to the music of ABBA. Artie was the very feet of the Dancing Queen herself. My piece on the other hand involved object theatre. Myself and another performer place a decorative piece of wood, a napkin ring and some white cloth on a table, then somehow manipulate it into a swan who preens, explores her surroundings, then catches and eats a bug before finding the waters edge, jumping in and swimming away. I received a glowing comment from Ronnie Burkett (attending to run his own Master Class) who said that this piece was his favorite of our groups pieces and that my concentration and body movements were worth watching alone. I joined Marty's class to become less intimidated about performing in front of people and to feel more at ease with my puppeteer skills, and I think the time spent on this was more than successful.

On top of the chosen master class, there was also an optional master class (I took Improv with Tyler Bunch), short classes on things like writing and music and also time for "Participant Pieces". You can choose to pitch your own or work on someone else's short puppet piece. You are expected to work on 2 projects and only 1 of those can be your own pitched piece, however you can help on 2 other peoples projects and not pitch one at all. Artie and I pitched a joint piece - we knew we wanted to use my unfinished bear and fox puppets that I had made in my spare time for the conference, but as yet had no real idea of story and content. I also helped out on another piece called "Epic Battle" which involved audience participation in an outside show where a red and blue puppet group fight each other to save/burn the princess. Much fun was had by all and this piece performed two nights and had 2 different endings.

The fox and bear piece came together beautifully with the help of two aspiring puppeteers and a director. Artie made and designed beautiful set pieces and I made other puppets and props including a rat, a club, bear rod puppets and a lump of cheese. We had many good reviews on the piece and hope to expand it into a full show in the not-so-distant future.

Overall, an amazing time and I hope to be invited back next year to progress further.

Are You Getting Your Membership's Worth?

Membership is much more than hanging out with a great community of puppeteers, getting your newsletter and attending a couple of meetings! The guild offers you many opportunities and resources. Below are a few.

Guild Yahoo Group- Every guild member with an email address can use the guild Yahoo Group. Use it to ask a question (Ex. Has anyone ever used Puppet Head Goo (probably not a real product) to make a puppet? How did it work? Where do you get it?) Use it to arrange car pooling to a guild meeting or puppet show. Use it to advertise your next show. Use it to discuss puppet philosophy. So, how do you use it? Write up your email and send it to sfbapg@yahoo.com. You can also post pictures on the yahoo group site, look at others' albums, read past messages, etc. Here is the guild Yahoo group website page: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sfbapg/>

Guild Facebook Page- Search for sfbapg on Facebook and join the guild Facebook page. You can view and post puppet pictures, videos, get updates on shows and network with fellow puppeteers. You don't need to be a guild member to join the Guild Facebook page.

Services Directory- Do you do shows for pay? Do you build puppets? Are you looking for more business? The guild will list your services for free (for members) on the Guild website. Do a Google search on puppets in the SF Bay Area and the guild comes out at the top of the page. Go on the page and click services and you can see guild members who offer services. The ability to look for puppeteers to hire on this site is free to the public; the ability to list your services here is only for guild members. How do you get listed? All the instructions are on that same page (Services, then click "apply for a listing.") If you are a member without email or internet and still want to be listed, contact Michael Nelson, 707-363-4573, and I will get the instructions to you.

Calendar Listings on the Website- Each month send your performance listings to Conrad Bishop at eye@independenteye.org and get listed on the master calendar. This is a calendar that the public can use to find puppet performances in Northern California. Even if you are not selling tickets but are being paid by the presenter of your show, having the public show up at your event will show the folks that booked you that you are popular (and hopefully they will hire you again!)

Library- The guild has a library with books (including some rare, out of print books) and puppet DVDs that you may qualify to check out for free. Our librarian, Lee Armstrong, brings a small collection to each meeting she can attend, but there are many, many more. Check out the list of available books and DVDs (and probably some video cassettes as well) on the guild website, request it and enjoy this member benefit. The library section of the website is: <http://www.sfbapg.org/resources/library/>

Scholarships- Yes, the guild sometimes gives away money so members can learn to be a better puppeteers. For info on scholarships to puppet workshops, courses or festivals, email: sfbapg@gmail.com

Be a Strong Member- Take advantage of all of the many benefits of membership, a few of which are listed above. And don't forget to support your guild (and all the great benefits of membership) by going to meetings, serving on the board, donating to the various funds, sharing your skills with the membership, and supporting and promoting puppetry in your community. This is a membership organization run by volunteers. We need your creativity, expertise and generosity.

THEY'RE BACK! Puppets & Players Little Theatre, from Southern California, are returning to the Marin County Fair this weekend with "Thumbelina". Last fall I wrote a glowing account of their superb show about Puff the Magic Dragon, performed at the fair a year ago. Hopefully my review and letter to Jim Farley, fair "booker" helped expedite this. Couldn't hurt, support your fellow puppeteers!!! It had been about a decade since their last performance there and now they're back the very next year.

Puppets and Players Little Theatre bring literature to life as beloved children's author, Hans Christian Andersen, narrates one of his most famous tales, Thumbelina, about the many adventures of a girl who is no bigger than a thumb.

Performances are daily at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. at their Baroque-style theater wagon, which was inspired by an Italian opera house in Milan. [Performances are outdoors. There is an awning attached to the wagon, and small hillocks across the meadow, with trees for shade. Also somewhere to sit off the ground. The show is fine viewed and heard from this distance.

Otherwise, bring a sun hat and/or umbrella for a closer look.]

Each show runs 30 minutes and features marionettes and hand puppets, classic songs and live performances by Gil Olin and Laurie Branham.

The Marin County Fair runs Saturday June 30-Wednesday July 4th. It is located in San Rafael, behind the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Civic Center, just E. of highway 101, at the county fairgrounds. Show is free, car parking \$6 for the day, general admission: \$16, Seniors, (65+) \$14, Children, 4-12, \$14. Order tickets online at <http://www.marinfair.org/>. or wait in line.

Saturday, June 30 is Marin Independent Journal Day. Admission includes all concerts, exhibits, nightly fireworks, attractions and 28 free carnival rides.

At our Guild Gala, we saw Thumbelina by the Oregon Shadow Theater, interpreted in a hippy/art deco style. Come to the Fair and Compare this version! Also, introduce yourselves to Gil and Laurie as Guild members and fellow puppeteers. They're delightful folks. Tell 'em Elisheva sent you!

PT Puppet Shows and More for Sale

Peter Brizzi, owner of PT Puppets was a very talented and successful Bay Area puppeteer. Many Guild members were fortunate to see his shows, with well-written stories and beautifully crafted puppets. Peter did an amazing job of bringing a wide range of characters to life, performing all the voices live. Sadly, Peter passed away Nov 2010, but his legacy lives on in the shows he created.

The PT puppet shows are offered for sale at \$1800 per show. This includes a video of the performance and all the puppets, props and backgrounds to make the show come to life. Samples of the quality of the shows can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/user/ptpuppets?feature=results_main. If you are interested in a particular show and haven't seen it performed, Peter's wife Teena will loan a copy of the video. We all know the countless hours that go into creating a puppet show. Some shows have already been snatched up. The shows that are available at this date are:

The Elves & the Shoemaker, The Night Before Christmas, The Ugly Duckling & The Emperor & the Nightingale (2 classic 15 minute tales, The Pirates of Penn's Aunt, Aesop's Fables: The Ant & the Grasshopper, the Tortoise & the Hare, Androcles & the Lion, The Adventures of Spider & Fly, Dragoon (a dragon tale, with conflict resolution, very popular in the schools), The Princess & the Pea, Rumpelstiltskin, Goldilocks & the 3 Teddy Bears (a great preschool show), Prince & Princess. The PT Puppet Stage is also available for \$2,000, complete with curtaining. It is a one person stage with two stage boxes as the foundation, with a footprint approx 4 x 7 feet. If anyone would like the stage and 3 shows, the cost would be \$6,500. Please share this information. Teena Brizzi can be contacted at 916 706-1401 or teenab@gmail.com.

Warhorse
Alan Cook

I saw WARHORSE June 16, and it is a must-see for most in puppetry. The published script is skimpy, meaning that the director and crew had a lot to fill in, and did they ever! I suspect buying the script online or from bookstores might be cheaper than the theater lobby price of \$20. But allow for shipping or shopping time if you want to read it before seeing it onstage. Some non-puppeteers said they did not see the movie first, and thought no-one should, but that is nonsense. They are realized in very different ways. Seeing the movie helped me follow the story better. The horse puppets should be seen by Guild members! There has been considerable tweaking in Los Angeles for the touring version of WARHORSE. The show originally used a thrust stage and a turntable. A tour has to make allowances for many different stages with physical differences, and the obvious care that has gone into the road show preparations means that some improvements have taken place---Basil & Adrian told that to the L A Guild group last week. So those in the Bay Area have a chance to see a historic show in a slightly reconfigured form which might be better than ever, and it was great and important to puppet history right from the beginning in 2007 at the National Theatre in London where it all started. If any SFBAPG members are concerned about the expense of tickets, now is the time to just GO & SEE. You can always sacrifice something else of less import.

 **Calendar** 

Editor's note concerning the calendar this month: Usually I pull as many listings from the web as I can find and format them all the same. Since I am working under constraints of working on the road away from my more familiar computer, this month's entries are listed just as they were sent to me. In addition, there will be no pull out calendar this month. You may look for a return of these features next month. Thank you for your patience.

Here's Puppet Art Theater Co.'s calendar listings for July:

5th

Maya Angelou Branch Library, Stockton
Tommy's Space Adventure
3:30pm

10-15th

Puppet Fest Midwest
Puppets on Camera Workshop
20 hour intensive workshop
Taught by Art Grueneberger and Drew Allison

12th

Ripon Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
2pm

13th

South Lake Tahoe Library
Tale of the Dragon's Tail
2pm

14th

Chavez Branch Library, Oakland
Tommy's Space Adventure
2pm

15th

San Francisco Zoo
Shows TBA
10:30am, 12:30pm and 2:30pm

16th

Park Branch Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
3:30pm

17th

Rockridge Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
7pm

18th

Dublin Library
Super Tommy!
1pm and 2pm

Livermore Library
Goldilocks and the Three Sharks
7pm

19th
El Dorado Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
11am and 1pm

Eastmont Branch Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
1:30pm

20th
Weston Branch Library, Stockton
Tommy's Space Adventure
4pm

21st
Linden Branch Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
11am

Colonial Heights Library, Sacramento
Tommy's Space Adventure
2pm

24th
Irvine University Park Library (So Cal)
Tommy's Space Adventure
3pm

Dimond Branch Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
7pm

25th
Sunnyvale Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
2pm

MLK Library, Carson, CA (So Cal)
Tommy's Space Adventure
2pm

26th
Fremont Main Library

Super Tommy!
11:30am and 12:45pm

Los Gatos Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
4pm

27th
Hermosa Beach Library
Tommy's Space Adventure
3:30pm

Conrad Bishop & Elizabeth Fuller (The Independent Eye) continue their readings of Co-Creation: Fifty Years in the Making, their memoir of five decades as mates and creative partners.

The month of June saw house-concert readings in Berkeley, Albion, San Francisco and Sebastopol, plus four end-of-month readings in Boulder, CO. They are available for house concerts in the Bay Area during July and August.

The duo are now booking an Eastern tour (centered in Philadelphia, extending from NH to VA) starting Sept. 15th. Co-Creation is available at <<http://www.independenteye.org/co-creation>>.

CMT Ministry Team
July 6, 7:30pm
"You Are Special"
KidZone @ Oak Park Christian Center (\$10 Admission)

CMT Ministry Team
July 8, 11:00am
"Reach: Live!"
Oak Park Christian Center



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