



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
Looking for updates and missed information?
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SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization

November 2014



Guild board member Camilla Henneman writes about creating the puppet, Chucky, for what has become a horror classic film, "Child's Play."

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Inside this issue...

- ◆ The creation of Chucky
- ◆ International selection of puppetry in November
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Looking for the guild calendar? Check out the guild website:
<http://www.sfbapg.org/events/calendar/>

Message from the President

Spooky greetings to all! I hope your Hallowe'en was full of puppet-y antics. Depending on when you read this, I also hope you were able to attend our November membership meeting, or if you weren't able to attend, that you wish you could! Our Program Planning Committee has poured over the results of survey and is hard at work to arrange exciting meetings and workshops based on the survey, so stay tuned. The survey results will be made available to the membership as soon as the Survey Committee comes up with a way to do it (There may be some results in this newsletter, even).

Last April, the membership unanimously voted to amend the bylaws to give the Board the ability to offer compensation for presenters at our meetings. The Board was also charged with communicating to the membership (that's you) how exactly we were going to implement this new bylaw. Our newsletter editor and master of words, Michael Nelson, crafted this statement to explain our new procedure:

Guild Procedure for compensation for the main presentation at guild meetings: As provided by our bylaws and by a unanimous vote of the guild board on April 1, 2014, the main presenter at a guild meeting, whether a guild member or not, may receive \$150.00 as compensation. The determination of this payment and to whom it is made will be decided by the Program Planning Committee. Presenters or workshop leaders beyond the designated main presenter are not compensated. If additional funds are needed for materials, etc., the expenditure request must be submitted to the board for a 2/3s approval vote.

Chucky, "Your Best Friend"

by [Camilla Henneman](#)

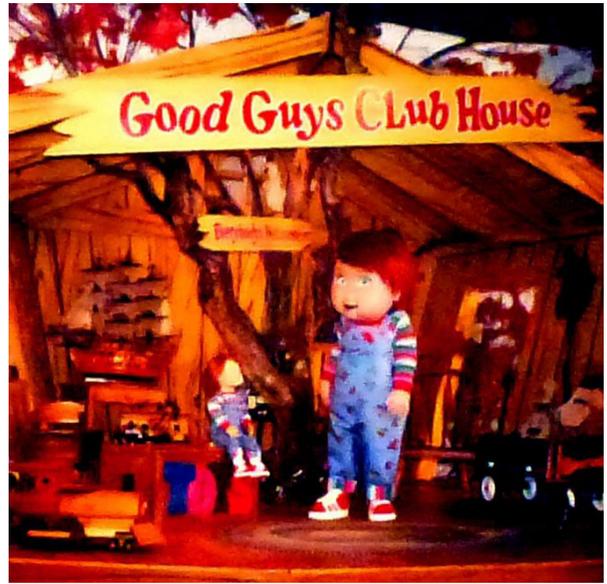
When I tell people I worked on the Chucky puppet for Childs Play, I get one of two reactions. Either the person takes a physical step back away from me, their face darkens, and they mumble something like "I hate that movie and everything in it!" or....their face lights up, they squeal with delight, and (occasionally) ask for my autograph. Now, I should qualify that with the information that the latter group consists of boys from 9 to 14 years of age. But if you are working with preteen boys and you are a woman who is old enough to be their grandmother, having worked on Chucky buys a much needed measure of respect.

Childs Play was the brainchild of producer David Kirshner, a writer/producer who built his reputation on creating the animated children's films: *An American Tale* and *Fievel Goes West*. While working with David Kirschner, I often heard him voice his fear that Chucky might ruin his image. David Kirschner did, in fact, have at least one fan track him down at home to ask him if Chucky was real. According to Tim Lawrence, Kirschner sat on his front porch with the man and explained it to him. Chucky and Childs Play may have changed his image, but he certainly didn't lose money and Childs Play went on to become a horror film classic.



United Artists movie poster

For the film, Childs Play I built the walk around costume, and the costumes for the various sizes of puppets and dolls. The fabric for the overalls was screen printed and the shirt fabric knitted in 3 scales, the smallest was used for the dolls and the puppets which were about 30 inches tall. Costumers Martha Trujillo, Dorothy Bulac and I made 70 sets of overalls in this size (about half of them were used for puppets and the rest for dolls in boxes). The Chucky puppet is put through a lot of action, such as burning and being blown up. Each take of a scene had to start with the costume matching the previous shot for continuity. Next in size was a full body costume and head worn by Ed Gale (Howard the Duck and Oh Brother, Where Art Though?) which was shot on an oversized set to show the flaming Chucky breaking out of the fireplace. The largest was for the walk- around costume that I built with Steve Slep and Dorothy Bulac in my shop. It was used for a commercial within the film before Chucky turns evil.



The puppets were built at Kevin Yeagher's shop in Burbank, CA. There were many versions of the puppet built for different purposes .One full body servo motor powered puppet was used for walking and wider shots. Servo motors are the motors used by hobbyists for model airplanes. There was one puppet with cable-controlled arms and legs for shots that called for faster movement. Additionally, there were: a stripped-down stunt version, a shaking version powered by a cordless drill motor for the shots where Chucky is set on fire, a charred version that had its arm, leg, and head blown off, and for the final death sequence, the charred head all by itself



Pride of Chucky - Proboards

Brad Dourif (*Dune*, *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Lord Of The Rings*) played the killer, Charles Lee Ray performed the voice for the puppet. With animatronics, often the mechanical movement detracts from the realism. For Chucky, this actually worked in the animators' favor. Since Chucky was supposed to be a doll, the less than fluid movement made him more believable. It took 2 people to work the head - one wearing a harness on his head to work the jaw and working two control boxes to sync the lips, and a second with 2 more control boxes to work the eyes, eyelids, and brows. Puppeteers on *Childs Play* included: Allan Coulter, Brock Winkless, Loren Soman, William Bryan, Steve James, Dave Nelson, Howard Berger and Marc Tyler.

I asked mechanical designer, Allan Coulter what the greatest challenges were. He said, "Selling the idea of doing a puppet this way was probably the most difficult thing. I give Kevin Yeagher a lot of credit for trusting our mechanical design team as much as he did. A lot of what we were trying was first-ever; complicated, expensive hardware meant to do things a puppet hadn't done before. The only way to answer the demand 'show me how it works' was to spend the time and money to build it - and not everything we tried worked out. We built an elaborate dolly rig meant to make it possible for Chucky to walk and jump, but in the end the servo motors weren't strong or quick enough and the rig was too heavy and slow, so we set it aside, clamped the puppet to a metal rod, hand held by a puppeteer, and got on with it like that."

Photo by Marc Tyler Left to right: Alan Coulter, Loren Soman, Dave Nelson and Howard Berger According to Al Coulter, another challenge and the source of some humor on set was the scene where Chucky has to club Chris Sarandon with a little baseball bat. Coulter said, "It is not easy to remotely puppeteer a character swinging a baseball bat, so we kept missing, and Chris kept acting like he'd been hit, and praying for the take where we would actually hit him. We did finally make the connection, barely grazing him, and he sold the gag, dropping to the floor like he'd been clubbed proper



Brock Winkless puppeteering Chucky's mouth - photo: ePix Chucky evolves over the course of the film, from a sweet harmless seeming doll to an evil serial killer.



Biography of Brad Dourif



Pride of Chucky - Kevin Yeagher

by a psychotic, possessed doll.

Childs Play is the only horror film I worked on, but it was a great experience. Some of the most creative designers, fabricators and puppeteers in the special effects industry were involved in bringing the puppet to life (so to speak) I am grateful to Allan Coulter, Tim Lawrence and Marc Tyler for their input and photos.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION

by Elisheva Hart

A fun, new puppetesque animated movie is "The Book of Life", currently showing in theaters (as of Oct. 27th. If films don't make a big income in the first 2 weeks, they are yanked out of circulation.) A group of rowdy young kids are dropped off at a museum and given the "special tour" which involves The Day of the Dead (November 2nd). The tour guide captures their interest by telling the story with wood carved and jointed dolls of the principal characters who soon are acting in colorful settings of the bull ring, the Land of the Remembered [dead] and the ashy setting of the Land of the Forgotten. Wonderful music, celebration and voices of Ice Cube and Cheech, among many others. It is brimming over with great ideas for costumes, settings and "puppet" relationships. PG rating



Photo by Marc Tyler, Puppeteer - Steve James

Here is a terrific video of the puppet behind the scenes.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gowd3VfhhmE> (copy and paste into your browser address bar)

Editor’s Note: Mary Nagler agreed to share this story with our readers about how she turned a mishap into a marvelous recovery..thanks for sharing, Mary!

The Puppet Ruckus was fun except I forgot to bring a puppet. It was Jilly, the puppet Lex was supposed to use in the bit she was doing with me. Arriving two hours away from home and making that realization is the stuff of puppeteer nightmares! I blamed it on the chaos of getting all the peeps in the car to go, as I was taking Elisheva Hart, Jennifer Kruss and my neighbor Tyler, who wanted to visit his sister in Sacramento. Oi!

A simpler explanation was I am going senile, but I did not want to go there. I had some of the stuff from the Foam sculpting class I am taking with John Arnold in my car, so I banged out a crude little girl thing using a latex glove, 2 nerf balls, gorilla tape and some scraps.

I was assisted in this endeavor by Lex Rudd who has astounded us all with her creativity under pressure. We had 10 minutes to get it done! Collaboration at its best! I cut my finger. I was distressed more by my memory glitch, but there was nothing for it. The show must go on!

When Lex bent her Jilly down to shake her piggy bank at one point during the performance, her Nerf head fell off back stage, but the audience never knew. Lex is the consummate professional; she never missed a beat! Ah, live theater! We will try it again. We were getting laughs.



“When Lex bent her Jilly down to shake her piggy bank at one point during the performance, her Nerf head fell off back stage, but the audience never knew. Lex is the consummate professional; she never missed a beat! Ah, live theater! I am the robot.”

A Message from your Membership Officer

Thanks to everyone who renewed their memberships or joined this year. If you have not renewed or joined yet, you can go to our web page to renew or sign up <http://www.sfbapg.org/membership/join-or-renew-membership/>

On behalf of the guild, I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the following members who gave a donation to guild activities: Kathy Dodge, Christine Papalexis, Barbara Grillo, Tom Crystle and Beth Deenihan, Barbara Korflage, Sharon Lande, Karen Prell, Dennis and Donna Marvin, and Herbert Lange.

* Tips from Gabriel Anthony on puppet games with kids: *
* I like to just improv with students and puppets. *
* A favorite is to break them into pairs or trios and have them prepare and rehearse a short skit. Helps them develop their sense of comedy, character and manipulation. Other favorites include: *
* Questions: http://improvcyclopedia.org/games/Online_Questions.html (We don't "boo" out but have another player take over if they mess up). *
* Ding: http://improvcyclopedia.org/games/Ding_Characters.html *
* Party *
* Game: http://improvcyclopedia.org/games/The_Party.html *

November: International Festival of Puppetry in the Bay Area?

In addition to the Guild Meeting Nov. 1, great puppet shows too numerous to list here will be throughout the Bay Area this month. For full listings and details go to our guild calendar at <http://www.sfbapg.org/events/>. Thanks to everyone who sent in listings for this month!



Henson Alternative's PUPPET UP! – UNCENSORED, a night of hilarious uncensored mayhem featuring over 60 original Henson puppets brought to life by a cast of six world-class puppeteers of The Jim Henson Company in a night of off the cuff comedy.

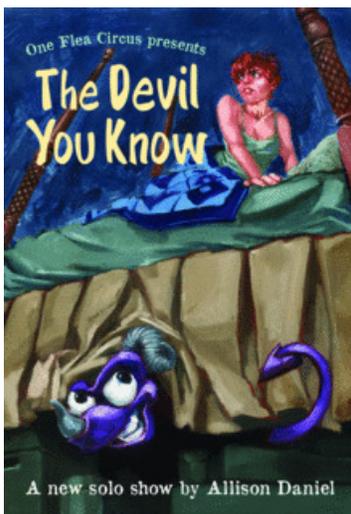
So many scholarships!

The SFBAPG **scholarship committee** is gearing up to give away money! We are finalizing the guidelines, but here is a heads up. Members in good standing for at least two years are eligible. The scholarship will help pay for registration at a puppet festival or workshop. Deadline is two months before the event. Look for more information in future newsletters or email Valerie Nelson at magicalmoonshine@gmail.com for more details.

UNIMA-USA scholarship for 2015

The UNIMA-USA scholarship committee accepts now applications for 2015 to take a workshop abroad. The deadline for applications is December 1st, 2014. The committee will review applications in early December, and will notify candidates of their decision by December 31st 2013. Please check the UNIMA-USA site: <http://www.unima-usa.org/scholarships/>

Please, propose the workshop you wish to follow; if you have any questions or you need information about master workshops abroad, please, contact Irina Niculescu at: scholarship@unima-usa.org.



Un-Scripted Theater Company, 533 Sutter St, San Francisco, CA 94102

What happens when a monster gets loose from under a woman's bed and wreaks havoc on society? Bedlam Ensues!

November 6-9 at 8pm

Details:

<http://www.sfbapg.org/events/>

MORE LISTINGS:

Avenue Q in Novato

Canterbury Tales in Vallejo

Mermaid Theatre from

Nova Scotia

And more

Details:

<http://www.sfbapg.org/events/>



Stanford: Blind Summit Theatre, Oct 30 - Nov 2, 2014, Bing Concert Hall, Stanford Campus, Stanford, CA , An epic tale about God and Moses, life, death, and puppetry. Details:

<http://www.sfbapg.org/events/>



SF LIVE ARTS @ CYPRIAN'S Presents

ShadowLight Production's performance of Wayang Bali: Balinese Shadow Play

Performed by Artistic Director and Shadow Master Larry Reed

Featuring ShadowLight Gamelan
Gender Wayang: Date: Saturday, November 22, 2014

Time: 8:00pm (Music will start about 15 minutes before the show time)

Venue: St. Cyprian's Church, 2097 Turk Street @ Lyon (Near USF)

. Details:

<http://www.sfbapg.org/events/>

~ Participant Registration begins January 2015 ~



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nationalpuppetryfestival2015.com

join us on facebook for updates, volunteer opportunities and more:
Puppeteers of America 2015 National Festival at UConn



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