



The official newsletter of
San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild
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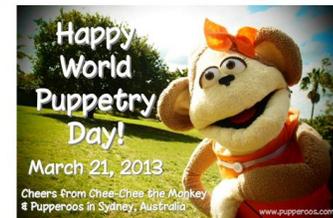
SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization

March 2016

World puppetry day

21st march 2004

Union internationale de la marionnette



World Puppetry Day, March 21- A world-wide celebration of the amazing and wonderful art of puppetry! How will you celebrate?

Inside this issue:

Workshops, scholarships, review of Feathers of Fire, tips from members, Images in Motion new 3D printer, vodka for puppets and more!

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From your Co-President (Michael this time)

March 21 is World Puppetry Day. In 2000 an Iranian puppeteer proposed the idea to the international organization of puppetry, Union Internationale de la Marionnette, ([UNIMA](#)) and the international puppetry congress adopted the idea which was first celebrated in 2003. Puppeteers of America had been celebrating a National Day of Puppetry and last year officially decided to move our national day to March 21 to coincide with the international celebration. March 21 falls on a Monday this year and your treasurer (my wife) suggested "Bring a Puppet to Work Day" for all you puppet enthusiasts. Remember it is your constitutional right to bear puppets (or have puppet bears.) Spread a little joy among those in your community who have not yet found the joy of puppetry or left it behind in childhood and now can't quite put their finger on why they have that empty feeling. Puppets Up!

Ready to improve your **Puppets Up** skills? This newsletter is full of opportunities to raise your skill levels and even get scholarship funds to do so. Read on!



IMPRESSIONS OF "FEATHERS OF FIRE": a Persian 10th century Epic

Written by Elisheva Hart. For the synopsis of this story, and websites for visuals, please see page 4 in the "San Francisco Bay Area Puppetry Guild" Newsletter, January, 2016 issue. It is available on our website.



This extraordinary cinematic shadow puppet marvel is created in collaboration between Larry Reed and ShadowLight Productions, and Hamid Rahmanian who conceived, designed and directed it.

"Feathers of Fire" is an action packed magical tale (with a happy ending) of star-crossed young lovers from opposing families. HE, Zaul, is the son of a knight in the Persian court and is raised in a mountain peak nest by a magical

bird. SHE, Rudabeh, daughter of the Governor of Kabul was raised in a castle. Sound familiar? This attraction still happens today, especially among the young.

There is another scene which might have influenced one of our fairy tales since the Silk Road of spice merchants back in the day included storytellers and musicians too. Zaul climbs up into a tower, aided by Rudabeh's long tresses. A folklorist friend tells me it could possibly be the influence for the fairytale of "Rapunzel."

The script for this elegant performance is based on the 10th century Persian Epic "Shahnameh", written by the famous Persian poet Ferdowsi. This important book, written and read in Farsi, was instrumental in preserving this language, which is still spoken today in Iran instead of being overshadowed by Arabic.

In fact this book is so important to Iranians that they comprised way over half the audience attending the 4 sold out performances at Cowell Theater. Many children attended and were able to see a grand performance of an important piece of their culture brought to life before their very eyes and ears. (Music was amazing also and composed perfectly for each scene.) Productions are expensive and the local Iranian community, both foundations and individuals, generously funded this one.

We puppeteers in the audience had the unique opportunity to hear Farsi being spoken all around us, while the play-goers waited for the shadow play to begin. This was interesting and limited my opportunities to listen to what I call "lobby chatter", which often gives me interesting quotes for reviews. I did get two: (first is from an anglo woman, a resident of S.F.), "He [Larry Reed] did something on Kublai Khan. [A shadow play decades ago, called "In Xanadu"]. I'll never forget it. I've seen most of his things!" And from an Iranian woman, speaking in accented English, "For a moment I thought of Clara, when she [Rudabeh] began to dance." I too was reminded of my Iranian friend, Sholeh, when she dances. They have a distinctive and lovely way of moving their hands.

Once the play was being introduced, Hamid dedicated this last performance at Ft. Mason, on Monday, January 18th, to Larry Reed, his collaborator. Much applause was given to each man.

Larry studied shadow puppetry many years ago in Bali and has incorporated some of those techniques in his subsequent "Western" shows. To aid human performers integrate with shadow puppets on the same stage he often has the puppets (which are maybe 2 feet high) performing further back from the screen which gives very large shadows. The humans perform close to the screen and wear a head gear which Larry developed. It is sort of like large horse blinders, but the two "wings" project outwards from the face at a slight angle. These are identically and gorgeously filigreed with the profile of the character's face. The actual puppets are carved in profile also. A quick flick of the masked performers' heads and their body can change direction, just as the puppets can. Only a few of the dozens of masks were not carved with a laser cutter. This new high tech technique gives the sharpest images of all.

The mask for Rudabeh, the ingénue, is beautiful and regal and, it seemed, to me, too mature- more like the mask of a sister to her Mother's mask than a blooming young woman, possibly still a teen, with soft features.

My favorite action/scenery bits are curvy white Persian style clouds, somewhat similar to Chinese ones, which scuttle across the sky now and then. And water swirling under the bridge in the palace garden. Also when Zaul

was alone in a small boat, similar to a Viking boat, and the waves kept piling up and growing bigger and bigger....then a sea monster attacked! Several times!!



Over 100 amazing digitally animated backgrounds by Rahmanian were partnered with the manually operated shadow puppets and the masked performers. One especially good affect of the animation was when puppets climbed/crawled up the mountain to reach the nest of Simorg, Zaul's magical bird foster mother. As the animated background changed levels plus went sideways, only when I checked with the proscenium could I convince my eyes that the puppets were "climbing in place" and the background was moving! I almost got dizzy from the "altitude."

Carpool chatter: we discussed the balance needed between animation and puppets so that neither one would "overshadow" the other. Since we were puppeteers we were slightly biased in the puppet direction. However, all in all, the production was marvelous and amazing.

We "critics" chuckled again at the three silly ladies in waiting who provided comic relief with their giggling colloquialisms in modern American-speak, such as "He's SO handsome", and "He MUST workout" as they were peeking at Zaul. Also, when Zaul was in the garden and attempting to impress Rudaeh, he shot a duck, while murmuring, ""Sorry little brother". (His nest siblings were birds of course).

In Balinese Shadow Theater the clown-servants speak funny lines in the local, non-formal language, no matter what other more formal language the other characters spoke. Not only do the Balinese audiences laugh at this, but when in America, for instance, these few lines in American-speak get big laughs. Shakespeare used this technique when his "rustics" played to the common folks in "the pits" [no seats, maybe dirty straw to sit on] in London's Old Globe Theatre.

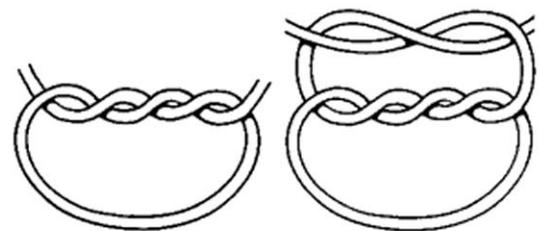
Our very own Guild member, Fred C. Riley III, is the Assistant Director of this fine production as well as a member of the ensemble of puppeteers and masked performers, etc. As we left Cowell Theater he remarked at how wonderful it was for them to perform for Guild members, and the rest of the audience members, since they had spent countless rehearsals playing to an empty room.



Balem the Clown, Balinese shadow puppet

Tips from the Pros (from Michael Nelson, Magical Moonshine Theatre)

Puppet building with upholstery thread: I often use upholstery thread when sewing a puppet. This is a very strong thread that must be cut rather than broken, and it will hold up under a lot of stress. When tying off threads I will usually use a surgeon's knot (if it's good enough for sewing up people then it's good enough for puppets!) This knot consists of a double overhand followed by a single overhand knot. The advantage is that with the double overhand, when you tighten it down, it will tend to stay tight while you tie off the finishing overhand knot. Try it! Before trimming your knot strings: a tiny dot of white glue will keep your knot from untying. Now, slide your loose strings through a needle eye and "dip" the needle into and then out of your puppet again, leaving an inch or two of thread inside your puppet (if it's a stuffed puppet or has foam inside), then trim the threads at your exit point. This way you have a substantial length of thread held inside the puppet that would have to come untied rather than just a tiny stub (if you had cut it off at the knot.) I use upholstery thread for many non-standard uses. Several layers of it can make a joint hinge where



Surgeon's knot

you need something small, simple and light. I also have used it to sew hinges onto puppet joints where there is not substantial wood to screw to (and I trust it as being stronger as well.) I drill holes and sew through wood or plywood or plastic. A technique I have found to be extremely strong is many layers or windings of upholstery thread applied and then coated with a thin layer of hot glue (usually I don't even tie a knot as the glue prevents the thread from coming off.) Worried about a thin wooden dowel splitting? Wrap the at-risk end with thread and then coat with glue. I recently needed to attach tiny eye screws to a bamboo skewer; I tied them crudely to the skewer (lots of spaces around the screw threads where the upholstery thread was wrapped) and then spread 5 minute epoxy lightly over the screw threads, wrapped upholstery thread and bamboo skewer end, giving me a connection that would have been very hard to create otherwise. Upholstery thread is one of my go-to materials for one of my cardinal rules of puppet building which is try to have at least two methods of attaching anything (if you use glue, use a mechanical attachment as well.) A little extra effort in building the puppet will pay off when your puppet's head does not come off during a performance!

Are You Still Making Your Spring/Summer/Fall Travel Plans?

If you have been a member in good standing of SFBAPG for at least 2 years, you are eligible to apply to the Founders' Scholarship Fund for assistance in attending a festival or workshop!

This is a great benefit of membership that you should consider taking part in. The full guidelines for eligibility and submitting your request can be found at <http://www.sfbapg.org/membership/benefits/scholarship-guidelines/> or just go to sfbapg.org, hover over the "membership" button and click on "benefits." If you have any questions you can drop an email to Talib Huff at tinkerscoin<at>[mac.com](mailto:tinkerscoin@mac.com)</at> (substitute @ for <at>, that's just to fool spammer robots). Here are some festivals you might consider, but remember, the fund is to cover basic registration fees, not travel or lodging:

Pacific Northwest Region
Puppet Power 2016: Connecting Generations
Calgary, Alberta
May 27 – May 29, 2016
<http://wppuppet.com/puppet-power/>



Southeast Region
Music City Puppet Festival
June 16 – 20 (check dates, they are different on the PofA site), 2016,
Nashville, TN
www.pofasoutheast.weebly.com/

Northeast & Mid-Atlantic Regions
Puppet Homecoming 2016: Be Inspired!
September 9 – 11, 2016
<http://puppethomecoming.org>

Partial image from the guild website showing how to find the scholarship guidelines. It requires some "mouse hovering." To hover a mouse, just hold your mouse over the text, then glide on to the next appearing text and so on.

The Power of the Puppet in Performance

Lee Armstrong will be teaching a 6 session class for the Osher Learning Center at San Francisco State

From 4/4/2016 - 5/9/2016, Mondays 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

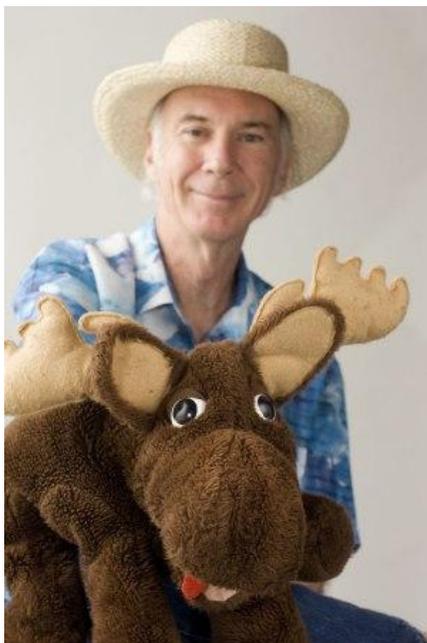
More information and registration:

This theater/art based class will explore the power of the puppet, its diversity in world culture and its performance potential. It will include lecture, demonstration, video clips, discussion and “hands-on” puppetry. The class will view rare footage and discuss the works of master puppeteers. Build a hand puppet or a moving mouth (Muppet-style) puppet, create the puppet character and bring it to life. Delve into story creation. Compare stage and TV puppetry through demos and “hands-on” experience. Put it all together in a final project in order to appreciate the puppet in performance.



Note: Patterns are provided free, or participants may choose to order a kit at the 2nd class. Moving Mouth Puppet Kit: \$30, Hand Puppet Kit \$15. Puppets will be made in the 3rd class.

Lee Armstrong, TV puppeteer, was hired by Jim Henson in 1982 to work on his Emmy award winning TV series “Fraggle Rock.” She has worked with, or met, many of the puppeteers featured in the course material. Film credits include “Being John Malkovich” and “Monkeybone.” She is the recipient of two regional Emmys. For over 20 years, she has co-owned Images in Motion, which specializes in bringing art to life, from TV puppetry to 3D printing. She is active in the Bay Area puppetry community, and has lectured at UC Santa Cruz and OLLIs at UC Berkeley and SF State.



MY NAME IS MAYNARD MOOSE: CREATING A STORYTELLING PUPPETCHARACTER WORKSHOP!

[Look Ma, no stage!] If you like doing a solo puppet with no barriers between you and your audience, here's a great opportunity for you from two experts: Maynard Moose and his handler, Willy Clafin! An auspicious omen is that when our guild met in San Francisco to hear Larry Reed talk last year, I passed Willy on the street! Maynard was having lunch with the Golden Gate Bison at that time, alas. -Elisheva]

*The 30th and last Bay Area Storytelling Festival is being held in Orinda, Friday April 29th, through Sunday, May 1. On Friday at 9:00 am

to 12 noon, this Fabulous Workshop is being held. Content: to bring a puppet to life; make it seem like a real, live creature; learn to use a different voice; basic hand movements; and a Secret Trick that Maynard promises to reveal to workshop participants! They will also show you fool-proof ways of making up original stories for your puppet to tell.*

I have seen Willy and Maynard many times and they are terrific. This is a chance to learn this from a master. I've never seen him offer a workshop before. He's very popular with librarians and other storytellers. The spaces are filling, so register NOW! I did.

The price is \$40.00. For info on registering: <http://www.bayareastorytelling.org/> and check out Willy and Maynard at willyclaflin.com then click on Maynard Moose

This is the 30th Bay Area Storytelling Festival and the last. On the program for the first fest, it lists guild member Ruth Stotter. Also Guild Life Member Pam Brown has been continuously involved as part of the quilt making committee. It is auctioned off at the festival. Other Guild members-Kitty Adams, Ruthmarie Sheehan and myself have attended and/or presented at many festivals.

Toby Froud: two rod puppet workshops

April 16 & 17, 2016 at The Fernie Brae in Portland, OR (a magical shop!)

July 23 & 24, 2016 at Petaluma Arts Center in Petaluma, CA (in conjunction with a fabulous doll art exhibit!!)

Hours: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

The class costs \$350.

Toby Froud will lead students through his process for creating imaginative puppet characters. During the workshop, you will sculpt the puppet's head and hands in polymer clay. You'll learn Toby's design for building an effective rod puppet mechanism with articulated head movement; students will also explore costuming and finishing techniques.

Let me know if you'd like to reserve a seat!
Sherri Morgan Email: shesculpt@aol.com

Ed. Note: Toby Froud is known in Muppet circles, among other things, as the baby Toby in Henson's puppet film, Labyrinth. Son of Wendy and Brian Froud (who was designer for Labyrinth and worked on a number of projects with Henson), Toby has worked on a number of films and puppet projects including making puppets for the films ParaNorman and the Box Trolls.



New 3D Printer at Images In Motion

Since 2014, Images In Motion has been busy 3D printing full color, high resolution pieces, from dinosaur skulls to art pieces and puppet parts. Their gypsum printers, a Z510 and 650 are the same type of printers used to "make" the stop motion puppets for "Coraline" and "ParaNorman."

What are our members up to?

Images in Motion

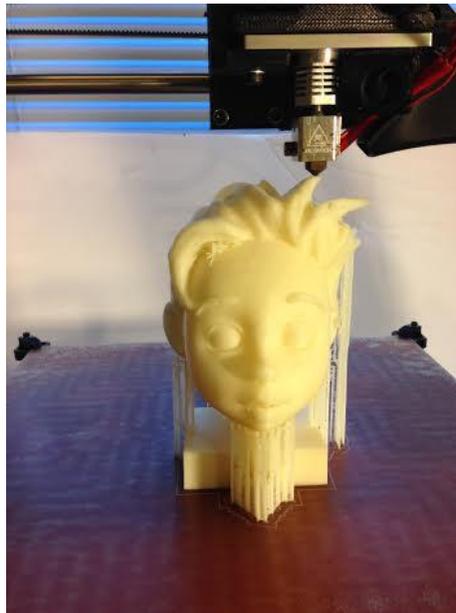
Now Images In Motion has acquired a LulzBot® TAZ, a versatile, high performance desktop 3D printer with a 11.7in x 10.8in x 9.8in print area which will allow us to offer 3D printing in a variety of materials.

Kamela Portuges-Robbins and Kieron Robbins, our 3D print experts had the LulzBot up and running and printing within the day. They've run tests on some of the materials, including ABS (plastic) and nylon. The supplies come as a filament on a spool,

which is feed into the LulzBot. The filaments also come in a wood like material as well as metal, and stone, opening up all sorts of possibilities for art and puppet pieces!

You can see the printer in action at

https://www.facebook.com/ImagesinMotionMedia/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel.



CAUTIONARY TALES – A TWO FOR ONE SPECIAL

PUPPETS + DISASTER

= JUST ONE MORE REASON TO HAVE PLENTY OF VODKA ON HAND by Judy Roberto

A few months ago, I opened a large Rubbermaid container with my puppets from “The Most Wonderful Egg” puppet show, to bring one of my Chicken puppets to our Holiday Party. But something was wrong ... very wrong. The smell was indescribable, and that was because everything in the container was wet and extremely moldy. All the puppets and props were covered in wet black spots, inside and out.

But HOW? The container had been sitting in the workroom in that back corner for at least two months, and no one smelled a thing. Was there an evil chicken puppet hater lurking in our midst? That's impossible!

After the feelings of nausea, sadness, anger, and guilt (for not checking on them sooner) began to subside, I put on my big girl detective hat and discovered the *Rubbermaid container phenomenon* had struck me - again. This had happened before many years ago. It popped a hole in the bottom due to water pressure! That time was outdoor storage and extremely cold weather. But this was in the



workroom! A small water heater under the sink had sprung a leak shortly after I put the puppets nearby. It leaked enough to cause us to remove most of the things that appeared to be in danger, but why move the Rubbermaid Container – it's sealed, it's plastic, and the floor had been mopped. Perhaps some seepage nearby came back unnoticed, but here's what happened:

The water pressure between the floor and the container pushed up on that little plastic bubble on the center bottom where the container is released from the manufacturing mold. This caused the plastic on *the inside* to begin unraveling in a spiral ribbon. Amazing as this sounds, the 1/32" wide ribbon of spiraling plastic was hundreds of feet long. This process was aided by the incredible sealing power of these containers. That is also why every bit of moisture in the area sucked right into it as well. And the hole? It was only 1/8"!



And finally, we get to the VODKA part! Hooray! A sewist named Michelle, who has worked for theater, opera, ballet and our puppet theater, told me last year that they all use Vodka – the cheapest

Vodka – to take away body odor, must, mildew, and some staining. I had my doubts in this case. The red feathers were black and awful looking, the felt under the wings nearly solid black, and the smell – yuck. I ran out to get a gallon and a good sprayer that very day. First I removed as much nasty as I could with Vodka on a rag, and then I saturated them completely with the Vodka, even the feathers, and hung them to dry.

Within a day, when they were mostly dry, I was amazed. The only places that held any mold color was where there was white glue, and the damage was light. They still have a very slight odor, but completely tolerable. I'll probably give them another dose before long. The green dye on

CHEAP VODKA



the fabric sleeve seemed to become a bit unstable, but not bad at all. The biggest surprise was the feathers. They had never looked as good as they did afterwards.

I know it's tempting to think it's just the alcohol in the Vodka, but evidently it has unique properties watered down rubbing alcohol does not have. I hope you never have a disaster like this, but if you do, have the Vodka ready, and Cheers!



Wing, before and after vodka.



Feathers, before and after vodka.

Ed. Note: I think we all know the moral of THIS story... Vodka is good for puppets!