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|  | <p>The official newsletter of San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild <i>Looking for updates and missed information? Check for it at SFBAPG.ORG</i></p> <p><i>SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization</i></p> |
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December 2017



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From your Editor

Dear Friends,

We approach the Winter Solstice and Holiday Season and realize that another year is coming to a close. Working puppeteers may find their schedules filled with holiday performance events and celebrations, while those of us who enjoy puppetry in a less public manner may be pulling out the holiday shows for family or community gatherings. The nights are long and puppet shows are a wonderful and welcome cozy entertainment with a long, historical tradition. As puppeteers we have a special skill that brings joy and wonder to our audiences, whether they be large or small, young or old. Use your skills to share a smile and some laughter and perhaps a little glimpse into a deeper magic. It is a wonderful gift that is fun to give!

Bonus tip: Now that many of you have had the chance to attend the Nick Barone Shadow Puppet workshop (write up below) and are now shadow enthusiasts, you might be interested to try an idea that I tried out last Christmas; I made a tiny shadow puppet show (figures were about 2 inches tall) and used my cell phone flashlight app to project the shadows very large upon the wall, creating a Nativity show for grandchildren and family. I doubt I spent more than an hour creating the 10 minute show, and, while I discovered that manipulating tiny shadow puppets required a steady and still hand (as the movements get amplified) it was great fun and enjoyed by all. Of course, you could make it bigger, too!

For newcomers to our guild, we do have a wonderful, holiday party for the guild each year, but since puppeteers (and everyone, for that matter) are usually quite busy in December, it has become guild tradition to have our holiday party in the quieter month of January. Look for more information on that not-to-be-missed party, below.



Image: Season change puppets of Anne Cubberly—Happy Solstice!

Holiday Party in January (the 20th, to be specific!)

Come celebrate with your puppet tribe on January 20, at the Benicia Veterans Memorial Hall, 1150 First St, Benicia, from 4:30 to 9. This is a DIY party in so many ways!

BRING YOUR NEWLY MADE PUPPET And strut your stuff in the second annual puppet runway show and tell. Bring a description for the emcee to read or they will make it up on the spot!

BRING A DISH Our potlucks are fabulous because everyone brings awesome food.

BRING A DONATION We have a raffle of wonderful things puppetry that benefits the Founders Scholarship. This pays for the registrations at puppet workshops and festivals for lucky applicants. If you let me know that you plan to bring a raffle item, I will stop worrying that there won't be any raffle items (Valerie Nelson, magicalmoonshine@gmail.com)

BRING CASH! So you can buy raffle tickets!

BRING A TABLE DECOR Decorate a table for whichever holiday you like.

Plan on the tables being round, or rectangular (hey, we're flexible!) Your table will be oohed and ahed over.
BRING A SHORT PUPPET PIECE (But call me first. Valerie Nelson 707 342-0248) We are looking for 2 or 3 short (under 10 minutes) family friendly pieces.)

BRING A PRESENT If you wish to join a present exchange, bring something inexpensive (around \$10 or less) and puppety, wrapped up.

BRING YOUR HELPFULNESS! Help set up, help clean up, come early, stay late! Many hands, short work.

BRING YOUR JOY! We need each other more than ever. Pass the hugs.

I am very pleased that Animal Cracker Conspiracy will perform a short act at our Holiday party. Details will follow soon....Below is a photo of Animal Cracker Conspiracy's toy theatre offering...a fishy tale, indeed!



Words from a Computer Chair

Hello from your webmaster, trying to keep things fresh you may have noticed some changes to the guild on Facebook.

Previously our Facebook Group was "Private." People on facebook could see our group, but not who was a member, or what we posted. This made sharing fun things with your friends, new members and others a bit harder.



Public
Anyone can see the group, its members and their posts.

Closed
Anyone can find the group and see who's in it. Only members can see posts.

Secret
Only members can find the group and see posts.

All members and admins will receive a notification that the group privacy settings have changed.

Now we're public. That means anyone can see our posts, comments and members, but we can now share things that we post with others. So now you can share too. So if you see something you think others would like outside of the guild, click the share button, and it can appear on your facebook posts that your friends can see. Also the new Facebook Page needs your likes and loves (click on the

appropriate button.

<https://www.facebook.com/SanFranBAPG/>

This is our official profile for the guild, people can "like" this without having to join the group and they will see our official updates about events, meetings, newsletters, and more. The group is for us to talk, share, and collaborate, and the page is for official guild news updates and more from the board as well as things we want to promote.

Both can and should be used to publicize your events, and activities. If you have something you want us to share, post it to the group, and/or message @SanFranBAPG on Facebook, and we can help share and let others know too.



REVIEW OF RONNIE BURKETT'S "THE DAISY THEATRE" by Elisheva Hart

On Thursday, November 16, 47 Guilders-including some non-member spouses and friends-treked from all over the Bay Area to Stanford University in Palo Alto to attend this special event. A few had gone the night before, due to personal scheduling. There were marionettes-51 of them (although not all were called on to perform this night), variety acts, monologues, musical numbers, roll in the aisle humor, homage to burlesque, excellence personified-etc., etc. PLUS audience participation in voting which of 3 theatrical divas would perform, and which songs to perform, + 2 'lucky' guys called up from the audience to be on stage. Also Thursday night included a post-show Artist Talkback (Q & A session), which is undoubtedly why this date was selected as befitting a Guild event. A surprise in the Program's fine print shows that a former Guild member- a resident of Vancouver-was represented at the performance: Marionette Controls: Luman Coad.

Ronnie Burkett's Marionette Theatre is 31 years old. The Daisy Theatre ("Daisies grow in the dark.") began with 20 marionettes "4 or 5 years ago" and now he has a cast of 51 disparate characters. We viewed performances by several of this huge cast. Obviously a core group are 'givens'; the others perform 'whenever'. Each marionette is inspired by found objects, overheard comments, links to Ronnie's past, etc., many of which he discovers while on walks or at the store or other simple activities, therefore, "Nothing has anything to do with each other so they can co-exist on The Daisy Show!" says he.

Those of you unfortunately not in the audience, please check out Ronnie Burkett's website and on youtube to see his craft in motion, even if you have to corral a nearby Millennial to access it for you. We got a great preview of Ronnie at Mary Nagler's Farewell Party much earlier in the year, when she gave us a talk about him and taught us some exercises she had learned at his workshop, a payback to our Guild for assisting her with a Scholarship.

Despite the fact that few of Ronnie's amazingly sculpted and painted marionettes have open mouths, none are articulated (nor do they need to be) except for the jaw of Little Woody, a ventriloquist dummy marionette who sits on the lap of Meyer Lemon, his over-the-hill-and-out-of-commission ventriloquist. After the show we were allowed to circulate around the stage, checking out the 51 stringed performers. One puppeteer who sat at the back of the basement auditorium commented that the puppets were much smaller than she thought. That's what focus will do! Also Ronnie does not use a microphone and is clearly heard while voicing and singing his characters, as he is manipulating them.

Besides all his brilliance and genius, Ronnie Burkett is also a SHAPE SHIFTER! By sitting at a cafe' table immediately in front of the stage- where I could simultaneously see the marionette and Ronnie manipulating it- I got my first hint of his magic early on. He can walk a puppet off Stage Left while he is looking Stage Right and singing too. The puppet being walked never dangles, stumbles or floats. (Neither does Ronnie. He out shines Ginger Rogers in the wisecrack that she can do all the dance moves Fred Astaire can, backwards and wearing high heels!)

Soon I realized as he manipulates each of his uniquely designed puppets, his own face TOTALLY BECOMES EACH FACE and his body posture IS THE POSTURE of that puppet! If photos were taken of him and each marionette as he manipulates and voices it, then if the photos cut in half horizontally-with Ronnie's face and the puppets' faces on separate pieces) and the pieces made into a match-the-pieces game, it would be easy peasy to reunite the halves just by this amazing ability on his part. At our summer meeting in Daly City our voice instructor, Brenda Besdansky, told of professional voice-overs (like for animated characters) who grimace and distort their faces to create the proper sound for their character. Ronnie actually BECOMES each of his characters, not mimicing them.

Artist Talkback (Q & A session) His credo is, "It's the idea you have that makes you unique, not the stuff you have."

Also a great piece of advice for troupes touring Canada in the winter, "Don't hot glue stuff because when it freezes, it shatters."

Ronnie says that there are many voices inside of him and he lets them out with puppets [Hurrah!], otherwise he'd either be dead or crazy.



The Holy 3 is what he calls his personified interior puppet characters-each being 1/3 of himself.

They are:

Mrs. Edna Rural, from the prairies of Alberta (just like him) who's favorite saying, like his Mom's, is "Lord Love a duck!", a confused Canadian (left).

Esme' Massengill, aged theatrical diva, his bitter self who has been on the road too long. (below, right)

Snitzel, beloved fairy(?) ("I'm not sure what he is," says Ronnie.), who opens and closes The Daisy Theatre. (below)



RONNIE BURKETT'S COMING ATTRACTION!

December 5th is the Grand Opening of "Little Dickens", The Daisy Theatre's version of "A Christmas Carol", (opening in Canada, alas.)

It stars the theatrical diva Esme' Massengill as a drunken Scrooge, and beloved Schnitzel as the heart-touching Tiny Tim, plus the familiar dynamic entourage, plus a funny unscripted script. This performance is geared to audiences 19+ years old, who should bring Low Expectations:

"I've brought you the stupidest show I've ever created", says Ronnie in his online promo. At his recent appearance at Stanford in November, he further said ["This new production] will either be an ongoing success for a long time---or a one-time TURKEY!" Let's vote for the first choice and that he will return with it next year. As Schnitzel might say, "Wot a nice present for us all, everyone!"

Independent Eye, New Show Preview!



The Independent Eye will host four Sebastopol previews of its new show, SURVIVAL, on Dec. 2-3 and 9-10, Saturdays at 7:30 pm, Sundays at 3 pm. The show lasts 55 minutes. Admission is free. We'll pass a hat afterward and offer refreshments.

SURVIVAL features veteran actress Elizabeth Fuller as two halves of herself. As Lou, she's a 77-year-old jack-of-all-trades in denim jacket. Reading the daily news with its multiple threats of disaster—"Annihilation Awareness Day," "International Apocalypse Week"—she can only slam down the newspaper, yelling, "Hel-I-lp!"

Coming to her rescue is an inner clown self, Bozo, a red-nosed perpetual optimist who studies how-to books, assembles a cabinet of advisers on her fingers, and evokes gurus, conspiracies, and the patrons of Smoky's Bar. She scans the survival potentials of sorting socks, get-rich schemes, positive thinking, and suicide.

Written by Fuller and partner Conrad Bishop, SURVIVAL will be on tour nationally during the coming year. Area theatregoers will remember Fuller as the Fool in *King Lear*, Elizabeth in *Frankenstein*, Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and a seven-faced clown in her own solo show *Dream House*. *Survival* marks her 43rd year of touring with The Independent Eye.

If you can attend a performance, it's imperative that you email for reservations: eye@independenteye.org—seating is very limited. We'll send you a confirmation, directions, and instructions on parking.

Peace & joy—
Conrad & Elizabeth



Guild member Joel Schechter shared this update:

White House Follies performed at the Howard Zinn Book Fair in San Francisco with Donald Trump and Emma Goldman on stage, November 19, 2017. Puppeteers (not shown): Joel Schechter and Jeni Johnson. Photographer: Florentina Mocanu.

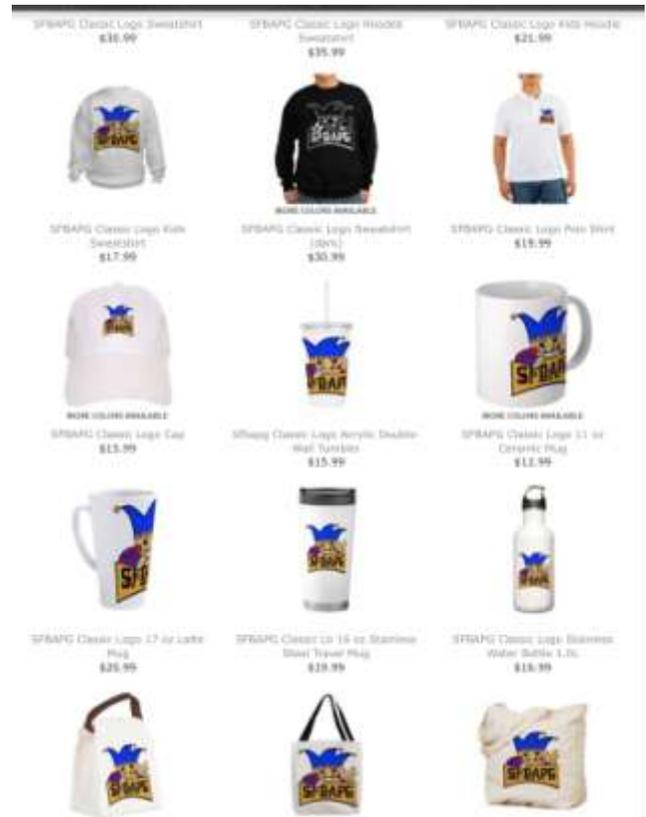
CORRECTION. In last month's Newsletter (November, 2027 issue) the Review of Brenda Besdanský's Voice Workshop, some facts got scrambled and need sorting out. Brenda's current involvement is with SFSPCA's "Sit, Stay, Love" program. This is where she will use the animal hand puppets donated to her at the Guild meeting. Her company name is "Performing Pooch Productions" and that website is currently down due to

receiving a face lift. And WOOF is just for her personal email address, woof@performingpooch.com Please take note of these corrections.

Buy Some Guild Merchandise, soon to be rare collector's items (probably)!

Every purchase you makes supports the Founders Scholarship, which helps our guild members travel to puppet festivals and workshops and bring back valuable skills to share with us all. Plus, you get to proclaim your membership in our very exclusive (actually, very inclusive) club!

<http://www.cafepress.com/sfbapg> You can buy Tshirts and other clothing, tote bags, ipad covers, key chains, mugs, water bottles, stickers, and all kinds of unexpected things, all with the SFBAPG logo on it! (to right, a sampler of the many available items)



CLASSIFIED AD

Merrywood Puppets wants to sell our hand Puppet/marionette stage, puppets, sound system including wireless mics and headset \$1000 OBO. Will deliver to sfbapg. It is portable and fits in our van, includes rolling chairs for puppeteers, and table for sound system, velvet curtain and all to do a complete show. And 2 original scripts for two to three actors! Full description of puppets and equipment available. Send inquiries to merrywoodpuppets@gmail.com. (Editors note: the list of included items was too long to run here but includes lots of great equipment and is definitely worth a look if you are interested in this deal! This looks to be a full set up with sound, lights, staging, puppets, scripts, etc.)

Thank You, Thank You!

--The guild wants to thank members who have rejoined and gone the extra mile by donating to our special projects. Thank you to Christine Papalexis, Wendy Morton, Jonathan Korfhage, Joe and Ronna Leon, Anne Heron, Nicole Yellin, Derek Lux, Steve Chaney, Michael and Valerie Nelson, Beth-Marie Deenihan, Tom Crystle, and Wendy Ring.

2nd Annual Nick Barone Memorial Puppet Workshop, by Ann Gronvold

On Saturday, November 4th, we celebrated the memory of Nick Barone with a day of superbs: a shadow puppet workshop led by Wendy Morton; live music performed by her partner, John



Magee; and Nick's special cheesecake.

Last summer, Wendy participated in Australian Shadow Puppet Master, Richard Bradshaw's intensive workshop at the Eugene O'Neill Puppetry Conference in Connecticut. On Saturday, she taught us the basics of what she had learned.

Wendy opened the workshop with a slide show — Sharing pictures of her own work, an exquisite shadow animation of internationally renowned storyteller Jay 'O Callahan's *Little Dragon*, which they toured together in Germany. The show also traced the history of shadow puppetry from its ancient roots in China (or maybe India) to Richard Bradshaw's work.

A charming myth from China's Han Dynasty (2nd century BC) tells of the first shadow puppet show. When Emperor Wu's favorite concubine died, he was so grief-stricken, he lost all interest in ruling the kingdom. A wise minister staged a shadow show, performing a likeness of the concubine on the screen. The "visit" from his dead wife so cheered the Emperor that he went back to work.

As shadow puppets flourished and spread into Southeast Asia, then to the Middle East and Europe, different forms, construction materials, and modes of manipulation were invented. For example, Indonesian Wayang (9th century), used rods from below. In the Ottoman Empire (16th century), Karagöz (a punch-like character) and his pals employed rods perpendicular to the puppet's back.

By the mid-1800's, European shadow theatres were closing, but Galanty shows played in London until the end of the century. From 1881-1887, the "ombres chinoises" surged in popularity at the Chat-Noir Café in Paris's Montmartre district, where artists, musicians and writers performed short, often satirical pieces.

Germany's Lotte Reiniger created film animations with her silhouette figures in the early 20th century. Her *Prince Achmed* (1926) is the oldest surviving feature-length animation — produced 11 years before Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1927). Lotte's craft was extraordinary. Because she could not refer back, she had to keep the specific details of all her puppets' movements in her mind.

When Hitler came to power, Nazis forced her to make propaganda films, so she and her husband left Germany. After the war, they settled in England, where Lotte's work inspired many artists and puppeteers.

In 1952 when Bradshaw was 14, an English company, Hogarth Puppets, toured Australia. Their repertoire included one shadow piece, *The Happy Prince*, performed with puppets that Lotte had made. That show inspired shadow puppeteers across Australia, including Bradshaw.

The slide show closed with videos of Richard Bradshaw's works, and then we plunged into making his style of puppets. Wendy provided four patterns — snake, frog, rabbit, and elephant. Or, you could invent your own. Our "cast" included a girl, with a bird in her hand, and a bear. We traced the patterns onto black poster board, cut the pieces, joined them with coils of thin copper wire. Next, we made the rods: 3/32 copper wire — bent at one end to fit into a wooden dowel handle, secured by duck tape — and bent into a staple shape at the other end, which we attached to our puppets with thread-sized wire.





With puppets completed, we played with the ways they could slither, hop, jump, amble and fly on one of three shadow screens Wendy had set up around the room.

As a finale, we feasted on Nick's cheese cake.

Our work was inspired by John Magee's music. Originally from Belfast, Ireland, John traveled

and lived in Europe, finally settling in the Bay area. His original pieces and improvisations are inspired by a broad musical palette — rock; blues; Irish; a bit of folk; noisy and exuberant; quiet and emotionally nuanced (the sort of music that reveals a soul or heart).

John's music, like his life, has been a journey, weaving different styles together, always evolving, always refining his art and skill. His playing (a solo electric guitar) added a rich creative dimension to Wendy's terrific workshop, and inspired our puppet making and inventions.

While nothing can compare to the in-person workshop, you can get a flavor by googling "Richard Bradshaw youtube"; reading his teachers' notes at

https://www.youngaus.com.au/images/teachers_notes/Richard_bradshaw.pdf

and listening to John's music at <http://jpmagee.com/music.html>

For Nick's famous cheesecake — well, you'll just have to make your own. The recipe is available.

CALENDAR —Send calendar listings to events@sfbapg.org (and newsletter articles to newsletter@sfbapg.org) The Guild calendar is located at <http://www.sfbapg.org/events/calendar/> For those without internet at home, may we suggest you access the calendar at the library. Unfortunately we do not have room to keep up with the ever-changing calendar in this issue of the newsletter, but will continue to highlight special events when space permits.

