

BOARD NEWS

THE PROBLEM: Membership in Puppeteers of America is down. It has hovered around 1600 for several years now but at times in the past it was near 2300. It could, it should be up. How do we reach that goal?

There seem to be puppets everywhere these days, lots of younger artists and even older artists/actors are picking up puppets and giving the glamorous and incredibly enriching art form a twirl. Then why is membership down? I am no social scientist nor a statistician.

Speaking from first hand knowledge I have belonged since I was thirteen, except briefly when I was making thirty three dollars a week in 1977, working at a small puppet theater in Omaha Nebraska. I soon rejoined but lost that lower membership number (like area codes some members used to relish their low number status).

THE BENEFITS: I have always liked the welcome visit to my mailbox of the Journal and the Playboard when it came along. and I truly love the Membership Directory, one of the most useful single printed publications I own. In it are phone numbers of friends (except the cranky ones,

and you know who you are), addresses, a brief history of Puppeteers of America, and lot of other really useful information.

There has been talk of eliminating the directory and putting it on-line but I always will be a book person and this hand book I keep handy.

Besides these very real benefits there is a 10% discount at the puppetry store and the incredibly rich and varied video/dvd library from which only members can borrow and enjoy.

METHODS: Several years ago the organization had a successful "Each One Reach One" campaign where each member was encouraged to put the finger on some un-member and encourage them to join. I would encourage you to do that. It worked quite well and membership grew once again. There are many ways though. Since I became President I have tried to twist the arms of a variety of past members (or as Paul Eide called them "the

fallen away") I have had mixed results. I have had the most success in encouraging new members from the endless parade of people who come backstage after a show and want to say that they do puppets at their church and can they see how my stage is built. Or the shy soul who waits in the audience till everyone has left and says that they used to do puppets as a child. I mention the website and that they can check us out and join, and sometimes in the wrecking zone that is my van after touring for three weeks I can find an official membership form from Puppeteers of America and hand it off.

ACTION: There are lots of ways and the time is now. You may have already received an e-mail notification that you can rejoin via the internet. Reach out and touch a fellow puppeteer (appropriately,) encourage the novice and beginner, and call an old friend.

Paul Mesner, President

REGIONAL FESTIVALS

EAST COAST SUPER SONIC PUPPET FESTIVAL

JULY 19 - 23, 2006

Asheville, North Carolina

Tri-Regional Festival: Southeast,
Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast Regions
Festival Director: Susan VandeWeghe -
vanpuppet@citcom.net

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL FESTIVAL

CELEBRATE THE PUPPET

JULY 27 - 30, 2006

LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

(with support from Great Plains Region)

Co-sponsored by the Ontario Puppetry
Association. Go to www.puppetwerx.ca

Festival Director: Phil Arnold -
PArnold@fanshawec.ca

PACIFIC NW & PACIFIC SW REGIONAL FESTIVAL

MUCH ADO ABOUT PUPPETS

August 4 - 7, 2006

Tacoma, Washington

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Wash-
ington www.muchadoaboutpuppets.org
Jean Mattson - jmariematt@aol.com

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

The Membership Office maintains the member database used to generate all the mailing labels used to deliver the Puppetry Journal, Playboard, the Members' Directory and other mailings including renewal forms, election information, and festival informational packets. We have no way of knowing about changes unless YOU inform the membership office. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

A single note, email or call to the membership office will ensure that your information is changed in the main data base.

The membership office should also be informed if you have not received any of the Puppeteers of America publications within a reasonable time after they have been mailed.

FYI: The Puppetry Journal is mailed out four times a year: the end of February, the end of May, the end of August, and the end of November.

Playboard is mailed out six times a year at the end of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

The Membership Directory is mailed out in late September.

A notice of that mailing appears in the September Playboard.

If you have changed your address, phone, email or web-site address, please contact

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Is it possible that summer is here? We have a week and a half to go until school is out and I'm not at all ready for summer. So many neat things that have happened since you last read the column, I'm not sure I'll remember everything.

Day of Puppetry '06 is long gone and reports from the Guilds have been outstanding. Our DOP in the Mile High City this year went well, with the help of three wonderful librarians. Now we can look ahead to Regional Festivals coming up. The Sandglass Theatre and the University of Connecticut Puppet Arts Program have a three-week intense program lined up for the summer. I look forward to a week of fun and knowledge at Puppetfest Midwest, set to go in Missouri.

In California, puppeteer and ventriloquist Buddie Big Mountain and his wife Diana, are traveling to England to check out theatres where they will be performing. It will be the first time they will be performing together. Doing the library circuit throughout California are Franklin Haynes and the Johnson brothers. Laurie Branham will be wowing them this summer at the San Diego zoo. Nancy Sander will be dashing off from Ohio to NY for the summer. She will be doing 50 performances of her new production "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" The world of Puppetry was well represented at the Pittsburg International Children's Festival. Performing were Joe Cashore Marionettes, Lille Kartoffler from Germany doing "Cinderella" and the Gateway to the Arts/Ruckus Productions doing "Gypsies and Crickets."

A number of puppeteers have moved from puppetry to storytelling Glenda Bonin in Arizona carries a suitcase of puppets with her for kids to experience the joy of a puppet. I agree kids need to learn the fun of doing puppets.

Lynn Zetzman teaches at Xavier High School in Wisconsin and has had a really busy year. Six computer graphic students completed toy theatre books. They designed a theatre proscenium, characters, sets and props as well as writing scripts. Her puppet group also designed 29 large parade puppets. Lynn is now working on a toy theatre version of "Our American Cousin". In Detroit the Padzieski Gallery held an exhibit honoring the 60th anniversary of the Detroit Puppet Guild. The Fuller Craft museum in Brockton MA is doing "(No) Strings Attached" exhibit, that includes works of Dan Butterworth, Behind the Mask, Figures of Speech Theatre, Gerwick Puppets, Sandglass Theatre, Tanglewood Marionettes and The Underground Railway.

The National Gallery in Washington D.C., had Sophie Teauber's 1918 unusual and thought provoking puppets in an exceptional exhibit. It offered a look at the fun people of the Dada age and the puppets that reflect it.

New shows in Florida - The Creative Arts Theatre celebrated Black History Month with "All Tales are Anansi's". There summer production is going to be "Rabbit and Moon", a Cree folk tale. Frank Lakus will be doing "A Tale is Told" in the Florida Libraries and Katie Adams will be performing "The Peacock's Gift".

Nancy Fawcett in Florida sent me news that the Octagon Center for the Arts in Ames Iowa will be having an exhibit in the fall. "Puppets on Stage" will honor Veronika Ruedenberg and Nancy. They were mainstay Puppeteers in Iowa doing all kinds of enchanting puppetry.

Diane Houk of the Puppetry Arts Institute in Independence MO. is thrilled to have a new permanent exhibit of Toy Theatres. Gigi and Glenn Sandberg of Mississippi have donated the Toy Theatres. The Sanbergs Toy Theatres are stunning and how wonderful to have them in and exhibit. The PAI s having a series of shows The Elwoodettes Marionettes of Canada, Papa and Jackie Wright from St. Louis, Missouri, Kurt and Kathy Hunter from Minneapolis, Minnesota and Philip Huber of Tennessee.

REUM~ ...with a view. M'EL REUM

As you know we skipped an issue last time and just after the deadline I received some wonderful information from the Carter Family, Northwest Puppet Center. They had a live Wayang Golek show by Kathy Foley and Spyglass did a "Secret Life Of Bugs". The busy Carters are building a new marionette opera

"The Life of Tom Thumb," by Henry Fielding. Now just to be sure they keep busy, in June they will be in Potsdam, Germany doing three performances of Hayden's marionette Opera "The Burning House". Congratulations!

We meet so many people as we find ourselves doing puppetry. In recent weeks I have lost two good friends. John Miller, formerly from Detroit, was one of the first people I met at a Festival. "John's Place" was one of those never forget experiences at a Festival. You met and talked to so many people. Many of us learned about the P of A and got to know each other because of John's generosity. I shall miss, as will many, my long time friend Lettie Schubert. Lettie and I early on shared tales of doing live TV shows when kids shows were all live. She was doing "Brother Buzz" and I was doing "Puppet People." Lettie was a puppeteers' puppeteer. She shared her knowledge and her joy of life with me and with all who new her. I'm sure she'll keep an eye on us.

Bruce Chesse in Oregon sent me a wonderful CD with old pictures of early puppetry. There are priceless pictures of early TV and WPA puppetry. Bruce is working on a project that we will all be proud of. I'm not sure of all the details, but when he let's me know you will read it here first.

I have trouble keeping track of my buddy Ed Sheehy. This Easter he overwhelmed the congregation doing The Easter story in shadows. A wonderful write up in the Jersey Journal indicates everyone was stunned with the beauty of the production. Ed does a different kind of puppetry each time I catch up with him and it is always does it sooo well. What a joy.

Now what are YOU doing this summer. I may see you, but if I don't drop me a line. - Send me a clipping - call me. The summer will be over before you know it. Have a good one.
M'EL

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THE GUILD CONNECTION

KURT HUNTER

It is officially spring in Minnesota. The annual May Day Parade and Land Festival presented by In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre the first Sunday of May each year marks the season for thousands of creative souls. It's a community built parade lead by Sandy Spieler, HOBt's artistic director, and dozens of other talented artists. It's a massive undertaking especially remarkable for the quality and quantity of the creative output. The theme this year focused on community, which has always been an unspoken theme holding the whole affair together. Everyone is welcome to show up with their creative energy and build their own little piece of the parade. My experiences with puppetry guilds have been very similar. It's a very nice feeling to fit in based on the same things that can make you feel like an outsider in other settings. It's good to come home.

- Hands-on involvement is a great way to bring people together. The folks in the Central Florida Puppet Guild had a hands-on opportunity in March as John Kennedy lead a session of making puppets from his new book, "Puppet Planet". They also performed short skits with those puppets in the lobby of the Orlando Repertory Theatre a few days later.
- The members of the Greater Houston Puppetry Guild also took part in a fun sounding hands-on workshop in March. Irma Hite led a workshop making fantasy creature marionettes called "Movers and Shakers".
- The Savannah Coastal Puppetry Guild had a puppet making workshop at the Puppet People Studio for their March meeting.
- As a part of their 60th anniversary celebration, members of the Detroit Puppeteers Guild created a 15 foot tall parade puppet "Spirit of the Healing Waters". Their creation joined other puppets in an exhibit at the Padzieski Gallery in the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center in Dearborn.
- The Connecticut Guild of Puppetry members also have experience with parade puppets. Their giant guild dragon puppet, Violet, came out of storage to make an appearance in a parade at the Connecticut Storytelling Festival in April.
- The Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry offered its members a chance to get their hands involved in February with a workshop on television puppetry led by Kevin Carlson hosted at the Chiodo Brothers Studio.
- The Images in Motion studio was the site of the San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild workshop in April on video puppetry. The popular workshop was presented by Kamela Portuges, Mike Wick, and Lee Armstrong.
- The Orange County Puppetry Guild was offering the unique opportunity to get some hands-on experience with shadow puppets at their May meeting. Charles Taylor brought in shadow puppets that he created for a number of stories for the guild members to work with.
- Performances are another popular way to bring people together. The Puppet Guild of South Florida picked up group tickets in February to see Das Puppenspiel perform "Peter and the Wolf" with the South Florida Youth Symphony.
- In February the Columbia Association of Puppeteers got to see Tears of Joy's production of "The Monkey King". Tickets were free to guild members thanks to the generosity of Janet Bradley.
- At the February meeting of the Puppetry Guild of Northeastern Ohio, Don Morrison offered "part show and part show and tell" as he explained the work that he does for library story hours.

He performed several Shel Silverstein poems. His Jabberwocky puppet was a especially well received.

- The lucky members of the Puppet Guild of Long Island got an early peak at Fred Greenspan's work in progress, "Professor Frederick's Flea Circus" at their March meeting.
- The always lucky members of the National Capital Puppetry Guild took in a performance of "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp" before their March meeting at the Puppet Company Playhouse.
- The members of the Puppet Guild of Greater St. Louis did the performing themselves, brushing off their Lewis and Clark production for a performance at their National Day of Puppetry event at the Missouri History Museum. The event also included the opportunity for participants assisted by Paul Vandivort to make small puppets of animals that Lewis and Clark would have encountered.
- Of course, the National Day of Puppetry generated a lot of activity across the country. The Mile High Puppet Guild had an exhibit up at the Englewood Library for the month of April leading up to their NDOP event.
- My own Twin Cities Puppeteers had a successful Day of Puppetry at the Southdale Library, our hosts for the last few years. This year we added a very popular, hands-on workshop for participants to construct a version of George Latshaw's handle bag puppets.
- The Cincinnati Area Puppetry Guild held their NDOP event at the Ridge Community Center co-sponsored by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission with performances, an exhibit, workshops, and "Puppet Central," a hands-on station to encourage creative play, movement, and voice.
- The Phoenix Guild of Puppetry had an especially interesting pre-NDOP event planned at the Phoenix Children's Hospital with Connie Galeener performing and the guild donating puppets to the patients.
- The Montana Puppet Guild spread their puppet celebration over two weekends at the Kalispel Center Mall. They also have a website up. Check out www.montanapuppets.com.
- The Philadelphia Area Puppetry Guild also has a new website in the works, www.phillypuppets.org, thanks to the efforts of Marianne Tucker.
- There's so much fascinating and wonderful news coming in from the guilds that I honestly don't know where to stop, but I have to squeeze in a few more things before I close. The Boston Guild of Puppetry held a banquet at the Puppet Showplace Theatre for their March meeting. This event was designed as an evening of feasting, fun and stimulating conversation; a concerted effort to help people get to know each other.
- The Florida Suncoast Puppet Guild met in March for a workshop led by University of Tampa Dance Department chair Susan Taylor Lennon. The workshop was designed to feed your inner artist in a "sumptuous afternoon of stretching, moving, storytelling, drawing and playing in a supportive community environment." Now that's a community I would like to be a part of.

As always let me know what your little puppetry community is up to and I'll share the news with our big puppetry community.

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EUREKA!!!

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Greetings, all you who are dealing with a deadline for a new show, and all you who are just dealing...I'm sweating a deadline four weeks from now. How come no one believes you when you say you're having trouble sleeping at night because of the anxiety? Little do they know. That is why the Organization is so important—we know, don't we?

Anyway, I'm still cleaning my office—now in the fourth month!—and I unearthed several “new” tips. Actually, they could be years old. For instance...

PAPIER MACHE: This one, easily over four years old, comes from **Marianne Tucker**, of **Abington, PA** who gave me this tip when she came to perform for our banquet. She says to use tissue paper for the last layer of your papier mache head to create a much smoother surface.

SAW SHARPENING: Another, written on the same scrap of paper, comes from **Hobey Ford**, of **Weaverville, NC**. He says that cutting aluminum on a band saw sharpens the blade. Hmm. That's interesting. Sort of like cutting through sandpaper sharpens scissors.

FLYERS: What makes a good flyer for your show? Simple: show the puppets and tell folks how to get in touch with you. That's all you need. My husband, Eric Sander, came up with a great tip for me as I was making my flyer for my new show. He wondered why I was standing the puppets up for the photo shoot. Why not lay them down—so much easier to pose them in a prone position—and shoot from above. You can get “eye contact” with your puppets by propping pencils, spools or whatever underneath heads and hands. Who cares about the background? If you are not competent with computer editing, you can eliminate the background with a simple pair of scissors.

GREAT PAPER: And I always get my background paper from the scrapbook store—there is such a great variety of colors and patterns. Gone are my plain backgrounds. I now use plaids, polka dots, stripes or whatever works.

AN OLD FRIEND: It makes me so happy to still be learning and perfecting my craft. I celebrate the great products that are available, such as Neoprene. Yeah, yeah, who doesn't know about Neoprene, but there may be some newcomers who don't. So here goes: If you're looking for a rigid latex that comes out of the mold with enough flexibility to handle pretty deep undercuts, Neoprene is for you. It is a non-toxic latex that cures rock-hard. It can be sanded, drilled and tapped. It only needs to be skin thick which makes it ideal for marionette limbs. Google or contact Chicago Latex and order #501. I order it by the gallon: \$60.00 with free shipping. Be sure, however don't order it in the winter for fear of freezing.

FOR THE MESSY: **Lois Harmeyer** of **Monrovia, CA** must be someone like me. When I get to “creating” I have to practically buy a new wardrobe (Thank goodness for thrift shops!) She writes, “I have a handy hint you may be able to use. If you want to get paint or glue off your hands and or clothing, here is a handy thing to have around. It is in a spray can by DESIGN MASTER and it is called MESS MASTER. [Don't you love the name? -NS] It says it is a special floral cleaner, but it cleans hands like magic. Just spray the paint or glue you have on your hands and wipe with a paper towel and it is gone.”

A SPECIAL TOUCH: When I go to a birthday party for an African-American client, I always carry a dollar bill in my pocket. The African-American birthday child wears a corsage of money that family and guests pin onto him or her. I add my dollar and that adds a smile for everyone. I like those little touches that say I am happy to be there.

SCRIPT SEGUES: When I was a young whipper-snapper I wrote a “great” original story that no one could follow. I couldn't figure it out until a fellow guild member pointed out that I had no segues from one scene to the next. People were getting lost between act one and act two. Now at the end of an act I am careful to tell my young audience where I will be when I come back in the next scene. For instance, Red Ridinghood might exit the scene with, “I'm off to Granny's. I'm running late, so I think I will cut through the woods.” I have just told the children where I will be in scene two: in the woods, of course.

TECH CORNER: There is so much information about puppets on the Internet nowadays. Here are two sites you might want to investigate: www.bear-town.com/backstage/puppetbldg_resources_pg4.htm is an incredible guide to puppet building resources. <http://puppetvision.blogspot.com> This site promises “The web's best source for puppet film and video goodness, delivered fresh to your computer each day.”

I'd love to hear from you. And have a great summer. ____ Nancy