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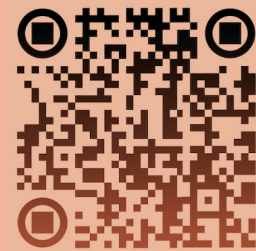
FALL 2022

VOL 73 NO. 4



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Cover: Little Amal, a 12-foot puppet, attracts crowds in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens, site of the 1939 and 1964 World's Fair.

Photo: Richard Termine

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Christmastime and Puppets

In this issue, there are articles and interviews about puppeteers and puppets that have truly made a difference to our art form. The brilliant Australian shadow puppeteer Richard Bradshaw tells a story of connections, inspiration, and friendship with three legendary friends: Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth from England and the great shadow filmmaker from Germany, Lotte Reiniger. The groundbreaking musical *Little Shop of Horrors* is thrilling audiences 40 years after its debut, and puppeteer/actor Teddy Yudain talked to us about *Little Shop*. Madame, the creation of Wayland Flowers, brought a new level of adult bawdiness to clubs, films, and television in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2022, Joe Kovacs brings her back to vividly entertain again. And our cover story is about Little Amal, the 12-foot orphan puppet who has won hearts in more than a dozen countries. There are articles about puppetry in New York, Houston, Austin, St. Louis, Charlotte, San Diego, Korea, and Kenya.

This issue goes to print at holiday time. December can mean a very full schedule. I want to share just a bit about how my own work evolved to meet the challenges of a busy season, and no doubt it is similar to your journey as well.

Santa closes the show. It's fairly obvious that no "act" should follow him. He is the grand finale. Doing my very first Christmas

The weekends in December were typically filled with three shows a day and on some days, foolishly, four shows. Fortified with coffee at 8 AM, I would arrive at a department store for Breakfast With Santa, dash off to a lunchtime show, and move on to a late afternoon show. Parties that started late, or a Santa who was not ready, or snow, could add extra stress to the day.

gigs, a couple of clients wanted the puppet show to go after Santa. So with not much experience and wanting to please the client, I agreed. Mistake. After Santa, the kids are done. I suggested that the puppet show introduce Santa. I tried using a puppet Santa at the end, but he was followed by the "real," life-size Santa. The puppet seemed lame. Albert, my green and yellow mouth puppet loved to sing. He could end the show. He didn't sing well (inspired by my own not-so-great singing ability), but he was irrepressibly enthusiastic. So at the end, Albert would sing "Jingle Bells." It was arranged with the sponsors that Albert's song would be the cue to bring

in Santa. On quite a few occasions, I would glance over to Santa's personal assistant, and often I would get a signal to stretch. Santa was having trouble with his costume, or his beard. So Albert sang "Deck the Halls," followed by "Rudolph," and at times of extreme delay, "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," and then hopefully Santa was ready for his "Jingle Bells" cue. It worked like a charm but with one small cost. Santa's entrance left no room for the audience to applaud the end of the show. That was OK. I packed up, collected my check, and hurried on to the next gig.

The weekends in December were typically filled with three shows a day and on some days, foolishly, four shows. Fortified with coffee at 8 AM, I would arrive at a department store for Breakfast With Santa, dash off to a lunchtime show, and move on to a late afternoon show. Parties that started late, or a Santa who was not ready, or snow, could add extra stress to the day. At times, adults were imbibing "Christmas good cheer." They were politely encouraged to stay at the bar to drink and chatter, but sometimes they were with the kids and their tipsy conversations became yet another challenge.

Inspired by Burr Tillstrom, my show centered on my little family of puppets preparing for the holidays. They would struggle to decorate with a garland of holly, getting hopelessly tangled up. They had great difficulty wrapping a gift, so the delighted audience would offer helpful instructions. With different decorations and different wrapping paper, the same show would work for Chanukah, singing the "Dreidel Song" at the end.

Many puppeteers have confessed that by the time December 23 rolled around, they had run a marathon of shows and were exhausted. The road-warrior puppeteers (oops, the "ambassadors of holiday happiness") had not had time to buy one present or put up a single decoration. Puppeteers are part of the service industry. Just as store clerks and waiters serve the public, our job is to make the audience happy (and make it look easy). We arrive at a venue and quickly assess the small changes that would make the show the best it could be, perhaps not the best ever, but the best it could be in those particular circumstances. There are the gigs where everyone knows that something magically wonderful has happened, a perfect bond of audience and performer, and other times, not so much. I remember a show that I thought was just little bit off, but as I was leaving, the host said, "You were great. We love your show. See you next year," and best of all he said, "You are part of our holiday tradition."



Steve

KRYSTAL PUPPET THEATRE OF KENYA

By CAMILLA HENNEMAN

Audiences at Great Plains Puppet Train, the Green Mountain Festival, and Puppets in Portland were fortunate to see one of Kenya's premier puppet troupes, Krystal Theatre, perform their show *Tears by the River*. When I spent time in Kenya during the late 1980s, I fell in love with the country and its people. I was thrilled to see this wonderful show from Kenya come here.

Puppetry as a means of addressing health and social issues in Kenya got its start in 1995, as a response to HIV/AIDS. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject and stigma attached to it, health organizations were looking for a way to get information to the public in a form that would engage interest and not upset them. Myths and taboos surrounding HIV were dominating the news. Puppetry offered a way to get the message out that the public could accept. Puppets could say things to an audience that humans could not. Puppets could talk about sexual issues and show condom demonstration without upsetting the audience.

The Family Planning Private Sector Project, an organization in Nairobi, invited Gary Friedman, a renowned puppeteer from South Africa, to train some students in puppetry to develop live productions and videos addressing issues like HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, girl child education, conservation, and corruption. Through the Kenya Institute of Puppet Theatre, they created projects for community involvement, awareness, growth, and development.

Fedelis Kyalo and Chrispin Mwashaga met at a training session in Mombasa. Together, Fedelis and Chrispin formed Krystal Theatre, named after Eric Krystall,



Masks as well as puppets from the work of Krystal Puppet Theatre.

Photos courtesy of Krystal Puppet Theatre who mentored many Kenyan puppeteers. Fedelis began in school as a stage actor, a choir member, and a percussionist. He was inspired by his family's Kamba heritage, and particularly by his grandmother's traditional stories and songs, which she would tell with a wooden doll dressed in a banana peel and colored beads. From his family, he also learned traditional drumming and dance. Chrispin grew up listening to traditional oral stories narrated by his parents, grandparents, and teachers. He would bring characters to life, by singing with them and telling stories together with his six siblings.

In 2002, an international puppetry festival was held in Nairobi. Audiences were introduced to many different puppetry styles, including marionettes and Bunraku. Fedelis and Chrispin were

inspired to create their first theater performance, *Tears by the River*, which incorporated marionettes, hand puppets, masks, drums, and silhouettes. The story is a folktale with animal characters that explores courage and the modern-day issue of migration. Traditional oral storytelling combined with music and humor tell a story about the courage of one little monkey and jealousy of others. The show pulls from the traditions of Kenya's many tribal

communities, drawing on elements such as the wooden figures of the Giriama people, and the bead and hide-costumed wooden dolls of the Turkana, Maasai, and Kamba tribes. The story teaches a lesson that is meant to prepare young people for life.

They were soon invited to perform in Europe. Fedelis told me, "We translated our script into Spanish to prepare for three festivals in Spain. After that, we were invited to perform in Ecuador, Indonesia, Poland, Argentina, and South Africa." After COVID hit the world, there was an opportunity of doing more public service shows. They created a video show, *Ask Dr. Pamoja*, a series of short puppet stories to inform children and caregivers about the benefits of hand washing, masks, social distancing, and vaccination. They used their well-known monkey character, Bali, and created a new character, Dr. Pamoja (*Pamoja* means "together" in Swahili). In Kenya, puppetry is also spreading to the streets as artists are incorporating puppets into street protests to voice their anger.

It would be great to see more of Krystal Theatre's shows here. Bringing performers from Africa involves detailed planning. One of the most challenging aspects of bringing performers from overseas is procuring the visas. Shoshana Bass and Eric Bass from Sandglass Theater secured the visas allowing the group to travel. It is a long, expensive, and sometimes difficult process, but it is well worth it. Some tips I got from Shoshanna are: Start a year in advance; collaborate with other presenters, schools, and community organizations; and build connections. Figure unexpected costs into your fundraising. The interview on the artist's side matters too. They need to be well prepared.

On these days of tight funding and difficult travel, it might be tempting not to deal with the visa process; after all, what can we really learn from a brave little monkey from Kenya? But as the United States is getting more insular, I think that now we need artists from outside of our culture more than ever. We need stories and performers that bring a message of courage. What can we learn from a brave little monkey with a big heart? I would respond, "So much more than we can ever imagine!"

Krystal Theatre: kpuppettheatre@gmail.com; Twitter: [Kpuppeteers Krystal](#); Facebook: [Krystal Puppeteers](#)



Scene from *Tears by the River*.

Greetings, Working Puppet Folk (I hope, I hope, I hope!)

I just returned from the Great Lakes Region's Puppet Potlatch, and what a joy it was to hear that folks are slowly but surely returning to work. I, too, was pleased to join the ranks of the almost employed. Being 81 and out of work for two years, I wondered if I would be able to return to work. I ran a trial summer, booking one show every two weeks and...YES! Woo! Wee!



Smaller Sound Systems. I felt that it would be possible for me to lighten the load by purchasing a Bose speaker from Walmart. There are many small speakers available, but for my music I thought I would spring for a high-end product. It is $6 \times 4 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and will take wallpaper off the back of the gym wall. Well worth the price (\$125), because the quality of the sound is incredible.

Headset and Amplifier. Next, I purchased a Zoweetek Voice Amplifier from Amazon. This little baby is $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and comes with two headsets (one to plug in and one Bluetooth). It holds a charge for several days. It was developed for gym teachers who were losing their voices trying to yell at the kids on the basketball team. I slip it into my pocket, and I am good to go. If you are going to do some singing, you might want to upgrade, but for crowds of 100 or under, it's a blessing. It's just perfect for libraries. I bought mine for \$55.00.

Folding Stool. So now I had 1 pound plus of sound equipment. How else could I reduce the number of carry-in trips? I needed both a stool and a step stool. At www.smithpicks.com, I purchased a retractable folding stool. When closed, it is the size of my purse (and much lighter!) with a carrying handle. It can expand just a short way, to make a step stool, or all the way, for chair height. It comes with a sit-upon cushion as well. I paid \$44.98—pricey, I know, but stuff like this saves on the chiropractor bills!

Extra Strong Cardboard. Jeff Bragg of Washington, DC, whom I met at the Coney Island Festival, told me a good source of really

heavy cardboard. He said to go to a music store that sells guitars. Guitars are shipped in a box within a box, and that inside box is as hard as wood and very light weight. Best of all, it's free!

Hot Glue Method. Nate Brown of Shaker Heights, Ohio, has to be the king of hot glue. His huge, magnificent creations are sculptures of fur tufts and hot glue. He says that to get a faster setup of large amounts of hot glue, use ice packs. Also, never do any hot gluing without a bowl of cold water next to your project, and practice putting your burning hand into the bowl, not your mouth (which I've done numerous times!).

Big Slabs of Cardboard. If you are working with big props and on a budget, Amy Trompetter of New Rochelle, New York, says that you can get big, strong sheets of cardboard from your local bicycle shop. These are also good for stages at the elementary school. And again, it's free.

Bookmarks for Advertising. There was a time when you could post your flyer at the library. You could leave your promotional postcard on the librarian's desk. No more. But Peggy Pearson of Greenwood, Indiana, says that your advertising piece, in the shape of a bookmark, is always welcomed, and kids can pick one up to carry home in their book. Order postcards designed to be cut in half, and you have a bookmark.

Working With Fleece. So many people are working with fleece. It stretches, but Jenny Walker of Lyndhurst, Ohio, cautions users to watch out for its stretchability. It stretches only one way, so be careful to double check the bias before cutting. She also says to pay extra for the non-pill type.

Fire! I was visiting Brad Lowe in Waterford, Michigan, when he accidentally tipped over a burning candle. I was ready to rush for the water when he just picked it up and put it back on the table. It was a lightbulb! It was so realistic that I couldn't believe it. Of course, I immediately thought of puppet props. He said he bought it at Hobby Lobby. I had seen other "candles," but this was bigger, brighter, and more realistic.

Well, folks, I have some other work to do, so I have to sign off. I love to hear from you, any way you can. Stay safe, and work toward excellence!

I, too, was pleased to join the ranks of the almost employed. Being 81 and out of work for two years, I wondered if I would be able to return to work. I ran a trial summer, booking one show every two weeks and...YES! Woo! Wee!

Puppetry News

Pinocchio

Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio* is a 2022 stop-motion animated musical fantasy film directed by Guillermo del Toro and Mark Gustafson. In previews, critics praised the direction, the writing, the animation, the score, and the voice acting.

More than 10 years in the making, *Pinocchio* was announced by del Toro in 2008 and scheduled for release in 2014, but the project ran into many obstacles. In 2018, the project was revived with the support of Netflix. Streaming on Netflix began December 9, 2022.

Del Toro is most famous for directing *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and *The Shape of Water* (2017), which earned Academy Awards for best director and best picture. The *Pinocchio* producers are listed as Netflix Animation, The Jim Henson Company, Shadow Machine, and Double Dare You Productions. It was Lisa Henson who approached ShadowMachine founders Alex Bulkley and Corey Campodónico about having their animation studio come on board for the production, and she introduced them to the two directors.

The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi was published in Italy in 1883, and since then, there have been many productions, all done in different styles. In 1938, the WPA Theatre produced Yasha Frank's *Pinocchio* as a stage play, and by 1939, the Suzari Marionettes were performing a puppet version of Frank's show. In 1940, the iconic Disney film made its debut. A new, live-action version by Disney released in September 2022 received devastating reviews, with a low 27% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

Del Toro's *Pinocchio* received a 98% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. To see the brilliant puppets and del Toro's passionate commentary, take a look at the YouTube clip "Guillermo del Toro Behind the Craft."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUoS-CBi-4iA>

Allie Scollon

John Scollon of the Columbia Marionette Theatre, Columbia, South Carolina, proudly announced that the founder of the theater—his mom, Allie Scollon—celebrated her 90th birthday on November 10, 2022. Allie Scollon was the recipient of the Puppeteers of America President's Award in 2009. At the age of 18, Allie and her husband, Bill, built their first puppets. She was soon performing shows at department stores. In the late 1960s, the Scollons rented a store as a studio and began producing full-length marionette shows that would travel the country. In 1982, the Scollons moved to South Carolina and in 1988 founded their theater company. In 1995, they opened their theater building under the leadership of John Scollon and Karri Scollon.

My Neighbour Totoro

This season, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented *My*

Neighbour Totoro. The *New York Times* reported, "The show's visual invention honors the animal kingdom, and the puppeteer Basil Twist and his hardworking team spring one enchantment after another on the audience. (The puppets are the glorious handiwork of Jim Henson's Creature Shop.)" The play is based on a sweet, tender 1988 animated film by Hayao Miyazaki. The play, directed by Phelim McDermott, who divides his career between theater and opera, is a tale of two sisters displaced to rural Japan in the 1950s. *Financial Times* called it "a tender and remarkably beautiful show."

Life of Pi

Life of Pi comes to Broadway, with previews starting March 9, 2023, and officially opening March 30, 2023. A young boy, Pi, and a Bengal tiger (a puppet) named Richard Parker share a journey in a very small boat. The puppet and movement direction by Finn Caldwell, and puppet design by Caldwell and Nick Barnes, are an essential and spectacular part of the show.

<https://www.lifeofpionstage.com/#trailer>

Life of Pi as a film in 2012 was nominated for 11 Academy Awards. The stage play made its debut in Sheffield, England, in 2019 and opened in London, December 2021. The Olivier Awards are the London theater equivalent of Broadway's Tony Awards. The seven performer/puppeteers who play the tiger in *Life of Pi* were collectively awarded Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the Olivier

Awards for "using intricate puppetry to bring the animal characters to life."

Before coming to Broadway, *Life of Pi* will make its North American premiere at the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University December 4, 2022, to January 29, 2023.

News of Christmas Past

Almost all of Tony Sarg's New York City performances were in late December: *Rip Van Winkle* (1920), *Don Quixote* (1923), *Treasure Island* (1925), *Ali Baba* (1926), and

Alice in Wonderland (1930). New York City offers choices. In 1929, there were holiday offerings by Sue Hastings Marionettes, Remo Bufano, and Tony Sarg. All through the 1930s, Bufano, Sarg, and Hastings presented December shows. In 1932, the Yale Puppeteers added to the mix, and the following December, Italy's Teatro dei Piccoli was on Broadway. The Salzburg Marionettes were on Broadway in 1952, followed by December performances on many other visits. Other holiday-time Broadway shows included Baird's *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves* (1956), *Alice in Wonderland* (1982), and *Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop* (1994).

Sarg's upside-down marionettes, the huge balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, began in 1927. Nick Coppola and Macy's have created more holiday magic, each year from 1976 to 2017.



Habib Nasib Nader, Tom Larkin, and Scarlet Wilderink in *Life of Pi*.
Photo: Johan Persson

REMEMBERING LOTTE REINIGER

*By Richard Bradshaw for part of a Zoom presentation
organized by the Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry, August 7, 2022.*

The first time I heard the name Lotte Reiniger was in Sydney in 1952. I was 13, and a school-friend had persuaded me to join a little children's puppet theater in the beachside suburb of Clovelly. At the time, the Hogarth Puppets of Jan

Bussell and his wife, Ann Hogarth, from England, were on tour with marionettes for the Australian Children's Theatre. A few evening performances for adults were organized, with shadow puppets as well as marionettes, and my school-friend had been to one of those shows in a suburban town hall. He had been very impressed by the main shadow story, Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*, with shadow puppets made by Lotte Reiniger. The story was told using three screens, a central rectangular screen with a circular screen on either side. The Bussells did the narration, moving from screen to screen so that there was no break in the 25 minutes of story, even though there were 15 changes of scene.

The shadow show had originally been made for television, which in those days went out live. Jan Bussell had invited Lotte to make the figures in 1950 but was a bit alarmed on the day she came to cut them out, because she arrived with no notes or sketches. "Don't worry," she said. "It's all in here!" and pointed to her head. The Bussells had to do a show that day, and when they returned 12 hours later, there was Lotte sitting on the floor surrounded by all the exquisite scenery and figures needed. Lotte didn't draw her figures before cutting them out but created the silhouettes directly from card with the deft use of scissors, after roughly mapping out the design with the scrawl of a pencil. Nor did she pursue a geometric accuracy in patterns, such as tiled floors, window panes, columns, and rows of bells. That wasn't necessary and, in fact, would have looked wrong.

The Bussells were my link to Lotte. Even before I joined the Clovelly Puppet Theatre, I had borrowed Jan's book *The Puppet Theatre* from a library and tried my hand at making a marionette. The Hogarth Puppets were already quite famous in England, mainly

for their marionette puppet Muffin the Mule, which had been appearing on BBC TV since 1946, and is claimed to be the first-ever TV puppet star. While I didn't see the adult show in 1952, I did get to see their children's marionette show in Sydney, from the back upstairs row of a 2,500-seat theater.

After their tour in Australia, Jan asked Lotte to make figures for some Aboriginal legends and years later, gave some of these figures to me. On the back is written, "Runnymede Framing of Egham." The Bussells lived in Runnymede (part of Egham), and Runnymede is where King John signed the Magna Carta in 1215. In 1965, I visited the Bussells when the 750th anniversary of the Magna Carta was being celebrated.

There are two more Aboriginal figures by Lotte that the Bussells gave me, and I've attached them to clear plastic on the window of one of our doors with the quite unrelated angel Lotte made for *The Happy Prince*. In one hand is the heart that remained after the rest of the statue was melted down. In the other is the dead swallow that distributed the gold and jewels from the statue to the needy and died of cold when, in order to stay with the Happy Prince statue, it missed the autumn migration to Africa.

Lotte's interest in making some shadow puppets as well as silhouette films was sparked by a visit to Athens in 1936, when she saw a show by the great Karagiozis player Mollas. She was delighted by the enthusiastic enjoyment of the large adult audience, demonstrating that shadow theater could be popular entertainment.

She mentions this in her book, saying how the distributors of her films insisted that they be marketed as "art," but she preferred them to have popular appeal. Lotte was very taken by the lively action of the Greek puppets, which are worked from behind with horizontal rods pushed into the holes of the figures, which used to be made of leather. At that time, German shadow puppets were usually worked from below, often with clear plastic strips. By a happy coincidence, Jan Bussell had visited Athens in 1938 and had also been inspired

continued on next page



Lotte Reiniger, 1979.
Photos courtesy of Richard Bradshaw



The Happy Prince.



Scissor-cut (3.5 × 3.5 inches), gift from Lotte to Jan Bussell.



Puppets by Lotte at the home of Richard Bradshaw.

continued from previous page

by Mollas's work. He wrote about it in his book *The Puppets and I* (1950) but before he had approached Lotte to make the shadow puppets for *The Happy Prince*.

It is not surprising, then, to find that the puppets for *The Happy Prince* were worked from behind with rods. Jan had special brass fittings made to go onto the end of the rods, into which little flat bolts could be screwed from the screen side of the puppets. With so many puppets, a lot of time was spent before and after a show attaching and then removing the rods. As an amateur, I had taken a shadow show to England with me in 1964 but had worked the figures from below. I then remade them to be worked by rods from behind, but didn't enjoy the time spent fixing and removing rods, and trying to keep them safe during a performance. A couple of months before I returned to Australia in early 1966, Jan suggested I could try hinging the rods to the puppets, and that solved all those problems. For me, it was a real breakthrough ... but I later read in Lotte's book that she was already doing that, using rods from umbrellas.

Jan Bussell had first met Lotte when she was working in London in 1938-39, before World War II. In 1937, in the very early experimental days of BBC television at Alexandra Palace, Jan had become a director of televised plays. One day, Lotte had come to the studio to be a guest on an interview program. Already an admirer of her films, Jan then had no idea of her new interest in shadow puppets.

Back in Sydney in 1953, one of the adult puppeteers and my school friend, Arthur Cantrill, had been inspired to act out another Oscar Wilde story with shadow puppets, *The Nightingale and the Rose*. This was also done using three screens, but they resembled the three panels of a church window. I helped them, and that was my introduction to working with shadow puppets. I never imagined then that they would take over my life, but it's clear that this was all Lotte and Jan's fault!

In 1964, I left Sydney to spend two years based in London. A couple of months after arriving, I attended a festival of USSR puppetry in Leningrad with Edith Murray, the director of the Clovelly Puppet Theatre. We traveled there by ship from London. That is where, for the first time, I met Jan and Ann Bussell. After Leningrad, we went to Moscow to see more puppetry and then returned to England by train. Jan and Ann were also on that long train journey and invited me to work with them doing shows in London parks with their caravan theater that summer. I was planning to do some teaching in England, but this was holiday time, and I gladly accepted. The Bussells' home was alongside the river Thames in Egham, and I had accommodation in a bed and breakfast near a boat shed a few doors along. While I was rehearsing with the Bussells, they invited me to a show, and so at last, 12 years after I had first heard about it, I got to see *The Happy Prince*...but from backstage.

One Saturday afternoon...August 1, 1964 (58 years ago!)...

Lotte Reiniger came to tea from her home in North London. Jan collected her from Egham Station. A proper English tea is quite an event, with cakes and other nice things laid on. Lotte's much-loved husband, Carl Koch, had died exactly eight months earlier, and she was still a bit sad. Before she left, she invited me to visit her studio and drew a little map to help me to get there.

A couple of months later, once I had found some longer-term accommodation in London, and was doing some supply teaching in order to pay the rent, I visited Lotte at The Abbey, an artists' community in High Barnet in the north of London, where she and Carl had begun living in 1952. Shadow puppeteer Betty Polus (a.k.a. Elisheva Hart), from the Bay Area, visited her at The Abbey in 1979 and wrote that Lotte's flat gave the impression of floating in trees.

It is hard to say how privileged I felt, almost overwhelmed, to

be invited to Lotte's home. She showed me the trick table with a chain to the camera up above, which was pulled to take a single frame. I was a bit concerned that she was now using colored figures lit from above, feeling that the silhouettes were dramatically stronger, and worried that the final result might look like a poor animated cartoon, but I'm glad to say I was wrong. I have a DVD of her 1958 film *A Night in a Harem*, which used such colored figures, and it's a delight. In 1963, before I arrived in London, Lotte had made a five-minute film for a Coventry Theatre production of a Christmas pantomime of *Cinderella*. The sequence showed the pumpkin and mice being turned into a coach and horses. Edith Murray had seen it and enjoyed the coach flying over recognizable London landmarks: Tower Bridge, St Paul's, and Westminster.

After Lotte had shown me her workplace, she invited me to supper. She had cooked a main course of veal and capers followed by *apfelstrudel* and cream, with some red wine to drink. I was sharing a flat with three other Australians, and we were not very house-trained, so this was a memorable luxury. Alongside the table was a pile of silhouettes Lotte had cut from newspapers and magazines.

I saw Lotte again some months later at the end of a talk she gave at the V&A Museum during school holidays. At question time, a little girl, clearly worried about the tedium of frame-by-frame animation, asked, "Do you enjoy doing this?"

Lotte took a deep breath and replied, "Yes!" Although Lotte's command of English was excellent, when she hadn't heard a question clearly, she would ask, "Bitte?" After the talk, Lotte told me there was another Australian in the audience, but she had left.

There was Lotte sitting on the floor surrounded by all the exquisite scenery and figures needed. Lotte didn't draw her figures before cutting them out but created the silhouettes directly from card with the deft use of scissors, after roughly mapping out the design with the scrawl of a pencil.



Greek puppeteer Mollas, Athens, 1936. Scratchboard by Lotte.

In 1975, after a show for a school in Terang, a town about 200 km (about 134 miles) west of Melbourne, a teacher asked if she could record me singing "Super Kangaroo." It turns out she had been that other Australian Lotte had mentioned 10 years earlier.

In January 1973, I was yet again staying with the Bussells. They had been in Australia in the first half of 1972, and it is thanks to their suggestion that I performed at a Puppeteers of America Festival in Oakland ahead of the big UNIMA Festival in France. With their help that January, I did a show at the Commonwealth Institute in London, mainly for the local puppeteers. We had invited Lotte, but she got the date wrong and later sent a long apology, which I didn't expect:

Dear Mr. Bradshaw,

I have no words to try to explain to you, why I was not there on Monday.

It must have something to do with my braincells which are failing me in my old age : I have got muddled with the days of the week. Please believe me that I am more than crestfallen - for I wanted nothing more eagerly, than to see your show, as it is such a rare pleasure to [see] someone else's shadow show and I desire nothing more, than to meet my colleagues. Please forgive me.

Thank you so much for sending me the ticket. I meant to come with my assistants, who also were most keen to see it and are now furious with me for my muddle.

Wishing you all the best and hoping sincerely for a next time, to amend this mistake

Yours Lotte Reiniger

This generous note was accompanied by a little scissor-cut (about 9 by 9 cm [about 3.5 inches]). On the
continued on next page



Scissor-cut of Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth, scene from *Aucassin and Nicolette*.



The Happy Prince, 1950.



Pfarrhaus (pastor's house) in Dettenhausen, where Lotte spent her last months.

continued from previous page

back is written: *For Richard Bradshaw with friendly greetings from most apologetic. Lotte Reiniger*

In 1979, I performed at a big puppet festival in London. The main force behind this was Penny Francis, but Jan Bussell was the artistic director. For two weeks, I played for school audiences in the charming New Arts Theatre near Leicester Square, which was perfect for me. But on the Sunday afternoon in the middle of the season, I did a show to a large public audience in the Wigmore Hall. It's a famous venue for chamber concerts and boxing matches but not very good for shadow puppets. Not only is the seating on a flat floor, but also the ceiling is of frosted glass and allows some daylight in. It was not an easy show, but at the end, three young men came up to speak with me. They were Australian doctors,

and I had been their mathematics teacher a decade earlier. While I was chatting with them, I caught sight of Lotte standing at one side with a broad smile on her face, waiting to say hello. A wonderful surprise! She was staying on after my show in order to see Albrecht Roser, who was playing there that night.

At that same festival, I met Liliane Morin from France, who asked if I was interested in touring Europe. I said yes but told Margaret that I didn't think anything would come of it. How wrong I was! The first tour was to begin in France in late 1981, and before it was finalized, I received a letter from people named Happ in Dettenhausen, Germany, asking if I could do a workshop and show there. Liliane was able to add it to the end of the tour in February 1982.

When Margaret and I got to Dettenhausen, we discovered that this was where Lotte was living at the end of her life. Dettenhausen is a village of about 5,500, about 30 km (18 miles) south of Stuttgart. It is near Waldenbuch, where Ritter chocolates are made, and Tübingen, the university town, is a bit further south. The Happs invited Lotte to give a workshop in Dettenhausen for German and Swiss puppeteers in 1978. In mid-1979, she was back in Germany for a retrospective exhibit at the puppet museum in Munich. In 1980, her health was failing, and with the help of the Happs, she moved from London to Dettenhausen, at first to a retirement home and then, in the autumn of 1980, into their home. Alfred Happ is a Lutheran pastor, and at the time, he and his wife, Helga, and daughters Judith and Kati lived in the *pfarrhaus* (pastor's residence) near the church, and Lotte made shadow plays with the family.

We were in Dettenhausen in February 1982, and Lotte had died in the previous June. Alfred Happ had conducted her funeral service. Albrecht Roser attended and was very impressed. Nancy Staub from the United States was also there and says it was a great celebration with an "oompah-pah" German band. The room we stayed in had been Lotte's, and her books were still on the shelves. On a later visit, we saw that a simple tombstone had been erected with the names Lotte Reiniger-Koch and Carl Koch. How was that possible? Carl had died in 1963! The Bussells told me that Lotte had kept the urn with Carl's ashes on a mantelpiece and every night lit a candle on either side. Even when she traveled to North America, she took his ashes with her. One is reminded of that first animated film on which they worked together before they were married: *The Ornament of the Loving Heart*.

Alfred Happ persuaded the Stadtmuseum (the town museum) of

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Tübingen to set up a permanent exhibition of Lotte's work, and the museum has an online shop where you can buy related books and DVDs. I strongly recommend the biography Alfred wrote, which sells for about 15 euros. Even if you can't handle the German text, it is richly illustrated and you can read Whitney Grace's biography for the story in English. Alfred contributed to the silhouette diary Lotte kept when she and Carl took over Jean Renoir's film *La Tosca* in Italy in 1940. Lotte illustrated Hans Anderson's *Die Kleine Seejungfrau* (*The Little Mermaid*) with scissor-cuts, and the proceeds

of the sales went toward restoration of the church in Dettenhausen. It was her last work. Alfred also published a huge book of her scissor-cuts illustrating operas by her favorite composer, Mozart.

Lotte was not just a great artist; she was a warm, generous person, happy to share her art with as many people as possible. And, like Mozart, she was a genius.

Richard Bradshaw,
Bowral NSW, August 2022.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES FROM WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PUPPETRY ARTS

Hogarth Puppets

The Hogarth Puppets was founded in 1932 in London by Jan Bussell (1909-1985) and Ann Hogarth (1910-1993) and became Britain's best-known company at home and abroad. Ann Hogarth was trained as a stage manager at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. While Jan Bussell served in the navy he collected puppets from Asia. He was an actor and television producer already involved in puppetry when the two met. Their most famous puppet was Muffin the Mule, which enjoyed a long television life of its own in a BBC series from 1946 to 1954. Ann Hogarth operated the marionettes, and Annette Mills played the piano on which Muffin and his friends performed. Muffin has passed into television history as part of the national heritage. He continued to appear live in the Hogarth Puppets' variety shows, in prestigious theaters including London's West End, with Jan Bussell as narrator and musician and Ann Hogarth as manipulator. In 1950, famed filmmaker/puppeteer Lotte Reiniger created shadow puppets for the Hogarth's production of Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. The Hogarth Puppets toured internationally with their string puppets to Australia, Africa, North America, and Europe. Jan Bussell, author of eight puppetry books, served as chairman of the British Centre of UNIMA and president of international UNIMA from 1968 to 1976.



On the set of *Muffin the Mule*. Left to right: Annette Mills (at piano), Ann Hogarth, and Jan Bussell, puppeteers.



Lotte at work with scissors.

Lotte Reiniger, born in Berlin (1899-1981), earned a place in cinema history and puppet history with her shadow silhouette film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), a pioneering feature-length animated film. At the age of 20, she made her first complete film, a "short," *The Ornament of the Loving Heart* (1919), in which she met Carl Koch (1892-1963), whom she married two years later in 1921. Her work was actively supported by Carl Koch, also a skilled animator, who master-minded many of the technical processes involved in the filmmaking, leaving Reiniger free to design, scissor-cut, and bring to life her witty and charming characters and creatures. The war years were difficult. In 1949, Reiniger and Koch started a new life in London. Puppeteers Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth befriended them. Reiniger worked on more than 40 films throughout her career, including 12 short traditional "fairy tale" films made in London in 1954. In the late 1970s, she visited North America for the first time, to conduct workshops.

Richard Bradshaw, born in Sydney, Australia, is best known for a solo shadow puppet show, which he has performed in 25 countries, and at five PofA National Festivals, first in 1972. He was one of six puppeteers profiled in the series *Jim Henson Presents the World of Puppetry*. He was a guest artist at the National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Center in 2007 and 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy63sh0TY-o&t=11s>

Zoom Is Here to Stay

Having once again maxed out my “in-house” and “in-garage” storage, I spent quite a bit of time this summer and fall deciding what to keep and what to let go. As we slowly find our way past the pandemic, it feels like the guilds are doing some of this too. My own guild, the **Twin Cities Puppeteers**, did some physical housekeeping by thinning out the guild library, which has been in storage for several years. Now the much smaller library will be available at guild meetings again.

It looks like many guilds have decided that Zoom is something to keep. Some guilds have experimented with hybrid (in-person and online) meetings, but I’ve been surprised at how many guilds are still having Zoom-only meetings. The **Greater Houston Puppetry Guild** had a performance via Zoom for their October meeting by Lisa Sturz, with her delightful tabletop version of *Aesop’s Fables*. Their November presentation, also via Zoom, was by Leonardo Velasquez, “Mr. Leo,” who performs using magic, music, storytelling, and puppets in Spanish and English.

In October, the **Boston Area Guild of Puppetry** met via Zoom with special guest Kate Brehm, a movement director and artist specializing in puppetry and physical acting, who is currently directing a large production at Harvard University.

The **Atlanta Puppetry Guild** focused on work created at the National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center for their October meeting via Zoom.

Sofia Padilla of Paradox Teatro, who spends part of her time in Minneapolis, presented a virtual workshop on “Making Shadow Puppet Joints and Mechs” in November for the **National Capital Puppetry Guild**.

The **Twin Cities Puppeteers** started the fall with two hybrid meetings. In September, Cecilia Schiller, an excellent woodcarver who has developed an extraordinary talent for building automata, talked to us about her work and demonstrated her “Puppet Master” automaton. In October, Chris Griffith and Shari Aronson of Z Puppets Rosenschnoz shared with us about the latest puppetry videos they have created focusing on the Cherokee language.

The **Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry** had a different kind of hybrid event in November when David Gordezky presented “Subject & Object,” a clown/puppetry hybrid workshop.

The members of the **Detroit Puppeteers Guild** were finally able to get together for a birthday party, the guild’s 76th, in October with a dinner and show at Kathie Henk’s studio. Rob Papineau’s Pippin Puppets performed *Magic Tricks With Batty Witch*.



The **Puppetry Guild of Greater St. Louis** had their October meeting at Bob Kramer’s Marionettes, which included the opportunity to see a performance of *Marvin’s Halloween Party*.

The **Puppet Guild of South Florida** met in August at the home of Carol Cheyne for food, friends, sharing, and show and tell. Amy Carlson has also arranged for the guild to use the art room at the high school where she teaches for meetings. In November, the guild was a part of the Day of the Dead celebration in Fort Lauderdale.

The **Florida Suncoast Puppet Guild** is not meeting in person yet, but the guild newsletter, edited by Robert Anthony, keeps members connected. The latest issue was a tribute to Priscilla Lakus, a founding member of the guild who passed away in July.

Joe Emory edits the newsletter for the **West Michigan Puppetry Guild**, which highlights members’ activities. The November-December issue included information about the Great Lakes Region’s annual Potlatch and the work of Jason Yancey, who uses shadow puppets to teach Spanish.

The newsletter of the **San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers’ Guild**, edited by Michael Nelson, is always packed with information. Recent issues have included highlights of the Left Coast Puppet Fest, the Children’s Fairyland Day of Puppetry, and a new Jim Henson exhibit in San Francisco.

The September meeting of the **Puppetry Guild of Upstate New York** featured a performance of *The Old Tyme Punch and Judy Show*, with the first use of George Blake’s 1880 Punch and Judy “fit up.”

A bit farther south, the **Puppetry Guild of Greater New York** met in September at the Jim Henson Carriage House for a discussion about the tricks of the trade for touring puppet shows locally and nationally.

The **Puppetry Guild of Northeastern Ohio** had a very interesting program for their November meeting, with Brad Clark showing very large, corrugated cardboard masks that he made with a paper sculpture technique and his carved wooden Baron von Munchausen marionette.

The **Connecticut Guild of Puppetry** has a new T-shirt available on their website, www.ctpuppetry.org. It’s a great way to promote the guild and probably make a little money along the way.

Don’t forget to let me know what your guild is doing. I’d love to receive news about your guild at kurt@huntermarionettes.com.

Awe and Possibility, Celebrating the Puppetry Guild of New York at 60

By Bruce Cannon, Guild President

1962 was a profound year for me. I was seven years old and full of awe and possibility. In 1962, Puppetry Guild of Greater New York (PGOGNY) was started in Greenwich Village by dancer-puppeteer Lea Wallace. In 1962, Kennedy was president. John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth. There was the Cuban missile crisis. There was a fierce reaction when a Black man was first admitted to University of Mississippi. In 1962, Spiderman, Marvel's superhero, made his first appearance.

In the guild archives, I found a great article by Elani Myers in *Puppet Master*, December 2007. She researched the archives and wrote wonderfully about our humble beginning. One document began, "Organizational attempts were made, but nothing actually happened until Lea Wallace called together a steering committee: Larry Berth-

el and co-editor with Ann Marie Cecil (1968-1971). He was editor of the newsletter titled *Involvement* (1973-1981). The newsletter has provided an ongoing chronicle of puppetry in New York. Steven Widerman was editor of *Puppet Master* (1995-2003) followed by editor Peter Lewis.

In Central Park, every June from 1996 until 2008, PGOGNY, in cooperation with the City of New York Parks and Recreation, held its annual event "Puppets in the Park." There were four hours of puppet performances by talented guild members, with a finale by the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre's touring company. Several celebrations of National Day of Puppetry were held at the Donnell Library in cooperation with the New York Public Library. Over the years, guild meetings moved all over Manhattan, from the Lenny Suib Playhouse at Asphalt Green, to the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, to Westbeth, and most recently to the Carriage House (courtesy of the Hensons).

We had some very significant icons of puppetry come through our guild; however, we cannot lose sight of the fact that our guild is also for those new to puppetry, novices, enthusiasts, and the whole spectrum of artists with an interest in puppetry.

In 2020, our officers and board began the process of updating our constitution and bylaws, maintaining our traditions and looking to the future. A committee for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) was established to seek the diverse perspective PGOGNY needs to become equitable and inclusive.

The updated constitution and bylaws were approved by our membership on February 8, 2022, just in time for our 60th

birthday. It is impossible to name them all, so I would like to first give a posthumous salute to our founders and a collective shout-out and hug to all officers, board members, writers, editors, guild performers, workshop coordinators, meeting hosts, and anyone in the last 60 years who gave time to our guild.

I would like to end with another quote from Elani Myers: "The moral is that we are all part of a wonderful tradition. Just a glimpse at the history of the guild lets us know that we can look back and appreciate all the great puppeteers who have graced our guild, and the members who continue to grace us with their greatness."

Happy birthday, PGOGNY. We will continue to do great things in puppetry.

Bruce Cannon currently serves as director of the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre.

The guild charter lists 85 names as charter members, including Doug and Gayle Anderson, Paul Ashley, Bil Baird, Larry Berthelson, Nancy Cole, Bob Brown, Ann Cohen and Bea Geller, Jim and Jane Henson, Marshall Izen, Alice May Hall, Milton Halpert, Jero Magon, Lillian Oppenheimer, Frank Paris, Nancy Schmale and Alice Swann, Bernice Silver, Tom Tichenor, Lea Wallace, Gia Wallace, Caroly Wilcox, and Rod Young.



PGOGNY September 2022 meeting at the Carriage House.

elson, Ann Cohen, Bea Geller, Alice May Hall, Mary D. Hoffman, Ted Lewis, Frank Paris, Claire Silverman, and Rod Young."

In Lea Wallace's papers, Elani found press releases and many letters from puppetry greats. There was an invitation from RCA to perform on color television at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. A 1964 clipping from *Backstage* declared, "Puppetry Guild Meets Rowlf...A canine puppet star on *The Jimmy Dean Show* on ABC will make a guest appearance at the first fall meeting of the Puppetry Guild of Greater New York." Another headline proclaimed, "Dog Philosopher to Offer Biting Commentary." Of course, the dog philosopher is Rowlf, created by Jim Henson.

The first guild newsletter from 1963 reported, "Kukla, Burr, and Ollie to Speak." Burr Tillstrom, a television celebrity puppeteer, was an advisor to our guild. Bil Baird was on the advisory board. In 1965, Baird's "Lonely Goatherd" sequence in the film *The Sound of Music* became famous around the world. The first guild president was Frank Paris, the creator of the original Howdy Doody. Rod Young, who like myself worked at the Swedish Cottage, was guild president in 1966, when Puppeteers of America chartered the guild. Young was the editor of volume one (1963) of the guild newsletter,



Chuncheon Puppet Festival opening parade, led by Cocobau.
Photos: Hwayheon Oh

Korea Celebrates Puppets

By Chad Williams

In a medium-sized city in the mountains of Korea, near the northern border and DMZ, straddling a lake that supplies Seoul with all its drinking water, is one of the great puppet capitals of the world: Chuncheon.

Every week in Chuncheon, amazing puppet and mask performances take place for local audiences at the Cocobau Theater. This is the same multi-venue site that hosts a very high-caliber annual international puppet festival, drawing in amazing international and local puppet troupes. The last mayor spent a metric ton of cash to enhance Chuncheon's cultural identity in the world as a major puppet city on par with Charleville-Mézières in France. This included building an ambitious theater complex with several indoor and outdoor performance spaces of varying sizes and a puppetry museum with ever-updating exhibits (which now boasts a large collection of *Puppetry Journal*). Cocobau, the brand and signature character, is everywhere. You cannot walk anywhere on the grounds without seeing, hearing, or feeling Cocobau.

The 34th Chuncheon Puppet Festival began with a 1,000-strong parade starting downtown and leading to an outdoor stadium. Hundreds of police officers and staff blocked streets as all participating companies, local groups, kids on bikes, politicians, and VIPs brought the streets to life with puppets of every shape and size. A rocking drum corps led the motley, unending stream of puppeteers through a very long route with packed audiences on either side of the streets. This was a major event. At our destination, a show with

giant puppets was already taking place to an already-seated crowd of 1,000 people. My group, which consisted of presenters at the International Association of Puppet Friendly Cities (AVIAMA), a group of leaders of puppet communities from more than 15 countries, marched proudly with giant rod fish, marionettes, and, in my case, a little fox hand puppet. The entire parade moved through the stadium, followed by many, many performances and speeches that went late into the night.

The week before this event, AVIAMA presenters had a VIP tour of major cultural institutions around Chuncheon. Mayors from European cities, all trying to be the next Charleville, pitched to UNIMA International leaders about why we should attend their city's premiere events next. The week of the puppet festival, we were now audience members, watching great puppet shows in the morning and afternoon, and at midday presenting ideas about how puppetry can fulfill the United Nations' 17 Sustainability Development Goals. At night there was the Art Market. The shows we saw used many different forms and were mostly in Korean. Many showcased Korean culture or folk traditions as an integral part of the presentation.

Theater Troupe Maruhan brought the audience onstage to play Korean children's games and showcased extremely silly street magic and feats of clowning in their take on the traditional Korean story *The Sun, the Moon and the Tiger*. Early in the last century, troupes of entertainers traveled from town to town presenting exciting material

in the same way. After some adults (myself included) played jump rope, Red Light, Green Light, and laughed as the troupe members played hide and seek in the audience, the performers easily transitioned to very simple puppets accompanied by the Korean traditional drum, *janggu*, banging out an exciting beat. The puppets were paper plate masks with streamers attached (very simple) but skillfully manipulated to tell a story about a dangerous tiger. The drums and infectious energy from the performers made this performance a standout of the festival.

In the grand theater with the cushiest seats (an extreme opposite of the two basement blackbox theaters with hard flat benches), we watched an excellent mask and shadow performance called *Croak Croak* by Bookmark Theater. The story was about four animals that try to figure out why drought has affected their land. The four were represented by dancers in colored costumes, each doing an animal pantomime. The star is the last animal to show up, the frog, who leads the audience in a K-Pop routine that introduces how awesome and fun she is. Frog became the main character and even left the others behind to continue the adventure alone. The presentation was minimalist, with small scenery being reused and a shadow screen with different types of small projections. Mathew Cohen, a puppetry professor from the University of Connecticut who was also presenting at the AVIAMA symposium, mentioned that this piece felt very recognizable as derivative of Teatro Gioco from Italy. Since they had recently done a workshop in Chuncheon, he surmised that perhaps *Croak Croak* was inspired by their workshop.

Another standout show was *The Departure* by Long & Short Company, based on a Franz Kafka short story. The tale is about a man saddling his horse and explaining his desire to go far, far away. The performance began with an automaton horse and rider appearing out of the darkness, illuminated on a black tabletop with high-tech color-changing lights and a smoke effect. They moved beautifully, repeating a galloping movement over and over. As time passed, the puppeteer added human figures in different poses to a moving conveyor belt on the edge of the table, creating perceived movement as the horse and rider galloped while staying put. Snow effects, stars, bubbles, more horses, and the horse and rider rode on as different lights shone on them. Their shadow projected all over the theater as they rode and rode. It was inspiring to watch a bit of visual poetry that captured the feeling of Kafka's story while having the entire piece revolve around one single prop. The puppeteer did a very good job at creating many different scenarios while keeping our focus on the same unchanging figures. It was mesmerizing and meaningful.

At the late-night Art Market, domestic troupes and puppeteers from Korea pitched their shows in five-minute stints on stage and in a speed-dating style session where every five minutes a buzzer rang and they switched to different tables to speak to different performing art center directors from various countries. Bubble Dragon showed off all manner of bubbles, filling the entire space with soapy projectiles. A young mime performed an anti-cellphone piece where he very hilariously attempted to stop a life-sized puppet from

constantly using their phone. An extremely talented dancer who did a nonstop "robot" called Recycle Man donned giant robot arms to clean an invisible glass window. Puppeteers and staffers drank and laughed into the night.

In addition to the puppet festival, members of the AVIAMA symposium gave short presentations. Dr. Jungmin Song "Min" showed photos from her powerful exhibit *Puppetry's Racial Reckoning*, held at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry in 2021. Nina Vogel from Brazil spoke about an exciting grassroots movement of women puppeteers in her country. Maria Laura from Peru spoke about the history of women puppeteers in the Americas. Officers of UNIMA



Festival stadium show with enormous audience.



Performances continued on into the night.

International spoke about their relief efforts for Ukrainian refugees. Our mini-congress was interrupted by pouring rain one day, and the next day a gaggle of tanks thundered loudly on their way to the border. "Lot of traffic today!" the President of UNIMA Korea joked.

As my two-week adventure in Chuncheon came to a close, new friends all promised to return in 2025 for the big UNIMA International Congress and puppet festival. I look forward to seeing the beautiful city on the lake surrounded by mountains again, where great puppetry is performed.

Puppets Pondering Post Pandemic

By Ellen Turner Scott

Austin Public Library's Literature Live! is a program that began its roots 45 years ago and has impacted countless children and adults with free puppet performances. In the mid 1970s, Brenda Branch, later to become the library's director, decided to bring literature to life through puppetry. I was working in the children's room, shelving books at the time, and the children's librarian, Grace Schmitt and I joined forces and began building and performing puppet shows.

The Austin Public Library community

embraces innovative approaches to libraries and the potential to meet the needs of a diverse and growing population. Literature Live! is an invaluable part of that approach, and the program is still going strong with two full-time paid puppeteers—Devo Carpenter and myself. Our tag line is “Changing Lives, One Story at a Time,” and with each performance or video, we invite audiences to suspend their disbelief and imagine what's possible when stories come to life.

Today, Literature Live! is part of the library's Community Services and Outreach team, made up of puppet shows, commu-

nity services, bookmobile services, and ArtSmart programs by Ambray Gonzales, which have many puppetry elements.

Literature Live! has created many shows through the years, and there are about 25 in our current repertoire. Every time we relaunch a show, we carefully assess its content and update it as needed for the present-day climate. John Dixon, a staff member and gifted musician, creates original soundtracks for some of our performances. We try to keep the shows at a size that we can easily transport from location to location, although sometimes there are



The cast of *Rumpelstiltskin*.



Sally Ann Thunder.

some large, loose props. Our ideal performance time hovers around 25 minutes—which seems to be the average attention span for both kids and adults. We insert chase scenes whenever possible!

We also have produced more than 150 episodes of *The Van Show*, a puppet interview show in which Van connects with authors from around the globe so kids can meet the creators of their favorite stories. Devo Carpenter invented Van with a pattern, some blue fur, foam, and an idea. Puppeteer Gabriel Ransenberg brings Van to life with humor and curiosity, opening up the authors about their childhoods, writing process, and inspirations.

In March 2020, the pandemic hit and we all knew our library lives were going to change. It took many months for any of us to find our footing, but digital programming was the answer, and Devo and I welcomed learning and refining a new skill that was relevant, tangible, and extremely creative.

Our first digital project was a shadow puppet show titled *Everyone Counts/Todos Cuentan*, a U.S. Census public service announcement (PSA) that was bilingual, educational, and catchy. We went on to create another PSA using characters from our *Rumpelstiltskin* puppet cast, encouraging people to vote. One of the most extensive digital projects we produced, with the expertise of Gabriel Ransenberg, was *Elves and the Shoemaker*. He filmed and edited our full performance, and now it's available to

audiences on our website.

We love adding new shows to our repertoire. Currently, Devo and I are working on *Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett*, a tall tale about Davy Crockett's wife. It will be a tabletop puppet show, and the puppets are mixed media.

Following *Sally Ann Thunder*, we will be working on an original show written by Devo titled *The Hugag*. It is a story about a fearsome cryptid creature, and I am excited to represent it by building my first wooden marionette. This will be our first time to share this form of puppetry with our audiences, and I can't wait.

Lastly, Literature Live! is currently being celebrated at the Central Library's gallery through an impressive exhibition titled *Release the Puppets*, which recognizes 40 years of their visionary work, creative collaboration, and ongoing legacy of bringing literature to life through the magic of puppetry. It will be on display until January 8, 2023. Please come visit us, y'all, if you happen to travel to Austin.

My puppet pals and I are trying to figure out how many public libraries hire puppeteers on their staff. Let us know if you are a library staff puppeteer, or regularly use puppets in your library, to help us plan future articles in *Puppetry Journal*. Contact Kevin at kkammeradd@kdl.org
Everyone Counts/Todos Cuentan
Rumpelstiltskin Votes
Elves and the Shoemaker - vimeo - <https://vimeo.com/489139681>

Our first digital project was a shadow puppet show titled *Everyone Counts/Todos Cuentan*, a U.S. Census public service announcement (PSA) that was bilingual, educational, and catchy. We went on to create another PSA using characters from our *Rumpelstiltskin* puppet cast, encouraging people to vote on our website.



Grandmother from *Grandmother's Story*.



The cast of *Tiger Woman*.



Van from *The Van Show*.

Little Amal in New York

By Steve Abrams

“**T**he hottest celebrity in town right now is an enchanting 12-foot-tall Syrian refugee puppet. She’s drawing masses of admirers,” proclaimed a headline in the *New York Times*. Little Amal, a 10-year-old refugee (puppet) was in New York City for 17 days, September 14 to October 2, 2022.

Her journey, *The Walk*, the vision of director Amir Nizar Zuabi, has been described as a “travelling art festival, a celebration of migration and cultural diversity.” Little Amal was seen in every borough of New York City, appearing in more than 50 locations. She was greeted at the airport by the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. She drew large crowds at Times Square, Grand Central Station, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and Central Park. On the Lower East Side, at the Clemente Soto Vélaz Center, she was surprised to meet puppet friends created by Teatro SEA. She visited neighborhoods with large populations of immigrants, including Diversity Plaza in the Jackson Heights section of Queens. Crossing the Brooklyn Bridge was especially spectacular as 100 pigeon puppets created by Robin Frohardt and flown by volunteers accompanied Little Amal.

In 2021, from July to November, she traveled 5,592 miles through 12 countries with her message of hope and solidarity for displaced people everywhere, especially children who have been separated from their families. Her journey began in Turkey near the Syrian border and concluded in the United Kingdom. Earlier in 2022, she traveled to Poland and Ukraine.

The puppet was designed and built by Handspring Puppet Company (Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler), who created the puppets for the international hit play *War Horse*. She has become an international symbol of compassion and of human rights.

Handspring carefully crafted Little Amal from robust but lightweight materials such as cane and carbon fiber so that she can be operated for extended periods in varying conditions. It takes a team of puppeteers to bring Little Amal to life: one on each arm, one supporting her back, and one inside walking on stilts.

continued on next page

Little Amal at Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens,
site of 1939 and 1964 World’s Fair.
Photos: Richard Termine





Puppeteers rehearsing with Little Amal at St. Ann's Warehouse.



Under the Brooklyn Bridge.

Puppetry Journal Interviews Little Amal Puppetry Director Enrico Dau Yang Wey

In the *New York Times*, Laura Collins-Hughes wrote, "The point of Little Amal is to use the visceral power of puppetry, and of theater at its most disarming, to make us feel, and cajole us into considering what we owe to the most vulnerable among us."

Puppetry Journal interviewed Little Amal puppetry director Enrico Dau Yang Wey. Wey, a performer, puppeteer, puppetry director, artist, and researcher from Taiwan, has been a senior member of Handspring Puppet Company since 2005. He has performed in productions including *Tall Horse* and the Tony Award-winning Broadway play *War Horse*.

Puppetry Journal: Thanks for speaking about Little Amal. Are there puppeteers in NYC who were in the 2021 Walk, or are they all new, or a mix?

Enrico Wey: We wanted to be very conscientious about how we approached our time in New York. A different city and country comes with different urgencies. Finding a blend of people to encourage exchange seemed necessary in this new context, so we had a team of nine rotating puppeteers: five from 2021 and four who joined this specific journey. The team is composed of three puppeteers. Occasionally, if we need extra stability against the elements, a fourth puppeteer is added. They all rotate in different combinations in order to create an Amal that is layered and multifaceted.

PJ: How do you choose new puppeteers?

EW: I find that often I am looking for someone with a particular sensitivity to the performed object. It is hard to describe in words, but this sensitivity is perhaps a blend of listening, observation, and clear intention. As this work is collaborative, it is often equally about the full blend of personalities we look for in an ensemble. The performer can be completely new to puppetry. Some come with a stronger sensibility toward physicality, muscle tension, breath. Some have more experience with puppetry or acting. Amal is a living being, and she encounters each event, each moment, as such. She is experiencing things for the first time, without a script. Our puppeteers are asked to be a motor, to respond and to generate thought and feeling from a place of understanding Amal.

PJ: How long does it take to train and rehearse puppeteers?

EW: It feels like an unending process, to be honest. During the rehearsal period, we focus on basic skills and ensemble practice, but so much of the training exists within the event. We can only do so much in a traditional studio setting. Before each event, we discuss Amal's situation, where she is coming from, where she is headed in relationship to the offerings from the local organization. After each event, we have an exchange about what worked, what didn't, and how we could use what we learned for the next event. I want the puppeteers to feel buoyant in the moment without too much directorial interference.

PJ: I find some of the most powerful photos show Little Amal bending and looking down and touching and making contact with individuals.



Little Amal and pigeon puppets walk on the Brooklyn Bridge.



Rehearsal with large shoes.



Rehearsal with stilts.



Little Amal at Flushing Meadows.

EW: The puppeteers must be aware of the power of these moments. The smaller the child, the harder it is to reach them! Each interaction becomes so personal to each individual.

PJ: I have read a few critical comments that her size and theatricality, and the crowds attracted, might overwhelm her essential message of humanity. I think they miss something important. Size gets the attention so that a large audience can see her, and then feel the vulnerability of a child. Does that sound correct?

EW: I would agree. We like to think that she is the exact size she needs to be. She is larger than life. It establishes her immediately as an

outsider and, within that, being alone in a crowd, her vulnerability becomes more readily visible. Even the largest of souls have experienced this. There is a beauty in the sense that Amal is a vessel large enough to carry the wills and thoughts of the people performing as her as well as the stories of the people who witness her. A child shouldn't have to be smaller in order to move through this world freely, but the world she is navigating should be bigger to give her the space to.

Walk Productions was founded by David Lan and Tracey Seaward. Little Amal Walks NYC is a co-production of Walk Productions and St. Ann's Warehouse (artistic director, Susan Feldman) in association with Handspring Puppet Company.

Interview: Joe Kovacs

Interviews Conducted by Jeff Bragg

Jeff Bragg: Did you really start puppeteering at three years old?

Joe Kovacs: On my third birthday, my grandfather gave me two puppets, a little black mohair dog and a little brown mohair bear, and I could not put them down. My parents noticed, and they bought me two more puppets, a dog and a raccoon. Then my grandfather got me a lion and a tiger. So I had six puppets, and instantly they all had distinct voices and personalities. They all worked together in a unit, and I would do shows from behind the sofa. My shows would go on and on. They were like shadow puppet shows that start at dusk and end at dawn. My family would come in and out, bring a snack, sit, sleep, wake up, and just live their lives around my shows.

JB: What was school for you?

JK: My father was the principal of the Independence Elementary School. I was kind of the Julie Taymor of school. I would get people in and have them dressed up in costumes and have puppets and people and do these productions. I also had free reign of the art room and all of the art supplies. I was just always there, making things and putting on shows. My friends from school all remember doing shows with me at the elementary school. At least two traveling puppet shows would come to the area and do shows at the elementary school. I would talk to the puppeteers, and they would gladly divulge every secret they had, you know. "Ooh, that was really cool. How'd you do that?" "Oh, it's just a Christmas decoration on a flash-light that I wave around behind the screen." And so that loving and caring and sharing helped feed the passion as well.

JB: How was high school?

JK: We left Independence and moved to Cincinnati. In the sixth grade, I started at The Cincinnati School for the Creative and Performing Arts. I was taking acting classes and dance classes, also music classes and voice lessons. I always did puppets as extra credit.

JB: It sounds like your high school experience was quite a good fit.

JK: At that time, it was like kind of a cross between the island of misfit toys and this perfect utopian world of love. I still talk to high school friends. They're all still very supportive. We're a family, and we stay in touch.

JB: You attended your first festival in Cincinnati in 1987?

JK: I actually worked the festival in Cincinnati in 1987. Kathy Piper put that festival together. I had been volunteering with the guild. Kathy said, "Do you wanna work the festival?" I said, "Yes." And she said, "Well, I need an assistant stage manager." I ended up working all of the shows and got to meet a lot of people and see lots of shows.

JB: You also built puppets and created costumes for the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta. Let's talk about your work there.

JK: At the festival, I met Vince Anthony, Luis Barroso, and Paul Hartis, who was working as a puppet builder at the Center for Puppetry Arts, and later worked for Henson. The next year, I got a call from Luis, "I need a puppeteer for our tour of *Alice in Wonderland*. Are you interested?" He had never seen me puppeteer. He had just met me at the festival, and somehow Luis thought, "I got a feeling about this kid," and hired me to be the lead puppeteer on

a tour of *Alice*. We toured for six months. I did the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, Tweedle Dumb, and the Dormouse. There were like six or seven characters that I did with Jane Katherine Shaw. Then I refurbished puppets for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Next was building things for *Peter Pan*. When Hartis moved to New York, I took over his job at the Center as a puppeteer and puppet maker. A few years later, I was going to New York City. Paul was just about to go to Fire Island for a week, and I was gonna stay in his apartment. I met him, and he showed me around the Muppet studios. While I was there, Goran Sparrman was building bears for *Bear in the Big Blue House*. He said, "You're a puppeteer. Put your hand in the head of this bear!" So the bear was kind of hanging over on this thing. I put my hand in; he goes, "Can you come back tomorrow?" The next day, he filmed me walking around and doing stuff in the bear. About a month later, I got a call: "Hi, this is Elizabeth Brusa from Henson in New York. I've got you on my Bear roster. Can you go to the

New York State Fair and do four days of meet and greet as Bear?" I did Bear off and on from 1998 to 2004, including international tours. So, just from meeting puppeteers at that festival led to me doing Bear. I started doing live Bear shows for Henson. I also started doing a big puppet Shrek for DreamWorks, built by Henson. I feel like I've done a lot of big puppet things. I even did about eight live



Left to right: Jeff Bragg, Madame, Joe Kovacs.
Photos courtesy of Joe Kovacs and Jeff Bragg

Barney shows around the country. Yeah, Barney's a beast.

JB: You've done a ton of other great work, but once again, you are working with a true show business legend. And you have known Madame for a long time.

JK: I started doing Madame back in 2005. When Wayland died, he left everything to Marlena Shell, who was his manager. Marlena was devastated. And then people talked her into bringing Madame back. And she worked with Tom Fountain. He manipulated Salem the cat for *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*. As far as I know, Tom was the first person Marlena worked with. Then she let Jerry Halliday do Madame in his show *Famous Women* (I think using a Madame that he made), but then she felt that Madame should not be part of an-

other show. Madame is her own show. I met Marlena through Randy Carfagno. I was working with David Fino on *Bear in the Big Blue House Live*. He was also working for Randy. David told me, "I got a message from my boss, Randy, who is working on a project I can't talk about. They need a puppeteer. I recommended you. Would you like to meet my boss?" So, I meet Randy Carfagno, who said, "I'm working on some new puppets based on an old puppet who is pretty famous." I'm thinking I know it's not the Muppets. It doesn't seem to be a ventriloquist dummy, or marionettes; maybe it's Topo Gigio? I asked Randy if I could guess the puppet. He said, "Well, I guess if you guess..." I said, "Is it Madame?" He said yes, and he pulled her out of a drawer. He said, "It's too small for any of us to

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Interview: Madame

Jeff Bragg: Madame, I cannot tell you what a delight it is to be here with you today. You're one of my all-time favorite performers. We are all so glad to see you again. How does it feel to be back?

Madame: Well, honey, I never went away! I've always been here, lurking in the corners, lurking in the darkness. Oh, you know, probably just in an old bag somewhere, maybe in a box.

JB: Well, you look absolutely, stunningly beautiful.

Madame: Cheap flattery will get you everywhere, honey. I like anything cheap.

JB: And I see you have a brand new companion! Introduce us!

Madame: This old thing, honey? I worked with him years ago. It's nice to be back. It's great to see him. (An aside) Well, you know, I don't pay much attention to him. He's a necessary evil, I say. Gotta keep him around to hold me up in the air, keep me high and dry. I like to be more high than dry, honey.

JB: I'm seeing the six o'clock performance tonight. Are we going to have a wonderful time?

Madame: I hope so, honey; well I hope so! I'll show it to you. I'll show it to you twice if you want. Once is never enough.

JB: It's so wonderful to see you back in action. I know you have plans for a world tour, don't you?

Madame: Oh, honey. I hope to see it all. I traveled with Maude for 16 years, honey. We did it all, but I didn't perform. Yeah. I was on the DL. That's the down low, I learned. Learning the new lingo. But we're back. Try to, you know, wipe off the cobwebs.

JB: It must feel good to be back at the Pilgrim House.

Madame: Wayland and I started here, honey. Oh, back in the seventies, when he used to wear a tuxedo and no shoes on the beach. He'd roll up his tuxedo, and in the middle of the night, he'd find boys on the beach, and he'd say, "Hey, boy, you wanna see our puppet show?" Little did they know, it was actually a puppet show on the beach, in the middle of the f---g night! It was true!

JB: I appreciate your time today. And I know that you and Joe have

to prepare for tonight's show.

Madame: Oh, honey. I gotta take my pills. They gotta kick in by six, honey. Right? Don't do pills and drive! I'm driving this dress like Joan Rivers. This is actually an old Joan Rivers sleeve, I think. You know, she's dead. She doesn't wear it anymore.



Madame in the collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts, Atlanta.

JB: Good thing someone's getting some use out of it, right? Well, thank you so much, Madame. It was wonderful to speak with you and Joe. Madame, I think you found a forever friend.

Madame: I hope so, honey. You know, I don't like to think of all those stray hands inside of me! Yours was fine, honey. It was a quick in and out!

JB: Thank you, dear. It'll be our secret. Madame, a bawdy rod puppet, a grande dame with a sharp wit, was sometimes called the alter ego of Wayland Flowers.

Biography notes on Wayland Flowers: born in Dawson, Georgia, 1939; died in Los Angeles, California, 1988. Flowers moved to New York City in 1963, where he performed and built puppets for Suzari Marionettes, Nicolas Coppola, Bil Baird, and Aniforms. Madame's first professional appearance in 1971 was the off-Broadway show *Kumquats*, billed as "the world's first erotic puppet show." In 1972, Madame appeared as a lounge act at the Madeira Room (now Pilgrim House), Provincetown, Massachusetts, and attracted enormous crowds. Soon, Flowers was appearing in New York nightclubs. In club performances, Flowers was visible, and not particularly concerned with being considered a ventriloquist. In 1974, he and Madame appeared in the film *Norman... Is That You?* For the next 10 years, Flowers and Madame were star attractions at American clubs and casinos, especially in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Wayland Flowers and Madame occupied the center square on Hollywood Squares, and their clever wit and adult humor pushed the limits of acceptable content for television. It was not a secret that Flowers was an LGBTQ performer. Flowers and Madame had their own television talk show, *Madame's Place* (1982), broadcasting 150 episodes. In 1982, Flowers appeared at the National Puppetry Festival in Atlanta. One version of Madame is in the collection of the Center for Puppetry Arts, Atlanta.

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get our hand in.” I said, “Can I try?” He said, “Sure.” And so, I put my hand in Madame and he said, “Oh my God, you’re Cinderella!” Madame fit! So I worked her a little bit there, and then he introduced me to Marlena, who said, “Take the dolly home with you and just work with her for a while.” At home, I started working on stuff and working on movements. I went to a vocal coach, because my voice is very different from Wayland’s. I will never sound like Wayland Flowers being Madame. I had to find a voice. So, I figured, 16 years of drinking and drugging and running around with her best friend, Maude, all over the world; she’s Lauren Bacall now! Marlena just gave me a lot of time. She gave me a lot of research. Wayland would tape-record a lot of his shows. So she gave me cassette tapes to listen to. I spent one whole year just working with Madame and then did my first show. It was like five minutes at Jim Caruso’s Cast Party at Birdland in New York, and then I just started doing small shows, and then bigger shows, and found a piano player, and that was four years. In Edinburgh, I was working for only a percentage of the door, and being new to the festival, I didn’t know that you have to have a picture in the big program; if not, people will just go by. So, I was making no money. After a couple weeks of taking (Madame) out all day, barking in the rain, trying to hold an umbrella, and handing out cards, I was sick. It was damp and wet and cold. By the end, Marlena and I had a disagreement, and I ended up leaving. I moved on to various projects. My own puppet character, Miss Greta Green, was doing Drag Queen Puppet Bingo at New York clubs. There were a few film credits, including *The Furchester Hotel* and *The Happytime Murders*. For a time I did some building at Henson. Ken Horgan and Scott Bente, the owners of Pilgrim House, met Marlena. They knew that she’d had a stroke and she wasn’t doing well. They wanted to help her out. So now, they are 100% owners of Madame, and they have everything. That’s why I’ve got costumes, and the joke file, all sorts of things.

JB: How did you get back around to being Madame’s companion?

JK: From what they have told me, they were looking for somebody to do Madame. Ken and Scott heard from various people: “Oh, too bad Joe Kovacs isn’t there. Where did Joe Kovacs go?” And I always said I wanted to retire just sitting next to her, making people laugh.

JB: Well, that’s not a retirement. That’s heaven!

JK: Right! Ken called me in May 2022 and said, “I wanna talk to you. Are you interested in maybe doing Madame again?” And I’m like, “Yes, I don’t have to think about that.” He said, “Well, I would like to meet with you because you know, we own Madame now, and everyone said that we should see you and talk to you because you were the person that should be doing it.” I said, “I can’t get away. I’ve got shows that I’m working on now.” He said, “Well, what if I come to Cincinnati? I’ll call you right back.” And this was on a Friday. He (calls back), “I’m flying in on Monday. I booked a room for us on Tuesday. I fly back on Wednesday.” He came into town; I walked into his hotel room, where Madame was laying on the bed with legs! The first time I’d ever seen her

with legs. He was doing some stuff on his computer and talking to somebody on the phone. So I just put Madame on, I was sitting on the bed and just reacquainting with her. And I just occasionally hear him laugh; he was kind of half paying attention, and he just laughed a little bit. And then my phone rang. I had Madame on when I picked up the phone. Madame says, “What the f-k are you doing? We were having a conversation! Put your phone down! Oh my God, come on, Sophie, choose. It’s not that hard. You know, one or the other!” Ken had to relay this to me, because when I put Madame on, and I just go, and I don’t remember everything that’s in that moment. Ken lost it. He turned around and was crying and he said, “That is the funniest thing I’ve ever heard in my life. You’re meant to be doing this.” And he just left Madame with me. And he goes, “Please come to Provincetown.” So my partner and our cat all moved to Provincetown. We’re here, at least for now. In the winter, we’ll be doing shows in Palm Springs, and hopefully some tour dates. We’ll be here every summer, and we’ll be out there for the winters.



Young puppeteer Joe Kovacs (1983).

JB: Do you do all the work maintaining these the Madames you currently have?

JK: Yeah. Randy Carfagno is building all the new Madames. They’re casting them now out of something. I have two Madames; one is a Celastic and plastic wood. I don’t know how many Madames were made or who has them.

JB: How does this feel to bring Madame back to the stage?

JK: Yeah, it’s amazing. My shows, being at a six o’clock time slot...it’s not really Madame’s hour. Madame’s after dark, so six o’clock is tough for an audience, but they’re all there because they want to see Madame. And that’s

the thing; It’s one thing just to have a room full of people who are enjoying what you do. It’s another thing to have a room full of people who saw that Madame was here and came to see her. The thing that I like about Madame is she’s old Hollywood glamour mixed with a classy classless dirty broad. In my show, at times she is very coy about names for body parts, you know, like her hoo-ha. But then at other times, she just throws out a word or wants to know why she can’t say that word. So, it’s a mix of, “Ooh, I’m a demure little flower” and “I’ve got my tits out.”

JB: What’s in store for the future of Madame?

JK: This show was a reunion for Madame and me. We talk about the old days and where she’s been. We talk about Wayland. I think Madame wants to learn. She wants to know that the apps on her phone aren’t appetizers. She wants to know what you are doing and what do you like. But she’s always going to have that classy old Hollywood...you know, some boas, some glitz. She has one and a half costume changes in this show. My goal was to have five,

JB: Joe, thank you for the interview. Is there anything you’d like to close with?

JK: I’m grateful for this opportunity just to be able to do this. I want to bring joy, to take people away from the reality of their day-to-day worlds. Just to make people smile, make ‘em laugh. Make ‘em forget about something for an hour.

Houston Festival: Two for One

September 15-17, 2022, the Houston Puppet Festival, the 42nd edition, organized by members of the Greater Houston Puppetry Guild, was combined with the Puppeteers of America Southwest Regional Puppetry Festival, a splendid example of the puppetry community working together. Joanne Schroeder and Jean Kuecher, each with vast experience, served as co-directors.

The festival performance roster included Karen Konnerth, Calliope Puppets, New Orleans, *A Fable, a Fairytale, and the Big, Bad Wolf*; Ellen Scott and Robbie Lueth, Hand to Mouth Puppet Theatre, Austin, *Bumper Crop*; Pix Smith, Dallas Puppet Theater, *Strings Variety Show*; and Allen Ware and Rick Strot, Ware House Puppets, Waco, *The Goat in the Chili Patch*.

Each presenter had enthusiastic comments about the festival and about each other's work.

"Hats off to the Greater Houston Puppetry Guild. The workshops, performances, and all the camaraderie were all I had hoped for in an intimate regional. It's hard to imagine that the guild has pulled this off for 42 years."

"It was nice seeing Greg Ruhe emcee the opening dinner's puppet slam, and he also gave an excellent shadow puppet workshop. There were fine slam performances from everyone. Lee Bryan, all the way from Atlanta, with a really, really funny piece."

"Great presentation by Ellen Scott with Nancy Renfro Studios, and a good retrospective of her influential work in puppetry in education."

"Karen Konnerth did two great shows, and Ellen had a nice performance as well. Greg Ruhe's shadow puppetry workshop was really great. I recommend it to anyone who sees it on the bill somewhere."



Festival co-director Joanne Schroeder and friend.
Photo: Karen Konnerth



Festival exhibit, Poppinjay Puppets, from Pix Smith and Gary Busk collection. Photo: Pix Smith

Notes on festival performers:

- Ellen Turner Scott and Robbie Lueth discovered puppetry in the 1970s. They launched their own company, Hand to Mouth Puppet Theatre, in 1989. For 10 years, they brought literature to life with puppets for the Austin Public Library. Robbie was a high school teacher. Ellen is a puppeteer with Literature Live, the Austin Library Puppet Troupe. Ellen is the proud owner of Nancy Renfro Studios, Inc., a Puppet Resource Company with 250 puppet character designs and 18 books on puppetry.
- Karen Konnerth has presented thoughtfully interactive puppet theater for 40 years for children, families, and art lovers of all ages. She is an internationally known, award-winning arts integration specialist making puppetry, creative writing, and visual art part of the curriculum in elementary school classrooms.
- Pix Smith's offering used large-scale marionettes performing to lively and familiar music, all operated in full view of the audience. Pix has performed since 1980. For the festival in Houston, he exhibited treasured puppets from the Gary Busk collection.
- Over the years the Houston Puppet Festival did outreach and workshops for educators, with enticement of earning credits for the Texas Education Agency. Both Greg Ruhe and Jean Kuecher are on the roster of Young Audiences of Houston, an arts and education agency that books school programs. Greg Ruhe said, "Looking forward to the 43rd Annual Houston Puppet Festival!"

CONEY ISLAND PUPPET HOMECOMING

By Lois Raff Corwin

Going to Coney Island on October 8 was an experience that split my mind into two parts. At first, I found myself transported back to childhood with wonder-filled eyes. All the rides with their glittering lights seemed big, fast, and thrilling. But secondly, there are images everywhere of freakish people who made their living by shocking their audience... a woman who swallows fire, a man who hammers nails into his nose, a man who has hair that covers his entire face like an animal. Like the “sacred and profane,” the two vastly different spirits live together well in Coney Island and added an interesting atmosphere to the Homecoming program.

It wasn't high tourist season, so the puppeteers had exclusive use of the Shooting Gallery Annex and the Freak Bar for the morning puppet workshops. The Shooting Gallery Annex was decorated with a fabulous array of large puppets influenced by Peter Schumann of the Bread and Puppet Theater. This display was created by Amy Trompetter (who says she owes everything she knows about puppetry to Peter Schumann) and featured images of money mongers who exploit war for their own profit. This was the backdrop for Chad

Williams to conduct his “Hand Puppet Techniques” workshop. Chad introduced workshop attendees to exercises that demonstrated techniques for a hand puppet to walk, to point, and to show a wide range of emotions. I thought it was most fascinating that he showed the difference between male and female puppet movement. Chad cited his references going back to readings from ancient Chinese puppetry techniques. Best of all, he showed us his personal stretch so that we could begin to get that wonderful Chad flexibility.

The second workshop I attended was by Amy Trompetter: “Skirt-as-Stage Revolution.” The “skirt” could also be described as a sort of open-ended bag the puppeteer gets inside of. Once inside, this long bag can be pulled over the head and held in place by poles connected to a belt around the puppeteer's waist. The puppets are inside the bag and perform above the top of the skirt. Punch and Judy puppets were available for participants to use while wearing the skirt stage, and each person was asked to improvise a scene. Amy herself improvises and relishes the opportunity to interact with the audience. She regaled us with stories of where and how she per-

formed. I loved hearing about how she got a permit to perform on the Staten Island Ferry. When her permit expired, she simply used Wite-Out on the date and put in a new date. This was in the 1970s. She was able to continue the Staten Island Ferry shows and timed them so that they ended as the boat docked and she was able to fill her collection bucket as passengers exited. The focus of the workshop was to give the next generation of puppeteers a way to display their views or insights while entertaining as street performers. Amy Trompetter is an inspirational puppeteer



Nancy Sander's Punch and Judy puppets.

and a fierce advocate for social justice.

The afternoon was a festive collection of Punch and Judy performances, each one different and entertaining. Versions of “Punch” were performed by Amy Trompetter of Redwing Blackbird Theater, Gretchen Van Lente of Drama of Works, Nancy Sander (three shows by women), and Chad Williams of WonderSpark Puppets. Ayhan Hulagu performed the traditional Turkish shadow theater hero Karagoz, often compared to Punch. Punch was used for different purposes in each show. Gretchen Van Lente cast Punch and Judy as Sid and Nancy of the Sex Pistols. Throughout the show, they fought over drugs as in the real-life saga of this pair. The message blatantly conveyed the dangers of drug use. *Ash & Solly* in Chad Williams' show delivered a totally different message. In this performance, Mr. Punch had to deal with the Jewish King, who reminded him that on the holiday of Yom Kippur, one must apologize for his/her misdeeds. Mr. Punch experienced the benefit of apologizing in the end.

Nancy Sander did a wonderful perfor-



The Divinity Supply Company by the Boxcutter Collective. Photos courtesy of Brendan Schweda

mance of the traditional Punch and Judy, and Amy Trompetter's show (announced with a trumpet) was a little more politically thought provoking.

This amassing of Punch and Judy shows was followed by a panel discussion. The panel convened in the Coney Island Museum, where one could see the photos of the destruction of Coney Island by fire in 1911, original carousel horses, bumper cars, posters, etc. The first question was, "Why choose to perform Punch currently?" Nancy Sander maintained that she "just loved puppets," and Punch was a fine example of what a puppet can do. Others discussed the difficulty of showing the violence in Punch and Judy, and Chad Williams felt he found a way for Mr. Punch to find redemption. The comparison to Karagoz was fascinating from a cultural and historical perspective.

Although Great Small Works was not allowed to have their planned spaghetti dinner, they played three films, had a wonderful "Famous Names in Puppetry" bingo game with prizes, and a Chinese puppet show to entertain us. At the close of the day, participants were showing signs of exhaustion. We ended with a short Potpourri with a personal touch and lots humor from Mery Cheung (who did charming impersonations through her puppet), Artie Poore (with a snarky little song taught to him by Marty Robinson), and Heather Henson (with a few lively moments using a puppet she made in the workshop with Spica Wobbe).

At the close of the day, the resident orange tabby cat, Sideshow, decided to sleep on the Potpourri performance area. He walked onto the stage during other performances on Saturday and was very comfortable being in the center of it all. I thought we should rename him Mainstage. He was a nice reminder of the genuinely homey feel of this Puppet Homecoming.

Festival Program Notes for Thursday, Friday, and Sunday

There were several pre-festival events on Thursday, October 6. Heather Henson hosted shows (Liz Joyce and screening of films) and a reception at the Carriage House. A festival map showed where Ronny Wasserstrom was busking in Central Park. Early evening shows were scheduled for Nick Coppola's Puppetworks in Brooklyn and Teatro SEA on the Lower East Side.

Friday morning, October 7, the festival of-



Amy Trompetter in a gallery filled with her puppetry and artwork.

ficially began. The welcome included festival director Brendan Schweda speaking about Coney Island and its connection to puppetry. Steve Abrams offered a PowerPoint presentation about puppetry in New York City, and Heather Henson spoke about her family's deep and ongoing connection to New York City.

On a perfect fall day on the boardwalk at Coney Island, there was a pageant puppet parade with puppets by Amy Trompetter and Heather Henson, and celebratory marching music.

Late in the afternoon, Jaime Sunwoo spoke about her process for creating *The Art of SPAM*. There were screenings of films from Heather Henson's *Handmade*

Puppet Dreams and the premier showing of Jeff Bragg's documentary film *Hobey Ford: Modern Master*. The Friday evening performance was *The Divinity Supply Company* by the Boxcutter Collective, including painted work by Peter Schumann, Bread and Puppet Theater, and a party hosted by the Puppetry Guild of Greater New York, celebrating the guild's 60th anniversary.

Sunday morning there were workshops by Ayhan Hulagu and Spica Wobbe. Sunday afternoon shows were *Go Home Tiny Monster* by the Gottabees and *Crankie Cabaret* by Lilypad Puppet Theatre.

All festival events were recorded and offered at the Virtual Festival, October 13-16, 2022.



Audrey II and Lena Hall as Audrey.

Photos: Emilio Madrid, courtesy of Vivacity Media Group

Feed Me!

Inside the *Little Shop of Horrors*

By Steve Abrams

“Feed me,” says the demanding, insatiable plant, Audrey II, in *Little Shop of Horrors* (<https://littleshopnyc.com/>). In 1982, 40 years ago, *Little Shop* started off-Broadway and ran for a record-breaking five years. Since then, *Little Shop* has played on Broadway, the West End of London, national tours, regional theaters, and hundreds of high schools. Those first simple words of the plant, “Feed me,” delivered in a deep bass voice, are startling and both threatening and comic. Actors, puppet builders, and puppeteers have been “fed” with a naughty sort of enjoyment (and in some cases, employment) for 40 years, and audiences have gobbled up the show. The engaging comedy-horror of *Little Shop* would be impossible without the innovative puppetry, first designed by Martin P. Robinson. His major contribution to the art form was 15 years before the mighty *Lion King* came to Broadway. Even before *Little Shop* ended its record-breaking run in 1987, regional theaters were producing the show.

After a month of previews, *Little Shop* returned to off-Broadway in

New York, October 17, 2019, at the Westside Theatre Upstairs, to rave reviews. Five months later, March 11, 2020, COVID brought theater to an abrupt stop, and puppeteers Eric Wright and Teddy Yudain wondered what would happen. September 21, 2021, *Little Shop* opened again, with Wright and Yudain handling Audrey II. Episode 80 of *Puppet Tears* has an excellent interview with Wright and Yudain. Recently, Wright moved on to other projects and Yudain was joined by Weston Chandler Long.

The puppets were created by the Monkey Boys, but with new skin covering painted by Nicholas Mahon. During the run of *Little Shop*, there were delays and changes of actors due to cases of COVID. The role of Seymour has been played by seven different actors—Jonathan Groff, Gideon Glick, Jeremy Jordan, Conrad Ricamora, Skylar Astin, Rob McClure, and in November 2022, Tony Award winner Matt Doyle. Tony-nominated actor Rob McClure (Seymour number six) had Broadway and off-Broadway experience as an actor/puppeteer in *Avenue Q*.

This revival of *Little Shop* has a direct line back to the original production. The technique and wisdom and fun were passed along from Marty Robinson, to Marc Petrosino and Michael Latini, and then on to Wright and Yudain. When Music Theatre International licenses *Little Shop* for performances by regional theaters or high schools, they provide the script, the score, and designs for building the puppets. They also offer puppets to rent based on the original designs of Marty Robinson. Some companies who have produced the show built their own puppets or rented them. Over the years, various puppet designers and builders took the challenge of making the puppets.

Teddy Yudain was with *Little Shop* when it opened, and for most of the run he worked with Eric Wright. Yudain and Wright are delightful and informative speaking about *Little Shop in Puppet Tears* (episode 80), and this November Yudain took some time to be interviewed for *Puppetry Journal*. Both of Yudain's parents are actors, so he grew up with a lot of backstage time watching them work. While in high school, he saw Jim "Nappy" Napolitano perform with shadow puppets and was intrigued. Yudain went to the University of Connecticut, majoring in theater. He brings a fully developed love of theater to his work in puppetry. He has played Malvolio, Trinculo, and the second witch in *Macbeth*. As Jack in *Into the Woods*, he worked with the puppet Milky White, and Bart Roccoberton coached him. In New York, his first real puppet gig was in the people-and-puppets Spanish version of *Puss in Boots* (*El Gato con Botas*). The intensity, the physicality needed for that show really appealed to him. He was hooked. In 2011, he was understudy at the Metropolitan Opera, where he met Marc Petrosino, Kevin Augustine, and Eric Wright. He worked with Eric Wright and Emily DeCola at Puppet Kitchen. Along the way, he was in two earlier productions of *Little Shop*. In 2017, he attended the National Puppetry Conference at the O'Neill, learning about marionettes from Jim Rose. During the COVID break, he wanted to learn more about puppet building, so he signed up for virtual sessions with Puppets in Prague, Bernd Ogrodnik, and Hobey Ford. Currently, he is puppet captain at *Little Shop*, rehearsing new "vacation covers" (otherwise known as understudies). He said, "After playing Audrey II so many times, it becomes clearer and clearer which moments are high energy and where it is OK to relax just a bit" (<https://www.teddyyudain.com/>).

Rehearsing for *Little Shop*, Wright and Yudain got to hear from the original composer, Alan Menken. Marc Petrosino and Michael Latini, the Monkey Boys, provided the rental set of puppets for *Little Shop*, with newly painted covering by Nicholas Mahon.

Four Pods

For Pod 1, Audrey II is a mere sprout in a flowerpot. A hidden puppeteer does the manipulation. For Pod 2, the actor playing Seymour controls the puppet using a fake arm (the Seymour actor needs to understand at least a bit about puppetry). Pod 3 is a large 3 × 3-foot puppet with the puppeteer entirely hidden. The puppeteer has to wait quietly for 10 minutes inside the very warm puppet before the action begins. Pod 4 is the super enormous Audrey that requires two puppeteers.

Petrosino and Latini are enormously knowledgeable about *Little Shop*. They were mentored by the original designer and performer of the show, Marty Robinson, and then toured the show for two years. Latini and Petrosino were terrifically helpful. They emphasized the importance of consistency in performance. The Monkey Boys alternated as the puppeteer in Pod 3, which kept them both in better shape and fresh. Wright and Yudain took the advice and also alternated their roles. Wright said that the show could be directed in many ways: some are darker, some are sillier, and some are very nuanced.

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Weston Chandler Long recently joined the cast. He and Yudain alternate puppeteer duties for Pod 3. When Long was seven years old, he met Caroll Spinney (Big Bird), who became a friend and mentor to the young puppeteer. Other mentors and directors include John Tartaglia, Matt Vogel, Marty Robinson, and Peter Linz. Long's credits include *ImaginOcean*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Avenue Q*, and *All Hallows' Eve*.

Eric Wright has an impressive array of performance credits, including *Compulsion* (Matt Acheson), *Madama Butterfly* (Metropolitan Opera), *Peter and Wendy* (Mabou Mines), *Petrushka* and *La Bella Dormente* (Basil Twist), and *Disfarmer* and *Hiroshima Maiden* (Dan Hurlin). Wright, along with Emily DeCola and Michael Schupbach, founded the Puppet Kitchen in 2008 at a studio in New York's East Village. All were gifted designers and performers eager to practice their skills and share them. Monitor Nights were a popular event at the Puppet Kitchen, serving the puppetry community, offering an opportunity to build skills, and encouraging collaboration, aspects of puppetry very important to Eric Wright (www.puppetkitchen.com).

Marc Petrosino and **Michael Latini** both began work as puppeteers around 2000. They met at the National Puppetry Conference at the O'Neill Theater Center. From 2004 to 2006, they were the Audrey II puppeteers for the national tour of *Little Shop*. They founded **Monkey Boys Productions** in 2008. Both have formidable skills as builders and as performers. They earned the confidence of Marty Robinson, who gave them the original designs, authorizing them to build *Little Shop* puppets for rentals.

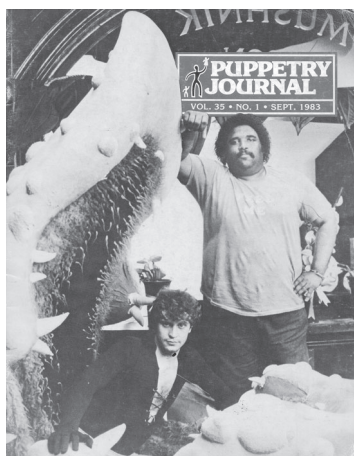
Michael Latini, described as a "creative problem solver," is a designer, puppeteer, and fabricator. Around the age of 12, he started performing in school shows and working with his carpenter father. His puppetry career began as Bear in the *Bear in the Big Blue House*
continued on next page

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Live national tour in 2001, and he's been lucky to work with many shows and productions, including *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Avenue Q*, *Johnny and the Sprites*, *Sesame Street*, and *Helpsters* (Daytime Emmy nomination). Besides the two-year national tour of *Little Shop*, there were world tours with *Walking With Dinosaurs LIVE* and *How to Train Your Dragon LIVE*. Latini and Petrosino built props for *Saturday Night Live* and received national attention for making a "weaponized" podium.

Marc Petrosino and Latini began collaborating in New York City. Their shared optimism and sense of humor and their complementary skills were the basis for founding Monkey Boys Productions. Petrosino's credits include *Sesame Street*, *Blue's Room*, *Crank Yankers*, and *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon*. He has puppeteered in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Broadway and first national tour), *Madama Butterfly* (Metropolitan Opera), *Young People's Concerts* at Carnegie Hall, Basil Twist's *Petrushka*, and *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Petrosino's other Broadway credits include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Amélie*, and *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*. He has worked as a fabricator and/or designer on many projects, including *Saturday Night Live* and *Helpsters* (<https://www.monkeyboysproductions.com/>).

Anthony Asbury was a very successful puppeteer for about 30 years. After *Little Shop* off-Broadway, he was in the London West End production. In London, he was a puppeteer on *Spitting Image* (1984-1992). And in London, he was the puppeteer for the 1986 film version of *Little Shop*, directed by Frank Oz. Back in the USA, Asbury was a puppeteer on *Allegra's Window* and *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*. He worked with Martin P. Robinson on the 2003 Broadway version of *Little Shop*. In 2000, he was a lead puppeteer in *Between the Lions*. In 2008, Anthony Asbury pursued a dream of being a chef at his own restaurant. With wife Louise, they opened Sweet Lula's in Pitman, New Jersey.



Pupperty Journal September 1983. Photo: Peter Cunningham

1980. He has been on set as Mr. Snuffleupagus, Telly Monster, and Slimy the Worm for more than 30 years. For most of that time, he played scenes with Caroll Spinney as Big Bird. He has been in five Muppet-related films. Robinson trains and mentors *Sesame Street* puppeteers. He has traveled to a dozen nations, including Mexico, Israel, Egypt, Russia, and Bangladesh, to lead the development of *Sesame Street*-type programs. He has served on staff of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center National Puppetry Conference since it began in 1991. At the O'Neill, he did two resident artist projects, *Jackstraws in a Wind Tunnel* and *All Hallows' Eve* (2018). "Marty" became a full-time puppeteer in 1975. He worked with Nick Coppola (Nicolo Marionettes), Addis Williams, Bil Baird, and Liz Swados.



Audrey II and Jeremy Jordan as Seymour

He credits Jim Henson, Jane Henson, Jon Stone, Kermit Love, Frank Oz, Jerry Nelson, and Richard Hunt as mentors. In 2004, he worked with director Susan Stroman on the Broadway revival of *The Frogs* by Stephen Sondheim. In 2008, Robinson and *Sesame Street* writer Annie Evans were married on the set of *Sesame Street* (<https://www.martinprobinson.com/>).

Little Shop was the cover story of *Pupperty Journal*, September 1983, with puppeteer Anthony Asbury and Ron Taylor (1952-2002), who provided the voice of Audrey II. The collaboration of the puppeteers with the actor who voices Audrey II is essential. When the show opened in 2019, Kingsley Leggs was the voice of Audrey II, followed by Aaron Arnell Harrington. Both Yudain and Wright can go into very nuanced observations about why each actor was great, and the differences between them. Yudain was particularly appreciative of the low and high textures of Harrington's voice. At one performance, the actor playing Seymour had a momentary problem; Harrington gave Audrey II especially long syllables to cover it. The puppeteers said he did exactly the right thing.

Little Shop absolutely requires puppets. It paved the way for successful puppet-centric shows: *Lion King* (1997), *Avenue Q* (2003), *War Horse* (2011), and *Hand to God* (2015). The impact of *Little Shop* went beyond the world of puppetry. The words and lyrics by Howard Ashman (1950-1991) and the music by Alan Menken led to a chance to work for Disney. They created words and music for the Disney animated film *Little Mermaid* that launched the "Disney Renaissance." Next, they created a masterpiece, *Beauty and the Beast*. Ashman and Menken brought the sound of Broadway to animated films, proving a resounding success, appealing to both children and adults. After the Broadway debut of *Beauty and the Beast*, suddenly parents and grandparents were bringing kids to see live theater on Broadway.

Over 40 years and thousands of performances, somehow *Little Shop* found that oh-so-rare magic spot where producers, actors, and audiences are drawn to it again and again. The rock and roll, doo-wop, girl group score has the timeless appeal of classic rock. The balance of comedy and horror (heavy on the comedy) is just right. There are splendid acting opportunities and the puppet, the always-surprising Audrey II. The show is durable enough that inexperienced high school performers can have fun with it, and there are hidden highs and lows to be found by the very best actors and puppeteers.

Memories of a Young Puppeteer

By Larry Steckling

I was born in 1947. My puppetry journey began in 1956 in St. Paul, Minnesota, where both parents, Adrian and Dorothy, encouraged me. Our mother Dorothy's talents included cooking, baking, painting murals, interior decorating, and gardening. She was also knowledgeable about acting, stage directing, costuming, set design, stage makeup...and puppetry.

Before getting married, my mother studied drama and dancing at MacPhail School of Music, Dance and Dramatic Art in Minneapolis. She graduated in 1933 and was hired by Sylvia Meredith to work for Sue Hastings Marionettes. She performed a show in a window of Chicago's Carson Pirie Scott department store during the Christmas season. But her time as a puppeteer was brief. Just why she never went back to Hastings or Meredith was never made clear to us. She was soon working as a real-life maid and governess for a well-to-do Minneapolis family. Growing up, I was not into outdoor sports, so mother regaled me with stories about her drama classes, her many college plays, her chance meeting with Meredith at a local college puppet performance, and her stint with Sue Hastings Marionettes. I heard how thrilling it was for her to unpack the puppets for a show, stringing them up to the controls, making sewing repairs to the costumes or puppet bodies, sprucing up the miniature sets with new paint and sparkle, and becoming familiar with the music and sound effects. I heard about the demanding schedule of several 15-minute shows in a day performed by a solo puppeteer and how much she loved it.

In 1958, my older sister, Dorian, was studying for a degree in occupational therapy at the University of Minnesota, where she had to take a class in puppetry. The students were assigned to two-person teams. Each team had to create a puppet version of a classic children's story. Dorian and her partner, Marta, chose a scene loosely adapted from *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

They had to make all the marionettes using a simple method that could be taught to young children with developmental disabilities. Mother was brought into the project. She taught all three of us how to construct the puppets, paint the faces, and costume them. I was 11 and already enthused.

A simple bedroom set was formed out of cardboard and painted in a faux wallpaper floral pattern. Toy furniture and a small

wardrobe with looking-glass doors were just big enough to bring the Alice puppet through for her dramatic entrance. My sister devised a short, simple script. We shamelessly added a Fairy Godmother (stolen from another classic). A dancing clown marionette was added. He was a rebuilt Howdy Doody puppet, a Christmas gift from

my parents. Mother re-costumed him in blue and pink floral material. Alice was dressed in pretty blue satin taken from mother's hat-making box. The Fairy Godmother inadvertently became the star of the show. She had a small Styrofoam head. Her hair was white and curly. Mother seemed to magically create it from leftover Christmas decorations. Her body was petite, but was spectacularly festooned with a cloud of faded light blue tulle from an old hat.

A small string of "twinkle lights" (more Christmas décor) was embedded into her costume and hair, with more lights traveling up to the airplane control. I'm not sure how we managed to hook the lights to plug into an outlet, but the lights certainly provided a special aura. All the puppets had airplane controls for easy operation. My dad helped us build the homemade controls, and to us, they seemed very professional.

Music was a necessity for the show. The family didn't own a tape recorder, but we did have a sturdy record player. The music was chosen from my parents'

rather small record collection. We used the *Nutcracker Suite*, and Offenbach's can-can for the finale.

We rehearsed the show, but sadly I would not be permitted to perform. No children were allowed as visitors in hospital wards. No one thought to use our Brownie camera to document our work, so there was no record of the performance. This made for a very tearful 11-year-old boy. Once the performers returned with sore bodies, but wonderful performance stories, I was back in the troupe again. The girls received an A for their production. The puppets, sets, and props were all given to me to do shows in the neighborhood. But I wanted to do professional shows. The Steckling Family Puppets were born! We started with a performance at my grade school and one for a church banquet. A new chapter began in 1959. As I was finishing seventh grade, the whole family packed up and moved to San Diego for my mother's health.



Young puppeteer Larry with Pinocchio.

Part two: Larry Steckling in San Diego, will appear in the next issue.

PUPPETS AT THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE OF CHARLOTTE

CONTRIBUTED BY CTC STAFF

Magda Guichard is a gifted puppet designer and builder with Children's Theatre of Charlotte (CTC). In 2011, she completed her MFA in production and costume design from Savannah College of Art and Design. In 2013, her first season at CTC, she was assigned to create a puppet for *The Reluctant Dragon*. Later, there was a 20-foot dragon for *Shrek, The Musical*. She has gone on to design and build puppets for about a dozen productions, added to her duties of designing costumes for many productions at CTC. Cindy Taylor, part of the staff at CTC, said of Guichard, "She's bold in her craft but humble in her nature."

The penguins for *Mr. Popper's Penguins* are especially memorable, as are Guichard's puppets for *A Sick Day for Amos McGee*. She created animals from a curiously small mouse, to a mid-sized and elderly Amos, to large jungle-sized creatures. *A Sick Day for Amos McGee*, by Philip and Erin Stead and winner of the 2011 Caldecott Medal, was the source for a play commissioned by CTC. It is a story about the joys of friendship, with lots of animals, portrayed mostly by puppets. Zookeeper Amos visits his animal friends at the zoo, running races with the tortoise, caring for a particularly shy penguin, and reading stories to an owl. One day, Amos is too sick to

visit his zoo friends, but fortunately, the animals know just how to help. The story fits nicely into the theater's theme, called "The Kindness Project," and the puppets were designed with a very specific goal in mind, to spread kindness.

Other shows with puppets include *Caroline, My Wonderful Birthday Suit*, and *Go, Dog. Go!* Occasionally, Guichard reimagines puppets so they can fit in a trailer, enabling shows to tour across North Carolina and South Carolina.

Even after nine years of building puppets, Magda says, "I'm somewhat new to the puppet world. Growing up near West Palm Beach, Florida, I always liked drawing clothes or costumes. I loved *Sesame Street* and the Muppets, but at the time, my focus was on costumes. In high school, I'd make Halloween costumes for my friends. It was at CTC that designing and fabricating puppets became important



Dragon from *Shrek, the Musical*.
Photo: John Merrick



Puppets from *A Sick Day for Amos McGee*.
Photo: John Merrick



Puppets from *Mr. Popper's Penguins*.
Photo: Donna Bise

to me. Visiting my parents, who live most of the year in France, I was lucky enough to see the puppets of La Machine. Their work is so amazing, using classic techniques on such a gigantic scale. Roger Titley from South Africa does work that is awesome in its perceived simplicity, and I drew from that for a couple of pieces. I repeatedly watch Adam Kreutinger's YouTube videos for help on some mechanics. London-based puppet designer Jimmy Grimes has a new book that wonderfully breaks down the process for a newbie like me, but otherwise I research and test as much as I have time for and hope for the best when I hit a deadline."

Children's Theatre of Charlotte was founded in 1948 and established their first permanent home theater in 1971, and then an even better facility in 2003. In 2008, they produced *BFG (Big Friendly Giant)*, collaborating with Grey Seal Puppets.

Of course, there are other prominent children's theaters that are puppet friendly. Children's Theatre Company, Minneapolis, uses puppets as part of their teaching to engage children in the delights of theater. Seattle Children's Theatre is another company that has used many puppets. Doug Paasch (1959-2009) served as puppet master before his untimely passing. Since 2014, Annett Mateo has designed and built puppets for the Seattle company. And in Charlotte, Guichard will keep designing costumes and puppets. As her creativity continues to grow, audiences are eager to see what she will do next.

By Monica Leo

It's been a challenging year for the St. Louis Puppetry Guild. Weeks before the Great Plains Puppet Train, our regional festival, two of their most active members died within days of each other. First, they lost their president Stan Gulick, whose obituary appears in *Puppetry Journal*, Summer 2022, and then Jeanie Bryan. Jeanie was 37, a rising star, when her sudden death robbed us of a piece of our art form's future. Two years earlier, they lost another pivotal member, Tom Bonham. Last April, Jason Kohner, a newer member, passed away. Jason, a musician, focused on puppetry for adults, interspersing his rock-and-roll shows with puppet vignettes. He was the victim of a bicycle accident.

These losses might be enough to break most groups, but the stalwart St. Louisans grieved their losses and continued their work on the festival. Dan (Digger) Romano organized the workshops while Michelle O'Donnell Gulick, Stan's wife, took charge of the festival exhibits. As always, they had the full support of their guild.

The St. Louis Guild stands out as an unusually tight-knit, supportive group. Formed in 1939 and chartered in 1963, they worked on four national festivals, 1941, 1947, 1968, and 1975. Marilyn Myers, Michelle's mom, exemplified the guild's positive vibe. For decades, Marilyn was our region's "Puppet Mama." She specialized in education, creating scores of workshops and programs for kids. She nurtured all of us as beginning puppeteers. She invited Teri Jean and me to perform at our first festival and took the same chance with many of our peers.

Her daughters are much like her. No grass grows under the feet of the Myers gals. When Stan was diagnosed with cancer and subjected to a brutal round of chemo and radiation, he and Michelle already had a full summer of shows, workshops, and residencies booked. Older sister Maureen stepped up, learned Stan's parts, and

even wrote some additional music for their new show, *The Three Little Fishies* (and the Shark). Stan was delighted, insisting, "The show must go on!"

After Stan's death in July, Maureen and Michelle finished the tour. Digger stepped into Stan's role as guild president. Work on the September festival continued.

Digger does many of the same kinds of gigs that Michelle did with Stan. Their shows and residencies for preschool through middle school are booked

through Springboard to Learning and Young Audiences. They meet with each group once a week for nine weeks in classrooms, summer camps, and after-school settings. The kids, even the youngest preschoolers, make puppets and learn to tell stories with them. At the end of each residency, they perform for another class or, in the case of the older kids, for the school.

Digger's shows—folk tales and original stories—use traditional hand puppets and shadow puppets. His troupe, Blaque Berry Puppets, includes an artistic partner, Sandra Griffin, an artist and illustrator. Sandra designs and cuts the shadow puppets; Digger adds the controls.

Bob Kramer's Marionette Studio was established in 1963 and has operated continuously since, presenting shows in-house and touring to other venues. Bob, the primary marionette craftsman, had dreamed of being a puppeteer since early childhood. He tends to be the silent partner. His co-puppeteer, Dug Felch, has a background in theater and excels at spreading good cheer and news about upcoming shows. Dug does most of the marketing for the studio. Young interns round out the staff.

Most of the Kramer shows use carefully crafted, wood-carved marionettes, performing in cabaret style, with their characters dancing, skating, and cavorting through musical numbers. Occasionally, a rod puppet appears over a backdrop. As often as not, it's Marvin the Moose announcing the next act or telling a joke. In October, the guild held their meeting after a cabaret-style show at the Kramer Studio.

Papa and Jackie Wright are longtime members performing as a storytelling/puppetry/percussion duo. Papa does percussion and puppets; Jackie is a dynamic storyteller. Together they specialize in performing interactive shows for young children. Jackie and the audience interact with the puppets, and Papa somehow manages to work the puppets and add percussion!

And then there's Doris Benz! Doris is in her 90s now, not very ambulatory, so she can't come to festivals. When she was able, she attended every available festival and event. She was positive, wise, and insightful. I always enjoyed hearing her comments about shows, workshops, and life in general. I got a note from her recently. She wrote "I'm so sorry that I can't get out and see my friends as I can hardly walk now...It's the pits as I'd like to do it all over again."

Remember to take the time to enjoy your life! Then tell me about it, so I can write about you!
monica@puppetspuppets.com



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Milestones

In Memoriam

Martin “Marty” Dow Richmond

April 23, 1945 to November 21, 2022

Steven Overton, Marty’s partner and husband for more than 45 years, wrote, “My lifelong incredible partner in life, family, kids, Renaissance Fairs, safety and health, and entertainment has passed on. Martin D. Richmond was an extraordinary man with a passion for life. May folks fondly remember his amazing contributions to the world of puppetry, arts, and music.” Marty and Steven founded the Olde World Puppet Theatre (OWPT) in San Francisco in 1982. They settled in Portland, Oregon, in 1992 and founded the Olde World Puppet Museum in 2012 (www.puppetmuseum.com).

Olde World Puppet Theatre Studios created innovative puppets, stages, sets, and lighting, as well as video and computer magic. Marty was the cinematographer and video editor. He worked on 19 puppet sound tracks. Marty was the voice of Ping Pong the Panda. He was cameraman and editor for *Witch Key*, *A Prince’s Adventure* (Amazon Prime) and editor and photographer for *The Enchanted Ring*, *A Princess’s Adventure*.

Born in Washington, DC, Marty’s love of theater started in high

Tributes in the next issue:

- Bob McGrath 1932-2022
- Jody Wren 1938-2022

school in Newton, Massachusetts. He graduated from Emerson College with a degree in radio and theater.

Using his design and tech skills, and his management skills, he worked on fascinating and diverse kinds of projects. He did the lighting and tech for 30 episodes re-filming *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*. He created floats for the Grand Floral Rose Parade and the Starlight Parade, Portland, Oregon. He served as assistant manager/actor for St. Wolfgang’s Bavarian Guild, doing 21 years of Renaissance fairs in California, Oregon, and Washington.

He worked with the travel coordinator for rock stars including Donna Summers and Rod Stewart on Electra Records’ European tour. He managed a facility favored by executives of the recording industry and another facility where rock stars recorded their first albums. He also served as manager for Blue Max Restaurant in Lahaina, Hawaii, and worked with Ananda Air in Hawaii. He even toured with a Canadian race car team.

OWPT worked on *Wee Sing: Under the Sea* (1994), building the three most complex puppets and performing many of the most difficult segments. In November 1996, Marty and Steven created “The Incredible, Fascinating, Wonderful World of Puppets” for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, featuring over 1,000 puppets, and featuring live puppet performances by famous West Coast puppet troupes.

Charles “Charlie” Holden

1953 to 2022

Charlie Holden of We’re Holden Puppets recently passed away of leukemia. Holden studied with Margo Lovelace and Joann Spencer Siegrist. We’re Holden Puppets was founded in 1980. With Laura Opshinsky, wife and puppet partner, there were performances at Carnegie Museum, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh’s First Night, Three Rivers Arts Festival, and hundreds of elementary schools and private homes. For several years, Holden was “house” puppeteer at the Pittsburgh Children’s Museum. They created educational and entertaining shows for full-stage school assemblies. They made giant strolling puppets, and taught puppet making and performance workshops. Holden retired from puppetry around 2001.

Contributed by Joann Spencer Siegrist

Jules Bass

September 16, 1935 to October 25, 2022

Jules Bass, famous in the world of stop-action animation, began working with Arthur Rankin Jr. (1924-2014) in 1955. They released their first syndicated television series in 1960 and formed Rankin/Bass Productions. *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964, NBC) has been telecast every year since 1964, making it the longest continuously running Christmas TV special. Bass, working with

Maury Laws, wrote the lyrics for many of the films he co-directed with Rankin. *Frosty the Snowman* (1969) was another Rankin-Bass classic. Bass wrote the lyrics for *The Hobbit* (1977), which earned a Peabody Award.

Gabrielle Boisson

December 19, 1920 to August 19, 2022

“Gabrielle was a very special lady. She told me many stories of how she and her husband survived in war-torn Paris during and after WW II. She learned to make paper flowers and sell them on the streets.” (From Charles Taylor) She sang at Paris nightclubs in 1951. Gaby came to the US in 1956. Her skill at making paper flowers got her a job at a company that supplied Tiki House at Disneyland. Near Hollywood, she founded French Doll House Nursery School in 1962. From a profile in *Puppetry Journal*, September 1980, she said she discovered puppetry in 1968. Mentors included Harry Burnett, Bob Bromley, and Betsy Brown. After 1970, Gaby specialized in doing shadow puppets. She served as president of the Los Angeles guild from 1982 to 1983. In 2007, she moved into Kingsley Manor and would occasionally do puppet shows. “She graciously allowed the LA Guild of Puppetry to use her nursery school for meetings and workshops for many years. A lovely, generous woman with a charming French accent and a twinkle in her eyes, she was a great asset to puppetry.” (Contributed by Beth Fernandez). A eulogy by her daughter, Danielle Schmit, and her husband, Michael, said Gabrielle was a free spirit who could light up a room.

*Happy Holidays
to Everyone From
Puppetry Journal
and PofA*



Membership Benefits

The *Puppetry Journal* appears four times a year. Each issue contains full-color photographs and articles covering all aspects of puppet theater. Entertaining and newsworthy articles about puppeteers, puppet theatres, exhibitions, touring companies, technical tips, new books, films, television, and puppet festivals, keep the membership informed. Other membership benefits include **Special Registration Rates for Festivals**, **Liability Insurance** for members of PofA only, with coverage at a nominal annual cost. **Scholarships & Endowment Grants** for special studies and projects. **Resources for Learning and Research**. **Directory of Members**, national experts, and theatres, all celebrating the art of puppetry. Contact the Puppeteers of America for more information.



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NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE

theoneill.org/pup

2023 APPLICATION WINDOW:
January 10-31, 2023



Shoshana Bass at the 2022
National Puppetry Conference
Photo by Emi-Lei Styers Zysk

O^{the}Neill
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Love EVERYTHING puppet?!? JOIN the CLUB!



Puppet Club logo
designed by Michael Kelly.

Puppet Club is an online meeting place for young people (aged approximately 15 - 30) who love puppets and who are **neurodiverse** or "differently-wired." Most have Autism Spectrum Disorder, while others have Learning/Intellectual Disabilities... everyone is welcome at Puppet Club and we **celebrate our differences!**

The Club strives to foster **social** interactions, collaborations, friendships, and above all to further our members' knowledge, **artistry** and **professionalism** in the field of puppetry. Many of our meetings center around socializing, sharing artwork, and learning from each other, while others tackle more specific topics ranging from "parody" to "copyright" or "puppet wrangling" to "audition self-tape 101" - and at some meetings we even have **special guests!**

Think you or someone you know might want to **JOIN the CLUB?** - please email us at info@dramaofworks.com and we'll be happy to answer any questions you might have!

VISIT our website: www.dramaofworks.com/puppetclub
Follow us on Instagram: [@dowpuppetclub](https://www.instagram.com/dowpuppetclub)

Puppet Club is 100% free - it is supported in part by funds from ART/NY and a generous donation from the Jane Henson Foundation.

Happy
VALENTINES DAY

This February take **\$5 off** new/existing memberships for UNIMA-USA!

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Discount valid January 28 - February 28, 2023 at unimausa.org/become-a-member

New Things to Discover on the Jim Henson Foundation Website



PUPPETRY AT THE CARRIAGE HOUSE

Complete history of past PATCH
residency artists from 2011-present.

Charlotte Lily Gaspard *Mia M.I.A.* 2022 PATCH Artist
Photo: Richard Termine, taken at La MaMa

PUPPET HAPPENINGS

Online listings for NYC Adult &
Family, National, Festivals, Exhibits,
and Classes updated weekly

Modern Times Theater *The Baffo Box Show* 2022 Family Grant
Photo: Beana Bern



ALLELU AWARD named for Allelu Kurten

Annual grants for international travel
to perform in a major puppet festival.

Margarita Blush Productions *Unfolding* 2022 Allelu Award
Pesta Boneka International Puppet Theater Festival, Indonesia
Photo: Sophia Blush

HensonFoundation.org

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