

Puppeteers of America, Inc. presents

The One and Only

National Day of Puppetry



Handbook

A Guidebook to creating a festive celebration of the
Art of the Puppet

Introduction

Puppetry in America is older than the various countries on this continent themselves. Until the beginning of the 20th century, puppet shows were not common. Even then, puppeteers kept their art a closely guarded secret, certainly not shared with the public.

In the first half of the 20th century, some puppeteers (most notably, Tony Sarg) helped to lift the veil of secrecy, sharing information about their work, which led to the formation of the Puppeteers of America in 1937.

Today, almost three quarters of a century onward, puppets hold a place in the public's heart that is rivaled by few other arts. They appear on stage, in movies, on television, and now, on the Internet.

The National Day of Puppetry grew out of an idea presented by Carol Fijan to a guild presidents' forum at a Puppeteers of America National Festival. Her dream was for a puppet on every street corner on the same day, filling our lands with the joy and inspiration this liveliest of Arts brings.

The Puppeteers of America is proud to present a National Day of Puppetry taking place all over North America and presented by the local Puppeteers of America Guild.

This handbook can assist your guild in producing a National Day of Puppetry event for area. Let it show the celebration you find in the Puppet.

I am indebted to Libby Bierbaum for her contributions to the original NDoP newsletters that contained much of this information.

--Compiled and edited by Wayne Krefting, Summer 2004 edition

(updated 02/28/07 edition, so you know it's fresh!)

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Planning Your Event

Plan your National Day of Puppetry (NDoP) events early.

Although the “official” date for the National Day of Puppetry is the **fourth Saturday of April**, not every guild or puppetry group chooses to celebrate on that date. Partnerships with other organizations, scheduling conflicts, more opportune dates, and so on have caused NDoP, like a good puppeteer, to stretch to meet the needs of its audience. The important thing is to celebrate!

The purpose of NDoP is two-fold. First, NDoP promotes the art of puppetry through awareness and education about the art. Second, NDoP promotes both the Puppeteers of America, the local guilds, and especially the benefits of membership.

Elevating the art of the puppet in the public eye can take as many forms as there are puppeteers and members of the Puppeteers of America. Performances showcase the entertaining, and often emotionally and intellectually provoking, medium puppetry is in the theater. Exhibits display the contributions puppetry makes to the fine arts. Puppet building and other construction workshops demonstrate the craft and artistry puppetry contains.

Or, all the above can just be simple, plain, unadorned FUN. Or, in many cases around the continent, all of the above. Its' your choice. Use your strengths and resources to create a day which shows off the best of puppetry in your locale to the world.

Let's look at how to get started.

Old hands and New, the first thing to do is: **GET ORGANIZED!**

Organization Structure

Key to the success of any endeavor is organization. Knowing what jobs need to be done, and being able to divide up the work, will make your event run smoother and more fun for everyone involved. However, before discussing a committee to organize for the NDoP, recognition needs to be given to the fact that guilds and puppet organizations come in all sizes.

The basic structure outlined below assumes a medium sized, active guild. Of course, if yours is a very large group, there are plenty of resources to call upon. If, on the other hand, you have a small guild, or few active members, some thought needs to be given as to how best to use the resources at your disposal (not to mention getting those inactive members, more active).

In the case of a small group, you may not have the resources for all the committee responsibilities. A Chair is essential, and so too is Publicity. However, you can get by with fewer members if you concentrate on one or two event presentations. Another way to organize “smart” is to partner with an organization such as a museum or children's theater. They will, most likely, do the advertising and can provide facility coordination. You can then spend your time on the program itself. One of the best resources you have is the Puppeteers of America directory where you can find the names, addresses, and email for guilds, large and small, around North America. Contact them and see what they are doing. Remember, this is an organizational, continental, wide event.

With that in mind, what do you do?

Get your committee together. You can model after the Puppeteer of America Festival staffs. Here are some suggested jobs and their responsibilities, positions might include:

Chair:

Keeps the big picture in mind
Finds partnerships with the community (Community organizations can offer volunteers, financial resources, & event space.)

Publicity:

Arranges press releases, advertising/pubic service announcements with TV, radio & newspapers. Don't forget the tourism board, community calendars, or the Chamber of Commerce.

Performance coordinator:

Lines up the artists
Gathers individual performer and set up information
Puts together the schedule of performances

Workshop coordinator:

Lines up workshops presenters
Assigns locations/rooms.
Coordinates special set-up requirements
Handles public sign-ups if necessary

Location & Set Up coordinator:

Finds a suitable location for the event.
Coordinates "day of" set up needs like mics, pa's, tables, chairs, stage, etc.
Obtains permits required if required

Volunteer Coordinator - You'll need HELP!

Coordinates volunteers into multiple crews as needed

Refreshment Coordinator -

Takes care of your people; try to have food available for your staff & performers. This may be possible through in-kind donations from local businesses in exchange for advertising. Be aware of locale food laws/ordinances whether for staff, or others

Adult Committee Chair -

If you plan on showcasing adult entertainment as well as family performers you might want to split up the duties.

Additional Activity coordinator -

Coordinates complimentary activities, i.e.: clowns, face painting, bands, etc. For example, having a band perform between shows can help bridge the lull and keep your audience interested and attentive.

Accommodations / Travel coordinator -

If you have out of towners performing or attending your event, local where to stay info is helpful along with maps of the city & location of the event.

Whew! That does sound sort of daunting. Remember, not every area can sustain all those people, need all that activity, nor have large-scale events. But big group or small, mega-event or modest celebration, the tasks needed to create your event can be shared and aren't really hard, taken one bite at a time. If you don't have a large guild, **think about partnering with an organization**, like a library, park, or museum, to help in carrying your NDoP off.

Find a location

If you don't have a locale, you may not have an event. Where to go?

Locations you might consider: municipal parks or city centers, libraries, malls, theatres, museums, churches, other private businesses with space or even a parking lot, the local Farmers' Market. Are there festivals currently happening in your area with which you can partner? **Also, if you have an outdoor event, plan an inclement weather backup.**

What about money?

Some events are strictly volunteer, performers and others donating their time, space, and so on. Other events may have costs that mean obtaining funding from an outside source. It may be too late for grant money (usually applications are in and decisions made 9 months in advance), but there are alternatives.

Now may be the time to think of local corporate sponsorship. Don't give up hope on your local businesses. If you are still in need of funding try offering ad spots on your brochures, programs, and posters.

Figure out, in specific line items, what your needs are and how much it will take to accomplish them. Then, make a list of businesses to contact, dividing up the work among committee members as needed. When you call upon a business, ask to speak to the manager or owner.

Introduce yourself and explain BRIEFLY who you are and why you are calling. Remember time is money: Ask them if they have time to talk with you now, or if you should call back later, or even come by in person to talk in greater detail. Know what you are going to ask for, before you call. If seeking monetary donation, have some simple, giving amounts (2 or 3), such as \$10, \$25, \$50, so they won't have to "make up a number". If they can't donate money, ask for donations of services or hard items ("in-kind" donations) that your event could use. Local assistance could also come in the form of donations of food, advertising, location space, Xeroxing of materials, etc.

You need to be specific about what you can offer them in return for their sponsorship. What kind of exposure your event will have, numbers of attendees based on past programs. Advertisement in brochures and posters is an obvious benefit to offer. How much space are you offering. Perhaps banners on the PA system, or mention of their sponsorship as shows are introduced. You could have a special sponsors flyer or list to display the day of the event.

Ask if they are particular about how the printed sponsorship is listed? Do they have specific artwork or a logo that you need to use or can you just type up something? Don't get sloppy here... watch for typos or other errors. Get their listing right!

Once you receive sponsorship dollars, you need to have some kind of form or receipt to give the business as an acknowledgement of their contribution. Something with your guild or center logo and address that lists the specific amount of cash, goods, or services they have contributed. Don't forget if you are non-profit the business can probably write this off on their taxes.

The THANK YOU. This is very important. Don't forget to invite them to your event, in writing preferably, and include a copy of the event schedule and anything you have in print with their name on it. After the event make sure to write them a thank you note for their support and include any additional printed items with their name on it. This builds community appreciation and paves the way for next year!

Should you charge the public? Free shows might draw a higher attendance (and many venues like libraries won't allow you to charge), but there is also a perceived value when there is a fee, even if nominal.

Advertise, Advertise, Advertise!

No one will come if they don't know about your fabulous event. Make a list of publicity outlets like newspapers, radio/TV, and local magazines in your area. Call them and get a contact name so when you are ready you know just who to send your information to. Also, check to see how far in advance of an event do they need your info for consideration? Write your press releases and send them out 4-6 weeks in advance of your event.

The Event Itself

What are you going to do? Performance, workshops, music, games, a parade? Who is your audience; who do you want to reach? You don't need to do everything. One or two well-done and enthusiastic programs are much better than a dozen well-intended but ill planned events.

Performers

Who will perform? Will they be paid or volunteer their work. What types of puppet styles will be showcased? What length of performances? Keep your performers in mind as you choose venues.

Workshops/puppet making booths

If you are offering any workshops where children are involved - remember two things - Time & Simplicity. Keep your projects easy enough to finish in approx. 15-30 minutes. Keep them simple—you don't want to get bogged down helping 1 child while 15 are waiting for help. You will be swamped! One tricky thing can be how is your project attached? Watch out for hot glue with kids (not mention toxic materials), and is there access to electricity?

Items to sell

Do you have anything you want to sell to the public like puppets, CD's, t-shirts, books? If you have folks in your guild that are not active puppeteers but are creative and crafty - have them make simple, inexpensive finger puppets that can be sold. This can be a great way to generate some money for the guild! However, you need to be careful how sales are discussed and conducted, whether they are on behalf of a specific puppet troupe or on behalf of the guild. Who gets the benefit - remember most guilds are non-profit and you don't want to abuse that status (not to mention sales tax issues for those entities—like puppeteers—who are not non-profit**). Someone needs to be in charge of this stuff, too. Decide whether you should have a fixed booth or a roving sales person. **DON'T FORGET TO HAVE PETTY CASH for CHANGE!!!**

****A very important consideration regarding sales:** Check your state and local sales tax laws. Unless your organization specifically is a legally designated non-profit (you will have had to fill out lots of paperwork and will then have a tax exemption document and number from the state), you will have to charge sales tax and remit it to the appropriate authority.

Event schedule

Put together an event schedule. Break down the day in hourly increments, or whatever works best for you, and list show times, performing troupes, show titles, and other festivities. When is the Puppet Parade!!!? This helps with your planning and advertising.

Equipment

Find out if performers are bringing all the equipment they need - especially sound equipment! If they can't bring it all with them, get a specific list of needs. Most troupes are pretty self-contained, but be sure to ask. Other general items you may need to provide anyway are a raised platform, microphones, speakers, batteries, cassette or cd players. What about sand bags for light stands? If your event is outside and you have a troupe performing behind a stage with curtains... the wind can really "SAIL" away with the show. Also, who needs electricity? Where are you going to get it? Don't forget the extension cords!

Puppeteers of America

Remember to promote both the **Puppeteers of America** and your **local guild** as a part of your National Day of Puppetry event. Be sure to have a supply of membership brochures for both available and visible to the public. Fred Thompson, Membership, can help you obtain some. A display with copies of the Puppetry Journal, Playboard, and other PoA material also makes an eye-catching presentation.

If you have questions (or answers and suggestions), please send them to me:

John Scollon
National Day of Puppetry
401 Laurel Street
Columbia SC 29201

Phone: 803 252 7366

Email: puppetgnomes@msn.com

and we'll include them in the next NDoP manual update.

See you next time!

National Day of Puppetry Templates

Sample Short Press Release

Double spaced, print on one side only! Keep it short!

The Hands Strings and Rods Puppetry Guild/Region
Puppeteers of America
P.O. Box ABC
Our Fair City , State of Optimism, USA, 99999

For immediate Release (or Release Date), Date: (date release is mailed) Contact:
Festival chair, Patsy Puppeteer, Phone #: 690/555-1212, Email _____

“National Day of Puppetry Celebrated in Our Fair City “

Who: The Hands Strings and Rods Puppetry Guild
What: Gala Puppetry Festival and "Puppets Across the Park" gathering.
Where: The rotunda at City Hall, and City Hall Park, 1888 Main Street
When: (Day, your date) , 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Activities will begin with Mayor Pompus declaring National Day of Puppetry in Our Fair City. Other activities include free shows every hour starting at 9 a.m., a free Children's Puppetry Clinic at 10:30 a.m., a puppet construction workshop for teachers at 1:30 p.m., a revival tent of religious puppetry at 2:30 p.m., a Puppet Exhibit and Puppetry Store open all day, and a barbecue from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

Everyone with a puppet is invited to line up at 4:30 p.m. in front of City Hall for the "Puppets Across the Park." All participants will receive a free puppet badge.

The Hands Strings and Rods Puppetry Guild was chartered in 1947 by the Puppeteers of America Inc., a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1937 to encourage and promote puppetry.

For further information contact Festival chair, Patsy Puppeteer at 690/555-1212.

Sample Press Release

Fill in your own information below. Double space, print on one side only! Try to keep to one page. Remember who, what, when, where, why.

The Hands Strings and Rods Puppetry Guild/Region
Puppeteers of America
P.O. Box ABC
Our Fair City , State of Optimism, USA, 99999.

For immediate Release (or Release Date) Date: (date release is mailed)
Contact: Festival chair, Patsy Puppeteer, Phone #: 690/555-1212, Email: ----

National Day of Puppetry Celebrated in Our Fair City

The Hands, Strings & Rods Guild/Region of the Puppeteers of America will celebrate The National Day of Puppetry on (day, your date) with a Gala Puppetry Festival and "Puppets Across the Park" gathering. The Festival will be held in the rotunda at City Hall starting at 8:45 a.m. and conclude with a joining hands of over 1,000 puppets across City Hall Park at 5 p.m.

Mayor Nero Pompus will Open the Festival with a proclamation declaring National Day of Puppetry in Our Fair City At 8:45 a.m., followed by free puppet shows on the hour featuring:

9 a.m. - Jimmy Jones Jumpen Strings
10 a.m. - Peeking Puppet Theater
11 a.m. - Shadows d'Arts
12 noon - Tina's Tiny Tales
1 p.m. - El Teatro Boom Boom
2 p.m. - Short N' Sweet
3 p.m. - Polly's Preschool Players
4 p.m. - Puppets International Inc.

Other activities include a free Puppetry Clinic to mend children's puppets at 10:30 a.m., a puppet construction workshop for teachers at 1:30 p.m., a revival tent of religious puppetry at 2:30 p.m., a Puppet Exhibit and Puppetry Store open all day, and a barbecue from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Everyone with a puppet is invited to line up at 4:30 p.m. in front of City Hall for the "Puppets Across the Park." All participants will receive a free puppet badge.

The Hands Strings and Rods Guild was chartered in 1947 by the Puppeteers of America Inc. a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1937. Its purpose is to encourage and promote puppetry as a means of communication, an extension of human expression, and as a performing art; to enhance the proficiency of the Art of Puppetry, both professional and amateur.

For further information contact Festival chair, Patsy Puppeteer at 690/555-1212.

Want an "Official Day of Puppetry"? Get a city or state official to make a **Proclamation!** Here's a sample:

Whereas,

In the history of America, from Native American puppet representations, traveling troupes from the Revolutionary War, onwards, through the vaudeville and arts theater entertainments, into the early days of television with stars like Howdy Doody and Beanie and Cecil and movies like Lili, The Sound of Music and the Muppet Movie series, into the present with Sesame Street, The Muppet Show, The Shari Lewis Show and many other local and regional programs, puppets have played an important role in American theater, and have helped to shape positively, the minds of our young people. In addition, puppets are used in the classroom, in physical and mental therapy and as a source of pleasure for all ages. and

Whereas,

the Puppeteers of America Inc. a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1937 to encourage and promote puppetry as a means of communication, an extension of human expression, and as a performing art and to enhance the proficiency of the Art of Puppetry, both professional and amateur, has declared Saturday, (your date), as a National Day of Puppetry, and

Whereas,

puppet shows, festivals, exhibits, workshops and other puppetry activities will take place throughout the nation on this day,

Now therefore be it resolved that the Legislature of the State of _____ declares the (spelled out your date), a State (City) Day of Puppetry.

Here's a **Sample Letter** to the to accompany your proclamation proposal:

Date

The Honorable

Address

Dear,

The _____ Guild of Puppeteers of America, Inc. would like to enroll your assistance in recognizing and celebrating a National Day of Puppetry on (day, your date). All over the continent, activities will take place to help raise the awareness of Puppetry as an art form, a teaching and therapy tool, a means of communicating religious, health and social messages, as pure entertainment for adults and children, and as a part of the history of the arts of the North American continent.

Puppeteers of America Inc. is a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1937. Its purpose is to encourage and promote puppetry as a means of communication, an extension of human expression, and as a performing art; to enhance the proficiency of the Art of Puppetry, both professional and amateur.

In the history of America, from Native American puppet representations, traveling troupes from the Revolutionary War, onwards, through the vaudeville and arts theater entertainments, into the early days of television with stars like Howdy Doody and Beanie and Cecil and movies like Lili, The Sound of Music and the Muppet Movie series, into the present with Sesame Street, The Muppet Show, The Shari Lewis Show and many other local and regional programs, puppets have played an important role in American theater, and have helped to shape positively, the minds of our young people. In addition, puppets have nee and continue to be used in the classroom, in physical and mental therapy and as a source of pleasure for all ages.

Our guild will be (Put in what you are doing) in celebration of this day. You can help us raise the awareness of the art of puppetry by collaborating with your colleagues to have the attached proclamation read into the record of your legislature.

If you have any further questions or need clarification, please contact me at:_____. Thank you for your assistance in this effort.

Yours,