

BOARD NEWS

The Puppeteers of America National Festival is the premier showcase of North American puppetry. It highlights great performers and educators, and generates a lot of enthusiasm for this wonderful, unique art form.

But now it is time for all of us to take a close look at the festival model we have used for many years and ask the hard questions: Does the model need to be updated? Does it perhaps need to be completely reconstructed? There are several issues surrounding the national festival that bring up a great deal of concern among many members: (1) the cost of attending a festival; (2) the cost and risk of producing a festival; (3) the difficulty in finding a location and director. We are at a crossroads. The universities who hosted us in the past are charging much higher "real" prices now, not the once-upon-a-time prices of yesterday. So, if we keep national festivals the same length and scope, the costs are going to increase substantially. How can we reduce costs or at least make them more manageable? We might shorten the festival. We certainly need to increase efforts to maximize the number of attendees, and by doing so, bring in more income.

REUM...With a View (Continued from Page 3.)

Michael Graham of **Spring Valley Puppets** presented "Jack and the Beanstalk" with lots of new twists, **Heidi Rugg's Barefoot Puppets** doing "Little Red Hen" and **The Puppet Co.**, doing "Nutcracker." all at **Glen Echo Park**.

Tears of Joy in **Oregon** opening a new "Cinderella" they are also presenting Nancy Aldrich's new "Blame It On the Moon."

The Masque Theatre in **New York** are working on a childrens television series. Indications are it is difficult to get people to commit to worthwhile projects.

Fred Putz of **Chicago** echoed the same thing. Getting people to join and participate in Guild activities is a problem. Fred has tried all kinds of great ideas. If anyone has ideas of ways to recruit and get new members let us know.

As always there are lots of new shows in **New York**. **The 42nd Street Puppets** are doing "Erik The Amazing & The Shal-laballah," the story of how Erik overcame his fears. **The Puppetworks** are doing "Beauty and the Beast." And the **Swedish**

P.L.A.Y.B.O.A.R.D

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Many of us in the puppet community have been challenged or hurt by cuts in funding to the arts, and we face more constraints on our time and finances than ever before. It's important to keep the festivals affordable.

The energy expended by producing a festival should be matched by the enthusiasm and benefit that comes out of that festival. People travel long distances, expending their precious time and hard earned money to see high quality shows, participate in great workshops, and come away energized and renewed in their love of the art form.

Performers sacrifice their time and a real paycheck for the opportunity to perform at a festival. The organizers relish the thanks they receive and the camaraderie they have helped enable. One of the biggest benefits to the organization on the whole is that the national festival traditionally attracts many new members.

Kudos go to Kurt Hunter and the Minnesota Mafia for the great job they did this past summer in producing a successful national festival during this critical time of transition. They were forced to re-budget near the last moment when advanced registrations were lower than expected and everything worked out well.

The festival site for the 2007 national probably will return to Concordia University in St. Paul, MN. Nancy Smith has agreed to serve as the Artistic Director and Kurt Hunter has agreed to help as Site Liaison, but not as Festival Director. Most other jobs remain unfilled.

Now is the time for anyone interested in helping with a national festival to step up to the plate. You need not live near the festival site. Those days are gone. Meetings will be by email, phone and fax. This is going to be a national festival and will require effort from folks all over North America. — Paul Mesner, President

Cottage Marionette Theatre is (doing it in the threes), **The Three Pigs, Bears and Billy Goats**.

Ed Sheehy's picture was in the NY newsletter doing two different kinds of puppets. I have known Ed since I first got involved with the PofA so I have to stop and say Ed does the most phenomenal hand puppets I have seen in years. They are beautifully simple and he handles them as if they were part of him. He handles them like the Chinese puppets that jump and fly. Ed's puppets do all those things even better. I hope he will be at a Regional Festival because I will go just to see him perform with them again.

My thanks to all of you who sent me e-mails and who wrote and sent newsletters. If I missed you know that it is because I lost this column three different times in cyber space. Have a great New Year everyone and keep doing and letting me know what you are doing. — M'El

Have you visited the
Puppeteers of America
Website?
Check it out at:
www.puppeteers.com

REGIONAL FESTIVALS

EAST COAST SUPER SONIC PUPPET FESTIVAL

JULY 19 - 23, 2006

Asheville, North Carolina

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

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL FESTIVAL

CELEBRATE THE PUPPET

JULY 27 - 30, 2006

LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

(with support from Great Plains Region)
Co-sponsored by the Ontario Puppetry Association. Go to www.puppetwerx.ca for more information
Festival Director: Phil Arnold - PArnold@fanshawec.ca

PACIFIC NW & PACIFIC SW

REGIONAL FESTIVAL

MUCH ADO ABOUT PUPPETS

August 4 - 7, 2006

Tacoma, Washington

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington
www.muchadoaboutpuppets.org/
contact Jean Mattson jmariematt@aol.com

THE GUILD CONNECTION

KURT HUNTER

Those of you who made the trek to Minnesota last summer for the festival can testify that the state isn't a year round winter wonderland. You probably recall that temperatures can (and did) climb to rather unpleasant heights. Apart from those highs, we've had an unusually long run of pleasant weather. A long enough run that I had grown surprisingly tired of "pleasant". Well, in the last couple of days we've taken a quick tumble, briefly hitting single digits and I'm rather enjoying it. Nothing gets me back into the workshop like sub-freezing temperatures. It's very satisfying to be spending more time "hands-on".

- Similarly, (trying desperately for a smooth segue) there's been a lot of "hands-on" activity at guild meetings recently, which I suspect has also been quite satisfying. The September meeting of the **Phoenix Guild of Puppetry** was advertised as a "mystery make and take" workshop. The surprise was Claire Radich leading a hands-on recap of the Polyfoam Puppets for the Classroom workshop that Pam Corcoran presented at the national festival this summer. It's a very simple, but extremely creative way to work with polyfoam.

- About that same time, a bit farther north, Elizabeth Luce was leading a completely different type of hands-on polyfoam puppet workshop for the lucky **Puppeteers of Puget Sound**. There was no fee for the glue and foam thanks to a grant from the Puppeteers of America.

- In October, the **Puppet Guild of Long Island** had their hands full at Carol Fijan's studio in a workshop constructing witch puppets using a cone puppet technique designed by Frank and Carol Altruda. That's another one that sounds fascinating.

- My own **Twin Cities Puppeteers** was treated to a plaster mold making workshop for our October meeting. Paul Eide was brave enough to do a live demo of two different techniques. We learned the "Do's" and the "Don'ts". One technique worked. One didn't.

- The good folks of the **Columbia Association of Puppeteers** were also in demo mode in October learning about rubber latex and neoprene from new guild president Jason R-Cady at his new home.

- Rather than "hands-on", the **Columbus Puppetry Guild** had a "minds-on" meeting in September with guests from the OSU Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute. Their expert guests discussed donating historical material from the guild to the institute. Suggestions that they are already following up on included creating an archive of guild oral histories and appointing a guild archivist to supervise collection of historical materials.

- Hopefully minds were stimulated as well by Bill Scott's workshop on "Religious Puppetry" for the **Greater Philadelphia Area Puppetry Guild** in November.

- Lots of performances have been showing up at guild meetings as well. Buddy Big Mountain performed at the October meeting of the **Orange County Puppetry Guild**. In fact, he was performing for his own send off before he and Diana move to Canada. With Buddy's move Larry Gilleland has taken over as guild president.

- Their neighbors in the **Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry**, offered a new twist on a familiar theme with "PuppetSlam 3: SpookySlam" the end of October.

- The **Mile High Puppeteers** were scheduled to see a performance of "Town Mouse and Country Mouse" by the Mont View Puppets for their November meeting.

- The description of Janaki Ranpura's "Lovesick Sea Play", performed for the **San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild** in October, was especially fascinating. This one woman shadow play was performed in the open without a shadow screen. The delightful performance was followed by a "lively and supportive" discussion, which proved to be a learning experience for all involved.

- On the other side of the country the members of the **National Capital Puppetry Guild** were congratulating Heidi Rugg on the UNIMA Citation of Excellence that she received for "Galapagos George". They are pleased to note that she performed the show for the guild during its development to get some feedback and encourage others to do the same. Guild feedback may not guarantee you an UNIMA citation, but it gives you a pretty good shot at a better show.

- **Puppetry Guild of Northeastern Ohio** junior member Doug Puskas did just that with his new show "Dinosaurs". He performed the show for the October meeting, got feedback, and presented an improved performance for the Great Lakes Region's annual celebration at Pokagon in November.

- October saw the **Connecticut Guild of Puppetry** celebrating 30 years with a puppetry marathon. The day included unveiling of the new Henson stamps, screening of puppet films "Hand Made Puppet Dreams" thanks to Heather Henson, a dinner, cake, reminiscing, and a Puppet Slam.

- The Houston Puppetry Festival, presented annually by the **Greater Houston Puppetry Guild**, was another grand success this year with 102 participants and 32 staff. The festival dinner became a "Jean Kuecher Appreciation Dinner" honoring the woman who brought the festival together.

- The **Montana Puppet Guild** also has grand success to report. At a September meeting six guild members took the plunge and joined the Puppeteers of America. For a guild with small numbers, six new P of A members is something to brag about. Their other good news is guild president and newsletter editor Sherry Johns has retired (not from the guild) and will be devoting some of that extra time to the newsletter.

- Jamie Strickland has taken over the newsletter for the **Central Florida Puppet Guild** and her first effort looked great.

- The November newsletter of the **Puppetry Guild of Greater New York** included a nice retrospective of the guild's National Day of Puppetry and their Puppets on the Green events complete with a wealth of photos.

- In other communication news, new webmaster Bethany Mooradian is updating the website for **Detroit Puppeteers Guild**, www.detroitpuppeteersguild.org.

- The prize for most unique guild fundraiser this month goes to the **Florida Suncoast Puppet Guild**. The **City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department** is hosting a Hispanic festival and the guild was given the opportunity to work the beer booth and split the profits. If you happen to be in Tampa, stop by the booth and lift a glass for the good of puppetry.

Well, I'm out of printed space, time and news. Stay warm (easier for some of you than for others) and let me know what your guild is up to when you have the chance.

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This is the season! How did the Holiday season get here so fast and where has it gone? Hope you all had a Merry and profitable Season . . . I plan a wonderful family Christmas in New Hampshire. My grandkids are beginning to tower over me. Time flies, or I'm shrinking . Thanks for lots of mail .Happy 60th Birthday to the **Detroit Guild** and Happy 50th to **Kermit the Frog** . Congratulations to **The Puppet Art in Detroit** celebrating ten years .

If you haven't seen them yet run to your Post Office and pick up the new **Muppet Stamps** they are great.

The Handspring and Sogolon Puppet Companies presented a production of "Tall Horse" (the story of a captured giraffe,) in Michigan. They were using large scale-puppets both African and European style.

An e-mail from **Jennifer Hunt** a member of the **Squalls Puppeteers in Louisville Kentucky** let me know what they are up to. They are moving into a new space and will be able to seat 100. They have two new shows in the works "Outside" a show for Middle and High School and "Little Horses Big Adventure" for Pre-Schools. She also reports that they had the largest Halloween party in the world because they built 9 and 10 foot puppets. Thanks for the up-date and good luck on your new puppet place.

The **New York puppeteers** have been busy building new puppets. **Linda Bienstock** has an unusual hand puppet lady ready to be a stand-up comedienne, **Jeffery Nelson** (based in CT) but performing in NY has a new hand puppet magician . **Lois Corwin** also a New Yorker has just completed her new show , " The John Henry Story." I received an unexpected letter from **Joann Siegrist** in **West Virginia**. She was on sabbatical last spring and spent time in Beijing China. She appeared on a TV Show in Central China and indicated one has a wild time finding supplies for making puppets in China.

Wayne Martin of **Boston** did a stint in Rhode Island and wowed them with his Count Dracula who was host of the performers that included goblins , ghosts , pumpkins and bones.

Colin Taylor, a woodcarver, from **North Platte Nebraska**, that he has just finished a fairy and giant for his new show, He tells me his shows are based on the "Virtues Book"

Bob Digangi from **Florida** has a beautiful new hand carved Punch and Judy set. A large and varied P&J cast from Punch and Judy to the Wizard of Oz, Just for the fun of it.

Also in **Long Beach California**, **Carol and Emily Taylor** are doing their own version of Punch and Judy. (All hail -- Punch and Judy lives on.) Carol and Emily spent three weeks in Japan recently learning about Japanese culture.

Jim Gamble and crew have been cruising up and down the Calif. Coast line.

Those lucky people in Arizona had a workshop with **Drew Allison** out of **South Carolina** doing foam puppets. I can tell you they had a great time. One of my favorite puppets - a green leprechaun, I built two summers ago in Drew's class at Puppet Festival Mid-West. The leprechaun is a favorite with my pre-school buddies and my wild Irish friends..naturally on St Patrick's day.

Drew Allison's Gray Seals have really been busy in his studio! **Vania Reckard** and **Cheralyn Lambeth** have been making two NBA and three other mascot costumes. Gray Seal also collaborated with Charlotte's Barebones Theatre Co. on the production of Clive Barker's "Crazyface". Drew in the mean time dropped in on

the **Mum Puppettheatre in Philadelphia**, and then on to the **Great Arizona Puppet Theatre**.

Speaking of **The Mid West Festival** , I got an e-mail from **Peter Allen** saying he was tired of my whining about not having anything to write in my column, so he offered me information as to the **Parasol Puppets** activities. Fortunately **Debbie Allen** clarified the information . She is much easier to understand than Peter. They -The Parasol Puppets - performed at Christmas at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, 6 shows on Sunday - 7 shows a day - 5 days a week. WOW. Their show was a new one , "The Animals Christmas" and they built 40 new puppets for the show. It is their 14th year performing in Honolulu. What a great record. Have pity of those who never get call backs.

A note from **Bob Nathanson** tells me he wasn't ruined by hurricane Wilma . What's ruining things is NASCAR and football. How well I understand that. Colorado drives us nuts with a team for everything and skiing besides.

Allynn Gooen in **New York** writes that he is still busy doing balloons and helping his busy wife **Annie**. Annie does fantastic bug costumes and this year for the opening of the new children's garden in Chicago, she not only did

her show but they gave her a room labeled the "Annie Hickman Costume Art Gallery" . If you have ever seen the costumes she does , you know the kids went wild getting to view them.

I received a report from **Dale VonSeggen** of **Puppets From One Way Street**. He reported that last summer they hosted the Festival of Christian Puppetry and Ventriloquism. It was their tenth anniversary and they had over 1,102 attendees. Dale also sent me a copy of their workbook and it is phenomenal . Check his web site.

Tom and Maryanne Tucker were mentioned in the Finnish American Reporter . The Finnish loved their performance at the Finnish American Festival. Central Florida had a neat coverage of the 2005 Minneapolis PofA Festival. Picture pages that show all the fun and laughter at a topnotch Festival.

In Orlando they had a fall festival with lots of puppet people: **Paul Zaloom, Philip Huber, Scott and James Silson, Am-Jam Productions, Gepetto,** and **David Steven's** "New Adventures of Peter Rabbit and Puppets From the Edge .

I love it when the **DC Puppettimes** arrives in my mail box. I stop everything to read it. My good friend, **John McAnistan** always has lots about the D.C. Puppeteers and they always have an article that is special to puppetry. **Terry Snyder** had a wonderful article about a Paul McPharlin marionette named Ming Tsi that was made for "The Chinese Nightengale." Terry wrote an article on the difficulties involved in restoring old marionettes. John reports that **Bob Brown** is well after a health scare. That's good news, once again proving that puppeteers are tough.. **Sue Wood** in DC has written a kids book "Polly Parrot" look for it in your local book stores. John also had word that **New Orleans's** residents, **Nancy Staub** and the **Stolterers** escaped the ravages of "Katrina" That's more good news.

REUM...With a View (Continued on page 1)

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EUREKA!!!

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Greetings, my puppet family! What a wonderful autumn we in Ohio have had this year. We even haven't had to get our ice scrapers out yet. Of course, by the time you get this, the story will be quite different. Sigh...

Once again I went to the Puppeteers' Potlatch that the Great Lakes Region puts on every year. I moderated a discussion on promotional materials and selling techniques.

MAILING MATERIALS: It was mutually agreed that, because all your potential clients are bombarded daily by junk mail, you have a bare few seconds in which you might present your case. **David Herzog**, of **Chicago, Illinois**, believes that mailing materials that come in an envelope have a high probability of not even being opened (How many envelopes go unopened into your round file?). Therefore he sends out a glossy half-sheet postcard (yes, it costs the same postage as a letter), crammed with puppets. It takes less than three seconds for the reader to know exactly what David is offering.

MAILER CONTENTS: First and foremost, the clients want to see the puppets. Do they look professional? How large are they? Secondly, they want to know: the age group which would enjoy this show; the length of the show; the size of the audience; will it be fun? Do *not* include the price. That can be discussed after you have convinced the client that he must have the show.

COLD CALLING: As much as you don't like it, cold calling is part of your job. **Rick Morse**, of **Flint, Michigan**, emphasizes working with a script on the phone. You have a product that you believe in. You have less than four minutes to tell your client how you will fill all his basic entertainment needs. Naturally, you don't want to rattle off (without stopping for breath) your spiel, but you should be rehearsed and know where you are going—and for heavens sake, smile as you talk. You'll sound so much better!

CONVERSATIONS: **Brad Lowe**, of **Clarkston, Michigan**, pointed out that after the original introduction, part of good selling is to engage the client in conversation. Don't ask a string of questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." Questions like, "What are the ages of the audience?" and "What is the occasion for the event?" Once you have your client talking, you can paint him a picture of how wonderful it will be to have your show and how perfectly your show fits into his plans.

SCHOOL MATERIALS: **Mel Biske** of **Bolingsbrook, Illinois**, does a whopping business in the schools. Two weeks before his appearance he mails to the school a packet for each teacher containing a synopsis of the story, a history of the puppeteers, contact information and many teaching ideas and activities. This illustrates an important aspect of selling the show. The seller must ask himself, "What does my client really want?"

It may not be what you first think. For instance, school principals want: 1) to be able to justify the expense to the superintendent; 2) to be able to justify the time allotted out of the classroom; 3) to broaden the education of the students; 4) to have a performer that will not cause chaos in the gym; and 5) to have the kids have a good time.

A DIFFERENT SKILL: When you are in business, you need to have many hats. Sales is a whole different business from puppeteering. You have a product which your client needs, and he doesn't know you exist. Being a good sales person is not a thing to be ashamed of. Just like learning more about puppetry by reading, there are a lot of great books out there that help you learn to be a good seller. If you can get to hear a tape by Zig Zigler called "The Art of Closing The Sale," get it. Not only is it funny, but it is really informative.

LOGOS AND ARTWORK: We puppeteers pride ourselves with the ability to do everything ourselves. That's our job. But unless you have your degree in graphic arts, don't draw your own logo. **Marc Henry**, of **San Diego, California**, (a master at sales) gave me my mantra for business: "You sell the sizzle, not the steak.." With an amateur drawing you are telling him that either you are an amateur or that you are too penny-ante to take your business seriously. Face it: would you try a new restaurant that has a hand painted sign?

THE WRAP-UP: After all was said and done, it was unanimously agreed that the very best advertisement is one hundred percent professionalism as a performer. That means professionalism before the show (contracts and materials arriving on time, contact before the performance date), professionalism on the site (neatly dressed, polite and cheerful disposition, unending flexibility) and professionalism of the entertainer (well-rehearsed show, clean and repaired puppets). Word of mouth is the best advertising there is.

So, folks, what are some of the things that you do that help sell your business? Or have you discovered a neat new product or have seen a great new catalogue? Have you found a great website that we all would enjoy? What about a trick of the trade? Keep in touch. Take the time. Hope to hear from you.

_____ Nancy