

THE TANGLED WEB, OR WHERE THE HECK IS THAT SURVEY?

Since last summer, members of the Puppeteers of America (and others) have been waiting patiently for the long promised Survey to appear in their mailbox (electronically or otherwise). And like that first wisp of Spring in March, such a promise has only produced dashed expectations! Some words of explanation are in order. First, the survey was actually ready last July and has since awaited being sent forth. Initially, the plan was to send the survey out in a mass email, plus paper mail to those without email. To make a long story short: both a change in how to administer the survey and the lack of an email list held up the process. After some discussion, it was decided that a more accessible and accurate survey would be obtained by posting the survey on our website and just sending out the URL in emails to members and posting on Puptcrit. Paper mail would still go out to those without email addresses.

We ran into a snag with posting on our website with the result that we moved the Puppeteers of America web presence to a new host server which gives our webmaster better control over our operations for additions, changes, and so on. Finally, we also are working with an email service that will provide us better, more professional communication services. All these new changes have happened since mid-December, after much discussion. At this writing, the last piece to the puzzle is a design template for Puppeteers of America emails, to give our organization uniform, professional looking communications.

So, the bottom line: By the time you read this, you may have already gotten email notification of the Puppeteers of America survey webpage. If not, here is the URL: www.puppeteers.org/survey.html.

If you have not done so, please go to the survey page and fill it out. The survey will only take a few minutes, will be very valuable to the future direction of this organization, and is completely anonymous. Please ask others in our organization and those outside, too, in guilds, companies, and so on involved in this Art to take the survey. If you do not have an email address listed, you will receive a paper copy. If you have Internet access, you can fill out the online form, if you wish.

Thank you for your patience.

This coming year will see a number of new, innovative changes for the online Puppeteers of America.

_____ Wayne Krefting - Trustee

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

The NEWSLETTER OF THE PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA, Inc.

• January - February 2006 •

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BOARD NEWS

Today finds me in Phoenix having just concluded our first day of two and a half days of meetings. It's the mid year meeting for the board of trustees. We talk numbers, membership totals, and plans for the year to come. We discussed the budget for the current fiscal year and heard committee reports. Its not as bad as it sounds, we are a happy and optimistic group and after several thin years I am happy to say we are in the black and working to remain so. This was the result of strict fiscal management spearheaded by our able budget officer Marsha McGee, and by the discipline of each appointed officer who all carefully watched their budgets, and it was helped by a successful festival and the slight increase of membership that that brings

One of the areas often neglected is fund raising. . We need interested volunteers with expertise and enthusiasm for strategic planning and oversight of fundraising activities. Jovonna Van Pelt is organizing

this effort, please contact her at Jovanpelt@comcast.net.

The festival staff for the 2007 festival again returning to St Paul at Concordia is shaping up and so far these are the confirmed staff positions

Festival Directors Drew Allison and Bob Nathanson,

Artistic Director: Nancy Smith

Associate artistic Director: Jim Hammond

Business Manager: Lisa Rhodes

On Site Coordinator Kurt Hunter.

More to follow, but we are thrilled to have this team taking on the daunting task of creating out of the ether another marvelous fantastic production that we call the Puppeteers of America Festival. No name yet from these folks' but that's just one more thing to look forward to.

The next Playboard will be given over to the election of new Trustees. Watch for your chance to vote and do so.

_____ Paul Mesner, President

REGIONAL FESTIVALS

EAST COAST SUPER SONIC PUPPET FESTIVAL

JULY 19 - 23, 2006

Asheville, North Carolina

Tri-Regional Festival: Southeast,

Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast Regions

Festival Director: Susan VandeWeghe - vanpuppet@citcom.net

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL FESTIVAL

CELEBRATE THE PUPPET

JULY 27 - 30, 2006

LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

(with support from Great Plains Region)

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

The mailbox hasn't been as full since the last column. I'll blame that on the holidays. From the news that I have heard it sounds like everyone from coast to coast has been getting their potluck dishes prepared and wrapping the white elephants for their gift exchanges. Our artistic interests may be diverse, but nothing brings us together like the opportunity to sample other people's favorite recipes (or deli take-out) and the chance to discover that someone else's gift-wrapped trash is our new treasure.

That was the scenario at the **Phoenix Guild of Puppetry** in December. Their party included the opportunity for gift exchange and gift thievery as well as performances by Claire Radich and Linda Brittain.

Similarly, the **Cincinnati Area Puppetry Guild** held their Holiday Social in December with a potluck, "holiday themed puppet performances," and a white elephant gift exchange.

The Columbus Puppetry Guild also had a potluck and white elephant gift exchange in December, but their holiday performance was a separate event. After months of work under the leadership of Richard McClead, they presented a marionette adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" at the Upper Arlington Public Library. It was so well received that they are considering taking it to Pokagon next fall.

The St. Louis Guild of Puppetry had their Holiday Party at Kramer's Marionettes. Along with the potluck and gift exchange, they were treated to Chanukah and Christmas performances by Ginny Weiss and Pat Breithaupt respectively. As an interesting and very appropriate twist, they also collected canned goods at the party for the local food bank.

My own **Twin Cities Puppeteers** had a wonderful holiday party early in January. Other than the fact that about two thirds of food offerings were desserts, which I personally did not see as a problem, it was an excellent event with a variety of members offering short performances or Show and Tell.

Taking the tradition to the next level, the **San Francisco Bay Area Puppetry Guild** was planning a tropical themed "Holiday Hula-Day Celebration" in January. With a performance of the Tahitian version of "Cirque du Café" by Magical Moonshine Theatre, this may be the social event of the (holiday) season.

Starting the year off right, January looked like a busy month for puppetry across the country. The members of the **Columbia Association of Puppeteers** headed off to the Olde World Puppet Theatre shop to see their holiday decorations and their production of "The Nutcracker Cracked."

The Boston Area Guild of Puppetry was looking forward to an evening with Debra Wise of the Underground Railway Theater. Debra planned to show examples of the companies work and talk about the future of the theater.

The Detroit Puppeteers Guild started off the year right with a trip downtown to the Detroit Puppet Theatre to see their brand new marionette production, "Banana for Turtle."

The Puppetry Guild of Northeastern Ohio planned a performance/demonstration called "Open Puppetry: How To Utilize Puppets in Storytelling Without a Stage" by Valerie Farschman AKA Silly the Clown, a presenter of "polished silliness." University of the Arts hosted the **Greater Philadelphia Area Puppetry Guild** for their January meeting. David Deneen and Nick Pawlow presented a program on Ventriloquism: Construction and Performance.

The seventh annual Margo Rose Fundraiser was on the January calendar for the **Connecticut Guild of Puppetry**. This year Preston Foeder is headlining the event.

For their January meeting, the **Montana Puppet Guild** was heading to the home of Jim Connell and Janey Robertson for an afternoon of puppets and snow fun. Even in Minnesota, we've never invited members to bring their snowshoes to a meeting. In addition to fun in the snow, they planned to see a new DVD that Jim produced and get a workshop tour.

Snowshoes probably weren't part of the dress code as the members of the **Florida Suncoast Puppet Guild** headed to the Tampa Theatre in January to see "The Dinosaur Book of World Records" by Dino-Rock Productions.

Sticking with the warmer states, the **Greater Houston Puppetry Guild** was scheduled for a Make and Take workshop lead by Julie Cowan in January.

The Mile High Puppet Guild met at Annie Zook's theater in January for a night of potluck and videos.

The Orange County Puppetry Guild also had a video night planned for January featuring a wonderful video about the "Famous People Players".

The Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry has scheduled the mother of all video nights. They'll meet again at Bob Baker's Marionette Theater for a screening of rare puppet films from the collection of Mark Bryan Wilson. It's exciting to see the opportunities that guilds take advantage of across the country. The Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry is certainly fortunate to have their long running association with Bob Baker's Theater.

Similarly, the **National Capital Puppetry Guild** has received tremendous support from The Puppet Company as newsletter editor Christopher Hudert so eloquently pointed out in the most recent issue of the D. C. Puppetimes. Their new state of the art theatre facility is certainly an enviable location for guild meetings.

Another enviable partnership found the **Central Florida Puppet Guild** hosting a reception at the Orlando Puppet Festival. The event was a way to connect the public to the performers.

In an update to previously reported news, the **Florida Suncoast Puppet Guild's** beer booth fund raiser proved to be as effective as it was unique. Over \$2000 made it's way into the guild coffers thanks to their time manning the taps. There may be competition out there for the National Capital Puppetry Guild's long running and ever popular Taque Café.

It seems that 2006 is off to a good start. There's certainly no shortage of puppetry activity bubbling up around the country. As always, you make the news (and tell me about it) and I'll report it. Until next time ...

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I'm looking out at four inches of snow, the sun shining and the city is absorbed in sports. I rejoice I can fall back into the world of Puppetry and play with my puppets and read my fairy tales. Maybe we are all crazy, but I think we have a better grip on life than others.

The world of puppetry seems to be thriving. **Irina Baranovskaya** in Detroit, at the Detroit Puppet theatre has a wonderful new show "Banana for Turtle". Pictures of the puppets are striking. **Heidi Rugg** has been commissioned, by Wolf Trap to build a new show "Under the Baobab Tree". **Matthew Miller**, a junior member in Maryland did a show at a local restaurant and was such a hit they invited him back for a return performance. In NY, **Arm-of-the-Sea, Mask and Puppet Theatre** are performing a show for elementary and middle school student at the 900 seat Tribeca Performing Arts Center. The show, is called, "The City That Drinks Mountain Sky". A show that concerns itself, with the history of water. The company uses all types of puppets, from puppets on sticks to full body puppets. The word is, the audiences were enthralled. **The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry** at the University of Connecticut held a successful end of the year Christmas Bazaar and are getting ready for a busy year ahead.

There's a new puppet exhibit at the **Padzieski Gallery** in Detroit celebrating "Detroit Puppeteers Guild: Sixty years of puppetry." **Julie Moreno** is designing the exhibit. **Rick Morse** in Detroit has been doing magic, but I understand he has not abandoned puppetry. He is working on a summer show with animal marionettes. **David Holquest** is working on a new Swedish Troll. **Pete Koschnick** has left teaching in Ohio to join a Tennessee puppet group "Wood 'n' Strings." Word from Ohio that **Kathy Piper** is still going strong and performing regularly. **Evan Lawrence** in NY has built a new wearable giant puppet named "Edith Head." It is made of a fabric mesh waste basket and a length of fabric and sponge foam. In The Puppetmaster, the newsletter from NY there is a picture of **Bernice Silver**, with her squirrel hand puppet from her show "The World of Jelly Bean". **Marilyn Schroeder and Martin Howard** - "The Poppy Town Puppets" in Duanesburg NY had an experience to remember. When the Muppet stamps came out, their local postmaster contacted them and had them perform for the public. The postmaster was so delighted with their performance he had the stamp of their choice (Kermit) enlarged and framed with a gold plaque. Now that's a show to remember. **Peter Turdin** in Connecticut, has a new puppet of a Raven. Ahh, Poe fame. Another Connecticut resident, my long time friend **Carrol Spinney** will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award on April 28, 2006 at the Annual Daytime Emmys. Congratulations, Carrol...

In the new ideas department I had an e-mail from **Michael Nelson** in California. Michael and Valerie have two new venues. One a venture into toy theatre that met with great success in Germany. The other new project and this sounds intriguing, they are performing a show in restaurants called "Cirque du Cafe". It is object theatre and they dress as waiters and do table top acts with eggs, salt, tea balls and whatever shows up, all to live music and to Valerie's beautiful voice. Sounds like fun. **Ed Sheehy** in NY received the annual Brotherhood award from the Religious Brothers Conference. Congrats Ed!

Our own **Alice Szwarc** was honored at a brunch in Boulder, Colorado. Alice was Special Woman in the Spotlight.. She was recognized for all her work in puppetry both in Florida and here in Colorado. Our members have such diverse talents. There are a number of Quilters in our midst. **Jan Dolland** had a article about her work in Detroit papers. **Maureen Lawry** here in Colorado and of course **Karen Larsen** in Massachusetts. both do sensational work.

A note from **Shirey Schaff** in Missouri. Tells me that **Heather Loenstein of Stone Lion Puppets** did a program with PBS called "Bark Park Place" starring Heather's Woodland Puppets and they have won an Emmy for Children's Best programming. One of the kids on the show was Shirley's granddaughter Jesse. We have seen Jesse perform at potpourri and SHE does a great job.

Music is another field puppeteers excel in. **Jim Bartz** in Calif. sent me a sensational CD with dancing music for Limber Jacks. If you use your Limber Jacks this music is perfect. Thanks Jim I love it. **Maureen Shiffman** in Detroit tells me that two of her songs have been used on a radio show up in Alaska. For those who hadn't heard my fellow columnist **Nancy Sander** broke her wrist just before Christmas and the Ohio puppeteers helped cover shows for her. Puppeteers are great people. I understand that her wrist is well and al-



most back to normal

Christopher Hudert has written a wonderful series of articles concerning the creation of the new Puppet Co. Playhouse in Maryland. I am hoping he will offer copies at a festival. It is an interesting read. **Christopher Piper** (Puppet Co Playhouse) has produced a DVD of **Paul Vincent Davis'** "Beauty and the Beast". \$25.00 at their store.

I mentioned in the column that it is tough to get new members and I have had a couple of good suggestions. **The Phoenix Guild** is having a "recruit a new member quarter." They are having a contest to see who can recruit the most members by The National Day of Puppetry. There is a modest prize for the winner. **Joanne Schroeder** sent me a note about bringing new members in. When she does workshops she mentions she learned techniques from Guild meetings. Their Guild doubled in size in a year. Joanne said the reason she first joined was, after she saw a library performance the presenter handed her a copy of the Guild newsletter. Great idea. Thanks, Joanne

Puppetry indeed is everywhere. My colleagues **Phyllis Stare** and **Jean Mate** were rehearsing for our show when the phone rang. Our call was from Israel wanting to consult with us about puppets. We of course were delighted to help. Turns out Jeans son lives in Israel and they were having a puppet party and had a few questions. It made us feel great. They called us later to tell us everything went well. Like I say, Puppeteers are special people.

Well, now the snow has melted but it is still cold. My puppet class has doubled in size. By the time you read this the Super-bowl will be over and I will so grateful. Running a ball up and down a field seems really dumb. Have a wonderful Spring and save for those coming Festivals.

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EUREKA!!!

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Greetings, all of you who carry the puppet torch through the slush, snow, sleet, freezing rain and ice. A tip of the hat to you. And to you who are in warmer areas, it's never easy! By the time you get this column I hope to have my wrist out of the cast. Wouldn't it be my luck to take a pitch two days before the opening of the Christmas season? But I feel luckier than all the puppeteers who worked in the Katrina area; I only lost a month and I still have my stuff.

PUPPET SKIRTS: My New Year's resolution to clean out my file cabinet paid off. Part way down a pile I found a great letter from **Bob Brown, of Alexandria, VA.** If I have used them before, it had to be more than six years ago, so I figured that you'd like to read them again. Bob, they're great! He writes, "I use plastic bleach bottles in several different ways. A one or two inch strip can be cut from around the bottle and inserted into the bottom hem of a hand puppet body. This will help hold the costume open making it easier to insert your hand quickly. You can even sew through the plastic. I have also used a much wider strip in the sleeve of a mouth puppet body."

BLEACH BOTTLE EYES: I cut circles from bleach bottles to use as eyes on puppets with a cloth head. (Trace coins for a pattern). Shiny, black faced buttons with a shank on the back can be secured to the circles by punching a hole in the plastic with a paper punch. Push the shank through the hole. Secure in place by using a wire twist (from a bread wrapper) through the hole in the shank. The eyes are placed against the cloth head. Trace around the eyes lightly with a pencil. Spread hot glue within the circle and attach the eyes. If you put hot glue directly on the eye the heat will distort the plastic.

CLOWN COLLAR AND CUFFS: Use bleach bottle plastic for a stand up clown color and cuffs.

SEWING TIP: I keep a scrap of the plastic (about the size of a credit card) on top of my sewing machine. Slip the plastic behind the needle when threading the needle. It makes it much easier to see. Pattern keeper I cut patterns from the plastic bottles because it lasts longer than cardboard. Use a paper punch to make a hole in the pattern so it can be hung up for storage.

LET IT SNOW!: One of **Peggy Pearson's** of **Greenwood, IN** winter variety puppets is a group of carolers. As they sing, it begins to snow. The effect is wonderful. Peggy has installed a long trough above the main control. Into this trough she has loaded pablum (uncooked, of course!). As the carolers sing she gently blows into the trough and voila! Snow!

CHEWING YOUR FINGERNAILS: **Mark Adams** in **Niantic, CT** tickled my fancy when he wrote, "I was pondering about implanting individual acrylic teeth into a puppet's mouth and also considering the ability to close its mouth as needed. Then an idea popped into my mind, why not take acrylic finger nails shape with an emery board, paint an off white and implant these, tops angled slightly forward and close to lips, the lower slanted back and slightly back from lips. You have the realistic appearance of teeth and since they are paper thin there is no bulk. The teeth close like an overbite allowing full mouth closure and best of all, acrylic nails are extremely cheap, even available by the bag load at dollar stores compared to true dental sets."

ANIMAL TEETH: Speaking of teeth, **Liz Evans, of Norristown, PA** writes: "Clear Sculpey cooked 15 minutes longer than the recommended time listed on the package yellows them just enough to make excellent Wild Animal tooth color. We discovered this by accident of course, but now take full advantage of not having to do anything but sculpt, bake, and seat into the mouth." Gee, Liz, you must cook like I do!

PEARLY TEETH: And then, there was my friend, the late **Jeannie Jenkins, of Fairview, OH,** who used a string of pearls for a dazzling puppet smile. Of course, her puppet was named "Pearly White."

When I think of teeth, I chuckle at the memory of sitting my dog, Curly, down on the sofa and continually pulling her lips back as I sculpted the teeth for my wolf. Poor dog. So, what do you use for teeth? I mean puppet teeth, of course. Let me know. I'll put it in the tooth collection.

A FINAL BUSINESS NOTE: As we begin (or continue) to work on our summer bookings, remember to pay attention to your sales techniques as carefully as you do your artistic endeavors. I was asking my super-salesman brother, **Marc Henry of El Cajon, CA** for a business tip, and he told me one that is really worth memorizing: "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got—or less." Put that on a sticky note and stick it on your computer.

So let me know what you're up to. Send me your favorite trick of the trade. I'm particularly looking for ideas on costuming. I want to improve my skill on pattern making and costume design. And what about hands? What can you share about hands? I hope to hear from you!

_____ Nancy