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NCPG

Price 15 cents

# PUPPETIMES





# National Capital Puppetry Guild

## PUPPETIMES

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Sarah Olmsted Thomas

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Puppetimes is the official newsletter of the National Capital Puppetry Guild.

Puppetimes is published biannually and is available to all members.

Puppetimes is always soliciting your articles, letters to the editor, and other missives for publication.

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The National Capital Puppetry Guild, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity dedicated to the education and practice of the puppetry arts. We were chartered in 1964 by the Puppeteers of America. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in puppetry.

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# Welcome!

Welcome to the National Capital Puppetry Guild's Puppetimes! This issue includes a welcome from our new president Dr. Leigh Lafosse, a recap of our successful January Make-a-Thon led by Secretary Heidi Rugg, Scholarship Committee updates and opportunities by Treasurer Vanessa Spring-Frank, and the NCPG Kids Club news by Board Member At Large Mobi Warren. NCPG Member Emeritus Elise Handelman contributed in an article about the Puppet History Panel at Virtual Puppet Con and Baltimore's Black Cherry Puppet Theater is calling all artists to participate in the March Slamwich as well as other booking opportunities. Thank you for taking a look.

Sarah Olmsted Thomas & Alex Vernon  
Editors

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Cover:  
Love is in the Air  
Created by:  
Alex Vernon

# From the Office of the President

Greetings, fabulous members of the NCPG and beyond!

I must start by sharing a heartfelt expression of gratitude to our phenomenal past-President, Yolanda Sampson, for brilliantly leading the guild through the tumultuous and challenging timeline of 2020 and 2021. Her clear vision and dedicated willingness to give so freely and so generously of herself in support of this community was directly responsible for so many of our shared successes, and we are incredibly grateful for everything she offered to this family. She remains an active member of the NCPG and will be working on exciting events for Puppeteers of America, so we are focusing on the joyful knowledge that we are guaranteed more Yolanda in our future!

After serving as your treasurer for the past few years I've now shifted into the position of president, and I'm excited to be tasked to serve our guild in this way. Other changes on the board include Vanessa Spring-Frank taking over as your fabulous treasurer, and we are thrilled to welcome Dirk Joseph, Paige O'Malley, and Mobi Warren as new Board Members At Large! Your entire board is here to help generate positive connections, and we all hope you'll reach out with ideas, thoughts, dreams, or visions that you might have for this powerful puppet crew- collaboration is a central tenet of our philosophy for growth, and we know that the NCPG members are among the most creative and engaging artists and educators on the globe.

Related to the talent in the NCPG- we are in the process of developing our membership meeting workshop series for the remainder of this year and will be accepting applications through our website on a rolling basis. If you have a workshop you'd be interested in leading, or if you know of someone who might be



*NCPG President, Leigh Lafosse*

game to share their skills with our community, we hope you'll engage and share this opportunity. We're always on the lookout for technical subjects, philosophical topics, historical angles, panel discussions... the range of our interests is wide, and our goal is to provide unique and relevant content that appeals to each of you. If there's something you'd like to see, please reach out and let us know.

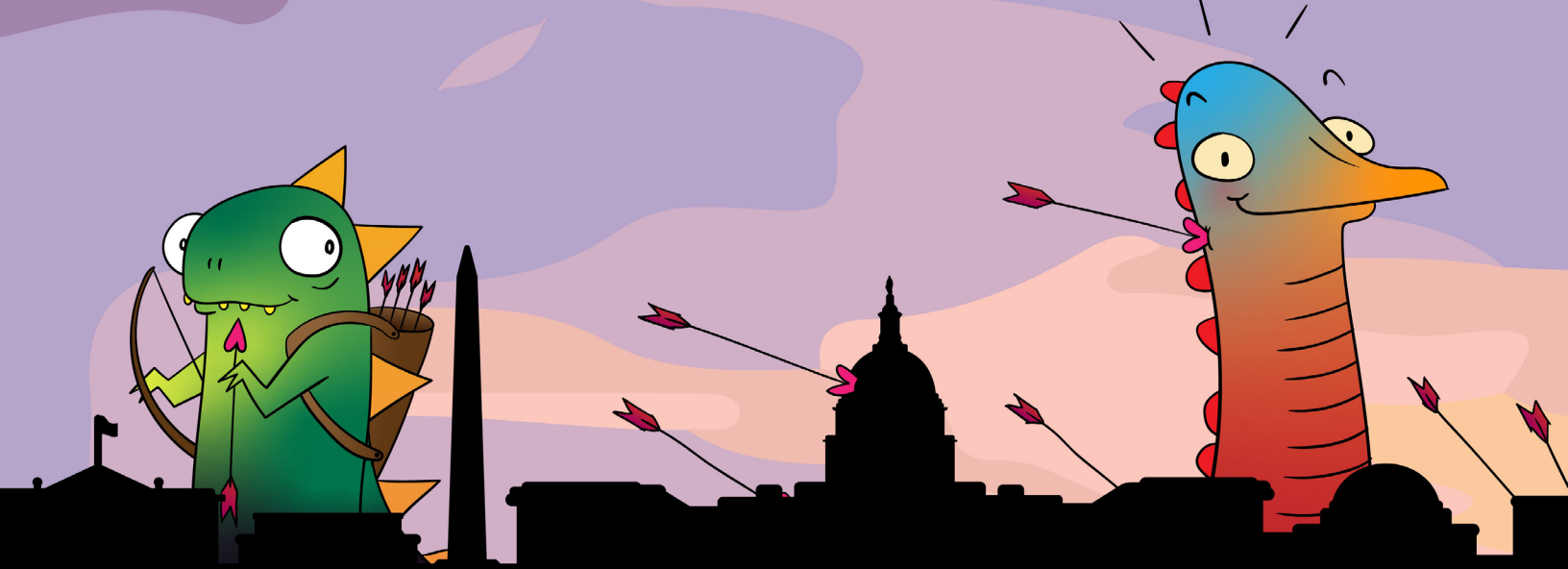
If you've wondered about ways that you can become more involved with your guild, we have positions available on a few of our committees and would love to welcome you to our 'behind-the-scenes' teams! A committee is a great way to learn more about how the guild operates while making a substantial difference in the scope of events we're able to cultivate through the year. Reach out via email or social media if you have any questions or would like more information.

COVID has forced huge swaths of the performance and education industry to pivot away from in-person events and towards virtual connections, but our guild as it now exists today was actually born in this virtual world. Organizations are searching for ways to include virtual elements as they return to in-person events, but our guild will be fighting the opposite battle- how do we add in-person elements to our virtual events without sacrificing that metric for inclusivity and engagement? With members joining from around the globe, we're passionate about remaining accessible to everyone interested in connecting through the art of puppetry, regardless of geographic location. The NCPG is a vibrant community, and you are each what makes that ring as true. Thank you for being here, thank you for hanging in there, and welcome to NCPG 2022!

Sincerely,

Leigh Lafosse  
NCPG President

**"WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT  
REMAINING ACCESSIBLE  
TO EVERYONE INTERESTED  
IN CONNECTING THROUGH  
THE ART OF PUPPETRY,  
REGARDLESS OF  
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION"**



NATIONAL CAPITAL PUPPETRY GUILD  
presents

FEB 7<sup>TH</sup>

"We'll always have...  
Potpourri!"

7PM ET

## Open Mic style puppetry presented every other month

The Potpourri is an open mic for puppetry. The material can be new, it can be old, but just make sure it's family friendly and under 5 minutes. If you don't have an act, but you have a puppet you'd like to share, our hosts are ready to give your puppet an interview!



*The God of Monsters (Cori Bourne, left) and the NCPG Dino (Alex Vernon, right) plot to eat guest host, "Sarah" Leigh Lafosse, at the December 2021 Potpourri*

Upcoming	2/7/2022
Potpourri	4/17/2022
Dates	6/12/2022

## Want to perform or watch?

Keep an eye out for NCPG emails letting you know about sign-ups and Zoom links!  
If you're not receiving our regular mailings, or would like to be added to our mailing list, please [email](#) and let us know.





Laura Mathews

## Just Winging it at the January Make-a-thon!

by Heidi Rugg

Where might you find a gathering of chickens, flying demon golf carts, flying carriages, a gargyle demon child, a miniature owl, penguins, shadow wings, dragons, herons, and more? Why, that would be the NCPG Make-a-thon for January 2022!

This was the third Make-a-thon for the guild and full of ingenuity. At our Fall Make-a-thon in 2021, the idea for a thematic Make-a-thon focused on wing mechanisms received an enthusiastic response from participants. For our January event, twenty-five guild members spanning three continents (plus one US Territory) joined together virtually for a weekend centered on wing mechanisms. From Friday afternoon through Sunday evening, guild members worked on wings for puppets – oh, how we soared! Participants ranged in skill levels from beginners to established professionals and everything in between; the mix was energizing. The projects for this weekend demonstrated the full creativity and all the possibilities open to puppetry artists. A variety of birds and winged vehicles made up the majority with a smattering of fantastical beasts. We had puppets in miniature and a puppet with a wingspan of over five feet. To aid in this burst of creativity, there were breakout rooms for troubleshooting, mech-brainstorming, and listening to music (with Leigh Lafosse as our intrepid deejay).

As an added treat, we had artist Laura Mathews as a special presenter to share her expertise in winged creations. She joined in Make-a-thon on Saturday morning for a solid jolt of inspiration as she shared examples of her work up close. Laura is based in England where she creates articulated figures and puppets. Guild members were enthralled by her sparrow puppet, barn owl, a dragon, and more! Her work these past years has been centered on winged creatures, and she has developed quite the following on Instagram. You can check out Laura's work at [www.instagram.com/lauramathewsart](https://www.instagram.com/lauramathewsart) . More technical drawings and ideas are available through Laura's Patreon at: [www.patreon.com/lauramathewsart/posts](https://www.patreon.com/lauramathewsart/posts)

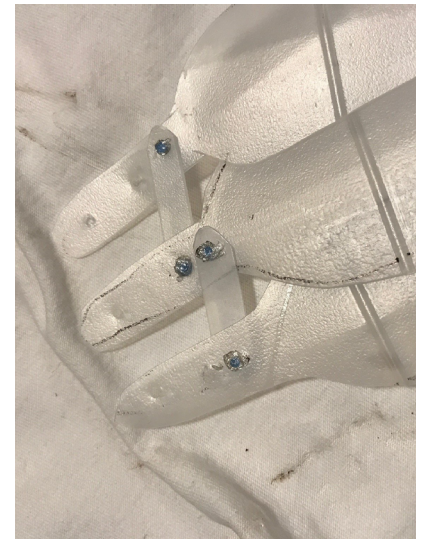
Throughout the weekend, there were various check-ins for group sharing. Guild members were generous with ideas, knowledge of materials, and suggestions for resources – it was truly amazing to see the sense of community as everyone worked together. Participants shared their favorite tools, materials, prototyping methods, and ways of organizing their workspaces. At the end of weekend, participants flew the extra mile and brainstormed ideas for future thematic Make-a-thons...so stay tuned for more community fun!



**LOOK AT THE GREAT WORK FROM  
SOME OF OUR PARTICIPANTS!**



*Top Row: Linda Wingerter*



*Middle Row: Shelly Sharp*



*Bottom Row: Deborah Hunt*



# A Conversation with Yolanda Sampson

Alex and Olmsted had the honor of sitting down with NCPG President Emeritus Yolanda Sampson for an enriching conversation about her life as an artist and minister. From talk about her favorite material with which to build (paper), to her favorite song to get inspired (Israel Houghton's *You Are Good*), to details about her forthcoming crankie, we invite you to get to know a little more about the fascinating and innovative Yolanda Sampson.

**Alex and Olmsted:** How did you get into puppetry?

**Yolanda Sampson:** Well, when I was 12 years old I was going to the Takoma Park Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. and I had a youth pastor, Retired Captain Chaplain Ollis Mozon, Jr., who introduced puppet ministry at the church. Believe it or not, I was a very shy child but I came alive when I put a puppet in my hand and I found a way to express myself without having to be in front of a crowd. We used to perform at different churches and community outreach days in hospitals, in the prison, and I really enjoyed that. [Chaplain Ollis Mozon, Jr.] became a Navy Chaplain and became a Captain in the Navy and he lives in California right now and does puppets and storytelling.

**A&O:** Do you still keep in touch with him?

**YS:** I sure do!

**A&O:** Mentors are so important. To be able to keep that relationship going

through your life is profound.

**YS:** It really is. It's been invaluable. He has been a cheerleader, cheering me on, and even with the GO Y.O. Forgiveness Marathon, he just sends me little posts, you know, "Have you considered this?" or, "Have you considered dealing with this particular topic?" He's wonderful.

**A&O:** Speaking of the GO Y.O. Forgiveness Marathon...could you tell us a little bit about what that is?

**YS:** The mission of the Forgiveness Marathon is to empower people to live a life of forgiveness. I don't know about you, but I know that I'm not perfect and none of us are perfect. ...Forgiveness means letting go of the anger, letting go of the bitterness, letting go of the pain and moving on. ...What we find is that many people, because they hold on to that unforgiveness, are unable to move forward in life and live a happy life because they're so busy thinking about what happened in the past that it paralyzes them. That unforgiveness builds fences, but forgiveness builds bridges. This [Forgiveness Marathon] is really to liberate people and to understand that we are imperfect people, everybody needs to forgive somebody, and sometimes in that process we need to forgive ourselves for the things that we did do and the things that we didn't do. With Christianity, we believe that if we need God to forgive us, then we need to make sure that we forgive one another.

**A&O:** Forgiving yourself and other people is so difficult and sometimes it can be such a heavy weight. How have you found using puppetry can help people open up to that side of themselves?

**YS:** Well, they're able to see the little skits and see, "Oh, maybe



*Yolanda Sampson and Lovuro*

**The mission of the Forgiveness Marathon is to empower people to live a life of forgiveness**

if I act like that, maybe I have a lot of anger and bitterness inside.” ...They're able to see themselves in the puppet in a humorous way. It's like, “Okay. I act like that. Maybe, you know, I need to forgive somebody. I need to pray for them. I need to deal with the situation. Maybe I need to let that person know that I am mad at them and I haven't expressed that before; I'm holding them hostage because of something that they did but I have not communicated that to them.” ...A puppet can communicate in a way that is not offensive. The guards are down and it's like, “Maybe that's me?”



**A&O:** One of the recurring characters you use in your work and in the Forgiveness Marathon is Lovuro. Could you tell us a little about the origin of Lovuro?

**YS:** Lovuro was born back in 1992. Wow, a long time ago! Lovuro is from the Planet Peacuro. I have this thought in life: I always look at the glass half full, not half empty. You know, what would life be like if everybody loved one another and cared about one another? Wouldn't this world be a better place? ...It was a time in Washington, D.C. where we were coined as, “The murder capital of the world.” There was a lot of violence and a lot of drug distribution and it became a very gloomy kind of place. So Lovuro was born out of that era, like, can't we just all love one another? Can't we just all get along?

**A&O:** For readers who aren't familiar with Lovuro, how would you sum up how she approaches situations? She seems to me sort of the audience surrogate in that she doesn't always react perfectly right away.

**YS:** Actually, she acts opposite from the way that she's supposed to be acting many times! She has to go through these different journeys, these different scenarios in life, to bring her to that place of, “Okay, I need to love. I need to be authentic. I need to be who I was created to be.” Many times we are often in that tension and we are in that journey of becoming, and that's where Lovuro is.

**A&O:** Any stories or memories of a particularly special or impactful interaction you've had with an audience or an audience member?

**YS:** Oh my goodness, yes. I remember being in Panama and working with some children with puppetry and they just were so excited that Lovuro came to their country. They were touching her head and saying, “...I want to be like Lovuro!” ...So many times the Lord would send me into marginalized communities like the Standing Rock Indian Reservation to work with the kids. I was there at Standing Rock at a time when the U.S. was building a pipeline through that particular reservation. Many people there struggled with alcoholism. Many of the people didn't have good jobs; the only job that you can find on the reservation was at a casino. Many of them experienced a lot of hurt. Coming into those communities and doing puppet making workshops and letting them know how much God loves them, how much God cares for them. I taught them how to create their own little puppet and to be able to express themselves through the puppet so it became like therapy for them.

**A&O:** You're giving them a tool that they can use for the rest of their lives - a tool for communication that they can share.

**YS:** It was the same way going down to the border at the Rio Grande working at the Catholic charities where migrant children were being caged and treated like animals. Many children that came into the Catholic charities didn't know where they were going to go, some came by themselves, some came with one parent or with a neighbor not knowing what's going to happen to them; are they going to be able to remain in the United States? Many were separated from their parents. When I came there I was able to teach them to make their own little portable



stage that they could use and their own little portable puppets. We made sure that it fit in the envelope so they could carry it with them wherever they went. Although there was a language barrier, I had an interpreter with me and you could just see their smiles and the way they were creating and having fun just escaping from life for an hour or two hours. It just brings so much joy.

**A&O:** Could you tell us a little about the crankie you're working on?

**YS:** Actually, it's a crankie that I started working on during one of Heidi Rugg's Make-a-Thons. It tells the story about how Lovuro goes through a transformation from unforgiveness to forgiveness and how she grapples with the pain of being bullied and the isolation that she went into as a result of thinking she's not accepted, not wanted, and different from everybody else. ...She comes to the point where she starts identifying herself with how people treat her instead of identifying herself with how God sees her; that she's loved and accepted how she is. We see in that crankie how she goes through that transformation from tears to joy.

**A&O:** Anything else you're working on right now?

**YS:** I'll be sending some G.O. Y.O. puppet kits to the migrant children [on the Rio Grande] and to the Standing Rock Reservation homeless shelter with instructions on how to put their little puppets together and with scripture, little candies, prayer cards, and little journals.

**A&O:** That's fantastic! You work so hard for your community and for the bigger community.

**YS:** It's a blessing. It's one of the reasons why God created me.

**A&O:** When you take on ambitious projects where you're serving a really wide community from around the world, what are the big challenges that you run into?

**YS:** COVID-19. ...I'm unable to work with as many people as I would like to because there are so many COVID restrictions. Sometimes my imagination is also bigger than my skill set in terms of building so I'll need some help, Sarah

and Alex...

**A&O:** ...We're on it!

**YS:** Those are the major challenges at this time. I'm continuing to learn, to grow, to evolve in my craft and I want to just learn as much as I can on the creative side.



*Yolanda Sampson's puppets Lovuro and Kim performed with Staged Black Theatre in Arlington, Virginia*

**A&O:** If time and money and resources weren't an issue, is there a dream show you would want to make?

**YS:** I would continue to build upon the What Time Is It? series that I began years ago and to really address society's ills in the form of puppetry and maybe even have a live musical.

**A&O:** For our readers, can you tell us a little bit about What Time Is It?

**YS:** Yes! What Time Is It? was my first video project back in 1995. I was able to fund that particular project because I had won the Miss Black World Beauty and Modeling Pageant. I was traveling around doing the Anheuser Busch Kings and Queens of Africa Storytelling Puppet Show. I was going to different conventions around the country and I started thinking it would be nice just to put it in a video. With the financial resources from the pageant, I was able to fund the What Time Is It? project. It is about Lovuro, our key character from the Planet Peacuro, and her interactions in the community in dealing with the issues in society. It was a fresh blend of puppeteering and music. The first What Time Is It? video was in Blockbuster Video stores in the community service section and Billboard Magazine called it "endlessly creative." It was something that I wanted to continue to build on but along the way I went into ministry and closed that chapter for a little while.

**A&O:** Well, speaking of closing chapters, you recently finished your tenure as our illustrious NCPG president! Congratulations on a well-served term and one that will continue to positively impact the organization for years to come.

**YS:** Oh thank you all! I had the best Vice President ever and the best board team ever. You all bless my life in ways that you would never ever imagine. It was so wonderful to be around other people that are beautiful people inside and out, that love puppets the way I love puppets: we could talk about puppets and projects all day into the night! It was an absolute dream; the workshops, the potpourris, and providing others a platform to share and to learn about puppetry. It was absolutely amazing and something that I will never ever forget. I will be a lifelong National Capital Puppetry Guild member!

**A&O:** What advice would you give to young puppeteers that are just starting out?

**YS:** For young puppeteers that are just starting out, I would encourage them to join the NCPG where they can be mentored, where they can create, and where they can have a safe place to display their work. It's a place where they can go to workshops and to be able to glean from some of the best puppeteers not only in this region but the entire world. It's that type of place where everybody can learn, everybody can grow, nobody's put down and everyone's accepted. We would encourage every young puppeteer to join the Guild.

**A&O:** Well, thank you so much for chatting with us, Yolanda! It was great to learn a little more about you and we'll see you at the next meeting!

**YS:** Absolutely! We plan on it.



*Yolanda Sampson, Miss Black World 1995*



# Spring into Puppetry!



## Kids Club! Springs into Puppetry

by Mobi Warren

After a fun and successful first year of Kids Club! in 2021, we are ready to Spring into Puppetry for 2022. If you are a teacher, parent, or kids' advocate and would love to share the imaginative arts with aspiring young puppeteers, sign those kids up for NCPG's FREE Kids Club! Registration is easy—simply fill out the form on our webpage to be automatically added to the mailing list for upcoming events and unique, educational offerings.

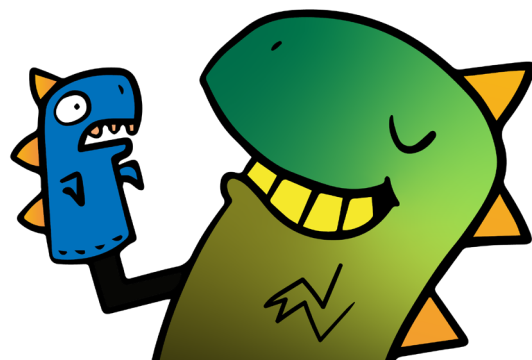
Beloved puppet Penny Pancakes (from puppeteer Paige O'Malley) will be the 2022 face and emcee for quarterly, interactive zoom sessions in which NCPG puppeteer/educators will demonstrate how to make and perform with simple puppets. Kids will have a chance to practice and showcase their own puppet creations. Packets with materials and directions needed to assemble a puppet will be sent to all Kids Club! members.

The first Kids Club! zoom meeting will be on March 19, 2022 at 2 p.m. EST. The theme is Springing into Puppetry and a flower puppet (springing up after spending a lonely winter as a seed in the ground) will be featured.

Important: Click [HERE](#) to Register for Kids Club! by February 15, 2022 in order to receive the March packet.

In the meantime, check out Kids Club! on the NCPG website to view videos and activities posted in 2021, as well as a preview for our March 19 gathering.

We can't wait to Spring into Puppetry with you!





# NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE

## Applications open through February 25

Apply here: [https://www.theoneill.org/pup?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Apply+Now+for+the+National+Puppetry+Conference&utm\\_campaign=Pup+apps+open+2022](https://www.theoneill.org/pup?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Apply+Now+for+the+National+Puppetry+Conference&utm_campaign=Pup+apps+open+2022)

Apply now for the 2022 NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE!  
Applications are open through 11:59pm PST on February 25, 2022.

The Conference encourages artists to create and communicate through the visual and kinetic form of the puppet, push beyond their personal boundaries, and develop new works for puppet theater. Participants collaborate with renowned guest directors, puppet artists, playwrights, and musicians to develop innovative new work.

This #ONeillSummer will feature strands led by guest artists Jim Kroupa, Alice Gottschalk, Martin P. Robinson, Tim Lagasse, Kurt Hunter, Dr. Melissa Dunphy, Matt Dunphy, and, new to our conference, Emmy Award-winner and Sesame Street writer Luis Santeiro, Concrete Temple Theater artistic director Carlo Adinolfi, and director/designer Tom Lee!

Join us on campus, in-person, May 31 - June 12, 2022.

BIPOC individuals are highly encouraged to apply. Before applying please review the eligibility requirements and prelists available on our website.





## The Scholarship Committee

by Vanessa Spring-Frank

Over the past two years, the National Capital Puppetry Guild has been able to bring exciting international workshops to the virtual table. Due to the pandemic, we have all had to pivot our work and learn new skills in the digital era, and these virtual workshops allow participants to grow their crafts while creating lasting connections and network with people from all over the globe. Because of this online transition, we have been able to experience some incredible workshops and work with some amazing participants.

NCPG has been so proud to offer consistent scholarships with our partnerships between Peter Court of Puppet Madness located in South Africa, and Fagner and Cass Gastaldon of Puppet Soup located in Wales. These exclusive scholarships are being offered to all NCPG members with new workshops coming out on a regular basis. Application deadlines pop up quickly, so keep your eyes peeled for the promotional material on social media and through email to keep up to date on all the new opportunities we are able to offer.

For those early-career puppeteers, participating in a festival for the first time is a life changing experience. For this specific purpose we are able to offer the Judy Barry Brown Festival Grant. It is awarded to puppeteers 18-24 to help them participate in their first regional or national Puppeteers of America sponsored puppetry festival. This is a rolling grant and can be applied to at any time, please email [nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com](mailto:nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com)

We have another scholarship specific for those who wish to attend The O'Neill National Puppetry Conference. The grant is offered to members who are accepted to the conference for the first time. The scholarship is need-based and is designed to offset the participant's expenses. The application is open to all members in good standing that are under the age of thirty. This years' conference dates for the Pre-conference is (May 31st - June 2nd) and the Main Conference (June 4th - June 12th) The application for the conference is fast approaching with the deadline February 25th. Once you have been accepted to the O'Neill and wish to apply for this scholarship please email [nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com](mailto:nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com)

Lastly, if you are passionate about making the puppetry arts more accessible and you want to help make a difference, we hope you'll consider joining our scholarship committee to help us continue supporting our puppetry community!

# NCPG Scholarships at a glance



## Judy Barry Brown Festival Grant

The Judy Barry Brown Festival Grant is awarded to ages 18-24 to participate in their first regional or national Puppeteers of America sponsored puppetry festival. Application is open to all members in good standing with the NCPG. Applications for the grant must be made at least one month prior to the festival. This is a rolling grant and can be applied to at any time, please email [nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com](mailto:nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com)



## O'Neill Puppetry Conference Grant

The O'Neill Conference Grant is offered to guild members under the age of thirty who are accepted by the conference for first-time attendance. It is a need-based, partial scholarship designed to offset a participant's expenses while there. Application is open to all members in good standing of the NCPG. Applications are due May 15 of each calendar year. Once you have been accepted to the O'Neill and wish to apply for this scholarship please email [nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com](mailto:nationalcapitalpuppetryguild@gmail.com)



## Teatro Lambe Lambe Online Puppetry Course

March 19th, 20th, 26th, 27th and April 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th

Join award-winning Brazilian puppeteer and maker, Fagner Gastaldon of PuppetSoup, and learn how to create and build a "Teatro Lambe Lambe" in this inspiring online puppetry course. Develop a unique and portable puppetry performance and construct a magical theatre box, miniature theatre world and fantastic micro puppets in this innovative puppetry workshop.

The National Capital Puppetry Guild is pleased to offer two scholarships for this course. Please follow this link for the application: <https://forms.gle/4wi1Cwib2g78srfq9>. The deadline to apply for a scholarship is March 5, 2022.



## Peter Court's Creative Madness Workshops

NCPG is thrilled to partner with Peter Court of Creative Madness in South Africa to provide two scholarships to cover the cost of tuition for select virtual workshops. At the NCPG's recent festival, Peter's workshops were a hit! He was described as a "inspirational and informative" instructor with an abundance of "enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge." Stay tuned for upcoming workshop opportunities!



## Donate to the Scholarship Funds

We can't offer these scholarships without donations from people like you. The NCPG is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that runs its programming based solely on grants, membership dues, and donations.

If you'd like to donate to the NCPG Scholarship Funds, you can do so on the NCPG Website under "[Donations](#)".



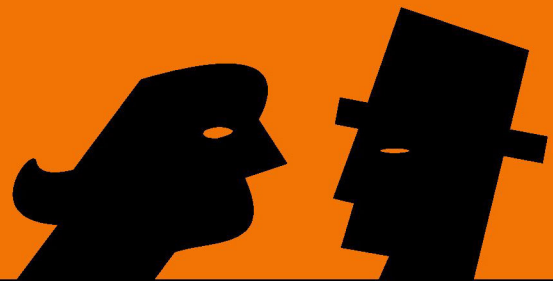
# PUPPET SLAMWICH

## CALLING ALL PUPPETEERS!

EMAIL US AT [PUPPETSLAMWICH@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PUPPETSLAMWICH@GMAIL.COM) FOR MORE INFO  
OR TO SUBMIT YOUR PERFORMANCE, SEND US THE FOLLOWING:

- Title (what's the name of your show?)
- Your name and location (where are you based?)
- Length of piece (must be ten minutes or less)
- Type of puppetry (rod, hand, shadow, mask, string, etc)
- Short description of piece. Please mention tone (is it funny? sad? thoughtful? melancholy? a few feelings?)
- Include images of your work! Video is also helpful
- If your piece has specific technical needs, mention it here! (table, floor piece, special lighting, etc.)

Made possible with the generous support of The Puppet Slam Network and the HBH Fund.



## SATURDAY MARCH 12

(& maybe a matinee on the 13th)



# From Our Members



*Elise Handelman, Seth Shaffer, Steve Abrams, Sharon Murphy Boski, and John Bell*

## **Puppetry History Panel at Virtual Puppet Con NE Edition 2021**

by Elise Handelman

On Saturday, Nov. 13th, as part of the Virtual Puppet Con NE Edition 2021, I was honored to be included on a Panel titled, “Puppetry History: How To Research and Save the Puppetry History in Your Area.” Sharon Murphy Boski, Festival Coordinator, was also the Panel Moderator. She also invited the following esteemed panelists: John Bell (Professor at UCONN & Director of BIMP-Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry), Steve Abrams (Puppetry Journal Editor) and Seth Shaffer (Puppeteer & PofA A-V Archivist). Sharon invited me to discuss the 12 Video Oral Histories, as well as the multiple Special Events videos, that my husband, Bob Nathanson, and I have documented for the Puppeteers of America’s A-V Library.

In 1994, we did 7 Video Histories with the following renowned NY puppeteers: Lenny Suib, Doug & Gayle Anderson, Carol Fijan, Carl Harms, Lea Wallace, Nick Coppola and Bernice Silver. I also discussed the 2020 Tribute Video, that I coordinated with Seth Shaffer following Bernice’s passing, titled “Queen of Potpourri Revisited,” which included the interview and footage from her 1994 original video, titled, “Queen of Potpourri.”

We hope this Panel discussion, which lasted 1-1/2 hours, was an inspiration to others to audio or video puppeteers in their guild or area.



# Get To Know Your NCPG Board



## Dr. Leigh Lafosse - President

Leigh is an active duty military musician, serving the last 15 years as a clarinetist in the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own". She received her undergrad and masters from Texas Tech University and her doctoral degree from Indiana University, Bloomington. Actively involved in education and community, she served as Association Director of the MD/DC chapters of Odyssey of the Mind, a volunteer for Ameri-Corps Reading Partners in DC, a head of family for the THREAD outreach program in Baltimore, the education coordinator for the Del Ray Artisans, and as a volunteer for STEAM onward in Fort Washington. As a puppeteer, Leigh devised, created, built, choreographed, and produced a two-person puppet production of "Hamilton", that Lin-Manual Miranda sent a personal letter of regret for not being able to attend. She was also responsible for developing a puppet feature for the 2019 U.S. Army Birthday Ball, which included caricatured puppets of the Army Senior Leaders; an event that required her to escort the puppets through Pentagon security for likeness approval by the Secretary of the Army.



## Sarah Olmsted Thomas - Vice President

Sarah Olmsted Thomas is a fifth generation performing artist. She is half of Alex and Olmsted, an internationally acclaimed puppetry duo that was awarded 2017 and 2020 Jim Henson Foundation Grants as well as the 2020 State Independent Artist Award for Performing Arts from the Maryland State Arts Council. Alex and Olmsted has toured the Festival of Wonder in Denmark, the Puppet Festival Chuncheon in South Korea, the Festival de Casteliers in Montréal, and Symphony Space in New York City, among others. Since 2012, Sarah has also been a company member with Happenstance Theater with whom she has devised 10 full-length productions (31 Helen Hayes Award Nominations, 5 wins). Sarah completed an apprenticeship with Bread and Puppet Theater, was awarded a Lisa Simon Scholarship to attend the 2017 National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, and has been honored with 2 Helen Hayes Award nominations for Outstanding Lead Actress by Theatre Washington. She is a proud NCPG member since 2018. B.A., Sarah Lawrence College.



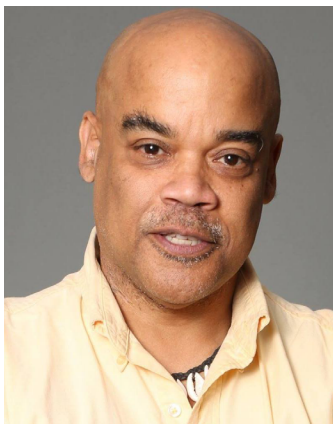
## Heidi Rugg - Secretary

Heidi Rugg is a Richmond-based puppeteer, puppet builder, playwright, director, educator, and founder of Barefoot Puppet Theatre, now entering its 25th year of touring! Working with a wide-variety of puppetry styles, she designs, builds, and writes for puppet theatre. She is passionate about puppet mechanisms, STEAM, playwriting for puppetry, and puppetry's applications in education. Heidi is on the teaching artists roster for the Virginia Commission for the Arts and has worked with all ages. She has a special passion for arts integration and has received extensive training through the Kennedy Center, Partner in the Arts, and is a current Wolf Trap Teaching Artist. In 2005, she was awarded an UNIMA-Citation of Excellence for her original work, "Galapagos George." She has received grant support for her work from the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Arts, The Virginia Commission for the Arts, Puppeteers of America, and the Jim Henson Foundation. Heidi holds a Bachelor's of Interdisciplinary Studies in Arts Integration from Virginia Commonwealth University with a minor in Art History. She and her husband, Sam Rugg, reside in Richmond, Virginia.



## Vanessa Spring-Frank - Treasurer

Vanessa has been a proud member of the NCPG board since the beginning of 2020. As a board member at large, she has helped to double the NCPG membership with the success of the 2020 and 2021 National Capital Puppetry Festivals. Vanessa is a freelance props artisan and puppet builder in the D.C. area working at Theaters such as Imagination Stage, Baltimore Fringe, Round House Theater Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center, among others. She has worked to focus her career on Theater for Young Audiences through the lens of Puppetry after being accepted to the 2016 National Puppetry Festival at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center where she fell in love with the limitless possibilities that puppetry has to offer story telling. Since then, she has used puppetry in her art forms through creating large scale pyrotechnic effigy sculptures for festivals and rod puppets in theatrical settings.



## **Dr. Schroeder Cherry - Member at Large**

Dr. Schroeder Cherry is a puppeteer and visual artist based in Baltimore, MD. Working with sculpted rod puppets and wood cutouts that he designs, Schroeder has performed original shows with puppets in museums, libraries, schools, and cultural centers across the United States. Performances include: "Can You Spell Harlem?," "The Land of Primary Colors," "Underground Railroad, Not A Subway," "Tuskegee Airmen," "How The Sun Came To The Sky," and "Children's Civil Rights Crusade." Dr. Cherry was recently featured on the front cover of the Puppetry Journal, the official magazine of the Puppeteers of America. During COVID, he and his puppets began making appearances on Instagram, commenting on everyday events.



## **Alex Vernon - Member at Large**

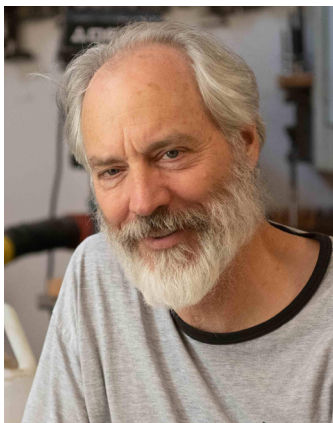
Alex Vernon is an actor, puppeteer, designer and automata engineer. In 2017, the National Puppetry Conference awarded Alex the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center Scholarship during which time he studied Mechanisms with Jim Kroupa and Marionette Construction with Jim Rose. Since 2012, Alex has been a company member with Washington, D.C.'s award-winning Happenstance Theater with whom he has created 10 original productions. With Happenstance, Alex was nominated twice as Outstanding Lead Actor for the Helen Hayes Awards. In the Spring of 2020 Alex taught as an adjunct professor of Puppetry Arts at the University of Maryland, College Park: Jim Henson's alma mater. Alex built a 6 foot mechanical horse puppet for the Washington Revels, 21 Wayang Kulit puppets for WSC Avant Bard's Midsummer, and a transforming chair for Theater Alliance's Mnemonic; a Bunraku-style puppet that also functioned as a weight-bearing chair. He is one half of the puppet theater duo, Alex and Olmsted.



## **Sam Rugg - Member at Large**

Sam has been involved with puppetry since 1996 when he met puppeteer (and wife-to-be), Heidi Rugg. Originally from the Windy City, Sam is known for his work behind-the-scenes with sound systems, stage design, terrible puns, and set construction with Barefoot Puppet Theatre. Sam brings a knowledge and love of power tools to the puppetry scene along with a deep appreciation for all forms of performance. He is in constant search of the perfect touring vehicle. He and Heidi have two daughters and reside in Richmond, Virginia.

Sam has served on the board of NCPG for over twenty years and retains much institutional memory for the organization.



## **Michael Lamason - Member at Large**

Michael Lamason is a cofounder and current Executive Director of Baltimore's Black Cherry Puppet Theater where he wrangles puppets, builds new shows, and manages its community arts programming, all while trying to conquer a mountain of administrative tasks. He and the other Black Cherry artists have been touring marionettes, as well as other puppets, and creating innovative puppetry based educational programs in city neighborhoods and across the Mid-Atlantic region since 1980.





## Dirk Joseph - Member at Large

Dirk was born in Trinidad, grew up in NY and has been based in Baltimore for 16 years. For 3 decades he has worked as a visual artist, art teacher, and graphic designer. Dirk started performing puppetry in 2015 and in 2016 founded String Theater, a small Baltimore based puppetry troupe. String Theory Theater creates their original shows employing various puppetry formats including marionettes, hand and rod puppets, crankies, shadow puppets, toy theater, and large scale festival puppets. String Theory String Theory Theater performs and conducts creative workshops in schools, libraries, and community centers, as well as venues such as The Eubie Blake National Jazz and Cultural Center, BMA, Creative Alliance, Black Cherry Puppet Theater, Baltimore Museum of Art, and many more locations around Baltimore. STT has also traveled to perform on stages at the Detroit Institute of Art, UCONN, and DC more.



## Mobi Warren - Member at Large

Mobi Warren is both a puppeteer and writer. She is author of a YA novel, *The Bee Maker*, translator from Vietnamese of several works by Thich Nhat Hanh, and co-founder of a Texas writers/artists collaborative, *Stone in the Stream*, that advocates for environmental awareness and justice. She was the Puppeteer-in-Residence at the San Antonio Museum of Art before leaving to teach mathematics for 21 years in San Antonio's inner city schools. Since retiring, Mobi has re-activated her lifelong love for puppetry to create a troupe of hand and rod puppets that perform skits about biodiversity, especially the beauty and necessity of insects. Mobi serves on the Education Committee of the National Capital Puppetry Guild. As a retired teacher who does not need to earn a living from puppetry, Mobi is interested in supporting the work and livelihood of others, sharing puppetry locally as a community service, and exploring ways to make puppet-building and performances eco-conscious and environmentally friendly.



## Paige O'Malley - Member at Large

Paige O'Malley (she/her) is a DC based, queer, theatre artist with an appetite for puppetry in all its forms! She is a guild member of the NCPG and a volunteer for the guild's Kid's Club. Paige also performs regularly as a company member with *We Happy Few DC*, working to redefine classical theatre in the District. She has performed live in several national tours with *Swazzle Puppet Studio*, including playing the title role in the *Little Prince*. Paige currently uses her signature puppet character *Penny Pancakes* to create literacy-driven digital content for her work at *Bookshop.org*. She has also voiced many titles as an audiobook narrator for the Library of Congress. She currently lives happily with her queer family and fur babies in their home in Southeast DC.

