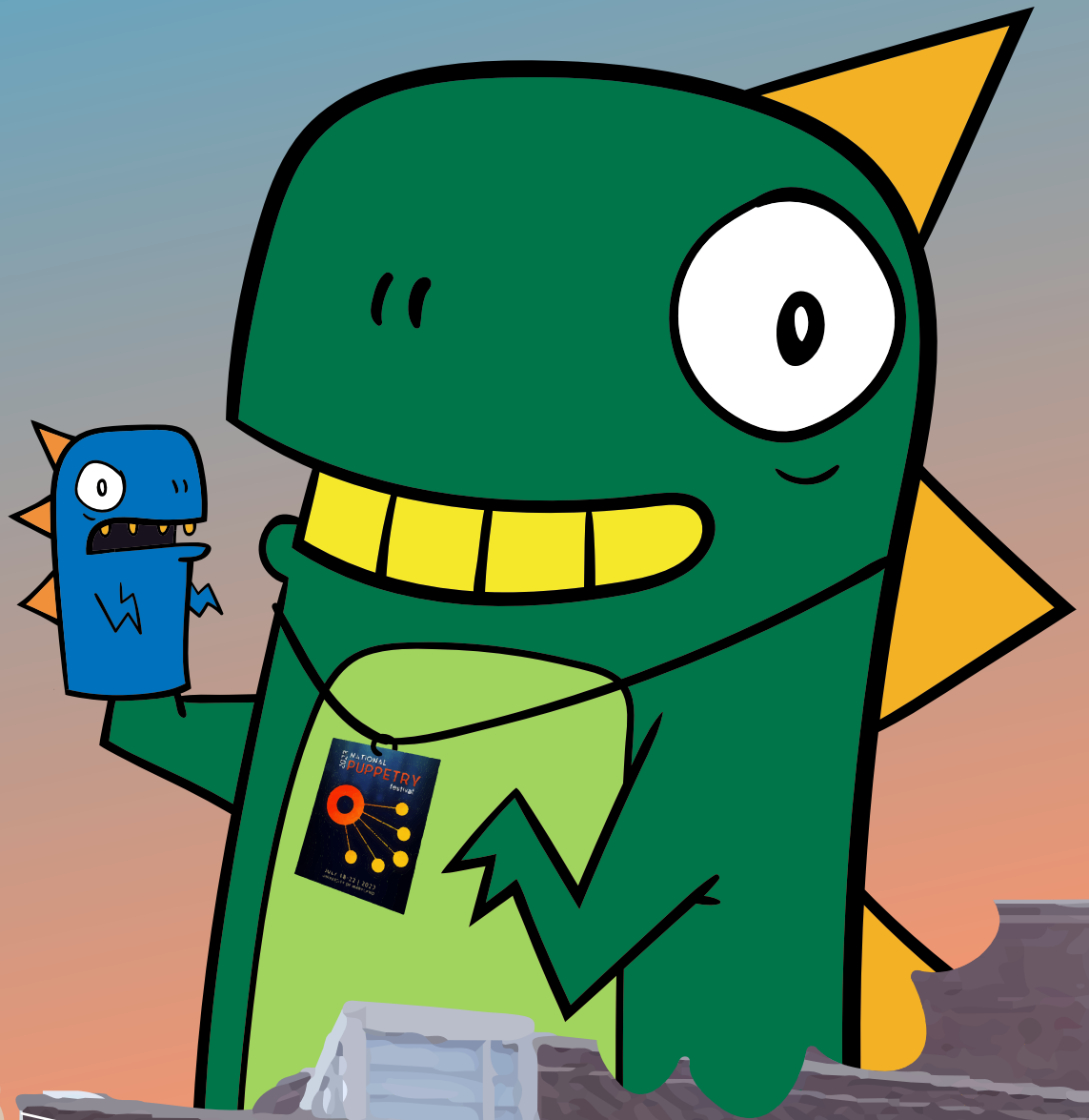


June 2023

NCPG

Price 15 cents

# PUPPETIMES



2023 National Puppetry Festival

July 18-22

**WELCOME PUPPETEERS!**



# National Capital Puppetry Guild

## PUPPETIMES

June 2023

VOL. 59 #1

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Sarah Olmsted Thomas

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

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

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Send all submissions to [puppetimes@gmail.com](mailto:puppetimes@gmail.com)

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.

NCPG Website: [nationalcapitalpuppetry.org](http://nationalcapitalpuppetry.org)

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For information regarding membership in NCPG: [Join/Renew Today!](#)

For information regarding membership in The Puppeteers of America: [puppeteers.org](http://puppeteers.org)

# Howdy!

Welcome to the National Capital Puppetry Guild's *Puppetimes*! This issue includes a welcome from president Dr. Leigh Lafosse, a summary of the 2023 member meetings thus far, our recent Potpourri open mics, and a feature on the newly formed and wondrously robust Eco-Puppetry Committee. There's also a Black Cherry Puppet Slamwich report by NCPG Board Member Dr. Schroeder Cherry, scholarship announcements with a testimonial, and a call for registration for the 66th National Puppeteers of America Festival taking place next month. You're also in for a real treat with NCPG member Cathy Pruet's DIY Dino puppet!

Thank you for taking a look.

Sarah Olmsted Thomas & Alex Vernon  
Editors

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Cover:  
Dino at the Festival  
Created by:  
Alex Vernon

# From the Office of the President

Hello to our beautiful NCPG family!

There is an excited, growing buzz in the air surrounding the DC/MD/VA corridor as the imminent descent of hundreds of puppeteers from around the globe marches closer to us with each day. *The 2023 National Puppetry Festival* is taking place July 18-22 at University of Maryland, and it is shaping up to be an incredible opportunity to finally meet the distant friends and mentors we've grown to love primarily through a virtual medium these past few years. I'd like to take a moment to share with you some of the ways you can engage with the NCPG during the week, and we are so hopeful to see many of your faces **IN REAL LIFE!**



*NCPG President, Leigh Lafosse*


- All active members (and those who renew/join) will be given a special *NCPG lapel pin* on site, just find me on site to receive yours. If you'd like to renew ahead of time, you can take care of that [HERE](#).
- Are you interested in sporting your NCPG pride with a shirt, hat, socks, notebook, or other *Dino swag*? Order yours now through our Redbubble site and let everyone know you're part of team NCPG! Check out our latest designs [HERE!](#)
- Be sure to attend the *Charm City Puppet Cabaret*, a celebration of Baltimore's innovative puppetry scene and featuring some of the city's most beloved artists. The Cabaret will be Wednesday, July 19th, 1pm & 4pm at the Hoff Theater - Stamp Student Union. Our guild supported this showcase and will have a table on display before and after each show, to include an opportunity to experience a portion of *The Fettig Project*.
- Stay tuned for more info on our *NCPG Brown Bag Lunch Gathering!* Join your board for some in-person puppetry fellowship- come meet the faces you've seen on zoom.
- All our board members will be handing out *FREE NCPG buttons* for folks to sport, so find one of us on site to snag yours.
- Many of our members will be performing throughout the festival, so check out the [schedule](#) and be sure to support when you can!



*New [Guild T-Shirt](#) Available*

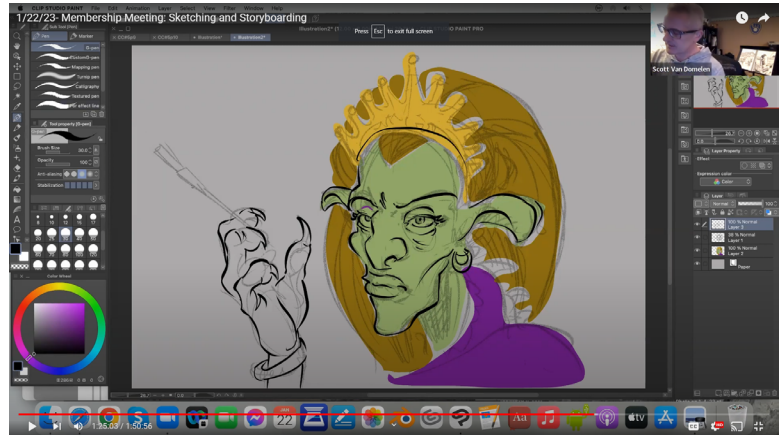
Please [send us an email](#) if you have any thoughts or questions as the festival approaches, or if you have questions about your membership status.

We cannot wait to celebrate the puppetry arts with each and every one of you!

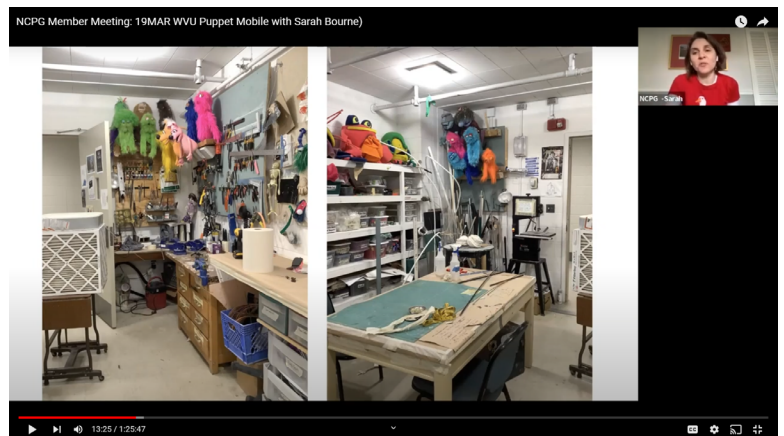
  
Dr. Leigh Lafosse

# Member Meetings

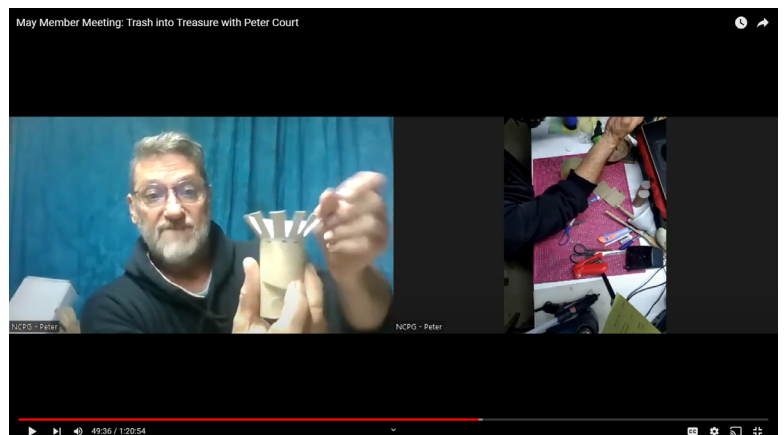
Did you know NCPG has member meetings every other month? Did you know ALL of these meetings include a workshop, artist discussion, or panel conversation? Check out the awesome events since the last issue!



*Sketching and Storyboarding with Scott Van Domelen - [View Recorded Meeting HERE](#)*



*WVU Puppet Mobile with Sarah Bourne - [View Recorded Meeting HERE](#)*



*Trash to Treasure with Peter Court - [View Recorded Meeting HERE](#)*

NATIONAL CAPITAL PUPPETRY GUILD  
presents

# POTPOURRI



FEB 26  
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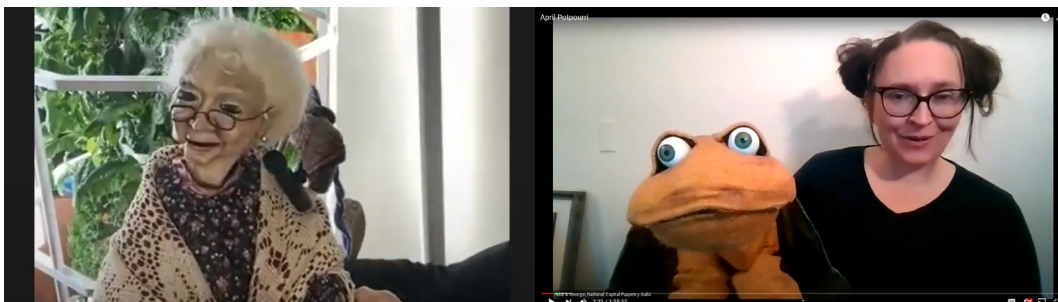
HOSTED BY ALEX AND OLMSTED

## Open Mic puppetry starring YOU!

The NCPG Potpourris are open mics for puppetry. Inspired by the model at the Puppeteers of America Festivals, they are variety performances where everyone brings a short skit to share and it ends up becoming a little bit of everything. The NCPG hosts Potpourris virtually on Zoom throughout the year. The acts are under 5 minutes and family friendly. For those puppeteers who don't have an act, our hosts are ready to give your puppet an interview!



*Cori Bourne and Violet (left) share some excellent scarf marionette work with Alex, Olmsted, and Dino for the February Potpourri.*



*Nicole and Granny (left) entertain Heidi and George during the April Potpourri.*

**Want to perform or watch?** Keep an eye out for NCPG emails letting you know about sign-ups and Zoom links!

# Eco-Puppetry

## The NCPG Eco-puppetry Committee Q&A: Part 1

*In this joint-article from the NCPG Eco-puppetry Committee, we share our first round of self-generated questions along with musings, brainstorming and researched answers to those selfsame questions.*

### Question List

- **Mobi Warren asks:** How can learning about the flora and fauna of one's own bioregion serve as a resource for puppet scripts that inspire curiosity and wonder and at the same time, address the biodiversity crisis?
- **Mary Nagler asks:** In educating children - teens about climate change, how do you get the urgency and potential calamity across without scaring them (and their parents) into a state of dread, worry, and a feeling of helplessness and despair?
- **Heidi Rugg asks:** How do you stay creative when you are dealing with big emotions surrounding climate change?
- **Genna Beth Davidson asks:** Can commercial puppet builders be commercially competitive and use more environmentally-friendly materials and practices?
- **Cecilia Ford asks:** Is there eco-friendly glue?

### Mobi Warren

**Q:** How can learning about the flora and fauna of one's own bioregion serve as a resource for puppet scripts that inspire curiosity and wonder and at the same time, address the biodiversity crisis?

**A:** As an amateur naturalist with an affinity for insects, I love science, but am also aware that Western scientific thought has often reduced the living world to a collection of inert things or resources for humans to exploit, rather than a vast web of kinship and reciprocity. If we are to slow the catastrophic loss of biodiversity due to climate change and habitat degradation, we need to restore a sacred sense of kinship with the other-than-human. Puppeteers have a unique role to play—puppetry's ability to ignite empathy and wonder while also exposing hard truths, makes it a powerful vehicle.

Since most of us work and perform primarily at local and regional levels, becoming intimate with and knowledgeable about one's own bioregion is an affirming process that can inspire timely and engaging puppet scripts.

In my own work, I explore ways to blend scientific understanding with imagination in order to kindle curiosity and respect for insects and the native plants they depend on. "Think Globally, Act Locally," is an apt ethos for this work. Pollinators worldwide are in decline so I learn all I can about local pollinators, the threats they face, and how to help them. A few years ago, I knew virtually nothing about native wild bees in Texas. Participation in the Texas Master Naturalist program and Native Plant Society combined with daily observation in my yard, neighborhood, and local city parks, opened a whole new world to me.

When I discovered that stout, black-and-white *Lithurgopsis* bees sleep in prickly poppies (or even use cactus flower buds like a sleeping bag), an idea for a puppet was born. Another puppet was inspired by a blue Mason bee that chews bits of tender cactus pulp to make the mortar that seals her nests. My Tarantula Hawk Wasp

puppet carries a medicine bag and sports a hat with Mesquite and Zizotes milkweed seedpods, plants I've seen these wasps pollinate. The symbiotic relationship between live oak trees and mealy oak gall wasps inspired a crankie show. Skits or songs with these puppets aim to delight as well as pass along an urgent message: "Bee Kind to Insects."



I perform a puppet skit "Besitos de Insectos" in preschool classes throughout San Antonio to encourage children to be curious about rather than frightened by insects. Neoma, a young naturalist puppet, is kissed by a Mason bee, a Monarch butterfly, and a Cicada. The children squeal in delight as the insect puppets blow them kisses, too.

I imagine puppeteers everywhere taking the time to learn about and encounter more-than-human kin right where they live. Puppets that emerge from such encounters remind us that there is still much beauty in our world, whether we inhabit urban, suburban or rural spaces. Beauty that needs our fierce and tender attention.

### Mary Nagler

**Q:** In educating children and teens about climate change, how do you get the urgency and potential calamity across without scaring them (and their parents) into a state of dread, worry, and a feeling of helplessness and

despair? Many children and young adults are experiencing this dread now and hear through the media what the ramifications are without hearing about what is being done globally to heal our home planet. What can we tell them to bring hope and positive action? How do we motivate them to see the situation as not too big to effect change? How do we inspire them to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

**A:** The (short) answer. In an interview with Fred Rogers, he stated that:

*“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” To this day, especially in times of “disaster,” I remember my mother’s words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world.”*

I, too, like to look for helpers and to emphasize the positive.

A possible performance could start with an explanation of what is going on in the atmosphere, why things are heating up and what is being done to turn the heat down. The use of puppetry and colorful, engaging visuals will hold their attention to hear the message of action toward hope. We can use our unique artform to not only entertain but to educate toward change, for example, introducing them to Project Drawdown. The world’s leading resource for climate solutions, Project Drawdown’s mission is to help the world stop climate change—as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible.

To do this, they pursue three key strategies:

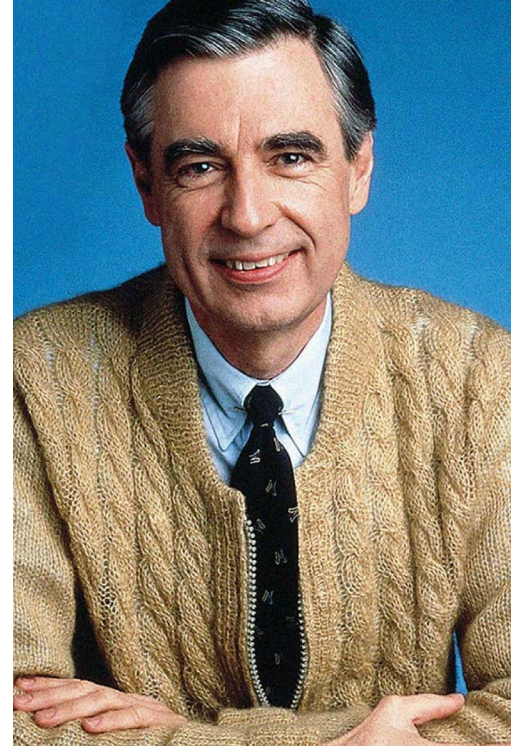
**Advance Effective, Science-based Climate Solutions and Strategies.** *We do the science no one else does to cut through the noise and find effective “whole system” solutions and strategies for stopping climate change.*

**Foster Bold, New Climate Leadership.** *We inform, inspire, and empower business leaders, investors, and philanthropists to take bold, new positions, act more strategically, and rapidly bring climate solutions to scale.*

**Promote New Narratives and New Voices.** *We work to shift the conversation about climate change from “doom and gloom” to “possibility and opportunity.” And we elevate new, underrepresented climate heroes through storytelling and “passing the mic.”*

I especially like to describe the work being done by young people (Modern folk heroes) who have developed things that help, as an inspiration. Here is one of the young people profiled:

*“Sahil Doshi of Pittsburgh. This 14-year-old innovator recently developed PolluCell, a battery that uses carbon dioxide and other waste materials, clearing the atmosphere of greenhouse gases and providing a low-cost alternative to electricity in developing countries” (Savedge).*





The performance could emphasize what is being done and what they personally can do to help the planet with choices they have now, in their daily lives. Many, many people doing a little bit each is exponentially more effective and more powerful than a few people tasked with doing a lot by themselves. Emphasis can be on how global warming affects us ALL, and we ALL have a part to play in bringing the heat down. Let us ALL become helpers.

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 “About Project Drawdown.” Project Drawdown. Accessed 6/10/2023. <https://www.drawdown.org/about>.

“Mr. Rogers Post Goes Viral.” Nation. Public Broadcasting Service. 12/18/2012. Accessed 6/10/2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/fred-rogers-post-goes-viral>.

Savedge, Jenn. “9 Young Inventors Who May Just Save the World.” Treehugger. February 7, 2021. Accessed 6/10/2023. <https://www.treehugger.com/young-inventors-who-may-just-save-the-world-4868617>.

## Heidi Rugg

**Q:** How do you stay creative when you are dealing with big emotions surrounding climate change?

**A:** A few months ago, I led a multi-session, virtual workshop on creating a sustainable arts practice for the Smithsonian. I was so excited to have an exchange on this topic that is near and dear to my heart, but the conversation took some unexpected turns. Participants expressed strong feelings of anxiety and sorrow around climate change and the other environmental issues of our time; they reported that these feelings were making it difficult to be creative. As I looked at the faces on my screen, I could see heads nodding with each report of high levels of anxiety and impaired creativity. My own head was nodding, too.

Being a puppeteer (and not a counselor), I felt out of my element as this exchange of ideas took an unexpected turn into deep emotions that I now label as eco-grief. The day after the first session, I changed my schedule to take additional time to process the discussion from the workshop. I journaled. I went down some rabbit holes on the internet. I realized that I was going to have to make some big changes to the next session of my workshop to move the conversation forward.

Digging into some scholarly journals, I came across a study (Schwartz, 2022) that found a correlation between people who engaged in collective, pro-environmental behavior (i.e. participating in a climate rally or signing a petition) as more likely to report feeling hopeful about the future and less anxious about climate change. The key word is collective. To process the emotions around climate anxiety, there is a deep need to connect with others.

This is when I had an “aha moment.” My big realization? My own creativity had also been stymied by my feelings of anxiety, too. But, much like a fish unaware of the water in the aquarium, I couldn’t see the deep waters of my own emotions until I had connected with others. It was only after March of 2020 that I began to have regular, meaningful conversations about climate change and environmental crises with other artists who had also been sidelined by the pandemic.

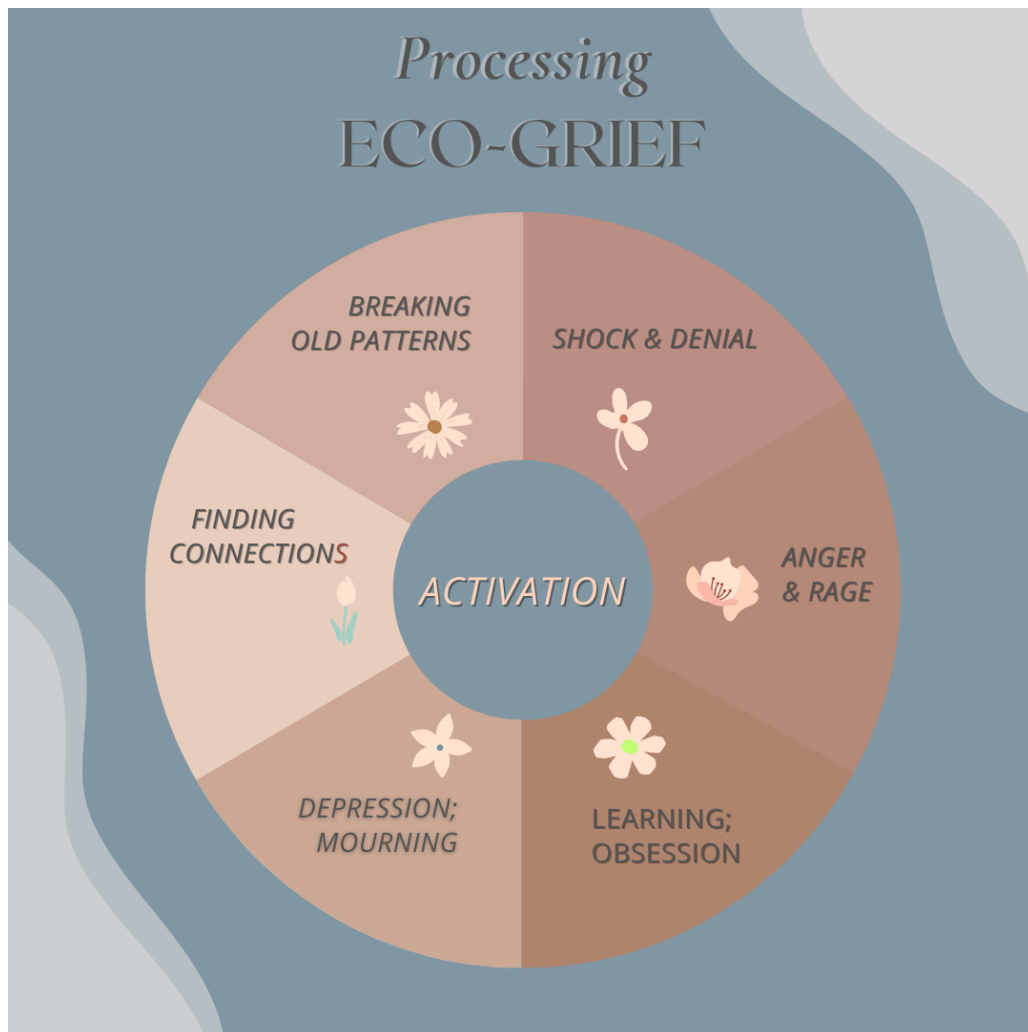
I reflected on my creative practice prior to March 2020 (the start of lockdown), and I spotted a possible correlation. In 2022, after many conversations, I created a new show set in Antarctica that references climate change in the subtext. Amidst the fun of penguins and sea creatures, I thought the reference likely too subtle for

notice. Since opening the show in June 2022, I have had multiple conversations with audience members who shared with me how their family was inspired to talk about the issue of climate change after the show. The performance acknowledged the reality of climate change without condemnation, shaming, or guilt-tripping the audience. I had created a spark for conversation and reflection for my audience. I realized that my own feelings around climate change had been transformed from grief and anxiety to active hope – and it was this transformation that I needed to better understand.

This “aha moment” led me to look more closely at grief with the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross was a Swiss-American psychiatrist and author of, *On Death and Dying*, where she first discussed her theory of the five stages of grief. This theory is now widely accepted and is now known as the "Kübler-Ross model." This model identifies the five stages of grief as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Looking at the "Kübler-Ross model," I discerned a connection to eco-grief. After more carefully examining my own emotional stage and looking over the research available (Hickman, 2021), I expanded the framework that excludes the notion of acceptance (a deal-breaker for me) and includes the additional stages of learning, finding connection, and breaking patterns. In the center of the cycle lies Activation, the space where grief is finally transformed into positive action.



Looking at the framework, you will notice that Finding Connection lies between Depression/Mourning and Breaking Old Patterns. To my mind, this is the crucial piece of the puzzle: we need the discussions, the honesty, and the experience of connection to help us regulate our emotions and move from a state of heightened anxiety to an activated space where creativity and positive action can occur. This is critical for maintaining creativity.

A week later, with this new framework in hand, I opened Zoom for the next session of the workshop. I was curious to see if this model would resonate with the other participants. It did! They responded positively to this model that honored their emotions and had a pathway to Activation and Engagement. The infographic was requested by the participants to share with others.

Taking action with others, even in the smallest of ways, can help individuals feel connected to a community working towards solutions for climate change. Social support is a powerful antidote to climate anxiety. For puppeteers this could be creating a new show centered on environmental issues, building puppets within a group, taking a workshop, having coffee/conversation with another artist, or being involved with something like, perhaps, an Eco-Puppetry Group. Being active and engaged in climate action with others helps individuals feel more empowered and less anxious; it is the connection to others that helps us to regulate strong emotions. Activism is the medicine we need to stay creative.

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 Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, E. E., Wray, B., Mellor, C., & van Susteren, L. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: A global survey. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 5(12). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196\(21\)00278-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196(21)00278-3)

Kübler-Ross, E. (1970). *On death and dying*. Collier Books/Macmillan Publishing Co.

Schwartz, S.E.O., Benoit, L., Clayton, S. et al. Climate change anxiety and mental health: Environmental activism as buffer. *Current Psychology* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02735-6>

## Genna Beth Davidson

**Q:** Can commercial puppet builders be commercially competitive and use more environmentally-friendly materials and practices?

**A:** When I worked for a time in a commercial puppet building shop, I discovered that on some level money always dictated the material techniques and processes we used. We had to do things as efficiently as possible which meant using a lot of plastic, foam, and toxic glue in production. Creating puppets that are lightweight, durable, and expeditious to make means relying on the wonders of petroleum. Making those puppets out of cardboard, papier-mâché, and other potentially more biodegradable materials would have taken too long or wouldn't have held up for the entire run of the show and subsequent tours. That being said, I found myself wondering how can a person have a thriving, commercial enterprise without relying on petroleum-based materials?

“First off,” I say to myself, “what the heck do I mean by *commercially competitive*?” I guess to be more specific, the question I’m trying to ask is “can we make all the amazing things I’ve seen on stage and film without foams and plastics?” That’s an obvious no at this point. From time to time, I come across amazing new materials that are in the works like transparent wood and mycelium leather and foam. But based on my experience, it seems that the entertainment industry does not yet have access to these materials. Then again nor

do the much larger textile and automotive industries for whom new materials are developed. So, in short, no. I don't think we can yet make ALL the *things of our dreams* without our super nifty and harmful petroleum-based materials, and in that regard, a company dedicated to say the biodegradability of their puppets, will not get certain contracts unless that client is also committed to more sustainable and eco-friendly practices.

Now, why am I even asking these questions? As I worked in the aforementioned shop, I was in constant disputes with myself about how neat it was to create with the materials and how much waste and harm were being created. I value the novel materials and they are also out of sync with caring for the planet.

I can understand why the challenge of being commercially competitive *and* eco-friendly are insurmountable right now. Current puppet materials and techniques seem to come from other industries. The modern artform adopts and adapts what other industries create. In a sense, we're scavengers. I wonder if we could still be commercially competitive at some scale with a commitment to creating biodegradable puppets. What would it take? What limits would need to be respected and practiced with clients?

Though we can mitigate the health risks to ourselves in an immediate sense by establishing and following safe practices for working with hazardous materials, I would like to establish alternatives to using many of the foams, plastics, thermoplastics, and glues that are currently in wide use. I know how awesome these new materials are. Our products often need to withstand heavy use and abuse. So how do we develop material techniques that allow us more eco-friendly options without waiting around for other industries to pioneer the materials? Or is there a way to become earlier adopters of greener materials that are already out there but not currently available at the craft or hardware store?

As I've been pondering the limits of what I can do right now to effect change, I've come to some conclusions, and I've made some lists:

1. Avoid virgin materials and find what's available second hand to delay disposal.
2. Find alternatives as you go and ask companies that are innovating on materials to give us early access.
3. Move slower. Do less. You will be okay.  
*For me, this is the hardest thing EVER! In a world that is constantly asking, no... demanding! (or so it feels) that we do more, make more, and use more, I often give in because I need to feed myself. So...*
4. Be kind to myself. Personally, I choose to be complicit in the harm as I work to find better ways, and this doesn't make me a horrible person.
5. Finally, trust and believe all our dreams for doing better are possible!

So back to my question. Can we be commercially competitive? I hope that eventually we can say yes to this question. There are things we can't make and can't do if we limit ourselves to more eco-friendly practices. I think that's a good thing actually. Because in committing to some principles that will help change the system, we will find our way to change the system. One day there won't be any more oil, but that doesn't mean we won't overuse and exploit some other material instead (remember that mention of transparent wood? I don't think exploiting trees is really any better than oil). So, let's engage in finding new ways now of not just safer materials for us and the planet, but also of cultural change to help future humans live in a connected and holistic way with our shared environment.

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Thompson, Joanna. "Forget plastic: This see-through wood material is millions of times more sustainable." Inverse. 10/31/2022. Accessed on 6/10/2023. <https://www.inverse.com/innovation/see-through-wood-sustainable>.

“Why Mycellium?” Ecovative. Accessed on 6/10/2023. <https://www.ecovative.com/pages/why-mycelium>.

## Cecilia Ford

**Q:** Is there eco-friendly glue?

**A:** As a novice puppeteer, I can't recall a project I've done that didn't involve glue. Even in needle felting, the least glue-intensive technique I've learned, I use glue to attach control skewers. Professional puppeteer friends agree that glue is necessary and that most forms of glue are disturbingly harmful to the biosphere of which we are inseparable.

In searching for information on eco-friendly glue, instead of clear answers, I bumped into my limited knowledge of chemistry and the challenge of trusting labels. How much can we believe claims of biodegradability without a clear articulation of the conditions and timeframe of that biodegrading? Sad as it is to acknowledge, harming the environment is built into my everyday life, and building puppets is no exception.

I am committed to engaging in conversations about eco-puppetry. That entails questions about materials and themes and what it takes emotionally and labor-wise to work with sensitivity to the impact of our creations. Searching for an answer to the question, "Is there eco-friendly glue?" has been overwhelming, and I've learned that the glues I most use are harmful to the environment. Most commercially available glues involve petroleum, plastics, and resins. I wonder whether my overwhelm at trying to answer the eco-glue question is shared by others in the puppetry guild.

What I offer here is what I've learned about the environmental impact of standardly available glues. As well, I report how members of the eco-puppetry committee work toward solutions to the eco-glue dilemma.

As Melissa Beyer puts it on Treehugger.com, "[t]he petroleum industry is notoriously destructive, and these products do not break down readily after being discarded." She explains that the 20th century emergence of the aerospace industry led to the demand for glues that work under extreme conditions. These concoctions trickled down to other uses and have become the glues to which most of us are accustomed. Commonly available commercial glues are derived from or dependent on petroleum. This applies to such benign seeming brands as Elmers ("other natural ingredients") and, of course, to most convenient and highly adhesive hot glues. On sources of hot glues, visit the website [www.conserve-energy-future.com](http://www.conserve-energy-future.com).

Underscoring the trust in labeling issue, Marina “Heron” Tsaplina (eco-puppetry committee member) notes that "Any resin-based/epoxy glues I found that claimed to be 'sustainable/biodegradable' were, simply not." Near the end of the Beyer article, "Is Glue Sustainable," Treehugger.com gives a recipe for plant-based glue.

Many websites that list alternatives to petroleum-based glues point to do-it-yourself plant-based recipes (see recipe links below) and to commercial products, a favorite is Coccoino. Homemade glues as well as commercially available ones work well on fabrics, paper, and papier mâché but not so much on foam or on hard materials like wood. The commercial outlet LD Davis Glues and Gelatins offers what seems to be honest information and alternative products. On the environmental impact of hot glue, I wish I had the knowledge to evaluate this information. Peter Court (also on the eco-puppetry committee) is working with industrial engineers to see if they can find a way to make plastic bottles into hot glue. Stay tuned!

Mobi Warren (on the eco-committee) shares how she is dealing with the problem of glue:

*For fabric/papier mâché I've started using Coccoino glue paste from Italy. It's made from potato starch, is solvent free and biodegradable, and comes in a recyclable/reusable aluminum tin. It also smells like marzipan! It's great for paper and fabric but likely not strong enough for wood...Also, when possible, I use sewing to hold things together rather than glue, and also use tiny half-inch straight pins to hold hair pieces to papier mache puppet heads.*

Marina “Heron” Tsaplina has done extensive research on adhesives that are functional and biodegradable. She gives us the following links:

Methyl-Cellulose: <https://www.talasonline.com/Methyl-Cellulose>

Gelatin: <https://www.talasonline.com/Gelatin>

Fish-adhesive: <https://www.talasonline.com/Fish-Glue>

Animal-hide glue: <https://www.talasonline.com/Hide-Glue-in-Cake-Form>

Casein glue can become somewhat water resistant by adding Calcium Hydroxide via

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_sfoK-LYr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_sfoK-LYr8)

Tapioca-starch adhesive: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rItsBDrrayk>

Marina is quick to note that "none of these would work for foams, or really firm attachments (the way hot glue would)." She also gives us her own rice glue recipe. The glue she used for her amazing [Dream Puppet](#).

Marina “Heron” Tsaplina’s Rice Glue Recipe:

1. Boil a bunch of sticky-rice/sushi rice. (The sticky part is important!)
2. In general, it's a 2.5 to 1 water : rice ratio\*; boil both rice + water together.  
\**One can always add water, but not really take it away. I just eyeball it.*
3. Once cooked, mash up the cooked rice OR blend it in food processor (preferred)
4. Important final step: put your blended/mashed paste into a strainer/sieve, to get any remaining chunks out through manual squishing.
5. Adjust the thickness of the paste ratio by adding water.
6. You can add a bit of salt for preservative
7. It lasts maybe 4 - 5 days refrigerated (not frozen) -- I pushed its limit to 6 unrefrigerated days and worked through a moldy stench ;)

Like Mobi's move to sewing her puppets, Marina suggests "knotting is a possible substitute for fossil-fuel based glues." I find myself at once challenged and inspired by Marina's insight that, as we move toward sustainability, it "obviously changes the approach to making and designing from the start."

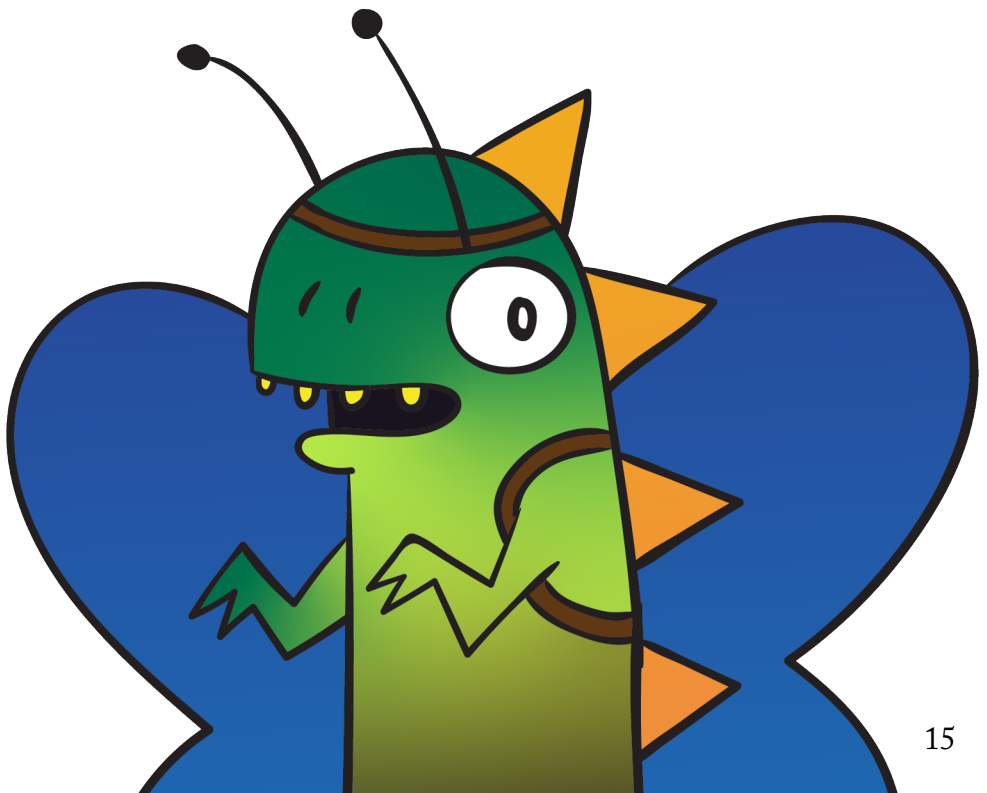
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*Do you have a question you'd like the Eco-puppetry Committee to think about?*

*Click [HERE](#) to complete our survey.*



# Puppet Slam



## BLACK CHERRY PUPPET SLAMWICH

Slam Report by Dr. Schroeder Cherry

On May 20, 2023, Black Cherry Puppet Theater presented a lively Puppet Slamwich for adults at Open Space in Baltimore, MD. Performances included a range of puppetry styles that had audiences laughing, sighing, boing at villains, and almost in tears. The presenters were: Peter Redgrave; Danny Joe's Treehouse; Marian McLaughlin; Lil Lamberta; Schroeder Cherry; and The Oggy, Smitty, and Marv Comedy Hour. The musical guest was Ghost Modal. Laure Drogoul served as emcee for the two sold out performances.



Slam poster designed by Esie Cheng



Dr. Schroeder Cherry



Danny Joe LaBrecque



Marian McLaughlin

Interested in performing at a future Black Cherry Puppet Slamwich?  
Please email the Slamwich team at [puppetslamwich@gmail.com](mailto:puppetslamwich@gmail.com)

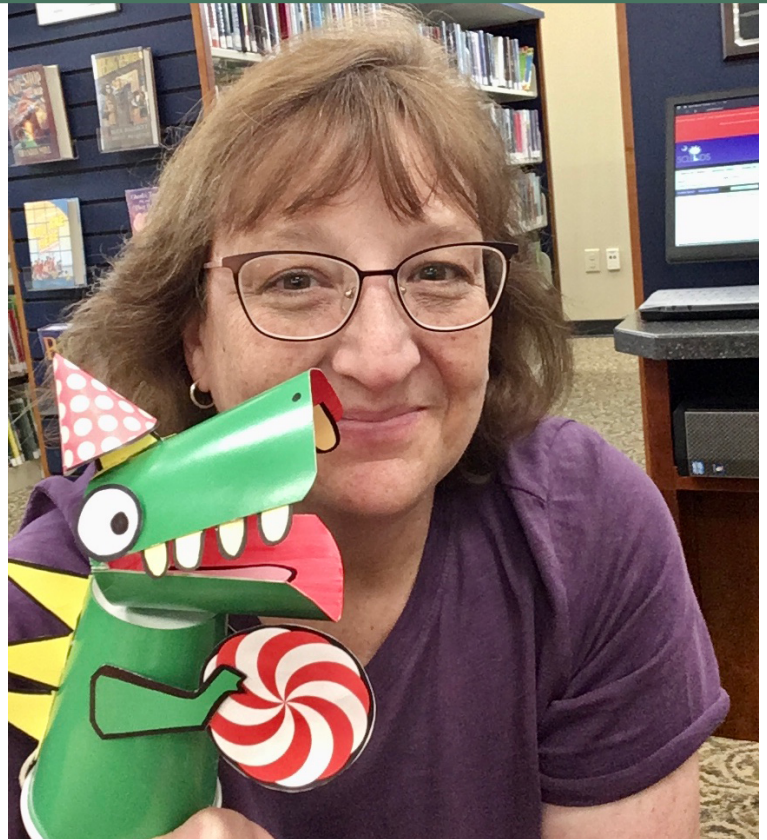


# DIY DINO

## *Puppetry Tutorial by Cathy Pruett*

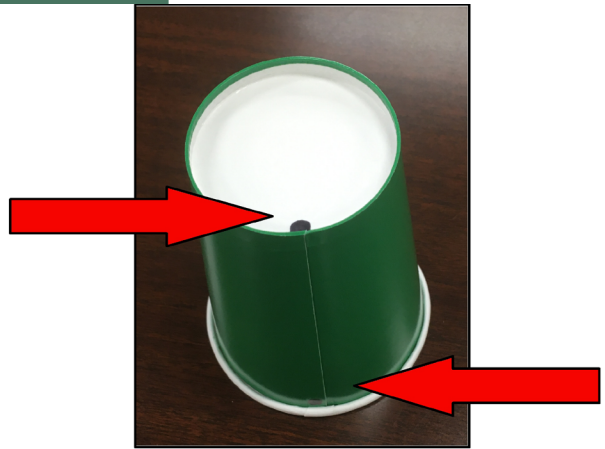
My very own NCPG Dino!

I admit, I've had a crush on Dino since I first saw his animated self facing an onslaught of foes among our nation's capital landmarks during the interludes between puppet performances at the 2020 NCPG Virtual National Capital Puppetry Festival. Seeing his plush self in later virtual meetings only deepened my admiration. (I, too, love cake and parties and find peppermints altogether too spicy!) So when I saw a moving mouth dinosaur on the Instagram account [@koodake.bahoosh](https://www.instagram.com/koodake.bahoosh), I knew I could make my own Dino with just a few simple materials. You can, too!



*Cathy Pruett  
Librarian, Puppeteer, and proud member of NCPG since 2020*





**Materials needed:** Dino parts sheet, 2 green paper cups, thick string or yarn, black sharpie, scissors, red paint and paint brush, and hot glue gun.

**Dino body:**

Poke holes where indicated.



**Dino head:** 1. Trim off cup rim. 2. Make two straight cuts from edge to bottom for jaws. Curve corners. 3. Make a hole in the back of cup at center top. 4. Bend and crease cup base outward to allow mouth to move.



**To assemble:** 1. Knot string several times so it doesn't pull through the hole in mouth. 2. Run string through the top of body and out in hole near base. Hot glue head onto body. 3. Paint inside of mouth and glue on eyes, teeth, tongue, and spikes. Add nostrils with sharpie.

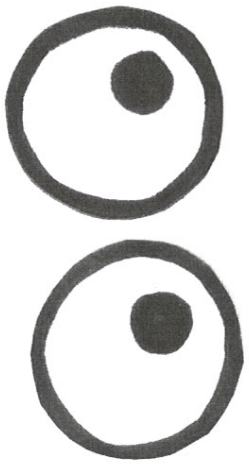


The finished product! Simply pull the string to make him talk.  
Check out this DIY Dino in action [HERE!](#)

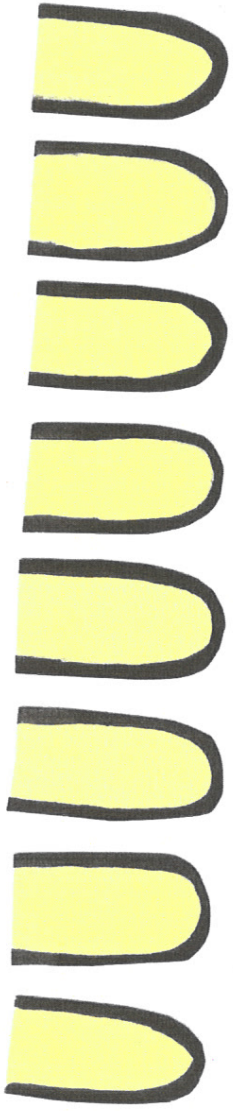
Thanks so much for the tutorial, Cathy!

If you have a fun puppetry project you'd like to share with your fellow members via The Puppetimes, send it along to [Puppetimes@gmail.com](mailto:Puppetimes@gmail.com)





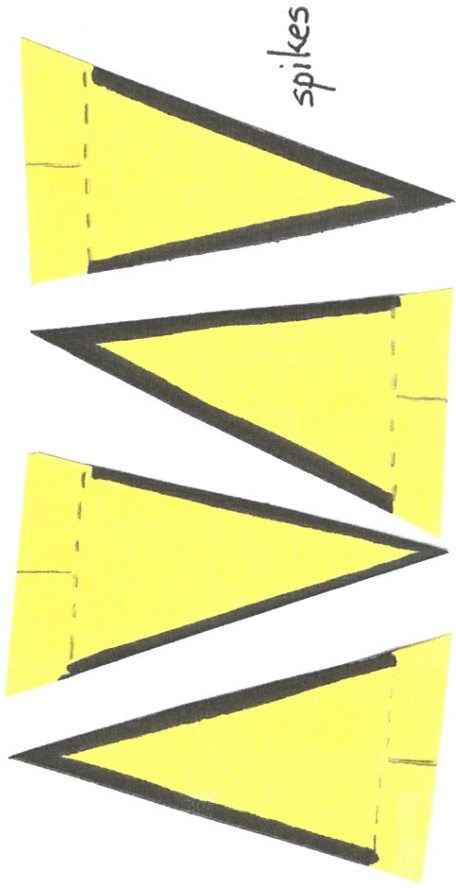
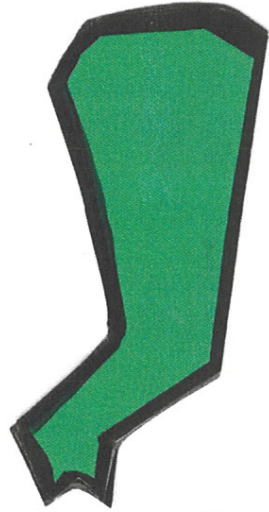
eyes



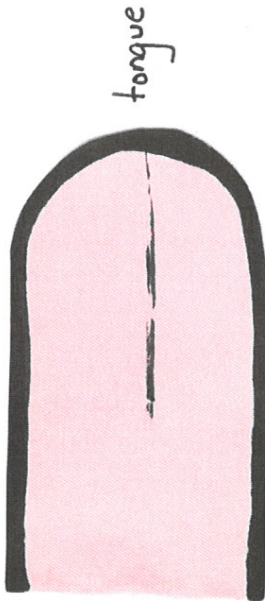
teeth



arms



spikes



tongue



dino  
day  
hat



too spicy  
peppermints



# Scholarships

Announcing the 2023 NCPG scholarship recipients Chelsea Elliff, Maisie O'Brien, and Whitney Lehn Meltz! Chelsea and Whitney were awarded scholarships to attend the 2023 National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center and Maisie O'Brien was awarded a Judy Barry Brown Scholarship to attend the upcoming 2023 National Puppetry Festival. Congratulations to these fantastic artists!



## Chelsea J. Elliff

Chelsea J. Elliff is a full-time non-traditional student juggling my Puppetry BFA at WVU with being a first-time mom. Chelsea writes, "After graduation, I hope to continue putting on puppet shows with more of my creations, explore different methods and mechanics of building puppets, while pursuing numerous opportunities to put more puppets into the world. This is my first time attending a puppetry festival and I am very excited. I am so thankful for the Judy Barry Brown scholarship and this opportunity it has given me: to be surrounded by the wonder, whimsy and power of puppetry! Hope to see you there!"



## Maisie O'Brien

Maisie O'Brien (she/they) is a Philadelphia based shadow puppeteer simmering together everything from cut paper to overhead projector, crankie theater, animation, printmaking, and cello. She has performed and workshopped her shadows nationally at puppet slams, festivals, and classrooms from Camden to Chicago. They have also developed shadows, puppets, sets, and costumes for local and international collaborations with filmmakers, dancers, musicians, playwrights, and educators. Most recently they have completed their first ever mini tour "Spirit Rider and Night Heart" in partnership with fiddler and composer Georgia Beatty.



## Whitney Lehn Meltz

Whitney is a nonbinary scenic designer and artist of oddities based out of Las Vegas, NV. Whitney currently works as a member of the Exhibit Scenic team for Omega Mart, and freelance designs scenery and puppets for theatres across the country.

M.F.A. University of Nevada, Las Vegas '22

B.F.A Illinois Wesleyan University '19

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 or making a financial donation to help us continue being able to serve our puppetry community by offsetting the costs of the educational opportunities.

Donate to the NCPG [HERE!](#)

# Robots, Puppets, and Mad Science at the O'Neill National Puppetry Conference '23

by *Whitney Lehn Meltz (they/them)*

I had the great fortune in late May to travel to Waterford, CT for my first time attending the O'Neill National Puppetry Conference in part thanks to the generosity of the NCPG scholarship. Within an (admittedly very jet-lagged) hour, I knew I was in for a delightful week. It is hard to describe the energy and enthusiasm of a campus full of people who have all gathered to work on a shared passion—suffice it to say that handshakes quickly transformed into shared meals and spirited conversations about individual expertise.

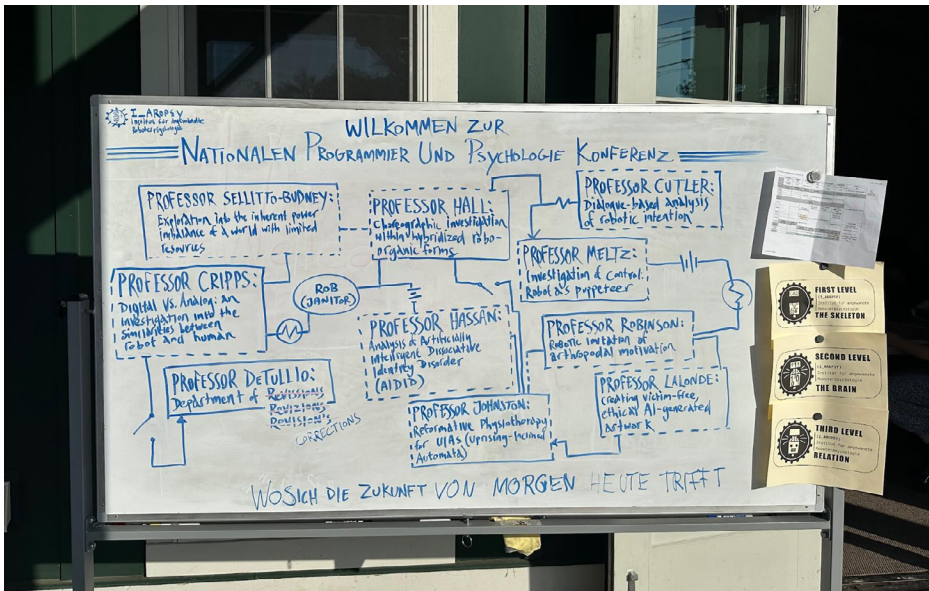


We were swept up into a whirlwind introduction of the various pre-conference strands which would set the pace for the rest of the week. I was there to attend the “Puppets, Robots, and Hybrid Marionettes” strand led by Alice Gottschalk. Alice wowed the crowd in a lavender lab coat with several mechanical flowers blooming and closing on it in steady motion as she introduced the Institute for Applied Robot Psychology, for which my colleagues and I would be conducting research throughout the week. We were then taken to our ‘laboratory’ which was a computer lab that had been decked out with 3D printers and soldering irons. Alice led us through the concept behind the Institute which became the guiding principle for our various ‘experiments.’ Why does technology behave the way it does and how can we relate to robots as puppeteers? Alice then unleashed us upon a three-step program to answer this question.

Over the next several days we learned skills in drafting, 3D printing, wiring, soldering, and coding. I could write at much greater length about the lessons contained therein, but above all, I want to highlight the genuine embracing of experimentation. We tinkered, we tampered, we deconstructed and reassembled and played. Under Alice’s guidance, the ten of us “Professors” explored our individual curiosities and shared our triumphs and our failures with gusto. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences between professors allowed us to see and try far more than any one of us could have explored in a scant few days, and someone was always quick to lend a helping hand when another professor was stuck.

We also took several movement breaks to get us out of our seats and away from the computers, one of which stood out to me in particular. In pairs, we had to collaboratively write a series of simple code commands for the other person. This was predominantly to demonstrate the level of specificity that coding requires in order to speak to robotic elements. We discovered, however, that the more specific and restrictive we became with our coding language to each other, the more likely the “robot” partner was to be obstinately pedantic in response. This is where it clicked for

me with the idea of “applied robot psychology.” In tying our very technological workshop back to puppetry, it came down to learning to expect a working relationship with the robotics— like any puppeteer should expect of a more traditional puppet— instead of presuming to have total control over them. This relational experience also allowed our group towards the end of the strand to branch out into a variety of projects that we felt newly equipped to tackle. Pictured below is the presentation board that greeted our fellow pre-conference attendees on the final day of shared performances, including the formal title of each Professor’s individual project.



The other aspect of the pre-conference that I would be remiss not to touch on was the “Pub Show,” a nightly volunteer variety act outside of Blue Gene’s Pub. I was truly astonished to see the variety of puppeteering skills casually on display from the other attendees, and it was in turns profound and completely absurd as all good puppet shows should be! As a first timer to the conference, it was really wonderful to experience so

much art, creativity, and passion in one condensed (and beautiful) location for a week, and I certainly can’t wait for next year! My thanks again to NCPG.



*Pictured above is the “Puppets, Robots, and Hybrid Marionettes” strand, courtesy of Madison J. Cripps. In clockwise order from the far left: Prof. Alice Gottschalk, Prof. Ellis Lalonde, Prof. Daniel Ryan Johnston, Prof. Whitney Lehn Melitz, Prof. Rob Cutler, Prof. Martin Robinson, Prof. Anthony Sellitto-Budney, Prof. Kira Hall, Prof. Joe Detullio, Prof. Dennis Hassan, Prof. Madison J. Cripps*

# 2023 NATIONAL PUPPETRY festival

We are excited for you to join us at the University of Maryland for the Puppeteers of America **2023 National Puppetry Festival** and Academic Symposium. Scheduled for **July 18-22, 2023**, Puppeteers, enthusiasts, educators, and friends will all be gathering to celebrate the puppetry arts and experience our first festival together in four years. The festival will focus on the theme of *Generations*, honoring those that went before, celebrating those who are with us now, and encouraging those to come.

Learn more about the festival [here](#), or click [here](#) for the registration page!

We look forward to seeing you!

Xx Dustin, Yolanda, Anatar  
*National Festival Directors*

***Prez Leigh says:***

"To all of our members who are planning to make the trip out this way next month: stay tuned for more information about ways to share in-person space with your fellow NCPG members, and be sure to bring your NCPG shirts, hats, and buttons to show off your Guild pride!! Don't have a shirt yet? No problem! Head to our [Redbubble site](#) and grab the new T-shirt, or pick your favorite design from the last few years to sport around campus!"





# 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.



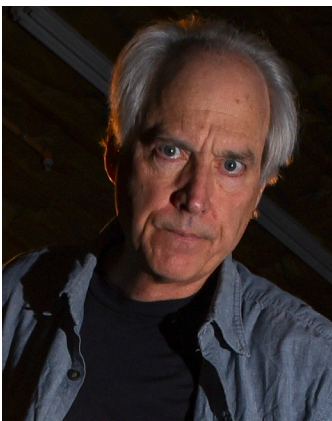
## Sarah Olmsted Thomas - Vice President

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 11 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.



## Michael Lamason - Treasurer

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.

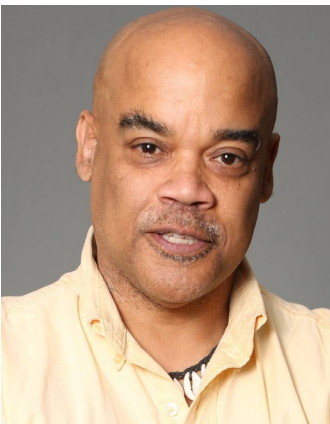


## Sarah Bourne

Sarah Bourne first joined the National Capital Puppetry Guild in 1998. She's happy to be back after a long hiatus, rejoining in 2020. She's currently the Costume and Puppet Shop Manager at West Virginia University, home of one of the two USA-based BFA in Puppetry Programs. She's previously worked for Austin Peay State University, Animax Designs, VEE Corporation, In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, and has been the technical director for Puppeteers of America National Festivals in 2001, 2005, and 2007. She has performed her own puppetry pieces in Minneapolis, Baltimore, Salt Lake City, Shepherdstown, and Boston as well as performing in shows with the Underground Railway Theatre, the University of Utah Lyric Ensemble, and the Contemporary American Theatre Festival. She was a participant at the National Puppetry Conference in 2021 and 2022. Sarah earned a B.F.A. and an M.A. in Puppetry Arts from the University of Connecticut and an M.F.A. in Interdisciplinary Theatre and Performance Art from Towson University. She's very excited to serve on the NCPG Board of Directors!

[theatre.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/sarah-bourne](http://theatre.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/sarah-bourne)

Photo: Richard Termine.



## 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.



## Peter Court

Peter has worked in education, the creative arts and theatre for almost thirty five years, and in South Africa for over twenty five years. Much of his current work focuses on strengthening school systems through the creative arts and life orientation programmes. He is also a certified life coach, counselor and a skilled facilitator. He continues to make theatrical work and to perform occasionally.

Peter is the Director of Creative Madness (Pty) Ltd. Creative Madness is an award-winning company with international experience in theatre and education and specializes in creating tailor-made productions, processes or curricula for the corporate, not-for-profit and education market. Creative Madness works with the Mr Price Foundation as the Creative Arts implementation partner in its National Schools Development Programme - EduRise.



## Jill Kyle-Keith

Jill Kyle-Keith is the Owner and Queen of Beale Street Puppets in Baltimore, Md. A professional full-time puppeteer since 1988, she holds a BA in Performance Theatre from the University of Maryland, and a Lifetime Achievement Award in Making a Living Out Of Thin Air (self awarded). Jill and her husband Bill Walker have been married for 33 years resulting in another Award for Marriage Endurance, also self awarded. She is the proud parent of Scotty Walker, 26, and Toby Walker, 23, both of whom, over the years, have been forced, sometimes at Nerf gunpoint, into performing in various puppet shows as well as dressing up as the Crab from Moana and Toby the Dog from Punch and Judy. During the performance-free days of Covid, Jill has been making artisan dollhouse miniatures, selling online, and most recently, has traveled twice to the juried London Dolls House Festival in the UK. Scotty and Toby were, of course, forced to come and help set up and sell and then go see culture. Jill is currently involved in an ill advised, pie-in-the-sky endeavor to turn her tumbledown Beale Street Puppets studio in Baltimore into The Museum of Tiny Things, an offbeat, Balty-style small museum, devoted to dollhouses, vintage toys, squished pennies, 1950s rhinestone jewelry, miniature bits and bobs, and, of course, puppets. She also recently got a tattoo of a mermaid, because why not? Who's gonna stop her?



## 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.



## 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 11 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](#).



## 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 that range from fairy tales to themes of biodiversity, especially the beauty and necessity of insects. 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.

NCPG

PUPPETTIMES

MD FLAG BACKGROUND



Concept sketch for this issue's cover by Alex Vernon.