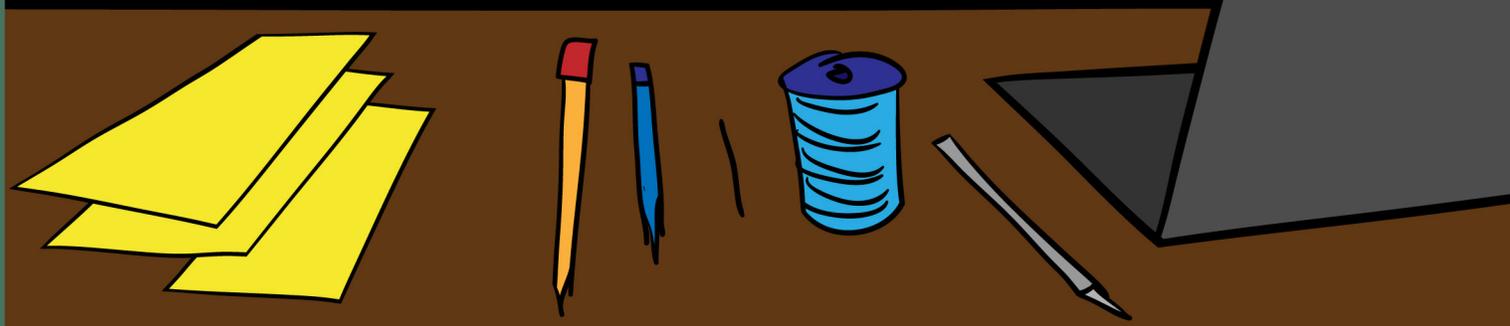


Mar 2024

NCPG

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PUPPETIMES



**A year of workshops designed to help you
make your dream puppet show**

2024
PAGE to STAGE



National Capital Puppetry Guild

PUPPETIMES

Mar 2024

VOL. 60 #1

Editors: Alex Vernon
Sarah Olmsted Thomas

Graphic Design: Alex Vernon

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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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Howdy!

Welcome to the National Capital Puppetry Guild's *Puppetimes*! This issue includes a welcome from president Dr. Leigh Lafosse, a summary of our exciting 2024 programming arc PAGE TO STAGE, and an exciting announcement about NCPG board member Dr. Schroeder Cherry's recent feature on PBS's *Craft in America*. This issue also introduces a new column, *From the Memory of Fred Thompson* - a series of reflections from the storied career of an extraordinary artist. We also bring you three brilliant testimonials by scholarship recipients Maisie O'Brien, Marisol Himmel, and Anna Jane McIntyre about their respective experiences at the 2023 Puppeteers of America Festival and PuppetSoup's Teatro Lambe Lambe workshops. Enjoy a lovely reflection about the New England Puppetry Intensive by board member Genna Beth Davidson and be sure to try out board member Peter Court's puppet design for the Eco-Puppetry Committee.

Thank you for taking a look.
Sarah Olmsted Thomas & Alex Vernon
Editors

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Cover:
Dino in the Workshop
Created by:
Alex Vernon

From the Office of the President

Hello, National Capital Puppetry Guild....

Welcome to 2024!!!!

Dino has been working hard to create something special for you this year: All our slated workshops, make-a-thons, and potpourris will be unified under a central theme: "From Page to Stage!"

The intention is to provide you with the scaffolding you'll need to take a performance piece from conception to reality, including the logistics that sometimes get overlooked from an educational angle. (To include grant writing, contracts, tech riders and more!)



NCPG President, Leigh Lafosse

The content we're offering throughout 2024 is intended to be a connected whole, but every workshop and event can still be enjoyed as a standalone session. Choose your own growth adventure this year with the NCPG as your trusted guide! If you have the flicker of an idea you've been looking for a time to flesh out, this is the perfect excuse to slowly welcome it into the world, and we hope you'll use the opportunities to 'show and tell' your progress at our virtual lobby after each event.

Stay tuned for additional Make-a-thon dates, as well as opportunities to be involved with our Fettig, Education, and Eco-puppetry teams. Our guild functions because of people like you who volunteer their time and services to help our collective whole learn and grow together. We welcome your input and endeavor to be an inclusive and accessible community for everyone.

A lightly related update- I wanted to use this letter as opportunity to share that this will be my last year working as your guild president. For the past 17 years I've served as clarinet player for the United States Army Band "Pershing's own", and a recent selection for promotion to Sergeant Major is forcing an early retirement from my depth of involvement with our beautiful NCPG. You won't be completely rid of me though- I'm no fool- this group is unlike any I've ever been lucky enough to be a part of, so you'll definitely still see me around as an active and enthusiastic member of Team Dino. I'm already looking forward to watching where the next batch of guild leadership takes us, and who knows- maybe you're reading this today and will find yourself serving as president tomorrow. Stranger things have happened... ;)

Keep dreaming and keep bringing those dreams to life with all the vibrancy of your puppetry imaginations. I'm ever relying on you.

With a heart full of awe, gratitude, and admiration-

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 some of the awesome events since the last issue!



"Page to Stage" Events

Outline of anticipated events, all at 1pm ET:

- January 21-** Writing Puppet Scripts (Special Guest: Pam Severns)
- February 9-11-** WRITE-A-THON
- February 18-** Potpourri #1
- March 10th-** Invitation to join the Greater Philly Puppetry Guild for a virtual Puppet Building workshop!
- March 24-** Legal Advice for Puppeteers
- April 21** – PUPPET BUILDING #1
- May 19-** Tech Talks: Lighting Plots and Audio Design
- June 23-** Potpourri #2
- July 14-** Rehearsal Techniques & Play
- August 17/18-** DINO DAY PARTY! (Workshop, Potpourri #3, Membership Drive)
- September 22-** TBD
- October 20-** PUPPET BUILDING #2
- November 17-** Tech Riders & Press Kits
- December 8-** Potpourri #4



Want to attend?

Keep an eye out for NCPG emails letting you know about Zoom links!



Craft in America

on PBS

NCPG Board Member Schroeder Cherry is one of five artists featured in the episode PLAY, produced by PBS Craft in America. The hour-long special explores the intersection of play and artistry. From puppets to piñatas to unicorns, the hour reveals how artists use the tools of childhood to inspire imagination, celebration and wonder. A related exhibit in Los Angeles currently displays some of Schroeder's art work and puppets at Craft in America Center. The exhibit runs into March 2024.

View the full episode [HERE](#).



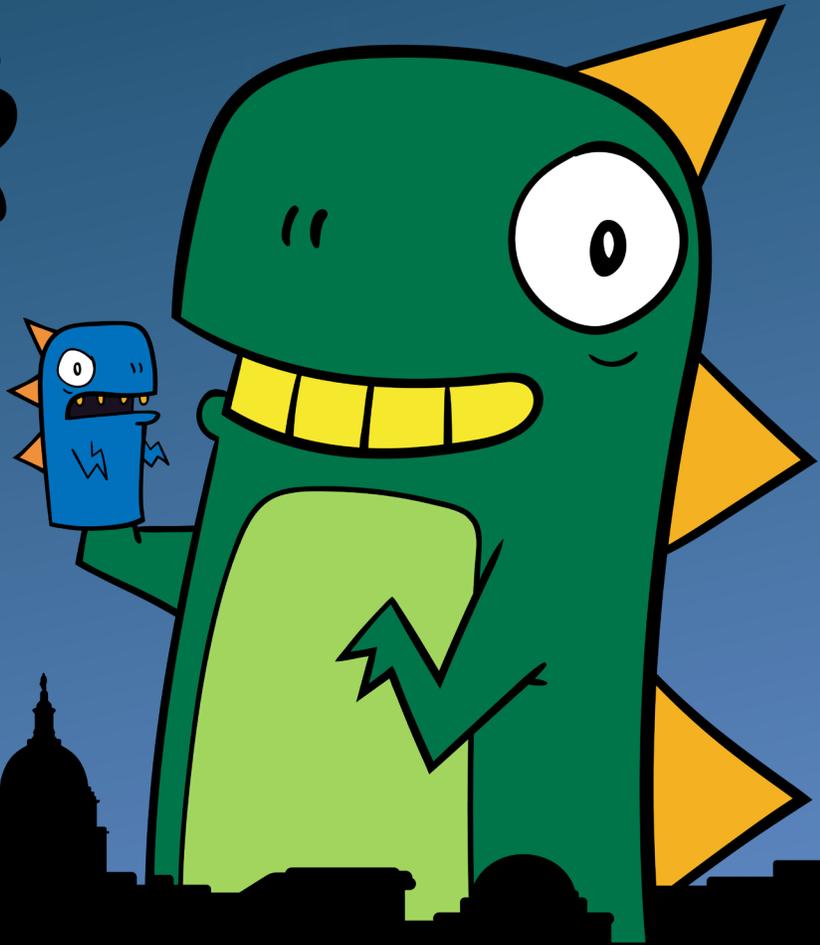
CRAFT IN AMERICA

NATIONAL CAPITAL PUPPETRY GUILD
presents

POTPPOURRI

June 23
1pm ET

Open-Mic style puppetry
featuring YOU!



2024
PAGE to STAGE

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. This year we'd like to invite our members to share fragments of the shows they're working on for "Page to Stage," be those excerpts of script evolutions, the start of sets or puppet builds, or even anecdotes about process and progress!

Want to perform or watch?

Keep an eye out for NCPG emails letting you know about sign-ups and Zoom links!

Eco-Puppetry Committee

Hi everyone!

Greetings from Africa, where it is a mild 113 degrees Fahrenheit as I type this “Hello” @ 20h00 at night!

Yes, this is Peter, your puppeteer at large, (or just a large puppeteer!!!)



So... A junk puppet made from a plastic bottle, (my nemesis, but I do seem to use them a lot!) some cardstock from a delivery box, some string, some tape... and whatever else you have around the house.

This puppet could be the base of something you want to develop into a fully formed character, a “stand-in” at rehearsals whilst the “real” puppet is being made or just a fun puppet to play and experiment with, playing with movement, character, or shape.

If you'd fit under my arm, and remember that I'm only 5'8" ... then get someone to help you cut the bottle... that's the only really tricky bit. Remember that safety is paramount! Also, your puppet doesn't have to be a human... after playing with this puppet idea... some friends of mine here created an owl puppet based on this design, because the puppets head can turn round a full 360 degrees.

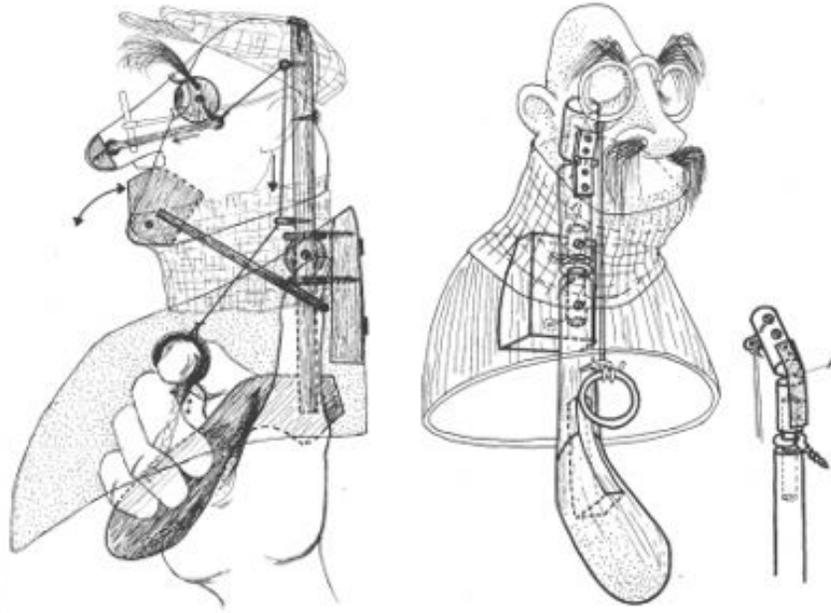
Here's the link to the video: <https://youtu.be/yXpX08JfgiA>

Enjoy, have fun, be safe & send pictures!!!

Love from Africa
XXX
Peter Court

The Fettig Project

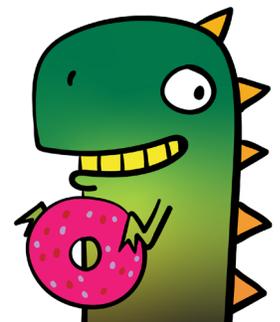
Tired of reinventing the wheel? Intrigued by the many designs in books and articles, but a bit daunted by the idea of getting started? Wish you knew how to build something in that Hansjurgen Fettig book? Become part of The Fettig Project!



Named for Hansjurgen Fettig, author of *Rod Puppets* and *Table-top Puppets: A Handbook of Design and Technique*, the Fettig Project will create a 3-D interactive exhibit of rod puppet mechanisms that will travel to puppetry festivals and conferences to inspire, educate, and inform puppeteers and puppet builders.

The Fettig Project allows us to share our knowledge so we can all keep learning and moving forward together. A way we can build puppets that move better with greater ease, allowing us to focus more energy on performance. A way to give the next generation of puppeteers and builders a leg up.

The NCPG recently took The Fettig Project under its wing. Stay tuned for more information about upcoming programs and how to get involved!



From the Memory of Fred Thompson

In 1973 – '74 as 'Companie Phillip Genty' travelled the country with "Expedition Alexandre," I had the good fortune to witness, close up, one of the offerings of the company. It was one of the most exciting pieces of puppetry I have seen. It was the only performance where the hair on the back of my neck stood up.

Operated by three puppeteers in black, this lone Bunraku-style puppet about thirty inches tall, was what one might expect to see on stage: white-faced male with intense expression, ornate hair style and dark, ornamented robes and the ubiquitous samurai sword at his side. His movements, also typical, were stylized, deliberate and effective.

Samurai Warrior.

The warrior steps out of the darkness, taking in all around him; his confidence and strength apparent in his posture and stance. He is alone, for the moment, and relaxed. All is quiet.

Suddenly, his head cocks to the side in an almost imperceptible but deliberate move, given away only by the trembling of the decorative device extending from his hair. He senses someone approaching. His body, now crouched, arms drawn back in anticipation, awaits the arrival of this unknown. As his head drops, chin forward gazing into the darkness, he steps towards the noise, punctuated with the loud slap of a musical instrument. His body straightens, head drawn back, and we know that he spies the one who was only a distant sound moments before. The Samurai's alert, rigid stance, hands at the ready across his abdomen, tells us that this is not a friend.

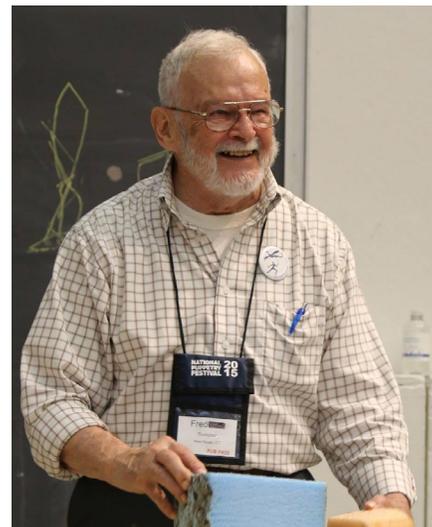
Our warrior takes a step to the side to broaden his stance accompanied by the attendant swagger typical of Kabuki theater. This and all other lunges and withdrawals are again emphasized with slap sticks. His hands slowly reach to his side and withdraws his sword, his gaze constantly focused on his opponent.

He holds his sword at the ready, eyes fixed, as his opponent makes the first move. Our Samurai parries the opponent's thrust with his sword held horizontal. We see our warrior take the force of the blow and hold against it. He returns the attack with a sweeping motion and immediately prepares for the next hit from his opponent. The battle continues as each delivers stronger and more ferocious attacks. Our Samurai seems to be getting the worst of the hits, as his stance seems to weaken. His once straight posture bends backwards as he moves from side to side to avoid his opponent's sword. His body slowly crumbles under the attack. All appears to be lost. The Samurai, now desperate is reduced to a crouched mass, awaiting the final blow. With a quick tilt of his head, we know that he has spied an opportunity. His opponent, sensing victory, has relaxed for just a moment. The Samurai, knowing that this will be his last chance for survival, leaps up, and with arms fully extended above his head, swings his sword in a powerful arc, down, down, down. There is no movement.

The Samurai, head down and standing over his opponent, is still.

Slowly, his shoulders draw back, his head raises and his body straightens. He takes a breath. He pauses. While looking directly at the audience, he picks up the hem of his robe and draws his sword through it, holding it horizontally.

Blackout!



Fred Thompson, photo by Eric Kuska

Scholarship Experience

Puppeteers of America 2023 National Festival

by Maisie O'Brien

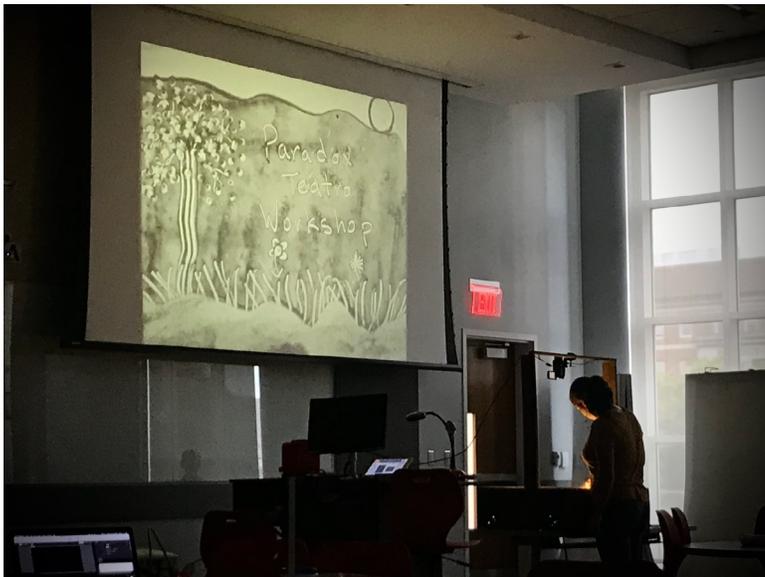
Unsticking myself from the familiarity of the driver's seat, I stepped out onto the pavement of the University of Maryland to swiftly find that most shining beacon of orientation: sweaty puppeteers unloading all their stuff. My own vehicle, uncharacteristically void of any cardboard, box cutters, staple pliers, or googly eyes on this journey endured three more parking attempts and then I was in! I had officially made it to the 2023 National Puppetry Festival, my first in-person puppeteer convergence of its kind. It was a circumstance that I could not have planned for at all without support from the Puppeteers of America and the Judy Barry Brown Scholarship from the National Capital Puppetry Guild.

Prior to the trip, I had set careful first-timer goals for the week anxious to spend time in the flesh and felt with the colleagues I had gotten to know since the COVID-19 lockdowns. Up until this point my ability to go to puppet shows or workshops had been rationed out few and far between – always online and spaced around the pendulum swings of part time jobs. To be included in this large multipass event was to feel encouraged along the notion that there is no 'one way' to make your journey in puppetry.



Maisie O'Brien

Ultimately I decided to run with the opportunity to visit several morning classes, and then in the evenings to relax into the schedule of puppet shows. Feeding my love of shadows, I dove in with an entrancing class on live-projected sand drawing and shadow puppets presented by Paradox Teatro duo Sofia Padilla and Davey Steinman.



Sophia Padilla of Paradox Teatro

Next I devoted some quality time admiring shadow master Ayhan Hülügü's craftsmanship of leather Turkish shadow puppets and learning about his international adaptations of Karagöz. As a part time parade builder and educator working in Philadelphia, I was excited to join two classes that addressed the art of puppets 'in the wild,' Cheryl Capezzuti's whirlwind parade-in-a-day, and Bernie Beauchamp's introduction to busking. While solely inferred on my end, both workshops demonstrated that negotiating with your environment and your teammates can be a form of puppetry too.

In the evenings I was impressed by the Festival's breadth of performances from its sleek main stage productions to its more frenetic Swedish Chef kitchen of Fringes, Slams, Potpourris, and Cabarets.

Each show different from the other yet striking in their own labors of love; Every decision of the puppeteers made visible by the physicality of their art. Did you catch the youthful bounce in that elephant's trunk? The defiant scuffing on that marionette's foot? The pregnancy of a squatting shadow woman concealing more puppets within her form?

Some of the most sacred experiences for me were the shared mealtimes and the brief peacetimes between shows that stitched the day together. An art teacher of mine once described such moments as “the hang.” A crucial time to learn more about each other over food and rest and also when we can extrapolate how our new influences from all these shows and classes will filter through in our future projects. Discovering people’s wonderfully multigenerational backgrounds was helpful for framing the Festival in perspective as well. Getting to listen to all the ‘where froms’ and ‘whys’ of other puppeteers helped me see how infinite our career options can be, while at the same time it challenged me to keep discerning what I want for my own work.



In our time at the National Puppetry Festival I felt that we all gelled with unanimous affection and irreverence for the absurd and mighty art of puppetry. In indulgence, we acknowledged each other bringing our own thickly laminated reasons for why we held this time dear – a time and place to be ourselves, to learn, to teach, to lighten our inventories, to subvert oppressive or mundane norms, to laugh and cry from forbidden places... the contrary spirit of intangible heritage was downright palpable all week. I’m back home now, still playing back moments of superb crowdwork and deconstructing Fettig mechanisms in my head. As all positive formative experiences go, I’m already looking forward to next time. Thank you NCPG!

Rob D’Arc’s Cardboard Parade Dragon with Kathy Fahey puppeteering the ferocious head

–Fondly, Maisie



Scholarship Experience

Teatro Lambe Lambe with Puppet Soup

by Marisol Himmel of Moddy Puppets

I had the privilege of attending Puppet Soup's Lambe Lambe virtual workshop thanks to a scholarship from the National Capital Puppetry Guild. This four week course was attended by puppeteers from all around the world, from Montreal to Saudi Arabia. It consisted of slideshows, videos, live tutoring, and my favorite: collaborative puppet exercises that really tested my range of puppetry motion and emotion and led to some unexpected discoveries not only about puppetry but also about myself.

Over the course of this unique online workshop we learned about the origins of Teatro Lambe Lambe, its roots in Brazil (where our instructor Fagner Gastaldon is from) and created our very own Lambe Lambe theater box.

We were encouraged to find inspiration in something personal for our piece and put as much of ourselves into it as we dared. I struggled for two whole weeks to narrow down my ideas. I finally landed on using my name as the inspiration for the piece. "Marisol" means "Sea and Sun" in Spanish. That narrowed down my setting. Around the same time, I was reminded of a story from Nayarit, Mexico of a woman whose fiancé was lost at sea only three days before their wedding. The woman waited on the pier in her wedding gown for her love to return, and continued to do so for years, earning the moniker: "The Madwoman of the pier". This was the story I would tell in my show!



Marisol Himmel

Lambe Lambe shows are presented using miniature puppets or objects or occasionally with the hands of the puppeteer as characters themselves. This proved to be a true challenge for me. As a ventriloquist I am able to lend expression to my interactions with the puppet with my own facial expressions. Ventriloquy by its very nature is very dialogue dependent. I was entirely out of my comfort zone not speaking and not being seen, telling a sad story using only my hands.

This true story of Rebeca Mendez Jimenez and her long lost love, Manuel, was related by Rebeca herself to Fher Olivera, lead singer of Mexican pop/rock band, Maná. The band immortalized her story in the song "El Muelle de San Blas" which was released in 1997. The song turned out to be a big hit for the band and it played on the radio throughout my adolescence.

The chorus of the song makes repeated use of the word "Sola" (she's alone). It spoke to me as a young teen when my friends moved away; as a young adult when my sister got married; and most recently during the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the setting is a happy one and the song is somewhat upbeat, the lyrics paint a different picture, one I wanted to explore and translate into movement. Lambe Lambe shows are traditionally short, usually 2 - 5 minutes in length, so why not use the song as the sound track for my theater box performance?



I got to work creating the scenery, the sea, the sun, the boat, and (most importantly) the pier.

Through this workshop I was introduced to a new sculpting material, Milliput, which Fagner taught us to use and guided us in creating a modified Czech style marionette puppet. I tried using Milliput to create the figures for my Lambe Lambe and did create prototypes that I used to practice and lay out my pacing, but ultimately I decided to carve my figures out of foam. This would allow me to manipulate the figures differently and create some transitions similar to sleight of hand magic.



Having such tiny puppets meant my movements had to be smaller and more meaningful. My puppets have no facial features. How would I convey his love for her? How would I show the depth of her sadness? I would have to literally lend a hand. Slide a ring onto my finger to show their relationship. Wring them to show her concern as the boat leaves.



While there is a lot of freedom in Lambe Lambe to experiment within the minimal space and to find clarity within your story, the most important aspect is the fluidity in which the show is performed. This proved a true test on the final day of the workshop when we were to present our Lambe Lambe in front of a live Zoom audience of not only our fellow attendees, but their and my invited guests. Being nervous doesn't exactly help with fluidity. When it was my turn and the spotlight was on the inside of my box theater, I took a breath to steady my hands before beginning and was reminded of a point that our instructor Fagner repeated many times throughout the course: "Share your breath with the puppet, even in the moments of stillness,"

I am so grateful for the opportunity to take part in such an immersive class. I feel that I grew as a puppeteer and as an artist. I have found that my progress in puppetry has come as a quieting of sorts. It's tempting as a beginner to kermit-arm-flail through every puppet performance, but the real magic of puppetry can be found in the pauses; the quiet moments that allow the audience to FEEL. Those are the moments in which the puppet is truly alive.



Scholarship Experience

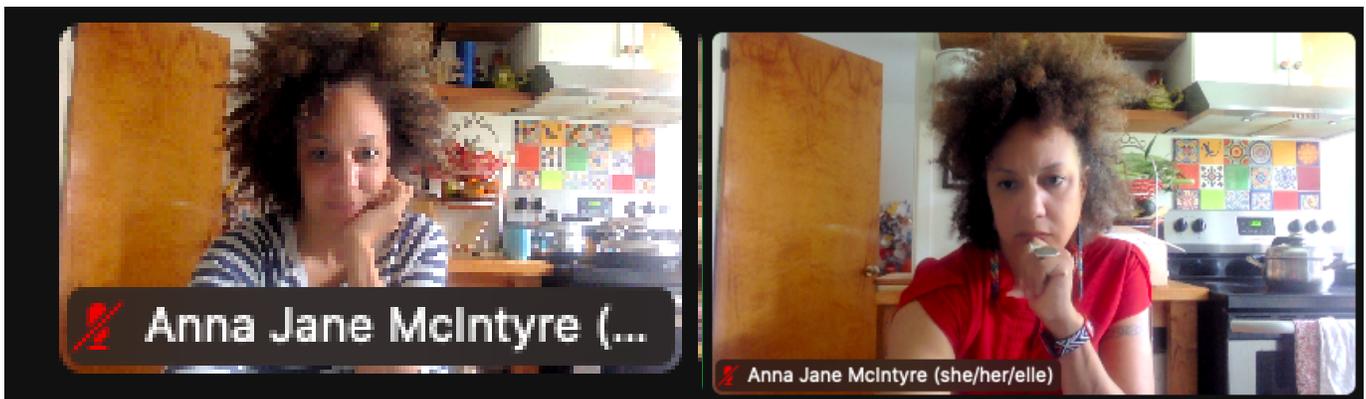
Teatro Lambe Lambe with Puppet Soup

by Anna Jane McIntyre, Montréal, Québec, Canada

Hi everyone! My name is Anna Jane McIntyre and I'm an artist based in Montréal. I'm trained as a printmaker and like many printmakers do a little of everything! My favourite thing is to make immersive analog artworks much like giant theatre sets or installations. The reason I love to do this is because I think art is so fantastic and life affirming and can help your mind think new thoughts and your body feel new feelings. I think of art as visual-philosophy and a kind of mental-adventure. Ever since I was a teenager I have worked on and off in galleries as an attendant and gallery guide. While I was working, I really began to notice how tricky art is to access and feel comfortable with, how much time it can take to get something out of an artwork and how intimidating it can feel to face an artwork. I think a lot about how to make artworks more inviting for people so that they can feel welcome and feel that all they need to have is their own lived experience and curiosity to get something out of an artwork. Perhaps this is why I adore the accessible playfulness in puppetry so much. I grew up with a very artsy British mum who was always making things and we often played with puppets, so I feel comfortable with puppets and have experimented a bit with shadow puppets, toy theatres and theatre sets but strangely had never ventured very far into puppetry or taken a course.



Aa is for Afropresentism, Photo by Kinga Michalska



When I saw the call for scholarship applicants by The National Capital Puppetry Guild for a Teatro Lambe Lambe course taught by Fagner Gastaldon of PuppetSoup I was thrilled! I had never heard of this micro puppetry street theatre form and didn't think I had a chance at all to win it, but what did I have to lose! What a delight to receive the confirmation email. So shocking! Ha! Joining the course was a glorious start to the autumn.

The materials list was intriguing, a few things that I hadn't heard of like Milliput, an epoxy putty/modelling clay and headphone splitter (genius! How had I never heard or thought of a headphone splitter before?!) Everything was pretty easy to find, and it was great to be introduced to new materials. I experimented with the Milliput right away. I soon discovered that the mixing ratio of the two different Milliput components matters. I never quite got that right and my Milliput sculptures never hardened. I will try again as I can see that it could be a cool material for the puppets to be made from. The sculptures would have a fun weight to them once they dried.

Throughout the class I think there were 8 students? I can't remember exactly but they were from all over the world. Each participant had a fascinating puppetry practice. I was definitely the least experienced in puppetry. I was a complete nerd during the course and wrote copious notes and drew constantly trying to absorb and integrate all the incredible tips, pointers, info, partially just so I could retain all the goodness and this is the only way I remember! Fagner took us through an amazing introduction about Teatro Lambe Lambe, and I learnt that this puppetry art form is wildly popular and first began in Brazil in 1989 started by two women, Denise di Santos and Ismine Silva.

For those who are unfamiliar with Lambe Lambe theatre, quickly described this form of street puppetry is an intimate experience with a short play performed in tiny portable puppet theatres and small puppets to micro audiences on the street. The plays are often just a few minutes long and the puppeteer might perform a gazillion times in succession to audience members, one at a time. The puppet theatres looked like a cross between a toy theatre, dollhouse and old-fashioned analog street photography set ups. During the course we looked at a range of stunning theatres and plays. I am still amazed that I had never heard of it before! The 8 classes of the course passed by far too quickly.

I love working with cardboard and often use it in my projects. The first project that I tried to do was to create a very large miniature circus tent or yurt. The tent I made was quite large, about 2 feet across at least ha! It's still sitting unfinished in my living room at the moment. Fagner suggested that we start large so that we could get used to using our puppets in a generous amount of space. Very wise as this way you can explore the movement possibilities with your puppet! In the end, though, I discovered that I preferred to start small and branch out. I ended up using a Lazy Susan and painted it to create a kinetic mini-stage circus ring, I painted the edges in white and red and was very pleased with how it turned and how I could quickly change the set up. I got my puppets and set to work imaging what I could do. One class Fagner gave us an hour to develop a show. This was slightly terrifying and also very fun. I created a ridiculous impromptu magic act with a square glass vase, a marionette puppet that I created during the class and a wind up fish + a gazillion other mini-props all set to the very peppy fab tune from 1983 of "Nobody's Diary" by the group Yazoo. O my goodness! Trying to manage all the props and transitions was an incredible challenge. I felt sorry for my audience unsure how they would react lol. I couldn't believe how supportive and enthusiastic they were about my wild experimental lightly narrative puppetry! It was such a learning experience, really I was just floored by how generous Cass and Fagner were and all the other participants. Honestly I think that it was the warmest reaction to anything that I have ever created?! In our final gathering we had a beautiful presentation of everyone's works. Ha! I was working up until just a few minutes before to finalize everything but finished in time to be able to fully pay attention to all the



incredibly crafted works and touching stories everyone had created. It was such a top notch learning experience and my first real foray in really looking at puppetry, which interestingly has so many crossovers and commonalities with printmaking. As I continue to work and teach, I hold the experience of the workshop very close to my heart and now have ambitions to create a play series and am actually in conversation with a dramaturg about translating one of her plays to be presented in this miniature puppetry form. Thank you so much for this chance to learn about Teatro Lambe Lambe National Capital Puppetry Guild!! It was the best! Also a big thank you to Fagner and Cass and all the lovely participants of the workshop for their sharing and generous encouragement.

Here are a few screenshots of my final performance with my puppet and set created during the workshop.



Summer Puppetry

New England Puppetry Intensive

by Genna Beth Davidson

As a newbie to puppetry arts in the early 2010s, I began seeking opportunities for immersive experiences in my new-found love of puppetry. After a few google searches and email correspondences, I found myself signed-up for the New England Puppetry Intensive (NEPI). This summer camp for immersing oneself in the art of making, creating and doing puppetry was a great way for me to take a giant step forward in puppetry. I was a student at the intensive in 2015 under the guidance of David Lane, Nan Balkwill and Peter Balkwill. The dozen or so artists along with our leaders lived, worked and played in the beautiful Berkshires for 10 days. It was chance to connect, relax, play, and deepen my craft without being overly serious. That summer I learned to mold and cast a puppet head in neoprene for the first time. I sat in a circle of fellow puppetry-enthusiasts and brought assorted clothing bits to life with larval form puppet heads. I did yoga and played some intense four-square with my new friends. The downtime I found was as important as the making and doing. What wonderful memories that I cherish to this day! These experiences shaped me and informed so much of the work I still do today.

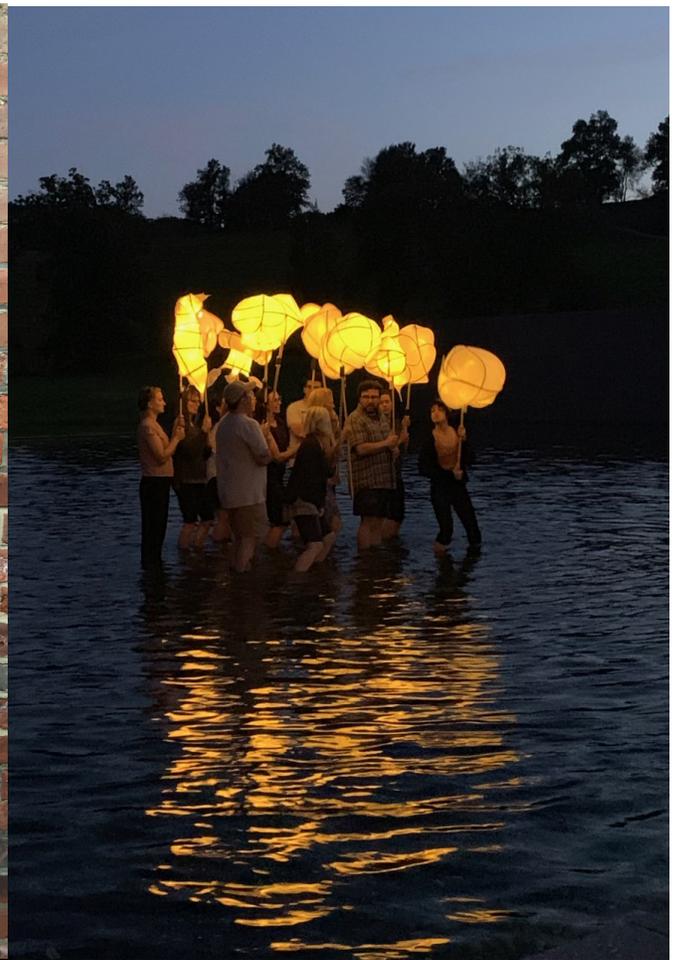


Genna Beth Davidson

In 2018, David Lane added to the summer offerings by creating a Wood Carving and Puppet Design Residency which I just couldn't resist. This shorter and building-focused experience held at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) was another fantastic offering of which I took advantage, twice in fact. On that first summer retreat, I learned all the basics. Then I returned in 2021 to refresh and further my skills. I had my own starter set of tools already and a bunch of half-finished projects from the in-between years that needed some attention. I wasn't exactly sure what I'd get up to carving that time around, but I was seriously ready for a break (weren't we all that summer of 2021?). Again, it was a wonderful and fulfilling week of puppetry immersion.



As I've had such terrific experiences with both these programs, I wanted to make sure that other members of NCPG are aware of the offering. Both are happening this summer with a special Design Edition of the NEPI. So, if you're looking for a deep dive and an in-person experience for a few weeks this summer, I highly recommend taking a trip up to Massachusetts.



For more information check out:

2024 New England Puppet Intensive — Design Edition

Immerse yourself in the ultimate studio experience with NEPI's fully stocked puppet-making lab set against the backdrop of the beautiful Berkshires. Alongside studio activity, we engage in a mindful and physical practice — providing participants time for reflection, and the opportunity to explore creative impulses that dovetail with expressive design. Curriculum includes: Character Design; Technical Drawing, Sculpting & Casting, Painting, Controls, Joints, Costuming, Lantern Puppets, and more!

More info: www.newenglandpuppet.org

MASS MoCA Wood Carving and Puppet Design Residency

The wood carving puppet laboratory returns for another edition in residence at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. This edition, we'll dig deep into traditional European-style carving techniques and create beautiful, inspired puppets together. Topics include: Character design, technical drawings, band-saw rough outs, knife technique, controls, joints, Fettig mechanisms, painting, and simple costume patterning.

More info: www.assetsforartists.org/workshops-in-residence

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.



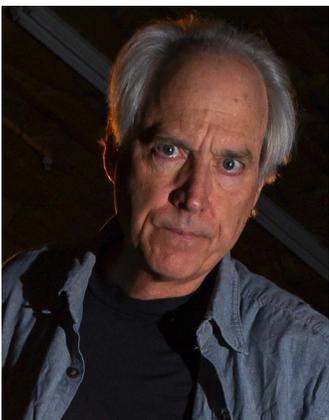
Sarah Olmsted Thomas - Vice President

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.

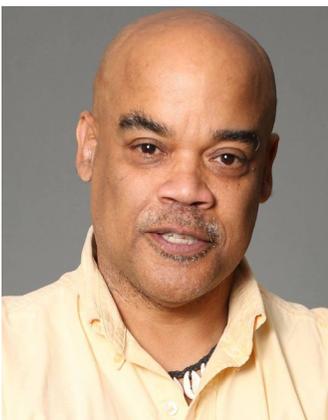


Sarah Bourne - Member at Large

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

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 - Member at Large

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.



Genna Beth Davidson - Member at Large

Genna Beth Davidson is a professional puppeteer, designer, fabricator, and all-around theatre artist. She graduated from the University of Connecticut's Puppet Arts program with her M.F.A. in 2022. Prior to graduate school, she lived in Washington, DC where she co-founded Wit's End Puppets and also designed puppets for the likes of Pointless Theatre and Brave Spirits Theatre. She loves designing and building large theatrical puppets, writing and creating her own puppetry work, and filing away puppet theatre history into an ever-growing memory bank of puppet trivia. Most recently she has been performing as a puppeteer in Barefoot Puppet's New Squid on the Block. She's been a member of NCPG for three years and counting. She serves as a member of the Eco-puppetry Committee and the Fettig Project. She is also a member of Puppeteers of America and UNIMA-USA.



Jill Kyle-Keith - Member at Large

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?



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 2024
PAGE to STAGE!



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