



One of the cottages housing BIMP – the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry – on UConn's Depot Campus. The Puppet Arts program is in a building near by.

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Puppeteers of America
**REGIONAL
FESTIVALS**

SOUTHEAST Asheville, North Carolina

PUPPETS on the RIDGE

by Lisa Sturz

First of all, I want to thank our incredible staff and all the Festival volunteers who pitched in to make our Southeast Regional Festival a true success. Susan VandeWeghe, our Business Manager extraordinaire devoted countless hours as did Lauren Hobbs, my trusted assistant. Libby Bierbaum and Vania Reckard, our registrars were amazing and Drew Allison and Bob Nathanson pulled together some outstanding workshops. Our hospitality Chair, Milky Way Bouree greeted people with warmth and kept our hospitality areas stocked with healthy refreshments and friendly conversation. Becky Becker pulled together the volunteers, John Scallion jumped in as a sound technician, and Winnie Barrett lead the Puppetry Store, despite recent surgery. Lyon Hill and Hobe Ford headed up our exhibitions and Hobe Ford darted around the Festival solving problems before I even knew about them. Pamela O'Connor headed a memorable banquet at the Biltmore Estate and Marston Blow led our outdoor Parade. We were also blessed with four fabulous student interns who kept the wheels running.

We had a strong public component to our Festival with eight public performances, two art exhibits, a parade through downtown, and a free outdoor public performance. Our public relations campaign started three years before the Festival and the media came through with articles in every major paper, including several covers and radio and television interviews. It would be difficult to find any one living in the region

sound effects!

Workshops abounded, but this writer spent every workshop period in Ghislane Mahler's three-day mask-making session and is unable to personally comment on the other fine workshops. But, according to the reports of various friends and acquaintances, the following were highly recommended: Anna Vargas- "Sculpting Puppet Heads in Wool", Sam Rugg's "Building Your Own Foot-switch Operated Cueing System", and Debora Costine's "Small Shows for Small Groups of Children". Debora's exquisite paper mache tree set/stage was part of the exhibit, and one afternoon your writer got a private mini-performance. Workshops we would have liked to look in on were "New Materials for Puppet & Mask Construction" by Joyce Ritz, "New Approaches in Shadow Puppetry" – a performance/workshop by Sarah Frechette – and "Live Noises for the Puppet Stage" by Peter Allen. (One can only imagine.) The workshops were longer than usual and designed to give the attendee an in-depth experience, and reports are that they did just that. There were twenty-four intriguing workshops, and we're sorry to be unable to review more than a handful.

One effect of this tightly-scheduled festival was that one sometimes had to miss one activity to attend another – or to take a necessary half-hour rest. Regrettably, I missed the wonderful films that were offered. My roommate, Jean Hasselschwert, highly recommended the "Rose Documentary", a film by Lindsey Briggs about the life and work of Margo and Rufus Rose. There were several other films of equal interest and quality.

During the Festival there was a special tribute to Frank Ballard, who headed the puppetry department at UConn for so many years. Classes continue on a small campus about a mile from the main one. There is

also a gallery that houses the Frank Ballard Museum of Puppets, which has been designated as a Connecticut state museum. We visited this museum on our way home after the festival, and Frank was there to greet us and talk about the collection. We particularly admired some rod puppets by Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin.

The Board of the Puppeteers of America met at this Regional, and one of its last duties was to elect Paul Mesner President as former President Jean Hasselschwert left office.

Festival Director Tom Fogarty is to be commended on a well-run festival. His Artistic Directors, Steve Abrams, Karen Larsen and Bart Roccoberon gathered a variety of excellent shows with something for everyone. The theme of the festival was "Bridges: Linking the Past to the Future", and the performances did just that.

The Workshop Directors were Bonny Hall and Jamie Keithline. There was a fine exhibit mounted by Deb Costine and a big Store organized by Alice Schaefer. Potpourri was run by Liz Joyce and the Fringe by Chris McLaughlin. Registrar Heather Balchunas kept things running smoothly along with Business Manager Donna Hurwit. These and all Fogarty's hard-working staff and volunteers are to be commended for producing a memorable festival. If I have any complaint about this exciting event, it was that the schedule was over-packed with exceptional activities and I had to make some hard choices or risk exhaustion!

Nancy Henk is a Detroit Puppeteer, editor of the Detroit Guild newsletter, and a frequent contributor to the Journal.

Photos by Paul Eide

Puppets on the Ridge



This photo montage created by Wayne Hampton, who lives in Pompano Beach, Florida

who didn't know something big was happening in the world of puppetry.

Headliners were Joe Cashore, Blair Thomas, and Phil Huber, all of whom performed for the public as well. Other featured performers included Wood and Strings, Schroeder Cherry, Columbia Marionette Theatre, Curious Moon, Barefoot Puppets, Tim Reed Marionettes, Crabgrass Puppet Theatre, and more.

Our elegant banquet was held at the Deerpark Inn on the Biltmore Estate and featured live entertainment from Eddie Swim-

mer – a champion Cherokee hoop dancer, Angela Beasley's Puppet People, several local dance companies, and a square dance in the adjacent barn

Thanks to the generous support of the Henson International Puppetry Festival and the North Carolina Arts Council, we were able to pay all our bills, balance our budget and return outstanding loans to the Puppeteers of America, the Southeast Region and the Asheville Puppetry Alliance.

Our biggest challenge involved trying to keep costs down and include high quality

productions. We opted not to use the traditional University setting to take advantage of the beautiful 500-seat state-of-the-art Diana Wortham Theatre and several other smaller venues in the downtown area. The technical expertise of these venues enhanced the professionalism that we felt was of primary importance. Our Technical Director, Fluffy, and her Staff were not only well prepared and capable, but they supported the performers with their kindness and deep appreciation of puppetry.

Hotel costs in close proximity to our

main venue are prohibitive in the Summer as Asheville is a huge tourist attraction. We hired the Asheville Historical Trolley to transport attendees from the less expensive (although not cheap) conference hotel where all the morning workshops and activities were housed. This also added cost and occasional confusion.

A key to the success of our Festival was getting an early start (four years), involving the community, and nurturing frequent communication with the Staff. The ability to email large groups of people at a time and to "cc" the Festival Directors with the small details was a BIG PIECE of the puzzle. We required quarterly and then monthly reports from the Staff as we got close. I circulated a newsletter amongst the greater Festival community every month for at least a year before the event and our website was continually updated by Vania.

While Susan and I have been pouring over evaluation forms and budget sheets getting ready for a final report, we are still basking from the glow and the frequent comments we receive from audience members and Festival attendees. Both Susan and myself have made many personal and professional sacrifices and put in thousands of unpaid hours to shape the Festival. It is no small task, but it is not a "thankless" job.

I have gained much in my life from attending previous Festivals and feel strongly that it was my turn to give back to the organization which has nurtured me.

Lisa Sturz was director of the Asheville Festival. She's been a puppeteer for thirty years working in theatre, film, television, and special events.

The PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGIONAL FESTIVAL

Puppetry Expo '04, was held August 6-9, on the campus of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

Their theme was "Puppetry: Culture, Community, Children at Heart."

Doug Stephens was the Festival Director, with Sherry Johns as Artistic Director, and Elizabeth Leaverton as Workshop Coordinator.

We hope to include a report on the festival in the next issue.



Puppeteers of America REGIONAL FESTIVALS

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST Phoenix, Arizona

PUPPETS FOR EVERYONE

by Greg Williams

An eclectic mix of performers brought the theme "Puppets for Everyone" onstage. The shows ranged from young audiences to mature with nearly every aspect of performance puppetry represented. To be sure, we received a complaint or two about language and content, but that made our point clearer, Puppets are for

My job as artistic director only required that I book top talent and let them shine. For our afternoons, Icarus Puppets impressed with *The Crane Daughter*. Peter and Debbie Allen provided their silly-on-the-surface yet substantial-in-craft *Pied Piper*. Huang Yang



Huang Yang

amazed with his dexterity and the character of his hand puppets. Randal Metz and Rhonda Godwin performed a charming *Nutcracker*. Buddy Big Mountain entertained at our closing Sunday morning show.

Consummate professionals took the stage for all the evenings. Maria Bodmann opened with her best performance yet of *Alice in the Shadows*. Her voice range was incredible and her shadow work filmic. She was rock solid as was the band backing her. Ventriloquist Bob Abdou is a very funny man. His *Woowoo the Bunny* routine is classic comedy. The Syrotiaks received a well-deserved standing ovation for their performance. (I loved that the festival brought David Syrotiak and Phillip Huber together socially for the first time.) Blair Thomas is nothing short of sensational. Tucson Puppet Works led our Friday Puppet Insomniacs. A special thank you to Hortense the Sea Bat for hosting Insomniacs. He is now my favorite sea bat.

For our party at the Great Arizona Puppet Theater, Nick Barone amused with *T-Rex Thunderlizard's Wild West Revue*. The



Buddy Big Mountain



Nick Barone