



The Phoenix Garden State Puppetry Guild Newsletter Winter 2014

January 3, 2014

Dear Members,

Happy New Year and Happy Snow Day! Here's to a productive and prosperous and healthy year to come, with lots of communion with your puppetry peers. Enjoy a look back over our Fall season in this current newsletter. Garden State Puppetry Guild is the sum of its members' efforts, and we thrive in proportion to your participation. We especially welcome reviews and anecdotes for *The Phoenix*!

We have great programs planned for the winter-spring season, starting with our Happy 2014! **Sunday, January 26** at **2pm** there will be a **party** at my house, **489 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck NJ 07666**. We follow tradition and ask for your best pot luck goodies; I will supply beverages and a glass of bubbly! Give me a buzz at 201-692-1289 if you have any questions. *Please bring your most interesting puppet creation or acquisition from this past year for our Show and Tell*. For entertainment we have a dress rehearsal of Steve Swank's rod puppet pantomime piece, *Manhatpole*.

Please mark your calendars for our workshop meeting **February 16** in Chatham. Builder Brian Carson will give us hands-on experience and advice mastering the mysteries of faux fur!

I look forward to seeing you all on January 26th.

Best regards,
Diane Koszarski, President and Co-Editor, *The Phoenix*
Garden State Puppetry Guild





Review

THE REPUBLIC, OR MY DINNER WITH SOCRATES

Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theater

Reviewed by Lois Raff Corwin

I was a NYC puppet show junky on December 15. First I went to LaMaMa where I saw "The Republic, Or, My Dinner with Socrates." This puppet show was written and directed by Vit Horejs of the Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theatre. Mr. Horejs based his play on the dialogues of Plato. He did a masterful job of scripting the most commonly known tools of the Socratic method of teaching: A) Feigning ignorance to elicit information, B) Socratic irony, and C) The posing of questions to stimulate fundamental insights



Key among the characters in the show are the shrewish wife of Socrates, Xantippe, nagging and pushing forward her ideas of justice, especially for women. Socrates' students' questioning reality is shown beautifully through the parable of the cave. In this parable Socrates proposes a scenario where some people are raised in a cave, chained there so that all they know and see is within those parameters.

By some means a candle casts a shadow on the wall of the cave and shadows of people are seen by the prisoners in the cave. This is a superb opportunity for, what else but a shadow show. Then the philosophic question becomes, "How are people to know what is real and what is a shadow?" The other characters in the play are the accusers of Socrates who convict him of corrupting the youth in Athens. The jury eventually gives Socrates the well-known hemlock drink and he does not resist.

The marionettes are constructed in the Czech style and puppeteers are in full view walking them through the play. The great draw of this play, however, was the script. The dialogues of Socrates with his students begins with a simple question, such as "Should the poor man be equal to a rich man?" The script then draws out the Socratic dialogue ad absurdum with the next and still further issues that the question begs: "If poor men are equal, then women should also be equal, etc."

The reasoning leads to how wars begin and mayhem continues if one follows the logic. This is all in the spirit of being fair, reasonable, and logical! All in all it is a grand way to see the most complicated philosophy presented on a simple level.





Review

PIGEONING

by Robin Frohardt

Reviewed by Lois Raff Corwin



My second stop that day was the marvelous performance of "The Pigeoning." This show was held at HERE, Basil Twist's theater, including experimental programs. The show was created by Robin Frohardt and puppets and props were created by her and Jesse "Roadkill" Wilson. This was a total theater experience! When the audience was admitted to the theater, each seat had a training and orientation manual on it, much the same as any office would print to introduce new employees to the do's and don'ts of the agency.

The first scene was a video of a lovely, chatty woman telling you how you should dress, act and keep your office clean and do your work. Then we see the obsessive, compulsive, nerdy bunraku style puppet straightening his desk. His large, blank eyes, framed in no-nonsense glasses and his expressionless face tell the story of a man dreading disorder or untidy circumstances.

The action continues on a park bench where he unwraps his sandwich. Then, the intruders come....the pigeons. They are, of course, interested in his sandwich. Very subtly and with the warmest humor, we begin to see signs that these pigeons are up to something. What would you think of a pigeon outside your office window tapping Morris Code on the phone pole wires? The theme is carried out to the unexpected ending of the world!

I want to praise the expressive manipulation of the main character by these artists. The pauses and poignant looks of the puppet were timed to perfection by three manipulators. I was totally drawn in to the puppet's fears and fastidiousness and, for a while, the subtle similarity to Hitchcock's "The Birds." This was one of the best shows I have seen for many years. I particularly loved it for its excellent puppet manipulation, seamless action, and a dry humor you will never forget.





SLEEPING BEAUTY

Carlos Colla & Sons Marionette Company

Reviewed by Diane Koszarski

The famous fairy tale is beautifully, lavishly mounted by this traditional marionette troupe from Milan, Italy. The marionettes, dozens and dozens of characters, are cleverly articulated, and clothed in sumptuous costumes: the rich array of fabric evident even to the back rows.

Every other scene involved numerous characters, each with unique movements. And yet there was a stateliness to the drama that disappointed. For most of the time, the puppets move like small human actors, with all the limits of gravity and scale that constrains a human player. Many of the key moments of fairy magic take place off stage! With a pre-recorded English narration that is well voiced, and the sweeping strains of Tchaikovsky's score, the show is beautiful, but rather boring.



All is redeemed, however, in the celebratory parade at the very end, when a host of storybook favorites, Puss in Boots, Cinderella, Three Little Pigs, The Wolf and many more gambol and prance across the stage in the most witty and lively turns.

From this, and an after-show demonstration of their Rigoletto puppet, we see that the Colla crew is capable of a much more animated marionette drama. They have chosen not to apply that sensibility to Sleeping Beauty, which wreathes it in tradition, old fashioned, solid, a voice of past practice.



**“The Shatterer,”
an installation by
Peter Shulman at
Queens Museum,
December 2013**



Review

reviewed by
Diane Koszarski

Peter Shulman, founder and director of Bread and Puppet Theater, has created an installation, on view until March 2014, for the re-opening of Queens Museum that displays the full force of his prophetic vision, and underlines the edgy but populist ethos of this outer borough art museum.

Shulman celebrates the Boot-Flag Army, an uprising of Silesian peasants during the Hundred Years War of the 16th century. Shulman lived through similar brutalities during the Nazi occupation of Silesia, his homeland, as a child. His peasant ancestors had a brief success against their oppressors.

Striking imagist word poems, from the movement’s leaders, that celebrate sun and peace and harvest and song, gleam from the walls, which are covered in a papier-mâché swirl of grey human forms, souls struggling in the purgatory of materialism. A ghostly white reindeer, an angel of nature, is the only hint as to some kind of salvation.

A second room is arranged as an ironical medieval library with Shulman’s small pamphlets advocating the simple life chained to reading desks, while dubious figures of reverence, saints of acquisition, temporizing, artificiality are arrayed above.

Although the exhibit is only tangentially about puppetry, it makes a very clear statement of the otherworldly principles that have lain at the core of Bread and Puppet Theater for decades.





GSPG Minutes

September 15, 2013

The GSPG met at Chatham Library. In attendance were Diane and Richard, Steve Swank, Lois Corwin and no one else!

The meeting centered on the student film Steve Swank participated in this summer, Ed Hellman's *Retire for the Evening*, his SVA graduation project. Steve's role as the aged puppeteer called for him to die, and have his sock puppet drag him across the floor. Other actors portray the puppeteer as a young boy, and as grown man, a famous performer. An actress portrayed the puppeteer's ventriloquist mother. Charlie Kanev, a student of Leah Klingman, designed and built the sock puppet protagonist. The film was made on a \$5,000 budget, about half of what the filmmaker estimated necessary. Shooting took place in Brooklyn, using a professional crew brought in from Baltimore!

After the screening, we enjoyed discussing the philosophical threads of the story, as well as Steve's experiences filming, and snacked on sugar cookies fashioned in the shape of the very sock puppet who stars in *Retire for the Evening*. Steve transmitted a snap of the cookie to Charlie, who remembered it when we met him a few days later at PGOGNY.

As so few members were present, we delayed voting of the current slate of officers.

After watching a second DVD, a record of Steve's pantomime puppet show *Manhatpole*, he, Lois and Diane discussed reviving it to audition for Puppet Homecoming II.

We adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Our next meeting will be October 20, 2013. Bob Culek will present his award winning piece, *Micropuppetology*.

Respectfully submitted,
Lois Corwin, recording secretary

*Sock Puppet
Cookie*



*echos Charlie
Kanev's design*





GSPG Minutes

October 10, 2013

Members present: Diane Koszarski, Penny Rapicano, Mickey Talon, T.S. Nagarajan, Bob Culek, Richard Koszarski, Jennifer Bryson

Circle Time

Diane is preparing a blue jay puppet to add a bit of drama to *Uncle Hoppy*, her version of "The Grasshopper and the Ant." Steve Swank helped her rig flapping wings for one form of the character.

Penny is using faceless rod puppets for an LGBT consciousness raising workshop; also developing a family story featuring talking laundry. Raj is using software like WII to create digital shadow puppets to dramatize his tellings of folk tales. Mickey is building a combination marionette-rod puppet, inspired by ones used by Los Tinterios, to make a fox and a rat for a skit he wants to debut at 2015 Potpourri. New member Jennifer Bryson of Princeton NJ uses puppetry with Flying Fox Puppet Theater to involve high school puppetry interns in environmental learning projects.

Business

Day of Puppetry. Diane, after discussions with Teaneck Public Library, sketched out a possible Day of Puppetry event for May 4, 2014. The Guild needs to commit by Monday, October 11 to hold the date. Will enough members participate so we can offer one workshop, followed by a puppet variety show, between 1 and 4 PM that Sunday? Diane, Lois, and Marshal offered to perform via email, Penny will take part if possible, Bob Culek offered tech support, Mickey offered a shadow puppet show and tell. We agreed, therefore, to produce Day of Puppetry in Teaneck this year. Best of all, this venue will pay our Guild a \$200 honorarium.

Puppet Homecoming II. Penny reminded us that the date chosen is first weekend after Labor Day, at the previous location, Ramapo for Children near Rhinebeck, NY. She has resigned as co-artistic director with Artie Poore.

Newsletter

Steven Hollow no longer has time to do the technical assembly. Jennifer Bryson volunteered to take over this job.





Program

Bob Culek introduced “**Micropuppetology**,” his entry in Kate Brehn’s Puppet Fake Science Fair event last year. His animated electron microscope won second prize! We all took turns viewing the antics of fat and long microbes (chenille rod puppets manipulated by Bob) drifting and combining in microscopic space. What an array of **imaginons, fuzzons, shadowites, and magicules!** Bob’s design, a “microscope” of PVC pipe, really gave a sense of peering at a magnified image, through the dark space and twinkly lights he built beneath the “microscope slide” plane. When seen through the viewing tube, it definitely felt like a high-powered microscope, as we watched “highly elusive particles that induce a sense of wonder in the observer,” to quote from Bob’s terminology hand-out. Very cool!

*What’s in that **black box**?!?*

GSPG Members study the antics of micropuppets under Bob’s PVC-pipe-and-cardboard electron ‘scope’.



Next Meeting

November 17, 2013, 2-4 at Chatham Public Library.

Paperclay Workshop. Join Diane in experiencing a useful puppet building substance, paperclay. We will make a small puppet head, a self-portrait (or avatar), while she shares what she learned from Sam Koji Hale’s workshop on this material at this year’s Puppet Festival (r)Evolution. Register for this program by Nov 15, 2013 so she can prepare materials.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Koszarski
Recording Secretary pro tem





GSPG Minutes

November 17, 2013



Above: Penny, Michael and Lois with finished paperclay heads

Below: Diane with Puppet Festival (r)Evolution sculpt and today's head



The meeting was attended by Penny, Diane, Lois and Michael T.

Due to the low attendance we dispensed with business and began with the workshop that Diane had carefully prepared for us all on working with paper clay.

Diane learned the technique from Sam Koji Hale's workshop on this material, which she attended at Puppet Festival (r)Evolution.

We all received a styrofoam "egg" with modge-podge coating over the surface of the egg. The eggs were set up on necks and attached to a base so that we could begin right away sculpting with the paper clay.

As we sculpted, we discussed what was on our minds, and the number one topic was low attendance at our meetings. It was brought out that many other clubs are having a similar difficulty. Our president doesn't want to have to pressure people constantly to come. We have lost many of our strong members for reasons not having to do with our guild. These members have personal reasons that they cannot attend as they used to. Michael was designated as the person who will find any POA members living in NJ so that we could reach out to them.

Diane suggested that we have 4 meetings per year and that members be required to RSVP so that we don't hold a meeting with 2 or 3 people present. Michael also thought that there might be clowns and magicians who would be interested in GSPG and that they might find it entertaining to put a puppet in their acts.





GSPG Minutes November 17, 2013 continued

It was decided that there will be no December meeting. The January meeting is set to be held at Lois' house. [now relocated to Diane's home]. Fake fur workshop by Brian Carson is scheduled for February and the meeting after that will deal with the NDOP format and arrangements.

National Day of Puppetry this year will be held at the Teaneck, NJ Public Library on May 4.

We took some lovely pictures of all 4 of us and our paper clay sculptures and closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Lois Raff Corwin, Recording Secretary
raff170@aol.com

A note of interest is that a couple of days after our meeting I attended the PGOGNY meeting at Westbeth in NYC. Artie Poore attended that meeting as well as Honey Goodenough.

The Homecoming II plans were discussed and Artie mentioned that he hoped to schedule both a potpourri and a more formal late night salon. One evening will showcase more serious performances and the other more impromptu material. He announced that GSPG will be responsible for the puppetry exhibit as we did before.

Money is being collected for a scholarship to pay for Bernice and her helper and Honey was selling buttons and t-shirts to support that effort.





*Creatures
Inspired
puppet
builder
Brian
Carson.*



**Faux Fur Meister
Brian Carson,
coming
February 16**

NEXT UP

Sunday, January 26, 2-4pm

GSPG party!

489 Sagamore Ave, Teaneck NJ 07666

February 16, 2-4pm

GSPG Faux Fur Workshop with Brian Carson
Chatham Public Library, NJ

March 1

Deadline for performance and workshop
applications for the Regional Festival
Puppet Homecoming 2014
www.puppethomecoming.org

May 4

GSPG's NJ celebration of National Day of
Puppetry, Teaneck Public Library, NJ

September 5-7

Puppet Homecoming, Rhinebeck, NY

Garden State Puppetry Guild Officers

Diane Koszarski, President, Program Chair, and Newsletter Co-Editor

Lois Corwin, Vice-President and Recording Secretary

Steven Hollow, Treasurer

Penny Rapicano, Membership and Corresponding Secretary

Jennifer Bryson, Newsletter Co-Editor

GSPG Winter 2014

11

*Snowflakes, Puppets, and Puppeteers --
each one as unique as the next!*

