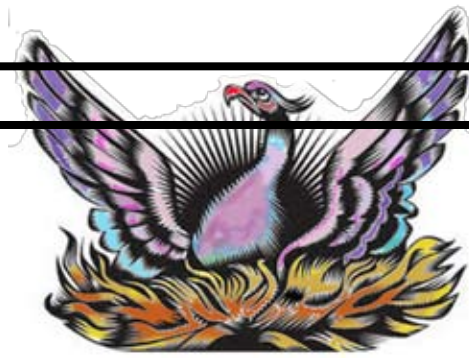


THE



PHOENIX

GSPG Dec16 2012 minutes

The GSPG meeting on 12/16/12 in the Chatham Public library was attended by Lois, Penny, Diane, Bob and Richard. The meeting opened with a discussion of the trip to Morris Museum for our last meeting in November. Generally, all in attendance had picked favorite automatons and were astounded by the intricacies of the workings of them and the music we heard from the large automatons in the exhibit. We agreed to send a heartfelt thank you note to our hosts.

Diane announced that NDOP will be held in 2013 in our usual 4-H location as arranged by Betty. We all felt that for 2014 we should try to find a new location because this location seems to be one where our attendance and the interest of local people has dwindled. Penny agreed to look into Old Bridge Library.

There was a quorum for voting and the slate proposed in Sept. 2013 was unanimously passed: Diane for President, Lois for Vice President and Recording Secretary, Steven for Treasurer, and Penny for Corresponding Secretary. Diane and Steven are Newsletter Editors.

Diane is hoping to get in touch with Carol's friend Anne Marie Keevins at Puppet Heap so that we might arrange a tour of their workshop for our Spring meeting. Diane also announced that Steve Widerman is coming to our February 17, 2013 meeting to address some of our questions regarding puppet making. All members who previously discussed puppet making issues should write them down and any new issues that members think of should be put in writing and conveyed to Diane. Diane will ask Steve to be prepared to teach methods that address these problems. For the January 20, 2013 meeting we will have an "info-tech book swap" meeting. Members should bring relevant puppetry books to the meeting so that others can look over the books available that would be useful to them. Diane also

announced the POA festival in August 2013 will be at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. There are opportunities to apply for scholarships for this festival and also Bernice Silvers, who will be 99, is looking for helpers to assist her at this festival. It was announced that Bernice Silvers recently broke her hip and is recovering in a rehabilitation center in NYC. Lois sent a get well card to her and signed it from the GSPG. We circulated a card to sign for Mickey Talon who has also been ill.

We all agreed to be thinking of a theme for NDOP as we are on a quest to find one. Diane suggested that we could think of getting together a shadow show as a group by March 17 to present at NDOP. We also need workshop ideas and people willing to do a workshop for NDOP.

We closed the meeting with a wonderful 16mm film shown to us by Richard. The film was made in the 1940's of a celebrated "punchman", George Prentice. The audience of little children in the film sat in rapt attention as Santa Claus introduced the puppet show. This Punch and Judy show was done in rapid sequences as the Mr. Punch quickly smacked Judy, the dog, an alligator, a neighbor, a skunk and more. Then the members sat and discussed the puppeteer's expertly delivered hand movements, the non-acceptance of the show today as opposed to 1940's, the wonderful image of the skunk spraying... all while we munched on muffins and cookies and sipped apple cider. Thank you, Richard, for this wonderful film. [Others who would like to see this performance can find it on YouTube with the keywords "Santa Claus' Punch and Judy (1948)"]

Lois Corwin, Recording Secretary

Visit us on the web at:
www.gardenstatepuppetryguild.com

GSPG Minutes for the Meeting Held November 18, 2012

The Garden State Puppetry Guild met in the lovely accommodations given to us by the Morris Museum on Nov. 18, 2012. The members present for this field trip meeting were: Carol, Michael, Robert, Lois, Diane and Richard. We did not have enough officers present for the election of 2012 officers. Those present agreed to continue as we are until we have a quorum at the next meeting. Members attending were reimbursed 50% of the price of admission to the Museum, an outlay of \$26.50. Diane personally covered those expenses. In the absence of the treasurer, she will request reimbursement from Steven at later date.

Members were concerned upon hearing the report that Mickey Talon has not been well and we all agreed to sign a card during the next meeting to send him. The treasurer and membership secretary were not available for their usual reports. Carol D'Agostino told the members that she had phoned Puppet Heap to ask if GSPG could have a tour of their workshop. She found that they were busy making a film currently but would be free in May. It is possible that Puppet Heap could give us a tour on a week day in May. Carol's contact is Jean Marie Keevins and she advised that if anyone has questions that Jean Marie is the one to call. Lois announced that PGOGNY is having a Puppet Heap presentation by Paul Andrejco of Puppet Heap on November 29 at WestBeth in NYC. She invited other members to car pool with her if they wanted to see this presentation.

Diane announced that Betty has gotten GSPG a date of April 20 for NDOP at the Ted Blum 4-H Center. The display case that we usually use, however, is already going to be occupied during that time. December 18 is the date for our Holiday Party: Share pot luck samples from your holiday traditions, and help create a shadow puppet play around the verses of "Jingle Bells" at the Chatham Library.

Diane asked for suggestion for future programs. She reminded members that we have agreed to reimburse members of the Guild or outsiders who are P of A members, \$75.00 and other puppeteers \$50.00 for a professional workshop offering.

In a discussion that followed regarding what

workshops could be arranged, many productive ideas were suggested. 1. We should contact Art Grueneberger, the new POA liaison who offered to help guilds out. He asks what we want from our P of A connection. 2. Michael wanted to know who could help him build or build for him, a marionette control for two puppets together. Lois suggested that we ask Steve Widerman to show us. 3. We could show our DVD's to each other using the media room or equipment of the library. 4. Michael could tell us about the Vent conventions he has attended in Ft. Mitchell, KY at Vent Haven. 5. Have a "puppet clinic" for any member who has a puppet problem and the rest of the members try to help find solutions; we might invite an expert technician for such a clinic. 6. Carol could show us how to successfully make a glove puppet. She could also teach how to make a scarf puppet after the style of Albert Roser or a puppet with nerf ball head as created by Eric Bass. 7. Have a meeting where we all bring our puppet books so that others can have a preview and decide if they want to buy any one of the books. 8. Michael is acquainted with ventriloquist Jeff Dunham, and will ask if we can get together when Dunham is in the area.

Carol showed us a box of beautiful marionettes that had been used in the Morris Museum program in the Bickford Theater.[by The Marionette Theater Players?]. The puppets included a King, Sorcerer, Tinny Tinsel, Alice, Baba Yaga and Vasa Lisa, all carefully stored in plastic wrap.

The meeting adjourned and our wonderful hosts, Jere Ryder, Curator, and Lewis Perlmutter, Theatre Technical Director, showed us around the Museum. We attended Jere's mid-afternoon demonstration of instruments and figures for the public, and then got a special tour of the basement storage area for the Automations collected by Murtoth D. Guinness, and of "Gepetto's Workshop," where Jere keeps the collection in mint condition.

Lois Corwin, Recording Secretary.
Lois Raff Corwin
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A HOLIDAY ADVENTURE

I decided to see the latest version of Macy's holiday season marionette show after chatting with Honey Goodenough and Brian Carson at the November meeting of the Puppetry Guild of Greater New York. Honey is one of six marionette artists working on the new show, "Yes, Virginia, The Musical," and Brian, puppeteer and builder (Creatures Inspired@gmail.com), had an Elf gig at Macy's Santaland.

So, off to the Big Apple with a pal. We buy \$5 tickets for the 2:15 PM show from Holiday Train conductors, shop and snack for a while and then line up to get a good spot. What hardy parents in the city, to brave these long lines with children in tow, for a puppet show and perhaps later, a photo op with Santa! We senior types gladly claim bleacher seats in the back of a darkened room, while families spread out on the carpet to be ten feet closer to the stage.

A Train conductor warms up the audience, while the Proscenium Facade (designed by Macy's Parade Studio) glows behind her. A classic curved red awning tops a window through which we see Virginia's famous note to the New York Sun editor, asking if there really is a Santa Claus. Our attention is drawn to a trio of pigeons perched on the awning, who peck and flap a bit. This is an almost subliminal hint to the audience, who need to tune their eyes for relatively subtle visual touches of whimsy and comic relief. Two 19th century limestone windows flank the central stage. From these side balconies, rod puppets of Miriam the Librarian (a look-alike--designed by Kevin Fritsch and Nick Coppola--of Whoopi Goldberg, who voices the narration) and editor Frank Church (whose signature song, "Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa" is voiced by Mathew Broderick) interact with the one or two marionettes playing center stage. The curtain rises, and we see a backdrop representing a wintry Herald Square of the 1890's. Here Virginia and her young sidekick Ollie meet Scraggly Santa, a cheerful bell-ringer who encourages optimism, and Charlotte, a snarky classmate bent on cynical denial of "baby

stuff" like Santa Claus.

For a trained eye, there are skillful marionette tricks to appreciate: Charlotte's cat, perched on her shoulders, twitches with disdain; Virginia flips open her handmade pop-up book with one hand; pigeons grab a tidbit from Scraggly



Santa's hand; colorful paper chains magically rise to decorate the Square for a happy ending. Director Nicholas Coppola has clearly worked carefully to translate the full scale musical of "Yes Virginia" created by William Schermerhorn and Wesley Whately into a piece featuring seven marionettes. Inevitably, the show is

mostly dialogue, with brief musical solos. Each character appearance is aptly characterized by the marionette work. The figures are handsomely designed with a new look, a bit older in appearance than the roly-poly animation types. I missed some of the spectacle possible in the stage musical; it would have been fun to see a bolder interpretation of the "Santa by the Book" number, perhaps with large rod puppets, pop ups or silhouettes for more color. The puppet crew this year consists of James Woytal, Janine Schiller, Mike Gilbert, Liam Huntley,



Ronny Wasserstrom and Honey Goodenough, in teams of three per show. Honey explained later that with eleven shows a day, they have enjoyed tweaking every move for better gestures, smooth transitions and careful synching with the sound track, and it shows in their performances. I suspect the three-person crew must limit the amount of dazzle that can be executed. But the grand finale dance did have a passel of marionettes on stage!

The story itself, which affirms the community spirit

Continued From Page 3

of Santa-ness over a magical vision of flying reindeer, holds the plot to a snowy urban streetscape rather than Nutcracker-like fantasy, and so constrains much of a marionette's special

potential. I was curious, indeed, to see how the drama would affirm Virginia's belief without undercutting the realist terms of the tale. At the end, a "jolly gentleman" marionette, clad in a scarlet frockcoat, chartreuse vest, and white beard, tips his red top hat to Virginia, who greets him, "Hello, Santa!"

He does not reply, but that does not prevent her from wishing everyone else a merry Christmas: a very credible solution. And it was most heartening to see how attentive and responsive the children were to a show without blasting sound and videogame pyrotechnics. Puppet power!

After the show I had a chance to greet to the director himself, Nick Coppola. He graciously called on Honey Goodenough to guide us backstage. After I had doffed my winter duds, lest they get caught on some necessary bracket, Honey led me up to the white painted bridge, and let me try some movements with the Virginia marionette, which she operates in the show. So hard to articulate the smooth moves we had just witnessed! She also pointed out the context of this marionette show as the latest version of a much larger investment by Macy's Department Store. As part of an advertising/entertainment campaign, the story of Virginia Hanlon, once a quirky part of New York City folklore, has now, with Macy's sponsorship, become an award-winning animated movie, a children's storybook, characters in the Thanksgiving Day parade, a musical designed for grade school production (with \$100,000 in production grants from the store!) and a new 2012 puppet show, with a professional sound track using Broadway talent to sing Emmy-nominated



songs! One senses the spirit of Tony Sarg still present in Macy's boardroom.

As we left the theater, Honey advised us to ask for Brian by his Elf name, Blip, and we trekked down to Santaland, on the off-chance of being able to say hello. A line of parents and tots stretched way round the corner, but mentioning Blip's name worked a charm; the lady in charge of entry (who sported a walkie-talkie kit worthy of the Secret Service) very discretely let us cut in front of all the Santa hopefuls. Blip amused us with his "weather elf" observations, we had a chance to greet St. Nick in his living room, and have a digital snapshot made well worth the considerable pennies it cost. All power to puppet connections!

Being a reporter for The Phoenix most certainly takes you on wonderful adventures.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Hoping for a healthy, prosperous and creative 2013 for all members of our terrific Guild. If we haven't seen you in a while, we'd love to get re-acquainted at our next meeting. Do send us your news via e-mail – we are your special puppet-centered community, enjoy us, it, them!

Diane Koszarski, President

2013 PROGRAMS

Sunday, February 17 PUPPET CLINIC

Guest speaker Steve Widerman, director of The Puppet Company, out of Huntington, NY, a maestro of marionette construction and performance, will be available to answer questions and suggest solutions on all things marionette.

Sunday, March 17 NDOP PREP SESSION

Erin Go Bragh! & join us to prepare workshop kits, collaborate on a short performance piece, or whatever is needed to polish up a perfect National Day of Puppetry. There will be soda bread!

National Day of Puppetry

Saturday, April 20

10:00 am to 4 PM

Ted Blum 4-H Center

Bridgewater, New Jersey

Co-chairs Penny Rapicano and Betty Sommerville are looking for workshop presenters, performers and helpers for NDOP. Get in touch! Our April Guild meeting will follow the performances.

The Old Man and the Old Moon

This November I was lucky enough to get a seat for the sold out performance of PigPen Theater Company's presentation of "The Old Man and the Old Moon." It was playing in the small auditorium of the Gym At Judson Memorial Church on Thompson St. in NYC. Upon entering the theater, all 7 cast members, handsome young men and recent graduates of Carnegie Mellon, were already playing their instruments on stage (banjo, guitar, violin, accordion, and various percussion instruments like small drums, blocks and tambourine). They greeted us as we got seated, already creating a warm atmosphere.

The play about The Old Man and the Old Moon was created by them as well as the Irish-like folk songs that are so charming to go with the story. Apparently all the players worked on weekends and vacation breaks to create this piece and others while they were in school together. The result is fantastic, engaging in every way, and moving.

The story told is that an Old Man has to refill the moon every month because it has a leak. The leak, of course, causes the moon to shrink to half, quarter, crescent and then disappears. Using simple sheets (yes, like those on your bed), the group strings up a shadow screen to show the silhouette of the old man climbing his crooked ladder to the moon and emptying his bucket into the moon to illuminate it. Did I mention that the group accompanies their actions with most evocative, lilting and original Irish folk songs?

Then the Old Woman, wife of the Old Man, wonders why they live where they do and how did all this ritual come about? She has the desire to go across the sea and explore their place of origin, where they met. The Old Man refuses to go with her because he feels he cannot desert his duty of attending to the moon. He wakes up the next morning to find that his wife is gone. The Old Man decides it is more important to be with his wife, and the adventures begin.

Seamlessly, different episodes of the journey are knitted together in a tapestry with exquisite shadow puppets and also the players acting in hilarious scenes depicting the chase. The actors play the parts of the Old Man (and at times the Old Woman) who follows his wife in a boat manned by sailors who believe him to be a long lost naval hero. He is bound to be discovered, and he is, but although he is cast off, his adventures continue on the high seas and include the companionship of a wonderful life-size dog puppet made very simply with a plastic bottle and the strands of a mop for long, straggly hair. The Old Man and the dog sat on the floor and the rest of the cast curled a sheet under and around them in a boat shape and rocked them quite convincingly like the waves. But the world is growing dark without the Old Man to fill up the moon, and sailors particularly fear this darkness. They question, "Is it never ending?" Very unusual lighting effects propelled the story forward such as an astounding effect produced by two players who were silhouetted behind the shadow "sheet", and a blazing opening appeared around each one's mouth and their mouths began speaking.

The Old Man and Old Woman eventually reunite and their tenderness and caring for each other is beautifully rendered.

You can google them at www.PigPenTheater.com and see some shorts from their works and music. Some of the same beautiful techniques are used in their piece called "Bremen." I believe we will be seeing more marvelous works from this young and vibrant group. They have had many performances of other shows before this show at LaMama, Boston's Calderwood Pavilion, ARS Nova, Barrow St. Playhouse, and SoHo Playhouse to name a few. My highest recommendation goes to this group for their beautiful combination of media, acting, song and puppets, all done, it appears with minimum cost but a lot of talent.

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GSPG November Program

Special Tour of the Guinness Collection of Musical Instruments and Automata, Morris Museum.

After our Guild meeting, we gathered with members of the public at 2:00 PM for a demonstrations and a brief history of automated music machines given by curator Jere Ryder. He also demonstrated the automation of a player doll with elements exposed for a clear view: the figure waves its hand, turns its head and “conducts” music. There followed animations of the gorgeous automata on display in the public collection: a magician who loses his head, then finds it under a box, a chef who drinks wine and reveals the kitty-cat in his saucepan, very elegant French figures. My eye was also caught by the Japanese maiden who twirls her parasol, and the young girl raising her Polichinelle marionette. A nearby video documents the movements of the many automata on exhibit.

After a few minutes to enjoy the music of impressively large calliopes on the main floor, Jere took us downstairs to the display storage, and let us see hundreds more automata up close and personal, operating each one as we chose: three cats playing cards, tails twitching; a spooky witch that Tim Burton might have designed, who rocked in her chair while

bulging her eyeballs and stirring a skull in the pot on her lap! Others included a beautiful Caribbean fruit peddler whose three tulips each reveal a secret, and an exquisite Harlequin twirling a ball on his wand. The movie Hugo stimulated a lot of interest in the collection: Jere knew the history of the two different historic automata, one of which is in the Guinness Collection, that were blended to make the Hugo figure.

Last but not least, we had a view of his workplace, “Gepetto’s Workshop,” awesomely neat, and full of unusual supplies, eg. Tortoise shell polish. On his repair bench was a music box from the 1870’s with transcriptions of 19th century Chinese melodies, as noted by commercial travellers. A musicologist had just been to examine it, believing these tunes to be the inspiration for Puccini’s famous aria Un Bel Di in Madam Butterfly. History mysteries solved!

Our group browsed through the folk art and natural history collection, and enjoyed a great cup of coffee in the lobby before departing, well pleased and well informed about the world of 19th century amusement from which our own special craft has sprung. Much appreciation to Lewis Perlmutter and Jere Ryder for sharing their Morris Museum with us so generously.

Diane Koszarski



We gather in “Gepetto’s Workshop.” L - R, Bob Culek, Michael Terletsky, Jere Ryder, Lois Corwin, Carole D’Agostino, Diane and Richard Koszarski



Spooky witch in downstairs storage

Puppet Homecoming Photos



Puppets designed by Penny Rapicano for her show "The Bee and the Wasp"



Lois Corwin with her characters from "Outside the Circle of Compassion."



Marionettes by Jean Rapicano



GSPG slapstick: "That's the way to do it!"



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