



# Puppetry Guild of Pittsburgh

## NEWSLETTER



The Super Smash Opera Crew

### NEXT MEETING

Sunday, November 13

2:00 to 4:00 pm

Braddock Library

419 Library St.

Braddock, PA 15104

At our meeting we will have the Super Smash Opera creature crafters Liz Rishel, Marj Rishel, and Bonnie Bogovich (Guild Member) showing many of the props, puppets, and costumes from their show and explaining how they were created.



Mike Marra, Darlene Fedele Thompson, and Yulia Gray in "Baby Bird and Bee."

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings, puppeteers and friends!

Hard to believe it's been just over a year since seven of us first met in Bob Dayton's church for an organizational meeting to make the Puppetry Guild of Pittsburgh a reality! Now we have over 20 dues-paying members, and we're getting ready to begin our second year as an official arts business and arm of the Puppeteers of America.

Several of our members are actively performing in the Pittsburgh area, but our biggest achievement to date has to be the Pierogi Power Puppet Slam at the Union Project last August. The show, which consisted of 12 puppet acts ranging from toy theatre to marionettes to huge dancing puppets, was a great success. We had a terrific turnout from the community, got some good press, took in some money, and sold a lot of pierogis! After the success of this event, the puppet slam committee hopes to make it an annual puppet bash! The Pittsburgh community definitely knows we're around, and we're looking forward to bigger and better things in 2017.

If you're already a Guild member, be sure to attend our November meeting. If you're not, you're still welcome to show up, share ideas, and have some puppet fun.

Keep Your Hands Up,

Darlene Fedele Thompson

### MEMBER NEWS

#### From Felicia Cooper

Felicia Cooper recently performed her show *Prometheus Bound* at the Irma Freeman Center for Imagination. It got a great review from Theater in the Round. Read it here: <http://www.pghintheround.com/prometheus-bound-a-puppet-tragedy/>

She will be performing at *Girl Who Swallowed the Sun* at Wood's Run Library on November 15th at 6pm.

# I BOMBED

By Scott KuechenmeisterHall

I got a text from a friend back in August asking if I would do a puppet show for Unity in the Community. It's a two day event put on by the churches in Etna. There's a main stage where preachers speak and bands perform. They usually try to bring in a big name evangelist. My friend is a Lutheran pastor as am I, and this is not the brand of Christianity we are used to, but he's trying to have a presence in the community. I agreed to help him out. I was scheduled to perform on Saturday, October 8, in the afternoon. I told him that my show was enjoyed by adults and children alike. I would need an electrical outlet.

He didn't get back to me with any other details, but I showed up at the appointed time and place. It was outdoors at the ball field in Etna. My assumption had been that I would perform on (or in front of) the main stage. When he greeted me at the ball field, however, I was led to the children's area between the bouncy house and football throw. The arts and craft table was about 15 feet away and the main stage was about thirty feet away. These activities were not going to stop while I was performing.

I started my show with a about 15 kids seated politely in front of me. I did the skits that I always do and seem to work well. I could tell right away that I didn't have the undivided attention of the audience. One by one or in small groups, they drifted away as I kept performing. I was cutting the show short and losing my concentration. I was practically yelling into the microphone in order to heard over the main stage. As I finished what had become my last skit, there were three kids left. They were older and just being polite. I had utterly bombed.

I've been performing for 39 years, and I haven't so spectacularly failed at a show since I was fourteen years old. My friend was angry at the event's planning committee. I was a little embarrassed and not a little angry for all the trouble I went through just to get hoarse from yelling. I took a breath and told him that I've been doing this a long time. I told him that this was just another show and my self worth as a puppeteer did not depend on my performance for this one show.

As I drove away, I thought about what I had learned from the experience. I needed to be clear about the type of show that I was presenting and what was needed from the audience. I needed to have the assertiveness to ask for what was needed for a successful show when I showed up at the venue. Better yet, I should have made it clear from the beginning.

Beyond all of the "should haves" running through my brain, I thought what could I have done differently when I showed up and saw the situation? What could I have at the ready to perform in such chaotic circumstances? I have been at fairs and outdoor events before with similar results. I decided that I needed some very brief skits that would work for very small audiences as I walked around with a puppet or two. In this way I could engage the crowd not all at once but just two to four people at a time. Instead of feeling angry about the circumstance or guilty for not putting on a good show, I became excited about the possibility for new material.

We will all have shows that go well and shows that bomb. Take some time after each show, the good ones and the bad ones, to evaluate what went well and what didn't. You may require some tweaking here and there. You may also discover whole new ways of engaging with an audience. After 39 years, I'm still learning. I hope you are too.



## MEMBER NEWS From Gwen Bowman

"States of Silliness" New! Gwen Bowman, the flight attendant ventriloquist, leads audience members on a trip across The United States as they use their imagination! A variety of educational themes are presented as they meet comical puppet characters at each stop along the way. From a couch potato in Idaho and a bilingual movie star in California, to a super hero honey bee in NYC, a mixed-up fairytale character and a stowaway book-worm, this show is first-class fun all the way! Includes 8 original songs, too! Featured themes include Geography, Spanish, Travel, Exploration, Reading, Nutrition and Hibernation.

## MEMBER NEWS From Mande Williams

Did you know that you can borrow giant puppets and even smaller puppets for a whole week? Dazzle your friends and neighbors with an impromptu puppet parade! Bring a puppet to Thanksgiving dinner for a non-political conversation piece! Stop by the Braddock Carnegie Library and select a few puppet friends for a week or two! While you're there, be sure to check out their fabulous Art Lending collection. You can check out real art by real artists to hang on your walls for a few weeks. Impress your friends and guests during the upcoming holiday season! All you need is your library card from any Allegheny County library. Visit [www.braddockcarnegielibrary.org](http://www.braddockcarnegielibrary.org) for hours and contact information!

Mandee is the new Children's Librarian at the Braddock Carnegie Library. Congratulations, Mandee!

## MEMBER NEWS From Cheryl Capezzuti

This summer Capezzuti and her crew were commissioned by the mayor's office to tell the history of Pittsburgh with giant puppets for the Bicentennial Parade. The project included puppets of Queen Allequippa, Chief Gwaysuta, George Washington, Andrew Carnegie, Andy Warhol, Mr. Rogers, Roberto Clemente, Franco Harris, Sidney Crosby and even the Mayor Peduto himself. So many guild members came out to lend a hand and make this little piece of history happen!



On October 28 Capezzuti gave Pittsburgh a sneak peak of one of the First Night Art Car Puppets, a flying Pig made by artist Katya Malkin. Look for all five Art Cars in the First Night Pittsburgh parade at 8:00 pm on New Year's Eve in Downtown Pittsburgh. Want to make puppets for the parade? Come to a First Night Puppet workshops. Visit [http://firstnightpgh.trustarts.org/fn\\_home/get-involved/parade-workshops/](http://firstnightpgh.trustarts.org/fn_home/get-involved/parade-workshops/) for workshop dates and locations.

## MEMBER NEWS The Rumba Report

Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> – Safari Bob World Wide Animal Guide in the Yogi Bear Theatre at Jellystone Park Resort in N.J. after show got to meet Boo Boo Bear & was only 10 miles away from Woodstock so went to the Woodstock Museum & had my picture taken by the Groovy Bus.

Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> Hazlett Theatre 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary disguised as kids Birthday Party Balloon Bob & Baby Bear puppet laugh with adults drinks, eating, cake, Brian O'Neal reporter Pittsburgh Post-Gazette attended some kids crash because parents can't get sitter.

Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> Fox Chapel for WQED with Pgh. Puppet Works puppeteering under guidance of Guild favorite Gwen Bowman

Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> saw "Hand of God" & after had fun talking with Nick LaMedica & was complemented when Nick said he was working on Tyrone voices, his entertainer puppeteer dad gave him the DVD "Choices of Voices" told him to try that & got base for Tyrone from that. Since that's my DVD I can live from that lift for awhile.

Oct. 20, 21<sup>st</sup> Halloween Wedding in Chicago Alisha Johns & Brad Garrett Pilcher was ordained so as a ventriloquist I could marry them officially. Then move to next room of castle to walk around with monster Drools, after dinner, do a stage show, dessert & do Monster Mash in Boris voice with mummy dummy

Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> M-i-c-k-e-y party, Balloon Bob with Baby Bear

Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, Scott Land puppet class (head puppeteer on movie "Team America") voice class by me on 2<sup>nd</sup> day in his workshop in Las Vegas NV. Fly out with me or see ya there





# MORE PUPPET NEWS

From Alison Babusci



Formed in June of 2015, Light Bright Beautiful Puppetry is a collaboration between seasoned artist-educators Alison Babusci and Alison Zapata. LBBP creates playful, arts-based learning experiences and interdisciplinary performances to teach and uplift diverse audiences in our community.

In our first year we have focused primarily on shadow puppetry and making connections with the arts and sciences for young learners. We are proud to report that after securing our first grant through Remake Learning and The Sprout Fund, LBBP just completed a successful series of residencies at Allegheny County Libraries. Our first production, *Color Play* (pictured below) uses shadow puppetry to teach color theory and was the kick-off celebration for our residencies at Bethel Park Public Library, CC Mellor Memorial Library and Oakmont Carnegie Library. What's our next project? Well, First Night of course! (Where all the cool puppeteers are!) We will have a shadow puppet MAKE & PLAY at The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust Education Center. Look for us and come play with light, shadows, color and puppets!



Photo Credit: Renee Rosensteel

## Join the Puppetry Guild of Pittsburgh!

Puppetry Guild of Pittsburgh unites puppeteers, puppet-makers and people that love puppets. We support and celebrate the art of puppetry in the greater Pittsburgh region.

Come to a meeting and join the fun!

## Annual Dues \$15

President:

Darlene Fedeles Thompson

Vice President:

Bob Dayton

Secretary:

Mandee Williams

Treasurer:

Tom Sarver

Newsletter:

Cheryl Capezzuti

November 2016