

## May 2023 Newsletter

**Upcoming Meetings... Do come! 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month 1:30 – 5:00**  
**Bring your show and tell for the meeting afterwards... It's always a highlight!**

**THIS Sunday! May 21<sup>st</sup> 1:30** PGUNY Meeting with the usual suspects PLUS Nancy Hardy,

**Builder of all kinds of puppets!** "I met my first puppet when I was four. It was instant love. While I enjoy watching puppet shows, I am primarily a builder. I've built all kinds of puppets: hand puppets, rod puppets, shadow puppets and marionettes. I even built a menagerie of puppets. My latest project is building a ventriloquist's puppet. I never stop learning! Building puppet stages is a particular love of mine. I've built all sizes from a tabletop miniature to a full sized performance stage.

I taught Puppetry at Utica College for seven years and truly enjoyed the opportunity to share my love of the art with so many people. This weekend I'll present a workshop on how to make a basic puppet form (your choice of rod puppet or marionette) that you can customize to your heart's content."

**Workshop begins at 2:00!**

**Come join the fun and build a puppet! General Public: \$10 a puppet while supplies last.**



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- June 18** Robert Rogers performs The Adventures of Orlando Furioso, a traditional Sicilian puppet show
- July 16** Melanie Zimmer performs Little Pirate during Sylvan Beach's Pirate Weekend.
- Aug. 20** Nancy Sander (Puppets w/Pizazz) performs Rumpelstiltskin
- Sept. 17** PGUNY PICNIC
- Oct. 15** Carol Mandigo (Catskill puppets) – Shadow puppet workshop for children (or adults who want ideas)
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**Want to help build a parade puppet for the Sylvan Beach Pirate Parade? Let's talk! (Nancy Sander)**



**Oneida Lake Arts and Heritage Center**  
**1201 Main St. Sylvan Beach, NY 13157**

Easily reached from the Thruway  
Canastota exit or Route 13.

[www.OneidaLakeArtsandHeritageCenter.org](http://www.OneidaLakeArtsandHeritageCenter.org)  
[info@olahcenter.org](mailto:info@olahcenter.org) 315-761-4071



**Put June 18<sup>th</sup> on your calendar!**

**Robert Rogers Performs "The Adventures of Orlando Furioso"**

**A traditional Sicilian Puppet Show for all ages!**

**Feel transported to another time with puppets that are nearly 100 years old!**

**Robert is most interested in performing this for other puppeteers. Come see the show and enjoy the chance to hear what Robert has to share afterwards. It will also be open to the public.**

**WHY THE GUILD** by Nancy Sander

Looking back on my fifty year involvement with puppets, I pause to reflect on the importance of puppetry guilds on my career and on my life.

Way back in 1971 I was just starting out in puppetry when I met Jean Jenkins, a seventy year old puppet veteran and a staunch supporter of The Puppetry Guild of Northeastern Ohio. I began an apprenticeship under her.

"Nag, nag, nag, nag, nag! Guild, guild, guild, guild, guild!" That was Jeannie. So finally I went...and it changed my life.

Back in the early thirties, when PofA was just starting up, it had to be decided whether the puppeteers would be like magicians: "Keep the tricks of the trade to yourselves and make the viewers figure it out," or "Share and share alike." Thankfully, they unanimously chose the latter, and to this day, a puppeteer can work ten years on a gimmick and give it away to a colleague in ten seconds.

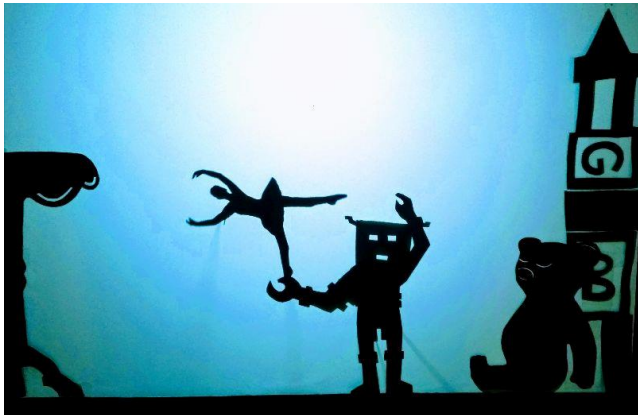
Why is the guild so essential? The first thing I think of is this: When I talk about my passion for puppets most of the world looks at me with glassy eyes; at guild, their eyes shine! But more than that. The essential part of the guild is to pass excellence down from one to another. When I first went to guild (cocky me) I thought, "What have these old geezers (most were in these forties!) think they can teach me???" Little did I know that one of the geezers was George Latshaw! Another was Roger Dennis, UNIMA award winning hand puppeteer; another was Alina Naum, director of the National Puppet Theater of Romania for thirteen years. What did they have to teach me? That what I was doing (which I thought was excellent) was mediocre at best.

These great artists would perform for their guild because this was the way puppeteers learn: to see how high puppeteers can take this art form. Of course, there might be only fifteen members in attendance, but giving to the guild, without charge (what treasury can afford the price of a show?), was an important gift.

Another important aspect was open shows to the outside. Perhaps there would be more visitors than guild members, but how were the puppeteers to know whether there was the next Jim Henson, age 4, sitting in the front row? If one of the main emphases is to bring up the next generation of puppeteers, exposure is the catalyst. If I had been able to see a puppet show when I was a child, I wouldn't have had to wait a quarter of a century to find the purpose and love of my life. But it was a free show, put on by the guild, which exposed me to Mr. Punch. The first book Of a Punch script was Ed Emberley's Punch and Judy. "This is, by far, the stupidest thing I ever read!" said I to myself. And then I saw it... I saw my first Punch show at 11:30 AM and by 2:00 PM I was building my first Punch show.

And again: My good friend (now deceased), Toby Van Eck, tells of how, at the age of four, he was sitting on the church step, crying because he didn't have a quarter to see the puppet show. When the puppeteer heard him, he invited the child in, and since then, Master Puppeteer Toby Van Eck became the most famous puppeteer in South Africa, going on to train many puppeteers both here and in South Africa. As the saying goes, "Hey, you never know!"

There is so much to learn in puppetry that is not written in books or even on the computer. Can you imagine writing down how to do a chase scene? No, my fellow puppeteers, you must see to believe. And that is why, since 1934, puppeteers have been gathering together to learn about puppets, to talk about puppets and to make lifetime friends of like-minded puppetophiles.



**Check out what Lilypad Puppet Theatre is up to:**

### **Shadow Puppet Party!**

**Saturday, June 3 @ 10:30 am @ The Cherry**

**(102 Cherry St. Ithaca)**

**We're sending a separate email with all the information... Sounds like a lot of fun!**

### **A Passion for Puppetry** by Iver Johnson

A soapbox speech inspired by Kenneth Gross's book "Puppet: An Essay on an Uncanny Life"

I see puppetry as a flame that illuminates the world with a mesmerizing, primal light. When properly fanned it can be blinding beautiful. But without holders of the knowledge then the flames flicker down to a fragile spark. Any child may find the spark of animation irresistible. However the most diluted form of puppetry is often seen in birthday parties. Unfortunately this becomes the only experience that many may have with the art and rarely shows the potential of the magic. Children transform into adults thinking only of puppets as tiny playthings.

Yet some are touched by the fascinating magic and are drawn into other worlds, becoming creators themselves. Some live to perform. A few make it their life's work. Dabblers, innovators, supporters,


and educators slip back and forth blurring boundaries between fantasy and reality. However, working solo in a bubble can be isolating.

Puppeteers pull strings, but not just those of a marionette, but of the human heart. They make us care, to cry or laugh. Miraculously, they do so without a million dollar budget or fantastic crew, but only by themselves and a piece of fabric and wood. They combine the elemental pieces of life; the art of the visual, the art of movement, the art of storytelling. Puppet Theater touches us in so many unpredictable ways. Puppeteers are often invisible, the guild gives us a face, a place to be recognized and accepted and find help to persevere.

Puppeteers create an illusion of life. Uncanny means weird, strange, or mysterious. I might like to think of it in not so negative terms; out of the ordinary, inexplicable, or uncommon. Our human perception can be tricked into believing things can be what they are not. Puppeteers trigger our emotions, interacting with the audience in special ways. Throughout history regions have developed particular styles, passed on through generations of performers, examples are Chinese hand puppets, Japanese Bunraku, Indonesia Shadow puppets, Greek Shadow Karagoz, English Punch, French Guignol, these have become cultural standards. These elements are deeply embedded in a puppeteer's heritage. Understanding our shared roots comes alive in a guild with peer mentors as living resources.


For nearly two decades I supported myself with puppet endeavors. There were struggles but the creative experiences were astounding and unique. I think now is a time to give back and I see the guild as a catalyst for discovery and discussions. PGUNY can be a forum for creatives to contribute to the art form, honoring the past and forging the future. I invite my fellow explorers to join together, to share, and to inspire one another. Come and Wonder, Dream and Create within a group who know the power of the puppet. Come and find an unexpected family, celebrate our similarities, marvel at our diversity, and unite with kindred spirits!

**I hope to see you at an upcoming meeting, mark your calendars for the 3rd Sunday of the month. Sylvan Beach is just 15 minutes from the Thruway exit at Canastota. To quote the old song; the more we get together the happier we'll be!**



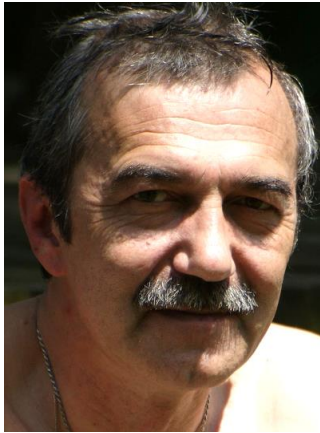
**At the April PGUNY guild meeting:** Mary Crangle brought up the Life of Pi production, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/12/scene-stealing-puppets-of-life-of-pi/> The theatrical adaptation of "Life of Pi," Yann Martel's award-winning novel about a zookeeper's teenage son stranded on a lifeboat, makes its American premiere at American Repertory Theater with opening night on Dec. 15 before heading to Broadway. Since premiering in England in 2019, the play by Lolita Chakrabarti has won five Olivier Awards. Much praise has been directed at its large-scale animal puppets designed by Nick Barnes, Finn Caldwell, and Caroline Bowman, with more than one critic calling them the stars of the show.

This story came to my attention when 7 puppeteers were awarded Best Supporting Actor for their animation of the Tiger. Finn Caldwell was inspired in his youth by Julie Taymore. The question was raised is this the future of the circus with live animals replaced by puppets? The Warhorse was another award winning show in the same vein.



**Have something to share?** A performance, part of a performance, a workshop, a collection of puppetry related items? **Something to sell?** **Something else?** It can be short or...

Contact us at [pamandiver@juno.com](mailto:pamandiver@juno.com)



### **Vladimir A. Vasyagin Actor-Puppeteer at Open Hand Theater Inc.**

Vladimir A Vasyagin, 63, of Syracuse, passed away on Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2021 peacefully with his wife Natasha at his side. Vladimir was born in Russia and had a long career as actor/puppeteer with Skomorokh Theater of Tomsk, Siberia. He traveled extensively as a performer and eventually immigrated to the United States to work with Open Hand Theater of Syracuse. Vladimir was well loved and will be missed by his wife Natasha, many colleagues and friends, and particularly the children he worked with in theater programs throughout the city. He was a

dedicated performer and teacher. A memorial service was held on Saturday, March 20.

Open Hand Theater Inc.

Yekaterinburg State Theatre Institute

"Girl for all" The Theater of the Puppet and the Actor

"Skomorokh" Aug 1983 - Jul 1999 16 years Tomsk, Russia

- Performing in different styles (puppetry, drama, comedy, melodrama, stage stuntman)
- Puppeteering (marionettes, rod puppets, shadows, masks)
- Director
- Puppet design and production (in different styles)
- Participation in Theater collaborations and International Puppet Theaters' Festivals (Poland, Germany, Switzerland, France, Yugoslavia, US) Yekaterinburg Puppet Theater Graphic Actor-Puppeteer

Yekaterinburg Puppet Theater Mar 1980 - Jul 1983 Yekaterinburg, Russia

Samara Puppet Theater Graphic Student-Puppeteer Aug 1974 - May 1975 Samara, Russia