



July 2023 Newsletter

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

This Sunday!! July 16th 1:30 – 5:00 Don't miss it!

PIRATE PUPPETS TO HIJACK THE OLAH CENTER

Shiver me timbers! Man the lifeboats! It's Sylvan Beach's Pirates' Weekend and the puppet pirates are heading to the Oneida Lake Arts and Heritage Center. Be prepared to laugh with the Dancing Bear puppets as Hubert's mother tries to find her son, the littlest pirate.



Dancing Bear Puppet Theater is the creation of puppeteer Melanie Zimmer, of Vernon, NY. Zimmer has been making her own puppets, creating her own scripts and performing her solo performances for over twenty years. Originally as a member of The Pearl In The Egg Storytellers Guild, she specialized in telling fairy tales, folk tales, myths and legends. Eventually she wanted to have her stories be more visual and puppets were a natural blend. "The Littlest Pirate," is one of her original creations. Zimmer is a member of both The Puppetry Guild of Upstate New York and Puppeteers of America. She is also locally known as the author of four books published by the Historical Press on the myths and legends of The Finger Lakes and Central New York Regions of New York.

Dancing Bear Puppets is being sponsored by both the Oneida Lake Arts and Heritage Center, the Village of Sylvan Beach and the Puppetry Guild of Upstate New York. The performance is being held at the Oneida Lakes Art and Heritage Center, 1201 Main Street, Sylvan Beach on Sunday, July 16th at 3:00 PM. The show is suitable for children of all ages, from three to one hundred and three.

The cost of the show is: buccaneers and wenches (adults): seven doubloons (\$7); scalawags (children): five doubloons (\$5); those still on the poop deck (children under 3): no charge.

So weigh your anchors and dock at the OLAH Center for a family fun time.

(Thanks to Nancy Sander for the words and Melanie for the photos!)





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
info@olahcenter.org 315-761-4071



Save these Dates for the rest of our season!

July 15 **Pirate Week Parade in Sylvan Beach with a PGUNY Float**
(3 scoops of ice cream and plenty of nuts!)

JOIN US! THIS Saturday! 10:30 to put the float together!!

Bring your own pirate related puppet, dress up or send us your puppet in time for it to be added to the float. We'll be glad to return it if you'd like.



July 16 **Dancing Bear Puppet Theater and Storytelling**
with Melanie Zimmer brings... drum roll...

The Littlest Pirate Puppet Theater for our entertainment during Sylvan Beach's Pirate Weekend!

In the ridiculous tale of "The Littlest Pirate", life takes an unexpected turn for young Hubert as he plays pirate.



Aug. 20 **Nancy Sander** (Puppets w/Pizazz) performs Brer Rabbit

Sept.17 **PGUNY PICNIC**

Oct. 15 **Carol Mandigo** (Catskill puppets) – Shadow puppet workshop for children (or adults who want ideas)

Creating pirate heads to add to the PGUNY Pirate Parade Float

What fun! A bunch of us got together to try out Nancy Sander's bleach bottle puppet heads!



A DAY WITH PUPPETS CRISIS

By Nancy Sander

As I left the Beach last year we had talked about having a Day With Puppets geared toward all the children's librarians in the four counties surrounding the Oneida Lake Arts and Heritage Center, here in Sylvan Beach. A tentative date was set up for **Sunday, August 20th**.

Now the time is drawing near.

The tentative schedule:

9:30: Registration

10:00: Workshop #1

11:00: Workshop #2

12:00: Bag lunch on site (may be purchased?)

1:00: Make-It-and-Take-It workshop

2:00: Show #1 (open to the public)

2:45: (or immediately following) Show #2 (open to the public) I agreed to do an afternoon show.

Walk-around puppets: as people arrive, during lunch, before shows.

Display: all day. Trading post: 12:00 to 1:00

The venue is perfect, with a wonderful performance room and an adjoining room with tables and display space. Because we are working with OLAH, there will be publicity for the open shows.

The registration cost will be tentatively \$25.00 for all day (not bag lunch); shows: \$7.00 for adults; \$5.00 for children over 3.

Finances for the Center are still to be determined but usually we split with OLAH 70/30% but there is use for the whole building to be considered and decided.

THE BIG DECISION

I don't have to tell you that, for a guild so small and spread out, this is a big undertaking, but I think doable. I don't have to tell you that this is a long drive for you in Albany, Rochester and Ithaca. These past meetings, at best, have been poorly attended or not attended at all. Pam, Iver and Nancy H. (and her gang) have been faithfully trying to present interesting programs...for Iver, Pam and Nancy, and me in the summer. So there appears to be a crisis.

Let's get real here: traditionally a DWP brings new blood to the membership; it fulfills the purpose of a guild (to peek the interest of, in this case, librarians so that they include puppets in their programs), thusly furthering the art of puppetry. **But do you, the membership, want a DWP?** This cannot, and will not, be Pam, Iver, Nancy H. and Nancy S. So we are asking for your response: Do you, or do you not, want to go forward with this venture? We are asking for a vote. Voting "**Yes**" commits

you to attending, pitching in and enjoying a wonderful day with puppets. Voting “**No**” means there is no condemnation for your decision; we all have busy lives. **No response** will be counted as a “**No**.” And because time is so short, we need your answer by **July 15th**, and if there is a show or a workshop you would like to donate, include that information as well. And don’t worry about feeling useless on the big day: there is always plenty to do! I personally am voting a big fat YES! **Please send your response to pamandiver@juno.com**

Robert Rogers visits PGUNY... Notes from what he shared with us



It was a great pleasure to see Robert Rogers in Sylvan Beach. He was performing without his proscenium (the front wall of the stage which hides activity). Why? First space limitations of the Center and secondly he was traveling in his Versa rather than his truck. Lucky us! We were able to get a much better sense of what goes on that the public doesn’t usually get to see. There was also a huge wall mirror at the center which provided an even greater view. Pam and I are always fascinated by how the puppets are stored when not in immediate use as well as the exits, entrances and general manipulation. Roger has great skills in gesturing and keeping the puppets alive!

Nancy Sander gave a warm intro for the show... *“Many years ago I knew of Robert Rogers- a puppeteer totally excellent in what he does! Now in central NY, it is good to see his wonderful puppets (and visit him and his wife, Debbie.) We are treated to a par excellent, absolutely fantastic, historical show, a very old tale by the one and only Robert Rogers”.*

In 1980 Robert’s grandfather helped him construct a stage from pipes. His parents had bought him a Sicilian Marionette made for tourists which he repainted and dyed.

Robert performs Orlando Furioso for several Italian American groups, including Buffalo’s little Italy festival. It has no set schedule... shows run 25 minutes but the timing can be adjusted. Speakers lined the streets. He mentioned two CDs; a military brass band by Philip Jones and the Cambridge Buskers 1979ish with pennywhistle and accordion.



Robert acquired the puppets used during this presentation several years ago from Sarah Goldsmith, the woman who created them. They were the marionettes from her show of Friar Tuck 1939. Sarah and her

brother made the puppets with close attention to detail. Some were even dressed with underwear. Sarah was born in Syracuse, lived in East Orange NJ and then on Long Island. Robert made some cosmetic repair; hair/fur, and minor blemishes. They used vertical controllers which Robert feels are more natural because there is less tension on the wrists. He also admires the controllers of Philip Heuber, David Syrotiak, and Ronnie Burkett.

As he set up the stage and after the show, Robert shared a variety of experience and thoughts including decisions he made along the way about how things have been done in the past and what he does today. It was interesting to hear!

A true Sicilian marionette would never have strings. From a YouTube Robert learned how some have a strap that goes over the puppeteer's arm for support so they didn't have to have to hold the rod with a hand. Two authors he mentioned are John McCormack, an author of puppet history and George Spade who writes on who performed rather than the how.

Traditionally there were not full scripts, only outlines, although there are some transcriptions. Robert wrote his own script. Centuries ago soundtracks were not available but there were harmoniums to provide some melody. They were played slowly for sad scenes and fast for action. Robert uses Verdi operas and ballets, on a MP3 player. Robert innovates, while in Italy they preserve the art form. The Italian shows were not for kids. The New Stratford Theater continues with 'how it was done in the day'. Some of the old stages were hollow which increased the action noises, especially during fights. They also used a special effect of a blown out egg shell filled with beet juice for the fight scene, a practice no longer appropriate.



Robert spoke of reading Ludicrous' epic, *The Song of Roland*. It tells of Orlando and King Charlemagne, old characters, historical and Biblical reenactments. The Italian government uses it to increase literacy. There are three puppet styles in Italy, the north had hand puppets, the central has string marionettes, and the south has rod puppets (Sicilian marionettes). He mentioned chapter 4 (the Adventures of Orlando Furioso who was love sick for Princess Angelina) and we think it was from that book.



More recently, Robert returned from Bellman NY schools, doing workshops with 61 2nd grades, using paper plate puppets. He will be performing *Cinderella in the Wild West* in NY this September.

The Guild owes him a gigantic thanks for sharing his skill and time with us. It was a real delight!

Thanks, Robert!

