



Puppet Patter

The Official Publication of the Chicago and Area Puppetry Guild

A Quarterly Publication

June 2023

Under the Heading of Old Business or "Potlatch" To Be or Not to Be

by Mel Biske



Paraphrasing from the unofficial minutes from the 8:00 am Great Lakes Region meeting held on Saturday November 5, 2022: All guilds in the region were represented, with two invited P of A members. Regional Director, Rick Morse presiding. Under section 5, old business, "Updating the logo and name, Potlatch. It has become even more apparent that it is time to modernize. We want to attract younger puppeteers and not be seen as appropriating cultural signifiers." This edict was suggested through the P of A board of directors. A discussion was held regarding pros and cons regarding a name change. Name change suggestions were

made at random and all wanted a new name to emphasize the cooperative and friendly nature of our annual event.

A little bit of history here. "Potlatch" was the brainchild of the Atlantis Expedition (Nancy Henk, Dick Waskin, Bill Wilson and Cindy Yott). On their way to perform in Indianapolis, they stopped at the Potawatomi Inn, located in the Pokagon State Park in Indiana, for lunch and began talking about what a wonderful place it would be for a regional festival. When they returned home, they contacted Kathy Piper, who was then Regional Director, and shared their idea. What transpired was not a regional festival, but a very relaxed imitation of one. Registration costs were minimal. No one was paid for performing or conducting workshops and most people brought something to share – a song, a game, a puppet idea or a new technique - which is the very heart of the word, "Potlatch". It began in October 1982.

At the November meeting, a few alternate replacement names were bandied about and it was certain that the names suggested fell short of best describing this forty-one-year-old beloved tradition of our family of puppeteers in the Great Lakes region. Rick suggested to have the Guild representatives inquire with their members for their opinions on this matter. Assuming that the guild representatives present, had responded to the request of contacting their membership and with the CPG, lacking a president or vice-president, the staff of our Puppet Patter publication accepted the responsibility. We emailed an explanation of the proposed name change along with their suggestions for a new name. The results are as follows:

- Free-lance suggestions from the meeting floor - The Great Lakes Puppet Share, The Great Lakes Puppetry Party, The Great Lakes Mini - Fest.
- Jill Frederickson - Great Lakes Puppet Share
- Susan Bass Marcus - The Great Lakes Puppetry Reunion
- Kat Pleviak - The Great Lakes Mini-Fest
- Jean Kuecher - Great Lakes Puppet Mini-Fest
- Neal Biske - Great Lakes Puppet Coterie (*kōdā'rē* - French derivation - A group of people meeting with a unifying common interest.)
- Linda Roberts - Great Lakes Puppetry Reunion
- Dave Herzog - Would prefer maintaining the Potlatch title
- Mel Biske - Maintain the Potlatch title*

(refer to the *By the Way* column this issue.)





The Continuing Search for a Great Lakes Regional Director

by Mel Biske

It is with great honor and gratitude to our current Great lakes Regional Director, Rick Morse, in acknowledging his announcement to retire from his Regional Director post after four years of dedicated service. During two of those four years (during the COVID19 shutdown) he continued maintaining and supporting an interest in various guild highlights and events via video streaming to a network of guild recipients. These day long productions were emphasized with puppet shows, workshops, instructional videos and personal interviews.

All seven guilds in the Great Lakes Region were overjoyed to attend our Potlatch once again in November of 2022. Rick made arrangements with the Potawatomi Inn and once again we are anticipating Potlatch 2023! He has also reserved the Inn for November, 2024, extending his duties even after announcing his retirement in early 2023. An attempt was made to seek nominations for the office of Regional Director at that time with no results. This year, in a March 11th email to all the Great Lakes Guilds and guild related personnel, he stressed the urgent need to, "start beating the bushes to find someone." If you did not see it, he said to, "Post it in your newsletters! Naturally, I'm happy to offer guidance to the new RD, whoever that might be. Come on, team! Produce!"



In that same email he outlines the guild responsibilities for Potlatch 2023, as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Performances: PGNO | Potpourri: Chicago |
| Workshops: Cincinnati | Hospitality: Western Michigan |
| Trading Post: Indiana | Scotch Auction: Detroit |
| Exhibit: Central Illinois | |

THAT'S NOT MY JOB!

This is a little story about four people named **Everybody**, **Somebody**, **Anybody**, and **Nobody**.

There was an important job to be done and **Everybody** was sure that **Somebody** would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but **Nobody** did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was **Everybody's** job.

Everybody thought that **Anybody** could do it, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** wouldn't do it.

It ended up that **Everybody** blamed **Somebody** when **Nobody** did what **Anybody** could have done.



The Chicagoland Puppetry Guild Files

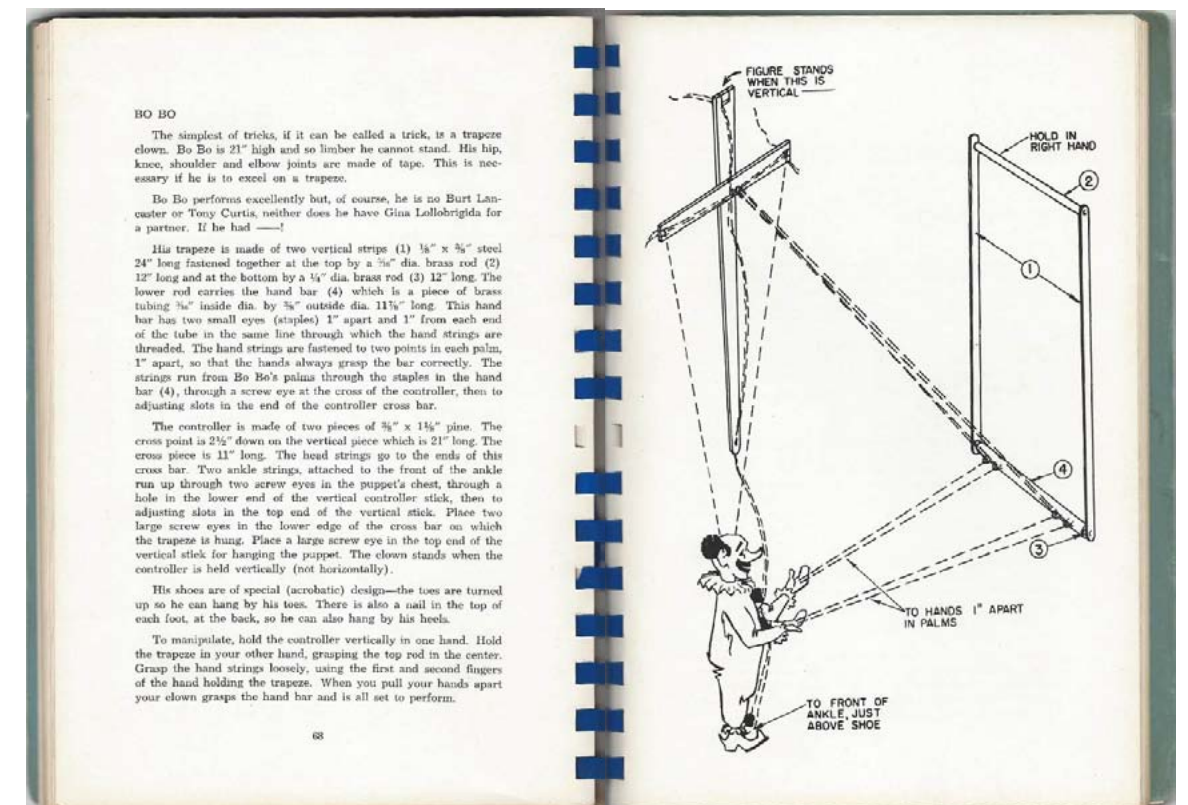
by Dave Herzog

The Chicagoland Puppetry Guild files were meticulously kept by Fred Putz for decades. While perusing this amazing collection of Chicago, national, and international puppetry ephemera, I continue to discover files of historical significance or special note. I am fortunate to be able to share my findings as a regular feature in each quarterly issue of The Puppet Patter. Appearing in this Issue...

Puppetry Festival Workshop Guides

When Fred Putz asked me to take possession of his puppetry books and the Guild Files, among the many treasures were a series of Puppetry Festival Workshop Guides. In the "good old days" before everything went digital, each attendee at Puppeteers of America National Festival received a binder or notebook containing the very extensive notes from every workshop that was to be presented at the festival. The presenters, at the time of being chosen to present the workshop, were required to provide these notes to the workshop director whose crew then duplicated them and had them published. In the past few decades this was done in the form of a loose leaf notebook chock full of information on everything from wood carving to needle felting and in "the good old days" things like how to transfer your reel to reel tapes to cassettes Nowadays of course there are workshops on all things digital. It will be interesting to see if there is a workshop guide at this year's festival. One actually had to pay five dollars extra this year at registration just to get a printed festival program. Today everything is being done digitally, but there is still much to be said for still possessing a set of hard copy notes.

These workshop guides are a real treasure and many of the note sets are now from experts who have since passed away, so these have become even more valuable as these skill sets are now being lost. I have had in my collection for many years a workshop guide from the 1956 P of A Festival held in Evanston, Illinois, containing amazing notes from the likes of Joe Owens who was both a master inventor and the master of many of the trick marionettes still in use today. Most notable his method of performing the trapeze marionette - A method I still use today and will be teaching later this summer in Las Vegas. These notes, along with many Regional Festival Workshop Guides, including our own Great Lakes Regional festival workshop notes, are now being kept as part of the archives of the Chicagoland Puppetry Guild. What a treasure trove of knowledge these archives contain, and it's all thanks to our own Fred Putz who, as puppeteer and educator, had the foresight to keep all of this knowledge safe, and available to all who wish to learn and grow in the art of puppetry.



Multiple Marionette Building (or How to build 15 to 20 Marionettes at a Time and Not End Up in the Looney Bin!)

by Dave Herzog

In my nearly fifty-year career as a professional puppeteer, I have helped with or created many projects that involved building many multiple puppets. For Bob Kramer's Marionettes in St. Louis, I was a shop assistant when Bob was building multiple tandem dancers and ancillary characters for his production of *Peter and the Wolf*. For the Fred Cowan Puppets of Crawfordsville, Indiana, I spent a Summer in Wisconsin Dells filling countless molds with Celastic for their bicentennial show. In my years with Trotter Brothers Productions in Wichita, Kansas, I helped build hundreds of puppets, marionettes and costumed characters for amusement park productions. Here in Chicago, I built two complete marionette productions for AnimART Puppet Theater as well as the wooden marionette parts for Bill Henderson's production of *Peter and the Wolf*, and other productions, including *Music for All Seasons* for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. For my own company, Dave Herzog's Marionettes, I have built numerous complete productions including *Dragon Days and Knight Time*, *Captain Cranky and His Crew* (for Navy Pier), *Stringing on a Star an Outer Space Adventure*, *Puppet Soup*, *Cirque Fantastique*, *Halloween Hi-Jinks*, *The Pumpkin Patch Review*, *Christmas Capers*, and *The Snow Show*.

The last few years I have done three major multiple builds including 20 fully carved marionettes with neoprene heads for Team Land Productions in Las Vegas, which has already been chronicled in the Patter. More recently I have built for Team Land (now known as The Land Schools) 20 trapeze artist marionettes for a class July 29-30th 2023. I still have a few spaces for that class. Go to <https://thelandschools.com/?mibexotio=Zx2cZs> for full information.

Last, but certainly not least, I have just completed 15 wooden marionettes for The Marc Dunworth Foundation for the Performing Arts to be used in classes aimed at adults in Chicago area libraries. I hope these fifteen will be the first of many more to come.

You might be asking yourself, "Self. How does one build fifteen identical marionettes without going stark raving bonkers?" Well, the short answer is it helps to be a little crazy. But seriously folks, you do have to develop a bit of tunnel vision and dedicate yourself to a series of daily repetitive tasks working in an assembly line style. This was to be a somewhat "simplified" style of building compared to my own fully carved marionettes. My first task was to design a set of patterns for the body parts, upper and lower torso, feet, and hands. I knew the legs and arms would be built from dowel rods so all I needed to determine was the length of the arms and legs. I had a mold of a small head that I would need to pour fifteen times, actually 16 including a prototype then proceeded to build said prototype. Once the prototype was complete and working to my satisfaction the real work began.

It took a little over three days to gather, and or order the materials for the project. This involved trips to several hardware stores, and home centers for hinges and dowel rods, as well as a trip to Owl Lumber for the special Jelutong wood I use for the body parts. I chose jelutong because all though a bit more expensive than bass wood it would be easier, and therefore quicker, to work with thereby reducing production time and expense. It also produced a lighter puppet and this was important as this is a class for beginners. I knew costume fabric would be supplied from left over fabrics in my abundant fabric draws and many ancillary supplies, hardware and the like were sourced from the supplies on hand in my shop. Finally, two gallons of neoprene rubber (Chicago Latex formula 501) was delivered from Spartan Adhesives in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Each step is fully completed before going on to the next step. I started with the arms, first, cutting out all thirty and putting them in a small storage box. I did the same with the legs, and then proceeded to cut and join them all until I had a box with fifteen sets of arms and another fifteen sets of legs.

Next I traced all fifteen upper and lower torso pieces on a big block of jelutong and cut them out, each piece was then carved on the belt sander and fine sanded



The start of the Dunworth Puppet build

with a mouse sander. The torsos were then joined with two double locking screw eyes joints. The same procedure was then followed for all thirty feet. The wells for the ankle joint were all cut using a Forsner bit on the drill press and then all were jointed using a length of coat hanger wire.

The simplified hands being used for these marionettes were also cut out of jelutong and each was hand carved using a combination of a Dremel motor tool, small files and sand paper. This was by far the most time consuming task of the project needing a total of five days. For future builds of this puppet I will be creating a plaster mold so the hands can be poured in neoprene at the same time the heads are created. Each head for the project takes a full day to cast, pre-cure and then a day to cure before it is sanded and a wooden neck inserted. Each day, as a head is being cast, I am working on the other puppet pieces. Once all of the pieces have been completed each puppet is individually assembled.



The Dunworth Puppets and The Land Schools build all on one table 35 wooden marionettes total!

The costumes are also created using an assembly line. First, I trace and cut all fifteen costumes, using a jumpsuit pattern from James Maynard's puppet blog www.puppetsandmarionettes.blogspot.com. I can't recommend this blog highly enough. It is well worth your time to check out. I am able to download James's excellent costume patterns in full size and print them out as many times as I want. Beginners, I assure you this blog will save you years of trial and error. Each shoulder seam is then sewn and pressed open. Each sleeve is fitted sewn and pressed, each arm seam is sewn and pressed each sleeve hem is put in each leg seam is sewn and pressed each leg hem is sewn and pressed on and on until each costume is finally completed by sewing the center seam. And, yes! Each and every seam is pressed open, trust me you cannot build puppet costumes without a good steam iron. It is tedious work but audio books

are a great help and you tend to get into a very Zen state that is until the damn bobbin needs to be refilled. All joking aside, these little jumpsuits are a lot of fun to make. Plus the fabulous cotton prints we have today are a joy to work with.

Finally I cut and sanded fifteen paddle style controls and drilled all of the string attachment holes on the drill press - 11 per control including the hanging strap. 165 in total. It only took about an hour.

From start to finish the Dunworth Foundation project was accomplished in 32 days. Hard work? Yes, indeed, but the real fun will begin when we are able to present the class to a library. Each student will get a kit, they will paint the head and body, create a wig with yarn or feather boa, fit the costume, string the marionette and have the fun of learning how to control and create a personality for their figure. Experience has taught me we will have fifteen totally unique characters created from these kits. I can assure you it's great fun to watch happen. I will publish a future article featuring the actual puppets and shots of the class in progress.

I have high hopes for this class that is being directed at adults but could also be accomplished by a dedicated older teen. This work is meant to carry on the legacy of learning that was the hallmark of my relationship with Marc Dunworth. We both taught each other so much about puppetry and life. This class will build on that foundation of creativity. Who knows where Marc's legacy will lead. I hope I will be building many more of these marionettes.

For more information of the Marc Dunworth Foundation for the Performing Arts, go to <https://dunworthfoundation.org> or on Facebook at Marc Dunworth Foundation for the Performing Arts.



The completed build

The Grumpy Old Man Puppet Company

by Dave Herzog

I've joked for the last few years about changing the name of Dave Herzog's Marionettes to Grumpy Old Man Puppets, Inc. I find I'm becoming very much like the stereotypical neighborhood grumpy old man telling the kids to, "Get off his lawn!" especially when, for almost fifty years, I have heard the same phrases, questions and excuses from people. So here are a few phrases and questions that make me want to scream "Get off my lawn, ya dang kids ya!" P.S.: My answers are strictly tongue in cheek... most of the time.



Ten Questions Puppeteers Are Often Asked

1. Do you have anything to bring in? (*What I'd like to answer is too naughty to print*)
2. How long is your "little" show? (*I start at the beginning and when I get to the end I stop*)
3. What do you charge for your "little" show? (*Why do they always call my 300 plus pounds of equipment "little"?*)
4. "Oh! Was that today?" (*When you tell the school secretary you are here to set up for the show*)
5. "Who makes your puppets?" (*Santa's elves*)
6. "When does the magic show start?" (*GET OFF MY LAWN!*)
7. "Do you do one year old Birthday parties?" (*I'd rather eat rocky mountain oysters*)
8. "Where do you buy your puppets?" (*Well technically the hardware store, the craft store, the fabric store and the lumber yard*)
9. "What's your real job?" (*Brain surgeon*)
10. "Why are your puppets so creepy?" (*Because you've allowed yourself to be brainwashed by American pop culture, try watching PBS once in a while*)

Ten Phrases Puppeteers Hear

(That we would like to never, ever hear again.)

1. "Oh your kids are so cute" (*No, these are my puppets. People frown upon keeping my kids in a trunk in the car*)
2. "Oh! you're early" (*When you have arrived the agreed upon hour in advance to set up*)
3. "You'll need to go up a few stairs" (*Translation: Up 10 stairs across a landing and up ten more stairs*)
4. "We'll seat the babies and toddlers in front so they can see." (*Better yet, let's not seat them at all*)
5. "You're going to be outside over by the swings" (*When you've expressly agreed upon an indoor venue*)
6. "We've decided to cancel the show because the children misbehaved" (*Yes, this does happen*)
7. "We'll wait a few more minutes to start the show, our people never come on time." (*Often heard at libraries*)
8. "Well we never know how many are going to show up for these things." (*Also often heard at libraries*)
9. "Sorry so few people showed up. The High School was having a big game tonight" (*Yep, you guessed it. Often heard at libraries*)
10. "We'll put the check in the mail." (*Good I'll come back and do the show when I've received it*)

And the top "Get off my lawn" phrase of all? "This is a dying art form you know." In all seriousness to that statement and with all kidding aside I do answer as follows, "Well no, that's not actually true. There are more people doing more puppetry in more ways than ever before. Puppetry is being used in film, music videos, the theater, in advertising, and in education and therapy, and a whole host of other applications. On the contrary puppetry is a vibrant, living, growing art form that is getting bigger every day." (*and said under my breath, "Now get off my lawn!"*)

By The Way...

by Ann Onymous

Clowning Around

Looks like Susan Witek is "clowning around" again. Susan is a member of the World Clown Association and attends their annual "unconventional" convention on a regular basis. This year it was held at the Avanti Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, last March 20th - 24th, 2023. She marveled at the collection of some of the puppets that clowns use in their acts. She also mentioned and admired a solo act by clown, Nestor Mora, performing shadow puppets by forming configurations with his hands. Susan will be attending next year's convention right here in Chicago!



Look What I Found!



While doing a webs search on the subject of "puppets," a name came into view with the letter "M" turned upside down making it a "W". Curious, I clicked on the site and discovered that Wesley's Wuppets is a faith-based YouTube channel that features puppets lip synching to faith-based skits, songs and funny "stuff". Scanning the site revealed well created puppets accompanied by vocals and musical accompaniment. The sets were simple and complimentary to the subject matter. The manipulation and staging are right on, especially when multiple puppets are cast for various numbers. Might be a pleasing visit to the web site. (www.wuppettoons.com)

Please Pardon The Interruption

*Excuse me. This is Ann Onymous. My column and I would like to add my support toward the two members who agreed to maintain the name "Potlatch" for our annual gathering which has been held for the last 41 years. Historically, it has been revered in our hearts for so long that when it was cancelled for two years due to the COVID plague, our reunion in 2022 was happily shared by all attending. If you are among those members who have never shared a Potlatch I would strongly suggest "give it a try". With the intention suggested in the directive "**to attract young puppeteers,**" we see families of puppeteers whose children have grown up and followed puppetry by joining the ranks professionally. And as for "**being seen as appropriating cultural signifiers,**" the very location selected for Potlatch is in Indiana's Pokagon State Park at the Potawatomi Inn. Just off the lobby area of the Inn stands an eight-foot Northwest Native-American totem pole, placed there in the spirit of an honored nationwide culture. And located near the Lakeview restaurant is a sign which teaches Potawatomi phrases.



We Are Happy To Announce...

The family of the Marc Dunworth Foundation for the Performing Arts present the 4th Annual BBQ Fest, Saturday, August 5th, 2023 at 11:43 AM at the Wolfe Wildlife Park, Oak Lawn, Illinois. Complete details for this and other upcoming events can be found at their website: www.dunworthfoundation.org/calendar.

Have You Checked Out the CPG Website Lately?



Be sure to visit our guild's web site on a regular basis for the latest postings on what's happening in the Chicago area, the latest on the Great Lakes Regional Festival and a roster of active and newly added puppeteers. Events and Shows page has the latest posting of local performing companies, their current production and a link to their web sites, current and past issues of the Puppet Pater, and more!

Our address is:

www.chicagopuppetguild.org

The CPG is on Facebook, too!
Be sure to check us out!



Happy Summer!



Leave 'em Laughin'!

by Dave Carpenter



"Before we hear from tonight's speaker, Mr. Bobo, I think we should give him a hand."