

The Puppetry Arts Quarterly

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Interview
The Huber Marionettes

The Puppetry Arts Guild
of San Diego
2804 30th Street
San Diego, CA 92104

Board Members:
Tom Jensen - President / Newsletter
Wendy Lucas - Meyer - Secretary
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Promoting the Art of Puppetry in San Diego

Welcome

The Puppetry Arts Guild of San Diego is dedicated to the promotion and education of the art of puppetry in San Diego. We host a broad range of workshops in the various aspects of puppetry, live performances, guild meetings and social events, etc.

We welcome you to join us.

Please visit: PuppetryArtsGuild.com for upcoming events.

What is a Puppet?

A puppet is an inanimate, often resembling a human, animal or mythical figure, that is animated or manipulated by a person called a puppeteer. The puppeteer uses movements of their hands, arms or control devices such as rods or strings to move body, head, limbs, and in some cases the mouth and eyes of the puppet.

There are many different varieties of puppets. Hand and rod, shadow puppets, marionettes or string puppets and many more. If you would like to learn more about the many types of puppets... Join Us at a Guild Meeting.

What is World Puppetry Day?

We celebrate World Puppetry Day on March 21 every year. This day aims to recognize puppetry as a global art form. It is also an attempt to pay tribute to and honor puppeteers from around the world.

In Honor of World Puppetry Day
The Puppetry Arts Guild of San Diego
presents

Legends of American Puppetry

(a multi-media presentation)

March 21, 2023 6:45 pm

Scripps Miramar Ranch Library
10301 Scripps Lake Drive
San Diego, CA 92131



Interview with Phillip Huber The Huber Marionettes

by Tom Jensen

Phillip Huber is an internationally acclaimed marionette artist who has performed worldwide, as well as, worked on films, such as, "Being John Malkovich" and "Oz: The Great and Powerful."

I have always admired the Huber Marionettes. I first met Phillip in 1986 when we both attended the Puppeteers of America Festival in Vancouver, BC, Canada. He was also performing with his marionettes at Vancouver's World's Fair which was occurring at the same time. Last November, I had an opportunity to attend his "Suspended Animation" performance at the Greater Arizona Puppet Theater. I asked Phillip if I could have an interview. This is that encounter:

Tom Jensen: Thank you for speaking with me today. Was that the first time you performed at the Greater Arizona Puppet Theater?

Phillip Huber: It was the third time that I performed there with the first time being about ten years ago.

TJ: Which puppeteers most influenced you as a young person?

PH: Frank Paris, Bob Bromley, Walton and O'Rourke, Bil Baird, Rufus and Margo Rose and of course on television... Howdy Doody.

TJ: Why do you prefer to perform with marionettes?

PH: I find marionettes a joy. They have a special magic about them because there is something about the long length of strings that creates a separation between the puppeteer and the puppet. There are so many puppets these days where you see the puppeteers holding on to the puppets and the puppeteer is visible, which I find to be distracting. People have always called me "Mr. Cellophane" because I can disappear. I can be sitting at a table in a restaurant and everybody at the table has ordered and the waiter completely forgets to take my order.

TJ: What do you make the marionette heads and bodies out of?

PH: The heads are made from celastic and the bodies are carved from wood. However, I do use other materials like Paper Mache.

TJ: Approximately, how long does it take to build one?

PH: It takes me about 400 hours to create one on average. It probably takes me longer than most because I add a lot of animation in the face.

TJ: We know a basic marionette has nine strings. Which one of your marionettes has the most strings?

PH: My Chinese magician has the most, with 32 strings. The average number of strings on my marionettes is 16 strings. Louisa, my trapeze artist has 9 strings, which includes one string that removes her cape when she first comes on. My contortionist has the least number of strings and only has 8.

TJ: Is the Chinese magician the most difficult to perform?

PH: Yes, technically, he is the most involved with the most things that can go wrong. However, the trapeze artist is very difficult and my tightrope walker, Pierrot is also difficult in a different way.

TJ: Do you ever re-do a marionette when you get a new idea for it?

PH: Yes, I do. I have gone back and made adjustments to marionettes that have already been performing for more than 25 years. Frequently, when I put them aside for a long period of time, then start performing with them again. I'll go back and make a change to the controller, the stringing or even to the costume.

TJ: Which is your favorite act?

PH: Taffy the Dog is one of my favorites because it relates so well with audiences. It seems I have been type cast as dogs in so many shows. Live theater shows where I have been the only puppeteer and I'm manipulating a dog. I am working on building another dog right now.

TJ: What makes for a great marionette variety show?

PH: A good show is one that does not just rely on gimmicks. It needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Gimmicks are good to surprise an audience, usually at the end of a number. Puppets must have recognizable personalities.

TJ: I know you have performed all over the world. Do you have a favorite venue?

PH: One of my favorite venues is the Hansa Theater in Hamburg, Germany. It is one of the oldest variety theaters still working after 120 years. They have had puppetry there since it started, featuring very famous puppetry acts from all over Europe. The great Houdini also performed there, as well as, many other acts.

TJ: As puppeteers we know that strings catch on everything and anything. Any mishaps you care to share and how did you solve the problem?

PH: I try to plan it out so that does not happen. I fool proof props by adding "guard strings" across anything that might catch a string. While filming "Being John Malkovich" I ran into problems with strings catching in the puppet's joints because they were nude. I remedied the problem by adding string guards over the joints.

TJ: What advice would you give a marionette artist that is just starting out?

PH: Spend as much time as you can rehearsing, getting comfortable with the character, so it becomes second nature and the technical aspect fades into the background. Then what comes forward is the heart of the puppet, the soul and that is what you project down the strings to create the character.

TJ: Thank you Phillip for your time today. You are a true hero of American puppetry.



Greater Arizona Puppet Theater



Phillip Huber, Taffy and Tom Jensen

Bob Baker
February 9, 1924 - 2014



9th Annual
BOB BAKER DAY
Los Angeles
State Historic Park

February 25th
10am -5pm

Free All Day Outdoor
Carnival

bobbakerday.com

Happy Heavenly Birthday Bob & Patty

Bob Baker - the founder of
The Bob Baker Marionette
Theater.

Pat Platt - a very talented
puppeteer and storyteller.
She directed the 1966
National Puppetry Festival
and served on the board of
Puppeteers of America.
She loved making puppets
out of gourds. She and Bob
Baker had a friendship
lasting over 50 years!



Pat Platt - February 19, 1923 - 2018

Puppeteers of America
2023 National Puppetry Festival



University of Maryland
July 18 - 22 2023
www.puppeteers.org

Become a member of
Puppeteers of America

www.puppeteers.org



Submissions for the May edition of
The Puppetry Arts Quarterly
is April 20th. tom@PuppetryArtsGuild.com

• **Save the Date** •

Guild Meeting & Puppet Making Tent
Saturday May 20th 2023 10am - 1pm
Villa Norte Park • 6475 Antigua Blvd
Tierransanta 92124

Join

The Puppetry Arts Guild
of San Diego

We welcome professionals,
amateurs, educators, hobbyists
and puppet enthusiasts.



Membership dues:

Adult - \$25.00
Senior - \$20.00
Couple - \$35.00
Family - \$45.00
Junior - \$20.00

[PuppetryArts Guild.com](http://PuppetryArtsGuild.com)
join@puppetryartsguild.com

The Huber Marionettes



Phillip Huber and Nicole



Manuel D'Exterity

Louisa



Song & Dance Man - George M.



Liza



Chinese Magician - Mo Sho Long



Taffy



Pierrot