

# Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas: “Celebration” May 23 – 29, 2022



*Message from Erin Prosser, Program Manager  
Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas*

For our 10<sup>th</sup> edition of Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas we hosted both an in-person family festival-style day event and a series of online performances, talks, and workshops/demos over 7 days.

We engaged over 90 people including performers, puppeteers, and other professionals to support this years' ambitious program. I am deeply humbled and grateful to the over 40 volunteers who came out to support our in-person event, Highland Park Community Association for their partnership and collaboration, to our Technical Support Teams: Rockethouse, DayOne Media, and Chelsea Yang-Smith and of course to our small but mighty team at WP Puppet Theatre, Wendy, Barb, and Kira – there's no way we could have pulled this off without everyone rolling up their sleeves and stepping in to help.

When Wendy and I selected this year's theme of celebration almost 18 months before the event, we were imagining what a post-covid world might look like – and how we might celebrate or protest these times. I'm not sure that either of us anticipated the ongoing collective exhaustion or level of existing inequities that came to light during our planning phases.

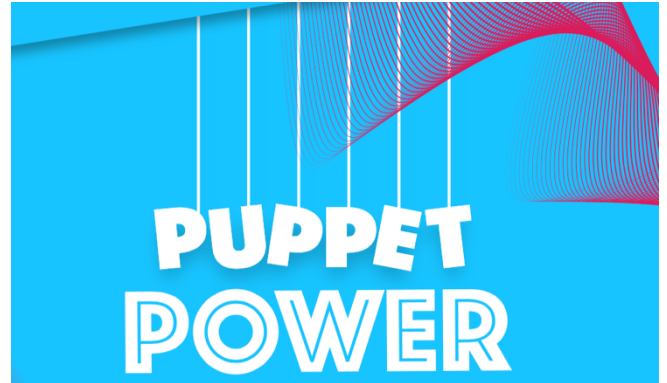
We selected the quote below from Heschel, as inspiration and a starting point for conversation. As we all grew, grieved, and changed over the past couple of years my relationship to the quote has also changed. I have learned to honour and hold space both for the enjoyment of simply being entertained as well as for the active art of mindfully being present when in a state of celebration. I continue my journey to look up, notice, and listen to who is not celebrating and why. I have not yet mastered the ability to hold both joy and grief at the same time. I suppose that is part of our learning and the dichotomy of our collective human experience.

Thank you again to everyone who breathed some air into Puppet Power, no matter how small or large your contribution you had an impact, and I am grateful to you. - Erin

*"People of our time are losing the power of celebration. Instead of celebrating we seek to be amused or entertained. Celebration is an active state, an act of expressing reverence or appreciation. To be entertained is a passive state—it is to receive pleasure afforded by an amusing act or a spectacle. Celebration is a confrontation, giving attention to the transcendent meaning of one's actions." ~ Abraham Joshua Heschel*

*Thoughts from Wendy Passmore-Godfrey  
WPTS Artistic and Executive Director*

Puppet Power Festival of Ideas launched back in 1999 as a means to inspire and support puppetry, specifically Applied Puppetry\*. Over the years we have had amazing artists, dedicated volunteers, fantastic participants, wonderful supporters and partners.



The theme of Celebration, as with many of our themes, was interpreted by our presenters in many different ways. Personally, I enjoyed Matt Smith's short talk on Celebratory Art and his conclusions that

- Celebratory Art is an opportunity for the public to freely celebrate and change their environment
- It is important to construct our own rituals and celebrations to suit them
- Celebrations are a very important area of performance to study and research
- Artists can help facilitate and enrich both already established celebrations and create new ones
- Life without clearly marked celebrations can seem empty
- Performing objects can help us to celebrate

As we have in past years, we engaged an 'Animateur' to 'animate the ideas and inspiration'. Jeremiah Bartrum, Ottawa, rose to this unusual challenge with thoughtful insightful observations. I urge you to read his whole document but he concluded in words that stick with me...

*We celebrate in the face of the fears and dark forces of our time, knowing that we belong to a community of artists, of puppeteers, of seekers, of peace makers and we are confident that our work, however intimate or grand in scale, has the power to change the world.*

Puppet Power 2022 as both the online Festival of Ideas program and the in-person Family Festival Day had so many different aspects that resonated with so many people (as indicated in the surveys and the smiles on the faces) This is indeed a celebration that carries us into planning the next iterations! Stay tuned!

\* Applied Puppetry is "puppetry that is used as a communication and expressive tool in settings such as education, therapeutic interventions, social action, institutions and other social settings".

# Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas

Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas looked at the role inanimate objects have had in ceremonies and celebrations since time immemorial. We explored the impact and potential of Applied Puppetry in all sorts of practices. We wondered, who's at the party, who's not and whether it's time to take back the carnival! With the advantages of an online platform, enabling a 'greenish' footprint, our speakers joined us from the Philippines, Catalonia, Iran, United Kingdom, Australia, and the USA. We also featured amazing Canadian artists from across the country.

1. Alberta Garcia & Aitana Giralt
2. Alexandra Gorlin-Crenshaw
3. Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete
4. Andrew G. Cooper
5. Bonnie Duncan
6. Chad Williams
7. Graham Soul
8. S.E. Grummet (Grumms)
9. Juanita Dawn
10. Nazanin Mehraein
11. Saba Saadat
12. Shiva Massoudi
13. Cathy Stubbington and Harper Friedman
14. Sandra Lamouche
15. Tangle McClaron
16. Trevor Duffy & team
17. Jeremiah Bartram
18. Matt Smith, Caroline Bernier Dionne
19. Kaja Irwin, Luis Fernando Gurrola
20. Thomas Miller, Saralee Lewis, Peter Balkwill
21. Ann & David Powell, Tim Gosley, Jessica Belbin, Carolyn Bjartveit
22. Sara Neill, Steve Abrams
23. Gary Friedman, Chadmindika Wanduragala, South Miller, Nathan Millar
24. Sandy Spieler, Kathy Foley, Nicole Levell, Kati Qui





## Family Festival Day Kick Off

Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas kicked off with a live, in person event on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Over 500 people joined us for our Family Festival Day as we celebrated puppets with families, children and the young at heart! We were honoured that Elder Hayden from Siksika Nation opened the day.

After that, all manner of fun events unfolded: Imaginarium Puppet Theatre performed from a funky gypsy wagon.

Tangle led puppet making of birds as well as the puppet parade.

Sandra Lamouche, world champion hoop dancer, did an awe-inspiring performance. Little Brown Jug Brass Band played exuberantly for the puppet parade.

Calgary Public Library Book Truck had a steady stream of book borrowers.

Tam Godfrey and his team led a workshop to build wooden puppets using only hand powered tools.

And we had face painting, kite making, green screen video, food trucks and ice cream, and much more. The Family Festival Day was a way to engage and connect with the community while promoting the art of puppetry and WP Puppet Theatre.



## The Performances, Panels and Workshops

Over the course of seven days, Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas showcased more than 40 professional puppeteers and presenters in 30+ amazingly crafted live streamed online events. We also hosted a new event this year called “Intermissions!” – an online networking and idea exchange hosted by one of our presenters on a variety of thought-provoking topics.



While designed for everyone, the festival was of particular interest to educators, therapists, helping professionals, artists, students, thought leader and idea generators. More than just entertainment and information sharing, our Festival of Ideas was about making authentic connections, having meaningful conversations on important topics, and motivating a call to action to use the power of puppetry to impact positive social change.

### Community Connection

As in previous years, and as part of our commitment to accessibility and to connect with our community, we offered free tickets to the performances and panels. We also offered bursaries. Additionally, we provided ASL interpretation for selected sessions. And translated two of the post festival recordings into Spanish.

The Post Festival recordings themselves provide access to those who can't attend the festival itself.





## Marketing Highlights

### World Puppetry Day:

The line up for Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas was announced through a series of videos and social media posts beginning on March 21. A highlight was the special lighting of the Calgary Tower in purple and yellow to honour world Puppetry Day and recognize puppetry as a global art form.

### Media:

Two news releases were sent through WILD PR, one on March 18<sup>th</sup>, the second sent out May 19<sup>th</sup>.

First release was picked up by two media (Calgary Citizen and Daily Hive)

Second release picked up by one media (Calgary Citizen)

Festival mentioned/shared by other outlets in connection to the Queen's Jubilee.

- <https://www.kingstonist.com/event/puppet-power-festival-of-ideas/>
- <https://www.familyfuncanada.com/calgary/puppet-power/>

### Social Media Stats – March 1 to June 1:

Paid reach – 62, 336 (an increase of 845%)

FB post reach – 145, 384 (an increase of 925%)

IG reach – 4,357 (an increase of 424%)

FB followers – 74 new followers

FB likes – 2, 282 likes

IG followers – 84 new followers

Demographics – 70% Canada, 9.2% USA, 2.1% United Kingdom,

75.6% women, 24.4% men

Twitter (May only) – 2256 impressions, 19 mentions, 551 profile visits and 4 new followers



### Blogs:

Six "Artists Series" blogs were created with one being released each week leading up to Puppet Power. The blogs were shared across social media and invited followers to enjoy the presentation of a puppeteer who was not performing at the festival but who had submitted an application. Doing this strengthened WP Puppet's connection with the larger, worldwide puppet community while also using its platforms to promote other artists, build and strengthen relationships and maintain a positive experience of the festival, even if the puppeteer ultimately wasn't chosen to perform at Puppet Power.

Each blog was highlighted independently on social media and in newsletters.

1. Celebrating the Human Spirit - Beka Haigh
2. Creating During Covid - Peter Marino
3. Celebrating Burst Days - Giacomo Ochi
4. Celebration and Indignation - Daniele Viola Rocha
5. Liminal Space - Kathy Smith
6. Growing Up - Melanie Lefebvre

**Newsletters:**

Eleven (11) newsletters were sent, one every other week, leading up to Puppet Power, beginning on March 1st. The newsletters highlighted various aspects of the festival, announced speaker line up, promoted ticket sales and discounts, highlighted performers and those featured in our Artist Series blog.

- Sent to 4,476 contacts
- Open rate varied from 29% - 35%
- 2% click rate

**Attendance:**

176 individual tickets were sold for the online Festival of Ideas

442 tickets were sold for the Family Festival Day

75 All Access Passes were accessed.

Peak Viewers for the online presentations was 404 people.

23 post Festival Recording packages were purchased.

## Venue and People Power

Puppet Power: Festival of Ideas 2022 was an online conference with a live, in person kick-off event hosted at the Highland Park Community Association (HPCA) situated in northwest Calgary.

HPCA was a fantastic community partner to work with as they had a great indoor and outdoor space that was a perfect fit for the Family Festival Day events. Puppet making and the green screen video booth were housed inside while all other events were outdoors.

The partnership with the community association was terrific as was the collaboration with WPTS and HPCA in terms of promotion and sharing of information across social media channels.

More than 40 volunteers plus staff and contractors were onsite for the Family Festival Day and it is only through their dedication and offers to help were we able to host such a large event in a post-pandemic environment.

We sincerely thank everyone who assisted with Puppet

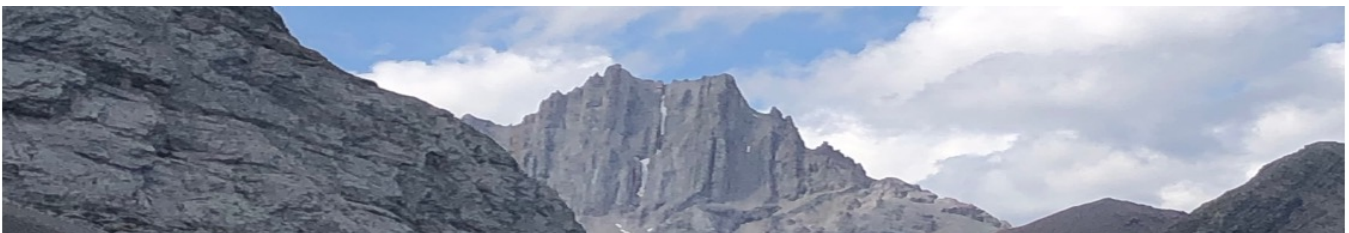
Power: Festival of Ideas in any capacity – we share its success with all of you!



## Sponsors

As with our volunteers and core staff, we would like to thank our sponsors, partners, donors and funding supporters who made the weeklong event a possibility.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts  
Business through the Arts  
Calgary Arts Development  
Calgary Foundation  
Calgary Public Library  
Government of Alberta  
Government of Canada  
Highland Park Community Association  
Post Media – advertising  
Rockethouse Productions  
UNIMA Educational Development and Therapy



WP Puppet Theatre acknowledges the original care-takers of this land who have and currently reside in Turtle Island for thousands of years. We honour that we live, work and play on Treaty 7 territory home of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region.

We acknowledge our shared history as an act of reconciliation, respect, and truth and continue to work to understand our role and responsibilities as Treaty People.