

PUPPET POWER: Story Conference Report June 1 – 3, 2018

(Wendy Passmore-Godfrey – Conference Chair)

"The stories we tell literally make the world. If you want to change the world, you need to change your story"

Michael Margolis.



Aligning our conference to W.P. Puppet Theatre Society's mission to *"use the power of puppetry to impact positive social change"* we chose STORY as the 2018 theme. There were three sub themes that provided criteria for presenter selections:

1. Learn why, scientifically and anthropologically, puppet and story are so powerful.
2. Hear of the work puppeteers/artists/educators' do and the stories their puppets tell.
3. Experience hands on puppet making and playing workshops.

The very successful weekend inspired, galvanized, encouraged, and mentored over 150 attendees to think deeply about 'story', and experience the transformative power of all things, living and non-living, to tell stories – including stories and songs that have been told on this land for thousands of years by our first peoples.



Paraphrased Bighetty Brothers:

We try to wear our values as opposed to teaching them"
"The letter B – brought to you by Bannock, Baloney & Butter"
"They call it remote but to us it's our home"
"We played cowboys and Indians but there was only one cowboy"



*Fantasyscapes:
one of eighteen
fantastic
workshops
at PP18*



In Friday evenings keynote Jovanka Rivi did a beautiful job of setting the theme of the power of story and theatricality.

Remember the "Pizza Giraffe"

Photos: Kieron Circuit, Jenn Pierce, Adrian Shellard

PUPPET POWER: Story featured 33 presenters from around the world as well as Canadian and local. Participants overwhelmingly remarked on the high caliber of workshops. (See presenter directory for details):

Speakers

Nan Balkwill & Katie Green
Juanita Dawn
Pat Tarr & Sayward Wilkinson
Blanc
Glenn Taylor
Pia Banzhaf
Sonia Norris
Amihan & Aina Bonifacio-
Ramolete

Emma Fisher & Ivan Owen
Sylvia Kind & Johanna Po
Andrew Periale
Ann & David Powell
Jovanka Rivi

William Cumb
Ken Bighetty
Kelsey Bighetty
Danny Bighetty

Puppet Potpourri

Sarah Bannister
Jess Szabo
Rich Theroux
Michelle Warkentin
Shelley King

Animateur

Mike Czuba

The sessions:

PP18 featured 18 workshops/talks, Friday evening and Sunday closing keynotes and an opening Q&A with the Bighetty Brothers. We again hosted a Puppet Potpourri, with four short live talks, four commissioned videos and a puppet making activity. As we have other years we provided a free ticket to CAOS's Dolly Wiggler Cabaret to all full registrants and presenters.



Michelle Warkentin



Sonia Norris workshop

*So much of the 'human experience' is within the power of puppets
(Attendee)*

Grazie Mille

*I was blown away with the caliber of artists that the conference presented – Bravo!
(Attendee)*

Thank you for your vision and curation of such interesting artists, presentations and workshops (Presenter)

*It was educational, inspiring and wonder-filled
(Attendee)*

Puppet Power Marketing & Publicity Highlights

(Report from Sandra Neill - Marketing & Communications Manager and Rob Mabee- Media Relations)

Social Media and word of mouth proved to be the top ways people found out about PP18. Our website saw a 164% increase in views over the same period in 2017. Fourteen blog posts and over a dozen videos about Puppet Power 2018 were created, featured on our homepage, and promoted on social media. In the 6 months leading up to PP18 approximately 65 Facebook posts were made with a reach of 75.5+K, 2.5+K clicks, and 1000+ reactions, comments, and shares.

Photos: Kieron Circuit, Jenn Pierce, Adrian Shellard

We had a lot of fun producing a professional video for World Puppetry Day in March 2018, which prompted a number of media invitations:

1. CBC Daybreak Alberta – Radio Show (province-wide), Wendy interviewed by Russell Bowers – March 18th, 2018. Reach: 485,000
<https://audioboom.com/posts/6730544-world-puppetry-day>
2. Global Morning Live – morning TV segment interview with Michelle Warkentin and Lola - March 21st, 2018. Reach: 348,300
<https://globalnews.ca/video/4096567/learn-more-about-world-puppetry-day-on-march-21>
3. The Calgary Herald article – March 21st, 2018. Reach: 194,000 print, 176,000 web.
<http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/puppeteers-celebrate-all-puppets-can-do-as-world-puppetry-day-approaches>



On the set of World Puppetry Day video

Closer to the conference date, Calgary media again picked up the story of this unique event:

1. CTV Calgary News – Inspiring Albertans segment with Darrel Janz, Profile of Wendy, May 29th, 2018. Reach: 415,000.
<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1405105>
2. CBC Homestretch – Host Terri Campbell, Interview with Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete, June 1st, 2018. Reach: 196,500
<http://www.cbc.ca/listen/shows/the-homestretch/segment/15548403>
3. BT Breakfast Show – Morning TV segment with Wendy, June 1st, 2018. Reach: 134,600
<https://www.btcalgary.ca/videos/the-power-of-puppetry/>

Venue and Human Resources

(Report from Erin Prosser - Logistics & Operations Manager)

This year's Puppet Power Conference was hosted at the beautiful University of Calgary Main Campus. We partnered with the Division of Drama who generously donated space for talks and workshops and provided access to University pricing with the department of Conference and Events. Other conference components happened at the Alma Hotel and the EEEL Building (Energy, Environment, and Experiential Learning)



The popular puppet photo booth

The staff, the organizing committee and the event volunteers were a committed cohort of people and we owe our success and sincere gratitude to our 28 volunteers including committee and board members and 6 staff/contractors supporting the event.

Photos: Kieron Circuit, Jenn Pierce, Adrian Shellard

Sponsors and partners

Like a complex marionette any event has numerous strings to make it work. We'd like to recognize our very important sponsors, partners and donors:

In alphabetical order:

Arun Chaturvedi Photo – stunning images for the VIEW from the Inside exhibit

Calgary Animated Object Society – CAOS – Dolly Wiggler tickets!

Calgary Reggio Network – co presenting our speaker from Italy

CKUA – marketing support

Destination Art – all our signage – printed on the most popular colours of paint!

Empathy Week by Humainlogie – marketing support.

First Executive Centre – office space for some hard work to happen in!

Foster Mak – all the easels

Jenn Pierce Photography – archiving the moments!

KH Dental (one of the places where you might not be able to tell your story)

Petrus Resources – for our hands-on workshop supplies

Pizza on the Fly – fantastic catering for our volunteer training!

Rob Mabee PR – Media relations

Shellard Photography – archiving the moments!

Shona Rae – for beautiful jewelry piece for our for raffle

Star Metro – marketing support

University of Calgary – School of Creative and Performing Arts, Drama Department.



On going and project funders

Calgary Arts Development

The City of Calgary

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Alberta Culture and Tourism Community Initiatives Fund

Call to Action

Mike Czuba concluded Puppet Power 2018 with a call to *"Continue doing. Continue Making. Continue building things from nothing but an unformed idea. Yes, we need to reflect and think and discuss but those things alone will not our story make. In the Doing we discover truths and we discover we are capable of more than we believed."*

Last word

'We're the social glue, the disruptor flying under the radar – it's just puppets' said Andrew Periale. Yet PUPPET POWER: Story once again demonstrated the power that 'just puppets' have.

PUPPET POWER 2020 – Details coming!

Photos: Kieron Circuit, Jenn Pierce, Adrian Shellard