Performances that will Astonish & Delight
Dear Guests,

It is with joy and delight that I present to you the 2nd edition of our Puppet Festival here in Chicago! The modern/ancient art of puppetry will offer you unexpected insights into our otherwise media-saturated cultural landscape. Story is a powerful tradition here in our Midwestern metropolis and you will discover the unique storytelling power of puppetry from around the globe. The puppet and its object-world mirror back our humanity using a unique universal language. It can be both surprisingly comic and startlingly profound. For me as a puppeteer the pure abandoned fun keeps me coming back. I hope you too can discover an equal joy at the Festival. Join around this toasty fire of culture for astonishing and completely memorable experiences with family, friends and our global neighbors.

—Blair Thomas
Festival Founder & Artistic Director

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

The Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival is a biennial event founded in 2015 to establish Chicago as a prominent center for the art of puppetry practices by artists in the world today. The festival builds on the city’s hunger for high quality international theater work, and harnesses the spirit of collaboration with established local partners.

We would like to express our gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for their multi-year, flagship investment toward the vision of the Festival.

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| 10 am - 12:45 pm | THE ELLEN VAN VOLKENBURG PUPPETRY SYMPOSIUM  [p. 52] | 10 am - 12:45 pm     | 10 am - 12:45 pm    | 10 am - 12:45 pm  |                   |                    |                      |                      |                   |                     |                     |
**Feathers of Fire: A Persian Epic** is a visually breathtaking cinematic shadow play for all ages, created by Hamid Rahmanian in collaboration with Larry Reed. The play unfolds an action-packed magical tale of star-crossed lovers from the 10th-century Persian epic “Shahnameh” (“The Book of Kings”). Inspired by Iranian visual traditions, Rahmanian uses puppets, costumes, masks, scenography and digital animation to bring the story to life on a cinema-sized screen. The show features original music by Loga Ramin Torkian and Azam Ali.

**STUDEBAKER THEATRE**
Fine Arts Building
410 S. Michigan Ave.

$40; $30 student/senior

Thursday, January 26: 7:30 pm
Friday, January 27: 7:30 pm
Saturday, January 28: 3 pm + 7:30 pm
Sunday, January 29: 3 pm

(Panel discussion, see pg. 53)

70 minutes

chicagopuppetfest.org
Where lies the boundary between the body and the machine? In an empty space, illuminated by cold light, Geumhyung Jeong combines dance, puppetry, and a mastery of visual theatrics to explore the potential of the human: the sensuality, power, and mutability of the body. In seven peculiar “duets” with mundane objects ranging from household appliances to mannequins, Jeong bestows a bizarre and disconcerting life to the inanimate through an intense and risky interaction with her own body.
In a bilingual Yiddish-English play, *Muntergang and Other Cheerful Downfalls* meditates on power dynamics by revisiting the performances of radical 20th-century puppeteers Zuni Maud and Yosi Cutler. Using original graphics and satirical scripts, Great Small Works combines new puppets and projections with original graphics and satirical scripts, introducing Mae West and The Dybbuk along the way.
Diamond Dogs is a classic deadly-maze story set in Alastair Reynolds’s Revelation Space Universe. Follow a future team of humans and transhumans as they investigate a mysterious alien tower, bent on brutally punishing all intruders. Body modification is the norm in the 26th century, and award-winning puppet designer Mary Robinette Kowal articulates and re-shapes actors’ human forms into powerful, mechanized players battling for their lives. Blood will spill.
Conversations with Devi brings Hindu mythology to life using intricate Balinese shadow puppetry. When a haughty demon named Mahishasura taunts the goddess Devi, the two engage in an epic battle of shape shifting and strength. Delicate chiseled leather puppets called wayang kuilt illuminate the story while the sounds of an Indonesian gamelan orchestra draw rhythmic motion from every figure, animal, and tree. Mandala presents beloved Chicago artist and cultural educator I Gusti Ngurah Kertayuda.
Four innovators present medium-length works: Vanessa Valliere’s, *The Life and Times of Terry*, a whimsical multi-media journey of romance, parenthood, and success; Myra Su’s *An Inter-Dimensional Love Story*, which tells of an unrequited love between a 2D square and a 4D tesseract; Christopher Knowlton’s *Hay in Hard Times*, starring a charming and somewhat bumbling character created by Knowlton’s butt; and Liz Schachterle’s *Music Box*, a poetic piece about love and loneliness within a mechanical imaginative world.
Traveling storytellers Mr. and Mrs. Pennyworth captivate audiences with spellbinding tales. But one day, The Big Bad Wolf mysteriously dies before his story is complete. As fairy tales disappear from their pages, Mr. and Mrs. Pennyworth must journey through the stories to restore order before they are lost forever. Written and directed by Doug Hara, with puppets by Blair Thomas and shadow puppets by Manual Cinema. Recommended for ages 8+.

LOOKINGGLASS THEATRE COMPANY presents:

MR. AND MRS. PENNYWORTH

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

Traveling storytellers Mr. and Mrs. Pennyworth captivate audiences with spellbinding tales. But one day, The Big Bad Wolf mysteriously dies before his story is complete. As fairy tales disappear from their pages, Mr. and Mrs. Pennyworth must journey through the stories to restore order before they are lost forever. Written and directed by Doug Hara, with puppets by Blair Thomas and shadow puppets by Manual Cinema. Recommended for ages 8+.

LOOKINGGLASS THEATRE
821 N. Michigan Ave.

$35

Thursday, January 19: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Friday, January 20: 7:30 pm
Saturday, January 21: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Sunday, January 22: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Wednesday, January 25: 7:30 pm
Thursday, January 26: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Friday, January 27: 7:30 pm
Saturday, January 28: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Sunday, January 29: 2 pm + 7:30 pm
Manual Cinema transforms Edith Nesbit's novel *The Magic City* into a live, cinematic shadow puppet show in this new work commissioned by Chicago Children’s Theatre. When a young girl moves into a new home, she entertains herself by building a city using household objects. Through some magic, she finds herself inside the city, surrounded by life. Using overhead projectors, paper shadow puppets, live actors in silhouette, miniature toy theater and a live music ensemble, Manual Cinema’s *Magic City* modernizes the novel.
Utilizing an astonishing variety of puppetry and mask techniques, Kick (an unfortunately named “klown”) performs a series of pieces inspired by the writings of the hysterically lugubrious Franz Kafka. Between these darkly comic works, Kick also explores his own father issues through interactions with a huge shoe. This is the second collaboration between master puppeteer Michael Montenegro and Neo-Futurist director and writer Greg Allen who lovingly refer to themselves as “Dim Bulb and The Bastard”.

VICTORY GARDENS
Richard Christiansen Theater
2433 N. Lincoln Ave.
$25; $20 student/senior

Thursday, January 19: 9 pm
Friday, January 20: 9 pm
Saturday, January 21: 9 pm
Sunday, January 22: 2 pm

60 minutes
Link Hall and Rough House present:

**Nasty, Brutish & Short: A Puppet Cabaret**

**Friday, January 20 - Saturday, January 28**

Hit Links Hall for late night cabarets featuring short works by international festival artists, regional puppeteers and local talent. End your evening with a tasty selection of the raucous, raunchy, dark, sassy, sad and hilarious! The program provides a late-night hang out spot for the whole festival, an opportunity for out-of-town talent to bring shorter works, and a space for local artists. Each show features at least two mainstage festival artists bringing secondary short works, and at least two Nasty, Brutish & Short contributors.

**Links Hall**

Studio B

3111 N. Western Ave.

$10, $8 student/senior

Friday, January 20: 11pm

Saturday, January 21: 11 pm

Friday, January 27: 11pm

Saturday, January 28: 11 pm

80 minutes

chicagopuppetfest.org
Narcissister employs a spectacle-rich approach to explorations of gender, racial identity and sexuality. Humor, pop songs, elaborate costumes, contemporary dance and her trademark mask are her tools. By opening up and turning against themselves what Stuart Hall calls “fixed and closed stereotypical representations,” Narcissister exposes, in live performance, video and photography, the practice of representation itself, and challenges the audience to question its own attraction and repulsion.

CARDS AGAINST HUMANITY THEATER
1917 N. Elston Ave.

$25

Friday, January 20: 7 pm + 9 pm
Saturday, January 21: 7 pm + 9 pm

60 minutes
Open Eye Figure Theatre's adaptation of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* for the marionette stage is a look at youth, aging and the allure of power. Creator Michael Sommers uses Goethe's 1797 poem “Der Zauberlehrling” as inspiration, expanding on the young apprentice's mishaps and mistakes in this original work with a unique Open Eye approach. With its highly designed production, original score and masterful puppetry, this show appeals to both adults and children.

ADVENTURE STAGE CHICAGO and BLAIR THOMAS & CO. present:

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 27 - SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

Open Eye Figure Theatre | **THE SORCERER’S APPRENTICE**

ADVENTURE STAGE CHICAGO
at the VITTUM THEATER
1012 N. Noble St.

$17; $12 ages 14 and under

Friday, January 27: 7 pm
Saturday, January 28: 1 pm + 7 pm

Call (773) 342-4141 for information about special school performances.

60 minutes
Cendres (Ashes) is an emotional thriller straddling fiction and reality, equally remarkable and disturbing. Based on the book by Gaute Heivoll, the production tells the true story of a Norwegian arsonist. When Heivoll compares this event to his own life, ambiguous and subtle parallels emerge. Behind multiple house fires lies an intimate narrative, one that examines the mad fire at the bottom of every human being.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

Cendres

PLEXUS POLAIRE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

BLAIR THOMAS & CO. presents:

FRANCE

VICTORY GARDENS
Začek McVey Theater
2433 N. Lincoln Ave.

$35; $25 student/senior

Friday, January 20: 7 pm
Saturday, January 21: 7 pm
Sunday, January 22: 7 pm

60 minutes

chicagopuppetfest.org

Photo: Kristin Aasly Opdan
Future Crash collides Vincent de Rooij, puppeteer of site-specific performances and magician of the inanimate object, with The Neo-Futurists, Chicago’s purveyors of the first-person play and destroyers of the fourth wall. Traveling from the Netherlands, de Rooij leads the ensemble in an interdisciplinary collaboration, guiding the audience through a solar system of short work hidden throughout the Neo-Futurarium.

THE NEO-FUTURISTS present:

VINCENT DE ROOIJ AND THE NEO-FUTURIST ENSEMBLE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26 - SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

Future Crash

THE NEO-FUTURARIUM
5153 N. Ashland Ave.

$25, $15 student/senior with ID

Thursday, January 26: 7:30 pm
Friday, January 27: 7:30 pm
Saturday, January 28: 7:30 pm

70 minutes
Ubu The King brings Alfred Jarry’s seminal satire Ubu Roi to life in all its absurd, grotesque glory. In the hands of five power hungry puppeteer-performers, loveable tyrant Pa Ubu murders, lies and farts his way up to the Polish throne—and back down again. Beautifully designed and meticulously realized, Ubu is ridiculous, heartbreaking and spectacular. Chicago-based Rough House is committed to connecting individuals and communities through art.
A shaft collapses. A young miner, to keep working, must travel to Chiflón del Diablo, one of the most dangerous mines in Chile. Using white marionettes constructed of newspaper, this stunning North American debut ominously builds the violence of the global economy and affects a montage of sensations that are indisputably human. It is performed in silence. Based in part on the story by distinguished Chilean author Baldomero Lillo, and devised during trips to the mining town of Lota, Chiflón reflects a deep creative process.
Part mime, part contortion, Italy’s Teatro dei Piedi (Feet Theater) stages characters whose stories are by turns romantic, ironic, poetic and ridiculous—with their feet! Laura Kibel and Verónica González put their hands, feet and knees together to create extraordinarily articulate characters.

$20; $12 student; $10 children under 12/Istituto Italiano and Cervantes members
What’s more surprising than a plastic-bag-world, where funny and colorful creatures appear and transform? They fill up, they empty out, they fly, they get bored and they resemble us a little bit. With *Plastique*, Théâtre Puzzle brings to Adventure Stage a multicolored performance with unusual puppets, humor and unexpected situations. Created in Bulgaria and established in Montreal since 2004, Théâtre Puzzle presents a unique style by mixing various genres, traditional and contemporary.
The Festival Neighborhood Tour fosters an appreciation of puppetry in every corner of the city by presenting three Festival artists—Schroeder Cherry, Magali Chouinard, and Interstate Arts—in six neighborhood locations, for a total of 18 performances.

FREE and open to the public. Reservations required for Garfield Park shows only.

1. NAVY PIER
600 E. Grand Ave.
Saturday, January 21
2 pm Magali Chouinard; 3 pm Schroeder Cherry; 4 pm Interstate Arts

2. CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER
Preston Bradley Hall, 78 E. Washington St.
Sunday, January 22
11 am Schroeder Cherry; 1 pm Interstate Arts; 3 pm Magali Chouinard

3. GARFIELD PARK CONSERVATORY
Jensen Room, 300 N. Central Park Ave.
Wednesday, January 25
4:30 pm Schroeder Cherry; 5:30 pm Interstate Arts; 6:30 pm Magali Chouinard
*Reservations required

4. CALUMET PARK
9801 S. Ave. G
Thursday, January 26
11:30 am Magali Chouinard; 12:30 pm Interstate Arts; 1:30 pm Schroeder Cherry

5. MARQUETTE PARK
6743 S. Kedzie Ave.
Friday, January 27
5 pm Schroeder Cherry; 6 pm Magali Chouinard; 7 pm Interstate Arts

6. HAMILTON PARK
513 W. 72nd St.
Saturday, January 28
1 pm Magali Chouinard; 2 pm Interstate Arts; 3 pm Schroeder Cherry

These free events invite families to sample shows or share a full day of puppetry. Each show runs 40-45 minutes. Audiences are invited to meet the artists after each performance. See next page for details.
In *The White Woman*, Montreal’s Magali Chouinard takes a tender look at how solitude can be a special place, a place where we discover and rediscover ourselves. By daring to be silent, to move slowly and deliberately, and by steering away from a linear narrative, Chouinard invites audiences to invest themselves in an otherworldly visual poem.

In *Underground Railroad, Not A Subway*, Schroeder Cherry shares the story of a young boy who escapes slavery and runs North, encountering free blacks, sympathetic whites and slave catchers along the way. Will he make it? This 45-minute presentation is performed with a variety of puppets constructed by Schroeder Cherry: rod puppets, hand puppets and wood cutouts.

**See previous page for performance times and locations.**

**INTERSTATE ARTS**

Designed for families and kids, *PLAY with Your Food* by Detroit-based Interstate Arts mixes hilarious and bizarre live performers with sweet and spectacular puppets of all sizes in celebration of the universal human experience of eating. This original piece invites audiences to learn urban gardening and cooking how-tos, hear from a chatty muffin and get down with the sweet sound of a veggie synthesizer.

**MONTRÉAL, CANADA**

**DETOIT, MI**

**BALTIMORE, MD**

**Photo: Melissa Detlof**

**Photo: Schroeder Cherry**
TWO MARIAS

FEATURES HANDCRAFTED PUPPETS AND DIORAMA-LIKE SET PIECES IN A WALK-THROUGH, IMMERSIVE EXPLORATION OF THE WAYS THAT LOSS CAN SHIFT AND CHANGE OUR INNER LandscAPES.

THIS EXPERIMENTAL, INSTALLATION-BASED WORK (THE CULMINATION OF A TWO-MONTH RESIDENCY WITH DCASE) TAKES INSPIRATION FROM THE VAST, SURREAL BEAUTY OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST.

PORTMANTEAU T(W)O MARIAS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

T(W)O MARIAS features handcrafted puppets and diorama-like set pieces in a walk-through, immersive exploration of the ways that loss can shift and change our inner landscapes. This experimental, installation-based work (the culmination of a two-month residency with DCASE) takes inspiration from the vast, surreal beauty of the American southwest.

Presented by the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

This year the Festival features a variety of puppetry workshops for amateurs and professionals, children and adults. Please see the website for details: chicagopuppetfest.org

WORKS IN DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC WORKSHOPS and THE CATAPULT

PUPPET QUARTET: UCHICAGO PERFORMANCE LAB RESIDENCIES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

An immersive afternoon of four works in development in various sites of performance within the Logan Center for the Arts. Audiences will move from space to space to experience the works by noted puppet artists Liz Joyce, Jesse Mooney-Bullock, Molly Ross and Micheal Sommers. Attendees are invited to join the artistic staff for dinner following the performances.

Presented by Theater and Performance Studies and the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts

THE CATAPULT

This year the Festival launches The Catapult, a pilot program serving 20+ practicing professional artists from across the country. The program provides the artists with an intensive experience including professional puppetry workshops and backstage access to over a dozen shows. The Catapult is designed to advance the form of puppetry in the United States. Please see the website for details: chicagopuppetfest.org

FREE and open to the public, no reservations required

Saturday, January 21: 12 - 4 pm
Sunday, January 22: 12 - 4 pm
Drop-in/open studio

CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER
Dance Studio
78 E. Washington St.

PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS
VOLKENBURG PUPPETRY SYMPOSIUM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22 | 10 AM - 12:45 PM

MCA CHICAGO
Edlis Neeson Theatre
220 E. Chicago Ave.

Moderator: John Bell (Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry) with guests from the University of Chicago

FREE and open to the public, no reservations are required.

Puppetry and the Human Body
10 - 11:15 am
What kind of performance dynamics emerge between fabricated puppets and human bodies? **Panelists:** Magali Chouinard (Montréal), Stephanie Diaz (Chicago), Geumhyung Jeong (South Korea), Narcissister (Brooklyn)

Puppets as Narrative Vehicles
11:30 am - 12:45 pm
How do puppets tell stories, and what is distinct about their theatrical language? **Panelists:** Yngvild Aspeli (Director, Plexus Polaire, France), Sarah Fornace (Co-director, Manuel Cinema, Chicago), Dominga Gutierrez (Co-director, Silencio Blanco, Chile), Michael Summers (Director, Open Eye Figure Theatre, Minneapolis), Santiago Tobar (Co-director, Silencio Blanco, Chile)

The Ellen van Volkenberg Puppetry Symposium
brings together practicing Festival artists with scholars to consider the intersection of puppetry with other disciplines and ideas.

Presented by the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago in cooperation with Blair Thomas & Co. and the MCA Chicago.

STUDEBAKER THEATRE
Fine Arts Building
410 S. Michigan Ave.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28 | 5 - 6:15 PM

Literary & Cultural Adaptation: The Shahnameh
5 - 6:15 pm
Hear from the artists and adaptors of Feathers of Fire, the spectacular shadow puppet production of the Persian Book of Kings, as they consider cultural translations, traditional and contemporary imagery, and shadow puppetry. **Panelists:** Hamid Rahmanian (Director and Designer, Feathers of Fire), Ahmad Sadri (Translator and Carter Professor of Islamic World Studies and Professor of Sociology at Lake Forest College, with guests from the University of Chicago.

ELLEN VAN VOLKENBURG

Before 1912, the term “Puppeteer” did not exist in the English language. Ellen van Volkenburg, a director with the Chicago Little Theatre, needed a program credit for the actors she had trained to manipulate marionettes while speaking the text of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” Van Volkenberg coined this word at the dawn of the movement in puppetry that has brought us to the rich art form that is practiced today.
Blair Thomas & Co. is the organization behind the Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival. BT&Co. is devoted to the advancement of puppetry through original productions and presentation of the biennial Festival. The organization produces and presents work and programs that are vital to the cultural life of Chicago and influential in the field of puppetry nationally and internationally. Founded in 2002 in Chicago by puppeteer and director/designer Blair Thomas, BT&Co. has created over a dozen original puppet theater pieces and is a national and international touring puppet theater company.

The festival team

Cheryl Lynn Bruce  Colleen Sims  Blair Thomas
Claire Rice (Chair)  Ashley Smith  Chuck Thurow
Andrea Saenz  Rick Stoneham  Angel Ysaguirre

THE FESTIVAL TEAM

BLAIR THOMAS
Founder and Artistic Director

SANDY SMITH GERDING
Managing Director

KELLEY DORHAUER
Business Manager

NIC BARNUM
Production Manager

DAYNA CALDERON
Production Manager/Festival Neighborhood Tour

KRISTIN HAVERTY + SARAH GOONE
Catapult Director + Catapult Coordinator

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS:
Jacky Kelsey, Daniel Robles Lizano, Jesse Mooney-Bullock, Nicole Nienow, Mike Oleon, Marley Smith, Lucinda Sponholz

INTERNS:
Breanne Dengler, Samuel Barr, Molly Bryson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cheryl Lynn Bruce  Colleen Sims  Blair Thomas
Claire Rice (Chair)  Ashley Smith  Chuck Thurow
Andrea Saenz  Rick Stoneham  Angel Ysaguirre

THE festival team

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Development Director, Creative Partners

MEGGIE KEISER
Development Associate, Creative Partners

ALEX MONROE
Grants Manager, Creative Partners

JESS + ANDY WICKSTROM
Graphic Design, Website + Video Editing

JULIA ROHED/LEAGUE OF CHICAGO THEATRES
Box Office Manager

SARAH BEST STRATEGIES
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JAY KELLY/L.C. WILLIAMS & ASSOC.
Publicist

COVEY LAW
Artists Visas
Blair Thomas & Co. gratefully acknowledges the following donors for their generous support of the Festival and Blair Thomas & Co.

Festival Funders

$35,000 +

The REVA & David Logan Foundation

$30,000 - $34,999

MacArthur Foundation

$10,000 - $34,999

Alphawood Foundation Chicago

$5,000 - $9,999

Bloomberg Philanthropies

Arts Work Fund

National Endowment for the Arts

Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation

$1,000 - $4,999

The Chicago Community Trust

MacArthur Foundation Foundation

$500 - $999

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Bob Shapiro & Ginger Farley

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