

Olde World Puppet Theatre History Highlights

The Olde World Puppet Theatre has performed their award-winning medieval *Tales of Belvuria* series live for over 30 years, making it one of the longest running puppet series in the United States.

The series features 17 interlocking episodes with over 150 exquisite marionette characters- from Dragons to Unicorns, Witches, Pixies, Faeries, a King and Queen, and a Prince and Princess.

Each story tells children and families a new adventure from our very unique and original land of Belvuria. Each of the interlocking shows is complete within itself, a snapshot of the lives of the land's inhabitants, their trials and tribulations. The series was designed to bring family audiences of all ages into our fantasy world. They were performed in indoor live theatres which we designed and built in Pacifica and Palo Alto, California, as well as touring to the educational systems throughout the west coast.

We spent the '80's in San Francisco where we were Macy's puppet company for 11 Bay Area stores. Each of the four seasons brought a new show traveling to all of their stores, the largest being the Christmas Season in their downtown San Francisco store in their famous Bayberry Row.

We dazzled the opening of the San Francisco opera season by featuring our jewel-like marionettes in eight windows for Tiffany & Co. as well as providing winter holiday windows for three Saks Fifth Avenue stores. We also planted the idea for the talking Mother Goose by Worlds of Wonder and gave inspiration to Steven Sondheim for his Broadway hit *Into The Woods*.

The California Board of Education and the National Association of Librarians recognized us with awards for best children's plays for *The Tales Of Belvuria*.

The Olde World Puppet Theatre has made TV appearances in segments on PBS, *Evening Magazine*, numerous local news shows and public access cable TV shows. Some of our earlier Tales of Belvuria tapes were seen nationwide across Canada.

In 1992, The Olde World Puppet Theatre returned home to Portland Oregon, opening deluxe indoor marionette puppet theaters in both Mall 205 and Jantzen Beach Super Center. For the next 15 years they also continued performing their live traveling shows for festivals and local events throughout the western United States. It is a source of pride that our clients booked our live shows over and over again. Among our continuing clients: Macys, Nordstrom, I Magnin, Horst Mager's Octoberfest, Portland's and Seattle's Italian Festas, and the elementary educational systems throughout the western United States.

In 1994, The Olde World Puppet Theatre was hired by David Poulshock Productions, producers of the children's video *Wee Sing Under The Sea* to consult on its creation, build the three most complex puppets in the video, and to perform many of the most difficult segments.

From November 1996 to January, 1997, we curated and created ***The Incredible, Fascinating, Wonderful World of Puppets*** for The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the largest puppet event ever held on the west coast.

It featured over 1,000 puppets from around the world, hands-on activities for visitors and three months of live puppet performances by the most famous puppet troupes on the west coast. Drawing over 71,000 visitors, it helped OMSI recover from the river flooding that ravaged their campus. This is still one of our proudest achievements.

We began building giant puppets for Portland Scandinavian Revels, starting with an 18 foot tall Water Mother puppet operated by four puppeteers, followed by an eight foot tall wind mask that transformed on stage. Other puppets for that show included Dala Goats, each three to five feet tall. They were the first puppets to be printed from a computer and blown up to their huge size. The show went on to run in Seattle as well as Boston, taking our creations across the United States.

Continuing with outdoor live puppet spectacles, we teamed up with St. Wolfgang's Bavarian Guild to produce three shows performed at Pacific Northwest Renaissance Fairs. ***Lord of the Dance*** was a seven-minute giant puppet and mask event took over 68 performers and featured the music of Todd Allen. ***The Legend of Bily Goats Gruff*** featured all kinds of puppets from rod to giant parade puppet, thrilling the live audiences for 22 minutes. The 11th century ***St George and the Dragon*** was recreated as a living bard puppet piece and was performed for over seven years.

Portland's Starlight Parade and Rose Festival Parade have also featured our larger creations, including fifteen-foot tall Norse God puppets, Faffner, a giant purple smoke-belching dragon, and Renaissance-costumed walkaround characters, winning the company three Best Float awards.

Along the way, we have built several sets of puppets for other company's shows including Portland's Tears of Joy Theatre's ***Adventures of Perseus***, and the Ojai Valley (California) Land Conservancy's ***Quilly the Quail's Adventure Show***.

Working with Michael Curry Designs, we also designed and built 25 rod puppets for Orlando Disneyworld's live stage production of ***Hunchback of Notré Dame***, which was seen by over 21 million people during its six-year run. Other challenging projects included the Barq's Root Beer Dog and Sophie, the River Otter mascot for the Fort Vancouver Library system.

No, No, No Pinocchio, our madcap retelling of Carlo Collodi's treasured tale was created for the Festas Italiana in both Portland and Seattle.

We produced ***The Adventures of Robin Hood*** for Sherwood's annual Robin Hood Days festival. Resembling stained glass, these unique characters lifted off the windows of an outdoor chapel to battle foes in this romantic legend of old.

For Portland area festivals we built the puppets, props and sets for an outdoor version of *Wizard of Oz*. For those of you who missed the disco scene of the late 70's, an artist named Meco created a disco version of the movie which told the entire story in 27 minutes.

In our version, in addition to our usual cast of marionettes, several of the puppets were human-size, worn by the puppeteers, allowing them a totally new freedom to interact with the audience.

We have also been either puppet or costume consultant for such films as *Skin Deep* for Blake Edwards, *Mousehunt*, and *Titanic*, as well as winning the Portland Drama Critic's DRAMMY award for Best Costumer for Tygre's Heart Shakespeare Company's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Using all Oregon-based talent, we spent the last four years making the movie *Witch Key, a Prince's Adventure*, one of the most beloved and performed tales in the series, and the book, *The Enchanted Ring, a Princess's Adventure*, another of our most performed tales.

The creative forces behind the theatre are Master Puppeteer Steven M. Overton and Martin Richmond. Other company members include Michelle Brouse Peoples, Brittany Burton, Dan DeMoy, Candace Dobson, Bill Holznagel, Geordie Humphrey, Samantha Anne Maggio, Bobbi Overton, Wyatt Peoples, Justen Rambo, Steve Richmond, Jason Ropp, and Starr Sheppard-Decker.

Over the years, our memberships have included the San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild, The Columbia Association of Puppeteers, UNIMA and The Puppeteers of America.

We created The Olde World Puppet Theatre Studios with the goal, in the new digital age, to release our stories directly into people's homes for the whole family to enjoy and share. Printed and electronic books, DVDs and electronic downloads all fulfill this goal. Later we hope to film other puppet companies, preserving the traditions of American puppetry for future generations to come.

We operate three websites, <http://www.belvuria.com> - the destination website devoted to everything about our mythical kingdom; <http://www.puppetmuseum.com> , an international magnet for puppet enthusiasts, with visitors from over 85 different countries represented to date, and <http://www.st-wolfgangs.org> , a time capsule of the Renaissance Fair days of old.

For more information on any of these projects go to <http://www.puppetmuseum.com/CommercialWork1.html>