



Sarah Vigars
Puppet Maker | Artist

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Introduction

I am a **puppet maker specialising in WOOD and STRINGS**. I am based in South Devon (UK) with a workshop situated on the southern edge of Dartmoor National Park. In 2023 marionette making was added to the **Heritage Crafts Association's RED LIST of endangered crafts**. I am proud to be one of the few remaining professional makers of marionettes in the UK! I make puppets for small-scale theatre, street theatre, participatory projects, exhibitions and private collections. I sell work through my online shop and teach puppet making through online tutorials.

I am also a **puppeteer and lead artist for Flying with Strings Marionette Theatre**, which I founded in 2020 in collaboration with musician Louis Bingham. In early 2020 I was awarded a **Develop your Creative Practice grant by Arts Council England** which funded the development of my marionette making. This culminated in the creation of three bird marionettes that now feature in *Flying with Strings*, a puppet show for all ages. The puppets were exhibited later that year at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen's annual members exhibition, where they were **awarded the President's Prize** by renowned British sculptor **Peter Randall Page RA**. In 2021 the company received two small grants from the **Golsoncott Foundation (Exeter)** and the **Curious School of Puppetry (London)** which further aided to development of *Flying with Strings* into both a live performance piece and a digital film.

Qualifications and Training

Member of MAKE Southwest | 2019-2023

A craft charity based in Bovey Tracey, Devon UK (formerly the Devon Guild of Craftsmen)

Member of the Heritage Crafts Association | 2023

I am registered as a marionette maker on the HCA's 'Red List of Endangered Crafts'

Curious School of Puppetry Alumni | 2016

I attended a ten week short course in puppeteering, directed by Sarah Wright

Puppet Carving Courses Alumni | 2013-2015

I completed three short courses in woodcarving between 2013 and 2015, tutored by puppet maker John Roberts.

BA (Hons) Theatre Design | 2009-2012

First Class Hons, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Art Foundation Diploma | 2008-2009

Passed with Distinction, University College Falmouth

Professional Experience

Making Commissions

A chronology of craft commissions undertaken (2019-2023)

2023

Puppet Maker - 'Mr Fitz' Pose-able Puppets and Glove Puppets

Privately commissioned by author Garth Nix (Sydney, Australia), August - September 2023

Featuring in Garth Nix's publicity strategy for the launch of his new book 'Sir Hereward and Mr Fitz'

Woodcarver - Heraldic Components

Piece-work carving for heritage woodcarver William Barsley (South Devon), May 2023

Puppet Maker - Condor Marionette (2)

Privately commissioned by puppeteer and children's entertainer Jose Navarro (London), February 2023

2022

Prop Maker - Bespoke Storytelling 'Crankie' Box

Commissioned with ACE funding by storyteller Sara Hurley (South Devon), December 2022

Appearing in a new storytelling adaptation of local Dartmoor folktales from February 2023

Puppet Maker - Condor Marionette (1)

Privately commissioned by puppeteer and children's entertainer Jose Navarro (London), September 2022

Woodcarver - Westminster Angels

Piece-work carving for heritage woodcarver William Barsley (South Devon), June - August 2022

Puppet Maker - Pigeon Marionette

Commissioned with ACE funding by musician Miranda Lewis (London)

Appearing in a new children's theatre piece 'The Pigeon and the Peacock' from January 2022

2021

Puppet Maker - Siamese Kitten, Robin and Hummingbird Marionettes

Privately commissioned by puppeteer and children's entertainer Jose Navarro (London), throughout 2021

Puppet Maker - Cat Marionette

Commissioned with ACE funding by director Josh Lucas of 'Running Dog Theatre' (Exeter)

Appearing in a new street show 'Hobbs the Cat' from August 2021

Puppet Maker - Tabletop Puppets and Miniature Sets

Commissioned with ACE funding by 'Above Bounds Theatre Collective' (Plymouth)

Appearing in a new puppet film 'With Flying Colours', made in collaboration with year 5 pupils, May - June 2021

Puppet Maker - 2D puppets

Commissioned with ACE funding by storyteller Sara Hurley (South Devon)

Appearing in a new storytelling adaptation of 'The Musicians of Bremen' from March 2021

2020

Puppet Maker - Bird Marionettes

Self-led portfolio development, supported with a DYCP grant from Arts Council England, November 2019 - July 2020

Appearing in 'Flying with Strings' (my own puppet show for all ages) from March 2021.

2019

Puppet Maker - Transforming Hedgehog Puppet and Accompanying Props

Commissioned with ACE funding by Hedgespoken Storytelling Theatre (South Devon)

Appearing in a new storytelling show 'Iron-Brow and Thorn-Coat', April - August 2019

Performances, Films, Exhibitions and Events

A chronology of events (2020-2024)

2024

Newcastle Puppet Festival | April 2024

Flying with Strings has been invited to appear for three days at next year's Newcastle Puppet Festival (funding TBC)

2023

A Celebration of the Craft of Marionette Making | September 2023

I have been invited to appear as a demonstrator at an event hosted by the Art Worker's Guild (London). The event will celebrate the art of marionette making, including a panel discussion between industry experts about the future of the craft. Marionette making has recently been added to the Heritage Crafts Association's 'Red List of Endangered Crafts'.

'Flying with Strings' Puppet Film | June 2023

*Commissioned by Villages in Action (Devon) for their 'Active Care Homes through the Arts' project
Performed by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham and produced by Luke Jeffery (VIA)
DOP by Adam Michael and sound by Benjamin Akira Tallamy.*

2022

Newton Abbot Library | September 2022

*Family performance of 'Flying with Strings' by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham
Produced by Villages in Action (Devon)*

Totnes Festival | August 2022

*Three family performances of 'Flying with Strings' by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham
Produced by Totnes Arts Events (Devon)*

Beverley Puppet Festival | July 2022

Eight family performances of 'Flying with Strings' by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham

2021

Exeter Phoenix | October 2021

Two family performances of 'Flying with Strings' by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham

Curious Puppet Showcase at the Kneehigh Barns, Gorran Haven | October 2021

Preview performances of 'Flying with Strings' by Sarah Vigars and Louis Bingham to feedback from puppeteers

Your Voice: An Exhibition | July-August 2021

The marionettes from 'Flying with Strings' were exhibited at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, Wales

Art, Craft And Imagination: a peep into the world of puppets | January-May 2021

The marionettes from 'Flying with Strings' were exhibited at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Bovey Tracey, Devon

'Flying with Strings' Puppet Film | March 2021

*Commissioned by The Devon Guild of Craftsmen (Bovey Tracey) with a grant from the Golsoncott Foundation (Exeter)
The film was screened at the Devon Guild's puppetry exhibition 'Art Craft and Imagination' (above)*

2020

Devon Guild Of Craftsmen Annual Member's Show | September-November 2020

*The marionettes from 'Flying with Strings' were exhibited at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Bovey Tracey, Devon
The puppets were awarded the annual President's Prize by sculptor Peter Randall Page RA*

Teaching and Facilitation

Online and in person (2020-2023)

Online Tutorials - Adult Learning

I have spearheaded three online tutorial series in puppet carving between August 2020 and December 2022
These can be viewed online at www.sarahvigarsart.com/tutorials

Secondary and Further Education

1 day puppet making workshop with year 9 pupils, as part of South Hams AONB's 'Life on the Edge' project
King Edward VI Community College, Totnes, June 2023

2 day puppet making workshop with GCSE, A-level and Art Foundation students
King Edward VI Community College, Totnes, March 2022

Higher Education

Online masterclass in woodcarving for undergraduate and postgraduate students in theatre design
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff, November 2021

Past Work Experience

Highlights from my early career (2014-2017)

Puppet Maker, Puppeteer and Lead Artist for 'The Fisher-Knight's Tale'

I spearheaded a new children's puppet show, created in Autumn 2016 with a grant from Arts Council England
Dir. John Roberts, Wild Toy Theatre (Devon), UK tour 2016-2017

Set and Costume Designer for two productions with the Theatre Royal Plymouth

'Scenes from an Execution' by Howard Barker, Dir. Nikolas Partridge, June 2017
'Buckets' by Adam Barnard, Dir. Lee Hart, August 2016

Puppeteer and/or Puppet Maker for two productions with Puppetcraft, Dartington

'The Tin Forest' by Helen Ward, Dir. John Roberts, UK tour 2016-2017
'Monkey' by Michael Rosen, Dir. John Roberts, UK tour 2014-2015

Assistant Designer and Prop Maker for three productions with Theatre Alibi, Exeter

'The Boy Who Climbed Into The Moon' by Daniel Jamieson, Dir. Nikki Sved, UK Tour 2016
'Olive and the Dream Train' by Daniel Jamieson, Dir. Nikki Sved, UK tour 2015
'Hammer and Tongs' by Daniel Jamieson, Dir. Nikki Sved, UK tour 2014

Additional Information

Fabrication skills: Specialist skills include wood carving, wood working and scale model-making. Complimentary skills include basic carpentry, basic pattern cutting, fabric painting/dyeing and machine sewing

Computer skills: I am proficient with the following software and web platforms: Final Cut Pro, Movavi, Sketchup, basic CAD, Photoshop, Gimp, InDesign, Cricut, Squarespace, Shopify, Instagram

I have further professional experience in health and social care, hospitality and office administration.
I have held a clean UK driving license since 2013

References

John Roberts

Puppetcraft
Dartington, Devon
john@puppetcraft.co.uk

Sarah Wright

The Curious School of Puppetry
London / Cornwall
sarah@curiouspuppetry.com

William Barsley

Heritage Woodcarver
Dartington, Devon
info@williambarsley.com

Addresses and phone numbers for the above are available upon request