

ARTICLE EXTRAS



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quickly.”

They also consider the overall makeup of the slam. “We like to have a diverse selection of styles of puppetry,” Pleviak explained.

Puppet variety

The upcoming Puppet Meltdown will feature tabletop puppets, rod puppets, hand puppets and shadow puppets, plus shadow improv, a new form of puppetry that was developed this summer at the O’Neill National Puppetry Conference in Connecticut.

“We have some really clever films this time,” Pleviak reported. “We have one called, ‘Goldfish Swan Lake,’ which utilizes actual goldfish.”

Pleviak, who holds a master’s degree in youth theater and puppetry from the University of Hawaii, will present “The Shadow Puppet Conspiracy,” which is an example of shadow improv puppetry. Her company will also show a short video from a series called “Dinosaurs in the Office,” which features small dinosaur bobble-head puppets.

Sea Beast member Mary Kate Rix will present “Funkbot 5000” and the company will also show “Tiny Bubbles,” about a mermaid lounge singer.

Getting weird

Davey Krofta participated in the slam last year and is looking forward to being part of it again. Krofta studied fiber and material at the Cleveland Institute of Art, “which basically means pattern-making, weaving and dyeing,” he said. “They didn’t have a strong focus on making clothes. They wanted people to get a little bit weirder.”

Since Krofta was always interested in performance, puppetry was a natural move for him. He started creating props and then worked with a classmate on “Food Parties,” a cooking show with puppets on the Independent Film Channel.

Krofta calls his informally organized company, Davey K and Friends.

Last year’s show was at Gorilla Tango’s Chicago space. “It was a real interesting experience because it was the first time I had done any kind of slam,” Krofta said. “It was cool to see a bunch of different puppeteers. This is their art. It’s not what they get paid for but it’s what they love to do.”

This year, Krofta's group will present two pieces, both featuring the same puppet — a little blue goblin character. In "The Lonely Necromancer," a mystic will conjure a spirit and send it into the goblin's body.

The second piece, "Level Five Dwarf," "is like a live music video for a song that some friends of mine did quite a few years back," Krofta said. "It's about the shenanigans that a little dwarf gets up to on his rise to power in kind of an ode to Dungeons and Dragons."