



BACKGROUND

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On September 23, 1978, Kermit the Frog, accompanied by his creator, Jim Henson, cut the ribbon to officially open the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta. Founded by Barbara and Bill Wyllie Executive Director Vincent Anthony, the Center is the largest organization in the United States dedicated to the art form of puppetry and focuses on three areas: performance, museum and education.

Housed in a former school building to which \$9 million in renovations have been made, the three-story Center includes the 350-seat Mainstage Theater, 170-seat Downstairs Theater, 70-seat Theater III, atrium, museum, museum special exhibits, rehearsal space, library, workshop rooms, multi-purpose room, Museum Store and administrative offices.

Each year the **Family Series** presents original adaptations of classic stories, as well as new works, in a wide range of puppetry styles by the Center company. The **New Directions Series (NDS)**, geared to adult audiences, features innovative shows by the Center's company and by American and international artists. As part of **NDS**, **Xperimental Puppetry Theater (XPT)** showcases new works for audiences 18 and up. **SummerFest** offers a wide array of puppetry for the entire family with selections by guest artists.

The Center's special exhibits and global museum, **PUPPETS: The Power of Wonder**, provide visitors with a basic understanding of the performance process. A portion of the permanent collection of more than 1,000 puppets is on view throughout the year, with additional thematic exhibits that illustrate puppetry's impact as a teaching tool, a healing implement and communication vehicle. The interactive museum provides hands-on educational fun with over 350 ancient and contemporary puppets from around the world, including Link Hogthrob and Dr. Strangepork of Muppet's fame; Wayland Flower's Madame; and a Skeksis from *The Dark Crystal*.

The Education Program offers workshops for children and adults, including special programs for teachers. Create-A-Puppet workshops, offered in conjunction with each family performance, allow participants to make a puppet relating to the show. Outreach programs, available in the metro Atlanta area, focus on the global aspects of puppetry. The Education Program also includes Distance Learning via videoconferencing. This two-way interactive technology enables the Center to broaden its service to schools, libraries and other agencies across the United States and beyond. This program has served 35 states, 3 countries, and over 80,000 students and teachers since the program's inception. The Adult Series is designed for adults ages 16 and older. Classes are taught by puppetry professionals and cover such topics as character voice, puppet building and puppet manipulation.

The Center for Puppetry Arts has been recognized both nationally and internationally as a center for excellence by several esteemed organizations. The National Endowment for the Humanities recently awarded the Center a prestigious \$40,000 museum planning grant. The highly respected Ford Foundation selected the Center in 2000 as one of only 28 organizations across the country to be recognized for success in management and innovative programs. The Kresge Foundation has awarded the Center three different challenge grants to support its capital campaigns. The Center was also the only theater group chosen by the 1996 Olympics to participate in all four years of the arts festival program, garnering recognition from *Newsweek* as "one of the most exciting companies in American theater."

The Center serves as the headquarters of UNIMA-USA, the American branch of the international organization Union Internationale de la Marionnette, the world's oldest theater organization.

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The Center for Puppetry Arts is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts; the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly (the Council is a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts); and contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations. Major funding for the Center is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council. The Center is a constituent of TCG and member of the Atlanta Coalition of Performing Arts. The Center also serves as headquarters of UNIMA-USA.

