

Sesame Street's Muppet Performers

Fran Brill was the first female Muppet performer hired by Jim Henson for *Sesame Street*. Since joining the show, she has won numerous Emmy awards and created the characters of Zoe, Prairie Dawn, and many others. Her other work with the Muppets includes *The Muppet Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, *The Jim Henson Hour*, *Dog City*, *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, *CinderElmo*, *Zoe's Dance Moves* and *Play with Me Sesame*. As an actress, Brill has appeared off-Broadway at the Roundabout Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, Ensemble Studio Theatre and was twice nominated for the Drama Desk Award. She has also played leading roles at many regional theatres including the Long Wharf, Yale Rep., Arena Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and the Mark Taper Forum. Her film credits include *Midnight Run*, *City Hall*, *What About Bob?* and *Being There*. She has guest-starred on many night time dramas including *Law and Order*, *Law and Order Criminal Intent*, *Third Watch* and *Against the Law*. She has also been heard on hundreds of commercials and the cartoon series *Doug* and *Sheep in the Big City*.

Kevin Clash, whose characters include Elmo, Hoots the Owl and Baby Natasha, is *Sesame Street's* Muppet Captain. He began building puppets at the age of ten and performed on Baltimore's Harbor Front as a teenager. Clash's first television work was for the CBS affiliate in Baltimore. He came to *Sesame Street* after attracting the attention of Muppet designer Kermit Love. Clash's film credits include Jim Henson's 1986 fantasy film *Labyrinth*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles I* and *II*, *Muppet Treasure Island*, *Muppets from Space*, and *Elmo in Grouchland*. His television work includes *The Great Space Coaster*, *Captain Kangaroo*, *The Jim Henson Hour*, *Jim Henson's Dog City*, *Dinosaurs* and *Muppets Tonight*. He also was Co-Executive Producer for *Elmopalooza*, Co-Producer for *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, and Co-Executive Producer for *CinderElmo* and *Elmo's World*. Clash

won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work as Elmo and Hoots the Owl in Season 21, and in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 for his work as Co-Executive Producer for Outstanding Pre-School Children's Series.

Stephanie D'Abruzzo, in her 12th year on *Sesame Street*, lends her talents to Curly Bear, as well as a myriad of walk-on characters on the street. She also brings life to many inanimate objects on *Elmo's World* and can be heard in a variety of animated and Muppet inserts. Since she began working with the Muppets in 1993, she has performed and voiced nearly 200 characters for film and television. D'Abruzzo has also worked on *Oobi*, (playing Uma and Inka), *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Donna's Day*, *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, *Binyah Binyah!*, *The Puzzle Place*, *Rory's Place* (for which she co-wrote a pair of episodes with husband Craig Shemin), the television specials *Elmo's Magic Cookbook*, *Elmopalooza* and *CinderElmo*, and the 1999 feature film *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*. As a voice talent, her credits include *Sheep in the Big City* and *The Book of Pooh*, as well as several promos and commercials. Stephanie is currently starring in the Tony-winning musical *Avenue Q*, for which she received a 2004 Tony nomination, a Theatre World Award, a special Outer Critics Circle Award (for Outstanding Ensemble and Puppet Artistry), as well as a 2003 Drama Desk nomination for the show's Off-Broadway run.

Eric Jacobson began his career with The Jim Henson Company in 1994 as a puppeteer on *Sesame Street*. Since then he has come to be known as the man who performs Bert and Grover in the absence of legendary puppeteer and acclaimed director, Frank Oz. In addition to these *Sesame Street* characters, Jacobson has recently begun performing other characters Oz made famous, including Miss Piggy and Fozzie Bear. Jacobson's long list of film and television credits includes *Bear In The Big Blue House* (Harry the Duck), *The Puzzle Place* (Kyle), and performing

another well-known pig, Piglet, on Disney's *The Book of Pooh*. Jacobson has been honored for his work on several occasions and holds the distinction of being the first puppeteer to work on multiple film and television productions cited for excellence by UNIMA (the international organization begun by Jim Henson dedicated to the art of puppetry) in the same year. However, Jacobson does not limit himself exclusively to TV and film. He also performs on stage, and recently appeared in *Symphonie Fantastique*, an underwater puppet show that played to rave reviews at the HERE art space in New York's Soho. Jacobson also performs live puppet theater in New York City with The Puppet Company, The Cosmic Bicycle Theater, and The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater in Central Park.

Joseph Mazzarino began working with the Muppets in 1989 and has been performing and writing for *Sesame Street* since 1990. He performs a number of characters on the show, including Stinky the Stinkweed, the Two-Headed Monster, Papa Bear and one very strange Elephant in a tutu. Mazzarino's writing credits also include *Sheep in the Big City* and *Bear in the Big Blue House*. He has co-written screenplays including *Muppets in Space* and *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, and wrote and performed on the first ever Henson direct-to-video feature, *Kermit's Swamp Years*. Mazzarino is currently working as a writer on a feature length video of the Disney Channel's *Stanley*.

Jerry Nelson began working on *Sesame Street* in 1970 and over the years has been involved in the development of dozens of Muppet characters, including Count von Count, Sherlock Hemlock and Herry Monster. Starting in the business as a film, stage and television actor, he was a member of the Bil Baird Puppet Company and The Jim Henson Company before joining *Sesame Street* in its second season. Since then, Nelson has worked on most of the Muppet television and film projects. He also plays the guitar, writes songs and performs with several bands.

Carmen Osbahr, who performs Rosita and other characters, began her relationship with *Sesame Street* as a teenager in 1985, when she attended a puppetry workshop sponsored by The Jim Henson Company in her native Mexico City. She appeared on various television shows for Televisa (Mexico City), including *The Treasure of Knowledge*, and worked on *The Songs of Cri-Cri*, a special starring Placido Domingo. Osbahr was a member of the *Plaza Sesamo* cast before moving to New York, where she maintained ties to the show while pursuing her college education. In 1989, she officially became a Jim Henson Muppet performer, working for *Sesame Street*, *City Kids*, *Dog City*, *Aliens in the Family*, and *Bear in the Big Blue House*. Osbahr's other credits include Kiki in *The Puzzle Place* and a role in *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*. Carmen lives in CT with her husband and four year old son.

Frank Oz has been one of the major creative forces behind the Muppets since before *Sesame Street* began. He first met Jim and Jane Henson in 1961 and became a Muppet performer two years later, at the age of 19. Oz performs the characters Bert, Cookie Monster and Grover on *Sesame Street*.

Martin Robinson has been on staff at The Jim Henson Company since 1980. Originally hired to play Aloysius Snuffleupagus, he also lends his talents to Telly Monster, Slimey the Worm and many other characters. He has played an active role in hiring and training puppeteers for local *Sesame Street* productions in Mexico, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Russia, and Bangladesh. Robinson's stage credits include designing, building and performing Audrey II in the Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, and set designing and building for the Broadway production of *Frogs*. He played the Cat in the Hat on the television show *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, and performed the animatronics for Leonardo in the movie *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Recent projects include *Allegra's Window* on

Nickelodeon, for which he coordinated the construction of the puppets and played several characters. Robinson got into the business as a member of the Bil Baird Puppet Company.

David Rudman's relationship with The Jim Henson Company dates back to 1981, when he came to work for the Muppet Workshop as a summer intern. He has been a Muppet performer since 1983, and a *Sesame Street* performer since 1985 bringing to life Baby Bear, Two-Headed Monster, Davey Monkey, Humphrey, Sonny Friendly, Norm (assistant to the Grand High Triangle Lover), and Cookie Monster. David was recently nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work on *Sesame Street* as Baby Bear and Cookie Monster. Rudman's film credits include *Muppets Take Manhattan*, *A Muppet Christmas Carol*, *Labyrinth*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*. His television work has ranged from *Dinosaurs* to *Saturday Night Live*, as well as several major prime-time specials. Rudman also served as Muppet Coordinator for *City Kids*, performed the character Bobut on *Aliens in the Family*, and has written and directed several live-action and animated films for *Sesame Street*, MTV, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central. Television viewers have seen Rudman's work in commercials for Coke, McDonald's, Cheerios, Disney World and the National Wildlife Federation, and may recognize his "digital" performance as Fingerman in the popular Ziploc storage bag spots. David is also one of the creators and executive producers of the Nick Jr. *Baby's Curious Buddies* home videos.

Caroll Spinney, who plays both Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch, has been a puppeteer since he was eight years old, and has been with *Sesame Street* since its inception. His characters have been seen on more than 4,000 episodes, and he starred in the feature film *Follow That Bird*. *Sesame Street* television specials have taken Spinney to China, Japan, Australia, France, Germany, Canada, and the

United Kingdom, and has performed on a number of other shows, including 141 episodes of *Hollywood Squares*. He has earned four Emmy's, two Gold Records, and two Grammy Awards. In 2000, the Library of Congress declared Spinney, as Big Bird, a "living legend." He was most recently awarded The Christopher Award and has written a book, [The Wisdom of Big Bird](#).

John Tartaglia has been a Muppeteer with *Sesame Street* for the past nine seasons, starting at age 16. On *Sesame Street*, he performs Alfred Duck, and a host of other Muppets ranging from penguins to sheep. Tartaglia is also part of the "Elmo's World" team of computer-graphic puppeteers. Recently, he had the honor of playing the Muppet, Tingo, in *Sesame English*, which airs internationally. He also played the part of DJ2 in *Animal Jam*, a new Jim Henson Company series airing on Discovery Kids! Tartaglia's work can also be seen in *The Book of Pooh*, *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Between the Lions*, and *Dog City*. An accomplished musical theater performer, he spent his teenage years dancing as Cookie Monster and Oscar the Grouch at Sesame Place in Langhorne, PA, and was recently on Broadway in *Avenue Q*, the acclaimed hit musical, playing the lead role.

Matt Vogel has been performing various pigs, chickens and monsters on *Sesame Street* since 1996. He is one of the performers on "Elmo's World" and currently performs Big Bird in "Journey to Ernie." Matt has performed puppets for Cartoon Network's *Big Bag*, Disney's *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *MATHmatazz*, *Sesame English*, HBO's *OZ*, *The Puzzle Place*, *Between the Lions* and the Columbia Pictures' film *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*. He has a BFA in Theatre and has appeared regionally in productions including *Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Foreigner* and *The Sum of Us*. Matt is also front man for the band, The Mighty Weaklings, and performed Audrey II in the Broadway production of *Little Shop of*

Horrors. He lives in New York City with his wife, Kelly, and three children, Jack, Hunter and Lyla.

Steve Whitmire has been a principal Muppet performer for more than 25 years, and has been performing Ernie and Kermit the Frog since 1990. He became interested in the Muppets by watching *Sesame Street* as a child growing up in Georgia. As a teenager, he began working at a nearby theme park, which led to valuable experience on local television. After meeting Carroll Spinney at a Puppetry Festival, Whitmire auditioned for Jim Henson and went to work on *The Muppet Show*. Among his many film credits is *Muppet Treasure Island*, for which he performed both Kermit and Rizzo the Rat.