

***Sesame Street* Puppeteers**

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, Fran 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*.

Leslie Carrara-Rudolph joins the *Sesame Street* cast this season performing the Street's newest resident, Abby Cadabby. Leslie is a professional entertainer, puppeteer, teacher, and artist who has written, created, and performed several shows and interactive workshops for all age groups throughout the United States. In addition to *Sesame Street*, she is currently writing and illustrating children's books and working as a freelance creative consultant and comedy writer. She is also performing in her latest cabaret, *Young at Heart* and working in voice over.

As a puppeteer, Leslie began her career on *Muppets Tonight* and later performed main characters for the Jim Henson Company on *The Wubulous World of Dr. Seuss*, *Animal Jam*, and the soon to be released series *Frances*. She puppeteered the dog,

Blue, for Nickelodeon's TV show *Blue's Room* and performs Prairie Dawn's mom for *Sesame Beginnings* produced by Sesame Workshop.

Leslie designed and created an original live interactive musical stage show for the Walt Disney Co. called *The Wahoo Wagon*. The show featured herself and an amazing cast of puppeteered supporting characters. The project graced the stage at Hollywood's El Captain Theater Saturday mornings.

A participant in numerous outreach projects, Leslie joyfully volunteers throughout her community. Her degree in Child Development Through the Arts from San Francisco State assists her enormously in designing programs that are educational as well as entertaining.

Kevin Clash, whose characters include Elmo, Hoots the Owl and Baby Natasha, is *Sesame Street's* Senior Puppet Coordinator and Muppet Captain. He began building puppets at the age of ten and performed on Baltimore's Harbor Front and local television 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*, *Dinosaurs* and *Muppets Tonight*. He also was Co-Executive Producer for *Elmopalooza*, *CinderElmo*, and *Elmo's World*; Co-Producer for *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*; and also directs *Sesame Street* episodes and other projects. Most recently Clash directed and Co-Produced the DVD series *Sesame Beginnings* for Sesame Workshop. Clash won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work as Elmo and Hoots

the Owl in Seasons 21, 35 and 36, and in 2001-2006 for his work as Co-Executive Producer for Outstanding Pre-School Children's Series.

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*, *The Puzzle Place*, 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 *The Upside Down Show*, *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*.

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 Sésamo* 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 Connecticut with her husband and 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 has also lent his talents to Telly Monster, Slimey the Worm and many other characters. He has played an active role in hiring and training puppeteers for international *Sesame Street* co-productions in Mexico, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Russia, Bangladesh, and India. Robinson's stage credits include designing, building and performing Audrey II in the Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, and designing puppets for the Lincoln Center 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 plays several characters. Robinson got into the business as a member of the Bil Baird's Marionettes.

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 Award 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 Baby Nick Jr. *Curious Buddies* home videos and *Jack's Big Music Show* on Noggin.

Carroll 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 shows, 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 he 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 awarded The Christopher Award and has written a book, *The Wisdom of Big Bird*. Most recently he received the Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences and is also an accomplished artist and lecturer.

Matt Vogel has been performing various pigs, chickens and monsters on *Sesame Street* since 1996. He is the understudy for Carroll Spinney's Big Bird and is the performer of Baby Big Bird in the *Sesame Beginnings* DVD series. He has worked as a puppeteer on Disney's *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Oobi*, *Between the Lions*, *Blue's Room*, *The Puzzle Place*, *Big Bag*, *MATHmatazz*, the Columbia Pictures' film *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, HBO's *OZ* and for *GORILLAZ Live at The Apollo*. Matt has a BFA in Theatre and appeared regionally in productions including *Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Foreigner* and *The Sum of Us*. Most recently, he appeared on Broadway (along with Martin P. Robinson) as a member of the

puppeteering team for Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*. He has a production company with Joseph Mazzarino called Pratz Productions which produced the award-winning short film *Murder, He Squeaked*, as well as short films for *Sesame Street* Home Video and Nick Jr.'s *Curious Buddies*. He is also front man for the band, *The Mighty Weaklings* (featured on *Jack's Big Music Show*). Matt lives in New York City with his wife, Kelly, and their three children Jack, Hunter and Lyla.

Steve Whitmire became interested in being a puppeteer while watching the Muppets on *Sesame Street* as a teenager. He began working as a puppeteer at an Atlanta theme park, which led to invaluable experience on local television. After meeting Carroll Spinney at a puppetry festival, he auditioned for Jim Henson and began his Muppet career in London working on *The Muppet Show*. Whitmire has been a principal Muppet performer since 1978 and has worked on every major Muppet project since. He has performed Ernie and Kermit the Frog since Jim Henson's death in 1990 and his other notable characters include Rizzo the Rat, Bean Bunny, Beaker, Statler, Wembley Fraggle and Sprocket the Dog.