

Sesame Street Season 38

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 TV 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 is a multi-faceted performer and puppeteer with a wide variety of characters and talents. Leslie's television work spans a variety of acclaimed children's television programs, including *Sesame Street*, on which she currently performs the fairy-in-training, Abby Cadabby. She is also Ginger Sprite on the Disney Channel's new show *Johnny & the Sprites*. Leslie got her start on *Muppets Tonight* for ABC and then worked on a number of productions including the DVD series *Sesame Beginnings* for Sesame Workshop, *Animal Jam* for the Learning Channel, and season two of *The Wubulouse World of Dr. Seuss* for Nickelodeon.

Additionally, Leslie was a member of the PBS puppet tour that visited shelters in Louisiana and Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Some of Leslie's stage credits include *Sweeny Todd* (Beggar woman), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey) and *Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. As a comedian she has done stand up at Caroline's comedy club in New York, performed with the Henson puppet improv group Puppet Up at the Aspen Comedy Festival and the Australian Comedy Festival. She designed, created and starred in an original live interactive musical stage show for the Walt Disney Company called *The Wahoo Wagon* which was performed at Hollywood's famous El Capitan Theatre. Leslie is currently touring with her new show *Entertaining Thoughts*, an interactive musical story telling free for all, designed to fire up the imagination of the young and young at heart.

In her spare time, Leslie illustrates children's books, teaches workshops, and creates her own brand of magic and joy. You can find out more about her at www.lesliecarrara-rudolph.com

Kevin Clash, whose characters include Elmo, Hoots the Owl and Baby Natasha, is *Sesame Street's* Senior Puppet Coordinator and Muppet Captain as well as Sesame Workshop's Senior Creative Advisor. 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. Clash directed and Co-Produced the DVD series *Sesame Beginnings* for Sesame Workshop. Most recently, he directed and was Co-Producer for Sesame Workshop's outreach DVD: *Talk, Listen, Connect II: Deployments, Homecomings and Changes*. Clash won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work as Elmo in Seasons 21, and 35-37, and in 2001-2008 for his work as Co-Executive Producer for Outstanding Pre-School Children's Series. In September 2006, Clash released his autobiography, *My Life As A Furry Red Monster, What Elmo Has Taught Me About Life, Love, and Laughing Out Loud*.

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.

Joey 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 Murray, Stinky the Stinkweed, the Two-Headed Monster, Papa Bear and Horatio the Elephant. 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 Plácido 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, Between the Lions and Bear in the Big Blue House. Osbahr's other credits include Kiki in *The Puzzle Place*, a role in *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland* and as Lily in *Johnny and the Sprites* for the Disney Channel. Osbahr lives in Connecticut with her husband and son.

Frank Oz was a major creative force behind the Muppets since 1963. Oz performed Bert, Cookie Monster, and Grover for more than 30 years. While Eric Jacobson and David Rudman have taken over the bulk of his character work, Oz still occasionally comes by *Sesame Street* to perform.

Martin Robinson has been on staff at The Jim Henson Company since 1981. 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, India, Indonesia, and Ireland. Robinson's stage credits include designing, building and performing Audrey II in the Off Broadway and Broadway productions 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*, performed the animatronics for Leonardo in the movie *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and was a featured performer on four seasons of the popular British satire *Spitting Image*. Recent projects include *Allegra's Window* on Nickelodeon, for which he coordinated the construction of the puppets and plays several characters, and designing/directing *Night on Bald Mountain* and *Firebird* in concert at Carnegie Hall. He has been on staff at the O'Neill National Puppetry Conference since it's beginning in 1991. Robinson got into the business as a member of 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 *Sesame Street* performer since 1985 bringing to life Cookie Monster, Baby Bear and Two-Headed Monster. Rudman 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. He has performed in numerous television shows, specials and films including *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Muppet Christmas Carol*, *Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Labyrinth* and *Elmo in Grouchland*. Rudman also has written and directed several live-action and animated films for *Sesame Street*, MTV, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central. Television viewers may recognize his "digital" performance as Fingerman in the popular Ziploc storage bag spots. Currently, Rudman is co-creator, co-executive producer and director of *Jack's Big Music Show* on Noggin, *Curious Buddies* for Nick Jr. and *Bunnytown* for Playhouse Disney.

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 he has performed on a number of other shows, including 141 episodes of *Hollywood Squares*. He has earned five Emmy's, most recently in 2007 for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work as Oscar the Grouch, 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](#). He is an accomplished artist and lecturer. In 2006, he received the Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences.

Matt Vogel has been performing various pigs, chickens, monsters and a range of other characters 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 Noggin's *Jack's Big Music Show*, *Oobi*, Nick Jr.'s *Blue's Room*, Disney's *Bear in the Big Blue House*, PBS' *Between the Lions*, *The Puzzle Place*, *Big Bag*, *MATHmatazz*, the Columbia Pictures' film *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, HBO's *OZ* and *GORILLAZ Live at The Apollo*. Matt has a BFA in Theatre and appeared regionally in productions including *Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Foreigner*, *The Deputy* and *The Sum of Us*. He appeared in the Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors* as a member of the puppeteering team for Audrey II (along with Martin P. Robinson). Matt has a production company with Joseph Mazzarino called Pratzfall 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, whose song "Rocket Ship" is featured on Noggin's *Jack's Big Music Show* and whose CD "You Can't Rock Sittin' Down" was released in 2008. He lives in New York City with his wife, Kelly, and their four children Jack, Hunter, Lyla and Keaton.

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 Fraggles and Sprocket the Dog.