



Season 42 Puppeteer Bios

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*, *Play with Me Sesame* and many home videos. 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 nighttime dramas including *Law & Order*, *Law & 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*.

Brill served on the board of the Screen Actors Guild and currently serves as Vice President on the board of directors of the Jim Henson Legacy. Visit Brill at www.franbrill.com.

Leslie Carrara-Rudolph is a multi-faceted performer and twice Emmy-nominated puppeteer for her work on *Sesame Street* as fairy-in-training **Abby Cadabby**. Carrara-Rudolph's television work spans a variety of acclaimed children's television programs including Disney's *Johnny & the Sprites* (Ginger Sprite), Nickelodeon's *Wubulous World of Dr. Seuss* (Morton, Little Cat A, etc.), The Learning Channel's *Animal Jam* (Edi) and currently Nickelodeon's hit cartoon series *Tough Puppy* (Peg Puppy). Her voice can also be heard on *The Electric Company* as all the characters in the "Haunted House" cartoon sketches (Wolf Man, Mummy, Bat and Aunt Hildegard). She does background walla for *The*

Simpsons and is the official voice match for Disney's character Yzma from *The Emperor's New Groove*.

Carrara-Rudolph has a B.A. in Child Development through the Arts from San Francisco State University. She got her start as a puppeteer on ABC's *Muppets Tonight* as Spamela Hamderson. She has appeared in several outreach videos for Sesame Workshop including as Prairie Dawn's mom in *Sesame Beginnings* and most recently as Jesse in *When Families Grieve* and Rosita's mom in *Coping with Changes* for Sesame Workshop's military families initiative. Movie credits include female vampire in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and background in the new *Muppet Movie* and *Men in Black II*.

Some of Carrara-Rudolph's stage credits include *Sweeney Todd* (Beggar woman), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey), *Parallel Lives*, and *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. As a comedian, she performed stand-up at Caroline's Comedy Club in New York and performed with the Henson puppet improv group at Aspen Comedy Festival, the Australian Comedy Festival and off-Broadway at the Union Square Theater. 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 Theater. Carrara-Rudolph is currently touring with her new show *Wake up Your Weird*, an interactive musical short story designed to fire up the imaginations of the young and young at heart. The show received the 2009 Jim Henson Grant and an UNIMA Citation of Excellence (under the name *Entertaining a Thought*). She has been the guest artist twice at the Ojai playwright conference and teaches character development at the O'Neill Puppetry Conference. She will be the 2011 guest artist at the O'Neill.

In her spare time, Carrara-Rudolph illustrates children's books, teaches workshops and creates her own brand of magic and joy. You can find out more about Leslie's show at www.wakeupyourweird.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 consultant. He began building puppets at the age of 10 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. Moreover, he directed and was co-producer for Sesame Workshop's outreach DVD *Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployments, Homecomings and Changes*.

Recently, Clash appeared in and directed *Talk, Listen, Connect: When Families Grieve*. He also directed the Muppet™ segments of the PBS primetime special, *Families Stand Together: Feeling Secure in Tough Times*. Clash won the 2011 Emmy Award for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work as Elmo on *Sesame Street* and also won the award for Seasons 21, 35-37, 39 and 40. In 2001-2008, 2010 and 2011, he won 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*.

Clash is the subject of the 2011 documentary *Being Elmo: A Puppeteer's Journey*, winner of the Special Jury Prize at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival.

Eric Jacobson began his career with The Jim Henson Company in 1994 as a puppeteer on *Sesame Street*. Since then he has become 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 now also performs 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*, *Jack's Big Music Show*, *Bunnytown* 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 dedicated to the art of puppetry) in the same year. However, Jacobson has not limited himself exclusively to TV and film, having appeared in many theatrical shows, including the original run of Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique*, an underwater puppet show that played to rave reviews at the HERE art space in New York. Jacobson has also performed live puppet theater in New York City with The Puppet Company, The Cosmic Bicycle Theatre 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 **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*. He also wrote and performed the first ever Henson direct-to-video feature *Kermit's Swamp Years*. In 2010, Mazzarino won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his performances of Murray, Stinky and Blogg.

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 appeared on television in *The Naked City*, *The Defenders* and multiple

commercials. On stage, he performed in *The Cherry Orchard* as well as *The Caine Mutiny* at Arena Stage in Washington DC. Nelson appeared in lead roles in *Make A Million* and *Dark at the Top of the Stairs* at the Gateway Playhouse in Belmar, NY. 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. Last year Nelson launched a CD of ten songs he wrote on the album "Truro Daydreams."

Carmen Osbahr, who performs **Rosita**, **Ovejita** 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*, *Xe-Tu* and *The Songs of Cri-Cri*, a special starring Placido Domingo. Osbahr was a member of the *Plaza Sésamo* cast before moving to New York.

In 1989, Osbahr 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 Lily in *Johnny and the Sprites* for the Disney Channel. Her most recent work, and the most important to her, is Sesame Workshop's outreach programs with military families.

Osbahr lives in Connecticut with her husband and son.

Frank Oz has been 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 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 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 its beginning in 1991. Since 2009, he and his wife Annie Evans have provided humorous commentary and films concerning the raising of their twin daughters for the *Sesame Street* Parents website (sesamestreet.org/parents/blog). Robinson got into the business as a member of Bil Baird's Marionettes.

David Rudman has been a *Sesame Street* Muppet™ performer since 1985, bringing to life **Baby Bear**, **Cookie Monster** and **Two-Headed Monster**. Rudman has received two Emmy Award nominations for Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series for his work on *Sesame Street*. He has performed in numerous television shows and specials from *Saturday Night Live* to the *Colbert Report*. His film credits include *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Muppet Christmas Carol*, *Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Labyrinth*, *Elmo in Grouchland* and the upcoming *The Muppets*. In addition to his work on *Sesame Street*, Rudman is also co-owner of Spiffy Pictures where he is co-creator, co-executive producer and director of *Jack's Big Music Show* and *Curious Buddies* on Nick Jr. and *Bunnytown* on Playhouse Disney. Rudman recently co-produced and directed several web videos for Sesame Workshop including *Cookie Monster Auditions for Saturday Night Live* and *Conversations with Bert*.

Caroll Spinney has been the heart and soul of **Big Bird** and **Oscar the Grouch** since *Sesame Street's* premiere episode on November 10, 1969. He has loved working on "the Street." Big Bird hit the road to China with Bob Hope in 1979 and has danced with the Rockettes and with prima ballerina, Cynthia Gregory. *Sesame Street* specials have taken Spinney to China, Japan, Australia, France, Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom, and he has performed on various television shows, including 146 episodes of *Hollywood Squares*. Spinney also conducted symphony orchestras throughout the United States, Australia and Canada. En route, Big Bird has been feted with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, celebrated with his likeness on a U.S. postage stamp and as Big Bird, Spinney was named a "Living Legend" in 2000 by the Library of Congress. Spinney enjoys being a lecturer and has earned four honorary doctorates. He is also an accomplished author and artist, and co-authored and illustrated his autobiography, *The Wisdom of Big Bird*. Spinney takes great pride in his 2006 Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award, his five Emmys, two Gold Records and two Grammy honors. He is the 2003 recipient of the "Legacy for Children Award" and The Christopher's James Keller Award in 2004. Spinney starred in the much-loved feature film, *Follow That Bird*.

Spinney and his wife, Debra, have been together for thirty-eight years and love living in New England. They have three children and four grandchildren.

Matt Vogel has been performing various pigs, chickens, monsters and a range of other characters on *Sesame Street* since 1996. He is part of the Emmy Award-winning directing team for *Sesame Street* and is the assistant Muppet™ captain on the show. He is the understudy for Big Bird and performs Baby Big Bird in the *Sesame Beginnings* DVD series. He has worked as a puppeteer on Disney's *The Muppets*, the Columbia Pictures film *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, *30 Rock*, *The Muppets: Letters to Santa*, *Jack's Big Music Show*, *Oobi*, *Blue's Room*, *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Between the Lions*, *The Puzzle Place*, *Big Bag*, *Oz* and *GORILLAZ Live at The Apollo*. Vogel's production company, Pratzfall Productions (with Joseph Mazzarino), produced the award-winning short film *Murder, He Squeaked*, as well as short films for *Sesame Street*, *Sesame Street* home video and Nick

Jr.'s Curious Buddies. He has a BFA in Theatre and appeared in the Broadway production of *Little Shop of Horrors* as a member of the puppeteering team for Audrey II (along with Martin Robinson). He is lead singer of The Mighty Weaklings, a band featured on Nick Jr.'s *Jack's Big Music Show* with the song "Rocket Ship" from their record, "You Can't Rock Sittin' Down." He lives in Connecticut with his wife and their four children.

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 project since. He has performed **Ernie** and Kermit the Frog since Jim Henson's death in 1990 as well as Beaker and Statler who were originally performed by Richard Hunt. Whitmire's other notable characters include Rizzo the Rat, Bean Bunny, Wembley Fraggle and Sprocket the Dog.