



BEAUMONT
SCHOOL

*A tradition of Ursuline
education since 1850*

Spring 2005

*Our Mission: Beaumont, a Catholic School in the Ursuline
tradition, educates women for life, leadership and service*

To Whom it May Concern:

After many years of watching Margaret Nelson teach puppet making workshops at folk festivals in a couple different states, I was delighted at the opportunity to have her teach for the Beaumont Summer Arts Workshop in Cleveland Heights, Ohio last summer. Margaret's professionalism and organization for the two sorts of puppets she taught was superb. The girls got clear directions with examples and their swift completion of the first to the point of engaging in puppet play was astonishingly fast. With their appetite for creating characters whetted by this, she launched them into the more complex puppet, carefully herding them through each stage. I don't think the girls were ever left confused about what was to be done. Margaret has done this so many times that she has each step clearly worked out in her head both in how it's done and how she explains it to her students. Along the way, Margaret challenged the girls to think about all sorts of issues to do with the puppet characters they were creating, in a thoughtful nurturing way. She helped the girls bring forth some amazing characters with well developed personalities. From the critters, to the "Stereotypical Princess" to the astonishing quirkiness of "Uncle Fungus" each and every puppet was a success. The girls who started the two weeks thinking "I'm too OLD for puppets" (at 11 and 12) were some of the most enthusiastic by the end of the session.

Besides showing the Workshop Campers (middle school girls) how to make puppets, Margaret provided a wonderful example of the way a studio works and an artist creates: importance of thinking things through, keeping tools in order, supplies in place and cleaned up, working step by step, respecting the studio and others' work. Her willingness to make components of the puppets that were outside the time or capability limitations of the girls was worked in so well that they never lost feeling of ownership of the work in the finished product. Most remarkable to me was how much work she had them do with a glue gun with no one getting burned: quite a feat for this age range.

I cannot say enough good things about Margaret and her gentle, loving, yet structured and substantial puppet programs. Her many years of working in puppets give her such a rich context to offer students. I am hoping to have her back again in my three year cycle of classes.

**Joanne Laessig,
Director Summer Arts Workshop
JLaessig@beaumontschool.org**