LIFE

CAROLE D'AGOSTINO MIXES PUPPETRY AND ORNITHOLOGY AT 'THE TINY BIRD SHOW'



A woodpecker puppet and a barn owl statue sit on a puppet stage on Oct. 17, 2026. The Tiny Bird Show was held in the Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL JEFFERS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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A magnificent performance of "The Tiny Bird Show" was put on by Carole D'Agostino on Saturday at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry. In the show, D'Agostino used toy puppetry to present 13 birds and their backgrounds.

D'Agostino is a performer, presenter and puppet builder who graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1997 and has put on many shows.

"I've done some puppet festivals throughout New England and the Northeast," D'Agostino said. "I've also performed at the Children's Festival in West Liberty, Iowa."

D'Agostino began doing puppetry when she was 11. At the time, she did many forms of theater, such as clowning and commedia dell'arte. She also said her dreams of pursuing puppetry originated from a Bread and Puppet Circus show that she watched in Vermont.

"It inspired me to say, 'Oh, this is a job,'" D'Agostino said. "Then I found out about the University of Connecticut's puppet arts program, and I said, 'That's where I want to go to school.'"

The theater was packed with people of all ages, making a successful turnout.

"I was thrilled to see the turnout today at the Ballard Institute, especially on the weekend," D'Agostino said. "It's hard to get students to come to shows, but I was really thrilled and honored that all of our colleagues were able to come and see the performance today."

Among those who came was Oliver Bellman, a first-semester puppet arts student. He came to the show because it aligned with his interest in puppetry.

"I received the email that all puppet arts majors were welcome to come see the show," Bellman said. "I like any opportunity I can get to see different people perform puppetry, so I can use it to do good and better things with my work."

Before the show, bird stickers and ocular glasses made from cardboard were offered to attendees. The ocular glasses were meant to help attendees capture the details of D'Agostino's birds, which were miniscule in size. She began with a blue butterfly and walked around the theater with it, allowing audience members to touch it.

D'Agostino said the butterfly was meant to tell the audience that the show will be fun and won't have jump scares. After showing the butterfly, she opened her puppet box's curtain, revealing a backyard with plants. She added a bird feeder, birdbath and bird seeds.

The first bird D'Agostino presented was the chickadee, which had an orange belly and a black head. She said there are different kinds of chickadees, such as black-capped and boreal.

Chickadees come out in the morning, according to D'Agostino. Whenever a predator is close to them, they call out. The call's length indicates the predator's proximity to the bird.

Next was the tufted titmouse, a gray bird that's native to the east coast, which lives in forests and loves eating insects, according to D'Agostino.

After the tufted titmouse was the white-breasted nuthatch. The bird is mostly white but has gray and black feathers. Like the tufted titmouse, it enjoys going to trees and eating insects.

Next was the northern cardinal, D'Agostino's favorite bird. D'Agostino said it likes eating birdseed and red flowers, which give it its red color. She also said female northern cardinals have a lighter color than males.

After the northern red cardinal was the American robin. D'Agostino said it's been Connecticut's state bird since 1943. She also said American robin eggs are blue, a color that the bird's predators can't see.

An interesting bird that D'Agostino presented was the goldfinch, which makes its nests from spiderweb silk. D'Agostino mentioned that the bird gets its nutrients from sunflowers.

The next two birds were blue. The first was the eastern bluebird, which likes to hang out with nature and return to its nest daily. The second was the blue jay, which can be found in many parts of North America. D'Agostino said the bird sounds like a crow because of their shared DNA.

After the eastern bluebird and blue jay was the ruby-throated hummingbird, the show's smallest bird. Like the northern cardinal, ruby-throated hummingbirds love red flowers.

Next was the mourning dove, which is mostly brown, hangs out with bunnies and rests on telephone poles. D'Agostino said the bird's name originates from its call, which sounds like a melancholic cooing sequence.

After the mourning dove were the American woodcock and the downy woodpecker. The American woodcock has a long beak and likes eating worms. Meanwhile, the downy woodpecker loves pecking wood and eating wasps.

The final bird D'Agostino presented was the barn owl, whose feathers are silent when the owl flies. She mentioned that barn owls are very active at night and eat small mammals like bunnies and mice.

Bellman said he really enjoyed the show.

"I loved all the different little bird elements," Bellman said.



Carole D'Agostino showcases two blue jay puppets on Saturday, Oct. 17, 2026. The Tiny Bird Show was held in the Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry.

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