

# Get to Know PigPen Theatre Co.

Interviews conducted by Rachel Carpman



**RYAN**  
The old man

**Name:** Ryan Melia  
**Hometown:** Acton, MA  
**Instruments:** Guitar, banjo, and fiddle  
**What your favorite myth?** *The Odyssey*  
**Land, sea, or dirigible?** Land. Sweet, sweet land.  
**Did you have a lot of imaginary friends?** Yes. Their names are Ben, Dan, Curtis, Alex, Arya, Matt and Dr. Hammerhands.  
**What's your favorite children's book?** *Calvin and Hobbes*.  
**If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?** Wherever they're keeping the aliens...



**MATT**  
Matheson

**Name:** Matt Nuernberger  
**Hometown:** Vernon Hills, IL  
**Instruments:** Guitar and piano  
**Favorite phase of the moon?** Crescent  
**What song do you wish you'd written?** "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi" by Radiohead.  
**What would you do if you weren't making theatre?** Making muffins?  
**Do you have a surprising phobia?** The feeling of newspaper.  
**If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?** Sweden.



**BEN**  
Callahan

**Name:** Ben Ferguson  
**Hometown:** Austin, TX  
**Instruments:** Guitar and banjo  
**What's your favorite phase of the moon?** Definitely a Harvest Moon.  
**Did you have a lot of imaginary friends? (do you still?):** Sometimes I think the guys in PigPen are my imaginary friends and one day I'll look around and I'll just be five years old and talking to myself.  
**What's your favorite children's book?** *The Wild Baby* or *Where the Wild Things Are*. I was a very calm child.  
**What's your least favorite breakfast cereal?** Raisin Bran. Two scoops is too much.  
**Do you have a surprising phobia?** Holding lizards. No thank you.



**DAN**  
Mabelu

**Name:** Dan Weschler  
**Hometown:** Hershey, PA  
**Instrument:** Accordion  
**What's your favorite PigPen rehearsal memory?** We once did a Halloween run of the show in which Matt cackled like a witch and inserted the word "spooky" in every line he could (which was all of them). It was supposed to be an understudy rehearsal but it ended up being a completely unique theatrical event—witnessed only by the stage managers and never to be repeated.  
**What's your favorite phase of the moon?** Waxing gibbous, because it makes me think of an ape at a salon.  
**What song do you wish you'd written?** "Johnny B. Good." There's a chance, given advances in our understanding of the space-time continuum, that I still could.  
**What would you do if you weren't making theatre?** Billionaire philanthropist.  
**What's your favorite children's book?** I just read *A Monster Calls* which is really more of a "turn a full grown man into a quivering mass of tears and emotion" book than a children's book. But it does have pictures. Highly recommend.



**CURTIS**  
Lewellyn

**Name:** Curtis Gillen  
**Hometown:** Pittsburgh, PA  
**Instruments:** Bass and drums  
**What's your favorite myth?** The Green Man, also known as Charlie No-Face  
**What's your favorite phase of the moon?** Full Moon.  
**What song do you wish you'd written?** "Young Man in America" by Anais Mitchell.  
**What would you do if you weren't making theatre?** Teaching theatre to kids or playing in a Paul Simon cover band.  
**What's your favorite children's book?** *Where the Wild Things Are*.  
**What's your least favorite breakfast cereal?** Kix. Kid Curtis tested. Kid Curtis not approved.



**ARYA**  
Cookie

**Name:** Arya Shahi  
**Hometown:** Tucson, AZ  
**Instrument:** Percussion  
**What's your favorite PigPen rehearsal memory?** Our "emergency rehearsal" before our very first performance seven years ago as freshman at Carnegie Mellon. We had spent a whole week writing a show that relied heavily on darkness (for shadow puppetry and such) but hadn't told the school that. The festival programmer had PigPen performing at 11:45 am in a room with massive windows. We spent our "emergency rehearsal" before the show running back and forth to our dorms and shoving our mattresses into the window frames. I spent most of our first performance together terrified a mattress was going to fall onto the heads of our teachers and friends. Luckily, things only got better for us from there.  
**Favorite phase of the moon?** It's not exactly a phase, but I love the Red Moon. I remember seeing my first one as a child visiting family in Iran and then again a few years later in the U.S. It continues to remind me that people all over the world are looking up.  
**What song do you wish you'd written?** Any of the finer works by the Beatles or Eminem.  
**Least favorite breakfast cereal?** Life. Honestly, I've never even tried it—you can't expect me to think so "big picture" 15 minutes after I wake up.



**ALEX**  
old woman/captain

**Name:** Alex Falberg  
**Hometown:** Chagrin Falls, OH  
**Instruments:** Banjo and piano  
**What's your favorite PigPen rehearsal memory?** I'll never forget the day we played with new LED lights that could allow us to change perspectives of a shadow puppet on a screen. It allowed us to start thinking like camera operators on a film. We embraced language that can be found on a film set: cuts, pans, fades, zooms—a cinematic set of tools in a theatrical setting.  
**Land, sea, or dirigible?** Super scared of the sea, the land gets a little boring, heights are scary too...maybe a grounded dirigible that's on a beach?  
**What song do you wish you'd written?** Dvorak's "New World Symphony."  
**What your favorite children's book?** *Mr. Nonsense*.  
**What's your least favorite breakfast cereal?** I love them all. Don't discriminate.

Watercolor rendering by Lydia Fine