

**Editorial : Puppet is a multifaceted word**

The *PuppetPlays* database currently distinguishes forty-two different kinds of puppets, marionettes and animated objects, classified according to their animation technique. These categories are still under construction, the corresponding records have not all been written. Some of them will perhaps be gathered under the same name, others will certainly be added: how could we put an end to the taxonomy of a constantly changing set? A toy, an anatomic part, a few lines drawn on a post-it note, a vegetable or a fruit: every object coming from our ordinary life can be used as a puppet, providing that it is put on stage with enough imagination and skill.

This is the reason why enclosing puppetry in a simple definition, clearly delineated, is so difficult. Nothing can be said to be *the* puppet. Only do instruments exist, some specific, some diverted, which actors use to give life to other beings.

The puppeteer François Lazard proposes "interpretation by delegation": the comedian delegates to an object the task of representing the character. But is a character always involved? Contemporary playwriting leads us to areas where every word has to be re-examined.

But one thing, however, is certain: puppetry is born in the eye of the spectator, when seeing the illusion of an inner life where he or she did not expect it.

[Prof Dr Didier Plassard]

Illustration : *Histoires post-it*, stage direction by Johanny Bert, 2010.



**In the puppet theater, Pulcinella keeps his place of prince**

Eduardo Scarpetta (1854-1925), actor, author and natural father of Eduardo De Filippo (1900-1984), is known to have put an end to the undisputed success of Pulcinella on the Neapolitan theatrical scene, replacing him with Felice Sciosciammocca, a character without a mask representing a Neapolitan bourgeois. If in some plays of Scarpetta, Felice Sciosciammocca is still accompanied by Pulcinella, in *Miseria e nobiltà* (*Misery and Nobility*) from 1887, one of his greatest successes, Sciosciammocca is the only protagonist.

While at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pulcinella was in decline in the actors' theatres, he remained the star of Neapolitan glove puppets. It is therefore not surprising that in 1936, in a puppet theater, Pulcinella dethroned Felice Sciosciammocca by becoming the new protagonist of *Miseria e nobiltà*. Francesco Ferraiolo (1905-1973) and his brothers Salvatore, Michele and Enzo reduced the plot of the play and gave Pulcinella the role of Felice Sciosciammocca, that of a poor and starving man who pretends to be a prince.



More information on the play *Pulcinella Principe per due ore* on our database [puppetplays.eu](http://puppetplays.eu). (in French)



Adriano Ferraiolo's Pulcinella. ©Photo Anna Leone

This play continues to be performed by Adriano Ferraiolo (1944) who, unlike his father Francesco, doesn't use the swazzele that gives the character an artificial voice. In his version of *Miseria e nobiltà* entitled *Pulcinella principe per due ore* (Pulcinella prince for two hours), Pulcinella has a human voice, he doesn't give blows of the stick and he corrects the multiple language mistakes of his compère. It would seem that he had to lose his typical characters to take over the role originally written for Felice Sciosciammocca. In reality, the blows of the stick and the word plays are assumed first by Pulcinella's son, Pulcinelluccio, and then by Pulcinella himself, who regains part of his spirit when he plays the prince. So even when he loses his bird's voice, Pulcinella remains the prince of glove puppets.

[Dr Anna Leone]

**A travelling shadow theatre in the Museo del Precinema in Padua (Italy)**

At the *Museo del Precinema* (Museum of Precinema) in Padua, a collection entirely gathered by Laura Minici Zotti, you can find a treasure: a travelling shadow theatre, fully equipped for a performance (a frame, two lanterns, several sets of silhouettes, zinc scenery, storage boxes).

The connection with the Théâtre du Chat Noir is obvious: the silhouettes are those of the cabaret's successful plays (*L'Épopée* [The Epic], *La Marche à l'étoile* [The Walk to the Star], *Le Sphinx* [The Sphinx], *Le Carnaval de Venise* [The Carnival of Venice], *L'Âge d'or* [The Golden Age]) and the Japanese aesthetic of the paintings adorning the frame is very close to the prints that illustrated the cabaret's programmes. This travelling theatre was probably used by the artists of the Chat Noir during their tours, for which Henri Rivière, not without criticising their lucrative purpose, made and repaired the silhouettes.

The programmes on tour were similar to those of the Parisian soirées. The great lyrical or epic plays were the core of the evening, while songs and shorter plays served as curtain raisers or interludes. The boniment of these short pieces was usually improvised, but could also be based on a predetermined text, such as Maurice Vaucaire's dramatic poem for *Le Carnaval de Venise*, which Rodolphe Salis recited with fantasy. Unfortunately we keep no record of these improvisations, and the beautiful collection in Padua does not tell us anything about them.



Photograph of the travelling shadow theatre in the Museo del Precinema in Padua (Italy), late 19<sup>th</sup> century

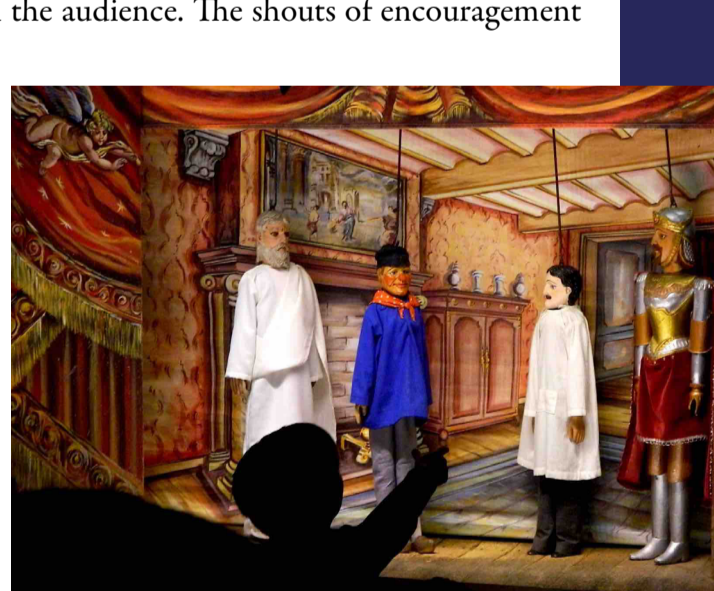
[Ma Sophie Courtade]

**The dialogues with Tchanchès (My meetings with the puppeteers of Liège)**

"Dear children, you can answer, but don't interrupt the play when the person is speaking."

A Liège puppet show is above all a dialogue with the audience. The shouts of encouragement "Tchanchès! Tchanchès! Tchanchès!" double the force of the *côp d'tièssse épwèsomé* (poisoned head blow) of Tchanchès, the emblematic character of this show. The Liège puppet is made to dialogue with the spectator, as Denis Fauconnier, owner and main puppeteer of the Théâtre à Denis in the Sainte-Marguerite district, reminds us: "In Liège puppets, we often have a synopsis with a few written or annotated passages, but the rest is done by improvisation with the children, because the children talk to the puppets, and so the show can be greatly modified by the audience from one time to the next".

In the past, the repertoire of Liège's puppets was drawn from chapbooks (the famous *Bibliothèque bleue*), in particular from chivalric romance annotated for performance. What role does tradition occupy in puppeteers of today? Anthony Ficarrotta, puppeteer of the Théâtre de marionnettes du Musée de la Vie wallonne, plays very few old texts, "because Liège puppets are not folklore, they are an artistic expression that must evolve and take its place in our time. [...] [We] must be able to talk about something other than chivalry [...]". Ficarrotta therefore writes about ecology (*La Mare aux déchets*), about junk food (*Le Resto machiavélique de Gronald*), about gender equality (*Chevaleresse*), "about all the current and interesting issues that can be discussed with children and that also allow the Liège puppet theatre to be highlighted in a different way".



"It is him, the villain!" *Tchanchès et la Joconde* by Anthony Ficarrotta at Théâtre de marionnettes du Musée de la Vie wallonne. ©Photo : Yanna Kor

While Tchanchès engages in a dialogue with the spectators, another dialogue takes place behind the scenes. The Liège puppeteer also speaks with Tchanchès and, through him, with his heritage. How to represent *La Naissance* or *Les Quatre Fils Aymon* today? Are Roland, Charlemagne or Renaud still relevant? And how to maintain the dialogue between Tchanchès, who is almost 150 years old, and the children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

[Dr. Yanna Kor]

Read more about the plays *Les Quatre Fils Aymon* and *Chevaleresse* on [puppetplays.eu](http://puppetplays.eu) (in French).

**News**

**SOON :**  
 Study day *Dramaturgies du geste. Faire récit par l'image et le corps dans le texte de théâtre de 1945 à nos jours*, on 10 march 2023.

Carole Guidicelli, *PuppetPlays* research ingeneer will take part in the event with a paper entitled :  
 « Le geste défaillant de la marionnette »

This day, organised by Pénélope Dechaufour and Élise Leménager-Bertrand, will take place at La Baignoire, 7 rue Bruveys, Montpellier.

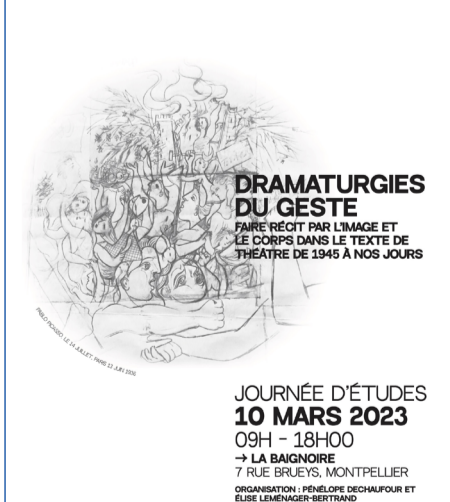
**CONTACTS**

*PuppetPlays* (GA 835193)  
 Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3  
 Site Saint-Charles 1  
 71 rue du Professeur Henri Serre  
 34090 Montpellier - FRANCE

Principal investigator  
[didier.plassard@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:didier.plassard@univ-montp3.fr)  
 Research Engineer  
[carole.guidicelli@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:carole.guidicelli@univ-montp3.fr)

[@ERC PuppetPlays](https://www.facebook.com/ERC PuppetPlays)

[#PuppetPlays](https://twitter.com/PuppetPlays)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement ERC 835193