

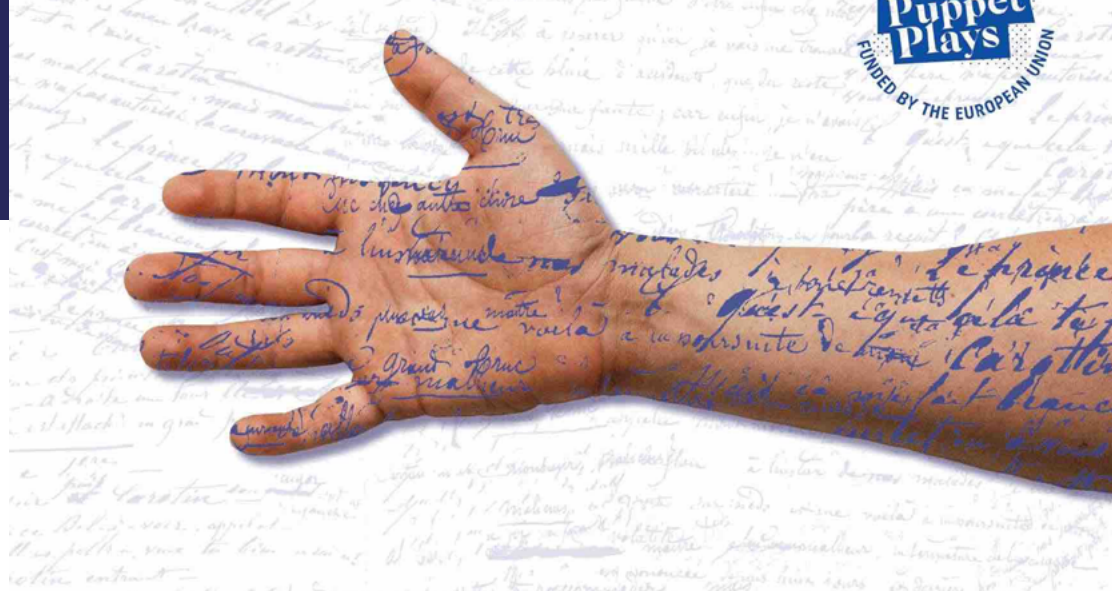
Editorial : Portrait of the puppeteer as an author

The title of *PuppetPlays*' second (and last) international conference is of course a hint at James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), but even more at Dylan Thomas' collection of short stories *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940), whose title sounds more strangely. Considering performing artists as authors, in the strongest meaning of this word, is not self-evident. Sometimes they are only acknowledged as performers, sometimes, for a handful of them, they are crowned with the title of "creators", but this grandiloquent word isolates them in a deceptive singularity: it does not help us to think about the meaning of their works, nor about their relationships with the works of others.

An author, in contrast, may converse with other authors. He does not stand alone in the middle of the world to which he has given birth, but he is part of a heritage and of a landscape. While imposing his mark, he negotiates his place and his means of expression with the society in which he lives and to which he addresses himself. Above all, there are several ways to assume this role, when there is only one, vertical, to impose oneself as a creator. And puppeteers, through the diversity of their practices, show us many ways in which one can become an author.

To reflect on this with the *PuppetPlays* team, some forty international researchers and artists will meet in Montpellier from 23 to 25 May. The conference will be broadcast live on the Zoom platform, with simultaneous English translation. We hope that many of you will attend it, either on site or remotely, and that you will take advantage of this meeting to share your questions and thoughts with us.

[Prof. Dr. Didier Plassar]d



2nd international PuppetPlays conference: more information

PORTRAIT OF THE PUPPETEER AS AN AUTHOR. WRITING PRACTICES FOR PUPPETS IN WESTERN EUROPE (17TH - 21ST CENTURY)

After a first conference dedicated to the plays composed by writers (*Literary Writing for Puppets in Western Europe*, Montpellier, 2021), the second international conference will be devoted exclusively to works produced by puppeteers: traditional plays and scripts, adaptations and variation, collective works, "écritures de plateau".

Coming from different European and American countries, researchers and artists will pay attention to the following questions:

- When is the text set? How is it determined by the choice of instruments, materials or collaborators?
- What means are used for the composition? Writing? Storyboarding? Video recording?
- What traces remain of the performance once its life cycle is over?
- What roles can institutions play in the preservation and valorization of this theatrical heritage?

The conference will alternate between papers by researchers, speeches by artists and round tables.

WHEN? 23rd to 25th, May 2023

WHERE?

IN PERSON
 in Montpellier
 Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3
 Site Saint-Charles 1
 71 rue du Professeur Henri Serre
 34090 Montpellier - France

Tramway stops :
 Place Albert 1^{er} – Saint-Charles (ligne 1)
 Albert 1^{er} – Cathédrale (ligne 4)

REMOTELY
 The whole conference will be broadcast live on the Zoom videoconference platform with simultaneous interpretation into English from French.

WEBSITE
puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr
puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr/fr/actions/colloque-portrait-marionnettiste-auteur

CONTACTS :
 Claire-Marine Parodi
claire-marine.parodi@univ-montp3.fr
 Carole Guidicelli
carole.guidicelli@univ-montp3.fr

Phone number
 +33 (0)4 11 75 71 84

International conference open to all, with free access, in person and by videoconference.

[LINK TO THE PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME](#)

Cuticchio, a family in flesh and wood

The families of Sicilian marionettists are sometimes similar to those of the paladins: equally numerous and full of stories. This is the case with Mimmo Cuticchio's, one of the most famous "opranti" today. His father Giacomo (1917-1985) gave his first performances at the age of fourteen for children in an improvised theatre. In the 1950's, after having directed a theatre in Palermo, he took his *pupi* to the villages before returning to the city in 1969. He had numerous texts, now preserved in the library of Palazzo Branciforte in Palermo: twenty-four notebooks on the cycle of the paladins of France (each of which can contain up to ten episodes), but also cycles of handwritten outlines on brigands and several short cycles or single shows (lives of saints, tragedies of Shakespeare, serials, shows for tourists, etc.)

Giacomo Cuticchio loved his 300 *pupi* like children and he passed on his passion to his children of flesh and blood. As soon as he learned to write, Mimmo was charged by his father to copy his notebooks. After the opening of his theatre in Palermo, in 1973, he composed new texts to renew the repertoire, taking as subjects chivalrous stories, historical events, literary works, adaptations of theatrical plays or operas. With more than forty texts registered at the Italian Society of Authors and Publishers, he is the most prolific author of the family.

It was Mimmo who convinced his sister Anna to become a marionettist. Kidnapped at the age of fifteen and forced to marry the young man who had abducted her, she emigrated to Turin, then managed to emancipate herself: she divorced, worked, raised her two children. In 1979 she returned to Palermo and worked with Mimmo before opening her own theatre. There, she directs all her shows and interprets all the voices, male or female. This is a unique case in Palermo, where these tasks are usually done by men. Anna has written stories about female warriors, an adaptation of Pietro Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria rusticana*, a *cunto* about a trade unionist killed by the mafia, plays for glove puppets... Even her brother Nino, best known as a marionettist and *pupi* constructor, has written plays, notably a show about the ancient secret society of the Beati Paoli.

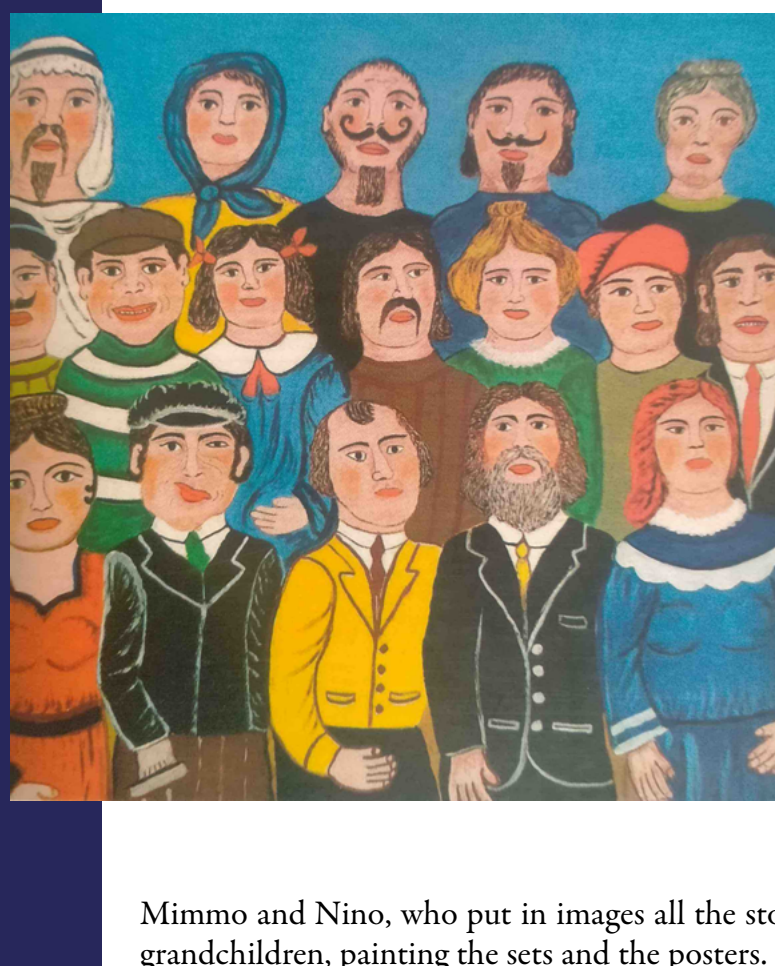
The passion for *pupi* continued in the following generation, in particular with another Giacomo Cuticchio (son of Mimmo), composer, pianist and marionettist, author of some chivalrous plays, of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and of a *cunto* in music.

It is very difficult to be synthetic when speaking of these *opera dei pupi*. But all the stories of these marionettists and their *pupi* are well resumed in a sentence of Pina Patti (1926-2013), mother of Anna,

Mimmo and Nino, who put in images all the stories staged by her husband, her children and grandchildren, painting the sets and the posters. Pina Patti had married Giacomo at the age of fifteen, during the war. Pregnant, she had to escape the bombs, sleep in a cave, see dozens of dead soldiers... Then she took care of 300 *pupi* and seven children, often born on the theatre stage. When a journalist asked her to briefly tell about her life and work, she answered: "the *opera dei pupi* is a beautiful theatre that makes you forget everything".

Picture : Audience attending the show *El Retablo de Maese Pedro*, Pina Patti, 2004 (Figli d'Arte Cuticchio Archive). In this panel, like in all of Pina Patti's works, her family members have fun in recognizing their own faces.

[Dr. Anna Leone]



From clocks to shadows... The theatre of Emmanuel Cottier

Backstage in his Carouge workshop, Emmanuel Cottier (1858-1930) devoted his life to two passions: clockmaking and theatre. Like the Geneva jeweller Pierre-François Charbonnier (1828-1881), Emmanuel Cottier, who bought Charbonnier's theatre and equipment, found in shadow theatre a way of reconciling his inclination for spectacle to precision mechanics. He made numerous ingeniously articulated silhouettes, now preserved in the Geneva Museum of Art and History. Their remarkable restoration reveals the meticulousness of the mechanisms, identified specifically so that the illusion of life that animates the shadows on the screen overshadows this partial automation of the movements.

The programme of the performances, in which Mrs. Cottier took part, included comic and picturesque sketches, whose silhouettes were reused to play different "street scenes" or "lake scenes". The historical account of *L'Escalade* [The Climbing], which recounts the night assault of Geneva by the Duke of Savoy's troops in 1602, was the most ambitious play, with a specific set of silhouettes and a development in seven tableaux. According to Jean-Pierre Cottier's inventory of his grandfather's collection, his grandfather wrote the "commentaries" of his plays. He could be inspired by ordinary dialogues (for example, when writing the street scenes), reuse popular songs or adapt some of Séraphin's successful plays. We would like to find all these documents, the "scenarios" and "playlets" mentioned by Jean-Pierre Cottier, in order to better appreciate the "Geneva spirit" of these shows that critics and amateurs celebrated in the local press.



Emmanuel Cottier with his wife in the wings of his theatre, ca. 1925-30. From: Chapuis Allfred. *Le Monde des Automates*. Paris / Neuchâtel, 1928, p. 346.

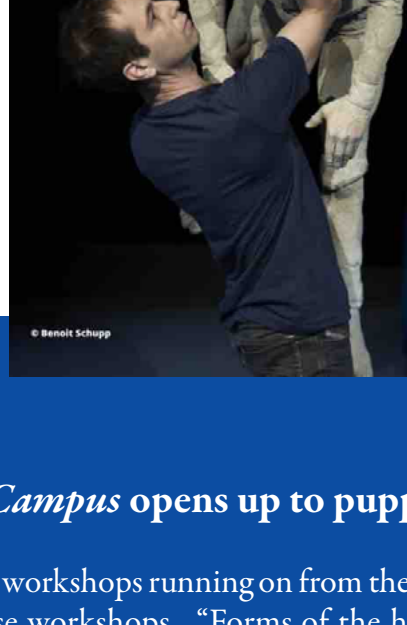
[Ma. Sophie Courtade]

News

Publication

Puppeteers start being recognized as authors! *The Literary Encyclopedia - Exploring Literature, History and Culture* dedicates several new entries to them: Bruno Sarina, Girolamo Cuticchio, Agrippino Manteo... Pina Patti's one, written by Anna Leone, has just joined them, and those for Mimmo and Anna Cuticchio are being prepared.

[CLICKABLE LINK AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS NEWSLETTER](#)



Artistic professional training: Campus opens up to puppetry

Campus is a series of professional training workshops running on from the festival "Printemps des comédiens". One of these workshops, "Forms of the hand-to-hand: playing with a manikin on stage" (Montpellier, 12-17 June 2023), will be directed by the puppeteer and stage director Renaud Herbin, whom *PuppetPlays* has entrusted a keynote during the conference *Portrait of the Puppeteer as an author*, on May 25 at 9.15 on the Saint-Charles campus.

Les formes du corps à corps. Jouer avec le mannequin au théâtre
INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION : CYCLO-RAMA.COM

Renaud Herbin, *La Vie des formes* © Benoît Schupp

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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.plassar@univ-montp3.fr
 Research Engineer
carole.guidicelli@univ-montp3.fr

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