

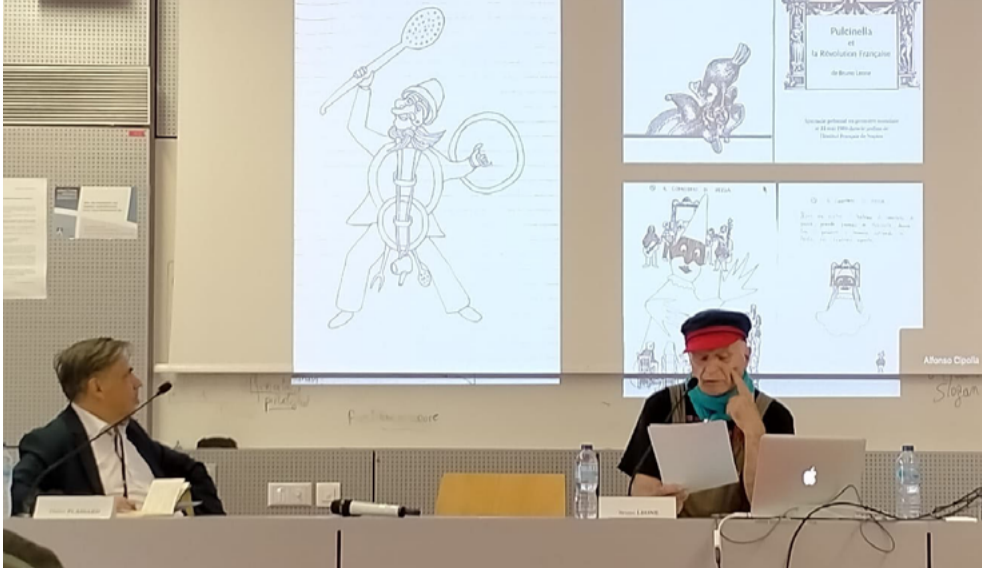
**Editorial : From oral to oral**

Studying the ways in which puppeteers compose and transmit their plays, as the international symposium *Portrait of the Puppeteer as Author* (23-25 May 2023) did last month, means reflecting on the place of the written word in this practice: at what point, and with what precision, does the theatrical work, which only finds its fulfilment in the performance in front of an audience, take the form of words set down on paper or formed on the screen? In a society governed by the written word, what relationship does the spoken word on stage or in the puppet-booth frame have with the traces that are preserved of it?

From this conference where orality was often discussed, it is important that we also preserve the sound traces. It is not the least of today's paradoxes that, thanks to videoconferences and to the recordings we keep of them, our attention is drawn back to the very origin of human communication: spoken thought, shared by the instrument of the voice, with its inflections, accents and hesitations. The proceedings of the *PuppetPlays* conferences will be published by the Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée in 2024, but before they are published in book form, they can already be accessed as video recordings (in French and English) at [puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr](http://puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr).

For those who missed them, or who would like to hear them again, we wish some beautiful discoveries amid these audio-visual archives.

[Prof. Dr. Didier Plassard]



**Videos of the conference are available on our website:**

[puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr/en](http://puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr/en)

IN THE ORIGINAL VERSION (FRENCH, ENGLISH OR ITALIAN) AND IN TRANSLATED VERSION (ENGLISH FOR SPEECHES IN FRENCH AND ITALIAN, AND FRENCH FOR SPEECHES IN ITALIAN)

**“Writing with light”**

The recording of the round table with Jean-Pierre Lescot, Michèle Augustin (compagnie Amoros et Augustin), Norbert Götz (Theater der Schatten, Bamberg) and Aurélie Morin (Théâtre de Nuit, Saillans) is now available.

**T**aema means “light” in the imaginary language of Jean-Pierre Lescot’s show, *Taema ou la fille du timbalier* [‘Taema or the timbaler’s daughter’] (1981). In *Punkt, Punkt, Coma, Strich* [Dot, Dot, Coma, Dash] (2022) by Theater der Schatten, light is also personified but in a playful and abstract form, it is a point that is moved and twists and turns in a geometric environment. In *Perpetuum Mobile* (2004) by Théâtre de Nuit, light is a magical object, a mysterious and glittering egg that guides the young Karim out of the regulated time of clocks. In *Sanjata* (1984) and *Le Chant de l’ours* [The Bear Song] (1993) by Amoros et Augustin, it creates a space-time, an environment: the blinding light is that of the desert or that of the North Pole in legendary times...



Symbol, environment, character, light in these shows is part of the fable, essential at every level - thematic, technical and poetic. These are some of the dramaturgical issues specific to contemporary shadow theatre which motivated the discussion during the round table of the second international *PuppetPlays* conference. Thanks to the recording, now available online, it is possible to hear again or discover four artists from different generations and aesthetic universes, who evoke their practice in substantially distinct and complementary ways, from optical laws to anthropological fears, via stained glass and cinema.

[ Ma. Sophie Courtade]

Illustrations from top to bottom, from left to right:  
 • Compagnie Amoros et Augustin, *Sanjata*, 1984. © Michel Frison  
 • Theater der Schatten, *Punkt, Punkt, Coma, Strich* [Dot, dot, coma, dash], 2022. © Theater der Schatten  
 • Théâtre de Nuit, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 2004. © Théâtre de Nuit  
 • Jean-Pierre Lescot, *Taema ou la fille du timbalier* [‘Taema or the timbaler’s daughter’], 1981. © Compagnie Jean-Pierre Lescot / PAM

**From the small to the big stage, building a “tradition”**

**A**uthors often publish their texts so that they can be staged by others. But when Mimmo Cuticchio published five of his plays, in the collection *L’Opera dei pupi dalla piccola alla grande scena* (2008), he had a different objective. This volume, as explained in the foreword, is born above all to “demonstrate” that *opera dei pupi* has undergone an “anthropological transformation of techniques and dramaturgy”. The first text, *Visita guidata all’opera dei pupi* (written in 1989 by Cuticchio and Salvo Licata) is a long monologue, the hallucinatory delirium of an old Sicilian puppeteer, in which scenes of performances and dialogues with the audience alternate, telling us about the end of the old *opera dei pupi*. *Don Giovanni all’opera dei pupi* (2002), on the contrary, features numerous dialogues and two overlapping scenes: the *pupi*’s small stage and the front stage, where a flesh-and-blood storyteller converses with the *pupi* and musicians play Mozart. This same alternation between *cunto* (Sicilian improvised storytelling), *pupi* and music is used to reinterpret a classic episode from the *opera dei pupi*, Angelica’s arrival in Paris, in *Dal Catai a Parigi* (2006). Then there is a story foreign to the repertoires of Sicilian rod marionettes, *Aladino di tutti i colori* (2007), written by Cuticchio to bring *pupi* closer to the Middle East. Here, Cuticchio, dressed as the Genie of the Lamp, converses with his *pupi*. In the last text, *La riscoperta di Troia* (2007), the narration takes precedence over the marionettes, but there is still an alternation between *cunto*, *pupi* and music, and a superimposition of more narrative planes.

These five texts speak to us of the construction of a new “tradition”, the “tradition” of Mimmo Cuticchio, which combines several languages and includes shows inspired by whaler cycles, operas, literary or theatrical texts or historical events. In fact, each puppeteer - whether coming from an old “tradition” or a new “school” - ends up building his own “tradition”. This idea also emerged from the contributions of many of the artists present at the conference *Portrait of the puppeteer as author*. Each of them explained their conception of the text and of dramatic writing, a puppeteer’s own sensibility than by the instrumental techniques, puppets or stories inherited from their predecessors.

*L’Opera dei Pupi dalla piccola alla grande scena*, a work published in 2008 by the Associazione Figli d’Arte Cutecchio.

[Dr. Anna Leone]

More information on the following plays can be found on our [puppetplays.eu](http://puppetplays.eu) database:

- [Visita guidata all’opera dei pupi.](#)
- [Don Giovanni all’opera dei pupi.](#)
- [Dal Catai a Parigi. Angelica alla corte di re Carlo.](#)
- [Aladino di tutti i colori.](#)
- [La riscoperta di Troia.](#)

**Puppetry in Europe: from one conference to the next**

**S**hortly after the end of the second international *PuppetPlays* conference, I flew to the beautiful Danish city of Aarhus to present our online platform in the broad context of the 6<sup>th</sup> EASTAP conference (European Association for the Studies of Theatre and Performance). This year’s conference focused on the different declarations of dramaturgy (the title being Dimensions of dramaturgy), and consisted of 37 panels, with a total of 83 papers. In this multitude, I was surprised to have presented the only paper concerning the dramaturgy of puppet theatre.



Delighted to take part in an EASTAP conference for the third time dealing with puppet-related issues, I was curious to see the programs of previous editions to assess the presence of this art form in the context of one of Europe’s major theatre studies conferences. The results: the first conference in Paris (2018) featured only one paper on puppet theatre; the second, in Lisbon, not even one; the third, cancelled because of the Covid but whose papers were published by the University of Bologna, marked a significant change, with an entire panel devoted to “the theatres of figure” and another to “the theatre of robots”, as well as a talk given by a puppet artist; the fourth, which took place online and focused on digital theatre forms in the age of Covid, shed no light on the use of puppetry in this context - yet several companies had created hybrid formats of puppets and video, and the Moschino fashion label had decided to unveil its Spring-Summer 2021 collection using puppets instead of models...; the fifth conference, held last year at Milan’s Piccolo Teatro, saw a resurgence of interest in this art form (probably due to the fact that the organisers were the same as in Bologna), with two papers on puppet theatre and a plenary session held, this time in person, by the same puppeteer as in Bologna.

What can we learn from this brief overview? Is puppetry not a sufficiently interesting subject? Is it not considered a performing language like any other? Is it still linked to the militancy of some researcher or organiser? It is also possible that researchers in puppetry arts do not invest sufficiently in the European spaces of theatrical research (however well opened to subjects concerning puppetry, as the EASTAP is). This observation is even more bitter because it is a product of a European context.

Yet isn’t it precisely the puppet theatre that has stimulated the circulation of motives, legends, rewritings and characters that have shaped European theatre? Go and find out yourselves on ERC program *PuppetPlays*’ database ([puppetplays.eu/en](http://puppetplays.eu/en)): our colleagues in Aarhus were impressed.

[Dr. Francesca Di Fazio]

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