

My Puppet, My Freedom!

Albert BAGNO*

Abstract: The puppet has always been the metaphor of freedom. Here is a list of events that have taken place over the centuries and in various countries where puppetry has been necessary to claim freedom. Try not to solo the voice of the voice, but the voice of the voice does not have voice! No, during a difficult period, and in the course of developments and war, the Marionette was born in particular and it was a difficult task at the moment. The most surprising thing is that during periods of time it is not alone that it is difficult to move and it is difficult to do so, but I keep people in the community for a while to resist, resist and live poorly all the time.

Keywords: freedom, puppetry, community, Pulcinella, Lojze Lavric

The Origins

Even if it is impossible to go back to the dawn of time, it is clear that puppetry has always been the voice of freedom. It is not only the voice of those who animate the puppets, it is also the voice of the voiceless!

It is no coincidence that in every difficult period, and during revolutions and wars, puppetry – and especially puppets – bring a breath of life to the difficulties of the moment.

The most surprising thing is that in these periods, it is not only the professional puppeteer who moves his puppets, but often ordinary people choose this medium to express themselves, resist and live in spite of everything.

Many authoritarian powers first tried to profit from puppetry and then banned it.

Many people survived because they had placed their hope of life in the puppets.

Here, by examining various historical events that occurred during revolts, wars and revolutions, we wish to demonstrate the extent to which the metaphor of the puppet was for many that of freedom.

Pulcinella and the characters of the Commedia dell'Arte were not born by chance but are the result of an attempt by the Roman Catholic Church to

* Puppeteer and researcher of world puppetry. He is founder (1989) of the association Marionetta e Terapia (Puppet and Therapy).

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

take away their voice from the theatre¹ it did not like, and from the puppeteers who were too independent^{2/3/4}.

What is surprising, considering the era, is how quickly these characters were born and how quickly they spread to the different territories of origin and then elsewhere in Europe.

Thus Pulcinella was already in Paris a few decades after his birth in Naples. From that point on, many Pulcinelli-type characters were born in many European cities, but censorship and bans also developed, but that didn't stop Pulcinella and his friends.

Pulcinella was already a great protagonist of social and political life, and in 1649 a "Mazzarinade" or linguistic joke – written against Cardinal Mazarin while he was regent of the future King Louis XIV in France – gives us the measure of his role. We are in Paris, because even at the time you had to go to the capital to succeed, and one of the great moments of expression and popularity of puppetry was offered at fairs such as the one of Saint-Germain or of Saint Laurent. These fairs are huge, it is very expensive to attend them or to have a shop there. If you stand out at a fair, luck (no matter how fleeting) can smile on you. This is what happened to some of them, including the puppeteers Jean-Baptiste Archambault, Jérôme, Arthur and Nicolas Féron, Pierre Datelin known as Jean Brioché (1567-1671) and his son François known as Franchon. It is thanks to these last two characters, probably of Italian origin, that the Italian Pulcinella completes its mutation to become Polichinelle.

Polichinelle said all the bad things he thought of the great men of this world and thus became one of the standard-bearers of the Parisian people at the time of the Fronde (1648 and 1653). In 1649, Jean Brioché had set up his puppet theatre at the foot of the Pont-Neuf and had his puppets recite a pamphlet opposing Mazarin, an eminent political figure of the time. From this "mazzarinade" entitled "Letter from Polichinelle to Mazarin" we retain the famous tirade:

"I'm Polichinelle
Who makes the sentinel
At the gates of Nesle »⁵

¹ The phrase remains famous: "the music is that of the angels (of course it can be done in church) and the theater is of the devils (therefore it cannot be done in church).

² The Council of Trent (1545-1563) (known as the Council of the Counter-Reformation).

³ Non potendo entrare nello specifico visto delle decisioni prese e delle varie conseguenze, si riassume in poche parole una la faccenda che è decisamente molto più complessa.

⁴ At the same time, the Jesuits will use theatre and puppets to "civilize" distant peoples.

⁵ Challamel Augustin (1819-1894): Les Amuseurs de la rue (1875).

<https://www.bmlisieux.com/curiosa/challa01.htm>

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

("I am Polichinelle, who stands guard at the gate of Nesle").

In this case, it must be understood that Polichinelle⁶ (the people of Paris) is watching over the power that is in the Louvre just in front of the Porte de Nesle. The Porte de Nesle was a watchtower that allowed people to control who entered Paris. The tower was destroyed in 1665. This declaration is in itself an act of defiance of power and at the same time an indication of freedom, clearly expressed by the puppet.

Rome and Gaetanaccio

A century later, in the Rome of the Popes, the puppeteer Gaetano Santangelo, known as Ghetanaccio or Gaetanaccio⁷ (Rome 1782 - Rome 1832) with his Rugantino and his Roman Pulcinella, was the voice of the Roman population and quickly ended up in prison for having been too talkative and against papal power. He died in poverty, but for centuries he remained the voice of the discontented Roman.

Napoleon revolutionized the world of puppets

Under Napoleon the various ministers of the Interior promulgated several laws and decrees (such as those of 25 April and 28 or 29 July 1807, concerning the laws enacted for France and 1797 for those enacted in Italy) which changed the situation quite quickly.

A directive forbade "masked characters in theatres" because, according to Napoleon, these "masks" were too reminiscent of the old regime. These laws stimulated the creation of new characters who directly and indirectly conveyed the new ideas of the time, these are now known as "Folk Heroes"⁸. They will gradually and only partially eclipse the characters of the Commedia dell'Arte. Some puppetry techniques will emerge, others will undergo substantial changes. It is therefore in this climate that several characters were born in France that became very popular: Barbizier⁹ in Besançon, Lafleur¹⁰ in Amiens, Jacques¹¹ in Lille and obviously Guignol¹² in Lyon. Each tradition will have the technique that suits it best.

⁶ Another interpretation is that in this case Polichinelle is none other than the puppeteer himself, namely Jean Brioché.

⁷ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaetano_Santangelo

⁸ This term is especially valid for characters born in Italy.

⁹ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbizier>

¹⁰ [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lafleur_\(marionnette\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lafleur_(marionnette))

¹¹ <https://lepetitjacques.fr/jacques-de-lille/>

¹² <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guignol>

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

During the revolution, puppetry was seen as a revolutionary instrument. It was at this time that a whole series of mechanisms and ideas were explored and developed, in the shadow of major political events, which would find their way into society a few years later. In the puppetry sector, this will be the case for so-called mechanical techniques, such as that of Besançon, which will be defined as "progress in progress".

Guignol in Lyon, Lafleur in Amiens and Barbizier in Besançon were born out of the need to express the social malaise of the societies they represent. If today we tend to level the different characters, at the time each of them had its own specificity. Everyone speaks in their own dialect and that only makes sense if they talk about the problems that people are experiencing directly.

In Lyon, it was Laurent Mourguet, an unemployed canut (silk worker) who, after giving life to Gnafron, an artisan shoemaker around 1804, created Guignol in 1808 who would become the hero par excellence. "Guignol was born of the French Revolution, but he is not a revolutionary"¹³; in a certain sense, thanks to the popularity and importance it will have, it is a revolution in itself.

Popular puppets are in tune with the times and if the people rebel, so do the puppets. If the people go to war, so does the puppet. These folk heroes will belong to all revolutions, rebellions, and wars. Thus, during the First World War and during the interwar period, puppets were involved.

The Napoleonic directive allowed directly and indirectly the birth of new characters in France and thus new traditions, and it had the same effect in Italy, so that little by little new folk heroes were born. Of course, they supported the cause of revolutions and other major political events. Some characters were born before the revolutionary period, but it was during the revolution that they acquired a dominant role.

The unification of Italy

The same thing will happen in Italy with the arrival of dozens of local characters. And the same thing, perhaps in a slightly different way, would happen throughout Napoleonic Europe. In northern Italy alone, along the French and Slovenian borders, there is a tradition every 50 to 60 kilometres.

Nineteenth-century Italy is just a jigsaw puzzle of small countries. Towards the middle of the century, a series of battles and actions known as the "Risorgimento" followed one another that led to the unity of the country in 1861. Among the great figures of this period was the King of Piedmont Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy, Count Camillo Benzo De Cavour, Giuseppe

¹³ <https://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/indre-et-loire/commune/la-croix-en-touraine/memeles-marionnettes-font-de-la-politique>

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

Mazzini and General Garibaldi. They gathered an army of volunteers to make a united Italy a reality. The members of this army are called the "Garibaldini". Of course, all these flesh-and-blood heroes will very quickly become characters in puppet theatres, whether they are glove, string or rod puppets. Both in libraries and in public or private collections, there are several hundred puppet texts on this subject.

From the beginning of the battles for the unification of Italy, many puppeteers decided to throw themselves into the heart of the action. Almost everyone was sympathetic to the national cause. They created a large number of shows against the invader, which led to the arrest of some of them, who had dared to propagate revolutionary ideas through their characters. One of the most famous arrests was that of puppeteer Giovanni Battista Lampugnani in Milan by the Austrians. He made his puppet say "Viva Verdi", which did not evoke the great musician but a name behind which the acronym was hidden: "Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia", that is, the independence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Because of their origins, it is certain that the future Italian puppeteers were almost entirely in favour of the values of the emerging Italy! This also applied to puppets such as the Bergamo folk hero Gioppino (Giuseppe) who is a true proclamation of the cause, indeed it is no coincidence that he is dressed in green, white and red. He was one of the few figures to openly declare his faith in the new, unified homeland. Although it is not really known who gave birth to this character, and

although this is the evolution of previously existing characters, it is very likely that he appeared around 1808.

At the same time, "Gerolamo" was born in Turin, a character created by the Piedmontese puppeteer Giovan Battista Sales but invented by Umberto Biancamano, better known as Gioanin d'ij Osei. In 1802 we find Sales with his colleague Gioacchino Bellone in Genoa, where the doge was Gerolamo Durazzo. And what was supposed to happen happened. As soon as the character made fun of himself in the castle, the authorities thought he was making fun of the Doge, which was frowned upon, let alone tolerated. In a very short time, our two friends had to change the name of the character to Gianduja. Returning to Turin, they again gave his name to Gerolamo, but in 1807 Napoleon's younger brother became king of Vesfalia, including Turin, and so as not to appear anti-French, Gianduja became the person's definitive name.

Some time earlier, in 1794, Giovanni Battista De Rolandis had imagined with Luigi Zamboni the tricolor cockade, symbol of independent Italy. Sales, who knew De Rolandis, decided that Gianduja would wear the rosette. The new character was officially presented to the people of Turin on 25 November 1808. Throughout the period of the Unification of Italy,

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

Gianduja played an important role in supporting the new ideas and values that the Unification brought to the country. The character of Gianduja who represents the city of Turin and the region of Piedmont always wears the national cockade on his tricorn hat.

One of the most important events in the unification of Italy was the one known as the "D-Day Landing of the Thousand". These "Thousand" were the volunteers who followed General Garibaldi to liberate Sicily from the Bourbons. It turns out that many of the volunteers came from the city of Bergamo, its province and that of Brescia. This earned the city of Bergamo the right to boast the honorary title of "City of a Thousand". Among these brave people was Giuseppe Copler (1829-1879) from the province of Bergamo. He is a miller and puppeteer. Under the number 124, he was incorporated into the Eighth Company. He took part in the landing of the Thousand in Sicily. In 1860, demobilized for health reasons, he walked up Italy from Naples to Brescia. While in Naples in 1863, he acquired puppets with which, during the long journey home, he recounted in his own way what he himself had experienced. His puppets were like him in a red shirt (a distinctive symbol of the Garibaldins). More generally, the epic of Garibaldi and the Thousand became a classic of puppet theatre until the First World War. Throughout the duration of the Italian Wars of Independence, in order to mock Austrian laws, puppeteers chose texts that were not formally hostile to the occupier, but actually suggested his cumbersome presence. In fact, seemingly classical texts have become vehicles of rebellion and hope.

In Europe

Czech Republic

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the revolutionary phenomenon affected virtually all countries and cultures. The puppeteers of these countries play an active role in these wars, in these movements of rebellion and unity of peoples. The national hero of the Czech Republic is Kasperek and he has a special status: according to an unwritten rule, if necessary, anyone (not just puppeteers) can bring him to life. Kasperek had a strong presence during World War I and World War II and during the Velvet Revolution of 1989, where Kasperek can be seen among the protesters¹⁴.

Greece

Among the heroes of freedom is the Greek Karaghiozis, which has its roots in the Turkish shadow theatre "Karagöz" and which the Ottomans

¹⁴ These facts were reported verbally in 1999 by the Czech puppeteer Tomas Simcha Jelinek.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

imported during their very long domination of Greece. Gradually, the latter transforms into Karaghiozis and becomes authentically Greek. In addition to the fact that this theatre will change from Muslim to Catholic, it will serve to build a national identity. The program will feature Greek heroes such as "Alexander the Great" and "Athanasios Diakos" (1788-1821), as well as ordinary people and saints. One of the first great animators of Greek shadows was Dimitrios Sardounis alias Mimaros (1865-1912).



1944 (?) – Show in Stratis Island. Greece

Belgium

Since the Middle Ages, there have been several very different traditions in Belgium (both Flemish and Walloon). For the Brussels region, legend has it that on the orders of Philip II of Spain (1527-1598), hated by the population, he closed the theatres to prevent them from becoming meeting places that would have accentuated the hostility towards him. The people of Brussels would then replace the actors with poechenelles (Pulcinella puppets) in clandestine theatres.

As early as 1789, the future Belgium was imbued with the country's ideals of freedom and unity, which happened in 1830 with the "Brabant" Revolution. During these periods of hope, the puppets, often from other countries, quickly took on a specifically Belgian character. In Liège, the hero is Tchanchès and he attacks the French who want to invade the country. Around 1830, the Toone dynasty of puppeteers (short for Antoine) appeared in Brussels, which became one of the symbols of Belgian culture. Belgium is

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

at the centre of the shows and the texts, whatever they may be, become a showcase of Belgium; whether it's the Three Musketeers, St. Anthony or the classics of European puppetry. In addition, intellectuals such as Michel de Ghelderode¹⁵ brought a strong national touch.

First World War

From the beginning of the so-called Great War, the art of puppetry was very present on the various fronts of the First World War. Guignol, Gioppino, Kasperl, Petrushka and the others mobilized to help raise the morale of the troops and those who were suffering. This moral support has penetrated very deeply into people's minds and cultural heritage. The war effort of the puppeteers and thus the puppets was so great that after the war in Czechoslovakia, many streets were named in honor of Kasperek (the puppet), as a local hero.

A minor episode but which gives the importance of popular heroes : in 1918, in order to allow his troops to lift their spirits, the Italian general Alberico Albricci (1864-1936), born in Galarate in Lombardy (so not from Bergamo, but still knows Gioppino's figure), commander of the second army corps in Bligny in France, asked the Ministry of War in Rome to send puppets to the front for his soldiers, coming chiefly from the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia, for he remembered (as he later wrote) the spiritual influence puppets had on the peoples of the valleys at the time of the sad Austrian rule. He goes on to say: "The puppet theatre (with hand puppets) that was often animated in an intelligent and often courageous way by naïve and spontaneous artists..." and concludes his letter by stating: "And don't forget Gioppino"¹⁶.

Second World War

Walter, puppeteer even in war

It is incredible, to say the least, to what extent the Puppet was an act of resistance, an act of hope during the Second World War, for those who, in order to survive and as a sign of struggle and affirmation of freedom, made puppets anyway, like the German Walter Büttner¹⁷. Büttner is a communist and anti-fascist artist. He puts on shows wherever he can, even when he is forbidden to do so. They put him in jail and he puts on shows, they send him to the front as a soldier and he puts on shows. When he was captured by the Americans, he performed in the Aliceville camp in Alabama.

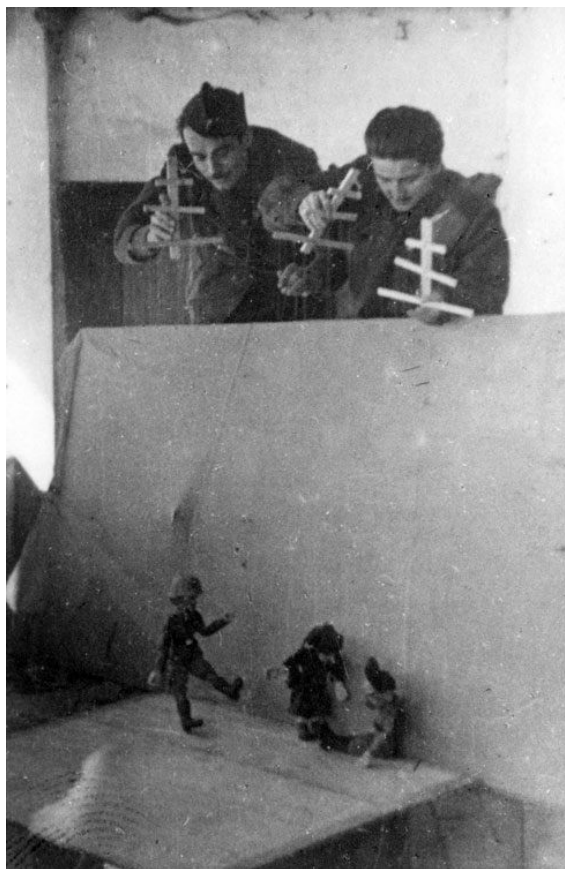
¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Ghelderode

¹⁶ Information from: Pino Capellini. Crape de lègn. Ed. Sesaab. Bergamo. 2002.

¹⁷ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_B%C3%BCttner

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

How can we not remember the hope and freedom expressed by puppets when we think of Jewish women who make puppets for Christmas¹⁸ before being sent to crematoria; or the children of Theresienstadt who make puppets evoking a future they hope they don't have.



Lojze Lavric (1914-1954) show in mountain show around 1945.
Photo collection of the Lubiana City Museum.

Partisan puppets

The invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the Axis forces on 6 April 1941 was the starting point for that country's entry into the war. Towards the end of 1943, the Partisan Puppet Company was founded in what is now Slovenia thanks to Lojze Lavrič (1914-1954), who came from a family of puppeteers and brought wood for puppets from home. His first puppet will be the courier Jurček. His friend Nikolaj Pirnat drew Hitler, the SS, a fascist and member of the White Guard (three thieves), a gymnast, a clown and Lili

¹⁸ It may seem abnormal for Jewish women to celebrate Christmas, but to give hope, they cling to everything.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

Marlen. The first performance of the Yugoslav Puppet Partisan Theatre took place at the Crmosnjice Fire Station on New Year's Eve 1944. Puppeteer Milenko Doberlet collaborated with Franci Divjak - puppeteer Stef. Alenka Gerlovič writes a four-act puppet show for children. This play, which he will also direct, is partly inspired by a puppet show staged before the war in Novo Mesto. It is very rare that so much information has come to us about a company active during the war and in the resistance^{19/20/21}.

Belgium

Despite being a small country, Belgium is one of the European states that has a large number of traditions. Tchanchès in Liège, the Poesjenellen in Antwerp, Woltj in Brussels, Pierke in Ghent etc. Many puppeteers were partisans or at least were in favor of freedom. A curious fact is the fate reserved for a character who was only a puppet during the war: Spirou. Whether they are French or Belgian, almost every child knows "Spirou", a Belgian comic book character.

In 1943, the Germans did not allow the magazine to be published, so its founder asked for permission to create a puppet company called the "Farfadets Company" (The Company of Leprechauns). This is why the young puppeteer André Moons (1923-1988) was asked to do it. He was the one who turned comic book heroes into puppets. For the rest of the occupation, the company was at the head of a network of Belgian partisans that the occupying forces never discovered²². At the end of the war, Moons resumed his puppets and distracted the newly landed troops.

France

At the beginning of the war, Pétain's collaborationist regime let the puppeteers work, at least until 1942, on the condition that they did not engage in politics and did not harm their German "friends", because it wanted to give a semblance of normality at all costs. The great puppeteers of the post-war period discovered their art at this time²³. Several public figures, although not puppeteers, devoted themselves to puppetry during this time.

¹⁹ <http://www.lgl.si>

²⁰ Information taken from the website: <http://www.partisantheatre.org/index.php/puppet-theatre/> on 14.05.2013

²¹ The company's puppets are on display at the IGL Museum in Ljubljana.

²² The story of Spirou during the war is told in the comic strip: the little theatre of Spirou. <https://www.dupuis.com/le-petit-theatre-de-spirou/bd/le-petit-theatre-de-spirou-le-petit-theatre-de-spirou/76657>

²³ The great puppeteer Yves Joly (1908-2013) was one of them. See https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yves_Joly

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

If there is one man who has contributed a lot to the world of puppetry, it is Jacques Félix (1923-2006), originally from the Ardennes, who became interested in puppetry at a very young age. During the war, he was a teenager and a Christian who, together with the young people of his parish, organized a group to perform shows for those who were suffering. The psychological help he will provide in the middle of the war will not be negligible at all. One of the facts not to be underestimated is that Jacques Félix is a Scout, and despite the limitations, controls and prohibitions to which the Scout movement is subjected by the Vichy regime, he will animate the character "Scoutin" (the little Scout) which was not a banal act but a form of resistance to the Pétain regime. In 1946, together with his companions, he founded the amateur puppet company "Les petits comédiens de Chiffons". In 1961, he laid the foundations for what would become the World Festival of Puppet Theatre. He founded the International Institute of Puppetry in his hometown of Charleville-Mézières.

Poland

An example that deserves to be cited to illustrate the subject at hand is certainly the story of what happened during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. From the beginning of the war, Poland was humiliated, crushed, mocked, but this did not prevent it from having more than once moments of revolt and opposition to what seemed obvious to them: that is, what the Nazis wanted to erase from the geographical map of this country. Once recovered from the surprise of the invasion, the Poles demonstrated their character and, despite the lack of resources, they gave the occupiers a hard time until the liberation.



1942, The Polish soldiers in Russia: Ochotniczka Marycia - Włodzimierz Kowanko²⁴

²⁴ Photo National Collection of Poland. Warsaw. <https://culture.pl/en/feature/humour-in-a-miserable-time-cabaret-artists-on-the-war-trail> –

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

In Poland, puppets have always played an important role at Christmas and other occasions. While the Nazi armies had no mercy for this country, the Poles decided to raise their heads and after many humiliations took place the Warsaw Uprising which began on August 1, 1944 and ended in October of the same year. During this very short period of time, the company "Kukiełki na barykadzie" (Puppets of the Barricade)²⁵ was very active in the Powiśle district, which was a spontaneous companion born from the will of two young women who had nothing to do with the world of puppetry. Krystyna Berwińska and Zofia Rendzner simply aimed to boost the morale of the soldiers and entertain the children through short texts. They understood the importance of spreading propaganda messages among civilians and fighting rumours, panic and cowardice. On August 16, in a house at 38 Tamka Street, the first character was born who would later become the main character: the tiger representing the German. This small company plays everywhere in the streets, under the arcades, in the houses, near the Vistula, in the cellars of the city center. Zofia creates the puppets and Krystyna creates a text every day. At first, the theatre is very simple since it is a simple table that fits the doors of the neighbourhood. Sometimes it is the citizens themselves who ask the question. The lyrics were met with a lot of enthusiasm. The two young women were helped by a very popular pre-war radio host, Joseph Małgorzewski, and his wife, a singer. According to Krystyna Berwińska's testimony, towards the end of the uprising, the Germans set up their puppet theatre on Dobra Street for German soldiers. Both women were captured and Krystyna Berwińska was sent to concentration camps. When asked to continue their work as puppeteers, they simply refused, saying that they did not want to steal the craft from those who knew how to do it and that they had only acted because the circumstances demanded it. After the war, Krystyna became a children's writer and Zofia Rendzner a ceramist. Almost all of the company's participants died shortly after the events. Today, their material survives in the Museum of the Uprising in Warsaw²⁶.

²⁵ <https://www.scoprivarsavia.com/museo-insurrezione-varsavia>

²⁶ <https://www.1944.pl/en>

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA



1944, Warsaw uprising, transport from the theater of the barricade company "Kukielki pod Barykadą"national²⁷

Italy – Azelio Serra, Modest Partisan

In Italy, companies had a lot to do. If there were fascist puppeteers, many more had chosen freedom, sometimes unexpectedly. Who would have imagined that Azelio Serra, known as Zeglio²⁸, from Cesena (present-day province of Forlì-Cesena), was a partisan? Officially, he was a humble employee of the Municipality. His humble role was to clean the city's toilets. Which city is very big and he would sometimes leave the house for days. He loved puppets, always travelled with them, and put on amateur puppet shows after the service. During the Second World War, although he was known to the fascists, his very modest appearance allowed him to pursue his activity as a puppeteer almost freely and this allowed him to hide his active participation in the partisan network. In his head, he hid the messages that during the performances, among the various jokes in dialect, he conveyed to those who needed to know. No Blackshirt or Nazi ever suspected that these puppets were a means of communicating with the resistance. Azelio Serra, known as Zelio, never talked about what he did and he never thought he was a hero²⁹.

A cultural fact

²⁷ For Tower of Nesle from Paris.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tour_de_Nesle_Seine_1655_Zeiller_13741.jpg

²⁸ Azelio Serra is the protagonist of the book "E castell du buratain" by Sauro Spada: Edition Angelo Longo – Ravenna, 1999.

²⁹ The information was provided by a family member in 2010.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

It is a fact that puppets have always had an importance in Italy, but it was precisely during the war that we realized to what extent puppets were a cultural fact that had deeply penetrated the culture of the people. In times of war, many people chose combat nicknames related to the Puppets. The passion for puppets, but also thanks to their "habitual" presence in everyday language, makes these names particularly "harmless", and above all we take into account the fact that many popular expressions refer to the world of puppets³⁰.

Before moving on to another era, it should be noted that puppets and puppeteers played an important role during the Spanish Civil War³¹. The poet Federico Garcia-Lorca was at that time a very active puppeteer in the Tarumba Company supported by the Spanish Republic.

Popular revolts and revolutions after World War II

Paris May 68

During the events in France in May 1968, puppets were not really present, although a puppet laboratory operated at the Sorbonne University. Not much is known about this laboratory, except for the existence of posters made by the Faculty of Fine Arts which indicate that this laboratory was indeed active. Two posters are now part of the heritage of the events of May 68. Both screen-printed and printed, each in different colours, bearing the title "Popular Puppets". There are also drawings and posters in which General de Gaulle, then President of the Republic, is depicted as a puppet. A poster depicts Citroën's management manipulating the puppet of the independent union. The BNF (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) keeps a poster from this period indicating the direction to join the "Puppet Workshop"³². In all these cases, the professional puppeteers have nothing to do with these events, but are due to the students who appropriate the puppets, their signs and symbols.

Shadows of Indonesia

In a country like Indonesia, where puppetry plays a fundamental role in the national culture, it is natural to note that during the country's war of independence in 1945, puppetry and especially shadows³³ had considerable weight. Spectacles, scenes, words, mixed with classic stories, clearly indicated what to do against the enemies. Under the Sukarno (Soekarno) regime (term: 1945-1967), the "Dalangs"³⁴ were encouraged to use art to help the nation modernize. New "branching stories" (carangan) featuring strong characters

³⁰ A Ligurian partisan was called Baciccia, a Lombard priest "Gioppino", etc.

³¹ https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/09/28/actualidad/1538146969_946320.html#

³² <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9018433t.item>

³³ Shadows in Indonesian are Wayang. There are different types. At least six large families.

³⁴ The Dalang are the Wayang manipulators.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

proliferated, and the dalang were hired by political parties to publicize their programs³⁵.

Vietnam

During the Indochina War and then the Vietnam War, it was Uncle Ho³⁶ who, on March 12, 1956, instructed Minister Hoang Minh Giam: "... A professional puppet company is needed so that children have more joy and laughter." At the time in Vietnam there were various traditions such as water puppetry, a unique show in the world, but given the relations with the Soviet Union and China, it was the techniques learned abroad that dominated. Several shows commemorate the War of Independence of France. It is only belatedly that Vietnam is showcasing its very original traditions.

Wars in Africa

The end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties of the twentieth century saw the independence of many countries, especially Africa. At that time, puppets appeared in the Congo but also in Niger and Nigeria to mock the blacks who chose to live like the colonists, but also to express the joy of the Independence obtained³⁷.

Czech Republic

Kasperek's role in the 1989 "Velvet Revolution" in Prague has already been mentioned.

Today – Tomorrow

The different traditions of the Arab and Muslim world are little known in the West, yet they have marked the history of many civilizations. The black servant Mobarak who becomes the reference puppet of Persian-Iranian culture. Karagöz and his friend Hacivat, who were the protagonists of the Ottoman conquests. It is therefore no coincidence that during the "Arab Spring" of 2010-2011, puppetry played its part.

³⁵ <https://wepa.unima.org/en/indonesia/>

³⁶ He is known as Uncle Ho: Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969). The father of independence and modern Vietnam.

³⁷ In « Marionnettes et Masques d'Afrique ». Olenka Darkowska.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA



2019 – City Saraqib, Syria³⁸

Arab Spring

It was at that time that on all the televisions of the world we saw happy people and several Egyptians making puppets "dance". Various murals in Egypt and Tunisia depict the powerful in the form of puppet manipulators or manipulated³⁹.

The newspaper Al Arabiya of 23 June 2013 documented the work of Syrian puppeteer Masasit Mati in the TV series he created on YouTube⁴⁰ entitled "Top Goon: Diary of a Little Dictator" in which rudimentary puppets mock the Syrian president.

Burma

In 2007, in Cambodia-Myanmar, the artists and puppeteers "Moustache Brothers" (The Brothers: Par Par Lay, Lu Maw, Lu Zaw) were imprisoned for many years for animating characters deemed offensive to the authorities of that country. They were only released because a global campaign

³⁸https://www.facebook.com/UNOCreHA/photos/a.144296522253272/5071143999568475/?type=3&paipv=0&eav=Afa5tz5N_SmOpkkNa6sUTXEicXcNOF1JNqmgZjDwnlD58vHcNlAostBoOU3TCgVbw8&_rdr

³⁹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/military-hopes-for-great-leader-from-egypt-vote/>

⁴⁰ <https://souriahouria.com/top-goon-diaries-of-a-little-dictator-a-revolutionary-satirical-puppet-theatre-webseries-calling-for-funds-to-help-it-produce-a-second-season/>

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

mobilized thousands of people⁴¹. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has repeatedly spoken out in their favour.

Mexico

A rebellion of the Zapatista people and other peoples has been going on for a long time in Mexico. Currently⁴², in the context of the revolt in Chiapas, we find "Petul"⁴³ (Pedro): he is a character adopted by the Mayan people to speak about sensitive subjects and problems that concern the community. Such is the popularity of this character that a puppet festival bearing his name is held every year.

Conclusions

We could conclude this list of events with this humble theatre by Syrian puppeteer Walid Abu Rashed who puts on a puppet show to the children who find themselves among the rubble of Saraqid. A sign of hope, but above all a way of indicating that puppets and the Puppeteers are present in all circumstances, are necessary, and do not give up.

Faced with such an important and complex subject, this writing is admittedly fragmentary, but it aims to present the incredible vitality of puppets and how, in times of need, people call on them to be able to freely express their choice.

Over the centuries, in different forms, depending on the country and culture, puppets have been the expression of a desire for freedom, to challenge power and the powerful when the needs of the people do not match.

It must be borne in mind that the choice of puppetry is not free and is not without risk: how many puppet "lovers" have been martyred or died for expressing the affirmation of the need to express oneself through puppets?⁴⁴

As we have seen, it is sometimes the puppeteers who act personally, but it is not uncommon for them to be ordinary people who know nothing about puppets and who urgently need them to express themselves and participate in a creative process that brings their own voice, beyond prohibitions and censorship, in short: to freedom!

⁴¹ https://www.facebook.com/TheMoustacheBrothers/?locale=fr_FR

⁴² March 2024

⁴³ He is also called Petul-Xun

⁴⁴ If we take the example of the Demeny Company of Leningrad in the USSR alone, more than seven companies of puppeteers died during the battles in 1941 and 1942.

<http://www.ruvr.ru/main.php?lng=rus&q=98971&cid=22&p=22.01.2009>. Let us not forget that Soviet puppeteers performed patriotic performances between battles.

THEATRICAL COLLOQUIA

Bibliography

Webography

- <https://www.bmlisieux.com/curiosa/challa01.htm>
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaetano_Santangelo
<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbizier>
[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lafleur_\(marionnette\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lafleur_(marionnette))
<https://lepetitjacques.fr/jacques-de-lille/>
<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guignol>
<https://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/indre-et-loire/commune/la-croix-en-touraine/meme-les-marionnettes-font-de-la-politique>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Ghelderode
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_B%C3%BCttner
<http://www.lgl.si>
<https://www.dupuis.com/le-petit-theatre-de-spirou/bd/le-petit-theatre-de-spirou-le-petit-theatre-de-spirou/76657>
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yves_Joly
<https://www.scoprivarsavia.com/museo-insurrezione-varsavia>
<https://www.1944.pl/en>
https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/09/28/actualidad/1538146969_946320.html
- #
- <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9018433t.item>
<https://wepa.unima.org/en/indonesia/>
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/military-hopes-for-great-leader-from-egypt-vote/>
- <https://souriahouria.com/top-goon-diaries-of-a-little-dictator-a-revolutionary-satirical-puppet-theatre-webseries-calling-for-funds-to-help-it-produce-a-second-season/>
https://www.facebook.com/TheMoustacheBrothers/?locale=fr_FR
. <http://www.ruvr.ru/main.php?lng=rus&q=98971&cid=22&p=22.01.2009>
- Let us not forget that Soviet puppeteers performed patriotic performances between battles.