The image features two marionettes against a white background with two horizontal red stripes. The marionette in the foreground is a woman with long, dark brown hair, wearing a light-colored, possibly white, dress with a dark sash. The marionette behind her is a man with a balding head and a small tuft of hair, wearing a similar light-colored garment. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Current trends in Greek puppet theatre.
An informal educational approach?

Antigoni Paroussi, Antonis Lenakakis
Editors

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Department of Early Childhood Education

Current trends in Greek puppet theatre.
An informal educational approach?

Antigoni Paroussi, Antonis Lenakakis
Editors

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Department of Early Childhood Education

Current trends in Greek puppet theatre. An informal educational approach?

Editors

Antigoni Paroussi

Professor

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

School of Education

Department of Early Childhood Education

Antonis Lenakakis

Associate Professor

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Faculty of Education

School of Early Childhood Education

English translation: Marianne Georgopoulos, unless otherwise stated

Artistic design: Antigoni Paroussi

Photographic conference material: Dionissis Tsaftaridis

ePublisher : National Documentation Centre of Greece (EKT)

ISBN 978-618-80640-8-9

The authors of the articles published in this volume retain their intellectual property rights pertaining to said articles. Articles published in this volume can be reused on the proviso that reference is made to their author.

The authors may submit their article to an institutional or other repository and/or publish it in another publication, with a mandatory reference to its initial publication in this volume.

The authors are encouraged to deposit their work in a repository or to publish it online.

How to cite:

Paroussi, A., & Lenakakis, A. (Eds.). (2023). *Current trends in Greek puppet theatre.*

An informal educational approach? DECE NKUA. <https://doi.org/10.12681/ecdnkua.192>

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Department of Early Childhood Education

Athens 2023

*To Michael Meschke
Teacher, partner, friend*

Contents

Introduction Antigoni Paroussi	16
-----------------------------------	----

Part One

Puppet theatre everywhere

Aesthetics in Education Alexandra Mouríki	24
A way of approaching movement Olympia Agalianou	37
The puppets of the film 'Arabim – The souls of the Statues' Katerina Theofanopoulou	59
The puppet in the Théâtre du Soleil. The puppet as Justice Maria Velioti-Georgopoulou	69
The puppet as a tool during the psychotherapeutic procedure Marialena Tsiamoura	91

Theatre/drama in university teacher education: balancing between innovative currents and institutional inertia Vassiliki Riga & Vassilis Tselfes	104
Puppet theatre at the School of Drama of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Myrto Pigkou-Repousi	139
The puppet as an “animated” audiovisual text in school Pavlos Valsamidis	155
Puppet theatre and museum narratives. The Old University and its residents Fay Tsitou	171
The Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network: Strengthening the role of Theatre/Drama and the Performing Arts in Education in Greece, 1998-2020 Betty Giannouli	199

Part Two

From an artist of the past to the artists of the future
Michael Meschke 224

UNIMA HELLAS: Identity and artistic activity
Marialena Tsiamoura 232

Behind the puppets

Theatro tis Kouklas: 40 years of puppet theatre
Takis Sarris 237

Well met, puppets!
Or a school visit to the puppet theatre
Alexia Alexiou 247

“Don’t panic, Bufos!”
The constant quest and apprenticeship in the art of puppet theatre:
the journey from the street to festivals
by two troupes that almost became one
Anneta Stefanopoulou 263

Theatre for children... a theatre by adults: thoughts,
trends and contradictions
Evgenia Tsihliia & Thanos Sioris 285

Puppet theatre as a bridge
Francisco Brito 295

A theatre born of the image, the puppet and the actor’s body /
WE PUPPETPLAY: A new generation of citizens
through the use of the puppet as a creative tool 299
Emmanouela Kapokaki

The challenge of giving movement to a helpless body – Prompted by the
staging of “On Duty”, a puppet show for adults 309
Klio Kioulpali

Between light and shadow 317
Betty Kokaraki

Message for the World Puppet Theatre Day 325
Anna Santorinaiou

Folding dragons 329
Fevronia Reizidou

Ice dream – the beginning of the journey 339
Eleni Voyiatzidou, Alexandros Seitaridis

Puppetry in the Age of Aquarius 349
Paul Nowak

“Theatre at your fingertips”. An exhibition on puppet theatre 357
Mairivi Verykokkou-Georgiadou

Part Three

Some things we learn from the dialogue

Puppet-theatre Thematic Week.

Trainee teachers' evaluative assessments
Lia Tsermidou, Antigoni Paroussi & Vassilis Tselfes 372

Contemporary trends in Greek puppetry.

Detecting their informal educational characteristics
Antigoni Paroussi, Antonis Lenakakis & Vassilis Tselfes 390

Instead of an epilogue

Thirty years later
Yiorgis Hayias 410



Editors' Foreword

Educational "courses" are considered, in principle, to be reproductive processes. They tend to push learners to reproduce knowledge and practices that are the possession of their educator or, otherwise, form part of a recognised subject matter.

But university "courses" are also productive. Their institutional framework and teaching approaches also include, as an institutionally-established feature, the research component that accompanies each cognitive object. In this manner, they recognise and showcase as being part of them, and to a significant degree, the doubts, contradictions and convergences that make the cognitive object come "alive" and be "productive". Something that everyone knows holds true for all "courses" –including non-university ones– but which is usually passed over in silence: in all courses, the educator also learns something new, produces something new.

The "courses" of the Thematic Weeks of the University of Athens' Department of Early Childhood Education have this productive dimension as their essential goal. And from their outcome, we considered that the successful courses of the Thematic Week titled "Contemporary trends in Greek puppet theatre. An Informal educational approach?" were so productive that it would be a pity to keep their results confined to the time and space that the formal part of their realisation reduced them to.

This fact made us decide to put together and publish this collective book bearing the same title as the Thematic Week.

We hope the result will not disappoint its readers.

The editors,
Antigoni Paroussi and Antonis Lenakakis



Introduction

Antigoni Paroussi

Trajectories of the “becoming” of the life of puppet theatre... From the vernacular to the artful, from the traditional to the pioneering, from children’s to adult puppet theatre, from educational puppet show to puppet spectacle...

Puppet theatre and its puppets have been adored, they have been persecuted, they have entertained and they have raised questions and troubled; great artists and people of letters have showcased it and many professionals and amateurs have experimented with it. Puppetry is a multifaceted art, or as the introduction to the University of Connecticut’s undergraduate curriculum in Puppet Arts puts it, “puppet arts are a crossroad of many disciplines,”¹ a crossroad where all the Arts and most of the Sciences meet. At the same time, it is often a neglected art. It is a global tradition and heritage and a contemporary art. An experimental theatre. The stereotype that has followed it since the middle of the last century, that of being a “children’s spectacle”, has condemned it for significant periods of time to the margins of the Arts’ “market”, although ever more frequently nowadays we see the theatrical puppet making a return and participating in the international landscape of the performing arts. Is a long-standing relationship being revived?

The relationship between puppetry and the arts of today –and by this, I mean the trends in contemporary art– has resulted in important syntheses in form, expressive content and often ingenious visual and theatrical treatment. The main characteristic of these tendencies is the transcendence of the boundaries between art genres, but also, at all times, through the act of animating, the transcendence by tradition of the boundaries between what is real and the imaginary. In the puppeteers’ productions, the space-related arts, such as drawing/painting, sculpture or architecture, are increasingly intertwined with the dynamics of time, music, dance, impersonation, while the body itself of the artist is often presented as their main means of expression. Thus we have begun to see performances where the synthesis of the arts with an emphasis on animation leads to highly abstract forms/images.²

¹ <https://drama.uconn.edu/programs/puppet-arts/bfa-puppet-arts/>

² Cf. the performance of Basil Twist, “Dogugaeshi” at the Charleville-Mézières festival of 2019. <https://vimeo.com/191698846>

At present, the rapid development of technology opens up other paths of communication and expression. We therefore see various trends taking shape, which pose new aesthetic, conceptual or even moral and political issues.³ On the other hand, as Claudia Orenstein concludes in her introduction to Part II of “The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance” (edited by D. Posner, C. Orenstein and J. Bell, 2014, p.113), “even as puppetry diversifies today, it is not unbound from its past. Anterior practices and figures continue to link us to a notion of what puppetry is in its paradigmatic forms. To transform puppetry in the present is inherently to be in dialogue with its history...”

All these are open and interesting issues that concern all those involved in the “life” of the theatrical puppet, from whichever perspective they have chosen to approach it. They also concern the puppeteers. And they concern the teachers, too.

An opportunity for dialogue

Within the undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), the module of the Thematic Weeks stands out (DECE, 2020: 164-165). These Thematic Weeks each offer, in a different manner, an alternative way of working and approaching the subject they deal with and, although they continue to be “courses”, they break away from the way that courses are usually taught. The daily interaction with the group of students who have chosen the particular subject, as well as the presence of invited experts, de facto creates a different relationship with the lecturer and a different approach to each chosen subject. In our case, the art of puppetry.

So the organisation of the Thematic Week around puppet theatre allowed us to develop the subject freely and to address issues around this art, both in workshop and theoretical terms. Four practical workshops were organised with different themes, materials, movement and puppet-making techniques, as well as a two-day conference with presentations and contributions, which during its first part were theoretical and during the second were delivered by professional puppeteers. As our theme, we chose the “Contemporary trends in Greek puppetry” and asked ourselves to what extent these function as “An informal form of education?” And this because if, at first glance, it appears that Art and

³ See, for instance, the Théâtre de la Licorne (<https://theatrelalicorne.com>) or Le Cœur Cousu (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVreQCn0gAY>).

Education have followed different trajectories, puppet theatre in Greece and education –particularly early childhood education– have a parallel development in their historical course with numerous points of encounter (Lenakakis, Paroussi, & Tselfes, 2019), which as a rule include constructive exchanges, both interesting and productive.

By participating in the dialogue, obviously from the side of education, our students were invited to embrace this art's content in the context of their profession. Our objective was to allow them to move away from the narrow confines of need, which dictates that puppetry is an activity that is inevitably important for their future job, and to get closer to professional artists. To interact with the art of puppetry itself, to see, to experiment, to listen and, perhaps, to get to know it better.

Fellow academics, teacher trainers and scholars of the Arts joined the same dialogue, appreciating the fact that the role of the latter is being upgraded in formal education. Thus the contemporary trends in Greek puppet theatre, i.e. an artistic activity presented by its own artists, can possibly raise interesting, primary art issues or also highlight tendencies of informal forms of education (of the kind that all performing arts implicitly adopt and develop when trying to communicate with their public), which it would be good for more general formal forms of education to take into account.

For my part, although today a lecturer, I have lived puppet theatre in Greece for several decades and have watched it follow and shape –in its own measure and time– international developments. It must have been the late 1970s when I worked at the Athens Puppet Theatre of Eleni Theochari-Perakis with the Barba Mytoussis show. I remember us laughing our heads off, when people called and asked to speak to Mr Mytoussis to book a performance (they skipped “barba”, meaning uncle, out of courtesy) and it being inconceivable to them that the cast was made up only of women. The puppet character was dominant, while the puppeteers were invisible, hidden behind the screen. The evolution of materials used to make the puppets and props brought a renewal each time, their “secrets” and techniques well-hidden. Exchanges and transformations emanated from the feedback at international festivals, where, until 1980, we also met with E. Spatharis’ Shadow Theatre. A landmark era, which led to an expanded conception of the art of puppetry.

Since then, a lot has changed in our country. UNIMA-HELLAS was created, the

community of puppeteers has grown. New puppeteers, new troupes have been formed, have carved their own path; they participate in international festivals, produce, teach, create partnerships, train, evolve, share and exchange their experiences.

Their participation in the dialogue was therefore an excellent opportunity for DECE students to hear about the new proposals and to exchange ideas on the actions and perspectives of puppet theatre.

The publication

The idea of publishing a collective volume began over a year ago, immediately after the completion of the Thematic Week, held at the end of January 2020 at the NKUA’s DECE, in collaboration with the Greek Puppet Theatre Centre of UNIMA-HELLAS.

The volume is published digitally and comprises articles on the issues raised in the contributions and interventions of fellow lecturers and puppet artists, the aim being to showcase the contemporary artistic trends of Greek puppet theatre and combining design practices, theoretical approaches and educational processes.

None of us, of course, imagined that a year and more after the presentations at this two-day event our life would be so different and the digital publication of this volume so timely, at a time when the upheavals in the socially and politically self-evident put to the test the art of puppet theatre, education and, even more so, the relationship between theatre and education.

The volume aspires to present to a wide audience some thoughts about the current identity of Greek puppet theatre, which differ greatly from the stereotyped image circulating in a major part of the world of education. It also aspires to capture, as much as possible, the dynamics of its existence and the transition from the pre-pandemic normality to the post-epidemic unspecified future, through an indisputably dystopian present.

The first part of the volume, titled: Puppet theatre everywhere, comprises theoretical texts that discuss the questions of aesthetics and movement as a means of expression, as well as the issue of staging in general and in puppet theatre in particular. The texts discuss the question of the puppet’s place and expressive power in political street theatre, but also in therapy processes. They approach and analyse the evolving and complex relations of puppet theatre as a theatrical genre with education: teacher education in Greek universities, and



in particular at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, education in nursery-school classrooms, non-formal museum education, the kinetic type of activity developed by the “Network for Theatre in Education”, but also the education in the reverse direction of the puppeteers themselves.

The second part, titled: Behind the puppets, comprises texts with thoughts, positions and opinions of the puppeteers who participated in the Thematic Week. Despite preferring to speak through their performances, mentors and apprentices, apprentices of the apprentices, today’s puppeteers in the field have provided us with texts about their work, its difficulties and its joys. Reflecting the past, they talk about today, they dream of tomorrow. I would like to clarify that these significant texts are far from being an inventory of troupes and companies; nor do they exhaust all the trends of Greek puppet theatre today. But we would like to believe that, in their pages, in a certain manner, one can at least perceive the present of Greek puppet theatre and the outlines of its potential and its future.

The third part, titled: Some things we learnt from the dialogue, comprises two research texts. The first attempts to discern the educationally informal components of artistic puppet theatre as these emerge, on the one hand, from the statements of puppeteers in the interviews of an earlier research study and, on the other, from the views of the students who attended the Thematic Week. The second seeks to deliver an overall evaluation of the Thematic Week’s educational outcomes based on the students’ ex post viewpoints, as expressed in the discussions of the focus groups.

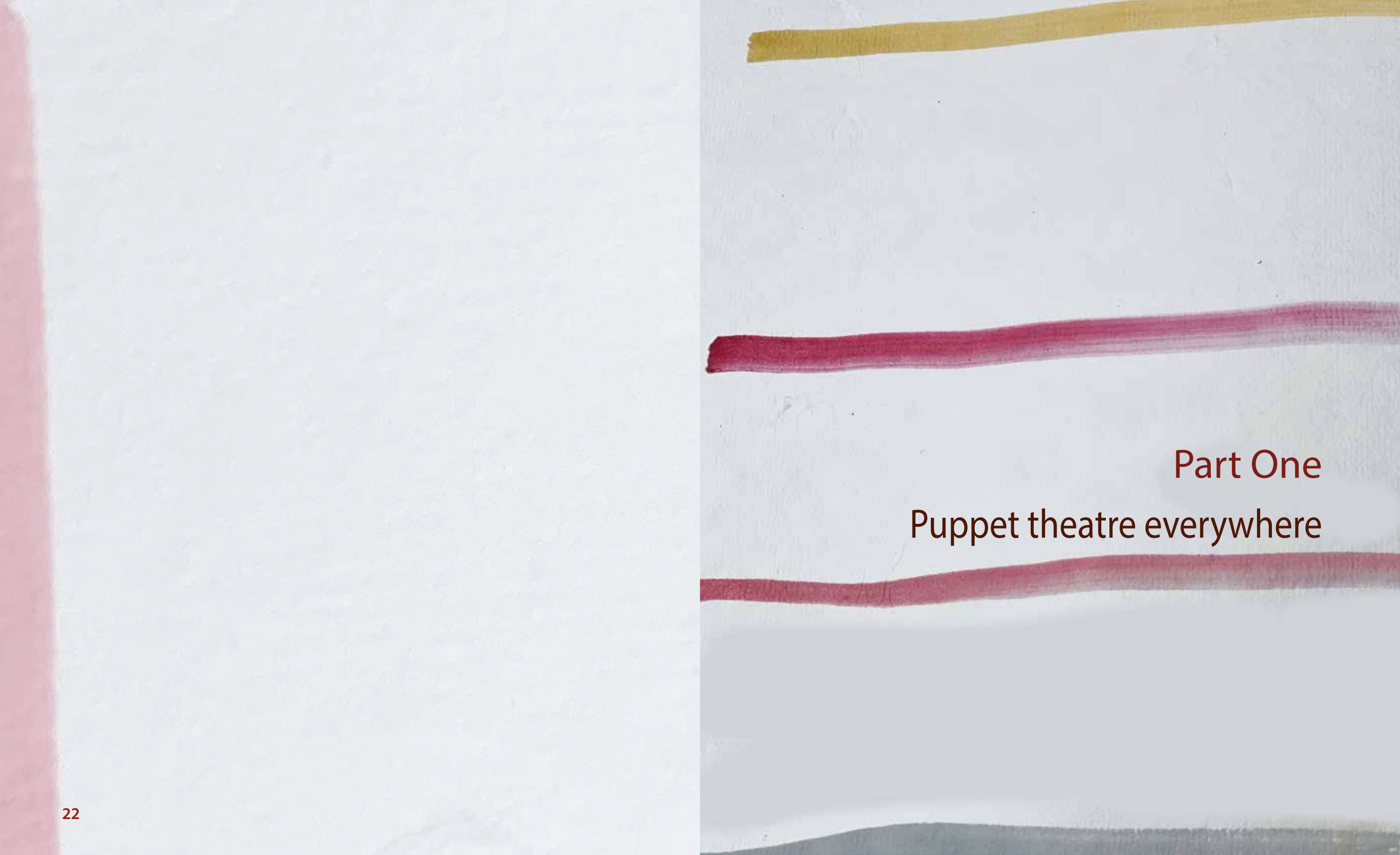
References

Lenakakis, A., Paroussi, A. & Tselfes, V. (2019). Θεσμικά και πολιτισμικά σχήματα που περιγράφουν τη μεταβαλλόμενη παρουσία του κουκλοθέατρου στον εκπαιδευτικό χώρο των ελληνικών Νηπιαγωγείων [Institutional and cultural schemes describing the changing presence of puppetry in the educational space of Greek nursery schools]. *Mentoras*, 16, 48-94.

Posner, D., Orenstein, C., & Bell, J. (2014) (Eds). *The Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*. Routledge.

DECE. (2020). Οδηγός Σπουδών 2020–2021 [Student’s Guide 2020-2021]. DECE, NKUA. <http://www.ecd.uoa.gr/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ΟΣ-2020-F.pdf>. For a presentation in English, see the previous year’s Student’s Guide 2019-2020: <http://www.ecd.uoa.gr/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/%CE%9F%CE%A3-E-2019-1-1.pdf> particularly p.134 onwards.





Part One
Puppet theatre everywhere

Aesthetics in Education

Alexandra Mouriki

Abstract

How does aesthetics fit into the educational context and interact with aesthetic and art education issues? In an attempt to probe the issues raised by this question, the text refers briefly to: a) the content of aesthetics and its relation to the philosophy of art, and, b) the importance of establishing an aesthetic education in reference, and in relation, to the concept of aesthetics. It attempts to highlight the possibility of a contemporary aesthetic education, which is based on the creative nature of the various forms of art, recognises the diversity of the expressive process and adopts multifaceted practices that favour multidimensional interpretations, creative engagement, critical reflexion and the initiation into a different way of grasping and conceiving meanings.

Key words: aesthetics, arts, education, meaning, transformative process, aesthetic experience.

The man with the blue guitar and a metaphor

*They said, "You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are."*

*The man replied, "Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar."*

*And they said then, "But play, you must,
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,*

*A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are.*

The excerpt above is from Wallace Stevens' poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar", published in 1937 (Stevens, 1982: 165).

It has been suggested that the poem is an imaginary conversation with Picasso's "The Old Guitarist" (1904), which Stevens might have seen while it was displayed at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1934. Stevens himself, though, insisted that this influence was only peripheral. The painting is almost entirely done in monochromatic blues and blue-blacks, except for the guitar itself, which is painted in a slightly warmer brown. The man is blind but, no longer seeing the world around him, he sees more deeply into the reality within.

In the poem, it is the guitar of the blind guitarist that is blue, while people –we don't know who, acting as a chorus– tell the guitarist that he does not play things as they are, thus transforming the blue guitar into a metaphor for the perception of reality and art, imagination and the aesthetic experience.

In the verse of Stevens' long poetic composition ("The Man with the Blue Guitar" is divided into 33 brief sections or cantos), a constant tension emerges between the desire to see beyond, to reveal what is hidden, and the desire to stay where one is, immersed in the familiar, the everyday, the comfortable. The guitarist invites his audience to step away from the lights and definitions, and to say what they see in the darkness. He bids them look with their own eyes, find their own voices –become who they really are– and see things differently.

The theme of this metaphor of the blue guitar has also inspired a theoretical exploration of the fields within which blue guitars find their place as meaningful metaphors. This theme can be seen in the work of philosopher and aesthetic education theorist Maxine Greene, who, also inspired by Stevens, wrote Variations on a blue guitar, projecting the blue guitar as a metaphor for imagination, which is central to her theory of aesthetic education. Considering, for my own part, that the blue guitar is a metaphor for art itself and the experience to which it invites us, I use it here as a trigger for our discussion of aesthetics, art and aesthetic education and the manner in which they are connected in educational practice.

In search of definitions, qualifiers and meanings

Aesthetic appreciation, in a rather classical and globally accepted approach, is associated with those situations in which we perceive things and enjoy them for themselves, for their form. These forms seem to be full of meaning to us; this is an aesthetic situation. The forms perceived as full of meaning in this situation do not acquire meaning because they refer/allude to something else (as is the case with the common words or other common symbols we use). These forms are enjoyable and meaningful in and of themselves: a poem, a painting, a theatrical performance or, too, a sunset or a seashell on the beach.

This is the aesthetic dimension that works of art share with objects, things or situations that are not art. Which means that the arts are closely related to aesthetics, but the latter does not refer exclusively to the arts; it is something broader than the arts. In the case of the arts, someone creates something, with the intention that this something will become an object of aesthetic pleasure in the way we have just mentioned.



However, broadening the scope of this rather traditional view of the aesthetic as pleasure to that of aesthetics as a field of study in philosophy, we could say that aesthetics deals with the perception, senses, cognitive faculties –especially imagination– that are involved in how we know, sense/feel the world in which we live, or, more precisely, aspects of it (indicatively: Barrett, 2017; Carroll, 1999; Greene, 2001; Mouriki, 2003; White, 2009). And although it is not exclusively limited to them, aesthetics –from its modern and contemporary perspective and approach– primarily refers to those of our experiences that are linked to our reflective and conscious contact/encounter with the arts. It can also focus on the manner in which a work of art becomes an object of our experience and the effect it might thus have on changing our perspective of the world, nature, human beings and human existence (Greene, 2001: 5). It offers us a way to explore our commitments/connections to objects in the world in ways that can jolt our mental habits (Spivak, 2012: 6).

On the other hand, from a phenomenological perspective, education/learning is a transformative process, an ongoing course of educating/forming/shaping learners. It is a process that allows them, as Maxine Greene (2001) argues, “to become different, to enter the multiple provinces of meaning” (p. 6), to break with the “natural attitude”, with what is taken for granted. This process allows the learners to look through the lenses of different and diverse ways of knowing (which is not necessarily dialogical in nature), rearranging or imposing a different kind of order on their experience. It is an “initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving,” so as to “nurture a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meanings and a learning to learn” (Greene, 2001: 7).

Combining the above, then, aesthetic education is thus shown to be a course of initiation into this process of generating meanings that arise/emerge through a particular manner of contact with the world and its various ways of articulation, through the particular kind of experiences that aesthetic experiences are. The specificity of these experiences –and their particular interest pedagogically– resides in their non-passive nature. Aesthetic experiences do not just happen. They require a degree of detachment, of distancing from everyday life and practical interests, and a degree of focus on the objects of our attention so that they present themselves in a space of their own –an “aesthetic space”, according to Greene (2001: 53)– within which they become visible and are sensed in new and often unpredictable ways.

Works of art, of whatever sort, are created with the aim of provoking such experiences. But they cannot do that, they are not activated as aesthetic objects, unless they are approached in the ways of this intensive attention that distracts us from everyday concerns. It is an interactive relationship between a subject and an object which is not solely physical, nor solely intellectual, and which leads to a creation whose product can be interpretations and meanings, according to Dewey (1934: 256). It leads to meaningful/significant experiences which challenge conventions and focus on the emergence of new ideas (Garrett & Kerr, 2016: 8) or, put differently, which imply, as Rancière phrases it, referring to Kant, “a certain disconnection from the habitual conditions of sensible experience” (Rancière, 2006: 1). Consequently, the aesthetic experience is involved in the learning process (at least at certain moments) because of the way it signals a break with commonplace admissions and assumptions (Garrett & Kerr, 2016).

Summing up, then:

— Aesthetics = exploration of the manner in which aesthetic experiences jolt our mental habits and create conditions for the emergence of new meanings (Merleau-Ponty, 1993: 105-106; Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 106-107), new ideas (Dewey, 1934).

— Education/training = search for meanings (understood as connections within the experience and definitions of concepts), whose realm, as Dewey among others has shown, “is wider than that of true-and-false meanings; it is more urgent and more fertile” (Dewey, 1929: 410). In other words, it is the creation of conditions that make young people, children, capable of discovering them (these meanings).

— Aesthetic education, therefore = a conscious endeavour that aims not only to cultivate reflective, participatory forms of engagement with the arts, but also, through our contacts with them¹, to enable opening up to the “richness and freedom of meanings” (Dewey, 1929: 411). In this sense, it constitutes an open scheme/project; it is a work in progress (Spivak, cited in Rafaty, 2014). It does not aim to transmit predetermined knowledge (as other areas of education perhaps) but, rather, “teaches” (through the total involvement of the senses, emotions, cognition) the importance of constant discovery.

¹ “They lend works of art their lives,” says Greene (2001: 6) “in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful”.



A somewhat different knowledge and the multiple organs of perception

In support of this choice, we can draw on neo-cognitive arguments which agree that cognitive value is not always a matter of truth and knowledge, and that “the arts offer a more diffuse, but still cognitively significant, encounter with reality than could be captured in a proposition, claim or by answering a ‘what is it like’ question” (Gibson, 2008: 585).

Art might not provide new knowledge –although it can also do this under a certain perspective and conditions– but it can transform the knowledge we already have. It enlightens us by mobilising what we already know and feel, and in doing so it offers us an opportunity to deepen our understanding about what we already know and feel².

Art offers, too, a valuable broadening of our cognitive capacities. Its cognitive value “resides primarily in its capacity to promote certain cognitive and perceptual virtues, for example the capacity to attend to detail, grasp meaning, look beyond surfaces and contemplate an object selflessly” (Gibson, 2008: 585-6).

Consequently, the knowledge that art can offer, although it may not be propositional and may not pretend to a value of truth as in science or philosophy, can nevertheless be a source of insight and awareness; it can help us to see the world in a new or different way.

For example, works of art, such as those that puppeteers make and play, can teach (show) us how to look at the world, discovering ignored aspects of it or rediscovering familiar aspects of it in a new light. The works of art then become “spiritual organs”, according to Merleau-Ponty or “multiple organs of perception” (Dieleman, 2017: 8), as they teach us how to look and at the same time invite us to think in a way that no analytical work can. As Merleau-Ponty explains, the analysis finds in the object only what we ourselves have put into it (Merleau-Ponty, 1993b: 114; Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 123). In the work of art, though, it is not we who put into it what we want to find and analyse. Consequently, our encounter with art shows us that there are other ways to apprehend the world and our relationship to it beyond the objectifying ways of science or the pragmatic ways of everyday life, and these ways are neither trivial nor insignificant. The object of the experience of coming into contact with art presents itself to our consciousness liberated from the premises of both common sense and science (see also Greene, 2001: 57).

² For a similar argument in defence of art’s ability to clarify the knowledge we bring to it, see also Carroll, 1998; Eldridge, 2005.

The experiences we gain from our encounter with the arts “reach the same undivided world” (Efland, 2002: 171) which we try to interpret and grasp through different cognitive functions (reasoning, imagination, feeling, and even motion and action). Contact with the arts enhances the abilities and skills of imagination and reflection (Stokes, 2006: 78-80); it allows us to see the familiar in an unfamiliar light and to discern new connections between things. It can thus serve as a model for another kind of knowledge, a “specific kind of knowledge” (Lamarque & Olsen, 1994: 452) that leads to a different contact with things and with the world. As Nelson Goodman says, a work of art (e.g., a puppet-theatre play) “may bring out neglected likenesses and differences [to real-life circumstances and situations, let’s say], force unaccustomed associations and, in some measure, remake our world” (Goodman, 1976: 33).

A slightly different approach: art as expression

But how is this possible? How is the world remade through art? In “Cézanne’s Doubt” (Merleau-Ponty, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1993a), but also in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1993b; Merleau-Ponty, 2005), Merleau-Ponty describes the artist, the painter more specifically, as someone who, established in time and place, looks at the whole of an already-started painting composition and, with simple strokes of his/her brush, resolves problems that the composition itself poses and/or makes something emerge/come into being that is only faintly perceptible before it is given form. An artist is thus projected as someone who seeks and expresses with his/her own artistic means not that which he/she has in mind or which exists out there as an object to be represented but “the allusive logic of the perceived world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1993b: 94; Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 91).

The artist is not only someone who sees, hears, moves and represents, nor just someone who thinks. He/she does not represent simple sensations or phenomena, but neither is what he/she does the result of applying his/her judgement to what he/she perceives through his/her senses. The artist undertakes to express the world without submitting to the prosaic discourse of the senses or the concept. His/her own expression is, or rather ought to be, as Merleau-Ponty says, poetry; it “must completely awaken and recall our sheer power of expressing beyond things already said and seen” (Merleau-Ponty, 1993b: 89; Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 84).

“Art,” asserts Merleau-Ponty, “is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expression”



(Merleau-Ponty, 1991: 42; Merleau-Ponty, 1993a: 67-68) [similar to expression through the written or spoken word]. And in the same way that language/speech does not resemble what it names, so, too, art is not some kind of mimetic artifice that deceives us. Figures from the theatre, such as Hamlet, for example, or Punch and Judy from puppet theatre, are, in a sense, 'real' people. As characters, they are 'taken from life'. At the same time, though, they are also outside of life (Reid, 2008: 297). They draw their individual uniqueness from their life within the work of art; they are transformed by being embodied in the work of art. And this embodiment, where form and meaning are inseparable, is perhaps the key idea of aesthetics – as Reid asserts (2008: 297).

Through the artistic act, then, both a transition and a transformation take place simultaneously: we pass from an order of events to an order of meaning; these very situations which until then we perceive passively (as data of the senses) become a signifying system.

The meaning that the expressive acts of artistic creation aspire to is not accomplished in advance in a firmament of ideas, nor is it found in things which do not yet have meaning. It emerges at a particular moment, within the sphere of an already constituted discourse, as an embodied meaning demanding to find its way and take root in the consciousness of others, without any guarantee that it will ever succeed (Merleau-Ponty, 1991: 46-47; Merleau-Ponty, 1993a: 70).

An aesthetic object is full of meaning, then, not because it refers to something else (such as common words or other symbols), but because, in a way, its meaning is contained within it (Reid, 2008: 300).

The meaning in works of art as embodied meaning

Retrospectively and in confirmation, this observation leads us back to the issue of knowledge to which we referred above. The experience we have from contact with this embodied meaning is a kind of knowledge (Reid, 2008: 297). It is a particular and unique kind of knowledge, for which there is no substitute, and which, unfortunately, is more or less neglected in education due to the prevailing stereotyped perception of knowledge based on the use of common language and conventional symbols. Implicitly, the experience of art is a type of cognitive process and learning. It is the type of knowledge that is acquired once one enters this particular experience of contact with the embodied meaning of art. When someone –we and the children we are addressing– enters it, facets/ aspects of the world of human experience are revealed in a way that cannot be revealed by

any of the other ways used in the learning process. Through the active focusing of attention on the shape and form of the symbols of art, in all its forms, in poetry, theatre, dance, experiences of a holistic nature are activated (where the mind participates as much as the body, senses and emotions). The embodied symbol, or the aesthetic object, absorbs into itself all types of life experiences and ways in which we perceive and feel the world and objects, and transforms them.

In conclusion: embodied meanings, more thought and blue guitars or another way of knowing

Through the way in which they present their "embodied meanings" or their "sensory intuitions" (according to Kant), works of art open us up to an infinite process of understanding: they tell us "more than we can express in words with a given meaning" and provoke "greater reflection" than a purely conceptual processing of these meanings can cause (cf. Kant, 2000: 193). In other words, they give access to ways of understanding that cannot be expressed in purely conceptual terms and thus not only do not remove but, on the contrary, contribute to knowledge (Goodman, 1976: 33).

Consequently, contact with the arts, the aesthetic experience, has an essential role to play in the educational process. Being a particular way of encountering and representing the world, it opens up unexpected horizons in experience, reveals previously unknown dimensions and aspects of the world, and constantly offers new fields of conceptual explorations and interpretations.

Aesthetic education is practiced as an initiation to this other way of knowing: it becomes the place where this other knowledge unfolds and is proposed as another way of learning. A way that is related to the stimulation of the imagination, the creation of new connections, the awareness from within of what the arts are/resemble and what they mean, as pointed out by Greene (2001), who, as mentioned above, used as a symbol for her theory of aesthetic education "the blue guitar", the image of the man with the blue guitar who "doesn't play things as they are". By awakening the imagination (by disconnecting from the familiar, or defamiliarizing the familiar, we might say), aesthetic education can change children's lives, freeing them from feeling inadequate when faced with logocentric curricula, and freeing the curricula from the obsessive attachment to standards and predetermined objectives.

Because a blue guitar does not play things as they are or as people are used to believing they are. Because what occurs on the particular stage of a puppet



show is not the way things occur in the world – even if it resembles or alludes to it. Because the voice and the sounds that the puppeteer produces invite the spectators to listen to the sound of the breaking shell (the outer shape) of the things he/she is breaking and to see that which is happening in front of them as something unusual yet possible – or even as a utopian possibility; to see things differently and be surprised:

*Throw the lights away. Nothing must stand
Between you and the shapes you take
When the crust of shape has been destroyed.
You as you are? You are yourself.
The blue guitar surprises you.*
(Stevens, 1982: 183)

Playing on the blue guitars of art is an opening towards the particular perspective of meaning that emerges from the imaginary projection of things as they might otherwise be. It corresponds to the search for meaning, opening up unforeseen possibilities through unexpected associations and emergent patterns. This does not mean that aesthetic education cuts us off from the rationality of a learning process. For the more informed our encounters with the arts become, the more our perspectives widen (Greene, 2001: 36), on the condition, of course, that this information is educated understanding, informed awareness (idem.: 58). Such awareness is, on the one hand, an initiation/introduction to the processes of artistic creation and the various forms of expression, and, on the other hand, an act of “bringing actual works alive in experience,” as Greene says (2001: 59).

This is exactly what the art of puppet theatre does: it creates worlds that the children’s imagination activates, worlds that come to life through a living, holistic experience, where things can exist differently.

References

- Barrett, T. (2017). *Why is that art? Aesthetics and criticism of contemporary art* (3rd ed.). New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carroll, N. (1998). Art, narrative, and moral understanding. In J. Levinson (Ed.), *Aesthetics and ethics: Essays at the intersection* (pp. 126–60). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Carroll, N. (1999). *Philosophy of art: A contemporary introduction*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Carroll, N. (2001). *Beyond aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company.
- Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and nature*. London: George Allen and Unwin Limited
- Dieleman, H. (2017). Arts-based education for enchanting, embodied and embedded sustainability. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, 2(2). Available at <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/atj/vol2/iss2/4>
- Efland, A. D. (2002). *Art and cognition: Integrating the visual arts in the curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Eldridge, R. (2005). *An introduction to the philosophy of art*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Garrett, H. J., & Kerr, S. L. (2016). Theorizing the use of aesthetic texts in social studies education. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 44(4), 505-531. Consulted at: https://www.academia.edu/28202779/Theorizing_the_Use_of_Aesthetic_Texts_in_Social_Studies_Education, 1-27
- Gibson, J. (2008). Cognitivism and the arts. *Philosophy Compass*, 3, 573-589. Also available at <https://philpapers.org/archive/GIBCAT-2.pdf>
- Goodman, N. (1976). *Languages of art: An approach to a theory of symbols* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Greene, M. (2001). *Variations on a blue guitar, the Lincoln Center Institute lectures on aesthetic education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Kant, I. (2000). *Critique of the power of judgment* (P. Guyer & E. Matthews, Trans.). Cambridge, MA and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press (Original work published 1790).
- Lamarque, P., & Olsen, S. H. (1994). *Truth, fiction and literature: A philosophical perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.



Merleau-Ponty, M. (1991). Cézanne's doubt. In M. Merleau-Ponty, *Cezanne's doubt. The eye and the spirit* [in Greek] (A. Mouriki, Trans.). Athens: Nefeli.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1993a). Cézanne's doubt. In G. A. Johnson (Ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (pp. 76-120). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1993b). Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence. In G. A. Johnson (Ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (pp. 76-120). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2005). Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence. In M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (pp. 63-133) [in Greek] (G. Faraklas, Trans.; A. Mouriki, Postface). Athens: Hestia Publishers.

Mouriki, A. (2003). *Metamorphoses of aesthetics* [in Greek]. Athens: Nefeli.

Rafaty, R. (2014). Who will educate the educators? An interview with Gayatri Spivak. Retrieved from <https://www.kingsreview.co.uk/interviews/who-will-educate-the-educators-an-interview-with-gayatri-spivak>.

Rancière, J. (2006). Thinking between disciplines: an aesthetics of knowledge (Trans. J. Roffe). *Parrhesia*, 1, 1-12. Also accessible via https://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia01/parrhesia01_ranciere.pdf

Reid, L. A. (2008). Aesthetics and education. *Research in Dance Education*, 9(3), 295-304. doi:10.1080/14647890802416713

Spivak, G. C. (2012). *An aesthetic education in the era of globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Stevens, W. (1982). *The collected poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Knopf.

Stokes, D. (2006). Art and modal knowledge. In M. Kieran & D. McIver Lopes (Eds.), *Knowing art. Essays in aesthetics and epistemology* (pp. 67-81). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

White, B. (2009). *Aesthetics primer*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Alexandra Mouriki

is Associate Professor at the University of Patras, where she teaches Aesthetics, Aesthetic Education and History of Art. She is member of the International Society for Education through Art (INSEA), the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA), the American Society for Aesthetics (ASA), the European Society for Aesthetics (ESA), and the Hellenic Society for Aesthetics (HSA). Her fields of interest and research lie in Aesthetics, Aesthetics and Arts in Education and Philosophy of Aesthetic Education. She authored *Metamorphoses of Aesthetics* (in Greek, Nefeli, Athens 2005) and co-authored together with Marina Sotiropoulou-Zormpala *Enriching Arts Education through Aesthetics* (Routledge 2020) and "Did Miró have a mother?" *From Aesthetic theory to aesthetic teaching* (in Greek, Pedio, Athens 2021). She has also published several articles on aesthetics and aesthetic education and translated and edited two volumes of essays by Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricœur.



Fig.1: Dance improvisation rehearsals by Department of Early Childhood Education students

A way of approaching movement Olympia Agalianou

(text revised by the author)

Abstract

Movement is an integral part of the performing arts. Puppet theatre is a complex such art and is performed through the relationship between puppeteer and puppet, itself largely based on movement and which has often met –and continues the relationship with– the quintessential art of movement which is dance. Much like dancers, puppeteers should be aware of movement in order to develop their personal technique and be able to make functional movement decisions during a performance. Rudolf Laban, who defined the evolution of modern dance and the study of movement, developed his theory in what is now known as the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). This, as a tool, can be used as a system of observing and studying movement. In addition, it leads to movement awareness and develops the ability to make decisions about movement. It can also be associated to sound and music, so that the connections between movement and sound stimuli enhance the expressive pursuit of the movement. In puppet theatre, the fusion of puppet and puppeteer into a single moving entity brings awareness of body movement decisions to the centre of artistic creation

Key words: Movement awareness, movement decision, Laban Movement Analysis, dance, puppet theatre.

Introduction

As an onstage art, puppet theatre supposes a complex interpretation that incorporates elements from almost all of the performing arts. At the same time, it is based on a visual artistic conception/creation of the puppeteer (the puppet handler), the puppet itself, with which (s)he develops a unique relationship in order to bring it to life under the theatrical context. The puppet / puppeteer relationship begins well before the moment when the two of them appear together (one openly and the other hidden) on stage and is constructed gradually (Paroussi, 2012: 300). It begins with the puppeteer making the puppet, which sets the main constraints, rules and expressive requirements of its movement. The puppeteer will then be called to animate the lifeless puppet through suitable movements that serve its construction and form, so that its theatrical character might emerge. The puppet retains the independence of its materials, converses with its creator through its kinetic responses, from the stage of its making through to that of interpreting.



The puppet's kinetic responses are in fact comprehensive answers, both in relation to its material and theatrical existence, as well as regarding the body, character and intentions of the puppeteer. The artist/puppeteer needs to listen to them, to decode them, before proceeding. The puppet tells the truth about its handler's movement and this implies the requirement for a high movement awareness. What should the handler's movement skills be? What are her/his movement preferences? What does her/his physical relationship to the puppet call for? What are the needs of the puppet and what are the needs of the role in terms of movement? These and many other related questions are in a constant search for answers.

The veracity of the puppet's movement has been a source of great fascination for the art of dance. Through the study of its movement, choreographers and dancers have sought answers to the expressive movement of the human body. They have also used the puppet onstage –as either a concept or an object– and experimentations around this idea continue.

The communication among arts and their unity was a request of the early 20th century, which fades and returns from time to time. Puppet theatre is a context of encounter of a number of arts that require a high level of body and movement awareness and skills. Movement is one of the defining factors of the aesthetic influence not only of dance, but also of every performing art.

My intention in this text is to suggest a way of thinking about observing the movement, making conscious movement decisions and organizing the movement according to the artistic / expressive desires and wishes of each puppeteer. My proposal is based mainly on the work of the movement theorist and pioneer of contemporary dance thought, Rudolf Laban, as formulated in the Laban Movement Analysis (L.M.A.). In trying to broaden the field, in relation to the L.M.A., I also attempt to connect movement with sound and music, elements that coexist in life and interact / form when joined together in the performing arts.

Learning techniques and perfecting movement are not enough to ensure an excellent interpretation, which results from the two-way relationship between motion and emotion (Paroussi, 2012: 300). The development of body awareness and movement, resulting from the combination of thoughts, action, experience and reflection, is capable of leading to the inner knowledge required to make expressive and artistic decisions.

The puppet, the dancer and the handler

Dance and puppet theatre cross paths many times over time and cultures. Even classical ballet, the austere, erudite dance of the West culture associated with symphonic music and grand theatre stages, was charmed by the concept of the puppet. Hoffman's tales starring puppets inspire librettos and symphonic music works for ballet. The result was classic masterpieces that lasted over time. In 1870, the ballet "Coppélia" to music by Delibes was staged in Paris, which would later become famous thanks to Petipa's choreography and staging in Saint Petersburg. The libretto is based on two of Hoffman's older tales –Der Sandmann (The Sandman) and Die Automate (The Mechanical Doll)– with the choreography bringing the worlds of mechanical dolls and humans together. The libretto of the well-known Nutcracker is also based on one of Hoffman's tales and was staged in Saint Petersburg for the first time as a ballet performance to a score by Tchaikovsky, in 1892. The protagonist is a mechanical doll that comes to life in a choreography that serves the movement of both man and automaton. Another example is that of the ballet "Petruska", to music by Stravinsky, which was first performed in Paris by the Ballets Russes in 1911. In this ballet, three puppets come to life, with the performance of legendary dancer Vaslav Nijinsky in the role of Petruska is now a reference in the history of dance. On the other hand, composers, such as Shostakovich, for instance, in his work "Dances of the Dolls", imagine dolls or puppets dancing and transform this dance into music.

My intention is not a complete inventory of ballets whose theme or inspirations are based on dolls or puppets, but to illuminate the puppet's attraction to the art of dance. Both dancers and choreographers continue to study the accuracy of the doll's -and particularly the puppet's– kinetic response with the same interest as the one described by von Kleist in his fictionalised essay "Über das Marionettentheater" (On the Marionette Theatre). In it, K., a renowned dancer, makes the narrator understand that puppets have many different things to teach a dancer who seeks perfection (Kleist, 1982: 12).

The control of the centre of gravity of the body and of its parts preoccupied ballet and –up to the present–, all dance techniques. We could say that different ways of managing and using weight - and especially the centre of gravity - by the dancers determine the technique and shape the aesthetics of different dance styles. The centre of gravity path "is the path of the dancer's soul and he did not believe that the puppeteer could follow it other than to mentally shift to the



puppet centre of gravity - in other words, if he danced" (Kleist, 1982: 14). This is how the famous dancer Kleist, Mr K. perceives the connection between the two arts.

Kleist's book is somewhere in the bookcases of both dancers and choreographers and 20th and 21st century modern dance continues to be fascinated by the puppet. Freed from the conventions of ballet, having restored its relationship with the other arts, in a continuous and intense path of search and experimentation, the dance is inspired by the age-old yet at the same time contemporary puppet theatre. Thus, relationships and influences between dance and puppet theatre are evident in many works and in various styles. The coexistence of human bodies and puppets on stage in countless artistic approaches continues this relationship, as in Stelarc performances with the extreme experimental and strong robotic influence or in Akram Khan's *Desh*, where the same person undertakes the role of the dancer and the puppet. Contemporary choreographers often use objects as co-dancers of human bodies, meaning that the two arts come ever closer. The modern puppet theatre, on the other hand, functions as a place of artistic experimentation, where every inanimate object can be considered a doll when it comes to life on stage (Paroussi, 2010).

Is the handler puppeteer (also) a dancer? Is the puppet (also) a dancer? What is dance? According to Laban, dance is the movement of the network in space and time, in relation to the rhythm, weight, dynamics and flow of a body (Laban, 1975), while Royce summarizing various definitions, concludes that dance is "a shaped movement performed as an end in itself" (Royce, 2005: 29). Both definitions emphasize the connection between dance and the "here and now" and its simultaneous organization and autonomy. Playfulness with a wider sense is also a point of encounter between dancer and puppeteer. The handler plays (with) the puppet's character –he choreographs it– and the dancer moves him or herself as an end in itself, much as play is always an end in itself if it is to really be play. The puppet follows its handler, shares her/his breathe while keeping its autonomy and reflects her/his choices. All three, puppet, handler and dancer "think movement". The boundaries between the arts become faint, confirming Royce's statement: "The only reason for the existence of definitions (of dance) is so that we may talk of something and others understand what it is about" (Royce, 2005: 29).

Rudolf Laban

The period of 1880-1930 encompasses the decisive transition marking the completion of the modern world's emergence (Kugler, 2014). Among the important things occurring at the time, the Art Nouveau movement expressed the revisional and renewal mood in the arts, scientific interest turned to the human psyche as well, and "dance, fulfilling the purpose of externalizing an inner compulsion, set aside all that had preceded it and started from the beginning" (Horst & Russell, 1981: 16).

Around 1910, one of the revolutionary artistic movements of the time concerned dance and was taking place on the old continent by European artists centred on Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958). Laban had no formal academic education. He did not study dance, nor can it be said that he engaged in scientific research. He pursued a completely personal quest and study by participating in the restlessness taking hold in large European cities and was influenced by the theories and philosophical currents of the time and the newly-founded psychoanalysis. His rich experiences due to family travels and postings greatly contributed to this. He studied in depth the works of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras. His first contact was through his initiation into the practices of the Rosicrucian mystical order, where he was also introduced to Gurdjieff¹, ancient Egyptian religion and Christian and Muslim mystical texts. At the same time, he studied architecture in Paris and began to systematically observe the moving body in space.

Laban saw movement as a physical reaction that can be psychological, emotional or metabolic. Everything we discover about life involves a kinetic experience. We move and react with movements that we are sometimes aware of and sometimes not. The consciousness of movement leads to knowledge and allows expression. The way we move reflects moods and emotions and, conversely, how we move can also influence these. The unity of 'soul' and body is evident in the expression of human movement.

His research led him to a comprehensive theory about analyzing movement and dance. The precision of his studies led him to conceive a dance notation system known as Labanotation or Kinetography Laban. His theory is still used today in the study of dance, movement and physical education. It is a structural

¹ George Gurdjieff (1866-1949) was a Russian mystic, philosopher and spiritual teacher of Armenian and Greek descent.

tool for choreography, movement and dance education, and for theatre also combined with the Stanislavski and the Grotowski principles², while at the same time it has been used by industry in ergonomic constructions. It is the basis on which more recent theories and tools that deal with the observation, recording and systematic study of human movement, comparative choreology and the connection of movement with artificial intelligence models were elaborated. Laban's biographer, Valery Preston-Dunlop, stresses his ability –as both teacher and choreographer– and that of his method to liberate artistically and enable the dancer to discover their potential, their own technique and personal dance/movement style (Preston-Dunlop, 1998).

Laban's theory is known as the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). Complemented by Irmgard Bartenieff (1900-1981) and her movement principles, known as Bartenieff Fundamentals, it is often referred to as LMA/BF, especially in terms of orthosomatic applications, and can serve as a study tool for anyone involved in movement.

LMA as a way approaching movement

LMA has great breadth and depth. Its study requires a lot of time and at the same time empirical/experiential involvement in order to understand in depth the concepts it refers to and be in a position to use it fully as a tool of observation and practice. Nevertheless, the conciseness and clarity of its main principles allow a brief and basic presentation, which can contribute to the creation of a way of thinking. In this section, I shall focus on a selection of its basic principles, as I studied and, more importantly, experienced them in my artistic and educational career. My purpose is to move, step by step, towards the observation, understanding and performance of movement, and my ultimate goal is to help the puppeteer who moves, and is moved by, the puppet.

² Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) elaborated what is known as the Stanislavski system for training actors, a method that was completed later on by Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999).

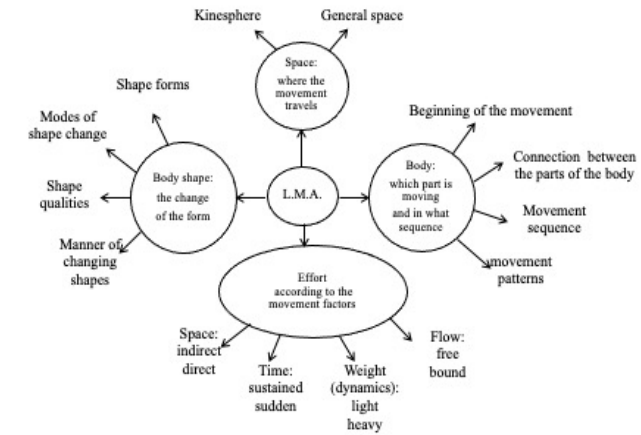


Figure 1: L.M.A.'s basic principles

In LMA, the study of movement starts from four basic themes: space, body, body shape and effort to move. Space is the central theme. The body moves in/through space and is surrounded by space. The trajectory of the movement of the body's parts, where it starts, where it ends and along which path, affects its functionality and expressiveness. Laban studied movement with the aid of 'five crystals', i.e. stereometric polyhedron: cube, tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron. The study of the movement of the body and its parts is carried out in relation to the three planes corresponding to the dimensions of space: 1) frontal (door plane), 2) horizontal (table plane) and 3) symmetrical (wheel plane) (Laban, 1975; Newlove & Dalby, 2004).

His study led him to invent natural movement sequences, which he called movement scales, following the idea that certain movement trajectories/pathways can ensure maximum functionality and harmony of movement in space. The scales' organization was made similarly to musical scales. Through this work, he provided a tool for the geometric/stereometric observation of movement and a way for devising understanding/consciousness exercises of movement and cultivating its many qualities (Laban, 1975; Newlove & Dalby, 2004).

LMA studies movement in personal and general space. Personal space is defined as the sphere, the kinesphere, in which our own body moves, and general space as the space in which the body is able to move. The dimensions of

space –height, breadth, depth– offer the body the possibility of moving in the kinesphere from the centre towards the periphery close or far from the centre or to change directions. The kinesphere can be defined as “the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extended limbs without stepping away from that place which is the point of support when standing on one foot” (Laban, 1975). In addition, it can be defined by the disposition of each body to define its own space or by how much space the energy of its presence occupies. According to this reasoning, it does not have a fixed volume, but changes according to a person’s disposition and intention. Studying and being aware of it can provide insights into the disposition of the moving person, but also into the management of the body in the performing arts in order to achieve the desired effect. We can also envision it as an imaginary bubble that surrounds our body.

It is particularly interesting to envisage the concept of kinesphere in puppet theatre. The puppet is an extension of the puppeteer’s body. The form, look, manipulation and material of the puppet define its own kinesphere, which can merge with, intersect or even separate from that of the puppeteer, thus defining a variety of theatrical conditions and situations.

Body movement and locomotion takes place in the general space. Locomotion in space can be done in a number of ways and results in the transfer of the body’s centre of gravity from one point in space to another. It can be accompanied by an individual movement of limbs in relation to the axes of the body. Distinguishing between the concepts of movement and locomotion helps thinking and organising movement. In order to think of movement in general space, we take into account: a) its direction: forward, backward, up and down, sideways, diagonal, etc.; b) its level: high, medium and low; c) its trajectories: the pathways that the movement of the body follows on the ground: straight lines, curves, circles, etc.; and, d) its shape: the somatic shapes/patterns the body adopts when it exists in space.

The body shapes constantly change in space as the body moves in and through it. This change takes place in various ways and its flow and qualities determine the aesthetic outcome. The shaping of the body shapes requires practice and thought. Successive moments of stillness enable the mover to gain awareness of the body shapes and the manner/flow/quality of the changes.

The puppet’s body changes shapes according to the will of the puppeteer.

The relationship between the two bodies/shapes can be visible to the audience or invisible, it can be used theatrically or not. In any case, the puppet expands the puppeteer’s body shape, affects the way of transition from one shape to another and determines the aesthetic effect.

The category of study that refers to the body is about its movement. The way in which each movement is initiated largely determines its continuity and quality. Very often, this does not happen in full consciousness, meaning that the control of the result is lost. The initiation of movement is an act that provokes and invites each moving person to think. Which limb will initiate the movement, in what direction and in what way? The connection of the body’s parts is one of the factors that determine the movement’s continuity. Knowledge of the human body’s anatomy is information, which, without its practical exploration, cannot provide the mover with significant knowledge of the body’s interconnections. The consciousness of ‘what moves what’, ‘what entails what’ is experienced through exercises and activities that lead the mover to acquire the basic technique of movement.

In the case of puppet theatre, the questions of ‘what moves what’ and ‘what drives what’ become more complex and extend beyond the human anatomy. Each puppet’s anatomy, its unique construction, its handling in terms of a connection/ articulation/ relationship with the puppeteer create a new body, whose mechanics are complex and unique. The study of the sequence of movements and the factors determining it is part of the process towards the unique relationship that the puppet and its manipulator will develop.

Movement, then, is governed by a physical sequence, which depends on the way it begins and the connections of the parts. Kinetic sequences can be built on this physical sequence, according to what the mover wishes to achieve. This is a process, which in one way or another, occurs in life, which is full of motion. The repetition of movement sequences leads to neuromuscular connections that result in the performance of movement patterns in an almost automatic manner. This occurs either unconsciously in everyday life or in an absolutely conscious and controlled manner –as a rehearsal– that seeks to develop specific techniques. The functionality of these patterns is of great importance for both the outcome and the effectiveness of the movement. The almost automatic and economical performance is a great asset and corresponds to what we call technique. Thus, jumps, pirouettes, martial arts’ strikes, playing musical



instruments, but also gestures in the context of any job or everyday life, acquire precision and perfection. However, if this automated movement contains non-functional phases, what we often call errors or “learning errors”, then it may be a problem.

Every movement is determined by four key factors: space, time, weight (dynamics) and flow. Based on them, the observer can describe a movement and its qualities, while the mover can examine her/his movement or make movement decisions.

As it unfolds, a movement crosses a specific space, which is defined by its starting point, route and destination. Space as a factor of movement refers to the manner of achieving destination. It can be reached directly (direct), accurately, or indirectly (indirect), with flexibility, and with all the variations in between. Time refers to the movement’s duration, which can be sudden/sharp or continuous/sustained, with all the intermediate variations. Weight refers to the qualities of the dynamics. A movement can be strong/heavy or light and all the variations between the two.

The two extreme poles of flow are the free and the bound flow. “Flow can be considered to be free when it is entirely seamless and difficult to stop suddenly. As with water flowing down a slope, the mover feels there are no problems” (Newlove & Dalby, 2004: 127). In this case each movement freely follows the previous one. “In an action capable of being stopped and held without difficulty at any moment during the movement, the flow is bound” (Laban, 1975: 56). Flow is connected to the movers’ emotional world in a variety of ways.

Although as a single system the puppeteer and the puppet share common space and time and experience the same sense of flow and dynamics, in practice this can correspond to many combinations, which reveals both the difficulty and the possibilities of this art. How does the puppeteer approach the theatrical space, how does the puppet approach it and how is this presented to or concealed from the audience? How does the puppeteer differentiate her/his intention from that of the puppet? Similar questions also arise regarding the factor of time. What is the puppeteer’s personal time, slow or fast, what the puppet’s time is and how the puppeteer will can transmit it to the puppet. Does she/he intend to distinguish her/his personal time from the puppet’s time or not? Issues of the same sort exist in the handling of the dynamics. Flow is an entirely different factor. In theory, the puppeteer cannot have a completely free flow, because that would mean

losing control of the puppet. However, it is possible that the sense of free flow is a theatrical requirement for achieving a specific stage goal.

The puppeteer has to plot his own movement, the puppet’s movement, the manner in which he will give the puppet the desired movement and the visible and invisible aspects of movement from the audience’s perspective. The table below briefly presents a way of thinking about movement based on the four factors that describe it.

Table 1: Motion factors

Movement decisions based on motion factors			
Motion factors	Range of variation	Manner of approach	Decision process
Space	indirect-direct - indefinite: multiple and complex focus specific direction of movement - specific focus-direction of movement	I think the space	How do I approach the space?
Time	sudden-sustained: - the movement’s duration is short - the movement is sustain	I guess the time	How do I use time?
Weight (dynamics)	light-heavy (strong) - the movement is performed with minimal force and without resistance - performing the movement requires strength	I feel the weight	What is the imprint of my weight?



Flow	<p>free-bound - each movement is a continuation of the previous one, is performed without control and cannot be stopped abruptly</p> <p>- each movement is not connected to the previous one, is carried out with total control and can be stopped at any time</p>	I feel the flow	In what way do I continue my movement?
------	--	-----------------	--

The factors' combinations give different internal movement intentions, lead to a different manner of effort, function and aesthetic outcome. Laban came up with eight basic effort actions, which result from a combination of space, time and weight³. The list of these combinations can help observation and lead to the practical study (experiencing with the body) of movement's qualities. It is a way of developing kinetic abilities, becoming aware of movement and making kinetic decisions with a view to developing functionality and expressiveness.

The table below presents the eight basic effort actions.

Table 2: The eight basic effort actions

Basic effort actions of movement as a combination of motion factors			
Motion factors	Space	Time	Weight
Float	indeterminate-indirect	sustained	light
Glide	specific-direct	sustained	light
Wring	indeterminate-indirect	sustained	heavy(strong)
Dab	indeterminate-indirect	brief/sudden	light
Punch/Thrust	specific-direct	brief/sudden	heavy

³ Laban worked on various combinations of the factors of motion, resulting in different categorizations of movement. Here, the most basic one is presented.

Slash	indeterminate-indirect	brief/sudden	heavy
Flick	specific-direct	brief/sudden	light
Press	specific-direct	sustained	heavy

Laban considered rhythm to be a key component of movement and of life itself. He called it the 'lawless law which governs everything without exception (...) it is always around us and within us and reveals itself everywhere'. Rhythm is inseparable from the concept of time. It consists of stressed and unstressed moments of time, which are perceived by all the senses and not just hearing. He also dealt extensively with the term 'eukinetics' and stressed the effect of rhythm and its dynamics on movement. He also studied the rhythm of movement autonomously and independently of music.

The rhythm of movement has its own 'grammar and syntax' and for this, the expressiveness of movement is autonomous. A human being's physical movements are not always related to the metrical rhythmic system. That is why expressive movement must be studied according to the nature of the movement, because it is from this that the rhythmic elements stem and are dictated. Each person has their own rhythmic patterns, on whose basis they perform their activities in their own unique way. The particular rhythm of each person's movement is connected to the general rhythm of life and the universe.

LMA gives a broad dimension to dance, accessible to every mover, and offers a way of thinking capable of helping each one develop their own movement vocabulary and develop their own subjective technique. Dance manifests itself as a somatic response to weight and dynamics in proportion to the space and time with a particular/personal flow resulting in movement, transportation and communication.

Dance is a continuous change of body shape in space. The same is also true for every person's daily movements. In dance, as in the other performing arts, this change occurs with a specific expressive and communicative goal in mind. The study categories of LMA are a starting point for both thought and practical exploration/ exercise. Laban, like his successors, most notably Bartenieff, proposes a mode of study that involves experience, regardless of the goal of utilising the LMA/BF. The four categories of body, effort, space and shape are perceived as forming a whole, referred to as BESS. It is often depicted as a triangle of interactions that lead to choreography and communication.



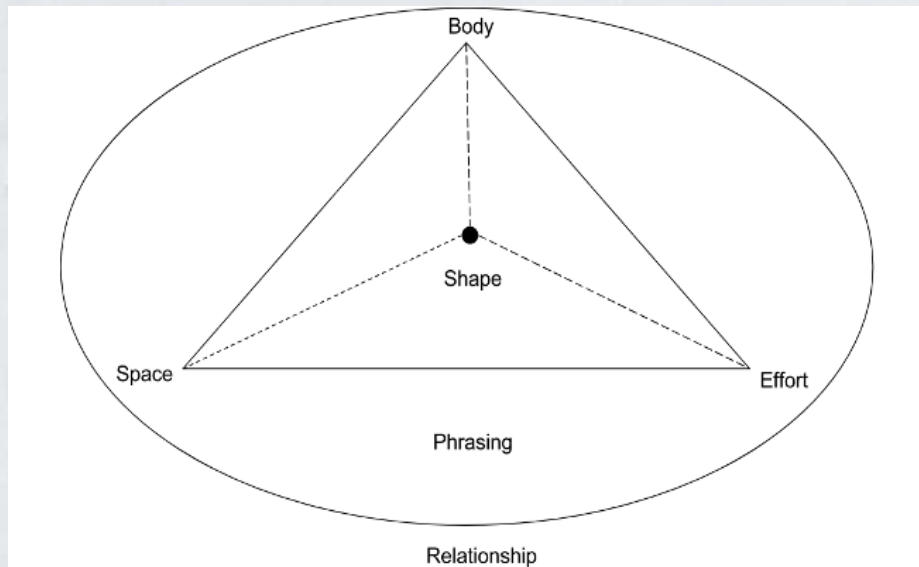


Figure 2: Bess

The puppeteer studies her/his body to proceed with the manipulation of the puppet. The puppet depends on its handler to come to life. Nevertheless, it also maintains its autonomy and mirrors back to its handler her/his choices, making her/him aware of their own movement. The puppet is a companion in the process of movement awareness.

Sound-music-movement

Sound is the building element of music. The anthropology of music and ethnomusicology consider music as the organization of sound in such a way that it has (musical) meaning for the individual or group that organised it. This definition seems to have also been adopted by 20th century music education approaches, which focused on improvisation and creation⁴. It also appears as very acceptable particularly to musical currents that focused on sound. The composer and music theorist John Cage (1912-1992), a pioneer of indeterminacy in music, electroacoustic music, and the non-standard use of musical instruments,

⁴ These music-making approaches have had a decisive influence in the field of music education. The most widespread are those of Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff and Gordon.

turned musical thought towards sound. As a leading figure of the post-war avant-garde and one of the most important American composers of the 20th century, he influenced the modern concept of composition and contemporary dance through his relationship and collaboration with choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009). Even if not organized into a musical form, it possesses an autonomous character and the potential to mobilize people (McClellan, 1997). Movement is the body's visible reaction to a sound stimulus. The movement of the human body can produce sound in many ways and sound itself is caused by the oscillation-movement of a material.

Every sound, regardless of how it is produced, has the following physical properties:

- Sharpness. It refers to the tone-height, or pitch. In Western musical notation, it is described by the notes' positions on the pentagram.

- Duration. It refers to how long or short a sound is. In Western musical notation, it is described by the rhythmic values.

- Loudness. It refers to how loud or soft a sound sounds. In the musical terminology of Western music, the Italian terms are used: forte (f) – piano (p) for loud, soft respectively, and related terms for intermediate variations, such as mezzo forte (mf), mezzo piano (mp), etc.

- Timbre (tone colour). It refers to the particular way that each sound sounds.

This property allows us to identify musical instruments without seeing them, the materials that produce a sound (wood, metal, etc.) or the person to whom the voice we hear corresponds.

We could attempt to correlate the physical properties of sound to the parameters of movement with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between sound and movement on the expressive level. This correlation can help in choosing the relationships according to the desired aesthetic result. Matching or contrasting and all the intermediate stages, even the illusion of a lack of relationship, are all possibilities that can be used to achieve the desired results on stage. The correlation of the physical properties of sound to the parameters of movement resulting from my personal exploration of choreographic issues is presented in the table below:

Table 3: Correlation between the physical properties of sound and the parameters of movement

Physical properties of sound	Motion factors	Movement
Pitch	Space	Movement on the levels of space (high, medium, low) and the intermediate paths
Duration of the sound	Time	Duration of the movement
Loudness (forte – piano)	Weight	Dynamics of the movement
Timbre	Flow	Personal style and flow of movement

As far as space is concerned, the correlation concerns the levels of space and not the manner of approaching it, because this is where its shared feature with the physical properties of sound is located. Despite this, we can think of what it would mean for us or how we could produce sound with an indeterminate or a specific direction. In this case, we could return to Table 2 featuring the 8 basic effort actions and combine qualities of motion and sound. The specific or indeterminate space could be further combined with complete musical compositions and the feeling they create.

Music affects movement. It conveys to the moving bodies the notion of space, form and style. It directs the coordination and the uncoupling of the movements, indicates the breath of phrases, the pauses and the expressive colouring of timbre (Bachmann, 1996: 69). However, the artist who would like to combine music and movement can choose the relationship between the moving body and the musical stimulus according to the aesthetic effect they are pursuing. We could therefore detect the following relationships:

- Musical accompaniment to movement. The movement is perfectly linked to the sound stimulus. It is an organized or a random reaction to the sound or the musical composition.

- Music carpet. The movement functions independently of the music, which is used to create a general atmosphere.

- Choreography. The movement relates in specific ways to the structure, style, musicological characteristics and orchestration of the music. The connections may be based on identification, musical accompaniment, contrast, etc., as well as on their combinations.

Conclusion

The constant search of every artist in the performing arts involves movement. Each art provides its own means and functions according to its own conventions. The artist interacts with them and seeks her/his own expressive pathways. The thought processes are personal and unique. The tools facilitate understanding, broaden the field and point to pathways that remain unique, as are their destinations, too. I think that the LMA's great quality resides in the fact it is specific yet general. It works as a guide rather than as a restriction. It is an instrument for personal questing, increasing awareness and the development of a subjective technique corresponding to the body and the material. It connects action to expression and contributes to making artistic decisions.

Sound and movement are inextricably linked in nature and life. Music and choreography are expressive extensions of primary sound and everyday movement. The possibilities of connection are many and their appropriate selection enhances the artistic effect.

In puppet theatre, the puppet and the puppeteer share the same breath. The movement of one influences the movement of the other. The puppeteer moves her/his puppet and the puppet gives her/him a unique motivation to move, while simultaneously mirroring her/his choices. The theatrical/stage effect is the distillation of this process.

Dance and puppetry meet and/or coexist in the history of art. From Heinrich Kleist's famous dancer at the dawn of the 19th century to Akram Khan's human body in the dual role of man and puppet two centuries later, the relationship of the two arts takes many forms. Today, the boundaries between the two are less pronounced. Music converses with both arts. It accompanies them; it defines them or is inspired by them. The puppet has inspired musicians from the 19th century through to the present or invites them to accompany it in its dance. During the puppet's dance, dancer, puppet and handler become one.

The search in art is constant. The awareness of the choices and decisions determine the aesthetic outcome.



References

Bachmann, M. L. (1996). Jaques-Dalcroze Eurythmics: the importance and influence of music-motor education in the development of the infant [in Greek]. In: The importance and influence of music-motor education in the development of the infant. Conference proceedings: 67-70. Athens: Doukas School.

Horst, L. & Russell, C. (1981). Modern dance forms in relation to the other modern arts [in Greek]. Trans. Eleftheria Kouroupi & Mari-Keti Stamou. Athens: Iolkos.

Kleist, H. von (1982). The Marionettes and a study by Bernard Dort [in Greek]. Trans. Jenny Mastoraki. Athens: Agra.

Kugler, M. (1914/2014). The decline of the beautiful and the birth of the element. Mary Wigman's entrance and Hellerau's exit. *Orff-Schulwerk heute*, 91, 49-51.

Laban, R. (1975). *Modern Educational Dance* (3rd edition). Revised by L. Ullman. London: Macdonald & Evans.

McClellan, R. (1997). *The Healing Forces of Music: History, Theory, and Practice* [in Greek]. Trans. Eva Peppas. Athens: Fagotto.

Newlove, J. & Dalby, J. (2004). *Laban for all*. New York: Routledge.

Paroussi, A. (2010). Talking about Puppet Theatre [in Greek]. In: P. Kanellopoulos & N. Tsaftaridis (Eds), *Art in educations, education in art*. 90-98. Athens: Nissos.

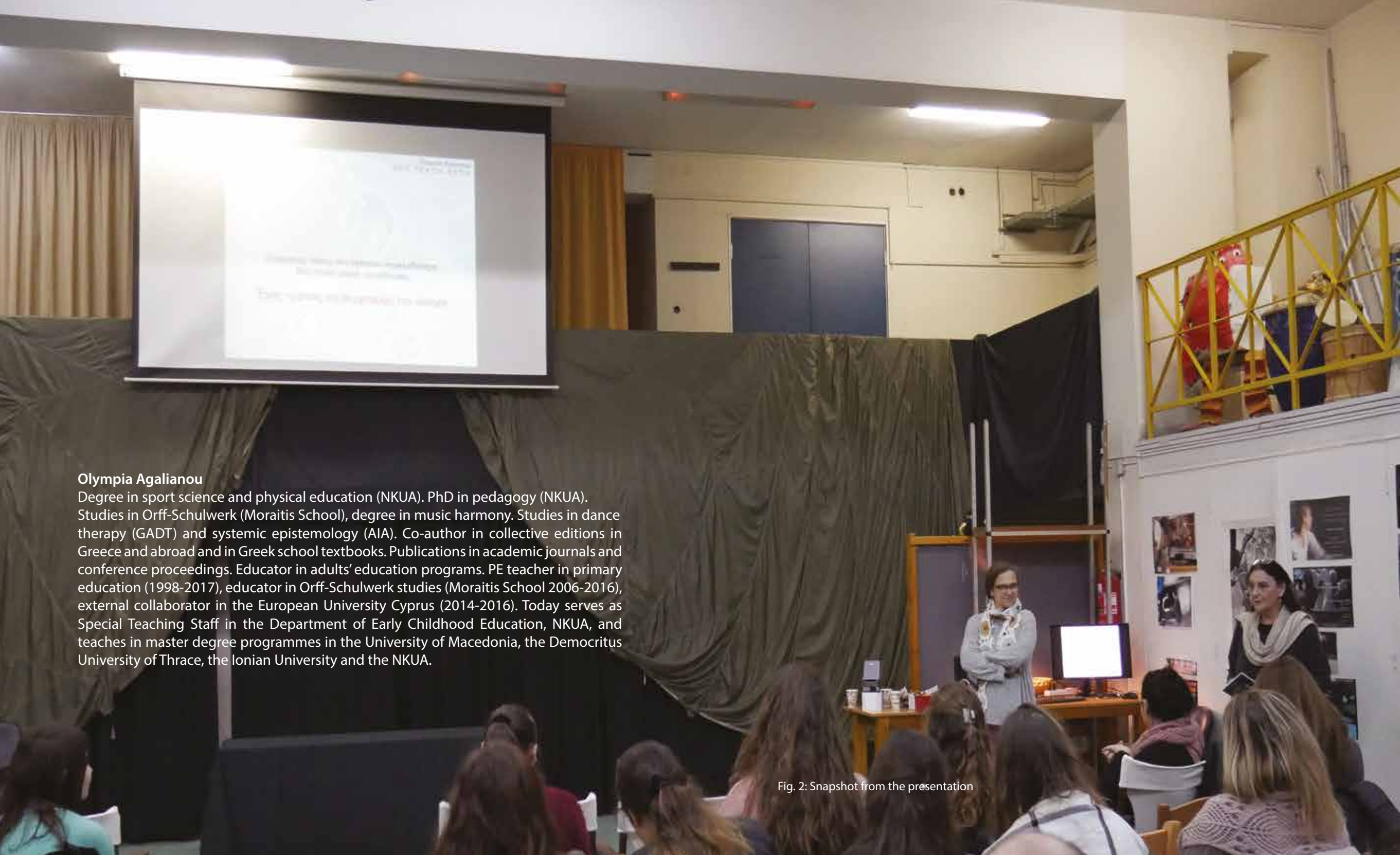
Paroussi, A. (2012). Animation: handler and puppet. A relationship built over time [in Greek]. In: N. Govas, M. Katsaridou and D. Mavreas (Eds), *Theatre and education: ties of solidarity*, 299-301. Athens: Hellenic Theatre/Drama Education Network.

Preston-Dunlop, V. (1998). *Rudolf Laban: An extraordinary life*. London: Dance Books.

Peterson-Royce, A. (2005). *The anthropology of dance* [in Greek]. Trans. Magda Zografou. Athens: Nissos.

Selioni, K. (2014). Laban-Aristotle: Ζών (Zoon) in theatre πράξις (Praxis); Towards a methodology for movement training for the actor and in acting. Athens: Hellinoekdotiki. Also accessible via [http://cresco.ac.uk/id/eprint/460/1/Laban-Aristotle_Z%CF%8E%CE%BF%CE%BD_\(Zoon\)_in_Theatre_%CE%A0%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%BE%CE%B9%CF%82_\(Praxis\).pdf](http://cresco.ac.uk/id/eprint/460/1/Laban-Aristotle_Z%CF%8E%CE%BF%CE%BD_(Zoon)_in_Theatre_%CE%A0%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%BE%CE%B9%CF%82_(Praxis).pdf) or as a summarised version in http://chorosjournal.com/docs/choros5/2_CHOROS_05_KIKI_SELIONI.pdf.





Olympia Agalianou

Degree in sport science and physical education (NKUA). PhD in pedagogy (NKUA). Studies in Orff-Schulwerk (Moraitis School), degree in music harmony. Studies in dance therapy (GADT) and systemic epistemology (AIA). Co-author in collective editions in Greece and abroad and in Greek school textbooks. Publications in academic journals and conference proceedings. Educator in adults' education programs. PE teacher in primary education (1998-2017), educator in Orff-Schulwerk studies (Moraitis School 2006-2016), external collaborator in the European University Cyprus (2014-2016). Today serves as Special Teaching Staff in the Department of Early Childhood Education, NKUA, and teaches in master degree programmes in the University of Macedonia, the Democritus University of Thrace, the Ionian University and the NKUA.

Fig. 2: Snapshot from the presentation



Fig.1: The dance masks, 2016

The puppets of the film 'Arabim – The Souls of the Statues'

Katerina Theofanopoulou

(English text by the author)

Abstract

Using as my starting point the making of puppets for the film 'Arabim – The Souls of the Statues', I shall look back at the creative process from the set designer's point of view. In an unusual puppet-theatre film production like this one, I shall explore which pieces of information, given circumstances and necessities deriving from the script determined the overall set design and the final look of the characters. What goes on during that journey between the first meeting and the initial concept all the way through to the crucial moment of filming. I shall lay down my view to date of the role of set design in theatre and fiction. Finally, I shall attempt to place this creative experience within a more theoretical framework of theatrical aesthetics.

Starting with a story

The initial idea of a new puppet-theatre performance soon morphed into an idea for a film production that aspired to use more complex narrative tools. Director Antigoni Paroussi put together a creative team to flesh out the legend of the Arabim and the story of the theft of the Parthenon Marbles. At the same time, she gathered resources and took all the necessary steps to provide a very creative experience to everyone involved in the making.

The original script written by Margarita Koulentianou was, as with all film scripts, the guiding element that set the pace for the creative team. The script is always the 'Bible' of any production team. In every fiction film or play, all that we see and hear are purposed to deliver the script. In order to tell a story, we use words, light, clothes, hairstyles, makeup, props and furniture, music, hints and symbolisms, and details that describe the characters and build up an atmosphere. Therefore, the work of a designer is never a self-contained creative process.

When I was asked to make the puppets and the masks for the film, at an early stage and certainly before I started any creative work, there was a thorough discussion on all details of the script. We talked extensively on the story that we would tell, the individual characters, the spacetime in which events take place. Beyond the dialogues, we had to discuss the kind of messages that the story would potentially get across and what our stand would be concerning the



disputed historical events. In the end, an underlying question was how would this story illuminate our beliefs concerning the return of our national treasures.

In the story of the film there are fictitious characters interpreted by real actors coexisting with historical figures played by puppets, and the imaginary protagonists who are the Arabim themselves. The tortured souls of the statues are portrayed by puppets, shadows and a Chorus. The script embraced the idea of the Arabim with tenderness, whereas the Elgin couple was approached with a certain degree of sarcasm. These were key elements that I considered while designing the puppets and making the first sample for the chorus masks.

Brainstorming

In order to make each puppet, I collected information about the historical personalities, meaning Lord Elgin, his wife and Sultan Selim III. An important parameter in portraying these characters was the content of their dialogues and the script's intention to emphasize certain qualities such as bloated self-esteem, imperial grandeur, arrogance, etc.

The ideas I came up with were put down on paper, in collage and drawings that included colour samples. The drawings are an important part of the creative process, even when they are not too technical or detailed.

Set and costume designers communicate their ideas through drawings, not just with design interpreters and technicians, but also with the rest of the creative team. It makes sense for actors to know what their costume will look like when they are rehearsing their part. Directors can give their input and ideas on the designs. A director of photography (or a lighting designer) usually needs to know the colours and textures they will deal with and so on.

This design process was useful in our film too, as it made communication easier and provided the cast with a picture of the overall design of the puppet cast, and the expected look of the puppets that would interact in some scenes. It was also a useful tool and point of reference during the construction that followed.

At this early stage we decided not only upon the puppets' size and facial features, but also the technical characteristics of each one. Three were articulated puppets roughly 60 cm tall, with extensions behind the elbows and handles at the back of the head and the heels, made to be manipulated by one and up to three puppeteers on a platform, depending on the action's needs. The puppeteers were dressed in black and, with the appropriate lighting one, could hardly distinguish them from the black backdrop. The director of photography,

Kostis Papanastasatos, made them disappear spectacularly using lights and later through his post-production processing.

The Lord and Lady Elgin puppets had some rather comic characteristics, which I like to refer to as 'exclamation marks' that helped them stand out. The hair of Lord Elgin was quite edgy to give him an interesting silhouette, while Lady Elgin resembled him in looks in terms of her nose and cheeks. They were both made in a vibrant colour version and a less coloured one. The almost black and white version was more realistic, and it's the one we ended up using in the film.

The Sultan was a seated figure, who primarily used his hands. He's the only puppet that was given real hands to make gestures. That is a 'privilege' possessed also by a traditional folk puppet, the character of Barba-Mitoussis, whose hands were gloves worn by the puppeteer. The Sultan wore vibrant colours, as pictured in a painting of his time. He was also given an oversized nose, a distinct look of boredom and a servant with the appropriate folk features.

The puppets of the Spirits had no legs or solid body, but consisted of layers of light, off-white veils, indicating their immateriality. The film's silent Chorus wears masks with exaggerated features, resembling the puppets of Yeni and Karyatis. At this point I need to stress the importance of consistency that I feel all the independent elements of a design need to have. The costumes of the Arabim and the costumes of the Chorus had very similar colours and texture. The puppet heads were all made of papier-mâché, woollen yarns, gauze and acrylic paints without glossy varnishes so as to avoid reflecting light. The reason behind this, is that I didn't want attention to be drawn to inconsistencies in the story's visual frame or its continuum and this particular fantasy world. I deal with the visuals of a puppetry play in the same manner that a storybook is illustrated or a performance is staged. The design needs to create a parallel world, held together by its own 'natural' laws and possess a solid visual consistency. I thought that it would be out of place to use a soft muppet, for instance, as the Sultan, or a shadow puppet, while in the story he interacts with other types of puppets. It is the design's consistency that effortlessly carries away a young or an older audience into the parallel universe of a story. So puppets, along with other design elements and props, create their own stage, help to build an atmosphere and thus the universe inside the movie. That is how puppets come to life and suspend the 'audience's disbelief'.



Construction

With a clear plan in mind over the plot and the characters of the film, I started constructing. My main concern while choosing materials was the need to make the puppets as lightweight, durable and easy to manipulate as possible. The inner structure was made of light aluminium wire, covered with wadding for volume without adding weight, and the heads were all hollow.

The long hours of rehearsal have shown that even the lightest of puppets becomes burdensome and tiring after a couple of hours of use. To reduce the level of discomfort for the actors-puppeteers, some adjustments were in order. The handle moving the head was on occasion replaced by a thicker and steadier one, and, on the way, Lady Elgin 'sacrificed' her legs to become lighter and got a long underskirt instead, and so on.

The puppets were custom made for these particular characters, this script and with all the parameters described. Another artisan would have made Lady Elgin in a very different way. With clay or polymer clay, for instance, her features could have been finer, even similar to porcelain, but the puppet would have definitely been more fragile. So it would have run the constant risk of being dropped by accident and shattering. Some other artist could choose to carve Lord Elgin out of wood and achieve a wonderful rustic result! However, given his size, that would result in quite a heavy puppet and be very labour intensive to make. After weighing the particulars of each project, one decides on the most preferable construction method.

Much as I admire and follow the traditional and new techniques used worldwide for theatre crafts, I have never adhered to a specific 'school' for my own projects. Somehow, all my accumulated crafting experiences and technical skills seem to find a way to come together. A commedia dell'arte mask carries the weight of centuries-old traditions and small secrets. So does a traditional marionette or an Ottoman felt fez. Since I don't often make historical replicas, I find it more useful to isolate different technical elements and adapt them each time accordingly.

A Collaborative Art

During rehearsals, in every genre of spectacle, there is always a possibility of changes being introduced, of script or directorial additions or alterations that effect the work of many production team members. I find this idea of creative flexibility and experimentation quite useful and I welcome the prospect of

change and improvement. This may not be possible in expensive large-scale film productions with tight schedules and deadlines. When someone has had such filming experience it becomes clear that expertise, hierarchy and commitment to the timeframes are all essential. However, it's always fascinating to face a challenge in team spirit, discover a better solution to a problem, or improve an idea while running the project, or even be carried away on an impulse towards a different direction.

Stage design is not an end in itself and does not function autonomously. The objects onstage are not works of art suspended on their own on the stage or in the outer world. The drawings and 3D models are not the final work produced by a set designer. I, personally, perceive them as a means to communicate and as tools.

The artistic work being produced is the performance in its entirety, or the film, that reaches the audience. In other words, it is the end product emanating from the collaboration of a team of individual artists.

Julie Taymor made the puppets of the iconic musical *Lion King*. Her vision came to life through incredibly skilled dancers, puppeteers and opera singers. Jim Henson created the one and only Kermit the Frog and the legendary Muppet show. However, his lovable frog earned international stardom thanks to his distinct voice and the hard work of numerous other associates.

A lot of people tend to compare and confuse set and costume design with the decorative arts or fashion. Stage design is not an Applied Art. It is a collective art, or else a Collaborative Art.

Filming

Making a motion picture on video, and even more so on film, is a very expensive and time-consuming process. A lot of preparation is required prior to the day of shooting for any given scene, so that all involved are ready for the scheduled sequence of takes. For the optimum use of time, the director of photography inspects the shooting area and gathers all necessary equipment for the day. All members of the crew and production team prepare accordingly. On set, the effort made by the actors and puppeteers during the entire rehearsal period, has to result in a few dense minutes of action. Endless repetitions are very exhausting, so the best way to go about it is to prepare ahead of time, and also to aim for a good rehearsal on set with the camera just before the actual take.

In making the film *Arabim*, what was particularly challenging was the lighting



and the camera angles during the action between puppets. The 'frame' of each puppet couldn't be a backdrop or scenery of any sort because, as mentioned earlier, the puppeteers were right behind them. All the other scenes presented challenges similar to any film shoot. These include external sounds, scheduling around everyone's availability, getting permits for outdoor takes, etc.

For the Chorus scenes, I made some last-minute adjustments to secure the masks. The wigs were attached to the Chorus masks, that only covered half their faces and didn't obstruct their breathing. The choreography was quite demanding and I wanted to make sure that no dancer would ever have to touch a mask and reposition it on their face. That could spoil the scene and we would risk repeating a difficult take.

In the same way that the puppets had been available for rehearsal a long time ahead of filming, so were the masks fitted and tested during several rehearsals. I made two sculpted prototypes to cover the needs of the team of dancers, as their facial features differed significantly. For other theatre productions, where masks are potentially worn by actors every night for months or even a whole season, I put a lot of time and effort to ensure the best possible fitting and the durability of my work.

Most often the mask is sculpted on the plaster-cast face of the actor to achieve comfort and fit. By applying many layers of paper, the mask becomes harder but also a bit heavier. Adding varnish and inlaid wire, the mask becomes steadier and more insulated.

In this particular project, the masks had the final appearance I planned for, but not all the technical features I just described, since they were intended to last for the filming process and that alone.

Puppets and objects

As mentioned by one of the film's characters, puppeteers usually make their own puppets. I would add that they design their lighting, process the sound, direct the play, and they also devise the sets and costumes if they need to. Some puppeteers even write their own plays. The majority of puppet plays in our country, seem to be addressed to very small children. There is no doubt that puppets can be wonderful tools for preschool education, as well as for other teachers who narrate stories in libraries, teachers in primary schools and so on.

This common practice of puppetry professionals who do-it-all is probably self-explanatory, given the scale of the genre and the very young audiences, but

I feel it is also an obstacle for the potential growth of puppetry. This practice leaves out older children, who could watch a longer and more complex play, like Shakespeare's, Lucian of Samosata's or Aristophanes' comedies. I remember watching, a long time ago, a memorable puppetry production of Shakespeare's 'Tempest' with intricately detailed marionettes, live music and great voices. The space was limited, but the ticket price made the production viable. The show was played on a boat for years and I am certain that a lot of experienced craftsmen, musicians and artists of other disciplines had taken part in its making

Over the past few years, I have had the pleasure of working with directors who like using masks or puppets in their work. I also immensely enjoy watching, although rarely, any show or musical that employs object manipulation, masks or puppets in an innovative and not a stereotypical manner.

In the theatre world, a universal definition of a puppet is 'a three-dimensional animated representation of a living person or creature'. In the somewhat loosened theatre genre that artists define as Object Theatre, they manipulate other inanimate objects during the action. 'Performing objects remain objects (and not representative) whose quiddity or material essence is harnessed to performant function' as Melissa Trimmingham¹ pointed out.

In our film, certain scenic objects were made with the same materials and textures as the puppets, as they were a part of their imaginary world. The vase, the boat with the looted artifacts, the Sultans Decree, all became 'extras' for this story.

The Sultan's Decree (firman) is a very important object in the plot. Historically, it is a document whose existence is part of the greater dispute between the Greek and British sides concerning the ownership of the Marbles. Lord Elgin claimed in court that he was granted permission through a lost document, signed by the Sultan, to carry out research on the monuments of the Acropolis of Athens, but Ottoman diplomats denied it. In our story of the Arabim, the Sultan never signs the decree. The director illuminated the importance of the document in two ways. In the palace scene the decree, written on a scroll, is suspended in the air and waves unnaturally over the Sultan, and so he is afraid to sign it with his seal. On another level, there is a director's device, where the imperial scroll is greatly enlarged. Its two edges are represented by human figures. This large papyrus scroll is folded, unfolded, dances, and thus becomes one of the protagonists.

¹ Trimmingham, Melissa (2011) *The Theatre of the Bauhaus: the Modern and Postmodern Stage of Oskar Schlemmer*, London: Routledge.



A love affair

Twenty-two years ago, when I was a student, I had a most inspiring experience as I joined an experiential workshop on the use of puppets and masks by Stephen Mortram. In order to develop the skills I needed to realize my own designs, I attended more workshops for stage props, and millinery. It was still a time when one had to search for the right book, or join a workshop if one needed to learn the secrets of a traditional or other kind of craft. It could even mean going on a long journey to find the right education establishment.

In this day and age, technology facilitates our access to this kind of information. A lady in Brazil makes fabulous silk flowers at home with household tools rather than special equipment, and then shares her ideas on YouTube with crafters from all over the world. A great hat designer in Australia offers classes to any potential milliner who wants to invest some money and effort to learn old and new techniques on line.

I have a lifelong relationship with crafting, and the internet makes it easy to renew this affair constantly. As far as theatre is concerned, there is an undisputable force that draws anyone who enters its orbit and never lets them get away!

I not only enjoyed the opportunity to make original puppets for this movie, but I also had the pleasure of helping on set with its making. It was overall an unconventional production made with a team spirit. I believe everyone truly enjoyed putting effort in the project and gave their best. The benefits gained are surely many and different for everyone involved in this creative adventure.

Katerina Theofanopoulou

I was born in Athens and I studied at the Kingston-Upon-Thames University (Art and Design), and at the Central School of Speech and Drama (London)- Theatre Studies (Set and Costume Design). I have worked since 1999 in the show business as a costume and set designer and as an assistant for costume designers. For the past 9 years, I have worked as an independent crafter and artisan, almost exclusively making masks, puppets and theatrical hats.

I have worked for period films such as 'Brides' (Nyfes), 'A Touch of Spice' (Politiki Kouzina), 'Pandora' and others. Also on TV dramas, dance shows, theatre, musicals and opera. For the opening ceremony of the 2004 Athens Olympics I worked on the construction of the costumes of the Byzantine era.

On social media I can be found under the name Persona Imaginata.

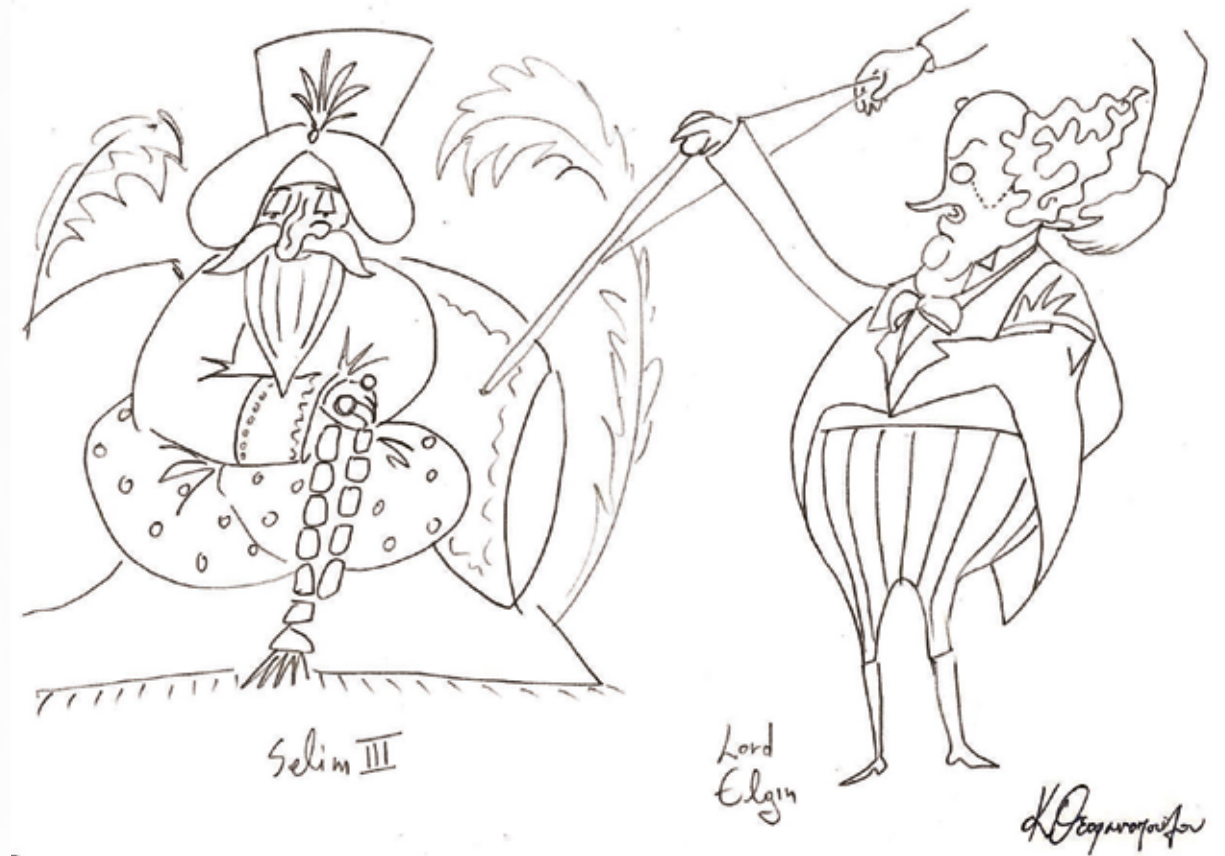




Fig.1: The Justice puppet of the Théâtre du Soleil in a demonstration against the bill increasing pension age.

The puppet in the Théâtre du Soleil. The puppet as Justice Maria Velioti-Georgopoulos

Abstract

For more than half a century, the Théâtre du Soleil (Theatre of the Sun), director Ariane Mnouchkine's lifework, has marked theatrical life in France and worldwide. Throughout this time, puppets have been one of the pillars of its theatrical work. This article recalls the role of puppets in the Théâtre du Soleil before focusing on the puppet called Justice. It presents the way this puppet was made and animated in connection with its mission, as Justice was not created to interpret a role in a theatrical play but to give a "shape" (be a figurehead) as the protagonist of an event, participating in various social movements organised over the past dozen years in Paris, as well as in the mobilisations of the Indignados in Athens (June 2011). In Paris, the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet has, for instance, taken part in the pensioners' demonstrations (autumn 2010), the protest marches against the attack on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo (January 2015), the pensioners' mobilisations (December 2019), and the demonstration in defence of the public hospital and in support of hospital staff (June 2020).

Key words: Théâtre du Soleil, puppet, marionette, Justice, social movements

Subject and methodology

According to a widespread stereotype attitude, puppet theatre is considered to target an audience almost exclusively of children, and in particular those of a preschool age or at the very most attending early primary school; as a result, it is directly linked to their entertainment and education. However, this paper will not discuss the recreational and/or educational dimension of puppetry, or at least not as we usually understand it, i.e., through the formal or even the non-formal forms of education and in particular those relating to children.

Instead, we shall concern ourselves with a lesser-known aspect of puppet shows, artistic always, but with a clear political-social orientation, which is aimed at adults. More specifically, we shall present in detail the action of the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet which, with the symbolic name of Justice, "educates" the public in the broader sense of the term, inasmuch as it enlightens and awakens it in an imaginative and highly aesthetic way (fig. 1).

In particular, after referring to the role of puppets in the Théâtre du Soleil, the study will focus on the Justice puppet. It will present the way that this puppet



Fig.2: Participation of the Théâtre du Soleil's Justice in the Indignados movement.Syntagma Square (Athens, 2011)

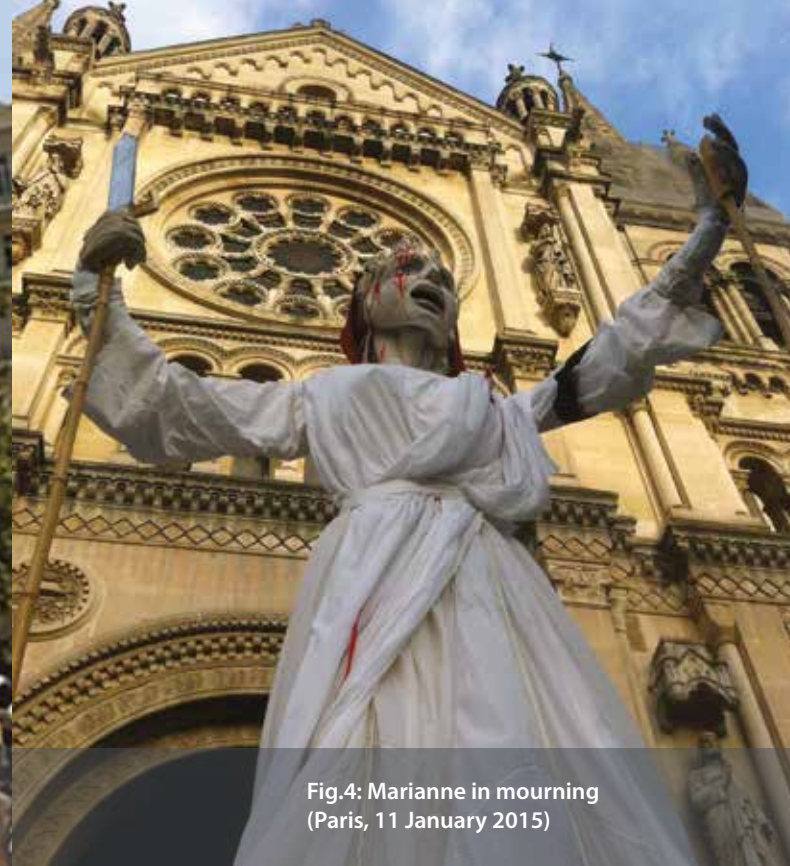


Fig.4: Marianne in mourning (Paris, 11 January 2015)



Fig.3: The Théâtre du Soleil's puppet as Marianne in the protest march after the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine

was made and animated in connection with its mission, as Justice was not created to interpret a role in a theatrical play but to give a “shape” (to be a figurehead) as the protagonist of an event, participating in various social movements organised over the past dozen years in Paris, as well as on one occasion when it participated in the mobilisations of the Indignados at Syntagma (Constitution) Square in Athens in June 2011¹ (fig. 2). In Paris, the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet participated in the pensioners' demonstrations in the autumn of 2010² (fig. 1), the protest marches against the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in January 2015³

1 On the Théâtre du Soleil's participation with its event Justice in Athens, cf. Velioti-Georgopoulos, 2019 and Velioti-Georgopoulos, 2020. Also, cf. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/l-almanach/la-justice-29> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

2 In the autumn of 2010, the Théâtre du Soleil participated with the Justice puppet for the first time in the demonstrations organised in Paris against the bill to increase retirement age. Cf. the Théâtre du Soleil website: <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/l-almanach/la-justice-29> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

3 On 11 January 2015, the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet Justice was transformed into Marianne, the symbolic embodiment of the French Republic, wearing the distinctive Phrygian cap and bearing the black band of mourning on her arm. A fighter and a victor, she starred again in the massive demonstration held in the French capital in response to the terrorist attack on the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. See also Laurent, 2015; available at: <http://www.20minutes.fr/culture/1514547-20150111-ariane-mnouchkine-marionnette-republique-veut-marcher> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

(fig. 3 and 4), the pensioners' mobilisations in December 2019⁴ (fig. 5), and the demonstration in defence of the public hospital and in support of hospital staff in June 2020 triggered by the coronavirus pandemic⁵ (fig. 6), to name but the most important.

The Théâtre du Soleil is the life's work of its founder, the inspirational Ariane Mnouchkine⁶. Founded in 1964, it has marked theatrical life in France and worldwide for more than fifty-five years. In 1970, the Théâtre du Soleil moved to the deserted and –at the time– decaying premises of a former munitions factory outside of Paris but at a short distance from it. This space, the Cartoucherie, was

www.20minutes.fr/culture/1514547-20150111-ariane-mnouchkine-marionnette-republique-veut-marcher [last accessed 10.08.2020].

4 <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/retraites-155> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

5 Davidovici & Sevestre, 2020. <http://theatredublog.unblog.fr/2020/06/17/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches/> [last accessed 10.08.2020] and <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches-184> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

6 On the historical trajectory of the Théâtre du Soleil, cf. Picon-Vallin, 2014 and Mnouchkine, 2010.



Fig.6: Justice guided by Ariane Mnouchkine at the demonstration in defence of the public hospital. (Paris, 17 June 2020)



remodelled with a lot of personal work and changed form entirely (fig. 7, 8 and 9). Gradually, other theatre troupes took over various buildings in this complex, resulting in the creation of a village-style cluster of theatres.

The Théâtre du Soleil has a very particular way of operating, guided by the following principles:

- the principle of “collaborative theatre” (création collective). Collaborative theatre is considered as being “the most democratic art form, capable of dealing with political questions” (Karch, 2011: 1). Indeed, the trajectory of the Théâtre du Soleil has shown that politics and theatre are not two different, separate realms, hence its rich activism over its long career.⁷

As regards work in the sphere of drama, “collaborative theatre” means the equitable participation of the troupe’s members in the decision-making process concerning the staging of the play and its production (Mnouchkine, 2010: 84-86). It also means equality regarding work – in other words, there are rigid roles: an actor can also be a technician or vice-versa, always depending on their skills;

- the principle of equal pay, of a common table (shared meals) and also, to a certain degree today, of a shared roof (Mnouchkine, 2010: 209-223). Those currently residing at the Théâtre du Soleil include members from countries other than France, some of whom arrived there under trying circumstances.

I return to the object of this article noting that the research for gathering the ethnographic material initially focused on the Internet, from where videos, photographs and related media reports were obtained both from Greek and French sources. This is a methodological route that recently started to be followed somewhat hesitantly, at least in Greece, by the anthropological community.⁸

However, the ethnography’s main body stems from fieldwork at the Théâtre du Soleil’s headquarters in Paris in November 2017, during which relevant archival material was collected and interviews were conducted with the artists-members of the company who had participated in the protest performances held up to that time in Paris and Athens, where the Justice puppet played a star role. Discussions were also held with French citizens who took part in the demonstrations where the Théâtre du Soleil’s puppet appeared, such as the demonstration following the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine (11 January 2015). As for the Greek

⁷ Féral, 1998: 245-263. Available at https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/public_data/download/pages/1513111979/feral_tous_th_est_po.pdf [last accessed 10.08.2020]. Also, Mnouchkine, 2010: 113-130 and Hamidi-Kim & Rennes, 2011: 141-154.

⁸ Papaelia & Petridis, 2015. Available via http://repfiles.kallipos.gr/html_books/15369/ [last accessed 10.08.2020].



side, interviews were carried out with people from the world of theatre who were aware of the Théâtre du Soleil's activist actions, had been informed about the specific protest happening at Syntagma Square on 18 June 2011 and had gone along to watch it in person.

The role of the puppet at the Théâtre du Soleil

Puppets are among the Théâtre du Soleil's six thematic pillars, along with the animals, carts, fabrics (especially silks), children and curtseys that have fed its work and aesthetics ever since its very first steps (Picon-Vallin, 2014: 291) (fig. 10, 11 and 12).

For Ariane Mnouchkine, the puppet as a drama figure is a form of explosive vitality; it is the actors' master teacher, as well as that of theatre people in general⁹. Referring to the Théâtre du Soleil's performance "Tambours sur la digue" (Drums on the Dam), where actors played as if they were puppets, manipulated by their colleagues in the role of puppeteers according to the bunraku¹⁰ technique of Japanese puppet theatre, Georges Banu adds: "Objects of a manipulation from above, [the puppets] lack autonomy... and it is this that makes them eternal... we look at these 'intermediary beings' that are the puppet¹¹ or the actor and we reflect ourselves in the mirror of their 'controlled freedom'... The puppet is organised [moves] around the animate... and the inanimate... But a question troubles us: where does the living stop? How can these inanimate statues come to life? But aren't they already 'alive'? Mnouchkine cultivates this initial confusion and thus the 'arrival' of the manipulators and their puppets plunges us into the anxiety of the in-between, where the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate seem blurred" (Banu, 2000: 68).

It was Ariane Mnouchkine who conceived the idea of the Justice puppet and the event with which the Théâtre du Soleil participates in various social movements. The aim was –and still is– to give a "form", a figure, a symbol to the demonstrations that motivates rebellion by awakening the protestors' imagination and impulse. A universal symbol above the partisan symbols of trade

⁹ Cf. her recent interview on French radio, in which she speaks admiringly of the puppets in puppet theatre: <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/hors-champs/ariane-mnouchkine-44> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

¹⁰ On Japanese bunraku puppet theatre, see <https://wepa.unima.org/en/bunraku/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

¹¹ In French, the word marionnette means any kind of puppet or figure that moves in front of, or even behind the cloth, such as the figures of Shadow Theatre.

unions and political parties, a symbol that represents all those who agree with the idea of protest but do not want to be part of political groups. The symbol was found in the persona of the wounded Justice who united people, because in her they recognised injustice, leading them to follow her for years now alongside the Théâtre du Soleil's artists in the aesthetically beautiful, artistically original and socially dynamic protest marches.

Construction, animation and mission

The shape of the face and the type of puppet were the subject of many discussions among the Théâtre du Soleil's members and the end result is the product of teamwork according to the principle of collaborative theatre. Ariane Mnouchkine envisioned making a mouth. At the same time, the prevailing view was to look for inspiration regarding the puppet-protagonist in Japanese puppets or also the Javanese puppets manipulated by rods. These ideas are recognisable in the final form of Justice, but which, according to visual artist Elena Ant who made it, was inspired by Ancient Greek sculpture. She stresses that "Justice is as beautiful as the ancient Greek statues" while noting that in this case, too, the principle of beauty was followed, as for the Théâtre du Soleil it is inviolable and extends to all its creations, theatrical performances and protest marches, even for a fleeting moment, even for something short-lived, no matter how much it costs in terms of effort.

Justice is an oversized puppet about three metres tall mounted on a four-to five-metre-long base (platform) (fig. 13 and 14). In her left hand she holds a pair of scales and in her right a sword, with which she fights off her enemies, represented as crows. Her form clearly refers to the concept of justice, but not to its classic beautified image, as the expression on the puppet's face is characterised by great tension, especially because of its large open mouth. After the first demonstrations, the puppet appeared with a wounded, bloody face, thus intensifying the drama of the scene (fig. 5 and 15).

The puppet's body –without feet– has female proportions (bosom, hips) and is made of Plastazote®, a synthetic foam material similar to Styrofoam, but much more flexible. The same material has been used for its hair and head which, as for any puppet, was very demanding to make (fig. 16-19). Its eyes are made of everyday objects, as is often the case in the art of puppet theatre. In this case, the curved outer surface of two soup spoons was used, on which the pupils were painted (fig. 20).



Fig.5: Justice at the pensioners' demonstration (Paris, 12 December 2019)



Fig.10: The large Queen puppet in the play 1789 (1970)



Fig.11: Puppets during the performance of the play 1789 (1970)



Εικ. 7: Η είσοδος στο Καλυκοποιείο



Εικ. 8: Το Θέατρο του Ήλιου



Εικ. 9: Η τραπεζαρία του Θεάτρου του Ήλιου

Fig.13 and 14: Justice



Fig.12: Tambours sur la digue (1999)



Fig.16 and 17: Study for the head of Justice



Fig.18: Visual artist Elena Ant creates the head of Justice

Fig.19 and 20: Completing the head of Justice.της Δικαιοσύνης



Fig.21: The happening's culmination: the crows' attack on Justice. Demonstration against increasing the pension age (Paris, 12 October 2010)

Its dress was made of white silk parachute fabric, a material that espouses and highlights the puppet's movement. The dress was created by the Théâtre du Soleil costume designer, Marie-Hélène Bouvet, with the help of another of the troupe's costume designers, Nathalie Thomas. As Marie-Hélène Bouvet participates as an operator in the Justice events, she has first-hand knowledge of the dress's behaviour and durability.

During the theatrical happening, Justice is attacked by effigies of crows attached to long poles that were made by the Théâtre du Soleil's actors. According to Elena Ant, the actors can make anything; they are what she calls true "golden-fingered handymen". They are also the ones behind the idea of creating the scales held by Justice, for which they once again used cheap everyday objects: two ashtrays of the kind used at the Théâtre du Soleil to put out food for the cats.

As already mentioned, the puppet is mounted on a four- to five-metre-long base (platform) that four members of the Théâtre du Soleil troupe carry on their shoulders and move rhythmically in such a way that from a distance it appears to float above the crowd (fig. 3 and 5). It marches to the accompaniment of recorded and live music, as Théâtre du Soleil members rhythmically beat on drums and kettledrums. The music composition and more generally the happening's musical accompaniment is the work of Jean-Jacques Lemêtre, a close collaborator of the Théâtre du Soleil for over thirty years (Mnouchkine, 2010: 235-237).

The climax of the action occurs when, during her march, Justice is attacked by about seven black crows, which she fights until she repels them¹² (fig. 21 and 22). Ariane Mnouchkine and some of her experienced collaborators take on the role of puppeteers. They transmit the stage directions so that all the performers can hear them, see them and synchronise: the four people holding the platform so that they move it appropriately to give the body the necessary movement, the two people moving the hands, the three moving the dress, the person moving the scales and those moving the crows...

There are two teams that alternate, as the "puppet playing" by the four carrying the platform is particularly tiring, especially given the distance that needs to be covered and the time required. In Paris, the happening is performed along

12 In the Théâtre du Soleil's most recent participation with Justice (17 June 2020) in the demonstration for the defence of the public hospital and in support of hospital staff occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic, the crows acquired symbolic names that were inscribed on their poles: Cynicism, Cruelty, Arrogance, Irresponsibility, Manipulation, Contempt... Cf. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches-184> [last accessed 10.8.2020].

the same trajectory as that of the protest march, which usually covers several kilometres and lasts hours. For all of the above reasons, the event requires the presence of almost the entire troupe, around 40 to 50 people.

Movement is what brings the puppet to life: "We cannot stand still with the puppet, because then it would be dead... And so all the strength and hope it brings would be lost ... but it can only come to life in the context of a protest," says actor Vincent Mangado, who during the happening plays a small Korean gong. "When we move the puppet, it becomes domineering [it rules us]... it pulls us into the performance and this thrills [the audience]... We give it life; it isn't an object that we carry," says actor Arman Saribekyan who during the happening is among those who carry and move the base with the puppet.

The puppet is flanked by various banners, obviously in French, that the Théâtre du Soleil's members wave to the rhythm of the music (fig. 1 and 5). Some refer to the theatrical group's identity and the happening, such as "Théâtre du Soleil" or "Yes, I am Justice, let me speak". Most bear excerpts of theatrical or other texts about justice, such as: "A sad public spectacle; everyone thinks only of themselves, of public office, of positions, of money. People take everything, want everything, plunder everything. They no longer live but for ambition and cupidity/ Victor Hugo-Ruy Blas, preface"; "Money, though it buys everything else, cannot buy morals and citizens/ Jean-Jacques Rousseau-A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences"; "Hope does not enter the palace of fear/ Aeschylus-Agamemnon"; "Dangerous is a people's voice charged with wrath, it acts as a curse of publicly ratified doom/ Aeschylus-Agamemnon",¹³ a slogan that is surprisingly relevant twenty-five centuries later.¹⁴

The Justice happening is an instance of Street Theatre with obvious references to the great revolutionary street movements, which deeply influenced Ariane Mnouchkine, and especially her theatrical play 1789, on whose subject she says: "1789 was undoubtedly influenced by my readings about the great revolutionary street movements that Meyerhold dreamt of carrying out in Moscow in the 1920s" (Mnouchkine, 2010: 95). In my opinion, the Justice happening also alludes to the popular folk processions with giant puppets that parade through the streets of

13 https://www.real.gr/archive_koinonia/arthro/to_theatro_tou_iliou_pige_syntagma-399031/ [last accessed 10.08.2020].

14 <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches-184> [last accessed 10.8.2020]. See also <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/l-almanach/retraites-155> [last accessed 10.8.2020].

towns in North-Eastern France and Belgium during various local feasts with the locals' active participation both as performers and spectators.

The only time, as far as I know, that the Justice happening was presented outside of France in its ten years of existence was in June 2011 at Syntagma Square in Athens. At the time, the Théâtre du Soleil had come to Greece to participate in the Athens Festival with its performance *Les naufragés du Fol Espoir* (The castaways of the Mad Hope). The troupe's members –around fifty people– had already decided, before their arrival in Athens, to support the protests of the Greek citizens suffering from the economic crisis. At noon on June 18, they presented the same happening with which they had participated in the Paris mobilisations the previous autumn. This action was independent of their professional obligations to the Athens Festival, as indeed is every one of their collective activist actions.

For the Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine, participating in the Syntagma Square protest was the implementation of the axiological principle that “what happens to others also happens to us... we are citizens of the world” (Mnouchkine, 2010: 189). “If I didn't know what's happening in Greece, I would be blind and deaf! I am not. Not yet. So we went to Syntagma on Saturday to honour all these people who are seeking to express themselves, to find the key to determine their own destiny.”¹⁵ “I wanted to come to Syntagma,” she says “and undertake this happening in Greece, where people ‘thirst’ for justice. I did it out of love, for Greece, for Democracy, for Justice.”¹⁶

The place chosen for staging it was Syntagma Square, the heart of the mobilisations, where, as of May 25, Greek citizens of all ages, regardless of political parties,¹⁷ gathered daily, without fail, in the late afternoon and evening. The enormous puppet arrived at Syntagma Square after having declared/demonstrated its presence by passing through central streets of the Greek capital to the accompaniment of recorded and live music. The movement of the banners with excerpts, in French, from the works of various writers was undertaken in

¹⁵ Blatsou, 2011. <https://www.protagon.gr/apopseis/blogs/arian-mnouskin-oi-anthrwpoi-boroun-na-orisounti-moira-tous-7482000000> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

¹⁶ https://www.real.gr/archive_koinonia/arthro/to_theatro_tou_iliou_pige_syntagma-399031/ [last accessed 10.08.2020].

¹⁷ “The mobilisations in Syntagma Square ... were characterised by great political heterogeneity ... [they included] left-wing partisans, who formed the majority, right-wing sympathisers and a certain number who identified themselves as having no ideology” (Simiti, 2014: 17).



Fig.22: The happening's culmination: Justice repels the crows' attack. Syntagma Square. (Athens, 18 June 2011)

part by appropriately trained Greeks.¹⁸ At Syntagma Square the well-known Paris scene was repeated, that of the crows attacking, the battle, being repelled and the victory of Justice. The happening lasted roughly two hours.

The trajectory of the Justice puppet, and especially the action scenes where it battles with the enemy crows, were welcomed most warmly by the public participating in the different Paris mobilisations: with applause, cheers, cries, with which it expressed its joy, its surprise, its admiration. The puppet's symbolism, be it as Justice or as Marianne, was immediately apparent, and the slogans proved to be timely and totally understandable, especially as most of them were familiar, coming as they did from French literature, while quite a few demonstrators recognised the Théâtre du Soleil.¹⁹

¹⁸ Kyriaki, 2011. <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/573-2011-06-20-21-27-37> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

¹⁹ Kyriaki, 2011. <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/573-2011-06-20-21-27-37> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

The spectators of Syntagma Square perceived the puppet-Justice according to their own pictorial models, as Thémis, the goddess who dispenses justice, and thus the semantic correspondence was identical. The slogans, which were written in French, were to some extent understandable as their translation had been handed out.²⁰ Moreover, the predominant French word Justice could be read by most of the attendees as being the same word as in English.

The mute puppet transmitted messages in a tacit symbolic way, the lifeless figure came to life and was able to arouse emotions in the audience: surprise at first, admiration and joy about its beauty and its artistic conception, emotion and sym-/empathy for its struggle, even fear when it fights enemies with its sword and especially with its bloodied, harsh face. "Yes, it causes some fear, but Justice should also cause fear sometimes," says Ariane Mnouchkine smilingly.²¹

What has been happening for years now –ever since the autumn of 2010– in the streets of Paris and what happened in Athens at Syntagma Square in June 2011 with the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet Justice in the lead role is something far more than a theatrical happening or a protest march. It is both of these simultaneously, a form of "performative resistance" (Dimitriou, 2017: 239-243), a term used by anthropologist Sotiris Dimitriou when referring to performances that are carried out in the context of movements and are motivated by the spirit of resistance.

Acknowledgements

My warmest thanks go to the members of the Théâtre du Soleil for their help, which allowed me to write texts including this one. In particular, I would like to thank Franck Pendino, head of the Théâtre du Soleil Archives for our discussions and for generously making available the archival material, as well as the artists who were kind enough to talk with me: Elena Ant and Vladimir Ant, Arman Saribekyan, Vincent Mangado, Virginie Le Coënt and Marie-Hélène Bouvet. Many thanks, too, to my friends Aurore Sagot, social anthropologist, and Jacques Sagot, sculptor and painter, for the discussions we had about the Théâtre du Soleil's puppet.

²⁰ Bousiouta, 2011. <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/572-2011-06-20-19-47-19> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

²¹ Laurent, 2015. <http://www.20minutes.fr/culture/1514547-20150111-ariane-mnouchkine-marionnette-republique-veut-marcher> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

References

- Banu, G. (2000). Nous les marionnettes... Le bunraku fantasmé du Théâtre du Soleil. *Alternatives Théâtrales*, 65-66, 68-70.
- Blatsou, I. (2011). Ariane Mnouchkine: «Οι άνθρωποι μπορούν να ορίσουν τη μοίρα τους». <https://www.protagon.gr/apopseis/blogs/arian-mnouchkine-oi-anthrwpoi-boroun-na-orisoun-ti-moira-tous-7482000000> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Bousiouta, Chr. (2011). Το θέατρο της Justice. Επί Σκηνής (20-6-2011). <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/572-2011-06-20-19-47-19> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Davidovici, M., & Sevestre, M.-A. (2020). Le Théâtre du Soleil à la manifestation des blouses blanches. *Théâtre du blog* (17.07.2020). Retrieved from <http://theatredublog.unblog.fr/2020/06/17/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Dimitriou, S. (2017). Κοινωνική εξέλιξη και σχέσεις δύναμης. Η μεθοδολογία των επιστημών του ανθρώπου. Athens: Alexandria.
- Féral, J. (1998). Tout théâtre est politique. In J. Féral, *Trajectoires du Soleil. Autour d'Ariane Mnouchkine*, 245-263). Paris: Editions Théâtrales. Retrieved from https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/public_data/download/pages/1513111979/feral_tous_th_est_po.pdf [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Hamidi-Kim, B., & Rennes, J. (2011). La beauté donne des forces pour agir. *Entretien avec Ariane Mnouchkine. Mouvements*, 68(4), 141-154.
- Karch, A. (2011). Theatre for the people: the impact of brechtian theory on the production and performance of 1789 by Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil. *Opticon*, 1826(10), 1-7.
- Kyriaki, M. (2011). Το Théâtre du Soleil φεύγει. Επί Σκηνής (20-6-2011). <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/573-2011-06-20-21-27-37> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Laurent, A. (2015). Ariane Mnouchkine: "Cette marionnette, c'est la République, c'est avec elle qu'on veut marcher". *20 Minutes* (11.01.2015). <http://www.20minutes.fr/culture/1514547-20150111-ariane-mnouchkine-marionnette-republique-veut-marcher> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- Mnouchkine, A. (2010). Η τέχνη του τώρα. Συζητήσεις με την Φαμπιέν Πασκώ (Γ. Βουδικλάρης, Μτφρ.). Athens: Koan.
- Papaelia, P. & Petridis, P. (2015). Ψηφιακή Εθνογραφία (Digital Ethnography). Athens: Σύνδεσμος Ελληνικών Ακαδημαϊκών Βιβλιοθηκών. Retrieved from http://repfiles.kallipos.gr/html_books/15369/ [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Picon-Vallin, B. (2014). *Le Théâtre du Soleil. Les cinquante premières années*. Arles: Actes Sud.

Simiti, M. (2014). *Rage and Protest: The case of the Greek Indignant movement*. GreeSE – Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe 82, Hellenic Observatory, LSE.

Velioti-Georgopoulos, M. (2021). Ο οικείος “άλλος”. Η μαριονέτα των κοινωνικών κινημάτων του Théâtre du Soleil. In M. Velioti-Georgopoulos, V. Georgopoulou, I. Karamanou & M. Kotzamani (Eds.), *Πρακτικά ΣΤ’ Πανελληνίου Θεατρολογικού Συνεδρίου Θέατρο και Ετερότητα: Θεωρία, Δραματουργία και Θεατρική Πρακτική [Proceedings of the VI Panhellenic Theatrical Conference Theatre and Otherness: Theory, Dramaturgy and Theatrical Practice]*. Vol. A, M. Velioti-Georgopoulos & I. Karamanou (Eds.), Nafplio 17-21 May 2017. Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Peloponnese, 95-114.

Velioti-Georgopoulos, M. (2019). *Emotions in Performative Resistance. The Justice of the Théâtre du Soleil in crisis-ridden Greece*. *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 22 (forthcoming).

Internet sources

- <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/l-almanach/la-justice-29> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/retraites-155> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches-184> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/hors-champs/ariane-mnouchkine-44> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://wepa.unima.org/en/bunraku/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- https://www.real.gr/archive_koinonia/arthro/to_theatro_tou_iliou_pige_syntagma-399031/ [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <http://theatre.blog.lemonde.fr/2010/10/12/manifestation-pour-les-retraites-le-theatre-du-soleil-illumine-le-cortège/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.in.gr/2011/06/18/greece/konta-stoys-aganaktismenoy-to-theatro-toy-iliou-to-sabbato/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/notre-theatre/histoire-et-sources/le-theatre-du-soleil-169> [last accessed 10.08.2020].
- <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/la-galerie-multimedia/en-images/spectacles> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Captions

Fig.1: The Justice puppet of the Théâtre du Soleil in a demonstration against the bill increasing pension age.

Paris, 16 October 2010. Photograph © Charles-Henri Bradier. Théâtre du Soleil Archives.

Fig.2: Participation of the Théâtre du Soleil’s Justice in the Indignados movement. Syntagma Square. Athens, 18 June 2011. <https://www.in.gr/2011/06/18/greece/konta-stoys-aganaktismenoy-to-theatro-toy-iliou-to-sabbato/> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.3: The Théâtre du Soleil’s puppet as Marianne in the protest march after the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine.

Paris, 11 January 2015. Photograph Jacques Sagot.

Fig.4: Marianne in mourning.

Paris, 11 January 2015. Photograph Elena Ant.

Fig.5: Justice at the pensioners’ demonstration.

Paris, 12 December 2019. Photograph © Charles-Henri Bradier. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/retraites-155> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.6: Justice guided by Ariane Mnouchkine at the demonstration in defence of the public hospital.

Paris, 17 June 2020. Photograph Antoine Agoudjian. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/guetteurs-tocsin/le-theatre-du-soleil-a-la-manifestation-des-blouses-blanches-184> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.7: The entrance to the Cartoucherie.

Photograph Maria Velioti-Georgopoulos

Fig.8: The Théâtre du Soleil. © Théâtre du Soleil Archives. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/notre-theatre/histoire-et-sources/le-theatre-du-soleil-169> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig. 9: The dining hall at the Théâtre du Soleil.

Photograph Maria Velioti-Georgopoulos

Fig.10: The large Queen puppet in the play 1789 (1970).

© Théâtre du Soleil Archives. <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/la-galerie-multimedia/en-images/spectacles> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.11: Puppets during the performance of the play 1789 (1970). Photograph © Gerard Taubman <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/la-galerie-multimedia/en-images/spectacles> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.12: The actors-puppets and their manipulators in the play *Tambours sur la digue* (1999).

Photograph © Michele Laurent <https://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/fr/la-galerie-multimedia/en-images/spectacles> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Fig.13 and 14: Justice
Photographs Elena Ant.
Fig.15: The wounded Justice fights the crows on Syntagma Square.
Athens, 18 June 2011. Théâtre du Soleil Archives.
Fig.16 and 17: Study for the head of Justice.
Photographs Elena Ant.
Fig.18: Visual artist Elena Ant creates the head of Justice.
Photograph Vladimir Ant.
Fig.19 and 20: Completing the head of Justice.
Photographs Elena Ant.
Fig.21: The happening's culmination: the crows' attack on Justice. Demonstration
against increasing the pension age.
Paris, 12 October 2010. Photograph © Marianne Delranc. Théâtre du Soleil Archives.
Fig.22: The happening's culmination: Justice repels the crows' attack.
Syntagma Square. Athens, 18 June 2011. <http://www.episkinis.gr/2009-05-31-09-20-01/2009-06-04-11-00-18/572-2011-06-20-19-47-19> [last accessed 10.08.2020].

Maria Velioti-Georgopoulos

is Associate Professor of "Social Anthropology and Rituals" in the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese. She studied History and Archaeology at the University of Athens. She then obtained a Master's and a PhD in Social Anthropology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. She is currently the Director of the Postgraduate Programme "M.A. in Theatre and Society: Theory, Staging and Didactics". Dr Velioti has done field research across Greece, especially in the Peloponnese and the Argolid region. She has led and participated in numerous research programmes, as well as planned and organised exhibitions and educational programmes in museums. She has spoken and served in numerous academic committees in Greek and international scientific conferences. Dr Velioti has published nine books (monographs, conference proceedings, collective volumes) and many papers in Greek and international journals and collective volumes.

Fig.15: The wounded Justice fights the crows on Syntagma Square





Fig. 1: From the laboratory DECE NKUA(2019)

The puppet as a tool during the psychotherapeutic procedure

Marialena Tsiamoura

Abstract

In this text, I propose an introduction to the world of puppet therapy. To begin with, I describe who the puppet is aimed at and the context in which it is used as a tool during the psychotherapeutic procedure, for both adults and children. Also, I clarify and analyze the ways in which the puppet appears in the therapy room: during the puppet's construction, during the puppet's animation by the client, and even when the therapist refers to the puppet. Moving on to the main question I raise in the article, namely, how the puppet functions therapeutically within the psychotherapeutic procedure, I describe how the puppet connects the client to their childhood part. As a result, resistances are relaxed and new choices emerge in the field for the client, which are reparative in relation to his or her previous experiences. In closing, I emphasize the importance of the relationship that is created between the client, the therapist and the puppet, and how this relationship is ultimately therapeutic.

Keywords: puppet, psychotherapy, tool, relationship, safe place.

Puppets

Puppets on stage, puppets in the classroom, and now puppets in therapy! Where do the art of puppetry and psychotherapy meet? What does it mean to incorporate the puppet into therapy as a tool? In this article, I shall try to offer a brief introduction to some big questions, a new application for an old, well-known and familiar object: the puppet.

When people ask me what I do for a living, and I answer that I am a puppet therapist, the first reaction I usually get from them is this: "Oh! You mean that young children come to your office and play puppet theatre?" For, rightly or wrongly, we have come to associate puppets and puppetry with childhood. And this is not because we underestimate the puppet as a tool, but because sometimes we unconsciously underestimate children as an audience in terms of their seriousness. In fact, children are far more open than adults to accept, to accommodate that an inanimate being can acquire a soul, live close to them for a short or long time, and relate to them. So, the puppet brings a challenge: accepting that an inanimate being can come alive, and this is what makes it ultimately therapeutic, creating a field of intervention first and foremost for adults.



I begin this essay, then, by answering this question, which I am often asked. Who is puppet therapy aimed at? For me, it is addressed mainly to adults. This does not exclude its use in therapy with children. But it's not so much about the tool as it is about whether and why a child comes to therapy.

The difference between adults and children is that the former have entrenched fixed patterns of behavior. These are patterns that have been formed through their childhood according to the way they grew up, according to what they have experienced. Inevitably, these patterns come to be associated with the therapist. In children, because of their age, these patterns haven't had the time to solidify, so we are talking about more short-term therapy and a different kind of intervention.

Another level that is worth mentioning, and at which the puppet can be used as a tool in the procedure with children, is that one of prevention. In prevention, we, as professionals, create a framework to support and strengthen the child's mental and emotional development. If children learn to recognize, express, communicate and manage their feelings, if children learn to see and listen accordingly to the emotions and behaviour of the environment in which they grow up, then they will be more prepared for possible difficult experiences in the future and will have less need for therapy. The puppet is an excellent medium and tool for those cases that aim at prevention.

In this paper, I will outline some thoughts regarding the therapeutic function of the puppet, which in my opinion is observed in the three cases mentioned above: in adult therapy, in child therapy, in prevention for children. For the sake of brevity, I will use the word therapy.

In my career as a therapist, I keep dealing with two basic questions: 1) What is it that makes a puppet therapeutic? What are the elements that make a puppet a therapeutic tool? 2) How can a puppet function therapeutically within the therapeutic procedure? In which way can the puppet be therapeutic during therapy? I choose not to answer extensively in this paper to the first question, as for me the answer lies in the puppetry literature and concerns the theatrical characteristics that the puppet carries inherently.

I move on to the second question: how, then, does the puppet function therapeutically in the therapy room? The same people who ask me if children come to therapy and play with puppets, ask me something else when I tell them that this is mostly for adults: "Oh, so you do a puppet show for them and then they talk?"

I start with a clarification. As a therapist, I rarely play with puppets; instead, it is the client who is in contact with the puppet. The ways in which the puppet appears in therapy are several and vary depending on the client. In the same way that every client is unique, so the puppet they make or choose is also unique, as well as the relationship they create with it.

However, the ways in which the puppet appears during therapy can be divided into three main categories: construction, animation, reference. In the first case, i.e., construction, the clients are invited to create a puppet from scratch. In other words, they are asked to choose the materials that will eventually make up their puppet. This means that they need to "talk" to the materials, to enter into a dialogue with them. They need to listen to both the materials and the tools, think about their properties, and consider how these will affect their puppet. They need to choose, spontaneously or even after much thought, every little thing that will be a detail for the face, body, perhaps even the character of their puppet.

It is a process that we can easily imagine in a puppeteer's workshop, but the importance it takes on in the therapy room is enormous. The clients build a puppet from scratch and are responsible for the form of that creature. It can be a marionette, glove puppet, rod puppet, finger puppet, even a giant puppet. It can be humanlike or not, it can be a creature, a monster, a feeling, or even a simple object. Whatever form it takes, it is the result of the dialogue between the client and the materials, with the puppet itself as it comes alive, and the result of their choices during the procedure.

The second way in which the puppet appears in the therapeutic procedure is through animation. It is the process in which an inanimate being, without life, from its place of non-existence, suddenly breathes, looks, perhaps speaks, moves, walks, dances, dreams, exists, lives. And the clients are there to support their life, see and recognise the puppet, let go of a piece of themselves and put it aside to make room for that creature, and let themselves experience that new relationship that has just begun.

The third way the puppet appears during therapy is through reference. That means, the clients do not speak or act "as a puppet", but refer to and talk about it. The puppet may not be there at that moment or it may be, and the clients may not be able to animate the puppet, they may be unwilling, afraid, ashamed to bring it to life and be there with it in that process. So, we, as therapists, give the opportunity, the choice for the clients to talk about it.



It can also be a puppet that they had made in the past and whose character they need to bring back as a reference to the therapeutic procedure, to work on something more, or to see something identical and familiar with a new perspective. This is similarly the case in the educational process, where children talk, for example, about the puppets they watched in a puppet show or a puppet they have made in the past, or a puppet they have played with and now don't want to wake up because it's tired. In other words, the puppet doesn't really have to be there to start an action; just the mention of its existence is enough. It may not be animated, but it has another way of living within the therapeutic process.

It is worth adding this detail: when I refer to the ways in which the puppet appears in therapy, I am not only referring to the puppet itself, but to the entire world that surrounds it. At the construction level, clients can create various objects or settings that accompany the puppet in its life and are important to it. At the animation and reference level, they can imagine its character, its origin, its language, whatever the meaning of the world of the puppet signifies and carries with it. The clients are aware of the choices they make for the puppet. These choices do not affect only the puppet, but its entire world, and that awareness reinforces the sense of responsibility, presence, and commitment in the relationship.

I return to my original question: how does the puppet ultimately function in the therapeutic procedure? In which way does it become therapeutic? At first glance, the obvious answer is projection. In projection, the clients, whether child or adult, project on/ attribute to the puppet an emotion or a characteristic, which is usually troubling them, making them feel upset and can be either unfamiliar or really familiar. Every time, it is a different element, which emerges in the therapy's here and now and which the clients need to see and work with therapeutically. From the moment they project this element onto the puppet, they can automatically see it better, just because they place the characteristic somewhere outside of them. Thus, they manage it in another way, play with it, even mock it, and therefore have another, new image for it. As a result, they can now choose to incorporate that particular element in another way.

Going a little deeper into this process, the clients slowly come into contact with a childhood part, a child part of themselves. And that happens because the puppet creates this connection automatically. Giving life to something soulless, searching and satisfying our needs through play in general, but especially with puppets, is an integral part of our development.

We all played with dolls and puppets as children, either caring for them or destroying them, building their world, even without paying much attention to them. However we did, in one way or another, have a relationship with them. But why does that matter during therapy? Because when we are young children, our resistance is almost non-existent. In every particular experience, like trauma or a significant experience that defines our personality, we create ways of responding, and we build behaviours that help us cope with the conditions. These behaviours over time become entrenched and are now fixed patterns of behaviour that come back into the here and now, as I mentioned before. Sometimes they are dysfunctional and make it difficult for us, sometimes not, but they are what has brought us here, they are part of our personality and they make us who we are today. As we usually describe it in Gestalt therapy, they are our creative adjustment.

So in children, these patterns are not as strongly fixed, and their resistances are correspondingly not so as strongly fixed either. The puppet connects the clients to their child part, and at the same time connects them with this sense of diminished resistance, relaxing the tension carried by the fixed behaviours.

The field eventually created brings trust, care, and safety, combined with the bounded and secure framework that already exists in the therapeutic procedure and relationship. Automatically, resistances are reduced and defenses are relaxed. But when resistance is relaxed, the clients can now see more clearly, make more forms (or gestalts). This means that they can see the new options they have, options that they had difficulty in seeing before, just because of their resistance. These are choices that they were not permitted to see by their environment. In other words, even if the clients tended to choose a specific way of behaviour to make contact with the environment (because of the specific way they have learnt to live), they now notice they have more choices.

As a result, the clients have a new range of options and are even aware of that range. If they finally select one of these new choices that emerge, they have a reparative experience, as we term it in Gestalt therapy. That is, they try doing or being something different to what they used to do or be before. This reparative experience is now assimilated as a new way of experiencing and living. It becomes a small conquest and the clients can go back to it and repeat it, enjoy it, try it again, in the same way they were returning to their fixed behaviours. This does not mean, of course, that they will automatically give up all previous patterns, but they are slowly learning to find a new balance between old and



new experiences. Eventually, this knowledge, the testing of a new possibility, the awareness and experience that someone can be different in a difficult situation, is, in a nutshell, what we call "therapy."

In order to understand the above processes a little bit better, I will describe two examples, one for the procedure of projection and one for the procedure of relaxing resistance and creating a reparative experience.

A few months ago, and shortly after the end of the first quarantine of 2020 as part of the measures against the coronavirus, I returned to my office after many teleconferences, and I started meeting my clients again in person. My office is full of puppets and, in particular, I have a basket full of them next to the clients' armchair, as in the first phase of therapy I tend to work more with ready-made puppets. Usually, I notice that they need to be prompted to pick up a puppet, and there are quite a few times when some have refused to do so.

Making a small digression at this point, upon returning from quarantine, I discovered that most of my clients were taking the puppets with incredible ease and without any prompting or instruction. They would sit in the chair at the beginning of the session, look at the basket of puppets, and spontaneously say "Ah! Should I hold one of these in my arms?". Each time that happened, I found it very sweet as a gesture, and even now when I think about it, I'm moved by people's need for hugging, caressing and care - from and to them - that emerged so strongly after such a difficult experience as quarantine. Some of those times, I chose to work therapeutically with the puppet of a client's choice and some others not. After all, even just holding the puppet and making contact with it is, for me, therapeutic.

In a similar way, a patient of mine, whom I will call here Xenia for reasons of confidentiality, one day asked for a puppet. Intuitively, I brought the second basket of puppets, which was a little further away. I was surprised to see her pick out a puppet that no other person in my office had ever picked before: a large and long green snake, about six feet long. She did not hold it in her arms, but folded it and placed it behind her neck, making it a pillow for her head, and leaving the rest of it falling over her shoulders. At that moment, I did not ask her anything with regard to the puppet; I only smiled, trusting the procedure, and asked her how she was doing that day.

The conversation flowed nicely and smoothly. That day we were talking about the way she communicates her thoughts when something is bothering her.

She was observing that she takes too much time to share her feelings and that this makes it difficult for her environment. She was talking about the guilt she feels about this, and she criticised herself saying that she should talk more and sooner to the people surrounding her about her feelings and thoughts. I listened carefully to her talking, and I listened to the two sides of what she was describing: one part of the difficulty in the environment, and at the same time a part of her own that described her need for more time before sharing something.

I mirrored it back to her, and told her:

- Xenia, I hear that you show a lot of empathy to your environment, which is confused, and struggles when you don't express yourself. At the same time, I hear that you need to take time before you share your thoughts. I notice that you're dwelling more on the "should" part, the criticism part, so, come on, let's linger a little on the other part. Let's see what you need there.

Xenia was having a hard time pondering, dwelling there. She kept going back to the feeling of guilt and the thought that she should share more with people around her. I understood that this was important to her and at the same time I knew that it was important therapeutically for her to see the other part. Since she was having a hard time seeing it through words, I decided it was time to mirror her phenomenology, the image that I had in front of me at that moment:

- Xenia, I think the time you take is like the snake you have put behind your head. For some people, it can be frightening and confusing to see you with such a big snake wrapped around you. For you, though, I see in the here and now, it acts as a pillow, supporting the neck and your head and helping you relax.

She paused, her face changed, from frowning to becoming calmer, and she told me confidently:

- You are right. You are right.

We continued then the conversation on this topic, how she feels supported by the time she takes, what is so important to her there. We didn't mention anything else about the snake. That moment, when she projected this trait to something outside of her so as to understand it better and bring it to her awareness, was enough.

Last summer; I worked at a five-day camp. The camp was for adults and their families. The adults attended various therapeutic seminars during the day and their children were in a large group, which I was responsible for together with two other colleagues. It was a mixed group of about twenty children of different



ages. Together we played games, did crafts, experiments, drew and we also did puppetry.

A boy, whom I call here Markos, for reasons of confidentiality, was a member of the group. Markos was around ten years old; he was a very, very sweet, emotional, and intelligent child. I noticed from day one that he sometimes made comments that embarrassed his interlocutor when he made contact with me or the other children. It wasn't something very offensive, but I felt that (at least with me) he was going beyond one of my limits. So, I began to notice that he was in some way passing beyond the limits of others with these comments, and I soon realised that this was a child, who, first and foremost, found it difficult to listen to and respect his own personal limits and boundaries.

One day, we were working with the puppets. Markos had left the rest of the group, as he was one of the older ones and therefore not always interested in the games the younger children played. He explained to me that he wanted to make a marionette, that he wanted me to show him how it's made. We sat down, I asked him what he wanted to do, we came up with a plan together and he went to work. He cut, he glued, he redrew, cut again, glued again, filled the puppet with newspaper, and eventually, he came to talk to me, really tired. Here is the dialogue:

- Marialena! I can't go on, I'm tired!

- Okay, it's normal to be tired, you worked hard and were so dedicated to your puppet for a long time now.

- Yes, I'm tired, but I don't know what to do!

- What are you thinking of doing?

- Well, I really want to finish it! On the other hand, I'm very tired, I can't work anymore!

I noticed at that moment that Markos had reached his limit. He was too tired and had reached the point where he needed to decide whether he was going to push through his tiredness to complete what he wanted so badly, or whether he was going to respect it and get some rest. I decided to mirror back to him the picture I had:

-Markos, I hear that you are very tired and at the same time you really want to finish your puppet today. And I see that you have two choices: one is to rest and finish it tomorrow, and the other is to show a little more patience and courage and get it done today.

- Yeah, but if the other kids take it and ruin it by tomorrow? And on the other hand, I really want to finish it today because I've got it all worked out in my head!...

Markos kept talking to me not knowing what to do and I saw that he wasn't actually listening to me, he wasn't in dialogue with me, but was wandering between these two thoughts: to leave the puppet, respecting his boundary and his need for rest, or to finish making it on that same day and enjoy what he had accomplished, but overstepping his fatigue and energy. I said to him in a whisper:

- I'll tell you something. When I'm having a hard time making a decision, I ask my puppet. Because sometimes they... know a little better than I do.

He thought about it for a while, looked at me strangely and said, "Fine...". In the meantime, his face had already changed. He left for a while, took his time, and came back five minutes later, all fired up, and said to me:

- Let me tell you something! I'm not sure if I heard that well... But I decided to stop for today and continue tomorrow!

I was very happy at that moment and, for me, it was very important that he was able to face his fatigue, the fatigue it takes to make such a beautiful puppet, and not only face the desire to make a very beautiful puppet.

The next day he continued making his puppet, while some of the other children were in the process of also making their own puppets. At one point a little girl asked me:

- Marialena, I have these eyes, but I'm not too sure if they match my puppet.

And then, Markos popped up from around the corner and answered her in a whisper, as if he were telling her a secret:

- I'll tell you something! If you don't know what to choose for eyes, ask the puppet. She knows!

What's even more interesting is that Markos didn't finish his puppet that day either. He wanted to play with his friends and so he came and told me:

- I'll take it home to finish it, because today is the last day we are here and I want to play with the kids. Just show me how to make the shoes.

And there I immediately saw him recognising his limit, his place, his need. I quickly showed him how to make the shoes, and I watched him full of joy go off to play with his friends.

So, the puppets, then, know all too well. They know so well, that this fact, in my view, creates the need for us to know too, whether we are teachers or therapists. As a therapist, I have been in individual and group therapy and I can't expect a



person to go through this process, if I didn't know what it means to be in therapy. Similarly, I take it for granted that I had to work with puppets and know them very well as a tool, in order to be able to include it in therapy, not only with safety but, more importantly, with the respect they deserve.

In other words, my suggestion to teachers, therapists and all professionals who use puppets in their work is: to watch performances, attend seminars, get to know the world of puppets! Indulge in this relationship to which each puppet invites you. I find it very important to have this knowledge and experience with the puppets. Especially with the puppet, which is a very, very powerful tool and which, without the proper training, can re-traumatize or violently open things, things that the clients, whether children or adults, are not ready to confront.

That is why it is important to mention that, unlike the case of Markos, one would work in a slightly different way with adults. After the experience and contact with the puppet, the therapist would focus on the client's awareness to see what happened there and how they make sense of and give a meaning to that experience. For children, sometimes the experience itself is enough, whereas for adults, it is important that the new way of contact is assimilated and transformed into words.

If I were to sum up in one word what I describe above, that word would be "relationship". It is the relationship between the client and the puppet, the one between the therapist and the puppet, and also the relationship between the therapist and the client. And these are relationships that are formed both in therapy and in education. And just because it is a relationship, I insist so much on getting to know the tool. If I want to be present in that relationship, if I want to be present, to actively contribute to making it go well, I need to go there and meet this unknown being and get to know it, to find the space within myself to allow for its existence as well, beyond my own.

I always come back to the relationship: the puppet itself is not therapeutic. The therapist is not the one who heals. It is the relationship that is healing and therapeutic. The relationships that are formed between people and puppets.

The emergence of the relationship with the puppet during the therapeutic procedure and the importance it acquires, highlights in turn the key characteristics that a therapist and a teacher should have. They are honesty, authenticity, acceptance, presence, as well as how open I am, as a therapist, in this relationship, whether with the puppet, or with the client, or with the child in the classroom.

This relationship is therapeutic; this relationship makes us grow and evolve.

Even more so in these uncharted waters that Covid-19 has created, and in the conditions created by its spread or the efforts to contain it, a relationship with puppets can be a source of support. These are difficult times, both for people who come to therapy, as well as for the therapists, the teachers, the puppeteers. The imprint of this experience is still far from clear.

Whatever difficulty the environment brings, the puppets know very well how to create a safe context for us, full of protection and care. They don't always have to be there as a presence, but the relationship with them will always be a source of inspiration and creativity against fear and the unknown.

I choose to close with a blessing, the words of my friend and teacher, Stathis Markopoulos: "May the puppets guide us to dream, but also to awakening. The show is ending, and people still need to be cared for".

References

- Giamarelou, G. et al. (2013). Εισαγωγή στην ψυχοθεραπεία Gestalt. Βασικές έννοιες, αρχές και εφαρμογές [Introduction to Gestalt psychotherapy. Basic concepts, principles and applications]. Gestalt Foundation.
- Bernier, M., & O'Hare, J. (Eds.). (2005). Puppetry in education and therapy: Unlocking doors to the mind and heart. AuthorHouse.
- Perls, F., Hefferline, R., & Goodman, P. (1951). Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in Human Personality. Souvenir Press





Fig. 2: Presentation in the laboratory, 2019

Marialena Tsiamoura

graduated from the School of Early Childhood Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her dissertation was about children's grief and the role of the puppet during this period. She also trained in Gestalt psychotherapy, and has participated in a number of seminars with important puppeteers. Recently, she obtained a Master's Degree in Psychology.

She presently works as a Gestalt therapist, working individually with clients in therapy, and also organizing therapy groups and seminars based on puppet therapy. She also works as a puppeteer. She is a founding member of the psychotherapeutic network "VerbaTeam" and an active member of UNIMA Hellas-Greece.



Theatre/drama in university teacher education: balancing between innovative currents and institutional inertia

Vassiliki Riga & Vassilis Tselfes

Abstract

The European educational policy of the past twenty years, but also the changing socio-political conditions throughout the world, mean that the higher education of teachers has to face new challenges, challenges that enhance the multifaceted social interventions to the detriment of the production and reproduction of unambiguous scientific knowledge. Culture and the arts play an important role in this constructive transformation of teachers' higher education. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the characteristics of the distinct discipline of "Theatre in Education" through an analysis of the curricula of twenty-three university departments of education in Greece, with a view to revealing this field's current/local orientation, its perspectives and its identity. The results of our research reveal that, on the one hand, theatre in teachers' university education is subjected to the more general Greek educational tradition, without dynamically opening up the innovative paths proposed by institutions, such as UNESCO and the European Union. On the other hand, though, it creates ruptures, through social interventions and interdisciplinary collaborations, which can be transformed into a current, which disrupts institutional inertia and causing changes in society.

Key words: Theatre in Education, curriculum, teacher education, higher education.

Introduction

In his 2017 State of the European Union (EU) address, the European Commission's then president, Jean-Claude Juncker, stressed that education and culture are crucial for the future of the individual and the EU, because "it is how we turn circumstance into opportunity, how we turn mirrors into windows" (European Commission, 2017a: 1).

It is undeniable that education and culture have always been an EU priority in our societies' functioning and quality of life. Over the past twenty years in particular, there has been a major and systematic effort to create a European Education Area, so as to address many of the European challenges of the 21st century, a century unfolding with successive crises¹. Higher education

¹ The reference to challenges, or the aforementioned transformation of circumstance into opportunity, relates to issues of the European social and economic crisis that education and culture are supposed to be able to reverse: changing conditions, structural changes or disruptions in the labour market that education can smooth out by removing barriers to transitions from one job to another; an economy in crisis and global interaction, which education can regulate by producing a highly skilled and flexible workforce; unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and cultural tensions,

institutions are slotted to play a dominant role in this endeavour (European Commission, 2013), as they are a key building block of democratic societies in terms of reproducing and at the same time calling into question knowledge, producing new knowledge and disseminating it to society, communities and the wider world, by shaping critical thinkers, solving problems, addressing social challenges and promoting culture.

The area of higher education

As of 1999 and the Bologna Declaration, the sector of higher education was challenged to change, the aim being to create a comparable, coherent, competitive and attractive European Higher Education Area for students, teachers and researchers within and outside the EU. The proposed changes to higher education systems were numerous and multilevel, mainly regarding the three dimensions of teaching and learning: personal growth, sustainable employment and active citizenship (European Commission, 2018). As of 2013, the European Commission has recommended that higher education institutions introduce and promote intersectoral, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching, learning and assessment², which will help students develop a broader understanding and their entrepreneurial and innovative skills (European Commission, 2013).

In the context of the above changes and the rapidly changing educational conditions, the learning outcomes of the curricula started being described on the basis of the competences that combine what the student knows/understands with what (s)he can do upon completing the learning process. The term "competences" became the reference point now for the design, description and evaluation of curricula (González & Wagenaar, 2003, 2005, 2008) in European universities, and students had to be assessed on the basis of expected learning outcomes (European Commission, 2013). The university course outlines were structured according to general competences (transversal, for all subjects), specific competences (in relation to the particular teaching subject), the approaches to

which education mitigates by promoting social cohesion, mobility, justice, active citizenship and the European way of life (European Commission, 2017a: 3).

² In this way, it proposes the transformation of the traditional reproduction of scientific knowledge and practices exclusively within the scientific communities separated according to cognitive object. It is a proposal to break down the boundaries between the different disciplines (at the highest educational level), which we might assume will result in the disruption of the symbolic control and in the diffusion of what are now interdisciplinary identities within the greater body of society (Bernstein, 1996). A breakdown of boundaries that seems to go hand in hand with the production of recognised and innovative knowledge (Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein, 2020).



learning and teaching, the assessment process and credit points (ECTS), i.e. the students' workload³. All this restructuring of the curricula was undertaken so as to make the students' knowledge and competences/skills equally, if not more, recognisable by the subjects of study in the European Higher Education Area and in the labour market.

Finally, this whole endeavour seems to have been much more than a formal change in the curriculum's structure (Interartes, 2008). It was a process of re-examining the teaching and learning objectives, the lecturer's role, the creation of a different learning environment conducive to innovation, cultural diversity and creativity. Academic staff now needed not just to teach, but to teach effectively at a high professional level (European Commission, 2013). Their role shifted from reproducing knowledge to guiding students in their own learning; social interaction was extolled as a key component of learning, and students, graduates and the labour market became co-designers of curricula. And all of this under the pressure of a more global qualitative shift from the emphasis on knowledge/ representations to an emphasis on practices/ interventions, which could diffuse scientific culture within the polymorphous social structures. This endeavour is part of the older international attempt which, since the 1980s, seeks more generally to orientate the established theoretical physiognomy of the sciences (type-1) towards the production of applied knowledge (type-2), i.e. knowledge that focuses on solving practical and social problems with a view to creating a business-oriented university that is linked to the economy (Knuuttila, 2013).

An important role in the above transformation of education systems (UNESCO, 2010) with an emphasis on improving the quality of education that any creative and culturally-sensitive society aims at, is played by culture and the arts (UNESCO, 2006), two key components of an integrated education that leads to the individual's full development. At its world conference in Lisbon, in March 2006, UNESCO presented Arts in Education as a universal human right for all pupils, including those who are often excluded from education, such as migrants, cultural minority groups and people with disabilities. The EU (European Parliament, 2010) followed in the same direction, increasingly recognising the role of Arts Education as a factor contributing significantly to innovation in

³ It is, in all likelihood, the first time in the history of university education when the students are assessed institutionally also on the basis of their workload. Something that is consistent with the promotion of skills and competences linked to what they do.

society and the economy, to civic education, to improving our capacity to think and to personal development, whether intellectual, emotional or physical.

In addition, the EU also recognises as an important problem the fact that there are no opportunities for students who attempt to pursue interdisciplinary approaches to combine Science and Technology with the Arts (European Commission, 2017a: 7). The result is that the interaction of the interdisciplinary integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) with the Arts (STEAM), which has been shown to lead to meaningful innovation and creativity, is also endangered (European Commission, 2017b: 5-6).

The above European/ international political, social and educational setting obviously places the question of the place of Arts Education in the perspective of the production of type-2 applied knowledge. A fact that is expected to have consequences for the issue of teacher-training in the Arts and their educational use.

Art in teacher education

On the basis, then, of the Bologna reforms, the curricula for Arts Education found themselves being re-examined as to the way in which art subjects are taught, in order to address the new social and cultural challenges of the modern world. Questions about whether Arts Education should be taught as autonomous courses with the knowledge, skills and values that flow from them (Arts in Education) or as a broader means of enhancing teaching/learning in other cognitive fields as well (Education through Arts) also shaped the approach of teachers, art professionals and policy makers. In any case, the UNESCO proposal (2006) in the Lisbon Road Map was, through artistic practices and experiences, to gradually teach the arts to all learners and to preserve the value not only of the outcome but also of the process itself.

Due to these changes, learning and teaching the arts have become more complex than ever, requiring an open approach to Arts Education from teachers (Interartes, 2008) and new skills from learners, such as critical reflection, creativity in relation to innovation in society, thinking outside the box and the capacity to question orthodoxies (KEA European Affairs, 2009). The teachers' key role in teaching the arts was also stressed in UNESCO's 2nd world conference, held in Seoul in May 2010. The Seoul Agenda (UNESCO, 2010) set out goals and proposed strategies and actions for the development of Arts Education, with high-quality curricula in terms of design and implementation and teacher training in terms



of knowledge and skills predominating. Of course, despite the improvement of teacher education being one of the EU's objectives for the past 20 years (European Parliament, 2008; OECD, 2001; Council of the European Union, 2007), to this day it continues to be a goal to achieve, pursued through the updating of arts curricula, the content and teaching methods, and the development of partnerships between teachers, cultural systems and institutions.

Despite this effort and the organisation of remarkable teacher-training programmes in Greece,⁴ teachers do not seem to be prepared on a theoretical and practical level. They express a lack of self-confidence (Eurydice, 2009), while asking for their sense of self-efficacy in teaching art to be strengthened, in order to integrate it in their classrooms (Garvis & Pendergast, 2011). Furthermore, according to the findings of research on Arts in Education in Greek childhood education departments (for future nursery and primary school teachers) (Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, Trouli, & Linardakis, 2015), it appears that the artistic education on offer has remained static over the past thirty years, without incorporating the conclusions of recent research on art education, and without experiencing the development that the other university subjects have known. The research's recommendations include increasing the number of art courses and especially that of compulsory ones, connecting theory with teaching practice, preparing future teachers to the reality of the work environment and school curricula, improving the methodological approach to arts activities, using mixed methods of teaching and, more generally, raising the university community's awareness of the pedagogical importance of effective teacher training in the arts.

However, we believe that the endeavour is far from easy and that general recommendations may not be enough; structural changes usually call for new ways of implementation. For instance, for decades now art-related cognitive objects have been in the field of university education, trying to develop along the pattern of the type-1 theoretical sciences. Their success in this effort has created a tradition of theoretical meta-objects (art history, aesthetics, semiotics, theatology, etc.), which tends to complete the study and development of practices and applications that, in the case of the arts, predate the theory. As a result, the academic side of the arts currently finds itself at a complex crossroads.

⁴ See the teacher-training programme on theatre pedagogy (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 104-139), which led to a bolstering of the teachers' confidence in their individual abilities and a sense of self-efficacy.

Artists, with or without a university degree, produce work of greater or lesser social influence, focusing on the applied part of their art (type 2 production). Academics study the artists' work and their world (type 1 production) and are now asked to shift their interest towards applied knowledge while not necessarily being artists themselves. Thus they appear to be turning to education specialists, who are neither artists nor arts academics, and asking them to open avenues through which arts practices and theories can be conveyed to the everyday worlds of non-specialists. A demand for self-evident interdisciplinarity with multiple obstacles that, to a large extent, institutions tend to entrust ultimately to the people of education.

In this context, we encounter a number of proposals from international organisations (Eurydice, 2009; KEA European Affairs, 2009; UNESCO, 2006) on what contemporary curricula of Arts in Education and Education in the Arts should include, proposals that could feature in type-1 art curricula:

- development of all future teachers' knowledge and skills in one or more art forms,
 - contact with artistic works (concerts, exhibitions, books, films),
 - study and critical appraisal of works of art,
 - participation in artistic practices,
 - understanding of cultural heritage and cultural diversity,
- but also type-2 education curricula with an interdisciplinary orientation:
- cultivation of skills (individual expression, creativity, imagination, problem solving, risk taking, social and communication skills),
 - aesthetic experience and enjoyment,
 - strengthening teachers' confidence / self-esteem,
 - interdisciplinary approach to the arts and their connection with social sciences, business administration, technology and the natural sciences,
 - teaching in an open and exploratory way that permits risk-taking, failure and experimentation,
 - creative teaching methods (playful exploration, self-directed learning, use of ICT, etc.),
 - methodologies for interdisciplinary arts teaching and teaching through the arts,
 - appropriate assessment for Arts in Education,
 - curriculum design for school (formal) and community (informal) education,



- developing and establishing sustainable collaborations between schools, artists and cultural institutions,
- promoting lifelong learning through the arts.

Theatre/drama in teacher education

Theatre is a multifaceted and interdisciplinary art form, which articulates many forms of art while simultaneously requiring a knowledge and understanding of them. As such a complex yet simultaneously dynamic art form, it contributes actively to the development of creative human capital, offering learners a multitude of learning opportunities and challenges covering a wide range of needs in our changing society (Interartes, 2008). Learners are involved with their whole being and their understanding is mainly sensory/emotional and not only cognitive; therefore, theatre can shape their values (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 29).

This reality leads to various trends and practices of Theatre/Drama in Education without their boundaries being strict. Theatre/Drama is applied in education sometimes as aesthetic education, defending the aesthetic experience's central significance (Mouriki, 2003: 207), sometimes as an educational methodology and sometimes as a means for socialising or promoting social awareness and emancipation (Govas, 2007: 125). Of course, the existence of all these trends encourages the teacher not to adopt a unique choice but to create the conditions that, as Antonis Vaos characteristically states, acknowledge the numerous practices and many perspectives as parts of the organised knowledge of the art of the present and the past, and simultaneously places them under open, investigative and critical examination (Vaos, 2008: 8). For all these reasons, the teachers' initiation into Theatre/Drama in Education is a necessary but long-term process (IDEA-Europe, 2011) and should be studied in depth in higher education (DICE, 2010).

An international study carried out by twelve European countries comes up with important recommendations about teaching this subject in universities, and also supports the EU's objectives, as set out in the "Europe 2020" strategy (DICE, 2010). One of this study's primary recommendations is that all teachers in Europe should have basic knowledge and receive appropriate training on what Theatre/Drama in Education is and how it can improve teaching and learning. Consequently, Theatre/Drama in Education should be included as a compulsory introductory course (at least 5 ECTS) in teacher-training university curricula,

and also serve as a methodology for teaching other cognitive objects, such as pedagogy, language, social sciences and history.

In conclusion, curricula today are required to be dynamic and promote new perspectives for Theatre in Education through collaborations with other disciplines (Tselfes & Paroussi, 2015), with educational and/or cultural institutions and with theatre practitioners (IDEA-Europe, 2011). To include different methods, different practices, but also interdisciplinary study of other fields (Interartes, 2008: 64-79),

type-1:

- theoretical studies on the theatrical tradition of other cultures (enhancement of cultural pluralism),

- theory and theatrical texts' analysis,

and type-2:

- (embodied) knowledge, understanding and skills to create, promote and view an event through research, action, reflection and evaluation processes,

- learning by doing in a group context (cooperative learning),

- practical exercises (regarding the creation, design, production, rendition and management of a production),

- approach to related fields (cinema, television, radio) with regard to the process and product and in relation to technologies (video, digital sound, and imaging),

- preparation for the labour market,

- fostering of social awareness, social and business skills.

After outlining the framework of European education policy over the past twenty years regarding the theatre curricula in teachers' basic education, we ask ourselves what the landscape is in Greek higher education. As an EU member, Greece follows the Union's provisions by coordinating its policy, while academic staff monitor current research developments in their respective fields. This encounter of the two worlds is expected to be reflected in the curricula, which are adapted quite frequently, thus affecting the educational reality.

On the basis of the reasoning above, the purpose of this study was to focus on the official texts that showcase the work of the university departments of teacher education and, through these, outline the distinct discipline of "Theatre in Education". Considering that the curriculum has been defined (González & Wagenaar, 2003: 127, 128) as a "learning plan" (which is composed of a coherent



and integrated set of learning situations with clear goals and objectives in terms of learning, content, teaching and learning strategies/ methodologies, teaching/ learning material and procedures for assessing the learning and teaching), individual research objectives consisted in:

- inventorying the courses relating to Theatre in Education in the curricula of all the teacher-training departments in Greece (departments of childhood education and care, primary and secondary education),
- analysing the outlines of the courses in terms of objectives and learning outcomes, student competences, credit units (ECTS), approaches to learning and teaching, the evaluation process and the students' workload, and
- bringing to the fore the orientation, perspectives and current identity of this field in Greece, at least as these appear through the course outlines communicated by lecturers to their universities.

At the same time, taking into account the fact that the official texts reflect not only elements of what actually goes on in the educational practice, but also elements of what the institutions require should be recorded (in other words, texts' adaptations to the rationale and terminology of institutional obligations, such as the departmental evaluation and the certification of curricula), we included an additional objective:

- seeing to what extent the parts of the texts that have been institutionally imposed as a structure and terminology (e.g., learning outcomes versus objectives with explicitly differentiated knowledge, skills and competencies, teaching methodology, assessment of students' workload, etc.) are consistent with the parts of the texts that refer to more traditional descriptions (e.g., titles, content); in other words, whether or not the subject "Theatre in Education" tends to incorporate a smooth transition from type-1 to type-2.

The research questions we investigated so as to attain the above objectives were:

- Which courses make up the field of "Theatre in Education" in the university education of future teachers?
- What is the place of these courses in the curricula of the education departments? In other words, do all teachers build up basic knowledge in this field by attending compulsory courses and how many credits do these courses correspond to cumulatively?
- What position do the teachers occupy in the education departments and to what extent does the academic community recognise the importance of teaching such courses in the teachers' curriculum?

- What learning outcomes are described in these courses and to what extent do they correspond (points of convergence or divergence) to the proposals of the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education⁵ regarding the qualifications of 1st-cycle graduates (level 6)?

- What general competencies should graduating teachers have acquired in this field?
- What is the content of the courses?
- What teaching methods do the lecturers use?
- In what ways are the students assessed?

Methodology

In order to answer our research questions, we analysed the content of the curriculum guides of all the education departments in Greece, i.e. a total of twenty-three that function within thirteen larger academic units, meaning university schools or faculties. Of the twenty-three departments, three concern early childhood education and care, nine concern early childhood education, another nine are dedicated to elementary education, one department concerns secondary education and one centres on special education (cf. Table 1, Annex). The data were collected via the Internet from the official websites of eleven universities located throughout Greece (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Location of Greek universities with education departments

5 See www.tinyurl.com/ykx7u8g3

The main criterion in the search for courses relating to Theatre in Education was that their title should contain the base words “theatre” or “drama” and their derivative and compound words. Although we came across courses that used some form of dramatic art as a teaching or expression technique, we did not include them in our analysis as the aim of our research was to map, and analyse, only the courses that clearly stated in their titles that they dealt with forms of theatre in education and were taught as autonomous subjects.

The bulk of the data was collected from the study guides of the past two academic years (2018-19 and 2019-20) so as to take into account the case of a lecturer being on leave and their classes not being taught over the most recent academic year. In quite a few cases, the study guides were incomplete and we proceeded to seek information from the timetables, course lists, course outlines and the lecturers’ personal pages. Despite this, beyond their title, some courses offered no information about their content and how they are conducted.

We decided to analyse the research material using content analysis, a technique of archival research (Issari & Pourkos, 2015: 62), which allows us to effectively manage and analyse a large volume of data in a short period of time. Furthermore, this technique allows us to return to the data being studied for further analysis or for reliability checks (Robson, 2007) as many times as we wish, because they remain constant and are not modified by either the presence of the researcher or time. However, except for the simple counting of words needed to classify the text into categories, we carried out a qualitative analysis of the content of the course outlines in question for an in-depth analysis of the theories, methods and techniques used by the lecturers. Of course, such a research method leads to a subjective interpretation –as Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) characteristically state– of the content of the courses’ outlines through the systematic process of classifying, coding and identifying subjects or models. In qualitative research, though, the researcher’s personal involvement, which includes experiences, opinions, expectations and biases, is considered a given and in any case influences the reflection framework they wish to create (Issari & Pourkos, 2015: 79).

The categories to be analysed

Following the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) for conducting a thematic analysis of the research material’s content, during the first stage we carried out a repeated reading of the outlines of all relevant courses and an active

search for subjects, sub subjects and meanings, gradually forming a system of categories for classifying the material according to the research questions. Following this, certain subcategories were merged (for lack of data), while on the contrary others were divided into separate subcategories due to the volume of data. In order to establish the categories, we used the combined approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). We started with an inductive category development based on the courses’ outlines in the study guides, given that the material had already been standardised in most education departments, helping us identify the initial categories. Then, following the literature review on the theory of teaching Theatre in Education, we moved on to the deductive category application (Mayring, 2000) and the showcasing of new emerging categories.

For each category, we analysed the content of the above electronic material, which was coded and organised into subcategories using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo produced by Qualitative Research Solutions (QSR) International and more specifically its version 10 (QSR NVivo10). The NVivo software was of assistance at all stages of our research, from storing, organising and classifying the primary data to coding them, searching for relationships between data, processing them statistically and visualising the analysis’ findings through schematic illustrations.

On the one hand, NVivo gave us the possibility of a quantitative analysis of the content, which recorded the frequency with which keywords occurred. On the other, it enabled us to correlate the research’s different categories with each other and highlight new relationships in order to describe, interpret and understand the current identity of the field of “Theatre in Education”.

Consequently, on the basis of the research’s questions, the literature review and the in-depth examination of the material, the final coding scheme was organised into the following categories of analysis:

Universities, Schools/Faculties

-Departments (Education and Care, Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Special Education)

-Teaching personnel (employment relationship)

-Courses (title, type of course, semester of studies, teaching hours, course load, ECTS)

- Learning outcomes (objectives, general competences)

- Course content (type of theatre art, trends, perspectives)



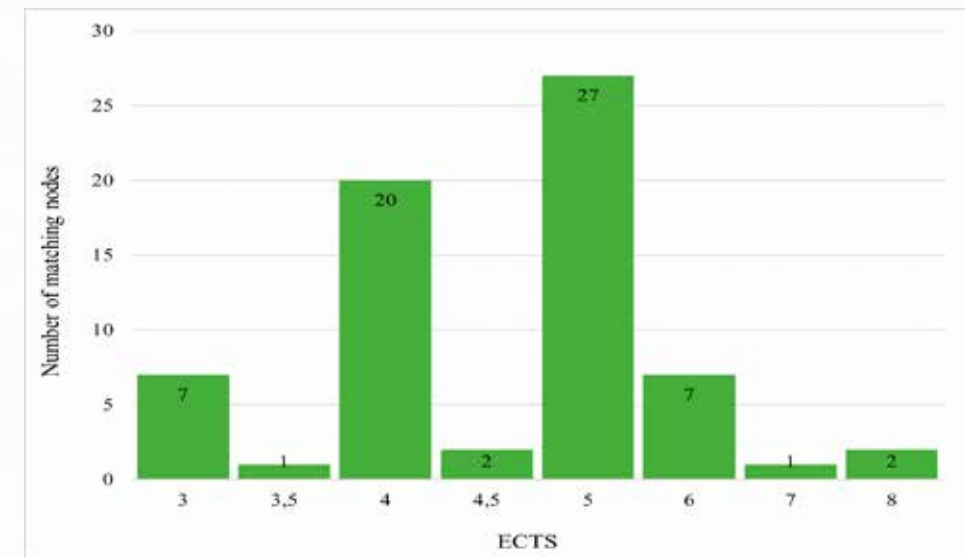
- Teaching and learning methods
- Evaluation (students, lecturer, course, evaluation methods, evaluation criteria)

Results

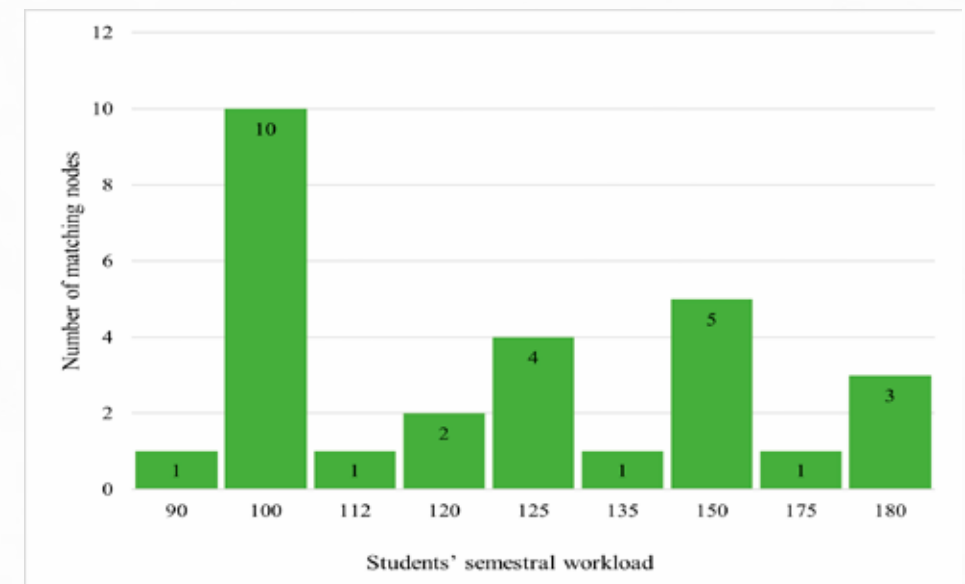
The analysis of the content of the study guides, the timetables, and the courses of the academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20 of all the education departments allowed us to identify 73 courses relating to the field of “Theatre in Education” (see Annex, Table 2).

From the courses’ titles, there are essentially 64 different courses, as nine of them appear with identical titles in more than one department. The vast majority of the courses are concerned with theatre education and theatre pedagogy and, on a second level, with the (theatrical) education and training of the (future) teacher. The most “popular” type of Theatre in Education is puppet theatre, followed by drama. From the titles already reference is made to teaching processes and educational methods, such as (theatrical/drama) play, dramatization, expression, teaching, performance, practical training, and improvisation. Although introductory, the courses’ content is contemporary and comprises mainly applications and practical training and, to a lesser extent, methods and theory. Reference is also made to programmes and approaches and it is connected to society, the Greek reality and young children.

Of the 73 courses, only 67 had an indication of the type of course. The vast majority (n37) are elective courses, 13 are elective compulsory, 11 are compulsory and only 6 are explicitly linked, through their title, to the students’ practical training. Most courses (n47) accumulate 4 or 5 credits (cf. Graph 1), their weekly attendance is usually three hours, while the students’ workload for each semester varies between 90 to 180 hours per course (cf. Graph 2). Courses are taught during all semesters, the average being mostly held in the 4th semester and very few in the 8th semester.

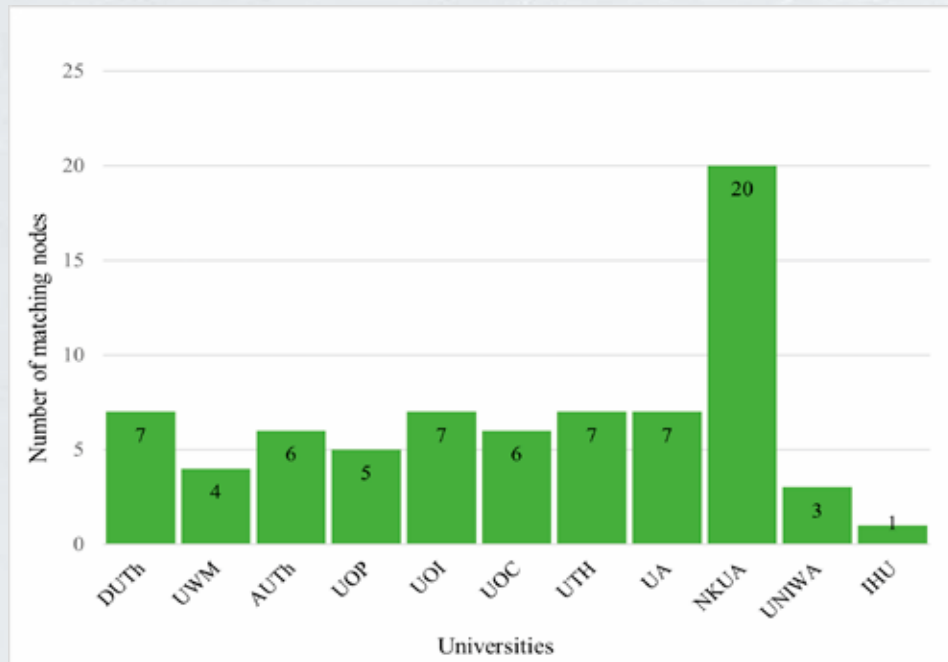


Graph 1. The credits accumulated in courses relating to Theatre in Education

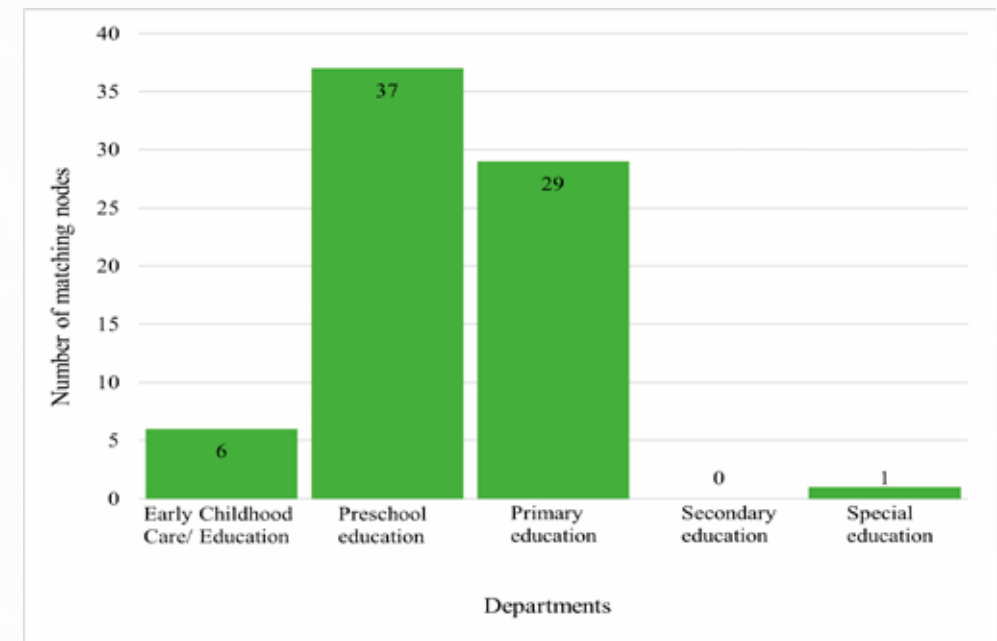


Graph 2. Students' semestral workload

Most universities offer around seven courses a year related to Theatre in Education. The exception is the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) with 20 courses, while the International Hellenic University (IHU) offers only one (cf. Graph 3). The departments of preschool education offer the most courses (37 courses), while the department of secondary education offers no courses at all on theatre (cf. Graph 4).



Graph 3. Number of courses relating to Theatre in Education offered by the universities



Graph 4. Number of courses relating to Theatre in Education offered by the departments

The vast majority of the courses are taught by members of the Teaching and Research Personnel (DEP), and very few by members of the Special Courses Staff (EEP) and members of the Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP).

The courses' learning outcomes describe specific knowledge, skills and competences that students will acquire after the courses' successful completion. The aim of the courses is for students to discover, explore, reflect, get to know, familiarise themselves with, understand, combine, connect, gain knowledge and experience of and be introduced to theatre as education. More specifically, students will learn and develop techniques and practices regarding theatre and theatrical expression and communication; they will acquire basic knowledge about the place and development process of theatre in children's education; they will understand issues related to the field of theatre pedagogy and how to approach different forms of theatre art; and, they will become aware of theatre not only as an artistic expression, a pedagogical process and a teaching method,

but also as a social phenomenon. One of the most popular theatrical techniques, methods or else teaching practice is theatrical play, which is presented to students as an activity of joy, knowledge and communication. The students, on the one hand, will explore relevant artistic, social, cultural or scientific issues in a group context and, on the other, will develop their personal capacity of expression. They will be able to transfer all of the above to the educational process.

The students are prepared for their entry into the labour market and so as to work in an international professional environment, which is indeed highly competitive. However, the basic skills they will have acquired will enable them to work either independently or as part of a team in an interdisciplinary environment, respecting multiculturalism and diversity, and demonstrating social, professional and ethical responsibility and sensitivity to various issues (for instance, gender issues). They will have acquired valuable skills for today's world, such as decision-making, generating new (research) ideas, being capable of criticising and self-criticism, promoting free, creative and deductive thinking, and adapting to new situations.

The courses' content is developed around the central concepts (dominant key term) of the noun "theatre" and the adjective "theatrical". These concepts seem to be associated with concepts/ key terms that guide theatre and theatrical:

- towards a specific type (puppet, puppet theatre, shadows),
- in a specific context (education, lesson, historical review),
- with specific teaching processes (exercises, creation, dramatization, improvisation, expression, animation, play, examples, performance),
- with practical applications and techniques (creation, construction, management, work, deepening, testing, commenting), and,
- with objectives that do not appear to be differentiated from those of the teaching processes (except, possibly, for the term "techniques") and, as a result, possibly consist of the development of relatively unspecified skills and competences linked to the individual teaching processes and, certainly, the techniques which, while being part of every theatrical discipline, it is unclear which competences they serve.

The vast majority of the teaching personnel is recorded as organising the course around lectures, while also demanding quite a few hours of independent study by the students in order to cope with the course's requirements. The teaching is based on audiovisual material, while use is also made of online

classes. In parallel to the lectures, workshop exercises, experiential exercises, and the practical training of students in schools also take place. In many instances, the students are invited to watch theatre performances, events, conferences and seminars, and they are often asked to prepare a group or individual project or an artistic creation.

The students' evaluation process is based mainly on an oral examination at the end of the semester and less on written examinations. Also, the students can undertake written assignments (dispensations) during the semester and/or final papers based on literature and present them publicly (to their fellow students or to an audience). Few courses propose artistic creation (e.g., a theatre pedagogy happening, an interdisciplinary stage implementation) as a process of student evaluation. Lastly, a very small number of courses declare having incorporated a formative or continuous course assessment over the course of the semester.

Discussion

As presented in the study guides of the education departments, the courses show that theatre/drama in university teacher education is subjected to the more general Greek educational tradition, without opening up the innovative paths proposed by institutions such as UNESCO (2006, 2010) or the EU (2010, 2017a, 2017b).

In this tradition, puppet theatre is an established and gradually evolving educational tool in early childhood education and has been so for over 50 years (Lenakakis, Paroussi & Tselfes, 2019). Consequently, the education of teachers who, in their professional life, will be occupied in the education, the care or the extracurricular activities of children under the age of 6 years old, the use of puppet-theatre applications is expected. In other words, it explains the dominance of puppet theatre in the 9 (early childhood education departments) plus 3 (education and care departments) relevant university departments, since they train classroom teachers who are expected to use it in their future profession.

In primary school, teachers are also classroom (and not subject) teachers. Here, too, then, theatre in education with an emphasis on drama, and not puppet theatre or on activities such as theatrical play, dramatization, improvisation or the organisation of performances, is destined for the aesthetic education classes and requires a relatively well-trained teacher. This explains the significant number of theatre courses (fewer than puppet theatre) offered by the primary education departments. On the other hand, we believe that the use of drama



and not puppet theatre as the appropriate theatrical genre for primary school refers to the traditional connection of puppet theatre with performances “for little children”.

In secondary education, teachers are specialised (subject) teachers. And the theatre-related specialities are taught in university theatre/theatrolgy departments. Their graduates, with a theatrolgist’s degree and artistic specialisations, also possess “teaching competence” thanks to a supplementary programme of instructional courses. In the same way as their colleagues of other disciplines do for other subjects, these graduates undertake to teach classes relating to theatre. This explains the fact that the only secondary teacher education department does not offer any courses in theatre in education. It offers a complete curriculum of “teaching competence” to trainee teachers specialising in philology, that is to say in parallel to a curriculum of 17 compulsory courses in the cognitive fields of philology, psychology, history and philosophy.

Therefore, at first glance, the Greek educational tradition of general education, combined with the professional rights that have been consolidated and legislated, seem to constitute a powerful grid of containment in the promotion of interdisciplinary university subjects that would combine equally theatre disciplines with the disciplines of other sciences, other than education sciences. In the case of the latter, theatre seems to have penetrated sufficiently, forming an additional branch in the science of education (theatre education, theatre pedagogy), which achieves its autonomy both through the theories it develops and through the teaching/learning methods it promotes. Methods that are also encountered in the courses’ titles, with reference to two traditionally and not inherently differentiated frameworks (puppet theatre versus drama) and their adaptation to the first levels of general education.

The connections appearing in the courses’ content also move in the same direction. The contents tend to bring “theatre” and “theatrical” into connection with pedagogical and instructional extensions. Extensions that largely balance between traditional and innovative approaches of both pedagogy and sociology, but without particularly exploiting the fact that, as a medium of education, theatre mediates effectively in the direction of both teaching/ learning differentiation (a crucial pedagogical issue) and social inclusion (a sociological issue).

The above setting provides evidence of the development of theatre education/ theatre pedagogy in the context of type-1 sciences. This development presents

characteristics of diversity (large number of courses with different titles), a significant occupation time of the students (indications generated by the ECTS), teaching mainly by members of the Teaching and Research Personnel (DEP) with research experience and significant CVs, emphasis on teaching applications with a parallel support of theory, even if to a lesser degree.

From this point on, mixed evidence of a transition to the production of type-2 knowledge begins to appear.

The learning outcomes, as put forth in the courses’ outlines, tend towards competences that guide the acquisition of knowledge/construction of representations and less towards capacity-building for interventions. For example, they concern the ability to explore artistic, social, cultural or scientific issues in a group context, but not competences to intervene and transform them creatively and innovatively. This is a type-1 tendency.

However, as far as interdisciplinary approaches are concerned, they appear in relation to the graduates’ professional future and in directions refer to existing and mature social problems. They appear as theatre pedagogy components which focus on problems of multiculturalism, gender issues, environmental issues, diversity, but not, for example, on components of disability (with the exception of the course offered by the Department of Special Education). And we believe that this points to a small step towards the production of useful and applied type-2 knowledge, which evolves by following the changes but without aspiring to cause them. For example, the now mature issue of immigration with its accompanying issues of diversity, the substantial inequality of social genders or the protection of the environment are approached through educational applications of theatre in the direction of understanding, respect, ethics, sensitivity – but not differentiated, not inclusive, in the way that Theatre in Education can approach them. Something that cannot exist when referring to special education and training, which cannot be conceived today without interventional differentiation and inclusion.

At the same time, two issues arise in the case of the objectives: a tension and a conformity that conceal a formulation tautology. The objectives, which concern competences as learning outcomes, are not easily distinguishable from the descriptions of teaching/ learning processes, except possibly as regards the use of the rather abstract term “techniques”. This is in line with the logic of educational differentiation, which we believe is the intrinsic characteristic of



theatrical activities, but also of the arts and creative activities generally: each learner succeeds in a process (theatrical, artistic, creative) if they go through with it and reach a satisfactory result, regardless of which personal (and certainly different from person to person) skills or abilities they activate and put into practice to achieve it. Here, the university curriculum directly clashes with the obligation to define *ex ante* objectives concerning skills and competences that future professional teachers must acquire.

From this point on, a “politically correct” compliance inevitably begins; a compliance illustrating the fact that:

a) lecturers state they will be teaching classes with a cognitive content, in order to justify examination content and the students’ quantitative assessments;

b) in order to use theatre, they organise activities in the context of their classes that are not assessed by quantitative methods but which develop any pre-existing personal competences and skills of the students relating to these activities. In other words, they carry out flipped classes (Stoller, 2018);

c) the lecturer assesses verbally and in some, fewer, cases on the basis of final productions (theatrical studies, essays, etc.), as a means of distinguishing the qualities of the skills and competences. And in any case, as a teacher, silently quantifies these qualitative assessments.

We believe that this picture confirms the fact that the lecturers are aware of the specificities and dynamics of their subject. At the same time, they are also aware of their institutional obligations which, from the point of view of the Greek State and the educational traditions of general education, dictate that they must prepare professional classroom teachers for specific levels of education. Also, from the EU side, they are pressured to declare in advance the development of specific competences and skills, as well as an approximate work timeframe for the students. These assertions are based on the emerging tensions underlying the texts:

a) On the one hand, the courses’ titles and contents refer to a mature type-1 science of education, with a theory and applications. On the other hand, in our data, student activity processes, for example relevant to practical training, are stated or implied as existing within the courses that bring theatre, at least in an educational intervention context, as well as interdisciplinary encounters with communication subjects (the press, literature, cinema, art), into contact with hard core subjects of Sociology (social constructions), with the subject of Special

Education and with that of Physics. These encounters do not easily match any specific level of general education, nor do they necessarily fit in with the logic of a science of education, thus pointing to type-2 ruptures, which tend to multiply rather than wane.

b) On the one hand, the characteristics of differentiation and inclusion seem to run through, both in teaching terms and in essence, the classes on the application of Theatre in Education. On the other hand, the necessarily differentiated competences developed by the students during the course tend to be obscured under the institutional pressure of their uniform description. An unnecessary tension that arises from the institutions’ attempt to standardise features of type-2 knowledge production, which is inherent to theatre education and rather impossible to standardise. Here the lecturers follow the examples provided by the institutions to describe competences. They use the verb “can” followed by one or more of their classes’ activities, described with greater or lesser clarity, since the institutional example states: Can perform a managerial and supervisory role in the context of a specific task or learning process, where unpredictable changes might occur. Can review and develop both his/her own and other people’s performance (GSEE Labour Institute, 2019: 7).

c) On the one hand, qualitative methods of student assessment are proposed as the norm. On the other hand, the final necessarily quantitative results force the lecturers, in the context of the official texts, to gloss over how qualitative assessments ultimately produce grades. A tension that arises from the educationally-dominant approach of assessment as a classification, which is outdated in the context of type-2 knowledge production (where what matters is the assessment by the market, which is interested in what one knows and not in what grade one has on their degree).

d) The credits, also, are linked to the students’ workload which, to our mind, links them to the development of type-2 skills and competences and should not be an indicator of the course’s “weight” in the overall curriculum. However, because degrees correspond to a finite number of credits, the credits of one course function antagonistically to the credits of the others and it is questionable whether their values express a workload or whether they are derived in proportion to the curriculum’s other courses, the *modus vivendi* of university departments usually promoting their even distribution.

Our final assessment is that the study guides’ texts do not ultimately show what is precisely happening in educational practice. But they do signal other



interesting things. They show that the type-2 standardisations imposed in the study guides' official texts constrain the lecturers' description in a peculiar and contradictory way: by its very nature, the type-1 discipline of theatre education/theatre pedagogy contains the seeds of the production of interventionist and differentiated type-2 knowledge. During its relatively brief life in Greek universities (roughly 30 years), it tried and succeeded to establish itself by projecting its type-1 face. So is it easy for it today to assert, if not accept, that its strong card is interventionist, type-2, and that, for this very reason, it is at the forefront of institutional change?

At this particular point in time, we fear that the answer is no. Our analysis shows only the signs of disruption: it reveals tensions. And although tensions usually lead to ruptures, ruptures need one step more before being transformed into a current. This step is discernible in the texts we analysed: it is the meaningful encounters with colleagues from other disciplines (Gunve, 2018). And these encounters need not be majoritarian. As long as they exist. When and if they do occur, the current will be present and will be looking to its new internal tensions, which will be trying to modify it.

References

- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- DICE - Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competencies in Education. (2010). The DICE has been cast. Research findings and recommendations on educational theatre and drama. European Commission.
- Eurydice. (2009). *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe*. Brussels: EACEA P9 Eurydice.
- European Commission (2017a). *Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture. The European Commission's contribution to the EU leaders' meeting at the Social Summit in Gothenburg*, COM(2017) 673 final, 14.11.2017, Strasbourg.
- European Commission (2017b). *A renewed EU agenda for higher education*, COM(2017) 247 final, 30.5.2017, Bruxelles.
- European Parliament. (2008). Resolution of 18 December 2008 on delivering

lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation — implementation of the 'Education and Training 2010 work programme' (2008/2102(INI)). *Official Journal of the European Union C 45*, 23.2.2010: 33-39.

European Parliament. (2010). *Artistic studies in the European Union*. European Parliament resolution of 24 March 2009 on artistic studies in the European Union (2008/2226(INI)). *Official Journal of the European Union C 117*, 6.5.2010: 23-26.

European Commission. (2013). *High level group on the modernisation of higher education. Report to the European Commission on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission. (2018). *Promoting the relevance of higher education. Main report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1). Retrieved from https://sites.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_1/PDF/FEREDAY.PDF

Garvis, S., & Pendergast, D. (2011). An investigation of early childhood teacher self-efficacy beliefs in the teaching of arts education. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 12(9). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v12n9/>

González, J., & Wagenaar, R. (Eds.) (2003). *Tuning educational structures in Europe. Final report. Phase one*. Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto.

González, J., & Wagenaar, R. (Eds.) (2005). *Tuning educational structures in Europe II. Universities' contribution to the Bologna process*. Spain: Tuning Project & Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto.

González, J., & Wagenaar, R. (Eds.) (2008). *Tuning educational structures in Europe. Universities' contribution to the Bologna process. An introduction* (2nd ed.). Spain: Tuning Project & Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto.

Govas, N. (2007). *Θέατρο και εκπαίδευση: Αναζητώντας έναν κοινό τόπο* [Theatre and education: Seeking a common ground]. In A. Tsiaras (Ed.), *Το θέατρο στην εκπαίδευση. Θεωρία και πράξη. Πρακτικά επιστημονικών ημερίδων* [Theatre in education. Theory and practice. Proceedings of one-day workshops] (pp. 117-126). Athens: Papazissis.

GSEE Labour Institute (2019). *Το Εθνικό Πλαίσιο Προσόντων (ΕΠΠ) και η αντιστοίχισή του με το Ευρωπαϊκό Πλαίσιο Προσόντων (EQF)* [The National Qualifications Framework (EPP) and its mapping with the European Qualifications



Framework (EQF)]. Retrieved from www.tinyurl.com/ykx7u8g3.

Gunve, F. (2018). Doing (art) education as art (education). In L. Knight & A. Lasczik Cutcher (Eds), *Arts-research-education: connections and directions* (pp. 237-249). Switzerland: Springer.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.

IDEA-Europe. (2011). Διακήρυξη για το θέατρο/δράμα στην εκπαίδευση του ευρωπαϊκού τμήματος του Διεθνούς Οργανισμού για το Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση, Νοέμβριος 2010 [Manifesto on theatre/drama in education of the European section of the International Organisation for Theatre in Education, November 2010]. *Ekpaidefsi & Theatro*, 12, 76-77.

Interartes. (2008). *Tapping into the potential of Higher Arts Education in Europe*. Amsterdam/Warsaw: ELIA.

Issari, P. & Pourkos, M. (2015). Ποιοτική μεθοδολογία έρευνας. Εφαρμογές στην ψυχολογία και στην εκπαίδευση [Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology and Education]. Athens: Hellenic Academic eBooks.

KEA European Affairs. (2009). *The impact of culture on creativity*. Study prepared for the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture. Brussels: KEA European Affairs.

Knuuttila, T. (2013). Science in a new mode: Good old (theoretical) science versus brave new (commodified) knowledge production? *Science & Education*, 22, 2443-2461.

Lenakakis, A. & Paroussi, A. (2019). Η τέχνη του κουκλοθέατρου στην εκπαίδευση. Παιχνίδι συγκλίσεων και αποκλίσεων [The art of puppet theatre in education. A game of convergences and divergences]. Athens: Gutenberg.

Lenakakis, A., Paroussi, A. & Tselfes, V. (2019). Θεσμικά και πολιτισμικά σχήματα που περιγράφουν τη μεταβαλλόμενη παρουσία του κουκλοθέατρου στον εκπαιδευτικό χώρο των ελληνικών Νηπιαγωγείων [Institutional and cultural schemes describing the changing presence of puppetry in the educational space of Greek nursery schools]. *Mentoras*, 16, 48-94.

Mouriki, A. (2003). Μεταμορφώσεις της αισθητικής [Transformations of aesthetics]. Athens: Nefeli.

Malm, B. (2009). Towards a new professionalism: enhancing personal and professional development in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 35(1), 77-91.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), Art. 20. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089>

Robson, C. (2007). Η έρευνα του πραγματικού κόσμου. Ένα μέσον για κοινωνικούς επιστήμονες και επαγγελματίες ερευνητές [Real World Research. A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers]. Athens: Gutenberg.

Root-Bernstein, R., & Root-Bernstein, M. (2020). A statistical study of intra-domain and trans-domain polymathy among Nobel laureates. *Creativity Research Journal*. doi:10.1080/10400419.2020.1751545

Council of the European Union. (2007). Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education. *Official Journal of the European Union C 300*, 12.12.2007: 6-9.

Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, M., Trouli, K., & Linardakis, M. (2015). Arts education in Greek universities for future kindergarten and primary school teachers: departmental programs and students' views. *Preschool & Primary Education*, 3(1), 34-52.

Stoller, A. (2018). The flipped curriculum: Dewey's pragmatic university. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 37(5), 451-465.

Tselfes, V. & Paroussi, A. (2015). Θέατρο και επιστήμη στην εκπαίδευση [Theatre and science in education]. Athens: Hellenic Academic eBooks, www.kallipos.gr.

Taggart, G., Whitby, K., & Sharp, C. (2004). *Curriculum and progression in the arts: An international study*. Final report (International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Project). London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

UNESCO. (2006). *Road Map for Arts Education. Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century*. The World Conference on Arts Education: Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century. Lisbon, 6-9 March 2006.

UNESCO. (2010). *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education*. The Second World Conference on Arts Education. Seoul, 25-28 May 2010.

Vaos, A. (2008). Ζητήματα διδακτικής των εικαστικών τεχνών. Το καλλιτεχνικό εγχείρημα ως παιδαγωγική πράξη [Issues in the teaching of visual arts. The artistic project as a pedagogical act]. Athens: Topos.





ANNEX

Table 1. Education Departments in higher education in Greece

University	Faculty/School	Department(s)
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh)	Faculty of Education	School of Early Childhood Education (S.E.C.E.) School of Primary Education (S.P.E.)
Democritus University of Thrace (DUTh)	School of Education	Department of Education Sciences in Early Childhood (D.E.S.E.C.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.)
International Hellenic University (IHU)	School of Social Sciences	Department of Early Childhood Education and Care
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA)	School of Education School of Philosophy	Department of Early Childhood Education (D.E.C.E.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.) Department of Educational Studies (D.E.S.)
University of the Aegean (UA)	School of Humanities	Department of Preschool Education and of Educational Design (D.P.E.E.D.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.)
University of West Attica (UNIWA)	School of Administrative, Economic and Social Sciences	Department of Early Childhood Care and Education



University of Western Macedonia (UWM)	School of Social Sciences and Humanities	Department of Early Childhood Education (D.E.C.E.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.)
University of Thessaly (UTH)	School of Humanities and Social Sciences	Department of Early Childhood Education (D.E.C.E.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.) Department of Special Education (D.S.E.)
University of Ioannina (UOI)	School of Education	Department of Early Childhood Education (D.E.C.E.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.)
	School of Social Sciences	Department of Early Years Learning and Care
University of Crete (UOC)	School of Education	Department of Preschool Education (D.P.S.E.) Department of Primary Education (D.P.E.)
University of Patras (ΠΠ)	School of Humanities and Social Sciences	Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education (D.E.S.E.C.E.) Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work (D.E.S.S.W.)

Table 2. Courses taught relating to Theatre in Education (academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20)

Body language and speech. The contribution of theatre in the educational act
Linguistic expression in the pedagogy of theatre
Creative method of rhythmic & theatrical play
Teaching educational drama - theatre techniques in education
Instructional and pedagogical aspects of theatre (D.E.C.E./ NKUA)
Instructional and pedagogical aspects of theatre (D.P.E./ NKUA)
Dramatic play - Dramatization
Dramatization
Dramatization – Theatrical expression, rhythm and movement
Introduction to the pedagogy of theatre
Introduction to theatre as education
Introduction to puppet theatre
Introduction to theatre codes, theory and practice
Education - Its public perception. Press, Literature, Cinema, Theatre, Art
Greek literature and theatrical culture
Dramatic art in education
Theatre applications and science education I
Theatre education (D.E.C.E./ UWM)
Theatre education (Department of Early Childhood Education & Care/ UNIWA)
Theatre education for expression and communication
Theatre education in elementary school
Theatrical animation, personal development and team building
Theatre education (D.E.C.E./ UOI)
Theatre education (D.P.E./ NKUA)
Theatre education and practice
Theatre education, experiential learning & creativity in education



Theatrical and symbolic play
Theatrical play (D.E.C.E./ UWM)
Theatrical play (D.E.C.E./ UOI)
Theatrical play (Department of Early Childhood Education & Care/ IHU)
Theatrical play (D.P.E.E.D./ UA)
Theatrical play and dramatization
Theatre for children and young people - From text to performance
Theatre for children and young people. Dramatic text and theatrical performance
Theatre for child and young people audiences
Theatre and social constructions
Theatre in Education - theories and methods
Theatre in Education - Pedagogical and social interventions
Theatre in Education - Director attitudes and practices
Theatre in society - Theory and practice
Theatre, culture and education
Theatre pedagogy programmes - Devising, structuring, implementing
Theatre pedagogy programmes in elementary education
Theatre pedagogy - Approaches and applications in educational contexts
Theatre pedagogy practices and innovative actions
Theatre pedagogy practices in the Kindergarten
Theatre pedagogy approaches and applications in an educational context I and II
Theatre pedagogy approaches and applications in preschool education
Theatre pedagogy
Theatre pedagogy in special education and care
History of theatre
Movement-play and theatrical play
Puppets and puppet theatre
Puppet theatre (Department of Early Childhood Education & Care/ UOI)

Puppet theatre (D.P.E./ UOC)
Puppet theatre (Department of Early Childhood Education & Care/ UNIWA)
Puppet theatre and improvisations – Practical training
Modern Greek theatre and society
The performing arts as a means of education and socio-cultural animation
Organisation of a theatrical performance
Pedagogy of theatre
Story tale and children's theatre
Practical arts of the theatre and drama theory
Practical training II (Puppet theatre for children)
Seminar on Greek literature and theatre education
Seminar on theatre education
Comparative teatrology, Modern Greek and international drama
Contemporary and traditional aspects of shadow theatre - Pedagogical applications
Modern teaching methods exploiting drama and theatre (D.E.C.E./ NKUA)
Modern teaching methods exploiting drama and theatre (D.P.E./ NKUA)
Contemporary trends in Greek puppet theatre. An informal form of education?
Body and theatrical expression in preschool education - Dramatization
Gender and theatre





Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater
DECE, NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY

Vassiliki Riga

works as an Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education (DESECE) of the University of Patras specialising in "Theatrical Expression, Rhythm and Movement in Early Childhood Education". She has studied Physical Education and Sports and holds a Master and Doctoral degree in Educational Sciences from the University of Strasbourg in France. She has taught at universities in Greece and abroad and has coordinated many European and international projects. She is a certified expert evaluator of adult trainers and curricula and has designed, implemented and animated training programmes and workshops for teachers. Her research interests focus on physical education, body and theatrical expression, psychomotor education in preschool age, as well as on body culture studies, performance studies and embodied learning in adult education.

Vassilis Tselfes see page 404



Fig.1: Rehearsals from the performance "Arabim. The souls of the statues" (2016)



Fig.1 Project "Water"

Puppet theatre at the School of Drama of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Myrto Pigkou-Repousi

Abstract

Puppet theatre is a hybrid art that synthesises elements of fine art and performance art. At the same time, it constitutes a dynamic pedagogy which is popular among educators and effective for different educational grades. In the School of Drama (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), puppet theatre is approached in terms of theory but mainly in practice, and more specifically through its different forms in the artistic and in educational contexts. In this text, the different approaches of puppet theatre that are followed in the scenographic modules and in the educational modules are presented and analysed through their objective, aims and further potentials.

Key words: puppet theatre, theatre in education, scenography, higher education.

The School of Drama of the Faculty of Fine Arts

The School of Drama of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki gives students the opportunity to study theatre through a series of theoretical courses in the field of Drama and Performance Analysis, but also to delve into some of the individual practices of theatre art and educational theatre. Within this framework, the curriculum comprises a series of classes of theatre in education, as well as a wide range of artistic courses that form the other orientations: a) acting, b) directing and c) scenography-costume design. Within this curriculum, puppet theatre is found as a stand-alone course titled "Puppets and Masks" in the scenography-costume design orientation, but also as a sub-module in other courses in stage design and costume. However, apart from the scenography-costume orientation, puppet theatre also exists as a genre in theatre pedagogy courses, as it is both a distinct artistic pedagogical method and a technique that works in combination with other theatre pedagogy approaches in the context of exploring and/or furthering knowledge of a taught subject or a story. In this second environment, the types of puppetry become broader, as the process of animation involves all the objects with which teachers and learners of all ages can make stories and scripts. The main objective of this paper is to offer a brief presentation of these two aspects of puppet theatre at the School of Drama through indicative works and applications in these two different orientations, scenography and pedagogy.



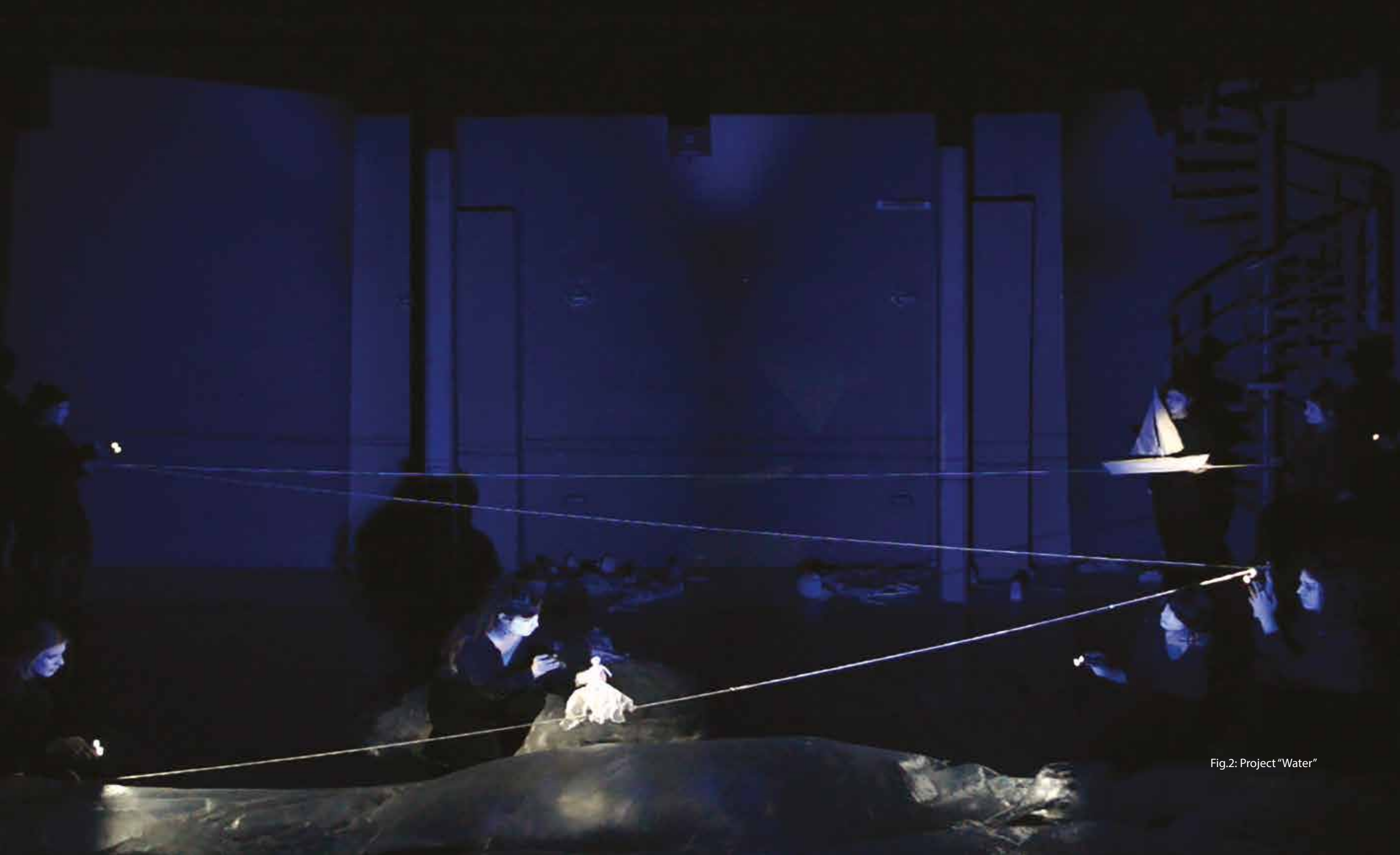


Fig.2: Project "Water"

The puppet as an object and a role

The course “Puppets and Masks” has been taught for more than fifteen years and focuses on puppet-making, as well as the study of its movement, which is explored through improvisations that often aim or result in the creation of short or lengthier performances using scripts of the students themselves or pre-existing, mainly theatrical, texts. For Olympia Sideridou, the course’s lecturer, making the puppet and its movement do not occur in two different phases, where one precedes and the other follows. She stresses that the choices of the crafting contain decisions about the puppet’s kinetic possibilities. “It needs to be clear: the person making the puppet from the early stages is the one who chooses its movement, because they are in total contact with what they are making. Holding it in their hands, they understand the movements and decide at the same time how to make it and what this puppet’s, this object’s, possibilities will be.”¹ In this context, the crafting guides the movement and the trials with the movement serve to enlighten the puppet-making process.

Often, if not most of the time, the maker is also the puppet handler, who, according to Antigoni Paroussi, thinks and acts in this dual situation, as “actor and non-actor simultaneously”, as by animating the puppet she/he presents her/his intentions onstage (Paroussi, 2012: 27). This inseparable unity of animator and puppet also constitutes, ultimately, the structural difference of puppet theatre with other types of spectacle, as it places the actor on stage, the animator and the puppet in a constant “collaboration” that is also an interdependence and this not only at the preparation stage, but also during the artistic undertaking itself. The students themselves animate the puppets they make, with a view to acquiring a complete experience of a puppet theatre performance. It is important, stresses O. Sideridou, for students to have “the opportunity to experience what it is like to animate on stage a puppet, whether it be a small or a large one, perhaps twice their height, and see the difficulties that can arise: how light it needs to be, how stable, how expressive.” Being confronted with the challenges involved in animation can enhance their skills both as puppet-makers and as animators.

In this context, where the goal is learning through practice, the students in groups, in pairs or individually, are invited to improvise around a subject or based on the existing puppets in order to create an, even rudimentary, type of text, script or action condition. In other cases, a drama text is handed out to act

¹ The extracts are original statements by Olympia Sideridou when interviewed for the purposes of this text.

as a context and to map out a field of creation for the participants’ team- and/or individual work. It is important that, whichever the case, this be “in its entirety, a possibly small yet complete theatrical study: from the elaboration of the play’s subject and script through to the ‘building’ of the theatre stage” and is presented to the other members of the group or even in public (Paroussi, 2019: 22). Except for this specific course, the presence of the puppet is evident in the scenography orientation’s other courses, as well as in the students’ dissertations. In some cases, the emphasis is entirely artistic, while often narration and performative representation gain ground, as in the case of the artistic rendering of Goethe’s fairy tale “The Green Snake”. Finally, there is the case of cooperation between the lecturers of scenography-related courses in order to support and create a more demanding artistic performance.

A typical example of this is the show “Water”, created under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Apostolos Vettas and presented both at the Venice Open Stage 2015 and the Prague Quadrennial of the same year, among other festivals. It is a performance about the birth of the water world based on a text written by the students with influences from Greek mythology and ancient drama. The performance recounts the story of a mermaid, who lures a sailor into the depths and keeps him beside her forever. In order to create this show, experiments and improvisations were carried out for the creation of the characters-puppets and finding the appropriate technique for each of them. In the deep-sea scene, puppet-creatures appeared in turn, handheld, on sticks and on rods, while the costumes were transformed into scenery and screens for the shadow play.

The puppet as a pedagogical vehicle

In the theatre pedagogy classes, puppet- and shadow-theatre are presented both in the form of a complete puppet show and as individual techniques, which can be used in any of the nursery or primary school’s curriculum lessons. They can also be included in the context of another application of theatre in education, such as, for instance, theatrical play or educational drama.

However, the students know that in the theatre pedagogy environment the making part remains active but is not primordial, as the puppet constitutes a unique opportunity of expression for their future pupils or workshop participants (Lenakakis & Loula, 2014). For this reason, animation does not only concern the (artistically-made) puppet, but any object that acquires, or can acquire, life in





Fig.3: Project "Water"

children's imaginations. Indeed, the term object theatre is often encountered and designates precisely this freedom that is given, through puppet theatre, in the educational environment.

Another important convention of the puppet-theatre approach in the curriculum's theatre pedagogy courses is the knowledge that what is taught to the students each time is a knowledge-learning process, which they, in turn, need to transmit to their pupils or which they need to be capable of using to teach something in the classrooms where the applications will take place.

When implementing puppet theatre in the educational process, many common features with other forms of theatrical expression in education can be identified and which focus on both the educational process and the targeted skills. These include cooperation and teamwork, playful/exploratory learning, aesthetic cultivation, multimodal expression and learning, as well as privileged communication between teachers and learners.

The preparation of a short puppet or shadow theatre presentation is similar to the preparation/rehearsal process for a short act of theatrical improvisation or for an educational drama technique, such as the frozen image, hotseat, etc. The participants are divided into groups whose members are asked to suggest ideas, to negotiate, make decisions, to co-create and reach a shared outcome. During this collaborative creation and learning, the pupils have the opportunity to improve their communication with each other and develop the skills that any creative synergy requires (Paroussi, 2012: 132), as well as to understand the importance of integrating different ideas, both when they emerge within the group itself or when they are proposed by the other participants/ spectators after the presentation, during the period of reflection or feedback about it (Paroussi, 2019).

While they are cooperating, the pupils engage in a playful and, at the same time, exploratory activity, in which they improvise with respect to materials, the subject, their group's perspective on it, the choice of the most appropriate technique and the final presentation (Paroussi, 2019). Thus they learn by trying out, they learn by doing in the way that the true researcher carries out her/his work (Avgitidou, 2001, cited in Lenakakis & Loula, 2014: 1070). Here learning is not exclusively about how to make or form, but extends into the world of the puppet they animate or the characters they embody, overcoming mental or other limitations related to the closed shell of their subjectivity in order to

understand themselves and other people (Lenakakis & Loula, 2014).

Lastly, another essential similarity between theatre in education and puppet theatre lies in the reversal of the traditional relationship between teacher and learner. In the theatre pedagogy workshop, the teacher usually acts as a coordinator of the educational process, during which she/he provides stimuli, guides the teamwork and mediates between the group doing a presentation and the public, so that there is an informed decoding of each presentation and a meaningful feedback on it. At the same time, the theatre educator has at her/his disposal techniques allowing her/him to enter the symbolic/imaginary world and participate in it on equal terms with her/his pupils. A typical example is the "teacher in role" technique, whereby the teacher assumes a role and takes part in a group improvisation or a scene. The teacher has the possibility of choosing roles of equal or lower status of those of her/his pupils, so as to ensure a more equitable, spontaneous and, in all probability, authentic communication with her/his pupils.

One could argue that the teacher/puppet-animator is in an even more privileged position to achieve this more authentic/spontaneous communication because of the puppet, which mediates the interaction between the teacher and the pupil. The use of the puppet in a leading role has the potential to outshine the presence of the teacher, allowing her/him to penetrate into the children's inner world and nurture an autonomous relationship between the children and the puppet, which ultimately promotes freedom and creativity (Lenakakis & Loula, 2014). It is no coincidence that in the adult world, too, "puppet theatre was used to say the things people were unable to say, even as actors on a stage" through the puppet becoming autonomous and the living relationship it creates with its audience (Paroussi, 2012: 29). This possibility is enhanced in the child's world, where puppets are often able not only to communicate more freely than their animators, but also to surpass their physical abilities. They can, for example, fly, change environment and acquire a range of properties as they ensue from children's imaginations.

In order to achieve this more spontaneous and independent communication with children in the first grades of primary school, the puppet was included in some theatre pedagogy curricula, which were designed within the framework of the "Theatre at School" course and implemented in primary schools in the wider area of the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Perhaps the most characteristic example



is the use of puppet theatre in a lesson on healthy eating based on the story "The Golden Pip" by Panayiotis Dimitropoulos. The story deals with the issue of healthy eating through the story of a girl who, while hating fruits and vegetables, comes to love them when she sees how bad it is for her health to exclude them from her diet. From the very beginning, the group of students searched for a way to talk about the beneficial properties of fruit, while at the same time trying to avoid didactic attitudes or trite approaches to the topic. In this context, the fruit, in the form of flat puppets whose movement is provided by wooden rods, took action on their own, either to assert their "rights" in the eating habits of the young heroine Agni or to organise deliberations and devise action plans. The fruit-puppets met the children, discussed with them ways for them to enter the life Agni (the book's heroine), followed their instructions, such as, for instance, appearing in the form of a cake, and had an authentic collaboration with them. This kind of self-determination of the "characters" and their communication with the children encouraged the pupils' enthusiastic participation in all three grades of the primary schools where the lesson was conducted, and enabled the children to hear the arguments in favour of a healthy diet from the interested parties themselves.

Instead of a conclusion

Through the presentation of the two courses of the School of Drama that refer to puppet theatre, we can see that the first course, which concerns the "place of the puppet" in theatre scenography, attempts a gradual shift from the puppet as a crafted object to the puppet as a composition of crafted object and movement with respect to its role and the overall framework/scenario. Here we consider that the central unifying idea is "animation". An idea that refers to a crafted object, which cannot be separated from its handler and in all probability maker, nor from the "form of life" it represents in the overall theatrical production (Wittgenstein, 2001). This idea, that of animation, seems to also constitute the bridge that transposes puppet theatre applications to education, in two ways. Two ways which to some extent collide by coexisting. From the children's point of view (mainly the little ones), the animation of inanimate objects, including puppets, is a familiar activity in the context of their symbolic play. It is therefore a bridge to their existing abilities, which, however, the educational process usually attempts to manipulate, at least symbolically (Makrynioti, 1997). This manipulation is in line with the more general objectives of the educational reproduction of well-known

social and cultural forms of life, which the children have not experienced yet but are called upon to appropriate, so as to be able to experience them with increased chances of success in the future. In other words, there is a creative mediation between children's existing experiences and the knowledge to come. In this way, school knowledge is incorporated into an existing axis and ultimately acquires meaning directly through its integration into it. And it is here that we encounter the second way of bridging that the animation of inanimate objects proposed by puppet theatre can achieve, if it manages to avoid the unidimensional use of the object/puppet and the exclusive use of the puppet as a teaching tool rather than as a means of artistic expression. In this context, the teacher is called upon to recognise the tension created between the freedom that the child's natural tendency to animate lifeless objects creates based on scenarios its imagination comes up with and the manipulation promoted by the projection of models through the objects/puppets animated by the teacher.

The issue is resolved by the teacher's effort to avoid didacticism or trite approaches to her/his subject matter. We believe that this is the second important effort, after the effort of animation, that should pervade the teaching activities of a balanced educational process.



Fig. 4, 5: "The Green Snake"

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Lila Karakosta (Professor of Set Design) and Olympia Sideridou (Set Designer) for their contribution to the article.

Fig. 1, 2, & 3 are from the "Water" project under the supervision of Apostolos Vetta (Professor Emeritus of Set Design - Costume) and the photos are by Dimitris Mugou.

Fig. 4, 5 are from Christina Thalassa's thesis "The Green Snake" supervised by Lila Karakosta.

References

Avgitidou, S. (2001). Το παιχνίδι: Σύγχρονες ερμηνευτικές και διδακτικές προσεγγίσεις [Play. Contemporary interpretations and pedagogical approaches]. Athens: Typothito.

Lenakakis, A., & Loula, M. (2014). Κουκλοθέατρο και δημιουργικότητα. Μια ερευνητική προσέγγιση [Puppet theatre and creativity. A research approach]. In K. Sarafidou (Ed.), Δημιουργικότητα στην εκπαίδευση. Πρακτικά 5ου Πανελληνίου Συνεδρίου Εταιρείας Επιστημών Αγωγής Δράμας [Creativity in education. Proceedings of the 5th Panhellenic Conference of the Society of Education Sciences of Drama] (1069-1081). Drama: SESD. <http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/267009/files/kouklo8eatro.pdf>

Makrynioti, D. (Ed.) (1997). Παιδική ηλικία [Childhood]. Athens: Nissos.

Paroussi, A. (2012). Κουκλοθέατρο στην εκπαίδευση. Εκπαίδευση στο κουκλοθέατρο. [Puppet theatre in education. Education in puppet theatre]. Athens: Plethron.

Paroussi, A. (2019). Μετασχηματισμοί των χάρτινων θεάτρων: από την παράδοση στην εκπαίδευση εκπαιδευτικών [Transformations of paper theatres: from tradition to teacher education]. *Ekpaidefsi & Théâtre*, 20, 20-29.

Wittgenstein, L. (2001). Philosophical investigations: The German text, with a revised English translation (50th anniversary commemorative edition), (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trns.). New Jersey, USA: Wiley-Blackwell.



Myrto Pigkou-Repoussi

is assistant professor of Theatre in Education at the School of Drama of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her lectures and research interests centre on applied drama in formal and non-formal education and on the transfer of contemporary performative arts' practices to different social and educational environments. She holds a B.A. in Theatre (London Metropolitan University, 2006), a first-class honours M.A. in Drama and Theatre Education (University of Warwick, 2007) and a Ph.D. on "Ensemble Theatre and Citizenship Education" (2012) from the same university. Since 2014 she has been collaborating as a researcher at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in various international programmes, such as "Youth, Theatre, Radical Hope and the Ethical Imaginary" (2014-2018) and "Global Youth (Digital) Citizen-Artists and their Publics: Performing for Socio-Ecological Justice" (2019-2023). Previously, she had collaborated in training programmes with Unicef and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the UNHCR, the Centre for Intercultural Education (KEDA) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Panhellenic Network for Theatre in Education and the Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Attica.



Fig.5: Scotch tape improvisations

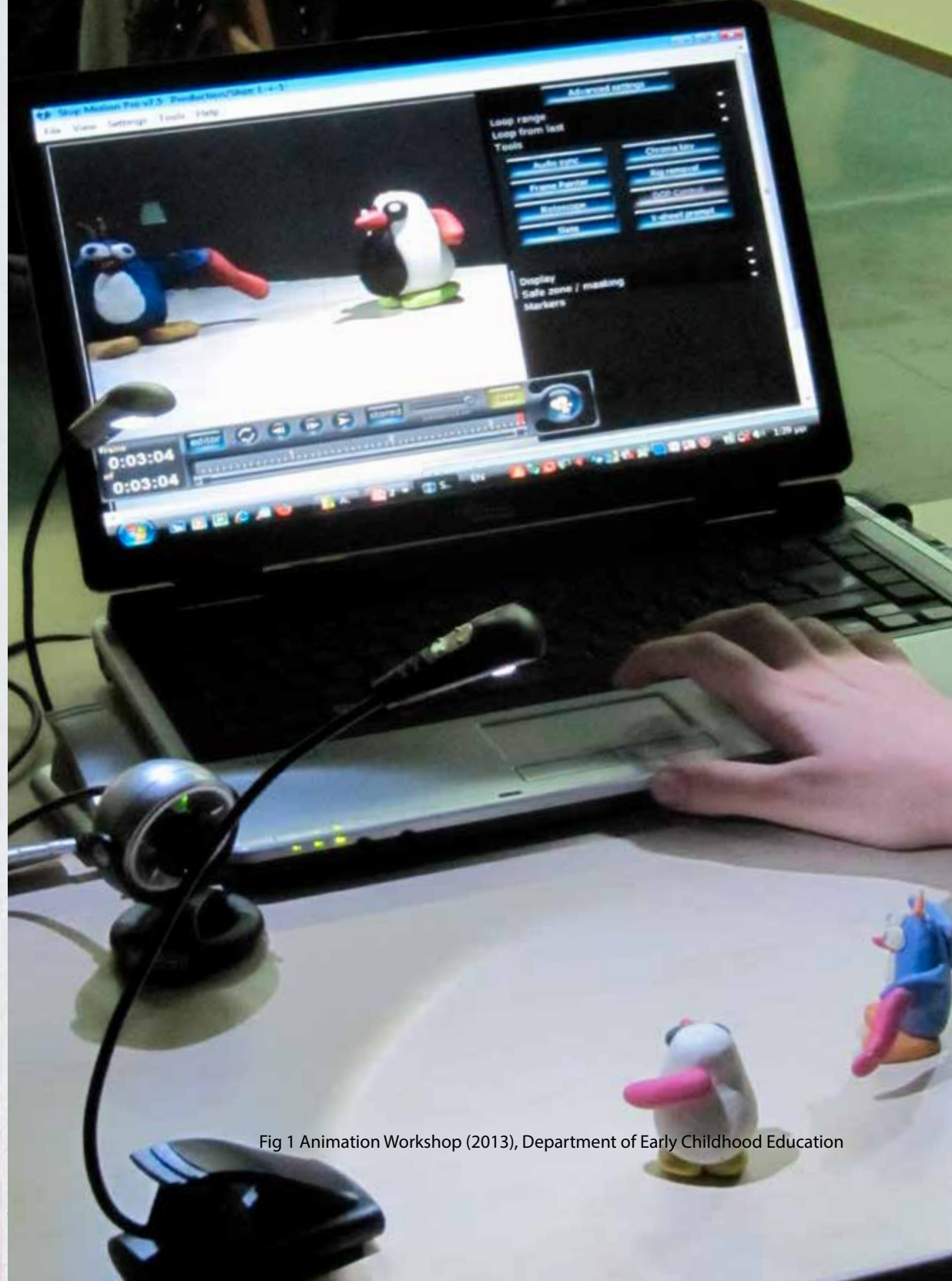


Fig 1 Animation Workshop (2013), Department of Early Childhood Education

The puppet as an “animated” audiovisual text in school Pavlos Valsamidis

Abstract

Puppet theatre is one of the oldest forms of art. The puppet, the core of puppetry, which was once made of paper, plasticine, cloth, very quickly moved to the new medium of the 20th century: film. It became the basis of animation films, once again conquering the children’s public. Now that children come into contact from a very young age with the fast-paced images of videogames, videos on the Internet, movies at the cinema, can the puppet be a springboard for audiovisual activities in the school classroom? Should this be possible, what educational goals spring from it?

Keywords: Audiovisual education, stop motion, animation film, holistic constructionist approach.

Animation films

The term animation refers to that particular kind of audiovisual “texts” (movie film, videogame, video), where the rapid projection of a series of images gives the viewer the illusion of movement of inanimate objects or drawings (Vassiliadis, 2016: 16). Like the cinematographic phenomenon, it is based on the “afterimage”, i.e., on the weakness of the human eye, which retains the image of the objective world on the retina for 1/18sec after the cessation of the cause that gave the image (Dizikirikis, 1985: 12). In this way, if its differentiation is slight, the image that pre-exists with the image that follows is perceived in the mind as a continuous motion. And it is precisely the animator’s art to be able to set up the material in such a way that the viewer believes that something inanimate moved (Purves, 2008: 9-10).

Vassiliadis (2016) argues that the most important differentiation of animated films compared to live-action films is that they do not seek to offer a faithful representation of reality but, rather, its subjective transmutation (p. 16). In animation creations, natural laws are abolished, the imagination is set free breaking the ontological realism/imagination framework (Valoukos, 2003: 223).

Among the techniques of animation films and the materials they use, we note the classic animated cartoon, cut-out papers/figures, pixilation¹, the recent digital 3D animation and the traditional 3D animated puppets with the stop motion technique, which we will focus on below (Vassiliadis 2016, 16).

¹ A technique in which motionless actors are photographed with stop motion and take the place of the puppet.

“Stop Motion”, an oxymoronic term

The technique of puppet movement² in cinema and other forms of animation is realised with stop motion, i.e. the –oxymoronic– stop of movement. The term refers to the successive photographing of a motionless object, which we intervene on through a slight shift. In the end, the set of still photographs at the right projection speed gives the impression of movement (Purves, 2008: 9).

It is worth noting that to create one second of motion of the inanimate puppet it is necessary to create 24 separate unique poses. For a 90-minute film, 130,000 unique poses need to be created (Giesen, 2019: 95). Today, the evolution of this traditional technique has reached photorealistic perfection through 3D digital animation (Giesen, 2019: xv).

For the animator/creator, as for the puppeteer, the puppet was and is the material embodiment of their idea. With their hands they “mould” the imaginary form of the story’s hero, give it a corresponding material substance and then movement. Many creators point out that, whether made of plasticine, wood, cloth or paper, the puppet is an extension of their own soul (Giesen, 2019: 1-2). It is worth mentioning here the pioneers of the genre, both abroad and in Greece.

A brief overview

The first recorded feature-length animated film with puppets, in this case cut-outs of paper figures, is *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* [Lotte Reiniger, 1926]. The creator’s technique was simple. The paper figures were articulated –they had wire joints– and were photographed frame by frame with minimal displacement. The background and the scenery were also made of paper, so as to ensure a stylistic unity, while the lighting played an important role. In fact, her figures influenced great directors of German expressionist cinema, such as Lange and Murnau (Giesen, 2019: 6-9).

In Britain, the first to launch himself into animation was Arthur Melbourne-Cooper. Many consider him to be the equal of Georges Méliès, because he enriched his films with various visual tricks. Animation was one of these and, in fact, in the early 20th century films using stop-motion were called “trick films” (Giesen, 2019: 11). It is worth mentioning the short film *Dreams of Toyland* [Arthur Melbourne-Cooper, 1908], in which we have a combination of live-action actors and the hero, asleep, dreaming that his toys have come to life.

² We are referring to puppets made of plasticine or plastic and not to muppet-show type glove-puppets.

For his part, Ladislav Starevich is also known as the alchemist of puppet-animated films, as he experimented with a variety of materials, even dead insects! From Russia he fled to France and created a rich body of work in which his films are distinguished both for their innovation and their social concerns. Indeed, his version of the classic *The Tale of the Fox* [1937] is considered by critics as being far better than the one by Disney in terms of lyricism and the liveliness of its motion (Giesen, 2019: 14).

After the end of the Second World War, and despite Disney in the United States being identified with animated cartoons, the core of puppet animation was to be found in what was then Czechoslovakia. Creators such as Hermína Týrlová and, later, her trainee Karel Zeman experimented with the possibilities of puppet animation in complex aesthetic creations influenced by the post-war climate of the time (Giesen, 2019: 39-41).

When, in the 1960s and 1970s, people like Ray Harryhausen and Gerry Anderson used either puppet movement as an effect for live-action movies such as *Jason and the Argonauts*, where skeleton warrior-puppets fight the protagonists with swords [Don Chaffey in collaboration with Ray Harryhausen, 1963], or marionettes as heroes in television series such as *Stingray* [Gerry Anderson, 1963-64] and *Thunderbirds* [Gerry Anderson, 1964-66], puppet animation reaches perfection and is accepted by all of the spectators (Giesen, 2019: 56-57). In the decades that follow we have, as already mentioned, a transition to digital 3D animation, where the effect is entirely computer-generated; however, many creators, such as for example Henry Selick –with *The Nightmare Before Christmas* [1993] and *Coraline* [2009]– uphold the old tradition (Giesen, 2019).

In Greece...

The audiovisual animation texts in Greece never became film productions that prospered financially but were, rather, isolated efforts of creators who, using the time-consuming method of animation, cleverly tried to savage the political situation of their time. It is no coincidence that, for many decades, there were no creations exclusively targeted at children’s audiences and were mainly short films (Rouvas, 2016: 28).

In Greece, the first attempt at stop-motion with puppets would appear very tardily compared to other countries. It was a short interstitial fantasy sequence, directed by Yiorgos Dizikirikis for the needs of the film *Marriage... Greek Style* [Vassilis Georgiadis, 1964]; Christos Diatsinis would follow a few years later with



A Friend from Outer Space [1967], a film in colour (Rouvas, 2016: 30). These attempts would not meet with wide appeal in Greek cinema and, furthermore, the production companies of the time were turning to other genres for financial gains (Rouvas, 2016).

In the mid-1960s, the puppet finds fertile ground on Greek television frequencies. Barba Mytousis (Uncle Bignose) was the first Greek children's programme where the main characters were puppets made by the Athens Puppet Theatre of Eleni Theochari-Petraki (Rouvas, 2016).

In the 1970s, creators of short films appear who would later influence and develop the Greek production of animated films, such as Stratos Stassinis with Peripatos (Promenade) [Stassinis, 1979], or Markos Holevas and Stella Tsikra with their first Claymation creation (a puppet made of plasticine) 5684 kinimatografika karé (5,684 film frames) (Rouvas, 2016: 32-36), and others.

The 1980s improved technical excellence. On television, the puppets of Lakis Apostolidis attracted attention through series such as Kapos Kapou Kapote (Somehow, Somewhere, Sometime), or thanks to his collaboration with Manoussos Manoussakis in Kalikantzaroi (Goblins) [Manoussakis, 1985]. At the same time, new creators would leave their mark, such as the Sofianos family with the now classic adaptation of Eugene Trivizas' Fruitopia, but also the series Tou koutiou ta paramythia (The Box's Stories) (Rouvas, 2016: 46). At the same time, the Karaghiozis of Spatharis and, later on, of Spiropoulos maintain the historical continuity of shadow theatre through video performances.

The decade of the 1990s in Greece marks a new period for animation, as European programmes like "Cartoon" lay the foundations for co-productions and the establishment of production companies in Greece exclusively for animation films, mainly animated cartoons. Creations such as cartoonist Arkas' O issovitis (The Lifer) for state television, but also the political satire Psarokostoula, agapi mou (Psarokostoula, my love) for private television, are typical examples of the use of puppets (Rouvas, 2016: 48-60).

The new millennium would find Greece in full swing in the field of animation films, which would last until the years of crisis. The new technologies help a new generation of filmmakers to express themselves through the use of the puppet, usually in their attempts of short films. Among others, it is worth mentioning Kleopatra Korai who creates with puppets made of plasticene, Katerina Athanassopoulou, Sofia Papachristou with the Story of Stolen Time

[Papachristou, 2009] and the younger ones, Stelios Polychronakis with The Village [Polychronakis, 2010] and Efi Pappa with My Stuffed Granny [Pappa, 2014], who have won awards and prizes (Rouvas, 2016: 70-80). Despite the economic crisis affecting production, the creators keep on trying and continue against all odds.

Puppet and education

From the first performances of "Chinese shadows", the shows of the Far East with figures made out of animal skins (Foley & Reusch, 2009) and those with articulated wooden dolls, the "neurospasta" in Ancient Greece and Byzantium, a universal art inherent to human evolution through time is documented, that of puppet theatre (Argyriadou, 1991: 268). It stems from humankind's need to represent the divine in its everyday life and to entertain/redeem itself, through effigies, in the face of death. The puppet, whether a figure of shadow theatre, a marionette or a glove-puppet, won over both East and West and, beyond the adult audience, won the hearts of young spectators (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 43).

Young spectators are thirsty for puppet theatre performances, as they are transported to imaginary worlds with heroes that are animated inanimate objects, full of light, colour, movement. In Greece, Karaghiozis from the East and Fassoulis from the West were a source of entertainment for children –and not only– as of the late 19th century. The relationship between puppets and childhood is particularly important and this explains the historical ties between puppet theatre and Greek preschool education (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 47-98).

The manipulator of the puppet gives life to an inanimate object and in this way "moulds" a character with a story, a particular voice and at the same time builds an imaginary world to surround the puppet in its effort to communicate with its public through aesthetically-achieved actions (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 41). Over and above other details of puppet theatre, the most essential one affecting preschool education is the fact that the puppet's animator "disappears" into it throughout the performance. The protagonist is the puppet. It is the carrier of the action. The performance is a magical moment, when all eyes are focused on the puppet-hero, with whom the children identify and empathise seeking redemption. The animator is present yet absent, hidden behind the backdrop (Paroussi, 2012).

By analogy, the puppet in the classroom functions as a mask, an alter ego



through which the child can express itself while “playing it safe” and come into contact with situations and concerns (Gersak et al., 2012). Like the artist-animator, the schoolchild builds a different identity for the puppet, in which it hides elements of itself. We could say that the puppet constitutes a bridge between the externalisation of the child’s innermost thoughts and its internalisation of the external world, which often arouses its interest but it is unable to fully understand (Rogers & Evans, 2008: 22). In any case, the puppet contributes to the children’s meaningful socio-emotional development (Gersak et al., 2012).

The puppet in the classroom as an artistic activity breaks with the traditional forms of education and becomes an act of creation. The pupils involved collaborate and participate as a group. Concerns originating from the “outside” world become a springboard for building imaginary worlds where the hero-puppets will live (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019).

On a practical level, the pupils record their thoughts and create the script. After this, they take on roles and get involved with materials (e.g. for making the puppet or the props), reflect, experiment, find solutions together (e.g. about the music) and acquire knowledge experientially. The experience of the performance itself gives them the opportunity to express themselves, overcome their own fears and communicate, transforming thoughts and messages into action (Kroger & Nuponnen, 2019; Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 196).

Puppet theatre in the classroom is a holistic constructionist approach, where knowledge is built through action, through discovery and problem-solving. Maintaining the oldest cultural tradition of human existence unchanged, the young pupils become creators and builders of a world where the puppet explicitly or implicitly raises concerns and seeks redemption during the magical hour of the performance (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 33).

At this point, the question arises: given the contemporary omnipotence of the image thanks to television, cinema, videogames and even smartphones, how can the puppet in the classroom maintain its relationship with the pupil? How can the unique moment of the performance be combined with the image and become a fertile step in artistic creation and social reflection?

Audiovisual education

Children come into contact with images from a very early age. From the age of three, in addition to their mother tongue, they also understand the language of pictures. They may not yet be able to distinguish between what is real and

what is imaginary in all they see, but they are able to follow the development of a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. In the 21st century, cinema and television, in combination with videogames and games on mobile phones, are their first cultural experience (Primary Education Working Group, 2003, 3).

Through an informal literacy, the daily, non-systematic contact with images makes children capable of recognising images even before entering formal education (Koutsogiannis, 2011: 43). Buckingham (1990) maintains that the child entering the school classroom for the first time has already developed a high level of knowledge about cinema and television. It becomes acquainted with a particular kind of texts, “multimodal” texts, which combine images (static or moving), sounds, colour, written text and are the springboard for a “new visual literacy” based on the dominant power of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010: 64). Systematic education in this new reality is more necessary than ever and is defined by the term “audiovisual education”. Menis Theodoridis (2017) argues that this corresponds to “the educational process that aims to cultivate pupils’ ‘audiovisual consciousness’, i.e., to familiarise children with all forms of audiovisual expression” (p. 14). “Audiovisual texts”, such as films and television programmes, etc., are among the forms of audiovisual expression.

Audiovisual education is important in the school classroom as well. It helps reduce the number of visually illiterate children, since not everyone has access with the same frequency to the same audiovisual stimuli, such as watching movie films or television programmes. At the same time, it promotes the systematic cultivation of both “reading” activities of audiovisual texts (e.g. comprehension, analysis and critical attitude towards watching a film) and “writing” activities (i.e. becoming familiar with audiovisual tools, such as script, camera, cutting, montage) and the creation of their own audiovisual texts in which they record their thoughts (the pupil as creator) (Fransecky & Debes, 1972: 7; Theodoridis, 2013: 40-48).

The young pupils’ active involvement in “reading” and “writing” activities is the principal objective (Biljeska, 2012). It is precisely this active learning that constitutes the central pedagogical axis of the exercise. The pupils show initiative, act, discover and acquire knowledge through experienced situations. They learn to be thinking media consumers and to appreciate the aesthetic pleasure derived from them. They learn about everyday problems, take on roles, find solutions and record their thoughts through audiovisual creations, while



slowly-slowly morphing into an active citizen (Buckingham, 2000: 3-9). Teamwork, critical thinking and social reflection become innovative creative expressions in the classroom that combine image, sound, colour, motion (Livingstone & Van der Graaf, 2010).

In school, "reading" activities concerning short films can become a springboard for interdisciplinary activities that involve the pupils in a process of deconstruction of audiovisual texts and a critical analysis of what they have watched (Who is the hero? What does he want? What befalls him? What do you think of the ending?), while at the same time short audiovisual writing creations can become a multilevel, appealing tool of learning and artistic creation.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the curricula in force in Greece do not, per se, leave any space for the systematic cultivation of audiovisual education. Even the vision of the "New School" that was enthusiastically presented in 2011 was never implemented. We hope that very soon something like this will become an applicable action in the field of Greek education.

Audiovisual animation texts in school

In the everyday life of Greek school, finally, is it feasible for young pupils to create their own audiovisual texts with puppet heroes using the stop motion technique? Also, what is the essential pedagogical dimension of such an activity?

Regarding the first question we can answer that it is feasible. As far as the material logistics are concerned, for an exercise such as this to succeed nothing more is needed than the materials available in the classroom, e.g. plasticine, paper, a camera or a mobile phone, a fixed light and a computer with software such as, for instance, Movie Maker. The pupils' involvement in an innovative and complex activity of this nature contributes to their all-round development (Buckingham, 1998). The young pupils come into contact with and discover the "secrets", the codes of the two art forms: cinema and puppet theatre. They embrace those elements that enable them to express themselves and record their thoughts and experiment.

In the beginning was the Word

The pupils work as a team to write the script. Audiovisual education is involved in all of the cognitive objects of the curriculum (Theodoridis, 2013: 46). The children start off with problems they themselves are concerned about in school life or with topics elaborated by the teachers and focus on the one that interests

them. They compose their story with a beginning, middle and end and build the main characters. In this way the pupils are encouraged to speak, to narrate, to express and record experiences, and to accept the opinion of their classmates. Luke (1998) stresses that dialogue, disagreement and the choice of one or the other opinion is the fertile ground which will support audiovisual education.

Preparation stage

Once the script finalised and the decision made as to whether it will contain dialogue or just music, the children will familiarise themselves with the sizes of film shots and their meaning, e.g. a close-up stresses/emphasises something. They will repeat the story through storyboards, in other words small sketches in the form of a guide on how they will record the story visually in the end result. The pupils go into action, discover the importance of visual communication. They understand that the image goes from "showing" to "writing"/recounting their story (Skarpelos, 2011: 12). Which scene will be first and why? Which frame advances the development of the story?

Then they move on to making the puppet and the sets. They separate into smaller groups and take on roles. They come into contact with and get to know a variety of materials, they try out, measure and co-decide the form of the puppet-hero and the imaginary scenic world that surrounds it. The puppeteer's primeval passion to make the most representative puppet-hero out of the material at hand is revived as a creative activity in the school classroom.

Lastly, they discuss the soundtrack of their audiovisual text. Which music best fits their story? What sounds is it essential to have in order to bring to life the action of the story they will capture? They record. They act on their own. They experiment with the musical instruments in the classroom or they suggest pieces of music they have heard.

Filming stage

They take on new roles. Who will take photographs? Who will take care of changing the puppets' positions so as to achieve a sense of movement? Who will help and record the appropriate shots? Although a time-consuming process, it is nonetheless highly entertaining and stimulating and turns the class into a group whose members complement each other. Theodoridis (2009) argues that the creation of an audiovisual animation text in school is a "controlled construction" (p. 11).

Indeed, unlike a live-action film with actors and outdoor filming, the



animation film, which essentially requires the studio/classroom and the puppets, is completely controlled, especially by young children. Additionally, the audiovisual result is not entangled in the bureaucratic obstacles of ethical rules, such as special parental permission in order to show the children's faces.

Post-production stage/editing

All the photographs taken with the help of a computer are placed one after the other and give a sense of movement "bringing to life" the puppet. The sounds that were chosen are tried out to see if they suit the image. If not, they try out others. The puppet theatre is reinvented through the moving images. The first projection follows. The story's initial message is evaluated against the final outcome produced by the pupils themselves. Did they achieve their goal? What would they change? An attempt is then made, either through festivals or online, to communicate their creation to other audiences.

Also, the pupils grasp a key difference between puppet theatre and cinema. In the puppet theatre performance, the puppet's life lasts as long as the show and ends with the "final curtain". On the contrary, the audiovisual text produced can be repeated again and again. The puppet-hero "comes alive" forever.

The role of the school teacher

The school teacher should act as the activity's animator and at the same time organise the space appropriately, so as to allow the pupils to act on their own. An atmosphere of trust and cooperation is necessary, where the young pupils can express themselves and create. Taking the above into account, we believe that it is not necessary to have an external collaborator during these activities, as this alters the pedagogical relationship between teacher and pupil. The objective is not for pupils to become directors, but to discover an innovative έκφρασης (Διαμαντάκη et al., 2001, σ. 16).

Afterword/Conclusions

The strong relationship between puppet theatre, puppets and childhood is historically documented. The puppet is an integral part of the school classroom and the artistic activities that stem from it contribute to the all-round development of young children. Nowadays, however, small children are attracted by the images they come across in their everyday life and show signs of an emerging visual literacy even before they go to school.

The videogames, movie films and videos on the Internet are audiovisual

texts that pique their interest. In this context, the traditional puppet in the classroom can be transformed into an audiovisual text made by the children themselves. It will be an artistic act and an educational strategy where pupils will learn experientially the art of both puppet theatre and cinema, expressing and reflecting their personal concerns in images of a world they have literally and metaphorically created themselves.

References

- Argyriadou, M. (1991). Η κούκλα στην αρχαία Ελλάδα [The puppet in Ancient Greece]. Athens: Bratziotis.
- Biljeska, U. (2012). Critical insights in the European Media Literacy: Research and Policy. *Media Studies*, 16(6), 5.
- Buckingham, D. (1998). *Teaching popular culture: Beyond radical pedagogy*. London: University College London
- Buckingham, D. (1990). Making it explicit: Towards a theory of media learning. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Watching media learning: Making sense of media education* (pp. 215-230). London: Falmer Press.
- Buckingham, D. (2000). *After the death of childhood: growing up in the age of electronic media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Diamantaki, K., Davou, M., & Panoussis, G. (2001). Νέες τεχνολογίες και παλαιοί φόβοι στο σχολείο [New technologies and old fears in school]. Athens: Papazissis.
- Dizikirikis, G. (1985). Λεξικό αισθητικών και τεχνικών όρων του κινηματογράφου [Dictionary of aesthetic and technical terms of cinema] (Vol. II). Athens: Aigokeros.
- Foley, K., & Reusch, R. (2009). Ombres (Theatre d'). In H. Jurkowski & T. Foulc (Eds.), *Encyclopedie mondiale des arts de la marionnette* (pp. 508-515). Montpellier: UNIMA L'Entretemps.
- Fransecky, R., & Debes, J. (1972). *Visual literacy: A way to learn a way to teach*. Washington: A.E.C.T.
- Gersak, V., Korosek, H., Majaron, E., & Turnsek, N. (2012). *Promoting the social emotional aspects of education: A multi-faceted priority*. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana - Faculty of Education.
- Giesen, R. (2019). *Puppetry, puppet animation and the digital age*. Boca Raton FL: CRC press Taylor & Francis Group.
- Koutsogiannis, D. (2011). Εφηβικές πρακτικές ψηφιακού γραμματισμού και ταυτότητες [Adolescents' digital literacy practices and identities]. Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language.



Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2010). Η ανάγνωση των εικόνων. Η γραμματική του οπτικού σχεδιασμού [Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design]. (Ph. Papadimitriou, Ed.; G. Kourmentala, Trans.; Original publication 1996). Athens: Epikentro.

Kroger, T., & Nuponnen, A. (2019, March). Puppet as a pedagogical tool: A literature review. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 11(4), 393-401. doi:10.26822/iejee.2019450797

Lenakakis, A. & Paroussi, A. (2019). Η τέχνη του κουκλοθέατρου στην εκπαίδευση. Παιχνίδι συγκλίσεων και αποκλίσεων [The art of puppet theatre in education. A game of convergences and divergences]. Athens: Gutenberg.

Livingstone, S., & Van der Graaf, S. (2010). Media literacy. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of communication*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Luke, C. (1998). Pedagogy and authority: Lessons from feminist and cultural studies Postmodernism and feminist pedagogy. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Teaching popular culture: Beyond radical pedagogy* (pp. 18-41). London: U.C.L.A.

Paroussi, A. (2012). Κουκλοθέατρο στην εκπαίδευση. Εκπαίδευση στο κουκλοθέατρο [Puppet theatre in education. Education in puppet theatre]. Athens: Plethron.

Primary Education Working Group (2003). *Look again. A teaching guide to using film and television with three to eleven years old*. London: B.F.I.

Purves, B. (2008). *Stop motion: Passion, process and performance*. Oxford: Focal Press.

Rogers, S., & Evans, J. (2008). *Inside role play in early education: Researching children's perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Rouvas, A. (2016). Ελληνικό κινούμενο σχέδιο 1945-2015: 70 χρόνια δημιουργίας [Greek animated cartoons 1945-2015: 70 years of creation]. In P.

Kyriakoulakos, A. Papadaniil & A. Rouvas (Eds.), *70 χρόνια δημιουργίας ελληνικών κινουμένων σχεδίων [70 years of creation of Greek animated cartoons]* (28-136). Athens: Asifa Hellas.

Skarpelos, G. (2011). *Εικόνα και κοινωνία [Image and society]*. Athens: Topos.

Theodoridis, M. (2009). Κινηματογράφος και παιδί. Μια απόπειρα χαρτογράφησης του χώρου [Cinema and child. An attempt at mapping the field]. *Ερευνώντας τον Κόσμο του Παιδιού [Exploring the World of the Child]*, 9, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.12681/icw.18079>

Theodoridis, M. (2013). *Πρόγραμμα σπουδών για την οπτικοακουστική έκφραση [Curriculum for audiovisual expression]*. Athens: Karpos - Centre for Educational Activities and Intercultural Communication.

Theodoridis, M. (2017). *Οδηγός εκπαιδευτικού για την οπτικοακουστική έκφραση (Πεδίο Πολιτισμός-Αισθητική Παιδεία) [Teacher's guide for audiovisual expression (Field of Culture-Aesthetic Education)]*. Athens: Karpos - Centre for Educational Activities and Intercultural Communication.

Valoukos, S. (2003). *Ιστορία του κινηματογράφου [History of cinema]* (4th ed.). Athens: Aigokeros.

Vassiliadis, G. (2016). Τα 70 χρόνια (1945-2015) του ελληνικού animation [The 70 years (1945-2015) of Greek animation]. In P. Kyriakoulakos, A. Papadaniil, & A. Rouvas (Eds.), *70 χρόνια δημιουργίας ελληνικών κινούμενων σχεδίων [70 years of creation of Greek animated cartoons]* (16-22). Athens: Asifa Hellas.

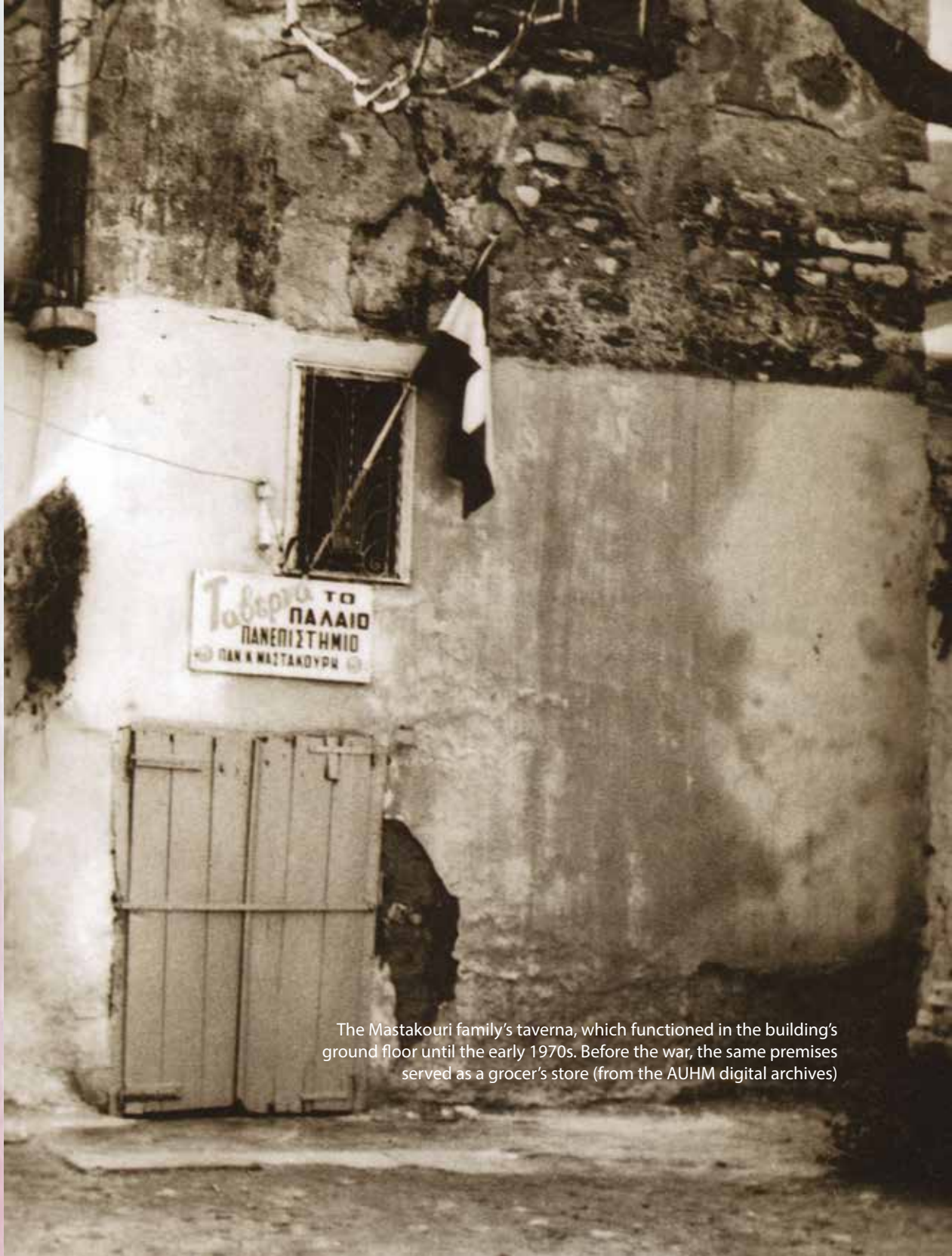


Pavlos Valsamidis

studied Pedagogy and Cinema in Athens. He is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Communication, Media and Culture and has directed short films: *Nemesis* (2009), *Contact Distance* (co-directed, 2011) and *Cost of Opportunity* (2019). He specialises in issues relating to audiovisual education in primary education



Fig. 2: Moving Image Laboratory (2019)
With the QR app you can see the video



The Mastakouri family's taverna, which functioned in the building's ground floor until the early 1970s. Before the war, the same premises served as a grocer's store (from the AUHM digital archives)

Puppet theatre and museum narratives. The Old University and its residents Fay Tsitou

Abstract

In this article we will examine some issues of museum puppetry narratives and we will attempt to define museum puppetry practice in relation to other museum practices and especially to museum theatre. In the charged museum environment, rich in both stimuli and limitations, we will try to identify the stages, the methodology and the objectives, as well as various possibilities and challenges of museum puppetry interpretation/communication. The practice will be studied not only from the perspective of the narrator/puppet-maker/manipulator but also from that of the visitors, with a view to exploring their personal narratives. The pilot project "The Old University and its residents", designed recently for the Athens University History Museum, is used as a case study.

Key words: museum puppetry, museum narratives, micro-narratives, Old University

Introduction

Over recent decades, ever since officially recognising their role as "narrators/storytellers", museums have taken to reinterpreting their collections. As a result, most of them have become "highly interpretive landscapes" for the ever-expanding 21st century museum public (cf. Hourston-Hanks, MacLeod & Hale, 2012: ix-xx). It is a trend that constantly evolves thanks to the new museological and museum education practices implemented by contemporary museums in order to give shape, first and foremost, to a dense communication network with their public in a multifaceted, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and democratic environment.

The construction and communication of contemporary museum narratives – with thrift, imagination, emotion, unified aesthetics and style – may hint at more than what they reveal at first glance. They often indicate the anthropocentric museums' new perception that aims at more intense experiences for a greater number of visitors. An impressive variety of museum interpretation and communication practices¹ often borrows tried and tested terms and techniques from literature, the performing arts and cinema. Object-centred, didactic

¹ For various examples of museum narratives, see Nikonanou, 2015.





Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference
DECE, National and Kapodistrian University

guided tours or obscure long interpretative texts – as, too, overly succinct ones – are considered outdated. Increasingly, in contemporary museums one sees nowadays a stage-setting approach in an educational programme's design, a literary refinement in the writing of texts, a theatricality in guided tours, strong symbolism in the exhibits' designing (scenography) or in the architecture of the museum building itself. In such a museum environment one sometimes feels that answers to diffuse, open-ended questions addressed to the public – and at best to the museum's curators as well – are pending. After all, material and nonmaterial culture is an inspiration, if not an ideal springboard for creating an experience of high aesthetics, critical thinking, spiritual uplift, or a playful interaction of a pedagogical, popularised nature – or of both at the same time.

In the above context, museum puppetry is a particularly demanding practice with rich semantics, a challenge with its own limitations, with impressive adaptability and an "instantaneous" response from the public.

The puppet: the distinguishing difference of museum puppetry

I always hold up the wooden actors as instructive object-lessons to our flesh and blood players.

The wooden ones, though stiff and continually glaring at you with the same overcharged expression, yet move you as only the most experienced living actors can. What really affects us in the theatre is not the muscular activities of the performers, but the feelings they awaken in us by their aspect; for the imagination of the spectator plays a far greater part there than the exertions of the actors.

The puppet is the actor in his primitive
G. B. Shaw (1949: vi)

Famous or lesser-known puppeteers from all over the world have been working for decades with museums of the sciences, of art or of history, with zoos, etc. They either undertake entirely the design and presentation of a museum narrative, or they train their staff, mainly in manipulation.² This can be occasioned by a performance, an educational programme or an event outside the museum, a workshop, the construction of interactive exhibits, the curation of an exhibition or even collaborations with specific minorities of the museum's public (visitors with disabilities, immigrant communities, etc.) (Tsitou, 2011-12: 17-19). All of the above are forms of museum puppetry, but differ from each other in many aspects: in their objectives, the specifications of the puppet making, the time of preparation and manipulation, the design, the form and degree of interaction with the exhibits and the visitors, etc.

Museum puppetry, one could argue, belongs to the most widespread and systematized museum practice known as museum theatre. The goals, challenges and methodology of museum puppetry generally do not differ from other sub-categories of museum theatre such as, for example, the re-enactment, the first- or third-person interpretation, the living history, role-playing, etc.³ Despite this, museum puppetry continues to retain its distinct dynamic due to its own tool: the puppet - the ultimate metaphor (Tsitou, 2012: 59-61).

According to the professor of museum studies Simon Knell (2007), when an object is removed from the environment in which humans gave it its initial meaning, it loses its poetic quality. Taking into account the above point of

² For example at the Skirball Arts Center, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, the Horniman Museum, the Altonaer Museum and others (Tsitou, 2012).

³ For more on museum theatre, see Venieri, 2020; Bridal, 2004; Hugh, 1998 and Jackson & Kidd, 2008.

view, one can assume that a reasonable goal of a museum narrative is to create the appropriate conditions so that the museum object regains, to a certain extent, its poetic quality. In other words, the aim here is to regain the connection the object used to have to its broader environment, before being given a catalogue number, before being photographed, conserved and finding its place in a display case, immobile, in a state of perpetual expectancy.

Let us take an example to explain the process that is usually followed in the case of museum theatre. Therefore let us suppose that a museum commissions an actor/ director (and their team, if it exists; on the whole, this means external collaborators) to design and implement a museum theatre activity (Bridal, 2004). The museum's objective is to complement the existing interpretation of one or more of its exhibits or an entire collection, to restore to the objects – as far as possible, as mentioned above – their lost poetic quality. The degree of liberty given to the artist regarding the choice of exhibits, the individual goals, the visitor's journey in the museum, the subject around which the theatrical text will be developed, etc. varies.⁴

In the case where the artist does not work completely autonomously, which is also the most common one,⁵ the exhibits, the subject, the type of visitor that will be addressed, the suggested spaces, the duration, the type of interaction with the exhibits and visitors are determined by the museum (or jointly). The museum provides the actor/director with the appropriate research material it has at its disposal in order to study the topic in depth, and they discuss together the objectives of the project, the museum space's possibilities and limitations, the budget, the kind of interpretation, etc.

Let us suppose that the technique of a live performance in the first person is considered more appropriate (the actor usually wears period clothes and either "travels" to the future to meet the public or the public "travels" to the past to meet her/him).⁶ Alongside the writing of the text, whose validity can be evaluated at various stages by the museum's curators, studies are carried out about the costumes and their authenticity – especially in the case of period narratives –, which are also evaluated. These are followed by rehearsals and then by audience research and a pilot implementation in the museum. Finally, the necessary

⁴ For an example of a museum that gives the artist more liberty, see Tsitou, 2012: 78-86.

⁵ For an example of a museum with strict specifications regarding historical representations, see Tsitou, 2012: 189-195.

⁶ See also <https://www.imtal-europe.org/what-interpretation.html>.

adjustments are made, especially with regard to the flow of the narrative, how the interaction functions and the visitors' journey in the museum premises (if this is included in the narrative).

When the moment arrives for the actor to be in front of the museum audience, in essence he or she mainly uses the spoken word to bring alive the story around the selected objects in the museum (ideas, concepts, emotions, events relating to them), to provoke the interaction with the audience and the latter's participation to the extent planned. The greater the actors' acting experience, the more powerful their interpretation is, and the more profoundly, as the famous British playwright G. B. Shaw says (1972), the spectators/ participants will be moved.

In the case of museum puppetry, if we also include the making of the puppet and the rehearsals for its manipulation (or the manipulation of an object, in the case of object theatre), to a certain extent a similar process is followed. But the moment the puppet "takes the floor" from the narrator (actor/puppeteer), its own language will be based mainly on the semiotic system of moving images (Bogatyrev, 1983) (visible, tangible, precise), on the economy of visual language and on an admirable variety of manufacturing and manipulation techniques.

The puppeteer/puppet-maker, when (s)he deems it necessary, can control with "surgical precision", very purposefully and clearly the varied and sometimes complex means of expression at her/his disposal. This process aims to stimulate the spectators' interest, emotions and imagination around the exhibits, their qualities, their life in their original environment and ultimately their relationship to humans, directly and on multiple levels (Tsitou 2012: 43-107).

Let us take the case of a copy of any museum object, whether authentic or a replica. From the inexhaustible works of man and nature we could choose anything that catches our attention from a museum's collections and after careful observation: a painter's brush, the lens of a microscope, an embalmed whale, a landmine, a bullet, the propeller of a wind turbine, the missing bone from a dinosaur skeleton, a replica of a human heart muscle, a grave offering, a train, a religious symbol on a sword blade, elements of a battle engraved on the surface of a ring, the geometric patterns on a vase, a historical figure or a peasant depicted in a painting. When puppet theatre images are created centred on one of the above, the museum objects they refer to seem to suddenly acquire vitality, great flexibility, rich, often poetic symbolism, either as anthropomorphic replicas (when human traits defining the face, the gaze and possibly the joints have been



given to them) or not (object theatre). More often than not, the museum replica (along with other props/puppets/the puppeteer as an actor – or without any of these at all), with the appropriate construction and the right manipulation can define directly and selectively the surroundings and the time, the “inside” and the “outside”, the gigantic and the diminutive, the subconscious and the reality, the relations of power. As it moves with ease and clarity between all of the above, it constantly forms new images, relationships and symbolisms that are immediately perceived by the spectator’s eye.

The quality of the object’s movement, the manner of its making and manipulation, its dimensions, its material, its aesthetics and expression, the constructed social or natural, realistic or allegorical environment in which it moves (and which can be defined implicitly with great economy), the montage of the images it composes, the play with scales and exaggeration, all interact with each other and can come to life in a “puppet-theatre manner”. The puppet (or an animated object) can express emotions with distinctive clarity, honesty, or – if that is the desired effect – also with grace (Kleist, 2015), in the hands both of experienced puppeteers and of museum staff (even the most timid) who have received appropriate training in the “safe” environment that is created.⁷

It is perhaps not surprising that the complexity and polysemy of the medium (puppet) favours a wide variety of definitions. Some associate it with magic and death, others with theology, others with popular culture and others yet with psychology.⁸ But what makes the medium “highly” communicative, giving it an element of surprise and vitality, stems for many from a paradoxical complicity as described by the American puppeteer and theorist Steve Tillis (1992: 17). This element generates a non-negotiable interaction with the puppet’s appearance in front of the public, even in its silence. According to Tillis (1992), the puppet exists thanks to the public, as long as it willingly suspends its disbelief and consents to the validity of a convention against what its reason (and common sense, ultimately) dictates. If the public is not convinced that what it sees has character and life on stage, at least for the duration of the performance, there is no puppet (hence no museum puppetry). The spectator is considered a co-creator here, and in this sense puppet theatre is seen as a deeply popular and democratic genre.

7 On the safe environment created by objects, cf. Winnicott, 2006.

8 On the definitions of the puppet, cf. Williams, 2007.

Objectives of museum puppet theatre

The objectives of museum puppetry are identical to those of museum theatre, as mentioned by Venieri (2020). Some of these are listed below, and are completed as follows:

- the emergence of the objects’ poetic dimension, their properties, their relationship and interaction with their original environment, their symbolisms;⁹
- the connection between the museum exhibits and today’s reality, with other exhibits in the museum, or even with the museum building itself (if, for instance, this is a historical building);
- the showcasing of the social context of the period related to the museum objects;
- the visitors’ emotional involvement with history, its protagonists, human-kind’s material culture;
- the emergence of unknown stories (micro-narratives, oral testimonies, etc.) of famous or even forgotten members of society and everyday people;
- the development of the visitors’ personal narrative around difficult topics, contradictory versions of history;
- the interpretation of the intangible cultural heritage;
- the promotion of intangible and material cultural heritage as expressed through traditional puppets, folk stories and the myths they re-enact;
- the free expression and socialisation of a broader number of visitors in a “safe” environment through the “intermediate”/puppet.

The concept of “gap” in the museum narrative and the multiple interpretations

Many researchers argue that, even if today we cannot reconstruct a historical event and the circumstances that created it (Nichols, 1991), we can re-examine the past by examining multiple interpretations following a “bottom-up” path (Hourston-Hanks et al., 2012: xxii). With the present as a reference point, we can illuminate subtle nuances of the past, micro-narratives, experiences and values of everyday life, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of ordinary, unknown

⁹ We should note here that the interaction can become far more complex. Apart from the obvious interaction between spectator-puppet-exhibits there is also the interaction puppeteer-puppet (hence also puppeteer-exhibits, puppeteer-spectator). The “synergy”, as the Polish puppet theatre theorist Henryk Jurkowski (1990: 22) calls it, can occur either quietly and implicitly or more overtly and emphatically, that is to say in the case where the puppeteer, while interacting with the puppet (s)he is manipulating, also finds her/himself playing a role at the same time.



people which, under the weight of a large-scale narrative, would have remained in obscurity (Hourston-Hanks et al., 2012: ix-xx). We can also approach the past by identifying discontinuities, uncertainties, contradictions, dark spots, opposing voices associated with prominent and obscure members of society, or, also, by examining issues for which there is still incomplete documentation (Fraser & Coulson, 2012: 223; Zellner, 2012: 201).

Along the same lines, Fraser and Coulson (2012) state that “uncertain, open-ended experiences can be productive” (p. 223) and that they give visitors “critical tools to both appreciate and question the museum’s role” (p. 227). They believe that a museum environment that is tolerant of uncertainty can enhance the visitors’ trust in the museum itself and gain their appreciation. They maintain that the public can “stand” being confronted with a degree of “uncertainty”, “mystery”, “active discovery” (pp. 225, 227, 231). Besides, they argue, some people “visit [the museum] to enjoy some measure of that sensation” (p. 229).

The criticism levelled at the above approach of museum narration usually refers to the possibility of the public getting the “wrong” impression, of misunderstanding something or being “disappointed” upon finding that “there is no clear conclusion to the story” (Fraser & Coulson, 2012: 227). Even if we agree that museums today are expected to come to terms with the idea of a narrative characterised by “gaps”, incomplete material, uncertainties, subjectivity, and the confusion that all this might cause compared to more “objective”, “unambiguous”, generic narratives, it does not mean that we can rule out the possibility of the public’s dissatisfaction. Designing a museum narrative without some form of measure could undermine the validity of even a fully-documented scientific interpretation, seriously upsetting the visitors’ trust – which always remains a key principle of any museum (idem: 229). In other words, when undertaken carelessly and without thought, the shift from considering knowledge as objective truth to the multiple meanings we seek to ascribe to our cultural heritage has the potential to lead to extremes, inaccuracies and, ultimately, to erroneous conclusions, to a “rampant relativism” (Roberts, 1997: 3) around commonly accepted truths.

Concluding this section, we should also note the doubts of some historians regarding the claim that an exhibition, or other museum activity, can faithfully narrate the frequently “chaotic”, at times “mundane”, at others “intense”, real life of the multifaceted societies of the present or an earlier era, full of “inconsistencies”, “uncertainties”, “ambiguities” and “discontinuities” (Hourston-Hanks et al., 2012).

Following the above, we should also consider whether museum curators’ aim to connect exhibits to each other in a communicative, understandable and engaging way impels them, rather superficially and without previous deeper reasoning, to techniques and objectives that belong to the realm of classical storytelling (for example, the linearity of events, the narrative’s cohesion, a clear beginning, a clear ending, a climax, a flow with no gaps, impasses or uncertainties) (Hourston-Hanks et al., 2012: xxii).

Below we present a case study that attempts to incorporate the properties of the specific genre of museum narrative (museum puppetry) taking into account the above considerations.

Case study: The historical building of the Athens University History Museum

The collection of the Athens University History Museum (AUHM) consists of documents of university life from the time of King Otto through to approximately the mid-20th century and relates, among other things, with the teaching and research work of the professors, student life and the institution’s administrative course. The Othóneion Panepistemion (Ottoman University), the independent Greek State’s very first such institution, functioned for four years (1837-1841) in the building that houses the AUHM today. The “Kleanthis House” or “Old University”, as it is more commonly known, is one of the oldest –and once one of the largest– houses in the historic centre of Athens. The monument’s age, and the significant interventions it has undergone, justify the wealth and variety of the stories left behind by the famous or also ordinary people who lived or worked in it over the years. We know that, initially, it was the residence of the architects Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert. A few years after the establishment of the Greek State, these two –at the time young– architects were charged by King Otto to draw up the first town-planning scheme of the capital, before it was moved to Athens from Nafplion.

In later years, the building was used as a gymnasium (high school), university, teacher’s academy and infantry barracks. Ever since Stamatios Kleanthis sold it to a private individual, in 1851, the building kept changing owners. Among others, it was inhabited by Greek refugees –at that time– from Crete and Asia Minor and internal migrants, who arrived in Athens during the past two centuries. Due to the Cretan Revolution in 1868, the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922 and the Second World War, many people left their homes in search of shelter or a better life in the Greek capital. Over time, the spacious high-ceilinged rooms of the historic





Fig 1: Photograph of the building (1960s, from the AUHM archives)



Fig 3: Oil painting (1674) by Jacques Carrey (the painting is exhibited at the Museum of the City of Athens)



Fig.4: Display board with photographs of the former tenants (AUHM archives)

In 2016, the building's history was recorded in the AUHM new permanent exhibition module (A house for a museum: the building's history). To this end, the AUHM's museological team, Elena Kitta, Evangelos Papoulias (the AUHM's Director), Myrsini Pichou and Konstantinos Kapsimallis, collected and studied research material on the two architects (Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert) who repaired and extended the building, giving it its current form. The team also depicted the different phases of the main interventions and extensions to the building and showcased them through the construction of an interactive exhibit and a video with a 3D reconstruction.

The latter collected household items belonging to the building's last tenants which they themselves and their families used while living in it¹⁰ and designed

¹⁰ A coal iron, a portable record-player and vinyl records of that period, a woven piece of cloth, an old radio, knitting needles, a pair of socks, a tin of Threpsini (a nutritious grape-based spread of that period for children).

their presentation. For the purposes of the Museum's new exhibition, the tenants also provided, in a digital format, photographs of their lives in this very same space, as well as oral testimonies. Part of this original research and of the photographic and audio archives created is presented in the form of a collage of photographs around a digital frame featuring relevant content and an audio exhibit (an old telephone set which functions interactively with the public thanks to electronic automation). Μέρος της πρωτότυπης αυτής έρευνας, του The author carried out the research and design (script, direction, constructions) of the museum narrative that follows, but turned to external collaborators for the painting of the figures and the voice recordings.

Museum puppetry: "The Old University and its residents"

The educational programme "The Old University and its residents" was fashioned as a complex museum narrative using various performance techniques and which centred on the techniques of museum puppet theatre. The programme's objective is to showcase known and unknown aspects of the history of both the building and its residents, whether these were famous or ordinary people. At the same time, the programme attempts to highlight the value of conserving architectural monuments (as well as issues arising from this), the needs and obligations of their occupants and administrators, in conjunction with their capabilities and the conditions of each period. On a second level, the aim is to create stimuli for a frank discussion, which is not content with the "authenticity" of the events' chronicling or the transmission of historical knowledge but which seeks its relation to the present, i.e, raising issues that could be of concern today to the programme's participants. The challenge here is for the narrative to move away from the conventional sense of "museum genre" and examine more contemporary issues (such as, for instance, the legal framework for the conservation and preservation of architectural monuments, sustainable development, the modernisation and the economic policy of a historical capital such as Athens, the recognition of the value of modern culture –in parallel with ancient civilisation– and the attitude of each of us towards it, which is an integral part of it).

Using the technique of paper theatre and a human-sized puppet, snapshots from the lives of the two architects (Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert) are brought to life. The audience follows the adventures of the first (1833) urban plan of Athens, the Greek State's new capital, which the famous architects



envisioned and created in what was the city's first "architectural office" and their home. The same techniques are used to convey why and how the town-planning scheme was modified (1834) by the architect of the Bavarian court in Munich, Leo von Klenze. Lastly, with the help of the micro-cinema technique (video projection using a micro-camera), archival material, oral testimonies and everyday objects of the 20th century, the visitors discover aspects of Stamatios Kleanthis' architectural work, the Athens University's functioning in the building (1837-1841) and the life of its last tenants before its restoration. In the programme's experiential part, they are invited to detect the interventions that the historical monument has undergone, but also to discover the human stories connected to it, through a self-guided tour and drama in education techniques. Guided by old photographs, visitors tour the museum and its courtyards and trace how the building's last tenants adapted it to meet their own needs in difficult times.

The public and its participation

In this phase,¹¹ the programme is aimed at secondary education pupils¹² and has been designed to lead to targeted discussions about listed buildings (e.g. the owners' rights and obligations, the role and services of the State, the relevant terminology, etc.), as well as to experiential activities using drama in education techniques (Avdi & Hadzigeorgiou, 2007). In the case where the programme is addressed to the general public, it is designed to be accompanied at the end by a loosely-structured open discussion with invited researchers and professionals of various fields (architects, art historians, restorers, teatrologists, jurists, representatives of state institutions and other museums, etc.). In both cases, the intermediate points of the narrative that, dramaturgically and spatially, favour the integration of "gaps", the interaction with the visitors and selected exhibits or stage objects, and the degree and the form of participation (simple reaching out, brief participation/comment, discussion with open questions, etc.).

The design

From the early stages of the programme's design there was a concern about the interest this particular subject might present for a 21st century audience, as well as on the formulation of an appropriate narrative that would not somehow repeat the existing exhibition's content. Using the above as a reference point, an attempt was made to cross-check new sources and to exploit the contradictions and dark spots that emerged from the research's new data. The human stories behind history's famous protagonists were also sought out. The material began taking shape around aspects of the story not included in the information material (display boards, captions, audio-visual material) of the AUHM exhibition. In parallel to the dramaturgical elaboration and the new archival material's transformation into a narrative and dialogical form, the elaboration of the structure, the appropriate sequence of images and events was worked out, as well as the choice of stage settings that would be depicted visually through references to paintings and engravings of the time. Among other things, an attempt was made to shed light on the historical figures' relations with each other and the dark points behind the drafting and modification of the urban plan, and to highlight the reactions of

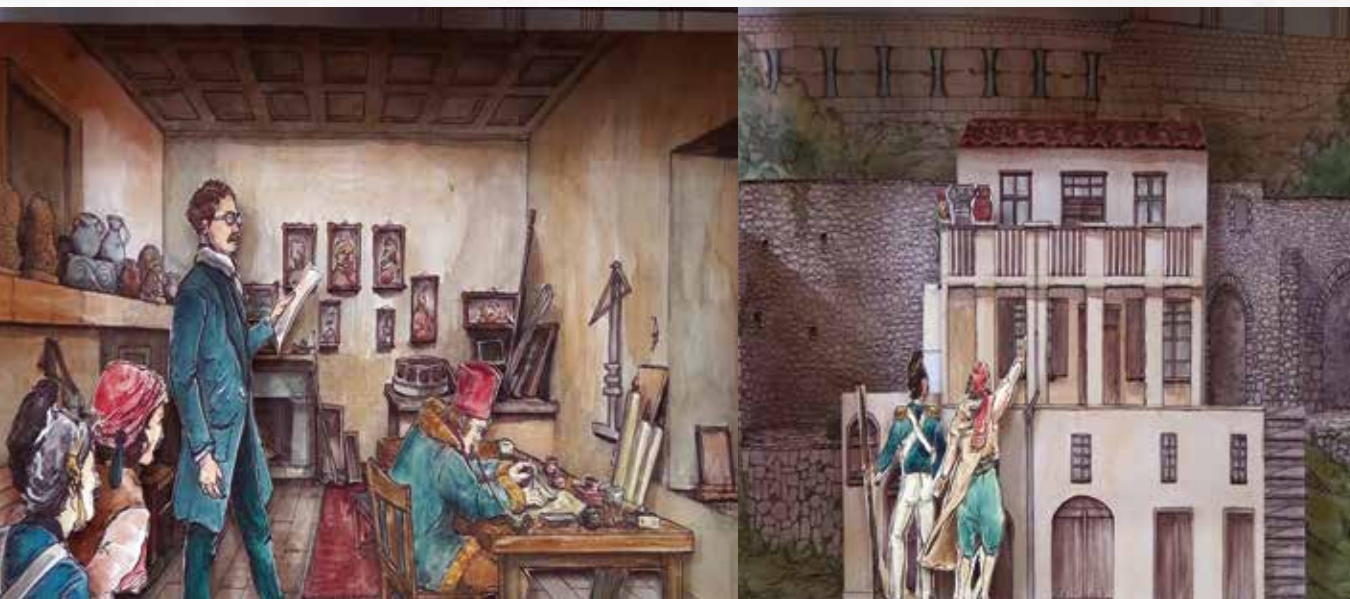


Fig. 5, 6: Scenes from the paper theatre (AUHM archives)

¹¹ The plan is, in the near future, to adapt it for primary school pupils, too, using shadow theatre and modifying the interactive part correspondingly.

¹² The programme was scheduled to be piloted with groups of high school students in early April 2020, but due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, this was postponed.

the society of the time. In other words, an attempt was made to supplement the exhibition with material which it would have been particularly difficult (or very costly, in the case of digital technology) to find a place for in the limited space of the gallery earmarked for this exhibition (the exhibition is presented separately from the AUHM's other collections, which concern the history of the University of Athens).

Particular emphasis was placed on the way in which the characters' weaknesses and their conflicts are verbally and visually highlighted, as well as to the social and historical context of the time. What was of interest was not so much to fully develop the characters or provide a resolution to the story after a dramatic climax, nor to round off or generalise the events. As already mentioned above about the uncertainties or the mundane (antitheatrical) side of life, new perceptions of the discipline of history question the validity of a "complete", "genuine" interpretation and representation of the past in totally theatrical terms. Besides, the "gaps" themselves in our data were not conducive to such a thing. Obviously, the aim was neither to challenge commonly accepted truths of official history on which most historians agree, nor to impress or "educate" the public. During the collection of the material, as well as during its processing, the main aim was to produce a museum narrative –albeit with a fragmentary plot– with a chronological sequence of events. It was important to keep the visitors' interest alive, to make the story and the issues it raises understandable without being tiring, and to provide the appropriate stimuli and information both for identifying with the heroes and for critical thinking.

Regarding the narrative's main characters, some sources, but also discussions with experts at times led to contradictions. For instance, conflicting opinions existed on the story's protagonist, Stamátios Kleánthis: was he truly an able and talented architect/ town-planner, a patriot and visionary with long-term plans for the prosperity of his city and country, or, on the contrary, did he go down in history more as a contractor, a marble merchant, a vexatious litigant, an opportunist and a lover of money? Similarly, opinions differ on the Bavarian architect Leo von Klenze. The acknowledgement of his contribution to the preservation of Greek antiquities contrasts with the negative criticisms received for his intervention in Athens' town planning, which is not held in its entirety in the same high regard by certain researchers.

As for the above "gaps" arising from opposing interpretations of the past,

our distance from it, the uncertainties and incomplete data, an attempt was made to process the material by dramatic, visual and acting means. The narrative's comic element was another issue that needed attention. To this end, two anonymous fictional characters, a Bavarian soldier and an Epirote mason, who were created to quickly convey, in an "authentic" and entertaining way, specific, documented information, the narrative's social context and to promote the action proved particularly useful. As for the material concerning the oral testimonies and photographs of the former tenants, this, as already mentioned, had already been collected by the AUHM's museum curators. The attention here was focused on the careful selection of the material, the music, and the creation of an appropriate sequence of the selected oral excerpts and accompanying photographs so that this section might acquire a dramaturgical interest.¹³

The techniques: possibilities, difficulties, challenges

Although this particular programme has been designed for the most demanding circumstance¹⁴ (i.e. to be animated by a single person, who will also undertake the role of narrator), it could be presented ideally with two animators (or additionally with an assistant). The animator, in the (loose) role of narrator/time traveller, develops the museum narrative, manipulates the figures and the puppet, supervises the flow of the tour, encourages the interaction with the exhibits, "listens" to the public, creates "gaps" for its participation and coordinates the discussion and the experiential activity.¹⁵ At the same time, (s)he handles the technical equipment: video, lighting, sound (recorded voices of actors corresponding to the toy theatre figures and the puppet,¹⁶ as well as music).

The paper theatre is used to present the history of the urban plan and the historical-social context of the time.

¹³ It should be noted here that the visitor study that will be conducted in the near future will indicate how close the programme is to its objectives and what adjustments may be needed.

¹⁴ Not uncommon in the case of a museum with a limited staff and a rich schedule of events for at least six months annually (May-October).

¹⁵ Participants undertake their tour in groups and are encouraged to observe the building, to identify similarities and differences of parts of the building as depicted in old photographs and as it is today following its rehabilitation. In the case of school visits, the programme includes activities prior to and after the visit, with suggestions about watching videos from the internet on Stamátios Kleánthis, a documentary on the neoclassical houses of Athens, as well as preparation for participating in the experiential activities (the experiential activities can be carried out either at the museum or at the school after the visit). Lastly, worksheets with written exercises to be completed by the pupils at school, educational material and evaluation questionnaires are provided.

¹⁶ This is a group of external collaborators, the actors Arghýris Xáfis, Thános Lékkas, Vassílis Safós and Aléxandros Chrysanthópoulos, who interpret the voices of the heroes.





Fig. 7, 8 The students of the Athens School of Fine Arts, Evangelia Kalyva, Despina Manolarou, Giorgos Kalokairinos (MIPA file)

This technique favours a multi-person narration and numerous tos-and-fros in space and time, dramaturgical choices that would be difficult to support with any other technique and with the economy of a single manipulator. Also, this technique brings out the setting of each episode in a distinctly poetic way, as it is constantly brought to life, composed and decomposed in front of the spectators' eyes (Paroussi, 2012: 191-213). At the same time, it enhances the programme's degree of authenticity as it uses visual material based on historical sources (paintings, sketches, portraits, photographs) and the monument itself (the AUHM).

Other characteristics of this technique are the cheap raw material (cardboard, plywood, wooden laths) and the ease in transportation (lightweight constructions, small dimensions). In other words, it is suitable both for the museum's limited budget and its demanding programming (often two or three events are held in parallel at the AUHM, so that flexibility regarding a possible change of the location where the performance is held can solve various problems)¹⁷.

This said, the usually small dimension of the stage opening (especially when there is a single operator) is a disadvantage, as it limits the number of spectators.

¹⁷ For other examples of the paper theatre technique in the museum, see also Tsitou, 2011.

Although paper theatre is not particularly demanding in terms of handling, it comprises a difficulty regarding the construction of the figures and the numerous sets, a process that is particularly time-consuming, especially in the case of historical subjects. Because of this, it is advisable for the creator

to have the ability to draw and create copies and, of course, to have time. For example, (s)he will need to draw a large number of the same historical figure, in different poses or dimensions, at different ages or with different expressions, sometimes with very few sources to choose from, not always two-dimensional, in a satisfactory dimension or in good condition. In our case, the collaboration with a group of students of the Engraving Workshop B (Illustration-Comics-Animation)

of the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA)¹⁸ contributed substantially to the figures' materialisation.

After the relevant guidance on practical issues of paper theatre technique, the students were put in charge of designing and colouring all of the paper theatre's figures and scenery on the basis of the performance's detailed storyboard.

¹⁸ The students collaborated in the context of their practical training and with the contribution of the person in charge –in the full meaning of the word– of the ASFA's practical training bureau, Mr Nikos Nikoloutsos. It should also be noted here that Artemis Orphanidou, a student at the same faculty's Department of Art Theory and History, participated in the initial stage of the project's preparation.



Fig 9: Kleanthis and Schaubert dream of the new capital as they look at the view from the balcony of their house (AUHM building) - the background refers to their urban plan and is backlit (AUHM archives)

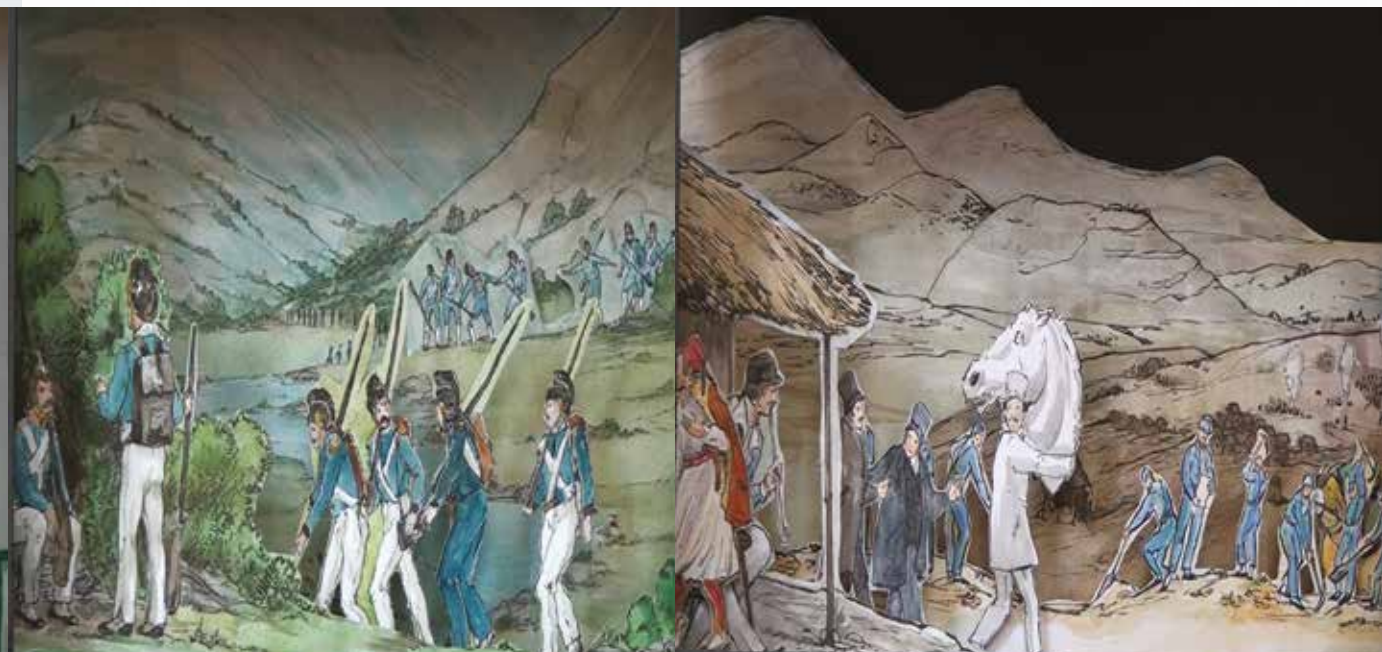


Fig. 10,11: The Bavarians in Greece, the works in Athens and the antiquities (AUHM archives)(Αρχείο ΜΙΠΑ)

The professionalism, team spirit and passion shown by the students not only contributed to a harmonious and enjoyable collaboration with them, but can also be considered to have been reflected in the best possible way in their work.

The first appearance of the human-sized puppet¹⁹ in the programme's introduction is videotaped. As the public watches the projection of the puppet as it moves through the museum's outdoor and indoor spaces, which at the same time denotes the relationship of the character (Stamatios Kleanthis) with the space (his house), the action and the audience move along. At the narrator's urging to look for the hero (seen on the screen) inside the museum, the visitors prepare for the "live" meeting with him. On the top floor of the building, from where one has a view of the Acropolis and the city (the Athens basin and the mountains that embrace it), the public meets the puppet-Kleanthis seated at a desk with items belonging to the character it impersonates (a sextant from the museum's collection, copies of urban plans and notes, pieces of Pentelic marble,

¹⁹ The puppet was designed and made by the author and Vassilis Bounatsos, while the recommendations and interventions of the ceramicist and sculptor Nikos Sklavenitis on the initial sculpture of the head in clay were very helpful.

a copy of a newspaper of the time). The visitors stand among the exhibits in the gallery dedicated to the University's Faculty of Philosophy. They watch the puppet-Kleanthis' inner monologue, which is interrupted to interact with two portraits of the gallery using the flash-back/flash-forward technique, while at the same time references are made to the city of Athens its past and its future.

The choice of the puppet (three-dimensional, roughly the height of a human being) aims to enhance the spectators' identification with it, as they coexist on an equal footing –but in different roles– in the same environment (stage set - Kleanthis House - Museum). Also, the puppet's human dimensions aim to create a more convincing interaction with the exhibits²⁰.

The micro-cinema technique was considered ideal for animating two-dimensional copies of archival material (photographs, architectural drawings, documents). The two-dimensional items –whose content, in this case, needs to be clearly discernible and legible, i.e., the spectators can read an excerpt of

²⁰ However, it should be pointed out here that, especially in the case where there is only one animator, the choice of a human-sized puppet necessarily limits its movements to a minimum – the puppet remains seated almost throughout the action.

a text or easily observe details on a small photograph– were presented using a micro-camera connected to a projector. The audience watches live the puppeteer manipulating the objects in front of the fixed camera’s lens, as well as their magnified projection on one of the Museum’s free surfaces. The images’ alternation, the camera angle, the close-ups/distant shots, the former occupants’ recorded oral testimonies and the music are conceived to give a theatrical dimension to material which, otherwise, it is difficult to present to the public (two-dimensional objects and their contents).

The museum as a setting: difficulties and practical issues

The practical difficulties can be summarised in the lack of stage/storage space, technical equipment, collaborators, budget, in the difficulty of achieving a total blackout and in the precautions needed to ensure both the public’s and the exhibits’ safety during the tour. Here, prior knowledge of the specific museum’s space (its possibilities and limitations, its collection and its history), as well as the research/collection of museum material done beforehand, helped adapt the design from the outset, securing valuable time and avoiding unforeseen surprises.

A complex narrative such as the one mentioned here requires evaluations at various stages of its design. A visitor study, especially of larger groups and on-site, is often a time-consuming process to organise, but essential for examining both the artistic and learning outcomes and a good “advisor” about changes and improvements (particularly when talking about what for museums –possibly unfamiliar with this specific practice– constitutes the difficult public of adolescents)²¹.

As for the programme’s dramaturgy and documentation, it was necessary to find the golden mean between dramatic narration and historical interpretation (between telling a story and talking about documented history), as well as between image and speech. In other words, it was necessary to carefully study and select the information in the existing archival material, elaborate it into a dramatic form, decide which character and in what way would convey it with economy and dramatic interest or, alternatively, which parts of it would be conveyed through the artwork or by the manipulator live. It was also necessary to give careful thought to the volume, the nature and the elaboration of the

²¹ When the public health measures due to the pandemic allow it.

information, so as to avoid tiring or confusing the visitors, over-popularising it and therefore making it boring, keeping it too complex or specialised and hence discouraging the spectator and making her/him feel powerless (that they do not, for example, have sufficient knowledge to understand the content and engage in discussion about it).

In lieu of a conclusion

While research on museum puppet theatre is still in progress, its basic tool continues to bear its stigma (performance for preschool children / second-rate art). However, thanks to its long tenure on the theatrical stage and in the street, the puppet also seems to “bear up” in the museum – and its very nature constitutes a sure guarantee of what it promises here: polysemy, multi-level interaction with the visitors and the exhibits, expressiveness, communicative power (even to groups of visitors of different ages, level of education, interests and mother tongue), possibility of animating and showcasing objects, Nature, natural phenomena, the social context and power relations, the subconscious, the metaphysical element, the exhibits’ symbols and material qualities, flexibility, a low budget, tactile experiences. In the face of all that exceeds the limits of our own knowledge, aesthetics, perception or imagination, the puppet appears to tangibly create an inviting “gap” for us to reflect, feel, communicate and respond. Both as professionals in the museum field and as spectators it has the capacity to keep us aware of what we observe inside and outside the museum, within and without our own selves.



References

- Avdi, A. & Hadzigeorgiou, M. (2007). Η τέχνη του δράματος στην εκπαίδευση [The art of drama in education]. Athens: Metaichmio.
- Bogatyrev, P. (1983). The interconnection of two similar semiotic systems: The puppet theatre and the theatre of living actors. *Semiotica*, 47(1-4), 47-68.
- Bridal, T. (2004). Exploring museum theatre. Oxford: Altamira.
- Fraser, A., & Coulson, H. (2012). Incomplete stories. In S. Macleod, L. H. Hourston-Hanks, & J. Hale (Eds.), *Museum making. Narratives, architectures, exhibitions* (pp. 268-278). Oxon: Routledge.
- Hourston-Hanks, L., MacLeod, S., & Hale, J. (2012). Introduction: museum making. The place of narrative. In S. Macleod, L. H. Hanks, & J. Hale (Eds.), *Museum making. Narratives, architectures, exhibitions* (pp. ix-xxiii). Oxon: Routledge.
- Hugh, C. (1998). *Museum theatre. Communicating with visitors through drama*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Jackson, A., & Kidd, J. (2008). Performance, learning & heritage: A research project funded by the arts & humanities research council July 2005-November 2008. Report November 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.plh.manchester.ac.uk/documents/Performance,%20Learning%20&%20Heritage%20-%20Report.pdf>
- Jurkowski, H. (1990). The mode of existence of characters of the puppet stage. In L. Komniz & M. Levenson (Eds.), *The language of the puppet* (pp. 21-36). Vancouver: The Pacific Puppetry Center Press.
- Kleist, H. von (2015) Οι Μαρριονέτες [The Marionettes]. Trans. Jenny Mastoraki. Athens: Agra.
- Knell, S. J. (2007). Museums, reality and the material world. In *Museums in the material world* (pp. 1-28). Oxon: Routledge.
- Lenakakis, A. & Paroussi, A. (2019). Η τέχνη του κουκλοθέατρου στην εκπαίδευση. Παιχνίδι συγκλίσεων και αποκλίσεων [The art of puppet theatre in education. A game of convergences and divergences]. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Nikonanou, N. (Ed.) (2015). *Μουσειακή μάθηση και εμπειρία στον 21ο αιώνα* [Museum learning and experience in the 21st century]. Athens: Hellenic Academic eBooks.
- Nichols, B. (1991). *Representing reality: Issues and concepts in documentary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Paroussi, A. (2012). *Κουκλοθέατρο στην εκπαίδευση. Εκπαίδευση στο κουκλοθέατρο* [Puppet theatre in education. Education in puppet theatre]. Athens: Plethron.

- Roberts, L. C. (1997). *From knowledge to narrative: Educators and the changing Museum*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Shaw, G. B. (1972). Note on puppets. In M. von Boehn, *Puppets and Automata* (p. vi). New York: Dover Publications.
- Tillis, S. (1992). *Towards an aesthetics of the puppet: Puppetry as a theatrical art*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Tsitou, F. (2011). Robert Poulter's new model theatre in museums. *Puppetry International*, 29, 8-11.
- Tsitou, F. (2011-2012). *Applied puppetry in museums: the conditions for learning*. *Puppet Notebook*, 20, 17-19.
- Tsitou, F. (2012). *Puppetry in museum interpretation and communication* (Doctoral dissertation). Royal Holloway University of London. Retrieved from http://www.takey.com/Thesis_51.pdf
- Venieri, F. (2020). Μουσειακό θέατρο. Νέες ερμηνευτικές προσεγγίσεις [Museum theatre. New interpretative approaches]. Athens: Kaleidoskopio.
- Williams, M. (2007). Including the audience: The idea of 'the puppet' and the real spectator. *Australian Drama Studies*, 51, 119-132.
- Winnicott, D. W. (2006). *Playing and reality*. Cornwall: Routledge.
- Zellner, P. (2012). Narrative space: The book of lies. In S. Macleod, L. H. Hourston-Hanks, & J. Hale (Eds.), *Museum making. Narratives, architectures, exhibitions* (pp. 203-221). Oxon: Routledge.



Fay Tsitou

works as museum educator/curator at the Athens University History Museum. She graduated from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens' Drama Department and studied philosophy (BA, Deree College) and contemporary theatre practice (MA, Lancaster University). Her PhD research (Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012) focuses on museum puppetry communication and interpretation practices, and she has written several articles on relative subjects. She was trained by acclaimed puppeteers and in 2003 she founded dytes puppet theatre. She designed and directed a number of puppet theatre shows and museum puppetry learning programs. She has presented her work in puppet theatre festivals and has received a Best Practice Award (ICOM/CECA, Rio 2013) for the museum puppetry project "How on Earth would you Study Science?". She has also conducted puppetry and museum puppetry workshops for university students, educators and children.



Fig. 12: From a rehearsal in the Museum (AUHM archives)



Students of the Department of Early Childhood Education,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,
5th International Theatre/Drama and Education Conference, 2006

The Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network: Strengthening the role of Theatre/Drama and the Performing Arts in Education in Greece, 1998-2020

Betty Giannouli

((English text by the author))

Abstract

During its 22 years of existence, the Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network (TENet-Gr) has set as its aim the promotion of theatre and the performing arts in formal and non-formal educational. It has focused on the different ways of using theatre as a teaching method, as a means of social intervention, as an aesthetic experience and as a cultural action. Since its initial steps and to the present day, its pursuit has been to enrich the knowledge of theatre in education with new approaches, theories and techniques, through action, research, and collaborations with academic, educational and cultural bodies and institutions in Greece and abroad. Throughout the years, the art of puppetry has been constantly present in teacher training programmes, in international events, as well as in discussions on its context, its various forms and its use in and out of schools. This article summarises the development of TENet-Gr from 1998 to the present day and draws its material from the choices made along the way.

Key words: The Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network (TENet-Gr), Arts in Education, experiential learning, critical pedagogy, theatre actions, puppet theatre actions

Introduction

The writing of this article has enabled the author to enter into a twenty-two-year retrospective process of the course of theatre's place in education, through the actions of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network (TENet-Gr). This course has been marked by beginnings, evolutions and realisations concerning an important part of life, culture, the encounter of cultures, ideas, values, and cultural and educational pursuits. The way TENet-Gr was founded outlines its general philosophy at both a theoretical and a practical level. TENet-Gr was formed in 1998 by teachers who felt the need for continuous training and research. Its development has shown that a strong vision, in a given time and place, in line with the international landscape in the field of "Theatre and Education" can be implemented, bring forces together, gain support and acquire solid foundations that give it sustainability.



Theatre in Education

Theatre in Education as a distinct academic field was based on the fundamental pedagogical principles of Dewey, Vygotsky and Bruner, who focus on the child's active participation, on its taking "action" towards problem-solving in the course of the overall educational and learning processes it is involved in. Dewey emphasises the role that the individual's experience plays in education (Dewey, 1980) and points to the fundamental weakness of school to reconcile this experience with the social need for collectivity, which is a prerequisite for social symbiosis, concluding that "school lacks the element of shared creative activity" (Dewey, 1982: 18).

In his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky recognises the social context in learning and the particular importance of complex meaning processing, so that the sphere of experience is not limited (Dafermos, 2002: 75), but also leaves room for the field of the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1930: 216). In this way, the existing gap between what an individual can do/learn on their own and what they can achieve with the help of someone who knows more can be reduced.

Learning by discovery is at the heart of Bruner's approach, who considers drama in the learning process of great importance, as it makes the familiar unfamiliar and leaves room for new reflections and questions to be born.

For Bruner, leaving such room exemplifies a school classroom based on democratic principles and is the place where "one can perceive the world anew" (Bruner, 1996: 99). Similarly, he argues that the richer an experience is, the richer the results in the development of thought and perception, thereby encouraging the child to proceed with joy to the next experience. Factors such as interest, curiosity and the fascination of discovery, which increase one's intrinsic motivation to learn (Bruner, 1960: 63), contribute to the pupil's readiness for learning. (Bruner, 1960, σ. 63).

An educational process which uses theatre in its various forms and manifestations encourages exploration, dialogue, the enrichment of experience, the interconnection between one's mental and emotional worlds and the use of different ways in which an individual can understand the world according to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1991). The above are highlighted and form the theoretical framework of the various approaches included in the term "Theatre in Education": Drama in Education (DiE), Theatre in Education

(TiE), Applied Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre for Development, Participatory Theatre, etc.

In every approach, the element of social change is emphasised, an element which finds pedagogical legitimisation in the Brazilian pedagogue P. Freire and draws practices from Brecht's theatre (Avdi & Hadjigeorgiou, 2007; Nicholson, 2005; Pigou-Repoussi, 2009). Freire, an educator representing the principles of critical pedagogy, worked in the field of adult education. His views about the role of the school and the place of the teacher in it were adopted by pedagogy at large. Freire focuses on the active role of the learner and considers education to be a dialectical process in which the efforts of the educator converge with the efforts of the learners to view reality critically and to seek mutual humanisation. He considers knowledge to be a process of research and criticises the "banking model of education" that characterises traditional methods of teaching, where education is an act of saving and, instead of seeking equal communication between teacher and pupil, the former makes statements that the latter receives, records in their memory and repeats patiently. Knowledge "is only born through discovery and rediscovery, and this is achieved through the relentless, impatient, constant, hopeful search that people make about the world, with the world and for each other" (Freire, 1976: 51-67). A key element of his pedagogy is dialogue, which is considered as an encounter between people "who name reality"; a dialogue that requires great faith in the human being and in its power to create and recreate, and helps us "to reveal a new reality for ourselves and for the others" (pp. 69-73). Education can become "a practice of freedom", since it is not simply a transmission of knowledge or culture, but the means by which men and women engage critically and creatively with reality and discover ways of accessing and transforming society (pp. 17-21).¹

In the general consideration of Theatre in the educational process, the aesthetic approach to theatrical activity plays a prominent role, not as a field for evaluation but as a field for the learners' development of aesthetic criteria of perception. Theatre-pedagogy, according to the term used in the German tradition, focuses on personal and social emancipation, as well as on aesthetic cultivation, individual rhythms and diversity, flexibility in the face of the unexpected and the new, while not overlooking participation and reflection (Lenakakis, 2013). The above theoretical principles supported and formed the ground on which

¹ The reference on pages 17-21 by Th. Gerou, in the introduction to Freire, P. (1976). *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (G. Kreticos, Transl.). Athens: Rappa





"Street Cleaner", a performance by Takis Sarris Athens 2004

TENet-Gr has charted its course, designed its actions and implemented its programmes.

The course and actions of TENet-Gr.²

Each project can be seen and understood in a specific time and place, when a real need is looking for a way to be met, and perhaps when something relevant has preceded it, as was, for example, the "Melina - Education and Culture" programme.³

Thus, a small group of teachers, of which the author is a member, had the need and supported the initiative that was to gradually be transformed into the association named The Hellenic Theatre and Education Network.⁴ Seminars and workshops began to be held systematically, covering different aspects of theatre and its use in education, and exploring new approaches, new techniques, greater knowledge and experience.

The small group slowly began to expand and the teachers, from the school playgrounds where they mingled with Creon and Shakespeare's fairies, experimented with movement that produces speech in physical theatre and with the characters of commedia dell'arte, found themselves attending seminars at the Central School of Speech and Drama and working with the method of Drama in Education, and participated in workshops at the Royal National Theatre in London exchanging looks and movements in the Gromalot language.

The practical training was followed by the need for theoretical knowledge, the constant feedback and in-depth understanding of Theatre and its possibilities in the educational process. This led to the creation of dynamic foci, with the aim of recognising and/or emphasising the value of Theatre both in the educational process as well as through specially designed programmes, for their implementation of which, collaborations between theatre artists, theatre educators/drama teachers, theatre theoreticians, teachers, and dialogue with academic and artistic bodies and institutions were required.

² The references to the actions of the TENet-Gr in the second and other sections, as well as the photographs, are taken from the official website of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network www.theatroedu.gr and from its archival material.

³ The main aim of the Melina project was to highlight education's cultural dimension and to integrate the Arts (Theatre, Music, Dance, Visual and Audiovisual Expression) into the educational process. The implementation of its actions, teacher training and production of educational material, started as a pilot project in 100 schools in 1995 before being expanded in 2001.

⁴ The rallying of teachers for vocational training and the integration of Theatre into the educational process was an initiative of Nikos Govas, which started out from the Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Attica.



TENet-Gr was an initiative that quickly developed, acquired a legal form as an association, operated with members and collaborators all over the country and linked up with educational institutions in Greece and abroad, setting as its main objective theatre acquiring a central place in education as a teaching method, as an aesthetic experience and cultural action, and as a means of social intervention.

Part of the successful development of TENet-Gr and of its continuity over time has also been its attitude towards current developments. TENet-Gr has always listened to the developing needs in formal and non-formal education, to the international developments in the field of academic research and practices, and has planned its steps accordingly, constantly redefining its actions, in order to better organise and enrich them, so that it can achieve its objectives. Another significant characteristic of the identity of TENet-Gr, which to a certain extent explains its continuous course, is that it has functioned from the very beginning as a community of teachers and artists sharing the belief that the educational process can be both enriched and transformative through theatre/drama and the performing arts. It is also important to stress that TENet-Gr is an association which relies on the voluntary contribution of its members.

It should also be noted that TENet-Gr's choices of actions and collaborations/partnerships have served, as mentioned above, the different aspects of Theatre in the educational process. These are also the aspects that constitute the guidelines of international organisations and have been codified in texts such as the Roadmap for Arts Education (UNESCO, 2006) and the Seoul Agenda (UNESCO, 2010).

The guidelines of these two texts recognise the subject of Art as an artistic event with its own principles and teaching methodologies. At the same time, they attribute to the Arts an important role as a means of cultivating humanistic education, with educational practices that serve the broader pedagogical role of schools. Ensuring that Art should be a fundamental element of education and should be made accessible to all is the key objective pursued by the Seoul Agenda, and therefore an objective adopted and promoted by UNESCO, which even links it to the transformation of education. In the same Agenda, Art is seen as "the foundation for a balanced, creative, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and social development of children and all human beings in general". At the same time, the social dimension of Art is recognised: "the application of the fundamental principles and practices of the Arts in Education must contribute

to finding solutions to the social and cultural challenges faced by today's world" (UNESCO, 2010). στη

The effort for Theatre to acquire the place it deserves in education required practices that reinforced the idea of its necessity in teachers' consciousness in various ways, but also advocacy to policy makers. A key prerequisite for achieving this was, in addition to a focus on practice, to highlight research results which demonstrate that Theatre is a dynamic and effective agent in reinforcing fundamental principles of pedagogy. The referred journal "Education and Theatre" and TENet-Gr's publications, forty in number to date, have aimed, among other things, at promoting the value of theatre in education as a distinct subject, in the hope that they will contribute to its recognition as such and, by extension, to its institutional and uninterrupted presence in education.

The recognition of Theatre as a distinct subject, its use as a means of modern pedagogical practice, as well as the promotion of its social dimension, have always been key drivers for TENet-Gr's decision making and action taking. In this context, TENet Gr forms partnerships with artists, teachers, academic and cultural institutions that combine the aesthetic experience with raising children's awareness of important social issues, while emphasising experience and theatrical activity. A "pedagogy of the arts" has been the aim of TENet-Gr's journey, since, as pointed out by Lenakakis and Paroussi (2019), it seeks a new way of looking at the world or leaves room for the creation of events that define real learning through the path of art and its pedagogy and make the learning process a meaningful social process (pp. 58-59).

The above objectives are highlighted and confirmed by the actions of TENet-Gr which, among others, include:

- Training programmes for teachers, theatre educators and facilitators.
- Theatre summer camps.
- Programmes in schools and in the community.
- European projects
- International Conferences on Theatre and the Performing Arts in Education.
- The celebration of World Theatre/Drama and Education Day.
- Participating in the International Drama/Theatre & Education Association (IDEA) as an organisational member and in the European Network for Drama/Theatre in Education - IDEA-Europe (founding member).

Some characteristic examples of programmes are mentioned below. Although



these are only three illustrations of how TENet-Gr operates, we believe that to a large extent they reveal the range of actions, the theoretical principles underlying them, the policy of cooperation and the adaptation of actions to the changing circumstances.

mPPACT - A methodology for a Pupil and Performing Arts→ Centred Teaching

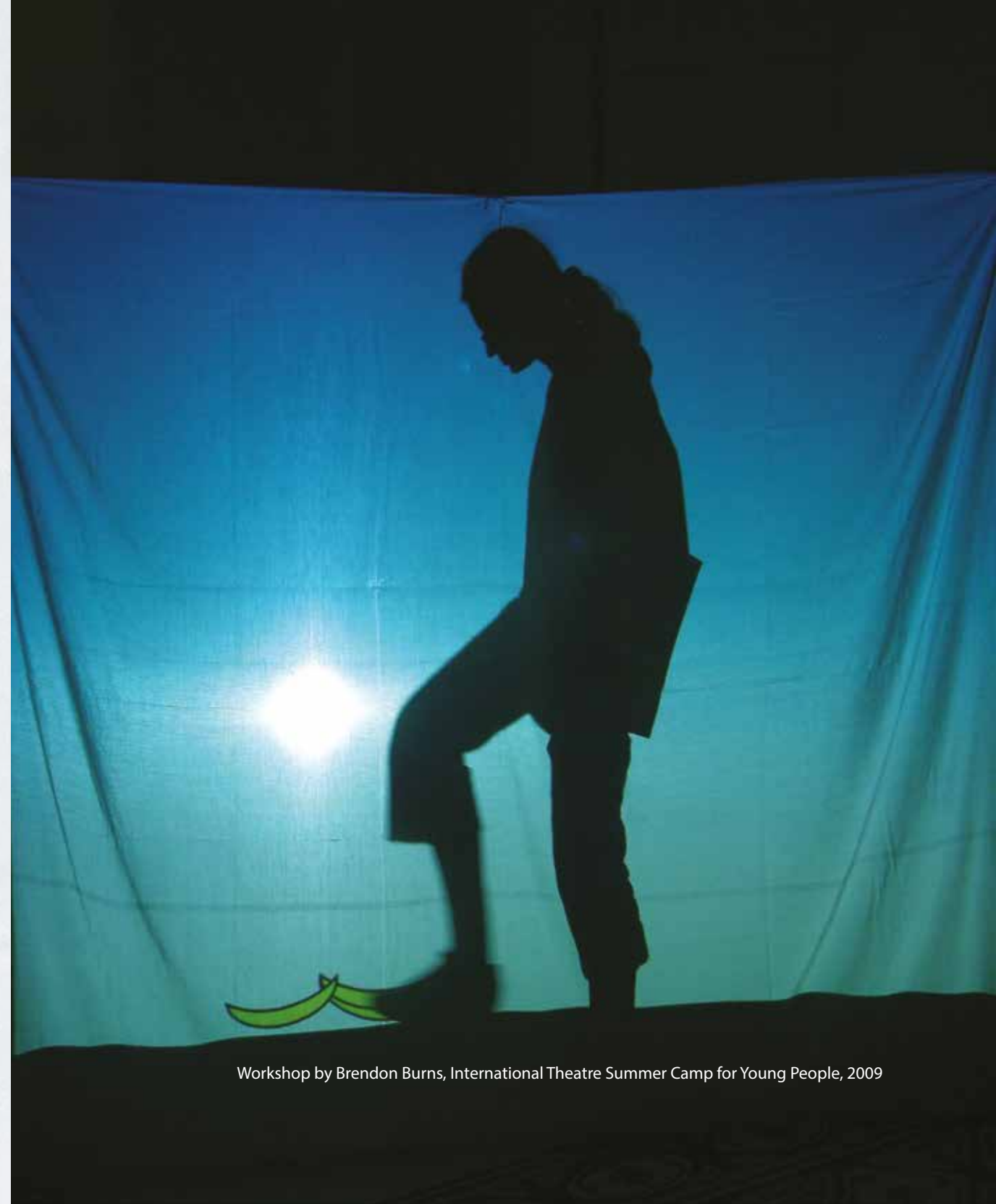
The European project “mPPACT - A methodology for a Pupil and Performing Arts→ Centred Teaching” was implemented in collaboration with seven organisations from four countries (Greece, Cyprus, UK, Denmark) from 2006 to 2009 (Mavrocordatos, 2009).

This was a teacher training programme, which recorded the theoretical framework for the application of Theatre in the educational process and formed the basis for its implementation. A key feature of the teacher training was that no attempt was made to develop a teaching methodology in the sense of the way in which the teacher organises the approach to knowledge and their communication with the student. It was a methodology for a broader pedagogical practice, in which the teacher/educator takes into account the historical and social context within which knowledge takes place and the students’ perception of the world around them.

The Arts, and especially Theatre with its “tools”, symbols, the perception of space and time, were essential elements for teaching and for the emergence of the role of the teacher (Giannouli, 2010: 93-98). At the same time, the artistic event, with the schools’ participation in festivals in each country, constituted the final phase of the programme, making it obvious, as discussed above, that both the field of pedagogical and of aesthetic experience were key pillars of the programme. Once completed, the project was certified in the European Union’s Lifelong Learning database, and training coordinated by TENet-Gr was provided to European teachers.

The “It could be me-it could be you” programme

A recent example of an action that responds to the new circumstances, in this case the escalation of the refugee crisis, is that of “It could be me-it could be you”, an awareness-raising programme on human rights and refugee issues, which has been implemented for the last five years by TENet-Gr and UNHCR-Greece. The programme is addressed to the wider educational community, uses theatre and experiential learning techniques, and includes training seminars, experiential workshops with students, interactive performances, activities bringing together



Workshop by Brendon Burns, International Theatre Summer Camp for Young People, 2009

refugee and local student populations, as well as student festivals. To date, more than 9,000 teachers and 18,000 students have participated in seminars and festivals in 30 cities in Greece.⁵

International Conferences

A constant activity of TENet-Gr is that of International Conferences, which are the culmination of its whole course and a place for meeting and exchanging new concepts and trends, highlighting and using the regular cooperation of TENet-Gr with both academic and cultural institutions in Greece, as well as with the international academic and cultural community.

The first Conference was implemented in 2000 and since then another eight have been held, which have hosted many approaches and forms of Theatre and the Performing Arts. They are of particular importance, since they renew the dialogue with renowned theorists and practitioners in the field, at the same time putting emphasis on the current social reality and on the questions that concern the Theatre in Education community at the moment they are being implemented. The last Conference, which took place in 2018 and was entitled: "The 8th International Conference on Theatre and Education: Theatre and the Performing Arts in education: Utopia or Necessity?" is a good example of this activity.

The aim of the 8th International Conference was characteristic of the situation the Arts were, and are still, going through in Greece and in the world. In its rationale, it was stated that it intended to create a platform for productive dialogue and reflection between the different communities of teachers, artists, researchers, academics and civil society: "At a time when research around the world underlines the contribution of Theatre and the Performing Arts to the holistic development of the human being, the cultivation of active citizenship, the development of intercultural competence and communication, as well as to personal and social development, and to the development of a sense of responsibility and responsibility for the arts, we are faced with their increasing undervaluing in education". The 450 participants from 17 countries from all continents attempted to answer the question "Is the presence of Theatre in

⁵ The structure of the programme, its theoretical framework, the teacher-training workshops and the student programmes that have been and are being implemented in the "It could be me – it could be you" project are presented in Choleva N. (ed.) (2021). "It Could Be Me – It Could Be You" - Drama/Theatre in Education methodologies and activities for raising awareness on human rights and refugees. Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr), UNHCR Greece.

Education a utopia or is it recognised as a need for which we must work together to make it a reality?" During the Conference, the dialogue with the international community was renewed, new arguments were added and new research in the field was shared, while a bilingual publication containing the speeches, presentations and practical workshops followed (Giannouli & Koukounaras-Liagkis, 2019).

Puppet Theatre in the Actions of TENet-Gr

The art of Puppet Theatre has always been present in TENet-Gr's course, in the teacher training seminars, in international events, in discussions explaining its context and in its many forms, constructions, facilitation, performances, etc. The following are some highlights of this course:

a. Puppet Theatre at TENet-Gr's International Conferences

a1. Workshops

2001 - The use of puppetry in the teaching of spoken and written language, Thanassis Koutsogiannis

- Object & puppet animation, Stathis Markopoulos

2003 - Main principles of puppet animation: against common problems and mistakes, Stathis Markopoulos

- Puppet theatre intervention in contemporary school teaching practice or how a puppet can invade the classroom... allowing imagination and creativity to take off, Vassiliki Bakrozi

2004 - Puppet-making and animation (marionette, marotte), Constantina Mara & Iphigenia Tsihla

2006 - Paper giants, Stathis Markopoulos

- Puppet and everyday objects' animation workshop, Kyriaki Doxara

2007 - The object subject - Workshop on the alliance of inanimate objects with animate teachers, Stathis Markopoulos

- The Art of Speech in the Theatre of Objects, Antigoni Paroussi & Katerina Vlachou

2008 - Looking for the puppet..., Christos Avtsidis

-Dance of the threads or my shoe - the ideal puppet: a theatre puppetry workshop, Stathis Markopoulos





Paper Giants, 5th International Theatre/Drama and Education Conference, 2006

2012 - The puppeteer and the puppet. A relationship that is built, Antigoni Paroussi

2018 - In the service of magical creatures, Stathis Markopoulos

a2. Performances - Happenings

In two of the international conferences, the action in the corridors and the courtyard attracted the interest of the spectators-participants when, between speeches, workshops and breaks, students of the Puppetry and Shadow Theatre class of Professor Antigoni Paroussi of the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Athens, presented happenings by creating shadows behind white umbrellas or constructed small worlds with their paper theatres to remind us that puppetry is “the creation, the ‘making’ of new worlds immersed in emotion, with artistic, magical-metaphysical elements and in each case unique” (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019: 64). In another international conference, the dynamics of the giant puppets created a happening by walking around the premises with all the momentum that the participants of Stathis Markopoulos’ workshop were given by the joy of their creation and the knowledge of puppetry’s essential techniques.

Scheduled performances held the attention of the participants, such as the performance “Unique moments of love” by the Baruti At The End Of the Thread

Puppet Theatre Company and “The street cleaner” with Takis Sarris, at the 4th International Conference in 2004.

b. Seminars - camps - collaborations

The relationship of TENet-Gr with puppetry does not stop here. A number of seminars have been held over the years, either as pre-conference events in the context of the international conferences, such as the Table Top Puppets seminar at the 2006 Conference with Stathis Markopoulos as facilitator, or in the context of training initiatives organised by TENet-Gr’s branches in Greece, either on a regular basis or as part of the International Theatre/Drama and Education Day celebrations; for example, in 2015, in Thessaloniki, the seminar “Introduction to Black Theatre” with Vangelis Stamatis, Theodosia Tourtoglou and Nausika Katsikea as facilitators, and in Athens, the seminar “The Making of Drama: The theatrical puppet as a tool for the condensation of meaning” with Stathis Markopoulos as facilitator, where the puppet attempted a commentary on the refugee issue. The puppet became an object of animation for the children at TENet-Gr’s Theatre Summer Camp in Pelion in 2019 with Anastasia Kordari’s workshop “The creatures of the camp: a mask and puppet workshop”.

At the same time, the dialogue and cooperation of TENet-Gr with the Greek branch of the international puppet-theatre association UNIMA HELLAS



is maintained in conferences and seminars. In addition, TENet-Gr has been present for several years as a collaborating partner in the International Puppet Theatre Festival of Kilkis. In 2020, TENet-Gr collaborated with the Puppet Theatre Company "Prassein Aloga" and participated in the Conference on Puppetry in Education held as part of the educational programme and competition "Playing Puppetry: Teacher & Theatrical Puppet in the Classroom".

A most important collaboration was the one with Michael Meschke, artist, director, professor of theatre, known as "the puppeteer of the 20th century". At the International Symposium on Ancient Drama organised by TENet-Gr, with his presentation "Three Cultures for Sophocles: a unique stage adventure" and at the 2010 Theatre Summer Camp with the presentation "Theatre at the Fingertips: From Sophocles through Brecht to Revelation", he shared with the participants-spectators moments from a lifetime dedicated to interdisciplinary theatre creation. The audience had the opportunity to meet and talk with a theatre man who specialises in puppetry, but also to see snapshots from his archives and videos of his work, in the auditorium of the Anargyrios School in Spetses.

Finally, in the Education and Theatre journal one can read about a number of publications on puppetry education, as well as accounts of festivals and actions such as the 2011 Charleville-Mezieres International Puppet Festival (Paroussi, 2012).

From "The Gaza Monologues" to the "Monologues across the Aegean Sea" and the "Quarantine Monologues": TENet-Gr during the COVID-19 quarantine time.

The period of quarantine due to COVID-19 was a shock for everyone. We went from a state of everyday life, with elements of a self-evident freedom, to a state of isolation, loneliness, bewilderment and the inability to carry out activities and have contacts that used to be essential parts of our lives. The actions of TENet-Gr require experiencing them live, personal contact, interaction and communication. We lost the possibility to express ourselves the way we used to, to share our work, to try out new things. But while TENet-Gr's face-to-face activities had to be postponed, creativity and solidarity found a way to express themselves through online meetings. From discussions with artists such as Dimitris Tarlow, Argyris Xafis and Martha Bouziouri in the context of the Action "Let's go to the theatre from... home!", we moved, among other things, to intercultural education training sessions with Kostas Magos, theatre forum with Christina Zoniou, exploring the

role of the theatre educator with Antonis Lenakakis and attempts at remote theatrical expression with Georgina Kakoudaki, Kostas Gakis and others. Online communication had many supporters and although, by general admission and as is self-evident, it cannot replace the face-to-face experience, it was a spark of hope, sharing and communication in the difficult situation of social distancing. Many actions took place, and the pre-existing networking of TENet-Gr's members, partners and friends facilitated this form of communication and training.

A major project of TENet-Gr during the quarantine period was the "Quarantine Monologues" project.

Creating an artistic event with a strong element of social awareness through monologues is a practice that TENet-Gr has embraced and supported since 2010. Specifically: from November 2009 to April 2010, 32 Palestinian youths aged 13-17, in Gaza, worked on their experiences, thoughts, hopes, dreams and fears during and after the Israeli invasion in December 2008 and produced "The Gaza Monologues". Their stories were presented simultaneously in October 2010 in 30 countries. TENet-Gr organised actions in eight cities in Greece, practical workshops for students and young people, discussions and theatre performances with students, so that, as the project coordinator, Iman Aoun, artistic director of Ashtar Theatre, said, their voices could be heard, so that they could say "Enough is enough! We deserve a better world, a world without wars and siege, and above all, without occupation!"⁶

The Gaza Monologues set the example for the implementation of the "Monologues across the Aegean Sea", an action organised by TENet-Gr and UNHCR-Greece, which produced 28 testimonies of unaccompanied minor refugees, who were forced to leave their homes and arrive alone in Greece in 2015 and 2016, crossing the Aegean Sea. Through a series of 20 practical workshops, the voices of these children were collected in one publication (Tsoukala, 2016). This publication also became a journey for children and young people from schools all over Greece, by including public readings, theatre workshops, various happenings and performances.

The above idea was also the basis for the production of the "Quarantine Monologues", which emerged from the testimonies of 24 refugee teenagers through 16 writing workshops, under the guidance of professional writers. The teenagers came from Refugee Accommodation Centres, unaccompanied

⁶ See <https://bit.ly/39k4kDG>



children's shelters and apartments of the ESTIA programme. Their texts will be included in a special edition in Greek and English.

Epilogue

One could argue that the recognition of the importance of aesthetic experience in the learning process, the need for collaborative ways of working, and the treatment of the human being as a whole, as body, soul and mind, are elements that do not need defending. They are part of the perceptual patterns of our culture, which since antiquity have recognised that theatre has an educational value, it has value as a means of cultivating active citizens, it has value as a means of enhancing the critical eye of children, young people and adults. So, does Theatre in Education need defending?

Unfortunately, the contemporary reality of the place of Theatre and the Arts in Education in general negates the obvious. Recently, the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE)⁷ has taken action and drawn up the Frankfurt Declaration (WAAE, 2019) to put pressure on UNESCO to include the Arts in its strategic priorities from now on. With its reactivation, WAAE is present and opposes any restriction of the Arts around the world, as it recently did with its letter about the shrinking of the Arts in Greek schools.⁸

Finally, it should be noted that the expansion of the place of the Arts in education has been a need that TENet-Gr has served steadily throughout its 22 years of existence, with the collaboration of teachers, art institutions, scientific associations, puppeteers, facilitators and others. We come to the conclusion, therefore, that it is a common assumption that, although "the empty space" for theatre is a possibility, as Peter Brook (2008) stated, for education the gap left by the absence or shrinking of the Arts in any form is the greatest loss. The overturning of such a reality requires joining forces, since the target is a common one.

⁷ The World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) was created in 2006 at the World Conference on Arts Education in Lisbon and consists of the following organisations: International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), International Society for Music Education (ISME), International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) and World Dance Alliance (WDA). See <https://www.waae.online/>. The last WAAE Conference took place in October 2019 in Frankfurt, where representatives from all four arts met and discussed taking action about the place of the Arts in education and the implementation of the Seoul Agenda goals.

⁸ See letter of the World Alliance for Arts Education to the Greek government on the shrinking position of the Arts in Greek schools at https://www.waae.online/uploads/1/2/9/2/129270960/waae_letter_to_ministers_of_education_in_greece_june_25_2020__1_.pdf

References

- Avdi, A., & Hatzigeorgiou, M. (2007). Η τέχνη του δράματος στην εκπαίδευση. 48 προτάσεις για εργαστήρια θεατρικής αγωγής [The art of drama in education. 48 proposals for theatre/drama in education workshops]. Metaihmio.
- Brook, Peter (1968). *The Empty Space*. Penguin (2008).
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Choleva N. (ed.) (2021). "It Could Be Me – It Could Be You" - Drama/Theatre in Education methodologies and activities for raising awareness on human rights and refugees. Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr) in partnership with the UNHCR Representation in Greece. <http://theatroedu.gr/en/What-we-do/Our-books/it-could-be-me-it-could-be-you-dramatheatre-in-education-methodologies-and-activities-for-raising-awareness-on-human-rights-and-refugees-1>
- Dafermos, M (2002). Η πολιτισμική-ιστορική θεωρία του Vygotsky. Φιλοσοφικές – ψυχολογικές – παιδαγωγικές διαστάσεις [Vygotsky's cultural – historical theory. Philosophical -psychological - pedagogical dimensions]. Atrapos.
- Dewey, J. (1980). *Εμπειρία και εκπαίδευση* [Experience & Education] (L. Polenakis, Trans). Glaros
- Dewey, J. (1982). *Το σχολείο και η κοινωνία* [Schools and Society] (M. Mihalopoulou, Trans). Glaros.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. FreePress.
- Freire, P. (1976). *Η αγωγή του καταπιεζόμενου* [Pedagogy of the Oppressed] (G. Kretikos, Trans). Rappa.
- Freire P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin.
- Gardner, H. (1991). *The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach*. Basic Books.
- Giannouli, B. (2010). *μPPACT: Μεθοδολογία για μια παιδαγωγική με κέντρο τον μαθητή και τις παραστατικές τέχνες. Η πορεία και η εξέλιξη του προγράμματος στην Ελλάδα* [Methodology for a Pupil and Performing Art-Centered Teaching. The course and the development of the project in Greece]. Education & Theatre, 11, 93-98.
- Giannouli, B., & Koukounaras-Liagkis, M. (eds) (2019). *Theatre/Drama & Performing Arts in Education: Utopia or Necessity?* Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network. <http://theatroedu.gr/en/What-we-do/Our-books>



Lenakakis, A. (2013). Η διεθνής συμφωνία περί δεοντολογίας και συμπεριφοράς του θεατροπαιδαγωγού ως αφορμή για διάλογο και προτάσεις [The international agreement for the ethics and behaviour of theatre-pedagogue as a motive for dialogue and proposals]. *Education and Theatre*, 14, 127-134.

Lenakakis, A. & Paroussi, A. (2019). Η τέχνη του κουκλοθεάτρου στην εκπαίδευση. Παιχνίδι συγκλίσεων και αποκλίσεων [The art of puppet theatre in Education. A game of convergences and divergences]. Gutenberg.

Mavrocordatos, A. (Ed.) (2009). mPPACT manifest: Methodology for a pupil & performing arts centred teaching. Authors OnLine Ltd. Retrieved from <http://www.theatroedu.gr/Portals/38/main/images/stories/files/Books/mPPACT/mPPACT%20olo%20s.pdf>

Nicholson, H., (2005). *Applied drama. The gift of theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Paroussi, A. (2012). Ένα ταξίδι στην πρωτεύουσα της μαριονέτας: Διεθνές Φεστιβάλ Μαριονέτας της Charleville-Mezières. Πενήντα χρόνια φεστιβάλ 15-25 Σεπτεμβρίου 2011 [A journey to the capital of marionette: International Festival of Marionette to Charleville-Mezières. Fifty years of Festival, 15-25 September 2011]. *Εκπαίδευση και Θέατρο*, 13, 75-83.

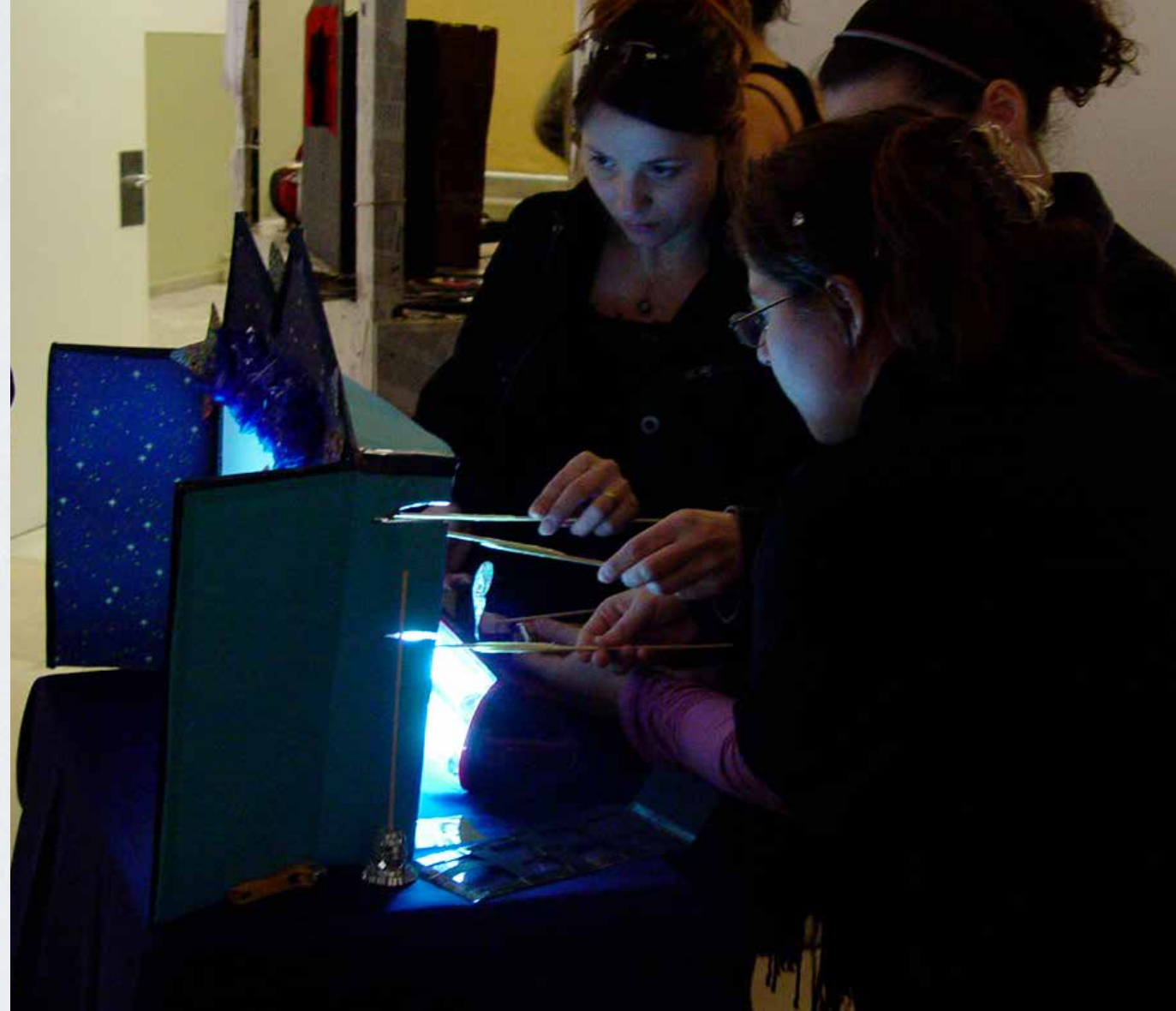
Rigkou-Repousi, M. (2019). *Εκπαιδευτικό δράμα: Από το θέατρο στην εκπαίδευση [Educational Drama. From Theatre to Education]*. Kastaniotis.

Tsoukala, H. (ed.) (2016). *Monologues across the Aegean Sea - The journey and dreams of unaccompanied refugee children*. Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network & UNHCR <http://theatroedu.gr/en/What-we-do/Our-books/%ce%bconologues-across-the-aegean-sea-the-journey-and-dreams-of-unaccompanied-refugee-children-1>

UNESCO (2006). *Road map for arts education*. Lisbon: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Arts_Edu_RoadMap_en.pdf

UNESCO (2010). *The Seoul Agenda: Goals for the development of arts education*. Seoul: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTI-MEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Seoul_Agenda_EN.pdf

World Alliance for Arts Education. (2019). *The Frankfurt declaration for arts education*. Retrieved from <https://www.waae.online/advocacy.html>



Paper theaters, performances /happening by A. Paroussi, Students of the Department of Early Childhood Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 5th International Theatre/Drama and Education Conference, 2008

Betty Giannouli

is a theatre educator and sociologist. Since 2017, she teaches Theatre/Drama in Education at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Early Childhood Education, after working in Higher Secondary Education for 25 years as a teacher and as a principal. She has been teaching Theatre/Drama in Education in Post Graduate Programmes at Athens University and the University of the Peloponnese since 2013. Her research interests since 1998 lie in the use of theatre as an educational medium and as a means of social intervention. Her PhD field-research focused on how theatre/drama can have a positive effect on learning, on the cooperation among pupils, the development of critical thinking and the role of the teacher-facilitator. Since 2013 she has been working with the INDRA International Programme for Young People, which focuses on reconciliation through the Arts. She is a founding member of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network (TENet-Gr), where she has held the position of the President (2008-2011) and of the Vice President (2017-2020). Her work also includes planning, organising and delivering teacher-training seminars, national and international conferences on Theatre/Drama in Education as well as projects.

6η ΔΙΕΘΝΗΣ ΣΥΝΔΙΑΣΚΕΨΗ
ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΘΕΑΤΡΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ 2008
6th ATHENS INTERNATIONAL THEATRE/DRAMA & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

"Θέατρο και Εκπαίδευση
στο Κέντρο της Σκηνής"



"Theatre & Education at Centre Stage"

27 | 28 | 29 | 30

Μαρτίου 2008 Αθήνα | March 2008, Athens, Greece

www.theatroedu.gr

οργάνωση:
ΠΑΝΕΛΛΗΝΙΟ ΔΙΚΤΥΟ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ
ΘΕΑΤΡΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ



organised by:
HELLENIC THEATRE / DRAMA
& EDUCATION NETWORK

Πανελλήνιο Δίκτυο για το
Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση

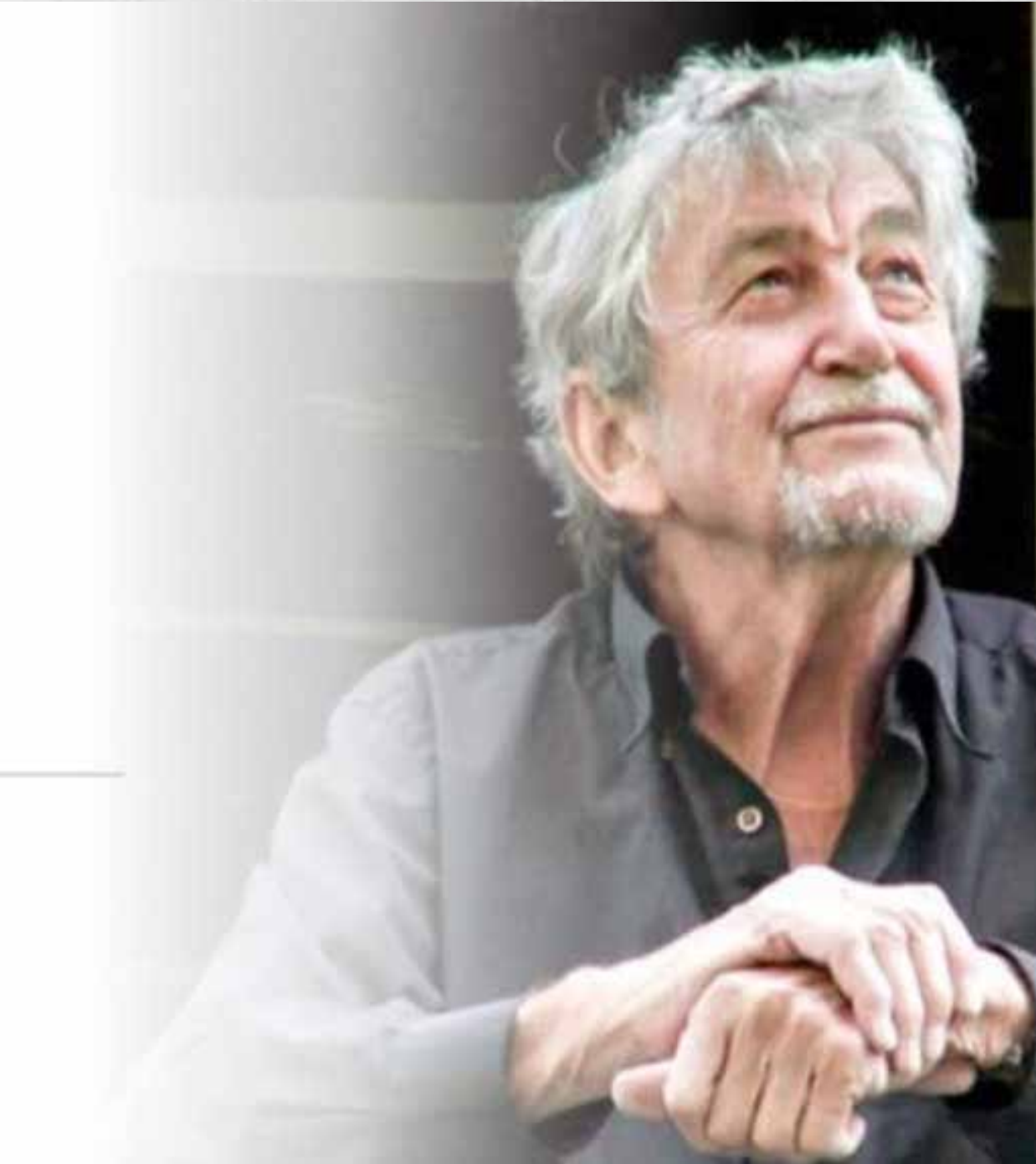


Fig.5: Baptiste, 1953
Michael Meschke



The image shows four vertical strips of colored paper against a white background. From left to right, the strips are: a red strip, a yellow strip, a light orange strip, and a darker orange strip. The strips are slightly curved and have a textured appearance. The text 'Part Two' is written in red on the right side of the image.

Part Two



From an artist of the past to the artists of the future

I express my wishes: may no difficulty ever stop you from striving to reach your audiences with laughter and tears through important contents. Use all the accumulated knowledge of craftsmanship, refined techniques for articulation of puppet's bodies and clever or simple manipulation constructions and search for quality through, especially cherishing movements on stage! The more refined your instruments, the greater your chances to reach the hearts of others.
"Work is love made visible" said the poet Kahlil Gibran.

*Excerpt from a speech by Professor Michael Meschke
at the celebration of UNIMA's 90 years, Charleville-Mézières.
September 22, 2019*

Speech by Professor Michael Meschke

Given in Charleville, Belgium, September 22, 2019 at the celebration of UNIMA's 90th anniversary.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly thank President Dadi Pudumjee, Secretary General Idoya Otegui and professor Cristina Grazioli for inviting me, on the occasion of UNIMA's 90th jubilee, to share some thoughts with you from a long past with this Union.

The little group of artists from six nations who gathered in Prague in 1929 shared a passion. Let's take a quick ride through time, starting with them. I was not there, so please bear with me if, in a fog of fact and myth, I rely on my fantasy, imagining these pioneers spending nights in the cosy taverns of Prague, filling their glasses with crazy, utopic dreams about a world dominance of puppets (oh horrible perspective!) – yet sober enough to draw up and sign the foundation act of UNIMA.

Glory and honour to the founders, with names like Veselý, Lowenhaupt, Hardy, Brohme, Link, Jeanne, Bogatyrev, Puhonny, etc. A memory book edited by Nina Malikova has just been published.

They lived and worked in the dynamic and dramatic age of the 1920s. Bauhaus days. And then?

During the 1930s, under the leadership of Jan Malik, UNIMA was slowly growing while the world was darkening. What a challenge to promote internationalism as the greatest crime in history was being prepared. During World War II, UNIMA was deep frozen but, as the world rose from the ashes, the organisation was resurrected: the foundation spirit had survived and artists were there to take over.

In the late 1940s and the 1950s, puppet theatre reflected the need in most societies to rebuild – at the same time as a new political polarisation split us into East and West.

In so-called socialist countries puppetry was recognised by the State as a folk art and subsidized widely, with theatres in every town! Whereas in the so-called capitalist West, puppeteers had to struggle for recognition and financing. Puppet theatres tried to reconstruct a repertory from before.

Then came the 1960s, new ideas, new artists who broke new ground, radicalised the form of language in certain plays, like Franciszka Themerson in

Stockholm when she designed the production of Ubu Roi in 1964.

With the movement called "May 68" everything started changing: in the East with hardening repression, in the West with unheard of liberalisation.

During the 1970s, the new lifestyle and freedom of 1968 brought social and political participation, also in puppetry, with people like Peter Schumann and his Bread and Puppet Theatre opposing the Vietnam war, or Joan Miró's political satire. For myself, I called it the "furious impotence of puppetry".

As early as in 1973, at the session in Sweden, the Executive Committee is faced with a "Stockholm Declaration" containing new definitions of puppetry and related arts, propagating artistic multi-disciplinary openness, inclusiveness and tolerance. The Declaration was unanimously adopted – and soon forgotten.

From Warsaw, Henryk Jurkowski, who was then UNIMA's Secretary General, started a periodical called "Unima-informations", a yearly publication open to all, sent out to members by post – the internet did not exist then.

News was published from outer space, meaning from cultures beyond Europe. Some distant representatives joined UNIMA and were elected executive members, such as Meher Contractor from India and Taiji Kawajiri from Japan.

Jacques Félix of Charleville, who was now the third Secretary General, was easy to win over in favour of global extension, encouraging new countries to join, especially Togo, Africa. The more the world was shrinking, the bigger the need for a broader integration. We created The Third World Commission, (an ugly, postcolonial name), but then soon understood that there was not one world to cover out there but several worlds.

Consequently, we dissolved ourselves and started one separate commission for each continent.

But the most important and lasting change in those days was the birth of new national centres: in India, Greece, Iceland, Mexico, Thailand and elsewhere.

Cultural exchange intensified, a lot thanks to cooperation with the Charleville festivals presenting art from many cultures. Especially treasures from Japan made more hearts than mine beat faster: Bunraku-master Minosuke Yoshida, the Takeda family string-puppet players, the Kuruma Ningyo (cart puppetry) player Koryu Nishikawa, as well as the until then unseen tradition of Karakuri Ningyo (mechanised puppets) brought by Yasuko Senda.

We are now in the 1980s. At the 13th UNIMA congress in Washington, Nancy Lohman Staub offered a truly worldwide festival, unseen before in scale, scope



and boldness of visions, especially including repressed countries in Latin America. They got a face and a voice through Ana Maria Tempestini.

Margareta Niculescu spearheaded the introduction of professional training, her most important contribution to the world as well to UNIMA, because this high school, although financed by the French state, is open to students from all over the world. To teach new generations, beginning in 1981, with talents like the Arketal's founders, Greta Bruggeman and Sylvie Osman, through to Basil Swift was a privilege.

In a historical perspective, and of course subjectively speaking, I would say "Those were the days my friend; I thought they'd never end!"

All these achievements were motorised by pure passion.

We had no choice anyway – there was never enough money for the needs.

Now, what made UNIMA live so long? Maybe we can find some form of answer looking at some basic values.

UNIMA's greatest potential is communication: to establish contacts, exchange information, spread knowledge, promote understanding of the unknown and the exotic, honour experience, fight readymade ideas, correct prejudice.

One such prejudice that is hard to kill, is that tradition and renewal are opposed – while they are, in fact, each other's condition.

As early as in 1957 in Braunschweig, we debated the long-lived idea that tradition and renewal are opposed, while they are each other's condition! The radical modernist Harry Kramer's distorted, amputated post-war characters rolled over the stage to Aretha Franklin's sad voice. Kramer surprised us by declaring that his inspiration came from traditional, mobile artisan children's toys. The man built a bridge between tradition and renewal.

Another value inseparable from UNIMA is idealism. It means to dream a better world, regardless how utopic. Idealism inspired the founders and, I hope, still makes the organisation go round thanks to all the unpaid work done. That is something! We need to keep it that way!

What about solidarity?

The Italian reformer Matteo Renzi said "solidarity is the constitutional element of our identity". Taste that!

UNIMA, as an organisation independent and free from any regime or cultural dictate, is free to face challenges, to take stands, and therefore should intervene when needed and possible, be it to help a persecuted member, a living tradition

threatened to disappear or a museum forced to shut down – a reality in Sweden. In brief it needs to implement solidarity.

Here is the biggest dilemma. With Idoya Otegui's words: "UNIMA has existed so many years because of much diplomacy. We have to deal with many countries, different regimes, religions, political ideas. Most of all we must fight for what our statutes say ...respect for the human being."

Indeed, statutes are there to uphold democracy. I know something about that: 1969, the UNIMA congress in Prague, one year after the annihilation of the "Prague spring". Tension in the air. First time for me, bringing a Swedish delegation. The congress agenda includes changes of statutes to improve democratic procedures, presented by two Czech intellectuals, Dr Eric Kolar and Dr Zdenek Beszdek.

A big Russian delegation, headed by UNIMA president Sergey Obratsov, aggressively rejected the propositions. The members from Eastern countries observed a terrible silence. Timidly, I raised my voice to express Swedish support to the improvements.

Consternation: who was this extra-terrestrial who dared to oppose the big elephants? The matter was closed without any democratic discussion. I believe that is what started my career as the black sheep of UNIMA.

Years later, at the 1992 congress in Ljubljana, another big statute crisis shook UNIMA. This time I was chairman of the Statute Commission. On the table: new statutes, requested by several national centres, especially Italy, who wanted to solve a big democratic problem:

Generally, in socialist countries the membership in UNIMA was collective and automatic for employees of state puppet theatres. No fees to pay and yet one voice per person. On the other hand, Western members had to pay their membership fees individually. As a result, the beautiful principle of one member one voice, in this case made the East unfairly outnumber the West.

But before voting, the congress had to elect a new President of UNIMA. I happened to be a favourite for the office.

Opponents to statute changes thought stopping me from being elected would also stop the new statutes. I lost the election, but the statutes were adopted and UNIMA changed radically, from direct to indirect voting, meaning that the representatives elected in proportion to the number of members in each centre gathered in the Council and took over decision-making.



It was a victory for democracy. They received the message, even if they killed the messenger and I left UNIMA, not without heading, together with Ariel Bufano, a seminar about ethics within the organisation.

THE FUTURE

The new millennium brought along new challenges. Materialism and rough egoism took over, bringing along contempt of knowledge, of experience, of the immaterial heritage. Voices were shut down, visions refused. This constitutes heavy threats to all culture, including our art and our institutions. Life is not easy.

Can UNIMA be a counterweight to such threats?

Indeed, what is UNIMA?

UNIMA exists only because there is puppet theatre! Puppet theatre exists only because there are artists, artists who are there to offer the magic of theatre to generation after generation. Performers and performances, by the thousands and through time, are part of this collective heritage, or patrimonio, as it is celebrated all over the world this very day. Let's remember just some of them, like Jan Wilkowski's *O Zwyrtale muzykancie*, Joan Baixas's and Joan Miró's *Mori el Merma*, or the works of creators like Richard Teschner, Géza Blattner, Yves Joly, Ariel Bufano, Philippe Genty, also including eminent benefactors like Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, from India, Kive Staiff, from Argentina, and so forth. Such "name dropping" is really necessary for our history. No history – no future! Remembering shapes continuity. Where there is continuity, there is future. And that future is international.

Today, UNIMA has successfully reached an enviable globalisation, symbolised by the first non-European President in the person of Dadi Pudumjee: artist, humanist and "mundialista" in one person. Myself, I owe him to have re-activated me for UNIMA.

From an artist of the past to the artists of the future, I express my wishes: may no difficulty ever stop you from striving to reach your audiences with laughter and tears through important contents.

Use all the accumulated knowledge of craftsmanship, the refined techniques for the articulation of puppets' bodies and clever or simple manipulation constructions and search for quality throughout, especially cherishing the movements on stage! The more refined your instruments, the greater your chances to reach the hearts of others.

"Work is love made visible," said the poet Kahlil Gibran.

UNIMA's future as an organisation depends entirely on the personalities who shape the organisation's action. The Old Lady is a mirror of the world: she can bring out the best and the worst in you. You can use her, abuse her or serve her, but if she has lived as much as ninety years there must be something about her.

I believe UNIMA has a natural destiny, which it has yet to assume, to be the highest qualified authority in puppetry-related issues, in matters of ethics and aesthetics, social justice, professional training, trade union business and so forth by continuing to be a non-bureaucratic instrument for the promotion of exchange and quality.

By the way, the future is already here – what you do and decide today shapes your tomorrow.

Let me conclude with the words of a friend, the Indian philosopher Subash Malik: Be – not become; Act – not react.

Happy birthday, UNIMA!

Final and only version, as of September 23, 2019

Michael Meschke





UNIMA HELLAS: Identity and artistic activity

UN.I.MA., acronym of the French “Union Internationale de la Marionnette”, is the International Puppetry Association. It is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation, affiliated to UNESCO and a full member of the International Theatre Institute. It was founded in 1929 in Prague and today has chapters in some ninety countries around the world, its headquarters being in France. It acts as a contact point for the puppeteers of the world, but also as an independent organisation which, through its many committees and working groups, promotes puppet theatre at an international level. Every four years a world congress is held, where the organisation’s objectives, policy and programming are redefined.

Fig.1: Representatives of UNIMA HELLAS, A. Gounaridis, M. Tsiamoura, L. Aslanoglou, B. Kokaraki (from left to right)

Hellenic UNIMA Centre Marialena Tsiamoura

The Hellenic UNIMA Centre was founded in 1990. It is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation and its goal is to promote the art of puppetry in Greece, at all levels, in its contemporary broad sense. More specifically, and according to its statutes, its purpose is to promote the art and techniques of puppet-theatre forms in the following ways:

- a) by creating, thanks to the use of all possible means of communication, contacts and exchanges between the artists of these forms of theatre, within and outside Greece;
 - b) by organising festivals, lectures, exhibitions, competitions, seminars, workshops and other related activities;
 - c) by encouraging professional training;
 - d) by contributing to historical, theoretical and scientific research;
 - e) by keeping traditions alive and encouraging their renewal;
 - f) by disseminating the above arts as a means of moral and aesthetic education;
- and,
- g) by participating in the work of international and Greek organisations with similar purposes.

Membership in the association is open to all those who are artists or friends of puppet theatre, shadow theatre, Karaghiozis, marionettes, black theatre, etc. It brings the puppet professionals closer together, and the audience closer to the puppet and its theatre. Today it has about 60 members from all over Greece and unites all the professionals in the field, without any breakaways or splinter groups. As it is the only collective body for the art of puppet theatre, it also functions –through its General Assembly and working groups– as the artists' collective representative before the State and state institutions/agencies and this for any case that is deemed appropriate or necessary.

The activities of UNIMA HELLAS include the organisation of festivals, happenings, seminars, workshops for children and adults, one-day meetings or conferences on the art of puppetry, performances and events, the celebration of World Puppetry Day in various cities in Greece, as well as the support of actions that promote puppet theatre.

The association also publishes books, the magazine *Níma* (i.e., Thread) and other informative material promoting Greek troupes, fighting daily to upgrade the art of puppetry and participating in the international dialogue around it.

It has collaborated with many institutions (universities, cultural centres, teachers' associations, municipalities, etc.) as the co-organiser of festivals, exhibitions, workshops and presentations and is in constant communication and dialogue with a number of other theatrical institutions.

Every year, on the occasion of the World Puppetry Day, UNIMA HELLAS organises an open, collective celebration to share the love for its art and to communicate that puppetry is flourishing and that it generously spreads imagination, thought and laughter to young and old alike. This celebration comprises puppet theatre performances for both children and adult audiences, children's puppet workshops, adult puppet workshops with a show, a puppet exhibition of experienced and young puppeteers, a puppet parade, as well as activities and events around the art of puppetry. Indeed, this celebration is not held solely in Athens, but also in Ioánnina and Thessaloníki – and sometimes in Crete, Corfu and Kalambáka (in Thessaly) on the same terms. All the artists involved in the organisation of the World Puppetry Day work voluntarily and all performances and workshops are free of charge.

UNIMA's secretariat and library were hosted for a number of years at the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation (206 Piraeus Street, Tavros) and were open to the public every Tuesday and Thursday. Currently, a new space is being sought, which will be able to host all the activities described above. Thanks to its website www.unimahellas.org and the web page forum.unimahellas.org, the association has valuable material on the internet, thus helping those interested in puppet theatre and keeping its members in touch with stimuli for a creative dialogue on topics that interest both the friends of puppet theatre and the professionals, as well as being a means of communication for information and announcements about the association's actions.

UNIMA HELLAS is funded through the subscriptions of its members. All its actions and long years of contribution to Greece's cultural landscape have relied exclusively on the enthusiasm and voluntary work of the professionals, amateurs and friends of puppet theatre.





Behind the puppets

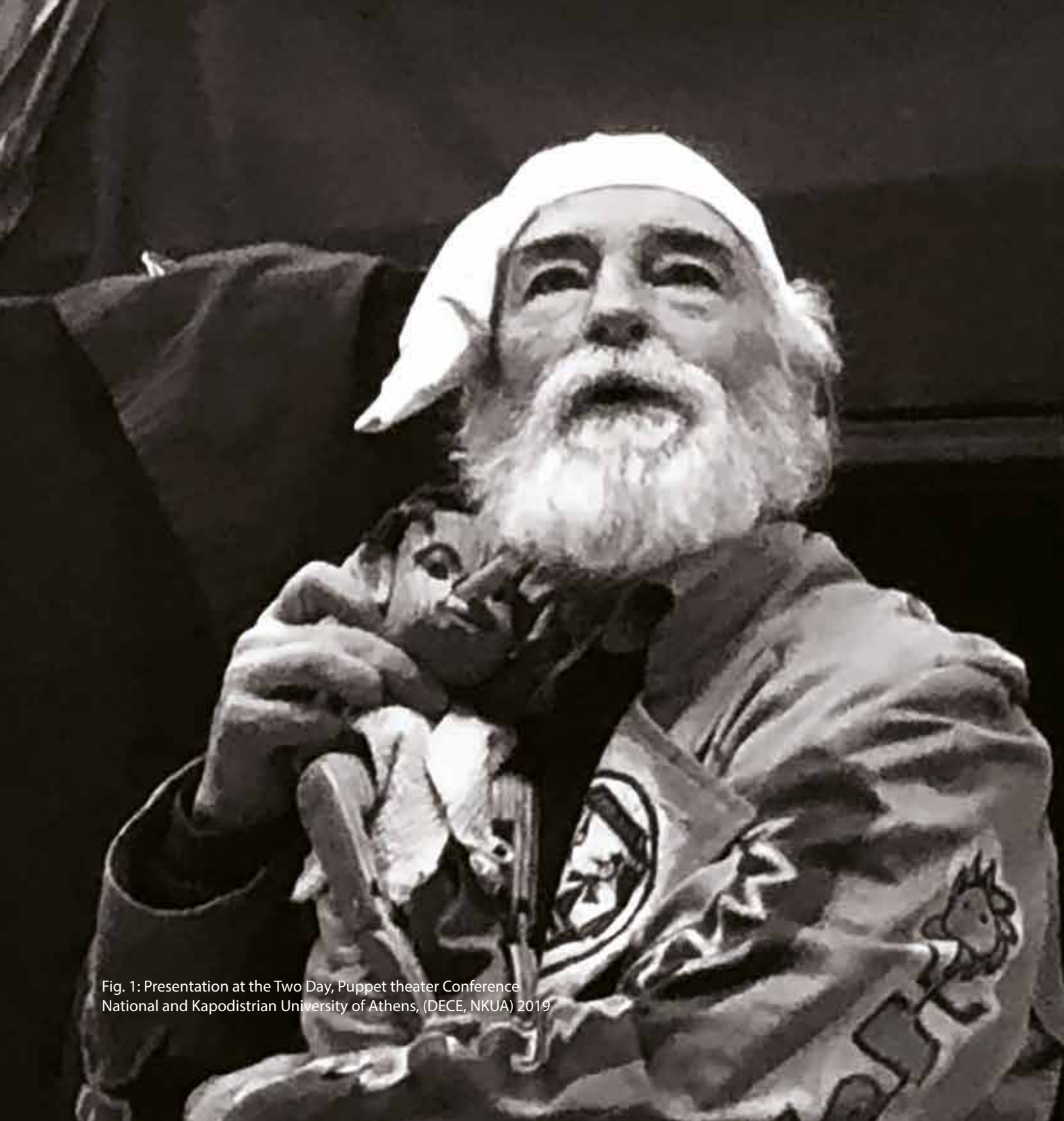


Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019

Theatro tis Kouklas

The "Theatro tis Kouklas" was created by Takis Sarris and Mina Sarri in 1978. In the beginning, it was called Kouklothiassos "To Koskino" (Puppet Company "The Sieve"), but as of 1981 it took its current name of "Theatro tis Kouklas". The source of inspiration and driving force to embark on this venture came from the performances of the great American theatrical company, the "Bread and Puppet Theater", which toured Greece in the wake of the Junta's fall, in 1975.

During these four decades, the "Theatro tis Kouklas" has offered a lot in the field of puppetry and in many areas. The greater part of the effort fell to the performances, as these are the theatrical mirror of each troupe's ideas and puppet-theatre beliefs. To achieve this, the troupe experimented and was able to acquire its own puppet-theatre physiognomy. Another important area of activity of the "Theatro tis Kouklas" has been that of teaching and the transmission of knowledge around the art of the puppet to young people, as well as to teachers, through the organisation of seminars, courses and workshops.

If we refer in detail to the puppetry events organised by the "Theatro tis Kouklas" over all these years, then one will surely think that the troupe has strong organisational structures, structures with many people, as well as substantial and stable financial support. And yet none of this is true.

The "Theatro tis Kouklas" has been upheld all these years by the passion, stubbornness, hard work and dedication of a few people, who were inspired and believed in the vision of Takis and Mina of a puppet theatre of substance, a puppet theatre that nourishes, just like bread.

In the past few years, the troupe has become tired of the great and constant effort needed and has centred its activity on performances, mainly for children, in its small theatre in the Athenian neighbourhood of Kato Patissia, on Psaroudaki Street, and in schools. The theatrical tandem of Takis and Mina has now been reinforced by their daughter, Sofia Sarri, who brings hope of other magical journeys.

Theatro tis Kouklas: 40 years of puppet theatre

Takis Sarris

I am Takis Sarris and I must talk to you about the about the 40 years of uninterrupted existence of the "Theatro tis Kouklas", something that each of you can understand is very difficult, because of the long period that the theatre has been functioning for – but mainly because I believe that whatever a puppet theatre has to say, it does so through its performances. Despite this, I'll try to convey to you some thoughts, beliefs, certainties, some "truths" and some principles that were shaped along the way and which in turn influenced and to a great degree determined the troupe's character.

The very first steps were made by me when, in 1975, I saw the performances of the great American theatrical company, the "Bread and Puppet Theater", which toured our country. This company and its performances defined my life. I changed course, left the theatre for which I had abandoned my studies in agricultural science, and started out into the unknown, puppet theatre, which deep inside me a voice I'd never heard before told me I should persevere in. And I persevered and Mina, my wife, followed me, and so the first nucleus of the Theatro tis Kouklas was formed.

In the beginning, the puppet theatre's name was Kouklothiassos "To Koskino" (Puppet Company "The Sieve"), but it was renamed "Theatro tis Kouklas" in 1981.

From the first moment, while making my first puppets, I realised that I had to choose and work with materials that suited me; to get to know them, love them, dedicate myself to them. Which is what came about with papier mâché. It is the material that, more than any other, is identified with the art of puppet-making. Today, there exists a plethora of materials. But in the old days, some paper and some flour to make the flour paste were the main materials of puppet-making, because they were both easy to find and cost almost nothing yet made puppets that were light and durable.

So I'll talk to you about my favourite material, papier mâché, in the manner that I make and work it, because everyone has their own "secrets" for papier mâché. My materials for papier mâché are paper, glue and water. For paper, I use newspaper or toilet paper. I use white wood glue, which is water soluble. I also need a plastic bowl, a piece of wood resembling a pestle and water. The process is as follows: we unroll the paper in the basin and sprinkle it with water until it

is wet right through (not a lot of water; it's better to use less and be able to add some more if that's necessary). After this, we add the glue (for a roll of paper, a glass and a half of glue), we mix the paper and the glue using the piece of wood and then we beat it the way you would garlic to make skordaliá, so that in a little while we get a paste that is neither too runny nor too stiff; that is a matter of experience. Our papier mâché is ready for us to be able to position it and cover our mould with it and then give it the features that we want the face to have. Next step: letting our puppet dry out properly, then sand it so as to get the desired surface, without many irregularities, and then paint it with water-soluble paints (usually acrylic) and, finally, we glue on the additional elements that are needed (hair, beard, moustache and others) and our puppet's head is ready. To complete our puppet, we need to dress it. In all the books we can find the pattern we'll need for our glove puppet, since we are talking about a glove puppet. We choose the fabric, sew the garment and our puppet is now ready – or almost ready. I say almost ready, because the puppet has to agree too. We ask it in our own way and learn to listen to what it says. Now everything is ready or almost ready for action.

A little earlier, when talking about making the puppet, I referred to the mould, that is to say the base on which we spread the papier mâché. In its simplest form, this base can be a small plastic bottle. On this small bottle and before putting on the papier mâché, we wrap cotton string which we lightly coat with glue, so that the pulp sticks to the base, to the mould.

Another way to make the mould of our puppet's head is as follows: we fill a small plastic bag (as big as our fist or a little bigger) with sawdust or semolina (materials that will be removed later) and we adapt the neck of the bag around a small, 25-cm piece of wood (we take it from a broomstick) and, with string that we wind around, we make something like a small round bottle on which we'll spread the papier mâché and we'll work as I mentioned above about how to make it. When the papier mâché is thoroughly dry, after a few days, we pull out the piece of wood carefully and empty the puppet of the sawdust or semolina and we also pull out the little bag and our puppet is completely empty and therefore quite light. Without being particularly difficult, this method of puppet-making requires becoming familiar with it and is more sophisticated than the previous one, as in this manner we determine the puppet's size and shape and have a lighter construct.

By making many puppets and devoting time to this, our hands learn the



materials, their behaviour and properties, and new things are constantly revealed to us so that our work becomes both enjoyable and effective. Love the materials and spend time in the relationship you create with them. Let's move on. In his collection titled Testimonies, our great poet Yánnis Rítsos has a short poem he named Approximately.¹ I copy it out:

*He picks up in his hands things that don't match – a stone,
a broken roof-tile, two burnt matches,
the rusty nail from the wall opposite,
the leaf that came in through the window, the drops
dropping from the watered flower pots, that bit of straw
the wind blew in your hair yesterday – he takes them
and he builds, in his back yard, approximately a tree.
Poetry is in this 'approximately'. Can you see it?*

This poem expresses in the best way a number of my own beliefs regarding the art I love and am a humble servant of. And by extension, it expresses the whole troupe and to a large extent this is manifested on stage –if it is manifested– in the performances of the Theatro tis Kouklas.

The word “approximately” is, I think, the key that opens the making and interpretive perspective and shapes the team's ideology. During the act of making, for example, many odd, incongruous things magically compose a face or approximately a face. In no way are we making a photographically or precisely realistic copy of a face, but its poetic version, which is contained in the approximately. The same also applies to the animation, that is to say the movement and immobility of the puppets during their life onstage. The art of puppet theatre creates a different reality onstage, the reality of puppet theatre. To this end, it uses various, even disparate, techniques “stolen” or borrowed from the reality of humans and creates another magical reality, unique, poetic, authentic and, because of this, very real.

I'll tell you a story that I experienced in the early years of my life as a puppeteer. I'm in Ithaca with the “Theatriki Syntechnia” (Theatrical Guild), a theatrical company where I still acted at the time, since I didn't break away from theatre once and for

¹ Y. Ritsos (1966). Testimonies B. The English version included here is taken from: Yannis Ritsos: Selected Poems (1974), translated by Nikos Stangos, with an introduction by Peter Bien, Penguin Modern European Poets, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p.79. Retrieved from <https://www.docdroid.net/ngpcZfv/yannis-ritsos-nikos-stangos-yannis-ritsos-selected-poems-pdf>

all, but gradually. We had gone for a series of performances and were slated to stay on the island for a few days. I got in touch with a cultural association and we organised a workshop with the children of the island. They would make puppets and at the end they would stage a small show. An unforgettable experience. The children rapidly found the theme of the play, which because of the island's tradition was none other than the return of Odysseus. In no time at all, they created a rudimentary and simple script and then got down to making things. At the same time, they split into small teams and some made the scenery and props, others dressed the puppets with amazing skill and yet others created the dialogues. The moment for the show came. Usually, each child wants to perform with its puppet. But here we had the following phenomenon: some children were shy and were hesitant about performing, while their puppets were both beautiful and necessary for the story to unfold. Then, two or three among this group eagerly said they would take on these roles. Indeed, had I let him, one of them was capable of playing all the roles by himself. Things were self-regulated. Now came the actual moment of the performance.

I'm telling the story because of the one I mentioned earlier who wanted to play all the roles. In the show he managed, I don't know how, to play both Odysseus and his faithful dog, Argos. I let things evolve and then came the “performative” revelation. Odysseus comes onstage. He sees Argos lying a bit further away and says to himself: “Argos... my faithful dog...”. Argos gets up, approaches Odysseus growling and suddenly, as if having sprouted wings, jumps into the air and exits the stage tracing a magnificent arc. I felt it at that moment and I still feel it now: I witnessed the most poetic stage death. A stark, totally unrealistic action, a death that was approximately death. It was a great lesson. Let's move on.

The performance's process.

The process of putting on a show is never exactly the same as the previous one, but by and large I follow the same creative path of my own or approximately the same. Don't think that this involves a monotonous and boring repetition with no new experiences and experimentation; far from it. When I say “creative path”, I mean the mental apparatus, my own “digging” tools, my own magnifying and distorting lenses to help me enter and probe, explore and interpret a text, a dialogue, a situation.



So I decide, for certain reasons, to stage... let's take for example "The Three Little Pigs". After reading it countless times and in different versions, I begin the creative ordeal of questioning. Why this way and not the other? In our example, why did they leave their house? Where are their parents? How did they find themselves in the woods? Who did they meet? Aren't they afraid? What's the weather like? What are the relations between them? Many, and another that many, and many more questions yet. I carry these questions inside me for a long time and when at some point and when I least expect it (sitting in a café or at a metro station) a nice answer, a nice idea comes to me, I write it down. And then one day, a long time later, for some inexplicable reason, if I feel that this should be written, I sit down and write it in an afternoon. Simply and easily. Then, based on the script, the puppets are made and, in many cases, they force me to change the script in many places and at the same time, along with the puppets, the sets are made and one type of work influences the other until the rehearsals begin. The play is ready when it's ready. Don't ask me how long this takes. And if despite my saying this you insist, I'll tell you: as long as it takes. We don't force things along; we work and when they are ready, they tell us, they shout it to us. We have to learn to listen to things. So in our version of the story, as they go through the woods, our little pigs meet a hare going down its burrow, a tortoise which, as we know, carries its home on its back– and a little bird singing from its nest high up in a tree. So, for us, this is a good opportunity to talk about the need for every being to have its home without didacticism. I won't say anything about the wolf, because the wolf is the wolf as each of us understands him.

"The Three Little Pigs" was the biggest commercial success of the Théâtre tis Kouklas. It has been performed for over 20 years and even today continues to be part of our repertoire with the very same puppets as when it was first staged.

Something else now. Something about the "Theatro tis Kouklas".

In the 40 years since it was established, the Theatro tis Kouklas has done many things, so many that one would think that it's a large puppet theatre organisation with terrific organisation and a lot of staff. But no. Things are entirely different. Basically, the Theatro tis Kouklas is the couple of Takis and Mina Sarris and, for the past 15 years, their daughter, Sophia, has also been involved significantly. But all through these years, they have had amazing partners and friends by their side – without them, their trajectory would have been very different. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Théâtre tis Kouklas, Takis, who is the troupe's artistic

director, divided its story into four decades, which he named and for each of which he wrote the following:

FIRST DECADE:

The decade of familiarisation with the art of puppet theatre

During this decade, the troupe's members tried to gather information about the technique of performing, the possibilities of the materials, but also their own capacities. It was during this decade that the foundations were laid to build the Theatro tis Kouklas "edifice".

First performance, with the play by Takis Sarris: "Order to laugh". 26 February 1978. Calvos Cultural Association in Gýzi (a neighbourhood in Athens). Performers: Takis Theofanidis, Agni Stroumbouli, Mina Sarri, Takis Sarris. Music: Loukianos Kilaïdonis.

During this decade, 12 plays were staged.

A significant moment: The performance of Bertolt Brecht's play "The Good Man of Szechwan", directed by Yiannis Houvardas.

SECOND DECADE:

The decade of large-scale performances

The second decade is the decade in which the Theatro tis Kouklas produced its large-scale performances. The existence of a stable abode at the Amore Theatre certainly contributed to this. Through these performances the Theatro tis Kouklas became known to the wider public, without ever knowing a big commercial success. A certain introversion on behalf of the troupe perhaps contributed to this, as it invested most of its energy in the production and far less into the shows' promotion.

A significant moment: At the close of the decade, the Theatro tis Kouklas organised and implemented a European programme under the title "Dream journeys". The programme comprised a two-day international symposium at the Goulandris-Horn Foundation, a large original exhibition of stage sets and puppets from the 20-year trajectory of the Theatro tis Kouklas and a performance of Sophocles' tragedy Antigone at the Amore Theatre. Over this decade, seven plays were staged.

THIRD DECADE:

The decade with the three little pigs

At the close of its second decade, the Theatro tis Kouklas does a major



turnaround and addresses its performances to younger age groups: pre-schoolers and children in the lower grades of primary school. Until then, its performances were primarily aimed at older children and adult audiences. In this context, the troupe staged "The Three Little Pigs". Its success, both commercial and artistic, was resounding and to a certain extent unexpected. "The Three Little Pigs" continue to be performed to this day, always with great success. During this decade, the Teatro tis Kouklas set up its own small theatre (50 seats) at 34 Psaroudaki Street in the Kato Patíssia neighbourhood of Athens. The productions use fewer people and become more mobile, so as to be transportable to schools. A significant moment: The staging of Takis Sarris' play "The Strays".

"The Strays" is a solo performance without words, but which "says" a lot. A curious man, a wanderer who collects various discarded and for many people "useless" things, creates a universe of his own out of them and in his own way comments on his surroundings. Takis Sarris considers this play an important possibly the most important moment of his artistic career.

During this decade, six plays were staged.

FOURTH DECADE:

The "personal" performances

With the play "The Strays" at the end of the third decade and the ones that would follow, we move on to a new thematic field, the "personal" performances, which have dominated the creative work of Teatro tis Kouklas throughout its fourth decade and up to the present, when we have entered the fifth decade. In the so-called personal performances, very personal situations, beliefs, opinions and ideas about life and art have somehow entered into the story told by the troupe onstage. These plays are: 1) "The Strays" 2) "Eftikos and the lost smile" and 3) "Eftikos meets Pinocchio".

A significant moment: The creation of the theatrical hero Eftikos. Based on his childhood memories, Takis Sarris created Eftikós as a wandering puppeteer, multifarious, mysterious, magical and enchanting.

During this decade, two plays were staged.

FIFTH DECADE:

We're still at the beginning; A big question mark is in front of us. Every day a new challenge in terms of creation and adventure.

I could talk about puppet theatre and chat with people interested in this art endlessly – but not as a lecturer nor in writing. Which is why, when various institutions ask me to talk about puppet theatre, I take along with me pieces of my performances and show them, so that my puppet-theatre beliefs can be understood. But there are exceptions to all things. Today, I both spoke and wrote and performed for my friend Antigoni Paroussi and her students. I did it with my heart and I enjoyed it.

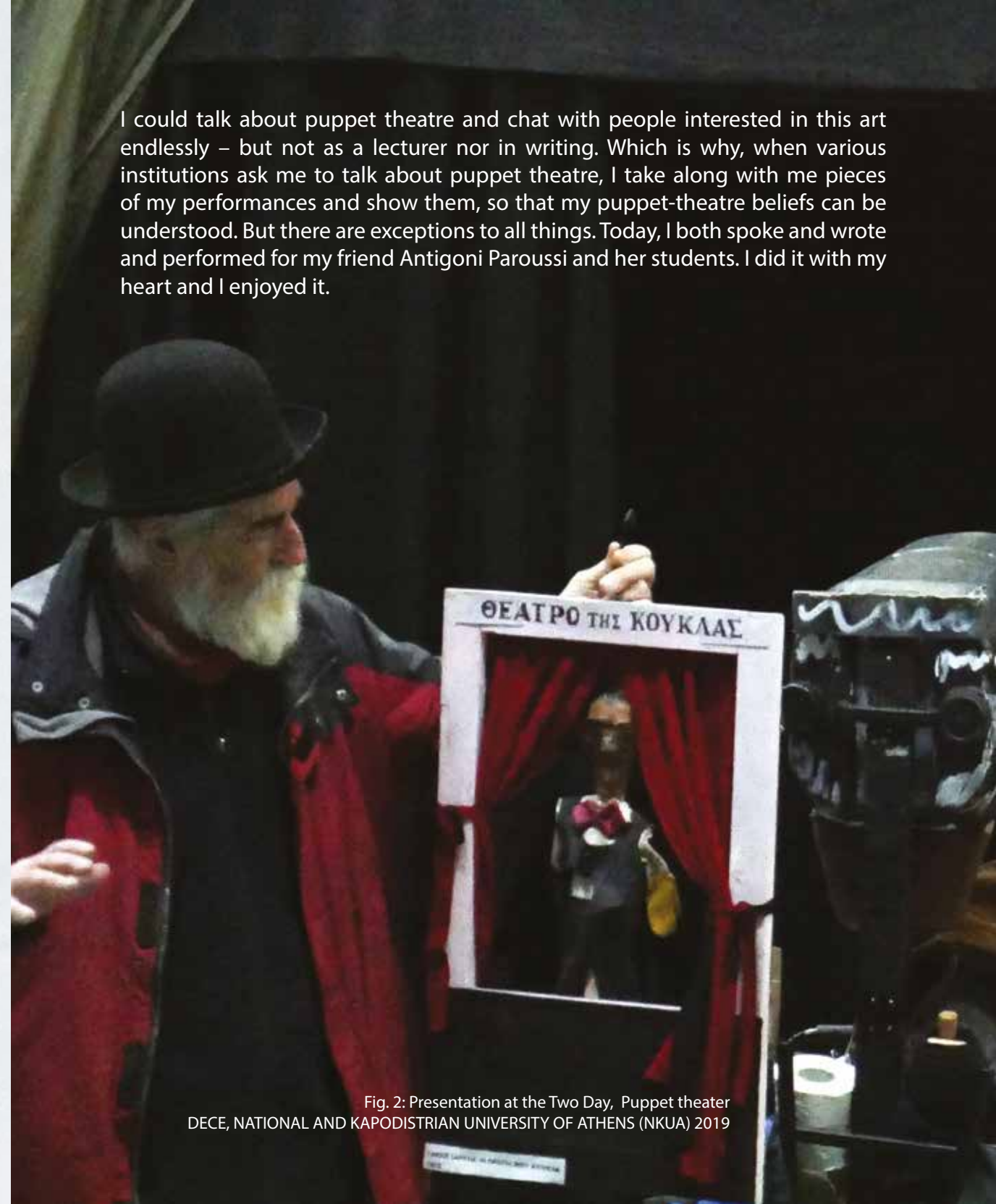


Fig. 2: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater DECE, NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS (NKUA) 2019

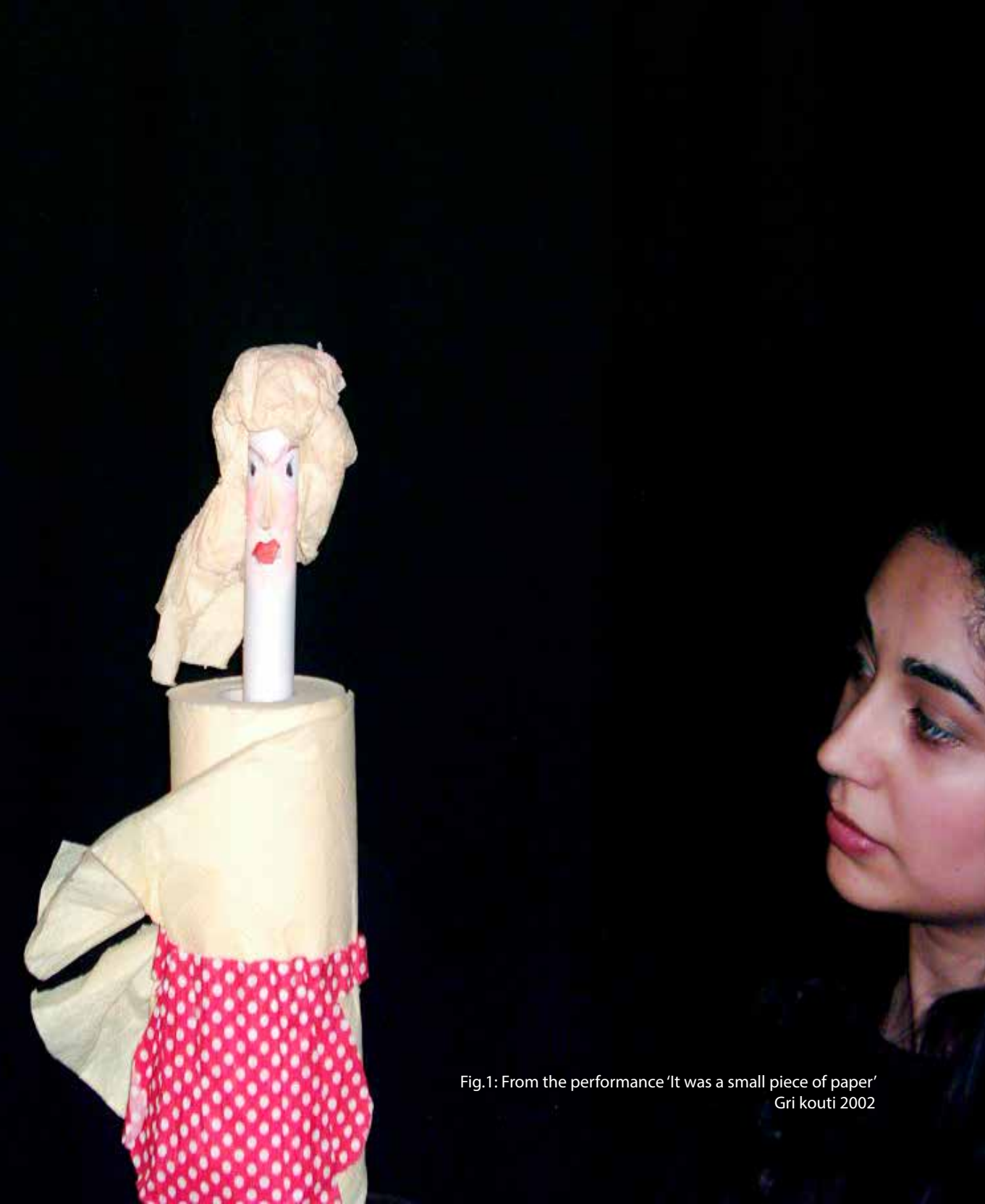


Fig.1: From the performance 'It was a small piece of paper'
Gri kouti 2002

Figures & Puppets Alexia Alexiou Puppet Theatre

Alexia Alexiou has been involved in puppetry since 1992. She writes, directs and presents puppet theatre performances. She also designs and implements/ animates educational programmes with puppetry and Karaghiozis with school groups.

She studied theatre, Greek Culture and Education. She was a puppeteer of Antigoni Paroussi's "Gri Kouti" troupe, while in 2005 she created the "Alexia Alexiou Puppet Theatre". In 1999, with Tassos Konstas, she founded the Centre for the Study & Study of the Art of the Shadow & Puppet Theatre "Figures & Puppets".

She has also participated in workshops, conferences, international and Greek festivals, as well as in television educational programmes. She has worked as an art director in the municipality of Athens for the creation, organisation and curation of festivals and cultural events for children.



Well met, puppets!
Or a school visit to the puppet theatre
Alexia Alexiou

In our article, we try to record our personal experience through the daytime educational visits of schools to our small theatre. We analyse the way in which we choose the themes of our performances, but also how we design and implement our educational programmes, our main focus being to showcase the theatrical puppet not only as a great means of entertainment, but also of learning.

Key words: puppet theatre, theatrical puppet, education, educational programmes, educational process, child

Introduction

Puppet theatre! Theatre and playing with puppets! I love both equally! I wasn't fortunate enough to see a live puppet show as a child, but life has rewarded me! It gave me the opportunity to play with my puppets forever, to feel like a child forever. To make my own small, magical world and give it life, like a small god. Worlds, sometimes made of paper, sometimes of cloth, sometimes colourful, with volume or flat, but always made with care and love for their simplicity; love and respect for the art of animation taught to me by my teachers; love and a lot of work for the needs of creation, nurturer of my art and of all the arts; love for my need to communicate with children and adults alike through puppet theatre and to share feelings, experiences, to make memories...

But most of all, a great love of children! Therefore, I gladly accepted the invitation and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about my thirty years of involvement with the art of puppetry and about the experience I have gained from it.

And here I am now, sharing with you my daily life with puppets at the "Figures & Puppets Theatre" for the past twenty-two years!

A school visit to our puppet theatre

Sound of a horn, noise of a school bus parking, children's voices and laughter, loud good mornings and hugs with the teachers (sometimes with the bus drivers, too...), who after twenty-two years are now family.

-Well come to "Figures & Puppets!"

-Well met, puppets!

-How are you? Have you had something to eat, children? Perfect!

-Come in and seat yourselves comfortably! Not on somebody's knees! The others behind you can't see then! Nor two together in a seat! There are empty places...

-Hang your jackets and bags on your chairs! Let me see the aisle clear, please!

Whose glove is this?

-Please put away ALL the food! Remember that we don't eat during a performance!

-Are we ready for puppet theatre? The puppets are waiting to appear on the stage!

The necessary mini-changes are made so that everyone can see! The tall little boy needs to sit towards the side, the little girl with the big pigtails and the headband with the unicorn next to him, friends need to be kept together, the young gentleman with the vision problem needs to move further forward, etc.

The last instructions are given ...

-Children, now all the lights in the auditorium will go out slowly and all the lights on the stage will come on (we always leave some light in the auditorium until the stage lights are on, especially when we are hosting very young children). If you need anything, ask your teacher for it in a low voice or ask us!

-Open your eyes and ears well and, dear teachers, please switch off your mobile phones.

-Our performance starts in a few moments!

-Have fun!

In order for everyone to have a good time, children, teachers, puppets and puppeteers, every morning in our small theatre we welcome and take care to prepare and inform the young spectators who visit us to watch a performance of either puppet theatre or Karaghiózis that our shows are performed live, meaning that the same rules apply as those in theatres.

In order to respect our spectators and our art, we need to set the framework/rules that ensure things function smoothly, just as any school classroom or family does to avoid friction among its members. From there on, the children know what is possible and what is not, and adapt accordingly.

The curtain opens, the music starts, the show's lighting comes on and the puppets appear on stage. The magic of the Art of Animation rivets both young and old! The puppets entertain the children with their adventures, mischief and sufferings, while simultaneously creating an environment that offers learning opportunities thanks to the action and reaction on stage. The children



identify with the story's heroes, adopt or reject their behaviours, interact with the puppets by actively participating and often provide the solution to the problem that occurs. Consequently, by watching a puppet show children learn in an imaginative, playful and therefore for them appealing and familiar way! The performance ends, the spectators applaud, say goodbye to the puppets and leave with the school buses.

But when does a performance really begin and when does it end? Does it begin with the call of the third bell and end with the curtain falling and the applause? And what "memories" do we carry afterwards for play in the classroom?

What are the criteria for choosing a performance for preschool and primary school children?

How do we prepare young spectators before the visit to a puppet theatre/theatrical venue?

These are some basic questions that both I and our colleagues at Figures & Puppets ask ourselves. And since you are the future of education, allow me to share with you below some of our thoughts, attitudes, opinions and worries regarding them.

How do we choose the theme of each performance and how do we design a comprehensive educational programme?

Subject matter

How do we choose the theme of each performance and how do we design a comprehensive educational programme? It is somewhat like this that beloved stories presented with puppets came to be, plays such as "Don Takis", "Recycle Life", "The Village of AB" and others, which were singled out by parents and teachers, loved, stood the test of time and are still performed today.

My source of inspiration was my daughter and some of the subjects that "preoccupied" her intensely at the time of her tender preschool age. I remember the day she came back all fired up from the day-care centre and announced that at school they were going to recycle and she wanted to participate. The questions rained down! What would we do, how would we do it, where would we do it! Immediately, the idea of "talking" through my art to children, especially very young children, entered my mind. Because, if not puppet theatre, what other art would be better suited to do it?

Thus a large-scale modern performance of high aesthetics and mixed technique was created, combining mime, physical theatre, object theatre/

puppet theatre, shadow theatre. Narrative codes were chosen that "touch" and "speak" to children, to awaken and sensitise them. The show's action evolved in an ever-changing and "recyclable" setting full of surprises. The scenery was made of recyclable materials, which were constantly transformed and came to life, stimulating the children's imagination by offering them a plethora of stimuli. While watching the tender love story of two cardboard boxes, our Lilliputian spectators were offered information about recycling. Furthermore, they realised that many things which, until then, they had considered "useless" and which are easily found, when used with imagination and attention, can be transformed, animated and thus offer them unique moments of creativity and play in their free time. With our help, but also that of their teachers, the show and its puppet heroes accompanied the young puppeteers in their playmaking for a long time!

Something similar also happened with "Don Takis" and "The village of AB". More specifically, the first is a humorous puppet musical about oral hygiene/healthy eating, but it is also about the transitional stage of changing baby teeth, which is of interest to children in preschool and the lower grades of primary school. The inspiration came from children's "incomplete" smiles and their anxiety about new teeth replacing the baby ones, and took into account the biological, social and psychological needs of our young spectators. Our main goal was to formulate and modify behavioural patterns that would lead children to take greater responsibility about their self-care, but also to encourage them to become communicators of knowledge in their immediate family environment.

"The village of AB" –my very first brainchild– was born in the spring of 2006 and was published a little later by Stratis Publications. It deals with the anxiety of a little girl, young Margarita, about learning the alphabet. The pencil appears as a deus ex machina and proposes a dream trip to Alphabet Village for her to meet the letters up close. But when they get there, they discover great turmoil. Consonants and vowels are jointly laying claim to the village's leadership, refusing to collaborate. Fortunately, with the help of the children and Margarita, peace prevails again in Alphabet Village. This performance aims, at a first level, to entertain the children, but also to introduce them pleasantly and smoothly to the world of writing and letters. I firmly believe that the theatrical puppet can be an excellent educational tool and an alternative way of learning in the course of the educational process.

For this reason, my joy and satisfaction are immense since, for the past fifteen



years, teachers have chosen to visit us with their school to attend the performance. What they share with us is the children's happiness after the performance and their wish to paint the Alphabet Village or to make their own puppets and play, following either our suggestions or their own ideas. The performance serves as a stimulus for the children to come into contact with different perspectives of the written word. The more active their participation in processes of familiarisation with letters, words and sentences through play, the smoother their subsequent introduction to the world of writing will be.

The use of theatrical puppets in the educational process can contribute greatly. It helps the teacher to arouse the pupil's interest and cultivate his/her love for the production of the written word in a playful way, as play is an effective means of developing the perceptual ability and production of the written word by using all three ways of the sensory approach to letters or words: through sight, hearing and touch (Vamvoukas et al., 2016). The young pupil learns and masters the form, name, phoneme and representation/writing of the letters.

Thus, the more a child observes and plays with the show's foam letter-puppets, for example, and associates them with letters on cards or with words for objects in his/her space, the easier he/she learns to write through the puppet theatre approach of multisensory practice. Playing with the puppet can contribute to the child learning the sounds of the alphabet and enhance its capacity to recognise letters and identify the sound corresponding to each of them. The teacher's use of the theatrical puppet, e.g., playing with the letters-puppets, at this stage allows the children to understand that oral sounds are converted into letters and vice versa. Their continuous involvement in daily play with the puppets contributes in time to their understanding the communicative function of language. The creation of short improvised dialogues will develop the young pupils' critical capacity and motivate them to seek out new stories. Reading a book in the company of a puppet makes reading more interesting and engaging for young learners.

Although preschool children do not know how to read or write, they often display reading and writing behaviours by pretending to do so. Frequently, we see them leafing through a book and quite often trying to repeat the story in their own way. The use of the theatrical puppet to encourage the reading process is considered important. Through the puppet, the teacher can indicate the right way to hold a book or a pencil, the direction we read and write in, the observation

of a cover, etc., without discouraging the child from its own experimentation with the reading process. The theatrical puppet can serve as an excellent (positive or negative) model, helping us differentiate the learning process and create active, free-spirited pupils.

After this short review of our favourite shows from previous years, we've reached the present! The play we chose to perform for the 2020-21 artistic season and we are very happy about this is the beloved story by Antigoni Paroussi and Alexis Kyritopoulos called "There was once a small piece of paper". It is a puppet show using mixed techniques, which is aimed at children in preschool and the lower grades of primary school. The story is about a small piece of paper wandering around its home and its town, trying to decide what job it will do when it grows up. Alongside the entertainment resulting from the funny characters, the clever dialogues and the original songs and music, the performance seeks to bring children into contact with the magical world of paper, to introduce them to its history, its uses, the qualities and types of paper, while also initiating them into the use of compound words.

The show's subject matter, as well as the way it is performed on stage, mean it can be watched by very young children (from as young as two-and-a-half years old) and be their first stimulus, introducing them smoothly and pleasantly to the world of puppetry and the theatrical art.

Design and implementation of an educational programme

Like all our performances at Figures & Puppets, the "small piece of paper" we will be referring to is completed in three stages and constitutes a complete educational programme for the visits of school groups.

In detail:

Stage 1 (theoretical)

-An exploration of the children's knowledge is carried out through discussion and the use of audio-visual material.

The children learn about the history of paper, its different kinds and qualities, as well as its multiple uses.

Stage 2 (implementation)

-Attending a theatrical performance with puppets and an actor.

The children are entertained, learn and have fun as the small piece of paper wanders around the city, trying to find the job that suits it. The job that will make it useful, but at the same time happy. By identifying with this, the children adopt





Fig.2: From the performance 'It was a small piece of paper'
Gri kouti 2002

a healthy attitude to life and perceiving, which will help them in the subsequent smooth completion of their personality.

At the same time, the children cultivate their imagination and aesthetics, as our troupe attaches great importance to the visual effect and to aesthetic education. Through a continuous experimentation, we try to harmoniously bring together each time arts and techniques, transcending conventional restrictions and rules that limit children's imagination and creativity, while simultaneously providing motivation and inspiration to both pupils and teachers to experiment and play, both with materials and techniques. Contemporary puppet theatre is characterised by the variety and richness of its forms.

Stage 3 (practical application)

-Making of an individual puppet by each child.

At the end of the performance, the children are shown the puppets, see and touch the materials they are made of and make a puppet of their own. Thus, separated into groups and working in parallel workshops, we make the show's main character, the small piece of paper, with different kinds of paper. We adapt it to the size of a child's hands and playing with it begins at the theatre and continues at school and at home! Which fingers are the puppet's arms? Which are the legs? How does our puppet walk, run, jump up and down, fly, sit, etc. An excellent exercise of fine motor skills and more!

At the same time, in another workshop we work with the pedagogical and informational material we have created specifically in order to serve the needs of each of our educational programmes. Thus, for children in nursery school, we have prepared coloured cards with pictures and we invite the children to form compound words with the word paper inspired by the story's protagonists: paper + kite, paper + bag, paper + napkin, paper + hanky etc. The children work together, join the cards in pairs and then find the card with the resulting compound word (paper-kite, paper-bag, paper-napkin, paper-hanky etc.).

For younger children, a paper workshop is set up, where they can play with sheets of newspaper, crumple them up, cut them into strips, make balls, paint them and make their own puppet or form letters.

In each of our educational programmes, we strive to ensure the children's active involvement as, at Figures & Puppets, we believe that what we hear we forget, what we see we remember, but what we make we understand! Experiential knowledge is never forgotten!

I think you now have a sense of how we spend our mornings, pleasantly



and creatively, when schools visit us in our premises, there where the theatrical puppet, apart from being a means of entertainment, in the hands of inspired operators and creators is transformed daily into a great means of learning and teaching.

Yet although we make sure we have a good time, the puppeteer's work is neither easy nor simplistic. Much like the teacher's, in fact. And it shouldn't be, in my opinion, so that those who stand the test of time, those who have something to "say", those who have something to "give", can continue doing so! It took and still takes a lot of work, constant searching and study, great dedication, many sacrifices and infinite patience every day, as well as a love of the art and of children, for us to be able to continue to welcome our Lilliputian friends of puppet theatre, to be "fellow travellers" and to "escape together" for a while, with the puppets, into their own wonderful, small world.

And just as you, the teachers, as the children's "second parents", care about them and take care to offer them the best knowledge, in the most appropriate way for them, so do we, the puppeteers, care about and take care of our spiritual "children"... our puppet shows. We wish them to be well and warmly received by their spectators. From the moment the idea is "born" in our minds, during the whole time we watch it come into being and taking form and shape in the workshop, right through to the moment that it makes its first timid "steps" on stage and we proudly see it succeed and constantly evolve.

Every year, at the beginning of the school year, your colleagues and you in the very near future, are invited to choose the shows the children will visit with their school. Frequently, teachers ask us how they should go about choosing a puppet theatre performance and what the components of a good one are.

A good, infallible solution I suggest to them, and which I recommend to you, is to watch a lot of puppet theatre – and theatre more generally. To sharpen your criterion so as to possess your own yardstick. Then, believe me, when you see a good performance, you will recognise it! A "good" performance is one that respects its spectators and vice versa.

When I say respects its spectators, I mean that it has a well-thought-out script, clever dialogues (when and if it includes speech), inspired direction that showcases the puppets' presence and usefulness, inventive and functional scenery and props that pique the spectator's interest but also serve the puppets dramatically, appropriate lighting, possibly, why not, original music and songs

and most certainly puppets as protagonists and puppeteers with a soul and passion. A good performance, I think, is one that, once you leave the theatre, has entertained you, made you reflect, made you feel better and "richer" in terms of experience than when you entered it. Perhaps even makes you feel "lighter". Of course, for a "good" performance, an equally "good" public is necessary.

A "good audience" is a school whose teachers know what they have come to see in the puppet show. They have been informed about the topic the performance deals with, the age group it is aimed at, its duration and therefore have consciously chosen this particular show. Also, they have prepared the children for this visit. Both as regards the performance's subject, and the way we behave in the premises of a theatre. For example, the children and their parents need to be informed that we don't eat popcorn and crisps during a performance at the theatre. We need to help children understand the difference between the screen and a live performance.

A "good audience" is an audience that arrives on time on the day of the show, before the show's starting time. That arrives at the scheduled time and leaves once the programme is completed. It is very inconvenient and unfair for the schools that have arrived on time to have to wait for a school that is late before the performance can begin, and for the children to grow tired. Likewise, it is inelegant and annoying for a school to enter the theatre once the performance has already started, or to leave just a little before it ends! And naturally it is a pity, particularly for the children, who were finally unable to enjoy their visit to the theatre, didn't complete their educational programme and left feeling disappointed.

Certainly, we can't predict everything. Neither the traffic, nor road closures, nor a whole host of unpredictable factors. But should we maybe re-examine our choices? Should we possibly consider a closer destination next time? Or maybe a smaller and more controlled venue than a large and vast theatre? Or a shorter performance? It isn't necessary to choose the highly-publicized show, at that particular stadium, just because other schools went there. There are infinite options, if only we look a little harder.

Lastly, a "good audience" is the audience that lets itself go in the theatrical convention. It is part of the show and it participates in the show. And this is always achieved with children. Children are a puppeteer's joy. Let the children participate and interact with the puppets. Let them clap their hands, sing.





Fig. 3: Workshop for students, part of the performance "Petros and the Wolf"

We puppeteers delight in a "live" audience and challenge it. You, too, follow their example and let yourselves go. Enjoy the performance alongside them; you'll see that you'll find an amazing way of communicating with them. The "memories" you create will become the valuable "baggage" you'll take with you when you leave the theatre. Be sure to make good use of it, transporting an echo of the show into the classroom. If, for example, we made the "little piece of paper" at the theatre, at school you can make other of the story's paper heroes and stage your own show with paper puppets. Or you can continue the compound word game, e.g., with the word puppet! paper-puppet, finger-puppet, glove-puppet.

The time that the performance lasts should not be a break from school, nor an opportunity to correct the pupil's homework, catch up on the day's news or dash

out for some quick shopping. And let us not forget that children observe and imitate behaviours. So let's give them the example of a good spectator.

It is through us, but also you, through our choices, is shaped the future stance and behaviour of tomorrow's puppet-theatre lovers and theatregoers in general. And because theatre is culture, because play is culture, we have a responsibility to preserve and protect it, so that the puppets can rejoice every time the horn of a school bus sounds outside the puppet theatre, we puppeteers can welcome you enthusiastically to our performances and you can joyfully respond "Puppets, well met!"

YES, WELL COME INDEED!!



Afterword

Antigoni's invitation to speak at the early childhood teachers' conference reached me at a very difficult juncture in my life, after an important loss. My first thought was to refuse. Things became even more difficult soon after, when we were forced to close the theatre due to the coronavirus pandemic, with whatever difficulties that can entail. Despite this, as I wrote the text above, I realised how glad I am that, in the end, I accepted and was able to be at the conference with you, physically and mentally, to share my experience with you.

I am glad to have seen many dear colleagues, but also many young people, a fact that confirms the theory that puppet theatre and puppeteers are here, combat-worthy, and will continue to do what they do so well: infuse life where there is none!

So I thank you all, because through this meeting and the writing of this text, I "remembered and recalled" while taking breaths of strength for the difficult winter we are going through the reason why I chose to serve this art! Or why it chose me, I don't know... FOR BEING ABLE TO SURPASS ONESELF!

Reference

Vamvoukas, M., Vamvouka, I., & Hatzaki, M. (2016). Αλφάβητο και μάθηση του γραπτού λόγου. Θεωρητική και ερευνητική προσέγγιση [Alphabet and apprenticeship of the written word. A theoretical and research approach]. Athens: Grigoris.



Fig 4: "Figures & Puppets" 2019



Fig.1: Anneta Stefanopoulou, Lita Aslanoglou, 2019

Bufos

Anneta Stefanopoulou was born in Athens in 1982. She graduated from the faculty of Theatre Studies of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

She discovered the world of puppetry in 2001 and attended workshops on puppet construction and animation by Stathis Markopoulos, Rene Baker, Roberto White and Francisco Brito. She also attended workshops on stop-motion animation, theatre lighting, street theatre, theatrical clowning, educational drama, comic creation and others.

From 2007 until 2013, she worked with groups of children and adults exploring the techniques of Creative Drama and Puppet Theatre.

She started working as a puppeteer in 2008. She has performed for Baruti, Gri Kouti, Logou Paignion, Antamapantahou, Ta Panta Fi, Ayusaya and Don't Panic Puppet theatre¹. In the summer of 2011 she created the "Bufos" puppet theatre. She has performed constantly in shows on the street, in bistros, theatres, welfare institutions, and festivals in Greece and abroad. At the same time she runs puppet-making workshops for children and adults. She has participated in movies, documentaries, advertisements and music videos. She has also created puppets for theatre companies and individuals.

1. Lita Aslanoglou is a puppeteer. Her career to date comprises:

1998-2010. Studies in painting-sketching (1998-2003), pottery and puppet construction (2004-2010).

2009-2018. Puppetry training workshops with Theodora Lambrinou, Stathis Markopoulos, Stephen Mottram, Jordi Bertran, Gavin Glover, Girovago E Rondella, Rene Baker, Jean-Jacques Lemêtre.

2010-2013. Solo productions: "The Black Vinyl" / "Ivan the Swan" (script, direction, production, puppet and scene construction, animation).

2014. The "Don't Panic" puppet theatre was founded by Eleni Xylouri and Lita Aslanoglou somewhere in Greece between Crete, Kalamata and Athens.

2014-2017. Productions with the "Don't Panic" puppet theatre: "Should have said no" and "Do you sing in your bathtub?" (script, direction, production, puppet and scene construction, animation with partners).

2018-2019. President of Unima Hellas (the Greek National Centre of the UNion Internationale de la MArionnette).

2018-2020. Production and collaboration with the Greek National Opera for the opera "El Retablo de Maese Pedro" (direction, puppet construction, animation, with partners) (2018-2019 / 2019-2020)

2010-2020. Participation in 35 international puppet and theatre festivals.



“Don’t panic, Bufos!”

The constant quest and apprenticeship in the art of puppet theatre: the journey from the street to festivals by two troupes that almost became one

Anneta Stefanopoulou

A text referring to our wanderings in the art of puppetry. Its various applications and some thoughts arising from this experience. Where and how we encountered puppet theatre, what fascinated us about it, how we approached it as a “profession”. The experiences this flexible art offered us performing in the street, in theatres, in cafés, schools, institutions and festivals in Greece and abroad. A practical apprenticeship that seems to never end, an endless quest that constantly hides something new to discover, the joy of creation and human communication through the inanimate/ animated object and the sense of freedom that it offers generously. The text was written by Anneta Stefanopoulou and refers to her journey and that of her collaborator, Lita Aslanoglou.

The art of puppet theatre

In a talk we attended in 2016 at the Izmir International Puppet Festival in Turkey, the Portuguese Luis Vieira said of puppet theatre: “The art that has no limits, the art that makes stones talk”. This sentence reflects in a very simple manner one of the magical elements of puppet theatre: the unlimited freedom of the imagination, something that is enjoyed both by the puppeteer (especially during the process of preparing the performance) and the spectator, as the symbolic element found in most performances leaves room for us to project whatever we might need. Furthermore, his sentence encompasses the fact that, in puppet theatre, everything can be transformed and function theatrically; this perspective is hidden all around us.

Then, in a puppet animation workshop, Rene Baker introduced us to some technical aspects of animation. Usually, we think that the puppeteer “applies” certain movements to the puppet so that it performs predetermined actions. Rene led us to a different approach to animation. She asked us to find out “what the puppet likes to do”; in other words, to discover its weight and to perceive the floor as an animation “assistant”. In between these exercises, she also drew our attention to images we see daily and where, once again, it is not necessary for the

¹ Bufos is the common Greek name for the horned owl *Bubo bubo*, considered to be graceless and with a vacant stare, so that the term has become a funny way of saying stupid, chump or blockhead.

animator to be a person. You can see stories play out and recognise characters and behaviours even in the play of a bag in the wind or the dance of the clouds. These are what Rene called “small personal performances”.

Puppetry, the act of bringing to life theoretically inanimate materials, is essentially a way of thinking and perceiving the environment that can be traced back to the very beginnings of human civilisation. Animism, mankind’s oldest worship practice, has at its core this perspective: being able to locate the life, spirit or soul of whatever surrounds you.

Certainly, logic helps people to understand themselves and their environment. But in and of itself, this is not enough. In order to experience something, anything, people need their senses, their emotions and possibly, too, intuition, so as to get a more overall and substantial picture.

Stories, symbols, the imitation and depiction of reality have always been essential tools for people to understand in depth the mystery of life and action, of both themselves and their environment. The puppet/doll appeared along with human civilisation, as a totem and as a toy. It continues to have its place and perform its function, evoking the same emotions for thousands of years. It can excite our imagination, help us get in touch with our emotions, which we project onto it, without feeling guilty. It may frighten us, as its totemic role, the contact with the divine and the unknown, the non-real, is not always a comfortable place. I often think that those who are most afraid of puppets are those who believe in them the most, those who sense there is a hidden “soul” behind the shaped materials with articulations.

The first acquaintance with the art and its people

A person’s decision to study and delve into the art of puppet theatre has, in most cases, an interesting story behind it. Especially in the parts of the world where it is not particularly widespread.

What made you start on it? What won you over to it? Why choose an art that comes at a price and often finds itself on the fringes of cultural programming?

Most of the time you will hear a story of meandering through the arts, techniques and studies in more or less relevant fields. After this first introductory piece there will be a pause followed by a short phrase whose meaning is: “And then I came across it! And I decided that was what I wanted to do.” Many times it feels like a discovery/revelation: “This is what I wanted to do!” And then there follow the first adventures resulting from this choice.



In both Lita's case and mine, our involvement in the art of puppetry came from our love of painting and making things with our hands.

Anneta

My parents liked handmade things a lot and were constantly providing me with stimuli in this direction. The dough for making biscuits became a weightlifter that we eventually ate. My birthday cakes were castles made with jam for glue and wafer rolls for canons. My father collected wood from things people had thrown out and transformed it into cupboards, stools, small tables. He liked to paint and he loved tools and materials, whose uses and properties he would explain to me.

With my mother, we would draw, make collages, watch performances. She welcomed whatever I made enthusiastically and made detailed observations. Having noticed that, ever since I was a child, my main interest was drawing and making things, she suggested we go to an exhibition on puppet theatre at the Mairivi Workshop. The exhibits amazed us. Despite our visits to museums and theatres, we had never come across such simple and original characters. I'll never forget a wall where a medium-sized stage was erected depicting a group of little mice engaging in activities I don't remember but which were so very ready to come alive that I still recall them. Other puppets created an unfamiliar feeling in me. My mother urged me to attend a three-month puppet-construction seminar and it's through it that I discovered wood pulp and the pleasure of giving form to it. The main thing that stayed with me was that, while I sculpted, I stopped thinking, which in my restless post-adolescent mind I desperately needed.

There followed, the year after that, a puppet construction and animation workshop with Francisco Brito. There I discovered the magic that exists in giving life to these constructs. What's more, I found a wonderfully bright and inspiring teacher. The puppetry bug started to make itself felt. There followed seminars on cloth puppets, giant puppets, life-sized puppets. Most of the time with Francisco, for about 4-5 years. During the last seminar, the thought that this was what I'd like to do was already there. But timidly, with fear and without sharing it with many around me.

As of 2007, I started my apprenticeship with the "Mystery of the East", a technically very demanding performance. This was followed by workshops with Stathis Markopoulos, who offered me a different understanding of puppet theatre. The one that says "everything is possible". There, I attended the workshops on offer for three years. I gained a lot of knowledge, entered into deep discussions

with my teacher and fellow learners, and met people with whom we are now companions in both art and our lives.

At the same time, from the age of 18, I studied at the University of Athens' Department of Theatre Studies, a faculty that I enjoyed around 60%, as the theoretical information on theatre did not attract me particularly. I really missed the practical part of experimenting and doing. Certainly, some of the classes on the theory and philosophy of theatre, the history of cinema, poetry and some of the works of playwrights we were taught moved me deeply and changed the way I think. So, looking at this from a distance, I feel extremely fortunate for the tools I acquired from this school which help me to better understand and analyse my art.

As for the seminars, they continue to this day: animation, theatrical clown, street theatre, stop motion, cartoons, theatrical lighting, the musical body and others.

Lita

Lita's involvement with puppet theatre also sprung up from her interest in sketching, drawing and more generally making things. For five years she attended freehand drawing classes, while also working for a time as an assistant in making jewellery. She also attended pottery classes for two years. But her acquaintance with the art of making puppets came in 2004, when she went to a puppet-making workshop taught by Theodora Lambrinou. She participated in it for six years, as she enjoyed both the teaching of the subject and the communication that developed with the teacher and the other participants. Each year, an exhibition was held with a demanding and imaginative set-up, which had the students envisioning and creating the environment in which the original character they had created would be able to "live". The puppets weren't simply placed. In passing through the exhibition, you would see either the narration of a single story or the setting up of a frozen image, like a snapshot of some activity. So beyond the making part, there was also an introduction to scenography/stage design, as the workshop participants as students were invited to imagine and construct the world their creations inhabited.

A somewhat "accidental" visit to the introductory lesson of Stathis Markopoulos' annual workshop awakened Lita's interest. After six years of coming into contact with puppet-making and the creation of scenery, she decided to study how movement and animation could be added to them. This was not an easy choice,



as at the time she was living in Tripoli, in the Peloponnese. Despite this, once a week she would attend the workshop and, over the final period of setting up the performance, she more or less moved in there, working from morning till night on her production. "Black Vinyl" is an original show for adults inspired by the music of the Cramps, with tiny puppets and alternating sets. The action takes place in a small living room and continues on a turntable. Lita had plunged into the act of creating, enjoying it and struggling to achieve the perfect result.

The show went very well, despite Lita's anxiety about being exposed to the public for the first time in her life. Before the performance, she had said to herself: "If I don't faint, this is what I'm going to do in life" and, to our continuing joy, she didn't faint!

The workshops continue to this day: puppet making and dramaturgy in Italy, animation in Spain, micro-cinema in Portugal, theatrical lighting and the musical body in Athens among others.

The street

The public space is the stage where theatrical events first appeared and where they have continued to maintain their presence for thousands of years. From the wandering troupe with the Chariot of Thespis through to the present not many things have changed in the process of performing artistic actions in the public space addressed to all those who are there, fortuitously or intentionally.

The energy required during a street performance is incredibly greater than in a theatre environment, as the discussions and noise all around can be quite intense.

For us, it was the scene we chose in order to acquire a daily experience of performing. We did it systematically for five years and more sporadically over the past four.

The streets that are usually the backdrop to our performance are Dionyssiou Areopagitou Street, below the Acropolis (spring and summer) and Ermou Street, the commercial street on the lower side of Sintagma Square (over the Christmas period). The energy required during a street performance is incredibly greater than in a theatre environment, as the discussions and noise all around can be quite intense. For us, it was the scene we chose in order to acquire a daily experience of performing. We did it systematically for five years and more sporadically over the past four.

The streets that are usually the backdrop to our performance are Dionyssiou

Areopagitou Street, below the Acropolis (spring and summer) and Ermou Street, the commercial street on the lower side of Sintagma Square (over the Christmas period).

The relationship with the public is totally free: no one is obliged to stand and watch, no one is obliged to pay. Despite that, if what you do offers people something, the reward that ultimately surfaces is what gives you a reason to continue being there.

Jovan-the-puppet

It takes a lot of patience and persistence to understand what makes your performance work. One piece of advice that Francisco, with 30 years of street performance experience, gave me is that, from a hundred metres away, the audience needs to grasp what your performance depicts and come up to watch it and see how it is being performed. It won't approach easily if it's something abstract, it won't come to see what you are doing but how you do it. This information was of real help, as in the case of Jovan, who first appeared with an undefined character and action, the hat set out on the ground informed us in record time that it wasn't working. On the first day, five euros, on the second eight euros. For four hours' work per day. On the third day, I said "let's go back to the original idea", and I gave Jovan a moustache and out came the bouzouki and the puppet started singing rebetika: 40 euros.

The help of close friends who came along as co-performers was significant. Vangelis, Yiorgos and Agni knew nothing about puppet theatre, but they believed in it and threw themselves into the endeavour with their whole heart. Other close friends, as well as my parents, helped me either with advice or with practical matters. Even now, when I'm asked who composes the team, I mention my colleagues on and behind the stage, but also my whole group of friends, as they support my dream as if it were also their own.

I was ignorant of many components of the technique of animating this particular kind of puppet, I didn't know about lip synch, I even struggled with the pauses and the focus of the eyes. I applied whatever I could from breathing and the clown technique (interaction with the public, puppet's reaction to external stimuli, expression of emotions according to the action). And in substance the director was the audience. Whatever action I felt the audience responded to, I retained. The greatest emotional payoff for us were the people's happy looks. That was, and continues to be, a very essential motivation in our art. Jovan



managed to find himself and functioned very well, with effort, care and love, which he offered and received from the audience. For some reason, which I still don't quite understand, this tender communication and love are typical feelings that spring up from the performance, both in us and in the public, irrespective of age and ethnicity.

Ivan-the-puppet

In Lita's case, her choice was Ivan. A wood-carved puppet with a cubist face, delicate limbs made with great detail and an abstract set design. Ivan effects a musical transition among airs of a different rhythm, style and volume. From rock and roll to classical music and back again. He gets confused in the transitions from one kind of music to the other, but gets carried away easily and dances to whatever music his amplifier might produce with the same passion.

Lita made a difficult choice for a street performance: very original, of great finesse and not easily recognisable from a distance, whether as regards who this character is or what his action is. Nonetheless, she has an abundant reserve of patience and perseverance. She is always totally focused on this ethereal creature with the turquoise uniform and the red boots. The puppet is made with such great detail that it can separately move its ankle, its leg both back and forth, the front of its shoe, its palms. It dances on its toes, twists and turns in the air.

The virtuosity stemming from the carefully-crafted puppet and the good movement bewitched the public. The people enjoyed the fact that such a fragile and mysterious construct moved so breezily and with such grace. Its figure piqued their interest through its originality. So, in the end, despite the difficulties arising from this choice, Ivan has acquired an audience that loves him and supports him steadfastly.

To sum it up, you need great reserves of faith in order to continue systematically performing in the street. The difficult parts you have to face are many. In the metro, people can get annoyed that you're entering with a bulky trolley. In the street, shopkeepers or the neighbours, justly or not, may be bothered by it. This might be expressed politely or with insults. The police might allow your presence in the street, or it may not. The other "buskers" may respect street etiquette, or they might not. You might set up and be on the verge of performing, when someone appears two metres away with their music full blast. You will tell them that you are here to work and ask whether they can move a bit further away so that both of you can get on with your job – and they might move along, or they

might not. In general, it is quite frequent that you either can't find a spot to set up and perform or, having found one, you are unable to do so for whichever of the reasons above. Street "cancellation" is as likely as being bowled over. You go out there and you can't predict anything. Only experience and emotional toughening up can help you overcome these adversities.

Of course, one can say that these are very minor difficulties compared to the joy that the people's faces give you and the knowledge and development of this technique that this activity as a whole gives you.

You are given material to explore on all subjects: in which spot the lights need to be, at what volume the music should play, when the act should come to an end so that people don't get bored but also understand the finale, which is also accompanied by a pecuniary offering. Or at what time the best natural lighting exists, how the puppet should interact with the people and a whole lot of other, small or more important things, all of them equally important, though, for both you and the public to be able to fully enjoy this magical moment in the bustling city.

The moment when the time of here and now ceases to exist, while simultaneously being very active. The moment when you can be transported to another planet, another time, another level. To communicate only from the heart, to let go, to feel a kinship with the person standing next to you, comrades in something no one knew would occur. The greatest thrills are hidden in street performance, where all of us, unsuspecting, might happen to or, for the puppeteer, might succeed to let go of ourselves in this collective experience.

The collaboration

Our acquaintance started in Stathis Markopoulos' annual workshop and evolved as we performed side by side in the street as of 2011. At the same time, a deep friendship slowly developed, characterised by respect, trust and the exchange of ideas on a wide range of topics.

In 2016, our collaboration began officially, performing together in the play "Jovan". This was followed by Lita's proposal that I replace Eleni Xylouri, who was unavailable at the time, in the performance "Should have said no". And then Lita created "Do you sing in your bathtub?", which she invited me to join as a helping hand and mind. She had set up the script and created all the props and puppets. When I went along, I started giving her ideas and we started working on the execution.



I would say our collaboration is a rich one, as we are both very different, whether as people or in our perception of puppet theatre. At the same time, we trust each other's criteria. The objects of study and areas of exploration differ. Lita has inspiration and strong ideas where the script is concerned and puts an emphasis on the construction techniques and the scenography. For my part, I attach importance to the animation, communication with the public and ergonomics. The funny and illustrative example of this is that "Jovan" fits in a piece of hand luggage and has a set-up time of 20 minutes, whereas the play "Should have said no" needs four giant suitcases/boxes and a set-up time of four hours!

I would say our collaboration is a rich one, as we are both very different, whether as people or in our perception of puppet theatre. At the same time, we trust each other's criteria. The objects of study and areas of exploration differ. Lita has inspiration and strong ideas where the script is concerned and puts an emphasis on the construction techniques and the scenography. For my part, I attach importance to the animation, communication with the public and ergonomics. The funny and illustrative example of this is that "Jovan" fits in a piece of hand luggage and has a set-up time of 20 minutes, whereas the play "Should have said no" needs four giant suitcases/boxes and a set-up time of four hours!

Subsequent productions

The need to explore aspects of our art through a systematic engagement, but also the need to earn "daily bread" thanks to it, led us to subsequent creations and participations.

Through the workshops we participated in, but also those of Unima Hellas, we found ourselves collaborating with people who share the same curiosity and pursuit as us to understand our art.

Lita

Lita, in collaboration with Eleni Xylouri, created the troupe "Don't Panic" in 2014 as well as the show "Should have said no". A show staged between Crete and Kalamata, in the Peloponnese: their places of residence.

It is a comic thriller inspired by the horror films of the 1960s. Its technique is a new take on the Paper or Toy Theatre developed as a bourgeois spectacle in the late 18th century. The original music with a Cretan lyre was composed by Yiorgos Kaloudis. The performance's 20 figures are made of thin MDF board and have an articulated body, predesigned to perform specific movements. The

show travelled widely and won awards at festivals – and continues its journey to this day.

In 2017, Lita created the show "Do you sing in your bathtub?", a tribute to classic opera songs, which are experienced with all his being by the wannabe tenor, Luigi. Starring in a recital that takes place in his bathtub, he feels in complete control of this dazzling performance. But in his bathroom, all the objects have come to life and put him through a variety of emotional states. And there are some objects, such as his bar of soap, that lead him to a humiliating finale.

She also collaborated with Marianne Charalambidou for the performance "Fidel & Lucy", a production of the annual Ayusaya workshop (2014). After this, she collaborated with Irini Mastora and Yiannis Tsioutas on Manuel de Falla's puppet-opera "Master Peter's Puppet Show", a production of the Greek National Opera (2018-2020). In 2019, together with Fouli Diakoliou, they created the group "Trischorolalato" and the show "Lolo's big party".

Anneta

The next production was "No, no, no: ceci n'est pas Molière", coproduced with Maria Apostolakea for the Theatrical Compositions festival of the Beton 7 Theatre. When reading through Molière's plays and the letters he sent to King Louis XIV, we were struck by his heretical discourse and his attack on the courtiers' morals alongside the flattering letters he sent to the king in order to allow his plays to be staged. The performance consisted of a duet between an actress and a puppet: Molière and his Spirit. The writing process, the difficult game of inspiration, handling the bad criticism, were things that moved us.

At the same time, in 2014-2015, though the Municipality of Athens' programme "Traces of Trades" I was offered a small shop dedicated to puppet theatre for eight months. There, performances, rehearsals and workshops were held. The relationship with the space's organisational aspect was very interesting and a lot of work!

After the initial apprenticeship in the Baruti group's "Mystery of the East" in 2007, came the show "Africa: In search of the breadfruit tree" in 2009, a production of the Gri Kouti troupe based on a text by Margarita Koulentianou. There, for the first time, I experienced the process of creating a complete show right from the beginning, in parallel to the human connection and friendship that can grow out of a collaboration.

There followed "The Little Beaver and the Echo", a show performed by the

speech group Paignion (i.e., Play) from 2015 to 2017. We performed every Sunday – and sometimes on weekdays for schools. The weekly repetition in the same space resolves quite a few practical issues and allows you to delve into animation without exterior distractions. I played the role of a turtle and an otter simultaneously, quite a demanding situation as your right side needs to move very nonchalantly and your left side with a lot of agitation. In the last scene, I also played the role of Old Beaver as an actor. This performance helped me a lot. Working with the other members of the group was extremely interesting, as we shared techniques that are encountered in dance, elocution, acting and puppet theatre to help each other.

After this, in 2016-2017 there were the performances “Puppetleaps, in dance’s footsteps” and “The goblin’s dilemma” of the Antamapantachou troupe as a replacement for Eleni Giannakopoulou. There I came into contact with exceptionally-crafted objects and I learnt a very meticulous manner of animation. Everything measured and everything with moderation.

In parallel, I trained in the productions of the Don’t panic group, either as an understudy or as an assistant. In “Should have said no”, the control needed to move the delicate two-dimensional figures and the restrained animation these required was really interesting.

During that very same year, I was fortunate enough to work with Christos Brito and the production company Marni Films for a series of promotional videos. We made twelve videos, a video clip and a live performance. Getting acquainted with the technique of puppetry in videos entranced me, as did working in such a large team: there were around 20 people for each shoot, with a real division of labour. Some commercials and music videos followed, as well as the film “Arabim. The souls of the statues” by Antigoni Paroussi, Margarita Koulentianou and Kostis Papanastassatos (2016). The teamwork required in videotaped puppet theatre, its technique (a lot of takes and the possibility of choosing scenes) and the directing angle are elements that exhilarated me.

In 2017, Lita and I started working on “Do you sing in your bathtub?”, a performance we are still finetuning at every opportunity.

In 2018-2019, I participated in the show “Short guide for aspiring tightrope walkers”, directed by Stathis Markopoulos and produced by the Onassis Foundation, which took us to places where people don’t have easy access to theatre. For the very first time, we had paid rehearsals for two months, with

a dramatist and a kinesiologist. A work based on the in-depth study of Jean Genet’s “Tightrope walker” by Stathis Markopoulos. In the same year, I replaced Iirini Mastora in the Christmastime “Von Kourabies and Count Melomakaronis”, a show with very amusing characters that makes you happy, whether as member of the audience or as an animator.

6. Festivals Abroad

In 2010, we participated with the performances created during Stathis Markopoulos’ annual puppet-making and animation workshop in the “New Puppeteers” competition of the Kilkis Festival, in Central Macedonia. Lita won the prize for best performance with “Black Vinyl”. This secured her a place at the Bilbao Festival, and gave her her first experience as a participant in an international festival. She saw, then, that there was also this option, to perform abroad, which she had been unaware of until then. From then on, she did a great deal of research that resulted in an organised list, finding festivals all over the world, deadlines, applications, conditions and ways to participate. To this day, this work she did allows us to travel to festivals large and small (the other way is by attending a festival, being seen by someone else’s production manager and this person then asking for the show).

Between 2011 and 2012, we started travelling independently to festivals abroad. Our first stops were at Segovia’s Titirimundi, in Spain, and at the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville, in France. There, we performed off-programme, in the street.

Whereas before we felt quite “alone” artistically and that we were part of a tiny number of people engaged in this art that’s unknown to many, at festivals you see that there many people more or less alone who have made this choice. And the endless ways in which they have chosen to express it. You can see lambe lambe² performances for a single spectator, large- or small-scale street performances, farces unfolding in a canteen, shadow theatre in caravans, classical repertoire

² What is lambe lambe theatre? It is a scenic language of animation developed inside a small stage box, with miniature puppets and/or objects that, accompanied by music and/or voice, perform secret theatrical situations in between one and three minutes, for one, two, or at the very most three spectators at a time. The audience wears headphones and observes the play through a small window. On the opposite side of the box, the actor/ animator sets in motion the play by manipulating the lighting, sound, props, puppets and/or objects. Most stories have no words and seek to captivate the audience through their simplicity with intimate and secret moments. Lambe lambe theatre began in Brazil in 1989 thanks to Denise Santos and Ismine Lima, who were inspired by the itinerant photographers of old (called lambe-lambe photographers and who would set up their “box on a tripod” in squares and public parks in Brazil in the days before cameras became consumer goods) and created their first play called “La Danza del Parto” or the Dance of Childbirth. See <https://oaniteatro.com/festival/>.

shows with an impeccable stage design, superproductions by 30 puppeteers in large theatres for 1,000 people. This experience broadens your horizons, you see the magical element of this art, that there are no limits to its execution. You observe that in some cases with large troupes there is a division of labour and an infrastructure.

They can be troupes composed of many people, very business-like and successful. There are also the municipal puppet theatres, which are mainly found in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. There the puppeteers are civil servants and are required to put on three new productions a year. There are "self-made" artists, too, who have developed a personal technique and aesthetics. You can see shows that are newly-created or ones that have been performed almost without changing for 20-30 years. There are puppeteers who are graduates of schools, so you can also find common elements among these in terms of the technique they were trained in. You notice similarities and differences in the approaches, the ways of perceiving and performing. This said, of course, it is possible that the essence of puppet theatre remains the same. What might this be? Where does the pleasure of creating or observing new worlds come from? How does identification come into being through abstraction, the comic or the symbolic? What is the objective of puppet theatre? Part of its goal is definitely the need to create, to express yourself and to communicate with your fellow human beings.

And the audience may differ or be very similar in its reactions, whether we are talking of a 5-year-old German girl or an 85-year-old Korean man. The education and knowledge you gain from these visits is irreplaceable. By attending performances, lectures and exhibitions, by talking with colleagues from all over the world, you can develop your perception, your aesthetic and dramatic criteria. You can see in practice abundant techniques and ways of performing puppet theatre. Also, the feedback you get from professionals about your own performance is particularly constructive and always takes you one step forward. An equally important stimulus is that of the performances, too, but also the fact there is a shared space and time for eating and drinking. Our discussions about what sparked the idea of a show, how each person first got involved with the subject, what their goals are, where their work space is, what are the best connections for the articulations, which glue is the most durable, which show is their preferred one, but also our philosophical discussions or the exchange of ideas make the encounter very meaningful, rich and beneficial. Often, you

meet the same people from far-flung corners of the globe in different places. You make friends everywhere in the world. With a common system of values, preoccupations, sensibilities. You feel your mind opening up and planet Earth morphing into a small and welcoming place to dwell in.

"Don't panic, Bufos!" Some thoughts on the staging, animation and execution of a show

The process of a professional involvement with the art of puppet theatre is a complex experience. Usually, a first "baptism" through relevant studies and seminars has preceded. But getting into it professionally plunges you into deeper waters. First you start making your puppet and your show. Then you slowly discover that the care you put into these needs to be given to a host of other areas you may not have even been aware of. The promotion and functional execution of your performance also have their own techniques and take time. You may suffer small panic attacks on various occasions. The construct may have an accident, either while you are creating it or during the performance. The sound may not work, either because you neglected to sufficiently charge its source or because you placed the amplifier in a bad spot and during the performance you kicked it, causing the cable to come loose.

The audience may be placed too far away, resulting in insufficient visibility, or too close, meaning that only the first row of spectators has good visibility. These are a few of our experiences that, at a first level, caused us anxiety, plunged us into the process of resolving them and have now given us the opportunity to be relatively prepared. Obviously, we still have a lot to learn. And even during rehearsals, if we have an accident, we don't interrupt the flow; we follow Francisco's advice: "pretend it didn't happen".

Making the puppet

Making a puppet usually starts in one of two ways: by chance or on a whim, and through the wish to do so or because of an order.

An example of the first case: in the summer of 2017, I discovered that a distant uncle of mine on the island of Donoussa had made 30 puppets out of pieces of wood he picks up around the island. When I asked him how he got this idea, why he started making puppets he told me: "Well, there was a piece of driftwood outside a café that looked like a human pelvis. Nobody picked it up, so I took it and made the first puppet. Over the following winter, I made the other 29."



The second case, that of a specific wish, is the most common one for a professional puppeteer. Either you decide to stage a particular script, you choose the aesthetic effect, you figure out the practical needs and start building the puppets and sets, or you wish to make a puppet that will be at the origin of a scenario, which will emerge from the puppet itself and its puppet-theatre potential.

The material used to make it depends on the movement and action you want it to do, the weight you want it to have, the feeling you want it to give. It can be wood, which has a long life, which has weight; the chisel gives nice details and clean cuts that make the features sharp and lively. It can be made of pulp, wood pulp or resin, which gives you the ability to set the weight, to do detailed sculpting. Fabric or foam, materials with plasticity and elasticity, offer you the possibility of changing its form and bring out a softer feel. The puppet can be made out of everyday objects which, with two or three interventions, acquire character. It can be made simply out of paper, food or a combination of materials. (Pieces of wood, glue, fabric, scissors, string, fishing line, needle and thread, Styrofoam, cutters, saws, nails and hammers, screws and a screwdriver, wire, circlip pliers and clippers, chisels, buttons, knitting wool, Velcro, beads, pins, drills are common materials found in our workshops.)

Through experience, you can organise the design and anticipate problems resulting from the materials used for the puppet or find rapid tested solutions when these arise. Until you reach that point, you'll often find yourself in a tricky situation and you'll make plenty of failed attempts and, in this manner, you learn in depth their characteristics, properties and possibilities.

The puppet-making is tested during the performance. That is where the functionality and success of the choices are judged.

The animation

The animation can also follow many paths. The puppet may have minimal, economical movement, but it may also suit it to move constantly. It may be silent or talk non-stop. It may execute movements in a way that imitates human movement. It can have a grotesque surreal movement or follow a slow, hypnotic rhythm in everything it does.

Some elements remain important whatever the form of animation, and you should decide to study them. In a nutshell, these are your breathing, focused

gaze, pauses, rhythm, preparation for each movement (anticipation)³ – the action that is followed by an emotional response and the natural laws that govern its universe and support its “verisimilitude” within this universe.

The puppeteer

The bet is, over time, to become a conscious performer. Not to get carried away in excessive movement by your anxiety, nor allow your timidity to give hesitancy to the character's expression. In general, and as far as possible, don't appear more dynamic than the puppet. Do allow it to live at a pace that serves its every action and every emotion. Even if your own emotion is on a different frequency at that moment. Over time, the concentration required to perform will become similar to a form of meditation. Giving movement to another body, living in perfect synchronicity with its emotions and energy while maintaining an inner calm and observation is a very relaxing process. Of course, you need to keep control of it, to be in control of the scene and be mentally one step ahead of the action, so as to prepare it and keep it from being wooden.

Eventually, of course, in both your body and the puppet's, the essence and quality of what you have as energy comes out. As if your spirit appeared somewhere in the atmosphere between it and you. And there is, too, that magic point where you can all breathe at the same rhythm, puppet, puppeteer and audience.

The performance

The preparation, from making the puppet to the rehearsals and the planning of the lighting and music, is completed with the performance. This is where it is important to have your set properly set up, to have checked the puppets and any other technical elements. It always helps to have a good warm-up to make your body softer, which gives the puppet better movement and also protects you from injury. Plus, it gives you concentration and calmness.

Depending on the size of your performance and the venue in which it is held, you take care of the spectators' seating. I have noticed that, for our small shows, it is best if the public is seated in a semi-circular arrangement close to the stage and as tightly as possible. You always adopt peculiar positions when you're

³ See Disney's 12 basic principles of animation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_basic_principles_of_animation



performing. With experience, you make sure to plan how to position your body so as to avoid lumbago and tendonitis.

The accidents

They occur due to how things were made, because of external conditions (wind, noise) or due to technical issues. They are definitely part of the programme and, if you regard them as challenges, they can give the puppet the opportunity to react very successfully. It would seem that the adrenaline of the moment makes us perform more meaningfully, with more immediacy, more vividly than what we plan during the hours and hours of rehearsals.

It's obviously hard when there's an accident. The hero you have spent so much time struggling to bring alive, to make convincing so that the public can understand and feel for, might suddenly be unable to move a hand or a leg, get tangled up in a funny position or fall dead before the spectators' very eyes! Accidents are often followed by warm applause.

The public

As an audience, we usually come into contact with puppet theatre in our childhood, with memories that may be tinged with pleasure, wonder, magic or



even terror. A lot of people perceive puppets as something frightening. This may be due to the puppet's aesthetics or because the performing is strange. But it could also be because it is rather difficult to transcend the collective memory, which defines the puppet as a totemic object, between truth and falsehood, between a mere dead material and a god. As a puppeteer you can get to know people in a special and profound way through your puppet. Through the public's reaction, you can also observe certain communication codes, by age and nationality. You can communicate directly and from the heart, you can feel intimate with people who until a short while ago were total strangers. We feel great joy and gratitude for the way our puppets allow us to connect with many, different people. In conclusion, from the first to the last stage of the puppet show, there is an effort to keep everything under control, but at the same time everything remains very free. A sense of risk always lurks in the corner and all possibilities remain open, until the final applause.

Puppet theatre in the past, present and future

In the relatively recent past, until the 1950s, puppet theatre was a spectacle for both adults and children. Without being practiced by many performers, the presence of Karaghiozis initially and then Fassoulis was quite widespread. Over time, it evolved into a spectacle mainly for children, with an educational and instructional nature. These past three decades, there has been a rapid growth in both techniques and themes and the public it is addressed to. We observe that puppet theatre is growing, evolving, entering more often into schools, theatres, alternative settings (parks, cafes, concerts), advertising, music videos and films. Or at least it did, before the advent of the pandemic. At present, given that most troupes are autonomous and self-sufficient, things are expected to be quite difficult for the foreseeable future. Support for the cultural sector in Greece is non-existent and, when it does exist, it is destined almost exclusively to the large institutions. Of course, puppet theatre has always managed to exist in people's lives: whether during the good times or the bad, it always found a way to survive. The flexibility and resourcefulness that characterise this art ensure that, one way or another, it will continue to exist. It is we that I'm not sure how long we'll continue to exist!





Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019

Hop Signor puppet theatre troupe



Fig2: performance "The Giraffe"

The Hop Signor puppet theatre was founded by Evgenia Tsihlia and Thanos Sioris.

Having studied and worked in different fields, such as theater, education, science, handicrafts and humanities, they found in puppetry a common ground for expression. They have attended workshops in puppetry, object theatre and physical theatre (Rene Baker, Neville Tranter, Agnes Limbos, Katy Deville, Camillo Betancor, Stathis Markopoulos, Gozde Atalay Kokkoris).

Puppets, with their poetic and symbolic power, became for them the means to share stories. Hop Signor uses minimal scenic elements that leave space for the exploration of movement. It is this movement, in conjunction with the use of sound and light; that form the company's non-verbal vocabulary. Their stories are inspired by places, objects and people. They are funny stories, moving stories, stories that invite you to complete them with your own imagination and feelings.

The Hop Signor puppet theatre has presented its work to spectators of all ages all around the world and has been awarded by international juries multiple times.



Theatre for children... a theatre by adults: thoughts, trends and contradictions

Evgenia Tsihlia & Thanos Sioris

The term "theatre for children" or otherwise "children's entertainment/spectacle" is now established in the performing arts and comprises theatre, puppet theatre, dance, circus and other performances targeted at child audiences. However, the meaning of this term is expanding and evolving, often blurring the boundaries of "children's spectacle".

Is the child's world cut off from the world view and the concerns of adults? Are there performances that adults (artists, parents, teachers) believe are not addressed to children, but in which children would find elements to interest them? How can we be sure of a spectator's experience if it is not tested? Is there a preferred aesthetics and subject matter for children?

Travelling the length and breadth of Greece, but also to international festivals abroad, we often came across these questions. We encountered them when presenting our performances, watching other shows, talking with other artists, but also at conferences where the above questions were debated. The article below outlines thoughts and experiences that touch upon these questions.

Key words: children's spectacle, drama, aesthetics, didacticism

Aesthetics and themes of children's spectacles

Our first performance was called "Tabula Rosa" and when we started plotting the play it was not our objective to present it to a children's audience. At first glance, its storyline does not appear to concern children: an author closets himself up in his room trying to write. Each time that he wakes up and gets out of bed, he is smaller in size. Often a red shadow, his inspiration, visits him, which he meets in the end so that both of them together can enter his writings.

In addition, taking into account its aesthetics, the features of this show are not those we are used to seeing in children's performances. It is a show with no alternating images, since everything takes place in the same room, without colourful scenery, as everything is black and white, and without many different characters. As for its sound, it features original music suitable for a thriller movie and the puppets don't talk. Finally, its rhythm is slow and, had we been making a show so that the children would not get bored, which is often the main concern, in all likelihood we would not have started off with this choice.

Given all the above, we believed that we had made a show for adults and, during its first steps in Greece, none of the professional puppeteers thought

differently. Until the time came to present it in Bulgaria, at the International Sofia Puppet Fair. Two programmers of a youth festival in France were there and they were looking for shows to invite to their festival. We dissuaded them from coming to see ours, as we were sure that it was not aimed at children. But they came nonetheless, the show pleased them and they decided to invite us for a series of performances for primary school children in their country. Even when it was time to perform in France, we believed that the programmers hadn't thought it out properly and we were afraid of the way things would go. We saw the children come and we waited for the decision's mistake to be revealed. To our great surprise the children had many positive reactions. The following year we were invited again to present it to schools in that area. How was it possible that others (the programmers) could see something that we ourselves could not see about our show? What was it they could see and we couldn't? What stereotypes do we unwittingly reproduce through our certainty that a performance isn't for children before even trying it out?

Since that festival in France, "Tabula Rosa" has been presented on many occasions to adults and children, and adults often come up to us to tell us how impressed they are that children watch a performance that is slow, without many changes of scene. Reflecting on this example now, we believe that the very characteristics of the show that we thought would function as a deterrent were those that ultimately helped it being well received. The comprehensive small stage, the suspense of the music and the single character shrinking as he tries to write in his room were sufficient stimuli for a child's imagination. However, even this is still a hypothesis, as this experience showed us that we can never completely control what has a positive effect and what doesn't on the spectator's psychological makeup. Could it be that children can see much more than what we offer them? Should we sometimes start from the fact that we cannot possibly know what is "for children"? Without going so far as to say that a children's show shouldn't have colourful scenery, a fast pace, etc., "Tabula Rosa" is an example showing that a performance can also function without these.

At this point, we would like to mention a show by the Polish troupe "Theatre Baj" called "Duck, Death and the Tulip" based on the story of the same name by Wolf Erlbruch. In it, a duck dies after spending its last moments in the company of Death.¹ Death resembles a young child in terms of clothes and height and has

1 Trailer of the show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pmv2bKEPHRM>

a skull as a head. While the duck is initially afraid of the child, it then begins to like the child and they spend time in each other's company, swimming in a pond, climbing a tree and going for walks. Death is beside Duck when one day it stops breathing. Death gently lifts Duck to let it travel on the water.

After the performance, we heard doubts expressed about whether this subject is addressed to children because of the story's characters, its dark atmosphere and moody tone. The daughter of a colleague who attended the show cried and he expressed reservations about whether it was suitable for children.

We had a similar experience when we performed our show "Giraffe" in the Cretan town of Rethymno. A little boy was crying loudly, causing concern among the public and to us, too. His mother asked him if he would like them to leave and he answered "no mummy, let me cry". At the end of the performance, we learnt that he had recently lost a family member. The image in our show of a child parting with an object it loves brought to mind his own loss. Too often, by being careful about what children come into contact with, we end up limiting their stimuli, but also emotions they are able to experience and handle. By trying to protect children from something that we, first and foremost, don't want to touch upon, we conceal real aspects of life. We think that it is not yet time to talk about this or that and we forget that this has to do with our own needs and the theoretical schemes of the moment. It is interesting to note how a show receives a positive review if its adult public is moved, whereas when a child cries during a performance we begin to worry. It might be worth considering each time, from the beginning, in what way we convey a subject in a performance and not rule it out in advance as a taboo issue. Instead of excluding topics such as power, racism, death, homosexuality, etc., we could discuss the different ways an artist can approach all of these, taking into account the children's age and the particular characteristics of this age. What purpose does it serve to represent to a child what, for us, is an ideal world or should we, on the contrary, portray the world in which it lives and will live?

Approach of the dramaturgy of a children's show

The next topic that is perhaps worth discussing through the example of our second performance is the approach of its dramaturgy. How open in its meanings can a performance for children be and how do we seek, through it, to address the spectators? Do we wish to share an adage or questions we have? This discussion explores the fine boundaries of didacticism, which cannot by definition be bad,

but often becomes a vehicle that devitalises the spirit of a performance.

The "Giraffe" show has, as its starting point, a story that moved us and which we decided was suited to be performed with puppets. Our main objective was to explore motion, sound and light and also to see what would result from the puppet-object-person relationship. In this performance, two different puppets, a young child and an adult, meet a piggy-bank that has the shape of a giraffe.

They see it as something more than a receptacle for coins, recognise it has a life, and bond with it. Initially the child wants to buy an airplane, but the puppeteers give it a piggy bank in which to collect money. When the time comes to break the piggy bank, the child refuses to do so and releases it into the wild, there where real giraffes live. At this point, a lover of the sky who comes to watch birds through his telescope finds it.² The performance is wordless, puts an emphasis on physicality and the spectator is called upon to translate the movement at every moment. The absence of speech allows points of the story to be open, seeking an active spectator, who follows the plot and corroborates the action. However, many teachers in schools hesitate to choose our show, doubting that the children will understand it (especially as it contains no words).

Is it possible that the understanding of a meaning is the greatest purpose of art? Is it the artist's responsibility to create an experience full of certainties about its meaning or, on the contrary, an experience with uncontrollable possibilities? Do we want to create a performance in which everyone feels and thinks the same or where each one is different? Although in life we are constantly trying, through language, to name and classify things, it is nice that a performance, whether for children or adults, leaves room for multiple readings. Trying to constantly label creation in an attempt to control it may kill its mystery and vitality.

This is also the reason why, as a team, we often find it difficult to draft a press release. When we wish to communicate about the performance to teachers and parents, we have to choose the right words. We feel that phrases such as "this performance is about friendship, diversity, etc." confine the show's content, as they are never enough. We think of many things and force ourselves to decide what is most important. Such moments are occasions to think more about the didacticism underlying our requirements regarding children's theatre. If we don't want didacticism to go out of the door and come in through the window, we

² Trailer of the show: www.hopsignor.gr/en/videos/



need to constantly re-examine ourselves, both while we create and about how we talk of the product of this creation to others (teachers, parents, etc.). Here it is worth giving the example of a performance by the Dutch group "Theater Artemis", which we saw at a festival for children and young people and which we consider evocative as regards the discussion about didacticism, i.e., about how theatre can be an experience and not a lesson. Its theme is war.³ And they "talk" about their show like this:

Sorry,
We wish we had something sensible to say.
But a war is too big a thing even for us.
We are just here to make a show.

Something about a balloon slowly deflating, a nose bleeding, little helicopters falling down from a tree, a shower crying, audience members shooting and three soldiers roller-skating and talking backwards.

Huh? Come and see for yourself.

War is a subject that we are all concerned about. Our children have their own ideas about it, but try as we might, we never have any real answers for them.

For us, this show, but also the way they talk about it, was a wonderful way to showcase how one can touch upon subjects such as the ridiculousness and absurdity of war without even saying it, without saying that war is bad and those who start it are bad people. Without even using a linear story with a beginning, middle and end, but focusing on the heroes' relationships as they experience the absurdity of war.

How much do we effectively "point" with our finger at what we want to say? How can we not only hide this lifted finger, but remove it totally? Do we want the public to feel small and that we are manipulating it, or do we want to work in a direction where the spectators have room to go further, to imagine and create their own associations? Is our intention that of impressing, or of creatively empowering our public?

To answer to all of this, we need to ask ourselves: when does something become didactic in a way that takes the dynamic out of a performance? Here are some of our own thoughts. As humans, we experience different situations and draw conclusions. This is not bad in itself. But it is one thing to invite the

³ Trailer of the show: <https://vimeo.com/234495308>

spectators in order to recount our conclusions and another to reproduce the situations with their ambiguity on stage and leave them free to draw their own conclusions. After all, we need to always bear in mind that reality is far more complex than whatever conclusions we reach about it. Truth, for the most part, is not defined because it exists between opposites, in the disagreement of ideas and images. It is one thing to provide answers and another to find the new questions within them.

The difference is that of discovery and finding something readymade. Discovery contains all the joy of the journey, the doubt, of interactivity and risk, whereas the "readymade" has a fixed character that is imposed.

What do we want from tomorrow's puppet theatre?

By way of a conclusion, we will answer a question that Antigone Paroussi asked us during the two-day conference. What do we want from tomorrow's puppet show? We will answer for our team and what we would like from ourselves for our next performances.

Not to get into moulds and partitioned spaces. To treat children as adults and ourselves as children who are playing so as to create a performance, making room for experimenting with materials, new techniques, light and sound. To be able to create puppet shows boldly, because we find something that is totally us and about appealing to children. Not to forget, especially as a child "category" has been created in various fields (children's spectacle, child psychology, etc.), that no matter how we approach the world of the child, the adult's approach and gaze towards it remain, marked by a certain historical moment and its constructions and theories. For our primary criterion to be that which motivates us, and to find things of interest without compromising. I shall use an excerpt from one of my favourite books about when one knows that something is interesting.

«The primary tool in a creative process is interest. To be true to one's interest, to pursue it successfully, one's body is the best barometer. The heart races. The pulse soars. Interest can be your guide. It always points you in the right direction. It defines the quality, energy and content of your work. You cannot feign or fake interest or choose to be interested in something because it is prescribed. It is never prescribed. It is discovered. When you sense this quickening, you must act immediately. You must follow that interest and hold on tight" (Bogart, 2001: 76).

We believe that the words above propose a way to lead us to thinking of spectators as a community. Honesty and boldness in the creative process



can generate spectacles that are enjoyed equally by adults and children, in a community of theatre that has no need of a segregation according to age. Adults who are not on their cell phones or simply “park” their children at the theatre. And children who enjoy the spectacle more, because they see their parents next to them, happy.

Reference

Bogart, A. (2001). *A director prepares: Seven essays on art and theatre*. London: Routledge.

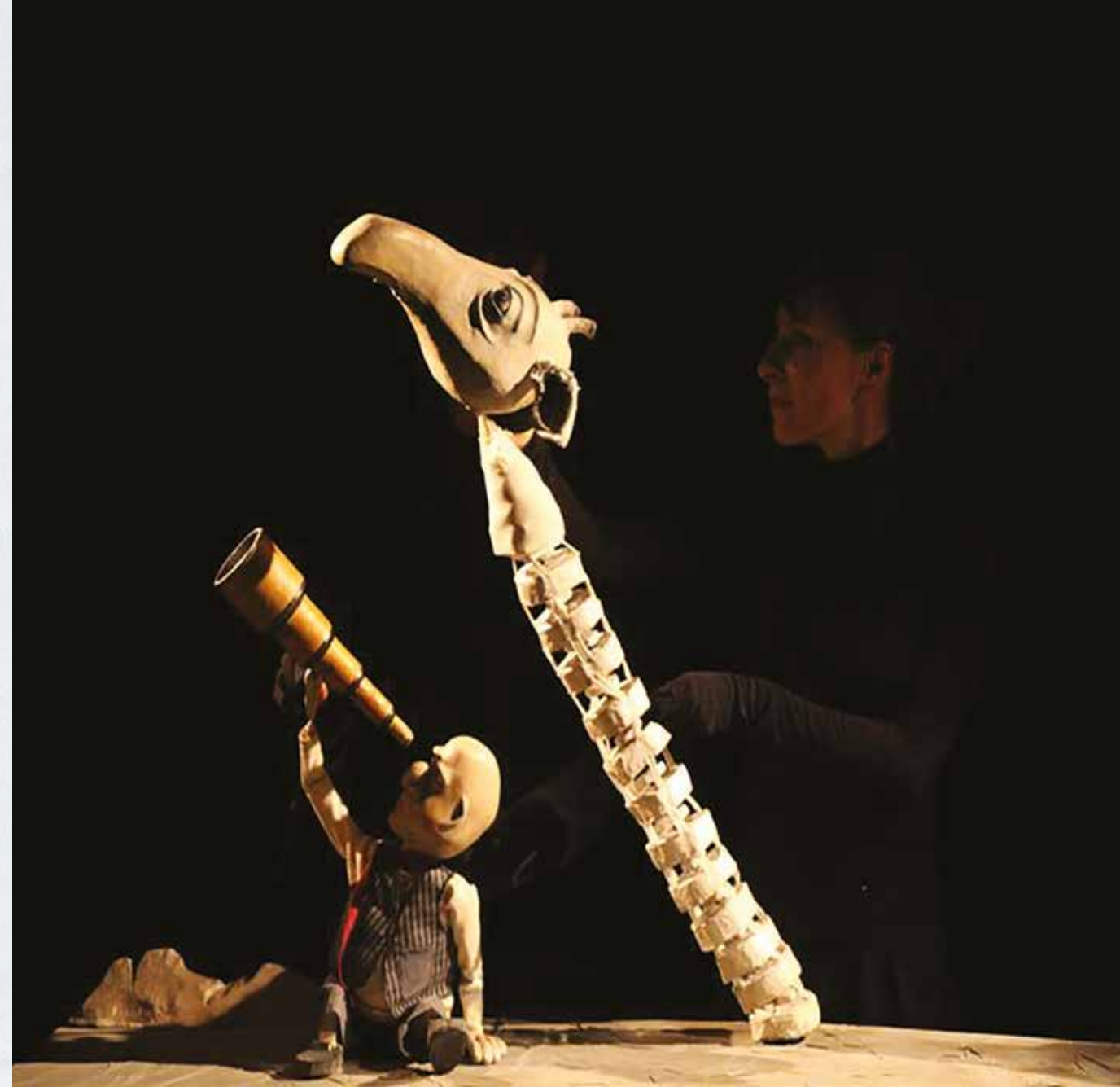


Fig.3: The Giraffe is a performance with table puppets and the puppeteers taking part in the action





Baruti Group

Francisco Brito was born in Tenerife, in the Canary Islands (Spain). He studied drama at the Philippe Gaulier School in Paris. He was apprenticed and worked at the glass-blowing workshop of artisan Nikos Troullinos for seven years. He enriched his theatrical studies with seminars alongside teachers and groups such as Tapa Sudana, Odin Theater and Gioco Vita. Since 1993, he teaches theatrical play, as well as giving classes on making and animating puppets and theatrical clowns. He has collaborated with venues and theatres such as the Epi Kolono Theatre, the Maryvi Theatre, and the Figures and Puppet Theatre. He has also collaborated with artists and people, among them Agami Thytai, Glykeria, Ferentinos and others, and has participated in TV shows. With the Baruti Group, he has participated in international festivals around the world from 2000 until today (Spain, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Turkey, Taiwan, Korea, etc.). Lastly, he is involved in directing theatrical and puppetry group performances. Since 2005, he has been the artistic director of the International Puppet Theatre Festival in the Canary Islands.

Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference DECE, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) 2019

Puppet theatre as a bridge

Francisco Brito
(English text by the author)

I became a puppet player by accident. In 1986, I saw Alexander Mihelovski in Paris performing with a puppet violinist in the street. I was mesmerized by the show. I was also enchanted by the hat full of money! Until then, I had been searching for a way to travel the world. So at that moment, I thought that would be a good way! I returned to Athens and, with a photograph of Alex's marionette and my memories of my grandfather's carpentry shop as my sole capital, I went to work. That's how my first puppet, Dupi, was born! At the time, I couldn't have imagined the great road that was about to open up for me...

Dupi changed many times, evolving and improving, and so did I. With him, I did indeed travel to many, many countries, all over Europe, the Far East and Africa. I came in contact with so many different cultures and people who constantly opened new windows in my mind. The road grew longer and broader, it brought performances, festivals, seminars, people; many and interesting people! Through puppet theatre many friendships were born, deep ones, friendships for life. Apprentices were also born in the natural flow of passing on knowledge. Some of those went on to become professional puppeteers, something that makes me particularly happy and grateful.

For me, puppet theatre functions like a bridge of a double nature. On the one hand, it allows me, as an actor, to bridge all my amorphous inner world with the outer world. To give it shape, express it and offer it to my fellow human beings. It is a deeply therapeutical process, whose outcome affects both sides of the bridge. On the other, it functions as a bridge that can bring me to all the magic of Life through my close acquaintance with people. A puppet offers the most direct means of being able to remove the apparent differentiations that keep us at a distance and in casts and to bring together people's hearts. A puppet that comes alive with the flame of the soul always has the power to remind us we are ONE!

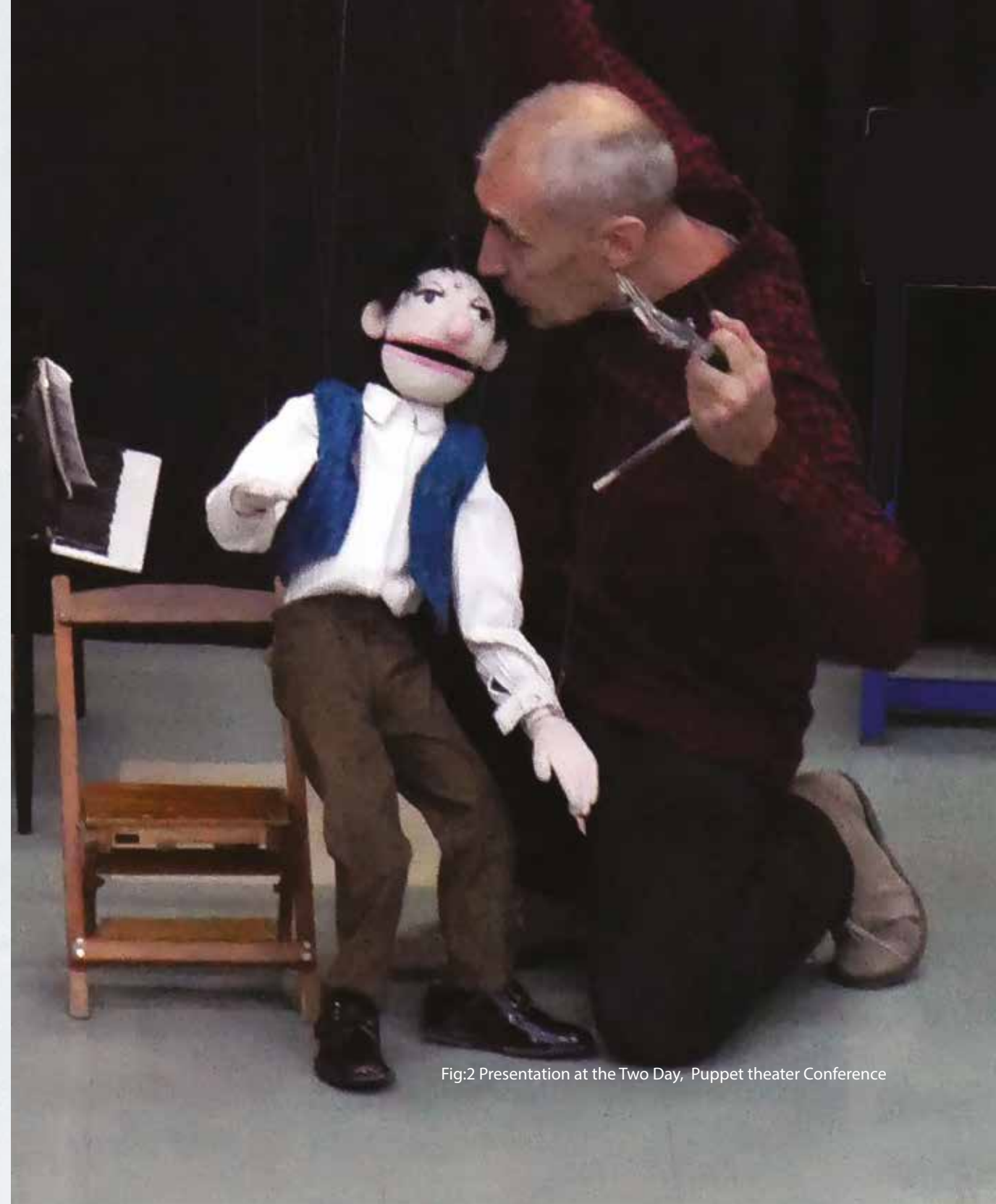


Fig:2 Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference

Prassein Aloga Visual Puppet Theatre troupe

A theatre born of the image, the puppet and the actor's body

The "Prassein Aloga" Visual Puppet Theatre troupe was founded in 1997 by Emmanouéla Kapokaki, a graduate of the French Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette with a scholarship from the Onassis Foundation. It is a puppet theatre that incorporates various types of puppets on stage together with actors, thus breaking with traditional puppetry. The puppet's interaction with human beings is a combination that is presented on stage using images, symbols, dramatic speech and dance. The spectator is approached differently to the way of spoken theatre, using the language of the image, the archetype. The troupe's name is no accident. It aims to guide the spectators to "horse acting" (an attempt at wordplay, the Ancient Greek word that translates today as horse meaning "wordless"), intertwining sentiment and subconscious in the plays' fictional stories. An original spectacle, combining actor and puppet action for children and adult spectators alike.

With two decades of experience, the troupe offers excellent expertise in the art of puppet theatre and a constant and stable presence in Greek theatre. The element of research is important in the theatrical writing with feedback from the public, with an emphasis on the authenticity and imagination presented in each performance. The troupe is fuelled by its passion for the puppet and its potential to contribute to society. After all, it is well known that the puppet possesses magical power: through its artistic value, it revives childhood memories, processes the fear of death, while also offering healing properties. The troupe's track record comprises fifteen theatrical productions, while, as of 2000, it has received subsidies from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the National Centre for Theatre and Dance eight times for its artistic and social work. It has also been supported by various embassy teaching institutes, the General Secretariat for Youth, the Municipality of Athens, the Athens Prefecture, the Onassis Foundation's "Stégi" (cultural centre) and other educational and private institutions. It should be noted that, thanks to these subsidies, the troupe was able to realise several productions and also to organise the way of approaching the public so that it gets to know the theatrical puppet. Thus the "Prassein Aloga" troupe also organises puppet-making and animation workshops for children and adults, aimed at transmitting the knowledge of puppet theatre to everyone, but above all to empower everyone through its benefits. The troupe places great emphasis on the impact that puppet theatre has on society and "Prassein Aloga" contributes significantly through performances and seminars for the community, particularly for vulnerable groups.



Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019

See <http://www.prasinaloga.gr>

WE PUPPETPLAY: A new generation of citizens through the use of the puppet as a creative tool

Emmanouela Kapokaki

The “Prassein Aloga” Visual Puppet Theatre was founded in 1997 as an idea of Emmanouela Kapokaki. Over its long course in the field of the theatrical puppet, it introduced an innovative approach to shows for young and old alike. Thanks to its artistic path, in 2019 “Prassein Aloga” acknowledged the need to renew the puppet and introduce it into education. Thus, the troupe implemented the 1st Panhellenic programme and competition “We Puppetplay” thanks to funding from and under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, as a form of digital training for teachers, parents and children, in order to integrate an innovative form of learning in primary education based on imagination and interaction. Since the programme’s pilot year and through the support of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Primary Education Directorates, the Panhellenic Network for Theatre in Education, “Prassein Aloga” continues to envision the future of puppet theatre in alternative ways in a national and European context, responding to Greece’s economic crisis and to the outbreak of the pandemic with a constant search for new ways to sustain and establish puppet theatre in education and culture.

WE PUPPETPLAY:

A new generation of citizens through the use of the puppet as a creative tool

With all these social and artistic strings to its bow, the troupe is constantly looking for new ways to bring the art of puppet theatre centre stage in the art of everyday life and the everyday life of Art. Therefore, when the calls for proposals reappeared for creative proposals to be subsidised by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, the idea of “We Puppetplay” was born.

Throughout its years of artistic creation and contribution, the troupe has constantly been in the pleasant position of observing the benefits of puppet theatre for young and old alike, especially when the puppet-making and animation is done by the people themselves. Involvement in the medium of the puppet awakens, inspires and strengthens manual and cognitive skills, while also fostering free expression and imagination.

Through our twenty-year experience of puppet shows, workshops for children, our contact with nursery and primary-school teachers and documented research,

we identified as a problem children’s deficient everyday familiarity with the Arts, their inability to follow step-by-step instructions for a creative construction, their lack of manual skills, as well as their reduced power of concentration.

Thus, we proposed the educational programme and competition “We Puppetplay”, which concerned the use of puppets in education with participations from all over Greece. With the assistance and support of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, we created open-access digital material on our website, so as to help the participants in their puppet-making and animation, as well as in creating a performance. In addition, we provided on a daily basis online and telephone support to participants and those interested in our programme, as we knew that very few teachers had been involved with puppets in the classroom, especially from the very first stage of making a puppet through to creating a performance.

For the notification and better dissemination of the educational programme and competition, in collaboration with the Cultural Affairs Officers for Attica’s Primary Education Directorates and the Ministry of Culture and Sports, on Monday 30/9/2019 we organised the free experiential seminar “Teacher and Theatrical Puppet” for teachers at the Tritsis Amphitheatre. The aim of the seminar was obviously to familiarise the teachers with the programme and guide them so that they could participate in this educational programme.

We were very pleased to see that over 200 teachers from the Attica Region participated, engaging in the process with great enthusiasm and making their own direct-motion puppet; they even tested their animation skills following the instructions of the team leader. They were also given a first taste of curriculum dramatization and the importance of theatrical play by Stelios Vgages, teacher, theatre educator and animator at the “School of Play”.

Following the collaboration we were able to achieve with the Primary Education Directorates of Attica, we also held face-to-face seminars in special education schools of Attica with socio-economic criteria, so as to offer better guidance for our competition. Understanding the need for a learning tool in education, the family and vulnerable groups, we opened our participatory audience to the whole spectrum of Greek society.

In the context of the programme during the school year, and alongside the continuous communication with and support of the participants by e-mail,



telephone, newsletter and the Facebook group,¹ the team sought out ways to inspire the teachers with step-by-step handicrafts and through the renewal of the existing digital material. For this reason, we approached S. Vgages so that he might share with us his knowledge of theatrical play and the importance of theatre in school in two videos that were also made available on our YouTube channel² as well as on the troupe's website. In these videos, we give answers to all the participants' questions about dramatization and how to convey theatre from teacher to classroom.

Furthermore, understanding the difficulty of many teachers –especially those from remote areas of the Region– to complete the programme and participate in the competition, we insisted on them sending us information on their actions thus far. More specifically, wanting to record their progress and have them also participate the following year, we created the Action Diaries,³ in which all the participants could fill in their progress in the programme and the competition according to the stages they were following, their collaboration with the pupils and the time at their disposal. This recording of the process was beneficial not only for us as part of pedagogical research for the future, but also for the teachers themselves, as they recorded all of the process' stages and their observations that they could take into account for the following year's competition. Another very essential part of the Diaries was the recording of their collaboration with the children, the initiatives they took and their reflection on their participation in the project.

We believe that the Action Diaries were an important addition to our programme and competition, especially for the participants of course, as the main objective was to record their experience as a whole. And precisely because our programme was based on four stages (1. Selection of the story, 2. Crafting, 3. Animation and 4. Dramatization), they were structured in that order.

Similarly, for us also they were a very important component of the programme, on the one hand because this helped us to see the whole process and the way

in which teachers approached the puppet in the classroom –which through the subsequent reading of the reports appears to have been impressively organised given the limited time available– and, on the other, because it helped a lot in the global evaluation of “We Puppetplay”. Thanks to this review, the troupe was able to listen to the participants' problems and ideas and to shape the following year's competition even better.

Out of this whole process of the Action Diaries, we noticed that, beyond our digital material, the way in which the programme was approached in the classroom differed according to each participant. It is also important to note that, precisely because of the different circumstances and needs of each class or group, the instructor had to adapt the puppet and the knowledge she/he had received according to the children's specificities (age, interests, curriculum, socio-economic circumstances, etc.). Although it offered a tool, a means of creation that the children were obviously enthusiastic about and was presented as a “fuel” to develop their imagination, their self-expression, we saw that the organisation, and later the team's communication, was built precisely on the basis of the common goal of creating a performance from scratch.

This is evident in most of the reports we collected in the teachers'/instructors' Personal Note. Although there were great difficulties and it was a great challenge in the middle of the school year for both them and the children to deal with, the puppet provided an environment of one or two hours during the week where children and grown-ups created, communicated through play and ultimately bonded through the shared goal via the puppet.

Our programme ended its pilot year with the organisation of our Workshop called “Puppet Theatre in Education” with experienced and knowledgeable people from the field of Primary Education and lecturers from the Departments of Early Childhood Education as panellists in an open discussion with the programme's participating teachers. However, as our competition concerned the whole of Greece –and had also reached some of the Greek schools abroad– with the outbreak of COVID-19 we were forced to reschedule our Workshop, which was to be held at the City of Athens Cultural Centre, a number of times until, due to the virus-prevention measures, our workshop took place online. At this point, we should say that this event brought us closer to our speakers and collaborators.

The participants of the e-Workshop were:

-Antigoni Paroussi, tenured professor at DECE of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, whose presentation concerned the differentiation of

1 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/koyklopaizoyme>

2 The troupe's communication and collaboration with S. Vgages was very important as, through these videos, questions and concerns were answered regarding the approach of theatrical play and theatrical activity by adults (teachers, group leaders, etc.). The videos are published on the troupe's YouTube channel: [tinyurl.com/yehx8za](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyehx8za).

3 The Action Diaries [A.D.] were created by “Prasein Aloga” during the programme and competition and participants were informed by email and newsletter by the troupe, so as to include them in their participatory process. They had the possibility of downloading them in a pdf format from the troupe's website: [tinyurl.com/yh7j1wso](https://www.tinyurl.com/yh7j1wso). See appendix for further notes/conclusions on the 2019 A.D. from the e-Workshop: Puppet Theatre in Education.

her students' practices as practices of "poiesis" and "praxis". She took a critical approach to the role and outcomes of artistic/learning practices according to her academic experience.

-Maria Velioti, associate professor at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Peloponnese, with her useful presentation on Justice, the special puppet of the Theatre of the Sun crafted as a puppet/happening in various social movements. She also presented how it was crafted and animated in connection with its mission.

-Irini Marna, who spoke on behalf of the Panhellenic Network for Theatre in Education, presented the role of theatre and how it contributes decisively to the development of creativity, humanist education, the cultivation of a humanist consciousness and the approach of issues of cultural alterity. She also stressed the importance of programmes that introduce forms of theatrical expression, such as puppetry, to the educational function and of art/education collaborations in achieving pedagogical goals that enhance the modern role of schools.

-Marialena Tsiamoura, early childhood educator, mental health counsellor and puppet therapist, who spoke on behalf of UNIMA Hellas about the use of the puppet in the classroom by educators, as well as about its expanding action beyond being an organised educational activity. When the puppet comes to life, both the child and the teacher are invited to meet it and communicate with it. Her speech was about the dynamics of the relationship with puppets, its importance and power in education and beyond, while she also stressed the importance of the work UNIMA produces in Greece.

For "Prasein Aloga", the e-Workshop⁴ functioned very beneficially, as it enabled the participation of all participants and interested teachers from all over Greece. This event confirmed to us the need for education to take a creative approach to learning. An approach that awakens creativity and the imagination, while at the same time giving children the opportunity to make and animate their own puppet, bringing it to life in the learning environment. All of our Workshop participants observed that the pupils took initiatives, collaborated and connected with them through theatrical expression.

Through the puppet, they process their feelings, entertain themselves and learn. From last year's nationwide participation in "We Puppetplay", we observed

⁴ The online workshop "Puppet Theatre in Education" has been published, with the approval of the presenters, on the channel of the "Prasein Aloga" troupe: tinyurl.com/yf3g6a3v.

that the use of the puppet can greatly benefit society. In particular, we noted that there was significant participatory interest in our competition in most of the provinces, in all probability because it addresses the lack of cultural/educational events away from major urban centres. For this reason, this year we want to expand our action to more remote areas, so as to inspire creatively and give equal opportunities to areas that lack the benefits of cultural activities.

Thus, once again through a State subsidy and under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, we are trying to open up our participatory public by approaching the Greek provinces through education and local culture. This will be carried out simultaneously on three bases: through experiential seminars in major cities of Attica and other regions, according to criteria of accessibility to cultural activities; through video seminars (e-classes), thanks to the possibilities of the digital age, throughout Greece including the more remote areas; and, lastly, through the access and use of open electronic platforms and audiovisual material (open source), we shall provide the know-how and the opportunity to participate. In all three cases, everybody will have the possibility to learn how to make and animate a puppet, dramatize themes, receive feedback from our troupe, participate in the theatrical puppet competition and present their works in a digital exhibition.

Our troupe's means to reach this goal is puppet theatre, an imaginative and enjoyable medium, a playful process that uses and develops both manual and cognitive skills, leading to physical and emotional expression. It puts the participant in the position of conscious spectator and partner in Art and strengthens initiative, as well as free writing and the creation of their own stories. "In action research conducted in 2010 in Stockholm (Sweden): they showed a greater increase in vocabulary, a greater ability to retell a story and produce written and oral speech than the pupils in the control group."⁵

Through puppet theatre, participants come into contact with contemporary forms of visual and theatrical art, develop their imagination, approach various social and cultural concepts and become multifaceted personalities. A new generation of citizens equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The benefits of puppet theatre, both in the educational sector and in the family and local communities, encourage a creative mind with innovative ideas and relational skills. Also, it can serve "to engage children, explain abstract ideas, demonstrate

⁵ See Vitsou, 2016.



processes and concepts and, in this way, ease the learning process (...) [it] creates a connotation of play (...) [and thus] the knowledge acquired is assimilated and not forgotten for a long time”⁶

The aim of “Prassein Aloga” is for this educational programme to be established in schools throughout Greece, focusing on the puppet and the benefits of puppet theatre, which encourage creativity and initiative. In order to realise this goal, the troupe is constantly on the lookout for funding, whether State subsidies or grants through Greek companies’ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes.

We believe that this is an innovative method that can also be developed at a European level. Thus, through European programmes and sponsorships, we are approaching other educational institutions with whom we could cooperate to introduce “We Puppetplay” in schools. To create a network where a debate on the future of education and alternative ways of learning can be opened up across Europe.

In conclusion, we abide by the vision of the educational programme and competition “We Puppetplay” as a sustainable future not only for “Prassein Aloga”, but also for the puppet in Greece, as it has the potential for puppet theatre and all the benefits it offers to both young and old alike to be acknowledged to a greater extent in education. Besides, it is a method that contributes to a new school, a new approach to learning with a dual function: by putting an emphasis on the pupils’ art, initiative, communication and expression, while in parallel encouraging interaction and manual and cognitive skills in the learning environment. We have a vision of puppet theatre being better established and recognised in education thanks to “We Puppetplay”, as we believe it is an important learning tool, an imaginative and enjoyable medium, a playful process

6 See Remer & Tzuriel, 2015: 358.

References

Vitsou, V. (2016). Το κουκλοθέατρο ως διαπολιτισμικό και επικοινωνιακό εργαλείο στην διδασκαλία της ελληνικής ως δεύτερης γλώσσας [Puppet theatre as an intercultural and communicative tool in the teaching of Greek as a second language] (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Department of Theatre Studies, University of the Peloponnese.

Remer, R., & Tzuriel, D. (2015). “I teach better with the puppet”. Use of puppet as a mediating tool in kindergarten education - an evaluation. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3(3), 356-365.





Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019

Kentro Varous Puppet Theatre

Cleo Kioulpali was born in Heraklion, Crete, and studied at the Pedagogical Department of the University of Crete. She continued her puppetry studies in Stockholm with a Marionetteatern scholarship and with Michael Meschke as a teacher. She also attended puppetry classes at Finland's TUTVO (Turku School of Art and Communication-Puppet dep).

She has worked as a kindergarten teacher, a translator of children's books and has taught puppetry at the Department of Infant Nurses of TEI Athens. In 2004, she founded the "Kentro Varous" puppet theatre with Anthippi Petraki, with which they presented the performances "And Eleni was small and the coat was big" (authored by her) and "H2O, 7 drops are enough". Together with Dimitra Konstantinidou,¹ they designed and made the puppets for the show "Speak and Shoot" by the group Copernicus (Lilian Voudouris Music Library, at the Athens Concert Hall, 2016-2018).

She collaborated with the puppet theatre group "Wings of Myth" in the show "As soon as possible" (2016-2018). At present, she is working on the preparation of the show for adult audiences "Ephemeria" (On Duty), as well as participating in Eva Tsampasi's² "Circus Sokoro". At the same time, she teaches puppet-making and animation to children attending private education schools. She is a member of the Greek Puppet Theatre Centre UNIMA HELLAS.

¹ Dimitra Konstantinidou is a Founding member of the group .the wings of the myth. from 1999 with five shows to her credit. In the past she collaborated as a manufacturer and puppeteer with the groups .Copernicus. & .Allalouth".. This time he works with the team "center of gravity". He has been an active member of UNIMA since 1996.

² Eva Tsampasi is a puppeteer and maker of special constructions in theaters representations. Last puppet show .Circus Sokoro., the only flea circus in Hellas.



The challenge of giving movement to a helpless body – Prompted by the staging of “On Duty”, a puppet show for adults

Klio Kioulpali

on behalf of Betty Kokaraki, Dimitra Konstantinidou and Eva Tsambassi

In our text we discuss the process of setting up a puppet show for an adult audience and the perspective from which we approach puppet theatre. In other words, how we position ourselves with respect to our puppets and with respect to the public at a time when puppeteers have left their invisible position as manipulators in favour of an active interaction with their little creatures. The particular performance is called “On Duty” and is structured around snapshots of a hospital ward. The puppeteers are visible and hold the roles of nurses, doctors and patients’ escorts. The entire narrative is based on personal experiences or testimonies of people close to us. What connects these small tableaux is the atmosphere of the hospital and whatever this can mean for each person. We are therefore sharing with you our thoughts, the difficulties that arrive out of the blue during this long process, the dilemmas we are constantly called upon to answer, but also our anticipation of seeing what we have worked so hard and for so long to prepare finally take shape in front of the public.

It was a very pleasant moment when we accepted the invitation from Antigoni Paroussi, friend and also professor at the Kapodistrian University, to participate in the two-day conference on Contemporary Trends in Greek Puppet Theatre. The invitation reached us during the creative phase of a puppet show for adults called “On Duty”. Despite our performance not being addressed to children, we immediately accepted the invitation, believing that it would be very interesting and useful for us to share with young people our thoughts, concerns and expectations at this stage of our preparation – but also to hear their thoughts about this idea, hoping that for them, too, it’s interesting. It’s also an amazing opportunity to come together and exchange views with our fellow puppeteers, and we thank you for giving it to us!

About three years ago, we first started talking with Dimitra Konstantinidou about a puppet show for adult audiences centred on snapshots from hospital. We soon decided on a central framework within which to work, so as not to get lost in such a huge chapter as this. So the framework is a hospital ward with four puppets-patients and four puppeteers in the role of nurses, doctors, escorts, etc. We watch small moments of these people’s everyday life in the hospital. The central idea is based on a simple realisation, but which energised us through its

simplicity: the role of the puppeteer to move and bring to life the initially lifeless limbs of a puppet could be likened to the role of a doctor who, with care, tries to mobilise a human body that is in pain and helpless. So we focused on trying to combine these two roles into one, that of the puppeteer-nurse. To move the puppets’ bodies with the intention of helping them, or caring for them, or simply of getting the job done before the end of our shift. But always with a sense of belonging to the nursing staff and that these bodies must in some way be made to move.

We soon decided that, as we don’t have any medical knowledge, we would present the hospital from the perspective of the people who go there to be treated and that we wouldn’t reproduce any scientific/medical record of cases. That we would convey, for instance, the feeling a person has while being carried on a stretcher and not what the correct way to transport a patient is. This said, our interest in the subject obviously obliged us, as a team, to study certain medical data every now and then. Betty Kokaraki and Eva Tsambassi joined the team, each of them enriching the initial outline with her insight. Many narratives were brought to the table, many questions, endless reflections and concerns about how to perform this dual role and how to balance the puppet’s animation between passive motion and its “own” active volition. And, respectively, when to appear as doctors acting on the patient’s body and when the patients themselves address themselves to us in whatever way.

Obviously, we don’t feel we’ve discovered the wheel; contemporary puppet theatre is full of this kind of questions and answers. But each new project is a new puzzle, which needs to be filled in each time with many different details. In the case of “On Duty” there was no kind of ready-made script. Our only guide was the certainty that, despite their difficulty, hospital stories often have something positive to say about life and it’s this aspect we tried to reveal. But it’s a difficult and risky thing to talk about something ex ante without having seen as yet how it will play out to the end, what response it’ll have from the public. So let’s focus on the questions that occupied us, essentially on a technical level: the puppets and their possibilities. The sizes and scales. The relationship of the puppeteers to the puppets. Mainly this one. Very often during the rehearsals one hears questions of the kind: now is the puppet doing this on its own or are we making it do it?

Am I the nurse now or the puppeteer? And as stupid as this may sound, the answer isn’t easily or obviously one or the other.



The puppets aren't made in a uniform way. They are all roughly the same size, but their materials and technical characteristics vary, depending on the reasoning behind their making. For example, there's a puppet whose body is made of Styrofoam, because we want it to get wet, whereas the other bodies are made of wood or papier mâché. There's also a puppet that is assembled onstage, meaning that none of its joints could be permanent fixtures. All of the puppets were made after existing as thoughts, as stories. Accordingly, in certain cases their final form influenced our own outlook.

The puppets were originally designed to be smaller in size, as were their beds. They grew and they grew again and even today we are concerned with the issue of size and perspective from a distance, precisely because the puppets interact with our own size and perform on a large-scale stage. We made the decision that only the beds would be the same size as the puppets and all the other elements of the hospital space should be our size, the size of the nursing staff. This appears better related to reality: when a patient goes to hospital, they usually feel very small and helpless, whereas the doctors move about comfortably and gracefully in a space that is completely natural to them. When it goes by, the gang in white coats has something so powerful in its stride and stance that it often makes patients shrivel up and look insignificant. Of course, we could have made the opposite decision and all the doctors move in a miniature hospital, in scale with the patients. Obviously, the same story would then be told in a very different manner.

For a long time, we were concerned with the personal history of each patient. Beyond the problem that brought each person to hospital, we wanted to have all the details of their previous life and this took up a lot of time and energy. But there were important moments in this collective embroidery of the characters, at times with absolute certainty and at others with difficulties and backpedalling. The outcome is that these patients have become people we feel close to, with significant stature within the team.

Throughout this process, we've often discussed the dividing line between emotion and melodrama. Due to the sensitive subject the performance deals with, which includes the questions of pain –physical and mental–, the perishability of the body and the fear of death, it's necessary to pay great attention to the amounts of emotion that will be released.

In general, we don't advance with certainties, we move towards unknown points following a conscious decision, sometimes more heavily and others more lightly, but with the conviction that this path is worth it even though it doesn't offer any guaranteed security. The result will show whether we've managed to keep the desired balance. We hope that, when completed, the performance will answer the question "Puppet theatre today – puppet theatre tomorrow", in the sense of showing the outside world that it has something fresh and interesting to say. And we hope you'll be there to give us your opinion.

Postscript

And since the times have made it so and this text is being written months after the presentation itself, I think it's only fair to say a few words about the time that has elapsed and the turn things have taken due to the coronavirus.

First of all, it should be said that the memory of this, in any case important, two-day conference has acquired even greater significance in our minds after the latest developments. It now feels like a fortunate, precious moment we all had, to come together, puppeteers, teachers and students, and exchange information and viewpoints about what is happening and what could occur in the space between the art of puppet theatre and education. It's a bit like this that things could and should work. A small, bright exception to be remembered or a principle of free interaction between the two fields? We hope there'll be a continuation, perhaps in other new ways, adapted to new circumstances.

As for our team, suddenly the hospital issue became the whole world's everyday life. The information, terminology, daily updates, objects, words, images, smells, conversations, the whole of our lives suddenly became totally identified with the world of health, the world that up til then we'd been exploring with artistic interest. The surgical masks, gloves and antiseptics that we were joyfully using during rehearsals suddenly became the trademark of the entire planet.

We froze. A time of embarrassment and silence went by. None of us wanted to broach the subject of the performance's continuation. Two months passed with difficult thoughts about what we'd done that far. That if we continued, everyone would think we were out to imitate life with the catchiest subject. But also a feeling of futility, not just about our own work, but about everyone.



Our first meeting was outdoors, some of us more cautiously, others more determinedly. We met again timidly. We started again timidly.

Not all four of us simultaneously as yet. Without fanfare. But somehow. After almost a month of renewed meetings, maybe there's a little more dogged determination now. Maybe too a feeling of "let's go for it, while we still can" guides this. Let's finish it and we'll see. There's still a lot of work ahead of us, a lot of unresolved questions and the imponderable at any given moment weighing much heavier because of its vagueness. We haven't the slightest clue of when and under what conditions we'll be able to perform this show. We aren't sure of anything, far more than before when, again, deep down, we weren't sure of anything. It doesn't matter. It seems that new creative things emerge from this uncertainty. We don't give up.

Note: We jointly decided that we won't make changes and won't include the coronavirus in the story.

Fig. 2: From the rehearsals of the show Ephemera
(photo: Betty Kokaraki)



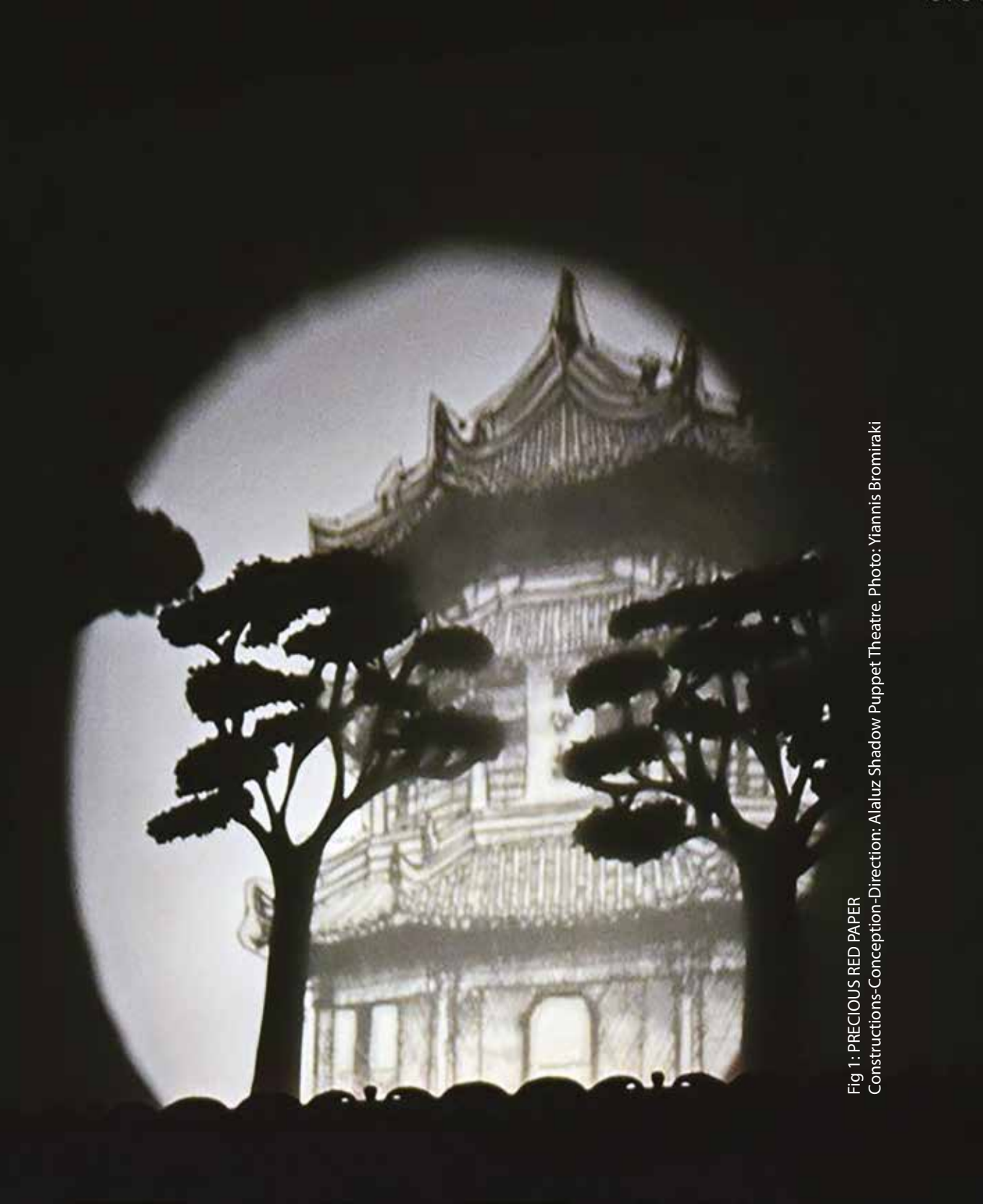


Fig 1: PRECIOUS RED PAPER
Constructions-Conception-Direction: Alaluz Shadow Puppet Theatre. Photo: Yiannis Bromiraki

Alaluz Shadow Puppet Theatre

Betty Kokaraki was born in Athens. She studied Photography and Early Childhood Education. She studied in the workshop of the contemporary shadow theatre group Teatro Gioco Vita (Italy) and in the workshop of Norbert Gotz specialising in contemporary shadow theatre, dramaturgy, types and techniques of light (Germany). She learnt the art of traditional shadow theatre (Karaghiozis) at the "Athassiou Shadow Theatre". She attended workshops in puppetry, puppet theatre, object theatre, micro cinema, and others, in Greece and Italy. She has attended various workshops with Rene Baker, Gavin Glover, Damiet Van Dalsum, Galya Levy Grant, Janni Younge, Bruno Accetella, Icaro Accetella, Stathis Markopoulos, Antigoni Paroussi and many more. She is an active member of the Hellenic Centre of UNIMA - Union Internationale de la Marionette (www.unimahellas.org). Since the birth of the Alaluz shadow puppet theatre troupe, she has worked in Greece and abroad with her own productions, as well as in collaboration with other troupes. She has participated in international festivals, conferences and meetings on the art of puppetry and shadow theatre. She designs and runs performances, workshops and educational programmes around shadow theatre, puppetry, art play and the environment, in collaboration with various organisations. The team's last project was realized in collaboration with Dimitra Konstantinidou and Taxiarchis Beligiannis.¹

¹ Dimitra Konstantinidou is a puppeteer and puppet maker and has collaborated on performances with the Alaluz shadow puppet theatre group.

Taxiarchis Beligiannis was born in Piraeus in 1971. He studied and worked in the field of computer science, specialising in networks. He engaged with strategy games and role-playing games. In 2006, he became a storyteller and started storytelling in schools, bars, museums, in the outdoors and on stages of artistic expression, both in Greece and abroad. He also has participated in storytelling festivals. Lately he has been chronicling traditional fairy tales and experimenting with the marriage of oral and music improvisation.

Between light and shadow

Betty Kokaraki

When my telephone rang one day and I was asked if I had a shadow-theatre performance that somehow related to China, the truth is that I couldn't have imagined what would follow. I hadn't! I was asked whether I would like to prepare something then for the festival they were organising. Without asking too many questions, I accepted!

A very good collaboration, a lot of creative work, many hours of experimentation and the show started coming together. Kazantzakis' China was captured on the white cloth. "You are reaching the Heavenly Kingdom which, they say, is made of mud brought down by the rivers, and of the ashes –the hair, brains, flesh– of the ancestors. What do you expect to understand?" N. Kazantzakis, Japan/China.

I'm Betty Kokaraki and when I came across puppetry and shadow theatre in the mid-2000s, a whole world appeared before me! I entered it full of curiosity and enthusiasm, I learnt, I travelled, I collaborated, I created, I was inspired – and I continue to be so. Between then and today this world has fascinated me and made me a better person.

In 2009, in Athens, I created the Alaluz Shadow Puppet Theatre troupe. The Alaluz troupe is an open artistic collective of people from different backgrounds, whose aim is to work together and seek out a synthesis of different techniques so as to produce a single artistic result. In the context of its statutory goal, it has collaborated with artists from the fields of puppet theatre, shadow theatre, dance, theatre, music, the visual arts, storytelling, cinema and others.

The troupe's latest project was a performance of contemporary shadow theatre accompanied by narration. The performance was undertaken in collaboration with Dimitra Konstantinidou and Taxiarchis Beligiannis. It's based on a story from Nikos Kazantzakis' book, Japan/China. The International Art and Literature Festival "Travelling... China"¹ asked us to create a shadow-theatre performance inspired by the work of Nikos Kazantzakis. We searched, we read, we designed, we experimented. The figures left the cloth screen, we held the lights in our hands, the figures don't move and yet they advance, the shadow is black, the shadow changes colour, the light illuminates us. Kazantzakis' words strong and sharp... I hear the tinkling of the bells, the performance begins! The light dances,

the shadow takes us on a journey... We've arrived in China!

And it's a bit like this that this collaboration started. The difficulties were many, but the beautiful moments were even more. We started by studying the culture of China, to understand as much as we could. Painting, architecture, martial arts, philosophy, music, theatre, calligraphy, traditions, customs, everything useful, everything creation. We rapidly decided that the first part of the project would be presented using the technique of shadow theatre. Colour was used to highlight details that were important to understanding this faraway people. The figures black and white, the light warm like the first summer sunshine, colourful like the grace of spring, red like blood! Why did he kill him? Why? And the narration begins, creating parallel worlds, filling in the gaps, providing tension to the pauses...

Trying out the traditional techniques and forms of shadow theatre, continuing to keep the power of light, we started to set up the performance. We decided that our sources of light wouldn't be stationary; we would have the possibility of holding a light in our hands. We used torches and halogen lamps. This kind of lights allows one, at whatever distance the figures might be, to create shadows whose contours are clear, clean-cut. We created a large stage space, where we were able to play with the distances and the sizes in such a way that it appears there's movement in a fixed set. Precision is very important for the result. The rehearsals and trials were many.

We started without knowing exactly what the plan was. We created it very quickly, though, whereupon we worked on it. It's very important for a performance that starts off with a white cloth to quickly set the boundaries within which it will evolve. We worked on the text to understand it and find its deeper interpretations; we added and subtracted words so as to create images and moods. The narration helped us immensely. It gave the tone that was missing from the figures and filled the heroes' closed mouths with speech. We decided to record the text. We didn't have as much time as we would have liked, but working with good friends who know and love their work makes everything seem easier. We worked in parallel. The show was being set up while the narration was being recorded. We were anxious about how and if we would be able to match such a powerful text with an image.

¹ See <https://www.kazantzaki.gr/en/to-festival--taksiduontas-kina>



Changes in the lighting, changes in the positioning, changes in the figures. We settled on the final designs and a unified aesthetic and started working on it.

I had the good fortune and joy of meeting Dimitra Konstantinidou through the puppet theatre network. I suggested that we collaborate on this show; luckily for me, she accepted! In the beginning, we said that we would make certain things together but that she wouldn't be very involved with the performance, yet very quickly the original plans changed – fortunately! We set up the performance in Dimitra's workshop and started the rehearsals. We didn't have the final recording yet; during the rehearsal breaks we were still working on it. We also wanted music. A short while before, during rehearsals for a different performance, our beloved Klio Kioulpali had us listen to a melody played on a traditional Chinese musical instrument. That was it! It fit perfectly. We met Taxiarchis Beliyiannis and tried to describe the scenes, the pauses and the feel we wanted. He listened to the music we had chosen and very quickly we also had the narration. Exactly as we'd imagined it, down to the very last detail! We worked hard, we learnt to operate audio programmes, to transform a recording of two minutes into ten! We were ready. But are we ever ready?

The time came for us to leave. Always the same anxiety. We went to Crete, where the show's first presentation was scheduled to take place. Called "Precious red paper", it was part of a larger performance lasting two and a half hours, which was a walk through the village where ten stops inspired by/ based on Nikos Kazantzakis' work *Japan/China* had been created. We were the third stop. We didn't know many details. We arrived in Myrtia, the village where the festival was being held, a very picturesque village just outside Heraklion. That is also where the Kazantzakis Museum that was organising the festival is. We met the organisers and the other participants and learnt about the festival's programme, the idea and how it would be implemented. They showed us where to set up, asked us whether we needed any help and wished us good luck! The lonely path of the puppeteer! We had the day to set up and, as soon as evening fell, we would start to fix the lighting. We needed shade to work in.

We took a short tour of the village, which had been transformed into a large stage. Everywhere there were people setting up, painting, constructing, painting red pagodas with their brushes, trying on spectacular costumes. To be honest, we didn't understand much about what was going on. For our part, we were in a very pretty and quiet part of the village, in what had been named "Shakespeare's

house" during a previous festival. We set up on a small raised balcony beneath a grapevine. The space was small; we adapted ourselves.

Night started falling. After resolving the last technical issues that had arisen, we started setting up. The neighbourhood put out its lights, for us to turn on the lights for the shadows...

It was the dress rehearsal and each of us participants would play our performance ten times to see if, finally, this idea would work. During this rehearsal of the performance, we would all have the possibility to see the other performances, so as to know what was going on. And that's what happened or, rather, it went something like that. Everyone saw them except for us! It was dark and that was the time when we could work, set up the lighting, see any corrections that needed to be made and put our finishing touches. We performed ten times! We were behind our screen, dressed in our black work clothes. At the end, we were all told to go to the entrance of the village where all the people who attended this special performance would gather to applaud us. No clapping was allowed during the performance so that not a single moment of the atmosphere was lost. We went along. Everyone was in their colourful costumes, with their bright makeup and we were in our black work clothes! When the time came for them to applaud us, nobody did! They didn't know who we were, nor what we did!

Naturally, as nobody sees us: we are behind the screen playing with light and shadow! It was a magical moment. People weren't talking and were looking at us with a look that said: I know you did something, but I don't know what. Very quickly the silence was broken. We were introduced and people understood who we were and what we did. They applauded us and we now became part of the show. Over three nights, we performed thirty times! And each time was different. In the beginning we were anxious and nervous about getting everything out at the prescribed time, counting the steps, the movements, worrying about the lights being turned on and off at the right moment, the figures looking in the right direction, following the choreography faithfully so that the result would be what we'd imagined. Slowly-slowly, we too began dancing with our heroes.

The narration would begin and everything functioned harmoniously between light and shadow... Why did they kill him... why... The very first words of the narration, the journey begins in a China we don't know, a world full of traditions and prejudices that we are learning about only now... A unique experience!



Each evening was a living journey through the history and culture of China through Nikos Kazantzakis' eyes, welcoming and bringing together artists from Crete and the rest of Greece, Europe and, of course, China!

And there we were, in our black work clothes, serving our need to create, but faithful to the lonely path of the puppeteer. On a path that some people don't understand, because they haven't come across it. And yet others don't understand why they came across it! Between light and shadow!

The performance was presented for the first time in July 2019 at the International Art and Literature Festival "Travelling... China", held in Myrtia, in the department of Heraklion, in Crete.


A few words about the show

Kazantzakis' China is the China between the two Sino-Japanese Wars, which has only just hung up her imperial mantle and is sewing her first dress as a republic, both plagued and inspired by the West. Her face is fluid, covered in mud, her body naked and atrophied, full of the marks of war and diseases; her hair black as coal, a long dragon's tail, braided with roses and jasmine. Her spirit full of souls, rough and primitive, committed to faith without a god, with myriads of superstitions. Her dance chaotic. Her rhythm is about to change.

An excerpt from Nikos Kazantzakis' book *Japan/China* is illustrated through the technique of shadow theatre, highlighting the thinking and traditions of China during this period. It concerns the grievance of a rich, aged lord about his country's "downfall". A ritual with mystery and emotional tension, with roots in Chinese tradition that make it peculiar and spine-chilling in the eyes and thinking of Western civilisation.



Fig. 2: Shadow Theater Workshop
Thematic Week 2019



Anna Santorinaiou
Puppet maker/puppeteer, costume designer

I started making puppets in 1986. The basic material I used to make them with was Styrofoam, a material quite misunderstood at the time and drawing a lot of dislike, especially as it was paired to power glue (a very toxic glue for the lungs when inhaled and then some). Which is why it's a good idea to wear a mask when using it and keep the window open. What I was interested in was puppet theatre on television and that's what I served all these years in programmes both for children and adults. The teamwork of so many specialists –set designer, musician, screenwriter, actor, director and puppeteer– is what attracted me the most in television, but also the “special effects”, its magical abilities to make the puppet fly over the sun and the moon and make it look so real... but also so many other truly fairytale effects. And the third reason I really loved television was that each episode was different. The way of making and acting I followed was that of Jim Henson (inspiner and creator of the Muppets). In the beginning, I was equipped with my studies in drawing and, later on, costume design and pattern making.

I had learnt to sew many years before thanks to my mother with her Singer treadle sewing machine. I mark a pause here, to say that the most important equipment is love and the love of creating and that whatever material we use, if we don't love it, if we don't respect it, if we don't listen to it, it won't become our ally in our work and won't reveal its secrets to us.

I have worked in over 40 productions for children's and for educational shows, as well as for programmes addressed to adults, on Greek and foreign, state and private television. Puppet making and puppet performing. I have made puppets and costumes for theatrical performances produced by the Municipal Regional Theatre (DIPETHE) of Patras, Xenia Kalogeropoulou's "Mikri Porta" theatre, the Teatro Coronet, the Fournos theatre and others. I have taught in seminars and workshops about puppet making and movement, in municipalities and private schools, for children and adults, and I have taken part in puppet exhibitions and international festivals. I was a member of the Board of UNIMA HELLAS (the Greek Puppet Centre) for many years. I participate as a permanent collaborator in the audio-visual research and applications company "Eikona".

Some of the work on television:

- 1987 "In the land of white and black tetrphones", ET1
- 1988 "Argonaut", ET1
 - "Riki and her family", ET1
- 1989 "Journey to the pages", ET1
 - "Like a children's song", ET2
- 1990 "Singing, we travel", ET2
- 1991 "The Lifer", inspired by Arkas' comic strips, ET1
- 1993 "Small screen", ET2
- 1995 "Let's go ET2", ET2
- 1997 "Joy and the Gudun", ET1
- 1998 "Lies and truth, that's how stories are", NET
- 1999 "In your own writing", ET1
- 2001 "Tring-stop", ET1
- 2002 "The Maximalists", TEMPO channel

At the theatre:

- 1992 Costumes for "The little siren", "Fournos" Theatre, directed by Th. Espiritu
- 1996 "Noah's family", "Mikri Porta" Theatre, directed by Th. Moschopoulos
- 2001 "The spells of winter", "Mikri Porta" Theatre, directed by Th. Moschopoulos
- 2002 "Beauty and the Beast", "Mikri Porta" Theatre
- 2006 "Prague's Black Theatre", Théâtre Coronet
- 2008 "Apples, sugar, cinnamon", "Fournos" Theatre, directed by E. Santorinaïou
- 2009 "Good giants also exist", "Fournos" Theatre, directed by M. Santorinaïos
- 2010 "Markos the cat", "Fournos" Theatre, directed by E. Santorinaïou
- 2015 "The boy with the blue hair", "Fournos" Theatre, directed by E. Santorinaïou

"Times are tough!" you hear everywhere and I agree. These are not times for princes and princesses! I exhort everyone, myself included: "Keep your eyes open in case you miss something, keep your mind sharp in case somebody plays you a nasty trick, lift up your voice so that it can be heard... But on the other hand, don't let your emotions freeze inside you, don't close the door to magic, because it exists... Give space to your imagination and let it manifest itself at times and, lastly, don't be afraid to be moved!

Puppet theatre is an art that generously offers all of the above and which makes our lips smile and pushes us to wink conspiratorially at whoever understood...

I started making puppets, muppets, totally by accident –but on the other hand, in such a preordained way– and performing with them mainly for television shows. So I believe I found myself at that moment exactly where I needed to be...

I see the puppet talking of itself, as my hand slips through it and my fingers reach its mouth. I forget that I have a hand, there are just the two of us, the puppet and I; I watch the puppet and the puppet watches me; I tell it: "Here you didn't stand straight and your gaze dropped to the ground... Let's go again!". It's only when the hand grows tired, raised high up there so that the puppet might perform and open and close its mouth that I realise it's mine and I lower it to rest and with it the puppet comes down, but gently so that it doesn't get damaged... And then we go again!

I've experienced magic all through these years with the puppets and puppet theatre, and I still have this magic in me and I'm grateful for that!

So now I can say with certainty that the art of puppet theatre has offered more to me than what I did to it! So long live puppet theatre and many happy returns!



Fig. 1: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019

Karabola Puppet Theatre

Fevronia Reizidou was born in Athens in 1968. After graduating in Italian culture and language at the Università per Stranieri in Perugia (1993), she went on to attend workshops in puppet and object theatre at the Instituto del Teatre de Barcelona in Spain (1998–99). In 1996, she founded the Karabola Puppet Theatre, performing in Greece and abroad and participating in international festivals. She studied with the puppeteer and actor Takis Sarris, took courses in primitive dance and dance therapy at the Movement-Dance-Expression Centre of Alexia Margariti (2004–06) and graduated from the Iakovos Kampanellis Drama School of Athens (2009). Her curriculum included Danza vital - expresión corporal with Susana Abigador and Mimicry – Somatic theatre with Antonis Koutroumpis and Theo Espiritou. Since 2015, she has attended music therapy workshops, collaborated with music therapist Michael Tobler, and worked as a member of the charitable Musikoparea Society in Care Units for the Elderly engaging in therapeutic singing. In 2017, she participated in Bread and Puppet performances directed by Peter Schuman in Vermont, USA. She has made many puppets and stage objects, e.g. for the performances «Katalogia» at the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation and «Hear the Party» for the Tsokara theatre company, and constructed the stage set for the Bliss concert at the K44 venue. In addition, she has taken courses in piano, guitar, traditional percussion and the Constantinople lyre, and sings in the traditional choir «Domna Samiou» under the direction of Katerina Papadopoulou, as well as in the polyphonic group «Apotheri» under the direction of Adamatia Vlami. Fevronia Reizidou is a member of the Greek Centre of the International Puppet Association (UNIMA). She hosts a weekly fairy tale show at the Lihnari FM radio station with live songs and music.



Folding dragons

Fevronia Reizidou

The secret lies in simplicity. I realised that, while it's necessary to master the performance-making process and the technical aspects, it's equally important to know who you are when performing behind the puppet. Every performance is part of our lives, it's not something you embark on just to get it over with; it is something you want to live to the full and enjoy. It is a form of expression when you find it difficult to speak, so you can communicate with the people around you through the performance. Many times, you find yourself having a meal with relatives or friends, and there's no way you'll ever get to speak, and when you are asked to speak your mind, the earth opens up and swallows you. When you're on stage no such issues exist. Art has an impact, and it's good to pay attention to what we feed our audience.

I was born in the Piraeus neighbourhood of Nikaia many, many years ago. I remember very clearly, while I was still in primary school, my mother and father pinning up a postcard of a snowy landscape and competing to see who could draw it most faithfully. At first glance, the two drawings were identical – but if you looked closely, you could see that my father's was dominated by accuracy and detail, whereas my mother was freer with her brushstrokes. And they would do it just to while away the time... I would draw, too, but what child doesn't... In high school, I took Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice and divided it up into roles that I mentally distributed to the neighbourhood children who, of course, never learnt of my grandiose plans. We didn't actually do that much together. We had school, crammed for classes and tests, sports activities, piano lessons, guitar lessons, and so it went – a very full schedule. Despite this, I would do "room directing", like that, on my own. At about the same time, I made my first carnival costume: I decided to dress up as a lamp with a lamp shade, using a balloon as a mould, with string and wood glue. It was something I'd seen on a television programme about handicrafts. As I approached the end of high school, chaos reigned. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life! I liked so many things, but how did they translate into a job? I loved gymnastics, choir singing, travelling, foreign languages, drawing. I went to the theatre a lot, but I couldn't imagine that theatre could be a profession. I wanted to do something that I would love a lot – and I was also an only child. I need to communicate and find ways of expressing myself, and that's how I had the idea of teaching a foreign language.

I went to Italy, studied Italian and, upon returning to Greece, I decided to move to Rhodes. One day I heard there was a theatre workshop and I joined the group. There, I was lucky enough to meet Keti Bouli and there I encountered puppet theatre for the first time. She organised, totally informally, a workshop on making glove-puppets at her house, which I had no desire to attend, because for me puppet theatre was boring and totally uninteresting. But I went along because I thought it would be shameful to reject the invitation and whatever went on there with all the others from the theatre workshop. But above all what made me attend was Keti herself. The way she spoke about puppet theatre the day before made me want to see what this person had to say to me. And the day came and only two of us had decided to go, and we started to pound newspapers with a stick in a bucket with glue and water to make papier-mâché. And for me that was already a revelation! What a material! I started to make noses, ears and eyes using the mould. I looked at what I had made: I was holding a grey head in my hands. And at that moment something inside me turned upside-down...

The following week, a lot more of us gathered and we made glove-puppets. Within a month, at the premiere of the play that was to be performed by the Municipal Regional Theatre of Rhodes, we asked to set up an exhibition with our puppets in the foyer of the National Theatre. A few days later, Keti Bouli left Rhodes following her transfer to another posting, and already she'd given me a lot of information during our few but precious meetings. "Go and see Sarris," she kept on telling me. I don't remember the details, but the important thing was that I should go and find Sarris. "Also, in a month's time there's the Hydra International Puppet Festival." Within three months of that first puppet, I found myself at the Hydra Festival in July 1996. A different world... that I was within a hair's breadth of never having known!

I returned to Rhodes and started staging a story, defining the roles and distributing them – but this time I also informed the interested parties! In August 1996, we started rehearsals at my house for The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish and named our group "Karabola" (which in Greek means carom, crash, or pileup). Keti told me about UNIMA, an association of puppeteers in Athens and that it also published a magazine. "Become a subscriber, write and tell them you are a puppeteer troupe! That you've just begun. You should get to know them... write to them!" And I was thinking why would they care about the troupe we set up in Rhodes. But because this woman had a way of persuading me, I said to



myself: Why don't I write to them? And I wrote a letter about this and that, we're a new group, etc., and in the very next issue of UNIMA I saw my letter published... and beneath it a response from Stathis Markopoulos, the magazine's editor: Well done folks – and have a great start! Maybe it was childish, but for me this response was terribly important. When I read it, I felt a connection with people I didn't know.

The rehearsals in the covered area beneath my house were unique: The whole neighbourhood could hear us! Some of us were from the theatre workshop and others were friends; there were ten of us in all. Our professional backgrounds were varied: one was an electrician, another one an agronomist, a high-school literature professor, a pupil, a builder, a graphic designer, a student, a musician, a translator... At first, we performed in private venues, at the Municipal Theatre, in the villages of Rhodes. There wasn't another puppet theatre on the island. Two years earlier, Marco Grignani and his family had left Rhodes; they too had started out in Rhodes and for seven years performed on the street as mime artists, puppeteers, and musicians, and I recall very clearly how people would speak of them with great love and appreciation for what they offered. At some point, our friends and acquaintances started urging us to ask for money. Up to that point, we had performed for free, paying our expenses out of our own pockets. We started asking for a fee to perform. We sought to perform everywhere, sent out press releases and chose places that we thought were suitable. Word of mouth reached various cultural associations – and they began booking our shows. The experience in the villages of Rhodes was unique: I remember in Psinthos, Salakos, Asklipio, Phanes, Soroni, Dimilia and Istrios, we would start setting up our show, and all the children would come running, as soon as they saw us with our props. They would patiently watch all the preparations as if it were a performance in itself. Our public was the whole village, all ages – including grandpas and grannies, who would come equipped with their knitting and comment during the show – down to the youngest grandchild.

The performance would end and we would be walking on air!

In 1997, I came across a list of puppet theatre schools around the world in the UNIMA magazine. A year later, I was in Barcelona in one of these schools. When I returned, Rhodes was no longer large enough to contain me. I decided to follow a three-month workshop with Takis Sarris and commuted between Rhodes and Athens. Time, distances, difficulties of any sort were irrelevant. Takis Sarris is a

wonderful person, and a great teacher, not because he teaches you this complex technique but because he makes you unlearn it. The secret lies in simplicity. I realised that it's important to master all the making processes and technical stuff in order to go forward, but that who you are when you are performing behind the puppet is equally important.

In 2004, I returned permanently to Athens because of my need to watch performances, to meet puppeteers, to collaborate, to perform, to learn. At the same time, I sat exams and was accepted by a drama school in Athens. I attended a multitude of performances, of puppet theatre, music, mime, drama, which were a great source of inspiration. I was greatly moved whenever in a theatre venue, not only when I performed, but also as a spectator.

What I experience intensely in puppet theatre during the performance is the public's vocal or silent participation, which can make you go off-script, forget your words, and discover the true underlying text of the play. There have been times when I "understood" what the play recounted while I was on stage, during the performance, and that's the moment you touch something ineffable inside you...

It's a great joy when you've been performing a play for a long time and it doesn't bore you because it's never the same, because you're never the same, because in a way the public is performing with you and the way in which the public will perform is unpredictable.

Each time, I wonder what the next play will be. I think of lots of things and reject them, until I stop thinking and the answer comes unexpectedly. That's what happened with "The Sun and the Mouse". At a storytelling evening, I heard the story and I immediately saw it before me separated into acts. That same evening, I started making the mouse. That's also, in a way, how the show "A Dragon in my Sock" came into being. I'd hardly thought of it, and I'd already decided about it.

The story of the dragon is so simple, an unadorned and very brief text. There are times when long texts ramble on, without really containing anything that needs to be said. It's something that happens in life, too. Silence is a great art to use and manage. The most beautiful moments are when you lose your words and there's a pause, possibly endless for you but extraordinary for the spectator. I admire my fellow puppeteers who set up a show without any words at all and manage to hold the spectators' interest undiminished, without the performance becoming incomprehensible.



While still living in Rhodes, I wrote a story called "Looking for the Lost Bottle", where strawberry juice was the elixir of laughter. I wanted the smell of strawberries in the theatre during the show. So, we got a sponsor in the form of a friend who had a perfume shop and we put three drops of strawberry essence on each spectator, and also served them a small cup of strawberry tea as they came out. I'd embellished it with choreography, original music, songs for two and three voices, black light lighting. There was substance to the story, ha ha...! And it was these tricks that sort of saved it a little; my intention to raise the issue of people's grumpiness over anything and everything and the lack of action, optimism, and humour was very good. But it had too many words, it was boring, didactic, explanatory, literary, which I understood right away after performing it two days in a row. We never performed it again!

In the early plays, my tendency to try and persuade the children, guide them on what is good and what is bad, is obvious. Naturally, I didn't often present the evil hero as being too malevolent, meaning that in many cases the children supported and helped him. When I witnessed this kind of behaviour, I tried to make him terribly evil and still didn't succeed. I'd try to make him worse so as to get the answer they had to give me so that I might continue the performance as foreseen, supposedly according to their own wishes. I hadn't grasped exactly what I was doing at the time. A while later, I was in Athens, in the small theatre of Takis Sarris, to watch a performance of the "Three Little Pigs". The wolf appeared and asked the children: "I heard that three little pigs are running around in the forest. Is that true?" "Yeeeeesss," shouted the children and then went on to help him. The show ended, the whole theatre was in a joyous state of uproar, the children looking at the puppets, eating small sweets and various treats, the performance a masterpiece that still bounced around in our heads. I approached Sarris and asked him: "Well, doesn't it bother you that the children 'rat out' the little pigs to the wolf? I was surprised you didn't try to make them hate him a bit more, yet to be honest, I liked that too." I'm not sure I can faithfully convey his answer, but what he told me more or less is that children play and don't have rivalries. As for the strong encouragement of what we consider good, children don't need it, because in the end they come across good or evil and recognise it on their own.

Each performance is a part of our lives; it's not something you want to do just to get it over with; it's something you want to live to the full and enjoy; it's a way of speaking when you find it difficult to express yourself and of communicating

with the people around you through the performance. Many times, you find yourself having a meal with relatives or friends and there's no way you'll ever get to speak and then, when you are asked to speak your mind, the earth opens up and swallows you. When you're on the stage, there are no such issues.

Music and songs are a key component that I look to work on in the show. Sometimes I think that these alone are enough and can replace the spoken word entirely. What I use the most is group singing. The dynamics of many voices has a power that you can feel, like a vibration, and it passes from one body to the other. Unfortunately, a lot of us are trapped in old memories – when someone might have belittled us about not being able to sing or not having a singing voice. We all have a singing voice, though it may be inactive, all snarled and knotty, in the process of rusting. I remember I once heard a man in a workshop we were attending together sing a traditional song I didn't know. He made me look for it because I wanted to learn it. I liked it so much, I 'heard' the words of the song, he meant every single word. When I heard the original version, I realised he had sung it totally off-key... But ultimately, what is off-key?

A milestone performance: "

A Dragon in my Sock". Ultimately, every performance is us. If there are five heroes, we are all five together. The scaredy-cat, the clumsy one, the know-it-all, the aggressive one, the sweetie and so on. The performance was set up on and around a table, with six tweaked traditional songs, live music, percussion, guitar/oud, simple props, medium- and large-sized table puppets and a lot of enthusiasm!

We had five puppeteers/musicians on stage throughout the show, alternating roles where needed. The story: a child wakes up one day to find a small dragon in his room. He tells his mummy, but she rejects its existence and the dragon grows. The longer she refuses to see it the larger it becomes until it's so big that it puts their house on its back and flies away. It's based on the story "There's No Such Thing as a Dragon" by Jack Kent. The play would seem to have therapeutic properties. First and foremost it heals us, who perform it. We all have a dragon wandering around in our lives. Sometimes the play elicits reactions in the children: "But can't you see it – it's an entire dragon?" When the mother wonders: "But where is it? I don't see a thing", the children go wild and shout at the mummy-puppet: "There! There! Don't you see it?" They may even shriek. Sometimes the



show is brought to a standstill by the shouting. And we let the audience unleash its feelings until they quieten down and then we continue as if that, too, were part of the performance. One mother saw the play three times and told us that she was crying during the show. Another came to see the puppets up close with her little one and told us with a smile: "We got the message". We were invited to perform at a primary school, where the teachers and as many parents as possible were invited to watch the performance with their children, and on the following day they organised a meeting between parents, teachers, and two psychologists on the subject of dragons, fear, and phobias, together with an exhibition of drawings by the children who had seen the show. Obviously, a lot of groundwork had been done by the teachers.

On one occasion, when we performed for a group of autistic children, the people in charge of the institution told us that it was the first time that they had watched something so calmly. They concluded that it had something to do with the songs. One of these children, a sixteen-year-old who drew and made incredibly faithful dragons out of wire, came backstage after the show, all serious and silent, observing the three different-sized dragons that performed in the play, and stayed for a long while looking at them not wanting to leave.

Live music and singing are a big part of the show. Just before we start a performance, we try to get the public to sing along with us, and this acts like a warm-up (in other performances we may also do it during the performance itself).

As a final note, I would like to say that we have a responsibility towards the spectators – especially the young spectators – because our performances are written on them like blank slates. Art has an impact, so it's good to pay attention to what we feed our audience. So I'll conclude with the words of Peter Schumann from his "Bread and Puppet" manifesto:


PEOPLE have been THINKING for too long that ART is a PRIVILEGE of the MUSEUMS and the RICH. ART is not BUSINESS! ART has to be CHEAP and available to EVERYBODY... ART wakes up sleepers. ART FIGHTS AGAINST WAR and STUPIDITY! ART IS FOOD! YOU can't EAT it, but it FEEDS you.

Bon appétit!



Fig. 2: Bread and Puppet 2017
photo: Joana Feijo





Artistic team Fortunati

Eleni Voyiatzidou studied Early Childhood Education and worked as a teacher in private kindergartens. During this time she got to know theatrical play and since 2002 she has been professionally involved in animating groups of children using this technique. She discovered puppetry in 2009, attended numerous workshops with Greek and foreign puppeteers, travelled and collaborated with other puppet groups. The construction and animation of puppets and objects are now a dynamic part of her pedagogical programme and life.

Alexandros Seitaridis studied at the University of Hertfordshire and has a Bachelor of Science with Second Class Honours (First Division). He is a graduate of the workshops held by Lakis Kouretzis on theatre and theatrical play as teaching tools and has studied with the puppeteer Stathis Markopoulos. He strives for art to be present in every aspect of his professional activity. At the same time, he creates videos, lighting for theatre performances, video editing, and he is the production manager of the international music community "Music Village" at Aghios Lavrentios, Pelion.

Fig. 1: Ice dream – the beginning of the journey
Photo: Katerina Thanou

Ice dream – the beginning of the journey

Eleni Voyiatzidou & Alexandros Seitaridis

Each of us had a different starting point, took different paths and followed other ways, all of them very close but far from identical. At some point we met, we continued together, in parallel and independently. It's somewhere along there that puppet theatre entered the picture. Each beginning hides surprises, curiosity, joy, a foray into the unknown, as well as anxiousness. Our beginning was multicoloured, musical, magical, and made us journey in worlds where everything is possible. Puppet theatre in Greece has awakened for good, with new ideas, new techniques, with an appetite and love for the art. There are many obstacles but the passion is boundless.

We, unable to coordinate our thoughts, moods and expectations and thus organise the sequence of our presentations, in the end improvised and trusted our relationship and our sense of humour to guide you through our journey.

We started out from different starting points, with different goals, but inside each of us the need for expression, learning and development was intense. Eleni was the first to come into contact with puppetry and this became the reason for both of us to get involved with it. So we will focus on her story – my story that is.

The before

During the course of my studies at the Vocational Training Institute, I was introduced to theatrical play and it was clear to me that it was something that suits me, that inspires me and which I'd like to integrate in my pedagogical programme. I read a lot, found seminars I could attend and, gradually, animating groups through theatrical play became part of my work. At the same time, the school classroom was a fertile ground for play, experimentation, exploration and creation. Years went by, I attended various seminars on storytelling, creative writing, mask-making, music-movement, physical theatre and others. I followed some workshops on puppet theatre, but for some reason, at the time, I didn't think this was for me...

The acquaintance

And then suddenly I saw a puppet show that shattered everything I had ever believed about puppet theatre. It enchanted and transported me. It showed me new techniques, with a more poetic subject matter, without words, only with music, not only for children but also for adults, a story that brings our imagination to life and leaves it free to interpret. Everything changed. I started searching,

asking and, after a telephone call, I found myself a student at the workshop "Ayoúsaya!" with Stathis Markopoulos as our teacher.

The beginning of the journey

When the journey into the world of puppets begins under the right captain, it's transformed into a life experience. Different techniques, many trials, constructions I have difficulty with, wood, chisels, Styrofoam, fabric, darkness, light, candles, strings, cutters, scissors, pencils, saws became an occasion for discovery and experimentation. The inanimate comes alive in our hands and it's an incredible sensation. The love of teacher Stathis Markopoulos for his art and for people is also incredible and unique. The sharing of knowledge is generous, authentic and with no strings attached. Dynamic and sensitive, he guides you, he advises you, yet leaves you free to discover your own world, your own way. He is always there to show, to help, to yell and to inspire. For as long as you are by his side, you want to live and breathe just for puppet theatre.

At the end of the workshop, each of us had to present a performance. I read books, fairy tales, I listened to music, I went to the theatre, I thought, I asked, I spent hours looking into thin air, I thought about doing something traditional, old, modern. But nothing appealed to me until a book fell into my hands and, as I read it, in my mind the words became puppets. That's it, I thought. But the technical demands were many and complex, not easy for someone just starting out. At the same time, at the time we tried out a new improvisation in the physical theatre class and this became a puppet movement in my mind.

"Perfect! I have two ideas; I'll take them to the teacher so we can decide."

"I have a super production and a simpler idea, which one should I choose?" was the question.

"The simple one!" he replied.

That is how simply the journey began. Intense work begins. A story from scratch. For a long time, only questions so as to be able to set up the story. Why? Who? Where? And again Why? Why? Why? And more reflections: from what material, what technique, research, videos, trials. Finally: a world of foam, because I liked it as a material, with bright colours simply because they arose out of the trials, with a hero with no facial features, because I found that easier? I saw it somewhere and liked it? It suits me subconsciously? Scissors, paintbrushes, paints, wood and simultaneously the development of the dramatic process to know what else will be needed. Then, the scenes in sequence, animation trials, again and again, with



video so we can see it again. Among everything else, music, too, as a necessary means of narrating, as the story will be wordless. Countless hours of listening and when you find the right piece of music it is so clear and unmistakable. The whole puzzle slowly takes shape; all that remains is to learn how to animate the puppet correctly, because when all is said and done, that's all that matters: that everyone believes the unbelievable!

The time came for the first presentation, "Ice ixtir" the first title. You still don't know what's waiting for you... The people come, you don your black clothes, you giggle with the others, the teacher shouts that you should ready yourself and concentrate, so that we don't forget anything, we wait for the theatre to fill up and we think everything will be fine. The lights go down, your music starts up and you reach out for the puppet and you feel your hands unable to follow the instructions of your brain, they shake and become independent. You, without grimacing, are trying to control this unprecedented anxiety, while on the stage in front of you the small hero has already started to live, to try, to explore his world and to share his story with the audience. You, behind him, are battling with yourself!

The continuation

After more dispassionate thought: "Ice dream" the final title. More rehearsals followed, minor changes but also new additions. One of those was Alexandros, a significant help in making the performance easier for me. And more rehearsals, changes, trials. The teacher urges us to take part in the Festival of Puppet Theatre and Pantomime in Kilkis (Macedonia) in the "New Puppeteers" category. We do so with great trepidation and it's a decision we never regretted; on the contrary, it became the opportunity for numerous workshops with renowned, mainly foreign, puppeteers and acquaintances with Greek and foreign puppeteers, both amateurs and professionals. We saw performances that we would never have had the opportunity to see, with lots of different techniques. It was a great school for us, a great opportunity and a trigger for us to get involved professionally with puppet theatre. The recognition of our show as the judges' second preference for child audiences gave us strength and joy to pursue this path. Performances followed all over Greece, in cafes, in schools, in clubs, in the street, on our own and with other troupes. We organised small festivals, actions and workshops. We even travelled, a group of puppeteers, all the way to Italy to a festival.

To date, the show has gone through various stages. It is presently at a stage

of redefinition and changes. We intend to enrich it and make it longer, possibly adding a second part also, maybe making it more interactive, maybe with live music, maybe also with clown elements. We are still thinking, trying things out and waiting for the new form to reveal itself. Inspiration doesn't appear on demand and life's priorities change and sometimes lead you along different paths.

The association

In this journey, we were greatly helped, too, by our participation in the Hellenic Puppet-Theatre Centre, UNIMA HELLAS. Stathis Markopoulos was its chairman at the time and he encouraged us to participate in the assemblies and actions. So, quite timidly at first, we learnt, listened, helped as we could and became part of this creative process. We came to love puppet theatre and its people deeply and we, too, became active members of this circle. Such was our joy and need for teamwork that I joined the Board to help the association even more. I was the association's general secretary for four years, then I took a break and now I'm back in the same position.

The work undertaken by the association is to promote the art of puppet theatre, to inform people about activities and performances, to support the professionals and to ensure that their concerns find a space to be expressed. Like all collective processes, the association is influenced by the dynamics of those participating in it, but the need for a presence and for sharing will always be there.





Fig. 2: Ice dream – the beginning of the journey

Puppet theatre today


It's encouraging and a source for optimism that today puppetry has many supporters, both professionals and among the public. Many use the puppet as a means of expression in the theatre, cinema, television and storytelling. The techniques that are used have raised the bar considerably and puppet theatre has nothing to envy of a theatrical play. Complex mechanisms, modern aesthetics influenced by painting, sculpture and music, vivid colours and dark ones that dare to provoke. Subject matter that escapes the narrow confines of fairy tales and depends on the disposition, lived experience and need of the artist and not necessarily on the wishes of the public. The scale has changed both upwards, puppets larger than humans, and downwards, puppet theatre for only three people. Music plays an important role, often replacing words. Strange words, sounds and made-up language are heard in performances more and more often. The public is expanding, puppet theatre is addressed to literally everybody. Small venues for puppet theatre are opening, but large theatres, too, are hosting puppet shows. There is a great need for a National Puppet Theatre and even more so for an officially-recognised School of Puppetry.

Puppet theatre tomorrow

My hope for puppet theatre is that, as in many European countries, there will be a recognised School of Puppetry and that all the remarkable teachers we have in Greece will participate in it. I hope that more and more people will get involved with puppet theatre, with consistency, attentiveness, love, responsibility, seriousness and a feeling of responsibility, both towards the art and the public. That it will be recognised that for all these years puppeteers have been battling on their own to produce their work, relying only on their own strengths and without the financial resources to support their own premises. In the difficult situation that is ahead of us, I believe we'll find a way to carry on. Puppeteers have always been flexible, adaptable to circumstances and willing to rally when it's needed.

And we, in turn, shall continue to experiment with new techniques, discover new ways of expression, create stories and games that bring to life the imagination of both the young and the old. A couple in life and in art, we insist on dreaming and hoping.





We thank the "Fyrdin-migdin" troupe for showing us the "ship", Teacher Stathis Markopoulos for lifting the anchors so that this journey could begin, and the crew of the Hellenic Puppet-Theatre Centre – UNIMA HELLAS who were assistants and fellow travellers so that we might continue the adventure. We warmly thank Antigoni Paroussi for the important and unique effort she made to bring us together and thus allow us to meet puppet theatre and our colleagues from a different perspective.

Fig. 3: Presentation at the Two Day, Puppet theater Conference National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, (DECE, NKUA) 2019



Paul Nowak

Paul Nowak was born and raised in Chania, Crete, in a multicultural environment. He spent his childhood summers in the children's department of the Rythimna Beach Hotel, where he fell in love with, trained for and started working as a children's animateur for hotels. Later, he undertook the design and operation of children's department in hotel such as Elounda Mare, Creta Palace, Amirandes, Cape Sounio and Costa Navarino. His initial contact with puppetry came through summer programmes at a young age and then through his mother's work. Until 2019, he collaborated with and/or worked in 20 productions and tours in Greece, Norway, England, France, Cyprus and Spain. He studied puppet making / manipulation and special effects for theatre and television at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London and completed a master's degree in "Theatre and Education" at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona.

Fig. 1: Christmas show

Puppetry in the Age of Aquarius

Paul Nowak

(English text by the author)

My first ever memory of properly playing puppetry in front of an audience was at the end of the 1980s. The show was produced by my mother, who, so that her head wasn't visible by the spectators, had to kneel under the stage. I, on the other hand, was standing and even so I was still not visible... maybe I was 9 years of age? No one remembers. What I do remember, though, is the fact that for my voice to be heard my mother had attached a microphone around my neck with Scotch Tape, like the ones seen worn by some rappers. The only difference was that mine wasn't gold-plated and was connected to a cassette player. My part in the show was supporting roles with glove puppets.

Hi! My name is Paul Nowak and I come from Chania, in Crete. As far as puppetry goes, I'm a second-generation puppeteer/maker. I say that not so much to make a statement as such, but the fact of growing up under the constant gaze of puppets in nearly all the rooms of one's house undoubtedly alters your relationship with this form of expression.

When I was asked to write my opinion about the future of puppetry, the truth is I hesitated. First and foremost, not being so much of the social type, expressing opinions for things that deeply interest me doesn't happen even with individuals in direct social circles, let alone express them with a pen and paper for others to see. Secondly, time after time, in conversations with professionals, amateurs and spectators from numerous countries alike, I have come to witness how much the meaning behind the word puppetry can vary!

So, before starting I would like to state the following:

1. If you find yourself starting to feel agitated while reading what puppetry is to me and the future which I see then stop. There is no reason for you to read something that doesn't make you feel well... I won't take it personally and it won't affect our relationship.

2. This text is my personal opinion for all that I have witnessed in this sector the last three decades, so you don't need to feel the need to criticize it. I will be writing as if I knew what I'm talking about!

"In the beginning was... the two hemispheres"

Do you sense yourself being more of a logical, analytical and objective individual? Then you are more of a Left Hemisphere kind of a person (a.k.a. Left Brain). Alternatively, if you feel yourself being more on the intuitive, stochastic and subjective side, then most likely you are a Right Hemisphere type (a.k.a. Right Brain).

Being conscious of how you interact with incoming information from your surroundings is one of the "safety cushions" of "Knowing Thy Self". A part of the gazillion of uses and applications this knowing can have in your day-to-day life is that it can also hint at what would better suit you in the future. What do I mean by that...

In my case, at the stage of dialling in the movements of the characters in a new production, I am Left Brain. If you come over and ask me to "find the movements that the puppet likes" (more of a Right Brain approach), I'll most likely give the puppet right back and bite my tongue not to utter something inadequate. Instead, and to better avoid any "creative friction" with colleagues, I follow what I know about my way of working and search for seminars or workshops that analyse puppet movement in terms of rhythm, speed and form.

Of course, things aren't black and white (look at the work on multiple intelligences); I'm just simplifying things so as to make a point. Now, when things have to do with my team during a tour, then I am undoubtedly Right Brain. With the motto kindly inspired by Heraclitus's "Everything Flows ... except for the where and when of the next performance" all team members are free and encouraged to do everything they see fit to retain their healthy interests, their physical and psychological wellbeing, in any way they see fit! We might change plans 15 times in a single morning or spread to the "four corners" of wherever we are with myself in the role of taxi driver all day long... not a problem. As long as at the designated time of our next performance everybody is where they have to be, to do what they have to do. Again, knowing that about myself I will involve myself with exercises that allow me to up my internal coherence and extend my stay in that state rain or shine, so that I might deal with things without getting worn out.

So, we have stated a couple of things about Right Brain, a couple of things about Left Brain and so as to project both states into the future of puppetry we are missing a third one, which I like to term "Democratisation of Everything".



The Democratisation of Everything is a concept which was not given the right tool to expand through the family of man up until the arrival of the internet. In the Age of Aquarius, we will build upon the horizontal and unfiltered access to information of all levels. The great "Secrets of the Masters" will be readily available to our finger tips. Don't get me misunderstood: I don't mean that the need for teaching or training will cease; not at all. What I am saying is that the Democratisation of Everything will remove the "have to" from the equation. That in itself is liberating and the only road to form an authentic and personal relationship with puppetry!

In my covert vision of life, in a thousand years from now I see people deeply and authentically fulfilled, expressing and interacting through this expressive tool which we now call the world of puppets. Since they will have direct access to the "how"s and the "why"s of all technicians, all structures of organisation and support from the community, they will be able to express their Being with clarity... which seems to be, if you really think about it, the ultimate goal of all creative engagement.

Well, that's that. One more thing and we're done!

The Thirteenth... Stage Set

1990s film innuendo aside, there might be the sense that I have set things up in kind of a duality. It's not that there aren't thousands upon thousands of our fellow people that live their day ins and day outs this way, but there is a third way. To walk the third road one must do it under the banner of yet another saying from yesteryear "Everything in Moderation" (Παν μέτρον άριστον/ pan metron ariston) which refers, in our case, to the fact that if moderation oversees your actions, then the fruits of your labour will be what are needed.

- "No biggie!" you might hear the left hemisphere whisper.

- "I'll just go online, find all those "everything"s, write them down in a list and just make sure I don't go to extremes..."

Yeah right! Until the two hemispheres get where they need to be in the upcoming "status quo" they still have a long way to go. Nonetheless, that doesn't stop us from being able to have a personal experience of what is to be in the future steps of the human family, no matter how fleeting.

I won't even go into what happened to the Right Hemisphere, since by the mere mention of the words "must" and "everything" stormed the streets in protest!

Both Hemispheres are right, though, herein lies the oxymoron of this whole

situation. On one hand, there should be someone to convey the boundaries to you, so that you may apply "moderation", right? On the other hand, everything? What everything? EVERYTHING everything? And what does that have to do with object manipulation anyway?

Wait a moment.

Let's say you have some experience in puppetry. Let's say you come to my team for our next tour and expect that during rehearsals I will give you a puppet and the "feeling" of the Scene and let you "discover" its movement... Not likely! To your great surprise, you very quickly discover that I'm quite a "pain in the neck" and don't give you slack until you produce the scene in the way I say and that all training exercises are designed to assist you to animate the puppet with up to a 95% accuracy. This experience could either take you to a nice place inside (e.g., very happy that someone else has chosen the movements for you), or it could take you to a bad place (e.g., very angry that somebody else has chosen the movements for you). Those are the two boundaries. That which is pleasurable to your Being and the other, the un-nameable, the un-utterable. Within those two lies YOUR moderation and whether you discover it or stick to it at all costs is a CHOICE and for each choice of such calibre one needs COURAGE.

Isn't "Know Thy Self" what we mentioned earlier? Well, that is exactly where this third way stems from. Only by living life and contemplating it do we, mere humans, manage to get to know our own boundaries and as such design the outlines of moderation itself. What is most important to me is when each one of you dynamically chooses the experience you wish to have with puppets. Do you want to be drenched in anxiety? Good. Do you want others to abuse your skills and knowledge? That's fine as well. Do you wish to "vomit" everything that you haven't managed to express through other mediums? Not a problem. You look to feel the exhilaration of being the Hand of the All Mighty? Let's go!

Objects will always be there to be used by you, for all the reasons that you might come up with, as long as you keep-on-choosing. Never stay inert, even if that means setting puppetry aside for a time. As we have stated, there are a thousand years still remaining to achieve the unalterable goal of Puppetry in the Age of Aquarius... what's the rush?!

The Democratisation of Everything comes to save the day once again and this time it bares gifts. In this case, it brings the knowledge that allows everyone that makes use of it to dramatically cut down on the time needed to outline



Moderation In All Things and that is the methodology and technology of psycho-physiological coherence. By no means is it the only way, but it is one of the ways I can vouch for.

Acting while being psycho-physiologically coherent, also known as “being in the flow”, is an experience in itself. It might sound old-fashioned stating “Only by quieting the mind might man be complete”, yet Christ said that the puppeteer isn’t the puppet so many years ago and that doesn’t mean it’s not so just because people have been repeating it for so long, right? (See how elegantly I mentioned the outcome of the Age of Pisces?)

The moment you choose to be well and you put that into action by activating, through free will, a positive state such as compassion, then the mind quiets. The human species is made to be noble. Through appreciation, forgiveness, compassion, understanding, humility, courage, the human body works with greater fidelity and unlocks a whole palette of capabilities. In this State of Flow, as it is commonly known, the limits of all things are attainable and the path of moderation unfolds seemingly effortlessly since it’s something innate. You know what kind of a show children in preschool need to experience, or the kids in a rural village, or the youth, or the elderly at an old people’s home, etc. You know. You just need to sabotage your mind a little each day, until it remembers it’s rightful place. Until it learns that you choose to think through your being.

Why did I make such a big deal of all this? Well, from the moment you choose to entangle your life with puppetry, know that it is social labour for the benefit of man and more so for the man of the future. Just like all teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. have the obligation to be at their best while they work because society depends on it, well, so do you! This job is, and will be, social labour no matter if it needs another 200 years for that to be accepted!

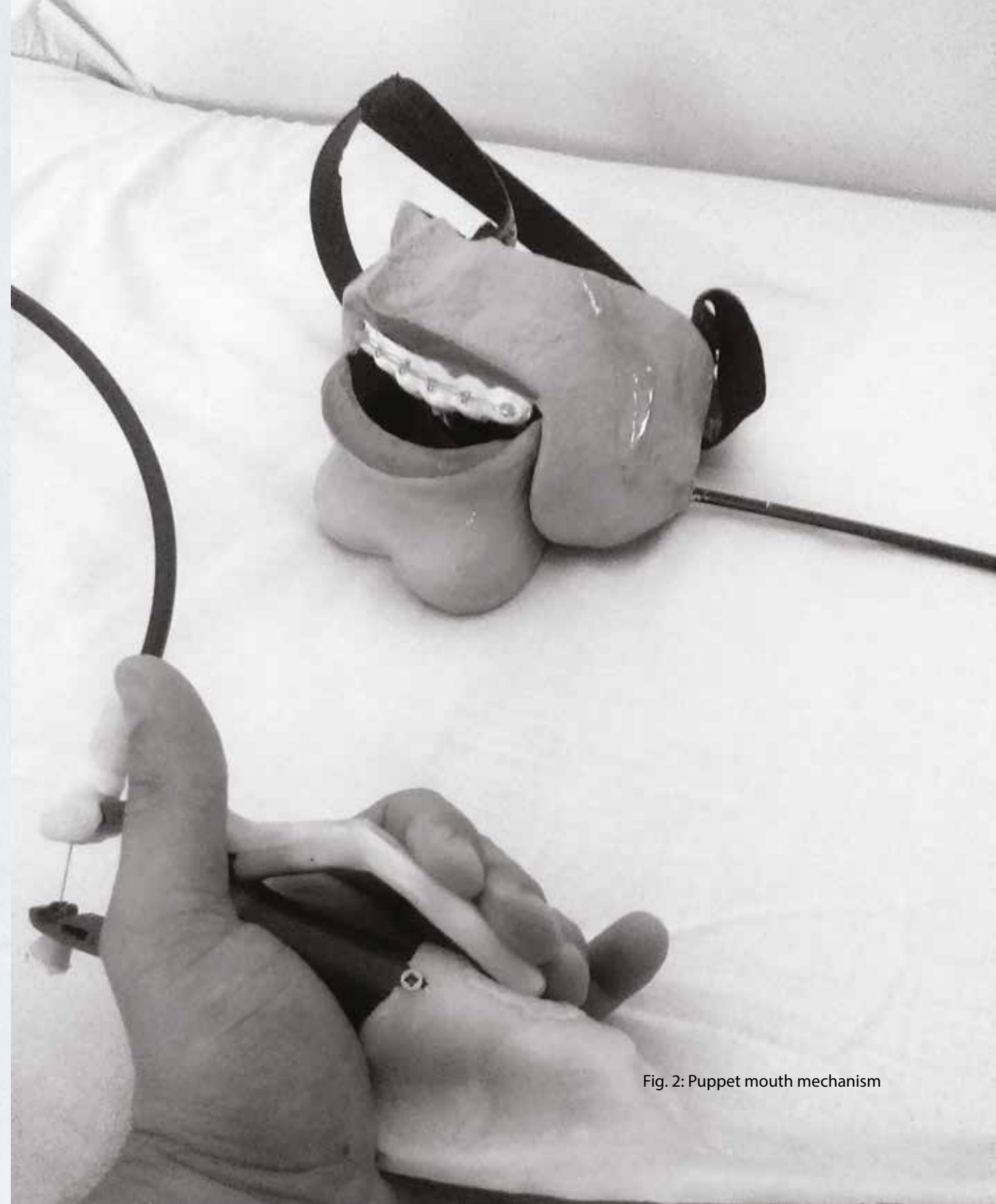
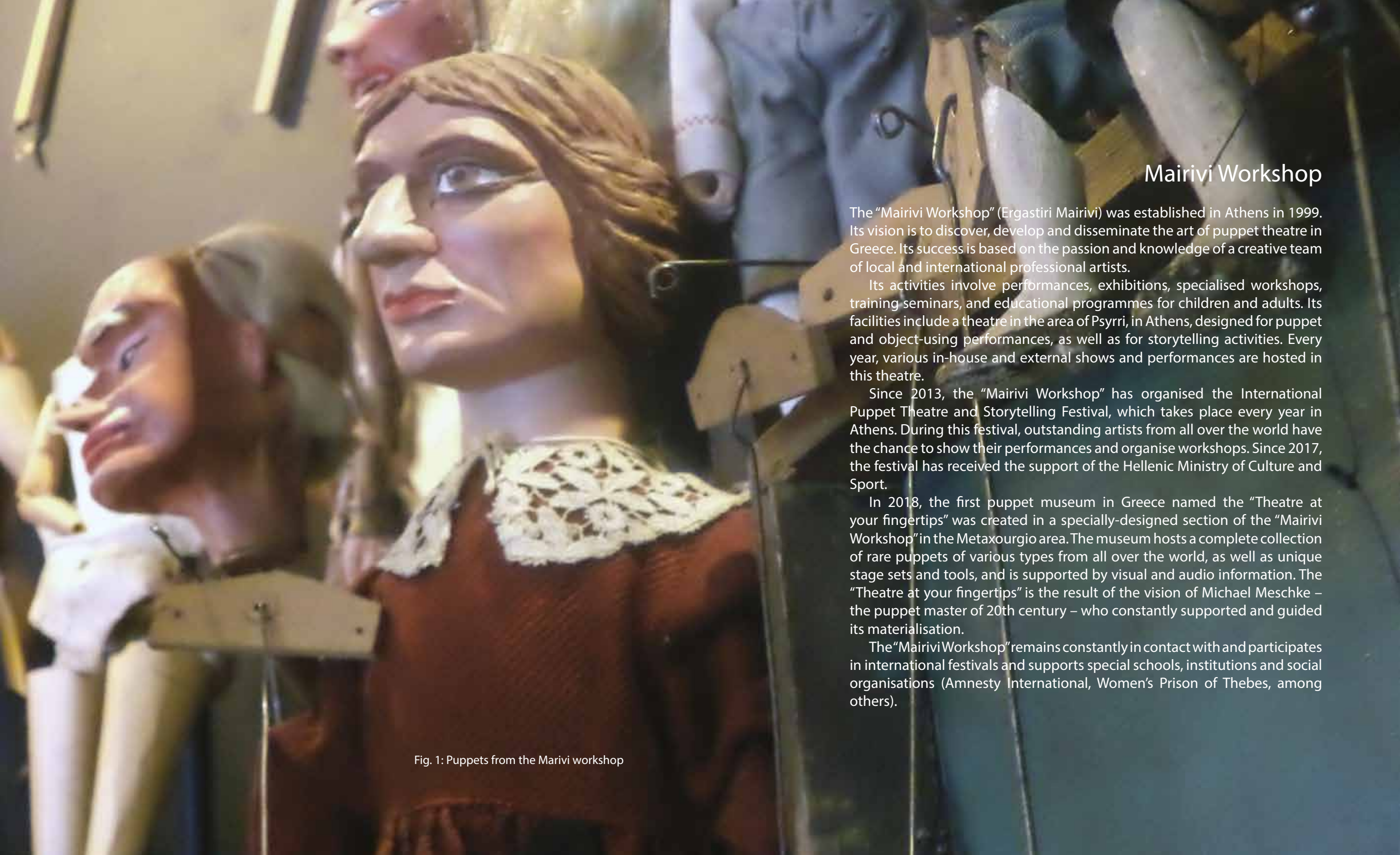


Fig. 2: Puppet mouth mechanism



Mairivi Workshop

The “Mairivi Workshop” (Ergastiri Mairivi) was established in Athens in 1999. Its vision is to discover, develop and disseminate the art of puppet theatre in Greece. Its success is based on the passion and knowledge of a creative team of local and international professional artists.

Its activities involve performances, exhibitions, specialised workshops, training seminars, and educational programmes for children and adults. Its facilities include a theatre in the area of Psyrri, in Athens, designed for puppet and object-using performances, as well as for storytelling activities. Every year, various in-house and external shows and performances are hosted in this theatre.

Since 2013, the “Mairivi Workshop” has organised the International Puppet Theatre and Storytelling Festival, which takes place every year in Athens. During this festival, outstanding artists from all over the world have the chance to show their performances and organise workshops. Since 2017, the festival has received the support of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sport.

In 2018, the first puppet museum in Greece named the “Theatre at your fingertips” was created in a specially-designed section of the “Mairivi Workshop” in the Metaxourgio area. The museum hosts a complete collection of rare puppets of various types from all over the world, as well as unique stage sets and tools, and is supported by visual and audio information. The “Theatre at your fingertips” is the result of the vision of Michael Meschke – the puppet master of 20th century – who constantly supported and guided its materialisation.

The “Mairivi Workshop” remains constantly in contact with and participates in international festivals and supports special schools, institutions and social organisations (Amnesty International, Women’s Prison of Thebes, among others).

Fig. 1: Puppets from the Marivi workshop

“Theatre at your fingertips”. An exhibition on puppet theatre

Mairivi Verykokkou-Georgiadou

The “Theatre at your fingertips”, a permanent exhibition on puppetry, was created in 2018. It is the result of the continuous encouragement and a materialisation of the vision of Michael Meschke, the “puppet master of the 20th century”. The exhibition’s objective is that of motivating a meaningful contact with the art of puppet theatre in all its manifestations; to contribute to the effort of showcasing puppet theatre which for a long time was on the margins of the artistic scene in Greece. It is housed in the “Mairivi Workshop” in the Metaxourgio neighbourhood of Athens, in a space specially designed for puppet theatre, which has embraced this art for over twenty years now. It is addressed to adults and children from Greece and abroad. Artists and researchers in the field of the arts come to find inspiration and expand their knowledge on puppetry. Students at higher education institutions and pupils of all levels of education are offered guided tours of the exhibition premises, watch performances and participate in workshops and educational programmes on making and animating puppets. The exhibition is open to the general public during seasonally-adjusted opening hours; organised visits can also be scheduled.

Introduction

Puppet theatre in Greece has been on the rise for the past 25 years. An ever-growing number of young people is becoming involved with this art and a number of puppet-theatre troupes stage remarkable productions. At the same time, artists from the theatre, music, dance and the wider field of the arts are discovering the puppet as a new means of expression, are impressed by its dynamics and incorporate it into their work. In schools, puppet theatre now occupies an important place as an educational tool.

In university faculties, lectures on puppet theatre are no longer limited to its simplistic version, but are expanded in the context of artistic research and contact with puppet theatre worldwide. However, there is still a long way to go before puppetry can rise to its rightful place in the arts. The “Theatre at your fingertips”, a permanent exhibition on puppetry, was created in 2018 with a view to contributing to the effort of showcasing this art, which for a long time had been relegated to the margins of the artistic scene. It is the outcome of a long journey of research and immersion in the uncharted art of puppet theatre that is linked to the “Mairivi Workshop”.

The journey...

The need for a space/workshop for personal research and experimentation gave birth to the “Mairivi Workshop” in the neighbourhood of Metaxourgio. Gradually, it evolved into a space open to people who were beginning on the same quest as I. Ever since I was a child, I loved puppet theatre. In my eyes it was a miracle. The puppets coming alive, moving, speaking and communicating. Sheer magic... This feeling was so beautiful and powerful, I never let go of it. And although I graduated in Economic Sciences at the University of Thessaloniki, I didn’t follow this path, starting out instead on a quest for knowledge and information about this art. In Greece, my first contact with the field of puppet theatre was my acquaintance with UNIMA HELLAS. Through this association of puppeteers I met a few, but remarkable, people who served, at that time in Greece, the art of puppetry with respect. I would like to mention Takis and Mina Sarris, in particular, because they were an important active troupe and generously transferred their experience to young interested people.

However, in Greece the difficulties surrounding learning and broader knowledge were many, as there existed no corresponding school. My search beyond the Greek borders was pivotal, as during this journey I met remarkable people of the puppet-theatre world, who helped me and still continue to do so. A decisive milestone was my apprenticeship at Annina Steiner’s “Fidibus” Puppet Theatre in Zurich, in Switzerland. My acquaintance, and subsequent collaboration, with two renowned people in the field of puppetry, Nikolina Georgieva, director of the Department of Puppetry at the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts of Sofia, in Bulgaria, and Michael Meschke, director of the Marionetteatern in Stockholm, in Sweden. The meeting with Mirela Katsa, a puppeteer of many years at the Cluj State Puppet Theatre in Romania, which developed into a permanent collaboration, played an essential role in my subsequent career.

All this seeking, the contacts, the experiences and the reflections found space in an old house in Metaxourgio. This is where the “Mairivi Workshop” started functioning, slowly evolving into a meeting place for professional puppeteers and people interested in this art. As of 1999, workshops on a variety of puppet-theatre techniques started being held in this space, in collaboration with teachers from Greece and abroad. Also, special educational programmes and performances are organised, under the supervision of Nikolina Georgieva. The educational programmes and workshops have garnered a strong interest and



warm response from young people. At the same time, the need to upgrade the quality of puppet theatre productions in Greece led to the thought of creating a professional school for puppet theatre. In collaboration with Stathis Markopoulos, a curriculum for a three-year school for professional puppeteers was designed in 2006. But it was difficult to implement this project without public funding. Ever since, and right up to the present, annual workshops are held on the art of puppet theatre and storytelling. Alongside the storytelling seminars, a Storytelling Club was started in 2001 on the initiative of Stelios Pelasgos. During the storytelling evenings, which are open to the public, the workshop's students are given the opportunity to put into practice all they have learnt. Short workshops are also held for those who consider the puppet to be an important tool for their work.

In the premises' puppet theatre, the "Mairivi Workshop" stages its own productions, open to the public. At the same time, it hosts performances by Greek puppeteers and storytellers, the aim being to strengthen their cooperation, mutual support and networking. It also hosts young Greek puppeteers and its workshop students.

The "Mairivi Workshop" also welcomes schools. Pupils of all levels of compulsory education visit it daily to watch performances using various puppet-theatre techniques. The great response from the public and their love for the performances lead to the creation of a stage in Athens entirely dedicated to puppet theatre, in the neighbourhood of Psyrri in 2012. In this venue, the activity of shows for children, but also for adults, was expanded. The International Festival of Puppet Theatre and Storytelling launched in 2013 also contributed to this. Acclaimed puppeteers and storytellers from all over the world come to Athens every year with performances, storytelling and workshops. It is a two-way form of communication, dialogue and meaningful contact between Greek and foreign artists. And, last but far from least, the general public is given the opportunity to get to know puppet theatre from beyond our country's geographical boundaries. The stalwart collaborators in the Festival's organisation and realisation are Stelios Pelasgos, Francisco Brito and Juanjo Corrales. αλληλοϋποστήριξης και της δικτύωσής τους. Φιλοξενεί και ομάδες νέων ελλήνων κουκλοπαικτών και μαθητών του Εργαστηρίου.

The Puppet Theatre exhibition

All the activities over the years at the "Mairivi Workshop" were aimed at contributing to the promotion of the art of puppet theatre in Greece. The

productive discussions with the "puppet master of the 20th century", Michael Meschke, led to the conclusion that it would be important to create a permanent exhibition on puppet theatre, open to the general public, which would be an incentive for a meaningful contact with the art of puppet theatre in all its manifestations. With the guidance, support and succour of Michael Meschke and Elisabeth Beijer Meschke, the work for transforming this into a reality began. The ideal space to host this vision was the premises of the "Mairivi Workshop" in Metaxourgio, a space specially designed for puppet theatre, who has embraced this art for over twenty years. The "Theatre at your fingertips" exhibition opened its doors to the public on the 12th October 2018 with a four-day programme of events free of admission, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. The exhibition took its name from the book of the same name by Michael Meschke (translated and published in Greece by Typothito-Yiorgos Dardanos Publications) and was curated by the Panteion University's Department of Communication, Media and Culture, headed by Professor Andromachi Gazi. The contribution of Antigoni Paroussi, professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, was also important. Also, the practical help and moral support from all of the Workshop's collaborators and the donation of puppets by people connected with puppetry also played an essential role.

"Theatre at your fingertips"

What is a piece of wood, a piece of cloth, a piece of rope? Nothing in themselves. And yet! In the right hands, they can be transformed into something more, something exceptional. They can become the carriers of a story, a tradition, a culture. That's the magic of puppet theatre. An exhibition designed to open a "window" onto what is –for many visitors– an unseen world through discovery, interactivity and personal contact, revealing the magic that hides behind the animation of each puppet from inanimate object to carrier of culture and values. The visitor embarks on a journey to the heart of this uncharted art, following in the footsteps left by puppets and puppeteers from around the world, through traditions that for centuries have accompanied the different kinds of puppet theatre in every corner of the world. She/he discovers their hidden and fascinating stories and shares the unique experience of this art.

The exhibition is addressed to adults and children from Greece and abroad. Artists and researchers in the field of arts come to be inspired and expand their knowledge on puppet theatre. Students at higher education institutions



and pupils of all levels of education are offered guided tours of the exhibition premises, watch performances and participate in workshops and educational programmes on making and animating puppets. The exhibition is permanent and open to the general public during seasonally-adjusted opening hours, while organised visits are also arranged. The space housing the exhibition comprises:

- a main hall for the display of the puppets-exhibits;

- a puppeteer's workshop;

- a puppeteer's stage;

- two puppet-theatre stages:

 - a small stage (40 seats)

 - a large, multipurpose stage (100 seats), which is the venue used to present the Workshop's performances, but also for hosting performances by other troupes;

 - an active workshop space for children and adults. This comprises a specially-equipped space (with toolboxes and materials) for holding classes, workshops and educational programmes about making puppets and stage props, and a room for theatrical experimentations, rehearsals, classes and educational programmes concerning the movement and animation of puppets and other related workshops;

 - a library and an area for study and the gathering of information that includes audiovisual material;

 - a separate hall for hosting other exhibitions and events (lectures, meetings, screenings, etc.) related to puppet theatre and the relevant performing arts.

Touring the exhibition

The visitor gets to know the trajectory of the puppet through the world and through time. The exhibits represent key characters from performances of countries with a special tradition in puppet theatre, finishing off with Greece and today's reality. In the main hall, each place recounts the myth in its own way.

Indicatively...

Marionettes from India, protagonists in performances that draw their themes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. Puppets with carved heads made of mango wood, stuffed with cotton rags and other handy materials, reveal an art directly linked to people's daily lives, as they performed even during the breaks in their agricultural work.

Marionettes from China, made of camphor wood and painted with colours representative of their role, include the five representative characters and the

main hero Sheng Guai.

Wayang golek rod puppets from Java (Indonesia), where even the shape of the hands expresses the character and role of each one. Puppets with a particular construction, since the movement by the puppeteer is achieved thanks to a wooden rod and threads placed inside the puppet's body.

Elaborate marionettes from Burma (Myanmar), carved in infinite detail, with exceptional movement in their limbs, but also in many of them with movement in the eyes, tongue, mouth...

Glove puppets and marionettes from Africa made of local types of wood, gourds, shells and other materials.

Wood-carved puppets from the Czech Republic, a country with a long tradition in puppetry and the characteristic small-sized marionettes that performed in the shows of "family" troupes (a very popular traditional puppet show in the Czech Republic and Slovakia), placed in small wooden suitcases, which served as a stage.

And Fassoulis on stage... A traditional Greek glove-puppet. The Italian hero Pulcinella, the British Punch and his companion Judy, the German Kasper, the Czechoslovak Kasperek and the Greek Fassoulis are in fact the same hero, who is beloved and familiar throughout Europe.

Shadow-theatre figures, wayang kulit, made of leather, wood and cardboard, from Indonesia and Malaysia to Greece, where our well-known Karaghiozis is the protagonist.

The puppeteer's workshop

Spread out in the puppeteer's workshop, materials, tools, phases and ways of making different kinds of theatrical puppets give a realistic picture of the work that precedes the transformation of the puppet-character into a protagonist on stage. Marionettes, marottes, glove-puppets, rag dolls, shadow-theatre figures, puppets made with everyday materials will be used according to the requirements of each performance, and the way and technique chosen each time by the puppeteer.

The puppeteer's stage

The possibility of visiting the inside of a puppeteer's traditional stage is of particular interest. The public enters the stage's inner sanctum, discovers how the puppeteer works behind it, how the interior space has been designed to



meet the puppet show's needs. Nothing missing, but nothing superfluous either. Carefully placed puppets and props await the puppeteer's hand to bring them to life

Come, let's play with puppet theatre

In the premises theatre, the children discover puppets hidden in chests and trunks, come into contact with them, interact, improvise and perform puppet shows in the small stages.

The "Theatre at your fingertips", a living space of inspiration and creation

The exhibition doesn't only offer the possibility to visit and tour its premises.

In the broader context of the public's acquaintance and contact with this art, events, performances and educational programmes for adults and children are also organised.

Performances

Puppet theatre is motion. Contact with this art would be incomplete without puppets coming to life on stage. Puppet shows of various techniques accompany the exhibition. Performances by the "Mairivi Workshop" and productions by other puppet troupes.

Workshops for adults

Throughout the year, workshops for adults are organised on how to make and animate puppets. The workshops are addressed to teachers of all levels and specialties, students at drama and childhood education schools, storytellers, psychotherapists, occupational therapists, parents, those who consider puppets an important tool for their work and those who are interested in puppet theatre as a form of expression. We believe that the creation of a more organised form of education contributes substantially to upgrading the art of puppetry. To this end, a series of specialised workshops is proposed for young people who want to engage professionally with it. The purpose of these workshops is to provide participants with targeted training in terms of technical knowledge and the performing skills required for those interested in pursuing the art of puppet theatre on a professional level. Moreover, the workshops cultivate inventiveness and imagination, aesthetics and a critical eye, the most important tools of the future artist. Some of the important workshops included in this series are: history and theory of puppet theatre, dramaturgy, directing puppet theatre, kinesiology,

physical expression and miming, impersonation, phonetics and elocution, puppet manipulation, puppet animation, mask use, traditional puppet theatre, theatrical writing, storytelling, lighting design, individual and group improvisation, use of tools and materials, design of objects and mechanisms, puppet-making of all types, mask-making, construction of stage objects, performance design and production implementation. All of them together, each one separately, but also in combination with each other, these workshops provide basic skillsets to the future puppeteer.

Workshops for children

Workshops on puppet theatre are held for children.

Educational programmes for schools

One of the exhibition's important activities is the possibility it offers to school groups to visit it and participate in educational programmes. The programmes are addressed to schools of all levels of compulsory education. They are adapted according to the age group and tailored according to each school's possibilities and the activities chosen by each group. The children discover the art of puppet theatre through a story: "The puppeteer's life" becomes a vehicle for a journey in her/his world. How did she/he discover the art of puppet theatre? Why did she/he become a puppeteer? Why did she/he travel as much? Through the narration of this story while touring the exhibition, the children follow in the puppeteer's footsteps; they travel the world with her/him and share her/his love of puppets, but also her/his anxieties until the end of this journey. They visit her/his workshop, see how she/he makes her/his puppets, follow her/him backstage and discover her/his secrets.

Through puppet-making and animation workshops, the children are also given the opportunity to engage with tools and materials, to make their own puppets, to play and improvise behind the stage. In the venue's puppet theatre, the children can also watch a performance. Many of the educational programmes incorporate an alternating repertoire of puppet shows.

Events/happenings

The "Theatre at your fingertips" is flanked by events that are connected to puppet theatre and relevant performing arts (lectures, one-day conferences, projections, etc.). The building at Metaxourgio hosts temporary exhibitions by puppet-makers

and puppeteers. It also houses the exhibition “Visiting Hours” featuring puppets made by the inmates of the Women’s Prison of Thebes, an initiative organised and supported by the “Mairivi Workshop” for the past 17 years. In the context of a cooperation with social institutions (Amnesty International, One Earth and others) and through the programme of the Organisation Arsis, inmates of the Prison of Thebes (formerly of Korydallos) make puppets throughout the year, which are sold at the exhibition. The proceeds from the works’ sales are deposited in the prison’s accounting office, for each detainee separately.

Afterword

Puppet theatre in Greece is on an upswing. Quite a few steps are being made thanks to painful efforts by the professionals in this domain. It is a difficult art and you need to love it deeply in order to serve it steadily and consistently; a multidimensional art that involves many arts. That is why, over and above the performing skills, the profession of puppeteer requires technical knowledge and a lot of hard work, dedication and patience.

The involvement of an ever-growing number of young people with puppet theatre is an encouraging sign for the future. Support from the State is necessary, so that all those who start working professionally with puppet theatre can dedicate themselves to it, continue doing so and develop it. The State’s support is also needed to aid puppet theatre productions, as well as other activities relating to puppet art, in order to improve the overall quality of the art of puppet theatre in Greece. All of us together, with the continuous support of the puppeteers’ association UNIMA HELLAS, and each of us separately, we continue fighting so that the art of puppet theatre might gain its rightful place.

An art that defies categorisation (for children or for adults), an art for everyone, irrespective of age. The “Theatre at your fingertips” wants to contribute in this direction in every possible way. To continue to support and promote this –for many still misunderstood– art, with a constant and dynamic presence in the broader artistic field. The public’s contact with puppet theatre in all its dimensions, from its history, its traces in space and time through to its contemporary performances, cultivates the public’s critical eye, so that it realises it is not the simplistic art that a stereotyped perception painted it as for many decades.


The priority for the “Theatre at your fingertips” is to broaden the audience interested in puppetry not only age wise, but also geographically. For this reason,

it is planning to move its activities to Naxos, where there is a permanent, solid venue to host these activities.

At the same time, all these activities can travel to other regions in Greece. The art of puppet theatre shouldn’t exclude anyone. It is important that everyone have access to it. For this reason, a digital tour of the exhibition premises is planned, as well as educational programmes and workshops that can be attended online. The possibility of a remote access to puppet theatre is necessary, as it makes it easier for the public to get closer to it even in exceptional situations, such as the current pandemic. The art of puppet theatre knows how to adapt to circumstances and evolves constantly. It transcends the walls of language and knows no borders. It looks into the heart of different cultures, which interact creatively. The “Theatre at your fingertips” endorses this productive dialogue and wants to open channels of communication with actors from abroad. It wants to bring together all those who share the same love of puppet theatre and those who believe in it. Those who believe that puppet theatre has a special dynamic and is carving its own path in contemporary culture.

Puppet theatre is an eons-old art. It has survived through the centuries against difficult and adverse conditions. Even when the puppeteer is no more, the puppets are there, waiting. A hand will come to bring them to life again...



The image consists of two side-by-side photographs of a puppet. The puppet is made of light-colored wood or clay, with a human-like face and torso. It has several thin black strings attached to its head and shoulders, used for manipulation. The puppet's body is wrapped in a light-colored fabric. The background is a rough, textured wall. In the left photograph, the puppet is in deep shadow, with only its face and upper body visible. In the right photograph, the puppet is brightly lit, showing its full form and the texture of its body and face.

Puppet theatre is an eons-old art. It has survived through the centuries against difficult and adverse conditions. Even when the puppeteer is no more, the puppets are there, waiting. A hand will come to bring them to life again...

Fig. 2: Puppets from the Marivi workshop



Part Three
Some things we learned
from the dialogue

**Puppet-theatre Thematic Week.
Trainee teachers' evaluative assessments**
Lia Tsermidou, Antigoni Paroussi & Vassilis Tselfes

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the evaluation of a Thematic Week (TW), which resembled a closed conference for trainee teachers of the University of Athens' Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE). The conference speakers were puppeteers and university lecturers, its participants were undergraduate students (who chose to attend the TW as a compulsory elective course) and its organisers were members of both the university community and the puppeteers' artistic-professional association (Unima Hellas). The theme of the conference referred to Greek puppetry (its contemporary artistic trends) and focused on its potential informal educational possibilities. The evaluation data was generated from the student participants, through focus group discussions held at the end of the week. Data analysis used a theoretical approach that considers the students as active subjects and their expectations, knowledge, views, attitudes, and so on, characterising the students as having emerged in the context of the relationships that were established and not as constructions/structures of individual subjects. The results discuss the categories and the transformational power of the students' relationships with human and material factors that emerged through the Thematic Week's processes and indicate the development of strong relationships

Introduction

Thematic Weeks (TWs) were established as "compulsory elective courses" of the DECE over ten years ago. They constitute a separate module of classes in the Department's curriculum, not because of any shared theme in the subjects they treat, but because of a common differentiated educational approach on whose basis they are organised (DECE, 2020: 164-165). This event resembles an extended seminar or conference, which lasts at least 39 hours over one week and involves, in addition to the Department's teaching staff, specialists/experts on the matters at hand and also persons who are active in the field of the topic it aims to study. In this manner the students, in the course of their studies, are obliged to choose and attend a Thematic Week of their liking. They find themselves operating in a context that differs from that of university courses, as they take on the role of conference participants and develop relationships with people who are active outside the Department and academia. At the same time, they are also pressured

by the institutional framework of university courses, as they are obliged to participate, write an end-of-course essay, be evaluated, and so on.

This particular Thematic Week, that this chapter evaluates, was centred on the "Contemporary trends of Greek Puppet Theatre: An informal form of education?". In other words, the TW is an artistic activity that is transformed into an educational one and is extensively used in preschool education. Its organisation comprised three distinct modules. During the first module, structured as a one-day conference, university teachers spoke and discussed issues relating to aspects of contemporary puppet theatre in education. In the second, Greek puppeteers presented their work and spoke about the present and future of puppet theatre. The third module was composed of four workshops, organised by artists, puppet players and non-players, on subjects concerning artistic applications of puppetry (e.g. organisation of a performance for children, puppet-theatre techniques, puppets in cinema, stage design in puppet theatre).

In this context, the students found themselves listening and talking to university teachers and artists about issues that concern the characteristics of both educational and artistic puppet theatre. In this circumstance, on the one hand, the two approaches conversed and revealed their differences and convergences and, on the other hand, the students' actions were under pressure to conform at times to the traditional directions of a university course and at others to directions of a participation in artistic experiences. This circumstance brought to the surface underlying tensions between:

- a) traditional perceptions of education – education as a process, with the clear predefined objectives of instructors and the learning outcomes of trainees assessed against these objectives; and,
- b) pragmatic perceptions of education (see, for example, Stoller, 2018) – education as a set of differentiated experiences of learners, which emerge within a framework of potential actions and relationships. These actions and relationships are initially organised by the instructors on the basis of their own experiences and expectations, and not based on external or overriding goals.

These two dimensions of the Thematic Week introduce, de facto, two different evaluation approaches. The first moves between objectives and results and is concerned by questions such as: How did the students perceive the Thematic Week's objectives when deciding to register for the "class"? What made it difficult and what made it easier for them to complete it successfully? What do they



feel they learned? The second approach moves between expectations and experiences: What did the students expect, initially, from their participation in the Thematic Week? How do they evaluate their experiences from this participation? What new expectations were created about the future? The first dimension obeys the logic of formal curricula. It approaches the learning process in a manner at best constructivist or even constructionist, if it recognises incidental and promotes differentiated learning. Here the students individually and actively (re)construct or even transform knowledge and practices through their social and material interactions (see, for instance, Ackermann, 2001). The second dimension conforms to pragmatic logic (see, for example, the classic texts: James, 1914 and Whitehead, 1929). It approaches the learning process as a sequence of relations (between human, material and normative factors) from which experiences emerge and accumulate “like drops”, reshaping old expectations and creating new ones.

Methodology

To evaluate the Thematic Week on the basis of the students’ opinions, the method of focus group interviews was chosen. Focus groups can offer significant advantages over other methods in cases where the research seeks to develop tools or further clarify already conceptualised data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2010; MacNaghten & Myers, 2004). Similarly, focus groups can contribute to the production of new schemas/models for explaining the issues under investigation (Iosifidis, 2008; Morgan, 1997). We consider that this production of new schemas is relevant for the present research, which seeks to clarify or synthesise the two different dimensions expected to emerge in the students’ assessments. The present research also aims to improve the teaching/educational model that supports the Thematic Weeks’ design.

Focus groups are composed of a small group of participants and facilitators/researchers. Potentially meaningful and equal relationships are formed within a focus group between the participants and researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2010). These relationships contribute to the development of a fruitful dialogue, so as to collect detailed qualitative data regarding participants’ views, perceptions, understandings and practices.

In our case, the interviews with focus groups were conducted in four groups of six to eight people, with each discussion lasting between forty and fifty minutes. In total, twenty-eight students participated, with the first group composed of seven, the second of eight, the third of seven and the fourth of six students. The

discussions were facilitated, recorded and transcribed by the first of this chapter’s authors, who formally was not a lecturer of the course. In procedural terms, this research followed all of the provisions in both the research and confidentiality protocols and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) code of conduct and ensured the students’ anonymity and voluntary participation. The respondents were informed that, should any or part of the interviews be published, the protection of their personal data would be ensured and their anonymity would be maintained. On this basis, their consent was sought, and granted, to record and process the data.

The transcribed data was examined using thematic content analysis. Its key feature was the systematisation and re-foundation of the texts’ contexts and highlighting the multiple possibilities for understanding and interpreting them (Green & Thorogood, 2004). This approach enabled us initially to create free categories (Patton, 1990) and to conceptualise them a posteriori on the basis of the aforementioned bidimensional approach of the Thematic Week. All three authors of this chapter contributed to both of these steps, first independently and then collaboratively.

Results and initial commentary

The results of the thematic content analysis will be presented in sections, with each sub-title signifying an emerging free category that was created by the analysis. Following this, we shall present the comments and the contexts’ re-foundations based on the two dimensions, traditional and pragmatic.

A) On the Thematic Week’s objectives

A1. The students seem to perceive the thematic week as a “class” that is part of their studies and whose objectives are to offer them knowledge and techniques on puppetry as an art, as well as on the possibilities of using puppet theatre during the act of teaching. More specifically, they state that the Thematic Week had as its goal: “raising awareness about puppetry”; “getting to know about puppet theatre”; “understanding what puppet theatre is”; “to see its different aspects”; “getting to know puppetry as an art and how we can use it as an educational tool”; “to learn that puppetry is not only an art but also a tool in education, a technique for our work in nursery school”.

Reading the traditional dimension of the above statements, we can say that the students see the Thematic Week as a “class” and easily refer to traditionally



expected cognitive “objectives” on the basis of its title. They speak as if it were a process/relationship, where an impersonal entity (the “course”) will guide/compel them to “learn” a series of things about the key term puppet theatre included in the title. Here, some of the phrases suggest that the students are coming across puppet theatre for the first time – yet the Department offers around four relevant courses each year. At the same time, they do not include two elements that were emphatically mentioned in the Thematic Week’s title: contemporary puppet theatre and its possible (because of the question mark) dimension of informal education.

Accordingly, the pragmatic reading tells us that the students’ statements are a rather hackneyed conceptualisation of the “objectives of the course”, which dominates the curricula. This conceptualisation ends up concealing the essence of the relationship between university teachers and students. In other terms, it conceals the fact that the objectives, if and as they exist or are affirmed by the students, should be those of the teachers organising the “course” and not of the “course” itself. Furthermore, the act of ignoring the terms “contemporary” and “informal” can be interpreted, if we assume that the objectives presented in the data are constructs of the students, which emerge not from their information about the Thematic Week they chose to attend, but from their previous experience of the Department’s classes – an experience that seems to have ended up squeezing the objectives into the double-pole cognitive object – future educational use.

A2. The students identify a further category of objectives relating to criteria that will enable them to evaluate puppet shows: “To adopt criteria for understanding and evaluating puppet theatre. That is, whether it is a good performance and whether it can be used in the classroom”; “The thematic subject also had as its goal to help us acquire the correct criterion on how to judge a good show”; “To acquire a critical gaze regarding puppet theatre, to be able to evaluate different performances”.

Here the traditional view says that the students also recognise in the “course” a goal relating to skills rather than knowledge. The recognition of this goal allows us to see that the students place this course in advance in a category of classes that offer ways for the future educational use of their content. This view might be justified by the information that puppeteers would be participating in the Thematic Week as speakers.

In this particular case, though, it extends in a way that tends to influence in advance the image of an important relationship: that of the students with the puppeteers in the context of the Thematic Week. Hierarchies are seemingly being created here, which may have roots in the educational tradition. The university teachers organising the Thematic Week are expected, by the students, to mediate in such a way that the students/puppeteers relationship evolves into a relationship of judge/being judged.

B) On the students’ expectations regarding their participation in the Thematic Week

B1. Regarding the expectations about the Thematic Week, the students focus on the ways of using puppetry in early childhood education and especially on how to teach through puppet theatre. In particular, they state: “To teach through puppet theatre”; “To teach through puppet theatre and to teach children things through puppetry”; “I chose it for my work later on. And that was truly the way it was, I learnt and came away with a lot [...] it was terrific”.

Here, the steering of the focus groups brings the students’ expectations to the fore and pressures them to express themselves in a pragmatic direction. Thus we see that the students’ initial expectations coexist with their future expectations, those related to their future work. Of course, these expectations seem to be made of traditional educational materials (to teach, to teach children things, to do my job). If we also assume that experiences and expectations are made of the same materials, materials of lived experience (Whitehead, 1929), then the above traditional expectations may refer to lived traditional educational experiences, which certainly do not come solely from university studies, but which, it appears, have not been modified by them.

B2. Before their participation in the Thematic Week, the students belonged to two different groups characterised by their expectations of what would occur in terms of experiences while it unfolded. On the one hand, are students who expected a long teacher-centred course on theory and, on the other, students expecting an interventionist workshop: “I believed it would be something totally theoretical, even after seeing the programme... but luckily I was wrong”; “The Thematic Week exceeded my expectations. I thought, and luckily that wasn’t the case, that we would be in a kind of amphitheatre and that we would be sitting the whole time and that people would be talking to us all the time. Which for me would be a killer. But... our contact with so many people was amazing. Who



spoke to us, and we did so many different things; I really enjoyed it"; "I believed that we would come and we would also perform"; "To learn to make puppets"; "I didn't choose it; I missed the deadline for another one and so I enrolled in this one. I never liked puppet theatre before. But I also liked the theory; I never expected to be able to follow for so many hours".

Here, the students' expectations refer in all likelihood to their lived experience at university. The distinction between workshop-style participation and class attendance is not expected to result from their previous education. And in our opinion, it is extremely interesting to note that, when the students talk about their expectations in the future field of their teaching profession, they draw on their experience in general education, which is not the case when they refer to their expectations, and hence their experiences, within the university setting.

B3. Despite the above dimension regarding their ex-ante expectations, all the students tend to declare ex post that the experience of the Thematic Week surpassed their expectations in a positive way. Most of the students stated that the Thematic Week was a positive experience in their studies because it modified their previously stereotyped perceptions of puppet theatre. In their words: "I expected something totally boring. It wasn't my first choice. I thought, seriously now ... puppet theatre ... give us a break ... And at the end of it I realised, just as well that this happened, because it's the first time I found a class at the DECE that I actually wanted to sit down and involve myself in. It was 'wow!'; "I had a very negative view of puppet theatre and I was afraid of it as a child. And puppets scared me. But I was very impressed and, also, the stereotypes I had deserted me. I reconsidered some of the things I believed"; "I didn't want to choose this thematic week, because I was afraid of the exposure it entails. I am grateful I found myself in it. I consider myself to be very lucky I did". A smaller number of students, who, as a result of an intrinsic motivation and interest in the art of theatre, consciously chose this Thematic Week, provided a positive evaluation for the same reasons as the previous group of students: "I have been involved in the field of theatre and I have a second degree ... I chose it out of curiosity alone; I wanted to see what these two arts have in common and where they diverge [...]. The truth is that I would wait and I would come and I would say and now I'll hear, I'll hear ... although I like to have the theoretical framework first and then move on to the practice ... And I liked what happened a lot; it exceeded my expectations and what I wanted. So I have something over and above what

I thought for both theatre and puppetry, and also with respect to my future quality as a teacher".

The traditional approach to the above data speaks of a successful constructivist or constructionist teaching organisation of the Thematic Week, but which is difficult to support analytically as we lack data on the learning trajectories of each student individually. However, the data does clearly highlight the apparent heterogeneity of the students who participated. Some chose the class out of interest in the content they estimated it would have and some were confronted with puppet theatre for the first time, through chance or necessity. Pragmatically, the fact that a heterogeneous group of students ended up positively evaluating their experience of the Thematic Week, in principle for the same reasons, probably means that some of the relationships (similar for all students) that were created and functioned within the course conference were catalytic. And it would be interesting to know what those relationships were.

C) On "what we learnt"

C1. When referring to knowledge they acquired about puppet theatre, the students' evaluations regarding the traditional evaluative question "what did you learn?" are essentially expected, general, and even tautological: "Puppet theatre is an art, but it is also a tool in our work"; "I didn't expect puppet theatre to be such an important tool for education"; "Puppetry is an art that is very close to children"; "As a teacher, I need to have a specific goal, a reason as to how to integrate puppetry into educational practice. For instance, going to watch a performance is something that the teacher needs to know why they are undertaking it; it isn't just an excursion"; "I discarded the stereotype that puppet theatre is a performance and I believe that I can use it in the classroom in many ways"; "When all is said and done, puppet theatre has more dimensions than what we imagined"; "Although I have attended other similar courses, I didn't expect this to happen. I learnt a lot and I saw new things about puppetry".

The responses become interesting when, through the discussion in the focus groups, some constructivist-type tensions between pre-existing and ex-post views begin to emerge:

"What I understood is that puppet theatre is addressed to a broader public ... it isn't only for children; it's also for adults and for older people"; "I had two erroneous images in my mind before the Thematic Week: I had associated puppet theatre purely and solely with children's theatre and shadow theatre exclusively



with Karagióziis. [...] I discovered things that were totally unknown to me"; "I was very touched that puppet theatre isn't only the happiness of a child, but also a therapy tool for adults". Constructionist-type procedural statements also emerged: "For my part, I was captivated by the process of making our own puppet. That ... whatever mistake you might make, which obviously you'll make, a unique result comes out of it and it's your very own"; "What I realised is that, even for us, puppet theatre is a means of expression, and thus even more so for children. It liberates you and it's creative."

From these data, the traditional view could evaluate small-scale learning events of an effective conceptual confrontation or even procedural reconsiderations, which in principle abolish the logic of educational reproduction in favour of creativity.

C2. The students' views on what they learnt about puppet theatre in young children's education, or more generally about the relationship between children and puppetry, also evolve within the same traditional framework: "Children's contact with art and puppet theatre is very important; they approach it as an experience, but it's really fascinating for the children"; "I appreciated puppet theatre both as an art and as a tool for my work"; "It's experiential"; "Because the child needs play ... it's something that needs to be there ... puppet theatre offers that"; "Puppetry can be used in nursery school in many ways, either through a theatrical performance or as an educational tool."

Here, too, we come across assertions that indirectly refer to constructivist confrontations: "It helps a lot; it's very important; I don't know why, but children like it a lot"; "Puppet theatre can treat even difficult topics in a way that is understandable and accessible to children"; or statements that refer to constructionist procedural reconsiderations: "Over these days I realised that we can tell children things without wagging our finger at them"; "It's something different and it's more engaging"; "It offers something magical to the educational process."

Looking at the above data (C1 and C2) pragmatically, we could say that the students' views emerge from a lived experience of traditional assessment. They state what they learnt using generic-style answers, which are safe in evaluation terms as they refer to concluding positions, which tend to be justified on the basis of unspecified "ways", "tools", "goals", "dimensions", "new things", "lived experiences", and "needs". This situation is overturned in the few cases where

reversals have occurred. It is characteristic that the reversals' descriptions are at the same time clear and do not contain any of the unspecified terms mentioned above. But why did these reversals take place? We hope to discover this through the students' evaluation of the Thematic Week, either with respect to its teaching structure (i.e. traditionally) or concerning the structure of the relationships it created (i.e. pragmatically).

D) On the Thematic Week's teaching structure

Three categories appear to dominate the students' statements when evaluating the Thematic Week's teaching structure: "experiential", "collaborative", "creative/constructive": "What I saw and retain is that, even we as adults, who can understand the theoretical part, we interact much better, we understand much better when there is something experiential, when we get involved in it ..."; "Collaboration in an experiential process helps us to be more comfortable, even in our case, which is even more true in the case of children ... This collaborative participation was very effective"; "I liked the fact they [the puppeteers] talked about their experiences"; "In the experiential sessions I enjoyed myself much more and learnt more things"; "The puppets we made. It impressed me that you can make a puppet out of simple materials"; "I liked the group part. The collaboration among us and how puppet theatre can help with that in the classroom"; "What we made, created"; "The performance we staged"; "The act of creating with your own hands. It's very helpful for people generally as a process".

In other words, the traditional view sees three alternative, literature-informed teaching approaches that are activated in the context of the Thematic Week: the experiential approach/ learning, the collaborative and the workshop/creative.

The pragmatic view is more holistic. Behind the term "lived experience" it sees the term "a drop of experience", which comes and adds itself each time to the entirety of the fluid and already-lived experience, altering, usually in an undefined manner, memories and expectations. And because each new drop of experience materialises in the relations that human entities enter into with other, either human or material, entities, we believe that the "collaborativeness" of the traditional view refers to the relations with human entities and the intervention/construction to those with material entities. In other words, looking at the students' evaluations of the Thematic Week's teaching structure through the pragmatic approach, we can say that this Week created many, different opportunities for the subjects to form many, solid drops of experience, which



in turn caused the modifications we discerned in all the previous steps of our analysis.

E) On the relationships that dominated during the Thematic Week

The answer to this question, which was not posed directly to the students, emerged from a number of statements that show that the dominant relationship was the one between puppeteers and students. It was the relationship that probably fuelled a “different climate”, in which the relationships between students also functioned in a renewed way: “I liked the fact I met people who are passionate about what they do and who have been doing it for years. I really liked it that they love their work ... I don’t know whether I have reached that point ... I want to become a nursery teacher, but I don’t know if I have that passion”; “I didn’t expect us to come into contact with so many puppet-theatre professionals, I expected 1, 2, 3 speakers ... I didn’t expect this whole conference”; “I didn’t expect such an atmosphere to emerge in a university course. We got to know each other properly and we collaborated. It was an opportunity to get to know my fellow students”; “I discussed things at home, too”; “It made me feel proud of the Department I’m enrolled in”; “We all grew closer; there were people who generally don’t talk a lot [in other classes] and here they talked and we all became a team”; “It’s one thing to see it, quite another to experience it”; “I leave full of energy, even though I feel tired”; “The puppeteers’ love for what they do. Their eyes sparkled. That’s what I want to find ... the thing that will make me shine like that”; “I was impressed that although they were very different performers there was no competitiveness, just respect and mutual support”; “It was a tiring week, but I would go home bursting. I learnt things and I felt that I didn’t want it to ever end”; “I want to be able to recall it; it was something exceptional ... I want to remember that when I was a student, we had a class that impressed me like mad. The team spirit, the creativity, the interaction ...”.

Lastly, we also see a significant number of alternative relationships that were activated:

Relationships with space: “I liked the space, which is inspiring for this kind of classes ... It’s really the best of what the university can offer”.

Relationships with components of the specific art and their materials: “[I liked] the performances we attended and the puppets we came into contact with”; “[I liked] the puppets we made. It impressed me that you can make a puppet out of simple materials”; “What we made, created”; “The performance we

staged”. “The act of creating with your own hands. It’s very helpful for people generally as a process”.

Relationships with the university staff: “...and not just with fellow students, but also with the lecturer; I liked the fact we got to know her better and become closer. It isn’t easy to come so close to the lecturer in a Department where there are so many of us”.

Discussion

This particular Thematic Week created a typical conference in lieu of a university class, with the contributions from: puppet performers, who presented and discussed contemporary aspects of Greek artistic puppet theatre; university teachers, who presented contemporary aspects of educational puppetry, while also making sure to highlight any informal educational aspects of artistic puppeteering; and, undergraduate students, future nursery teachers who, through their presence, called for strong shows of commitment and a “third” look on behalf of both the performers and the university teachers. This chapter’s data and analysis talk about, precisely, this “third” look. A look that came to the premises of the conference-class with expectations formed by previous university and non-university educational experience and encountered a social dynamic, unprecedented not only for the students but in all likelihood for the performers and the university teachers too. The fact is that this social dynamic did not unfold to its full extent. The students were not exposed to discussions between puppeteers and university teachers at length. Only a small proportion of the university teachers, who intervened during the first day of the conference, followed the second day’s artistic speakers – and only a small number of performers came on the first day to listen to the university teachers. Their mingling in the context of the workshops that followed was rather more intense but relatively limited.

Thus, the best picture resulted from the experiences and expectations that the students brought, shaped and reshaped in the Thematic Week’s space and whose descriptions can be considered extremely reliable, as there is evidence pointing to the fact that a feeling of trust prevailed in the focus groups: “Everything in the Thematic Week was very special and different from our other experiences at the university. Even what we’re doing now in this discussion and having the opportunity to talk, and feel that someone is listening and paying attention to our point of view”. “I feel like this is the first time I’ve been given this opportunity,



to be heard. That you are listening to us and are interested in our point of view. That it isn't only, that is, sit and listen ...".

We consider that the overall results highlight a deep dichotomy between the educational framework (at every level) and the context of the artistic communication. The educational terminology and logic were present in the students' descriptions, mainly when and where they were prompted by the questions (e.g. what did you think the course's goals were, or what did you ultimately learn from the course). As a rule, the relevant responses were general and quite vague, in the way that answers always are in an educational framework that is haunted by the learners' evaluation/grading (Larson, 1995).

When the discussion framework opened up past the educational context and the questions referred to "experiences" and "expectations", then the students' responses became revealing: they disclosed that the students attend classes in order to take away useful knowledge pertaining to their future profession and not "theories". At the same time, they revealed their pleasant surprise about a course which, despite their expectations, was not focused on "what we will do as teachers". The course was "wow!" because it offered them experiences they were not expecting. These experiences were close to their interests, but came by means of "other worlds", which they did not expect to encounter at university. They revealed that the central source of these experiences was the relationships they formed with the performers, relationships that offered paradigms, relationships that tended to enhance other relationships, already familiar though university life with space, with colleagues, with university teachers, with the materials of artistic production.

There are two possible interpretations of these results. Both refer to central features of the Thematic Week's organisation. One of these features is the conference structure which was given. It is a structure that, despite its current pathologies (delegates usually speak rather than listen or discuss), is a unique space in which any scientific discipline whatever really breathes; it breathes because that is where it comes into being/is created through disagreements, assertions and doubts. Something that inevitably is not the case in the fields of education, where scientific disciplines try, usually, to be reproduced without disagreement and doubt. That is to say, without a "breath". The students seem to have received a breath as something unexpected, enjoying it accordingly. The second of the characteristics is the essential, at least for the students, coexistence

of performers and university teachers in the same context as that of the students' activation. This coexistence created a functional tension, implicit yet intuitively recognisable. This tension in all likelihood guided appreciations about the performers' exceptional quality session ("I was impressed that although they were very different performers there was no competitiveness, just respect and mutual support"), which sparked both the important relations between artists and students and the latter's disruptive experiences.

Thus, despite certain difficulties ("The long hours were exhausting", "The theory tired me", "The conditions, i.e. the cold and the chairs, were definitely an inhibiting factor"), these two advantages of the Thematic Week tend to make it an irreplaceable undergraduate "course".

References

- Ackermann, E. (2001). Piaget's constructivism, Papert's constructionism: What's the difference? In Conference Proceedings, Constructivism: uses and perspectives in education. Geneva. tinyurl.com/ycsjqol5
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-32). London: Sage.
- Department of Early Childhood Education. (2020). Οδηγός Σπουδών [Study Guide]. DECE, NTUA. Retrieved from: tinyurl.com/yja7nvec
- Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2004). Analysing qualitative data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative methods for health research* (pp. 173-200). London: Sage. tinyurl.com/ye4ol7sz
- James, W. (1914). *The meaning of truth*. Prometheus Books [e-book, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2008].
- Iosifidis, Th. (2008). Ποιοτικές μέθοδοι έρευνας στις κοινωνικές επιστήμες [Qualitative research methods in the social sciences]. Athens: Kritiki.
- Larson, J. (1995). Fatima's rules and other elements of an unintended chemistry curriculum. Paper presented at The annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco, CA.
- MacNaghten, P., & Myers, G. (2004). Focus groups. In J. G. Giampietro Gobo, C. Seale, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 65-79). London: Sage.
- Morgan, D. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA:



Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Stoller, A. (2018). The flipped curriculum: Dewey's pragmatic university. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 37(5), 451-65.

Whitehead, A. N. (1929). *Process and reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and NY: Macmillan [Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald Sherburne, NY/London: The Free Press (1978)].

Lia Tsermidou

holds a PhD in Special and Inclusive Education from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). Her research interests revolve around Inclusive Education (theory and praxis), whilst she has extensive research experience in issues related to disability and inclusion, and more specifically, in the support, assessment and evaluation of inclusive schools, teachers' education and the development and differentiation of educational material. She is an active researcher and academic, having contributed papers to international and national conferences as well as publications in the field of Inclusive Education and Disability Studies.

Antigone Parousi & Vassilis Tselfes see page 404





After the workshop on making a rubber-foam puppet

Contemporary trends in Greek puppetry. Detecting their informal educational characteristics

Antigoni Paroussi, Antonis Lenakakis & Vassilis Tselfes

Abstract

Puppet theatre is a form of theatrical art and as such it is unsurprising that it contributes, like any art form, to what we perceive today as informal education. A today, however, whose indeterminate tomorrow puts pressure on the structures of formal education to move away from the role of “social and cultural reproduction” and accept a role of creator of visions for the future (see, for instance, the goals of creativity and innovation). In the context of this shift, the Arts have permeated formal education and attempt to guide its teachers along the informal paths of artistic communication.

The text that follows tries to read these informal paths through the eyes of the puppeteers and the trainee nursery-school teachers who followed them, in the context of the Thematic Week that gave birth to this volume. The results show that the views of puppeteers and teachers come together in art categories, diverge in education categories and look to a unifying setting.

Introduction

Puppet theatre is a form of theatre with strong links to education, especially of preschool and early-school children. In Greece in particular (see Lenakakis, Paroussi & Tselfes, 2019), puppet theatre was established as a spectacle for children, whether from middle- or working-class backgrounds, in the first half of the 20th century. It breaches the halls of educational institutions and enters the curricula and teacher training in the 1960s-1980s. Finally, as of the 1990s and up to the present, it contributes, through collaborations shaped by the more global current of “theatre/drama in education”, to the production and implementation of novel pedagogical proposals, which can be found in every nursery school and in almost every university teacher-education department (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019; Riga & Tselfes, 2020).

Nowadays, Greek nursery-school teachers particularly appreciate the pedagogical potential of puppet theatre in children’s education, whether as part of daily activities in classrooms or thanks to performances staged by artistic puppeteers and watched by the children (Lenakakis & Paroussi, 2019). In particular, regarding their appreciation of the art of puppet theatre, we know that 75% of them attend one to two organised performances with their pupils every

academic year. These performances are considered as entertaining the children, while at the same time passing on “pedagogical messages” and enriching the overall school programme. Additionally, over 30% of nursery school teachers have attended seminars proposed by artists that train participants in the art of puppetry. This is over and above the fact that 90% has attended undergraduate or even postgraduate classes on “puppet theatre in education”.

In our text we try to take the relationship between this art and education one step further, by attempting to answer the question: do contemporary performances of Greek puppet theatre also function as a potential informal form of “education”? This question orients us towards the function of puppetry in the relationship between children, as spectators, and puppeteers’ professional performances, a relationship mediated by the teachers, but also the parents, who choose to take the children to these performances.

This particular interest arises from the more general considerations of our times, which state that the social and cultural dynamics of the early 21st century are closely linked to the circulation of “information” in ways that do not necessarily pass through the hands of formal education. For instance, Manuel Castells (2010) captures this situation in his trilogy titled *The information age*. His texts identify the maturity and end of the era of the third industrial revolution (that of information and communications technologies, or ICTs) and describe the tensions/conflicts that will generate the “new era”. Another interesting model for representing this transformation talks of the development of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), a form of current capitalism that considers the data of human experience as raw data, which are circulated as “information on the market” and from which tools can be produced to influence opinions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

What aroused our interest is the fact that, in both of these theories, the communicative mechanisms have characteristics of effective informal education, while the arts are at the heart of the construction of communicative mechanisms. Influencing tools, for example, are aesthetically groomed, not only by Internet-literacy specialists, but also by artists who tend to the users’ aesthetic experiences (Dewey, 1934). It is a process that, to a great extent, shapes the future’s qualities: in today’s social structures, poles of power appear and disappear with great frequency, such as markets, individual networks, individuals-prophets and strategic organisations which, through “information”, disseminate models of



rational expectations, but also counterpoints of communities that project, also through “information”, strong identities of resistance, of an ecological, feminist or sexual-orientation through to nationalist or religious-fundamentalist nature (Castells, 2010). And the game is “played” via the structures of various networks distributing information, where the arts intervene dynamically thanks to aesthetics or in synergy with other disciplines (Hausken, 2013).

For our part, we do not want traditional formal forms of education to be left out of these developments due to institutional inertia. In terms of content, the field of formal education includes the productions and practices (what they say and what they do) of various socio-cultural activities, scientific, artistic, technological, religious or sporting. The contents of these activities sometimes open and sometimes close avenues to contemporary developments. In the case of technologies, the avenues open up: formal education at all levels deals almost exclusively with new technologies. For the sciences, these tend to be closed: as a rule, the interest of formal education focuses on old/traditional scientific principles and practices. For the arts, the situation is fluid. In the case of Greece, we see, from one year to the other, courses in theatre, visual arts, music, dance, at times introduced into the curricula and at others removed from them. The only constant: puppet theatre in preschool education. For this reason, we are interested in “reading” in the contemporary trends of puppet theatre all that it knows de facto through its informal education action in the socio-cultural realm. Knowledge and practices that could also be useful in the field of formal general education, whose effectiveness is more often than not problematic.

Informal versus formal and non-formal education

There is more than one model of representation to distinguish between the three, now well-established, forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal) (Carliner, 2013). In our case, we use the models that start emphatically with informal education and end up differentiating it from the other forms (Bagdonaite-Stelmokiene & Zydziunaite, 2016; Bennett, 2012; Fallik, Rosenfeld & Eylon, 2013; Schugurensky, 2000). This is because we are interested in the ways in which puppet shows are likely to function as informal sources of learning for the young children attending them, obviously after the choices made by adult teachers and parents. We therefore end up choosing the following dimensions as characterising and differentiating informal education (Fallik et al., 2013):A.

A. Organisational dimension

Informal education/learning takes place outside the educational institution of “school” and is aimed solely at children’s participation. We believe that, here, the teachers’ and parents’ choices and interventions can shift the process from the informal to the non-formal context: the teachers and parents talk with the children about the performance, organise activities relating to it, etc. Also, informal education is governed by flexible relationships between facilitators and participants. This is true whether the facilitators are present as people, or not (e.g. artists in a puppet show may or may not be on stage, teachers or parents accompanying children may or may not be in the room). Lastly, it focuses on social, creative, practical knowledge and skills (not on academic knowledge) and is assessed through a mutual interaction between facilitators and participants, which can be played out live (as in the case of a puppet show between performers and children), but also through more or less obvious processes (as happens through organised activities before or after attending the performance).

B. Cognitive dimension

It emphasises the knowledge and practices relating mainly to everyday challenges and dilemmas (not scientific ones, not ones to be memorised). It often promotes knowledge and practices from “other worlds” and cultures, but which relate to (or are compared to) everyday challenges and dilemmas. It also promotes “comprehensive” cognitive and emotional skills through bottom-up approaches that avoid formal symbolism. In other words, it provides facts and signs that inductively lead to important insights.

C. Emotional dimension

Ultimately, and often indirectly, the participants choose who, where and when they will watch and whether they will retain something from this. They are motivated by inner/personal motives, are rewarded solely through their participation and feel excitement, tension, joy or sorrow, pleasure, interest. Everything, that is, that effective learning needs.

D. Social dimension

The participants are initiated into the models and practices of a broader or an alternative culture and tend to appreciate their instructors in a context that respects their own needs, beyond those of the context.

Do the artistic performances created by Greek puppeteers today have such characteristics?



Three different sources provide answers to this complex question:

The first source is the puppeteers' texts included in this volume. We consider these texts to be important primary sources about what is happening in contemporary Greek puppet theatre, important sources about the description of the relationship between children and artists and we shall not "tamper" with them with our analyses. We shall leave them as they are, unaltered, at the readers' disposal.

The second source corresponds to the results of an extensive research project published in the book by A. Lenakakis and A. Paroussi (2019), where artist puppeteers were interviewed about their work and their relationship with children.

The third source are the opinions/statements of the students who participated in the work of the "Thematic Week", contributing to the production of the texts in this volume. Through these statements, the students express their viewpoints on whose basis they recognise, or not, informal education characteristics (as formulated previously) in the puppeteers' artistic productions.

The puppeteers talk about their art and its 'informal education' dimension

Lenakakis and Paroussi (2019) analysed 31 semi-structured interviews of professional puppeteers based on the grounded theory model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In these interviews, the puppeteers presented their views about their relationship with the "child" as a spectator, but also as a socio-cultural subject, with parents and teachers as the children's guiding models, and with teachers as potential puppeteers within their classrooms. They also spoke critically about the educational in-school activities based on puppet-theatre techniques.

The analysis showed that the puppeteers' discourse was based on the premise of puppetry as an art. In other words, starting from the puppeteer-creator's relationship with their object: their puppets and their stagecraft. Against this background, they recounted their views on: a) the relationship between the puppeteer-creator and their spectators, both children and adults; b) the mediation of parents and teachers between puppeteers and child spectators; and c) the relationship of the puppeteer-creator with the teachers, who try to transfer components of this art to their classrooms.

The overall results show that the puppeteers represent these settings on the basis of a dual guiding variable: a) the creator's particular personal relationship with their inanimate/living creation and b) the creator's social/cultural –and not pedagogical– relationship with their audience (children, parents, teachers).

For instance, in the data provided by Lenakakis and Paroussi (2019) we read, regarding the personal relationship: "These are particular artistic/ theatrical productions, a different language, a different kind of theatre, where the puppet assumes the soul and the action and the movement and is alive, even while we know it is not" (p. 281). And about the relationship with the audience: "Puppet theatre ... keeps an ace up its sleeve: it is live. A live process that takes place here and now before your eyes, it has an immediacy that ... continues to win over the spectator, whether they be four or eighty-four years old" (p. 281).

We assume that the above results –but also the data that support them– include descriptions that endow the implementation/attendance of a puppet show with characteristics of an informal educational process, which we attempt to identify through an alternative analysis of their content based on the categories mentioned above as dimensions of informal education.

This alternative analysis reveals some rather coherent characteristics:

A. Organisational features, which:

place puppet shows "outside school" (even if they are held on the school premises), because they belong, by presumption, to the realm of theatre and not education: the productions "are not conceived specifically for a children's audience. ... Our work is not addressed exclusively to children, nor is the market in which we function confined solely to schools or spaces entirely dedicated to children. What we do is instructive with regard to the theatre codes that the child learns. Puppet theatre's educational value derives from its theatrical value" (p. 310). Based on this assumption, the puppeteers' role is to find "enchanting ways" of mediating their art, so that their spectators "first of all laugh, feel companionable, and, through the show, receive stimuli, so that their curiosity increases and they enter a process of thinking" (p. 310), characteristics that they tend to consider differentiate them from the traditional role of teacher.

As for the inevitable mediation of the parents or teachers, which can transform a child's educational relationship with a puppet show from informal to non-formal, the puppeteers' views are extremely interesting: they consider that the parents' criteria in choosing a performance are fluid and often contradictory. "I don't know. If you say it's instructive, some will say 'we'll get bored'. If you say it's a fairy tale, others will say 'ah, it's for the little ones.' In other words, I don't know. For me, this is still elusive..." (p. 318). "For our part, we don't try to win them over with something specific; we respect the fact that each parent brings their child to see



the performance for their own reasons" (p. 319), according, too, to what their "life experience is at home" (p. 319). With regard to teachers, they tend to have a more solid view: "What the teacher cares about usually is integrating the performance into the curriculum. It is the first thing we discuss with them" (p. 324). However, the fact that a puppet show focuses on the puppet's image and movement and that speech is totally absent "is not considered as a plus by teachers" (p. 324). They stress that what is of interest to them in a performance is whatever "can be associated to the curriculum they teach" (p. 324) or which "has some educational feature and conveys certain timeless values, such as friendship or love" (p. 324).

These two observations lead to the same result for the puppeteers. Both the conflicted and often indifferent attitude of parents, and the manipulative attitude of teachers in the direction of the "curriculum", contribute to liberating the puppeteers' relationship with the children and orienting the attendance of a performance in the direction of informal education. This direction balances the puppeteers' goals that conflict with social norms: "... we don't like to treat children as customers, nor even their parents or teachers. Unfortunately, in the capitalist system the worker-customer relationship holds sway and, we believe, erodes the authentic relationship, which in our case should be the one of artist-audience. Be that as it may, in children's theatre there is indeed a particularity: one person chooses the service (teacher/parent) and another is the one to receive it (child)" (p. 327). Yet, "... often, in schools, it is the principal, who doesn't even attend the performance, who chooses it" (p. 327). And many teachers say "... I see them saying: 'OK, we'll go three times a year. Because the parent may never take it to the theatre, so at least we will take it to the theatre'" (pp. 327-328).

We believe that the above approaches of parents and teachers liberate and shift in an informal direction the relationship between children and the puppeteers, who choose to state that "... we treat the children with respect and honesty and try to offer them a theatrical experience that will allow them to take away some meaning and build their own theatrical culture, something we consider very important" (p. 320). The forms of evaluation, even the relatively structured ones, when and where they appear, point in the same direction. They are interested, for example, in "how many different answers" can be given to a "question" posed by a performance rather than in the answers' content or the correct answer. Of course, the direct, interactive and mutual evaluation between artists and children remains dominant: "Children are very genuine spectators,

they perceive the object's authenticity very quickly" (p. 296), "they have their own world... they are harsher critics, because they are authentic ... they don't wrap up their criticism nicely and prettily. So that from the moment there is a hustle and bustle among the spectators and [they] are children, this means that the performance isn't appreciated" (p. 296).

B. Cognitive characteristics, which:

are shaped through the polysemy of theatrical performances' secondary codes and allow "different levels of perception of the performance that the child will find interesting" (p. 297). After all, "not all children are the same. So you can't wag your finger at them and tell them that this is the right thing to do. Let them judge for themselves what is right and what suits each of them as right. So we treat the child ... as an entity that has a personality and chooses what expresses it" (p. 297). This situation moves even the unambiguous school contents to differentiated cognitive directions: there are "a hundred and eighty-five ecological stories that are delightful, humorous, with unexpected twists and turns, but this doesn't mean that this is what makes your performance... Bring me a good text and I'll stage it, but I won't do it on the basis of it being moral-forming or instructive or I don't know what" (p. 283). In a similar way, "contents" that have been expelled from formal or even non-formal education are also introduced; for example, "sex education", "unemployment", "adoption" or "the question of death" (pp. 322-323). "Teachers are scared of talking about them at school. Parents skirt and avoid them" (p. 323). "Parents or teachers worry about the children and you see that after all the children themselves aren't worried" (p. 322).

C. Emotional characteristics, where:

the puppeteers identify that children-spectators, in terms of both perception and response, differ from adult spectators. For children, the show comprises dimensions of imagination and magic, with a dominant sensory approach and "innocent" intentionality. A condition that guides them emotionally towards identification and engagement. An identification and engagement which in turn lead to immediate responses with spontaneity and affectivity. This condition is reinforced by the puppeteers, in order to achieve the child-spectators' autonomy: "to be able, through the performance, to instil confidence [in the child] that it can distance itself from its mother and feel that its own presence is sufficient while watching the play" (p. 295).



D. Social characteristics, which:

initiate the children spectators to “other” cultures: “Using ... simple materials we can create a magical world. This, for me, is the key” (p. 312). This initiation has its difficulties, because it presupposes the puppeteer’s respect for their young audience: “When you address a child, you have to be very genuine and very honest, something that doesn’t always hold true in adult theatre, even with great actors. A child, though, because it sees the truth, will get up and comment if you don’t give it the truth; it will either leave, or it will loudly say ‘I don’t like what I’m watching, you’re lying, you’re fake, you aren’t who you pretend to be’” (p. 296). And this “trueness” has nothing to do with a certain content or some everyday reality. It depends on the inner harmony that the form of life projected through the performance has, however much this form of life might differ from the current social form of life of adults.

Overall, then, the artistically adequate puppet shows, at least as approached by their artist creators, have characteristics mainly of an informal education of young spectators, however much the parents and teachers intervene. The exception seems to be the cases where the fixation of certain adult spectators favours “really terrible productions with safe themes, means, manners, etc., rather than excellent, artistic, poetic productions, which for some reason make them feel insecure about how they will be perceived by the children, the parents, the principal” (p. 326). Here, we believe that, according to the puppeteers’ assessment, the performances are influenced in directions of a non-formal assistance to formal education, which acts as a brake on the emergence and impact of whatever artistic creation on the child-spectator.

The students talk about the informal educational features of the puppeteers’ art

The “Thematic Week” was attended by 29 female students of the Department of Early Childhood Education who participated in the seminars and workshops that were held. These students came into contact with the puppetry artists in two ways, by attending both the presentations of their work and the discussions that accompanied them. They also participated in workshops led by some of the puppeteers.

Upon the completion of the Thematic Week’s sessions, the students each wrote an individual text in which they answered a series of questions. The latter required of the students to identify a number of characteristics of informal

education in what the puppeteers said or did, as they described or demonstrated their work. Specifically, the students were asked to identify and describe with examples:

A. Organisational characteristics of the puppeteers’ work: a) ways in which the puppeteer artists solicit their young spectators’ participation, b) ways in which they try to interact with young spectators and take into account their explicit or implicit “remarks”.

B. Cognitive characteristics: a) ways in which they put forth “integrated” cognitive approaches to the issues they treat, b) symbolisms that they use.

C. Emotional characteristics: ways they use to provoke enthusiasm, tension, joy or sorrow, pleasure, interest, etc. in their audience.

D. Social characteristics: characteristics of the puppeteers’ artistic work that bear witness to their respect of their spectators’ needs.

The students’ texts were analysed qualitatively (content analysis on the basis of the categories defined by the questions) and the results showed that:

A. The students perceived practices that can be considered as being typical of informal educational processes in the ways in which the puppeteers solicit the participation of their young spectators: “The puppets address themselves to the children and talk with them during the performance”, “...they assign roles to them”, they provoke their emotional involvement, they allow modifications to the plot according to the children’s wishes. But they also identified practices that are part of organised non-formal education activities: some puppeteers “hold discussions with the children after the performance and, in this context, reveal behind-the-scene” artifices, which the children try to play with.

Interestingly, in both cases, whether informal or non-formal, the students consider the performances’ organisational characteristics as being those that involve explicit processes of communication with the children. Their texts, for example, do not mention the organisation of highly aesthetic shows as a way in which the artists seek to draw in their young spectators.

Independently of this, there is no clear evidence to suggest that the children’s responses function as a criticism/assessment of the artists. Many texts have no reference to it. Many, too, mention that “it is at the discretion of the puppeteers” to understand or ask questions in that direction. As a rule, the students’ texts tend to identify an organisation that functions by analogy to traditional education: in order to involve the spectators, the artist asks them questions (including through



the puppet), assigns them roles or activities, etc.

B. Many of the students' texts identify the analytical, presumably artistic, "... construction of a framework" within which knowledge makes sense, as a way of putting forth integrated cognitive approaches through the performances; as an example, they use a show where the setting for the action, i.e. the world of the performance, is built from the beginning, piece by piece, in front of the spectators' eyes, before the heroes' appearance and the beginning of the theatrical narration of what befalls them. In some texts, too, the ways of putting forth integrated cognitive approaches selected by the students refer explicitly to specific subject (seasons, shapes, colours). Finally, a few texts suggest that the cognitive approach is inherent "...to the performance's central idea/ symbol".

With respect to symbolisms, the students mention a multitude of examples, where in essence they attempt to compose symbolisms as theatrical signs with reference not only to the signifier and the signified but also to the context, the one referred to by Peirce (1964), without using this terminology.

Here, without abandoning their dominant, formal, educational gaze, the students seem to also be looking obliquely towards the informal artistic aspects of puppet theatre: they applaud performances that explicitly refer to subjects (formal approach), recognise puppet theatre's possibilities in terms of constructing the context, the "other world", within which knowledge makes sense (non-formal approach), and arrive at an (informal) reading of knowledge through theatrical signs.

C. Almost all of the students identify the ways in which artists reach out to their spectators to involve them emotionally as corresponding to elements of the performances' aesthetics: the movement, the design and the sound track (Tillis, 1992), either in one or more of these or in all three together, as well as in their harmonious coexistence. In some texts, these three elements are not referred to as "aesthetics" but as "animation". In each case, however, the students have distanced themselves from their formal education approach and have moved into the area where Art has the upper hand: their perception of the challenge of involving the children has shifted from institutional guidance (Makrynioti, 1997) to an aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1934).

D. Here the students revert to their formal education model. Only a few texts mention the puppeteers' great amount of work and persistent effort before the performance, or their detachment from everyday problems during the show, as evidence of the artists' respect for their young spectators. In most of the texts,

evidence of the puppeteers' respect is mentioned as being their intent to offer the children knowledge and emotions (in line with the educational objectives). Lastly, in some texts respect changes direction. In these, the students talk about the respect due to the puppeteers during the show by the children-spectators.

Discussion

The above results indicate that, for their part, while committed to their art, puppeteers end up in productions that can function as informal educational activities for young spectators. This seems to be the case, as a rule, despite any interventions by parents and teachers, who sometimes attempt to turn the performances in directions of a non-formal education. The performer's identity and their perception of the relationship with their audience, both during the performance itself and while preparing for it, appear to outweigh whatever dynamics the puppeteer's relations with the children's adult instructors might have, even though the latter have a serious impact on the troupes' professional and financial future.

On the other hand, the trainee nursery-school teachers seem to recognise the informal communication characteristics of puppet theatre performances. They don their artistic lenses and recognise the aesthetics and the theatrical signs/theatrical symbols as really powerful tools of communication that engage and informally educate children. But when they move to the areas of organisation and social interaction, areas that are crucial points of formal educational activity, they activate the guidance lenses and see in artistic performances characteristics even of formal education.

Some remarkable artistic productions supported by pragmatic educational considerations seem to build bridges between these two viewpoints. Productions with artistic integrity that create abstract "other worlds" in which formal knowledge breathes informally and differentially. Productions that are either in the hands of performers with a contemporary pedagogical background, or in the hands of contemporary educators with artistic experience, or, finally, in areas of a genuine collaboration between performers and educators. In other words, we return through the back door to the issue of interdisciplinary encounters (see, for example, Gunve, 2018). Encounters which, in the field of education, flourish if the differentiated, inclusive and creative learning outcomes are recognised as good outcomes by members of all of the disciplines involved. Unfortunately, a fact that nowadays is taken for granted in the field of informal education and in



the realm of puppet-theatre artists – but not in the tradition of formal education.

Lastly, our analyses highlight the role played by the rather unspecified educational category of “curriculum” in the communication between teachers and performers. Research shows that, in the more global field of organising pupil/teacher visits to non-school places (which is also what a visit to watch a puppet show is), the teachers tend to explicitly link their choices to the “subject matter/curriculum” they teach. At the same time, however, there is no evidence to suggest that, in their classes, they link the content emanating from the visits they make to the “subject matter” they teach (Anderson, Kisiel & Storksdieck, 2006).

In our case, the puppeteers appear to experience the pressure of the “subject matter” in their communication with the teachers prior to the show. Few of them attempt to include it in their performances and even fewer of them do so successfully (differentiated within alternative theatrical worlds). In general, they do not consider this to be their job. On the other hand, most of the trainee nursery teachers take kindly to “subject matter” being included in the artistic productions, but do not offer any proof showing that they do not leave it there, proof that, modified artistically, they bring it into their classroom. Thus, our analyses tend to reinforce the data contained in the relevant literature. In the case of puppet theatre, too, the “subject matter” remains confined to the spaces of communication between teachers and puppeteers, without affecting either the educational work of the former or the artistic work of the latter.

References

- Anderson, D., Kisiel, J. & Storksdieck, M. (2006). Understanding teachers' perspectives on field trips: Discovering common ground in three countries. *Curator*, 49(3), 365-386.
- Bagdonaite-Stelmokiene, R. & Zydziunaite, V. (2016). Considerations of informal learning: different concepts and their dimensions. In 'SOCIETY. INTEGRATION. EDUCATION': Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference. Volume IV, pp. 13-23. Rēzekne, Latvia: Rezekne Academy of Technologies. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6f4f/9c004fd8cd458c205c694bd018a087e27746.pdf>
- Bennett, E. (2012). A Four-Part Model of Informal Learning: Extending Schugurensky's Conceptual Model. Adult Education Research Conference. Retrieved from <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2012/papers/3>
- Carliner, S. (2013). How have concepts of informal learning developed over

- time? *Performance Improvement*, 52(3), 5-11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21330>
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fallik, O., Rosenfeld, Sh. & Eylon, B-Sh. (2013). School and out-of-school science: a model for bridging the gap. *Studies in Science Education*, 49(1), 69-91.
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Gunve, F. (2018). Doing (art) education as art (education). In L. Knight & A. Lasczik Cutcher (Eds.), *Arts-research-education: connections and directions* (pp. 237-250). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Hausken, L. (Ed.) (2013). *Thinking media aesthetics: Media studies, film studies and the arts*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Lenakakis, A. & Paroussi, A. (2019). Η τέχνη του κουκλοθέατρου στην εκπαίδευση. Παιχνίδι συγκλίσεων και αποκλίσεων [The art of puppet theatre in education. A game of convergences and divergences]. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Lenakakis, A., Paroussi, A. & Tselfes, V. (2019). Θεσμικά και πολιτισμικά σχήματα που περιγράφουν τη μεταβαλλόμενη παρουσία του κουκλοθέατρου στον εκπαιδευτικό χώρο των ελληνικών Νηπιαγωγείων [Institutional and cultural schemes describing the changing presence of puppetry in the educational space of Greek nursery schools]. *Mentoras*, 16, 48-94.
- Makrynioti, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Παιδική ηλικία [Childhood]*. Athens: Nissos.
- Peirce, C.-S. (1964). *Collected papers* (Ed. by C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss). Cambridge: Belkan Press.
- Riga, V. & Tselfes, V. (2020). Το θέατρο στην πανεπιστημιακή εκπαίδευση εκπαιδευτικών: ισορροπία μεταξύ καινοτόμων ρευμάτων και θεσμικής αδράνειας [Theatre/drama in the university education of teacher: a balance between innovative currents and institutional inaction]. In the present volume.
- Schugurensky, D. (2000). The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field. WALL Working Paper, 19. Retrieved from <https://tspace>.
- Tillis, S. (1992). *Towards an aesthetics of the puppet*. Greenwood Press.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. Public Affairs.



Antigoni Paroussi

is professor emerita of Theatrical Expression and Pedagogy at the Department of Early Childhood Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has been involved in puppetry since 1976 and in teachers' education since 1990; she has directed more than 20 puppet-theatre performances, organised festivals, artistic events and seminars. Her work has been published in Greek and international books, journals and conference proceedings.

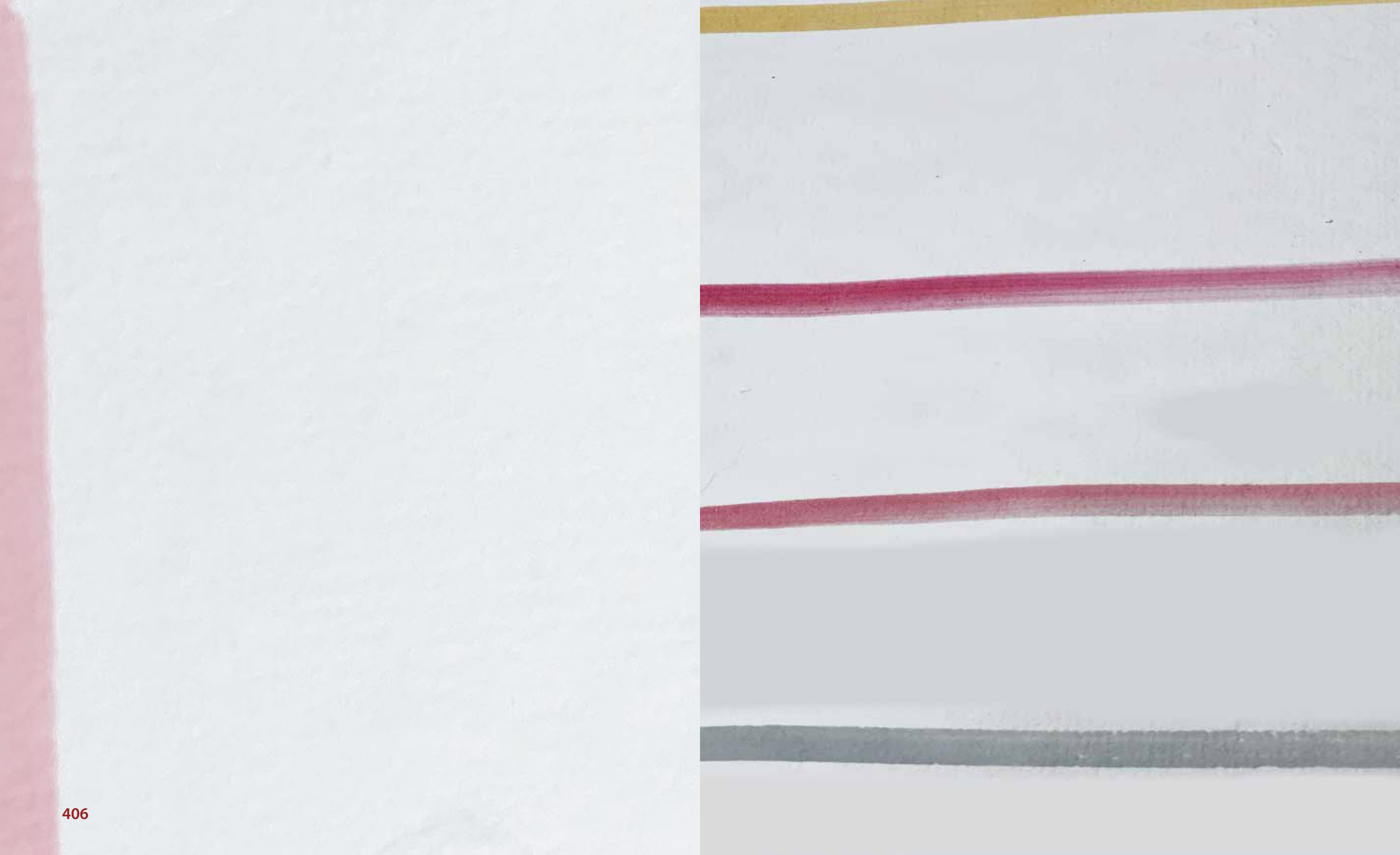
Antonis Lenakakis

is associate professor of drama/theatre pedagogy at the Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has taught drama/theatre pedagogy on a graduate and post graduate level at the University of Fine Arts of Berlin and at the universities of Vienna and Cyprus, as well as at several Greek universities. He has facilitated a number of drama/theatre pedagogical workshops and has participated in numerous national and international research programmes, focusing on drama in education, puppet theatre and human rights, teacher education and cultural literacy. His research interests include drama/theatre pedagogy theory and practice in formal, non-formal and informal education and in teachers' training; papers by him have been published in Greek and international journals, conference proceedings and collective volumes.

Vassilis Tselfes

is professor emeritus at the Department of Early Childhood Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. His recent research interests include the social dimensions of science teaching and learning, as well as the interdisciplinary approaches involved in this field. Papers by him on Solid State Physics, Science Education and the educational interconnection of Science and the Arts are included in Greek and international books, journals, collective volumes and conference proceedings.







Instead of an epilogue



Thirty years later
Yiorgis Hayias

EX MACHINA

DP: You're very rigid on stage, TecMar...

TM: Why, do you think you're better, DigiPup?

DP: I don't know whether I'm better, but don't you find that all these pairs of eyes looking at us now are a bit melancholy?

TM: Quite obviously there's something they don't like... But I, for one, always give my best.

DP: Me too... But that's probably not enough either... And just think that this time we had rehearsed so much, limbering up exercises, dance classes, vocal training. We worked really hard, my friend.

TM: True... This time we gave it our all. But what do you mean "we worked"? I woke up and I knew everything ...

DP: That's what your call-up class is like... You don't have our AI yet.

TM: !!!

ARIS:... Even the little one who grew up steeped in technology understood it... Ever since puppets became self-propelled, they changed so much software, they even used machine/human brain hybrids, AI has become so autonomous... but still, something is missing.

APHRODITE: A frozen gaze... Without depth.

ARIS: Puppets "no longer have a soul," Aphrodite.

APHRODITE: Why, did they ever have one in our time, Aris? Someone else made them move...

ARIS: Not made them move... Animated them... Brought them to life... A big difference.

APHRODITE: Yes... Unfortunately, art morphed into technique, technology... Hi tech maybe, but no soul whatever.

ARIS: It's no longer ex anima... It's ex machina... They'll never be as good as us.

The family of three leave the street theatre event and, as they walk away, the zoom-out reveals that their legs are bionic.

Yiorgis Hayias

Committed to seeking different art forms to mediate an active aesthetic learning in education and in the community, Yiorgis Hayias developed a late love for puppet theatre, which he now cultivates systematically using as his starting point the postgraduate programme of Theatrical Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and contemplating with curiosity the perspectives that open up. With studies in Communications, International Relations, Foreign Policy and Philosophy, he now carries out interdisciplinary experiments in drama and puppet theatre, exploring new possibilities of teaching and interactive learning around ideas and problems that concern mankind and our place in the world from the moment of the first reflection until today.



At a time when overturns of the socially and politically self-evident are putting to the test the art of puppet theatre, education and, even more so, the relationship between theatre and education, the digital publication of this volume seeks to present to a wide audience the “today” of Greek puppet theatre, which differs greatly from the stereotypical image prevalent in much of the educational world. This volume aspires to capture, as far as possible, the dynamics of Greek puppet theatre’s existence and history, a history that proves that, no matter how much it has been underestimated as a theatrical genre, no matter how many exclusions it has been subjected to, it is very much present and continues to entertain – but also, through its particular characteristics, to “infiltrate” the fields of both education and the other arts.



National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
School of Education
Department of Early Childhood Education