

la terrasse

Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II

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<https://www.journal-laterrasse.fr/le-petit-theatre-du-bout-du-monde-opus-ii-2/>

Since 2014, Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu has been developing a world populated by miniature creatures designed by a group of artists, authors, researchers, and engineers from France and elsewhere. Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II is a beautiful and subtle metaphor for a society running out of steam.

It is first on a workbench that we are introduced to the puppets of Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II. Arranged sometimes by size and appearance, sometimes according to criteria that elude us, they invite contemplation as they stand there, powerless to determine their own fate. Their inertia is all the more striking given that, around the large landscape model installed in the center of the room, director, puppeteer, and set designer Ezéquier Garcia-Romeu and his five fellow French and Bulgarian puppeteers mingle with the audience as they wander freely.

A Work in Progress

As early as 2014, when Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu presented the first installment of what is intended to be an ongoing project at the National Puppet Theater in Vidin, Bulgaria, the health of the miniature humanoid puppets populating his large horizontal puppet stage left much to be desired. They are hardly in better shape in the three parts that make up the second “volume”—featuring texts by contemporary authors, their creator has begun to establish a “puppet library” where each figure will have its own entry—of the Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde. Manipulated in full view with a technical skill that the six puppeteers have the grace not to flaunt, the puppets and other props in the show—presented as a “work-in-progress”—are either too fragile or too absorbed in their repetitive tasks to form even the faintest outline of a plot. Dominated in the second scene by an Administrator cut from the same cloth as they are, they barely cross paths. Instead, they often collide with objects gliding along wires as if on a cable car: a shell, a can, a nylon stocking... As foot soldiers of a hyper-surveilled society, they hardly need words to convey the excesses of our time. The highly international community of artists brought together by Ezéquier Garcia-Romeu develops its own unique tragicomic language, blending DIY and new technologies.

Anaïs Heluin



Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde Opus II by Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu

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At the **Théâtre National de Nice**, in a rehearsal space, **Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu** and his team have set up a performance using object theater. The result is captivating and mesmerizing.

We are invited to spread out around a large installation evoking a desert landscape. We can wander through this landscape—so close and yet so far away—which will serve as the setting for three episodes, each like a tale for curious children. Four puppeteers create a world before our eyes using puppets, raw materials, animated objects, poles, and micro-projectors suspended from small cranes that are themselves manipulated. While the first five minutes may be disorienting, the puppeteers' skill, the power of the staging, the musical composition, and the beauty of the puppets captivate the audience, who remain spellbound by the narrative.

The team masterfully combines puppetry, object theater, music, and robotics to build a world right before our eyes, much like a chef who brings a dish to life by transforming and integrating each ingredient. In this way, the imaginary world takes shape and comes to life, and the characters seem to wander through this no man's land in search of a better life. **The power of the performance lies as much in the strangely familiar nature of this world being created as in its message.** Without telling a specific story, the production takes root in our minds through allusions and symbols, and the poetic power of the whole washes over us like a language.

David Rofé-Sarfati

la terrasse

Le Petit Théâtre du bout du monde (I & II) created and directed by Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu

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Populated by bizarre creatures, the “theater of the far reaches” imagined by Ezéquier Garcia-Romeu is a poetic stage from which emerge political and philosophical questions about our world and the way we inhabit it.

“This two-part show, which we perform alternately, is set in the future perfect tense. In the style of dystopias or alternate histories, it presents a future that questions what led to its coming to pass. From the first human learning to walk to the effects of progress on nature, we follow creatures who have become machines, anonymous numbers, and monitored slaves within a world destroyed by greed, where they can no longer find even the slightest space for freedom. On stage: a stage manager, four actors, old machines and automatons, and puppets that appear as distant, faded, and anonymous silhouettes. The audience moves around the installation, as if discovering the palimpsest of a world waiting to be rewritten.”

A poetic and visual utopia, somewhere between a warning and a threat

“No lectures here! Just the poetry of a creative gesture that questions the effects of greedy and authoritarian capitalism. A moment of shared experience rather than mere entertainment, we witness a wordless performance—developed in collaboration with Laurent Caillon—that unfolds as a narrative told through universal and accessible images. Driven by a desire to renew and innovate by creating a theatrical and scenographic performance space, we address the state of our world, the catastrophe threatening it, and the difficulty we face in preventing it.”

Catherine Robert



Loudly, quietly, in whispers—the puppets speak
"Materia Magica" International Puppet Theater Festival

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<https://www.7md.lt/teatras/2025-05-16/Garsiai-tyliai-kuzdomis--kalba-leles>

A Synthesis of Fragility and Monumentality in "Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde"

Another production by Garcia-Romeu, "Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II," can confidently be called the grand climax of the "Materia Magica" artistic program. Performed at the "Hofo" Hall in Klaipeda, "Opus" became a melancholic journey into the world of puppets, where the deadly coldness of mechanics merges with human fragility. The performance is like a metaphorical attempt to understand the absurdity of civilization and humanity's struggle to survive in a technological world steeped in the mists of totalitarianism. Accompanied by subtle plays of light and sound compositions, the puppets' movements in "Opus" transform into a poetic allegory of how our modern endeavors often fail when confronted with the fragility of existence. The puppets, born of dust, wood, silicone, plaster, sponge, and mechanics, told the story of a world—weary, fragile, yet constantly striving to survive.

Garcia-Romeu's poetic and theatrical performance unveiled a universe lying between the beauty of matter and its brutality—a universe in which time curls into eternity, and people, like shadows of skeletons, wade through gravel and rise from the deepest underground with the weight of stone. "Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II" is a compelling theatrical experiment in which every movement becomes an emotional impulse for the viewer's consciousness. Puppet figures balancing on the curved surface of a platform draw a parallel with our own existential condition—to be and to wait, never discovering the true meaning of human dignity. It is a peculiar reflection of our everyday life, in which life often becomes a mere trifle, and the human being a tool of propaganda.

The play's structure is reminiscent of ancient tragedy, divided into three parts in which fate once again triumphs over human effort. The mechanical, constantly repeating actions—like mechanisms controlled by an invisible fate—exude a paradoxical sense of melancholy and fragility. It is a theatrical installation in which poetry and puppeteers who subtly manipulate objects are in constant struggle against the inevitable force of machines, which threatens human fragility. Here, Garcia-Romeu creates not a linear narrative but a meditative theatrical vision, in which the fragmentary nature of the puppets becomes a symbol of human life. This work depicts the fragility of the world—it is a reflection on our everyday existence, slowly crumbling and collapsing, yet at the same time monumental in its titanic efforts to survive at any cost.

Ingrida Ragelskiene

DURYS

Magical Moments at the Puppet Theater Festival

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<https://durys.diena.lt/magiski-leliu-teatru-festivalio-atsiverimai/>

Simana: The French play *Opus II* is an ode to the resilience of the solitary individual, to his journey through the wilderness of life, despite not knowing where the path leads or when he will find a place to rest. The boot of a soldier under a totalitarian regime, and the harsh, dehumanizing relationship with the depths of human existence—these are the themes the French have laid out on a long, wide, undulating surface representing the landscape of an empty (because devoid of humanity) world. The principle of contrast is employed: large (the table) – small (the person), the individual (walking his own path) – the masses (the parade, plunging into the abyss), short (the puppets) – long (the rod controlling the puppet). The puppet is controlled like the lever of an ancient well—symbolically, one can perceive the performance's descent into the darkest, coldest wells of humanity's trials. The soundtrack of this performance is impressive, precisely accurate, and crisp.

Driežis: The performance left a truly positive impression. A theatrical experiment, a search for something along the way. A wide variety of textures, materials, and raw materials were used (silicone, foam, wood shavings, plaster, metal, stone, etc.), but the performance itself remained intact—consistent in nature, cohesive, and thought-provoking. The performance is intended for adult audiences, but for the sake of experimentation, I'd be curious to see how children would receive it. I think this stylistic approach would be very accessible to them. The creators probably had their own story in mind, but I didn't detect a coherent dramatic framework here. However, it was so unobtrusive that it allowed me to create my own story. For me, the film felt disjointed. I pieced the plot together myself. There were many different compositional elements, but that wasn't a flaw—rather, an advantage. The visuals evoked personal memories, certain associations, and stirred up emotions. I think the makers had serious intentions. The question arose: why were the titles of those tiny little books, haphazardly spilled out of a box, written in Russian?

Grigaitiene: I agree that each audience member created the performance in their own mind. Electric poles, loudspeakers, wooden barracks, and a large white plane that gradually filled up evoked associations with the horrors of exile in the vast expanses of Siberia, the absurdity of the Soviet regime, and certain political aspects of the past and present. The image of the actors using long poles purely as a technical means to move a figure into the desired position took on a broader, symbolic meaning for me personally. The world is like a game board. The spectacle resembled a giant pool table, where the world's powerful use their cues to push people around like balls, altering and crippling their fates, brutally steering them in the

direction that suits them best.

Driežis: The poles most likely arose from necessity, while the associations they evoke are symbolic. In fact, I've only ever seen such props in casinos. There was no attempt here to reference familiar material, and this decision truly paid off, giving the audience the freedom to let their imaginations run wild. It was compelling. As with the last few productions by E. Nekrošius that I've seen, I realize that the director and actors know what they're doing. It's serious and compelling, but the world they're creating remained, for me, as if behind a glass wall. The same is true of this French production—I have no doubt that the creators know what they're doing, but their story remained unfamiliar to me. However, it's commendable that the audience is given complete freedom to create their own personal stories.

Burneikaite: In fact, this French "game on the edge of the world" evoked a sense of novelty. Thoughts wandered off on their own, and that "puppeteers' game," viewed from a distance, was at times even spine-chilling. After all, these days we so often hear the rhetorical cry about the world "Who's the real puppeteer here?" So, the time has come to realize and acknowledge that puppet theater is indeed not just a children's game. Incidentally, it took a long time to prove this. And this year's "Materia Magica" festival featured a serious program for adult audiences, and there was no shortage of viewers.

« Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde » : unreal journeys into cruel worlds

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From March 13 to 15, 2026, Théâtre 71 Malakoff presented (as part of the MARTO festival) Opus II and Opus III from Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu's **Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde** (Théâtre de la Massue). These are striking, world-like plays—almost wordless and seemingly without a narrative, yet heavily laden with meaning and filled with dazzling, beautiful imagery. A highly unique aesthetic and dramaturgical approach, resulting in a fascinating experience.

It's for me if:

- *I love raw aesthetics, visible materials, and theater where everything is out in the open to be seen*
- *I love world-scale shows with astonishing proportions, the play on scale that makes it feel as though you're flying over an entire landscape*
- *I'm always open to discovering realistic (or dystopian!) plays that still allow for moments of fragile beauty amid the darkness*

A Unique Relationship with the Audience and the Space

One of the first things that strikes a viewer venturing for the first time to see one of the Opus productions at the Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde is the highly distinctive stage design employed by Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu: whereas Opus I is presented in a sort of giant puppet theater—a cube around which the audience can freely move—Opus II uses a massive landscape-table made of assembled wooden planks, with its hollows, bumps, and hills, while Opus III is performed on the floor and on tables previously covered with a large piece of fabric that resembles snow-covered ground. The performance never begins immediately: thus, the audience members have plenty of time to explore the space, identify the best viewing angles, and get comfortable with the freedom they've been given. In Opus III, they don't even know where the performance will take place as they discover the venue and the performers.

In fact, many of the puppets and props that will be used in the performance are on full display—in cases that serve as a sort of cabinet of curiosities for Opus II, and on tables arranged around the perimeter of the future performance space for Opus III. Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu gives the audience as much mental freedom as physical space: everything—or almost everything—is done in full view; no mechanisms are hidden, the puppeteers perform as close as possible to the audience—to the point that you sometimes feel you might bump into them during Opus II—and few effects are not produced openly and in real time—even if a few microphones and sound sources remain concealed, and the subtle lighting design, which is an integral part of the dramaturgy, reveals

itself only to those who pay close attention. The result is, of course, a sort of Brechtian alienation—yet the scenes are so gripping, the images so powerful, that one finds oneself immersed in the performance ten or twenty times in a row without even realizing it.

At the Edge of the World, all the puppets are gray

It seems clear that Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu favors long-distance manipulation, which takes full advantage of the possibilities of performing in a large space completely free from the physical constraints of the stage. For example, his arsenal includes puppets with very long strings, manipulated from the side of the stage, similar to those used by Aurélie Hubeau in *Alcools*. These are puppets that allow the audience to watch the creature without the puppeteers appearing in the frame, even though the controls remain visible. The effect produced is fascinating: the slightest tremor in the puppeteer's hand is visibly reflected in the puppet's body, which is slender, suspended, barely grazing the ground despite its weighted feet... And yet it is simultaneously burdened by a terrible metaphorical heaviness: a walking stick whose resonant taps set the rhythm for the puppet's advance as it opens *Opus II*, a weight dragged along by the slave puppet in *Opus III*.

We also come across a few mammal skeletons, marionettes with strings of varying lengths and degrees of articulation, and one or two glove puppets—in short, all these techniques coexist without any particular hierarchy, each one employed for the dramatic possibilities unique to it. Thus, the glove puppet brings the puppeteer closer to the character, allowing for an interplay between creator and creature. The *Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde* also incorporates a number of machines—in the sense of objects driven by an internal force, such as an electric motor—often to evoke industrial machinery from elsewhere, suggesting their immense scale through the play of proportions and rendering their mechanical sounds through various metallic elements used as percussion. The sounds produced by the puppets and machines on the wooden panels of *Opus II* or the sheet metal panel of *Opus III* are important elements of the dramaturgy, as they project the material into space, allowing it to be heard even if it cannot be touched.

This requires a wide range of technical skills from the performers. They demonstrate versatile abilities and succeed in infusing every scene and every movement with great intensity through the concentration with which they attend to the slightest positioning and the slightest movement, transforming each interaction into a ritual rich with meaning. This holds true even in *Opus III*, where each scene culminates in a violent break from puppetry conventions, with the puppeteers overturning the sets and hurling certain puppets across the room. Respect for the puppet on stage does not preclude irreverence toward the object, which loses its sacred character once it is no longer performing! Thierry Hett, Alicia Malialin, Roxane Merten-Pallanca, Iroslav Petkov, Inbal Yomtovian, Ézéquier Garcia-Romeu, and Simon T. Rann—they're all amazing.

Filling the World with Presences

The bulk of the works consists of figures rather than puppets—that is, sculptures of various scales and materials, more or less roughly hewn, but always featuring a face with unmistakably human features. These may be simple busts or standing figures, fashioned from all sorts of materials, either painted or left in their raw state. But they share the common trait of being non-articulated and posed rather than manipulated—and this approach, which reminds us of François Lazaro, in no way prevents the (re)positioning of these silent figures—sinister observers of the landscape in which they are set—from being charged with meaning and dramatic intensity. These handcrafted figures, produced in large numbers, can form crowds or processions—an effect that is used more

extensively in Opus II than in Opus III, which gives much more room for the performers' acting.

Thus, the stage spaces—initially completely empty—host wordless yet highly meaningful scenes that unfold one after another without a specific narrative thread to clarify their meaning. The images created, and the meaning conveyed through movement and staging, are thus left open to the audience's free interpretation. There is ample room for metamorphosis—and metaphor—in this **Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde**. The puppets change in appearance, or the meaning of what they do: a pile of gravel dug into by a character is adorned with a cross, and a grave appears. This principle of shifting meaning through physical transformation even extends to the performers when Roxane Merten-Pallanca finds herself changing clothes and accessories at the end of Opus III, as if it were up to a human to find a final meaning in a performance that resembles a succession of scenes from the Anthropocene. This is also true of the set design, which is often suggested rather than depicted: metal baskets become a city's skyscrapers in Opus II, and tin cans become a landscape of industrial ruins or an ocean liner in Opus III. It brings to mind children's games, where they build castles out of cardboard boxes—except that these are adult games, and they are both more political and darker.

The Edge of the World and the end of the world

The precise meaning of each scene is rarely explicitly defined, and great trust is placed in the audience and their ability to interpret what they are shown. The overall tone, however, is clear: the exploitation of people and natural resources, surveillance, indoctrination, mechanization—one senses the dark corruption of totalitarianism and ecocidal capitalism. A giant human head, which appears in Opus III and is placed on the downstage left, overlooking the stage, stands as a representation of *Sapiens'* hubris—as humanity sets itself up as a demiurge, a creator rather than a creature, a being of pure intellect that has freed itself from its body—and thus from its sensations and its animal nature. The images presented are powerful and poetic, and the fleeting appearances of certain creatures sometimes bring a touch of lightness, and even a hint of humor—always of a dark variety.

These performances are disconcerting—in the positive sense of the word, in that they challenge the passive consumption of the performance by spectator-consumers, replacing it with a fruitful discomfort that sometimes arises from the themes, sometimes from sounds that are barely bearable, and generally from the fact that they force the audience to stand, preventing their bodies from slumping limply into a plush armchair. They are open enough to interpretation that viewers can project onto them whatever they wish to see: where one person might see in Opus II an evocation of Soviet totalitarianism and the gulag—and thus a vision of the 20th century—another might see a warning about the near future of European societies in particular, an interpretation made all the more tempting by the fact that the performances took place over a weekend of municipal elections. It is up to each and every one of us to form our own opinion, then. In any case, it's clear that *Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde* is a condemnation, a silent cry of alarm, and that it's best not to come to a performance expecting to find much hope there—it's not Dante's *Inferno*, but it is an uncompromising look at some of humanity's worst inventions.

With a raw and unique aesthetic, and a choreography of image and movement as precise as a scalpel, *Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde* draws on a few recognizable influences, yet its style is unparalleled. Perhaps one could venture to call it a masterpiece—in any case, it offers audiences an unusual, powerful experience that is well worth taking the time to experience.

Mathieu Dochtermann