

LA NACION

FIBA : 'The Scriptographer', the unique poetry of tiny, almost magical creatures

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Ézéquiél García-Romeu's creation gathers six provisional writers who will devise their stories after seeing these characters

A rectangular table, three lamps, three notebooks, three chairs on each side. A huge roll of paper sits motionless in the centre. Six provisional/improvised writers take their seats at the table of challenge. The game consists of them watching a puppet show and producing a piece of writing based on what they see. That is the brief. Consequently, the performance is clearly divided into two distinct parts. On the one hand, **the impeccable, delightful, minimalist work of the puppeteer beneath the table** – of whom we see, from time to time, nothing but his hands – through whose artistry various characters and objects appear, playing primarily on the element of surprise and, one might say, on the concept of the dissection table on which lie the sewing machine and the umbrella, as proposed by the Surrealists.

In fact, the aim is to bring automatic writing onto the table, quite literally. Of course, **the precision required in the act of manipulation, the humour, the alternation between scales, and the variety of characters constitute a unique array of triggers. It is important to emphasise the challenge faced by the puppeteer in working from below, in the dark**, with a precise sense of where the writers are positioned (because they will need to point at one of them and give them an instruction, and the finger must not be pointing into the void); moreover, they work in two spaces simultaneously, as if, at times, mimicking the hands of two different people: a sudden cut seems to put one hand at risk from the other, as if one were unable to anticipate the movement of the second. The production is full of such details.

In absolute silence (how silence operates on stage, how little presence it usually has and how much weight it carries), we, the audience, bear witness to this dual display: the puppets and the writers surrounding them. We cannot help but notice the impact that what is seen has on those who are writing. We see them smile, grow serious, and attempt to hold their pens whilst continuing to watch. What we see, fundamentally, is how those writers also become objects manipulated by the puppeteer's craft. The strings that drive them to act—because writing is, without a doubt, an act.

The puppeteer suggests a conclusion that evokes a sense of wonder. But then it is the turn of the writers, one at a time, to read what they have created based on what they saw. And here, silence takes on new meaning because the information is purely visual. The stories produced take profoundly different paths, as do the voices that convey them. It is absolutely incredible to hear how the starting points have branched out into multiple paths which, at times, converge and, at other times, have nothing in common. It is the styles that take centre stage.

A beautiful, poetic, entertaining experience... though you do need to choose your seat carefully so as not to miss a thing of this unique production.

Mónica Berman

The French avant-garde and Édith Piaf's throaty 'rrrrrrrr' at the 'Materia Magica' festival

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During the performance *Le Petit Théâtre du Bout du Monde – Opus II*, the Hof space was filled with a vast, undulating expanse – a landscape of an empty world, through the centre of which walks a small, solitary puppet-man, controlled by strings and long rods. The soundtrack serves as the story's main narrator. Before the audience's eyes, the actors assemble and dismantle the constructs of the relationship between the individual and totalitarian society: concentration camps, parades, displays of power, the logistics of bombing... Can a person remain human in a totalitarian world? How? A painful question today. The performance ends much as it began – with the figure of a solitary man walking towards the edge of the world. His footsteps echo throughout the Universe. And the Universe, after all, hears and is surely thinking something, so a person must not give up, but must keep walking and send out into the Universe the resolute echo of his footsteps.

The puppets in the performance – small figures – are arranged, pushed, pulled, carried in and carried out. The use of static puppet-figures' movements is apparently popular in contemporary puppet theatre, as it has also been used in other performances at the festival. It is reminiscent of the principle behind animated film-making, where each movement is drawn and then edited together to create a seamless sequence of action. However, in this performance, the audience members themselves piece the action together in their own imaginations.

Sondra Simana



Loudly, quietly, in whispers—the puppets speak

"Materia Magica" International Puppet Theater Festival

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Creative rituals in 'The Scriptographer'

Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu is one of the most prominent figures in contemporary puppet theatre, renowned for his experiments with object theatre, visual dramaturgy and an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary art processes. Born in Buenos Aires in 1961 and currently living in Nice, France, he has made a name for himself as a director, puppeteer, set designer and teacher. Garcia-Romeu's work is characterised by a constant search for new forms of expression, combining literature, puppet theatre, set design and the latest technologies.

The festival organisers – the Klaipeda Puppet Theatre – have made their cosy little hall at the Educational Centre available for Garcia-Romeu's interactive performance-workshop 'Skriptografas'. It is the ideal space for a creative laboratory where dreams intertwine with reality. At the centre of the stage stands a large table, upon which a sheet of white paper has been unrolled. We – four volunteer writers – are seated facing one another, each with a lined school exercise book and a simple ballpoint pen within easy reach on a miniature desk. Behind us are several rows of audience members.

For now, the blank surface of the white sheet symbolises the realm of creation, a space where reality becomes a dream and a dream becomes reality. In the next instant, something crouching beneath the table cuts a square hole in the white sheet; a gap opens onto the unknown, through which the strangest of puppets and miniature objects attempt to slip, only to vanish again into the unknown. The audience gradually becomes a witness to how texts are born from the symbolic movements of the puppets and their enigmatic gestures – fragmentary yet emotional, reminiscent of snatches of a dream. It is like a collective dream in which the scratching of the writer's pen and the puppeteer's gestures merge into a single creative vision – this was the thought that struck me as I watched my colleagues from the 'Scriptographer' writing workshop, Andrius, Sonda and Anupras, read out the texts they'd written during the finale.

From the pages of my notebook, scribbled in my own barely legible handwriting, I could only quote the final 'Post Scriptum' – 'Soak your inner serpent in spirit'. The perfect toast as we raised a glass of red wine, each writer presented with a miniature doll of imperial stature.

Ingrida Ragelskiene

DURYS

Magical Moments at the Puppet Theater Festival

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Simana: As for the French play *The Scriptographer* – that's based on a completely different creative principle. I was one of four people who, during the performance, watched the puppets leaping off the table and wrote down whatever popped into my head at the time. After the puppets' performance, having drunk a glass of red wine, all four of us had to read out our scribbles. The texts turned out to be different, even though we'd all seen the same thing. Proof that truth is born in the eyes of the beholder, not in the hands of the performer. There are as many possible interpretations as there are audience members. Even if every member of the audience had written something down, I have no doubt the texts would have differed. This demonstrates the phenomenon of theatre as a creative laboratory – the universality of theatre. And I enjoyed writing. It was excellent practice. The 'Théâtre de la Massue' has been using the principles of creative writing in its productions for many years now. It is a social and creative tool that fosters mutual trust and openness. During the performance, the auditorium was shrouded in semi-darkness; perhaps that's why I felt as though I'd fallen down the rabbit hole into Alice's wonderland, where I myself had shrunk to the size of a table doll.

Driežis: This performance provides a source of inspiration, and that inspiration ultimately takes the form of authentic written work. An intriguing adventure. An excellent method for encouraging and refining creative writing. The little puppets are well-made; you feel like diving into the associations they evoke, alongside the four people sitting at the tables and crafting their own stories.

teatroecritica

Puppets for adults. Anima IF's Sardinia

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Conceived by Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu, a French director and set designer, The Scriptographer is a kind of poetic experiment in spontaneous creation. A large writing table, around which six authors – chosen by the audience – sit at their stations, each with a sheet of paper and a pen. In the centre, beneath the tabletop, hidden away like a secret, the puppeteer sets up his miniature scene: a character, a story that gradually takes shape as various objects are revealed. The audience, seated all around, watches.

There is no curtain, no distance. Everything happens right there, in real time, in a balance between writing, movement and performance. Ézéquiél Garcia-Romeu, hidden beneath the table, improvises tiny performances with puppets and objects, whilst the writers, inspired by what they see, write live, allowing their imaginations to roam freely, as in a form of surrealist automatic writing. At the end of the performance, the texts are read aloud as brief flashes of drama born from contact with the puppet.

Giuseppina Borghese