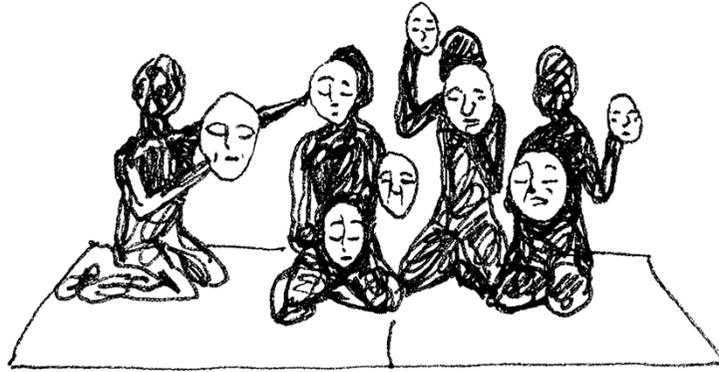


## ABSTRACTS



# At Odds. Models of Identity in Contemporary Puppet Theatre

Uneins. Identitätsentwürfe im Figurentheater

Désuni. Conceptions d'identité dans le théâtre de marionnettes

International Conference

23.01. – 24.01.2020

University of Bern & Bern University of the Arts



Institute of Theatre Studies  
Faculty of the Humanities  
Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Research Network  
GSAH



FONDS NATIONAL SUISSE  
SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS  
FONDO NAZIONALE SVIZZERO  
SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

HKB

Hochschule der Künste Bern  
Haute école des arts de Berne  
Bern University of the Arts



Burggemeinde  
Bern

The conference is organised by the members of the SNSF-funded research network (2017 – 2020)

**Visible Manipulation in Drama, Dance and Music Theatre. Cross-Disciplinary Responses to a Puppetry Aesthetic**

**Offene Manipulation. Figurentheater als Movens spartenübergreifender Theater-, Tanz- und Musiktheaterforschung**

**La manipulation à vue dans l'art dramatique, la danse et le théâtre musical. Réponses interdisciplinaires aux techniques de figuration du théâtre de marionnettes**

directed by Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer, Christina Thurner and Andi Schoon.

### ***Lead***

Puppetry for adults is becoming increasingly visible on the institutionalised stage. This development is symptomatic of the progressive destabilisation of genre boundaries within the arts. Puppetry has seen considerable development over the past 20 years. This development is attributable to the intensified use of visible manipulation, a puppetry technique by which objects are accorded equal status to humans as actors.

### ***The Research Project: Object and Objectives***

Puppetry is currently one of the most innovative genres of the performing arts due to its ability to assimilate different materials, narratives, and expressive techniques. Yet despite its versatility, puppetry only receives marginal attention within academia. The aim of this research project is threefold: 1. To establish puppetry as a field of theatre/dance-scholarly interest, 2. To reinvigorate the discourse on contemporary puppetry by intensifying interdisciplinary research, and 3. To open new areas of enquiry by questioning the implicit value systems underlying current theatre/dance scholarship.

### ***Scientific and Societal Context***

The individual studies subsumed under this research project draw on an array of methods and approaches from theatre/dance scholarship and musicology. These include performance analysis, historiographical research, and reception aesthetics. Focussing on the principles and practices of puppetry, these studies seek both to refine the conventional methods they utilise and to inform current scholarly discourse.

## RESEARCH TEAM

### **Marcel Behn**

Marcel Behn received his B.A. in Theatre & Media Studies and English Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg and went on to pursue an M.A. in Dance Studies and English Literature at the University of Bern. As part of the interdisciplinary research project *Visible Manipulation in Drama, Dance, and Music Theatre. Cross-Disciplinary Responses to a Puppetry Aesthetic*, Marcel Behn is currently conducting research on stage adaptations of Heinrich von Kleist's essay *Über das Marionettentheater*.

### **Franziska Burger**

Franziska Burger studied Theatre Studies and German Literature at the Universities of Bern and Leipzig. Following her M.A., Franziska Burger was awarded a full Doc.CH-scholarship to conduct her dissertation *Ausser-sich-Sein. Verhältnisse zwischen Spielfiguren und SpielerInnen im gegenwärtigen Figurentheater*. Franziska Burger currently holds a position as research associate at the Bern University of the Arts where she is carrying out research on the cultural exchange between Switzerland and South Africa, focussing specifically on South African theatre in Switzerland.

### **Laurette Burgholzer**

Laurette Burgholzer holds a PhD from the University of Vienna, awarded for her dissertation *Masken der A/Moderne. Phantasmen und Experimente der Retheatralisierung bei Farina (1883-1943), Charles Dullin (1885-1949) und Jacques Copeau (1879-1949)*. The beneficiary of a Marietta Blau government

grant, she conducted archival research at the National Library of France (2015-2016). She has been a lecturer at the Université Paris 8 (2016) and teaches at the École supérieure d'art dramatique in Paris since 2017. Laurette Burgholzer currently holds a postdoc position at the University of Bern where she is carrying out research on vocational puppetry training in France (ESNAM, Charleville-Mézières; Théâtre aux Mains Nues, Paris) and German speaking countries.

### **Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer**

Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer graduated in Theatre Studies and German Philology at the University of Vienna, where she was awarded a doctorate in 1996 and also habilitated in 2012 with the gender-theoretical publication *Kostümierung der Geschlechter. 'Schauspielkunst' als Erfindung der Aufklärung*. Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer has held a professorship at the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Bern since 2013. Her main research areas include theatre, the dramatic literature and theories of acting of the 18th, 20th and 21st century, gender research, theatre historiography, and puppetry. Between 2015 and 2017, Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer was acting director of the Graduate School of the Arts (GSA) at the University of Bern.

### **Angela Koerfer-Bürger**

Angela Koerfer-Bürger is a stage director and lecturer on experimental music theatre, théâtre musical, and Junge Oper. A graduate of the Bavarian Theatre Academy in Munich, Angela Koerfer-Bürger was awarded her M.A. Master of Research from the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Bern in 2015. She holds a position as lecturer at the Bern University of the Arts since 2004, where she was also acting director of the study programme

Théâtre Musical from 2004 to 2011. She has also worked in arts education at the Junge Oper Biel (2011–2014) and the Zurich Opera (2016–2017). Angela Koerfer-Bürger has an extensive track record as a stage director of operas.

### **Nadja Rothenburger**

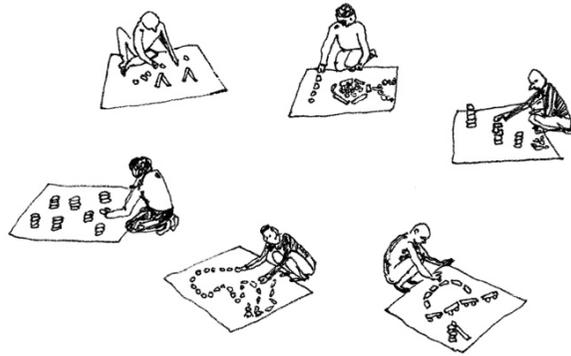
Nadja Rothenburger received her B.A. in Theatre Studies and Comparative Literature at the Freie Universität Berlin. In 2020 she completed her M.A. in Dance Studies and World Literature at the University of Bern with a thesis on authorship in postmodern dance. She currently holds a position as an assistant in the research project *Visible Manipulation in Drama, Dance and Music Theatre*, and in the research platform *Auto\_Bio\_Graphy – Historiographic Perspectives on Ego Documents/Personal Testimonies in Literature and the Visual and Performative Arts* at the University of Bern. Additionally she works as a dance dramaturge.

### **Andi Schoon**

Andi Schoon studied Musicology, Sociology and New German Literature in Hamburg, where he was awarded his doctorate in 2005. He was a lecturer at the University of Hamburg and also an author and member of the art group Jullander (jullander.de). Andi Schoon has been affiliated with the Bern University of the Arts since 2007 and has held a professorship there since 2012. He is the director of both the Y Institute with its M.A. study programme Contemporary Arts Practice, a lecturer for Culture and Media Studies, and supervisor of the research platform Auditive Kulturen. He is also an executive committee member of the graduate school Studies in the Arts (SINTA) at the University of Bern.

### **Christina Thurner**

Christina Thurner holds a professorship in Dance Studies at the Department of Theatre Studies (ITW) at the University of Bern. Following studies in Zurich and Berlin, she was awarded a doctorate in 2001 and habilitated in 2008 at the University of Basel. She has directed several SNSF projects (e.g. the ProDoc project *Intermediale Ästhetik. Spiel – Ritual – Performanz*), has been a guest lecturer in Paris, Bayreuth and Nice and is also the director of the MAS study programme Dance/Performing Arts at the University of Bern. Her main research areas include dance aesthetics and discourses from the 18th to the 21st century, dance historiography, dance criticism, and figuration.



## Cariad ASTLES

### The Return of the Puppetress/Sorceress: Feminism, (Auto)Biography, Ecology

This proposal positions itself in relation to Mona Chollet's assertion that 'magic fights back' (Chollet 2018: *Sorcières: La Puissance Invaincue des Femmes*). Chollet's contention is that in an age in which reason has been jettisoned in favour of power, magic acquires greater importance.

Female puppeteers, gatekeepers at the threshold of the liminal animate/inanimate world, have often told stories of mediation between human and non-human worlds. This article proposes a new vision of the contemporary female puppeteer: the *puppetress*, a magical figure likened to the sorceress, who reclaims the power of wild animistic nature as the source of her artistic creativity and vocabulary. This positioning of the artist/puppeteer as existing

*amongst and in relation with* – as opposed to exercising power over or manipulating – materials, bodies and things, is common to contemporary puppetry. Recent performances by female puppeteers which draw on the relationship between female embodied knowledge and nature have much to offer us in terms of their potential to reshape our understanding both of ecological theory (with its emphasis on inter-dependence) as well as Merleau-Ponty's theories of core and extended consciousness. In much recent female/feminist puppetry work, *female identity and the female body* is seen primarily in relation to an animistic world; puppetry forms, materials, and objects emerge from within and amongst nature; consciousness is seen as something which enters, temporarily, into matter and form, rather than belonging to it; and the power of magic, ecology and autobiography enables the discussion of identity, politics and purpose. This approach to contemporary puppetry by women pays homage to the historical figure of the archaic female puppeteer and her role within rituals and liminal spaces of birth, sex, and death, where animated figures were once used to facilitate the passage between worlds.

The dynamic social spaces created by the *puppetress* across multiple cultural and historical contexts locate them as cultural interlocutors and negotiators of key life transitions through magical and ecological thinking. Women use dolls and puppets – archaic remnants of animism – as a way to connect their embodied nature as performers with a sense of living as part of and amongst a network of living and conscious matter. Puppets and animated figures are re-endowed with their once sacred nature, as puppetry moves away from technique and back towards an act of devotion.

The paper will refer to performances by contemporary female puppeteers including Ilka Schönbein (Meschugge), Magali Chouinard, Yngvild Aspeli (Plexus Polaire) and Elise Vigneron (Théâtre de l'Entrouvert) (the latter two companies performing at the London International Mime Festival 2019).

*Cariad Astles is a puppetry trainer and teacher, researcher, occasional director and performer of puppet theatre. She trained in drama at Exeter University and later worked with Teatro Travesura, PuppetCraft, the Little Angel Theatre and Sue Buckmaster, amongst others, developing skills in puppetry through professional work and short courses, including some at the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières. Since 2006 she has been course leader and course tutor for students of the BA in Puppetry: Design and Performance at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London. She also teaches and conducts research on puppetry and object theatre at Exeter University and runs freelance international training workshops in puppetry performance; object theatre; poetry and puppetry; puppetry and identity; puppetry and ghosts; applied puppetry with a particular focus on healthcare. Since 2016 she has been the president of the UNIMA Research Commission.*

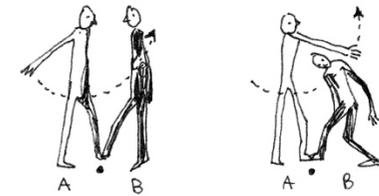
## Helène BEAUCHAMP

### La marionnette dans les expériences théâtrales des avant-gardes historiques : la dissolution de l'identité ?

#### The Puppet in the Experiments of Modernist Theatre: The Dissolution of Identity?

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the puppet becomes a powerful instrument of fragmentation of both the player and the character on the symbolist and modernist stage. The unity and stability of a character's psychology is destroyed by various strategies which transform the character into a real or symbolical puppet (Maeterlinck, Jarry, Artaud, Albert-Birot, Valle-Inclán). The actor himself is asked to imitate the puppet as a means to reform the art of acting which, in the estimation of E. G. Craig, was in sharp decline. Modernist theatre paves the way for a new style of fragmented acting by drawing on the division between mute puppets and the narrator in traditional puppet theatre. For example, *El Retablo de Maese Pedro* (*Master Peter's Puppet Show*), a puppet opera written by Manuel de Falla (1923), makes remarkable use of this division between the narrator's voice and the puppet's body. Modernist stage also offers the first experiments of dismembered, double or triple figurations of the body, mixing real actors and various sorts of puppets on stage. Shadows, silhouettes, traditional puppets and masks occupy the stage of the French « Laboratoire Art et Action » or the Théâtre Alfred Jarry of

Antonin Artaud. This paper will explore the ways in which the puppet, dissolving the notion of identity in drama and on stage, opened new ways for theatrical art during this time



*Hélène Beauchamp is assistant professor in comparative literature at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès. Her research focuses on the dramaturgy of puppet theatre, specifically at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with special interest in the literary repertoire and staging of puppet theatre. Her publications on this subject include *La Marionnette, laboratoire du théâtre* (*The Puppet, Laboratory of the Theatre*) (2018) as well as edited volumes including *Marionnette, corps-frontière* (2016) and *Les scènes philosophiques de la marionnette* (2016).*

## Alexandra BERALDIN

### Dislocated Identities. Bodies of Becoming in Ilka Schönbein's *Winterreise* and Uta Gebert's *Manto*

This paper puts forward a reading of two contemporary puppet theatre pieces that question our understanding of the personal pronoun “I”. Indeed, in Ilka Schönbein’s *Winterreise* and Uta Gebert’s *Manto* there is a metamorphosis of the body in relation to the notion of *becoming* as theorised by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *One Thousand Plateaus*. The fragmented, anthropomorphic “I” is challenged as Ilka Schönbein becomes matter, and Uta Gebert, animal. Ilka Schönbein’s *Winterreise* (2003) reprises Schubert’s work of the same title. In the performance, the music is sung by a tenor, while Schönbein manipulates various forms of puppet-like objects to describe the various *lieder* in the piece. The puppet-like objects in question are in fact pieces of her own body, moulded from plaster, and used as puppets. In Uta Gebert’s *Manto* (2014), the artist tells the story of a mythological augur with the use of a life sized dear-woman puppet. In Gebert’s universe, Manto follows her inner voices into the darkness and the audience witnesses her revelations. These two artists develop distinct puppetry techniques as they challenge female narratives through hybridisation, duplication and acts of dislocation. Are these new bodies of becoming a political act? Is the fragmentation of the human body into multiple puppet-like forms an act of new discourse, or rather, the reason we are limited to an anthropomorphic understanding of ecological questions?

*Alexandra Beraldin received her Honours Bachelor’s Degree in Theatre Production and Italian Language and Culture from the University of Ottawa. She obtained her M.A. in Theatre at the Université Paris 8 and studied puppetry with various companies including La compagnie Philippe Genty. She is also co-founder of IGLOÛ Paris, a platform that brings together multidisciplinary artists in a site-specific annual event in Paris, offering visitors the occasion to experience hybrid forms through an immersive guided tour. She is currently lecturer at École EAC, marché de l’art, culture, patrimoine, luxe, where she gives classes on subjects such as professional English, cultural management and patronage.*

## Mélissa BERTRAND

### Tuer le visage. Faire corps avec la matière

#### Killing the Face. Bodies Entangled with Material

In Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy, it is the face that embodies absolute otherness. Unable to contain, yet always able to redefine itself through speech, the face awakens the temptation of murder, of total annihilation concomitant with the ethical impossibility of killing. But what if the Other even takes away this possibility of murder by hiding their face? Isn't it the supreme expression of oneself, of one's "power of power", to voluntarily remove one's identity from one's interlocutor and to make silence prevail? In the era of the Anthropocene, choosing to disappear in favour of one's environment could be a way of re-founding one's identity in otherness, of shifting away from the human, of allowing matter to emerge. In this paper, I will propose a study of the disappearance of the human face for the benefit of matter in two shows : *Wax* by Renaud Herbin and *Paso Doble* by Joseph Nadj and Miguel Barcelo). In *Wax*, the destruction of the story through a material-word that transforms the body contributes to the final scene of the disappearance of the face under the wax. The impact on the youngest spectators can be felt: while children enjoy the process of stammering to produce words and of manipulating wax to create characters, they express fear when the wax recovers the actress's face. The un-human or beyond-human appears when her face disappears and when the material takes over. But it is with *Paso Doble* that human bodily

identity seems to deteriorate the most, revealing the invincible power of matter which, never tired, ends up totally absorbing faces and bodies. The succession of mud-made masks erases the human face. It evokes animality, tribal divinities, and most of all, the power of a raw and natural material. The mud becomes an element, an environment, in which the human body seems to reach its limits and, at the same time, become part of it. If the proposed analysis goes beyond the field of the more traditional puppet, it is indeed a question of studying the relationship between identity, body, and the non-human in a theatre of matter or material that tends to assert itself



*Mélissa Bertrand is a PhD student in theatre (Sorbonne Nouvelle - LIRA) under the direction of Josette Féral. The subject of her thesis questions the body as a frontier and its potential for transformation on stage (entitled: "Bodies in trans-: towards a dissolution of bodily identity?"). In particular, she questions the borderline between identity and otherness through gender, the representation of the trance, the mechanisms of transfer to the puppet or the material. In addition, she is an author, director and performer in the Compagnie de l'Archée (Paris). Her latest show (in progress) includes puppet and object theatre.*

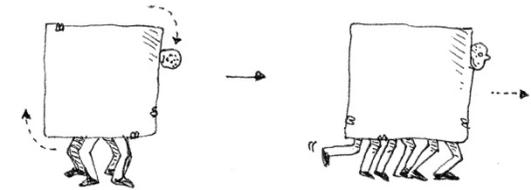
## Emilie COMBES

**De l'inerte au vivant, déconstruction et reconstruction de soi : quand la marionnette ouvre les portes du sensible.**

**From Inert to Living, Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Self: When Puppets Push the Doors of the Sensitive Realm.**

In the play of Alexandre Haslé *La Pluie*, the puppeteer's body can be considered a site of de- and reconstruction where the mask and the puppet are both someone else and one's self. In the work of the stage director, a close collaborator of Ilka Schönbein, normal bodies become "extraordinary" bodies that are somehow hindered, misshaped, made different from their initial condition. Thus, stage characters emerge by means of superposition and hybridization. The issue will be to see how the puppet, kept at a distance or literally on hand, becomes an extension of the puppeteer's body. This will require thinking about the puppet's entrance on stage, the directing choices puppeteers make. The puppet, which is given its own identity, acts like a deforming power on the puppet master's body, thereby creating a hybrid capable of escaping the confinement of one single identity and exploring new ones. Then, the aim of the work will be to study the use of the puppet and the mask in the 'teratogenic' process of bodily dissolution and reconstruction. This paper will investigate the manner in which this dis- and reassembly work leads to the birth of a new "identity" and the strangeness it emanates.

At last, we will focus on what this coexistence of bodies on stage reveals, as the puppet invokes motion forces that would otherwise be invisible to us. In these strange beings, we are surprised to perceive reflections of ourselves, to project our emotions onto them. The capacity of the puppet to open mental projection spaces allows in the play *La Pluie* to give birth and exist on stage the memory. I propose to present the wealth of this "duality" and the dramaturgical and aesthetic issues of Haslé's work in order to see how he turns from an objective body to a living body which accepts its own multiplicity.

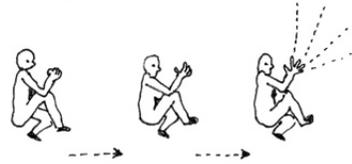


*Emilie Combes is a lecturer at the University Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle, at the department of modern literature. She is the author of a PhD thesis achieved at the University Paris 4 – Sorbonne, directed by Professor D. Alexandre: Le théâtre panique de Fernando Arrabal, « Science de l'essence de la confusion » ("Arrabal's Panic theatre, science of the confusion's essence"). Since 2012, she has been publishing criticism on current theatrical creations for the cultural website L'Intermède.com which she is also managing director of. Her research focuses on Fernando Arrabal's work and extends to theatrical poetics and contemporary stage creation.*

## Lucie DOUBLET

### La marionnette et le cyborg

### The Puppet and the Cyborg



“In sum, modern science is good for puppets.” (Jacques Chesnais: *Histoire générale des marionnettes*)

The puppet and the cyborg share a same ontology, one of hybridization. An amalgam of flesh and machine, the cyborg challenges the dichotomies that seem to structure our reality: human/non-human, organic/mechanical, living/inanimate, etc. The cyborg is an invitation to our thinking to also overcome such dichotomies. For its part, puppet theatre did not have to wait for the oppositions particular to the 20th century in order to explore the complexity of identities and the instability of borders. The puppeteer's manipulation device had already generated an archetypal hybridization of living and inanimate, and puppeteers have long exploited the subversive power of such a device. With his "theatre of death," for example, Kantor puts before us the interpenetrability of life and death. With Craig, the utopia of the Superpuppet foreshadows the overcoming of the human that transhumanists dream of. Currently, puppeteers are also appropriating cyborgian technologies in the service of theatre (cie la Machine). The kinship between the more recent figure of the cyborg and what, for puppet theatre, is established tradition, seems to put the puppet in an ambiguous position. With the cyborg, reality appears to close the gap with art, if not indeed to surpass it. As Donna Haraway notes, "this myth [*the cyborg myth*] has been made real: we are merely

chimeras, hybrids of machines and organisms, theorized and then manufactured - in short, cyborgs" (*A Cyborg Manifesto*). This raises the question, to what extent can hybridization, now become reality, still be the subject of theatre? What role then is left for the spectacle? It would be ironic indeed if puppet theatre, whose great innovation was its break with naturalism, and thus a break with representation as a model, found itself today in the position of merely mimicking a movement that current events are bringing about in actuality. We will begin by rendering precise the nature of the similarities between puppet and cyborg. If indeed we have before us two hybrids employing technology in the service of an anthropomorphic illusion, what still remains to be specified is the nature of the amalgam of body and artefact relied upon in each case. The classification proposed by Baudrillard in *System of Objects* allows us to clarify this point. These specifications in turn permit us to distinguish the puppet-specific form of hybridization from the transhumanist one. The former sets before us the necessity of connection, by making a link with otherness through the act of animation. It thus reveals the precariousness of identity. As such, puppetic hybridization implicitly criticizes the cyborgic dream of obliterating human vulnerability, a dream far beyond the more modest promise of transcendence offered by its theatrical twin. Far from obviating the role of puppet theatre, on the contrary, the development of cyborgian technologies places puppet theatre into a renewed relationship with current events, one in which it has a unique and particular responsibility in the entire artistic and social sphere. For, in its dependence on otherness, the puppet invokes our relationship to power. Puppet theatre thus constitutes the domain where the alienation risked by cyborgian technologies of hybridization can be called into question.

*Lucie Doublet holds a PhD in philosophy. Her research focuses on the notion of human community, especially in Emmanuel Levinas' work. She is also trained in classical dance and theater. She is now administrator of the Théâtre sans Toit company, and in charge of a research project: the International Teaching Laboratory in the Puppeteer Theater.*

Fabrizio DI SALVO

Stanislas PILI

**theoneandthemany** (2019)

*theoneandthemany* is a piece for one performer and a table which can be used as a tape player. It tells the story of a manifesto entitled “The Conscience of a Hacker” which, when deciphered correctly, is said to reveal the “absolute truth”. With the help of movement sensors and software specifically made for this piece, the artist and composer Fabrizio di Salvo takes the audience on a journey to the mechanisms behind the echo chambers of the Internet and probes the veracity and construction of today’s truths. This absurd object-musical is interpreted in situ by the percussionist Stanislas Pili, whose vertiginously fast drumming forms an integral part of *theoneandthemany*.

Fabrizio di Salvo: Concept, Realization, Creation

Stanislas Pili: Performance, Creation

Seven Chosen: Text - „The Conscience of a Hacker”

Duration: 20 minutes

Florian FEISEL

**Puppen sterben besser**

Lecture-Performance zum Jenseitigen des Figurentheaters von Prof. Florian Feisel

**Puppets Die Better**

A Lecture Performance on what lies beyond puppetry, by Prof. Florian Feisel

This piece is a performative attempt to investigate the specificity of puppetry in terms of life and death, to understand the principles of animation via the concept of mortality. It experiments with the materiality of the inanimate as a means of exploring that which lies beyond the world of things.

Stage: Florian Feisel

Dramaturgy: Julika Mayer

Duration: 50 minutes

*Florian Feisel*

*Born in 1972, Florian Feisel underwent training as an actor and puppeteer in Mainz and Berlin before becoming a freelance artist in 2002 and receiving international acclaim for his experimental performances. He has held a professorship in puppetry at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Künste Stuttgart since 2012 and continues to produce work for German-speaking festivals (most recently: the lecture performance “Puppen sterben besser” and the interactive installation “SchmeterDINGE”).*

*Stanislas Pili*

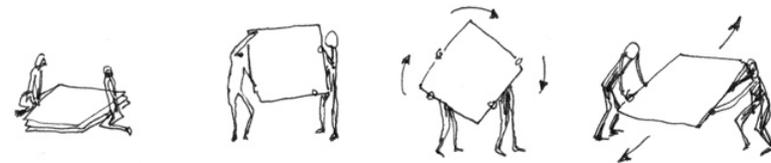
*Percussionist, Composer, Performer*

*Born in Sardinia, Stanislas Pili studied percussion at the Conservatory of Turin, the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome and the Conservatory of Maastricht. He has performed at various festivals such as Impuls Graz, Biennale Venezia, Pakt Bern, Acht-Brücken Köln and the Darmstadt Ferien Kurse für neue Musik, where he won the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis 2018 for the piece “silence resistance”, co-created with Martin Hirsti-Kvam. As a performer, he has worked at the Kunsthalle Bern, Musica in Prossimità, Usinesonore Bienne, in «Europe Sauvage» by Joachim Schlömer and in «Machinations» by Georges Aperghis. In 2020, Pili will perform with the Collegium Novum Zürich and perform as a soloist at the Festival Jardins Musicaux Cernier.*

*Fabrizio di Salvo*

*Composer, Sound Artist*

*Di Salvo was born in Switzerland of Italian descent. His works are at the boundaries between experimental music, contemporary composition, sound installations and scenic art, focusing on concepts that examine models between politics and social life. He obtained the Bachelor of Sound and Media Art at the Bern University of the Arts and a diploma in sound engineering. His works as composer, choreographer and sound artist were shown at Milano Musica, Theater Basel, Theater Rote Fabrik Zürich, Teatro Paco Rabal Madrid, Tanztage Berlin, Münchner Kammerspiele Museum der Kulturen Basel, Landesmuseum Zürich, Kunsthalle Winterthur, Kunsthaus Baselland, Kunstmuseum La Chaux-deFonds, Arcaden Gallery Berlin, Fondation l’abri Geneva, Interdans Festival Belgium, Les Digitales Festival Bern, Neu Bad Luzern, and Dampfzentrale Bern.*



# Jessica HÖLZL

## Assoziierende Fragmente. Spielweisen im Dingtheater der Gegenwart

### Fragments that Associate. Practices of Play in Contemporary Thing-based Theatre

Assuming a conception of thingness as a material as well as a significant fragment, this approach tries to examine the function of association as an essential principle in contemporary thing-based theatre. Based on this assumption, this paper will attempt to develop some perspectives that might prove productive for the analysis of thing-theatrical forms.

In contrast to normative ideas of identity or linear temporality, thing-theatrical forms produce subversive movements and narratives that figure and establish alternative conceptions of being.

Using procedures of showing, grading, and composing in his object performance *Cosas que se olvidan fácilmente*, Xavier Bobés displays different temporalities and historical connections. By playing with things, he exposes narration and 'history' as products of thing-based association. In contrast to these strongly semanticized associations, Tim Spooner's thing-based installation *Assembly of Animals* uses the fragmentary nature of things as a starting point for some very material-based play with similarity and association in order to create a texture of temporary resemblances.

This paper will approach the specific transboundary drive of thing-based play using association as a possibly gainful view and method of analysis.



*Jessica Hölzl studied German Language and Literature, Indian Studies and Theatre Studies in Göttingen and Leipzig. She currently holds a position as research assistant at the Institute for Theatre Studies in Leipzig, where she wrote her Master thesis on practices of similarity / resemblance as tools for the analysis of 'thing-theatrical' forms of playing / acting. In addition to the academic examination of thing-based theatre forms she regularly does write-ups on contemporary productions called figure theatre, object theatre or theatre of things.*

# Markus JOSS

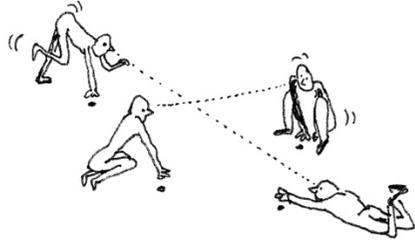
## Workshop: Der geteilte Körper / The Split Body

To work with puppets on stage means to split oneself into parts, to offer up one's body to an imaginary Other, to question one's own corporeal cohesion. Playing with puppets always means playing with images of the body. This short workshop aims to introduce its participants to contemporary aesthetic strategies of puppetry via practical examples. By analysing the complex mechanisms behind these strategies, participants will expand their terminological „tool box“.



*Following his vocational training and a career as a cabinetmaker, Markus Joss undertook a degree in stage direction at the HfS Ernst Busch in Berlin. As a free-lance director and author, Joss was quickly drawn to the diverse forms of expression the art of puppetry had to offer. He became professor for puppetry at the HfS Ernst Busch in 2008, where he has been the director of the eponymous degree course since 2013. Both his artistic work and teaching focus on concepts of the body. Over the past years, Joss has worked increasingly with installation and performance formats – artistic settings which help foreground the transformation processes inherent in the dialogue between human agents and objects.*

## Salma MOHSENI ARDEHALI



### **Studying the Identity of the Puppet and Multiculturalism, Through an Analysis of an Iranian Puppet Show, *Simin and Farzan***

Today, the identity of many artworks – in our case, a puppet – is the product of multiculturalism. Now that national identities are spontaneously weakening because of globalization policies, the questions are: should identity be something which is rooted in a distinctive culture, language, nationality and geography? Does “artistic identity” originate from indigenous identity or is it global and somehow an inter-identity concept? Is artistic identity able to stand beyond national identity? An artwork is an artifact and has a compound and interwoven identity, which is not just like the identity of a “thing” nor like “human” identity. The identity of an artwork can be one of the most dynamic and evolving identities. In the world of puppetry, every performing object has two fundamental parts: Form (technique, material) and content (narrative, animation); sometimes these elements are the products of the different cultures which have made together a new and unique identity. My case study is a performance titled *Simin and Farzan* which was performed in the spring of 2019 in Tehran. In terms of content, this performance is a free

adaptation of the Russian poem *Ruslan and Ludmila* by Pushkin, who himself had tendencies towards orientalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In terms of technique, it was a paper theater show (which is a form of miniature theater dating back to the early nineteenth century in Europe which was introduced to Iranian puppeteers by the French puppet master Alain Lecucq in 2005); and in terms of aesthetics and again form, puppets were designed based on the lithographic images from the Qajar era [Qajar Dynasty 1789 to 1925], (which were collected and revived by German scholar Ulrich Marzolph). On the surface, this show seemed to be a thoroughly ‘Iranian’ as it also benefited from the components of Iranian traditional theatre like music, acting and Naqali and Pardeh-Khani techniques (two storytelling tradition from Iran). But the reality is that this performance was a multicultural product and somehow was the result of post-colonialism. Since post-colonialism has caused many comparative studies in the context of national and indigenous cultures, this paper attempts to study the multicultural and inter-identical functions of puppetry via a post-colonial approach.

*Salma Mohseni Ardehali is an Iranian puppet artist, puppet scholar and lecturer. She studied puppetry and animation at university. She has been working as a puppeteer since 2001 and has been active in writing, translation and research around puppetry and related interdisciplinary fields. She teaches basics of puppetry, puppet manipulation, and voice lessons for puppeteers at university. Her research interests focus on contemporary puppetry (of Iran) and related interdisciplinary fields.*

## Paul PIRIS

### The Puppet as a Figure of Alterity in Contemporary Theatre

The renewal of puppetry over the past decades is the result of an exploration of the dramaturgical meaning of the animated figure in theatre. Since the beginning of the 1980s, artists such as Neville Tranter in the Netherlands, Philippe Genty in France, Ilka Schönbein in Germany, Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté in Belgium, and Blind Summit in Britain have developed a new form of performance that I have named “manipulating”. By interacting with puppets, performers enter the fictional world of the puppets and appear as their Others. In this particular form of performance, a co-presence takes place between the puppeteer and the puppet. This co-presence is particular because it establishes a relation of self to Other between two beings that are ontologically different: one is a subject, in other words a being endowed with consciousness, and the other one an object, in other words a thing. Yet, the particularity of the puppet is to present an ontological ambiguity because it is an object that appears in performance as a subject. Co-presence stresses this ontological ambiguity by confronting the puppet to a human protagonist.

This presentation examines the embodiment of the Other by a puppet through two case studies: *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses*. *Cuniculus* was produced in 2008 by the Dutch company Stuffed Puppet Theatre. The piece was conceived and performed by Neville Tranter. *Twin Houses* was produced by the Belgian company Mossoux-Bonté in 1994 and is still part of their repertoire. *Twin Houses* was conceived and performed by Nicole Mossoux, and directed by Patrick Bonté. Although both performances are solo shows and

use large-sized puppets, I suggest that *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses* respectively are instances of dramatic and postdramatic theatre as defined by Lehmann. The fabrication of the alterities of the puppets is materialised differently in terms of performance, dramaturgy and design in these two pieces.

I conclude the discussion by offering an understanding of the fabrication of a co-presence between the manipulator and the puppet on stage through a theoretical framework based on Sartrean and, to some extent, Levinasian phenomenology. I specifically address the argument developed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* that the relation of self to Other is the result of our presence in the world as embodied consciousness. I discuss the issue of representing an Other by an object such as a puppet if we agree with Emmanuel Levinas that a relation of self to Other can only exist between two subjects. This contradiction of an object-as-Other is solved by examining perception and imagination in the spectator’s experience of puppetry.

*Paul Piris is a French independent researcher and a theatre director based in Britain. He completed an MA in Directing and a PhD at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. His doctoral thesis is a phenomenological study of the puppet as a figure of the Other. He is the co-founder and artistic director of Rouge28 Theatre, a London-based award-winning company that fuses puppetry with different performance genres to produce original and intriguing visual theatre. His work has been presented in Britain, France, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Greece and Singapore. Publications includes chapters in The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance (Routledge) and Interactions entre le Vivant et la Marionnette (Artois Presses Université). He is the Honorary Treasurer of British Unima and the Puppet Centre Trust.*

## Yvonne SCHMIDT & Demis QUADRI

### **Performing Agency. Exploring Puppetry from a Disability Perspective**

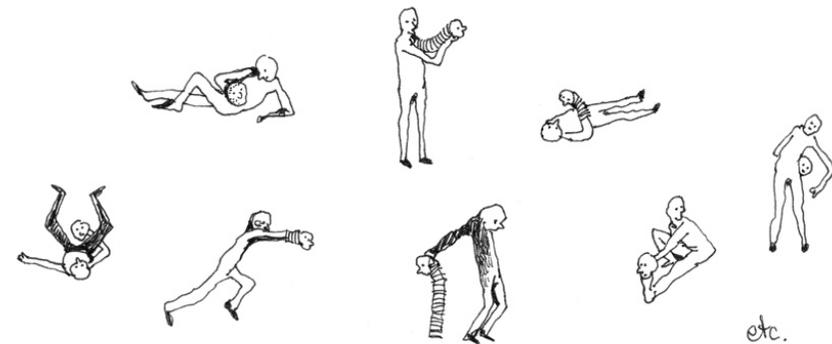
The presentation explores the intersection between disability performance and puppetry from different angles. It focuses on performers with disabilities working on stage with their prostheses and other devices (wheelchairs, crutches, etc.) in a perspective that can be read in terms of puppetry. By reading puppetry performances from a disability perspective, and vice versa, the issue of agency and body concepts are subject to debate.

On the one hand, disabled performers, according to the disability studies scholar Petra Kuppers, constantly have «to negotiate two areas of cultural meaning: invisibility as an active member in the public sphere, and hyper-visibility and instant categorization as passive consumer and victim in much of the popular imagination» (2003). Performers with disabilities risk being categorized on the basis of alleged deficits, for things they do not have. In the reception of the audience their identity risks being defined in the negative, rather than for what they are or can actually do. On the other hand, starting from Edward Gordon Craig's reflections on the «Übermarionette», passing through the work of Surrealists, Dadaists and Futurists in the first part of the 20th century, the work with puppets has been interpreted as a metaphor to represent the human condition in terms of submission and powerlessness: the relationship between the puppeteer as performer and the puppet has strong symbolic implications from the viewpoint of power dynamics. In this context, performers with disabilities can move prostheses and other tools on stage and thereby develop aesthetic and artistic discourses as subjects who

take possession of what is usually perceived as a deficit, but can also be seen in an active and positive perspective (for example in terms of empowerment). Like the dynamics between puppeteer and puppet, the relationship between the performer with disability and the staging of her or his prostheses can also be read by questioning the concepts of acting, acting on (or manipulating) and being acted-upon (see Margaret Williams, 2014). In the case of the performer with disabilities, the theatrical work with an inanimate object such as a prosthesis or a wheelchair is charged with further complex implications of the dynamics between the acting subject and the acted object. The performer, for example, takes possession – by giving it a stage life – of inanimate materials that risk being culturally identified as signs of potential social passivity. A prosthesis or a wheelchair, by becoming a scenic object and a manipulated character, can question the logic that sees a person with disability as somebody who is carried by helping devices (according to a dynamic that is specular to what is traditionally believed to happen between the puppeteer and the puppet; see Kathy Foley, 2000): what then takes place on stage is much better characterized in terms of a collaborative exchange that is far from simple linearity or unidirectionality. What happens between animated and inanimate objects, on stage as in life, in practice as in theory, is far from the simplicity of clichés. In a different way, some disabled performers refuse to regard their crutches, prostheses or wheelchairs as props, but consider these aids an integral part of their bodies, through which they own agency. The lens of a disability studies perspective thus leads to an extension of the puppet theatre discourse.

*Demis Quadri is SUPSI Professor of Research and Teaching in Physical Theatre. He obtained a double doctorate in Italian language and literature and Theatrical studies at the Universities of Fribourg and Berne. From 2005 to 2009, he collaborated with the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft at the University of Berne on a research project of the Swiss National Fund on the topic of Commedia dell'Arte. In 2010 he was an invited lecturer at the Haute école de musique in Geneva and in 2017 at the Istituto per il Teatro e il Melodramma della Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice. In the framework of «DisAbility on Stage», he was responsible for the sub-project «Disabled Bodies in Discourse». He is a member of the Accademia Teatro Dimitri SUPSI's Dean-ship, where he is Head of Research and in which he has been regularly teaching since 2009, offering a course dedicated to theatre theory and history.*

*Yvonne Schmidt is a Lecturer and Deputy Head of the Institute for the Performing Arts and Film at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and responsible for the research area «arts mediation» at the Institute for Practices and Theories in the Arts at the Bern University of the Arts (HKB). From 2015-2019 she led the SNF-research project «DisAbility on Stage» at ZHdK. She is the co-founder of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) Working Group «Performance and Disability». Her expertise covers acting theory, interdisciplinary approaches to performance and disability, amateur theatre practices (Swiss outdoor theatre), and practice-based research methods in the performing arts and film. Her research speaks both to practitioners/artists and academics. In the context of this interest in alternate formats of research dissemination, she has recently co-directed the film documentary *Sechs RegisseurInnen – eine Republik* in collaboration with Theater HORA in Zurich as part of the research project *DisAbility on Stage*.*



## Karol SUSZCZYŃSKI

### **Character – Simulacrum – Object – Symbol. The Ontological Versatility of the Dummy-like Puppets in the Contemporary Puppet Theatre for Youth and Adults in Poland**

21<sup>st</sup> century in Poland is characterized by an unprecedented increase of puppetry productions addressed to the youth and adult audiences alike. Among the almost 200 performances that were created after 2000, the most interesting and diverse group are those productions in which the authors reach for the dummy-like puppets as a visual medium. These dummies have a different ontological status, depending on convention. Sometimes the dummy is the main character or the partner of a live-action actor, but from time to time it is introduced as a symbol and even as an ordinary object. The dummy can be an individual being, a kind of a hybrid form, or can be completely dominated by a human. Animation can be hidden or explicit. The appearance of the dummy can be a reflection of the appearance of a human, sometimes even a copy of an actor who is partnering him. But dummies also take grotesque forms, sometimes losing anthropological shapes. In my speech I will trace all the possible ways of the dummy's presence in the contemporary puppet theatre for young people and adults, to show how many functions this puppet can have.



*Karol Suszczyński graduated in Theatre Studies in the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw and Puppet Theatre Art Department in branch campus in Białystok, where he at present works as a lecturer. He conducts classes devoted to the Puppet Theatre in the World, Theory of Puppet Theatre and Raising Funds for Cultural Activities. In 2019 at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, he defended with distinction his PhD thesis entitled *Witkacy w teatrze lalek. Od inspiracji do inscenizacji* [Witkacy in the Puppet Theatre. From the Inspiration to the Staging], devoted to the puppetry aspects in Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's dramas. In 2019 was published *Puppetry in the 21st Century. Reflections and Challenges*, of which he is a co-editor. He is the president of the *Białostockie Stowarzyszenie Artystów Lalkarzy* [Białystok Puppeteers Association] and a member of the *POLUNIMA* [Polish Puppetry Centre UNIMA].*

## Meike WAGNER

### **Who am I? Challenging the Self through Puppets**

From the mid-twentieth century on, open manipulation in puppetry gained a great popularity up to the point that today we consider the open interaction between puppet and human actors the rule rather than the exception. A second important development set in towards the end of the century with the advent of post-dramatic and performative modes of dramaturgy and playing – both in theatre and in puppetry. As a consequence, theatrical narration and the construction of the dramatic figure became highly contested and thus opened new and manifold ways to relate theatre text and puppet bodies. The artistic focus hence moved towards the materialities of objects and puppets, bringing to the fore their visual, medial and symbolic qualities in performance. In the process of the performance, audiences are now confronted with visual and material meanings of puppet bodies that are constantly reorganised, re-formulated and re-flected through material clash, fragmentation and constant reshaping. These aesthetic strategies of late-twentieth century puppetry are interlinked with social and political discourses on optimizing, construction, virtual imaging, and the prosthetics of the human body. Puppets as an artistic medium are particularly well suited to articulate the relevant impact on these matters since they position themselves exactly on the threshold between being a subjective existence and being a material object.

Postmodern puppet theatre greatly invests in the de-stabilization of identity concepts and subject positions. In my book „Nähte am Puppenkörper“, I identified three main strategies that have the potential to challenge the self of the puppeteer, the puppet as well as of the spectator: 1) displaying the process of constructing of the puppet, 2) emphasizing the ‘otherness’ of the puppet being, 3) liquefying the body concept of puppets to make it impossible to identify a fixed corporeal form. Puppet artists using these aesthetic strategies relate their staging of the puppet body to a re-formulation of the dramatic puppet figure and of the ontological status of both puppet and human actor. When attending these performances, we experience that stable entities or ‘natural’ ontologies cannot be applied any longer. Puppet bodies are formed from materials mixing with organic body parts of the actors, and subject performers and performing objects rather operate in the mode of transformation than subscribing to any given order. It becomes clear that the basis of their status lies in the performativity on stage. Subject actors are performed as subjects and object actors are performed as objects, while at the same time they can easily switch roles through their playing.

This performativity of identity has been described in terms of gender theory by Judith Butler. Mainstreamed into constructivist philosophy from the 1990s on, it has shaped our idea of human identity as being performed within normative frames in daily life through unintentional repetitious acts. This repetition of the act allows for negotiation and development through failure. What we see on stage performed are, of course, intentional acts of performers, yet, in the aesthetic experience we relate their staged performativity to ourselves feeling uneasy about our own re-negotiated identity, corporeal scheme and the challenge of ‘othering’ our self. A phenomenological perspective thus can grasp the interrelation of the performativity on stage and the performativity of our being.

Within this frame of thinking I will discuss puppet performances that have a potential to unearth this uneasiness about our own non-identity. I will particularly focus on Helmuth Plessner's writings on the eccentricity of man and on laughing and crying as existential crises of human beings to discuss the effects of fragmenting and destabilizing our own identity during puppet shows.

*Meike Wagner is Professor of Theatre Studies at Stockholm University. She has previously been part of the faculty of LMU Munich. She received her PhD degree from Mainz University with a dissertation on the mediality of the theatrical body (Sutured Puppet Bodies. On the Theatre Body and the Medial Gaze. Bielefeld 2003). She is the author of Theatre and the Public Sphere in ,Vormærz'. Berlin, Munich and Vienna as Playgrounds of Bourgeois Media Practices (Berlin 2013). Her main research interests are theatre and media, performance and contemporary theatre, animation film, puppetry, theatre history, 19th century theatre, theatre and politics. She is teaching in the fields of theatre history, performance analysis, theatre theory, theatre and media, contemporary theatre and performance, puppetry and object theatre, transcultural theatre, theatre of 18th and 19th century.*



Jean YOUSSEF

### **Le théâtre de marionnette au Liban : une mosaïque d'identités**

#### **The puppet theater in Lebanon: a mosaic of identities**

Identity in Lebanon is an issue that keeps debates alive. Indeed, by its history, the Lebanese territory is a true mosaic of cultures and identities. With its 10452 square kilometers, this country is made up of 18 religious communities recognized by the government. From 1516 to 1918, Lebanon was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, then under the French mandate until 1943, its date of independence. In 1948, Lebanon opened its doors to the Palestinians, hosting them in camps. However, identity conflicts between the Lebanese and the Palestinians erupted and triggered the 1975 civil war, which lasted 15 years. Recently, the reception of more than a million and a half Syrian refugees caused by the war in 2011, has once again questioned the identity problem in Lebanon because of the considerable increase of the number of inhabitants. This question of identity at the heart of political debates is present in many areas; one of those is the puppet theater, where artists try to give a Lebanese identity to their shows. How is this Lebanese identity represented in the puppet theater in Lebanon? How to interpret the new relationships between the puppeteer and the puppet in the Lebanese theater? We will attempt to answer these questions in two parts. We will first see that the Lebanese puppet theater offers characters reminiscent of a form of identity derived from the oral culture transmitted from generation to generation, such as the character of *Geha*, the figure of the storyteller or popular songs,

which directors continue to use in their puppet shows. *Al Hakawati* (storyteller) is part of the oral and social tradition of Lebanon. The question of identity cannot be evoked without addressing tales, stories, legends and songs from the oral tradition reprised by many puppet theater troupes. Najla Khoury, former director of "La Boîte à Images" staged them in order to recall the country's cultural history. On the other hand, some groupes, such as the troupe of the Lebanese Theater of Puppetry ("la troupe du Théâtre Libanais de la Marionnette"), exhibit characters from Lebanese society, in order to encourage the viewer to reflect on new social behaviors. Thus, the modern Lebanese woman who has had a lot of plastic surgery and who always wears an excess of makeup, or the village gossip girl are often parodied through the puppet. In addition, the Lebanese language is generally preferred by the director of this troupe when the shows are presented to a Lebanese public, even if the institutions require shows in other languages. Other troupes, like the *Kahraba Collective* ("Collectif Kahraba"), addresses the audience, what constitutes it or no longer constitutes it by new forms of identity representations and a contemporary aesthetic, through puppetry and objects, in particular by creating animal sculptures live on stage, and using them to then retell new versions of tales from ancient Arabic and more commonly Lebanese literature. Today, Lebanese artists anxious to represent the Lebanese identity, not only take inspiration from the traditional repertoire, but also propose new approaches in an evolutionary perspective.

*Jean Youssef obtained a BA in Theater Arts from the Lebanese University and worked as a puppeteer in Beirut. He completed his Master's degree in Theater, Writing and Performance in France in 2017, with a thesis on the history of the Lebanese puppet theater. He is a PhD candidate in Theater Studies at Université Paris 3, his thesis is entitled "Forms and uses of puppet theaters in*

*Lebanon from 1975 to the present day". One of the objectives of this doctoral thesis is to document the history of puppet theater in Lebanon in the 60's and 70's.*

Research Project: [www.figuretheater.unibe.ch](http://www.figuretheater.unibe.ch)

Illustrations: Laurette Burgholzer

