



## World Puppetry Day March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013

UNIMA is happy to present the Message for UNIMA World Puppetry Day 2013. We invited this year a famous Italian musician, Maestro Roberto De Simóne, who is also author, director and eminent specialist of the Neapolitan tradition of *Guarratelle* and *Pulcinella*. This choice is following the visit that Dadi Pudumjee and I made to Rome and Naples, due to the invitation of the directors of UNIMA-Italy, that brought us also to Acerra, birth place of the character Pulcinella, to which we were bestowed the title *Ambasciatore del Museo di Pulcinella*. We thank the director and the team of the prestigious Museo Pulcinella for the honour they conferred us. We invite all of you to visit this wonderful museum.

We all know the enormous influence Pulcinella's character has in puppetry world, its gradual evolution under different forms and appearances, through cultures of many countries. The text of the Maestro will allow you to enter in the heart of his own Napolitan culture and point out the musical and rhythmic dimension that every good puppet-master must possess.

Our art is unique and ever growing. On March 21st 2013, let's celebrate puppetry ! Be conscious however that certain traditional forms are in danger of disappearing and demand an increasing protection. In this aspect, Naples and its surroundings give us a good example to follow: transmission of the tradition operates in a respectful and invigorating manner between masters and pupils since more than 500 years.

Jacques Trudeau  
UNIMA Secretary General

Roberto De Simóne

Italian director and musicologist, his anthropological interests are also present, among others, in works as *Fiabe campane* (1993). He also worked as musician and director, often in collaboration with la *Nuova compagnia di canto popolare*.

He was the artistic director (1981-87) of Teatro San Carlo of Naples and directed many operas. Nominated in 1998 Académicien de Santa Cecilia, he received later the title of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the President of the French Republic. In 2003, he received the Price Roberto Sanseverino.



(From Treccani.it the Italian encyclopedia)

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## International Message from Roberto De Simóne

My first encounter with Pulcinella goes back into the mists of my memory; to the early days of my childhood, when Pulcinella was part of the imagery of all Neapolitan children. You could meet him in the street in the wondrous baskets of the toy-peddlers or on the stalls in the Fairs of Saint Joseph, of the Epiphany, of the Piedigrotta Festival, where small traditional toys were exhibited. Among those a small Pulcinella stood out, who, placed on a miniature trolley and pushed by a stick, would mechanically clap his hands fitted with minuscule brass cymbals. Another plaything was also extremely popular: a small red cone made of cardboard in which you could insert a toy trumpet equipped with a *pivetta* to play the tune of a traditional tarantella.

A small wire puller was also part of the game: when it was inserted in the cone and gently pushed by the child it made a tiny Pulcinella manikin go up and down, whose white vest was glued to the circular brim of the cone itself. Obviously the game, suggestive of a mischievous sexual movement, lent to our character a phallic meaning, which was reaffirmed also in other traditional performances.

Lastly, Pulcinella could be found in rigmaroles, nursery rhymes and fairy tales: in short, he belonged to the dreamlike fabric of tradition, so that little by little you would access his initiatory purpose, and then his deeper mysterious and emblematic significance.

To all this the itinerant *Guarattelle* puppet theater also contributed, in which the fanciful puppets of Pulcinella, Teresina (his sweetheart), the Dog, Death, the Hangman and others would perform in the Piazza del Gesù, San Domenico Maggiore, and Porta Capuana, mesmerizing our childish faces, as we stood there, open mouthed, to receive the Creed of our oneiric Bible.



### *VOICE OF PULCINELLA*

*Puè puè puè puè puè*

*puere puè puè.*

*Look out Teresa,*

*look out from your balcony*

*for I want you to hear a beautiful song*

Finally, I would like to recall that even in the traditional repertory of the *Guarattelle* you can find characters and scenes which appear to be connected to the Jewish tradition, the Spanish tradition, the tradition of the Latin and even the Greek theatre. The term *guarattella* is the vernacular rendition of *bagattella*, (a trifling matter) and comes from the word *Bagatto*, which is one of the major trumps of the tarot cards, of cabalistic origin and a vehicle of tales and features that we often find in the repertoires and outlines of the *Guarattella* theater.

I will like to conclude with a touching declaration that I recorded from the voice of the last Neapolitan *guarrattellaro* of the old tradition, a certain Nunzio Zampella, prematurely passed away, who had in his DNA all the chromosomes of an ancient Pulcinella-style art. Asked how important the use of the *pivetta* was to a puppeteer, he gave me this answer.

ZAMPELLA: «It is essential. The art of the puppeteer is not easy; the handling can be simple, but the mimicry is musical, the movement is music. The most difficult thing is the double voice that is to alter the natural voice with the artificial one by the use of the *pivetta* (a sort of whistle). The puppeteer must be able to do all the voices: the Woman, the Carabineer, the Monk, Pulcinella, the Dog and even the voice of Death. But whatever tomfoolery you say in the show it must become rhythm: words are music, movement is rhythm; in this only lies the true strength of the *guarattelle*». (21 giugno 1975)

\*The puppet Pulcinella created in 1620's inspired ten other characters of the European popular theatre that, everyone, knew to entertain their audience and to give him a space of liberty.

I wish all you, on the 5 continents, a fabulous World Puppetry Day !