



EVOC

Experimental Vocational training for puppeteers

For a pedagogy of “sharing”



Funded by
the European Union

The EVOC project is funded by the European Union in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. The project is carried out by LE TAS DE SABLE – CHES PANSES VERTE (France), in partnership with: CENTRE DE LA MARIONNETTE DE LA FEDERATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES (Belgium), LJUBLJANA PUPPET THEATRE (Slovenia), SYNKOINO COOPERATIVE (Greece), TEATRO GIOCO VITA (Italy), TOPIC (Spain) and UNIMA (International Union for Puppetry Arts). It is a cooperation project about vocational training for puppeteers based on 3 sets of objectives:

1. Experimenting new devices of vocational training for puppeteers.
2. Developing a common reflection on the professional structuring of the field of puppetry arts.
3. Updating the link between training and occupational integration. EVOC should be the place to think of this particular moment in the life of puppeteers.

Members of the Pedagogy Working Group :

Fabrizio Montecchi (IT)
Sylvie Baillon (FR)
Martina Maurič Lazar (SL)
Stathis Markopoulos (GR)

Participants :

Alba Grande (ES), Ana Nežmah (SL), Asier Pagola (ES), Benjamin Zajc (SL), Eirni Mastora (GR), Evita Angeli (GR), Giorgio Castagna (IT), Léa Le Fell (BE), Margo Wyon (FR), Maria Manasi (GR), Mehrzad Kateb (BE), Sara Šoukal (SL), Thomas Blanchet (FR), Valentina Lisi (IT).

"I think this type of experience is fundamental because it really allows in practice the possibility of a real meeting between European artists. Like the Erasmus programme, this project makes you understand both what Europe is and what it means to be a European citizen and, in these times, I think that is no small thing. I also thank all of you organisers. Thank you for making this experience possible."

Giorgio Castagna (IT).

"How to look for the answer and not the answer itself was for me an important outcome of the whole procedure.

As far as it concerns the professionalization part, the concern over identification field is much more interesting for me than searching for a definition .The fact that puppeteers could gather, talk and express what brought them to puppetry, how deep and personal was that pathway, how it went for everyone and how similar or not we experienced our puppetry life, it was really precious . [...]

Closing I have to say that for me, it was amazing to meet more puppeteers who settled in small places like I do and we have similar points of view about puppetry and life itself . It made me feel less lonely and it empowered the sense of community that I like to think that still exist in puppetry fields."

Maria Manasi (GR)

"Each of the mentors managed to present part of their interests in the field in a short period of time and to convey them to the participants in an appropriate manner. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that both mentors encouraged creative freedom and acted most of the time not as lecturers but as stimulators and helpers of the participants's creative thoughts."

Benjamin Zajc (SL)



EXPERIMENTING NEW DEVICES OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR PUPPETEERS

The training part of the EVOC project, curated by the members of the Pedagogical Group Sylvie Baillon, Martina Maurič Lazar, Stathis Markopoulos and Fabrizio Montecchi, was conceived from the beginning as a space of freedom and experimentation. The aim was researching innovative methods of transmission responding to the higher education needs of young European artists interested in contemporary puppetry arts. The EVOC project, thanks to its non-institutional nature, was able to test a transversal and unconventional didactic proposal. A didactic that was based on an idea of transmission understood primarily as an «equal» dialogue between trainers and beneficiaries of training. Secondly, built on the principle that the artistic proposals of the beneficiaries should be the engine and heart of the transmission processes implemented by the trainers and not the other way around.

These intentions were tested in the two scheduled workshops, in Thessaloniki and Ljubljana. The participants found themselves, thanks to a series of practical exercises suggested by the trainers, involved in a game of exchanging technical and linguistic proposals, artistic and poetic visions and moments of reflection on the notion of professional practice. This broad pedagogical approach has characterized the workshops, making them real laboratories of ideas. It made everyone reflect on the aspects related to artistic creation, on the problems connected to this type of training and profession, and on the very idea of contemporary puppetry arts.

The two workshops were therefore configured, coherently with the aims of the entire EVOC project, as a junction between training and profession. The achieved results and the reflections that has emerged represent a precious material. From there, it will be possible to start developing original teaching proposals based on new pedagogical paradigms and developing new support devices closer to the way in which young artists interpret the fact of "being" a puppetry arts professional today.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND PARTICIPANTS

The training part of the EVOC project was designed for a group of 14 participants coming equally from the 6 countries involved. The Call for Participation, launched at the end of March 2022 and disseminated by each partner in their national networks, had very simple requirements. They were: being a resident in one of the 6 countries of the project (France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Slovenia); being aged from 25 to 40; having had, in the field of puppetry arts, one or more previous training courses or at least three years of work experience.

More than 70 received applications were carefully examined by the members of the Pedagogical Group who, in addition to taking into account the criteria of gender equality and inclusiveness, tried to grasp the singularity of each participant for the purpose of composing a highly heterogeneous group. The principle of non-homogeneity of age, training and professional path was fundamental for the purpose of achieving the objectives set by the EVOC project. This was well demonstrated by the extraordinary relational dynamic that has been established between the members of the group and with the trainers.

Once selected, the participants were asked to participate at different levels in the planned actions. The first expected level of participation was the dialogue that the young artists established with various interlocutors on the subject of professionalization and professional insertion through moments of exchange, written questionnaires and oral interviews.

But the most important level was the participation in the two experimental workshops and in the online preparatory meetings, around the question: "What is the idea of puppetry arts for a young artist today?". As demonstrated the relationships that followed developed into an "equal" dialogue between trainers and beneficiaries of the training, and through continuous games of exchange between the participants.

"For my experience in Thessaloniki, the general sense is certainly 100% positive!! The first thing I can say is that it was an amazing week with unique tutors and colleagues. I loved the other participants and was really excited to discover what everyone was doing and their path up to the point we met. At the same time it was demanding in terms of schedule and hours, yet rewarding since I did learn new things which proved the efforts worthy."

Eirni Mastora (GR)

"About Sylvie's dramaturgy approach, [...] I'm glad I was in the second group that worked with her. It was neither easy nor particularly comfortable to work, but soooo interesting and rich, that I'm glad I had already known the people for three days, to be more able to work in a more theoretical aspect, and let say "politic" because we added 7 brains to accord on one vision, this focus that, as students, we chose to give following Sylvie's suggestions, maybe has not been the most technically efficient, but has been really rich as a sharing experience of listening, suggesting, deliberating in a group. And seeing as a method can really drive brains to an agreement. For a lonely wolf like me, it was really precious."

Thomas Blanchet (FR)

*"I was part of the group that started with the workshop held by Stathis and personally I was happy to start the journey with his pedagogical approach which involved reading Jean Genet's text *The Tightrope Walker* and making short improvisations. The first day on the human figure of the tightrope walker, the second day on the rope object and the last day a union of the two improvisations made together with the use of a puppet of death. The improvisations were alternated with moments of dialogue and discussion on the theme of the animation of the figures and why we want to take this path. This methodology allowed me to become very familiar with the other participants and the atmosphere that was created was of exchange and respect."*

Valentina Lisi (IT)

FIRST WORKSHOP EVOC: THESSALONIKI, 5 – 12 JULY 2022

In the Thessaloniki part of the EVOC workshop, Sylvie Baillon and StathisMarkopoulos were focusing on their separate professional fields: puppet poetics and puppet construction and manipulation/ animation. Participants were divided into two groups according to geographical and gender subdivision criteria. Each group worked three days with one trainer and three days with the other one in separate spaces. On the last day they all met together for a collective synthesis.

With Sylvie, the participants worked on the James Saunders play *After Liverpool* which had been given and studied before. They were asked to build a sketch of a staging, using all the means of puppet theater, after having identified a dramaturgical axis, and asking themselves the question of «Why Puppet?» The first group was divided into subgroups of 2 or 3. The second group worked together.

With Stathis the participants worked on the text of Jean Genet *Le Funambule (The Tightrope Walker)*, a text that refers to the relation of the artist with his/her art and tools. The workshop proposed that the ideas of Genet about the personal »death« and solitude of the artist match perfectly well with the state of the puppeteer and his/her puppets. The group worked in two ways: First, the »traditional« way of animating puppets through their body language, precise manipulation and the transition from »natural« to »supernatural« action. Second, the symbolic use of the objects –in this case mainly ropes- its relation to the human body and their possibilities in the context of Genet's words. The participants created short personal sketches, they presented and discussed them with the group.

SECOND WORKSHOP EVOC : LJUBLJANA, 5 – 12 OCTOBER 2022

In the Ljubljana part of the EVOC workshop, Fabrizio Montecchi and Martina Maurič Lazar were focusing on their separate professional fields: shadow theatre and actor-puppeteer exploration. Participants were divided into two groups by drawing lots. Each group worked three days with one trainer and three days with the other in separate spaces. On the last day they all met together for a collective synthesis.

With Fabrizio, the participants were invited to perform simple dramaturgy and staging exercises with shadow theatre starting from Sonnet No. 27 by William Shakespeare. Given the disparity of technical and linguistic knowledge in the specific field of shadow theatre, two short but intense experiences developed. All in a continuous search for forms necessary to restore the meaning of the Sonnet. Teamwork, strongly desired by all, represented a value, not a limit. The self-generated creative mechanism of the two groups has made possible to share knowledge, encourage transmission processes between participants and welcome individual contributions within a collectively shared project. Listening to each other was the hallmark of every artistic and creative act.

With Martina, the participants had to write intimate professional contemplations about their relation to puppets and puppet theatre. They also had to prepare pieces of the first Letter to A Young Poet by R.M. Rilke and choose some parts from it that strongly connected with them. This was all done before the workshop. At the spot, they slowly started to explore the relations between individual participants, performers, and the simple wooden puppets that were given to them. They also started to look for the dialogues between the individual texts of the performers and the pieces of Rilke's text. Slowly, each one of the young artist was building a structure, a form, a sincere and personal architecture of thought, action and unique actor-puppeteer expression, which has at the end resulted in exquisite and very interesting short pieces of a study performance.

"I really liked the workshop in Ljubljana, it pushed me more into my entrenchments but made me step back. There was a lot of kindness from Martina and Fabrizio and the setting was great! We were received like kings and the help of Benjamin and Sara were really precious... The possibility of visiting the museum and seeing shows was a added value and the group got even closer! I have some notes that I took after Martina's workshop which helped me a lot!"

Margo Wyon (FR)

"The most striking thing for me in the shadow course was the emotional impact I felt during the renderings. I am not used to tears or spasms, but there, I experienced a small tidal wave, due to the group but also to the intimate space where the shadow could lead me. So I finally received an intimate experience very different from what I had known before via the shadow that comes to illustrate what we point out when we talk about the particularity of this type of theater, which could be summed up as a way to address the unconscious directly. As a doubting Thomas, I saw it, I believe in it now, thank you."

Thomas Blanchet (FR)

"It was a true privilege that I had a chance (thanks to Benjamin) to discover a touch of amazing history of culture in particular puppetry arts via Ljubljana Puppet Theatre and the museum of puppetry. We had also a chance to assist a show in Lutkovno which was very nice. Regarding the workshops, I had an honor to be able to work with Fabrizio and Martina and our group A. I can say that during the workshop of Martina I gained a lot because of her way of approaching the subject through dramaturgy and feedbacks. The same for Fabrizio with more emphases of discovery the shadow theatre language and its possibilities."

Mehrzad Kateb (BE)



SYLVIE BAILLON'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE EVOC PROJECT

The goal of these three days was to understand the processes of dramaturgy and staging, based on J. Saunders' text : After Liverpool. The groups worked collectively to answer to the following questions: What is it about (narratives) ? What is the fable ? What do I/we want to tell with this text (dramaturgy) ? How to bring this text into play, i.e. how to make something concrete based on what has been reflected (situation/ puppet or object « what for »/ relationships on stage) ? And to implement it.

Sharing questions. Bringing out the different imaginaries. Different cultures. This is what was implemented during the EVOC project. A workshop like the one Rabelais dreamed of? Working on the object, yes, but also the opportunity to discuss other topics.»

"Who seeks always finds. They don't not necessarily find what they're looking for, even less what must be found. But they finds something new to relate to the thing he/she already knows." **J. Rancière.**

STATHIS MARKOPOULOS'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE EVOC PROJECT

The fact that during the few but intensive workshop days there has been realized such a great creative dynamics among the artists who participated, confirms that the long process of designing the pathway was fruitful and correct. It brought together puppeteers from different backgrounds but at the same time with a quite concrete common view on our art and vocational training, and lead to targets and criteria, an approach and a method which proved successful. The workshops themselves gave a unique motivating opportunity

and space to young artists that – apart from the specific work done and information shared - disclosed the importance and the challenges of exchanging experience and collaborating in a collective and inclusive artistic environment and context. They are going to take it further in their next steps and professional journey. The fundamental discussion on "Why Puppet?" has to continue since it placed a number of crucial questions to be explored deeper and for them to broaden the possibilities.





MARTINA MAURIČ LAZAR'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE EVOC PROJECT

The artistic and pedagogical model of EVOC, the model of offering an alternative and explorational puppet thinking and practice to young professionals is a luxury and a necessity. A luxury for both the pedagogues and the participants to be able to work and to be in a concentrated area of time and space with people willing to discover new grounds and a necessity to broaden their views on their work, thinking, performing and existing on stage and in society. EVOC is a healthy and liberating model of exchanging experience, knowledge and ideas, a common ground for pedagogues

and participants to discover new spaces in a unique constellation of artistic personas and ideas. The possibility of changing places for the participants, to visit new cities, to see and experience new theatre practices and to work intensely in a short period of time with other artists from different cultural backgrounds is more than exploring or creating new artistic approaches. It is creating a noble and sensitive society of young and old, a society that joins together in order to learn from each other, to grow and to create the unimaginable. A luxury and a necessity.

FABRIZIO MONTECCHI 'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE EVOC PROJECT

Accepting diversity as a founding value and invaluable wealth of our doing. Recognizing mutual singularities as an essential condition for dialogue, exchange and also, very importantly, for the creative act. Affirming the primacy of the collaborative spirit in human, artistic and professional relationships as a vital alternative to the prevailing of competitive spirit. For me, these were the highest results achieved by the small community gathered around the EVOC project. To judge the

experience in terms of performance and effectiveness of the training offer in this unconventional context would be absolutely meaningless. Sharing, on the other hand, is the word that best summarizes this short journey and replaces and supplants those of training and transmission. They appear inadequate for me to express what has happened. To share: share together with others, have in common with others. The word from which a new EVOC journey should start.

"I found the workshop refreshing and motivating, the three-day course run by each one of them were very different. In Thessaloniki, on the first part of the training, I missed being somehow related, or linked between them. But nowadays having a wider perspective I would like to take it back. As at the end of the course, we have four different approaches to puppetry arts, and all of them were very valuable. It was a great learning experience and great content overall. To be honest, I would love if we had another third training course week."

Asier Pagola (ES)

"It was simply magical. We sincerely, truly met. We have all gone into our areas of discomfort with such generosity and kindness. It was rich. One of the most beautiful experiences of my life, both from an artistic and human point of view.

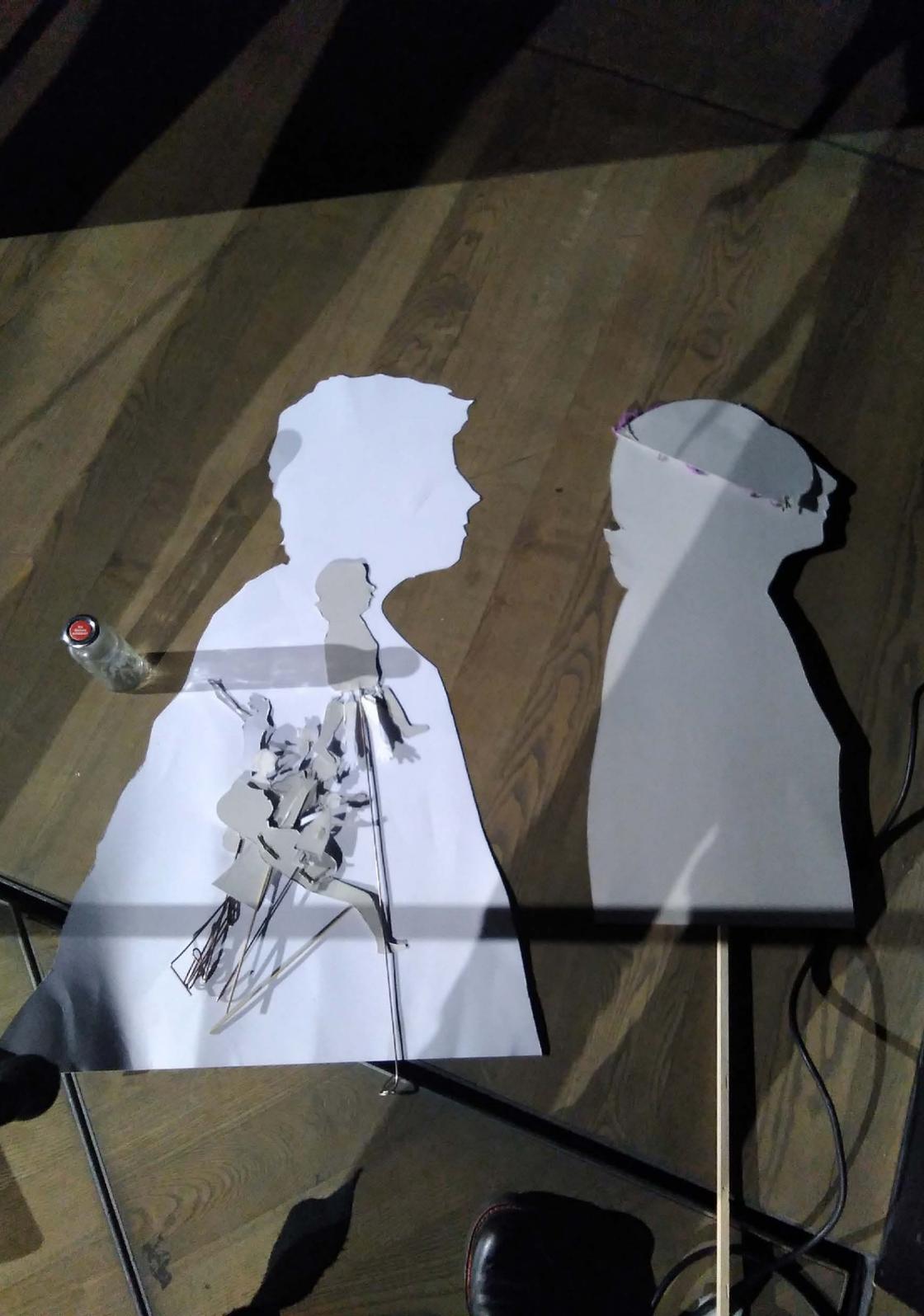
For that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am grateful for the prestige to which I had access, that of being able to research with people foreign to my logical connections, to my traditions, to my universes. The prestige of being able to experiment simply without any expectation or production at stake. What an immense joy!"

Léa Le Fell (BE)

"Through the workshops we had the chance to get involved in a creative net between us, that was revealed through personal and collective experiences. This net enriched my creative vocabulary. Watching each other on stage, playing, trying, talking, dancing ...and a bit of drinking together was amazing and created expectation of a new gathering. It really is a very promising dynamic that was created there and I wish we could find ways to keep going with these people, somehow ...Let s see! My wish would be that the EVOC programme would go further and help the young professionals not only to meet and exchange but also create and work together."

Maria Manasi (GR)



WHAT COULD THE EVOC PROJECT BECOME?

EVOC was born as an experimental project and like any act of experimentation, it did resolve itself by its ability to open up to something else, in its ability to prefigure new possibilities. And EVOC has carried out this task admirably, leaving us with many reasons for reflection and indications on which to work. On the one hand, it allowed us to see very clearly that there is a space in the field of contemporary puppetry arts for a transversal and unconventional pedagogy that complements and integrates the institutional one. An idea of pedagogy that does not aim so much at basic training or even at specialist training but rather at stimulating and encouraging the maturation of artistic personalities through authentic processes of exchange and sharing of knowledge, visions and experiences. We could define it as a pedagogy of 'artistic bartering'.

On the other hand, it has left us precise indications on how to articulate better, in time and space, the meeting devices that allow us to recreate the conditions in which the two EVOC workshops were tested. Indications on how the role and function of those defined by project participants could be better developed: facilitators of experiences. On how the level of synergy between the «sharers» could be increased, always starting from the principle of their non-homogeneity (if everyone is different, everyone is the same and what unites them are their differences). On how one could give continuity to lived experiences after they have ended.

In conclusion, we can state that starting from this legacy it is certainly possible to imagine a permanent but dynamic European system that satisfies the needs of "another» continuous training of young artists interested in contemporary puppetry arts.

AFTER EVOC : WONDER FOOLS BY THE PUPPETCHEERS COLLECTIVE

We are an international collective of puppeteers with artists from: France, Spain, Iran, Italy, Slovenia and Greece.

We were born following the Erasmus+ project «EVOC – Experimenting VOCational training for puppeteers». This project has put us to the test, we have experimented with multiple languages and followed by multiple teachers different methodologies of approach to the realization of a show in relation to the use of puppets. We experimented with glove puppets with Greek puppeteer Stathis Markopoulos; we experimented directing a puppet show with French director Sylvie Baillon; we experimented with the language of the Shadow Theater with the Italian director Fabrizio Montecchi; and finally we experimented the language of puppets with the

Slovenian actress and animator Martina Maurič Lazar.

But above all we worked together, we found connections with people from different countries, each with its own artistic profile, with different experiences and backgrounds. This led us to develop the idea of wanting to go further, after taking part in the courses of the Erasmus+ EVOC project, we decided to make these connections the next step. Wanting to work together to create a show with which to continue, albeit independently, the project that saw us born of experimentation and above all collaborations between different realities.

Our project, still under development, was born from the idea of wanting to collaborate and to do so through the multiple strengths that each of us has. We come from different countries and different cultures as well as having different skills, we are a cauldron of possibilities.

Hence our starting idea: talking about the figure of Don Quixote, one of the most common texts represented in the Puppet Theater, not as a character but as an archetype, each of us, with respect to his own experience and origin, has managed to identify three main strengths in him: the concept of madness, the concept of fighting for justice and the concept of breaking the rules.

Hence the initial choice of wanting to look for, in each of our cultures of origin, one's own archetype of Don Quixote, which more closely addresses one of the three identified strengths.

[...] But what are all these conclusions? They are characters, archetypes to be precise, with which each of us wants to confront and play, make them dialogue, because each of them, just as each of us has his own precise and profound point of view on the chosen theme.

But how to stage all this multitude? With a game! Made by chance and improvisation. What would happen if Prometheus dialogued with Alda Merini? [...] Will the public be encouraged to participate as well? Or will they remain silent spectators?

[...] What can they lead us to? A reflection on the times we live in and the places we inhabit.

[...] As a group, we use different kinds of puppetry arts, let's say archetypal ways to animate characters. And we feel that each way to animate is a way to transcend as artists about our ways to be a fool and a hero as Quixote.

"The important thing for the future of our profession is to meet."

"If it was about a laboratory where we had to think, to try, to communicate about social and political questions in puppetry and in our profession, than I would have liked more facilitation during the week of creation for this individual and collective reflection, and clearer questions about the reason why we were all there."

I thank you to have found wonderful people in Greece and in Slovenia. Being able to talk with them outside of the programm was very nourishing for me as a person and as a professional. For me, for my profession and my motivation, it was interesting to hear the testimonies of fellow professionals and companies in Europe about our work.

I ask myself why this programm could be interesting for professional puppeteers? As a professional, one should normally know what we would like as a training. Why one should receive an experience that might not be valuable at that time? Why do you think we need that training? What kind of plans do you have for us, this group of professionals that you chose?

If I answer the question myself, and to relieve myself, I stick to a sentence said by Sylvie and by the group in general during the last day in Thessaloniki: "The important thing for the future of our profession is to meet."

Alba Grande (ES)

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renoncement car c'est ma peur
et je ne l'ai pas utilisé au final.

10/10/22

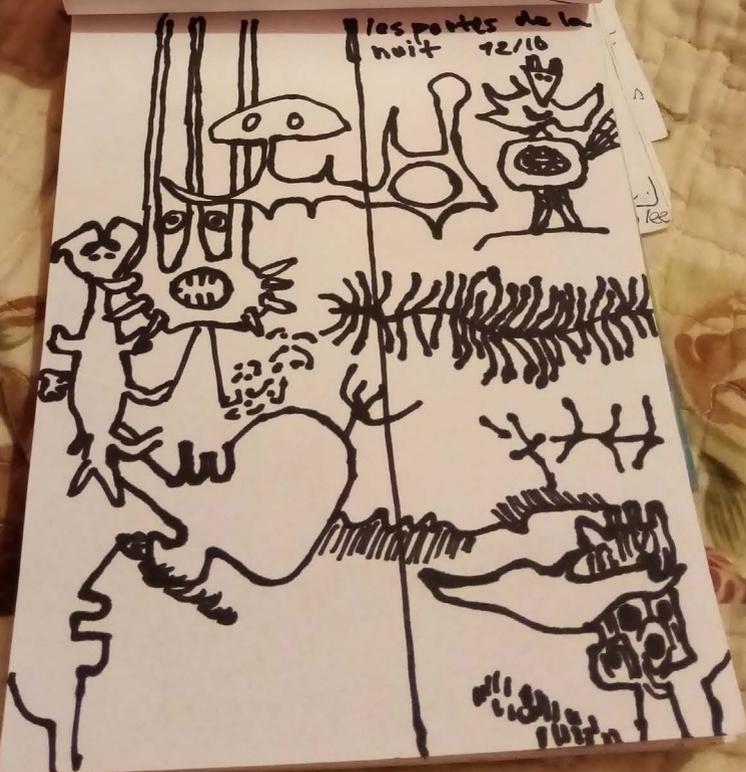
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The Synkoino cooperative and, in particular, Juanjo Corrales for the organization and his availability during the workshop in Thessaloniki;

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The collective of young artists Spacetime for the provision of their workspaces.

The Ljubljana Puppet Theater and its team, in particular Uroš Korenčan and Pija Bodlaj for the organisation, hosting and work on the videos during the workshop in Ljubljana.



Photos

p1 : Pija Bodlaj

p4 : Maria Manasi

p11 : Fabrizio Montecchi

p13 : (haut) Stathis Markopoulos / (bas) Stathis Markopoulos

p14 : (haut) Stathis Markopoulos / (bas) Fabrizio Montecchi

p17 : Maria Manasi

p21 : Margo Wyon

p22 : Stathis Markopoulos

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TEATRO GIOCO VITA



ΣΥΝ-ΚΟΙΝΩ

πολιτισμός/culture
κοινωνία/society
περιβάλλον/environment



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