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THE IMPROVISED PUPPET

– the integral part between the profane and sacred



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IMPROVISOITU NUKKE

Tässä työssä etsin vastauksia kysymykseen: miksi me tarvitsemme improvisoitua nukkea? Aion perustaa oman työni Mircea Eliade filosofiaan siitä, miten pyhä paljastaa itsensä meille arkitodellisuudessa ja yhdistän sen Penny Francyn ajatuksiin nukketeatterista.

Olen keskittynyt kysymykseen miten improvisoitu nukke yhdistää draama- ja nukketeatteri-maailman. Ihmishäyttelijä luo draamamaailmassa nukan ja siitä lähtien kaksi todellisuutta sulautuu yhteen. Yleensä improvisoitu nukke syntyy ihmishäyttelijän ajatuksista. Ihmisellä on valtaa päättää nukan synnystä ja kuolemasta. Tämä tekee näistä nukeista hyvin hauraat, mutta voimakkaat samanaikaisesti.

Työssäni saan selville, että improvisoitu nukke vastaa meidän peruskysymyksiin elämästä ja kuolemasta. Improvisoitu nukke on kuvaava metafora Jumalan ja ihmisen suhteesta sekä uskonnollisesta kokemuksesta. Miten ihmiset kokevat jotain täysin erilaista jokapäiväisessä elämässä?

ASIASANAT:

improvisoitu nukke, nukke, kuvataide

BACHELOR'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

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In this work I search for answers to the question: why do we need the improvised puppet? What are the fundamental questions that bring us to the improvised puppet? I will base my work on Mircea Eliade's philosophy about how the sacred reveals itself in our everyday reality and I combine it with Penny Francy's thoughts about puppetry.

I focus on the aspect how the improvised puppet connects two realities: the drama- and the puppet world. Human actor from drama world introduces a puppet and from that point on two realities will blend together. Usually the improvised puppet illustrates the ideas of the human character. The human character has total power over the puppets he creates. This makes these puppets very fragile but on the same time also powerful.

In my work I find out that the improvised puppet responds to our fundamental questions about life and death. The improvised puppet is a telling metaphor for God and Man relationship. It is also a telling metaphor for religious experience. It helps us to understand how people experience something from wholly different order in our everyday life?

KEYWORDS:

improvised puppet, puppet, fine art

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1 INTRODUCTION

“The fascination with puppets (...) reaches so far back into human history that it must be regarded as a response to a fundamental need or needs.”
(Puppetry, Penny Francis, 145.)

Puppetry is constantly developing. Traditional forms are blending together with other disciplines like fine art, video art, human drama etc. Often it is hard to classify what is puppetry and what is not in the contemporary theatre field. Often performances that play with visual effects are classified as visual theatre pieces. Also the *improvised puppet* is on the border of puppetry. In these kind of performances the stories are told through visual imagery rather than through text. In my work I try to focus on the strengths of the improvised puppet.

I use the term “improvised puppet” for puppets and figures that are created on stage during a performance. The show includes the process of creation. This will make the puppet unique in every show. The improvised puppet uses elements from fine art – the puppets can be sculpted, built, drawn or painted on stage. It can be made out of almost anything – paper, cloth, clay, glass, rubber, metal cans, food etc. We can create a puppet also out of the existing scenery. Often direct manipulation (hands-on technique) is used with these puppets – giving life and character to the puppet. Always the improvised puppet doesn’t need to be animated. They are only made. In this case they work as statements. There is very little written information about the improvised puppet but mostly I will base my thoughts on shows that I have seen.

I am interested to find out why artists use the improvised puppet. What kind of questions have led to the appearance of the improvised puppet? What kind of dramaturgies suit for the improvised puppet? How does the improvised puppet change the role of the actor? What kind of impact has

the improvised puppet on the audience? Does the audience experience something different than they would with the ordinary puppet? What is the power of these fragile figures that exist only during one performance?

2 FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS

Firstly I would like to explore the fundamental needs of mankind that have kept puppetry alive through times. I would like to understand what could have been the reasons for puppetry to appear in ancient times? Penny Francis in his book "Puppetry" tackles this idea as follows:

The animation of object, i.e. puppetry, can be directly traced to the atavistic, universal belief in the spirit life hidden within and embodied by natural phenomena, things and materials. The belief forms the core of the animist religion and is intrinsic to the understanding of the puppet's origins. Animism was humankind's first belief system and informed the early stages of awakening to its small world, its place in that world and its first questions as to the reason for its existence. Uncertain of their own power, unconscious of their mental capacities, but certain of their dependence of nature, humans deified everything that they feared or that brought them comfort and sustenance, investing any thing which represented the forces around them with anima.(...) Among the most ancient and widespread of cultural tradition is the use of material-object in a narrative or dramatic performance (...) dancers who wear masks, bards who use scroll-painting (...) to illustrate their narrations, children who create dramatic scenes in doll-play, worshippers who bear icons in a religious procession (...) all manifest the urge to give life to non-living things, as they animate objects in dramatic performance and use material images as surrogates for human actors. Whether the dramatic actor is a miniaturized wood-and-cloth puppet or a gigantic, extra-human phantasm and whether at the performance context is one of secular entertainment or sacred ritual, the creative energy that animates the images is the same – the impulse to create objects to act in our stead. Objects through which we can project intensified and often holy speech and action". (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 5-6).

So from early times on people have had the need to give life to non-living things that would act instead themselves. Puppets have represented forces around us because a puppet can turn into anything but human actor will always remain who he or she is. It has always been more easy to believe a puppet (a thing) turning into something else than a human actor because a human actor is too familiar for us, we know that he or she can't "turn" into anything else. He or she can only pretend to turn into something else. People want to experience things around themselves. They want to understand: what is the world? Mircea Eliade, professor of history and religion, gives us an insight about how people can experience the sacred in ordinary things. How objects can become the manifestations of the sacred forces.

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term tierophany. It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e. that something sacred shows it-self to us. It could be said that the history of religion – from the most primitive to the most highly developed – is constituted by a great number of hierophanies, by manifestation of sacred realities. From the most elementary hierophany – e.g. manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree – to supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity. In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act – the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our neutral "profane" world. (...) It is impossible to overemphasize the paradox represented by every hierophany, even the most elementary. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A sacred stone remains a stone; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view, nothing distinguishes it from all

other stones. But for those whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany. (The sacred and the profane, Mircea Eliade, 11)

I think experiencing the sacred is one of humankind's fundamental needs. How to see the divinity in everything? I do believe that puppetry helps us to experience this kind of idea. If a teapot can make us cry or laugh during a show – we cannot deny the power it has. It draws parallels with our own life. The teapot will turn into a hierophany for the audience members. It will not be a simple teapot anymore, because it has showed us something emotional. In a performance we can add additional meaning to objects, which will then be of greater importance even though they remain physically the same objects. For example, in Peter Brook's production *Le Costume*.

The play told of a vengeful husband who, having caught his wife at home in flagrante delicto, places the abandoned suit of his wife's lover, who has fled, over a chair at the end of the marital bed as a permanent reminder of her guilt. For spectator and actors, the suit was invested with a powerful presence – a torturous reminder of her adultery (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 14).

For actors as well as spectators the costume became a manifestation of an emotion. With the associations that are created, we feel totally different energy from the same costume. This idea can only be experienced. It is interesting how ideas can be transformed into material. How and object can carry a whole story or make a concrete comment in its silence. Ideas are abstract and we need to find the proper words for explaining them. Often words create different associations for people and therefore we have to choose our words most precisely to get our ideas delivered clearly. In puppetry we can transform an idea into an object. Once an ob-

ject is carrying a concrete meaning (as the costume in Peter Brook's *Le Costume*) we don't need any words, yet we can be sure that everybody understood the context and the meaning. Your idea will be experienced universally. I think this kind of universal understanding is providing us already an experience that can be compared with the term hierophany - to realize that an object is telling us something. Besides the need to experience something sacred what other fundamental needs take us to puppetry?

"Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons why puppet theatre is so appealing is the human need to see and participate in the reversal of death. What is death but the transformation of the animate into the inanimate? In puppetry, this direction is reversed (quoted in Puppetry, Penny Francis, 47.) Seeing how something becomes alive, explains us also often why it becomes alive. I think the question why things came into existence, is another fundamental need of humankind. "Every myth shows how a reality came into existence, whether it is the total reality or only a fragment – an island, a species of plant, a human institution. To tell how things came into existence is to explain them and at the same time indirectly to answer another question: Why did they come into existence? The why is always implied in the how – for the simple reason that to tell how a thing was born is to reveal an eruption of the sacred into the world and the sacred is the ultimate cause of all real existence (...) 1) By imitating the god, man remains in the sacred, hence in reality. 2) By the continuous reactualization of paradigmatic divine gestures, the world is sanctified. Men's religious behavior contributes to maintaining the sanctity of the world. (The Sacred and the Profane, Mircea Eliade, 97.)"

Understanding how the world functions is our fundamental need. We want to understand who creates the world. Is it us or is it something else? Our fundamental need is to have control over the creative powers that we possess. Therefore giving life to a puppet is appealing to us. It draws a parallel for us with the whole creation of the world. We want to

see and experience how a world is born. On stage we can metaphorically experience that.

Puppets carry in themselves the contradiction of life and death; they are and they are not. A human actor asks: "To be or not to be?" and it is serious, when a puppet asks: "To be or not to be?" it is comical even though on the next moment he could really be "dead". They exist in a reality where everything is possible. I believe our basic need is to dream of the impossible. Therefore we enjoy seeing the puppet world where everything is possible. Because of this puppet has always been and will be powerful and needed.

3 THE AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENT

During the last century wide changes happened in the whole art field. New movements came into existence one after another. *Modernism grew into a strong revolt against existing art forms, against the whole social order of life that continued from 19th century. Avant-garde movements – futurism, dada, expressionism, surrealism etc. – wanted to share their emotions with a greater number of people. They cared more about a direct contact with the spectator. They despised the division of art and included everything in the modern expression of human artistic endeavor (research) (History of European puppetry, volume two: the twentieth century, Henryk Jurkowski, 48).* This all was a response to the changes that happened generally in the world – the two world wars etc. Art became a field for self-exploration, film and photography took the place of capturing the world. *Harold Segel says that 'No point or movements in the history of European stage ever found as much creative relevance in the puppet figure are modernism and avant-garde. (Penny Francis, Puppetry, 166).* Theatre in general started to protest against old traditions and the commercial bourgeois theatre. Modernism artists wanted to counteract the commercial culture and find ways to escape the earthy aesthetics of realism. *Realism in theatre means the illusionistic tradition (referring to the illusion of reality or real), a tradition that began with the development of perspective and the Italian proscenium stage and explored with the fusion of performance and photography in the cinema. The cinema promptly usurped the role of the theatre as the principal purveyor of illusory reality; since when the theatre was chosen to survive by letting go. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 137).*

The first tributary of the movement to gather up puppetry was symbolism, whose principal apologists included the poet Federico Garcia Lorca, as much a devotee of puppetry as Maurice Sand half a century before him. Other writers such as the Irish W.B. Yeats and the Russian Aleksander

Blok were also committed adherents of puppetry. For all of them symbolism was a open door to a new theatre with great scenographic potential embracing its ideal of the de-personalized performer, that is, the puppet which could symbolize humanity and the human condition and could portray the new dramaturgies as actors could not. Maurice Bouchor (1825-1929), a French writer of the symbolist school, who wrote several no-mystery plays for marionettes said: 'The personality of the actor, too real and too familiar destroys all impression of the supernatural (quoted in Penny Francis, Puppetry, 166.) So, in puppetry old traditional plays and stories were abandoned. Puppets were no more little replicas of human actors imitating them. Artists started to use puppets for representing ideas. The less a puppet depends on naturalism, the greater is its power of illusion, but the more the puppet tries to imitate the surface of life for its own sake, the more it draws attention to its limitations. It must create an illusion of reality not reality itself. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 173). Artists started to value puppets for what they were; what kind of qualities they had. They started to find dramaturgies that would correspond to these qualities. "The new puppet theatre found its repertoire in the old classics and myths that had been long forgotten. Henri Signoret: "The marvels of the Greek stage have almost never been transposed to our theatre. The Latin dramas seem not to tempt any of our talented directors; neither has anyone tried to make us familiar with the Mystery of plays of the Middle Ages. Almost nothing has been done for French and Italian farce, and the Spanish drama, so vibrant with life, remains buried in books". Puppets were accepted to speak in the name of dead masses while the men could speak only for themselves. Therefore writers and artists distanced themselves from the existing theatre practice because the dominance of actors. (A history of European Puppetry, volume two: twentieth century. Henryk Jurkowski, 4.) These new stories gave the possibility to create something different from the normal reality. Human actors would have not felt as believable as puppets in the role of Greek Gods. The flesh and blood human couldn't have that unearthly quality of the puppets. These

different qualities gave the artists freedom to tell the stories through pictures and materials rather than through text. *The new puppet theatre was full of metaphors and signs. Often the shows were not understood – because the audience didn't understand the symbolism. Hidden meaning was too difficult for them to decipher. (A history of European Puppetry, volume two: twentieth century. Henryk Jurkowski, 26)* An example of the metaphorical puppet theatre: “A major contributor to the renewal of puppetry, propelling it into the postmodern era, was the DRAK company of E. Bohemia (Czech Republic). The DRAK company were masters at adapting text where the presence of the puppets alongside the performers always had dramaturgical validity. *Dragon (The Song of Life, 1976)* from a story of Evgeny Schwartz, told of a village tyrannized by a dragon-monster who annually demands tribute in the form of a local virgin. The village is saved by Lancelot who kills the dragon and rescues the girl. Villain and hero were played by humans, the villagers by puppets - a telling metaphor. The reference to Nazi tyranny was overt in the costume of the dragon, the intended reference to Soviet tyranny rather less so. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 113). Puppets started to have dramaturgical validity. In DRAK-company they used puppets for villager to show that people were marionettes in the hands of Nazis. The physical qualities of the puppet and what these physical qualities could tell without words became more important than just narrating a story with minimized replicas of human beings.

One step closer to the improvised puppet brought us the fine artists. *Another interesting phenomenon was to be observed at the beginning of the 20th century: painters turned to theatre with a precise objective of bringing their paintings to life. (A history of European Puppetry, volume two: twentieth century. Henryk Jurkowski, 49)* Modernist writers, painters and sculptors often saw theatre as a work of visual art in motion. Though almost none of them was experienced as a puppet performer or designer. This kind of experiments proved the puppets' artistic potential. Puppets got various shapes and the old traditional perception of how puppets

should look like was destroyed. Artists started to have a more subjective attitude towards the puppets; more dependent from their own interpretation of the world. In many cases this often meant that audience was surprised by bizarre and unpredictable effects. *Its traditional image seemed incompatible with experimental theatre and its new face was not recognized in the installations of the visual artists and in their experiments with materials. However, in the theatre, the forms in Bread and Puppet, Kantor's manikins and the actors of Foreman and Wilson all bear witness to a change that was taking place in the mind-set of creators. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 141).*

Another thing that happened, probably with the help of fine artists who created and animated their own art pieces on stage, was that artists started to manipulate puppets directly, with hands, while the traditional puppetry had strings and rods. Strings and rods give the puppet independence; puppeteer is there only to help him to be alive. Direct manipulation on the other hand brings out strongly the presence of the puppeteer. *The hands-on technique has also its dramaturgical uses, for example, where the character has literally to be broken apart and then reassembled. The broken figure can be held and thought it is a portrait of the alter ego of the human character, as in a production of Strindberg's Miss Julie when the two lovers each carried their puppet double (which represented their inner self), visible only to the other. For the climatic love scene the puppets were thrown to the floor and dismembered, as metaphor of their passion, later to be put back together as the couple composed themselves (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 113).* The hands-on technique made it possible to create a strong connection between the puppet and the manipulator. This raised a question: What dramaturgical reasons there can be for the manipulator to take a puppet? The visible manipulator made a bound between drama and puppetry. With the visible manipulator the human aspect became more important. The stories were about humans who solve their problems with the help of puppets.

During the last century artists became more interested about their direct connection to world. What do I think about the world? How do I see the world? Therefore the presence of the human actor alongside the puppets appeared. Artists were searching for ways to express their own thoughts. Therefore they started to experiment with the form of the puppets. Traditionally there was the “puppet show” or “puppet theatre” where the main medium of expression was puppetry. The puppet stories told about the world. During the last century the “theatre with puppets” appeared, here puppetry played only greater or lesser part in the performance. New dramaturgies blended together drama and puppets, searched justification for the puppets to appear on the drama stage with actors.

4 IMPROVISED PUPPET – FIRST PIONEERS

The improvised puppet appears in the 50ties in France. *First artist to bring this kind of approach to the stage was Yves Joly. His small company started to play regularly in the Parisian cabaret La Rose Rouge where the program was made up of short items. The originality of his work lay in its play with theatrical illusion. He would show a puppet in the making, and then he played with it, making the audience believe in the independent existence of his objects with life. He gave birth to the improvised puppet out of materials or objects. (A history of European Puppetry, volume two: twentieth century. Henryk Jurkowski.)* There is little account on who, when and where experimented with improvising puppets on stage. Probably it happened in many places because artists in the fifties and sixties did experiment a lot and puppet became an instrument of contemporary artistic expression for them. Puppet became more subjective, more dependent on an individual's vision of the world, which gave the artists' the freedom to re-create the puppet in any aspect, including the form, construction and context. I will base my information on the shows I have seen and make my own conclusions on them.

4.1 Creation Process

If we go to see a puppetry show we are expecting to see puppets. Now an improvised puppet needs an actor who is on the same time also the builder. So, we are given a drama world with an actor who will create the puppet. One world will be born from the other one. Improvised puppet creates a link between the human reality and imagination. It is important how and from what we build the puppet because that will tell the audience *who* or *what* is the puppet. What kind of ways there are to build a figure on stage? Should we show the audience the whole process of

building or only a part of it or maybe we don't build at all, we only pretend to build? What does the audience read from the creation process?

4.1.1 Tricking the audience.

The time for making a figure in a performance is limited. Therefore the building process has to be well timed and rhythmic. The construction of the puppet should be also quite easy and well planned. On stage there is no possibility to fix your piece of art, because on stage everything is seen by the audience and everything that happens will have a meaning. So you can't keep on fixing your art-work until it achieves the perfect shape, unless you play a hopeless character who never succeeds. Sometimes the process of creation can be quite long and not interesting to watch. In this case we can *trick* the audience. For example, if we need to make paper figures on the stage, we can show that we are cutting them out of paper. Actually we have them pre-cut already, so that you can only make a quick cut with scissors and take out a perfectly cut detailed figure. So we can manipulate the time of constructing on stage. We can show them only this much that they understand that we are building. The rest we can have made ready before hand. Let me explain by an example: in the show "Gelsomina" by Laura Hallantie, the audience is given a concrete scene where the main character is making loud rummaging noise behind a large suitcase. Every now and then she comes up so that audience sees her fixing together old rusty cutlery pieces. The whole action lasts less than a minute, nevertheless finally she comes up and she has a rusty old puppet in her hands. So, audience was deceived, because actually she didn't build herself anything, the puppet was already ready at the first place. She just gave hints to the audience as if she would be building something out of the metal pieces. This puppet was a ready-made puppet that was presented as if it would have been built on stage. By tricking the audience we can save time.

The surprise element is also always present when you cheat with the time. In my solo work (Rovaniemi 7+7 soolo festival) I used plane paper to tell about my dreams. The paper was a letter from my beloved one who told that he didn't love me back. Instead of accepting the negative message inside the letter, I tore it into pieces, each piece representing one of my dreams with him (a house, a dog, a loving husband etc.) Even though it looked as if everything was just torn from the paper – the more complex figures such as a house and husband, were actually cut-out before hand. I guess that audience was rather amazed by how quickly I could “cut out” proper pieces.

It is enough when we create the illusion of building for the audience. Audience likes to be cheated! We show them the system – I cut pieces out of paper – and then we surprise them – suddenly a proper house is cut out in a second. We give them what they expect to get with just a little bit of extra that will make them surprise. If a puppet comes to the stage with a positive surprise, it has already won the approval of the audience.

4.1.2 When the creating process is seen.

It is also possible to turn the creating process itself into meaningful. The process of creation is usually a time-consuming activity. If we want to do it on stage we have to know how to serve it to the audience. If the creating process is longer - we have to find a way to keep up the audience's attention. It can be done by adding a dramatic idea to the process. For example, in the show “D'Etats de femmes” by Company S'Appelle Reviens, one of the male characters molded from clay a female figure for fifteen minutes. The process of creation became important through his attitude towards the work. First he was quite systematic and tender in the modeling; the woman got a recognizable shape but after that he started to use more force and speed. The shape of the woman started slowly to distort. It grew bigger until the shape was totally destroyed. Just a hint

was left that it had been a woman in his hands. My attention was kept up with two things. In the beginning I wanted to know what he was modeling. Soon it became clear – a woman. After my realization-point actor's attitude changed, he became wilder for some reason. Again it got my attention. Finally the artist just left the broken form of the woman. This image was very expressive and you could make your own conclusions about the whole show which was dealing with men and women relationships. It was a separate scene with its build up: the start (taking the clay) middle (modeling a woman) and climax (destroying the woman) and resolution. It is interesting that the building process in this show was successfully used to talk about relationships without having two active characters. The building itself became the action between these two characters (the clay woman and the artist).

Figures can also be made more easily. For example in Dimitry Krymov's performance "Opus nr.7", buckets of black paint were thrown onto white walls. It was quite abstract act and didn't anyhow revile what for they were made. Next, little black paper hats were added on top of these stains in order to turn them into figures of Jews. The black paint created the "body" of the figure and the paint that was running down created the legs. (In arts this technique is known as a surrealist method – Bulletism - shooting ink at blank piece of paper. The artist can then develop images based on what is seen.) Here, the building didn't take long time and audience could follow every action. Nevertheless, audience didn't know what to expect until the black hats were attached. At that moment, audience was taken by surprise. Next the figures were cut out from the cardboard and they stayed standing loosely and shaking, which created the feeling that they were sometimes marching and other times standing and shivering.

Audience will read something out of every action. Therefore it is important to consider what kind of attitude we have when we build something. Do we build with care or we do it brutally? It will give information

about our relationship to the puppet we are building. We can make the whole creation process dramaturgically meaningful (the clay woman). Always when we build something, there is a point of surprise. Audience will realize what you are building. We can stretch that moment: our activity can look abstract and meaningless till the last moment when we add the cap to the Jew.

4.2 Building materials

As we build a puppet, we need to ask ourselves firstly what for do we need this puppet? Maybe we don't need both legs because the character is a fat man who prefers to jump on his belly, maybe the puppet is in two pieces – the head and the body - because the character is very curious and wants to look around a lot. Sometimes the construction of the puppet already tells us what kind of character it is. Also spectators will enjoy “filling the gaps” with their own imagination. As my teacher Rene Baker has often pointed out: *“puppets necessarily do not need concrete eyes”*, because we can imagine them ourselves. Any object will start to have a look when we use the focus correctly. Our imagination will place the eyes of the character in tiny cracks or dots it might have naturally on it. Audience enjoys when there is left room for their own imagination. *The more you leave out, the more we see ourselves in the picture, the more we project our own thoughts onto it. (And then you act, Anne Bogart, 76.)* The missing details can help us to find the characteristics of the puppet and invite the audience to use their imagination.

Audience will see what materials we use when we build a puppet on stage. We can benefit from that. For example, we can hide something inside the puppet when we build one. If there is a hammer inside a joyful character, immediately audience will start wondering why? Is there a secret on his heart? Has he done something bad? We have to be conscious about what symbols we use and what do they mean. How do they

contribute to our story? When we create figures on stage, we often see the materials already used before in some kind of context. Later when we use them for creating figures, the former information can have a comment on the created figures. For instance, in the show "Opus nr.7" the created figures were created by throwing black paint on the walls. This black paint came from buckets that had been standing on the floor the whole first scene. During the first scene there was a lady cleaning the dirty floor. The black paints in the buckets presented the dirty cleaning water. Later the same black paint was used to create pictures of Jews. Audience could make their own associations between dirty water and Jews. Also in Laura Hallantie's graduation work "Gelsomina" all the puppets are built from old cans and cutlery that are introduced during the first scene. They come from Zampano's suitcase and are empty and worthless. So, the material we use can add a layer of information to the puppet.

Different materials have different qualities. Therefore it is good to know what kind of character do we need, so we can choose right material, or we can take a particular material and see what kind of character it could be? For example in "Gelsomina" we needed a puppet for Zampano who was a strong and determined man. Zampano's puppet was built from rusty old metal because he had seen the world, he was experienced. His metal corpus gave him rigid nature - he was a strict and hardworking man who didn't compromise. The qualities of the material help us to show visually what kind of character our puppet is. Also food can be used for doing puppets. For instance, for creating a stereotypical middle-aged woman uses Stephane Georis a toast with chocolate mousse. In the show "Puppets in the drawer" he plays a scene with two toasts, an old couple. One of them has two large dots of chocolate for eyes that start to drip down during the scene when the toast cries that "I'm not pretty", which she obviously isn't with her dripping make-up. Food can be eaten, of course. This can create very strong connection between the manipulator and the puppet. In the end of this scene also one lover (the

actor) will eat the other lover (the toast lady). This situation for the puppets is as cruel as death for humans, because there is no way back. Yet, everybody laughs. Improvised puppet is perfect for using materials that doesn't last long like chocolate mousse, clay, ice etc. Because the life of the puppet is short and every show there will be a new one. Also the soft consistence of the material will give nice alive affects. The chocolate is dripping, ice is melting etc. - activities that happen without manipulation and are pleasant to watch, especially when they are metaphorical.

The improvised puppet has often quite simple construction. One of the reasons is the limited time for building on stage. Another reason is that the puppet is just a representational image, subjective memory picture or imagination of the artist. It is not a puppet that would exist independently in its own universe. Much of the life the puppet has will just come from the artist because he believes in the puppet. Therefore also we won't question if this puppet is alive enough because we understand that this puppet is just an illustration of an idea he wants to play with. Therefore we forgive the imperfections for the puppets that are created on the stage more easily. That is why the ready-made puppets often need to be manipulated better, have a proper construction or distinct voice so that audience could really feel that they are independent characters who live in their own complete world regardless from the actor. Even though the manipulator has still the power to just "kill" the puppet, he cannot do it because it would look bad. For owning complete power over the puppet the artist has to also create the puppet. Who gives life, can also take it back. Improvised puppets for this reason can be fragile in their construction.

I think the material-language remains the same whether it is the ready-made puppet or the improvised one. Metal is metal and it has its nature. Of course, the selection of materials might vary in both cases, because normal puppets have to be strong and survive numerous performances while the improvised puppets are temporary and need exists only for

short time. This allows us to use more fragile materials. Improvised puppet has more freedom to play with the metaphorical meanings of the material. It allows us to use the materials firstly as everyday objects; to establish an everyday connection between the actor and the object. And then we can use these objects for building our puppet that will immediately have a pretext.

4.3 Focus

When we build the puppet we have to be aware of the moment when the puppet is born. We have to decide precisely at what moment the puppet will become alive. Will it happen when we attach the eyes? How do we start to manipulate him? Often, it works well when we first present the new character. We show it to the audience. Next it takes the first breath and looks around. One thing at the time, because if we build and start to move and shout around with the puppet in the same moment, we won't get our audience to follow us. They would be confused: "What just happened?" When we have properly introduced our character we have to know who is on the focus – the manipulator or the puppet. We have to direct the focus of the audience. The basic rule is to look only at the puppet when he is active - this makes the audience also look at the puppet. If the actor and puppet exist both, we have to divide the whole show into bits. We have to know concretely when the puppet is in focus and when the actor. For the actor it means that he has to move swiftly between two roles: the character and the manipulator.

4.4 Dramaturgy

The biggest challenge for the improvised puppet is to create the link between the puppet world and drama world. In a performance the improvised puppet has to justify its appearance. Puppets and drama theatre are two different realities and therefore we have to find ways to blend

them together. Puppets need to have a good reason for appearing. People don't believe in fairies and ghosts materializing as puppets on stage, they need something that they can believe in.

How to introduce the puppet for the spectators? What kind of dramaturgical build up could lead to the improvised puppet? In the show "Gelsomina" the puppets appear because the main character Gelsomina starts to remember old times. Puppets appear only to illustrate her flow of thoughts. Audience follows the character from the start: Zampano has left her alone, there is nowhere to go and there are only their old things which will remind her of their story. Everyone has remembered people and old stories in their heads, therefore it is familiar for the audience and they can follow logically the character's way into building the puppet, they will understand why the puppet came. We all have our inner imagination and we can relate to this. Our thoughts come to us spontaneously. Also in the performance we create the feeling as if the idea of building a puppet came to us spontaneously. Of course, we can build a puppet also just because we need one. Like professor Olaf Stevenson does in the show "Olaf: Le polichineur de tiroirs". He wants to tell us a philosophical story about why love is like bread and therefore he needs to build puppets from bread. So he does it. But for this, he establishes from the start of the show the code: he will take different objects from the drawer and turn them into puppets. When he creates his first character, the penguin, he also comments himself: "I'm stupid", which will give the audience the freedom to laugh, because it is strange what he does. From that point on people know that this is the way characters will be born. So, if we want to create numerous characters on stage it is good to establish a code for the audience in the beginning. Sometimes the building of a puppet can also be abstract. In the "D'Etats de femmes" by Company S'Appelle Reviens the artists starts to model with the clay. This activity is normal and we follow what he is doing, at some point, when the figure is formed and he continues to model it, we see how it moves and became alive in his hands. Gradually the artists went from modeling into manipulation, giving

focus to the puppet. This lasted only for some moments and then already the image was destroyed. There are definitely numerous more ways about how to serve your puppet to the audience. I think it is important to introduce to the audience how you will build the puppet. Gelsomina joins old cans together until it turns into a puppet. Olaf Stevenson puts together marzipan balls that will then be shaped into a penguin. The audience is taken by hand, step by step until they are confronted with a figure. Also it is important to comment (usually) your work, to step out of the role for a second and just comment the puppet you have made. Olaf Stevenson says he's being stupid while Gelsomina is proud about building a metal puppet in three seconds. This will affirm to the audience that the artist knows that he or she has built a puppet and it is perfectly normal, there are no 'magical' ghosts who just 'appeared' from nowhere.

So the audience feels comfortable when they understand that the artist is perfectly aware of the characters he or she has built. They know that everything the characters will do on stage is just the fantasy of the artist. They are like thoughts that come and go. It can happen that thoughts can take power over us. Therefore also puppets are allowed to disobey sometimes.

5 FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS AND THE IMPROVISED PUPPET

I often end up with stories that involve the improvised puppet. I try to understand what kinds of questions bring me to this. How the improvised puppet responds to our fundamental needs?

I like to create the puppet out of some existing material. Like the letter or old cans. In this way the shows have been about human, one character has turned her thoughts, memories into puppets. I have tried to understand why I like to do it. Why I don't choose ordinary puppets instead? I like professor Mircea Eliade's theory: *It is impossible to overemphasize the paradox represented by every hierophany - e.g. manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. (The sacred and the profane, Mircea Eliade, 11)* I think I have been searching for this connection between reality and fantasy. The fundamental need to experience something sacred in our ordinary life might have been the reason for improvising puppets. My teacher Rene Baker sent us to flea-market to find stories. The most amazing thing happens when you walk between the stuff and suddenly you notice this lonely teapot there. You go up to the teapot and it tells you his story. This is the moment when the connection is born. I think I have been searching exactly for this moment. From this perfectly normal situation, you standing in front of a teapot, you can start to build the whole world of the teapot. I think the improvised puppet responds to our basic need to experience something sacred; something different from our normal profane life.

5.1 The artists' point of view

The depth of your reasons for action influences the quality of the act as well as the energy of engagement. The why determines the values of the what. For this reason, it is essential to examine the reasons that motivate you. (And then you act, Anne Bogart, 43). What could be the possible motivations for artists to create puppets on stage?

As we know already, in the 20th century painters started to animate their own paintings on stage. This was a response to the general changes in the art field. Art and theatre became more subjective. One of the artists who started with this kind of experiments was Joan Baixas, painter, dramatist and director from Spain. One of his first experiments was "Mori el Merma" with huge white puppets that were painted by Joan Miró. Later he started to use live painting on stage. He paints with earth and sand on a large canvas that is lit from behind. The scenes of painting can sometimes last for up to 15 minutes. The painting is transforming all the time. New images are drawn on top of each other. Different characters appear with different voices, who eat each other, chase or fall in love. Sometimes he illustrates the story that he is telling and sometimes he lets things happen on the canvas, so that audience can follow the story just by observing the pictures. When I asked Joan why he loves to paint on the stage and he told me that it is pleasurable to paint on the stage because he knows that lots of people will see his art. Paintings might often be left in oblivion. The performance is like a live gallery. Different pictures change all the time on one canvas. Even though, in the end of the show we can't talk about a ready painting for sale because the canvas looks like dirty used wall-paper. His paintings need the show and the story to be alive. It is connecting the beauty of theatre and fine art – for a moment we share something magical and then it is gone again. This moment will make the painting very valuable. Later it will exist only in our memories and not on our walls. Therefore a painting or a sculpture that is made in

10 minutes on stage every night will be vibrant of life under the spectators' eyes. For an artist it is of course important to share his art with a larger number of people. Even though, on stage, we cannot talk about ordinary painting because, artist cannot achieve a perfect image there because of the limited time. And another thing to be aware of is that on the stage the action (painting) will become important. How you paint? Are you a character? What is your attitude? Therefore the outcome, the painting itself loses its importance. Personally, I feel that it can be rather challenging for an artist to change his/her focus from the outcome to the process. In the end the show is more important than your piece of art. If it is a good show, the audience forgives you the worst painting or sculpture you have ever done.

Still, why do artists like to create on stage? Another answer comes from Stephane Georis from the company Chemine De Terre: *"I take an everyday object and I transform it (as little as possible: just 2 eyes) and I give life to that thing. Then comes magic and puppetry: a dead thing becomes alive. I love it because it is very simple. So that everyone would think: "Wow! I could do it also!" And that's wonderful! I feel (any puppeteer feels that way) like god. And in these moments of creating a puppet on the stage, I AM god: I give life to someone! A moment later, I am god again: I can kill him! Then he goes back to his normal life..."* This takes us back to our fundamental needs. Humankind's basic need to understand the phenomena on God, to play God themselves. Harold Segel: *The fascination with puppets (...) reveals a yearning to play god, to master life. By constructing replicas of human beings whose moments they can exert complete power over, artists play at being gods instead of beings merely playthings of the gods. (quoted in Penny Francis, 145)* I think the improvised puppet gives the pleasure to see how we can control our everyday life. An improvised puppet can get a start from a scratch and our world is full of scratches. Anything can turn into a puppet and obey to us. I think it draws a parallel for nowadays people whose hands are full of work and we try to cope with everything. The improvised puppet gives us the satis-

fraction of seeing how in the end everything is under our control. I believe this might one of the reasons why the improvised puppet has appeared.

To sum up, I cannot say more than that there are as many reasons for creating puppets as there are different artists who do so. Yet, I believe deep in our hearts the main fundamental needs are driving us.

5.2 Audience point of view.

What kind of experience does the improvised puppet offer for the audience?

I think that the improvised puppet is the integral part between drama and puppetry. It searches for ways to connect these two realities. How from a normal situation something surreal can be born? *The human experience craves an occasional exposure to magic. The desire to be in the presence of enchantment is basic. To watch one substance transform into another in front of our very eyes! Magic is based upon the belief that unseen forces and spirits permeate (inhabit) all things in the universe. To watch somebody transform gives us hope for our own personal transubstantiation (transformation). The theatre is an ideal vehicle for magic because it can ask an audience to make an investment of imagination. (And then you act, Anne Bogart, 89.)* The improvised puppet invites people to believe in surreal happenings. Usually in the performance the situation rolls up from perfectly normal situation into a wild game with puppets. Often the improvised puppets are built from usual things that are familiar to the audience. Therefore audience members already have a personal connection with the material. The more unbelievable it is to see these things turning alive. I believe nowadays people (especially myself) are questioning the world around us. What is real and what is surreal? Therefore it is interesting observe how we believe in dancing bananas and tin-can heroes. I believe the improvised puppet once again responds to our fundamental needs in life: *the manifestation of something of a*

wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our neutral "profane" world. (The sacred and the profane, Mircea Eliade, 11).

Also, it is pleasurable to experience something unique. An improvised puppet is unique because (in most cases) it is built anew in every show. This makes every performance unique. That particular audience will see the show with exactly this puppet and the same kind of puppet will never happen again. The bulletism image of the Jew might not have 4 dripping-down-legs as it had in this show, I saw. Even though it does not change the story nor the feeling, but it still gives a sensation of seeing something unique.

I personally enjoy watching other people being busy with something: working, building, painting, drawing, anything. Like children who learn through watching, we keep on learning through all our life. Therefore I believe there is a special pleasure to see somebody modeling or painting on stage. Just the action itself is interesting for us, especially when there is an outcome – a puppet is being built.

I think the improvised puppet gives the audience the possibility to be creative themselves because puppets that are built quickly on stage need usually some extra imagination. If the puppet is not perfect we will ourselves find a perfect character in our head. Therefore the improvised puppet can also be interpreted in many different ways. When the puppet is built from everyday things (like the cans) it gives the audience the freedom to find metaphors. Most importantly it is transforming our everyday reality. The improvised puppet gives us hope for the transformation of our lives as well.

6 CONCLUSION

Improvised puppet appeared in the 50'ies and it is still a developing form of puppetry. The appearance of the puppet was a response to a changing mind-set of thoughts the artists had during the last century. French director Grégoire Callies expressed his opinion that the theatre with objects and puppets was more relevant than it was 50 years ago. *I get the impression that I could link this change to the emergence of new concepts, new thoughts, like those of Deleuze and Foucault, even to the evolution of modern philosophy. It is not simply linked to the return of the barbaric, to the end of certain humanism, to another way of thinking about the burden of life and the role of death. The puppet, after all, speaks only of that, of the relationship between life and death. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 38.)* The improvised puppet it created on stage by the actor and he can also be killed the same way. The nature of these puppets are very fragile – they are like thoughts that come and go. They appear and enchant the audience and then they are gone. The artist, who builds the puppet on stage, is the god in this performance. There are many fundamental questions that the improvised puppet touches. The improvised puppet is a telling metaphore for God and Man relationship; it makes us believe in the transformation of our everyday reality etc. *In modern times when many by no means all societies have “freed” themselves from the animistic beliefs, the freedom can seem superficial when confronted with the animation, the apparent stirring of life in a “dead” object. (Puppetry, Penny Francis, 6).*

The improvised puppet is usually uilt by one character, this creates a strong conenction between these two charaters. This enables the artist to create very subjective performances. It is like a tool of self-exploration. The improvised puppet creates the illusion of being a thought. It comes to life only because of the artist. It does not have a life of its own. That makes them very personal and subjective. Therefore also the appear-

ance of the puppets varies a lot. The construction will depend on what idea the puppet has to represent. It gives a lot of freedom to play with different material, different objects. It gives the freedom to find metaphores and interesting dramaturgies.

SOURCE MATERIAL

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Performances:

- "D'ÉTATS DE FEMMES" BY COMPANY S'APPELLE REVIENS
- "Opus nr.7" by Dimitry Krymov
- "Zoé" by Joan Baixas
- "Olaf: Le polichineur de tiroirs" by Company Chemins de Terre
- "Gelsomina" graduation work by Laura Hallantie

