

**PUPPET THEATRE: IN THE BEGINNING WERE PUPPETS**  
**An Interdisciplinary Conference held at Salzburg University**  
**in Collaboration with the Salzburg Marionette Theatre**  
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**ABSTRACTS**

**Mali SKOTHEIM | University of London / Princeton**

**“The Puppet and the Puppet-Master in Ancient Greece: Fragments of an Art Form”**

Of all performance traditions of antiquity, puppetry has attracted perhaps the least scholarly attention, yet, from the fragmentary evidence which has survived, it is possible to make a number of observations about the real practice of puppetry, beyond its metaphorical usage in philosophical texts. In this paper, I will address the inter-relationship of the physical form of ancient Greek puppets, performance context, and the aesthetic of *thauma* (amazement) associated with ancient puppetry. Some aspects of the physical form of ancient puppets may be deduced by comparing literary references to puppets with surviving examples of terracotta jointed dolls. Many of these dolls have a hole at the top of the head in which a rod would have been inserted as a stabilizing mechanism, and holes in their hands for strings, similar to modern Sicilian puppets. Rather than ball-and-socket joints, which would allow for a full range of motion, the dolls' joints are like hinges, allowing for movement on one plane (up and down, rather than side-to-side). Aristotle describes puppeteers pulling a string to move every part of the puppet, referring, probably, to the anchor point on the puppet's head (*On the Cosmos* 398b).

Aside from the shadow-puppets referenced in Plato's allegory of the cave (Plato, *Republic* 514b), most ancient Greek puppets seem to have been marionettes, as puppeteers were known as *neurospastai* ("string-pullers") in ancient Greek. We know the names of only three professional *neurospastai*: Potheinas, and perhaps Eurycleides (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 1.19e) who performed in Athens in the 4th c. BCE, and a puppeteer whose name ended in -sion from the end of a list of victors on Delos from 169 BCE (*IG XI* 2.133). Antiochus IX Philopator (ruled 115-95 BCE), also practiced puppeteering (Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 34/35, 34.1).

Puppeteers performed in a variety of contexts, which included public theaters, during religious festivals, where they were hired to supplement competitions in drama and music. This is documented in inscriptions relating to festivals. Like other hired entertainers, such as trick magicians, acrobats, mimes, and pantomimes, puppeteers were known as *thaumatopoi* ("marvel-makers"). *Thauma* is the wonder experienced at things which the viewer cannot comprehend, which seem impossible or defy expectation, and is often (as in the case of puppetry) associated with *mimesis* ("imitation").

*Thauma* is directed at puppets because they are inanimate objects, and yet, appear to move as living beings in the miniature theater, an artful imitation of life.

**Mareike GAUBITZ | Deutsches Forum für Figurentheater und Puppenspielkunst, Bochum**  
**“Growing up! Thoughts on a History of Puppetry”**

Puppetry in its contemporary form is a complex that creates a whole art form including theatre with objects, material, things – and in wider definitions even visual theatre and new media. Searching for a notion for this complex, *Theatre of Things* seems to be the best and widest one. This complex, in its convertibility, development and dynamic, is comparable to a living and breathing organism. Thinking metaphorically about the way a puppet grows up is indeed comparable to the life cycle of a human being: When was it born? Who were its parents? How did it grow? Is it grown up yet?

With this metaphorical intellectual game it is possible to discuss history, philosophies, aesthetics and dramaturgy of the *Theatre of Things* from different angles and in bigger correlations.

For example: sources on the birth of a *Theatre of Things* are very rare. We have some documents in the middle ages, testimonials of the moving theatres, the troupes playing at fairs, etc. and one stone picture from the Maya culture showing evidently a glove puppet player in a ritual context.

But imagine when people were living in caves: they had already developed speech and artistic crafting. So, people were sitting in their cave and there was a massive storm outside. They ate, they satisfied all their needs – people start getting bored! So, consequently, they started telling tales and stories. The lights of the fireplaces were meanwhile throwing pictures on the wall, moving pictures, pictures that could be manipulated with hands and objects.

It is quite possible – and thinking about this hypothesis makes it increasingly evident – that the birthplace of the *Theatre of Things* lies within the birth of humankind or civilisation itself.

**Hayley FENN | Harvard / King's College London**  
**“Highly Strung Vocalities: Marionette Opera, Sound Technologies, and the Poetics of Synchronization”**

Marionettes have been singing opera for centuries. Composers since Haydn have deemed them worthy performers of original works, while *Marionettenspieler*—the name given in German-speaking lands to puppeteers of marionettes—have long considered these wooden homunculi to be ideal for performing canonic operas. The aesthetic, socio-political, and technological traits that result from the fusion of a pervasively elitist entertainment and a popular commercial enterprise have left marionette-theater opera on the outskirts of conventional opera-historical enquiry. Yet, it is marionette opera's very cultural hybridity that questions the givens associated with its constituent genres. Today's paper confronts head on the phenomenological paradox engendered when two particular givens collide: the operatic voice and the marionette's voicelessness.

When marionettes sing opera, *they* of course sing nothing at all. As a consequence of this apparent muteness, scholars have rendered the marionette a vehicle of primarily visual expression. To consider it mute, however, is to misunderstand the nature of the marionette's vocality. In today's performances of marionette opera, the specific human singer—with his or her fully embodied voice in a recognizable body—is displaced by a multi-part performance network involving several distinct media and material objects. Out of this assemblage emerges a voice that confounds conventional understandings of audio-visual relations, in particular the concept of synchronisation.

In this paper, I present my concept of the "performance network" as a productive and insightful lens for parsing puppet-musical encounters. Drawing together my research in theaters across Germany and Austria, philosophical reflections on puppetry, and musicological scholarship on puppetry-adjacent topics, such as audio-visual culture and organology, I argue that the performance network of marionette opera generates a complex "poetics of synchronization" from which the gravity-defying vocalities associated with these non-singing singers emerge. By grappling with the vocal performances of these most unlikely of opera stars, I posit the marionette as a novel—and necessary—lens onto perennially slippery issues in opera studies (such as voice, phenomenology, analysis of staging, and media-theoretical conundrums) that are current touchstones in musicological inquiries concerning music's materiality.

**Alisa RAKUL | Paris 8 / Moscow State Linguistics University**

**"Who is Talking? The Voice as the Main Character of Maeterlinck's Plays for Marionettes"**

The theme of the inevitable destiny and character victims of Maeterlinck's plays has been attested by critics. Traditionally puppets are linked to the mystical interpretation of human life. In our paper we suggest going deeper into the anthropological problem of the voice put by Maeterlinck's texts even before their dramatic realization on stage.

We will take examples of the plays conceived by Maeterlinck for the marionettes and staged recently in France using puppets: "*Alladine and Palomides*" (by Olivier Dhénin, 2017), "*Interior*" (by Nâzim Boudjenah, 2017, "*The Death of Tintagiles*" (by Denis Podalydès in 2015 and 2016) and the play version of "*Pelléas and Mélisande*" (by Alain Batis in 2017).

Contemporary staging mixes puppets' and actors' play, which acoustically creates an atmosphere of stereo voice presence, making the voice a special character acting a part. At the end of the drama for marionettes, *Alladine and Palomides*, the didascalía indicates that the characters are transformed into their voices: Alladine's Voice talking to Palomides' Voice. Conversely, the characters of *Interior* are not heard behind the window glass; however their silent communication is exhibited and amplified by the comments of the characters who see them.

At the same time the scenography answers the message of Maeterlinck's texts by drawing attention to the listening of the endless discourse that necessarily includes silence. Maeterlinck's plays create the notion of *transsubject* voice that penetrates the characters without stopping on any of them. Maeterlinck's poetic project is realized thanks to puppets, free of specific personal traits, so called *disindividualized individuals*.

The marionette theatre poses an important philosophical and discourse question: Who is talking? Especially when a puppet permits an acoustic (voice) and visual (body) dissociation. The spectator is invited to participate in the situation when he simultaneously sees and hears contradictory things that he can't explain still believing in their plausibility. This visual and audio disconnection through a puppet helps to get rid of realism, and suggests another way of seeing and hearing.

On the one hand, a puppet is close to our ontological manner of thinking and the human conception of the world that we conceive through different roles and games. On the other hand, in the symbolist theatre the puppet destabilizes the usual order of things and permits another point of view that shows that the voice is the continuation of the body; paradoxically it is the body out of the body, going through space and time.

**Rachel HERSCHMAN | New York University / University of Washington, Seattle**  
**“Rundfunkkasperle: The Radio Puppetry of Liesel Simon and Walter Benjamin”**

In Germany's Weimar Republic (1919–1933), innovations in new media technologies allowed puppeteers to transform their art for the modern era. Puppetry played an integral and now well-known role in the history of cinema—in stop-motion animations featuring figurines and shadow puppets, for example—yet puppets were also used to help other types of media find audiences. Radio broadcasting was a new form of mass communication during this period and listenership increased dramatically in a relatively short period of time: Although entertainment radio in Germany only began in late 1923, the number of radio subscribers grew from one hundred thousand in 1924, to two million in 1928, and eventually to more than four million in 1932. Puppets were a part of this story almost from the very beginning, and this paper presents the surprising histories of two radio Kasper performers—Liesel Simon (1887–1958) and Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)—and what a professional puppeteer and a philosopher may teach us about the relationship of puppetry and radio.

Both Simon and Benjamin put their own distinctive spin on Kasper—Germany's famous tramp-like everyman trickster puppet character—and used him as a way to introduce new audiences to radio. Liesel Simon was a famous figure in her own day, perhaps even more popular with radio listeners than Walter Benjamin: A puppeteer in Frankfurt who began performing Kasper glove puppet shows around 1917 or 1918, she established her own theater company, found growing success throughout the early 1920s, and cultivated a new, completely original approach to the art form for the radio. She frequently led children's programming on the radio station Frankfurt Rundfunk, broadcasting on the show *Die Stunde der Jugend* starting in 1926. The philosopher and media theorist Walter Benjamin also contributed to this same children's program between 1927 and 1933. Although better known for his association with the Frankfurt School, Benjamin presented around eighty children's broadcasts for the airwaves; while most were readings rather than theatrical presentations, he was particularly proud of his only puppet play, one intended for both children and adults: *Radau um Kasperl* (1932). Much of early radio was performed live and recordings are quite rare, yet extant records of Simon's puppet programs and two substantial audio fragments of

Benjamin's broadcast survive, and together with other archival documents, these materials offer a unique opportunity to consider this chapter of media history—its promises and anxieties.

**Wolfgang BÜCHEL | Bonn / Weimar**  
**“An Unexplainable Small Literary Phenomenon:  
To Apostrophize a Drama as a Puppet Show”**

A doll is an anthropomorphic object on a technical and often artistic level. The decisive factor in recognizing a resemblance to human form in a doll is that the viewer inevitably inspires it (Rilke). Their shape causes the attribution of human characteristics. It can remain statuary or be effectively set in dramatic action. Dolls can be statues and actors or are strikingly close to both. Even without giving it a human voice, a doll can act, silently, pantomimically.

Given the persuasive power that a puppet can convey in a dramatic manner, there is no need to prove that any role that an active subject can bring to life can also master a puppet. Anthropomorphism achieves what is necessary, while the doll remains true to its constitution. What the living actor communicates better, the doll offers with its soul, but it hits the dramatic essence. This raises the question of the literary genre of puppetry. Since dolls can play everything or everything can be transferred to dolls – what distinguishes a piece for dolls? Can it really only be played by dolls? Let's test the pieces for puppets such as *Doctor Faust's Puppet Show*, Maeterlinck's *Death of Tintagiles* and *At Home*, Schnitzler's puppet trilogy, Eichendorff's *Incognito*, Arnim's *Appelmänner* and Schink's *Hanswurst von Salzburg*.

Without the apostrophication, none of them would be identifiable as puppet shows. Each of these regular dramas can be staged by dolls as well as by acting subjects. That means, conversely, that every other drama is also open to dolls.

It is revealing when actors act together with puppets. If these are suggestive dolls, the impression is breathtaking. Even if the viewer sees the puppeteer, you are convinced of the soul of the puppet – against better and more obvious knowledge.

The doll, in its anthropomorphic character on the one hand and the human insurmountable tendency to anthropomorphism on the other hand, thwarts any clarification; on the contrary, both explain to a certain extent that there is no explanation. Not explainable, therefore, not as unreachable because it is too difficult, but not explainable based on evidence. An apparent mysteriousness that the exact view resolves.

Although the dramatic depiction using puppets has to do without pathognomics (according to Lavater), it conveys the essence of the drama, provided the puppets are suggestive. The doll sets the anthropomorphic; anthropomorphism suits you and the player gives it the rounding-off necessary to be an actor. Every drama can be a puppet show just like every puppet show is open to actors.

**Piero CORBELLA | Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figli, Milan**  
**“The Marionette Company Carlo Colla & Sons”**

For more than two centuries, the Marionette Company Carlo Colla & Sons has represented one of the reference points of the tradition of the string marionettes from Northern Italy. From the beginning in the early 19th century, its history has been strongly connected with the culture and the society of the time. It performed the function of Mass Media *ante litteram* and today the Company is the ambassador in the world of the Italian theatrical culture, together with the Teatro alla Scala and the Piccolo Teatro of Milan – Theater of Europe, the two best known theatres of Milan with which the company actively collaborates.

For over a century and a half, Carlo Colla & Sons has been a "family" company, in which tradition has passed from father to son; today, after the death of Eugenio Monti Colla, the last of the family's puppeteer, the Company is composed by people who in no way have a puppetry tradition behind them. The members of the new “family” which formed around the pupils of Eugenio Monti Colla (who learned from him, from the old generations Colla and from the old puppeteers of different formations now disappeared the rudiments of the "profession") has been created by shared choices, passions and the desire to entertain and fascinate the public today as it was done in the past.

The group consists of 15 people who work on the stage to move the puppets but also realize, in the internal craft workshops, everything that is necessary for the new productions (puppets, scenes, costumes, tools, wigs etc.). Special attention is given to the transmission of tradition. The inclusion of young people, such as interns, trainees and apprentices, becomes the way to prepare for the future of the Company.

The opening of the new Museum of the Figure Theater of Milan (MuTeF), aims to be a stimulus for the use of the tradition (materials, documents, historical memory and daily practice) not only for exhibition purposes but also as a basis for the formation of new generations of puppeteers. The archives of materials and documents, under construction, with special software designed and realized by us, in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Lombardy Region and the Municipality of Milan, aims to fix the historical memory for those who will continue the work after us.

Tradition and innovation go hand in hand within the Company. Tradition is nothing more than a successful innovation.

**Emily LEQUESNE | Bath Spa University**  
**“Puppet Theatre Dramaturgy and the Uncanny”**

Puppets are inherently uncanny. Objects manipulated to appear alive, are both familiar and unfamiliar, disturbing yet fascinating. This paper explores literary dramaturgy, phenomenology and the uncanny within puppet theatre.

Written in 1906, ten years before Freud's exploration of the uncanny, Ernst Jentsch discussed the term in “The psychology of the Uncanny”:

*'Among all the physical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate.'*<sup>1</sup>

We read character in puppetry visually. In human theatre, we 'read' character equally if not more so, from dialogue as much as visual impact. The puppet is not a simulacrum, it is only ever itself, and this can be an uncanny experience for the spectator.

What are the questions to ask, to explore the uncanniness of a puppetry performance or a puppetry script? Can the uncanny be pre-supposed? Can one write the uncanny onto the page in a puppetry script? Does a phenomenological approach to puppetry render it uncanny?

My PhD research explores the possibility and practicalities of writing for puppetry as a lone playwright with no pre-existing puppet designs and no collaborative devising. Existing texts written 'for puppets' often include no specifics to make them any different to a human script. This leads to the puppeteers and directors becoming literary and production dramaturgs, trying to find a way to perform the text that unlocks the puppetry implied by the writer. This is what Patrice Pavis has called '*participating in dramaturgic choices and changes*'.<sup>2</sup> Rather than solely focussing on the creative skill of bringing a puppet character and narrative to life.

What is the dramaturgy of the uncanny? What does the puppet director and puppeteer need to see on the page to elevate the written text to a place of inspiring and useful play script, and can a visceral or uncanny experience be written into that?

**David KRYCH | University of Vienna / Danube University Krems**  
**“The Tenth Muse’: Jan Sztudynger’s *Marionettes* (1938)”**

Jan Izydor Sztudynger’s 1938 book *Marionettes (Marionetki)* is a remarkable piece of scholarship. A practitioner and a theorist in puppet theatre, Sztudynger (1904-1970) brings forward an impressive argument and highlights the fundamental problems of the theorisation of puppet theatre. This paper delivers an insight in the yet untranslated study, focusing on three core topics:

1. Media criticism as culture criticism: Although Sztudynger’s book was already published in the late 1930s, his analysis of puppet theatre is surprisingly ageless. Indeed, what the author has to say about his research subject seems up-to-date even today. Then and now, puppets are spoken about as an apparently marginal phenomenon. By criticising or devaluing other forms of media, the author formulates a peculiar cultural critique and elevates puppet theatre to the status of the “Tenth Muse”.
2. The arrangement of things: Specific recurring puppets have a long and intricate history that date back to ancient rituals and religious practices. In a microcosmic manner Sztudynger’s work reflects the macrocosm of puppet theatre, which accentuates the fundamental challenges of theatre historiography and theory.

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<sup>1</sup> Jentsch, Ernst, On the Psychology of the Uncanny. Translated by Roy Sellars [http://www.art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Jentsch\\_uncanny.pdf](http://www.art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Jentsch_uncanny.pdf) (Accessed 10/10/17) 8.

<sup>2</sup> Pavis quoted in Turner, Cathy & Behrndt, Synne K, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 193.

3. The aesthetics of ensouling: A crucial point of Sztudynger's argument is the aesthetic classification of puppets, marionettes etc. This concerns both practical and theoretical spheres. Negotiating questions about the relation between realism and imagination, a typical topos in European theatre history, the author emphasises the combination of subject and object, which seems like an anticipation of Michail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque.

**Erwin POKORNY | Academy of Fine Arts Vienna / University of Innsbruck**  
**"The Magician as a Puppeteer"**

In 1564 Pieter Bruegel the Elder made a drawing for Pieter van der Heyden's engraving "The Fall of the Magician Hermogenes", an incident from the legend of St. James the Apostle. Both the drawing and some prints have been preserved. Below the print we read the caption "Idem impetravit a deo ut magus a demonibus discerperetur", which means: He obtained precisely this from God (his prayer) that the magician should be torn to pieces by demons. This statement is in contrast to the *Legenda aurea* in which the Apostle prevents the magician from being killed by them. Bruegel's intention was more likely to illustrate the superiority of the Christian faith over magic and witchcraft. Interestingly, Bruegel seems to have invented his drawing without any prototype but was obviously inspired by Hieronymus Bosch and his followers who loved to create strange demons. Bruegel, however, intermingled witchcraft and real magical tricks. So, both his drawing and the engraving are full not only of demons but men doing acrobatic performances or magical tricks, which was quite novel in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At the top left, in front of a poster similar to those used by charlatans, we see a man in back view who seems to be talking with his hand puppet.

This puppeteer has a large bag hanging from his shoulder, a kind of attribute of conjurers. Across his chest and back he wears a metal chain of heraldic badges which was a widespread accessory of jesters north of the Alps. This chain fits with the fool's cap worn by the hand puppet. The conversation between puppeteer and puppet, together with the jester-like nature of the puppet remind one of a jester's scepter, the so-called marotte. Jesters sometimes used their marotte as a rod puppet, probably talking with it like a ventriloquist. So the question arises why did Bruegel combine legerdemain and folly in a puppeteer? What was the meaning?

Early puppet theaters were a funfair entertainment often held in the vicinity of traveling fairground artists like minstrels, street musicians, comedians, clowns, acrobats, charlatans and conjurers. The engraving from 1565 is full of those little respected and dubious professions. Assumedly, a puppeteer could have enjoyed a kind of fool's freedom, and took over the role of the jester, the buffoon, making crude, anarchical or satirical jokes. Street theater and puppet theater existed side by side for performing crude jokes and popular comedies. Ultimately, the crude clowns were domesticated in child-friendly circus or puppet shows like "Punch and Judy" or the German "Kasperltheater" in which the German "Hans Wurst" (Austrian "Wurstl") has lived on until today.

Bruegel has depicted magical tricks which we don't know if they have ever been illustrated ever before: Two demons perform the cups and balls trick, others seem to have knives stuck in a hand or nose, a nail through the tongue, or a padlock through the lips. At bottom left of the engraving we see

a table with a wide tablecloth hanging down to the floor. On that table lies the body of a beheaded man next to a sword and the head presented on a flat bowl. The combination of these objects corresponds exactly to the trick of the decapitation of St. John, first described and illustrated in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London 1584).

In this very context we can link the puppeteer, dressed like a jester and conjurer, to a special magic trick in which the magician makes his audience believe that a little doll he presents at first like a hand puppet then completely disappears. Both the disappearing doll and the trick are called *Bonus Genius*, *Nuntius Invisibilis* or *Hiccius Doctius*, and are explained in the first handbook for magicians and illusionists, the *Hocus Pocus Junior* (London 1634).

The etymology of the saying "hocus pocus" may help us to understand Bruegel's combining the roles of the conjurer and the jester in the figure of the puppeteer. Since 1694 "hocus pocus" has been explained as "a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the priests of the Church of Rome in their trick of transsubstantiation." Whereas this would fit, it seems more likely that another meaning derives from a proverb on folly in 16th century Italy. The first part of the proverb "Ocus bocus quinque reque, qui nace mato no guarisce may" sounds like the senseless jabber of madmen, and the second means: Whoever is born crazy never heals. Maybe „ocus bocus“ is a corruption of words in different languages referring to the fooling of the gullible viewers by the conjurer's sleight of hands. The first word could refer to the eye of the viewer deriving from the Latin "oculus", Italian "occhio", or Slovenian "oco". The second word "bocus" could derive from the Italian word "poco" (little) or the Slovenian "pookus" (aftertaste). Also the German/Dutch/English word "Buch"/"boek"/"book" could be a possible source, since the German satirical book "Visiones de Don Quevedo / Wunderliche und Warhafftige Gesichte Philanders von Sittewalt", printed in Strassburg 1642, tells a story about a printmaker burning in hell for selling sinful books and introduced himself as "Ocus Bocus". The sum of all those indications suggests that *Hocus Pocus* is originally connected with conjurers, frauds and fools. So, the activity of Bruegel's puppeteer, talking to his hand puppet like a jester to his marotte, but carrying a conjurer's bag and surround by demons, indicates that a similar trick like the disappearing *Bonus Genius* had already been performed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, at least in the Spanish occupied Netherlands.

**Antonia NAPP | TheaterFigurenMuseum Lübeck**

**Sonja RIEHN | TheaterFigurenMuseum Lübeck**

**Stephan SCHLAFKE | KOBALT Figurentheater Lübeck**

**Annika SCHULTE | TheaterFigurenMuseum Lübeck**

**Silke TECHNAU | KOBALT Figurentheater Lübeck**

**"Scenic Spaces in Museum Spaces? A Work in Progress Report from the Museum of Theater Puppets in Lübeck"**

The fundamental renovation and restructuring of the museum of theatre puppets and the puppet theatre in Lübeck has given rise to the opportunity to intensively investigate the international collection during the construction phase. The museum's collection comprises about 20,000 objects

in the field of puppetry (including theatre puppets, props, stages, posters, musical instruments) from Europe, Africa and Asia. The museum, which was for a long time run as a collector's museum in which sheer mass and variety of the objects were the main exhibition criteria, has now the chance to completely reinvent itself and the art of exhibiting puppet theatre.

The range of the collection is both, a challenge and an opportunity. Without forcing the collection into a coherent narrative, we want to let the objects speak and to explore the conditions and peculiarities of their stage existence as well as the circumstances of their entry into the museum's collection. A transdisciplinary research and curator's team of art, cultural and theatre scientists and puppeteers raises the questions of how the many different phenomena and perspectives inherent in the puppets can be made productive in exhibition situations.

Based on the focus on the puppet theatre stage, we will highlight our key questions in our paper based on four different play forms existing in the museum's collection:

In the area of the traditional glove puppet stages, we follow a theatrical anthropological approach that conceives the stage as a designed concealment of the dancing body, which aims at long-distance effect and sensory recognition in its cultural, theatrical context. To what extent can/must facets such as special rhythms, speech and playing techniques be incorporated in a museum presentation?

How can a particular type of stage (the revolving stage) shape a stage production, both metaphorically and in terms of content, as well as figure dramaturgical ideas? In this case, perspectives of set design and dramaturgy interlock. In some puppet theatre productions one can speak of the stage as a further actor.

The collection also includes a set of objects from the Chinese iron-rod puppet theatre *tiezhi mu'ouxi*: a stage, puppets, boxes, props and musical instruments. However, we do not know much about these objects and the genre at the moment. How do we deal with this imbalance in the exhibition?

Portable animal puppet stages of *sogo bò* in Mali are an example of a fusion of figure and stage: The puppet stages are puppets in themselves and serve as stages for other figures. But how to exhibit this particular play technique when there are only solitary fragments in the collection? How to (if at all?) display culturally sensitive objects?

How do we deal with the quasi-doubled semiophoric structure of the theatrical figures in our collection? To what extent do reconstructions of the theatre experience in the museum depend on context, or are we focusing on the polyphonic nature of theatre figures and objects, of which the performative moment on stage is only one facet?

**Esther FERNÁNDEZ | Rice University / University of California at Davis**

**Jared WHITE | Buena Vista University / University of California at Irvine**

**Jason YANCEY | Grand Valley State University / University of Arizona**

**“When Shadows ‘Move’: From Medieval and Early Modern Puppetry to Contemporary Performance and Outreach”**

The Dragoncillo Puppet Troupe was established in 2018 by Esther Fernández, Jonathan Wade, Jared White, and Jason Yancey. The troupe grew out of a staging of *The Fabulous Johnny Frog* at the 2018

Association for Hispanic and Classical Theater's (AHCT) yearly symposium. This first work, adapted by Jason Yancey, focuses on the popular and controversial Spanish Golden Age buffoon, Juan Rana, and was specially designed as an outreach initiative to bring early modern Spanish theater to schools using shadow puppetry. In this current year, Dr. Yancey has created a new performance based on two farces written by Spanish writer Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645). For this show he has taken black and white cartoons from the 1930s as his main artistic and aesthetic reference while Jonathan Wade and Jared White have worked on several sets of translations in order to subsequently adapt the farces for younger audiences and for this specific animation style.

In April 2019, the troupe received an invitation and sponsorship from The Siglo de Oro Drama Festival coordinated by the National Park Service and their community partners (e.g., Los Paisanos de el Chamizal) to visit several schools in El Paso, Texas. The troupe will also be presenting works at several universities and local schools in the United States and at the Festival de Teatro Clásico in Almagro (Spain) in 2020. Since all the members of the troupe are university professors specializing in Spanish early modern theater, we have conceived of this initiative in close relation to puppetry practices of pre-modern Iberia. Whereas shadow puppets are the most convenient way for us to put on self-contained shows with minimal rehearsal time, the long history of shadow puppetry in Iberia may be traced to the Arab expansion across North Africa, which arrived in Al-Andalus at the beginning of the eleventh century. Egyptian oculist *Muhammad ibn Dāniyāl* (1248-1310) became well-known on the Iberian Peninsula for his humorous shadow puppets and famous texts. Puppetry in general played a significant role in the artistic, social, and religious life of pre-modern Spain. Thus, bringing today's early modern texts to young audiences is not only an endeavor of outreach but also a way to recover an intangible patrimony unjustly relegated to a second-rate art category.

Our goal for this conference is to illustrate through performance and presentation how the Dragoncillo Puppet Troupe is introducing Hispanic literature and culture to young audiences across the United States, while at the same time using our experience as university professors and early modern theater scholars to uniquely shape this outreach initiative.

**Cynthia DRETEL | Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, Weimar / Indiana University**  
**“The Gift of Happy Memories: A WWII Christmas Puppet Play in Ravensbrück”**

*Szopki*, Polish musical nativity puppet plays, have been performed on Christmas Eve for centuries and these plays were a widespread but relatively unstudied artistic response to Nazi occupation among Polish Catholics interned in concentration camps in the last years of World War Two. Polish inmates used the *szopki* as an opportunity to subvert censorship, as the SS officers running the camps were unaware that the nativity story is only a small portion of a *szopki* production. *Szopka Polska* was written and performed Ravensbrück, a Nazi concentration camp primarily for women, in 1943 and 1944. The creators, artist Maja Berezowska and Warsaw children's puppeteer Jadwiga Kopijowska, stated in the introduction that their *szopka* was a gift to cheer and encourage the interned children. This case study offers an exploration of the purposeful recreation of happy and comforting pre-war

memories in the play and the significance of including the puppet versions of camp inmates in the scenes, a phenomenon that rarely occurred in other forms of concentration camp theater.

The writers of the *Szopka Polska*, a shorter and simpler play than other surviving camp *szopki* manuscripts examined in my dissertation, followed the genre's performance practice; their play combined daily life and the Nativity scene, set in a camp barrack, with Polish folklore and secular characters. Far from singing and dancing puppets en route to the manger, the *Szopka Polska* writers drew strength from representations of childhood and motherhood, using Poland's past triumphs as hope for future liberation. The writers' happier "world of [their] childhood" was shared directly through the narrator's and characters' descriptions of pre-war life. The newly written scenes and the recreations of often comedic traditional *szopki* stock scenes promoted Polish heritage and normalcy. This case study from my broader research applying sociocultural approaches to puppet theater builds on scholarship that highlights sharing positive memories as a form of care-taking and less visible resistance, as these activities, especially communal activities led by women, are often overlooked in scholarship in favor of more overt or dramatic actions. Puppet theater for children was a valuable tool as the writers visually engaged the children's imagination with fanciful tales and they could educate and empower the children within their limited camp resources. The writers used certain puppets characters to model resilience and staged "miniature scenes" of camp life to help the children process the trauma of the Nazi occupation and internment.

**Sarah PLUMMER | Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, Weimar / Indiana University**  
**"Puppet Feats: Bread and Puppet Theater's Circus Show"**

This paper examines the role of puppets in Bread and Puppet Theater's circus show. Bread and Puppet started out in New York City in the 1960s as a street protest theater. While they still perform at protests, parades, and festivals, this paper is concerned with Bread and Puppet's annual circus since 1999, which is performed weekly during the summer months in their outdoor amphitheater in rural Vermont. These shows, described by the group as circuses, make use of the traditional American circus in terms of performance style and types of acts.

The traditional Victorian-era circus perpetuated ideas of human exceptionalism by showcasing exceptional bodies and mastery over animals (and, by extension, nature). Traditional circuses displayed exceptional bodies, from strongmen to human oddities. The use of puppets within the circus genre decenters the human and creates a more egalitarian performance space within a genre that capitalizes on hierarchies of power. From their creative process, which focuses on improvisation and attunement to puppets, to the way they use puppets and masks in performance, I argue that Bread and Puppet is an example of what Claudia Orenstein calls "New Puppetry," a style of puppetry that considers the agency of puppets and focuses on human and non-human interconnectedness. I use theories of object-oriented ontology to understand the way Bread and Puppet decentralizes and deprivileges the puppeteer in performance and human exceptionalism in performance narratives. Puppeteering itself could be considered display of human exceptionalism with hidden and complicated mechanical operations. At Bread and Puppet, however, puppets are constructed simply

and without hidden mechanisms, and puppeteers (who wear white) are clearly visible during the performance. Moreover, skits are created with open roles to allow volunteer audience members to step in as puppeteers during the performance. In these ways, the performance is demystified and human skill decentered.

Lastly, the circus, especially the heyday of the American circus, is closely aligned with industrial expansion — the circus grew as the rail system grew. Because of its reference to the traditional circus, Bread and Puppet interrogates themes of benevolent or inevitable progress by showcasing non-human animal puppets in positions of knowledge and mastery, especially in skits where non-human animal puppets reverse or invert historical processes begun by humans.

**Sahareh ASTANEH | University of Salzburg / Soore University, Teheran**  
**“The Indigenization of the Puppet Theater in Iran after the Revolution of 1979”**

The opera first came to Iran as a European souvenir during the Qadschar dynasty (1785 – 1925) but numerous intellectuals and artists criticized the opera as a form of Western art. They deemed the opera a Western bourgeois art form that was imported solely to present the regime as modern and progressive. With the revolution of 1979, the artistic form “opera” was abandoned completely.

For a long time, the director Behrouz Gharibpour (\*1950) concentrated on the “Kheimeh Shab Bazi”, the Iranian Traditional Marionette Theatre. Inspired by “Taziyeh” and “Naqqali”, two old dramaturgical traditions, he brought the technique of the puppet theater from Austria to Iran. In 2004 he founded the “Aran Puppet Theatre Company”, which served as the educational institution for up to 100 different puppet players, teaching them the various operational techniques. This served to circumvent the regulations and restrictions concerning the opera by the regime. Gharibpour started with the production of puppets as well as the development and indigenization of foreign puppetry techniques, adapting it to the Iranian culture. His puppet theatre was inspired by Persian history, literature, poetry and mythology as well as traditional Iranian art music and singing technique. With this effort, he managed to revivify opera as an artistic form in Iran. This paper analyzes the transformational process, which adapted the European puppet as actors for the Iranian opera stage.

PhD Pocket Paper:

**Caterina PAN | University Ca’ Foscari Venice / University of Salzburg**  
**“Kasperl and his Brothers – Intercultural Heritage of the Popular Matrix”**

My PhD thesis "Popular Theatre in Early Modern England, Germany and Italy (1570-1640) as Phenomenon of Intercultural Theatricality" aims at giving a transversal perspective on the development of popular theatre in Germany and Austria under the double influence of English strolling players from the north and touring Commedia dell’arte troupes from the south. A central

aspect that mediated this intercultural adaptation is what I call *popular culture*, i.e. a network of shared knowledge not completely erased by the nationalisation and textualization of an elite culture. The puppet theatre as site of cultural heritage lends itself to illustrate the continuity of one of the representatives of popular culture, the fool, in his many national identities and forms but with unvarying characteristics, perpetuated throughout the centuries in different cultural contexts. It might not be a coincidence that the first puppet Anton Aicher carved for his newly established Salzburg Marionette Theatre in 1913 was Kasperl, a figure deeply rooted in Austrian popular theatre. With his pointed hat, colourful clothes, sly and at the same time naïve nature, Kasperl made his first appearance in 1790 but contains a whole tradition of international fools and clowns. In fact, this merry fellow was developed by Johann Laroche (1745-1806) after the model of the Wiener Volkstheater personage of Hanswurst, set up by Joseph Anton Stranitzky (1676?-1720) and further promoted by Philipp Hafner (1735-1764) despite Gottsched's ban. Interestingly, Hafner drew inspiration from Goldoni's *Il servitore di due padroni* ("The Servant of Two Masters", 1745) for his adaptation *Hanswurst Diener zweier Herren*. Thus, an immediate predecessor of Kasperl leads back both to Italian Commedia dell'arte and to the German-Austrian medieval Shrovetide farces, fruitfully combined under the English influence.

When the English Comedians first toured the European Continent starting from the 1580s, they made use of pre-existent comic traditions to establish their own clowns – Pickelhering, John Posset, and Hans Stockfisch – with the same characteristics present in Kasperl, Hanswurst, and Arlecchino: recognisable costume and props; centrality of the body (references to sex and bodily functions, physical and verbal violence ridiculed); carnivalesque reversal and restoration of order; universal reflecting the individual (distinguished through dialects and regional identities); mother wit and earthly preoccupations. The adaptation of similar types to different stages continued until the eighteenth century, when the amalgamation of Pickelhering, Hanswurst and Arlecchino with various names ("Kasperl", "Thaddädl" and "Staberl") enriched the *Possen* of Ferdinand Raimund (1790-1827) and Johann Nestroy (1801-1862). And to some extent, the same mechanisms generating laughter in these traditions are still at work, for example, in modern-day sitcoms.

By starting his career as impresario with the puppet of Kasperl, protagonist of more than 130 Salzburg Marionette Theatre productions until 1950, Aicher inserted himself into a long line of stakeholders of popular characters, welded together from several sources and connected to the same, durable matrix.

**Francesca CECCONI | University of Verona / University of Pisa**  
**"Nino Pozzo: A Good Practice of Italian Puppet Tradition"**

Part of the Italian puppet tradition is influenced by the Commedia dell'Arte and their masks. Analyzing glove-puppets, we can see how some characters derive from the masks of the Commedia dell'Arte thanks to similar elements, such as the costume, the dialect (as a vehicle of communication with the public of the country), the type of characters (servants, old, lovers), the plot and *canovacci* (special script with some parts unwritten dedicated to improvisation).

It is in this context of assonances and dissonances that the present proposal aims at examining the work of Nino Pozzo, a puppeteer from Verona of the twentieth century, in whose work it is possible to see all of these phenomena. He operated in the north of Italy and he learned from Francesco Campogalliani, the most important puppeteer of Emilian tradition. Pozzo left a considerable equipment related to his own activity; unlike other traveling puppeteers, he had settled in Verona, so he kept all his materials himself. There are a lot of scripts, records, letters, glove-puppets, scenarios, which allow us to retrace his entire artistic work. From Nino Pozzo, it is indeed possible to study the development from the Commedia dell'Arte to the puppet in the different regions of Italy, because in his theatre he used different characters and dialects: there are some characters taken from the Venetian repertoire, others from the Emilian one, and others still belonging to Lombardy. In addition to a territorial influence – for which it will be possible to notice characters like Fagiolino, Sandrone, Brighella, Facanapa, Pantalone – it will be interesting to highlight how some texts have developed over others.

This research will reveal themes belonging to the fairy tales (*Hansel & Gretel*, *Three little pigs*), but also plots from the Italian novels (*I Promessi Sposi* by Manzoni, *Sangue Romagnolo* from *Cuore* by De Amicis), from the heritage of puppets (*The adventures of Fasolino*, *Sandrone Re dei Mammalucchi*) and specific texts of the puppet's tradition (*Biagio Carnico el luganegher de Venezia*, *Genoveffa*, *Il Fornaretto di Venezia*).

The goal of this study is to highlight the peculiarities and the differences of the various repertoires within Pozzo's work, and to show how these were influenced creating new results. This proposal aims to analyze some examples of the puppet theatre tradition in Italy thanks to the contribution of Nino Pozzo: from the text to the show, studying all the details of productions (from the construction of the puppet until the scenarios) and his connection with Commedia dell'Arte.

**Georgia CHRYSSOULI | University of Essex / University of Athens**

**“Jan Švankmajer: The Uncanny Life of a Puppet”:**

Jan Švankmajer is a leading Czech filmmaker and artist and a self-proclaimed militant Surrealist. His poetic and dynamic work is characterised by a diversity of means and techniques, live-action, puppets, clay modelling, traditional drawn animation, object collage, stop-frame special effects and stop-motion animation and operates by means of close interactions with literature, theatre, and the visual arts.

Švankmajer has asserted in several instances that puppets best symbolise the character of man in a contemporary, manipulated world, that puppets have accompanied him throughout his life and it may be that everything he does is just a puppet play, referring to actors as puppets, working with them exactly as he would work with inanimate objects and placing them at the same level of importance.

Švankmajer has always been fascinated by the ambiguous and complementary relations which exist between the human body and the object, organic life and the illusion of life, the animated and the

manipulated entity, and he employs the notion of the uncanny in various manifestations in his films in mixing and contrasting ways, affecting accordingly the perception of the cinematic viewer.

The Uncanny Valley is a hypothesis in the field of robotics and 3D computer animation, but is also applicable to any type of anthropomorphic representation, such as dolls, puppets, masks, cartoons, caricatures, computer graphics characters in movies and avatars in virtual reality. According to this hypothesis, coined by Professor Masahiro Mori in a paper in the journal *Energy* in 1970, when a robot is made to look more human in its appearance and motion, the emotional response from a human towards the robot will become increasingly positive and empathetic until a point is reached, beyond which this response quickly becomes negative and one of strong revulsion. However, as the appearance and motion continue to become less distinguishable from a human, the emotional response becomes positive again and approaches human to human empathy levels. This area of negative, repulsive response, aroused by a robot with appearance and motion between a “barely human” and “fully human” entity is called the Uncanny Valley.

My paper will trace, explore and address the appearance of the phenomenon of the Uncanny Valley in Švankmajer’s short puppet films and the puppet’s uncanniness in his work, the dual nature of the puppet as simultaneously inert object and animated creature that crosses the dichotomous line between life and death, also raising questions on human nature and identity.

**Jonas KLINKENBERG | Figurentheaterzentrum Westflügel Leipzig**  
**“Space-Time-Conceptions in Today's Puppetry”**

Theater is always a construct of a layered space, the “doppelter Ort” as Gerda Baumbach calls it: A simultaneity of the reality level of actors and the audience as well as the fictional level of the characters and events shown.<sup>13</sup>

This doubled space serves as an opportunity to examine and differentiate between different forms of theater. How is the fact of the *doppelter Ort* treated? Is it openly shown or is it hidden? Are the borders fixed or can they move? How are they linked to the reality of the stage and its spatial conditions? To examine these phenomena in today's puppet theater and connected arts, taking a look at some works might be helpful. *Staub – DUST - גבול* (Wilde & Vogel, Golden Delicious, Premiere 2018) deals with personal and collective history of artists from Germany and Israel. *TRICKSTER – Catch me if you can* and *IMPRINT [imagine absence]* (both Dekoltas Handwerk / Jan Jedenak; premiere 2017/2019) examine the boundary between mythical characters and violence, as well as the representation of one's own death. Moreover, works by Gony Paz, Gyula Molnár and others will be briefly discussed.

While mythical creatures populate the stage in *Trickster*, the audience is invited to shoot these figures with balls, shoes and weapons. While the spaces of the characters and the audience remain separate, the game unleashes a shift in levels that blurs game and reality in the act of violence – until the player himself comes out of the mask. The very uncommon use of a strict separation and having a

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<sup>3</sup> See Baumbach, Gerda: *Schauspieler. Historische Anthropologie des Akteurs*. Leipzig: 2012, Band 1, S. 200.

participation-based approach at the same time, make this work very unique in its use of the *doppelter Ort*, referring directly to the travelling powers of the Tricksters.

*Imprint* works with three players, who initially enter a kind of intermediate world with the act of taking a photo – temporal processes are slowed down, movement, color and language are reduced to an extreme. The empty stage is broken up by clear spaces created by the two moving lights. Dealing with time and space creates an in-between world that allows experiments and imaginations, death masks appear, a life-size mannequin is present and the imaginations of death and absence can be created. What seems to be a clear separation is drawing the audience into the same intermediate space, by physical stimuli, the slowed down time, the music and the light in the auditorium – becomes part of the imaginations. An imperceptible game between levels.

*Staub – DUST - גבול* takes biographical stories of the players to counter the unspeakable of collective history, looking for traces and connections, for personal stories and the greater picture. There is a small round cloth on the stage, which the players do not leave once they have entered – unlike the puppets and objects: a bench with small abstract shapes for a split second becomes the moment of horror, floating beings refer to the world outside of the small world of the meeting of those actors, the stories from other times, the cosmos and collective memory reveal a greater narrative. It is the restriction of space and a hidden border between fiction and reality that allows this piece to drift between small stories and history.

Looking at the use of space and time, connected to the *doppelter Ort* can help to understand potentials of modern puppetry and to look for occurrences which are specifically linked to the appearance of puppets and masks, even today.

**Mara THEODORITSI | University of Ottawa / University of Texas**

**“Literary Masters of Puppets: Hanging by the Threads of Miguel de Cervantes and Luigi Pirandello”**

In this paper, I explore puppet theatre as the common ground shared by two outstanding writers in the Western literary canon: the seventeenth-century Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes and the twentieth-century Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello. Drawing on the work of the Spanish scholar Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, I first examine the role of puppet theatricality in Cervantes’s novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605/1615). Díaz-Plaja posits the influence of Sicilian *pupi* (whose origins go back to the fourteenth century) on part two of *Don Quijote*, especially in the much-discussed episode of Master Pedro’s puppet show —an influence that Díaz-Plaja explains, among other reasons, by referring to Cervantes’s sojourn in Messina and Palermo in 1574, following his participation in the Battle of Lepanto. I then engage in a comparative reading of the marionette theatre identified in *Don Quijote* and other works of Cervantes (such as the short story *El licenciado Vidriera* [1613] and the *entremés* “El retablo de las maravillas” [1615]) and in several of Pirandello’s works, such as the novel *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904) and the plays *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* (1921) and *I giganti della montagna* (1937) by examining the use of various techniques of marionette theatre (by way of allusion and the representation of a puppet show performance) and the implicit association of

dramatic characters with puppets. In this way, I seek to trace the continued influence of marionette theatre from the early modern era to the twentieth century in the literary arena by comparing works of different national origins, periods and genres as those by Cervantes and Pirandello. Investigating dramatic techniques as they are deployed in the texts, rather than focusing on the artistic philosophy of their respective authors, serves to shed new light on puppet theatre as an *interactive* form, as well as on the non-literary sources of inspiration for Cervantes and Pirandello and the significance of their work for the circulation of marionette theatre beyond nations, cultures and epochs. This study is part of my doctoral research on the transgression of literary genres and its transnational dimension. In it, I argue the need for a closer examination of the tradition of Sicilian marionette theatre to better understand the theatrical aspects of Cervantes's *œuvre*, which I compare to those aspects that Pirandello drew on and developed in his dramatic output.