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**Romania**

**Magical, Lay, Aesthetic**

**The metamorphoses of puppet theatre in Romania**

Abstract

Puppet theatre as practised in Romania has always been a synthesis between two different, seemingly incongruent approaches: sacred and profane, heathen and Christian, comical and tragical, social and aesthetic.

The same reconciled double-sidedness can also be noticed in the main element of such a performance: „the puppet” and the actor who brings it to life are a whole, a monad without which it is impossible to change the character and send the message. From the sacred theatre in the ancient era to the one in folk fairs, from the avantgarde laboratory to the poetics affirmed by contemporary stage directors, the miraculous transfer of vitality on lifeless matter, the association between something that is alive and something dead trigger a very important convention. This is why, far from being a means of children’s entertainment, puppet theatre as conceived and practised by Romanian artists is rather meant for grown-ups. Performances directed by Romanian creators belonging to various generations, representative not only at a national level– Margareta Niculescu, Liviu Ciulei, Cătălina Buzoianu, Cristian Pepino – are of crucial importance due to their wish to make a change in terms of paradigm.

The early 20th century witnessed the birth of new mythology in the field: from the „puppet chest“ to the „toy box“, by means of changing one single word, there emerged a new approach to puppet theatre and this way a branch of art with a millenium-old tradition was exiled to the outskirts of theatre. When identical to toy, a word such as *puppet* no longer works as a precise definition of means. Due to the powerful creation of visionary artists, there followed contradictions to cause a rejection of „illusion“ theatre and an emphasis on convention. There occured a new approach to the puppet as object, as a technique and also as a visual representation, accompanied by a new use of the space and of the actor „at sight”, which had important effects on the evolution in the field. In these latest decades stage director and professor Cristian Pepino has focused on redefining puppet theater as theatre of animation, a phrase reflecting the aesthetic changes coming up.