



PERFORMANCE

Master Peter's Puppet Show

Stage composition by Manuel de Falla

Synopsis

El Retablo de Maese Pedro, a stage composition by Manuel de Falla, designed for puppets, singers, and a chamber orchestra, is based on *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes.

The libretto, adapted by the composer himself, covers the episode in which Don Quixote and Sancho Panza attend the show that a puppeteer, Maese Pedro, and his young assistant, El Trujamán, put on about a knightly adventure inspired by the medieval romances. The shifts between reality and fiction running through Cervantes' creation are imaginatively translated on the puppet stage. Don Quixote, driven by the power of the theatrical representation, rushes to the aid of the play's heroes, Don Gaiferos and Melisendra, and swings his sword against the puppets, destroying the stage, under the despairing eyes of Maese Pedro. In his play, Falla revives this fictional device with a stage and musical creation that brings back the resources of popular shows and in which the language, in accordance with the neoclassical aesthetics of Europe between the wars, includes allusions to the music of the past, especially that of the Spanish Golden Age, but also popular folk songs. The proposal of the PerPoc company is extraordinary faithful to the original concept of Falla himself, who designed the work so that all the characters, both those who appear in the puppet show and Don Quixote, Sancho, Maese Pedro, and El Trujamán, would be played by puppets, with the latter as life-sized puppets, acquiring a vocal presence thanks to the work of the four singers. PerPoc also accentuates the popular dimension, which is so decisive in the libretto. The direct and raw material nature of the puppets provides a dialogue with the manifestations of the popular, rustic culture of the Iberian Peninsula. The figures have been made from pieces of logs and sticks found where the erosion of time and of natural processes has left its mark and in which the knots and fibres become eyes, mouths, and gestures, combined with cloth, rags and vegetable fibres to make up the anatomy of the puppets. In the immediate expressiveness of the characters, in colours that are those of the earth, ceramic, wood, and fibre, and in their almost tactile textures, we can also see how PerPoc has been inspired by the work of leading Spanish creators, such as Alberto, Maruja Mallo, and Benjamín Palencia, who found in championing of popular culture one of the

main driving forces of the renewal of art in the period following the Spanish Civil War. The same rough texture dominates the stage design, based on the use of cloths that are distributed and recombined to generate a spatial effect that is both suggestive and provisional, and which reminds us of the textile art of the Catalan artist, Aurèlia Muñoz, while also being a way of signalling the nomadic and errant condition intrinsic to the practices of popular theatre. These easy-to-transport, mobile architectures of cloth accentuate the link that, beyond the centuries, links the puppet show of Cervantes' work to the practice of a company that, in our present, is keeping a tradition alive.

David Cortés

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Credits

Artistic Direction: Santi Arnal and Anna Fernández

Puppet Construction: Guoda Korsakaitė and Deimantė Krutulytė

Video Projections And Scenography: Guoda Korsakaitė

Light Design: Pau Vila

Puppeteers: Santiago Arnal, Alba Cerdeiriña, Anna Fernandez, Edurne Salas

Documentation: David Cortés

Performance photos



Per Poc · Puppet company · Barcelona

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