

The UNIMA CROATIA Message for World Puppetry Day

Teodora Vigato

Croatian puppetry – past and present

Puppetry has always lived modestly in all parts of Croatia, inconspicuous, and without the usual theatrical pomp. It appeared in the artistic circles of those fanatics of this form of theatrical art. The origin of the puppet is old, and little attention was previously given to puppets, as they were intended for the commoners and children. The folk customs with puppets have been forgotten, and the European friends Punch, Petruška, Kašparek or Ginjol have not become household names in Croatia.

The Croatian national puppet was forced off the streets and pulled from the hands of the travelling comedy players in the mid 20th century, in order to give these puppets a role in the education of children. It was by decree, and not for artistic reasons, that the puppet theatres in Split, Zagreb, Zadar, Osijek and Rijeka were established. They were intended to serve children, for entertainment and learning. Though the Croatian puppetry tradition developed alongside the European tradition, each professional Croatian puppet theatre brought its own set of values into its puppetry. The process of transforming puppet theatres from classical to contemporary forms took place through the ginjol in Zadar, marionettes in Split, black theatre in Rijeka, Deželić's puppets as a stage symbol in Zagreb, and the musical plays of Branko Mihaljević in Osijek.

Puppet theatre in Croatia today has been accepted as a distinctive form of theatre, with its own laws and activities. However, the puppet theatres have lost their foundations by which they were recognisable and have become increasingly similar in their expression. Puppetry began to expand outside its traditional boundaries, disturbing those who have strived to retain and express the typical nature of puppetry. On the other hand, the differences in artistic seeking has enriched the expressive means of puppet theatres. In the 21st century, these

theatres are embarking on the process of artistic change, which is opening new prospects, and it will be interesting to see which trends will rule over puppetry in the coming years.

Regardless of the fact that puppet theatre is constantly transforming into another form of art which is then further transformed, it becomes even more embedded in puppetry.

Wishing everyone a Happy World (Croatian) Puppetry Day!



Teodora Vigato graduated in Croatian Studies and Education from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zadar, her hometown. She received her master's degree from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, and her doctorate from the University of Zadar. She works at the Teacher's College of the University of Zadar, teaching Puppetry and theatrical culture, Media culture, and Early Croatian literature. She has published numerous papers on the theory and history of puppetry and has addressed a range of theatrical topics from the Early Croatian literature. She has brought her thoughts on puppet theatre together in the books *Svi zadarski ginjoli (All the ginjols of Zadar)* and *Mile Gatara i zadarsko lutkarstvo (Mile Gatara and puppetry in Zadar)*, while in the handbook *Metodički pristupi scenskoj kulturi (Methodical approaches to the theatrical arts)* she writes of working with students on exercises from the course Puppetry and theatrical culture.

