

THE COMPANY
LES ABOUGAZELLES CENT TÊTES
PRESENTS

Pulcinella mon amour



A puppet and music show

Freely inspired by the traditional scenarios of Southern Italy
and by Bruno Leone's 1981 work *Lo spettacolo di Carnevale*

with

Valentina Valentini
puppeteer

Valerio Zaina
musician

For all audiences (from age 5 up to 110)
Outdoors or indoors / running time: approximately 35 minutes

Synopsis

Pulcinella mon amour



Pulcinella, despite his irresistible urge to sleep, decides to please his fiancée by singing her a love serenade. However, this seemingly harmless gesture plunges him into a madcap adventure in which he is confronted with situations as absurd as they are unpredictable. Along the way, he first encounters a hen, then a rooster, in a whirlwind of fantasy and mishaps. The climax of this adventure comes when Pulcinella, caught up in a piece of devilry orchestrated by the rooster and the Devil himself, must face the most outrageous ordeal of his life: giving birth to a whole string of little Pulcinellas from a magical egg. The performance is driven by joyful, lively music that breathes a unique energy into the whole show.



Artistic intent

The creation of this performance began with an in-depth exploration of *guarattelle*, traditional Neapolitan glove-puppet shows that have been passed down orally for over five centuries, in which Pulcinella, the central figure, embodies an untamed freedom. This character, originally inspired by one of the oldest protagonists of *Commedia dell'arte*—the popular Italian theatre that emerged in the 16th century—is at once naïve and cunning, fearful and brave. He questions relationships of domination and challenges society as a whole. His supernatural voice, produced through a technical process that has always been kept secret by puppeteers, evokes the cry of a duck. Powerful, comic and almost incomprehensible, it creates an immediate connection with the audience and captures everyone's attention. Bruno Leone's 1981 work *Carnevale*, by the master puppeteer and specialist in the art of *guarattelle*, is of particular interest to us not only for its profoundly Pulcinella-like quality, but also because it explores universal themes such as love, anger, death and rebirth. These themes are brought to light through unexpected encounters and surprising twists, characteristic of *guarattelle*. In this performance, Pulcinella, in all his flamboyance, moves through these trials while expressing deeply human emotions. At the heart of the story, the hen goes beyond its role as a comic animal to become a symbol of life and the fragility of existence. It is no longer merely a farce, but a poetic reflection on life, in which every ending opens the way to a new



beginning. Through his adventures, Pulcinella reminds us that, despite hardships, each of us carries within ourselves the ability to be reborn. Through *guarattelle*, this performance becomes a mirror of humanity. Both funny and biting, it highlights our weaknesses while emphasising our resilience, in a subtle blend of humour and poetry that never ceases to delight and surprise audiences of all ages. To bring these endearing characters to life and to infuse the mischievous energy of the piece, we combine traditional glove puppets and music. While the puppeteer, hidden inside the booth (*castelet/baracca*), animates the adventures of Pulcinella and his companions, the *spalla*—an Italian term meaning literally “shoulder” and akin to a supporting performer—is visible on stage. He interacts with the characters and the audience, calls out to Pulcinella, comments on the action with humour, and adds a layer of irony and critical distance. His role is not limited to speech: as a musician, he accompanies the story with various instruments, giving rhythm and energy to the performance. Thanks to this dynamic interplay between puppet manipulation and the live intervention of the *spalla*, the show unfolds as a playful and offbeat performance, carrying young and old alike into adventures that are as improbable as they are enriching. This on-stage duo, heir to a centuries-old tradition, continually renews the art of *guarattelle*, where irony, satire and music intertwine in an ongoing dialogue between stage and audience.



Production

LES ABOUGAZELLES CENT TÊTES

Artistic team

Valentina Valentini

Puppetry, sculpture, painting, sewing, stage direction

Valerio Zaina

Music, sound effects, performance

Joanna Bartholomew

Curtains

Nicolas Goussef

Attentive eye

Support

Casa delle guarattelle-Naples, Centre Paris Anim' Rebeval, Centre Paris Anim'Mado Robin, Théâtre aux mains nues, Théâtre Halle Roublot, Figurentheaterhaus Poppespännchen-Luxembourg, Plateau Urbain, Compagnie du lynx.



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Biographies



Valentina Valentini puppeteer

Before becoming a puppeteer, she worked in the management of film collections, first at the *Paris Astronomical Observatory*, then at the *Centre Georges-Pompidou*. After attending a masterclass with *Bruno Leone* and training at the *Théâtre aux Mains Nues*, she became the artistic director of the puppet company *Les Abougazelles Cent Têtes* in 2020.

Her creation *La Chanson de Pulcinella* has been awarded at prestigious festivals, notably at the *Festifée International Festival* in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, in 2024. At the same time, she conducts workshops on the art of puppetry, catering to diverse audiences and adapting to all kinds of settings. She passionately sculpts wooden puppets and designs her own puppet booths (castelets/baracche), thereby creating unique, tailor-made worlds for each performance.

Valerio Zaina musician

Born in a small Venetian village, he left his homeland for Paris, where he began his training at the *International Academy of Performing Arts*, directed by *Carlo Boso*. He received comprehensive training in *Commedia dell'Arte* and various other performing arts. He also trained at the *Berliner Schule für Schauspiel* in Berlin and the *Paolo Grassi School* in Milan, as well as attending seminars with *John Strasberg*, *Gulu Monterio*, *Gil Foreman*, and *Eric Bouvron*.

He joined several live performance companies, including *Le Grenier de Babouchka*, directed by *Jean-Philippe Daguerre* and *Charlotte Matzneff*, and *L'Éternel Été*, directed by *Emmanuel Besnault*. In 2020, he founded his own theatre company, *The company Rhapsodia*. In 2024, he completed the French translation of *Carlo Goldoni's La veuve rusée* for *Les Bouffes Parisiens* and performed in the same production under the direction of *Giancarlo Marinelli*.

Technical sheet

Wood-carved glove puppets.

For all audiences, from age 5 up to 110.

Up to three performances per day.

Running time: approximately 35 minutes.

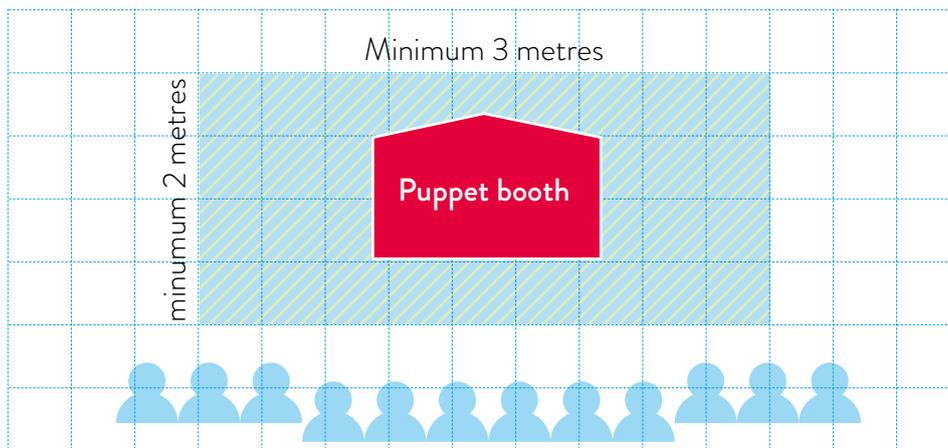
Can be performed outdoors, indoors, or under a big top.

Audience capacity: 150–200 people.

Performance available in

French, Italian, English, Spanish, and German.

Teaser : <https://youtu.be/dfa4YNGI4b0>



Minimum stage area: 3 m × 2 m / Flat floor / Height: minimum 2.5 m

Electricity: none required

Setup: 60 minutes / Teardown: 30 minutes

Touring team: 2 performers / Dressing room nearby required

Accommodation: 2 separate rooms

Transport: from Paris

Fee: a quote is available on request



The company

Founded in October 2020, the company *Les Abougazelles Cent Têtes* was built around the artist Valentina Valentini and champions an artistic universe blending puppet theatre, visual arts, and street arts.

In our Parisian workshop, Valentina carefully sculpts our puppets from wood, before painting them and crafting their costumes. The result of an ever-evolving artisanal expertise, these puppets travel from booth to booth, from cities to villages, bringing burlesque and tragicomic stories to life.

The company's first creation, *La Chanson de Pulcinella*, has been presented at numerous festivals, such as the World Festival of Puppet Theatres in Charleville-Mézières, *Marionnettes Sauvages* in Luxembourg, *Marionnettes dans la Nature* in Vercoeur, as well as in various cultural centres, schools, and associations.

This production was awarded the *Tiburce Koffi Puppet Prize* at *Festifée 2023* in Paris and the *Neba Bienvenu Puppet Prize* at *Festifée 2024* at the *Jah Live Cultural Centre* in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire.

The company regularly works in schools and runs workshops to raise awareness of the art of puppetry for all audiences, regardless of age or background, thus providing broad access to culture.



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