

# RUMBA ON THE MOON

a VISUAL POEM : DREAM ALONG FROM AGES 2 AND UP



C<sup>ie</sup> MARIZIBIL  
CYRILLE LOUGE

# Rumba ON The MOON

## THIRST FOR DREAMS AND HUNGER FOR THE UNKNOWN

Rumba the little mouse is hungry. Hungry for cheese, for adventure, for life and for dreams. Like a child who puts everything in her mouth in order to taste the world, Rumba wants to eat the wide and delectable unknown that she glimpses through her window when the clouds part. So, in the light of the beautiful round moon – which as everyone knows is made of cheese! – Rumba, eyes wide shut, goes through the looking glass like a mousy Alice...

a VISUAL POEM : DREAM ALONG FROM AGES 2 AND UP

Written and directed by Cyrille Louge

Puppets by Francesca Testi

Acted by Francesca Testi & Cyrille Louge

Light design by Bastien Gérard

Animation by Pierre Bouchon

Set by Denis Louge & Thierry Bigot

With the artistic eye of Ghislaine Laglantine

Length: 35 min.

Appropriate for non-French speakers

Video available upon request

**C<sup>ie</sup> MARIZIBILL**  
CYRILLE LOUGE

Compagnie Marizibill - Fontenay-sous-Bois (94)

Resident artists at the Théâtre de l'Abbaye in Saint-Maur (94)

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# The STORY OF RUMBA



## a cheese Named desire

The moon that is made of cheese (or a big wheel of cheese that looks like a moon) represents the symbolic goal of every quest. It is the thing that Rumba hungers for the most. Just as children hear expressions like "Don't throw in the towel," "That's a pain in the neck," or "She's throwing her money away," and come up with their own interpretations, Rumba decides to literally "ask for the moon."

I had the idea for, imagined and wrote this piece by playing with images like the words of a poem: rhyming colors with sounds and seasons, and images with characters. Rumba's quest and fears form the framework of the show. Inspired by the work of directors like Philippe Genty and James Thierrée, I steered away from classic dramatic structure and chose to take our young audiences on a voyage through the dreamlike world of the unconscious.

Rumba on the moon tells the story of our yearning and search for the ideal using the vocabulary of dreams. The characters, settings and seasons follow one another in stream-of-consciousness associations as in a nursery rhyme – "Mary Mary quite contrary how does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells and pretty maids all in a row..." When Rumba hides in a crate of wine, it transforms into a winephant with the head of a pink pachyderm. Drunken bubbles come out of its trunk, popping to reveal mice that dance wildly to the strains of a klezmer clarinet.

At times, the dream turns into a nightmare like when a tasty morsel of cheese turns out to be the bait in a scary mousetrap, or when the garden hose becomes a hissing snake. But Rumba discovers that the mousetrap is actually a delicate, tender and light-hearted creature, and the snake is really more interested in cuddles than in bites!

## Why "Rumba" ?

Rumba's name was inspired by the work of Fiona Gordon, Dominique Abel and Bruno Romy. The artistic team that created the films *L'iceberg* and *Rumba* also got their start in live theater. The poetic-comedic worlds they created have often been compared to those of directors like Jacques Tati. The atmosphere of their films was in important influence in its first show, *The comedy of comedies*.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## Through The Looking Glass

In this piece, I set out to play with audience perceptions as they follow Rumba into her dream and get caught up in its sensations. I wanted audiences to be surprised, to doubt what they were seeing; I wanted to challenge reality and realism, and invent a world where dreamscapes come to life.

To accomplish this, I decided to reach beyond traditional puppeteering and to work with "invisible puppeteers," a technique where the actors handling the puppets disappear completely, giving the illusion that the puppets are moving of their own accord. This magical effect was indispensable to create the lyric finale: "the dance of the planets." But I knew I had to start the show with visible puppeteers in order lay the groundwork with our young audience members. I needed them to agree to the rules of our game so that I could take them on a trip into the imagination.

Still, in order to create doubt in audience perceptions, I wanted to go even further. I came up with the idea of having the puppets share the stage with drawn animations. The sheer curtain made of tulle netting not only allows for this, but also throws a "veil of strangeness" over the play like something from another dimension. It permits both lightness and depth and, most importantly, it serves as the looking glass through which we can pass to get to dreamland. The animations projected by invisible projectors onto the sheer curtain seem to float just like the puppets in the black light theater.

## The animation

Rumba on the moon's original animation is the result of my providential encounter with Pierre Bouchon, who, among other things, directs animated short films. Again, we set out to create pleasant confusion; we wanted the audience to wonder: were they seeing a puppet or projection? A drawing or a solid set piece? I didn't want the video to impose itself on the rest, but on the contrary, to blend into it until you almost forget its presence. We used Francesca Testi's puppet design to develop a graphic style that was simple and playful, a style that captured the universal charm of early cartoons. We refined the animation over the course of rehearsals as I expressed my artistic goals and Pierre suggested solutions.

## The Rules of The game

The prologue that takes place in front of the sheer curtain sets up the real world and Rumba's character. We see her fall asleep and glide slowly into the world of dreams. Though she sometimes changes sizes, Rumba remains the audience's constant guide. She is always shown as a puppet. As for the animations, they exist in the dream universe and only come out after she falls asleep. The world around Rumba is ever changing; real world objects are transformed, blended together and seen through dream lenses. They become furniture: the cat hiding under a cardboard box becomes a flying cardboard cat, a cat-o-box; the bobbin and needle transform into a bobbinbird...

## La Voce della Luna

In this theatrical dance without words, music is omnipresent. It leads us from emotion to emotion. Young listeners will discover works from different musical traditions. They'll hear, among others, the multi-instrumented talent of Pascal Comelade, the Yiddish klezmer player Gioria Feidman, and even an electric arrangement by Thomas Fersen. Noises and sounds co-exist with musical melodies to create characters and situations in the same way our mind takes sounds heard during sleep and integrates them into our dreams.

# The ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

At the age of seven, I first saw Amadeus, the Milos Forman movie, adapted from the play by Peter Schaffer. Awe-inspired, I insisted on going back to see it several times and I decided to take up the piano. Of course, by that age, Mozart was already a prodigious composer... But some instinct in me had been deeply moved. It was all there: cinema, music, theater.

Throughout my years at school, I hardly spoke a word. When there was little dinner conversation, sometimes I couldn't even bring myself to ask someone to pass the salt... Then, one day, I saw the singer George Brassens on TV petrified with stage fright at a concert. Then and there, I decided, terribly shy as I was, to audition for acting classes at the Cours Simon. On the day of the audition, I almost fainted on the stairs going up to the classroom...

Not long after, however, I had my stage debut in a Jean Genet play in the role of a scoundrel who ended the show with a striptease! That was my first experience working with a company that divided its time between the stage and theatrical experimentation as a troupe. I continued learning my art in theater schools, workshops, staged readings, and short films. Most importantly, I discovered and cultivated my desire to direct.

A few years later, I put on my first play, a composition of one-acts, poems and songs by Jean Tardieu, with a set inspired by Joan Miró, performed to the rhythm of a "chaplinsque" ragtime.

## PUPPETS

You might say destiny had a hand in my meeting Francesca Testi... and discovering the puppets she constructed and manipulated during a series of improvisational encounters for young children in public pre-schools. The experience opened my mind to an art of immense possibilities: a distancing through the puppet that allows the artist to take greater risks, an infinite freedom to imagine characters, and the puppet's capacity to focus artistic energies. In short, I found a creative opportunity to transform life and theater into a poetic gesture.

## YOUNG APPETITES

The puppet provides a common ground between adults and very young children, a world where we all can meet. It speaks to the animism of children – something puppets never grow out of. Imagining one thing becomes another – "it's not scissors, it's a bird" ; "these aren't slippers, they're sad beavers" – is one of the first games children play and already a step towards the art of puppetry.

While working in pre-schools, I became aware of the ease with which young children accept the codes we use, the intrinsic life of the puppet. I was touched by their receptivity, their appetite for games, for sharing with us, and also their high standards. They demand total sincerity from the performers.

Through that experience, I came to see how I could explore a theatrical language, made up of images and rhythms, of sounds and meanings: an intimate conversation with the unconscious. I took my observations and started testing them, my improvisations and started writing. What I learned from those children became the fertile ground in which the company's plays began to grow.

Cyrille Louge





## The PUPPET : a CONTEMPORARY VISION

Since its creation in 2006, the Compagnie Marizibill has been part of the rapidly expanding contemporary movement to study the art of puppeteering. Going beyond hand puppets, strings, and all that is attached to the traditional image of the puppet, the movement explores the variable ways they can be used and their infinite capacities. For example, puppets have the ability to become a part of the actor's body, to complete or extend it; they can create a perfect illusion when manipulated by invisible puppeteers in a black box theater. Puppets have the amazing potential to adapt to various techniques and disciplines in live performance today, which makes them uniquely suited to contemporary dramatic art.

The Franco-Italian Compagnie Marizibill, founded by Francesca Testi (puppet designer) and Cyrille Louge (artistic director), is based in Fontenay-sous-Bois, near Paris. Currently, the company's three "children's" shows are original contemporary plays for the very young (1-6 years old). Ohé Zoé ! (Hey Zoe!) shows a poetically colorful view of nature and of the inner search for oneself. Commissioned by the company and written by a contemporary playwright, Isidore et la plume bleue (Isidore and the Blue Feather) tells a story about discovering the unknown, the desire for adventure and the quest for one dreams. Rumba sur la Lune (Rumba on the Moon) takes off into the dreamlike poetry of the imagination with an appetite to discover the world and the hidden soul in all things. In all its work, the company continues to explore the many levels on which a play can be enjoyed, and to champion family theater that really is for the whole family, that speaks to adults as well as to children and provides an experience that little ones and "big ones" can truly share.

Historically, all ages have enjoyed the art form and today, in the 21st Century, puppets still have much to say and teach us. Puppetry is a universal medium and need not be limited to young audiences. In its upcoming shows for adults, the company continues its questioning of the barriers between the human and non-human. Both in a trilogy about monsters, and in the adaptation of a contemporary Russian novel – a fable about the human condition told through eyes of chickens in an industrial farm – imagination stretches the boundaries between actors and puppets.

The president of the board, Françoise Baqué, is a writer, published by Éditions Jacqueline Chambon.



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- Length of the show : 35 minutes
- Appropriate for ages : 2 and up
- Audience size : 150 maximum
  
- Stage dimensions: minimum 7m wide x 5m deep x 4m high
- Lighting grid or pipes
- Pipe to hang stage curtain (curtain provided by the company)
- Black theater and stage
- 2 technical rehearsals
- Electrical access for video material, projectors and light board (material provided by the company)

## PRICES

(does not include taxes)

- 1 850 € • single show
- 3 100 € • 2 shows the same day
- 4 200 € • 3 shows the same day
- 4 500 € • 3 shows in 2 days
- 5 700 € • 4 shows in 2 days

Estimate for a longer run upon request

Round trip transportation costs for 4 people and set (6m3)

Other negotiated expenses at union rates for 4 people