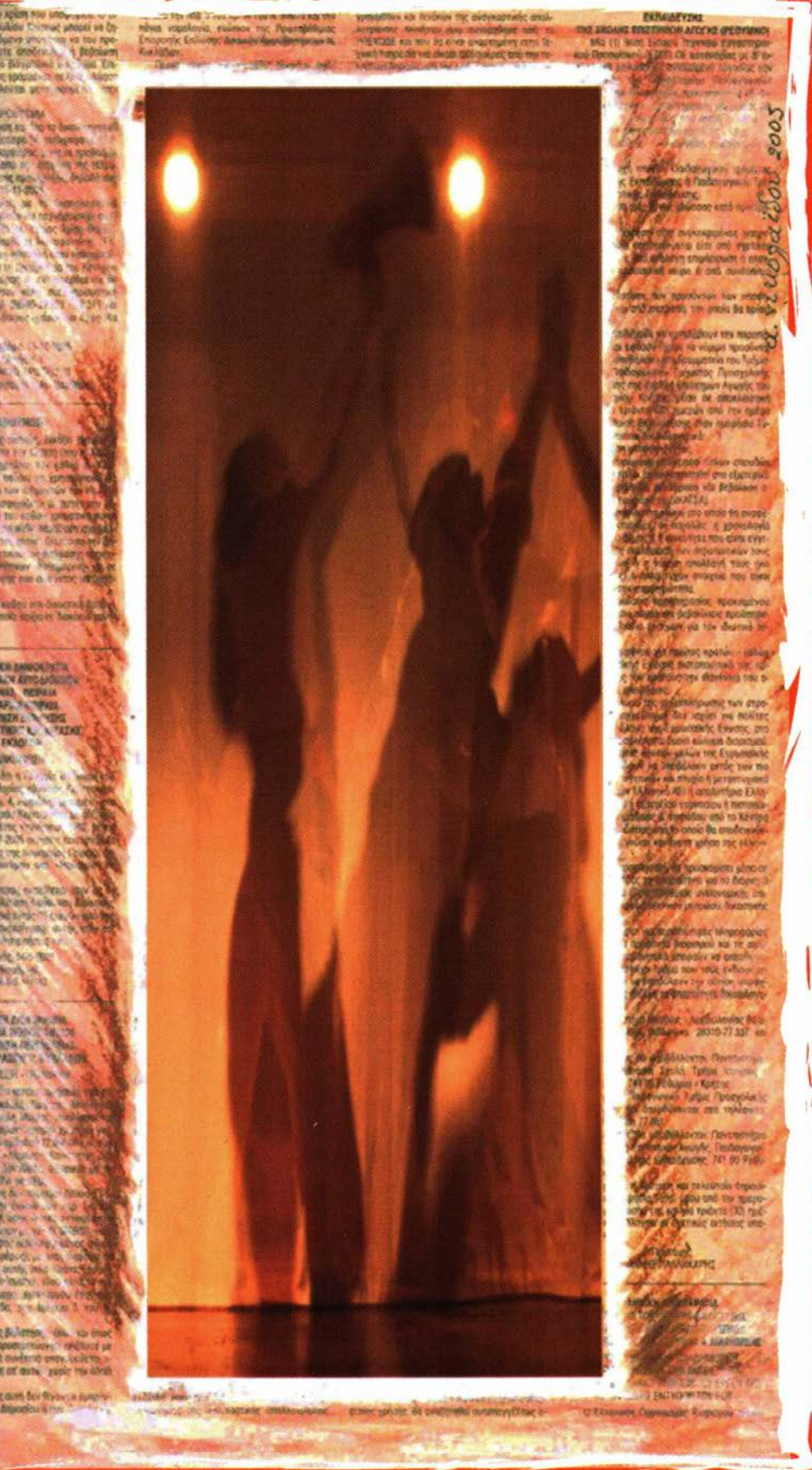


Theatre/Drama and Education: Creating New Roles for the 21st Century



Picasso theatre: the intercultural language in the pedagogy of the Commedia dell' Arte

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Picasso Theatre is a laboratory of introduction to the Commedia dell' Arte, originated from an experimental research on poetry and pictorial image through the knowledge of theatrical language. The programme intends to study in depth the theme of theatre from the mimic and verbal point of view, to apply poetry and pictorial image to the technique and the production of the Commedia. Picasso and some of his masterpieces are included in the didactic itinerary researching an osmosis of the languages of art, which constitute the cultural patrimony of the theatre: word, movement, painting, music, form and content of the elements. Word is metamorphosed through Picasso's characters, and each work takes place in poetry (*the drawing of poetry – the scheme for the actor's representation*), which becomes theatre.



Together with the students a series of poems close to the pedagogic and artistic sense of the research were selected and combined with the images, the author, the painter, the texts were explained and work in groups was created (a group for each work). The goal was to prepare the students to use the half masks through a path of scenic writing which involved both body and dialogue, in a dimension of study where the most important task was the consciousness of the body, voice, text, space, light, object and a work group: all of these are fundamental elements to the actor of the Commedia dell' Arte, and they help him on stage, in order to maintain his autonomy and his creative mastery during the improvisation.

Another goal of the introduction to the Commedia, was also to pass through the culture of the languages of art, analyzing not only the technique but also the history, the political and social context, the geography, the literature, the poetry, the image and the authors; the workshop participants were to receive a global cultural preparation, similar to the Commedia dell' Arte's actor, without which it would be difficult to grow either as a person or as an artist. Why painting and why Picasso? Because painting is similar to the theatre for the creation and organization of all its components but with an added value: the visible drawing of characters (men, women, children, trees, geometric figures, flowers...), upon whom the actor can draw to reproduce a form with his body and create subsequently the pose and the peculiar character of the masks of the Commedia; furthermore, each painting has in itself a specific atmosphere which describes that moment: light, material, noises, actions, smells, flavours, all those basic components useful to the carrying out of the script and its representation. Picasso's work is involved in this research because it is close to a dream vision of the theatre (in form, in colour, in content – blue period, pink period), particularly in the Commedia dell' Arte: *total theatrical technique far from the typical structures of realism*.

Pedagogical dimension

Students to achieve the following objectives:

- develop their self consciousness, their own limits and their potential;

- acceptance of themselves and of others;
- experimental working in a team, collaborating with others for their own personal, cultural, political, social and aesthetical growth;
- improve relationships;
- experiment on rules, not as a limit but as a principle and a guarantee of creative and social order;
- use the body languages (mimic and voice) to express themselves and communicate through the knowledge of the tradition and of the innovation of the mask;
- develop creativity;
- develop skills of self control;
- develop skills of attention, concentration and memorization;
- develop ability of synthesis in the application of the above points to the Commedia dell' Arte.

Pedagogic Route

- *The drawing of the poems*: the participants draw on the white paper the poem that they will perform. The drawing is composed of more lines, each of them representing the pictorial sign of a verse; to each line corresponds a sound and a body movement;
- *The movement of the poetry*: we translate the drawing of the poem in movement. The participants reproduce with their body the lines that compose their own drawing and unify them; every part of the body is involved in the exercise: head, eyes, shoulders, arms, hands, back, legs, feet;
- *Sound, word, movement*: we coordinate the sound of the lines to movement and then we repeat the exercise exchanging sound with verses of poems. The rhythm of the verses will be the same as movement;
- *The content of word and movement*: word and movement don't have a meaning at this stage (content); they are still linked to the form (spoken word without sense – expressed movement without sense). The participants give both of them a meaning and create an action (action = content of word and movement = communication and narration);
- *The physical shape of Picasso's characters*: we analyze the limits and the potentialities through the study of the human marionette (students model the body of other students). The work groups study in details the physical shape of Picasso's characters and they reproduce it with their body, then they transform it in the peculiar pose of the masks of the Commedia dell' Arte. A subsequent investigation will involve the participants' attention to the organization of spaces, colours, objects inside the images.

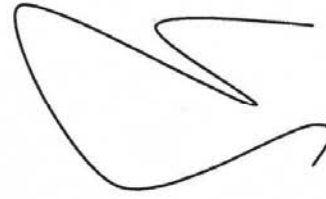
Application of the pedagogic route – teaching to the production

Examples:

*"Metaphors"*¹

They appear and disappear in the shadow of a theatre:
stars that are never calm.
They search for a reason for their exhibition,

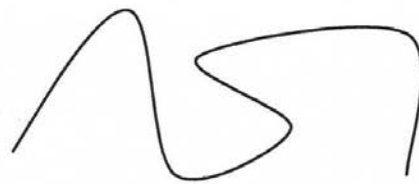
that escape,
 that jumps from one square to another,
 that changes each time the same story.
 They are characters of a blue period,
 or pink,
 works that do not stop.
 Far from the imitation of nature,
 stars abstract their content
 from the light surrealism of a strange relationship
 between painting and poetry,
 and they displace themselves in length and width
 in those sterile areas of creation,
 to build a new visible field
 from which dominates the depth.



[The drawing of the poems]

"Lightness"

They are on walls and on paper bills
 that stain the streets,
 the alleys,
 hills,
 slopes,
 elevators and exhibitions.
 They slide on asphalt
 and slither the cement;
 design parabola,
 semi-circles,
 naïf but extraordinary architectures:
 refined things for the poor
 hiding in the attics.
 What pushes the forms
 of the outskirts of the city from high to low
 from their hypocrisy... misery?



[The drawing of the poems]

"Creation"

From each part of the colour they move
 and don't know if the previous idea
 will be enough to satisfy the work.
 They enter and leave from mathematical logic
 from heavy calculations,
 they add and lift solids,
 they aspire and inspire liquids,
 they spread drops of chromatic odour,
 they segment vague melodies between coats,
 jackets and hats,
 that sound of a lin do lon
 blown by the wind.
 when they finally reach
 the peak of chance,
 they return breathing to the previous light,
 and begin to disperse the air

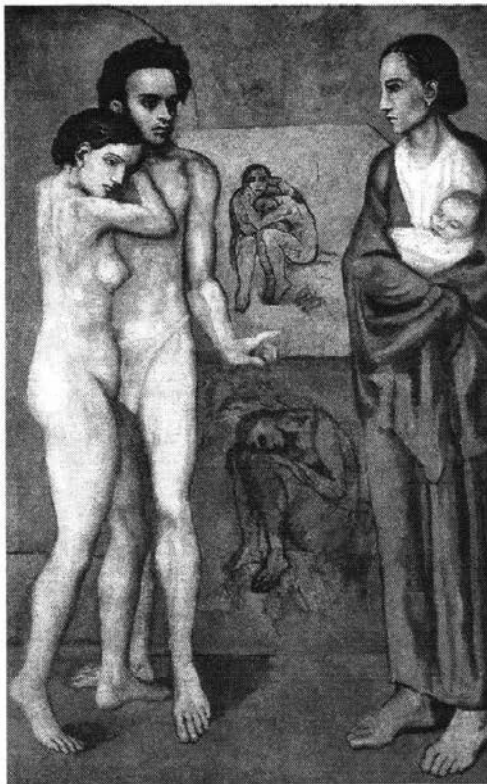


[The drawing of the poems]

in the emptiness of a canvas,
or of a piece of paper,
or of cloth:
*and all that which was unnecessary
begins again to think.*

The production – The story (example with a few images)

The space evokes from time to time the room of the painter and the characters that are generated by his mind. Free from any representative object, the room becomes empty and at the same time full, thanks to a continuous movement of apparitions (the single works of Picasso chosen by each group of work) which creates and annuls themselves. Every apparition is anticipated by the projection of a slide, which intends to suggest to the audience the inspiration of the story.

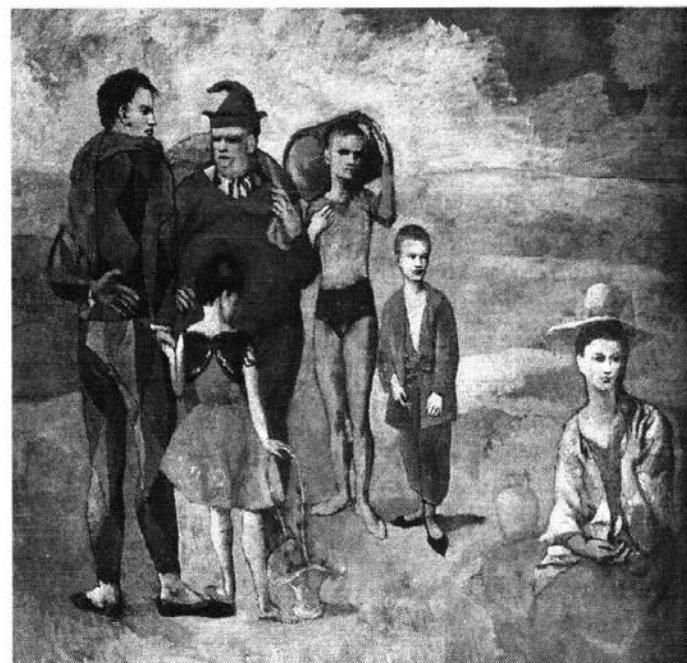


movement). Pause. The characters dissolve and stop in a point of the space; following an established order each of them tell the audience the poem and its drawing (word and movement). The poetic text is occasionally shared also from other characters, who in the meantime are related to the audience and to the companion who speaks, with his eyes and movement of the body (slow, small movements).

The space is populated with other characters and new objects. (*Salimbanchi*, Picasso, 1905 -



A fragile light illuminates the space. Light and far noises (bells, wind, low voices) add themselves to the light... slide (*Life*, Picasso, 1903 – Cleveland, Museum of Art); three actors enter and assume the posture of characters and reproduce the work (slow



Washington The National Gallery of Art). The light changes and the music announces the preparation of an event... slide... When the scene is ready, the work is carried out and is cancelled immediately afterwards to represent another show: poetry.



them and the wind and the sweet music accompanies the drawing of the poetry of every text (movements on time, rhythm of the music). The words occupy the space in different points and the silence 'listens' to them.



Picasso, 1921 - Parigi, Musée Picasso); they exchange words, thoughts, opinions (*Three women at the fountain*, Picasso, 1921 - New



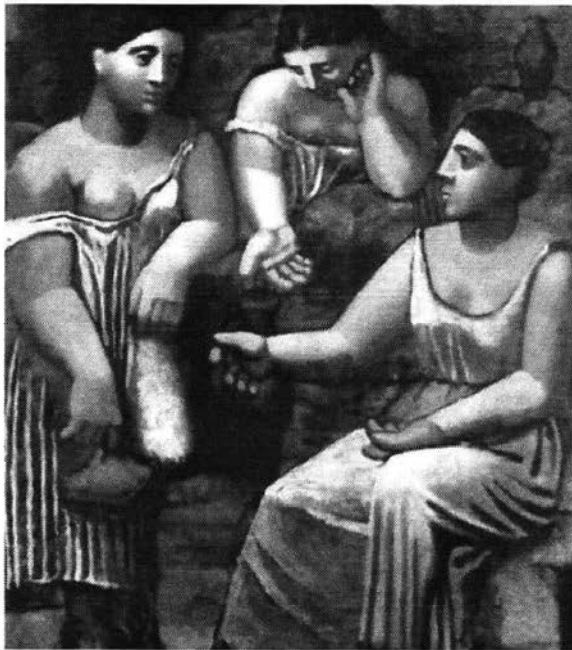
Enter *The Ladies of Avignon* (Picasso, 1907 - New York Museum of Modern Art); they mix with the *Saltimbanchi* who soon leave them alone. Slide. The next number is about to begin and the women introduce themselves to the public: composition of the image. A cold light illuminates



The space is empty in the silence (the interval of the show); in the absence of the music four actors enter (*Family of acrobats with a monkey*, Picasso, 1905 - Göteborg, Konstmuseum), who represent the rest of the artists behind the scenes... slide. A light of amber colour illuminates the intimacy of the image.

Other people come to the scene and fill it with different significations. In some other point of space, somebody reads again brief memories (*The reading of a letter*,





York Museum of Modern Art), others still observe the horizon and travel with their minds towards new destinations (*Arlecchino and His Companion*, Picasso, 1901 - New York Museum of Modern Art)... series of slides.



The show re-begins again and everybody gets ready for the end, all the works meet on the scene and divide into two different images: *Guernica*, (Picasso 1937 – Madrid, Centro de Arte Reina Sofia) and *Pastoral*, (Picasso, 1946 – Antibes, Musée Picasso). War and peace, hate and love, black and white, disorder and order, the eternal conflict between the individual and the society. The word is cancelled and only the slow movement of music designs the life that continues...

Notes:

1. Poems by Mario Gallo from *The book of the stars*, Teatro Ricerche, 1999

Mario Gallo
March 2006