

From its premiere in 1991, Bambalina's *Quijote* show has visited 36 countries and has been performed more than 350 times. Based on a literary classic that contains the essential values of a great work, the company favoured a confluence of professionals with very interesting contributions in the field of directing (**Carles Alfaro**), music (**Joan Cerveró**) and stageplay (**Jaume Policarpo**), with a contemporary aesthetic connecting Cervantes' classic with today's audience. Since its first performance *Quijote* has become one of the company's classics and continues to receive applause from the public and the critics.

## ***Quijote*: Bambalina's classic**

*Quijote* premiered in 1991 and since then has been performed more than 350 times outside of Spain, with audiences whose languages range from English, German and French to Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Arabic, *Quijote's* secret does not lie in the words but in the gestures, both those of the actors-puppeteers and those of their puppets. Spectators of all ages, religions, genders, education and social status have applauded this *Quijote* with the same enthusiasm, captivated by universal themes such as madness, friendship or love; human behaviour present in all cultures.

"The audience has always been transported by the ritual put forth by the staging and which contains intense emotion – declares **Josep Policarpo**, a founder member of the Company-: "the same show format (an intimate, small, chamber-like setting) conditions the personal relationship with the audience: there is a very direct involvement with the audience in each country and this intensifies communication with other cultures".

*Quijote* has also meant a turning point in the company's trajectory, in the sense of having marked a change of aesthetic direction and set a very personal theatrical language," – Policarpo continues, "this language is precisely what has stood out for the different audiences in each country, their surprise at a way of understanding puppet theatre that is totally surprising and innovative, breaking the audience's traditional preconceived notions. On this point it is important to recall that we have visited some countries with a great puppet theatre tradition, such as China, Japan, Indonesia, among others".

Although this was not a show created *ex professo* for the 4<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the publication of *Quijote*, this celebration did serve to boost its showing in many more countries. On this point, the theatre critic **Rosanna Torres** stated during her presentation in Paris: "this year has seen an infinity of works on *Quijote*, but I would save just a few exceptions, among

them the *Quijote* by Bambalina, perhaps because it was done in total liberty, because there was a belief in the genuine values of Cervantes' work and not just to take advantage of the centenary..."

Currently it is the actor **Àngel Figols** who plays Quijote and **David Durán**, a member of the company since 1998, who is Sancho: "When an adult comes up against the ritual of our *Quijote*, he or she can react in very different ways, depending on his or her culture, society and even the history of his or her country," comments David Durán, "practically throughout the world people have a preconceived notion that puppets are part of a child's world and so their first reaction tends to be one of surprise. As actors we have always aimed to get to the deepest inner worlds, arouse this and, in a certain way, subvert it. It is pleasing to tell stories that do not leave the audience indifferent and with *Quijote* this is what happens in any part of the world. Many people stay on in the theatre when the performance has ended, still moved, wanting to communicate with us and with an unstoppable need to thank us. That is what pushes me to continue in this profession".

#### **The small print from an international tour**

A production that is simple and easy to move (candle lighting, minimal scenery, actors and handlers who work back stage). Only three people are needed to cover the world with this *Quijote*, from Osaka to Buenos Aires: the two actors and the company's production person, **Ángeles González**.

Over the period of 15 years the *Quijote* show has been modified, has discovered new paths, has been enriched by the new artistic team but also by the views contributed by such different audiences. "Theatre goers have always wanted to see works from other countries. In Asia, because they normally only get flamenco or dance productions because of the language problem. In Latin America because they are fascinated by a theatrical approach that is so simple, with so few resources but also so resounding in its content. Of course, the puppets arouse passions but especially in Bambalina's way of working, in which neither the puppets nor the handlers play traditional roles.

## **A SPECTATOR'S REPRODUCTION OF THE PROGRAMME**

For just under one hour the audience and theatre critics from the whole world experienced a fascination with Quijote, Bambalina's master work. Two officiants dressed in black, a table, the play of light and shadows, precise gestures and the right music blend to create a mute yet eloquent Quijote, with Goyesque, Gothic, Expressionist evocations.

*Quijote* alone, in a room in his house, is obsessively reading books of all types until he goes mad. Thus starts this work that shows the madness of this universal hero, his love for Dulcinea and the special relationship he has with Sancho. Through episodes such as the windmill adventure or the Maese Pedro (Master Peter's) puppet show (the puppet theatre within the puppet theatre) we see how Quijote goes on mixing reality and fiction until he is finally humiliated by those around him and is vanquished by his own demons.

### **ARTISTIC TEAM**

Script and staging concept: Jaume Policarpo.

Original music: Joan Cerveró.

Actors: David Durán, Àngel Fígols

Directed by: Carles Alfaro

## **SOME COMMENTS FROM THE CRITICS**

Now, Espai Moma has done itself justice with this beautiful production taking puppet techniques to a new level. And the first thing that continues to astonish in this new approach is how the actor handlers manage to give life to these wooden hearts, these sad figures, literally making them breathe. The myth of Cervantes, brought to the world of nightmares, within a perverse game and, above all to an expressionistic aesthetic on all sides. (...) Carles Alfaro has managed to provoke powerful and immediate explosions of humanity. He makes the invisible Quijote and Sancho visible with imperceptible sounds alongside Joan Cerveró's disturbing music.

The illusion hypnotises the audience for an hour, stunning them with this little creative madness. Whoever misses this will not enter the kingdom of the theatre in the sky.

*Enrique Herreras. Cartelera Levante.*

It barely lasts one hour but has more intensity than many shows of longer duration. It has the rare gift of offering something new on something very different. Something that is different, delicate, intimate, beautifully sad, mysteriously calm, artificially human, poetically dazzling.

*Pedro Manuel Villora. ABC.*

This *Quijote* is a show that is truly stunning, I cannot think of a better word to define this. If there was any doubt that puppets could be elevated to an art of a higher category, Babelina will, without a doubt, change your mind. The treatment of props is simply brilliant, a highly original relationship is established between puppeteers, who also act out characters, and their puppets; the music, beautiful, deepening with each sentiment; its aim being to provoke the audience, truly accomplishing this aim. The worst part of *Quijote* is when the lights come back on and one knows that the show has ended.

*Pedro López Castañeyra. LaNetro Madrid*

This is a work that is risky, courageous, full of suggestions, with barely any concessions; a work in which we witness, in addition to the staging of the Cervantes work, the great ceremony of marionette artistry. Especially recommended for those with sensitive and inquiring souls, those that are open to creativity.

*Ramón Roselló. Cartelera Valencia Semanal*

The Spanish group Bambalina came through Córdoba in order to leave us with one of the most impacting images of El Quijote: images from the book in the year of Cervantes; of the author, the character, the madness and the puppeteer's art that rides through the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the difficulties of any chamber art. This Quijote was set against all, an armed knight by force. What draws our attention is how the actors approach the violence that gives and takes whoever goes against the world. We witnessed known episodes but the one-hour work went beyond that. Bambalina left out the bad mood of this man so blinded by the phantoms of imagination but also recovered the beauty and the tenderness of whoever finds meaning to life through art. It was a luxury, to have been in the Real theatre on Sunday, face to face with Quijote and his team.

*Beatriz Molinari. La voz del interior.*

With much poetry, imagination and tenderness, various of the best known episodes and characters from the Cervantes novel appear in a play of light and dark in which the puppeteers handled their dolls before the audience in a paradoxical link: at times confusing the puppet and the puppeteer as if they were one (which in the end they are!); at others with the puppets taking on life as if they were independent of their puppeteers.

The actors David Durán and Àngel Firols demonstrated a virtuous mastery of puppeteer artistry, in precise synchronisation with that contributed by the mood and playful beauty of the score created by Joan Cerveró.

*Andrés Sáenz. La nación.*

Don Quijote plays securely on the darkness of Goya and on gothic suggestions, energetically underlining signs of death, energetic madness and poetic despair. The show, brimming with austere melancholy and subject to a dark chamber, is outstanding for its perfect integration between actors and marionettes just as the puppet theatre has a thousand faces to investigate.

*Claudio Cumani. Il Resto del Carlino.*

The strength of the Compañía Bambalina Titelles lies in its capacity to penetrate its own being like a wave within a tide. They offer us a Quijote without artifice, one that is pure. There, with nothing more than gestures, images. Not one word. And two puppets as two idées fixes, so alive that they finally impose themselves on their handlers.

*Ouest France.*

The Bambalina marionette theatre allows puppets and humans to complement each other so as to achieve a seductive effect. At times, the voices and faces of the puppeteers express thoughts and feelings that cannot be expressed by the manipulated wood and textile; on other occasions the humans become the malevolent forces in Don Quijote's dreams. Surprisingly enveloping.

*Clare Bayley. The Independent.*

The puppets and their human puppeteers (or are they?) achieve mysterious life from artifice. It is appropriate to recreate Cervantes' fable with marionettes, close to the fluctuating limits between fantasy and reality. More than spectacular, it is intricately subtle but literally captivating.

*Catherine Lockerbie. The Scotsman.*

## BAMBALINA

Bambalina burst onto the Valencian scene in 1981, focusing its approach on the singular mode that is puppet theatre. In its eagerness to regenerate and dignify this artistic mode, they created the *Mostra de Titelles a la Vall d'Albaida* (1985) and the *Museo Internacional de Títeres de Albaida* (1997), two initiatives that have signified a cultural experience for the district and which have become an international point of reference.

Bambalina was established in Valencia in 1991 and began collaborating with creative artists such as Carles Alfaro, Joaquín Hinojosa, Ramón Moreno, Gemma Miralles and Joan Cerveró. The company has an ongoing presence in the main cities in Spain and in many European festivals. The company's growing importance has resulted in numerous awards and firm recognition from high institutions such as the Generalitat Valenciana and the Ministry of Culture.

From 2000 on the company took on far more important projects: a co-production with Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales and the Instituto Valenciano de la Música. Later it signed exhibition agreements with the Instituto Cervantes and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that led to tours in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America, Morocco and the whole of East Asia. In 2005, Bambalina culminated this expansion process with *Ubú*, a large format co-production for the Nave de Sagunto.

Bambalina has always been outstanding for the interdisciplinary vocation of its shows and for its use of a theatre language in tune with the most contemporary playwrights. Over its 25 years of history, the company has staged some emblematic works of universal literature and musical repertoire such as *Pinocchio*, *Quijote*, *Ulysses*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Alice*, *The Maese Pedro puppet show* and *The soldier's story*. It has also developed a more personal line of creation with productions such as *The garden of earthly delights*, *Pasionaria*, *The smile of Federico García Lorca*, *El cielo en una estancia* or *Kraft*.

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