Interview with Marina Montefusco, Le Clan des Songes

Written by Nicole Birmann Bloom | 27th Jun 2019 | France, Interview, Puppetry

Press photo

Before leaving for New York for the presentation of Bout à Bout**, Marina Montefusco**, founder of the company Le Clan des Songes shared some thoughts about her work as a puppeteer.

Nicole: Hello Marina, it's wonderful to see you back in New York at the New Victory Theater! We loved your first two shows, "Fragile" and "City". This time, you and your company are back with a simple rope and lots of ideas!

Can you tell us what inspired you to develop *Bout à Bout*? Is it a companion piece to *Fragile*?

Marina: After *City* was created, I started working on something for young children, something on shapes and stripped back materials. I took on the challenge of creating a show only with rope, really because first and foremost I love the aesthetic of this raw, very suggestive material.

It can represent anything and transform itself over and over again. It is playful and creative. It allows a very stripped back visual. It is poetic. It lends itself well to telling stories as I like them best – without words, accompanied mainly by music and sound.

By manipulating the rope, I explore emotional bonds: bonds that form, that develop, that come loose.

Nicole: Can you tell us more about creating moving objects and characters, how you control them? For example, we rarely see puppeteers in your work, only the object itself.

Marina: Above all, I enjoy exploring new shapes. Each show is different, each creation is a new challenge. I like the figurative but recently I've found that the raw, stripped back aesthetic with more abstract and suggestive shapes interests me because it suggests rather than "tells." It leaves more freedom to us as creators as well as to the audience.

Nicole: Do you start with the material or with a story?

Marina: When I write a show, I don't rely on a script or a story.

To create *Bout à Bout* we explored the possibilities of using rope and we began by building a collective vocabulary while also nourishing our collective imagination around the idea of bonds and attachment.

With the help of the team, I shaped it to get about 40 minutes. The show then progressed through research in the studio, meeting with young children, and stage writing.

Throughout my exploration, I had a preschool involved in the creation process. I would watch the children use the ropes to play and create.

With the help of teachers particularly appreciative of contemporary art in all its forms, we have shared research, proposals, and discoveries. We have observed how children adapt this material to play to situations that affect them.

Nicole: Recently, most of your creations have been aimed at very young children aged 2 years plus. What motivates you to create for a very young audience? What are the challenges?

Marina: The more I get to know the young audience, the more I discover their incredible listening skills, openness, and availability. It is a wonderful audience and the challenge is not to disappoint, compartmentalize, or (especially!) to underestimate it.

Ici le défi principal a été d'arriver à transférer au théâtre d'images la liberté du dessin du jeune enfant car *Bout à Bout* c'est de la véritable manipulation en 2D.

The key challenge here was taking all the freedom of young children's drawings and conveying that in a puppet theatre because *Bout à Bout* is pure 2D manipulation. We also had to create a show in which the adult can share with the child; it required us to widen our vision as creators, listening to the child within us in order to work on emotion rather than understanding.

Nicole: You trained in puppetry in Italy and came to France in the early 90s to develop your company. If this isn't too personal, why France?

Marina: Yes, it's personal, but I will tell you anyway! I followed my love, a French artist and… I fell in love with France!

Thank you, Marina. See you very soon at The New Victory Theater.

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