

Biographies

PANTAKIN COMMEDIA

It originated in Venice in 1995 as a theatre company, with the aim of keeping the tradition of *Commedia dell'Arte* and puppet theatre alive, and developing a theatrical language that is able to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. The company has been recognised by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage since 2003. In 2016, together with Woodstock Teatro and the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory in Venice, Pantakin began working with Teatro La Fenice on the production of diverse musical comedies including *La favola dei tre gobbi*, loosely based on the Carlo Goldoni's comic intermezzo (2016); the production *I duellanti. Notturmo Settecento* (2017) with the figures of Antonio Vivaldi and Baldassarre Galuppi as protagonists and original music by Paolo Furlani. Recently the company produced *Il visitatore. Shakespeare in Venice* (2019) with Teatro La Fenice and *Leonardo e la colomba* with Napoli Teatro Festival and Opera Estate Festival in Bassano.

WOODSTOCK TEATRO

It was founded in 2013 in Venice at a meeting of graduates in Theatre Science and Techniques at the IUAV University in Venice for the technical department with actors who graduated from Accademia Teatrale Veneta in Venice and other national schools. The company's works range from contemporary prose, children's theatre, installation and sensorial itineraries, radio theatre and musical-theatre. In addition to the above-mentioned projects with Pantakin, the company has also worked with Andrea Pennacchi and Teatro Boxer (*Trincee: risveglio di primavera, The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Stivalaccio Teatro (*Ucci Ucci*), Susi Danesin and *Il libro con gli stivali (Colore, Silent Book)* and *Bitols (ECG, winner of the Incanti off prize, 2015)*.

ENSEMBLE HARMONIA PRATTICA

An instrumental and vocal group, ever since it was founded Ensemble Harmonia Pratica has worked together with Teatro La Fenice, the Pantakin theatre company and Woodstock Teatro on the production of musical comedies. The members of the ensemble vary and include soloists and musicians in orchestral formations in some of the most prestigious music festivals on the Italian and European scene, as well as in opera and theatre seasons. It is conducted by Alberto Maron on the cembalo. The ensemble is made up of Sebastiano Franz and Chiara Arzenton on violins; Davide Girolimetto on cello; Davide Gazzato on plucked string instruments and percussion.



Teatro La Fenice – Sale Apollinee

Sunday 16 February 2020, 8.00 pm | Monday 17 February, 11.00 am *for schools* |
Tuesday 18 February, 11.00 am *for schools* | Wednesday 19 February, 11.00 am *for schools* |
Thursday 20 February, 12.00 am | Friday 21 February, 12.00 am | Saturday 22 February, 12.00 am |
Monday 24 February 2020, 12.00 | Tuesday 25 February, 12.00 am |

FANTASMAGORIE.

The life, death and miracles of Pulcinella

a musical theatre show
inspired by Giandomenico Tiepolo's works

direction
Michele Modesto Casarin
based on an idea by Michele Modesto Casarin

plot and lyrics **Marco Gnaccolini**
original music **Alberto Maron**
set and costumes **Licia Lucchese**

with the actors Susi Danesin, Claudio Colombo, Michele Modesto Casarin

soprano **Giuseppina Perna**
soprano **Ilenia Tosatto**

Harmonia Pratica Ensemble
conductor **Alberto Maron**

costumes **Sartoria DLQ**
masks and puppets **BRAT Teatro**
director's assistant **Matteo Campagnol**
costume designer's assistant **Alessandra Dolce**
production head **Emanuele Pasqualini**
administration **Flavio Costa**

Fondazione Teatro La Fenice production
in collaboration with
Pantakin Commedia, Woodstock Teatro



THE SUBJECT

Venice at the end of the 1700s. The famous, elderly painter Giandomenico Tiepolo is wandering around the city disguised as the ragamuffin head of a theatre company, offering people his most incredible and innovative creation: phantasmagoria, a performance of images of his new paintings that really come to life thanks to optical contraptions, opera music and *Commedia dell'Arte* actors, bringing to life the marvellous and bizarre life of Pulcinella, the Neapolitan puppet, with a narration of his numerous, tragic-comic deaths: how many times does Pulcinella have to die if he is to continue to live?

THE PROJECT: FROM TIEPOLO TO PULCINELLA

The aim of *Fantasmagorie. The life, death and miracle of Pulcinella* is to stage a dialogue of music and theatre between Venice and Naples, two of the most important artistic worlds in the history of opera and the theatre of *Commedia dell'Arte*. To do this we decided to take the painter Giandomenico Tiepolo as the protagonist, and narrate one of his most controversial works: *Divertimento per li ragazzi*, a series of one hundred and four plates of black and sepia ink drawings that illustrate the life, adventures, works, deaths and resurrections of Pulcinella, the most famous Neapolitan puppet and the most recognised and representative figure in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, equal to Harlequin. Very little is known about the representation and reasons behind the origins of this drawing album: were they cartoons for larger frescos? Are they a mirror of the painter's emotional and philosophical state of mind, or were they done for pure amusement and artistic training? What we do know is that these drawings were completed around the end of the 1700s while Tiepolo remained in the family villa in Zianigo (not far from Venice) in what was the darkest period of the Venetian Republic, when its decline was on the horizon and shortly before the Republic fell following the French conquest of Napoleon Bonaparte (1797). The Venetian Tiepolo is therefore not only in a world that is coming to an end when he composed his *Divertimento*, but also at the end of his life. What is even stranger and of great significance is Tiepolo's choice for his work: in what is likely to be his last artistic work, while Venice is collapsing around him Tiepolo decides to portray Pulcinella, a Neapolitan puppet! A character from the *Commedia* while the world around him is being consumed by Tragedy. We know nothing about the reasons for this choice, as there is nothing in either writing or in the form of testimonies. Why Pulcinella? What strong tie could there have been between one of the greatest Venetian painters of his times and a Neapolitan puppet that made him want to devote such an extensive drawing album to the subject? If, however, there is one thing that we all know about Pulcinella it is that this puppet not only belongs to the world of theatre and *Commedia*, but that it is also a much more profound archetype of demons that have always belonged to the mythical, emotional and unconscious sphere of human beings; they are therefore only to be found in the form of puppets so they can portray the pain, anxiety and problems one is experiencing, whilst seeking a way out from this imminent worry, pending evil and inevitable death.

It could well be owing to this vivacious link with death that today Pulcinella still makes children laugh when they see him beaten continuously in the local puppet shows and is still a source of more profound reflection by philosophers (Giorgio Agamben wrote a book on the relationship between Tiepolo and Pulcinella, published in 2016); Pulcinella is a character that keeps on dying, but never dies. And if the puppets of *Commedia dell'Arte* are the bearers of our most profound aspects, Pulcinella could therefore simply be showing us how not to give in to the most tragic situations, because in the world there is always a way to rebel against anything that wants to crush us, and therefore a way to rediscover life.

THE PRODUCTION: MUSIC, JOKES AND PRE-CINEMA

The production of *Fantasmagorie* is a combination and mixture of different artistic production forms: opera, *Commedia dell'Arte*, pantomime and the visionary creations of magic lanterns. All the music is original, including the musical harmony that evokes the atmosphere of Venice and Naples in the 1700s without neglecting the contemporary in the composition, and the lyrics that were inspired by the texts of seventeenth-century short moral popular songs (which portray the characteristics of the human soul) and the lyrics of the Calabrese revolution against Napoleon (just one example: the patriotic hymn when burning the tyrants' insignia). While the music has the task of enveloping us in the most turbulent moments at the heart of dramatic events, *Commedia dell'Arte* has that of developing the succession of events in the tale, presenting a concatenation of Pulcinella's deaths and resurrections in short, tragic-comic scenes that are developed by using the means of the fanciful: ranging from pantomime, stage objects, puppets, and creatures of our dreams. As a sort of visual memory of the theatrical action that takes place before our very eyes, the production then ends with huge projections of Tiepolo's drawing, thus tracing an invisible conceptual thread between the hypothesis that the Venetian painter might have drawn inspiration for his drawings from comedians he saw performing in some Venetian theatre or public square, or in a dream in his fanciful mind. The title of our production is illustrative of our 'narrating the visions', creating a particular form of theatrical practice: the word 'phantasmagorie' was used to describe theatre performance that used a modified form of the magic lantern (an optical vision instrument invented in the mid 1700s, which was one of the forerunners of today's cinema), which projected imaginary, and often extremely frightening images onto the stage, resulting in the creation of a real form of dreaming with your eyes open. We believe that these art forms are all we have to help society not to surrender in the face of the lack of its inhabitants' fantasy, and on the occasion of times of death and lack of freedom, together with Pulcinella we would like to say: "Rebel! Always!".

Marco Gnaccolini