

# **El Heraldo de Aragón (The Aragón Herald)**

**Wednesday 30th December 2009**

**Theatre Criticism – José Luis Melguizo**

## **A Toybox of Dreams**

Knockabout puppets (puppet theatre in general) considered until recently (too recently and, unfortunately, this opinion has not yet been entirely abandoned) as a kind of sub-genre of the dramatic arts, has its roots deep in centuries old tradition of popular theatre. The puppeteer donned his glove puppets which appeared in the puppet theatre to delight the lower classes with their irreverence and their social and political criticism, with that grotesque and elemental violence (of which the blows of the cosh are the most basic and effective display) which elicited laughter from the public, and with that typical call to ingenuity as a means to resolve the problems which the characters faced.

In the best puppeteering tradition, Toni Rumbau has created ‘Full Hands’ the show we had the opportunity to see in the VIII International Children’s Theatre Festival, organised by the Theatre Arbolé at their new theatre in the Parque de las Aguas. The show contains some of the most characteristic elements of the genre (participation and dialogue with the public, characters who chase each other, who hide, who hit one another with a stick or any other significant object) and various of the genre’s traditional figures (Polichinela, the Devil, the policeman...). But Rumbau does not limit himself to a masterly presentation in this worthy tradition; as well as that, he converts the puppet theatre into a toybox of dreams, with the addition of the ancestral magic of light and shadow puppets.

A new facet of the puppet theatre is revealed; it becomes translucent so as to show us, through the language of shadow puppets, how the hands of the puppeteer cause the different characters to emerge; we see them transformed into hand puppets to end up, at the close of the show, once more converted into the shadows they were. ‘Full Hands’ shows us brilliantly the three faces of the puppet, which is to say, the plasticity of the puppet as object, its role in the dramatic action and the manipulation of the puppeteer who endows it with life (voice and movement).

The Fanfarra’s offering is visually highly attractive, (this is multiplied by the combination of puppets and shadow puppets); the directing handles the rhythm perfectly (it uses the shadow puppets as a linking element between the scenes); there is a good hierarchy between the various elements, the puppet manipulation is impeccable, and the show connects with the audience.

***Full Hands (awarded the newspaper’s maximum four stars)***

***Company: The Fanfarra, Puppet theatre company***

***Puppets: Mariona Masgrau***

***Costumes: Carmen González***

***Music: Octavi Rumbau***

***Creation, performance, direction: Toni Rumbau***

***Teatro Arbolé***

***VIII Festival de Teatro para Niños y Niñas***

***28th december 200***