

compagnia
tpo



interactive
theatre for
children



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

THE TPO AND INTERACTIVE THEATRE

Visual, exciting, immersive theatre is the hallmark of the TPO Company. By using interactive technology to manipulate images, sounds and colours, each production transforms the stage space into an environment of the senses. This is the ideal way for dancers, performers, and audience members to explore the fine line between art and play, constantly inventing new forms of expression that go beyond any barriers of differing culture and language. The TPO Company is made up of a team of creators who make expert use of different aspects of the visual and performing arts. Large-scale projections, all-encompassing stage environments, and, above all, an innovative use of interactive technology (some of which has been developed specifically for TPO productions): these are the outstanding characteristics of TPO's theatre.

TPO conceives the stage space as a dynamic and reactive environment that can involve the public in individual or group actions: in fact it is set up with sensors (touch pads, video cameras and microphones) that allow both performers and public to modulate sounds or to interact with images via movement or voice. These technologies generate "sensitive" theatrical environments where children explore the space and discover that it responds to their actions in a certain way. Thus an active relationship ensues between the young people and their setting, a kind of open dialogue with space, forms, and sounds, that allows them to connect to art through the TPO experience. In our productions the performers' role is imbued with special meaning: using their bodies and movements in conjunction with interactive effects the dancers "paint" and "play" on stage; however, their particular role is to invite the children to explore the space with a theatrical approach that emphasizes the use of the body and the gaze.

BLEU, A PRODUCTION DEVOTED TO THE SEA

'A long, long time ago, the nymphs who roamed the natural world could be seen by anybody who let go of worries and listened to the wind, to bird song, to slight rustling or to whoever paused to sense distant lights flickering or the calm of night-time.'

This story of the sailor's encounter with the forces of nature is inspired by the legends and mythologies that the Mediterranean Basin has treasured since the beginning of time.

Two dancers take their place on stage: he is a Sailor, She is a magical character.

A few at a time groups from the audience will be invited into the stage space, as little sailors, to take active part in the games that mark various situations arising during the narration of the story.

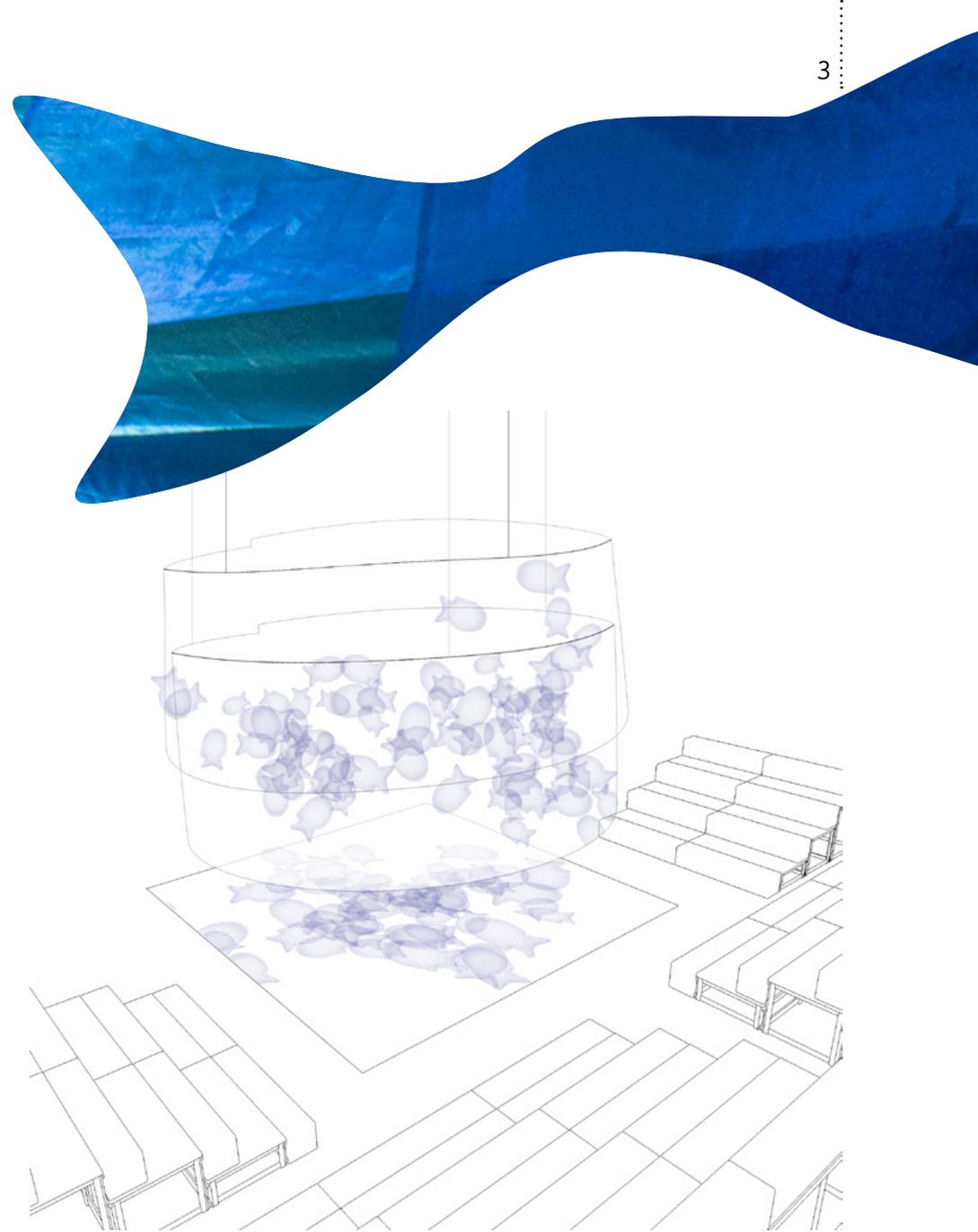
THE STAGE

The audience sits on three sides of the performative space: a white dance mat overhung by a large spiral-shaped structure from which tulle fabric is suspended. During the show the spiral will be lowered (via motorized devices) a little at a time until it completely envelops the space. Both the central dance mat and the tulle fabric form surfaces for projected images that seem to float in space.

THE INTERACTIVE SET

At the centre of the stage a "sensitive" mat hides a series of pressure sensors which, almost like a keyboard, trigger the interaction of images and sounds. The pressure sensors react to the weighted movements of performers and audience members as they walk, run, and jump on the surface, each exploring his own tactile relationship with the space.

From above an infra-red video camera optically senses the slightest on-stage movements, even a hand gesture can be registered. This type of sensor allows a more dynamic, kinesthetic interaction with the entire body.



The show opens with a *tableau vivant*, a still scene in which a sailor stands as if suddenly frozen while hauling his line. Not far away a female figure is seated on a cloud of light. The figures remain immobile as the night-time scene comes alive, softly and slowly, as if in a dream...

The mysterious woman figure is at times the sky, at others the wind, wave, sea. She will lead the Sailor – and the many little sailors in the audience – on a journey through landscapes of nature and of fantasy.

At first the Sailor doesn't see her. She slips a **PEARL** into the sea so that he can find and return it to her.

The **SAILOR** also misses her dance across the sky as she creates a pathway of **STARS**, which will lead him far off.

He doesn't see that She is the one creating the **WIND** that will allow him to play with sounds. It is She who calls up the **WAVES**, swirling them into a **STORM** that will bring the Sailor to the **BOTTOM OF THE SEA** where She lives.

Indeed their **ENCOUNTER** takes place underwater because it is only there that the Sailor finally recognizes her as the Soul of the Deep Blue Sea, with all her **MARVELLOUS CREATURES** that are soft, refined, brightly-coloured, dangerous...

Let's imagine that falling stars tumble out of the sky, splash into the water and come to rest on the sea floor where they become starfish. Here at the bottom of the sea the Sailor gives her back the pearl and receives in exchange the gift of a large seashell. He discovers that blowing the conch shell produces a sound that calms the storm and allows him to find the way to **RETURN**.

During his voyage the Sailor will invite other "sailor children" from the audience to assist him in the various situations that arise during the sea tale...

SYNOPSIS

PEARL

THE SAILOR

STARS

WIND

WAVES

STORM

BOTTOM OF THE SEA

ENCOUNTER

MARVELLOUS CREATURES

RETURN



When **the audience enters** the space, they see that the stage -- with its areas, marks and characters -- is fully visible.

The Sailor, the sea and the moonlit night all allow us to recognize the setting.

A dreamlike or magic feeling is communicated by the Sailor's still pose and by the female figure who is first seen seated on a "cloud of light" before performing her dance with the bright pearl.

The female character is mysterious and can be read in a number of ways. She might represent natural elements like wind and water or else She could be a magical being or a nymph from Greek mythology.

Begun in **the prologue** the story's narrative line is developed until its conclusion in the epilogue:

"She" sees the Sailor and is captivated by his proud bearing, in this way she lets one of her tears slip into the sea where it is magically transformed into a pearl, taking on a physical form that he will be able to find. In order to return the pearl to her the Sailor will undertake a voyage which will be a path of discovery and knowledge.

The narration is based on four fundamental moments:

The first part:

This is **the space of the sky** at night and it refers to the routes that sailors laid out according to the position of the constellations. In the context of *Bleu!* it is part of a dream dimension: She rearranges the stars' positions in order to lead the Sailor along a different route, one that changes and can never be identified on any geographical map.

The sky is furrowed by falling stars, a recurring theme every time there is a night-time scene. In the epilogue, it develops to a conclusion derived from a child's imagination: where do stars fall? They plummet to the bottom of the sea and become starfish.



The second part:

This is **the space of the sea's surface** where the Sailor cannot see the female character.

She takes action, using the language of natural forces such as wind and water to propel the Sailor along his journey until he reaches the point when he is able to see her.

This surface space of sea and beach is a privileged one for the games that accompany the theatrical action: the children are called upon to play with crabs, to draw in the wet sand, and to play chase with the waves.

In this moment of suspension that prepares and builds towards the climax, playing is used to establish a spirit of collaboration between the Sailor and his "crew".

The third part:

This is marked by the dramatic **storm** that She has summoned up, a tempest which overturns the situation and instigates the climax.

THE DRAPES:

lowered during the whirlpool scene the tulle drapes envelop the performative space, connoting our underwater descent. From now on the drapes remain lowered for projected images of water, bubbles and sea life.



The fourth part:

This is the **underwater area** where She has wanted to direct the Sailor's steps because it is here that he will finally be able to see her. In looking at her the Sailor recognizes her as the Sea and gleans that sunken world's sea creatures and marvels.

Various actions take place in this environment: games played with bubbles and schools of fish, a quiet time spent with jellyfish, the dramatic rescue of the Sailor from the tentacles of a giant octopus.

The epilogue:

It takes place on the sea floor where "the falling stars from the sky settle... and become starfish".

This is where the Sailor's journey ends. He hands her back the pearl and She gives him a conch shell: blowing it will calm the storm and allow him to return to the surface.

THE PROPS

Some of the objects on stage are used for interactivity.

The rope allows the Sailor to activate the repetition of the word “bleu.”

The shells allow the children to play the wind.

The sticks allow the children to draw on the sand.

The sponges allow the children to wipe away the black marks left by the octopus’ tentacles.

Other objects serve a strictly theatrical function.

The bright pearl is programmed, via software, to light up and move.

The large fish is a large silvery, remote-controlled balloon and its fish-like swimming motion comes from the movement of its tail. A series of small counterweights determine its height in space.



LINK:

DEMO VIDEO OF THE SHOW - <http://vimeo.com/78659636>

MUSIC FROM THE SHOW - http://www.tpo.it/lavoro/bleu_musiche/bleu

SUGGESTIONS:

By following the stars, sailors have never gotten lost but, rather, have discovered new worlds...

The **Mediterranean Sea** is bordered by three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia – making it a true middle space. To narrate the Mediterranean means to interweave a plurality of voices coming from many different cultural areas. Of all the narrations originating here, the most important and fecund is the epic tale of the Odyssey: as the main character traverses real space a group of men transform that journey and its places into a mythical and imaginary world. The result is a mythic, poetic and narrative creation of real and imagined space which has undergone an enormous amount of elaboration and rewriting: Captain Ulysses as, Alberto Savinio called him, is the archetype of the “man of the sea.”

A long, long time ago the oldest tales of Ancient Greece tell that certain spirits of the water, called **NYMPHS**, inhabited the seas. They looked like young women with blue eyes and cascading curls of hair. Sometimes they took on the appearance of waves or of beautiful Mermaids.

Buccina s. f. [L. bucina, crooked horn or trumpet] or more generally, **conch shell**, a whorled univalve seashell suited to use as a trumpet by ancient seaside peoples. In some areas it was used throughout the centuries as a device for signalling via sound. In the figurative arts it was a symbol of Tritons and other marine divinities. Legend had it that sounding the shell trumpet calmed stormy waters and called forth the god of the sea.

Mythology and ancient legends often associated **pearls** with tears and the Greeks believed them to be cried by Nymphs. Instead, for the Romans, they were the solidified tears of angels whereas for the Islamic world they were considered the tears of Adam and Eve, crying over their sin.

How the starfish was born by Cristina Sussi (first grade student, 2002)

One day, in the far-off time of Ancient Greek myths and legends, as Apollo was carrying the Sun across the skies in his chariot, he mistakenly knocked a precious star from the firmament. It fell and came to rest on the bottom of the sea, in the domain of the powerful god, Poseidon. After having spent so much time in the water the star lost its brightness and gilt colour and became green, then purple, then red. The change in colour took place because of the salty sea and also because the star couldn't breathe underwater. Because it had been previously been attached to the sky, so too it looked for a place to attach itself at the bottom of the sea. At last it found a reef. [...]

THE DIGITAL SET AND NATURAL LANDSCAPES

A fundamental consideration in our work centers on the relationship between the natural landscape and its virtual representation. Prior to any new project we first ask ourselves how we can create a visual/audio environment that can trigger a tale. From that point on the task of directing takes the form of a carefully prepared, almost cinematographic storyboard. In this practice of simulation the entire team works on creating emotive environments in which sounds and images can be actors playing in harmony opposite the performers on stage. The exchange between actions (dance, movement) and interactions (images, sounds) generate signs, which can even be abstract or allusive, like an animated scene that narrates what words cannot say. In such a context the representation or the stage pretense – which, in traditional theatre, have always had an important role and a precise code – are abandoned in order to reach an idea of new theatre: one in which the key players are aesthetic practice and the exercise of all the arts.



The TPO (*Teatro di Piazza o d'Occasione*) has its headquarters at the Fabbrichino Theatre in Prato, Italy where it operates as the resident company specialized in children's theatre. Their most important works have originated as co-productions and as artistic collaborations with the Teatro Metastasio Stabile della Toscana.

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sound design Spartaco Cortesi

computer engineering Rossano Monti

costumes Fiamma Ciotti Farulli

props Livia Cortesi

organization Valentina Martini, Francesca Nunziati, Chiara Saponari

