

Bellyfoot

(Piè di Pancia)

(a tribute to Pablo Neruda dedicated to the nest of infancy)

The Melarancio Theatrical Company

By and with

Tiziana Ferro and Vanni Zinola

With the advising in the direction by
Marichiara Raviola



THE PLOT

Ring-a-ring o' Roses
How wonderful the world is
For every child who today has come
more wonderful still it has become!

Beneath a dome of soft veils reminiscent of a playroom, the spectators, together with the actors, crawl barefoot and on all fours to reach the perimeter of cushions which delimitate, in a helpful nearness, the area of the scene.

Two butterflies, moved by the actors, propose a delicate contact as a "sensory rite of welcoming" which, step by step, focuses the attention on the swollen belly of an expectant mother.

The intimate tenderness binding the two future parents allows them to perceive the tiny signals of a new life beginning.

Is it the foot of a child who, from the ancestral world of before and of within, is announcing his desire to exist?

And, does a child's foot know that it's a child's foot?

In that dimension in which everything is still possible, doesn't it perhaps dream of being...

...a cloud ...a bird ...a butterfly?

Can it imagine how many steps time and the experiences of life which awaits it will take?

One.. two.. three steps to go and play with Lucy.

One.. two.. three steps to learn to write.

One.. two.. three steps to see the sea.

Steps as the unit of measurement, which has accompanied us since the infancy of mankind, to pace out the slow, stately stride of knowledge, of loving, of living. Steps scattered along the pathways of the world telling of the hopes and the dreams of every being, beginning from that tiny unmistakable first signal of the desire to live.

*Take your place in the circle of feet
Those who walk take no seat
Every child comes into the world
To bring his feet to the circle!*

THE PRINCIPAL THEMES

Our show tells the story of every child: a man and a woman, before the birth, imagine how their child will be and practice being mum and dad.

The principal themes are:

Time: the suspended time of waiting, the actions of the present and those of the future.

The Body: first discoveries of the body

Emotions: love and tenderness, irony, desires and fears

Time: The present and future; the time of waiting

The show speaks indirectly of time: a present time and a future time.

The space/time presented, however, has a particular unit of measurement: the "step" The protagonists, the two parents-to-be, ask themselves how many steps their child will have to take before he learns to ride a bicycle, before he becomes an astronaut, a dancer, a chef, a florist, before it's his or her turn to be called mother or father.

Another 'idea' dealt with in the show which gives stimulus and food for thought is physical space. The children taking part are gathered in, and surrounded by, a soft white veil and protected by a soft cloth roof which recalls the large cot of a newborn baby or the big top tent of a small circus.

The unfolding story varies the scene area which is in continuous transformation inviting the children to examine the perception of small, of big, of above, of below, of high and low.

The Body: first discoveries of the body

During the show the actors enter into contact with the children creating a tonic and affectionate rapport with them.

The choice of filtering our story via the experiences of a foot came from the preference of the young of this part of the body for beginning to learn about the world.

Through the movement of the body, the attitude of the feet and a few simple words, our protagonists explore human mobility; from womb kicking to kicking in the air, from crawling to the first steps and on to moving with ease and confidence.

Since the prehistoric era, as rock drawings and sculptures show, the form of the footprint marks the presence of man. At a tender age exploration of the world begins with the discovery of the feet; "easily reached objects" with which one can play and begin getting to know one's body, one's confines, the external environment, pleasant sensations. So to us the feet seemed to be an excellent means of communication with our "little" audience, a language that is easily understood and very near to their own experiences.

Emotions: love and tenderness

The protagonists show their affection with tender gestures, both one for the other and for the child, imagined and desired, who will soon be born.

The show offers a cross section of family life: perhaps a rather "idealistic" view of the daily routine that, although difficult to reach, we all dream of and see as the reaching of happiness and which, for children in particular, means security and sense of identity.

Throughout the show the actual birth is never openly mentioned, but the presence of the pot bellied mother-to-be continuously leads the imagination to the expected babe in a clear but delicate tale of how we come to be and also in a subtle and poetic explanation of the differences between being male and being female.

In my mummy's belly...

In my mummy's belly I swam like a goldfish.

...my feet were near her heart

... I could touch the roof with my feet

...I kicked and kicked to make myself loved

In your mummy's belly...

there was you, waiting to grow and become the child you are

THE LANGUAGE USED

Bellyfoot is a dynamic, interactive theatrical show in which the actors attempt to rediscover infantile fantasy and desire to explore.

Freed like children of socks and shoes, even the two adults on the scene surrender to play and allow their feet to be transformed into other things.

"A child's foot does not yet know that it is a foot. It wants to be a butterfly.. an apple.."

(Pablo Neruda)

The actor and the dancer, often interacting with the young audience gathered all around, communicate with almost "dance-like" gestures, with rhymes, simple phrases and onomatopoeic exclamations to underline the mood and describe the various situations.

Rhymes

This is for wood
And this is for water
This is for tagliatelle, which is good
And HE/SHE/THIS ONE ?? ate
it all up and we caught her
And the little one who was inside the
belly
Didn't even get a jelly

This is the big toe
and this is his friend
This is the little brother
And this is the rascal
And where can I put this little
pinkie?
Yummy!!

The first wants bread
For the second there's none
The third says "I'll go and buy some!"
The fourth says "there's a little left"
Give it to me, I'm the smallest.

THE SCENERY

A multicoloured circle of footprints on the blue background of a large rug welcomes the children. All around, a light veil gathers them together in a luminous magical environment. A few simple objects, moved and animated, move through the story and give form to the fantasies of the protagonists. Socks, shoes, butterflies, a baby's bottle, talcum powder and soft white cloth all attract attention and invite the audience to imagine the situations suggested, one by one, through the games of the actors.

At the end of the show the audience is wished farewell with an invitation to step on a 'sensory carpet' that will deliver the feet back to the world of everyday life with a last pause for reflection on their tactile perceptions.

The music also becomes a resonant chrysalis creating an environment, underlining the story and stimulating sensations.

The soundtrack of the show features a selection of tracks by Hugues Le Bars, Andre Popp, the Pascals and Ensemble Rayè.

A flat, empty area measuring a minimum of 6mt x 6mt is necessary to be able to set up the scenery for the show and gather the audience.

LENGTH AND RECEIVERS

Babies from 1 to 3
Nursery-school
Performance of 20 minutes

Technical requirements/ minimum space
mt6x mt6, children (max.70) are gathered
inside the structure

Electrical connect 220 volts 3 kw

SOURCES

-Alexander Lowen,
Il linguaggio del corpo

-Giulia Baronchielli-Celia Carpi Germani
Coccole e filastrocche (Giunti)

-Christopher Knill
Contatto corporeo e comunicazione (Erikson)

-Odilla Veronesi
Il mistero della vita- Un libro di educazione alla sessualità (fatto da bambini per i bambini I.R.S.E.F.)

-Josef Stahl
I bambini ci interrogano-Educazione sessuale dei bambini sino a 6 anni
I bambini ci interrogano-Educazione sessuale dei bambini 6/12 anni



Progetto Prima Infanzia: Tiziana Ferro
tiziana.ferro@melarancio.com



Compagnia Il Melarancio Cooperativa sociale onlus
Casella Postale 74 - 12100 Cuneo CN - Italia
tel/fax 0039-0171699971 / 0039-3391277798 / 0039-3484120611
E-mail: organizzazione@melarancio.com web: www.melarancio.com