

Letter to avoid confusion between Royal de Luxe and Les Machines de l'Île

There is always being confusion between Les Machines de Nantes and the street theatre company Royal de Luxe. It is true that it is difficult to understand the situation. I often meet people in the street that ask me about the Elephant, the carrousel and other projects from Les Machines de l'Île, from Nantes, Toulouse or elsewhere.

This question always makes me feel very uncomfortable: first of all because I am not following closely the adventures of the company Les Machines de l'Île and secondly because we don't speak about the same work and the connection with the audience is completely different. Of course, it is obvious that Francois Delaroziere talent in its constructions must be recognized as well as Pierre Orefice in the creation of their common project.

We used to work together and for this I am very happy that they received the 2013 Award for the most original attraction in Los Angeles. But once again, I am embarrassed to be congratulated in the shops in Nantes or in the Talensac and Petite Hollande markets. Embarrassed to be congratulated about an award I didn't receive.

Pierre Orefice was the financial manager for Royal de Luxe from 1985 – « Les grands mammifères ou l'incroyable histoire d'amour entre un cheval et une péniche » to 1998 – Back from Africa. He worked there for 13 years when the Company Royal de Luxe has been existing for 35 years. Francois Delaroziere met the company when he was around 18 in Le Gard at Anduze (South of France), then he worked to created machines that I included in my show.

When he left, I heard people saying that he was considered as the one who had the ideas of the Royal De Luxe machines and even that he was the creator of it, forgetting other great engineers and poetic inventors that are nowadays still in the company, such as Raymond Kajak, Didier Gallot-Lavallée, Matthieu Bony, Jean-Yves Aschard and others.

Genesis

Royal de Luxe has been doing popular and free theatre since its creation in 1979. Imaginary machines have always been included to the shows , as a burst of laughter on the industrial revolution of the 19th century, involving famous brands (Coca-Cola, Total, shell, Ford, Mercedes, etc. creating through advertising the hope of a heaven on earth which is of course only for those who benefit from this capitalism).

The name of the company comes from this. Creating a kind of popular theatre named after a company that could be a cigarette brand, mobile phone, cars etc.

In addition, the idea of having machines in my shows comes directly from Jules Vernes stories that I used to devour when I was 16 years old – it was the only nourishment of my spirit at that time – Then appeared the fascination for Leonard De Vinci, pulling the world out from the middle age. This is the basis, which have never changed since, of the creation of the company.

Having the street as only stage forced me to develop a simple and popular theatre.

First shift: A 3 days show

After traveling around in Europe, begging to be able to create shows and getting contract in festivals, in 1983, I had the idea to tell a story to a whole city.

The realisation of the new concept, growing in my head, was a show spread out over 3 days. The first show was a 15 minutes show called “Waterclash” where the audience could see the useless and violent fight of two kinds of contemporary knights riding rolling WC shot out by an engine, fighting over paint spurts, feathers, mud.

All this was supervised by a conductor in a motorised bath facing musicians who were smashing washing machines and porcelain crockery with hammers.

At the end of the show, a real ambulance turned up on the scene and loaded a knight wounded by the fight. For a few seconds, there was a feeling of surprise from the audience before they applaud.

From this, scenarios were created in different parts of the city, developing a story over several days.

At that time, for the creation of three days of show, the great financial manager, who, I have to admit, made Royal de Luxe get off the ground thanks to his talent, was Pierre Berthelot.

He is now director of the brilliant street theatre company Generik Vapeur in Marseille.

The Giants Saga

Then, has started the great adventure of the Giants and the pursuit of stories through the time: a 10 years old child in 1993, discovering the first Giant is today 30 years old and can share this experience with his children.

There is a difference in the conception of the machines between RDL and Les Machines: We can speak about a permanent attraction in l’Île de Nantes yet it is absolutely not the RDL approach. For us, a machine is not an end in itself. I can’t imagine the little Giant girl or Xolo being displayed every day to the audience. In addition, it is necessary for me that a machine tells a story (simple at the beginning, a development, and an end), or comes with the story. In my opinion, seeing a giant

every day kills the mystery of it. (taking a simple example: let's imagine that father Christmas is around every day!).

So, regarding Les Machines de l'Île, I will speak about permanent exhibition rather than mobile sculptures.

Once again, I respect all kind of Art and expression, but one day, it is important to make the difference.

Royal de Luxe performances are always free, unlike big attraction parks.

Confusion with the elephant

Another confusion is the apparition of the elephant. This animal has always been part of a world to be developed in the Giant Saga. After the rhinoceros (my favourite animal) and the giraffes, hippopotamus, buffalos, leopards or any other animal from Africa are following on from the Little Black Giant arrival with his huge "bestiary".

At that time, Nantes and Amiens cities gave me the opportunity to create a project about the centenary of Jules Vernes death (1828-1905). I bumped into Pierre and Francois who were busy with the attraction park of Les Machines de l'Île. Planning to have an elephant in this park was a project they had and it was also natural for me as part of the Giant Saga.

I created the Show « La visite du Sultan des Indes sur son éléphant à voyager dans le temps ». This performance became as strong as a space rocket thrown over the continent, where the Little Giant came from.

Its first impact took place in front of the Cathedral in Nantes. This elephant that I had imagined in my head for a very long time, was finally able to walk and bounce in the world, as big, even more than in my dreams.

The show took place and since the Elephant settled in Nantes like a symbol of the city, making even stronger the confusion with Royal de Luxe.

A few theatrical differences

In my opinion, street theatre, in its imagination and creation, leads to multiple different paths. Yes, there is the fact of speaking to a whole city through the time with Giants. Yes, there had been before the wish to create a story over 3 or 4 days, even more. Yes, there was also what I have called the "show accidents" (car park for shoes, traffic jams etc.) Here it is about, simple but precise unexpected meeting of an inhabitant with an impossible image displayed in a corner of a street (a giant fork stuck into a car, a series of cars sewed on the macadam etc.)

Yes the idea and the development of an imaginary realism has been created since the first RDL shows.

Yes, I like theatre being set in a desert village in Atacama, north Chili, where all the inhabitants (about 60) watch the little show with a quiet smoke from a volcano in the background. Yes I like to hear a thousand of people burst out laughing at a same time, the surprise, their come back into childhood because of the discovering of a livable exoplanete in the univers.

To finish, yes, there is a difference between the concept of a machine, I mean the projection of the imagination, its life, before its creation: after the idea, the machine is into the hand of the engineers. The machine takes a different shape.

Les Machines de l'île, in other fields take different ways.

Do not mistake the two companies which are Les machines de L'île and RDL. Each one creates different arts. Les machine likes to advertise in advance as much as I rather like to keep the secret. Someone told me one day at the flea market place Viarme that secret is an art. I wish all the best success to Les Machines of course...

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