

A man in a dark mask with a large, protruding nose and a patterned brown and gold shirt is standing in the center of a rehearsal space. He is looking down at his hands, which are clasped together. In the background, a woman with long brown hair is sitting at a table with a laptop and a white cup. To the left, there is a backdrop with a repeating pattern of a face and the text 'СТАНИСЛАВСКИЙ'. The overall scene is a rehearsal for a production.

# Tree Born

*Photo and text: Olga FOUX*

NOTES FROM THE PINOCCHIO REHEARSAL IN THE  
ELECTROTREATHRE STANISLAVSKY

THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEATRES ARE LOOKING FOR THEIR NICHE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, EMBEDDING THEIR PRODUCT IN THIS PROCRUSTEAN BED – A PERFORMANCE. ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE ELECTROTHEATRE STANISLAVSKY BORIS YUKHANANOV FLOATS AGAINST THE STREAM, CONTINUING TO CREATE A THEATRE-JOURNEY, A THEATRE-WAY OF LEARNING, A THEATRE-LIFESTYLE, WHERE THE LITERARY NAME BECOMES STARTING POINT FOR A GLOBAL MYSTERY AND GAME. OUR CORRESPONDENT ATTENDED REHEARSALS OF HIS NEW THEATRICAL SERIES PINOCCHIO.

**T**he story of this production began more than twenty years ago, when the director and his friend, playwright Andrei Vishnevsky, began to compose a meta-text based on “The Adventures of Pinocchio” by Carlo Collodi – about a wooden man (aka Angel of the Apocalypse, aka Heavenly Puppet), which set off into a fantastic and a terrible odyssey in the Middle World to become a Man.

Other Pinocchio characters include the master Jeppetto, who helped to give birth to the Tree of Life and the birth of Pinocchio, the cruel and powerful theatre dealer Manjiafuoco, Rose of the Light, for which Pinocchio disrupted the play, first entering the theatre, remarkers – relatives of Italian servants of the proscenium Junk-clowns



are excommunicated, but theatre-dependent actors who look for theatrical dose wherever possible: in pieces of plays, in the remnants of props, in the dust of the wings (they will be played by elderly actors who are ready for any experiments) and a friend e surreal, or on the contrary, it is very real, the characters.

### **Masks. New collection haute couture**

For a more complete immersion in the consonant “Pinocchio” world of mask theatre, Alessio Nardina, a famous Italian specialist in the art of comedy del arte, was invited by the artists to work with Stanislavsky for a year now (with a break for Alessio’s trips to Italy to produce original masks for “Pinocchio”). For actors rehearsal with Alessio – only on their feet and only in English (although he learned a lot of Russian words with excellent pronunciation on the fly and, it seems, has long understood Russian) – a real challenge. In Russian minds, he made a small revolution, destroying the idea of masks of the comedy del arte, as some kind of compelling characters once and for all and talking about cult Italian actors, whose fame spread throughout Europe and whose names and pseudonyms came to us by the names of Truffaldino, Brigella, Tartaglia and so on. Such a “conservative” art as comedy del arte is simply doomed to development, otherwise it will die (Alessio convinces by changing the brand new leather masks specially invented for Pinocchio). And who knows what names will be added to this great artwork after the birth of Pinocchio.

This summer, the most advanced of the future spectators also entered the orbit of the performance – for them, the Electrotheatre Stanislavsky organized a



series of theatre tours, workshops and public talks with the creators of Pinocchio – artists, make-up artists, playwright, composer, actors, puppet specialists. And here the performance itself became just a starting point for detailed conversations about music in the era of artificial intelligence, about the psychology of masks in the 21st century, about philosophical aspects in the images of Pinocchio, Dunno, Reineke Lis and other fairy tale characters, about the connection between Pinocchio and Dante's Paradise – This talk about contemporary art and the most bizarre associations would be enough for a separate book, a sort of new "Bead Game". Thus, like Manjiafuoco Pinocchio, potential spectators are on the "needle" of the Theatre.

### **And a sigh of longing, and the joy of compassion**

Let's go through the intermedia first, and skip the meat scene. So, monster spectators went. When you sit down, no pants should come out. And the clock, too – clock are no longer present... So, come to me, clutching the mask. I don't know who it is, but it seems to me, Anya. Is this Leonid Ivanovich? Show a face... Ah, Anton. Now

the Boar has gone... Boar, your place is next to Zhenya. Bow to each other, you are good neighbors...

Spectators-burghers at the Manjiafuoco Theatre wear outlandish huge masks of wild boars and rams – in such cases they will not lose their balance for long. And the director rehearses with them "hall sounds" – a roar of indignation, a rumbling of pleasure, a waterfall of laughter... and a shock of compassion when they suddenly rip off their masks, expose their faces, see each other real... embarrassed, hide again in their masks. Pinocchio, a forked androgynous man with two silver voices, will fall into this theatre.

Pinocchio is played by Svetlana Naidenova and Maria Belyaeva. They have one text, laid out in voice and echo, the same costume, and one fate of the "old-born" doll. By the way, the characters in Yukhananov's play generally double and triple, flicker with emotions, and throw replicas. Under the arms of the make-up artist, brunette Maria and brown-haired Svetlana gradually turn into a beaver-androgynous creature in pastel colors. Long hair braided in braids – remove under a silicone bald spot. I remember,



somehow I come to try my costume on,” says Maria. “And I feel that everyone is tense, but they don’t say what they will do. I smeared eyebrows and eyelashes with cream and began to pour silicone layer by layer, leaving only holes to breathe. It lasted an hour and a half. Soon I was very scared, I realized that I had real claustrophobia – a feeling of being walled up alive. And you do not see anything, do not understand anything and are completely dependent on others. Then they even poured cognac”.

Pinocchio enters the Theatre during the performance “The Gentle Homunculus, or The Adventures of Pierrot and Harlequin in a Dying World”. And the tonality changes dramatically, as if from a mystery tale we find ourselves in a modern drama. Here Harlequin is the servant of as many as seven gentlemen: a gangster named Meat, a dancer Mata Hari, the twins of the Holy and the Witch, the King of the Sun, the Queen of the fairies of Titania... Nimble and business, he is ready to teach his fellow all the technologies of modern success. And Pierrot is an eternal gloomy dissident (Chatsky, Hamlet, go ahead yourself), who can never get along with the powers that be and will always be beaten...

## Soak in the mystery

But before the rehearsals with the actors began, the production team spent several months conducting “creative sessions”, generating ideas. Artist Yuri Harikov, composer Dmitry Kurlyandsky, choreographer Andrei Kuznetsov-

Vecheslov, costume designer Anastasia Nefyodova gradually became involved in the funnel of this work. And Yuri Harikov painted on an entire album of sketches. His scenography will resemble a temple, which lets in “drafts” of any era.

At these sessions, Anastasia Nefyodova painted pages of the text with portraits of actors who gradually grew into plumps, wigs, bald patches, and joints. “Boris Yurievich sets the mystery, where everything should be for real,” says

Anastasia Nefyodova. – This is an expensive work, but not in order to amaze with wealth, but in order



for the viewer to connect to this mystery with all the receptors. Here is the controller’s suit at the entrance – in this armor each wire was wound manually, and in this process a certain energy enters the suit, which cannot be felt. For us, this is a deliberate work – in order for the audience to become saturated with the mystery, you need to invest a lot of things, not only money. Although money is a divine essence and the only territory on which we can agree”.

Recording music for Pinocchio is also far from laying on a stove. Composer Dmitry Kurlyandsky takes a notebook and begins to throw dots and lines on it – spontaneous sounds of the choir, which create a sound suspension, the musical environment of many scenes. According to him, a modern composer should not only combine notes from the musical “lego” of an existing system (a computer can do this for a long time), how much to break the rules, push the frames, turn any introduced sounds into music – the noise of lighting fixtures, voices artists. He also admitted that while sitting at home, he would never have written the score that was born during brain attacks with a staging team, outside this space, which in itself sounds and resonates. “When I first came here to work, I really suffered from what a noisy space the theatre is. But then I realized that comfortable silence is the same framework, and any sound of space can be material for music, you just have to accept it and create the right sound”.

The premiere of the first two parts of Pinocchio – Forest and Theatre, each of which is a full-fledged performance – will be released in the fall. There will be five of them in total. So, the audience will join in the journey, the outcome of which, perhaps, is not yet completely clear even to the captain Yukhananov himself.





