

PSYCHÉ

Mise en scène de Yiorgos Karakantzas
Écriture de Sylvain Levey





The performance *Psyché* brings together Sylvain Levey's text with the visual and puppetry-based world of Anima Théâtre. This new creation explores the complex and shifting relationships between humans, animated objects and intelligent machines. It brings bodies, materials, puppetry figures and technological forms into dialogue, creating a sensitive and evocative space.

Through a combination of theatre, puppetry and visual arts, the work reflects on our relationship with the world through an initiatory science-fiction story. It questions the place of artificial forms of life, which are increasingly present in our everyday lives, as well as war, a reality that remains ever-present today. The performance also explores questions of gender and imagines a small utopia, a world that might be better, beyond conflict.

This creation draws strong connections with the myth of Pygmalion, as well as with the Golem and Frankenstein — myths that connect humanity with artificial life. For decades, these stories have continued to inspire the repertoire of puppet theatre and puppetry more broadly.

The team

- | **Yiorgos Karakantzas** / Director and Artistic Director
- | **Sylvain Levey** / Writer
- | **Nayara Martins** / Puppeteer
- | **Naoyuki Tanaka "Nao"** / Performer and Robot Creator
- | **Yragaël Gervais** / Videographer and AI Operator
- | **Ali Hout** / Musician
- | **Anne Rossignol and Carla Vasquez**, in'8 circle / Administration and Production
- | **Anna Massonnet** / Production and Touring
- | **Gatien Rimbault** / Communications and Logistics

Co-producers & Pre-purchases

- | **Théâtre du Sémaphore** - coproduction et accueil en résidence
- | **Scène 55**, scène conventionnée «Art et Création» - coproduction et accueil en résidence
- | **Vélo Théâtre** à Apt (84) Scène conventionnée - en discussion
- | **Théâtre Massalia** à Marseille (13) Scène conventionnée - en discussion
- | **Espace Jéliote** à Oloron-Sainte-Marie (64) Centre national de la Marionnette - en discussion
- | **Théâtre National** de Nice, Centre Dramatique National - en discussion
- | **Le PÔLE Arts en Circulation** à Revest les Eaux (83) - accueil en résidence et pré-achat

Supporters

- | **Domaine de l'Etang des Aulnes** - aide à la résidence sollicitée
- | **Université du Michigan Etats-Unis** - laboratoire de recherche
- | **La Chartreuse** à Villeneuve les Avignon (84) Centre national des écritures du spectacle - résidence
- | **Compagnie L'entreprise** - Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille (13) - mise à disposition salle de répétition

THE TEXT

Psyché is a poetic, initiatory and robotic tale set in an imaginary country preparing for war.

Psyché lies at the crossroads between puppet theatre and animation.

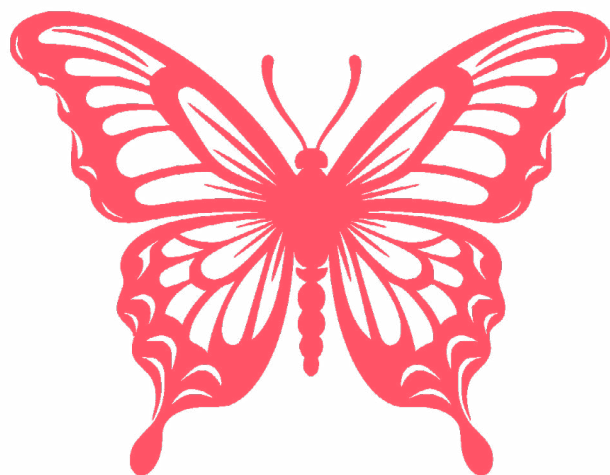
« Throughout the performance, the audience follows Zéphyr, heir to a long line of industrialists, who has the misfortune of being born a girl into a family where inheritance is traditionally passed down to sons.

Zéphyr's father builds robots, an army of robot soldiers — so why not a son?

What if this android son, with Zéphyr's help, were to overturn the established order that has been in place for generations?

What if Zéphyr, with the help of this robot son, could put an end to the shadow of a war that has been looming for a long time?

-Sylvain Levey about Psyché (working title)



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

« Since the dawn of humanity, symbolic objects have occupied a central place. They have taken many forms and have always been at the heart of ceremonies. Objects were considered a link between human beings and the divine, with deities perceived as being closely connected to everything that surrounds us. Objects have evolved, and even in ancient imaginaries, the idea of animated objects appears, from Plato to Homer. The place of the animated object in our imagination and society continues to evolve alongside technological development.

The Industrial Revolution marked a turning point, reflecting a profound shift in the relationship between nature and humankind and fundamentally changing our expectations of animated objects. The rapid advances of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as autonomous cars and intelligent systems, have profoundly transformed our daily lives. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is driving a digital transformation that influences our perception of creativity and life, while raising questions about the boundary between the living and the artificial.

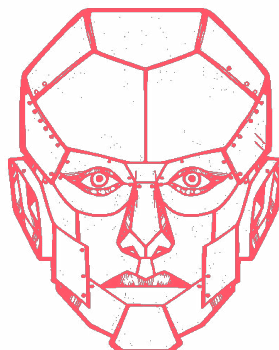
I am interested in the philosophical, political and poetic implications of artificial life, in relation to puppetry and animated objects. These themes have their roots in ancient myths such as Talos and Pygmalion, as well as in stories such as the Golem and literary works such as Frankenstein, or in the representations of robots in Karel Čapek's work and Fritz Lang's Metropolis. These stories challenge our relationship with the "living" by bringing inanimate bodies to life, while also questioning our relationship with the world around them.

In a world where we are increasingly connected to "intelligent" objects, industry and the world of work are seeking to replace human beings with androids or robotic war machines; we are experiencing a new upheaval in our relationship with these objects.

Through art, philosophy and poetry, which continue to develop in response to this impulse to bring the inanimate to life, what answers and what new forms of relationship can we imagine for our present-day relationship with technology ?



-Yiorgos Karakantzas



PUPPETRY AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTION

« Puppetry is not merely a theatrical form or language, nor simply an art object. It is also an object that, in almost every culture, has embodied questions about the origins of life and death, and about the relationships between the visible and the invisible, between spirit and matter.

Numerous myths are connected to puppetry, from Pygmalion to Plato's cave. The diversity of religious and theatrical practices in which puppets play a role — from Nativity scenes to carnivals — across vastly different settings, both in the East and the West, demonstrates how puppetry has served as both a concrete and metaphorical vehicle for religious beliefs, philosophical theories and specific aesthetic ideas. By renewing and reinterpreting the myth, it has allowed the ideas it carries to become integrated into a wide range of contexts, across both space and time.

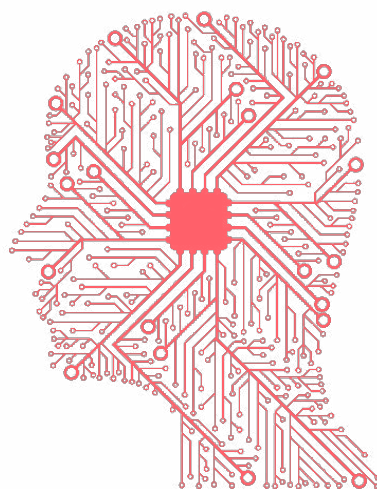
One central idea seems to run through the myth of the puppet: that life includes the inanimate (and vice versa). In traditional cultures, the similarities between the human and the artificial, between human beings and puppets, reflect a kind of magic at the boundaries between material reality and spiritual or imaginary ritual. Contemporary society, meanwhile, as it speculates about its possible futures — sometimes deeply unsettling ones — places the puppet at the heart of technological and cybernetic concerns, as in the novels of Philip K. Dick, which offer a particularly striking vision of this.

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Brunella Eruli,

“Thinking About the Human,”
Puck No. 14, L'Entretemps Editions

As a poetic tool for reflection, the art of puppetry allows us to revisit the evolving relationship between humans and the inanimate, and to question the transformations of this relationship. It offers imagined and explored responses to the contemporary era and to the growing presence of artificial life in our everyday lives.



ENGAGING WITH ROBOTS, PUPPETS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES

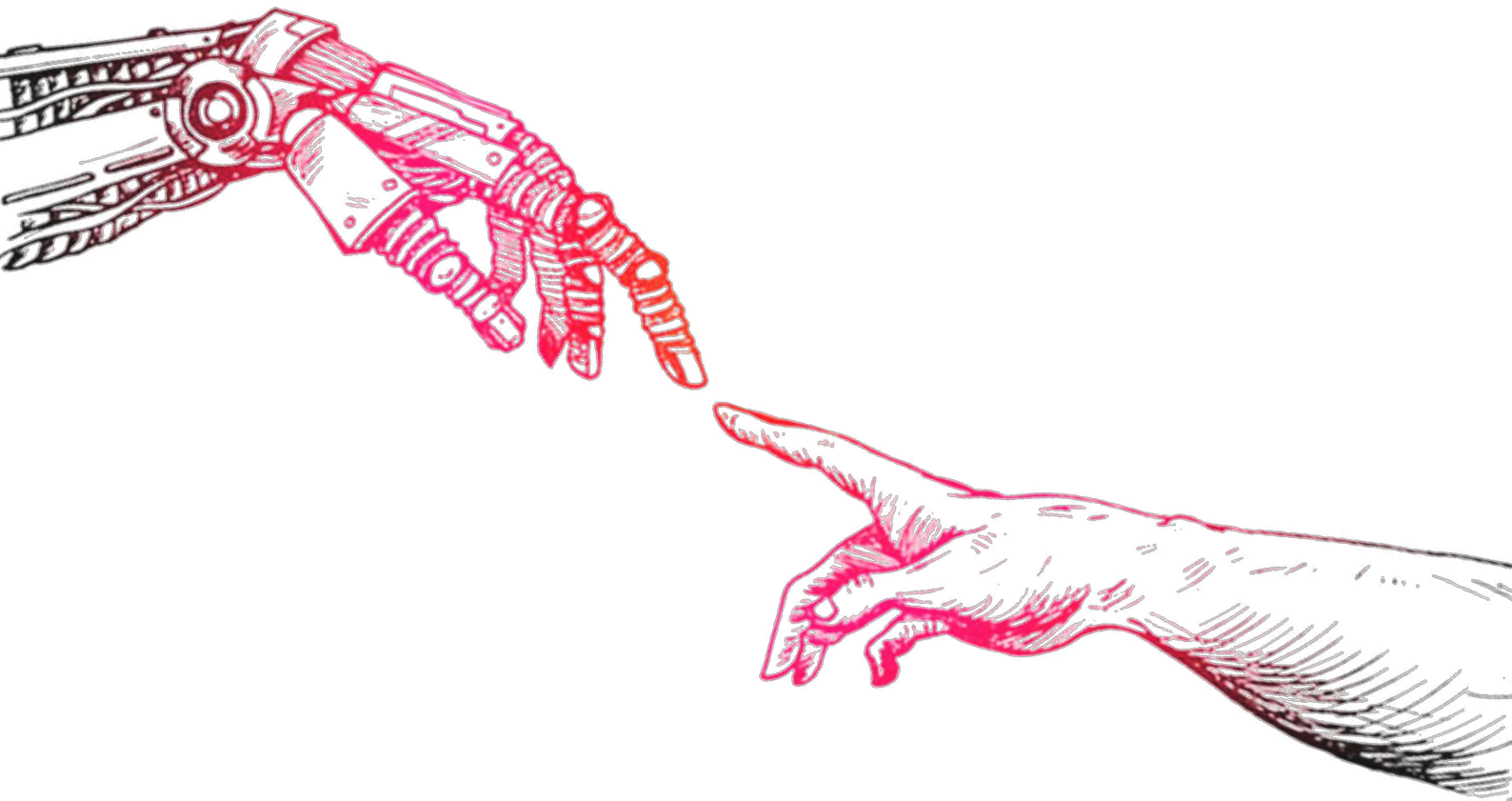
The art of puppetry creates a bridge between life and death, between the living and the inanimate.

It is precisely this quality that, throughout its history, has made the puppet a ritual object, but also a source of enduring fascination on the contemporary stage, as demonstrated by the works of Tadeusz Kantor, Edward Gordon Craig and Romeo Castellucci.

Rich in meaning and symbolism, the puppet, when confronted with an “intelligent” machine, profoundly questions the very notion of what it means to be “alive”. On stage, I want to provoke this confrontation, echoing Frankenstein, confronted with the existential questions raised by his own creation.

Through a stage-based exploration, the aim will be to create the conditions for this dialogue, to bring a questioning to the surface, or at least to hold up a mirror between these two forms of “life”.

The staging will incorporate robotic elements manipulating puppets, alongside other evolving and automated devices.



COLLABORATIONS

Thinking Together

For several years, Yiorgos Karakantzas has sought to open up the creative process to a wide range of encounters, in order to enrich the thinking, aesthetics and writing surrounding the project. This creates a circulation of ideas and practices, grounding the project's ideas in the multiple realities that are brought into dialogue with one another.

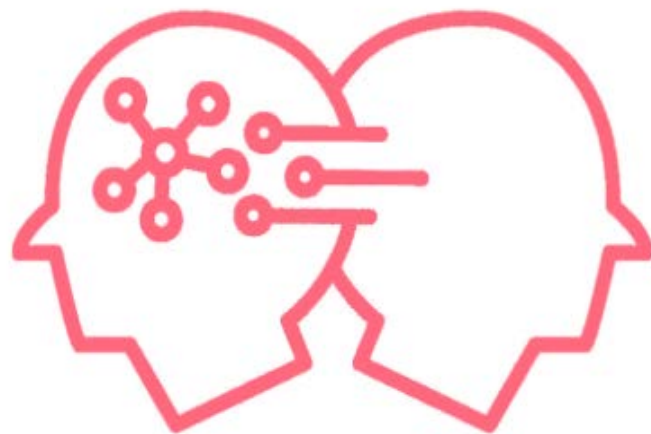
He brings together a team to reconsider and reframe the questions raised by this exploration of the animated object.

- | Sylvain Levey / Writer
- | Naoyuki Tanaka "Nao" / Performer, Robot Creator
- | Yragaël Gervais / Videographer and AI Operator

RESEARCH LABS

In February 2025, Yiorgos Karakantzas and Alma Roccella led several workshops exploring puppetry, with a focus on hybridization and the encounter between puppetry and new technologies.

These workshops were carried out in collaboration with various departments at the University of Michigan, including the School of Architecture, Social Studies, Theatre and Fine Arts.



TIMELINE

- | January 2025 – “Robotics and Puppetry” research residency with the artist “Nao” at Compagnie l’Entreprise (Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille)
- | February 2025 – “Hybrid Body” research labs with students from the University of Michigan
- | September 2025 – Research and construction residency at Théâtre Sémaphore
- | April 2026 – Experimental residency at Le Plateau, Scène 55
- | September 2026 – Writing residency at La Chartreuse
- | November 2026 – Experimental residency at Le Plateau, Étang des Aulnes
- | December 2026 – Construction residency at Hang’art (application submitted)
- | April 2027 – Professional gathering at Scène 55, “Puppetry & AI”, with Yokai company
- | April 2027 – Residency at PÔLE – Arts en Circulation (Revest-les-Eaux, 83)
- | June 2027 – Residency at Le Plateau – in discussion

“PSYCHÉ”

A production by Anima Théâtre

Based in Marseille, the company has forged its own path through the world of puppetry. Beyond creating performances, Anima Théâtre works to raise awareness of the art of puppetry through educational and outreach activities: workshops, training courses, events and encounters.

Since 2013, Anima Théâtre has also expanded into programming, organizing the Marché Noir des Petites Utopies, a biennial event dedicated to small-scale puppetry and object theatre. In the coming years, Anima Théâtre aims to continue developing its activities around four main areas:

- | Creation and touring: creating new performances and presenting them at regional, national and international levels, building on a loyal network while also developing relationships with new partners.

- | International development: Anima Théâtre aims to expand its activities abroad, notably by promoting visual forms within international networks, but also through concrete initiatives such as joining the Erasmus programme for young entrepreneurs, in order to support young international artists in their professional development within the company.

- | Audience engagement: developing demanding, puppetry-specific educational programmes for school groups, people in socially or institutionally restricted settings, amateur adults, and others.

- | Programming: through the Marché Noir des Petites Utopies, whose future editions will involve new partners in order to gradually expand the festival across several cities in the region, while also reaching a broader audience.

THE TEAM

The Artistic Team

I Yiorgos Karakantzas

A director trained at the Theatre Academy in Prague, Czech Republic, and later at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières, Yiorgos Karakantzas founded Anima Théâtre with Claire Latarget in 2004. Based at La Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille, he has developed a visual and symbolic form of theatre combining puppetry, storytelling and visual arts. Since 2002, he has created around ten productions, including *Le Cabaret des âmes perdues* (2002), *Yéti, Yéti pas ?* (2006), *Mr H ?* (2008), *Zombie* (2009), *Le Rêve de la Joconde* (2011), *Gojira* (2015), *Mécanique* (2017), *Rebetiko* (2020), *Engrenage* (2021), *Laterna* (2022), and *Mythos* (2024).

I Sylvain Levey

Sylvain Levey began his career as an actor before becoming a playwright. Since 2004, he has written nearly thirty highly acclaimed plays, for children and teenagers as well as for adult audiences. Most of his texts have been published by Éditions Théâtrales. Numerous prestigious venues in France and internationally have hosted productions of his work. He often works in residence and accepts writing commissions, through which he enjoys becoming involved with the organisations and their audiences. His texts have received numerous awards and distinctions, both within the performing arts and in the field of education. In 2017, he wrote *Gros*, a play about the beginnings of his vocation as a writer, which he has performed as a solo show since 2020, directed by Matthieu Roy. His theatre of commitment and liberation engages both the sensitivity and the intelligence of the reader.

I Nayara Martins

Actress, arts educator, multi-language researcher and lifelong learner. I am a member of TRÓPICO NOVO (a research group exploring the POETICS and TECHNIQUES of the body on stage) and Cia LÚDICOS de Teatro Popular (a theatre research company dedicated to young audiences). Through art and dialogue between the languages of circus, dance and theatre, I create networks of connection and encounters through the poetics of the body, always seeking forms of subversion through utopian pathways.

I Ali Hout

Ali Hout (born in Beirut in 1985) has been a professional percussionist since 2008. A member of numerous musical ensembles specialising in Arab and Levantine repertoires, as well as contemporary classical music from the Middle East — including Ahl Al-Hawa, Asil Ensemble and Sharqi Ensemble — he has also collaborated with several Western contemporary music ensembles. He holds a degree in Dramatic Arts and Directing from the Lebanese University. In 2014, he founded the Lebanese electro-acoustic and noise duo “Two or The Dragon”, which explores Beirut’s urban soundscapes through live performances, as well as composing music for contemporary dance, theatre and film.

I Naoyuki Tanaka "Nao"

A Japanese artist based in France, Nao creates performances combining sound, image and programming within a noisy and interactive universe. His work draws on the unconscious dimensions of emotion to explore, with a cynical perspective, the contradictions of everyday life and society. He also develops performative robots, at the intersection of art and technology.

I Yragaël Gervais

A videographer and visual artist, Yragaël Gervais creates visual and interactive installations as part of the La Station Magnétique collective. He develops sensitive and mechanical devices in collaboration with visual artist Sarah Grandjean and takes part in projects for the performing arts. He is particularly interested in holographic forms and in animating images through artificial intelligence.

The Administrative Team

I In'8 circle / Anne Rossignol, Carla Vasquez

In'8 circle is a production company based in France. Since 2022, it has been collaborating with Anima Théâtre to support its organisational development and the networking of its projects. With a qualified team, in'8 circle operates throughout France and internationally, bringing expertise drawn from diverse professional backgrounds and a practice based on ongoing training and personalised support.

I Anna Massonnet

Anna Massonnet has worked for several years in the performing arts, notably with the Deraïdenz company, where she was responsible for touring and communications. Her career has also taken her to theatres and cultural institutions, worki

I Gatien Rimbault

Gatien Rimbault is responsible for communications for the company's productions, tours and the Le Marché des Petites Utopies festival. He also oversees production and touring logistics, contributing to the management and organisation of Anima Théâtre's projects.

Contacts

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Board of Anima Théâtre

Abraham Poincheval, Président
Janie Cianferani, Trésorière
Jérémy Gautier, Secrétaire

Our Partners

Anima Théâtre is supported by the French Ministry of Culture – DRAC PACA, and receives operating support from the Région Sud and the City of Marseille. Its productions and the Marché Noir des Petites Utopies festival also regularly receive support from the Bouches-du-Rhône Department, the Institut français, SPEDIDAM and ADAMI.

Anima Théâtre shares its offices with Théâtre de Cuisine at La Friche la Belle de Mai in Marseille.

