



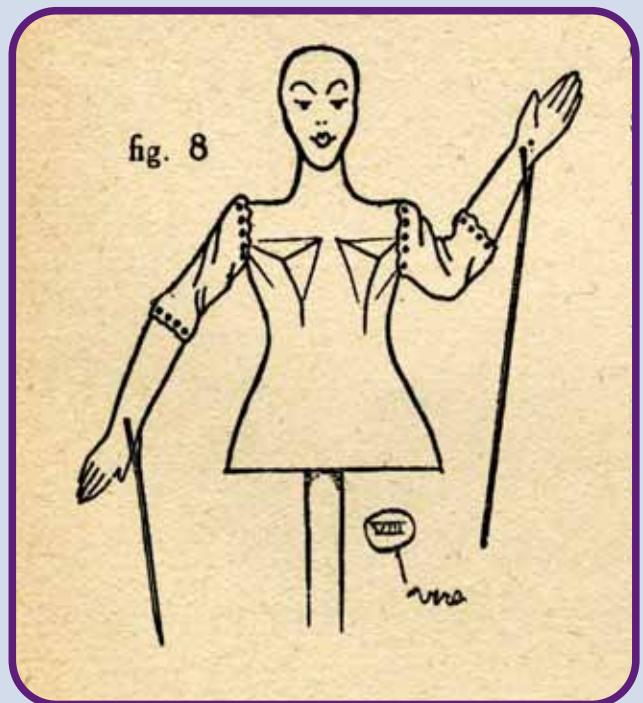
Characters

Sgorghiguelo

This young, uneducated yet crafty man is the son of Sandrone and Polonia and, invented by Guglielmo Preti, he was first introduced in 1846. He is a bit of a ladies' man or rough Casanova type as he falls for all the ragazzole he meets.

Linda

It seems that, while travelling from one village to another, Gustavo Preti fell in love with Linda, the daughter of man who owned and ran an 'osteria'. The liaison was forbidden and the couple parted but to celebrate their undying love Preti created a rod puppet with Linda's features and used her real hair which she had given him as a love token. This type of puppet was a typical way to present female characters at the time.



Puppeteers



Guglielmo Preti known as Giòli

Guglielmo Preti

(Reggio Emilia 1831 – Modena 1916)

As a child, Guglielmo (also known as *Giòli*, *al burattiner* - dialect) attended both the school and the puppet theatre of his father Guido who let him perform for the first time at the age of fourteen when he operated the puppet of Sgorghiguelo, the son of Sandrone and Polonia. He also wrote plays for his father; in 1849 his first script *Imelde ed Il-debrando* was performed and soon followed by *Il nemico delle donne* (*The Misogynist*). Together with his brother Carlo, he was taught music by Francesco Cavalieri from Rubiera, who was then co-operating with Giulio Preti in writing the musical pieces for the dances and intermezzos during the puppet shows.

In 1856 Guglielmo married Filomena Cagliari, who helped him in the puppet theatre and gave him thirteen sons. In November 1864 he succeeded in the final exams at the Normale School – which he had been attending since 1863 – and obtained the role of teacher at the elementary school of Nonantola; nonetheless, the following year he went back to the profession of puppeteer and returned to Modena, where he settled down. His travelling performances covered a huge area, reaching the town of Varese and the province of Milan.

Thanks to Guglielmo, the hand puppet repertoire was revised: in fact, he was constantly acquiring new scripts from Italian and French plays, comedies, dramas and romances (Dumas the father, Saverio di Montepin and Ponson du Terrail are among the authors of the serial romances he derived his scripts from). He thus introduced a new kind of serial performances so that his shows could last many nights, as was the case of *Giuseppe Balsamo Conte di Cagliostro* (*Giuseppe Balsamo Count of Cagliostro* – 32 performances), *La giornata di Enrico IV* (*Henry IV's Day* – 25 performances), *Le avventure di Rocambole* (*Rocambole's Adventures* – almost 100 performances). Guglielmo retired from the stage on April 14th 1909.



Gustavo Preti (Modena 1871 – 1940)

Gustavo Preti lived a solitary life, travelling from one village to another on his bicycle which he used to carry all the equipment he needed in his double profession of both puppeteer and painter and decorator. His work area was the north-eastern side of the Modena province (including villages such as Motta, Cavezzo, Disvetro etc.). Even though the puppets and scripts had been passed on to him, he himself used to write some pieces and paint the background scenery. He was the teacher of Alberto Maletti, who came equal to him in the Modena Competition of 1930 when he staged the play entitled *Donna Bianca di Castiglia ovvero Sandrone ambasciatore rogante* (*Lady Bianca of Castilia, or Sandrone the Roving Ambassador*). In 1933 in the Second Modena Competition he won second prize with the comic play *Sandrone reduce dal fronte* (*Sandrone Returns from the Front*) and the farce *I dilettanti alla prova* (*Amateurs on Trial*). Other pieces in his repertoire were *Sandrone ambasciatore* (*Sandrone the Ambassador*), *Sandrone Re dei mammalucchi* (*Sandrone the King of the Simpletons*), *I due sergenti* (*The Two Sergeants*), and *Adani e Caprari*; he used to write his own scripts inserting actual references to contemporary bandits.

Marionette Puppeteers

The Lupi Family

The Lupis were one of the most ancient families of marionette puppeteers performing in Italy; their origins go back to the second half of the XVIII century. According to tradition, the first head of the family was Luigi Lupi, who was born in Ferrara in 1768 and had helped out in the Jacoponi Company, which he followed to Turin; there, in 1795, he married Caterina Jacoponi. In 1814 his first son Enrico was born; he in turn had two sons, Luigi I (Turin 1843 – 1912) and Luigi II (Turin 1846 – 1919). Some critics, however, maintain that the first Luigi Lupi of this dynasty of puppeteers was certainly born in Ferrara, but at the later date of 1794. What is certain is that in the 1820's the Lupis used to perform their marionette shows at the S. Martino Theatre in Turin, which was one of the first permanent marionette theatres. At the end of the century, Edmondo De Amicis ¹ described the Lupi brothers – who were then working at the D'Angennes Theatre, later called the Gianduja Theatre – as «... two associate working literates, enjoying perfect harmony... The elder looks for the subjects, writes, translates and adapts the scripts, leads the organisation of the theatre; the other is responsible for the performances, the construction of the marionettes and their costumes, all the stuff of the performance..» According to De Amicis, the Lupis' repertoire was huge and consisted of almost a thousand scripts including *Stanley attraverso l'Africa tenebrosa* (*Stanley Through Darkest Africa*), *La morte del duca Amedeo d'Aosta* (*The Death of Amedeo Duke of Austria*), *Dall'Amba Alagi a Makallé* (*From Amba Alagi to Makallé*), *Castore e Polluce*, *La morte di Meleagro* (*The Death of Meleagro*), and the great mythological ballet *Il ratto di Proserpina* (*The Rape of Proserpine*) which they had been performing since the time of the S. Martino Theatre complete with a volcanic eruption achieved using an «elaborate mechanism».

The main masked character in the Lupis' shows was at first Harlequin, who was then replaced by Gianduja. The Lupis owned different versions of this marionette as they were not satisfied with a simple change of costume. Again De Amicis is the source of a description of the different types of Gianduja which were put on stage: «Giandujas of different size and age... fatter, taller, bold, sad, cheerful, disguised, all of which were necessary for a character who, though contemporary, is joined on stage by renowned heroes from different times and places.» The success obtained by the brothers' company came to an end only when they left the D'Angennes Theatre in the 1940's. After their departure from live theatre they often appeared on television.

¹ Edmondo De Amicis is an Italian writer, renowned for the novel *Cuore*, which he wrote towards the end of the xix century [N.d.T.].