



Characters

«Bargnocla in Cuccagna» (*Bargnocla in the Land of Cockaigne*)

Like many other shows in the '70's, *Bargnocla in the Land of Cockaigne* was a modern remake based on earlier traditions. The subject of 'the land of Cockaigne', which belongs to an ancient tradition, had been used in different art forms such as literature, painting, and theatre. Two renowned examples may well be the wonderful banquets of both Gargantua and Pantagruel, the two giants in Rabelais's novel, and the French Paladins in the romances by Ariosto and



Pulci. As far as painting is concerned, many pictures and frescos celebrate the complete repletion of appetites; such is the case of *The Land of Cockaigne* by Breugel the Elder (1567) and all those representations where food is not intended to assuage hunger but is better conceived as a feast where many dishes are present in huge quantities.

It is a sort of exorcism against the ghost of hunger, and it takes the form of culinary hyperboles. The Land of *Cockaigne* is an imaginary place where food never ends and is easily available to everybody; this idea worked as a compensation for the impending fear of famine and poverty; that is why the rooves were covered with *focaccia*, while the fountains were spouting wine...

This comedy is characterised by a double plot which is based on the cruelty of two spendthrift brothers who, while patiently waiting for their uncle's death in order to inherit his money, give Bargnocla a drugged drink and trick him with the help of Brighella. When Bargnocla awakes, he finds himself in the land of *Cockaigne*, but reaching out for the abundance all around him is not easy and a never-ending series of obstacles is to be faced...



Sconos for "Bargnocla in Cuccagna"



Burattinai

Giordano Ferrari (Sissa 1905 – Parma 1987)

It may well be said that Giordano Ferrari was born in the puppet theatre. Ebe Avanzini, his mother, used to feed him while operating Colombina with her other hand, and often made him sleep inside a puppet case. His first teacher was his father Italo, who transmitted to him his love for the art of animation. Very soon Giordano's talent emerged: he was a



Giordano and Luciano Ferrari

good stage designer and stage-hand technician, a dance teacher, a skilled guitarist, a painter, a choreographer and a puppeteer. He is also said to have been one of the best Italian caricaturists of the xx century: above their diabolic grins and exaggerated features, the faces he carved are so unique as to be portraits. Giordano brought back on stage the character of Bargnocla, which had been invented by his father, and provided him with a more defined nature and the typical philosophy of life of the Oltretorrente, which was Parma's 'popular' area of town. During the 1930's, when he realised that only three months after his death, one of his colleagues, Ermenegildo Preti, had been forgotten, Giordano began what he himself defined as «the best thing I could ever do», that is to collect all the material which is now on display in this museum, together with scripts, manifests, letters, photographs, books, and so on. He wrote hundreds of letters to his colleagues, connections and amateur performers asking for whatever contribution they could offer to witness

the existence of even the least important artists. Many items were exchanged, others were bought –and the results are what we see here today.

After undergoing throat surgery, he lost his voice but he went on working and became extremely skilful at operating the puppets.



Italo Ferrari known as Gimmi

In Salsomaggiore, where the Ferraris worked during the summer season, he met Bianca Anesi, a soprano who had graduated from the Parma Conservatoire; she became his wife and gave him two sons, Luciano (1934-1978) and Italo (1940-2006). Both of them continued their father's profession and gave important contributions to the animation theatre: Luciano was a good accordion player, a successful manager and the inimitable voice of Bargnocla; Gimmi (Italo) was a carver, a painter, a musician (he was a member of the rock band *I Corvi*), and a great interpreter as he gave voice to many puppet characters. Both were excellent puppeteers.