

INSTITUT INTERNATIONAL DE LA MARIONNETTE
ÉCOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE DES ARTS DE LA MARIONNETTE
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE DOCUMENTATION

7, PLACE WINSTON CHURCHILL / F-08000 CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES
+33 (0)3 24 33 72 50 \ INSTITUT@MARIONNETTE.COM
WWW.MARIONNETTE.COM

MARGARETA NICULESCU

1926-2018

The Institut International de la Marionnette, the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes and the Union Internationale de la Marionnette are profoundly grieved to inform you of the passing of Margareta Niculescu. The puppeteer community is in mourning. And the Institute is particularly affected by this loss.

Margareta Niculescu played a major role in the revival of puppetry from 1949 to 2013. Her contribution began during her work as a stage director, constantly bringing the level of artistic demands in this field to new heights. She was director of the Tandarica Theatre in Bucharest for more than 30 years. In spite of a difficult political context, she undauntedly promoted exchange between puppeteers and organized one of the first major international festivals in 1958, right in the middle of the Cold War. It was on this occasion that many French puppeteers discovered the talent of this artist, her visionary power, her capacity for hard work and her fighting spirit.

From 1957 onwards, her active participation with Henryk Jurkowsky in the Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA) and her later meeting with Jacques Félix - President of the Festival and the Institute and General Secretary for UNIMA – would be decisive for the rest of her career and especially for the role Charleville-Mézières would thereafter play in the world of puppetry. The symbiosis between these three personalities gave birth to our Institute in 1981. Right from the beginning Margareta Niculescu had a daring vision of what the puppet could become in this Ardennes territory. Training, research and creation have been present from the start and today still bear witness to the relevance of her initial vision on the pediment of our Institute.

Then there was the birth of the School in 1987. An establishment for higher professional training under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and an integral part of the Institut International de la Marionnette. She was its initiator and also its founder, along with the president Jacques Félix, who entrusted her with the role of director, a director who would be supported by an entire profession recognizing in her the artist and educator capable of inventing the future of puppetry arts on the building site of a school.

A privileged place for contact and experimentation, "the school is a melting pot of curiosity, imagination, sharing and passion," wrote Margareta Niculescu. Against the dominant model in Eastern Europe, she invented a pedagogical counter-utopia for accompanying the student on his or her artistic path in an approach joining the dramatic and sculptural dimensions of our art. This philosophy at work right from the beginning is still today an active catalyst for the ESNAM pedagogy.

Margareta Niculescu, through the strength of her conviction, was able to surround herself with the greatest artists of her time, in and outside of our disciplinary field. Here too, she was a visionary. She worked to release the puppet from its enclave, increasing cross-disciplinary interaction through international encounters, forever guided by the elevated view she had of our art. Her active presence in UNIMA fostered contacts. She created an international commission for the professional training of puppeteers.

In 1988 she initiated the Institute publications with the first issue of the journal *Puck*. An essential tool for allowing all to see and understand the metamorphoses of puppetry today. The international dimension of the Institute and its School owes a great deal to this extraordinary personality, whose openness and insatiable curiosity have made it possible to embrace global manifestations of the puppet on a theatrical as well as patrimonial level. Charleville-Mézières still recalls those wonderful exhibitions during the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes (FMTM) that made it possible to discover other imaginary worlds and other practices. She went a very long way to shape the identity of our future city of puppetry arts.

Finally, to put finishing touches on her work and still in partnership with Jacques Félix, in 1996 she inaugurated the Villa d'Aubilly, a residence for researchers and creators that would comfortably accommodate personalities from around the world and where they would find, at the heart of the Institute, a place of resources, a place of refuge, a haven for research and creation.

The Institut International de la Marionnette, home for all puppeteers, spawned by one of the world's biggest festivals devoted to our art, now had a solid foundation for the development of puppetry in this territory.

Margareta Niculescu has marked an era and generations of puppeteers have been trained in her contact. France, like the city of Charleville-Mézières, had the inspiration to invite this great lady of puppet theatre. She gave them much in return. And until her death she remained faithful to this Ardennes community that had adopted her. It is here that she will be buried next to her late husband on Thursday, August 23 at 2 pm at the Grand Rulut Cemetery. A reception will follow at the Institute, 7 place Winston Churchill.

All our thoughts go out to her family, to her near and dear ones, and to all those who, near or afar, have been transformed by their encounter with Margareta Niculescu.

Christophe Blandin-Estournet,
Président de l'IIM

Jean Luc-Felix,
Président du FMTM

Dadi Pudumjee,
Président de l'UNIMA

Eloi Recoing,
Directeur de l'IIM

Anne-Françoise Cabanis,
Directrice du FMTM

Idoya Otegui,
Secrétaire Générale de
l'UNIMA

