

Carlo Colla and Sons Marionette Company

THE PIED PIPER

Emmett Robinson Theatre at College of Charleston	May 25, 4:00pm and 7:00pm; May 26, 12:00pm and 5:00pm; May 27, 12:00pm
Director, Text, and Costumes	Eugenio Monti Colla
Music	Daniilo Lorenzini and Giuseppe Azzarelli
English Translation	Nadia Boaretto
Lyric Opera	Enzo Oddone
Scenic Design, Sculptor, and Lighting Designer	Franco Citterio
Technical Director	Tiziano Marcollegio
Designer Hairdresser	Maria Grazia Citterio
Costume Construction	Mariapia Lanino, Sheila Perego, Cecilia di Marco, Debora Coviello
Toolmakers	Giovanni Schiavolin, Camillo Cosulich, Paolo Sette
Puppeteers	Franco Citterio, Maria Grazia Citterio, Piero Corbella, Camillo Cosulich, Debora Coviello, Carlo Decio, Cecilia di Marco, Tiziano Marcollegio, Pietro Monti, Giovanni Schiavolin, Paolo Sette
The Voices	Michael Cooke, Daniel Hird, Matthew O'Hara, Laura Pasetti, Paul Ross, Riley Stewart, Clare Waugh <i>Recorded in Rosyth, Fife, Scotland, Sub Station Studio in collaboration with Charioteer Theatre Directed by Laura Pasetti; Assistant: Carlotta la Floresta</i>
Music Recording	
Singers	Liliana Oliveri, Andrea Thomas Gambetti, Filippo Tuccimei
Musicians	Erika Barba, Alessandro Lamperti, Daniilo Lorenzini, Erika Macalli, Daniele Moretto, Antonio Papetti, Daniele Sozzani Desperati, Paolo Sportelli
Directors	Daniilo Lorenzini and Giuseppe Azzarelli <i>Recorded in Milan, Il Borgo della Musica</i>
Characters	The Burgomaster of Hamelin Lise, his daughter Members of the Town Council: Master Gropius, banker; Doctor Gunther, physician; Master Jacob, notary Otto, blacksmith Fritz, barber Kurt, baker Franz, innkeeper Burgomaster's pages: Mathias, Wilhelm Hans Frida, old peasant woman The patrol The brewmasters The music band The young betrothed Children, men, and women from Hamelin The foreigner The imperial messenger
	1 hour, 30 minutes Performed with one intermission

These performances are made possible in part through funds from the Spoleto Festival USA Endowment, generously supported by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America.

The Carlo Colla and Sons Marionette Company is supported by Mibact, Regione Lombardia, Comune di Milano, and Masidef – Würth Gruppe.

Program Note

Is it a metaphor? A poetic journey? An oneiric suggestion? Perhaps *The Pied Piper* is a little bit of everything. Because of their specific language, marionettes have a life of their own, hence the re-elaboration of the famous tale by the Grimm brothers with more complex dramaturgic situations and new characters. All in all, marionettes regain here their old satirical function as keen commenters of historical events and of social changes in the past. This satirical role goes side by side with the poignant need of nostalgia, of melancholy, of poetry evoked by these moving “objects/creatures”—their novelties lie in both features and roles. They become a projection of fantasizing about places, sounds, and actions; they wear flamboyant, colored costumes in order to be the “actors” onstage. A good number of subtle cues is offered for discussion about all of us, about times long past, in an undertone, as befits this miniature world, midway between dreams and thoughts.

– Eugenio Monti Colla

Synopsis

Part I | Scene 1: Hamelin

Hamelin, a rich town in Saxony, celebrates the grape harvest with a feast. Girls carry basketfuls of grapes, while carts parade in the streets displaying huge beer barrels in an atmosphere of rejoicing and cheerfulness. The Burgomaster responds to the acclamation of the crowd by praising the citizens’ industriousness and the town’s wealth, which is the pride and renown of the whole Empire. In spite of the widespread mirth, some inhabitants are troubled by the presence of the young poet Hans, who seems to skip practical activities and prefers to linger with animals and kids, playing, reading poems, telling stories and legends, contemplating natural beauties. The Burgomaster fears that this may deter the young ones from their daily chores and future tasks, so he orders that the animals be put into cages and left in the woods outside the town walls. Besides, children will be forbidden from seeing Hans. People depart to carry out these assignments but Lise, the Burgomaster’s young daughter, tries to convince him to back off from such decisions. Meanwhile, here comes Hans, distressed by the citizens’ insensitivity. This attitude arouses the wrath of the Burgomaster, who banishes him from the city with insults and bad words. The children’s weeping accompanies from afar the sad exile of animals, driven out of town, into the woods.

Scene 2: A glade in the woods

Hans tries to cheer up the dejected animals, which are squatting on the grass. Lise comes to ask him to return to Hamelin and to present his act of submission to the Town Council. Hans refuses to yield to threats and, all of a sudden, a foreigner surprises them with his mysterious arrival. He spurs the young couple to stick to their pure hearts and promises that nothing will hamper their love. When the sun sets in the sky, the foreigner heads towards Hamelin’s gates.

Scene 3: Hamelin’s boroughs

Darkness envelopes the city. The patrolman invites the population to rest in peace and quiet. The foreigner appears on the horizon and plays a sweet melody with his pipe. Suddenly, multitudes of hungry rats swarm everywhere and devour whatever they find.

Scene 4: The tavern

The councillors meet to decide how to face the rats invasion and the risk of total destruction. Terrible news comes from different places in town, and panic is spreading. The Burgomaster decrees a reward will be paid to whoever will save Hamelin from the dreadful scourge. Among the general surprise, the foreigner offers to save the city for a prize of one thousand gold coins. They all agree to the plan and express everlasting gratitude. He walks away to achieve what he promised.

Scene 5: The Weser banks

The foreigner’s pipe plays a sweet melody, which attracts the rats. They swarm out of the city and drown themselves in the waters of the river Weser.

Part II | Scene 6: Hamelin Town Hall

The Burgomaster and the councillors are going berserk because the foreigner is waiting for his reward in the town square. Five days have elapsed since his prodigious deliverance from the rats, but the Burgomaster does not want to give him one thousand gold coins. As an alternative, he proposes to dedicate a monument in memory of the generous deed which has saved Hamelin. The foreigner refuses to be swindled but the councillors deny any previous agreement concerning money and pretend to be shocked by the fact that a charitable action may be exchanged with filthy lucre. The foreigner is outraged by their hypocrisy and leaves the hall threatening a memorable revenge.

Scene 7: The central square in Hamelin

At the sound of the foreigner’s pipe, the children of Hamelin leave their homes and walk away, into the woods. Their fathers and mothers are desperate but powerless.

Scene 8: The central square in Hamelin

For five endless days the citizens have been prey to despair. The Burgomaster and the councillors cannot find a solution. Then, wise old Frida reminds the people of the good times when they lived happily in the greatest simplicity, free from ambition and greed. These words lead to action: the Burgomaster decides to go into the woods and pay the foreigner. This evokes the sudden appearance of the mysterious personage. It is clear from his words that only one day has elapsed since he drove the mice out. No guile or punishment has occurred. Hamelin’s children are playing in the woods with Hans, as usual. The foreigner foresees a brilliant future for the young poet and, before leaving Hamelin, gives Lise the thousand gold coins as a present for her wedding with Hans. Once again the music of the pipe leads the children, Hans, and the animals, this time back to Hamelin, amid the general jubilation. Trumpet blasts announce an imperial messenger who breaks the news that young Hans has been appointed court poet by the emperor. Hamelin celebrates the happy events with dancing and singing. Finally, the Pied Piper’s melody supplies the last wonder: Hans is now perfectly healed. Night falls on Hamelin’s restored peace.

Eugenio Monti Colla, 1939 – 2017

For a centuries-old art, the advent of new technology—and the kind that keeps people in their living rooms—can be threatening. Yet Eugenio Monti Carlo, the last direct descendant of the renowned Colla family of master puppeteers, remained undeterred by the changing world, steadfast in preserving the time-honored and intricate craft inherited from his ancestors.

Born in Milan in 1939, Eugenio Monti Colla began maneuvering marionettes around the same time as he was learning to walk. Performing professionally by age 10, he later spent his young adulthood as an actor and theater teacher. In the 1950s, however, Compagnia Carlo Colla e Figli—the troupe established by Eugenio’s great-uncle in the mid-1800s—fell dormant, no thanks to the closure of Milan’s Teatro Gerolamo and, in a larger sense, the proliferation of the small screen.

Yet Eugenio (with the help of a few relatives) ensured it was only a brief hiatus. By the 1970s, Carlo Colla and Sons Marionette Company experienced a resurgence, touring countless festivals worldwide—starting with the 1970 Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy—and even adapting its ornate operas and ballets for televised specials. The company flourished under Eugenio’s artistic leadership and expert tutelage, growing not only as a performing organization, but also as an institution dedicated to the preservation and conservation of historic puppetry.

When Carlo Colla and Sons Marionette Company makes its seventh return to Spoleto Festival USA this year, the troupe’s beloved patriarch will not be in attendance. Yet his extraordinary spirit will, no doubt, be felt during each performance; his legacy lives on through the next generation of master puppeteers and the marionettes he so affectionately championed.

Below: Eugenio Monti Colla; photo provided

