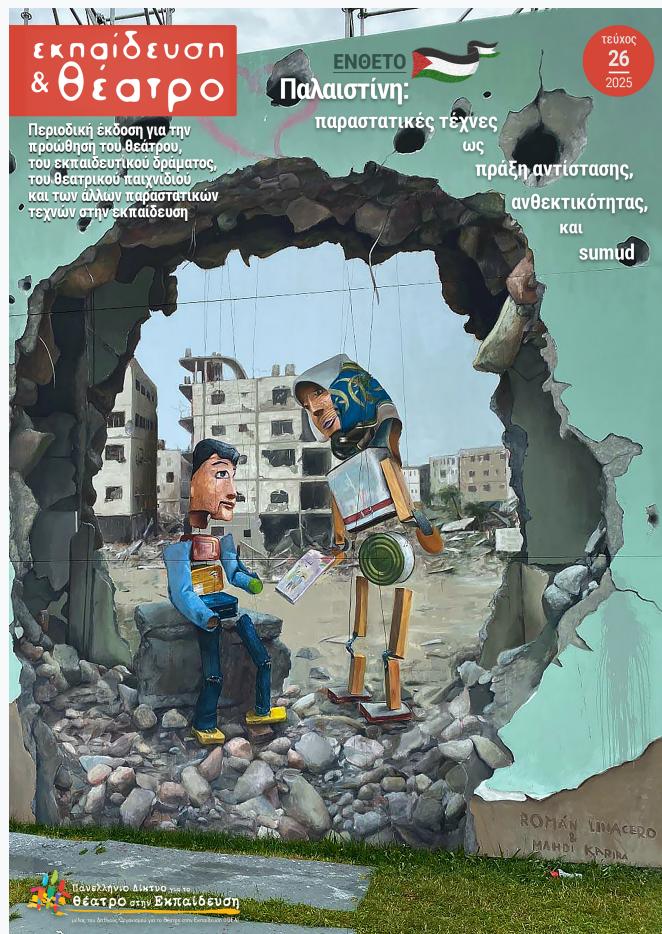


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Our Michael Meschke

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Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the work and presence of the Swedish artist Michael Meschke in Greece to date, following the parallel paths that emerge from both external, historical accounts of events as well as internal structures shaped by a personal experience of many of these events. It attempts to present the historical and personal records of these two trajectories, as well as the dynamic relationships that connect them. It was originally conceived as an oral presentation for a tribute event titled "To the great master Michael Meschke, the puppeteer of the 20th century", organised by the "Theatre at your fingertips" – Puppet Theatre Museum on 13 December 2024 in Athens.

Keywords: *Michael Meschke, puppet theatre, International Puppet Theatre Festival of Hydra*

Introduction

Nestled among apartment blocks, small vendors' shops and grill houses in the Athenian district of Metaxourgeio, an unexpected standalone building emerges: the Puppet Theatre Museum (<https://www.mairivi.gr/el/mouseio>). It houses puppets, marionettes and shadow theatre figures from around the world. This is the realisation of yet another idea by the Swedish artist Michael Meschke, conceived following his first visit to Mairivi's workshop. The museum is now a fully operational reality. Visitors, both children and adults, come to discover the diverse traditions that have shaped the art of puppetry across the globe for centuries.

In this museum, visitors encounter puppets not as living characters performing on stage, but as works of art. One can sit and observe them, examining them from various angles and focusing on the details, such as their costumes and features, or the materials and techniques used to create their movement. Visitors may wander around the museum as they would a garden, without focusing on any particular exhibit, yet still gaining a sense of the puppets' presence, which is crucial to the space they explore (Meschke, 2009).

Peeking out from among a row of suitcases at the museum's entrance are the puppets from the 1955 children's show *The Circus*, known as "The Acrobats". These puppets are one of Meschke's early works and were recently donated to the museum by the artist. They have an abstract aesthetic: white fabric forms without facial features, each with a uniquely shaped body that captures the viewer's attention. Some are operated by strings and others by rods. They are soft, flexible, lightweight and malleable. They invite you to step into a space that offers more than just information or education. It is a place steeped in history, and if you dare to walk through it, you cannot help but experience it for yourself. Even without touching a single puppet or crafted figure, the "strangely alive" forms (Bell, 2014), gathered in clusters from corner to corner, compel you to leap across countries and centuries. When you return to the streets of Metaxourgeio after your journey, feeling slightly dazed, you can't help by wonder what puppet theatre artists imbue their works with to unsettle your everyday sense of reality so powerfully. Are these fragments of their own lives and thoughts? Or are they pieces of your own life and inner world – your desires and fears – that they have somehow stolen and carved into these strange yet familiar forms? How did they imagine you from so far away, across time and space? And how do they now play with your reason and your emotion, being present yet absent?

Who is Michael Meschke?

Born to a pastor father and a musician mother, Michael Meschke received a puppet theatre as a birthday gift. He spent his childhood happily moulding clay into all kinds of objects while also learning his first theatre lessons at school, where he studied the classical playwrights.

Anyone studying international puppet theatre will find that scattered biographical and artistic records confirm Meschke's status as a prime example of a multicultural personality. Born a German citizen in the Polish port city of Gdańsk (then known as Danzig) in 1931, he came into the world at a time when the city was still under German administration. Both his parents were artistically trained: his father held a doctorate in "sword dancing" and his mother was a church organist. They worked for the German church as a pastor and musician, respectively, before becoming educators in Sweden, to which they had fled.

Meschke spent his early childhood in Schillersdorf, a small town on the Polish-German border which is now in Poland, but was part of Germany at the time. In 1939, his family fled to Stockholm due to his mother's Jewish heritage. There, they all enrolled at the renowned Viggbyholm School: his parents as teachers, and Meschke as a pupil.

He began his puppetry apprenticeship in the workshop of Harro Siegel.¹ He then studied mime with Étienne Decroux, which made him realise the expressive potential of human movement. This knowledge would later inform his work with theatrical puppets. He also studied directing under two prominent theatre and opera figures: Oskar Fritz Schuh and Jean Vilar.

The artist's personal history is intricately interwoven with the events that have shaped world history: the rise of Nazism, the persecution of his family (due to his mother's Jewish roots), their self-imposed exile to Sweden and his coming of age in a land of democratic freedoms and progressive education while the most horrific war unfolded across Europe. As a teenager, Meschke wandered through the war-torn ruins of Europe, watching in awe as the pieces were put back together to create a new life. It was through his art that he learned how to enrich this life in accordance with his moral convictions.

In Sweden, a country without a puppetry tradition, Meschke took his first daring step by combining the craft of puppet-making with theatre. This marked the beginning of a series of revolutionary steps that made his name synonymous with disruption and innovation, helping to create a new global aesthetic in puppet theatre.

In 1952, he created Baptiste, a marionette that marked a significant point in his personal journey. During a challenging time living in Paris, he sculpted Baptiste from a small amount of clay in his workshop, using the puppet's melancholy gaze to express his inner world. Baptiste, his most famous marionette, was inspired by Jean-Baptiste Gaspard Deburau, as portrayed by Jean-Louis Barrault in the film *Children of Paradise*. Although Meschke never performed with Baptiste, the puppet held deep emotional significance for him, embodying aspects of his own biography as a puppeteer. The puppet's character was heavily influenced by Marcel Carné's film, with its theatricality, moving performances and intense emotional imagery (Meschke, 2004).

In 1958, he founded the Stockholm Puppet Theatre (Marionetteatern), which was the first puppet theatre to be integrated into a national theatre in the West. Meschke was undeniably a pioneer. His repertoire included works by classical authors such as the ancient Greek tragic poets, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Cervantes, as well as modern writers such as Hoffmann, Jarry and Brecht, and folk traditions. He gradually abandoned the small puppet stage and introduced cinematic techniques into his productions. By incorporating traditional puppet methods from around the world, he demonstrated his deep respect for both tradition and innovation.

He reflected critically on the potential and pitfalls of puppetry. For Meschke, innovation stemmed from in-depth research and study of tradition, as well as thoughtful adaptation to contemporary realities. To this end, he travelled extensively, from Greece to India, Latin America and Thailand, studying puppets in all their forms – from early clay figurines to the intricate constructions of the East. Freeing himself from bias, he allowed himself to be equally influenced by the simplicity of Greek idols and the rich, refined techniques of East Asia.

Meschke's dialogue with his puppets began the moment he conceived their form. Given his belief that "not all puppets can play all roles", the technique chosen, the materials used and the innovations employed to achieve specific movement capabilities, all determine the expressive range of each puppet – the very field in which its personality can unfold. These are the essential elements of the *animated*, rather than the *inanimate*. The puppeteer is not the absolute master. The characters on stage may lead him down unforeseen paths.

He began creating a play with a clear vision of what he wanted to express. The process evolved through ongoing and open collaboration with his team, comprising both people and puppets. While the final result could be anything, one constant remained: his

unwavering respect for the intelligence and aesthetic sensibility of his audience, whether adult or child. This is evident not only in his children's shows, but also in the educational programmes offered at his museum.

His puppets, which are expressions of a universal human sensitivity, are now preserved and displayed in dedicated sections of puppet museums across Europe. Regarded as works of art, they provide historical evidence of his long journey in the world of puppetry.

A citizen of the world

Moving between Sweden, post-war Germany and France, Meschke learned puppet-making from a sculptor who taught at his school, movement from a German puppeteer and mime and stage directing from theatre professionals. From that point, he literally embarked on his journey into the world. He visited, collaborated and created work in almost every country where puppetry, both traditional and modern, flourished during his younger years.

He was an active member of Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA) from the beginning of his career. In 1972, he was elected to the Executive Committee. The following year, at the annual meeting of the national centres in Stockholm, he presented the "Stockholm Declaration", a set of proposals reflecting his desire to revitalise the International Centre. While serving as Vice President in 1976, he realised this vision by establishing local puppetry centres in Mexico, Thailand, India and Greece.

Meschke's involvement with UNIMA went far beyond organisational matters and the values the union represented. He also focused on the professional development of puppeteers. For Meschke, it was clear that puppeteers needed training. At Marionetteatern, he often led their training himself and invited specialised teachers to deliver training in various techniques. His commitment to education and empowering puppeteers was evident in his activities within UNIMA, where he played an active role in setting up schools that shared his vision of the "modern" puppeteer. Throughout his artistic journey, he explored a wide range of approaches, moving from one aesthetic perception to another and experimenting with different interpretations, which he discussed in his books. He also engaged respectfully with the interpretations of others. He remained – and still remains – in constant dialogue with the puppets he used in his productions.

In 2009, he was honoured alongside Margareta Niculescu² and Henryk Jurkowski³ for his contributions to puppetry and to UNIMA at the International Puppet Festival in Charleville-Mézières.

Our Meschke

So, we come to Meschke's Greece. He first visited the country on holiday during the dictatorship in order to experience the land, light, colours and earth before staging his performances: *Antigone* (1977), *Odysseus* (1978) and *Oedipus* (1980) (Meschke, 2007). He got to know and love the country, its culture and its people, as well as the sun and the sea. Above all, however, he fell in love with the island of Hydra. It was there that he bought his summer residence.

Thus, he found himself in Greece, where he connected with Greek puppeteers and Karagiozis players. He organised UNIMA and settled on Hydra, becoming known as "our Michalis". And "our Michalis" was more than just a person or a puppeteer who performed. He embodied the Argentinian puppeteers, the Parisian stilt-walkers, the puppet-gourd figures from Togo, the Indians from Kerala, the Indian Malik, the Sicilian knights, the Japanese Kuruma Ninjo and the great Bunraku master Minosuke Yoshida. They were all together on the captivatingly Aegean yet colourful and international beach of Hydra, immersed in historical time.

A small, cosmopolitan island with a rich history, Hydra is an outcrop dotted with beautiful houses and old mansions built around the harbour. It is one of the few places to remain untouched by "civilization"; there are no roads for cars, so everything is transported on foot or by mule.

I first met Michael Meschke in Hydra. 1985 was a significant year: the Athens Puppet Theatre of Eleni Theocharis Peraki closed after 45 years in Greece, and the International Puppet Theatre Festival began. Although 40 years have passed since then, it feels like yesterday when I speak of the creator of this institution. He managed to sustain and serve the festival for two decades on an island with extremely unique conditions.

Hydra proved to be the ideal place. Michael Meschke organised the first "Puppet Days" on the island, combining his professional experience and personal contacts with important artists from around the world. The event established Hydra as the island of puppetry. The initiative aimed to promote intercultural exchange through an art form that transcends language barriers, since puppetry is primarily a language of movement that is universally understood. During the first few years, traditional techniques and contemporary expressions came together for a week. However, economic reasons later limited this to an annual three-day event facilitating exchange and dialogue.

Initiated by Meschke, these meetings led to the establishment of the Greek Centre for Puppet Theatre and Karagiozis, also known as "UNIMA Hellas",



which is a branch of the international UNIMA union. The main objective was to raise awareness of and elevate the art of puppetry in Greece.

Performances were presented every evening, initially in the area in front of the old cannon and later on the football field. In the mornings, workshops for children, as well as thematic meetings, lectures and exhibitions, were usually organised indoors.

In addition to the evening shows, the invited troupes performed excerpts from their work at the harbour in the morning. At 11:30, the "EFTYCHIA", a line ferry carrying holidaymakers, arrived. It was time for the happening: from one end of the harbour to the other, there was a festival featuring music, puppets and everything else in the programme. Initially conceived as a "teaser", this idea was intended to generate interest in the evening shows. Each performer prepared a short presentation of five to ten minutes, which they performed multiple times in different parts of the harbour. These morning presentations were very successful and gradually led to troupes being invited to perform exclusively at the harbour.



The Greek Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Hydra initially welcomed and encouraged Meschke's idea of creating the International Puppet Theatre Festival. The Hydra Film Club, led by Lakis Christidis, an island resident and key collaborator, adopted the festival, and it began. Despite the often challenging circumstances, the aim of breathing new life into the Greek puppetry tradition became a reality (Parousi, 2012).

I wanted to reciprocate the love that Greece had shown me, but all I had to offer in return was my work. So, I proposed to Melina Mercouri, the Minister of Culture, that we create an international festival as a Greek-Swedish collaboration [...] Our goal was to present puppet shows from cultures around the world that would be open to all, regardless of economic, linguistic or cultural barriers. Entry would therefore be free, and the organisation would be voluntary – no one would make money. The key to the plan was that I could invite colleagues from all over the world to perform for free, with accommodation on the island being their only compensation [...]

I was completely unfamiliar with Greek customs and the surreal bureaucracy, a particular feature of which is that the authorities may agree to provide subsidies, but then pay them months after the event they are supposed to be supporting. Apparently, they assume that someone else will cover the expenses, which are normally paid before the event, not after! (Meschke, 2004, p. 148)

Preparations for the festival took place in Stockholm during the winter, with open communication maintained throughout. Most of the artists were friends or collaborators of Meschke's. They were attracted by the prospect of spending three days in Hydra. Many came with their families and extended their stay by an additional ten days to enjoy a holiday. The "island of Meschke", with its bright sunshine, sea and hospitable inhabitants, quickly gained a reputation in European artistic circles. Consequently, we received an increasing number of letters from new troupes wishing to participate. However, tickets, food and accommodation still represented a significant expense for us organisers, and the subsidy funds were always limited. Therefore, we took the mobility of troupes into account, which reduced distances and ticket costs. We invited troupes who were travelling to or from Europe to stop in Greece. Beyond the Swedish Embassy and the Swedish Institute, which supported the festival in every possible way, many artists managed to secure funding for tickets from their home countries. Embassies and cultural institutes, as well as private friends and acquaintances also made positive contributions.

However, this situation gradually changed over the years as the status and demands of puppetry within the global theatre scene evolved. The number of international festivals increased, and troupes grew larger. They incurred fees and fixed expenses, and despite their goodwill, they could hardly perform without pay anymore. This new reality would alter the festival's operating model. Shortly before we stopped the festival, we proposed that the municipal authority take over its management. Unfortunately, they did not respond.

Out of all the soloists who appeared, the ones that really stood out were Horacio Peralta from Argentina and Ariel Bufano, my peer in profession, spirit and soul. Other notable performers were the Parisian stilt walkers, Danai Kanlanfei from Togo who made marionettes from water gourds, the Indians of Gopal Venu from Kerala, who, because they didn't like Greek food, survived by boiling and eating white rice all day long.

By contrast, my friend and philosopher K.S. Malik, who was also Indian, felt so comfortable that he delivered a captivating speech that disrupted our entire programme. Alongside the festival, we increasingly organised symposia and workshops for children under Antigoni's care.

The knights from Sicily, the famous Puppi of Mimmo Cuticchio, were unforgettable too, with their splendid armour shining in the sun as they arrived at the harbour hanging on the ship's railing. The Japanese puppeteers were impressive too, such as Korio IV Nishikawa, with his authentic Kuruma Ningyo dolls, and Minosuke Yoshida, the great Bunraku master from Osaka, who was accompanied by a national television crew. They filmed a report about his visit to Hydra which was broadcast four times across Japan. (Meschke, 2004, p. 148)



The 1995 festival

The year 1995 was different from the previous years for two reasons. Firstly, the International Day of Peace was celebrated with a special event. Secondly, the festival began with a ten-day puppet workshop, and the final results were presented during the festival's three-day programme. I coordinated the workshop and served as the organisation's liaison.

The final form of *The Apocalypse* was still just an idea in Michael's mind, an experiment yet to be re-alised. The theme was a trial, with Mephistopheles and the Angels acting as the opposing parties. The structure of the performance was modular, with short scenes featuring excerpts from previous Marionetteatern shows, such as *Don Quixote*, *Antigone* and *The Odyssey*. Specifically for *The Apocalypse*, puppets from the Stockholm performances were transported to Hydra, where they were combined with other ideas and excerpts that had been developed earlier in the Athens workshop.

For ten consecutive days, we worked tirelessly to learn techniques, rehearse and create everything necessary to bring the idea to life. For the final performance, students from the Finnish puppet school, along with a group of volunteer musicians, joined in. The show was to begin with a procession of Angels starting at the port of Hydra and crossing through the town to the stadium. Meschke's concept was that the Angels would symbolise peace. They would carry staffs bearing banners inscribed with the word "peace", and drummers would encourage the crowd to follow them to the stadium. Another one of his ambitious ideas was for the Angels to arrive by sea, emerging from the depths on a small boat and disembarking at the harbour. I describe it as ambitious because the festival lacked the funds to even maintain itself. The workshop was free, the performances were open to the public and everything relied on volunteers and the organisers' passion. Therefore, finding and hiring a traditional Hydra caique for two hours was a real luxury!

Yet, at the last moment, one was found. None of those who participated will ever forget it! That's when we became Angels, standing in the sea and walking in the sky.

At dusk, we boarded the caique, dressed in white cloaks, each with two large, pure white wings attached to the shoulders. We loaded the staffs with flags and slowly slipped behind the cape, powered by a diesel engine. Inside the boat, we tried to find spots where our wings wouldn't get crumpled up. Everyone was anxious – surely ten days was too short a time to prepare, and we knew it. It took more than half an hour to round the cape and it was fully dark by then. Nothing could be heard except the sound of the engine and the splash of the waves.

We breathed in the sea breeze and lost ourselves in it. The return journey marked the beginning of our roles. No one spoke. We watched the harbour lights growing larger as we approached. Our breath caught. We heard the ship's whistle which meant we had arrived. We began to wave to the crowd waiting on the pier. The caique docked, and we descended the ladder one by one, majestically. The people didn't understand what was happening. They stood there, watching us, as if we were angels. Were we?

At the start of the procession, the musicians took their places and we followed in relaxed twos and threes. We marched slowly and solemnly while waving flags. The emotion and the sea breeze accompanied us on our journey, and one thing was certain: we were somewhere else.

The atmosphere was transferred to the audience, who applauded us. Women, children and tourists followed along; some appeared on balconies and others stood outside shops.



The route was not short. We reached the stadium and took our places. The stands were all full... the performance began... Mephisto, tall and thin, dressed in a black tailcoat, greeted the audience aggressively and began his confrontation with the Angels...

Everything felt like a dream. I can't remember if things went well or if we were on the edge of disaster... The beginning was impressive, and we all felt very confident in what we were doing when a summer rainstorm perhaps brought our nirvana to a divine end. We were determined to perform the entire show even in the rain. Then Meschke's voice brought us back to reality: "No more episodes. Let the Angels come out and finish with the dance".

We gathered the children who were watching the performance inside the stadium and, holding their hands, we began to dance. The Angels removed their wings and placed them on the crowd, who despite the rain entered the stage area and danced for peace. (Parousi, 2009)

The 2003 festival

Within the framework of a festival that was, for some of us, a school in itself, the workshops organised over the years provided an opportunity to undertake a short apprenticeship with established artists and practitioners who employed innovative approaches or traditional techniques. Each workshop held during the festival's 20-year history had its own special significance. I will elaborate on two of these workshops, mainly because the available data (video recordings, artists' diaries and trainees' testimonies) provide a

comprehensive overview, and also because many of the workshop participants were trainee educators. At the 2003 festival, two workshops were held: theatrical puppet construction with the Arketal troupe (4-10 July) and capoeira, a Brazilian martial dance (5-10 July), with instructors Calibre and Sliman from Metz, France.

The migratory birds

The Arketal troupe conducted a workshop on creating and animating marionettes based on designs by the painter Marius Rech. The workshop culminated in a presentation at the port of Hydra, where large, human-sized constructions with the features of migratory birds came to life.

The workshop instructors were Greta Brugeman (puppeteer, builder and set designer for the Arketal troupe), Marius Rech (painter, sculptor, fine arts professor and set designer) and Sylvie Osman (puppeteer and actress for the Arketal troupe). The general idea of the Arketal workshop's scenario in 2003 – still relevant today – was as follows:

A group of migratory refugee birds disembarks at the port of Hydra. On the shore, two illegal immigrants are waiting. Obstacles placed on the ground represent the borders. First crossing: With their gaze, the group demarcates this trajectory, unfolding along it with movements and rhythms that are more or less sluggish. Meanwhile, the illegal immigrants make sounds by tapping on reeds. Second crossing: The refugees jump over the obstacles and line up behind each other. Sounds – Obstacles: Along the refugees' path, a whistle signals an

external threat. Reactions: The birds tremble. The reeds rhythmically echo this trembling on the ground. Then, the two illegal immigrants form a door-like passageway through which the birds pass. This short route was repeated three times during the procession, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes each time. (Parousi, 2012, pp. 349–350)

The encounter with the capoeira group and the final performance

The three-day presentation period arrived quickly. The finished puppets were impressive, towering over café awnings. The migratory birds troupe performed formations along the entire length of the harbour, coordinated but also hesitant in their first appearance. However, this initial awkwardness and tension dissipated very quickly. For each stop, the group had chosen a rather melancholic Greek song. Together, the birds stood out with their long wooden legs and their strange pointed mouths that opened and closed, capturing the audience's attention. Each pair had to coordinate their walking and head movements well. They made many small daily appearances at the port, improving each time. On the last day, they met the capoeira group. The two groups almost merged. Keeping to the sound and rhythm, the bird puppets improvised within the capoeira circle. These improvisations thrilled the watching crowd, who applauded and took photographs. The bird troupe had gained the confidence they needed – they were no longer huddled together in fear. They had inhabited the souls of their puppets, which were not easy to construct or move. Any mistakes were no longer evident: what stood out instead was the group's energy, the participants' enthusiasm and the pastel colours of the birds (Compagnie Arketal, 2004).

None of us expected to finish our giant marionette in just four days. On the fifth day, we rehearsed in order to identify the weaknesses of each puppet and work out how to present them to the public. The show was a success. We enjoyed it so much that we paid no attention to the crowd. They saw huge marionettes coming into the city streets. Gradually, boys and girls emerged from underneath. We were something different at the festival. On the last day, we had a surprise in store for everyone. Our birds "played" with a capoeira group. It was amazing. (Machi Kalivrousi, then a student at the Department of Early Childhood Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)



Instead of a conclusion

I do not know what the "improvisational revelation" of Hydra ultimately offered its creator in terms of designing and realising the final Marionetteatern performance. What I can say with certainty, however, is that the pieces I described were unique to those of us who participated, regardless of our response. At the same time, it prompted UNIMA Hellas to create their own distinct piece for the International Day of Peace, independently of Meschke's initiative.

The International Puppet Theatre Festival lives on in the hearts of the locals and the children who grew up with it. A stroll around the harbour will bring you into contact with at least ten people who will ask: "When is Michalis coming with his puppets? What are you going to do this year?" Then the stories will begin: "Have you seen those puppets that played..." This is our own "Michalis", as the people of Hydra called him. He gave to the place and took from it. Since every event exists in its own time, the Hydra festival lives on in the memories of those who experienced it.

An artist's contribution to the development and dissemination of their art is not fully conveyed by their thoughts and opinions, as expressed in their written or oral texts, nor by their works and productions alone. In order to understand the mark an artist leaves on the global web of culture, equally important are the subjective experiences of events that reflect the artist's thoughts and opinions. When these experiences are expressed as faint voices or third-party narratives related to the artist's legacy, they shape the most essential elements of cultural history, imbued with the artist's work. Culture is forged through the experiences of others, which can glorify, confine or even erase creations from cultural archives.

When discussing Michael Meschke, we can document his life, artistic activity and professional and personal relationships by collecting evidence from

archives, texts, photographs and videos. This text attempts to record experiences that shaped Meschke's identity as perceived by others within the Greek context. In some of the previous paragraphs, I have tried to describe these aspects of "our Meschke" and integrate them into a broader global narrative.

From biographical and historical evidence relating to his artistic career, it appears that Meschke, the "citizen of the world", was a person with a penchant for education. The puppetry organisations he helped to establish in various countries (see UNIMA) have functioned and continue to function as educational organisations that interact with arts schools worldwide and have gradually integrated puppetry into the recognised field of performing arts. In these performing arts, "our Meschke" was a teacher! He initiated you into "how things are" by getting you to do them yourself. Once you had learned "how they are done," you could recall your experience and admit that: Everything flowed like a dream. I don't remember whether things went well or were on the brink of disaster, but I clearly remember what it was like to be part of a puppet performance.

As you leave the museum, you feel certain that "our Meschke", who could be said to live in Sweden today, is here with his entire world. You leave him behind as you step out onto the streets of Metaxourgeio. Beyond organising and educating people in this global and multicultural performing art, which is consumed by the ephemeral nature of its creations, the "artist Meschke" was obsessed with creating timeless centres and imprints of the workings of puppetry, such as museums.



Notes

1. Harro Siegel (1900–1985): A German puppeteer and puppet theatre teacher. In 1928, he founded his own troupe and developed its repertoire in line with the trends of the German youth music movement of the time. In 1936, he became a professor at the National School of Fine Arts in Berlin. In 1943, he was appointed Professor of Art Education in Braunschweig. It was there that he founded and organised a puppet theatre festival in 1957.
2. Margareta Niculescu (1926–2018): A Romanian puppeteer, director, producer, teacher and theorist of the art of puppetry. A graduate of the Bucharest Theatre Institute, she was awarded the State Prize of the Socialist Republic of Romania in 1953. She received further awards at international puppet theatre festivals in 1958, 1962, and 1965.
3. Henryk Jurkowski (1927–2016): A Polish historian and theorist of puppetry, theatre critic, playwright, translator and university professor. He was the author of numerous books, studies and essays on puppet theatre, which were published in multiple languages.

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1989: *En estetik för dockteater!* [Aesthetics for the puppet theatre], in cooperation with Margareta Sörenson

1992: *In Search of Aesthetics for the Puppet Theatre*, in cooperation with Margareta Sörenson

1996: *Grenzüberschreitungen* [Crossing borders]

2002: *Marionettisten, memoarer* [The marionettist, memoirs]

2006: *Michael Meschke, texter om dockteater 1949–2004* [Michael Meschke, texts on puppet theatre, 1949–2004]

2009: *A theatre – an era, testimonies about the Stockholm Marionetteatern and the Marionettmuseum*

2012: *Le théâtre au bout des doigts* [Theatre at your fingertips]

For more information about Michael Meschke, please visit: <https://www.michaelmeschke.com/bio3.htm>

Antigoni Parousi is an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She studied pedagogy and completed a doctoral dissertation on puppetry directing. She has taught and conducted research on the pedagogy of theatrical expression for over 30 years and has relevant artistic experience. She has published over 80 articles in international and Greek journals, edited volumes, conference proceedings and books. She has directed over 50 puppet theatre performances and was honoured with the International Prix Michael Meschke in recognition of her work in developing and renewing the art of marionette puppetry.