

Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca - Texts

POL DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIPTION

POL is tale told in the form of a mechatronic show: an ironic and poetic fable for all audiences. An interactive story, product of the dialogue between machines, performers and spectators. A new form of technology, a mutation on stage production.

In its origins, POL draws on the popular European fable. We have chosen this genre not out of any nostalgia for children's stories or desire to follow an ethnic tradition, but for its narrative characteristics. Fables are structured with a simplicity, pace and sequence of events - magical, unexpected, disconcerting - that makes them very apt for the construction of a particular graphic universe and for fostering key moments through interaction.

Although inspired in the genre, POL isn't a reworking of any particular popular tale. The story of POL traces the perilous journey of a rabbit in search of love. The loss of his teeth, a biological accident of his infancy and physiological change akin to that which the body undergoes in other stages of life, emerges as one of the leitmotifs of the odyssey. His quest for love is another. Pol's adventures, with the reward of new teeth and, in the end, a substitute for love, bring out archetypical passions and fears: violent euphoria, fear of infection and the narcotic nightmare.

SYNOPSIS

After losing his teeth POL the rabbit finds his diet limited to soft food, and he gets hooked on a particular brand of tinned sausage. As he eats his way through tin after tin, our rodent falls in love with the girl on the label, Princepolli, daughter of the evil Cervosatán. Pol sets off on a journey of initiation in search of his love. Along the way he must overcome the obstacles thrown up in his path by Cervosatán's scheming henchmen: Jaba, Lopa, Sap and Serpe. With each test he wins another tooth until he has regained the full set, symbol of strength. Only then can he subdue his enemies, vanquish Cervosatán and win his love.

HARDWARE

POL is staged on a rectangular space bounded by three vertical screens at the back, the computer system on the sides, and the audience at the front. Five robots and two exoskeletalised performers provide the action on stage.

The kinetic backdrop is made up of three vertical backprojections, creating a wide-screen image. The visual universe is made up of two- and three-dimensional interactive images.

The robotic automatons are made of animal skins, plastic and metal. With the exception of Cervosatán, who moves autonomously, they are fed through cables connected to the computer system. The robots are included in the fable's cast of characters.

The exoskeletons translate the movements executed by the performers and send them via radio modem to the computers, which in turn control the image, sound and robots. A development on the prototype used in Afasia from 1998, the exoskeleton is the system's chief interface. It is equipped with on/off switches, mercury switches (signalling position), selecting switch, level potentiometers and microphone.

In some scenes the performers' voices are used as level sensors, the volume generating or deforming certain images.

Audience participation is effected by means of two giant joysticks, which we call totems. Moving the axis of the totem adds other sound sources to the music and new images on the side screens. These are only active in certain scenes.

SOFTWARE

The interactive and interdisciplinary grammar of POL is made possible by our own software written specifically for the show. The program allows the sensors to be linked to the variables of image, sound and robots. Through this program, a sort of editor, the more than seventy sensors on the exoskeletons and totems are linked up with commercial programs and MIDI protocols. The applications are Flash MX for 2D, Virtools for 3D, and Reaktor for the sound and music. The MIDI sequences are used for the robots and lighting.

The interactive fabric links up not only interface and programs but also the programs among themselves. It is possible, for example, for a MIDI note to activate a Flash MX variable, or vice versa.

This application is highly versatile and easy to use, an advance on the earlier versions, in which it was necessary to write the code. In this latest version, the editing is performed with menus.

This program offers vast potential: it exploits and links up the endless possibilities of the programs described, at the same time as it is applicable to innumerable systems.

INTERACTION

POL examines the specific arguments that technology brings to artistic discourse and its means of representation. The use of such concepts as juxtaposition, synchrony and interaction permits a new form of narration.

As in Afasia, the interaction in POL is at the service of the story. Other interactive forms pursue different objectives: as in videogames, where interactivity provides the means to overcome obstacles, or on the Internet, where interaction is the engine for information exchange. None of this happens in this performance.

The interactive narration in POL occurs on a broad and particular platform. The interface prototypes - exoskeletons - tend to generate a specific body action, quite different from the joysticks, keyboards, mice and trackballs of other interactions. The body expands in a cause/non-effect relation towards such new means as robots or interactive image and sound. An arm movement can determine things as arbitrary as the modulated frequency of a sound, the horizontal direction of a

virtual landscape or the speed with which a robot moves.

This mechatronic event is the foundation of the interactive drama. The spoken dialogue underpinning traditional drama is either relegated to a secondary plane or disappears. The drama is a chain reaction that links body, interface, computer and setting in interactive dialogue. And this discourse juxtaposes gesture, apparatus, noise and icon, engendering a new form without known standards and offering vast potentials.

The story emerges from the means that the executor anticipates from his interface, administering a torrential flow of information. Out of this flow emerge the audiovisual margins produced by spectator's manipulations of the totem. And thus flows the fable.

The interaction in POL doesn't produce random events, but rather a malleable, entertaining and flexible narrative line. And, hopefully, a cathartic rite.

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

The performance is structured in acts, in turn broken down into scenes. Each act develops a specific interaction protocol. The forms of interaction are:

Exo / image_sound interaction. From the exoskeleton, one or both performers control the movement of the image and sound, determining the position of the images, changing their colour, or launching or interrupting clips of images or music.

Exo / robot interaction. The switches on the belt and legs of the exo select the robot and activate or interrupt its movement. The rings on the fingers, equipped with buttons, launch the MIDI rhythm sequences. The potentiometers on the elbows control the speed and direction of the Ciervo robot. The mercury switches activate a number of the pistons on the robots.

Exo / instrument interaction. The potentiometers enable the exoskeleton to generate modulating levels of sound: changes in pitch, volume, effects and FM. The rings launch and interrupt these modulations.

Voice level. The voice volume level modulates some image clips.

01 INTOPOL ACT. Interaction: exo / image_sound, exo / instrument.

SCENES: 01.01 Hi I'm Pol. 01.02 This happened when my new teeth came in. 01.03 I couldn't eat rabbit food. 01.04 I only eat soft food. 01.05 The girl on the label was so beautiful. 01.06 I dreamt of her as I hopped along. 01.07 I found a suitcase with this suit inside. 01.08 That's where it all began.

02 STATION ACT. Interaction: exo / image_sound.

SCENES: 02.01 Pol dreams of Princepollu. 02.02 Pol discovers the animals. 02.03 The lovers. 02.04 Cervosatán thwarts love.

03 CISAT ACT. Interaction: Cervosatán exo / robot. exo / image_sound. Voice level.

SCENES: 03.01 The king's rage. 03.02 Cervosatán and his henchmen.

04 BALL ACT. Interaction: Exo / image sound. Exo / robots.

SCENES: 04.01 Preparing the trap. 04.02 The dance. 04.03 The cake. 04.04 The antiparty

05 FOREST ACT. Interaction: Exo / 3D image. Exo / image sound

SCENES: 05.01 Pol's house burns. 05.02 The 3D trip.

06 JABA ACT. Interaction: Exo / Jaba robot. Exo / image sound.

SCENES: 06.01 Jaba the sow's kitchen. 06.02 Pol doesn't eat, he plays. 06.03 Jaba desperate. 06.04 The first tooth.

07 LOPA DESERT ACT. Interaction: Exo / Lopa robot. Exo / image sound. Exo / instrument.

SCENES: 07.01 Lopa's desert. 07.02 The insults. 07.03 The struggle.

08 FOVEL ACT. Interaction: Exo / Princepollu robot. Exo / image sound.

SCENES: 08.01 Soulless beauty. 08.02 Photromance. 08.03 I love you.

09 CIRCUS ACT. SAP Interaction: Exo / Sap robot. Exo / image sound. Exo / instrument. .

SCENES: 09.10 Sap's circus. 09.02 The virus inoculation. 09.03 The illness. 09.04 The cannon.

10 SERPE NARCOSIS ACT Interaction: Exo / Serpe robot. Exo / image sound. Exo / instrument.

SCENES: 10.01 Serpe's narcosis. 10.02 Pol's narcotic experience. 10.03 The hallucination. 10.04 Cervosatán's laugh.

11 SUPERPOL ACT Exo / image sound.

SCENES: 11.01 Pol reborn. 11.02 Enough. 11.03 The last tooth. 11.04 I feel good. 11.05 All the power. 11.06 Sex machine. 11.07 I'm gonna kill you. 11.08 I am the king. 11.09 Princepollu I love you.

12 FINAL ACT Exo / image sound. Exo / robots.

SCENES: 12.01 Pol subdues the animals. 12.02 Pol kills Cervosatán. 12.03 The hug.