

# 14th International Symposium on the Interactions between Sediments and Water

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OPERA DEI PUPPI  
TURI GRASSO  
ACIREALE

## Puppet show



*Theatre "Turi Grasso"*

Via Nazionale per Catania 195 Acireale-Sicily  
[www.operadeipupi.com](http://www.operadeipupi.com)

Puppet Show

Programme

**C**arlo Magno per sette anni ha combattuto contro la Spagna.

Tutte le città sono cadute tranne Saragozza ove risiede il re Marsilio; costui vedendo vana ogni resistenza all'avanzata dell'esercito di Carlo Magno, simula un'alleanza e fa sapere a Carlo che sono pronti a ricevere il battesimo dall'Arcivescovo Turpino.

Carlo Magno per assicurarsi su ciò manda Gano come ambasciatore al re Marsilio. Gano però tradisce Carlo e i suoi paladini e li fa cadere in un'imboscata, tesa dai mori di Spagna e dagli insorti Baschi, nella stretta gola di Roncisvalle.

**C**harles the Great fought for seven years against Spain.

All the cities had fallen except Saragozza, where King Marsilio lives; Seeing vain every resistance to the advance of the army of Charles the Great, simulates an alliance and let's Charles know that they are ready to receive baptism from the archbishop Turpino.

Charles the Great in order to be sure on that, sends Gano as ambassador to king Marsilio. He betrays Charles and his paladins and let them fall into an ambush laid by the Moors of Spain and by the Basques rebels in the narrow gorge of Roncisvalle.

### **Turi Grasso: the puppet maker and his puppets**

*Born in 1993, today Turi Grasso is the only puppet maker who still carries out this trade in Acireale.*

*After having gone from one job to another in the area of crafts and artisanry he was exposed to puppets for the first time at the age of 16 when he attended a puppet show in Via Alessi. Emanuele Macrì, the puppet artist, noticed Turi's regular attendance and his interest in puppets and so he invited him to work with him as operator.*

*Took the show abroad, and Turi soon realized how deep was his love for this activity. He was a quick learner and so he soon picked up all the secret of the trade from Macrì.*

*Ten years later as a result of misunderstandings with "Macrì", he decided to go off on his own and set up his own puppet making business.*

*After having built his first puppets with the help of his wife Venera, who is still his costume designer and costume maker, Turi decided to make his much longed-for dream come true: set up his own puppet show with a company of his own.*

*He thus prepared the maneuvering bench, the scenes, the curtains, and began his first shows roaming from one square to another.*

*And in truth puppet shows owe their great success to that squares. The origin of these puppets can be traced back to Spanish puppets which were brought to Naples quite by accident and there Giovanni Grasso, from Catania purchased them in 1861. He had immediately fallen in love with them when he saw a show in which they were not wearing any armour; he took them back to Sicily and prepared armours and breastplates for them and thus created the first real Sicilian "pupi".*

*The pupi spread rapidly throughout the whole island and became the main form of popular show, the subject matter was the epic of chivalry of the Carolingian cycle. During the years three schools of realization and manovring were developed.*

*The Palermo school manufacture puppi having jointed knees and their sword is in its sheath; the Catania school whose puppets are about 140 cm high, and weight around 20 kg. The puppets of these two latter schools have stiff knees and they carry their sword in their hand they are manovred from the manoevring bench which is above the puppets and not from the side as occurs with the Palermo puppets.*

*In constructing his puppets, Turi faithfully followed the rules of this tradition: the structure is of wood and iron, pupped with straw, the armour is made of copper and embossed manually, the heads are of wood, which are carefully carved and painted with great mastery and skill, and the costumes are of precious fabric, indeed these puppets can be defined as true works of art. During forty years of activity Turi has set up a whole of array puppets: paladins, Saracenes, witches, giants, dragons, serpents, angels and devils: over 200 theatrical elements are used to bring to life the story of the paladins of France.*

*The show is very accurately prepared drawing on the texts of the Chanson de Roland and on the texts by Giusto Lo Dico. Turi freely adapts this material and writes the scripts that he plays from behind the curtains, giving his voice to the various characters which requires three strong and highly skilled assistants to manoeuvre them. His very first show in 1965 was a true triumph which made his much longed-for dream come true. From then on Orlando, Rinaldo, Agricano, Gano of Magonza, Charlemagne, all of Turi's characters have been admired and applauded by thousands of people and he has thus held high the name of the town and of the puppet maker that they belong to.*