

**Kolozsvári Állami Magyar Színház**

**Teatrul Maghiar de Stat Cluj**

**Hungarian Theatre of Cluj**

**Théâtre Hongrois de Cluj**

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after Rabelais:

## **PANTAGRUEL'S COUSIN**

**Hommage à Rabelais**

Coproduction of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, the Radu Stanca National Theatre of Sibiu and the Company Silviu Purcărete (Lyon, France)

Cast:

MIKLÓS BÁCS

ZSOLT BOGDÁN

JÓZSEF BIRÓ

ÁRON DIMÉNY

LEVENTE MOLNÁR

JACQUES BOURGAUX

MARIE CAYROL

FLORIN COȘULEȚ

DIANA FUFEZAN

ENIKŐ GYÖRGYJAKAB

CĂTĂLIN PATRU

OFELIA POPII

LAURENT SCHUH

CRISTIAN STANCA

CRISTINA FLUTUR

ADRIAN MATIOC

LEVENTE BORSOS

Directed by

**SILVIU PURCĂRETE**

Musicians

ANCA STRANICI, LAURA CĂLINA

Director's assistant

CRISTIAN STANCA

Music composed by

VASILE ȘIRLI

Set and costume design

HELMUT STÜRMER

Stage director

LEVENTE BORSOS

Duration: 1 hour and 20 minutes without intermission

Date of opening: May 28th, 2003.

**Awards:**

- Best Performance Award at the Youth Open Festival – Skopje (Macedonia) – 2009
- Public's Award – EX PONTO International Theatre Festival – Ljubljana (Slovenia) – 2009
- Public's Award - International Festival of Bogota (Colombie) - 2006
- Nomination for UNITER Award for Best Performance of the year 2003 in Romania

**Tours, festival participation:**

- Festival International de Rijeka - (Croatie) - 2010
- Youth Open Festival – Skopje (Macedonia) – 2009
- BLACK SEA International Theatre Festival – Trabzon (Turkey) -2009
- EX PONTO International Theatre Festival – Ljubljana (Slovenia) – 2009
- Naples Theatre Festival – Naples (Italy) – 2008
- György Harag Memorial Festival – Cluj (Romania) – 2006
- Festival International de Bogota - (Colombie) - 2006
- Scène nationale de Bayonne Sud Aquitain - (France) - 2006
- Xth edition of the Union of Theatres of Europe – Rome (Italy) – 2005
- Théâtre à Chatillon - (France) - 2005
- La Seyne-sur-Mer - (France) - 2005
- PONTI'04 – 13th Festival of the Union of Theatres of Europe – Porto (Portugal) – 2004
- Coup de Chauffe Festival – Cognac (France) – 2004
- National Theatre Festival, Bucharest (Romania) – 2003
- International Theatre Festival – Sibiu (Romania) – 2003
- Thália Theatre – Budapest (Hungary) – 2003

Inspired by François Rabelais' The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel, director Silviu Purcărete created this silent piece using rhythmic body movements. Quite removed from traditional theatre vocabulary, this progressive piece is bound to meet with great success wherever it is performed – no translation is necessary.



*Pantagruel's Cousin (Homage to Rabelais)* is a veritable and authentic lesson in theater. A lesson in which Silviu Purcărete proves that any literature, even one without a dramatic substance, might be used as and transformed into a theatrical subject matter, might constitute the substance of a unique representation. At the end of it, you applaud in front of the open stage, and think about the next time when you might

see it again.

Demostene Șofron: *Purcărete Lesson*  
Adevărul de Cluj, June 2, 2003

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An amazing performance in which sensations, illusions, emotions were transformed into metaphors and hyperboles. [...] Although the director choose to work with a text written by an author who lived in a very different age, he [Purcărete] created a strange combination of old and postmodern “Rabelais”, a seducing mise-en-scene.

Daniela Rațiu: „*Pantagruel's Cousin*”, by *Silviu Purcărete – An Amazing Performance*  
Ziua de Vest, November 11, 2003

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The talent of the actors was obvious; their movements were brilliant and seemingly chaotic, but presented with meticulousness and ingeniously seasoned. The musicians beside their “audible” qualities proved to possess actorly talents also.

Radu Țuculescu: *The Stomach and the Song*  
Tribuna, December 16-31, 2003

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Silviu Purcărete, together with set designer Helmut Stürmer are creators of spaces that melt into an explosive vision. For them, the objects are vectors that induce sensations. A whole desirous-ludic arsenal is deployed in *Pantagruel's Cousin*, by Rabelais. Purcărete leads his audience into a salivary ecstasy. The word is absorbed into a “spoony - glassy” anthropology and the verbalization is plasticized.

Mihaela Michailov: *The Memory of the Objects*  
Observator Cultural, no. 183, 08/26 – 09/01, 2003



The performance of Mr. Purcărete impresses with the pure scene expression, which proves that for the experimental and alternative theater there are not necessary technical or multimedia innovations. It's proved that in this technologically developed time, the actor himself is a provocation enough for exploring.

His body his voice are used as a basic found for drama narration in which the verbal poetry is exchanged with gesticulation, "plastic", and emotions which are borne from the primeval instincts. The bizarrely made solutions are obliterated with originality, simplicity, exact and soft humor. The audience, is released and enjoys in the following of the play, and therefore creating (or not) its own specific story.

Alexandra Boshkovska  
theater critic and jury of the Youth Open Festival (MOT) of Skopje (Macedonia)

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This production - a series of scenes, where one scene is born out of the previous one, almost entirely without a recourse to text, but using ingenious directorial solutions - presents the irresistible pleasure of eating.

Anna Pintér: *Eating Each Other on the Stage*  
NOL – Népszabadság Online, [www.nol.hu](http://www.nol.hu), November 3, 2003

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Put under an unheard of siege of creativity, Rabelais' work transcribed by Silviu Purcărete and his collaborators becomes the source of an extremely rich theatrical ideogram. Gifted actors, trained in individual roles, melt their personalities into a group performance.

Mircea Morariu: *Pantagruel's Cousin (Homage to Rabelais)*  
Revista Familia, July-August, 2003

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*Pantagruel's Cousin*, directed by Silviu Purcărete is a reckless comedy, but interpreted with a maximum of actorly virtuosity. [...] Almost every sequence provoked a boisterous burst of laughter. Together with the characters, the audience partake in a feast of hilarity. But there is, beside this popular one, a more profound level to it: everything is food, even your fellow. In Purcărete's vision eating is almost an act of power, of authority, of influence.

[...]Although they performed it only two times in Cluj, *Pantagruel's Cousin* might be considered the big event of the Cluj season. An exceptional spectacle.

Claudiu Groza: *Theater in May*  
Tribuna, July 1-15, 2003

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I've gloated over the spectacle, *Pantagruel's Cousin* by Silviu Purcărete, from the beginning to the end, forgetting where am I. I've laughed, become hungry, applauded, and enjoyed myself like a child. [...]

The quality of the directorial construct is evident thanks to the well-built internal suspense of each moment, a strategy that doesn't let the tonus of the representation

lapse for one second. Even though retrospectively is hard to explain what happens on the stage, it keeps you astounded, curious, attentive, sometimes intrigued, and almost all the time amused, specially when the director offers some surprising solutions.

Cristina Modreanu: „*Pantagruel Cousin*” – *A Marrow Spectacle*  
Adevărul literar și artistic, July 22, 2003

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The world-famous Purcărete's production is an homage to Rabelais, a full-blooded play with plenty of humor and ideas and a sweeping liveliness. A true theater of happiness. And a real theater of movement.

Gábor Bóta: *Theater of Movement at Home and Abroad*  
Magyar Hírlap, November 13, 2003

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Magic and rhythm. Primal energies that hits one in the solar plexus in order to redirect the audience towards the essence, making him/her to forget civilization and to feel again the profoundly human, elementary realities of living. Translated by the director into distinctive, rich, always surprising signs, they imbibe the audience and give them the courage to confront themselves.

Mirela Năstăsache: *Journal of Festival*  
Curentul, November 15–16, 2003



First grade artists of the Silviu Purcărete Company, of the Hungarian Theater of Cluj, and the Radu Stanca Theater of Sibiu, together with set designer Helmut Stürmer and composer Vasile Sirli embarked in this enterprise which favors the ensemble to the bad habit of the excessive “self-affirmation.” Because nothing is further from this piece than the stardom encouraged by its frenetic apologists. *Pantagruel’s Cousin* could be

for some people a tricky title, for others a key or a passport. With all the risks of the party-breaking. More adequately, it leads us to the ambivalence of the “access road,” synthesizing the actor-spectator relationship in its generic meaning. It is a theatrical production without words. *HOMAGE TO RABELAIS*, brings together the heraldic brilliance of the creation with the ample mediation about human condition.

Valentin Dumitrescu: *Play and Interrogation*  
Revista 22, no. 178, December 9–15, 2003

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It is not only a large-scale, playful, humorous and dramatically strong production that uses a unique theatrical language, but also a multinational co-production, which brought together actors and companies with different training. Purcărete composed an etude-sequence, a logical and coherent work of art based on actorly improvisations and situation-exercises on the grand themes of the Rabelais-esque eating, consumption and cannibalism. *Joie de vivre* emanates and the drama of cannibalism emerges from this saturated, surreal firework that came forth from the combination of the medieval, Bahtyn- and Rabelais-esque culture of laughter and the contemporary theater. Pleasure of acting, energy and boundless imagination sweep away the audience; transformations and transubstantiations swell ceaselessly in the production: the human being is presented as the subject and object, the active and receptive party, the individual hero and communal victim of eating.

Andrea Tompa: *Sweet Stepmother. The 2003-2004 Season of the Theater of Cluj*  
Színház, September, 2004

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A huge quality-spectacle. Purcărete doesn’t offer a reduction of Rabelais’ text, as it seems at first sight. He offers a whole new thing that vibrates and is alert and exciting. The actors’ sarabande functions as vocabulary and the rhythm of the music substitutes grammar.

Demostene Șofron: „*Pantagruel’s Cousin*”, *successes on the French stages*  
Adevărul de Cluj, November 17, 2004

The body loses its identity and turns into an amorphous, devoured and devourable mass. Purcărete produces a spectacle about the sonorousness of appetite: visceral, fantastic and contagious.

Mihaela Michailov: *Events from year 2003. Audio-scopes*  
Observator Cultural, no. 205, 01/27-02/02, 2004

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Silviu Purcărete invokes the world of the silent films in this black-and-white vision of Rabelais' grandiose prose, the Gargantua and Pantagruel. Genres of different intensity proceed in front of us, as if we were participating in a spryly theatrical séance. Rationality should be searched outside of the performance: this follows its own internal logic and is immune to any kind of smarty whys and wherefores.

Melinda Sőregi: *Tough Performance*  
A hét, November 27, 2003

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Purcărete's visual compositions can be nearly impossible to interpret concretely. His open poetic metaphors lead the viewer to a series of associations. Purcărete's *Pantagruel*, probably the most 'free' performance in this sense, could be described as a series of improvisations – not textual, but gesticular – on the themes of birth and creation, suggesting Rabelaisian eating, digesting, and the earthly and bodily pleasures of life and art.

Andrea Tompa: "Theatre", Yale School of Drama vol. 39/2, 2009

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This performance is sort of "parodia sacra," consecrated by the tradition of the "Eastern laugh." If we connect the important knots of the piece, we end up with the story of the birth of the communion, using the style of the original play, seasoned with Purcărete-imagery. The most ordinary and the simplest things receive sometimes cosmic connotations. We are witnessing the degradation, the vulgarization of the sublime, but also its rebirth. It buries us, but shows the seed.

Katalin Köllő: *Customized Communion in Purcărete's Vision*  
Szabadság, June 7, 2003

It is a suggestive co-placement of the culture of book and the more provocative, alive and noisy world of the entertainment, impregnated with bold games and "events", where people gather to admire physical achievements. The amazingly skillful or handicapped and suffering Body becomes the source of folk entertainment in this marvelous performance. The Body would be the cruel reality, but the slippery imagination is present also. The thirst for entertainment increases proportionally with the pleasure of eating. And Purcărete doesn't miss out on any of the meanings of the word: entertainment.

Ion Cazaban: *Festival-like performances*  
Teatrul Azi, no. 9-10/2003

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Rabelais' fabrications perfectly fit Silviu Purcărete. He himself inventor of fabulous scenarios, of almost unreal images, of a world that is born in front of our eyes, on the stage, like in the most beautiful and incredible fairy tale. The theatrical language of Silviu Purcărete is impregnated by the voluptuousness of the creation of situations, by images which have at their origin the extraordinary thrill of the word.

The director is bound by it in all he does. The vibration of the word causes a dizzying parade of different images, which, on their turn and due to the rich spirit and sophisticated culture of the author, take command of him; they haunt him, trouble him, and define him as an artist, redefining in the mean time the formidable mystery of theater. Word-image is the distinctive sign of Purcărete's art.

Marina Constantinescu: *About the state of people or how director Purcărete interprets Rabelais' word*  
România Literară. Nr. 31, August 6-12, 2003

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Staging this "anti-dramatic" piece makes him re-evaluate the meaning of his own art. The director's strategy seems to be simple: he extracts from Rabelais epic fluxes themes for improvisations for an animated, professional group of actors, who are ready to follow him to the end... of his whirling imagination. [...] From such sequences, Purcărete, the absolute master of play, puts together an almost geometrical canvas, adding, painting, redistributing visual and audio effects.

Andreea Dumitru: *Anatomy and gastronomy*  
Teatrul Azi, Nr. 9-10/2003

It was the official premier of the international co-production, uniting artists from Romania, France, Germany (set designer Helmut Stürmer) and Hungary, which made the hall of Radu Stanca Theater look small, and turned it altogether by the end of the piece into an ocean of applause and ovation.

Ion Parhon: *Four of Aces*  
România Liberă, 06/07/2003

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The spectacle is digested between two moments which close the cycle of the menu: the autopsied body from which hypertrophied organs pour on a world which lives by eating, and the body covered with dough and baked instantaneously, and savored frenetically. The even-tempered *Pantagruel's Cousin* and the delight of the feast. A rain of spoons from above, culinary construction of the space. The assimilating objects of the set: table, glasses, plates, etc. In short, bon appetite!"

Mihaela Michailov: *Sincretic.net or a prelude for a festival-menu*  
Observator Cultural, 06/17/2003

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If Hieronymus Bosch were more interested in the encyclopedic laughter of the chivalrous revelries of the nephew of Gargamel than in the mirror of the sardonic smile hold against the Medieval Age, an as digestible age as any other, then, he would have been the scenographer of this piece, from our times, produced by Purcărete.

Doru MAREȘ: *(Uni)forms of the scenic poetic*  
Observator Cultural, November 18-24, 2003

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Regarding Purcărete, *Pantagruel's Cousin* playfully enlivens the bookish memory of ingestion and fermentation, time becoming sort of orgiastic oven, in which the dough gives birth to a ritualistic feast. The voluptuousness of the tempo digests its own passage.

Mihaela MICHAÏLOV: *Temporary Archeologies*  
Observator Cultural, November 18-24, 2003