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CERES Brown Bag Talk:

FRANCA RAME AND THE DIAGONAL ARCHIVE

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Even while they were widely recognized as anti-institutional left-wing activists, Franca Rame (1929-2013) and her partner in life and art for close to 50 years, the Nobel laureate Dario Fo, enjoyed the distinction of being the most performed living playwrights across the globe for more than three decades of their lives. Rame's work on stage has proven difficult to analyze thanks to her complex relationship to performance, which she embraced as a method to explore her socio-political ideas perhaps even more than a form of artistic expression.

In my talk I theorize a 'diagonal archive,' or a space of historical preservation that relates indirectly to the subject, and in its relational position reveals parallel patterns in which new understandings and perspectives can emerge.

In the case of Rame, one archive is that of the Napoli family puppet theater, a multigenerational operation working today that demonstrates similar practices of Rame's own itinerant performing family; another archive is one of fanciful oral histories, or a source of evolving remembrances: stories retold and remembered by Rame herself, several of her former company members, her son, scholars, and friends; and finally, there is the actual traditional archive that Rame curated over her life, managed today with emotion and high stakes by her family in a delicate state-sponsored agreement, inviting questions on who curates an archive and when their personal relationship to the materials becomes its own story about power, history, and knowledge production.



Puppets of the Napoli family. Photo by speaker