

The Stars of the Show



Even if you don't think marionettes are quite as fascinating as they're cracked up to be (cardboard swords, pie-plate shields and all that squeaky ventriloquy), the exhibition of the 20 string-operated figures created by the Théâtre du Tilleul should win you over. When in action they perform Manuel de Falla's opera, "El Retablo de Maese Pedro," complete with Charlemagne's Court, a castle in Spain, an army of Moorish soldiers, siege weapons, banners and horses and elephants.

The operatic part of it is a production of the French Opera du Nord (Lille); the staging is in the hands of director

Stéphane Verrue, an Insas graduate. But the puppetry of it all is the ingenious invention of a Belgian team — Roby Comblain and the Théâtre du Tilleul.

Perhaps not quite as meticulous as de Falla, who took four years to compose his 26-minute opera — he wrote the libretto from episodes in *Don Quixote* and wanted authentic-sounding music, bringing the harpsichord back to the 20th century to do it —, Comblain and company have gone to great lengths to give their artificial people something like real personalities.

Right now, the marionettes are taking it easy and won't be performing until next spring (we'll let you know where



and when). The point of their appearance in Brussels is to be part of the current show at the Centre International du Fantastique at the Abbaye de Forest (9 Place St Denis), every day except Sunday from 10 to 6, until November 13. The other part of the exhibit is called *Robots, Toys and Fantasy of the Postwar Period*, an extended nostalgia trip arranged from the private collection of André Leborgne.

