# THE ACTOR ARCHITECT OF THE EMPTY SPACE

## A STUDY OF THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH OF JACQUES LECOQ

A Thesis

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Movement is an intuitive expression of the soul. Life begins in movement. Movement signifies life. To watch . . . to listen . . . to move, is to discover.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Who is Jacques Lecoq and what is his contribution to the field of actor training? These two questions and their answers, together with the importance of Lecoq's work have not yet permeated the educational community in the United States. This thesis will examine the strengths of Lecoq's pedagogical approach and the understandings it inspires within the student. Perhaps if a widespread understanding of the profound significance of Lecoq training were common among the community of educators in the United States, a new direction of live theatre as an important and "essential" form of expression might arise in our developing cultural landscape. Objectives of the study have been to identify, through empirical research, the basis of Jacques Lecoq's teachings, his vision regarding the creative process and the individual, the importance of movement in the training process and the significance of specific aspects of his training program.

The study's main task is to define the teaching methods which have characterized the conservatory program at the International School of Theatre Jacques Lecoq (École Jacques Lecoq) in Paris, France, for the forty year period between 1956 and 1996. The study's insights and conclusions about the Lecoq approach to actor training were derived from both historical and contemporary sources. The historical roots upon which the philosophies of Lecoq's pedagogy rests are identified and described. These roots

established the context for the research which acquired information and insights from multiple contemporary sources including: (1) translations of Mr. Lecoq's comments concerning his work, (2) former students' descriptions of the school and its teachings (including classroom exercises, as these have evolved over the history of the school), (3) a portrait of Mr. Lecoq as teacher--as painted by his former students and displayed through their work as actors, teachers, designers and playwrights, and (4) the personal experiences of the author, an alumnus of the school.

## Overview

It is the opinion of the author that, in the plastic multi-media world of film, video and television to which audiences are exposed today, a longing for an experience in the performing arts that touches the individual deeply as a human being grows ever stronger. The medium of live performance seems to be fading. Where it still lives, what we seek as an audience is often missing. In the case of live theatre, we are frequently dazzled with special effects, amazing sets and beautiful costumes, yet we leave untouched, wanting more. Our intellect has been overwhelmed, our senses amazed, but intuitively, at a deep inner level, the most important element is missing. In all of the presentation, the integral part--that which makes the performance live--has been almost forgotten, or if not forgotten, unintentionally buried by all else. That which should be the building block for all other elements in the theatre, the element with which one should begin to mold the presentation of a dramatic creation, has become dust on the roof where it should have been the foundation. That element is the ensemble, the actor.

The actor has become a commodity like costume cloth that is sized and bought according to how it looks in relation to the aesthetic of the production. He is trimmed and altered, cut and hemmed into a work that may contain nothing that is of himself. The ensemble has been reduced to a group of individuals, each in his own world, each trying to out do the other. In robbing the actor of the opportunity to play in an environment where he can work to the best of his ability, and by neglecting the importance and the force of the creative ensemble, theatre often becomes a purely material happening that fails to move us from within.

Arguments such as these (against an environment promoted by the commercialization of theatre where the process and the art are sacrificed in the name of production values and profit) have been made throughout history by some of the great teachers and directors of the theatre. Copeau, Stanislavski, Artaud, and contemporaries like Brook, Barba, and Grotowski have all been driven by the necessity to go beyond the purely material aspects of the theatre in a search to redefine the art form.

## Balance and Harmony in the Lecoq Training

All too often, directors, producers, and audiences fail to see the actor as the architect of the empty theatrical space. It is the actor who forms the bridge between the public, the poet and the performance, using as his building blocks human emotion, vocal pitch, physical movement, rhythm, energy and the dynamics of the empty space. He plays with these blocks like a child building, tearing down, rebuilding and adding on, inventing, reinventing, and making the impossible possible. He begins alone and builds a palace

full of kings and queens out of nothingness following only his intuition for a plan. Through his interaction and relationship to the surroundings, the actor reaches out to the audience members holding them on the edges of their seats simply through his play and the effects it has on the existing energies in the space. The act of connecting to all of the elements in space can be accomplished only when the environment around the actor supports his activity and when he is properly trained to be aware of himself, his surroundings, and to master the simplicity of the actor's play.

It is important that all the elements of the theatre be in perfect balance so that one does not outweigh the other; the sets, lights and costumes must not exceed the actor's ability to control the performance space. It is therefore necessary that the actor be trained to be more aware of those energies encompassing him and to play among them with an uninhibited spontaneity. He must achieve a stronger grasp of his intuitive feelings so that he may be honest in his play. He must gain an understanding that acting is a craft that requires a constant application of intuitive feeling and applied technique.

Only when the actor possesses enough strength to equal or surpass the presence of the other elements surrounding him will he take command of the ever moving and changing theatrical space. The foundation for such a strength and understanding is a knowledge and awareness of the body in space. As Jacques Copeau commented, "the problem of the actor is a corporeal one."

Perhaps inherent in this last statement lies the reason why, until recently, little emphasis has been placed on the importance of movement training for the actor in the majority of educational programs in the United States and why there has been so little

understood or discussed concerning the work of Jacques Lecoq. In the United States, the study, understanding and teaching of theatre is based primarily on an intellectual and psychological analysis. Lecoq has emphasized an understanding (derived from the study of rhythmic and spatial relationships) of theatre and performance based not on what the actor is feeling but on what the audience perceives regarding the given image--one that emphasizes the actors play and presence--and on the realization that a knowledge and understanding of movement is fundamental to a theatre that is complete and alive. Another possible reason for the shortage of information concerning Lecoq and his ancestors is that he promotes the concept of movement training and learning through doing, through experience, rather than an approach to understanding primarily through academic study and analysis of methods and theories.

While learning through practical application is the basis on which conservatory training programs rest, Lecoq's teaching approach looks holistically at theatre as an art. This is to say, that the act of theatre is complete only as "the sum of its parts." The various components are so intimately related and interconnected that "the sum of the parts" is at its strongest and most dynamic when all elements exist in harmony. This balance is founded on the principle that the actor is in "chorus." That is, the actor must be supported and in turn support the other elements. It is a perfect balance of the dynamics of rhythm, space and time. A blend of nature, light, color, movement and architecture in an empty space form a living, larger than life experience for the viewer, who is at the same time, audience and participant.

A simple example of an element that disturbs the necessary harmony would be a costume designed to communicate an idea but which does not practically serve the movement of the character. The costume that does not "play" detracts from the force and the impact of the work. It ultimately results in the actor becoming "disconnected" from the space. He can no longer communicate. Although the audience may "understand," an important element will be missing and neither the actor nor the audience will be fully engaged in the action. Another example is a set that in its grandeur and beauty dwarfs the actors, a set that is more present in the space than the play itself. Peter Brook addresses this point of view in his question, "why a chair?" (Brook, Empty 12). If an element is not absolutely necessary for the telling of the story then it should be eliminated. Lecoq takes this a step further and insists that what elements exist must be alive, must be connected, "must play." There is a relationship between all aspects of a performance that cannot be ignored. Each element, each movement, each word uttered symbolizes something important. A communication, an exchange, that must be finely tuned in order to be vibrant and alive, exists between actor and actor, actor and object, and actor and audience. This condition is much like a symphony orchestra in which the music cannot live in the space, cannot jump to life in its most dynamic form if the second violin is out of tune.

## The Differences that are Lecoq

The concepts and ideas Lecoq brings to the field of actor training are not so dissimilar from those of Meyerhold, Brook, Grotowski or Barba. The difference between

Lecoq and these others is in his method of teaching and the emphasis he places on the intimate relationship between the space, the rhythms of the actor and the play, *le jeu.* Lecoq's approach differs from approaches such as the American Actor's Studio Strasbourg Method of actor training in that it approaches understanding through the observation of movement. Some examples of differences are as follows:

Table 1.1 Comparison Table

| Lecoq | Other (method) |
|---|---|
| The actor approaches the action with the question, "what am I doing?" | The actor approaches the action with the question, "Why am I doing this?" |
| The actor approaches the creation of a character through the creation of the character's silhouette and the finding of the character's center. | The actor approaches the creation of a character through the development of a psychological profile and emotional history. |
| A character's emotional response is the result of the action, the "playing" of the situation. | A character's emotional response is based on past emotional situations (of the character or of the actor). |
| Emotional state is a result of the physical action. | Physical action is a result of the emotional state. |
| The manner and behavior of a character and the style are interrelated, dependant upon each other. | The character is me. |
| A theatre of action. | Psycho-drama. |
| Theatre is "extra-daily life." | Theatre is a re-creation of daily life. |

The actor's understanding of character, performance and dramatic structure is arrived at through a sense of movement, timing, rhythm and space. For example, in the third comparison given above, the actor in column one reacts as the character connecting and responding to the rhythm, intensity and build of the action in a scene. He could be responding to the actual technical elements: the rhythm at which he is approached by

another actor, the distance he must travel to get from a chair to a table, a breath in connection with a physical movement such as the turning of the head. In column two, the actor provides an emotional response to the situation based on, for example, an emotional event such as the death of his actual grandmother. The Lecoq trained actor is concerned, first, with doing. Feeling is the result. In the fourth comparison, column one, the actor, as a result of a chosen rhythm and timing in which he moves across the room, develops a sense of sadness within himself and communicates this image to the audience. In column two, the actor moves slowly because he feels sad. The difference between these two approaches lies in the recognition that what the audience perceives is more important than what the actor feels. Mr. Lecoq's response to a student faced with this concept is, "Yes, that felt good didn't it . . . but what about us, what about the audience?" (personal notes)

On the fifth comparison, column one, the actor confronts style. For Lecoq, the actions and the manner of the reactions of the character are directly related to the style in which the actor finds himself immersed. This concept is based on the relationship between the movement of the actor and the space. Each style has a corresponding spatial dimension, and subsequently a rhythm and energy of its own.

Depicted in a very simplistic graphic example (Figure 1.1) is the spatial relationship of two actors corresponding to three given styles. Both a character's inner sense of passion and outer movement must adjust to the dimensions of the style. A change in the spatial relationship between the players also changes the timing, the dimensions of relationship, the size and extension of a given gestural response and the sense of dramatic tensions.

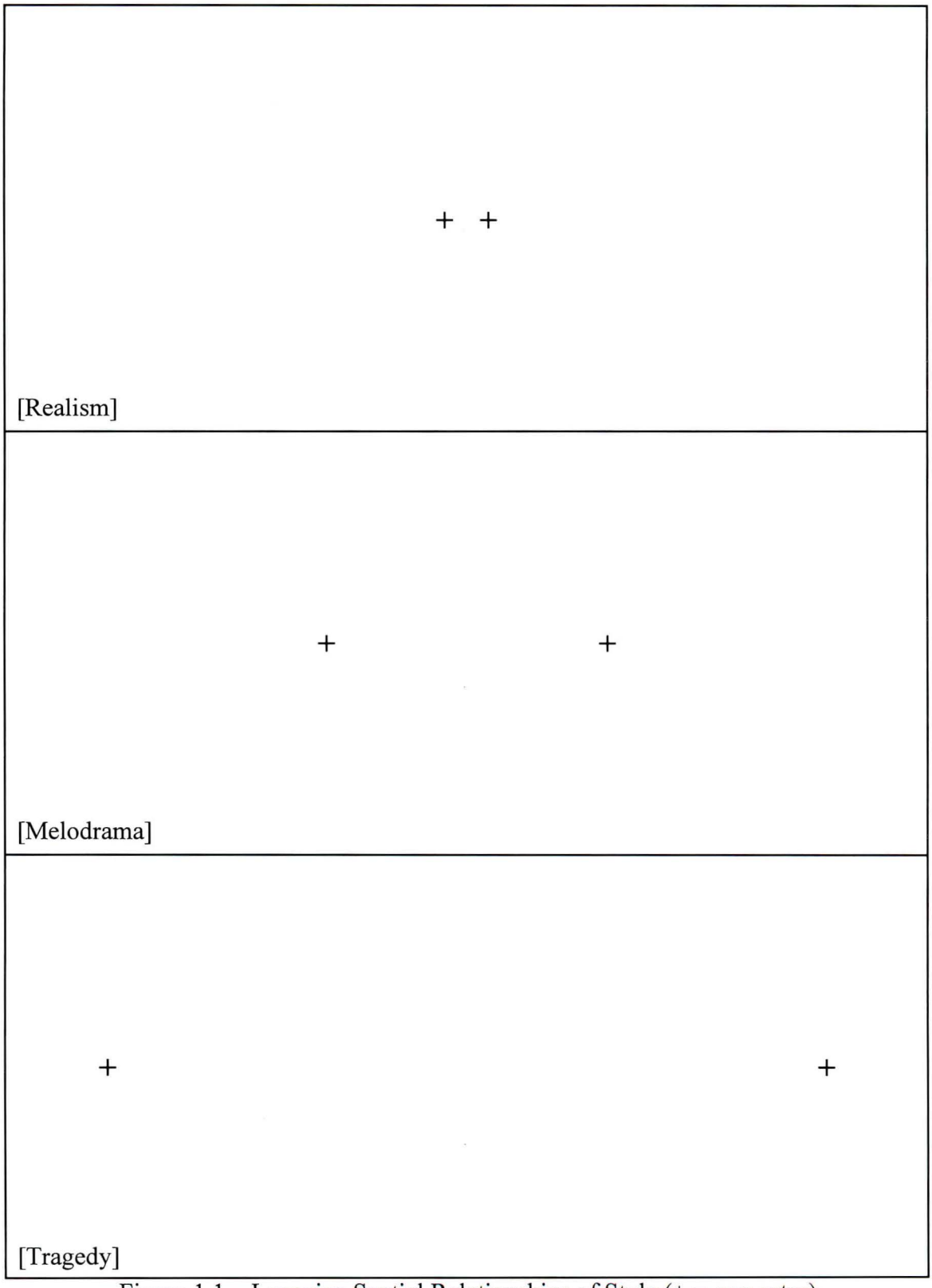


Figure 1.1 Lecoqian Spatial Relationships of Style (+ = one actor)

One finds that the spatial dimensions of a style provide the foundation upon which all the elements of the actor's play must respond. The character and the style also have a symbiotic relationship. The character cannot find complete life unless it exists wholly within the style, as the style cannot reach its full dynamic proportions unless the characters play accordingly. Playing a given style is much like playing a particular mask. For Lecoq, an actor must react to, conform to, and bring to life elements much greater than himself or herself.

For Lecoq, there is no separation between movement training and actor training. He expresses this in the following short list of impressions:

> The emphasis of expression--particularly those of dramatic expression, and later of dramatic creation, are created out of the silent body of man.
>
> The fire I see burns within me. I recognize that fire by identifying myself with it in acting; I add my fire to the fire.
>
> The impressions of the body impart life to words, leave the body to travel in the comfort of their definitions, they become paralyzed and die--conveying only emptiness. Likewise, our approach begins with the body. (Lecoq, Mime 117)

Because of the international aspect of the school and the number of cultures and languages represented, work with text and development of the voice have a reduced emphasis. The school is one wherein the actor learns to create his or her own theatre which may or may not result in text based work. The first year is spent almost entirely behind a mask or in non-verbal improvisation (this is not to say that speech is completely lacking). The emphasis is placed on the play of action as opposed to a communication through text. It is perhaps for this reason that in the past, Lecoq has been referred to continually as a teacher of mime and that the majority of publications, articles and books,

discussing his teaching have been disseminated under the subject heading of mime. Unfortunately, this tendency to categorize has been a limiting factor in the ability to see the overall ramifications of what Lecoq's teaching encompasses. For Lecoq mime is simply the silence that precedes the spoken word and the physical work of learning "mime" technique is a means to a greater understanding of the art of the performer. He writes:

> People often ask me: "What do you do at your school? Mime?" I always have the feeling that in asking the question they reduce the school to a kind of silent formalism. Even the word "mime" itself is restrictive. One visualizes an actor who does not speak, and who uses stylized gestures to show objects which do not exist, or makes faces to indicate that he laughs or weeps.
>
> In this sense, I would have to reply that we don't do mime--not that kind of mime. The mime we teach at the school is for me the fundamental principle of all human expressions--whether they be gestural, plastic, intoned, written or spoken. The kind of mime that I call *le fond* "the foundation" is the greatest school for the theatre, and it is based upon movement.
>
> It is the gesture behind the gesture, in the gesture behind the word, in the animation of materials, of sounds, of colors, of lights, that the school is founded. The human ability to mime, enables us to recognize everything that moves; man, with his entire being, identifies himself to the world by recreating it. (Lecoq, Mime 117)

Since 1969 only eight articles concerning Lecoq and his teaching have appeared in English in the United States, six of them published before 1977. Mr. Lecoq's work is described in five books published in English: Behind the Mask by Bari Rolphe (1977), briefly in chapters contained in Mimes on Miming edited by Bari Rolphe (1980), Apostles of Silence by Mira Felner (1985), Improvisation in Drama by Antony Frost and Ralph Yarrow (1989), and Commedia dell'Arté: An Actor's Handbook (1994). His work with masks is also discussed in the doctoral dissertation Masks: Their Use and

Effectiveness in Actor Training Programs by Sears Eldredge. The movement theatre community is indebted to Frost and Yarrow for the clear and complete picture of the Lecoq training program provided up to this time and to Bari Rolphe, a 1966 graduate of the school, for the vast majority of these publications (five of the eight articles and two of the books).

In the past forty years of the school, three thousand students from all over the world have attended École Jacques Lecoq, only a small number of them Americans. In 1994, "Theatre of Creation" took place. This small festival sponsored by Touchstone Theatre and Lehigh University was dedicated solely to work whose origins are found with Lecoq.

The lack of information concerning Lecoq's method is due in part to the fact that Jacques Lecoq has dedicated his life's work to the art of teaching. He has not sought recognition as a director or performer as have some of the other great master teachers and innovators of modern drama such as Constantine Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook. Although it is clear that Mr. Lecoq takes pleasure in the successes and work of his students, this is not the major motivating factor behind his work. His interest lies in the shared "re-discovery" of theatre with each passing student, a task that seems never to tire him. He awakens in each individual a creative spark and sends him or her into the world to define their own unique path. The teaching method of the school does not produce Lecoq clones. For the observer who has not experienced the training, linking many of the students through their work to the program is difficult. This is evident as one looks at high profile and well known performers in this country who

have graduated from the school: Geoff Rush who has recently won an Academy Award Nomination for his portrayal of David Helfgott in the movie Shine; Gates McFadden, best known for her portrayal of Dr. Beverly Crusher in Star Trek: The Next Generation; Avner "The Eccentric" Eisenberg, a well known theatre clown, whose show has been seen for nearly thirty years throughout the United States and on Broadway at the Lambs Theatre in 1985; Mummenshanz, the world renowned Swiss mask ensemble; and a group which has established one of the leading theatres in the United States, Théàtre de la Jeune Lune in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The teaching approach of École Lecoq, which will be described in detail in later chapters, works to achieve a holistic and intuitive understanding in the student. The various classes and exercises are not broken down to provide the opportunity to understand different parts separately, but rather are designed to teach in one single exercise the whole. The teaching style is "via negativa," which is to say that the student is told what is not working or what his or her work isn't. What is working or how to find what will work is left up to the student. Bari Rolphe describes this as "leaving affirmative paths open for the student to find" (Rolphe 38). One hears Lecoq as he observes the work, "No, that's not working . . . It's too psychological . . . very scholarly (emphasis on the disappointment in his voice) . . . no . . . (sigh) . . . that's not it . . . next. Yes, that's it!" Through the critique and feedback the student is brought to an intuitive understanding of the work, a sense of what is working and when it is working. This is done without the study or discussion of theory or the intellectualization of concepts.

Learning is accomplished through doing and observing and being guided through the process by a group of instructors unified under a single vision.

> The school offers an education. I call education a series of courses, not taken one after the other, but linked to each other by a uniformity of direction, unfolding through time, following a method, and transmitted by a way of teaching that is related to the professions for which the student is being prepared, and at the same time to an understanding of life, which is our constant quest. Theatre, mime, dance, cinema, and other forms of human expression exist as special vehicles, each following its own bent to create a rapport between the creator and others. (Lecoq, Mime 119)

Inherent in the pedagogic approach are those elements that make the pedagogy difficult to define, to place into a context and subsequently to explain. The approach is not a method but a living and changing entity that is specific to, and uniquely a part of, each student who passes through the school. It is not something that one can necessarily read about and understand. One can, in this way, only get a glimpse or peripheral idea of what the pedagogy is, of its profound impact on the student. In order to truly understand, one must experience the school. Nevertheless, on with the study.

In an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for the teaching methods of École Lecoq, a review of its predecessors will be undertaken, concentrating on the work and teachings of Jacques Copeau to whom Jacques Lecoq is a third generation descendant by way of Jean-Louis Barrault and Jean Dasté.

# CHAPTER II

## THE WORK OF JACQUES COPEAU

Jean Louis Barrault passionately responds to the question of what has been the contribution of Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) to the world theatre community, to France and to the art of actor training when he refers to Copeau as "the master of us all" (Bently 50). In France there could be considered two periods of theatre; before Jacques Copeau and after Jacques Copeau. In 1955 William Melnitz described Copeau as "the greatest force in the French theatre in the twentieth century" (Katz 433). His work toward a future art of performance guided and influence practitioners of the art such as Grotowski, Barba, Mnouchkine and Lecoq.

Copeau, along with his contemporaries, reshaped not only how we look at and perceive the theatre but, perhaps more importantly, provided us with a valuable foundation upon which to base actor training. In order to understand Copeau's contributions it is necessary to look at: (1) his work as an actor/director in his theatre the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, (2) those men and women who directly influenced him, and (3) his accomplishments as pedagogue of the school, École du Vieux-Colombier. For Copeau the life and work of his company and the work of the school were inseparably linked. His "new theatre" could not come to fruition without a complete re-education of the actor (Eldredge, Masks 75).

Copeau was a visionary and an idealist and he contended that the attempts of his contemporary theatre to portray reality lacked an "inner truth" (Katz 435). Recognizing the degraded state of the popular theatre and that the stages of Paris were overwhelmed by exaggerated behavior and extraneous material, he railed against the customs of the time, often letting the actors bear the brunt of his criticism:

> The theatre managers and their hirelings have one single occupation--will my play make money? They have of course very heavy burdens to bear, but none is heavier than the actors' greed. Vain and arrogant, the latter are true masters of the situation; their whims, their despotic ignorance rule the stage. A play is unrecognizable once it has passed through their hands. They modify the text, add, delete and transform it to suit themselves; they are supposed to be the collaborators of the authors, and they are their tormentors. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 72)

He continues with this criticism in his essay on dramatic renovation:

> Most theatres have been snapped up by a hand full of entertainers in the play of unscrupulous impresarios; everywhere, most of all in those places where great traditions should safeguard some integrity, there is the same mountebank, speculative attitude, the same vulgarity; one finds fakery everywhere, excess and exhibitionism of all kinds, all the usual parasites of a dying art that no longer pretends to be otherwise; everywhere one finds flabbiness, mess, indiscipline, ignorance and stupidity, disdain and abhorrence of the beautiful; what is produced is more and more extravagant and self-congratulatory, criticism is more and more fawning and public taste more and more misguided: that is what has roused our indignation. (Rudlin, Jacques 3-4)

He adds once again to these comments in preparing his thoughts and ideas for the founding of his school:

> I care little for the great actor. If pressed I should say that in every age the great actor was the enemy of dramatic art. For great dramatic art what is needed is not a great actor, but a new conception of dramatic interpretation. (Rudlin, Copeau 11)

Copeau wished to create a new theatre, one where the elements of lighting, set, costume, management, direction and acting worked to support the art of the playwright. The first step in his plan was to create a school in which he would be able to train a new

actor for this new theatre. Copeau did not want the "new" theatre artist to be contaminated with the baseness and corrupt attitudes of his present day (Eldredge, Masks 74). He wanted to begin with children and adolescents who had had no theatrical experience. The school would not train the student to be a great actor, but to become a theatre artist (Rudlin, Jacques 11). His aim was to create an actor who would serve the art not use the art to serve himself.

In 1913 Copeau published "An Essay of Dramatic Renovation: The Theatre du Vieux-Colombier" in the September edition of "La Nouvelle Revue Française" (Eldredge, Masks 73). Here he described the principles by which he would guide the new work of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. His intent in this project was not to completely do away with the old but, instead, to develop a "new" theatre by purging the old of its impurities (Eldredge, Masks 74). Unfortunately, the necessity to support the theatre financially and his wish to convince the public through example, required that Copeau place his full attention first on production and the forming of a company of actors. The school would have to wait. He began his renovation in October of the same year with the opening of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier (Rudlin, Copeau xvi).

Copeau believed the work of the actor was inseparably linked to the space in which he was playing. Anything that did not directly support the actor or the work of the playwright was superfluous. His essay on dramatic renovation (often referred to as a manifesto) ended with:

> We do not believe that in order to "represent the whole life of a man" it is necessary to have a theatre "where sets can rise up from below and scene changes can be effected instantaneously," nor, ultimately, that the future of our art should be tied to

> "the question of mechanization." On the contrary! The restrictions of our stage and its crude resources will impose a discipline on us, by obliging us to concentrate true meaning in the emotions of our characters. For this new work all those tricks can be dispensed with: just leave us a bare stage. (Rudlin, Jacques 7)

The company he gathered was a small group of young actors, whom he had chosen because of their natural, spontaneous, energetic, and enthusiastic qualities rather than for their prior stage experience, and who were willing to accept the challenge of Copeau's vision (Kusler 11). This group of "actor creators" was to help Copeau develop and shape his ideas of a new theatre. First, however, he was to initiate them not only in his new ideas, but to a new way of life:

> We shall have in view the development of the individual talents and their subordination to the ensemble. We shall fight against the encroachment of commercialism, against all professional deformations, against the stringency of specialization. In short, we shall do our best to renormalize these men and women whose vocation is to stimulate all human emotions and gestures. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 75)

Because Copeau believed that in order for the actor to achieve success in the imitation of humanity he must first remain deeply connected to nature and with life, he took his first company to Limon to work. Outside of Paris, in the countryside, they developed the work to be presented at the Vieux-Colombier. Their days included two hours of sight reading to build a supple intellect, one hour for outdoor activities such as swimming and fencing. Improvisation was scheduled in the evenings (Eldredge, Masks 76). The work of the company culminated in the tremendous success of the productions of The Brothers Karamozov and Twelfth Night. Copeau was wary of this success, perhaps fearing it might lead him to propagate the commercial, ego-driven approach to creating theatre against which he was fighting.

> Success has left me very calm, very much in command of myself, very diffident. Truth to tell, it has left me with a sense of loathing and disgust. Success which one merely exploits, which one merely uses to puff oneself up with vanity and self-advertisement is nothing, it serves no useful purpose. (Rudlin, Jacques 111)

For Copeau there was only one great personality, one individual who had the right to dominate the stage. That individual was the poet, who embodied the dramatic work (Rudlin, Jacques 11). He continued to seek a deeper understanding and purer form of theatre.

Although Copeau would have preferred to have begun his "new" theater with the founding of a school, the work of the first company, which was brought to an end with the outbreak of World War One, laid a solid foundation for what was to come later. As he had eluded earlier in his manifesto, the work of the first company was only provisional. It would not come to its full expression until the methods of The Vieux-Colombier School emerged (Rudlin, Jacques 4).

## The Influence of Copeau's Contemporaries

During the war Copeau had the time to study and review the work done in the first year of the company (Eldredge, Masks 76). In this period of time, Copeau met with Gordon Craig, Emile Jaques Dalcroze and Adolphe Appia. The work of these men deeply influenced and encouraged him to continue in the direction he had begun.

In 1915 Copeau met with Gordon Craig at the Arena Goldoni in Florence. Although he had a great deal of difficulty communicating with Craig because of language barriers, he gained much from the encounter. Copeau was particularly interested in the school that Craig had started at the arena. The curriculum and operation allowed the

students to study the various facets of the arts in addition to studying theory (Eldredge, Masks 80). He wrote of his impressions:

> The spirit of the school is excellent, such as I had seen it described. It does not open up any prospect that I had not already considered before. Its program is mine: by the diversity, the universality of knowledge, de-specializing and re-normalizing the future actor, making him a human being, open, in harmony with life, a master-artist in his art, but with a general cultural background. (Rudlin, Copeau 20)

Copeau also carried away from his meeting with Craig images of what his bare stage would look like. He wrote to Jouvet, a former member of his company who was in the army at the time, that "Craig had shown him a stage that would solve all of their needs" (Eldredge, Masks 81). Copeau was taking to heart what Craig would later state: "To create a simplified stage is the first duty of a master of the drama" (Eldredge, Masks 83). The meeting between the two urged Copeau forward.

> Craig's personality is exciting. That is especially what I owe him, after a month of daily contacts: a great excitement along a more intense awareness of my means, an increased faith, the certainty of being on the right road, and an urgent need to produce. (Rudlin, Copeau 22)

Copeau, a man of literature, realized his lack of a conceptual base for the physical aspects of actor training. He needed a method of working with the actors that was integral and directly connected to the performers' plasticity rather than an adjunct to it. Copeau believed, initially, that he would find what he was looking for in the work of Emile Jacques Dalcroze and his system of Eurhythmics. He hoped that Dalcroze's physical work with rhythm would help him to achieve an expressive actor rather than a dancer (Rudlin, Copeau 55).

Copeau was first made aware of Dalcroze when he was given as a gift the pamphlet, "The Eurhythmics of Jacques Dalcroze," in the spring of 1915. He wrote of it in his journal:

> Reading it was a veritable revelation for me, and I took an enthusiastic interest in it. In order to indicate a few of the ideas that inspired me, I content myself with copying here a few notes and quotations that I gathered while reading:
>
> > It is the pupil who should teach the master, not the reverse. The role of the master is rather to reveal to the pupil what it is that he has learned.
>
> The master will constantly guide his teaching by the very responses to the educable material he has at hand and which will be an object of endless new discoveries.
>
> > One must not reshape the pupil but develop him.
> > . . . we do not think of initiating them into the art of elocution until they have got something to say . . . . All modern educationalists are agreed that the first step in a child's education should be to teach him to know himself, to accustom him to life, and to awaken in him sensations, feelings and emotions, before giving him the power of describing them.
> > . . . technique should be nothing but a means to art . . . . (Rudlin, Copeau 57)

On October 19, 1915, Copeau met with Dalcroze in Geneva, Switzerland. There he observed the Eurhythmics classes with young children and inquired about the workings of the school. The intent of the rhythm education was to train the student artists' powers of expression and apperception, thus rendering easier the externalization of natural emotions (Dalcroze 35). He became convinced that the use of improvisation and a general rhythmic education was a necessary foundation for the professional training of actors (Eldredge, Masks 83).

Both Craig and Dalcroze were helping Copeau to hone his vision and thoughts, to develope a vocabulary and to clearly define for himself the path he would later take at the Vieux-Colombier School. Copeau found that Dalcroze intended through the training to

produce an artist with a well rounded, fuller understanding of his craft--not a specialist. The raising of an awareness of both physical and emotional rhythms and the rhythms of the dramatic work interested Copeau. For him, if the actor could sense the change of rhythm in the work then he should follow with a change of expression (Rudlin, Copeau 58). The notion of rhythm as a movement which involves time and space was to become important to Copeau (Dalcroze 39).

A simple break down or outline of the Dalcroze philosophy is as follows:

1) All rhythm is movement.
2) All movement is material.
3) All movement requires space and time.
4) Space and time are tied anew by the matter which turns them in an eternal rhythm.
5) Movements of small children are purely physical and unconscious.
6) Physical experience forms the conscience.
7) Perfection of physical means produces clarity of intellectual perception.
8) To control movement is to develop rhythmic mentality. (Dalcroze 117)

Copeau had hoped his experience with Dalcroze and the work with Eurhythmics would provide him a basis for achieving his goals regarding the actor. He later abandoned the work with Eurhythmics, however. The fundamentals of the rhythm training would remain, but Copeau dismissed Eurythmics as a method. He found that the Dalcroze system inhibited the outer manifestation of the inner senses in the actor (Rudlin, Copeau 56). Suzanne Bing, a member of Copeau's company and instructor at the school, later wrote:

> With Dalcroze, Music is reduced. Our art is not reducible to numbers and signs. The Music we are trying to express by cultivating ourselves as instruments is the same one we may hear between an architectural form and its environment, and the movement born from them. When Dalcroze speaks of music, he means music reduced to its instrumental function. When he deals with the human body, it is in order to incorporate what he has learned from this music by means of a conventional muscular

> translation of that music's conventional signs. In this way, there is also a reduction of bodily expression: a kind of graphics.

Copeau placed the underlining in the above quotation. Five years prior to Bing's comments, he had been full of enthusiasm for this new approach (Rudlin, Copeau 56).

It was through Dalcroze that Copeau was to be introduced to Adolphe Appia (Eldredge, Masks 83). Like Craig, Appia's work was to become deeply influential in the development of the playing space at the Vieux-Colombier (Rudlin, Copeau 92). Appia's search for a space that resonated a unity between the stage and the auditorium was reflected in the permanent levels, stairs and connecting steps installed during the second renovation of the Vieux-Colombier. This performance space reflected a simplicity of design. It reflected Appia's ideal: that the stage should be an expression of weight and solidity, thus a counterpoint to the living body and its movements--a rhythmic space, nothing more (Appia xvi). Appia writes in his book The Work of Living Art:

> A dramatic dialogue is not altogether expressive unless it is completely harmonious. It attains this harmony only by its spatial relationships, which control the elocution that is intimately linked to the action at hand and is a fact or function of space.

More precisely stated with regard to the actor:

> Stage decoration is regulated by the presence of the living body. This body is the final authority concerning the possibilities of realization; everything that is incongruous or inconsistent in relation to its presence is "impossible" and suppresses the play. (43)

Here Appia was concerned, among other things, with the actor as the fulcrum or connecting element between space and the elements of text and music (Appia 14). This concept would be carried through in Copeau's teaching.

Like Craig, Appia's work was primarily theoretical and dealt mostly with architectural concepts. In a conversation with Appia on Sunday June 25, 1916, Copeau points to the fact that the improvisational work with real actors could very quickly answer all sorts of questions pertaining to the stage, the actors and the public from both an aesthetic and speculative point of view (Rudlin, Copeau 96). For Copeau, the problems of one who worked in the real world were self evident (Rudlin, Copeau 97). He interrupts Appia saying:

> What surprises me and worries me is that you (Appia) and Craig are constructing the theatre of the future without knowing who will be in it. What sort of artists are you going to have on the stage, inhabiting this theatre when you wish to be more worthy of receiving them. It seems to me, Appia, that I am the only one who began by turning my attention to forming a company of actors. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 98)

In November of 1917, the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier was re-established and re-opened in New York. Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant reported her impressions of Copeau's objectives in The New Republic as a preface to his arrival.

> To restore the importance of the drama Copeau's method is *elimination*; elimination of the vain and artificial personality of the actor, suppression of the *décor,* of the very idea of a setting. Action, he says, is the essence of the art of the theatre, and action is movement. The degree to which the rhythm of this movement is imposed on the actor by the spirit of the piece will determine its significance. He must find its echo in his own heart, and while drawing his whole force thence, subordinate himself to the total effect. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 91)

Sergeant then quoted Copeau:

> If I stretch a grey cloth on the stage instead of a *décor*, it is not because I think I have discovered a new definitive decorative formula. It is a radical remedy, a purgation. It is because I want the stage to be *naked* and *neutral*, in order that every delicacy may appear there, in order that every fault may stand out; in order that the dramatic work may have a chance in this *neutral atmosphere* to fashion that individual garment which it knows how to put on. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 82)

Once again we have a declaration of Copeau's desire for a "*tréteau nu*," a bare or naked stage. In his search for a new theatre medium Copeau remained unsure (or perhaps unwilling to decide) whether to start with the stage or the actor. What he sought was their symbiosis as dramatic action (Rudlin, Copeau 82). Looking at his plans for the school, one begins to see that the ideas of "elimination" and of a "naked and neutral" stage begin to apply to his ideas of the proper starting point for the actor (Eldredge, Masks 92).

As with Craig, Dalcroze and Appia, Copeau's principal objective was to create in the student actor an "awareness and experience of the human body" (Cole 219).

> What is needed is to make normally developed bodies capable of adjusting themselves, giving themselves over to any action they may undertake. What is needed is that within them every movement be accompanied by an internal state of awareness peculiar to the movement being done.
>
> Knowledge and mastery of the movements of the face, grow out of imitation of oneself, or of others, or of painted or sculpted images. Without banishing human observations or aesthetic knowledge from the training of the actor, it can be said that it is not in the changes in his own face in the mirror, that the actor will learn to modulate the intensity of his dramatic expression. He will have to have an internal knowledge of the passions he expresses, whether through personal experience or that kind of divination that is peculiar to the artist. And he will have to acquire the a natomical knowledge and muscular mastery of his instrument, which is his own face. The dramatic artist at rest and in action always has an internal awareness of the show he is putting on. At the moment when he expresses it, the passion or the dramatic movement he is interpreting has ceased to be an object of awareness. He directs them, but is not possessed by them. No affection of any kind whatsoever, whether of the body, the mind or the voice. What we are seeking is headlong harmony. (qtd. in Cole 219)

Sears Eldredge, in using the above citation to portray Copeau's philosophy and its similarities to Appia and Dalcroze, in his dissertation on Masks in Actor Training, also points out that Copeau wrote, in other notes, about what must be the "starting point of expression" (Eldredge, Masks 98).

> The state of repose, calm relaxation, *détente*, silence, or simplicity. In reading aloud as well as in his spoken interpretations and in his physical playing or action or business the actor always starts from the artificial *attitude*, a bodily, mental, or vocal *grimace*. His attack is both too deliberate and insufficiently premeditated, or what is even simple and more serious, insufficiently felt.
>
> ---
>
> To start from silence and calm. That is the very first point. An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to answer, to remain motionless, to start a gesture, follow through with it, come back to motionlessness and silence, with all the shadings and half-tones that these actions imply. (qtd. in Cole 220-222)

Eldredge writes that in these statements Copeau could be referring to the naked or neutral stage. "The actor, like the stage, must first exist in a neutral state" (Eldredge, Masks 97). Copeau defines the actor's neutral state in *"Notes sur l'éducation de l'acteur"* as:

> The departure point of expressivity: the state of rest, of calm, of relaxation, of silence, or of simplicity. . . . This affects spoken interpretation as well as playing action. . . . An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to respond, to stay still, to begin in action, to develop it, and to return to silence and immobility. (qtd. in Frost and Yarrow 22)

Copeau's neutral state in the actor is as important to him as the neutrality of the stage. The two are inseparably linked (Eldredge, Masks 97).

## L'École du Vieux Colombier

In the fall of 1920 Copeau opened the school that he had long been planning (Rudlin, Copeau xviii). He wrote in his journal: "There will be no new theatre which does not start from a school where everything must be absorbed from first principles" (Rudlin, Copeau 54). Here he wished to provide a teaching atmosphere in which a common goal was shared, a unity of doctrine, one with a technical and intellectual unity,

one of principal aim and intention (Rudlin, Copeau 39). He wished to form a training program that would provide for his students a true unity of spirit (Rudlin, Copeau 38).

The Vieux-Colombier School was an enormous undertaking. Copeau described it as a technical school that proposed to give its students a professional induction, one which would be as methodical and complete as possible. The central part of the program was theatrical technique in all its visages. There were closed courses offered to the apprentice group, courses for the Vieux-Colombier Company, courses for outside professionals and courses open to the general public (Rudlin, Copeau 42).

The first year prospectus (December 1921- July 1922) offered classes in prosody, poetic technique, theory of the theatre, dramatic instinct, reading, diction, acting, *mise en scéne*, French language, memory, the Vieux-Colombier Repertoire, theatre architecture, music and song, acrobatics, mime, dance, and workshops in stage craft (modeling, costumes, décor, stage architecture) (Rudlin, Copeau 41-42).

The Apprentice Group, young people of both sexes ranging in age from fourteen to twenty, met for a period of study that was to last three years. The objective was to create a "theatre artist," one who is technically fully competent in his craft, through a rigorous professional training (Rudlin, Copeau 43).

Courses and workshops for the Apprentice Group

1. *Theory of the Theatre*. Instructor: Jacques Copeau.
   Religious origins and social significance.
   Birth and development of dramatic feeling, of the tragic form, of the instrument of theatre. The architecture and the materials of the theatre. Performance. The role of the actor and the arrangement of the stage. Written works.

2. *Dramatic training.* Instructors: Jacques Copeau and Suzanne Bing.
   Cultivation of spontaneity and invention in the adolescent. Story telling, games to sharpen the mind, improvisation, impromptu dialogue, mimicry, mask work, etc. Stage presentation of the various abilities acquired by the students in the course of their general instruction.
3. *Schools, Communities and Civilization.* Instructor: Georges Chennevière.
   The nation. Race. The spirit. Overall view of the history of civilization. Great men and collectivities. Philosophical schools. Philosophical and religious communities. Literary and artistic schools. Corporations. Daily life of individuals, groups and cities. How it is expressed in poetry, music and theatre.
4. *Class in the French language.* Instructor: Line Noro.
   Grammar exercises. Vocabulary. Textual analysis.

4a. *Memory exercises.* Rational cultivation of memory. Recitation of texts.

5. *Elocution, diction, declamation.* Instructor: Suzanne Bing.
   Mechanism of elocution. Syntax. Study of genres and styles. Ensembles.
6. *Music.* Under the direction of Daniel Lazarus.
   a. *Musical culture.* Study of ancient and medieval music. Annotated readings of the works of the great classical, romantic and modern composers.
   b. *Singing.* Instructor: Louis Brochard.
   Study of *a cappella* and accompanied chorus of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
   c. *Dance.* Instructor: M. Motne.
   Hygiene and training of the body. Open air exercises.
   Suppleness. Breathing. Endurance. Stability.
7. *Acrobatics, games of strength and skill.*
   Instructors: Paul and François Fratellini.
   Work in the ring of the Medrano Circus.
8. *Craft workshops.*
   a. Design, sketching, modeling and molding. Drawing from life.
   b. Costume
   c. Design. Study of materials.
   The work in the craft shops allows considerable freedom for individual initiative and for the student's own spontaneous aptitudes. Classes will be supplemented from time to time with readings, games, group outings (to museums, monuments, gardens, etc.).

Courses reserved for the Vieux-Colombier Company

1. *Study of poetic styles.* (in preparation for the Poetic Matinees).
   Instructor: Jules Romains.
   Exceptional, upon application and prior examination, some amateurs will be admitted to attend these classes and choral recitations.
2. *Principles of mise en scène.* Instructor: Jacques Copeau.

3. *Singing*. (individual and choral). Instructor: Louis Brochard.
4. *Dance*. Instructor: Mlle. Lamballe.
5. *Perfecting diction and stage practice*. (intended for the company's student actors). Instructor: Suzanne Bing. (Rudlin, Copeau 43-45)

The apprentice group was made up of twelve students. An emphasis was placed during the first year of study on the acquisition of fundamental concepts, the second year on a common vocational and cultural development, and the third on specific abilities and individual excellence. Performance work was undertaken for the first time in the third year (Rudlin, Copeau 46).

The objective of the training was to produce players who were themselves ingredients of the drama. Beyond this it was to create creators (Frank 590). Copeau wanted to make the student aware of all his/her means of expression, "to send the actor to the school of poetry and the poet to the school of stage craft" (Copeau, Remembrances 9).

> Instead of an intensive training submitted to by the actor to fulfill the immediate needs of the play, instead of the crude and cursory lessons which his brief encounters with technical realities inflict upon the author, I want to offer a broad professional background, a free dramatic life shared by men and women of the theatre. (Copeau, Remembrances 9)

Not wishing to train one to be an exceptional individual, Copeau set his sights on training a company that would live in harmony. He set out to "create living habits favorable to the profession." His renovation was not so much a renovation of the theatre, but a renovation of man in the theatre. Copeau refers to a simple motto of Goethe's: "before doing one must be." Man cannot accomplish more than the sum total of what he is (Copeau, Remembrances 9).

As one looks at the prospectus for the school it is important to remember that, as Waldo Frank writes, "The basic principle touching upon the school was that there be no theory save as an essence of experience" (Frank 587). With this in mind, one must picture the students in constant movement, engaged in active exercises and being guided toward an understanding. The approach was far from a studied intellectual and analytical method. Eldredge shares Michel Saint-Denis' comments on this principle, followed by Copeau's own references concerning the teaching.

> In reality it was the master who apprehended new dramatic worlds to be discovered, their discovery became the common task of master and students. There were no doctrines or pre-established methods: experience would furnish these in time, but to begin with all was invention, discovery and consequently liberty with its close corollary discipline.

Copeau adds:

> The method was to follow the natural development of the child's natural instinct for acting, limiting ourselves to encouraging him the means of expressing himself according to his own taste, imagination, needs of entertainment. At first we gave him an obedient body. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 100)

The purpose was to build from the absolute beginning, to be at the start as indistinct as is possible, so that through the body, voice and mind expression, the pupil could achieve his/her drama organically. He sought for exercises to link external action with an internal state of mind (Rudlin, Jacques 46). He believed at the outset the body must express the idea.

The students learned that in order to express simple ideas or emotions the body must first learn to express forms. Students had to articulate what could be referred to as the "Platonic essence" of an ocean, a tree or an animal. They worked first without words

portraying pictures, passions, even complex human situations. All of the elements of an actor's craft that he might lean upon to avoid a true inner feeling were eliminated (props, facial gesture, set, the spoken word) in order that he might be freed to discover "the essence of true poetics" (Copeau, Remembrances 9). Copeau writes in reference to the training of the actor, "Then he progressed from gymnastics to the idea of interior rhythm, to music, to dance, to mimicry with masks, to speaking, to the elementary dramatic forms, to conscious acting, to scenic invention, and to poetry" (Copeau, Remembrances 9). To better visualize what took place in Copeau's classroom, a description of an exercise provided by Waldo Frank in his essay, "Copeau Begins Again," serves as an excellent example.

> The scene is bare, let us say, save for a table. A boy jumps on the table, masked. He is portraying a tree in a sunny field. He is not acting a pantomime: he is improvising a drama; and the first factors to convince are his associates. His arms and body, marvelously swaying, convey the shady scope of bole and branch moving in a breeze. A wayfarer enters (like all others, masked). He espies the shade and goes to it, escaping the heat of the sun. He sleeps. Enter a flock of sheep. (These are boys and girls on all fours, costumeless of course). They see the tree, nibble at its leaves, seek its shade. They come in collision with a man. Man and beasts are frightened off.
>
> A group of pupils come to the front of the stage. They must produce, despite their masked faces, a vision of a strand and of fisher-folk peering out upon a stormy sea. Their bodies create not alone their own emotion but by a subtle fugue the heave of the water. A rowboat comes up. It is created by two actors in a rhythmic unison of propulsion. They leave their boat and mount the stairs to the apron. They have news of the drowning of a comrade: the news transfigures the group. The scene shifts to what is an interior of a fisher cottage. The wife and children await the master. The friends come in, with the tragic tidings.
>
> The stage is a crowded street in Paris. A naughty poster rouses the risibilities of the *bonnes femmes*. A gendarme interferes and tries to tear down the poster: he has to cope with the vigorous protests of the *bons becs de Paris*. (No word is spoken, no face is seen, there is of course no "business" on the bare stage, nor has there been a preamble of explanation.)

> Now, these little acts, primitive as they are in Copeau's work, go already beyond pantomime and diverge radically from the dance. They have, indeed, a rhythm and ideal movement, as have the dance and music. Rhythm is precisely the undifferentiate, common element of art. But these scenes are a beginning to drama. The so positive silence, the so poignant dimensional lack which are the traits of pantomime give way here to an essential, socially dimensioned fullness. Copeau seems to be proving what may one day appear a fundamental law in the revised theatre which we all expect: that the essence of drama is symphonic: that it exists unitarily in a single form of which body, body movement, body group and voice plasticity are ingredients; and of which the world is a sort of constant zenith possessing the ideal, serene quality of a culmination. (589)

Copeau sought an appropriateness of gesture that would not clothe the actor's bareness but celebrate it (Rudlin, Jacques 45). He believed that the natural movement of craftsmen or children at play could be developed in actors by connecting the external action with the internal state of mind. Here Copeau began to focus on the inner feeling of the action instead of a psychological study. Copeau found that the lack of sincerity in movement was often caused by a lack of internal preparation and follow through--"a self consciousness rather than an action consciousness" (Kusler 19). Here he comments on the workers installing the stage at the Vieux-Colombier. He writes that they:

> use an economy of gesture so that everything seems in its rightful place. That comes from their really doing something, that they do what they do and do it well, knowing the reason, absorbing themselves in it. The movements of their actions are sincere, they observe real time and correspond to a useful end towards which they are perfectly appropriate. (Rudlin, Jacques 45)

Copeau is commenting on, among other elements of craft, the importance of time as applied to the actions of an actor. Later he would write that, "continuity and slow pace are conditions of powerful and sincere playing" (Rudlin, Jacques 46). Kusler writes:

> He defined the "sincere" playing he sought to cultivate as, not the emotion itself in its most primitive form, but a feeling of calm, of authority, which allows the artist to be possessed by what he expresses, and at the same time to direct its expression. (19)

For the first time in the history of a French acting school, one sees the emphasis placed on physical training. Copeau's decision to move in this direction reflects his understanding that the body is the actor's primary tool.

A great influence in Copeau's development of physical training techniques and a member of the faculty at the Vieux-Colombier was Georges Hébert, author of *"L'Education Physique du l'entrainement complet par la méthode naturelle"* (The Complete Physical Education Training Method According to a Natural Approach) (Felner 40). Hérbert had developed a system of physical training which included, along with his own exercises meant to re-educate the body, work in acrobatics and circus skills. His aim was to provide for a consistent and total corporal development, to broaden the actor's range of movement, improve coordination and flexibility, in short to provide a cornerstone for later work (Felner 40).

Mask work, improvisation, stylized movement and the development of kinesthetic awareness were the focus of the more advanced courses. For Copeau, the work on kinesthetics made the student more conscious of the feelings accompanying an action. He felt that every physical movement has a corresponding emotional response and that every emotional response has a corresponding physical manifestation (Cole, 221). Bing, one of Copeau's most loyal company members and instructors, defined the kinesthetic sense as including an awareness and understanding of "space" and "movement" combining ideas of "force and duration, place, orientation, balance, lightness, heaviness, gentleness, elasticity, resistance, direction, obedience and independence." Her notes indicate an importance of the development of a "musical sense" as well (Kusler 21).

The development of an inner sense of rhythm was tremendously important to the training. Exercises making the actor aware of the rhythm of breathing and the tempo of movement were developed based on the work related to Dalcroze. Children's songs were sung and mimed with changes in rhythmic patterns and dynamics. Rhythm was used as the connecting element between the actors as a way of uniting choral movement. Rhythm awareness played an important role in the work with masks as well as the work Suzanne Bing did with animal games and character development based thereupon. The student worked through the observation and recreation of animal movement and the subsequent transfer of this work to the creation of characters. Bing's enactment of La Fontaine's fables exemplifies how the physical and rhythm work were combined (Kusler 19).

Physically, the actors worked toward a subtle emotional articulation through improvisational techniques that had grown originally out of the work with the earlier company before the war. Such an approach had been discussed through correspondence between Copeau, Dullin (a former student and company member) and Jouvet. The actors were encouraged to take a less analytical approach (Kusler 11). Students were encouraged to develop a natural "child like" instinct for play (Felner 42). Mira Felner in Apostles of Silence cites that both Jacques Copeau and Suzanne Bing were developing exercises to train this instinct. Inspired by her work at the Montessori School in New York, Bing developed a series of exercises that resemble what we refer to as theatre games today, and which were intended to break down blocks and release spontaneous movement. Copeau connected this work through another exercise:

> He threw us a word: "Paris," "storm," "The Goal," etc., etc., and we had to react immediately without a moment of reflection with one of several gestures, by a pose, by a sequence of movements, etc. (42)

Improvisation was to become a major theme throughout Copeau's work both as a director and teacher. He recognized it as an important tool early on in rehearsals and set out to make it a major element in the teaching of students as well. Copeau's "much vaunted theatre of the future must follow the line of improvisation" (Eldredge, Masks 77). In his rehearsals Copeau spent long periods of time allowing the actors to improvise around the text. From these improvisations he later devised the *mise en scéne.* He was among the first to utilize this technique as well as the use of improvisation to develop character for a written text (Frost and Yarrow 21). Copeau believed:

> The habit of improvisation will give back to the actor the suppleness, the elasticity, the true spontaneous life of the word and the gesture, the true feeling of the movement, the true contact with the public, the inspiration, the fire and daring of the jester. And what an education for the poet; what a source of inspiration. (Rudlin, Copeau 153)

Although Copeau was among the first to use improvisation as a rehearsal and training technique we have seen that Stanislavski also employed it at the Moscow Art Theatre studio. Copeau, however, was the first to base a system of exploratory work upon it (Frost and Yarrow 20). His search for a more organic approach to text, a liberation of the physical and vocal instrument, an ability to reach the "inner truth" of the character on stage and the need to free the creativity of the actor, led him to the use of improvisation.

He discovered that the Italian style of comedy, commedia dell'Arte, fulfilled his need for a style of improvisation and high level of creative energy. He found that the commedia mirrored his ideas concerning the value of improvisation as a basis for acting,

the creation of play, and the development of text (Eldredge, Masks 76). In taking on the use of the commedia dell'Arte, Copeau hoped to find a new improvised comedy using contemporary types and subjects. He envisaged a company creating a twentieth century version of the old comedy with new characters (new masks) (Frost and yarrow 25). Copeau wrote of three of the new character types: "the intellectual, the bureaucrat, the adolescent" (Rudlin, Copeau 155).

## Masks and Copeau

Perhaps it was through his work with the commedia, the use of improvisational rehearsal techniques, his love of Moliere and his meeting with Gordon Craig that Copeau arrived at the most innovative segment of his training: the work with masks (Eldredge, Masks 122). Jean Dorcy, a pupil at the Vieux-Colombier, writes of how this might have come about.

> By a stroke of intuitive genius, Copeau, who sensed that we were still not far removed from the games of childhood encouraged our inclination to make believe, and allowed us to invent and to develop our own little dramas. The mask was born in this laboratory. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 101)

Copeau believed that in order to understand the essence of theatre he would have to go back to the origins of western drama. He recognized that all of the ancient theatre styles used masks. He turned to the masked choral work of the Greek tragedy which he referred to as "the mother cell of all dramatic poetry" (Felner 42). The mask for Copeau became the key to the actors' approach to the role. The students worked first with immobility, allowing the mask simply to be. By first taking the time to put on the mask, collect their thoughts and free themselves, they prepared themselves for the influence of

the mask. They moved to simple poses and daily movements such as sitting, standing and walking--simple tasks and gestures to discover what the mask imposed. They made use of the qualities of slowness, largeness and simplicity. Afterwards, they returned to stillness. An effort was made to avoid affectation. The students reported a new sense of confidence and authority, "a power and unknown security," a sense of balance, an awareness of each gesture and of oneself (Rudlin, Jacques 48). Copeau was the first to see the psychological force of the mask.

> The virtue of the mask is even more convincing. It symbolizes perfectly the position of the interpreter in relation to the character, and demonstrates how the two are fused one to the other. The actor who plays under the mask receives from this object of cardboard the reality of the character. He is commanded by it and obeys it irresistibly. Barely has he shoed the mask, when he feels pouring out of himself a being of which he is unaware, that he did not even suspect existed. It is not only his face which is altered, but his being, the character of his reflexes where feelings are being formed which he would have been incapable of imagining with his face uncovered even the accent of his voice will be dictated by the mask by a persona that is to say by a personage without life as long as it is unweeded to the actor, which came from without, yet seizes him and substitutes for the self. (Rudlin, Jacques 43)

The mask training accomplished many of Copeau's aims in the formation of the actor. Jean Dorcy speaks of the actors' entrance into a new way of being, a coming to life in a new dramatic way.

> To re-establish dramatic harmony, it will be necessary to act according to the law of the mask; to create and comply with the rhythm imposed by the theme, to emphasize contrasts, and to eliminate superfluous movements and amplify or exaggerate the remaining motions. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 101)

It was in the early workshops that Copeau discovered the neutral mask. In the beginning, the students made their own masks. They began by covering their faces with handkerchiefs, then moved to constructing crude masks out of cardboard, paper-mâché,

shellac and flour, and linen and glue. With the help of sculptor Albert Marque, the students came to the formation of a neutral mask, one that held only the expression of the body and without an expressive grimace (Eldredge, Masks 101). The discovery of the neutral mask was pivotal for Copeau. Its use helped him to find a fulcrum for the actor, a point of departure. Through exercises, the actor was able to establish a universal state, a return to silence and calm.

> The actor always starts from an artificial attitude, a bodily, mental, or vocal grimace. His attack is both too deliberate and insufficiently premeditated, or, what is even simpler and serious, insufficiently felt to start from silence and calm. That is the very first point. An actor must know how to be silent, to listen, to answer, to remain motionless, to start a gesture, follow through with it, come back to motionlessness and silence, with all the shadings and half-tones that theses actions imply. (Kusler 19)

The neutral mask seemed to dictate the style Copeau had visualized. It lent a new dimension to previous exercises, imposing a great power and amplitude on each movement (Kusler 31).

Later, Copeau moved to more complex masks to facilitate character study. More advanced improvisational exercises using masks, movement and sound were implemented as part of the work on the "new comedy." Using "type" characters, students worked on the creation of a silhouette or characteristic posture. Work in basic rhythms of walking and gesture began the exploration. Through a beginning of immobility, the students gradually found particular movements, traits and mannerisms of the characters they were working on. They then improvised sounds and simple texts or "characteristic verbal phrases" (Lecoq, Mime 31). As time passed, the students began to work more and more on their own, developing material and exploring the classroom exercises.

## The Actor as Creator

The main performance projects were designed to pull together the major principles the students were learning in the classroom. The projects incorporated the basic concepts of the school's teaching: stylized movement, masks, rhythmic composition, music, dance, improvisation, type characters, the personification of the elements of nature, elements of French tradition and myth, pantomime, and animal characters. Kusler describes two of the performance projects:

> "Sleeping Beauty" . . . was an improvisation in dynamics of movement and sound as the palace guards, cooks, ladies, and gentlemen fell asleep. The "tree" was the leader in the regulating rhythms and intensity of the action: women began with just the sounds of their knitting needles; the sounds of games and songs came in; gradually voices grew louder and movement more active until a climax was reached and reversed itself, with everyone at last falling asleep.
>
> *Chant du jeudi* (Thursday's Song) was a more advanced project utilizing sets, lighting, costume, improvisation and acting from a written text. The verse drama incorporated animal characters as well as children, which made it somewhat easier to understand than most plays. (37)

Over the course of the first three years of the school, the prospectus of courses was redesigned. Each year more and more emphasis was placed on the apprentice group. Eventually, all other teaching aspects of the school would be discontinued aside from the apprentice classes due to personal difficulties on the part of Copeau, commitment on the part of the Vieux-Colombier, the actors attending classes and last, but certainly not least, funding problems. The following is an outline of the stage instruction classes for the apprentice program in the year 1923-24:

> 1) The use of masks to increase "consciousness of the body's possibilities"; 2) "Putting oneself in a state of readiness"; 3) Continuity, direction of movement: the part of the body most affected leads the movement; 4) Developing a sense of timing and the shape of a scene through improvisations with two to four people, clearly

> establishing a beginning, climax, and conclusion; 5) A study in the relationship of parts of an action or improvisation "idea of dramatic construction"; 6) Mime and choral work stressing sensitivity to other actors' space, and adherence to basic structure through games, charade, and stories as well as improvisation. (Kusler 43)

From the start of his work, Copeau, in the forming of a new actor for his "renovated" theatre, hoped to develop an artist who sought to contribute wholly to the ensemble, to the craft, and to the work at hand, rather than seek self opportunism. He began by trying to build a community among those with whom he worked. In 1914 with the formation of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier he began by moving the company out of Paris to the countryside so that their life and their work were one and the same. His plans for the school followed the same line concerning the immersion of life in art. The Greek chorus, the commedia troupe, the circus family, even the brotherhood of a monastic order, were for him models of how ensemble playing could come from sharing a communal way of life (Rudlin, Copeau 166).

At the school, Copeau put his students to the task of learning to work as an ensemble. Work and study of the Greek chorus, the commedia dell'Arte, the rigorous physical work, improvisation and the work with masks were all a means to this end. Copeau describes his vision of a group so trained as:

> a smaller than usual chorus, but so musical, so rigorously trained and obedient to the flute that leads it, that it will express by its dance, song and declamation all the reactions appropriate to portraying great feelings and great attitudes of the soul of the people: waiting, worry, doubt, horror, tumult, or jubilation. (Kusler 4)

In his quest for the discovery of a vibrant, dynamic theatre which reflected the highest level of craft attainable, Copeau remained true to his belief that to make

something new did not mean to reinvent but to rediscover what was there all along. He describes this in a lecture given in 1935:

> In practicing theatre, in studying its origins and its developments, I'm convinced that it does not progress in the same way that practical or scientific knowledge does, leaving behind acquired truths in order to rise above them toward new truths which will replace the old, all the while waiting for those newly found truths to be themselves corrected or replaced. There is in art a renewal of internal forces which is accomplished through a periodic return to the original source, to the maternal bosom. (Kusler 4)

As one looks at the work of Copeau both as a director and teacher, one finds a "return to the original source" reflected in all aspects of his activity. His starting point for both the actor and the stage, one of neutrality, the *tréteau nu*, the "naked" actor, was a stripping away of all that was superfluous, a return to the beginning, to the bare essentials. For the actor, this means a depersonalization, a stripping away of the individual personality traits so that he/she might reclothe in the life of the character. Sears Eldredge writes of this:

> The renovation needed for both the stage and the actor was a rebuilding from within. For the actor it was an attempt to first establish in himself a more universal state of mind, where all men are alike, before the distinguishing, individualizing characteristics appear. The actors were to return to silence. Once there they could start the evolutionary process of discovering their identification with the elements of nature, with the animal world, and finally with man. (Masks 123)

In the process of training, the return to the beginning was the return to the mask and the physical training that accompanied this action. This return was the laying of a foundation for the new theatre that Copeau sought. The experiences shared by Copeau, his students, and company members taught them all a great deal. This work would have resounding influence on following generations.

## Copeau's Influence

Copeau's former students and colleagues went on to influence theatre around the world. He had worked with nearly all of the great French theatre artists of his time and had met and corresponded with others throughout Europe including Gordon Craig, Adolpe Appia, Emile Jacques Dalcroze and Constantine Stanislavski. Those from France include Louis Jouvet, an original company member and collaborator; Suzanne Bing, an original company member and one of Copeau's closest colleagues; Charles Dullin; Etienne Decroux, a student of the school; Jean Dasté; and Antonin Artaud, a student for a brief period of time. Pupils of some of these individuals include, Jean Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceaux. Jouvet later became a professor at the Paris Conservatoire and resident director of the Commédie Française. Michel Saint-Denis, Copeau's nephew, founded five major theatre training programs in Europe, Canada and the United States: the London Theatre School (London, England 1935-1939), the Old Vic Theatre School (London, England 1946-1952), the École Supérieure D'Art Dramatique (Strasbourg, France 1954- ), the Drama Division of The Juilliard School (New York City 1956- ), and The National Theatre School of Canada (Montreal 1960- ) (Eldredge, Masks 129). Jerzy Grotowski referred to Saint Denis as "my spiritual father" (Frost and Yarrow 23). Other students of Saint-Denis have gone on to develop programs and teach at major universities in the United States. These schools include: the School of Drama at Yale University, Harvard University, and Depaul University (formerly The Goodman School of Drama) (Eldredge, Masks 128). Copeau's influence has been profound and persists to the present day. His initiatives continue to permeate drama training on all levels (Frost

and Yarrow 30). The school most closely linked to, and inspired by, the teachings of Jacques Copeau is École Jacques Lecoq in Paris, France.

Looking at the activities which Jacques Lecoq promotes in his school, one can see their origin in the work and vision of Jacques Copeau. One also sees that Lecoq has taken this work in a different direction than Copeau may have intended and that because of the longevity of École Lecoq and the depth to which Mr. Lecoq has gone, the work has progressed much farther than Copeau was able to take it in his lifetime. Unlike the the schools established by Saint-Denis, The Lecoq school has maintained a single pedagogical vision since its establishment and has perhaps remained truest to the vision and intentions of Copeau. Lecoq has preserved and developed many of the concepts that Copeau initiated and explored in the few short years of his school.

# CHAPTER III

# PEDAGOGY AND ÉCOLE JACQUES LECOQ

## A History of Lecoq and the School

Jacques Lecoq began his professional career in physical education and rehabilitation of the disabled. Following World War II, in 1945, he joined Jean Dasté's Compagnie de Comédiens in Grenoble. In 1947 he started work at the Education par le Jeu Dramatique, a Paris school for actors founded by Jean Louis Barrault and Jean Dasté. One year later he was invited to teach movement at the University of Padua Theatre School in Milan, Italy, where he was to stay for the next eight years. While in Milan he founded the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. It was there he developed an expertise in mime, dramatic choreography, and gained experience in a broad range of styles. During this time he was involved in over sixty productions and the development of a pantomime television series. In Syracuse, while working on a production of a Greek tragedy, he saw for the first time the power of the chorus (Lecoq, School Bro.). The year 1956 saw Lecoq's return to Paris and the opening of École Lecoq. Since that time Lecoq has collaborated with the Théâtre National Populaire, the Comédie Française, the Schiller Theater and the Royal Shakespeare Company. In 1969, adding to his teaching at École Lecoq, he began work as a professor at the University of Paris VI, directing a laboratory devoted to the study of movement and dramatic architecture (Frost and Yarrow 62). This

work has continued to the present in the form of the movement laboratory L.E.M., a separate part of the school.

École Jacques Lecoq began renting space at 83 rue du Bac. It remained there for twelve years. Following this period were five years spent at rue de la Quintine including a year at the Théâtre de la Ville. Then there were two years at the Centre Américain before moving into the space that it occupies today. Currently the school is located at 57 rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. The space is what was formerly the Christman gymnasium built in 1876 for the gymnastics of Amoros, a pioneer of physical education in France, and later the Central Sporting Club, the home of many great French boxers in the thirties. One enters the school through a small door on the street. The door leads into an arched tunnel, through a tiny ancient stone courtyard, under another archway, to an entrance still marked with the marquee, Le Central. The class spaces consist, first, of *la grande salle*, which was the gymnasium. It is a large open space with a suspended wooden floor, a translucent ceiling and a walkway around the top at the level of the second story. The wooden toe boards between the balcony railings are worn from the feet of the spectators who used to come to watch boxing. The other space used for the regular training program is *la petite salle* which is separated from the gym by a small foyer. Just next door separated by an ally is the studio where the *Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement*, the course taught in conjunction with the architect from the Beaux Arts, is located. The entire school is situated next to the pharmacy where the great french actor and director, Louis Jouvet, worked and is not far from the apartment where Jacques Copeau was born: number 76 of the same street.

Lecoq's contact with Barrault and his work with Dasté, a former company member and instructor of acrobatics at The Vieux-Colombier in Limon, directly links him to the work of Copeau. Many of the exercises conceived at the Vieux-Colombier remain as a cornerstone of the teaching. They have been developed and honed through the constant work and persistence of the school. Much has been added and taken away from the teachings of Copeau by Jacques Lecoq. Like Copeau, Lecoq's pedagogy leads the student towards a new theatre and a particular way of perceiving the art and the craft of the actor. His pedagogy works on many levels and one of its strengths is the opportunity to immerse oneself in learning without the pressures and demands of production. Lecoq has realized Copeau's dream concerning a school and he does it without requiring the student to perform finished works of theatre. The training of the actor is accomplished through the creation of theatre rather than the interpretation of created works. The artistic expression of the instructors is the pedagogy of the school, which is ever changing and evolving with each new group of students that enters the program. The school creates a culture and a language of understanding that provides a basis for a new vision of theatre and actor training. Although its origins are clear, the constant research of École Lecoq stands on its own in its contributions to the theatre community.

## Pedagogy and the Work of the School

The program draws its strength from its pedagogical approach. Eugenio Barba, in his book The Secret Art of the Performer, discusses the importance of this choice:

> The practices and poetics of the great masters led to a different kind of theatre. The essential element: pedagogy, the search for the formation of a new human being in a different and renewed theatre and society, the search for a way of work which may keep an original quality and whose values are not measured by the success of performances but rather by the cultural tensions which the theatre provokes and defines. (26)

Jacques Dalcroze in his book Rhythm, Music, and Education, a work that inspired Copeau, speaks to the dynamic created by a pedagogy when he writes, "Pedagogy as a creative act is a realization of the need to create a theatrical culture, a dimension of the theatre which performances only partially satisfy and which imagination translates in terms of vital tension" (28). Later, in the same work, Appia speaks to the importance of the art of teaching in respect to the greater artistic community when he writes, "The theatre pedagogy of the founding fathers is artistic creation through the teaching and learning of theatre" (Dalcroze 29).

A pedagogical approach to teaching and learning is not something that is widely used or understood as a method of teaching and learning in this country. Pedagogy is defined by the French Larousse Dictionary as: "1. Theory, the science of education. 2. The quality of a good pedagogue; possessing a pedagogical sense. 3. A method of teaching," and Pedagogue as: "1. Teacher, educator. 2. A person who has the intuitive sense, the gift of a teacher." The Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines pedagogy as "1. The art, practice or profession of teaching. 2. Specially systematized learning or

instruction. Concentrated principles and methods of teaching." The definition in both Webster's and The Random House Dictionary of a pedagogue, however, differ from that of the French definition. Both English definitions seem to emphasize what could be considered by some to be the negative connotations of the term, defining a pedagogue as one who is pedantic (one who overemphasizes rules and details), dogmatic and formal. These definitions fall far short of providing the depth of understanding necessary to see the profound importance and effects of a pedagogical approach. They do, however, provide a place from which to begin the discussion of the pedagogy particular to École Jacques Lecoq.

Culturally, Americans sometimes see systems of learning and living which are formal, dogmatic and which emphasize rules and the extreme attention to detail as being oppressive and limiting to the freedom of expression. Yet conservatory type training programs which attempt to achieve the highest understanding of the student in a particular field are based on these qualities. École Lecoq is such a program. The strengths of the program lie in the fact that the system laid out and the manner in which the teaching occurs is strongly structured, extremely well defined and clearly communicated by the instructors. There is a system of principles and an established belief as to "what works." This allows the definition of detail. The expectation is that the work will seek to live in the details. The fact that the relationship between the student and instructor is a formal one allows for personalities to be put aside and for the critique to be attached more directly to the work as opposed to the person. The clarity of vision and the stability of structure provide an environment of learning that can speak to each

individual's way of perceiving and learning. The ultimate success of such a system is based on the principle that everything is in constant movement, implying that it is alive, constantly growing and changing.

Lecoq's pedagogical approach is based on an understanding of universal rhythms, the movement of the human body and the relationship of these elements to the performance space. He has taken truths and observations of the natural world and applied them to an understanding of, and a way of teaching, theatre. One of Lecoq's students referred to the pedagogical philosophy in the following manner:

> If you sit in a really quiet forest you discover there are subtle little movements all around you. They produce a feeling in you. . . . If you can capture that movement and recreate it somehow then you can create that feeling in someone else. It is an organic and all encompassing approach to movement. And movement is what we do. From the very first breath we take. (Interview #9, App. 21 217)

The pedagogical approach attempts to instill in the student an understanding of "these little movements," and the rhythms that are present in the world around us, in the world that is within, in music, in text, in emotional response, color, texture and in space. The ultimate goal, once an individual has developed a sensitivity and awareness, is to apply this new understanding to the creation of theatre. A student who had completed the third year of the school put it this way:

> It's all based on resonating with universal rhythms. That's what the elements and mask work is all about. It's about dropping out of your personal self. Coming to a larger place where by virtue of the fact the body is a microcosm of the macrocosm, that we all have the ability to identify rhythmically with everything in nature. Everything that is the macrocosm. The work, the approach is really about getting people to see that the body has a rhythm. . . . That if you put stock in the body it can take you there. It is not psychological or emotional at all. It is without regard to psychology or emotion. It is putting yourself in the hands of the human organism which has the ability to really resonate with all that is out there. . . . that is what is so

> brilliant about the pedagogy because he is trying to teach you to respond from your physical self in order to find the truth in movement. That equals justice and that justice is what everybody responds to. (Interview #8, App. 20 207-8)

One of the performers interviewed for this project referred to the "Unified Theory of Relativity" (Grand Unified Theory) when asked about the pedagogical approach of the school (Interview #9, App. 21 217). From a philosophical point of view this reference becomes important as we begin to look at the specifics of the training. To understand more clearly this reference to the grand unified theory let us look first at The Special Theory of Relativity. The Special Theory of Relativity deals with motion situations where no acceleration is involved and attempts to provide a description of motion observation from different points of reference (e.g., sitting at a desk as opposed to sitting in a car). In the actor training through movement analysis, Lecoq is providing a frame of reference based on an understanding of the craft of theatre as viewed from every possible perspective. Since theatre is an art and a living "enhanced reflection" of life, then the student must have a profound understanding of the art, and must understand fundamental aspects of life and what it is to be human. In "The Unified Theory" there is an attempt to bring together in one grand scheme all of the forces which are known to exist. Once again, from a philosophical point of view with regard to Lecoq's pedagogical approach, this manner of thinking helps to clarify a point of departure when trying to define where the pedagogy ultimately leads. The goal is to reach an understanding of that moment when "all of the forces" for the actor (physical movement, rhythm, emotion, intellect and space) come together to create a true animated dynamic tension. The pedagogy breaks

these "forces" down, allowing the actor to understand them on a fundamental level so that he may use them as tools.

The school is one of discovery and of creation. Lecoq trains the actor to be a creator of theatre not an interpreter of theatre. The pedagogy is the "journey" that Lecoq takes the students through over a period of two years. There are multiple levels to the various exercises and each section of the training. Each segment or style follows the same basic pattern in terms of the levels and the approach to understanding. In general the first year includes the following:

> Body education, analysis of movement, acrobatics, juggling, combat, re-creation of daily life, the neutral mask, as well as expressive, larval, grotesque, utilitarian masks. The dynamic study of the elements, materials, colors, plants, animals, characters and passions. Every week work themes *(auto-cours*) are given to the pupils as to encourage collective creation. "Dramatic enquiry" is carried out in different surroundings. (Lecoq, School Bro.)

Generally the second year includes:

> Body education, dramatic acrobatics, applied techniques, language of gestures and white pantomime, buffoons, Commedia dell'Arte, tactics and levels of acting, tragedy and space of the chorus, search for the hero, writing, approach to text and music, discovery of ones own clown. (Lecoq, School Bro.)

The first year is the foundation year. It is the period of time used for laying the foundation on which the later work will be based. The second year is one of styles and learning to apply what has been learned in the first year. The difference between the first and the second year could also be described as the first being the de-constructive year and the second as a year of building back. Lecoq writes:

> The first year is one of destroying preconceptions; of releasing in the student a physical, psychological and emotional openness, and of enabling him to recognize life

> as it is through the observation of the everyday. We don't speak of the theatre, but of what lives.
>
> The students don't arrive at the school inexperienced. Many have already had theatrical experience--have preconceived ideas and set opinions. In the beginning it is necessary to disabuse ourselves of what we have learned in order to reach a state of not knowing, and therefore to open ourselves to the rediscovery of the elementary. We are unable to see what is beside us and alive; plant, tree, water, horse, and all those things that don't change fashion every ten years. (Mime 118)

The classes run five days a week and meet either in the morning or the afternoon. There are, at any given moment, three first year groups and one second year group. The groups are split to comprise a number of approximately thirty students to a group at the beginning of the first year. After the trial term at the beginning of the first year (three weeks), some students leave or are asked to leave and the groups that remain have approximately twenty-five to twenty-eight students each. A typical class day in the first year will include one hour of body work, either the *Preparation corporelle* (body education) or *Analyse du mouvement* (movement analysis), one hour of technique such as Acrobatics, one-and-a-half hours of improvisation and one-and-a-half hours of *Auto-cours* (creative ensemble work). Students taking the *Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement* (The Movement Laboratory) have additional classes twice a week in the evenings for an hour-and-a-half to two hours. The Movement Lab is an autonomous part of the school specially dedicated to the dynamic research of space and rhythm through the fine arts. The course is team taught by Jacques Lecoq and Krikor Belekian, an architect from l'École Supérieure des Beaux Arts.

## Physical Training Classes at École Lecoq

In the body education classes, students work on breathing exercises, centering, co-ordination, balance, flexibility and technique related to the "twenty movements." The physical work is generally connected to the style being studied at the time or is connected to the "twenty movements" which are being taught primarily in the movement analysis classes. The work in these classes makes use of mime (not pantomime) as a basis for understanding. Mime is not taught as an art in and of itself, but rather used as a tool, a manner of approaching the development of the actor's body, voice and mind (Rolphe, *Mime of* 34). Lecoq writes:

> In the history of the theatre, mime as a separate art has no permanence. It is an *art de passage*, a transition, a channel for nourishing drama and dance. It appears at certain times, at the end of one theatre and the beginning of another. It retains action and conserves gesture in that interim in which theatre, having lost the force of words, renews its forms. (qtd. in Rolphe, Mime of 36)

Concerning the important use of this approach as a foundation for understanding movement, Bari Rolphe writes:

> Mime is connotative, as pantomime is denotative. The mime gesture gathers around itself a wealth of implications, attributed to it by the viewer. It makes one think of George Steiner's comment on Shakespeare's language, that he "seems to hear around the core of every word the totality of its overtones and undertones, of its connotations and echoes--the individual word was a nucleus surrounded by a field of complex energies." The connotative gesture is a still point within the widening circles of meaning. (Mime of 38)

The movement analysis classes include the "twenty movements" (which are taught in the first year), exercises and techniques related to the mask classes, as well as exercises such as the *Gamme* (the scaled build) and the Seven States of Dramatic Tension. Both of the latter are movement exercises that break down a concept and provide a fundamental

understanding of dramatic structure and physical engagement through movement. The *Gamme* is an exercise that teaches rhythm and dramatic build. It is a series of steps set to a drum beat that breaks down a build step-by-step. The exercise begins by the student performing a simple action (raking leaves, digging a hole, sawing a board, etc.). As the student mimes the action, a drum beat sounds indicating the first level of awareness. A second beat sounds a few minutes later indicating the second level and so on up to six. The levels are as follows:

1) The actor notices but does not react, the work continues.

2) There is a small reaction, the work continues.

3) The actor begins to work slower, he is interested, the work continues.

4) The actor stops working, he knows where the sound is coming from, he looks, he begins to work faster.

5) The actor stops, sees, finds where the sound is coming from, sees it, the work does not continue.

6) The actor dives to the floor for cover.

An exercise such as this is introduced and given just as it is presented here, with no explanation as to why or what the student should get from it. The lesson will not come until later during the work in improvisation or *auto-cours* when an individual or a group in an exercise goes from level one to level six without going through three, four and five and is heavily criticized for it. Another de-constructive exercise given to lay a foundation for future work is the Seven States of Dramatic Tension which is given at or around the beginning of the neutral mask work.

Lecoq introduces the exercise by first teaching the seven states.

I - Total relaxation

II - American (loose)

III - Economical

IV - Alert

V- Action

VI - Passionate

VII - Frozen/fixed

The students first try the states individually while scattered around the *Grand Salle* (the main teaching space at the school), then come together as a group to move from one end of the room to the other while making the transitions from one state to the next. The following is a passage taken from the notes of a student who engaged in the exercise in his first year, 1986:

> We went through all seven states while moving across the room, concentrating on the passage, the natural transition from one state to the next. We were instructed to think with the body first, then the head. Then we descended down the states. We then incorporated the states into a theme narrative of our own creation. Mine was lost in the desert searching for water.
>
> Lecoq suggests that every writer has a corresponding body state for his or her plays. Neutral mask encompasses states III, IV, and V.
>
> I. Total Relaxation. Almost sub-theatrical (I think of ritual, primal, experimental theatre).
> II. American (loose). Could be method acting--film. Mamet?
> III. Economical. Begins neutral mask. Lecoq suggests Ionesco.
> IV. Alert. Suspended, listening for sounds. Silence like a cat. Suggests tragedy. Called out in the space (up to the balcony) and waiting for a response.

> V. Action. A fine line above alert, but now takes the space--takes the opportunity. Alert reacts, action acts. No time for thinking. Comedy and perhaps clown.
> VI. Passionate. Intense, big and powerful. The tendency is for it to become anger and out of control. When it is grounded and channeled into immobility the commedia energy and presence appears. As does Melodrama.
> VII. Frozen/fixed. Highest point of tension, fatiguing you. Try to talk and all you get are strained sounds . . . . Noh or Kyogen. (Richardson, personal notes)

Both of these exercises are examples that begin to lend an understanding to the ordered way in which Lecoq has broken down his understandings and then imparts them to his students. Concepts and theories instantly become living reality and take on a form in which the student can experience them on a very deep level. Through his instruction, "think with your body," Lecoq is offering the student a way of analyzing and reproducing the dynamics of action (Frost and Yarrow 63).

## The Twenty Movements

The "twenty movements" mentioned earlier are a series of movements learned by the first year students over the period of the entire year that culminate in a presentation at the end of the first year. The movements are taught to provide the student with an awareness of the importance of the economy of movement and to provide a complete technical understanding of the human body; the energies it exerts such as pushing and pulling, the release of these energies into the space, the body's presence in space, what it means to be open or closed, balance, isolation of the various parts, center, and an understanding of how to break down movement in order to understand it physically and rhythmically. Some examples of the "twenty movements" include: both a backward and

a forward undulation through the body, a hand stand, a forward role, a cartwheel, the throwing of an imaginary discus, ice skating in place, swimming in place, the climbing of an imaginary wall and jumping to the other side, the rowing of a boat, the punting of a small boat, the imaginary lifting of weights, and the turning of an imaginary wooden pole in front of the body. Others deal with centering, turning, balance and positions of being physically open and physically closed. All of the work on the movements concentrates heavily on the use of breath and the organic rhythms of the body in space.

Each movement is taught by breaking it down to its essential components with each component having a beginning, middle and end. Examples would be mixing a cocktail in 132 steps or turning a baton in front of the body. The movement is broken down into elements such as, look, approach, reach, grasp, turn, look, release, reach, etc. (Interview #3, App. 15 172). Considerable attention is also placed on breath while doing the exercise. The actor is constantly finding where the inhale and exhale falls and what happens when he tries to work against what is happening naturally. Through this work the actor learns to use only what is essential to making a movement clear. An actor can then "articulate" clearly what he is saying and be sure that he is saying exactly what he intended and only that.

Special attention is placed on the body in space and gesture because for Lecoq this is the point of departure. A developed technical understanding of the body in space allows the actor to free himself and to make creative decisions each time he or she approaches something for the first time. Technical knowledge and ability enable the actor to be a creator of art rather than an interpreter of aesthetic ideals. The technical

work for the student at the school is not intended to develop a codified vocabulary of movement to be used in a variety of situations but rather to build an understanding of where to start in each new situation. Codification instantly turns the actor into an interpreter instead of a creator and, ultimately, in order for an interpreter to be successful he must also be a virtuoso. In protest concerning the virtuoso Lecoq goes as far as to say: "If a mime is to be interesting, he should mime badly." Codification limits creativity and results in the cliché (Felner 156).

The following is an example of codification and the cliché taken from a rehearsal situation: An actor is asked to "act happy" and given a gesture which is intended to communicate to the audience the quality, "I'm happy" (e.g., the director says, "do it like this!"). The result is a cliché gesture and emotion that communicates the idea of this state of being. In the case of the very young or those entering the theatre for the first time, the cliché may briefly hold an audience's attention. For the more experienced theatre goer or professional, the moment falls flat, is not dynamic, and does not engage the space or the audience. If in "playing" the scene, the actor "discovers" happiness, the cliché disappears. The organic discovery of the gesture and the state that follows addresses a universal understanding in both the actor and the audience. In that moment, a dynamic exchange takes place between the actor, the space, and the audience.

## Physical Gesture

The technical work of breaking down gesture and movement occurs so that the actor can understand what has taken place in a rehearsal or an improvisation and then

recreate it over and over again in performance. Through the movement work, the actor is slowly brought to an understanding of when a movement resonates in space: when a movement is not overextended, when it is extended or when it is just right (Interview #1, App. 13 152). In response to the question, "Can you elaborate on the concept of the body in space?" a former student of the school replied:

> Lecoq spends a lot of time with all of the different movements. The "punt" is a perfect example. Where it is all about extension and weight change. What your body is doing in space rather than mime. To me the illusion part of what he was doing was almost irrelevant. . . . Everything was about something else. If you were turning a little baton around in space three-hundred-and-sixty degrees, it wasn't really about manipulating a baton, we could care less. It was about how you are moving your hand in space to show that you are holding something. And it is just as applicable to me if you have an imaginary object as if you have a real object. (Interview #1, App. 13 152)

The work is to understand the movement on an organic level. The historical, stylistic, stereotyped, beautiful or artistic gesture, the narcissistic gesture or gestural aestheticism end in the same result as the cliché (Felner 155). In the beginning Lecoq's goal is to send the student back to a cognitive level and to find the gesture that precedes the word. From a primitive point of view, "gesture" is at the basic level of all communication. "Gesture precedes knowledge. Gesture precedes thought. Gesture precedes language" (Felner 150). In addressing the training Lecoq writes, "The gesture and the word are recognized on the level at which they merge into one another. A word must be charged with the impression of the body and only become clear in so far as it is so (Lecoq, Mime 119). He encourages the student to "find the gesture in the word, the actions for the verbs in the profound silence in which they were born" (Frost and Yarrow 63). Mira Felner, in her

book, The Apostles of Silence, speaks of the importance of gesture in the technical training:

> Anyone can imitate life without being able to act on the stage. The difference comes from what the talented, skilled and trained actor extracts consciously and intuitively from what he observes--a common point of gesture among all men, a sort of common denominator. (153)

Lecoq is working to provide his students with a profound understanding of the body in movement and when he speaks of gesture he refers not only to the movement of the arms and hands but to the whole body. The work does not remain purely technical, however. A difference is drawn between purely physical and expressive movement. The student is constantly urged to connect the movements with passions. Each movement taught seems connected with or inspires a particular passion within the actor (Interview #3, App. 15 172).

The movement classes lay the foundation for a teaching that is based on the concept that knowledge is gained through movement and that thought and emotional response occur after movement. Bari Rolphe, the first American to attend the school in 1963, comments:

> My point of view is that the actor's whole organism is indivisible, for functioning muscles, sensory systems, and conscious gesture all affect one another. Organic training treats the whole, but it can also emphasize separate aspects. The body needs physical training, first, so that muscles become flexible, coordinated, and capable of a diversity of movement. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 140)

The goal is not to train as a pantomime so as to learn to replace words with gestures, but to find the gesture for the word, the gesture that is in the word, the "actions for the verbs" and to search for them in a profound silence. The student begins, through the study and

understanding of the specific details of the world in movement, to develop the ability to enter easily into a state of constant discovery. Such a state of discovery is presumed by Lecoq's pedagogy to be indispensable to the actor.

The method of arriving at the set pedagogical goals is the journey of the school itself. The path leads through a series of performance styles each chosen to provide the actor with particular understandings. The journey ultimately leads to the discovery of the artist's own personal style. Lecoq speaks of the school in an article published in 1973:

> During the school's two-year course, the student finds himself having to overcome obstacles and experiment in various kinds of dramatic direction and in different levels of acting. Through this experience and because he is given the utmost freedom for personal creation, the student will define himself and learn to recognize his own possibilities. The school is thus open to different styles of acting, but to acting that has as its fundamental value that the student reach an awareness through observation of life, and that he relive this awareness through mimetic reenactment. (Lecoq, Mime 117-118)

> We call up in ourselves past states, forgotten memories; we contemplate our dreams and our fantasies. We study passions and conflicts, situations, in order to seize upon their essence and their dynamic laws. The physical impression is more important than the physical expression. It is from all this that the student, understanding the cause, can determine what will be in the future: his choice, his style, his unique and privileged position for remaking the world. (Lecoq, Mime 118)

> We play people, minerals, animals, plants, trees, colors, lights materials, sounds, and surpassing their images we recognize through improvisation their rhythm and their breath. We analyze man's physical endeavors; his walk, his throw, his acrobatics--everything we do to move and remove, the push and the pull, that make us what we are. We try to feel that when an arm is raised, there is raised in the body a parallel dramatic state--that the bodily attitude corresponds to an interior attitude. (Lecoq, Mime 118)

Each step is based on careful observation of life and analysis of craft. The elements that figure prominently throughout the training are: the establishing of the neutral body, the concept of play (*le jeu*) and discovery, attention to "realistic" detail, and

understanding of rhythm, movement and one's relationship to the space. Anthony Frost accurately describes the basic structure of the courses involving work which he classifies into the following three areas: "a) basics of dramatic performance; b) the play of styles; and c) movement and plasticity in terms of the architecture of space" (63).

The establishment of the neutral body is a primary goal of the physical training. The actor's sense of presence, his relationship to the space, and his sensations of whether or not what he is engaged in is based on an organic choice, rests on his ability to achieve a physical neutrality. Without accomplishing this, the actor cannot achieve a specific choice. Extraneous elements will be present in the work, making the play, and the audience's perceived image of what is happening unclear.

## Why Improvisation Classes?

When one speaks about the improvisation classes at École Lecoq, the images of theatre games and the style of improvisation that has become popular at comedy clubs and many lower level acting programs must be put aside. The improvisations are a play of action without dialogue. Communication and situation are developed through the interactive play of the actors. When successfully executed, this eliminates a need for dialogue. The exploration of situation and relationship in silence allows the instructor and the student to concentrate on the essentials. The actor must rely on inner impulses and the ability to listen and react rather than the pursuit of the next best idea. The success of the improvisation depends on the performer's ability to connect on all levels in a single moment. The improvisations follow the simple formula "action-reaction-interaction."

Aside from the obvious pedagogical reasons for eliminating speech (at least in the beginning) there is a very practical one as there are at any given time twenty or more nationalities represented in each freshman class. Even though French is the language of instruction, a common spoken language is not always shared among the students at the beginning of the first year.

Lecoq's improvisations are profoundly pedagogical. He is working with the students' perceptions of communication, dramatic communication and human action. His improvisations are leading the student toward an understanding of the self in a performance situation, as well as leading the student to a sensory level in which the body knows when a moment is dynamic and alive and when it is not (Interview #2, App. 14 164). In the improvisation courses Lecoq is, as Yarrow puts it, "pitting the student face to face with himself in a state of perpetual discovery" (73). These classes are where the concepts being taught throughout are brought together in a performance situation. Because the classes are large (around twenty-five students) there is a built-in audience for each class. This number of students may seem large for a performance-oriented class; however, the manner of teaching allows for full participation and creates a unique learning environment. Students are learning both through doing and through intense observation. Here is where the decree, "observe, analyze, improvise," comes to life. A former student comments on the central aspect of the improvisation at the school:

> The improvs themselves are the meat of what Lecoq does, of what he teaches and of what you learn. The improv is much more complicated than everything else. Movement analysis is movement analysis, it is the body and breathing, but improv is where you are melding your entire soul, your entire body with everyone else's that is out there with you. (Interview #1, App. 13 153)

Students pass in a voluntary order, either solo or in groups, depending on the exercise. An improvisation is allowed to go on only as long as it is working on all levels rhythmically, spatially and with an honest play on the part of the actors. As the students gain an understanding of what it means to maintain a certain level of play (*jeu*) or engagement, then the amount of time an improv is allowed to go on when everyone is not connected decreases. When a mistake or series of mistakes are made, the improvisation is stopped, a detailed and personal critique is given and the next person or the next group gets up to go. The student is seldom given the chance to repeat or rework a failed improvisation. This concentrated work emphasizes and provides the opportunity in an intense atmosphere for the student to, as Lecoq states, "*découvrir les régles du jeu théâtral par une pratique de l'improvisation tactile à tous les niveaux (du réalisme à l'abstraction)* (Frost and Yarrow 62). That is, to discover the rules that govern the play of the actor through improvisation.

Each of the improv classes varies in style according to the instructor, although the primary objective is the same. Lecoq's style often seems to be to rifle through as many students as he can until he finds the person who is able to provide the best example of what he wants us to see and understand (Interview #8, App. 20 208). Other instructors spend more time with each individual. During these exercises, the classes bring together the human body, rhythm, space and play. In class, the student is learning both what it feels like and what it looks like when all of these elements are working in harmony with one another. This moment, the moment of complete success, receives the critical

response, "*Oui, c'est ça,*"(Yes, that's it!). It is the moment when the student is completely inside the action, the moment when the movement serves the character and the text, the moment of honesty. It is the moment when the action breaths dynamic life into the space and animates the actor and the audience. "*Oui, c'est ça,*" is not often heard. It is, however, in these moments that the actor begins to truly discover the world Lecoq is trying to get him or her to see. The following is a description of a former student's experience in the improvisation classes:

> You enter a room and become the color of the room. Then you go through a door or a tunnel into the next room and become the color of that room. It's just abstract movement. Something happened where I, for the first time, just gave myself totally over to the movement and the rhythm and the performance. I finished it and I remember it was like the perfect moment. I was absolutely calm. As I look back on it I realize that sense of unity. The idea and the movement happened at the same time. I wasn't on the outside editing it as I usually was. That was a moment that stuck with me and one that I am constantly looking for in performance. (Interview #9, App. 21 212-13)

And again:

> We were doing exercises with animal images in Greek Tragedy. There is a scene from Agamemnon where he is blinded and the preferred animal is a caged lion pacing back and forth in his cage. You are doing the text, the guy has been blinded, his family has all been killed and he is in the depths of despair. You do it as an animal but spouting the text. Finally my turn came and I said I would do the exercise as a tortoise. Almost everyone else had used the wild beast image.
>
> Well, it was wonderful. If you put a desert tortoise on a hard surface it can't quite catch its claws on the floor and has a hard time moving. I was trying to crawl and kept slipping while doing this agonized speech about how tough life was. I bumped into a post in the middle of the room. I just kept walking, crawling but my head was against the post. I got quite agitated and eventually flipped over on my back. There was this long moment of self discovery and then this fight to get turned back over while still spouting the text. Again it was one of those perfect moments where the movement served the text and the character. Lecoq basically said yes, that's it. That was the highest compliment that he could give. (Interview #9, App. 21 213)

The improvisation classes are directly connected to the style being studied such as neutral mask, larval, expressive or utilitarian masks, the elements, colors, commedia or clown. In the improvisations, the student is always confronted with a meeting. The meeting can take the form of the actor meeting the space, the neutral mask meeting the world, a group of strangers meeting each other, a mask meeting a mask, an element meeting another element or the actor meeting a style or text. Through this underlying theme of constantly meeting the unknown, the actor is forced into a constant state of discovery, a state where he or she must learn to be open to the experience and then to be willing to discover what comes next.

An important word and an important concept that is used in the critique of the students is *disponible*. *Disponible* means to be available, to be open to what is going on around you ("to have a kind of spontaneous openness to 'nature' to the life of the senses"), to listen and to be alert. Frost defines *disponible* as the state of being ready (66)--having at one's disposal all the developed tools for a departure in action. In order for an actor to arrive at a point where he or she can be *disponible*, in a state of readiness, not only must the mind be free and open, but the body must be prepared in order to respond accordingly to the impulse. A well known alumnus of the school spoke of a colleague's definition for the term *disponible*.

> "I am like a table," she said. "When you don't need me I'm in the corner, but when you need me, you can stand on me, you can put things on me, you can use me." That is the best definition of "disponible" that I have found. To be available. You are not poking in saying I'm here, you are just available. It goes back to the listening part. Performing is not acting it is reacting. So you have to constantly monitor what is going on. (Interview #9, App. 21 214)

Only in improvisation can a complete state of readiness be developed. Thus, the importance of the physical training becomes obvious. The work with the neutral mask is part of this training and allows for what Lecoq refers to as a de-mystification of the actor. the thrust of the work in the improvisation classes is to re-educate the student to become aware of everything surrounding him. Lecoq writes, "In the beginning, it is necessary to de-mystify all that we know in order to put ourselves in a state of non-knowing, a state of openness and availability for the rediscovery of the elemental. For now, we no longer see what surrounds us" (Felner 148).

The improvisation classes are also where a student is guided toward a profound understanding of the performer in space and his relationship to the audience. It is a place where the student must step forward with only himself to use as a tool and create in the moment. Because of the immediacy of the situation and the constant search for the moment of "*C'est ça*," the work is pushed to a different level. The greatest personal discoveries and those of profound understanding are often begun in the improvisation classes. During an interview one former student commented, "It is difficult to preconceive brilliance but it is not that difficult to sort of bump into it when your body's ready and everything else is ready" (Interview #1, App. 13 154). Antony Frost and Keith Yarrow in their book, Improvisation in Drama, state this more technically when talking about "play" (*le jeu*), a central element in the success of an improvisation:

> Thus for Lecoq "play" is very much a question of developing the physical articulation of mimetic possibility; for him "mime" signifies all the resources available to the actor including his use of text, and the function of improvisation is to set those resources in play. Therefore, the outcome is in and through performance, that

> necessarily improvisatory moment when imagination composes new shapes and makes active the knowledge that resides in the body. (65).

As with all of the work to come out of the school, the improvisational work has the air of a precise act. Even though this act may be the response to an event which has occurred in the moment, a response to another actor or a reaction to the audience, the technical preparation of the actor and his sensibility to the "just" moment remains exact. It is this quality that sets Lecoq's improvisation apart from other techniques. It is a level of awareness and precision that is created through the work with masks.

## What is the *Auto-cours*?

The *auto-cours* is the part of the school where the students develop their own creativity and where they get a chance to apply their own understandings of the material being learned in a structured and rehearsed theatre piece of their own invention. This is where the student begins to develop his or her own theatre. It is here in the *auto-cours* where the theatre is constantly reinvented and redefined, where the actor truly becomes creator. Lecoq writes:

> We speak to the student as creator and not as interpreter of an aesthetic which is presented to him. The forms of theatre which I call the "extreme" set an example for us-- not as museum pieces but rather for the dimensions they propose. Through these the student might gain an understanding of the extremes of acting which would employ his entire being. It serves him as a point of reference. (qtd. in Rolphe, Mime of 119)

The creative work of the *auto-cours* is important not only to the development of the students at the school but also the work of the school itself. Many of Lecoq's theories are based on the idea of creative freedom (Felner 166). The creative input of each class

keeps the work of the school alive and changing every year. As a result, the teaching is constantly adjusted to the needs and the world perception of the students at any given time. For example, the style of Melodrama was a very strong part of the school in 1986. Lecoq had explained to the students at that time how fifteen years earlier Melodrama (European style, not the peanut throwing western) had to be put aside as a serious endeavor because audiences could not see the style in a dramatic light. They did not believe in the concept any more. The attitudes of the 1960's did away with a belief in the high moral ideals that represent the Melodrama: patriotism, family above all, romantic love, the pursuit of the noble, chivalry, belief in God, etc. As the times changed audiences began once again to believe in and accept the Melodrama as an ideal rather than view it as farce. Lecoq began then to work with Melodrama as a style, inserting the chorus, the hero, and making it into a contemporary version of the Greek Tragedy, a style studied in the second year of the school.

In the *auto-cours*, which takes place for ninety minutes each day and then is worked on outside of the school, the students are given a theme around which they must build a theatre piece. The results of the work are presented each week on Friday and then a new theme is given. Some of the themes are given a period of two weeks with a critique given half way through the work. Lecoq assigns the theme for the work and then gives the number of people allowed in each group. The students form small ensembles at their own choosing.

The themes of the *auto-cours* are assigned according to the style being studied at the time. The students have the opportunity to apply the work and critique from the

improvisation and the movement analysis classes. The themes for the first year (1986-87) are listed in the order they were given: Place and Event (*lieu et evenement*), Invisible Man (*l'homme invisible*), The Fantasy World (*le monde fantastique*), The Village (two weeks), The Birth of Man (*naissance de l'homme*), The Valley of the Giants (with masks), The Build (*la gamme* with masks), The Elements as People (earth, air, fire, water), The Combat of Materials (oil, paper, metals, etc.), The Painters (a physical exploration of color, each group working with paintings of a famous artist, e.g., Miro, Degas, Matisse), Fantasy Animals, Animals in Human Form, Personal Masks (masks made by the students), Masks at Work, Combat (two weeks), Objects, The Table Top (*le treteau*), A Letter Arrives--Part I, A Letter Arrives--Part II, The Final Project--The Voyage (four weeks), and A Choreography of The Twenty Movements.

The themes of the second year are directly connected to the styles and are more directly connected to performance, to something immanently presentable as opposed to the more pedagogical work of the first year.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE STYLES OF THE FIRST YEAR

## Le Jeu Psychologique

The first year begins with *Le Jeu Pyschologique* or *Rejeu*. In this period of time, the students are taken into a world where the emphasis is placed on the rediscovery of daily life; the basics of dramatic structure and organic rhythms that occur within the body. Here Lecoq is not seeking realism or a codified illusion of reality but rather the essence of reality (Felner 153). This observation and analysis also begins to develop an understanding between the *mime du fond* and the *mime de forme*, the first being the fundamental, basic, heart, root or essence of gesture and the second being what is mannered or shaped. For Lecoq, the *mime du fond* must be the basis for all movement. Through being thrust into a world of silence the student is made aware of infinitesimal detail and nuance (Rolphe, Mime of 36). The work of defining the universal, the archetype, that which transcends culture, begins.

> For me, the mime to be learned at the school is at the root of all man's expressions, whether gestural, constructed, modeled, sonorous, written or spoken. That mime which I call fundamental is the greatest school of the theatre; it is based on movement. (Rolphe, Mimes 151)

An excellent exercise illustrating the work during this period is the *Chambre d'enfance*, the childhood room. In this improvisation a student must enter the empty

performance space and play the discovery of his childhood room which he has not seen in twenty years. The exercise evolves from the first week to the second with the addition of a mirror in the room in which the actor must discover himself during the discovery of the room. This exercise is the first step in preparation for the neutral mask work to come later. Through the personal critique the student receives, he or she is guided toward a play that is without commentary and without sentiment--one that exists purely on a level of simple discovery and the rhythms that ensue. It is the first step in the purging of "ready-made" ideas from the play of the actor and a step toward creating "a state of readiness and availability of the physical abilities of the student. There is a recognition of life as it is, through observation of the everyday occurrence. We do not speak of theatre but of life" (qtd. in Felner 157).

## Neutral Mask

Three weeks into the first year begins what is to be the foundation for all that is to come later; the neutral mask. For Lecoq the work with the neutral mask is a profound step in the training process. He speaks of the neutral mask as tending toward a "fulcrum point which does not exist." When the actor approaches this fixed point he becomes "a blank sheet of paper, a tabula rasa" (Rubin 73). "It attempts to erase the individuality; to get at the essence; to get at man rather than this man" (Eldredge, Masks 390). In response to the question of why begin training with the neutral mask, Lecoq responds, "The neutral mask is not a surface mask but comes from deep inside one. The neutral

mask is like the bottom of the sea: It's quiet, it's still. The expressive mask is like waves; underneath is the neutral mask" (Eldredge, Masks 130).

Bari Rolphe, a former student of Lecoq, observes that the key element in the training process is the total configuration of the person: face and body in harmony with the mask. Rolphe notes, "the mask acts as a medium through which both strengths and weaknesses of the actor can be seen" (Rolphe, Behind 11). The mask magnifies the inadequacies and problems of the actor. "The mask both hides and reveals" (Rolphe, Behind 11).

In the classroom the actor must put himself at the mercy of the mask, be receptive and let himself be led by it. Robbed of his face and voice, he must learn to express with his body. Through donning the mask and assuming its dimension the actor can achieve an unsuspected presence and power, unknown even to himself (Rolphe, Behind 11). Rolphe speaks to the process of learning under the mask and the ramifications of such a process when she writes, "The mask does become, should become a sacred object; in it the actor feels a sense of magic, of grandeur and of mystery too often lost in the slick commercial shuffle and the wise cracking exchange of the theatre" (Rolphe, Behind 12). Referring to the neutral mask as the universal mask she adds, "The universal mask is an inner one. It represents that which human beings have in common, without the reactions and attitudes with which individuals relate to the world" (Rolphe, Behind 117). The neutral mask represents the inner core of human kind. Its use helps the wearer to break down activity into its simplest, most basic essentials. With the neutral mask the actor searches the universal reaction to events in the world, not the personal (Rolphe, Behind

18). Neutral can also be described as the starting point from which we measure movement and time, space and its level of energy (Rolphe, Behind 19). Work with the neutral mask is a process of finding what is truthful in one's actions.

> When necessity, economy and heightened energy all merge, the movements then have reached the mask's dimension; they have nobility and grandeur, qualities that are associated with the Greek ideal of universality and with an approach to God or spirit. (Rolphe, Behind 21)

With the donning of the neutral mask, the actor must leave behind his or her personality, everything that he or she knows, all the physical qualities that make the individual distinctive, and stand in a state of simple readiness for what is to come next. This is the basic starting point where one is liberated to rediscover a state of non-knowing (Eldredge, Masks 158). Frost describes the basic condition of the neutral mask as, "a condition which is at the basis of dynamic extension in space, time and matter" (65). The state of neutrality is a highly charged state of readiness, a pre-play state of being (Frost and Yarrow 63).

The work of the neutral mask is one of absolute economy of movement. It is an exercise in the discovery of the least amount of movement and energy needed to accomplish an action (Felner 161). The mask is man or woman. The mask is a dynamic representation of the neutral, physical being. Man and woman are physically, emotionally and spiritually different from each other; therefore, there is a separate mask for each. The neutral mask is without a past and has no immediate needs for the future. The neutral mask exists only in the present, in a constant state of discovery. Lecoq describes it as the mask of calm. For example, if a bright light suddenly appears or a

board falls on its head, the mask does not react with surprise but rather, curious resolve. There is the discovery of light or the discovery of pain. Lecoq explains that the basis of the neutral mask is to attain a state of stability without conflicts. "It is the discovery of the self, but not through the self" (Felner 159). He continues:

> The study of the economy of movement in physical action (how to achieve the maximum result with the least effort), and the state of dramatic neutrality (a state of availability without past or passion) enables us to better understand the manifestations of life through a state of perpetual discovery without preconceptions and without the interjection of personal conflicts. (Lecoq, Mime 118)

The mask improvisation exercises begin with a solo improvisation of the awakening of the mask in nature. The improv is an awakening to the world wherein the whole body is full of eyes all opening to a new world (Frost and Yarrow 67). Improvisations that follow are *Adieux bateau* wherein the mask enters walking along the shore, stops, sees a boat on the water, walks out on the pier and waves good-bye. Another is "The Voyage," a journey in which the mask begins in the sea, is washed ashore, walks through the deep sands of the beach, then travels through a dense forest arriving at a mountain. The mask climbs the mountain, arrives at the summit and then descends the other side. Arriving at the bottom, the mask crosses a great plain, swims a river and finishes at a village. The voyage is one in which the mask not only sees and discovers these landscapes but, in so doing, becomes them (e.g., the mask sees the mountain; the mask becomes the mountain). Frost explains that as the actor moves from landscape to landscape, he is constantly changing his inner state in reaction to the environment. "The challenge is letting the change occur viscerally without artificially manufacturing feeling" (Felner 163).

The exercise is also one of the discovery of rhythm and of space. During the period when these exercises are being prepared and worked on in the improvisation classes, the *auto-cours* is "The Provincial Village." The essence of the assignment speaks directly to the neutral mask work as it applies to the group creation and dramatic structure. It is an assignment in which each of the first year groups must, as a class, work to recreate a twenty-four hour day in a small village. It is an exercise in life rhythms and the organization of space, rhythm being the heart beat at the center of the dramatic act. This, however, is often lost on the students in the beginning, as that young group of twenty-five actors from all regions of the world argue over who gets to play the baker and whether or not there should be a village idiot.

The work with the neutral mask takes two roads: "The first is improvisation starting with the interior state towards the exterior. The second is the purely technical analysis of the human body and everything that moves" (Eldredge, Masks 158). The neutral state is one that is by nature economical, simple and direct--stripped of all that is not essential (Rolphe, Mime of 37). For Lecoq, it is a state that must be achieved before any of the other work can begin. He writes:

> I begin with the process of forgetting. Then de-mystification. We return to zero through masks and de-contraction. We begin again to gather knowledge through the body. When we have recognized the world through the body, we can express ourselves. Next we attempt new experiences. (qtd. in Felner 157)

The work with the neutral mask is the start of becoming spatially aware, and becoming aware of the dynamics that make up performance. This growing awareness of the body and its "dynamic" relationship to the space is central to the work of the school.

It is a concept not only important as a basis of understanding the work of the actor as an individual, but also essential for an understanding of style and what makes different "languages" of performance succeed or fail. A graduate of the third year states:

> It's really the idea of the process of widening your vision. So you see not only what is going on inside you but what's all around you. Therefore, it's your body in relationship to the space or the box, the stage. The space that you occupy. That space is your partner. So that becomes a larger dynamic. That's the spatial dynamic. . . . That's the dynamic of the space upon you and you upon the space. In the first year the neutral mask also increases the amount of space that a person is aware of since the mask takes on a much bigger space than you do. The mask is asking you to step into it's space. Which is larger and more universal. (Interview #8, App. 20 209)

If one starts from a point of universality, neutrality on all levels, then the choices become clear, well defined and fully understandable by the actor and the audience both in reality and in abstraction.

## Neutral Mask and the Elements

The neutral mask work is then combined with the abstract physical exploration of the four classical elements: air, earth, water, and fire. Here one begins to see clearly the gesture as the foundation of expression. Because the actor is asked to enter a world governed by forces that are greater than himself, and once there, to deal with rhythms which, although true to the natural world and universal in nature, go beyond normal human response, he is forced into a situation wherein he must go beyond the personal. Reactions to a situation can no longer be based on personal history or psychological distress. Instead, the actor's relationship to the action becomes a visceral response connected to the fundamental physical components of the present situation. The factors at play become the body, its rhythms and the space. The student is guided toward a state

wherein body isolations and rhythms of movement provoke changes in the emotional state. What makes the exercise so powerful, and what takes it beyond an abstract exploration of movement, is that there is a search for the "just" rhythm and dynamic force of each element as it truly exists in creation (i.e., the rhythm and force of fire, the grandeur and strength of a great body of water or it's raging force, the unpredictability and weightlessness of wind, the slow dynamic forces of a slowly changing mass of earth). Discoveries made are directly applicable to the dramatic situation. The dynamic qualities are quickly transferred to characters in the weeks that follow the neutral mask work. The rhythmic and spatial characteristics of this work become fundamental in the exploration of styles throughout the first and second year of the school.

Once again there is an emphasis placed on the respiration of the actor in reference to the physical actions. One begins to recognize an importance of breath both in terms of what is the natural organic response to the action and what happens when position and rhythm of the inhale, the holding of the breath, and the exhale are imposed. One finds not only a change in rhythm of the physical actions, but also that the simple change in respiration can result in internal conflict. Once again the intellectual and psychological aspects of the work are removed. The actor's life becomes a series of dynamic reactions rather than ponderous and psychologically self indulgent. It is the actor's ability to observe and imitate life that takes him in the direction that Lecoq wishes to go. Lecoq writes, "We gain knowledge of things that move through the ability that man has to 'mime,' that is his ability, to identify with the world through its reenactment" (qtd. in Felner 147).

After the exploration of the elements, the work moves on to various materials. The exploration of rhythms and qualities becomes much more complex and dynamically diverse. Because various materials such as paper or stainless steel are made up of a combination of substances there is already an internal struggle implied as the components of a material strive to exist harmoniously. The meeting of these materials becomes an intricate work and with the ultimate transfer to human characters based on the materials, it begins to approach the human condition.

## Poetry

Upon completion of the research concerning the materials, the students move on to work on the physicalization of language or, as Lecoq speaks of it, "the gesture behind the word," or "the gesture that is the word." This is not to be confused with the gestures of pantomime which replace the word. Once again there is a search for the "*mime du fond*" or the "*silence du fond.*" Speaking of the school Felner explains, "The *silence du fond* where the word does not yet exist, is a necessity and the gesture is pure versus the superficial and mutilated silence, where gesture imitates, and tries in vain to replace the word, which has already said everything" (150). Frost elaborates:

> Anthropologically and anatomically, movement precedes language, and Lecoq seeks to return students to that situation where they discover emotion and meaning through gesture: the "*mime du fond*" is also the "*mime du début*"--of the beginnings of all knowing and all articulation. (66)

The work with poetry and language gives way to a physical exploration of the colors and the passions. Here one begins to discover a concept which Lecoq terms "*l'architecture invisible du drame*" (personal notes). Through an exploration of colors

and passions one begins to find specific, detailed, universal elements that can be structured rhythmically and spatially. For example, jealousy as well as the melodrama follow the oblique, hate collapses inwardly, pride elevates and shame seeks to lower itself (Frost and Yarrow 63). The form of anger and rage is on the verge of exploding; within there is a juxtaposition of hard against soft and contradictory rhythmic patterns. The form appears to be struggling against itself. Passionate love contains strong, long, open rhythmic patterns. One sees that moods can be identified by the orientation of the body in space. As with the movement work, Lecoq has applied a developed, precise, intellectual and practical structure to the exploration (Frost and Yarrow 63). We find the *Gamme de peur*, neutrality--fear--terror--death and the *Gamme de rire*, neutrality--smirk--smile--giggle--laughter--hysterics (Felner 163). The exploration of the colors and the passions are taken to a much greater depth by the Movement Laboratory which meets in the evenings. The architectural concepts discovered are directly applied to sculpted form.

## Animals

With week fourteen and fifteen of the first year (1986) arrives the recreation of animals. Students study closely the movement of a chosen animal, its rhythms and breathing patterns, and attempt to recreate it as closely as possible in their own bodies. All different types of living creatures are explored: insects, reptiles, amphibians, domestic and wild. Once the animals have been explored as animals their qualities are then transferred to human characters who have as their base a particular animal. Both the *auto-cours* themes and the themes of the improvisation classes revolve around the

meeting of the different animals and the dynamic exchange that occurs. In the movement classes, the students work with the feeling of weight, rhythms of movement, extension and the inner state of each animal. The eyes become an important element in the work. The question of what is this animal's perspective or how does it view the world comes into play as the actor is developing a sense of its inner state.

## Larval and Expressive Mask

In the four weeks that follow the animals, the students once again don and work behind a variety of masks. They use full face expressive masks, both of their own making and the Sartorii masks owned by the school, utilitarian masks and larval masks. Lecoq describes the masks in his book *Le théâtre du geste*:

> The larval masks are simplified human forms: round, pointed, hooked, where the nose has great importance and dominates the face. These unfinished faces permit a large, simple, elementary play. The expressive masks are more elaborate, contain finer detail. They need small movements for playing big.
>
> Each larval or expressive mask can play two ways: as the mask and as the contre-mask. If I play a mask that represents a cretin, I try to identify with the role that the mask proposes and I adjust my body and my play accordingly. However, I can play the opposite and experiment playing intelligence under the mask of the idiot. Here, I create a different character, much richer than the first, who carries within himself the conflict of seeming like an idiot when he isn't really. That is the contre-mask. There exist masks that find in the same individual the given and the opposite: authority and weakness, sadness and joy. One must search in the face, the other face in order truly to know the person and the role he plays. For the masks it is the same thing. The only mask that does not have a contre-mask is the neutral mask.
>
> For all of the these silent masks it is necessary that speech not be a forbidden element and that replacement gestures intervene. It is enough to enter a place where speech is not yet possible, or is no longer possible. One must never give the audience the impression that the masked actor cannot speak because he wears a mask that prevents him from doing so. (115)

The students have once again entered a period that is central to the first year and a fundamental part of the pedagogical approach of the school.

The work with the masks is intended to return the student to a state of not knowing (Eldredge, Masks 132). The neutral mask was the first step in this process; the second was a building of a dynamic sense of the body in movement and its relationship to the space and a learning to connect with universal rhythms. Now the work with the masks will go a step further placing these understandings in the work of character development. In the de-constructive process, through the covering of the face, the actor is denied the principles of "normal" acting, the existence of the actor as individual (Bently 70). The mask is an entity in and of itself which cannot be denied. Its rhythms, gestures, voice and world view are fixed. The actor must give up his ideas and personality and follow the impulses given to him by the mask. The play must be honest and just or the living form of the mask dies. The actions of the mask must be permitted to live and to breath. In a sense, a dialogue arrives between the mask and the wearer (Felner 162). It is a play in which the discovery of what the mask wants and how the mask sees and perceives the world is brought to life by the actor. The work with the mask is the embodiment of action dictating the internal state. The actor is instructed "Portez-le masque!" An alumnus from the school defines this in the following:

> It means to serve the mask. Everything that you do must work to bring the mask alive. It is not a face that you put on your body. It is a creature that you serve. You have to create an organic hold for it. The wonderful thing about mask work is that if one of the pieces is missing it becomes so immediately obvious. When it's there it's just amazing. The thing just comes alive. (Interview #9, App. 21 214)

Another comments:

> It is very essential. The mask work feeds into everything else. A mask is not something that you put on your face. It is something that you "*porte*" that you wear, that you fully embody. It is not so much bringing the mask to you but that you go to the mask. Lecoq uses the mask as a metaphor for the voyage that you go on while you're at the school: as a means of transformation, to get you outside of yourself. To get rid of all the petite "me-isms." The little "*petite personage*" that you have inside and to force you to express yourself in a different way. The mask is a fabulous tool for that. That's what Copeau discovered. He started with paper bags and it evolved into the neutral mask. It is not inhibiting, it's freeing in a lot of ways. (Interview #1, App. 13 154)

The most important factor in mask training is the impulse to identify physically with the mask (Rolphe, Behind 9). Rolphe explains: "A body that can unself-consciously give itself to the total identification, with total commitment, is capable of range, sensitivity and theatrical dimension" (Rolphe, Behind 10). She explains that it is this total configuration which is the key to the training process (Rolphe, Behind 10). The mask enables the actor to change the space around him. The time of reaction becomes different, and the actor becomes more sensitive to the presence of the others on stage. The mask seemingly takes over guiding and dictating reaction, feeling and movement (Rolphe, Behind 14).

The mask acts at the same time as an agent or release and one of control (Duchartre 18). While under the mask, the actor must be fully engaged at every second in order for the mask to be present. Even in moments of stillness there must always be an inner movement, an "active passivity." The dimension of the mask helps the actor to find a total physical expression as well as later on to amplify his words (Turne 13). As a training tool it offers the actor a way out of the confusing psychological orientation with which he is often confronted and thrusts him into a dynamic world of action and constant

discovery. Felner writes, "They [masks] facilitate the discovery of the central point, the essence of a relationship, or a conflict, the discovery of the gesture which is the sum of all gestures, the word which represents all words" (157).

The work with the masks develops in the student a heightened awareness of self, of one's relationship to others and to the space. The rhythms of play become elongated and every action becomes specific and important to the movement of the scene. The mask, in taking away completely the psychological elements of play, inspires the actor to act immediately from the silence, from the unknowing ( Frost and Yarrow 271). Ms. Rolphe comments on the use of mask improvisations in the training approach:

> A second emphasis is placed on the body's manifestations of internal life, and consists of exercises to remove hampering inhibitions, promote self-awareness, teach focus and concentration, and encourage authentic and spontaneous group interaction. Both of these areas are preparation for the total expressive use of the body, the actor learns to read and to express himself in body language, to choose movement that is meaningful, to master economy, to physicalize his intentions and to achieve a theatrical non-naturalistic dimension of movement. (qtd. in Eldredge, Masks 140)

Two weeks of working with objects follows the mask work. This work is to stimulate the creative energies of the students and to develop now a relationship to the objects in space. Exercises in telling stories with objects wherein the objects dictate the story, exercises in object manipulation (juggling, puppetry) and stage combat are included here. The basis of the work is to let the object decide the outcome of the creative impulse. The work with the objects is conducted on much the same level as that of the work with masks.

Following the work with the objects comes an important exercise utilized to enhance the actors' sensation, their use of and understanding of the space. The *Treteau* or

platform is an exercise in which five actors are confined to a one meter by two meter elevated space and given an epic theme to create a play around. Like the full face expressive mask in which the actors must communicate with one another without ever giving the audience the impression that they are unable to talk, the actors must play the story without ever giving the impression that they have been confined to a very small space. The rules of the game are that the actors may never exit the space. The scenario of one of the projects is as follows:

> A great adventurer is seated in his library telling the story of one of his adventures; The Search for the Emerald Jewel. As the adventurer mentions his trusty servants name he instantly appears and the two of them find themselves at the beginning of the adventure riding a train through the wild country on their way to the hidden treasure. Unknown to them, they are being followed by two villains. We see the train travel across the great plains and up into the mountains where, unfortunately, it crashes. The adventurer, his trusty companion and a beautiful woman he has met on the train survive the crash and make their way into the wilderness. They are followed by the villains as they make their way over the mountains, through the dangerous pass where high cliffs threaten death at every turn. Once off the mountain they must cross the desert where they have a brief gun battle with the bad guys, get lost in a sand storm and eventually find themselves in a bar in the middle of nowhere. The villains wind up in a mirage. The adventurer, his trusty companion and the beautiful lady leave the bar seconds before the villains arrive and as they are crossing the dunes fall into the secret cave where the emerald jewels are hidden. In the final scene, we once again find the adventurer seated in his library ending the story. He is joined by the beautiful lady. (personal notes)

The action of this play is played by five actors in the confined, elevated space.

The element of the confined space becomes the mask that the ensemble must play. Its limitations dictate what decisions must be made in order for the play to be a success. Here the actor is learning to respond to the dynamic of the space in relationship to both the other actors and the audience.

## End of the First Year

The last term of the first year begins the application of all the technical work and personal discovery to the creation of theatre as applied to the grand styles and the creation of characters. The neutrality of the actor is "treated" stylistically. In this way it is an introduction (for those that will be asked to continue) to the work of the second year. During this term the students are introduced to character development, to music and sound, and to *le jeu*. The year ends with two final projects: 1) the *auto-cours* in which the students are grouped in ensembles of a specific number of people and then assigned a theme on which they will have four weeks to work and 2) a personal choreography of the "twenty movements."

# CHAPTER V

## WHAT ROLE DOES THE MOVEMENT LABORATORY PLAY?

The *Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement* (Movement Laboratory) was started in 1977 as a separate part of the school to explore the relationship between the human body and the space as an architectural phenomenon.

> This relationship with the human body is essential. The body through imitation discovers, before rationalizing, a dynamic sensation with which it can better analyze future discoveries. Miming is, doing with the body, in order to intimately be familiar with what comes profoundly from within and the forces which organize and record living things and their actions such as the arrangements within an inner and within an outer space. (Lecoq, L.E.M. 1986)

The knowledge gained from this work is applicable in scenic design, architecture, acting, directing, choreography, and the making of masks. The brochure for the course notes:

> The L.E.M. pursues a knowledge of movement in its dynamics (rhythm, space, force) and in its dramatics (passions, conflicts, combats).
>
> One studies the physical actions of the human body in order to better understand the interplay of the forces governing a structured space and recognizing its tensions, sense of pushing and range.
>
> We discover the movement of color, then move to the dwelling place of the passions. (Lecoq, L.E.M. 1988)

The course is divided into three sections. The first section defines the approach and the vocabulary. An emphasis is placed on a developing in the body a feeling for the space. The exercises in which the students are involved are architectural explorations of

the human body such as a constructed representation of the body and the face, a defined study of the walk, an exploration of space in tension, "the push and pull," the sculpture of calm, and the dynamic exploration of the artist's materials (learning to work within the demands of the material, to follow these demands, much like entering into play with a mask).

The second section is an exploration of the movement and dynamic of color and the passions. The students explore the colors and the various passions through abstract physical movement and then transfer these explorations to the realization of design studies and structures. For example, a sculpture is created depicting the dynamic changes and spaces of the spectrum (if built on a larger scale one would be able to walk in and out of the spaces of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet in that order). A linear gauge indicating the colors of the human body is constructed. Lecoq writes:

> All structured space acts upon he who lives, and provokes within himself emotional and physical states of being; as if all sensations, sentiments, and passions searched to find a habitable space. All bodies plunge into a space constructed for them. The space, of course obliges the body to do so. (Lecoq, L.E.M. 1988)

A sculpture of "the plateau of passions" is built during this term. It is a plateau upon which is found all the passions represented in abstract architectural form: the wall of pride, a tower of egotism, the explosive form of joy and laughter, a spiral of sadness, the curve of jealousy etc.

The third section is dedicated to the final projects. Students choose a theme upon which they will base the creation of a single sculpture or a series of sculptures that will depict the dynamic qualities of the theme. An example would be a violent summer

thunderstorm. The objective is to create a sculpture whose qualities seem to be in movement when the sculpture is stationary or appear to jump to life as the sculpture is moved through the space. This is also the fundamental concept behind the creation of a mask. The sculptor attempts to capture both the physical body and the dynamic emotional and psychological elements of the character within the sculpture itself. If the mask is to work--to play--all of these elements must be captured in the static form of the sculpture yet appear to be in movement. The final projects take the form of portable structures, living walls, sculptural obstacle courses, the play of plains of colors, habitable structures, masks, costume elements and installations. "Action speech and music intervene as part of the integrated ensemble" (Lecoq, L.E.M. 1986). Lecoq refers to the constructed elements in the space as the "mimodynamic" structure.

The course explores a world of theatre without actors where it is the space that enters into play, a theatre where the actor is a plastic element of the ensemble and "a theatre where the space would be the partner with the actor as in poetry, where silence is the partner with the word" (Lecoq, L.E.M. 1986).

Once again, Lecoq, in the L.E.M. course, is concerned with universals pertaining to rhythm and its living dynamic relationship to form and to the space. The approach to the understanding of various architectural phenomena is based on the human body as the foundation from which all else is founded. The movement lab explores a theatre where there is total integration of all elements present: nothing in excess, nothing solely for aesthetic. The space supports the actor and in turn the actor supports the space. A dynamic conversation incurs between the performer, the observer and the space. *Tous les*

*elements sont mis en jeu.* Lecoq's philosophies and understandings link directly to Copeau and those other masters who influenced Copeau's work. Adolphe Appia, a contemporary of Copeau, relates conceptually to the teaching: "It is not merely mechanically that we possess space and are its center: it is because we are living. Space is our life; our life creates space; and our body expresses it (Appia 53).

# CHAPTER VI

## THE SECOND YEAR; A YEAR OF STYLES

The journey of the second year is very different from that of the first. In the first year Lecoq is opening the student to a new way of perceiving theatre. He is taking away the old and preparing the ground for what is going to come. The second year is a year of applying the concepts of understanding gained in the first to the exploration of theatre styles. The styles studied in the second year (years author attended, 1987-88) are commedia, melodrama, tragedy, buffoon and clown. The conceptual link between the study of these styles and the work of the first year lies in the approach the students will take as they attack each new style. At the beginning of a term the point of neutrality within a given style is sought. The student is asked to enter the space with the presence of the style (e.g., the presence of the commedia, the presence of buffoon, or the presence of the tragedy). From this point of apparent calm the exploration begins.

Lecoq states that he is not interested in the exploration of the classical theatre styles as historical research. With each new class the styles are reinvented and redefined according to the time. They become once again vibrant contemporary art in which universal elements are given a dynamic life. "I don't bury myself in historical references. I try to rediscover the spirit of these forms. Commedia has nothing to do with those little

Italian troupes who export precious entertainments. It is about misery, a world where life's a luxury" (Rudlin, Commedia 21).

## The Commedia dell'Arte at the School

The students of the second year once again find themselves behind the mask as they enter into the world of the commedia dell'Arte. The commedia embodies many of the principles that the school is trying to teach and is where the actor delves deeply into the *le jeu*. The actor must leap into the commedia which is based on the meeting, at a high level of intensity, of man's passions, pushed to their maximum. John Rudlin, the author of Commedia dell'Arte: An Actors' Handbook observes that, "Lecoq progresses towards use of commedia masks both through exercises which raise the level of intensity of expressing emotion: each feeling, for instance, can be progressively 'scaled up' by every new character entering a scene" (201). The commedia is a world where there is an urgency to life. Lecoq describes it as the struggle to live rather than just life. The commedia is like a child who constantly acts and immediately reacts directly to the situation. It is where the gesture and speech are united and happen in the same moment (Lecoq, Le théâtre 113). The commedia is always played at the highest level of intensity, at a level that is beyond laughter and beyond terror (Felner 163). Theatrically the style implements:

1. Rapport between the actor and the mask.
2. Gesture begetting character.
3. Movement for survival not for superficial gesturing.
4. Word meeting gesture.
5. Improvisation through lazzi.
6. External and internal rhythm.

7. Character relationships.
8. Play of attitudes.
9. The gesture that is the sum of all gesture.
10. The word that is the sum of all words. (Felner 64)

The commedia is a style that, although comic, rests essentially in tragedy and revolves around fundamental themes such as fear: fear of death, fear of life, fear of everything. It is cruel, in the present, and without remorse (Lecoq, Le théâtre 113). The commedia dell'Arte, as Lecoq sums it up, is a style where the play is in play; "*c'est le jeu qui est en jeu*" (Interview #3, App. 15 173).

## The Tragedy, The Melodrama and The Chorus

Following the Commedia the students of the second year attack the style of tragedy. Now the space and the ensemble become the masks that the actor must play. The exercises revolve around the work of the chorus and the ensemble to find the rhythms and the movement of a group. The space becomes larger and the imagery epic in size. The exercises drive the student to the understanding that the chorus is not a crowd of individuals, does not move as a group, but is of one mind and one body. Exercises such as the recreation of a great historical event are undertaken, and work with text from the great poets both ancient and modern ensues. In the mid to late eighties the work of the tragedy was combined with the style of melodrama. The result was a contemporary form of the tragedy in which the hero and chorus were pitted against the turmoil of the modern world.

> Thus, commedia dell'Arte, where the play is action, and the Greek tragedy, where the word is flesh, are the forms of theatre where the actor is entirely engaged: pelvis, solar plexus, and head. We use a lot of masks. . . . They allow us to seek in acting, a

> conflict at its strongest point: the essential, the gesture that sums up the multiplicity of gestures of daily life, the word of all words. All that is great tends towards immobility. (Lecoq, Mime 119)

## Buffoons as a Classic Theatre Style

> The Buffoons come from somewhere else. They are linked to the vertical of mystery; they are part of the relationship between the sky and the earth but they have reversed the values. They spit on the sky and invoke the earth; in this sense they are in the same space as the tragedy; they cross on the same vertical. (Lecoq, Le théâtre 119)

The chorus of the tragedy gives way to the roving band of buffoons who engage in constant mockery of all that surrounds them including themselves. Everything becomes a parody of itself or what it is confronted with, be it the audience, the story, the characters, fellow buffoons, or the message of the plot. The world of the buffoons is an organized hierarchy and they live in a perfect world without conflict where everyone has his exact place. It is the ideal image of the society of man. There are the bullies and the weaklings, those that have the right to speak and those that do not; there are those who are carried by another and those who carry. They are the perfect society (Lecoq, Le théâtre 119).

What separates the buffoons from man is the physical body. The buffoons have a distorted and exaggerated physicality. There arms are twice as long or twice as short as should be, their bellies are enormous, their heads too small; distorted growths project from every part of their bodies. The theatre that they partake in is one of imagery. Their movement and gesture is an extension of their body. The costume becomes the mask that obliges the actor to move in a certain way resulting in what Lecoq refers to as *"une acrobatie catastrophique*" (Lecoq, Le théâtre 119).

The buffoons are reminiscent of the paintings of Jérome and Bosch, the sketches of Degas, the gargoyles atop the cathedrals, the fools of Shakespeare and the jesters of the kings. These beings bring with them a distorted insanity. It is from this vantage point that they are better able to speak the truth. One accepts better the truth from such a being than if spoken by a normal person. "We listen to them as the king listens to his fool" (Lecoq, Le théâtre 119).

> In an extremely odd manner they present in front of us, almost a parody of our follies. They play our society, themes of power, of science, of religion through an organized idiocy following precise rule where the most mentally defective direct the others and declare war because they are bored. (Lecoq, Le théâtre 119)

## The Clown Chez Lecoq

> For several years now at the school the clown has taken on great importance; not in the sense of the traditional circus; which is dead, but as a part of the search for what is laughable and ridiculous in man. The clown in the modern sense, has replaced the hero that no longer exists in the theatre. We put the emphasis on the rediscovery of our own individual clown--the one that has grown up within us and which society does not allow us to express. This is an act of great freedom where the individual discovers that he is himself--and that this self is also the experience of solitude (Lecoq, Mime 119-120)

The last term of the school concerns itself with the search for and the development of one's personal clown. It begins in an exercise in which Lecoq is seated at the top of a semicircle of benches peopled with the students of the second year. The students are to enter the semi-circle one by one; the goal, "make me laugh," says Mr. Lecoq. One by one the students pass each trying absurd and ridiculous things, some tell a joke, some try tricks of various sorts. Nobody is funny. Finally, someone enters the space afraid and reluctant to try, knowing that impending failure looms overhead. Out of exasperation and

embarrassment she looks at the audience and sits on the floor for lack of a better idea. We laugh and the exercise is over.

What the spectator laughs at is not how clever or how skilled the clown is but at his humanity. When he fails because of his honesty, his innocence, the spectator sees himself and laughs. It is the survival through failure that brings us to the clown. Because the performer must discover and exploit his or her own personal foibles, he or she must come to a much deeper understanding of the self. Lecoq takes the student on this journey of self discovery, and the discovery of using oneself as the basis for creating material, for the basis of *le jeu*. Again, Lecoq is, in this final lesson, stripping away from the student all that is unnecessary. Concerning the school, Antony Frost writes:

> The center of this work (clowning) is learning how to be at home on the stage even when the clown has nothing to fall back on except himself, his audience and what can be created between them in the moment of performance. Sending the clown out to amuse an audience armed with absolutely nothing (no gags, no jokes, no script, perhaps not even speech) is a way of "de-cabotinising" the student actor. (Frost and Yarrow 23)

Mira Felner comments:

> It deals with bringing out of each individual the child which has grown up inside him, and which society does not permit him to express. The inner child has become for many of us a source of shame. This buried being made of solitude missed experiences and hidden faults belongs to us. . . . To express one's clown, that means to stand face to face with one's self, yet still stand outside one's self, at the small distance where humor is located. It is an indispensable dimension in the search for knowledge. (165)

Students wear the mask of a clown: a small round red nose. This mask distorts the nose and makes the face appear round and open and the color pulls our attention to the face. The nose looks stupid and the clown wears it happily (Frost and Yarrow 67).

The mask exaggerates the absurdity of the clown and gives him permission in the eyes of the audience to take the stage. The nose permits us to accept his stupidity, which he glories in and generously shares. The human condition is one full of absurd irony and the clown accepts and embraces the absurdity often attacking it with a ridiculous sense of logic, of freedom and of naivete. He does not mind making a fool of himself. As Frost puts it: "He is vulnerable, and happy to be so. His face is a disarming icon of happy stupidity" (67).

The search for one's personal clown is an important part of the school. The early exercises in the first year were for the development of knowledge about the world (Felner 165). The work of the clown is to gain knowledge of the self. The primary element at play in the world of the clown is the clown himself; it is "*le personage qui est en jeu*" (Interview #3, App. 15 173). The motor driving the clown's performance is the audience and his relationship to it. There is no text, no story; it is the conversation that is important. He has only himself to rely upon. For Lecoq it is this last step in the journey that is to become the basis for all of the student's work in the future--a point of understanding from which to begin.

# CHAPTER VII

## SUMMARY

This study of the pedagogical approach of The International School of Theatre Jacques Lecoq can only be as complete as the limited understandings and experiences of its author. The information and explanations can be understood only as far as one can imagine the actor in motion in space. Only the intuitive observations of the body in movement can provide true knowledge in this respect. Also the study has been completed without the direct input of Jacques Lecoq himself. His health did not permit the opportunity for an interview and with the impending publication of his book on the pedagogy of the school, *Le Corps Poétique*, in November of 1997, he asked that the author of this project wait for the book to act as a response to the questions sent to him in May, 1997. This proved impossible because of the authors touring schedule and the need to meet the deadlines for completion set by The University of Akron.

Upon looking at the historical origins of the Lecoq school, the concepts and teaching methods that Jacques Lecoq is working with, and where the school has taken the work that began at the Vieux Colombier one observes what is being accomplished through the pedagogy of the school. Lecoq has developed a system of actor training that creates within the student the capacity to sense when a moment is just, when

communication between all the elements of performance is complete, and when there is a harmony of style and an understanding of the universals in performance.

Lecoq's pedagogy allows the student to apply basic understandings on all levels in order to achieve a dynamic performance regardless of the style. Frost and Yarrow have given a very accurate breakdown of the primary elements contained within the pedagogy already discussed in this document:

> Four things figure prominently in most of Lecoq's courses: (a) the establishment of the "neutral," including use of the neutral mask; (b) the concept of "play"; (c) observation and research, both of "realistic" detail and of rhythm and movement; (d) the auto-cours, or "do-it-yourself," work, in teams or groups towards producing various kinds of performance.
>
> The structure of the courses themselves typically involves work which can be classified into three areas: (a) basics of dramatic performance; (b) the play of styles; and (c) movement and plasticity in terms of the architecture of space. (63)

The two training tools or methods that provide an outline for the student to follow are the physical training and the use of masks. The training of the body engaged in at the school intends to provide for the actor a well trained tool that he can depend upon in any given situation. The training provided concentrates on preserving the individual's organic sense of movement. Although, training such as ballet, mime technique, or fencing can be useful in developing strength, flexibility and a sense of center it can lead to complications later if the performer has become immersed in the codified physical language of the training. The body work at the school provides for the student an instrument that can respond to the inner impulse in a dynamic and organic fashion without mannerisms or affection. The training provides for a physical state of readiness.

Aside from the widening of awareness and the raised dynamic level of engagement that the mask provides for the student, the mask teaches important lessons in how to approach the work in general and teaches important lessons relative to the play of the actor. It teaches the actor not to impose himself upon the work but rather to follow the organic impulses from within and to respond to the demands of the action in the space. It provides for the student a radial awareness in which the actor becomes aware in a single moment of his or her own personal rhythms and those rhythms of the world at large. The actor learns to approach the work as he would approach the mask--an approach which leaves him open and available to respond to the existing rhythms in space through uninhibited play. One finds that the empty space can be played like a mask. Once the parameters of a style have been defined it also can be played like a mask.

The work in improvisation and the detailed analysis done in the first year provide the ability to define and establish the parameters and structures of a given moment or a given style and then a sensibility and capacity to play with and respond in the moment on a creative level to the existing elements.

Three concepts and a connecting dynamic appear over and over again in the journey that is the school. These are rhythm, play, space, and the relationship that exists between the three. Herein is a direct connection to the work begun by Copeau. Both Lecoq and Copeau recognize the importance of these conceptual elements in the training of actors and their resultant effect on performance. In order to achieve a complete understanding, the emphasis in the teaching and the personal critique is placed on the work itself and the individual's relationship to it rather than the individual personality or

individual accomplishments of the student. Always the critique is given from the perspective of the audience. The work is based on the human body as the central element and the actor is the axis around which all other aspects of the performance revolve. In order to make the actor aware of the internal and external rhythms surrounding him, each part of the training, each new aspect explored, begins in a state of calm, a point of neutrality, where all that is unnecessary has been eliminated, where there is an absolute economy of movement.

The following exercise is an excellent example of what is at the foundation of the pedagogical approach and epitomizes the complexity of each moment a student is guided through. The "*c'est ça*" of the pedagogy is that moment when the actor is totally committed to the action and his or her play is creating an organic relationship between the rhythms of the actor or actors and the space, all in relationship to the audience. The "plateau" is an exercise introduced in the first year of the school and repeated again in the second with variations on its theme occurring over and over again throughout the two years of the program. In this exercise the students enter onto an imaginary plateau that is suspended in the middle by a single point. The objective is to maintain the balance of the plateau as actors enter one by one. The actors must enter when either the plateau is about to fall or when the rhythm or the play of the game dictate it is time for another to enter the space. In the most neutral form of this exercise, the intimate relationship between the elements of space, rhythm and the actor's play must exist in justice and harmony or the dynamics of the energy involved falls flat and the game becomes empty and meaningless. The game is a simple and pure play of rhythm in relationship to the elements of the space.

There is no plot, there are no characters, no defined place, only a game wherein it is not the balance that is sought, but the continuous struggle to maintain a balance. Here the mere presence of man in space becomes a dramatic event.

On the plateau we see that the play of the actor is dictated by a direct reaction to the demands of the space as it evokes a rhythmic relationship to the others present. Rhythm = intention = rhythm. On a basic level this exercise gives the actor the foundation for an approach to performance that is removed from a psychological or an intellectual point of view. One sees that in all performance there is constant movement. One finds here a theatre where there is movement in stillness, where silence speaks and where empty space resonates with a dynamic tension.

The pedagogical approach of École Lecoq allows the student to achieve the constant state of discovery that is the creative act of the performer. Through an improvised play of rhythms and movement in space the actor animates the dynamic tensions of the space. The just moment is one of design, built through a detailed and skilled understanding and manipulation of the existing elements in the space. The actor is in fact constructing--as if using a specific series of shapes, colors and forms--a specific result. He is, in reality, an architect of the empty space.

## Recommendations for Further Study

A further compiling and disseminating of information concerning the work done at the Lecoq School and the accomplishments of the artists who have graduated from its training program would provide a much greater understanding of Lecoq's methodology

and philosophy of theatre training. The study of work being done by groups such as Théâtre de la Jeune Lune in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Touchstone Theatre in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as well as comparison studies between the Lecoq pedagogy and other well known training philosophies would be helpful in further defining differences. Two other studies that might be of interest are 1) research into how the pedagogical approach of Lecoq has changed and grown over the forty years of the school--why he has made the decisions he has made and what led him to the methods he is using now and 2) a study of the application of Lecoq's training methods to the American theatre community through a look at programs such as The Ohio University, Carnegie-Mellon University, Brandeis University and schools based directly on his teaching such as The Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre in Blue Lake, California, and a new school opening in the fall of 1997, The Center for Movement Theatre in Washington, DC.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1

# HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM

The University of Akron

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
(330) 972-7666 (330) 972-6281 Fax

January 28, 1997

Mr. Jonathan Becker
75 Mitchell Avenue
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear Mr. Becker:

You requested review by The University of Akron's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) of your research project entitled: *The Pedagogic Approach of Jaques Lecoq.*

The IRB conducted the research review and made the following determinations:

_____ Project found to be exempt of need for further review.
__X__ Project required expedited review conducted on 01/27/97.
_____ Project required convened meeting held on _____.

IRB review concluded that your research was:

__X__ Approved without further qualifications for one year from the approval date. Per federal guidelines, if you wish to continue the project beyond one year, you must submit a request for continuing review to the IRB. (Please request 60 days prior to expiration date.) Any changes in the original research protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
_____ Project is eligible for approval contingent upon your written confirmation of the IRB's recommended changes.
_____ Project was disapproved.

Please retain this letter for your files. If this research is being conducted for masters thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Gerald M. Parker
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

pc: James Slowiak
Lucinda Lavelli

# APPENDIX 2

## BLANK INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS: THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON SCHOOL OF THEATRE ARTS

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**The purpose of this form is to confirm your agreement to participate in the research project concerning the pedagogic approach of Jacques Lecoq being undertaken by Jonathan Becker a masters candidate in the School of Theatre at The University of Akron.**

The general purpose of this research project is to investigate the pedagogic approach of Jacques Lecoq.

As a research subject you will be asked to complete a phone interview and fill out a written survey of your experiences at the school. Either research method should take no more than three hours (combined time).

You will receive a research summary upon completion of this project.

Your participation may extend knowledge which may ultimately assist in a wider understanding of the contributions Jacques Lecoq has made to the theatre community.

There are no known risks involved with participation in this project. This project has been approved by the School of Theatre Arts and by The University of Akron's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (call Dr. Paul A. Daum at 330-972-5905 for verification). If you have questions regarding this project, you may contact me at 607-773-8246.

Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to discontinue participating at any time without penalty or prejudice. Your identity will not be revealed in any report or publication resulting from this project without your written consent. Confidentiality of project records will be maintained within limits of the law. You may choose not to write your name on the survey. We thank you for your consideration. Your participation in the study is indeed appreciated.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| **Name of Researcher** | **Name of Participant** |
| _____ | _____ |
| **Signature of Researcher** | **Signature of Participant** |

**Date:** _____

# APPENDIX 3

## TRANSLATION OF 1986 L.E.M. FLIER

**Translation of 1986 flier**

**L.E.M.**

***Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement***

The **Movement Laboratory (L.E.M.)** is an autonomous part of the International School of Theatre Jacques Lecoq, specially dedicated to the dynamic research of space and of rhythm, through the fine arts. It is about the discovery of the movement of colors, forms, structures and placement of this knowledge in the service of scenography. The theatre today cannot ignore the expression of its technical design. The actors play must be intimately connected to the scenographic space. The intention is not to construct sets like display cases and to make the actors move about within. The intention is to integrate the scenography with the dramatic play and to pursue a research in the direction of the theatrical image.

One can imagine:

a theatre without actors where only the space enters in play,
a theatre where the actor is a plastic element of the ensemble,
a theatre where the space would be a partner with the actor as in poetry,
where silence is the partner of the word.

The public of today is trained to see that which is in motion by the cinema and especially through television. It is provoked by a multitude of images. Visual communication has invaded all aspects of information. The eye is faster than before in grasping what moves, the "flash," the abbreviated suggestion, causes "tilt." This rushing is often to the detriment of something profound. That which moves is not necessarily that which is displaced and it is precisely in this that one can appreciate the dynamic of space. Calder's "mobile" is not interesting because it moves, it is interesting because it distributes within itself relationships of dynamic space that create moments of immobility charged themselves with a movement and a life comparable to several sculptures following in succession.

Students of the **Movement Laboratory (L.E.M.)**, through a Workshop Practicum, construct using a wide range of materials (clay, wood, cardboard, paper, iron . . .) "objects." In the first part of the course, these objects are created based on themes using the human body as a point of departure.

Constructing the space: of the body erect
of the walk
of push and pull

This relationship with the body is essential. The body through imitation discovers, before rationalizing, a dynamic sensation with which it can better analyze future discoveries.

Miming is doing with the body, in order to intimately be familiar with what comes profoundly from within, the rhythm and the forces which organize and record living things and their actions such as the arrangements within an inner space and within an outer space.

In the second part, students explore the domain of passions and isolated dramatic states, such as: jealousy, pride, fear, anger . . . and their representation in forms, colors, and structures.

They discover the angles of jealousy, the rises of pride, the recoil of fear, the tensions of anger, etc . . .

In the third part, students enter into the world of the poets, musicians painters and create a plastic representation based on their "mimodynamic" structure.

Finally, the Movement Laboratory culminates in personal projects given as a visual presentation created by the students:

a public expodrama

The situations are presented as scenario. The writing is based on the space, on form and on rhythm, not carried by any particular discourse. They are placed in a constructed space:

portable structures (*d'architectures portables*)
living walls (*de murs animés*)
a sculptural obstacle course (*de parcours plastiques*)
the play of plains and colors (*de jeux de plans et de couleurs*)
habitable structures (*de constructions habitables*)

Action, speech, and music intervene as part of an integrated ensemble.

**The Movement Laboratory (L.E.M.)** meets twice a week:

- one session on the body in space held at École Jacques Lecoq, taught by Jacques Lecoq
- one session of workshop practicum at l'A.P.E.M. (Association pour l'Etude du Mouvement) taught by Krikor Belekian, architect.

**The Movement Laboratory (L.E.M.)** is open to all interested parties (architects, painters, sculptors . . .).

# APPENDIX 4

# TRANSLATION OF 1988 L.E.M. BROCHURE

## Translation of 1988 Brochure

## L.E.M.

### *Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement*

**The Movement Laboratory (L.E.M.)** was created in 1977 following a course taught by Jacques Lecoq at l'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts to architects, in collaboration with Krikor Belekian.

It is a place of research open to those interested in the relationships between the human body, architecture and the theatre.

We study and construct scenographic spaces.

The course is addressed to:

Scene designers
Architects
Actors
Directors
Choreographers
Stylists
Designers
and
Creators of Spaces

### THE HUMAN BODY

The **L.E.M.** pursues a knowledge of movement in its dynamics (rhythm, space, force) and in its dramatics (passions, conflicts, combats)

One studies the physical actions of the human body in order to better understand the interplay of the forces governing a structured space and recognizing its tensions, sense of pushing and range.

We discover the movement of color, then move to the dwelling place; the space of the passions.

The different experimental objectives realized are:

- the spacial representation of the walk
- a constructed representation of the body and the face
- a linear gauge indicating the colors of the human body

- sculpture of calm
- the plateau of human passions
- etc.

## COLORS

All structured space acts upon he who lives, and provokes within himself emotional and physical states of being, as if all sensations, sentiments, and passions searched to find a habitable space.

All bodies plunge into a space constructed for them. The space, of course, obliges the body to do so.

## PASSIONS

Human passions move about in well defined places as if they were living organisms. They have a structured form; they move at a certain speed, emit sounds, draw back, lean in, pull or push.

They inhabit "a house" in order that they may live better: a welcoming scenic design.

## MOVEMENT

The teaching of the L.E.M. proposes a pedagogical approach which engages the human body as the basis for all observation. Support for this is found through mime which permits a sensing, through the imitative body, the world around us in order to gain a better understanding.

All observations concerning the real are reenacted before being translated to design, to form, to color, to structure, . . .

The experiences which the students live, develop a feeling for the space and sharpen the students' regard on that which often appears like a void as they discover, in apparent immobility, MOVEMENT.

The three sessions of L.E.M.:

1. Developing in the body a feeling for the space
2. Studies and Structures
3. Projects and Realizations

## STRUCTURE

The L.E.M. concludes with the realization of individual design projects. The subjects are chosen from life (situation, event, history, landscape . . .), or are inspired by works of drama, poetry, music, art, . . .

The studies of L.E.M. end in an exposition-performance, where the results of the experimental work are presented as different theatrical offerings (portable structures, theatre of light and color, living walls, constructed passions, dynamic masks and costumes, . . .)

The laboratory is open to all original creative works which have a relationship to theatre and architecture.

## ARCHITECTURE THEATRE SCENOGRAPHY

The reference to calm is indispensable as one reaches for a better understanding of the dynamics of the passions. It is the reference point that provides a better understanding of movement.

Everything tends toward a balance and towards a searching. Movement is born of an eternal compensation for the unbalanced.

Man has the need to place movement into a series of attitudes in order to grasp what were his first impressions of it. He chooses the most noteworthy moments, then, unsatisfied, he divulges other more secret ones, and thus, little by little, if he so wishes, he penetrates the movement in all its depth on a continuous quest.

# APPENDIX 5

## TRANSLATION OF "THE 30 YEARS OF L'ÉCOLE JACQUES LECOQ"

**Jacques Lecoq**
**30 Years of The School**
**1956-1986**

## The 30 Years of l'École Jacques Lecoq

The school celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this month, December 1986.

Different places have marked the significant periods of its evolution since 1956, inspiring each time a deepening of its teaching.

It all began at 83 rue du Bac where during a period of 12 years we built the foundation of the great school that it is today. Following this period was la rue de la Quintine where we stayed for five years, including a year spent at the Théâtre de la Ville. We were searching for a house of our own. Again two years in a temporary space at the Centre Amèicaine before finally finding a home.

Ten years ago we moved into 57 rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, into a vast structure made of wood and glass twice blessed by history: the Christman gymnasium was built in 1876 for the gymnastics of Amoros, a pioneer of physical education in France and subsequently became the Central Sporting Club, the birth place of the great boxers of the thirties.

It is situated next to the pharmacy where Louis Jouvet worked and not far from the apartment where Jacques Copeau was born; number 76 of the same street. All of this near le boulevard du Crime where Deburau triumphed.

So much for the history.

During the past thirty years the school slowly developed progressively different *dramatic territories* which were explored through the actor-imitator's play *(jeu de l'acteur-mimeur).*

It created a coherent teaching based in movement and placed ideas contained in a pedagogy, at heart, very difficult and time consuming, culminating in the student's confirmation; an indispensable faultfinder.

This theatre school is not like the more traditional schools founded more or less on the interpretation of texts. Consequently, it is difficult to classify within preestablished boundaries.

It attracts many young actors from countries all over the world who, having had previous experience, desired a teaching that they could not find elsewhere. One which took place over a long term, was in depth, professional and technical. One which confronted their creative impulse and proposed a very divers approach to style without confining them to typical formalism.

The school exists as a collaboration between the professors and the students engaged in a vital confrontation, permitting a better grasp on one hand, and on the other, permitting the essential in order that one be able to defend later one's living intentions, those in art as well as in life.

During these past 30 years the school could not have existed but for the imagination and tenacity of an administration which has organized, day by day, navigating "the boat," keeping it from sinking.

The teaching is presented as a voyage in stages, following a progression which inspires the student to discover new paths. The need to create is provoked through a curiosity aroused by the exercises.

What is expressed on the surface must be in relation to what is happening within. It begins with the "motors" and "desires" that recast themselves in new forms and it is there where they find their justification. The danger is covering the play of the actor with stereotypical styles, prepared in advance "*a la manière de*."

In so far as I have worked with movement--"everything that moves"--the body appeared to me as a fundamental in actor training and I was unable to consider it as a simple instrument. Acting is a physical act; gesture and speech issue from the same dynamic.

I searched to recreate nature and its rhythms, to mimic it. I approached from within character, situation, words, and texts until I understood the meaning of imitation. Mimicry was at the center of all artistic creation.

Picasso, as a spectator of a bullfight, received physical impressions. The moving attitudes of the toreador and the bull mimed within. He transferred their inner movement placing pen to paper. Another would just as well have translated them in gesture or in music. The source was the same: a hidden gesture.

It is the mime described here that the school has developed to service theatre training.

Currently, all over the world we can see schools incorporating a few of our pedagogical discoveries. The path is always long before things begin to move. Each time new ideas appear they are received in a great desert, then, years afterward, they take on great importance and even become a method. It is at this moment one must become vigilant. All over again one must fight to denounce the uniforms that abandoned the spirit that inspired the first discovery and are no more than a semblance of its original form.

The clowns which began the school in 1962 have found their way around the world. The search for one's "personal clown" was met by the young with a profound enthusiasm. It combined a need to show off in complete freedom, such as we are with the need to be seen without distrust. These young students, not all of them actors, brought laughter through

failing at what they didn't know how to do. The curiosity of the public waned quickly. Today the wish to be a clown remains, but the little red nose is no longer enough. Being a clown is a difficult job that demands skills beyond just the talent of an actor.

In the world, the mime follows movement and progresses to clown. The same phenomenon has taken place in The United States and in the East.

Expressing oneself is not forcibly an act of creation. The emitter-receptor canal of you and me is quickly saturated; it is quite the same for the psycho-drama and the search for oneself.

In 1974 another dimension was desired. Born in "*le jeu de la folie*" out of tempting the verticals of mystery, came the buffoons, who took from the clown their collective aspect, an element that was to their advantage. The clown found himself alone, more responsible. The carnival in Europe recaptured interests.

This need to believe in something bigger than day to day reality, without it becoming an escape, filled the students with enthusiasm just as the café theatre began to make use of parody and discourse.

Not far off, the return to melodrama announced itself, placing once again in a place of honor great sentiment, moral ideas and justice.

An so the school moves:
The commedia dell'Arte discovers the comedy that invented the masks.

The Pantomime of words, which moved to images and discovered a language was adopted by the storyteller.

The chorus organized the crowd and the space of tragedy which is occupied by the buffoons and awaits the arrival of the hero.

Song raises the passions of melodrama.

We continue to work with the neutral mask, with the calm, and the balance of the plateau which establishes the *point fixe* necessary (that moves always a little in a humor of depth) always referential, indispensable to all derivatives.

The variety show appears diversifying the comics and inspiring the cabaret.

The *"melomime"* is kindled by the language of *les bandes-mimé* and the reduction of action-images to communicate the story.

Little by little came the day of spacial transitions, the passages where the different dramatic territories are organized: Tragedy-buffoons, melodrama-clowns, etc . . . It is the time of a mixture of the arts, each rejuvenated by its contact with another in a theatre that unites them.

The movement laboratory L.E.M. (Laboratoire d'Etude du Mouvement) builds the space of the colors, the passions, those of the body and of the interplay of objects, toward an experimental scenography that places the tableaux outside of the frame, uniting the theatre and architecture.

The approach to poetry, to painting and to music enriches the teaching and permits the students to develop their artistic intelligence through the pedagogy of "*mimage.*" The study of text and voice work benefit the research of L.E.M. which brings to light the dynamics of the voice and the word in a space that is the body.

The international character of the school is a great wealth and shows the profound and elementary values with which each country can recognize itself as in a common denominator.

And so, here they are, after thirty years, some established facts of theatre training by a school where the students form throughout the world a creative "circuit"; they recognize each other through a common aim they discovered here together.

*Jacques Lecoq*

*December 5, 1986*

# APPENDIX 6

# TRANSLATION OF "A LETTER TO MY STUDENTS; 40 YEARS OF THE SCHOOL"

**Jacques Lecoq**
**A Letter To My Students**
**40 Years of the School**
**1956 - 1996**

People who know me and have not seen me for a long time often ask: "So what are you doing now?" I respond, "The school, of course!" I see in the eyes of the questioner a certain deception and lack of enthusiasm for my response. "You're still teaching?" "Yes every day, as long as there are students."

Looking within, I ask myself the question: How is it that I have been teaching for such a long time without having the impression of doing the same thing, each year feeling the same sense of joy as the school begins again. It is there, with my students, that I am best able to realize the quest that urges me on to a further understanding of movement. The dramatic creation and exploration of different territories has allowed me an extended observation of the phenomena of life; imagination has become the connection to reality. And so, season after season I make the voyage "alone" in contact with the students, who are each year different from the last, and bring to me the echo of their time, showing me the path of their generation.

I have always thought that the students don't need a professor to be of their time and that we, the professors, should bring to them something of permanence. I began teaching with students who were my own age and in forty years they have not changed. I learned while teaching what I didn't already know; little by little, over the course of time, I have deposited into the memory of my body gestures and attitudes that are essential and demonstrate the laws of Movement that direct the organization of life and of the arts . . . the teaching of the school.

I built my teaching as one builds a cathedral, stone by stone, with different interrelated spaces, following a pedagogical path which is enriched each year; where the voyager is guided to discover by the mimetic body, the play of the theatre.

*You who have been my students, what are you doing now? Where are you? You who have spent two years, one year, the period of a workshop and for some, three years, you who have become the bearers of a dream that the school has helped to build, how has life received it? What has it made?*

*Do you remember the first day?*

Many came a long distance to do the school, from all over the world, Asia, America, Africa, from Australia. They discovered France and Paris and have become colleagues of the English, the Spanish, the Scandinavians, etc, and the French.

All considered themselves competent in the French Language, but in fact, many didn't understand and discovered this during the course.

It was necessary to find lodging; numerous sleeping bags stayed several days in the foyer of the school.

It was necessary as well to visit the office to confirm registration before beginning the course. ("It hasn't arrived at the bank yet!" "All I have is Pesetas!") In short, many problems to resolve.

Then at 9 o-clock the meeting of the students and the professors. They wait in the foyer of the school, seated wisely on the benches in a great silence, nobody knows each other yet. We, the professors, are meeting in the office on the second floor, waiting for the signal to begin the reception. We avoid coming down as a group so as not to appear too formal; in any case there is a shared nervousness.

I introduce the professors, present the pedagogy and the course program. We form three groups and the students introduce themselves. On this same day they will begin their course and be given the first *Auto-cours* theme. Herein they will have their first experiences in creation. Fifteen days is necessary for the school to take on its work rhythm, then the voyage can begin.

*As you know it is a pedagogical group that sustains the courses, decisions are made as a group: the trial trimester, the selection for the second year . . . We meet often to speak about you.*

*I give you a "diploma" at the end. (What will become of it? framed, hidden, lost?). Giving it to you is an important act for me; later, by the paper, the body will be reminded.*

On the last day of the school it is necessary to depart, leave the house, leave also friendships and lovers. Other adventures await them far from this protected place where they will have to fight to defend the discoveries they have made at the school but also to bring to life practically the profession of which they have dreamed and be able to live.

We end with a celebration; we talk a lot, exchange addresses and projects. It will be prolonged by other parties elsewhere, late into the night, with laughter and tears.

It is difficult to leave. Some escape the noisy reunion and go alone in silence into the *grande salle* to feel for the last time their *espace de jeu*; one walks slowly around the perimeter of the room, another lies on his back in the very middle, eyes closed. Images, sensations accumulate in this time that carry them away.

What will become of them when they return home to their family, in their country. What demands will be placed upon them. "So, what have you done at Lecoq's''? They will have a difficult time responding to those who have not had the experience; it will be difficult

for them to explain why they have mimed oil, a tiger, the color yellow, why they have embodied words, worn a neutral mask on their face, when they had left in order to do theatre.

I would like to be hidden in a corner in order that I might hear talk of the school.

But it will be said also that they have developed in their bodies a multitude of "physical circuits." These will keep the memory when they play on stage, there where it is necessary to be *juste.* They also will have discovered the great territories of theatre that have as their names: melodrama, commedia dell'Arte, tragedy, clowns and buffoons. They will have gained access to constants that continue in a theater of human nature: great sentiments, passions, states of need that engage a play of parody and mystery, of comedy and drama, of the grotesque to the fantastical. It is a time of mixing together all that is proposed to them, for the creation resembles who they are.

The students leave the school as they knew it, stopping there its image. They will evolve in their work and often don't realize that we too are advancing in our research and that other dramatic territories will be discovered.

*What are you doing now?*

*It is after five years that you will realize what it is that you have learned at the school.*

*It isn't the point to recreate identically what you have learned; this would be a mediocre transmission of the teaching that would quickly become a method. The school is first a human experience and artistic bearer of a poetry not yet written.*

*Where are you?*

I receive after many years letters that keep me up to date of their activities: " Its going well, I found my clown," "I got married," " I have a company," "I've joined the Comédie Française," "I've created a school!"

The students all over the world form a big family in which they recognize one another through a common language. Groups form, break up and reform in a great diversity of performance styles where the body is present, the gesture of immobility, silence and speech.

At the end of each year when the students have left, we are left alone, the professors, the directors, the administrators and the superintendent around the last bottles of champaign. We would like to leave with them to participate in the adventure of their work. After they have left we feel empty, but also a certain relief after having given much. Fortunately, a wave of new students will come to reestablish the lost equilibrium.

It is time to clean house, to fix things up for next year, a tremendous amount of work often ignored especially by those who have in their charge the practical daily workings of the school.

Wave after wave, year after year, the school and its teaching advances, each time renewed.

Today, the fourth of December, 1996 is the fortieth wave,

*Jacques Lecoq*

*December 4, 1996*

# APPENDIX 7

## LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

**Jonathan Becker**
**75 Mitchell Avenue**
**Binghamton, New York 13903**
**Phone/Fax 607-773-8246**

Prospective Participant
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Month Day, 1997

Dear Prospective Participant,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jonathan Becker and I am a 1988 graduate of École Jacques Lecoq. Currently I am working on a masters thesis at The University of Akron. The thesis deals with the pedagogic approach of Jacques Lecoq and as part of the research I am conducting a survey of alumni from École Lecoq. I would like to invite you to take part in the survey.

The survey will consist of a focused (phone) interview and a written survey. The purpose of the focused interview will be to gather information concerning personal experiences, personal impressions and to define some of the more abstract elements of the school. The purpose of the written survey is to ascertain: 1) The order in which exercises were taught and, 2) Which exercises were found in correlation with another. This information in combination with the personal responses to the focused interview will provide insight as to how the program builds pedagogically. Participation in the two phases of this project will take approximately three hours of your time.

The project is being carried out in order to extend knowledge of Lecoq's teaching, to clarify understandings of what takes place at the school and to provide a tool for those currently using Lecoq's ideas in the classroom. If you are interested in the results of the survey a summary will be mailed to you upon completion of the project.

Anonymity and confidentiality of you, the respondent, will be protected throughout both the survey tabulations and ensuing publication(s) within limits of the law. Although participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may refrain from answering any or all questions without penalty, your responses will be appreciated, and will add to the validity of the study. There are no known risks involved in the donation of your time.

Enclosed you will find a post card. Please return it to me in the self addressed stamped envelope and indicate whether or not you would like to participate in this

project. If you would like to participate please indicate a time when I might reach you so as to schedule a date for the focused (phone) interview.

If you have any questions concerning this request you may contact either me, at (607) 773-8246 or my faculty advisor James Slowiak at (330) 972-5909. This survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at The University of Akron. Any questions regarding IRB approval, etc., may be directed to the Institutional Review Board (Attention Mary Dingler), Office of Research Services, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio 44325-2102, Telephone (330)972-7774.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Becker

# APPENDIX 8

## LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS CONCERNING PHONE INTERVIEW

**Jonathan Becker**
**75 Mitchell Avenue**
**Binghamton, New York 13903**
**Phone/Fax: 607-773-8246**

Participant
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Month Day, 1997

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. The questions listed below will be used to elicit responses in the focused interview. This is not a set outline of questions but rather one that is intended to stimulate discussion. I am sending them to you in advance so as to give you an idea of what I would like to talk about in the interview. If there are issues that you feel are important and wish to discuss that are not included in the questions please feel free to bring them up during the interview. Please allow sixty minutes for our scheduled interview.

The purpose of the focused interview will be to gather information concerning personal experiences, personal impressions and to define some of the more abstract elements of the school.

**Questions For The Phone Interview**

I will ask you to describe the following courses:

*Auto-cours*
*Analyse de mouvements*
Improvisation
*Techniques Appliquées*
*Approches des textes*
L.E.M.
Others not listed (all of our experiences will have been different)

Please describe exercises related to the mask work at the school.

What were some significant classroom experiences?

Describe the specific vocabulary used (favorite phrases used by Lecoq to make a point)? How was your work critiqued differently than that of your fellow students?

Describe the meaning of *Jeu* as Lecoq uses the term.

Describe the importance of rhythm in the Lecoq Training.

What does Lecoq mean when he uses the term "space?"

What is the importance of the mask training?

What are the strengths of the program?

What are the weaknesses of the program?

Describe how Lecoq achieves a well trained "Theatre Artist."

What do you think Lecoq's goals are concerning the student as an individual?

Do you teach?

Describe the elements of the program you yourself use as a teacher?

Where have you taught?

What kind of student have you taught?

Do you think Lecoq's work has effected theatre training elsewhere?

How?

Why?

Many of these questions will overlap as we discuss your experiences and thoughts.

Thank you again for participating in this project. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Becker

# APPENDIX 9

## LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS CONCERNING WRITTEN PART OF THE SURVEY

**Jonathan Becker**
**75 Mitchell Avenue**
**Binghamton, New York 13903**
**Phone/Fax: 607-773-8246**

Participant
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Month Day, 1997

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the last phase of research, The Written Survey.

**Enclosed you will find four items. The first is an example sheet and is labeled as such. The second item is a series of three sheets labeled First Year, the third is a series labeled Second Year and the fourth is self addressed stamped envelope for return of the survey. The sheets are laid out in a schedule format indicating the courses taught across the top and the week of the program down the side. I fully realize that the names of the courses may not reflect your experience at the school. To the best of your ability please indicate the theme of the course or the name of an exercise in the blank provided. In many cases there may be more than one theme or exercise per week. In some cases there may be a theme or an exercise that goes for more than a week. Please see the example sheet. I realize that it may be impossible for you to provide all of the information asked for or that time may not allow for a complete response. The most important information to me is the *auto-cours* in conjunction with the styles. If you can remember exercises but not the order in which they took place simply write no order at the top of the column. If you cannot remember the class the exercise took place in cross out the course category. The more information I have, the more accurate the picture. Please provide as much as you feel you can. If the class labels on the schedule sheet vary dramatically from your experience at the school feel free to change the headings. You may use the backs of the schedule sheets to provide any comments. If you have any questions please call me at (607) 773-8246.**

Go ahead and treat this work as we discussed on the phone. Please mail the survey to me by Month Day, 1997.

The purpose of the written survey is to ascertain: 1) The order in which exercises were taught and, 2) Which exercises were found in correlation with another. This information in combination with the personal responses to the focused interview will provide insight as to how the program builds pedagogically.

Thank you very much for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Becker

# APPENDIX 10

## REDUCED VERSION OF THE SURVEY GRIDS THAT ACCOMPANIED LETTER

| FIRST YEAR 19___ | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week | Auto-cours Theme | Improvisation Theme | Analyse des Mouvements | Preparation Corporelle | Style |
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |

| SECOND YEAR 19___ | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week | Auto-cours Theme | Improvisation Theme | Techniques Appliquées | Approche des Textes | Style |
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |

APPENDIX 11

LETTER SENT TO MR. LECOQ MAY 12, 1997

**Jonathan Becker**
**75 Mitchell Avenue**
**Binghamton, New York 13903**
**Phone/Fax: 607-773-8246**

M. Jacques Lecoq
École Jacques Lecoq
57 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis
75010 Paris, France

le 12 mai. 1997

Cher M. Lecoq,

Comme vous devez le savoir, je suis actuellement entain de travailler sur ma thése de maîtrise au subjet de l'approche pédagogique de l' École. Comme j'ai déjà dû le mentioner dans une de mes précédentes lettres, cette urgence de choisir d'écrire au subjet de la fonction de l'École vient de la frustration des mécompréhensions et des idées fausses dans ce pays à propos de la fonction du travail que vous avez effectué ces quarante dernières années. Mon souhaît serait d'arriver à concevoir un document qui aiderait à apporter un peu plus de compréhension sur ce qui se passe au sein de l'école, et pourquoi le travail est si important. Peut-être qu'à mesure que le temps passe, nous, américains, en viendront à une meillure compréhension de l'importance de saisir la dynamique du corps humain dans l'espace et que cette compréhension et fondée sur la connaissance acquise par l'experience du jeu de rythme et de mouvement, plutôt que sur la poursuite de théories intellectuelles ou analyses psychologiques.

Ceci étant dit, il pourraît presque hypocrite d'ecrire une thése sur l'étude de la pédogogie de l'École, puisqu'elle ne peut être comprise qu'â travers l'experience. Il me faut surmonter d'énormes obstacles pour essayer de traduire ma comprehension intuitive at mes impressions sur l'enseignement dans des concepts clairement définis et qui transmettent la juste image située dans l'esprit. Ce qui existe purement et simplement dans l'espace devient souvent encombrant et énormement complex ou superficiel quand il s'agit de fournir un explication écrite de ce qui se passe à tous les niveaux.

Pendant les quelques mois passés, j'ai interviewé des anciens étudiants avec l'intention de clarifier "intellectuellement" ce que je voulais écrire sur ce que je cherchais à comprendre. J'ai formulé quelques questions auxquelles, j'espère, vous prendrez le temps de répondre.

Pensez-vous qu'il y a des éléments spécifiques de l'entrainment qui peuvent être le clês d'une comprêhension du théâtre?

Plusieurs éléments me viennent à l'esprit, et à l'esprit de beaucoup d'autres personnes quand on parle de ce travail. Pouvez-vous définir ou parler du rôle de l'mportance de:

l'espace
le rythme
le jeu

Pouvez-vous parlez au subjet des relation entre l'espace, du rythme et du jeu? Pouvez-vous définir ce que vous cherchez dans le travail des actuers qui nous font dire: "C'est ça!"?

Par example, est-ce qu'il serait approprié de dire que c'est le moment où les éléments du corps et ses rhytmes de jeu sont connectés dans l'espace? Le moment où l'acteur accomplit un état constant de découverte de bonne volonté (quand il est disponible).

Pourquoi commencer avec le corps en mouvement comme base de compréhension plutôt qu'une analyse intellectuelle ou psychologique?

Vous serait-il possible de me citer brièvement les philosophies élémentaires en rapport avec la pédagogie de l'École? Si oui, quelles sont-elles?

De quelle manière espérez-vous que le traivail de l'école, va contribuer au théâtre? Pourquoi l'École?

J'espère que vous aurez le temps de répndre aux questions. Si vous n'avez pas le temps d'écrire, auriez-vous l'amabilité de m'envoyer un fax, et peut-être pourions-nous envisager une heure où je pourais vous les poser au télépone.

Je sais que vous êtes trés occupé, cependant, j'apprécierais même une réponse partielle. Afin de ne pas dépasser la date limite du projet, vous serait-il possible de m'envoyer vos réactions avant le 25 aout. Le plus tôt serait le mieux, mais uniquement si c'est possible.

Je vous remercie infiniment pour le temps que vous m'accordez, et pour avoir considéré ma requête. J'espère que cette lettre vous trouvera en bonne santé et dédié à des activité qui vous comblent de joie, ainsi que Fay, et tout le corps enseignant.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Becker

# APPENDIX 12

## REPLY FROM FAY LECOQ CONCERNING INTERVIEW

ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE DE THÉATRE

JACQUES  LECOQ

**Mr. Jonathan Becker**
**c/o Landis & Co.**
**12 Chelfield Road**
**GLENSIDE, PA 19038 - USA**
**Fax : (00)(1) 215 887 3376**
**(1 page, celle-ce)**

Paris, le 12 septembre 1997

Cher Jonathan,

Suite à la réception de tes derniers fax et en référence à ton courrier du 12 mai dernier concernant la possibilité d'interroger M. Lecoq par Téléphone afin de conclure ton travail de thèse sur l'approche pédagogique de l'éole, nous sommes au regret une fois de plus de ne pouvoir donner accès à ta demande. M. Lecoq, qui a dû subir une opération chirurgicale durant l'été, n'est pas encore en mesure, malgré son bon rétablissement et du fait par ailleurs de l'important travail de préparation de la prochaine saison de cours, de soutenir un tel entretien.

Cependant, et c'est sans doute là la meilleure nouvelle que tu puisses attendre, nous savons désormais que son livre, consacré précisément à la pédagogie développée au cours des deux ans de l'école sous le titre "Le Corps Poétique," sera disponible dès novembre prochain aux éditions française Actes Sud.

Nous pourrons te le faire parvenir dè que nous le recevrons - débout novembre - et respecter ainsi tes délais quant à la remise de ton travail : tu aurais ainsi un mois pour le compulser et en tirer le réponses à tes interrogations, bien mieux sans doute qu'au cours d'un entretien oral, pressé par le temps.

En espérant que cette solution te satisfasse et en te remerciant pour tous tes efforts et ton travail autour de l'intérêt que tu portes à l'enseignement de Jacques Lecoq, nous te transmettons, cher Jonathan, nos sincères salutations.

Fay LEES LECOQ,
Directrice

57, rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis - 75010 Paris - Téléphone 01 47 70 44 78 - Télécopie 01 45 23 40 14

APPENDIX 13

INTERVIEW #1

Interview #1

J - Why did you decide to do Lecoq?

B - I went there because I was working with a man in Portland Oregon who had gone to the school and had also done quite a bit of teaching at the school for several years named Richard Haze Marshall. He's an Australian. He came to Portland Oregon and started a school and I studied with him for about a year. But then I decided I really wanted to get it from the horses mouth. Since I was seriously considering theatre as a profession at the time and --what was I?--I was, about twenty and a sophomore in college. I went to get it from the horses mouth.

J - In those first few weeks or months did you feel as if you were getting what you had gone to find?

B - Yea, well I actually went early to learn French and imbibe the French culture and things like that. So when I got to the school I was a little bit less culture shocked than a lot of the other foreigners and the other Americans. The school at that time was at the Centre Amèricaine, up on the left bank, and I felt very much that I was getting what I went there for. I was excited to be there. You know the atmosphere at the school is somewhat tortuous, grueling in some ways.

J - Can you be more specific about that?

B - When you first go to a place like that you spend a lot of time in self reflection. You're trying to sort of make your mark and learn the language, the culture, the ideals of everything that is going on. Including the language, the culture and ideals of the school and so you spend a lot of time thinking about the school, analyzing what's going on, group dynamics and learning the other students. For me it was an intense experience and not always pleasant but I did feel as if I was getting what I went there to get.

J - Do any particular courses stand out in your mind?

B - Actually a lot of them stand out. I associate the courses with the teachers.

J - That's fine.

B - Because everyone sort of had their very particular and eccentric way of teaching whatever the material was. You had Monica Pagneaux who was very good at the corporeal stuff that had nothing to do with theatre. It was just body work. So it was the simplest and most pure in some ways. We had a Portuguese guy named Eduardo who taught improv and movement analysis and I studied acrobatics then with Serge and of

course Lecoq had movement analysis and improvisation. During the first year is what I am still talking about.

J - Right.

B - Each of those courses had their strengths and their weaknesses. Lecoq was always, and still is, in my mind, the clearest, not only in his thought process and conceptualization but in his ability to communicate to other people. He is very clear. Whereas some of the younger teachers that I have mentioned had more of an agenda possibly. Maybe they were trying to find their own way. Their courses were sometimes more interesting but less clear. We would sometimes get lost a little bit. I remember trying to learn the "treatment." We had done a series of exercises and then you treat them. You add things. Nobody understood what the hell was going on. We couldn't make sense out of it. It was in the middle of the first year or maybe at the end of the first semester.

J - Can you be more specific concerning what you said about Lecoq being clearer in the way he communicates?

B - Yea. I think that Lecoq is a teacher by profession. I don't think he's a theatre artist. Whereas I think that the others possibly were or were other things. Lecoq lived to teach, to communicate it to other people. He is always searching for *le grande theme*. He's looking for the themes he really wants to focus on and then he communicates those themes and he always communicates them in a way that is very enthusiastic and very very broad based so that he doesn't . . . I don't even know how to describe this in words. To me he doesn't just put things, he doesn't just filter them through his own ego necessarily. He really has looked at life and he has this enjoyment of having made these discoveries. Very childlike. He communicates that enthusiasm to his students and in the course of communicating that enthusiasm he just really lets you discover and lets you discover to the fullest extent that discovery. I think that's an incredibly difficult thing to do as a teacher. Ninety percent of the teachers in this world don't really achieve that. They don't allow students to discover. They don't allow students to take pleasure in their discovery. They're busy trying to teach a dogma. Lecoq has a dogma, it's not a dogma, it's a pedagogy. He is very clear about what that is. He brings you into that very softly, so that you discover it, can embrace it and take it on as if you were the first person in the world to learn some of those things.

J - Do you remember any of the specific vocabulary from the class work. Ways in which Lecoq would clarify or describe exercises. His critiques?

B - That's a good question. Do I remember any specific vocabulary? The vocabulary that I remember from Lecoq, in my mind, is the stuff that makes me kind of laugh. It was the stuff that was sort of the jokes. Like when he would say, "*C'est ça*" or "*mais oui.*" He

was very curt sometimes. I remember his laugh very clearly and how he would demonstrate something. He would never demonstrate something from the point of view of, "I'm an actor demonstrating this." He would demonstrate it from the point of view of look what I discovered. That was more evident in his body language. Well it may have been evident in his spoken language but I just don't remember it. I remember all of his Lecoqisms.

J - Earlier you mentioned that Lecoq didn't necessarily have a dogma but a pedagogy. Can you lend more of a definition to what you mean by, "He had more of a pedagogy?"

B - For me, a pedagogy is more like a philosophy, whereas a dogma is much narrower and more specific. Lecoq's philosophy is very broad based and much more universal. I'm not saying he's not without faults but his pedagogy was a way of looking at life and therefore a way of looking at theatre and at recreation. His whole thing was to observe, analyze and then recreate, improvise. To me, that's his pedagogy.

J - Can you describe the *auto-cours*? Was it different in the second year than in the first?

B - Oh, everything was totally different in the second year than it was in the first. In fact I was just reading my notes. I kept very detailed notes of everything that I did in the two years. In the second year he had moved into the new space. Into rue de Faubourg Saint-Denis. We were the first year of students in that space. I just read my notes of going in and discovering that space. In my notes it says that the entire atmosphere of the school is entirely different. We went from renting space in somebody else's community organization, the American Center, to Lecoq having his own space. The spacial change echoed a lot of other changes. It seemed to me that the faculty had even changed. The *auto-cours* were very different. First of all, there is a distinction that I always make between the first and the second year. The first year isn't really about theatre and the second year is. The second year being styles. All the *auto-cours* had to do with the particular styles and therefore we created mini theatre pieces. We did a wonderful melodrama I remember. We also did evening showcases. I forget what we called them. Once a month we would show a lot of the *auto-cours*. The *auto-cours* in the second year were performance oriented. They were much more rehearsed. They were much more important. In the first year they were much more for exploration. Some of them worked and some of them didn't. A much greater percentage of them in the first year didn't work from a theatrical perspective and were much more open ended. "The Great Event" was one of the early ones I think. You could do anything. You could create any kind of event. Because people came into the school with lots of different kinds of training and some really did not have a lot of background in theatre per say, they were always more sort of personal explorations. I think personal dynamics played a greater role in the first year of some people trying to assert dominance. There were more squabbles I remember, and dissatisfaction generally throughout the whole first year than in the second year. In the second year you were there because you were chosen. You were also there because

you were committed not only to your own career but to the school and to theatre in particular. A lot of people who were there for psychological reasons either dropped out of the first year or just didn't come back to the second year or weren't accepted or whatever. Does that answer your question?

J - Yes. Can you remember the *analyze de mouvement* courses?

B - Yes. I can remember them pretty clearly. One of the reasons is that I took a lot of notes and drew stick figures. After I finished Lecoq I waited some time but then became a teacher and I recreated the twenty movements that were the core curriculum for the *analyze de mouvements*. Later personal touches were added. I remember basic principles and his progression of learning all about weight and balance and extension and your limits and really filling space. Those physical dynamics of a body in relationship to space that are so very important. They left a very keen impression on me and formed the bases for my own pedagogy for when I was a teacher.

J - Can you elaborate on the concept of the body in space.

B - One of the chronic things that actors do, particularly American actors, is that they raise their arm but they don't really extend their arm. It's not straight. It's not dynamic. Sometimes it can be dynamic to have it bent, it really depends on what the actor is doing. Lecoq really has you look at where those extensions are, where those over extensions are and where is just right. Where is just the *c'est ça* of the movement. Where you can maximize whatever that expression is, for me as actor, it means that you can play to the back of the house. It doesn't mean going too far. Very few people go too far. Usually you are underneath it. Lecoq spends a lot of time with all of the different movements. "The punt" is a perfect example. Where it is all about extension and weight change. What your body is doing in space rather than mime. To me the illusion part of what he was doing was almost irrelevant. I would never call Lecoq a mime. In the French sense of the word maybe. Not for what it has become in America. It was about movement not about mime. Everything was about something else. If you were turning a little *baton* around in space three hundred and sixty degrees it wasn't really about manipulating a baton, we could care less. It was about how you are moving your hand in space to show that you are holding something. And it is just as applicable to me if you have an imaginary object as if you have a real object.

J - Can you elaborate on the *c'est ça* of Lecoq's work? This seems to be a predominant theme in his search for what does or does not work.

B - Yea. Lecoq is kind of a black and white sort of guy in some ways as a teacher. He doesn't really get into the grey area of encouraging you, like: "you're almost there, that's better, you're making progress, I see a difference." These are all phrases I would use in my teaching in this country because you can't teach via negativa in this country and get a

job or keep it. Lecoq was very black and white. Either you were neutral or you weren't. There was no gradation in between. "*Elle est la, elle n'est pas la.*" That is the same kind of thing as the *c'est ça.* When you finally get it it's this great rush. You usually know that you got it, Lecoq told you you got it and you usually got the reaction from your fellow class mates at the time you got it as well. I remember once at the end of neutral mask work when we were doing animals and I was doing a leopard or a black panther, it was one of those big cats. I could totally tell that not only did I have it in my body I completely had it in my face and in my eyes and everything else and they were all in hysterics, Lecoq as well, because he kept saying: "*Regard les yeuxs. C'est incroyable.*" That was the *c'est ça.* You were so inside the action that you were just there. That is probably the universal experience with Lecoq students. No matter who you were or what you did everybody had their moment in the school. I know at the end of the first year; I don't know if he still does this, this was in 1977, no I'm sorry it is at the end of the second year, he has a talk with you and gives you just two or three sentences of where he feels your strengths lie and what his memory of you is. I remember he sees me excel when I'm alone. That's Lecoq's way of saying that's when you really get it. The interaction with other people gets more complex.

J - Can you describe the improvisation classes?

B - The improvisation courses were kind of all over the map in terms of who taught them, how they functioned, what you did. There was an enormous amount of fear associated with the improv classes for me but I don't think that I'm alone in saying that. They were something you had to do but you dreaded it because sometimes you got up and fell totally flat on your face. Because there was no encouragement, if you were ninety-nine percent of the way there and you missed that one percent it was just as bad as being one percent there, missing the other ninety-nine. That was emotionally and morally very discouraging. How I got through that was by writing my notes. Keeping detailed descriptions of what happened. Sometimes there were too many of us and I don't think everybody passed in every exercise. If you didn't have the guts to get up and try an exercise then you blew your chance to do that exercise forever. There was a finality to that that I didn't like and when I came to teach in this country I didn't uphold it. I make sure that everybody passes every exercise. For example everybody does "child's room." He didn't care whether you got up or not. Once in a while when there was somebody who hadn't gotten up in a long time, he would sort of nudge them and say, "*vas-y, vas-y.*" Mostly, he left it up to the students. The improvs themselves are the meat of what Lecoq does, of what he teaches and of what you learn. The improve is much more complicated than everything else. Movement analysis is movement analysis, it is just the body and breathing but improv is where you are melding your entire soul, your entire body with every one else's that is out there with you. It is an incredible experience to improvise. I became so interested in improv that I became a real improv nut. When I came back to this country I was very interested in theatre sports, which is a totally different thing and has nothing to do with Lecoq. What does have to do with it is the element of spontaneity.

J - When you say the improv is "the meat" of the training can you be more specific about what the meat is?

B - Well the meat is in the aspect of the recreation. You observe then analyze, then recreate. When you are doing *personage* for instance, and you are in your character, you can walk around the room trying to find various aspects. The proof is in the pudding, this is a performance medium and I'm an actor and when I get up on stage to improvise that's where the rubber meets the road. It is, in my point of view, where, not only at Lecoq's, the most inspired performances come out of, is through improvisation. It is difficult to preconceive brilliance but is not that difficult to sort of bump into it when your body's ready and everything else is ready. The improvs in the second year are essential. Commedia is improvisation. That's all it is. You have to discover your own clown, your own buffoon, your own harlequin, all of your own masks. You have to discover your own personal style. You can't do that in movement analysis class, you can't do that with Monica, you can't do that in any of the other classes. A little in the *auto-cours* maybe. It is in the improvisation where your own sense of style emerges and you realize here's what I do best, here's what I want to do better. It is why it is such a terrifying thing. It is because it is totally you.

J - Can you describe the importance of the mask work at the school?

B - I think it is very essential. The mask work feeds into everything else. A mask is not something that you put on your face. It is something that you *porte* that you wear, that you fully embody. It is not so much bringing the mask to you but that you go to the mask. Lecoq uses the mask as a metaphor for the voyage that you go on while you're at the school: as a means of transformation, to get you outside of yourself. To get rid of all the *petite* me-isms. The little *petite personage* that you have inside and to force you to express yourself in a different way. The mask is a fabulous tool for that. That's what Copeau discovered. He started with paper bags and it evolved into the neutral mask. It is not inhibiting, it's freeing in a lot of ways. You start with the neutral mask then move through all the Basel masks and then the utilitarian masks in the first year working on a very simple level without the voice; to work on your ability to express and transform yourself and utilize everything that you're learning. In the second year any masks that are used such as the clown nose and the commedia masks are for the purposes of that style and as an extension of the work that you did in the first year.

J- Can you describe the concept of *jeu* as Lecoq uses it.

B - I can but I am not sure I can do it justice. I think the *jeu* for him is the spirit that motivates you to do. The clown doesn't just look at the piece of paper. The clown looks at the white square of paper on the ground with all the awe and amazement that he would look at an earthquake or something that was even more enormous with absolutely no preconception. So the *jeu* is that core motivation, spirit, kind of environment that comes

from inside but then gets embodied in the way that the actor or the character is dealing with the world. Whether it is with themselves, with other people, with objects or with space. There is always a sense of play and discovery. I think *jeu* is very close to discovery. It is not quite the same thing but it is close to it.

J - What about rhythm? Is it an important concept to Lecoq?

B - Yea. I do think it's important to Lecoq. I think it's a theme. For me it wasn't one of the major themes of the school. Also for me the word rhythm means musical time. It has a different connotation. I would call it more momentum in a way that the rhythm of what anyone is doing on stage is important. You can build that rhythm and take it somewhere. That for me is momentum. Its a question of building rather than rhythm. For me it was not a question of listening to a rhythm or trying to discern a rhythm or trying to recreate a rhythm. It was try to just allow whatever natural rhythm would come out of the *jeu* out of the discovery. To build on that and make sure you didn't squash that with any preconceived ideas. I remember in a commedia class a Japanese student who was quite a well known movie actor at the time and he did a wonderful rhythmic piece with the harliquin mask. There was a rug on the floor. It was in the little room. I can't remember if it was wood or linoleum. His bare feet were making a noise on the floor and when he got on the rug there was no noise. The whole little *jeu* was about him discovering that his feet were sometimes making noise and sometimes they weren't. It involved rhythm specifically and he used it really well but the rhythm came out of the play not the other way around. Sometimes the word rhythm has preconceived connotations.

J - Can you describe the second year of the program in terms of the study of styles.

B - Lecoq has continued to evolve all of this stuff over the course of many years. Certain things are important at certain periods of time to Lecoq. The reason I think I went to Lecoq was because clowning was it for me. I loved clowning. I had a great clown. It got further refined at Lecoq. I couldn't believe the process of discovering your own clown. I was little disappointed when I discovered clown was becoming less and less important at the time I was at the school. Buffoon was new. I think we were the second year that we did buffoon. Buffoon was kind of starting to subsume clowning at the time. We started with *pantomime blanche*, then went into charlatans, then discourse then buffoons then tragedy and then we did clown. I know that in more recent years he has done some things that we didn't do at all. I think he has done more with text. There are a couple things that we didn't even get close to. I enjoyed the second year much more than the first year. It was a smaller group, it was more tight knit. Everybody was already comfortable with the language or comfortable with the fact they didn't know the language. There were all those kind of things. You were able to sink your teeth a little bit more into the work. I was a little bit less intimidated.

J - Can you speak to the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

B - The strengths of the school is Lecoq. He has spent all of his life researching these themes and he has come up with some very unique and interesting findings and they are very useful findings no matter what you do with your life. That is the number one strength of the school. The other teachers, sometimes they're a strength, sometimes they're a liability. I don't think Lecoq has spent enough energy and time training other teachers to teach in the school. I think sometimes he's let teachers teach and has given them a little bit too much free reign to do whatever they wanted and while it makes it interesting and varied, when they're not good teachers, it really sucks because you spend a lot of time with them. The other teachers are a strength and a weakness. The only weaknesses for me in the school; and others will probably talk to you more about this because I really don't care. A lot of women feel that the whole school is sexist and Lecoq has a hard time letting women wear the commedia masks. That he is gender biased. I actually never experienced a whole lot of that. I don't think it's Lecoq any more than it's European and French. I'm an aggressive woman and if I wanted to wear the masks I just bloody well did. Nobody ever objected and said, "you can't do that." When you're sending Americans over, there is a cultural shift that is very hard to warn them about. Some people react really well to that cultural shift and some people don't. I think another asset to the school is its internationalism. When I was there it was about one third American, one third French and one third everywhere else. That was a wonderful experience and something not to be missed. I think the space is an asset. It is a very inspiring space to be in.

J - What does Lecoq want the students to take away from the school?

B - I think he wants them to take away an understanding of the human being and the human psyche in space. The importance of discovery and an ability to observe analyze and recreate. To look at the world with new eyes and to understand how ultimately theatrical almost anything can be if you look at it with an analytic approach. I don't think he has ulterior motives from an egotistical basis. I hope that he is pleased with the success of his students but I don't think this is his motivation at all. His motivation is to impart that same sense of discovery that he feels. That has amazed me from the moment I met him. Here is this man, how old did you say he was?

J - Seventy-six

B - Seventy-six. I have done a lot of teaching in my life. I'm forty-three and I don't teach any more and I don't want to teach any more. I don't have what Lecoq has. I can't continually inspire that wonderful sense of discovery and not get burned out. Lecoq, however he does it . . . he doesn't burn himself out with it, he doesn't get old with it, he doesn't get sour with it, he is not cynical about it, and he is not naive about it either. He is just *la*. He's there. He sees it and he enjoys the wonderment of it. I forget what all that is in answer to.

J - Me too. What kind of an effect has his training had specifically on other training programs in this country?

B - I wish I could speak more to this. I don't think that his training has had a great deal of effect on anything in America. I know that there are Lecoq grads out there teaching and you can tell when you look at ArtSearch at the movement positions which are few and far between. When you look at them they want Lecoq and it is always spelled wrong. They want neutral mask, they want clown and nobody knows what it is and what they're asking for. I think it is very difficult to integrate Lecoq's kind of work into an academic training program in this country. In a conservatory maybe. People don't give a shit about movement in this country. They care about acting and movement gets relegated to a secondary position whereby you have acting teachers, movement teachers, voice teachers and maybe you have improve teachers. Acting is the only place where it is all brought together. Lecoq is never considered in this country. People don't know who he is. They can't spell his name right. That makes me so annoyed. Heads of programs say we need to get a Lecoq teacher in here to kind of take care of their body. I resent that attitude and it's widely prevalent and it has been a thorn in my side for a long time. It is one of the reasons why I left the profession. I can't stand it anymore. I'm tired of it.

I think he has had an indirect effect. Everybody has heard of Mummenshanz but nobody of Lecoq. I don't think his students have been very good about naming him. He is not a commercial sort of a guy. I went there twenty years ago and his name should be much more common among theatre departments now.

APPENDIX 14

INTERVIEW #2

Interview #2

J - When did you do the school?

T - I was there in 1976.

J - Now you had done the evening course. What was that specifically?

T - That was like a crash course in the school. It was great for me because I had already studied with a prof. from the school in the states. He had started a mini-Lecoq's in Oregon and I went through his program. It was just amazing. It was a total clone of the school. All the exercises, both years. I went through Richards school and had taught at Richards school. I helped him to found a company. I was on his board and everything else. I had just finished undergrad and was burned out. I thought, oh God, now I'm going to go do two years of Lecoq? He had just started his night school and I thought, this is perfect. So I went to that. It was ideal, it was great.

J - So was it a condensed version of the regular school?

T- He took it from us. Sort of looked at who we were and went from that. You know your first question . . . It's sort of funny . . . you know Richard, who I studied with was a dancer who had busted his Achilles and had gone to Lecoq's. Richard was good for me because he was a very formal and strict type of movement person. Great acrobat, very very nice clown. In terms of movement studies, ferociously accurate. Much more in some ways than Lecoq. When I got to Lecoq he said, "Oh chill out. *Le jeu, C'est ça.*" That's everything, the play, you know? He really nailed me on that. Which is where I had begun anyway. That was my interest and Lecoq reminded me of that. It was ideal for me. I had had a lot of strict movement training, I had done all the mask stuff, I had done all his improvs, everything. I then got a really strong dose of Lecoq.

J - So he taught the entire evening course? It was just with him?

T - Yea. It was just with him.

J - Was it set up along the same format of the day program?

T - Yes. It was like a mini-version of the school. Start with neutral mask, do the improvs, Basel mask, the styles. We didn't do all the styles. There just wasn't time. It was very nice to just work with him. The class was very small so we got a lot of personal attention. It was nice to go through the same material again but from his point of view. It wasn't as intense and you didn't get the benefit of the rest of the faculty as you do in the day school.

J - Can you describe some of the classes? Let's begin with the *auto-cours*.

T - Let me think. My background is so huge at this point. Separating it out from what I have done since and what I did before is all a blur.

J - Can you speak about the concept of the *auto-cours*?

T - The *auto-cours* s is the research project that you work on for a week or two weeks and then present. Is that what you're talking about?

J - Yes.

T - Well I have always seen the circle as observation, improvisation or rehearsal, I guess, and then performance or presentation. That is what I like about the *auto-cours*. You are out there, you observe a situation, a space or a ritual. Whatever the theme is and as a team you have to figure out how you are going to put these observations together into a structure of some kind. In that process what you are doing is taking his work and building your own vocabulary. That is what I admire about Lecoq so much is that it is not about a formalism of his information. He's constantly throwing you back to your own resources and testing his information. I view it as constantly a test of his own process as well as encouraging you to go out and build your own vocabulary and method of working. Then putting to the test in front of your peers. Your peers being the mirror as well as him. All he ever said to me was yes or no, "*oui or non.*" Most of the time it was no. Except one day, I was so pissed off and frustrated and he said, "yes." That's the answer to the question. Does that make sense?

J - Yes.

T - I think that is why so many Lecoq people like to work together after the school.

J - Do you think it is a question of vocabulary?

T - Yes. Vocabulary and also a way of working. You have worked with so many different people and done so many projects together that you have developed this tremendous method of working with other people. When we've taught, that's how we have taught. We didn't call it *auto-cours* we just called it project, to Americanize it. That is the only thing in my head. I have spent so much time Americanizing Lecoq that in a sense my vocabulary has changed. What does *auto-cours* mean anyway? Do you know what the translation is?

J - A direct translation of *auto-cours*? I don't think you can translate it into English. I don't think there is one. You can translate the concept but I don't think you can translate the word.

T - There are some others I can't find translations for.

J - Can you remember any significant classroom experiences.

T- There was one where we had to do a *pantomime blanche* exercise. We had to come and do a news paper article in *pantomime blanche*. I had worked the whole bloody thing out. Every detail imaginable to mankind. Because I had had so much of his technique; quote unquote technique. Oh, he nailed my ass. He put so much energy into me. He bombarded me. He physically grabbed me picked me up and shook me. I was so flabbergasted. He almost threw me out and said, "Do it again now." I was so taken off guard by that energy from him that I did it again quickly. He sort of smiled and said, "There you go." His hands on work with me was wonderful. It was what I wanted. That to me, was worth the entire year. Just to have that one moment. I had worked very hard but I had worked too hard and come up with too much stuff. His energy at that moment showed me how much he deeply cared and how well he understood my problem. Again he reiterate, "The play's the thing, the *jeu*, always find the *jeu*."

J - How would you define Lecoq's use of the term *jeu*?

T - It's taking things far. Knowing how to take things far. Its finding that connection. So many of the first year exercises are about finding the play. Like the restaurant one, where you walk into a restaurant and you think somebody is connecting with you but actually they are looking over your shoulder at someone else. One person goes into a restaurant. That person has to set it up. What kind of restaurant, what kind of traffic patterns and everything else. He sits down, orders food, etc. Second person comes in respecting the space the other person set up. So it is a nice observation exercise. Then the first person looks in your direction and you, the character think that they are looking at you. They are in fact looking past you at another person. Whom they know and with whom they have played with as a child. They then start to act out something. Who knows. Something that happened as a child some game they played, how stupid they were. All physically, there are no words. How ridiculous it was. They have to build this, they have to find the physical language to speak this without illustrating. They then build this scene with the imaginary person until it is ridiculous. They're taking their cloths off, their building fires, their fighting, you know a Lecoq kind of build. Meanwhile, you have to go along with them thinking that they are really speaking with you. It is a very careful balance kind of a thing. It's ping pong. The person leading the exercise through their third eye sort of watches you, fans the flames, gets you engaged. It starts very realistically and goes through that Lecoq type build through all the different stages. They are leading you until you are making a complete idiot out of your self. You've gone to the same extreme they've gone to. When you are at the height that person walks over to you as if to say hello and walks by you to the imaginary third person. You then have to take the fall cause your embarrassed. So you have to go all the way down. That whole exercise, the whole improv is based on your ability to play. Your ability to accept, your

ability to take it far and then the ability to take the fall. Actually in some ways that's the hardest part. The exercise usually doesn't work until about the tenth couple has gone up and the class says, "Oh why didn't you say so." The Basel masks are a great introduction to play because they are so simple and basic. They play wonderfully and they're such a relief after neutral mask.

J - Do you remember how Lecoq critiqued your work or how he critiqued you differently than the other students in the class?

T - Again, because I came with a kind of, quote unquote, strong technical Lecoq background, he was always jumping on me as to drop that shit and just play, find the *jeu*. I must say that I never thought of myself as a good mime. The reason that I studied all this stuff is because I was a stage director and I wanted to find out more about movement. I had sort of discovered the power of movement but didn't have the vocabulary. I wasn't particularly adept at it. I really challenged myself to learn acrobatics to learn movement analysis and all that stuff. Richard was excellent. He wasn't mannered or mechanical or anything else. At that time I found it very hard to invent physically. Technically I was very proficient but my imagination wasn't so great.

J - Was your imagination opened at the time you were at the school.

T - Afterwards. I was so much in awe of him that that made it more difficult. Also, I was trying to understand the whole process. You know, like everybody goes through. It was murder or it was great. I was just trying to soak up as much as I could. It wasn't the full time course. I had so little time. I was lucky because I had so much of his attention that I just wanted to . . . I usually do this when I study. I just lay myself out raw. I try and get as quickly as possible to my faults. So I don't necessarily show my best side to teachers. I try to get the most out of them.

J - What do you think the strengths were of the program.

T - I think his whole process is phenomenal. In my own teaching I have often mucked around and changed the order of things, but so often I went back to his process as I remember it. In terms of doing the very basic stuff with people. In terms of doing the neutral mask work and then going into Basel mask work to support it. I just think it's a wonderful first year. The neutral mask is staggeringly informative. It's just amazing. And very tough to do in America.

J - Why do think that is?

T - Why is it? I think that the pedagogical environment in America doesn't understand the reason for it so they are threatened by it. They know it's necessary but they don't really know how or why. I think that American actor training . . . this is not always the

case . . . is so psychologically based that a sort of, quote unquote, anti-psychological approach is threatening to a lot of acting teachers. I think that if it is not supported in a context it is very hard as a teacher to strike out against that. Movement teachers generally don't have a lot of authority in programs. It's difficult. It depends on what level you're working with. Whether it is undergrads or grads, the grads are more ingrained and a bit more sophisticated, undergrads soak it up more because they are younger but don't really understand the, quote unquote, metaphysical ramifications of it. Nevertheless, I think it is profound. Lecoq, I think only works with people over twenty-one right? Or used to at any rate.

J- I think from time to time he does take younger people in the professional training program.

T - I used to teach Neutral mask to freshmen. I got in a lot of trouble for doing that. Mostly from the head of the program. So I waited to the sophomore year and introduced them to different concepts. I mostly taught stage combat because I'm also certified with the Society for American Fight Directors. In the guise of combat and acrobatics I introduced the Lecoq principles of economy and engagement. So when it came to neutral mask it was less of a shock. Less abstract to them. It is very abstract to American students. "Oh, how does this relate to acting." That sort of dreadful question. I say: "It doesn't. It relates to being human." I tend to think that American actor training often relies so much on text and text analysis that the idea of observing real life seems alien. Lecoq's system is so non-aesthetic. His system is based on observation of human actions. I'm sort of doomed. I always think that way. It doesn't matter if it is theatre or if it is design or business or anything.

J - Are there any weaknesses of the Lecoq program?

T - Oh Nooo. None, absolutely (laughter). Well, people often say of Lecoq actors that their work is so light. That has sort of puzzled me. Maybe it is because they have misinterpreted clown, because clown is of course highly emotional.

J - Why do you suppose it is that many of the groups coming out of Lecoq don't, as you say, create work with a, quote unquote, deep political, emotional or philosophical content?

T - It's too much fun. It is. For me, it's a marvelous sensation to perform in the styles because it is so personally based. Based on my person rather than having to interpret an extent text. Which is a whole skill that I respect but I really like the idea of the *auteur*, you know? The author or the actor as author and I think through those styles you can do that. It doesn't necessarily lead to great playwrighting but I think, hopefully, the quality of the performance can make an equivocation. It presents a challenge and is not always the case. I was always told I was a much better performer than a writer. My performance

was better than the material. I think that that's a shame. If my material had been better I might have been more successful. It's very tough to write for a Lecoq style performance. As a weakness, at the time I was there there wasn't enough emphasis on writing. That just answers your question about *auto-cours*. Which is what you really had to do in *auto-cours*. You know, that bridge back to theatre is a tough one: a) because of the resistance of legit theatre's to these kinds of ways of working.

J - How is the aspect of improvisation integral to the program?

T - Well, it's funny. I adopted another kind of improvisation along with the Lecoq style developed by Keith Johnstone. I found a lot of parallels actually.

J - Can you describe those parallels?

T - Although Johnstone is highly vocal in his performance style he starts with body. Very clearly so. His status analysis is quite profound and is based on physical presentation. That's a real bridge right there. Lecoq's improv is profoundly pedagogical in that he's working with your perceptions of communication and dramatic communication and human action. When I think about Lecoq he really is a pedagogue so his improvs are leading you to learn lessons that lead you to deep understanding of self in a performance situation. So they don't necessarily get immediate results. They hit you a year later. I think his improvs are very precise in terms of supporting vocabulary that I think you need for mask. Getting you to a very heightened awareness of your partner in the stage space. To rhythmical connections to things. His improvs are quite extraordinary. The rhythm comes up time and time again in my head.

J - What do think the importance of the concept of rhythm is to Lecoq? Is this a term that you remember Lecoq using specifically?

T - No. It is a term I find myself using. That must be his voice. After neutral mask, let's say we are working in Basel mask and I'm trying to coach people, no maybe I'm speaking about clown. Sort of at the end of the whole process. It's you and the student. You and the knowledge of the student and you the teacher are just as naked as the student. In terms of, yes you've got all this vocabulary, but if it's not working you throw it all away. What do you say? How do you help this person? And invariably, how I see the play happening is that they bump into something and they have to stay with that something. They have to risk that something leading them into a brick wall or off a cliff. You can see it. It is sort of a spark. It is determined by a rhythm. Maybe they pick up a book and the book wavers in their hand and you know right away that if they don't stay with that waver they're in their head, they're onto the next idea and they're editing themselves. All that internal shit. If they are, quote unquote, in that moment, the wavering of the book, the waveringness attracts them and they try to discover what the waveringness is. So they keep doing it. They push it. That is Lecoq. Push it, go further,

take it further, keep doing it, push it further go, go, go, keep doing that. To the point where it makes sense. To where you get feedback from the audience I guess. To the point where you know you are sort of in. That's where I see it more clearly. To where it is purely a rhythmical thing and it is not conscious rationalist. It is not even necessarily emotional, although it expresses itself emotionally and in turn it feeds back into the character as a clown for instance or a mask or whatever. The character then absorbs that rhythm. It becomes his mobious strip. It becomes an internal thing and an external thing. It is very difficult to explain. When the actor catches on to that then it is what you are trying to bump into and make yourself available for. American acting teachers would say that that is just being in the moment. It is more so with Lecoq. You take things much further. That is what I remember him saying all the time is, "take things far, push it, go further, always go further, take it far, take it far, take it far." On the outside what he means and I understand this very clearly now having taught this stuff for so long, because a lot of American actors just don't take things far. They're good, they're very clever, they'll get something but they'll stop and go onto the next idea. Done that, go on now. Instead of having the courage to stay with that thing and explore all of its ramifications. That's when it becomes marvelous you know? For me anyway.

J - Do you remember or address in your teaching the space? Lecoq's use of the term *l'espace*?

T - Ahh, it's a flat world who needs space. It's too big anyway (laughter). I do a lot of action reaction games. I don't know whether it was Lecoq or Richard Haze Marshal. I think it was Richard Haze Marshal. He had me play a lot of space games. So I invented a whole bunch. I do a lot of experiments. It was the last class I taught after twenty years who broke this rule. Without fail. A group of people doing a sculpture exercise, will always present it to the audience in a proscenium style. It is difficult because sometimes I would set them up for that. I would position them surreptitiously around the room and they would still do that. It seems to be a natural instinct either of humans or of people who want to be actors. They just don't understand that there is any depth of space at all. Lecoq thinks backs are beautiful. I think his whole game is about architecture. Not just about architecture of space but that the voice is an architectural phenomenon. I was always using sound and breath as a part of the architecture of the body and architecture of the space. To me they are all one in the same thing. The dynamic line to a body in a room is just essential to understanding action and I think that is right at the core of what Lecoq is all about. A body in space with breath and dynamic line. What is that and how does that communicate? That is absolutely essential of all of his analysis of work and play and improv and everything. The Basel masks are so architectural. It is such a wonderful fluid way. That is why it is so extraordinary. On one hand he can work architecturally and analytically and on the other hand he can work on the level of pure theatrical play. He can bring those two and meet them in the middle. I think that's fabulous.

J - Can you speak at all to the concept of the actor-creator or the whole theatre artist as pertains to the Lecoq training?

T - In some ways it's implied. It is part of that whole circle. Observation, improvisation presentation, back to observation again. Building a vocabulary. Going through that line of development, you develop all the skills you need to build things. Because you are always working, always within an economy of means then it is immanently possible to make things. By habit of working in the school you build those muscles to where it's very natural to go out and make things on your own. Whether that makes a whole or complete theatre artist or not I don't know. It depends on what you mean by that. I think sometimes that can almost be crippling. Because when you're hungry for that, it makes it difficult to go back and work in legitimate theatre. Which is so hugely architectural and encumbered with a lot of media. It is a difficult question. It depends on what you mean by a whole complete theatre artist. I guess I think of a lot of Lecoq people doing a lot of alternative theatre. I don't know whether that is being a complete theatre artist or not.

J - Let me back up a little. Can you talk specifically about some of the movement training on a technical level?

T - I think of the twenty movements. The *vingt mouvements*. I'm really a movement bozo. Those were extraordinary. Their specificity lead me to be able to observe. To look very closely at human action and see it precisely. I was tired of all the theatrical speculation I had to go through. As a director I was very frustrated because I wanted a specific vocabulary to work with actors. Especially with staging or movement, gestural vitality. I did my thesis on a guy called Peter Hanka who was very interested in the politics of human relationship through gesture. When I first started to study Lecoq movement analysis I thought it was marvelous. It was such a specific vocabulary and it was the specificity that really interested me. It was well taught. I was taught to fear the strictly mechanical. It was an intellectual interest that then lead me back to myself. I had been an actor too. I was a comedy actor. Character acting. When I started to play with the vocabulary and I could see, it opened me up. I was so much less bound. I had been a successful actor. I'm British originally and so I have a good handle on text. But when I was on stage I had this peculiar feeling of being locked inside this bubble. It was very frightening to me and the more successful I became, the more I got from the audience, the more trapped I felt. When I studied Lecoq movement I discovered a lot of my own short-comings and problems. In turn I was also given a vocabulary to deal with them. It was like magic. It was like a door being opened. I stepped through and it was a remarkable discovery. Especially rhythmically. I was very trapped in personal rhythms that worked well. I was type cast in these comic little roles. Fine, I had a great little personage going. The movement analysis gave me a way to break down my own characterological traps. Very specifically. So I wasn't lost. I had a hand guiding me through this personal madness. It was tough work and that mirror is very hard to look in. This gave you a place to go that was specific. Also the method of discovery . . . the discovery of these

physical truths was not, "Copy me. Here's the way of doing it." Not like dance. You know what all this is about. That is the thing that amazed me. It was knowledge that I had had but was lost and re-given again. Marvelous. Just a beautiful circle of teaching and understanding and discovery. Then you can take ownership in a very natural way. Brilliant!

J - Where have you taught?

T - I've taught everywhere. Underneath bridges, in the basement of churches, Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, Mexico, Canada, America. Mostly America. On the west coast when I first came back from Lecoq's. Proposition 19 really wiped me out, boy they're really paying the price for that right now. My first real professional gig was at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. Then I went to New York to pursue a professional career as a comedian. Then I taught part time, at an academy in New York, I was a guest artist at Brandies, it's a long list. We did that for eight years. And then Carnegie Melon for eight years. Over a time I was able to work out my Lecoq process and when I got CMU I could really put it into high gear. Develop a four year program based on Lecoq stuff. The school Richard Haze Marshall had was good but I think a little too Lecoq for it's own good. He should have Americanized it a little more. That is what I like about the D'elle Arte school in California. They have pretty much Americanized their teaching and chilled out a lot. I'm not a purest. I don't know many Lecoq people who are purest. I shudder at the thought. I think Lecoq does too. I think he's always trying to get people to reinvent themselves and him too.

J - Do you think that Lecoq's work has influenced work and training elsewhere?

T - I know in England definitely. In fact, what's happened in England is that he has such an effect there that there is a backlash. Almost negatively. Because people are sick of bloody Lecoq stuff now. I can't verify that because I haven't spent much time there. But that is what I hear. Oh, certainly, you mention movement and Lecoq is always mentioned in there somewhere. I think it is very thoroughly represented in American training all over the place.

J - How do you think it is perceived or understood?

T - I don't think it is understood. People know it works and therefore they grab it. Movement training in general is misunderstood. People see it as mystical. The whole bloody ball of wax is misunderstood. Michael Saint-Denis really understood. You know he founded Julliard and the training program at the Guthrie. I got a much more relaxed sense there. But they are not in it as a University. They are conservatories. The problem at a university is that you have a very logo centric academic environment and anything physical, put it in the sports department. Also this culture has a very strange relationship to the human body. It's a cultural thing as well and I think it is hard to gain legitimacy as

a movement teacher in academia and that hurts the profession a lot. Students pick up on that so why should they take it seriously. But it works and you can see it. What it really surprises me is that I've gotten a tremendous amount of feedback concerning the physical training of my students, audition after audition, production after production. Throughout all of that no recognition at all or verification of the work. I think that drama is driven by the word and if an actor is strong physically it threatens that perception of what theatre is in this country.

APPENDIX 15

INTERVIEW #3

Interview #3

J - Why did you go to the Lecoq School?

D - I was studying and performing mime over a period of years. First in college and then afterwards. The very first person to teach me knew about Lecoq and almost everyone else who you talked to or asked for a mime school. There was no other school. I say mime on purpose here because that's all I had heard about at that point. So I kind of had that in my mind and at a certain point when I was between work and school and had a little bit of money I thought about going. At that point, by coincidence, through a friend I met somebody who was there at the school. He was in between his first and second year. He sat down and explained the school for me. It turned out to be not at all the school I expected but much more what I was interested in than an actual mime school. That was the clincher.

J - I would like you to describe the various courses at the school. Let's start with the *auto-cours*.

D - The *auto-cours* was basically homework that was presented at the end of the week. He would assign a theme. Something usually related to what we were working on at the time. We had to prepare something. Sometimes I remember it was quite specific in its structure and sometimes it was quite loose. It was just a subject or a theme or something. Mostly they were group things, not always. We were supposed to work on it during the week and present it to him at the end of the week and then we'd get a critique. I think it served a couple of purposes. One, of course is to work together and the other was the middle ground between doing an improv on the spot and doing a full performance. This was sort of a semi-prepared improv that would get critiques after a certain amount of work but not as a finished product.

J - Do you remember any significant classroom experiences from your time at the school?

D - I could list a ton of them. Usually with each style that we worked through there was an epiphany. There was this moment when you had a major breakthrough. I can remember at a certain point saying, "Oh I get it, I've had this break through here so I can do all of the other things. I won't have to go through the struggle and the breakthrough again." In fact, it would happen each time. It would come to that point where I couldn't, you know, I didn't understand, I was frustrated, I didn't know what it was he wanted or what I was doing wrong and then, boom! That would be followed by a break through.

J - Can you describe specifically one of these moments? What happened, any vocabulary . . .

D - One that was particularly dramatic was when we had people there. I guess that is why it sticks in my mind. If I remember it was people from a well known Czechoslovakian mime troupe. They came into watch one day. It was the expressive masks, the character masks that we were working with. The exercise we were doing was one where he actually gave you a little story. You were being chased, you hid, you watched the person go by, you climbed a wall, you jumped down the other side of the wall and the person was there right next to you and you ran off. He would coach you through this. His pushing, nudging, prodding thing. When it came time to do it. He said, "who wants to go," and nobody wanted to go. He picked on me. Why he picked on me that day I don't know. He seemed to know somehow. Several times I'd say he knew which was the day to pick on me. He got me up and I ran through it and it was pretty lousy and I didn't know what I was doing. He just kept coaching me in his way. Usually you were in the improv doing it and he would just say things to you. Like, more of that, push it, or go or maybe more significant things until finally I was set free and identified with the mask and really just rolled with it. After that I identified with the masks. I knew how to get into those masks. That was a typical thing. That kind of thing would happen with every style. The first one for me in fact was the neutral mask with the elements. That was the first time. I was being American, very analytical, and I kept saying, "yes, but what am I supposed to be thinking." He would say, "you're not supposed to be thinking anything, just do it." Finally one day he was angry with me. I couldn't speak French and I was arguing with him through a translator. And he said, "stop thinking and just do it," a few more, not nasty remarks but ones that made me angry and ended by saying, "why don't you learn French anyway!" He was deliberately getting me angry. And it worked. The next time I got up angry and saying I don't know what the heck you want so I'm going to do something crazy, big, whatever. Sure enough, boom. It happened. Not that this works every time but he seemed to have a particular sensitivity as to when to do it.

J - Do you remember any of the specific vocabulary that he would use too, as you said earlier, push and nudge?

D - He had his own vocabulary which I wish I could remember more of. Also it is very hard to translate into English. Once you do they don't mean much. Some of the key words were, *sur le niveau*, you know, the *niveau de jeu*, *sur la dimension*, *psychologique*, *c'est trop psychologique*, another favorite is *téléphoné*, *c'est téléphoné* which I still haven't found a good one in English for.

J - Perhaps predictable might be a good equivalent.

D - I thought what he was saying by that was, you're not doing it, you're telling it to us. You're saying, I'm hungry, rather than being hungry. When Americans were doing their internal method acting thing he would turn a little movie camera and say, "Stanislavski, Stanislavski."

J - Do you remember what took place in the *analyse du mouvement* classes?

D - You know we had probably a little bit different courses than you. If I remember, we would have with Lecoq a technique course. I'm not sure whether it was called *analyse du mouvement* or *education corporelle*. No I don't think it was the *education corporelle*. That was our movement technique class. In the second year they added another one. It was taught by Monica. You know stretching, coordination and flexibility. Whereas Lecoq's was the, quote, mime course if you like. Lecoq was very systematic. It was different from any other mime courses because it was so systematic. He broke down the mime into various different levels. If I remember he started with *les efforts*, the efforts and he taught us basically how the body works with pushing, pulling, lifting, things like that. He did it more realistically than a Marceau teacher would do or a Decroux teacher. You did begin to understand how the body functioned to push. He did it through his classic movements. The gondolier, the punter, you know pushing the boat, the discuss thrower. He would show you how to stylize these movements but he was always connecting the efforts to the passions. Any movement that involved an effort also seemed to inspire or express a passion. He was continuously making the connection back and forth as to what it was as a purely physical movement and what it was as an expressive movement. Then he did manipulation which was the handling of objects as a separate section. He really broke it down. You would count each step with your hand. Relax, present, grasp, use. I think we mixed a drink in one hundred and thirty two counts or something like that. Including look. Look, approach, reach grasp . . .

J - What do you suppose his objectives were in breaking things down in that way?

D - I found a couple of really good uses for it. One is that you really understood the movement. If you wanted to do it as a mime you could break it down and use only what was essential to making it clear. If you stylized it you would have a really concrete thing to start with. The manipulation was very good for what Lecoq called articulation. That is, in your movements in general making your movements very clear and specific. So if you're using a mask or doing commedia and you're gesturing. The manipulation would help you to have your extremities, your hands, your finger tips, everything very much alive and expressive and in touch with what your doing.

J - Earlier as you were explaining something you said, "quote, mime." Can you explain why you said, "quote, mime?" Why set it off that way?

D - Another thing that Lecoq did was to separate mime and *pantomime blanche* in his teaching. The mime in this case is the illusion mime where you are using objects that aren't there, where you are creating scenes that use illusion. With the *pantomime blanche* he opened up a much wider approach to the problem of telling a story without words. With the pantomime there was definitely an emphasis on telling the story. You were actually speaking to the audience as it were, rather than just acting out the story having

the audience watch it. You used every means that you could. So you used mime if you wanted, you could also use and manipulate objects, you could use sound. Through all of that he opened up the whole idea of expression in the theatre other than words. He really opened our minds to all different kinds of possibilities using the theatre without words.

J - Can you describe Lecoq's use of the word *jeu*?

D - Literally, of course it means acting. Which is a lousy word to use for it. Which is too bad because it takes out the idea of play. In general that is what I would call it. He developed more work around *le jeu* I think after I was there. When we worked we didn't have any specific exercises or improvs to explore *le jeu*. He had one very very good phrase that he said one day and again it would be impossible to translate well but summed up a lot of important things. He said, *"avec le pantomime c'est le geste qui est en jeu, avec le clown c'est le personage qui est en jeu, et avec le commedia c'est le jeu qui est en jeu."* One would say with the commedia that it is the acting that is in play or the essence of the style. I can't say too much more than that. He really didn't isolate it as a concept.

J - Did he place an emphasis on the importance of the space.

D - Funny you should say that. No, and I deliberately noted that. Kind of ironic that he now has this whole architecture thing. I came from something of a dance background and noted that he did not deal with space from an American modern dance point of view. We really thought about space a lot. He did not and I noticed it missing.

J - Do you suppose at the time it was something that he had not yet begun to work with?

D - Well I don't know what he eventually did with it. I can think of one good reason it was different for me, maybe he was working with it more than I thought. I was used to working with it a lot. But the European concept of space and the American concept of space is totally different. Europeans are much more used to working in small spaces, social crowding. Whereas the Americans . . . having unlimited amounts of space is the essence of our existence. American modern dance is sort of based on that in a way. One thing he did do a lot was, in improvs, make use of confined spaces to provoke conflict. Like putting everyone in a small train compartment. I can remember, not the specific moment, but that, gee, he doesn't talk much about the use of space here.

J - What about rhythm? Was it an important aspect of the work?

D - Yea, it was. Even work with a metronome sometimes. A few specific things I remember he did with it was once he used it when we were learning manipulation. He would have us get up and do a manipulation exercise and he would put on a metronome and we would have to do it on the beat. Or play with the beat in some way. It was a

tremendously helpful exercise. Instead of being constraining it was actually freeing. He also had exercises of being on the beat and being on the off beat and playing back and forth between those things. Walking and so on. Also he would have us do exercises with the rhythms of styles of theater. For example, when you were playing on a masked level of theatre, he would say the rhythm was slower than the natural rhythm of play. He would play with the metronome and show us this so that we would get the feel of that.

J - Have you yourself done any teaching?

D - Yes.

J - Under what circumstances?

D - Just about everything. Mostly adults and semi-professionals or professionals. The most significant teaching thing I have done was a summer international school in Italy specializing in Clown, mime, mask and circus techniques. We did that for fifteen summers. There we were working with people who were very much in the profession or heading in the profession of this kind of independent theatre.

J - Can you describe specifically any of the elements of your own teaching that you have drawn directly from your experience at Lecoq?

D - Lecoq has certainly been a starting point for almost all the teaching that I have done. Certainly the concepts. The approach to the clown, the mask and the commedia have all been involved in Lecoq.

J - Can you be more specific when you say concepts? Can you describe conceptually the Lecoq training say, in reference to the commedia?

D - Commedia is a bad example because it is one that I drew a lot from later stuff I did after the school. There are a few basic concepts that work in all of the styles. One is the idea of identification. That you become the mask, you become the character, you become the element, you become the clown as a total physical emotional thing. However, you want to put it. Rather than as a reactive thought process as in the method. It's total, a very physical kind of phenomenon. You feel it in your body it's not a thought process.

J - Going back to Lecoq. You did the school 1969-1971. What do you think his objectives are concerning the students as individuals?

D - I'm not quite sure I get the question.

J - Why have a theatre school?

D - That's a hard one to answer. Well, that he might actually want to change the theatre. He didn't speak of that but his work was revolutionary enough that I would say that he would certainly want to influence the theatre and make it more physical, visual and organic and fundamental in a way. I would say that he has a specific pedagogical interest. I think he really likes, is fascinated and challenged by the pedagogical question, "how do you get at these experiences. What improvs and techniques can lead to the students understanding and ability to do clown.

J - Can you define or describe that pedagogic approach?

D - With each style it's somewhat different. Like the quote I gave you earlier about pantomime the clown and commedia. First of all the essence of the clown is the character. That's a pedagogical concept in itself rather than the essence of the clown is the gag. Another discovery as the essence of the clown character is failure. The moment of failure. People who do clown sort of know that instinctively but to use it as a pedagogical concept to discover the clown in a person is major. The idea that the clown character comes out of you personally rather than you looking around you at other clowns and making it up from an external point of view. What somebody actually described as cookie cutter clown. Which a lot of people who come out of Lecoq actually teach because it is very scary to sit in a room with a group of people who you don't even know and think that you're going to be able to find the clown that comes out of them in a given period of time. There was something else in my mind about the clown that was important. Oh! I know what it is. I think another thing that fascinates him as much as puts down the *jeu psychologique*, one of his criticisms is, "*c'est trop psychologique*," he is fascinated with psychology. People told me that what got him started, and this is pure rumor, but I'll pass it on because it seems to fit. What got him started in the theatre was that he was involved in sports and he was interested from a psychological point of view what sort of people chose what kind of sport. Almost as if he used the sport for the metaphor for the psychological traits. Again that's heresy, but you could certainly see that in all of his work. That he is interested in let's say the external or physical metaphor of an internal psychology.

J - Can you speak more specifically to the pedagogical approach? Perhaps the suite of events as pertains to each style.

D - I'd say the only thing that I noted is similar in all of them is that the grasping of the style is based on the experience of total identification in some way which is beyond . . . which one simply cannot get at through a rational understanding or logical approach. You can't go through it as a process of the mind and get there. Each time I would grasp one style I would try to approach the next style with that same logic. I would say, ok this is what happened last time I can just do it this time and I won't have to go through my frustration and crisis. But it wouldn't work. He would immerse you in the problem so deeply that at some point out of a combination of his guidance, your exploration, your

frustration, if you like, you would discover the experience yourself and have it. He could not pass on the experience to you in that sense.

J - Can you describe the differences between the first year and the second year?

D - I always used to say to the people who left after the first year that's too bad because the first year takes off all your old cloths and the second one puts on your new ones. If you left after the first year you were walking around naked. The first year was very much, I wouldn't call it a stripping down, I would call it a letting go of a lot of things, of opening up, of getting in touch with the basics. The neutral mask sort of got down to some very basic experiences and concepts and ways of doing things on the stage that came from a very organic basis let's say. There wasn't a lot of material in the styles we did in the first year that I think are directly performable. Possibly the expressive masks or the larval masks. He really didn't work much towards performance in the first year. The second year you worked with styles where I think you really explored styles and ideas I think you can really begin to use on the stage. Think about what I'm going to do on the stage, how I'm going to express things on the stage and stuff. The second built up much more your tools if you like.

J - Are there any other thoughts that come to mind that we have not discussed that you feel might be important?

D - The only thing that comes to mind and may not need emphasizing, but that has always been important to me is the creative aspect of the school. It really was a school from the very beginning which let you know or was based on the idea that let you know that the person who was performing is the person who is creating the material. That is a specific approach to theatre and specific kind of theatre. I think it was not necessarily revolutionary in Europe at the time. There has always been that kind of theatre but I think in the world in general it is a statement Lecoq definitely made and is important to make, that this is a significant kind of theatre. That kind of theatre is sort of pooh-poohed as street theatre, folk theatre, whatever, but in fact is the origins of the rest of it. The literary theatre was built out of that. Nobody has built up the importance of that kind of theatre the way Lecoq did in these last whatever many years.

APPENDIX 16

INTERVIEW #4

Interview #4

J - Do you remember what led you to the school?

B - I was at the University of Minnesota in the B.F.A. program for acting and being a very disgruntled student. Not being very happy with what I was getting. A man by the name of David Feldshuh taught a class. He had worked with Lecoq at a master class. I think he was doing that at Yale at the time. I'm not sure where, maybe Harvard. From a four week course with Lecoq he was teaching this class. I was very excited about what he was doing. He said, well why don't you go to France and study with the guy and get the full two years. I didn't think about it much and what that really meant. I was excited about the class and I was able at the time to financially swing it so I just picked up and went.

J - Do you remember upon your arrival what your initial impressions of the training program were?

B - Oh yea. I got to Paris in the beginning of September and panicked because of the language. I had had high school French and couldn't really speak it. So I enrolled in the Alliance Française.

J - Sounds familiar.

B - Fay Lecoq had written saying, "Don't worry about the language. I'll be in class translating for the first couple of months. Well, we never saw Fay. So, there we all were those of us who didn't speak the language very well and Lecoq would get up and he'd lecture about French theatre and French actors. All these people I knew nothing about. So I couldn't even reference it from the little I could pick up. So a lot of what he said in the first few months I'm sure I missed. I remember that. Then I remember the whole gist of the program was to work on breaking down the actor physically. Getting rid of all of your preconceived ideas. There was a lot of individual work. I was alone in Paris. It was a rough time. I remember a lot of people couldn't deal with it. Lecoq kept saying I'm not interested in psychological stuff and of course that's where everybody was. Dealing with their own psyche and how they could deal with being torn apart, for the most part living in a culture that wasn't their own, being away from family and friends. So it was hard on people. I know I would not have stayed had I not had a good friend back in the U.S. who wrote to me and said you've got to stay, hang in there. I also remember I had a great High School program in theatre that was based in a lot of improvisation and a lot of what Lecoq did at the beginning. I said well why do I need this I've already done this. What am I here for? I'm paying a lot of money. So it was a rough first three months. But it was great at the same time and I'm obviously glad that I did it.

J - Can you speak about the various classes you had? Let's start with the *auto-cours*.

B - How would you like me to talk about it. Would you like to hear what my perspective of it is now or how I reacted to it then or both?

J - Yes both. Why don't you start with what your reaction was then and then we'll move to what your thoughts about it are now.

B - I had a couple different reactions at the time. A lot of the time I loved it because you were given a chance to really work with people. It was pretty exciting and also painful depending on whether the groups came up with ideas right away or whether you struggled with it and came up with nothing. It was always a challenge in that respect. I also remember thinking as did a lot of people, that this is a way Lecoq has of taking a lot of money from his students and then having the students teach themselves. A lot of people in the beginning were a little upset about that. As first year students, I think we had him at the time maybe three hours a week. We really felt that we wanted to have him more of the time. Obviously that wasn't going to be in the cards. It was probably one of the best things he does with his students actually. The whole idea of working on something and showing it at the end of the week and critiquing it. If you were lucky enough to be somewhat successful that he would critique it and not say, No, wrong sit down." I think that personally I tended to be really successful with it so it was a real good experience for me most of the time. It's obviously, I think, the core of what he teaches. The whole idea of learning about your own creativity and what you have to say as an artist and a writer and an actor. That has definitely shaped my career in the theatre enormously and it was also something that feeds right into what I wanted to be doing enormously.

J - What about the more physical classes? The *analyse des mouvements* or the *education corporelle*?

B - I just loved it all. Any thing that had to do with the body. I had been dancing since I was two and a half. I loved the acrobatics a lot. The analysis of movement from an academic point of view was very interesting and very exciting and when I teach or the company teaches we always do some of that. That was always boring for me. It was a little too academic for my body. Although she is no longer there I was fortunate to have Monica Pagneaux. Her series of exercises at the time were based in yoga and I had never done that. I remember the first few months with her thinking, this is ridiculous. I have a very physical body and I can do a lot of stuff but I can't do this. What's wrong with me? The whole approach at the time was to liberate your body and find what your body can do. Not try to push it into a realm of what somebody else has decided what the body should do. That also seemed to feed my idea of what should be happening too.

J - Can you speak specifically to some of the exercises you encountered as a student?

B - They always said I had a *corps du mouvement*. My body always understood often even before my brain did. I was fortunate in that respect. I know a lot of people

struggled with a lot of the stuff. I'm not sure what you're asking me. In teaching I have used Monica's exercises verbatim. So I know them all. Which ones would you like me to describe.

J - Lets take in the direction of describing significant experiences while at the school.

B - I remember that it went along in the beginning as getting rid of your preconceived ideas. A lot of people especially some of the women who had had a lot of dance and therefore had incorporated their body movement into a particular way of moving were always told don't do that and really trying to get rid of anything that was not a neutral quality. Then that would be coupled with all of our work with the neutral mask so that the body was just getting the body to a ready state and a state of energy and at the same time in a neutral body but not an empty body. Not an approach that would relax you so much or say nothing but a body that would say I'm ready to do something. You could always see that, when somebody was in that state. Most of the time you'd see it when we were doing the beginning class work with masks and you'd see somebody. Before you'd even put the mask on and turned around the teacher would say, "nope, sit down." Before you had even thought you had started something or somebody would turn around and you would go, "that's it!" Look how strong they look and how prepared they are for whatever is going to happen next. Immediately you were interested in what might happen next. You were as an audience totally brought in to the moment and waiting for what would happen and that was always very exciting.

J - Do you remember any specific vocabulary used in reference to those exercises?

B - I remember a moment when we were doing color. We had done all the colors. Somebody would be blue, somebody was red, somebody was black and nobody could do green. Everybody was getting up and trying to do it and Lecoq would say, *"Non, ce n'est pas ça, ce n'est pas ça.*" Then Avner got up and did green and Lecoq said, "that's it! *C'est ça, ça c'est du vert!*" And we all looked at it and went, "hmmm? Oh, we see!?" Some of it was just a mystery. The big thing was that Lecoq would say, "*Oui, c'est ça* or *Non, ce n'est pas ça.*" You're always looking for *ça*. He'd also say, "*c'est psychologique*." I'm not looking for anything that is psychological. I'm not interested in any of your personal problems. We are looking for something together here, we are looking for a new theatre here, we are looking for what makes theatre today. What is modern theatre was a big thing for him when I was in school. Especially when he got into commedia dell'Arte. What is commedia today? How does it work? Can it work? All the language was based on research I think.

J - Can you speak to Lecoq's use of the term *jeu*?

B - I think it is not an easy thing to talk about in the sense that it is very complex. A lot of it for me would be being ready for *jeu*. Being *disponible*. I'm not really sure what I would say. I'm not sure I know what to say about it.

J - Did Lecoq speak about the space?

B - All the time. He was starting to get into it more and more. It was right around the time I started at the school that he was beginning to work on the L.E.M. with the *beaux arts*. That he started to work with the larger masks and moving in the space. The whole idea, and it probably goes back to the neutral mask, the whole idea of filling the space. In the beginning that was a really difficult concept. Potentially for American actors, because so many people who had any kind of training from the U. S. were coming at it from a method point of view or from a very psychological point of view, an interior point of view. And here is this guy saying it's not about any of that. It's about being where you are. It's about being open to whatever is going to happen. It's about being in the space. It is about all of these things at least in the beginning that were coming at some of us and we're going, "what is he talking about." Then when it would happen, which is the beauty of his school, where you would get so much time to watch people work. If you couldn't accomplish it you would eventually see someone who did. Then you would go, "Oh I get it now." That whole idea of filling the space. That is something that our theatre as a company has really taken to heart. We are fortunate now to have our own space, but even before that, any time we rented a space we would make our show fit the space. We never performed in a black box kind of idea. It always used whatever was there. The building always became part of the show and the show a part of the building. Now we have a space that is totally flexible.

J - Has that changed your way of working?

B - It has changed our way of working in that it's a huge space. We have an old warehouse. We gutted a portion of it for the performance space so it goes up three stories. It's just a big empty space. Our shows have had to get bigger. The theatres we played in before could seat only around two hundred people. They were very intimate. We can still have intimate moments but they have to be enormous. It pushes us I think. I don't know if everyone who works with us feels this, but coming from Lecoq even as long ago as I did, it pushes you to that huge extension. That idea of universality because you can't be small. You can't just hide in your corner. It just doesn't work in our space.

J - What about rhythm?

B - A lot of the times when we talk about it is with people who don't have this kind of training. A rhythm that they would sink into would be a psychological rhythm. Which does not play for the most part in shows that we do. The idea of timing. Something that is easier to get across to our actors when we are doing comedy but even when we are not

doing comedy. Even so the whole idea of breaking a rhythm. Establishing something that doesn't repeat itself. You're constantly surprising yourself and your audience. That is something that we talk about all the time.

J - Going back to the classes. Can you talk a little bit about the improvisation work at the school?

B - I don't know how much you know about our work, but I can talk about it in terms of the last show we just finished performing. We did The Three Musketeers. The way we did that show is the way we would always like to be working but can't always work because of time money or whatever. We started out with the idea that we wanted to do our own adaptation. We went ahead and made an adaptation that was pretty much straight out of the book and then asked what do we want to do to make it our own. Then as a group, there are eight of us right now, we sat down and talked through the scenario. We got a scenario that we felt was pretty air tight. We knew that there were a few problems that would eventually have to get worked out differently. Then we started to write scenes and different people were working on different scenes. As scenes were ready we would get up on our feet and do it. Sometimes it would be the actor playing the part. Sometimes we'd switch roles to see what that would contribute. Then through that sometimes improvising a scene if we didn't have an idea through writing. We would go back and rewrite. We're constantly using the improvisation skills in a writing sense. I don't think we have ever done a show where we improvise on stage in front of an audience that much. Some of our comedy, when it's successful, we've been able to take moments and expand them. If a lazzi is going well then you just keep doing it and go on and on. As a group, improvisation is not something that we do in performance necessarily.

J - Can you describe some of the improvisation at the school.

B - I always thought it was a great opportunity and luxury to have such a captive audience and such great critiques that would happen all the time. No matter what we were doing. I can remember the first day of clown. It wasn't the first day. I can't remember exactly what lead up to it. It was one of the first days that Lecoq brought in all these trunks of clothing, hats and scarves and said, "Ok get dressed and stand up and say your name as your clown." How difficult that was for some people and for others how it was a snap because it was something they understood organically from the beginning. That was always a wonderful thing to see how some people with some things just clicked immediately and we would do something else and they would just never get it. Personally I always enjoyed working with people. I was always intrigued and excited about how one person would throw an idea out and another would build upon that and another would build on that so that you accomplished something that was much more rich and interesting than someone on their own creating something and that's why I'm one of the founding members of a company because that is something that we really strive to do.

Have an idea and build on it and have everybody throw out ideas. It was very difficult I think for some people to accept the fact sometimes their idea wouldn't get used or that somebody would have a better idea. My personality was such that it didn't matter to me. So I was probably a good match with the school. I was just looking for what fit best, what played best, what worked best. Where was that elusive theatre that Lecoq was always talking about that worked and where was it and where could we find it.

J - You had mentioned that one thing about the improvisation classes that was good were the "great critiques." Can you be more specific?

B - The things said always made it very clear. Why it worked or didn't work. I didn't always agree. Often with Lecoq I would not agree with something he had said about something. I remember at our three month review. You know, you go into his office and he says yes you can stay or no you can't and then he tells you why. And with some of the people he told they couldn't and what he said to them, I thought, this is baloney. Most of the time it was with foreigners and I wonder if some of his problem was in not understanding a particular viewpoint or a particular culture. He always said, "I'm a French guy and this is who I am. I'm not changing and this is my approach to the work." A lot of the time it was very difficult for some people, especially for a lot of the women. That was hard. I was always fortunate at that school because I could do crossovers and I remember when we got into the commedia he said well, women can't really do mask work. They are supposed to be doing the female servants and the young sweet lovelies and stuff. I insisted on doing Arlechino and he said, "that's Arlechino!" And that was incredible, obviously that made me feel good. But he would always tell the women you can't do it. He would always say don't even try. Often in the critiquing process he would critique a guy a lot more than he would critique a woman. That would be hard on people. I'm trying to be objective here and I know it sounds like I'm bragging but I was very fortunate that I could do a lot of the cross over work and could bring a masculine side to my work or at least a masculine side that he saw. His critiquing of me seemed to be very positive. It always clarified things especially in terms of watching. Somebody would get up and do something and he would say no and this is why. What would be hard was in the beginning when he would say no that's not it and you'd go, well what is? After a while you would start to see what it is. He wouldn't have to say a lot because it became so clear. Some of the other teachers I had were more verbal in terms of what they had to say about what was working and what wasn't working.

J - Do you think that Lecoq's work has had an effect on aspects of theatre training here in this country?

B - It may be starting to. I say that because I hear often that so and so went to Lecoq's and so and so went to Lecoq's and I think if you go and do that program and complete it that you could not have that effect your work. Whether you're performing or teaching or both or a writer. It is going to come through. It was a long time ago that I did the school

and a long time that it has been effecting my work. I think that's a good thing. I think that theatre in this country needs go through some kind of revolution and get shaken up a bit. Stop being so damn boring.

J - What qualities of the work do you find to be revitalizing?

B - I don't know how much of this is Lecoq influence and how much is just my approach. To me theatre is something that should be constantly in question and you should constantly take risks. It's an art form. It's not something that should be outright a financial venture, something you do for money or for fame. It's an art form. As such it constantly needs to go through change. With Lecoq we talk about what is theatre today? What's the change? How can it work today and what will it be tomorrow? If you do that and you are successful at it then your theatre becomes extremely exciting. You're constantly engaging your audience in something new and their being challenged rather than going to the theatre sitting down and going show me. That is something that we are constantly trying to do. Put our skills and our knowledge on the line and try to do something new. If we have done something in the past one way, we try to change the way we are doing it now. I think we're fairly successful at that. Not always. It is one thing to say that theatre should not really be based in finances but you can't really get away from that. One of the things we've done as a company is that we have retained control of the company. We are four artistic directors. The artists really control the situation where we work. Most other theatre is not like that.

J - Do you think that sentiment in terms of the artist being at the center of the whole process is something that grows directly out of the work at the school?

B - Oh sure. I think one thing that you don't want to do is compromise as an artist. I say that even based on the idea of a group of people working together where you do compromise because you are exchanging ideas and building on another's ideas and transforming your ideas. So there is that compromise or maybe transform is a better way of putting it. To not have the artist at the center--why--to me that makes no sense. Our theatre is a mid-sized to growing theatre in terms of our audiences and finances and we have traveled to other theatres in the country and it's pervasive. Boards are boards and unions. So many different aspects and where are the artists here.

J - Can you speak to the differences between the first and second year of the school?

B - The first thing I remember was how great it was to have Lecoq more. You always felt, well the master is really interested now. The first year was kind of a weeding out process. As the year went by it was pretty clear who he was interested in and who he wasn't. He never apologized for playing favorites. Never was a large person in that sense. Giving everybody a chance. The second year I remember being really great. I remember that it really focused on acting for us. That's what I was there for. The *auto-*

*cours* took a big leap forward. The things that we did. Going out into Paris, doing research and coming back and showing. Then he got into the *soirées*. That was always great, having an outside audience come in to see the work. It was the more successful work to begin with. The group in the second year was so cohesive and so talented for the most part that it was a real exciting process. So varied. My second year. Almost all of the people went on into theatre. Which I think is really an extraordinary thing. A lot of them are doing great things. The second year when I was doing the first year and people from my year created the Footsbarn Theatre in London. They're still in existence. There are people who went to Niagra on the Lake. Avner was in my class. Just a lot of very talented people doing very varied things.

J - Do you think the varied aspect is because of the cultural diversity of the school or is it inherent in the way Lecoq is teaching?

B - It's probably both. The fact that he just pushes and pushes you to get your creativity out. So, of course, if you are successful at that and you go out into the real world to do something, you've bought it. And that's what you want to do. Sometimes it leads you into straight acting, trying to go on Broadway, sometimes it leads you to starting your own company. More often than not you're probably going to find Lecoq people trying to create work and if they are not they're probably unhappy.

APPENDIX 17

INTERVIEW #5

Interview #5

J - Can you describe any significant classroom experiences?

D - I remember one class that stuck with me. The seven stages of dramatic tension class in which Lecoq gave us seven levels of tension and related it to seven styles of drama. That really opened my mind to style and the relation of the body to styles. That was one of those experiences that you experience first and then relate completely to a concept. Once you have that in your body it is no longer just an intellectual concept but something that you know.

J - What about the *auto-cours*?

D - I have vague memories of *auto-cours*. Lots of struggles and tension. I remember struggles of language and trying to communicate with each other. Struggles of culture and past theatrical experience. I'm trying to think of specific examples.

J - Do you have any specific memories of the improvisation courses.

D - Very strong. Specifically with Lecoq. He was the strongest teacher of improv. He had a grasp on everything I think much more than the other teachers did. I have memories of going into that class specifically when we did neutral mask work and this actually relates to connections between classes. Coming from acrobatics directly to improv. Having done all this work with front hand springs and going in to do neutral mask and finding that it is the same thing. That it's in the approach. Throwing away all your preconceptions and just going for it. You may land on your ass but you at least risked something in the process. You might be a little better in your neutral mask exercise and your hand spring the next time. If you don't you are not even going to come close to learning how to do a hand spring or the neutral mask if you don't throw yourself into it and trust that your body knows what to do in that sense. It was one of those associations that I made while I was doing the neutral mask and had that experience in the body having done acrobatics right before that.

J - Do you remember any specific vocabulary that was used, specific phrases?

D - *Null! Osez quel que chose. Disponible,* I think is very important. Openness, flexibility are two ranges of that word. It is hard to translate literally.

J - Can you describe what Lecoq means when he uses the term Jeu?

D - I can give you my interpretation of it. Literally it means play or game. I remember a lot of talk about *rejeu* and *jeu*. Replaying, or reenacting realistically something from real life. As if you had played a VCR back. I always saw jeu as taking those elements and

throwing them up in the air and expanding some and playing with them as if they were props that you could focus in on and accentuate. That is the editing process of the *rejeu.* Taking something straight from real life and then making a montage out of it. It has a lot to do with rhythm.

J - Can you expand on what you mean by rhythm?

D - I remember Lecoq doing an impression of a jazz band with his face. It had a very strong dynamic with changes between the dynamic and the tempos. I remember him trying to make a distinction between rhythm and measure. Not just simply being a metronome just counting out. That's not rhythm. Rhythm is a dynamic force.

J - Be more specific about "rhythm as a dynamic force."

D - My only experience is Jazz. A jazz combo playing together. It is something that I have never put into words. The image says more to me than any definition could.

J - What about space? Was it an important element in the teaching?

D - Yes, and that is one of the questions from your sheet that I wrestled with. I really could not define it although I knew it was very important. I think I had an understanding of it. I think he meant theatrical space as well as space that is something that is not abstract but very concrete. It has its own material to it. Someone in space affects the space. It was hard to separate how space is perceived by someone who is looking at it and a performer's perception of the space as they come into it. The performer affects the space more than they know in terms of composition and the space affects the performer as well as another partner on stage.

J - Can you speak about the mask work at the school?

D - It was shorter than I wanted. I wanted more of it. I think it helped a lot with the ensemble working together as a group. I think that was kind of a turning point at the school for the students . . . by covering up your face and having you act together without words and without being able to see each other practically, really developed a strong sense of each other on stage and working together in ways that go beyond speech and go more towards a kinesthetic awareness.

J - Define kinesthetic awareness.

D - In the sense that you are aware of each other even if you are not looking at each other and someone's movements on stage affect your movements even though you might not consciously be aware. You're reacting and acting in a spontaneous non-autonomous way. I have senses of, you know, someone sits down and you sit down on a bench and they

move their hand and you immediately react to their hand moving by moving your hand in perfect timing without really being aware that they had done that. And yet there was less messiness. People didn't move at the same time. There is a strong awareness of each other.

J - Do you have any specific memories of experiences of the mask work?

D - Not a lot of them. Partly because I had done so much before the school. It wasn't a new experience for me. I think there is kind of a drama of experiencing the masks for the first time when you actually get the feeling of being taken over by a mask or actually playing a mask for the first time. A lot of this was work.

J - You use masks a lot in performance now.

D - Right.

J - Can you speak about that in relation to the work at the school?

D - I would say there is an indirect relationship between the work I am doing now and the work from the school. The school does not teach a technique in a sense. I have had to develop my own way of working over the years. I think it opened me up to some of the spontaneity and play involved in mask work and sensitivity to the mask with the body. Especially the articulation exercises from the *analyse du mouvements* were a strong influence on finding a technique for the mask. And realizing that every mask is different. Stylistically even. You kind of have to build a style around a mask or a piece.

J - Do you use Lecoq exercises when you're teaching?

D - Not really. Since I don't teach in a two-year program I have to draw on different skills. Sometimes I'll go to my notes when I'm trying to solve a problem. A lot of the Lecoq exercises are sort of Rorschach exercises. There is nothing inherent in the exercise itself that's different than any other exercise. Two masks enter and sit down at the beach. It is very kind of abstract and universal. It's less about what the exercise is than how the teacher responds to what is presented to them in the moment. I think that is what I took away from it as a teacher. More of an eye than specific exercises that we did at the school.

J - Are there any other thoughts or images that came to mind when you first received the list of questions?

D - Let me look at the list. I remember one day doing the elements and humanizing them. Turning them into *personage*. Such as fire, wind, water, tree, and it struck me this memory because it was different than any other experiences. I felt that the whole via

negativa way of teaching, of giving blocks and negative comments to push you forward or to push you sideways and have you jump over the wall. There was one time I went on stage as wind, a wind character I heard Lecoq whisper, "*C'est ça.*" I think that threw me more than any, "*Non, non, non.*" That he ever did (laughter) That might be one testimony to not being too positive. That could also be in contrast to just never having gotten that before. I also remember the large group project. The village. Where we had to recreate twenty four hours in a village or something like that. It was an extensive project. I remember it being very frustrating. I have images of all these people trying to take over and control it and at the same time others not wanting any control, any structure. In retrospect I can see that all of us were looking for a right answer a right way to do things and there really wasn't. Some times I felt like a lab rat at the school. A psychology experiment that had no context for what was going on. We were thrown into these situations and someone else was observing us. Now I get to be that psychologist and can look back and say, "Oh! What strange people we were."

J - You had mentioned when you had gotten the list and had begun to go through your notes that it had brought up a lot of stressful thoughts.

D - Some of that was reading logs of *auto-cours*. "Today we did nothing but talk." I remember thinking we only had two days to Friday when we have to present this and then looking at Friday and seeing that it went horribly or oh, it didn't go so bad at all. Some of the stress was wishing I had taken better notes or less subjective notes. I wish I had just written the facts of what had happened each day instead of my interpretations of everything. I was trying to learn every moment in the moment and wasn't as involved as I could have been. It was self observation of everything instead of waiting ten years and then observing what might have happened and what the effects were. I was kind of amazed to see how short the day was really at the school. I think it was four hours, three and a half, four and a half. I can't read French time any more. It was a very little time in our life. I mean it seemed like it was our whole life but in terms of the actual time we spent at the school working it wasn't that much, (although if you did the L.E.M. it would probably increase). Most of my memories are of school. The whole school was also living in France for a year. I felt it would have been a stronger school if we had had one teacher doing the *preparation corporelle* class every day. More consistency. It didn't bother me, the changing of the teachers, as much with the improv class because improv needs more of that dynamic but movement needs more structured consistency.

J - Do you think that may have something to do with the movement classes being less about technique than being a pedagogical tool?

D - I agree that it is not just a movement technique class, that it is related to the teaching. I don't think that is why we had a different teacher every day. I would think that that has more to do with the school and how many classes and students there were. It's hard to tell.

J - If you had something to say about how the school has effected your work as an artist what would you say?

D - I think Lecoq is brilliant and has created a brilliant school that is going to influence theatre decades after his death. Personally I felt I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. There were so many factors that sort of tripped me up during and afterwards that I'm a big fan with a bad experience. I worked with a lot of people who came out of the school or were influenced by the school. Who took it to other levels, who developed their own pedagogy and I think that had a stronger influence on me than the school itself. The core concepts of the school still stick with me of dynamic, neutrality and the mask and style and the physicality of theatre. Lecoq is not as open about his pedagogy. Everyone's experience is so widely different that it is almost foolish to turn it into something universal unless you're Lecoq himself or have really absorbed the school beyond even the three years.

APPENDIX 18

INTERVIEW #6

Interview #6

J - Where was the school when you were there? What was the atmosphere?

B - Rue de Bac, 1963-66. I don't remember the area but a map would show it. The international make up of the school was very definite. There were almost no French students; they were practically all foreign students. There wasn't any official translation. Those who didn't have as much French would have to ask some of the other students to help with translation. It worked all right. We managed to get everything we needed. I don't know whether you have a list of the courses that were given.

J - At that time, no.

B - I went through material, for I have a lot of stuff. We had a course called *education corporelle*. That was taught by Monica Pagneaux and acrobatics was done by Pierre Bilan, and we had a course in respiration, taught by Jacques. It was just a short term thing but typical of Lecoq to link many things together. Of course mask and we had improvs in simple situations, and we had manipulation, which I think was that structured series of counts with one gesture on each count. In the second year we had more of all of the above and also *pantomime blanche* and commedia, clown. There was also mime and music, another short term thing. Then chorus. That's pretty much the regular course at that time.

J - Did the school end with clown or another style?

B - I don't have anything that shows when these things were given so I can't answer that.

J - Do you still have any specific memories concerning class room experiences?

B - Nothing outstanding but certainly reactions to the general things that were happening. One that I think is particularly interesting. Lecoq, as you know, is quite a demanding teacher, and if somebody got up to do an exercise and started it, Lecoq would often say, "yes, you know how to do it, please sit down." I and several other people found that frustrating. What we would do after class is that we would go to each others hotel rooms and re-enact these exercises. We knew that we knew them, but we wanted a chance to do them to get them into our bodies. That's unusual.

It was his neutral mask that just colored everything that I was doing, feeling, thinking, wanting, and for years since then it has stayed with me strongly. Much more than simply a mask for the theatre. For one thing it taught me to write. I think you have some of that material. More than that, the philosophy behind it. I find that it has given me a value system that I may have had before but that I became conscious of: Economy, and finding out what you need, knowing what you do not need. That kind of thing.

J - When you say the universal mask was more than just a mask for the theatre, can you expand on that aside from the influence that it had on your writing?

B - I remember when I got back to the states. I went to Los Angeles where I could stay with my brother. I went into a big grocery chain store looking for a bottle of salad dressing. I came to the section where they were and there were twelve board feet of nothing but salad dressings: that hit me hard because who needs it! Again this is part of the mask, again a philosophy of living: What you need, know what you need, and get it; but also you find out what you really don't need.

J - You translated the term neutral to universal. Did you find in your work and teaching translations for other expressions and concepts that fit into the American cultural way of understanding things?

B - Let me see. I have some notes here. For instance the term *figuration*. I have here somewhere in parenthesis, representation. We have no term for *figuration*. We have only figurant. *Figuration* means to have someone representing a thing: a house or a car or whatever it is with your body. That is one term that I really had to find another way to say it. Then I have something that I called figures that is no relation. Question: do you remember what *analyse du mouvement was*? I don't have it in my books.

J - It was for us the class that we learned the twenty movements in and some of the exercises that were directly connected to, say, the neutral mask. Such as the pantomimed voyage through the elements and some of the animal work.

B - That must have come after I was there because that doesn't sound familiar at all. Although, we did the voyage and the animal work.

J - Coming back to the vocabulary. This is something that interests me a great deal. Are there any more terms or phrases that you've found that have stuck with you or remember being used?

B - *Disponible*. In fact I have a little pin on my wall saying "available." He used it so often when I was there, perhaps when you were there. But as you know this is one of the ways you learn how to be an actor. Beginning actors often say something and then wait for the next person to say something before saying something again. This is not being available to people. To me this is tremendously important. Again he used the term over and over.

J - Can you speak to his use of the term "*jeu*?"

B - Yes, that was a difficult one, still is. In his book it comes up all the time. When I needed the concept with students I used either interaction or playing out.

J - Why "playing out" as opposed to just "playing?"

B - To enact is maybe a better word.

J - Was he dealing with the concepts of space and rhythm when you were there?

B - I'll look at this list; no. No we didn't deal with space even though he was teaching at the school of architecture; it didn't enter into what we were doing except as part of an improv. People coming into a room, how they dealt with space, where they sat, that kind of a thing. Rhythm? No. The "mime and music" course had more to do with quality of the music rather than breaking it down in any way.

J - Can you expand on the work with music that you mention?

B - Let me see what he did. Again it was a short course. He said, "You and music are one. You swim in it, it supports you, it underlines you, it emphasizes your gestures, it can even substitute for your gesture. While you do only a part of a gesture, for example, the music is furious while you stand groggy. The action is with the dynamic on the beat. It can be external, atmospheric, it can be internal reflecting your action. In the Greek chorus for instance, the catastrophic cord when something ominous has occurred suddenly." He said, "music is a separate entity. A partner of some value. You converse with it, go in together or go on separate ways. One more, music is your enemy. You are actively against each other either literally so, or the disturbing noise next door, or less so in its declaration of a mood or a style opposed to your own."

J - You actually worked with music while you were there?

B - We must have because I have a long list of music. Let's see: A tired bar tender is cleaning up. The juke box is playing . . . something gogo. Oh, it's the contrast of the tired bar tender cleaning up and the rock music in the background. Here is one, Hospital receiving room. Pressure and tension with soothing background music. There is a difference between being with the rhythm and following the beat. The latter is monotonous. Listen to the music before using it if you want to use dynamics. If the music is the enemy don't need to know it. Let's see . . . A short review of the work with the metronome. Choose a metier and do it to music. Stay with the rhythm and not with the beat.

J - Back to the vocabulary question before we move on. Can you add to what we have already discussed?

B - Maybe the term "universal" I checked with Jacques several years later when he was visiting here and he said, "that's fine." He had no objections. It was necessary for me to make the change. I was at UCLA and these were third year students. In Lecoq terms

they were quite young; they were not ready to be neutral. That's not cool. So I was looking for another word and when I found "universal." I felt that was a positive way to say that this mask deals only with what is common to us all. It was a positive rather than a negative term.

J - Was your work concentrated in mask work?

B - It was only one aspect of it. I taught in a couple of universities: UCLA, the University of Washington and a community college, they were all in the drama departments so I needed material that was essential and appropriate to the student training. Two of those places were part of the Professional Actor Training Program. My curricula included mask, silent improvs, commedia, comedy, figures. That's the one gesture at a time series handling imaginary props, great for economy. e.g., reach, grasp, carry, place, and so on. That's pretty much the range. I remember a colleague came to observe the classes on comedy and said to he knew I was on the right track when I told the students that they needed to take comedy seriously.

My problems with academia were separate from the material. Apart from loosing the library I was happy to get away. There were too many things that were contrary to a professional attitude and professional atmosphere.

J - Can you describe the teaching approach at the Lecoq school?

B - When I was teaching in this country I was very aware that I had to have different methods from what Jacques was using. Remember when I said that if he thought you already knew what to do then don't bother? In this country the students wouldn't stand for that and I didn't blame them so I had them repeat. I could not use the demanding approach. I remember another instance: I was taking a summer workshop and was asked to do translating into English. There was a group of British students in the class. Lecoq had said something, I translated and the British students said they didn't understand, it was confusing. Lecoq turned to Fay and asked if it was well translated. Fay said yes and Lecoq replied to the students, "Well then, it's not my fault." I thought to myself, "if I could do that sometimes," but I never could. Of course, it was wonderful to be challenged by his demands. But still, we ran the exercises in each others rooms after class.

J - What did you discover when you ran those exercises?

B - Nothing new. It was a confirmation. As an ex-dancer it feels important to put things into your body physically. That's important and satisfying.

J - Now you went to Paris in search of training as a mime and it appears that your work after the school fell more into the world of theatre.

B - That happened at school, even during the first year. I saw a world, much more than I had thought I wanted. I was tremendously excited. It so happened that we had to repeat the first year because there were not enough students to do a second year so he canceled the second year. Two of us stayed to do the first year again. That was lucky for me. When I started at the school I came there to learn the technique and add it to my dances. As I got more involved in the work I saw how great it was and needed to make notes, feeling a tremendous urge to go into teaching, to show the world this fantastic area. So repeating the first year meant I could make many notes for teaching--was I ever lucky! The other student who stayed to repeat the first year is Harro Maskow who formed the theatre company Theatre Beyond Words, in Canada.

J - Let's talk about the mask work.

B - We did neutral mask in the first year and character, or expressive as he calls it, in the second. The work on character mask was very close to work done in this country on character exercises. But without mask. Having a mask makes it easier and bigger. To play big. I had never heard that phrase in this country. You can do it without a mask but mask helps. Still, the work is not all that different. It was the neutral mask that opened a new world; the character mask was a continuation of what we knew was useful in theatre training.

J - Was he working with text when you were there?

B - I have some notes about things done in silence and others not. I don't remember any text.

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B - . . . we didn't have the *auto-cours* at that time.

J - So it was primarily a half day of straight class work?

B - Yes. I remember an exercise. I don't remember what section it belonged to. It was walking through a city. Exercise in traversing various terrains. You remain the person and follow the mime interiorly and let what may come out. Here you will be with the music, against the music and illustrating it because of the changing terrains. Avoid being decorative. Stay simple. Stay rather neutral. Allow movements to take on their acquired dimension. Avoid conflict. Let identification with what you see hinge on your rhythm or stance or the way you walk. Things like that. I don't have notes on it now but if you are interested I can send you notes on some of the workshops he taught that were not part of the curriculum. One was a course on finding your own clown and the technique of doing it I thought was just marvelous. Here you are a clown, you're before an audience and you are doing your regular clown thing, and you are a total flop. And what do you do?

APPENDIX 19

INTERVIEW #7

Interview #7

J - You had said you went in 1964. What lead you to the school?

A - Carlo Mazzoni came to teach at Carnegie Tech where I was a student. Carlo had just come to this country in 57 or 56. He had just gotten married. In fact Fay and Jacques Lecoq had met in Carlo's apartment in Paris. It was a funny thing. They both came on the wrong night. Did you ever hear that story?

J - No.

A - Nobody else came to the party but those two. It was some kind of a strange thing where they came on the wrong night or something like that. Typical Carlo Mazzoni' story. The rest is history from that point of view. Carlo came and had been in the Piccolo. Lecoq had worked with him there. Carlo was a great friend of Sartori Sr. They were contemporaries. Actually fought the fascists underground together. That is what actually killed Sartori. He was tortured by the fascists because he was an underground gorilla. I met Carlo then when I was a young actor a Carnegie Tech which is now Carnegie Melon. He was teaching what he had learned at that time. He's a great teacher himself. Kind of a wild teacher. Not in the way that Jacques is a great teacher. He is another kind of spirit. I worked with Carlo and wanted to know what all that was about. Marceau had just come to America and was doing the same thing he is doing now. I wanted to do that. I won't go into the story with Carlo on how I discovered the key to economy of movement but it was through doing a Beckett play where I played Clov and discovered what the economy of movement was pushing the chair around. I worked closely with Carlo and became a protégé of his during the three years I had to finish school. As soon as I got out of school I got a teaching job in Connecticut and applied for a Fulbright to go to Lecoq. I had to audition, get recommendations, the whole thing and nobody had done that before. There was no category for that. There had been categories for theatre to go study in other countries but not for France specifically to go and study what Jacques was teaching. I won the Fulbright and went over in the fall of sixty-four.

J - Can you briefly describe the combination of classes at that time?

A - There were two sections; a section A and a section B. You could do one or the other. You were in a group. It was purely arbitrary. Section A would meet from 10:30 until, let's say, noon with Jacques while section B was meeting with Monique and then they'd switch. Occasionally we'd have other things. Fortunately, I had my tuition paid and as long as you paid Fay you could take whatever you wanted. So I took double courses. I took both sections A and B. Since I had already had a taste of physical theatre before I got there I was kind of a stand out in the school. The curriculum was physical stuff in the morning. Movement analysis and education corporelle. Monique did a lot of what could be called the Wigman school, the German school of dance. We had acrobatics once a

week with Pierre Bilan. We had, as I said, Movement Analysis with Jacques which was the look step reach grab type of thing. The analyzing. The going over the wall. All the technique of manipulation. The going into the bathtub, let me see I'm trying to remember . . . doing the *passeure*, doing that. He was, of course, formulating a lot of that stuff then. Then we would do the mask sequence which the first year. The first year was primarily neutral mask. All the neutral mask improvs. From the grande adieu to everything else. Then that sequence would go into the expressive masks. Those six or seven characters we had there. We had improvisation as well. Which was the creative games. I don't know if he was . . . I use the level system. I have developed it a little further than he did. When I asked him about it he seemed to have let it drop. Do you know what I am talking about?

J - No I don't. Please describe that to me.

A - *Premiere degree*. First degree, second degree, third degree, fourth degree. Eyeball, action, comic, grotesque and abstraction?

J - As you talk about it things sound familiar but I have never heard it put quite that way.

A - That was a very strong attitude toward style and I've developed it even further. Really codified it. I use it a lot in my teaching and directing. I call it the level system. He use to call it, *premiere degree, L'oeil, verité dans l'oeil*. He would talk about the truth in the eye and the internal state and then how action came out of that and how the action would lead to something comic. I think I might have . . . I can't tell what is his and what I've carried further. That's why he said when asked if I was teaching Lecoq, no he's teaching Zaslove, it means that I've gone a little further. Having worked with Mazzoni all along the way too, I've kind of amalgamated all of that stuff and I've had all the Stanislavski stuff and all of the American technique in voice and speech and then I met somebody doing Shakespeare in my earlier career and I put all that together. So the system is that. The first, second, third, fourth degree. What you call total theatre. Song, dance, opera, puppets, Marx Brothers, mime, commedia, Greek theatre, Brecht, where everything is incorporated. And as you know, without the truth of it, when you support a mask you have to be the character. That was a very strong foundation. The improvisation and the games and all those things and the neutral mask led to the animals and the animals led to matter, *la matière*, and we created characters from the animals. I don't know whether he's still doing that or not? Then you created, you created characters. Grotesque characters, comic characters or whatever. Then that led to putting on a mask and doing the seven characters that he had. Did he use some very good comic rubber masks when you were there? I gave him a set of rubber masks I found in California once.

J - Yes, one day he brought those down and we all put them on and used them in improvisation class.

A - That's the sequence of the first year. I believe along the way. Was configuration as well and the classic *pantomime blanche* . . .

J - Can you describe configuration? That's a new term to me.

A - The body doing stuff. Where you would do a whole environment. That became choral work. We would do big tableaus. A photo mat with three flashing images or we would do a sea theme. A *tableaux vivant* of the sea. I think we did sea, air, aviation, nautical and something else. I've carried even further where we do movies. Westerns and sci-fi movies. An exercise presented to the entire class when it is done. That was configuration. He had a text class as well which I didn't take because it wasn't really very well developed. We did some Yoga. We did breathing. Respiration. One session or two even though it was incorporated in the warm up every day. It was one special class working on the controlling of the breath. Which I learned later was very much of a yoga tradition. Now I took a stage in the summer which was the second year and then took the first semester of the second year. It is a little bit cloudy to me. It was so long ago. I think we did *pantomime blanche* in that section plus more mask work. I did everything in the second year except the commedia which was the second semester of the second year. The first half of the second year was classic pantomime, more acrobatics and maybe more configuration and always improvisation and creative work. And then the second half I ran out of money and my visa ran out and I left before the last part. But I had work in the commedia because of working with Carlo. I had also had done the French commedia with him. The Cassandra and Pierrot and Colombine. Probably in the first half of the second year. He did a stage in the summer from 10:00 to 5:00 where the entire two year curriculum was covered and I did that the summer of sixty-five. So that was the two years basically. From developing yourself, being calm and being neutral. His sequence at the time. I use that when I am teaching two and three year programs. It was quite solid in that it was starting out with developing yourself and leading up to the most difficult which is the commedia. Which is still the most difficult to achieve for American actors and European actors as well. They don't understand. We don't have it in our culture. You've got Robin Williams and hacks like Jim Carry who think they're funny. There's nothing left of it see. Along the way we had monthly, what do you call them, seances. Where you came up and did anything that you wanted. That was incredible. Everybody would look at it as getting out of his tightness and control of the class and then they could be free. There were a couple of Swiss guys there who were fantastic. They were completely off the wall. The French were the least successful there. We had an Italian guy, a guy from south America, the Swiss were great. Do you know who Erhart Steifeld is?

J - No.

A - He was one of my class mates and he was a sculptor and an artist and not a real theatre person. He was taking the classes anyway and got turned on by the masks and he

went on to make his own masks and is probably one of the greatest mask makers in the world right now. He works for Mnoushkine. He's been influenced by the commedia of Sartori and the Japanese. That was the two years. Then when I came back . . . Jacques came over. He had never been to America before and then the national theatre school which was set up by Michael Saint-Denis in the tradition of the Bristol Old Vic and Copeau. Do you know all about the rivalries between Decroux and those guys?

J - No.

A - Decroux was still teaching when I was there and we weren't even allowed in to see any of the demonstrations. If anyone knew I was a Lecoq student going to look at some Decroux demonstrations I think I would have been drummed out of there with a baseball bat or something like that.

J - You had said that in the evening presentations that there was a freedom from the otherwise tighter control of the school. Can you describe the pedagogical approach?

A - He discouraged anybody from doing what he called the *sous-mime*. Carbon copies of Marceau. Or anything that anybody else was doing. Any time anybody did that in class he would shoot them down mercilessly. I don't know if he is still doing that or not but somebody would go up and do something and they would be attempting the theme of the day and they would do something that would be exterior, presentational, cliched or phony and he would say, "*Non, stop. Ce n'est pas ça. Asseyez vous.*" That's the brutality of the pedagogy. He didn't want you to do what you thought it was. He wanted the theme to be creative in the style that we were trying to learn. Which you could call Lecoq style. It was illusive. A lot of people didn't understand it. They would sit down and go, "what, what did I do? What did I do wrong?" In a sense he was making you, forcing you to discover yourself. What it was supposed to be. He would never articulate it. He wouldn't say, "it's this." It's in the Zen school in mastering the art of shooting the arrow into the target. He would never explain what he wanted. He would just say what it wasn't. If you were smart, intuitive and talented, you could do it. Then he would say, "*Voila, C'est ça.*" When he did say that's it you began to sense gradually over the course of the process what kind of style, what kind of creativity you were searching for. Sometimes he would say, "*Voila, C'est ça. Regards ça.*" And it would be very different from what somebody else would have done in a previous class and yet there would be a consistency if you understood what the whole thing was. Very few people did. Yet they were still getting a moderate amount of success because he is guiding the individual performer. He would force you to get rid of your habits. That is the whole neutral thing. It is the center. The sacred zone of the neutral was that he would never put it on, he would never demonstrate it. Then when you would begin to see the mask come alive with someone you would say, "ahhh." But that is of course an internal state. You can't just put the mask on and do it and say this is what the mask is. Once you've been up the mountain you can guide someone else up there. Unless you've been up there you can't

just say this is what it is. Unless you've seen it. It is a centering of the self. It is a very deep, deep experience. That is why it is so cathartic. I have seen people take the mask off weeping, devastated because they have touched something of their soul. You don't even talk about this stuff with Lecoq. He doesn't say this stuff. He doesn't go into the spiritual. He is a very distant man. He is deep and brilliant. He guided the individual. The individual went on their own journey. If you were going down the right road you would succeed and learn. If you didn't you would be terribly frustrated. When I came back to this country and started teaching I would try to do it like him. Of course that was a big mistake. A student would do an exercise with the neutral mask and I would say no that's not it and they would say well what is it? This is North America. Finally I had to say well it is an expressive mask. It is a character like the comic masks. You must play that character.

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J - Can you talk about Rhythm for a minute in terms of the Lecoq work?

A - It's the heart of it really. Timing, rhythm, precision, all those things that the athletes have and the animals have. That's the heart of it. I've developed a whole school now called animal athlete and actor where I pull all three together. The essence of effort. Not just the push and pull but the size of the gesture and all those things are so important to the heart of his teaching. You boil down to rhythm of the situation. I have carried to the point where I talk about the improv as an organism. It has a life and has a rhythm and a life of its own that you have to keep alive. You can't be brutal to it you have to be sensitive to its changes. I developed a theory of change out of that. On how things have to change. That is one thing that I have carried in my soul to this day is that it has to change and that you have to acknowledge the change but that you cannot change it arbitrarily. That is where he would blow the whistle and say, no, stop sit down, if someone would come up with a bogus idea that had nothing to do with the situation, a contrivance. That's where the rhythm of the situation is essential. It's an organism. That of course is the heart of the work. The grotesque, the tragic, that's something that's also there and is grossly misunderstood. The ability to have a comic and tragic function simultaneously. It has taken me forty years to be able to articulate it clearly and even then it hard to find the examples in western culture. Where it occurs at the same time. When a funny thing would happen in a tragic way. That's when he would laugh and say yes that's it. That's basically what I mean about rhythm.

J - What about the concept of space?

A - Well that's his sense of space as an architect and a designer. The sense where the actor understands his position in space and how the space changes when he changes but I think he didn't emphasize that all that much. What that means is the use of space in a painterly way. As a director being very visual I know what he is talking about. The use

of focus and space in painting and composition that he would talk about but not really articulate very much. When you teach and work with it a long time you see an improv and you say look, look at the picture; there's what's happening. The space is in perfect harmony and the people are in perfect harmony with the space. That's basically what the hard core fundamental of that was in those days. He was developing in the L.E.M. Which I saw when I was there visiting and I thought it was quite academic and maybe useful for designers and visual artists. I think it is nothing more than what the Bauhaus was doing.

J - Can you speak briefly to the concept of play?

A - To me it is what I call abandon. It is a sense of freedom and control in the spontaneity of the child and the creativity of an artist. Anything can follow anything as long as it is organic and logical coming from a situation which is founded in truth. So the play or the *jeu* has got to come from the heart of what the situation is. Whether it is the actor or . . . also I use it as a motor. I don't know whether he is still using that or not. *Le moteur*. Which is the through line of the scene. Which is the driving force or what pushes the scene. The ultimate is the commedia. It is the characters that push the scene. What they do is out of their madness and out of their grotesque state. Play is the heart of it. It correlates with the rhythm. It is a sense of freedom, it's sense of creativity. It's philosophical too.

J - If you had something to say to Lecoq after all these years what would you have to say to him?

A - Well, I think even more than Carlo, he is my creative father. He has influenced all of my work and does so every day. You don't get emotional in front of him of course, but the foundation of what he taught me in those two years has carried me for my entire career. I was very lucky to be right at his feet for a long period of time. Jacques gave me a sense of discipline. When I was there as a young man he said I was too relaxed, too sloppy and he taught me to be neat and precise and to have the discipline and to find the pedagogical approach based on the instinct that I knew I had. He gave me discipline and precision if any thing. A sense of form and a sense of style. He taught me what style is. To this day I don't think that people understand what style is. A few directors do. Europe does but in America I rarely if ever see it. Rarely and I'm a curmudgeon now.

J - Are you still teaching.

A - I taught for ten years at UBC and I am now starting a school attached to my company.

APPENDIX 20

INTERVIEW #8

Interview #8

J - What is the third year?

D - It is a huge undertaking. The way he does it is that over time he sort of imparts his pedagogy to you. There is no definite structure to the third year. It is really what you make of it. He really kind of says, "Ok, here is the school, here is the program." It is up to each person to do it as they can. A lot of people who take on the third year don't understand; one, how thoroughly exhausting it is if you really do it whole heartedly. It's very deceiving because he doesn't lay anything out specifically to you. It is a matter of being there and little by little it unfolds to you. The project is to follow the first year work. It's not about the second year because the first year is such a foundation. It is sort of like for those who do the diploma program in that it hits you later on as your out in your life using it. In five years it is, "boom!" You really begin to see the magnitude and the depth of the work. The third year is that way. You go back and you are taking a look from another perspective. From an outside perspective. That is another part that is really hard. You're just sitting there. You're just sitting there on that bench for the whole year. Except for the project. You have to put together a movement phrase and teach the students. That is the big *oeuvre* for the third year students. In general I would say that it's this crossing over to understanding from a completely other vantage point the work. It's about how to take someone through the work as opposed to what happens to you when you go through the process yourself. It is what you make of it. If you are into it then he's right there. If you're not into it he's not there. You know what I'm saying? He's available for discussion and will talk to you on whatever level, wherever you're at. It is very much like graduate work. It has to do with who you are, what your personality is like, what your perspective is, what you want to do with it, where you've been in your life, where your going, etc.

J - What are the objectives of the faculty as they work with the various students?

D - That's a very hard question to answer because the faculty is so varied.

J - Let me ask it in this way; In the manner in which the faculty works with the student it is obvious that there is an individual way in which each faculty member works with the student. Is there a collective way in which the faculty works with the students?

D - Yes, but it is not talked about. The collective is the work, the voyage of the school, and the body of work that constitutes the work is the vocabulary. Everyone there knows it cold. Certainly the team that was there when I was doing the third year, and you were in the second year, were people who had been there quite a while. So it is not something that needs to be discussed at all. It is quite ingrained.

J - When you say the vocabulary, are you referring to the actual suite of exercises, the journey or the actual vocabulary?

D - The journey, the suite of exercises. The place the journey takes you. For me, I have a personal description for what it is. I'm not sure that what I say parallels necessarily with what he says but I know for me, for example, the work with the neutral mask, the process of stripping down, of really essentialising gesture; getting to the essential so that you pair down and find exactly that which is important to make such and such a statement or such and such an image. It's really just stripping down and breaking down, tearing down. At the same time it's transporting people away from their personal self to the universal self. The language becomes right away a universal language. It's a kind of descent often that a person has to take. What happens in the first year, is that some people are taking the descent, no problem. Crashing and burning and blanched out. Those people are actually easy to work with. It is the people who resist. The people who have a lot of data, people who have a lot of walls, they've come from something else, they've been through different training and their resisting, resisting, resisting. That's difficult. Those are the difficult cases. In order to go on that voyage you've got to drop down the tube. The neutral mask is the beginning. It creates, I think, a large enough space usually, that people who have humility go to the proper place. Because they have the humility. There are those that don't. You have all different levels. Often times the vocabulary, the talk among the different teachers is more about, "how is that person doing? That one is a problem." People are looking for the key. The key to get them to let go so that person can get to the right place and take the voyage with everybody else. If you get a group of people and get them all to respond, get them all working on the same level and in the same spirit, then you've got a good group and good things can happen. *Auto-course*s are better. There is not all the problems. Hey, there are years where there are horrible groups. There are certain types of humanity that stack up to make a horrible group. Actually, I didn't experience a terrible group. There are three groups and there is always one great group, a horrible group and an ok group, or something. You know what I mean? When I say vocabulary what I mean is the journey. The journey of the school. The journey that the school takes one on is understood. What teachers talk about is how people are doing. Everybody's desire is that the person succeed. That is definitely a unified spirit on the part of the profs.

J - If someone where to ask you what is the pedagogy of the school, what is that?

D - Man that's rough. Doesn't he have a book coming out?

J - I think so.

D - Do you mean what is the philosophy of his pedagogy? It's all based on resonating with universal rhythms. That's what the elements and the mask work is all about. It's about dropping out of your personal self. Coming to a larger place where by virtue of the

fact that the body is a microcosm of the macrocosm, that we all have the ability to identify rhythmically with everything in nature. Everything that is the macrocosm. The work, the approach is really about getting people to see that the body has the rhythm. The pedagogy is, in my opinion, as I see it, as I teach it, as I am continually amazed by it. That if you put the stock in the body, it can take you there. It is not psychological or emotional at all. It is without regard to psychology or emotion. It's putting yourself in the hands of the human organism which has the ability to really resonate with all that there is. That is what is interesting about the liaison between what he does and the theatre. That is what I think people want to see, the people sitting in the audience. They want to see something happen on stage that they can personally relate to as a human being. Not because, you know, I'm Sally Smith and my mother is whatever and my father is this and my personal story, but moreover that this is the case in humanity that we encounter such and such a situation and that there is a more universal approach to finding gesture and expression. That is what is so brilliant about the pedagogy because he is trying to teach you to respond from your physical self in order to find the truth in movement. That equals justice and that justice is what everybody responds to. That is the best that I can put it.

J - In reference to what you just said let's take a look at the various courses and see if we can't plug them into that a little bit. Let's start with the *auto-cours*. How does that fit into the "universal?"

D - Every circumstance produces groups of different natures. Having to become a part of a group and find your place in the group, to find your strength or weakness. Your ability to work is what it is like to go out and apply your skills in life. It is routine practice on a daily basis. It's an environment in which you can really learn a lot about yourself. It also shows the teachers a lot about you. Are you a leader, are you a follower, do you respond well, are you a team player are you a soloist? Many people realize through the *auto-cours* that they want to do solo work because they can't stand this thing called the group. It's really just a practicum. A place to try your skills. How do people respond to you? Did you ever run into those people in *auto-cours* who just couldn't work with people?

J- Yes, I remember a couple. What about the improvisation classes?

D - Again its just an area in which to apply. Again I'm thinking more about the first year. The first year is getting the foundation. The second is applying it to styles. Roaming through styles trying to get a little bit of experience around the theatrical globe, so to speak. Improvisation is always dedicated to what you are working on, whether it is neutral mask, or animals or substances. It is a place where you get a chance to try. It is a laboratory. You get critiqued. No that didn't work, why not? Somebody else tries. It is a little different in each persons class. I found that Lecoq's method in his improv class was to riffle through people to find the finest example of that style or of that specific piece of the puzzle. Sometimes he was fairly ruthless.

J - Searching to find someone so that everyone else can see it?

D - Yea. So that he can say, "*Voila, C'est ça.*" He wants to be able to find the best example given that group of people. So he's madly blowing through everybody.

J - Can you define what Lecoq means when he says, "*jeu*?"

D - Action.

J - Can you elaborate on that at all?

D - Not really.

J - What about the importance of Rhythm?

D - That's all that initial stuff I was talking about concerning universal rhythms. The study of the elements and color and light. That is a lot where the rhythms is. A broader universal rhythm. Then you have the interior rhythm of a piece which is like the music of it. There are those two aspects of rhythm that work together. The smaller one, the one that is more like music, I'd say is responsible for dynamics.

J - Can you define dynamics?

D - I'm really bad at this kind of stuff. I'm like a word groper . . . When I teach, I often call what I teach spatial dynamics. That operates on many levels. It's all about being out there in that black box. It's really the idea of the process of widening your vision. So that you see that not only what is going on with you, inside you but it's all around you. Therefore it's your body in relationship to the space or the box, the stage. The space that you occupy. That space is your partner. So that becomes a larger dynamic. That's the spatial dynamic. That's the dynamic of the space upon you and you upon the space. It's just like all that stuff when we work with the bubble. The bubble around you. He does that at a certain point with the preparation to choral work. How much space do you need around you. That type of a thing. In the first year the neutral mask also increases the amount of space that a person is aware of since the mask takes on a much bigger space than you do. The mask is asking you to step into it's space. Which is larger and more universal. A direct application of this and I see as working really well is going right into chorus because you take that sensation and you compound it by adding all these people around you and therefore you're actually creating a huge spacial vibration by virtue of the juxtaposition of these people against each other and the value you give to the space in between the people. Are you following any of this? It is a very specific sort of vision. A way of seeing the world and how things go together. My particular journey. . . . The way that I make the bulk of my income is that I am a massage therapist. To go from this particular work, the teaching and then to study the body, man! The information that runs

between the two is incredible. When I saw Lecoq at the theatre of creation festival we sat down and talked. He said, "you know I began as a kinesthesiologist." I said, "Let's talk about that." It was probably one of the most incredible discussions I have ever had with him. The truth of the matter is that the fact that he came from this background, sports and everything, is that when he encountered Dasté he was coming to the work from the body and that has been the flowering of his vision in the theatre.

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When Lecoq says *jeu* it's as if it's the play the action. There's a dimension of it where truth and justice are a part of it.

J - When you say justice is that in reference to the phrase, "*c'est juste*?"

D - Right. You're always searching for the truth in movement. It is that sort of justice that doesn't have to do with me or you or right or wrong. It just that when anybody see's it they go, "yea, that's it." Again that is a visceral reality. It is not an emotional reality. It's visceral. The wonderful thing is that it operates in a universal place. It is a fabulous way to know whether it is on or off. Whether it is working. It is not a typical check list. It is yep, definitely or not! There is not a lot of discussion about it. It is because it resonates in the gut. You don't have to ask your brain. It is just this sensation of uh huh. Even in the third year project I remember he makes you teach the class these movements. He stands in the back of the room with a stop watch and when your time is up, no matter where you are he shuts down the class and takes you upstairs and critiques you. He will always point out what happened rhythmically as opposed to it being, "well you did this and you did that." Even his critique would be, "did you sense when you had them or when you lost them." He is critiquing you spatially. He talks about what that space felt like. The space between you and them and how you command that space. How you keep that tension in that space in you favor. How to command a large group. When it's right, what is the sensation. What is it that you feel dynamically. Always things being parlayed in the sense of rhythm and dynamics. When you study the body you learn movement=health=life. When there is no movement it is dead. That is the same thing when he says' "*il n'y a pas d'espace*." It means the molecular level in the space was dank. You forgot to put oxygen in the molecules around you. Which means you didn't pay attention. That's all. You didn't pay attention to the space. If you forget to create a sense of space then it's dead. It is the space that places "*en relief*" the action. That's what your doing. You're enlivening your action by paying attention to that negative space around you.

APPENDIX 21

INTERVIEW #9

Interview #9

J - What inspired you to go off to the Lecoq School?

A - I wanted to be Marcel Marceau. In those days any one who wanted to get into mime wanted to be like Marceau. This was in the late sixties. I had seen Marceau in concert and he blew my socks off. Around that time, 1968 or 1969, Lecoq came to NYU and did a workshop. I had never heard of him. I just knew that a mime was coming and thought that all mime was Marceau. I took Lecoq's workshop. I thought it was interesting, fairly incomprehensible, but fascinating.

In 1971 I graduated from the University of Washington. A friend who had been in a Commedia troupe and I decided to live in Europe for a year and study mime, and Lecoq was our vehicle. We got the Paris phone book out and couldn't find Marceau's name, but Lecoq was listed. We wrote to the school and got accepted. Needless to say it was a tough first three months.

Shortly before the end of the three month trial period I had a sort of epiphany. All of a sudden I understood what Lecoq was trying to do. It was much much deeper than just the illusion, mime, magic trick aspect that I had gone there to study. Luckily it was early enough that I saved myself and was allowed to stay for the rest of the first year.

J - Can you be more specific about your revelation? What was it that you came to understand?

A - I think it was the first time I really saw theatre, anthropology and life all come together. His study really brought all of those things together. It wasn't just performing magic tricks. One of the reasons Marceau was so successful is because when most people saw what he did they were blown away and didn't know what to make of it; much the same as when you see good magic. Ultimately after you have seen a lot of magic you begin to see the technique. The dramatic possibilities of the lone illusion pantomimist are very limited.

Lecoq was talking about theatre and life. It tied into interests that I had then and have continued to have concerning psychotherapy. For example, seeing the mask not as something that you only put on, but something that you take off. One revelation in working with the neutral mask that you are also peeling away the masks that you've developed as psychological crutches for coping.

J - Do you remember any specific classroom experiences?

A - There was one sort of transcendental experience when we were doing colors. You enter a room and become the color of the room. Then you go through a door or a tunnel

into the next room and become the color of that room. It's just abstract movement. Something happened where I, for the first time, just gave myself totally over to the movement and the rhythm and the performance. I finished it and I remember it was like the perfect moment. I was absolutely calm. As I look back on it I realize that sense of unity. The idea and the movement happened at the same time. I wasn't on the outside editing it as I usually was. That was a moment that stuck with me and one that I am constantly looking for in performance.

Another one was kind of comical. We were doing exercises with animal images in Greek Tragedy. There is a scene from Agamemnon where he is blinded and the preferred animal is a caged lion pacing back and forth in his cage. You are doing the text, the guy has been blinded, his family has all been killed and he is in the depths of despair. You do it as an animal but spouting the text. Finally my turn came and I said I would do the exercise as a tortoise. Almost everyone else had used the wild beast image.

Well, it was wonderful. If you put a desert tortoise on a hard surface it can't quite catch its claws on the floor and has a hard time moving. I was trying to crawl and kept slipping while doing this agonized speech about how tough life was. I bumped into a post in the middle of the room. I just kept walking, crawling but my head was against the post. I got quite agitated and eventually flipped over on my back. There was this long moment of self discovery and then this fight to get turned back over while still spouting the text. Again it was one of those perfect moments where the movement served the text and the character. Lecoq basically said yes, that's it. That was the highest compliment that he could give.

There was another important moment in clown. We were walking around the room and were to say hello and engage in a banal conversation. My French left me at that moment and I was just staring at him and he said, "Yes, yes that's it! That's it!"
And I said, "What"
"Yes, right! Right!"
"What's right?"
"Yes, That's it!"
"Wha . . . Wha . . . What? What?"
In fact, that was it. I found out years later that was one of the essential elements of my clown. The more confused I got the more he said yes, yes that's it!

J - Let's take this phrase "*Oui c'est ça.*" And talk a little more about the vocabulary used at the school. Do you remember any other words or phrases used at the school by Lecoq or the other instructors?

A - Yes. *Portez-la masque*, *basculez-le basin*, and *prenez-l'espace*.

J - When an instructor says "*Portez-la masque*." What are they saying exactly?

A - I think it means to serve the mask. Everything that you do must work to bring the mask alive. It is not a face that you put on your body. It is a creature that you serve. You must create an organic whole for it. The wonderful thing about mask work is that if one of the pieces is missing it becomes so immediately obvious. When it's there it's just amazing. The mask comes alive.

J - What about the second phrase?

A - *Basculez-le basin.* It simply means to rotate your pelvis.

J - The *basin* is important though . . .

A - It's the center, isn't it? It's the center of the movement. Where it all starts. A very important part of your body to control.

J - And the third?

A - *Prenez-l'espace.* Seize the space, seize the day.

J - Can you describe specifically what your understanding of take the space is?

A - Uh . . . I know it when I see it. It is a hard thing to describe. I am not sure that I can give a good definition of it. Can you?

J - Not yet. That is going to be one of the challenges of this document.

A - One of the things that I often talk to students about is the notion that you are always communicating on more than one level. While you are having an intimate conversation on stage with your partner you are doing it for the benefit of the audience but you can't let them know that you are doing it for their benefit. It is a matter of finding all those levels of communication. On one level it means, fill the space. Don't be timid. When you come in take charge of the space around you. It also means be affected by the space. My earlier understanding was take charge of the space. Now I have a two sided view of it. Don't close off your hearing and your feeling. Be aware of the vibrations in the space, what is going on and deal with them, incorporate them. It is relaxed awareness. Aikido has this same feeling. A total awareness.

*Disponible* is another great word. It ties in very tightly with psychotherapy. When I was in Paris I did a number of shows for emotionally disturbed kids. The woman who ran the school became a very close friend and we talked a lot about therapy and theatre. One of her comments was very, very interesting. "I'm like a table," she said. " When you don't need me I'm in the corner but when you need me you can stand on me, you can put things on me, you can use me." That is the best definition of *disponible* that I have found. To

be available. It goes back to the listening part. Performing is not acting it is reacting. So you must constantly monitor what is going on.

J - Was rhythm a visible concept when you were at the school?

A - In more ways than one. First there is a rhythm to the year. Lecoq instills a rhythm in everything that he does. It was amazing being in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, with him on the day that he set up his workshop and lecture. He gave so much care to the staging; where the people would sit and what the background would be. There were some open windows behind him and he said, "Absolutely not. We have to change this." He moved the whole room around so that the lighting was right and where people sat was right, so that where people put their coats was right. I learned a big lesson from that. That preparation is important. Like a chef.

There was an attempt to teach rhythm in all the work at the Lecoq school. There is a rhythm that you fit into or you fight it. And when you fit in, it goes. There are times when you fight it, when you want to break the rhythm of the scene. So it is very important that you know what the rhythm of the scene is so that you can break it. Bring in a new rhythm.

J - Let's attack the concept of *jeu*. What is *jeu*?

A - I have just learned. I have finally figured it out in the last eight-and-a-half years. Do you know why that is?

J - Why?

A - I have an eight-and-a-half year old son. I have finally understood what *jeu* meant. I see it every day. He's my teacher. When he plays it is more real than what is real. It means an absolute, total commitment to the game, whatever the rules are, whatever the game is. Any theatre exercise is a game. You teach the audience what the rules are. It's the reason that the first ten minutes of the play is a throw away. You don't want to do anything too good because the audience is still learning the rules. They are getting used to how loud you're going to talk and what stylistic considerations are at work in the show or how naturalistic the acting is going to be. It takes a while.

To practice *le jeu* means to be committed to the rules. I don't think it means to be playful in a childish sense, rather being playful the way a con man is playful. A con man is an actor. A damn good one until he gets caught. It's really kind of psychopathic behavior isn't it? Isn't that what they say about sociopaths, that there is no feedback that what they do is inappropriate? To be a good actor you've got to do that. You can't constantly monitor yourself. You have to be committed to the game. In the tortoise exercise my rule was, "I'm a turtle. I'm too stupid to back up and go around the post." That's a

given. It's what made that exercise work. I didn't have to make a choice. It was one of the givens.

J - What's the importance of the mask training?

A - There's a gulf between the way we act and the way we move and the way we think we act and the way we think we move. The mask is one of the most powerful tools for revealing that gap and closing it. The better the performer the smaller the gap, the more aware they are of how they really are. Again this goes back to a kind of theatre and therapy. A lot of therapy deals with the difference between the presented self and the perceived self. The neutral mask is the study of the human body. Not your body, the Human Body which is at our core. We all have a basic human body. There is so much that we've done to change that, that we have gotten away from the neutral human person. It's not all bad. It is just things that we do. For example, all of the cultural adaptations change that neutrality. If you travel around the world you see that very clearly.

In mask work you see the basic generic human being. At the basic physical level, and I think this comes from Lecoq's analysis of movement, you learn how the body works as a machine. What are the leverages. Like learning how to hit a golf ball or learning how to juggle. One strives for an efficiency of movement: the minimum effort for the maximum results. Masks are a great tool to begin studying that, but also on a much subtler level. It's a place to start studying the neutrality of the human soul, and then to understand that neutrality doesn't exist because we are cultural creatures. But at least if we know we are cultural creatures we can adapt to other cultures if necessary for the character. We can at least be aware we are doing things that are cultural. We can start to become aware of them.

J - Can you describe the importance of the *auto-cours*?

A - It's a way to create feedback for both the teachers and the student. It's also where you start to create your own theatre.

J - What about the improvisation?

A - I never liked that subject. You mean at the school?

J - Yes. What do you feel it lends to the teaching?

A - Agony! But I suppose there has got to be someplace where you can be bad. I certainly tell my students that.

J - How about the *preparation corporelle* classes?

A - Important. Great stuff. Beyond the obvious which is that you have to be in great shape to do this work. Again there is a rhythm and a method to it. It was always systematic. The system was to gain control of your body and to be aware of what you were doing and when you were doing it. Not to just move hap-hazardly even if it was good. It's important to be aware of what you are doing and then to build on that awareness. So in the *basculez-le basin*, we approach the control of the middle part of the body from every possible direction. Everything from the psychological control to gymnastics.

J - And the *analyse du mouvement* classes?

A - I view that as the study of the human body as a machine. The things that you study tend to be the classic field events from ancient Greece. Those are classes of movements to understand how the body moves most efficiently. The discus is an undulation. It is the epitome of the spiral undulation. Once you understand that you can apply it to any kind of swinging movement.

J - Let's jump to the big question. If you had to define the pedagogical approach of the school what would you say?

A - It is like the unified theory of relativity . . . For Lecoq I think it is the order that he imposes on life. He started looking at the world in terms of the four classical elements. Those are the first four things that you motivate movement with; fire, air, earth, and water. Then there are the materials, plants, animals, substances. You become aware that there is movement and rhythm in every aspect of our universe. If you sit in a really quiet forest you discover that there are subtle little movements all around you. They produce a feeling in you. Again this goes back to the therapy issue for me. If you can capture that movement and recreate it somehow then you can create that feeling in someone else. It is an organic and all encompassing approach to movement. And movement is what we do. From the first breath we take. So it is not only good theatre it is good therapy.

J - Let's talk about clowning. Did you discover it at the school?

A - I never discovered it at the school. It was my worst subject. I would surely have gotten the prize for least likely to earn a living as a clown. Again, there are a couple of moments that have stuck with me. One is the one I described to you and another was a funny little jump off a chair that I discovered.

Imagine: If you were standing on a chair and you bend your knees so that if your legs were straight you would be standing on the ground. You kind of jump off forward and while you're weightless there in the air you just lower your legs. It is this funny looking cartoon thing where it looks like legs just sprout out from underneath you. You don't go down at all. That is what I discovered. That moment. It was one of the key components

of my clown. I don't know why. It was finding these seemingly illogical but ultimately very satisfying ways of doing things.

J - Where have you taken the work since you left the school aside from your show?

A - About four or five years ago Joan Shirley at Dell'Arte asked me to teach clowning. I had refused to teach clowning for fifteen years. My answer was always, "I don't understand it. I do it but I don't understand it and I haven't got a clue about how to teach it." Everything I do is tied up in skills that I've learned and then the clowning work was reframing the skills to hide the technique. Without the skills there wasn't any clowning and I didn't understand it. Then she told me a story about a Shakespearian actor who had been at Dell'Arte and who had taught a workshop. She commented to this master teacher that he taught a wonderful workshop and was a wonderful actor but didn't teach what he did on stage.

I started thinking about that and I looked very carefully at my own show and at a show that I co-wrote and directed of my wife's and another show that I co-wrote with Gould and Sterns and I found a way to abstract themes from the shows. Without even knowing that they were clowning, I just knew that they worked and later they started to come together in a pattern. They are now principles that I teach. It is a little different than Lecoq's clown which is a very pure and very much a cardinal point of his theatrical compass.

J - Can you be specific about that?

A - I would have thought that the clown and the buffoon were sort of polar opposites. I asked him about this and he said the melodrama is opposite to the buffoon. The buffoon laughs at us because we believe in things. We believe in propriety and decency and politeness and morals and the buffoon doesn't. The buffoon stops and laughs at us because of our hypocrisies. In melodrama the character believes in everything. They believe in patriotism and God and glory and all the things that the melodrama portrays. I thought that was very interesting so I asked, "what is the clown." He said that the red nose is *la petite masque de la derisoire*. Which I translated as meaning, the little mask of that which is laughable. He said we laugh at the clown because he is innocent. Whereas the buffoon laughs at us because we believe in things. For me clown is, on one level a way to make a living, but I started to find my own definition of clown, which I have never discussed with Lecoq, so I don't know if this really fits into the purview of your discussion but I would be glad to go over it with you.

J - Sure.

A - I think basically Clown is the art form in which the performer is the material. It is the only art form I can think of where there is no material other than the performer himself.

The props, costumes, stories, etc. are secondary to the way the performer reacts to them. It's how the clown reacts to things that is so funny. That is what makes it so hard. Johnny Carson was a great clown because he could tell a bad joke and get a bigger laugh from his reaction to the bad joke than he could from a good joke. That's the clown.

This is a research that my wife, Julie Goell, and I have been conducting for the past four years in teaching workshops for Dell'Arte and at the Celebration Barn.

What is the place of the audience in the clown's world? Without an audience there is no clown. The notion of permission developed. The clown has to get permission even to enter the stage. The clown writes the contract on the spot when he comes in. As opposed to other performers where the contract was written before they arrived. When you go to see Hedda Gabbler and Hedda Gabbler walks on stage everyone understands.

I started to realize the difference between sketch humor and clowning. For example, there is an office, a telephone and a conversation that happens. In sketch humor the office is empty, the telephone rings, the actor enters, answers it, says "Hello!" and off we go. The clown walks in deals with the audience, finds the telephone or doesn't or uses a banana--it doesn't matter--creates the desk and the phone and the situation and then in complicity with the audience goes, "Ring, ring, that might be for me," and off they go. It is the involvement of the audience.

Then we got off on a jag with Keith Johnstone's work and a sense of status. We found out that status is very important in clowning. It is very important to understand the clown's status to partners, to place, to props. You can have status relationships on all three levels simultaneously. What was funny was status change. I think that a lot of our job as teachers is to provoke status changes and then the laughs come. Clown does something. It succeeds and then gloats and when the clown gloats you get the laugh. When the clown does something and fails, when the status falls to the floor then you get the laugh. It is the change in status that makes it work.

Another aspect is that the clown creates context out of seemingly unrelated objects or events. The clown is a problem solver. The clown's idiom in is trying to solve seemingly simple problems like getting down from a chair.

Another notion of clowning is clown logic, which is largely about rules. Since you the clown is starting from nothing the clown gets to create the rules, establish an atmosphere. For example, at one moment the clown gets up on a chair wanting to do something and then, "Oh my, I can't get down." Once the clown creates that *jeu*, "I can't get down from that chair," the audience accepts it. And will accept any tortured and convoluted logic in trying to create a solution to get down from the chair. It can be anything. Like the funny movement I found to erecting a tight rope that goes across the stage to where a ladder is. That is perfectly within the world of the clown. He can erect a tight rope and walk across

it just to get to a ladder to get to the floor when all he really had to do was step down. It's the reason real clowning doesn't work for children. Because they look at you and yell, "get down, what are doing? Get down!" That is where the clowning has gone for me. It all happens in the waiting.

One of the best and most dreaded exercises we do is called, show starts in five minutes. In this exercise you prepare a numero. You come out and set the stage and establish your relationship with the audience. Do the whole thing with your little check list. And just when you take that breath to start into your numero the voice comes over the loud speaker, "ladies and gentlemen the show will begin in five minutes." Immediately there is a status change. You either become defiant or you stand there going, "Oh no, what am I going to do?" You can't use your numero because you have to save that for the show. How do you fill those five minutes? That is where the clown is born and we start to see what kind of a clown a person is.

Another aspect of the study deals with character defects. This is another level of clowning. It is the part of your character that you really hate. The part most people won't admit that they have and everyone else sees it. You first have to identify it, you have to embrace it and then exploit it. Clowns are imperfect people. We call the course The Art of Dysfunctional Living.

J - What do you think the greatest strengths of the program are?

A - If you want to create your own movement based theatre it is the only place to go. The school teaches you how to really listen to what is going on in your audience, in yourself and your fellow performers and I think it teaches you standards. I can't explain it any more articulately except to say that I know I developed a sense of what is good and what works that I would not have had a clue about otherwise.

J - What about the weaknesses of the program?

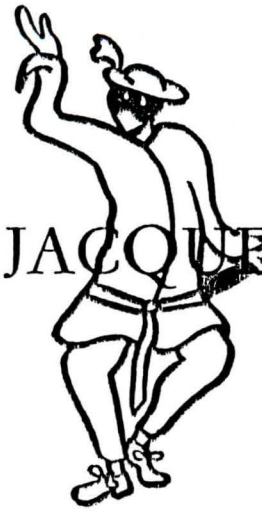
A - I don't know if this is a weakness or not. It was tough living in a foreign country and we didn't get much help from the school. I suspect it is still the same. The first couple of months were fairly traumatic; just trying to find a place to live, trying to eat, trying to deal with the language. On the other hand, it's a professional school. It's not a summer camp, it's not a liberal arts college. Ultimately, it is up to you to deal with all of that. It is kind of a Zen system of learning. You get immersed in it and learn from your experiences. I don't know if there are any weaknesses. I don't think it is a question of strengths or weaknesses. If you want to study with Lecoq you study on his terms.

APPENDIX 22

AUTHOR'S CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

FROM

ÉCOLE JACQUES LECOQ



# ÉCOLE JACQUES LECOQ

JE
CERTIFIE
QUE
M^r Becker Jonathan
A ÉTÉ ÉLÈVE DE MON ÉCOLE
DU 13 Octobre 86 AU 18 Juin 88
ET QU' il A TERMINÉ SES ÉTUDES
AVEC SUCCÈS

PARIS, LE 18 Juin 1988

MIME - THÉATRE
MOUVEMENT