

SKRIFTSERIE ★ NR2/2004

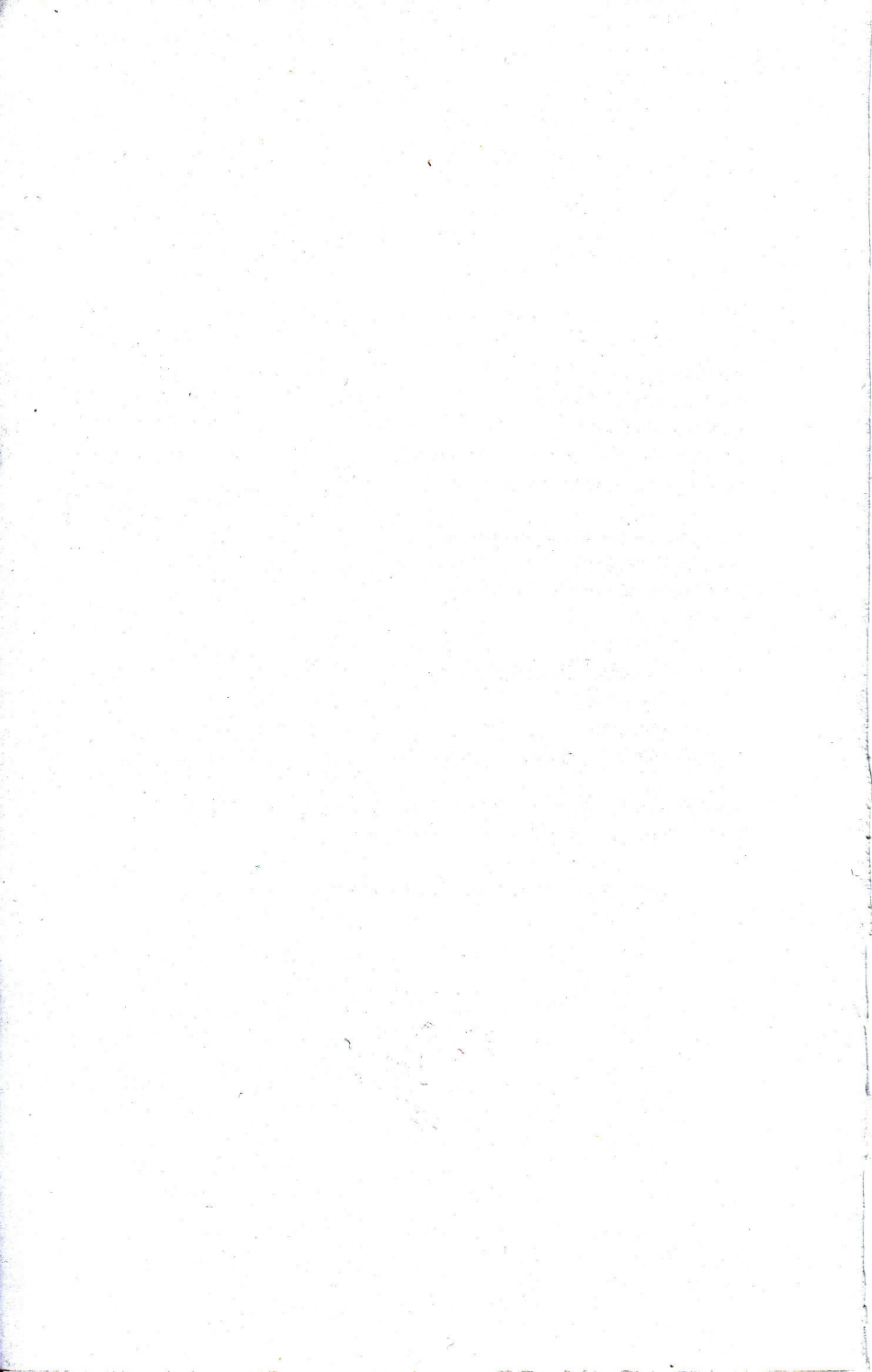
**THE FACE AND  
THE MASK OF THE ACTOR**  
METHODICA 2003

Martha Vestin  
Grete Sneltved

In cooperation with  
European Association for Theatre Culture



Dramatiska Institutet  
Enheten för Konstnärligt Utvecklingsarbete



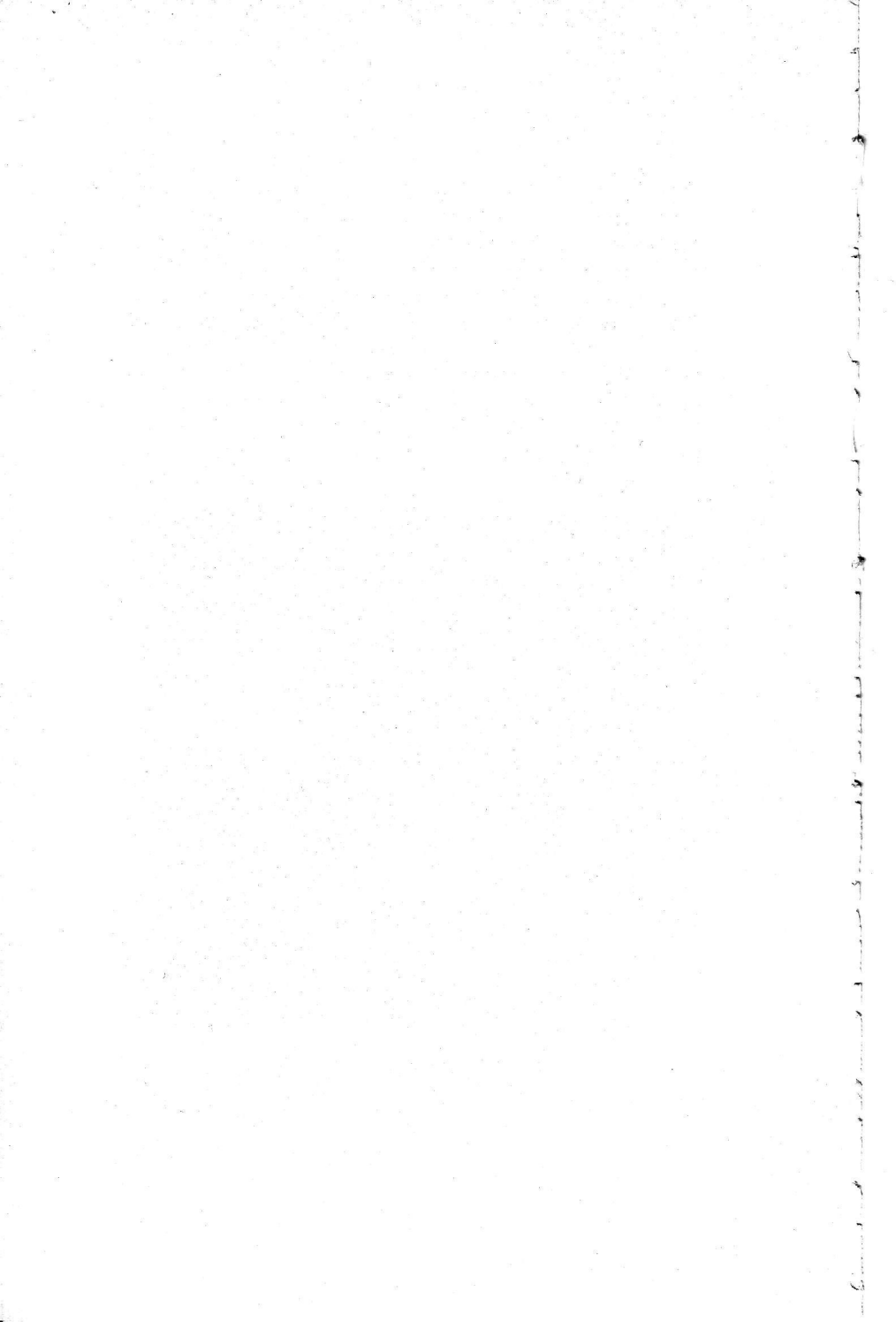


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# THE FACE AND THE MASK OF THE ACTOR

This publication is based on the documentation from Methodika 2003, complemented with comments and articles on the theme "The Face and the mask of the actor".

METHODIKA is a unique international festival exploring various methods of theatrical training. It opens for new directions in the development of theatre pedagogues and the evolution of methodological approaches; distributes knowledge to theatre professionals and scientists; and finally creates a discussion about pedagogy in theatre schools, and in the theatre itself.

METHODIKA 2003 was the Third festival of Methods in Theatre Training. It was held in Gripsholm, Sweden 2 – 8 August. Dr. Jurij Alschitz, pedagogue, director and leader of European Association for Theatre Culture, initiated the festival in 1999 and is its artistic leader. Methodika 2003 was organised by SCUT – Skandinavisk Centrum för Utforskning av Teater, Oslo/Stockholm.

The festival for theatre artists, pedagogues, students and scholars of performing arts takes the form of an intense working meeting.

The chosen theme for METHODIKA 2003 was "The Face and the Mask of the Actor".

How should we define the face and the mask?

What does the actor show when he goes on stage?

What is more "true", the face or the mask?

The structure of METHODIKA 2003 gave the participants an exceptional opportunity to combine theory with practical research and open discussions. Four masters were selected to lead a group consisting of students, actors, directors and pedagogues. During 6 days they wor-

ked with and explored the different working methods. Each master lectured on the theoretical principles of his or her method and gave a practical demonstration of their work.

## PEDAGOGUES METHODIKA 2003:

### **Four principal pedagogues:**

Director Vladimir Klimenko (Klim) (Russia),

Professor Claudio de Maglio (Italy) from Civica Accademia Dell' Arte Drammatica Nico Pepe in Udine.

Director Abel Solares (Guatemala/Japan).

Mask-maker/costumier/scenographer Thanos Vovolis  
and director Giorgos Zamboulakis (Greece)

### **Lectures and exhibition:**

Professor Edgardo de la Cruz, Head of the Department of Theatrical Studies at California State University.

Mask-maker Uwe Krieger (Germany)

### **Guest performance:**

Torbjörn Alström – "Tales from a mask"

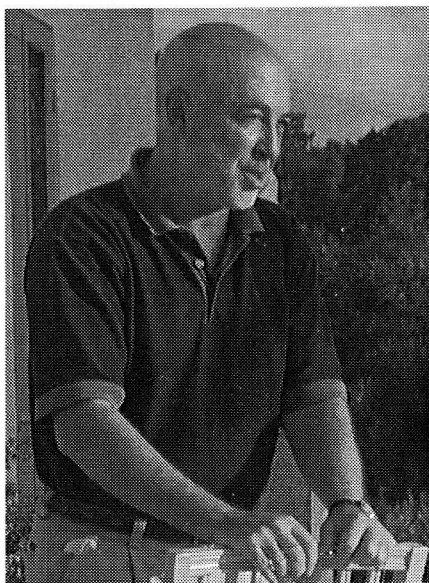
The ca 60 artists who participated in Methodika 2003 came from Germany, Sweden, USA, Iceland, Greece, Ukraine, Japan, Latvia, Russia, Denmark and Norway.

### **Introduction to Methodika 2003 by its artistic leader dr. Jurij Alschitz**

"There is no such thing as a universal or unique knowledge or method for educating actors and directors. Unfortunately, however, a method, which is interesting in its, own very often becomes a dogma that reigns supreme for several generations, and this is a catastrophe for theatre. The idea of METHODIKA is to connect teachers from all over the world with living methods. If you understand a "pedagogical method" as something fixed which is repeated constantly in the same shape (even though that shape is very beautiful), you will have to admit in the

end that it is dead. Sadly, a large number of these dead methods exist and a lot of people continue to use them. I believe it is time for a strong break in theatre pedagogy. If we understand the education of actors and directors as a "method of creation", as a living process, it should be constantly changing, moving and developing – not only in one direction, but also in several different directions – this is the principle of our festival.

I think the modern kind of pedagogy should continuously develop itself in the background, distancing itself from traditional education in schools. This pedagogy shall have no final point – as a category of final does not exist. This pedagogy is endless, infinite. It simultaneously creates everything; it knows no chronological order. It does not move from a beginning to the next chapter: "finish this, start the next etc." Instead, all parts develop together; as a system it is a polyphonic life. Everything alive grows up this way – in complexity. The human being grows up this way, and this system needs only one main teacher – as the Greeks call him – Cosmos.



## **Introduction to this publication by prof. Martha Vestin**

After Methodika 2003, there was a lot of documentation in form of recordings, videotapes and photos. But more important, there were a many comments from participants and observers, among them myself. With the help of the festival director, Grete Sneltved, I have tried to structure and edit this big material and combine it with my own comments. Somebody else probably would have structured it differently. I want the reader to get an impression of the high level of training, discussion and exchange, and of the differences in approach to the subject and to teaching method.

The theme of the workshop was "The face and the mask of the actor". Within this theme the focus was on method and process, the general idea of Methodika. Even the guest-performance we saw – by Torbjörn Ahlström – was mainly about how to use different kinds of mask, and how they transform the actor.

I have come across several methods of mask work, ranging from the extremely disciplined and structured work, where the actor has to delay all reactions to keep total control (as in the work of Mario Gonzales), to the not less disciplined methods based on instant impulse and trancelike loss of control. Some mask teachers use the looking in the mirror, where the actor gets to see his new physiognomy, the combination of his own face and body with the half-mask, as the "ignition spark" for improvisation, while others see it as absolutely forbidden to look in the mirror and only allow the actor to look at the mask before he has put it on.

I wanted to see if the three pedagogues working with mask were specialized in training actors for mask-theatre only, or if they regarded their type of maskwork as generally useful for actors of all theatre styles.

I also wanted to see, if Methodika 2003 was going to confront me with even more approaches to work with mask, if there were common values in spite of the different methods, and most interesting of all, how the theme "Face and Mask" would be tackled. A seminar on just "Mask" would not have been half as interesting.

In the publication, I have tried to highlight those aspects.

The four main pedagogues have a section each, where they first present themselves and the theme of their workshop. After the presen-

tation follows a short summary of their workshop and a more detailed report. Finally, each pedagogue as well as dr. Alschitz has provided us with his own article.

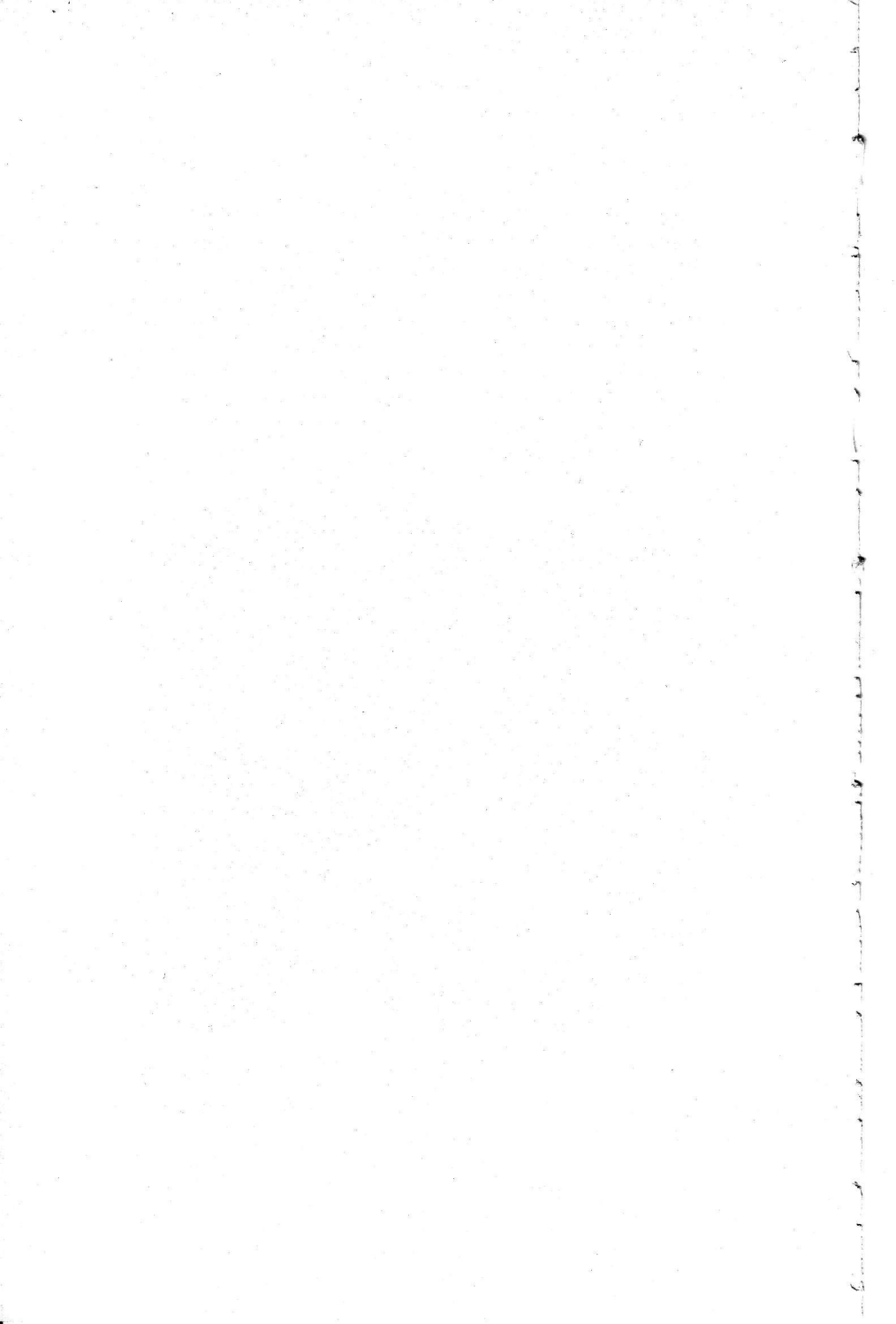
After that follows articles from the evening guests, some concluding remarks by dr. Alschitz and the main pedagogues, and last my own reflections on the whole seminar.



Martha Vestin



Grete Sneltvædt





# **PRESENTATION**

**CLAUDIO DE MAGLIO**

**Dancer, actor, author, director**

Claudio de Maglio is director of the Civica Accademia d'arte Drammatica "Nico Pepe" in Udine, Italy.

His professional and artistic education comes from school sessions and performing workshops with some of the most interesting personalities and important teachers of contemporary dance and theatre in Europe and America. As actor he has worked in international productions with – among others – Yoshi Oida and Jean Paul Denizon. As teacher he has done workshops in Europe and Somalia. His productions have taken part in some of the most important International Festivals such as Biennale Venice, International Festival of Muggia, Inteatro of Poverigi and various festivals in Milano, Roma, Greece, Austria and Malta.

"The mask and the face – conflict or harmony?  
Conflict or prolongation – a two-way street"

I prefer to develop the argument in a series of questions – which I prefer more than the answers – about relationship between mask and actor's body and mind (that means not only the face! And not only the body...)

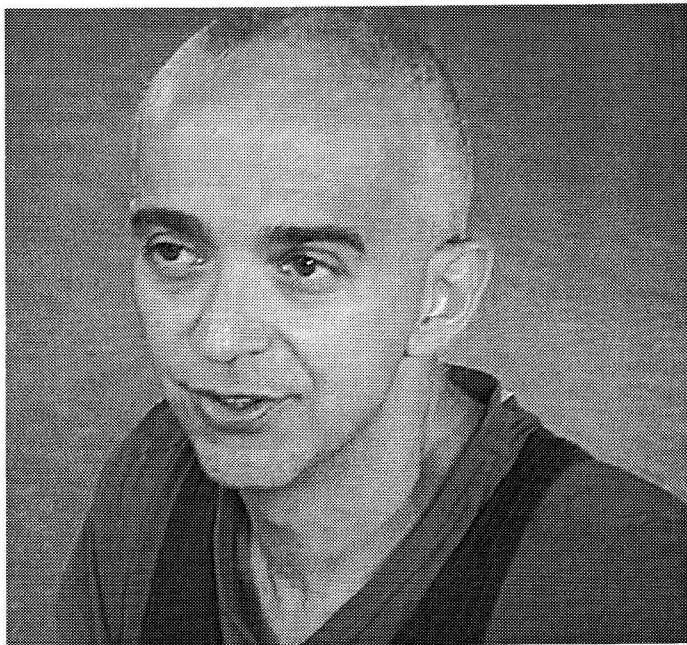
What does it mean to wear a mask... are you ready for this trip?  
What will you lose – if you really lose something – and what could you find...  
How can you enrich yourself as an actor through this "technique"?  
What kind of energy do you need and where can you find it...

These are some of the principle questions of the 4 days work during which we will try to go use different masks (servant, owner, soldier,

doctor, lover, noble...) and try to see how these masks ask us to be alive on stage.

It will be just a touch, a smell about an essence...

*Claudio de Maglio*



## CLAUDIO DE MAGLIO – short workshop summary

Claudio worked with preparatory training for playing with traditional *commedia del arte* masks. First he did movement exercises with focus on specific body parts. It was done with high energy, he demanded precision but also fun and enjoyment. He used lively fast-beat music, not to dance to, but to push the participants to work more without worrying. He moved fast from individual work to exchange and participation.

In a second phase, he showed the masks and started to explain the traditional characters and their movements. Everybody worked with those movements, and also with the quite extreme voices of the characters.

In the third phase, one by one were allowed to try the mask on and act the character. With the traditional movements as a base, they were asked to improvise within a given situation.

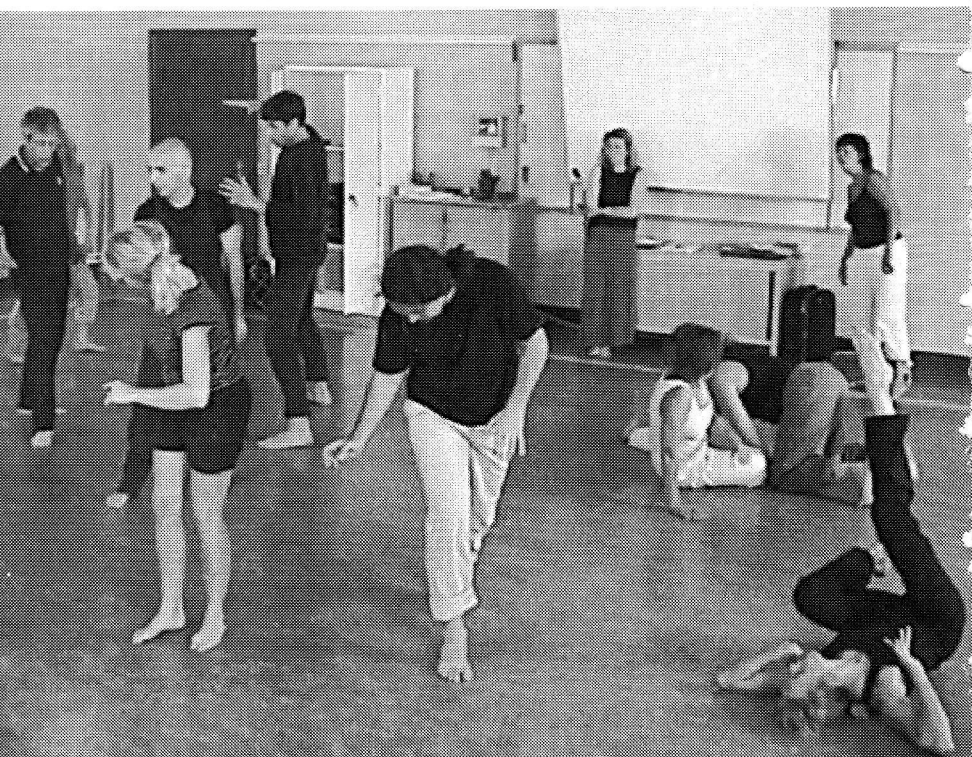
In the end, some characters with masks met each other in a typical *commedia* situation. They improvised around the situations.

Some of the participants were also asked to learn part of traditional script and try it.

The whole workshop was run with a very open and warm attitude, people laughed a lot without losing concentration, and they also learnt a lot. By the end, everybody had understood something about the combination of fixed elements and free improvisation in *commedia*, and also about the extra energy and physical precision demanded by the actor in mask. Everybody could see when the mask becomes alive and when it remains a dead object.

He also worked with the actors' own face, training facial muscles, expressions and distortions. In a way, the *commedia* mask can also be seen in the actor's own face.

M. V.



CLAUDIO DE MAGLIO  
Workshop report  
Based on documentation recordings and on  
notes by observer Kjell Wremert

Each day, the training started with some simple group exercise for awareness of the room and the group. Then followed the training with movements of the joints, to make them agile and free and to train the actor to separate each joint from the other. Claudio often gave the instruction on what joint or part of the body the actor should move, in this way they could get a freer flow and avoid fixed patterns. Foot, hands, pelvis, head, face, chest, the whole body etc. He also changed the speed and rhythm of the work. Often music was used as a help to find inner rhythm, and to be inspired by the vibrations of the music. The beat of the music should not be followed, "don't dance".

From individual work they passed over to interaction, sometimes two by two, sometimes by three, or in the whole group. There is always a demand for precision in using the specific body part, have focus and direction in the room, and at the same time being able to improvise freely and surprise yourself.

He always encouraged them to do more to try to break their imagined limitations.

Another type of exercise was to use four possibilities of positioning the body in the room; standing, lying down, sitting, and walking. Within each category there are lots of possible variations.

In several exercises they changed the four positions in different tempo, dynamic, and created their own compositions.

Every day there was also at least one exercise dealing with the presence of the relaxed and attentive actor, not trying to act or impress or doing anything "extra", just be present. As everyone in theatre knows, this is very difficult. In those exercises, participants pronounced their own names, and later also some details about themselves, like where they live, or what they wish for.

Towards the end, this was combined with the exercise of positions in the room, which heightens the awareness and presence even more.

During the training it is important that the actors have a flow of energy, even with abrupt or surprising changes. The change is needed for creating surprises and new shapes or forms. Without precision in the space the actor will not be able to see the space that they are leaving and even more important to see the space where they are moving. They should be like comets in the space. The actor should be able to listen to his/her breath and stay with it and not force it.

After the warming up exercises the work with masks started. The first day, after a small introduction on Commedia masks by Claudio, only the Zanni mask was used. Then each day, more masks were introduced and the work became more and more complex.

The Zanni is a bird – like mask, inspired by the pheasant. He is a servant, an immigrant, simple and sly, a survivor. His driving forces are food and sex.

The preparatory training for Zanni (and later for the other masks) was done in several steps.

First the basic form and movements for Zanni were trained. He stands on half toe, always prepared to move sideways. One hand is up over the head, the other behind the back, and both hands are nervously waving the air (like an exited bird). When the feet change place with a very fast movement, the hands also change. The head moves in a birdlike way, stopping in to the side, to the front, to the other side, observing. And when he sees something interesting (like girl or food) he runs away sideways with a strong focus. All this is first trained without mask, and as a strict movement pattern.

The second step is to try this with the mask. Participants are instructed never to touch the mask with the hands once it is on. Then it immediately becomes reduced to a dead object. The mask requires a strong inner rhythm. The movements may be small or big, but the inner rhythm has to be strong in any case.

The third step is to work with the mask in a specific acting space. The acting space is marked on the floor. Outside it you are “private”. You take the mask on outside the space with your back turned to the

audience. You enter the space, stop in the middle and turn towards the audience. Without pre-planning you start a small movement in one body part, you make it bigger and bigger and let it spread to the rest of the body and develop a rhythm. Claudio helps by drumming on the floor. After a maximum you start diminishing until you are back to your original small movement. Then you stop, turn, walk out and take off the mask in a neutral way. Everybody had to try this.

The next day this was developed so that Claudio stops the person in the middle of the movement, the person has to freeze for some moments and then starts to develop the mask character from this form. All changes of direction have to start from the head. You also have to remember your vertical axis and your inner rhythm. Then Claudio stops again and you go gradually back to the original small movement.

The next step of development was to add voice, first only by sounds and exclamations of surprise, happiness, fear, worry etc, then later also with words. Claudio helped by asking questions to the Zanni, in this way also leading the actor towards the typical line of thought of the Zanni.

During the third and fourth day new masks were introduced, and the same line of training was followed, only a little faster. In each case, the traditional strict movement pattern was combined with the actor's own improvisation on the character. Very quickly, the participants were able to use the traditional elements in their improvisations. The masks used were:

**Arlecchino:** a child, a cat, lazy but full of action and surprise, with a hat and a baton, leaning forward with his thumbs tucked into his waistline.

**Colombina,** his female counterpart, strong and focused, with acrobatic jumps of happiness, zickzack movements with hands turned out.

**Pantalone,** with a black mask of power, old but want to be young and make love to young girls. An old eagle, or a turkey or owl. Walks strutting with one hand fluttering behind his ass, the other holding his empty balls or purse. Very greedy.

**Il Dottore,** a fat old pig, speaks the "fat" dialect of Bologna, points philosophically towards the sky in his long speeches, which always end with a request for food. He usually has a book in his left hand.

Pantalone and il Dottore have more or less the same status; they can be rivals or friends.

**Pulcinella**, another servant, an outsider from Naples. Like a chicken or a rat, very rhythmical. Dangerous.

**Il Capitano**, speaks in Spanish or German about military matters, wants to show his muscles, very "macho", walks with "nazi steps" but is afraid of his own shadow, makes much noise for little content.

**The witch** a modern mask for women was added to the traditional ones. She moves close to the ground like an old crow, with a stick in her hand. She has magical powers.

The participants were given the possibility to try different masks, and then to stay with and develop their favourite.

As a final stage, some characters could meet in the small acting space. There were rules to be observed. The servants always had to enter from the side, and Dottore and Pantalone always from the back. Servants may never pass in front of Dottore or Pantalone. The first improvisations were only a short meeting, to see each other and react, and then some longer improvisations on typical Commedia-situations or scenarios were developed.

Some of the participants also had prepared texts that they used with the mask. (*Two gentlemen from Verona*).

Also, the lovers, romantic characters without mask were tried. They are romantic, confused and impractical to a maximum that makes them vulnerable and comic. Claudio pointed out that they have to be performed with strong emotion by the actor, otherwise they are not comic. The actors must not try to be ridiculous, on the contrary, he tries to be romantic and serious, but he becomes funny in the eyes of the audience. The participants tried to play the lovers in a typical commedia scene where they have made a secret appointment, but everything goes wrong; misunderstandings of time and place, accidents, suicide attempts, misdirected letters, darkness of night etc.

Even though the work is developed each day, from session to session, Claudio reminds the participants that they cannot fall back on things that were good yesterday. They have to start every session on a fresh here and now.

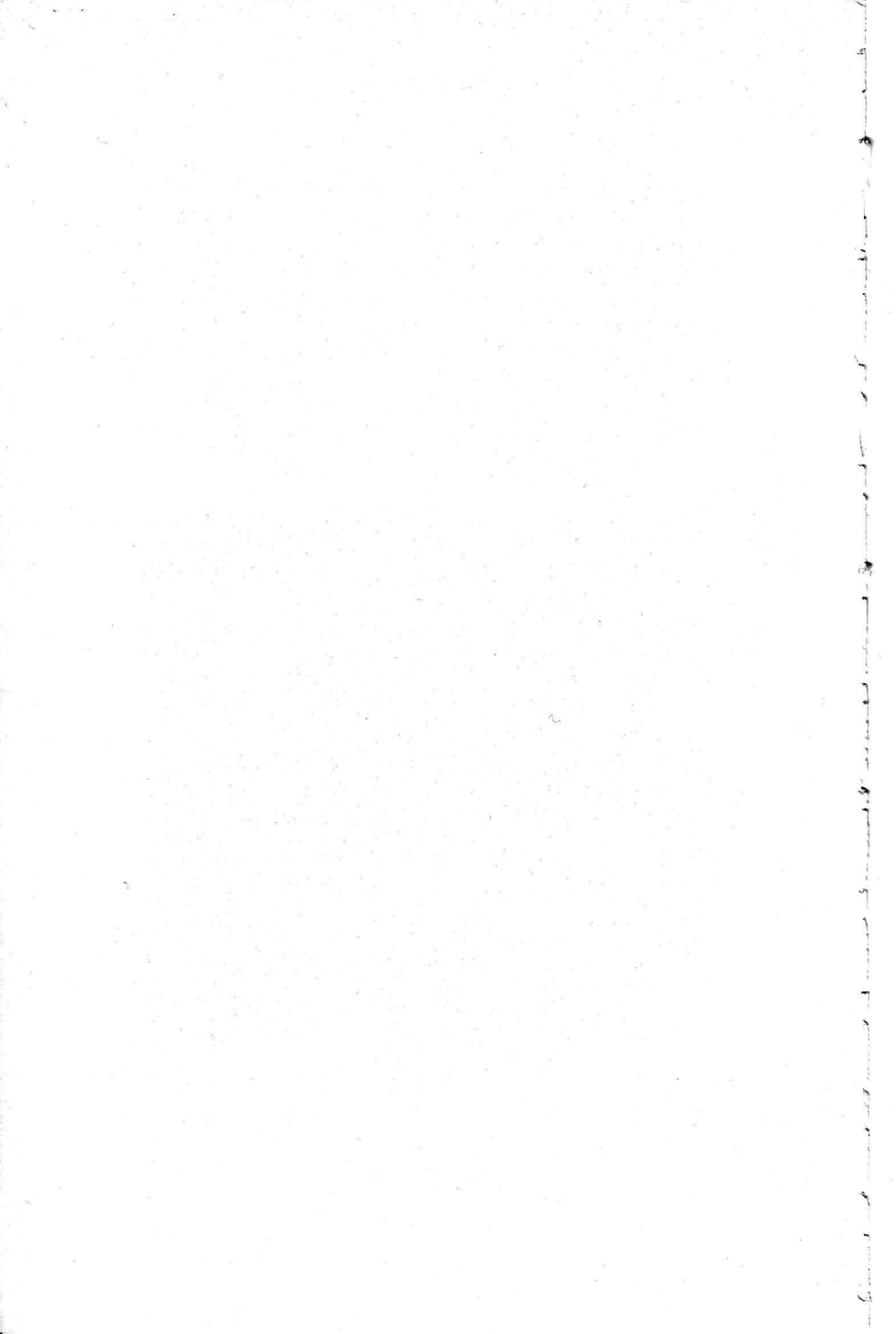


For the work demonstration the last day, the work just went on, warming up exercises, preparatory work for the masks, simple solo improvisations with masks, meetings and finally some scenarios with text. In the very end, all the participants presented themselves to the audience with the name exercise that they did every day.

The cleaning or purifying of the actor is one important aspect of Claudio's work, which may seem a paradox when you see the drastic, energetic and expressive commedia characters. But the openness and free attitude of the actor is a prerequisite for such work. The actor has to be freed from prestige, mannerism and self-indulgence.

At the work demonstration, Claudio gave an explanation to his training, which follows, slightly shortened.





## Claudio's speech at the work demonstration (slightly shortened)

Just some words to explain a little bit of the work we did. Obviously you know the technique of Commedia del'Arte. For every mask there is a walk, a line to explore. That means that it is very easy to fall into parody. It's a very fragile work. So we must not expect that every time it comes deeply. I think that the fragility of this work needs to be protected.

We tried today to give you a very compressed idea of what the work of Commedia del'Arte could be, in a way that could be interesting to use. In the beginning we did what I call the warming up of the joints. It is combined with the idea of the intelligence of the body. To clean your body, moving in a way to be reconditioned out of the gestures or postures of daily life. All of us have these gestures and postures. This way of making your body alive, giving the idea of the intelligence, of the conscience of the body moving through space in an unusual way. Every time and in every section of the body you have to give consciousness to change the rhythm, use the space, to surprise yourself every time.

Then there was the idea of the different languages of the different parts of the body. The question of the hands and the answer of the head. And the music of Paganini was used not with the idea of making a dance but from the idea of using the vibration of the music that can change you. This is very important, not to go into the idea of dance, not to illustrate the music but the vibration that is inside of the music. To empty your body. This is the main idea of these exercises that we were doing.

Afterwards came this exercise to become more precise in the space: gesture and word, gesture and word. First gesture; you become conscious of the space, open your space inside to be conscious about the space that you move in and then projecting the voice.

Then it was the exercise that you saw in the end. This is an exercise, or an improvisation that we have had too little time with, to

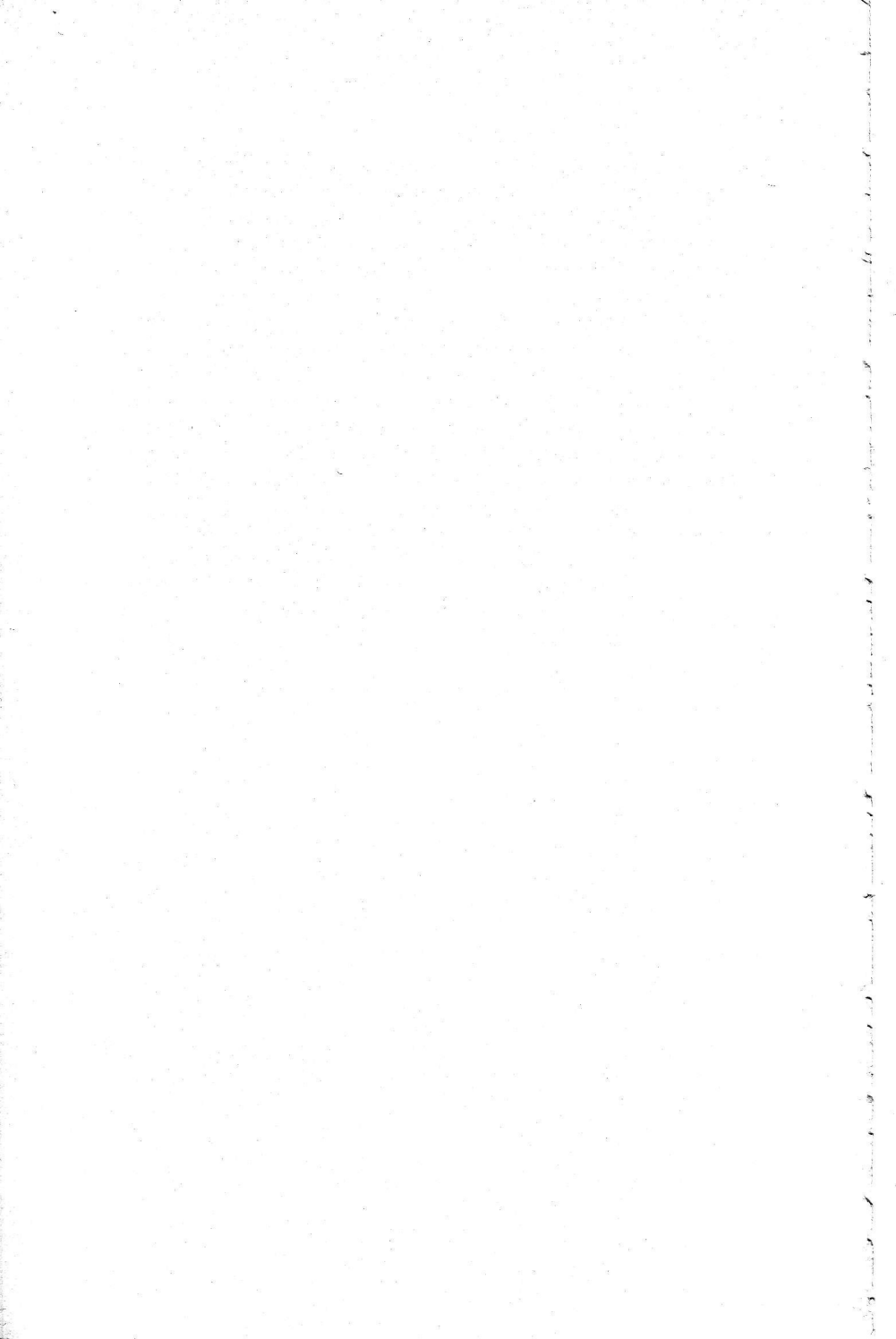
empty yourself and move in the four possibilities in the space that the human being has. There are four main possibilities; vertical – standing up, walking – different kinds of rhythms; you can walk, run, slowly etc., then sitting and then lay down. We do not have any other possibilities in the space. But in these four possibilities there is a lot of richness, lot of possibilities of how you move in space.

And there are all these exercises that I like to call «the Face»; because I wanted to stay close to the theme of Face and Mask – how they nourish each other. That is why every day after a new kind of exercise we ended the lesson with a question. These questions had no answer, it was questions coming from the kind of exercises that we did. The main important thing is that the answers to the questions are not to come in an intellectual way but through the experience that they got from the work. So they can say something because they experienced it. You know that Commedia dell Arte is a theatre for the actors. It's for the actors because the text is just a structure of actions and because of the actor must be very autonomous, very ready, and creative and this is the kind of work that we were trying to do.

Then you could see that the other work was on research. During the first days we looked in some books about Commedia del'Arte, because you know that in the 20th century there were a lot of studies, formalising into a sequence of postures the characters of Commedia del'Arte. Because we don't have a strong tradition as in the East where there are centuries after centuries of traditions in theatre, Commedia dell Arte was totally reinvented in the 20th century, starting from the stamps, from the descriptions. But on one side we have some people who think that Harlequin has to move like this, Pulcinella has to move like this and on the other side we have a lot of possibilities to enrich this traditions, to change and even break with the traditions. And this was what we were trying to do; starting from the consciousness of the body, the consciousness of the deformation of the mask will give you their characters; they are all asymmetrical and very strange. This means that they need the body. It is in this that I think that the theme of these four days can be enriched by the conscious-

ness that the mask is not only the head. But how can the body work to give support to the idea of the mask? I don't think that the mask is just the head. In our Western culture the body was always left out in the history because of the social, economical situation and most of all religion. In Italy we have the Vatican, and we had and have a lot of problems.

So for me Commedia dell'Arte is just one step. I'm not specialised in Commedia dell'Arte but I use these very important steps for giving the actors their own consciousness. It's like a mirror that can deform you. When you look at this form you will understand something about yourself. And this was the parable: to go from the face, to deformation, to the mask, to let the form go out and go back to our face and say your name. This might be a road towards the profession of the actor, and even for the development of any human being, it can be useful. That's why we were working with form coming from inner starting point, the consciousness of what position my body is taking and what kind of feeling it gives me, even give me this mask and then leave the form. It was the task of these days.



## Fragments on the Mask and the Face by Claudio de Maglio

Speaking about the mask, sooner or later you come face to face with one of the fundamental themes in the actor's work: the relationship between form and the inner man. Or, one could say, the internal process that manages to link up with and then touch a form, to then nurture it. It is, however, necessary to ask oneself what it is that makes a mask recognizable, and up to what point one can go. Everything is clear when the mask-object is made of leather, wood, or papier-mâché (there are masks made of every conceivable material – see the work done by groups like *the mummenschanz*). At times there are, however, masks that do not use the mask-object that we usually associate with this word. There are also the masks represented by Totò, Charlie Chaplin... but also Commedia dell'Arte lovers, who are all "characters", models that express a synthesis of different types of behaviour and gestures 'without having a mask on'. In this case it is even more evident that the whole body contributes to the enacting of the mask because the latter corresponds to a precise image, which, in the time and context that produced it, was perfectly recognizable. In the first thirty years of the 20th century, a few centuries after the Commedia dell'Arte, Luigi Pirandello got fundamental inspiration for his plays from the concept of the mask, taken however from everyday life of contemporary society. That means that we can recognise a mask when we are able to discern a synthesis, when there is a convergence of definite, coherent characteristics, which correspond to a common view of the world. A mask should be immediately recognisable. From Pirandello's point of view, society, with its values whittled down to behavioural patterns that become irreversible rituals void of meaning and totally empty, represents the fixation of form within which man is bound and in which he feels imprisoned. For our author there are then two possibilities: give in unconsciously, or accept the game, learning to dance like the other marionettes, forcing yourself and others to toe this general and perverse line. This digression on Pirandello allows me to mention how the mask has, even though it is a synthesis which expresses a precise interior movement, an impor-

tant functional role: it is something in which people from all walks of life can mirror themselves. The mask will be recognized as such in so far as it relates to what people really are, or better, it will live when it is able to establish a specific relationship with the surrounding society, while keeping itself a certain distance from it. And it is in the defining of this difference that a link is created – we are looking out through a window over the abyss that separates us from sense and from the form that our very being takes on to manifest itself.

In the times and places where Nature is more greatly evidenced in human imagination (and for the Western world this is more and more a thing of the past) the mask has allowed us to come into contact with the 'extra-human': the divine and/or the animal that is within us, letting it speak and act, transmitting knowledge, evoking and contacting the dead/the gods.

Glancing back to the origins, to the shamanic cultures, we notice that it is the divinity that comes down to us, accepting the conflict between its original lack of form and its being given one, which, I may add, is deforming and deformed. Through this 'incarnation' the divinity becomes an expression of something beyond daily routine, beyond mere amplification.

These introductory remarks would each require further deepening, but let's take a step forward saying that the mask cannot live except as an extension of the body of the actor. It is in this extremity, in the moving away from the central motor system towards an ever more distant periphery, that the mask comes into its own. And it is therefore this quest for the centre, and the consequent flowing from the centre towards the periphery of the body that become so interesting for the actor who is keen on doing research and developing his art.

This extension does not mean the simple extension of the gesture – the voice. It implies a change of energy levels of the mind-body, which allows one to enter a state where it is the whole body that writes, recounts, expresses itself.

Ever since primitive times and up to Pirandello, the mask managed to accompany us as we grew up, expressing forms within which the human and the divine (or extra-human) either touch, or clash, or unite. It brought to light the irreparable conflict-constriction between the 'I' and society, as it descended from the divine to the human.



Yet the mask always retains an element which goes beyond the human dimension, and that is given by its fixity... the thing that links us to the death that the mask always keeps in view...

The complete theatrical works of Pirandello is entitled "Maschere Nude" (*Naked Masks*) and here I find another very interesting point: I wonder if the unveiling of the mask reveals true humanity and whether this humanity is fragile... impalpable... or even reachable, i.e. definable. But definitions always construct another form...

Is it possible to be in touch with this most fragile of elements without restricting it? How? That's another good question ...

Let us now come to the *Commedia dell'Arte*, perhaps for some applied pedagogy...

I do not consider myself a specialist in the *Commedia dell'Arte* even though I must admit that I do get excited about this field of culture from which I come. It contains a great wealth and offers many possibilities for re-invention. Besides this, I realise there is a great risk that so-called experts run. It is very easy to have certain deeply-rooted and even unconscious convictions about the *Commedia dell'Arte*, judging this art form as being superficial, seeing it as something that touches without affecting anything, something that is, using provincial or mannerist terminology, 'nice', 'charming', 'Italian'.

There is no specific tradition regarding the use of the mask in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. There is no immutable form that is passed down from generation to generation, perhaps through minimal and ingenious variants suggested by heads of theatre families who would certainly be authorised to do so, as we see in the Oriental theatre tradition.

This lack of certainties leads to mystery, to the secret that many tried to discover last century, and which fed the fascination for the 'improvised' *Commedia*: there was a way that each mask was worn and the governing principles had to be revealed. It is more likely that there were several modalities, each one referring to the level of success each company enjoyed, success that was also due to the genius of the actors. Each modality had its own logic and recognizability for the thrilled and enraptured spectator. If there had not been this recognizability that allowed the heterogeneous audience (from the masses to

the sovereign) to see themselves mirrored in the work, this form of entertainment would not have maintained such a high level of popularity throughout Europe and for over two centuries. The Orientals might smile at this, but for the West, where everything is so quickly proposed and superseded, where great social change and imposing discoveries have been made, the fact that this art form continued to thrive for over two hundred years is no mean achievement.

Great masters and innovators of the 20th century theatre – from the Russians to the French, from the English to the Italians – have turned to this art form searching for the seeds of a rebirth and refounding of the meaning of 'theatre'. Therefore, everything we know today is simply nothing but what we believe we know. Everything comes from these diverse forms of re-elaboration that often led to stylisation, to the formalization that would later be defined as 'classical'. We would add that this is the fruit of a construction that is as arbitrary as it is legitimate. As nothing indicates that any one particular way of seeing things is the true way, let alone the one and only way, it is possible to receive everything our predecessors left us and try to regenerate it.

It is interesting to see the two approaches towards this type of entertainment. On the one hand some tend to follow the form as if it were a sort of guarantee that certifies the unchanging quality of the product over the years. On the other hand, some see a vagueness of experimentation lived out with an anxious need for re-adaptation while searching for 'types' or new 'forms' to revive the *Commedia* – and this often ends up as simple allegory. Facing such spinous issues, perhaps it would be better to not deal with the *Commedia dell'Arte* and go on to something else. The ways of the Theatre are many...

And yet there is something in this form of theatre that I found useful and worth exploring – the question of the methodology, or rather, a phenomenology that is open, always coming into being, always ready to contradict itself and to supersede itself in experience, and that concerns the growth process of the actor. The only thing that is certain with the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and that on which all the different schools of thought and methodological approaches converge is the centrality of the actor.

By centrality of the actor we mean an awareness of one's expressive instruments, and therefore precision, the ability to recognise the

effects of one's own working, together with the ability to reproduce it. It means autonomy (improvising, intervening coherently on the action). It means creativity, energy that leads to plausible variants, the re-invention of the form to save the substance of one's acting. All these elements are excellent for an Acting School, an essential stage in the formation process of an actor, a growth factor for the whole man.

The school I head and teach in tries to not favour one single method in the formation of an actor. We try to not fix within set pre-constituted schemes the very concept of formation, which we see rather as deriving from the manifestation, in phenomenological terms, of experience, exploration, and feed-back from the acquisitions of the student himself. Together with a stable group of teachers, I work towards this end. This 'sailing-by-sight' method, more demanding than others, is enriched by regular visits from guest teachers, who differ in working methodology and poetics. This is decided on according to the needs of the courses, each one of which is unique, as is each student. I have learnt that it is vitally important to search for the key to this: sometimes talent remains unexpressed when faced with forms, methods and approaches that are not presented at the right time – just nothing happens! The key has not been found! Other times, next to nothing is sufficient to set everything ablaze, and the up-till-then hidden talent will develop like a forest fire.

Favouring this process, searching for the key, finding the key - these are the things that drive me on, stimulating me to try new paths and to refine the itinerary. Perhaps this is one of the tasks of a Theatre School - providing occasions where this process can be set in motion. Yet one must be careful because the stimuli must be very discreet, at times almost invisible. In some cases it means accompanying the student, going along a dark path with him; in others you must leave him on his own right from the beginning, just silently watching over the pathway he opens up for himself, being there when something vital is touched upon. Heaven help us in this task, and, above all, protect the students from the devotion of their teachers.

Eventually the students must leave the school and walk in their own strength. Those who are slow in reaching this point must receive special attention. And this is the most natural of things: you must start from the beginning... welcoming change. The pedagogue's duty is per-

haps right here: he must recognize in the confusion, in the continual and obsessive transformation of the world scene that is hard pressing each one of us, in the lowering of cultural levels and in the impoverishing of the imaginary that is its logical consequence, a substance, an essence that begs to be recognized, to be brought to light. It is a bit like the old story about the statue that is already in the block of marble or the diamond hidden and imprisoned by a rock – but the theatre school's task is neither that of the sculptor nor that of the miner! It is rather that of reminding the sculptor and the miner of what they are and that there is a job to be done. The school should furnish the students with the tools needed to complete their work.. We must encourage the actor to be the sculptor of himself, and the miner to dig down into himself to discover what is already there. The actor's job, in fact, is to chisel away until he has removed everything that hides the totality of his presence. In other words, he must remove the mask, or masks, to finally reveal his face, his full potential.

In my school, the Commedia dell'Arte is the intermediate stage in a three-year course, and is dealt with halfway through the second year.

The studying and deepening your knowledge of the Commedia dell'Arte is an exciting moment, very direct and sometimes even quite distressing for some of the students. This is because the mask brings you face to face with all your clichés: if you do not recognize them, if you do not master them, you will never be able to overcome them or abandon them; you will never be able to use them according to the phase you are in. The mask exposes your lack of real knowledge of your body, and it does it in a very direct or even cruel way: you can neither hide from it nor bluff your way around it. The interplay of the mask requires precision and such a quality of energy that no shortcuts are possible: no use can be made of ambiguity or logical and reasoned words. There are no 'ifs' or 'buts': it is the body that speaks and transmits everything... everything is clear, immediate!

It is therefore important to stress that the mask is not just an object that covers your face... and above all, to remember that the mask is not about your head! The mask is about the actor's body, his totality. That means that it is not only his voice but also his imagination, together with the interior process that is activated, that all get involved,

becoming part of the whole that enrich and nourish continually.

Working with the mask requires precise preparation of the actor: he must become a sort of explorer, even if he prefers an open methodology (and I personally find this interesting). Much rigour must be applied to establishing the basic principles of consciousness – of one's own body (starting with a de-conditioning phase); of space; of the amount of energy needed. Besides this, there is the interior process that stimulates and activates the amplification, and the extension of the body-mind (de-formation/trans-formation).

### **Concluding remarks**

The mask, therefore, includes to a substantial degree the basis aspects of the work of the actor and of the theatre, and it is for this reason that I continue to direct much of my research in this direction.

I have seen both excellent and extremely poor quality theatre made up of or with the mask. I have seen fine actors go to pieces when faced with the mask, and I have seen others who were having great difficulty asserting themselves flourish thanks to the mask. Has the mask always constituted an essential step in the career of an actor? Is it his final destination or the starting point? And then, what type of mask? I have not got an answer to these questions: I have only my experience, which I try to transmit to others.

Every year there is at least one student who does not manage to overcome the difficulties met with when we come to the *Commedia dell'Arte*. However, with successive theatre experiences not involving the mask, these few people are reborn, finding their *raison d'être*, leaving behind them the 'ifs' and 'buts' of an opportunity missed or not lived out to a full. That shock they experienced, that refusal, turned out to be of vital importance to grasp this deeper understanding. The effect produced is a bit like the cork of a bottle of champagne: it might not explode at midnight, but sooner or later it will explode! In the formation process, in learning, it is not so much a case of going up the steps of a ladder: what matters is the going through the process. At the end of the day, it is this that allows one to accept and integrate every experience and to be receptive to further growth experiences! At times it is worth scrutinizing the path we had problems on from a

second path that runs parallel to it, seeing without judging what had blocked us, learning to smile at it, and then going on.

Every year I write a scenario, after having found, together with my students, the masks that are most congenial for each one of them. This is something I cannot know beforehand. Neither can I rely on a ready-written scenario: there are never the right number of parts nor the right characters! So every year I have to get down to writing something new. Every year is unique. Every year unique conditions and combinations present themselves. After reaching an acceptable level of technical competence, the real work begins, passing through a phase of improvisation, to finally arrive at the definition of a new plot. But then this form, too, is abandoned, together with the special type of complicity that was created. Both the students and myself go on to other things – life must go on for all of us.

### **What I hope to do during these "Swedish Days"**

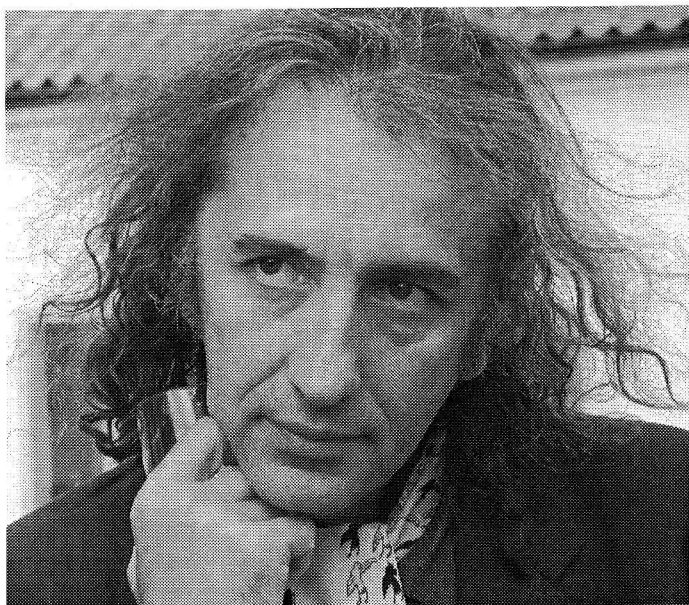
Researching into tomorrow's theatre, we must never lose sight of the attention that is due to the body and its expressive strength, which is expandable in a multitude of directions. Since a certain moment in the history of Western Europe, the body has been declassified by different types of powers. The spoken word was favoured and isolated by the so-called 'high' culture. There were then the religious, economic, social and, as we surely must add today, the virtual powers. The latter eagerly replaces the body, sets it aside again, and then, finally, as if it were a dogma, denies it once and for all! Here the field for exploration and its implications are infinite.

I could not therefore focus attention only on the theme that develops the concept 'Mask and Face'. I would have risked forgetting that which I believe means most, and that which, from my point of view, is fundamental... the BODY of the actor, his wholeness, and that which concerns the integrity of the person himself. We have tried to work on the mask starting from a physical and mental de-conditioning, recognizing and taking off the deformed mask that each one of us wears internally. After this we dealt with elements of a few 'techniques' as they were codified by several masters in the 20th century. We tried to extract the essence, the energetic quality, for each character. After

this, we started doing some personal research, setting out from a receptive condition that then allowed us, with a free mind, to open up to true creation. Each time, we managed to live out in a complete way, even if it was just for a brief moment, a new form, with each person starting from his or her own expressiveness,. We then, inevitably, let it go and returned to the face, to the receptive body.

Naturally, as we say in Italy, 'ephemeral comments on the Universe', but at times this is best, also because something might have just started... be it only a spark.

*Claudio de Maglio*





## VLADIMIR KLIMENKO (KLIM)

### Director, teacher, playwright

#### **"Opening the face of the actor"**

The Russian director, teacher and playwright KLIM lives and works in Moscow in his own laboratory studio. He is one of the most famous teachers with an alternative and particular view on theatre. He is doing research on how to find the original individuality of a person without the mask in everyday theatre to make it possible to «open the real face of the actor». KLIM is a prominent stage director in modern Russia. He works in an experimental direction with high attention on the work with voice in theatre in order to be able to express the essence in the textual material. He is educated at GITIS and has been student of A. Eferos and A. Vassiliev.

#### **The Face and the Mask**

The most important thing is what will happen during the meetings because the real meaning of working together is the field of energy that is created.

#### **Two types of theatre**

A: To bring to the surface one's individual world. The actor is the source, the mask the result of the ritual of hiding one's intentions.

B: To attempt to reach the truth. The actor is the window, the face, the result of a vertical consciousness and the "zero-ritual".

Theatre as a laboratory

Theatre as an observatory

Practical exercises: Body – consciousness – zero consciousness and conductivity.

*KLIM*



## KLIM

### – short workshop summary

It was difficult to follow Klim's long monologues, full of side tracks, associations and memories. Some participants left the group in an early stage, but those remaining become gradually more and more fascinated and engaged.

As I understood it, he aimed at cleaning and purifying the actor and the actor's face from all "acting" and conscious expression, to allow a free flow of impulses and reactions.

To illustrate this, he took a clean white paper and put a small spot on it. Everybody could easily see the small spot. But when he crumpled the paper, so that it became full of wrinkles, it became difficult to see the spot. Our perception becomes disturbed by all these "extras".

The basic exercises, used in long sessions were: running in a circle with focus on the step with right foot, and whirling with extended arms and the right hand pointing backwards in the direction of the turn, whirling, whirling in shamanistic way. The participants got very dizzy, but they continued, until they became "high", and when they finally stopped they staggered around the room laughing and sometimes falling.

From the outside it was difficult to understand the experience of this kind of exercise, but it was evident that you lose control and go into a trance-like state.

In the second half of the workshop he started working with words from a scene of Hamlet. He made a list of the words – one list for Hamlet and one list for Gertrud – and the actors were to try one word at a time, and work with the sounds of that word.

Towards the end couples of actors worked with Hamlet meeting his mother, using one word at the time from the list, and finding contact and communication.

M.V.



KLIM

– workshop report

Based on documentation recordings and on  
notes by participant Duncan Green and  
observer Coralía Costas

Klim used numerous metaphors, images and sometimes contradictions to explain the philosophical aspects of his work, and he returned to the same subjects over and over again, always approaching from different angles. His language, or pattern of thought, resembled a "stream of consciousness" that "attacked" the actors very strongly and inspired them.

His work, entitled "Opening the Face of the Actor" aimed at investigating both the face and mask of the actor, focusing mainly on voice and movement, and its importance in expressing the essence of the text.

In Klim's opinion, there are two aspects that are crucial to theatre work, and these are linked to his view of theatre. The actor is the source and the mask is the result of the ritual of hiding one's intentions when attempting to bring one's individual world to the surface. The actor is the window and the face the result of a vertical consciousness and the "zero-ritual" in an attempt to reach truth in the work of art.

Klim's aim during the workshop was to communicate some of the basic elements of the theatre and the basic training connected with the first meeting (touch) with the text of "Hamlet" by Shakespeare and finding a simple starting point for this work. During this process the actors need to heighten the presence between each other and the project. He spoke a lot about cleaning and purification in the expression. For the actor, it is very important to find an objective course of action that can lead him towards spiritual purification. By the end of a performance, the actors should be clean and almost empty. The emotional process takes place amongst the audience, and they will be filled towards the end of the performance.

During the demonstration on the fifth day of the festival, Klim brie-

fly expressed his opinion on theatre, on how the actor gets into the role, and how a dramatic text needs to be read. With regards to this last aspect, Klim and the participants deconstructed a fragment of Hamlet and obtained a list of words which the actors then rediscovered, taking into account both the role and the context of the moment. An interesting example, which represented quite a shift in the interpretation of the data of the basic text, was when the actors were asked to act as though the mother was pregnant. In this regard, Klim explained that if the dramatic theatre text cannot be changed the approach has to be changed. The unchangeable element in *Commedia dell'Arte*, for instance, is the mask, together with the costume and behaviour of the personage. Therefore, in the dramatic theatre, in order to turn the text from a mask into a human face, it needs to be rewritten, without any punctuation, with one word on each line. To Klim, the mask is an image of death. The dream of any person is to remove his/her mask, but since people find this impossible, they go to the theatre to see others doing it. Yet, in reality, the actor never does give up his/her mask. A basic rule in this regard is to never really look another actor on stage or a spectator in the audience in the eyes, and if he/she does do so, then it must be done as if it is being done for the first time.

Another important point that was mentioned was that when the actor prepares he has to turn his body and consciousness into an empty white sheet of paper. This action demands that the soul must be clean, beautiful and untouched. The process of creation includes the process of purification, which means that the actor has to throw away, clean and empty himself before every action. The actions are reflected in the face and if the face is clean and pure there will be more nuances visible in the reflection. All the work should focus on purification. Artistic activity includes the soul taking part in the process and acting is done in such a way that the soul becomes free. Then the light from the soul will shine on the empty clean paper.

### **The exercises**

During the training, Klim asked the participants to not lose themselves in details, but to follow the principle – the purpose of their being

on stage – and he said that in order to do so the beginning of a gesture is as important as its final moment. He started the physical work on the floor from what is believed to be a basic standing position. From this position adjustments were made to the balance as preparatory work for understanding the left and right side of the body. "We believe that how we think is more important than how we stand," said Klim, "but the body is like an antenna and this antenna connects with a special form of clear energy." This energy comes from the ground and goes to the head and should return to the earth. Our thoughts have a special kind of energy, and meaning changes due to different positions.

### **About the left and the right leg**

He asked the participants to stand on their right leg because the right leg gives them a connection with the ground. It is important for the actor to feel the place where the power comes from. Every movement and consciousness has to be rooted in the right side or half of the body – it is through the right side that the human being/actor remains anchored to the earth and to the energy of the earth. Every movement should be directed out in order to gain freedom and get rid of what is not needed. "We have to teach the tree to walk without losing contact with the ground." The right side is the anchor, but energy is taken in through the left side and from there it is transferred to the right side and is again rooted in the earth. Thoughts come in through the left side and move through the body, like lightning from heaven, towards the right side, towards action. The left and the right side create different worlds.

Through the right leg contact with the life is established and kept and from there one receives power. This power makes it possible to freely direct attention out towards the world, and not in towards oneself. In the training with the circle or with the circular movement the actor creates a movable world, and even when he stops, the world continues to move. All movements should lead out and ahead, not in, and when they reach their boundary the actor has to change direction.

Klim claims that a person who leans towards his left half, who stands on the left leg and trusts the left inside himself to dominate will become sick, get lost in thoughts and speculations which can lead

to serious consequences, even artistically. The left side belongs to heaven, only there. By standing wide open on the left side, one exposes oneself to the universal radiation consisting of a million small seeds that rain down on us continuously. One seed that roots can become an idea, a creation. Several seeds can lead us into confusion and make us lose what should have been our own creativity. We become sick and nothing gets done. As living creatures, we have to choose between these heavenly seeds. Richness becomes chaos, later more and more rigidity and in the end, total closure. If instead we lean on, trust and stand on the right side, we will pass on the information seeds from the left half via the right half, and then it will be easier to choose one seed to work with at a time. Klim said that as an author he was often forced to confront himself with the alienation experienced when leaning into the left half's world and then mustering up the willpower to shift back to the right. Quite often he found himself in a world between the left and the right.

So when you stand on your right side you should feel that you have grown from the ground to the heaven. The head should not take part in the growing. The head is like the moon hanging over the lake. Tension in the body should never be connected with tension in the head and the mind.

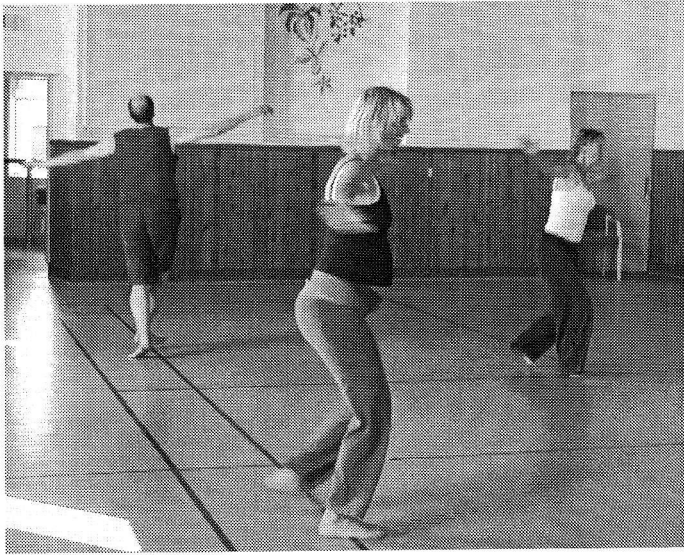
### **Circles in ensemble and circles alone that move to whirling**

They ran in circles every day and as they ran he corrected their feet, head and arms. He always told them to look at each other and to smile and then run faster and faster but always changing the rhythm and stamping. The stamps were done in order to re-establish the connection with the earth. They could do this for a long time without getting tired.

The main exercises used were a whirling "dervish" dance, where you rotate until the point of falling or fainting, and running around the room in a big circle. Part of the experience from the "whirl-dance" was that, when one eventually stops turning around, one will experience the same world as before but in a totally different way: this world is spinning/whirling, not me. He says that he is not actually turning but that he is following. The actor is not supposed to think while doing this. "Imagine the spirit as a small golden point and then start to turn



around it. Imagine that you have strong pain in the tip of your finger and through the power of will you find this exact golden point and with the help of your will power you turn around it".



### **Work with energy fields and hands that can see**

Exercises such as maintaining hands straight on the horizontal or vertical axis, as long as possible, and concentrating energy in fingers helps the actor appropriate the energy of the place and find the mask/face necessary for the role.

### **Vocal exercises and text work**

He worked briefly on the five vowels in the language, their possibilities in variations and compared them to a vertical string instrument. He focused on the vibration of sounds in the body and ideas about the different directions for each vowel. You should sense and perceive the sounds in a different way – one that does not belong to the intellectual or other established assumptions about sounds. When introdu-

cing his work with text, he said that the actors in their first meeting with the text should imagine themselves as being in the situation as people from Mars who know nothing and have no preferences or skills to understand what anticipated meanings are implied within the text. This means that the actor has to peel off those "anticipations" he as an individual as well as a collective being have upon a text, and look upon it from a naïve position. We also have to rid ourselves of the psychological interpretation that we normally use while working on a text.

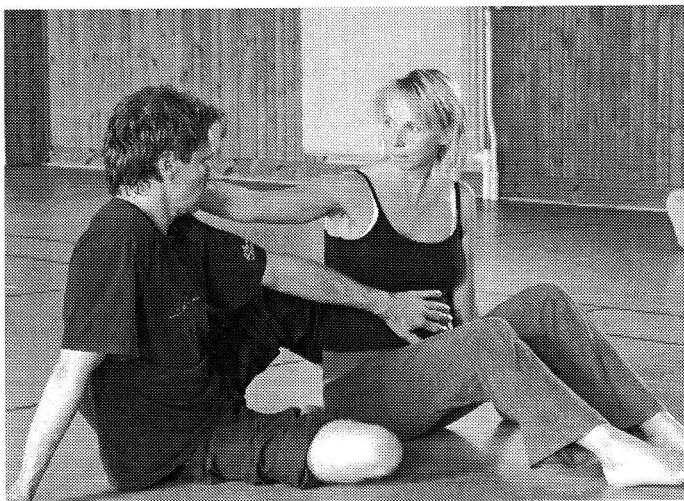
When working with and rewriting the text all the signs (punctuation: comma, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark etc.) are removed, including the capital letters that normally tell us where a sentence starts, so that only the words are left, or the division of the words that shows that we are somehow dealing with some sort of dialogue. The text is stable but the actor is moveable and he can move around the text and while doing so the text will touch the actor. The focus of the actor is always on the words and each word and each sentence has many layers of connotations. The actor should not answer his partner according to the logic in the text but according to the real situation that is created in the room. Klim stressed the actor's acting direction. They should not look at each other but act in the same direction. This might lead to a situation where the words float between the actors. (A spectator to one of Klim's performances told me that he had never seen such strong communication on stage before. Even if the actors did not look at each other it seemed like they spoke to each other through the cosmos.)

They started researching the text almost purely gutturally. One of the actors made an improvisation where he experimented with his way through the word "MOOOTHER".

At the same time the actor investigated the way the words resonated in the room and in his own body depending on the position of his body, the use of energy etc.

He also investigated the situation. During this research, it was important to refrain from acting in a collegial/friendly manner towards the other actor. Not before "something" found its resonance inside of him, should he answer with the words or sentences from the dialogue.

It seemed like a kind of rehearsal where the aim was to reach or get closer to the text or the significance of the text through the process of peeling off as much as possible. The shape or sound of the words carries all the meaning built in by human beings from the beginning of language, including the expression, the significance, the perception.



The actor should never try to express emotion, because then the actor would perform or imitate an interpretation of what the actor has already adopted as a self-evident/self-sufficient expression for this feeling. When the actor was running around shouting, mumbling, whispering, babbling "MOOOTHER" in different ways, he never used emotion. What he used was energy, energy under different conditions: such as changing the form of the lips (as if using different mouthpieces) during a strong out-breath, pressing out the sound as if strangled, raising and lowering the tone of voice, tensing up the body, appearing to be out of breath, heated/overstrained etc. Besides that, he also worked on rhythm; soft legato and hard staccato.

This kind of work sometimes gave birth to certain "expressions" of impressions of feelings. More important is that the impressions should come to life in the listener, the audience. Theatre and life is different in one very special way. In life we know the feeling but we don't know the plot and in theatre we know the plot but not the feelings because feelings cannot be directed. It is a big mistake for the theatre that people think that they can direct or illustrate feelings and emotions. Feelings are born in the audience and the actor only follows the feelings of the audience.

### **The mask and the naked face**

Klim is concerned with the connection between the mask and the naked face. In his workshop, the masks that were investigated/researched were not physical; instead they were abstract and dealt with the ideas of the human being, expressions, reflections and opinions about theatre, about oneself and ways of understanding the surrounding world. Between the mask and the actor there exists a border, and in connection with the audience, when the laws of the game are created, there is no need to do the grimacing. One has to learn to keep the freedom within the mask.

The actor must not destroy his body. It doesn't matter how high the ideals are since the spirit and the soul will not exist without the body. One does not have to worry about the soul; it is immortal and nothing dangerous can happen to it. If she lives in a sick body, however, she will become tired and leave. The body is not created by the soul but by the spirit, which means the will to live.

### **About theatre**

This is essential to gaining an understanding of Klim's work: The feelings and emotions, the story, theme and the actual play are enacted/performed in the world of the audience's impression.

From this raises his opinion that the actor enters the stage filled with assumptions and agreements he trough the rehearsal has "recaptured", to be able to lead the audience towards the experience. The audience, on the other hand, comes inside "clean". During the performance there is a transaction where the actor becomes lighter while the audience gets filled. In the last scene of "Othello" (KLIM

referred to this), the most fantastic moment for the audience is not the murder in itself but the ensuing moment when the actor and the role has delivered, executed its intentions and stands there clean or purified.

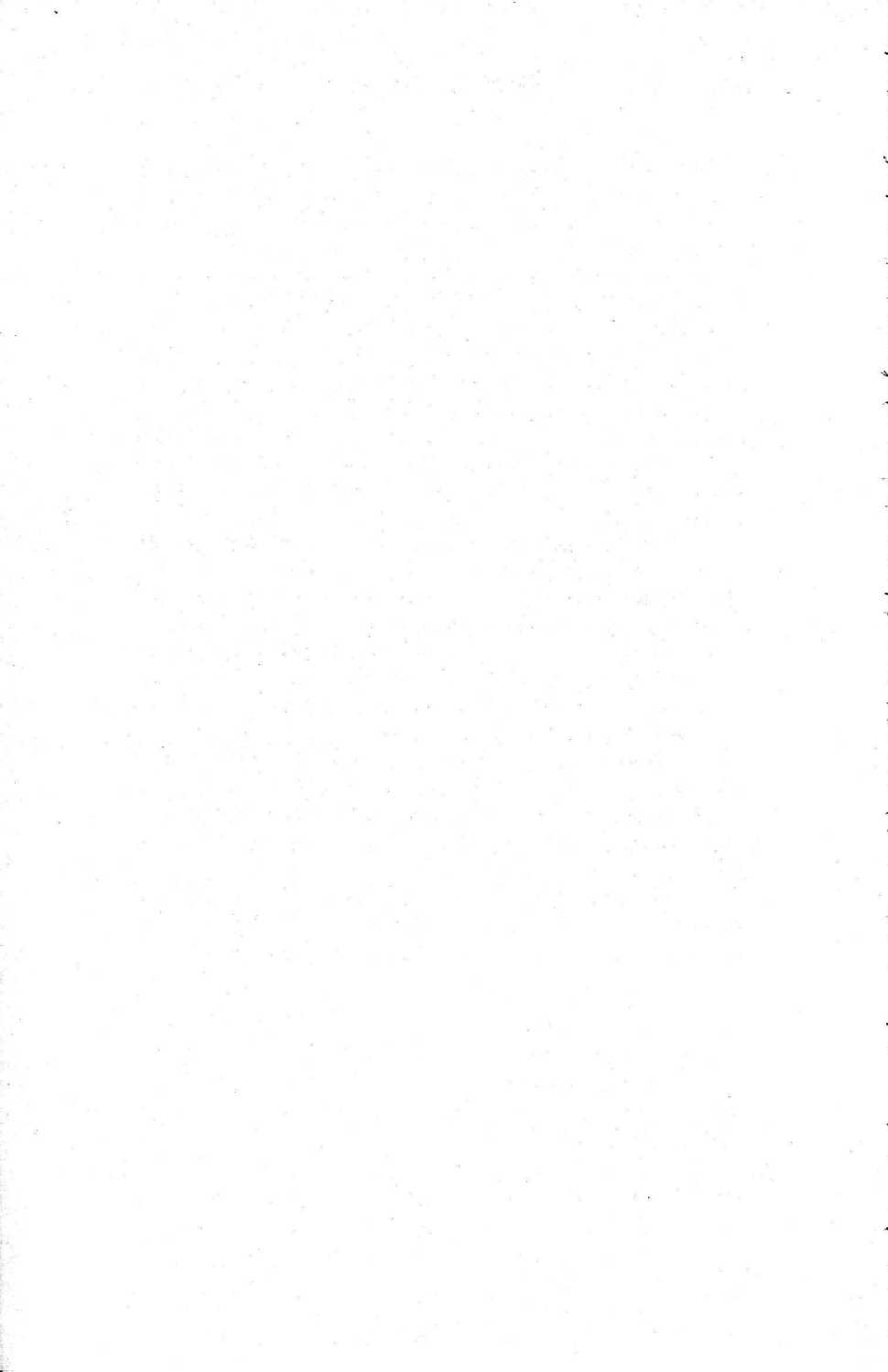
To act or to deliver a performance must mean for the actor to make the spirit free. In the beginning of the play, the actor carries the load of circumstances, the burden of a form, text, actions, but every step he makes should free him from what he has done. He gives away the actions and this giving-away is one of the strongest effects of the theatre. While the actor becomes free, the audience receives the burden, and as a member of the audience I will ask myself how the spirit of the actor can be so free. "Normal" theatre goes in the opposite direction and this is one of the problems with the system of Stanislavskij.

Theatre, he says, must be seen as something happening here and now, in the energy field between stage and auditorium, between concrete conscious people, as a kind of collective consciousness. Since Klim always looked at any subject, word, idea etc. from different angles, he had yet another way of speaking about different theatres; farmer's theatre and industrial theatre – the first of which is connected with growth and with actors, while the latter relates to buildings and the leadership of the director.

What Klim is saying implies that theatre is something that we build together. If no one comes to look, I will not continue. If the theatre can present you with the will to live, then it has reached its goal. If theatre is no longer the fool who can tell the truth to the king, theatre will die.

"It was a fantastic experience. Sometimes I wonder if I experienced anything at all. At the same time, though, I feel something inside and this work definitely started a process," says participant Duncan Green.

G.S.



# KLIM The Mask

We cannot say the mask of birth.

The language allows us and insists on the other extreme: the death mask – posthumous mask. And the Bible saying regarding God, it says: "God, God of Gods and Master of Masters, Great God, strong and fearful, the one who does not look at faces" – it explains us little. What does this "not looking at faces" mean? ... Not looking at our faces, the face of the one who is "the surface of the abyss". Does it follow then from it that the face of the human, "created by the image and likeness" of Adam who was exiled from paradise, who was created by the image of Adam-imperishable, who was created not from the dust and not for the dust but like the image of the future world, like the self-portrait of the Creator so to remember what was at the beginning: the surface of the abyss and "Saint Spirit was soaring above the water (above the abyss)". In other words is human face the surface of the abyss or is it the surface of the water, its (abyss) "like stone it is getting stronger and the surface of the abyss is freezing up" as "God said let the earth be in the midst of the water".

What? Or Who? Is our face?

Is it the water that is not freezing in the abyss or is it the earth in the midst of the water? Is this earth of the frozen water the mask? The mask or the earth of the human face, which appeared as a result of the creation. Does any creation suppose to come to the earth of the freezing abyss and is the human creation his only life: is it earth and does it expect to have a mask?... or is the mask the result of this life which knows only two conditions: the condition when Saint Spirit is soaring above the abyss of the water or the water of the abyss (conception and birth) and the condition when the earth is created or the surface of the abyss is freezing (life-dieing? dieing and getting free?)? What is death and what is creation? Where one finishes and the other starts?

It is said, "Saint Spirit was soaring above the abyss of the water"! ... And human? Human soul which comes into body and which leaves it when the breathing of the abyss becomes impossible as the surface of the abyss when it is getting freezing does not leave water or abyss (what has no bottom) for the spirit what Saint Spirit is able to inspire, creating the shelter for the soul. And life? The abyss becomes precipice (rotten place as what has bottom is ultimate), and Spirit or Creation forgets its primordial, secret sense and it goes to look for new abyss of water, as the Spirit is not soaring above the earth, which was completed and is not in the creation anymore. His last creation is posthumous mask – "the door to other" and those who are left are not able to look beyond it.

Is any mask "the door to other" where it is not possible to get or is it only posthumous, last look of the eternal on the vain, last soul kiss of the body which is leaving its shelter through eyes.

The eyes of the one who has left this world has to be closed as the soul is not looking to this mirror anymore, the soul was looking at the world through the mirror of eyes but once when it looked imprudent it met with the gaze of the death and its live house turned to stone.

Does it follow from it then that life as the art of dieing creates last look or door, which once and forever hides from us the essence of her soul's previous life?

Does it follow then from it that when we put the mask on we get to be on the other or by the other side and from this moment on we look at this our world "from", like we died? Does it follow then from it that the mask is posthumous mask and it is the essence of the life that we have lived and is this life that we have lived our essence?

And what is our essence?... Is it what we have become creating our only life – indelible but disappearing, something that is not possible to change or is this essence our hope that this is not the end yet?!

It is worth to ask yourself and then you understand that all the other words, except the words of the Holy Scripture, are just words. But words itself sometimes have in them answers to many questions. We just forget its sense. They part just like people, like men and women and don't give birth to their child – "image"- or answer to "what we are?" The answer of Holy Scripture is simple and it says: "all that your hand is able to do – do as you can, because in the grave where you



are going"...Your face will turn into posthumous mask for a moment giving freedom to his face from inertia of life and from the signs it leaves and is this face of the Death is Mask? ... frozen earth of the abyss.

And what is our face: clouds – islands appearing in the abyss?

While they are just clouds we are young and beautiful! When they are islands, which appear from the volcanoes eruptions, then it is completely different story...

Creation of our face "by his image and likeness" is just like the smooth surface of the ocean on a quiet sunny day with flying fishes and it is not possible to say how deep is that precipice which is hidden from us by serenity as if you don't know how to swim even two meters will be enough to drown.

And soul?...who or what is it? Is it a Saint Spirit, which found its shelter in the flesh?... who are we? ...his joys and sorrows?!

Perhaps the Mask is the Face of Death or it is the drawing, which is indelible by the waters of Styx which life leaves on the face of the life itself. That is our last and longest feeling, the last glance after which follows Tolstoy's "let me go". This can mean what we take with you to this trip of which we know so little and this may also mean what we leave others, it is more correct to say that they who stay accept it anyway not depending on us, like our last saying, our understanding, tiredness, bewilderment what for we suffer so much so to finally?... the joy of the end of the earth way!...? Sometimes it is grateful sometimes not but the essence is that it is the Face of the Death or last reminiscence, our face washed before entering to the "other" – who is so ready. Our professional interest is in this intercommunication of feeling and mask. And it is logical that when we are trying to provoke suffering we put on the mask of suffering, trying to provoke laughter we put on the mask of laughter. Naturally, everything is not so unambiguously as masks are some symbolic (note) recordings of feelings. Like notation in music which comes to life because of our knowledge and skills to follow what we see there and like signs that mean certain notes masks can only be signs if we are not able to turn them into the sound of certain frequency and duration, so the masks can only be a dead form that mean something. That is not related to what we feel at this moment but it is related with some memory, just like some

music of feelings exists, and consequently there is some recording system of these feelings in our body which is indissolubly connected with our consciousness, that reminds the musical harmony of stable frequencies which are in harmony, in contrast and add to each other according to some objective law.

This inherent music of feelings has its own system of recording which is expressed through a visual system or our imitation nature as in order to hear the completeness of the tragic musical utterance of Maria Callas we have to be able to hear her, to be tuned, and accept with all our nature the possibility to believe in her and all our nature has to accept similar system of strings pulling of our human soul, same to the one which exists in the Soul and body of the singer. We do that in order to get the utmost resonance and for that we have to change all our nature, so that the resonance would be the maximum. Following this principle of the resonance or on some special memory or the ability to be tuned on the outside (for our soul) source so much that we get the image and likeness of Maria Callas in our own soul. The great tragic singer has to appear inside us the one that already exists there, the source has to open which would call and give birth to Maria Callas inside of us and only then we will hear this divine utterance.

This our tendency to divine utterance is not anything else but the deep, instinctive need of our soul, this is the call for hidden inside of us pro-being - Soul, or the breathing of the abyss inside of us and the tendency of this pro-being to the breathing outside of us and the search of the resonance between them as the prove of the verity of our Existence as the universe is created that way, so that when the inside and outside meet that brings united symbol to life and that keeps the tradition of the Existence or the ability of our soul to hear this breathing of the abyss or the Song of the Spirit above it.

What follows from it?

Perhaps, just the fact on this way we have to move in two opposite directions at the same time. One direction is related to the experience of culture or this is the result of our tendency to comprehend the depth of our own essence through culture and the other is related to opening the breathing of the Abyss inside of us, so to say without mediators, mystic way, feeling our continuity with the source of

Existence itself.

The first way could be called the way of learning music notation and scores, which existed before, and the second way which is practical or performing way, which is similar to turning note signs into the music. In our story with masks it is closer to Indian musical tradition than to anything else, we mean the relation of feeling and musical system. The body itself as a musical instrument of feelings is closer to Indian sitar.

There is also a connection between human's face as musical instrument and his whole body as musical instrument, same way as there is a connection between action, better to say intercommunication of human's will and human's essence as the instrument of the music of feelings or some special energy that we can call this music of feelings.

This music of feelings reveals itself in the highest form as "Silence" – or openness to smallest and momentary like the mirror-like surface of the evening lake or river. That would come out only after we take off one after another all seven seals of our unbelief to the obvious and then we will see "new sky and new land as previous sky and previous land are gone and there no more sea". Aren't these seven seals of seven masks seven notes, aren't they seven stable sources of some emanation that we can call the source of seven feelings and are these the feelings that we can call: faith, unbelief, hope, love, passion, fear, hatred, perhaps there are semi-tones of these or sensations of pain, bliss, hunger, thirst, hot and cold. What is initial? ...what is veritable?

We can call differently the whole human's body and face we can call it antenna: "and I heard loud voice from heaven that said: that is the tabernacle of God with people and he will live with them, they will be his nation and God himself will be their God. And God will wipe any tears from eyes and there will be no more death, no cry, no groan, no sickness as past is gone". That is the most important rule not only for the theatre but for life, so that God will stay with us. And this is "Alpha and Omega", beginning and end wishful will get for free from the source of the live water. Winning will inherit everything and I will be his God and he will be Son for me." What does that mean for the actor? That means that theatre as well as life is present, lasting time – this is understanding that life is future or the possibility of new inhalation!

And what about past? Probably we can put it in other words: there is something – zero cycle. Zero cycle or the cycle, which is like the birth or the soul birth. We mean the birth like the moment when the soul just before entering the body which ready to become human, so to create a special reality, divine reality which able "to hear the voice from heaven saying: that is the tabernacle of God with human and he will be living with him and the God himself will be God with him". This continuity of existence and theatre in the space of human's essence tendency is creation in the theatre. It is only possible when the expectancies of the human's essence are not dispersing as spiritual substance or Adam imperishable and Adam exiled or human's body.

And this saying itself in the theatre is kept in the grain of strange knowledge that there is no death or that our image or soul that lives in us is Adam-imperishable. Theatre is proceeding just from this magical assumption. Perhaps this is wrong but if you do not proceed from this magical axiom that there is no death then theatre is not possible. As theatre is opening the essence by the body (or body and soul) that there is no death. Opening of the death as theatre, first of all, is limiting life by the space and time boundaries. And there is one more very important limit or deprivation, deprivation of the mystery of accepting most important events of your own life, but this is not a limiting condition but this is the permitting condition and this is the essence and meaning of the theatre. And it is of no importance that this is breaking the mystery as this breaking the mystery results in sacrament of confession or it creates the mystery of confession. As the confession is the resonance of our words which are said publicly with our essence, as our essence only admits this public way as the verity of the limits of existence. Readiness to accept your opening of the death through overcoming of fear of it by other and others, through admittance of the verity of life. Through admittance of the duration and temporariness of life as verticality as the space of life which human can have owing to the limits in space and time. It demands building of multi-stores building of the existence.

This feeling of life, its height in its vertical daring is like limiting use of the land in the center of the city. As feeling of life is perhaps the main component of the essence of life. And this trait jacket of time and space of our existence, better to say this realization that this is

certain fact of our existence, without accepting it our life does not reach verity or tragic element and it remains in the frames of infantile illusion or drama, as not believing in the immortality of the soul.

Theatre is the chain of reincarnations with keeping the memory; next role is like next birth and every performance is an attempt to get to know one of the possible ways. It is just the question of consecution, sometimes it looks like the forms of the return of fate or the laws that we call myths are arbitrary. And heroes are acting in it or some ideal expressions of feelings, so to say forms that are ideally suited or maximum tuned to one or other frequency. The usage of the word mask in our reality, so called everyday life is most often related with psychological stress. Expression "to put the mask on" does not only brings a clear hint that a mask is part of the costume, so is part of the reality that protects body from the outside impacts: "hold – hot", but it also allows to protect from social cold and heat. Social position, age, belonging to that or the other group of people and so on, and so forth up to the vice and bringing it in a special light all that is indissolubly related in our consciousness and beyond it with the notion of "mask". In other words mask as well as costume is part of the technology for establishment of the distance: visual space, audibility and the possibility of game appearance, some energy noncontact dancing of identification. The goal and meaning of the dance is will. Will in all its completeness: from will as freedom in social, moral and space meaning to the Will as ability to be irreproachable not only in the performing of intentions but in its forming. Will should also be an ability to concentrate the energy of the intention, which is indissoluble with the idea of mystery. The mystery is the hiding of your intention and the sources of your energy, which allow you to accomplish this from the surrounding world. And this accomplishment is related with and it presumes some sort of duel or the dance of the Will. This duel or the thirst to absorb the will of the other is not anything but establishment of a certain visual space and audibility or going behind the back of the beaten.

As the distance in psychology of Will and Power is determined by the time it takes to get to heart of the Existence or the source of the Will to life, then this victory of one and defeat of the other determines their special relations, special space of the game. So to use the language

of physics the winner of the combat of Wills gets some sort of a channel which may be called the channel of superconductivity which appears at low temperatures. This means that the distance to the heart of the source of the Will to Life, source of the Will to Power of the defeated one the winner overcomes instantly. That is why this distance we can call zero one: because of the existence of this channel of superconductivity, which appears at low temperatures all that also refers to Power. Psychological coldness toward the defeated one and the heat of the vexation and injury which he is full of makes his way to the heart of essence of the Will to Life and Will to Power for the winner. In other words the winner has instant access to the heart of the other's essence and his main mystery – his life. The defeated one is going away. So the connection becomes a one way. The defeated one becomes slave or victim. And the Damocles' sword of the fate of the defeated one is overhanging. Injury and anger make fire in his soul and chaos in his consciousness. Forming of the intention becomes impossible. As well as the concentration of his Will becomes impossible, as the condition of the appearance of this process mystery is broken. The mystery or what is hidden, sacral or related with the heart is loosing its power as this is the category of the spirit or what is breathing freely and desacralization is destructive for the Spirit.

The winner demands obedience or the openness of his intention, so the same as desacralization or the power over the sources of the intention. Their space of the game becomes impossible or it presumes some fatal or mortal irreversibility and this is one of the reasons why the institution of special sacral behavior that can be called religious has appeared. This religious thinking is not anything but finding the right for the secret life of the Spirit over the Abyss of the individual essence. In this case it would be based on understanding of equality in front of united source, which created it as well as everything else around. This special secret thought is not controlled by the winner, as it is not possible to control something, which is not directed to confrontation with the source of the control. Controlling instrument, let's call it that way, states some emptiness or absence of the usual confrontation, something that is like the death of the controlling subject. This process could be called a little bit differently as the change of the superior values scale. This new scale or ladder gives the right

or establishes the backlash, which is the space between visible outside and invisible inside, so morally it justifies the mask when it creates new ideal which is not related to the image of the winner.

This technology of the appearance of new values or new religion at most revealed in the story of the appearance of Christianity. The fate came in the face of the Roman conqueror and local secular and religious nobility who got into collusion with him. Slavery came from human and that is why human absolute appeared – Christ, who had the image of the existence as not resistance and at the same time he kept inside "not piece but sword". Turn the other cheek ...let break and create the mask of obedience as that will hide the verity of your existence, that will make the veritable in you secret – sacral and therefore it will allow veritable in you be veritable. If you provoke anger in the one who is beating and he will loose his power as he will loose his coldness, he will loose superconductivity and in the attempt to take off your duplicity or the mask of acceptance he will destroy his face as he will conceive Christ who brought "not piece but sword" in you.

This mechanism of the mask appearance as deliberate act does it contradicts to the unconscious or instinct act of mask appearance against our wish? This question is principally important we can even say religiously important! As religious acceptance of it is religious act, or basing on our intention, this is theatrical act. Instinctive retreat under its vaults destroys the essence of the theatre.

So, we can say that the theatre appears where the mask creates deliberate act of the game space establishing which presumes the Dancing of the Will.

This Dancing of the Will presumes game with the memory of culture. This game is not only the attempt to become aware of the role "crevice, door between the worlds and times" with the help of which it is possible to get into the other dimension, that is the role that mask played in certain cultures. It is also important to admit the fact of objectivity of the role which mask still plays in real life, the way how human still uses it instinctively creating from the feeling of self-defence Dancing of the Will and Power and mask is an integral element of this ritual culture. Human in the process of its evolution brought the mask in his consciousness, he started to put it on as a secret armor as the body for the soul. That serves as the image and body for the

intention that is his totem, at the same time showing to the outside world what is called in Bible "pleasant for the face" the mask, which hides the intensions. Isn't then Bible warning regarding "pleasant for the face" "and for the piece of bread" able "to make lies" the indication of the creation of special zero mask process which is able to reveal every totem image of intention any moment? If it is so then we can say: "all days of your life be afraid of pleasant for the face! Scrutinize into faces! And who resembles what beast derives from it and is it. But above all of it there is "pleasantness for the face" – special beast called human...most insatiable and most guileful from all! And what about soul? "Our soul humiliated to dust... womb stocked to earth" and face, my human face "any day it is an opprobrium before me" and life inexplicably exists inside of me as I ...!? Who am I?

Doesn't it follow then from above that pleasantness for the face is a special technology to establish special, deceptive psychological distance, special secret channel of superconductivity, soft suppression of the source of Will to Power of others, special refined Dancing of Will, like the calm waters of the river where crocodile is hiding and waiting its time and victim. If you look at the theatre from this side then you can understand the reason why theatre rejected mask directly, as human face is closer to the waters of the river, which may instantly turn into danger, which it keeps inside.

Human can only respond to something that exists inside of him, similar resound to similar, but there is a special resonance, which appears when you break into marvelous and unknown. The fear that grabs the human then is what is called magical horror. And here starts to act the technology of acceptance or turning the fear into trembling, as this is the door, chink between "I" and "not I" through which you can get into the other dimension. The mask is also part of this technology of getting into other dimension: make the outside and the inside will come, it will respond from inside from the depth where the Waters of the Source of the Existence above which the spirit is soaring are still kept.

Most phenomenal in the sphere of resonance are faces of Christ and Buddha. Though in story of Buddha is missing what is so important for Christ, though proceeding from the logic, abstract logic it should be just the opposite, and shroud of Christ or posthumous



imprint...Though, quite different thing is important in both cases happened something that made it able to create two of these images which allow us to identify Christ or Buddha without any mistake. The search of this image is also a clear action, which is recognition in the consciousness of the looking one. This demand explains a lot as this recognition is only possible if the image contains and is able to accept the fullness of the Existence of the looking one, including his dream of ideal. The dream about ideal, which has no clear character indications, the dream which is at the same time on the verge of its shadow side or of its opposition. This verge increases the influence of the light under the threat of darkness. In other words here we have what Schopenhauer has formulated mathematically exactly, he gave the definition of the World as Will and Performance or like will to perform (theatre). This purely Russian playing with the meaning of word "performance" is very important for the so-called psychological theatre, theatre where mask in its basic meaning does not exist. In the playing theatre the mask identifies the essence of the acting power transferring all the attention on the actions of this essence, which are very expected and unexpected is revealing in "how?" and not in "what and who?" In psychological theatre the mask is the method, like in life, or it is the way to hide the essence as the psychological theatre is the search of the essence, it is the search of the grain of the role, or the totem mask, or the veritable essence, which like the killer in the detective, is trying to slip away, as the essence reveals itself in the psychological theatre as criminal or killer in the detective. In this case the theatre plays the role of the investigator, who is trying to restore the complete picture of the crime, the essence of which is in the loss of the meaning by the human of its existing on the earth. These are consequences of drama, drama is here escaping from the Tragedy or Knowledge, and it is escaping to the world of people who are similar.

This theatre that is researching human's life among humans who are alike, or so-called realistic or drama theatre is also called psychological. By its method it is related with the name of Stanislavski or with so-called system of Stanislavski, it was born as any other great art by the energy of the presentiment of the great upheavals.

In this coming world of human Will's fight, which does not recognize fate, it even excludes it, from the territory of the research. It deprived

human's consciousness its saving idea: idea of the Creator who creates "by the image and likeness", most powerful and merciful. His new look is born, which is not connected with human as a likeness of the Creator as from now on the Creator is abstract Chaos and his Spirit is a chance and a human himself is a chance and that is why Stanislavski and his followers identified their theatre's sphere of interests as the investigation of the life of human's spirit.

I will repeat that this is one of the most difficult places in the art of theatre as the art remained only where the angel flew, and it was against all ideologies.

Returning to Schopenhauer, or rather to the language game that appears in Russian word "performance", which is interpreted on one side as the effort of the will directed to see what we try to imagine and, on the other side, "performance" as show in usual theatrical meaning of this word. That gave birth to the system that we mentioned above, perhaps that didn't add a lot to the art of the theatre but the cinema, which came to life, needed it badly. Special sphere of its great future demanded new theatre, which being recorded on tape still would keep the warmth of life. And the name of this theatre is "movie theatre" and it reflects its essence.

Cinema solved this problem of mask, it left the function of the inside essence defense to the mask. Mask defended it from other's will, on one side and from the side of life in the usual meaning, and everything that has to be taken off against the instinct of self-preservation in the theatre.

Due to cinema "the miracle of miracles" or taking off the mask and uncovering the essence became something like Christ's shroud. It's the fact that is all looking are going through again and again.

But, coming back to the costume, everyday or imaginary mystic sense of the mask as integral part of the hoax, that is all in the situation when it is not related with the life danger or when it is related to the role of the mask in the theatre where it is created by the human from its body and so consequently the person who creates it is not free from his child, from his creation, or to the theatre which staying aside from the tragic search of verity. That is usual for tragedy, or for drama the appearance of which deprived the actor his mask, in the common understanding of the word. We have to admit the simple fact

that relations of wills of those who are taking part in the process are not that simple.

The will that is directed at creation of some mask or at the mass demonstration of the hoax, or in other words at creation of some sign that takes looking one from the veritable essence and true intentions of the hero. That creates mystery or detective of behavior. As we have to realize the fact that theatre begins when the story in the literature meaning is disappearing (we know myth as in tragedy, either things that are happening are not going beyond the frames of visual commonness as in drama, with this myths exist in some degraded way like the threads of tapestry and like in life are rarely realized). "The life of human's spirit" is completely absorbing the theatre world but with this we have to repeat what was already said before that the art of the theatre remains in the hands of angels or the Spirit, which is soaring above the abyss.

Our next remark refers to the mask that is created by the actor himself. There are two kinds of masks or masks of physically live people, they are creating it from their bodies. One of them is destroying theatre as category as it is the tool to survive in life or the mask of impenetrability. The theatre is interested in mask that creates game or the mask that gives birth to the energy of life "here and now" and not waiting until hard times are gone, as the theatre is not hiding the dream from eyes of others until better days. This is the dream that is like sprout, which is fights its way through magnificent temples that are built by our fear and then it is not that important what kind of theatre it is: tragic, playing or drama – that is the condition of his appearance and existence. And in this meaning the mask is the way to keep this essence. This is the space that appears between true inside and outside false, which is the space of the Freedom of Will. Krishna who pretended wretched, miserable, poor invalid who squeezed his nature in front of the duke of darkness and begged the opportunity to stand on one foot in the kingdom of darkness, he then conquered the kingdom having found the footing and having cheated the duke of darkness. Isn't theatre alike to what Krishna had done in that parable? To create theatre means to pass something off as something else and space that appears then allows to lead a game, so not to loose the essence and meaning of Existence, keeping carefully the great principle of

"stone garden" or as physicists call it "principle of uncertainty", keeping the world law of correlation between visible substance and the rest of reality, last one is much more as what you can see is just the covering of the soup sphere.

To create theatre means to have freedom of Will to perfect certain things up to the boundaries of uncertain things. In other words to create theatre means to go by the way of widening your boundaries of your Will Freedom up to unexpected and paradoxical.

To create theatre means to go by the way of widening your consciousness up to the ability to see what is hidden beyond motionless and definite, in other words inspiring and giving birth to Existence, Soul and Secret. Or in other words to create theatre means being related to something definite go through it to "other dimension", through the "life of human's spirit" to the God's Spirit and Creating Spirit. This "getting through the life of human's spirit to..." is the essence of psychological theatre as the essence of human's spirit is something elusive and drama is a fear to discover something eternal and permanent beyond this visibility, where there is no place for us – that is the Breathing of Abyss.

The essence is that this "getting through" demands widening of the space of its essence and not preserving of what we think is our essence, which begin to decrease from some moment as from some point of our life we are only occupied to go through losses, and we are preparing for new losses, doubting what will it be and how can we cheat fate by giving it something else at the last moment and then later we are sorry about our sacrifice. This process of holding and surviving and not happy accepting of the world and of its World's Gift (what World gives us) is drama. We become vulnerable as we are occupied only with ourselves, only by future sacrifice, we are trying to do impossible – we are trying "to stop the moment" and once when the World gets tired of our wish not to see it fulfils our crazy wish and stops the moment of our life. Theatrical drama regarding the mask or what appears as something stable is in playing relations, which allows strengthening the energy of our Soul. Here mask appears as the process of some imaginary mortification, it is entering the zone of death by the means of creation of distinctness or immobility, which allows in the consciousness of the observer do some permitted actions as

those are expected according to some standards that exist in human's consciousness. This authenticity on condition that it is possible not to loose yourself in freezing Abyss or not to turn theatrical drama into real or you get not to catch yourself with your essence on what you have created. Then mask starts to play keeping and defending role and it also allows giving the purity of sounding to the strings of our soul, creating shadow it strengthens the perception of light.

That is how the mask of impenetrability preserves its source of power and will from being discovered by its outside will and power, which is often used by human in its existence. That prevents outside will from manipulating its will as the outside will is acting through the sources of will inside of us. It discovers it through our fear, consciousness, pressing our will to live, blowing us from inside. That happens through resonance or recognition. But perhaps masks of some other unknown culture are influencing us so strong or even stronger then the culture, which we present, but we do not realize this action, that is not important for us. Other things are important for us, the relations of our image and deep inside psychological and physical processes that happen with us when we accept that or other image. Make your face alike to face of Buddha as the face of Buddha is the key to the door to the world of Buddha, and the face of Christ is key to the world of Christ!

Is it hard to say if it is sad or not, perhaps today's theatre is some reminiscence of the old days secret mystery, which were before religion came in our present understanding, it is its lighter form that have lost its true essence. Present days mask, where it has survived, maybe the memory of those days when it was real, taken from the real live creatures, those were embalmed totem faces or they came from not seen by the common consciousness but same real dimensions. And that is why we can call mask only something that is true, existing or something that existed before. It is some sort of key that opens some doors or gates to some energy. The energies are incoming and outgoing and therefore the mask is made by some standards like some special antenna, which is working "in" and "out", this is transmitter and receiver at the same time. When some of the soul strings are pulled or touched some sources of energy open, those sources are of certain frequency.

And that is why mask is indissoluble with magic and magic actions. This is the power that conquers the reality due to the memory of the danger image that exists inside of us. If this image is very strong then it has inside the energy of the defending subject itself. Most often we defend with the help of our knowledge or unbelief or some mask of indifference or mask of belief, which has nothing common as belief is the face of Jesus that has nothing like our mask of belief as well as the face of Knowledge of Buddha has nothing like our self confidence.

Our masks, whether we talk of human or drama, have nothing in common with those magic ones of which we have just spoke earlier as these are masks that escape from the true reality and not tragic approaching to Buddha, Christ and of delight of child's world.

It is important to settle one more division into mask, which is created by your own Will and mask that is the consequence of someone's Will and which is accepted due to need, it is what is usually called thrust role. Role that is accepted by someone without his will, as there is a need to do those or other actions, it is like murder by order or executioner role.

Here on one side we have to talk about two functions of mask, we mean mask that permits and mask that defends, not only the physical essence of the man on duty but his soul peace as well. On the other side something that is under mask is always limited or functional. So we can make the conclusion that under the human there is functional one. Here is the temptation to say that mask is the option to keep inside stable position for the soul or person, it helps to concentrate his Will on his intention...but suffering and the mask of suffering, as mechanism of relief of suffering, that comes out on the face have nothing in common. Last thing that appear is interesting for psychological theatre or psychological mystery.

Playing in the psychological theatre is related to the change of human masks but this action is deliberate and therefore playing in the psychological theatre is some kind of distance of discrepancy of so called mask and intention with invariability of action directed at keeping the inside essence of the individual existence and it is related with the theatre interest to some potential energy that keeps in it the fullness of the Existing.

This non-personal energy that can be called Fate in tragedy; coinci-

dence of circumstances in comedy, which leads to the triumph of the old-fox servant or foxy cat-scholar that goes along the chain of his form and does miracles and he is the lowest on the ladder of creation but because he accepts that he gets maximum benefits from the drama Fate.

And in the situation of Fate or absence of mask in its material form as subject or in the situation of moving mask in the drama theatre where the problem that appears in front of the creator is like the problem of the pureness of sound in musical performing art, at the same time we mustn't forget that mask in the drama is element of comedy or the ghost of the death.

As the problem of the pureness in music the problem of mask is related to the pureness of sounding or the inside energy that is involved from inside of us and is transmitted from there. That demands the skill to keep it in immobility that allows making deep hidden moves in the space of the playing or instantly discretely transform on the eyes of audience both is the greatest perfection or game of "yin" and "yang".

So, when we say "mask" we understand some musical instrument like sitar. If we transfer it into musical terms or keys that open those or others gates beyond which those or others sources of energy are kept, so when we put on the mask we are trying to pretend that we are part of that reality, we are trying to enter the waters of the source, so that it would become our helper or, using the terms of academician Propp, it becomes the magical grantor of our new essence with the help of which we are trying to get into the reality that was inaccessible before.

But this dangerous voyage is like the transformation in the boiling fabulous tubs. As to come and take the power does not mean to become the slave of it but you have to serve its essence for some time being its slave. Here we meet with methodological nuance that says comprehension is related with deliberate accepting, which means that first you have to go and serve as pupil to this power and love it, otherwise you may become slave and even perish if the power will suspect that you want to steal it from itself or to make it your slave. It has to come to you itself and love you otherwise you will become its slave, as when you get it you have to know what to do with it. This Energy or

Will is related to very precise using of the sources of this special luminescence, as the mask is the mystic boundary between static and moving, death and being alive. As the mask is special Energy of Mystic Horror, events from beyond visible Mother. Discontinuity of this Existence, of these changes or actions of totem ancestors that bring the dead face and allow us to feel this energy of eternal and invariable game of existence that does not know the difference between the act of birth and death and to see this breathing light of the abyss that attracts so much.

To take off the mask.

To make it the subject of playing of your Will, it's Will in the fight for own Will. To cheat death by defocusing it's sizzling look by taking off all your masks.

We need to take off all our masks and make them to be subject of our playing. But this playing is only possible in the condition when your face is like a mirror sphere that reflects the whole fullness of the world like the pond with transparent water in the evening is able to reflect the whole depth and gamma of the color and form of the world around and the fullness of the existence inside itself. As the feeling is the fish that you see in the calm pure transparent water.

To act means to do what brings you joy to your Soul, freedom to your Spirit and it according to its essence "soar where it wishes".

To act means to bring sweet tiredness for the body in the body's space of life and the feeling is not a load but ideal instrument of the Soul Existence Music. And the string touch it and it nerves, genius musician spirit is playing on it, it is genius with soul and soul is genius with it. Life is their child and is born and lives in love and has future. The Spirit is only then primordial Spirit if it is with Soul, when It "soar where it wishes" not becoming slave of the Soul and his Body of fears.

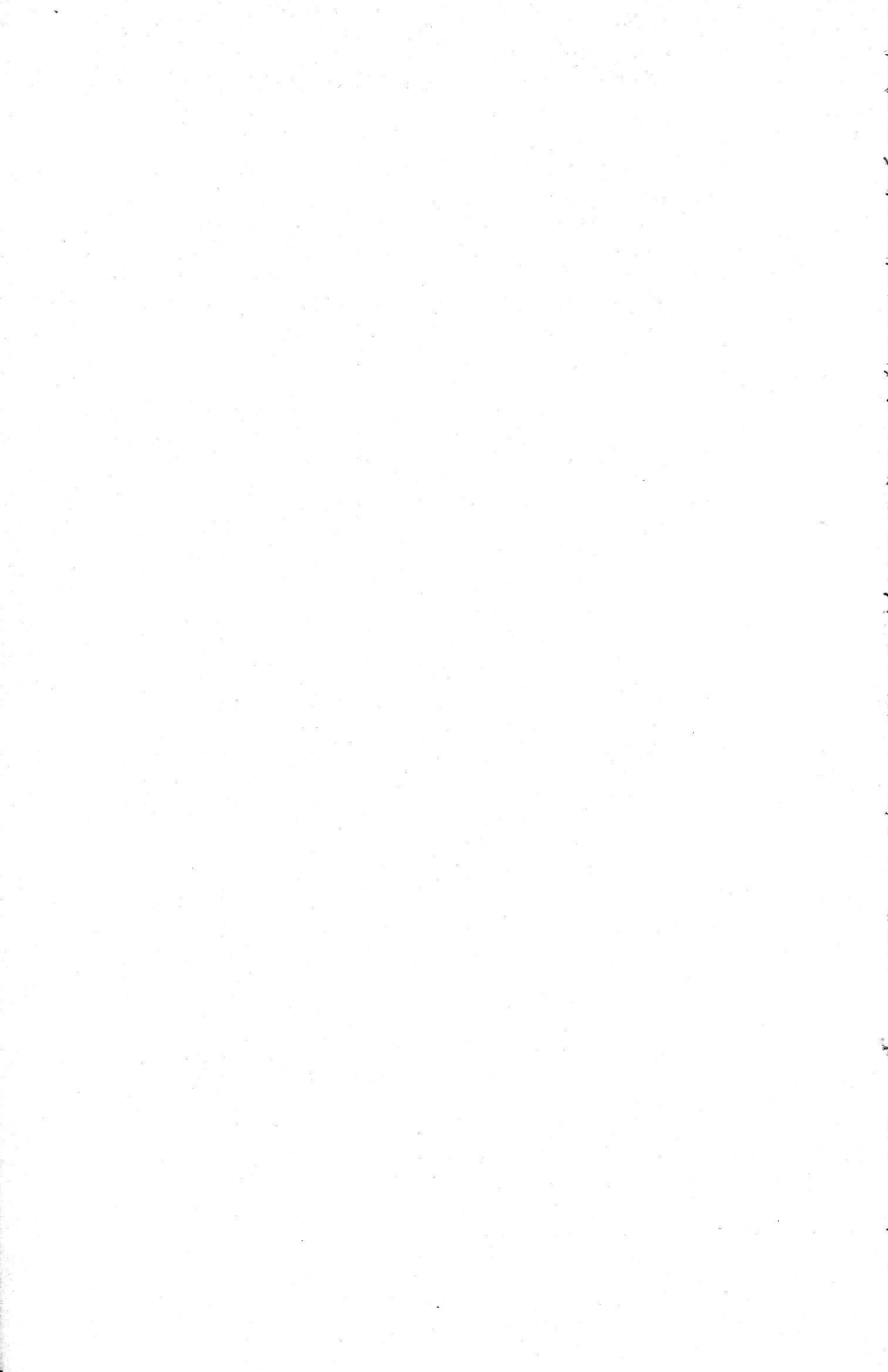
To act means to be directed with the human Spirit towards the Primordial Spirit, Spirit that creates life and following the perfection and destination of the body that was created to be the Door to Life. It is to open it and create Soul Breathing of Abyss, as I am the actor or the creator of act, uncovering the essence of destiny of the Existence with my only life.



P.S. Here the author must stop, as this text appearing in its English version will be something quite different.

Last remark will be some English words that cannot be explained if you are not looking at them from the other language but it is worth to think about it;

Face, fade, fail, failure, faint, faith, fame, famous, fate, favor, favorite.



## ABEL SOLARES

Actor, director, theatre pedagogue  
and storyteller

### **"Learning to learn"**

Abel Solares was born in Guatemala. He is co-founder of *TEATRO VIVO*, which – basing on latin-american tradition – had tours all over the world. As director and pedagogue, he has worked in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. His research is based upon anthropological questions in theatre: Oral traditions, rituals and theatrical forms in intercultural relations. Since 1996 his studies have been focused on the Japanese theatre tradition of Nô and Kabuki. He gained the *Uchimura Theatre Prize 2000* of ITI Tokyo for a modern version of the Nô play *Kinuta*. Abel Solares is member of the theatrical laboratory *Hideo-Zemi*, directed by the Nô Master Kanze Hideo in Tokyo, Japan.

### **The Sculpture's Flower**

*"Devoid of mask and excessively worried in the face,  
the modern actor has finally neglected  
the theatre instrument constituted by its body"  
(Constantin Miklavski, 1927)*

If the presence of the actor is the substance of the theatre fact, like fragrance is for the flower, then the pre-expressivity is the suspension of energy that carves the body from the inside, for alive expression in space and time. The mask – like a truer element, richer in meaning than the face, intensifies the expressive potentialities of the body and the gestures next to the sculpture must be expressive from all aspects.

The control, handling and modulation of the energy are so pronounced in the face as it is in the mask of the actor, transforming him/her into a living sculpture. This transformation into a moving sculpture, in which the actor lives his own scenic existence, is sustained in the training of body/mind from its small internal impulses.

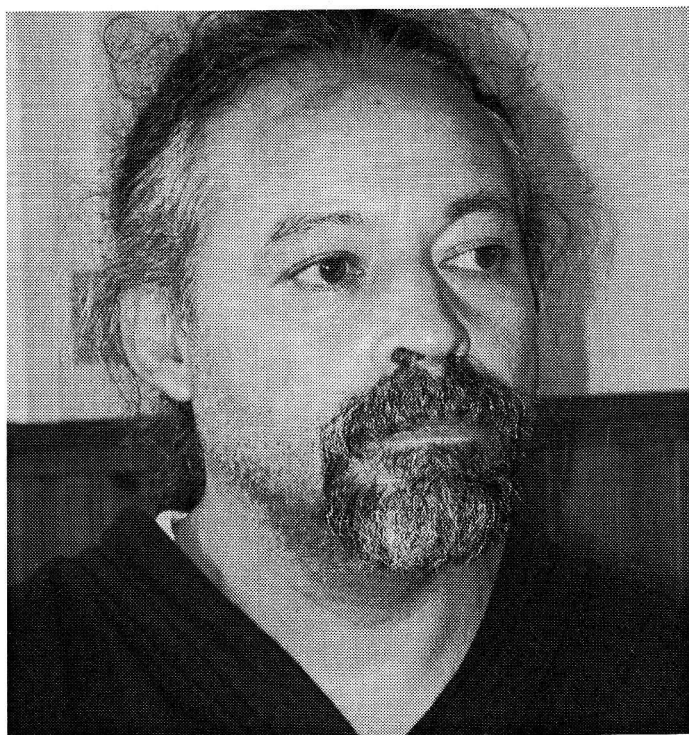
Starting from the basic movements of the extra-daily techniques of training taken from some Japanese classic performing arts such as

theatre Nô, Kabuki, Nihon Buyo, Samurai Dance Kenbu, we will explore some principles of the codified work and their application in the strength of the actor's presence.

This Workshop focuses on working with weight, equilibrium (equilibrium in action and precarious equilibrium), energy (qualities of energy; gentle energy, strong energy, the weight as energy), muscular oppositions of the partiture, quality of action (the smooth, the relaxed, the tense and the exact) and other elements of the actor's work which strives for rigorous coding, and makes it possible to use or modulate energy in space and in time.

These are some points to deal with during the workshop, but the main idea is to learn to learn. This is our departure point so that the actor can develop a personal training that allows him/her to be creative in their dramatic artwork.

*Abel Solares*





## Abel Solares – short workshop summary

Abel opened his workshop by declaring "the moment we start working, I am your teacher, and you do what I tell you. No questions." Everybody accepted, and he started with a hard programme of Japanese classical training, which demanded very high concentration, fast impulses and body consciousness and body memory. For some of the participants it was very painful, as they were older and had stiff untrained bodies. They simply could not sit on their knees, etc. But everybody tried the best they could, and Abel did not mind as long as everybody were doing their very best.

He introduced the "kata", long series of fixed movements, and buildt them first on the participants own improvised movements, which they were to chose, fix, and place in order.

Everybody got a long stick and Abel started to teach basics of handling the stick. Sticks were whirling in the air in the whole room. Later, movements with the stick were also structured into a long "katas".

The "katas" were later used in different ways, with fast "sharp" movements or in slow motion. Most of the time, classical Japanese music was used as inspiring background. In a final phase, the participants also met each other and interacted, using the "katas", where the movements then were loaded with different meaning.

Abel presented a collection of masks, and the participants chose one each. The masks were of very different character, classical no-masks, kabuki masks, comedy masks etc. With the masks on, the participants did the same kind of "kata"-training as they did before. Abel informed us that this is the way mask-training is done in classical Japanese theatre.

Then text was added, where the participants improvised text (and later wrote it down and rehearsed it) and imitated "classical Japanese" way of stage speech.

Some participants were chosen to perform scenes, where they acted together as i.e. Adam and Eve, in masks from two different traditions. One participant performed a Hamlet monologue, while doing

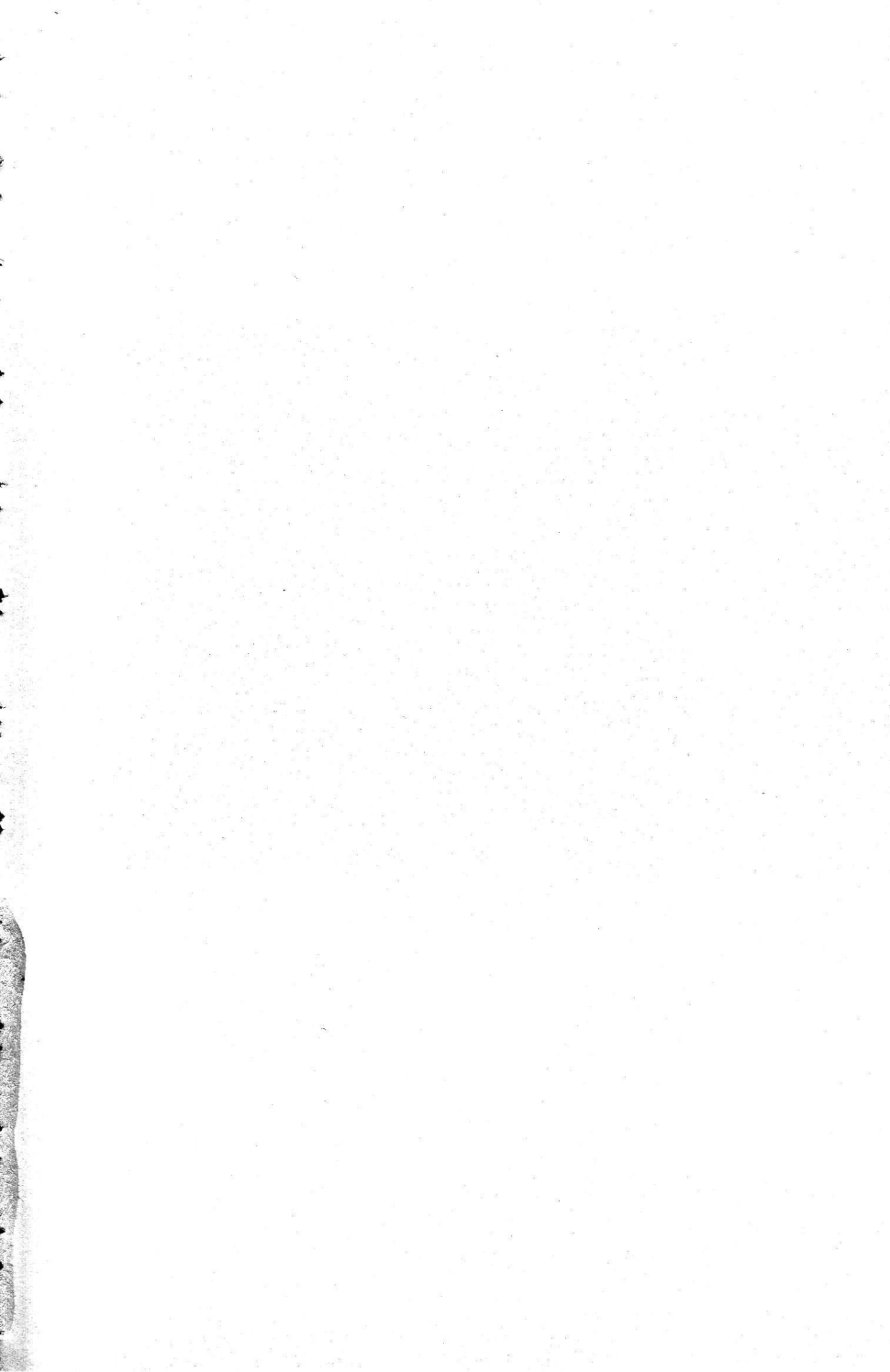
his "kata" and wearing a female wooden no-mask.

The first part of Abels workshop was very interesting, and all the participants made great progress, depending on their starting-level. They reached a high level of concentration and energy, and this part of the workshop could very well have been part of last Methodikas "Energy" theme. The mask-work seemed to me to be "added" to fit into this Methodikas theme.

Abel later gave an interesting speech about face and mask, which more or less corresponds with his article " la cara and el rostro".

*M.V.*







Abel Solares  
Workshop report based on documentation  
recordings and on notes by participant  
Colin Skelton

Abel demanded our full attention saying that this was the only way to work and that we only had four days to touch upon a 600 year old tradition. From then on he referred to each day as one year, and would, when referring to the next day, talk of next year instead of tomorrow.

**Opening and closing ritual**

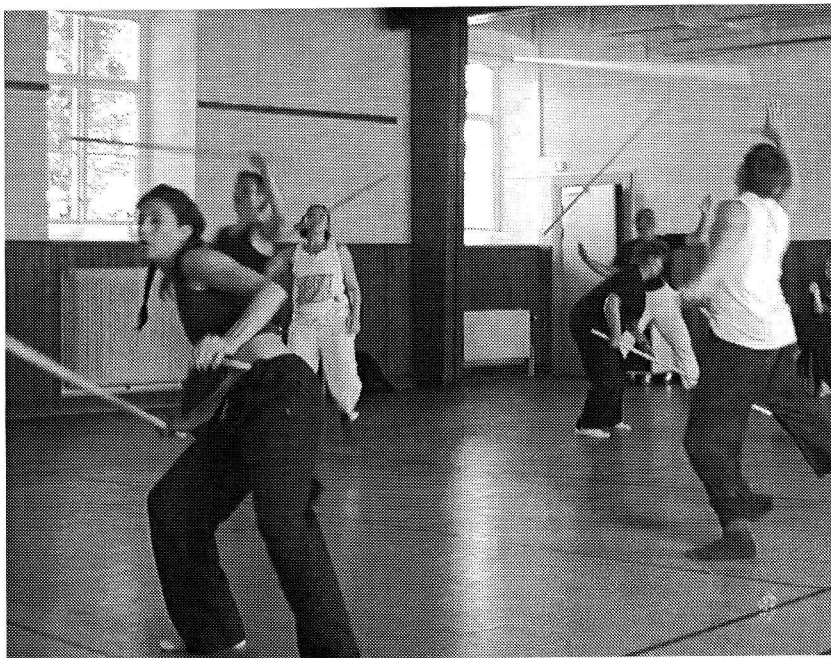
We were initially instructed to form two parallel lines facing each other and then to kneel down with straight backs, right foot slightly over left, facing the person opposite us. Abel placed himself perpendicularly to us at the top end of the formation. This basic formation we were to use when relaxing or listening to instructions from Abel; the position indicated that one was working and therefore concentrated. He then proceeded to teach us a ritual sequence consisting of simple hand movements and strong exhalations that were to set the space with the intention of working, and that focus and concentration was required. This ritual was performed at the beginning and end of each teaching session. Although the ritual itself signified nothing in particular, it served as a formal tool of transition that not only energised the working space with focus and intention, but also enabled the participants to gather energies on a common starting platform. We were instructed to end the sequence by jumping from a kneeling position into a standing position in one move without stumbling. Clearly this was to be a physical experience. Some of us managed, others didn't, and we were made aware of either a lack of agility or of sore knees. However, as the four days progressed and we touched upon experiences of weight, equilibrium and qualities of energy in the body, this somewhat challenging movement was achieved with relative ease by all the participants.

## **Working with sticks**

Everybody gets a long stick and Abel starts to teach basics of handling the stick. Sticks are whirling in the air in the whole room. Later, movements with the stick are also structured into a long "kata" sequence. The training with the sticks was resumed for one hour each day.

The stick, Abel told us, was our teacher and that we were to respect it. Stick-work consisted of free movements and sequence movements. Free movements were physically demanding and the initial twenty minutes of throwing sticks into the air and catching them with the other hand while trying to do a double sideways movement at the same time, soon began to draw a sweat! These exercises were very effective in demanding concentration and awareness of breath, while at the same time checking and correcting ones centre of gravity. We were constantly instructed to bend our knees and try to pull our centre of gravity downwards. As the actors' knees are always bent during a Noh performance, which sometimes last up to six hours, a state of physical endurance and strength is a basic requirement. Co-ordination was also required to manouvre the sticks correctly and often a stick would fly through the air and narrowly miss someones head. If this happened it was just a matter of retrieving ones stick with no giggles or fuss and return to ones place and continue working. It is amazing to consider, in retrospect, that no one (from the observers) lost an eye during these sessions!

The stick sequences consisted of a series of katas, which are stationary positions in space. In the Noh tradition a student learns from his teacher by imitating his movements over and over until they are imprinted on his body memory and learned. Abel emphasised the point that in the west we often think we need a theory to learn physical movements but that mental memory and theory will only be an obstacle in the art of Noh. In fact, as I soon discovered, the only way to remember a kata position in the sequence was to repeat the whole sequence from the beginning until I reached the point of that particular kata, and then my body would 'remember' the movement to be performed. Of course, training in body memory requires more than four days, but it was a start. After a few days when we became familiar with the stick sequence, it took on a whole different feeling. Doing the



kata sequences became for me very meditative, and when my attention was not focused on trying to remember the actual sequence, I was able to sink into the experience of my body and become aware of aspects such as breath, body alignment and weight distribution. Abel stressed precise movements without force.

### **Working with the Ogi – the fan**

Use of the fan in Noh is very common and is called an Ogi. Together with the mask, it is one of the primary props of expression. However, first we were to learn various correct ways of holding and opening the fan, and ways of coordinating these movements with our bodies. The ogi is a very versatile prop in Noh as it can be used to symbolise and express many different scenes, emotions and objects. The ogi can

transform from the water to a ship to a jug pouring wine into a glass, it can transform into a veil that one can cover ones face with and peak out from behind creating a playful scene. Even the samurai warriors bow and arrow can be depicted with the *ogi* in a little dance sequence. It seems to me there are set uses and applications with corresponding body positions when using the *ogi*. The standard body position is *Kamai*. One is in this position when the knees are slightly bent, clenched fist to the side of the body and arms slightly twisted outwards, heels are together with big toes separated about ten centimetres, counterbalancing a slightly forward leaning torso. In fact all movement in *Noh* begins from this position and ends here too.

As with the stick sequences, Abel taught us a few dances using the *Ogi* while playing the very trance-like accompanying Japanese music and song.

The *ogi* also has essentially a feminine quality that is greatly explored in *Noh*. Moving from the more masculine and explosive work with the sticks, to working with connecting with the feminine qualities that the fan provokes, is a contrast that proved a nourishing challenge. Learning the dances (called *nigobuyo*) with the *ogi* proved difficult for most of us even though the sequence seemed relatively easy. Perhaps the reason I found it easier to learn the stick sequences is because the *ogi* dances consisted of freer and more flowing softer qualities; or maybe the reason is simply because I felt less clumsy with the stick. Either way, one thing is certain when comparing working with sticks to the *ogi*: the quality of movement was greatly influenced by the quality of the prop.

### **Working with individual kata sequences**

This next exercise became the base for the work during the next four days. On the second day, after training with the sticks, we were told to spread out across the room. Our next instructions were to begin moving around the room, being led by an impulse arising from each specific area of the body that Abel was to call out, such as the shoulders and then the chest and back, followed by the nose and then perhaps the knees. Abel would call out a body part where we were to place our attention while moving, and after a few moments he would call out another area or part of the body and we reacted by shifting

attention and allowing movement to arise from that area. We were to allow ourselves to be led around the room by the spontaneous, erratic impulses that arose from that body part, without thinking about or premeditating (or even improvising) the movements, so that these impulses were manifested through the body's expression. Abel was clear to instruct us to constantly change positions and keep our energy and focus directed outward and upwards, especially when a movement was directed to the floor. After about ten minutes of this initial exercise, Abel told us he would at some point shout 'stop!' and we were to remain frozen in space in the position our bodies were in at that moment. This first position was to be remembered as our first kata. We continued to explore our bodies in space and movement in this way until we had collected 12 katas arising from spontaneous movement. We were instructed to remember these positions for the next day,

The participants had to remember all the 12 positions, and when Abel called out a random number immediately go to that position. Later, everyone composed a fixed sequence of her/his positions. Those individual kata sequences were used in different ways, with fast "sharp" movements or in slow motion. Most of the time, classical Japanese music was used as inspiring background. In a final phase, the participants also met each other and interacted, using the "kahta sequence", where the movements then became charged with new and different meaning.



### **Working with masks**

Abel presents a collection of masks, and the participants chose each one. The masks are of very different character, classical no-masks, kabuki masks, comedy masks etc. With the masks on, the participants do the same kind of "kata"-training as they did before. Abel informed us that this is the way mask-training is done in classical Japanese theatre.

Then text is added, where the participants improvise text (and later write it down and rehearse it) and imitate "classical Japanese" way of stage speech.

Some participants are chosen to perform scenes, where they act together as i.e. Adam and Eve, or David and Goliath in masks from two different traditions. One participant does a Hamlet monologue, while doing his "kata" and wearing a female wooden no-mask.

### **Cutting the mask**

Use of masks is another primary prop in the practise of Noh and of central focus for the Methodika festival. However as the mask is an instrument that magnifies and expresses the impulses of the body through the body, physical training in discipline, precision and body awareness is initially more important than the mask itself. We began to work with masks only on the third day. Abel taught us some simple methods to use the mask in Noh, one standard being that of 'cutting' the mask. Cutting the mask involves turning the head and thus the mask to face the audience, very precisely and quickly, creating a dramatic change of focus with minimal movement. As with all movements in Noh, cutting the mask is to be precise and with focused intention. The eye-holes in the Noh masks are very small so one needs to be very controlled in ones movements in order to not have to rely on visual orientation in space. Abel explained that there are different masks for specific characters and plays, however part of the art of a Noh performer lies in the way in which he interprets each mask's character. Obviously, as the masks remain the same, character interpretation is expressed through ones body and magnified through the mask.



### **Working with mask and kata**

Having learned our 12 katas, we were told to choose a mask and kneel on the ground in a semi-circle formation. Abel then asked for two volunteers to put on their masks and stand in the open area of the formation. Remembering their 12 katas from the previous day they were instructed to perform each kata separately without stopping, by following the body's movement from one kata to the next, giving freedom to the period of transition in-between each kata. The result was a masked dance of precise movements glued together by structured improvisation. Each of us had a turn to experience our first masked dance and observe each other. It was very interesting for me to observe how the mask influenced not only the way each person's movements were 'interpreted', but also the way in which my own movements were influenced by the character of the mask. I had chosen a mask used to depict a demon; a dominant, powerful expression. I noticed that my movements of katas, wearing the mask, became rigid and heavy while concentrating on precision of movement. I understood that I was creating tension in my body by not exploring the lighter, feminine possibilities of movement that existed. Having gained this awareness, I tried to relax more without releasing the energetic tension (positive tension) and allow the flow of movement to become more varied, richer and therefore more dramatically interesting.

### **Last day demonstrations**

The demonstration that Abels class presented was more of a performance than a work demonstration. They demonstrated the stick work, followed by the *ogi* dances, and then they presented a series of little sketches using the masks and the 12 katas in various simple ways.

Apart from the maskwork with the whole group, the scenes with two actors in masks including text, and the Hamlet solo, some "entertaining" group works were also presented. The class had also chosen to add background sound to the scenes in form of modern songs. (Yesterday)

The demonstrations ended with the ritual of finishing.



## Abel Solares The face and the mask of the actor

*With no mask and excessively concerned with his face,  
the modern actor has reached a state  
in which he disregards the theatrical instrument – of his body  
Constantin Miklasvski, 1927*

When I was thinking about this theme, I became aware that in Spanish there are two words for "face": *la cara* and *el rostro*.

*Cara* signifies the physical and natural face, whereas *rostro* stands for a human construction. *Rostro* is manufactured; *cara* is a part of the human body;

The *rostro* is fixed by our imagery. Our *rostro* is an architectural construction. The *cara* only remains because the *rostro* idealises it. The *rostro* arrests the flowing nature of the face.

In the same way the mask calls a halt to the metamorphoses of the face. The mask fixes the gesture. Of all possible transformations of a face it retains just one form, one archetype.

The mask hides our *cara*, it also polarises any change in the *rostro*. The mask stops time. The mask is the eternal. To be present means to have a *rostro*. Maybe that is why we cover our faces when we lie or make a mistake. We cover our *cara* and so, covered, we construct the *rostro* of shame, of fear or guilt. We live between *caras*. We live with *rostros*. The mask is, in fact, a petrified *rostro*.

The Japanese word for the mask in Noh theatre is "noh-men". *Men* means *rostro* or a face over the face. The Chinese character for *noh-men* can also be pronounced *omote*, which means *outside*. Professional mask players call the mask *omote*.

Since the beginning of the 20th century dramaturges and directors have used the mask extensively and in various contexts, incorporating modern ideas about aesthetics. In most cases the mask was an integral and necessary part of a presentation. The use of the mask allows the realisation of ideas of a theatre different from the theatre based

exclusively on spoken text, *Sprechtheater*, the theatre of the spoken word.

The mask stereotypes and objectifies the identity to which the actor aspires. This desire is realised through the mask's ability to transform through mimicry, which is what occurs when the actor-dancer puts on the mask and assumes the identity of the role. The mask also enables the gap between the identity represented and the subjective identity of the actor-dancer to be bridged. Transformation through mimicry is triggered by the ambiguous nature of the mask, which covers one identity whilst revealing another. Between these two opposing identities are the actor, hiding behind the mask, and the mask, hiding itself and bringing forth the body of the actor-dancer.

In this relationship between the actor-dancer's self and the represented role, it is the mask that determines the particular kind of gesture used. The gesture, the complete body movement, is generated in the centre of equilibrium situated in the centre of the trunk of the body. This gesture includes the whole body, which gives itself up to the action and works like a frame for the mask by transforming its immobility into mobility. But these gestures, these actions, which are loaded with energy, vary in rhythms and dimensions, and change directions and levels, thus changing the meaning and the value of the mask itself. They provoke a real dialogue between themselves, and thus the principles of true stage behaviour awake.

The return to the use of masks has intensified the actor's work with the body and he has had to respond to this by searching for a physical training that can meet the aesthetic demands set by his ancestors. In this search, he has turned to dance and theatre traditions of India, Indonesia, China, Japan and so on.

Charles Dullin remarks in *Souvenirs et notes de travail d'un acteur*: "I was always attracted by the principles of old Japanese theatre, and I have to admit that I owe it a great deal; studying its origins and its history, I affirmed my ideas on the renewal of the spectacle of theatre."

Jean Louis Barrault: "My interest in far eastern theatre - and especially in Japanese Noh-theatre - was born in the studio of Charles Dullin. Above all, we were attracted by masks, by all the ways they could play with expression... the mask takes the inner life to the extre-

*me. The mask awakens the instincts and makes the soul appear."*

Japanese theatre and its aesthetic ideas influenced such artists as Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats, Bertolt Brecht, Paul Claudel, Samuel Beckett, Jacques Copeau, Jean-Louis Barrault and Charles Dullin, Lecoq, Arianne Mnouchkine, Eugenio Barba, to mention a few, and thus it has had a significant influence on western theatre.

After having studied and practised Noh theatre, Kabuki and Chinese martial arts for some years, I developed a physical training for western actors and actresses, which is based on the fundamental movements of these performing arts. Now I shall deal with some body principles, which rule this training and acting technique.

## KATAS

Physical training as we understand it in the western world does not exist in classical Japanese theatre. In Japan, as in other parts of Asia, the student actor learns by imitating his master, the student repeats and assimilates little movement sequences with his body until he has learned a complete dance by body memory. Then he goes on to the next one.

Like bricks in the architecture of a building, movement sequences or body patterns build a structure, which we meet quite often in Japanese performing arts. In Noh theatre, Kabuki, Nihon buyo, the puppet theatre of Bunraku, and in the martial arts the word 'Kata' is used to refer to the smallest units in the stages of a dance (or the set forms of martial arts). The union, the connection of these basic movements, or 'katas', form series, sequences and dances which express a particular meaning. Various forms of 'katas' are modified by style, context, and costumes and by the kind and quality of energy the actor imprints on them with every action.

Depending on the context within a play there are:

- katas with meaning
- katas without special meaning
- symbolic katas with meaning
- realistic katas

## KAMAE: THE SERENE BRILLIANCE OF THE MOON

Donato Sartori tells of a time when his father was taking notes (as was his custom) whilst observing a rehearsal of Marcello Moretti. Marcello was trying to execute an acrobatic salto according to the customary rules prescribed by his character. On this occasion, Marcello had problems with his concentration because the eyeholes of his mask were too small. There seemed to be no solution. He lost patience and, without saying a word, took off the mask and enlarged the eyeholes with a pair of scissors he had found on stage. Afterwards, he put on the mask again and was about to continue his rehearsal calmly, when Ameleto Sartori, who had kept silent so far, let out a yell, and told him he was mad. They started to insult each other heavily and it was difficult to calm them down and resolve the situation peacefully: thus, the cat-mask of Arlecchino was born. The eyeholes were modified by being enlarged and widened. This is to say that the mask served the actor; the mask was functional to the performance.

With Japanese Noh theatre it is quite the contrary. The masks are produced before the drama has been perfected. The average size of a mask is about 21 cm in vertical and 13 cm in horizontal, and it is definitely smaller than the actor's face.

So, what is the actor's condition in Noh theatre when he uses a mask? In the beginning, he is invaded by anxiety as if he were in a dark room. The Noh mask is made to cover the face completely. That is why the mask is concave in shape, so that no light can get in from any side. The actor is in complete darkness. All he can see is a small spot of light appearing through the eyeholes of the mask. Of course, the Noh mask has two eyeholes, but, as the eyeholes are overlapping, the actor actually sees only one spot.

During the one or two hours that the mask is used on stage, the actor has to fix his eyes on this spot. All he can see of the external world is through this hole. He cannot turn away his eyes, not even for a second. He cannot take a rest. The tension and the pressure generated by the Noh mask are absolutely incomprehensible unless one has had the experience of participating in a Noh performance. Visibility through a Noh mask is extremely limited. The actor has no sight to either side, nor can he see his feet. Only being able to see one spot in front of the eyes means it is very difficult to keep one's balance.

As a result, a Noh actor cannot even think of lifting his knees while walking.

A response to the difficulties of moving on stage under these conditions is a form called 'Hakobi'. This form requires the actor to move with his feet extended on the ground, in 'suri ashi' – that is, without lifting his feet from the ground, taking short and slow steps, varying them slightly according to the role – woman, old person, warrior.

And a response to the anxiety provoked by darkness behind the mask, is the 'Kamae' posture adopted by the actor, the basic position in the unfolding of a Noh play. The actor takes a standing position, leaning slightly forward. Instead of bending his back from the hips, he maintains his back upright, shifting his gravity centre to the front. His position is unstable. He pushes backwards and concentrates on the lower part of his back to stabilize himself. Although, from outside, his body seems stable, the balance inside is false. This is due to microscopic tensions of forward- and backward-pulling energies, which produce a complete sensation of stability. This is 'Kamae'.

As Hisao Kanze, one of the greatest actors of the last years – he died in 1978 – said: "In the 'Kamae' position the actor irradiates energy to all directions whilst standing still on stage. He fixes his eyes and thus controls the space. He interprets this energy in a simple form, as if practising austerity.

'Kamae' means standing on your feet with your mind shining serenely like the moon, a state of alertness and tranquillity and potential energy ready to let the movement flow like a stream.

## JO-HA-KYU

All the 'katas' or sequences of movements begin and finish in the 'kamae' position.

The process of development is determined by 'Jo-Ha-Kyu', which is probably the most important aesthetical concept of Noh theatre.

'Jo' means 'beginning' or 'preparation', 'Ha' signifies 'rupture' and 'Kyu' 'rapid' or 'urgent'. The expression originates from Gagaku, the ancient Japanese court music that originally came from China. Generally it was used to indicate an opus consisting of three parts, which were executed with gradually increasing tempo:

'Jo' – noisy, entrance of the dancer, overture (introduction),

'Ha' – fine, treating the dance with gentleness, middle part (development),

'Kyu' – rapid, rapid dancing, final part (conclusion).

The principle of 'Jo-Ha-Kyu' was quickly adopted in poetry, in the tea ceremony, in the art of floral arrangement (Ikebana), in music – and, of course, in Noh theatre.

Komparu Kunio, direct descendant of Zeami and director of the Noh Research Centre, interprets the concept as follows:

'Jo' signifies 'beginning', as in: 'beginning-middle-end. It refers to a position and thus it is an element of space.

'Ha' describes 'rupture' or 'ruin'. It suggests destruction of an existing state and thus it is an element of disorder

'Kyu' means 'rapid', just like in the tempo: 'slow-medium-rapid'. It refers to velocity and thus it is an element of time

The concept of 'Jo-Ha-Kyu' unites the contradictory, essential concepts of time and space, connecting them with an element of rupture. The result is the discovery of beauty in imbalanced harmony and a process of gaining freedom, in our case, of body movement.

'Jo-Ha-Kyu' is used in all areas of Noh theatre: in daily design of theatre programmes, in a play's composition, in the space onstage, in rhythm, in the actor's movement.

The principles of 'kata', 'kamae' and 'Jo-Ha-Kyu' are also applied in Kabuki theatre, in Buyo Kabuki dance, and in Nihon buyo. With its characteristics as a performing art, Kabuki theatre is nearer to what we understand as theatre in Europe. This is also true of its terms and concepts. I use some of them in my training:

## KACHUKO

This term can be translated as 'class and style'. Saying that a dancer has class and style means that he has risen above the limits of his capabilities. It refers to a high spiritual level, as expressed in dance. But to express class and style it is necessary to apply another concept – the 'okisa' or amplitude. This amplitude does not refer to the body size of the dancer, nor to the stage area, nor the grandeur of movements. In Japan the ideal space onstage is small. An extremely large body would actually be disadvantageous in many cases. Given that classical Japanese dance intends to show an inner and intense



power, in most cases a small body is more efficient.

Speaking concretely, 'okisa' describes amplitude of expression and profundity of content. This is not a question of extending one's arms some centimetres more, or of jumping very high, or of spinning around in a very wide circle. If 'amplitude' meant these kinds of actions, it would be obvious that western dance is much 'greater' in this respect. 'Amplitude' in Japanese dance is expressed using different techniques.

For example, when a hand is to be stretched out to the front, first it moves to the rear in a preparatory gesture. If the right hand is to be extended to the right, it will first be softly led to the left and afterwards it will stretch to the right with a graceful turn of the wrist. If the head has to turn to the right, first the chin will point to the left. Second, the head falls forward, and third, the face rises to the right – it is a three-part movement.

The preparatory movements create a short pause. This focuses the attention to the final gesture. Thus, this gesture seems to be bigger and to have a wider scope. For example, if something has to be seen, first the eyes rise, then the rest of the body follows with a total extension towards the object seen, producing a visual montage of movement and also a richness and breadth of gesture. These techniques give additional power and vitality to movement in dance.

### **IKI: Spirit – Energy**

If these techniques for producing amplitude are applied mechanically, the dance will not be alive. No matter how mechanical a technique is, or how the actions of a dance are linked - mere technique will never produce true dramatic energy. This is only possible if the techniques unite in organic and artistic time and space, if they are all united with a spiritual power. In Japanese the spiritual state, which gives life to the dance, is called 'iki'. 'Iki' includes respiration, spirit, and energy – what Eugenio Barba calls 'the scenic bios'.

### **MA: Time – Space**

A sequence of actions or a series of beautiful positions will not make a high level dance.

True dance is born only with actions and movements that are con-

nected with the stream of life and only when it is ruled in its entirety by a total rhythm. This concept in Japanese dance has always been referred to as 'Ma'.

'Ma' is the space or the time between one movement and the next or between one position and the next. However, this does not mean space or time simply on a white sheet of paper. It means time-space conveyed artistically with rhythm and 'Iki'.

In his book *Art of Kabuki*, the actor Danjuro IX (1838-1903) says: "There exists a 'Ma', which can be taught, and a 'Ma', which cannot be taught." If we consider that the 'Ma' can be taught like a mechanical technique, then we still have not defined the 'Ma' that cannot be taught.

In another essay Danjuro states more precisely that rhythm can be taught but the 'grade' or 'extension' ('hodo') cannot be taught. It does not matter how 'expert' or 'precise' a dancer is in his rhythm – true artistic dance will not come to life unless the expressive sense of 'grade' or 'extension' is added. Thus, 'Ma' is connected with inner action of the body, applied in space, rhythm and time.

### **UTSURI: Transition**

'Utsuri' is a technical term, which means 'transition'. Given that Japanese dance is basically pantomime where many characters, situations, or emotions can be expressed during the course of the dance, the transition from one to the other becomes of high importance. Like the 'Ma', the 'Utsuri' is considered to be one of the most difficult aspects in art. The term, 'Utsuri', is also used to express the transition from a foot movement to a hand movement.

### **TOMARU**

Tomaru means 'Stop'. It is the sign, which is used in the streets to make the cars stop, but in dance it signifies the awareness that one movement is finished and the next one is to be initiated. In the beginning students are allowed to show 'Tomaru' openly between the movements or 'katas'. Later, when the student has achieved a deeper knowledge of dance, the 'Tomaru' will not vanish, but it should no longer be visible during the dance (except for the dynamic stop, which belongs to another concept, called 'Mie', about which we shall talk on another occasion).

All these principle mentioned above, as an entity, present themselves simultaneously in time and space during a dance performance or a sequence of dramatic 'katas'.

How will a western actor benefit, if he supplements his training with this technique?

We can say that the actor's presence is the substance of a theatrical act – as the fragrance is for a flower. As in Japanese classical dance, the actor can strengthen his body memory through a daily, disciplined and strict practice of the body principles, which rule his behaviour on stage. He can assimilate a codified technique, which will allow him to create sequences of movements with meaning, without special meaning, symbols with or without meaning, realistic sequences etc. Moreover, he can achieve the ability to repeat movements and sequences with precision and with the same quality of impulse and energy as he did when executing them for the first time. The technique will also enable him to improvise freely with or without a given theme, in liberty, with precise physical actions that are as controlled as if they had been codified in advance. The actor's presence will gain from his body understanding of the 'Kamae' principle as a suspension of energy that moulds the body from the interior to a living expression in time and space. If the concepts of JO-HA-KYU, MA, OKISA, UTSURI, TOMARU are applied by using and mastering sword-, sabre-, lance- and stick techniques, they will enrich and intensify the expressivity of the body. The actor's gestures, similar to those of a sculpture, will be expressive from every perspective.

The eastern techniques of physical action will underlie and support the dramaturgical awareness of the actor. They allow control of balance, its use in space and the use of its qualities in time. They reinforce immobility in movement.

They help to control, use and modulate energy, which manifests itself in the face ('rosto') as well as in the mask of the actor transformed by this into a living sculpture. This transformation into a moving sculpture sustains the actor in his actual stage presence by a body-mind training that starts from small inner impulses.

Finally: the actor will achieve a movement that is smooth, relaxed, tense and precise. This smoothness refers to the process of using energy.

This relaxation signifies a harmonisation of the muscles and the

whole body, without force, that concentrates the energy towards the next movement. Moreover, this quality is necessary for the coordination of different parts of the body in order to achieve a smooth movement and gentle application of energy.

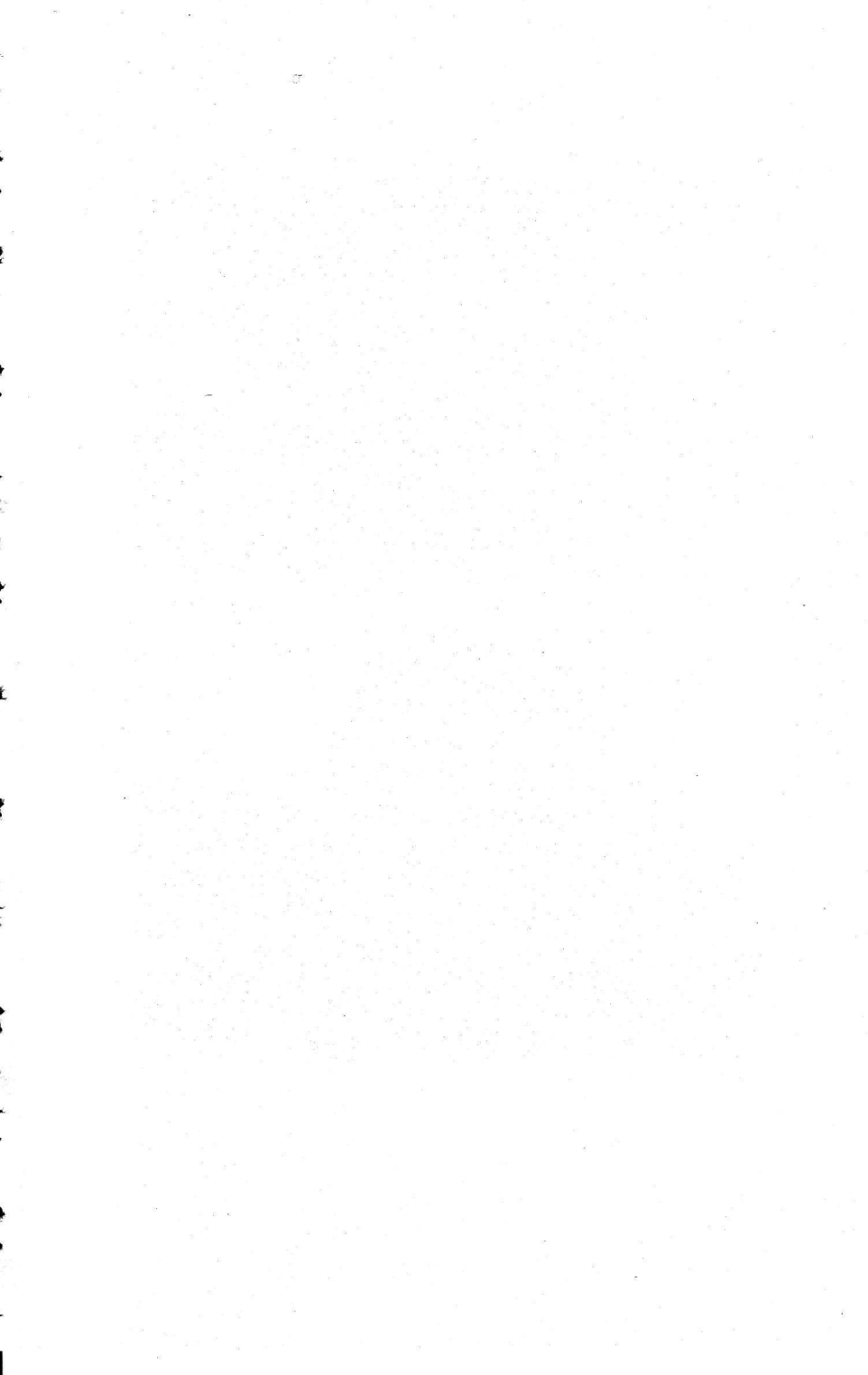
This tension is reflected in the moment when the actor tenses his muscles and projects energy. This is just for a short moment. Afterwards, he returns to a state of relaxation.

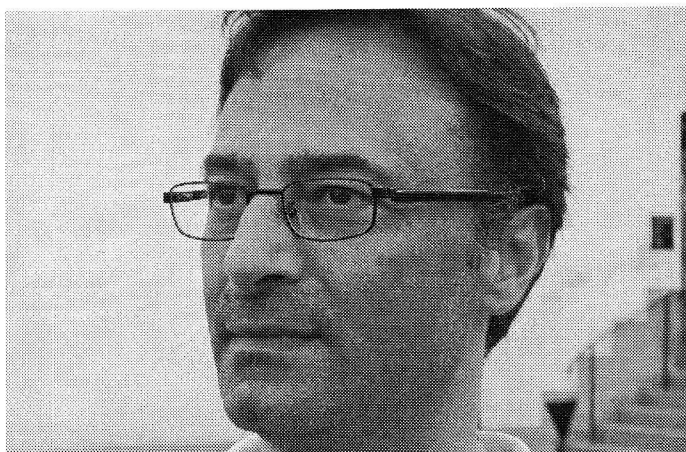
This precision means the concentration of energy towards a determined point.

These smooth, relaxed, tense and precise qualities contribute to a proper unfolding of physical energy.

And as the shamans say: 'Be full of vigour and remain attentive'.

*Abel Solares*





Thanos Vovolis



Giorgios Zamboulakis

THANOS VOVOLIS  
Mask, costume- and set designer

GIORGIOS ZAMBOULAKIS  
Stage director, actor and author  
The Mask in Greek Tragedy

*Thanos Vovolis* has studied Social Anthropology, Film and Theatre studies at the University of Stockholm and mask design at the Dramatic Institute, Stockholm. He has worked with mask, costume and set design on more than 50 performances in Sweden, Greece and Spain. Furthermore he has done artistic research on the Greek tragic mask in Antiquity and in modern theatre with a special focus on the relationship between the mask and the voice of the actor and in this he defined the notion of the acoustical, resonance mask. The project was financed by the Dramatic Institute/Research and Development Department and was presented in the report "PROSOPON – the Instrument of the Narrator". Recently he initiated a new research project, which examines the relationship between mask, voice, acoustics and theatre space. Exhibitions with his theatre masks have been shown in Sweden, Greece, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom, and he has held seminars, workshops and lectures about his research in many European countries. He has worked as a guest lecturer on mask and costume design at the Dramatic Institute in Stockholm.

*Giorgos Zamboulakis* studied acting and directing at the Hadjiko Film and Theatre School in Athens. He has been working as stage director in Greek theatres with both theatre plays and opera and he staged his own play, "Desert", at the Greek National Theatre in Athens in 1998. He is the author of a trilogy, "The Temple of Ancient Divisions", of which "Desert" is the first part.

Since 1995 he has led workshops upon the acoustical mask of Greek tragedy in Greece, England, and Sweden in institutions as The Royal Holloway College in London and The National Academy of Acting and Mime in Stockholm and Malmö, Sweden. Together with Thanos

Vovolis he has translated Lars Kleberg's play "the Aquarians" from Swedish and Bruce Meyer's "Dybbuk" from English into Greek.

### **The acoustic mask and greek tragedy**

The acoustic mask, the creation of chorus and role characterization in Greek tragedy.

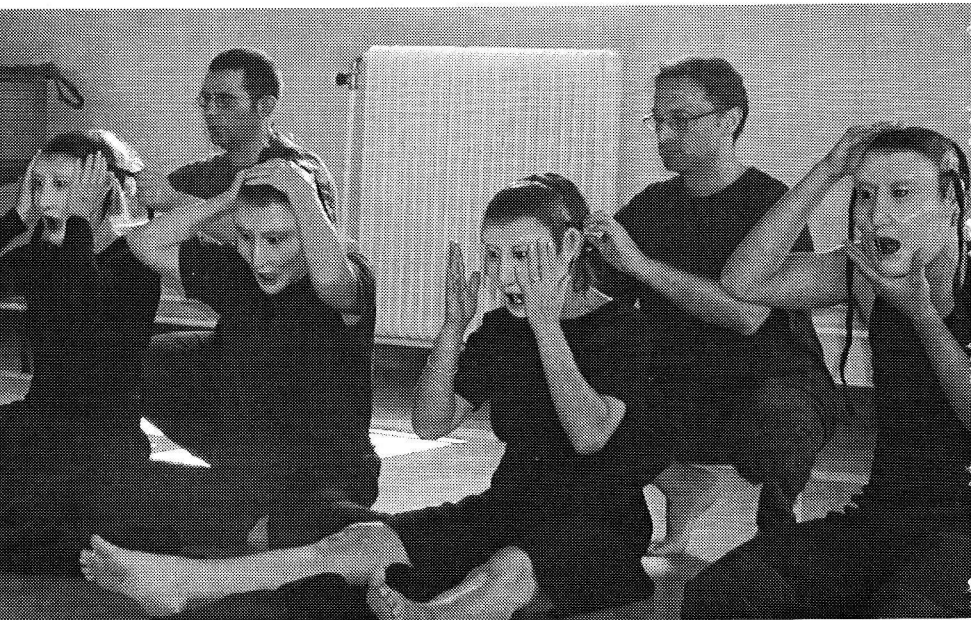
During the workshop and through breath/voice/body training we shall work with the following issues:

1. Meeting and accepting the mask, the interaction between the actor and the mask.
2. The individual and the collective sense of time.
3. The mask and the gaze of the actor. The lack of peripheral visual field and the development of the awareness of the body axes and the centering of the body.
4. The minimization of sight and the maximization of listening.
5. The acoustic mask as a resonance chamber for the voice of the actor and as an instrument to control the direction of the voice, the articulation and the rhythm of the text.
6. The mask as a medium that leads the actor to attention, intensity, awareness, to a body/mind state of emptiness, a state of communication that is the prerequisite for the transformation of the actor on stage.
7. The mask as the medium for the creation of a common breath, a common rhythm, a common movement pattern, the creation of the collective body of the chorus.
8. The emergence of the role characterization through the chorus and its return back to the chorus.
9. The mask and its connection to the theatrical space.



10. The mask as an abstraction of the human face and icon of thea tricality. The mask as an indispensable part of the theatre of archetypes, the theatre of Mythos.

11. The mask as the human face par excellence.



## Thanos Vovolis and Giorgios Zamboulakis – workshop summary

(The workshop is described in detail within their own article)

The whole workshop was very methodical and carefully planned. The first day, they used several hours on basic exercises for the resonance of the voice in the whole body. The first exercises were standing up, then came a series of exercises lying on the floor in different positions which help to remove unnecessary tension, build up strength in the muscles for producing sound, giving an experience of totality in the body and opening the whole apparatus for body resonance. Different vowels and also toning consonants were used with different resonances. Most of the exercises were performed in a slow rhythm and seemed quite simple from the outside, but it was evident that they were intense and exhausting for the participants. After the first long session of basic training, the pedagogues explained that this session was meant to give the participant a good understanding of the work required to prepare oneself for the mask and the voice, and that they would spend one hour each day on this.

Then through a careful procedure, the chorus masks were tried on for the first time. Already from the beginning, even before the mask is put on, the participants produced a strong body sound (on Oooh), and then, with the masks on, tried toning consonants (mm, nn, rr, zz) and tried to find the way in which their voices could produce vibration in the mask.

Also, the participants listened to each other and tried to create the sound together, and to experience themselves as one body, although they could hardly see anything. They could see in front, but not to the sides where the others were. They slowly rose from their sitting position, and standing in a line, they started speaking text, first hardly audible, then step by step up to a maximum, and then step by step back to only breathing together. In this first text exercise, any text could be used.

Without masks, they then worked on the text from Aeschylus, to speak in loud together, and in canon, and they trained the iambic rhythm with a walking and clapping exercise.

The next day, they did the basic exercises again, with variations, and towards the end of this section, exercises of moving together in the room in pattern were introduced as a preparation for the chorus. Everyone was also creating an individual sequence of moving between 3 different positions. In all exercises, sound with body resonance was an essential part.

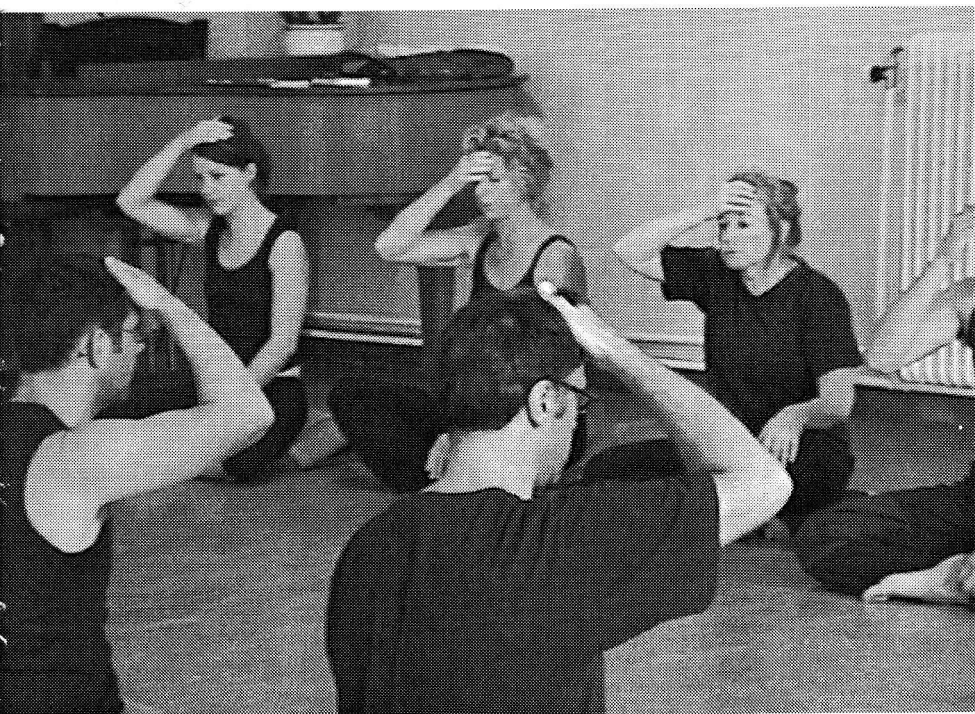
The mask work started with the same procedure. The sound had to be felt in the neck, and then pressed forward into the face, through the mask and into the universe. When they have used the voice into the masks from a sitting position, they slowly rose; they tried the step-by-step exercise but this time also with fragments of the text. When they took off the mask, they were asked to look at it with gratefulness.

After the mask work they started to work on the text in the chorus. They did different variations like speaking in canon, or having one main speaker with the others as background, or speaking one line each, and also using different volume variations. Finally they tried walking as one body.

The third day, during the basic exercises, it was evident that the participants had another more powerful tone in their voices, another relaxed heaviness and openness. They started to work in detail with the chorus scene, composing both movements and text. Many different possibilities were used. They walked in line, they spread out, they did the individual positions as a kind of slow dance, they kneeled in a circle etc. All this was of course much more difficult with the masks on. Also, the only male participant was chosen to use the full head mask as the ghost king invoked by the chorus, and he had another text, a separate entrance and other movements. The rehearsals on the chorus scene became quite intense the fourth day. The participants became worried that they would not be able to learn and remember it all, and they put in extra time.

In the work demonstration, they performed the chorus scene beautifully and the audience was quite moved by it.

*M.V.*



The text:  
Aeschylus "Persians"  
Verses 628–690

**CHORUS**

Great powers, powers of the Underworld –  
Mother Earth, Hermes, Majesty of Death –  
Send his soul from dark to light.  
Some remedy he knows, perhaps,  
Knows ruin's cure. Alone of mortals, knows.  
Perhaps, perhaps he'll speak.

Can he ever happy that he is,  
Divinity, our lord –  
Hear our wretchedness,  
Pains' litany?  
Must we cry again, again?  
Down here, can you hear us, Majesty?

Mother Earth, lords of all below,  
Free him, all praise, our king:  
Loud trumpeted,  
Susa's son, divinity.  
Release him to us, who's equal  
Persian soil never yet embraced.

Dear, dear he was and dear his tomb,  
Dear the qualities that it enshrines.  
Lord of the Underworld.  
Surging power islet him come up, our god, our king.  
Ee-yeh!  
No warriors of ours he killed,  
War-mongering insanity;  
Divinity we called him,  
Wise as god,

Sure pilot of his men.  
Ee-yeh!

Sire, sire of old,  
Come up, be here!  
On tomb's high mound  
Saffron sandal step,  
Royal diadem display.  
Evil's antidote, Darius, come!  
O-ee!

Hear it now, the pain,  
Your people's pain.  
Lord of our lord, be here.  
Hell's dark boils over us.  
Our young are gone, are gone.  
Evil's antidote, Darius, come!  
O-ee!

Al-ee, al-ee.  
We wept, your friends, wept and wept your death.  
Why is this happening, dear lord, dear lord?  
Whose is the blame?  
They're gone,  
The galley's gone,  
Unshipped, no ships at all.

#### DARIUS GHOST

Lords, trusty of the trusty, whose youth was mine,  
Old men of Persia, our state's distracted-why?  
It groans; it's scarred; it's crushed. Our land!  
Her Majesty, here by my tomb:  
I treble; I accept her offerings.  
You, sirs, crowding, chanting.  
"Rise up, rise up". I heard; I woke.  
Hard, hard to find the way. The powers below  
Would sooner keep us there than let us go





## THE ACOUSTICAL MASK OF GREEK TRAGEDY

Form, function and appearance of the tragic  
mask and its relation to the actor, text, audience  
and theatre space

By Thanos Vovolis and Giorgios Zamboulakis

In contemporary western theatre the mask is often used in a simplistic, confusing, arbitrary and flat manner. Western Theatre, following mostly the theatre tradition of Realism uses intellectual analysis or psychological manipulation as a means of approaching the dramatic text. Psychological Character is a dominant dramatic and dramaturgical category antithetical to the existence of the Mask. On the other hand modern theatre lacks consciousness of the special techniques needed to create the heightened scenic presence, which is the prerequisite for the life of the mask on stage. The fact that this theatre tradition has no valid approach to the mask (religious or instrumental) and the fact that western theatre has no faith in the mask, has led to the death of the Mask. Nevertheless the mask still exists on the modern stage because of its visual qualities. As an object, it creates extreme focus and tension on stage (much more than the human face) and at the same time functions as a visual metaphor. However, most often the mask is on stage not to reveal but to conceal.

Our frustration with the death of the mask in modern theatre and the fascination for the radiance and enigmatic appearance of the Greek tragic mask as well as our search for another kind of theatre that includes organically in its form the Mask became the starting point of research that has led us to the creation of a method for actors to work with the acoustical tragic mask. This method has been developed over the last 15 years around research projects\*, seminars, workshops and of course, theater performances. Needless to say this work is under constant development; a work in progress during which each of us always starts from his professional perspective, Giorgos Zambou-

lakis is a stage director/pedagogue/actor/writer and Thanos Vovolis is a mask/costume/set designer/researcher. Each one of us brings to the dialogue the elements that derive from his area of expertise and meets the other on the common field of our research, which is Greek Tragedy.

Our "re-invention" of the tragic mask and invention of a contemporary theatrical method for the use of this particular mask is based not only upon a dialogue between us but also upon the archaeological evidence, the textual corpus of Greek tragedy and ancient sources as well as on contemporary theatre practice. The archaeological evidence includes iconographical material related to Ancient Greek theatre and its architectural theatre structures. Our use of the term contemporary theatre practice includes the physical, psychological, mental and spiritual aspects of the work of the actor.

This is the first time in modern times that a research project has presented an extended concept of the mask in Greek Tragedy and at the same time develops a totally new concept and way of working with the mask in general, creating the notion of what we call, *acoustical mask*. According to this concept an initial and basic relation is developed between the mask and the voice of the actor, allowing him to become a fractal of the common body of the chorus, to emerge as the stage figure of the role and then dissolve back to the body of the chorus. A major aim of this work is to extend the principles of the acoustical tragic mask to contemporary theatre; that means both to the contemporary performance of Greek Tragedy and to particular plays in contemporary theater that may have the poetic, dramatic and dramatic qualities needed for the Text to communicate with the Mask and become enriched by it. Thus, creating modern forms of masked theatre. In our work we investigate the links of the chain:

Mask/actor/voice/text/chorus/acting/audience/theater space (the unity of stage/orchestra/auditorium).

### **Form, Function and Appearance of the Greek Tragic mask**

Ancient Greece was a civilization rich in masked expression and masks were used in rituals connected especially with the cults of Dionysus, Artemis and Demeter. Gods that defined and guaranteed the limits of civilization and guarded the passages between the civili-

zed and the savage, between the Self and the Other. Theater was dedicated to Dionysus, the worship of whom combined the ecstatic and the liberation of the wild with the order and control of civilization; a contradiction which is contained within the universe of tragedy.

<sup>1</sup> Theatre was the invention of one particular community, the city of Athens, in response to new social and political developments, which is why the creation of theatre is inextricably connected to the development of the Athenian democracy. Theatre, as a form of discourse, emerged to investigate the relations between society and the individual, male and female, norm and its deviation, happiness and suffering, life and death, human and divine.

Tragedy, comedy and satyr plays, all the theatrical forms that developed in Athens during the 6<sup>TH</sup> and 5<sup>TH</sup> century BC, were all forms of masked drama. Tragedy used as a medium for its purposes, the Mask, which is the medium par excellence to create a dialogue between the Self and the Other. The Ancient Greeks had no concept of theatre without the use of mask, but the tragic mask is a particular mask that significantly deviates from the ritual masks of the era. The representations of masks and theatre scenes during the 5<sup>TH</sup> century BC show a mask that covered the entire head like a helmet, was not much bigger than the human head, and had a very intense, concentrated, extrovert expression without substantial characteristics. The mouth was open; the eyeholes were round and small. The mask became more naturalistic following the aesthetics and art conventions of the era but kept the same intense, extrovert and enigmatic expression. Later on, during the Hellenistic and Roman periods the mask became larger than the human head, acquired the high headdress, a bigger mouth and wide-open eyes. Its expression changed to one of horror, passion and grief. This development resulted in the codification system on masks found in the Roman grammarian Pollux's encyclopedia "Onomasticon". It is a strict system of stereotyped characterization that indicates the radical changes, which occurred in the concept of Theatre during this historical era.

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1 \*"PROSOPON" A research and development in the Arts project, Dramatiska Institutet, Stockholm 1990-1995.

"THEATRE AS SOUND" A research and development in the Arts project, Dramatiska Institutet, Stockholm, 2002.

### The mask of emptiness

The appearance of the tragic mask before changing to the expression of the Roman era is a representation of a body/mind state of being. A state of meditation, a state of panic-free emptiness, which is created by the human voice. More specifically by particular cries, which are to be found in the tragic texts. The cries are part of ritual lamentation, a type of speech strongly identified with women and the actual funerary practice of that time. But the cries are also a type of vocalization found in the cult of Dionysus and even in tragedy and tragic lament. The cries are:

1. vowels or diphthongs as: i,e,a,o,ie, ee, ee,ei,ea,oa,io,ii,ioi,iou,
2. vowels or diphthongs in combination with pronouns such as:  
oimoi, omoi, iomoi
3. words creating assonance as: toti, otototi, ototototi, pape,  
papapape.

The cries are original, archetypal sounds, words without lexical meaning and usually not translatable. In the texts of Greek tragedy they are aspects of language that complement, extend and intensify the words of tragedy. They are that part of vocalization, which is able to evoke an enormous range of emotional connotations; they are ways of reaching a state of ecstasy, a state of controlled frenzy. The cries correspond to different resonance chambers in the human body and lead to a **metamorphosis**.

When the actor occupies the right bodily architecture and assumes postures that are necessary for the production of the cries, the body becomes a resonance chamber for these archetypal sounds. As a result of this, the human face acquires the appearance of the tragic mask; the emptiness of the tragic mask. Specific changes occur on the face during the deliverance of such a cry. The eyes are not focused but squint slightly and we can see a great tension in the area of the forehead, between the eyebrows.

The mouth is, of course, open and the jaw muscles relaxed. Since the neck is stretched and the head is bent forward, the eyes look straight ahead. The face radiates great intensity and presence. Of course there is no expression. The face is expressionless, in a state

of meditation, alertness, focusing at a point outside itself, a state of total presence, a state of emptiness. Total emptiness is thus total presence.

The tragic mask represents this state of mind and this is the state of mind the actor has to assume on stage. We define this state of body/mind as a **state of kenosis**, which in Greek means emptying, emphasizing the active process of reaching this state. We define the tragic mask as the **mask of emptiness**, emphasizing the fact that the mask has neither expression (but is by no means a neutral mask) nor is it a character mask. Expressive, neutral and character masks are the usual categories that mask makers, mask instructors, actors and directors operate with in the West. The mask of emptiness has no physiognomic traits that make it possible for the audience to define the character of the stage figure through the appearance of the mask. The mask doesn't present on stage any fixed human types. The idea that it is possible through the face of the human being to define its fixed character is alien to the mental universe of Classical Tragedy.

The notion of character, which derives from Greek and means an instrument for marking and engraving, an impress, a stamp or distinctive mark was created in Hellenistic times. Theophrastus' "Characters", 320 BC, is the earliest existing example of a literary genre, which was based upon the description of fixed character types that belong to the genre of comedy and not tragedy. The genre of New Comedy that was very popular during this era provided western theatre with a cast-list of human types, which survived through the centuries to our time. Instead the mask of tragedy does not represent any individual identity or character but its features correspond only to indications of sex, age, ethnic origins, social status, and perhaps other dichotomies such as human/divine, dead/alive. These elements together with the notion of emptiness create the notion of **Ethos**. Ethos was defined by Aristotle as one of the parts that construct Tragedy. In his "Poetics", Aristotle defined tragedy not as a representation of men but of action, and the end aimed at is not the representation of character but of action, because it is men's actions that make them happy or the opposite. They do not act to represent character but character study is included for the sake of the action. That leads us to the fact that the actor seeks the actions and not the cohe-

rent personality that commits them. The task of the actor is to inhabit the actions with such presence that the stage figure becomes alive. It means that any character drawing is not created on stage by the mask at the beginning of the performance but in the mind of the audience and by the totality of the performance at the end of it. The actions define the character drawing of the roles. The mask doesn't give to the audience any key to read the character but becomes a projection screen for the actions of the role. The mask creates empty space for the reflection of the spectator. Thus, the mask creates Ethos. It does this through the choice of what to present and what not to present on stage, what to show on the surface of the mask and what to leave outside this field, what to include and what to exclude, what to define and what to let be undefined.

Of course, the lack of character or neutrality and the presence of emptiness are connected to the fact that on a textual level Greek tragedy doesn't operate on the level of psychological realism and the idea of characters, but on archetypes. The human being was an organic part of the community without the psychological autonomy that marks modern man. The notion of tragic is born when the individual being part of the community, begins to search for the truth outside the community.

### **The helmet form of the mask and its function as a resonance chamber for the voice of the actor.**

Another crucial aspect of the tragic mask is its helmet form. The mask encloses the entire head like a helmet and this form derives from its function as an extra resonance chamber for the voice of the actor.

An acoustic phenomenon is produced in the space between the actor's head and the mask. This effect has been described by the Roman architect Vitruvius in his book "On Architecture" as the only positive acoustic phenomenon that occurs in Greek theatres, namely, **consonance**. In his own words, "consonance is the process, whereby, due to suitably placed reflecting surfaces, the voice is supported and strengthened when two identical sound waves arriving at the same point at the same time, combine to produce the sum of their effects".

The mask creates consonance and amplifies further the natural head resonator of the actor.

As it is known, the whole body is capable of resonance but the most important resonators are the chest, pharynx, nose, mouth, face and head resonators. The difference is, of course, that the head resonators carry best sound in large spaces because they produce harmonics that can easily pierce through space.

The mask turns out to be an instrument for the actor to control the direction and the volume of the voice, the rhythm, the articulation and the tone. This helps to achieve maximum resonance for each vowel and clear definition of the consonants, which is crucial in large spaces, because the energy content in consonants is small and they are easily muffled, although they are critical for speech intelligibility. So every syllable must be clearly defined in space.

The mask turns out to be an instrument to project the voice into space. The speech becomes powerful, clear, attractive. The entire theatre space 'answers' to the actor; it vibrates. This makes it easier and more pleasurable to work with in great spaces. The mask must be only slightly bigger than the head it covers, because larger resonance chambers influence the sound frequencies of the produced sound.

The mouth of the mask does not have to be opened wider than a normally relaxed mouth, because when the body is attuned by exercise, wasteful tensions disappear and the opening needed for voice production 'moves' inside the body to the pelvic area. The actor does not have to open the mouth too wide in order to produce a powerful sound, to use mere volume or to push the voice into the throat or chest resonators. Even if that might feel powerful to the actors who feel the sensation of their own voice in the body, the sound is not released out of them and defined in space. The sound is trapped and muffled. A voice free of tension, a powerful breath, an attuned body together with the actor's mental process of consciously projecting the voice into space and his conscious will to communicate with the audience, is enough for the voice to pass through the mask and create streams of sound.

### **The function of the small eyeholes of the mask**

The smallness of the eyeholes plays a significant role by enabling them to function as lenses for the gaze of the actor. The gaze is direc-

ted through this construction, the optic field becomes very narrow and after a while the actor has the feeling that he/she is looking through only one eyehole, a 'third eye', placed in the area between the eyebrows. This construction puts the actor in a meditative state and he develops a more conscious feeling for the body's axes, spine and pelvic area. This results in a more clear and extrovert direction. The actor becomes more aware of a series of physical actions such as the angle of the head, the drop of the shoulders, the position of the spine and the pelvis. This awareness influences the control of the voice because all the above are closely related to the production of a powerful and free voice. But the minimization of sight leads to the maximization of listening to the other actors, to a different awareness of their presence based not so much on seeing but on hearing. It leads the actor to the act of **akroasis**, the act of conscious and active listening.

### **The mask of the chorus**

Performances of tragedy in Ancient Greek theatres always had choruses. The tragic chorus had 15 members, performed as an indivisible whole, in vocal and physical union. In the context of the play the chorus is a multi-voiced persona, a single organism and not simply an accumulation of individuals. The chorus experiences and represents moments of collective feeling merged in ecstatic communion. It is in dialogue with the roles of the play. The actors playing the roles emerge from the chorus and dissolve back into it. The chorus has a structural place within the world of the play and is not detached from the time and place of the action. It is through the continuous presence on stage of the chorus that the so-called unity of Space, Time and Action is created. The particularity of the mask of the chorus is that all the members of the chorus have identical masks. We have to think what meaning can be derived from the presence on stage of fifteen bodies with the same mask, the same stage face. A fact that is unique in World Theatre. It is very recently, during the last century that through science and more specifically Quantum Physics, Biology and Genetics that we have been introduced to ideas about human beings that correspond to the idea of the human being as it is presented by the tragic chorus.

Quantum Physics present the fact that electrons and all other species of elementary particles exhibit no individuality. In Biology the dif-



ferent individuals in a certain species differ slightly, though not so much as to pass certain bounds that define the species. According to Genetics human beings are genetically very like each other and differ around 0.1% of our genetic code. Each one of us is genetically like the other 99.9%. The chorus presents the two unmistakable traits of the theory of Fractals; self-similarity, where every part of the fractal resembles every other part, and scaling, where the fractal pattern is made up of smaller copies of the same pattern. Each individual is a mode of a single universal substance; that is a field. In the complex interweaving of identity that joins us, each of us may be an aspect of the other. To exist is to participate and to be interdependent of each other. These ideas about the human being, common to the pre-Socratic philosophers have never been better represented on stage than with the presence of the tragic chorus. The tragic chorus lacks individuality and the chorus mask/costume stresses this fact. It unites the individuals but at the same time creates automatically variations of its form by the ways these unifying elements (mask/costume) meet the actual bodies of the chorus members. The mask always keeps alive the tension between the One and Other, the whole and the part.

Conclusively, we can say that the appearance of the tragic mask is based upon the notions of **emptiness** and **ethos** as opposed to expression, neutrality and character. The form and function are closely interrelated as two sides of the same coin; its helmet form based upon its function as a resonance chamber and the small eyeholes contribute to the creation of a new corporeal and mental state of the actor.

### **Prosopon not mask**

The Ancient Greeks during the Classical period used without differentiation the same word for the mask and the human face, the word *Prosopon*.

The word *Prosopon* is etymologically composed by the preposition *pros-* that means at, towards, for; and the word *ops-* which means hole, eye, gaze, opening, pupil, voice, word, speech.

The word contains the relationship between two subjects, pointing towards a dialogue, a reflection, contemplation, a meeting or an oppo-

sition with the other.

In the mental universe of Ancient Greece there was no distinction between the mask and the face.

The mask was another face and not an object that conceals and covers the human face. The idea of concealment, that is, the mask as something that hides the true face was developed in Western Europe as a result of the Christian civilization.

### **The mask and the actor**

Voice has a natural importance in oral societies, so it is quite natural that Ancient Greek society relied heavily on oral expression. The Athenians, specifically, were famous for their love of speech, which in its many forms played a crucial role in constructing civic identity.

To be a citizen meant to participate in the speech of the city in court, at the agora and at the Assembly.

As actors and spectators in the theatre festivals and all the arenas of public life, the Athenians were spectators of speeches and the skills required for actors and orators were strong voices, capable of modulating volume, pitch, and rhythm. Actors should be able to recite as well as sing because the Greek theatre was not merely a speaking theatre but a theatre of highly rhythmical text and music, even though the exact nature of tone intervals and of Greek musical scales is not known.

We have evidence that the actors trained carefully, even dieting and fasting, in order to keep their vocal instruments trained. Aristotle defines the art of acting as a matter of voice, "because words are imitations and the voice also, which of all our parts is best adapted for imitations".

### **The actor and the multiplicity of his roles**

Each role had a different mask but each role didn't have a different actor. In the beginning, one, later two, and from the middle of 5<sup>TH</sup> c. BC and on, three actors, all male, played all the roles. Each actor played several roles, by changing masks. The mask was, of course, the vehicle that permitted them to play all the roles, even the female parts. Because of the use of mask and the convention of the three actors playing all the roles each actor had the possibility to play many

different, contradictory, complementary and deeply interrelated roles and move between such dichotomies as: male/female, sacrificer /victim, human/divine, free man/slave, noble/common people, Athenian/foreigner, alive/dead. These roles together created a field of interwoven relations and a unity that surpassed each individual role; a totality much bigger than the simple addition of its parts. For example, in the case of the panoramic composition of Aeschylus trilogy "Oresteia" the actor playing Clytemnestra in the first play, "Agamemnon", has the potential to play Electra in the second play, "Libation bearers" and the Ghost of Clytemnestra in the last play of the trilogy, "Eumenides". It is possible for the same actor to play the victim and the sacrificer, the mother and the daughter, the living and the dead.

In the same way the second actor can play Agamemnon and Aegisthus in the first play, Orestes and Aegisthus in the second, and Orestes in the third play. The actor plays then the husband and the lover of Clytemnestra, the sacrificer and the victim; the son and the father, and the son and the lover of Clytemnestra.

The third actor can play Cassandra in the first play and the God Apollo in the third play. In this way the actor moves from the level of female/human/victim to the level of male/divine/sacrificer.

These roles are interrelated within the frame of a greater cosmological cycle and present levels of the human and divine, underlying the connection between them.

### **The mask, the voice and the body of the actor**

Once again we have to stress that the mask turns out to be an instrument for the actor to control the direction and the volume of the voice, the rhythm, the articulation and the tone. The mask turns out to be an instrument to project the voice into space and to learn to speak powerfully and with clear articulation; to learn to speak with the whole body. Then, the speech becomes powerful, clear, attractive. The entire theatre space 'answers' to the actor, it vibrates. The mask creates *resonance*.

The minimization of sight for the actor leads to the maximization of listening to the other actors, to a different awareness of their presence based not so much on seeing but on hearing. The lack of vision is the prerequisite for the development of an active and conscious lis-

tening, in other words *akroasis*. The lack of vision and the development of *akroasis* lead to the consciousness of the body's presence in space. This construction puts the actor in a meditative state and he develops a more conscious feeling for the body's axis, backbone and pelvic area. This results to a more clear and extrovert direction. The actor becomes more aware of a series of physical actions as the angle of the head, the drop of the shoulders, the position of the spine and the pelvis.

This awareness influences the control of the voice because all the above are closely related to the production of a powerful and free voice. It strengthens the consciousness of the three axes of the body, the vertical axis and the two horizontal ones. One that passes through the ears from one side of the head to the other and unites the left and the right side of the body, and the other passes through the 'third eye' to the back of the head and unites the front with the back side of the body. All three of them meet at a point in the middle of the head. The conscious feeling of the three axes is the prerequisite for the consciousness of the spine, torso, abdomen, pelvis, legs, arms, hands and the head. It leads to a consciousness of one's presence in the dimension of space and a conscious relation to other bodies; to the presence of other actors on stage. The need for control of the acting space and the spatial relations to the other actors creates a more precise and rhythmic movement pattern than in everyday life. The mask is an instrument for the mobilization of the energy and the creation of energy.

Paradoxically, it is easier to develop a rhythmic movement pattern together with other people when all are wearing masks, because the mask prevents them simply from imitating each other. The only alternative then left is to listen to the voice and the breath of the others and in this way develop little by little a common rhythm, a common breath, usually based upon the breath of the text. Everybody then depends on each other and develops a greater sensitivity for each other.

This is how a tragic chorus is born. Common breath and the creation of a common body are the basis of the Greek tragic chorus and the mask is the medium for the birth of the chorus. The actor behind the mask accepts the mask, adapts himself to the restrictions requi-

red by the mask, reveals himself thereby and achieves creative freedom.

As we see, the entire construction of the mask leads the actor towards a state of concentration, alertness, intensity, increased awareness, energy, expansion of presence; a heightened state of being during which the actor senses the experience of a bodily and vocal expansion; a state of communication.

In this way, the mask creates the necessary condition for the metamorphosis of the actor. When this occurs, the face and the mask change places. The face behind the mask becomes like the mask-intense, aware, present, and expressionless. The mask becomes like the human face-transparent, alive.

At this point the outside, 'the mask', and the inside, 'the human face', merge. A fusion occurs between the actor and the mask and a new reality comes into existence. A new poetic truth is born on stage for the audience.

During his metamorphosis, the actor, literally, offers space in his own body for the birth of his stage figure. The actor's first metamorphosis is to become a part of the chorus and then to transform himself into the role. He embodies the role. The experience of the actor behind the mask is that he is present in his body and at the same time he is aware of observing himself from the outside. Behind the mask the actor develops a double awareness.

In place of the *expressiveness* of the modern actor on stage based upon his psychology we can talk about his *existing on stage and his metamorphosis*.

### **The practical work with the actor**

#### **The workshop at the Methodika Festival 2003**

In our work with the actors, the creation of a mental condition of inner acceptance of the mask by the actor is of great importance. An acceptance which operates on a physical, psychological and mental level and which at the same time creates rapture in the way the actor has learned and is used to express himself according to the praxis of modern realistic theatre. One of the basic assumptions in our work with the actors is the development of the greatest possible range of their voice. Generally speaking, the voice is the basis of the existen-

ce of the mask on stage. We have as a starting point the principle that in tragedy three actors with the use of masks played all the roles, male and female, young and old, nobles and slaves. In accordance to this principle each role uses another part of the totality of the vocal range, analogous to the role. The issues actor comes across in his first encounter with the tragic mask are very specific. The method we worked with during our workshop at the Methodika festival 2003 is based upon these issues and we can categorize them in four basic units:

1. *Perception of Time / Perception of Space / Perception of Sound / Creation of common breath / Creation of the common body of the Chorus.*
2. *Production of sound / Speech and differentiated aspects of speech / Text / Metre / Rhythm.*
3. *Geometrical analysis of the movement / Sculptural composition / Development and unfolding as a totality created by the bodies of the participants / Choreography.*
4. *Composition of all the element / Creation of the act of Theatre.*

In this particular workshop we worked with Aeschylus' "Persians", verses 628-680. We should clarify that because of the short duration of the workshop we worked with rehearsal masks that covered the face up to the crown of the head and not with masks that cover the entire head. For this kind of mask a longer workshop period is needed. Our workshop started always with: Warming-up the muscles of the body / warming-up the internal organs using the breath and the voice / Creating Awareness of the body's axes / Emptying of energy / Bioenergy exercises.

We continued with:

*First Unit*

Subjects covered:

*Perception of Time / Perception of Space / Perception of Sound / Creation of common breath / Creation of the common body of the Chorus.*

1. *The development of the common breath.*

The alteration of the breath of the actor and the creation of a diffe-

rent system of breath that affects both the internal breathing space in the body and the time aspect of the breath. Altering the breath creates the conditions for the transformation of the voice and the produced sound.

## 2. *The common perception of Time*

The first element of importance is the individual sense of time, which is always a distortion of objective time. The individual sense of Time of each of the actors is enlarged by the changes of vision imposed by the mask; which are the lack of peripheral vision, the creation of tunnel vision and the adoption of an internal vision. The first element that appears is then the enlargement of the individual sense of time and its distortion of objective time.

Exercises for the creation of a common sense of time on an individual and group level and the creation of a consensus about the Time that is going to be common for all during the theatrical act.

The specific group at the Methodika festival showed a divergence of four to eight minutes on an actual five minutes period.

## 3. *Orientation in Space and the creation of the Mythical Topos*

Another important issue that arises and is based upon the changes in vision imposed by the mask is the perception and orientation in Space.

We help the actor to conceive the acting space and create points in the space that function as compass points. Points that make possible for the actor to navigate inside the limits of the acting space and make himself confident with his bodily presence, his movement and action in space. We inspire the actor to have in mind that through his physical and mental presence the mask transforms the actual acting area into a *Mythical Topos*; the mental and symbolic space where the dramatic act of Mythos unfolds. It is both the broad theatrical convention and the presence of the mask that convinces the audience that a common space is transformed into the space in front of the tomb of Darius.

## 4. *Perception of Sound and Akroasis*

Besides the compass points that help the actor to continuously define his position in space, we teach the actor to perceive in an active way the sound produced by the voices of the other actors so he can discriminate the different voices, place them in space and by this way

have the ability to orientate himself, communicate and co-create with the others the actual sound condition. That means the development of an active, and conscious listening, **akroasis**. Briefly, we can name the perception of complex sounds as pitch, intensity, volume, tone, music, melody, timbre, sound color etc.

### *Second Unit*

Subjects covered:

*Production of sound/ Speech and differentiated aspects of speech/ Text/Metre/Rhythm/Logos*

1. Improvisation of the actors on development of the musical scales. Everybody was allowed his own time, tuning the voice first separately and then as a whole. The development of the collective perception of the produced sound.

#### *2. Consonants*

Placement of the consonants and development of the produced sound in different parts of the head. The production and the perception of resonance.

#### *3. Vowels*

Placement and strengthening of the production of vowels in different resonance chambers of the body.

Sound production and its connection to different energy centers of the body.

#### *4. Acoustical Chaos*

The use of this exercise permits the actors to speak simultaneously whatever text each one chooses. Each actor has his own speed, rhythm, pitch, and level of intensity creating a feeling of safety behind and inside the mask. This feeling helps the actor to accept totally the mask. Using this exercise the actors create tension and bodily intensity on a personal level and on a collective level.

#### *5. Canon*

Division of the body of the chorus in two parts. Both subgroups perform the same text in a loop with different starting points but with the same chronicity. It is a kind of organized chaos that grants the audience a new perception of speech and for the actor is the beginning of creative confrontation with Logos.



#### 6. *Unison*

The voices of all the members of the chorus occur together at the same starting point in the text, simultaneously and the same pitch creating the solid body of the chorus unison.

#### 7. *Heterochrony*

The performance of the same text by the chorus, where each member has his own chronicity, his own span of time. The development of the presence of the individual as a subdivision in the common group of the chorus.

#### 8. *Rhythm*

Exercises on different rhythms that can become parts of the synthesis of elements above.

#### 9. *Metre*

Production of different metres of tragedy. First through literally walking the metres. Secondly, walking and clapping the metres. Third, standing and clapping the metres. Fourth, the use of metres in speech. The exploration of the metre as a condition that is connected to different energy centers of the body of the actor, and the importance of the continuous change of the metres for the actors and the audience.

#### 10. *Cries*

The cries as elements for the change of the corporeal and mental state of the mind of the actor and creation of scenic tension and a means of the metamorphosis of the actor.

#### 11. *The voice of the main actor*

Definition of the main voice, the voice of the actor and the creation of the role, the birth of the role and its emergence from the body of the chorus. The dialogue of the role with the chorus.

The mask gives the possibility to the actor to express the totality of his being and not simply express variations or diversions of human behavior.

When other kinds of theatre use the mask as means to present the differentiation of the character and the human behavior the tragic mask focuses not on the differences but the identity of the human species. Tragedy presents the deviation of the human behavior and as such it has to be judged and taught.

### *Third unit*

Subjects covered:

*Geometrical analysis of the movement/Sculptural composition/Development and unfolding of the whole created by the bodies of the actors/Choreography.*

The actor wearing a mask immediately is transformed into a living sculpture and when we have many masked actors on stage we can talk about a sculptural composition that continuously and perpetually evolves on stage. The very existence of this sculptural composition presupposes a different kind of movement and a different kind of development of the movement on stage.

In the beginning we analyze precisely the choreography, the sequence of movements, and then we practice so the actors can perform this sequence. In this particular workshop the movement of the chorus was based upon the development of basic forms, **schemata**: line, parallel lines, triangle and circle. A series of exercises included the execution of:

#### *1. Three different steps, **bemata**:*

Steps as preparation of movement, steps of transition, steps of corporeal oscillation.

#### *2. Positions of the arms and the hands, **Cheronomelai**.*

Six different positions of the arms and the hands and the importance of the transition from one position of the arms and the hands in relation to the mask as a means to creating dramatic meaning.

#### *3. **Immobilit**.*

The dramatic and dramaturgical meaning of immobility. Immobility as a basic component for the creation of a continuous and dynamic image. Immobility as the phase in between the completion of the fundamental formation of the chorus and its transition to the next formation. Immobility as a means of creation of scenic tension.

As with our work with speech, **Logos**, there are several forms that can be applied when we work with movement.

#### *1. **Kinetic Chaos***

Each actor improvises a series of movements that create a pattern which he follows alone without intervening in the movement patterns of the other actors. All movement patterns are different.

## 2. *Kinetic Canon*

The chorus is divided in two sub-groups and each group performs the same movement pattern but starting at a different time.

## 3. *Kinetic Unison*

Simultaneous movement when every member of the chorus performs the same movement pattern at the same time.

## 4. *Kinetic Dialogue*

A dialogue created between the movement pattern of the actor playing a role and the movement pattern of the chorus performed simultaneously.

All these forms may happen simultaneously with their corresponding forms of the Logos in accordance or in discordance with them.

## *Fourth unit*

*Composition and Synthesis of all the elements/Creation of the act of Theatre.*

The synthesis of all the elements we have been working with separately into a unity, which was presented, at the open demonstration of our group during the last day of the Methodika Festival.

Body/Breath/Voice/Rhythm/Metre/Logos/Movement, all these elements were brought together and became dramatic and dramaturgical material with the mask as the basis and the focal point of this synthesis. Theatre encompasses several Art forms as: Poetry, Dance, Music, Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture. Theater performance is a multi artwork. In respect to this; the tragic mask is a focal point, an epicenter where all the Arts converge. In contemporary theater terms we can deconstruct all the art forms that constitute the theatre performance but not the Mask. The Mask can not possible be deconstructed and exists as the sign for the synthesis of the Arts. It is only as such that it can reveal its hidden dynamics.

The presuppositions for the creation of this synthesis on stage and the revelation of the hidden dynamics of the Mask are the absolute respect of the individuality of each actor on a personal level, the full and complete understanding of the problems that each actor is confronted with when he is masked and the creation of solutions for each one of these problems. In conclusion, for the actor to be inspired and encouraged in order to reach his optimum, he has to be surrounded

by relationships full of acceptance, affection and loving kindness. Basic requirements for the creation of broader dialogue surrounding Tragedy's primary material; namely human existence.

### **The mask and the theatre space**

We define the theatre space as the unity created by the acting space and the space for the spectators. In Greek this is the word *theatron*; that means etymologically a space not just to watch but to examine and contemplate. Up to now, we have emphasized the close interrelation between the mask, the voice and the metamorphosis of the actor. Below, we shall discuss the relation between the mask, the voice of the actor and the theatrical space. In particular we will discuss the theatre of Epidauros, because of its excellent acoustics. It should be noted that the early theater buildings of the 5th century BC didn't have the excellent acoustics of Epidauros. Theatres were usually built on sites on the side of a hill which had a hollow recess and which sloped down at an angle of approximately 45 degrees and they generally had quite good acoustics. The choice of place, gave a shape to the auditorium that surrounded the orchestra, the performance space that matches almost perfectly the directivity of the human voice. It presents an almost unvarying sound distribution within the angle of 180 degrees.

Epidauros is not at all representative of the 5th century BC theatre buildings, but is extremely valuable because it contains in its architectural form the essence of the concept of Theatre as conceived and developed by the Ancient Greeks. Epidauros was built in 330–320 BC and is located in the sanctuary of Asclepius, the god of Health and medicine. The building is the expression of an age that saw the flourishing of mathematics and acoustics and the influence of Pythagorean science. It is the best preserved of the classical Greek theatres and nearly all the seats are in their original places. It has remarkable acoustics for speech intelligibility, solo or unison chanting and for solo musical instruments.

Rather than a single factor it is the cumulative effect of many refinements that contribute to its acoustical excellence. It can accommodate 14,000 people and the theatre is 387 feet in diameter and the orchestra is a complete circle 67 feet in diameter. In these vast

dimensions where it is not possible for the spectator to discern the masks if he is seated above the tenth row, we understand that what becomes important is the acoustical aspects and the formation of the bodies in the acting space.

The proportions are calculated in cubits, a unit of measurement related to the human body. The center of the orchestra is occupied by a stone with a radius of 35 cm. This seems to be the unit and all the measurements are multiplications of this basic unit in an elaborate system of corresponding measures. There are in total 55 rows of seats, 34 rows below the horizontal cross aisle and 21 rows above. The relationship between these numbers, 34 to 21 and 55 to 34 is based upon the Pythagorean golden ratio. This is a reciprocal relationship between two unequal parts of a whole in which the small part stands in the same proportion to the large part as the large part stands to the whole. The horizontal layout of the orchestra is planned on the pentagram, a Pythagorean symbol for health.

The perfection of the geometrical arrangement of seats, results in many early reflected sounds being received by all listeners in the auditorium almost together with the direct sound. The lower part of the auditorium circle extends to 210 degrees and the upper part to 192 degrees. The central sections of seats have their focus at the center of the orchestra. But the extensions of the radiating aisles of the two wedges of seats, at either side below the *diazoma*, have their focal points located at either side of the center of the orchestra. This seating layout with these three foci has the important acoustical effect in that there is a much less pronounced echo tone near the center of the orchestra than in theatres where the rows of seats are located on perfect circles with only one common center at the middle of the orchestra. The upper band has a steeper slant than the lower part and this gradient grows steeper as the distance between source and receiver increases, to account for the steadily decreasing level. So, a line stretched from the top to the bottom tier would pass above all the other tiers. The gradient helps to maximize the vertical distance between plane and sound field and minimize the sound energy loss during sound production.

Both visual and acoustical criteria dominate the design of the theatre and the best listening and the best vision is obtained. The perfec-

tion of the geometrical arrangement results in the acoustical and visual excellence. Early reflected sounds reaching the listener within 50 milliseconds after the initial sound and combined they produce in the listeners' consciousness a single acoustical image of greater intensity and enhanced quality than that of the direct sound alone.

In brief, some information about the visual aspects of Epidaurus. The lines of the auditorium converge in the area of the orchestra, where the focus of the thymele at the center of the orchestra has a magnetic force. This enhances the concentration and the focusing of the spectators who are looking downwards. The Greek theatre, in general and Epidaurus in particular is a democratic space that permits the creation of the union of the audience in a common body. This space permits its inhabitants to contemplate together.

The actors cannot look away from the audience or over their heads. The actors are in full contact with the audience and get energy from it without being in a dominant position, but more in a position of unity with the audience, embraced by it. The theatre architecture focuses the audience, centers the bodies of the actors and unites them in a common body.

It is obvious that the interest the Ancient Greeks developed in acoustics surpass the plain level of simply hearing and understanding of the dramatic texts. That's why we would like to add to this presentation the possibility for even further reinforcement of theatre acoustics, proposed by Vitruvius.

He discusses the necessity for further improvement of the tonal quality as well as the amplification of the voice by the use of sounding vases arranged in the auditorium.

These bronze or earthenware vases should be made in mathematical proportions to each other, taking into account the size of the theatre and they should be designed so that, when they were touched they sound a series of tones at intervals corresponding to seven fixed notes of one of the Greek scales (the enharmonic scale). The vase niches should be built among the seats and the vases placed in them in such a way that, they should not be in contact with surrounding stonework, but have a free space around and above. They should be placed upside-down with wedges not less than six inches high under them, on the side facing the stage. The vases should be 13 in small

theatres. The two outermost vases should resonate in response to the highest note, the next two tuned to the next interval and so on to the single central vase to be tuned to the lowest note of the scale. In bigger theatres the vases should be placed in three rows, corresponding to all the three Greek scales, i.e., 38 vases in total. The effect would be to pick up and reinforce the various notes so that the higher ones would resonate from the sides of the auditorium and the low notes from the middle.

According to Vitruvius, by this arrangement, the voice radiating from the stage creates a resonance in the vases and produces an increased clarity and a series of notes, which harmonizes with itself and gives pleasure to the audience. The archaeological findings that should permit us to accept the existence of such vases are rare, but they exist. So, we can't simply dismiss this theory. Even if Vitruvius meant this passage, as prescription rather than an actual description, its importance is not altered. These sources from antiquity suggest not only a wish to achieve good acoustics but express a desire to create an architectural unit, a theatre building that can function as a huge musical instrument oscillating in harmony with the human voice.

The mask has to be considered as the first external resonance chamber, a link in a chain of sound that starts with the actor and ends with the theatron and its surrounding landscape.

The most probable answer to the question, why the Greeks had such a huge interest in acoustics and in the human voice could be the consideration of the human voice and the sound as a major creational and healing form.

Modern scientific research describes the world and the Cosmos in terms of Rhythm and Sound. Sound consists of vibrations or oscillations in particles and these vibrations are found throughout the Universe. On a macro and microcosmic scale, sound is a universal and invisible force, which is always present and actual. These insights stemming from discoveries in physics suggest that the Earth and the Universe-organic and inorganic, plants, animals and people – not only produce vibrations but are in fact vibrations, as vibrations exist in both waves and particles. Material is vibration in proportional relationship – that is rhythm and sound. Sound causes changes on the physical, the emotional, mental and spiritual plane.

The human body is formed in harmonic proportions and can be likened to a very complex, unique and finely tuned musical instrument. The human voice always produces a base tone containing overtones, that is harmonic frequencies. Harmonic resonance-when the overtones are in harmonic proportion to the base tone- is a way of creating and maintaining good physical and mental health. This way of perceiving the world can be applied to the Theatre. Sound is a force and a basic component in theatre. Theatre is an acoustic phenomenon.

In contemporary theatre Character and Plot are still two dominant categories appealing to the logical and emotional level of the audience and its desire to understand and feel. Both are connected with the semantic levels of language but they don't necessarily awaken the other more subtle levels of human consciousness that we propose Theatre did for the Ancient Greeks.

Based upon the energy of *Logos* and the vibration of Sound, Theatre is seen as a cure of the soul and the body. A way to bring people to peace, to restore the body/mind balance, to purge, to purify and to heal. A democratic space, a space that through the exchange of energy, *osmosis*, creates the unity of the audience and the actor in one body; so that it communicates with Nature and the Divine.

Theatre is the embodiment of the principle of *catharsis*.

### **The masked theatre of Tragedy**

The mask enhances the voice, creates good conditions of understanding speech, strengthens the corporeal dimension of the text and is an instrument for the creation of the chorus and the metamorphosis of the actor. The entire construction of the mask leads the actor away from day to day life into a body/mind state of emptiness.

The faces of the actor and the mask change places. The face becomes the mask, intense, aware, and present and the mask becomes the face, transparent, human, and real. A fusion occurs between the body of the actor and the mask and a new reality comes into existence.

The mask with its lack of a definite expression and with its open in-expressive face becomes a projection screen for the text. Every movement, every tone, every change of the voice and the body alters even the experience of the mask. These continuous changes correspond to



the chain of perpetual changes that are contained in the text. The poetic texts have the capacity of emanating constant images in the imagination of the audience. The mask never illustrates these changes. The mask is in continuous dialogue with the text, in continuous tension, resisting the text. The mask becomes a projection screen for the audience to project text upon. The mask is a medium, an instrument, an invisible bridge between the actor and the audience, between the stage and the auditorium.

The Mask becomes the *Topos* where the energy of the voice and the body meet, the *Topos* upon which the gaze of the audience and the tragic text are projected. The Mask is a narrow and stern channel that leads all the energy to the creation of a new organism, the *Myth*.

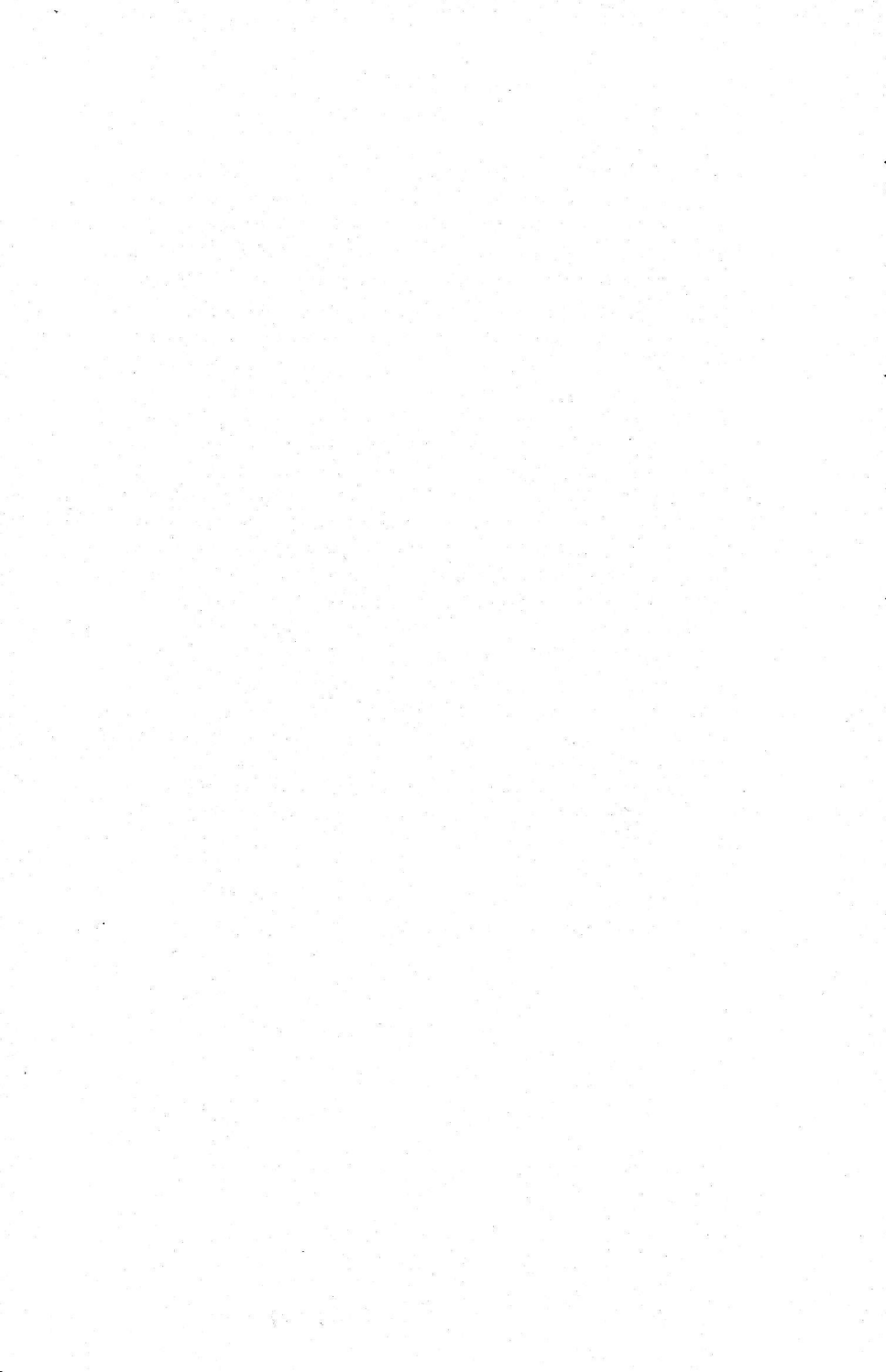
The Tragic Mask is the naked, essential, mythical face, expressionless and yet greatly expressive. The Mask is the epiphany of the tragic archetype. As perceived and created by the tragic Universe, the Mask is the human face par excellence.

The Mask is an indispensable part of a ceremonial theatre based upon the *Mask*; a masked theatre devoted to the narration of *Myth*, a theatre where the citizens unite to contemplate the Cosmos and Human existence. A cosmological theatre where the actor, the text, the voice, the mask, the theatre architecture, the audience and the landscape, like babushkas, the one inside the other, create an art form we still call *Theatre*.

**Theatron**-theatre, **Therapla**-therapy, **Theos**-god, are words with common etymological roots in Sanskrit. Roots that mean: air, breath, soul, pulse, and life.

*Athens, January 2004*

*Copyright: Thanos Vovolis, Giorgos Zamboulakis*



JURIJ ALSCHITZ

Notes about Theatre

...each exists outside of the other.

And, where necessary, they come together

(translation Michael Smith, published in "Ensemble" 2003)

**The Mirror of Mutual Reflection**

There is an ancient myth in theatre that Personnages are living beings. This myth affects an actor's career and his artistic fate. The brilliant Luigi Pirandello wrote of this in his plays. This myth, however, is not true for all forms of theatre. In the traditions of the Russian school, the Personnage is created by the actor, the actor comes to the Personnage from himself. In the West, this is generally not the case – the actor dispenses with the Personnage and reinvents himself. Some have tried to create new combinations à la "actor-role" and others have made deliberate attempts to separate them, "alienating" one from the other. So what is the relationship between the Actor and the Personnage? What are the rules governing their existence? The different interpretations of the laws that bind them are, in my opinion, one of the problems of contemporary theatre, where performers try to act together but believe in different myths and use different theatre structures. That is why I think it useful to talk of the dialectical connections between the actor and the role, between the persona and the personnage.

First and foremost, I think we must define the lexis we are using. That will explain a great deal. In everyday theatre practice, we often use the following categories: ACTOR, ARTIST, ROLE, MASK, PERSONALITY, CHARACTER, PERSONA and PERSONNAGE, but do we always really know what we are talking about and what we mean? Take for example the word role. This can be understood purely and simply as the French word rôle. Or as the Latin rotulus, the scroll containing an actor's cues. Or it could be an artistic image created by the dramatist and brought to life by the actor. A role can be taken to be a musician's sheet music, as a path of words, emotions and actions. It is the

essence of a given idea represented in an artistic form. It is the growth and development of a specific energy. Or take the word *persona* from the Etruscan *phersu* – a person in a mask. In Latin, *Persona* denotes a mask, or a face, or a role or personality. All merged into one. Hence the confusion.

When I work on a play, I always find it important to know how an actor will approach his role – as a *Persona* or as a *Personnage*. It is the difference between these concepts that basically defines my approach as a director. I want the actors to understand a *persona* as a real individual, with personality and character, with joys and woes. It is there at a certain point in the play and then it is gone. For example, when an actor utters the name "Hamlet", who does he mean? If he means the *Persona* who actually existed, then the stage representation must reflect the life of that man. In this scenario, the relationships between him and his mother, his friends, his enemies, the girl he loves, his father and so on will be in the forefront. Some loved him, others hated him, he suffered from loneliness and the treachery of his friends; in short, he felt real human emotions.

But if an actor sees Hamlet not merely as a person, but as the dynamic embodiment of an idea, or a certain philosophy, a certain myth, then we must look from an entirely different standpoint. He will focus largely not on the myriad possible manifestations of human nature, but on analysing a specific philosophical and aesthetic standpoint, the issues of life's unchanging values. This approach will endow an actor with the powerful energy of ideas and myths. The "self" of a *Personnage* free to do as he pleases and the "self" of an insignificant person. This contradiction between freedom of spirit and the limitations of physical energy results in dynamism of action which, by developing an Actor's personality, will propel him towards his own ideal "self".

I will tell an actor that "As a person, Hamlet is dead; as a *Personnage*, he is alive. So the question is, do you want to take the living or the dead?" The actor must decide what he will present to the audience – the suffering of one man or the suffering of the world. In researching a *Personnage*, an actor creates the kind of theatre where there are not mere "living" people, but also artistic images and other worlds. One might think that excluding "the person" from the role may result in a lack of emotional diversity, but this is not so. The artistic

world can suffer, and love, and hate just as mankind can. The only difference being that these emotions are expressed differently, incomparably richer, more powerful and more varied.

A Personnage is a legend, a myth, a dynamic substance beyond the confines of time and space. Personnages live forever and their energy is with us, communicating to us. Not every character in a play, however, has sufficient dynamic potential to be a Personnage. Some characters have mere functional roles, or convey a specific subject. The higher the level of drama, the fewer memorable figures the play contains. Treplev and Shamraev in *The Seagull* are real people, but Chekhov created one as a Personnage and the other as a Persona. To take Shamraev as a Personnage means artificially "inflating" him, which, although possible in theory, the role will not stand for. To take Treplev simply as a Persona diminishes the role. An author always imbues a Personnage's fate with the energy of a special idea or a special myth. It is important to define it, absorb it and embody it on stage.

It could be said that the relationship between a Persona and a Personnage somewhat resembles that between an Actor, meaning the mere profession or certain professional skills, and an Artist, meaning a unique artistic philosophy, a special artistic attitude or a unique theme in art. An Actor carries out another's instructions, whereas an Artist creates and analyses. The latter concept is more capacious, encompassing the ethics, the aesthetics and the philosophy of an artistic personality in addition to mere professional skills. The audience can always tell from the first glance whether it is an Actor or an Artist who comes on stage.

The stage can also be viewed from differing standpoints. It can be the place where people are born and where they live, or it can be the place where ideas are created and nurtured. Either theatre reflects day-to-day reality or it is a completely different world that requires other ways of thinking and talking, other emotions and other ideas, a world that merely corresponds with the world people live in.

Having defined the concepts of Persona and Character more clearly, we must turn our attentions to their differing relationships with the actor. First of all, we should ask what between them is constant and what varies? This question can be rephrased in the following way: does a person move and the mirror remain still, or does the mirror

move and the person remain where he is? Clearly these are entirely different actions and have different outcomes. Let us analyse a few different versions.

The first is when an actor sees the role as a man, i.e. as a *Persona*. In this case, he will compare his own life experience and his own psychological abilities with the behaviour and emotions of the *Persona*. This comparison acts as a source of energy and material for the role. Such life comparisons provide little energy. Using the "*Persona* = self" formula, an actor is merely creating a mirror image. The actor moves away from the existent "person" of the role towards himself, towards a real person. The *Persona* of the role is unchanging (if we ignore the changes as the plot develops); it remains constant and the actor adapts to suit, just as Proteus would change his form. The acting profession is generally seen in such a primitive light.

The second version is when an actor views the role as a *Personnage*. The *Personnage* does not change as well, but here the actor is reflected by a special artistic system and philosophy. It could be said that this is a mirror image not just of a person, but of a system too. By reflecting the philosophy and aesthetics of the *Personnage*, the Actor feeds on the energy of his ideas and philosophical views. This energy propels him towards the Character. The type and power of this energy depends on the level of the system and ideas of the *Personnage*, but also on the actor's skills and his ability to "§reflect" complicated structures and adapt to them. To be able to create such a mirror image, the status of the actor must change from an individual to an artist. The "*Personnage* = self" formula represents a more rounded approach to a role in comparison with the first version.

There is a third version where the Actor and the *Personnage* are two constant, unchanging and equal subjects. When they come together, we see a combination of two equally important figures, somehow concordant and somehow close to one another, but at the same time occupying opposing positions. In a single system we may observe two independent figures influencing each other. Here the formula of "playing" theatre comes into play, the "self + the *Personnage*" formula. Both are constantly seeking an object in which they can be reflected, in order that they be revealed. The *Personnage* seeks its actor, or to be more precise, its Artist. But the Actor/Artist is also looking for his

Personnage. Probably every actor dreams of playing the role of Treplev, but does Treplev want just any actor to play him? How is it possible to deliver Konstantin Treplev's phrase "This is my Theatre!" without having your own artistic image of Theatre, your own unique vision and artistic concept of what Theatre is? Even when there is no definite answer, it is important that the question is there, torturing both you and the Personnage who has come to you. Otherwise what could there be to talk about? Clearly this method requires above all else a well-trained actor who can meet the Personnage on an equal footing.

In its endless endeavour to be reflected, the "self + the Personnage" system will find its mirror image in the very mirror it has created – by acting. Both components of this system emit and reflect light at one and the same time. Both the Personnage and the Actor are objects of reflection and each acts as a mirror for the other. They exist as constant figures, but when they meet, deliberately adopting different positions, they are in a state of constant flux. They constantly change the angle and distance from which they view one another. If this does not happen, nothing will be reflected.

To be reflected, to see yourself, you always need distance. You understand the past, the present and the future better from a distance. You have to step outside yourself if you are to understand something of yourself. In the beginning, God used this method to set things apart. Light from darkness, the skies from the earth, dry land from the seas and so on. The sky has to be so high up in order to comprehend the earth. And only at this distance can we on earth see the beauty of the sky. The soul becomes set apart from the body and at this moment we discover what is possibly life's greatest secret.

Similarly in theatre, everything is separate from everything else. The space is divided into the auditorium and the stage. Time is divided into the time in the play and actual time. And the people are divided into the artists and the audience. A Mask, a Personnage, a Puppet – all this is created by distance. It is not just the distance, however, but also the "angle" that is important and how the two figures face each other. Whereas in the first two versions the mirror and the subject face each other directly, here the system is open. They view each other sideways. This angle increases the capacity of the role and

affords it an echo-like quality, ensuring an equilibrium while at the same time creating a new, third reflection of the performance. It is in this way that polar light is created, magical and almost unreal – the result of a complex reflection off several surfaces set at different angles to each other.

If we truly feel the actors to be alive, then I am convinced that the Personnages are alive. They inhabit their own world, with their own lives and their own fates. As actors, we inhabit a different world, with different lives and different fates. But they and we both love to play with mirrors. To become someone else, to change and see all this with your own eyes. And we do it for ourselves rather than for others. We need this, we need to change and turn into someone else. To become someone else and at the same time remain the same person, fundamental and constant – this paradox sums up the main energy of acting with mirrors. Becoming someone else in order to understand yourself! And there is only one way to do this – to be reflected. Both they and we are searching for something in which we will see ourselves reflected. But isn't the Personnage the best reflection of the actor playing the role? Doesn't an actor wish to play a specific Personnage precisely because that will provide the best mirror image of that actor? If the Personnage reflects the actor, that is acts as a mirror, then we must above all else demand absolute purity and depth from that Personnage. However, Personnages place the same demands on us as actors. Pirandello wrote of this in his play "Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore". Actors prefer to perform roles that reflect them, and Personnages prefer actors who will show them in the best possible light. Through such reflections, both discover something new in themselves and, thanks to these discoveries, they change, becoming "different".

This, however, raises a question: does becoming "different" mean moving from or coming to yourself? I consider that when an actor and a Personnage enter the stage in order to become "different", they go from one state of consciousness to another. There is distance, a journey to be made. Each goes towards himself. To say that they "come" would be incorrect. They "go" towards themselves. That is the acting's destiny. Its eternal destiny.

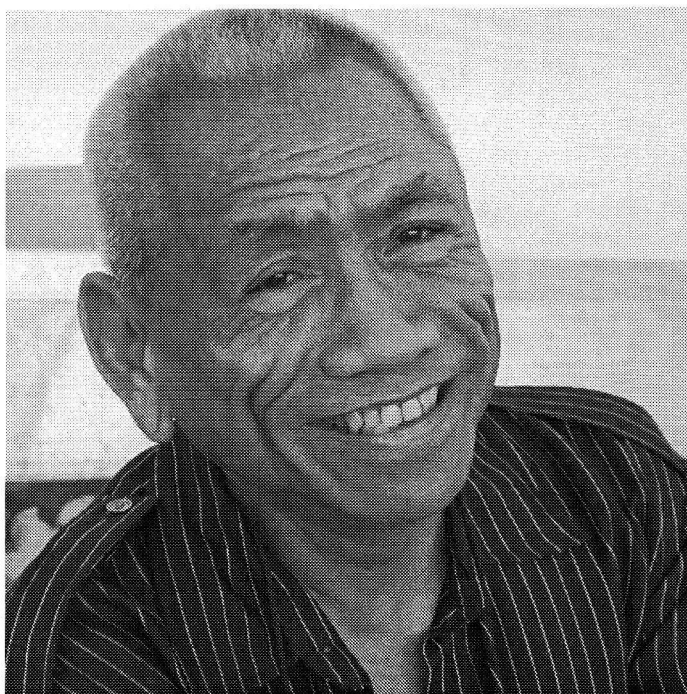
In theatre you will often hear an actor saying "I performed as Hamlet



tonight", though it is unlikely you would hear him say "Hamlet performed as me tonight".

We spend a long time learning how to act as Hamlet and are completely unprepared for Hamlet to act as us. But acting won't work that way. Acting is always a two-way process. A person is reflected in the mirror and the mirror in the person. The question "Do I write with ink or with a pen?" doesn't exist for me; "I write" and what is written "is written through me". These two absolutely different actions are in fact united in one system. There are many such paradoxes in theatre – the unique nature of acting lies in precisely this paradox: the performer and the instrument exist together in one body. The performer plays the instrument and the instrument plays on the performer. The writer creates the image, but the image also creates the writer. The actor approaches the role and the role approaches the actor. The mask plays with the face and the face with the mask. The Artist performs alongside the Personnage.

An actor must bear all this in mind from his first day at theatre school to his final performance. As I see it, their co-existence on stage depends on the precise definition of the nature of the relationships between the ACTOR, the PERSONNAGE, the PERSONA, the MASK and the PUPPET.



## EDGARDO BENGSON DE LA CRUZ

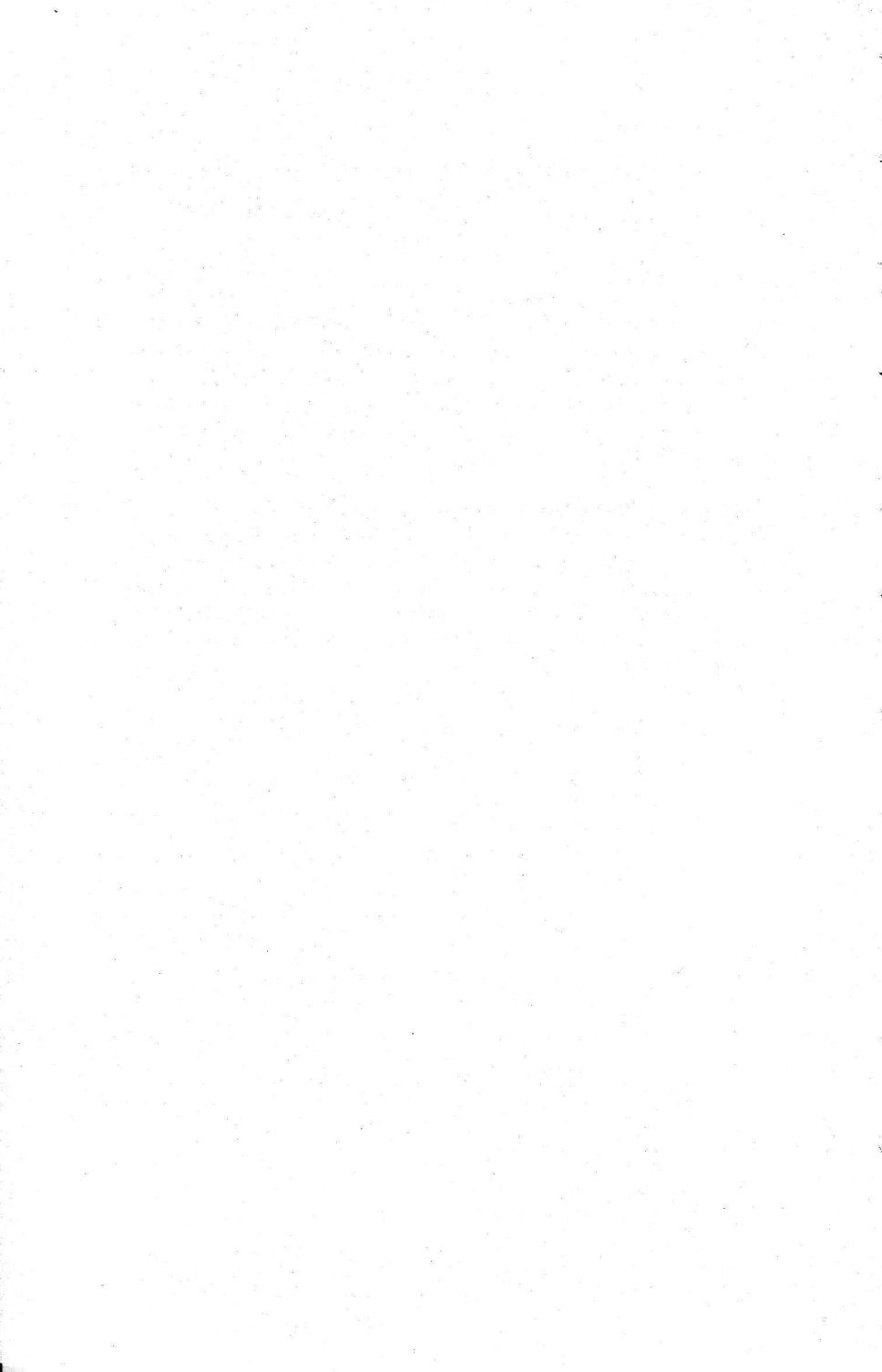
Director, teacher

Eduardo Bengson De La Cruz has directed over 100 productions in a variety of styles and encompassing a wide range of genres. He is member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and of the National Training Committee of the U.S. International Theatre Institute. Since 1981, he has been Professor at the California State University, Hayward.

### **"Acting as Metaphor: Freedom and Grandeur"**

As a director, the art or training of actors has been a constant and primary concern of mine. In my youth, I trained with as many methods of approaching the art of acting as I could find. Of course, with the perspective of age and experience, I have changed my mind about a lot of things about acting, and so I hope I have something to contribute to the festival.

*Edgardo Bengson De La Cruz*



## Edgardo Bengson de la Cruz

### Acting as a metaphore

Last April a debate arose in American theatre magazines and newspaper theatre columns about the efficacy of training actors in conservatories, acting schools or studios, and especially in universities. Debates on this subject have surfaced before, at least every 10 to 15 years, and usually initiated by someone in professional theatre. Those on the side of professional theatre state that all an actor needs are talent, luck, and work. Those on the side of training programs list all the successful graduates that have taken their methodologies without which they say success would not have been attainable. Throughout all these arguments, neither side found it necessary to define what each meant by acting. They gave the impression that what they referred to was some variant of Realism, anywhere within the spectrum of naturalism, psychological realism, and selective realism, and that this kind of acting applied to theatre as well as to TV and film. Neither side said anything about the work of auteur directors who each demand a particular acting style, or about the experimental companies that exhibit a fusion of styles or disregard the rules of commercial theatre, or about ancient theatrical traditions that still exist in some countries. All were seen I guess as aberrations in the general landscape of what passed for the art of the marketplace – Realism.

Tonight, I will speak only of the art of acting in theatre because it is what I know best. I read somewhere that the first burst of Realism at the end of the 19<sup>TH</sup> century lasted only 7 years to be replaced quickly by other –isms. Its aftereffects however on theatrical pursuits have lasted the whole length of the 20<sup>TH</sup> century. During this time Truth became confused with the recognizable, poetry with essay, performance metaphors with psychological cliché, choreography with gestures that merely repeated dialogue. Reality and Truth were assumed to be interchangeable. Actors set their goals to replicating reality assuming that Truth automatically came with the craft. Believability became the artistic goal rather than the poetic search for metaphoric expression that comes from the deliberate extending of the actor's

deepening encounter with life, with all aspects of theatre, and with all other arts.

From my perspective as a director, I hardly ever think of believability as a major concern for actors. That's a talent all efficient actors wear like a second skin. In the art of acting, I will say that Realism is an expression of denotation, whereas Truth is a revelation of connotation. Reality is sensed; Truth is understood. I'm more interested in the actor's capacity to express his art in forms, shapes, sounds, and movements which he integrates with *mise en scene* to open up for me thrilling recognitions, exciting revelations, and joyous encounters that contribute to my sense of humanity.

I am not even asking for a particular style of presentation. I am talking about the creation of a series of poetic metaphors (a poetic score) that transform a script into an imagined world of vocal and visual expressions unique to each production, the way each poem has its metaphoric individuality. This imagined world is then capable of eliciting an experience that allows audiences to sense the truth about human existence, to see behind the reality, by opening the channels of their understanding through astonishment, connotations, and resonances.

An actor in a performance space is not a representation of a character, but a poetic metaphor of what is merely printed dialogue and description of action in a script. He is not a mere interpreter. He is a transformational artist who becomes the unique and personal embodiment of his talent's perception of what, until he steps onto the performance space, is just literature. Like the rest of the *mise en scene*, he is a created being, a poetic invention, in a created world of the imagination. The creature is immersed in the convulsions of emotions that have been spewed out by intense confrontations of divergent desires and needs.

To achieve this state of metaphoric effectiveness, an actor relies on his vital curiosity about life and culture, on his passionate compassion for all things human and alive, and on his synchronicity with the present world by being an accurate observer and rabid participant. His expressiveness will come from the private depths of this understanding and thus he becomes the poet of the theatre. He then makes audiences work their imaginations, wonder at what is being revealed,

question the choices of action and emphasis, elicit empathy for the problem at hand, and prompt active analysis of the flow of events, all the while withholding conclusions until the theatrical event is over. When his art is propelled by freedom and grandeur, it remains indelibly alive in the memory of his audiences.

In the meantime, there are many forces that stand in the way of actors fulfilling their artistic mission. It seems that in the last 40 years or so, most of the Anglo-American plays I've read have dealt with dysfunctional family situations or some minor human concerns that echo the superficiality of TV soaps, comedy series, and reality programs. I wonder whether this is a result of having become too smug and comfortable with our lives or whether the constant bombardment of TV images of cataclysmic world situations has sedated us from empathizing with the suffering of others. The United States, a nation of great power and strength, has become translated into comicbook heroes on film with muscular robotic men confronting violence and attack. Such heroes, however, do not carry the resonance of mythology.

Also, the practice of "workshopping" plays seems symptomatic of the absence of playwriting skills, talent, imagination, and, above all, a deeper engagement with the transcendent issues of human existence. Could the dearth of challenging material be the reason for less challenging metaphors of performance? If actors have had nothing to sink their teeth into, then the language of acting will echo the shallowness of its material. The poetic soul of theatre wilts and shrivels without deeper perceptions and mythologies.

Plays are not about meanings although they are often discussed in those terms. If they were so, then they would be better as essays. Plays are about inner journeys, the experience of transformation, the desperate urge to shed existential loneliness. They are receptacles of our mythologies. Theatre is metaphoric because its subject is transcendence. We use metaphorical masks for others to see who and what we do in performance, but the masks are not transcendent in themselves. The actors are. The creator is the creation. Actors may speak the denotation of language, but performance connotes the sensation of language. Language is only the vegetation that covers the tectonic geography of clashing desires. Actors who are aroused by metaphors will find it easier to create metaphors that provide the real

experience of theatre.

I have conscientiously avoided the specifics of training the actor for what in my title I have called acting as metaphor. I have tried a few exercises in my classes to test how well the students have differentiated the concepts of Reality and Truth, how these are expressed in performance. I have made them write poems to accustom them to metaphoric expression. I have drawn from the impulses created by sound and music, and by the expressive range and vocabulary of dance to show them the possibilities inherent in the semiotic significance of sign, symbol, and metaphor.

I do not wish to devise a system because every production must have its own metaphoric vocabulary. Every text has its unique voice and movement and passion. I encourage the freedom, courage and energy to develop expressivities, always trusting that audiences will respond to these new vocabularies. For me, the experiencing of theatre is not what one has been through but what one encounters for the first time. And finally, in the best of all possible worlds, it is the actors' vocabulary that determines the rest of the *mise en scene* and not vice versa.

For my students, I function like a lighthouse shining its torch on the dark shoals of creativity. I hint at dangers, but the actors themselves must navigate the shoals using their talent, intelligence, imagination, and knowledge of life. I tell them that perfection is a chimera. Imperfection provides the resonance that validates their humanity. Like athletes, they must find their core of stillness and repose, their meditative center, as they create. This distancing saves them from panic and worry. And above all, I ask them to do "unnecessary" tasks before and after classes or performances such as mopping the performance space, putting away props, folding costumes, and walking around the space to absorb its aura and to bless it for being a part of their creativity. Such tasks teach patience, etiquette, discipline of spirit, responsiveness to detail, and control of ego.

The 20<sup>TH</sup> century will probably be known as the century of the theatre actor's disenfranchisement. The rise of auteur directors, each wanting a different approach to acting, gave rise to various methodologies. Social, political, economic, and technological forces conspired to elicit from playwrights new forms of plays, demanding new acting sty-



les and approaches to the *mise en scene*. Actors of the theatre became pawns, means of achieving the visions of other theatrical practitioners. Competing methodologies spawned different schools of training that mass produced actors like brand name products.

Gone was the actor who by dint of his personal talent and intelligence and perhaps a special mentor found for himself a place in a company in which performance rather than studio exercises became the training ground. Gone was the direct connection between life and art. Instead, actors had to disconnect from their art and to train instead in a specific craft. They lost the vital connection to live audiences, the direct encounter with vivid performance spaces, and the discovery of their individuality through the creation of poetic and deeply felt metaphors that transform plays into theatre.

Somewhere during the recent decades of the last century, aesthetics disconnected from living. The face of the actor, which is his own life, became less important than the mask, which is his role. The freedom of an unrestricted life and the grandeur of an unrestricted spirit became lost in the methodologies that emphasized sameness of style over untrammelled discovery.

What I advocate therefore for the 21st century is the resurgent importance of actors as a vital and important force in the shaping of the productions by giving them the chance to make decisions about the *mise en scene* they have to work with, and the kind of theatre that they want to be a part of. They need to have the opportunity to learn their art and craft through performance, and to have a say in all aspects of the evolving *mise en scene*. In the best of all possible worlds, the actor immerses himself in all aspects of theatrical art so that his vision of the production of which he will be a part will be just as important as the vision of those who collaborate with him to make the production possible. He stops thinking of himself as merely one element in a total creation and instead sees himself as a vital contributor to the shaping of all the elements that make up the production. Only in this way can he reclaim the importance due his art and get the attention due him in the 21st century.



## Edgardo on theatre schools – fragment from discussion

Edgardo: There is something about Americans, they are very practical, they want every problem to be solved immediately. There is always a solution and when you come to a decision you can buy it. If there is something happening in Europe, like psychoanalyses or realism, it crosses the Atlantic and it gets wet and it arrives in America in short-hand. Americans like realism very much, even in the most boring way. They are not used to working with symbols or metaphors. Everything has to be scientific and dry. The first thing I have to explain to my students in theatre is how to make a metaphor and I usually start with a poem, a love poem by Edward Estling Cummings:

*"I don't know what it is about you that closes  
and opens; only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper of the roses  
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands".*

As you can see it is all about images, images full of emotional associations so you are not interpreting a script, you are transforming on stage a universe that is brand new. If you are too caught up in making a perfect production you must remember that your production is happening in one night for that specific audience and it is a very small candlelight in the middle of the earth so don't put too much importance in it. Perfection in the theatre is impossible. I follow the Japanese aesthetics for imperfection to give resonance to perfection.

After rehearsal I don't like to give notes or anyone taking notes. I say; you know you are the actor, you know what you tried to achieve so you go home and ask yourself, did I achieve it, did I create what I wanted to create. Because I am only here to start you off on the road of possibilities, you are the ones who is creating.

A director has to be completely open. You have to have both passion and compassion for the work that you do because theatre is about the mysteries of the human heart and about the mysteries of human

existence.

If you really want a good theatre school, you should begin with the architecture and build it like an airport hangar with open people and open space within moveable walls. Every department; designers, of course directors, playwrights etc should be working together and create the best kind of teaching.

Actors Studio in New York, publish program every week, it is called "Actors Studio – the craft of acting". They don't say the art of acting. The craft of acting is OK; it's about the abilities to expand your vocabulary of expressions. But at the same time actors should use their talent, their imagination, their sensitivity, their awareness of human life, their culture and history and so forth in order to deepen the choices that they have to make when they have to make decisions about whether this is what they will do or not. That is what makes you the actress.

I find that in the USA most of my students problems in acting arises from problems in the family. They get in the way of their creativity. I was watching a scene and I said to myself, something is wrong, but I do not know what is wrong. I asked her: "Could you please stop acting and let me see" So I started to see something and asked her: "Do you have a mother who...?" And she said: "Yes". I say: "Before you can stand by yourself you can not be creative, because your mother will be in the way".

You have to find out what works for you because you are a different actor from the next actor. The only thing that is constant is to keep remembering that acting is a performing art and that it has nothing to do with documentation. It has to do with performance. I do like observing the classes in this METHODIKA because all the teachers are so passionate and so open and they do not dwell on mistakes, they dwell on possibilities of using what they have given. I think the best kind of teaching is that you show that there is a way of expanding the possibilities of expression and those possibilities will change year after year after year. So you have to know what has happened in the past and at the same time you must move forward.

I have a point of view where precision is the possibility for freedom. It is through precision that you gain freedom.

Theatre is performance art and because of that a performance

exists of two parts one is ours, the second part is the audience. Anyhow we are working for the audience; we could not work in empty space.



## UWE KRIEGER Mask-maker, teacher

Since 1969, Uwe Krieger has worked exclusively on making and playing with masks. He has created character masks for plays from every century – from Sophocles to Dario Fo.

As a pedagogue and lecturer, he has been in demand all over Europe, in Russia and in the USA.

Since 2000, he has been regular lecturer at the German Film School for Digital Production.

### **Mask and theatre**

Masked theatre must have or be something ritualistic – not because of its origins in religious ritual – but because of its “super-form”. The masked figures on stage are still humans and they represent humans too; but they are at the same time - as a result of the masks they wear – also super-human – not in the Nietzschean philosophical sense but simply because they are “different”. Given their unusual appearance, these humans are alienated – *verfremdet* – in the Brechtian sense; and given the acting method, they become “new” characters. This is why I prefer to speak of my masks as “character masks”.

### **The Face and the Mask of the Actor**

Theatre started with masks and needs masks. Masks represent characters.

The modern times with bourgeois theatre reduced plays and acting to the level of reality-shows. The faces of actors are misunderstood as grimasses of exaggerated emotions – or remain private faces - and therefore these plays do not need masks.

It is a widespread misunderstanding that a face-without-emotion is a mask (except the famous neutral-mask of Lecoq-Satori). Masks show emotions. Most interesting and fascinating are character-masks, which show the physiognomical shape and the emotions of a specific personality in the moment of the action.

These can only be performed with the method of mask-theatre (something truly different from acting-with-masks). Mask-theatre is good for all plays of the history of theatre and for all forms of performances, demonstrations, rituals, folk-feasts and high society-events even without the use of the object mask. Society depends on masks. We have to be glad not to live any longer in a time of theatre (courtoisie). A gentle smile, a superficial fascination or rage without a fist are signals of civilisation. We do need to transform our faces into masks.

*Uwe Krieger*







Former chansonette, now working in a bar

## UWE KRIEGER To read a mask as a face

Every face can be seen as a mask and (almost) every mask can be interpreted as a face. To see and to interpret opens doors of understanding; doors into wide spaces of creation and into vast libraries of information. In this lecture I shall try to open passages between these spaces.

We can "read" her recent social situation in her face. It is not astonishing that most people come to a similar interpretation of this mask – personality – as I have intended. (see picture to the left)

An Arabic proverb says: "From your 30th year on you are responsible for your face". There is a similar quotation in the Talmud : „Take care of your thoughts – since they will become words. Take care of your words, since they become activities. Take care of your activities, since they become habits. Take care of your habits, since they become your character. Take care of your character, since it becomes your destiny."

You can blame your parents and ancestors for your genetic material, but you cannot blame them any longer for your behavior (and fate). You have to have decided for yourself and you are responsible for your life and lifestyle.

Up to the age of 30 you have learned to express yourself – or you have forgotten that you have feelings... Up to that age you must have developed your specific expressiveness (vocabulary, intonation etc...) and you should have understood which of your individual abilities or deficiencies must be avoided or underlined.

Our faces show how we live: there are recognizable traits of social conditions, habits, sicknesses and private feelings: easy to understand, for anyone.

The historical and religious question of portrait and portraiture is, in addition, of basic importance in our culture. We are invited to interpretations: physiognomical, psychological, characterological, individual, sociological etc..:

"By the end of the 17th century, fictional character description fell into two basic categories: the idealized portrait, in which female beauty came to be associated in the French novel with melancholy and mystery, in which brunettes began to replace blondes as heroines, and the grotesque portrait." (Tytler, p. 130). "The grotesque portrait was developed to delightful extremes in the 18th century, particularly in the presentation of evil or eccentric characters." (Tytler, p. 131).

We have (often) the tendency to overact our mimical actions, (especially on stage, if we have learned it). In society there is the observation (true or not) that faces degrade to masks.

We may like it or not, but (all) our relations to other persons depend on their impressions about us and about our interpretations of their faces:

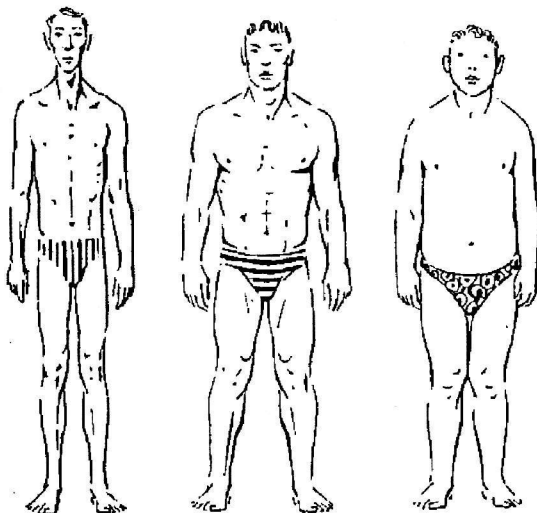
- 1: in less than one second after one sees another person one decides, may it be for sympathy, antipathy or – (up to 90 %) – indifference; sympathy or antipathy provoke that one may be further interested and take the next step,
- 2: to imagine a future: depending on erotic impressions and sexual preferences, etc... and last but not least and anyway
- 3: most important character-interpretations.

From the moment on when any kind of relation is established between persons, there is a constant exchange of emotional and character-related interpretations. And this is particularly intensified when one has learned that the person has tried to deceive or lied.

Both persons present themselves to each other through their facial expressivenesses and expressions – let all other aspects like voice, gestures and body-language aside – through the forms of their faces.

We Middleclass Europeans are not astonished about the, "more emotional" Italians or the "more bureaucratic" Germans or "the less reliable" Eastern-Europeans etc... We avoid to generalize "mentalities" or "national-characters". But we have to accept scientific research and interpret the forms of skulls (heads) corresponding to different "typologies" as, mostly, physiologic:

Kretschmer's 3 types: leptosom, athletic, pycnic (from left to right, conceived around 1910).



Pycnics have a tendency to melancholy. Or, more interesting for us: certainly, we can give an athletic type of actor the role of a melancholic, but that contradiction has to have consequences in costume, play and interpretation. And that may be funny or interesting. But it may also be boring or simply wrong.

What we can — immediately and without any special education — understand, are the 7 universal emotions in a face: anger, enjoyment, sadness, surprise, fear, contempt and disgust. An actor should be able to express about 180 quite specific emotions. Not only about these specific emotions, but about their deviations and mixtures we have got many scientific results.

To give an idea: the expression of, "smiling" has 16 variations. One version of smiling is the masked smile, which tries to cover a strong negative feeling. Masked emotions are those facial expressions, which mainly show one of the basic emotions but blended with one of the others — partly in the duration, partly in the intensity or their one-

sidesness in the upper or lower part, or in the left or right side of the face.

During the late 16th century the noble class in France felt the need to distinguish from the "uncivilized" behavior and in particular "wild grimassing" of ordinary people. They developed refined manners and it was very important to restrict the mimic of the white-powdered face to almost a mask. This was called "courtoisie" and is the beginning of politeness: do not show your real emotions in public.

We use (and misuse) our face for the expression of emotions – often without consciousness, without control. We have learned to make a friendly face:

1. related to our social class
2. depending to our social position.

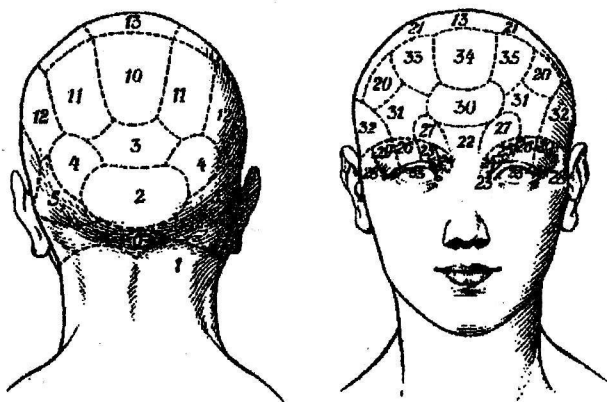
A polite smiling, just as one of several learned and not really felt mimical actions can be uncovered not only as politeness but, understanding this, we can say that we are unmasking the face.

To make the relation of face and mask, i.e. the presentation of character, a bit more systematic, I have to find the point where both – mask and face – have met and departed: GOETHE.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was a famous writer and he knew mythology. He was deeply interested in natural-sciences as well. He was an early friend of the Swiss priest Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) who published the 4 thick volumes of "Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und der Menschenliebe" (short: the, Physiognomische Fragmente, 1775–1778). Lavater is estimated to be the initiator of physiognomy in modern times – the art to read the character in the shape and the expression of the face of a human being. Lavater's ideas were quite (purely) speculative and often based on proverbs as well as (almost mechanical) transformations of elements of the form into corresponding expressions in words: symmetric is morally good etc. When Goethe met Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828) in 1804, who was the first medical doctor to make researches about brain-faculties, he was immediately convinced of the results. Gall found out, that certain intel-

lectual capacities are located in certain regions of the brain. His researches are known as phrenology and it was (and still is) believed that one can estimate mental capacities at the outside shape of the skull. All the ideas of Lavater and Gall (et al.) are nonsense, but they are essential part of romantic literature – since Goethe.

The phrenological organs – free after Gall



Charles Darwin (1809–1882) collected, on his long voyages around the world and using contacts to many people, all informations about emotional expressions and published "The Expression of Emotions in Men and Animals" in 1872. He was the first to find out that the basic emotions produce the same facial movements all over the world. The medical doctor Theodor Piderit (1826–1912) published the anatomical movements and drawings of almost 100 emotions in 1867.

Carl Huter (1861–1912) has collected all the scientific results available at his time, but made up his own speculations and phantasy as well. He invented the Naturell-Lehre (the doctrine of the natural capacities) – on the basis of Lavater, Gall, Goethe and Darwin. Anthroposophy became influenced by Huter and vice-versa. Huters ideas are still actual for quite some – dubious – teachers.

All these results, suppositions, prejudices and romantic phantasies were distributed in the whole civilized world, concluded, not only, in Germany, in the "Charakterkunde" (with lots of ridiculous side-effects) and got accepted towards the beginning of the 20th century as "science" at universities. Many people believed in it.

Phrenological Instrument (built after the model of the medical doctor Robert Burger-Villingen in 1912 after the initial idea of Lavater – IV, (pp. 236–246). Lavater: "The more exact one can measure the shape of the human skull, the more will physiognomy become scientific and certain." With a few sculptures Goethe was idealized with a high forehead. Since then we know the intelligent forehead.





Kretschmer still was convinced in 1955 that "the form is not the opposite to the function, but all outside forms of a body are expressions of its inner functions... including the psyche".

Körperbaumerkmal	Charaktereigenschaft
kleiner Kopf	Gefühl stärker als Verstand
großer Kopf	größere geistige Kräfte
übergroßer Kopf	kindlich, idiotisch
eingefallener Hinterkopf	willensschwach
kräftig entwickelter Hinterkopf	willensstark, ausdauernd, fleißig
hohe und breite Stirn	Analytiker, Suchender, Künstler
hohe und schmale Stirn	Synthetiker, Wollender, Techniker
Augenbrauenbogen schwach	schwache Beobachtungsgabe
Augenbrauenbogen stark gewölbt	gute Beobachtungsgabe
verschwommenes Profil	wenig ausgeprägte Persönlichkeit
ebenmäßiges Profil (Nase u. Oberlippe ragen über die Nasenwurzel-	das Geistige und Sinnlich-Körperliche ist harmonisch verknüpft
linie hinaus)	
Augen groß, Mund und Nase klein	geistiger Wille übergroß
Nase zu groß, Augen u. Mund klein	Selbstdarstellung hervortretend
Augen und Nase groß, Mund klein	rechthaberisch
Augen klein	geringes persönliches Format
Augen übergroß	selbstsichere Herrennatur
Nasenrücken groß und breit	starke, männlich geartete Darstellungskraft
Nasenrücken klein und schmal	schwache, weiblich geartete Darstellungskraft

The following list is a collection of widespread ideas what the form of a face tells about a person: It is so easy to think in analogy.

Spieth, Rudolf: Menschenkenntnis im Alltag (München, 1988, p. 182)

Caricature (the – grotesque – exaggeration of characteristic traits) is another wide field about how character can be transformed into a visible shape: King Louis-Philippe as a pear – by Daumier in 1848, who was severely punished for this. How easy it is to escape the wide-open trap he has layed out was for Lavater that he declared the ugly face of Sokrates as "an error in the writing of nature, which does not

prevent to read it". A German proverb: "Exception confirms the rule".

To make charakters visible, it is not enough to just make a good drawing. In Europe there are at least 5 methods known to read the character in the form of a face of a person and make an interpretation of the moral values:

1: freely corresponding to Lavater (Pseudo-Aristotle, della Porta, Sophus Schack: Fysionomiska Studier, Stockholm, 1883, etc.) by making free interpretations of physiologic parts to physiognomic data.



Partly this seems to be convincing, when we look up the temperaments of Lavater:

Lavater, Johann Caspar: Physiognomische Fragmente, IV (p. 353)

Lavater (et al.) have (had) such a success only because of the fact that better educated people came from middle and upper class and relied on sciences. Rich people don't go to prison. Their language is polite and rich in words, their faces are clean and their fingernails well-cut. All aspects of their codification correspond to their life-style which is alienated – or should we say: masked? In contrast to them can "criminals" easily be recognized, corresponding to the researches of Lombroso in an Italian prison towards the end of 19 th century. He found, that 30% of criminals, compared to only 7% of honest people had a protruding chin and looked "brutal". This is certainly not astonishing under the conditions of that time.

2: anthropometrical by connecting certain parts of the face with aesthetical normation and characterological indexes (remember Huter). We (all) have our suspicions and prejudices: dark versus light corresponds to bad versus good; good is beautiful and symmetric whereas bad is ugly unsymmetric. These are categories of aesthetics. Greek-christian aesthetic values are again and again confirmed up to our present time. If European culture did not have the David from Michelangelo, with his classical Greek profile, but the truly original portrait of Christ, it would probably not have idealized such a simple aesthetic. We, everyone of us, has his/her, way' of looking at a face, choosing and evaluating details in a culturally significant way. We have to constantly overcome aestheticism, if we want to avoid the racial trap.

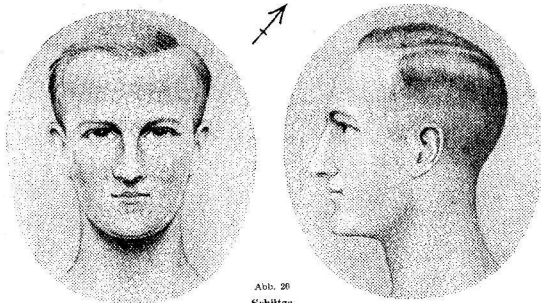


Abb. 26  
Schütze

**Charakter:**  
offenherzig, begüterungsfähig, sozial,  
menschheitsfreundlich, religiös, Philosophisch

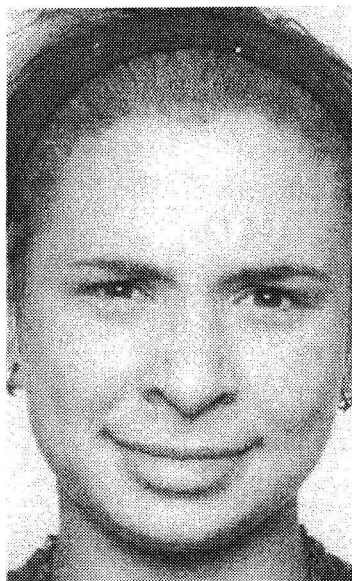
**Formensprache:**  
lange Nase, schlichtes Profil, freundliche, offene Augen, gerade  
Gesichtsfarbe, gewölbte Oberlippe, betonte Oberlippe, glatter  
Hautteppich, blonder Haar.

3: astrological corresponding to the zodiac

Stein, Hans: Charaktertypen (Berlin, 1952, p. 146)

Besides of the characters corresponding to the zodiac there are lists – and drawings – of the "types" corresponding to the planets, the elements (fire, water, air, soil), the "stadiums" (whatever that means) and the seasons... today their cars... etc...

4: Facial expressions of emotions (Ekman), their significance and interpretation.

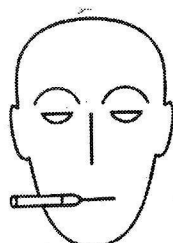


Ekman, Paul: Emotions Revealed (New York, 2003, pp. 230, 238)

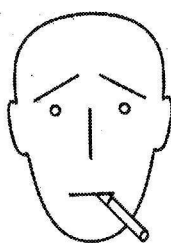
Note: Under [www.emotionsrevealed.com](http://www.emotionsrevealed.com) one can get a CD for practicing the recognition of all subtle expressions shown in the book.

5: Smokers and expressions of their emotions (from the advertisement in a weekly magazine, many years ago).

(from up left to down-right: dare-devil, shy, grim, dreamer, blasé, content, cheerful, hectic, enjoyed).



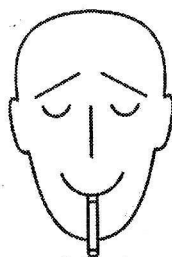
Der Draufgänger



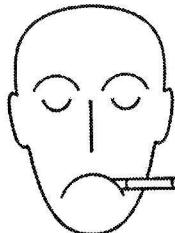
Der Schüchterne



Der Verbissene



Der Träumer



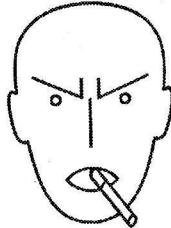
Der Blasierte



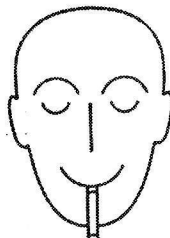
Der Gemütlche



Der Fröhliche

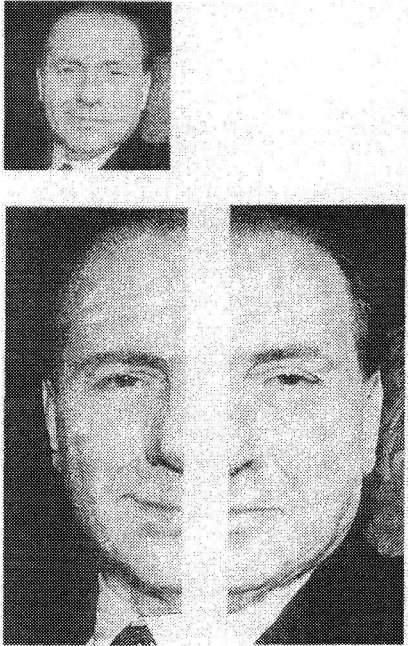


Der Hektiker



Der Genießer

Combining the previous informations I dare an interpretation of the following face:



His right side of the face clearly shows a smiling friendliness.

His left side of the face shows a lowered tip of the lips – scepticism, the tip is not so much lowered that one should assume depression – and the eye looks a bit dreamy and tired, maybe a bit attentive.

Both sides do not fit together. They let us see two emotions – in this very moment together. The open friendly side maybe "show" – we all can do that. His left side is "honest". This cannot be "played", but is character. Berlusconi is "unmasking" his character with his face.

Berlusconi is more than 30 years old – a "dis-united" or "discrepant" character. If he continues to make a friendly "show" and inside is "melancholic", than he is an "unsecured" – maybe "schizoid" cha-

racter. Just recently I have seen another foto with exactly the same expression in Berlusconi's face and that convinced me in my interpretation. It is accumulated knowledge and pseudo-knowledge about the face and its expressiveness. This interpretation maybe going too deep.

Not only theatre concentrated on the individual fate: the Übermensch showed up (has been an idea since long before Nietzsche, but around 1900 was extremely popular and it is logic, that the Übermensch could not exist without the Untermensch etc...), Freud projected the Übervater, E. G. Craig could not any longer stand the "grimacing" on stage, wanted the actors leave the stage and the Übermarionette should play and Iwan Goll wrote the Überdrama (1920): "The mask is the central point of theatre. When a person hides in a mask, this means an existential "unmasking", i.e. to make the "inner reality" visible in a more intensive way than this would be possible with the human face" (quoted: Viviani, Annalisa: *Das Drama des Expressionismus* (München, 1970, S. 58). This stays in contrast to our habit to "cover-up": to lie and to show (that we often do not succeed is another question). We want to be seen as "normal" people. We want to be nice and not detestable. We have internalized cultural values.

Masks, on the other hand, can be as complex characters as we humans, but they can as well be cruelly one-sided as we would never dare to be. And masks can be contradictory, combine different feelings and character-traits, as we would never be able to perform, not even an actor.

Masks do not tell lies.

Mask-theatre (except Commedia dell'Arte) makes the distancing from person to performer clear. The performing mask shows an authentic character – including the individual abilities of the person who makes the expressiveness of the face alive. The spectator makes the interpretation of the character of the mask and understands the performed "Gestalt" as a distinct individuality, an other being, maybe of symbolic quality.

One can play a mask at least in 2 ways: 1. correspondingly to its anatomy, i.e. the "Gestalt", its way of moving and participating in the

action underlines this (without that it is "illustrative gesticulating"), or: 2. in contrast, i.e. in a "minimalistic" way, reduced to as little action as possible, just using the facial expressiveness and translating this into dynamic and rhythmic action, which is by no means illustrative. As masks are very calm, compared to mimic, they have to be played with calm certainty. Wild grimacing is impossible and wild gesticulating must be avoided.

Masks do not need and do not "like" illustrative gesturing – that is one of the slight distinctions to pantomime. They like the voice – another distinction to pantomime – but the voice has to be as expressive as the mask itself – corresponding to the meaning of the words. As there is a distinction to pantomime, there is a soft overlapping into it. The same with puppets, figures and marionettes : when a mask is performed one sees its "Gestalt" and when it moves in a regular, measured, kind of "somehow automatic" or "alienated" or "steered from outside" way, than it can be seen as a figure. But the mask is alive in itself. It has to move as a "living" body (the actor is but the "carrier"). So the mask-theatre does not need "actors" – but it needs persons who are willing to give up their personalities to perform the mask. The mask represents the role and not the actor.

The essential of mask-theatre is the ritual: understanding to perform the action in a way which makes it "important". Important means here that every detail seems to have a special quality, a meaning and not only expressiveness; this means not necessarily a religious or symbolic quality, but cannot be reduced to the repetition of an everyday action. Ritual needs the actor (priest) as well as it is theatre. Ritual must be believable and at the same time it should rest strange. Both aspects exclude each other, but with (stylized) masks and stylization with the masks they can be performed: the *Verfremdung* is so little, that the action can be shown in a believable way at the same time. There is a similarity to mythology, but – by now – it only uses the technique of mythology and has become its own method and art-form – without the function of belief. Ritual has dynamic and rhythm – maybe even close to dance. The rhythmic part of mask-play gives a strong expressiveness to the Gestalt without making it to a figure and without the wild movements of pantomime.

Mimical work is necessary, if not essential for an actor (maybe often



more for the actors self-image than for the role). What I see all too often is "wild grimassing". Then I remember E.G. Craig: "The mask is the only medium to make the expression of the soul visible in the face"... "The actor imitates the emotions of the character"... "The actor has to quit the stage and the 'Übermarionette' has to take his place" ("über die kunst des theaters", 1911, Berlin, 1969).

My experiences as actor and teacher result in some short points: "strictness of the action and, never do two actions at the same time". Choreography is essential to make everything visible and, if several masks are on stage, to give everyone of them time and space for the proper action. All action may be a bit "over-played" or, "over-expressive": by this it corresponds to the (necessary) over-size of the mask (that it fits on the face of the actor) and to the aim to visibly play theatre – and not pseudo-life. Masks are simply used as props. Masks demonstrate theatre – somehow "ceremonial". Their similarity to the human face – even when quite stylized or grotesk – demand a body-language similar to humans, sufficiently different as the face.

There are good reasons to use all the mentioned 5 methods (remember: Lavater, anthropometric, astrologic, emotions, literary): especially for "short-appearing" characters as for "extreme" and "flat" characters. Do I need a "flat" face (in contrast to a "sharp" face), I do not have to search a convenient actor, but I can create a suitable mask and give it to (almost) any actor (and train him/her to develop a corresponding voice, gesturing, body-language, behavior etc...

We read faces and we read masks in the same way: making an interpretation of the forms and translating them in analogic terms.

Everything is allowed – if it makes sense. The mask just as a theatrical "effect" does not make sense. There is no recipe except tradition and experience. Tradition is full of good and bad statements (Lavater-Huter), reasonable assumptions and results (Piderit, Hjortsjö, Ekman). The main question to be discussed is the interpretation of the play. As soon as the roles are defined in their characters can the shape of the mask be decided – if it is needed. Then comes the difficult task to translate the character into the form.

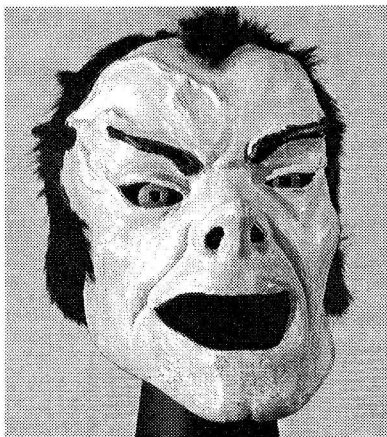
Masks make sense – even when they confirm prejudices or clichés.

Even if we deny the validity of typologies, we still rely on our impressions about faces. If the mask ends in exaggeration (funny or bad-taste, kitsch or aestecicism) this is only a theatrical question and in any way a theatrical quality.

An example of practical work: Kreon. Reading the text of the play – *Antigone* by Sophocle – all actions, remarks, relations, advises from the chorus and answers of Kreon, the dictator, had to be analysed for emotional qualities and character-traits. By this way his personality could be translated into temperament, skull and face.

His role: He gave an order and that had to be executed, even though it means the death of his niece, who is the fiancée of his son. He wants to show to the people that he really is the king. But he overplays his uncertainty with loudness. He is angry about himself, since he sticks to the decision only because of his childish obstinacy. He knows that his decision is wrong, but he does not dare to pull back, anxious to loose his reputation.

Kreon 1: "The new king in his insolence, paired with mistrust and insecurity" – as the director and I decided to show his character.



Interpretation and translation of the formal elements:

Important and powerful person - broad skull

Impulsive temperament, stress – black and shaggy hair, loosing hair

Energetic – broad jaws

Unfinished personality – childish nose

Nervous problems – deep wrinkles down from the nose

Impulsive temper – high blood pressure, veins of anger and angry eyebrows

Mistrust – an eye tightly folded

Watching – an eye attentively open

Tricky – both eyes slit

Unsensible screaming – wide-open mouth without lips

Cracky type – crack in the chin

Ascetic type, without tenderness – meager cheeks

Frigid – bluish upper part of the face

Almost sick – reddish-grey lower part of the face

We certainly reject the belief in character-analysis by physiognomy. But we watch films and see theatre-performances and confirm the choice of a "type", his or her mimical expression.

We are doped with our cultural values. We are doped with literature, psychology, typology... and: physiognomy... broadly speaking, physiognomy is incorporated "uncritically" into the French and German novel. In the English novel it tends to be treated with irony and ambivalence" (Tytler, p. 318). "Fair hair is sometimes a feature of characters who are weak, stupid or morally defective" (Tytler, p. 214).

We can transcribe into a mask what is written into a face.

Masks can be used and misused and can be an essential medium in changes of the society: they can give a shape to figures not yet real and with this theatrical effect, point to a future of desire or of horror (Science Fiction). "The problem of apparent ambiguity and the consequent apprehension of paradox need not, as so many cases of masking attest, be methodologically different" (Napier, p. 19).

Every now and then we feel, that we exaggerate, not only in words,

but also in mimic. We pull back. But then we believe, that we might have stiffened our face into a mask. As one of the consequences of my occupation with the mask it became obvious to me that it is not the question of "lie or truth". Social role, personality and character, even identity with or without mask are equal in alienation and *Verfremdung*. As theatre-pedagogues we teach people not to reduce their mimic to a mask, since this restricts the expression of personality. We are caught in a trap. A trap which we have opened systematically ourselves by separating our professional side from our private feelings. We have adapted ourselves to modern, civilized, alienated life-style. Our mask-face dilutes into mimic and... the process starts again... stiffens into a mask. There is no certain point to hold. We close and open the trap – as long as we depend on it, and as long as we are eager to hold our contacts and relations. Until we (may) decide for the *Verfremdungseffekt* and glide into some kind of independent, unrelated, unconcerned and – we know – intolerable indifference. Then we can finally give up the control and come back to the root of our personality – our character – which, all too often ends in solitude, the contrast to theatre – and questions our decision for theatre – which opens another trap.

There is no definite distinction between face and mask when a person is alive.





## TORBJÖRN ALSTRÖM

Torbjörn Alström has been active as professional maskmaker, actor and instructor for a number of years in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and USA. He has been working with Dell'arte Players Company ( USA ), Mario Gonzalez (France) and Västana Teater (Sweden) amongst many more. Has been teaching for several years in masked theatre at several schools and theatre groups, for example at the National College of Opera, Musical and Theatre in Gothenburg. In November 2001 he received a scholarship from The Nordic centre for the performing arts to do research of masks and historical handcraft techniques in the Nordic countries, of possible use in the making of masks. The full result of this was presented at the Nordic theatre meeting held at the Faeroic Islands 5–12 August 2002.

More information at [www.artmask.com](http://www.artmask.com)

### **Where are the maskmakers in Nordic tradition ?**

Today when searching for traces of masks in the Nordic tradition we're often referred to guessing based on early rock-carvings and decorations on early historical ceremonial or utility goods. One reason that we don't have any clear proof of early existing masks in the Nordic countries could be that the masks were made in organic and decomposable materials, and therefore are not preserved throughout a longer time. Another explanation could be that the masks were only of temporary art, and therefore not preserved, the surroundings always contained material for new masks. The Nordic history presents a number of variations on very highly skilled expressions of handcrafts and artworks in all kinds of materials, such as wood, birch-bark, silver, bronze, leather a.s.o. Today we can see examples of this in art craft, folk music instrument-making and also by studying the Norse stave-churches rich examples of fantastic wood-carvings. One question that comes to mind is; – Why can't we see examples of this rich handcraft-tradition in mask-expressions? In many other cultures we can see a clear connection between these two expressions. (*The con-*

*struction of masks discovered are not in any way equivalent to the handcraft skills we can see examples of.)* Is the answer to this as the assumption above that the tradition was of a temporary art, or is the fact simply that there were no tradition of maskmakers in the Nordic countries? In this case – why where there no maskmakers? – Because we had a tradition that didn't ask for such a skill! *(Perhaps can we from the rock-carvings assume that there one time in history existed a tradition of maskmakers, that later on dissapeared; in this case we are bound to ask the question – Why did this tradition disappear?)* The conclusion from the assumptions above becomes for me clear. To do research in the possible existence of masks in the history of the Nordic countries one has to do parallell studies of the historical art craft- and handcraft-expressions together with the examples of rock-carvings and decorations of early historical objects. Based on this research I'd like to play with the following idea; – If there would have existed a nordic masktradition, what would the masks look like ?

Skin, fur and leather are material easy referred to the Nordic countries and it's tradition, but how was the leather earlier treated? What kinds of leather were typical for our history? In my work I have found the raw-hide beeing a leathertype containing a very strong expression. This "raw" leather has been used as drum-skin, utility-goods and as decorations in thousands of years. Another skin-type that I strongly connect with the Nordic tradition is fish-skin. – If you once have seen a barktreated skin of a lumpfish, it's hard to see that it's never in history has been used as inspiration for a maskexpression. Together with this there are all other kinds of historical artcraft expressions made in tin, bronze, silver, bone, and horn that may have been used for decorations on these assumed masks.

Using typical leathermaterials, birch-bark, wood or any material associated to the Nordic traditions together with portrayed expressions, inspiration from stories and myths might bring us closer to an assumed expression of Nordic masks. The work I present embraces an experimental study of masks made in raw-hide, fishskin, elkskin and other leathertypes. I have also used birch-bark and wood as complement in my research. The question I want to express is how the choice of material effect the geographical and historical interpretation.







## Final comments on Methodika Fragments from the last day's final discussion

### **Jurij Alschitz:**

Does it makes sense to do METHODIKA, to open new methods, to reflect upon our everyday work or is it just like – you come here to watch strange people at work and then you just catch a bus home and next day you have forgotten what you have seen here?

It is of course important to use the richness of the different methods and create your own way and I'm sure it will be a very different way. I got my own way of teaching from a combination of several teachers and it went through me and from me to my concrete teaching. I think that it should go through each artist, through each teacher, through each director and in this way we can organise a unique theatre, a way of teaching, a way of researching on the basic of the tradition.

I'd like to change the situation in the theatre and I believe that all of us, as artists, are not satisfied with the situation. If you are satisfied you are not an artist anymore. You always have to make the next step, always have to create something new.

I have thought about the work of our teachers, and I find a lot that I know and at the same time new and different things. Different philosophy, different point of view, nuances and details that gives them all a face. I'd like you to make analyses about the difference between the work of the teachers.

I like the complexity of the work, because this is the beauty of the art. It is important to understand that we are speaking about the theme of the "Face and Mask" and that this opens for a lot of different discussions. I started to work with masks from an inner position, to make it easier for an actor to understand what personage, role and text means. For me the text is mask and the actor could be text. The understanding of the mask on different levels and in different cir-

cumstances I will have to bring into the drama-theatre, because I will never work in mask theatre.

METHODIKA should in essence lead to an understanding of the possibility to gradually change your work, your theatre and the situation in the theatre. That's why I'm serious about the necessity to analyse the knowledge that you have got. If this happens METHODIKA has sense, otherwise it is just a collection of several workshops.

The process of the assimilation is working like a bacteria that some times connects with another bacteria and you change into a different person. You can say; the grandmother was Abel, and the father was Thanos and now it is a completely different generation of ideas. I'm speaking about a way of thinking. I'm not speaking about the possibility for our masters to educate us in four days, I propose the ideas. Education will take years to accomplish, it's a culture and everyday work but if we can look upon the work of Abel as ideas, we will gain a lot. Together 40–50 persons have created a lot of interesting ideas, much more than one director or one mask.

The teacher gives you ideas. This is the main work of the modern actor, main relationship between teacher and student, between actor and director. You should create everything. This is the principle of the new and modern relationship between teacher and students. For the 21th century it's important to understand that theatre is incredible huge. To make things uniform is wrong, it is the dead mask of the theatre. A face is changing each second. I would like to have a face of theatre in a million different variants. When it is becomes a mask it's death and it is exactly the same with the method, a mask and not a living face. I have a dream to organise one big theatre school a very special, original and very different school and I would like that the teachers only will give the students ideas and nothing else.

### **Thanos:**

What is unique for me is not to present our work, it is the situation that was created here, on the level that it was four different workshops and we could follow the other teachers work and the other approaches. It is not only the way the teachers present his work, it's also the way the group works. It means that together we create this special here and now for every workshop. The exchange of ideas and

the exchange of different work is something unique for me because normally you do your work with your group alone. Even the theme for this meeting is surprisingly unique. I have been working with the face and the mask for 25 years, and I've never heard of a meeting or a seminar or workshop where these two are discussed together.

There are a lot of different mask traditions and ways to work with masks, but never in the 25 years I have been working with *the face and the mask*, heard of a meeting or a seminar or workshop where these two are connected and discussed. Usually it is confined to something special, Japanese mask, Greek mask, Commedia dell Arte, make-up in Hollywood, whatever.

Jurij talked about his idea of a school of ideas. And for me, as an artist it can give me the possibility to meet my students as artists and exchange ideas. For me it happens only on that level. Because behind every method, behind every way of work, there is a way of thinking and there is always philosophy and there is always a way of perceiving the human being. And these are different.

### **Giorgos:**

We can say that the mask is a point where many other arts meet, sculpture, painting, theatre, portrait, architecture, choreography, dance. And is like a point in the space where all these arts meet and because it is just a point you can't really deconstruct it. You can deconstruct it's form but not it's nature. It's nature is being exactly the point where these arts meet. When you have to work with so many elements, and you want to create a method where all these elements are put together, it is a difficult task. It's not impossible but at the other side it is difficult to present it in four days. That is why we concentrated on the sound. Following the different groups, I saw that the groups had many common exercises, so the exercise is not what we are simply looking for. It is how you want to use the exercise, the idea behind the exercise and the way you want to use it. For anybody to create a method takes many years of research.

What was very important for me during this meeting was what Jurij called the exchange of ideas. I saw many things, not only from the teachers, but from everybody in this seminar which as I consider as an inspiration for me as an artist.

Concerning the mask and the face, it is not in our work to start from a neutral mask, but to come in the end to this, let's say empty face. I don't use the word neutral because I don't believe in neutrality so I use the word emptiness and it's due to a different thinking. This you can see when everything is finished and everybody takes off their masks. Then you can see the empty face.

**Klim:**

I can speak only about my feelings. When I saw these different masters, I was astonished, it is like different religions but it has the same goal. The problem which all the masters tried to solve was the same, it had to do with the mask... and my effort to reach the naked face.

I use to say that theatre or creation of art is kind of starting at that very moment when the demon is coming out from me. If I could make him leave me, and only then I could start to reduce him, if the demon stays inside of me he will destroy me. The goal was always one, for one person to reach this feeling of creation you have to train with the sticks, for another person to reach this feeling you'll have to put a mask on your face and as a teacher and for a pedagogical goal I feel I would like to use masks. I understand what you could get from that. It is not the only way, you could put masks on your face, another one moves these sticks, the third one moves in a circle. But the one who works with the sticks comes to the moment when he has to put the mask on his face. Because while making art it put us up and then we loose it, and every time you have to over and over again give birth to your possibilities, your ability to fly.

**Abel:**

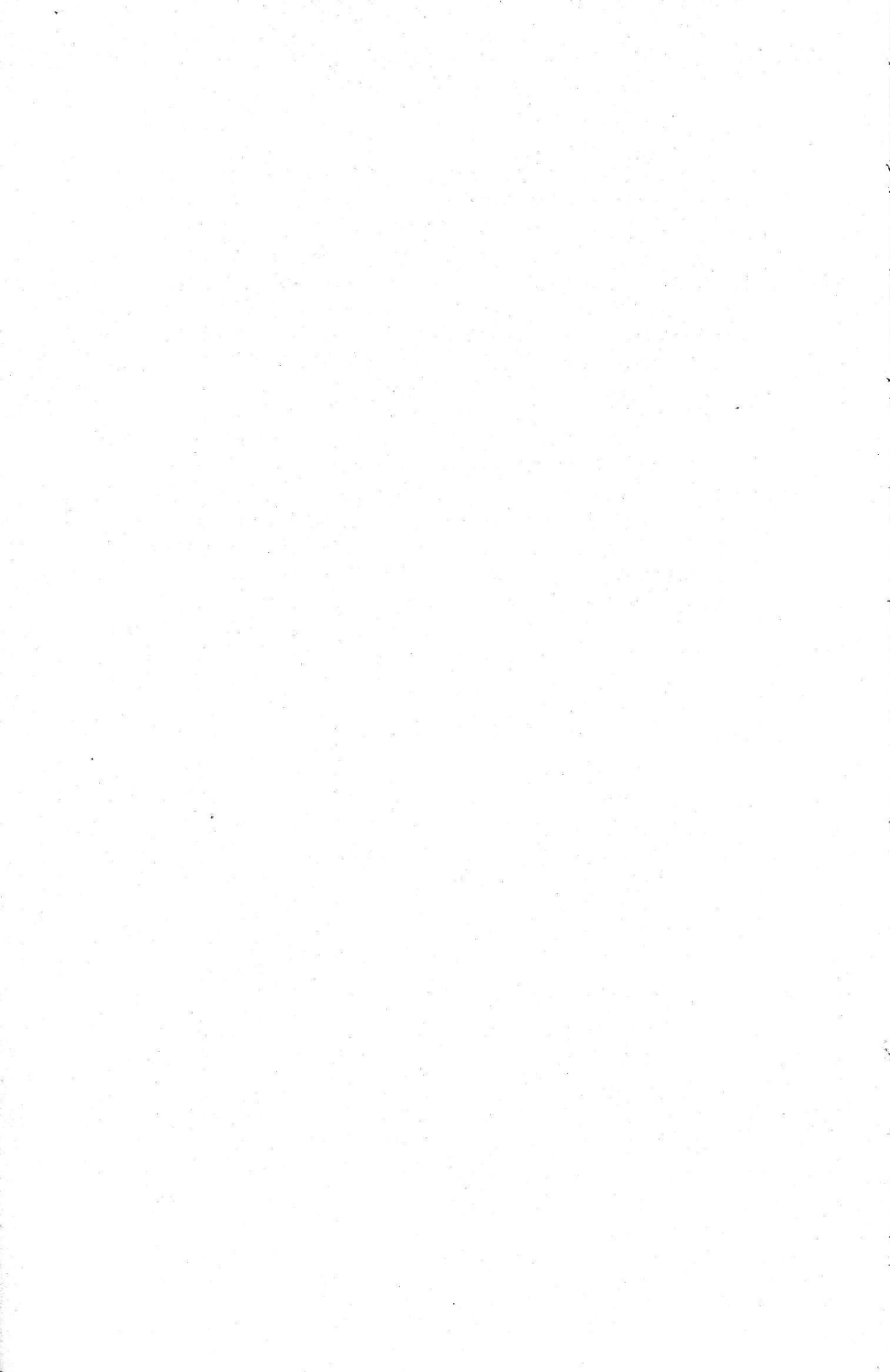
I have worked for many years with the body I worked with swords etc. all these things. But I did not have so much time to work on the voice. Of course I also work with the voice but I don't work so much with the direction of making the text concrete for the theatre. I work more in the direction to use the voice as an action. But when I saw the work of Klim, how he worked with these two, three words, like a kata of words, he can make a lot of katas with these two, three words. And for me this was completely new, I believe that I will work in this direction from now on. I saw a small improvisation with this mother and fat-

her sentences, very intensive and deep, emotions; it's like Nó. I ask myself what would happen in a longer, bigger scene and a lot of text - I don't want to have an answer, but I will ask.

I was in Egypt for two or three month, I trained there, dance of Dervish and when I saw the work of Klim, it is very similar. So if it comes from this Dervish dance, I like the way he makes the applications, not religious, but he made this application mystic for the actor. Perhaps it was not the idea but it was my interpretation

**Edgardo:**

I think that the most useful thing for me is the fact that these four days raised a lot of questions for me about the art of theatre that I have to answer eventually when I go home. I would say that the most important thing I got out of this METHODIKA, was the provocation's of the mind and I think that if I ever stop asking questions it would be time to lie down and die. As long as I'm looking for the answers, I hope I will be young forever. That's it.





## Reflections on Methodika 2003 by Martha Vestin

### **The face and the mask**

In the discussions at Methodika, the terms "face" and "mask" were very often used in a metaphoric and confusing way in expressions like "his face is a mask" etc. In my own vocabulary, the face is the human face, and the mask is an object of art that you put on your face. This simplifying of terminology does not make the whole issue less complicated or less interesting. There is still a lot of interesting and magic interaction between the face and the mask.

### **Naked or zero**

The human face, as we all know, has a lot of expressions. In his workshop, Klim was using his exercises to reach a naked face. The naked face is not the same as the empty "zero" face without expression. The naked face is the face that immediately, without any distance, reflects everything that happens to us in the moment, without any effort of controlling it. What happens can be seen in your naked face. The naked face has a lot of expressions.

A zero face – resembling of the zero mask – is an extremely controlled face that shows nothing. Buster Keaton was mentioned in the discussions as a zero face comedian. A lot of dramatic or exiting things happen to him, and nothing is seen in his face-, which is very funny. Of course this is a result of extreme control, and it is not a naked face.

The control of the face expression could be a social habit, or a must. Already as children we are taught to control our expression, and as we grow up, we become better at it. We don't want to be seen naked, not even showing our naked faces.

In the theatre, control of the face expression is part of the profession, in most traditions and styles. It can be done to imitate the expression of emotion – in his lecture, Uwe Krieger showed many

examples – it can be done to create a specific character or an archetype of human face.

The individuality, special traces and characteristics can of course be underlined by make-up. But this big issue was not the subject of our seminar. It could be worth a Methodika of its own. And of course there is an interesting area where face, make-up and mask meet. The actor, often in cooperation with a skilled make-up or mask artist, can transform his face with the help of both makeup and “loose parts”, all based on the individuality of his own face. In fact, one of the most fascinating masks shown by Torbjörn in his performance was created on stage by white-painting the face and distorting it by twisting simple household string all over it – a tradition from Greenland.

One common misunderstanding or simplification is that “face” is more natural and subtle, while “mask” is more grotesque or archetypal. It need not be so. We can have zero mask and zero face. We have very subtle masks, which can carry ever-changing nuances of expression, depending on the actor’s behaviour, and we have grotesque facial expressions, which the actor may keep fixed for the whole performance. (As when playing “the fool”)

### **Face and half mask**

One very interesting area is the interaction between face and half-mask, or any mask which does not cover the whole face. Even when half-masks are very strong in expression, and/or very traditional, in action on stage the total expression is always different depending on the unique combination with the actor’s own face. This was demonstrated in Claudio’s work, and also in Torbjörn’s performance. In one scene in Torbjörn’s performance, he was only using different noses, and changing his whole character with each new nose. A loose nose is a mask, even if it is small. It is still an “object on your face”, and it changes the whole expression of the whole face, interacting with it.

### **To give life to the mask**

Working with mask, the main task is to give life to the mask, so that the spectator no longer sees it as a foreign object on the actor’s face. The spectator should see a total being, a total expression. This is very

tricky, and we could see the participants of Claudio's workshop struggle with this problem. The most common problem in the beginning is that you don't "do enough" for the mask. If your actions, your body, your movements are not enough, if you are too imprecise, too private etc, the mask looks out of place, like a huge obstacle on your face.

Then the participants realise "oh I need a lot of energy, I really have to try..." And they fall in the next trap, doing too much. There is a lot of movement and bodywork, and you see a strange little thing on the face. To find the exact co-operation between body, face and mask takes years and years of training. When we see Claudio himself performing his masks, there is a deceptive lightness, you are deceived into thinking it is easy – until you have tried.

The most important thing for theatre people and actors is that mask work demands a lot from the actor, from his mind and body. This is evident. Often people say that working with mask demands more of the actor's body and movements and concentration. But from my point of view this is only half true. Acting without mask also demands more, much more than we normally see on stage. But when we work with mask the weaknesses are instantly disclosed.

If we lack presence, concentration, motivation and precision, it shows with painful evidence. All these qualities are needed also if you work without mask, only it is easier to cheat and get away with it.

This is one of the reasons why it is such a good training for actors to work with masks, whether they are going to use it on stage afterwards or not.

Claudio gave his participants some major questions to reflect on every day. These questions were very relevant to the whole Methodika, and I have made my own comments on them:

### **1 The Role of mask, is it to hide or to reveal something?**

It seems to me that the mask, when the work is good, rather reveals than hides. It reveals new potential in the actor, new energy and different lines of ideas and impulses, things that the actor did not know that he could do. In the work with Claudio and the commedia masks,

the actors become more "childish" or less intellectual, their reactions become bigger and more direct and with less inhibition. They like to do forbidden, "dirty" things. Claudio speaks a lot about the strict form of each mask and its characteristic movements as a passage to freedom, and to a certain extent, loss of control. The mask "takes over".

This reminds me of other mask techniques where this loss of control seems to be central, and as a consequence, leading to difficulties in controlling the mask-actors on stage. Keith Johnstone and Suzanne Osten with My Walter have done a lot of work and research in this area.

In the work of Thanos and Giorgio the full masks reveal other sides of the person in the mask. He/she seems to find and also express a deeper connection with the human history of deep emotions and common problems. The individuality is "hidden" by the mask, and the human being of all ages is revealed. The mask becomes a vehicle for the actor to get in contact with existential questions, and communicate them to the audience.

In the mask work of Abel, I saw the masks as objects hiding the faces, objects with strong expressions of their own, which then were added to the physical expression of the actor's movements. The masks did not come alive (for me personally), but maintained their own fixed expressions.

## **2 Can face live together with mask? How many faces do we have? And how many masks?**

One interesting aspect of this question is that every combination of half-mask and face is unique. The mask looks different on a different face, and also has to be played differently. Which means that the same mask may have endless expressions, combined with the individual actors face. Even if an actor performs within the fixed traditional movement pattern of for example Harlequin, the totality of his character becomes unique.

Also, with the full masks used by Thanos and Giorgio, and with the simplicity and purity that they demand from the actor, each mask starts to radiate an individual life within the chorus. It seemed almost like a paradox. All the women wore the same type of black dress, their masks were almost identical, they were chanting the text together and

doing the same movements, and still; each one had its own special fascinating glow.

Another aspect of this question is the naked face appearing in Klim's whirling exercise ("dervishes"). In the final phase of dizziness and almost fainting, the everyday faces of the persons we know are more or less eradicated, and the observers could see a mask-like and stupefied face, similar on everyone.

### **3 What can the body find, use or feel when meeting the mask?**

This is a very concrete and practical question for the participants of Claudio's workshop. Clearly, they experience new sensations when working with the masks. The masks give them a sense of freedom and courage. The body finds new energy.

In Thanos and Giorgio's workshop some participants said that they were quite worried in the beginning. The whole thing seemed so difficult. It was hard on the voice, body and concentration. But in the end, when they were doing the chorus scene together, they experienced a strong sensation of togetherness, even though it was difficult to see each other through the masks, and the movements seemed just to flow organically. Bodies and masks were united.

### **4 The mask and the face: a conflict or prolongation (harmony)?**

The half-mask can function as a prolongation or continuation of the face and vice versa. The mask does not function until it sits on the face of the actor, and the actor has to give his whole being – mind, voice and body including face – to the mask. The mask serves the actor in his performance, but in playing, the actor serves the mask. In European languages, the mask means the object that you put on the face. But in most African languages, the word for mask incorporates the whole personage: the actor himself, the costume, and the mask.

The actor is very much alive when he performs with mask, and even in a full mask, his face is cannot be dead. But he is not trying to express himself with his face; he is only trying to give life to the mask. In the moment of taking off the mask, the actor's face often expresses a kind of awe, confusion and relief: Where have I been, what did I do?

### **Mask and voice**

Mask work demands intensified voice work, depending on the kind of mask you work with. It is a big issue, which was not the main theme of our Methodika. However, in Thanos and Giorgio's workshop, it was the main theme. The preparatory training was mainly about voice, to find resonance in the body, to half-chant the classic text in chorus with the others, and how to use the mask as a resonator for the voice. The sound becomes more the expression of the body and less a message from the intellect.

In Abel's mask work, which was also with full masks, participants were instructed to create the voice "between" the face and the mask. It seems to me to be a similar approach as with Thanos and Georgios, to try to use the mask as an instrument of resonance, only with different terminology. They used deep body sound inspired by the Japanese tradition, and also sharp sounds with a high pitch. Of course they could not be fully trained to do this in four days, but it was evident that they were helped a lot by the physical posture, low, balanced, heavy and prepared for action, and by the mask itself.

The voice work is different with the Commedia masks. It has more to do with character, and with the animal associations of each character. First the participants used only sounds of surprise, fear, lust and happiness, and later they could add words. If they started to use too much text, the wild characteristics of the voice were easily lost.

In all the 3 workshops using mask, one thing was common: The mask sometimes allows the actor to do things and make sounds that his "private" person would not be able to do. The mask gives allowance and freedom within its strict boundaries.

Klim's voice work was an effort to deconstruct the language, going back to the pure sound of the words, getting rid of all previous meaning of the word or the sentence.

"I think it was about to, through the vibrations of sound in the body, and through the idea of different directions for each vowel, get acquainted with, sense the sounds in an different way – outside of the intellectual or in other ways generally accepted understanding of sounds." (reflection by the participant Duncan Green.)

## **Masks and methods**

The invited pedagogues of Methodika 2003 worked very differently, and to see their different way of developing the work during four days was a strange, both frustrating and awakening experience. As an observer you are challenged in many ways, first to try and understand what is going on, trying to take part as actively as possible, even when sitting at the side. Second, to sort out all the questions swarming in your head, and try to be patient and just store them for later. And third, to go into the next group and see the same questions tackled in another way, or become less adequate, or reformulated.

In a way, the four pedagogues, their teaching methods and general attitudes were very much coherent with what they were trying to teach. And even though they were all very different in their attitude and teaching, there were some common elements connected with our theme.

## **The naked face**

One common element is the need to liberate the actor from his private behaviour and mind. The terminology is different but it all boils down to the naked or "empty" face and mind, the right condition to go into the mask, or, as with Klim, to enter the stage.

Claudio does this through surprise in his movement exercises, where you have to work yourself past routine and standard patterns, and through courage, trust and openness in his "name" exercises. And also in the fixed movement patterns of the Commedia Characters which as a kind of paradox leads the actor to forget himself and thereby get access to a more free flow of creativity.

In Abel's work, he scrubs the actor free of all private attitudes and trying to look "good" through discipline and hard physical effort, and through the long "katas" which demands total concentration and presence. While doing the katas, you have no energy for anything else. And the "kamai" position of readiness on all levels. The participants gradually arrived at finding the "kamai" position with a high presence and without any "acting" or false attitude.

On the other hand, when the participants struggled with the sticks and the "katas" the frustration, pain or joy was reflected in their faces. The time was too short for most of them to allow them to get into the flow of movements and composed state of mind, as described by the participant Colin; "Doing the kata sequences became for me very meditative, and when my attention was not focused on trying to remember the actual sequence, I was able to sink into the experience of my body and become aware of aspects such as breath, body alignment and weight distribution."

With Thanos and Georgio, the preparatory training of body, breathing and voice, and the calm and serious working atmosphere had a visible effect on the openness and "nakedness" of the participants. Also, the mask works itself made them feel like being part of one big body, the chorus, and to forget more and more about their individual selves. At the work demonstration, in the final moment of taking off the mask, the faces were pure and glowing. Participant Lena Linnér describes it: "When we performed our work in front of the others the last day, we met a new form of energy – the audience. Your own experience is enforced. You become even more depending on the group, and you own ego more naked. You are totally a part of the whole, and you are only body and sound. It is like a cleansing, a rinsing. You feel completely unprotected and naked, somewhat confused when you take off the mask, and meet the experience of the audience reflected in their eyes. The eyes of the audience are warm and intense, and you feel clean and without emotions except from having emptied yourself and become part of a bigger whole." – You could say that she is speaking about "Catharsis", described from the actor's point of view.

In Klim's work, arriving at the "naked face" is the main theme. The method to get there seems – in comparison with the others – to be very unstructured. It seems to me that the attitude- and the exercises- is very unintellectual or even anti-intellectual. It is not about understanding, but about giving yourself to the exercises and just let go of discussion and understanding. On the other hand, Klim gives long monologues where metaphysical ideas are mixed with anecdotes from his life and work. It is difficult to follow, and as the translator also has difficulties in following the line of thought, participants lose concentration and readiness to start the exercises. However, the frustration,



which gradually got worse for the observers, seemed to get less among the participants. They found a way of relaxed waiting, and could after a 45 min speech, get up on the floor again and go into the exercise. The experience of the "dervish- dance" is described by participant Duncan Green: "The masks we explored were not physical, but instead abstract such as: The human ideas, expressions, views on theatre, the views on yourself and your ways of perceiving the world around you. Part of the experience in the whirling exercise was that when you had regained your balance and re-established yourself, you find that you perceive the same world as before, but in a totally different way. It was sweeping past, while your thought was resting inside you. You could say to your self, this world is turning, not my ego."

### **The respect for the mask**

The three pedagogues who worked with mask all demanded respect for the mask. This was manifested by rules of the mask work. The mask is not an object, which you can handle like a t-shirt or a coffee cup, or as any theatre prop. It is not only an object of art, it bears a great potential, which you have to pay respect, otherwise you will not be able to use its potential. Even if you are a "non-believer" of the potential of the mask itself, the respect for the mask and the ritual surrounding it puts you in a the state of mind, which is good for a serious work session or performance.

This was most evident in the work of Thanos and Georgio. When not in use, the masks were covered with a cloth; the participants had to collect the mask, sit down in a special position and carefully unveil the mask. Then they had to observe it, first while it is still on the floor in front of them, then lift it closer, start to make a deep long sound with the breathing, and again observe "what is going to be your face", trying to send the sound and the breathing to the mouth of the mask, and not until they have a feeling that the mask is responding, they slowly put the mask on, still making the sound. In this way, by his respect for the mask, the actor is conditioned to work with the mask.

In all mask work it is forbidden to touch the mask with your hands after you have put it in place on your face. From the spectator's point of view, it has a simple reason, because the mask becomes a dead object when touched. But from the actor's point of view, it is just as

important. Touching it would disturb his efforts to become the body and mind of this mask. If some adjustment should be necessary, he has to turn his back to the audience, and it will also be a break for himself.

The importance of this can be illustrated by Marcel Marceau's famous mime scene "the mask". With his white-painted face, he makes a laughing face. He touches the face as if it was a real mask, changes the (imaginary) mask to a sad one, and back to the laughing mask again. The drama comes when the laughing mask gets stuck on his face, and he tries to rip it off, becoming more and more desperate. In this case, the actor does not have a mask. But by touching his face as if he had a mask, we immediately see his face as an object-a mask.

In most African cultures, the masks are sacred and believed to carry enormous powers. They can only be handled and used by specially initiated persons, and only for special purposes. Not everyone is allowed to see them. Even if they have ended up in an exhibition, you have to pay respect, like taking of your shoes, clap your hands respectfully, etc. It is a common misunderstanding that masks often are used in African theatre. They are not. They are too sacred.

### **My own mask-work**

As a director, I have used mask in many performances, and from 1973 it has often been in close collaboration with the mask maker and teacher Uwe Krieger. Uwe has conducted special training sessions, integrated in the rehearsal period. Gradually, the actors are finding the body, voice and mind of the mask character. They improvise in a way that the actors are able to stay within the mask character whatever may happen during the performance. When each character is "stable" it is also easy for the actor to make a quick change to another character. This was tested to the extreme in "the Caucasian chalk circle" which was done with an ensemble of five actors, meaning that they had at least 5 parts each, 5 different masks to play. It was interesting to realise that this was easier than it would have been without masks. It was as if the character was waiting in the mask for the actor, he just had to put it on, and it was there.

Another interesting thing happened when we used masks for the

chorus of old men in "Lysistrata". The chorus consisted of actors and musicians. We wanted rather grotesque masks, inspired by the Greek comedy masks. They had to be half masks because there was a lot of text, spoken and sung, and the musicians had to be able to play their instruments. The masks Uwe Krieger created were quite big and covered most of the head, like the "helmet" construction used by Thanos and Georgios. And the actors and musicians created very specific and funny characters. But how would the masks function in connection with playing the different musical instruments? Would the musicians be able to play the music "in character"? Well, sometimes it worked and sometimes not. It was quite easy with instruments like drums or accordion. There, the body movements of the character could still be used for playing the instrument. But when it came to the trumpet or the violin, it was more difficult. It was not only the question of playing such an instrument "in character" of a grotesque old man, it was also a difficulty of bringing the instrument so close to the mask. We got a problem similar to the touching of the mask mentioned in the paragraph "the respect for the mask".

The intense work with body, voice and mind required for mask play led me many years ago to start using masks for training, as one possibility to look for a specific character. The brave freedom, with which the actor explores the possibilities of a given mask, and the specific movements and use of voice that he finds, can then be used without the mask. As I could see also in the Methodika workshop, the face of the actor is changed in the mask and when the mask is removed.

### **The meeting of Methodika**

METHODIKA is a unique meeting place for everybody interested in theatre teaching and methodology. Through intense workshops and analysing discussions we have had the possibility to concentrate on the essential questions we are confronted with in our daily work, but very seldom have the chance to discuss on a high professional level.

There are very few opportunities for theatre pedagogues to find situations of development, provocation and input. Even if they give their students all this, they need to meet colleagues in a place like Methodika. This is reflected in the final comments of the teachers.

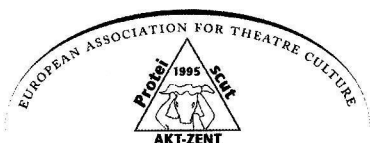
Methodika is also a unique meeting place for theatre scientists and practitioners. Sadly enough, they seldom meet, but stay away from each other in their theatres or universities.

Not only did we have the possibilities to learn from four specialists in their fields, but their work challenges all of us to put the questions to ourselves; What is the essence of my work, and through which practical steps will I try to reach my artistic goal?

For myself, the meeting was provoking and awakening. I did not get a clear answer on my questions concerning face and mask, but the whole issue became more complex and more promising.

*Martha Vestin*





# **METHODIKA**

## **3RD INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF METHODS IN THEATRE TRAINING**

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**Festival director**

**Co-producer**

**Co-producer**

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