

THE LESSON by Eugene Ionesco and “Tartuffe” by Molière :

Two presentations by four participants enrolled this year, in a 160 hour long advanced professional actors workshop given by **AUTOPOÏÉSIS, Ecole d'art Feldenkrais**®. Luc Bouffard, Philippe Cyr, Marie-Lyse Laberge–Forest and Stephanie Julien, young professionals who trained either at the Ecole Supérieure de Théâtre de l'Université du Québec in Montreal, or at the Ecole Supérieure de Théâtre Musical of Montreal, pooled their creativity, their previous training, their experience and their interests during a workshop dedicated in part to an unusual encounter with Molière and Eugène Ionesco. They had to take into account the framework imposed by the UNESCO Chair and the International Theatre Institute (35 minute presentations with 4 actors) as a creative constraint – what consequences would flow from these choices concerning the dramatic and aesthetic work undertaken in preparing the International workshops?

The course in which they participated was based on four main themes: the art of presence and action; the creative process and individual preferences; characters and neuro-motor patterns; autonomy and interdependence. These main themes are to be found both in the actor's training and in the overall theatrical production. The originality of the AUTOPOÏÉSIS approach resides in the practical integration of the *Feldenkrais*® method of somatic education into stage work: learning how to feel, imagine, think and act within a theatrical experience, thanks to an organic learning method.

“THE TARTUFFE or THE IMPOSTOR” by Jean Baptiste Poquelin known as Molière: His personal seal, three mirrors beneath a mask of comedy.

The art of presence and action. “Feeling”, how and why? As the workshop participants became familiar with the Awareness through Movement® technique, and with a series of explorations that led them closer into themselves, and into questioning themselves about the components of presence and great figures of action, they also sought to meet Molière. Who was he? How did he behave? What did “Tartuffe” represent for him in his life? How did he repeatedly put in action his Impostor? The approach adopted by the participants to this comedy was strongly influenced by the context which gave rise to “Tartuffe”. They tried to grasp the nature of the obstacles, the conflicts, the prohibitions which Molière had to face and adapt to with various strategies, which are reflected in the structure of his work. They wondered how to represent the battle waged behind the mask of comedy, whilst respecting the rules imposed by classic theatre and the entourage of the Sun King.

Creative Process and individual preferences. “Using one's imagination”, identifying one's creative process and individual preferences are tools for developing one's potential. As the participants were put into the proper framework, during their Awareness through Movement® classes, they became aware of their preferences in terms of behaviour and movement patterns, to invent chorus-style games based on texts and objects they liked, and they sought to approach Molières' characters by a series of images and chosen lines from the dialogue. Molière had created these characters for people who were near and dear to him. How could one approach them firstly in a very personal way? And how could one try to approach them all, since they had all been as part of a whole ? Selected lines and characteristic images of the characters were used to prepare the basis of the text for the 35 minute production staged for the audience.

Character and neuro-motor patterns. “Thinking”, building characters by a systematic exploration of movement patterns which have emerged from imagery associated with key

phrases chosen by each participant, was the ultimate goal of this long phase of work. Neutrality and mobility became both a necessity and a goal in the learning process. As the Awareness through Movement® classes continued, to which were added individual sessions of Functional Integration® all the characters of “Tartuffe” were constructed individually by each participant from a basis of unusual neuro-motor patterns, which were then pooled together. This way, the characters which will be finally presented to the audience are collective creations, including a wide variety of traits contributed by each participant. Relationships between the characters were also explored, emphasising characteristic traits of action-reaction.

Art of autonomy and interdependence. “Acting” in theatre, is the art of dialogue put into action. If classic dramaturgy relies on a close interdependence between the art of words and the art of action, the art of theatre, like Molière’s art, remains fundamentally baroque. In the scenic organisation that we offer to the audience, we are not presenting three mirrors beneath a mask of comedy as Molière himself must have done. We are composing a stage quartet where we modestly salute Molière for what even his illustrious protector, Louis XIV the Sun King, did not know he was: a model of humanity which asks us to reflect, and through this pleasure of acting, catch a glimpse of our own brand of honesty. Are we not all potential Tartuffes? These are the thoughts behind our little group of characters put at Molière’s disposal, as were his characters themselves, while he sought to escape the nightmare raised by his naïveté. Wearing a mask to denounce imposture has always been a dangerous game.

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