

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 **AUTOPOÏËSIS, 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 AUTOPOÏËSIS 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 LESSON by Eugene Ionesco: "Am I the voice of one person only?" (*"The author and his problems"*. In *"Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale"*, n° 4, 1963)

The art of presence and action. Neutrality, mobility and pleasure are important references for somatic education and in the acting craft. Alongside various explorations along these lines, the workshop participants questioned Ionesco on these concepts and sought to capture his type of presence and action in the theatrical act. The approach which was adopted to work on "The Lesson" was strongly influenced by Ionesco's obsession with the contradiction inherent in any affirmation, by his stated preference for the theatrical archetype and his propensity for detachment and duality.

Creative process and individual preferences. Anxieties, certainties, relationships to oneself and with the environment were soon revealed in the exploratory work and in the responses shown to the imposed or accepted constraints. Workshop participants were encouraged to become aware of their own ways of apprehending objects, images, words, their relation to gravity, and worked out in an ensemble project. For their work on "The Lesson", they chose an object, three characteristic images associated with a line of dialogue referring to each character of the play. These choices and individual preferences formed the basis of the elaborated text and of the creative constraints.

Characters and neuro-motor patterns. Do Ionesco's characters have individual identities? Can we infer that they would have a corporal image of themselves as well? Can complex relationships be established between them? The construction of these "archetypes" which are in contradiction with themselves flows from the workshop participants' suggestions. This leads to a "chorus" effect, the triad involving the teacher-tyrant, the student-victim and the maid-chorus as an accomplice to both parties' powerlessness. Each character is the other two characters as well. And each actor is an aspect of the character. This leads us away from ways we usually think in terms of persons and characters.

The art of autonomy and interdependence. Like Ionesco, who asks "Am I the voice of one person only?", and who wishes, in theatre, "to get to know that "person" which is a work of art", and who "reveals himself" in his writing, the participants accepted the challenge to represent their own perceptions of the character and the discourse of "The Lesson" whilst combining them with those of their fellow participants. The final staging of a 35 minute production offered to the audience respects each participants' choices, as well as the dramatic structure and the rigorous character distribution between the actors. The creation is thus the result of a learning game where individual choices became collective constraints, which in turn became an opportunity to approach unusual occurrences, much like world peace is an unusual occurrence. If, according to Ionesco, propaganda has made of word usage a tool for war, our work process aims to explore a particular way of making peace within and amongst ourselves.

