



Megan Ketch
Class
Hometown, N.C.

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I left for Europe on June 1, 2003 on a Burch Fellowship to heighten my skills as an actor through intensive study of the body's movement in theatrical space. The adventure was organized into three chapters of instruction in technique based on the work of Jacques Lecoq, an irrefutable patriarch of physical theater.

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The Moving Body, Lecoq Training in Europe



Lecoq founded a school in Paris forty-eight years ago to explore the correspondence between movement in nature and the most intimate movements of human emotion. His teaching engages two parallel paths of instruction: the study of improvisation and its rules and the analysis of movement technique. His fascination with movement originated from his love of athletics. Through his own physical ability as a runner, he observed what he calls the "poetry of motion", a phenomenon in which a pedestrian action takes on great meaning and resonance. He devoted his professional life to the development of pedagogy for acting based on the articulation of gesture and the language of movement.

Lecoq's trajectory as an artist enticed me to study his technique. When he was roughly my age, he used his budding skills as a gymnast, mime and dancer to convey his opposition to the German occupation of Paris and the fascist ideology that was stifling so many of his contemporaries. Once he realized how communicative his performance medium was, he became fascinated by how the laws of movement he observed in life applied to different acting traditions. His appetite for masked performance and melodrama led him to Italy where he collaborated with the great Dario Fo and Amelto Sartori. Lecoq's work became immeasurably influenced by the almost extinct art form of

Commedia Dell'Arte. Returning to Paris from the University of Padua, Lecoq felt summoned by his vast and diverse experience in movement analysis to disperse his knowledge to others. Lecoq's concept of the imaginative development and individual responsibility of the theater artist differentiates his training from any other master teacher. He teaches artists how to sustain themselves through a lifetime of creative fertility. Upon graduation from his program he tells his students "I have prepared you for a theater that does not exist, go out and create it"

Based on my experience in performance and in the process of rehearsing productions at Carolina, I realized that character commands the entire instrument of the actor, not just the voice and face. As an actor, my body mediates between the audience and the character's passion. Consequently, I need the full range of instrument to be well tuned and working efficiently. I completed a twelve-week intensive study of Lecoq training that is traditionally taught over two years in my three months in Europe. I went first to Paris to study with Max Dana, a recent graduate of the Lecoq School. He



taught me about the neutrality of the body through engagement of the neutral mask. The neutral mask is inextricably linked to an experience of the natural world. He built me my very own neutral mask that I wore for exercises in every public park in Paris. The neutral mask is alive for the first time every time the actor puts the mask on; the world is completely new and everything in it a perfect mystery. Experiencing the wonder of my surroundings was not too much of a stretch, as Paris was the most beautiful city I'd ever

glimpsed. I then traveled to London to study with Ron East, the director of the School of Physical Theater. Mr. East is a producer, director, playwright, and performer with over thirty years of experience in the professional theater. He was also trained by Lecoq in Paris. Building off the principles of neu-

trality, East taught me about Lecoq's notion of transposition; the idea of reinserting your neutrality as a performer into a dramatic dimension. I was the only student using the entire school the month of July. The studio space was luxurious and the expectations of my teacher for his single pupil enormous. I know I grew, as an artist, from the sheer creative industry Mr. East

actor's instrument will inform whatever artistic process I engage in for the rest of my life. I have a new physical vocabulary as an actor that I never imagined I would possess at twenty-one years old and because of the rich dichotomy of triumph and defeat that characterized my journey, I now have experiences to share with an audience.



demanding of me.

My final destination was Reggio Emilia, Italy, where I studied with Antonio Fava at the 19th International Training Session in Commedia Dell'Arte at the Teatro Cavallerizza. Fava is a master of Commedia Dell'Arte and an internationally acclaimed teacher and director. With Fava and twenty-one other international students, I learned techniques for gesturing, characterization, acrobatics and improvisation in preparation for the Canovacci, our culminating final performance. The class was taught simultaneously in four languages, Italian, English, Spanish and French and is designed so that every student collaborates more than once with every other participant in the course. The language of the body took on new depth and meaning when I was asked everyday to create an original fifteen-minute comedic performance piece in less than three hours with someone who spoke a different language than me.

I wanted to simulate a professional training program with my project design as well as visit three of the world's most beautiful cities. The discoveries I made about my

