

# L'atelier Spectaculaire

We are engaged in conveying meaning to our audience and in finding meaning for ourselves through personal exploration. Through collective creation we acknowledge the importance of both aspects, and bring them together in one artistic experience.

Be it for the creation of plays or for workshops, L'atelier Spectaculaire adopts a collaborative and detailed work process. For each specific project, several artists join Sofia Neukom and/or Philippe Rixhon to work in a trusting and playful atmosphere.

## **PHYSICAL THEATRE WORKSHOPS**

Human beings, men even more than women, are drilled to deny their emotions; big girls don't cry. Emotions have to be re-discovered, and appropriately, readably, harmlessly expressed. In movies, emotions are mainly expressed by the actor's face (close-up), on stage by the actor's body (long shot). Body language has a grammar and a vocabulary.

Based on Lecoq's teaching style – encouraging performers to investigate and create instead of transferring them codified skills, and on Grotowski's paratheatrical phase – attempting to transcend the separation between performer and spectator, Sofia Neukom developed a unique way to re-connect with your emotions and hence connect with your audience.

Sofia helps actors to develop a body language, which is meaningful and readable. Movements, expressions and feelings are the main components of the language. All her workshops are not only contextual and bespoke but dynamically adapted to the current, actual mood and physical condition of the participants. The workshops, e.g. buffoons, devised theatre and children's theatre, lead to a presentation. The show can be modest but it demonstrates to the participants, and potentially to an audience, the acquired skills and the work outcomes.



## **BUFFOONS**

Just like there is a clown in each human being, there is a buffoon in each of us. The audience laughs because the clown cannot avoid failing. To the contrary, the buffoon makes fun of the public, because we fail, he mocks the "normal" people, our miseries, he ridicules openly our triumphs. Each buffoon seeks and accepts this; one who looks for hitting, strikes; one who looks for being beaten, doesn't protect oneself. During the workshop, we look for the cruelest mockery and for the most refined parody. We study the nature of the buffoons and their twisted bodies. We create new volumes, new dimensions, and new articulations in our bodies. We experience the freedom of being twisted.

Outcomes –

- a) the actors are able to find extreme feelings/intentions – disgusting or outstanding – both physically and mentally
- b) the actors are able to show/act extreme feelings/intentions – both physically and mentally
- c) the actors are able to free themselves from any psychological barrier which would prevent them to find/show/act extreme feelings/situations – away from stereotypes, distinguishing between actor and character.

Exercises include –

- a) psychological and physical warm-up, incl. get to know each other
- b) various exercises to recognise, acknowledge and exploit one's "natural" face and body appearance and expression
- c) various exercises to reproduce "beauty ideals"; then to develop corresponding physical dynamics, costumes and voice; and finally to create a character – from outside inwards
- d) various exercises to reproduce "disabilities"; then to develop corresponding physical dynamics, costumes and voices; and finally to create a character – from outside inwards
- e) psychological and physical cool-down.

Prerequisites –

- a) the participants are committed, not forced, to the workshops
- b) the participants are in good physical condition.

The performers will experience and understand their bodies as tools, their mind as control, and their emotions as triggers. This workshop is designed for the performers to experience and push the limits of their own body and mind in order to deal with any given circumstances.

## DEVISED THEATRE

Devised theatre is a collective creation between actors, playwright, director, choreographer and designers. In this context, Sofía acts as choreographer and as facilitator of physical theatre. She enables the actors to express feelings, to discover meaningful action, and to produce connecting, i.e. readable, dramatic and aesthetic movements.

Outcomes –

- a) the actors learn and master the skills of physical theatre necessary to co-create theatre pieces of excellent physical quality
- b) the choreographer collaborates with her colleagues, playwright, director and designers to co-create a piece of theatre.

Exercises include –

- a) psychological and physical warm-up, incl. get to know each other
- b) various exercises to enable the expression of feelings
- c) various exercises to produce readable, dramatic, aesthetic, and meaningful movements – individual movements and collective movements
- d) psychological and physical cool-down.

Prerequisites –

- a) the participants are committed, not forced, to the workshops
- b) the participants are in good physical condition.



## CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Children's workshops are conceived around topics, e.g. witches and magicians. Sofia facilitates the children's discovery of protagonism and antagonism and the children's creation of characters and atmospheres. Children are also accompanied in the design and realisation of costumes.



Outcomes –

- a) the children can create a story, incl. atmospheres and characters, rehearse it and enact it
- b) the children “realise” their character, not only through texts, movements and costumes, but also through music (whereby lyrics can be written on a tune or a tune composed on a text)
- c) the children understand the various theatrical roles, e.g. acting, staging, lighting and sound, through training-on-production.

Exercises include –

- a) psychological and physical, playful warm-up, incl. get to know each other
- b) various activities to find, create or re-create themes and worlds, e.g. the witches' world
- c) various activities to find, create or re-create the participant's role in the theme/world context, whereby the participant can be an object, a plant, an animal, a human being, or a fictitious character, e.g. a fairy
- d) various activities to realise the role, starting with one colour, then the colour and one movement, then building up towards more individual movements and collective choreography, and finally adding voice, song, costume and light
- e) psychological and physical cool-down.

Prerequisites –

- a) the participants are committed, not forced, to the workshops
- b) the participants are in good physical condition.

## YOUTH PHYSICAL THEATRE

Youth physical theatre workshops are conceived around topics from the participants' artistic backgrounds and current interests, e.g. fashion, and theatrical styles, e.g. dance, musical or straight play. Sofía facilitates the discovery of protagonism and antagonism and the creation of characters and atmospheres. The participants are also accompanied in the design and realisation of costumes.



Outcomes –

- a) the 12-to-17-year-old students create a story, incl. atmospheres and characters, rehearse it and enact it
- b) the participants “realise” their character, not only through texts, movements and costumes, but also through music (whereby lyrics can be written on a tune or a tune composed on a text)
- c) the participants establish a company which assures the following functions: performers, designers and technicians (costumes, makeup, set, light, sound, photography and projection), stage manager, assistant director and assistant choreographer

Exercises include –

- a) psychological and physical, professional warm-up, incl. get to know each other
- b) various activities to find, create or re-create themes and worlds, e.g. the fashion world
- c) various activities to find, create or re-create the performer's role in the theme/world context, whereby the participants research contexts and characters
- d) various activities to realise the role, starting with feelings and characters, then building up towards individual movements and collective choreography, and finally adding voice, song, costume and light
- e) story-telling and presentation
- f) psychological and physical cool-down.

Prerequisites –

- a) the participants are committed, not forced, to the workshops
- b) the participants are in good physical condition.

## BIO

Sofía Neukom was born into an artistic family; visual and performing arts have always been her "inspiración". She read fine arts at the National University of Colombia, learned classical dance in Bogotá, modern dance in New York, and physical theatre in London. She choreographed shows in Costa Rica and Canada. In Zurich, Sofía studied Jacques Lecoq's teachings at the Comart Theatre School, appeared in the lead role of the musical *Stark Reduziert*, and in *La Traviata*. A member of the *Vereinigte Theaterschaffende der Schweiz* and of the *Théâtre Jeune Public*, she focuses now on literary creation, dance and physical theatre.



## REFERENCES

Physical theatre workshops:

- a) buffoons, Escuela Regional de Teatro, San Cristobal, Venezuela
- b) devised theatre, East 15 Drama School, London, United Kingdom
- c) children's theatre, City Programme, Olten, Switzerland
- d) youth physical theatre, Wollishofen School, Zurich, Switzerland
- e) youth physical theatre, Lavater School, Zurich, Switzerland

Dance workshops:

- a) dance for children with special needs, Insieme, Zurich, Switzerland
- b) musical theatre, *Die Zauberkuugel*, Berlin, Germany
- c) burlesque, *LoLa*, Zurich, Switzerland

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