



TAPS MASTER CLASS RESOURCE PACK: Physical Theatre and the Lecoq Approach
by **Joel Anderson**
October 2011, London

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Introduction

Over the last few years, in the UK and beyond, the theatre work of companies such as Complicite and the Théâtre du Soleil has prompted a great deal of interest in what is known as ‘physical theatre’, an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches to performance that go beyond the staging of a text to embrace the primacy of the performer’s body and the space. Central to this has been a renewed enthusiasm for the work of Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999), whose Ecole Internationale de Théâtre in Paris has been training actors, directors, architects and mimes over for more than fifty years. Former students of the Ecole include Simon McBurney (founder of Complicite), Ariane Mnouchkine (founder of the Théâtre du Soleil), Geoffrey Rush (actor), Sergi Lopez (actor), and Julie Taymor (director of ‘The Lion King’).

Lecoq devised a system of training that he considered applicable to all the major areas of theatre, and indeed sought to push the boundaries between different practices in order to foster new methods and styles. Common to all the work is an emphasis on the poetics of the performing body, and an intelligent approach to space, shape, and dynamics. The work promotes physical precision and awareness in the performer, who is always seen as an artist participating in a creative process, rather than a ‘vessel’ for the ideas of others. Although Lecoq’s methodologies are generally associated with devised work or collective creation, whereby a group constructs work by way of a workshop process, there is nevertheless a great deal of work that is applicable to text-based theatre contexts. Indeed, by tackling what Lecoq referred to as the ‘laws’ of theatre, the methodology is appropriate training for any form of theatre or performance, as evidenced by the wide range of work created by practitioners trained by Lecoq.

Lecoq’s pedagogy proposes a broad theatre training and education by way of workshop practice. Physical games and exercises are central to the work, and these are inclusive, with most aspects of the work suitable for a range of participants, applicable for different levels of ability and physical training. Most exercises combine practice with analysis, and a large section of Lecoq’s work is devoted to ‘movement analysis’, training the eye along with the body. Group work is crucial, and exercises can be effective for establishing group cohesion and cooperation, and for setting up inclusive environments for creative work. Overall, this is a vibrant and broad approach to creating theatre.

Master class overview

The workshop will consist of a series of exercises, giving a broad sense of Lecoq’s work, together with some explanation and analysis. The group will work as a

whole, at points breaking off into smaller groupings for specific exercises. There will be some general physical work at the start of the session. Participants are advised to wear comfortable clothing.

Exercises

Exercises will indicatively include:

- Spatial exercises and group work in the space
 - Physical actions, physical awareness and movement analysis
 - Improvisation
 - Work on states of tension in performance
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Bibliography

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