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Explorations with Masks
- Considerations for the Use of Masks in Baroque Dance

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This article aims to present some of the principles, characteristics and problems of masked performance. To contextualise the following accounts, a short outline of the use and experiments made with masks in the performing arts during the twentieth century shall be given first.[1]

Information on the technical aspects of masked dance is usually not found in treatises on dance. Much better sources are documents written by several theatre practitioners and pedagogues of the twentieth century who used masks and wrote about their particularities. Furthermore, choreographers and dancers have confronted themselves with masks and written about their experiences (Heiter, 2013, 125-138). As it is impossible to cover all aspects of the history of masked performance in a brief article, I will focus on the results of the work that was done during the short workshop I gave at the conference.

In many cultures the mask is a sacred object, often used in a ritual context, with a divine or diabolic dimension – involving a belief in which the mask represents some kind of spiritual power. Masks are associated with the 'other' and are a means of becoming someone else – a means of transformation (Barba/Savarese, 1991; Aslan/Bablet, 1999; Nunley/McCarthy, 1999; Ferino-Pagden, 2009).

In European culture, masks are linked to Carnival as a part of the disguise. Carnival as a yearly social ritual serves as a kind of catalyst for the preservation of social order by upsetting this order in a chronologically determined and limited period. Besides their use as a disguise, masks may have protective functions. Another well-known use of masks in European culture is the one of half-masks for the commedia dell'arte all'improviso-actors in Renaissance Italy. Travelling all over Europe their art of performance was widely spread. In particular their Masks, meaning not only the mask, but the whole construction of the character with its social standing, its typical gestures, attitudes and way of speaking – in Italian called *tipi fissi* – became popular for centuries (Rudlin, 1994, 2001). By overcoming language barriers with their physical theatre these typical roles survived long after the commedia all'improviso ceased to be performed. It has been inspiring theatre, ballet and opera productions from the nineteenth century until today (Fisher, 1992).

The Mask – Inspiration and Mythical Object for Performing Artists from the Turn of the 19th Century to post-WWII[2]

For the British theatre director and theorist Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) the revitalisation of the mask was essential for the renewal of the art of acting: 'The mask must return to the stage to restore expression... the visible expression of the mind... the inspiration which led men to use the mask in past ages is the same now as it ever was and will never die. It is this inspiration that we shall act under and in which we trust. Therefore let no one attempt to put this thing aside as being of the antique...' (Craig, 1911, in Eldredge, 1996, 13).

At the beginning of the twentieth century several artists initiated research processes with masks. In Russia Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1949) integrated masks in his training

program for actors, whereas in France Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, Charles Dullin (1885-1949) at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, Louis Jouvet (1887-1951), Marie-Hélène (born Copeau 1902-1994) et Jean Dasté (1904-1994) and Suzanne Bing (1885-1967) were experimenting with commedia dell'arte elements, improvisation and masks in search of physical acting techniques.

While developing his mime method and exercises, Étienne Decroux, a student of Jacques Copeau, used to pull transparent cloth over his head or wore neutral masks in order to draw attention to the expression of his body rather than to his facial expression (Decroux, 1994, 18; Decroux/Leabhart/ Chamberlain, 2008[3]; Barba/Savarese, 1991, 118). Up to the present day the mask is an important educational tool for theatre practitioners and performers.

In theatre anthropology, research focuses on the different stylistic forms of the performing arts, looking for similar principles among the performance techniques (Barba/Savarese, 1991, 8-22). In the Japanese Noh theatre and the Balinese mask theatre, masks are used with a very precise technique for their movements and have to be studied for several years. As the mask has an extraordinary appearance, leading to another dimension of interpretation, it was used by directors and theatre pedagogues to destroy the daily automatism of western actors and to allow them to become increasingly aware of their body language. Bertolt Brecht used the mask in several of his plays to emphasize the resulting alienation effect for the actor as well as for the audience (Tenschert, 1961, 50-57). But besides all those experiments with masks mentioned before, nothing made the western theatre producers fantasise more than the character masks of the commedia dell'arte.

Rediscovering the commedia dell'arte Mask and its Manufacturing Technique – Character Masks

Among the expressive masks there are larval masks, character masks and utilitarian masks (Lecoq, 2009, 52). For baroque dance, however, commedia dell'arte character masks are the most significant ones. Similarly to reconstruction issues of baroque dance during the 20th century, the modern commedia dell'arte had many difficulties to overcome, among them the lost masks, the forgotten manufacturing techniques and the knowledge how to act with the mask – how to become a Mask. The interpretation of a commedia dell'arte character differs significantly from the psychologically motivated acting in Western theatre: 'Personality disappeared to be replaced by type: the personality of the actor is thus overtaken not by an author's scripted character, but by the persona of the mask to be played. […] In Commedia, 'Mask' refers to character type and is inclusive of each individual mask. Thus the Lovers are still 'Masks' even though they do not wear actual masks' (Rudlin, 1994, 34-35).[4]

Giorgio Strehler's (1921-1997) production *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni* by Carlo Goldoni had several phases of creation.[5] For the creation in 1947 at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, the actors already used masks but not without sacrifices, as Giorgio Strehler remembers: 'The actors […] played in pathetic masks made of gauze and painted cardboard. We made them ourselves. They were infernal, awkward, unhappy things. The contours quickly bit into our flesh and visibility was relative and obscured. Fastened, as they were, straight on the face, with a primitive system of elastic, without any suppleness, the masks did not permit the eyelids to move. The eyelashes of the actor brushed against the edges and made the eyes weep continuously. The actors, each on their own personal initiative, began to pad them with peculiar pieces of wadding held on with sticking plaster. Thus the inside of the mask began to take on an altogether poetic quality. Then, as they were worn, the sweat of the actors penetrated the cardboard and made the glue melt. By the end of the play we were holding in our hands a few little black sweat-soaked patches which would not regain their shape until the next day. There was also the personal drama of the actors who could not 'feel it' in such a mask' (Strehler, 1998, in Rudlin, 1994, 43-45).

Consequently, Marcello Moretti (1910-1961), interpreting Arlecchino, preferred to paint his face. As early as 1948, Italian sculptor Amleto Sartori (1915-1962) started to research the technique of making leather masks and French theatre pedagogue Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999) introduced him to Giorgio Strehler. Together, they travelled to Paris to the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra to study historic masks. When Sartori recreated a mask after these models, 'it was a beautiful mask, but unperformable' as Lecoq remembers.[6] Finally Amleto Sartori succeeded and (re)invented the craft of creating leather masks which were alive, long-lasting and comparatively agreeable to wear (Rudlin, 1994, 43-47, Sartori in Botteldoorn, 2012, 181-185).[7] Leather is materially closer to the skin of the face and therefore the contrast is less striking for the spectator. When confronted with the mask creations of Sartori, the actors of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano found out quickly that they lacked the knowledge of how they should perform with them. It took a long time until they rediscovered the forgotten principles of how to create an effect on the audience by using certain rhythms and meticulous timing in a similar way as used in slapstick-comedies. This is also one of the reasons why Strehler created several versions of this emblematic play, which is still in the repertoire of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano today and touring the world.[8] This play was also a starting point for other theatre practitioners to experiment with commedia dell'arte masks, from Dario Fo (1926-2016), Carlo Boso, Antonio Fava to Arianne Mnouchkine and Mario Gonçales. Furthermore, Jacques Lecoq used character masks of commedia dell'arte in the curriculum of his acting school, requiring his students to create a mask of their own. Working with character masks can be extremely interesting. Each expressive mask has its countermask, which means one can act out the opposite of what is considered to be the most obvious expression of the mask (Lecoq, 2009, 58-59).[9] All commedia dell'arte characters are inspired by a certain animality; depending on the shape of the mask and the temperament of the interpreter, a Harlequin can be more like a cat, dog, fox or ape. Consequently, the position of the trunk and consciousness of the pelvic muscles are essential for the body language regarding the types of commedia dell'arte. All movements should start from the centre of gravity. John Rudlin explains how important it is to train 'the cervical vertebrae to move with greater independence from the thoracic than it is the case in everyday life' (Rudlin, 1994, 41). He emphasizes that 'proper training of the neck requires expert attention […] and should be built up gradually, not as a sudden demand' (Rudlin, 1994, 41).

Today, professional mask training requires students to experiment with neutral masks before confronting themselves with expressive masks and their demands of interpretation. The work with the neutral mask permits a particular state of awareness, a beneficial base for the interpreter.

The Neutral Mask – A Training Instrument for the Actor

'Surrendering to the mask necessitates a non-egotistical working base, a state of availability of mind and body, or rather mind in body, which, thanks to the experiments by Jacques Copeau and Suzanne Bing in the Vieux Colombier School and developed by Jean Dasté and Jacques Lecoq, has become known as 'neutrality''(Rudlin, 1994, 36). Jacques Lecoq performed with a 'noble' mask in *L'Exode* (1945), a production by Marie-Hélène and Jean Dasté (Lecoq, 2009, 2). The first actual neutral leather mask was created by Amleto Sartori due to a request of Jacques Lecoq and was used as a pedagogical tool for acting students (Sartori, 2012, 183, Lecoq, 2009, 2). Jacques Lecoq defines the neutral mask as follows: 'It is a face that we call neutral, a perfectly balanced mask, which produces a physical sensation of calm. This object, when placed on the face, should enable one to experience the state of neutrality prior to action, a state of receptiveness to everything around us, with no inner conflict' (Lecoq, 2009, 34).

Being confronted with a neutral mask, the observer enlarges the focus of his look from the face to the whole body. The face as a

communicative surface is crucial for us to determine whether we are in front of somebody friendly, unfriendly or even dangerous. If the expressions of the face are no longer readable, the observer naturally turns to the rest of the body in order to interpret its attitude and to know which attitude to adopt consequently.

'Beneath the neutral mask the actor's face disappears and his body becomes far more noticeable. Talking to someone, you often look that person in the face. With an actor wearing the neutral mask, you look at the whole body. The look is the mask, so the face becomes the whole body. Every movement is revealed as powerfully expressive. When the actor takes off the mask, if he has worn it well, his face is relaxed. I hardly need to watch what he does; it is enough to observe his face at the end to know if he wore it truthfully. The mask will have drawn something from him, divesting him from artifice. His face will be beautiful, free. Once he has achieved this freedom, the mask can be removed with no fear of falling back on artificial gestures. The neutral mask, in the end unmasks' (Lecoq, 2009, 36).

In other words, by concealing the face, the mask allows the revelation of the information given through bodily expression. The focus of the spectator transfers instinctively from the face to the whole body.

In her article Frances Tucker seems to worry about the expectations and perceptions of today's' audience. She argues that 'when we design costumes to show to today's general audience, we must remember that the 21st century is highly image-conscious. The public are used to fancy designs everywhere they look. So if you have detailed costumes with a plain mask your audience might feel there is nothing to look at, or that you have made a mistake, or not done your research. So, sometimes you have to show what is expected by today's audience, rather than what actually happened in the relevant period' (Tucker, 2006, 41).

A well-made neutral mask, either of leather or a 'noble' mask beautifully painted, will never disappoint an audience but always challenge them, whereas a white plastic mask will not only seem like a strange element but also actually disturb them. Material and form are decisive for the spirit of the mask. Understanding and respecting those two aspects is necessary for the successful use of masks.

Dancers and Masks – Reflections of Mary Wigman, Oskar Schlemmer and Alwin Nikolais

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, choreographies with masks are not as uncommon as one might think. Several artists confronted themselves with masks and used them as an inspirational point of departure for their choreographic creations, among them the German expressionist dancer and choreographer Mary Wigman (1886-1973), the German painter, sculptor and stage designer Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943), and the American dancer and choreographer Alwin Nikolais (1910-1993).

While working with the masks for *Zeremonielle Gestalt* (1925) and her second version of *Hexentanz* (1926) Mary Wigman experienced not only involuntarily changes in her body, like differing muscular tension and the shift of the centre of gravity (Wigman, 1963, 33-34, 41-42), but also that even though the mask has one rigid expression, a small inclination of the head could change the expression for the spectator. Mary Wigman uses the expression of '*Eigenleben*' – a 'life of its own' – for the witch mask created by Victor Magito (Wigman, 1963, 41). Oskar Schlemmer made a similar observation: 'My experiments with masks taught me the particularity that a minimum of expression, yes, even the suppression of any expression cannot stop the mask from having an expression, fascinating and stereotypical like the one which constitutes its essence' (Schlemmer, 1931, in Scheper, 1988, 267-268).[10]

For the choreography *Das Totenmal* (1930) Mary Wigman was working with masks made by Bruno Goldschmitt. She experienced that she had to subordinate her ideas to the formal and symbolic dimension of these masks.

During this working process she used the mirror as a kind of mediator for the interaction between body and mask (Wigman, 1963, 94-95). She describes the process of mask work as follows: 'This transformation demands of the dancer to overcome the personal in favour of the typical and the heightening of the typical to the '*Überpersonal*'. The masks annihilates the human being as a person and gives space for the dancing being, who wants to create' (Müller, 1986, 131).[11]

What seems to be a vertiginous loss of one's individuality can also be felt as a liberation and a way towards formal and abstract movement without an emotional interpretation.

The costumes and mask creations by the German expressionist dancers Lavinia Schulz (1896-1924) and Walter Holdt (1899-1924)[12] in Hamburg in the 1920s, can be considered as emblematic modern versions for baroque conceptions (Chadzis, 1998). Mark Franko writes about the concept of body deformations of allegorical as well as grotesque costumes in the French court ballet, stating that 'the dancing figure becomes autonomous from its 'natural' body in a project whose artistic outcome is not bound up with assumptions about psychology and human actions resumed in narrative' (Franko, 1993, 110). From this perspective one can also consider the even more radical abstraction in the work of Alwin Nikolais. He masked not only the face but the whole body of the dancers with large bags made of Lycra for the section *Noumenon* in *Masks, Props and Mobiles* (1953). 'My original effort was toward transcendence – out of a central emotional state of dancing into a more heroic figure by use of masks or props, thus making of the dancer an archetype rather than a pedestrian emotional figure. [...] In *Noumenon*, the idea of masking for the purpose of enlarging was now extended over the whole body. Out of this grew a totally non-literal, non-objective dance. Here the dancer brought to life free-formed sculptural shapes without revealing his own physical body' (Feinman, 1994, 149). Dorothy Vislocky, a member of the dance company of Alwin Nikolais, declared in an interview how the dancers felt about it: 'Being masked helped the dancers communicate a universal message by allowing them to concentrate on the motion. Therefore, the kinaesthetic message felt by the audience was one whose interpretation was based on their universal experience rather than upon the emoting of the dancer' (Interview 9.3.1989 in Feinman, 1994, 150). Dance theorist Laurence Louppe emphasizes how the mask can be helpful for a dancer: 'By removing the role of the face as a psycho-anecdotal commentator, the mask is doing the dancer's body a double favour: It emancipates it from naturalism and induces the whole body to mobilize itself still more in order to assure the responsibility of gesture and expression' (Louppe, 1999, 186).[13]

These few examples demonstrate how the use of the mask is perceived by modern dancers and choreographers as limiting and technically demanding as well as a liberating and powerful source of creativity. Nevertheless, every approach to masks is individual and subjective, so everyone experiences different sensations and stimulations by working with masks.

Baroque Dance and Masks

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century masks were an important aesthetic and performative element in European court ballet. A great variety of mask types were employed for the portrayal of the roles. They were considered as an indispensable part of the costume.[14] Until the middle of the eighteenth century professional dancers wore masks for their performances. Besides theatrical dancing, informal masquerades and masked balls were common amusements in the choreographic culture of this period. Therefore it seems important for baroque dancers and choreographers to engage in a research process with masks and mask technique.[15]

The Power of masks

As discussed above, a mask is more than a mere accessory, it is an object with its own power, its own logic and demands special attention by the performer. There are some general facts and rules one can find in most cultures using masks for the performing arts, though, which might be helpful to be considered when working with a mask.

Just the simple fact of putting on a mask changes the state of the body of the performer. Depending whether you put on a mask covering the whole face or a half-mask, you might experience trouble breathing; of course with half-masks it is easier. The lack of air can be a real challenge for actors or dancers, especially during a physically demanding performance.

If you put on a mask in front of someone, always turn around and stand with your front and face turned away from your audience. Take time to get comfortable, let your breath calm down. Adjust the mask by putting something soft, a handkerchief or a sponge, between your face and the mask. Lecoq considered the space between the mask and the face as vital (Lecoq, 2009, 36).[16] When you feel as comfortable as possible, turn around and just let the others watch you for a moment standing there. If you are wearing an expressive mask, you might wish to turn around, already assuming a pose, but the moment of standstill after you have turned around is crucial, as the spectators need some time to see you and to take-in what they are looking at. Then start to move. You will probably experience that it feels differently from what you are normally used to feel when you are moving – because wearing a mask can influence the position of the centre of gravity, the balance and the physical tension in your muscles.

‘Performing with a mask, using it to express reactions and feelings, and being able to orientate oneself in space in spite of a restriction of the field of vision, require actions which force the rest of the body to work in a particular way. Anyone who has worked with a mask knows that the use of the body is totally different when one is wearing a mask, even if the actions one does are the same’ (Barba/Savarese, 1991, 118).

The restriction of the field of vision is the most challenging part of wearing a mask, besides the lack of air and perhaps the uncomfortable feeling on your face. The most interesting effect of the mask is, however, not the physical changes, which are only a side effect, but the change of energy it induces in the body of the performer.

‘We normally look straight ahead and about thirty degrees downwards. If we keep the head in the same position and raise the eyes thirty degrees, a muscular tension will be created in the neck and trunk which will alter our balance. […] All these performers [the Kathakali, the Balinese, the Peking Opera, the Noh actor] use a field of vision which is different from the one they use in daily life. Their whole physical attitude is changed: the torso’s muscle tone, the pressure on the feet, the balance. A change in the normal way of looking brings about a qualitative change of energy. By one simple change in the daily way of looking, these performers are able to give impetus to a whole new level of energy’ (Barba/Savarese, 1991, 105 – citing: Eugenio Barba, *Theatre Anthropology: First Hypothesis*).

The first objective of every artist working with masks is to master the physical impact of the mask and to get familiar with the sensations and changes the mask produces. This process might not be completely without fits of anxiety as Marcello Moretti or Dario Fo could testify.[17] Only then can he or she start with technical, aesthetic and creative aspects of masked performance, bringing the mask to life.[18] Working, experimenting, dancing and acting with masks demands patience, playfulness and awareness of some technical principles.[19]

Selecting a mask

The first important decision when choosing a mask for a performance depends on what you wish to represent. If you are looking for a Venetian mask with glitter and feathers, for example, several of the rules stated below do

not apply, as this kind of mask is a mere accessory and ornament. While dancing with it, you still have to consider the movements with your head, as ornamented masks confuse the look of the spectator, so you should be careful not to move your head constantly. When working with a 'beautiful' mask, as it was used in court ballet and ballet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, you need to concentrate on your energy and body language. This kind of mask does not agree with ordinary behaviour and gestures, but requires stylization and very consciously executed 'graceful' movements. Gesticulation always destroys the desired effect of any mask.

Working with expressive masks, the first step is to 'decipher' the characterisation of the mask by the form of its wrinkles, nose, lips, cheeks, foreheads and the shape of the openings for the eyes. All these parts of the face have a meaning and give the mask a personality. Ask yourself: Is it a young or an older person (falling traits)? Full cheeks indicate a full stomach, hollow cheeks a hungry character (Harlequin). Some noses are like beaks of birds (Pantalone, Magnifico, Zanni), but a nose can also have a phallic resemblance (Capitano). Round and small openings for eyes can indicate stupidity, surprise and meanness, falling eyes give an old and/or sad impression (Pantalone, Pulcinella), but almond shaped eyes that are going upwards indicate intelligence and can become even diabolic (Magnifico). The length of the nose is also significant: 'The longer the nose of the mask, the more stupid it is and the more necessary it is to reduce the range of your own thought processes in order to let it play, rather than have to suffer your cleverness at its expense' (Rudlin, 1994, 40). For many commedia dell'arte practitioners the shape of the mask also hides an animal character, which is traditionally associated with certain characters: Magnifico-Eagle, Dottore-Bull. Harlequin has several types of reference animals: dog, fox, cat and monkey. The represented animal depends on the mask and on the plot in which Harlequin is performing in front of the audience.

Thus, before selecting or buying an expressive mask, make sure to 'read' the expression and ask yourself whether you would like to incarnate the represented type. The rules are the same as described in general treatises on physiognomy.[20] If you create your own mask, you can convey the character to the mask by choosing to give it this or that precise (character) trait. Nevertheless, before selecting a character mask for work, it is sometimes necessary to try different shapes of the same type of character on the person who should impersonate the character in order to decide which mask suits him or her best, depending on his/her own physical characteristics. If you create and make your own mask it is important to consider your own physiognomy. The practical recommendations of Frances Tucker on how to improve the fitting of a mask might be a great help (Tucker, 2006, 41-42).

John Rudlin, a specialist on commedia dell'arte performances recommends that 'as well as fulfilling its theatrical function, a mask needs to fit its wearer and be comfortable for him or her to wear for a period of time. Making a mask for a specific person means taking into account the shape of their face and the relative positions of forehead, eye holes and lip line etc. […] You should have a very good idea of the role or character that the mask is to portray, and also what kind of auditorium or performance space the mask will be used for' (Rudlin, 2001, 199 -200).

Indeed working with a mask, by allowing it to become alive and creating a character, is not possible without taking into consideration a potential onlooker.

The Dancer and the Spectator – A Symbiotic Relationship

As we saw during the short workshop with neutral masks and commedia dell'arte half masks, both the voluntary interpreters as well as the spectators experience how the mask changes perception – and how it unconsciously influences behaviour and interpretation. If the mask itself is an inanimate object with one frozen expression,

this expression can be transformed by the spectator. He or she needs to give meaning to the figure on stage and interpret the mood or the character of the masked performer by trying to decrypt the body language together with the information the masks provides. Do not work with a mirror, as you would as a dancer. This time the mirror is not your ally but your enemy because 'Masks live in the eye of the beholder' (Rudlin, 1994, 42).[21]

Therefore, just standing in an upright position while wearing a mask gives a distinct impression. Although a mask in general has only one frozen expression, it changes by only inclining the head a little to the side as well as forwards or executing any small movement of the head or of the chin, if it is a half-mask. That is what the artists quoted above experienced as well. Of course in most cases it is not the mask, which has changed the expression, although there are masks that can have ambiguous traits. The two face halves of these masks are not exactly symmetrical but show two different expressions when they are seen in profile; for example one corner of the mouth is going ever so slightly up – suggesting a smile – and the other corner is going down, suggesting sadness or bitterness and age. The real change, however, is a shift of signification in the eyes of the observer. It is not so much the expression which changes but rather the interpretation of that movement by the observer. Additionally, every mask has an independent life, its transformation is unique and unpredictable: The same mask allows significantly different impressions, depending on who is wearing it, on his or her body stature and weight.

Referring to her own experiences, Catherine Turocy explains: 'When I am wearing the mask, I do not feel that the audience is looking at my face – so they're not looking at the whole history of my life, they're not looking at Catherine Turocy. When I put the mask on, I know that they're seeing the mask and then when I take on the character, it's not a personal expression: I practise the storytelling. And I am telling the story and I am wearing a mask. And so it is really a masterful manipulation of a living puppet – and I happen to be the puppet' (The New York Baroque Dance Company, 2011, 00:17:09-00:17:39). John Rudlin emphasizes on this topic: 'It is true that a mask has no individualised past when it appears, only a present presence as a Mask' (Rudlin, 1994, 35).

Hands should never touch the mask or come too close to it, as their natural appearance reminds the spectator of the artificiality of the mask.[22] I would in any case recommend to put make-up on the hands as well. What is valid for the hands as well as the mask also concerns the appearance of the feet; they should never be naked, as they also would break the established convention between mask and the spectator.[23]

The performance with the mask has a specific temporality. It also demands a conscious use of movements of the head and the neck as well as the rest of the body. At this point the role of a director, choreographer, or a third eye becomes essential for the creation of a masked acting part, pantomime or baroque choreography. If the interpreter wants to resolve it all alone by only relying on personal aesthetic choices or the personal feeling, he or she will most probably fail at some point because the inner feeling does not correspond with the dynamics of the mask.[24]

This should also be thought of while experimenting with expressive gestures for expressive masks. Try to discover not only the correct temporality of your masked character but find gestures and attitudes, which suit the mask and yourself. Again, do not let yourself be influenced by engravings by Jacques Callot (1592-1635) or the treatise of Gregorio Lambranzi[25] – try to discover first how your mask would stand, walk, sit, move etc., always with someone watching you and reacting to your improvisation performance; at least one person, or even better a group of people. If you are working with a grotesque character, try uncommon and awkward positions.

Arne Zaslove, an American mask expert, director of the Bathhouse Theater and collaborator of the New York Baroque Dance Company, summarizes the important elements

of masked performance as follows: 'PRISM: Posture-Rhythm-Inner Soul-Mask. These four components are equal - to character' (The New York Baroque Dance Company, 2011, 00:14:35-00:14:45).

When you are comfortable with your character, your mask and its behavioural characteristics, try to work with a partner. See how you respond to it and how your body expresses your actions and reactions. Only after these moments of 'laboratory' you might introduce a gesture or a position you imitate. This is also the point where you might start interpreting a dance or begin with choreographing. And do not be surprised: even working with one masked character for several years, you might still feel changes and evolutions.

Catherine Turocy has a specific method[26], which was also used by the actors of the Odin Teatret for their training, helping them to find postures and gestures for their characters during the process of creation.[27] Starting from a person in a picture or a statue, you try to imitate the posture to your utmost ability of seizing it. Again, you would need someone looking at you and perhaps correcting your position ever so slightly. This method requires that you have already mastered some principles of the mask technique and that you know not only how to take a posture but how to 'inhabit' it; thus making it come alive and moving for a spectator. Still, it only gives you a point of departure, your own imagination has to fill in the moment before and the moment after, so that your character really comes alive and may move, dance and act.

If you move in front of your audience, one eye and a bit of the nose should always be visible, otherwise the mask disappears for the spectator, for example when you hang your head. This does not mean that you are not allowed to turn around but you have to be aware of the effect.[28] In conclusion, experimenting with masks means always to find out what works for you and how it works for you. The longer you work with masks, the easier it gets to develop not only the appropriate technique, but a kind of performance instinct.

As demonstrated in the introductory part, masks have played an important role in the baroque dance culture, but also for theatre practitioners, dancers and choreographers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For baroque dancers and choreographers it should not only be a fancy accessory, but an authentic and powerful tool for transformation, imitating a cultural technique which allows the recreation of an aesthetic that today's audience is no longer used to and which will always surprise and challenge them.

Have a lot of fun experimenting with masks – to discover and uncover hidden parts of your performance personality!

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End Notes

1 My observations and advice are based on my personal artistic training and experience.

2 The following paragraphs are intended to present some names and facts for a better contextualisation of the use of masks today, but are by no means pretending to be complete or exhaustive.

3 In an interview with Christiane Fournier, Decroux explains that in opposition to the old pantomime where 'the face was nude and the body covered, I want the body to be nude and the face veiled' (Decroux/ Leabhart/Chamberlain, 2008, 39). For Decroux the face has something 'obscene' (Decroux/Leabheart/ Chamberlain, 2008, 64). 'But the best reason for my prefering the body is that the face re-presents and the body creates' (Decroux/Leabheart/Chamberlain, 2008, 41). In *Paroles sur le mime*, Decroux states drastically what happens if you cover the face: 'Car le visage annulé, le corps n'avait pas trop de tous les membres pour le remplacer' (Decroux, 1994, 18).

4 John Rudlin gives a description of each stock character explaining the signification of the name, the origin of the type, the characteristics of costume, mask, props, stance, walk, movements, gestures, speech as well as the reference animal, the relationship of the type to the other roles and to the audience and its plot function (Rudlin, 1994, 67-159)

5 Giorgio Strehler admits being directly influenced by the production of *The Servant of Two Masters* directed by Max Reinhardt (Strehler, 1977, 102). Strehler's other versions were created in 1952, 1956, 1963 and 1975. The most important interpreters of Arlecchinos were Marcello Moretti and Ferruccio Soleri.

For pictures of *Arlecchino servitore di due Padroni* (1947) see http:archivio.piccoloteatro.org/eurolab/repertorio.php?tab=5&sub_tab=3&title=Archivi+-+repertorio

6 'Nous allâmes à la Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris voir les anciens masques de Zanni. Sartori fit un, imité de ceux qu'il avait vus. Il était très beau mais injouable' (Lecoq, 1985, 267).

7 Several creators of mask, in particular in Italy and France, use this technique, http://www.collectifmasque.fr/ as well as the contact list of leather mask makers established by John Rudlin (Rudlin, 2001, 209-211). This author describes the process of fabrication of leather masks (Rudlin, 1994, 249-261) and gives further advice on mask making (Rudlin, 2001, 199-209). The advantage of these masks is that they are extremely long lasting, and that they – unlike masks made of cardboard or plaster – cannot be harmed by perspiration and make-up.

8 The last performances were in March 2016 and the next will be in May 2017. Arlecchino is still interpreted by Ferrucio Soleri (born 1929). See the playbill for *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni* at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano: http://www.piccoloteatro.org/it/2016-2017/arlecchino-servitore-di-due-padroni.

9 See for improvisation exercises for the countermask the homonymous chapter (Eldredge, 1996, 97-103).

10 'Meine Versuche mit Masken haben mich das Eigentümliche gelehrt, daß ein Minimum des Ausdrucks, ja, die Unterdrückung jeglichen Ausdrucks die Maske nicht hindern kann, Ausdruck zu haben, eben jenen faszinierenden, stereotypen, der ihr Wesen ausmacht' (translation by the author).

11 'Diese Verwandlung verlangt vom Tänzer die Überwindung des Persönlichen zugunsten des Typischen und die Steigerung des Typischen zum Überpersönlichen. […]. Die Maske löscht den Menschen als Person aus und gibt dem zur Gestaltung drängenden Tanzgeschöpf Raum' (translation by the author).

12 See for ex. the masks and costumes for 'Toboggan B' and 'Great technique' http://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/collection/permanent-collection/modernity/costumes-toboggan-b-and-great-technique.html.

13 'Le masque en enlevant au visage son rôle de commentateur psycho-anecdotique rendra donc au corps de l'artiste un double service: Il l'affranchira du naturalisme et suivant il conduira ce corps tout entier à se mobiliser davantage pour assurer la responsabilité du geste et de l'expression' (translation by the author).

14 See my other article *Aesthetic and Performative Functions of the Mask in French Court Ballet (1573-1681*) in this issue P67.

15 An interesting example of the use of several types of masks was the (re)creation of the Ballet de la Merlaison (1635) by Christine Bayle in 2011. Watch an extract: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o16ji3Uwidk.

16 'Like every other mask, a neutral mask should not adhere closely to the face. A certain distance should be preserved between the face and the mask, for it is precisely this distance which makes it possible for the actor to play. It must be slightly larger than the face. The real dimensions of face, as found, for example, on death masks, do not help the performer to find the register of play, nor to extend it to those around. This is true of all masks' (Lecoq, 2009, 36).

17 Marcello Moretti had fits of claustrophobia (Rudlin, 1994, 45-46) and Dario Fo writes: 'Firstly, wearing a mask can, in an actor, induce anxiety deriving not so much from the use itself as from the fact that the mask restricts both the visual field and the acoustic-vocal range. Your own voice seems to be singing at you, stunning you, ringing in your ears an, until you master it, you cannot control your breathing. The mask feels like an encumbrance and can easily transform itself into a torture chamber. That is the first reason. Then there is a second which is mythical, magical almost. A singular sensation afflicts you when you take off the mask – this at least, is my reaction – the fear that part of the face has remained stuck to it, or the fear that the face has gone with the mask. When you remove the mask after having had it on for two or three hours, you have the impression of annihilating yourself' (Rudlin, 1994, 37).

18 'When performers put on a mask, it is as if their body has suddenly been decapitated. They give up all movement and expression of the facial musculature. The face's extraordinary richness disappears. There is such a resistance created between the provisional face (*kamen* in Japanese) and the performer that this conversion of the face into something apparently dead can actually make one think of a decapitation. This is one of the performer's greatest challenges: to transform a static, immobile, fixed object into a living and suggestive profile' (Barba/Savarese, 1991, 118).

19 As it is really impossible to describe every movement principle accurately, I suggest taking workshops and another good inspiration is all the reflections on principles like balance, opposition, dilation, energy and rhythm as they are explained in several treatises for physical theatre (Barba/Savarese, 1991; Eldridge, 1996; Lecoq, 2009; Rudlin, 1994 and 2001) At first glance, it might seem that these books are not for dancers, but in physical theatre, the boundaries between, acting, miming and dancing are permeable.

20 Showing a table assembling the examples of lesson 25 explaining the function of the muscles of the head, for mastication and expression by the French anatomist Mathias Duval in his *Précis d'Anatomie à l'usage des artistes*, the *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* explains: 'Although the facial muscles do not work independently of each other, facial expression is determined by the prevalence of one or another of these muscles over the others. [… It] shows what effects would be created if the facial muscles could function independently. The resulting expressions clearly show that pure physiological movement has in itself an effect on the spectator' (Barba/Savarese, 1991, chapter 'Face and Eyes', ill. 36, 115, Duval, 1900, [285]-328).

21 In Jacques Lecoq's mask pedagogy, one shouldn't look in the mirror either (Lecoq, 2009, 55).

22 'The actor's hands should never touch the mask because they're the only uncostumed, unmade-up part of the body in Commedia. Even the Lovers, though not masked, are exaggeratedly made up. The natural should not come into contact with the grotesque, the polychromatic with the monochrome' (Rudlin, 1994, 42).

23 'Shoes are often thought about too late – actors [and even more so: dancers] need them early enough to get used to walking in them, but not so early that they start to ruin them, They must be right because in a lot of cases they are directly in the audience's eye line. If we don't believe in the shoes, why should we believe in the Mask. For this reason bare feet are out, even for the lowlifes, as they belong to the actor, not to the Mask. For the servants the important thing is that we don't notice their feet – and if the shoes aren't right we will' (Rudlin, 2001, 227).

24 For more inspiring thoughts about timing and rhythm see Barba/Savarese, 1991, chapter 'Rhythm', 211-217.

25 In several engravings by Johann Georg Puschner Lambranzi are clearly indentifiable: Halfmasks for Harlequin, Pulcinella and the Dottore, mask covering the whole face for grotesque roles and satyres (Lambranzi, 1716, vol. I, 17. 29-33, 43- 44, 46, 48, and vol. II, 50). There are even dances with two-faced masks, which are technically very demanding (Lambranzi, 1716, vol. I 19, 20). Often the engravings are not so explicit, but the text mentions that the dancer is masked, for. ex. 'Dieser masquirte Bauer' - 'This masked farmer' (Lambranzi, 1716, vol. I, 18 and see also 16).

26 I was attending a mask workshop she gave at the International Summer Academy of Baroque Dance in Löftadalen in Sweden in Summer 2016. Working with her was a great pleasure, as she is a very good director for masked work.

27 The Odin Teatret is an international cross-disciplinary theatre collective, founded in 1964 in Oslo by the Italian director and pedagogue Eugenio Barba (born 1936) who previously worked with Jerzy Grotoswky. In 1966 it moved to Holstebro in Denmark and changed its name to Odin Teatret / Nordisk Teater-Laboratorium. The Odin Teatret hosts also the ISTA, International School for Theatre Anthropology, founded in 1979, see http://www.odinteatret.dk/about-us/about-odin-teatret.aspx. In several conferences I attended in Paris Roberta Carreri and Iben Nagel Rasmussen, two actresses of the Odin Teatret presented their training and work process for creating a character. When creating the solo Judith Roberta Carreri used also paintings of Judith, Salome and Mary Magdalene imitating their postures (Carreri, 2014, 111-117 and in particular 113).

28 John Rudlin calls that to 'develop the concept of the 'little mask'' (Rudlin, 1994, 42).

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