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“The mask that unmask”

An actor’s technique workshop by Fiore Zulli
about the use and the meaning of the traditional mask

There is an ancestral knowledge about the origin of the mask, linked with the need to let the community enter into a direct relationship with the metaphysical world and, on the other hand, to represent the different types of human psychism.

Therefore, what is a Traditional Mask? ... What are its specific meaning and purpose? ... How a traditional mask, be it African, European, Asian or American, can help the actor to find a better relationship with his body in search of that special quality of presence needed to tell a story through actions even when working without a mask in his face?

These are some questions that will animate the workshop directed by Fiore Zulli with the artistic collaboration of Carla Robertson.

Participants will be guided to experiment a practical, precise path, in which the actor's body and mind approach the mask as something that is far beyond our normal ordinary perceptions, as a Higher destination, where experiences and living symbols reside and speak us about the deep nature of the Human Being.

The comic and the tragic, the sacred and the profane will be explored from the objective point of view of the traditional mask that, once worn, takes away from the actor his subjective personality's mask, thus allowing him to reveal and physically transmit to the viewer the essence of the staged story.

An approaching work in which techniques, voices, music and ideas of different traditions merge in search of the magic moment when the actor manages in giving life to the traditional mask of this or that culture set in a new expressive context in the present.

LEADING GOALS OF THE WORKSHOP:

- Introduce the participants to the ancient knowledge of the mask's origin in human psychism.
- Observe differences and points of contact between different traditions.
- Exploring how a traditional mask, from ritual or tribal dances to ancient theatre, can be used in different contexts of modern theatre.

MAIN CONTENTS OF THE EXERCISES:

- Listening to the mask: the actor’s body preparation before wearing a traditional mask.
- The organic processes through which the mask establishes a living relation with the actor's body.
- How an imperceptible and precise movement can make the mask change expressions.

- The silent mask and the speaking mask.
- The storytelling dance mask.
- Using the masks on the face and using it on other parts of the body.
- Improvisations with different masks.

THE MASKS:

We'll work with some masks chosen from the following traditions and countries.

- Dan and Baulè (Ivory Coast)
- Rangda (Bali)
- Commedia dell'Arte (Italy)
- Guarani (Bolivia)
- Putumayo (Colombia)
- Latacunga (Ecuador)
- Chhou (India)

All the masks for the work will be provided by the Teatro Simurgh collection.

PARTICIPANTS:

The workshop is addressed to theatre students, professional actors, dancers, directors, and to all those who could be looking for practical approach to the art of the actor from multiple points of view.

Fiore Zulli is an Actor, Director, Playwright, Musician, Singer, Dancer, Pedagogue.

He has written and directed so far forty shows between South America and Europe. His relentless questioning about the practice, the philosophy, the ethics and the meaning of the actor and theatre in contemporary global reality, has broken new ground in the field of a theatre research that operates not so much "in the spotlight" but rather in those places and situations often forgotten or unknown of the human world, where a real capacity of the actors to communicate with the audience becomes a "matter of life or death".

His shows can have different characteristics among them in terms of stage language, thematic or aesthetic, but they all originate from a theatre practice whose starting point is a deep interest in the Human Being.

Carla Robertson is an Actress, Singer, Dancer, Pedagogue, Costume Designer, **Photographer** Artist of Bolivian/US origin, co-founder of the Teatro del Ogro in Bolivia and then of the Teatro Simurgh in Ecuador. She embodies the result of the studies on the artistic training, philosophy and ethic of the actor developed by Fiore Zulli in the years of work in South America.

Her personal research led her to explore beyond the theatre, in many fields of knowledge ranging from educational psychology to philosophies and religions between East and West; from traditional singing techniques and ancient practices of studying the movement of the body, up to the observation of plants as a means of meditation.

The skills of interpreter and the ability to synthesize, with her stage presence and the versatility of her voice, different cultural influences in languages always deep and universal, made her worth of an unfailing appreciation of the public and the critics. Over the years, she's always been an example of talent and discipline in front of pupils and companions.

You can find Fiore Zulli and Carla Robertson complete biographies at this link:

<https://www.teatrosimurgh.com/en/founders/>