

## HOW TO & TIPS: PANTOMIME FOR ACTORS

I created a lesson for each selected exercise from Jacques Lecoq's *Pantomime for Actors Technique*. I grouped the exercises in two units, based on their level of difficulty. Initially, I thought I could create an assessment tool for each exercise but considering the time constrain, I chose to elaborate my research around one of the exercises: *The Walking*.

The most difficult part of *The Walking* exercise is to learn how to coordinate the leg and feet movements that need to occur in order to create the illusion of "walking." The lower body set of movements is not the only component of this exercise, but it's quite more complicated than the upper body set of movements (arms, torso and head). I spent a good amount of time teaching two of the three required steps to perform *The Walking* (lower body). Remembering the criteria to perform those two steps was easy. The difficulty was in executing the steps while coordinating a set of movements with both legs.

To assess students' learning I created a checklist. Embedded in the checklist' criteria were the performance indicators or three "rules" for each step (steps 1 and 2). Even though I used this tool for all three formative assessment strategies (teacher, peer and self) I focused my research on peer assessment. I divided the class in groups of two to do a "Show and Tell," during which student A completes the checklist while observing student B perform the steps, and vice versa. Very often I used a more informal approach, offering the student mimes feedback based on the criteria, during "The Walking" sessions.

Later, I introduced the third step of the exercise. I used two different approaches to offer peer feedback. The first one was similar to the aforementioned formative assessment strategy with the exception that this time I used a sharing protocol instead of a checklist. The students (A and B) still needed to refer to the criteria but now the focus was on following a protocol to share observations and make recommendations to improve. (See *Protocols and Video*). The other approach, which became a routine, occurred in a whole-class setting at the end of the workshop.

Three to five student mimes stood inside a circle, one at a time, and showed us the exercise. The other student mimes, seated outside the circle, first offered feedback by noticing areas of improvement and then accomplishments, always referring to the performance indicators. I constantly checked with the students which peer assessment strategy they preferred. As they became more experienced mimes, the students felt more comfortable with the whole-class setting approach.

# Arts Assessment For Learning

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- A very well structured workshop model on movement will make the implementation of the assessment strategies much easier. In this sense, the workshop model consists of a series of many strict routines.
- Start the workshop with a mini physical warm-up led by a different student in each session. Then, briefly discuss the agenda with the students.
- The agenda shows the old (prior knowledge) and new exercises (teaching point or instructional goals) and their variations. Like in any movement/dance workshop, a lot of modeling from the teacher is necessary. Every now and then, call on a student that executes the movement or series of movements (exercises) as they were modeled, and request him/her to demonstrate.
- Walk around the room while the student actors train a body part or perform a series of movements. I advise you count from one to eight, and at times change the rhythm to informally assess their performance and identify any necessary modification. This will help you pair the students in preparation for peer assessment.
- For the closing, bring the class to a circle, and ask a few students to demonstrate a specific exercise from inside the circle, so you can model the sharing protocol they are expected to follow when working in pairs (peer assessment).
- It's very important to maintain a strict and consistent workshop model to later allow flexibility when filming and documenting the students' learning, use of assessment and their educational growth (e.g. ...when you need to teach and monitor while holding a camera to videotape). Nevertheless, the workshop's content is flexible in itself. If you would like to substitute Lecoq's technique for another technique, or perhaps a more general pantomime course, you can do so.
- If your teaching space or classroom has no mirrors like mine, I strongly recommend filming. Seeing themselves on a screen performing a specific exercise provides a more accurate sense of awareness than that obtained through teacher and peer assessment. However, one doesn't replace the other, and filming has its own limitations.