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**AUTHENTIC NEUTRAL MASK:  
A New Method Of Drama Therapy**

**Csilla Przibislawsky**

**A Research Paper  
in  
The Department  
of  
Art Education & Creative Arts Therapies**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

**April, 2000**

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## **Abstract**

### **Authentic Neutral Mask: A New Method of Drama Therapy**

**Csilla Przibislawsky**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
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Concordia University  
April 2000**

This research paper follows the heuristic study and development of a new Drama Therapy method entitled Authentic Neutral Mask. The researcher offers her own experiences with the method, as well as those of participants in a research group, as means for discovering meanings and essences that emerge from a synthesis of Movement technique 'Authentic Movement' and theatre technique 'Neutral Mask'. As part of this study, the researcher includes a thorough definition of the two separate methods and important components of the synthesized method. Adaptations to Neutral Mask technique needed for the purposes of therapy are also given, as well as the researcher's history with the two techniques and her reasons for synthesizing the two techniques into one method of Drama Therapy. The culmination of this paper is the formulation of a theoretical model grounded in existing theories in Psychology and Drama Therapy, and at the same time emerging wholly from the experiences of individuals engaged in Authentic Neutral Mask.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I want to thank my first year advisor Christine Novy for helping me make the connections to existing literature, to my second year advisor Dr. Stephen Snow for challenging me with questions crucial to the unfolding of this method, and to both of them for their all important role in helping me bring "meanings and essences" from my body, into my head, out of my mouth, and onto paper. Thank you also to Joanabbey Sack for her feedback especially with regards to authentic movement, and to Elizabeth Anthony for introducing me to the heuristic research paradigm.

I would also like to thank Guy Sprung and the staff of Infinite Theatre for providing the financial support for the creation of the neutral masks and the initial phase of developing this method. A very special thank you to VINNI and Duncan Morgan for the actual creation of the masks, to actors David Francis, Patricia Rodriguez, Rick Miller, and Stephanie Baptist for their passion and commitment as co-explorers in this work, and to the individuals involved in the research group whose dedication, generosity, questions, and feedback were an intrinsic part of transforming neutral mask into a technique intended for therapy.

Thank you also to my many friends and family members for indulging me in my many passionate discourses on the subject, and for their very valuable ideas and impressions. In particular I would like to thank Wade Maybie and Namta Gupta, whose ears I've noticed are three inches thicker now than they once were, from the accumulation of verbiage aimed in their immediate direction.

Last but certainly not least, I want to express my appreciation to Jacques Lecoq for opening the world to me in a way that I could not have anticipated.

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**- AUTHENTIC NEUTRAL MASK -**  
**A NEW METHOD OF DRAMA THERAPY**

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper follows the heuristic exploration and development of a drama therapy method which combines "neutral mask technique" and "authentic movement". The culmination of this paper will be the formulation of a theoretical model which delineates the many components of this new emergent technique entitled "Authentic Neutral Mask".

Neutral mask is a theatre/actor training technique originated in this century by French theatre director Jacques Copeau and developed further by master acting teacher Jacques Lecoq at his internationally renowned theatre school Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris. I trained as an actor at Ecole Lecoq and, consequently, became engrossed by my experiences and growth through working with the mask, and have been inspired, since, to further explore the potential healing power of the mask for myself and others.

During my graduate studies in the Creative Arts Therapies, I came across the movement technique called "authentic movement", and was immediately struck by some of the similarities between this technique and neutral mask work. In fact, I soon realized that not only do these two seemingly very different techniques share fascinating similarities, but each technique has something that adds to

the other. For instance, although both techniques aid the journeying process toward the unconscious of the individual mover, I found that authentic movement simplifies this journey in a way that neutral mask technique (as it is often taught) does not, and allows the mover to access internal, unconscious impulses more quickly and without undue stress. On the other hand, the theatrical aspect of neutral mask, offers a means of enlarging or amplifying the movement experience triggered by impulses and images, and can provide the opportunity for more profound and active engagement with the mover's unconscious.

After much research into available literature concerning both neutral mask and authentic movement, and exploring both mediums myself directly, I discovered a method of combining authentic movement with neutral mask which makes use of the mutually complementary elements of the mediums in combination with one another. I then began to explore this new method with two different groups of individuals: one was a group of professional actors wishing to explore the depths of their own creativity through neutral mask, and the other was a group of undergraduate students whom I assembled for the specific intention of researching the possible therapeutic benefits that a combination of neutral mask work and authentic movement may access.

In this paper I wish to communicate what has drawn me into the world of neutral mask, and continues to engage my passionate commitment. My hope is that by relating my own experiences, and the experiences of those with whom I worked, the essence and meanings of the work will naturally disclose themselves without premature definition and classification. I have very strong ideas of what might be happening for individuals during neutral mask sessions, and I will attempt to elucidate these thoughts as part of this process.

Through careful synthesis of my own experiences during this study as well as the experiences of members of the above mentioned research group, this paper will offer some of the discoveries that have been reached thus far in combining these two methods. In the analysis section of this paper I will draw links between these discoveries and how they may be related to existing psychological theories (including contributions by C.G. Jung, Arnold Mindell, and drama therapist Robert Landy). This inquiry is for the purpose of exploring the question:

Does this combination of authentic movement and neutral mask, as an innovative method of drama therapy enable new possibilities for personal growth and psychological transformation?

Although it is too early to draw any definitive conclusions as to what exactly is psychologically transformative about this work, this paper serves as the beginning of an exploration that will eventually lead to specific hypotheses that can be tested for scientific validity.

In the first section of this paper I will offer my reasons for choosing the heuristic research paradigm for this study. I will then discuss my own history with neutral mask beginning with my experiences at theatre school and ending with my formation of the authentic neutral mask research group discussed within this study.

The second section of the paper will be devoted to fully defining both authentic movement and neutral mask technique. The third section will discuss the process of adapting neutral mask technique and a description of why and how neutral mask has needed to be adapted from the technique which I was originally taught, when used for therapeutic purposes. Within this section I will also briefly define a few important components of this work and how they are applicable to the method. These components are the concepts of "embodiment", "amplification", and the role of the "witness". Further concepts will be addressed in the theoretical analysis section of the paper (section 6).

The fourth section will be a description and analysis of one particular experience that I encountered while

engaged in this new method, as a way of focusing and clarifying some of what is evoked by "Authentic Neutral Mask". In the fifth section, I will describe and analyze the experiences of individuals in the research group, draw correlations between their experiences and my own, then consolidate all meanings and essences that have emerged through the communication of all experiences as well as the process of writing this paper.

The sixth section will be a return to the research question. In an attempt to answer specifically what it is about this new synthesized method of drama therapy that can offer new possibilities for personal growth and psychological transformation, I will discuss how the method holds together from a theoretical standpoint and supported by the personal experiences of myself and others. This will culminate in the formulation of a theoretical model of Authentic Neutral Mask as a form of Drama Therapy. Future directions for the work will be discussed in the conclusion.

This paper is not intended to function as a "how to guide" for leading authentic neutral mask groups. There are many elements covered in this paper for the purpose of creating an understanding of them. However, many aspects of the work would need to be further delineated and clarified for the teaching of a direct application of the method.

## 1 - HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

**Does this combination of authentic movement and neutral mask enable new possibilities for personal growth and psychological transformation?**

### The Heuristic Research Paradigm

This paper is a heuristic inquiry, meaning that it is a process of 'unfolding' rather than a format for testing hypotheses. I have chosen the heuristic research paradigm for this paper, as the research question itself is an evolving one, and before any conclusions can be made with regards to the findings, I need a format that allows for freedom in terms of subjectivity. The question has arisen from gaining a clearer understanding of my own personal growth through neutral mask work. In order to fully take advantage of the meanings that disclose themselves to me about the work (for myself and others), I need to explore and sift through the personal content of my own experiences, compare them with the experiences of others, then come to a new understanding of commonalities that emerge, and may be universal in nature. The heuristic paradigm delineates a process of the researcher personally committing to a subject matter, which then brings intuitive visions, feelings, and sensings, that then bring about a growing awareness of

emerging patterns and relatedness (Moustakas, 1968). It is exactly these patterns and relatedness that will take this research question into the next phase of inquiry - one in which specific hypotheses may be tested. Therefore, for the time being I will trust the heuristic process (which ultimately means trusting my own intuition), and look for meanings and essences that emerge from this unique research process.

Situating the research well in an evolving process of personal and professional evolution, exploits the benefits of what is reflected in the following account of scientific discovery by Polanyi, a scientist often referred to in explicating qualitative processes of discovery:

"As I am convinced that there is great truth in science I do not consider its guesses as unfounded...In science the process of guessing starts when the novice feels first attracted to science and is then attracted further towards a certain field of problems. This guesswork involves the assessment of the young person's own yet largely undisclosed abilities, and of a scientific material, yet uncollected or even unobserved, to which he may later successfully apply his abilities. It involves the sensing of hidden gifts in himself and of hidden facts in nature, from which two, in combination, will spring one day his ideas that are to guide him to discovery...Potential discovery may be thought to attract the mind which will reveal it--inflaming the scientist with creative desire and imparting to him a foreknowledge of itself; guiding him from clue to clue and from surmise to surmise" (Polanyi, 1964 pp. 32,33).

### Researcher's Relationship With Neutral Mask

'Potential discovery' is a very accurate description of what I have felt in relation to neutral mask work. My relationship with the mask began in theatre school almost eight years ago. For reasons that I was yet to uncover, I was enraptured by some of my experiences behind the mask. Then, even after the month that the school devoted to neutral mask work, (as a foundation for actor training), I felt that I had merely touched on the potential of what this evocative medium could bring out of me.

Years later, and after having taught several workshops in neutral mask for actors, I was still intrigued by the work, and wanted to continue the work that I had begun in theatre school. I had a set of neutral masks made for myself and a group of four other professional actors. I then trained the group in the method that I had been taught, and joined them as an active participant in the continuing journey into this unknown world. The following journal entry is an example of my own processing of my experiences with the mask:

I have felt at times that I am being drawn in to exploring this world of the mask. The release of emotion is what entices me and the feeling of exhilaration afterward is what keeps me going back. It is the experience of being wholly alive.

Then, when I have conducted workshops and heard words like "exhilaration" coming from the mouths of others - words similar to my own, and have seen their excitement, that I have felt the urge to share the process, learn more about it myself, become skilled leading movers, providing safety and acceptance so that they can descend deeper and deeper into their



unconscious experience.

April, 1998

At the same time that I was working with this group of actors, I came across the movement technique called *authentic movement*. I immediately noticed some common characteristics between the two mediums - namely, that they both are used to suspend pre-conceived opinions, judgments, and biases for given periods of time, for the purpose of releasing unconscious emotions and expressing them outward through movement. As a therapeutic technique, it is recognized that this release of emotion through authentic movement "brings experiences of balance, clarity and wholeness" (Adler, 1987 p.24), and can lead to personal growth and psychological transformation<sup>1</sup>. Although neutral mask was not created for the intent of personal growth of the mask wearer, I also had had 'experiences of balance, clarity and wholeness' as a result of releasing what I was coming to understand were 'unconscious emotions', and I became interested in exploring and analyzing the potential for psychological transformation through neutral mask work.

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this paper, the terms 'balance' and 'health' refer to a state in which an individual is not pre-occupied with physical pain, emotional distress, or psychic disturbances. 'Wholeness' is a term used to describe all aspects of the individual (psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual) working in harmony with one another, and 'transformation' can be defined as the process of dissolving repetitive debilitating psychological, physical, and emotional patterns, and allowing for new, more adaptive ones in their place (Lewis, 1993).

After extensively researching available literature on authentic movement, I was able to draw on the similarities and differences between authentic movement and neutral mask technique, and arrive at how neutral mask technique would need to be adapted in order to best serve as a therapeutic method<sup>2</sup>. I then enrolled in an authentic movement group in order to experience the method myself in its pure form. Having experienced the two methods separately, I began to have an idea of how the two methods combined could complement one another. Authentic movement providing a connection to internal impulses and images of the mover without self judgment, then neutral mask providing a method of amplifying and expanding on those internal impulses and images. After four months of doing authentic movement myself, I began to introduce it to the group of actors that I continued to work with, in conjunction with neutral mask. As this group was intended as a means for creative expression, I began another group with four undergraduate theatre students for the specific purpose of researching the potential for personal growth and transformation through a combination of authentic movement and neutral mask work. Two out of four of the participants in this group had experienced neutral mask as a theatre technique before, in

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<sup>2</sup>The terms therapy and therapeutic will be used in this paper to describe a process of integrating into the conscious aspects of the psyche which have been repressed, and have thus created blocks in an individual's natural development toward health and wholeness.

a workshop that I had taught in the previous year. The other two had never worked with neutral mask or authentic movement. I worked with both the actor group and the research group simultaneously, using the same process and structure for the sessions in each group. My role in the actor group was as group leader/witness, and in the research group as witness/therapist/researcher. After two months of witnessing only in the actor group, I began to participate myself, and experience the combination of the two methods first hand for the first time.

My relationship with neutral mask and authentic movement began with a passionate emotional connection, and little cognitive understanding. It was the discrepancy between the strong emotions that I felt, and my lack of understanding of them, that then led to my passion for submerging myself into the material and coming to greater understanding as a result. The following entry from an old journal will illuminate this further:

I was confused by neutral mask work in theatre school because my body was giving me very powerful signals that I was feeling differently than what I wanted to be feeling, and felt that I should be feeling. At that time I was not ready to listen and be guided by my body. Over the years since then, through mistakes that I have made, I have come to the understanding that my body knows me - my strengths, limitations, and needs, much better than my conscious awareness of myself.

November, 1998

Over the years, I have come to realize that it was in fact a strong focus on intellectual understanding and

decision making, that was disconnecting me from the natural physical impulses within my body. I placed much higher value on what I thought that I should be doing, than on what I wanted to be doing. From this, I was in fact cutting myself off from my own intuitive responses to the world, and the decisions that I was making for myself understandably proved to be incongruous with my natural abilities and interests. The pursuit of reconnecting myself with my intuition then, has had very positive benefits within my life. By putting greater emphasis on messages that were naturally coming from me, I have been guided toward areas that I have a natural passion for. As a result, I have come to a much more balanced experience of relating to the world around me.

The benefits that this method have brought to my life inspire me to continue to explore and develop all aspects of the work as it reveals itself to me both through my own experiences as well as the experiences of those who share this inspiration with me. My hope is that through this paper the many facets of connecting to one's intuitive processes will be clearly communicated, and the powerful results will also speak for themselves.

## 2 - THE TWO METHODS DEFINED

### NEUTRAL MASK

"Neutral mask offers an opportunity to engage in body consciousness. ...It can be subtle and graceful work, intimately connecting us to our sense of being in the world." (Mitchelson, 1996 p. 132)

Neutral Mask was devised in this century by the French theatre director Jacques Copeau. His intentions in using the masks with actors was to discourage them from relying on habit-formed reactions, particularly manifested through facial expressions. (Mitchelson, 1996) The mask is expressionless (hence the title 'neutral') and requires that the actor expresses all emotions through the body without the help of the face. It is also intended to re-acquaint the individual wearing the mask with the body's natural impulses before the mind imposes an interpretation on stimuli. It is the actor's means to relinquishing all previous mental perceptions and body memories of any characters he/she may have embodied in the past. In this sense it is a voluntary loss of all personal identity (Lecoq, 1991). "Essentially, neutral mask technique attempts to wipe the slate clean, so that the actor is left with a neutral base upon which to build a character" (Welch, 1993 p. 169).

The slate that is referred to in this previous quote is the sum total of all mental perceptions from the actor's past, that have formed the personality of the actor, as well as the characters that he/she has embodied. Once the actors put on the neutral mask, they are asked to leave behind all of their personal assumptions and associations. Neutral mask is without a past. It lives entirely in the present moment of the actor's experience. "This moment-to-moment concentration on the present toward the future is the actor's thinking process..." (Welch, 1993, p. 169).

Copeau's actors reported that this experiencing life in the present gave them "a new sense of confidence and authority, a power and unknown security - a sort of balance and consciousness of each gesture and oneself" (Mitchelson, 1996, p. 132).

Neutral mask was then further developed by an actor in Copeau's troupe named Jacques Lecoq. Lecoq later founded his own professional theatre school in Paris, and used the mask to introduce his students to a method of entering a different realm of emotional consciousness (Marcia, 1980).

To this day, students at Ecole Lecoq are introduced to the mask through a series of exercises that involve specific physical actions that will naturally evoke various feeling states. These mimed actions range from something as simple as throwing a rock into a lake, to climbing the side of a mountain and falling down the other side in the midst of an

avalanche. The mental effort required for carrying out these actions is minimal. The exercises are designed to draw out the intuition of actors and to discourage them from any tendencies toward relying on their intellect as means to carrying them to various feeling states.

Actors can access a wide range of feeling states through neutral mask work by exploring the different rhythms and energies suggested by the various exercises. The actors learn to tap into their physical resources, which will then bring about an emotional release (Mitchelson, 1996). The mental, physical, and emotional state of the mask unfolds as the body takes on the rhythm and energy of the chosen images.

Thus the actor's actions, and outward behaviour, felt and expressed emotions are informed by internal impulses which evolve out of suggested images. This distinguishes the neutral mask from other theatrical masks which suggest a method of action by an expression of emotion on the exterior of the mask. For instance, a mask with an expression of sadness suggests to the masked actor that he/she is to incorporate the feeling of sadness into the body and then project it outwards physically. The actor wearing a neutral mask will only project sadness if the impulse was generated by rhythms and energies coming from within the body of the actor.

At Ecole Lecoq, each neutral mask exercise is performed

before the instructor and fellow classmates. Once the actor has finished the exercise, the instructor offers a critique of what he/she saw. The criteria for the instructor's criticism is based on the actor's level of engagement in experiencing the movement through the imaginal realm of the given visual images. The instructor also looks for when the actor's movements reflect his/her personal movement habits, and when the actor has been successful in achieving the pure movements without personal bias. The idea is that if the actor is able to achieve 'a different realm of emotional consciousness', then the actor's body will transcend its' individual mannerisms. The actor is given the ultimate task of striving for prolonged periods of movement within this heightened emotional consciousness, as this is where the performer connects with the audience (Lecoq, 1991). The experience of the actor is suddenly transferred to those sharing the same space, and energy is passed back and forth between the actor and the audience. This is what Peter Brook refers to as "seeing the face of the invisible through an experience on the stage that transcended (the audience's) experience in life". (Brook, 1968) This is ultimately what every actor and audience member hopes for when they share the experience of a performance (Lecoq, 1991).



"If our presence vibrates from the depth of our total organism, we are able to call on the witnessing spirit of those who have come to listen. It is still this organic, sensory and erotic connection between the actor and audience that we long for, what live theatre was meant to be from its earliest origins..." (Koltai, 1994, p.22).

Actors will often speak of experiencing moments in which they were able to live "beyond themselves". They are referring to a capacity to transcend their personal boundaries and experience life in the present in a heightened state of consciousness. This requires relinquishing self-consciousness and giving themselves over to the character/role which they are performing. The audience will immediately respond to this energy and engage in their own personal experience as a result (Lecoq, 1991).

## AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT

Authentic Movement as a form of movement therapy, is a method of therapeutically engaging an individual's psyche through movement, and thus enhancing the capacity to work through the individual's psychic disturbances. (Levy, 1992)

Authentic movement was first described and practised by dance therapy pioneer Mary Whitehouse (Adler, 1987). Whitehouse developed the method as a means of emphasizing a more experiential approach (to psychotherapy) which avoids labelling or diagnosing (Levy, 1992). Her basic goal in treating clients was to release repressed emotions which she believed became "buried in the body, in tissues, muscles, and joints..." (Wallock, 1977, p. 19). Whitehouse approached these emotions through a Jungian method of freeing one's associations to allow in all levels of conscious and unconscious experience (Levy, 1992). The conscious can be differentiated from the unconscious in that it is driven by the individual's ego or will, whereas the unconscious exists regardless of the ego (Jung, 1963).

In practical terms, authentic movement involves one person moving and another person witnessing the mover. In therapeutic terms the mover is the client and the witness is the therapist (Adler, 1987).

The mover's task can be explained as follows:

"...to respond to a sensation, to an inner impulse, to energy coming from the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious, or the superconscious. Her response to this energy creates movement that can be visible or invisible to the witness." (Adler, 1987, p.24).<sup>3</sup>

One important aim in authentic movement is for the mover to alternate easily between asserting and surrendering the will through movement; "to achieve a total awareness that encompasses both conscious and unconscious movement." (Levy, 1992, p.68). This is achieved through finding a state in which one is "being moved and moving at the same time" (Adler, 1987, p.21). "It is a moment of total awareness, the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me. It cannot be anticipated, explained, specifically worked for, nor repeated exactly" (Levy, 1992, 67).

The mover is carried from the conscious to the unconscious and back again, by becoming engaged in internal sensations and emotions that are evoked by different rhythmic patterns and their effects on the body as it embodies them. The mover "might be feeling, repressing, or

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<sup>3</sup> The terms collective unconscious and personal unconscious were first used by Jung. He defined the collective unconscious as "the sphere of unconscious mythology, the primordial contents of which are the common heritage of mankind". He then distinguished this from the personal unconscious which he defined as "the totality of those psychic processes and contents that are not only accessible to consciousness, but often would be conscious were they not subject to repression..." (Philipson, 1963)

expressing anger, joy, confusion, sadness. (The mover) might be seeing images, hearing sounds, immersed in a memory or thinking a particular thought" (Adler, 1987, p.22). If the mover is able to become completely immersed in his/her internal material, then he/she will lose self-consciousness as well as consciousness of the witness.

While the mover is engaged in movement, the witness is "witnessing, listening - bringing a specific quality of attention or presence to - the experience of the mover." (Adler, 1987, p.20). Once the mover has finished, the witness and the mover engage in a dialogue about their experience of the movement sequence, thereby bringing formerly unconscious processes into consciousness.

The mover/witness relationship is dialectical in nature. The mover's engagement arouses the witness' own engagement into his/her own internal sensory and emotional experience. At the end of the movement sequence, the verbal dialogue between the mover and the witness can bring new insight to both the mover and the witness, which will also further develop a strong relationship between the two.

After a significant amount of time working together, the mover will internalize the witness and gain the capacity to objectively observe his/her own unconscious material as it finds form through his/her movement (Adler, 1987, p.23).

Janet Adler, a dance therapist who specializes in working with authentic movement (Levy, 1992) sees the

authentic movement journey as beginning with working psychoanalytically with the personal material brought out through movement, then moving to a deeper level. Authentic movement lends itself to psychoanalytic work in that it emphasizes free association, and transference and counter-transference are an intrinsic part of the relationship between the mover and the witness. Once the mover has finished moving, the mover and witness engage in discussion which "slowly organizes the material within the language of psychodynamic theory" (Adler, 1987, p.23).

As Adler worked for greater lengths of time with the same movers, her emphasis shifted away from work on the personality and into exploring "transpersonal energies". Adler defines transpersonal as "moving across, over, and beyond the illusory boundaries of individual separateness, beyond the masks that characterize nationalities, cultures, differing professional orientations, or personalities, to the understanding that everything is connected at its most basic level" (Adler, 1987, p.23). She felt that 'psychodynamic theories of the ego structure' were limited to exploring disturbances within the mind while what she calls transpersonal energies (and others call the collective unconscious or the universal unconscious), take into account the whole individual. She then began to draw on both the psychological (pertaining to the mind) and the spiritual (pertaining to the soul) aspects of the discipline of

authentic movement, and witnessed that after several years of commitment to the form, the process "can bring experiences of balance, clarity and wholeness." Adler compares authentic movement to meditation in that they both produce "a sense of detachment in relation to one's own behavior, enacted or internal". Also like meditation, Adler comments that authentic movement can occasionally generate "an intense experience of spiritual rebirth" (purification of the soul). Adler believes that it is by accessing a level that is beyond the personality, that movers gain the capacity to experience themselves in close relation with others. This ability gives the mover the objective distance needed to integrate unconscious material into consciousness, which ultimately leads to growth and transformation of the whole person (Adler, 1987).

Judith Koltai, a registered dance/movement therapist works a great deal with professional actors using authentic movement to help them inform and nourish performance as well as aid in the discriminating view of one's work (Koltai, 1994). Unlike Mary Whitehouse and Janet Adler, who work with the material that the mover experiences for the personal benefit of the mover alone, Koltai's motives for evoking the actor's unconscious is for the purpose of producing authentic work for the stage.

Koltai writes that authentic movement helps actors find a rootedness in the body which allows them to speak from the

recalled experience rather than about it (Koltai, 1994). For example, when individuals share their movement experiences with each other, they speak in the present tense and recount what they are "doing". One can see a distinct difference between this and simply recalling an experience from the past. With Koltai's approach, the eyes of the speaker are averted from the eyes of others, and the body is engaged as though it were once again experiencing the movements, while the individual speaks. Much like Jacques Copeau's insistence on the actor's renunciation of previous interpretations, Koltai uses authentic movement to encourage the actor to share his/her experience in the present so that the work is discovered in the body and not preconceived in the head. Koltai calls on the actor's unconscious as a means to train for availability to the deep, unexpected and perhaps otherwise undiscovered unique creative impulses (Koltai, 1994). She writes that authentic movement trains and develops the functioning of a non-interfering conscious awareness which observes, acknowledges, and remembers previously unconscious material without prematurely shaping it into finalized form.

Koltai does not work with the personal unconscious of the actor. She states that without discouraging or ignoring personal material, she gently encourages the actor to explore more universal/collective themes. Her reason for this being, that should the actor's own personal material

become the focus of the work, the actor may prematurely draw conclusions about the material based on his or her personal history. This will keep the actor from reaching a deeper, collective level that may enrich the experience, and connect the actor with 'all living things'. Koltai chooses to focus her work with authentic movement on this collective level, as it is on this level of consciousness that actors connect with their audiences (Koltai, 1997).



### 3 - ADAPTATIONS OF NEUTRAL MASK FOR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES

Part (A) of this section was written before AUTHENTIC NEUTRAL MASK was ever put into practice. In fact, the conclusions made at the end of this section dictated to a large extent how the new method was introduced to the research group being followed in this study.

#### (A) How An Acting Technique Becomes a Therapeutic Technique

Janet Adler speaks of how the process of internalizing the witness will produce within the mover a sense of detachment in relation to one's own behaviour, enacted or internal, which will aid the mover's journey to the unconscious. This once again suggests a suspension of judgment within the mover, that can only be encouraged by the witness' own suspension of bias and judgement toward the mover. Given this, it is important to recognize how the critiquing style of feedback offered at Ecole Jacques Lecoq may negatively affect the mask wearer's attempts at accessing their unconscious.

The element of 'performing' a neutral mask exercise in front of others is an important aspect of the work, as it connects the mover with those who observe. The critique given after each mask exercise however, introduces an element of judgment into the process, as does the rigorous insistence on 'achieving pure movements without personal

content'. Ironically, these requirements can serve to restrict rather than aid the mask wearers in their efforts to give over control of their consciousness. Releasing self-consciousness is often talked of as a necessary part of the actor's process, however the element of the critique can often serve to encourage rather than discourage self-consciousness within the mask wearer. Critiques are often considered to be a necessary aspect of creating discipline within the actor. However in the context of therapy, it is best circumvented. Judith Koltai's approach of gently leading the mover at the appropriate time during a movement sequence, rather than giving a critique of the work after it has been completed, is perhaps more helpful to the mover's process.

The critiques offered at Ecole Jacques Lecoq are often phrased in terms of what the actor should not have done. This is meant to dissuade the actor from following impulses that are driven by the personality. Unfortunately the outcome of such criticism in a therapeutic context, can result in the mask wearers becoming hyper-conscious of personal mannerisms and thus closing themselves off from authentic impulses. The Lecoq approach to giving feedback was developed with a strong focus on achieving a product from the actor. That product being pure movement without personal content. Therapeutic approaches (such as Janet Adler's approach to authentic movement) are much more

concerned with the process of the mover, as it is in the process rather than the product that the mover experiences transformation. It is thus useful to adopt a more process-driven approach to witnessing neutral mask exercises, while utilizing the method for personal growth and transformation.

It is interesting to note the different thoughts on the value and limitations of working with personal material in both authentic movement and neutral mask. Jacques Lecoq sees personal material as something to be avoided altogether, and Judith Koltai also asserts that working with the personality of the mover impedes the mover's ability to access the collective unconscious. Janet Adler sees work with the personality as the beginning phase of therapy which then evolves into work on the transpersonal level. All three emphasize the value of working on the transpersonal/collective level more so than work with the ego or personality. Mary Whitehouse, who first developed authentic movement, seemed to place equal weight on both asserting and surrendering the will, and in fact saw great value in allowing in all levels of conscious and unconscious experience into the discipline. Rather than avoiding one to achieve another, Whitehouse placed the emphasis on a 'total awareness' that comes from an interplay between both conscious and unconscious movement. Allowing for more flexibility in terms of movement content within neutral mask, might open the way for a more process-oriented method,

than what exists in neutral mask today. This may increase the comfort level of the mask wearer and ultimately offer a greater possibility for achieving protracted periods of time in a state of 'heightened emotional consciousness'.

Another area in which neutral mask could be expanded upon, is in developing a stronger relationship between the mover and those who witness. At Ecole Lecoq, transference and counter-transference are not acknowledged as having any influence on the mover/actor's experience. The witness is the 'instructor' who then 'critiques' the performance of the mover. This sets up a relationship of one who knows and imparts his/her knowledge on one who does not. In authentic movement, the relationship between the mover and witness is more equal in terms of power dynamics, and perhaps it is a more accurate reflection of what transpires between the two. Authentic movement acknowledges that the experiences of the movement sequence for both the mover and the witness are subjective, and that each can gain insight from the ongoing sharing of their experiences with the other.

Perhaps if the mover-witness relationship in neutral mask would mirror that of the mover and witness in authentic movement, then other aspects of the relationship between the two in authentic movement could be equally true to those in neutral mask. Rather than giving a critique of the content of the mover's neutral mask exercise (which keeps the witness as an observing outsider), the witness could engage

more fully in the experience of the mask wearer, and enhance the possibilities for "experiences of balance, clarity, and wholeness". Through dialogue with the mover, the witness could help 'bring formerly unconscious processes into consciousness', and/or 'organize the material within the language of psychodynamic theory' (if the witness was trained in this area). Furthermore, similar to authentic movement, the mover-witness relationship in neutral mask could possibly develop to the point that the mover could internalize the reflective function of the witness, which would then help the mover 'gain the capacity to objectively observe unconscious material' and create what Judith Koltai described as 'a non-interfering conscious awareness which observes, acknowledges, and remembers previously unconscious material' (Koltai, 1994), and Janet Adler described as 'a sense of detachment in relation to one's own behaviour, enacted or internal' (Adler, 1987).

It seems that in developing neutral mask as a method that encourages growth and transformation, the emphasis should be placed on embracing elements from both neutral mask and authentic movement which take into account the 'whole person', and to alter those elements that isolate one part of the individual (whether it be emotional, psychological, or physical) from another. For it is this writer's belief that no individual part of a being can function (in a healthy way) independently from any of the

others.

Another element of neutral mask which needs to be addressed is the question of accessibility. Similar to authentic movement, it is most helpful to adults with a strong enough ego structure "to choose and to sustain extensive exploration of the unconscious" (Adler, 1987, p.23). Janet Adler suggests that usually people who choose authentic movement have a self-awareness, an ability to concentrate and a curiosity about the unknown. She does not however, offer what may occur to the detriment of those without a strong ego structure, should they choose authentic movement as a therapeutic medium.

Neutral mask is a challenging discipline for many reasons. Renee Emunah, a drama therapist warns that: "Masks are theatrically and psychologically powerful, but should be used with caution with clients who are disoriented or have weak ego boundaries. These clients may experience a loss of self when wearing the mask, or, as audience, a loss of the person who has just put on the mask." (Emunah, 1994, p.157).

Also, the physical demands required for engagement in many neutral mask exercises may also prove to be difficult for many people. One neutral mask practitioner describes how neutral mask work brings new awareness of breath to "a relaxed, alive, and mechanically efficient body". Unfortunately, many populations have great difficulty in

achieving relaxation, and even more can only dream of having a 'mechanically efficient body'. Therefore the physically rigorous exercises will need to be toned down for many, and by allowing the mask wearers to work with images that evolve from their own psyches rather than on those dictated by the witness, the mask wearers will have more control over the extent of their movement range within any given exercise.

Craig Turner, a drama professor at University of Washington has been investigating what he calls body-image stress in neutral mask work with high functioning acting students, since 1974. He states that in the initial phase of work, actors become hyper-aware that all movements will be interpreted and this causes a "slowing down of natural rhythms, confusion in normal motor habits and body sensations, interferences with breathing, and forces the mind to begin futile games of self-examination". He then goes on to say that as actors progress in their journey behind the mask, they give up old, comfortable habits, then gain freedom and strength, and finally discover a state of spontaneity and exploration (Turner, 1981, pp.5-11). The evolution of a non-judging witness in place of the distanced instructor will diminish a great deal of the anxiety that people have experienced as part of neutral mask work in the past. Also, introducing authentic movement as a pre-cursor to neutral mask work, will enable a more natural focus on the inner self to be accessed and then maintained even after

the neutral mask has been added to the experience. This combination of non-judging witness and the addition of authentic movement will hopefully diminish the likelihood of the above noted symptoms of dis-ease and self-consciousness as part of the neutral mask process, and will provide the opportunity for many more individuals to profit from the creative energies that many actors have enjoyed in utilizing neutral masks. Similar to authentic movement once again, neutral mask can serve individuals with strong ego structures, an ability to concentrate, a curiosity about the unknown, and a certain level of self-awareness. Future exploration of neutral mask with varied populations (with appropriate adjustments to ensure containment and safety) will illuminate the potential benefits of the technique on a larger scale.

In summary, neutral mask's ability to access the unconscious, to arouse feeling states that come directly from a movement experience, and to engage in transference and counter-transference with those who observe the mask wearer, substantiates the possibility that:

**Neutral mask work can serve as a viable method of therapy.**

The testing of this hypothesis will require that the power dynamics that currently exist between the mask wearer



and instructor must be altered, and that greater flexibility must be allowed into the mask wearer's movement content. It must also be acknowledged that the physical demands of various neutral mask exercises will need to be altered in order for more people to benefit from working within the medium.

## B) TERMINOLOGIES USED IN SYNTHESIZING TWO METHODS INTO ONE DRAMA THERAPY METHOD

### EMBODIMENT - DEFINITION AND APPLICATIONS

I will be using the word 'embodiment' in terms of a phenomena that can be as simple as the embodiment of physical sensations and impulses, and as complex as the embodiment of an action and eventually a persona or character.

The embodiment of physical sensations and impulses is another way of saying the acknowledgment, or the raising to consciousness feelings occurring within the body. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, the founder of the Movement therapy technique "Body-Mind Centering" describes embodiment as "feeling the force that is in this body" (Cohen, 1993, p.63). Cohen goes on to say that information (concerning one's present state) is always being transmitted viscerally, but each person is selective in terms of what they choose to acknowledge. In authentic movement one certainly essentializes one's focus and awareness to forces at work within the body. Often, these forces will lead to a physical impulse if they are paid attention to for long enough. Visual images will also frequently accompany these physical impulses, all stemming from visceral sensations within the body.

The second use of the word 'embodiment' referred to in

this paper, is in following these physical impulses and visual images into action/movement of the body. In essence, it is the physical expression of internal processes. These actions and movements vary immensely depending on the moment-to-moment messages being conveyed of one's state of being, and cannot be predicted ahead of time. It is in being fully engaged in the present moment, that one moves 'authentically', driven by internal visceral messages rather than by decisions made by the intellect.

The neutral mask then takes this process one step further. I have found in my own experiences as well as in the experiences of those I have worked with (as will be described later), that the presence of the mask on one's face can inspire the urge to physically enlarge the internal image/impulse in the form of a character. In other words, the neutral mask can elaborate on internal images and impulses. Then by enlarging these impulses, one is frequently led to personifying them and thus a character is created from what began as a mere sensation.

Therefore, I believe that the first form of embodiment (embodying physical sensations and impulses) can lead to the second (embodying an action and eventually a character). This is not always the case by any means, but when a character does emerge from the work, one's experience under the mask has an added dimension which I will elaborate on later.

To summarize, in the combination of authentic movement and neutral mask work, there are varying degrees of embodiment. Authentic movement begins the process, providing the seed for what can then be enlarged and experienced with more definition and focus with the addition of the neutral mask.

#### AMPLIFICATION - DEFINITION AND APPLICATION TO METHOD

Jung defines 'amplification' as the "elaboration and clarification of a dream-image by means of directed association" (Jung, 1961, p.391). These dream-images can be found through the body as is supported by the following passage by Arnold Mindell:

"We discover that body processes will mirror dreams when the body is encouraged to amplify and express its voluntary signals, such as pressures, pain, cramping, restlessness, excitement, exhaustion or nervousness." (Mindell, 1982, p.198)

Authentic Neutral Mask first accesses the body's voluntary signals through authentic movement, then amplifies them with the addition of the neutral mask, which encourages the mover to 'embody' the impulses within the body and express them outward through movement. The neutral mask ultimately helps individuals bring life to inner-images through the enactment of a persona or character.

Mindell states that when physical illness has

manifested itself, a reduction of symptoms and even healing often accompanies consciously unleashed body processes. He states that "the same unconscious contents that appear in dreams burden and activate the body with unexperienced forms of physical behaviour and undetected insights" (Mindell, 1982, p. 198) He suggests that by amplifying the body's symptoms, one is naturally led to engage in experiencing the images and emotions that accompany these symptoms. That in fact the symptoms lead the way to what the ego has repressed and denied the individual from experiencing as a part of his/her life experience. This repressed material has caused the symptoms of physical illness. He states that this process of repression leading to illness can be reversed by accessing the images and emotions that have been repressed, allowing them to emerge, amplifying them through active physical engagement with them and thereby bringing the unconscious material to the forefront of one's consciousness and enabling the individual to integrate the information into the conscious ego.

By first accessing the dream images and then actively engaging with them, Authentic Neutral Mask works in a similar way. The presence of the witness and the distancing aspect of the dramatic enactment brings safety into the process and ensures that feelings do not come out too quickly and chaotically (the way they would in their day to day lives without these safety measures), which Mindell

suggests could hinder the individual's ability to form an imagery or coherent feeling which the ego can integrate (Mindell, 1985). In other words, through creating a safe environment that encourages the expression of internal images and emotions, the natural healing processes within the mind and body are allowed to follow their natural course.

Currently, my feeling is that adding a neutral mask to the mover's authentic movement experience accentuates (amplifies) the embodiment of the mover's emotions by making them larger, more theatrical, and distanced. Usually the emotions get projected into a character, thus the performative element emerges and the witness becomes like an all accepting audience. This helps the mover in further exploring unconscious material and through discussion and personal reflection, the experience then becomes integrated into the conscious ego. The material that emerges in an Authentic Neutral Mask session may be archetypal and/or what Jung refers to as 'emotionally-toned complexes' within the personality. Either way, the outward expression and embodiment of the images and emotions associated within them brings them into consciousness where new insight is achieved and integrated into the conscious psyche. Jung states that "the psyche appears as a dynamic process which rests on a foundation of antithesis, on a flow of energy between two poles" (Jung, 1961, p.350). Thus, ultimately by enabling

the body to express the extremes of these antithetic poles, the body and psyche finds the balance that it naturally strive for within itself.

#### WITNESS - DEFINITION AND APPLICATION TO METHOD

The word witness denotes the nature of the therapist-client relationship in authentic movement (as I have already begun to describe earlier in the paper). In effect the witness observes the client's experience without physically (or verbally until after the movement sequence) interacting with the client. However, as the word 'witness' suggests, although the interaction between the client and therapist is not direct, the therapist is very much engaged in the experience of the client through what drama therapist David Read Johnson refers to as 'kinesthetic counter-transference' (Johnson, 1992). In simpler terms, the witness (much like an engaged audience member for a theatrical performance) becomes involved in their own experience of the client's movement journey and shares with the client what was evoked within themselves as a result of having witnessed the client's movements. The client meanwhile also experiences the witness' engaged presence as part of their movement experience, and this reflective engagement helps the mover to fully experience his/her own unconscious material.

Johnson describes the witness' role in relation to the

client as retaining the image of "the wise, objective presence, whose detachment is protective, and who evokes parental transferences" (Johnson, 1992, p.12). As clients have their eyes closed during authentic movement, they depend on the therapist to ensure their physical safety during their movement. This dependence on the witness for physical safety also extends into dependence for emotional safety, and if a trusting bond has been formed between clients and their therapist, the clients will tend to regress to an earlier developmental level in which it is possible to release binding inhibitions which limit what the clients will normally allow themselves to feel and express. In effect, clients will allow themselves to yield to the unconscious stream of bodily felt sensations and images, while at the same time bringing the experience into conscious awareness (Chodorow, 1988).

In my work with integrating the witness role into neutral mask work, I have found that the role is equally as important within this new method as it is in authentic movement alone. Specific examples of the witness' unique influence on the movement experience for individuals will be given later in the paper.

The links between embodiment, amplification, and the role of the witness in the emerging method of authentic neutral mask will be clarified in the following section, as they emerged within my own personal experiences while



engaging in the method. There is yet another important concept pertaining to this method, that of universal archetypes. This concept will be defined and discussed in the sixth section of the paper, as the concept emerges in the experiences of participants in the research group (discussed in the fifth section) more so than in the specific experience that I share in the fourth section.

#### 4 - AN EXAMPLE FROM RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH SYNTHESIZED METHOD

##### **Description of Experience**

I had been watching/witnessing others in authentic movement with neutral masks for two months before I tried the combination myself. On this day that I finally participated together with the group, it had been almost an entire year since the last time I had worn my mask. My first feeling in putting on the mask was of familiarity; the return of an old, familiar, safe friend. The smell of the mask, the feeling of the mask pressing against and surrounding my face brought me comfort. And on this day, I was needing comfort. The night before a significant relationship in my life had drawn to a close. Given this, it is not surprising that almost immediately after putting on the mask and focusing on sensations within my body, I became aware of many different emotions moving through me. At first I felt expansion. I wanted to feel every part of my body against the floor. I wanted to strike out, make myself seen and noticed. "Express my power" is what I wrote in my journal afterward. Most of the exercise was that; dancing, clapping, twirling. Then I made pulling in motions and said to myself 'I am pulling in power', and then pushed it out. I played with rhythms coming from other people in the group. I played a diva character: I clapped for myself

and the others in the group. I accepted imaginary roses that were being tossed at me, smelled them, then tossed them away and threw my head back and laughed. This evolved into a feeling of regret over having tossed away the roses and I sat down, held myself close, and cried. The group member who played the role of the witness for this exercise gave me the feedback after that I looked like "someone trying really hard to be happy about having lost someone".

### **Analysis of Experience**

My feeling in leaving the session was that I had experienced a far greater range of feelings around my current state, and had thus become aware of them to a larger degree than I had been before the session. Furthermore, as a result of having experienced this larger range of emotion, I had come to a greater understanding of what the inner conflicts were in my present situation. I began the session with a feeling of constriction and disempowerment. Immediately upon putting on the mask I began playing out a need to be large (because I felt small). Furthermore, I wanted to experience all of me in relation to the floor (because I felt caught up with my thoughts and had become estranged from my body), to interact and play with others (because I felt isolated), to receive accolades from a large crowd of adoring fans (because I felt punished and abandoned), to mischievously throw away what I had been

given (because the act of receiving had become constricting), and in this final act I discovered the opposing desire to keep the roses and drive away the loneliness that would creep in as a consequence of having thrown them away. Two opposing drives within me - the need to expand and gain back feelings of power, and the need to pull in and seek comfort and reassurance.

I could have surmised before this experience that I was torn between these two contrasting desires, however this exercise clarified and elaborated on sensations that I was feeling within my body. Through the exercise I was enabled to play out, externalize, embody my inner conflicts and ambiguity. It was also interesting that my spontaneous actions were compensations for what I was missing. I was playing out the opposite of what I was feeling, with the instinctive knowledge that this would take me somewhere; give me power and insight that I was lacking or perhaps split off from. The familiarity of the mask, an environment of supportive and empathic friends, both provided me with the safety of exploring the images buried in emotions which were buried in the "tissues of the body". I felt after this session very similar to the way I do after waking up from an enlightening dream. I had new perspective that comes from looking at a situation from a distance. The physical engagement also gave me a feeling of having achieved something.

What did the mask provide? I feel that there were a few important things provided by the mask: Containment of my face, a physical separation of my face from the outer world which gave me a feeling of distance and safety, the smell and feeling of the mask against my face was already familiar and had positive associations for me which also gave me comfort and safety, the limitation of not being able to make sounds behind the mask encouraged me to translate what would have been expressed through sound into expression of movement. Also, the feeling of the mask on my face inspired me with a desire to "be larger than life", to perform, to embody a character. Then through spontaneously enacting a scene from the life of the character I was taken to a different emotional state - one which brought new insight into my personal situation.

The witness then provided an audience to perform for. This encouraged me to be humorous. The knowledge that my witness would be empathic allowed me to experience being empathized with, and thus I began to empathize with myself.

What in verbal therapy comes out as "I feel small, I feel estranged from my body, I feel isolated, I feel punished and abandoned, I feel constricted by the obligation to receive" came out through this neutral mask experience as the playing out of the opposites. Then by playing out the compensatory action, I experienced the resulting feelings that come after having fulfilled a desire. This then

brought insight into the original feeling, insight into the resulting feeling, and finally insight into the reason for the imbalance.

The following is a formula that I tried as a way of structuring my own analysis of my experience under the mask:

- 1)Feeling - 2)compensatory action - 3)resulting feeling -
- 4)insight into the original feeling - 5)insight into the resulting feeling
- 6)reason for the imbalance

For example:

- 1)I feel small
- 2)I make large dance-like actions with my body, then create a larger than life character
- 3)I feel ready to feel some pain that I have been overwhelmed by before
- 4)feeling small makes me repress feelings of pain
- 5)I was more sad than I thought
- 6)much rumination over my troubles made my world small which made me feel small and overwhelmed. By expanding my body and movement, I expanded my world, which then allowed me to deal with what seemed overwhelming before, but became manageable as a result of the expansion. If I'm small and I have a big feeling, I make myself bigger and the feeling shrinks in comparison.

Before the exercise I knew only #1) that I felt small.

#2) was a compensation for feeling small, and #3)-6) came as revelations as a result of having embodied the diva character. The diva character was in fact an amplification of the compensation for feeling small.

## **Summary of Elements Integral to Experience**

In summary, I will itemize the important components of this experience. To begin with, I will mention the elements that were already in place even before beginning this exercise. It is important to mention these elements because had they not been present, there would have been a greater likelihood of my beginning the exercise with feelings of self-consciousness and inhibition, and thus the exercise would not have been as effective:

- an environment that felt familiar and safe
- a group of people who I felt accepted by and comfortable with
- a mask with which I had positive associations and which felt familiar to me
- a witness who I knew would empathize with me

In physical terms my actions progressed in the following manner:

- I expanded my body against the floor
- I danced, clapped, twirled
- I played with rhythms from others
- I embodied and enacted a diva character who then:
  - clapped for herself and others
  - accepted roses then tossed them away and laughed
  - culminating in a new emotion: regret
- I sat down, held myself close and cried

In psychological terms:

- sensations in my body were amplified, clarified, elaborated
- I played out antithetical desires
- I externalized, embodied inner conflicts and ambiguity
- emotions that came too quickly and chaotically in real life were given a form in which they could emerge and be observed at an objective distance at the same time as being experienced first-hand.

Outcome and benefits

- a humorous aspect was brought to my situation
- saw myself and the situation from a distance



-was able to experience and understand difficult emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them  
-gained new insight into my own internal conflicts as well as the situation at hand

Upon reflection, I realize that the four main elements that made this a rich experience were the desire to be 'larger than life', to perform, to embody a character, and the role of the witness. Dramatizing a scene from the diva's life brought me to a new emotional state which brought new insight into my personal situation. In other words, the embodiment and enactment of a situation that was different from my own personal situation and yet contained within it personal, symbolic meaning that I was not consciously aware of, afforded the distance to experience my inner conflicts and observe them at the same time. The presence of the witness encouraged me to perform, to be humorous (thereby further distancing the enactment), and then when the new feeling state emerged, I at once saw my own reaction through the eyes of the observer and this immediately brought feelings of empathy for my situation.

In the following section I will draw on experiences of the four members in the research group with whom I worked with over a period of eight, 2.5 hour sessions. I will then compare their journeys with my own and begin to identify commonalities between experiences.

## **5 - EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH GROUP MEMBERS**

### **Introduction of Research Group**

I recruited the members of this research group from the undergraduate university population. All four of the participants had had at least some experience with drama in the past. I had each member sign a letter of authorization (appendix #1), allowing me to use portions of their journals that they feel comfortable sharing with me, and excerpts from group discussions that were either audiotaped or recorded manually by myself for the purposes of this research paper. I also asked each of them to think of a personal goal that they would like to work toward, which we could refer back to periodically over the course of the process. My role in this group was to provide a loose structure as a take off point from which they could engage in their own process, to contain the group's safety needs (ie. making sure that they don't run into walls), to witness/engage in their movement experiences from the stance of an alert, empathic observer, and to record their movements and verbal commentaries for the purpose of future analysis.

As way of introducing the process, I told the group that the aim of our work together was to turn down the volume in the mind and to turn up the volume in the body; to connect with impulses within the body and to allow those impulses to lead their movements wherever they wanted to go

without the mind judging those movements. I told them that the idea of the work was to find out if their bodies contained within them messages that were different from, or in addition to what they already know about themselves, and/or about how and what they are feeling presently. This was the extent of my directives for them, in an attempt to allow their own internal processes to unfold without outside suggestion and influence. Already with the directions that I did give them, there are the following suggestions: that there are impulses in the body that we can 'connect with'; that these impulses lead to movement; that the mind may normally 'judge' these movements; and that there might very well be messages in their bodies that are different from, or in addition to what they already know about themselves, and/or about how and what they are feeling presently. How these suggestions influenced their experiences is difficult to ascertain, however I felt that this was the minimum amount of information that I needed to convey to them, to give them some sense of why we were doing this work together. My hope in our eight sessions together, was for them to connect with internal impulses through the authentic movement, and then to see how or even if the addition of the neutral mask made a difference in how they experienced those impulses. I had intended to eventually introduce images into their movement exercises with the mask, as we had had at Ecole Lecoq (ie. moving through the fog, watching a boat

take off from a dock), however I found that the time went by very quickly, and with absences of various group members at various times, it was difficult to introduce this new aspect when all of them would have been ready for it. This may have been an error in judgment on my part, as two out of the four members expressed at the wrap-up meeting that they needed the work to go to another level at some point. The feeding in of external images would have provided a new level of engagement, however perhaps it was best for this first group to have concentrated wholly on their own internal images, to simplify and clarify the role that the mask itself serves in the 'playing out' of images generated from internal impulses alone.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of the sessions consisted of a 50 minute warm-up focusing on bringing physical balance to the body through a ritualized stretching and breathing routine (exercises adapted from those taught in movement classes at Ecole Jacques Lecoq), then 15 minutes of authentic movement followed by five minutes of free associative journal writing, followed by a group discussion, and then 20 minutes of authentic movement with the addition of the neutral mask, followed once again by 5 minutes of journal writing and a group discussion. The first three sessions were purely

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<sup>4</sup> The structure that I used for this group was significantly less complex than the one that I currently employ (December, 1999) with authentic neutral mask groups. The structure that I use currently is partially as a result of the findings from this study.

authentic movement and the neutral mask was introduced in the fourth session. (I had intended to introduce the mask in the third session, however, as only half of the members were present for the third session, I decided to wait until all four of them could begin with the masks together.)

After giving the group opening directions for authentic movement, I told them to accept whatever impulses emerged without judging them as good or bad, but rather to acknowledge simply that they 'are'. Towards the end of the process I occasionally suggested that they try opening their eyes during the movement exercises with the mask, but for the most part they had their eyes closed during all movement exercises.

After the eighth session we had a wrap-up meeting in which I gave each group member a questionnaire (appendix #2) with fourteen questions to answer. Once they had finished the questionnaire, we had a final group discussion which I audiotaped.

The following is a summary of the progression of one of the group member's journey, which I have derived from the compilation of my observations of his movements, his journal, his verbal commentaries during group discussions, and his answers to the questionnaire at the end of the process. Due to length restrictions of this paper, I am unable to include this same lengthy analysis of all of the members' journeys. However, I have made an analysis of each

member's separate journey, and will include what emerged as commonalities between their experiences and/or what is relevant to the development of this method as a form of drama therapy as part of this section of the paper. Also, later in this section I will provide excerpts in verbatim of the final group discussion that I audiotaped during the wrap-up meeting. This will further illuminate how this work was experienced by the entire group. All names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the individuals involved in this research group.

### **Ben's Journey**

Ben wrote in his journal in the first session that he wanted to open up, to explore "the free me". He told the group after the authentic movement, that he had experienced lots of images and that he felt exhilarated by the movement exercise. He said also that he felt distracted by "thoughts" during the exercises in this first session.

In the second session Ben wrote that his mind was never quite still. For his goal he wrote: "I'm aiming at learning to let go of my talking mind, my inner monologue. I will it to subside and be silent and allow other functions to take the surface and be dominant". He discovered in this session that his body wanted to keep stretching after the warm-up. As the sessions wore on, this desire to keep stretching and bringing more stretching into his daily life

became more and more pronounced. Ben made it clear to the group within this session that this work was to be for his own personal development and not to be collaborative, therefore he would not share his personal goal with the group. (I gave them the choice to share or not to share their personal goals with the group.)

In the third session, Ben described his experience during authentic movement as being completely without self-consciousness for the first time. He said that he felt "powerful", "like red lava", like he never feels in "real life". He said that the experience was like "lying in the hot sun" which felt "rejuvenating" and "invigorating" to him. Another member's chanting transformed his invigorating power into a "power in comfort". He described an image of lying on pillows. For the first time he exhibited a desire to reach out to others in the room.

At the beginning of the fourth session, Ben told the group that he was telling others (outside of the group) that this was a theatre workshop (not a therapy group). His movements began to show what looked to me like more assertiveness. I made a note to myself in both the third and fourth sessions that Ben's movements looked to me like someone "trying to escape from his skin". (In the final questionnaire Ben defined 'therapeutic' as "loosening the knots of pain and torment that entangle a being".) Upon adding the mask, Ben was the first of the four to walk. He

crossed the room, shook his head, blew out, then grabbed his head with both arms. At exactly the same time, another group member grabbed her head in exactly the same way, in a different part of the room. Further into this exercise, all four of the group members engaged in a very energetic, loud interaction with one another that included covering a lot of space rather quickly (when one considers that their eyes were closed), aggressive banging of various things in the room (the floor, the walls, the door and door knob), and vigorously shaking, then ripping poster boards that they came across in their movement exploration. Ben's part in this evolved from covering a lot of space in the room, to making loud stomping sounds as a way to silence the others (which worked temporarily), to backing away from the noise of the others and throwing his head back and laughing loudly. He said later: "all I could do was laugh at the chaos!" He then added: "I was feeling all these different emotions! It's amazing how when you turn off the mind, you get all these different emotions! There was a real story happening." This began for Ben what he continued to describe as his experience under the mask: a real story happening.

The day following the fourth session (the first using the neutral mask), three out of the four members of this group gave an oral presentation in one of their classes. Ben shared in the fifth session that he had "kicked butt" in



his presentation. All three of them felt that the previous night's neutral mask experience had had something to do with their lack of self-consciousness during this presentation.

During the warm-up of the fifth session, I had asked the group to think if their body could say just one sentence, what would it be. Ben wrote in his journal that his body would say: "Take care of me." He then wrote: "Aint that the truth". During the neutral mask exercise, Ben walked around the room with what looked to me like impatience. During the group discussion he said that he felt very impatient this night. He also volunteered: "This is a place where you remove inhibitions." In his journal, Ben wrote: "I get this feeling that this is the year of recognition. The mask work is quite liberating. I was wandering and all else was silent."

In the sixth session, Ben wrote in his journal that he felt distracted and frustrated in the preliminary authentic movement exercise. In the neutral mask exercise, one of the other group members walked over to him and leaned against him. Ben looked like he was unsure whether or not he wanted to be leaned against. In his journal Ben wrote: "I find that when anybody enters my space (whether I know and trust them or not) I go into automatic shut down mode. I cease to be free and just me. I guess there's some issues to work out. Oh well!!!" I wonder if this moment of insight may have marked a transition for Ben from this group functioning

for him merely as a theatre 'workshop', to becoming more of a therapy group.

In the seventh session Ben shared with the group that he felt that stretching was addictive. In his journal he wrote that he could have stretched forever. Then he wrote: "Neutral Mask: The only way to be is to be yourself." Both exercises were done wearing the neutral mask in this session. During the second one, Ben collaborated with others in the group. He engaged in a sound duet with one other group member which included blowing, clucking, and whistling. In his journal, Ben wrote: "This was fun collaborating or exchanging with the others by whistling or other sounds by breathing through the mask. I could have gone on much longer."

In the eighth session, especially in the second exercise, I had the feeling that Ben was wanting/ needing interpersonal exchange. In the discussion he said that the mask brought out a "bonhomme" character. He said: "Put the mask on and right away there's a 'being', and as I go along the story of the being emerges. Today he was wandering. He also said: "I feel like somebody with the mask on. Without it I feel like (laughs) a nobody." Later in the discussion Ben said: "I am realizing that I am self-centered, self-conscious, self-obsessed. Me, me, me. All my problems. I have problems sharing space, have trouble 'being'." In his journal, Ben wrote: "My theme was to let go, to just be. I

guess I got it. Today I was just walking. I wanted to be unbridled, la, la, la. But instead... I still got what I wanted though. I just was and today I was a wanderer."

In the questionnaire that I gave to the group members during the wrap-up meeting, Ben took considerable time with each question and carefully thought through his answers. For his personal goal, he wrote: "I wanted to explore being free, or rather I wanted to free myself from the shackles of inhibition that keep my mind and emotions from engaging in a more cooperative and deep relationship." (This statement reminds me of my observation of Ben's movements in one session looking like he was trying to escape from his skin - the physicalization of a desire to move beyond self-imposed boundaries perhaps.) His answer to: Did this medium help you in working toward this goal? was: "Although my view on the subject is that this type of medium might be more rewarding over a longer period of time, it remains that I did get quite a bit out of this process. In effect I was brought closer to my goal than anticipated. Actually, now I can say that I have tools for accessing that feeling of freedom, of letting go." When asked if his goal had changed mid-way through the process, Ben wrote: "My goal pretty much remained the same throughout. Although at times it became much clearer and immediate." Then as part of this questionnaire he defined 'therapeutic' as: "Healing. Loosening the knots of pain and torment that entangle a

being. ie. in a mental/emotional context." He defined 'therapy' as: "It has come to mean to me something of a rather unpleasant nature. Due mostly to personal subjectively interpreted experience." When asked if these definitions had changed for him since earlier in the process when I asked them to define the two terms, Ben wrote: "Sure! I think that the whole concept of drama therapy has allowed me to see a kinder more humane and useful way that therapeutic art and science can be." When asked what the most significant thing that he had learned about himself as a result of this project, Ben wrote: "That there is a deep living pool of intense energy which can be tapped to useful benefits such as better self-esteem and determination." When asked if it was different working with the mask than without it, Ben wrote: "With the mask on it was a heightened experience wherein the exploration had more definition. It seemed to take on a life of its own." Finally, when asked what he liked best about the process, Ben wrote: "The neutral mask aspect and how it allowed me to get at parts of my being otherwise inaccessible."

## **Summary and Analysis of Ben's Journey**

Ben's journey began with a resistance to 'therapy' but a keen desire to "open up and explore the free me". He quickly moved from feeling inhibited by his thoughts, to freeing himself of his "inner dialogue" and thus experiencing 'red lava' power. This power he still ascribed to feeling within the space of the movement exercises but not as part of 'real life'. In the very next session, and with the addition of the neutral mask, he experienced having 'turned off his mind', then feeling many emotions during a group story which unfolded before him. The following day he 'kicked butt' on an oral presentation which he believes came from feelings of liberation that he still remembered (felt?) from the previous night's neutral mask mayhem. In the following session he identified his body as wanting him to take better care of it. Within the same session he announced to the group that "this is a place where you remove inhibitions". Perhaps the diminishing force of inhibitions allowed Ben to hear the protests of his hurt body. Ben found greater liberation from embodying 'the Wanderer' character who could just 'be'. Suddenly he realized that this state was broken by someone entering into his space from which he concluded that he needed to resolve this inability to be 'himself' in close proximity to others. By 'himself' I wonder if he means having his "mind and emotions engaging in a deep and cooperative relationship".

At the time of this session, the presence of another person in Ben's kinesphere threw the relationship between his mind and his emotions off balance.

In the following session he made strides toward 'collaborating' with others, and in the final session he recognized that while wearing the mask he felt like a 'somebody'; someone (a wanderer) who experiences in the present and is not pre-occupied with sharing space, self-consciousness, or the 'shackles of inhibition'.

In comparing Ben's journey to my own, I can see several commonalities:

1) Body sensations were amplified, clarified, elaborated

Ben described his experiences being 'heightened' and having greater 'definition' with the addition of the mask. One can sense this heightened state and a keen awareness of at least one of his senses in his words: "I was wandering and all else was silent." There is also a marked difference in how Ben described his personal goal at the beginning of the process and at the end. At the beginning he wrote: "I want to open up and explore the free me." At the end he wrote: "I wanted to free myself from the shackles of inhibition that keep my mind and emotions from engaging in a more cooperative and deep relationship." The second description, in its' clarity, elaboration, and amplified images and

emotions also displays a deeper cognitive, conscious understanding of his initial goal.

**2) I externalised, embodied inner conflicts and ambiguity**

The best example of Ben's embodiment of inner conflicts is in the words that he chose to define the term 'therapeutic' at the end of the eight sessions: "Loosening the knots of pain and torment that entangle a being". It is also worth noting the kinesthetic and (using Arnold Mindell's term) proprioceptive awareness<sup>5</sup> that Ben exhibits through the images that he uses here, in comparison to his earlier, more clinical and distanced definition of therapy in the fifth session: "A method used to help relieve an ailment or an addiction. Therefore it is a process used to help heal. That is, it is directed towards people who are sick and or suffering."

**3) I played out antithetical desires**

Ben began this work with one main desire: the desire to be without inhibitions and self-consciousness. In meeting this desire, and by entering into a state in which he could experience a lack of inhibitions, Ben experienced his

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<sup>5</sup> Arnold Mindell defines proprioception as 'body experience' (Mindell, 1985, p.7) therefore proprioceptive awareness would be the awareness of body experience.

resistance to contact with another person ("whether I know and trust them or not") on a heightened level. This drew focus to an inner conflict between his desire to have a deep and cooperative relationship between his mind and emotions, and a desire to share his space with others. I wonder if/how this discrepancy between desires may have dissolved over time and allowed for both desires to be met without conflict, had we continued our work together as a group. I also wonder if having experienced this discrepancy through this work will aid in the dissolution of this conflict within Ben at a faster rate, now that he has become consciously aware of it.

**4) Emotions that came too quickly and chaotically in real life were given a form in which they could emerge and be observed at an objective distance at the same time as being experienced first-hand.**

It is clear that Ben did experience a distance from which he could experience different emotions ("It's amazing how when you turn off the mind, you get all these different emotions!") and also experience a story unfolding as both a participant and someone who is able to objectively proclaim that "there is a story happening". It is also interesting to note that Ben felt that he was a 'somebody' when he played the mask character, perhaps for the very reason that the mask gave him the distance to observe himself and experience himself all at once, and purely in the present



moment without the censoring ego judging and thus dampening the experience. It seemed that Ben equated the feeling of being a 'nobody' with his own self-judging labels. ie. "self-centred", "self-conscious", "self-obsessed", "difficulty sharing space". Upon diminishing the voice of these judgments of himself, he became a 'somebody' which was embodied in the character of 'the Wanderer'.

Ben wrote that he learned about himself as a result of this project: "That there is a deep living pool of intense energy which can be tapped to useful benefits such as better self-esteem and determination". I am reminded of the very first neutral mask exercise that he engaged in, and when he grabbed his head with both arms at exactly the same time and in the same way as another group member who was across the room from him. (Both people had their eyes shut during this moment therefore simple imitation of one another can be ruled out as an explanation of this phenomena). In my own experiences of witnessing authentic movement, this synchronicity of movement was explained to me by my very experienced authentic movement leader and witness, as transpersonal energies catching the collective unconscious of the movers and being manifested/embodied through movement. It seems that all experienced authentic movers that I have spoken with understand this to be true. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the experience of moving in the realm of the collective unconscious can be visibly

differentiated from the experience of moving in the realm of the personal unconscious. Over the years, I have observed this difference in the movement quality of neutral mask movers as well. I believe that I can differentiate between someone moving in the realm of the personal unconscious and someone moving in the realm of the collective unconscious. However, I do not know at this point what the difference is in the mover's experience in the two different realms. Nor do I know the difference in the effects of someone having moved in one realm or the other. This distinction between movement and the effects of movement in the two different realms remains to be further studied and explored (at least in the area of neutral mask work). The analysis of this distinction is hugely significant in terms of defining the therapeutic benefits of evoking archetypal images and energies, as archetypes are thought to exist in the realm of the collective unconscious.

After their movement experience, I have sometimes noticed that those who were engaged in what I am for now delegating as the collective unconscious realm, appeared to be more excited, 'invigorated', 'exhilarated'. I have also at times felt more excited, invigorated, and exhilarated after a neutral mask exercise than I have at other times. Perhaps this may mean that experience in the collective unconscious realm is more heightened and more intense than experience in the personal unconscious realm. Even if this

was proven to be true, what the difference is in the lasting effects after someone having moved in one realm or the other, I cannot say. I find Ben's wording of what he had learned to be very interesting: "That there is a deep living pool of intense energy...". Is he in fact describing the collective unconscious? If so, then perhaps the rest of his statement: "...which can be tapped to useful benefits such as better self-esteem and determination" is one answer to some of the effects of work on this level. Obviously, it is too early to draw any definitive conclusions at this point.

#### **Excerpts From Group Discussions**

In the following portion of this section I will provide two excerpts from the final group discussion. The first excerpt is in response to the question: How did you experience authentic movement and then how did the addition of the neutral mask affect your experience? The second excerpt is in response to the question: What did you get out of this process? The initials in the left margin represent the first initial of the person speaking (all names except for my own have been changed). B=Ben, S=Sarah, D=Debbie, J=Jessica, and C=Csilla.

**Excerpt #1**

**How did you experience authentic movement and then how did the addition of the neutral mask affect your experience?**

**B:** Authentic movement was like stretching before a run. It got my emotions going, unconscious moving... it was kind of like warming up a car. I was ready for the mask work after the authentic movement. Putting the mask on felt like an extension. I wouldn't say that the authentic movement wasn't going anywhere but it was like when you did the authentic movement, it felt like really just getting everything flowing and moving then I put the mask on and this journey would begin. Because the mask had a personality and the authentic movement was like a raw experience, then the mask was very directed. Even though it was open and all that, it was still a lot more specific than the authentic movement.

**C:** Was it a character that you ended up playing under the neutral mask and was it the same character from week to week, or was it different each week?

**B:** I wouldn't so much call it a character as a personality. The mask took on a life of its' own really. I guess that could be considered a character but it wasn't like Joe the fisherman or Bob who works at the gas station. It was more just like this being came to life. Week to week it did change. It was wherever it was that time. I found certain things were common like emotionally some of the energy was similar.

**S:** I didn't experience that the mask had a character but that the mask allowed you to bring out characteristics of yourself. I wouldn't say putting on the mask suddenly infused a character into me but it gave me the freedom to play more, to feel a lot bigger. To me that's the difference. Bigger, freer, less fear, really feeling like you could go all out. For some reason when I put the mask on that was my experience. Like Ben, I had a different relationship with the mask (each week?) which to me reinforces the idea that you bring the character to the mask.<sup>6</sup> So it depends on

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah embodied two characters that I observed. The first time that they used the masks she played what I called

your energy that day, it depends on your experiences that week - how you're going to interact with yourself and with the mask.

- D: Absolutely. Some weeks I felt comfortable with it. It was good and the energy would come. Other weeks I didn't want the mask, it was not good.
- C: On the weeks that you weren't happy with the mask and it was "not good", then how was the authentic movement?
- D: Not so good.
- C: What did you feel that you needed in those weeks?
- D: Well I don't know that it was negative. I don't know if I needed something to change it so that it was... I think it was an experience whether it was a good or a bad one, I think it was still an experience. When I said that it was bad I just meant that I wasn't moving.
- C: Then putting the mask on top of that didn't make you want to move more.
- D: Right.
- S: It was interesting how sometimes I would have an impulse to move but I would still feel the heaviness of the day and I wouldn't move. In authentic movement I would have that knowledge that if I could just let myself get beyond that barrier of the first movement then a whole series of craziness would come. And with the neutral mask I was even more aware of it.

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the "Buddy" character. He (we discussed after the movement experience that the character seemed like a man to both of us) walked assertively around the room then approached me and patted me on the back with quite a bit of force in a 'Hi buddy' sort of way, then joined another group member in aggressively shaking poster boards and making loud sounds with them. The second character emerged in a later session in which Sarah had a bad cold. She said that during the authentic movement exercise she was trying to "work off her cold". Then once she put the mask on, she told us later that she felt like a giant walking up a mountain as her feet walked up a heat radiator. She said that she kept wanting to open her eyes and look at her feet because they "felt so big". I wondered if the character of the giant was an unconscious amplification, or even compensation for her feelings of ill health.

- D: I didn't find that every time we did it that I achieved that (getting over that first barrier to movement).
- S: Well exactly, I would just sit there and wouldn't let it... but then again if you move because you know that if you do you'll go crazy and it will be fun, then it wouldn't be authentic. So you don't move and you just sit there.
- C: When you were feeling that way and you had the mask on, did you feel that it was even more overwhelming to make that first movement?
- S: Not more overwhelming just more aware of the knowledge that I've got that barrier, becoming aware of that barrier being there.
- C: How about you Jessica?
- J: I think for me at first I put on the mask and I'd agree like some characters would come out. I was sort of more moving around and kind of more acting just the first week, maybe the second. Then after that I really enjoyed putting it on and not really moving but just using it as a bridge between myself and the outside world. It was like a protection to just think and let my thoughts go. So I just used it more to let my thoughts of my day and all the little garbage in mind flow and it was somewhat of a protection having it there. It was nice being around other people but not having to interact. That's what I liked about it.
- C: Giving yourself permission not to interact.
- J: Yeah, just staying in my own world. It was nice. I liked that.
- C: Then it was a conscious decision not to play out characters?
- J: No, I just sort of didn't want to. I was happy just lying with the mask and not really moving much. Using it more as relaxation of my body and my mind rather than as movement.
- S: It's interesting when you say that 'I wanted to do this or that'. In my experience whenever I did authentic movement or authentic movement with the mask, especially with the mask, it's not that I was consciously thinking about these things, it just happened, it was more of an intuitive thing and when I was finished I could go back and go okay that's what I

was experiencing. But I find especially with the mask most of the time like at least 85% of the time I was in the moment.

- B: Pretty much mostly I was... I'd say 80-85% percent of the time would be a good estimate. But even when I wasn't totally in the moment I wasn't completely distracted either. I wasn't running around in a park somewhere, I was still there.
- S: Once I caught the wave... it's almost like catching the wave. It's like when you exercise and suddenly you hit this plateau, or when you do art and you know that timelessness? I found that if you caught the wave that was it man. You're in the moment and forget about going back. Like the time we ripped up the paper (laughs). From that moment on, it could have been a minute, it could have been an hour, it could have been two days, it was just one free flow. Which is nice. It's nice to get into that state.
- B: I think for me the catching the wave was always accomplished when my inner critic would shut up. It was as simple as that. Because that would allow my other type of consciousness to appear when I wasn't thinking in words I would be thinking in just...I'd be...thinking...Feeling, really feeling. It was more like intuition says, intuition says, intuition says. Rather than my personal critic. That's really what catching the wave for me was.
- C: Do you mean that self-judgment would stop and suddenly you'd be open to your feelings a lot more?
- B: And it became successively easier to do that. I think the first few times we got together I had more of a tendency to think: "Oh jeez, what am I doing, la,la,la, blah, blah, blah," you know? But I think that as the lessons went on it was a lot easier to get into that zone of silencing the critical part of me.
- S: I find when I put the mask on suddenly I want to interface with everyone. It was a really weird experience 'cause I sensed that most people in the room just had there own little space and their own little world and I was like whoohoo! Can I go running? Can I jump on people? Really just wanting to play and connect. But I'm pretty much an extrovert so I think that's how I gather energy, is by going out rather than coming in. I think it's like when you're feeling good and calm, some people like to just sit and enjoy that and other people want to go and hug somebody. I'm the

type of person that if I'm feeling good I need to share.

C: You want the interpersonal exchange.

S: Yes.

### **Summary and Analysis of Excerpt #1**

(Meanings and essences that emerge from this summary appear in bold print.)

Ben echoed some of the things that he had said earlier, such as:

**Neutral mask is an extension to authentic movement in that it infuses a personality that begins a journey/story, thus bringing more direction and specificity to the experience.**

Sarah then added that it is not the mask itself which brings the personality but that it is the mover who brings the personality (or character) to the mask depending on his/her energy level that day and experiences engaged in during the week. She said that the mask gave her freedom to play more, to feel a lot bigger, to experience less fear, and to feel like she could go 'all out'. In her journal, Sarah wrote that the neutral mask creates a desire to move more and to "put on personas". A way of perhaps synthesizing Sarah's thoughts and some commonalities that I see between her experiences and my own, are that:

**Neutral mask is a theatrical device that encourages large, expansive, amplified behaviour, which often becomes translated into a personality/persona/character coming from inside the masked person.**

Sarah also mentioned on several different occasions that she often had a desire to connect with and to be "in sync with others" while she was wearing the mask. I have noticed many



other people experiencing this same desire while wearing the mask, and have experienced it myself.

Debbie then introduced a new element to their work: experiencing a barrier between the physical impulse to move, and then moving. Sarah identified feelings of heaviness from the week as sometimes coming in between her desire to move and her desire to stay still. In the end, the feelings of heaviness won out. Debbie didn't identify what may have been her barrier, but it seems that either physical fatigue or some other force that encourages physical stasis can keep an individual from engaging in movement, even though the internal impulse to move is present. It was also interesting to note that the addition of the mask did not enable the group member to surmount the barrier, however it made her more aware of the knowledge of having the barrier. This also sounds like a kind of amplification. Perhaps this could be translated into:

**The neutral mask amplifies internal physical impulses and when applicable, it also amplifies the knowledge of barriers to embodying the impulses through movement.**

This can be helpful in identifying barriers (or the forces that emerge as barriers) after a movement exercise, and thus consciously integrating the forces at work in the mover's present emotional and physical state.

Jessica then also introduced a new way of using the mask. She said that in the first two sessions she did

embody characters (I recorded in my notes that she played what she called a warrior in one exercise and then a swordsman in another in the fourth session), but that she preferred to use the mask as a "bridge" between herself and the outside world, a means of protection, allowing her to let her thoughts go. It seems that at some point Jessica did make a conscious decision not to embody internal sensations any more. She mentioned in the wrap-up meeting that she would have preferred shorter sessions because of the intensity of the work, and perhaps it was a desire to ease that intensity that was the root of her decision to use the sessions (and the mask) for reflection rather than action. Whatever her reasons were, she still felt, and I observed, a definite progression of her experiences over the course of the eight sessions. Jessica defined the term therapy on the questionnaire as: "Anything that helps a release happen and some resolution". I believe that this did occur for Jessica. I think that the therapeutic journey that Jessica engaged in was attributed to regression to states of childhood, and the re-feeling of the emotions that accompanied the visions and fantasies in those states. The mask was used pre-dominantly as a protective cover, further enabling a sense of comfort and security.

Jessica shared with the group during the group discussions that she had experienced many sensory memories from her childhood, and that she was becoming progressively

more bothered by her present living arrangement which lay in sharp contrast to the secure, comforting feelings that she was experiencing within this group and in her memories of childhood. I have observed that regression to early childhood phases of development occurs for most, if not all people engaged in this work. In fact I have a feeling that it might be a very important part of the unconscious healing process that naturally occurs when a group of people are assembled in a room, all with their eyes shut except for one who watches over them, and the body is allowed to do as it wishes. Jessica in one session shared with the group: "I'm feeling totally like a baby almost. I wanted to curl up and be comfortable and safe and secure". This reminded her of how unsafe and insecure she feels in her current living situation and brought the new insight that: "I'm realizing how stressed out I am with chaos around me". Sarah's authentic movement exercises often began with her assuming a child's pose. In the sixth session I had to leave the room very briefly to ask people in the next room to be more quiet, and in the group discussion after this exercise Sarah said that she felt during this time as though "mom had left the room". All four of the group members said that they had felt mildly anxious as a result of my leaving the room. Ben said that he caught himself thinking "what if one of us suddenly jumped up and ran across the room and banged into the wall?" He laughed as he said this, knowing rationally

that this would not have happened, given that all four of them were lying on their backs when I left, and that I came back very soon afterward. However, I think that he was expressing that in the state that he was in, the witness leaving the room provoked feelings of anxiety within him. I suddenly understood what David Read Johnson meant when he wrote that movers experience parental transferences toward their witness (Johnson, 1992).

Debbie wrote in her journal in the first session that her body "felt like a child's", and that different body positions took her back to different times. In my professional actor group one actor said that he felt around four or five years old during authentic movement, then with the addition of the neutral mask and my direction to amplify feelings, images, or characters that emerged (I was giving this direction to this group at this point), he said that he went to feeling six or seven years old.

As Jessica's experience of this group demonstrates, the regressive aspect of authentic movement and a group of kind people can engage a mover in an insight provoking journey. She also demonstrated that the embodiment of internal sensations, and the amplification of these sensations in the form of theatrical characters, was not what she was wanting at this time, thank you very much! Although she is the first, I am sure that she is not the last person that I will encounter who feels this way. However, from Jessica's

involvement in the group I now know how someone can adapt to the process if the intensity becomes too overwhelming, and still gain ample benefits from the experience.

To encapsulate the above, I will summarize with:

**The aspect of authentic movement that brings regression to childhood states serves as an effective and important preliminary stage in the journey of the unconscious in authentic neutral mask work.**

Sarah and Ben then dialogue about the 'experiencing in the present' aspect of neutral mask work, which Sarah likens to "catching the wave"; a state or feeling that she experiences while giving herself over to other art forms and physical activities as well. Sarah describes this state as: hitting a plateau; feeling of timelessness; one free flow. Ben says that he experiences this state when: the inner critic subsides; he stops thinking in words and instead...just feels; when he is directed by his intuition rather than by his internal critic; (allowing the ego to take a rest while the id has a chance to play!) In other words:

**Achieving a state in which the mind takes a back seat to the body's natural impulses, helps engage the mover in actively and physically experiencing feelings, images, sounds, and the ensuing characters that emerge through authentic neutral mask work.**

## **Excerpt #2**

*What did you get out of this process?*

J: I think for me it was a good piece in a puzzle, or my journey. Like I think it depends on where you're at. I've had a lot of places where I could talk about things so for me this was a place where I didn't have to talk, but just to be with other people and just a space to sort things out on my own, just concentrating on the physical and just relaxing. So for me it was valuable as that part of my life. It was nice for me not to analyze for a change. For me, I wouldn't come away from a session and think "oh I've solved this specific issue in my life which specifically relates to this, blah, blah, blah," which I have so often in the past become caught up with, but I would come away with feeling "oh I feel more relaxed now" and I wouldn't think about it during the week, but when I look back on it now I see that it was having a very subtle slow effect. It wasn't predictable but I did notice it having an underneath slow gradual effect.

S: Which is good because it's longer lasting.

J: For me just feeling whatever feelings was enough because then it passed and is gone. Right now I wouldn't have been into going further and acting things out. I'm just too much into that stuff, so it worked well just letting it go.

S: I don't see this just as a space for relaxing, etc. because if that were the case, what would be the difference between doing this and doing yoga? I think that this has the capability of not just allowing you to become more comfortable within yourself or for relaxing, but also for dealing with issues and really helping with all kinds of things.

B: Where is the direction that you want to take this work? A specific approach? A more holistic 'coming into myself', big, broad range of things? (This question was directed to Csilla.)

S: I don't think that the two work separately. I think they work together. I think it's more effective if you work on the big broad and from that you find the more specific. Because sometimes the specific you think you have is not the one that you really have and that's what I think is so good about this because your mind will tell you to be quiet but your true needs will speak through your body.

- C: Was there anything that came up through this work that surprised you, something that you learned about yourself, or something that you didn't know needed some attention?
- S: I never realized how comfortable I am in my own space. I was having a great time. That was a nice thing, to have that confirmation that I am as comfortable as I am.
- C: How did that being with yourself, accepting yourself help you in your life?
- S: I'll be able to tell you in a few years, but not yet.
- D: For me, after finishing (another group) I wasn't prepared to let it go because I was worried that the things that I had been exploring (in that group) had not been around in my life for long enough to know that I could do it on my own. One of them had to do with the group presentation that I had to do (the day after session #4), and it was just finding confidence and independence within myself. The other one was to become aware of and to relate with my unconscious. I think this helped me with that too.
- C: Can you talk a bit about how it helped you with both of those things?
- D: I broke up with my boyfriend yesterday and the unconscious - I don't know if there's a specific example but I just know that it's there. Choices that I make in my every day life. Letting that be within myself rather than weighting every option ahead of time. Choose one, go with it, and it will work out eventually.
- C: Do you mean that this process helped you to trust your intuition and to make decisions accordingly?
- D: Yes. And trying to live in the moment.
- J: This process made me realize how much I like comfort and security.
- B: For me it re-affirmed that there's this big pool of energy and confidence that I think I've neglected for too long. It made me feel like "whoa, heh, that feels good." This helped me explore that.
- S: Mine was stretching stress out of my body, connecting with my inner voice, quieting my mind, letting it rest

from fast creative thinking, having that mental release. You don't realize it when you're doing it (authentic neutral mask), but then when you're walking home you realize, 'holy smokes, that was big and heavy'. It's like you just moved a rock aside. You have so much energy as you're moving the rock aside then suddenly it's like 'whoa, wait a second'. That's why I say you have to ask me two years from now how this affected me because I still feel like I just moved a rock and I haven't felt the exhale yet. I can't see it yet. I'm too close.

B: I also think that this kind of process could be very beneficial in a long-term context. Very much more than just eight weeks. If it's open ended it's very different than eight weeks where you're counting down the sessions then you all say 'thank you very much, I got what I came for and now I'm on my way'.

### **Summary and Analysis of Excerpt #2**

(Meanings and essences that emerge from this summary appear in bold print.)

It seems that Jessica at some point during the process (I'm guessing around the fifth session) discovered that there was something about not moving and rather just being in her own space and allowing herself to feel whatever feelings came to her naturally, that was good for her. Although a feeling of relaxation was what she left each singular session with, she noticed over time that the process had made her realize how important comfort and security is to her, and perhaps that she did not have enough of either in her present life. Acting on her physical impulses at this time may have been too much of a risk, or very possibly it would have crossed boundaries that she intuitively knew she should not cross. Jessica knew exactly



how far she could go in this process, beyond which she would no longer feel safe. Having stayed within her own boundaries of safety, the essences and meanings of her own emotions as they came and passed gave her a new appreciation for 'comfort' and 'security'.

Arnold Mindell states that 'kinesthetic types' have "processes that express themselves in physical movement, outwardly, extrovertedly and dramatically" (Mindell, 1985, p.35). For others, like Jessica for example, just feeling inwardly is more appropriate, and must be respected and honoured.

**The amplification and embodiment of internal sensations may be only appropriate for those with kinesthetic orientations.**

For Ben, this process re-affirmed that there is a "big pool of energy and confidence" inside of him that makes him feel good when he is connected to it. Going one step further, perhaps Ben also learned that for now, sharing physical space with others makes it difficult for him to maintain a connection with that pool of energy and confidence.

**Authentic neutral mask is one means of accessing a powerful source of unconscious energy.**

Sarah for the most part, does not know yet what the therapeutic benefits of this work were for her. She does

know that experiencing and expanding on the feelings, images, and sounds coming from her intuition felt like moving a rock aside for her, and that she has yet to feel the "exhale" from this endeavour. Sarah also spoke a lot about seeing this work develop toward resolving specific issues or problem areas that individuals experience in their daily lives. She gave the example of someone who is car phobic re-enacting the experience of travelling in a car as part of a session and with the protection of the neutral mask, as a way of working through the emerging feelings of fear in an environment of safety, then attempting to transfer the neutral mask experience into the real life experience of travelling in a real life car. Authentic neutral mask as combination psychodrama and cognitive-behavioural therapy. This is a very interesting possibility.

I also found Sarah's description of the progression of this method to be fascinatingly right on the mark of what I believe as well. She said that she sees this work beginning with a broad focus, then finding the specific issues in what naturally emerges from the intuitive voice within the body. She adds that often "the specific (issue) that you think you have is not the one you really have". The way I interpret this, and what I believe as well, is that the body will express what it truly needs, while the mind can only express what it is consciously aware of, which is often only a small

portion of the whole picture. For example, if someone came to therapy wishing to resolve car phobia, then engaged in authentic neutral mask, the individual might discover conflicting desires emerging through a character being played out, or in what blocks the individual from playing the character out. This conflict may be recognizably related to car phobia or it may not. However, in working with the character and the conflicts that emerge, the individual may work out other aspects of the psyche that are out of balance, which may need to be attended to before a direct treatment of car phobia would be useful. To put it simply, the car phobia may be a symptom of something greater, in which case the individual may only be able to discover what that greater imbalance is through engaging the intuition and attuning his/her conscious attention to the body's natural unconscious healing process.

**Authentic neutral mask treats psychic imbalances as they appear through the playing out of desires in conflict with one another.**

Debbie felt that this process had helped her to "live more in the moment", which she identified as a necessary step toward hearing, then following her intuition. As a result, she had already begun to make decisions based on what she felt her intuition told her to be right, and she was beginning to trust that she didn't need to second guess herself about this decision. I interpret this as meaning

that Debbie's conscious understanding of her current dilemma was full of ambivalence, while intuitively she was given a clear direction. Perhaps it was in the discovery of this clarity that Debbie found new confidence and independence.

**Discovering clarity in one's intuition can bring new confidence and independence.**

Before moving into the next section, I would like to summarize elements that this group felt were not in place during this process, and would need to be in future authentic neutral mask groups. First and foremost, they needed to be in the same space throughout the eight sessions. The difficulty in accessing space was a great source of frustration for me as well as for them, and unfortunately, over the course of the eight sessions we worked in several different locations. Each of the four group members mentioned that they would have preferred one location, for a greater sense of familiarity and safety in their environment. As a result, I have resolved that I will not begin a group unless I am assured of having one consistent space to work in.

One group member also mentioned that she would have needed one entire session as an 'ice breaker' session. By this she meant that she needed a reasonable chance to meet the group members and for them to meet her, before she began the authentic movement. This is not the usual format for

authentic movement, however I think that I have veered away from traditional authentic movement enough to warrant an ice breaker session before getting into the heart of things.

Another piece of critique that the group gave me was that they felt that my goals for the group and the directions that I gave in the beginning were too vague. One group member mentioned feeling like she was floating at times, not knowing which way to go. I feel that for the purposes of this paper, I needed to be vague, to ensure that as little of my own experiences and biases contaminated their process. I felt that this was the only way to come to some possible truths about the nature of the addition of neutral mask to authentic movement. In fact, through this group's process, I have been able to see many commonalities in experiences without my having supplied them in the beginning. As a result, I now can (and do) give far more directions to present and future authentic neutral mask groups, and there is a marked difference in how quickly participants enter into and engage in the work.

The fourth element that two of the group members felt as important, was in taking the work to yet another level, narrowing the work to deal with specific issues that group members are needing to work out. I have been thinking a great deal about this and I am exploring different things with the groups that I am working with presently. I will write more about the future directions of this method in the

next section, but for now I will merely say that through this method there is a great deal of potential in the elaboration of characters that emerge from within the individual. Since this group, and as a result of what I had learned through this group, I have begun to introduce external images to layer into their already internal scenarios, and have found that this does in fact enrich the experiences of the movers.

**Necessary parameters of future authentic neutral mask groups:** One consistent space, ice-breaker first session, clear goals for the group stated at the beginning of the process, and further steps toward working through specific problem areas for each individual.

**List of Essences and Meanings arrived at through this paper**  
**Through Authentic Neutral Mask:**

- 1) Body sensations are amplified, clarified, elaborated**
- 2) Inner conflicts and ambiguity are externalised, and embodied**
- 3) Antithetical desires are played out**
- 4) Emotions that come too quickly and chaotically in real life are given a form in which they can emerge and be observed at an objective distance at the same time as being experienced first-hand.**
- 5) Neutral mask is an extension to authentic movement in that it infuses a personality that begins a journey/story, thus bringing more direction and specificity to the experience.**
- 6) Neutral mask is a theatrical device that encourages large, expansive, amplified behaviour, which often becomes translated into a personality/persona/character coming from inside the masked person.**
- 7) The neutral mask amplifies internal physical impulses and when applicable, it also amplifies the knowledge of barriers to embodying the impulses through movement.**
- 8) The aspect of authentic movement that brings regression to childhood states serves as an effective and important preliminary stage in the journey of the unconscious in authentic neutral mask work.**

9) Achieving a state in which the mind takes a back seat to the body's natural impulses, helps engage the mover in actively and physically experiencing feelings, images, sounds, and the ensuing characters that emerge through authentic neutral mask work.

10) The amplification and embodiment of internal sensations may be only appropriate for those with kinesthetic orientations.

11) Authentic neutral mask is one means of accessing a powerful source of unconscious energy.

12) Authentic neutral mask treats psychic imbalances as they appear through the playing out of desires in conflict with one another.

13) Discovering clarity in one's intuition can bring new confidence and independence.

14) Necessary parameters of future authentic neutral mask groups: One consistent space, ice-breaker first session, clear goals for the group stated at the beginning of the process, and further steps toward working through specific problem areas for each individual.



## 6 - ANALYSIS OF METHOD: TOWARDS A THEORY OF EFFICACY

In this section I will return to the research question:

**Does this combination of authentic movement and neutral mask enable new possibilities for personal growth and psychological transformation?**

In analyzing what specifically enables new possibilities for growth and transformation in this method, I feel that it is important to look at the whole as a sum of its' parts. I will begin by describing one important element, that of unconscious archetypes and how Jung has explained their therapeutic effects. Then I will begin to formulate the therapeutic qualities of authentic neutral mask work, beginning with its' relationship to unconscious archetypes and moving into other concepts including those intrinsic to other methods of drama therapy. I will then discuss the safety precautions needed with this work, and finally, I will offer a summary of the many facets of the method in an attempt to formulate a theoretical model.

### Archetypes

Carl Jung defines "archetypes" as the forms that the instinct assumes to make themselves known to the conscious mind through images and emotions (Jung, 1959, p. 36,37). He goes further to say that archetypes, as part of the

collective unconscious, are "energy-charged nuclei of meaning", "possessed of a magic and fascinating power" that are meant to be translated into a language that can communicate their meaning to the conscious mind (Jacobi, 1959, p.67). If this translation is successful, a natural process of transformation begins.

"A new bond is created between our personal conscious world and the primordial experience of mankind, and the historical man in us joins hands with the newborn, individual man, that is to say, the locked gate to the roots and sources of our psychic life is reopened. This accounts for the liberating effect that may result for a sick psyche, severed from its natural order, when it encounters and comes to grips with the archetypes" (Jacobi, 1959, p.67). "The deeper layers of the unconscious, the primordial images, are activated and the transformation of the personality can get under way" (Jacobi, 1959, p.68).

Similar thoughts are echoed by Arnold Mindell in his characterization of the "Dreambody":

"If you amplify a dream symbol, the process that results is the real you, the one you were before you were born and the one that you'll be after you die. The same result occurs when you amplify a body symptom. The eternal and total personality is exposed. The dreambody is the empirical name for a mystery which appears in practice as dreams and body life." (Mindell, 1985, p. 39)

One way in which we see the emergence of archetypal energy is through what Jung called "synchronicity". He defined this as "a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have a similar meaning" (Jacobi, 1959, p. 63). I am reminded of Ben and another research group member suddenly grasping their heads at the same time and in exactly the same way during an authentic

neutral mask exercise. Jung explains this phenomena as the acausality and space-time relativity prevailing in the unconscious simultaneously entering and acting upon the field of consciousness (Jacobi, 1959, p.62). He says that during these times of synchronicity, the "totality of all past life" meets "the fertile soil from which all future life will spring" (Jacobi, 1959, p.65). Jung also states that "on the basis of this bipolarity its "healing" aspect may be viewed as a fragment of anticipatory psychological development and utilized in psychotherapy" (Jacobi, 1959, p.65). By this I believe he means that the images that surface from the collective unconscious carry with them meaning that is based in the evolution of the personality of the individual. This meaning can be intuitively grasped while experiencing the image, and then integrated into the conscious psyche.

Authentic movement is known to access archetypal energy, as I have discussed earlier. Synchronicity is an element of authentic movement that I also have observed. Also, in answer to my earlier question of how it is healing to experience archetypal energy, it seems that Jung would say that a natural healing process begins when the archetypes are translated into a language that the conscious mind can understand. He states that the activation of an archetype naturally occurs when there is an alteration in the conscious situation. This alteration requires a new

form of compensation (provided by the release of the archetype) which in turn "leads to a new distribution of psychic energy and a corresponding reordering of the psychic situation" (Jacobi, 1959, p.68).

Given that authentic movement is one language which the archetypes are known to communicate through, I am curious as to how the added element of the neutral mask affects this process. Ben spoke of how his experiences became more clear and defined with the mask. I also experienced this. There is also the element of embodying a character which emerges from internal images, often linked to the same archetypal energy that triggers synchronicity. Are these 'characters' further clarification and definition of "energy-charged nuclei of meaning" which are meant to be communicated to the conscious mind? Are they dramatized forms of the 'total personality' that Mindell refers to? If that is the case, then how does the playing out of a scene or drama from this character's frame of reference inform our own lives? Do these dramas show us "fragments of anticipatory psychological development"? Are they points of departure that we understand intuitively and then gain insight from upon further reflection? These are questions in my mind at this point. Areas that I hope to gain more informed understanding of as time goes on and I become more experienced with the method.

In terms of my role as therapist/witness for those

engaged in discovering their own unconscious journey, I plan to follow Jung's advice in the following quote about when an archetype is activated: "We must follow nature as a guide, and what the doctor then does is less a question of treatment than of developing the creative possibilities latent in the patient himself" (Jacobi, 1959, p.69).

This trust of unconscious processes guiding the individual toward health and wholeness is reflected in much of Jung's writing. It reminds me of being in theatre school, finishing a neutral mask exercise, and simply knowing that something significant had just happened to me and from me. I did not know yet just how much that moment would shape my future, but I knew that it was significant and that whatever had just happened was not over yet.

"...Psychologically...the archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives..." (Jung in Jacobi, 1959, p. 38)

### **Towards Formulating a Theoretical Model**

Arnold Mindell writes:

"When you work with your body, you heighten your proprioceptive or body awareness. By continuing this for about fifteen minutes, you often change channels from proprioception to vision and begin to fantasize. A vision is a surprising fantasy which moves you emotionally and physically." (Mindell, 1985, p.35).

This connection between images, emotions, and physical experience is a major tenet at the base of Authentic Neutral Mask work. Through the mask, one personifies and plays out

the experience of these emotionally and physically moving fantasies, while the body is in a heightened state. In this state the senses are alert and attuned to the present physical experience of the fantasy. This act of "embodiment" externalizes psychic material and thereby provides a distance from which the mask-wearer can both experience and observe his/her actions at the same time. This ability to observe oneself while engaging in bodily-felt impulses leads to new insights that naturally and spontaneously emerge. Jung supports this idea when he states that "insight emerges from self-reflective physical action" (Chodorow, 1997, p.10). These insights can be further integrated into consciousness, and expanded on, through reflection and analysis of the movement experience.

The movement experience itself brings up a multitude of possibilities. Often movers experience increased energy, compensations in their actions to the emotions that they begin with, and perhaps related to this compensation, conflictual desires frequently surface. This desire does emerge completely naturally and I believe that the increased intensity and focus provided by the dramatic aspect of the mask will often direct the mover to engage in one desire to a greater extent, thus the ensuing experience of the antithetical desire and the discrepancy between the two is felt more fully, resulting in some form of catharsis.

In describing the "transcendant function" within active

imagination, Jung writes that "it draws polarized energies into a common channel, resulting in a new symbolic position which contains both perspectives." (Chodorow, 1997, p.4) He states that 'either/or' choices become 'both/and'; that a movement occurs out of the suspension between two opposites, and leads to a new level of being, a new situation. It seems to me that this can happen on two levels. One happens almost as a direct result of having experienced the 'polarized energies in a common channel' and the other happens over time.

For example, one acting student that I am currently working with confided to me that she finds the neutral mask class therapeutic (even though the focus of the class is completely acting based and not for therapy) because she recognizes what her characters symbolize and can identify what unresolved issues they represent in her life. She says that over the course of our eight classes together certain issues have become resolved within her by playing out characters until they naturally did not emerge any more. Once this happened, she felt that the conflict that the character represented had been resolved. This echoes Jessica's experience in the research group, in that over the course of our eight sessions she became more and more attuned to her safety and comfort needs.

On the other hand, in my experience, months after having had the neutral mask experience that I use as an

example in this paper, I realized that what emerged as two opposing drives at that time (either expanding and gaining back feelings of power or pulling in and seeking comfort and reassurance) had developed over many months to a point where I was able to embrace both desires in a way that is now mutually inclusive. Did this development occur as a result of the neutral mask experience that I had? No. The change happened over many months of negotiating between one desire and then the other until I was ready to actively change my situation in a way that both desires could exist at once. The neutral mask experience was what one of my peers calls an "aha" moment. In other words it brought sudden new insight into my current emotional state, however it did not transform my emotional state. I think that this is significant. I think that it helped change my psychological position (this also over time), then when I was ready, my emotional position changed enough to enable me to make concrete changes within my life. Another way of putting this is to say that: the authentic neutral mask experience that I had was indeed significant, cathartic, and life changing, but life changing because it was an instrument leading to change rather than an instrument of change.



Whether the transformation or dissolution of conflicts happens over a short or long interval of time, it remains constant that:

**Authentic Neutral Mask may be a very effective form of both identifying and dissolving complexes that block an individual's way toward wholeness and individuation.**

Jung writes that "direct experience of the unconscious and active engagement with it is the way gradually to transform and dissolve a troublesome complex" (Chodorow, 1997, p.18).

#### Links to Drama Therapy

Drama Therapist and innovator of Drama Therapy's 'Role Theory', Robert Landy, explicates what qualifies as Drama Therapy by the following criteria (Landy, 1986, pp. 29, 233, 234):

- restores balance<sup>7</sup> within the individual, as well as between and among individuals

- offers a viable alternative to treating symptoms through methods that address issues of imbalance within the person, and between people

- aims are: to re-cognize experience, to increase one's role-repertoire, and to learn how to play a single role more spontaneously and competently

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Landy defines a moment of balance as: "one that others have called insight, catharsis, spontaneity, faith, confluence, enlightenment, transcendence" (Landy, 1985, p. 233).

**-is inherently about tensions between past and present,  
conscious and unconscious, self and role**

**Authentic Neutral Mask as Drama Therapy: Authentic Neutral Mask does aid the individual in achieving and/or restoring "balance" through the experience of engaging in and playing out the role of another, or at times many others. These roles are embodied and enacted spontaneously, are drawn from the personal unconscious (related to the personal history of the mover) or the collective unconscious (related to what some refer to as the mover's 'total personality') of the mover, then are integrated into consciousness through verbal discussion with other group members and the witness. Although the beginning stages of authentic neutral mask work require that the individual focus and engage in his/her own internal experience, the group process is crucial to the development of the process, and, eventually an interplay between masked characters evolves. Tensions between past and present, conscious and unconscious, self and role are all underlying factors shaping the evolving journey of the individual. Regression to early childhood states is also an important part of the process, as are the interplay of tensions between opposing desires. Psychic tensions are released as the various 'characters' embodying them begin to lose energy and significance. These characters are then often integrated into the conscious role-repertoire of the**

individual. As one example: If someone feels an overabundance of one emotion, he/she will play out the opposite through a character. Through the expression and embodiment of the embodied extreme emotion, a new role is added to the individual's role repertoire, a split-off aspect of the personality is re-integrated (if only temporarily), and a balance is achieved. Through discussion with the group and the witness afterward, further integration into consciousness can be achieved.

Authentic Neutral Mask is the embodied amplification of dream images, emotions, and personas. It accesses archetypal numinous energy and engages with it from an aesthetic distance with the protection of the mask and the empathic encouragement of the witness. The 'healing' or transformation may occur in simply externalizing conflicts, in having embodied the conflict in desires through the symbol of images and characters. On the other hand, the experiences engaged in during authentic neutral mask sessions may be the beginning, the raising into conscious awareness of a conflict through an embodied experience. This preliminary step then identifies the imbalance, which through further analysis, further engagement with the conflict, and a necessary spanning of time, the either/or conflict dissolves and makes room for both/and in an effortless relationship.

## **CONCLUSION**

Future directions for this work will involve a greater refinement of the technique enabling individuals to identify repeated characters and themes and how they are connected to internal conflicts. For clients with more analytic orientations, I may try to apply the formula of compensatory actions which I developed in the fourth section of this paper. However each individual journey proceeds, the important element is the identification of the conflict through the work as a means of focusing the direction and allowing the work itself to dictate how to proceed.

Safety precautions also need to be rigorously attended to. This includes removing all pressure to embody characters if the individual does not naturally show an inclination in that direction, and assessing whether or not an individual may experience flooding or flashbacks to childhood trauma as part of the work. This can be assessed both in the initial interview with the client, and then ongoing throughout the process.

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**AUTHORIZATION FORM**

I, the undersigned \_\_\_\_\_, authorize Csilla Przibislawsky, a second year drama therapy student in the Concordia University Creative Arts Therapy Department, to use written material (of my choice) and material generated through manually written and audiotaped verbal commentaries for the purposes of her research paper and/or any future publications, with the understanding that confidentiality will be maintained and no reference will be made to my identity.

I also authorize Csilla Przibislawsky to discuss the process and content of the drama therapy group within the context of her own supervision, using audiotapes (and videotapes if applicable) for educational and supervisory purposes.

The duration of my involvement in this project will be from January 14th until the end of March, 1999, with the option to continue should the group feel that this would be beneficial at that time.

I also reserve the right to withdraw my authorization at a future date.

Witness	Date	Signature of person authorized to sign	Date
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QUESTIONNAIRE - NEUTRAL MASK GROUP, WINTER-SPRING, 1999

PART ONE YOUR PROCESS

1. What inspired you to join this group back in January?

2. What was your personal goal at the beginning of the process? (If you still do not want to share your goal, then feel free to only answer the second part of this question.)

Did this medium help you in working toward this goal? If yes, then how?

3. Did your goal change mid-way through the process? If yes, then how was your new goal different from the old goal? Did this medium help you in working toward the new goal?

4. What is your current definition of what is therapy and what is therapeutic?

5. Have these definitions changed since the last time that I asked you to reflect on these definitions for yourself? If yes, then how?

6. What is the most significant thing that you learned about yourself as a result of this project?

PART TWO SPECIFICS ABOUT THE PROJECT

7. How was it different working with the mask than without it? Did your relationship with the mask change over the course of the process?

8. Did the group discussions influence your own process? If yes, then how?

9. How did the warm-up influence your process, if in fact it did?

10. Did 8 sessions feel like the right amount for this process? If not, then would you have preferred to have more, or less?

11. Did the time frame of 2.5 hours feel like the right length of time for each session? If not, what would have been the ideal length per session?

12. What did you like best about this process?

13. What did you like least about this process?

14. Do you have any suggestions for improving the process?