

Theatre training and performance workshop  
Directed by Sam Kerson

Las Téoulères, France  
June 26 to July 26, 2009

*Dragon Dance Theatre*  
*exploring visual and performing arts since 1976*

## **A detailed description of the process we will use in France..**

Our first goal will be for everyone to know the story well enough to tell it.

We will work with the story until everyone can tell their version of it.

Here is a version of the myth we are proposing:

<http://dragondancetheatre.com/FRANCE%202009/Erysikthon%20Ovide%20-%20EN.pdf>

Erysichthon and his daughter, the shape-shifter Mestra. This story is from Ovids' *Metamorphoses*. There are other versions of this story. Let's look at them too.

During the first days we will look at the materials that are available in the natural environment, the forest and field. This will include clay, which is said to be plentiful there, found things from the forest, saplings and vines and hay from the fields. We know these elements are available and we will work with all of them.

Also we will choose a space, where to build our stage, which we will find, in nature, and once we have it we will start to develop it. This will entail constructing ephemeral structures, out of natural materials, that may be burned at the performances. In this work we will actually reshape the found environment, using natural and found materials to make a stage or a series of stages, or environments, for our performances.

Next, we will undertake a series of constructions, using armatures, clay and papier maché.

In this workshop we will present the latest evolution of our mask building techniques.

We will build armatures on the tables and sculpt the clay to the image we require. This work will reveal the entire process of mask making, as we know it. There will also be some painting, and/or printing in this process.

Theatrically we will proceed with our methods, planning to make a collective creation, based on a mythic tale, seen as a modern drama.

Our technique can be described by the terms of the stages:

- Identifying the drama; personalizing it, have we had this experience?
- Understanding the conflict in the scene.
- Dramatizing it, using improvisation.
- Criticizing the work collectively.
- Then socializing it; that is, changing the actors and doing the scene again, taking advantage of our own critiques.

A special aspect of the theatre that we will work with here is the comic interlude. Changing the emotional quality of the scenes. Remember we are making spectacle, perhaps closer to performance than to theatre. We will use humor to accent the drama. We will mix the two elements, serious/ drama and strong humor. Slapstick and Irony with a bit of whimsy and farce.

Typically we will work on one scene a day, our objective will be to complete one scene a day; which will leave us the very important steps of finding the titles and sequencing, which we also do collectively. When we get to this work, titleing and sequencing, we will be finished with the improvisation.

After this we will be ready to rehearse on the stage, or in a more theatrical way. At this point we will have created the work, now we will prepare it for performance...

The result of this workshop, in a pedagogic way, will be to observe and practice the steps, in the building of a collective creation, and as part of a cultural exchange. We will demonstrate and discuss all of the steps that we use in our work, from conception to performance.

One can expect to gain a new understanding of theatre,  
...theatre free of the, "edifice complex",  
...theatre that joins the myth with the drama of modern life.  
...theatre that celebrates the natural world.  
...theatre that understands the relevance and significance of humor.

We hope you can join us !

Sam and Katah