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Erratum

Translator's name omitted, page 46. Added May 25, 2015.

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Leela Alaniz

INTRODUCTION

Actors have to learn their craft in order to represent an action for an audience. Theatrical techniques have developed continuously through ages and civilizations. For example Greek theatre has considerably influenced Occidental cultures and very different theatrical genres, such as tragedy, comedy, satire and mime, and other theatrical forms, both sacred and profane, have existed in all cultures.

As theatrical forms mutate, new theatrical anthropologies emerge from multicultural visions today as in the past. One can speak of physical theatre, gestural theatre, object theatre and Corporeal Mime. In each case, actors communicate with their bodies, but in different ways. For each of these theatrical forms, the actor has to study appropriate techniques in order to master them, even to liberate himself from them. Clearly, a *commedia dell'arte* actor expresses with the body differently than an actor using Corporeal Mime techniques.

If mime comes from antiquity and pursues its course through the centuries, for example through Italian pantomime, the little-known Corporeal Mime developed recently. The French actor and director Etienne Decroux, often referred to as “the father of modern mime” (Lust, “Etienne Decroux” 14) used the term Corporeal Mime beginning in the 1930s.

A workshop and demonstration in Brazil by Thomas Leabhart, an American who studied with Decroux in Paris between 1968 and 1972, first aroused my interest in Corporeal Mime. Inspired by this to me entirely new vision of performance, even though I already practiced physical theatre, I subsequently became part of a research project set up by Leabhart, Professor of Theatre at Pomona College since 1982.

In 2003, after six years of courses and creative work with Leabhart during which time I became one of his assistants, I made my debut as a teacher while continuing my research in this newly-developed mode of theatrical expression.

My research focuses on *dynamo-rhythm*, a major concept in the distinctive language of Corporeal Mime, one that has continuously awakened my curiosity and my thirst for further knowledge in practical and experimental work within the discipline.

In order to learn Corporeal Mime, an actor needs time, concentration and will power. In this demanding work the body must become aware of the subtle differences in levels of muscular tension.

During my apprenticeship in Leabhart’s research group, I also realized the difficulty of working on Corporeal Mime’s various dynamics and rhythms. What is “*dynamo-rhythm*”? Often in class Leabhart would say: “Work on the *dynamo-rhythm* of this composition to give it life.” What is the origin of this expression? Not found in any dictionary, it remains intrinsic to the vocabulary of teachers of Corporeal Mime. This question informs the first part of my research.

Secondly, I explore how we may understand the concept of *dynamo-rhythm* in Decroux’s working methods as well as his artistic work.

Finally, I look at the contemporary practice carried out by Decroux's successors in Europe and America. How have they understood and interpreted *dynamo-rhythm* in their teaching and practice? Among the hundreds of actors who studied with Decroux, many became richly equipped to create a wide variety of theatrical forms and styles. Moreover, during an international mime festival, one can see Canada's Mime Omnibus, Pontine Theatre and Jan Munroe from the US, Théâtre du Mouvement (Paris) and Théâtre de L'Ange Fou (long-time resident in London) and many more. In spite of a common origin, each of these companies has its own individual style and particular approach to Corporeal Mime. Some of these artists have become teachers transmitting the techniques they learned from Decroux to subsequent generations of actors, mimes and performers.

In order to realize my objectives in writing this article while avoiding the danger of a purely subjective interpretation, I researched the origins of Corporeal Mime techniques, starting with the founding father. Decroux left a number of written texts and interviews, subsequently gathered together by his students and assistants, in addition to his *Paroles sur le mime* [*Words on Mime*].

I found it equally necessary to pursue my investigations through surveys and interviews with Decroux's numerous successors: actors, directors, teachers and performers in France, England and Italy as well as in the US.

Mime Journal published over the last forty years has enriched my research. I have also used personal notes made during studies with Leabhart in California and Paris.

I hope to throw light on the origin and the continued relevance of *dynamo-rhythm* for Corporeal Mime as created and developed by Etienne Decroux, as well as the possible points of convergence and divergence in the work of his successors as seen through their artistic practice as well as their teaching.

Since 2004 as co-director with Won Kim of the Pas de Dieux Company in Paris, I have taught and directed a program of intensive training for actors and dancers. Currently, as full-time professor at the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) in Singapore, I teach movement and observe and collaborate with Asian masters of traditional theatre such as Koodiyattam (India), Noh (Japan), Beijing Opera (China), Wayang Wong (Indonesia).

— Leela Alaniz

CHAPTER 1

What is *Dynamo-rhythm*?

“Decroux is a seeker” wrote Jean-Louis Barrault, whose collaboration with Decroux dated back to 1931 when they worked together at Charles Dullin’s Théâtre de l’Atelier. They were “two accomplices departing on a journey together in search of a new form of mime” (Barrault, *Souvenirs* 72).

To review the course of Decroux’s research, passionately pursued throughout his life, and to better understand the methodology he applied to Corporeal Mime, we will study the term *dynamo-rhythm*. Firstly, in order to gain a better understanding of his research objectives and methodology, we will retrace his steps starting with his study at Jacques Copeau’s Ecole de Vieux Colombier. Even though Decroux never saw himself as an innovator, we will discover the originality of his method, which he communicated to generations of students.

We will investigate the ways in which the concept of *dynamo-rhythm* came into being, looking to Decroux and his successors and their sources of inspiration.

Dynamo-rhythm: An Approach Particular to Decroux

While Decroux did not coin the expression *dynamo-rhythm* at the very beginning of his professional trajectory, his approach and the term itself remain inseparable. From Decroux’s earliest research through the next sixty years it became intrinsic to his work. Let’s briefly retrace Decroux’s career, before looking at his objectives and approaches to *dynamo-rhythm* along with those adopted by certain pupils.

A Review of Decroux’s Journey

Creating and researching Corporeal Mime as an autonomous discipline became Decroux’s lifework. Even before Decroux conceived of the project, Jacques Copeau used the term “corporeal mime” but solely designating a single course given at the École du Vieux Colombier rather than as a separate discipline.

Intending to undertake a political career, Decroux enrolled in the École du Vieux Colombier in 1923 to study voice. However, once accepted, he started theatrical training. Decroux explained that the school’s program included a multitude of activities:

Ground acrobatics, stadium athletics, ordinary gymnastics, classical ballet, corporeal mime, voice production, ordinary diction, declamation of classical chorus and of Japanese Noh, singing and sculpting. History of music, of costume, of philosophy, of literature, of poetry, of theatre and of much more besides. (*Words* 1-2)

Later, Decroux discovered new artistic potential as he watched with amazement the more advanced students’ masked improvisation. *Dynamo-rhythm*, not the form of the movements or the theme, attracted his attention. He later declared:

But what did they do, what was it that I noticed and that stayed with me? So, you see, even at the beginning it was the qualities inherent in the changing dynamic that drew my attention. There was already something there in opposition to dance, and I had never seen slow-motion movement before. I had never seen immobility prolonged or even explosive movements followed by a sudden immobility. This contribution to mime—these changes in dynamic qualities, this ability to move the body—was enormous. (Pezin 63)

On the subject of the term Corporeal Mime, Decroux explained his ideas: “That’s how I became aware of the importance of mime that I called ‘corporeal.’ I gave it that name while they said, strangely: ‘We work with masks’” (Pezin 62).

Certain students at the Vieux Colombier, perhaps those already with the taste and talent for it, developed an interest in researching and creating physical theatre. Among them were Jean Dorcy, Jean Dasté, with whom Jacques Lecoq later worked, and Etienne Decroux. On the subject of the École du Vieux Colombier’s influence on his ultimate trajectory, Decroux wrote:

The idea of a performing art that represents through body movement, that could shelter under its vast roof not only that which causes laughter but also that which arouses terror, pity and the waking dream, still remained to be found. Now it had been found.

It had already been put into practice at the Vieux-Colombier school.

All I invented was my belief in it. (*Words* 15)

Later in 1928, while working as an actor in Charles Dullin's Atelier Theatre, Decroux began his own research, resulting in the creation of a new theatrical genre. He named it Corporeal Mime in memory of his experiences at the Vieux Colombier School and also to differentiate it from nineteenth century pantomime that bore absolutely no similarities to Decroux's concept.

In the same Théâtre de l'Atelier in 1931, Etienne Decroux met the young Jean-Louis Barrault who wrote of Decroux: "He had ideas; he was looking for disciples. From his very first attempts I was his man, his novice!" (*Souvenirs* 71).

They worked together for two years and this collaboration proved fruitful for Decroux's research on *dynamo-rhythm* and in for the development of Corporeal Mime generally. Together they used the exercises in the following list for research and training from 1931 to 1933. The list, essential for an understanding of the notion *dynamo-rhythm*, would eventually gain more precise definition:

1. Complete relaxation: equivalent to a cleansing.
2. Awareness of muscle isolation: in particular, learning to contract one muscle while leaving the others relaxed.
3. Awareness of certain muscle groups.
4. Acquisition of muscular tone: neither contracted, nor flabby.
5. Development of abdominal muscles.
6. "Scales" with the spine.
7. The Whip *étude* represented by the spine.
8. Sincerity of sensation.
9. Development of concentration. (Barrault, *Réflexions* 38)

This fruitful collaboration with Barrault while lasting only two years established a basis for a system. Decroux continued work along the same lines, opening his own school in 1941, where he trained numerous students. He also sometimes taught abroad in order to spread an awareness of Corporeal Mime and its practice, between engagements teaching in his school in France where his son Maximilien filled in for him during his absences.

In 1974, Annette Lust, an American teacher and student of Decroux, explained this part of his career:

Decroux founded schools for mime throughout Europe and in America. From 1949 until 1952, he taught for short periods in Amsterdam and in Tel Aviv. In 1952, he taught at the Sorbonne and the following year he spent seven months in Milan at the Piccolo Teatro, and in 1954, two months in Stockholm and in Innsbruck. From 1957 on, he lectured and taught at New York University, at the Actor's Studio, the New School, and the Dramatic Workshop, and later opened his own school in New York. In New York, Milan, Stockholm, and Paris, his schools were continued by students, some of whom also taught in Lausanne and in Brecht's company in Berlin. ("Etienne Decroux" 22)

On his return to France in 1963, Gallimard published Decroux's *Paroles sur le mime*.

Decroux's Objective and his Approach to Research

Decroux often declared that he never invented anything: "I move things. I'm not an inventor; I'm a moving man" ("Erudition" 40). In retrospect, after Decroux's almost sixty years of research, performance and teaching, one can see the structure and methodology of a new theatrical genre in his work: Corporeal Mime, forged from his own notions about mime.

Decroux didn't want to study pantomime or dance; he engaged rather in long-term research to discover the potential for corporeal movement. Among other things, he researched the joints, weight and counter-weight, strength, speed, impetus, muscular respiration, muscular tension, relaxation and resistance.

At that time, classical dance alone in the West offered a corporeal teaching methodology that had a specific nomenclature.

Decroux wanted to enable actors to liberate themselves from the predominance of literature, from costume, sets, music and other elements that weighed down the theatre. In *Paroles sur le mime* [published in English as *Words on Mime* in 1985] he paraphrased Racine in describing the Emperor Nero's attitude when embracing his rival Britannicus to facilitate his downfall:

In the light of this particular collaboration we can reflect on the general collaboration of the actor with other art forms, and ask if his protectors did not stretch out their arms just to stifle him.

Meanwhile, we are approaching the port of the definition, so let us try to land: since the actor is the only artist without an honor of his own, the theatre must become his property. (*Words* 24)

Thomas Leabhart emphasizes the necessity that drove Decroux to develop the techniques that would allow the actor's independence:

Decroux not only wanted to overthrow the playwright, he often railed against mask makers and costumers who did not understand that actors needed to move, perhaps because they so often worked with actors who did not know how to move. ("Dramaturgy" 142)

The actor could then develop his ability as an autonomous creator without rigid subjection to text. Above all, he had to use the instrument belonging entirely to himself, namely his own body. Just as performers in traditional Asian forms had long periods of apprenticeship, the Western actor had to develop techniques permitting him to improve movement skills. Decroux emphasized: "Without work there is nothing to be hoped for. The desire to be glorified, united with laziness, results in what we call pretension" (Leabhart, "An Interview" 36).

In retrospect, Decroux could not achieve results through the use of signs or codes, as in certain Asian theatres. By using the tools of Corporeal Mime centered on himself, the actor could create a personal form of theatrical expression. Moreover, Decroux created a system of rules, a working method that allowed the actor to master the technique, but also to create freely and personally.

In the same spirit of research, around 1960 the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski created the Theatre Laboratory where actors had to work with "concentration, confidence, exposure, almost disappearance into the acting craft," dedicating themselves to "the composition of the role, on the construction of form..." (Grotowski, *Towards* 17). Grotowski's Poor Theatre like Decroux's Corporeal Mime sought a form of expression personal to the actor.

In terms of formal technique, we do not work by proliferation of signs, or by accumulation of signs (as in the formal repetitions of oriental theatre). Rather, we subtract, seeking distillation of signs by eliminating those elements of "natural" behavior which obscure pure impulse. (Grotowski, *Towards* 18)

In a 2001 interview, Corinne Soum, pupil and successor of Etienne Decroux, spoke of the aim of Decroux's system of rules:

Corporeal Mime has no code. It's not a set of conventions; there are no conventions in the pedagogy of the apprenticeship.... Moreover, I think that Decroux created this technique to render the actor autonomous.... To his mind, the actor could be a creator in his own right. (Interview)

Decroux's lifelong study of Corporeal Mime produced a form of physical theatre requiring the actor to embark on a process of exploration and discovery of his body in order to arrive at an autonomous theatrical expression. Decroux expressed it clearly: "I desire theatre in which the actor...is an instrumentalist of his own body, and everything he does, he does as an artist and not just as an exposition of his personal nature" (Leabhart, "An Interview" 33).

Leabhart referred to Decroux and two of his contemporaries:

Two other...giants, Lecoq and Grotowski, lived in a similar space. The three of them imagined a physical theatre which was not, first of all, literature, and which had a dramaturgy in and of the body. ("Dramaturgy" 149)

Therefore, Decroux created a systematic pedagogy as well as compositions, short pieces and performances. His own terminology supported his method, a terminology composed of words and expressions as well as poetic, dramatic, political and humorous connotations, referring generally to concrete situations in everyday life. In creating this terminology, including the term *dynamo-rhythm*, Decroux intended to ensure the survival of Corporeal Mime for future generations as a specific theatrical genre. According to Leabhart:

Decroux was not furnishing students with technical skills that would enable them to fit into a system he disdained; he was not forming actors for the theatre as it then existed. There can be little doubt that his true intentions, despite his long career in film, radio and on stage, were not to improve the theatre of his day, but to replace it. ("Dramaturgy" 149)

Dynamo-rhythm: originality, definition, necessity

For his own method Decroux coined the term *dynamo-rhythm*, one not found in the dictionary. We must emphasize its uniqueness in carefully refining both definition and content as ultimately we can only understand the full scope of Decroux's research through the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*.

The originality of the term *Dynamo-rhythm*

Teachers and students of Corporeal Mime use the term *dynamo-rhythm* while practitioners of other physical techniques such as contemporary dance, dance theatre or theatre anthropology do not. In her interview Corinne Soum explained: "In other physical theatre practices one speaks of dynamism and rhythm, but, if I'm not mistaken, I believe one finds the exact term *dynamo-rhythm* only in the Decrouxian context" (Interview).

The term *dynamo-rhythm* uniquely links Corporeal Mime to its primary and original application.

The definition of the term *Dynamo-rhythm*

The definition derives firstly from the initial part of the word "dynamic" (*dynamique* in French), then from the second "rhythm" (*rythme* in French) and then in its entirety. Finally we will attempt to define it by analogies, firstly with music and then through a metaphorical image of the rheostat.

Dynamique

The *dynamique* part of the term Decroux used literally in a physical sense. For the practitioner of Corporeal Mime, the *dynamique* effectively plays between strength and energy, between the inherent force of movements and the resisting forces imposed on them.

An analogy with Newtonian physics, familiar to those who learned the rudiments at school, permitted Decroux to convey to his students a concept one cannot perceive with the eyes. According to Decroux, Corporeal Mime is “an art addressed to the eyes” (Pezin 128), but paradoxically it’s not possible to see the strength or the energy:

How can one know if one is applying force? One can see which part of the body is moved, the direction in which it is moved. But can one see the force, the power inherent in the movement? Power is like electricity, one cannot see it and yet one can infer or deduce its existence. (Pezin 128)

Leabhart confirms Decroux’s statement: “Enabling students to understand the question of resistance in Corporeal Mime, Decroux often cited the third law of Newtonian physics: ‘Each action entails an equal and opposing reaction’” (Leabhart 7 March 2000).

Rythme

The roots for the *rhythm* part of the word *dynamo-rhythm* lie in the ancient Greek *rheo*, which signifies both *flow* and *run*. *Rhythm* from its origins maintains a direct connection to nature, but also to man integrated with it.

Only much later in the West one could find the notion of rhythm based on symmetry, cadence and alternating strong and weak beats. Since Plato, and subsequently in the Roman world, as well as in St Augustine’s tract *On Music*, the notion of rhythm has implied a metrical structure, used in numerous human activities such as music, dance, and poetry among many others. Nonetheless, in the present day, these forms of artistic expression are changing, concerning the nature of the rhythm employed in poetry, sounds in music, and movements in dance. They can also manifest in non-metrical organization of rhythmical structures. These changes affect their formal aesthetics.

For Decroux, Corporeal Mime never imposes a metrical rhythmic structure. Historically, Corporeal Mime’s rhythms derive from work, from crafts and from physical actions of man in his environment. These include necessary accelerations, pauses, quick changes of movement, and slowing down. Decroux explained how he started his research in Corporeal Mime:

I started with...the representation of concrete actions. I did not know how to swim, and I started right away by representing swimming. I opened a dictionary and looked up the word “swim,” and there were images representing different strokes, breast stroke, back stroke, and they had the stroke they called The Indian, the crawl, and so on. I said to myself “I am going to do them.” Then there was diving. “I shall dive onto the floor.” And, in the same area, there was a boat, one had to row, one had to fall out of the boat, get back into it, all the activities surrounding water, which were so much more droll, since I didn’t know how to swim! (“Origins” 75)

However, one cannot reduce Corporeal Mime’s often abstract movements to a mere representation of concrete physical actions. The source of movement can change from the physical to the metaphorical plane producing other forms of expression coinciding with an actor’s mental processes at that moment. The rhythm of these movements results from the actor’s own internal rhythms. In Corporeal Mime, the rhythm can carry a specific cadence when related to human gestures relevant to a certain trade or a given action. Two short pieces by Decroux, *The Washerwoman* and *The Carpenter*, necessitate repetition to accomplish the task, for example, when the carpenter planes the wood or when the washerwoman scrubs the laundry.

Decroux found rhythm an essential element in all the arts:

Rhythm exists in every self-respecting art form. If we take music, it follows rhythm even when it does not seem to. There are [kinds of] music to which one can neither march, nor dance, nor sing and yet in spite of this lack of rhythm when all is said and done there is still a rhythm.... Rhythm is also not immediately evident in painting.... There is a rhythm between the force of certain colors and the absence of force in others.... In mime, then, we must also have rhythm. (Pezin 124)

Naturally, here Decroux does not use rhythm in the Platonic sense. His conception of rhythm followed more closely the etymology of the original Greek *rheo*. The rhythm of man who works, who thinks, and who, while thinking, doubts, stops, speeds up, resists, gives space for the unexpected, never follows predictable cadences.

In their *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese dedicated a chapter to rhythm in the actor's work, establishing a connection with the ancient Greek root:

During a performance, the actor or dancer sensorialises the flow of time.... Rhythm materializes the duration of an action by means of a line of homogeneous or varied tensions. It creates a waiting, an expectation. (211)

Dynamo-rhythm

In conclusion, the term *Dynamo-rhythm*, formed from a collocation of two words, signifies the collective qualities of physical movements, in all their complexity, which are linked to:

- their outline or trajectory
- their speed
- their power or force.

In all physical movement, each of the elements taken separately possesses a range of infinite possibilities.

For example, speed varies from immobility to rapid movement. Similarly for power, within which muscular tension can range from the most refined subtlety to maximum resistance, ending with dynamic immobility. Finally, an infinity of possibilities exists for the outline or trajectory of all physical movements.

If each of these elements implies infinite variation, the combinations possible for *dynamo-rhythm* are also infinite. Decroux explained it as follows:

There is the *outline* to the movement, that is to say the *trajectory* accomplished. If the *trajectory* left a trace, that would be the *outline*.

After the *outline* we have the *speed*. In French, the word speed has a meaning that varies according to the context. It can be used to say "quick," "rapid," or in another context, the time that it takes to complete a determined *trajectory*....

We have then...the instrument, the *outline* that is the intonation, the *speed*, faster or slower, and finally the *force* or *power*....

We know that *power* can only be inferred, one cannot see it. (Pezin 128)

Mark Epstein, one of Decroux's successors, referred to the invisibility of force, what Decroux referred to as the dynamic:

He used to teach us that the dynamic is like the soul of the movement and that it is the soul in a kind of conceptual way, but in a more literal way it's also the soul because we don't see the soul very clearly. When I look at you, you're alive: I see your shape, I sense your soul, but I don't exactly see your soul. It's like that with dynamism. That, to see the difference between a light dynamism and a heavy dynamism, is possible but it is very subtle. Because it all has to do with the degree of slowing of the muscles. (Interview)

Lastly, Deidre Sklar, another of Decroux's successors summed up *dynamo-rhythm* as follow:

Dynamo-rhythm is essentially the way energy is transformed in movement. And Decroux was working with these qualities in terms of time, rhythm, and muscular tension, and teaching people how to see this combination, and understanding that the expressivity of movement exists in that factor as opposed to shape. (Interview)

An analogy with Music

Ultimately, Decroux found in music a means to sum up the various elements of movement to which he gave the name *dynamo-rhythm*. During an interview in 1978, Decroux explained:

Music has intonation and a range of different tones. Then, there is speed, but the word should not be confused with rapidity, that is to say, the time one takes to do something, which can be quick or slow. One should regard it as being in the same category as stops.... Then power intervenes, which has its own particularities; it should not be regarded as the fact of having been able to hear the sounds. Thanks to the applied sciences, the radio in particular, one may be able to hear a weak sound from one side for the globe to another, from Paris to New York. It would still be the same weak sound, heard across the world due to science. And, equally, even a man with a powerful voice under usual circumstances can produce a weak sound and send it off to be heard just as far. So, I repeat: intonation, speed and power.... In place of intonation, we have the outline. We could even say though it complicates things a little, the trajectory. Then comes the speed in the same sense, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow, with stops or not. Then power intervenes. (Interview)

Corinne Soum spoke of the same parallel between music and *dynamo-rhythm* with regard to an apprenticeship in Corporeal Mime. It requires the study of techniques, but authorizes personal liberty and interpretation:

Corporeal Mime is music, you see Like music, there are a variety of ways to study it...you learn music like white Western music generally using notes.... But, in Corporeal Mime one accepts the process of apprenticeship, that is to say one accepts knowing that the weight is on the right leg or left; one accepts that different parts of the body must be moved, etc . (Interview)

The analogy with the Rheostat

While perhaps Decroux never used the word *rheostat*---which is to say "a resistor for regulating a current by means of variable resistances" ("Rheostat")---one might draw an analogy between *dynamo-rhythm* and a rheostat to the extent that rhythm has the same original root as *rheo*, but implies the idea of circulation. Moreover, *dynamo-rhythm* entails a play of force, of energy that uses resistance, just like a rheostat used to enhance or reduce the intensity of light in an electric light bulb, the heat of an oven or the movement of an electric fan. Leabhart explains:

I remember him showing with his hands-- you remember in the old theaters that we used this [raising an imaginary handle] with the lights. Now, [in our modern time], it's pushing buttons. I can remember him doing this [raising an imaginary handle], but I don't remember him using the word *rheostat*. I don't have that memory, but I do have a memory of him doing this movement of raising and lowering the handles, [changing] the intensity of the lights. (Interview)

"Necessity" or the demands of the term *Dynamo-rhythm*

Decroux found that Corporeal Mime demanded its own vocabulary to facilitate notation and to transmit the technique to subsequent generations. In order to explain the combination of elements, outline

or trajectory, speed and force, in physical movement, Decroux created the term *dynamo-rhythm*, signifying that through its structure, movement closely links speed and force. Among the elements comprising the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*, i.e. the outline or trajectory, the speed and the force, Decroux does not include rhythm as such. In effect, for Decroux, rhythm always incorporated physical movement and even all movement in general. Each animal has its own intrinsic rhythm, as does water, even if not always on a par with the metrical structures of rhythm:

One can ask me: But why do you use the expression *dynamo-rhythm*? It is probably because often the power is directly united to the speed. There are instances when one cannot measure the speed of a violent movement. Therefore, we use the term *dynamo-rhythm*: that is union, coincidence between the speed and the force. And, often, it is very practical; it is very useful, it is not for the pleasure of having a word that seems to be a bit bizarre. (Interview)

In Patrick Pezin's "L'interview Imaginaire" Decroux reiterates his explanation: "Why do we use the term *dynamo-rhythm*? One could make do with terms like speed and force. But, then they are so closely tied together that often we use the term *dynamo-rhythm* that means 'interwoven'" (128).

Dynamo Rhythm: Its Emergence and its Origins

As noted earlier, Decroux did not regard himself as an inventor. He introduced the term *dynamo-rhythm* gradually and borrowed its content first from the arts, then from a multiplicity of sources.

The appearance of the term *Dynamo-rhythm*

While difficult to date its first usage, the term *dynamo-rhythm* appears in the work of many of Decroux's successors from the 1960s onwards. Before this time his pupils made very specific references to those qualities of movement, to the dynamics, speed and rhythm at the origin of the term. Mark Epstein, pupil and Decroux's translator in the United States in the 1950s, put it this way:

The way Decroux used the term "*dynamism*" or dynamics was very specific to the degree of muscular tension.... Rhythm had to do with sequence, a phrasing of fast and slows. And speed was literally ...going fast or slow. (Interview)

Another example comes from Marise Flach, who also worked with Decroux in the 1950s. In an interview, she remarks on the various possibilities for rhythms and their combinations:

In my day there was something called the "*pas*," that referred to a movement with a normal rhythm; then there was the "*toc*," probably the movement he called the "*saccade*,"¹ except that a "*saccade*" is a movement repetition, but there it was the "*toc*"; and then there was the "*fondou*." (Interview)

The *saccade* and the *fondou* [smooth, slow-motion movement], two qualities of movement based on the play of the actor's muscles, permitted Decroux to create a dramaturgy defined metaphorically:

And what is staccato movement?

– It is a plunge into action.

A somewhat wild, desperate plunge, angry at having hesitated.

...We explode: Staccato.

...Besides this staccato movement, mime has numerous other movements, which evoke the departure of a locomotive. This is smoothness. Then mime seems like a dreamed statue, which turns around for us as we would walk around it. (*Words* 50-51)

¹ *Saccade* or staccato movement means movements in a rhythmic series of punctuated stops.

Writings on the subject preceding 1960 mention rhythm, weight, articulation, phrasing and resistance among other concepts. However, they do not make reference to *dynamo-rhythm*. In an article published in the American journal *Chrysalis* in 1949 entitled “The Mime Theatre of Etienne Decroux” Alvin Epstein, one of Decroux’s pupils in the 1940s declares:

Thus it is possible to take the simplest gesture (even one that from a distance carries no lucid image to the eye) and by exaggerating its most basic qualities present to the spectator an action of clear meaning and intensified beauty. What are these basic qualities? Design, rhythm and intensity. Every conceivable movement can be considered in the light of these three characteristics. (A. Epstein 8-9)

Therefore, one can state that from the beginning Decroux worked on many variables relevant to movements with differing qualities.

Dynamo-rhythm emerged as a synthesis of many elements, requiring a long process of conceptualization and development. After 1960 the term *dynamo-rhythm* appeared among Decroux’s successors, although used rarely in writings concerned with Corporeal Mime, and used more often in interviews in which successors defined their conceptions and working methods.

The Numerous Sources of Inspiration

Many sources inspiring the development of *dynamo-rhythm* appeared during Decroux’s career:

- spoken text;
- music;
- practical know-how;
- sculpture;
- sport;
- observation of man in society;
- observation of nature.

The Spoken Text

His previous career as a speaking actor gave Decroux the opportunity to develop qualities of textual phrasing. He knew that two actors, speaking the same text could speak it in various ways according to their interpretations.

He used rules analogous to good diction for Corporeal Mime, rules that would, when combined with *dynamo-rhythm*, govern the execution of physical movements. Decroux explained: “Diction is mime, vocal mime. The inflexions that address themselves to your ear are analogous to those that address themselves to your eyes. It is mime” (Pezin 70).

Decroux’s further observed on diction and articulation:

Look at articulation. It is articulation that produces syllables composed of consonants and vowels, some following others without becoming confused with each other. There are actors who speak quickly while articulating very well and one loses nothing of what they are saying! ...A mime must articulate as well, because [movement] is analogous to syllables and, by the same analogy, consonants and vowels. Everything must be well marked; one must be able to feel where something stops, or starts or is finished. (Pezin 70)

With reference to the means at an actor’s disposal, Decroux once again made his point in another text:

1. Inflexion. Some people would call it intonation, but that would be saying too little, since one cannot reproduce an inflexion on the piano....
2. In addition, the actor brings a calculated speed to what he says: his delivery is faster or slower in different places, and his silences are longer or shorter.

3. He also gives what he says more or less physical force. It can be explosion, or a slow, regular push, or a swell followed by a subsiding....
4. Finally, the actor contributes the expression of his voice, a more subtle concept to explain.... (*Words* 33-34)

Concerning movements, he concluded: "All the principles that I have cited concerning the audible can also be applied to the visible ..." (*Words* 36).

One may establish a system of correspondences between *dynamo-rhythm*—designating the combination of the trajectory of movement, speed and weight in Corporeal Mime—and the interpretative techniques applied to the spoken text, such as those described earlier by Decroux. The different inflexions made by the speaking actor correspond in Corporeal Mime to different trajectories of physical movements that offer infinite possibilities.

Speed in the case of a speaking actor varies in elocution between faster and slower, working on the same principles for physical movements; in both cases clarity of expression depends on the quality of articulation, vocal for the speaking actor and physical for mime.

Weight given to the voice, translated as volume, consequently giving the spoken text its dramatic quality, finds its correspondence in Corporeal Mime in muscular tension brought to play, according to the extent of the resistance applied by the actor to his own movement, resistance that gives movements their dramatic qualities.

Music

Music provided another source of inspiration for Corporeal Mime because the work on *dynamo-rhythm* bears resemblances to musical interpretation, both of which allow for personal interpretation.

Decroux liked to consider the human body as a piano keyboard because, in the same way that one note can be separated from another, the body can articulate into separate parts, then reassemble into other forms. One cannot follow this idea to the letter, because the human body has limitations. Nonetheless, Decroux said:

What I have done is to consider the human body as a keyboard—the keyboard of a piano. Of course this is only an analogy. We know that the human body cannot be exactly like a keyboard. On a keyboard we can always isolate one note from another, but we can't isolate the chest from the head. If the chest moves, the head automatically does something. But nevertheless, the thought is there....

So we consider the keyboard as something that should inspire us. Nothing should happen in the body except what is desired and calculated. The actor should bear the relationship to his body that a pianist does to the keyboard. (Leabhart, "An Interview" 32)

In this case, the actor can make his own interpretation of a movement score, like a musician playing a musical score on his own instrument. In order to make his pupils understand *dynamo-rhythm* in the body, Decroux sometimes joked during his lessons, as reported by Dean Fogal, one of his successors: "The muscles must sing. Before collaborating with Mozart you must become like Mozart" ("Etienne Decroux" 31).

Practical Know-How

Decroux brought to mime practical know-how acquired as a manual laborer. Until age twenty-five he worked as a painter, plumber, mason, roofer, butcher, construction-site laborer, dock worker, car mechanic, diver and hospital orderly. His experiences became fundamental to the creation of a new form of theatrical expression, and he retained them throughout his life in his body memory.

In his research into movements, whether concrete or abstract, all Decroux's muscular fibers drew on past experiences:

I look around a lot on the streets. I've visited factories and I've worked in factories. I've also worked in small business, and I've worked with my hands. I won't list all the jobs I've done,

but I have worked in construction and I was a soldier in the World War I for more than three years and for more than a year in the World War II. I've seen and I've looked at things. ("Erudition" 40)

As concerns *dynamo-rhythm*, manual labor gave Decroux first-hand knowledge of a vast palette of resistances in movements, tensions ranging from the strong to subtle. Manual work directly inspired many of his compositions such as *The Washerwoman* and *The Carpenter*, in which appeared very rich facets of *dynamo-rhythm*, muscular tension and relaxation.

In *Words on Mime*, Decroux made explicit reference to manual labor:

You find the floor-sweeper, the marble-polisher, the ancient husbandman wielding his flail, the old-fashioned vine-grower crushing the grapes with his feet, the construction worker. All these people sweep, polish, strike and trample with spring; springs which are repeated indefinitely. (52)

Leabhart cites Decroux regarding everyday manual labor: "He predicted that one day people would have to go to the theatre to see work, to see counterweights in action, since people no longer performed them in real life" ("*L'homme de Sport*" 39).

Sculpture

Sculpture fascinated Decroux as it represented an *oeuvre* made through the work of an artist's hands, albeit with the help of tools. For him, materialization-- the fact that the artist made an idea tangible-- represented the major aspect of this art. Decroux identified "dynamic immobility" as a fundamental type of *dynamo-rhythm*. He believed that a body only appeared immobile, but that many interior forces always worked in opposition. Seeing both poetry and power in sculptures, he developed mobile statuary, which constituted one of the "categories of play" in *Corporeal Mime* as described later. He expressed his idea as follows:

It is my desire that the actor accepts the artifice and sculpts the air, making us feel where the line of poetry begins and where it ends.... Our thought pushes our gestures in the same way that the thumb of the sculptor pushes forms; and our body, sculpted from the inside, stretches. Our thought, between its thumb and index-finger, pinches us along the reserve flap of our envelope and our body, sculpted from the inside, folds.

Mime is, at the same time, both sculptor and statue. (*Words* 12)

Leabhart also writes of the sculptures that influenced Decroux:

Decroux saw in sculpture a teaching tool, as French society often placed great persons and allegorical figures in prominent places for the admiration and edification of the population. Three of these works from the nineteenth-century which no doubt influenced Decroux include the *Dancing Faun*, by Eugène Lequesne, in the Luxembourg Gardens; *The Dance*, by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, on the Opéra Garnier; and the *Genius of Liberty*, by Auguste Dumont, atop the Column of the Bastille. These three statues have in common not only their nudity, but the extremely committed and vigorous movement they embodied. ("*L'homme de Sport*" 45)

Sport

Sport became the most important source of inspiration for Decroux, who named one of the many "categories of play" in *Corporeal Mime* *The Sportsman*. This category includes figures of sport and also figures of manual labor (practical know-how).

This category of *études* includes counterweights, fundamental to an apprenticeship in *Corporeal Mime* and its mastery.

Decroux habitually made a parallel between the actor and the athlete, the former necessarily inspired by certain characteristics. For example, he took as his inspiration the boxing champion Georges Carpentier, of whom he wrote:

Vigor and grace; strength, elegance; dazzle and thought; a taste for danger and a smile....
We would never suspect that he was the motivating image for our study of physical mime (tragedy section). (*Words* 14)

On the subject of this idea of the actor/athlete, Leabhart quotes Decroux:

Decroux often spoke of the actor as a Goal Keeper, always in a state of readiness. He liked to quote the Bible's warning: "No one knows when the thief is coming"....

The goalie, because he or she does not know where the ball (the thief) might come from, watches and listens expectantly, even while seemingly immobile, alert for an attack that could break through his or her defenses. Acting this "play of oppositions" requires that the actor not know what will happen next. ("L'homme de Sport" 33-34)

The elements of the athlete's practice transposable to *dynamo-rhythm* and Corporeal Mime include physical and mental alertness and the struggle against weight incumbent on the tasks, in work as in sport, of accomplishing a continuous alternation of physical effort and relaxation.

Leabhart recalls Decroux's words during one of the philosophical reflections that studded his teachings: "Man struggles continuously: firstly with gravity, then with objects, then with one person, and finally with a group of people" (Leabhart 15 Oct. 2002). And, again on the subject of the actor/athlete, Decroux said: "One must have a fire in the stomach" (Leabhart 15 Oct. 2002).

Observation of Man in his Social Environment

A very good observer, Decroux learned a great deal from watching man in his social environment, his steps, his stops, his different rhythms and dynamics in physical movement in various social situations.

Where and when have we lived without society?
Without objects and people surrounding us?
Without crippling foresight, without being subjected to the division of labor or
the fate of the laborer? (*Words* 84)

Decroux found, in observing man's behavior as he conducted himself in society, material suitable for the enrichment of *dynamo-rhythm*, such as interaction between the trajectory of movement and the speed and the weight of physical movement. This behavior varied according to the social situation and external causes that provoked in man different physical reactions. He listed some of his observations that served the research of *dynamo-rhythm* in Corporeal Mime:

1. Life in society causes man to dissemble.
Dissembling, if malevolent, means concealing one's intentions in order to surprise.
What tends to get out must thus be held in.
Dissembling, if benevolent, means keeping from those who suffer the awareness of their solitude, and not spoiling the happiness of others, which elicits this commandment:
"In the face of joy: restraint; in the face of sorrow: restraint."
2. Foresight restricts or blocks harmony.
The memory of unpredicted changes of fortune causes obsession with disappointment, and contempt for despair. The foresight that is fed by this memory makes us defer our joy when events are favorable, and postpone our sorrow when they are harmful.

3. Material surroundings cause us to restrict or block harmony, since the area of action is limited: the nearness of a wall, of objects, or of people, makes us afraid of hurting ourselves, of breaking things or of hurting others: hence our tendency to hold in that which has a tendency to get out.

Cave- and forest-dwellers were also subject to this condition.

The man who cuts his hair very short thus can die without knowing that it is wavy.

4. In any production not endowed with extra-animal strength, the division of labor is also to blame.

There we act for the benefit of the product, not for the benefit of the producer's body.

And since his movement there is particular, there is little chance of its being harmonious.

At most it is a local harmony.

Then comes paralysis, crystallization, professional disease.

Did the craftsmen escape this condition? – I think not, for naming one's craft is the same as confessing a specialty.

And there is the laborer.

He is forever lifting, or leaning, or pulling, or pushing, or carrying. His body, assuming the shape of a shell, hardens into it. And as the laborer walks along, he resembles a vertical tortoise. (*Words* 83-4)

Observation of Nature

Decroux greatly facilitated his students' understanding of *dynamo-rhythm* by giving them access to physical comprehension through images from nature. He used animals, water, and the sun, among others, as points of reference.

The following examples illustrate dynamic immobility: "the pressure of water on the dike, the hovering of a fly stopped by the window-pane" (*Words* 51). He made an observation on the quality of *fondue*: "gauze-like scales which adorn the tail of the beautiful oriental fish and which fall dreamily back into place after being discreetly shaken, snail antennae which examine the world with eyes on the end of arms" (*Words* 51).

In interviews given by Decroux's successors, references to nature appear when they talk about *dynamo-rhythm*. Corinne Soum makes reference to one of Decroux's vocabulary of images, to the "snail's antennae that pull back when they meet an obstacle, when confronted with something" (Interview). This would find a final and more precise explanation in the categories of *dynamo-rhythm*. Yves Marc, another of Decroux's successors, spoke of the movements comprising the *fondue* in an interview. According to Marc:

There are movements that have a little more pressure, which are linked more closely to the elements. One can clearly see that sometimes he referred to aquatic animals, for example, to the flick of a hippopotamus's tail where one wants more water than air. With this, he played more on the dynamics of animals that specifically referred to the different elements, whether these were water, earth, fire or others. (Interview)

CHAPTER 2

***Dynamo-rhythm* in Etienne Decroux's Working Methods and Practice**

In *Words on Mime* Decroux quoted Edward Gordon Craig, who spoke of the actor's work: "the actor must know his craft before appearing on stage. He should not play his hand in public, and his apprenticeship should last six years" (5).

Decroux's pedagogical system occupied an important place in his research because, besides helping actors, he wanted to train mimes. Decroux contrasted his uniquely original approach to theatre, what he considered true theatre, to traditional theatre and mime.

In his working methodology, his research culminated in teaching and creating compositions, which in turn threw up new problems, leading to new rounds of research. As a result, research comprised the most fundamental aspect of his life-long work. Research, creating compositions and teaching linked directly and influenced mutually. As Daniel Stein explains: "He taught as he performed, and created as he investigated, with a seemingly direct link between his thoughts and his emotions and another direct link between himself and his spectator" (97).

His entirely original work demanded the creation of a body-alphabet with an equally original terminology, with words borrowed from (though not exclusively) poetry, nature, and politics, allowing for the continuance of Corporeal Mime's creative process.

The Transmission of *Dynamo-rhythm* in Decroux's Working Method

According to his successors, Decroux initiated a particular teaching method for the techniques he developed. He spoke of Corporeal Mime as a Great Project (*Words* 108).

In order to keep track of his work and to ensure its transmission to subsequent generations and its further development, Decroux devised an original terminology. Essentially transmitted orally, this vocabulary supported transmission in the practice of Corporeal Mime. Hundreds of his successors use it today according to their own artistic sensibilities. These successors put emphasis on one facet or another of the method in their own approach to teaching *dynamo-rhythm*. This terminology therefore becomes an inseparable means of teaching Corporeal Mime. For Decroux's successors, the means often prove more important than the terminology itself. Certainly, all these expressions integrate into practice, because one can only obtain competence in Corporeal Mime through physical implementation.

Accounts given by his successors enable us to distinguish the principal means by which Decroux taught *dynamo-rhythm*.

Stories and Metaphors

As part of his teaching Decroux told stories and used metaphors in an unforgettable way. Successors clearly recall this characteristic and some even consider it the most important aspect of their apprenticeship in Corporeal Mime.

Daniel Stein, one of Decroux's pupils and successors, noticed Decroux's preference for metaphors instead of answering "yes" or "no" to questions:

The power of metaphor was the power of his teaching and the power of his work. The chosen ambiguity of his metaphor left it to the imagination of his students to create a response to the question, as the chosen ambiguity of his images left the meaning of his plays to the imagination of the spectator. (97)

In order to teach *dynamo-rhythm*, Decroux gave his pupils images to help them comprehend. Corinne Soum explained that the intrinsic link between the images and the technical terms helped them to assimilate their own understanding of *dynamo-rhythm* into the work:

Decroux's images were complex depending on whether they were concerned with a piece, a figure or an exercise. For example, there is a vibration exercise that consists of lifting the arms

slowly, making a vibration in the middle and then lowering the arms slowly. One makes the vibration, for example, at the moment when it is most difficult, namely, when the arm is opposed to the earth's gravity, when the arm is at its peak. This particular exercise can be described in several ways, depending on the vocabulary. There is [the technical explanation] "*fondu/vibration/fondu*," or [the image] "it is a man or woman who wants to get rid of an image." So, at the moment one wants to "get rid of it" one does the vibration. Therefore, there is always, in fact, an alternation between the technical terms and a poetic evocation of the situation. (Interview)

Leabhart also speaks of the importance of stories in Decroux's teaching:

He taught *dynamo-rhythm* through stories.... The stories were the basis for his general teachings and in particular the teaching of *dynamo-rhythm*. He knew thousands of dynamic possibilities and every day he invented new ones. (Interview)

If he had to choose between the technical language and the images, he always preferred the images, Leabhart remembers:

He spoke to his students in metaphors. He used images. "The sun is in your back; you can feel it there, just between your shoulders. A sun that burns, what does that do to the back of your neck? What does it do to your arms?" ...He told stories about *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Erika Batdorf, one of Decroux's successors, speaks of the importance of the combination of images he used and his way of demonstrating the exercises:

What I loved as a student with Decroux was the integration of a system of poetic images. It is very difficult to convey his teaching on muscular dynamics because it relied more on demonstration and example than language. He gave a certain demonstration, then he illustrated it with a few poetic words or an image drawn from nature. Even when he was more than eighty years old, he could express subtle differences in muscular tension. (Letter)

Deidre Sklar speaks also of the images used by Decroux in relation to *dynamo-rhythm*:

Decroux worked minutely and specifically with where energy is held in tension, how the tension releases into another movement and dynamic. I also remember the idea of the "*secousse*" [*saccade*] and "*fondu*" [slow motion]. Decroux used to talk about the fish, the way it glides, then jumps, glides, jumps, glides. Even in the subtleties of that kind of gliding, "*fonduing*," you can feel that you are the conductor of your own body in terms of how quickly or slowly you let out the amount of tension in the melting. The other image I remember is the bow of the violin; he used to talk about that as another *dynamo-rhythm*. There was also a rhythm exercise (as opposed to a *dynamo-rhythm* exercise), where we used to do walking and changing rhythms, like a locomotive, a train. You start walking and you are supposed to feel the natural or logical build up and let go of the acceleration and deceleration, just constantly walking around and around, just getting a feel for those changes. (Interview)

Singing

Decroux taught *dynamo-rhythm* with stories, metaphors, and also with singing, with vibrations produced by the voice on a scale of melodic tones corresponding to the intensity of the muscular resistance he wanted pupils to obtain in their movements: the more intense the vibration and the tone low-pitched, the stronger the muscular resistance. This method made one feel empirically and not theoretically the resistance required in movement. In practice, during each lesson Decroux sang accompanying the students' movements. Several of his successors, both American and French, insist on the importance of singing in his

working practice. Leabhart recalls Decroux's integration of voice and movement: "The voice and the body: he sang the exercises that he taught. He showed us the way the voice vibrates. One understood that the gesture vibrated, beginning in the muscle" (Interview).

Marc spoke of it as well:

What made the work on Corporeal Mime exceptional, what Decroux brought to it, was the particularly rich idea of the "drama of muscle" (*comédie du muscle*, or rather the resistance, taking the drama to the interior of the muscle). And he gave us this through... the vibration in his voice....Decroux sang the movements. (Interview)

Anne Dennis, another of Decroux's successors, explains how he taught *dynamo-rhythm* by singing:

He basically insisted upon [the notion of *dynamo-rhythm*] ...by always having and very often making verbal the music.... And he sang everything he did; he sang all the time.... And he would speak as we were rehearsing, and he would speak and sing as we were doing our work. Not for us to follow his rhythm, but for us to understand where his rhythm was coming from. (Interview)

Finally, Sklar speaks of the choreography of *dynamo-rhythm* as Decroux perceived it: "So the singing, the vocal mime that he did, was a kind of choreography of *dynamo-rhythm*: to feel and hear the way time, tension, and intensity work and to imitate it in movement." (Interview)

Touching the Body

Decroux knew that *dynamo-rhythm* could not be learnt by copying exterior form, but only by work inside the body. So that his students could feel the movements more deeply, inside their muscular fibers, he touched them while they were performing the movements.

Leabhart explains:

Decroux ...encircled the waist of a pupil and pushed the *bust* in the desired direction with the desired energy while holding the waist back. The pupil not only understood the process, but felt the vibrato in his voice and in his arm as well. (Interview)

Technical Terms

Corporeal Mime terms find their origin in sources of inspiration nourished through Decroux's research. These terms--one could call them techniques--derive from poetical, political and social images issuing from practical know-how, but also from other artistic disciplines.

Decroux while working always created new categories to describe his discoveries, susceptible to change as his research advanced, as each day he made new discoveries. Consequently, among his successors, some consider these categories as points of reference for the continuation of the work, and others have preferred to keep to images and metaphors linked to movements.

Soum very consciously keeps the precision of technical terminology used by Decroux:

Now in order to be precise, Etienne Decroux had the habit of defining the categories of *Dynamo-rhythm*, those that he called: "toc stop," "toc motor," "snail antennae," "punctuation," "fondu," "vibration," "toc global," "without accent--static," and "spiral spring." (Interview)

She adds: "In fact, he always alternated technical terms with poetical terms" (Interview).

In contrast, other successors are more reticent about using technical terms. Marc gave the following point of view: "The types of *dynamo-rhythm*...! It's always complicated, because there is always the danger of too quickly popularizing things, of making them didactic" (Interview).

Leabhart agrees with the opinion above:

Etienne Decroux was French and he loved categories. He categorized and classified everything. He invented all the categories of *dynamo-rhythm* with the aim of clarifying and organizing his research. He modified the contents and the classifications constantly and created 1001 of them! ...However, Decroux sensed that it was absolutely impossible to bring this project to a successful conclusion. It was a futile endeavor. So he addressed his pupils in metaphor. He used images.... If you ask me, one cannot confine *dynamo-rhythm* in classifications. It's as if one wants to attempt to capture daylight and close it up in a ceramic jar. As soon as one closes the lid, it's dark inside. (Interview)

Categories of Corporeal Mime

Now we must list the categories of Corporeal Mime for pedagogical reasons, without intention to rigidly codify a flexible method that, without practice, means nothing.

Large Categories of Play

Decroux began with the observation of man during his habitual activities in his usual environments, at work, in sport, at leisure, dreaming, among others. He also explored human movement from the primitive and simple to the sophisticated. He based this research on observation and certainly later on practice on his own body.

Besides many performance pieces, his work resulted in "categories" or "styles" or "categories of play" created for pedagogical purposes.

These valuable categories facilitate a physical understanding on the basis of the visualization of types. Performance pieces created for each of the categories follow the rules appropriate to each category without becoming clichés.

Decroux declared that, even though he disliked scientific terms, his study could be qualified as "historico-economic" ("Categories" 99) taking into account the relationship it maintained with the survival and evolution of the human race. Decroux established these categories:

- Man of Sport*, comprised of three sub-categories,
Laborer, Artisan, Man of the Isles;
- Man of the Salon;*
- Mobile Statuary;*
- Day-Dreaming Man.*

We might analyze each of these categories as follows:

Man of Sport

Taking the term "historico-economic" into account, the category of the *Man of Sport* embraces those human activities linked to production, to work which generates economic development from the lowliest physical labor, like agriculture and construction, to the relatively less arduous, such as the washerwoman and dressmaker. All take part in the system of production. Decroux gave the name *Man of Sport* to those devoting themselves to these activities, as for Decroux sport symbolized all human physical labor. As the technological revolution progressed, the machine replaced most manual labor but the sportsman often remained representative of the memory of human toil.

This category represents man's physical labor, exploring weight in a fundamental way, on a scale running from light to heavy. Decroux explains:

For a long period, which ended a short while ago, a period which could be called the New Period, production was accomplished by animal power, man being considered an animal – a slave, a peasant....

So, man's movements provided the power for what he did. This man I call *Man of Sport*.

Why? Because the sportsman seems to miss the period when man was physically strong, able, courageous. Then he could mobilize all the parts of his body, and each part responded to his commands. ("Categories" 99)

Pushing, pulling, lifting, throwing, and so on brought into play a whole range of weights and counterweights. From then onwards, muscular effort appeared in work and in sports and the variation of weight determined the dramatic quality of *dynamo-rhythm*: the more weight implied in the effort, the more the movement seemed dramatic.

All movements developed from reality, from tasks drawn from real manual labor and from sport, giving *dynamo-rhythm* its qualities. Even movements developed from thought have weight, when metaphysical weight replaces physical weight. Muscular resistance derives from a movement in the mind: doubt, hesitation, ideas, and so on. According to Leabhart:

In boxing and manual labor the adversary is external to the sportsman or worker; in theatre the adversary is often another part of the character's self (the conflict internalized) or an external adversary, but against whom one will not use physical force. In either case, the counterweight becomes what Decroux calls a metaphysical one. ("L'homme de Sport" 39)

In all the sub-categories one can perceive various manifestations of *dynamo-rhythm*:

a) The Laborer

Decroux described him: "He is forever lifting, or leaning, or pulling, or pushing, or carrying. His body, assuming the shape of a shell, hardens into it. And as the laborer walks along, he resembles a vertical tortoise" (*Words* 84).

The heavy weights he pushes, lifts and pulls characterize *The Laborer*. Therefore *dynamo-rhythm* includes "immobility" as well as "transported immobility," where one finds "displacing without changing the body's shape" to accomplish a counterweight (Leabhart 11 January 2001). Mark Epstein gives an example:

You are miming pushing something heavy, there's first the contact, then that brings you to an immediate mandatory absolute stop and then to a very slow beginning which speeds up, that would be called *fondue de toc*.... And that is based on the actualities of dealing with real mass, real objects. So that there you will have, if you made a graph of it, you would have a rhythmic pattern.... It is not based on a regularity of pulsation. It's based on the specifics of the action to be accomplished, the objective to be accomplished. (Interview)

b) The Artisan

In this sub-category one finds work derived from know-how such as hitting, washing, cutting, filing, all of which imply specific movements. This type of task depends on *dynamo-rhythm* but also on the quality of the thought at the moment of realization. With regard to the role of thought in Corporeal Mime, Decroux explains:

Effectively, when man thinks he struggles with ideas as he would struggle with matter. Because ideas are not visible, because thought is not visible, because one cannot capture a thought directly, the best way is to carry out a tangible task that implicates the intelligence and therefore renders the gestures an echo of our intelligence. (Pezin 77)

Corinne Soum speaks of two pieces that can be found in this category:

One must play weight, but also ability, a geometric mind, stages of thought.

Pieces such as *The Carpenter* or *The Washerwoman* (1940) are not limited to mimicking these two activities, but expand a particular action while compressing others...so much so that these

physical portraits reveal reality (scraping, lifting, wringing, and so on), and the effort employed, but also the preparation time, the causes, the resonances, doubt, commentaries, reflection. (Pezin 411)

The play of movements and stops, the various muscular resistances consistent with the weight at that moment, alternating with the movements of thought, characterize *dynamo-rhythm*.

c) **Man of the Isles**

Constant harmony and fluidity marked by subtle differences in dynamo-rhythm typify the movements of *Man of the Isles*.

Decroux created the category *Man of the Isles* imagining a place where one performed manual labor without a great deal of muscular resistance or responded to resistance with “oil” in the muscles. One employed physical articulation for more minute tasks. We can think of a Caribbean or Indonesian island with a warm climate and where one moves with relaxation and fluidity.

Corinne Soum defined *Man of the Isles* as “an idea, a vision of muscular voluptuousness of elegant plenitude” (“Decroux” 411).

Guy Benhaïm, author of a thesis entitled *Mime corporel selon Etienne Decroux*, at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, described Man of the Isles and opposed him to a classical dancer:

[Man of the Isles] has intimate contact with Nature, at the heart of a climate of perpetual content, having preserved a unique harmony. None of his muscles move without the movement being compensated by another muscle. This feline quality is the opposite, for example, of the style of classical dance which uses geometrical constructions to express the triumph of the mind over matter, making an idealized portrait of a biped. (309)

Man of the Salon

The category *Man of the Salon* represents man in his social environment and therefore politeness and delicately refined gestures predominate. Decroux considered these attitudes hypocritical when man wants to give himself the airs of a social being, when his idealized behavior fails to correspond with his daily reality. Nonetheless, in a certain way, these attitudes have added, little by little, to an improvement in human behavior, to the extent to which they become habitual. Decroux explained:

The man who knows very well that he is not always good, would like to be all the time. What does he do? He play-acts goodness. It does not fool anyone, but it pleases them! It’s like an exercise for the heart, like the hope that by dint of playacting goodness, eventually we would finally feel it, we would have it. It’s a very beautiful thing. (“Categories” 99)

With regard to the *historico-economic* study, in this category man produces nothing “that can be sold” (“Categories” 99).

Gentle movements and sweeping gestures without much accentuated muscular resistance characterize the *dynamo-rhythm* of Man of the Salon.

Day Dreaming Man

According to Corinne Soum:

The Day Dreaming Man is without doubt the most difficult category to master because there is no movement, or a particular technique, or even one action larger than another, but it is rather a state of being. It is a state in which life expresses itself primarily through absence, without any visible sign of physical activity, and yet on close scrutiny one can see movements of the head, the chest, the trunk and the arms...which often seem to defy inertia, appearing without effort, like breathing, without any cause except those that flow simply and mysteriously from the life of the mind. (“Decroux” 418)

In this category, in addition to movements without pronounced accentuations, with slow rhythm and no muscular resistance, the *dynamo-rhythm* includes a “precarious equilibrium,” the physical equilibrium displaced from a secure center, situates elsewhere inviting the possibility of a fall.

Day-Dreaming Man uses inclined planes that give rise to physical instability and suggest the idea of the man recalling his life, or dreams, even while awake.

The Italian director Eugenio Barba, founder of Odin Teatret (1964), makes reference to the “precarious equilibrium” used in Decroux’s Corporeal Mime as a sort of highlighting of the actor’s presence. Internal energy and the notion of *dynamo-rhythm* both lend themselves to the actor’s personal expression:

One tradition in European mime makes conscious use of this *déséquilibre*: not as a means of expression, but as a means of intensification of certain organic processes and aspects of the body’s life. A change of balance results in a series of specific organic tensions which engage and emphasize the performer’s material presence, but at a stage, which precedes intentional, individualized expression. (Barba and Savarese 35)

Mark Epstein also explains this category with regard to the “precarious equilibrium”:

Everything will take place on the diagonal. And that’s very limited in its possibilities but it is very fascinating in its potential. Although it is very limited, it is very meaningful...a thing that he taught us over and over again in many different contexts was that the basic drama for the human being is the inner conflict between wanting to maintain the vertical and having to go off the center. So the fear of falling and the ways of dealing with the potential of falling is one of the most crucial areas of investigation for the theatrical audience. Because that’s what human life on Earth is about... In *Day Dreaming Man*, he takes ordinary life away from the center of security and puts it basically in the totally insecure and then you live in the insecure so to speak. (Interview)

Mobile Statuary

Sinuous movements, a breaking apart and re-composition of different parts of the body, characterize Mobile Statuary. According to Decroux:

The mime inclines his head further than he had before. But that is not enough. As the interior tendency continues, he inclines the neck, he inclines the chest, he inclines the waist, the pelvis, the legs, and there he is, in an area of imbalance so acute that he feels on the edge of falling. (“Categories” 101)

Mobile Statuary reinforces the idea that “the body, the whole muscular system, portrays thought” (“Categories” 101). Not a representation of reality, the physical movements instead follow movements of thought.

Changes of rhythm and dynamics characterize *dynamo-rhythm*. Effectively, human thought contains surprises, stops, changes of direction, allowing for oppositions to development. According to Corinne Soum:

Each element making up the trunk, aided by the legs which transport it, and the arms which accompany it, or erase themselves, will want to incline, to curve, to displace itself, like successive stages of reasoning, one after the other, one against the others, in the same direction, or in different directions, adopt, according to their needs, this or that muscular intensity, this or that speed of movement. (“Decroux” 20)

The Categories of *Dynamo-rhythm*

According to accounts given by some of Decroux’s successors, technical terms he used, being rigid, might limit creativity and teaching of Corporeal Mime and specifically of *dynamo-rhythm*. Nonetheless, Decroux left a rich nomenclature of categories for *dynamo-rhythm*, based on images of man at work or in

society, or others based on animals, on nature and on machines. These images constituted references for the synchronization of movements, that is “intra-corporeal and inter-spatial” relationships (Stein 99).

The following expressions, used by some of Decroux’s successors hark back to the names he gave to certain categories but have tended to change over time.

In spite of the difficulties inherent in describing movements drawn from practice, we will define the more significant categories of *dynamo-rhythm*: *tocs*, *fondus*, *saccade*, *vibration*, *départ imperceptible*, *départ brusque* or *effondrement*, *attitude*, *mobile immobility*, *transported immobility*, *causalities*, *shock/resonances*, *effects*, and *counterweights*.

Tocs

Corporeal Mime practitioners define *tocs* (M. Epstein, Interview) as muscular contractions varying in intensity from the gentlest to the most explosive. Characteristically, the same part of the body starts and finishes the *toc*. One can also occur during the course of a movement, in which case one refers to it as *punctuation*.

Decroux used the following examples of *tocs*, though the list is far from exhaustive:

a) *Toc “Butoir”*

The *toc “butoir”* suddenly stops the movement “as if the part of the body moving meets an obstacle and it becomes impossible for it to continue its course” (Leabhart 9 Feb. 2000), Sometimes, when the movement continues after a *toc*, it meets further slowing resistance.

b) *Toc “Moteur”*

“This is a *toc in place*” (Leabhart 9 Feb. 2000), i.e. the body, or a part of the body, muscularly contracts. This contraction begins a movement with a great deal of resistance that inscribes, engraves, its trajectory in space with the entire body or a part of the body. The *toc “moteur”* can also take place at the end of a movement.

c) *Toc Global*

“An on-the-spot *toc* made with the entire body” (Leabhart 16 Feb. 2000) is called a *toc global* or *general toc*. This means that a total muscular contraction or implosion causes the whole body to move, or, alternatively, the *toc global* puts an end to the movement of the whole body. We find the difference between a *toc global* and a *toc moteur* in that the *moteur* can begin or end a movement with a part of the body or with the whole body, whereas the *global toc* always implicates the whole body and can involve more or less resistance during displacements.

d) *Toc “Retour”*

The *toc “retour”* identifies a movement of one part of the body that advances and suddenly stops and recoils as if it has met resistance, making continuation impossible. One also calls this movement “snail antennae” or *choc/resonance* [shock/resonance]. Corinne Soum explains the term as follows:

If one takes, for example, the “snail antennae,” which consists of retreating in the face of an obstacle, face to face with something, the term is typically Decrouxian, because with this name he evokes nature, an animal: the snail that advances and then retracts its antennae.

He said that one does the “snail antennae” – giving an explanation that exceeds the simple muscular explanation – because one finds the world too ugly and one retreats into one’s shell. There is a universal meaning if one speaks to someone, even someone who does not know Decroux’s techniques: “Think that you are a snail, that you are going to face the world and that you retreat from the world.” There is an immediate understanding on the level of the muscles. (Interview)

e) *Toc Départ*

The *toc départ* is a *toc* that comes at the beginning of a movement, which gives the start signal. Marise Flach refers to the *développé* as an example of this category:

Decroux worked on classical dance movements, but revised them. There is a movement in classical dance that is called the *développé* and this is a movement of the leg: the thigh is bent and then the part of the leg that is an extension of the thigh. And he always went *toc* to raise the thigh and the leg continuing in a *fondue*. (Interview)

f) *Toc Léger*

This *toc* can delicately and almost imperceptibly start, finish or take place in the middle of a movement. It has practically no resistance (Flach, Interview).

g) *Punctuation*

"Punctuation identifies a type of *toc* characterized by a short pause during the course of a movement" (Flach, Interview) which continues its trajectory in the same direction or with a change of direction. The muscular resistance can or cannot change after the punctuation. The movement can contain several punctuations from beginning to end.

Fondu

This *toc* continues and slows a movement without resistance like "the clouds that pass across the sky" (Soum Interview), or more or less forcefully. In the case of a *fondue* with strong resistance, one calls it *graveur*. Like other *tocs* mentioned above, it can occur at the beginning or the end or in the middle of the movement. Mark Epstein explains the quality of the *fondue* and its alternation with the *toc*:

"Fondu," which means melting, was his term for a slow sustained rhythm. *Toc* was the staccato, so we would do things in pure *fondue* or in pure *toc*, or he put a very strong accent in teaching us the combinations of going from *toc* into *fondue*. So it would be "toc/fondu" or "fondue/toc." (Interview)

Saccade

The *saccade* identifies a succession of brusque *tocs* repeated during the course of a movement without necessarily having regularity in the stops.

Vibration

This concerns a "succession of small vibratory muscular movements produced by alternating tension and relaxation in the part of the body moving or remaining still" (Leabhart 2 Dec. 2000).

Départ Imperceptible

As the name implies, the *départ imperceptible* starts very slowly and has no accent at the beginning. Regarding, the *départ imperceptible* Yves Marc adds: "It reflects a certain physical quality, a certain quality of *dynamo-rhythm* that gives the impression of making a movement without the actor's volition. It is magnificent, and I practice it a great deal" (Interview).

Départ Brusque or Collapse (Effondrement)

The *départ brusque* entails a sudden detachment and rapid movement as if, before moving, the stuck part of the body or the entire stuck body needs force to detach itself. Marise Flach also explains the *effondrement*:

In the *effondrement* "I am on one leg, the other leg is relaxed. All of a sudden someone strikes the back of the knee and I start to fall, descending for several centimeters with all my weight, before recovering.... The *départ brusque* serves to evenly distribute the weight and is very useful

when one jumps, bends the legs, gathers momentum for the jump I use the weight of my body as it falls to take off again. One can use it to the front or the back, to the left or the right. It evokes something very sharp rather than a large jump: for example, when there is someone who starts off before you and you want to catch up, you make an *effondrement* in order to run faster. One has to throw the weight backwards a bit in order to immediately gain speed. (Interview)

Attitude

Attitude designates a type of stop, but not a simple stop. In this momentary pause the energetic actor subsequently continues the movement. In *Words on Mime*, Decroux declared: "one can conceive of a movement as a succession of attitudes (92). Then he continued:

If attitude is the punctuation of mime, one must agree that it cannot totally fill mime.... Attitude is perhaps more than a punctuation of movement. It is perhaps the witness, the report. In any case, it is a result. (91-92)

Mobile Immobility – *Immobilité Mobile*

In any movement, a palette of agitating resistances runs from zero to maximum. "When there is a strong enough state of resistance, the maximum that can impede the movement is the *immobilité mobile*" (Leabhart 13 Jan. 2000). The entire body or the part of it subject to resistance cannot move, but there is a very strong interior movement in opposition.

Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese observed the principle of a *mobile immobility* in Decroux's work as well as in forms of Traditional Asian Theater, for example Odissi Dance from India, Buyo Dance from Japan and Beijing Opera from China, among others. For this phenomenon they coined the term *Dynamic Immobility*.

In order to illustrate this quality of immobility on the exterior and the constant mobility on the body's interior, Decroux referred to the characteristic in certain animals: "It is a luxury for animals to be able to displace themselves and some animals don't move about at all. Their only manifestations are contraction and relaxation: it's *dynamo-rhythm*" (Pezin 129).

Transported Immobility – *Immobilité Transportée*

The term *immobilité transportée* signifies that as inferior parts of the body move, other superior parts remain immobile. The immobile part is *transportée* by the mobile part. Yves Marc explains:

I believe that Decroux understood the science of immobility and the *immobilité transportée*. And his intelligence told him that the body is not total, that there is a part which is immobile and another which is mobile. (Interview)

Systems of Causalities – Shock/Resonances – Consequences

The systems of *Causalities*, *Choc/Resonance*, and *Consequences* entail the coordination of two or more movements: one may see the beginning and the end, and their connection to the *causality*, taking into account the energy intrinsic to a movement that initiates the subsequent movement. One need not use two connected parts of the body, for example, the hand and the arm or the chest and the waist, to illustrate cause and effect. Therefore, a movement of the head can cause a movement of the pelvis. The connections between movements can motivate several parts of a single body, or two or more bodies.

The following exemplify these categories:

a) Causality *Ficelle* (String)

The *Causality Ficelle*, an "imaginary connection between two parts of the body," (Leabhart 6 Ap. 2000) supposes an imaginary string connecting them. When the first part moves away from the second the string tightens and the second part eventually moves as well, pulled by the imaginary taut string.

b) Causality *Bâton* (Stick)

In the *Causality Bâton* one must imagine a stick linking two parts of the body, “because one of these parts initiates the movement and the second part pushed simultaneously by the stick moves too” (Leabhart 6 Ap. 2000).

c) Tug Boat

The term *tug boat* describes a movement of two connected parts of the body, for example the chest and the arm, the trunk and the leg. Marise Flach gives the following example of a *Tug Boat* :

Tug Boat often occurs between the body and the arm. For example, I turn my chest and my arm moves after it, as if pulled by a tug boat. A *toc* isn't obligatory; it could be slow, or on the other hand, could be very fast. The rhythm depends on what one wants to do. (Interview)

d) Electric Eye

The *electric eye* causally relates two unconnected parts of the body. For example, in the piece *The Washing*, the washerwoman holds the sheet up and prepares to put it on the clothesline. As her hands reach waist level, she bends the right leg while the left stretches to the side, “as if an electric eye in her stomach saw the movement of the hands and provoked the subsequent movement of legs and trunk” (Leabhart 18 Nov. 2002).

e) Gauze

Describes a very gentle movement that arises as a consequence of a fast, brusque movement. Marise Flach remembered:

The *gauze* consisted generally of movements of the arms made by a *toc* in some other part of the body. For example, an inclination of the chest with a *toc* could cause the arms to move as gauze. Why is it called *gauze*? *Gauze* is a soft material reminiscent of [costumes worn by] dancers in ballrooms fifty years ago. One has full, white gowns made of gauze, and when the waltz turns are very sharp, the body makes rapid, sharp turns, but the gown swirls slowly, amplifying and slowing the movement. (Interview)

f) Spider Web Effect

The *spider web* is a type of *causality* in which the movement of the first part of the body, very slow, imperceptibly guides the movement of the other parts with which it is connected. Yves Marc explains:

Among the *causalities* that impressed me was one called the “*spider web effect*.” For example, if the arm is raised it is because there is an invisible *spider web* carrying through from the inclination of the chest. (Interview)

g) Boat Effect

Also, as Yves Marc comments: Decroux “spoke often of the ‘*boat effect*,’ which was one way of making the *shock-resonance*: when one knocks into a boat, it doesn't jump, it glides through the water” (Interview). When applying this to physical movement, it signifies a movement of one part of the body that meets another part of the body and, as a consequence, creates a shock effect, causing a gliding movement.

h) Causality ‘*Hydrolique*’

This is a play of movements made by two parts of the same body. For example, in *The Carpenter*, there is a moment when “one of the actor's arms descends and passes in front of the chest, and, as a consequence, the other arm rises gently” (Leabhart 18 Nov. 2002).

i) Wedge Effect

The *wedge effect* signifies that one “part of the body stops while moving as if it finds itself faced with an impediment, and, as a consequence, the other connected parts of the body take over the movement” (Leabhart 18 Nov. 2002).

Counterweights

Finally, after the categories of play and *dynamo-rhythm*, one finds the *counterweights*, fundamental for teaching and mastering Corporeal Mime.

Starting from the principle that “everything has weight” (Pezin 131) Decroux regarded counterweight as constantly present in daily life. His discovery of the importance of weight in human life became an essential starting point from which his work and its further development originated:

Counterweight, a word that exists in present-day language, is effectively also a technique in our art. It is the art of giving the impression....

Through counterweight I began my study of mime. Everything has weight. It is astonishing that I had the instinct to feel the importance of counterweights without having rationalized it. Not everything is hot, but everything has weight. Not everything is tender, but everything has weight. (Pezin 129-31)

Working on counterweights in Corporeal Mime consists of producing through play the effect of the weight of an object on the movement carried out. In miming a real object, to push, pull, or lift, for example, the counterweight reproduces the muscular tension brought to bear to convey the idea of the object’s weight, even if in reality non-existent. One will displace the effort made to convey one of these actions – pushing, pulling, and lifting – from the moment when the actor makes a real movement in the presence of the object, to the moment when the object itself is absent.

Decroux described the effect of counterweight on a laborer in a real situation:

Imagine you are pushing a wagon. Your front leg is bent, your back leg stretched. In reality, your front leg would be able to lift its foot, because it doesn’t support the weight of your body, which is carried by the back leg, firmly attached to the floor in order to push the wagon. (Pezin 130)

However, the actor must imagine and create the illusion of this labor:

Mime produces the reverse phenomenon. This bent front leg isn’t free; it supports your body. And, the stretched back leg serves no purpose. It is the reverse. In our art, the leg, which is in reality free, is engaged, and the other, which should be engaged, is free. (Pezin130)

In the same way, Jean-Louis Barrault, using the example of carrying a bucket of water, explained the effect of counterweight, and, indirectly, of *dynamo-rhythm*.

Example: I’m carrying a bucket of water on the end of my arm. This bucket doesn’t exist at the end of my arm except that my body mimes the counterweight created by the bucket. In other words, my body is miming the displacement of weight that I would make normally in maintaining my balance in spite of the weight of the bucket at the end of my arm. As the objects are imaginary, the study of counterweight puts the mime off-balance. Then, the mime has to show the modifications required to simulate this apparent imbalance on the inexpressive parts of his body. (*Réflexions* 40)

In Decroux’s scholarly counterweights, he researched and taught displacements as in the *reestablishment of two elements on the oblique*; jumps and translations of the weight from the vertical to the horizontal as in *jumping to fall on the head*; fixed points for *pushing* and *pulling* as in *doing away with the*

support; and placing the body in an arc with a fixed central axle for *lifting* as in the *wool-carding machine* (Kim).

Counterweight has an influence on *dynamo-rhythm* to the extent that expressing weight requires an effort, and, therefore, force of varying intensity, which at the same time influences speed of movement.

Up to now, we have used examples of counterweight related to imaginary objects. However, the counterweight does not necessarily coincide with imaginary objects as it primarily reveals the feelings of the actor accomplishing the movement rather than the weight of the imagined object only.

For this reason, Decroux gave other examples of counterweight when human passions intervened:

When a man carries out a concrete act with emotion, the point is that the object moved has weight. Imagine a man who has to take hold of the pen attached to the breast pocket of his jacket. It isn't difficult, using only the hand or the wrist. However, if he is in an emotional state, he must detach something heavy or firmly attached. Then, the emotion is expressed.... Sometimes, it is for the purpose of kindness that one lifts a glass of wine as if it is heavy to say "to your health." Of course, there are no contractions, but one can add some counterweight nonetheless as if this object were heavy. If one watches an orator one sees that he speaks.... But if one observes him closely, he is pushing or pulling. He pushes against something, and this something is an idea. He pushes this idea as if it were a material object. Afterwards, he pulls something as if he's pulling his listener to attract him to the idea. He is using counterweight without knowing it. (Pezin 132)

***Dynamo-rhythm* in Decroux's Creative Work**

The Basics

An artistic creation necessarily expresses an artist's inner reality, as Rainer-Maria Rilke put it in his *Letters to a Young Poet* (12).

The following selected examples show the influence of the man Decroux on his creation of Corporeal Mime, reflecting his taste for paradox or seemingly contradictory logic that corresponds more correctly to his deepest inner reality.

Decroux referred to himself as an atheist or "spiritual materialist" (Leabhart, "An Interview" 27). However, he created figures such as The Great Prayer and God Fishes Man and for his pupils he often referred to God in order to facilitate an understanding of a quality of *dynamo-rhythm*. Sometimes the actor found it useful when performing to abandon himself to the movement with complete confidence as if he were a "puppet manipulated by God" (Leabhart 8 Ap. 2000).

Yves Marc gives his opinion of Decroux's pronouncements on this subject:

"God is guiding you; God is leading you." This referred to a particular physical quality, a certain quality of *dynamo-rhythm*.... I love it when one gives the impression that the movement is made as if one were disconnected from the will, from the decision to carry it out. (Interview)

To give a further example, Decroux had a very expressive face as well an exceptional gift for oratory. Nonetheless, as a challenge he spent his entire life working with his body, either covering his face with a thin veil, or with an impassive expression, and in silence. His face without the veil had a neutral expression so that the actor's body and specifically the trunk should draw the spectators' attention. Decroux declared:

What I call the trunk is the whole body, including the arms and legs ... provided these arms and legs move only at the command of the trunk and prolong its line of force, as a limp rope grows taut when one has thrown the stone attached to its end. (*Words* 39)

Decroux never rejected the possibility that the actor/mime could speak. Deeply convinced that one should have achieved a high quality of physical expression before using text, a quality of physical expression into which drama had been integrated, Decroux felt that otherwise theatre would depend too

heavily on written dramaturgy. This conception facilitates a better understanding of the role of *dynamo-rhythm* in Decroux's artistic creations.

Another condition imposed on the speaking actor stipulated that movements and text should happily coincide and to the extent that one might be "rich" the other should be "poor."

With regard to using verbal texts, Decroux wrote: "And so, for a long time yet, the Mime must abstain from slipping into works of dramatic literature and must renounce the benefits of hiding behind the names of great writers" (*Words* 39).

As for Decroux himself, he never spoke during his pieces, nor did the actors/mimes who performed his work. But, from his own words we glean a distinction between the respective value of movement and verbal text, and the extent to which the actor could use the latter.

As for us, the mimes [as opposed to writers], we must seek to make poetry with actions rather than words.

Removing words will not suffice to make mime, but one must not try to replace their function: to speak of what is absent. The word speaks abstraction, the absence of reality. The word speaks generalities, an absence of reality. Something hidden, absent to our eyes, or something very far away, many kilometers distant, absent in space, the word speaks it. Something that existed centuries ago, absent in time, the word speaks it. That which will exist after, also absent in time, the word speaks it. All of this is evident, but what is less apparent, is that the word also speaks that which is absent from our consciousness, even when present in front of our eyes. Our eyes like a camera see everything but our consciousness doesn't notice all. The word tells us what we should take notice of; mime can't do that. One mustn't try to do another's work without his tools. (Pezin 105-6)

Although not his primary objective, Decroux created works of art to show the public. He fixed his attention predominantly on the universe in which the actor expressed himself physically, a research project born at the Vieux Colombier School.

He considered his public performances a type of teaching, so that the spectators, little by little, would learn to see this rare quality of *dynamo-rhythm* in the actor's movements. Knowing that an audience for Corporeal Mime didn't exist, he had to create it, train and educate it. Before the start of mime performances, Decroux usually addressed a few words to the audience:

Here I am in front of the curtain to speak to you briefly about our art and our show.

If the latter were perfect, I would not have to speak about it....

But our art stutters and our show has its shortcomings.

Then the question arises:

Should we not refrain from presenting to the public something that we know to be imperfect?

...The public in its turn must progressively sharpen its ability to understand, which will become for it a source of heightened pleasure. (*Words* 141)

We find the final example of Decroux's paradoxical nature in the contrast between his strong sometimes authoritarian personality and the poetical delicacy of many of his artistic creations.

In these creations, *dynamo-rhythm* represented contradictions inherent in Decroux the artist, so full of dramatic movements, physical struggle, resistance, imbalance, hesitations and persistence. Detailed exploration of the expression of men and women who sweat, struggle, hesitate and then continue their lives, resulted in artistic creation. In everyone, he saw man's struggle, his survival, his dreams, and his necessary development. The actions of people living, working, fighting, changing, suffering without embellishment, inspired his artistic creations within the "categories of play" described earlier. On the subject of Decroux's artistic creations, Corinne Soum confirms his proclivities: "It is true, for example, that Decroux's pieces have a very strong flavor of humanity, of hope" (Soum Interview).

Decroux did not want to make pantomime, which he considered "a simple imitation of the world...most often a reproduction, and generally a caricature of it." On the contrary, he wanted to lead the

way to “revelation of an unseen world” (Lust, “Etienne Decroux” 17), of numerous inner worlds full of beauty. His first pieces derived from man in his natural environment, the representation of physical actions such as climbing a tree, rowing, fishing etc., always making actions, not imitating them. In other words, an action “must not merely imitate the exterior form but must penetrate into the inner essence of a figure or movement to discover the impulses from which it springs” (Wylie 112).

Decroux performed his first show entitled *La Vie Primitive* (Lust, “Etienne Decroux” 23) with his wife Suzanne in 1931. In this performance one finds movements belonging to the “categories of play” like *The Sportsman* and *the Man of the Isles*, work entirely concerning an exploration of the body through the body.

In his creative work, principally at the beginning of his career in mime, Decroux mimed “imaginary objects.” Jean-Louis Barrault, who joined Decroux in his second show *La Vie Médiévale* (DeMarinis 161) in 1931, remarked: “The imagined existence of an object will become real when the body of the mime properly expresses the muscular disruption imposed by the object” (Barrault, *Réflexions* 38).

Although probably not a term during that period, *dynamo-rhythm* played nonetheless an important role, as an element of investigation of the actor’s qualities of movement, to the extent that he had to express the truth of the situation in which he found himself. In these non-narrative pieces, Decroux said “the intra-corporeal and inter-spatial *causalities* replace the plot” (Leabhart 10 Oct. 2002).

Among other things, *La Vie Médiévale* included the compositions *The Washing* and *The Carpenter*. *Dynamo-rhythm* completely linked the original physical actions executed---in other words, the weight, the resistance, the pause and the speed that must agree with the exigencies---to the tasks accomplished. To take up the examples of *The Washing* and *The Carpenter*, the movements made by the washerwoman in order to “scrub a sheet” have a different *dynamo-rhythm* from the carpenter’s when he “picks up the hammer,” imagined as being a short extension of himself, and “hitting the nail.”

The different “know-how” in the two pieces provokes different *dynamo-rhythm*. Gina Lalli, one of Decroux’s former pupils who saw Decroux perform *The Washing* and *The Carpenter* in the United States, referred to the qualities of the movements:

Here we see work movements translated into pure, distilled archetypal units...of torso and limbs, punctuated or balanced by moments of complete stillness, often as a movement has reached its peak and is about to turn back.

We become more and more aware that coexisting and interpenetrating our world of incessant clamor and action there is another world. In Corporeal Mime the clamor is stopped or perhaps “held at bay,” and for a blessed moment we are in that other world of sublime stillness. (Lalli 38)

In another of his 1946 pieces *La Vie Moderne* (Lust, “Etienne Decroux” 23) Decroux worked with elements such as weight, resistance, and so on, but also used an external rhythm, in other words, music. In *The Factory* and in *The Little Soldiers*, he worked with the noise of footsteps. Marise Flach, who acted in the latter piece recalls:

At first, the five soldiers walked in a straight line, and then suddenly they formed a triangle and then all of a sudden a diagonal line and then facing back. Their shoes tipped in iron produced different rhythms. It was the only time, I believe, that he used tap-dancing shoes for walking, but it became extraordinarily poetic. (Interview)

Many of Decroux’s other pieces used more abstract activities or situations: *The Weight-Lifter* (1940), *Meditation* (1952), *The Priest* (1981), *The Empty Armchair* (1984).

CHAPTER 3

The Concept of *Dynamo-rhythm* among Decroux's Successors

At present, Decroux's successors teach Corporeal Mime technique in several different countries and inspire diverse performance practices.

In 2001-02 I conducted a survey among a number of these successors trying to discover how they understood, taught and applied to their creative work the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*, so essential to Etienne Decroux.

- in Paris with Yves Marc and Ivan Bacciocchi;
- in London with Corinne Soum and Anne Dennis;
- in Milan with Marise Flach;
- in Naples with Michele Monetta;
- in California with Mark Epstein, Deidre Sklar, Thomas Leabhart and Jan Munroe;
- and by correspondence with Yves Lebreton (Italy), Dean Fogal and Erika Batdorf (Canada) and Marguerite Mathews (the United States).

This survey of Decroux's various successors still actively teaching, directing, and acting entailed interviews with these practitioners and their pupils, and I also observed their classes, preparations and rehearsals as well as a number of public performances.

In revealing the results of the survey, I necessary include different approaches to *dynamo-rhythm* in the work carried out the by pupils of the same master:

- with regard to their understanding of the concept;
- with regard to their teaching;
- and finally, with regard to their artistic production.

The Various Interpretations of *Dynamo-rhythm*

In comparing the replies given during interviews by Decroux's successors, one can see that they understood the concept of *dynamo-rhythm* during the period of their apprenticeship differently and through different prisms. One or more of them sometimes emphasize certain characteristics more or less. This does not mean that Decroux used one aspect more than another during a certain period, and then stressed another aspect without mentioning the first. More likely during the course of his research and his teaching certain aspects of *dynamo-rhythm* seemed to him more appropriate and he used them as a teaching tool more vigorously.

Decroux certainly used certain aspects of *dynamo-rhythm*, such as singing, images, the categories etc., during one period and others later on, while returning afterwards to aspects he had used earlier.

While we found it difficult to draw up an exact time frame for the development of *dynamo-rhythm*, we have noticed that aspects of *dynamo-rhythm* remarked on by his successors have no hierarchy, as one aspect seems not more important than another.

Why is it, then, that none of his successors discuss exactly the same aspects of *dynamo-rhythm*?

While Decroux's work, foremost a form of research, lasted for sixty years his pupils attended his school for a maximum of six years. Moreover, Decroux engaged deeply with specific aspects of his work for periods that could last several years. Pupils usually attended his school during a certain period, working on the perspective Decroux pursued at the time, and, therefore, have retained a more vivid memory of that particular aspect.

As a consequence, the concepts of *dynamo-rhythm* discussed by those among Decroux's successors who agreed to take part in this study contains the following elements:

- muscular intensity
- muscular respiration

- phrasing
- the *comédie du muscle*
- musicality
- limitation
- inner rhythm
- breathing

Muscular Intensity

We may define *muscular intensity* as the degree of activity in one or more muscles participating in a certain movement.

The actor must control his muscular energy while learning to dispense it. The actor enriches his potential for physical expression to the extent to which he knows his own body, the palette of energetic forces and also his limitations. According to Corinne Soum "Decroux's *dynamo-rhythm* is...much more an indication of muscular intensity than an indication of *decoupage de temps*" [breaking up the time] (Interview).

While an actor might use *decoupage de temps* in Corporeal Mime, he does so as a result of his inner work and his muscular application, and not as an arbitrary or formal decision on his part.

Muscular respiration

Decroux gave the name *muscular respiration* to designate muscular tension and relaxation analogous to pulmonary respiration. However, the two forms differ:

- two phases characterize pulmonary respiration: expansion, during which the air is inhaled, followed by relaxation, during which the air is exhaled;
- muscular respiration* consists of a phase during which the muscles contract in order to launch the movement, followed by a muscular release, the relaxation. One may voluntarily vary the movements as required, and take into consideration the *weight, speed* and *trajectory of movement (dynamo-rhythm)* realized.

As Thomas Leabhart explains: "One understood that the gesture vibrated from inside the muscle, from the three centers of muscular respiration: the biceps, the chest and the buttocks." (Interview)

Subsequently, he describes the exercise Decroux developed for the arms.

Sea Horse Tail demonstrates on a practical level how the statue under the glass globe [which Decroux mentions in his writings] is formed and reformed. The arm hangs freely at the side. The biceps are relaxed, and, from the inside, the actor "plucks the string" of the muscle, making the whole arm jump. The single pluck becomes a series of plucks, and the slices of relaxation becomes smaller and smaller, until the arm vibrates with a constantly changing alternation between tension and relaxation. This vibration creates a raising and lowering of the arm, a steady movement created by an internal alternation of minute impulses. Beginning students try to imitate the external shape, failing as they look at effect instead of cause. Yet this "muscular respiration" (present in buttocks as well as in biceps) is one of the keys to energy circulation in Decroux's actor's body." (Leabhart, "L'homme de Sport" 58)

Corporeal Mime students need time to learn to relax, to understand this very important part of the apprenticeship, because the more they relax, the more they can achieve high levels of muscular tension and expression. In his teaching, Thomas Leabhart uses the image of a deep well to explain the desired level of relaxation, and a high fountain for the level of muscular tension. "It's a question of relaxation. The further down you can go into the deepest well, the higher up the fountain will go" (Interview).

Phrasing

The word “phrasing” most frequently refers to the phrase as a linguistic or musical construction. In language a phrase consists of words structured with the intention of conveying, for example, ideas or emotions. Nonetheless, the structure of the phrase comprises only one part of the entire communication; the manner of speaking the phrase, its expression in hesitations, accelerations, pauses, intonation and other aspects comprises the other.

Leabhart stressed the importance phrasing in *dynamo-rhythm*: “One may say an ordinary phrase like: ‘Go over there and open the door’ in many different ways and each time the listener can understand it differently” (Leabhart 27 Nov. 2002).

Similarly for a musical phrase, a musician understands the score when he reads it as sheet music, but one appreciates his interpretation when he plays it. Leabhart insists: “contrasts make good phrasing” (Leabhart 27 Nov. 2002).

In both musical and verbal communication one may read and give expression to written signs. On the other hand, in Western corporeal creations usually one does not record or communicate through written signs, but creates, memorizes and interprets a dramatic movement-text with the performer’s body. One may notate these movements in many ways besides memory, for example, using a written description as *Labanotation* or *Kinetographic Laban*, or *Effort/Shape notation*, a system of analysing and recording human movement created by Rudolf von Laban; or *Benesh Movement Notation*, also known as *Choreology* created by Rudolf and Joan Benesh. These systems of notation provide a technical means of capturing some aspects of movement on paper. Decroux created very precise and extremely detailed movement studies and choreographies wherein he left the phrasing, or the essence of communication quite open to interpretation by future generations of performers. While his repertoire was not captured by a written recording system many of his works were filmed during his lifetime and later recreated by Théâtre de l’Ange Fou.

Nowadays we can see photos and video recordings of Corporeal Mime pieces, but we don’t have a specific set of written signs as in musical and verbal communication to read and interpret. Nonetheless, we may draw a parallel between the interpretation of a written text or a musical score and a dramatic movement text, because both contain tonality and phrasing, in other words, a personalized delivery of the works.

According to Corinne Soum, Decroux’s early work as a speaking actor influenced his *dynamo-rhythm* in mime. “One can say that *dynamo-rhythm* is the phrasing. *Dynamo-rhythm* is the manner of expression” (Interview).

Ivan Bacciocchi, another of Decroux’s successors, noted:

In the *dynamo-rhythm* exercise that Etienne Decroux made us work on students acquire physical qualities. Then one could hope that they would stand out during the physical phrasing, so that the quality would remain alive. Then students could color movements as one colors a phrase to give it different accents, different intonations, sometimes ironic, sometimes incisive, sometimes authoritarian. What rhythm does one use for a phase that should be authoritarian or ironic? They are different rhythms. The same rule applies to movements. (Interview)

The Drama of Muscle (*comédie du muscle*)

Decroux created the expression *comédie du muscle* in order to facilitate the transmission of his works. Comedy usually means a way of performing that is intended to make spectators laugh. However there is also the expression in French, “*jouer la comédie*” which means to act a pretence of feelings.

To Decroux, the *comédie du muscle* transferred the performer’s dramatic acting, usually expressed on an emotional level, to inside the muscles that would subsequently “act” different levels of muscular tension and relaxation. In reference to the work on counterweights, Decroux declared: “We can say that in mime there is something called the ‘*comédie du muscle*’” (Pezin 130).

According to Yves Marc, the “*comédie du muscle*” represented an important aspect of *dynamo-rhythm*:

Decroux took this particularly rich idea of the *comédie du muscle*, in other words the resistance, to locate the drama inside the muscle itself. Then, one brought a certain number of muscular resistances to bear on it, the famous *comédie du muscle*. Today one says *mode tonique relâché*, or

lâché, or *usuel*, or *détendu*. In the *mode tonique* there was conflict, which, of course, projects a dramatic conflict, the actor's conflict, the actor's physiological conflict. Therefore, it is the muscle that expresses the psychological conflict through the body. Since Decroux defined the theatre as being the place where drama is made, the place of conflict through opposing thoughts: "I want, but I can't"; "I would do that but someone else doesn't want me to"; therefore, that creates conflicts. (Interview)

On the actual play of the muscular drama, Yves Marc adds:

Decroux worked on a *spectre tonique* – I always use the word *tonique* when referring to muscular resistance; he played the *spectre tonique* very broadly. Moreover, he always said: "Weight replaces space." Corporeal Mime is on the spot, but, on the other hand, it has a palette of very specific dramatic play. (Interview)

The Concept of Musicality

Decroux taught *dynamo-rhythm* with musicality. As mentioned previously, Decroux sang or hummed while teaching Corporeal Mime. Yves Marc explains the influence of musicality on his work:

It was understood that one is using a poetic metaphor when one says that the concept of *dynamo-rhythm* could be the musicality of movement in the sense that I can sing it. The metaphor is correct, in the sense that it concerns the pitch of the notes, and that one could draw a parallel with the pitch of movements in the body. But, in practice, everything found in musicality, in music, can be found in the musicality of movement, whether this pertains to the dynamics, *forte*, *crescendo*, *decrescendo*, or speed, *lento*, *adagio*, *presto*, *prestissimo*. One can also use the entire panoply of musical expressions. This leads us to the thought that the musicality of movement was a metaphor that pretty much covers Decroux's concept of *dynamo-rhythm*, and, at the same time, perhaps it sends us elsewhere. I have never been able to verify the extent to which it covers Decroux's concept of *dynamo-rhythm*, but it became part of our vocabulary. (Interview)

Deidre Sklar considered the study of *dynamo-rhythm* entirely original to Decroux, along with the aspect of musicality. In fact, she makes a distinction between the work of Decroux and Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), who created a theory and principles of movement for dance:

I had never heard of [*dynamo-rhythm*] before Decroux. Certainly Laban also understood the efforts of time and weight, flow and tension; he researched the same territory.... I think *dynamo-rhythm* is a magnificent idea, especially how Decroux's understanding of it appears in his singing. (Interview)

She goes on to describe how this aspect of musicality manifests itself in physical movement to express the duration of the muscular tensions brought into play:

It's the singing of a combination of time and amount of muscular tension, and the transitions between moments, how you get from an attack, a "*secousse*," a jump, or how strong the attack is. And in what manner, in what rhythm, do you release this, and at what point is it appropriate to move into another mode. He taught students how to feel these things. We learned how to sing in our own bodies, sing those changes. (Interview)

Limitation

According to Thomas Leabhart, *limitation* also plays an important part in *dynamo-rhythm*, associating *force* (energy), speed and the trajectory of the movement (expansion in space). Decroux's metaphorical manner of expression that he used habitually during his teaching often spoke of limitation.

Leabhart recounts three of Decroux's stories that express the meaning of *limitation*. "Etienne Decroux underscored the importance of the principle of the *limits*: 'Limits are fundamental if one wants to create energy. The stronger the *limits*, the greater the energy'" (Interview)

This is the first story:

You have a certain quantity of water kept in an open space. It stagnates and rots and attracts mosquitoes and other insects. It emits a nauseating smell and aquatic vegetation incubates and proliferates. Imagine that this same quantity of water runs in a limited space like a narrow canal where the bottom and the sides are made of cement. The water thus channeled and directed runs with a great energy. It is alive. (Interview)

The second story is as follows:

The second story is also about water. On Decroux's seventieth birthday....he spoke to his pupils, expressing his deepest convictions on the subject of life so that each person might become the captain of his own life. A boat has two things essential for navigation: the motor and the rudder. If the boat has a motor, but no rudder, it can't be steered, and it will turn in circles instead of going forward. If the boat has a rudder but no motor it goes nowhere." The motor is the dynamic quality, the *dynamo-rhythm*, the energy necessary to run the boat, while the rudder is the technique that channels the energy to carry it to the desired destination. This is the technique he worked on for sixty years. (Interview)

On the theme of *limitation*, Leabhart finishes with the last story:

The third story illustrates the principle of *dynamo-rhythm*. There were just the two of us in the basement studio working on *The Carpenter* and *The Washing*.... I was weary, exhausted from working over and over again every day on the same movements. Decroux looked at me with sad eyes and said: "Ah! Thomas! It's so sad this work that we are doing. It's sad because we are installing the plumbing, the pipes.... It's a long, laborious job that takes up so much time.... But you know, one of these days, later in life, you will have hot steam running through those pipes." (Interview)

Leabhart draws a conclusion from the three stories:

It was always through images that he defended the idea of the *limits* of energy. When he demonstrated things, a simple gesture of the hand, it was always full of this energy, of this vibration, the hot steam. With a simple gesture he could show us the multitude of variations that rendered a movement different every time. (Interview)

Inner Rhythm

According to statements made by many of Decroux's successors, one may see a link between *dynamo-rhythm* and the origin or initiation of a movement. Developing and teaching a movement technique using the entire range of muscular tensions and relaxations, Decroux spoke of the soul of movement. In many ways he insisted that his pupils search for interior motivations before executing movements, so they would have direction, and express necessity. He spoke also of a zero point, the precondition for an actor's expressivity.

In their statements, his successors refer in various ways to this inner rhythm and also to the precondition preceding all expression – the zero point.

Perhaps here their interpretations coincide and also their differences become apparent, finally leading to aesthetically diverse works.

In the first place, Marc Epstein, speaking of his apprenticeship in *dynamo-rhythm* in Corporeal Mime, declares that Decroux did not limit himself to teaching a corporeal technique:

He never taught only technique; that was part of what was wonderful about him.... He was never teaching you technique, he could call it a technique class, yes, that was the term he used.... But basically, he was never teaching you what people think of as technique in the sense of...drilling you through certain technical actions. It always was a work of art that he was teaching you. It always had a spirit, it always had a meaning, it always had a soul. (Interview)

On Decroux's idea of soul, and the idea of expressing movement politely or impolitely, Erika Batdorf draws on notes she kept in a diary during his lessons:

He talked about when people say that technique needs a soul and without it, it is empty – “of course, but what do you think this is?” [Moving his arm in an “unstitching, imperceptible departure” --a clear demonstration of a particular muscular dynamic] “If you just move your body, with no preparation, that’s impolite, it’s the soul that vibrates, that prepares the way. First you see the soul move and then the body. (Letter)

She also underscores the importance of muscular work, never forgetting the interior work without which the latter would be worthless:

“Without engine or with engine” [Decroux said], referring to muscular work behind the movement, but also referring to use of the core of the body to support the limbs. When he spoke in this way, which he often did, he was referring to both the muscular dynamic and the core of the body to support the use of the limbs or the head or other parts of the body. “If you would do one or the other, it would not be right.” (Letter)

According to Anne Dennis, the liaison between the origin of the movement starting inside the actor and its physical realization provides the key to *dynamo-rhythm*.

Decroux, who had been an actor himself, insisted on the movement's point of departure, the need to listen to its interior rhythm in order to achieve veracity, “as an actor's way of getting into the dramatic moment” (Interview). She goes on to explain the idea:

That is what *dynamo-rhythm* is to me. It's a question of listening to your inner rhythm.... It is difficult when teaching to get an actor to take the time to respond to the inner rhythm, and be truthful in the inner rhythm.... Decroux gave us a means to go forward. A means to listen to our inner rhythm, a means to listen to our inner music. (Interview)

Yves Lebreton comments that *dynamo-rhythm* is the movement's “sap” and that one should be deeply familiar with it in practice in order to analyze it.

Dynamo-rhythm truly represents the beating heart of his work. The analysis of movement, the disassembling and reassembling of the body in its organic “arborescence,” would only have supported a formal study if there had been, below the surface, the pulsation of blood carrying the gesture from the epidermis and plunging the roots into the interior of the being both living and imaginary. (Letter)

Lebreton clearly underlines the importance of the liaison between the interiority and the execution of the movement:

The interior quality of movement is intimately linked to its course in the body as it is articulated in time and space. To isolate *dynamo-rhythm* from its physical context is to conceptualize it and at the same time devitalize it. The contents are inseparable from the container and vice versa. (Letter)

Bacciocchi's statement below makes a parallel between interior rhythm and the form of movement as taught by Decroux:

Decroux often liked to talk about the interior rhythm of movement to the point that he said that if one must choose between rhythm and form, one would have to choose rhythm, because it carries a dramatic message while form could be divested of intention. (Interview)

In order to understand well the source of movement and to avoid gratuitous ones, Leabhart sometimes said to his pupils before the beginning of an improvisation: "Listen to what is inside; follow your inner music" (Leabhart 8 Ap. 2000).

According to Decroux, the most crucial and essential moment occurred when the actor assumed a neutral position before beginning the execution of a figure, a piece or an improvisation. He identified this *zero* position as the instant a movement is born inside the actor, which he had to "hear" and his body to follow.

Dean Fogal, another of Decroux's successors, explains the notion of *zero* as follows:

The reason this question of *zero* is so important to the question of rhythm is that it speaks about where the mime places his/her "magnifying glass" or "barometer" along the whole spectrum of a movement. "Mimes," Decroux said, "are interested not just in things in motion, but in the origins of that movement, the thundering explosions, the sighs, the falling of flesh that gave birth to the movement." How amazing if the spectator as well as the actor could witness that birth. (Letter)

Dennis defines the *zero* moment as follows:

His whole method of teaching an actor was based on where a movement begins, where it's going, and where it ends or finishes. If you're *zero* then you end in a *zero*. In between, you have a movement, which is the result of a need to say something. This isn't an idea in itself; perhaps this is an idea in itself mostly in defining it in movement terms. (Interview)

Decroux himself summed up the *zero* moment with a brief and beautiful metaphor: "The horse is never so beautiful as just before it moves" (Benhaim 350).

To conclude the subject of interior rhythm and the *zero* moment, in other words, on interior *dynamo-rhythm*, the question of the actor's presence comes to light. For Decroux, the actor's present immobility on stage bore witness to the permanence of his inner movement.

Breathing

Decroux's successors seldom refer to breathing. However Anne Dennis links respiration and interior rhythm in acting, underscoring the importance of Decroux's physical work in acquiring readiness for necessary expression:

And I don't think you can do one without the other. But you do have to have a body that is completely free and yours in the sense that, if you want to move one part of the body, you only move one part of the body. And that happens after a while. You don't think about, "I am just going to rotate my head." But when you rotate, and translate, and incline all your body, it becomes yours. And then, you listen from the inside, and that is the *dynamo-rhythm*.... It's not any different from breath, breathing, and response. But what you do have to have is a body that responds. (Interview)

Batdorf gives another example of the need for breathing to respect Corporeal Mime's dramatic rhythm or *dynamo-rhythm*. Rhythm in general "is pure drama versus music...an understanding of rhythm that lives where it lives best – in the breath and the body (Letter)."

These two statements have accorded respiration a significant role in mastering *dynamo-rhythm*, but, nonetheless, with certain nuances with regard to Decroux's teaching. For Anne Dennis: "Many people say that they can't recall Decroux talking about respiration. If there is one thing I do recall, it is that Decroux talked about respiration, of breathing, all the time" (Interview).

According to Batdorf:

I think Decroux's development of the relationship of *dynamo-rhythm* to breath was undeveloped. Of course this is based on one year of study with him--perhaps he covered this at other times with other people. He would occasionally mention the breath – but not in the kind of scientific and systematic way that he would address the muscular and skeletal system. (Letter)

We find another reference to Decroux's concept of respiration in the statement made by Yves Marc, where he linked it to the notion of musicality:

Emotional respiration is the lyricism linked to inspiration, and it's not the same for exhalation; further, there is the musical side of respiration that organizes the ensemble in movement. To me, *dynamo-rhythms* are also linked to this musical dimension of respiration, which is not only organic. To Decroux, respiration is always under control, not simply organic. "I need air; I take the air," it is always musical and emotional somewhere. (Interview)

According to Decroux himself, one cannot find the link between respiration and *dynamo-rhythm*. In one of his statements, when speaking of the "major technical principles of mime," he mentions "respiration," but this is more of a metaphor representing animation, the *dynamo-rhythm* of a mime performance, rather than physiological respiration proper:

There are three things about mime that must be perfect: respiration, articulation and rhythm. Certain fundamental techniques follow from these three things. When I say respiration, one shouldn't imagine that I'm talking about pulmonary respiration. This is the breathing of four-eyed theoreticians who reflect and tell you that this is a lung, that's where it's attached, that sometimes it inflates and deflates and that's how one breathes: 1, 2, 3 – 1, 2, 3. The huge misfortune in such theories is that once one is on the stage, they are no use at all. When I perform Ancient Combat, there is a certain part I do without breathing at all. As Seneca said: "Everyone is a pilot when the sea is calm" and one always breathes well when one has nothing to do.

No! I'm talking about something else. I'm talking about the word "respiration" in a philosophical sense. If one were always given a sublime stage show, one wouldn't be able to put up with it for long. Contradictions are necessary, happening one after another, so that they breathe and we with them. After the peak of misery, there must be a valley of rest. (Pezin 122-23)

***Dynamo-rhythm* in the Teaching of Decroux's Successors**

"A great deal more remains to be said about apprenticeship in Corporeal Mime: once one can do, one still has to discover what one should want to do" Decroux wrote (*Words* 85).

Even if Decroux had a great influence on his pupils, each of them had his/her own personality and culture with a diversity of influences. After finishing their studies at his school, they followed their own paths, searching for their own personal and artistic identities. Some focused on performance, others turned to different professions, yet others combined artistic work with teaching either permanently or sporadically. Some of his former students still pass on the system of Corporeal Mime as defined by Decroux, and of the *dynamo-rhythm* associated with it, with different methodologies following from the cultural sensibilities, philosophies, politics and aesthetics appropriate to each teacher. Decroux's emphasis on ethics in his work remains, strongly rooted in his successors' work as well. Decroux said:

If the mime resolves problems, his merit would be great. If he doesn't resolve anything, he still retains one merit: that he provides an example of ethics. The mime does what he thinks; he doesn't just do. In this world, there are those who think without doing and others who do without thinking, those who preach and those who practice. This explains a lot. The practice of mime heightens a sense of responsibility. Practice what you preach. ("Présence" 15)

Through statements made by Decroux's successors one can see they always use those aspects of *dynamo-rhythm* they gleaned from their training in his school in their own teaching practice in flexible ways which accord with their own personalities.

The Significance of *Dynamo-rhythm*

Why do contemporary practitioners find *dynamo-rhythm* so important in the teaching not only of Corporeal Mime but also in other forms of theatrical expression and equally in dance?

Reactions to this question given by numerous teachers in these disciplines testify to the importance of *dynamo-rhythm* in their work and recognize their affiliation to Decroux.

Batdorf:

I have found Decroux's training *dynamo-rhythm* exquisite... something that...has affected my movement style tremendously. It is something that I see missing in much dance work – and in my teaching I find dancers very excited by the work. (Letter)

According to Marc:

In any case it is evident to me that Decroux passed on *dynamo-rhythm* to us, that which he later called the "musicality of movement"; it's certainly the area in which Decroux influenced us the most. He really developed our taste for it, with regard to *immobility*, *transported immobility*, *causalities* from one part of the body to another or from body to body, there where, instead of psychology we use body to body contact games. (Interview)

Dennis also explains, referring to Decroux:

He said, "not every movement has the same dramatic value." The way that a movement does not have the same dramatic value is through *dynamo-rhythm*.... He defined it and gave us a way of using it, a way that we listened to our own bodies, and responded to other people's bodies. (Interview)

Sklar said of *dynamo-rhythm* and all its constituent parts, comparing it with a piano, that for Decroux it comprised the complete range of movements for each part of the body:

It seems magnificent to me that somebody could present and teach an awareness of that dimension of movement. I don't think other systems, such as ballet, have that clear an understanding of those dynamic factors. People say that the keyboard of Decroux is the important thing, but I don't see that the keyboard is as exciting as the *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Soum put it this way:

I felt that *dynamo-rhythm* made me understand the form.... But perhaps that's personal. Perhaps, there are people more taken with the form first. For myself, I was also taken by the *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Finally, Yves Lebreton and Marguerite Mathews express themselves in metaphors in order to talk of the significance of *dynamo-rhythm* in their work in Italy and the US: “*Dynamo-rhythm* is the ‘beating heart’ of movement, its ‘sap’, its inner impulse, its imaginary magnetism” Lebreton wrote (Letter). And Mathews believes “*Dynamo-rhythm*...is the underlying ‘everything’ that fuels the action” (Letter).

The Practice of Teaching *Dynamo-rhythm*

Dynamo-rhythm as the subject of research and teaching in mime, in physical theatre and, equally, in dance, today takes on a wide variety of forms of artistic expression. Below some examples of contemporary teaching practice describe and allow an appreciation of different forms of apprehension.

Yves Marc

Together with Claire Heggen, Marc directs the Théâtre du Mouvement in Paris. Defining himself as “in love with music,” he insists on placing the actor’s psychological conflict in the body, in the *comédie du muscle*. His approach to teaching the qualities of physical acting in the Théâtre du Mouvement in Paris links to the concept of musicality:

I often tell my actors that I prefer to sing things to them, to talk to them about *dynamo-rhythm*, to talk to them about relations, of *causality* and *dynamique*, of *tonicité*, of respiration, of the quality of immobility and the states it induces in the body, rather than give them psychological references. I’m not a space-person; rather, I’m coming from the world of music, and moreover in love with music. (Interview)

Erika Batdorf

Batdorf, professor at York University in Toronto, Canada works with dancers. Corporeal Mime, an integral but not exclusive aspect of her teaching practice, brings *dynamo-rhythm*-- “something lacking in the dancer’s work.”

At this point when I teach it, it is integrated with other work that I have studied or developed – but it is primarily his influence.... I think *dynamo-rhythm* needs to be more available – especially for dancers. Although it is equally useful to actors – I find they usually lack the patience or discipline to apply themselves to the training it requires. (Letter)

Corinne Soum

Together with Steven Wasson, Soum directs the *École de L’Ange Fou* in London which offers three-year training in Corporeal Mime. Students can also learn a number of pieces from Decroux’s repertoire. She explains: “in my teaching I always say to myself: ‘good, at the end of three years, the students should have explored at least a dozen of Etienne Decroux’s pieces’” (Interview).

Teaching these pieces to her pupils gives Soum the opportunity to return to her own work:

For example, The Washerwoman, the piece I learned with Steven and then re-worked with Monsieur Decroux. If I hadn’t taught it, if I’d simply continued with the practice or the interpretation as a solo, I don’t think that I would have attained the level I’m at today. It is because I’ve taught it to so very many students and that I’ve seen it on other bodies, with people from other cultures, people who never knew Monsieur Decroux that finally this piece can now be shown to a public. (Interview)

In the following Soum explains the process through which she teaches *dynamo-rhythm*:

I don’t think one can say that there is a division between on the one hand the mechanical perspective and the other the *dynamo-rhythm*. I don’t believe that’s possible. For a start, if one disassembles a gesture for a student, doing everything at that moment *en fondu*.... Another day, I did the *figure du pinceau*. So, one tries the brush, one returns, one tries a bit more, and returns

and afterwards one uses what's called the *catch à l'envers*. One uses the adaptation of the body or the arm to adapt to something or to do something else. It's true that it's a difficult movement, because one has to compensate in the *bust*, and in the pelvis in order to turn. So, some pupils don't understand. What does one do then? I try to do the *dynamo-rhythm* as slowly as possible. But even then it is *dynamo-rhythm*. Because, it's very difficult to explain, but in fact nothing exists without *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Michele Monetta

Monetta and Lina Salvatore direct the *Scuola di Mimo Corporeo* in Naples. The work of Jacques Lecoq, a theatrical descendant of Copeau, and that of the Russian physicist, Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), who devised a method of physical training that connected movement, sensation, feeling and thought into a functioning whole, strongly influence the theatre curriculum. However, they also teach techniques derived from Etienne Decroux.

According to Monetta:

Corporeal Mime work is important for actors because it instills in them the habit of searching for detail and the habit of making a movement score, like in music. Decroux wanted to approach mime as if it were music. (Interview)

Dynamo-rhythm as taught there also draws from the principles of Francois Delsarte, a French teacher of theatre and singing (1811-1871) who developed a philosophy originally intended for actors in order to help them unify life with the spirit and the soul:

This idea of the "Tri-unity" is about the three parts, the three qualities that exist separately in the body, but can be unified in the unity of life, the spirit and the soul. Decroux took up the idea and said: "the spirit is thought, the soul is feeling, emotion, and life is the energy, the basis." For this reason he developed work using the idea of the unity of different parts of the body, such as the world of thought (the head), the rationality, the world of emotion, the place of feeling (the chest, the waist) and the (pelvis and legs) the energy, the life force – pulling, pushing, being. Above all, he worked on *dynamo-rhythm* through this idea of unity. (Monetta interview)

Anne Dennis

For Dennis, professor and director in London and Barcelona, *dynamo-rhythm* links to breathing, the source of the actor's presence and truthfulness on stage, because, as she puts it: "I think that *dynamo-rhythm* and this idea of breath, this idea of where a movement begins, exists in life."

Dennis integrated the concept of *dynamo-rhythm* into her discipline in order to help actors achieve clarity and precision of dramatic movements linked to actions. They have to steep themselves in their playing, and respond according to the unfolding of the actions.

That is probably the most beautiful way of teaching *dynamo-rhythm*, because you are responding to somebody else's *dynamo-rhythm*, and the response comes.

But what you have to have is a body that is free to respond to your inner rhythm. And that is where it all comes together. (Interview)

On the subject of the *mise-en-scène* she adds:

Dynamo-rhythm is theater. If you look at a scene constructed by a playwright, there is a rhythm in that scene. But actors give to those words, or to that situation, their own understanding of that dramatic moment, and that is why every scene will be different depending upon what actors are doing it and what they want, the decision they make from that dramatic moment.

What do they want? What is the response to a situation? And that is defined by *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Thomas Leabhart

Leabhart explains:

We are...dealing with elements so that the energy won't be lost or destroy the actor's work. For electricity, we have circuit breakers, dykes hold back water so that it doesn't spill out. In the actor's work, when form is stronger than energy, the result is "formalism"; when energy is stronger than form the result is "expressionism." Some actors self-destruct because they don't know how to control their energy. (Interview)

Here, Leabhart refers to the concept of *limitation* he learned from Decroux and has continued to teach his own pupils.

Leabhart teaches *dynamo-rhythm* to his pupils in many different ways. For example, one could describe an exercise called "the birth of awareness," a "perfect example of the change of dynamic qualities " (Interview).

"When Decroux travelled by train during World War I he saw a man asleep, sitting against a wall, who [slowly] woke up" (Interview).

This exercise, which starts with the actor seated, completely relaxed, his eyes closed.

There are five phases in "the birth of awareness":

He is sleeping with his eyes closed;

He is sleeping with his eyes open: the eyes are open but he sees nothing;

The eyes are open; he sees, but understands nothing;

He sees and understands;

He sees, understands and stands up.

All these phases correspond to a level of consciousness, and are linked to energy. The energy is dependent on the growing awareness, which awakens, then is mobilized, increases, then stops, ever expanding.... It's the *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

During improvisations, Leabhart broaches another way of working with *dynamo-rhythm*. He refers to an internal music the actor must follow, which he calls "the music of meditation" (Interview). In this case, the actor must be open and listening to his own music, in order to avoid gestures not prompted by his own internal music.

Like other teachers of Corporeal Mime techniques, Leabhart was inspired by Decroux to help students understand *dynamo-rhythm*. In other words, he sings to indicate different levels of muscular resistance. He uses images and metaphors. However, he believes that there are limits incumbent on the teaching and learning process as applied to *dynamo-rhythm*. The actor should work on himself, and maturity is an essential factor.

Can one teach *dynamo-rhythm*? No. One can sing; one can use images...but the phrasing can only be learned through time, work, personal experiences that add to the body's awareness. (Leabhart 14 Jan. 2003)

In his work, Leabhart draws on his studies with Arthur Lessac, "contemporary master teacher of movement and voice," (Leabhart, "L'homme de Sport" 34) in order to help actors acquire stage presence through an awareness of the center of their body, situated an inch below the navel. This consists of a group of physical exercises taught together with metaphorical images, the play of energies brought to bear being perfectly linked to the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*.

Leabhart defines his work as follows:

As Artaud wrote, “All true alchemists know that the alchemical symbol is a mirage as the theatre is a mirage” (49). In this pre-Cartesian mirage, the ordinary human body, with its ordinary human experience transforms into the pure gold of dramatic presence through the actor’s facilitating a flow of energy, a “play of oppositions” which negotiate “differences of potential.” Metaphorically, the actor draws energy from the ground, pulls it (energy, stuff, fluids, electricity, steam, water, thought) from a reservoir in the earth, through the legs, and into the place one inch below the navel. The individual energetic strands, drawn up through each leg, cross at the inch below the navel. There, a fire transforms the material (Decroux liked to say that actors had to have “something in the belly”) as the material rises up through the pectorals and projects out through the eyes. The acting stuff or substance (presence), now perhaps steam, rises in a high arc above the audience, and falls like rain behind them, only to be drawn up once more through the roots of the feet, into the fire of the belly. (Leabhart, “L’homme de Sport” 55)

Finally, Thomas Leabhart uses word play to aid his students in understanding *dynamo-rhythm*:

- “C.C.C (Clarity, Concentration, Communication)” applies to the relationship between the actor and audience;
- “D.D.D. (Difficult, Dangerous and Dramatic)” applies to the relationship between the actor, his body and his movements. (Leabhart 13 Nov. 2002)

Dean Fogal

Fogal, director of the Tooba Physical Theatre Centre in Vancouver, Canada, has developed his own specific brand of research into Corporeal Mime called the Assimilation of Style, and linked to the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*:

The Assimilation (of Style) is not a recipe for movement. It is an attempt to create a particular context in which experiencing one thing, will create the “next context” on our journey toward higher mobility, more flexibility, increased ability to move in different planes and levels of space, enhanced musicality, and greater sense of form.

Higher mobility automatically brings an increased awareness of rhythm. (Fogal, “Articulating”)

He continues to explain his concepts in more detail:

We obviously need training techniques that unite personal, emotional, and intellectual development with physical, technical, geometric, and spatial development so that we don't create actors who find after a long and intense physical training period, that they have to start again, from the beginning in the areas of group communication, emotional capacity, and spatial sensitivity. In fact, if we've become too lobster-like and hardened externally/technically, it's not always possible to go back to a humanitarian beginning and infuse ourselves with presence, the motivation to genuinely reach out to other people, true ownership of our work, and so on. (Fogal, “Articulating”)

In spite of different modes of expression, one can find a great many correspondences between Fogal’s work and Decroux’s.

Dynamo-rhythm in the Performance Work of Decroux's Successors

Thomas Leabhart, paraphrasing Decroux, said: "I believe that through *dynamo-rhythm* one can see the individual qualities of each person" (Leabhart 2 Sept. 2001).

At present, one sees a variety of types of performances in which the physicality of the actor figures fundamentally. Many actors, dancers, and performers have worked with Decroux or with his pupils. But because the artists concerned have also incorporated other physical and theatrical techniques *dynamo-rhythm* is not always immediately obvious in their performances. I therefore had to carry out a more specific investigation in order to throw more light on *dynamo-rhythm's* influence in artistic creations.

Corinne Soum

Soum very explicitly describes her creative process, while emphasizing the unification of all physical movement through *dynamo-rhythm*:

I've always been taken by *dynamo-rhythm*. It's the same, for example, for the creative process. I'm in the process of creating a piece, to me a type of modern Cinderella, in other words, someone who is cleaning all the time.

Often, it's like that for me when I'm in the process of creating: I put myself in the position, for example, of Cinderella [she demonstrates] as I see her, and afterwards impulses are born. If I put myself in this position, and I do it like this, I don't need to say to myself straight away: "Ok, now I'm going to pick something up." Or, "Ok, now I'm waking up." No, I want to feel something that makes me want to do something: a punctuation at the beginning and something light at the end. And by repeating this *dynamo-rhythm*, the things that come to me are, in fact, a type of unconscious memory and little by little I start to say: "Good, yes, that is sadness, or this is her cleaning something against her leg." Then afterwards the form will return me to the *dynamo-rhythm*. Then I will say to myself, for example, why do I want to make that gesture? Do you want to remove the dust? Do you want to rub? Do you want simply to move your finger lightly across something? Afterwards, the form will return me again to *dynamo-rhythm*. And in this way [she makes a circular gesture] there is a constant dialogue between form and *dynamo-rhythm*. (Interview)

Thomas Leabhart

Leabhart retains the memory of Decroux's singing in his creative process:

I can recall his music, the songs he sang..., and his voice always had *dynamo-rhythm*. I always have that voice in me, this "music" as the basis for Corporeal Mime. But, in my own work, I allow myself to discover and achieve other things. However, I don't think that this diverges a great deal from this music, [Decroux's] original music. (Interview)

During the process, he notices interior movements, in a way similar to Soum, that actualize his own deeper, inner being:

When I start a new piece, I just play. I sit on a chair, for example, and I lean naturally to one side. But, even that comes from Decroux, because he said: "Work from your natural asymmetry" when we start an improvisation.... One day your natural asymmetry takes you in one direction, the next day the other. Sit down, calm down, relax and see where relaxation takes you, where it is most natural. Where does it take you? It takes [the body] to a natural frontier [the floor, the edge of the chair] there to reconnect and awaken. (Interview)

Yves Marc

Marc and Claire Heggen have developed their own personal working practice and use the principles of *dynamo-rhythm* with regard to “the state of the [actor’s] body, linked to form, to dynamics” and “nourished by physical sensations and muscular precision” (Interview).

Clearly for Marc their artistic creations derive from the actor’s body in a state of complete availability. “To my mind, interpreting expression is directly linked to the state of the body in which dynamism, the *dynamo-rhythm*, plays a fundamental role” (Interview).

Music plays an important part in the creative process at Théâtre du Mouvement:

We have worked well with contemporary composers. The relationship to music is linked to this thought that is to me fundamental to Decroux’s work, that there is a relationship between the *dynamo-rhythms*, thought and emotion. (Interview)

Decroux demanded of his students a complete and utter devotion to the practice of Corporeal Mime. This attitude caused several of them to fear imprisonment in a single technique, so they left the school. Paradoxically, when one looks at the creative practice carried out by these three artists, one can appreciate very different and personal styles while at the same time they resemble each other. One can see that *dynamo-rhythm*, rather than containing the artist in a fixed methodology, plays a very significant role in the creative process, allowing one to evolve freely while using the same principles.

Decroux’s successors all have their own interpretations of the concept of *dynamo-rhythm*; however, their similarities outnumber their differences. They remain close to each other, as they share a source in Decroux.

Even though each has followed an individual path, adding other techniques to his/her teaching, creative practices or sources of inspiration, all have remained close to their common origin. Their statements give voice albeit in a various ways to the fundamentals that unite them.

Decroux based his research and his creation of Corporeal Mime on solid principles that allow for variations while retaining their origins.

CONCLUSION

Decroux left his successors an abundant vocabulary related to Corporeal Mime, one which for him carried very specific connotations, such as “scales,” “counterweights,” “rotations,” “triple designs,” “undulations,” “compensation bit by bit,” “contradictions,” “translations,” “reestablishment of two elements,” “walks,” “arm and hand designs,” and “figures of style,” among others.

To Decroux, the actor should have “the body of a gymnast, the mind of an actor and the heart of a poet” (Stein 99), --the essence of *dynamo-rhythm*. This article has attempted to throw light on this term, its origin, definition, necessity and significance. Without it, the practice of the exercises he described with so much precision would only produce mechanical movements, failing to develop the virtuosity inherent in a well-articulated body.

His successors, as well as the actors who work with them, have succeeded in grasping the essentials points of Decroux’s message, summarized as follows:

- an actor using Corporeal Mime techniques amplifies the form of expression to the extent that he can understand and master the *dynamo-rhythm* of his movements;
- he can only assimilate *dynamo-rhythm* through practice, either through the “pure” techniques of Corporeal Mime, or in other physical techniques that include it;
- the actor can pass beyond the purely intellectual understanding of *dynamo-rhythm*, fully understanding and mastering it as a constituent part of his acting, only after many years of apprenticeship.

For Decroux’s successors, an apprenticeship in *dynamo-rhythm* requires:

- physical work geared to understanding all human mechanics: muscles, movements, their reciprocal interactions;
- an imagination that expands the body’s potential and puts it to the test;
- the ability to master the body’s energy, control of the energy during movement;
- a state of openness, in other words, a state of readiness, of wakefulness, that allows the actor to react in his own role as well as relating to other actors.

Personally, researching and writing this monograph on *dynamo-rhythm* as found in Decroux’s work and that of his successors has enriched my own practice significantly. On one hand, I’ve met and interviewed those who have practiced these techniques for decades after leaving Decroux’s school. I have found this diversity of experience and knowledge enormously gratifying. On the other hand, as the term *dynamo-rhythm* did not figure in some of the interviews, I have sometimes had difficulty analyzing the concept.

We have far from exhausted the research potential for this subject as the further one goes into Decroux’s universe, the more one discovers the sheer dimension of his work and his dedication to it over almost sixty years. The term *dynamo-rhythm*, one of numerous expressions that originated in Decroux’s poetry, still requires study and analysis. This product of a remarkably rich imagination expresses his particular vision of the world.

— Translated by Jacqueline Fletcher

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