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Enacting Lecoq: Movement in Theatre, Cognition, and Life. Maiya Murphy. *Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019; pp. xvii + 214.

Maiya Murphy's *Enacting Lecoq* is a six-chapter book exploring the relationship between the pioneering pedagogical achievements of French theatre practitioner, Jacques Lecoq and the sub-field of cognitive science known as Enactivism. Though quite dense and largely geared towards those working in the cognitive sciences, this book has profound implications for acting teachers, and will be of particular interest to anyone teaching movement or working from within the Lecoq lineage. Throughout *Enacting Lecoq*, Murphy reveals the science which shows how Lecoq's pedagogical process of forging an "actor-creator" results in the development of foundational and highly adaptive cognitive abilities.

Enactivism, also called Enaction, is an approach which emphasizes the processual, whole-bodied nature of thinking and complicates earlier computational brain-centered models of cognition. By reading fledgling actor-creators in a Lecoq-based training as simply organisms in an environment, Murphy draws on the work of nearly a dozen cognitive scientists in the Enactivist tradition to explain how principles such as autonomy, autopoiesis, interiority/exteriority, structural coupling, needful freedom, relationship to the environment, participatory sense-making, and metabolism all have a hand in augmenting the perceptual,

imaginative, body-schematic, and decision-making powers of the actor. By emphasizing movement, even when least expected—or appearing not to exist at all—as in the example of a tree growing, Lecoq pedagogy capitalizes on the nature of cognition as an embodied process, heightening the adaptability and sensitivity of actors-in-training.

From an introduction which explains the historical roots of Lecoq and Enactivism, the book moves through four main chapters dedicated to the broad topics of 2) the actor-instructor relationship; 3) the cognitive & creative foundations of the training; 4) mime & identifications; and 5) significant practices such as play, improvisation, mask work & language. The conclusion, chapter 6, recaps the major ideas and makes a case for how Lecoq might contribute to Enactivist research. The book’s overall argument is that the movement in Lecoq’s pedagogy does “deep work at the roots of cognition” to establish a “new cognitive mode” (184).

One of the most clear examples from Enactivism, to which Murphy returns in several chapters, is drawn from Véronique Havelange’s writings on tactile visual sensory substitution (or TVSS) systems, devices that allow a blind or blindfolded person to effectively “see” their surroundings by translating visual stimuli from a video camera into tactile stimuli via vibrations on the skin. As Murphy explains, such experiments have been shown to be more effective at simulating sight when the subject themselves is allowed to move the camera, rather than having various objects set in front of them. This and other examples point to the ways in which “movement is fundamentally *constitutive* of perception” (76), providing the theoretical underpinning for why Lecoq pedagogy—which begins and ends with movement—is so effective at forming new cognitive, perceptual, and imaginative abilities, completely separate from the development of performance skills or styles, as more reductionist views of the pedagogy may assume.

In another example from Enactivist research, Murphy draws on the work of Shaun Gallagher to explain how Ian Waterman, who lost his sense of touch and proprioception, was able to relearn to walk through use of his sense of sight only. Gallagher argues that this is an example of *body image* functionally substituting for missing components of a *body schema* (70), which Murphy—via Drew Leder’s notion of *incorporation*—uses to suggest how Lecoq’s pedagogical tools such as neutral and expressive masks can effectively augment the existing *body schema* of an actor-creator. These tools can help actor-creators unlock new abilities to skillfully and adaptively manage the relationship between actor, audience, and space, even when they may not even be able to see their audience, as is the case when wearing certain types of masks.

One of the most simultaneously popular and misunderstood tools in Lecoq pedagogy, Identification, especially benefits from the conversation with Enactivism. Chapter 4 explains how Lecoq’s process of Identification unfolds in a sequence of Perception, Embodiment, and Transposition. Murphy’s emphasis on the first phase, Perception, as necessarily *embodied* is supported by a discussion of how the “Mirror Neuron System” (119) and “automatic mimicry” (123) allow an actor to hijack their own cognitive process in such a way that experience and imagination can become near equivalent when the body is engaged. This chapter may be a useful bridge for acting teachers who are unfamiliar with Lecoq’s work and looking to explore physical approaches for the first time.

In the final chapter, it seems that Murphy’s primary audience are those, not in theatre, but in the cognitive sciences, for whom this explication of “long-forged embodied practices” (193) is an invitation to fundamentally rethink experimental design in a way that embraces the inherent dynamism of life and Lecoq’s classic maxim that “everything moves” (192). Murphy makes a

compelling case for the "detailed and rigorous braiding of mutual constraints" (200) from disparate fields as a way of conducting interdisciplinary research and advancing knowledge on multiple frontiers.

Compared to other texts in the field of theatre, Murphy's *Enacting Lecoq* is unique both in its Enactivist approach and the way in which it focuses on the foundational versus executional abilities of the actor-creator. While this book may be overwhelming for undergraduate or even graduate students of acting, it could be a hugely important text for graduate students in Theatre Education, Movement Pedagogy, Applied Theatre, as well as acting teachers, whose students will deeply benefit from an incorporation of Murphy's insights into their pedagogy. Furthermore, the conceptual framework laid out in *Enacting Lecoq* is so strong and wide-reaching that it could persuasively be used to justify shifting Lecoq pedagogy from the periphery of actor training and the specialist domain of movement teachers to the very heart of 21st century actor training. As we enter the era of online and socially-distanced theatre, the demand and appreciation (not to mention opportunities) for actor-creators has never been greater.

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