

able one another through what unites them: the farewell. tive experience points forward to the chorus, which we e at a later stage.

### *The fundamental journey*

The great guiding theme of the neutral mask is 'The Fundamental Journey'. This journey through nature involves walking, running, climbing and jumping. The exercise is played out alone, with no interference from other actors, even if several students are performing it at the same time.

*At daybreak you emerge from the sea; in the distance you can see a forest and you set out towards it. You cross a sandy beach and then you enter the forest. You move through trees and vegetation which grow ever more densely as you search for a way out. Suddenly, without warning, you come out of the forest and find yourself facing a mountain. You 'absorb' the image of this mountain, then you begin to climb, from the first gentle slopes to the rocks and the vertical cliff face which tests your climbing skills. Once you reach the summit, a vast panorama opens up: a river runs through a valley and then there is a plain and finally, in the distance, a desert. You come down the mountain, cross the stream, walk through the plain, then into the desert, and finally the sun sets.*

The image of the natural world summoned up in this exercise is one of calm, neutrality, balance. It is not a 'Boy Scout' world with a practical handbook setting a distance between man and nature. The natural world speaks directly to the neutral state. When I walk through the forest, I am the forest. At the summit of the mountain I feel as though my feet are in the valley and I myself am the mountain. It enables us to take the first steps towards identification. This 'Fundamental Journey', which is a major theme in my work, prepares students for work on identification of all kinds.

This journey also has symbolic overtones. The exercise allows us to introduce students to the poetic aspects of the theme: we evoke Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Brecht's *Resistible*

### Improvisation

*Rise of Arturo Ui.* The crossing of the river can be compared to passing through adolescence to adult life, with all the movements finding their reflection in emotional feelings: the currents, the whirlpools, the waves rising and falling, washing back and forth from one bank to the other. As with all the other exercises, I give maximum encouragement to the students to fill out this journey with images which go beyond the simple geographical trip.

A second stage is to re-run the improvisation using the same theme but in extreme conditions and tempestuous weather.

*There is a raging sea and a wave throws you up onto the beach. The sand is being swept by a rain storm. The forest is on fire. Once you are on the mountain, there is an earthquake followed by avalanches, and you slide down towards the river, which is in flood. You manage by grabbing hold of trees. Finally you reach the desert, where a sandstorm is blowing up.*

In earlier versions the 'Journey' also went through a town before reaching the desert. I preferred to dispense with the town, since it is a built environment, linked to architectural forms around which we construct a language different from the language of *minnages* [see page 109] that we use for natural movement. So we work on the town at a different stage, again going from daybreak to sunset, in a state of calm and then in a state of revolution. These improvisations in extreme conditions lead students to experience situations which they have never lived through, performing very difficult movements which they have never achieved in their own lives, enabling the body to go to the limit of its capabilities in an imagined state of urgency.

### *Identification with the natural world*

The third phase of work with the neutral mask consists of identifications. Of course we do not mean total identification, which would be worrying, but rather playing at identification. I ask