

Worksheet 4:

Counter Mask

Counter Mask is when an actor plays the opposite emotion to the one written on a mask. For example if a mask expresses happiness and an actor, through their physicality expresses sadness, then they are using Counter Mask. The technique heightens communication of emotions to the audience and develops a powerful counter-relationship between the physicality and inner expressions of an actor.

Start this worksheet by watching the video [Mask Techniques #4 Counter Mask](#).



Counter Mask - practice

On the left side of a piece of paper, or your computer screen, make a list of a range of emotions. Try to have at least ten different emotions in your list, although you can have more. To start you off, you could choose happiness and fear.

Beside each one, write what you think would be the opposite emotion. Some are easier than others. For example, the opposite emotion of happiness is sadness, but what is the opposite emotion of fear, or anger? (You might need to do some research!)

You can do the next bit on your own, although it is great fun to share – either with a friend, in class or on Zoom, Facetime or Skype. Pick the first emotion from your list and form a ‘facial mask’ which expresses this emotion. This is when you ‘mould’ your face into a ‘mask’, a static expression, which must remain the same whatever you do with your body language, gesture, stance and physicality. Now try standing (stance) in a way that expresses the opposite emotion to your ‘facial mask’. Introduce your hands and body language. Keep trying until you find the most effective ways of using physicality to communicate the opposite emotion to your facial mask. (You might need to practice sustaining a facial mask, not allowing your face to change; it’s not all that easy!)

Counter Mask – in performance

Using your list to give you ideas, write the description of a short scene in which one or more of your Counter Mask ideas could be communicated to an audience. A character who is excited because he's just won the lottery (a mask which expresses excitement) but at the same time seems like he couldn't care less or is bored (what your physicality is expressing) because he's tired from a long night of celebrating.

Try performing this to your friends or in class.

Choose other contrasting emotions on your list and devise a scene for each. Perform them to each other and talk about the effectiveness of using *Counter Mask* as a technique.



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