

Barbe-à-Papa Metamorphoses into Emmet

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Just as the seasons, human activities have their cycles. This autumn, as a fresh load of new BA students joins the university after the warm summer holiday, the English Department Theatre Group too will effectuate its metamorphosis. The group's name "Barbe-à-Papa" started very much as a joke. A member of the original cast thought we might raise money by getting a cheap candyfloss machine on eBay and setting up a stall on the Place du Cirque. Awkwardly, although we never got the machine the name stuck and has remained, unquestioned, for the past seven years.

During that time, the group evolved as the natural flow of students completing their degrees left and new students from different faculties came to join the English Department Theatre Group to create new projects. The group has always been a mixture of people from various backgrounds, with English accents ranging from Indian to Swiss German, including French, Greek, Polish, and Romanian. Recently though, it has come to present more ambitious and interdisciplinary projects which have granted it greater recognition from an academic standpoint. Since 2011, the group has been part of the Activités Culturelles, and since 2013 it has been officially recognised as an association by the rectorate. It was therefore time to shift from the playful innocence of "Barbe-à-Papa" to something more apt to summon the complex matrix of play, focus, physical practice, and diction involved in the workshops and performances of our shows.

Emmet, a contraction for Embodied Metaphors, is the group's new name. It reflects both the collective nature of the group's dynamic and the work involved in the serious gaming that makes for skilled acting practice. Having introduced the group's new name I will now proceed with a short summary of last year's project before moving on to the new and exciting experiments that await us for the academic year 2013-2014.

The Blake Project

“Blake’s Revolution,” our adaptation of William Blake’s narrative poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1794), met an enthusiastic audience of about 350 people both in Geneva and Lausanne in April and May earlier this year. It ran for two dates at the Cité Bleue Theatre, then moved on to La Grange de Dorigny for a date at the Fécule Theatre Festival (Fécule = Festival des Cultures UNIL et EPFL), before ending with a final date in Carouge at the Festival d’ateliers-théâtre.

The show was a rich collaborative experience meant to summon the smithy of Blake’s imagination through a palette of media including acting, music (a rock band), contemporary dance, and video animation. By integrating the discourses of Blake’s contemporaries, notably Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and Edmund Burke, the show sought to develop the dialectical tension of Blake’s spiritual and moral revolution, connecting it to the French political Revolution and the advent of democracy. This project was filmed while still a work-in-progress and the making-of documentary is available on the group’s website.



Artistic Intentions 2013-2014

This year the Emmet workshops will be structured on a semester-by-semester basis. This means that rather than presenting a single, year-long project we will be working on two productions. The fall semester will be devoted to an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* while the spring semester will develop creative work based on the American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

To register for the workshops and keep informed about our work, check the Activités Culturelles and Emmet websites (www.a-c.ch; www.emmet.ch).