

Program - Landscapes of Laughter

Jos Houben

What bodies and what movements from everyday life give rise to a particular style of comedy? Childlike play in the sandbox, or imitation of adults, opens the door to the joyful mockery of the buffoon; imbalance and falling invite slapstick; playing with offbeat and misunderstanding leads us to the clown...

What are the underlying laws that govern these different theatrical languages, from which we can build scenes? What texts can enrich and support these explorations?

Over the course of each workshop, we will journey through several territories of laughter. Starting from physical play, we will discover the driving forces behind each style and establish the codes that govern them.

Through improvisation, we will then search for situations that allow us to begin to write short scenes.

This workshop offers a series of in-depth “masterclasses” on the principles and engines of performance in different styles of comic theatrical writing.

1/ Clown, absurd, nonsense :

26 - 30 January 2026 - 5 days - 25 hours

The great pleasure of naïveté: misunderstanding, confusion, dissonance, rule-breaking...

2/ Slapstick, stunts, accidents :

30 Mars - 3 April 2026 - 5 days - 25 hours

A world of accidents, fights, and chase scenes.

Extreme clumsiness sometimes reveals the most surprising virtuosity.

3/ Commedia dell'arte and Bouffon :

4 and 8 May 2026 - 5 days - 25 hours

The highest levels of performance.

Here we touch on the tragic core of comedy: the timeless human comedy, with its obsessions, deceptions, and hypocrisies; followed by the darker, mysterious realm of mockery, the grotesque, and madness.

The workshops are conceived as a continuous journey through the comic universe and its many styles and variations. However, it is also entirely possible to take part in one or two modules separately.

We will continue to develop our programme of workshops and masterclasses in the months and years to come. We will also be offering a new multidisciplinary training collaboration with Jos Houben, Emily Wilson, and Oria Puppo: **La Panoplie!** We would be delighted to hear your thoughts on future workshops. To this end, we have created a short survey. Thank you in advance for your feedback!

SONDAGE

Training Objectives:

Participants will learn to:

- Identify, analyse, and classify different human behaviours that form the basis of these theatrical languages: imitation, naïveté, imbalance, exaggeration, distortion, caricature, transgression, pretence, and more.
- Through physical preparation classes, participants will become familiar with the states, movements, and gestures specific to each comic register.
- Working from improvisation, and while respecting the constraints imposed by each style, participants will elevate their performances to the appropriate level. In this way, they will discover situations that inspire the writing of short scenes and texts.
- For each style, physical preparation will involve:
 - **Clown:** following, being open to the audience, accepting everything, jokes and gags.
 - **Slapstick:** accidents, timing, falls, simple acrobatics.
 - **Absurd:** coded and formalised behaviour; arbitrary rule changes; constructed spaces, doors, labyrinths.
 - **Nonsense:** abrupt shifts in style, inappropriate behaviour; structuring chaos; inventing vocabularies and languages.
 - **Commedia dell'arte:** masked performance; attitudes and gestures; tempo and rhythm; emotional states and scales; gags and *lazzi*.
 - **Bouffon:** the body of childhood; imitation, exaggeration, and mockery of others; involuntary and voluntary transgressions

Teaching Methods

- Demonstrations of comic physical language
- Guided and open practical exercises
- Improvisation
- Creative work alone and in small groups
- Collective analysis and personalised feedback
- Individual and group exercises
- Occasional theoretical input (references, texts, videos, comic dramaturgy)

Target Audience

- Professional performing artists or those in the process of professionalisation, from all disciplines
- Visual artists / scenographers / designers
- Technicians
- Directors / dramaturges / writers
- Teachers

Prerequisites

A minimum of two years of stage experience

Monitoring and Assessment Methods

- Attendance sheets
- Certificates of attendance
- Self-assessment
- Discussion circles
- Satisfaction questionnaire

Accessibility

Our training programmes are accessible to people with disabilities. Please contact us so that we can adapt intake arrangements and training conditions if necessary.

Disability contact: Emily Wilson
adm.panoplie@gmail.com

Practical Information

- **Hours:** 10:30–13:00 / 14:00–16:30
- **Address:** Plan L - 11 rue Saint-Luc (métro Barbès or Château Rouge)
- **Length:** Each workshop lasts 5 days (25 hours) - The total training program is 15 days long (75 hours)
- **Maximum number of participants:** 20

Pricing:

1 single workshop: 480€ self financed (payment plan possible) / 1000€ if paid by AFDAS, France Travail etc.

2 workshops: 900€ self financed (payment plan possible) / 1900€ if paid by AFDAS, France Travail etc.

3 workshops: 1200€ self financed (payment plan possible) / 2800€ if paid by AFDAS, France Travail etc.

To participate:

Please send a letter of introduction to houbenwilson@gmail.com

Registration deadline:

- 15 January 2026 (clown and absurd)
- 15 March 2026 (slapstick and stunts)
- 20 April 2026 (commedia and bouffon)

Jos Houben is a theatre director, actor, and teacher, internationally recognised as an expert in the field of comedy. He has performed his iconic solo show *The Art of Laughter* all over the world for more than twenty years. He is frequently invited to work as a comedy consultant on major productions in the UK, Germany, and Belgium. Jos is also a director of opera and musical theatre, and has been a teacher at the École Jacques Lecoq for the past 25 years.

Contact information

Training provider:

La Panoplie – currently in the process of Qualiopi certification for training activities.

Training activity registration number: 11 93 11903 93 – registered with the Prefect of the Île-de-France region

Administrative contact: adm.panoplie@gmail.com / 06 71 66 91 29 (Emily Wilson)

Quality Control

This training is organised as part of our continuous improvement process in order to meet Qualiopi criteria: clear objectives, assessment of learning outcomes, adaptation to participants' needs, and a certificate of attendance issued at the end of the workshop.

>> S'inscrire