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Michael Chokhov

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USING OUR METHOD
THE OBJECTIVE
THE IMAGINATION
TECHNIQUE OF THE REHEARSAL
ACTING AS A PROFESSION

Moscow Art Theatre

USING OUR METHOD:

All our exercises are permeating into our work. Perhaps the absorbing process has been slow for you, but it is going on. If you will compare yourselves with what you have done in the first year of our work, you will see how differently you do it. You have developed your taste and your approach to the problems, everything. In your dark moments you may think we have lost our time in the school, but you must realize that you are somehow blind, and cannot follow your own growth. You have developed such eyes and ears, such sensitive things which other actors would be blind to. Therefore, all our exercises are essentially important and must be taken as hungry people take food. You must take them with the full activity, as if they are so necessary for you that without them you would die.

If you stop your development now, you will not belong to the future theatre because you are not yet ready for it, and you will have lost your connection with the old theatre. So, if you stop now, you will be somehow half-beings - let us be brave enough to go through all the way until we come to the point where you and the audience will recognize that this is

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a group which intends to get some things which are there and yet not there. Part of this going on is taking the exercises and doing them with full activity.

When I was in the Moscow Art Theatre, I gave lessons to old actors and actresses - famous people in Moscow. They were my students, and they took these lessons just as though they were boys and girls taking their beginning lessons. They are great artists because they are able to be taught, and this ability to be taught - independent of age or fame - is the ability you must awaken in yourselves. It is a great pleasure to be able to be taught by yourselves or others throughout your whole life - it is the way to grow.

THE OBJECTIVE:

In taking the objective you forgot one important thing - you must take it with your whole being - then you will get pleasure when you use your legs, your arms, and every part of yourself for taking and fulfilling the objective. Listen to the exercise as if for the first time: I want to persuade somebody about something. Take it with your whole being - the whole being is going to "persuade." Your body can be filled with a psychological state - your finely developed body.

THE IMAGINATION:

For an artist all the points must be merged into one, and to exercise means to approach that point. Take the

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objective and then drop it, consciously. In the creative mood everything will come to you, but during exercises we must develop the ability to take and to drop the objective, for example. Fulfill the same objective in many ways. Consider how active your imagination was. Could you have done the exercise without imagination? Realize consciously that you are using your imagination - the more consciously we use it, the more powerful it will become. Now impose on yourself a definite picture in your imagination. Take it as if it is your own - don't cling to your own imagination but accept what is given to you. If you want to enrich your imagination, you must accept everything.

TECHNIQUE OF THE REHEARSAL:

To take freely again something which you have already done, this is the technique of the rehearsal. Each day and every day it must be, as it were, a different new thing - this is the secret of the successful rehearsal. Every day with a new feeling...how interesting everything becomes.

Don't confuse the moment of rest and the moment of work - this confusion destroys both. The inability to define kills both things - really rest, then images will come of themselves, and this is already the creative state. Don't be half-working and half-resting.

ACTING AS A PROFESSION:

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When you really get all the points of our Method, you will be able to fulfill them simply, naturally and easily - you will really have the feeling of what it means to have a profession. To be specialists in something - this is of incomparable value in life. Of course, all of us are concerned with the political situation, for example, but we are absolute dilettantes in the most important events in our life - this has killed in us the ability to be specialists. We accept this dilettante attitude towards everything, so we don't know what it means to know and master one thing - to have a light and to know where we are aiming it.

The Method in the theatre - whichever one it may be - is the way to awaken this desire to be specialists which lives in us. To have an aim, to have a vision, to be led by certain definite things. It is just the same when a woman wants to have a child - all her powers are concentrated on a certain vision to have a child. Why do all poets and artists appreciate the picture of the Madonna with the Child? Because it is the archetype of the ability to concentrate on something - to serve and to be led at the same time. To become the mother, or to become the professional artist - it is a profound thing to become professional in some one thing. It is just as important as to have a child. But this business of scattering prevents us - we must recognize it, and reject it, and stop being scattered. What does it mean to have the ideal of becoming

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professional? To know something and to be able to do it fully,
this is the whole aim of the Method.