

NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE THEATRE - IMAGINING THE PLAY
ROLE OF DIRECTOR, AUTHOR, DESIGNER
FLYING OVER THE PLAY - INCORPORATION OF IMAGES
THE METHOD AND THE IMAGINATION

To a certain extent, in a new way, we have to understand many ideas about the theatre, and to understand these ideas we have to work in a new direction. By working in this direction we will be able to understand many things we need in our work. But we must repeat very often the same things, and you must take them as if you are hearing them for the first time.

The theatre has never been quite independent enough from the author, from the designer, from famous actors, from the time and fashion. Therefore, actors and actresses have acquired the habit of thinking, "I have to act my part, well if possible, and other things will happen of themselves. Somebody will design the costumes and the settings." Many bad habits develop, and many things which we depend on we leave for other people to do. Therefore, for such professional actors and actresses it is a very dull and easy profession.

We have to find another approach to the theatre, and another understanding of it in which each member of the theatre - actor, director, designer, or author - will each be responsible for everyone. For instance, if you are an actor you must create something about the play as an author or a designer. This does not mean that you must write the lines with the author, but you must be with him with your full activity, and you must know what the author has written, not only for you, but for

your partners. This must be, in a real, true, and deep sense of the word, a collaboration. Therefore we must start our new kind of exercises with an approach which will give us the possibility to work upon a small sketch, or many, many sketches in which each will have a part, and work in different directions as scene designer, author, director, and so on. We must develop in ourselves this feeling for everyone who is around us. Such a feeling can be the first step towards the new understanding of the theatre, and with such an understanding perhaps we will be able to create a really new kind of theatre. The task is very big, and the problems are difficult, and the future is very far. But we must start.

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IMAGINING THE PLAY:

The Fishing Scene:

The first thing you must do is to imagine everything that the director or the designer will tell you. In order to hear, not with your brain or intellect, but with your imagination, you must train yourself to hear everything with your imagination. You must turn everything you hear into a picture. We have done some exercises in the past for the development of the imagination. In beginning to work on the plot or scenario, nothing must be fixed. The scenario is not finished in our profession. We must get a beautiful form but it must be movable. Nothing can remain fixed like a stone for us - everything must be flexible. Even beautiful moments

must be subject to change.

Imagine a fishing village in an imaginary place. Imagine the families living in this little village. Try to imagine the people and especially the strange psychology of such people who have always to deal with the sky, with the pictures which rise on the horizon. Each wind has a special meaning for them. They must listen to the changes of the wind in a special way, in order to read their meaning: which wind is bad, which is not so bad, and which is bringing tragedy. The meaning of each cloud. Try to imagine this kind of life. Then try to imagine the fishermen who went to sea but have not come back.

Two days and two nights the families of these fishermen have been waiting and waiting, in vain. In storm, and wind, and rain for two days and nights. Almost without hope. Try to look along the coast and see the wives and children, and the young bride, and the sisters, who are walking and standing about. It is already the end of the second helpless day. They are looking at the horizon, listening to every sound which they try to catch from the stormy, windy weather. They try to hear in the wind the voices of their men, until they almost have the illusion that they are hearing voices.

One of the figures is that of a very young girl. Imagine her tragic face and movements. She is waiting for her bridegroom. Perhaps her young life will be broken. She knows what the life of a fisherman is - every day, every night, at

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every moment some tragedy can happen. We see her at the moment when she understands this fully and she realizes that for her life may be over. Felicity must create this girl.

Now you must see another figure. A young woman - a wife waiting for her husband. She knows very well what it means to be the wife of a fisherman. She seems perhaps quieter than the young girl, but her experience of the tragedy is none the less keen. This wife will be played by Jocelyn.

There are many other figures - each enveloped in this tragic atmosphere which is suspended like a heavy stone above them. Then we see a very strange figure: an old, old woman, strangely dressed, walking in a strange manner. It is not easy to see what is happening to her - is she waiting for someone? Is she mad? Is she wise? An old, old woman who has had a long life of tragedy, which has bent her in her psychology and her body. She no longer belongs to any family - she is alone. She is the condensed embodiment of the tragic life of the village - a figure which is no longer quite normal.

This old, strange woman always appears on the coast before a tragedy takes place. She knows something more than the others. She has a special feeling - almost second sight - for the tragic life of the village. What she does is strange but good, what she speaks is strange but necessary. She helps everyone, comforts them, and gives solace to everybody. Nobody knows how she lives, who gives her food, where she goes when everyone is in the village. She appears only at the

crucial moment, and helps in a special way. She is the result of all the tragic life of the village.

The watchers begin to see something on the horizon - perhaps some of the boats are coming back. It takes hours for the little boat to fight the waves. Is it joy that the people feel? This changes because it can be clearly seen that only one boat is coming back. Who will be in the boat? Try to imagine the feelings of the group.

Imagine the moment when the boat reaches the shore and only one fisherman steps out of the boat - the husband of Jocelyn. This one fisherman has experienced a tremendous fight with the stormy elements of the sea. He has come back alone. He knows what this means. He is alive, but this is perhaps the most tragic moment for him, because he knows that all the other men are dead. Imagine his complicated state: bringing enormous joy to his wife and a tragic blow to everyone else. The joy of the wife is enormous and the tragedy for everybody else is enormous. Her state is endless joy and endless tragedy at the same time.

Imagine the reactions of everybody else. What is the state of the young girl who has lost her bridegroom? What has happened to everyone else? Will they go home or will they continue to stand on the shore? Perhaps for some of them there is no longer any reason to go home. This is one big wave of tragedy. Perhaps for many years the life of the village will be quiet, and again a new wave of tragedy will strike it.

We must elaborate this sketch and work it out. How can this be done? You must organize yourselves. The actors must be interested in every moment: in the preparation of the costumes and sets, etc. The director, Deirdre, author, Paul, and designers, Gretel and Beatrice, must create the sketch in a new way. You must all love the sketch, and love each other, and do everything yourselves.

ROLE OF DIRECTOR, AUTHOR, DESIGNER:

Let us imagine we are creating a new type of theatre, a new type of director. The director's position in the theatre of the future will be more important and more difficult than in the old theatre. The director in the new theatre must be the soul of everybody and everything. He must live with his cast, with the author and designer, and he must know and feel each movement in their souls. The director is a conductor in the right sense of this word. He must combine all these streams in such a way that they will come organically together.

The author of the new theatre - in our sense - will be a person who creates the words for the play, not in the solitude of his study, but working with and among the cast. Our author is an actor, a designer, etc. He must know what it means to stand on the stage and utter the words. If he is an actor as well as an author, he will know what words he must write down, and what words are possible for the actor to say. The director and the actors must be able to tell him what they wish to do, and the author must understand and give the actors the words for their purpose. In the future it must be like that.

The theatre is the theatre - it is a great power but it must find itself. We must know what it means to be a member of the theatre - it doesn't mean to be the servant of the designer or the author. In the future the right impulse for the author and designer will come from the actors and directors - they are the heart of the theatre. You will see how and why this is possible and necessary.

The director must "bear" the play in his imagination, with the help of the designer, author, and actors. He must always be two steps in advance of his cast, and therefore he must work with the sketch and prepare for each rehearsal. The director's first step is to take into his heart the members of his cast. This is a reality, not a sentimental suggestion. He must do this first. He must lead them. This can be done by asking questions. This is the very first step. Everybody - actors, author, designer - must begin to "imagine" - never to "think." To think in abstract forms or to think in pictures - this is the difference between scientific and artistic work.

FLYING OVER THE PLAY- INCORPORATION OF IMAGES?

You must imagine the sketch from the beginning to the end, and do this again and again, finding new images. By doing this you will find many details, moods, and situations which will tell you what you have to know. The director must ask his actors to see this or that moment in the play. When they have seen it, they may be asked to incorporate it. This is the task the director must give them - this "touching" of

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the reality, but it must be done very carefully. The director must fly over the play and touch some places. The director, designer, and author are collaborators from the very beginning.

Much is going on in the imagination of the director, but he must ask questions. Sometimes you, as the director, will ask the actors to see a certain moment, and when they have tried to do so, then the director has the right to ask them to try to incorporate what they have seen in their imagination - but very lightly. This is the task the director must give them - this touching of the reality. You must give this very carefully. If you ask them to show too much, they will show you too much which will be wrong. You must fly around in asking your questions. For instance, do you see such a moment in such an atmosphere in this surrounding, etc.?

Very small movements affect a very great change sometimes. The alterations can be so subtle, but they can give an absolutely different impression. It is wrong to think that we must change the impression by very strong means only.

By creating an image or a role you will get a special feeling for this role. You must feel that you are a specialist for this role.

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THE METHOD AND THE IMAGINATION:

All the sketches are very different. But the Method is the same. It is very flexible and its application depends

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upon the play and the character of the director and actors. The method is always the same: to create something from nothing in our imagination. This point is unchangeable. Only your imagination will help you.

Criticism of first rehearsal:

Deirdre: As director you must find the "form" of this scene. You must prepare alone these forms and moments in the scene. We need much time to awaken our imaginations because we cannot at the present time imagine things quickly and react to them. The stronger our imagination is, the more we will reap later on. Through our imagination we will escape an intellectual approach, and consequently will avoid mechanical efforts to act without having any impulse to act. Our imagination will give us the impulse to act and will lead us between intellectual and mechanical acting. Therefore, don't be afraid that you are giving your cast too much time to imagine things. The director must see moments in the play which he questions the cast about. The next step is to incorporate images which the cast may see.

Additional characters in the scene:

Eleanor's image is that of a hard, middle-aged, bitter woman. Gretel's image is that of a woman of thirty who loses her second husband in this tragedy. She has a sick child at home. Jocelyn's image is a woman about twenty-five, married for three years, with one small child. John's image is of a strong, silent man of about thirty. Anna's

image is of a girl of thirteen or fourteen who loses her elder brother in the tragedy; she has kept house for him. Catherine's image is of a boy of ten or twelve, in love with the adventure of going to sea. Felicity's image is of a sad, lonely figure: a bride of eighteen, who has come from another village.

General advice:

1. The cast must follow the director with the imagination only.
2. The feelings can be awakened through means of action, atmosphere, or imagination.
3. The director need not use the results of some of the work at once. Perhaps he can use it later on in the play.
4. Repeat each exercise, each moment, many times until a good result has been reached. Meditate upon it each time.
5. It is wrong to ask your actors to act at once - they will only lie. Begin by exploring, discovering, imagining, and doing.
6. The actor's approach is with the body and the feelings - not the intellect.
7. Ask your body what it can tell you; each muscle will tell you something.
8. Try to find the spine of the sketch. This can be done by finding the most important points in its development.
9. Always jot things down or draw them because they will add to your material. In later stages of your work you will be very happy to have these notes because they represent your first impressions and will inspire you.
10. When you discover that your body can speak to you, you will be greatly enriched as an actor. It will no longer be an enemy as it is with most actors today, but it will inspire you.