

Lessons to Teachers

LESSON III

THE SENSES  
CONCENTRATION  
THE JOY OF MOVEMENT  
GESTURE AND SPEECH

Stanislavsky

THE SENSES:

Don't speak about the sense of smell, etc. Tell the students that we are concentrating on the eye and ear and will not mention the other senses now because we find that, in working with the senses of eye and ear, we will awaken in the soul of the student and necessity for real attention. Explain, once and for all, that we base our lessons consciously and on purpose on these two senses because we find them enough for the time being.

CONCENTRATION:

If you give the students a pause in which to concentrate, you must sustain the pause with the feeling that you are with them in what they are doing. This is a very important part of the Method.

You must feel that you are flowing toward the object of your concentration. This whole invisible person is in movement. When you really concentrate, you will get a sense of expansion. You will feel that you are a larger person than

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you are physically, as if you become a person two or three sizes bigger than your ordinary physical self, and that you are flowing with all your being toward the object of your concentration. Whether it is a physical thing or an image that you are concentrating on, your whole invisible person will be in movement.

What is concentration? It is not clear enough to tell your pupils that they must identify themselves with an object. Perhaps they will understand this after much work, but by that time they will be so highly developed that they could become teachers themselves. Such a definition is not good. It is too abstract for the pupils. It is better to show them twenty times over some simple thing with your hands so that they can see and understand. Show them. It is better than to give the pupils such an abstract thing that they cannot understand what they are doing. It is not necessary to be aggressive. You must find your own manner of serving.

You must really understand each idea singly - not as a formless mess. Then you will know how to convey your ideas in simple, clear-cut forms.

You must always make quite sure that all the pupils understand before you go on to the next point. It is better to repeat a thing four or five times, as long as you are sure that all the pupils understand. Only then can you go further.

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This is very important. It is absolutely essential to know that you are understood. To be as definite as a sword. There is no half way.

Your manner of speech must be direct. Now only is what you say important, but how you say it.

The use of the will in concentration is very important. Don't tell the students that certain exercises are difficult. Try to avoid the term - try to encourage them.

The tragedy of Stanislavsky was that he had no understanding of what it meant to be a teacher. He was never able to find the way in which to give his knowledge to others. He was a great inventor, but as a teacher and director, he was very ungifted. He could demonstrate, but he could not teach.

#### THE JOY OF MOVEMENT:

As actors and actresses, we must rejoice in the possession of our physical faculties. We must experience joy in the use of our hands, arms, body, etc. Without this appreciation and realization of the body and its many possibilities, we cannot really play as artists. Compare the body without life and the body with life. Meditate on this. See how helpless the dead person is then contrast it with a living person. You should feel a flow of joy because you are alive. Your body will feel full of life. That is what

you must give from the stage. Your life. No less. That is art; to give all you have. And what have you? Your life - nothing more. And to give life means to feel life throughout your whole being.

You must know your material so well that it is like a panorama in your mind. When it is as clear as that, then you have the right to teach.

#### GESTURE AND SPEECH:

Try to speak with the hands and body. The gestures you do transform themselves into your speech. You must find very simple gestures, which must afterwards find their way into your speech. English people are so rigid that their speech is absolutely without gesture. They speak only with their brains. That is why actors on the English stage just speak and move as in everyday life, but that is not acting, and it is not art. That type of theatre only requires people brave enough to get up on the stage. We must release and uncover and break down this rigid habit.

Now, in broad, defined gestures, try to form the whole thought. Then try giving every word a gesture. Don't try to illustrate. Only will. It is absolutely opposite to illustration - that is not good. Only powerful gestures of will are needed.

Gestures help to convey your meaning to the audience.

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These gestures teach your will to convey your thoughts and feelings, etc. to your pupils or audience. Such gestures are nothing more than a scaffolding, and you will not need them after you have learned how to convey your ideas.

First we must know, then we must forget. We must know and then be. For this aim we need a method because without method it is not possible. To know and then to forget. When we reach this point, then we will be the new type of actor.