

IMAGINING THE PLAY
THE REHEARSAL-FOR-THE-REHEARSAL
PROFESSIONAL WAY OF WORKING

IMAGINING THE PLAY:

Today I want to touch on some psychological moments in the play on the basis of imagination. I will tell you the content of these particular moments, and then you will imagine in waves what can be done, and on the basis of this will you partially incorporate the moment itself.

Nicholas has come from abroad to this provincial town where his mother lives. He comes quite unexpectedly, and when he enters the room where his mother and guests are sitting, he faces a very strange, and for him, unexpected situation. The center of attention of the people in this room is his wife to whom he was secretly married, and nobody has known of it until this moment, at least no one in the room. The girl is very strange in her actions and in her dress, which is strange and brightly colored and tasteless, and she wears an artificial flower in her hair. She appears to be so stupid, almost an idiot, but at times attractive as she radiates a feeling of warm love, sometimes absent-minded, an unusually strong soul.

When Nicholas enters the room he is shocked by this unexpected meeting with his wife, and more than that, he sees his mother is greatly excited, and instead of greeting the son she has not seen for many years, she stands before him like a judge, strong, almost angry, and she says to him,

"Nicholas, before anything else, before you kiss me, tell me, tell your mother, who is this unfortunate girl. Tell me, who is she?" Such an unexpected and unusual meeting strikes even Nicholas, whom nothing in the world can actually touch or make uncertain. This is the moment when he is a little embarrassed by too many unexpected things. After a pause, and in a quiet tone, Nicholas answers his mother, "My lawful wedded wife." He then goes to his wife and speaks tenderly and kindly and says, "This is not the place for you." The girl asks almost in a whisper, "But, can I speak to you alone - at once - I need to so much." He answers, "Not now - later - I cannot just now." He then takes her out of the room.

Imagine as you like, quite freely, but you must remember the content - the meaning of the words. Imagine the following thing: When Nicholas answers, "She is my wife," the mother, who is a very important and influential personage in the town, feels it is too much for her that her son, who is a hero in her mind, a genius, whose career and everything is in the future, should have married this beggar girl. She almost faints for the moment, as she has lost her ability to deal with the situation.

Don't ask yourselves too many questions about why Nicholas has married this girl secretly, why he says she is his wife, why he answers as he does, why the mother is almost

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fainting and has lost control of the situation, etc. Take it as a picture drawn by some painter. You would not ask the painter about it, but you would imagine whatever you like about this picture, until you understand it because you have added so many things to it from yourself. You will get the satisfaction by doing things yourselves to the picture. If the director gives you a picture, if there are some gaps, fill them as you like for today, tomorrow something will be added, and so we shall come to the real performance where everything is justified, clarified, and bound together. The real actor never asks very much and is always satisfied with mere hints - everything else comes out of his imagination. Such kind of actor is never obliged to act so, and not so - and this ability and love of freedom remain always. This is again the question of interpretation. Today I have added out of my imagination such things. Today I acted like that, tomorrow like that. Certain directions will always be given by the director because he is the director, but certain freedom must always be there.

Scene between Nicholas and Mother:

Imagine and improve it and make it more and more profound. Create more and more interesting human psychology. Make it as deep as possible on the basis of your imagination which is unlimited. Collaboration requires that we see our friends in the same parts, and improve ourselves on the basis

of observing them.

I would suggest during the whole rehearsal you be concentrated on the task - if you will keep this mood you will get much more in a shorter time. Each time clearer and clearer. Even this small scene is like a riddle and there are many things to be discovered, and this pleasure to discover it is what I want you to experience - to discover quite freely - all these bridges, states, transitions and everything - a very interesting riddle.

Small additions: Actually in the room there are other people beside the mother, Nicholas and Martha. These people make the whole situation much more complicated psychologically for the mother, because now everybody in the town knows that Nicholas, the hero, the genius, has married this beggar girl. When the mother asks Nicholas who this girl is, she feels that the people standing in the room are like a burning flame, like a red hot iron burning her and it is torture for her. When the answer comes, "My wife...", she faints inwardly because the situation is hopeless at the moment; it cannot be saved. The same with Nicholas; the people embarrass him because he despises everyone around him but for his mother, whom he loves so deeply. He knows that by saying these words he actually wounds her heart.

Please make this psychological addition to the tragedy. Among the people in the room is the Governor, who has

many ideas about youth. He is lost in his ideas, therefore, he has a feeling that he understands everything, but he does not understand anything. He is present here and we see him in our imagination making a tremendous effort to understand this situation - to penetrate into the psychology of everybody, and we see him fail in these attempts.

In this room we see the spy who came just five minutes before Nicholas has entered, and he has announced that Nicholas has arrived in the town, to the great astonishment of Nicholas's mother and the others. The spy has tried to explain how and why Nicholas has married this strange girl in another town where he met her, but his explanation is very strange, and very vague.

The spy hates Nicholas for this marriage, because the idea of the spy is to get Nicholas entirely in his power for his social-political aims, and he knows that Nicholas, having so many psychological difficulties and complications inside, is always drawn back from this social-political activity. Therefore, he despises Nicholas as a person who has a personal life, and his whole attempt to explain why and how Nicholas has married this girl was nothing but sarcasm on his part. It was not a real explanation, it was something very unpleasant and makes the scene very intricate.

Before Nicholas enters, the spy hears Nicholas's steps and says, "Here he comes." At this moment begins the

finest part of the play. The spy's attitude of mind and his presence is most painful to the mother, and it becomes still more painful and torturing and difficult. Nicholas hates the spy because of his philosophical rudeness - he is too straightforward + too rude for Nicholas who is too complicated and never straight - Nicholas senses the danger of the spy's presence with the girl, for through some word or exclamation from the spy, the beggar girl may be laughed to scorn. Nicholas will never allow this.

Imagine it as a picture in which you have to fill the psychological gaps quite freely.

There are two more people in the room - Lisa, the ward of the mother, who is very attractive, and her fiance. The girl is attracted to Nicholas because he is a hero, a genius, and as a person he has such depths that not even his mother can penetrate his soul, and this secret of the human being attracts the girl to him - she loves him. She does not know that he is married, and she herself wanted to be married to forget her own love for Nicholas. When Nicholas comes unexpectedly, her whole love for him appears again even stronger than before, and when she hears the words, "She is my wife," to this tremendous passionate love comes the added hatred. She becomes at once like a flaming torch - passionate love and tremendous hatred at the same time. Her fiance sees everything, understands everything, but he is not

able to interpret the events which are going on around him. For him the conclusion must be clean, clever, without any personal interpretation.

I want you to be more conscious of two things: First, the very elemental rule on the stage - do not hide each other. Second, you forget your words, therefore, you can have so much inside of you, but it cannot come out.

Addition: After this dramatic moment I want you to make a humorous act, but it must not be obvious. The Governor finally understands that this is the moment when he must leave the room, and he must be generous enough to understand. We have to finish this sketch with the Governor's exit.

THE REHEARSAL-FOR-THE-REHEARSAL:

I must remind you that in our rehearsals-for-rehearsals we must always continue the work we start in the theatre. If we have a task to do, it must be continued, and next time we have to be ready for this next thing. You have to imagine it the whole time so that next time it will flourish like a flower.

Addition: The servant has announced that Nicholas has arrived and is coming. This announcement makes everybody unexpected in every sense - Nicholas from abroad - he is here, coming into this room. For the mother it is like a thunderbolt. For Lisa it is the moment when her whole life flames up. For the fiancee it is quite clear thought and danger. For the

Governor, what does it mean? For the beggar girl it means something quite different. The girl is not an idiot at all; she is much more clever than anybody here, but she has strange abilities. Her heart is so big and so full of love for everybody and especially for Nicholas, that she is like a faithful dog waiting for the master. She has known in her heart that he would come.

Everybody, in his own way according to his own psychology prepares to meet Nicholas. Steps are coming nearer and nearer and the spy appears, in a certain shameless way, and nobody knows him, the gentleman in spectacles. To the mother he says, "Allow me to introduce myself - I am your son's best friend." To Lisa, "Ah, Miss Elizabeth - how happy I am to meet you again - I trust you have not forgotten your tutor. Remember how you used to call me that before you came back?" It is evident that Lisa knew him abroad, but she is astonished no less than the others.

There is another person in the room - a former undergraduate student. Because of his political activity he has devoted his young life to this work. He is entirely absorbed in political ideas. We call him the idealist because his plan is to create a new social life; to a certain extent Utopia, just as the spy is also very active in the political life - his Utopia is something which the gentleman in spectacles hates no less than he hates the personal life and psy-

chological life of Nicholas. The spy - this gentleman in spectacles - actually hates everybody for some reason or other.

After the spy appears and has introduced himself to everybody and reminded Lisa of their association abroad, he sees the idealist sitting quietly in the corner, and this is the point where the spy in his turn is struck by meeting this enemy here in this room so unexpectedly. This is the only moment when we see that he, being an absolutely shameless person, has lost for a moment his poise, his balance, and he attempts to be nonchalant in hiding his surprise and shock. But instead of saying in a light way, "Hello," he feels that his hand and his expression make a different gesture - one which is threatening, and he is lost entirely. His evil nature threatens instead of being able to hide his real feelings. After this there will be a pause - the pause means that here there will be a long soliloquy of the spy who tries to explain who this beggar girl is, before the arrival of Nicholas. During this pause, imagine the dreadful impression that the people in the room get from the shameless psychology of this person, especially the mother. The spy tells them about the beggar girl in the style of a sarcastic, cynical anecdote. It is a shameless explanation of Nicholas's psychological connection with the girl. Try to realize all these gaps which can be filled. Try to imagine how to fill

the gaps out of your imagination.

Addition: At the moment when Nicholas leaves the room with his wife, Lisa quite unexpectedly shouts, "Nicholas," and in this one word she betrays herself. This shout is another unexpected shock to everybody. This is a new personal psychological development or drama as it were. Nicholas's reaction is that he stops, and actually by this stopping he emphasizes Lisa's cry, and as it were says to everybody, "Yes, there is a reason for this girl to shout like that." He is fearless, and in a certain way, cynical. And then he leaves the room. A heavy weight like a heavy stone falls on everybody after this. During this interval the spy takes the idealist aside and says, "I need you badly - tomorrow is set aside for district leaders' reports. I shall expect you at three." The idealist replies, "I shall not come, nor am I under any obligation to report." The spy says, "Then I shall pay you a visit." Conspiracy. The spy uses the heavy pause for this.

Addition: The Governor is old and has a cane, but he tries to give the impression of youthfulness by pretending he does not need his stick.

When the right line is felt, sensed, then the real time, the tempo comes naturally and it is a good sign. You will see later on that if the time to do the scene becomes longer and longer that means the play must be rehearsed.

Addition: As the Governor is about to go out of the room, Nicholas returns, having taken Martha home. The mother asks, "Why did you arrive so late?" Nicholas answers, "The train was wrecked." Imagine the connections between Nicholas and the idealist. They were established abroad and are very complicated. They are very different characters, but they love each other. They admire each other, but intellectually they are not able to understand each other. When they begin to speak about politics, they are enemies, but part of their beings are friends forever. We shall see later on how their connections develop, but in this scene we see the following thing.

The idealist gets up and approaches Nicholas and gives him a tremendous blow so that Nicholas is almost knocked down. It is important because he is a very primitive nature - a bear. He is suffering and, therefore, he hits him because he is suffering, not because he wants to offend him. The next moment Nicholas rushes to him, but when they come face to face, they realize they are good friends. They have to solve this problem not with their fists but in some other way. At the moment Nicholas could have killed him. But in the next moment we see something is going on between them and Nicholas takes his hands away demonstratively. This is the beginning of the friendly talk we will see in later scenes. The idealist leaves the room. Taking his hands back, is in

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this picture for the moment only. For the idealist it is a real blow under which he is psychologically crushed, and he disappears as if he was beaten.

Will you try to elaborate more the appearance of the spy, the appearance of Nicholas, etc.

PROFESSIONAL WAY OF WORKING:

This kind of work - this way of working - I have dreamed of my whole life. If you will continue this work, and believe in your own imagination, and never be unhappy, (if you have to be unhappy, I will tell you), then you will prepare the ground on which the director can afterwards come and plant all the small flowers which will flourish. To have actors who grow and blossom like plants - this is my dream. We will come to other points in our Method, touching different moments, but this must not be forgotten, this professional thing. If something is done, it must be continued and prepared.