

Michael Chekhov

October 22, 1937

IMPROVISATION - THE METHOD
CONTACT

IMPROVISATION: Old and New Students:

1. The scene is in a bank on a very active day. 2. A group of gangsters appears as a group of private people, and after a signal is given by the head of the group they overwhelm the bank employees and steal the money. 3. The police come and the gangsters try to hide themselves. They are disguised as old people. The improvisation is based on objectives. You must get a special kind of power to grasp many objectives, one after another. You must develop this muscle, therefore change your objectives.

We must realize what it means to live in the world of form - psychological or physical form. Everything must be form for us - inner or outer actions must both have form.

In this bank scene the old students must consider themselves helpers for the new students. The scene is merely for the purpose of exercising such things as concentration, imagination, atmosphere, objectives, etc. Repeat the scene; you must train yourselves to be able to change at once the ground on which you are working - this is the meaning of this exercise. You must become flexible enough and powerful enough to find, at the right moment, the right point of the Method for the moment on which you are working.

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In this scene exercise especially contact. By contact we understand the expanding of our circle, and not only being aware of what is going on around us psychologically and physically. You must take suggestions from one another and then there will be intercourse between two actors. Establish a relationship between yourself and others. Real contact is not only between actors, but with the structures and everything on the stage. Be very conscious of what you are in contact with. Take this contact consciously, and it will be your guide - never be vague.

The ability to be concentrated on things which you choose yourself is what we are working for, and not to be concentrated only on things which attract you. To be attracted without will or to be attracted because you want to be attracted - this is a very important difference.

I have seen for the first time today the instinct for playing which children have. If you are able to awaken this instinct it means for the actor's art that you are victors. For the first time I have seen you unafraid in contact, and there was a certain charm which is in the playing of children. Keep this in mind, because it is the best quality you can get. And how are we able to awaken this instinct for playing? Through just such pedantic exercises as we have been doing. The more careful the way, the more conscious, the more you pay attention to all the exercises, such as feeling of ease,

M. Chekhov

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beauty - everything, then the result will be that the flowers will open inside you, and you will get this ability to play as children, but the difference will be that children are doing it quite instinctively, while you will do it with the knowledge which has become again child-like. Therefore we have our school.

This was the first sign this morning, and you must appreciate it as I do. When you were playing, at once contact, feeling of beauty, feeling of ease, and concentration were there because they are all one mysterious, beautiful thing which we call the artist's soul, or ability, or spirit. But we must exercise them separately and pedantically.