

Michael Chekhov

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ATMOSPHERE IN THE THEATRE OF THE FUTURE  
FIRST APPROACH TO THE PLAY  
CREATING IMAGES

ATMOSPHERE IN THE THEATRE OF THE FUTURE:

The value of atmosphere in the theatre of the future. When we are doing exercises for the first time, we do them very superficially. It is always like that, but that is only the first level of understanding. Then, if the effort is made, you will come to the second understanding of each exercise. After you have understood the second meaning of the exercise, you have to make an effort again, and then you will reach the third understanding of the exercise.

Therefore, I think we have to establish a method of how we have to exercise. This method is very simple, but very useful. We must try to like and to love our exercises in details. For example, the movement of the wheel. The exercise we are doing may be very simple, and we know "why," but "how" is very important. Every detail is very important and must be understood and done with love.

The reason why I am speaking about this is because we have started our exercises with atmosphere and have taken a part of a play for the purpose of taking, keeping, and increasing the atmospheres. Try to approach this work with the feeling of a little dog who is trying to find the most comfortable place. At the same time, when you begin to feel that it is a little bit tiring, that is the moment when you

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must be more and more full of energy. That is the secret of improving - to overcome with the will.

FIRST APPROACH TO THE PLAY:

We must approach each new play very simply. Always in this way - not with the eyes and ears and brain, but through the pictures, through the imagination. Don't think that when you have read the play once and have got some images, some chaotic pictures, that it is the finish. You have to work with the images, from the very beginning to the very end.

There is no place for intellectual work. When you are working on the play, you may have to ask some things about it among yourselves. For instance, the question of some of the words in Henry's play; this is a question not of the imagination but of certain misunderstanding. That is the only thing to speak about and to use your intellectual powers for. When you try to explain what your image is, at that moment you kill your image and your ability to act it. If you try to sit for an hour and speak about your images, you will feel that you are very clever, and you will want to speak more and more, then you begin to yawn, and you feel that your body falls asleep.

After such intellectual conversations, if someone should come and ask you to act, you will not be able to. First of all, you will not even be able to want to act, because you have done work which is opposite to an actor's work. You have

awakened the power of the enemy of the actor, which is his ability to delve with his intellect into the play, and the less you will be able to act.

#### CREATING IMAGES:

This is very important. Try to understand this new method, which perhaps is not quite so agreeable to us. It is pleasing to speak about the play because we are able to talk about it easily as we are speaking people; but nobody can act. Therefore, we have to fight with this speaking ability, this illness of the intellect which is everywhere in the world today. We can do this only through the development of our imagination. First of all, we must develop our imagination in connection with the feeling of atmosphere.

First find the various atmospheres in the play, and then try to follow all the images. We must discover, as it were, a "script" of atmospheres in each play. Forgetting the intellect, we must be artists. We must see again and again, from the very beginning to the very end, the whole vision of the play. Let the images arise in your mind's eye, and don't think about them; don't discuss them; don't speak about them to one another. This is the moment of your first love, and, therefore, it is not possible to speak about it. The script is not for the intellect but for the soul. You must create your images. You must seek different images, but for the first moment you must enjoy all your images.

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Our rehearsals will be for the purpose of finding one line, one path, for the whole group and for the play. If you have two images for the same thing, they may conflict - that is a good sign. One of them will include the most important things. In the world of reality, a chair cannot go through a table, but in the world of images, it is possible - they can merge.

We must not allow our intellects to function but must use all our will to call upon our imagination and capture and create images. We must write and re-write the play, creating new atmospheres and images all the time.

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Paul Rogers must be the teacher and must give the exercise in which two partners run from either side of the room and jump together. The purpose of this exercise is to develop a feeling for one another, contact, and to develop our dexterity of movement.