

Michael Chekhov

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IMAGINATION
SETTINGS - MISE EN SCÈNE
CONTACT - ENSEMBLE
ACTOR-DIRECTOR
CENTER - FEELING OF THE WHOLE
Hamlet

IMAGINATION: New Students:

Don't wait until your image comes to you - create it actively. Imagine a big throne room - evening - artificial light. The king and queen are sitting on the thrones, with Hamlet and Ophelia sitting below them. See how they look. Try to use your ability of concentration so that you will be absolutely with this picture, and will not be distracted. See the moment when the poisoner pours the poison into the ear of the sleeping king. See their emotions - we are able to see emotions with our imagination which we cannot see with the physical eye. Now create the next moment - the king rises. See what has happened in the throne room. In our imagination we are not only actors, we are designers, directors, everything. Try to direct this scene, when the courtiers run from the room.

This is a tragic, psychological moment.

SETTINGS * MISE EN SCÈNE:

Create a setting by using the structures. The simple construction you have made must be taken into your whole being, then you will find the relationship to it. You must take it into your actor's will. When you walk over the structures you must feel that this is your world, that here I have steps, here I have a throne, here a chair, etc. The actor must feel the setting absolutely as a whole thing. Acting without any feeling

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for the set is death for the actor. If I have no feeling of harmony and contact, it concerns me very much to know what this harmony is. We must develop this feeling of contact not only with the other persons, but with the structures, with the space around, with the chairs, etc. Concentrate on the mise en scene and take it into your heart.

Each setting is a special world in which we have to create our actor's activity. We walk in a special world in each play. Try to find the contact between yourself and the setting. You will find a certain real pleasure in standing in different parts of the setting - it is a real feeling of joy which will speak to you; a real pleasure to stand on the different levels. The problem is to find and establish contact with each other and with the setting, and to find the moments of climax in the play. You must all be aware of this.

You must understand contact in a very fine way. You must feel the setting. Your world changes with one step up or down. You are quite a different figure, expressing something different, as you move about. It is like music. Your body, your mind, everything must enjoy and inspire these movements, really like music. We must allow ourselves to be like children when we are doing these things. We must have this feeling that we are like children.

CONTACT - ENSEMBLE (ACTOR-DIRECTOR)

This exercise is for developing contact. Don't confuse it by being characters or taking objectives or acting -

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only do it from the point of view of contact. Find yourself in your place through the feeling of ensemble. Remember that you are directors in this work also. Try to realize what you would do if you were directing it. Create this as directors, as actors and as painters. Draw lines and paint figures and find their places in the setting. Then we will feel that music is on the stage. The idea of the exercise is contact - nothing more. Look on the stage as painters and authors, and create again the two scenes you have just done, in your imagination. Everything moving on the stage must be music - your movements must be full of strings binding you together.

First take the moment when suspicion holds the whole crowd in suspense - the moment of explosion when the king leaves the throne room. Then the moment when Hamlet and Horatio are alone together, two solitary figures on the stage. Something has happened to them psychologically. Experience the difference between the throne room full of people, and then these two lonely figures. It must be a continuation of the group scene. You must appreciate every movement - it is inevitable, otherwise it would be a small picture but not part of the whole. It is absolutely necessary for the actor to be a director as well.