

Michael Chekhov

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TEMPO
BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS
TEMPO - FIRE
RADIATION - "I AM"
Alexander Moissi

TEMPO:

Imagine that we have acquired tempo from inner activity, inner life, from increased "I Am." At such times I have noticed one thing which must be understood and exercised. When you are acting in slow tempo, you sometimes develop very interesting psychological patterns, because you have time. When you act quicker, it disappears and there are simply blocks of wood pressed together and no longer fine psychology. We must learn to compress our psychology, but not to discard the points which we have established - the whole alphabet must be there - to act in 90 seconds or 40 seconds is the same thing inwardly.

BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS:

We will exercise bridges and transitions. We will try to elaborate a certain way, and then make it shorter. Your inner responsibility in making it shorter in time, will be to preserve all the ways and labyrinths.

Exercise:

1. Each individual will start with looking very worried - somewhere in the distance, far away, this is the point from which you start. We will take certain psychological moments which are unconnected, and you must find your

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own psychological way from one point to the next. This we call bridges and transitions.

2. You are tired and exhausted and very lazy. The first moment is very active - falling asleep.

3. You must create a sentence, "It is not me, it is you." Then tremendous fire, and after that relaxation. Stop.

TEMPO - FIRE:

When you have real tempo, it always changes the qualities, but still we remain in the points of the same thing. If you are acting King Lear slowly, and are given the task to act quickly, you will not become Claudius, but certain fine qualities must be changed. When you do it more compressed, try to realize where you have spoiled the complication of the inner paths. If it is done fully, in shorter psychological and physical time, it becomes more attractive and more persuasive - it enables you to catch or grip your audience. It can be legally and nobly produced only by the right tempo, which is fire. When actors try to grasp the audience with different means which are not quite honest, that is the way to a false "star" career, and we discard it. We discard those illegal ways. We have only one means which is tempo, then the audience will be ours and will be with us, which is much better.

When you will get this ability to compress everything

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in time without losing these precious things, then you will get rid of one other common disease - the hurry which leads to hysterics. Real tempo leads to inspiration, and when we train ourselves to have real tempo, we will never become hysterical, if it is not necessary to perform hysterics. When we hurry, we become in five minutes clinical cases. You can see it on the stage - when the actor becomes more and more hysterical because he ceases to impress his audience-- it is a case of human hysterics brought on by hurry and not tempo. We must have the angelic ability to fly over the psychology, through it and not an animal who is rushing here or there. In all hysterics there is something coming from our animal nature. All the influences from above, the angelic ones, come with tempo.

Exercise:

We are on the stage with other actors as a rule, so we have developed this ability to compress our inner life, and at the same time have very strong group feeling, so that one actor will not finish before the others. Once, when Moissi [Alexander Moissi] came to Russia to perform in Hamlet, he spoke in German and all the other actors spoke in Russian. They did not understand each other, but they were very happy speaking their lines. But when he was finished, they were still answering him!

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RADIATION: - "I AM"

You must make the simple decision to bring all your school experiences to the stage. The aim of our previous lessons and this lesson was to find out what it actually means to have real tempo, which we in our school understand as increased fire, increased "I Am" in the actor himself. If it is increased life, or "I Am," it is radiation at the same time because the stronger the "I Am" the more radiation comes from the person, even in our everyday life there are persons who radiate and others who do not. One is tiring and uninteresting and another is inspiring.

If we study people around us, we will get some understanding of this. Sometimes it is very tangible. I once experienced a little person who seemed to be very innocent in the sense of "I Am," but when I met him, I fainted quite unexpectedly. Then I understood that this was a tremendous "I Am" radiating, and not one of a good quality, but one which kills the consciousness. Radiation is the way to the tempo in our sense. Today we have discovered another thing - if we are able to make bridges and transitions (and without them there is nothing on the stage), to be able to create them we must be able to compress them without losing these precious links of which the chain consists. Transfer your abilities as students to your efforts in the theatre and we will be victorious.