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CONTACT
IMPROVISATION - INSPIRATION
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CHARACTERIZATION
ATMOSPHERE

Dostoyevsky

CONTACT: New Students:

Exercises on contact in which the old students will join. The idea is that when we are on the stage we have to have a special feeling which we call "contact," which means that no one is alone on the stage, and is never alone even if he or she speaks a soliloquy. The actor must get the ability to be in contact not only with everybody around him on the stage, but with everything. The properly thought-out setting is something with which the actor must be in contact. Of course it is the director's business to find the harmonious mise in scène, but the actor must always have a continuous feeling of his connection with the whole surroundings and the people around him, not only psychologically, but outwardly and physically. This feeling of harmony with everything around one is so important that it must be developed through the whole school, from the simple physical compositions to the most difficult psychological compositions on the stage - psychologically we have also a composition on the stage.

All the exercises we have for this feeling of harmony will take time; we are not able to do them in one day or one week. We must have much time for doing this, but we will

start with one very simple exercise. You must know very clearly why you are doing this exercise; for developing this fine feeling which actors need on the stage, in order to have harmonious contact with everybody around them. The highest point to which we have to ascend in this exercise is that we have to assume that we will get a certain human psychology.

If I am an actor, I must understand my profession from certain points of view, not by just thinking I am an actor. No, it means that I must have certain points of view about my profession, and one of them is that inwardly I must have a certain technique - to open myself to everybody and find the human contact - then I will be able to bring this contact on to the stage. This exercise we will do later, but we will start with the first very simple exercise.

Exercise:

Take partners so that there are two human bodies which must move continuously and at the same time, and by moving - very slowly in the beginning - you must find during the process of moving, the harmonious compositions of the two bodies.

Two students will begin; they are actors and artists. They must find each other - without this first step nobody is able to establish any contact. They must find each other, and this we do by the means which we call doing an invisible gesture inside of us, to open our apparatus for receiving everything which is invisible. Open your hearts and find each other,

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not with the eyes, not with the physical senses, not with touch, because that will only give contact in a very primitive form. We must find each other as actors and artists, with these invisible means, and this is the first step we must take in this simple exercise.

INSPIRATION:

To begin with do not look at each other as it is not necessary, and if you look at each other continuously it may disturb you. Now try to find each other again. When you have made this first effort to find each other, begin to move together out of the feeling of contact, out of the feeling of harmony, and move without any feeling of how you are going to move. It will grow out of the feeling of contact - move together out of this intangible thing. Nobody leads, and as actors you must find this special kind of psychology to believe in the inspiration which will come. It will absolutely come if you find the contact between two creative souls. Later on we will have an exercise in which everything is not so symmetrical, but this comes quite naturally at first. You come together and then separate, and much depends upon the intangible inspiration which you will get in trying to do the exercise. The idea of the exercise is not only not to lose the contact, but to establish it and increase it strongly.

There is one danger in this exercise and that is to become sleepy or mesmerized. Don't do this. It is better to have too much will than to get into such a state, because on

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the stage there is never a moment when we can be sleepy; we must always be active and the contact between one another can only be established at the highest point of activity. We can never do anything on the stage without being fully conscious.

THE OPEN HEART:

Now do the exercise: Be quite free, and open your heart to your partner; do it with your whole activity, very consciously and believe in the power of the contact. The idea of the exercise is to find in your souls a point which responds to what we call contact, or harmony, with your surroundings, with living beings, with everything on the stage.

The next step in the development of this exercise is to have a leader. Naturally the idea of the exercise is the same - to find contact with a person who is on the same level as you are and be led by him. It is a variation of the same theme, and will be done by three persons together. One of the three is the leader who gives some suggestions by his movements, while the others must find the possibility of making compositions by following the leader's suggestions. They must all be absolutely in contact; the leader must not lose contact with the persons he leads - he must fight with this, because it is so easy to do.

Now an exercise with four people and one leader - try to understand how sensitive an actor must be on the stage. "Read" the exercise, not only watch it - "read" it actively. What forms and shapes are you leaving as you watch, what streams are filling

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the room? Be very active by watching - the more harmony that is established even for one second, the more beautiful is the whole process. They must watch and follow, not only the leader, but each member of the group as well. We will get this later when we make a large circle and train ourselves to feel the circle, and take everything into our consciousness.

IMPROVISATION: Old Students:

The scene is from one of Dostoyevsky's novels - a very long psychological novel. The characters are an old man who has a wife and a child. The wife loves him in a quiet way, but he has been afraid all his life that he would be deceived, and the idea has grown so strong that he can see nothing in the world but lovers, everywhere. In Dostoyevsky's novels there are always so many ideas streaming simultaneously, and the person does not come to a simple connection because there are so many things streaming that they stop it. In this scene there is another man who is without any strong connection to any woman. He is attractive, and the wife of the man who is so jealous knows him through her husband.

The scene takes place at night. During the night the husband goes to the room of the friend, whom he awakens, and asks to have an urgent talk with him. The conversation goes all around the subject but never touches on it. The friend is waiting to be told the important thing, but in never

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comes. When the dawn breaks they are exhausted. The lover falls asleep and the husband takes a razor and prepares everything, but in the end nothing happens; his whole life is preparing - and then nothing! The friend awakens and sees the husband with the razor; he takes it and throws it away. Of course the lover understands why the friend has come, but he will never speak about it.

ATMOSPHERE: This improvisation must be done on the ground of the atmosphere. The psychology on the husband's part is a very complicated one, and that on the part of the lover is one of despising his friend. Yesterday you showed the ability to develop such fine elaborated psychology - never lose this ability or fall down into a primitive, straight performance.

CHARACTERIZATION:

Repeat the same sketch on the basis of characters.

The husband has very long, thin moustaches which are pointed, eyes which droop down, and a big brimmed hat, very thin, long sleeves and thin trousers with the buttons always done up. The lover is very happy, he has a pink face, very good body, fair hair, very free and beautiful kind of movements. He doesn't care for the people with whom he speaks. He has no feeling for others, only for himself. Something of the lion is in him. He does not hide his feelings. The face of the characters, the make-up, must be composed under the inspiration of the psychological gesture.

If the beginning is right then the whole scene will

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move forward. Sometimes unexpected things happen on the stage and we use these things. Therefore, we need to be able to establish a harmony with everything. The most important thing in this exercise was that the characters were not used enough, and what we saw was not based sufficiently on the characters. The point of the exercise was to have the character strongly in your imagination first, and then as a gesture, so that the character would come. You must justify the psychological gesture.