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Michael Chokhov

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TEMPO - RADIATION - PRESENCE

King Lear

TEMPO - RADIATION - PRESENCE:

It is much more pleasant to have inner tempo, which is radiation and presence, than it is to force your body and your voice. Radiation will come by means of your spirit - psychologically. What do you have to radiate? Your own being. Do a simple exercise and try to find the following fine state of your presence and radiation. Don't force yourself by moving and speaking. It is absolutely necessary to find whether you are strong enough at the moment as "I Am," to move the chair in this way or that, or whether you force yourself to move it. If you find this radiation - if your consciousness instinctively tells you the truth about yourself - you will master yourself in the sense of tempo.

Exercise moving the tables and putting the chairs around them. During this, try to speak to each other, not chattering, but find some sentences and speak one and then another - then we will be able to see how your real presence and radiation is in harmony with your movements and speech.

If we could always control ourselves in this way, we would be the best group in the whole world. Increase your presence and tremendous radiation, and move the tables and chairs back. Move just as quickly as you can, being present at this particular moment.

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I have noticed during the last rehearsal that you were present, but you did not use it, and you have spoiled it by adding to this presence something more physical. Then you got tired physically, and you felt it was a lie, and you dropped your spirit more and more, and it became more and more physical and shouting and hysterics because you did not rely on your own presence and radiation. To get presence and radiation is not enough - it will be right when you believe in it, when you will say, "I am awakened to a certain degree. I must be in tempo in accordance with what I really have in my spirit and my inner life, and I must not add anything because that spoils everything." You must get the inner state which we call radiation, but it must be in harmony with what you do.

Exercise:

Repeat the exercise of moving the tables and chairs and speaking. Try to find this coordination between your inner state and your manifestation of this state. Do it more quickly, but don't force yourself - be spiritually quicker. Try to radiate extremely strongly. We know our presence can be increased tremendously, without making us hysterical. Our everyday life does not require this from us, and we are lazy, but if we are artists, we must understand once and forever that as artists, we have no right to be as low as

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everyone around us, or as easy in our private lives. We must have this inner muscle which makes us able to radiate stronger than in everyday life. All it requires is that we take the decision to get it, and through a series of exercises we can get it.

We are normal people, but we are artists, and we have to diminish and increase this radiation when it is necessary. Now increase it to the extreme degree and repeat the exercise. If we are moving all right but lying in our voices, it kills the exercise just the same. It was pleasant to watch because there was harmony between the manifestation and the inner state. If

If we really know what the imagination is, we will discover one thing if we approach it from one angle. Imagination is like a pleasant disease which is contagious - if I really see my character in my imagination, I become "ill" with the disease - if my character is a young, ecstatic man, I immediately become young and ecstatic. That is the power of the imagination and its mystery. It does not stay like a picture - it is I who imagines, I who creates the imagination and sometimes it is like a gifted person - it is I and not I - therefore, it is contagious.

When we exercise sometimes it seems very difficult. If you will imagine Lear on the heath - if you will really imagine this soliloquy and Lear himself, you will catch this

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"disease." What does it mean for us? It means that you can inflame your presence to the degree that Lear has - it is already a miracle what he does, if we imagine him as existing in the world of Shakespeare and imagination - what a presence it is - it is a miracle - it overwhelms one - such a mighty presence and radiation. If you will look at it in your imagination and will get this presence, this is the way to the real tempo. However, to get it without any images, or which is more simple, to imagine your character in the right tempo, and it will come to you. By imagining your character, you will never have to go such a wrong way as to force yourself to do rash and crazy things on the stage. In your imagination no one forces you - you do better performances in your imagination. Imagine the character in the right tempo, and you will become awake to it and will radiate it.

### Exercise:

Find the tremendous presence and radiation which Lear has. Then move chairs and tables and speak sentences with activity which you have got from your imagination.

You will discover another thing, and that is that you can have tremendous tempo spiritually and yet move absolutely slowly, and it will still be in tremendous tempo. Tempo does not actually mean always quicker movement and speech, although it can. Having this spiritual fire you have moved in accordance with it. Now try to do the same thing

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but slowly, having the same inner tempo. If you will imagine Lear, you will see in your imagination many moments when he is like a statue surrounded by cosmic powers, and you cannot imagine him in other than tremendous tempo, even when it is quiet and only the wind moves his hair and beard - he is in tremendous tempo even without movement.

This is a pleasant thing to be able to separate your bodily functions and your spiritual functions. It is a most pleasant thing to be spiritually awake and physically quiet - it indicates that in the future we will be able to manage our bodies so that my body is here, and I am here and I can do with my body whatever I like. Artists must be aware of this mighty human spirit. Take from Lear this powerful presence and radiation, and move the tables and chairs quietly physically.

Now imagine your part in the play, and choose some moments which are quiet and other which are unquiet, and try to imagine both of them. The whole performance can be acted in this tremendous "Lear-like" spirit, without hurry and shouting. We have spoken about the following composition when our spirits are in tempo, and our bodies and speech are slow. It may seem, from the point of view of the beginning of the lesson, a disharmony between spirit and body, but disharmonious of this kind can have two extremes. Imagine that your spirit is sleepy, but your body is forced to move and speak -

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you will get a very very funny thing which clowns use very often, although we sometimes get hysterical cases. It is always like that - if the spirit is in tempo, then comes a dramatic or tragic or uplifting thing - the opposite is true when the body takes the place of the spirit, then comes either humor or hysteria. If we are able to manage the process of separation of our spirit and body in any way, and then the whole range in between. But to be able to use it, we have first to develop the ability to increase our presence by the simple desire or by the means of imagination - that is the first thing - to be able to separate them.

Exercise:

It is very useful to take some exercises from different points of view - the whole Method is a whole organism. The exercise of creating groups in different tempos - you must be in the tempo which is suggested, and the audience must get the impression of that tempo. Don't separate the body and spirit tempos this time. Take it harmoniously. Exercise two groups moving to music and forming groups. The music to be taken in our sense of tempo, which is suggesting the inner tempo, not the tempo of the music.

You must realize that the work on the exercises in the studio is the same as the work on the stage. You must be courageous enough to transfer these things to the stage. Because you can do it.

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You have not been able to merge the two extremes. There are two solutions. One is to try to again combine the two things and go back to the thoughts, and the other solution is when the actor begins to live in the play as if he had written the play; when he begins to really experience all the things that are there absolutely fully.

If you are acting a very good play, like King Lear, or if you are acting a very cheap play, you have to experience the play; otherwise it cannot be acted. It is not a question of whether you love the ideal. When you are acting, it is just like being a soldier who does not want to fight, but he is there, and he has to meet the enemy; otherwise he will be crushed.

We have to face the play, the part, the thoughts so much that we will give our utmost human qualities to the play - this is the other way. Whether we can awaken in us human feelings towards these problems and situations and that is the way to become profound. I will try to help you by speaking about the main characters, and perhaps that is the way you will be helped to dig a bit deeper.