

Michael Chekhov

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ATMOSPHERE
SPEECH

ATMOSPHERE:

The more experienced you become in getting the atmosphere from the air around you, the more you will be able to distinguish the following thing which is essentially important. When you begin to act and speak and move in the atmosphere, you sometimes lose it because your acting and speaking becomes stronger than the atmosphere. Then you go on speaking a certain content, or moving in a certain way, simply imitating and copying the real atmosphere. Sometimes the atmosphere leads you, but sometimes you try to substitute the real atmosphere with words and movements, etc.

This is a question of experience in being able to distinguish between the two, but you must know the danger now. Many actors start with the substitution rather than the atmosphere. This famous smile on the stage means the substitution of the real gaiety, and it kills the possibility of getting the real thing. Sometimes the speaking overwhelmed you today, rather than the atmosphere. In such cases during the class you must immediately imagine the air filled with the atmosphere you need. This desire to be expert in creating the atmosphere rather than the substitute will come when you have had more experience. If you learn to use this means, you will be able to fill the largest theatre with your power and expressiveness, and you will not need to shout.

We must learn to combine things, otherwise we will

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always stand on the same spot. If you are given the rhythmical gesture, for instance, it does not mean that it annihilates what has gone before. You must take the new suggestions and combine them with the old.

SPEECH:

Speech is the most important part of our profession, but somehow you have no respect for your own language which is very offensive to me, a foreigner. Why do you create these half-words - like arms or legs hanging about, but not real beings fully formed? It is offensive and repellant - you seem to despise your own language.