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DEVELOPMENT OF THE METHOD

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TRAGEDY - DRAMA - STYLE:

The difference between tragedy and drama is that one is very human (drama), and the other is beyond the human (tragedy). In acting tragedy we must consider persons who are acting in it as being half gods, half devils, but not quite human. The real human psychology is only given in drama, for example Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov - all drama. But Balladina is absolute tragedy, in which we see figures and deeds and atmospheres out of the human world, beyond the human, out of the human to heaven or to hell. Therefore tragedy is such a wide world, and the over-world and the under-world must be created by us.

LEADING QUESTIONS:

By leading questions we mean this is imagination led by the director. The director asks you to see this or that in your imagination - these are leading questions because each task that the director gives you in imagination is nothing more

than questioning your imagination. The images arise as a result of this "questioning". For example; see an old person dressed in black...this is a very concrete question. With tragic eyes... this is also a concrete question.

#### REHEARSAL PLAN IN THE HOLIDAYS:

Question: Are we to consider the element of time and a finished production, and arrange our time in that way?

Answer: It would be better to leave the question of the actual time entirely, and only imagine what you would do in regard to rehearsing in a very organic way. Perhaps it would be desirable, at the end of the third term, to show something to an audience. If we decide in this way then perhaps we will divide the groups and sketches, and prepare one of them more quickly. But this must not have any influence on the director's creation of the plan for rehearsing - it must be more an artistic plan, than a stage manager's plan.

Question: Is it all right to talk to yourself while acting?

Answer: Of course. I do it always and many actors do this. But this is nothing other than a kind of inner incorporation of all I have seen in my imagination - a kind of statement. It is something which crystalizes inside and it is a real necessity. It becomes very organic.

#### THE DIVIDED CONSCIOUSNESS,<sup>1</sup>

Question: When a part is fully rehearsed and ready for performance, do you, as you play it, have the image of your

character before your eye, or have you stepped inside it?

Answer: That is why we have imagination and inspiration. The imagination is that with which we must start, and the second stage is what we call inspiration. What you have imagined, before you do it, disappears but it is somewhere and it works in you, through you. When it is no more before you it disappears, and this is the most beautiful moment, when the actor feels, for the first time, that the image disappears but it is in him.

Question: Do you mean that once you have incorporated an image thoroughly you don't see it outside?

Answer: Before you are ready to be inspired, before you are ready for it, you have to see it, you must see it before you. I have rehearsed with my partners, having two consciousnesses, and I have seen my image continuously. By speaking with my partner I have really tried to incorporate this image which I have seen somewhere continuously. It was very difficult in the beginning, but later on I found that this was the right way.

If you are able to divide your consciousness in two parts, it is right. Then comes the moment when you know that something has happened, and then you begin to improvise. If you have your image inside you, after you have had it somewhere, then this is the only way to improvise freely during acting. Because if you have not seen your image, or created it before, you will be compelled to do some falsification with your body.

your voice, costume, make-up, etc., but you are dead, you have never created or imagined, and nothing can inspire you or come into your artistic soul. But if you are patient enough to create the image in front of you or around you, then it will come of itself, and you will be able to improvise. Nothing is impossible, you have everything at your disposal. You can play your scene in one minute or in forty minutes, because this other person is inside you and inspires you. You have only to observe and follow, and nothing more.

Question: In speaking of the first moment when you see yourself, do you mean that this was your image, or your consciousness?

Answer: It was both the image and the consciousness. By dividing the consciousness, I get the feeling that I am everywhere - in the audience room, behind the stage, everywhere. It is my habit to have it <sup>(the image)</sup> before me, in front of me, but the consciousness is there. If the directors can divide the consciousness and lead the actors, being always conscious of a figure sitting in the audience room, then the performance will be for the audience.

#### POINTS AND PAUSES:

Question: About points: when one is asked to justify a point, must there be some psychological justification for it?

Answer: The point is meant only to bring order. Nothing more. It is one of the letters from which the word "rhythma" is formed.

The less necessity you have, the more you will exercise the feeling for points, because if a point is necessary you don't exercise anything. The justification is only order, nothing more. If you want to bring order, it is nothing other than point. When you are doing it you are doing something psychological at the same time.

Question: Must the point be justified psychologically when you are acting on the stage?

Answer: No. The point only brings order. For example: I have to run around something very quickly. If I introduce points it will be much easier. I don't have to justify them. You must justify a pause, but points have no significance - only order. Pauses can be very small, but if they are full of significance they are pauses, not points. After you have acted something the audience will speak about your acting, remembering all your pauses but never a point. If the audience remembers your points it means that the actor was not skillful enough, or that the point had become a pause. The point has no significance, while the pause must be full of significance.

Question: The problem of having to take a boy's part when you are a girl, as we have to do in St. Jean for instance. Your image is clear but within yourself there is a division.

Answer: This is a particular case because in acting a male part a girl has no connection with it - there is no justification for it, therefore, your nature is against it. But if you will imagine that you have a reason to do this, then your conflict

will be stopped at once.

#### ACTOR'S AMPLEUR - RANGE - GAMUT - "EMPLOI":

There is always the question of "ampleur" (range) - the actor is limited in the roles he can play.<sup>2</sup> There is always this feeling of "ampleur" - for instance, if I try to play a certain part which is beyond my range I will always have this feeling that I cannot justify the role. If Romeo was a little crazy, perhaps I could act the part. Or, if I had to play in a political (propaganda) play, it would be impossible for me. Even if I were given a beautiful part, I could not act it, because it is against my beliefs, against my conscience, against everything in me. Or, if I were given a part which had no significance, I would not be able to act it.

#### INCORPORATION:

There are many sources for such conflicts. If we speak about the problem theoretically, we may say that we have to play the image in accordance with our abilities - but not too much. We must, of course, try to find in our body, in our soul, possibilities to re-create ourselves so that the image can be incorporated. It is always very interesting for the audience to see the actor transform his nature to such an extent that he shows that he has really done something. The principle which governs the theatre in France, and in Germany especially - that the actor acts all his parts just as he is born - it is so conceited, so poor, that there is nothing to do.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT:

When I saw <sup>a French actor</sup> [famous] for the first time, I thought it was very skilful acting, and I observed how fine this actor could manage his means of expression. But when I saw him again, in another play, he was the same person. He had done nothing - he was born like that. Why is he an actor? He could be a teacher, a conjurer, anything, but why should he appear on the stage and show his parents' work and nothing of his own? I went to his dressing room each time, and saw his make-up. It was only a little touch of blue, and a little flesh color in the cheeks - both times. Is this the actor's profession? I don't think it is right to take so easily the profession of the theatre.

I knew an actor in Russia who was very stout. He thought he was acting every time in a different way, but it was only in his imagination - he was the same each time, this poor fat man. It is something in our nature which makes us think that we are doing more than we are. The way to avoid this is by means of our exercises.

## DIRECTOR - ACTOR RELATIONSHIP:

Situation: Let us say that you are my director, and that I am acting Peneo. I find my image, and we begin to rehearse, and as we get near to the performance you say to me that my characterization is not Peneo. How much does the author give the soul to the character? Can two actors act the character differently,

or must they have similar characterizations?

Answer: Harlot, and all of Shakespeare's plays can be acted in many different ways. For a real artist the role can be acted differently forty times. But the director must never say to the actor, that is not good. Our directors will never do that. They will always try to find the way to the third image which can be satisfactory for both the actor and the director.

At the same time it means that the director must always say what he wants, and it will always be right because the actor's nature is so flexible. Stanislavsky was very rude in this way. <sup>1</sup> He would say, "It is not worth threepence," and as a result the actor lost his power. Stanislavsky is a very good director and actor, and the creator of the method, but as a teacher he is absolutely wrong. He can never feel the soul of his pupil. For his psychology everybody was his pupil, even the oldest actors and actresses were only pupils. His attitude was, "I know everything and you know nothing," and this quality killed very much in our souls, and therefore almost all of us hated the method.

The first method in the theatre was given by Stanislavsky - he has made the first attempt. But the manner in which he gave it was a real torture. The Inspector General was such a torture. When we began to speak one word he would cry, "Stop! It is not worth threepence," and the actors



stood before him empty, because during the rehearsal the actor must not be stopped in such a rude way. Then to be ordered to start the same small piece fifteen times. This is not the right way. Because we liked Stanislavsky - he is a very soft and loving person and he tries to be very strong - it disturbed us very much.

#### DIRECTOR - AUTHOR RELATIONSHIP:

Question: If the author has his own definite ideas about the play he has written, and has his inspiration which he wants to carry through, it must be very hard for him to see his play being directed in an entirely different way.

Answer: Yes, but I have more sympathy with the actors. <sup>I love them more.</sup> It is a question of to whom you belong. The case in which the author is also the director is the best. That is what we are trying to do. We must combine these things which really belong to the whole performance. The nature of the theatre requires that this be one thing - it must be. The theatre is the theatre, and we are not slaves to our authors. If I am to be a slave, then better let me have my private life, and act as the famous <sup>French actor did</sup> and earn my money, but it will not be my whole life, my whole being. The actor must have some rights to create freely. When I read Shakespeare I like to enjoy every word, but when I begin to act then I have the right to change scenes and lines, because I believe in the theatre more than in anything else. When literature comes into the theatre

M. Chekhov

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It must be under the power of the director.

In this connection I agree with Meyerhold when he announced in Moscow that he was "the author of the performance." He has taken some words of Dostoevsky's The Inspector General, and he has added some.<sup>4</sup> Nobody before would dare to do this, but he has done it and that is right because he believes himself to be the author of the performance. This is the theatre - not just following the author's psychology. I don't believe in the author's psychology, because very often when he writes he sits in his small room, and this is not the psychology which I, as an actor, am able to develop on the stage. I will tell him what psychology I must develop, having one thousand people before me! This is another psychology, absolutely.

I know one author who, when reading his play - not a very good one - cried over it. For me the play was nothing - his crying face was much more interesting. This is the difference in the psychology of the author and the actor. The actor has another dimension - a living audience before him, for whom he must move and speak. Therefore, the psychology and interpretation of the author is, for the actor, only suggestions and nothing more. I would like to read the author, but not act what he wants. Perhaps we will meet many enemies while trying to do this, but I am not able to do anything else.

I tell you frankly and honestly that if you try to be obedient to the author, we will go in two different ways.

A. Chekhov

April 2, 1937

It is too dry and slavish. If, as an actor, you are in love with some particular author; you can follow him as closely as you want - there is not contradiction - but I don't want the actor to be forced by the author. If you wish to follow the author, well and good, but it is a great delusion to think that you are acting in accordance with the author's imagination. It is not possible.

I will mention another case: when Anton Chekhov wrote The Cherry Orchard and brought it to Stanislavsky, one of the figures was wrong in a certain way. When a very gifted actor began to act the part in one of the rehearsals. He improvised and re-created the part so that it was entirely opposite, and Chekhov was very happy. He wrote words for him in his direction, and both author and actor were very happy. It was possible to do this because both were so talented, so gifted that they could understand each other at once, and it was a great pleasure to be able to help each other.

That is what we are trying to do in our school. To be absolutely free and open to one another - that is the only way. I don't deny the author, I only want him to have another attitude of mind towards the theatre. This must be started from the very beginning, as we are doing, and perhaps we will find some authors who will understand us and come to work with us. The finding of words is a special gift, and I hope such real authors will come to us. I don't deny them.

## REALISM AND IMAGINATION

Question: Could you explain the difference between the naturalistic and non-naturalistic approach.

Answer: The naturalistic theatre and naturalistic art in general is trying to compose definite elements which are around us, in our lives, in our families, etc. To combine them more or less cleverly, this is a naturalistic kind of play. The non or not naturalistic approach means that from inside we have to re-create things which are given us by nature. I mean by this that we have, for instance, to re-create a chair in accordance with Don Quixote. It is no longer naturalistic, but this must be done from inside, from the psychological gesture which penetrates everything, so that the chair is no longer a naturalistic one.

The best way is to illustrate. For instance, in a naturalistic way I place something on the chair so that it can be heard, and there will be a reaction to it. Naturalism and realism are two very different things. Naturalism is absolutely flat. In realism, such as in Faust, the powers of the earth spirit, it is not naturalistic because it has to do with nature, but it is realistic because Goethe believed in the existence of this spirit. If we believe in the spiritual world and in spiritual beings, and we perform these beings in fairy tales and mysteries, this is pure realism, because if we don't believe in it we must not touch it. But this is realism which has nothing to do with naturalism. If we have meditated on

M. Chakrov

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angels, we can perform an angel in a very real way.

#### STYLIZATION:

There is another way, that of civilization, when we give some very dry and dead things in the form of a sign - a sign for something. But the question arises, why not the thing itself? In the world, symbols have a great significance, but in art it is a great mistake to hide the life behind a symbol, which is not the life itself. You can mask the life - the more things which are between you and the thing, the more beautiful it will be - but don't do it with a symbol which does not mask. Dancers from India are dancing the symbol itself - this is another thing. I like symbols and admire them. If you take the symbol of the snake you will find that it is so significant, so deep, but how can we perform this snake?<sup>5</sup> It is not art, it is another realm of our life, perhaps religious, and it must remain in the religious realm. But if the symbol is acted out, then it becomes art. Perhaps every symbol cannot do this.

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I find, very objectively, that this term you have improved so much that it cannot be compared with the first term, and so I say goodbye to you, being very happy. I know some secrets about each one of you, and I know that we have made really a great, great progress. You have taught me very much new knowledge from you, and how you have worked has been

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very instructive for me, and I gave this back to you in another form. Therefore I think that we know now that our Method is no more a joke, but it is really our Method because we have explored this Method together. You know that my life before I came here could not give me the chance to apply this Method, and only Mr. and Mrs. Blahist and Beatrice have given me the possibility to try this Method in reality. I cannot repay them for this without you - we are exploring this Method together and, therefore, you are teaching me as I am teaching you. It is our great work together.<sup>6</sup> Children, goodbye. Be happy. Be very happy.

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