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Michael Chokhov

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BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS

BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS:

The ability to create and invent bridges and transitions - psychological labyrinths - this is the art on the stage. The following exercise will help you very much if you will practice it from time to time when you are working alone - otherwise, you will not awaken this ability to build bridges and transitions. All our exercises are more or less connected - they are actually all one thing, but we must take each exercise as a new thing. Realize that this will give you the ability to create a non-existing psychology.

Beatrice and Alan will be given the "what" and they must develop the "how." Beatrice will start with a strong, powerful temperamental thing - "silence," then a long pause, after which she must laugh and say, "My darling," in a very soft voice. The whole transition between the two points must be found by her, not just found, but found so that it will be full. Her soul must be filled with this transition, so that it will be radiated to us. Alan begins quietly, and when he feels that the right moment has come (this must be found out of their mutual understanding), he will say ironically, "Oh, never, never, never." When Beatrice says, "My darling," he must fall in a faint on the floor.

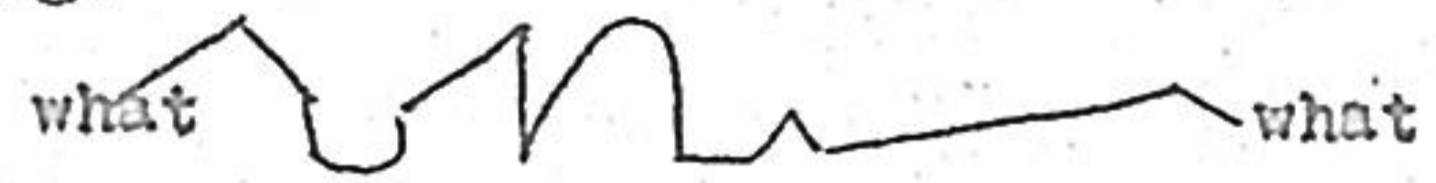
You can invent many variations on this exercise, but the main thing is to leave an empty space, as it were, which

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the actor must fill himself. When the actor knows too much about his psychology, he becomes more of a scientist than an actor - while we must know our profession, there must always be a space or margin for things which we do not know. Give the "whats" and create the "hows" which you cannot explain. We must develop this part of our actor's nature through our exercises, because here lies the point where the actor is an actor.

There is one secret which must be understood and then practiced. We can make bridges and transitions in a very short space of time, but when, for instance, we are given the task to take at least two minutes between "silence" and "my darling," during which time we must go on creating and finding bridges and transitions, then our actor's soul requires to create something out of nothing. It is possible, of course, to create something in two seconds, but in those two seconds the soul will not be so forced to create bridges and transitions. For instance, let us say we take five minutes for the following:



Now take the same thing and compress it - then it will be what we are aiming at. Nothing will be lost, but the psychology will become compressed and will, therefore, become stronger and have the power to radiate. We must be absolutely honest and not jump over things or leave gaps or make straight lines.

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It does not mean that you have to know what you have done - it is simply an artistic and instinctive feeling.

By this means you will be able to elaborate your part and the play, and will charm your audience. If you will consider different authors, you will realize that some use these instinctive complications more than others, and are more interesting than those who do not have the ability to create things out of nothing.

Try to act the first part of Lower Depths from the point of view of bridges and transitions. As this scene has already been acted by you many times, try to keep the same time and tempo as you have had before, but try to find all the bridges and transitions which lie in between.

We have to develop this special eye, or ear, or invisible organ to follow these bridges and transitions in ourselves and others, then we will enrich our art and discover things which are in our souls - they are there, but they must be discovered. By these exercises you will discover things which you will need and love and give to your audience. Take it as seriously as possible.

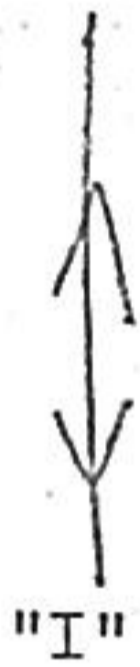
Yesterday I saw how tired you can become, when you do not know that there is a thing inside you which we call bridges and transitions - only pay attention to it and then everything will be all right.

Another thing which disturbed me was that there was

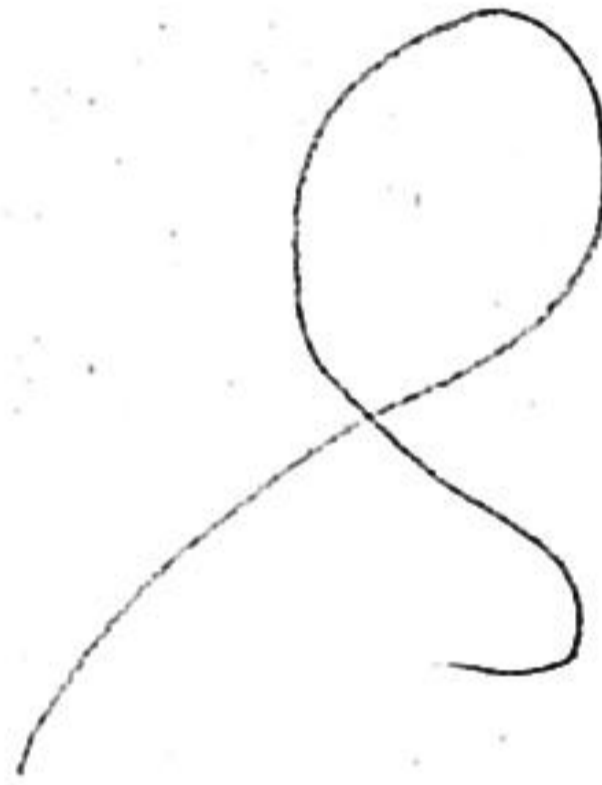
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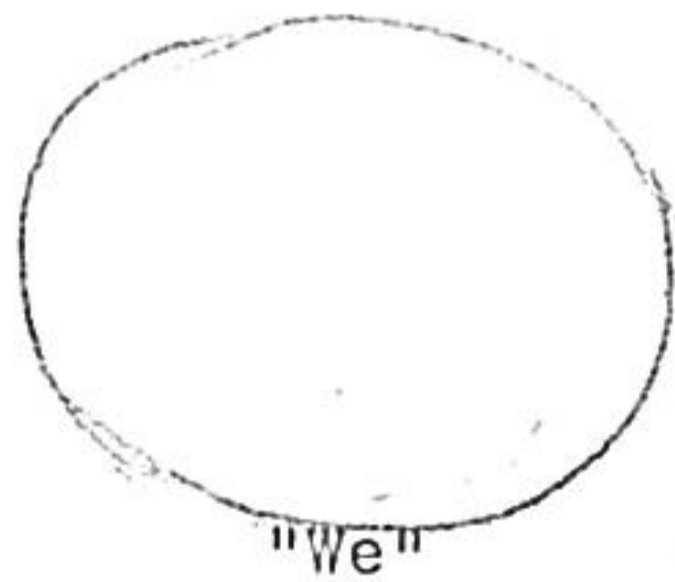
too much physical tension. So do the simple exercise of the feeling of ease, with the idea that yesterday you have done so much harm to yourselves, and you are guilty somehow before your artistic nature. Having had this special case of yesterday, do the feeling of ease exercise as a cure or a medicine... wrestling without muscles with the feeling of ease.



"I"



"Thou"



"We"

