

Michael Chekhov

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Given by Michael Chekhov

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THE ACTOR OF THE FUTURE:

All of us know what the theatre is now, we know what the theatre was, and we can imagine what the theatre would or should be. The present audience, while buying the ticket for the performance, wants to know who is the author, then they want to know the names of the stars, and maybe who the director is and that is all. There are no actors in the theatre - stars but not actors. They are stars - lonely beings. They do not need our help - the actor's help. They do not want to be disturbed, and they have the right not to be because they are not actors because the audience does not yet know that the actor is the theatre.

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Actors as a group, as an ensemble, that is the theatre, and so it will be, it seems to me, in the future that the theatre will consist of actors, first of all, among them more or less gifted ones, and then the author and the director. If we have certain visions about the future theatre, and I think we have, then it seems to me that we have to visualize, first of all, what the actor will be like.

Let us imagine for a moment what the actor of the future can be. I think the future actor has to have different ears, different eyes, different heart, different will, different feelings, different everything. Let us ask how the future actor would receive impressions around him. He will see things beyond usual things, and he will perform these things - not the obvious ones, not the surface, but something which he can see above and beyond the surface.

CONCENTRATION:

A very simple thing can serve him - to have such a high degree that things will reveal before him their secret, hidden sides. Of course, we know that everyone of us has, by nature, the ability to concentrate; otherwise, we could not cross the street, or have a meal, or say how do you do. But this is not enough for our imaginary future actor. He must have such an ability of concentration that he will penetrate into things, deeper than we can imagine at the moment.

Let us see how it can be done. Let us concentrate

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on these three letters [on the blackboard]. First we must see them with our eyes - if it was a sound, we must hear it. Then after we have seen clearly these three letters and can also describe them to ourselves, we have to do the next thing, which is to move inwardly. I mean psychologically, as it were, to move towards these three letters just as we can move towards a person we love, for instance. What are we doing when we are in love? We are moving towards this person continuously days and nights. This is the same in the act of real concentration, we have to move towards the thing we wish to penetrate with our concentration. Let us move towards these three letters.

When we have done this, we must do the next thing, which is to embrace these three letters with our invisible hands, which we can very easily imagine. We are moving towards the thing we see, we are embracing it and are holding it fast in our arms and hands. When we try to do this, we will see that the moment will come when the thing begins to be in us, within us, and we are around the thing. When we keep our attention on the thing in this way, if we are trained sufficiently, then we discover certain hidden qualities in the thing we are concentrating on. For instance, if it is a table on which you are concentrating, try to move towards it, embracing it, the moment will come when, although you are not actually touching it, you will feel how heavy it is, what material it is made of, what shape it is - not because you see it but

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because it is in you, and you become somehow "clairvoyant" to this thing.

If such an ability of concentration is developed, then the whole world around this future actor will seem to be an absolutely different one. People around us will tell us things which are worthwhile to perform on the stage. To merge with these things, to add to them our own heart and will and to send them out to the audience. Then our characters on the stage will become living beings and not schemes or dead, empty bodies, such as we very often see on the stage - corpses are walking in make-up, and dressed in strange costumes. The future actor, it seems to me, will be able not only to live on the stage himself, but to give to his characters and, therefore, both of them, the character and the actor, will become one being with increased life, with life which is much stronger than our usual lives are. Then because of this highly developed ability to concentrate, the life in us will become stronger, more powerful, and the heart will become bigger.

ATMOSPHERE:

Another thing the future actor will have is the ability to live in the atmospheres around him, in such a way that the atmosphere will become stronger in the presence of this new actor, and the actor himself will become inspired because of the atmosphere which surrounds him. Of course,

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everyone of us knows only too well what it means to experience different atmospheres while walking along the streets. If we are more or less attentive to these atmospheres, we will see how one street has one atmosphere, another a different one, one house has one atmosphere while another has a different one, and so on. But the difficulty with us is that we do not pay enough attention to these atmospheres. We pass through them without being affected by them.

There is a technique for catching atmospheres, for spreading them on the stage, and for using them. Let me tell you in a few words how it can be done. It is a very simple technique. Can we imagine this room filled with smoke? We can. Can we imagine this room filled with fragrance? We can. With a strong light? We can. We can imagine around us in this room anything we like. Try to imagine that the air is filled with sorrow. Don't do anything, but imagine objectively the air filled with sorrow. Since we have changed this actual air and space around us in this imaginary way, and since we opened ourselves towards this new air and space, it begins to influence us immediately and inevitably. We get some inspiration from this imaginary sorrow spread around us.

If we try to do the opposite thing, which actors so often do and which seems wrong to me because it is more difficult less successful, if we try to become sorry, to squeeze it out of our feelings, I don't think we will find it easy to

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do. Try to become sorry. We often don't know where to start inwardly. Of course, there are always clichés - I can change my voice, take a deep breath and lean on something, but it is a lie. We may become sorry because of the ten or twenty clichés we have been able to accumulate, but it will be accidental. To have a technique we must leave our feelings in peace - not touch them and squeeze and force them out of ourselves.

Once again, imagine the air around you filled with sorrow, and imagine it strongly enough and become free inwardly and outwardly - all these things are very easy to get, - and you will become sorry. Not too personal because that is wrong. Personal sorrow, or joy, or fear on the stage are not very interesting things. If one is sorry as a person - you can do it in the theatre very often and in life always - if one is sorry and tries to show his sorrow to another person, the other person reacts negatively and wants to get rid of this sorry person because it is too personal and too true.

In art our feelings have to be somehow objective and not absolutely personal. When we imagine the air around us filled with different feelings, we remain objective. When we get inspiration from this imaginary sorrow around us we are still free because the actor is not sorry, quite the opposite, he enjoys this state of being sorry because he is performing in the best sense, he is enjoying it and looking upon it

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objectively. He is not sitting in this sorrow and is not a slave to it. He is mastering this sorrow.

Since we have got a certain feeling because of this atmosphere, immediately we can act and speak and do everything in harmony with this atmosphere. If the atmosphere is that of fear - I have filled the air with fear - I have to find a certain manner to move in order to be in harmony with this fear, and that is all I have to do. To be in harmony, but not to become afraid. I think the future actor will master atmospheres, and, therefore, will never become the character because that is already a mental illness. Of course, we often say, "I was Othello tonight," but that is a lie because if it were true, I would sit with insane people. I must be a free person, enjoying my creation of Othello. I have given this imaginary Othello my voice, my body, my everything, and I manage, govern, and direct my Othello, how and what do feel without forcing my feelings.

IMAGINATION - THE IMAGE:

Another thing the future actor can and must develop is the ability to imagine to such an extent that his images will become for him just as concrete as real things around him - again not in the sense that he will become insane. No. The imagination can be very strong and still I can be free because it is my imagination but not me. The real imagination is the following thing. Let us say the actor wants to imagine

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a strange figure dressed in black. The actor can almost immediately see with his mind's eye the figure in black, each in his own way, and very often that is the limit. We see the figure in black, or we see Cordelia, Ophelia, Hamlet, Horatio, or any character - we see them and that is all.

But there is another step which we must take. Just as we must move towards the thing we want to be concentrated on, so we have inwardly to move towards this figure in black and to move closer and closer, and to embrace it with our invisible hands and then, just as with the object on which we have concentrated, we shall discover in this figure in black its character, its inner life, its feelings, its thoughts, its will impulses, everything. And although this figure in black, does not exist anywhere but in our imagination, it is a living being from the moment when we really merge with it, and we know who it is and what this figure in black will do and what it has done, how it thinks, what it feels, and wishes.

This image awakens to the degree that we give life to it; whether it is our own creation or Shakespeare's Othello, there is no difference. When we give our life to the imaginary figure, then we can be influenced by it just as we are by atmospheres and by everything around us in everyday life, if we have the ability to penetrate with our highly developed concentration into everything around us. And that is what we need. As soon as we are influenced by our image, we are able

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to act it. We are able to give to this image our bodies, our voices, our emotional life - all are at the disposal of the image.

Do you remember Michelangelo's Moses in Rome? Try to imagine how Michelangelo was imagining this figure, then you will get a clear picture of the tremendous power of the imagination. He could not shape such waves of hair and folds on the shoulders of the figure, such eyes and nose - quite obviously Michelangelo was inside this Moses before he started to mold the figure. If we try to penetrate into such great things as Moses, for instance, we will learn how great the imagination can be. It is good also to imagine how he was imagining.

THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHARACTER:

Then we can do the following thing - we can take King Lear on the heath crying "Blow, winds...". We can imagine King Lear on the heath, and so can ask him to act before our mind's eye; and while he is acting, we must go towards him inwardly and embrace him while he is acting, and be with him until we ourselves get the spark of fire which Lear has on the heath. Then we have a true imagination. We must not stop before we reach the threshold of the real imagination, which is the penetration into the inner life of the character. To see outwardly the figure of Lear moving there - if you are

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a director, you will see it easily - but that is not enough; to see things outwardly is easy but that is not yet the imagination - the real imagination starts when we begin to become "clairvoyant" when we begin to "see" his feelings, his will, his thoughts, his everything.

THE INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE OF THE CHARACTER:

The third stage of imagination will be the following one, and it will come of itself. It will come as the result of the two previous stages - to see outwardly and to see the inner life of the character. The third stage is when the character comes, and it is there. You see it with your open eyes - not your physical eyes - you don't need to close your eyes and say, "Don't disturb me, I am imagining." No, everything is then absolutely as in everyday life. You speak with someone, or you read a book, and still Horatio or Lear is there. You study him, not as a madman, but absolutely in a free and normal way, and still Horatio is there. You see him, and you look into him, you hear his voice, you see him acting, you see him radiating feelings, will impulses, and everything. You see the color of his skin; you see everything about him.

After such a visit you will feel a little tired because this image lives your life; you give him the life. But this tiredness is a good and sound one. After the character has left you, you will feel that you are able to act

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the character without clichés, without forcing yourself, without squeezing your feelings. It becomes possible to do so and that is the right thing because the ideal theatre of the future, as I visualize it, is a very easy job, not in the sense of today but an easy job and a very high standard at the same time. An easy job because if we are born actors, we don't want to do anything but act, and if one does the things he wants, they are always easy. What we are lacking is the technique, not only the bodily, physical technique, but the psychological technique to enable us to see what we want and as deeply as we need so that we can change psychologically the space around us without any special, unpleasant effort.

THE INCORPORATION OF THE CHARACTER:

Having acquired such an imagination that the characters begin to live around us, then the next step is to adjust to this character which has got the life from us; to adjust our real physical body to its imaginary body. Of course, Horatio is not like me, otherwise he would be like me in all characters and all parts. So we need physical, bodily training as well, but there is another means of adjusting the character's outer appearance to our physical body.

Imagine that we have developed our physical bodies to such a degree that they are flexible enough. Then we have to look upon our character and ask it to speak a sentence and

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to move. Let us take the "Blow, winds..." scene, for instance. Rehearse the moment in your imagination as many times as you like, until you become satisfied with it - you love your own imaginary production, and it satisfies you.

The next step is that you have to try to imitate your image. Very carefully, step by step, try to move like the character moves, but don't take too long a scene. Take one moment, perhaps one word, and try to imitate it as long as you feel that your body is able to serve the character, just as you imagine it - not in general. When is King Lear in general? We must take the moment of "Blow, winds..." that is all, and imagine it and incorporate it several times. Then you will come to the moment when you feel it is pleasant to serve your own imagination.

After you have chosen several moments of King Lear, - and you should take strong moments - then suddenly the moment will come when you feel you don't need to incorporate separate moments because the character, being a living being, will be doing everything absolutely truthfully and organically. This will be the case of our imagination is developed - you will feel "I am ready." Perhaps you have done twenty or thirty separate moments, trying to incorporate them, and then you have a different body all ready - ready for the whole part.

It is an interesting fact which shows us that consciously we can actually do very little, and we know only too

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well that the whole creative process takes place in our subconscious - this has become commonplace now, but it is still a fact. We have only to send one message after another to our subconscious and try to feed it. These are like a series of telegrams which we are sending to our subconscious. The work will be finished by our subconscious. When we feel that we are ready, having done only twenty or thirty separate moments, it means that our subconscious being has prepared our body to such an extent that we can rehearse the whole part.

THE IMAGINARY BODY OF THE CHARACTER:

Then there is another means of adjusting our bodies to our imaginary characters. Let us imagine that we are going to perform Don Quixote, who is a very tall, thin person. Perhaps we are not as tall and thin as he is, but we are able to make a psychological and physical "trick," if you will excuse the use of this word. There is Don Quixote, and here we are. Now let us imagine that we have another body, which is thin and tall. We can imagine it just as easily as we imagined the air filled with sorrow, or King Lear on the heath. We can imagine that we are much taller - not your physical body, which you can do nothing about, but your imaginary body. Now try to move your imaginary arm and hand, which is long and thin. Do it several times. When you can do it easily, then you can put your physical hand into it as

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into a glove, and your hand will become another one. Because you are creating, imagining, playing with this hand. Pleasantly playing with this imaginary tall figure. How would you walk if you had an imaginary tall body? Follow it, and you will feel how differently your joints are moving because of this imaginary body. When you try to become tall only by means of your physical body, you will get into difficulties, and you will be compelled to lie.

There are no physical means to help you, but the imaginary body can do everything. When we put this imaginary body on our physical body as a glove, then we can imitate and follow this imaginary body. First, we will feel that it is a very pleasant thing, and secondly, that it is art, and, thirdly, we will know about the psychology of such a tall person much more than if we were to try to stretch our physical body as much as we can. A fat man, for instance. Again, there are a few clichés for this, but they are lies. But we can imagine another body with a short neck, a big stomach, and thick arms and hands. Let this imaginary figure move, and you will see that everything becomes different in your body because it will be the psychology of a fat man and not our own body forced to become fat.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER'S PSYCHOLOGY:

This "trick" with the imaginary body will lead us to the ability - and here lies the trick - to know the psychology

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of the person who has this imaginary body. If we try to become fat physically, we will not know anything except that we are tired and a little ashamed, but if we try to put our physical body into this imaginary one, we will know how this fat person feels, thinks, etc. When the fat person says, for instance, "I will run and bring it," why does it seem so humorous? It is humorous only because we are able to penetrate into his imagination and into his idea of how he will run.

This ability to know the psychology of a character with a different body than our own is also one of the sources for humor on the stage. The real humor comes from being able to walk along all these psychological "corridors" of the other person. The clown, for instance. A good clown is humorous because he is walking "logically" along these corridors of a person who, being shot, says "Thank you." It is psychologically true, but if it becomes a lie, it is terrible. Grock is a genius and knows how to walk along these corridors. Now he throws the flowers and forgets them, and then, after many other tricks, he is picking them up. But one must be a genius like Grock to be able to walk such psychological corridors, because it is "logically" true what he does, although it seems impossible.

Just the same, each psychology, each character has inwardly its own corridors and ways, and if we try really to

experience the fat or thin body, then we immediately know the psychology of the character. We will not know the psychology of the character and will even forget our own if we try to force our own physical body to become thin, or fat, or stupid. Then we have no psychology, but only clichés and dead bodies.

DEVELOPING THE ACTOR'S BODY:

I am trying to tell you as many practical things as I can, therefore, I jump from one thing to the other. Certain physical exercises must be done as well because our bodies are very hostile to us. They want to have rest and nothing else. In each muscle and joint we can feel that we are going to fall asleep as soon as possible. It is our human unhappiness to have physical bodies which are sleepy and lazy. We have to stir them a little, and awaken them by means of certain exercises which can develop the whole body. The exercises are very simple, but if we do them continuously and patiently, we will get great results.

MOLDING - FLOWING - FLYING - RADIATING MOVEMENT:

There are different kinds of movements which we do every day without paying attention to them, but in order to exercise we must do them consciously. For instance, let us choose a movement which our bodies do in everyday life - molding movements. Try to make a circle in a molding way - as though you were molding the air with certain resistance

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which you have to overcome. If you have done it in the right way, you will have a feeling of increased power, first in the limb which you are moving, and then in the whole body. At the end you will have the impression that you are younger and stronger, and if you are an actor, you will want to act.

Then we can make another kind of movement - flowing movements. How you look while you are moving must not interest you at all. These exercises are only useful if we remember this. Try to make continuous, flowing movements so that nothing will stop them. Of course, you will feel a desire to sleep, but go on continuously. You can use your own body in the same way - any movement will be right. If this flowing movement is done right and long enough, it will awaken in you the feeling that you are psychologically getting warmer, that you want to radiate, to give your warmth to your audience. You will want to act with your heart. When you are doing molding movements, you want to act with your will, but in these flowing movements you want to act with your heart.

The third kind of movement is flying movements. Flying psychologically - we don't have to give the impression of a flying being - it is important that we feel that we are flying when we make these movements. After such flying movements we will get the feeling that we are happy and gay. If we are really filled with feelings of gaiety, we will get the same desire to act and to give our gay feelings to our audience.

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At the same time, of course, our body becomes flexible in a certain way, which actors need. A juggler who uses his body in everything he does will need other different exercises, but for us, as actors, these are the most important because they awaken our muscles, our whole body by means of the psychology. To be able to fly is a psychological fact, to be able to mold strongly or to float is a psychological fact.

The last kind of movement is a radiating movement. Spread or stretch your arm and hand and radiate - just radiate without any hesitation. You will see how easy it is to radiate in this way. We can radiate without any movements, too. Radiate so that you feel that you are covering space. Radiate to the stars. If the actor on the stage knows that he radiates, the audience will believe it.

These four kinds of movement, molding, flowing, flying, and radiating are of such a nature that you will see, if you exercise them, that they will awaken your body so that it will be able to incorporate, to imitate your own imagination. If we see King Lear running on the heath, and if our body is awakened and is able to obey these four different psychological movements, we can follow him. And we will see in him many more things because if the body is developed in this way, the body will begin to think and understand things. If one's body is flexible enough, it becomes an organ for understanding. If Lear falls down on the ground, how he falls

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in my imagination I know it by means of my own body, and my body does the same - even the impulse to do it is enough - my body discovers the psychology of Lear. Our bodies become our brains, able to hear, to see, to feel, to do everything.

When we have developed our bodies by means of these exercises, we can try to do the following thing. We can read the part which we have chosen for exercise - again let us take King Lear - and we will hear and see things which our body will permit us. "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" If you imagine this scene, you may see that here our body, as an organ of understanding which is penetrating into the psychology, can see that Lear is at this moment filled with will.

Of course, many explanations can be given for this - more or less psychological analysis - why he is filled with will at this time because he wants to get rid of...because he wants to become...but that is not important. How you see it, that is our means of understanding it. "You cataracts and hurricanes," if you will follow your imagination, you will see that he becomes like water - flowing movements - and you will speak these words differently and will act them differently. Of course, it is mixed with will and other things, too. "You sulphurous and thought-executing fires," can be radiating movements - with our bodies we are radiating. "Oak-cleaving thunderbolts," our body knows - everywhere lightning. Then

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another moment comes, "And thou, all-shaking thunder, smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!" Again that is a molding quality.

And so, by the means of our developed bodies, we will be able to see the character in our imagination in a different way than we would be able to without our bodies, which have become our brain.

STACCATO AND LEGATO MOVEMENTS:

There is another kind of movement which it is good to do. Two extreme possibilities which the human body can produce. One is the sharpest possible staccato - try to sharply stretch out your arm and hand and fix it. You must be able to stop as if dead. When we try really to stop our body completely, it begins to move in another way. It is not important to get this physical ability, but psychologically it is important that we have this assurance that we are like stone, or as though dead. It will awaken again certain things in our body which will become more flexible, we will be able to control it more than before, and, thirdly, it is another little "eye" which our body may have while imagining and understanding what the character is doing. Our bodies are constantly imitating our images, and by this process of imitating we understand the inner life of the character.

The other kind of movement is quite the opposite - legato, or flowing movement. Here the psychology is different

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because we are moving constantly in all parts of our bodies so that nothing is in a static state. Between these two poles are all the movements which we produce in everyday life, but we don't pay any attention to them and don't develop them, therefore, they are not strong enough in us to be able to become an inner "eye."

THE CENTER:

Now we come back to the imaginary body, that of Don Quixote, for instance. When our body has become flexible enough and is able to walk and to move being in this imaginary body, then there is another thing. We can imagine here in the center of our chest an imaginary center. This center is the thing upon which our whole body, our physical body, or the imaginary body of the character depends. When we are walking in everyday life, we can imagine we are moving forward because this imaginary center, which harmonizes our whole body, moves forward and we follow it. Then we can move with more inner power and expressiveness because there is something which kills in us the thing which we call "dragging our body," from weariness or bad habits which we accept and submit to. We must not accept these things.

We must always imagine that we have a perfect body, and inwardly we do have perfect bodies if we see them and that is the main thing here with the center. The center is the

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ideal center of an ideal body. If the center moves in a certain way, then no matter how I was born, I have to move beautifully, strongly, being sure that the center leads me forward. Or I follow the invitation of my center to sit down, to get up, etc. I will be always more sound and will have, in time, a body which will be able to become another kind of body because this body with the sound center is so healthy, so right, so beautiful, psychologically speaking, that it is easy for one who has such a center to become such a person. Because of this center, and if the imaginary body will give some suggestions.

This center can do everything and can inspire us in every way. Imagine that you are walking, being led by this center, in the normal way. Now imagine that this center is displaced - immediately you have a different body and a different psychology. This imaginary center having dropped down, let us say, suggests a psychological thing. As you have perhaps noticed, all these things which are so easy to do and to imagine outside of us, influence us strongly, much more strongly than if we try to become, for instance, gay or sad. By means of such imaginary things we just coax our feelings. We awaken them, and they react on all these invitations. They answer us gladly because they are not forced. Now let us place the center above our head. Quite a different psychology and kind of movement. The whole psychology will become

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another one. The center can be a very small thing, here or there. Now we can put the center over our shoulder, and it becomes suspicious. And so on. This center is just the essence of the thing, and it will help us to find the character much sooner.

Questions and Answers:

Question: Most of the people here are very interested in improving themselves as actors, and in getting a chance to be seen. They want to work. They want to lease a theatre for a year, to be used as an experimental workshop. Would you come down once in a while and take over the work?

Question: You said you would give your opinion of the theatre of the future. What do you imagine the ideal acting would be in the future? What would you like to see in the theatre of the future? What kind of acting? How would you achieve this theatre of the future?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): I have tried to touch upon this problem, but I cannot express myself adequately. In a few words I can say that the actor of the future must be a person who will be able to act everything given to him - a very naturalistic play, or a very high tragedy, or a clown, or whatever it is, but the main thing will be how to act. The actor who will develop himself as I have tried to explain today, will, first of all, discover himself as a human being with a

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tremendous will, a very big heart, and an imagination which becomes almost real. Then such an actor will be able to answer the problems of today, of any time in which he lives. He will be able to answer not only by means of a good play or by the work of a clever author, but will answer these questions himself, by opening himself to the point where all politeness and shame will be left behind. If the theatre is a serious thing, which it can and must be, then the actor cannot appear on the stage without being able to open everything he has and show his individuality, his real heart, his real will, because there is nothing more interesting and helpful and even frightening than to see a person as he really is. Not how they smile and say, "How do you do?" but how it is inside.

The theatre has arisen, as we know, from deep sources, from mysteries, and people who became actors were somehow connected with so many mysterious things around them in the world and in their surroundings, in other people, in the composition of their lives, of the events of history, of things which those ancient people found significant in the sense that they saw a person, for instance, and they saw the destiny of that person. They could feel the tragic and happy life of the person because they had insight for such things, and they didn't know how to close themselves because they were not egotistical. If one is closed, then he walks through life absolutely

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egotistically, because he is only taking and not giving anything. On the stage we have to give ourselves. If one acts Othello, the actor must give himself completely. This kind of acting will, of course, bring new playwrights. They will not be so primitive, so superficial. A person's destiny, unhappiness, happiness, sins, religious feelings, everything will be taken into consideration.

Now imagine that we are so closed, so unprepared to meet people who will come from some occupied country, and they will buy a ticket and sit in our theatre. How do you think they will feel? Can we perform before them the things we are giving the public now? We take a cigarette and smoke it and lean on something - such acting will not interest them. They have seen death. They have seen their parents, their brides, their friends, their children destroyed - they don't know where they are - they were bleeding, they are bleeding - they are crying inwardly for help which no one can give them. They are going through such a life now that if I were acting on the stage, I do not think that I could appear before them. I don't walk with my friends with a bayonet - two faces are there and suddenly one disappears - he is bleeding - it is an experience in which years and years of life are included in such a moment.

Don't you think that this is the answer to what kind of plays we must expect from playwrights, and how we, as

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actors must act. We cannot face such people with a smile and say, "How do you do?". It is not possible. They will be ashamed, and we will be ashamed. There will be a wall between us. We must tear our hearts a little, and say if I am performing for you, I must play with my heart, with my whole will. I have to have another psychological technique - I have to be able to become tremendously radiating and with enormous power being able to mold things inside of me.

The actor of the future must be a person different from any other person because of the war, because he is going to face people who are going through such a life, such a real life, such a school that they will have different ears, different eyes, different questions. We will have to satisfy them by recreating our nature and, first of all, psychologically, if we are actors, we have to discover means of expression which will [convey our deepest thoughts and feelings - our hearts and wills].

Questions and Answers:

Question: You have trained a lot of actors. What do you think we lack most?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): Our abilities are not yet beyond the threshold which makes an actor a real magician. Everyone must choose for himself things which he feels he needs because while it is important to have a method and to take it

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individually, not pedantically, each must choose certain things for himself. There are general things which have to be exercised. For instance, concentration. It may be dull work, but without it one cannot go on very far because without it one is somehow inwardly blind. Then imagination is just as important, and so are bodily exercises, properly done.

Question:

It seems to me that each of the four exercises which is specific...What I want to know is how to use that particular emotion in a particular scene. What steps must I take to use two levels of concentration?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): Our business as actors is to awaken our emotions without thinking of any particular part. Simply to enrich our subconsciousness, to be able to radiate, that is enough because then you will, by means of your intuition, find out how and what you have to use to awaken your emotions, or your will and everything. We can interfere consciously with our creative process only to a certain degree - we should not go beyond certain limits, otherwise we may become intellectually dry, and it will be somehow like a ballast on our subconscious abilities.

By exercising, developing, and awakening things inside of us in general, that is the first step. If you feel you are able to radiate and do other such things, if you are

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really able, then they will come at the right time on their own, and then it will be valuable. To answer your question directly, how can we call up certain feelings which we think are good for this particular moment? It requires more time.

Question: By the use of the images you have demonstrated, it seems to me that one simple thing is being expressed at a time. But human behaviour has many variations going on at the same time. A human being can be laughing and crying at the same time. How can you combine these types of behaviour by the use of these images?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): It is an important question which I will answer in general. There is a point in our Method called "two levels" - it is very important because it makes the real art. When one is tall and short at the same time, for instance. There are means to develop ourselves as actors so that we can act at once on two levels. When our acting is on one level, it is so dull. Shakespeare or a modern playwright will become dull immediately. Our work must be on two, perhaps even three or four levels.

Question: , Have you found any theatre in any country which approaches the ideal?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): The ideal theatre requires a constant group because if you are developed ideally but are all alone,

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and the other actors do not know anything about these ideal things, you cannot do very much. So it has to be a group, and here in America we have tried to develop such a group. Here I have had the first opportunity to start this work, and I am very grateful.¹

Question: In the Soviet they have this quality, have they not?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): They have a very strange group situation there. In Russia the theatres have permanent groups, and there is the Method of Stanislavsky. Stanislavsky trained his actors according to his Method, and they became the group they were when he was alive. The first generation of Stanislavsky actors were real masters of their art, with a very high standard. All the other theatres in Europe which I have seen are like the theatres in America - the actors come together accidentally, as it were, for this or that play.

Question: Your group is the only one of its kind in this country. How can we arrive at such a state? It is very difficult because no one else is promoting the group idea.

Answer (Michael Chekhov): I think about it in the following way. Everything depends on you. People who want to be pioneers can do everything. You can build a group and you can say we are here, and we want to serve this new theatre and build a

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foundation. You must be pioneers who will foresee what the theatre will be today and tomorrow and the day after and what you can add to the cultural life of tomorrow.

Question: Unfortunately, people are faced with financial problems, and they tend to leave the group when the chance to make money comes. Out of such groups a few successful actors reach Broadway, but the group dies - the nucleus leaves it for financial reasons. Not many people want to stick together for years.

Answer (Michael Chekhov): It is a very difficult problem, and from certain points of view we cannot solve it because if you need money, you need it. But still there is a little door through which we can enter a small room, and having very little time but a strong will and the desire to do something which may later on grow into something which we cannot even foresee.

Question: Regarding this future actor. If he has mastered the technique of concentration and imagination and is confronted by a script, would you say that he would be developed in such a way that he would be able to give a perfect reading on the first day?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): The manner in which the actors are compelled to work now will not give us any help. Therefore, I say that we must find a small door and a small room and try

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to develop there certain things which are not allowed to be done on Broadway. We must work and be patient and not impose Broadway's manner of work on our manner of work. The first step is to train ourselves as much as possible, and when the nature of the actor is changed even a little, then I am sure we will find a way to work simultaneously with the work being done on Broadway, and perhaps after years we will become victorious. But to persuade Broadway to change its manner of rehearsals and directing is impossible.

Question: Should we expect of ourselves the ability to get up and give a perfect reading of any character?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): I think so because if these abilities are really there, and are fully developed, it will be a great economy of time because you will have, as it were, buttons you can press inside of you with a certain ease. The first reading will be, at the same time, the first imagining, the first incorporating, the first characterization - it will work together all at once.

Question: Have you written a book?

Answer: I am writing a book and have been for some time now. I hope to finish it soon.²

Question: I am sure we are all very moved by people who have

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been through the war. We now have an organization which gives shows to the men in the army. Don't you think it would be wonderful if we could get the government to sponsor a national theatre where such an ideal theatre could be developed?

Answer (Michael Chekhov): I think it is the right way, but whether we would find a response to the idea on the part of the government now I cannot say. It must be something which will persuade them. The only way would be to prepare a play and show it, and then ask them to let us serve the cultural life of the country in this way. That seems to be more practical than to try to persuade them theoretically.

Question: About critics. Is there anything that can be done to take some of their power away from them? How can we buck this situation?

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