

Michael Chekhov

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IMAGINATION
IMAGES - FIRE - FLAME

Hamlet
King Lear

IMAGINATION:

Penetrate into the inner life of the image, or the feeling which must stream from the image through you. When you see the image, you are already on fire - that is what it means to be an actor.

IMAGES - FIRE - FLAME:

Take the same image of King Claudius in Hamlet with full power, without using your brain too much, but with your whole actor's instrument which is like a violin. Call the image to you and absorb it. Relax your body, then the feelings will come; if you are contracted they will not be able to penetrate into you or flow through you. Make your brain more and more free. If you feel you want to add something to what you have seen, when you are doing it, don't stop yourself - this is inspiration. When doing such a passionate scene you will be able to drop it and not be possessed by it. This is the manner in which we take our images - quite freely. This is a very important ability to be able to drop it immediately - you will get the ability to create much bigger and more archetypal images, because the instrument is free. When the instrument is free everything can be fulfilled by it.

Your voices are weak - you must pay more attention

to your speech work. Your voices keep you back. The articulation is sometimes very confused and weak and very personal. Our speech method gives you the possibility to use the voice impersonally, and that is the most beautiful thing we have received from this method.

Let us take another image - the theme is much higher and more objective - it is the moment when the person loses himself and becomes one with the world around him, - it is King Lear in the storm, when he says, "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" The play is with the elements - it is no longer personal. Imagine it and then do it.

Criticism:

You have confused two things - you have rehearsed whereas this exercise was just to get the ability to flame at once, having a very strong image. Therefore we have the need of more and more strong images.

The more free your body becomes the more you will be enticed to make movements with your bodies and your faces, while you are seeing your images. It is allowed and desirable. If the image is strong enough it will affect us - between the strong image and our life there is no barrier, but there should be no tension. This is a very good and inspired kind of rehearsal.

This exercise is different to incorporation - you are really feeling the image. By doing this exercise you will believe more and more in yourself. Some good actors are so timid

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that, although they are able to do many more interesting things, they are unable to break through. Therefore, they take a quicker and surer character, because they don't believe that they are able to do more with it. But with practice you will get this ability. Each of you now gives a certain pattern which is so good and so important - a certain form. Being in full consciousness you must be able to see your image acting in front of you.

Let us take another moment from King Lear, in which the power and the passions are shown in quite a different way; when Cordelia says, "Nothing, my lord." Experience it as if the psychological gesture of the king is his shining center above his head, which is driven right down inside him when Cordelia says, "Nothing, my lord." He is almost fainting. The strongest and most passionate moment with the same degree of intensity as in the "Blow, winds," scene. From somewhere comes this "nothingness" whisper. The whole tragedy is based on these two pauses - "Nothing, my lord!" - "Nothing." In seeing the image try to see King Lear before the words are spoken and after "Nothing" - it is two different kings really. It is the most crucial moment of the play. You must find the fire and convey it by means which are almost intangible.