

Michael Chekhov

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IMAGINATION
REHEARSING
IMPROVISATION
STYLE

IMAGINATION: New Students:

The idea of the imagination, in our sense, is to see the inner life of the character. The imagination must be flexible - for us as actors to imagine means to act in our imagination. Imagine with your hands, your torso, your wills, feelings, etc., but not with your brains. The imagination needs two things; first of all it needs very intensive power. A well-developed imagination will give you very clear moods, in which you will lose yourself. Then you will get results much quicker than if you have a weak imagination, which requires much time.

You must develop your imagination as clearly as possible, but you must be prepared to work with the image for a long time. Even with a strongly developed imagination, you must spend much time to get results in order to overcome the many difficulties which our inflexible bodies and souls give us. If the actor will take the time to find a good, true imagination he will be much more convincing than if he allows himself to be satisfied with an "as if" imagination, and then tries to perform it.

REHEARSING:

What does it mean to rehearse in the theatre? It

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means to meet reality; you imagine something and then in the theatre you meet reality in the form of the sets, structures, etc. This means that you must imagine again, on the basis of what you have experienced. In this way you will get much better results than if you depend on inspiration. The real rehearsal means to meet reality, take it into your imagination, and then rehearse again. This is the right idea of rehearsing as far as it concerns the imagination.

IMPROVISATION: Old Students:

To improvise means to be free in body and mind, to be capable of taking sufficient time to use the various things in the Method which are at your disposal, and to give them order in your spirit and in your soul. This will help us very much when we come to rhythmical improvisation, and we must get this ability during our improvisation work now. If you feel inspired, and the improvisation goes on without disturbance, then you are free to go on without ^{the} Method. But if you are not fully inspired, then don't be half and half - use the Method. But throw it away the moment you become inspired, because the whole Method only makes sense if it leads to inspiration. Improvise the Hauptmann's scene of the family and the father who returns.

STYLE: Improvisation:

Let us improvise the fairy tale in which the land of

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sleeping people is aroused by the birth of a young princess. With the awakening and the growing up of the child - who is not visible for the audience - the enemies of the country come and try to steal the young princess.

Criticism:

You have taken the theme on an earthy level which is not right, and it can be heard in your voices. In the realm of the fairy tale such realistic voices kill the style - you must have some feeling for the style. You must not confuse the styles and the levels - you may not be completely in the style, but you must have at least a foot on the threshold. You must pay more attention to the world which you are trying to create, and you must be more responsible for such elementary things.

We are coming close to the moment when we must approach the greater problem of rhythm, etc., so that we must pay more attention to the things which we already know. This feeling for the style is again something intangible. Style is something you, as actors, must find. No one can give you the key to the style of every play, but the play must suggest to your actor's being the style. You must be aware of this.