

Michael Chekhov

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STYLE OF THE PLAY
STACCATO MOVEMENT
IMAGINATIONSTYLE OF THE PLAY:The Possessed - Presence, radiation, threatening (open & closed):Exercise:

Soft and mild and loving, but it must be threatening radiation and presence for the audience. In this case the threatening is not a real danger. A child is sitting in the room and you go over to it and kneel down by it and say, "Don't cry...don't cry." This is the quality. Then repeat the thing in a quicker tempo. This quality of threatening is at the same time at the limit when it can break the form and become chaotic or volcanic. The threatening quality is always on the verge of breaking. There are two possibilities in the play - to break the form and become chaotic, fiery, and wild, or to keep the form and only threaten to break it. Exercise the process of breaking the form. Everything must be like an explosion - your psychology, movements, etc. This is the difference between threatening when things are not yet showing, and the breaking when everything is shown.

Exercise:

Get up by breaking the form, then sit down by closing the form. Next, in a pause, as if you are distracted, hear the question "What time is it?". By whispering the answer, break the form and then close it.

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These are practical things which we will require for the drama we are going to perform. The style must grow within the actor and be rehearsed and rehearsed. While we are rehearsing characters and scenes we will be rehearsing style. It is intangible for the actor, but very tangible for the audience. The style of The Possessed is drama close to tragedy.

Spanish Evening:

This is quite a different style. The first quality we have to develop is that the whole psychology of the actor, and the character which the actor has to perform, is a childish psychology. Everyone must have this glamour of the childish soul in whatever he does. Try to get it by means of the imagination first. Try to imagine a child who awakens - a very small child. Observe in your imagination how the child opens its eyes. Try to absorb the child's psychology - not the movements - only the spirit. Keeping this psychology, do the following: Look above your head and try to have the child's psychology. Do not try to imitate the child - this is a very different thing - it is childish, but we must have a child-like psychology. The psychological state of the child is what we are aiming at. Walk about the room, having this child-like psychology.

The next point for the same style is to be psychologically open to everything which you see, hear, or do. You

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absorb everything, being absolutely open. Get it through the psychological gesture. Open your whole being - by opening your arms and legs, you will get the psychology. Drop the gesture, and the psychology will remain open.

The third quality is to be absolutely centered on something - absolutely in it, never floundering about. The attention is always concentrated on something. Change the object, but always be entirely absorbed in it.

The last point is that when we are open and concentrated, we must find the psychological means of sending out our whole being to the object of our concentration. You can be concentrated on something and yet holding yourself back - we don't need this kind of concentration. You are out there in the object on which you are concentrating. You can be out or you can be in - but in this play you must be out.

Take it as one of the tasks, to develop and become accustomed to the different styles of these two play. For the Comedy - childlike quality, open, concentration (outward), ease, juggler psychology.

STACCATO MOVEMENT:

Send out your whole being when you march with this quality of staccato. When you come back to yourself, it is with the quality of staccato. Push yourself out of your body, and you will get gradually the feeling that your body is more obedient to you if you are able to send yourself out somewhere.

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If you are bound to your body, you will feel yourself restricted, stuck, stagnant. You must be able to manage your psychology independently from your body. Psychologically, you are living in the world of staccato - your soul becomes staccato - psychologically staccato. Imagine that you are somewhere else - you must be there. You must not be limited by your body. You must imagine yourself disappearing under the earth, or flying over the clouds if you want. Send out your whole being by the means of staccato.

Now add you are moving your body - not in the usual sense that your body moves. My body cannot move of itself - I have to be there to move my body. The artistic mind in me governs my body. This is the difference between the usual walking when one has some vague idea about who I am, and a vague idea about walking, and our walking as artists. I am the artist who moves this body because I want to move it. It belongs to me and I am the master of my body.

Move your body easily in the style of staccato, by sending yourself out each time. Now speak the sentence, "I am moving my body." Try speaking the sentence, being in the atmosphere and the world of staccato as if you are moving your body - now speak the sentence in the same spirit. You must not force your speech. The ideal case would be if only the spirit of the speech would be staccato. The ability to move is surely the ability to speak.