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Michael Chekhov

December 8, 1937

OBJECTIVE
PROFESSIONAL BLINDNESS
SPEECH

Hamlet

New Students:

On the basis of your imagination let us do the Ghost Scene in Hamlet. You must ask questions of your imagination, and your imagination will answer you. For instance, you must first imagine the ghost and then put questions to it, so that you will know what the suffering is which is troubling it.

PROFESSIONAL BLINDNESS:

When we are working on our plays and characters, we know very well what we are aiming at, and the director knows and those who are watching rehearsals know. In our theatre we called it professional blindness, which comes from knowing too much. We want too much and we expect too much; we become blind and it seems to us that we have reached certain things. But when the audience comes to see it for the first time they do not see these things, because they are really not there. To know means to be blind sometimes. For instance, as your director I am already blind so that you were much more expressive for me than for the others who were watching. Actors must know this danger. We must sometimes acquire the eyes and ears of the audience, and then we will get the ability to really see and hear many things.

OBJECTIVE:

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When we have really taken an objective and fulfilled it on the stage, we get the ability to catch the audience and to lead it. The audience is led not because we know the content of the scene, but because of the objective - if the actor has the objective he will be able to lead his audience. This is like a law, therefore, it is worthwhile to work on the objective, as well as the feeling of truth, justification, and all these things which are means to coax the audience and to lead it. You must get the Method like a tool, then your talent will be developed. Your talent will be free and persuasive and you will be happy.

SPEECH:

Let us do the scene from Dostoyevsky of the mother and the tortured son. If one word is lost the whole scene or half the scene can be lost. We must develop this capacity to speak in the theatre. None of the characters must become hysterical - you can express everything you want which lies in the hysterical psychology, without being hysterical, which only hurts and repulses your audience.