

Michael Chokhov

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SIGNIFICANCE  
"HOW" AND "WHAT"  
ACTIVITY - THE WILLSIGNIFICANCE:

The real artist, whether he be painter, musician, or actor has something in his soul which must be and can be discovered. All our exercises can be regarded as an attempt to discover things which are sitting in us, living and moving in us, but they are sometimes so covered that we have no idea of them. Each artist, if he is an artist, of course, has a certain psychological thing which we call feeling of significance. A real artist cannot create things which are not significant for him. It is absurd. When modern artists allow themselves to create things which are insignificant simply to fill the gaps which are in their own minds, this is the disease of our age, but real art is always significant. Whether the artist does a big thing or a small dot it is significant, because the "how" and "what" is significant. It must be psychologically significant. This feeling of significance is something which must be freed in our souls if we are artists - by means of certain exercises. We will start with very simple exercises, and they will lead us to this discovery.

Exercise:

Get up and, by getting up quite naturalistically, appeal to your own soul and ask if it can be done significantly. You will see that this significance is a psychological

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thing - a certain kind of radiance, and not exaggeration, or squeezing of effect for the audience. It is a psychological thing and not a physical one, and the right effect can never be gained by exaggeration. Appeal to this secret of the artistic nature - to be significant on the stage. Avoid two things - exaggeration and an attempt to show off. Don't try to persuade your audience that you are significant - you are significant in doing things. What will you gain by awakening this feeling of significance? You will develop the ability to make the audience follow you because you are significant on the stage, if you will awaken this spring in your nature.

Actors try to substitute many wrong things instead of developing this natural thing of being significant on the stage - they don't even know about it, but their actor's nature requires to be somehow significant and, therefore, they exaggerate by straining their voices, forming bad habits, etc. By all these means they try to substitute their natural desire to be significant. Try to recall actors you have seen, and think of them from this point of view - you will make a very interesting discovery that this feeling of significance wants to be freed. If it is not freed, it becomes an ugly, wrong thing. So there is a danger for our actor's nature if we do not free this desire for significance.

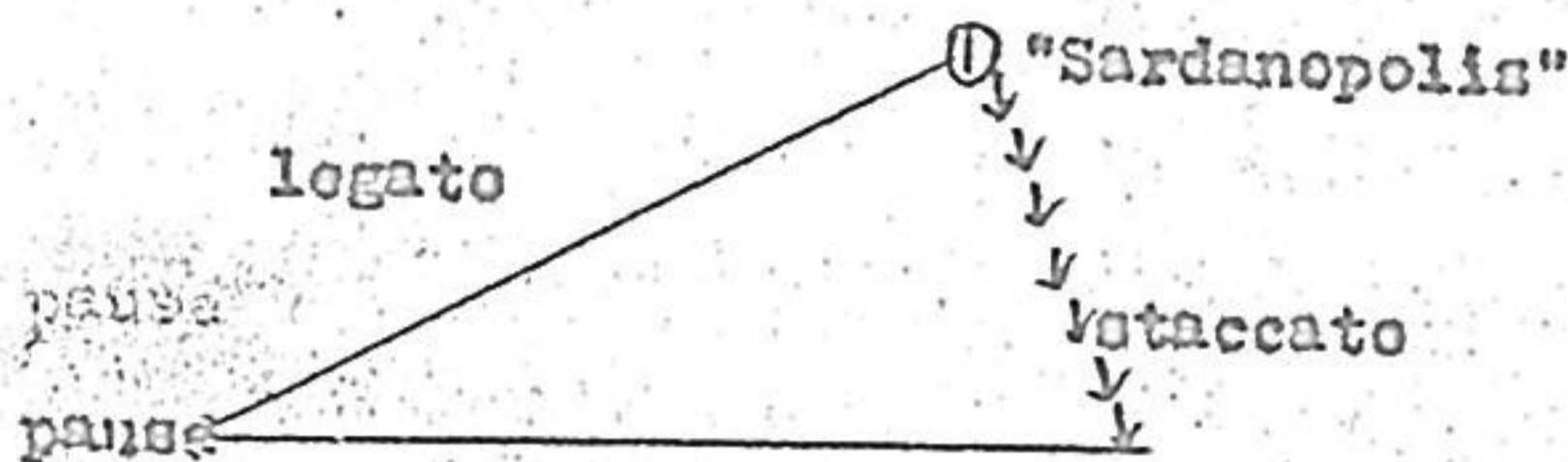
#### Lower Depths:

First act the whole first scene in your imagination

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with all the details and taking into consideration the following scheme:



Take the atmosphere - pale, gray morning, without hope... than the life begins to stir... imagine the whole scene, keeping in mind the rhythmical gesture or scheme.

"HOW" AND "WHAT": Criticisms:

It was too much in general, it was vague and had no form and no continuity. When the director or the audience feels exhausted at the end of a performance, it means that they have done the work for the actors. We have the right to use the term "music" - the rhythmical gesture is the music of our art. We will develop this with time. It is not only the naturalistic "how" which is affected by this music, but it will lead us into intangible, untouchable things. It is the most profound content of the play. If you will develop this big "ear" for rhythm on the stage, you will see that it is the most deeply hidden "what".

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There is one danger which you must avoid. If you have a long part to act, you must not allow yourself to drop your activity for a moment, because you may not be able to pick it up again. It is a question of will. If you drop your activity, you have to start several performances in the one evening, and each one will be weaker than if you hold your activity right through the evening. You must try to exercise this necessary thing in these scenes.