

Michael Chekhov

(afternoon) February 25, 1938

RADIATION \
SIGNIFICANCE

RADIATION:

To develop radiation in the actor, we will start with the most simple exercise. Try to experience the following: The moment when you will appear before the audience. You must realize that you are appearing before the audience, and at this moment of appearance, try to make an effort to radiate your "I am" - your own being. Then I will ask you to disappear, and compare each time the feeling - "I am on the stage," - "I am not on the stage" Keep it - radiate it. You must disappear with the body, not before you leave the stage. I have seen you "leave" the stage before you have left. The disappearance is as important as the appearance. Disappearing is a sustaining of what you have been before. Appear to be on the stage, or not to be on the stage. This is what we call "crossing the threshold." Now be sure that you are able to fill the whole space. This kind of radiation must be continuously in your soul.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Now, show one of your hands, and by showing your hand, try to fill the whole space with the same significance, the same power of radiation, through the power of the hands. Disappear significantly. Now compare these two different states. Do you feel yourselves, that if the effect to appear

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is done inwardly, it is more significant?

When you appear, say the sentence, "We are here," so that it will appear before the audience and fill the theatre. Now I want you to say the sentence, (only when I will give the sign), and this is the second stage of your appearance.

Now, compare the state of being on the stage, and not being on the stage.

Now, I want you, when you appear, to walk to the audience, experiencing it as three powerful waves of appearance:

1. Appearance
2. Walk forward
3. Sentence, "We are here."

Now disappear

1. Walk back - significantly
2. Disappear

Three waves of appearance - two waves of disappearance.

Now, with four waves for appearance - three waves for disappearance.

1. Appearance
2. Walk forward
3. Lift hand
4. Sentence, "We are here."

Now disappear

1. Walk back
2. Lift hand
3. Disappear

Now, try to do this thing with the same power of

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radiation, with the same feeling of significance, but in a very quickly advancing tempo (in the style of Henry's play):

1. Hands
2. Bodies
3. Walk forward
4. Sentence

Because of the quick tempo the significance must not disappear.

Now, in a very quiet voice, so that the power of radiation is more important than the loud voice.

Now, for an experiment, enter the stage without any significance. Do you feel the difference? For the audience it is quite different.

The same, but with music. One musical sentence for appearance - one for disappearance. Take this music, and turn to the style of Henry's play.

Now, appear in one place, and disappear in another. Try to disappear completely, because this not-quite-clean disappearance will spoil the habit we are working for. Between these two musical sentences say, "We appear, but we will disappear," then followed by the next musical sentence. Try to speak these two sentences in the style of Henry's play.

The stage space, as the stage time, is flexible and unreal, and if it is real it is not art. If you will diminish or increase the line, the appearance and disappearance are quite different. They must be done in quite a different way. You must get the ability to reckon in your souls, how

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you must appear. Be ready with the musical sentence and with the spoken sentence. Do you feel the difference? It must not be described but must be felt.

Do the entire exercise, without music, in the dark. The significance of your hand must be quite a different one in this dark room. Now, we are on the stage - quite different states. Now, with full light, give the same exercise. Now, with full darkness.

Will you enter the studio, radiating your being and spreading yourselves over the stage. "Crossing the threshold" is the most beautiful thing. Speaking quite simply, and without any special emphasis, say, "We are here."

Now, dim the light slowly and try not to change the mood, but try to experience what kind of radiating power you have to apply when the light goes dimmer. Now, back to full light.

What I wanted you to experience was not only the change of the mood by light and darkness, but the kind of activity with which we radiate, the amount of activity we radiate, because to change the atmosphere and the mood, it is much easier to find the real activity for speaking in lighted or darkened rooms. The actors must respond to all these fantastic differences - black, white, blue, green, small, big, high, low, thin, thick, etc. It is the amount of activity. Fill the room with your voice without increasing the voice.

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Now, try to diminish the power of your voice and rely upon your radiating power only. Explore only your radiating ability.

Turn your back and do the exercise. Go to the back wall and face it. Try to do the exercise by means of radiation.

Leave the stage and go to the dressing rooms and consider them part of the stage, and be conscious of what is going on on the lighted stage, then do the exercise. Try to get it in a whisper, still feeling the space - less voice - more radiation. Now do it with the stage in darkness.

Come forward, and by being on the threshold of the stage, try to experience your appearance on the stage which is full of light.

Now, everybody experience it from the audience with only Mrs. Elmhirst and Alan on the stage. The task is as follows: The mother is to dress the bridegroom so that each word and movement flies to the audience on waves of power and radiation. Follow them only from the point of view of radiation.

The same for Deirdre and Woody; Beatrice and Paul; Catherine, Terry and Peter. Now, the Wedding Procession to the Church. Everybody is under the magic power of the showman.

Have you got the idea of these exercises? Unless we are continuously radiating, we are not able to act. I want you to realize the following thing, that when we speak about

taking the objective with the whole being, it is necessary. The whole being must radiate even if we are just going to show one hand. We must radiate with our whole body. When you will take the whole body and show one finger you have great power.

Scenes from Mr. Shdanoff's play:

We will try to touch different moments from different scenes, by the condition that you will pay attention to this power of radiation which will fill the whole audience room and the stage, but I must make it clear that it is important to distinguish between two things: First, to carry our influence when speaking by the means of increasing the power of the voice. Secondly, whether we are behind the stage or not, we have only to increase our inner effort to radiate.

1. With your imagination, see two characters in the first scene - Nicholas and the spy. We see how the spy tries to convince Nicholas to go with him, and to start this big revolutionary movement in the country they are going to. The spy is always afraid before this strange nature of Nicholas, who can always say, "No," in the most important and crucial moments. We see the spy trying to persuade Nicholas to go with him. We will take only one sentence which the spy says enthusiastically, "Imagine, abroad we have the center of the whole organization. Threads are going from the center to a multitude of smaller groups and organizations." Nicholas replies, "If I go home it will be without you - you will not

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know when I go."

2. The train derailment scene. The task is the same.
3. Church Entrance scene.
4. Drawing room of the mother scene.
5. The son's nightmare scene.

The inability to get this radiation makes us do absolutely wrong things. Because this radiation is not yet in our power, we do everything that is wrong, in the hope that it will be all right. There must not be any illusion about this at all. I can increase my voice, I can make pauses, but it does not help. Quite the opposite - it spoils it more and more. We must pay attention to this necessity to develop our power of radiation, to have it consciously. If we will rely upon the "accident" we will have bad performances and then we are lost - nobody will reckon with us whether we are good or bad - it will be just bad theatre. Hurd, for instance, has lost absolutely everything with wrong effort, with wrong means. What we had in the studio was the beginning of something which was right. Ponder on this and see and desire to get the right means. If we are able to show good things in the studio, we can do them here in the theatre as well. The whole idea is to get the right means for all possible spaces. The mother's voice and radiation were on two different levels - one level could be right as, for instance, radiation, but the voice is quite wrong. You must

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master both the ability to speak and radiation - both things must be achieved.

6. Banquet scene.

There is a great illusion in our profession that we can belie the audience. Hurd's body tries to take shapes and forms that are impossible for the human body, instead of radiation.

If some of you are depressed after our work today, it is understandable, but do not allow this sorrow to take your activity. Do not be weak in the sense of being passively sorry, but be actively sorry and know that you have to achieve something, sorry because you are lacking something. Therefore, re-collect your activity and send it to your weak point. Please be very active after this experience, and remember what form or style this play has. The form is full and almost breaking. That means that the radiation is like a gun which is always full and almost breaking. ~~That means that the radiation is~~ like a gun which is always full and can give the shot. With time, this lack of radiation leads us to this timeless time which is almost stopped. Instead of having "Now the form will break," and being able to run in psychological space, the form will be closed and we will stop and be frozen in this form. If we are active in radiation, it will lead us more and more to this activity. This is a big play, and we must act it with such activity and power that the audience will

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get the feeling it is finished too soon. That will mean we have acted in the right way. You must think over what we have done and try to improve it in your imagination.