

Michael Chokhov

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IMPROVISATION  
THE CREATIVE STATE  
THE METHOD  
CRITICISM OF LESSON BY A  
STUDENT

Stanislavsky

## IMPROVISATION:

We will take a simple improvisation and will take different grounds and will change one after another as quickly as possible. The scene is a small provincial town in which this family lives. There comes into this dull provincial town a regiment, and some of the young officers visit this family. It is a Sunday morning, the sun shines and in a marvelously happy mood and the atmosphere all the member of the family are waiting to greet the officers. Everyone is happy. Then gradually the sound of a thunderstorm comes nearer and nearer. In the early morning a boy of fourteen went for a walk and has not yet come back, and this disturbs the members of the family whose only idea now becomes, "Where is the boy?"

The atmosphere changes as the thunder storm gets nearer and we see that something distrubs the family, although they do not say anything about it to their guests. Finally one of the members of the family goes out to find the boy, and at the end of the improvisation the person appears at the door and falls in a faint before he can say anything.

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The members of the family are: Hurd, Jeanne, Mary Lee, Mary La, and Woodies, and the officers are Peter, Blair, René, John, Sam, Paul, and Alan. All the members of the family are very friendly with each other, but there is a very strange old family nurse who is very obstinate, and who has a very strange character. She is very excitable and wants to be the first person to be considered. She tries to show off, especially on occasions when it is not necessary.

The task is a difficult one. If I tell you that the basis for the improvisation is to be characters, then you must find at once something and act the character with full feeling of truth. If I tell you that it is objective, then at once you must be quite conscious as to what kind of objective you can take. The scene is quite naturalistic, in the style of Chekhov or Ibsen.

From the point of view of being able to take all the suggestions it was not good, but perhaps the young students do not know some of the things such as significance, center of interest, etc., but it was not yet skillful enough. This attempt has perhaps helped you, but it was not what we think of as the real ability to juggle these basic things inside you. This exercise must be repeated many times and through this tremendous effort you will finally get the ability to manage inside you the whole psychology - otherwise the whole Method is as nothing.

Some basis or grounds which you may take are:

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contact, radiation, feeling of ease, feeling of form, center of interest, significance, atmosphere, objective, characters, group feeling, feeling of beauty, psychological gesture, radiation, style, feeling of the whole. Repeat the scene, finish it on your own, and then leave the stage.

The creative state is what we are aiming at. The whole Method, each point of it, has been taken from the work of great artists. Can you imagine a great artist, a great pianist, without radiation? Stanislavsky said that his Method was nothing more than picking things from other great artists, analyzing the work of great artists and taking these points. I have done nothing other than to elaborate it further. I have added nothing; I have only taken these points which exist in every form of great art.

What are we doing day after day with our two plays? Are we really going to be able to show them? If so we simply have to get all these points with all our will, with all our concentration. We have to know the whole Method with our whole being. It is essential, otherwise I feel that we are groundless - drowning. I feel I have no right to be here because I have not fulfilled my promise. Stop and ask yourself where is the objective? Imagine a group of workers in a wire rope factory; the hot metal streams through and they must catch it and turn it. They must know their business, and yet it seems to us that we don't need to know ours. This is not right;

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we have a definite method and we must have a definite grasp of it.

CRITICISM OF A LESSON ON ATMOSPHERE GIVEN BY A STUDENT (Veronica):

1. The lesson was too intellectual; in giving a lesson you must be concerned with the question as to whether the students follow you. In this instance Veronica gave her ideas quite cool and cold. The ability to give a lesson in our sense means that you must open your heart to them rather than to require them to follow you. Never use the words, believe in it. We have other means. It is impossible to believe when you are told to. You must approach it from other points; from the point of will. You can do something, but you cannot feel something or believe something by being ordered to do so. We have means which will lead us to something which we can do.

2. You have spoken about things which the New Students cannot understand - for example, you spoke of the soul of the play. Why is it called the soul of the play? In what sense? If you are going to explore atmosphere as the soul of the play or the performance, then you must explain that the spirit of the performance is the line of action, the theme, and the body of the performance is what we see and hear, but we must not start with this. This is too much for the New Students.

3. You have confused two things. You mention

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imagination but you have not defined what we must do with it. You have a good imagination, and if you will imagine that your students are always new ones then it will give you a special approach. It is not good to suppose that they know something. You have not explained to them the important thing which is how to manage the atmosphere. You asked them to take the atmosphere from the landscape and then to produce it. But we have a special technique - if you have to imagine the atmosphere you must imagine that it fills the room and then you must absorb it. The whole process is based on the will, not on the feeling or belief. When I have imagined the atmosphere I must send it out. You must be clear about the subject, and clearer about the succession. It was too quick; it could not have been understood, let alone done. The teacher must have an open heart.