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THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION  
 THE INNER LIFE OF THE IMAGE  
 FAIRY TALE IMAGES  
 THE ACTOR'S BODY  
 THE ACTOR'S SPIRITUAL CREATION  
 THE BODY AS THE ACTOR'S INSTRUMENT  
 STACCATO AND LEGATO - BODILY  
 PSYCHOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS  
 THE CENTER  
 INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHERS  
Hamlet

Class for Beginners

THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION:

I will try to give you an idea of what we actually mean by having first an approach to our Method. In our school we believe that the basis and main impulse for creative work is the creative imagination which must be developed consciously, and usually over a fairly long period of time. You must have enough inner activity to say to yourselves that we have to work upon the Method, upon the imagination, which means we have to make exercises every day, without interruption. If such exercises take only five or ten minutes a day, it is better than not to do them at all, or better than if you work half an hour today, and nothing tomorrow - it must be rhythmically repeated work.

Everyone has the ability to imagine; as a human being each of us has the ability, whether we are artists or not. We have the ability to imagine, but the power of the imagination which we have is not enough for an artist, and especially for an actor. It must be increased and developed to such an extent, that the imagination will become a really great power which can lead us in our creative work.

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

Why do I say lead us? Because the usual kind of imagination is something which we lead, we drag behind us, we have it somehow in our weak hands. But as an artist, an actor, we have to get quite a different feeling. We have to develop our imagination to such an extent that it will lead us. The imagination must be so strong that we have to run after it, not drag it behind us. For instance, if I ask you to imagine a flower, a red flower, you will have to make an effort and you may find that you cannot get the shape of the flower, or the interest for it. Or if you make the effort, you may see that the flower is gone, and instead you will see something more pleasant, like a cup of tea. You have to fight with your imagination - that is what we call to be led or to be dragged by your imagination.

But there is another possibility - a very strongly developed imagination. For instance, you have the task to imagine the red flower, and the instant you get the task you become interested in this flower. Immediately you will be absorbed into this picture. You will see a red flower and nothing more - you will see its shape and you will see that not only your mind's eye sees this flower, but you will find that all other abilities you have are brought into activity. You will feel that the red color is something which inspires you to certain activity, which we can call red activity. If the flower is blue, you will get a different feeling.

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

## THE INNER LIFE OF THE IMAGE:

All your senses and inner abilities will be drawn into this kind of imagination. More than this, if you will imagine some character - let us say Hamlet - if you imagine him, you will not only see him and how he looks, but you will be immediately able to penetrate into Hamlet's inner state, and live in all his feelings and thoughts. You will not only have your images before your mind's eye as clearly as your own hand, but you will be able to penetrate into the inner life of the character or image. Moreover, you will see that not only do human beings and characters which you have to imagine have inner life - you will see that everything has inner life. For instance, the chair. If you, as an artist, will imagine the chair, at this moment you will get the feeling that this chair has a certain life which you, as an artist, can and must use. If it is in one position, it will have one kind of expressiveness, and in another position it will mean something else.

There is nothing dead on the stage for the actor who has developed his imagination to such an extent that the imagination leads and lifts him. That is the first thing to learn about imagination.

## FAIRY TALE IMAGES:

Exercise:

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

In our library you will find books on fairy tales. Please take some of them and read them and choose one or two passages and try to imagine every day a little passage from the fairy tale you have chosen. Imagine it in the following way: Take three or four lines and then imagine the first image that is described, then see how the image does something or what somebody does with the image, or what new character appears, etc. Follow the succession of events again in the passage you have chosen.

To follow in your imagination means to try to see it with your mind's eye. Try to penetrate into the life, and try to make this picture more and more clear to yourself. Try to imagine the process of events and the characters clearer and clearer. You can make them more and more complicated and elaborated, but never be satisfied with the simple repetition of what you saw yesterday in your imagination. This would not develop the imagination, but in fact would really stop it. Each effort to imagine something must be a new thing. If I have seen the red flower clearly yesterday, today I must see it much clearer. Always a new effort, a new attempt to see the image clearer than before.

Exercise:

If you have noticed that your imagination breaks and becomes weaker and then stronger, or your attention is disturbed, that is actually the ground upon which we have to work. We

M. Chokhov

October 2, 1939

have to acquire the ability to imagine so that the imagination will not be broken, and get weaker and weaker, but rather stronger and stronger so that your images will not disappear and change if you don't want them to be changed.

It is just the same with parts in the theatre. We have seen actors with a very great and famous part like Hamlet, let us say, and they try to prepare it in a few weeks time. If a few lines in a simple fairy tale can give such content, how can one dare to take Shakespeare and prepare it in five weeks? How impossible, how wrong and crude and offensive!

By making these efforts for at least five minutes every day you will see two things. First of all, how far you can get if you will exercise. I want you to see this ideal case where you will master your own imagination so strongly that you will be like a magician in your own inner world. Secondly, you have to pay attention to certain mistakes which you make, for example, your imagination, breaking it, being satisfied with simple repetition, and remembering your imagination of yesterday, when you have become lazy and forgotten the ideal. There will always be two things - one thing leading to the ideal, and another to all the possible mistakes. So pay attention to the mistakes much stronger than to the mistakes. If you only pay attention to the mistakes, it will be disturbing to you, but if you will make a new effort to get the ideal, you will be aware of the mistakes, which you are likely to make.

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

You must continuously make this inner effort to see the images and also to be able to stop the imagination. The inner psychological muscle by means of which you can get the picture, keep it, and discard it. Therefore, I suggest that you do the exercise in this way - start the imagination, then break it and discard it, then start it again for a few seconds - start it, stop it - not the whole time but as part of this exercise.

#### THE ACTOR'S BODY:

The ideal we must work for is to get a new feeling for the whole body which we can describe as the following: "How glad I am that I have such a marvelous, flexible thing on me which I call my body." This pleasure in moving is the background for all artistic movement of the body. This pleasure can be awakened by such simple concentrated thinking as I have mentioned to you. (1) We have our bodies. (2) We have our bodies as instruments. (3) We have pleasure in moving our bodies.

Usually we feel that our bodies move us, but for the artist it must be quite different - the artist must say to himself, "I am moving my body." In our usual life we do not distinguish very clearly between our bodies and ourselves, which are sitting in the body. We have our bodies on us like an overcoat which we can take off and put aside. We will never say that the overcoat is me. The body is not me - it

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

is something which I have and which I can move if I want to, I can keep it quiet if I want to, I can move my hands if I want to.

THE ACTOR'S SPIRITUAL CREATION:

It is essentially important for an artistic consciousness to be able to distinguish between "I" and "my body," then we will get the right idea that the body is only an instrument which we possess for conveying to our audience our emotions, feelings, and ideas, and everything we have. We are going to show to our audience not only our body, we are going to show our spiritual creation, our ideas about Hamlet, Lear, or whatever the role is, by the means of our body.

The more you will consider your own body as if belonging to you, and not as you yourself, the easier you will be able to manage your body when you move. You can throw your overcoat away because you feel that it is at your disposal, and you possess it, but very often we cannot do this with our body because we think it is "me." If we confuse ourselves and our bodies we cannot manage our body freely, but if I have become accustomed to the idea that I control my body, I will feel superior to it, and then I will be free in all my movements - physical and psychological. You will get a kind of freedom which you will never acquire if you only develop your body as such. You must get the idea that "I take my body and move it."

2095  
M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

Move your body with the idea that "I am moving something which I call my body."

#### THE BODY AS THE ACTOR'S INSTRUMENT:

No one can see you, the real you, the spirit, the soul, the psychology, the feeling. We can only see the body. You, as a supernatural being, give the message to the outer world in the form of the arm which you lift. If I don't move my arm or give the message through my body, the audience will never know what I want to convey. When you enter the stage, you must always have this marvelous feeling that "I enter, not because my body leads me on the stage, but because I give you the message that my spirit, my supernatural body, moves my body towards you so that you have the message that my spirit is now on the stage." If you have this feeling, you will get absolute freedom in moving your body in a certain fine, expressive way. This is the first thing in learning how to re-create our understanding of our own body - re-imagine it.

There are two different kinds of movement which we can produce - two extreme kinds of movement. One we call staccato movement, in which our spirit is going to use our body in the extreme sharp form of staccato. The other extreme, in which there is nothing sharp but in which everything flows softly and smoothly, is the form we call legato. If we can make perfect staccato and legato movements, we will be able to move in between these two extremes. By exercising these



M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

the extremes we acquire the possibility of using all the gradations between the two.

#### STACCATO AND LEGATO - BODILY PSYCHOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS:

##### Exercise:

Try to move your whole body in strong, sharp staccato. Try to live in this atmosphere so that you are completely staccato - don't let your legs be staccato and your arms legato. You must fix it without any uncertainty or wavering. Now another extreme - absolutely legato - like water - each muscle must feel that it is in the process of flowing. While our bodies are moving staccato, certain powers in our body make something legato in it, and this spoils the movement. The same is true of legato movements. We must try to overcome this with the definite desire to get one extreme and then the other. Although we may never use these two extremes on the stage, we must get the ability to do so.

The exercise is really more psychological than physical. Do the exercise very simply in form, and all the "embroidery" do psychologically. First, we have our spiritual values [message], which we have to convey to the audience through the means of our bodies, and not our bodies because they are not interesting. Therefore, all our bodily exercises must be done as if they were psychological exercises. This is the aim. Now do the exercise only in your imagination fully

M. Chekhov

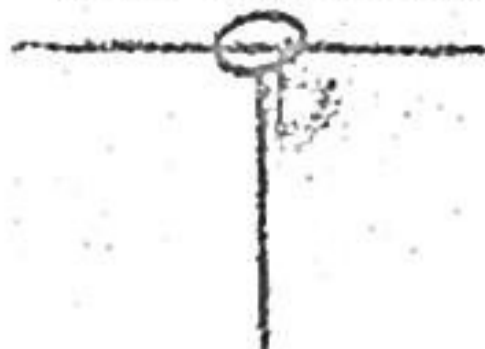
October 2, 1939

and strongly so that you have the picture of your own imaginary movements in the ideal form. Do it only psychologically - in your imagination.

We have our bodies. Try to appreciate that we, invisible beings, have a visible part which we call our body. What is the position of our body in the world? Up and down. That means we are attached to the earth as strongly as the animals are, but at the same time we are absolutely free from the earth in the upper part of our body, therefore, free from gravitation. Try to appreciate that there are no other creatures, except human beings, who are absolutely masters of the earth and have the heavens at their disposal. We must appreciate this if we want to manage and govern our bodies - we can be very rough and heavy and fall down, and we can also fly up.

So, with our psychology, these two extremes can give us great possibilities in the future - then we will be artists. If we were only flying over the earth, our art would not be useful, because we would be lopsided psychologically, and if we were animals, we could not know any art. But we possess this ability to appreciate how marvelously our bodies are put into the universe, with these two extremes.

#### THE CENTER:



This is the archetype of our body, and it is very easy to feel that the whole figure is

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

somehow centralized with a center. If you will try to listen to this center in you, you will find it very soon - a certain presence there. Now try to find the center in your chest - this is the center from which you actually move your arms and hands. When we move them from the shoulder only it is a dead process - something is lacking. We cannot express certain things if the shoulders are dead.

So the center is important from two points of view - if you will move the hands and arms from this center, all your movements will become more expressive and more full. At the same time it is psychologically important - you will feel yourself more expressive because your whole being, your emotions and psychology which you have to convey to your audience, will really flow from your joints. Our joints can be used to express our ideas, and, at the same time, if they are not developed, they can stop us from expressing our feelings. Exercise all movements of your hands and arms from this center. Now, having this center, try to move your body forward - first moving your center, and then your body must follow it. Now, move first your body and then the center. By means of such exercises you will get the ability to move very beautifully on the stage, and <sup>that</sup> is always essential for the actor. It is a movable and flexible thing.

Just as your arms and hands start from the center, so do your legs. Imagine that you walk from the center, like

M. Chokhov

October 2, 1939

a big pair of scissors.

If we have such an ideal comprehension of our body and our psychological being, this ideal composition will make it much easier for us to act character parts. Imagine, for instance, that you have a funny character part, and for this you have perhaps moved the center into your nose. Immediately you will get a certain funny psychology. All such things will be immediately at your disposal, and you will become psychologically beautiful so that the audience will say how strange that you are so beautiful. The secret is that it is a psychological beauty, which is based on a certain understanding of your body and soul. The violinist has a beautiful violin for his instrument, but the actor has nothing but his body and his soul. We must acquire the same feeling that the violinist or pianist has for his instrument. We have to evaluate our own body in order to do this.

Exercise: The Actor's March:

Try to keep in mind all the things we have done this morning, and try to incorporate them while you are marching. Always try to realize what it is we have done in this lesson. Make the effort to realize and incorporate everything in the Actor's March.

One principle is very important - you must not write down all the things which you will hear from our teachers but

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

try simply to remember them because the thing which is written down is forgotten, so try to remember rather than to write down. If you have forgotten something, wait until we come back to the same point or ask about it. This is a very important principle in our work.

You will start your work on some sketches, during which work you will get the points of our Method, and you will try to apply them while you are rehearsing these small sketches or scenes. The exercises will be done also during the whole time. You must prepare the sketches in accordance with the Method, so that you will exercise the various points. You must prepare your tasks. The first one has to do with a fairy tale. Imagine every day the same passage of the fairy tale. The second task is to think at least once a day, about all this bodily-psychological work we have touched on in our lesson today.

#### INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHERS:

We will try to work with the new students in exercises, sketches, and tasks. For instance, the task of imagining the fairy tale. Or for one week you can give them the task of exercising the feeling of ease. But give it in the form of a task, so that you are sure that during the week they are working on this or that exercise, and you must check on it at the end of the week. Avoid the following thing - don't give separate tasks - if one teacher gives a certain task, then all

M. Chekhov

October 2, 1939

of the students must do the same task. Therefore, we will have a book in which we will keep note of the tasks and exercises and sketches so that when another teacher comes, he can see what has been done.<sup>1</sup>

I would suggest not to go too quickly with new things. Perhaps keep the students on atmospheres and objectives as long as we can so that we will see that they get the idea in a particular way, and for this purpose I will give the first class on each new point. But for the present, exercise on imagination, body exercises, and sketches. You can also do improvisations based on imagination. Begin by reading or telling the scene so that they will imagine. I suggest that you divide the lesson between exercises and sketches.