

ACQUIRING THE METHOD
TECHNIQUE
STYLE
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JUSTIFICATION

ACQUIRING THE METHOD:

I am afraid of something which is too dangerous to be overlooked. I am not sure about two things one of which is whether you really work at home on the plays. When I see you starting again and again the same exercises I feel I have to lift you like a heavy weight each day anew. This is not at all professional - it is not allowed. A person who works in a factory cannot be taught each morning the same thing, but we have actually to start from the very beginning each morning. I repeat so many times the same thing, and without any results. It makes me so unhappy and it is a great problem for me. What does it mean? I don't know the reason.

I was an actor for many years, and I remember that when I was told by the director during the rehearsal that this is what I want, then I brought it the next day and it was there for the whole time, unless the director told me it was not needed. But to leave the rehearsal, and to come the next day as if you have done nothing or tried nothing, this is to me a mysterious thing, and it makes me ill.

The touring group must have professional abilities; what it has done it has done. Tomorrow we add another stone and the next day another, but to stay each day with the same stone is not possible, because we must build. I must put this

problem before you, because I feel helpless and hopeless. I cannot help you because you do not help me. I can do my work, but I cannot do your work. You must understand this; you must do it, not me. When I see that we start again from the very beginning, I am ill and weak psychologically, and I feel everything is in vain.

Another point, when I ask myself if they work at home, then I ask whether they really know how to work. You must know because we have spoken about it so many times. What does it mean to work at home. First of all you must have a list of the things, in whatever order you like. Let us imagine that you have to prepare something relating to center, for tomorrow. How shall you do it? You must start to work with your imagination on certain scenes, certain sentences, the whole play, but to work absolutely decisively, taking this or that point of our Method. After imagining for let us say ten minutes, then quite consciously stop and see what you have.

Next you may choose the Psychological Gesture - then take the scene or the character and find the psychological gesture. Perhaps you have to invent it, and when you have found it you work on the same scene with it. Then stop.

Then take other points of the Method, atmosphere, objectives, etc., and work with them. If you are able to do such work, then you are able to work with them. If you are able to do such work, then you are able to be a member of our

Studio and our future theatre, because we are trying to find this conscious, sound, cultural approach to this poor theatre profession which is nothing but vague floundering about. We want to find the method.

When you work in the old manner, that means to read some words and do some movements, then stop and look out the window, and then speak some sentences, then sink into a certain vague state which makes you feel that you are very much in the play - all these things are our enemies. Therefore I have elaborated a certain Method, because I have seen what a psychologically unhappy life actors have if they are not famous and selfish. They are only thinking of a big salary, and big parts, and to be head of the theatre. This their only aim; there is no profession, only floundering about and dreams of a possible future.

TECHNIQUE:

The only way to stop this stupid life is to make a real profession from our so-called profession and for this purpose we must have a certain technique - the simplest technique I can give you. Atmosphere...simple. Objective...simple. Don't take it as a heap of rules which a Russian person has given as a certain method. If you approach this heap of rules and really put your hand in and take one thing you will see that it is a jewel, and not a vague and unshaped heap of things. Everything is quite understandable, therefore

you must work at home, taking each of these things separately. For instance, take imagination...put it back. Objective... put it back. Psychological gesture...put it back...and don't try to take the whole heap of things which are falling down on you. If we do this, and only if we do this, will the time come when we shall master our simple technique as a magician masters his very complicated technique.

Imagine what a musician had to learn before he began to play - but he was able to learn his technique. That means by desiring to learn a certain technique we do not need to spend our whole life at it. In two or three years time we can be masters of our technique, but we only begin to master the technique of this so-called profession. If you go to the university you will have to learn much more difficult things with much more attention. You will have to learn Greek, for instance, because the University will require it of you. In our profession we cannot learn our technique theoretically, only practically, day after day, by doing these simple things; we have to do them one by one, then we will get this technique.

You do not appreciate one thing which is quite new in our school, but as an old person in the theatre I know how important it is. If you will go to another school which has no method, you will be told so many times that you are not gifted; the teachers will tell you that you have no gift. We never say that you have no gift; we say swallow this pill and you will be healthy and sound. We may have to say some-

times that a person is not gifted enough and it decides their destiny here. We are sometimes obliged to say it, but we don't say it to everyone, every moment.

In other schools you would experience this dreadful thing day after day. Gradually you would become old, angry, tired, willing to act and to be famous so as to reckon with all these teachers. With time it creates a certain psychology which we know in the theatre. You will not find a theatre anywhere in the world, except perhaps in China and Japan, where jealousy and hatred don't reign over the whole psychology of the theatre. But we are so lucky to have quite a different thing.

But we see that you have not taken this pill from the box and swallowed it - it will not hurt you it will only help you. There is a great difference. If we appreciate it we will appreciate the possibility of getting the means with which to manage ourselves. If you will take these suggestions seriously, then you will see the results, the first of which will be that you will bring to tomorrow's rehearsal what we have tried to do today, or yesterday, and from this point we will be able to say that now we begin to be professional. Until that time we are only amateurs and weak personalities.

If we have to hear the same thing day after day we are weak in our minds, simply weak, and something must be done about it. The only thing we can do to fight this wrong attitude of mind, is to take the Method. Please try to help

me by using the Method, one thing after another.

If you will do this you will get the pleasure and it will be your interest to work, you will want to work because it makes you happy, because you know how to work line by line, word by word. Therefore, I want you all together to attend the same rehearsal, and I will try to demonstrate to you how you can work at home, by combining certain things. When at the beginning of the term I told you to work from three points - concentration, imagination and incorporation, I thought you would do this and would understand it.

STYLE:

Imagine you are at home, working alone. What will your ground be? Style. Take the scene in the mother's sitting room in Our Phantoms, [The Possessed]. Rehearse by trying to express the style. We are not exploring the mise en scene - it is another possibility but not at this time. What does it mean to work with the style? Be quite clear and conscious of what we imply by the style. Be absolutely conscious of each step - form, my body gives me the form. I fill it. The form must be filled with at least my presence, my "I am" present in my form. Next: your presence must fill the form so strongly that it can be broken. Stiffness comes always but I take it from my body - stiffness inwardly which stops the tempo is taken away. My "I am" filling my body. Absolutely simply and very consciously done. Now we have

this basis and we see from this point of view only. If you feel that the form becomes weak, stop and begin again. Don't lose yourself in imaginary things; only one thing is being exercised - style - nothing more. You are blind and deaf to everything else.

If you judge yourself now from the point of view of the future performance there is nothing - it is impossible from the point of truth or justification perhaps, but in such rehearsals, at the very beginning when we are only concerned with the style, it will be wrong but let it be wrong - we have time to repair it. Actors of the old school try to act the whole part at once - from where? Just a heap of something which will lead to chaos. The same as a child who begins to write letters before he can write his alphabet, he will write, "Mama, buy me the toy."

Don't try to write something before you have the knowledge of the letters, but work concentratedly on the one point, doing it again and again. This does not mean that you have to lie - if your nature tells you that it is very untruthful you will find the right approach and the truth, but it is not absolutely necessary at the moment. We will find all the nuances and details and truth later on, but conscious work on the style is our only consideration at the moment.

That was an example of how you can work alone - no truth - not the right psychology - not the right characterization, etc., but that must be - all that is a necessity for

rehearsals, but if you try to find it all at once you will lose yourself. Just as the director must be patient, so you as actors must be patient as well.

Now imagine that you have chosen to work on the basis of justification, then it will be quite a different approach, quite a different line. Even if the style suffers this time do not pay attention to it. Then take radiation; you will enjoy it as much as any of the other points; you will enjoy all these things, and this is our aim. In this way you must take the method, being alone or being together. It is the simplest technique; it is much more simple than torturing yourself by trying to grasp the whole thing without having any means.

FEELING OF TRUTH & JUSTIFICATION:

Now take another ground - the feeling of truth, combined with justification. The moment will come when you can combine many things, and the moment will come when the director will ask you to act fully. If at this stage you feel you need words that are not there, improvise them. The author is here and will help you, but before you do improvise we cannot help you. It is not allowed to speak sentences of the text in a wrong way, but if you feel you need some sentences which are not there, improvise them. Later we can accept or change them. Such sentences must be created from the actor's point of view, and never from the intellectual -

it is the actor's necessity.

When working on the basis of justification, you must justify every little movement and sound. You can be as free as you like, but it must be justified each time; never movement in general; this is never allowed. Justification and feeling of truth is required to be there in everything. We must go through this torture, otherwise we will always rely upon the director, and this is not possible because the director can give direction only if the actors are able to give him enough material. The second point to remember is that you must get accustomed to the Method absolutely, otherwise we cannot even prepare the play. We have to go through this torture and understand once and for all what it means to justify. There is no other way to make it easier.

The first rough mistake must be justified as Paul has done. After he has justified his first rough movements, he must try again and he will be able to justify things which are finer and more subtle, then still more subtle things will be justified. If you hope to justify everything at once it will not be possible. Never try to justify yourself and everything in general, because it is impossible. You must justify each movement as it disturbs you, one by one. If you are getting up you must justify your getting up, etc. A chain of such justifications will lead you to another chain, each of which will be finer and finer.

Don't be depressed - if you expect that you will

M. Chekhov

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be able to get it tomorrow you are wrong, but it shows that you have not yet even started to use the Method. You have to work at home constantly, and this is the experience we must go through.

Now I suggest that you work on everything in the Method, instead of the three points - concentration, imagination, and incorporation - which I outlined for you at the beginning of this term. Go through all the points, working on Our Phantoms and Spanish Evening as well. Repeat the scene on the same ground. It was more justified - justification leads you more and more into the play, and we must not lose heart. In this stage you will lose such things as tempo, characterization, etc., because you cannot do it all at once. Later on you will be able to do all these things.

Please try to appreciate quite clearly that although you have lost many things in the scene, and you did many things wrong, you have justified much more. For the sake of final understanding we will take the same scene until you will see that you have understood what I am aiming at.