

Michael Chekhov

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THE METHOD - HOW TO ACQUIRE IT
TALENT - HINDRANCES

THE METHOD - HOW TO ACQUIRE IT:

I want to speak to your hearts and intellects as well - I want to remind you of something you know, but not well enough. You know with half knowing. This is not sufficient, and although it is as simple as a,b,c, it requires to be understood with effort. Therefore, you must not think that while I am speaking to you about this obvious thing, appealing to your hearts and minds to really understand.

TALENT - HINDRANCES:

What am I going to speak about? Why am I here with you? Why are you here with me? We are together because my mission to you is not to increase your talent - that is the thing only God himself can do - increase the talent. This is the wrong idea which sits in the heart of each of us, when we hope that our talent will grow. It cannot. It is given, and is much bigger than we think. On the principle our talent is genius, the question is not how much talent we have, but how many hindrances we have.

This is the question that has arisen, and this is the point. We must have a balanced school. We met each other, not because we are going to increase our talents, but we met together to diminish the hindrances. This is the basis on which I want to base my words. If we are going to increase our talent, we are going the way upon which we will meet many

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disappointments. There is nothing to increase. But the question is how to open this secret room where our genius lies. If we shall go this way quite consciously, we are fighting with all our mistakes, the warmest side of our nature. If we conquer this, we are on the right way. This will bring us power and pleasure and it will increase our talent. In this case, we are increasing it because we are opening the door wider and wider.

From this point, it is absolutely clear that this is the way which we call school, culture, science, art, based on some grounds. Here is method - a Method. There does not exist anything in the world that can be developed without method. This is the way our school and Method lies. It is so important. There is one path on which is written "Here is talent, genius." On this way we are expecting only joyful, pleasant moments. We do not know how to get them; ~~we do not know how to preclude failure. We are amateurs -~~ we can have so much pleasure, but it will never save us from the amateur destiny; after great pleasure, deep disappointment. There are scientific amateurs, religious amateurs, private-life amateurs, artistic amateurs.

Although this way is very enticing, you must not believe in this enticement because you must know that after this sweet thing, the poison is there, but it is too late to discover, as the poison has already eaten away. This other

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way is not so sweet because it requires very much hard, cold and collected work, and this is what we have to understand too. If we are aiming at the result which is in this way, we have to meet these problems with patient, collected, insistent work. From the amateur path we hear the voice: "Oh, you are an artist, why should you do such daily work - rely upon your talent." Do not listen to these voices - they are evil voices. There is a kinder voice on this other path, which lies far, far beyond these difficulties of dull work, and says, "Now I am master - now I possess my talent - now I can master and govern myself."

The artist-amateur becomes old, psychologically old, in a few years because to be always without ground it will be now beautiful, now dreadful, but never certain. This wears out your psychological organism in one year, instead of ten years of the real work. I am going through dark corridors - I am jumping over dangers and gaps. All the dangers we have in fairy tales are here. It must be understood. This way we can go together, but the other way you have to go alone. I can help only on this dull way, with much more light at the end, but not on this half-gay with much light in the beginning, and darkness at the end.

To be much more concrete. We have our Method, and our Method requires a certain period of cold work which I think we are lacking. I am responsible for your artistic

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destiny. When you are gay and happy as today (I have enjoyed Terry's fairy tale today as an onlooker), this is one side of the picture. But, you should be happy because of your cold, preparatory work. You must be continuously happy after the work is done, and you must not be accidentally happy, as I have seen you today. The happiness will come later, but it will be much greater. In the amateur way there are some happy events in the beginning, then later on worn-out psychology.

When we have our Method, we shall think of it as of something which we have to swallow, as pills which are not sweet. They will be the cure, but I have not seen you swallowing it. You have not yet swallowed these pills. For instance, yesterday you were not so happy, and I had the feeling that I must tell you that you were making mistakes, but I knew if I did you would be depressed. Therefore, I kept myself back and I did not tell you. (This is my weakness and I should have told you many times in the past that everything was wrong, but I was so afraid that you as amateurs would fall down). I have now decided to say that your behaviour towards the Method is sometimes amateurish.

You must understand that in the Method there are given some points which I must tell you about. What does it mean? You have to take them and elaborate them whenever you like - it does not concern me where or when - but you must

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always be doing the exercises, when you are walking somewhere, you must be doing exercises. You tell me you have no time. I say, not at all. If your mother is ill you will have time to take care of her - when it is necessary the person finds much time. Everything lies in us. The time exists only in us. We can increase or diminish it. You will see that you have to collect every bit of time, and you must want to make this time. You must want to get the Method.

The other side: Working here when we are all together, you make one very big mistake. Of course we know there are objectives and psychological gestures, and when I ask you to take the objective, then to do it, you start at once. Where is the moment when we are taking the objective? Another time I ask you about radiation, and you start the moment when I say start. You are not yet able to define the understanding of something and the doing. And this is the whole difference here in the class.

Now I speak absolutely truthfully because I have observed this question. You think you are taking the objective, you think you are spreading the atmosphere, etc., but you do not do this. You do this in happy moments. For instance, today in Terry's work you were talented people. Sometimes you are talented, sometimes you are hopeless. But you are not really hopeless; on the principle you are genius. Where lies the mistake? It lies in the approach.

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I know it is very simple what I say, but I want you to understand this with your hearts, and I put before you the question of whether you are going this way or that way. When you decide to go this way, you will put on your shoulder the urgency to work. I know it is dull to work - it is terribly dull. This is no secret, and it is not interesting, but in this is the triumph. If we are able to overcome this difficulty we are kings, and we are pioneers for the new theatre. If these difficulties will overcome us, we are one of the amateurs, and perhaps not the best. The time will be lost.

Please children, remember to find the time to work out of school, and realize in school during our rehearsals and lessons whether you are really taking the objectives and doing, and whether we are going together this way, or are you going alone the other way.

I must tell you this. I am not against this happiness, but I want the happiness that comes not by not being sorry after an unhappy rehearsal. This is the wrong point of view. Instead of being sorry we must say, "What shall we do?" Prepare yourselves for this long delay in the beginning where you have to work, and be brave enough to say "No" to the more enticing way. After we test the first sweets of the amateur way, there lies nothing - a senseless life. Today, when life is going on in such strange

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rhythms, sometime you will have to answer, "Why am I living my life?" If you go the wrong way, there will be a big gap - blind dark fear - but if you are really doing your work you will be able to answer, "This is the aim which I must have as a human being. This is the destiny of humanity."