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Michael Chekhov

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THE PAUSE
THE FEELINGS
SIGNIFICANCE
INSPIRATION
RADIATION

THE PAUSE:

Let us continue work on the pause: words out of the pause, and words leading into the pause, action into the pause, and action out of the pause. Exercise by walking around the room - action; then mounting the steps and pausing; going into the pause then turning it, and out of the pause say, "I am sorry."

THE FEELINGS:

So far we have been working to open ourselves to the feelings on the basis of some ground. Now we must open our hearts to the audience. This gives inspiration and means of expression. Inspiration gained on the basis of a ground is incorporated into the outer means of expression, and this is what I want you to understand in the way I have tried to point out to you. How important it is to appreciate our means of expression as something which is absolutely significant when we are using them. Whether it is radiation, or action with all our outer means of expression, etc., these must be considered as significant moments.

SIGNIFICANCE:

We have tried by means of exercises to get these inspirations, and in doing so I wanted to awaken the significance

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of everything you do on the stage. By raising the eyes or the hands, by lowering the eyes, etc., if these means of expression are not significant they kill the inspiration. When we started our lessons last year, I told you during the first or the second lesson that in our human nature is the instinct which we may describe as joy and pleasure in the movements of our bodies - like animals - and we would be the same if we were not such cultivated or cultured people, we would be able to feel the same joy. As artists we must awaken this same joy in moving, the same idea but a little bit enlarged. Each means of expression must be our joy, our pleasure.

When the human being expresses himself in movement it is the same joy as that of a little dog which runs around, but we must know this and awaken it by means of our exercises. Therefore the significance of the means of expression is at the same time the pleasure of expressing something, and the pleasure of using something gives it significance. They are two brothers.

Let us take a scene from The Golden Steed, first using the technique of opening the heart, and then we will add some small means of expression by which we must try to awaken this real pleasure of significance. We must know consciously how much we have been able to achieve. We must include in this the anticipation of what we want to get.

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You have not expressed your desire to your inspirer. You did not anticipate and something else came in its place. Instead of stopping yourselves and asking for something quite clear, you continued in the wrong way. You must always anticipate what you will get. I want you to be so flexible in the right way that at each moment when there are many disturbing things, you will be flexible enough to stop these wrong things and always put right things in their place. It is like walking across a street in Paris where there is so little order, and where you must dodge everything. Instead, you are walking like blind people, and you will be pushed and knocked down.

You must want to get your inner technique and you must use it, and must not be satisfied with such things. Each time it must be better. You must want this inner technique as much as you want your hand; you must have the same joy and pleasure inside you when opening these doors and creating all these inner things. It is very important to have this desire. Let us repeat the scene.

Criticism:

It was much better, but there were other mistakes. The feelings you got were too weak because your anticipation was not clear. Your anticipation is weak and vague, and because you ask for something vague it does not come. You must get the habit to ask for the most expressive, strong things. If, for instance, I want disappointment and unhappiness I must

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ask for thousands of years of disappointment. Not quite so intelligent and modern; we have too much of the drawing room feeling; we are too intelligent, and some pale sparks of this intelligence we bring onto the stage.

The approach to the stage and that to life is quite different. We must divide these two worlds, first of all because we have an audience of many people sitting before us, and we will not be able to reach them. Therefore, you must become accustomed to asking for more expressive things, more full feelings. In this scene you must rise to the climax, which is the appearance of the Black Prince, and then sink down - a metacruze and an anacruze - by means of your body - each movement must be significant. Repeat the scene.

Criticism:

It was much better; analyze what you have just done and try to find why it was good. Everything you do on the stage will be fascinating if you have this significance.

At the moment when we have our technique, our outer technique or our inner technique, we are free; significance; pleasure; we know what we are going to do and what it means. Then if someone says, "A very nice performance," we will know that they are blind, because nobody is able to say, "Very nice," after listening to Beethoven - it is a dissonance. When we have our technique and our rhythm we will never hear these words -

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it will be quite a different criticism.

IMPROVISATION:

Let us improvise on the basis of the psychological gesture the same scene from Hauptmann. The gesture is the same for everyone - it is one of continuous expansion, but very sentimental, very soft and very insignificant from the character point of view. As you know, the psychological gesture issues out of the archetype. Therefore, everything is given in the psychological gesture.

RADIATION:

Now we will continue the work with the pause - the Greek hero is the theme. First of all you must arouse your activity to the count of ten during which, through your own will, you will get power. Your body is transparent - spiritual activity - this activity has come to you because you have decided to have it. This is very important. Action, pause, turning the pause and action in the form of a sentence. When you diminish the outward expression, you must increase the radiation. The pause is always radiation.

Never look at the exercise with a vague idea, always work inside and understand what is good and what is bad. It must always be a very active kind of reception. Preparation, anticipation, prophecy. At the moment when you diminish the outer means of expression you must increase the inner means. Pay attention to the substitution of one power for the other. When you turn the activity from the outer to the inner, it is

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quite a different state of mind. Understand whether the body is expressive or not. This is absolutely our professional approach. The whole event of the pause must be absolutely clear and obvious for the audience. The pause is the result of something that has happened and it promises something more, out of which the hero speaks. Explore this with all the details. An actor must not only know what he does inside, but he has many, many secret means how to show this.

Exercise:

Form two groups; then begin to move out of a pause and come together, gradually increasing the action. One side asks, "Will you follow us," and the other group says, "No, we do not want to follow you." After this action you turn away as enemies and end in a fight. First you are prophets, when you are preparing the action. This is done by radiation of what you are able to foresee - you must keep it in your imagination. Before the curtain goes up each actor is in a state of prophecy, which continues until he is on the stage. When he has finished his soliloquy and the curtain comes down, this is the moment when he must hold the pause until it is down.

In this exercise you are Greek warriors, you meet each other and take a position, out of which you take another position. The first is the prophecy, the second the epilogue, cadenza or coda. Then build two groups and repeat the exercise.

When the groups meet, repeat the sentences, and out of the conflict move back into a group and pause. Realize the difference between radiating and not radiating. Repeat but add the sentences, "You will regret it," and "We know what we do." We must have the impression that you have left many strange forms and figures and sculptured things which were your speeches. Gradually turn the radiation into the outer action and incorporate it into the actions and words. After the action turn the outer action into rays of radiation.

Old Students:

Repeat the Hauptmann scene but this time on the basis of the psychological gesture. Try to do only significant things from now on. Not for one moment are you on the stage without gesture - whether you are moving or not, the gesture inside you must be there continuously.

Criticism:

So often your words are weak. You move much better than you speak in improvisations. You must get the ability to know that when you speak something it must be for a large audience, and must be significant. When we speak of significance it does not mean that it must be out of proportion. Not at all. It must be significant from its own inner meaning.

Old and New Students:

You must take into consideration all the elements

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around you - it is like a circle which must embrace the audience and everything. Take the problem quite consciously and build a group. Mr. Harvey will sing a song which will be given as a theme for one of the groups, and another theme for the other group. Take the song as a theme which you must incorporate as a group - there will be a group of women and one of men.