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Michael Chekhov

(afternoon) February 11, 1938

PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMIC PATTERNS

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There are certain psychological patterns in the plays of Henry and Mr. Shdanoff. Will you please attempt to awaken the whole dynamic pattern belonging to Henry's play. Lift your right hand in this style. Now the left. Look to right and to left. Sit down. Get up.

Exercise:

The boys will put the structures back, and the girls will attempt to hinder them. Continue it inwardly to short, quick music. Now do it outwardly. Try not to dance, but try to do certain simple actions in accordance with the rhythm of this music.

This time I want you to be more careful with the form. The moods must not be slurred. Each time in the pause find another action. Try to get together, with one another.

Theme: Boys are trying to play Peter's part with the girl. When the music stops say, "I love you," and the girl answers, "Uh."

Another theme: You are working separately, each standing before a window like the bridegroom, and you must appear as the old man saying, "I am half ready." Try to accomplish this ability to live through the whole pattern in the shortest time. Try to accomplish this psychology by

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falling down. It is too heavy, too material. The whole play must be un-material. Take some steps to the window, appear, then disappear back into the room. You must find the inner possibility of how to be limp.

Add the following complication: When you appear at the window nearly ready, and listen to the dreadful music, don't fall down, only suffer under this music, then retreat and faint. I want you to find the greatest contrast between this desire to appear before the window, before the whole world like a young boy, and this aged nightmare. You must be more truthful inside, and really create this funny psychology, not only the outer expressions of it. Do inwardly the whole gamut - all points of the style - butterfly.

We have done the music and we are moving quite freely, and have come to the point where we are moving quite slightly with the inward feeling of this movement. Every movement must respond, but inside is a volcano of pleasure. Even more economical but there must be certain movement there. Each part of the body is moving. Much more economical outwardly and absolutely active inside. We are looking for something which is very far from us, and having this volcano in us we are walking stealthily. We don't want to be noticed. Now we reach the point we are looking at it, but, with the same psychology. To get it successfully we must get the feel-

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ing of our body; our spirit is moving us. Somebody looks at us, try to disappear inwardly, we are not here, this somebody has gone and now we are free to run. The wall is before us, obstacles, what shall we do standing before this wall? I want you to think in the style of this play. Nothing remains too long, neither the position or the inner state.

Boys must put the structure back, and the girls must prevent them, but in such a way that the boys are not aware that you are preventing them. Find all possible things to stop them. I want you to do it again and try not to invent things that do not belong to the pushing of the structures. It is then limitless. Try to find the possibilities, as if by helping them.

Scene:

The old husband has to get a doctor for the bridegroom. The young people want to prevent him. The old people want him to go. The aim of the young wife and her young maid is to have the old husband go. The husband is very old and needs to take many things with him, to make him comfortable on the trip. There are many difficulties. He does not want to leave his young wife and the maid, because he is sure that somebody will come to visit them.

The street is full of young people. Create the feelings by the use of costumes. Do not take your charac-

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ters yet, just the objective which has been given.

Criticism:

You have done things which are irrelevant. They must have connection with the action. You must be sure that everything you do is psychologically necessary.

The young people are waiting for the appearance of the bridegroom on the street on the way to the church. I want you to say the sentence, "Here he comes." Old people joyful - young people depressed. The young people must not be too real and lose the feeling.

The bride and her sister are at the opposite end of the street and they meet, and the bridegroom kisses them as he meets them.

Now a very subtle thing. The task is very simple. Everybody is waiting for the doctor. Then along comes the showman who is hungry and poor, and is not a magician at all. The bride is depressed with the situation and is looking out of the window, waiting. The magician has no possibility of performing in this small town. The bride asks, "Are you the doctor?" The showman understands nothing but gradually the idea comes to him to say that he is, but he is uncertain. The girl tells him that it is her wedding day and asks if he can see the future. The showman gives the impression that he is going to say something very important. At this moment the mother appears at the window and asks the

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magician if he is the doctor. This is just the situation he wants to get out of telling the bride's future.

Scene:

Inside the bridegroom's house after he has fainted. He is half dressed and the mother has been trying to revive him. He is only half conscious. He has had every remedy but nothing helps. Then the doctor enters, but the mother is uncertain whether the doctor will be able to help. The magician has to make a quick decision as to what course of action he will take. He is really a very timid person, but he has a large black moustache which he uses to impress people with his strength of character. The magician mixes all the medicines that have been used, meanwhile impressing the mother and the bridegroom that he will be able to cure the bridegroom.

Scene:

The old husband has already gone in the wedding carriage to get the doctor and his young wife is left alone with her maid. She is at the window and sees the sacristan who she is determined to get into her house. He is very young and has only come to the study of theology because of his unhappy love affair with the young wife. He is absolutely innocent, but she is decisive and never retreats from her plan as she knows that eventually she will win. The

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sacristan is very susceptible and, therefore, has to keep his feelings closed inside of him.

Scene:

The young maid and her lover. The lover continuously rushes at her like a lion. His psychology is to go on and on, but her psychology is to keep him back each time he gains a point, but at the same time encouraging him to go on.