

Michael Chekhov

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Evening Lesson with Michael Chekhov, Alan, and
Beatrice Straight for Work on Exercises to
be Given Next Term

(From the Notes of Beatrice Straight)

This work is divided into three principle parts.
The first part concerns development of rhythmical feeling in
the soul of the actor.

These exercises can be for one person, many people,
or a group. They must be done for movement, gesture, speech.
(Speech - any kind of exclamations, syllables, words, solilo-
quies, dialogues.) The exercises can be done with or without
music.

1st Exercise - To develop the feeling for beauty without which
a feeling for rhythm is not possible:

Speak each word, make each movement with this feel-
ing. (Refer to the exercises this summer with M. Chekhov.)
Rudolf Steiner's phrase, "the aesthetical conscience"^[consciousness] of
beauty.

2nd Exercise - To be easy:

Again with sentences, gestures, movement. (Refer
to summer work.)

3rd Exercise - Feeling for form:

Each thing to be done with this feeling - opening

of a book, moving, speaking, etc. (Refer to summer work.)

4th Exercise - Points:

Each thing can be done with a feeling of point, short or long. This also gives the possibility to improve form. (Difference between a pause and a point - a pause comes, a point appears and disappears; a pause is a result of a process or is the preparation for a process.)

5th Exercise - The Pause:

The pause is always significant. It must be always felt and experienced. All significance of what has happened before is crystallized in the pause. It is the result of some action or process. Or a pause can be the beginning, and what happens after can be crystallized in the pause and grow from it. A pause can also come in between two things as well.

6th Exercise - Feeling for the Whole:

Before we do something, we must see it first in our imaginations as a whole. Take it as though already done so that when we reach the last moment, we already know it. This is most important not only in the work, but in the whole feeling for life outside.

7th Exercise - Metamorphosis:

Each movement is a transition. This training will give the ability to produce everything. Alan's exercises in

his lesson example is King Lear. How his figure, which in the beginning is majestic, above all kings, full of ego, and how it becomes the old, small body lying somewhere on the stage, but it is full of majestic spirit. (One aspect of rhythm - one being lifted up, the other going down.)

8th Exercise - Each action consists of three parts:

The first and third part are always opposite to each other in greater or lesser degrees, and the middle part is the metamorphosis of the two. The students must find these three parts, and then they can divide them up into many more parts, but the three will always remain.

9th Exercise - Climaxes:

A climax is a point in which something is very tense. An anti-climax is also a climax. There can be tension in a relaxed moment as well.

An accent is a small climax. In a play there may be three big climaxes, very seldom more, then several smaller climaxes, and many accents.

10th Exercise - What goes between climaxes:

In music this is called a progression. We can use the Dalcroze term of anacruse and metracruse. On the stage nothing must be done just to show something. Everything must be a way from one climax to another.

11th Exercise - Division of three parts:

Dividing three parts into as many parts as we want.
(Mystical numbers that we will understand later.)

12th Exercise - Repetitions:

Repetitions are very significant and must only be used with great sensitivity. It can have many different characters. One is a mirroring or echoing. If a repetition is repeated exactly, it shows an endlessness or timelessness. Another form of this is showing something large and then doing something small, showing the large thing that has been done. For example, running seven steps, then running one with the feeling of seven steps.

13th Exercise - Contrast:

This is to awaken the feeling for contrast. (The difference between this and three parts is, one is a process, the other is two moments. For example, Peter in evil group.)

14th Exercise - Symmetry - Asymmetry:

15th Exercise - Two ways of expressing everything in the theatre:

Outward means of expression and inward means of expression. One is acting, the other is radiation. In radiation every outward expression is stopped. In acting everything has to be acted and shown with much power. This is the breathing of the play. Acting without coming into radiation is

organically impossible.

16th Exercise - Action and Counter-action:

Each moment is done and difficulties are there - this is counter-action. For example, Antin versus brothers.

17th Exercise - Exercises with music:

Meter, tempo, forte, piano, staccato-legato, crescendo, diminuendo, syncopation.

Delcroze, p. 26, paragraph 15, "Every degree of energy or duration."

18th Exercise - All exercises with atmosphere:

Atmosphere can be created through imagination, will, movement, melody.

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SECOND PART OF THESE EXERCISES - Scenic space and time:

For scenic space, choose the most characteristic things - height, depth, width, form of the whole, limits, the floor straightened and then inclined, all steps and staircases, then cubes in two meanings - cube as cube entirely free, and cubes that can serve, i.e. table, chair, bed.

Colors - curtains, something which leads from limited space to infinite space, leadings out, openings. We will have openings so that, more and more, our stage will become a whole world. The evolution of openings, small to the whole.

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Suggest different colored cards for all these headings, and then we can mix them, and we will find that blue can't go with blue, etc.

Direction is space; right, left, center, periphery. Back stage, front stage, diagonal, etc.

Light - Darkness, Colored Lights, Color:

The group must be dressed in different costumes, starting with neutral, blue dresses. Then fantasy styles, periods, wigs, etc. This will change style of movement.

Training of hands: swords, fans, sticks, hats, etc.

Third part:

In the room that has been explored, students have to create forms and things without people in them. Blocks, colors, etc. being used. The principle of it is: First, the idea! Second, atmosphere without human beings. Third, dynamics - point from which we start and point where we finish. (Almost 1, 2, 3 idea.) Direction.

Second form with people form in space, actor in time. The idea that is incorporated in the boxes and forms begins to be an aim when people are brought into it. Materials carried out in space must be carried out in time by the actor. New element of speech in harmony with this. Atmosphere, music, sound effect.

All these exercises and work with color, etc. must

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correspond with first exercises. For instance, being light, everything must be light - forms, color, music, though they may, in reality, be heavy. Each color must have three parts, etc. The exercises can be combined in one exercise if you wish, and the exercises can be put together in many ways.