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September 29, 1937

IMAGINATION
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IMPROVISATION - THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT
ATMOSPHERE

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IMAGINATION: Beginners' Class:

Theatre imagination is, first of all, not memory; and you must know that if you remember something, of course you imagine, but this kind of imagination is not what we need. Memory is imagination, but it is not theatre imagination. We need a kind of imagination which will give us new things, and this is what we are aiming at through our exercises. We will leave the question as to whether the human being is able to create something really new in his imagination; we will leave this psychological question, but we will accept the idea because it is an idea which is very important for us. This creation of new things in our imagination is very interesting for us as artists and actors.

We will start our exercises on imagination with this simple memory which we all have. Please remember some things in your room where you are living; one after another. By repeating this exercise you must compare two different states. First of all you are taking in actual concrete impressions. The second stage is that you are not taking in actual impressions, but you are trying inside to recall some impressions

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which you have had.

Now look at the room about you, and receive some impressions from it. Be conscious that you are receiving impressions. Now stop and remember things in your own room. Now you are in a different state in recalling some impressions. When you will realize that real imagination requires great activity inside of you, you will in time get this real imagination.

We must not confuse two things; we have some dreams during our everyday life in which we are quite passive - these have nothing for us. Our dreams we must call up ourselves, with our will and our activity. In order to do this we must know that it is necessary, and we can do this by two exercises. Be again aware of the things around you, and realize that you are receiving impressions from the outside world. Stop. Now try to remember the things in your room.

We have discovered that in imagination we require a certain kind of activity, and that in merely remembering things we do not use this activity. The next step was to re-create the image of our memory, and this was the very beginning of the creative process. The activity we need in this case is more than just memory.

Now we come to the next step; you have not only to rebuild the image you can get from your memory, but you must create something quite new, it has no connection with what you

are able to remember. Again we must leave the question as to whether it is possible for a human being to create something entirely new or not. For our aim we must say that we are able to create quite new images. Such images will not be a remembrance of something we have seen. This kind of creation in the realm of our imagination requires the most intense effort of will and activity. It requires our activity, but there is a question as to whether we will give this activity or not.

We are free to be active or not; it is on the one hand our freedom, and on the other our danger. Therefore, you must know that if you are trying to create some images in your world of imagination, you have to be active. In this sense we must say that the creative imagination requires our activity. Now create an image which you have never seen or known; unless you create it it will never exist. Imagine you are walking through a forest; create this forest in your imagination. You are going through this forest, and it is getting more and more dark and gloomy. Suddenly a very small, vivid, strange being appears before you. Please create an image of this small being.

Think over the various stages; you must know clearly what we are speaking about. 1. Take the impression. 2. Remembering - active, but not creative. 3. Take a memory and re-create it - more creative. 4. Try to create something quite new. You must be appreciative of this last kind of creative imagination. By going through the various stages you will

begin to appreciate this ability to be able to create.

My repetition is deliberately done in order to make things clearer and clearer for you, and it will give more results. It means nothing for the artist to understand with his head; the artist must know everything with every part of his being. As an actor, when I appear on the stage, I act with a big sphere of surroundings; not only with my hands or with my feet, or with my costume. To develop the ability to influence an audience you must do these exercises, and develop your concentration and imagination.

When you will get the idea about all our exercises as being a whole thing, you will get the feeling that this is something which will give you the power to express yourself as you like, without any hesitation, and to spread yourself and to reach any point you like. To give your best to your audience, there is a sphere which you will be able to create around you. This means really to be an actor. Only this will give you the joy to be an actor.

When you find this feeling of being an enlarged being in a creative state, you will get another feeling of how dry the person is when he is not in a creative state. You will feel yourself like a lemon - condensed and small. Then you will get another kind of criticism, which is a very sound one - you will be able to criticize actors on the stage from this point of view. Whether the actor is famous or not will mean nothing to you, but you will have a special eye for the actor who spreads his radiance around him.

BODY EXERCISES; STACCATO AND LEGATO MOVEMENT:

Staccato and legato; this is a very simple bodily exercise, but you must take it as a psychological exercise as well, by trying to develop a certain kind of activity which we are trying to incorporate in these two different kinds of movement. Psychologically, staccato is very sharp and exciting. It is the same idea that I am governing by body, therefore I am the person who asks my body to do this movement, because I want to. Recall the act as a psychological state. We are able to be very sharp in our psychology, very staccato. If an actor wants to be like lightning, he must be able to be. If he wants to be like water, he must be able to be. These are two extreme poles of psychological ability, and between these two poles you will get all possible kinds of degrees. Through this sharp or smooth psychology you will be able to make the body sharp or smooth.

This brings us to another kind of psychology and another kind of movement - smooth, legato. It is important to find the possibility to move your whole being, invisibly or visibly, so that no one part is stiff, everything must be moving. It is very important to imagine that you are moving. Do it first in your imagination.

IMAGINATION:

We are able to create in our imagination whatever we want; the actor must be able to show the product of his

imagination. There are two very important and beautiful moments in the actor's creative work. The first period is when he prepares his part. This is a creative work, when it is done in the proper way with the feeling of appreciation that I am an artist and, therefore, I must be something more than myself. When the part is created in this way, in this spirit, then the period of preparation is a very beautiful one, and the actor can have much pleasure and joy doing this work. During this work the actor has to incorporate his own imagination.

INSPIRATION:

~~These are the two steps: to create an image and then~~
to incorporate it with all the means we have as actors. There is another very important process which goes on in the actor's soul during the time he is on the stage; it is no longer imagination, but it is inspiration. When you are acting on the stage you get inspiration from all sides, and you continue your acting under the influence of this inspiration. We will ~~not speak about this now; only about the image which we must~~
create with our own will, and then the incorporation of this image which we have created.

INCORPORATION:

Imagine that you are lifting your hands and arms and then lowering them. You must have the picture of yourself doing this movement. Everything must be clear for you. The speed with which you do it, how you stand, which direction you are facing, everything must be clear. When you have rehearsed

this simple movement often enough in your imagination, then you must really try to incorporate what you have rehearsed. You must have an eye for that which is not prepared or rehearsed - for those parts which are dead. Try to analyze by penetrating into what you have seen. Criticize always with warmth. Of the actors you have seen, some of them show you absolutely nothing but words and movement, while others show you something.

These two psychologies are very different and depend on the inner life of the actor. We must always say something from the stage. If we are too lazy to imagine, or have nothing to imagine, we have nothing to say to our audience except habits and clichés. You must always analyze and take account of what you have done, and realize whether you have achieved what you have seen in your imagination, or whether your body has disturbed you. Therefore, the body is something which can be controlled. It is absolutely necessary for the actor to be aware of everything that is being done, all the time. If we are aware all these things will go into our super-conscious being, and we will be able to do instead of to know. We must know what our profession is, and we must do everything with full awareness.

STACCATO AND LEGATO:

Let us take the same psychology of staccato and legato, but with the added condition that the staccato movement is when you are sending out your whole activity, and keeping

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nothing for yourself. The more you give your audience, the more you will have for yourself. If you have only a little bit, you must give it out. Actors do not know this very simple secret of their profession. Instead of keeping back everything for themselves, they can use the same energy to send out what they have, and they will be full of new energy and life. This is a psychological problem, to send out. You must have confidence in yourself, and your body will follow. This confidence is justified only if you are really able to do something. In legato you must give with energy. Do the following body exercises: first walk about without any direction, then walk being aware of the body, and that you are an artist.

THE FEELINGS:

Now we really start our work to awaken the feelings, and to develop the ability to improvise. This is a long work, and you must be very patient. You must not lose the idea that we must awaken our feelings. All the students must keep the idea that this year we begin with the most important thing for us - to awaken our human feelings. You must promise me not to forget this.

Our first attempt in this direction will be that you will act all your sketches, without any interruption or advice from me. Your first task is to take the problem of the feelings very seriously, asking yourself how much you can radiate

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and send out your feelings. This will be a trial for yourself - you must act for yourself and speak with yourself. After you have done this I will add something.

Take the beginning of The Fishing Scene, but do not pay any attention to the mise en scène. You are human beings sitting here on the ground. You must be more active than you have ever been before. Act with your feelings. The whole scene must be created as you sit there. Find the connection with one another, create the atmosphere and radiate everything to us. The idea is that you are going to awaken your heart. Be responsible for the feelings which you have to radiate, otherwise you are a shallow form and nothing for the audience.

Balladina II:

It is a great illusion that an actor can deceive the audience. Those in the audience must always help those on the stage. As a group we must be acting with each member of our company, no matter where we may be. We must be with the others who are acting - that is our duty. The actors may shout as much as they want, but they will never move the audience if the feelings are not there.

Peer Gynt:

We must find the right approach, not in general, but in each case, then it will give us something. The contact between the actors was better than in Balladina, but it was clear to see that the imagination has been sleepy during the prepara-

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tion of the sketch. They are not yet son and mother in Ibsen's sense. Was the son in the presence of his dying mother? Not at all. If the imagination has been active, the actor will see many things like revelations - not only the actual things but psychological revelations. At the moment the scene is very primitive and simple, and it is even lower than the printed text. This is always the case with Shakespeare; when we read it we think it is everything, but when we see it on the stage we feel how dull it is. This is not the fault of Shakespeare, but of the actors. From our present point of view it is only lack of feeling, of warmth, of the revelation of the human heart. We must look at each other and criticise very consciously; not in general, but each point.

IMPROVISATION: Circle of Light:

The first thing to know in doing an improvisation is the sense of a circle within which you are aware of everything, as in Stanislavsky's "circle of light". The idea of the circle is the basis for improvisation. This is the first condition: exercise: walk around the room creating first a small and then a large circle, being aware of the people who come into the circle. Then try to see in your imagination the circle around people you know. Think of people you know, and be aware of the width of the circle around them. For instance, a very shy person has a very little circle; a person desiring attention would need a bigger circle; a person in tears would

need a very contracted circle, while a person in laughter would need a wider circle. Try to think of two people, one who has a very small circle because of sadness, and one who has a wide circle because of joy inside. Repeat the exercise of walking around and being aware of the size of your own circle, and of people in it.

The second condition; you must have a real ground on which to improvise; atmosphere, for instance. Don't allow yourself to improvise when you have lost the basis or ground. Take at once another ground, such as objective. Otherwise you will fall into the abyss. Let us take an exercise: You will be given an atmosphere as a basis. You must do the action which will be given you, and you must create a sentence on the basis of the atmosphere.

IMPROVISATION; ATMOSPHERE:

You are three thieves entering an office which has been deserted by everyone. You know that someone will come in to clean the room, and you have only time to go to the window and open it, and then disappear - this is only the preparation for the real job which will be done at night. The atmosphere is one in which anything can happen at any moment which will kill you. A tense atmosphere of danger for you. You can speak when you like, but you must be conscious of the exercise as such. The theme has been given you on the basis of the atmosphere, and during the scene you must speak three

short sentences.

Let us realize what was right in the exercise which we have just seen. First of all, the atmosphere was there to a certain extent, and the action was quite good. However, there was one mistake - there was a window which was closed and you did not notice it, while you tried to open a window which was already open. If you had had the "circle" around you, then each window would speak to you. This is the meaning of having a really expanded circle, and here lies a very important point which is that you can approach the feeling of truth from the other side. If you have this circle, you will have this window and then you will be quite truthful. It is not necessary to pretend; having such "feelers" around you, you will see many things which you would not otherwise. To pretend without necessity is a very bad habit, and at the same time it is necessary to be able to pretend everything.

These improvisation exercises will help you to develop quite instinctively this idea of what you should take and what you should leave. This circle, as you will see, includes everything, the psychology of your partner is a visible and audible action; your own body; inanimate things in the room; all the feelings which are streaming through; archetypes.

Therefore, take this exercise and do it sometimes; try to as if "read" the content of this circle. You must get this ability to read such things. If you are able to read them

then you will be able to improvise, not only with things on the stage, with audible and tangible things, but also with the psychology of your partners. You will be able to read the inside, therefore, the content of this circle includes everything.

The basis of improvisation must be very conscious. We need to be super-conscious now, in order to act unconsciously later on. Let us exercise the circle, with the condition that everything that is included in your circle must be like a small spark of lightning, which tells you all the time that you are here and there. Try to awaken this special kind of being. If you do exercises by awakening your heart-life to find, for instance, the good qualities in your enemies, it is a way to awaken your actor's abilities. To be everywhere at the moment, wherever you like. For an actor we have one psychology; you must develop your human psychology then you will get results for your actor's abilities. Try to change the size of the circle and be aware of the contact with everyone.

Each improvisation must have a ground or basis. Let us imagine that we are all students in a university. There is a new Don and this is his first lecture. Much depends on the success of his lecture, but he has a reputation for being very funny. He knows this, and it is a great tragedy for him because inside he does not want to be humorous. All the students

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are waiting to see this funny man. The basis for the improvisation is the atmosphere which is that the classroom is full of tension, the tension before an explosion. On one side there is humor and laughter, and on the other side is the fear and tragedy that they will laugh. The atmosphere is so tense that at any moment an explosion can take place. The Don must enter the room, and say three sentences with which he wishes to introduce himself to his new students.

Let us take account of what you have done. What about the atmosphere? Were you able to keep it and consciously base everything on it? No. You have added so many intellectual things, instead of waiting for the inspiration. If you have talent you may be sure that you will get the inspiration. Don't try to do something before you get inspiration, because you will only shut doors. If you don't get inspiration say to yourself that it does not matter, and then you will get it. Our intellect tries to do some things "as if" acting, and this is wrong. When your intellect came to life before your real talent, at once everything became very interesting, very simple, like a straight line, very geometrical; because the intellect is only able to do things very straight. One thing which came spontaneously was good, but at once, instead of leaving it to the inspiration, the intellect took it. The intellect always tries to steal things which come from the talent. Never allow this, because it spoils everything, this

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suggestion that you underline and repeat something which was successful. It is better not to do this because at once you lose the feeling of truth.

Let us repeat the improvisation. Try to refuse this intellectual approach, and if necessary be prepared to act nothing, then perhaps you will get something. But this time it was too humble. We must be able to improvise in a masterful way, not this time beautifully and the next time badly. We must have the ability to improvise always well.

Objective:

The basis of this improvisation will be the objective; the scene is back-stage in a circus. A group of trapeze artists is very tense because the number they are going to perform is a very dangerous new one, without nets. The situation is very important for their reputation, and for their future careers. It is fifteen minutes before they must go on. They are preparing all the things they need, and they go through a sort of rehearsal. The objective of each member of the group is to understand the full idea of the new number; the objective of the whole group is to memorize and be sure of the number. There is an old man who used to be a famous acrobat, but who now drinks very heavily. He helps them in their work, but at this moment he is so consumed with the desire for a drink that he is almost crazy. His objective is to somehow

get money enough for a drink.

Let us analyze what we have seen. Did they give the impression that they were very sensitive to everyone around them? Were they free enough or not? How did the intellect interfere with their creative work? Try to answer these questions on the concrete basis of what we have actually done. Were you, as the audience, taken to the scene by means of the objective? Were you dragged, or were you quite free? The objective is the will of the scene. Were the words you heard absolutely necessary, issuing out of the objective, or were they intellectual because in life we are accustomed to speaking before we need to?

Characterization:

Based on characterization this time. The scene is between a husband and wife; the husband is a famous elderly professor who must go far away to attend an exhibition, and he must leave his wife behind. The parting is for a long time, for many years, perhaps forever. They have said goodbye many times and now he must leave in five minutes. They are alone in his study. The professor owes a certain sum of money which was a little secret from his wife, but now he must pay it to someone whom he will meet. The money is already in a drawer in his desk, and he has only to take it out and then he is ready to go, but his wife is sitting there, and does not allow him the possibility of taking the money. They are both good

people, and although the situation is not a serious one, it is serious enough for them.

Let us review what we have seen: was the scene "sparking"? Was it done with a feeling of truth? What about the words? Did they come out of a real necessity on the part of the characters?

THE FEELINGS: Exercise for getting the feelings:

Yesterday we spoke about two ways to awaken the feelings; 1. that the feelings are streaming through us, and not being squeezed out of us. 2. through the sphere of the archetype you will get everything. Today we will use the first possibility; our feelings are streaming through us. Try to exercise this real possibility to let the feelings pass through you. Let us take short moments from our sketches.

You must appeal to your instinct, to your actor's nature, to your talent, to your gift - your talent must respond to these exercises. Subconsciously your actor's soul will want to do only this streaming through on the stage. Never try to prepare by squeezing the feelings. Concentrate on the atmosphere, the objective, justification, etc, then the feelings will come like a benediction. Believe this. I have never asked you, and will never ask you to try to get the feelings. The feelings will come of themselves, if the person is gifted. The feelings you try to get with your power are the normal feelings we want to escape.

If you believe in the process, if you are really concentrated, then not only the feelings will come to you but the soul will be awakened. The whole psychology will be awakened, and the means are the abilities of concentration, of imagination, and of movement. These are all in your power. You can train yourself to move so that feelings, will, and thoughts will be awakened, and you can concentrate on everything to such an extent that your whole psychology, your psychological "I" will respond. This technique of sending the feelings through is the highest thing an artist can do; everything else is illness and contraction.

Sketches for new students:

The idea of the sketches is that they will give the new students an opportunity to exercise imagination, concentration, incorporation of characters, objectives, atmosphere, etc. In each sketch there must be great emotional tension, and very few words. Not improvised words in this instance, but set dialogue, and the sketch should be written so that the author will give his suggestions for atmosphere, etc.

The idea of these sketches is not improvisation, but a scene for exercising what they have learned during the lessons. For example, when they have had lessons in imagination, give them a scene and tell them to imagine this and that, and then act. Or when they have learned about atmosphere, tell them to realize the atmosphere of the scene, and then act.

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Do not mention psychological gesture or improvisation at this time. They must take the scene very simply as action, and as a means of exercising the lessons they have had. The sketch does not need to be original, and can be from a novel or from a play, but bear in mind that you are working with beginners.