

Michael Chekhov

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## FIRE

Our aim today is to do two things in the theatre. Mr. Shdanoff is longing to see his play on the stage, and I am longing to see my students on the right level. Our aims are different, but we must combine them. We will take scenes from Mr. Shdanoff's play which we have never touched before. The scene is the ball in the governor's house and the revolution outside. From my point of view, take this as a series of sketches - not even as a rehearsal. We shall try to find what we can do by directing the play later on, but from the point of view of the students it will be an exercise on fire.

In the Ball scene, the crowd is laughing, and dancing and talking, when Verkhovenski proposes a toast to the governor. After this there is dancing again and Verkhovenski and Lisa dance together and have their dialogue. Then Stavrogin enters and advances to Lisa as the lights go out. The crowd then disappears and becomes the revolutionary crowd around the orator.

Take this as an exercise for exploring and finding what the fire is. The whole time the voices and noises are merging together, making the atmosphere. The next scene is the Revolutionary Scene with the orator. It begins wildly but gradually the orator gets the crowd's attention, and the light goes out. Then <sup>the</sup> Slim Mike scene, with voices off-stage.

During the rehearsal it is easier to get the fire, but while you are on stage don't lose the idea that the fire is necessary continuously. Make this effort.