

CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE THEATRE
STYLE
FILLING THE FORM - PSYCHOLOGICALLY
& PHYSICALLY
COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE STYLE

Moscow Art Theatre

CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE THEATRE:

Why do we remain so long on the point of style, or gesture, or objective, etc? It is very dull and I could make the lessons more interesting, but it would kill our final result. We have to get the freedom as far as our work will allow us, but to be free during the performance means to get a certain quite definite basis on which we have to develop our play work. That means that the time we have to spend for building this ground must be much longer and much more careful and dull than is usually done in our theatres today.

In our modern theatres there is no ground under the play, only the habits of actors, and nothing is done for the play as such. Therefore, actors on the stage of the modern theatre are never improvising or acting freely, never creating their performances. We know that this particular actor will speak like that in this new play - I can hear him before the performance begins, I can see him walking, I can hear him speaking, everything the same as before except the costume perhaps. That means that such actors are far, far away from the creative approach to the theatre. They could be creative if they had a ground for each play - a separate ground. That means in the psychological sense; in our souls. That means

certain kind of abilities not habits - certain kind of abilities for this special, particular play we are awakened and as a result we are able to act this play in the future.

It is absolutely essential to know why we are working in this way. The wrong way is to get accustomed to the play, to accumulate a certain number of habits and use them each evening, being inwardly absolutely indifferent to the play. Therefore, you must say to yourself, we will rehearse the play in the usual sense from the beginning to the end much longer than the usual theatre does, but we will get the ability to act the play instead of just the habit to come to the play and make this or that make-up, and speak with this or that voice.

STYLE:

Simple style of both plays as such - to develop the abilities for these two plays. We will change and build our inner composition on the contrast between these two plays which will support each other in our exercising.

Our Phantoms: [The Possessed]

Remind yourself that you have your body as a form - the whole body, from top to toe. Then say, "My body, my form is a movable one." Make some movements, getting pleasure from the ability to move the form freely, completely. Add to this that I move my body as a form, filling it with my

presence; I am here; I fill my body as a form, filling it with my creative spirit, my "I am" my presence; it moves my body because I am there, sitting in my body filling it. My body must really be filled with my creative spirit, each fingertip must be filled with it - not the filling in general. Walk and move your bodies, taking different positions, being absolutely centered on the idea that you are present in your body. You are filling your body with this presence, and not with this or that emotion. Each step must be a form, a definite beautiful form.

FILLING THE FORM - PSYCHOLOGICALLY & PHYSICALLY:

In this play our performance must be like the Moscow Art performance - whether the audience looks at it or not, it will be something definite. When we are vague in our psychology and movements we are not responsible for the performance. If we are vague in our filling of the form, we will be vague in our psychology, in our character, in our interpretation of the play. We will be floundering all the time.

Add the next point: we have filled our bodies so much that they threaten to break. I am so much present in my body that the form of my movement can be broken at once, but it does not break. Try to distinguish between physical tension and the spiritual or creative feeling of the form. It is quite a different thing. Work consciously inside yourself to get these abilities. Now add the words. When we

try to fill the form sometimes our natures respond to it with certain emotions which we actually do not want. When we are filling the form we often get the emotion of anger, which is one of the very common mistakes in our profession. Try to get the ability to fill the form with your presence to the point where it can be broken, but without becoming angry. Try to speak some tender words with the filled form. For instance, say "My dear," with the filled form.

Spanish Evening:

Now immediately change psychologically to the Commedia dell' Arte style. The feeling of form must be ours for ever and ever, although in different kinds of form. The form of this play is no less definite than in the other play, and you must do everything quite as consciously. This is period theatre which we must give at this time. Remind yourself of the feeling of form, of ease, of the baby psychology, of the off-the-ground psychology. Everything must be remembered consciously; everything we have done must be consciously cherished in our souls.

By improvisations and small sketches in the style of the two plays - in this way the actors will test themselves as to whether they are able to create things in the style of the plays. When you do the exercises on style it is good, but when you do improvisations in the style it is not good. This shows how important it is to concentrate on the style.

so that it really becomes the basis for creative work. Therefore we must work patiently to understand the power of these styles. Let us do a sketch in a station, first in one style and then in the other.

In the style of Our Phantoms we hold the audience and we anticipate the climax. Your inner presence in your body must be there. It must be there so strongly that it can burst the form at any moment - this is what we call threatening the audience, preparing them for the next moment when the form will burst like an explosion. This has nothing to do with tension in the brain. We always make one big mistake with this style; by having our bodies filled with our presence we get stiffness in our physical body, but this is easy to discard. However, there is another kind of stiffness, and that is the inability to live in tempo. We think we must move slowly - not at all. This kind of stiffness is the more difficult than the other, but we must overcome it. The ability to be in the style of the play means to be able to move and speak very quickly. This will be the next step.