

REHEARSAL OF SKETCHES - ADVICE TO DIRECTORS
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The Habima Theatre

Balladina: Second scene:

The director has the right to say what feelings he expects from a certain exercise, but he must not require that the actors feel it. For instance, the exercise of Balladina coming in to the room where the Saint is, and being drawn to him and trying to get away from him at the same time.

IMAGINATION:

It is very good to take each point of the Method freely, and in this scene we have done so. The whole approach was free which is very good. But there are some mistakes. First of all, the director gave some material for the imagination - to speak without imagination has no sense, therefore it was for imagination, but the beginning of the rehearsal cannot be full. The beginning of the imagination must be very clearly pointed out, otherwise we will begin in a vacuum. We must not slur our everyday life and the rehearsal, otherwise it brings about a half-and-half state, neither rehearsal nor everyday life. The moment of beginning the rehearsal is

very important. If it is very concrete it brings much more results than if we just slide into it.

The second thing: It seemed that the director has given his material without knowing whether his cast is following him or not. As the director you must divide yourself into two people - one who gives and one who takes. You must know whether you are giving the material too fast or too slow. You must be director and actor at the same time. You must know what is going on in the souls of your cast. The process of leading, of giving, is so interesting that the director sometimes forgets his actors, and he does not know what is going on in his group. Sometimes the actors are not quite happy because they are not ready, and sometimes the director loses contact with his group. You must have a leading hand, not only a giving hand. If you interrupt your work by calling up the attention and activity of your group, it will pay better than not interrupting.

FORM OF THE PLAY:

What was new in this rehearsal was that you have given the form at the first rehearsal - the three points and the various levels. You have given the form at once, but this must be given much, much later. The director must know this form, and keep it in mind, but the actors are not yet able to bring this form into being. The form at this stage will be nothing, or it will make them cold and kill instead of giving them a feeling of joy about the beauty of the form. This came too early although the way in which you gave it was

good, because you did not require that they have to live in this form and produce in this form. However, if you had given them some picture of the form, without any intention to push the form into their souls or demand that they conform to it, that would be like a future vision for the actors to work toward. That you have started with the form is very important, because you must know it yourself very clearly, but you must not impose it on your actors yet.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

About the gesture of approaching the Saint and leaving him, which you have given after the imagination, this was right but instead of giving one gesture you gave too many gestures, with the result that Balladina began to act. When you ask an actor to act too early, the first thing he shows is his very weakest point. On the other hand, by preparing the psychological gesture every part of the soul and body will be permeated by the qualities of time and space, etc., and then the actor will feel that everything he does is part of this main gesture.

The gesture itself was right, but how you gave it was not right because you gave too much. For instance, you asked Balladina to approach and you told her only one thing - that she was "drawn". This was good. The director must find the clear-cut gesture. "How" she came back was not explained to her, therefore she began to act because there was nothing else to do. The gesture was not defined. For instance, to come to the Saint was one gesture, then to find her re-

lationship to him was another gesture, and to turn away is another gesture, etc. What will be the result if you work with the right gestures? You will gradually come to some long and complicated sketches and exercises, consisting only of the psychological gesture. When the Saint moves his hand it is another gesture - he must be given a psychological gesture too. Whether he calls her, or pushes her back, or tries to push his hand into her soul and touches her heart - anything you want to imagine, but he must have a gesture. Then gradually you can really act the whole scene without acting, only producing the series of gestures you have chosen. Then the whole scene would appear before you as the ideal form of the scene. The psychological gesture can be understood as the platonic idea of the scene. Then you will give to this complicated scene which you have rehearsed, an aura - many things which are acting behind this thing. Many things will be added to the original gesture.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

The clearer the psychological gestures which you give, the more these gestures will come back to you as inspiration. Because the director is in the same position as the actor who has to find his gestures. They will never be readymade. You must find the gesture which is the idea of the whole scene, but to get this you must give the clearest possible gesture, then you will know whether it is right or not. If you give a vague gesture, you will be dealing more with your own ideas than with the actor. You may find

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something in it which you want, but perhaps the actor is not really doing it. You must be able to see clearly what is going on in a practical way, and not in an ideal way. Therefore, it is better to make absolutely clear what you have given to your actors, and then see whether what you have given has brought you some results, rather than to lose yourself in your own ideas.

Each director has his own difficulties. For instance, sometimes - because I wanted many things - I gave the actors too much, without thinking of the actors. I was satisfied, but the actors were not yet ready, and they did not understand what I wanted. This often brought about a state of unhappiness between us because I was doing something with the actors and using them only as material. I did not appreciate their individual souls. This was true sometimes with the Habima Theatre.¹ The danger is always that the director will lose himself in his own ideas and the actors will be lost.

You must realize that your direction is very right and very deep, but you must take each gesture and elaborate it. The gesture must also be produced in the soul, not only with the body and the face. This was persuasive. Find some gesture which will produce this psychological character.

This invisible figure will impress the audience as a wonder. Today you have done so many things in a half hour which should be distributed over three or four rehearsals. The actor must have enough time to digest the gesture. In another instance you gave a psychological gesture, and then you tried to change it by increasing the tempo. As a result of changing the tempo many other things were changed. It means that you massage the soul by changing the same gesture. This is good, but you must always remember that if you change the gesture then you will produce another gesture, which may not be right.

PLAYING ON TWO LEVELS:

The Two Clowns: (Peter and Paul)

Under the guise of the two clowns we may have a very interesting and fascinating theme. Do you remember seeing Grock the Clown? He was playing on the piano and his partner was playing on [something else]. This transition is the most beautiful because two levels are shown. The deepest level is seen when we see the old suffering man. One tragic moment followed by humor. This is such a high quality of art, when we are able to find two levels in our playing this division into two levels gives such perspective, such depth to each piece of art that we have to discover this line. This was an exercise in outward form, the ground of which is found in the two levels.

Peer Gynt:

If the director tells his actors interesting things

in an intellectual way, they will understand you but that is nothing because for the artist intellectual understanding is only the illusion that you understand. In our profession not only is it not understanding, but it prevents future understanding, consequently the actor jumps too quickly to the feelings and to acting. Sometimes the director must remind his cast why we are doing these psychological gestures. We are doing them in order to explore the play, the scene, your own possibilities, etc., but not as acting. A slight difference, but a great one at the same time.

One error is to fall into the physical reaction, rather than the spiritual one. A really good actor will get the result from everything. Sometimes good actors can act well even with the wrong method. But we are speaking of the Method in its pure form. There is nothing against using the physical exercise only, but there is the possibility that in using the physical you will forget that you have to explore something more. You must use your physical instrument - the psychological gesture uses the body - but there must be a certain limit. For instance, the actor Veshnevsky could not understand Stanislavsky's method of many psychological preparations. He tried through physical pain to excite his temperament, and he got some, but the quality of it was not quite the best.

Physical movements are good, but the aim of the exercise is not to plunge in them and be drawn into them,

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but rather through them to explore what is arising in your imagination and feelings. If you, as the director, remind your actor to explore at the same time that he is doing his physical gesture, the actor will get a finer result. Unless this exploring is done the actor will begin to act.

For acting, what was done in the rehearsal today was too poor, too simple, too empty. If the actor will explore the psychological gesture you have given, he will have the feeling that he has done something which is enriching him, but it would not be acting. When the actor tries to repeat such acting he will feel how poor and bad it is, and he will be disappointed. But this will never be the case if you do not allow the actor to act until he has explored the psychological gesture. Then he will remember it and repeat it and it will be very good, because it will not be acting. The acting will be arising slowly inside him, and when you give him the moment to act he will really have an action prepared, and not some poor attempts at acting. Therefore, the longer the director can prevent the actor from acting, the better the result will be. As the director, you must develop this instinct to know when to allow your actors to act. This question cannot be calculated. The application of the principle must be absolutely free and be applied through intuition. After some time you will know what to do, as was the case with the Habima.

The director must be clear about the task he gives

his actors. If possible start with big things and then define each moment. Sometimes it is necessary to give one moment which has to be explored. Only if you give a clear task will the actor be free. Only through your limitations will he be free. It is being arbitrary and having freedom at the same time. If you can give your actor his direction, point by point, he will become free. By giving gestures we try to transform everything the director has in his imagination. The director must find the psychological gestures in his "laboratory" and then watch from his window. But if he gives a gesture which is not clear, then you give only quasi freedom.

Peer Gynt must make himself so small, and he must find himself in his mother's soul again - as a child. He touches his mother and finds her stiff, and from this gesture he will know that she is dying. The director can have the actor do a gesture without using a muscle - without doing the physical part of it. By being very, very small, then the gesture to touch the mother, then after this attempt to be with the mother as a child, he will find it is too late - she is already dead.

The director must decide whether he will give the actor the possibility to really knock on the door, or just "as if." Or he can have the actor work only in his imagination, but in giving this the director must be sure that the actor will really move his body slightly, because real imagination does affect the body. The director from his "laboratory"

must give the kind of psychological gesture. The result of this work with the psychological gesture is the character.

Everything we are doing is to call up the action, but not have the acting too soon. This is a question of tact and experience, and the quality of the play. The characters in the play are always in the background - we can draw them near for some exercises or have them further away. The director must tell the actors the rhythm in which the play is found. He must take the Method very strongly and then be absolutely free within it.

The gesture the director has to give must be the most characteristic. The later he allows his actors to act, the better the quality will be. After he sees that inspiration has touched his actors, he must let them be free. At the beginning the director must improvise, then later the actors will improvise for him. The director must not give too much at each rehearsal, but he must be insistent on getting the most out of every gesture, each of which must be thoroughly explored.

When the director forgets to define the activity there is confusion. He must give the action as well as the imagination, as for example, lifting, penetrating - something to do. The moment the director wishes to use the approach of the psychological gesture, he must give his actors something to do. The actor must know what he does, otherwise he can only act, and this acting will always be too early.

CHARACTERIZATION - THE IMAGINARY BODY:

To create the image means to change your body. It means also to change your soul, which is closely connected with your body. You have to change your body and there are two possibilities for you to do this. One way is to change your body from what it is - for instance, if I want to be older I try to bend my body and get accustomed to it. Another way is to imagine that I have another form for my body. This second means is much stronger and much more impressive and will bring more results. I have to imagine my body is smaller than it is. Therefore, by trying to-be smaller I will be bent. In my imagination I see my body something other than it is. By imagining this other body, my own body tries to fit into my image. When you try to fit gradually into this other body you will find a real character in it. By imagining that I am taller and, by trying to fit into my image I will give the appearance of another body. My physical body will be much more obedient, and will change more than if I try to do it mechanically.

This is the technique of finding the bodily characterization, but there is also a psychological "trick". For instance, if you have imagined your hands much longer than they are - imagine a figure with long, long hands. You will see not only the hands but the whole character which is expressed in those long hands. Or you may imagine a person with a very short neck, then you will feel the character of a person

with a very short neck. By imagining another body and by trying to fit your body into the imaginary one, you are changing your character at the same time. But you have to see very clearly what you want, and to imagine your other body very clearly, and then you will feel how your artistic character has changed as well.

The psychological approach is to imagine that you are taller, rather than trying to be taller. By your efforts to fit into a tall character you will find with time some fine process which will enable you to persuade your audience that you are taller or shorter. The problem is to find the right kind of body for your character. Only in your free imagination will you find a free expressive image. With time you will find that your body is expressing something.

FEELING OF THE WHOLE:

Exercise by forming a triangle - each person moving into his place with a feeling of what had gone before and what will follow.

FEELING OF FORM, EASE, BEAUTY:

Exercise by walking to the door, walking through the doorway and returning, experiencing the feeling of form all the time.

When Alan gave the chair exercise yesterday he gave it in three parts. The three steps were: 1. Movement. 2. Aim. 3. Performance. The teacher can take an exercise

without explaining the aim to begin with, but the next step of showing the aim must be explained as being the next step. For instance, what is the direction of the activity? In which form is the activity to be used?

THE POINT:

The point brings order into the form. If you are slurring two things which should not be slurred you must make a point. It is an intangible thing and it is without any other meaning, because if it has meaning it becomes a pause and that is another thing...it is both physical and psychological.

To exercise the feeling of form, beauty, ease, and the whole, stand in three lines and pass the chairs from one line to the other.



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If you change something about your image, it must be something very characteristic. It must be complete. Don't allow yourself to go half-way in characterization. Better to have none at all. Your characterization must be full and speaking. A small characterization will penetrate the whole body. It is not always necessary to change the whole body - a change of the head, definitely imagined and produced, will change the whole character.

The director must always try to define the action and the acting. The action is a preparation for acting.

"Pushes or Pushing": Exercise for Psychological Gesture:

The higher and more pure our "pushing" is at the beginning, the richer will be our "pushes" in the performance. This will create a persuasive thing for the audience.

"PUSHING"

1. Platonic world.
2. Psychological gesture.
3. Performance

The director must always try to give the purest form of the psychological gesture, otherwise you will develop many bad habits and ideas which will have to be uprooted later on.

At the moment you have a psychological gesture you can put on it every word, and the words will be living. Without the gesture you will only get the dry meaning of the word.

One of the most important reasons why we are using the psychological gesture was shown when Balladina was given a gesture, and then the gesture was taken away, but the inner gesture was there. This is a very good description of a psychological gesture.

Exercise for "Point":

Walk across the room with a feeling of point before beginning, point in the center of the room, and

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point when you reach the other wall, then return the same way. Do this with a feeling of the whole.

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Always show something definite in your characterization - nothing half-way. Remember that you have the possibility to create another body and then fit into it.