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OUR METHOD - HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT:

One of the main principles of any school, which is very easy to understand but very difficult apparently to fulfill, is that a method can be given to the students, whatever method it may be. The experience I have had with our school has given me a certain understanding of what is ^{really} going on in our school. Certain mistakes have been made by me and by the students, and we must be brave enough to see them from both sides, in order that we may go on in a better way.

My mistake was that I came with a method which was a very complicated one - not for me, because I have been concerned with it for years and years, and my own experience as an actor in Russia and abroad gave me a certain impetus to create this method as a protest against all the difficulties and I met inwardly as an actor, ^{and} from outside factors such as directors, ^{as I was greatly interested,} and other conditions. ^{So it was nothing new for me and,} was not difficult for me, but when I gave this method to my friends in England, and in America, again here, ^{I saw that it was apparently much more difficult} for them than I had thought. I realized this mistake even before I came to America, and I have simplified my method very much in order to meet this difficulty.

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The mistake on the students' side was that they were not active enough in taking the Method, and this is the point I want to speak about. If the Method is not taken, it remains a theoretical thing - one may think he has the atmosphere, or the objective, or the psychological gesture, or radiation, or group feeling, but it is only an illusion and it remains hanging in the air like a heavy ballast which depresses one and gives one a feeling of great shame.

It gives me a feeling of shame because I feel that I have tried for three years to give you the Method and either it is wrong, or you have not taken it. I agree that it was too complicated, but on the other hand, it was not fully taken. So I suggest to you that you try to take the Method in the simplified form in which I am going to give it to you.

TAKING THE METHOD:

What does it mean to "take" the Method? If you think it is enough to do the exercises only during the lessons, then you are mistaken - during the lessons you do the exercises very well, but after the lesson is over, you forget that there is a method, and no one actually exercises the things I have tried to give you until the next lesson. That is what I call not "taking" the Method.

During our exercises, when I tell you to take the objective, for instance, I see that you can do it, but when you come onto the stage, I see very clearly that you make no

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effort to take the objective with the whole body and being, and the result is that within a few moments the objective is gone because you have only understood it with the brain. The same with atmosphere - when I tell you to create this or that atmosphere, I am unable to detect at which moment you begin to create the atmosphere, and then move and speak in it.

This means that you make one big mistake - you think that the school belongs to our small studio room and lasts from four to five o'clock and that when you are in the theatre there is no more school. Also, when you leave the studio room and go on with your private life, you forget the school entirely, and you feel you are free - from what? From exercising the Method.

These two mistakes you make, but the only way to take the Method is to be as I have once said, "mad with this idea." So that when you go to a shop to buy things, for instance, you must give yourself the objective to understand what the salesgirl is thinking of. Or, for instance, when you go for a drive, try to do it in an atmosphere of fear. Only when you will take the Method in this way will you really have it.

STANISLAVSKY'S METHOD:

Stanislavsky's Method was much more complicated than ours, and he once said to his young actors, "Never exercise

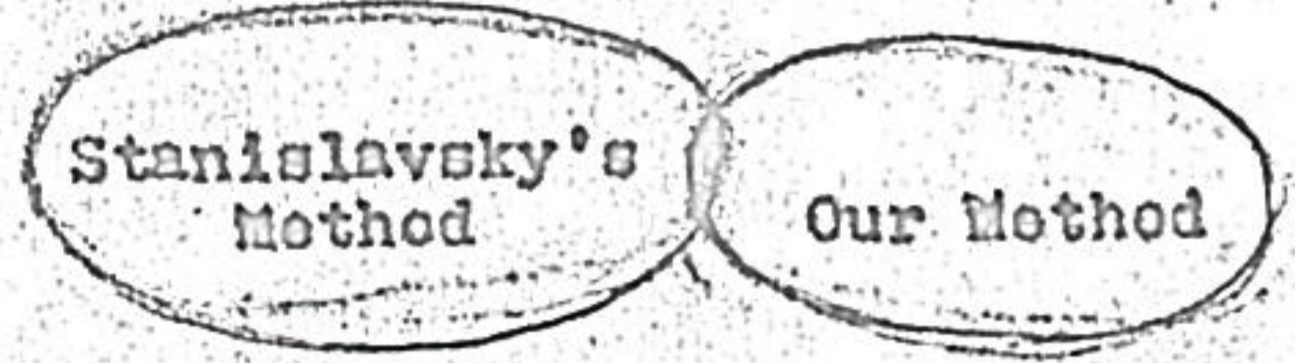
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the method when you are crossing the street." But I beg you to exercise even when you are crossing the street!



THE ACTOR'S PROFESSION:

Why do we students of drama neglect our profession when we are not actually on the stage, or when we have no definite part to work upon? We feel somehow free and that there is nothing in our profession to occupy us. The answer is that our profession has never had any technique - we have had brilliant actors in the past, we have brilliant examples of talent and genius today, but they have come of themselves and not because they have a certain technique or method. We think our profession is something which we have in our pocket - we have it one moment and then it disappears.

THE ACTOR'S TECHNIQUE:

Ask a musician how he would get his profession if he did not exercise it. Our Method is as nothing compared with the complicated technique of music, but we have the wrong perception about our profession - it is something which has no ground in the future, and none in the past. We have a part or we haven't one - but who are we when we haven't a part? No one - only a girl or a boy with a name - that is all.

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We have no profession because we have no technique. This idea is a most misleading and destructive thing; and, therefore, we have no idea of what we must do when we leave the classroom. But I want you to change this attitude of mind in our school, and to understand that there is a technique and that the technique which I am trying to give you is a real technique which requires to be developed through our exercises, psychological and physical. Our bodies must be exercised in a certain way to acquire a certain technique then you will be able to open the door just a little to this marvelous idea to be "mad" about our profession.

In our school so many things are lost or become useless because of this wrong attitude - I have seen you do fine things, but I have not yet seen you crazy about the Method. When you have changed this attitude, then it will have sense to go on with our lessons and exercises. For this purpose, try to find out how many exercises you can do in the one day - you will see that the whole day is actually at your disposal and all the events and meetings can be used for exercising different things. After the first two weeks of making such an effort, you will see that it comes of itself.

Then you will see another thing - you will get stronger and stronger psychologically as human beings and as actors if you acquire this ability to be occupied with this

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main idea or aim all your life. Properly done, our exercises are stimulating and give power, and you may discover another thing - you may find that you have found the aim of your life.

I cannot think that you came to us through accident or just to have a little pleasure - many of you have made great sacrifices to come to us, and you must know that I will not give you something light and entertaining, but I will give you something which will require your whole power or nothing. So you must decide whether it is the aim of your life to become an actor and whether it is worthwhile to concentrate on your aim. If you will concentrate on this one thing, you will get this wonderful feeling, as a religious person does when he concentrates on one idea, and that is that your heart and will are always leading to this one point, and you will become strong only because of this centralization of all your powers.

THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE FUTURE:

Our profession can be very important in our cultural life and in creating the cultural life of the future. If you understand this, you will know what you are aiming at and why you are going through all these difficulties because you are serving certain ideas which can bring good to the whole of humanity - not less than humanity. Our world is in such a state that if Chamberlain pushes a button in England, the whole world reacts, just as when something happens in China

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the whole world feels it - so that Hitler's idea of isolation by pure Aryan blood is impossible.

Don't think that when you are acting in New York you don't influence the whole world; you do. When you are acting badly, you don't influence anyone, but if you do something really significant, then you influence the whole world. If you act well today, you will see the result of your good acting in another part of the earth - it will not be so obvious immediately, but the streams are coming and going around the whole earth. If you will get the idea of what it means to have a real theatre, you will discover that you are really doing something on the right basis here which will influence the whole earth - let it be my fantasy at the moment, but it is not fantasy, it is like radio.

If you grasp this idea, you will understand that the boundaries are dissolved and that the world is a commonwealth. You cannot keep anything in one country - the culture of America exists in the whole world, as does the culture of other countries, so it is worthwhile to work along one aim and make it stronger and stronger so that it will benefit the whole of humanity. Perhaps it may seem exaggerated to you now, but if you will ponder on it, you will see that it is so.

The reason for this talk was that I want you to realize and make concrete the idea of our school, to work for

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it and for the whole human culture. But without making our first steps we cannot hope to go on - and for this purpose we must exercise our Method.

THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION:

Why do we speak so much about the imagination?

Because the creative imagination is the basis for all creative professions. Our profession needs a well-developed imagination, perhaps even more than other professions. The ability to imagine something can be developed to such an extent that you will be possessed by imaginations which will come to you and this is actually the first sign or glimpse of the imagination. If you are making efforts to see a character you have to perform, you must see it in your mind's eye by making the effort. By making such efforts every day, you will come to the point when your images will appear before you with such power and strength that you will be forced to stop your inner life and follow your image, not because you force it, but because it forces you to follow it. Then is the moment when you can say that you have developed your imagination to the necessary point.

This is the actor or artist's imagination - the creative imagination which gives this blessed moment when the image appears before you of its own accord. To get this ability you must expend tremendous activity and energy in doing exercises in which you try to see a definite character

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or image and penetrate into its life.

At the moment you get this ability to be possessed by your images you will develop not only imagination, but you will break the ice for your creative soul in general. At the moment when your images begin to fly around you, inside of you, you will not only have a developed imagination, but your whole creative possibilities are born in this moment.

This is a very important thing - it is the developing of your whole creative being, which consists of imagination, feelings, will impulses, and many subconscious and super-conscious things. From the developed imagination will be sent radios and telegrams in all directions so that your whole being will be flaming, exploding, and flooding, and you will be able to do everything with yourself, which is actually our actors profession. To manage oneself absolutely. Your developed imagination will give you yourself in your own hands.

IMAGES FROM FAIRY OR FOLK TALES:

To develop the imagination take a fairy tale - or rather a folk tale - and exercise in the following way. Read it and turn everything you read into images. One image after another and try to follow them so that they do not break or disappear (although they will). Try to see them acting before you or in you - the real imagination is always there and here at the same time.

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Take one of the Grimms fairy tales, or a North American Indian legend, or any real folk tale and try to see the images in the space in front of you. Follow the images and ask them to act before you constantly - try to follow the details and penetrate into their minds, and souls, and feelings, and desires - in their surroundings - try to imagine all possible details. Take the same fairy tale each day, perhaps forever.

If something says you are tired, say to this small being, "Stop." Never be tired, but every day take the same fairy tale until the feeling will grow in you that you have to look into this fairy tale, and you will feel a little unhappy unless you are able to do so. If you go on, the fairy tale will come to you in quite a different way, and you will see this marvelous performance going on inside and outside of you.

Then you will come to the point where you will ask, "Am I seeing this, or am I given this?" - "Am I acting on the stage, or is it someone in me who is able to see such beautiful images?" - and then you will get the answer, "Of course, not me." In us are two things, one which says, "Dull, dull, I want to see a film," and the other is one which shows us such things that we begin to understand that it is the artist which will create the cultural life of the future.

We are between this small devil and this powerful

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angel being. Try to persist with the fairy tale exercise every day, and then you will begin to feel that these intangible things are as real, and even more concrete, than tables and chairs.

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