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**MICHAEL CHEKHOV FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA:
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**MICHAIL ČECHOV Z EVROPY DO AMERIKY:
Z JEVIŠTĚ K PEDAGOGICKÉ METODĚ**

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Z JEVIŠTĚ K PEDAGOGICKÉ METODĚ)**

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Michael Chekhov from Europe to America: From Stage to Pedagogy

Abstract

This dissertation is based on my study of the pedagogical method of Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), as it developed after 1935 in England and the United States. Through newly found sources and new examination of documentation leading to an analysis of the artist's acting, directing, and pedagogical activities, it was possible to contribute to a deeper exploration of a unique phenomenon in the broader context of theater history.

The first chapter is a pedagogical biography and a summary of Chekhov's theory of acting. I separate the acting methods based on his own practice at the Moscow Art Theater from those techniques he discovered later. He focused then on imagination, image work, the imaginary character, the embodiment of ideas, imaginary centers, new aspects of atmosphere, and his unique discovery, the technique of Psychological Gesture.

The second chapter discusses Chekhov's pedagogical publications and shows how the patronage and opinions of gradually emerging collaborators and various groups of students in new places influenced his ideas and the way he expressed them. While the first of his main pedagogical publications (1942) was the result of teaching in Chekhov's drama studio, the other two (1946, published in Russian, and the later English publication from 1953) were written under new circumstances when his students, like Chekhov himself, were professional film actors in Hollywood. Special attention is paid to the connection between Chekhov's spirituality and his theory of acting.

Chapter three describes how my previous studies in the acting profession connected with study of Chekhov's method at The Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA). An important discovery was how well Chekhov's method works in conjunction with most of the acting techniques based on the Stanislavsky system, especially with the acting systems taught in America. However, Chekhov's method goes much further, standing firm by itself. Its integrity, holistic approach and free-spiritedness have ensured its viability in the 21st century.

In addition to mastering the method, I also conducted historical, pedagogical and scenological research on how Chekhov's theory of acting can be understood, maintained, and taught. The result is the fourth chapter, which provides a curriculum for a university course in acting and a text for teachers, based on the principles of Chekhov's method.

The chapters make use of many unpublished documents and a new translation of a chapter on Psychological Gesture from Chekhov's Russian edition in 1946. An extensive bibliography and eleven appendices are available, including a chronology of Chekhov's life, a glossary and interviews with contemporary educators.

Keywords: Michael Chekhov (1891-1955); theatre pedagogy; scenology; Psychological Gesture; MICHA (The Michael Chekhov Association)

Michail Čechov z Evropy do Ameriky: Z jeviště k pedagogické metodě

Abstrakt

Tato disertační práce vychází ze studia pedagogické metody Michaila Čechova (1891-1955) a jejího vývoje po roce 1935 v Anglii a ve Spojených státech. Prostřednictvím nově nalezených zdrojů a prozkoumáním pramenného dokumentačního materiálu, které vedlo k analýze umělcovy herecké, režijní a pedagogické činnosti, bylo možné přispět k hlubšímu zkoumání jedinečného fenoménu v širším kontextu historie divadla.

První kapitola obsahuje pedagogickou biografii a shrnutí Čechovovy teorie herectví. Rozděluje zde jeho herecké metody na ty, které založil na své vlastní praxi v Moskevském uměleckém divadle, a ty, které objevil později. Zaměřil se pak především na představitost, obrazovou práci, imaginární postavu, ztělesňování představ, imaginární centra, nové aspekty atmosféry a na svou jedinečnou objevnou techniku, psychologické gesto.

Kapitola druhá rozebírá Čechovovy pedagogické publikace a ukazuje, jak patronát a názory postupně se objevujících spolupracovníků a různých skupin studentů, které učil na nových místech, ovlivnily jeho myšlenky i způsob, jakým je vyjádřil. Zatímco první z jeho hlavních pedagogických publikací (1942) byla výsledkem výuky v Čechovově dramatickém studiu, další dvě (1946 vydané v ruštině a později anglická publikace z roku 1953) byly psány za nových okolností, kdy jeho studenti byli stejně jako Čechov profesionálními filmovými herci v Hollywoodu. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována propojení Čechovovy víry v duchovno s jeho teorií herectví.

Kapitola třetí popisuje, jak se moje předchozí studia herecké profese propojila se studiem Čechovovy metody v organizaci "Asociace Michaila Čechova" (MICHA). Důležitým zjištěním bylo, jak kompatibilní je Čechovova metoda s většinou hereckých technik založených na systému Stanislavského, zejména se systémy herectví vyučovanými v Americe. Čechovova metoda však jde mnohem dál, stojí pevně sama o sobě. Její celistvost, holistický přístup a svobodomyšlnost jí zajistily životaschopnost v 21. století.

Kromě osvojení si metody provedla jsem také historický, pedagogický a scénologický výzkum toho, jak lze Čechovovu teorii herectví chápat, udržovat a učit. Výsledkem je kapitola čtvrtá, která poskytuje učební plán univerzitního kurzu herectví, a text pro pedagogy, založený na principech Čechovovy metody.

Kapitoly obsahují mnohé nepublikované dokumenty a nový překlad kapitoly o psychologickém gestu z Čechovova ruského vydání v roce 1946. K dispozici je obsáhlá bibliografie a jedenáct příloh – včetně chronologie Čechovova života, glosáře a rozhovorů se současnými pedagogy.

Klíčová slova: Michail Čechov (1891-1955); divadelní pedagogika; scénologie; psychologické gesto; MICHA (Asociace Michaila Čechova)

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List of Abbreviations

Citations from Chekhov's works, compendiums of articles, and archival sources are given in complete form in the first instance, and thereafter in short author-date form. This also includes Chekhov's manuscripts, published writings, and lectures (e.g., Chekhov 1942a, Chekhov 1942/1991, Chekhov 1953, etc.). These short-form references may also be found in the Bibliography.

In the Bibliography, "Mikhail Aleksandrovich Chekhov" is used for Russian-language publications; "Michael Chekhov" for English; "Michael Tschechow" for German; and other language publications as noted.

The following abbreviations appear repeatedly in the text, notes, bibliography (with metadata if available), and appendices:

Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers – Adelphi University Archives & Special Collections, Michael Chekhov Manuscript Collection (Deirdre Hurst du Prey Papers); Garden City, Long Island, New York USA.

Critical Stages 2017 – Meerzon, Yana, ed. 2017. Special Section, "Michael Chekhov's Pedagogy and Contemporary Practice," in *Critical Stages/Scènes critiques*, issue 15, June 2017.

Dartington Hall Archives – Manuscripts and selected photographs located at the South West Heritage Trust Devon Archive Collection, Michael Chekhov Theatre Studio Deirdre Hurst du Prey Archive, Exeter, England, UK. See bibliography for extensive notes and metadata.

Keeve 2002/2009-2010 – Keeve, Frederick; Peter Spierer; Charles X. Block; Gregory Peck; et alia. 2002/2009-2010. *From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*. Venice CA: Pathfinder Home Entertainment, 2002; [United States]: Celebrity Home Entertainment, 2009, and [Zürich, Switzerland]: DIVA. AG, 2010. Available URL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiuB_6Zj05A .

Lit. nasl. – 1986. First edition, as Chekhov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich; Maria Osipovna Knebel, ed. 1986. *Literaturnoe nasledie: v dvuh tomah*. Moskva: Iskusstvo.
1995. Second, expanded edition, as Chekhov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich; Maria Osipovna Knebel, M. S. Ivanova; Natalia Anatolevna Krymova; and I. I. Abroskina, eds. 1995. *Literaturnoe nasledie*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1995.

MAT – Moscow Art Theatre (the various studios are described in the text without abbreviation). “MAT” will be used in this study in referring to the Moscow Art Theatre productions, First Studio, and training before 1919, and in general terms, when referring to Chekhov’s later participation in the “MAT tradition.”

МНАТ – “Moscow Academic Art Theatre” (Московский Художественный академический театр, or *Moskovskiy Hudojestvennyy Akademicheskiiy Teatr* in Latin characters – МНАТ) – the official name of the MAT after 1919. (Note: in English-language usage, both eras of the Moscow Art Theatre are referred to as “MAT.”)

МІСНА – The Michael Chekhov Association, New York.

NYPL – New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center, New York (see also Bibliography). Especially, see Bibliography, as follows:

Chekhov 1955 Lectures – Chekhov, Michael. 1955. Twelve lectures given in Hollywood on topics in the dramatic arts. Audiotapes. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York (call nos. LT10-4779 through LT10-4790).

Routledge 2015 – Autant-Mathieu, Marie-Christine, and Yana Meerzon, eds. 2015. *The Routledge Companion to Michael Chekhov*. London and New York: Routledge (reprinted 2018).

TDR 1983 – Gordon, Mel, et alia. *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 27, no. 3, Michael Chekhov Number (Autumn, 1983).

Theatre, Dance and Performance 2013 – Chamberlain, Franc, Adrei Kirillov, and Jonathan Pitches, eds. 2013. “Special Issue: Michael Chekhov,” in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, vol. 4, issue 2, July 2013. [London:] Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

ZHdK Archiv Boner Papers – Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Archiv: Georgette Boner Papers, Archive Number EFB-2008-E001-0059- [etc.]; Zürich, CH.

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Others also made essential contributions to preserving Chekhov's pedagogical work. Dr. Georgette Boner, Chekhov's first foreign pedagogical collaborator, should be mentioned. Charles Leonard helped Chekhov edit the 1953 edition of *To the Actor*. He also published in 1963 excerpts from Chekhov's 1955 Lectures in Hollywood, and Chekhov's directing script for a performance of Gogol's *The Inspector General* in Los Angeles. Chekhov's student in California, Mala Powers, who also would become executrix of his estate, made use of her connections with the publishing industry to edit, in collaboration with Mel Gordon (and of course implicitly with Hurst du Prey), "The 1942 Version," as well as distributing copies of edited audio versions of nine of the twelve lectures Chekhov gave in 1955, not long before his death. (That the tapes of these lectures were made and preserved was due to the efforts of John Dehner, John Abbott, and Fanya Miroff, actors who helped organize, with Akim Tamiroff and others, Chekhov's Hollywood lectures.) More recently, the group of Chekhov teachers associated with MICHA (The Michael Chekhov Association), notably Jessica Cerrullo, have continued sponsoring the publication of his lessons. In this context, a series of videotapes featuring or produced by Federick Keeve, Lisa Dalton, Joanna

Merlin, Ragnar Freidank, MICHA, and others have documented not only Michael Chekhov and his career but also the reminiscences of his first generation pupils.

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Library Manuscripts Division in London, the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, and the libraries of Fairfield University and the State University of New York, College at Purchase.

At Ridgefield, Connecticut, Jack Sanders of the *Ridgefield Press* newspaper guided my local research and connected me with colleagues in the Ridgefield Historical Society. Barbara Serfilippi, Town Clerk of Ridgefield, helped me with finding documents. Other colleagues at Ridgefield include Leslie Vuilleumier of the Ridgefield Public Library, who helped with the organization of my several lectures at the Ridgefield Public Library, and my colleagues on the board of the Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival in Ridgefield, with some of whom I have performed.

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The collaboration and advice of Yana Meerzon and Jessica Cerrullo, and the advice of Anatoly Smeliansky, Liz Shipman, Hugo Moss, and Max Hafler, have been essential. Lisa Dalton provided important support in accessing Chekhov's 1955 Lectures. Jessica Cerullo opened MICHA's archive to me and introduced me to the MICHA members, and has been irreplaceable in her organization of the MICHA meetings. Indeed, the final shape of this dissertation would have not been possible without the generous and wise contributions of my colleague members of MICHA, who allowed me to interview them in 2018-2019. Their names and words are given below in Appendix 6.

Of course, the work would not exist at all without the inspiration and guidance of the faculty at DAMU. I am grateful to my dissertation director doc. MgA. Jakub Korčák, for his many helpful suggestions and wise corrections; to prof. Jaroslav Vostrý, who first suggested the idea and guided many of my researches over the course of my recent study at DAMU and the work on the dissertation; to prof. MgA. Zuzana Sílová, *Ph.D*, Head of Cabinet in the Department of Drama Theater who constantly offered sage advices and aided me in finding resources in Prague libraries; and to Ema Horvátová for her friendship and advice.

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Dedicated to my mother,
Anna Hodková,
and to my husband and children.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Michael Chekhov from Europe to America: From Stage to Pedagogy

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Chekhov, known in English-speaking countries as Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), belongs to a group of great theatre artists who influenced dramatic practice in ways that were as refreshing as they were significant. Chekhov was an active participant in that moment when theatrical innovation thrived in early twentieth-century Russia, and his work as a leading actor at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT/MHAT) had already been recognized internationally, even before the MHAT summer 1922 tour to the Baltic States, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In 1928, events in Stalin's Soviet Union forced Chekhov into exile, where he continued to teach as well as act.

This study will focus on Michael Chekhov's pedagogy and his dramatic method as they developed after 1935 in England and in the United States, where I first studied the Chekhov work. My career as an actress in my home country and later abroad, and also as a teacher of acting, prepared me for this discovery and has inspired me to deepen my understanding of his techniques. I have tried to depict the relationship of Chekhov's pedagogy to the dramatic method he learned and taught at the MAT. I also seek to show how his pedagogical methods and dramatic theories evolved dynamically as he taught over the course of 37 years, both in Russia and particularly, after he became an independent pedagogue at the time of his exile.

My research for this study followed five parallel paths: scholarly historical and literary research on Chekhov's career as an actor, studio leader, and pedagogue; analysis of the documents and published writings relating to his dramatic theories and pedagogy; discovering the ways the Chekhov method was perpetuated after his death; learning the Chekhov method; and applying the Chekhov method in my own acting and teaching. In addition to the standard methodologies of conducting scholarly investigations in libraries and archives, I analyzed the unpublished archive materials relating to Chekhov's teaching, compared Chekhov's own writings to each other, and analyzed them from a scenological point of view. I have tried to combine

functions: for example, research on the institutions and practitioners who teach “the Chekhov work” was combined with learning Chekhov techniques from them. When learning the techniques, I let my scholarly knowledge nourish my studies, and when I have applied what I learned to my own teaching, I have used a pedagogical methodology based as closely as possible on Michael Chekhov’s own work.

Points of Emphasis

I find a number of things to be prominent in Chekhov’s approach to teaching dramatic method. These will be emphasized throughout the dissertation.

First, how much Chekhov was grounded in the traditions of the MAT.

Second, how many extraordinary new elements Chekhov brought to his pedagogy and theories, and how these have radically changed modern dramatic practice in both stage plays and films.

Third, how much his teachings are based on his personal experience as an outstanding performer, director, and studio leader, as well as a writer in several languages.

Fourth, how his spiritual beliefs and personal philosophy interacted with his dramatic theories in varying and occasionally surprising ways.

Fifth, how visual Chekhov’s approach to theatre was, including the primacy of Images in his method and his emphasis on stagecraft, style, and the concept of Atmospheres, which he received from Stanislavsky but augmented tremendously for both actor preparation and productions onstage.

Sixth, how patronage and a succession of groups receiving his teaching – his pedagogical “audiences” – affected both his expression of his ideas and the ideas themselves.

Finally, how unusually compatible the Chekhov method is with other systems, including the techniques from Stanislavsky and his colleagues, Uta Hagen, Herbert Berghof, and Sanford Meisner that were included in my own dramatic training.

The motive of this study has not simply been to investigate theatre history, but rather to provide resources and new understanding for theatrical scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and their students, who would want to share Chekhov's work and carry his legacy into the twenty-first century. Readers who wish to familiarize themselves with the details of Chekhov's career are urged to consult the Chronology provided as Appendix One.

Chapter One: Michael Chekhov's Pedagogy and Dramatic Method

In this chapter I answer several questions, such as: Who was Michael Chekhov? What was his dramatic method? What elements did he bring to his method and teaching from his origins in the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) and the techniques of Konstantin Stanislavsky? How did he adapt these techniques and enlarge them, adding many new influences, as he developed the method that bears his name? I also provide a very brief biographical background and summary explanations of the most important parts of his method. The biography focuses on Chekhov's teaching, especially in the years from 1936, when he led the Michael Chekhov Studio at Dartington Hall, Devon, England, and then, from January 1939 in the United States, after the Studio transferred to Ridgefield, Connecticut, expanding to New York City in October 1941 – finally disbanding in 1942 because of World War II. The focus on America continues after Chekhov moves to Hollywood in 1943, acting in films, continuing to write his books on dramatic method, and teaching from 1948 to his death in 1955.

The elements Chekhov brought to his method and teaching from his origins in the MAT include concentration (attention), characterizations, centers, the importance of movement (action), radiating, objectives, through-lines, scene analysis ("bits"), multi-leveled attention, and the already-mentioned concept of atmospheres, which becomes particularly dynamic and innovative in Chekhov's system. Other elements, in which he goes beyond his roots in the MAT, are found in his explanation of the function of will-impulses, especially when working with objectives, and his concept of the creative function of the Higher Self.

The point is that Chekhov made Stanislavsky's method his own and did not simply copy what he had learned at the MAT. He built on it, making original, innovative refinements and bringing in entirely new elements that he developed over six years of teaching in his Chekhov Theatre Studio in England and America, and in his acting classes for professionals in New York and Hollywood. Among the significant new elements Chekhov brought to his training system were his substitution of aspects of the actor's Imagination for the obsession with Affective Memory found in early Stanislavsky and in Stanislavsky's other American followers; his focus on physical sensations rather than pure feelings in evoking emotions; his bringing psychophysical exercises to the center of the actor's training; his use of images in developing a character, along with methods of "incorporating" those images into the actor's gestures and movement; and the idea of Psychological Gesture, translating the character's super-objective and scene objectives into movement, which is not found in other dramatic methods. There is also the influence of Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophy, seen in concepts such as "coloring" of movements with feeling; the tripartite division of human beings into body, soul [psyche], and spirit; and elements in the curriculum of the Michael Chekhov Studio, including Eurythmy.

The chapter explores the way Chekhov organized and expressed his concepts, as in elements such as the "Four Brothers" (Feelings of Ease, Beauty, Form, and the Entirety or Whole), and other larger concepts such as the Sense of Style and Feeling of Truth. Similarly, there is the pairing of gestures with psychological qualities, leading to emotions arising organically from the movement, and the focus on the audience (inherited from his mentor and colleague, Yevgeny Vakhtangov). Finally, these refinements and innovations will allow Chekhov to teach effectively in Hollywood and train a large group of highly successful actors. Chekhov will also incorporate the concepts into his pedagogical publications.

Chapter Two: Comparison of Chekhov's Publications

Chapter Two looks at Chekhov's publications and public lectures, analyzing differences in the presentation of dramatic pedagogy and artistic

theories. The focus is on the three major publications of *To the Actor*: the 1942 manuscript version (the basis for subsequent editions, published 1991); a privately printed 1946 edition published in Russian (О технике актера); and the best-known of Chekhov's publications, the 1953 edition (*To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*), with a Preface by Yul Brynner, Chekhov's best-known former student at the time. The Russian artist and set designer, Nicolai Remisoff, provided sixteen two-color lithographs in 1946 and re-drew black and white versions of seven of these for the 1953 edition. The three editions are compared to earlier materials, both published and unpublished, and to the series of 12 lectures that Chekhov recorded at Hollywood in 1955, the year of his death. Changes from edition to edition are noted and analyzed.

The goal is not just to compare the editions in literary terms but rather, in terms of how they present Chekhov's method and associated techniques and how they can be applied to teaching needs. Particularly close attention is paid to the 1953 edition. Although it clearly expresses the basic ideas of Michael Chekhov's dramatic theory and practical applications, and repeats many elements from several of the 1946 chapters (and one from 1942), it varies considerably in emphasis and offers fewer acting exercises. Nevertheless, the 1953 edition presents the innovative applications of the ideas and exercises Chekhov developed in California, including those based on his experience in Hollywood films, with a particular emphasis on improvisations. (Concepts such as Triplicity and Polarities are also presented in a new light.) Chekhov's educational principles remain the same, but the context had changed, and his dramatic theories and articulation of them have clearly evolved. Especially, the effect of different "audiences" on the presentation of the material in this and all of Chekhov's pedagogical writings is considered as one of several explanations.

Chapter Three: Previous Training and Learning the Chekhov Method

Chapter Three explains how I learned about Chekhov's method, in the context of my previous dramatic training in the Stanislavsky method, augmented by professional study in New York at the HB Studio with Herbert

Berghof and Uta Hagen, and with followers of Sanford Meisner at the Columbia University Film Studies Program. I also enriched my command of classical pantomime in master class residencies with Marcel Marceau. I was already an established professional actress when I first encountered the innovative Chekhov techniques. My investigations were initially conducted from the point of view of a scholar and theatre pedagogue. But I needed someone to help me, as the senior Chekhov teacher, Ted Pugh, has expressed it, “to get on my feet and do it.” I found my Chekhov mentors at MICHA, The Michael Chekhov Association, established by long-time Chekhov teachers Joanna Merlin, Sarah Kane, Lenard Petit, and Ted Pugh in 1999, on the basis of a Studio in New York created 1980-1992 by former Chekhov students from the Michael Chekhov Studio at both Dartington and Ridgefield and from his teaching in California. (See Appendices 4 and 5.)

MICHA sponsors gatherings of professionals and teachers from around the world every year in June. These gatherings include workshops and master classes addressing all aspects of the Chekhov work from introductory to advanced, embracing acting, directing, and pedagogy. In 2016, 2018, 2019 and (online) 2020, I attended the master classes at the MICHA annual meetings, as well as conference workshops at New York in March 2017 and November 2019.

Early in my study of Chekhov, it became obvious how much his method had in common, not only with Stanislavsky, but particularly with those techniques I had learned in New York with Hagen and Berghof and Meisner’s followers. Perhaps the most important thing I learned from Uta Hagen was the idea that the actor should not go directly for emotions: “do not play the emotions” but allow them to happen. Although this may have been a later development in Hagen’s pedagogy (perhaps showing Chekhov’s influence), it made it possible for me to fit the new Chekhov ideas smoothly into my already-established dramatic techniques.

I was also impressed with Chekhov’s extraordinarily subtle understanding of human psychology, making possible its extension into an actor’s life. This holistic approach is important now, and it will also be

important in the future in a global world where the actors of various backgrounds and origins have to collaborate much more closely than ever before. The work at MICHA strongly reinforced my ability to “hold a mirror to myself” – seeking things within me that are not part of my ordinary daily life. These had not been accessible in my previous study of dramatic methods. The key word was Image. Working with images again allowed me to be both open and concentrated at the same time, as the image work allowed my deepest feelings to surface.

Studying Chekhov has been the culmination of my acting training and my pedagogical development. In particular, I have made visits to individual Chekhov technique studios and conducted interviews and conversations internationally with teachers of the Chekhov techniques. (See Appendix 6.) These have augmented the training at MICHA, and the entire experience has allowed me to solidify my study of the Chekhov work and apply it to my own acting and teaching. It has had a major impact on many of my students. Chapter Three also makes an important scenological and pedagogical point: how an important 20th-century dramatic method can be transmitted by a diverse network of practitioners and institutions without a single central or dominant authority. Finally, I benefitted enormously not only from learning the techniques, but also from meeting the people themselves: Joanna Merlin, the last living pupil of Chekhov still teaching and President of MICHA; Jessica Cerullo, Artistic Director of MICHA; and Sinéad Rushe, Lisa Dalton, Craig Mathers, John McManus, Scott Fielding, Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Sol Garre, Hugo Moss, Max Hafler, Marjolein Baars, Ulrich Meyer-Horsch, and the other practitioners mentioned in Chapters Three and Four, the Conclusion, and Appendix 6 – an international group.

None of this would have been possible had I not already studied Chekhov’s pedagogical career and writings, giving me a theoretical context to support the exercises, scene studies, and workshops for teachers in the MICHA sessions. I recognized what the teachers were saying on the basis of my study of Chekhov’s work. This has become my own way of applying the

techniques in my teaching, in which I try to stay close to Chekhov's own words and exercises as possible.

Chapter Four: Teaching Chekhov, An Ideal Annotated Syllabus and Teaching Script

This chapter, subtitled "A Resource for Teachers," may come as a surprise to readers expecting a scholarly discussion. Instead it applies what I have learned about Chekhov to an intensive one-semester university course meeting twice a week for 14 weeks. The idea, as already suggested, was to try to use, as much as possible, Chekhov's own words in structuring and presenting his method. Furthermore, I gave emphasis to information from his unpublished lessons and lectures, and to those publications that are difficult of access or not translated into either English or Czech – particularly the 1942 manuscript and the 1946 Russian edition, *О технике актера*, from which I have translated the Russian text as needed. (See also Appendix 10, translation of the 1946 chapter on Psychological Gesture.) In support of these sources, I suggest the 1953 edition (as expanded in 2002) as a textbook for the students, using its exercises where necessary.

The term, "Syllabus," should not be confused with an actual course guide given out to students, since the chapter also contains notes for pedagogical application and the scripts of lectures to be presented in class. (Long verbatim passages from Chekhov used as the basis for exercises are given in Appendix 8; a lecture for Class 2 is given in Appendix 7; and handouts for the course are combined in Appendix 11.) The idea is that future teachers of the Chekhov work can find in this chapter useful, reliable resources for their pedagogy, as I have found for mine. I have tested these exercises, including those that are essentially "rediscovered," in my own acting and in most cases with my students. I am convinced they work well in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Michael Chekhov's Pedagogy and Dramatic Method

Who was Michael Chekhov? What was his dramatic method? What elements did he bring to his method and teaching from his origins in the Moscow Art Theatre and the techniques of Konstantin Stanislavsky? How did he adapt these techniques and enlarge them, adding many new influences, as he developed the method that bears his name?

1.1 A Brief Introduction to Michael Chekhov as a Teacher¹

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Chekhov (1891-1955), known in the West as Michael Chekhov, was one of the great acting geniuses of the twentieth-century theatre, adored by Russian audiences and admired in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and the United States. What made him special, however, and highly influential from his own era to the present day, was the fact that he was also an excellent pedagogue who developed his own acting techniques, initially based on the “System” of Konstantin Stanislavsky – with whom Chekhov worked for sixteen years – along with Leopold Sulerzhitsky, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov.² Indeed the death of Stanislavsky himself in August 1938 – preceded by that of Richard Boleslavsky, another pupil of Stanislavsky who popularized the Stanislavsky method in America, in January 1937 – made Chekhov the most important remaining follower of Stanislavsky outside of Russia from 1939 to his death in 1955. This greatly increased the importance of Chekhov's pedagogical activity. His techniques

¹ Note: throughout this study, archives cited repeatedly will be identified with the abbreviations listed above, or with short-title references as given at the beginning of the Bibliography. Repeated references to anthologies and scholarly compendiums are also given in the list of abbreviations. Other references will be given in their full citation, equivalent to the Bibliography, for the first mention, and in short author-date form thereafter (also consistent with the Bibliography).

² In his lectures of 1955 on “The Great Russian Directors,” Chekhov explains how he had blended the influences of these older artists, as well as those of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Alexander Tairov. The lectures are preserved on tape at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tapes 1 and 2; NYPL call nos. LT10-4787 (part I) and LT10-4788 (part II), as noted above in abbreviations and in the Bibliography. [Chekhov 1955 Lectures.]

have inspired and aided the dramatic work of many of the finest stage and movie actors of the late twentieth and now the twenty-first century.

After a brilliant career from 1912 to 1928 as first a student, then a star actor, and ultimately a director and manager with the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT/MHAT), Chekhov was forced, in August 1928, to go into exile in Western Europe. This was because the spiritual elements in his dramatic theory, largely derived from the teachings of Rudolf Steiner's "Anthroposophy," were considered unacceptable to the Communist government in Stalin's Russia.³ Ironically, in January 1928, Chekhov had published his autobiography, *Put aktera [The Path of the Actor]*, which became a national best-seller; it included comments on actor training in passing.⁴ Outside of Russia, Chekhov was becoming known as a significant actor; already in 1914, his performance as Caleb the toymaker in the First Studio's dramatization of *The Cricket on the Hearth* brought international mention.⁵ Chekhov's participation in tours with the MHAT First Studio to the south of Russia in June 1920, and most importantly, to Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, and Czechoslovakia in June-August 1922, further established his international reputation. (See Appendix 1.)

Chekhov had already begun teaching a decade earlier, at Moscow in 1918, in a private acting studio at his home, and then continued developing his teaching techniques as director of the Second Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, 1922-1928. However, it was in his European "exile" after 1928 that he focused on teaching in an even more active way. He explained his motives

³ See Cristini, Monica. 2015. "Meditation and Imagination: The contribution of anthroposophy to Michael Chekhov's acting technique," in Routledge 2015, pp. 69-81. See also below, on the role of author Andrei Bely, and as discussed by Hamon-Siréjols 2009, op. cit. footnote 20.

⁴ Chekhov, Michael. 1928. *Put aktera*. Leningrad: Academia. [Chekhov 1928]. (Republished in Russian in Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 1, pp. 34-121.) For Chekhov's teaching purposes at Dartington in England and Ridgefield in Connecticut USA, a translation by Boris Uvaroff was commissioned in 1936 for the Chekhov Theatre Studio. Uvaroff was the anglicized name of the Russian expatriate entomologist, Boris Petrovitch Uvaroff, 1886-1970. Dartington Hall Archives, locator no. MC/S4/8/C. [Chekhov 1928/1936]

An English edition of Chekhov 1928 was published as Chekhov, Michael; Andrei Kirillov and Bella Merlin, eds. 2005. *The Path of the Actor*. London and New York: Routledge. [Chekhov 1928/2005.] The work, in addition to the translation of the 1928 *Put aktera*; included excerpts from "Life and Encounters," [Chekhov 1944-1945], transl. D. Ball.

⁵ Gordon, Mel. 1983a. "Michael Chekhov's Life and Work: A Descriptive Chronology," in TDR 1983, p. 7. The MAT produced a film of the play as well.

in a letter written from Berlin to the first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, in May of 1930:

I find it hard to reconcile myself to the idea that a whole branch of our Russian theatrical culture has to perish. Everything that both Moscow Art Theatres have created, however great their achievements, is still not the consummation, the organic end, of their activity. External influences of a tendentious system of inspection and the narrowly propagandistic demands of the censorship in Russia have deprived the artist of freedom in the area of his creative activity. However, there is still much strength and many artistic projects and cultural aspirations dwelling in the souls of those who were raised and educated within the walls of the Art Theatre. ... I want to save the wonderful theatrical culture which once inspired me and gave me life as an artist. I want to serve the further flourishing and development of those precepts which I received from my teacher, Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavsky.⁶

(The admiration of Czech artists such as the writer and critic, Karel Čapek, for Chekhov's 1922 performances lent weight to Chekhov's proposal, but in the end the money could not be found.) Chekhov began to write down his own pedagogical ideas initially at Paris in 1931, where he collaborated with the Swiss theatre patron Dr. Georgette Boner, working together on the "Pariser Manuskript" written in German, until 1934.⁷ In 1932-33 Chekhov, with the occasional collaboration of Boner, taught groups of young theatre

⁶ Original in the Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic (KPR – Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic (KPR – Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky, Pražského hradu): locators Archiv KPR, fond KPR, inv.č. 644, Michail Čechov, 1930-31, kart. 53 (the "signature" [folder] has old inventory numbers running from D512/31 to D 6324/31); the letter has a cover memo dated 5 May 1930 paraphrasing Chekhov's text in Czech.

Quoted and translated into English by Anatoly Smeliansky in Senelick, Laurence, ed. 1992. *Wandering Stars: Russian Emigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press [Senelick 1992], pp. 66-67. Russian text also published in Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 1, pp. 368-371. Translated into Czech by Zoja Oubramová in her introduction to Čechov, Michail, and Nicolai Remisoff; Zoja Oubramová, transl. 2017. *Hercova cesta. O herecké technice*. Praha: KANT – Karel Kerlický pro AMU v Praze, pp. 32-33, citing archival locator D 512/31. (This was the revised edition of *Hercova cesta*, Praha: Panorama, 1990.)

Karel Čapek is cited in the documents as supporting Chekhov. Chekhov had performed on August 16, 1922, *The Cricket On the Hearth* in the same Královské Vinohrady theatre that the "Prague Group" performed in. See also Sergei Ostrovsky, in Senelick 1992, pp. 84-101 and Appendix 2, pp. 216-218. Compare Meerzon Yana. 2003. "Forgotten Hollywood. Michael Chekhov's Film Practice Viewed through the Aesthetics of the Prague Linguistic Circle," in *Toronto Slavic Annual*, vol. 11, pp. 219-229.

⁷ Tschechow, Michael [and] Georgette Boner, „Schauspiel-Technik: Pariser Manuskript“; Zürich: ZHdK Archiv Boner Papers, Archive Number EFB-2008-E001-0059-000. [Chekhov and Boner 1932-34.] See also below, Chapter Two.

professionals whom he was directing in Kaunas, Lithuania, and Riga, Latvia.⁸ At this time, Chekhov's own teaching began to be documented in notes taken by his students, as well as in a letter he wrote on the idea of theatrical "Atmosphere." These provide important early statements of his pedagogy.⁹ At this time, he also taught and directed in the Lithuanian National Theatre at Vilnius (near Kaunas), collaborating with his former MHAT colleagues, Andrius Jilinsky-Oleka (Žilinskas), director of the theatre 1929-35, and his wife, actress and teacher Vera Soloviova.

Forced from the Baltic States because of a political coup in 1934, Chekhov returned to Paris, where, under the sponsorship of the Russian-American impresario, Sol Hurok (Solomon Izrailevich Gurkov), he brought together in 1935 a group of Russian exiles, including Jilinsky and Soloviova, formerly associated with the MHAT. The group, calling itself the Moscow Art Players, presented Russian-language plays, including Gogol's *The Inspector General*, on Broadway in New York and in other US cities.¹⁰ This was Chekhov's first arrival in America. The impact of these performances brought Chekhov's pedagogical strengths to the attention of New York theatre professionals, but also to two young actresses, Beatrice Whitney Straight and

⁸ Chekhov 1928/2005, p. 225 n 48. Chekhov taught at Kaunas from 26 May 1932. In Riga, he taught at The Theatre School of the Union of Latvian Actors. According to Chekhov 1928/2005, p. 225 n 47, this "was opened on 12 September 1932. Chekhov taught there with his assistant V. Gromov and some Latvian teachers. There was a special seminar led by Chekhov, as well as a program for professional actors who wished to increase their professional skills. Chekhov taught in the Theatre School in Riga for two seasons until the spring of 1934, and he contributed enormously to the development of theatre pedagogy in Latvia, where the discipline was very young at the time. In the summer of 1933, Chekhov led an additional seminar session for professional actors in Sigulda.

⁹ Sixteen of Chekhov's lectures on acting from the Kaunas period were reconstructed from notes by Chekhov's Russian-speaking students and available in manuscript and in a booklet, "On the work of the actor" (Kaunas, 1936), but they were published in Russia only in 1989 due to *perestroika*, which also resulted in Chekhov's rehabilitation. See Adomajūte, A., and A. Guobis. 1989. *Uroki Michaila Čechova v gosudarstvennom teatre litry 1932 god: Materialy k kursu "Masterstvoaktera"*. Moskva: GITIS. [Chekhov 1932/1989.] Chekhov's letter on Atmospheres is appended, pp. 47-58.

¹⁰ In October 1934, Hurok had announced that the "Prague Group of the MAT" would perform in New York the following January. Even though during that winter the Soviet government threatened to cancel a project to bring Moscow theatres to America if the Moscow Art Players were allowed to perform on Broadway, Chekhov's group arrived in the USA on 14 February 1935 and gave performances at the Majestic Theatre in New York. (Hurok would extend the Players' run for two weeks and tour it to Philadelphia and Boston in April 1935.)

In addition to Khlestakov in *The Government Inspector*, Chekhov played Fraser in *The Flood*, took part in the *Anton Chekhov Evening*, when he performed in Anton Chekhov's sketch, "I Forget," and recited in concerts comprising soliloquies from Marmeladov (*Crime and Punishment*), *Hamlet*, and *Ivan the Terrible*. Each time, whatever role he performed, he played to full houses and received favorable reviews. In the USA, Chekhov received an offer to work on a permanent basis as a director and teacher of acting in the Group Theatre with Stella Adler and other Group Theatre members who met Chekhov and saw him perform in February 1935.

Deirdre Hurst, to whom he gave three lessons on acting, March 16, 18, and 22, 1935, with translations provided by Tamara Daykarhanova, a former colleague from the MAT.¹¹ Straight convinced her mother and stepfather, Dorothy Whitney Straight and Leonard Elmhirst, to install a “Chekhov Theatre Studio” in their utopian community at Dartington Hall in Devonshire, England, 1935-38. (Chekhov signed a contract for teaching at Dartington in late May 1935. His salary started on September 1st, but he was already preparing the curriculum in the United States during the summer of 1935, and, in spite of only beginning to learn English, lectured at New York in June 1935 at the Roerich-Museum and on September 22 at the New School for Social Research on “The Actor and the Theatre of Tomorrow.” (Chekhov also presented a similar lecture on “The Theatre of the Future” at Dartington in 1936.)

It should be stressed again that Chekhov’s work in Dartington needs to be understood, along with the subsequent period in Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA, as an essential part of his “American” pedagogy. Chekhov worked for an American patron, and many of his students, even in England, were American. For example, twelve of the 30 original 1936-37 students (the largest group) came from the United States, Canada and Latin America.¹² Also, Chekhov’s Studio in Devonshire was largely isolated from

¹¹ See below, note 64. Daykarhanova had emigrated in 1929 and opened a drama school with Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, who also worked with Straight and Hurst. Daykarhanova also served as the Dartington Michael Chekhov Studio’s American representative in 1936. See Chekhov Theatre Studio. 1936. Brochure for the Chekhov Theatre Studio, Dartington Hall. 1936. Plaistow, England: The Curwen Press. The copy at the NYPL copy came from the American Government’s Works Progress Administration Theater Project leader, Hallie Flanagan. The brochure was widely distributed in America.

Deirdre Hurst became Deirdre Hurst du Prey after her marriage in 1947. She will be referred to under this name throughout this dissertation. For information on her career, see Caracciolo, Diane. 2008. “Strengthening the Imagination through Theatre: The Contributions of Michael Chekhov,” in *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*; available URL: https://www.academia.edu/38165948/Strengthening_the_Imagination_through_Theatre_The_Contributions_of_Michael_Chekhov?auto=download; and Caracciolo, Diane. 2017. “Transformation and Renewal Through the Arts: The Life and Work of Deirdre Hurst du Prey,” in Caracciolo, Diane, and Courtney Lee Weida, eds. 2017. *The Swing of the Pendulum: The Urgency of Arts Education for Healing, Learning, and Wholeness*, New York: Springer Publishing, pp.135-147.

¹² Ten of the students were from Great Britain, two from Australia, one from New Zealand, and the rest from various European countries. Document in the Cornell Beatrice Straight Papers.

contemporary British theatre developments, other than mentions by theatre leaders such as John Gielgud.¹³

Chekhov left for England in October 1935, and by the spring of 1936 was offering “Lessons for Teachers” at Dartington to potential assistants and future teachers of his techniques, including Beatrice Straight, and Deirdre Hurst, who recorded the classes.¹⁴ (On 5 October 1939 in Ridgefield, Connecticut, exactly three years from the opening of the school at Dartington, Chekhov gave diplomas to six students who had entered in the first Dartington group: Beatrice Straight, her mother Dorothy Whitney Elmshirst, Deirdre Hurst, Peter Tunnard, Alan Harkness, and Blair Cutting.)¹⁵ Chekhov also kept an open working relationship with Boner, with the Group Theater in New York, and with Russian émigré peers, who would come to observe or lecture at Dartington. Studio classes started at Dartington on 5 October 1936 – a three-year course, cut short by the threat of war in Europe. The Chekhov Theatre Studio moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, in January 1939 and continued until American entry into World War II forced it to close in September 1942. On 21 October 1941, Chekhov opened a second branch of the Studio on 56th Street in New York. Chekhov taught classes there until 1942 for both beginners and for professional actors interested in his methods.

It is sometimes suggested that the beliefs of Count Leo Tolstoy, especially as they were lived out in the so-called “Tolstoyan” utopian communities,¹⁶ directly affected Michael Chekhov’s ideas of what a dramatic studio should be. Similarly, it is said that Chekhov embraced the idea of the theatre (and by extension, the studio) as “the actor’s temple, his sanctuary,” “place of hard but sacred work.” Konstantin Stanislavsky had adopted this from one of his most important sources, actor Michael Shchepkin (1788-

¹³ See Chamberlain, Franc. 2015. “Michael Chekhov in England: Outside the Magic Circle,” in Routledge 2015, pp. 207-218.

¹⁴ See Chekhov, Michael; Deirdre Hurst du Prey; and Jessica Cerullo (ed.). 2018. *Michael Chekhov’s Lessons for Teachers*. Expanded Edition. [New York]: MICHA Michael Chekhov Association [Chekhov 2018], pp. 1-38.

¹⁵ Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers, 5 October 1939, including Chekhov’s remarks at the time.

¹⁶ Tolstoy himself did not recognize these groups as part of some kind of unified “movement” led by him, and there was tremendous variety within a general admiration for Tolstoy’s ideas. For example, see Tolstoy 1878, pp. 170–172.

1863), who has been called the father of Russian dramatic realism.¹⁷ Obviously, given Shchepkin's realist principles and his career in Tsarist Russia, the "temple" concept was a metaphor or an analogy applied in a secular context. (This would be even more true about the MAT, where there were presumably widely varying religious positions or lack of them among the many members over three decades.) A similar concept, known to members of the MAT, was the "liturgical theatre" of the Symbolist poet, Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov (1866-1949). Ivanov sought to break down the division between actor and audience, combining the Dionysian rites ideas of the ancient Greek theatre with ancient oracles, medieval mystery plays, and his own increasing involvement in Theosophy,¹⁸ although this never became part of the MAT or the First Studio program.

Especially with regard to the metaphor of the theatre as a kind of artistic "temple," there is no doubt this was passed directly to Chekhov and Yevgeny Vakhtangov. The idea was also passed to Richard Boleslavsky, Maria Ouspenskaya, Tamara Daykarhanova, and Andrius Jilinsky-Oleka and Vera Soloviova, all of whom spread the Stanislavsky method internationally, especially in the United States – and all of whom had dramatic arts studios at various times. Indeed, nearly all teachers in the Stanislavsky tradition, especially Chekhov and his followers, honor the idea in exercises such as "Crossing the Threshold" into the dedicated space of the stage or studio. In

¹⁷ On the concept of the theatre as a "temple," in Michael Shchepkin and Stanislavsky, see Swart, Rufus. 2014. *Towards an integrated theory of actor training: Conjunctio oppositorum and the importance of dual consciousness*. PhD. Dissertation, Stellenbosch University, pp. 24 ff.; available URL: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za>. Shchepkin is quoted by Komisarjevsky, T. 1935. *The Theatre*. London: John Lane Publishers, p. 65. See also Hodge, Alison. 2009 (2010). *Twentieth Century Actor Training*. London: Routledge, p. 211.

On dual consciousness, see Wylie-Marques, Kathryn. 2003. "Opening the Actor's Spiritual Heart: The Zen Influence on Nô Training and Performance with Notes on Stanislavski and the Actor's Spirituality," in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 2003, pp. 131-160.

¹⁸ See Ivanov, Vyacheslav Ivanovich, and J. D. West (transl). 1971. *Po zvezdam: By the Stars*. Letchworth: Bradda Books. Vsevolod Meyerhold visited Ivanov's literary salons in St. Petersburg, 1905-1907. Some of Ivanov's ideas are apparent in Meyerhold's early career. For discussions of Ivanov's influence in early 20th-century Russian drama, see Carlson, Marvin. 1993. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present*. Expanded edition. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, pp. 312-318; Spencer Golub in Banham, Martin, ed. 1998. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 552; Kleberg, Lars, and Charles Rougle (transl.). 1980. *Theatre as Action: Soviet Russian Avant-Garde Aesthetics*. New York and London: Macmillan, p. 53; and Rudnitsky, Konstantin, George Petrov (transl.), and Sydney Schultze (ed.). 1981. *Meyerhold the Director*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Books, pp. 9-10.

both artistic and social-ethical terms, modern dramatic theory and pedagogy expect the actor to arrive prepared and be professional in every respect.

Certainly, it is unlikely that Chekhov ever followed Ivanov's ideas literally. Chekhov, like his colleague Vakhtangov, never gave up the theatricality of the performance or destroyed the illusion provided by the separation of *mise-en-scène* and audience. Already in 1908, Ivanov's fellow Symbolist poet and novelist, Andrei Bely, criticized Ivanov's ideas as unworkable in modern society¹⁹ – thirteen years later, Bely would become Chekhov's mentor in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy.²⁰ However, as Laurence Senelick has shown, parallels do exist between Ivanov and Steiner's idea of the theatre as a place where spiritual mysteries could find “material incarnation,” and the actors are “not performers but officiants and hierophants²¹ of its roles” – similar to actors in mystery plays or the original Greek choruses. Senelick shows how Chekhov applied these concepts as a battle of good and evil in the Second Moscow Art Theatre's staging in November 1924 of *Hamlet*, with Chekhov in the lead and the co-directors under his guidance as the new leader of the Second MAT.²² Of course, within less than four years, Chekhov would be forced into exile, leaving Stalinist dogma and “Socialist Realism” behind.

With regard to Tolstoy, there is, in general terms, an influence on all members of the MAT in its first two decades, since Leopold Sulerzhitsky – Chekhov's and Vakhtangov's beloved teacher at the MAT – had been a direct follower of Tolstoy. Sulerzhitsky was a classmate of Tatyana Tolstaya, Tolstoy's daughter, which led him into the Tolstoy family circle. Indeed, Sulerzhitsky's first hopes for the MAT First Studio were very close to the Tolstoyan ideal:

¹⁹ Quoted in Rudninsky, et al. 1981, p. 10.

²⁰ See Hamon-Siréjols, Christine. 2009. “Mikhail Tchekhov et Andreï Biely,” in Autant-Mathieu, Marie-Christine, and Christine Hamon-Siréjols. 2009. *Mikhail Tchekhov, Michael Chekhov: De Moscou à Hollywood, du théâtre au cinéma: Actes du colloque*, Paris, septembre 2007. Vic-la-Gardiole: Hérault, and Montpellier: L'Entretemps, pp. 157-168.

²¹ A person, especially a priest in ancient Greece, who interprets sacred mysteries or esoteric principles.

²² Senelick, Laurence. 2015. “Brief Encounters: Michael Chekhov and Shakespeare,” in Routledge 2015, pp. 148-151. It is interesting to note that Chekhov never attempted to direct *Hamlet* with his students or California colleagues in the United States.

The creation of a theatrical commune with its collective leadership, its grand challenges as a sacred theatre, its land ... its communal work, the sharing of profits in equal parts, its summertime organization in a place where one might relax in freedom on the land, which one developed and worked oneself.²³

In the 1920s Chekhov would be, after all, the artistically successful if eventually controversial (politically) leader of the First Studio, soon renamed the Second Moscow Art Theatre. Certain aspects of the tours and summer sojourns of these two troupes, in keeping with the traditional Russian pattern of summers in the country, were obviously related to what Sulerzhitsky had envisioned.

Tolstoy's ideas were centered on Christian ethics and progressive social ideas, a sense of social engagement, and a desire to change society for the better. Education was extremely important to Tolstoy, who built several schools, knowing that you have to start with educating children in order to change society peacefully. Michael Chekhov's first concern at Dartington was to train teachers in his method, so that his method would be carried on. He was also interested in children's education. Already at Dartington, a "Fairy Tale Theatre" group was created, and research began on certain main themes to be embodied in plays to be created for children's audiences. Classes for local children were begun in Ridgefield, where the young professional actors wrote and performed plays for young audiences. (One of his certified student-teachers, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, subsequently became an important pedagogue in children's arts education.)

²³ Sulerzhitsky's ideals combine the idea of a temple with that of a commune. Quoted by Autant-Mathieu in Routledge 2015, page 83, citing Sulerzhitskiy, Leopold Antonovich; E. I. Polakova; and V. A. Vilenkina. 1970. *Povesti i rasskazy, stati i zametki o teatre, perepiska, vospominaniya* (*Tales and stories, articles and notes about the theater, correspondence, memories*). Moscow: Istkusstvo, pp. 381, 309, 335, and 343; and as quoted by Vakhtangov, Evgenij B., and Vladislav V. Ivanov (ed.). 2011. *Evgenij Vakhtangov: Dokumenty i svidetel'stva*. Moscow: "Indrik", vol 1, p. 436.



The Chekhov Theatre Players in Ridgefield performing “Troublemaker / Doublemaker,” an original play by company members Iris Tree and Arnold Sundgaard, directed by Chekhov, 1940-1941. Deirdre Hurst is in the left photo, standing center right, next to Hurd Hatfield. The photo on the right shows Blair Cutting and Ford Rainey parodying cowboy movies. (Courtesy Dartington Hall Trust.)

One also remembers that Chekhov’s uncle, the playwright Anton P. Chekhov built three schools in Melikhovo, where he had an estate. As for social change, in a conversation near the end of his life, Chekhov was asked by his follower and principal associate, George Shdanoff, “Misha, what are we doing here in Hollywood? We didn’t become involved with the theatrical profession to make better actors for Louis B. Mayer.” Chekhov answered, “We’re not making better actors for Louis B. Mayer, we are helping people to grow spiritually and become better humans.”²⁴ Chekhov also dedicated an entire lecture in Hollywood in 1955 to the topic, “On love in our profession.”²⁵

Nevertheless, while there were parallels with Tolstoyan ideas, they were part of a general cultural heritage. Certainly, none of the Studios at the MAT was ever a “commune” in the usual sense of the word, in spite of Sulerzhitsky’s expressed hopes. Indeed, as Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu has shown, few of Sulerzhitsky’s ideals were realized in the First Studio even within his lifetime, and he in fact resigned in disappointment a year before he died in 1916.²⁶ And as close as Chekhov’s social principles may have been to Sulerzhitsky’s ideals, neither of his Michael Chekhov Studio locations was

²⁴ Quoted in Keeve 2002/2009-2010, *From Russia to Hollywood*.

²⁵ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 11; NYPL call no. LT10- 4789.

²⁶ Autant-Mathieu, Marie-Christine. 2015. “Michael Chekhov and the cult of the studio,” in Routledge 2015, p. 85.

ever a “commune,” either. His students did form something akin to Sulerzhitsky’s dream of a “fraternal troupe,” and at Dartington, had a kind of uniform and a common purpose, but it was otherwise like any other residential college, as far as can be determined. Any communal tasks arose from the need to mount (and in Ridgefield, to tour) theatrical productions. In fact, in Chekhov’s pedagogical writings and lectures, Tolstoy is almost never mentioned. He is quoted in a motto paired with one by Steiner in a 1942 manuscript (not published in 1942/1991), and he is included as expressing a “tendency towards self-perfection” in a list of philosophical attitudes towards creative individuality in 1946 (repeated in 1953).²⁷

Once he left Soviet Russia and went into exile, Chekhov had to quickly assimilate, first in Germany and then in a series of countries, but Chekhov could not leave Russia totally behind. Unlike his fellow MAT- member, Akim Tamiroff, who had the ability to adapt to new circumstances in such a way that he made them his own, Chekhov found it very difficult to prepare roles such as Lear quickly in English. Although he spoke German fluently and therefore was cast in plays and films in Germany and Austria, it was very different with English, which he began to learn at age 44. He spent most of a year studying English before he started teaching at Dartington. While his 1935 performances on Broadway in Russian were spectacularly successful, Chekhov delayed performing in English until 1942, on the eve of his move to Hollywood. Whereas a visual artist, such as the Russian avant-garde painter, Vassily Kandinsky, could paint anywhere, Chekhov needed a theatre, patrons,

²⁷ Chekhov, Mikhail Alexandrovich [Michael Chekhov]; illustrated by N[icolai].V. Remisoff (Remizov). 1946. *О технике актера (O tekhnike aktera)*. [Los Angeles:] Privately printed, pp. 155-156 [Chekhov 1946]; slightly paraphrased in Chekhov, Michael; Yul Brynner and Simon Callow (introd.); illustrated by Nicolai Remisoff. 2002. *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting: Revised and Expanded Edition*. London and New York: Routledge [Chekhov 1953/2002], pp. 85-86. The 2002 imprint revised the original 1953 edition, Chekhov, Michael; Yul Brynner, introd [Charles Leonard, ed.]; illustrated by Nicolai Remisoff (Remizov). 1953. *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*. New York: Harper & Row Perennial Library. [Chekhov 1953.]

Chekhov says, “Rudolf Steiner defines the creative individuality of Schiller as manifested in his works as a moral trend: good triumphs over evil; Maeterlinck seeks subtleties, mysterious nuances behind external events; Goethe saw prototypes unifying the variety of external phenomena. Stanislavsky (“An Actor Prepares”) says, ‘in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky reveals his search for God.’ Tolstoy’s personality manifests itself in the quest for self-improvement; [Anton P.] Chekhov quarrels with the triviality of bourgeois life. The creative individuality of each artist always seeks to express a main idea that runs as a leitmotif through all his works. The same can be said about the actor’s personality.”

and actors – a studio. He may have hoped that he could revive the ideals of the First Studio from the days of Sulerzhitsky, and his own hopes for the Second Moscow Art Theatre, 1924-28. Indeed, he might have found something like this in Kaunas and Riga in the 1930s, but political events intruded. And of course, what Autant-Mathieu has called the “cult” of the First Studio was by then only a nostalgic memory – the reality ended in bitterly disappointing Sulerzhitsky, and the ideals failed to protect Chekhov against intrigue, colleagues who were informants, and the Soviet politicians a decade later.

Fortunately, from 1936, Chekhov was to find in Dorothy Whitney and Leonard Elmhirst patrons whose “arcadian” utopian community at Dartington Hall could provide the haven, support, and artistic freedom Chekhov needed to create a true dramatic studio. However, while Leonard Elmhirst clearly was aware, through his work with Rabindranath Tagore, of Tolstoyan communities such as Gandhi’s in Africa and India, not to mention those in England,²⁸ there was no overt attempt to follow Tolstoyan ideas as such, either in Dartington Hall as an organization or in the Chekhov Theatre Studio. The parallels were there, but no cause and effect. In the American Studio at Ridgefield, the connection was even looser. (Chekhov had stayed in 1935 at the house of George Somoff, who would later become the Studio Manager of Dartington and Ridgefield, at Churaevka, a development of homes in Southbury, Connecticut, built by Russians. Among the founders was Tolstoy’s third son, Ilya Lvovich Tolstoy, but the “Tolstoyan” element was not fully realized. There were community events and an Orthodox chapel, but it was a summer community at first, inhabited by Russian expatriates, some of

²⁸ The relationship of Leonard Elmhirst and Rabindranath Tagore to international movements and progressive education groups in Britain and Ireland, including those using Tolstoyan ideas, has been investigated by Walsh, Brendan. 2007. *The Pedagogy of Protest: The Educational Thought and Work of Patrick H. Pearse*. Oxford: Peter Lang, *passim*; and Walsh, Brendan, and John Lalor. 2015, “New languages of possibility: Early experiments in education as dissent,” in *Journal of the History of Education Society*, vol.44, year 2015, issue no. 5, pp. 595-617 (available URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0046760X.2015.1050609?src=recsys&journalCode=th ed20>). Cf. Eversley, John. 2019. *Social and community development: An introduction*. London: Red Globe press, *passim*.

them wealthy professionals or industrialists, such as aviation pioneer, Igor Sikorsky. Chekhov's proximity to Tolstoy's son was purely coincidental.²⁹)

A different set of values, also based partially in Chekhov's experiences at the MAT, were more important to Chekhov. In addition to his sense of an ideal artistic community, Sulerzhitsky also brought other interests to the MAT, interests that were reinforced by Stanislavsky and Nicolai Demidov.³⁰ These included South Asian (Hindu/Buddhist) ideas associated with Yoga, such as *prana* ("breath," "life force", or "vital principle"). This interest was part of a much wider phenomenon in European culture, in which movements such as Theosophy and other occult groups embraced South Asian religious thought. This goes back nearly a century to the religious ideas of philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ralph Waldo Emerson. (See the discussion of "Radiation," below.)

When Sulerzhitsky died in 1916, it marked the beginning of the great period of psychological crisis in Chekhov's life, and by 1920, a new and much more powerful influence, specifically spiritual, had been added to the yoga practice and other South Asian elements that came to Chekhov from within the MAT.³¹ This new spirituality was the Anthroposophical teaching of Rudolf Steiner, guided by writer Andrei Bely in Russia and later reinforced by Chekhov's pedagogical collaborator, Dr. Georgette Boner, in Paris and the Baltic States.

At Dartington, Chekhov found patrons generally attuned to South Asian culture and spirituality, colleagues such as South Asian dancer, Uday Shankar, and an entire community with an accepting spiritual world view.

²⁹ Churaevka had been founded in 1927 by writer and designer George Grebenstchikoff in the 1920s, in collaboration with Ilya Tolstoy. Available URLs:

<http://www.presentationofchrist.org/churaevka.html> ;

<https://connecticuthistory.org/a-russian-village-retreat-in-southbury/> ;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_New_Haven_County,_Connecticut.

³⁰ According to Malaev-Babel, Andrei. 2015. "Michael Chekhov and Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Creative Dialogue," in Routledge 2015, p. 176, Demidov, then still a medical student, was at the shore in Brittany, France, with Stanislavsky in summer 1911, when he suggested applying concepts from Yoga to new techniques that Vakhtangov was developing for the new First Studio – already involving what would become Radiation and connections with the audience.

³¹ See Lloyd, Benjamin. 2006. "Stanislavsky, Spirituality, and the Problem of the Wounded Actor," in *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 70-75. The large bibliography on spiritual elements in Stanislavsky is a topic beyond the scope of the present study, except as noted in specific applications below.

Chekhov's Anthroposophical spirituality provided motivation, curriculum (Eurythmy), and a more powerful orientation for the work of the Michael Chekhov Studios at Dartington, Ridgefield, New York City, and beyond.

Chekhov, in addition to his successful autobiography *Put aktera* of 1928, is mainly known for his pedagogical publications. For example there are the Kaunas notes taken by his students, his letter on Atmosphere to them, and the already-mentioned fragmentary manuscript prepared by Boner.³² In addition, Chekhov prepared three editions of his pedagogical treatise, *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*. These include a manuscript version from 1942 (not published until 1991), a published Russian-language publication of 1946 (О технике актера), and the published 1953 edition generally referred to in the abbreviated form, *To the Actor*.³³ All of these texts, plus detailed information on his exercises for classes in Dartington, Ridgefield, and New York City, have come down to us as mentioned earlier thanks in large part to the faithful notes kept by his pupil and continuer, Deirdre Hurst du Prey.³⁴ The three pedagogical books were initially published in the United States, as was the second part of his autobiography, *Zhizni i vstrechi* (*Life and Encounters*).³⁵

³² Chekhov and Boner 1932-34. See below, Chapter Two. Boner and Chekhov had the idea of publishing Chekhov's exposition of his system in German, and Boner set to work editing and re-editing his texts, which he himself re-wrote and improved many times. To continue this collaborative work, Boner came to Latvia and lived with the Chekhovs for a long period in the summer of 1932. In the end Chekhov was dissatisfied with this German version and made no attempts to publish it. See Byckling 2000.

³³ All of Chekhov's pedagogical publications, manuscripts, and principal public lectures are detailed below in Chapter Two, q.v., and the Bibliography. Those of most concern to this study are [Chekhov 1942a and 1942b] Chekhov, Michael; Paul Marshall Allen and Deirdre Hurst du Prey, eds. 1942. *To the Actor [On the Technique of Acting]* ("The 1942 Version"). Manuscript (two copies). Exeter, Devonshire, United Kingdom, Dartington Hall Archives MC/S2/2 – and its subsequent partial publication as [Chekhov 1942/1991] Chekhov, Michael; Mel Gordon; and Mala Powers. 1991. *On the Technique of Acting*. New York: Harper Perennial; Chekhov 1946, Chekhov 1953, and Chekhov 1953/1991, op. cit. above.

Additional resources may be found in Gordon, Mel. 1983b. "Chekhov on Acting: A Collection of Unpublished Materials (1919-1942)," in TDR 1983, pp. 46-83; available URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1145460>. Exercises from Dartington/Ridgefield are included, based on Deirdre Hurst du Prey's notes, and other classes, many of which are now published in Chekhov 1985, Chekhov 2000, etc., op. cit. below, and in the Bibliography.

³⁴ See above, note 10.

³⁵ Chekhov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich [Michael Chekhov]. 1944-1945. "Жизнь и встречи" ("Zhizni i vstrechi" / "Life and Encounters"), in Новый журнал (*Novyi Zhurnal*) / *New Journal*, New York, vols. vii – ix, 1944, and vols. x – xi, 1945. [Chekhov 1944-1945.] The article appeared in serial

It is occasionally said that Chekhov returned to teaching in California because he failed as an actor, but this does not match the facts of his career. Chekhov came to Hollywood principally to be a film actor, and in fact found success, as in his supporting role of Dr. Brulov for the 1945 film, *Spellbound*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, which resulted in Chekhov being nominated for an Academy Award (only two years after coming to Hollywood, and only three years after performing in English for the first time).³⁶ Other film successes followed, but his career was compromised by medical problems – for example, a severe blood infection while filming *Arch of Triumph* in 1946 (his role was recast). Nevertheless, he made a film for William Castle in 1947 and appeared in a documentary. A serious heart attack in 1950 might have ended his film work, but he played in two more films in 1952 and in a larger role for *Rhapsody* in 1954. Within the span of the eleven years he lived in Hollywood Chekhov played large roles in 11 motion pictures. Clearly, even when fighting ill health, Chekhov was not forced away from acting by professional failure.

It should also be remembered that Chekhov had come back to the United States in 1939 to teach, to lead a Studio, and to send his graduates and current advanced students out on tour as young theatre professionals – just as he had done with the Second Moscow Art Theatre, 1922-28. Continuously from the time he left New York, Chekhov remained active as a pedagogue, seeking publishers for the 1942 manuscript, writing the Russian text he published in 1946 at his own expense, and preparing the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* for publication. By 1947, he had also begun coaching and teaching in the Hollywood and Los Angeles acting communities, eventually with a large group of followers. The list of film actors Chekhov and his associate from Dartington and Ridgefield, George Shdanoff, coached in Hollywood in

form. Chekhov's relationship with the *Novyi Zhurnal* editors offered another example of his efforts to maintain contact with Russian colleagues and admirers. See also the Aldanov correspondence, Columbia University.

³⁶ At a fundraiser in New York at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel, 26-27 September 1942, performing dramatized short stories by Anton P. Chekhov.

the 1940s and 1950s is simply astonishing – it represents one of the most successful examples of applied pedagogy in theatre history.³⁷

In the months before his death on 30 September 1955, Chekhov recorded twelve lectures which complete many of his pedagogical ideas and inspired his California pupils, especially Mala Powers, Joanna Merlin, Jack Colvin, Eddy Grove, Ford Rainey, John Abbott, and John Dehner, to perpetuate his teachings. (Nine of the twelve lectures were distributed in edited or partial form by Mala Powers on CDs in 1992, and Charles Leonard's editing of Chekhov's comments on directing included partial transcriptions, some heavily paraphrased or abridged, of six of these lectures, plus partial transcriptions of two others.³⁸ However, one of the lectures has never been distributed in audio form or transcriptions, and none of the lectures had been transcribed *verbatim* until I got permission and did the work. I hope to make all this work visible in the future for others interested.) The former California students joined graduates of the Dartington/Ridgefield Studio, such as Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Blair Cutting, Hurd Hatfield, Eleanor Faison, and Felicity Mason, in popularizing Chekhov's techniques. Many of them worked together in the "Michael Chekhov Studio" Straight founded with the Broadway producer, Robert Cole, in New York, 1980-92.³⁹

Chekhov was searching for a "Theatre of the Future."⁴⁰ He insisted that "the theatrical pedagogy of the future will emphatically reject the mechanical

³⁷ Shdanoff's wife, Elsa Schreiber Shdanoff, collaborated with him in the coaching profession. See below, Appendix 9.

³⁸ See Chekhov, Michael, and Mala Powers. 1992. *Michael Chekhov on Theatre and the Art of Acting: The Five-hour Master Class, with a Guide to Discovery with Exercises*. New York: Applause Theatre Books [4 CDs and Booklet]; second edition, 2004. [Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004.] See also Chekhov, Michael, and Charles Leonard, ed. 1963 (1984). *Michael Chekhov's To the Director and Playwright*. New York: Harper & Row; reprinted 1984, New York: Limelight Editions. [Chekhov and Leonard 1963.] Leonard had edited the 1953 *To the Actor*.

³⁹ See below, Chapter Four.

⁴⁰ He first used the phrase in a lecture given in English at the New School for Social Research in New York, 22 September 1935. Deirdre Hurst du Prey transcribed the lecture from the version given by Chekhov at Dartington in 1936. Copies at NYPL and Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers. He also gave the lecture in an updated form at the Labor Stage (New York, 12 April 1942); transcribed by Hurst du Prey – see Chekhov, Michael. 1983 (1942). "The Theatre of the Future," in *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 27, no. 4 (Winter, 1983), pp. 29-31. [Chekhov 1942/1983.] Russian version in Maria Knebel, et al., *Lit. nasl.* 1995, vol. 2, c. 147-148. Maria Osipovna Knebel (1898–1985) was Russian/Soviet actress, director, and teacher. She trained in the private Michael Chekhov Studio at Moscow from 1918 before joining the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

means employed today in the development of actors.” In place of the mechanical, “crude naturalism,” Chekhov emphasized a **psychophysical approach** along with “**knowledge of spiritual truths.**”⁴¹

1.2 The Elements of Chekhov’s System – Basic Principles

What then were the basic elements of Chekhov’s method as they came to be known by the end of his career? And how do they relate to his origins in Stanislavsky’s Methods?

To begin with, there are the **Five Guiding Principles**, which were articulated in their final form in one of his 1955 lectures but were repeatedly implied in all his writings and teaching.

“Now my good friends allow me to remind you of all five points we just discussed. Five leading and guiding principles through our method:

- 1) **Bodily development by psychological means.**
- 2) **Intangible means [of] expression while acting and rehearsing.**
- 3) **Our Spirit and the true intellect as a means of unification.**
- 4) **The purpose of our Method as means of invoking a creative state of mind.** (Look upon all the points of the Method, upon all the exercises, as the means for uniting of everything within and without ourselves. By doing so, you will see perhaps the entire method in quite a different light, and will learn also, by degrees of course, to make practical use of your spirit and your true intellect and your professional work.)

See also *ibid.*, Chekhov 1942/1983, pp. 11, “the essence of the actor’s art is: to convey, with the aid of his body and all his outer means of expression, the inner spiritual facts and events; to give expression to the author’s idea, to the director’s idea, and to the idea of his own self. ... This means that each physical exercise must be an exercise for the soul as well.” (This idea appears in a similar form in the “Theatre of the Future” lecture at New York in 1935 and Dartington in 1936).

⁴¹ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, [recording at Chekhov’s home about emotions and sensations], NYPL Call no. LT10-4780.

5) Separate points in our Method as the means leading to the freedom of our talents.”⁴²

Primary in all of this is Chekhov’s “**Psychophysical**” approach to acting – neither a purely psychological approach nor purely stage movement. As Chekhov put it in the first words of his 1953 edition of *To the Actor*:

It is a known fact that the human body and psychology influence each other and are in constant interplay.

But the actor, who must consider his body as an instrument for expressing creative ideas on the stage, must strive for the attainment of complete harmony between the two, body and psychology.

In this, as in many elements of his method, Chekhov is in agreement with the ideas of Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitsky, and Vakhtangov.

But should Chekhov simply be understood, in the way that Richard Boleslavsky and Lee Strasberg are understood, to simply be a continuer of the Stanislavsky method? Or did he evolve far enough beyond the pedagogy he knew from his years at the MAT for his method to be considered a new and distinct approach to dramatic arts? This question will be answered by two means: (1) an analysis of the elements Chekhov derived directly from the Stanislavsky system, and (2) a summary description of the new and inventive elements he brought to theatre training.

1.3 Elements in Chekhov’s Techniques derived from Stanislavsky’s System

Chekhov himself always insisted that his method grew out of that of Stanislavsky (even when disagreeing over individual points). While he said that he would “never permit myself to say that I taught the system of Stanislavsky,” Chekhov described his pedagogy in the following way:

⁴² Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, op. cit., NYPL Call no. LT10-4780. According to NYPL metadata, this 1955 lecture was recorded in Chekhov’s home. The restatement in parentheses is from today’s restatement from the Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA); available URL <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/our-story/#history>.

“I taught what I *myself* experienced from working with Stanislavsky, what I learned from Sulerzhitsky and Vakhtangov. The way that I understood and experienced what I had received from my teachers determined how I transmitted this to my students. Everything was refracted through my individual perception and was colored by my personal relationship to what I had perceived. I have to confess – with all sincerity – that I was never one of Stanislavsky’s best pupils, but I must say with equal sincerity that I made much of what Stanislavsky gave us my own forever, and I placed it at the foundation of my subsequent and, to some extent independent, experiments in the art of drama.”⁴³

At the same time, Chekhov followed Stanislavsky’s advice to “organize and write down your thoughts concerning the technique of acting.” Stanislavsky told Chekhov, “It is your duty and the duty of everyone who loves the theater and looks devotedly into its future,” and Chekhov continued, “I feel obliged to convey these inspiring words to all my colleagues, in the hope that at least some of them also will, humbly but courageously, formulate and organize their thoughts while trying to find objective principles and laws for furthering our professional technique.” (Chekhov 1953, p. 178; Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 160-161.)

Among the principles which unite all followers of Stanislavsky’s method is the understanding that interior processes (psychology, desires, fears, goals, will-impulses) must be expressed in the actor’s actions and words. As Jaroslav Vostrý has explained it, in centers of cultural and scientific inquiry, particularly in Vienna, “the interest changed from what is

⁴³ Chekhov 1928/2005, p. 78. Compare Kirillov and Merlin’s footnote 36, as follows: “Chekhov is excessively modest both in estimating his success at mastering and understanding Stanislavsky’s system and in reducing his radicalism and independence as far as his own approach to acting was concerned. As early as 1913, Stanislavsky himself had recognized Chekhov as his ideal pupil and the follower of his method who had ‘mastered the system in general’ and was ‘well directed’. He noticed that Chekhov was ‘very interesting’, ‘unquestionably talented and charming’ and that he was ‘one of the current hopes for the future.’” Cf. Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 2, pp. 448–9. In a 1915 interview, Chekhov identified himself and other participants of the First Studio as ‘the believers in the religion of Stanislavsky’ (Lit.nasl. 1995, vol. 2, p. 456).

Many details of the relationship between Chekhov and Stanislavsky, and their pedagogies, may be found in Byckling, Liisa. 2013. “Stanislavsky and Michael Chekhov,” in *Stanislavski Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 48-115.

on the surface to what is hidden on the inside, “with a great effect on the scientific, artistic, and cultural values.”⁴⁴ Among the results was the emergence of psychoanalysis and what we today call “Freudian” psychology, and one of the great influences on Sigmund Freud, particularly in his student years, and Arthur Schnitzler, was Baron Carl von Rokitansky (1804-1878) a Bohemian medical professor, pathologist, and philosopher. Rokitansky observed that “the truth is often hidden below the surface; one has to go deep below the skin to find it.”⁴⁵ Following the lead of scholars who trace a route from Rokitansky to Freud and Schnitzler, then to the Viennese early Modernist painters, Klimt, Kokoshka, Schiele, and their contemporaries, Vostrý relates these innovations to Stanislavsky’s application of subconscious processes to acting, citing Rokitansky’s probing “from the Apparent to the Hidden.” Michael Chekhov, with his strong interest in Imagination, interior thought processes, and their physical expression, may also be related to Rokitansky’s and Freud’s innovations, although with Chekhov, the formula should be reversed: “from the Hidden to the Apparent” (or as Chekhov, put it, “from the intangible to the tangible,” with the tangible also being used to draw out the deep psychological processes).

Twice in his mature career at the MAT, in 1919 and 1922, Chekhov himself described Stanislavsky’s method of acting. The first of these descriptions was published without authorization in January 1919 in the cultural journal, *Gorn (The Crucible)*, for which Chekhov was criticized in print by his good friend and teacher, the actor/director Yevgeny Vakhtangov.⁴⁶ The 1922 description, used in this essay because of its relationship to practice in the United States, was written while Chekhov was working, after Vakhtangov’s death in May 1922, in what would become the

⁴⁴ Vostrý, Jaroslav. 2018. *Stanislavského objev herecké kreativity a jeho sociokulturní souvislosti*. V Praze: KANT - Karel Kerlický pro Akademie múzických umění v Praze, 2018 (Disk / DAMU, Malá řada), p. 120. Vostrý makes use of Kandel, Eric R. 2012. *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain from Vienna 1900 to the Present*. New York: Random House, *passim*.

⁴⁵ See Jonah Lehrer’s review of Kandel 2012 and interview with Kandel, who won the Nobel Prize for neuroscience in 2000. Lehrer, Jonah. 1912. “The Truth Is Often Hidden Below The Surface.” (Review of Kandel 2012 and interview with Kandel). Available URL: <https://www.wired.com/2012/04/the-age-of-insight/>. Interview reprinted at <https://afflictor.com/2012/04/11/the-truth-is-often-hidden-below-the-surface/>.

⁴⁶ Chekhov’s text is included in *Lit. nasl.*, 1995, vol. 2, pp. 47-59.

Second Moscow Art Theatre. It was not published by Chekhov, but rather consisted of a series of notes edited into a type of lecture on the Stanislavsky system. He later provided the lecture to Molly Day Thacher [Kazan] and Mark Schmidt (translator) of the Group Theatre in New York, presumably around 1935, but before December 1942, when he moved to Hollywood. Chekhov describes the goal of the Stanislavsky system as twofold: the actor's ongoing work on himself on the one hand – based on giving the actor “elasticity, full mastery of his emotions, and control of his body” – and, on the other hand, preparing specific roles.”⁴⁷

Chekhov's 1922 Description of the Stanislavsky Method

The elements of the Stanislavsky method as listed by Chekhov in 1922 included the following categories, which, except as noted, **passed directly into Chekhov's own dramatic pedagogy.**

(The explanations in parentheses following the name of the element are Chekhov's own words from the American Group Theatre translation.)⁴⁸

- **Observation** (The student must train himself to analyze his own motives and to detect the motives of other people, determining other people's characters, professions, and habits from their appearances. [p. 105])

This element is associated in Chekhov's telling with another three elements he groups together as “The Creative State.”

- **The Creative State**
 - **Concentration** (Strong and undeviating **attention** to work at hand. ... When the actor on the stage lets his attention become diffuse, he loses all

⁴⁷ See Cole, Toby, and Lee Strasberg. 2014. *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*. New York: Lear Publishers (Martino Publishing), pp. 105-115. Chekhov confirmed the 1922 date in his 1955 lectures: “Ladies and Gentlemen, good friends, and Mr. Abbott, thank you very much for giving me the list of your very interesting and important questions, and for the tape recording of my article about Stanislavsky's method, which I wrote in 1922. The essence of all your questions seems to be this: Which are the two means we should use to awaken, to invoke, to call up our artistic feelings? The sense or emotion memory, or the sensations?” Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, op. cit., NYPL call no. LT10-4780. This tape was recorded, according to NYPL metadata, at Chekhov's home, suggesting he was ill at the time.

⁴⁸ In comparing these and subsequent elements in Chekhov's system to that of Stanislavsky, I have used the categories discussed by Carnicke, Sharon Marie. 2009. “Stanislavsky's System,” in Hodge 2009 (2010), pp. 16-36; and by Whyman, Rose. 2013. *Stanislavski: The Basics*. London and New York: Routledge, *passim* and as cited below. I have also benefitted from Jaroslav Vostrý's analysis of the Stanislavsky Method. See Vostrý, Jaroslav, 2018, *passim* and as cited above.

hold upon the audience.)

This is the absolutely first and most essential element of dramatic technique – as Stanislavsky famously said, “What can be more appalling than an actor’s vacant eyes!”⁴⁹

Stanislavsky spoke of “stage attention” (сценическое внимание) which he, as Chekhov indicates, considered part of the “creative state.” The entire concept relates directly to **Observation** focused in a concentrated way in various contexts, for example while viewing people in public, or in the course of rehearsals or performance, when the object of concentration will include one’s fellow actors and an awareness of the audience.⁵⁰

When he was beginning to form his curriculum for Dartington in England (and therefore for Ridgefield in Connecticut, USA) in 1935-36, Chekhov used Stanislavsky’s concept of **Concentration**, but greatly expanded it, as in the tenth lesson in spring 1936 he taught to Deirdre Hurst and Beatrice Straight.⁵¹ There Chekhov created a “Chart of Concentration,” in which his explanation of Concentration in the real world intersected Chekhov’s own ideas about “images of pure creative fantasy.”

⁴⁹ Stanislavsky, Konstantin. 2008. *An Actor’s Work*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 95.

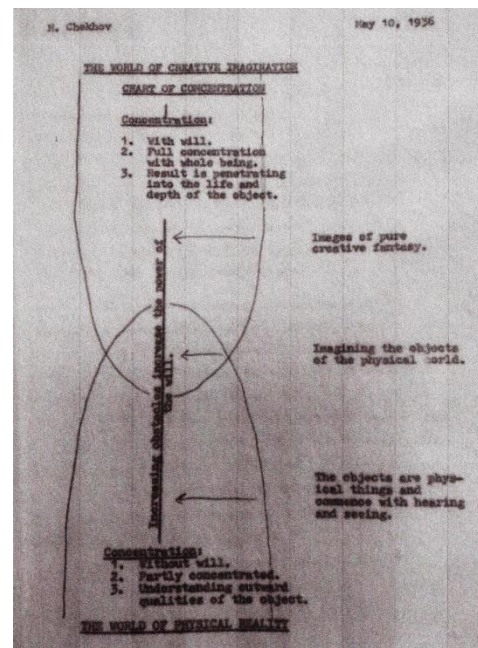
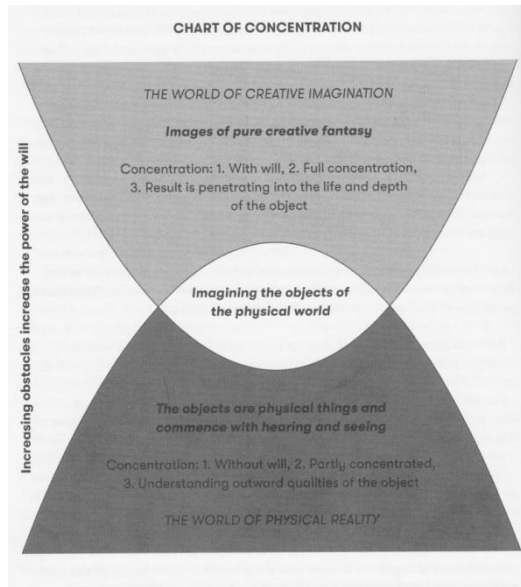
⁵⁰ In the middle of this explanation of Stanislavsky’s concept of attention, Chekhov uses an example with ironic importance for his own future in America:

When one forces concentration on a thing, interest begins to appear ... an object or idea will become interesting if one deliberately concentrates on it. For instance, concentrate on some object which ordinarily has no interest for you. Study a matchbox. It will begin to take on a new aspect, you will note details, a diversity of associations will come into consciousness. Finally your attention will create an interest in it.

This principle is very important ... When [an artist] masters his concentration so that he can fix it at will on any idea or object, he will be able to work when he wants to on any subject he determines, without being distracted, without waiting for “inspiration,” and he will find that from the starting point of concentration, interest and relevant imagination will grow. (112)

In the early stages of his career in Hollywood, Chekhov played an important supporting role in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945). One of his scenes, which subsequently became famous, involved his attempting to get a match out of a matchbox; he loses control of the box, with the matches exploding all over the set – a gesture which summed up his character’s frustration with the situation confronting him and his apprentice. Chekhov was nominated for an Academy Award for his work in the film.

⁵¹ Chekhov, “To Teachers,” Lesson 10, 10 May, 1936; Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers; published in Chekhov 2018, pp. 22-24.



Left: (From Chekhov 2018, p.24); right: Deirdre Hurst du Prey’s copy of Chekhov’s original chart (Hurst du Prey Archives, Adelphi University, Lesson 10, May 10, 1936).

“For us,” Chekhov insisted, “‘concentration’ has a special meaning. ... It is the door by which we can enter into the creative spiritual world.” As a result, Chekhov’s exercises alternate between concentrating on surrounding physical reality and concentrating on images in the mind. The “Chart of Concentration” also foreshadows the “Chart for Inspired Acting” that Chekhov would give Mala Powers in Hollywood more than a decade later in 1949. (See also the discussion below on Chekhov’s concept of **Imagination and Incorporation of Images.**)

In both Stanislavsky and Chekhov, the terms of description are extremely similar to contemporary concepts in **Gestalt Psychology**, particularly the idea of something seen or understood against the background of experience.⁵² In the 1922 lecture notes, Chekhov explicitly states this as an aspect of the Stanislavsky system: “Whatever [the actor] sees, hears, touches, tastes and smells, competes for his notice. The attention, whether consciously

⁵² The relationship of the Stanislavsky System to Gestalt Psychology has been frequently noted. See Mullen, Robert F. 2016. “The Art of Authenticity: Constantin Stanislavski and Merleau-Ponty,” in *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, July 2016, vol. 6, no. 7, pp. 790-803; available URL: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2edf/883dec32cb0ac47bc10f24fde6bc427482eb.pdf> .

or casually directed, focuses upon certain of these sense impressions, while the rest form a background that is almost disregarded.” (p. 111)⁵³

The separation of the element from the ground of experience will make possible Chekhov’s emphasis on “images” of the character and role in the actor’s mind as a principal means of achieving characterization.

- **Multi-leveled Attention, Many-leveled Acting, and the “Juggler Psychology”**

Stanislavsky associated Concentration with something he called “multi-level attention” – the necessity for an actor to be doing and concentrating on many things at once in the course of rehearsing or performing – a concept to which Chekhov devoted a whole lecture in 1955, entitled, “Many-leveled Acting.”⁵⁴ Chekhov also spoke of a “juggler psychology” in classes at Dartington at the beginning of October 1936 and later in Ridgefield.⁵⁵ He said, “We must learn to use our bodies with joy, with power, with the knowledge that we are artists in all we do. We must acquire the psychology of the juggler. The actor’s body [shows] the

⁵³ Here and in the Pariser Manuscript of the early 1930s (Chekhov and Boner 1932-34, pp. 283-284), this focus on certain sense impressions related to the actor’s image of the character offers thoughts that followed Chekhov’s debate with Stanislavsky over affective memory, and also represents a seed of what would become the Psychological Gesture.

“Die umgewandelte geläuterte Gefühle die sich um den Gestalt herum sammeln und die als Mitgefühl in der Seele des S[chauspielers] erklingen werden spaeter doch zu den Gefühen der Rolle. Wenn die Rolle richtig, so zu sagen, hygienisch vorbereitet ist, so kommt der S[chauspieler] doch dazu, dass er wirklich die Rolle Erlebt, aber nicht mit seinen gewoehnlichen, alltaeglichen Gefühen sondern mit umgewandelten “künstlerischen” Gefühen u[nd] Willensimpulsen. Wie das geschieht, dass Mitgefühl mit dem geschautem Gestalte zu einem richtigen, aber getrauterten Gefühl wird – daran wird die Rede spaeter sein.“

“The transformed, refined feelings that gather around the figure, and that resonate as compassion in the soul of the actor, will later become the seed of the role. If the role is properly prepared – so to speak, hygienically prepared – then the actor comes to the fact that he really has Experienced [lived] the role, but not with his ordinary, everyday feelings but with transformed “artistic” feelings and impulses of will, how it happens that sympathy with the observed form becomes a real, very trusted feeling - that will be discussed later.”

“Transformované očistěné pocity, které se shromažďují kolem postavy a rezonují jako soucit v duši herce, se později stanou zárodkem role. Pokud je role řádně připravena, tj. čistě-hygienicky připravena, pak herec roli prožije, ale ne se svými běžnými, každodenními pocity, ale s transformovanými „uměleckými“ pocity a impulzy vůle, jak k tomu dojde, že tento pocit s viděním určité formy se stane skutečným? Jak se stane, že pocit s pečlivě představenou formou se stane skutečným, a důvěryhodným duševním pocitem - o tom bude řeč později.”

⁵⁴ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many-leveled Acting,” NYPL (New York Public Library) call no. LT10- 4790 – this was possibly Chekhov’s last recorded lecture.

⁵⁵ Deirdre Hurst du Prey notes, 12 October 1936; Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers.

road to emotion.”⁵⁶

- **Imagination** (Every work of art is to a certain extent the product of imagination. ... Imagination, broadly, is the union and combination of diverse elements into a whole which does not correspond to reality. The materials of imagination are always taken from life. ... The fantasy of the artist always has for its aim the expression of feelings and actions springing from them. ... And in whatever field he works, the artist must study all branches of art. The actor, for example, can utilize painting, sculpture, music. [112-113])

We will return to the element of Imagination, and the related idea of the use of Images, below under the concept of “playing for one’s partner.”

- **Naïveté** (The quality of fantasy is conditioned by naïveté. Now children and savages display more creative imagination than grown people in civilized surroundings. ... Their concepts are not systemized, and so they can combine the elements of their environment without worrying about whether such a combination has any counterpart in reality. They are guided by feelings only. [113])

Chekhov, especially at Dartington and Ridgefield, used fairy tales (both traditional and written by members of the Studio) as fertile fields for the development and application of his techniques. Indeed, as will be shown, the concept of the Psychological Gesture was first introduced in the context of dramatic presentation of a Baltic fairy tale called *The Golden Steed* on 23 November 1936.⁵⁷

- **Playing for one’s partner** (The only satisfactory performance comes with the right relationship with ones fellow actors. If the actor, like a human being, makes himself clear and understood by his stage partner,

⁵⁶ Byckling, Liisa. 2011. “Michael Chekhov: Teaching (Acting) in a Foreign Land,” in *Critical Stages/Scènes critiques*, December 2011, no. 5; available URL: <http://www.critical-stages.org/5/michael-chekhov-teaching-acting-in-a-foreign-land> .

⁵⁷ Deirdre Hurst du Prey notes, 23 November 1936; Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers.

the audience will understand him, the performance will become real. ... Make constant use of real things – the other actors, the set, the props and relate to them in a real way. For example really study the other actor's face – which will make it more real to him as well as to the audience. All the above gives us the soul of the role, but not the body. And it is only through the body that all the thoughts and feelings of the character can be conveyed to the audience. Body and voice must be elastic and obedient to the will, so that they can reflect fully and easily every experience of the actor. [109])

Chekhov may be adding his own interpretations here to some extent, but the importance of this concept within the method as practiced internationally is very great. In the American context, the idea of concentration onstage with other actors was one to which Chekhov developed many exercises (including the famous work with tossing balls), and is an important element that Chekhov shares with another pedagogue descended from Stanislavsky, the American Sanford Meisner.

Indeed, wandering attention on the part of one's acting colleagues is a recurrent theme in Chekhov's teaching, and, to judge from the concerns raised by his students and colleagues in the 1955 tapes, was a special problem in Hollywood film and television productions.⁵⁸ Here Chekhov stayed close to his roots in Stanislavsky (including as expressed in 1922) as he developed strategies for his students to use to overcome the problem.

Chekhov, however, goes on to describe in more detail the way this element played out in Stanislavsky's system for creating a role and expressing characterization. This, according to Chekhov's 1922 description, **involved imagination and the use of images, as it would come to do in an even more important way in Chekhov's subsequent pedagogy.**

“The external characterization must be selected for its expressiveness, interest, and appropriateness. It must not only fit the logical and psychological characterization which has been built up, but must take

⁵⁸ So, for example, the discussion in Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, “Questions and answers. About the Stanislavsky Method of Acting,” NYPL call no. LT10-4779.

the latter for its starting point. Of course, in creating what might be called the **inner image**, a means of externalizing it may suggest itself. If this happens, the job is to understand this association, and then to incorporate it in the performance.”

But inner characterizations will not always suggest suitable outer ones. In most cases one has to invent for himself the most characteristic forms, but once these are selected they must be closely related to the inner characterization, and they must be justified. ... Such characteristic features must become an integral part of the actor. **Then as soon as he begins to live the life of the character these characteristics assert themselves spontaneously; and vice versa, when acting these features, the actor begins to experience the feelings underlying them.** [109-110 – boldface emphasis added here.]

Carnicke has described Stanislavsky’s use of images for characterization in the context of his interest in developing the emotions and Affective Memory, and notes the influence of Yoga on the entire process. In particular, Stanislavsky used images to energize the imagination, as part of the value he placed on treating fictional circumstances as real. Actors should “visualize the details of a character's world specifically,” and “should not speak without an image in the mind's eye ...”⁵⁹ This use of images became a central aspect of Chekhov’s system, and indeed, replaced Stanislavsky’s reliance on Affective Memory. (See below, comments on the Imaginary Body.) Often while coaching famous young actors in Hollywood he asked them to tell him about the character. The actor would visualize the role and start to make gestures perhaps different from his/her own, but mainly the actor/actress started to visualize and see images, which was the beginning of the creation of the new character.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Carnicke 2009, p. 130. A similar reading is given by Whyman and Katie Mitchell, in Whyman 2013, pp. 87-88.

⁶⁰ Compare Chekhov’s comments in his lecture, “On Rehearsing,” NYPL Tape 5, call no. LT10-4783.

Other elements of Stanislavsky's system as described by Chekhov in 1922 include the following categories. All of these appear throughout Chekhov's pedagogical development.

- **Intellectual Control** (Everything in acting is not done mentally. Intellectual analysis determines what is demanded by a scene, and sets the problem for the actor as clearly as possible. But the way in which the problem is to be solved, the details and manner of the performance cannot be arbitrarily determined in advance. They have to be worked out as one plays. This is where the rich material of the subconscious, which holds much of the background and personality of the actor, makes its contribution. For example, an actor decides that the core of his activity in a scene is to subdue a mob. Then he concentrates upon doing this, but he must not try to settle for himself, prematurely, when or how he shall move, whether he shall shout at the mob or command it quietly. When a rehearsal has been handled in this organic way, the director or the actor decides which details and developments are to be retained and developed still further for the final performance. [106])
- **Repetition of performances** The actor comes to each performance of the same part in a different state of mind, and a different mood. This fact should be utilized in keeping his performance from becoming stale. Every time he sets out to play a part he should refresh himself by thinking over the principal intention of the character and relating it to his own immediate state. If, for instance, reaching out for family happiness is the dominant drive of the character, the actor should ask himself what aspect of this is nearest to him. If one evaluates his role from the aspect of his mood at each performance, each problem in it acquires a special coloring each time. In essence it remains the same. [110]

These two elements relate to an often-expressed concern and motivation of actors, especially with regard to "keeping the role fresh," from Stanislavsky himself through Uta Hagen to today's actors.

- **Cliché** A cliché is a ready-made form for the expression of feeling. It is harmful because it forces the feeling into a set cast, and is likely to break up the continuity of the real experience. Some clichés are copies of other actors; some are repetitions of one's own devices. ... Or a cliché may be a habit formed in real life. ... In order to eradicate a cliché a real activity should be substituted. A cliché used to indicate deep thought is wrinkling one's forehead and looking at the ceiling. If the actor will stop and actually think – even if all he does is the multiplication tables – thought will be manifest in his face and body. [110]

- **Scenic Faith** An actor's belief in the situation he is playing. If he lacks it, the audience will lack it. ... [If a student develops] a sense of the reality of the setting, the student will come to feel a certain intimacy with regard to it. This is one step toward the development of complete stage faith. [107]

Stanislavsky's Chapter 8 of *An Actor Prepares*, was entitled "Faith and a Sense of Truth." Stanislavsky said, "truth on the stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity, whether in ourselves or in our colleagues."

The way Chekhov approaches this idea throughout the 1922 text, over a decade before the publication of Stanislavsky's own text, and the example he uses to illustrate it, suggest that he is also combining elements of Stanislavsky's "Concentration" and "Imagination" categories into the idea of Scenic Faith, and particularly into the "Magic If" idea, which Chekhov would eventually reject in his pedagogy. Here he may have been influenced by Vachtangov, who reformulated the "Magic If" by saying, "If you were an actor of the People's Theatre, creating the role of Calaf [from *Turandot*], how would you behave in the given circumstances of the play?"⁶¹ This allowed the actors the freedom to be self-referential, in this case, a Commedia troupe presenting Carlo Gozzi's 1762 play, *Princess Turandot*. This enhanced the

⁶¹ Quoted by Simonov, Ruben. 1969. *Stanislavsky's Protégé: Eugene Vakhtangov*. New York: DBS Publications.

theatricality of the production.⁶²

However, this element did affect Chekhov's concept of "**The Sense of Truth**," as discussed below.

- **Control of Emotions** [Affective Memory and Use of Sensory Affects]

One way of achieving a specific emotion is by using "affective recollections," that is, by awakening in the memory a definite feeling actually experienced in one's past, in order to recreate the feeling. Some people can do this simply by remembering a feeling. They think how angry they were at a certain time, and a real anger begins to stir in them at the recollection. It can also be done by concentrating upon the physical details and incidental circumstances which surrounded a moment of high feeling, until by association the feeling itself is recreated. Often a mood can be induced by simply stimulating through the memory sensory effects. A sense of lazy well-being, for instance, might be achieved in this way through a sense memory of sunshine sinking in through one's pores. [106]

Here it is clear that Chekhov, already in 1922, is interpreting and even contradicting Stanislavsky's concept of Affective Memory (Sense Memory), with much more emphasis on Imagination, as well as suggesting a wholly different type of emotional effect based on physical sensations rather than abstract emotions. At several points in his writings and lectures, Chekhov underscores how he and Stanislavsky "agreed to disagree" on these points.⁶³

⁶² The theatricality and the presentation of the play's story were not mutually exclusive. See Gauss, Rebecca B. 1999. *Lear's Daughters: The Studios of Moscow Art Theatre, 1905-1927*. New York: Peter Lang, passim; and Gordon, Mel. 1987. *The Stanislavsky Technique, Russia: A Workbook for Actors*. New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, p. 146. Cf. Whyman 2013, *op. cit.* above.

⁶³ For example, Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 10, "On experiences at the Moscow Art Theatre, part II," NYPL call no. LT10-4788. Chekhov and Stanislavsky met in Berlin from 17 to 22 September 1928, at one point discussing acting technique all night from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. in a Kurfürstendamm café. That was their last meeting.

Date provided in Elisová, Kateřina. 2012. *Život a dílo Michaila Čechova v kontextu vývoje ruského dramatického umění / Life and Work of Mikhail Chekhov in the Context of Historical Development of Russian Drama*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Pedagogická fakulta, Katedra rusistiky a lingvodidaktiky, p. 153. According to Liisa Byckling, Chekhov's student, Hurd Hatfield, asked, "What about Affective Memory?" Chekhov replied, "I don't use it, I never liked it." See Byckling, Liisa. 2019, "Michael Chekhov as Actor, Teacher and Director in the West," in *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, no. 68, Spring 2019, p. 9; available URL: <http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/01/chekhovwest.shtml>. (Quoting an interview with Hatfield, *Jurmala, Latvia*, August 9, 1996.)

- **Dissecting the Part**

The second half of an actor's problem is his work on specific parts. He learns to analyze the material, decide on its value for him and the meaning he wants to bring out. The process of building a performance is for the actor to merge with the character in his play.

The fresh approach and enthusiasm which accompany a first reading of a script are useful and should be prolonged. ...

Next the part can be broken into sections (also called bits/beats).⁶⁴

There is nothing formal about this: a part falls during a scene into a few divisions from each of which a different effect is desired. The effect desired may be one of amazement, then servility, then fear. But if the sections are labelled with nouns they must then be expanded into verbs, for one cannot perform "amazement" in general. ...

Out of all the actions of the sections one may derive two or three, and finally from these a single one, which not only includes the separate ones, but which conditions and explains them. The three examples given above might be resolved into one. This inclusive action is the basic drive of the character.

This is not always easy to find at the beginning of rehearsal. If it can't be determined at once, the actor can recall his own experiences [i.e., Affective Memory] which are analogous to those in the play, and use them as his starting point. In trying to give verbal definition to these "I wants"—the actor acquires a deeper understanding of the role. Each action sets him a problem similar to the ones in the work on affective feeling, and to be approached in the same way. [107-108]

Except for the reference to Affective Memory, Chekhov used this system in his teaching, directing, and analyzing plays. It should be noted, however, that the idea of combining the bits into one unit looks forward to his development of the Psychological Gesture in the mid-1930s.

⁶⁴ Stanislavsky used the term, "bit" (кусочек, кусок, частица – бит in modern Russian is a loan-word from the English computer term), and may also have referred to the series of bits being strung together like beads on a string – a metaphor used by Boleslavsky. With a Russian or Polish accent, "bits" (or "beads") would be pronounced "beats." See Carnicke in Hodge 2009 (2010), p. 24 and 5 n11. Hereafter, "bit" or "bits" will be used.

Jaroslav Vostrý points out that the tasks found in the “bits” also allow the actor to understand what the character wants or seeks. “Connected details of doing or acting onstage ‘between lines’,” Vostrý observes, “are accompanied by feelings which in the actor’s imagination are evoked in the momentary (Stanislavsky’s words) ‘life of the human spirit’ of the role/character. [Stanislavsky further notes the dangers] of filling between the lines with self-conscious acting, only using the actor’s “personal or private feelings (meaning feelings connected with them themselves on the level of ‘the everyday I,’ as Michael Chekhov would say.)”⁶⁵

It should also be mentioned at this point that, exactly at the moment Chekhov was preparing his 1922 lecture on the Stanislavsky method in Moscow, a former MHAT colleague, Richard Boleslavsky, came to the United States. Soon after, in January 1923, Stanislavsky and the MHAT (without Chekhov, who was directing the Second Moscow Art Theatre back in Russia) came to New York for the first of two tours. Boleslavsky ably assisted with the tour, and the success of the MHAT, which pleased Stanislavsky, led to Stanislavsky’s permission for Boleslavsky to lecture in English on the Stanislavsky method. This made Boleslavsky the legitimate representative of the Stanislavsky method in the United States – that is, the method up to 1923. Boleslavsky then taught in New York with Maria Ouspenskaya and subsequently with her and Tamara Daykarhanova, who collaborated with Chekhov in 1935.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Vostrý 2018, p.23.

⁶⁶ Art patrons Miriam and Herbert Stockton established the American Laboratory Theatre for Boleslavsky; he was joined in 1924 by Maria Ouspenskaya, even before the end of the MHAT 1923-1924 tour in May. Ouspenskaya stayed in the United States thereafter. American Laboratory Theatre closed in 1930. Boleslavsky, Ouspenskaya, and Tamara Daykarhanova, who had come to New York in 1929, then founded the School of Dramatic Art in New York City – Daykarhanova has already been mentioned above as a colleague of Chekhov in 1935. Lab Theatre students, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Harold Clurman and John Garfield, then became part of the Group Theatre. For a summary, see David Krasner in Hodge 2009 (2010), pp. 147-148 and notes, and <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Boleslavsky>.

See Hančil, Jan. 2012. “Mluví ‘Stanislavský’ anglicky? (Cesty, texty, vlivy),” in *Disk* 42 (December 2012), p. 40: “Vliv dvou zájezdů MCHAT do Spojených států ... Boleslavsky koncipoval American Laboratory Theatre jako školu ansámblového ‘živého divadla’. Ansámblového ducha si ale herci vyložili tak, že znamená i kolektivní rozhodování o všech podstatných věcech (podobně jako tomu později bylo v Group Theatre). To však byly požadavky zcela nereálné. Také prostředí komerčního newyorského divadla těmto ideálům příliš nepřálo. American Laboratory Theatre po celou dobu existence zápasilo o holou existenci. Boleslavsky sám byl bez peněz a musel si vydělávat režii na

What is notable is how much Boleslavsky and Chekhov agree. When Boleslavsky published *Acting: The First Six Lessons* in 1933, his categories included Concentration, Affective Memory, Dramatic Action, Characterization, Observation, and Rhythm. His use of bits in scene analysis has already been mentioned, and he shares concepts such as “coloring” actions with qualities and what he calls “Spiritual Concentration” (related to “Spiritual or Affective Memory”).⁶⁷

1.4 Other Stanislavsky Elements in Chekhov’s System (Not Discussed in 1922)

A number of aspects of Stanislavsky’s system, not specifically discussed in 1922, also were important parts of Chekhov’s system. For example, “Dissecting the Scene” implies an application to a character’s motivation through the whole play. This suggests ideas such as objectives and through-lines of action and the super-objective of the whole play.

- **Through-lines (Through Action) and Analyzing the Scene**⁶⁸
Stanislavsky separated *actions* (what the actor does to solve a problem given by the script and the circumstances of the play) from *activities* (everyday movements, including onstage, such as sitting down, eating, picking up an object, etc.). The actions are described with verbs – something that Chekhov also does in all his published texts. Stanislavsky used both musical and anatomical metaphors to explain how the actions that solve problems or accomplish something within the scenes (persuade someone to do something, take revenge in action, etc.) link together to create the overall plot of the play. Stanislavsky spoke of the actors writing down their

Broadwayi a v Hollywoodu. V době, kdy ve škole studoval Strasberg, měl Boleslavsky většinou jiné závazky a studenty vedla Maria Ouspenskaja.”

⁶⁷ “We have a special memory for feelings, which works unconsciously by itself and for itself. It's right there. It is in every artist. It is that which makes experience an essential part of our life and craft. All we have to do is know how to use it.” Boleslavsky, Richard; Edith J. R. Isaacs, ed. and introd. 1933. *Acting: The First Six Lessons*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, Chapter 2, “Memory of Emotion.” See also his lectures at the American Laboratory Theatre, ca. 1925-26.

⁶⁸ My description of Stanislavsky’s ideas of action and through-lines is indebted to Carnicke in Hodge 2009 (2010), pp. 24-28, and Vostrý 2018, pp. 23-24.

actions as a type of musical “score” – smaller “scores of physical actions” (including both activities and problem-solving actions) for the scenes and a “larger score of action” – as Carnicke paraphrased it, “inner and purposeful actions ... from the beginning to the end of the play.”⁶⁹ The musical metaphor has the tremendous advantage of introducing a sense of rhythm (staccato, legato) and crescendo or diminuendo – that is, musicality – into the actor’s task. (All aspects of Rhythm were central to Stanislavsky.) He spoke of the larger score as a “skeleton” unifying the play’s action. Among today’s practitioners of the Chekhov work, the usual term is the “spine” of the performance, scene, or gesture, a term Chekhov also used. Chekhov said, “It is necessary to find “the spine” of each exercise, but it is not possible to divide the hand from the body. You can see what the idea of each exercise is – to create a new person, a new type of actor who will be a whole person...Let them feel that these exercises are separate; but when the time comes, you must explain to them that each exercise is only a part of the whole organism... “If in the meantime we call it “the spine,” we will have our own and very specific definition for “rhythm” in the future.”⁷⁰

The concept of a “through-line” or “through action,” along with the parallel idea of a character’s seeking objectives in given scenes or bits, then stringing these wants or needs into a “super-objective,” is repeatedly found in Chekhov’s writings (and implied in his exercises), particularly after he came to Hollywood and is always expressed in terms of inner creativity: “Follow the *psychological succession of inner* events (feelings, emotions, wishes and other impulses) that speak to you from the depths of your creative individuality and you will soon be convinced that this “inner Voice” you possess never lies.” (1953/2002, p. 46)

⁶⁹ Carnicke, *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁰ “Lessons to Teachers,” Lesson 15, May 26, 1936; Lesson 16, June 2, 1936; and Lesson 17, June 4, 1936. He continued the investigation of rhythm in the context of Atmospheres. Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers; also published in Chekhov 2018, pp. 30-34.

The connection to Chekhov's MAT/MHAT origins is made explicit in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor*. For example, Chapter 10, "How to Approach the Part," includes numerous references to Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov (1953, pp. 146-170; 1953/2002 reprinting, pp. 132-153). After taking each of Chekhov's principle techniques in the other chapters and applying them to the way an actor can approach his or her part (from the direction of atmospheres, sensation of feelings, Psychological Gesture, tempo, and so forth), Chekhov dedicates several pages to concepts credited directly to Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov, including objectives, super-objectives, Vakhtangov's ideas about the imaginary presence of the audience in rehearsal, and stage business, plus the application of Chekhov's concept of the Psychological Gesture to objectives. (1953, 154-169; 1953/2002, 139-153.) While bits are not included in the 1953 text, he does use the term "bit," pronounced correctly, in his 1955 lectures, in the context of scene study – "don't play the result, go bit by bit."⁷¹ While this embrace of Chekhov's own origins in the Moscow Art Theatre also appears (more briefly) in the 1942/1991 edition (as in Chapter 7, "From Script to Rehearsal Hall," 107-112, on Objective), it is blended with his ideas on imagination, images ("pictures") of the character, and the Psychological Gesture. In 1953, he talks about the applications of images, Psychological Gesture, and so forth, separately from his discussion of the ideas coming from Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov.

In the 1946 Russian-language *O technike aktera* (О технике актера), the term "objective" is used in the sense of an general artistic goal, or the idea of being "objective and not subjective," as in his discussion of good and evil in *King Lear* and the "objective line" separating the two. "Goal" (Цель) is used in the same way. "Goal," in the sense of a dramatic Objective (that is, a desired end or objective for a character to achieve in a scene), appears only four times, in the chapter with his analysis of *King Lear*.

⁷¹ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 7, "On a short cut to approaching a part," NYPL call no. LT10-4785.

However, in the 1946 book,⁷² Chekhov uses a musical metaphor almost identical to Stanislavsky's idea of "the larger score of actions," but the metaphor is not applied to Through Action, but rather to the chain of different "Atmospheres" that make up the play. Since Chekhov used both Stanislavsky's idea of "Atmospheres" and the ideas of Through Action and Objectives (including super-objective), he may simply have used the musical score concept on the basis of his own experience with the Stanislavsky system, adapting it, as he did other elements in the system. Chekhov chose a metaphor which included the same concepts of rhythm and musicality which were useful to Stanislavsky.

Why did Chekhov emphasize his connection to Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov so much more openly in the 1953 edition? First, there was his concern about the other American teachers of the Stanislavsky method, particularly those such as Lee Strasberg, who were so dogmatic about the importance of Affective Memory in the Method. Carnicke has described the followers of this version of the Stanislavsky method as one path in a "bifurcation," or parting of the ways, in which, "in the United States, Stanislavsky's work with emotion answered the American fascination with Freudian psychology. In the Soviet Union, Stanislavsky's work with physical aspects of acting made his System better conform to the tenets of Marxist materialism."⁷³ (One should also remember that the second volume of Stanislavsky's dramatic philosophy, *Building a Character*, was first published in English in America, 1949.) Chekhov's intuitive, image-driven approach – and, as has been discussed above, Stanislavsky's system in general – fit much better into Gestalt psychology than Freudian analysis. It could be argued that the obsession with the analytic aspects of Affective Memory was an American distortion of the Stanislavsky method. Throughout his 1955 lectures, Chekhov made repeated skeptical comments about the need for

⁷² Chekhov 1946, Chapter 2, pp. 29-48.

⁷³ Carnicke, Sharon Marie. 1998. *Stanislavsky in Focus*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, pp. 149-151, 185-89. "For Stanislavsky, the mental and spiritual is always imbued with the physical and vice versa. Only three months before his death, he cautioned his directing students that: 'One must give actors various paths. One of these is the path of [physical] action. But there is also another path: you can move from feeling to action, arousing feeling first' (Stanislavskii 2000: 498)."

psychiatry, especially among actors, even those with great talent, whose lack of technique leads them to great frustration. One is reminded of his concern that Affective Memory could lead to hysteria. That a proper dramatic method could be therapeutic repeats Chekhov's own experience, where a massive psychological crisis nearly destroyed his career in spring 1918, and in spite of being treated by four psychiatrists hired by Stanislavsky into 1919, Chekhov only fully recovers after beginning to teach private classes in that year.⁷⁴ In another context, Lisa Dalton reports that one reason Chekhov had to include so much Stanislavsky training for Mala Powers, and incorporated the elements into his "Chart for Inspired Acting" (discussed immediately below), is that Mala – and presumably, other students coming to him in Los Angeles – did not have Stanislavsky training.⁷⁵

- **Communication** – see below, Chekhov, **Radiation**.
- **Atmosphere** – see below, **Atmospheres**.
- **Rhythm** – see the discussion below, following **Composition**.

- **The Fourth Wall**

One concept that most Stanislavsky-derived dramatic artists use is the "Fourth Wall," the imaginary barrier (usually bordered by the stage proscenium) separating the audience from the action of the play onstage. The concept the fourth wall was used from the 16th century to the full-blown realism and naturalism of the theatre of the 19th and 20th centuries. The concept was in use when Stanislavsky directed A.P. Chekhov's plays; it may be said that the actors acted as if they were unaware of the audience being separated by an invisible "fourth wall." The actors would ignore the audience; focus their attention predominantly on the dramatic world of the play using Stanislavsky's technique called "public solitude" (which is the ability to behave as one would in private, despite being in fact watched by the audience).

⁷⁴ For the chronology, see Gordon 1983a, pp. 8-9; see also below, Appendix 1.

⁷⁵ Lisa Dalton, interview June 2018.

“Breaking the fourth wall” is seen in many older plays – Shakespearian asides, for example – which use this technique to evoke a comic effect. But Vakhtangov, and Chekhov with him, created a way of rehearsing and performing in which the audience, and the actor’s connection with the audience, is always a part of the dramatic intention. What is more important is that this is a continuous, dynamic process, created by the actor’s Radiating, expression of feelings, sub-texts, Atmospheres, and so forth – applying ideas also used by Stanislavsky in order to break the barriers between audience and play. Stanislavsky was concerned about the play’s “effect on the audience,” but not in this dynamic, continuous way.⁷⁶ That is to say, Vakhtangov and Chekhov did not use this concept in the way other Stanislavsky-related artists did.

Chekhov Did Not Simply Imitate

The previous discussion of elements in the Stanislavsky system that Chekhov maintained in his own pedagogy suggests – even without considering Atmospheres and Rhythm – that when Chekhov directly continued aspects of the Stanislavsky system, he did not simply imitate them. Instead, he refined them, adapted them, and allowed them to evolve in harmony with Chekhov’s own emerging vision of the theatre and how an actor should prepare. Since his 1922 description of Stanislavsky’s system presumably indicates how he was going to teach with the Second Studio and certainly what he wanted to share about Stanislavsky with his American colleagues, the refinements and additions, even the criticism of certain elements such as Affective Memory, are highly significant. It is clear that Chekhov was already changing aspects of the different techniques, and this would pass complete into his final method. Moving from this point to his pedagogy as a whole as it came to be completed, taught, and written about in America, **Chekhov’s method strongly reveals very different goals and**

⁷⁶ Bendetti, Jean. 1982. *Stanislavski: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge (A Theatre Arts Book), p. 55, citing the Stanislavski Archives, MXAT Museum Moscow. See also “public solitude,” p. 78.

results, and an exactly opposite approach to finding the character, than are found in Stanislavsky. At the same time, of course, these direct elements from Stanislavsky meant that Chekhov could be received in America as a continuer of the larger Stanislavsky or MAT tradition.

1.5 Innovative Elements in Michael Chekhov's Dramatic Method

In fact, Michael Chekhov greatly enriched and expanded previously existing concepts such as atmospheres, characterizations, centers, the importance of movement (action), the way will-impulses function (in objectives), and the concept of the creative function of the higher ego (or higher self), which he pushed much further into the spiritual realm.

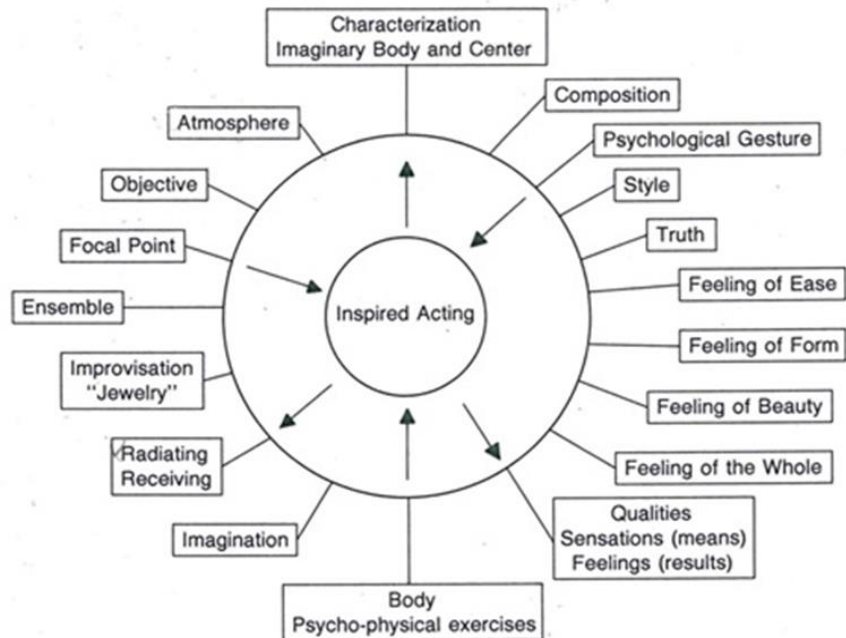
What is more, a large group of new elements brought to theatre training by Chekhov offers great advances into the fields of artistic realization and human development. These include:

- the substitution of aspects of the actor's Imagination for the obsession with Affective Memory (Sense Memory) found in Stanislavsky's other American followers,
- the focus on physical sensations (sense memory), rather than on pure feelings, in evoking emotion – feelings being the result, not the means,
- the idea of the “wise body,”⁷⁷
- an expansion of the role of psychophysical exercises,
- the use (incorporation) of Images in developing a character,
- and the idea of Psychological Gesture.

Chekhov himself prepared a teaching aid laying out these innovative ideas. In 1949 Chekhov prepared a diagram, or “**Chart for Inspired Acting,**” for his California students, which he felt summarized his method at that stage. This would include, of course his teaching in Dartington, Ridgefield, and New York, and his work on the 1942 and 1946 texts, as well as his experience in Hollywood films, his teaching in the Los Angeles area, and the writing of his

⁷⁷ An idea developed in the discussion of the Feeling of Form in 1942/1991, p. 55.

next text, eventually published in 1953 and distributed to the universities and colleges all over the United States.⁷⁸



The chart offers a useful way to survey the elements of Chekhov’s method.⁷⁹ With several important exceptions (Imagination, for example), the following discussion will use the order of the chart as it goes around the circle in a clockwise direction.

⁷⁸ Chekhov’s “Chart for Inspired Acting” was given to his California pupil, Mala Powers ca. 1949, as she attended M. Chekhov’s classes for professional actors in Beverly Hills, California, and studied with him privately. Chekhov told her that it was a kind of summary of his technique. He drew an imaginary circle around himself and explained that the chart represented such a circle drawn around the actor. (Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. xxxv-xliv.) According to Powers, Chekhov said, “Inspiration cannot be commanded; it is capricious. That is why the actor must always have a strong technique to fall back on.”

See also Mala Powers, “Michael Chekhov: An Intimate Glimpse,” pp. 2-3, quoted in Black, Lendley. 1987. *Mikhail Chekhov as Actor, Director, and Teacher*. Ann Arbor: Theatre and dramatic studies (no. 43), 1987., page 88. The book publishes Black’s dissertation: Black, Lendley. 1984. *A Portrait of Misha: The Life and Artistic Accomplishments of Mikhail Alexandrovich Chekhov*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas.

A more detailed explanation of the chart as used today in teaching the Chekhov method may be found in Dalton, Lisa. 2017. “The Art of Michael Chekhov’s Chart: A Training Sequence for Contemporary Practice in Professional Studios and Academia,” in *Critical Stages* 2017; available URL: <http://www.critical-stages.org/15/the-art-of-michael-chekhovs-chart-a-training-sequence-for-contemporary-practice-in-professional-studios-and-academia/>.

⁷⁹ Illustration from Chekhov 1942/1991, p. xxxvi.

❖ **Characterization (Imaginary Body and Center)**

Stanislavsky, following the Hindu idea of the *Pranas*, or bodily locations of vital energy, located two centers in the body, one radiating life from the solar plexus, and a cerebral thought center in the brain (or head).

“The cerebral center, Stanislavsky observed ...“appeared to be the seat of consciousness and the nerve center of the solar plexus, the seat of emotion. Stanislavsky’s idea was overtly practical, “to make use of it for my [dramatic] purposes.”⁸⁰ Stanislavsky was also interested in the physical center of gravity.

As Sinéad Rushe has observed, Stanislavsky, like traditions such as Kabuki and Noh Drama, saw the “Center” (or center of gravity) as low, at the end of the spine. (This would be one possible location for the “Will-Center” in Chekhov, the third of three centers including the “thought center” in the head, the “feeling center” in the chest, and the “will center” in the pelvis – giving the three concepts of “thinking-feeling-willing” that affected many of his exercises and continue to be an important part of Chekhov training today.⁸¹

Chekhov expanded these traditional ideas to allow the concept of a “center” to be more flexible, more able to adapt to the needs of the characterization. He proposed “Imaginary Centers,” including variations on the three centers already described. So, for example, one might think of an imaginary sun-like Center in the chest as the ideal creative center for the actor, the source of inner activity and power within the body, and think of it as radiating into the rest of the body and beyond the body, filling as large an area of space as the actor desires.⁸² An imaginary center can even be outside the body, as when a lover focuses on her beloved.

❖ **The Imaginary Body**

Chekhov, however, went far beyond this. He sought a complete **Transformation** of the actor’s inner and outer mean of expression.

“Every talented actor,” Chekhov insisted, “is possessed by the desire to

⁸⁰ Stanislavsky and Hapgood 1936, p. 187.

⁸¹ Rushe, Sinéad. 2019. *Michael Chekhov's Acting Technique: A Practitioner's Guide*. London and New York: Methuen Drama, pp. 38-39.

⁸² Powers, in Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, Booklet to accompany CD lectures, p. 26.

transform himself. ... to express yourself on the stage and to absorb and to accumulate as much as possible of all kinds of life experiences and all sorts of knowledge. Undoubtedly you've noticed that the richer your experiences and knowledge are, the more colorful your acting on the stage becomes. These two processes might be compared to the process of breathing. While you are expressing yourself, you exhale and while absorbing your experiences, you inhale as it were. All of us actors live and breathe in the sphere of art. That means that our exhaling and inhaling are of a very special kind.”⁸³

In 1942, Chekhov described a technique for seeming to appear different onstage than an actor might appear in reality. The actor was to “imagine another body for himself, create an **Imaginary Body** that is taller or thinner than his own. But he must imagine this within his real, visible body, occupying the same space. ... The next step will be a careful process of putting the actor's body into the imaginary body, trying to move the physical body so that it will follow the characteristic movements and shape of the Imaginary one. If the actor lifts up his imaginary, long, lean arm, he also moves his real arm within it. ... Without yet using any outer means, he will create the impression that he has another arm by his movement alone. Gradually ... a new experience in his own, real body, will substitute for the imaginary one. ... To this refinement the actor must add the Imaginary Center. The Imaginary Center gives the whole body a harmonious appearance because; being in the middle of the chest it draws the character nearer to the ideal body.” (1942/1991, pp. 99-106; cf. 1953/2002, pp.77-84.)

The 1953 edition of *To the Actor* follows this description with the same ideas but different examples, adding, “You clothe yourself, as it were, with this body [the Imaginary Body]; you put it on like a garment. What will be the result of this ‘masquerade’? After a while (or perhaps in a flash!) you will begin to feel and think of yourself as *another person*. ... The imaginary body

⁸³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 4, “On character and characteristics, II,” NYPL call no. LT10-4782. NB that this recording just preceded Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled Acting.” The idea is *sospire*, breathing in, getting the spirit in; the words in Russian are *спирая дыхание* (1946, p. 127, speaking of Don Quixote getting up after being knocked off his horse). There is a relation to the Italian word, *sospirare*, to sigh.

stands, as it were, *between* your real body and your psychology, influencing both of them.” (1953, p. 87; 1953/2002, p. 79; cf. p. 82.) In his 1955 lectures, Chekhov added: “That is why this [imaginary] body can so easily and so fully influence you with your psychology and your physical body and transform you into the character.”⁸⁴

Chekhov practitioner Scott Fielding has succinctly described the difference between Chekhov and Stanislavsky’s approach to building a character as being a matter of complete opposites – of Chekhov inverting Stanislavsky’s processes, especially as they involve Affective Memory and the use of the actor’s own personal history and psychology.

Chekhov’s approach to acting is based upon the principle of objectivity, meaning that the character is objective to the actor. The character, as an image, exists outside and independent of the actor-subject. Chekhov’s imaginative techniques related to and including the technique of “incorporation” proceed from character to actor; in this sense, the techniques may be understood as from “outside-in.” For Stanislavski, on the other hand, the approach to character is precisely the opposite: from actor to character. (“Inside-out”). . . . Stanislavski teaches the actor to start work on the role by imagining himself in the given circumstances of the character. Whereas for Chekhov, the actor is taught to begin by imagining the character in the given circumstances of the play. Stanislavski instructs the actor to ask: What would I do in the same circumstances as my character? Conversely, Chekhov says: Observe the character (the image) in the circumstances and ask him to show you what he does.⁸⁵

The *visualization* aspect of the process and the *incorporation* of the image (literally, bringing the image into your body, which conforms to the image) are one process, which has emotional consequences as well. Chekhov discusses all of this in the context of Imagination.

❖ **Imagination and Incorporation of Images**

Chekhov sees a well-developed and flexible imagination as essential to acting – the actor’s contribution to the author’s work. Indeed, in his 1942

⁸⁴ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, “On character and characterization, I,” NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

⁸⁵ Fielding, Scott. 2009. “Regarding the Significance of Divided Consciousness,” in Cerullo, Jessica, ed. 2009. *Michael Chekhov: Critical Issues, Reflections, Dreams*. New York: MICHA Michael Chekhov Association, p. 37.

manuscript, he put the chapter on Imagination and Concentration at the very beginning. He insists that “the Creative Imagination is one of the main channels through which the artist in him finds the way to express his own, individual (and therefore always unique) interpretation of the characters to be portrayed.” (1953, Chapter 2, “Imagination and the Incorporation of Images,” p. 28; 1953/2002 reprint, p. 27). Chekhov understands “imagination” to include visualization, that is, imaginary and remembered images relating to the character and the script. “Your forgotten and half-remembered wishes, daydreams, life’s aims, successes and failures appear as pictures before your mind. ... they are, in retrospect, slightly changed. But you still recognize them. ... Out of the visions of the past there flash here and there images totally unknown to you! They are pure products of your *Creative Imagination*. ... They begin to “act,” to “perform” before your fascinated gaze.” (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 21-22.) What is more, the images seen in the mind’s eye “have their own psychology, like the people surrounding me in my everyday life,” with the important difference that the creative images have their inner lives, emotions, feelings, and so forth completely open to the actor. (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 25-26.)

In his teaching in the spring of 1936, Chekhov combined the idea of the use of “images of pure creative fantasy” with the Stanislavsky-derived concept of **Concentration**. (One should once more emphasize that Chekhov arrived in America in 1935 already having enlarged the system he received from Stanislavsky, in part under the influence of Rudolph Steiner.⁸⁶) As he prepared his curriculum for the Dartington “Chekhov Theatre Studio” in America during the summer of 1935 and then at Dartington from fall 1935 to the first day of classes on 5 October 1936 he had the opportunity to further explain his expanded ideas.

⁸⁶ Already in 1919, in his article in Gorn, “About the Stanislavsky System,” Chekhov declared, “I want also to remind you that Konstantin Stanislavsky himself considers his work not fully finished; every new day could bring to the system new thought. Chekhov and Knebel, *Lit. nasl.*, 1995, vol. 2, p. 47 and note.

The larger context is Chekhov's rejection of a purely naturalistic theatre (which he felt Stanislavsky always represented, at least in the period Chekhov knew his work, up to 1928)⁸⁷ and its replacement with a theatre including a much larger element of Imagination. For example, the "Chart of Concentration" he gave to Deirdre Hurst and Beatrice Straight,⁸⁸ already mentioned above, made clear the intersection of physical reality and spiritual creativity via exercising Concentration ("the door by which we can enter into the creative spiritual world").⁸⁹

Chekhov also intends Imagination as an antidote to "dry reasoning" and uses imaginative methods in training, in rehearsal, and as part of communication between actor and audience, especially in the context of Atmospheres. More importantly, "the images which [the actor sees] with the mind's eye have their own psychology ... [and] their inner lives are completely open for me to behold. ... Through the manifestation of my image – that is to say of the character I am working upon by means of my imagination – I see its inner life." (1953, pp. 25-26; 1953/2002, p. 25.) That is to say, the incorporation of the image of the character can be used, along with psychophysical exercises and in the place of Stanislavsky's Affective Memory to bring the emotions needed for the character "into the moment" of the scene, incorporated into the actions of the actor onstage.

Indeed, Chekhov spoke of the "objectivity" of imagination, in contrast to the usual belief that the imagination is "subjective." He felt that the process of developing artistic imagination "somehow resembles" logical thinking. It was necessary, however, for the actor to develop a kind of artistic

⁸⁷ 9. "Underdone with his imagination, that's Stanislavsky. They were able to appreciate each other's way, which I don't understand. Meyerhold was devilish. Meyerhold worked in Stanislavsky's theatre, hoping to get work there. I don't know; I don't understand it. They worked together ... naturalistic way of truth ..." See Chekhov's 1955 lectures, Tape 9, "On experiences at Moscow art theatre, part I," NYPL call no. LT10- 4787; and Tape 10, "On experiences at Moscow art theatre, part II," NYPL call no. LT10- 4788.

⁸⁸ Chekhov, "To Teachers," Lesson 10, 10 May, 1936; Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers. Published in Chekhov 2018, pp. 22-24.

⁸⁹ Also interesting are the verbs Chekhov associated with Concentration in the context of working with images: "to contact, to be receptive; to merge, to be aware; to enfold, to be conscious of; to sense, to be with; to identify, to be in harmony with; to communicate with, to be at one with; to give to; to flow forward." As he had begun to do at Kaunas, he made a synthesis of this world of creative imagination and the world of physical reality. What is more, the greater the obstacles (which relate of course to the objectives in scenes and the super-objectives), the greater the power of the will, pushing further into the realms of creative imagination.

instinct warning him where he should turn away from the “logic” of his or her images. Thinking and reasoning alone will not help. (1942/1991, p. 6.)

In all of this, Chekhov insisted that the Imagination and its Images free actors from “their too personal, too intellectual interference with the creative process” – that is, from the sort of methods that Affective Memory represents. The New York actress and Chekhov method teacher Fern Sloan reports a similar dissatisfaction with “the Method,” which dominated American acting training in New York 1950-1980: “I didn’t get to the technique of Michael Chekhov until I’d had a career working primarily out of my own biography [i.e., Affective Memory]. I left the theatre because I thought it was silly, and I didn’t like the way I was working and felt terribly limited.”⁹⁰

Knowledge Through Images – To “See” Through Images

For Chekhov, Imagination “takes place in the sphere that lies beyond intellect. There is a meditative aspect to Chekhov’s work with images; he speaks of “waiting patiently until the image has matured to its highest expressiveness.” (1942/1991, pp. 3-4.) The awakened Imagination is a constant, fiery activity where the artist works consciously hand in hand with his/ her images. “For artists with mature imagination, images are living beings, as real to their mind’s eyes as things around us are visible to our physical eyes. Through the appearance of these living beings, artists “see” an inner life.” (1942 /1991page 4) He adds, “The word, behind which the image stands, acquires strength and expressiveness and remains alive, no matter how many times you repeat it. If you are in scenes that seem important to you for the play as a whole or for your role, find the main phrases and important words in them and then turn those words into images; you will revitalize your speech.” (1946; p.30.)

❖ Psychological Gesture

This is the most famous element of Chekhov’s method, which has no complete parallel in Stanislavsky (or in any other system).

Chekhov distinguished two kinds of gestures: ordinary, everyday

⁹⁰ Interview, June 2018.

gestures, and “what might be called the archetypal gesture, one which serves as an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind. The Psychological Gesture belongs to the second type.” That is, the Psychological Gesture is intended to be something coming from deep within the psyche of the actor. In most cases, the super-objective of a character from a play – the governing desire – can be linked to a gesture invented by the actor from within a fairly limited list of compact, highly evocative actions or gestures. Or as Joanna Merlin describes it, a strong, complete (“archetypal”) movement, defined as a simple, active verb (crush, penetrate, embrace, etc.), which is a translation into physical terms of the character’s super-objective.⁹¹

Chekhov urged the actor to “ask this character to act [moments in the play in] your Imagination and follow its acting in all its details. Simultaneously, try to see what the character is aiming at, what is his wish, his desire?... As soon as you begin to guess what the character is doing, try to find the most simple Psychological Gesture for it.”⁹² Chekhov himself called the Psychological Gesture a “condensed form” of the entire character, in both the sense of the entire role throughout the play, “or even a section of it” (as, for example, applied to a series of actions in a scene.) He also, insisted, however, that “without the spirit, Psychological Gesture will never appear in our mind! You would be never able to experience it, because this work of condensation of uniting, of drawing the conclusion, is the function of our spirit.”⁹³ He meant this in terms of the creative function of the higher ego (or higher self), but also in more purely spiritual terms.⁹⁴ The

⁹¹ Merlin, Joanna. 2001. *Auditioning: An Actor-Friendly Guide*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 55-60. Although the focus of the book is on auditions, the text offers a very useful and often detailed description of the entire Chekhov method. See also below, Chapter Four.

Mala Powers (in Chekhov 1942/1991, p. xxxviii) put this even more succinctly, describing the Psychological Gesture as “a movement that embodies the psychology and Objective [i.e., super-objective] of a character.

⁹² Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 312, pp. 64-65.

⁹³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, op. cit. above, NYPL Call no. LT10-4780.

⁹⁴ See Chamberlain 2004, pp. 48-52, on the inter-relationship of the Higher Ego (or Higher Self) and Creative Individuality.

Psychological Gesture takes possession of “our whole body, psychology, and soul” ... “so we may say that the strength of the movement stirs our will-power in general; the kind of movement awakens in us a definite corresponding desire, and the quality of the same movement conjures up our feelings.”⁹⁵

One should point out, as noted above, that seeds of the Psychological Gesture may be found in Chekhov’s expansion of Stanislavsky’s categories such as Control of Emotion. The Psychological Gesture is also intimately related to the concept of Atmospheres in Chekhov, as noted below.

❖ **Composition**

In all three of his versions of *To the Actor*, Chekhov included a chapter on “Composition of the Performance.” In 1946 and 1953, this chapter begins with the idea, “The same laws that govern the phenomena of the universe, the earth and human life, the laws that make harmony and rhythm in art such as music, poetry and architecture, can also find application in theater arts.” (1946, p. 169.) In 1942, this concept was related to the idea of an “artistic frame” to the performance: “Each artistic action, however large or small, must be preceded by a preparatory activity and then followed by a sustaining moment. This creates the frame.”

Composition follows principles that are almost mathematical. “The actor cannot comprehend composition and Rhythm if they are not experienced and felt inwardly. ... The aim is to create in the actor’s psychology which we call the Compositionary Gesture. (1942/1991, pp. 129-136) Chekhov goes on to describe technical concepts such as Pause, Pause and Atmosphere, Tempo, Crescendo and Diminuendo. (1942/1991, pp. 137-145). All three publications use Shakespeare’s *King Lear* for examples, but 1942 has numerous exercises not found in the others.

⁹⁵ Chekhov 1953, pp. 76-70 and 65; 1953/2002, p. 70 and 6.

❖ Rhythm and Tempo

Rhythm was an important concept for Stanislavsky throughout his career. He insisted on the importance of body rhythms as a trigger for the emotions, and said, “You cannot master the method of physical actions if you do not master rhythm. Each physical action is inseparably linked with the rhythm which characterizes it.”⁹⁶

As has been noted, Boleslavsky devoted a whole chapter to Rhythm. Chekhov, under the influence of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, used musical gymnastics (also used at the MAT) and Eurhythmics, which teaches concepts of rhythm, structure, and musical expression using movement, at Dartington and Ridgefield – Eurhythmics was advertised as an important part of the curriculum. Chekhov asked his students to use movement as a means of exploration which would be invisibly or intangibly present in their performances. “The invisible body must lead, entice and coax your visible body – not the opposite.” (Lesson, 20 October 1937.)⁹⁷

Chekhov also used Rhythm and Tempo as means for changing the Qualities of a given movement, action, or “bit” of acting onstage, as well as in numerous exercises for visualization. As with other theatre pedagogues, Chekhov was concerned about rhythm as an essential part of Ensemble, emphasizing the need for all actors to be in harmony on this point.

Chekhov set the tone early in his work at Dartington, when he was training Straight, Hurst, and others to be his teaching assistants. On 17 April 1936, he had a “conversation,” which seems to have included the Elmhursts, about a number of concerns. Among these was “Rhythm as a Living Being,”

⁹⁶ See Toporkov, Vasilii Osipovich; Christine Edwards, transl. 1979. *Stanislavski in Rehearsal: the Final Years*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, p. 170.

⁹⁷ Chekhov adds, “Our physical body needs time to adjust to the invisible one, so don’t force it. Your invisible body will coax the visible one if you will give it time.” To movement were added the visual arts. As Tom Cornford has noted, in order that his students would, as he put it, ‘develop a feeling for ‘form’’, Chekhov asked that they also have classes in drawing. These classes were provided by the American artist Mark Tobey. Tobey had come to Dartington to teach at its recently-established School of Dance-Mime in 1931 from the Cornish School in Seattle as part of an arrangement made in 1929 by Dorothy Elmhirst with its founder, Nellie Cornish. See Cornford, Tom. 2013. “‘A New Kind of Conversation’: Michael Chekhov’s ‘Turn to the Crafts’,” in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 2013, pp. 189-203; available URL – <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2013.794158>, pp. 189-203. See also Nicholas, Lorraine. 2007. *Dancing in Utopia: Dartington Hall and its Dancers*, Alton, Hampshire, UK: Dance Books, p. 58. Others who came to Dartington from the Cornish School included the puppeteer Richard Odlin, the dancer Louise Soelberg, and of course, Deirdre Hurst, a former student at Cornish.

for which he insisted that “in all the arts today, artists are fighting for rhythm. And the theatre has no rhythm – none at all. ... At its best it is only meter. ... Rhythm makes a person free – free from bad habits and free from narrow ways. ... The theatre of today lacks something, some element which would make it a creative whole – that is why the theatre is so stupid. That quality is Rhythm.” He goes on to insist that the rhythm must come from “a unifying will, a unifying idea, and feeling ... And if this unifying idea, feeling, and will is moving, then we have rhythm.”⁹⁸

To return to the context of **Composition**, Chekhov applied ideas about Rhythm to his search for laws of composition. “Life in its development is not always a straight line,” he insisted, “it does like the waves of rhythmic movements.” A life journey was a series of “undulations,” rising and falling, increasing and withering, heartbeats, breathing, and so forth. The 1946 text, *О технике актера*, repeatedly appeals to images metaphors of rhythmic waves, which oscillate between polarities. “When applied to the art of the theater, we can consider the waves as the shift between the external and internal action ... on the one hand, they reach the maximum stress in its outer expression (speech, gestures, staging, treatment of actors with subjects, light and sound effects, etc.). On the other hand, they are purely mental, internal (emission individual performers, their mood and atmosphere).” (1946, p. 207.)

Chekhov also applied concepts of Rhythm to his analysis of plays. In all three of his pedagogical texts (1942, 1946, and 1953), he devoted a chapter to an analysis of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.⁹⁹ (This underscores how important it was for Chekhov’s students at Dartington and Ridgefield to actively perform plays – and, in the case of Ridgefield in 1941-1942, perform them in New York and take them on national tours across the USA. In Hollywood, his students were actively performing already, so their professional needs supplied the texts.) Here Chekhov introduced the principle of “rhythmic

⁹⁸ This “conversation” was inserted into Deirdre Hurst du Preys transcripts of the Lessons for Teachers (Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers), but it was not a lesson in itself, and was not published in 2000/2018.

⁹⁹ For copyright reasons, the chapter on *King Lear* was omitted from the 1991 publication of the 1942 manuscript.

repetition” in the performing arts, and for him the regular repetitions (such as breathing) are less important than those that vary “qualitatively and quantitatively” at each repetition, evoking a different reaction in the viewer each time. (1946, pp. 198-199.) Musical concepts such as crescendo and diminuendo, changes in tempo, and of course, different rhythms, evoking different atmospheres and contexts for the actions, move in waves through the play. In fact, in analyzing the climaxes and sub-climaxes of *King Lear*, Chekhov used a type of wave diagram to illustrate his overall conception of the play (1946, p. 196 – derived from 1942.)

The Chart of Rhythmic Repetition



A, B, C = The three big (main) units of the tragedy [King Lear].
 I, II, III = Main Climaxes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 = Sub-climaxes (Auxiliary Climaxes).
 a, b, c, d, e, f, g = Subdivisions.¹⁰⁰

The diagram not only includes climaxes and sub-climaxes but is presented in the context of important speeches and transformations of the characters. A unified whole in keeping with his concept of his pedagogical system as one unified phenomenon accessible from any point, or his Feeling of Entirety, discussed below.

¹⁰⁰ Chekhov 1946, p. 196 – cf. pp. 206-207; reprinted in Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 102.

❖ Speech

At Dartington and Ridgefield, students received extensive training in speech, including speech-related elements in Eurhythmics and Speech Formation.¹⁰¹ Rudolph Steiner's version of Eurythmy added speech to music as a stimulus for movement – speech was to be made visible through the actors' movements. In moving to speech (making speech visible) Chekhov wanted his students to be aware of the movement itself but also the feeling which lies within a particular speech-related movement (as well as aspects which originate in the soul). Speech-formation was one of Steiner's main artistic emphases, in which speech involved Images – which of course were central to Chekhov's whole system.

Eurythmy and Speech Formation are present in the curriculum of the Chekhov Theatre Studio, 1936-1942; they are also included repeatedly in "The 1942 Version" and the 1946 Russian text, but they are not mentioned in the 1953 edition.¹⁰²

Black, who interviewed Dartington and Ridgefield students, found that they were divided about the value of the speech training – Beatrice Straight felt that the training caused an unchanging sing-song speech which did not vary from character to character, others who had not been trained literally "found their voice" in the classes.¹⁰³ Today, as will be discussed in more detail in a following chapter, whether or not the Steiner-related speech techniques are taught depends on the individual instructor's beliefs or on the institution, such as Emerson College in the UK and others.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ In discussing this aspect of Chekhov's pedagogy, I have relied on Lendley Black's analysis. See Black 1984 – republished as Black 1987, pp. 64- 67. Cf. Steiner 1967, pp. 12-22; and *ibid.*, Steiner 1959, *passim*.

¹⁰² See Chekhov 1942/1991, especially as part of the discussion of the Psychological Gesture, pp. 74-77, with a footnote giving bibliography for further reading; repeated (in Russian) in Chekhov 1946, pp. 75-77, plus an extended Bibliography of Rudolf Steiner's writings.

¹⁰³ Black 1984, p. 64.

¹⁰⁴ Mechthild Harkness, who had taught at Emerson, provided training in Chekhov technique and speech in Australia; among her pupils was John McManus – see Appendix 6, Interviews. See also the comments in Rushe, Sinéad. 2014. *Michael Chekhov Technique – A Complete Toolkit*. London and New York: Methuen Drama, p. 24. For additional comments from Chekhov, see 1942/1991, pp.

Deirdre Hurst du Prey has noted that at Dartington, in exercises for developing the body as the actor's instrument, "the exercises were intensive and were always accompanied by a pianist-composer." She also reports that, in several instances, students were responsible for composing music.¹⁰⁵ At Dartington, Chekhov formed a close relationship with the South Asian choreographer, Uday Shankar, whose troupe included Alice Boner, Georgette Boner's sister, and musicians (his younger brother was Ravi Shankar).¹⁰⁶ Music was a constant presence in the Dartington context. At Ridgefield, music continued to be a part of the training and particularly of the performances as the student professional company became a reality.

Another important element in Composition, closely related to Rhythm and Tempo (but of course to the absence of speech) is something Chekhov called "Pause." Related to Chekhov's analysis of *King Lear*, it also appears in all three texts. Pause as a verb means "to interrupt action or speech briefly"; used as a noun it means "a temporary stop in action or speech."

❖ The Pause

There are two kinds of pauses: one which expresses itself outwardly and the other, inwardly, and each can come before something happens – foretelling what is to come and awakening the audience's anticipation – or come afterwards, summing up what has happened. Pause is understood in musical terms. When you have a pause, you must always be conscious that something will be done or that something has been done. There is never a pause which means nothing – "true Pause is a moment of absolute Radiation." If you will train yourself in this way, you will get accustomed to find always instinctively the right place for the pause. Without the feeling of the whole, the pause has no significance.¹⁰⁷

74-77, and 1946, p. 78: "Moving, polished, obedient body and well-internalized speech technique will help the actor avoid unnecessary stress and haste, on the one hand, and passivity on the other."

¹⁰⁵ Hurst du Prey 1992 (in Senelick 1992), pp. 162-163.

¹⁰⁶ On the topic of dance and music at Dartington, see Nicholas 2007, *passim*.

¹⁰⁷ 1942/1991, pp. 137-142; cf. Chekhov, *Lessons for Teachers*, Lesson 9, May 10, 1936; 2018, p. 20.

Pause originates internally and puts a limit on external means of expression, which disappear as the force of the actor's **Radiation** increases. Pauses (or breaks) can come before or after actions. "The Pause of the first kind prepares the viewer to perceive the upcoming action," Chekhov observes, "and the latter summarizes the action has already taken place." Actions not accompanied by a pause leave "only a superficial impression on the viewer. (1946, p. 208.)

To return to the "Chart for Inspired Acting," we can continue with the following elements:

❖ **Sense of Style**

Chekhov was concerned that his own productions had a proper period setting; his curriculum at Dartington and Ridgefield included all the technical aspects of make-up, costume, props, sets – and the acting styles that go with them. "The costumes, sets, and make-up may be in a certain style, but they do not make the style of the performance if the sense of style does not live in the soul of the actor." (1942/1991, p. 124)

Chekhov insisted that the sense of style must be cultivated inwardly by means of exercises. For example, one exercise (1942/1991, ex. 70) asks the actors and actresses to imagine being dressed in costumes of different periods and styles. "Imagine them," he asks, "as clearly as possible so that they will become a real outward expression of the inner feeling of Style. Each fold in the costume, as well as its shape and color, must be visualized and inwardly experienced. Move and speak under the inspiration of the style of the imaginary costume." Chekhov takes the exercise through a number of variations intended to increase the sensitivity of the actors. The next exercise (71) asks the actor to call upon his or her dreams and try to live in them with his or her waking consciousness. An interesting element is added when Chekhov says, "the sense of Style, when obtained from the actor's dreams, will penetrate slowly and deeply into his nature. Supported by exercises, it will even penetrate the actor's body." Chekhov quotes Rudolf Steiner: "He will

acquire for himself not outer posture alone but artistic posture, full of style.” (1942/1991, pp. 127-128)

I cannot help but think how important it was for Chekhov to be dressed “immaculately” as both Mala Powers and Joanna Merlin remember when they met him for the first time – at home in California, teaching a class. He was a kind, gentle, sweet man wearing a fedora hat, suit, and tie, and had a walking stick. He loved to smoke, but used a cigarette holder, an elegant touch in the 1940s and 1950s – and practical, since he cut his cigarettes in half before smoking.¹⁰⁸



Michael Chekhov teaching at the Chekhov Theatre Studio. (1936-1938),
(Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

❖ **Feeling of Truth**

This topic derives from Stanislavsky’s “Scenic Faith,” listed above from Chekhov’s 1922 lecture, and Stanislavsky’s Chapter on “Faith and a Sense of Truth” (An Actor Prepares, Chapter 8), but without the sense of natural representation onstage that Chekhov criticized in his teacher, and the related dramatic tools such as the “Magic If.” [lecture 1955]

Instead, Chekhov emphasized the incorporation of images and the actor’s body moving in harmony with inner processes, Images, emotion, will, a sense of Atmosphere, and so on forth – achieving what he called

¹⁰⁸ Chekhov’s lectures and classes were interrupted by smoking breaks. Xenia, his wife teased him at home about his teacher persona: “First of all – my God, my wife tells me, “Oh, you professor” – I am so afraid of these words because I speak this nonsense all the time in our house.” Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 5, “On rehearsals,” NYPL call no. LT10-4783.

the “wise body.” (Chekhov was also concerned with the Feeling of Truth necessary for period dramas – see immediately above, the Sense of Style.)

Developing the sense of Truth

Chekhov wanted the actor to “develop that special, delicate sense of beauty and truth that can best be defined by the words: ‘aesthetic conscience’ . Your body will become ‘wise’ on the stage. Have you not noticed how ‘unwise, the body of an actor can look on stage if he never thought deeply about the body, did not try to evaluate it as a means of expression, with all its features, dignity and nobility of form? No wise words given by the author, and no costume made by the artist, will hide the ‘unwise’ body on the stage. Not only do dramatic images need a ‘wise’ body: a clown with an ‘unwise’ body will hardly cause you to smile. Stupidity is funny on stage only when it is portrayed.¹⁰⁹

❖ The “Four Brothers of Art”: Ease, Beauty, Form and Entirety

Chekhov always describes these four elements as a unit in a sequence of psychophysical exercises, although each can be applied separately to the needs of the actor. They are skills or “continuous abilities” that the actor must develop and maintain. Even when the seed of the idea is found in Stanislavsky, as in “Ease.” Here, and in the concepts of **Molding, Flowing, Flying, and Radiating**, the context of the dozens of preparation exercises generated by Chekhov over his career comes to the front. One really gets the sense of young actors developing skills, especially in the studio contexts of Dartington and Ridgefield, and the “Four Brothers” remain an essential part of Chekhov training. Chekhov presents them at the outset of his 1953 edition (1953 and 1953/2002, pp.

¹⁰⁹ Chekhov 1946, p. 110. В вас вырабатывается то особое, тонкое чувство красоты и правды, которое лучше всего можно определить словами: “эстетическая совесть”. Ваше тело станет “мудрым” на сцене. Разве не замечали вы, как “немудро” может выглядеть тело актера на сцене, если он никогда глубоко не думал о теле, не пытался оценить его как средство выразительности, со всеми его особенностями, достоинством и благородством форм? Никакие мудрые слова, данные автором, и никакой костюм, сделанный художником, не скроют “немудрого” тела на сцене. Не только драматические образы нуждаются в “мудром” теле: клоун с “немудрым” телом едва ли вызовет вашу улыбку. Глупость смешна на сцене, только когда ее изображают.

13-19 – “The Actor’s Body and Psychology” – compare 1942/1991, pp. 48-57, “The Actor’s Body: Psychophysical Exercises”.)

❖ **Feeling of Ease**

This concept and its exercises are enriched versions of Stanislavsky’s relaxation exercises. Chekhov asked his actor “to sit with a Feeling of Ease” instead of telling the actor “to relax.” ... “Feeling of Ease,” he insisted, “is also related to humor, a crucial aspect of art. The more hearty gaiety the actor brings into all his exercises the better. The Feeling of Ease can achieve this light tone. Humor cannot be squeezed out of the actor’s nature any more than can any other human feelings. It must be simply welcomed when it is there and then it will be helpful.” (1942/1991, pp. 48-50; 1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 13-14.)

The Feeling of Ease is related to the Flowing, Flying, and Radiating movements described below.

❖ **Feeling of Form**

Actors must have sensitivity to form, particularly the form of his or her own body. “The human hand,” he observes, “is constructed in such a way that it is almost a crime to abandon it to vagueness.” (1942/1991, p.50.) The Feeling of Form creates a special awareness when the actor, like a sculptor, molds bodily forms and choreographs movement. Here one should remember the interchange of artistic ideas at Dartington, where the musicians and dancers in the Uday Shankar troupe or the Kurt Jooss ballet interacted with the Chekhov Studio actors, and live music was constant presence in the training session. “To give a strong and harmonious impression,” Chekhov writes, “our feelings and will-impulses must be equally well shaped on the stage, together with the movable forms of our body. Look at the expressiveness of the fingers when they are put in different positions. The same is true of the arms, and shoulders, the neck, the back, the legs and feet – the whole body.” (1942/1991, p. 50-51; compare 1953 and 1953/2002, p. 14.)

As already suggested, the Feeling of Form is related to the Molding movements described below.

❖ **Feeling of Beauty**

The actor must be aware of true beauty, which has its roots *inside* our being, unlike the false beauty outside. “Everything has two sides, one that is right and the other, which is only a caricature of it. ...If love is a true human feeling, sentimentality is its counterfeit. Caution is a useful quality, fear is destructive and useless. Likewise beauty, when it becomes a primitive “showing off,” is obvious caricature of itself, and is easily distinguished.” (1942/1991, p. 55.) There is a right and a wrong sense of beauty.¹¹⁰ Chekhov wants the actor’s sense of beauty to color everything he or she does, even in the cases of “ugly situations and ugly characters,” where Chekhov wants the actor to distinguish between *what* and *how*. “Aesthetically performed, an unpleasant theme, character, or situation preserves the power of uplifting and inspiring the audience.” (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 15-16.) We may even say that true beauty must be hidden in order that others may discover it. (Cf. 1942/1991, p. 57, citing the example of Gloucester in *King Lear*.)

❖ **The Feeling of Entirety (or Feeling of the Whole)**

Chekhov added this element in the 1953 edition (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 17-19), in the context of the necessity of every actor to play every scene keeping in mind the previous and future scenes in the play – that is, “to understand or interpret his part as a whole or *in its entirety*.” As a result, the actor will be able to stress the essentials of the character, follow the main line of events, and therefore hold the attention of the audience. This is particularly important in films, where the beginning, middle, and end are not always filmed in sequence. The actor will not “be lost among many details ... We often see actors who are able to act so that there are is a marvelous series of details, but it is still not pleasant

¹¹⁰ “Likewise beauty, when it becomes a primitive “showing off,” is obvious caricature of itself, and is easily distinguished. When for instance, the heavy hammer flies up and down again and again, the worker’s mind is occupied exclusively with the task, without any desire to ‘show off’.” In this sense, when the present author studied Meisner’s technique, the class did the “difficult task exercise,” which directly follows this idea, concentrating on doing and not acting.

to look at because the actor has not the ability to grasp the whole thing.”¹¹¹ The “Chart for Inspired Acting” illustrates this sense of the entire method being interrelated.

An important point to be made about the “Four Brothers” is that Chekhov spoke of them as “Qualities” – an idea he used to describe, for example, the coloring or “the how” of an action. The reason this term was applied to the “Four Brothers” may be found in the 1946 edition, in which Chekhov speaks of “four qualities that are “inherent in the true work of art: **lightness, form, integrity (completeness) and beauty**. As an artist, you must develop the ability to manifest them in all your movements, words and emotional experiences on the stage.”¹¹² “Lightness” and “integrity (completeness)” are somewhat easier to understand as qualities to be applied to actions, or existing within the actor than “ease” and “entirety (as the whole).”

❖ **Physical-Psychological Exercises / The Actor’s Body and Psychology**

Chekhov considered it essential to “develop our bodies by means of our psychology.” For his method, “all our physical exercises will be considered and done as psychophysical exercises. We want to fill, to permeate our bodies with psychological values. ... Everything like the development of our imagination, or using of the Psychological Gesture, all such means make our physical exercises into *psychophysical*.” Each of his students and this continues with his practitioners today, are expected to know the psychological side of every gesture, the psychological “essence of every exercise.”¹¹³ Chekhov adds, “For instance; I am going to play an absent-minded professor.

¹¹¹ Chekhov, Michael; Deirdre Hurst du Prey; and Mel Gordon (introd.). 1985. *Lessons for the Professional Actor*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications [Chekhov 1985], 28 November 1941, p. 90.

¹¹² 1946, p. 105. “Четыре качества присущи истинному произведению искусства: легкость, форма, целостность (завершенность) и красота. Как художник, вы должны развить в себе способность проявлять их во всех ваших движениях, словах и душевных переживаниях на сцене.” Chekhov also used these ideas in his *Lessons for the Professional Actor*, third class, 14 November 1941, pp. 56-58: “I have said that there are three qualities which the actor must have as continuous abilities. One is the feeling of Ease, another the feeling of Form, and the third one we may call the feeling of the Whole.”

¹¹³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, “On character and characterization, I,” NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

Absent-mindedness is the purely psychological side of it. But it must find its way to express itself also physically. I might find some movements or some position of my head, or the way of looking strange and absent-mindedly, so that psychological absent-mindedness will find its physical, outer way being expressed and showed to the audience. You might consider it as a general rule for all kinds of characterization, however subtle and gentle it might be.”¹¹⁴

While the Chekhov actor develops his or her body as all actors do, he or she also uses the process to incorporate “strong, well elaborated images when you mold your body from within, as it were, and permeate it throughout with artistic feelings, emotions and will impulses.” (1942/1991, p. 33)

Another way Chekhov speaks of this (especially in the contexts of rehearsals and performances) is to say that intangible elements (feelings, emotions, imagination) lie behind the physical gestures and actions seen onstage: **“everything is intangible, but it is expressed by tangible means.”**¹¹⁵

In the same chapters where he discusses the “Four Brothers” (1953 and 1953/2002, Chapter One, pp. 1-20, exercises 1-9; 1942/1991, Chapter Four, pp. 43-57), Chekhov describes the concepts of five additional “qualities”: **Molding, Flowing, Flying, Radiating, and Receiving** – making nine concepts in all (including “Receiving,” usually discussed together with “Radiating”). The larger cultural context of the five “qualities” is clearly the idea of the **“four elements”** (earth, air, water, and fire – Radiating and Receiving being considered as one concept), but the exercises are highly applied to developing both a physical and a psychological or emotional element. Later, in discussing Improvisation and Ensemble, Chekhov suggests that improvisations can be altered by using different qualities, such as the qualities of molding, floating, flying and radiating movements. (1953 and 1953/2002, p.40.)

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Chekhov is almost describing his own role in Hitchcock’s movie, *Spellbound*.

¹¹⁵ Chekhov never ceased emphasizing this. “Intangible means of expression are always present on the stage at every moment while rehearsing or acting. We must not forget about them! We must even think of them as the most important ones! Then all tangible means our bodies, our speech, our voices, will become more expressive. More valuable than speaking to the spectator!” Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, op. cit., NYPL call no. LT10-4780.

Chekhov's goal in all nine concepts was to "By means of the suggested psychophysical exercises the actor can increase his inner strength, develop his abilities to radiate and receive, acquire a fine sense of form, enhance his feelings of freedom, ease, calm and beauty, experience the significance of his inner being, and learn to see things and processes in their entirety." (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 19-20.)

❖ **Molding**

As noted above, Molding is associated with the Feeling of Form. Bodily movements are practiced with an imaginary sense of, for example, different substances around the body. The exercise stresses that the actor must move "like a sculptor" molding the space around him. (1953 and 1953/2002, Exercise 3, pp.8-9.) Mala Powers provides an interesting personal note when discussing this element: "And there are times when it's great to be able to awaken your own 'sleeping' Will-forces through doing a series of Molding Gestures (molding forms in and through 'thick' air)." ¹¹⁶

Molding has qualities which connect it, through the Feeling of Form, with the **Psychological Gesture**. "The meaning lies in the psychological power of Molding, of overcoming the imaginary resistance and in giving the imaginary substance a definite form. ... [Then] drop the idea of molding the air around you. Complete any business, as was suggested, and let the molding character in your movements live in you inwardly by itself, without your special attention to it." (1942/1991, Exercise 23, p. 45.) In the chapter on Psychological Gesture, he cites the four movements in terms of removing tension: If you have properly and sufficiently exercised the molding, floating, flying and radiating movements (see Chapter 1), you will know that real power has actually nothing to do with overstraining one's muscles. (1953, p. 77; 1953/2002, p. 70)

❖ **Flowing (called "Floating" in 1953)**

"Here every movement is slurred into another in an unbroken line.

Although they must be well shaped, these movements must have neither

¹¹⁶ Powers, in Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, Booklet, p. 5.

a beginning nor an end, but must flow into one another organically. Here is also necessary to have activity and a certain power, but the character of the movement must be wavelike, growing and subsiding. Change the tempo. The element of air must be felt around you, as if it were the supporting surface of a wave. Use the same kind of simple movements as in previous exercises and then begin your improvisations.” (1942/1991, pp. 45-46 – cf. 1953/2002, Exercise 4, p. 10.)

❖ **Flying**

“Imagine your whole body flying through space. As in the previous exercises, your movements must merge into each other without becoming shapeless. In this exercise the physical strength of your movements may increase or diminish according to your desire, but it must never disappear altogether. Psychologically you must constantly maintain your strength. ... While moving, change tempos. A sensation of joyful lightness and easiness will permeate your entire body.” (1953/2002, Exercise 5, p. 11 – cf. 1942/1991, Exercise 25, p. 46.) An important element is that your body should have a tendency to lift off the ground and that the movements are to be thought of as continuing into space indefinitely – “flies away from you. ... The element of air must be experienced.”

These exercises remain standard introductory work for all practitioners of the Chekhov method today. Molding emphasizes sculptural manipulation of the human body and is a way to find the Psychological Gesture with molding power. Images of group activities at Dartington and Ridgefield show this type of exercise. Flying and Flowing are more dynamic exercises, but Chekhov warns against dancing movements or working in front of a mirror. Flowing develops a sense of organic movement without beginning or end, with smooth transitions, with wave-like qualities and changes with tempo. Flying movements continue into space indefinitely, flying away from your

physical body. There is a tendency for the body to want to lift itself from the ground.

❖ **Radiating / Radiation**

This is directly connected to Stanislavsky's idea of **Communication** – interaction among scene partners, and between actors and audience – and continues the influence of Hatha Yoga ¹¹⁷ on the Stanislavsky concept. Both pedagogues shared a metaphor of “rays” connecting the actor with those around. In both, as Carnicke put it, actors communicate subtext – anything a character thinks or feels (or in Chekhov's case, wills) through non-verbal means. Chekhov connected Radiation with Atmospheres, and of course, it has a connection with the Psychological Gesture.

“As a result of keeping to the right kind of Activity,” Chekhov said, “the actor will find that he has acquired the ability to Radiate out of himself emotions, Feelings, Will-impulses, and Images while on the stage. ...

On the stage the actor will feel himself as a kind of center that continuously expands in any and all directions he chooses. More than this, the actor will be able, through the power of radiation, to convey to the audience the finest and most subtle nuances of his acting, and the deepest meaning of the text and situations. In other words, the audience will receive the contents of the scenic moment together with the actor's

¹¹⁷ The Hindu scriptures often provide insight into the limitations of the rational mind – they are the ultimate source of many of the ideas about the Higher Ego and the Spirit found in Chekhov under Steiner's inspiration. For example, the Amritabindu Upanishad Verse 27 discusses the “Role of Mind”:

It is indeed the mind that is the cause of men's bondage and liberation.

The mind that is attached to sense-objects leads to bondage, while dissociated from sense objects it tends to lead to liberation. So they think.

Some rules of yoga

Against fear, against anger, against sloth,

Against too much waking, against too much sleeping,

Against too much eating, against starvation,

A Yogin shall always be on his guard.

Oneness of Atman in all beings

Cows are of various colors, milk is one-colored,

the wise man looks upon soul as milk,

of bodies as cows of different garbs,

knowledge is hidden, as butter in milk.

That in whom reside all beings and who resides in all beings, who is the giver of grace to all, the Supreme Soul of the universe, the limitless being – I am that. (Amritabindu Upanishad, 100 BCE to 300 CE.)

most intimate and individual interpretation of it.

If the Atmosphere bears the content in general, then Radiation bears it in detail. Radiation will make the words and the business highly significant and impressive. ... So an intangible means of expression may become the most tangible part of the performance, revealing the play, the part, and the actor's individual face behind them." (1942/1991 pp. 114-115; cf. 114-117, and *passim*. Cf. also, 1953 and 1953/2002, Exercise 2, pp. 7-8, 19-20.)

❖ **Receiving**

"To radiate on the stage means to give, to send out. Its counterpart is to receive. True acting is a constant exchange of the two. There are no moments on the stage when an actor can allow himself – or rather his character – to remain passive in this sense without running the risk of weakening the audience's attention and creating the sensation of a psychological vacuum." (1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 19-20.) This concern was also a part of Stanislavsky's concept of **Concentration**, as discussed above.

Then Chekhov gives some very good advice, especially in the context of film and television production in Hollywood: "To actually receive means to draw toward one's self with the utmost inner power the things, persons or events of the situation. Even though your partners may not know this technique, you must never, for the sake of your own performance, stop receiving whenever you choose to do so. You will find that your own efforts will intuitively awaken other players and inspire their collaboration." Two years after the publication of *To the Actor*, in the course of question and answer sessions during his 1955 lectures, Chekhov gave this exact advice to professionals facing what Stanislavsky called an "actor's vacant eyes": "...let us try to distinguish between two different ways of psychological process of receiving the impressions and of reacting to them. In one case we receive the impression and react upon them directly, immediately as it were spontaneously. In another case, this spontaneity, this directness is

impossible because it requires some inquiry and perhaps a lot of questions you have to ask before.”¹¹⁸

❖ **Qualities (Sensations and Feelings)**

Mala Powers described the principles of this component of Chekhov’s system by observing that “Feelings cannot be commanded, they can only be coaxed. The means of coaxing up Feelings are Qualities and Sensations.” (1942/1991, pp. xl-xli.)

In Chekhov’s system, Qualities are *how* an action is done (the action itself is the *what*). (1942/1991, pp. 38-39.) Chekhov spoke of reviving the actors’ feelings by arousing them through movements “colored” by different Qualities¹¹⁹ – for example, raising one’s hand cautiously – that is, with the Quality of caution. The quality evokes a feeling (of being cautious) – Chekhov even says the Quality *is* the feeling. “The feeling was called forth, provoked, attracted indirectly by our ‘business,’ doing, action. ... Therefore we can say that action with Qualities is the easiest way to the living Feelings.” (p. 37) Action or gestures spring from will-impulses (as in the sense of objectives) – and, opposite to this, a properly done gesture or action can stir up the actor’s or character’s Will, with its corresponding desires, aims (objectives), or wishes. (This is one aspect of the Psychological Gesture.) As noted above, for Chekhov the “Four Brothers” and connected five Physical-Psychological Exercises were also “Qualities” – skills or “continuous abilities.”

The word, “Sensation” means “a physical feeling or perception resulting from something that happens to or comes into contact with the body.” (“Feeling” means “an emotional state or reaction.”) Not only an action, but also the memory of a physical sensation, can bring up a Feeling or emotion for the actor’s use in creating a character or performing a scene. Towards the end of his career, Chekhov experimented with trying to find basic sensations,

¹¹⁸ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, “Questions and answers. About the Stanislavsky Method of Acting,” NYPL call no. LT10-4779.

¹¹⁹ Here one sees the echo of color-theory from Steiner’s Anthroposophy and Steiner’s origins in Theosophy. The idea of a “color” as a Quality is similar to the idea of a dye coloring a fabric. You tint the fabric of an action with a feeling. The Russian word has similar connotations.

identifying three “primary archetypal sensations” – floating, falling, and balancing – which are often taught by contemporary practitioners of the Chekhov method.¹²⁰ Similarly “The Atmosphere, like the well-developed imagination, stirs and awakens Feelings within us that are the essence of our art. The Feelings...arise organically of themselves, without being forced out of our soul.” (1942/1991, p. 31.) See the discussion of Atmosphere, below.

❖ **Improvisation**

Chekhov, like Stanislavsky (and all other modern theatre practitioners), used improvisation in actor training from his very earliest classes in 1918, not to mention in rehearsing and even in the final stages of preparing a role for the stage.

Because the documents for one such improvisation, the “Fishers Scene” used at Dartington, have been preserved, we have a detailed description of how the process worked,¹²¹ including the intervention of student directors, such as Deirdre Hurst du Prey, who described the “Fishers” improvisation projects as “a classic example of the use of Chekhov’s method, involving the most subtle aspects of his technique, as applied to this simple tragic scene.”¹²² (This improvisation was included in Chekhov’s 1953 edition of *To the Actor*; see the discussion below, Chapter Two.)

However, the larger meaning of the exercises in Chekhov’s method, and their application in rehearsal, is that, once performing, the actor is free to move through a scene spontaneously, “in the moment,” in essence improvising many details as he or she performs, because he or she has the objectives, wants, emotions, and gestures of the character firmly developed as Images in the Imagination. He or she has expressed these qualities in physical movements demonstrating tangibly the intangible inner life of the character.

¹²⁰ Petit, Lenard, and Michael Chekhov. 2010. *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 55-56.

¹²¹ See Pitches, Jonathan. 2013. “The Technique in Microcosm: Michael Chekhov’s Work on the Fishers Scene,” in *Theatre, Dance and Performance* 2013, pp. 219-236, on both the documents and the functioning of the scene in Chekhov’s teaching at Dartington. Available URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19443927.2013.797486?journalCode=rtdp20> .

¹²² Hurst du Prey, Deirdre. 1992. “Michael Chekhov in England and America,” in Senelick 1992, p. 162.

Chekhov linked improvisational discovery to an awareness of when an activity is not forced upon us but results from inner impulses (will, feelings, etc.). “If the actor possesses, has discovered these kinds of initiatives which come only from within himself, then he will become ingenious, original ...”¹²³ This is what twenty-first-century theater cannot do without; if it is not really authentic, no one is going to watch it. The prepared actor will provide each performance with variations within the frame of the script (serving the author) and the director’s ideas, as well as the elements given onstage by scene partner(s), the Atmospheres, and the actor’s image of the character. His or her performance will be alive, energetic, communicative, radiating the Atmosphere and ideas of the play to the audience. **The character improvises, and the performance does not become stale.**

Chekhov gave a wonderful, satirical description of an actor who does not maintain spontaneity in performing a role:

“Once upon a time, their first self-portrait, the very first one, was perhaps interesting, attractive, full of life, expressive and entirely new for themselves and for the spectator. And now the voices are heard; “ah, what a personality this actor has, what a charming, unique personality.” “AHA!” says the actor to himself, “I have a charming personality. All right, let them have it. I’ll give it to them.” And since that unfortunate time, the actor begins to repeat himself, his own acting. He begins to imitate his own performance from yesterday, of the day before yesterday, and so on and so forth. Poor man, he doesn’t even realize that through these constant imitations of himself his once charming personality begins to wither, to become stale.”¹²⁴

Chekhov thus links his method to one of the principal goals of Stanislavsky’s and all other significant twentieth-century acting teachers’ methods.

❖ Ensemble

Chekhov defined Ensemble as a group of actors “who must find the

¹²³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, “Questions and answers. About the Stanislavsky Method of Acting,” NYPL call no. LT10-4779.

¹²⁴ Chekhov 1955 lectures, Tape 3, “On character and characterization,” NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

right connection with each other in order to establish a constant harmony among themselves. The more sensitive they become, through correct training, the more they depend upon each other for mutual support and inspiration. ... Ensemble acting, if rightly understood, is the opposite of what we have called acting with “clichés,” in which everything is outwardly fixed and inwardly deadened.” (1942/1991, pp. 121, 124) It is notable that Chekhov’s exercises for Ensemble development in his texts and classes often involve Improvisations, including those that explore different Qualities, as mentioned above. “No matter how talented an actor is,” Chekhov insisted, “he cannot fully develop his talent, if he internally isolates himself from the collective. He must develop the ability of collective improvisation, receptivity to the creative impulses of others, a higher degree of creativity and sense of style.” (1946, p. 51.)

Chekhov also expanded the notion of “Ensemble” to include the larger family of each production, including the technical crew and, with Vakhtangov, the audience. In fact, when speaking to Hollywood actors, he suggested using the crew on the film set as a substitute for the audience in a theatre. A Chekhov anecdote, made famous by Anthony Quinn’s retelling of it, tells of Alfred Hitchcock’s technical crew bursting into applause at the conclusion of Chekhov’s “matchbook” scene in *Spellbound*.¹²⁵ Once again, Chekhov went further, connecting ensemble feeling with the setting as well. This is important because if the setting, whether it is a film set or in a theatre, is foreign to us, and we do not pay attention to the surroundings in which we have to perform, we cannot participate fully in the Atmosphere and lose our connection with the Ensemble. Uta Hagen, for example, with her well-known “Six Steps” exercise and her preparatory exercises where she asks the actor to “hang” imaginary props on the “fourth wall” of the proscenium, follows this line of thought. We are not, as it were, at home on the stage if we do not try

¹²⁵ Quinn, in an interview with Lisa Dalton. Included in Kieve 2002/2009-2010, *From Russia to Hollywood*.

to establish this contact with things – [the] setting, meaning everything, furniture, etc.¹²⁶

Chekhov's ideas recently found a parallel in the work of director Peter Farrelly on his Academy-Award-winning film, *Green Book*. In late 2018, I attended a preview for sponsors of the film at the Performing Arts Center of the university where I teach. Vigo Mortensen, one of the stars of the film, told us that, on the first day of shooting, Peter Farrelly “gathered everyone in the room – drivers, cooks, tech, and actors – and said I don't know everything; if you have a good idea share it, help. And then you know, usually when there is filming going on people get their sandwich and go on their phone, but here - everybody was listening – it was great atmosphere –people behind the scene – they were all on with it. Wonderful.”

Powers (1942/1991, pp. xlii-xliii) properly associates each actor's “timing,” the rhythm of scenes, a sense of collective “Radiating,” and the general concept of Atmospheres with Ensemble in Chekhov's pedagogy.

❖ **Focal Point**

This element is principally about professional application, particularly for the film and television actors in Chekhov's group, who might need to find focal points in scenes that were put together in haste immediately before shooting. Powers, who was a professional film actress before she met Chekhov, puts it succinctly: “Not everything in the scene is of an equal importance. Focal Point is essentially what the director wants the audience to focus on at any given moment, but the actor should also be mindful and aware of the most important moments for his/her own character in the play or script.” (1942/1991, p. xliii.) She indicates a

¹²⁶ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 6, “On Ensemble Feeling,” NYPL call no. LT10-4784. See Hagen, Uta, and Haskel Frankel. 1973. *Respect for Acting*. New York: Macmillan, Chapter 14, “The Fourth Wall,” pp. 106-111. It is interesting to note that, from 1938 to 1948, Hagen was married to the actor and director, José Ferrer, who directed and starred in the film, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1950) with Mala Powers, who was coached by Chekhov. The possibility of a Hagen-Chekhov connection, going back to his lessons for professional actors in New York, 1941-42, remains to be investigated, as well as the possibility that Uta Hagen's second husband and teaching partner, Herbert Berghof, studied with Chekhov in New York.

series of elements in Chekhov's method – presumably those she worked on with Chekhov – which would help the actor “communicate the important moments to the audience,” such as Radiating a gesture, making a pause, varying volume (pianissimo versus fortissimo).

Chekhov himself seems to have associated focus with Characterization and ego. Describing the Russian Director, Tairov, Chekhov says that he “was interested in spectator's ego. For him the center of the focal point of the whole performance was within the spectator – what the spectator will experience because of my performance.”¹²⁷ In another context, he spoke of the ego, or “I” consciousness of the character, which “shines through all the elements ... it makes one element at this moment more important than the other, then it lets this element to sink deeper into the soul of the character and brings another one to the foreground and so on. This “I” is the life of all the elements, and the focal point of the character itself.”¹²⁸

Following Focal Point, the “Chart for Inspired Acting” lists “**Objective**,” an element Chekhov took directly from Stanislavsky. See above, “**Through-Lines**,” in the section on “Other Stanislavsky Elements in Chekhov's System” (1.4).

❖ Atmospheres

One of Chekhov's earliest writings on dramatic theory and actor training,¹²⁹ and all three of his published pedagogical texts,¹³⁰ have extensive sections on the idea of “Atmosphere,” an idea he received from Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov and the productions of the

¹²⁷ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 10, “On experiences at Moscow art theatre, part II,” NYPL call no. LT10-4788.

¹²⁸ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled Acting,” NYPL call no. LT10-4790; see the discussion in the text on “Multi-leveled Attention,” and note 34, op. cit. above.

¹²⁹ Chekhov's letter of 4 October 1933 to his students in Kaunas, Lithuania, describing his concept of “Atmospheres”; Chekhov 1932/1989, pp. 47-58. Chekhov calls the letter “A kind reminder for the actors was written at the request of A.M. Žilinskis (Andrius Jilinsky Oleka) for the Studio Theatre of the Lithuanian state.”

¹³⁰ Chekhov 1942/1991, Chapter 3, pp. 26-42; 1946, Chapter [2], “Atmosphere: The Second Way of Rehearsing,” pp. 28-48; and 1953 and 1953/2002, pp. 47-62.

MAT/MHAT going back to the first representations of Anton P. Chekhov's plays. As used in the theatre, the word, Atmosphere, can refer to imagery in the script, physical environment (weather, light conditions, sound), social environment (struggle, war or riot, social confusion, crowds), and psychological mood. **Atmosphere is not a state but is dynamic, a process or series of processes.** Chekhov's "Atmosphere" is created in the performing arts in part by sets, costumes, make-up, and props, but more significantly by the nonverbal communication of both individual actors and the ensemble, along with the choices of the director (for example, in blocking and groupings or decisions about movements and action). According to Chekhov (1946, p. 28), while the spirit in the work of art is its idea, and what is visible and audible is its body, "the soul is the atmosphere."

Chekhov distinguished between the objective Atmosphere – which does not belong to any one character but applies to scenes or the whole play, coming towards the characters from outside – with subjective Atmosphere, which comes from within the character. The character (as it were) radiates it and carries it around himself all the time, or as long as it is needed.¹³¹ That is to say, there is a general Atmosphere of the scene or play, and an individual and personal, particular atmosphere of the character.

Atmosphere applies to the finished performance as an end product, but more importantly, to rehearsals and character development – in the 1946 text, most of the chapters are described as "ways of rehearsing," with Atmosphere being the second way. As has already been noted, Chekhov's 1946 book uses a musical metaphor almost identical to Stanislavsky's idea of "the larger score of actions" to explain the chain of different "Atmospheres" that make up the play.¹³² "You can organize a whole series of rehearsals," Chekhov notes, "where, as with a 'musical score' in your hands, you will go through the whole play, moving from one atmosphere to another." He adds, "When

¹³¹ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, "On Many-Leveled Acting," NYPL call no. LT10-4790.

¹³² Chekhov 1946, Chapter 2, pp. 29-48.

composing such a score, there is no need to reckon with the division of the play into scenes or acts – the same atmosphere can cover many scenes or change several times in the same scene.”¹³³ Reflecting on his own experience as an actor, Chekhov chose a metaphor which included the concepts of rhythm and musicality. He had tested the importance of Atmosphere both in acting and teaching, as documented in his letter on Atmospheres to Andrius Jilinsky Oleka’s pupils at Kaunas as early as 1933.

The benefits of a properly created Atmosphere are many: “Atmosphere reveals the content of the performance” (1942/1991, p.28); it forms a bond between actor and audience; it inspires the actor and inspires personal feelings; and it provides an inner dynamic for the performance and its actors. While there can be only one Atmosphere onstage at a time, there can be a conflict between the individual feelings of a character and the Atmosphere of the scene or play. “This struggle creates a tension of scenic action, attracting the attention of the viewer.”

Finally, Atmosphere plays an essential role in the actor’s Incorporation of Images: “Every atmosphere, if you actively surrender to it and merge your will with its will, will force you to act, awaken your imagination and inflame the feeling.” (1946, pp. 28-36, *passim*.)

The Visual Arts and Stage Design

One more element in Chekhov’s system – one which he did not discuss often in his publications but which played an extremely important role in the curriculum of the Michael Chekhov Studio at Dartington and Ridgefield – were the practical (or technical) aspects of stagecraft: lighting, set design, stage properties, make-up, and so forth. Both the advanced (essentially professional) students who went on tour from Ridgefield and those who remained in class studied these elements and also created them. (One remembers that when Chekhov first played the role of the toymaker Caleb in

¹³³ Ibid, p. 47. Вы можете организовать целый ряд репетиций, где, как с музыкальной “партитурой” в руках, вы пройдете по всей пьесе, переходя от одной атмосферы к другой. При составлении такой партитуры нет надобности считаться с делением пьесы на сцены или акты — одна и та же атмосфера может охватывать много сцен или меняться несколько раз в одной и той же сцене.

the dramatization of Dickens's *The Cricket on the Hearth* at the MAT in 1914, he actually made the toys himself.) Deirdre Hurst du Prey offered a glimpse of how the process worked.

Beginning with the second term, Chekhov divided the class into several groups, each of which was given a scene for performance by the end of the term. The purpose was to involve the various points of the method in everything that happened in preparation and rehearsal. The students were to be entirely responsible for everything, even in several instances, for creating the scripts and composing music. Everyone had a particular task to do, and in addition everyone in the cast had to present costume and scenic designs.”¹³⁴

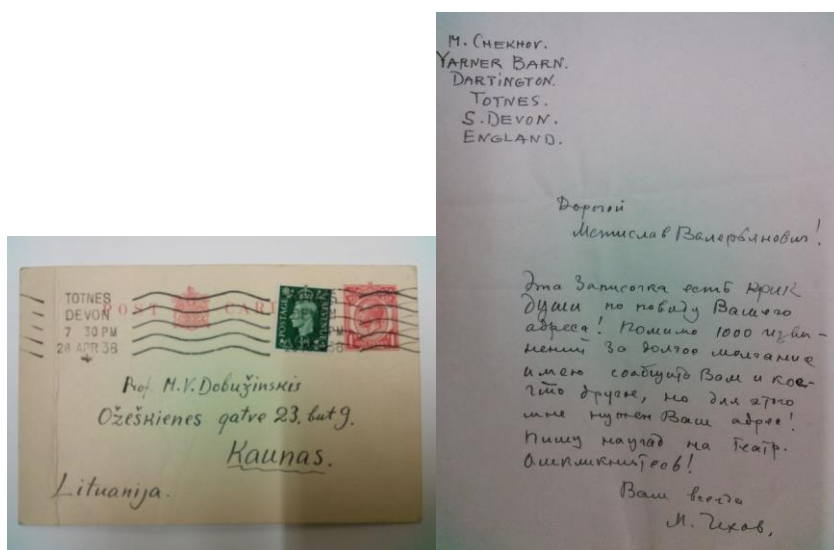
As has already been noted (and will be discussed further in Chapter Two), Hurst in fact directed one of performances of “The Fishers” improvisation scenario. What is more, Hurst du Prey insisted, “The Fishers” presented an idea of how Chekhov taught the students to approach the play and bring it to performance, which included art works associated with Goethe's colour psychology.”

The sense of the visual arts as important to the theatre may also be found in references to artists such as Leonardo da Vinci throughout Chekhov's pedagogical publications and in the descriptions of concepts such as Images, Feeling of Form, Feeling of Beauty, Sense of Style, Ensemble Feeling, and particularly Atmospheres, where the stagecraft aspects of the *mise-en-scène* become a dynamic force on their own.

Chekhov's visual arts interests resulted in collaborations with two visual artists in particular, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky and Nicolai Remisoff. Dobuzhinsky was of Lithuanian descent. Trained as a painter, he worked as a scenic designer for Sergei Diaghilev and at the MAT before World War I. Dobuzhinsky immigrated to Lithuania in 1924. He was the scenic designer for the Lithuanian State Theatre for over a decade and from 1932 collaborated with Chekhov on productions of *Hamlet* in Kaunas and Riga and *The*

¹³⁴ Hurst du Prey 1992 (in Senelick 1992), p. 163.

Inspector General at Kaunas. He moved to England in 1935, where he worked with Chekhov after 1936.¹³⁵



Chekhov letter from Dartington to Dobuzhinsky in Kaunas, 28 April 1938. (Courtesy of Columbia University Library.)

Briefly returning to Kaunas, he moved to New York in 1939, at the same time as the Chekhov Studio moved to Ridgefield, and designed the sets for Chekhov's production of *The Possessed*, George Shdanoff's adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel. He did the sets for the *Evening of Short Stories by A. P. Chekhov*, 26-27 September 1942, in New York, where Michael Chekhov performed in public for the first time in English. Dobuzhinsky collaborated again with Chekhov, who directed a production of Modest Mussorgsky's opera, *The Fair at Sorochyntsi*, for the New Opera Company of New York on 3 November 1942. The choreographer was George Balanchine.

¹³⁵ Kirillov and Merlin, in Chekhov 2005, p. 226 note 54. Julia Listengarten (2015, pp. 262-264), following Byckling 1992 and 2000, has called attention to Chekhov's collaboration with Dobuzhinsky. She also notes the many parallels between Chekhov's adaptation of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophist spirituality to Chekhov's dramatic theories, on the one hand, and the Theosophist spirituality in Kandinsky's paintings, on the other. The expressionist element in Kandinsky and in Dobuzhinsky's and Chekhov's sets and lighting is also discussed by Listengarten. This expressionistic element affected the improvisations Chekhov gave to his students at Dartington, and of course the productions of the students once the school had moved to Ridgefield, but is otherwise seldom expressed outright in his pedagogical writings. See also Byckling, Liisa. 1992. *Pisma Mikhaila Chekhova Mstislavu Dobuzhinskomu: Gody immigratsii, 1938-1951* [Letters from Mikhail Chekhov to Mstislav Dobuzhinsky: The Years of Immigration, 1938-1951]. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, pp. 50-53 and *passim*. Cf. Listengarten, Julia. 2015. "Michael Chekhov and the visual arts: Influences, synergies, collaborations," in Routledge 2015, p. 262; and Byckling, Liisa. 2000 (2001). *Mikhail Chekhov v zapadnom teatre i kino*. St. Petersburg: Akdamicheskii proekt, pp. 109-110, 166-182. An example of correspondence is illustrated here.

Nicolai Remisoff came to New York in 1922 as the designer for the Paris-based Chauve-Souris Russian theatrical company, moving to Chicago in 1925 and then to Los Angeles in 1938. He was an art director at United Artists and Universal film studios in Hollywood from 1939 to 1954. His sixteen illustrations for Chekhov's 1946 *О технике актера* and the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* are discussed below, Chapter Two.

1.6 Concluding Remarks

The discussion of Chekhov's Dramatic Theory and Methods of Actor Training in this chapter leads to several important conclusions about his work and its importance for dramatic methods today. To begin with, it is clear that Chekhov's origins as a theatre pedagogue are firmly rooted in the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Leopold Sulerzhitsky, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov, Chekhov's teachers and colleagues at the Moscow Art Theatre. Concepts such as Concentration, Multi-leveled Attention, Through-lines (Through Action), Analyzing the Scene into "Bits," Communication with fellow-actors and the audience, including ideas such as "Radiation," the idea of the "Atmosphere" of the play, and the importance of Rhythm, have all become part of modern dramatic method under Stanislavsky's influence. However, at the same time, Chekhov, almost from the beginning of his teaching career (around 1918), and certainly in 1922, when he started to lead what would become the Second Moscow Art Theatre, began to refine and add to the Stanislavsky system, even offering criticism of certain elements such as Affective Memory (which he and Stanislavsky would come to debate openly if respectfully). That is, Chekhov did not simply imitate what he learned at the MAT, and he shared his refinements with his American colleagues and students from his first arrival in 1935. The refinements and new elements, such as Psychological Gesture, also play an important role in his pedagogical publications, and most importantly, make possible the application of his techniques to acting in front of the camera. (The "Chart for Inspired Acting," introduced above, was given to a professional film actress, Mala Powers.)

Nevertheless, Chekhov remained, as Stanislavsky put it, “my most brilliant pupil.” Chekhov’s expansion of Stanislavsky’s system did not prevent Chekhov from being received as the prime representative of the larger Stanislavsky or MAT tradition.

Above all, the spiritual aspects of Chekhov’s own approach to drama, even when they are secularized and presented basically as psychology (as in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* or the work of many contemporary teachers today), and his insistence on a completely psychophysical approach to acting, represent two of his most important innovations. The idea of intangible, inner elements (thoughts, feelings, will-impulses, images) governing tangible, outer physical and vocal expression, is particularly powerful, and also related to a spiritual approach. (The African-American actor, singer, and dancer, Sammy Davis, Jr., said, “acting is all intangible, and you need a religion to hold onto.”)¹³⁶ Ideas such as the use of Imagination and Incorporation of Images, Characterization through the creation of an Imaginary Body and Imaginary Centers, and Psychological Gestures, joined with his psychophysical exercises and exploration of “Qualities,” have been built into an all-encompassing system that has been repeatedly tested and proven in dramatic practice. His method focuses on giving his students tools how to develop and train their imagination; it encourages them to use their intuition with confidence. He wants to free his students from inhibitions, asking them to follow the psychological succession of their inner feelings, emotions, wishes, and other impulses that speak to them from the depths of their creative individuality. They learn to recognize and listen to their “inner voice,” which Chekhov says, as mentioned earlier, “never lies.”

Any analysis of his dramatic theory and method, and of the curriculum he taught, especially at Dartington and Ridgefield, will uncover the continuous influence and terminology of Rudolph Steiner’s application of Anthroposophy to the performing arts. For example (to take just one), Chekhov took Steiner’s idea of the Four Elements (earth, water, air, fire),

¹³⁶ Sammy Davis, Jr. and Marilyn Monroe were close friends from around 1952 until her death in 1962, so it is theoretically possible that he was aware of Chekhov’s ideas.

which Steiner used to explain the levels of initiation into the mysteries of Anthroposophy, to inform Chekhov's "Qualities" of Molding (earth), Flowing (water), Flying (air), and Radiating (fire). The importance of Steiner-inspired training in voice and movement at Dartington and Ridgefield – that is, Eurythmy and Speech Formation, taught by specialists – is, however, something that was eliminated from Chekhov's pedagogy, certainly by the publication of the 1953 edition. Today, these subjects are taught only by selected Chekhov practitioners, usually with a connection to Steiner-related institutions.

Chekhov is so often extraordinary in his understanding of human psychology, at a much more subtle level than other methods, that his work has a holistic extension into an actor's life, which benefits from the new sensitivities the method develops.¹³⁷ That this holistic approach can be extended to acting technique is important now, and it will also be important in the future in a global world where the actors of various backgrounds and origins have to collaborate much more closely than ever before. The love of beauty, which Chekhov brought into his idea of the theatre from Vakhtangov, touches all aspects of Chekhov's method. "What can be more interesting," he asked, "in life and art than human being itself?"¹³⁸ Chekhov wanted to free artists not just on a superficial level but on an inspiring level, and wanted actors to go on to synthesize the creative world of the stage with the world of the audience who participate in the creation of the dramatic work of art.

For thirty-seven years Michael Chekhov shaped the ideas and terminology of his acting method for a succession of groups of students. Already in this analysis of his method, it is clear that Chekhov was speaking to different audiences in the course of his pedagogical career, with results that

¹³⁷ An example of parallels with contemporary spiritual philosophy may be found in K. Sundararajan's ideas to the theatre. Sundararajan speaks of holistic management in terms of three "P's": Process, Product, and People. All three of these have to be emphasized in a related way for a company (or a dramatic production) to be successful. Two of his categories – process and people – directly apply to any human activity, especially seen in holistic terms. Of course, Chekhov's holistic processes also affected the well-being of the people involved. Sundararajan. K. [2001/2009]. "Process, Product and People: 3P Approach to Quality," in *iSixSigma Magazine*.. Accessed via <http://www.isixsigma.com/library/content/c090216a> .

¹³⁸ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, "On many-leveled acting," NYPL call no. LT10-4790.

affect the application of his methods even today. (This idea will be developed at more length in the following chapter.) Chekhov, who loved actors, wanted to make sure that all interested in this performing art form could benefit from his teachings – not just those who could devote three to five years to his Studio. At the end of his work at Ridgefield, he reached out to professional actors in New York, then to an even wider range of professional actors in Hollywood, and not just the star actors whom he taught and coached in Hollywood,¹³⁹ but beginning professional actors and acting students as well. (As noted above, he had also started classes and produced performances in Connecticut for children to develop a future sophisticated audience.) His books were meant to present his acting technique and life philosophy to an even wider public – and in fact, as will be shown, many actors in the 1970s and 1980s came to the Chekhov work initially through reading Chekhov’s books. When confronted with professional Hollywood actors who had to prepare a film, or more likely, a television role in a matter of days or even hours, Chekhov provided a “short cut” to creating roles.¹⁴⁰ He applied his pedagogy (which he tested on himself as an actor and director) to the needs of his audiences, continuing the sense of communication which had made him famous as a stage and movie actor.

¹³⁹ See below, Appendix 9, where notes on the careers of Beatrice Straight, Yul Brynner, Marilyn Monroe, Gary Cooper, Anthony Quinn, Clint Eastwood, Anthony Hopkins, and Jack Nicholson, and others – as well as actors coached by George Shdanoff – are included.

¹⁴⁰ It was understood, of course, that the actor was already aware at some level of Chekhov’s method. See Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 7, “On a short cut to approaching a part,” NYPL call no. LT10- 4785.

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER TWO

Summary of differences, Michael Chekhov Publications:

“The 1942 Version,” 1946 Edition (Russian), 1953 Edition (English)

This chapter of the study focuses on how Chekhov’s pedagogical ideas were preserved and disseminated in his publications and related documents (manuscripts and lecture transcriptions). Particular attention is paid to comparing the editions of Chekhov’s theories and pedagogy published in America (“the three American editions”), including the two published in his lifetime – the editions of 1946 and 1953 – and the manuscript “1942 Version” (including the parts posthumously published in 1991), which was the basis of the other two. All three have titles that are some variation of the concept, “To the Actor on the Technique of Acting.”¹ At several points, reference will also be made to Chekhov’s Hollywood lectures from 1955, which help explain some of the published ideas and have the advantage of being expressed in Chekhov’s own words at a point he had completely mastered the English language and was at the peak of his pedagogical experience, with a vivid awareness of the relationship between theory and action.

Although the comparison of these texts is important from a historical point of view (both in the sense of the history of theatre in the United States and also the history of drama pedagogy in the larger international Stanislavsky tradition), the emphasis here will be different. The chapter seeks to demonstrate how the texts express the active development and the variety of Chekhov’s pedagogical thinking from the point of view of theatre development – that is, the approaches to the actor’s work and how this differs from text to text? This emphasis will be applied both to important themes in the publications, including Atmospheres, Gestures with Qualities, and the presence or absence of explicit references to Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy

¹ In order to separate the three publications without confusion the numbers for chapters in the three various publications are in this study marked as follows –A) Chapter I, Chapter II, etc.” for the 1942 material published in 1991, adding Arabic numerals for the three chapters not published in 1991; B) “Chapter [1], Chapter [2], etc.” for 1946 (since they are not numbered in the text); and C) “Chapter 1, Chapter 2, etc.” for 1953, since that is how they appear.

and aesthetic ideas (for example, whether to use “Coloration” as in Steiner’s color theory or the more neutral “Qualities”). Also included will be the presence and assimilation of general spiritual ideas in Chekhov’s dramatic theories, such as the tripartite nature of humans (body/psyche/spirit) and concepts such as the Higher Ego. Most importantly, we will look at Chekhov’s fluid, changing presentation of the concept of Psychological Gesture – perhaps his most famous contribution to dramatic method – and to applications of all these ideas.

In particular, we will pay attention to Chekhov’s audiences for each edition and the educational needs of his students at each stage of his development, including his own explanations of his method and techniques as they relate to the larger Stanislavsky tradition and the methods of his competitors in the world of theatrical education. Throughout the analysis, it will be important to note the context of his work as an actor and director; the interplay of theory and practical application; an understanding of the need for vividness; and in all contexts, a larger concern for the well-being of his students and professional colleagues.

2.1 The Documents

Before beginning the analysis, it will be useful to review the written documentation of Chekhov’s pedagogy and the ways he sought to edit and publish his ideas during his lifetime. (These materials are not the only sources for our understanding of his method: on a separate basis are the teaching traditions, either recorded from classes at Dartington and Ridgefield by Deirdre Hurst du Prey or passed down to his pupils and their followers. His own acting in Hollywood films, for one of which he was nominated for an Academy Award, also provides evidence for the success of his methods.)

Michael Chekhov left behind a large patchwork of documents, publications, lectures, and other sources, including letters to his friends and fellow artists, about his dramatic theories and pedagogical system, offering windows into his ideas and methods. But already in 1928, at the time he

published his first autobiography, he had ambitions to prepare a book on the subject of acting technique. “I should like to say a great deal,” he said, “about the relationship between the actor and the audience, but I shall leave further development of this theme to my other book, which will be particularly concerned with such questions regarding the theatre.”²

In the following list, items intended or actually edited for publication, or presented publicly and distributed for a wider audience within Chekhov’s lifetime are indicated as “[Books and other Publications],” “[Lecture],” or “[Manuscript].” Class notes taken by students and published posthumously are also noted.

2.1a Prologue: Work in Russia, France, and Baltic States

The pedagogy Chekhov produced between 1919 and 1935 was initially based in his work as an actor, director, and studio leader at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) and its subsidiary studios, and in his own private studio, but took on new importance in the latter part of his “wandering years,” as scholars have called the period 1928-1935. Often combining directing and teaching, as well as performing and collaborating with former colleagues from the MAT, Chekhov began to consolidate his pedagogical heritage from the MAT system developed by Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitzky, and Vakhtangov, with additional Russian influences from Meyerhold and Tairov. He incorporated new aesthetic and spiritual elements from Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy and Eurythmy (including influence from Andrei Bely). In this context, the loss of the exercises from the “Pariser Manuscript” co-written with fellow-Anthroposophist, Georgette Boner, is particularly to be regretted, even with the evidence of the notes taken by his Russian-speaking pupils at Kaunas. Since all of Chekhov’s pedagogical work from this period was completely re-invented by Chekhov for use in English after 1935, and since the documents are both difficult of access and written in either Russian or German (both of which I read but which are not widely studied internationally today), they will not be discussed here. Only the letter on Atmosphere, where the line from the

² Chekhov 1928/2005, p. 129 and note 38 p. 210.

MAT to his future teaching is explicit, and certain aspects of the Kaunas exercises, seem to have direct relationships with Anglo-American period.

- [Publication] A description of the Stanislavsky system, published in Russia on January 1919 in the cultural journal, *Gorn (The Crucible)*, without authorization (for which he was criticized by Vakhtangov) – see above, Chapter One.
- [Lecture and manuscript] A second description of the Stanislavsky system, which Chekhov prepared as a lecture from his own notes, after Vakhtangov's death in May of 1922. Chekhov gave the lecture text in Russian to Molly Day Thacher [Kazan] and Mark Schmidt of the Group Theatre in New York, for whom Schmidt translated it, presumably around 1935, but certainly before December 1942, when Chekhov moved to Hollywood. Chekhov also recorded the lecture, it is not clear when, but probably in English in the United States, since actor George Abbott had found a tape of it in 1955 – see above, Chapter One, where the pedagogical influence on Chekhov's own system (and on American drama) of this work is discussed in detail.
- [Publication / Autobiography] Čechov, Michail Aleksandrovič, and Pavel Ivanovič Novickij. 1928. *Put' aktera*. Leningrad: Academia. Occasional mentions of pedagogical work – see above, Chapter One.³
- [Intended Publication.] A manuscript of 1932-34 in German, co-authored with Dr. Georgette Boner of Switzerland, a younger collaborator who worked with Chekhov at Paris and in the Baltic States, entitled “Schauspiel-Technik: Pariser Manuskript,” which survives in partial form at Zürich.⁴ The manuscript is missing the exercises, which may however be at least partially reconstructed from the Kaunas notes, as follow:
 - [Notes from Classes (Posthumous)] Lessons from Russian-language classes for Andrius Jilinsky's group at Kaunas, Lithuania, 1932-34 –

³ As discussed there, an English translation by Boris Uvaroff was commissioned in 1936 for the Chekhov Theatre Studio. The definitive English translation is Chekhov 1928/2005 – see also Bibliography.

⁴ Chekhov and Boner 1932-34, op. cit above, Chapter One, and Bibliography. Chekhov's name is given as Michael Tschechow, his stage name in Germany.

classes in part based on work in Paris in 1931-32 and at Kaunas with Boner – preserved in Russian-language notes by his students.⁵

- [Publication] A letter Chekhov wrote to the Kaunas group on 4 October 1933, principally concerning “Atmosphere” onstage and its implications for both the actor in preparing the role/character and for an entire dramatic production.⁶

2.1b Chekhov’s Pedagogy in the Anglo-American Studio

A new phase of Chekhov’s pedagogy, and the associated documents, starts in America in 1935, when Chekhov brought a troupe to New York (see above, Chapter One). There he found American patrons (Beatrice Whitney Straight and her mother Dorothy Whitney Elmhist – not to mention her American-educated British husband, Leonard Elmhist). Already in contact (including lessons) with Chekhov in New York and Philadelphia, these patrons brought Chekhov to Dartington Hall in Devonshire, England, where he was able to set up a studio analogous to his work with the MAT. Dartington attracted many American students, and particularly, an American (Canadian) student teaching assistant, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, who, as has been noted, was also his recording secretary and editor (and in effect, was helping Chekhov learn English – all three roles similar to Boner in Paris and the Baltic States with regard to German).

Subsequently, with the coming of World War II, his American patrons helped him move the Chekhov Theatre Studio to Ridgefield CT (and

⁵ The transcriptions of notes taken by Chekhov’s Russophone students in Lithuania, along with a letter/essay from Chekhov and an analysis, were published in Russian by A. Adomajtite and A. Guobis in Chekhov 1932/1989. Summaries of parts of Chekhov’s lessons have been given in English by Justina Kasponyte, citing typescripts in the Lithuanian Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinema (LMTMC), Michael Chekhov archive, Eil. Nr. 43, A196/3, and a handwritten illustrated manuscript (“Michailas Čechovas. Pamokos – Praktiniai Pratimai Kauno Dramos Teatro Studijos Auklėtiniam,” 18 Aug. – 29 Sept. 1932) LMTMC Chekhov Archive, MS. Eil. Nr. 44, A196/7. See Kasponyte, Justina. 2012. *Stanislavski’s Directors: Michael Chekhov and the revolution in Lithuanian theatre of the 1930s*. MPhil(R) thesis, University of Glasgow; available URL: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3437/1/2011KasponyMPhil.pdf> .

Cf. Padegimas, Gytis. 2015. “Chekhov’s Lithuanian Lessons,” in Routledge 2015: 343-356. Additional analysis may be found in Aleksaitė, Irena, and Valentinas Didžgalvis. 1983. *Teatras: vaidybos problemos*. Vilnius: "Mintis". Chekhov’s work in the Baltics is put in a larger context by Autant-Mathieu 2015, pp. 82-95, and especially p. 88. See also following note.

⁶ Chekhov 1932/1989: pp.47-59 – first published in the book "On the work of the actor" (Kaunas, 1936) [Chekhov 1936].

eventually also in New York City), with the same professional associates, many of the same senior students/teaching assistants, and of course new American students as well as immigrants such as Yul Brynner. With Hurst's intervention, the English-language records of Chekhov's pedagogy – which run to hundreds of pages – were preserved, although only parts have been published. It was these notes, as we will see, that made possible the first versions of his theater pedagogy.

- [Notes from Classes (Posthumous Distribution in Typescript)]
Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst had received three lessons from Chekhov at New York in 1935, before he had contracted to work at Dartington.⁷
- [Notes from Classes (Posthumous Publication)] Eighteen lessons to the first students (whom he intended to be teachers) at Dartington Hall in England, 8 April 1936 – 8 June 1936; these included Dorothy Whitney Elmhurst and Beatrice Whitney Straight, as well as Deirdre Hurst [du Prey], who recorded them.⁸
- [Notes from Classes (Posthumous Publication)] Similarly, Lessons for Professional Actors in New York, including members of the Group Theatre, November-December 1941. Both this group and the previous were published decades after Chekhov's death, but were widely circulated in notes and manuscript copies.⁹
- [Public Lectures, Distributed (Posthumous Publication)]
At Dartington, Ridgefield, and elsewhere, most notably at the Labor Stage organization in New York, 12 April 1942, Chekhov lectured on "The Theatre of the Future," one of his favorite topics. The lectures, which were transcribed by Deirdre Hurst du Prey from shorthand

⁷ Three lessons given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (du Prey) in New York, 16, 18, and 22 March 1935 (Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers). [Chekhov 1935a]

⁸ Note that Chekhov intended teacher training as part of the Chekhov Theatre Studio program. See his lectures of spring 1936 in Chekhov 2018 (op. cit. above, Chapter one – see also Bibliography). Two of the students, Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst would become teaching assistants at Dartington in the fall of 1936, and at Ridgefield, Connecticut. They would later both be involved with the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York, 1980 ff.

⁹ Chekhov 1985, op. cit. above, Chapter One, and Bibliography.

notes, were apparently widely distributed and eventually published by Hurst after Chekhov's death.¹⁰

- [Publication / Book] “The 1942 Version” of *To the Actor*, based on classroom exercises developed at Dartington, England; Ridgefield, Connecticut; and New York City, 1935-1942. Chekhov and Deirdre Hurst [du Prey], his pupil, teaching assistant, and recorder of his classes, collaborated from 1940 to October 1942 with Hurd Hatfield, another senior student at Ridgefield, and editor Paul Marshall Allen to prepare Chekhov's ideas and lessons for publication. (How ironic that Hurst, beginning in 1935, was recording Chekhov's exercises, while officials in the USSR were trying to erase Chekhov's name from history!)

The manuscript was taken to Hollywood by Chekhov in November 1942 or January 1943 and served, according to Hurst, as the basis for Chekhov's 1946 edition.¹¹ Three typescripts remain in the Dartington archives at the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter UK. The first two are a “rough draft” with many pasted-in insertions (called here 1942a), which Hurst labeled “the final working / draft ... October 1942,” and a clean, slightly revised copy of the same manuscript (1942b), which Hurst said was similar to the typescript Chekhov took to Hollywood.¹²

► In 1991, Mala Powers, one of Chekhov's principal students in Hollywood, along with the scholar, Mel Gordon, published what Gordon called “a slightly amended version” of Chekhov and Hurst's

¹⁰ The 1942 lecture is published in Chekhov 1942/1983 (*The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 29-31).

¹¹ See below and note 14.

¹² The third manuscript was associated with Allen (Dartington Hall Archives, reference no. MC/S2/3/A). Manuscripts 1942a and 1942b (Dartington Hall Archives, reference nos. MC/S2/2/A and MC/S2/2/B, respectively), bear common title pages subsequently inserted by Deirdre Hurst du Prey, possibly in 1992: “Michael Chekhov / TO THE ACTOR / SOME NEW IDEAS ABOUT ACTING / (WITH EXERCISES) // THE 1942 VERSION: EDITED BY PAUL MARSHALL ALLEN / AND DEIRDRE HURST du PREY // (Copyright, 1942, by Michael Chekhov)”. 1942a (MC/S2/2/A; 287. pages) had a portfolio cover with the label in Hurst's hand, “I / This is the only existing / copy of the final working / draft of *To the Actor* completed / in October 1942 by Michael / Chekhov & Paul Marshall Allen & / Deirdre Hurst. See M.C.'s corrections”. 1942b (MC/S2/2/B; 301 pages) had a portfolio cover with the label in Hurst's hand, “II / This is the only existing copy / ^ except for a copy at Dartington / of the Manuscript / of *To the Actor* which was completed in October [sic] 1942 / with the editorial help of / Paul Marshall Allen & Deirdre Hurst / & taken by Michael Chekhov when / he left for Hollywood.” (Note: The first trip was in November for a screen test in Hollywood and the second in January 1943 was when he moved there with his wife for good.)

1942 manuscript, following a typewritten copy in Power's possession – presumably Chekhov's Hollywood copy [cited hereafter as Chekhov 1942/1991].¹³

- [Publication / Autobiography] Chekhov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich [Michael Chekhov]. 1944-1945. “Жизнь и встречи” (“*Zhizni i vstrechi*” / “*Life and Encounters*”), in НОВЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ (*Novyi Zhurnal*) / *New Journal*, New York, vols. vii – ix, 1944, and vols. x – xi, 1945. Of limited application to his American pedagogy. See above, Chapter One.

2.1c The Final Phase: Teaching and Publications in California

A particularly important divide occurred in 1943, when Chekhov moved to Hollywood. Importantly, Chekhov soon rewrites his pedagogy in his native Russian (1946) – although with a simultaneous translation into English (now presumably lost). He starts to teach in California in the context of his own experience in the American film industry. (He had also performed in several movies in Russia and Germany before he was cast in Hollywood films.) Then, in 1953, he publishes his best-known pedagogical text, augmented by preserved lectures given in 1955, the year of his death. Importantly, he left behind four close pupils in California (Joanna Merlin, Jack Colvin, Eddie Grove, and Mala Powers), who actively perpetuated his ideas and teaching and eventually, in 1980, joined forces with his former Dartington-Ridgefield pupils (Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Blair Cutting, Felicity Mason, and Eleanor Faison) to create teaching institutions in New York – Powers was also the executrix of Chekhov's estate. There were also a number of stars who continued on being performers not only in front of camera but also on stage. (See Appendix 9.)

- [Publication] The 1946 Russian edition, О технике актера (*O tekhnike aktera*), which can be translated as *On the Technique of Acting* or *On the Actor's Technique*), which Chekhov published at his

¹³ Chekhov 1942/1991, op. cit. above, Chapter One; see Bibliography. The editing by Gordon and Powers is discussed below. Power's Introduction and essay at the end of the volume on Chekhov in Hollywood are extremely useful pedagogical documents.

own expense and distributed to libraries in the United States and abroad. The edition featured sixteen expressive two-color lithographs after drawings by Nicolai Remisoff illustrating the chapter on Psychological Gesture. [Hereafter cited as Chekhov 1946.]¹⁴

- [Publication] The 1953 edition of *To the Actor*. In 1953, the American publishing house, Harper and Row, published Michael Chekhov's *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*, with drawings by Nicolai Remisoff based on a selection of his 1946 illustrations, and a Preface by Yul Brynner. The editor of the edition was Charles Leonard. For the 1953 edition, Remisoff drew new black and white versions of seven of his sixteen illustrations from 1946. [Hereafter cited as Chekhov 1953 and Chekhov 1953/2002].¹⁵ According to Joanna Merlin, who studied with Chekhov at the time, Chekhov also sent copies of the 1953 edition to "many school libraries."¹⁶
- [Public Lectures, Distributed] A series of twelve lectures given by Chekhov at Hollywood in 1955, near the end of his life, recorded on tapes.¹⁷ Eight of the twelve lectures were distributed in edited form by

¹⁴ Op. cit. above, Chapter One, and in Bibliography: Chekhov 1946, as Mikhail Alexandrovich Chekhov.

¹⁵ See Bibliography, Chekhov 1953 and Chekhov 1953/2002. As will be noted frequently in this study Yul Brynner had been admitted to the Ridgefield Michael Chekhov studio, taking part in the touring company. In 1953, he was the most famous member of the group from Ridgefield. While the 1953 edition is usually referred to as *To the Actor*, the complete title is *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*. It was republished repeatedly, notably in the 2002 expanded edition [Chekhov 1953/2002, with a second introduction by the actor Simon Callow and an Appendix by Andrei Malaev-Babel, pp. 183-215, partially translating Chekhov 1946, Chapter [4], "Psychological Gesture."

For information on Remisoff's career as a designer in Hollywood, see Minin, Oleg. 2014. "Russian Artists in the United States: The Case of Nicholas Remisoff (1887-1975)," in *Experiment*, vol. 20, issue 1, 27 Oct 2014, pp. 229–259.

¹⁶ Merlin, Joanna. 2015. "The Legacy of Michael Chekhov: Then and Now," in Routledge 2015, pp. 389-398.

¹⁷ Copies at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York (call nos. LT10-4779 through LT10-4790), and in the Dartington Hall Archives (two complete copies of the set of 12 tapes, MCTS-DHDP - MC/S7/2).

Nine of these 1955 lectures, including the two on the "Moscow Art Theatre and Russian directors," Tapes 9 and 10, and on "Love in the Acting Profession," Tape 11, were in fact broadcast at some point after 1959 on KPFK-FM in Los Angeles, with new introductions by the actor, radio announcer, artist, and animator, John Dehner. (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste/Archiv, object numbers: EFB-2008-E001-0057-000 and EFB-2008-E001-0058-000, bänder 1 & 2.)

Abbot's editions of the tapes, with his brief introductions, were apparently widely distributed, given the number of copies of the tapes still existing at the New York Public Library, Dartington, and elsewhere, plus the copies Powers used for the 1992 distribution. It is not known how many times the KPFK-FM broadcasts, with John Dehner's passionate background introductions, were re-broadcast in other locations, but the existence of three of the tapes in Zürich, apparently sent to Boner, suggests wider distribution.

Mala Powers in CD format in 1992 [reprinted 2004, 4 CDs].¹⁸ Previously, in 1963, Charles Leonard's editing of Chekhov's comments on directing included partial transcriptions, some heavily paraphrased, of eight of these lectures.¹⁹ However, two of the lectures have never been distributed in either audio form or transcriptions, and none of the lectures had been transcribed *verbatim* until I received permission to transcribe them. (I hope to make all this work visible for others interested.)

2.2 "The 1942 Version" of *To the Actor*

While undoubtedly representing Chekhov's ideas, perfected over seven years of English-language teaching at Dartington, Ridgefield, and New York, the 1942 edition was a collaboration, as in the case of the work with Georgette Boner, and probably the work at Kaunas, had been. (In fact, the 1942 edition also represents the tip of an immense "iceberg" of active, collaborative pedagogy, recorded in the already-mentioned hundreds of pages of notes by Deirdre Hurst du Prey.) Chekhov's collaborators, as has been noted, were Hurst du Prey, senior student Hurd Hatfield, and editor Paul Marshall Allen. They called the edition "The 1942 Version." Furthermore, it may be assumed that Hurst not only recorded the classes and ideas of Chekhov from 1935 to 1942, but also helped Chekhov articulate his ideas in English, and even affected his English vocabulary over the course of many years of daily interaction as Chekhov learned and perfected his command of English. (Chekhov himself underscored this in a letter to her on 21 February 1946.)²⁰ What is more, both she and Hatfield understood Chekhov's ideas in

¹⁸ Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, *op. cit.* above and in Bibliography; see also the separate citations throughout this dissertation given from Powers' essay in the accompanying booklet.

¹⁹ Chekhov and Leonard 1963, reprinted 1984, *op. cit.* above and in Bibliography.

²⁰ Hurst du Prey left several documents detailing the process of creating the 1942 edition – among some 8,000 pages of archives, including hundreds of pages of direct Chekhov classroom notes, preserved in the Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers (where she subsequently taught), Dartington/Exeter, the New York Public Library, and elsewhere. Among these are "The Actor is the Theatre," Hurst's unpublished, full-length version of Michael Chekhov's transcribed lessons, 1936-1942, from Hurst's *verbatim* shorthand notes – see Bibliography, Hurst du Prey 1977a and Hurst du Prey 1977b. A useful brief summary of this history is provided by Mel Gordon in Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. xxxi-xxxiv.

an active, applied sense, which also affected the articulation of Chekhov's concepts in the manuscript.

A glimpse of Chekhov's pedagogical concerns in August 1939, on the eve of both the first full academic year of the Chekhov Theatre Studio in Ridgefield and of World War II, is found in the following passage.

One current is the pedagogical line towards the audience, which is employed by a social-minded theatre, and the second line is to teach the children, to try to influence them. Our profession gives us wonderful opportunities to go along these paths. Very few professions can give the opportunity to say and think what we feel in all these spheres – education of children, philosophy, etc.

In order to be able to serve this wonderful ideal or mission of the future theatre, we actors, playwrights, and directors, and all members and workers in the theatre must work very seriously on our development and technique, and minds and souls and hearts.²¹

In Chekhov's case, of course, he dedicated his whole life to Art. Not long after, on 5 October 1939, six of his students who had been at Dartington, including Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst, received the first "diplomas" of the Chekhov Theatre Studio, and could be presented as qualified teachers of Chekhov's methods.

2.2a The 1991 Publication of 1942

A few notes should be added on the difference between the 1942 manuscripts from Dartington and the 1991 publication (Chekhov 1942/1991). Some of this difference occurred at Ridgefield in 1942, in the final editing stages. For example, the second-to-last manuscript (1942a) had the following comments which did not pass into the final manuscript (1942b) and therefore not into the 1991 text:

The surest way for the actor to remain hopelessly on the surface of the text is to approach the text directly. In this case, the actor runs the risk of being nothing more than a reader of the author's printed words. Haven't we witnessed often enough how the banal or superficial words

²¹ Cornell Beatrice Straight Papers, Collection Number 4496, August 1939, pp. 12 -14.

of an author suddenly, as if by some magic power, sound original or profound from the stage, and also how the wisest text sometimes appears humorously obvious and blunt? Who is responsible for this “magic” if not the actor himself?²²

(It is an idea that Chekhov often returned to, however, in a variety of contexts.) Similar editing removed comments such as “acting is nothing other than continuous free improvisation, between and beyond the author’s written play,” and handwritten comments explaining the function of exercises.²³ Other omissions, noted by Gordon in his Introduction to 1991, include “a few paragraphs and a chapter on dramatic composition [Chapter 8] ... in part because it does not exclusively relate to Chekhov’s teaching of acting, and in part because it appears verbatim in the 1953 *To the Actor*.²⁴” The motive was probably for copyright reasons as well. Gordon also notes the occasional replacement of words in the final 1942 manuscript with Chekhov’s articulations in the classes recorded by Hurst du Prey.²⁵

These are minor issues, but the omission of the eleven-page Chapter Eleven from 1942 (“The Actor Finds the Method,” 1942a, pp. 291-302) from the 1991 publication is more serious. It begins with advice on how to use the exercises, then moves on to his idea of “The Theatre of the Future” (pp. 296-302), which Chekhov often discussed at Dartington and Ridgefield and, as has been noted, lectured upon at the Labor Stage organization in New York, 12 April 1942, exactly when Chekhov, Hurst, and Allen were finalizing “The 1942 Version” (Presumably, “The 1942 Version” had also been affected by aspects of Chekhov’s pedagogy represented in the lessons for professional

²² Chekhov 1942a, p. 79.

²³ Ibidem, 1942a, pp. 82 and 96, respectively.

²⁴ Chekhov 1953, Chapter 8, pp. 93-122.

²⁵ Gordon in Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv. The Chapters on “The Actor’s Body,” IV in 1991, and “The Psychological Gesture,” V in 1991, are in reverse order in 1942a and 1946. Cf. Hurst du Prey, Deirdre. 1977b. “To the Reader of Several Versions of *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*.” Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers – together with 1977a, op. cit. below; NYPL, together with the 1955 lectures; Dartington Hall Archives, no. MC/S2/6/E (including notes relating to copyright issues, 1977-1990.)

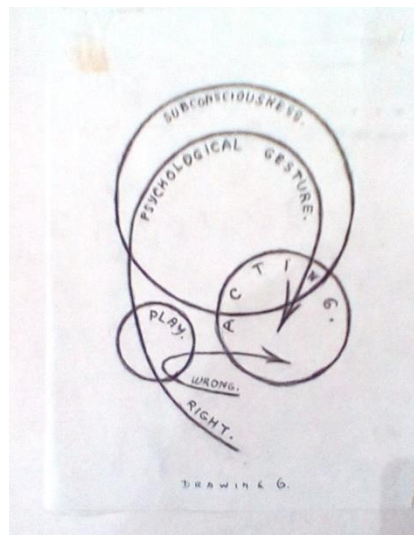
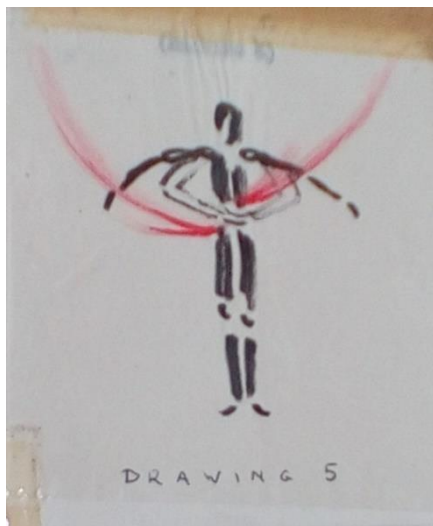
Hurst’s essay accompanies Hurst du Prey, Deirdre. 1977a. *The Actor is the theatre: A collection of Michael Chekhov’s unpublished notes and manuscripts on the art of acting and the theatre*.

Typescript. (Hurst’s full-length version of Michael Chekhov’s lessons, 1936-1942, from Hurst’s verbatim shorthand notes; 10 volumes.) Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers, T-Mss 2002-012; Dartington Hall Archives MC/Si/7-12; NYPL [excerpts?], also with the 1955 lectures.

actors in New York City he gave late 1941-1942.)²⁶ With these omissions noted, the 1991 publication may be taken as a reliable edition of the text of the final 1942 manuscript taken by Chekhov to California.

In six significant cases, however, drawings illustrating Chekhov's concepts were omitted from the 1991 publication. It is not clear whether this happened because of final editing before Chekhov went to California or, more likely, in 1991, since except for seven drawings reprinted along with their captions from the 1953 edition,²⁷ the 1991 publication is not illustrated.

Two of the missing drawings, numbered 5 and 6 in 1942a, are as follows:



[1942a, p. 66; text in 1991, p. 78] [1942a, p. 96 bis; text in 1991, p. 85]

The absence of the second of these drawings is particularly to be regretted. Four other drawings, illustrating Horatio's series of psychological gestures in the Ghost scene from *Hamlet*, will be discussed below.

2.3 The 1946 Edition, О технике актера

The 1946 publication of *O tekhnike aktera* is the only comprehensive articulation of Michael Chekhov's dramatic theory and pedagogical principles that he wrote entirely in his native language with minimal intervention by English-speaking (or German-speaking) collaborators and editors. Chekhov's

²⁶ See above and notes 8 and 9.

²⁷ Chekhov 1942/1991, following p. 68.

other Russian-language pedagogical text, the 1933 letter sent to Jilinsky's students in Kaunas, already mentioned, focused on Atmosphere only.²⁸

The 1946 publication is above all a personal statement of artistic philosophy. In comparison with 1942, Chekhov was now working alone, creating a “book” summarizing his dramatic theory and pedagogy. One must also remember that, as Chekhov was working on the Russian text in 1945-46, World War II had ended, with the Russians allied victoriously with the United States. Chekhov was writing in Russian for his own people. On September 10, 1945, Chekhov wrote to his friend, Aldanov: “The book is special, professional – not for a wide public. ... My artistic goal is to make my mind available to the RUSSIAN actor, in whom I believe. If the book will be published here in Russian language, then sooner or later, it will appear in Russia. I want that. ... Speaking of the English version, with translators Jay Lajda (Leyda) and Dr. Sergei L. Bertensson ... they started to translate even though they don't have a publisher. ... Russian publishing interests me spiritually, English materialistically.”²⁹ This English translation apparently no longer exists. Chekhov's choice of examples, such as his use of scenes from Gorky and Gogol – not in 1942/1991 – and an extended discussion of “old Russian actors on the provincial scene,” would have been more relevant to a Russian-speaking audience.

That Chekhov was hoping to get the Russian-language book distributed in some way in Soviet Russia is suggested by his correspondence with the film-maker, Sergei Eisenstein and his cast for the film, *Ivan the Terrible*, Part I, which Chekhov watched at Los Angeles in 1945. Some of

²⁸ Chekhov 1932/1989, pp. 47-59.

²⁹ Letter to Aldanov, Mark Aleksandrovich, 10 September 1945. (Aldanov correspondence, Columbia University Library.) Sergei Bertensson, who knew Rachmaninoff, published works on music and film, often with a documentary emphasis. Jay Leyda wrote extensively on Russian Music and film, as well as on American literature. See below, note 51.

Earlier, on 3 May 1944, Chekhov had told Aldanov, “I would love to see you in person. Here [California] is a strange climate – suddenly I started to feel better, you would too feel well here. What worries me is future (neuvěřitelné světlo a děsivá tma, zápas a divize mezi lidstvem, které se rozdělilo na dvě velké skupiny) incredible light and the terrifying darkness of the struggle and division of all humanity into two big groups.” (Aldanov correspondence, Columbia University Library).

Chekhov's former close colleagues from the MAT, notably Serafina Birman, had important roles in the film. Chekhov had known Eisenstein since 1920.³⁰

The 1946 publication also has the advantage over "The 1942 Version" of incorporating Chekhov's initial experiences in Hollywood, even though at this point his work was focused on his own acting in front of the camera. Presumably, the fact that Chekhov had been nominated for an Academy Award for his role in *Spellbound* in early 1946 would have increased his hopes for finding a market in English as well as Russian for his text – and his salary in films would have made it possible for him to afford the \$850 for 1000 copies it would cost to print the Russian edition privately.

It is interesting that in Soviet Russia the actors themselves were satisfied with the Russian 1946 version. (Some were smuggled to Russia, where the text continued to be circulated in *samizdat* typescripts until the fall of Communism.) The text was eventually published in Russia in the last years of the Soviet Union and is the standard text there today.³¹ Absent the lost manuscript translations, it has never again been translated into English, except for Malaev-Babel's partial translation of excerpts from the chapter on Psychological Gesture. (My complete English translation of the Psychological Gesture chapter is included here as Appendix 10, below.)

O tekhnike aktera has twelve unnumbered chapters, plus a Foreword and a Bibliography relating to the works of Dr. Rudolph Steiner on Eurythmy and "Artistic Speech" (that is, what Steiner, and Chekhov at Dartington and Ridgefield, called "Speech Formation"). Seven of the Chapters are about methods of preparing the actor for performing. Chekhov labels these "methods of repetition/rehearsing," including the chapter on the "Psychological Gesture." Chekhov makes clear that these methods are preparatory and differ from what the actor does onstage. (See the following chart comparing the chapters of all three American publications.)

³⁰ See the documentation below, notes 50 and 51.

³¹ Lit. nasl.1995, vol. II, pp. 166-287 – the first edition was 1986. The Russian text is also available online in a variety of sites. As has been mentioned, Lisa Dalton and other MICHA members who had experience with Russia before 2000 mention Russian colleagues who reported using *samizdat* copies of Chekhov's text. See Bibliography for the German translation on the basis of the Lit. nasl. text.

It should be noted that the contents largely include all of the 1942 chapters – although with some recombination and changes of order.³² These topics often repeat or condense, and occasionally expand, ideas from the 1942 manuscript, as even the chart comparing chapter titles makes clear. Where a topic seems to have been omitted, it is usually incorporated into another chapter.

2.3a The “Higher Self” and the Tripartite Human Being

One reason for possible scholarly (and pedagogical) confusion about which topics continue from edition to edition of *To the Actor* comes from relatively simple translation issues, usually involving going from Russian to English. One must remember that, in 1935, Chekhov had been principally teaching in Russian, with some German used with Georgette Boner. As he developed the English articulation of his exercises and theory, the Russian base remained. In the 1942 edition, Chapter II is entitled “The Higher Ego.” In 1946, Chapter [9] “Creative Individuality,” the same topic is addressed, but called the “the higher ‘I’,” более высокое “я” (and variations) in Russian. In 1953 (pp. 96 ff.), the concept is given initially as “the higher ‘I’,” but then repeated as “the higher self.” Clearly, all three terms have the same purely semantic meaning.³³

What Chekhov meant in terms of spirituality and dramatic theory depends on how one understands his own psychological and religious theories and what seem to have been the audiences he was addressing. While it is always recognized that Chekhov understood human existence as being divided in three – body, “soul” (probably psyche), and spirit – he was not always consistent in choosing words. (In his work in Kaunas in 1932-33, he specifically presented the soul and spirit as united, or undifferentiated, in speaking of inner processes versus the outer, physical body.) When he says “soul” in English he probably means the Russian word, душа – with

³² To cite some examples: 1942 Chapter III has been divided into two chapters in 1946; 1942 Chapters VII and VIII have been recombined into 1946 [7, [8], and [10]; and the order of the chapters on “The Actor’s Body” and “The Psychological Gesture” has been switched.

³³ In Russian, at least today, “Higher ‘I’ ” and “Higher self” are both translated as “Высшее Я” (or “Высшее ‘Я’ ”).

implications of heart, mind, psyche, interior processes. When he says “spirit,” it almost always means дух – spirit, mind, ghost, wind, esprit. As a result, one of the English connotations of the word, “soul” – meaning a spiritual or immortal part of a person’s existence – is probably not what he means. “Spirit” conveys that for him. While both the Russian and English words overlap, one can call his tripartite division, as a practical matter, “body, psyche, spirit.” “The higher self” is generally connected with the “spirit,” and, for Chekhov himself, as well as like-minded practitioners of the Chekhov method, the connection is with a higher, spiritual power in the religious sense. But especially in the 1953 edition, this is left vague.

2.3b “Hands-On” Pedagogy versus Theory

The 1946 edition has thirty-one numbered “Exercises” (Упражнение) included within the chapters or appended at the end of the text. In general, there is less emphasis overall on the “hands-on,” applied examples found among the 87 in the longer 1942 manuscript. The reduced number of exercises is in keeping with the reduced sense of “hands-on” training in this edition. But even so, there are fourteen more exercises than in 1953, and those that are included reflect in a practical way what Chekhov had been doing in his classes at Dartington, Ridgefield, and New York City – and presumably, would continue to do in California. Indeed, the descriptions of the exercises Chekhov wrote in 1946 (as I translate them from Russian) speak to me most clearly. This is perhaps due to the absence of an intervening editor, so that I have a sense of hearing Chekhov speaking directly in his own language. In 1955, when one actually hears him lecturing in English after 20 years of having learned the language, there is a similar direct sense of communication. What is more, the final, “Additional Exercises” (pp. 211 ff.), include several of his most important pieces and have been essential for many teachers of the Chekhov work, including myself.

Unfortunately, 1942 Chapter XI (also omitted from 1991), with its essay on “The Theatre of the Future,” is not found as such in 1946, although today’s Russian online sources include it as an appendix.³⁴

³⁴ See <https://coollib.com/b/76365/read#t19> .

CHART COMPARING 1942 1946 1953

<u>1942/1991</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1953</u>
<p>I. IMAGINATION AND CONCENTRATION 1.</p> <p>II. THE HIGHER EGO (1991, p. 15)</p> <p>III. OBJECTIVE ATMOSPHERE AND INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS 16</p> <p>IV. THE ACTOR'S BODY 43. (Chap. 5 in 1942a, PG is Chap. 4)</p> <p>V. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE 58.</p> <p>VI. INCORPORATION & CHARACTERIZATION 95.</p> <p>VII. FROM SCRIPT TO REHEARSAL HALL 107. (not given a title in 1942a, but same content)</p> <p>VIII. COMPOSITION OF THE PERFORMANCE 129 (= Chap. 10 in 1942a, entitled "Further Stages of Composition")</p> <p>IX. FOUR STAGES OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS (1991, p. 146; Chapter 8 in 1942)</p> <p>9. (1942, not in 1991, 10. "Composition of the Performance" becomes Chapter 8 in 1953)</p> <p>11. (1942, not in 1991, "The Actor Finds the Method")</p> <p>AFTERWORD (in 1991, Mala Powers) 160. "With Michael Chekhov in Hollywood" [In 1991, these are 87 exercises.]</p>	<p>[1] IMAGINATION AND ATTENTION (BENEFITS) FIRST METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 91</p> <p>[2] ATMOSPHERE, THE SECOND METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 39</p> <p>[3] INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS, ACTION WITH A PARTICULAR COLOR, THE THIRD METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 49</p> <p>[4] PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE, FOURTH METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 59.</p> <p>[5] THE ACTOR'S BODY (ТЕЛО АКТЕРА) 87.</p> <p>[6] EMBODIMENT (ВОЛЮЩЕИЕ) OF IMAGE (ОБРАЗ) AND CHARACTERIZATION FIFTH METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 117²</p> <p>[7] IMPROVISATION, SIXTH METHOD OF REPEITION/REHEARSING 129.</p> <p>[8] ACTORS' COLLECTIVE 139.</p> <p>[9] CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY 151. (Incorporating aspects of 1942, Chap. II)</p> <p>[10] COMPOSITION OF THE PERFORMANCE 169.</p> <p>[11] ADDITIONAL EXERCISES 211.</p> <p>[12] SEVERAL PRACTICAL COMMENTS 225</p> <p>LIST OF BOOKS FOR EURYTHMY AND ARTISTIC SPEECH 233. [In 1946, there are 31 exercises.]</p>	<p>2. IMAGINATION AND INCORPORATION OF IMAGES 21</p> <p>4. THE ATMOSPHERE AND INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS 47. [combined partially, in no. 4]</p> <p>5. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE 63.</p> <p>1. THE ACTOR'S BODY AND PSYCHOLOGY, 1</p> <p>6. CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION 85.</p> <p>3. IMPROVISATION AND ENSEMBLE 35. [combined partially in no. 3]</p> <p>7. CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY 94.</p> <p>8. COMPOSITION OF THE PERFORMANCE 103. (Chapter 9 in 1942, but 1953 omits some illustrations)</p> <p>9. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PERFORMANCES 136.</p> <p>10. HOW TO APPROACH THE PART 146</p> <p>11. CONCLUDING NOTES 171</p> <p>12. EXAMPLES FOR IMPROVISATION 179. [In 1953, there are 17 exercises, Chaps. 1-5; and 10 examples for improvisation. No Index.]</p>

¹ Chekhov's choice of words sometimes makes translation difficult. For example, ПЕРВЫЙ СПОСОБ РЕПЕТИЦИИ (первый способ репетиции) literally means "first method of repetitions," but the word, ПЕРВЫЙ СПОСОБ (первый способ), which can mean, "to release" (решить) – to what Chekhov meant was "the first method of rehearsing." Today's Russian might use "первый метод репетиции" (первый метод репетиции) – first method of rehearsal (первый метод репетиции). Both words are used here. The Russian word, внимание, literally means "attention," but in various translations of Chekhov's writings, it is given as "Concentration" – usually translated by different words in Russian (so внимание, сопереживание, сопереживание). The 1953 edition uses "Attention," twenty-one times, usually in a context implying Concentration, and Concentration two times. The 1942/1991 edition gives the chapter title as "Imagination and Concentration."

² The Russian title of the chapter is ВОЛЮЩЕИЕ ОБРАЗЫ И ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ. The first two Russian words are difficult to translate precisely. ВОЛЮЩЕИЕ means "embodiment, incarnation, incorporation, avatar, epitome, personification, personalization," ОБРАЗЫ means "image(s), form, figure, shape, picture," but also "character," and "imagination." The 1942/1991 edition gives the chapter title as "Incorporation and Characterization." (Use of the Imaginary Body technique better fits the translation of "incorporation" [to put into the body] instead of Character, since the idea is to put the image of the character into the actor's body – to express the image of the character physically.)

2.3c

“Qualities” versus “Coloration”

Before going on to discuss the 1953 edition of *To the Actor*, it is necessary to mention one more important difference between the 1953 edition and the 1946 Russian text. In 1946, the varying feelings and nuances of movement are expressed through the metaphor of color or “coloration,” with the actor “coloring” each gesture with different emotions in order to generate feelings (53-58, *passim*). No direct mention of any specific color theory is made in 1946, but in fact, color theory derived from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (frequently quoted elsewhere in the text) and Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, and the preceding importance of color in Theosophy (incorporating traditional South Asian ideas), had played a central role in Chekhov’s earlier teaching since at least his period in Paris and his teaching in Kaunas, 1931-34.³⁵ In the 1946 text, the metaphoric use of “coloring” continues through the whole chapter, but it is almost entirely from 1953, which only mentions the concept once, to ask the actor to “color” a gesture with a psychological quality, like “caution” (59). Otherwise, the word, “Quality,” is used.

This has often been cited as an example of how even the echoes of Steiner’s ideas and spiritual values in general were removed from the 1953 text, to be replaced with practical and more purely psychological observations. But in fact, the same substitution is found in “The 1942 Version,” where the use of “coloring” is entirely missing. In 1942, when speaking of the “how” of making gestures, Chekhov already uses the term, “Qualities” – meaning emotions (feelings) and will-impulse values that affect how a gesture is made, exactly as given in 1953.³⁶

The change of terms from 1946 to 1953 – or terms left vague – may suggest an awareness of the different ways Americans, for example, might interpret spiritual concepts, with the majority taking a more standard approach

³⁵ Chekhov brought the ideas to New York in 1935. See Chekhov 2018, *Lessons*, p. 38 – lesson of 8 June 1936. The permanence of this use of “coloration (coloring)” in his teaching is demonstrated by the way his technique has been taught since his death, including today. See the discussion below, and Chapter Three.

³⁶ Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 38-42. Chekhov was able to work Steiner into the 1953 text as the author of the motto for Chapter 8, “Composition of the Performance,” p. 103: “The thing isolated becomes incomprehensible. (Rudolf Steiner)”

to religious experiences – whether Protestant Christian, Roman Catholic, or Jewish. There were certainly many spiritualist believers in California and New York – including Anthroposophists among Chekhov’s followers (Mala Powers, Deirdre Hurst, Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, and Sarah Kane, for example, not to mention Marilyn Monroe) – who would have understood Theosophic and Anthroposophic ideas, and many Unitarians and Universalists nationwide. Those who have agreed with Chekhov’s spiritual orientation have accepted his ideas as spiritual guidance as well – Mala Powers is a particular example of this, asking Chekhov to help her go beyond theatrical training into Anthroposophy. But they were a minority among the students at Dartington and certainly among the potential market for the 1953 edition. The appeal to Steiner’s ideas would have fallen on deaf ears for most Americans or been considered out-of-date in 1953.

The situation in 1942 is more complicated. Before, at Dartington Hall, with its close connection to South Asian culture in the context of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst’s semi-utopian vision and Leonard’s work with Rabindranath Tagore, there would have been fertile soil for any reference to Anthroposophical concepts. But in 1942, Chekhov was in America, and perhaps editor Paul Marshall Allen had potential sales to American publishers in mind. Certainly, in his lessons for professional actors in New York City in late 1941, Chekhov, when he gave them any labels at all, spoke of gestures or movements with Qualities and did not bring the color theory terminology into the discussion.³⁷ For this audience, a more vaguely spiritual, psychological explanation was sufficient. In either case, in 1942 or 1953, Chekhov did not insist on a religious understanding in his classes. He was willing to let the spiritual aspects grow out of the technique. That is why he told George Shdanoff, “we’re not making better actors for Louis B. Mayer, we are helping people to grow spiritually and become better humans.”³⁸

³⁷ See for example, Chekhov 1985, pp. 99-101 and 146-148.

³⁸ Keeve 2002/2009-2010 (Part II in 2002).

2.4

The 1953 Edition

The 1953 edition of *To the Actor* has had the widest distribution in English and has been translated into numerous languages, including Czech. After Chekhov had suffered repeated rejections by English-language publishers of his 1942 and 1946 versions (the latter translated back into English),³⁹ the American publishing house, Harper and Row, offered to publish Chekhov's text as edited by Charles Leonard, whom Chekhov in his Foreword (pp. xii-xiii) describes as a "playwright-producer-director."

"Charles Leonard" (1900-1986) was the American professional name of Chaim Leb Eppelboim, who had been born in Kishinev, Moldova (then part of Russia); when he came to Hollywood in the 1920s, he anglicized his name to Charles Leonard Appleton. Leonard was married to Chekhov's agent in Hollywood, Betty Raskin Appleton. Their daughter, Julietta Xenia Michelle Appleton – note that she was named after Chekhov's second wife, Xenia – described Leonard as a "publicist, screenwriter, and script doctor," and noted his role as part of the "Rodeo Drive Radicals in the leftist Hollywood Theatre Alliance."⁴⁰ She also described Chekhov as Leonard's "friend and mentor." Leonard's birth in Moldova and his Jewish background, along with his marriage to Betty Raskin Appleton, help explain why Chekhov would have trusted him to edit a new English version of his writings.

2.4a

Comparison of 1942 and 1953

According to Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Leonard later insisted that the 1953 edition was only based on the 1946 publication instead of "The 1942 Version." However, it is obvious from even the most superficial comparison of the three texts that Chekhov and Leonard also relied on the 1942 extensively.⁴¹ This included, of course, those parts of 1942 that passed into

³⁹ In a letter to Aldanov, 28 June 1948, Chekhov complains, "I have been sending my book, "Technique for the Actor," in an English translation, to publishers, and they, with polite letters, are returning it to me, saying it is too complicated. It is a pity – it has even made me sad." (Mark Aleksandrovic Aldanov correspondence, Columbia University Library.)

⁴⁰ Appleton, Julietta, in IMDb [Internet Movie Database], n.d.; available URL: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0502587/bio?ref=nm_ov_bio_sm (accessed 28 January 2018).

⁴¹ In 1969 Xenia Chekhov told Hurst du Prey that Charles Leonard had advised her he had never seen the English version (presumably meaning 1942) and that Chekhov and he worked directly from

1946, but also other sections directly quoted or adapted. (This is to be expected, since Chekhov brought “The 1942 Version” manuscript with him to Hollywood.) Of course, Chapter 8 in 1953 was taken intact from 1942, but there are many other examples.⁴² Furthermore, as will be shown below, the added chapter on improvisation in 1953 returns to the pedagogical and theoretical context of 1942 in the Chekhov Theatre Studio of Dartington and Ridgefield.

2.4b Constant Elements in All Three Editions

Since the Chekhov method derives from the larger Stanislavsky-MAT techniques, the presentation of these elements across the three American editions is to be expected – see the discussion, below, and in Chapter One. For the present, we will focus either on Chekhov’s original contributions or areas in which he greatly expanded his MAT pedagogical heritage. In one such case, the chapter entitled “Composition of the Performance,” with its close analysis of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (including the same chart of the climaxes in the play), both 1946 and 1953 are based on the 1942 manuscripts. This is one of the few instances where the three editions are more or less identical.⁴³ Chekhov’s analysis of the play undoubtedly reflects his work with his young actors and directors in the touring company called the Chekhov

the Russian text. But Chekhov had thanked Hurst in the preface to his Russian version (О технике актера) for helping him with the book, and thanked her again in 1953. Chekhov 1953 cites “... in particular, to Deirdre du Prey, my former pupil and qualified teacher of the method...); and in 1946, he says, “Первоначальная версия этой книги была написана на английском языке. Незаменимое содействие оказали мне в этот период работы miss Deirdre Hurst, квалифицированная преподавательница предлагаемого в этой книге метода, Mr. Hurd Hartfield и Prof. Paul Marshall Allen. Этим лицам я приношу здесь свою глубокую благодарность. Очень признателен Сергею Львовичу Бертенсону за его помощь по редактированию этой книги.” [In a letter to Hurst in 1946 Chekhov wrote, “Books, like human beings, have their own destiny.” Both Hurst and Chekhov’s letters document English manuscript translations of the 1946 Russian text. See also above, and note 28.]

⁴² Just to give two of many examples: 1953’s Exercise 10 combines 1942’s Exercises 8-10, and elements from 1942, Chapter III (on Atmosphere) and Exercise 17 are incorporated into 1953, Exercise 14. See Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 12-14; Chekhov 1953, 29-32 (1953/2002, 28-31); Chekhov 1942/1991, Chapter III, “Objective Atmosphere and Individual Feelings,” pp. 26-27, and Exercise 17, p. 33; and Chekhov 1953, Chapter 4, “The Atmosphere and Individual Feelings,” Exercise 14, pp. 55-58 (1953/2002, pp. 54-58): “attempts to ‘perform’ the atmosphere or harmony will destroy the atmosphere.”

⁴³ Chekhov 1942a, Chapter 9, pp. 260 ff., as “Composition of the Performance”; not in 1991; 1953, Chapter 8, pp. 103-135 (1953/2002, pp. 93-122). Although the text of the 1942 chapter was reprinted intact in 1953 intact, some illustrations were omitted, as has been noted.

Players, who included a production of *King Lear* among the plays on their national tours in 1941-42.⁴⁴

2.4c Triplicity and Polarities

In the midst of the chapter analyzing *King Lear*, Chekhov introduces several “laws of composition” that have been extremely important to both acting training (thinking about acting) and scenology (how we think about and prepare scenes and the entire play).⁴⁵ The first of these is “the law of triplicity,” which is one of several ideas in Chekhov where a group of three elements are presented as a way of organizing the techniques and associated theories. These include “Thinking/Willing/Feeling” and the three associated principal body Centers, the “Head/Chest/Pelvis,” as well as “Spirit/Soul/Body.” In the case of triplicity, the concept is united with Chekhov’s idea of “Polarities,” or contrasts, which can be applied to the whole play, to a scene, or to the dynamic arc of changes within a character. In rehearsal (both privately by the actor and in group rehearsal under the guidance of a director), the idea would be to find the beginning and ending points of a scene or “bit,” then work on the middle, then find other intermediate points. Whereas Chekhov clearly was reinforced in this kind of thinking by Rudolf Steiner’s three-part understanding of the human being and his or her body (derived from South Asian spirituality), there is also the Christian idea of the Trinity, and, in more practical terms, the dialectic logic of Hegel, not to mention Marx and Engels. (“Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis.”)

In his 1955 lectures, Chekhov devoted a great deal of time to an analysis of the methods of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Although he criticized Meyerhold, somewhat flippantly, for taking a “devilish” attitude towards the

⁴⁴ The chapter was not republished in 1991. In 1991, the chapter title, “Composition of the Performance,” was re-applied to the related Chapter 10 from 1942, which had originally been entitled, “Further Stages of Composition” – see 1942/1991, Chapter VIII, pp. 129-145. This chapter contains principally exercises on topics such as Sustaining, and does not seem to be in either 1946 or 1953. It is much used by teachers of the Chekhov techniques. (Some fragmentary comments applied to “the Pause” and other topics in 1991 may have come from 1942a, Chapter 9.)

⁴⁵ Found in all three editions – see Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 94-100 and ff.

scripts of plays, it is clear that he respected Meyerhold's experiments and adapted certain aspects of his methods.⁴⁶ As Chekhov described it,

And what was characteristic for his imagination? That he looked, and had tremendous ability, to look behind, beyond reality – what we call reality, which Stanislavsky loved so much. He saw, with his strange kind of imagining, he saw things which are hidden from everybody else in the entire world. ... What actually Meyerhold saw in life, in people? His imagination led him always to certain what we might call now archetypes. ... And his own performances were really very devilish things, tremendously attractive. To me it was so interesting. I loved him very much as an artist, because he showed and revealed to us, to his spectators and friends, things which without him we could never be able to see. So his imagination was working beyond any boundaries of what we can see or imagine.⁴⁷

Meyerhold developed a forerunner of what Chekhov called “psychophysical” processes, connecting psychological and physiological elements. Even though Meyerhold's Biomechanical method was highly abstract, it included learning gestures and movements as a way of expressing emotion outwardly. He developed a number of body expressions that his actors would use to portray specific emotions and characters.⁴⁸ This seems to imply in part concepts in Chekhov's pedagogy, such as archetypal gestures and the Psychological Gesture. As Jonathan Pitches has shown, Meyerhold also divided the “bits” (куски) in a scene into three parts: “preparation,” “action,” and “end point.” “These three parts,” Pitches declares, “are the very building blocks of

⁴⁶ Scholars such as Knebel and Byckling have commented on the mutual admiration between Chekhov and Meyerhold. See Byckling, Liisa. 2015. “Michael Chekhov's work as director,” in Routledge 2015, p. 23, citing (Knebel) Lit. nasl. 1986, vol. 2, 125-127, and Chekhov's 1955 lectures (paraphrased) in Chekhov and Leonard 1963/1984, pp. 37-48. For the verbatim lectures, see the following note.

Chekhov and Meyerhold kept in touch after Chekhov's emigration from Russia in 1928 and during Chekhov's exile in Germany and the Baltic States. In September 1928, Meyerhold visited Berlin, and Chekhov tried to convince him to stay in Germany. In May of 1934, when Chekhov was in Latvia and a right-wing coup d'état occurred, rumors circulated in Moscow that Chekhov was going to return and join the Meyerhold company. (This of course did not happen.) In October 1954, Chekhov wrote a preface for Juri Jelagin's book about Meyerhold. See Lit. nasl., vol. 2, p. 559; Jelagin 1955; Jelagin and Wreden 1951, for which Chekhov was also supposed to write a preface.

⁴⁷ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 9, “On Experiences at the Moscow Art Theatre, part I”; NYPL call no. LT10-4787. Published in a paraphrased version by Charles Leonard, in Chekhov and Leonard 1963/1984, pp. 39-41.

⁴⁸ See https://monoskop.org/Vsevolod_Meyerhold.

Biomechanical theatre.”⁴⁹ Meyerhold understood this as a “tripartite rhythm” – a rhythm made up of three parts. This would seem to be a forerunner of Chekhov’s idea of triplicity.⁵⁰

Here we also remember that the pioneer film-maker, Sergei Eisenstein was a pupil of Meyerhold. Chekhov began appearing in films while still in Russia, and his years at the MHAT coincided with the first great period of Eisenstein’s cinematic work. They were acquainted as early as 1920,⁵¹ and as has been noted above, Chekhov wrote to him and his cast of *Ivan the Terrible* in 1945-46.⁵² Eisenstein of course is famous for his development of the technique of “montage,” in which a series of shots in a film, which may not have anything to do with each other when they were shot, create an illusion for the viewer that produces an entirely different effect. For example, we see a person in a close-up looking intently at something. We then see something tragic – an accident for example. Then we see the initial person crying. The implication is that the person witnesses an accident. Other examples given by Eisenstein include: Eye + Water = Crying; Door + Ear = Eavesdropping; Child + Mouth = Screaming; Knife + Heart = Anxiety. Put two different

⁴⁹ Pitches, Jonathan. 2018 (2004). *Vsevolod Meyerhold*. Abingdon, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2018., pp. 55, 92, 115; also available as an eBook.

⁵⁰ I am indebted to doc. MgA. Jakub Korčák for suggesting this parallel. See <https://www.damu.cz/cs/vse-o-fakulte/lide/328-jakub-korcak/>.

⁵¹ In 1920, when Eisenstein came back to Moscow to recuperate from being on the front during the Russian Civil Wars, Chekhov let him stay temporarily in his apartment. He apparently shared his new Anthroposophist faith with Eisenstein. See Bergan, Ronald. 2016. *Sergei Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict*. New York: Arcade Publishing; also available as an eBook.

⁵² One remembers that Chekhov played successfully Ivan the Terrible in *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* by Alexey K. Tolstoy in Latvian State Theatre in Riga 1932. Chekhov felt that Eisenstein’s actors, both those trained in the psychological school (Nikolay Cherkasov, Boris Babochkin) and in the expressionistic one (his former colleague, Serafina Birman) were not able to convey simultaneously the monumental style and precise psychological portrait of their characters. Only Chekhov, with his ability for transformation and a sense of the whole, was able to grasp this multi-layered task. See Leyda, Jay. 1973. *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*. London: Allen & Unwin, pp. 382-84. (As noted above, Leyda provided the translation into English, now lost, of Chekhov’s 1946 Russian text.)

For documentation in Russian, see Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 2, pp. 555-557. Eisenstein’s letter of 25 January 1946 was also published in *Iskustvo Kino*, 1968, no 1; Chekhov’s “Letter to the Soviet Cinema Workers in Connection with the Production by Eisenstein of ‘Ivan the Terrible,’” 3 July 1946, is preserved in a photostat in the Deirdre Hurst papers, Dartington Hall Archives, MC/S4/11/C, along with its translation by Helen Lerner.

Eisenstein suffered a heart attack on 2 February 1946, and spent much of the following year recovering. He died of a second heart attack on 11 February 1948, at the age of 50. Eisenstein’s film *Ivan the Terrible*, Part I (1944), presenting Ivan IV of Russia as a national hero, won Stalin’s approval (and a Stalin Prize), but the sequel, *Ivan the Terrible*, Part II, was criticized by various authorities and went unreleased until 1958. All footage from *Ivan the Terrible*, Part III was confiscated while the film was still incomplete, and most of it was destroyed, though several filmed scenes exist.

things together, one after the other, and our psychological response to those things is to create a third ‘representation’, a higher level of meaning produced by our own skills of association.⁵³ The emphasis again is on groups of three.

In fact, both the similarities and differences between the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* and the 1946 *О технике актера* show how important the 1946 edition was in the development of Chekhov’s theories and pedagogy. In essence, 1946 provided a “bridge” from the studio context of Dartington and Ridgefield (and for that matter, of Kaunas) to the new situation Chekhov found in Hollywood after 1943.

2.4d Atmosphere

The idea that a play produced on the stage must have an “Atmosphere” which communicates nonverbally to both the actors and especially to the audience was part of Michael Chekhov’s philosophy from its earliest expressions, including in the already-mentioned letter he wrote to his students in Jilinsky’s Kaunas studio in 1933. As an essential element of his teaching at Dartington and Ridgefield, the topic is included in “The 1942 Version,” elaborated in the 1946 edition, then repeated with some variations in 1953. As has been noted, in 1946, he expressed this in a metaphor: “The spirit in the work of art is its idea. The soul [that is, psyche] is the atmosphere. Yet, what is visible and audible is its body.”⁵⁴ In 1953, at the beginning of Chapter 4, he repeats this motto, and then continues to quote 1946 verbatim for five pages. Yet he returns to 1942 in combining Atmosphere with “Individual Feelings” (including movements with Qualities).⁵⁵

The evolution of how Chekhov describes the role of Atmosphere from 1942 to 1953 reveals interesting details of the theory and its approach to acting and directing practices. “The 1942 Version” emphasizes the general

⁵³ Eisenstein, Sergei, and Richard Taylor, transl. and ed. 1988. *Writings*. London: British Film Institute, vol 1, years 1922–1934, pp. 140, 164. Cf. Pitches 2018 (2004), p.74.

⁵⁴ 1946, p. [32]; 1953, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Chekhov had divided the two ideas into separate chapters in 1946. In 1953 he puts them back together again. As the 1953 chapter progresses, paraphrases and transposed abridged sections from 1946 are recombined with elements closer to Chekhov’s way of speaking in 1942. Nevertheless, over 90% of the 1953 discussion of Atmosphere is very close to the 1946 text, and almost nothing is left out, except for a final section in 1946 on “The Atmosphere as a Way of Rehearsing” (1946, pp. 46-48), part of which is picked up again in 1953 with regard to the “Psychological Gesture” (Chapter 5, 63-84) and part in “How to Approach the Part” (Chapter 10, 146-170).

concept of Atmospheres and its impact on the “individual feelings” both of people in real life and of the actor in character on the stage. While he separates the terms, “Atmosphere” (an “objective atmosphere outside of the individual”) from “individual Feelings,” he links the two ideas together in dramatic terms, especially in the exercises. He says, “both individual and objective Feelings may be different ... [but] often both may be present in the same time and the same space. That is what our experience shows us in ... life as well as on the stage.”⁵⁶ There is no mention of “warring” (conflicting or opposed) atmospheres. In 1946, he maintains the separate terminology: “Objective Atmosphere and subjective feelings ... the individual feelings of the actor on stage and the surrounding Atmosphere.” But it is here that he says, “two different [objective] Atmospheres cannot exist simultaneously. One (the strongest) wins or modifies another.” That is, the “warring Atmospheres” must produce a resolution of conflict, which Chekhov implies is similar to a catharsis.

Nevertheless, in 1946 he insists that the general objective atmosphere and individual feelings can co-exist even if they are in conflict.

The subjective feelings in a person, and the objective atmosphere outside of the person, are so independent in relation to each other that a person, staying in an opposing atmosphere, can still retain personal feelings in him - or herself. An atheist, for example, can maintain his skeptical feeling in an atmosphere of religious reverence, or a person surrounded by a cheerful and joyful atmosphere - experiencing a personal deep sorrow.

While two warring atmospheres cannot exist simultaneously, individual feelings and the atmosphere opposite to them can not only get along together, but they usually create spectacular moments on stage, giving the viewer aesthetic satisfaction. Between the individual feeling and the atmosphere, if they contradict each other, there is the same struggle as between the two warring atmospheres. This struggle creates a tension of scenic action, attracting the attention of the viewer.

⁵⁶ Chekhov, 1942/1991, pp. 31-35.

If the struggle is resolved by the victory of the atmosphere over an individual feeling or vice versa, the victorious party increases in strength and the public receives a new artistic satisfaction as if from a resolved musical chord.⁵⁷

One notices that Chekhov says “if” (если), not “when,” the struggle is resolved, then moves to a musical metaphor in keeping with his idea of the overall “score of Atmospheres.” (See above, Chapter One.) The point is that the victory over the individual feelings is conditional, so that Chekhov leaves the option open for the conflict not to be resolved.

Since the 1953 edition follows 1946 (and 1942) so closely, it is odd to find what seems to have been a change on Chekhov’s part in the 1953 chapter on Atmospheres. He presents the idea of the two different Atmospheres (objective Atmospheres and individual subjective feelings), affirms that two competing objective Atmospheres cannot exist simultaneously, and repeats 1946’s examples of the atheist existing in a religious atmosphere and a sorrowful person surrounded by a cheerful atmosphere – all of it verbatim from 1946.⁵⁸ However, on the next page in 1953, he seems to contradict himself. He now says that the individual’s fight with a hostile objective atmosphere will inevitably result in either in the atmosphere or the individual being triumphant. There is no possibility of the two co-existing. Either the objective atmosphere wins or the individual feelings win.

... the conflict between two contrasting atmospheres, and the slow or sudden but inevitable defeat of one of them, or the individual feelings of a character engaging in a fight with a hostile atmosphere, resulting in either a victory or defeat of the atmosphere over individual feelings.⁵⁹

This does not allow a third possibility, in which neither the individual feelings nor the objective atmosphere wins. In this case, there would be no resolution of conflict. For example, consider a rebellious hero who ends the play still

⁵⁷ For this and the previous quotations, see Chekhov 1946, pp. 36-38 – translated from the Russian. Emphasis added here.

⁵⁸ Chekhov 1953, pp. 52-53 (Chekhov 1953/2002, pp.51-52: “atmospheres *objective feelings* as opposed to individual *subjective feelings*” – Chekhov’s italics; “two different atmospheres objective feelings” cannot exist simultaneously; and examples of the atheist and sorrowful person, respectively.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p.53 in 1953 (p. 52 in 2002).

refusing to agree with the general Atmosphere without being completely destroyed. (Here we should think of the plays of Chekhov's uncle, Anton P. Chekhov – as in the characters Sonja and Vanya who continue living and working at the end of the play *Uncle Vanya*, with Sonya's faith, and essentially love and respect for one another.)

Why this apparent contradiction with the text in 1946? The contradiction may have been a lapse on Leonard's part as the editor, or it may reflect the real public "atmosphere" of the McCarthy era in the United States in the early 1950s. It was a time when, one after the other, people whom Chekhov knew were paraded before Congressional committees and saw their careers ruined. It seems significant that Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* –which used a plot about the Salem, Massachusetts, witch trials of the 1600s in order to overtly criticize the Congressional investigations of Communism in that era – premiered in 1953. In the play, the protagonist is literally crushed to death for resisting the prevalent Atmosphere of hysteria. Chekhov's first pupil and patron, Beatrice Whitney Straight, won a Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in the play, and was blacklisted for her efforts when the show and its producers and cast were investigated by congressional committees.⁶⁰ In fact, Charles Leonard himself had just been blacklisted – fired from a job as publicist for the L. Ron Hubbard Foundation after being named a Communist in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee.⁶¹ Nevertheless, within two years, Chekhov specifically returned to his original position of individual subjective feelings being able to resist an objective Atmosphere on the stage in the last lecture he gave before his death in 1955. "Whereas the individual and personal, particular atmosphere of the character and the general atmosphere of the scene, they can co-exist perfectly

⁶⁰ Murphy, Brenda. 2003. *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, pp. 106 ff. Straight was removed from the blacklist by the intervention of a Catholic priest.

⁶¹ Julietta Appleton, in her father's biography in IMDb [Internet Movie Database], recounts how her father "was fired from the Foundation position for his past membership in the Communist Party, after David and Babette Lang named him at the McCarthy HUAC hearings." Available URL: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0502587/bio?ref=nm_ov_bio_sm .

well.”⁶² The point is not minor: training students in these techniques is highly important in the Chekhov work and in presenting modern drama. (See below, Chapter Four.)

A handful of other concepts are added in 1953 to the sense of Atmospheres that link it to the rest of his method.⁶³ For example, Chekhov speaks metaphorically of a “will” or dynamic, driving power within the Atmosphere urging the performer to act in harmony with it; he adds an example/exercise found elsewhere in his teaching, that of a “street catastrophe.” He discusses the effects of stage lighting, grouping of actors, different vocal effects, and so forth. Here one recalls a detail in an important improvisational étude, which will also be discussed below, involving an event in a fishing village. For the improvisation at Dartington and Ridgefield, Chekhov asked the students to prepare stage lighting with colored gelatin filters to augment the Atmosphere. (Like many people associated with the theatre, I have vivid childhood memories of the colored lights onstage creating an “Atmosphere.”)

Of course, the actors onstage share the same physical space as the audience, so that the Atmosphere generated by the *mise-en-scène* is shared by both actor and viewer. In film, the *mise-en-scène* applies only to what the camera sees and does, and the shots may not be filmed in sequence. This increases the importance of each actor’s maintaining the continuity and Atmosphere of each scene during shots that are often separated. (For example, in the British television series, *Father Brown*, I have often admired the ability of Mark Williams, in playing the lead character, to maintain the Atmosphere of a scene even when it takes him into several different settings, interiors and exteriors. The Chekhov method trains the actor to accomplish this.)

Finally, Chekhov concludes his ideas on Atmosphere with another addition, no doubt combining his hopes for a theatre of the future with his experiences in America:

⁶² Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10-4790 (Unpublished). This and the previous Tape 11 (LT10-4789) were the last two lectures Chekhov recorded before his death on the night of September 30 - 1 October 1955.

⁶³ Chekhov 1953, pp. 50-55.

An individual, if he wishes, can dispense with his feelings for a while in his private life; but the arts, and the theater in particular, will slowly approach death if the atmospheres cease to radiate through their creations. The great mission of the actor as well as the director and the playwright is to save the soul of the theater and with it the future of our profession.⁶⁴

There follows Chekhov's section on "individual feelings," with the Steiner-derived theories of "coloring," as we have seen, being replaced by the discussion of "movement with Qualities."⁶⁵ In both 1946 and 1953, this discussion sets up the chapters on the Psychological Gesture.

2.4e Variations among Editions

Looking at other chapters from 1953 with many similarities to the 1946 text, we find a pattern emerging in the editing of Chekhov's ideas for the 1953 publication. In these chapters, (1) an initial use of Chekhov's 1946 text at the beginning is followed by (2) a re-ordered use of the 1946 material, (3) an increasing reliance on abridged or paraphrased excerpts from 1946 or 1942, and finally, (4) new observations (sometimes alternating with the 1946 material). This is to say, that while most of Chekhov's principles are largely the same, the presentation and many details are often different. (Of course, among the details lost are Chekhov's direct use of Steiner's ideas, including in exercises, and the clearly spiritual aspect that seems to permeate the 1946 and especially the 1942 versions.)

The 1953 edition also both abridges and combines other chapters from 1942 and 1946. For example, two chapters – Chapter 2 in 1953 ("Imagination and Incorporation of Images") and Chapters 6 in all three editions ("Character and Characterization") – concern embodying the Images in the mind into the creation of a character. All the major concepts are repeated: embodiment of your intuitive vision of your character, being specific, asking questions of the images, using the Imaginary Body and the Imaginary Center (including the

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55.

⁶⁵ Chekhov 1953, Chapter 4, for the most part a close but abridged paraphrase of the corresponding Chapter [3] in 1946, itself on the basis of 1942.

example of *Don Quixote*), and distinguishing the character as a whole from its characterization in details (small, peculiar features). But the corresponding text of Chapter 6 in 1953 is paraphrased or entirely rewritten, abridged, and made less applied (for example, by removing exercises). Chapter 2 begins with two pages of verbatim repetition of 1946, and paraphrases Chekhov's ideas about images and intuition, but then adds new material. ("Dry reasoning kills your imagination.")⁶⁶ Some exercises are omitted, and others are combined with different text, new additions, and directions, or given different applications.⁶⁷ The rest of the 1953 Chapter 2 departs entirely from the 1946 text with only a few exceptions but does add what might be called a "sermon" on the function of the actor in modern, naturalistic plays.⁶⁸ Chapter 3, "Improvisation and Ensemble," repeats some extremely lengthy and detailed exercises from the previous editions, and reduces other to less than one page. At the end of this chapter Chekhov stresses the importance of listening "from the depth of your creative individuality... to the 'inner voice' you possess (which) never lies."⁶⁹ Similarly, as we discussed above, 1946 Chapters [2] and [3] are abridged and combined into one chapter in 1953 – Chapter 4, "The Atmosphere and Individual Feelings."⁷⁰

2.4f Differences between 1946 and 1953

The numerous similarities between the editions of 1946 and 1953 in fact mask how different the two publications are. To begin with, the order of the chapters is changed, although, as has already been shown, Chekhov was re-ordering chapters even within the manuscripts of "The 1942 Version." The

⁶⁶ Chekhov 1953, pp. 21-34; compare 1946, Chapter [1], "Imagination and Attention," pp. 9-28, especially p.15.

⁶⁷ So, for example, 1946 Exercise 1, on "Attention" is omitted; Exercise 10 in 1953 (three single-spaced pages!, pp. 29-32) covers concentration, recollections, and incorporation of images, derived from many aspects of 1946 Exercise 2, with additions; 1953 Exercise 11, pp.32-33), relates to 1946 (Chapter [3], p. 53) "Actions with a Certain Color," but with all traces of Steiner removed and the focus shifted to linking "your vivid imagination with your body, voice and psychology" so that "your means of expression will thus become flexible and obedient to your commands."

⁶⁸ "What the author has given you in the form of the written play is *his* creation, not yours. ... But what is *your* contribution to the writer's work?" 1953, pp.27-29, italics Chekhov's.

⁶⁹ Chekhov 1953, pp. 35-46, combining 1946 Chapters [7], "Improvisation," pp. 129-138, and [8] "Actors' Collective" (i.e., Ensemble), pp. 139-150). Quotation is from 1953 p. 46. Among the casualties is a version of the standard Stanislavsky "threshold" exercise (1946, Exercise 24, pp. 146-147 – also present in 1942/1991, pp. 116-117).

⁷⁰ 1953, pp. 47-62.

1953 edition has only 17 numbered exercises within the first five chapters (nine of which are in the first chapter) and ten “Examples for Improvisation” in a separate chapter at the end of the book. In comparison, the 1946 Russian text has 31 exercises and the 1942 manuscript, 87 exercises. Some of the 1946 exercises are repeated in 1953, as in Chapter 1, but others are omitted entirely, placed in other contexts, or replaced with other exercises from 1942 or Deirdre Hurst du Prey’s class notes (not surprising, given the scores of in-class exercises from Dartington, Ridgefield, and New York transcribed by Hurst).

2.4g Divided Consciousness

The omissions of ideas related to Rudolf Steiner and other spiritual values have been mentioned, particularly the substitution of “Qualities” for “coloration.” Unfortunately, one removal of Steiner’s ideas resulted in an important part of Chekhov’s dramatic theory, and its application to acting practice, being lost. This is the concept of Divided Consciousness,⁷¹ which Chekhov called “the fourth stage of the creative process” in 1942. In 1946, Chekhov expanded on the concept, which he called “triple consciousness.” In both cases, the character (the role) is the bearer of this third consciousness, and the actor “becomes inwardly free of his own creation.” The actor “must not be possessed by his role” – one of many quotes from Steiner and Goethe which Chekhov used while describing the phenomenon. This and all other specific Steiner-derived ideas were omitted from 1953 except for the motto for Chapter 2, a suggestion on tempo, and a brief passage where Steiner quotes poet Friedrich Schiller on “Good fights Evil”.⁷²

As has been mentioned, one notable difference among the three American editions is that each one presents the chapters in a different order, and therefore a different order of argument in presenting the Chekhov method. In 1953, Chekhov’s Chapter 1 is “The Actor’s Body and

⁷¹ Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 155-158; Chekhov 1946, pp. 156-164.

⁷² Chekhov 1953, pp. 21 (motto), 95 (Schiller), and 107 (Steiner on tempo) – the corresponding pages in 1953/2002 are pp. 21, 85, and 97, respectively. In 1946, Exercise 18, and 108-110, illustrating concepts from Rudolph Steiner’s Eurythmy are similarly omitted.

Psychology.” In 1942 and 1946, the same Chapter, entitled simply “The Actor’s Body,” was the fourth and fifth chapter in the book, respectively. The change can be explained by the fact that, in 1953, Chekhov uses “The Actor’s Body and Psychology” to set the tone for the whole book. He begins, as in 1946, with creating another “sermon” on the necessity of the actor’s developing an “extreme sensitivity of the body to psychological creative impulses” that cannot be achieved by physical exercise alone without “the psychology itself” taking part. The actor’s body must absorb and be filled with psychological qualities – note the use of the word, “qualities.” Chekhov contrasts this with a strong criticism of “materialistic concepts” causing the actor to eliminate psychological elements and “overestimate” physical elements in acting. The result for Chekhov is the necessity of “psychophysical” acting and training.

At the end of 1953 Chapter 1, he repeats this emphasis:

Thus, in our first nine exercises, we have laid the foundation for the attainment of the four requirements which are basic to the actor’s technique. By means of the suggested psychophysical exercises the actor can increase his *inner strength*, develop his abilities to *radiate and receive*, acquire a fine sense of *form*, enhance his feelings of *freedom, ease, calm and beauty*, experience the significance of his *inner being*, and learn to see things and processes in their *entirety*. If the suggested exercises are patiently complied with, all these and all the other qualities and abilities we have covered will permeate his body, making it finer and more sensitive, enrich his psychology and at the same time give him, even at this stage of his development, a degree of mastery over them.⁷³

This point of view is strongly implied throughout the 1942 and 1946 versions but not specifically included in the corresponding chapters on “The Actor’s Body,” and not stated at the outset of the texts. This suggests an awareness of a difference “audience” for the 1953 book, an idea to which we will return below.

⁷³ Chekhov 1953, p. 20 – italics Chekhov’s.

2.4h

Psychological Gesture

The most surprising differences among the three texts, however, are found in the chapter that describes what many people would consider the most important aspect of Chekhov's dramatic theory: "Psychological Gesture," Chapter 5 in 1953.⁷⁴ While both later editions depend on 1942 for the basic description of the Psychological Gesture, or PG, there is relatively little to compare between the 1946 Russian and the 1953 English editions. Even the illustrations by Nicolai Remisoff, that were so important in 1946, were reduced in number (seven of sixteen) and used in different ways.

In fact, less than 10% of the 1953 chapter can be related in any direct way to the 1946 Russian version. Conforming to the pattern we have already discussed, the introductory paragraphs to this chapter in 1953 are an expanded rewording of the first paragraph in 1946, but with significant differences.

[1946] "A psychological gesture enables the actor working on the role to make the first, free "charcoal sketch" on a large canvas. Your first creative impulse you pour into the form of a psychological gesture. You create a plan, according to which step by step you will implement your artistic design."⁷⁵

[1953] "A true PG [Psychological Gesture] will resemble the broad charcoal stroke on an artist's canvas before he starts on the details. It is, to restate it, a scaffolding upon which the whole complicated architectural construction of the character will be erected."⁷⁶

Added in the first 1953 example is the important idea of the PG being a "scaffold" on which you can hang or build your conception of the character. This is more than rhetoric, since it conveys to the actor the function of the PG in a concrete way – a metaphor that the actor can use in practice. It offers a parallel to the idea of through-lines and super-objectives as "spines" for a play. The parallel is important, since the most direct way to explain the PG is

⁷⁴ Chekhov 1953, pp. 63-84; available in Czech Translation by Zoja Oubramová in Chekhov 1928/2017, pp. 49-63.

⁷⁵ Chekhov 1946, p. 65: "Психологический жест дает возможность актеру, работающему над ролью, сделать первый, свободный "набросок углем" на большом полотне. Ваш первый творческий импульс вы выливаете в форму психологического жеста. Вы создаете как бы план, по которому шаг за шагом будете осуществлять ваш художественный замысел."

⁷⁶ Chekhov 1953, p. 78.

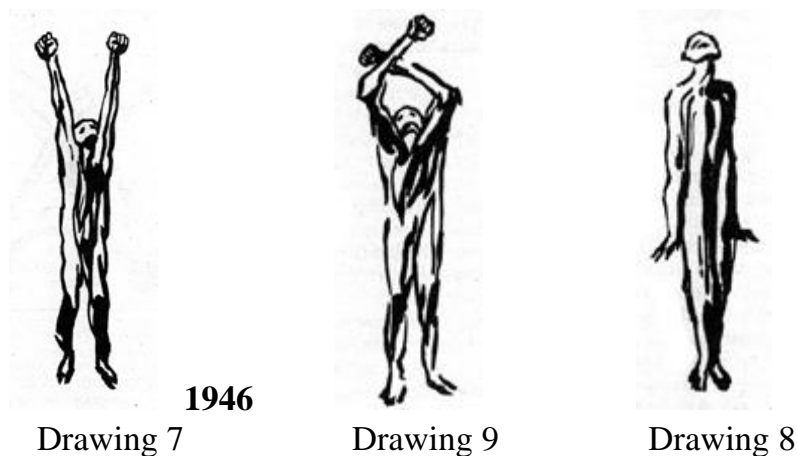
to have the actor find a super-objective for the character and convert it into a simple, "action verb" gesture.

From the point of view of writing a book, this desire to add nuances is typical of revised editions. A number of random comparisons suggest that Chekhov's general ideas of the PG were so well fixed in his mind that he could articulate them in a variety of ways to the same effect.

Illustrations

What is truly surprising, however, is the selective and abridged reuse of Nicolai Remisoff's 1946 illustrations. For the 1953 edition, Remisoff drew new black and white versions of only seven of his sixteen expressive two-color lithographs from 1946 – that is, 1953 used less than half of the original images. There are also new applications of the drawings to different dramatic topics, with varying degrees of relation to the 1946 text.

An example of the isolating re-use of the drawings may be seen in the following sequence from 1946.



In the 1946 chapter on PG, the context is Chekhov's showing how a series of gestures could inform the ending climax of Gorky *The Lower Depths*, while also showing how PGs work. Drawing 7 is labeled, "arms are quickly (power) thrown upwards (amazement), the fists are clenched (pain and force)." Drawing 9 (actually meant to follow 7), is labeled, "You may find that the color of the pain at the first shock will be reflected more strongly in the gesture if you throw your arms upwards and cross them over your head." Finally, Drawing 8 expresses, "after a pause (shock), [the hands] slowly

descend (increasing melancholy and depression).”⁷⁷ (See below, Appendix 10, “Psychological Gesture,” for full context.)

In 1953, 1946’s Drawing 7 is re-used as Drawing no. 5, but with the caption, “its main quality may seem to you to be suffering, perhaps with the nuance of anger or indignation.” (There is no reference to Gorky.) Or, immediately following, Drawing 8 in 1946 is reused as Drawing no. 6 in 1953: “weak type, unable to protest and fight his way through life; highly sensitive, inclined to suffering and self-pity, with a strong desire to complaints.”⁷⁸ Drawing no. 9 from 1946 is omitted in 1953. While the 1953 concepts are clearly related to the original use, if slightly different, a serious applied example has been lost. The 1946 images show a sequence from strength, to shock and pain, to weakness – a triplicity of beginning, middle, and end. The different application in 1953, with no sense of sequence, led to the 1946 drawings being isolated. To put it another way, 1946 shows “theatrical thinking,” potentially applied to what the actor actually does onstage; 1953 shows “dramatic thinking,” perhaps useful in training the actor but more general and not specifically applied. One should add that the lack of sequence – the isolation of the images – can be confusing to a new student, who does not have a trained teacher and might not understand how the sequence of images might be applied to the arc of PG developing over the course of a scene. Here we recall Chekhov practitioner Ted Pugh’s comment that just reading the 1953 book was not enough: “I had a teacher who basically went through the book – just what I was always looking for. Get me on my feet and say, chapter one, and that’s basically what he did. His name was Eddy Grove, and he had studied with Chekhov in California.”⁷⁹

Similarly, Drawing 11 in 1946 is part a sequence of three drawings (also in 1942) used by Chekhov to analyze gesture in the early scene in *Hamlet* where Horatio confronts the Ghost of Hamlet’s father. In 1953, the

⁷⁷ Chekhov 1946, p. 74. Drawing 7, “руки быстро (сила) вскидываются вверх (изумление), кулаки сжимаются (боль и сила)”; Drawing 8, “нарастающая тоска и подавленность”; Drawing 9, “Вы, может быть, найдете, что окраска боли при первом шоке сильнее отразится в жесте, если вы, вскинув вверх руки, скрестите их над головой (см. рис.9). После паузы вы медленно, с возрастающей окраской тоски, опускаете руки вниз, держа их близко к телу (подавленность).”

⁷⁸ Chekhov 1953, 68-71 (1953/2002, pp. 70-71).

⁷⁹ Included below in Appendix 6.

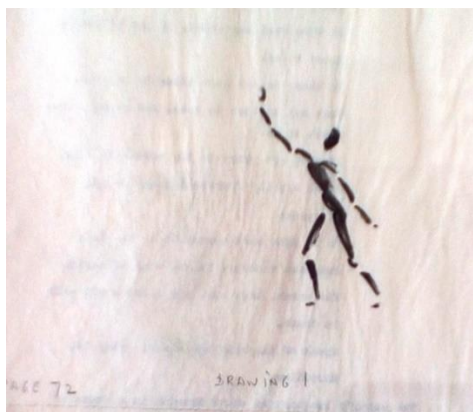
drawing (Drawing no. 1) is isolated and applied to a different concept:
“Imagine that you are going to play a character which ... has a strong and unbending *will*, is possessed by dominating, despotic *desires*, and is filled with *hatred* and *disgust*.”⁸⁰



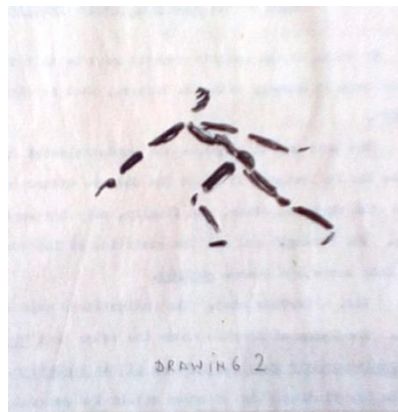
Drawing 11, 1946, redrawn as Drawing no. 1, 1953.

Obviously, the description has nothing to do with Horatio in *Hamlet*.

It is perhaps worthwhile to show some of the images from 1942 and 1946 not used in 1953. In Chekhov’s 1942 illustrations referring to the scene in which Horatio confronts the Ghost,⁸¹ the way the isolated parts of the body are depicted, make one think about “bits” in a scene or words in a sentence. Each part has its role in expression yet is part of the whole.



1942a Drawing 1



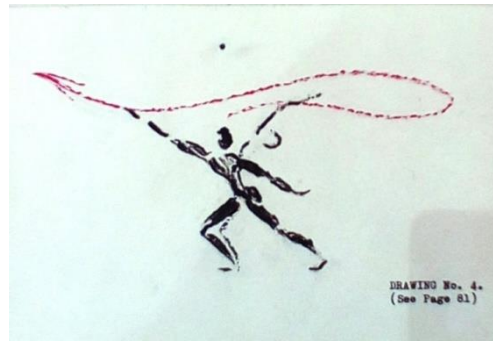
Drawing 2

⁸⁰ Chekhov 1953, p. 65 (1953/2002, p. 64). Compare 1946, pp. 77-81.

⁸¹ The drawings, by or after Chekhov himself, were inserted into the 1942a manuscript in the Dartington archives of *To the Actor* (“The 1942 Version”). The 1942 images (1942a, pp. 70 v, 72v, 73v, and 81) are previously unpublished.



Drawing 3



Drawing 4, repeating but citing 3 in a different context.

The sequence in 1946 is depicted as follows:



Drawing 10



Drawing 11



Drawing 12

Remisoff's drawings are directly derived from Chekhov's 1942 drawings, but they do not emphasize the segmented limbs and weight distribution. It is unfortunate that the entire sequence of these 1942 images – and more importantly, the analysis of the Horatio scene – which provides another good example of how a series of Psychological Gestures can be applied in a given scene – were omitted from the 1953 edition. The analysis was restored in the 1991 edition, based on the 1942 manuscripts, but only one of the images from 1946 (Drawing 11) was published, without it applying it to the Horatio scene and with the caption repeated from the 1953 edition!⁸² Other examples of this sort of change – for example, 1953 Drawings 2-4 – could be added, and this is not to mention the omitted drawings from 1946.

More recently, Andrei Malaev-Babel has restored Remisoff's 1946 version of these images in context for the Horatio scene, as well as other 1946 drawings, in his appendix to the 1953/2002 edition of 1953 (pp. 200-205).

⁸² Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 66-68, followed by Drawing 1(69 bis).

How does one explain the changes? The most obvious reason is twofold: a change of audience, and a change of publisher. Particularly in 1942, Chekhov still had young professionals, former students in the Chekhov Theatre Studio, still on the road in plays, and New York professional actors to whom he had been giving classes. This applied focus carried over into the 1946 edition, where he had the opportunity to develop the PG concept definitively, in his native language. The 1953 audience, while it included his students and associated Hollywood professionals in his classes, students who took private coaching sessions with him, and those who attended his lectures, were not part of a teaching studio. They needed general dramatic concepts they could then apply to their training and work. As for the publisher, both the 1942 and 1946 editions had been rejected in part because they were “too complicated.” The simplification and generalization of the image captions follows the need for a more streamlined product, and in fact, the strategy succeeded, since the book was published.

2.4i New Elements in 1953

While the 1953 edition offers changes and omissions, it also provides new material not previously published by Chekhov. For example, Chapter 9 in 1953, “Different Types of Performances,” appears to be a completely new essay, although it picks up on themes found here and there through both the 1946 and 1942 texts, such as “The Sense of Style,”⁸³ including clowning, vaudeville, period styles, and so forth. Concepts such as Tempo, often found in Chekhov’s teaching, are also part of the discussion.

The following chapter, “How to Approach the Part,” also newly-added in 1953,⁸⁴ takes each of the topics in the other chapters and applies them to the way an actor can approach his or her part, from the direction of atmospheres, sensation of feelings, Psychological Gesture, Tempo, and so forth. Interestingly, several pages are dedicated to concepts which Chekhov

⁸³ Chekhov 1942/1991, Chapter 7, “From Script to Rehearsal Hall” – subchapter on “The Sense of Style,” pp. 124-128.

⁸⁴ Chekhov 1953, Chapter 10, “How to Approach the Part,” pp. 146-170.

cites from Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov,⁸⁵ including objectives, super-objectives, Vakhtangov's ideas about the imaginary presence of the audience in rehearsal, stage business, and the application of Psychological Gesture to objectives. As already discussed in terms of application of dramatic theory in Chapter One, above, this embrace of Chekhov's own origins in the Moscow Art Theatre, appears occasionally in 1942 but rarely in 1946.⁸⁶ The theme is underscored strongly in 1953. Similarly, Chekhov will return to this theme in his 1955 lectures. In addition to his real concerns about Affective Memory in Stanislavsky's early method – which of course were even stronger, as has been mentioned, in the case of Lee Strasberg and other American teachers – Chekhov must have felt the need to claim the role of the torch-bearer for the MAT traditions, completing what he promised Stanislavsky and himself: that he would share his techniques and insights with a wider public.

The new element is of course the audience, or, one might even say, an awareness of the market – perhaps Charles Leonard remembered what Chekhov said about the English translation of the 1946 edition being about making American money, whereas the Russian version came from his heart. (In either case, Chekhov spent his own money to publish the Russian edition privately.) From a publishing point of view, Chekhov needed to underscore his MAT connections, especially in a Hollywood enamored of New York Strasberg-related “Method actors” and associated directors. Marlon Brando had brought his Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* from Broadway to Hollywood in 1951, under the Actor's Studio director, Elia Kazan. Chekhov was in effect defending his territory and his status as the pedagogue most closely associated with Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov.

⁸⁵ Chekhov 1953, pp. 154-169. Stanislavsky et alia are repeatedly mentioned, pp. 132-161. In 1942 (e.g., pp. 11-12 and 62-63) and 1946, the mentions are basically anecdotes or passages showing how Chekhov's ideas on PG evolved out of Stanislavsky's practices.

⁸⁶ Chekhov 1942/1991, Chapter VII, “From Script to Rehearsal Hall,” 107 ff. This is in keeping with Chekhov's already-mentioned intention of including Russian actors (but not the government) in his 1946 audience. Associating his name with the MHAT would have been bad for Russian colleagues still working there, but also useless for Chekhov, since under Stalin's rule in the 1930s, Socialist Realism had been increasingly imposed upon the MHAT, and particularly from 1938 (Stanislavsky's death) to 1953, the MAT's work had lost its verve, with its productions becoming notably undistinguished. See Carnicke, Sharon Marie, 2004. “Moscow Art Theatre,” from *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, vol. 3, New York: MacMillan Reference, citing further bibliography; available URL: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/literature-and-arts/performing-arts/theater/moscow-art-theater>.

After all, Chekhov's own "method" students from Ridgefield – Yul Brynner, Hurd Hatfield, Woody Chambliss, Erika Kapralik, Ford Rainey, and Alan Harkness, who had tragically died in 1952 – were making fine careers in Los Angeles. Others, such as Beatrice Straight, continued to find success in New York. And, by 1953, Chekhov's new protégés (Mala Powers, Gary Cooper, Marilyn Monroe, Jennifer Jones, Jack Palance, Anthony Quinn, James Dean, et al.), and others trained in Chekhov's method under George Shdanoff, were also finding enormous success. By 1953 Chekhov had re-oriented himself to this community of students and advisees, and established a new teaching system with a kind of loose "infrastructure" of supporters (such as Akim Tamiroff), who were aware of the MAT "Method" and its American practitioners. More importantly, there was the pressing question of the artistic needs of his students. As also discussed in Chapter One, not all the students coming to Chekhov knew the Stanislavsky techniques, so including these elements was a wise step towards better training and reaching a wider audience.⁸⁷

"Examples for Improvisation"

The final chapter in the 1953 edition, Chapter 12, "Examples for Improvisation,"⁸⁸ also provides completely new material: ten scenarios for the improvisation of entire scenes by groups of actors. Unlike the usual short improvisation "starters" of American improvisation teachers such as Viola Spolin (see below, Chapter Three), and indeed of Chekhov himself at Dartington and Ridgefield in many cases, these scenarios are highly detailed, as though they were the *lazzi* of Commedia dell'Arte scenes in the "Commedia Erudita" tradition. Furthermore, they offer a survey of Chekhov's own experiences as an actor and teacher over the entire range of his career. The roots of this type of improvisation in Chekhov's pedagogy are the improvisatory "études" in Stanislavsky's training methods, and they became a notable part of Chekhov's first private studio in Moscow, where the

⁸⁷ See above, Chapter One, and Appendix 6. As noted, Mala Powers reported this lack of method training in her own experience to Lisa Dalton, who generously shared this aspect of Powers' training.

⁸⁸ Chekhov 1953, pp. 179-201 (1953/2002, pp. 162-182). Hereafter cited in text with the format, "(179-201/162-182)," with 1953 before 1953/2002.

improvisations became “a long, complicated scene ... we would act it out several days in succession, using my entire apartment where I lived for this purpose and even going out into the yard and street.”⁸⁹ Improvisation no. 2 (184-186/166-168), “The Operating Room,” channels Chekhov’s own experiences while at the MAT, when he visited a surgical procedure at a medical school.⁹⁰ Another two of the scenarios, “Circus Triangle” (no. 3, 186-189/168-171) and “Stop Laughing!” (no. 8, 196-198/178-179) are set in a circus and may relate to Chekhov’s famous experience playing the clown, Skid, in Reinhardt’s Vienna production of *Artisten*. “Circus Triangle” involves a love triangle and trapeze accident, and reminds one that Chekhov’s former pupil, Yul Brynner, one of the most famous dramatic artists in America in 1953 and the author of the preface to the 1953 edition, came to the Ridgefield Studio after his career as a circus artist in France was cut short by an accident. Interestingly, the 1955 circus film, *Trapeze*, starring and co-produced by Burt Lancaster, himself a former trapeze artist who studied (and argued) with Chekhov,⁹¹ has a very similar plot line. “The Conflict” (no. 6, 194/175-176), involving a country doctor and fatal illnesses, may have recalled Chekhov’s personal experiences with the deaths of loved ones and close colleagues, 1913-1922, and his own problems with heart disease while living in exile.

One of the études, “Directorial Debut” (no. 7, 195-196/176-177), certainly reflects Chekhov’s experience, and that of his acting students, in the Hollywood film industry. In the étude, a brilliant young stage director – Chekhov calls him a “fountainhead” of inspiration – is shooting his first big film scene. The first “take” of the scene is a perfect success, and universal joy breaks out among the cast and crew. Unfortunately, the philistine producer of the film is also there, and after applauding the director and cast’s

⁸⁹ Chekhov 1928/2005, *Path*, p. 82; original Russian per Lit. Nasl. 1986, p. 103 (1995, pp. 108ff); also cited and partially translated by Byckling 2011, p. 10. Quite a bit is known about these classes, thanks to Chekhov’s own account, Lit. Nasl. 1986, vol. 1, 98-107, and the memoirs of Maria Knebel (1898-1985), the actress and teacher in the final years of the MAT, and the person who first began reviving awareness of Chekhov’s work in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and 1960s. Cf. Carnicke, Sharon Marie. 2015. “Michael Chekhov’s Legacy in Soviet Russia: A story about coming home,” in Routledge 2015, pp. 197-198 and 191-206, *passim*.

⁹⁰ Chekhov, *Path*, 2005, pp. 96-97; Lit. nasl. 1995, I, pp. 95-96.

⁹¹ Reported by Anthony Quinn in Keeve 2002/2009-2010.

efforts, begins to criticize the scene, humiliating the young director before his colleagues and ultimately demanding that he either re-shoot the scene or be replaced. We know, from an extended question and answer session that was part of one of Chekhov's 1955 recorded Hollywood lectures, that this sort of materialistic, anti-aesthetic interference was being discussed from an actor's point of view in Chekhov's classes, and was a persistent problem in the film industry, 1945-1955.⁹² The use of the word, "fountainhead," is significant, because it relates to the careers of two of Chekhov's most famous pupils, Patricia Neal (who was also coached by George and Else Shdanoff) and Gary Cooper, who both starred in the film, "The Fountainhead", in 1949. Cooper attended sessions for professional actors that Chekhov led at Akim Tamiroff's house and famously used one of Chekhov's exercises in which the actor sinks imaginary roots into the earth to derive energy, in order to unblock his acting in a difficult scene in the 1949 film.⁹³

Equally significant is the inclusion of the "Seascape," étude no. 5 (192-194; 174-175), in which the people of a fishing-village await the return of the ships after a storm. As discussed above, Chapter One, it is better known as "The Fishers," from the title of the scenario when Chekhov used it at Dartington and Ridgefield; it was directly related to training in Atmosphere. (Almost all the improvisations, particularly "Directorial Debut" and the circus-themed pieces, hinge on changes of Atmosphere.) "The Fishers" was recorded by Deirdre Hurst [du Prey] in October 1936. It was first used in a class on 21 October, and Hurst subsequently directed the scene during the spring term of 1937, where it became part of the final performance in July.⁹⁴ Chekhov's scenario in 1936 was brief:

Imagine a scene of fisher folk standing on the shore. They have been waiting two days and two nights for the fishing fleet to come home.

⁹² Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, "[1] Questions and answers. [2] About the Stanislavsky Method of Acting"; NYPL call no. LT10-4779.

⁹³ Recounted by Anthony Quinn in Keeve 2002/2009-2010. "[Chekhov] would say to us: 'You are full of gold, now you have to send it out.' It was funny to see Garry Cooper trying it."

⁹⁴ See Cornford, Thomas. 2012. *The English Theatre Studios of Michael Chekhov and Michel Saint-Denis, 1935-1965*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Coventry, UK: University of Warwick, p. 85, citing Hurst typescripts for 20, 21, and 27 October 1936. Available URL: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/57044>. Also analyzed at length by Pitches 2013, pp. 219-236. Cf. Pitches, Jonathan. 2015. "Contrasting Modernities: The rural and the urban in Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture and Meyerhold's biomechanical études," in Routledge 2015, pp. 226, 232 and 233 n. 13.

They see a light, but it fades out, then two lights appear in the darkness, and finally in the early morning the ships return, but one is missing.⁹⁵

As has been noted above, Chekhov adds a technical direction, “To help increase the atmosphere, use the colored gelatins – green and blue – two blues for night.” The much longer scenario published in 1953 represents the finished scene directed by Hurst du Prey (another example of her contributions to Chekhov’s pedagogy and writings), and the students responses to it, and perhaps later improvisations on the same scenario.⁹⁶ The other 1953 scenarios undoubtedly also relate to work in the Chekhov Theatre Studio from 1936 to 1942. These and other sources are joined with a presentation of the new ideas and exercises Chekhov developed within the film community in California, including his experience in Hollywood films and his knowledge of the way movie scenes are shot. As Pitches has noted, this use of going beyond improvisation to what we would today call “devising” theatre, is far ahead of its time.⁹⁷

What might have been Chekhov’s motives for including such an extended set of improvisation scenarios in the 1953 edition? Above all, this chapter in 1953 is a bridge to all that Chekhov and his students did during the years at Dartington and Ridgefield in the Chekhov Theatre Studio and the New York classes. One recalls that when the young professionals of the Studio did *Twelfth Night* on Broadway in December 1941, among the many things the critics applauded was the sense of inventiveness and ensemble creation in the performance.⁹⁸ But also, Chekhov was no doubt responding to requests from his new students in California – Jack Colvin, Mala Powers, and Joanna Merlin, for example. We know from the reports of Akim Tamiroff,

⁹⁵ Hurst typescripts for 20-21 October 1936. Copies at Adelphi and Dartington.

⁹⁶ The responses of Hurst, and the Dartington students involved in the improvisation, are preserved in a folder entitled, “Sketch Book for “The Fishing Scene” of 1936-37.” Dartington Hall Archives MC/S6/3/R. Discussed by Pitches 2013, *passim*.

⁹⁷ Pitches 2015, p. 226: “Chekhov [enlisted] the whole ensemble of students in collective improvisation, or in what would now be called ‘devising.’ These improvised studies, used as an integrating tool, formed a central part of the curriculum at Dartington and indicate the extent to which Chekhov was eschewing fixed models of training in favor of the fluidity and creative challenge of improvisation.”

⁹⁸ *Twelfth Night* was already in preparation at Dartington and was supposed to be staged in London. Instead, the Studio moved to Ridgefield in 1939.

Anthony Quinn, and others that the sessions Chekhov led in Hollywood for professional actors included improvisation scenes – there was a famous one where Gary Cooper and others staged an improvised poker game.⁹⁹ The success of these scenes among the elite of Hollywood actors may have been a strong inspiration to Chekhov. The improvisations chapter also allows Chekhov to include more of the spirit of the 1942 and 1946 editions – the word, “improvisation,” is mentioned over 60 times in the Russian 1946 text, and improvisation is an essential element in many exercises in both of the earlier editions. Chekhov may have been aware that, in writing a more general text, he had missed opportunities to apply his theories and pedagogical approaches to practical activities.

Finally, there is the quality of “Vividness” that the Improvisations chapter adds to the book, and that Chekhov’s training added to the *Twelfth Night* performance by his company. The improvisations are an instantaneous way to apply in “real time” all Chekhov sought to teach. This goes back to his fluid, dynamic understanding of the spontaneous, even playful, elements in his intuitive or a Hollywood film set methods such as the Psychological Gesture – living, interconnected elements always available for immediate application, whether in a studio improvisation.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

The 1953 edition of *To the Actor* clearly expresses the basic ideas of Michael Chekhov’s dramatic theory and practical applications, as developed from his pedagogy over two decades, and articulated in his editions of 1942, 1946, and 1953.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the 1953 edition must also be understood to vary considerably from Chekhov’s previous articulations of his system. Two important chapters (2, on Imagination, and 5, on Psychological Gesture) show significant omissions, mainly in missing exercises, but also, new approaches

⁹⁹ So, for example, Quinn in Keeve 2002/2009-2010: Chekhov asked him: “Have you worked in the theatre? Cooper: “I never have.” Chekhov: “Well, I would like you to do an improvisation....” Quinn also reported to Beatrice Straight, “Chekhov was the single most important teacher I ever had.” (Cornell University Library, Beatrice Straight Papers, box 3).

¹⁰⁰ Four chapters in 1953 (1, 4, 7, and 8) follow 1946 closely if with some variations, another chapter (6) is highly similar but rewritten, and one (3) combines and abridges two chapters each from 1946 – with all of them including occasional additions taken directly from 1942.

to the material. Fully a third of the book (Chapters 9-12) provides entirely new material shown in a different light and not included in 1946 or 1942.¹⁰¹

Throughout the 1953 edition, Chekhov presents the innovative applications of the ideas and exercises he developed in California, including those based on his experience in Hollywood films. All of this contributes to the significant differences from the earlier versions, and seemingly even with the lectures and exercises Chekhov presented to professional actors at New York City in 1941. The educational principles remain the same, but the context has changed, and Chekhov's dramatic theories and his articulation of them have clearly evolved.

The varying presentations in 1942, 1946, and 1953 illustrate, as mentioned above, what is often said about Chekhov the actor: that he needed to perform for an audience. This is also true of his written work. When he is writing, it is clear that he is writing to different audiences. In 1942, he was speaking first to his patrons at Dartington and Ridgefield, the Elmhursts, to his students and colleagues in the Chekhov Theatre Studio, and to New York City professional actors. In 1946, it was the Russian-speaking acting community internationally, and, with the English translations of that text, a wider community throughout the English-speaking world.

In 1953, the audience was a perhaps more specifically American mixture of stage professionals, film professionals, and future drama students. These included, in particular, Hollywood actors, students, and directors, and the American followers of methods derived from Stanislavsky and the MAT, who were also Chekhov's competition. In any case, the 1953 edition found its target audience, and has remained in print for over 65 years, not to mention numerous translations. Many actors find it essential guidance for their creative process. Chekhov practitioners and teachers with a deeper understanding of the technique, however, continue to use the 1942/1991 edition, and the 1946 text if they read Russian, for the many insights they provide into the Chekhov work.

¹⁰¹ Obviously, the topics, such as feelings and so forth, occur in all three texts, but the articulations and many topics are new in 1953.

In all the editions of his pedagogical works, and in his lectures, Chekhov is sending a message for twenty-first century actors and audiences – who are “the theatre of the future” from his point of view, but who also have to prepare the theatre to be significant for yet other generations to come. The message is to turn ourselves towards our inner strengths; to become more spiritual; to be humble, disciplined, and responsible. Among the virtues given to us are faith, hope and love, and among the artistic techniques are those Chekhov left to help us unlock the secret treasure house of our feelings and will-impulses as they are nourished by our Higher Self. Our task is to keep cultivating and making these virtues grow.

In 2009, Robert Wilson re-staged *Quartett*, Heiner Müller's and Ros Ribas's dramatic version of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, in a multilingual performance starring Isabelle Huppert. At one point, Huppert delivered a hypnotizing monologue in which the dramatic text was refracted as though through the facets of an immense unseen jewel held up in her hand. Reading Chekhov's version of his dramatic method offers the theatre professional a similar experience: something beautiful and powerful can be appreciated as seen through the facets of Michael Chekhov's career and pedagogical development.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER THREE

Learning the Michael Chekhov Technique

3.1 My Background in Acting Training

Like many actors who studied the craft in the later twentieth century, I learned dramatic techniques in the tradition of the “System” taught at the Moscow Art Theatre by Konstantin Stanislavsky, in collaboration with Leopold Sulerzhitsky, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov.¹ This was true both of my studies at DAMU, which included both Stanislavsky’s and Richard Boleslavsky’s writings, and of my subsequent training in the United States, principally at the HB Studio in New York with Herbert Berghof and Uta Hagen, but also with followers of Sanford Meisner at the Columbia University Film Studies Program – although both the HB Studio and the Meisner technique offer numerous elements that parallel or are influenced by Michael Chekhov’s ideas.² Hagen is often considered as a teacher who maintained a fairly orthodox Stanislavsky approach, although it is clear, as Lee Strasberg observed, that she was greatly influenced by Vachtangov, who had privately prepared a short manuscript summarizing certain MAT techniques in 1919, the same year as Chekhov’s summary, extensively quoted above.³

¹ See above, Chapter One, for the role of this training in Michael Chekhov’s acting and pedagogy. Stanislavsky’s system did not have an equal influence internationally before World War II. There was awareness in America (including the teaching of Boleslavsky, Ouspenskaya, Daykarhanova, Adler, Chekhov, and others), in the Baltic States (Jilinsky, Soloviova, and Chekhov), and Poland, among others. On the other hand, in England as late as 1936-37, the famous British actor and director, John Gielgud (Gielgud 1937), lamented that there were “too few” theatre schools that were run by people of “real distinction in the theatre,” but among the ones that did exist, he cited the London Theatre School created by Michel Saint-Denis, which used Stanislavski-like methods, and the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington. Gielgud, John. January 1937. Review of Stanislavsky 1936, “An Actor Prepares: A Comment on Stanislavski’s Method,” in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, pp. 31-34. Franc Chamberlain has discussed the British situation at length; see Chamberlain, Franc. 2004. *Michael Chekhov*. Routledge., pp 28-29; and Chamberlain 2015, pp. 207-218, *passim*.

² Cf. the mentions of these teachers in the previous chapter.

³ Chekhov’s and Vachtangov’s manuscripts were translated and circulated, especially among actors associated with the Group Theatre and Actors Studio in New York. Hagen was influenced by Harold Clurman, one of the founders of the Group Theatre, and certainly was aware of Strasberg, *et alia* – see Hagen, Uta. 1991. *A Challenge for the Actor*. New York: Scribner’s, pp. 15-16 and ff. See also Gordon, Mel. 1987. *The Stanislavsky Technique, Russia: A Workbook for Actors*. New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, pp. 101-115, specifically citing the “Eight Lectures” Vachtangov gave in 1919, the presumed basis of the text used in New York. Further extensive documentation has been published in Vachtangov [Vakhtangov], Evgenij, and Andrei Malaev-Babel, ed. 2011. *The*

It is interesting that Michael Howard in his chapter on “Why an Actor’s Laboratory?” notes that “in the mid-1930s, with the excitement generated by the work of the Group Theatre and with Michael Chekhov,” American actors “more generally were drawn to continuing their professional training.” So, in the late 1930s and into 1940, when the Group Theatre ended, there was much interest in understanding its way of working, and Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner (major members of the Group) introduced ongoing classes for professional actors – at exactly the same time Michael Chekhov was giving his lessons for professional actors in New York. This changed American theater. After the war, the advent of the Actor’s Studio in 1947 (the same year that Uta Hagen began her classes) made continuing study an accepted part of an actor’s career. Actors began to see the value of a professional acting class, although, as Howard remarked, “others laughed at such time-wasting foolishness. Many actors still do.”⁴ Stanislavsky talked about how actors need to train and condition themselves on an absolutely consistent basis every day in order to grow and stay sharp. The Chekhov teacher, Scott Fielding, agrees: “For the actor, one of the challenges is that most of us don’t have access to an empty studio, and few actors go in the living room at nine in the morning and says, ‘I’m going to work on my acting for x number of hours.’ But that’s the hard work – the practice.”⁵ Michael Chekhov said that the actor is an actor twenty-four hours a day, and his work offers insight into how we can be exercising at any moment.

While Uta Hagen, in the preface for *Respect for Acting* confessed (probably in reaction to Strasberg) that she was “frankly fearful of those who profess to teach acting while plunging into areas of actor’s lives that do not belong on a stage or in a classroom,” and insisted on teaching acting “as I approach it – from the human and technical problems which I have

Vachtangov Sourcebook. London: Routledge. Hagen’s “object exercises” are often understood to derive from both Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov.

⁴ Howard, Michael, 2016. *The Actor Uncovered*. New York: Allworth Press, p. 158 and Chapter 16, “Why an Actor’s Laboratory?”, *passim*.

⁵ Quoted in Weinstein, Anna, and Chris Qualls, eds. 2017. *Acting for the Stage*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 130.

experienced through living and practice,” she also agreed that: “Talent alone is not enough. Character and ethics, a point of view about the world in which you live and an education, can and must be acquired and developed.”⁶ One should remember that Michael Chekhov was teaching before Uta Hagen started to teach acting herself, and Hagen had worked in 1947 with Harold Clurman, on whom Chekhov’s influence is documented. Nevertheless, neither Uta Hagen nor Herbert Berghof ever mentioned Michael Chekhov Technique in my hearing – nor did his work come up in the other classes I took in New York, or indeed, during either my studies or professional career in Prague.

Chekhov offered creative exercises which could be practiced by the actor alone and at any time. Another impulse for me to learn about Chekhov’s technique was a need to keep growing as an artist. There is a typical cliché heard in both performing arts and visual arts conservatories: “He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches.” When I first heard this, being already both a working actor and a teacher speaking in English, a new language I had to learn, it was very hurtful. However, in my case, a former student who subsequently performed with me in my productions for young audiences told me that, among her teachers at university, I stood out as someone who both did theatre, and therefore authentically knew about it, and taught what I knew. I also remembered what Uta Hagen said in her book *A Challenge for the Actor* “I would like to disagree with George Bernard Shaw’s statement that ‘He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches’ – to express my personal belief that ‘Only he who can should teach’.” I have to say that also in Chekhov I found a great master whose technique came from both an extraordinary career as an actor and director and long years as a revered pedagogue.

At the HB Studio, one of the foundations of actor preparation for a scene is Uta Hagen’s well-known “Six Steps” exercise, included here is the form which I use in my own classes, incorporating influences from the

⁶ Hagen and Frankel 1973, pp. 9, 13.

acting coach, Larry Moss, himself influenced by Michael Chekhov. The exercise originally provided the introduction to a series of chapters Hagen described as “object exercises.”

THE SIX STEPS

(From Uta Hagen and Larry Moss)⁷

1. WHO AM I?

What is my present state of being? What have I just done before entering the scene?

How do I perceive myself? What do I as a character know about myself that is relevant to the scene (my backgrounds, my attitudes) – especially as I enter?

What am I wearing?

2. WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

What time is it? (The year, the season, the day? At what time does my selected life begin?)

Where am I? – where does the scene take place? (In what city, neighborhood, building, and room do I find myself? Or in what landscape?)

What surrounds me? (The immediate landscape? The weather?

The condition of the place and the nature of the objects in it?)

Who is in the scene with me?

What are the immediate circumstances? (What has just happened is happening? What do I expect or plan to happen next and later on?)

3. WHAT ARE MY RELATIONSHIPS?

How do I stand in relationship to the circumstances, the place, the objects, and the other people related to my circumstances?

What do I know about the other characters in the scene?

⁷ Hagen 1991, Chapter 10, p. 134. The “Six Steps” are a reorganization of nine questions that Hagen asked at the beginning of her “object exercises” section in her 1973 text., Cf. Hagen 1973, pp. 82-85. See also Moss, Larry. 2006 (2005). *The Intent to Live: Achieving Your True Potential as an Actor; [A Renowned Acting Coach Tells How to Make Characters Live on Stage, Screen, and Television]*. New York: Bantam Books, on similar exercises.

What are my emotional relationships with the other characters?

What do the other characters say about me in previous scenes and in the current scene?

Given what the script tells us, are they telling the truth or lying/misinformed about me?

4. WHAT DO I WANT?

What is my main objective in the play? What is my immediate need or objective? What is my super objective?

5. WHAT IS MY OBSTACLE?

What is in the way of what I want? How do I overcome it?

6. WHAT DO I DO TO GET WHAT I WANT?

How can I achieve my objective?

What's my behavior? / What are my actions?

(What do I literally do during the scene? Does it match with what I say?)

What do the other characters do to me? How do they treat me?

A major error is to concern yourself with the effect your presentation will have on your teacher and fellow students. When you are involved in a simple task, when you are really interested, you will be interesting.”

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For a scene study class with Herbert Berghof, my partner and I meticulously prepared a scene, including using Hagen’s Six Steps. Berghof asked us if we knew what we wanted in the scene, what happened before, what comes after? Then he said, “now forget it, forget everything you prepared and do the scene. Are you ready to do it that way? Go ahead!” And after our performance was done, the feeling was extremely uplifting; we felt light, we delivered in a moment. I went through an experience as it happened in front of an audience right at that moment, in real time. And Berghof praised us: “that is the way to go.”

Looking back on this experience after having studied Chekhov technique, I realize how close it is to what Chekhov, at the beginning of his work at Dartington Hall, told Deirdre Hurst, Beatrice Straight, and other future teachers of his technique: “First we must know, then we must forget.

We must know and then be. For this aim, we need a method, because without it, it is not possible. To know and then forget. When we reach this point, we will be the new actor.”⁸ (Note that in choosing the word, “method,” Chekhov was paying homage to Stanislavsky and building on that tradition.) Berghof gave a green light for Creativity: “making it yours.” He gave the example of an actor playing a character who had failed a job interview in the past because of dirty fingernails. In response to this, the actor played the character with an unconscious nervous gesture of cleaning his nails with other hand, letting the “veiled” subject be visible for a fleeting moment. Chekhov practitioners often report having used techniques compatible, even identical, with the Chekhov method before they ever knew of Chekhov. They only needed someone to point this out for them to move on to studying the Chekhov work. In my case, it was my academic study of Chekhov’s life and pedagogy that led to the realization. This was followed by hands-on lessons and practice for five years, which I applied to my acting onstage and teaching.

And, as has already been mentioned, Hagen was both a great theatre artist and a respected New York cook and cookbook author.⁹ She actually had a kitchen set available on the classroom stage and had the same attitude towards stage properties as Chekhov, who spoke of the set and properties needing to be the actor’s friends and let his student actors work with real

⁸ Chekhov 2018, p. 12.

⁹ Hagen, Uta. 1978. *Uta Hagen’s Love for Cooking*. New York: Collier Books, and London: Collier Macmillan. The famous *New York Times* food critic, Craig Claiborne, included her recipes in his columns. For example, Claiborne, Craig, “Food Day,” *The New York Times*, 18 August 1976, p. 6 Uta Hagen, the actress, was saying, “That’s why I cook. If there’s no one there to say ‘Thank you very much, that was delicious,’ I stand up and eat from the refrigerator.”

Midsummer Tart With Fruits And Berries (Uta Hagen’s recipe)

1 baked, sweet nine inch pastry crust, made from any standard recipe.

1 quart fresh berries such as strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries and so on including a combination of berries, if desired

1 cup fruit jelly such as crab apple, currant, beach plum or apple

2 tablespoons liqueur such as Grand Marnier, kirsch or framboise

¼ cup toasted slivered almonds Whipped cream.

1. Place the tart on a serving dish and fill with the berries. Place the largest and best berries in the center with the other berries piled around.

2. Heat the jelly over low heat and stir in the liqueur. Let cool slightly and spoon this over the fruit. Garnish with toasted almonds, sprinkling them in a ring around the berries. Chill at least one hour before serving. Lift the pie from outside rim. Serve with whipped cream on the side.

Yield: Six to 10 servings.

props, real sets. Similarly, there was with Hagen a sense of watching yourself doing things, of “looking back” or “witnessing.” This aspect has affected the Lost Object exercise in my own university classes. This is close to both Stanislavsky’s and Chekhov’s emphasizing Observation and Concentration, but also is in harmony with Chekhov’s emphasis on physical Sensations, which Hagen also discussed in her revised text on acting (see below).

Parallels with Chekhov

Perhaps the most important thing I learned from Uta Hagen was the idea that the actor should not go directly for emotions, “do not play the emotions” – allow them to happen. That is crucial, but it may have been a later development in Hagen’s pedagogy. For example, Fern Sloan, who presumably studied with Hagen in the 1970s, implied in conversation that Sloan’s initial professional work in the theatre was based on standard Stanislavsky-like technique, working, as has been noted above, “primarily out of my own biography.” (See the interview below, Appendix 6.) Then she found Chekhov in the 1980s and she was hooked – no longer just using her own emotions.

In fact, however, Hagen and Chekhov have a great deal in common on the subject of emotions. For Hagen, the emotions surface “because you can’t help yourself otherwise.” You may be trying to hold back tears, but then there is a trigger from your partner or some other source. Notice that this is not Affective Memory as a deliberate exercise, but something that comes “in the moment.” I have seen this work in my drama classes as well. For example, a student actress playing the covert lesbian Martha in Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour* performed the scene in which Martha finally reveals her romantic love for her colleague and close friend, Karen. In character, the actress was playing trying to be strong, but when Karen tells Martha that this is not really the case and turns her back on Martha, saying go “to sleep” – giving her, literally, “the cold shoulder” – the actress spontaneously started to weep. (The experience allowed the student, in the

safe space of the studio, to tell her fellow actors that she, too, was a lesbian in real life.)

Michael Chekhov also provided exercises based on physical sensations associated with emotions, ways to use the imagination, and psychophysical exercises, including those related to the Psychological Gesture – and these are what Fern Sloan embraced and continues to teach. As in Hagen, the core values of both depend on the actor’s response to a trigger not artificially created by exercises in emotional memory, but rather coming spontaneously from the subconscious in the moment of performance. The trigger of turning one’s back is squarely within the ideas of psychophysical movement in Chekhov’s system, and would not have been rejected by Hagen at the time I was studying with her and Berghof. I could compare something I heard Liv Ullman say at the time she was directing Cate Blanchett in Tennessee William’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2009: “I start with the choreography. With the movement and depending how the actors move in the space that is how they deliver the words. Perhaps with the back turned to the audience instead of facing the audience or his/her stage-partner.”

The parallels between Hagen’s (and Berghof’s) pedagogy and Chekhov’s technique were already hinted at in her 1973 *Respect for Acting*, the text I used while studying and adopted as a textbook for my students initially. In speaking of the actor’s thoughts, for example, she offers the idea of inner objects – “things or people not present in the room only as images in the mind.”¹⁰ The context is the standard emphasis on Action: “Real thinking precedes, is accompanied by, and follows action.”¹¹ Hagen’s revised book on actor training, *A Challenge to the Actor*, first published in 1991 (the year after Berghof’s death), carries this further. Indeed, looking in the light of my current study of Chekhov at this text, which Hagen was preparing in the 1980s when I studied with her and Berghof, I am amazed at how many parallels there are with Chekhov, not only because of a common origin in the

¹⁰ Hagen 1973, p. 66; cf. 60-67 *passim*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

work of Stanislavsky and Yevgeny Vachtangov, but also in those areas where Chekhov revised or moved beyond Stanislavsky's ideas. For example, already in 1973, Hagen had insisted that "sense memory, the recall of physical sensations, is often easier for the actor than the recall of his emotions."¹² Hagen's chapters on "The Physical Senses" and "The Psychological Senses" were repeated in 1991, along with an extended series of exercises (the "object exercises") on "Re-creating Physical Sensations."¹³ One notices the use of the word, "sensations," and its parallel in Chekhov's technique.¹⁴ Even though Hagen's interest was, as always, largely applied to the actor's needs in actual rehearsals and performances, such as the use of sensations in creating objects or activity (images in the mind), these are related to emotions attached to or animating the stage action. She makes this explicit in the context of endowing stage properties and similar real objects with qualities (or "needed realities," as she puts it).

The point is that these aspects of Hagen's pedagogy are fully compatible, as in the case of Meisner, with Chekhov's techniques, meaning that actors who use Hagen's and Meisner's techniques can easily combine them with training in the Chekhov work – and, for that matter, are already prepared to understand Chekhov's technique well.

To return to my own dramatic training in 1973-77 at Prague before I came to the United States in 1982, I remember the advice given the cast by a director for one of my first professional roles. "When you read a play for the first time," he told us, "remember what your reactions and images were, and come back to it when you are at the end of the process, making it as authentic as the first time you read through the play with the ensemble." In fact, this was also an element in the success of my student actress in *The Children's Hour*, since I had also told her in the final process to go back to all the feelings she experienced and the images she visualized when she read the scene for the first time. And the performance was wonderful.

¹² Hagen 1973, p. 52, and 52-64, *passim*, Chapters 5 and 6.

¹³ Hagen 1991, pp. 74-99 and 170-182, respectively. Cf. Hagen 1973, pp. 60-64.

¹⁴ Chekhov discussed the role of sensations versus direct emotional recall in his 1955 Lectures, Tape 2; NYPL call no. LT10-4780.

At the same time I was working with Berghof and Hagen, I received permission from František Daniel, then director of the graduate film program at Columbia University, to audit acting classes there.¹⁵ In effect, I was one of a number of professional actors the more advanced graduate film-makers could give a role in their thesis films, so that the relationship also provided me with semi-professional English-language roles at the very beginning of my stay in America. This experience was essential for my later professional work in independent films. A number of extraordinary experiences followed. For example, while working with a Columbia student director, Kevin Reynolds, I was cast as a homeless woman. While I was preparing this role, I encountered, several times, a homeless lady from Chicago in Grand Central Station in New York City. She had a family who had abandoned her, but she got sick and had no insurance, and eventually spiraled down to living on the street, although mostly in Grand Central because it was warm there. She was incredibly smart and educated and compassionate and so thankful for opportunity to talk with someone. The fact that she was so intelligent haunted me; how could someone like that be forgotten by society? The role made me so much more sensitive to the needs of people like this woman. When I played the role, I chose to make her stressed but not crazy, emphasizing the humanity of the person.

At Columbia, I took classes based on the techniques of Sanford Meisner from Brad Dourif and Bob Balaban¹⁶, two actors with notable careers in American films, and I audited a class taught by Miloš Forman as well as Vojtěch Jasný. What struck me, coming from European training, was exactly a sense of authenticity which was achieved through really connecting with your scene partner, truly listening to him/her – similar to playing a game of ping pong that is not about you but about your partner. Here again we find a parallel – in part because of Chekhov’s own influence

¹⁵ Daniel was at Columbia from 1978 to 1986; his colleagues there included Miloš Forman, Vojtěch Jasný and Milena Jelínek (Milena Jelínková). Daniel was then made Dean of the School of Cinema-Television at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; he retired as Dean in 1990 but continued to teach screenwriting there until his death in 1996. Unfortunately Milena Jelínková passed away in the spring of 2020 in New York of Covid-19.

¹⁶ Dourif played Billy Bibbit in Miloš Forman’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, 1975. Balaban played in *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969) and *Capote* (Bennett Miller, 2005).

on Meisner – with what Chekhov repeatedly stated as a part of his heritage from Stanislavsky. For example, it repeats as a motif in his 1955 lectures: “it is good for an actor with little experience, really to listen to what his partner says to him,” Chekhov insisted, “I mean as a character – really to listen, following the thought of the partner as a character, and not to wait for the cue.”¹⁷

We sat in our chairs in a circle, waiting for Brad Dourif to begin the first class. When he arrived and sat down, he did not say anything. We sat in silence for a while. Everybody existed in that space, at that time, in a different way. Some people started to get fidgety or looked around to see what was going on, or to dig in a purse trying to settle down, or giggle; someone came in late. And Brad just sat actively for a couple of minutes in silence. Then he broke the situation and started to teach. “What happened?” he asked. “You all have your own life. Do you know what it is called? It is Simple Reality. That’s what we are starting from, Simple Reality. And then we add onto this the circumstances.” In effect, he combined Stanislavsky’s *Magic If* with a sense of one’s own reality, and in doing that, separated the two, ultimately making it possible to do real action onstage and not just pretend.

Two of the Chekhov technique teachers with whom I interacted (see appendix, MICHA interviews), Scott Fielding in Boston and Liz Shipman in San Diego, teach the Chekhov work in tandem with Meisner technique. Fielding teaches both methods, and Shipman works with a Master Teacher of Meisner Technique, Lisa Berger – Shipman also offers Laban technique for actors. As with the others I met in the MICHA classes, there was a sense of using Meisner technique to correct overly theatrical misinterpretations of Chekhov’s techniques by going back to a sense of truth. As Scott Fielding put it, when asked what was it that Meisner had, he replied, “it’s going to sound strange, because Chekhov talks again and again about the most important thing that Meisner was after: the TRUTH.” I am also reminded of

¹⁷ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, “About the Stanislavsky Method of Acting”; NYPL Call no. LT10-4779.

what both Chekhov and Uta Hagen said, that “we must understand the difference between TRUTH IN ART as opposed to TRUTH IN LIFE. ... the *naturalistic* actor often falls into the trap of demanding the wrong kind of truth.” Like Chekhov, Hagen sought spontaneity onstage, night after night. “The *realistic* actor learns that, at will, he can induce specific, imagined stimuli to produce an organically correct behavioral response in order to arrive at the essence of the experience.”¹⁸

Other current Chekhov practitioners, such as Ted Pugh, found fulfillment in Chekhov’s work after studying Meisner technique. Dawn Arnold and Craig Mathers, in the midst of exercises correlating feelings such as elation and calm to the qualities of movement, suggested walking down the street switching from one feeling to another – repeating a Meisner exercise Brad Dourif gave us, similarly involving walking down the streets of Manhattan switching feelings (being happy, angry, shy...and switching within seconds from one feeling to another using images) and observing people at work (such as boys polishing shoes) at the Grand Station Terminal. Craig Mathers has taught Meisner technique as well. Andrei Malaev-Babel, a professor of acting, director, translator, and scholarly expert on Vakhtangov and Chekhov, who formerly taught with Lisa Dalton and is listed among the faculty at MICHA, also promotes the dramatic method of Nicolai Demidov.¹⁹

Scott Fielding also provided useful pedagogical advice: a class, he insists, is like a rehearsal. He is always very mindful that it is a practice, a class, and not a performance. In the United States at the university level, young acting teachers are expected to educate themselves in pedagogical method, learning how to teach as they teach. Formerly, the system assumed

¹⁸ Hagen 1991, p.76.

¹⁹ Malaev-Babel provided the partial translation of Chekhov’s 1946 chapter on Psychological Gesture for Chekhov 1953/2002, as cited above, Chapters One and Two. See also Lisa Dalton, at <https://www.chekhov.net/nmcahistory.html> ; cf. the MICHA faculty webpage, <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/andrei-malaevbabel> . For Malaev-Babel’s promotion of Demidov, compare his role as Head of the International Demidov Association and Moscow and London Demidov Studios Curator, <https://demidovschool.com/malaev-babel> . See also Demidov, Nikolai, and Andrei Malaev-Babel. 2015. *Nikolai Demidov: Becoming and Actor-Creator*. London: Routledge, 2015.

that the more experienced professors would mentor their new colleagues, but this is not so often the case today. While Chekhov had no formal training in pedagogy, he had the remarkable example and mentoring of Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitsky, and above all, Vachtangov. What is more, the first thing that Chekhov did upon arrival at Dartington in 1935 was to train six students as future teachers during the spring of 1936;²⁰ they eventually got their teaching certificates in October 1939, after the school had moved to Ridgefield. Similarly, for me, the HB Studio was a model for how to teach scene study. I have always made sure each student has an opportunity to perform and receive feedback on a regular basis.

An important part of Meisner technique is his famous Repetition exercise, emphasizing words and impulses coming from your scene partner, receiving and giving, giving and receiving. I remember Dustin Hoffman onstage in *Death of a Salesman* with Stephen Lang playing Happy. It was like watching a ball being tossed between them. In retrospect, I think of the ball-tossing exercises that are so much a part of the Chekhov technique. (There are expressions which athletic coaches use, and which have become a general proverb: “keep your eye on the ball” and “don’t drop the ball.”) I also think of acting teacher Robert Cohen, whose textbook I use for my students in Fundamentals of Acting classes. Cohen’s commandment was, “don’t give dead fish” – make the line meaningful, give it an inflectional ending, or the like.²¹

To again give an example from my work in Prague, I remember, while performing Neil Simon’s *The Sunshine Boys* with Vlastimil Brodský and Josef Bláha, watching the two of them from the wings when I was not on the stage with them. Bláha was absolutely shining, relaxed, performing the scene in effect for Brodský – Bláha wanted Brodský to shine. I remember thinking, this is most generous, a real partnership. They were so at ease that bits of improvisations would come naturally, spontaneously, as if

²⁰ See Chekhov 2018, *passim*; and Hurst’s previous publication of the lectures, as Chekhov, Michael, and Deirdre Hurst du Prey. 2000. *Michael Chekhov: Lessons for Teachers of His Acting Technique*. Ottawa, Canada: Dovehouse Editions.

²¹ The text is Cohen, Robert. 2008. *Acting One / Acting Two*, Fifth Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

out of the characters themselves. There was incredible energy coming from these experienced actors, and sometimes you were at risk of being struck dumb. They radiated energy onstage, and you had to radiate it back to them when you were onstage. You had to give them something to play – not a “dead fish” – and when I did this, Brodský was happy. It was an extraordinary lesson in dramatic art.

Indeed, one of the strongest aspects of the former theatrical system in Czechoslovakia, in spite of the obvious problems of Communist censorship and political interference with careers, was that young actors could move into contracts with the many professional repertory companies and therefore benefit from “on-the-job” training from many of the best actors of the time. Some students got permission to work in the theatres or in films even while being a student. (I was not the only one to benefit from this confidence on the part of the faculty.) This use of actual dramatic practice to complete a young actor’s education is exactly what Chekhov did with his students from Dartington Hall and Ridgefield when he not only cast them in Broadway productions but sent them out on tour across the United States in 1940-41.²²



First tour, Chekhov Theatre Studio, Ridgefield, CT, Autumn 1940. Scenery truck at left; cars and vans for actors behind. (Photo courtesy of Dartington Hall Trust.)

²² See also Byckling 2019, as cited above and in the Chronology, Appendix 1.

With the actors from the theatre ‘Divadlo na Vinohradech’ I too had an opportunity to tour and take performances to the regional theatres in the Czechoslovakia such as Karlovy Vary, České Budějovice etc. (In Karviná, we actually went down into a coal mine to mingle with the workers, for whom we would later perform. This is similar to what Chekhov and his Second Moscow Art Theatre actors did in performances for different professions and workers.) I remember Brodský’s advice had also included stage movement (walking in curves onstage) and character development in playing the scene. His advice to walk on the stage in curves and not in straight lines gave me a sense of the space, a Feeling of Beauty, when playing Anna in *Rozmarné léto*. He would say you don’t play the result; you play the process to arrive at the result, from “bit” to “bit” (called “bits” in Russian – see above, Chapter One and note). For example, a present in a beautiful box could elicit admiration for the beauty of the box, admiration for the quality of the present, and gratitude to the giver. Two emotions are achieved: admiration, then gratitude. An inexperienced actress playing the role will immediately rush to being thankful instead of expressing everything that impresses her, then being overwhelmed by gratitude.

My on-the-job training also continued after I came to America. I joined, as an actress, extended professional theatrical tours throughout the United States, Mexico, and even to Europe, as a member of a company based in New York. I also experienced dramatic literatures different than those I knew in Europe, and I still make a great effort to bring the multi-ethnic rainbow of American drama into the texts my students use. But being European did help me to be cast in Anton Chekhov’s plays (*The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*), Ibsen’s *The Master Builder*, Brecht’s epic theatre (Joan of the Stockyards), Ionesco (*The Lesson*). I had worked on a monologue for Hilda in *The Master Builder* as a 16-year-old, but I did not understand the role then. However, later, when I came back to this role in the USA, I believe I found Hilda, inspired by a painting by Hans Dahl, as well as by music and choosing a musical instrument to represent her (trumpet), and an element (fire, igniting Halvard Solness’s passion). There was also a secret I had that

only one of my friends, a doctor who sat in the audience discovered. He asked me after the performance, “Are you pregnant?” In fact, I was in my second trimester with my first son, but I was not showing yet – none of my theatre colleagues knew. It was as if the pregnancy with the child was giving me extra energy; I had that extra strength in me, that multi-layered energy Hilda possessed, and the connection with Nature. I visualized the mountains, and the idea that I came down from the hills – something supernatural. Solness reaches for the heights, and she gives him the necessary power.

What was very important for me as a pedagogue of acting was to be a student for a year at NYU under Peter Pitzele in Psychodrama. We also worked on *Hamlet*, which we did as a psychodrama. When I worked on Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmachine* in 1984, I returned to this psychological element in a much more abstract context (American premiere, Theatre for the New City, directed by Uwe Mengel – a text I could understand but also very different from what I worked on in Prague in a performance of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* directed by Ivan Glanc). I believe this also informed my work in nonverbal movement and performance art, such as the “mimodrama,” *Medea*, which I wrote, directed, and played the lead. I had a company then, and we were featured in Connecticut’s International Festival of Arts and Ideas in 2001, incorporating black light theater into the performance. I first studied mime with Ladislav Fialka as a member of his company in Prague (and then, in America, had the opportunity to attend mime master classes with Marcel Marceau. Some of Marceau’s ideas are compatible with Chekhov’s principles, as I have discussed in a recent article.²³ So Marceau’s teaching still lives alongside Chekhov’s in my own work. I have gone on to prepare a one-woman mime program for all ages, *Time for Mime*, and a series of performances for schools – this accords well with Chekhov’s own interest in children’s theatre and his insistence on

²³ Pichlíková, Lenka. 2017. “Performing in Mask: Michael Chekhov’s Pedagogy, Commedia & Mime,” in *Critical Stages* 2017; available URL: <http://www.critical-stages.org/15/performing-in-mask-michael-chekhovs-pedagogy-commedia-and-mime/> .

teaching skills for performing in front of young audiences to his acting students. One aspect of the individualized nature of the theatre profession in the United States that is beneficial is the many functions a theatre professional has to fill. I want the theater to reflect human experience as a whole, not only focus on one aspect, and the extent of my practical American experience helps me achieve this goal. I know dramatic texts and techniques from the point of view of an actor, director, writer, producer, and technician. At the local Actors Equity Association professional theater in Connecticut, where I acted professionally, taught, and directed for fifteen years, I served for example as assistant stage manager for a production of *K2* (about mountain climbers trapped on a ledge). As Steve Karp, the Artistic Director of the theatre, said after my work took me under the floor of the stage to help run a difficult scene where one of the characters fell off the ledge, "Lenka, you know theater from onstage, behind the scenes, and under the stage."

3.2 Games and Improvisation

A respect for improvisation and a sense of playfulness, of the give-and-take of games, also connects Chekhov to younger contemporaries such as Viola Spolin, the premier American exponent of improvisational theatre, where games and game skills are part of the technique. Spolin's exercises relate closely to the improvisation exercises that were so much a part of Michael Chekhov's pedagogical history, literally from the very first lessons he taught independently in Moscow. According to his students, improvisations would spill out into the street and last for hours.

Since Viola Spolin's work may not be so well known outside of the United States, I should add a few examples of her improvisation exercises that I have used in my own development and teaching.²⁴ One of Spolin's

²⁴ Exercises taken from Spolin, Viola. 1986. *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, pp. 25, 92. A video of a beginning mixed group doing the Slow Motion / Freeze Tag may be found at <https://spolingamesonline.org/slow-motion-tag/>.

exercises that incorporate elements found in Chekhov, such as the idea of a Threshold, is “Explosion Tag.” The basic idea is playing a regular game of tag within boundaries – that is, within a Threshold space. The space is relatively small, seven meters square for fifteen or sixteen players. Half the group plays, and half becomes the audience. In the exercise, a game of “tag” is played energetically as a warm-up. The leader/coach/teacher says, “who’s not it?” and the last person to respond is “it” – the first tagger. Once energy levels are high, the players are coached to “Explode!” when they are tagged, “in any way they wish.” (“fall on the floor, yell! explode!”). Explosion is a spontaneous action at the moment of being tagged. It helps crack players’ protective armor. It is important for each player to keep within the boundaries of the playing space.

This game can be a warm-up, or a natural lead-in to the “Slow Motion or Freeze Tag.” The group, in a space appropriate to the number of players, begins by walking in slow motion. Then the leader/coach/teacher tags one player, who starts the tag game in slow motion. A variation is for the tagged player to freeze, with the tagger continuing, or for the tagger to freeze, and the tagged player continues to tag the next player and then freeze. By the end, you have a group of statues similar to the molding exercises of Chekhov, relating the actor’s body to surrounding space, to other actors, and so forth. I also use another fun tagging exercise, where the players begin in a “freeze” position. The tagger (“the Clown”) goes from one player to another and, without touching them, tries to make them laugh. Once the Clown achieves the goal, the person who could not hold his/her face straight becomes the tagger.

A different type of exercise from Spolin is the “Mirror Sound” exercise, which relates both to Chekhov and to Sanford Meisner. A team of two players sits facing each other. One player is the initiator and makes sounds; the other is the reflector and mirrors the sounds. When “*Change!*” is called, roles are reversed. The reflector becomes the initiator, and the new reflector mirrors his or her sounds. Teams gather in different spots around the room and play simultaneously. The important thing is that there will be

no pause when the reflector hears the sounds. Players should be aware of their bodies and physical feelings as they mirror the partners' sounds.

A related physical game is “New York,” in which the players form two teams of equal size and stand on parallel “goal lines” seven meters or more apart. The first team huddles together, deciding on what occupation, trade, or type of work will be shown. The first team advances across the space in stages, while the following dialogue takes place:

First Team: Here we come!

Second team: Where from?

First Team: New York!

Second team: What's your trade?

First Team: Lemonade!

Second team: Show us some! (“If you are not afraid!”)

As they advance, the first team players mime or show individually the chosen trade or occupation. Players on the second team try to identify the occupation, calling out its name. If the guess is wrong, the first team goes on showing. When someone calls out the correct trade, the first team must run back to its goal with the second team in hot pursuit. Those who are tagged must join their pursuer's side. Now the second team chooses a trade and dialogue is repeated, followed by showing the trade as before. Both sides have the same number of turns and the team having the largest number of players at the end wins. Variations of this game can include animals, flowers, trees, objects, foods, etc., instead of trades.

In Chekhov's outdoor classes at Dartington Hall in England, students expressed nonverbally the qualities of the different kinds of trees they saw on the grounds, and similar exercises.²⁵ After the Chekhov Theatre Studio moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, and then closed in 1942, Chekhov

²⁵ See also below, Chapter Four. William Elmhirst, Beatrice Straight's half-brother, spoke of these exercises: “[the Dartington grounds are] a garden that gives the trees space in the true Chekhov fashion. They used to send the students out, and he would tell them to choose a tree, and then find the gesture that the tree was making and put it into human form. I remember that exercise my mother [Dorothy Whitney Straight Elmhirst, founder of Dartington Hall] talked about.” Quoted in Keeve 2002/2009-2010.



Chekhov students doing an exercise in the garden, Dartington, 1936.
(Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

incorporated the Dartington exercise into the exercises he used to develop the Psychological Gesture: “Start by observing the shapes of flowers and plants. Ask yourself: what gestures and what colors do they evoke in you? Cypress, for example, rushing upwards (gesture), has a calm, concentrated character (coloring), while the old, branched oak widely and unrestrainedly (coloring) is spreading out to the sides (gesture).”²⁶

3.3 LEARNING THE CHEKHOV TECHNIQUE AT MICHA (The Michael Chekhov Association)

MICHA was founded by long-time Chekhov teachers Joanna Merlin, Sarah Kane, Lenard Petit, and Ted Pugh in 1999. It was originally associated with the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center in Waterford, Connecticut, but separated in 2000 and became an independent organization. For several years following 2000, MICHA started a multi-year “master teacher” certification program, in the tradition of Chekhov’s own procedure at Dartington and Ridgefield and the adaptation of Chekhov’s pre-1942 policy to the situation in the professional theatre world that the founders of the Michael Chekhov Studio (MCS) in New York addressed in 1979-80. So, for example, Ted Pugh studied in the MCS – “went through a program,” in his

²⁶ Chekhov 1946, Psychological Gesture chapter, p. [67], Exercise 6.

words – for three years, principally with Eddy Grove, before being certified by Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst du Prey. “And then,” Pugh continues, “after I was at the Studio for, I don’t know, maybe three years, maybe five, they asked me to teach.” At MICHA in 2000, a specified series of training sessions were taken, after which the applicants had to do demonstration teaching, prepare a video, and write a thesis. (See also Appendix 6.)

A highly personal snapshot of the initial teaching offered at MICHA around 2000-2002 is found in Cynthia Ashperger’s account, published in 2008.²⁷ However, as Ashperger already noted in 2008, since the time she studied in the MICHA “master teacher” certification course, the certification policy of MICHA as an organization has changed. Today, MICHA offers what they call a “certificate of completion” verifying attendance at five of the MICHA extended conferences (usually held in June of each year), including two “Teacher Training (Basic or Advanced) extended conferences and three “International conferences.” It is understood that the participants will have worked independently during the rest of the year. The only conference requiring an application process is our Advanced Teacher Training conference. All other conferences have open enrollment.”²⁸ More importantly, it is not necessary to be enrolled in this certification program; the conferences are open to qualified professionals with varying degrees of involvement in the Chekhov work.

While learning at MICHA, I was also studying MICHA from an institutional, pedagogical, scenological, and education theory point of view. The present chapter essentially describes how a loosely organized, international network of practitioners and institutions without a single central or dominant authority can perpetuate and transmit an important dramatic system and pedagogic method without loss of faithfulness to the system’s origins and traditions – and maintaining a sense of vividness for the

²⁷ See Ashperger, Cynthia. 2008. *The Rhythm of Space and the Sound of Time: Michael Chekhov's Acting Technique in the 21st Century*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

²⁸ <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/teacher-training-certificate>.

participants. MICHA is not an established private teaching studio, a theatrical company, a unit within a national theater, an academic department or conservatory within a university. It is an independent organization supporting a network of teachers, practitioners, and students. As has been noted, the leaders of MICHA made a decision not to teach one version of the Chekhov techniques, but be a “forum,” or meeting place. To work, this model requires a common heritage and, in MICHA’s case, an origin in a group of teachers, many of whom studied directly with Chekhov and were associated together in the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York. It was Michael Chekhov himself who planted the seed of this success. His intentions were always international. (One should remember that with his self-published 1946 edition in Russian, Chekhov assured its distribution to the libraries at universities in America, which in effect supported the idea of professional future acting training.)

The approximately two decades after Michael Chekhov’s death in 1955, saw his pedagogical legacy survive a period in which only a handful of highly dispersed teachers taught the techniques in formal classes or studio settings. (See Appendix 4.) These included George and Elsa Shdanoff in Hollywood, primarily as coaches; Blair Cutting from about 1948 in New York and California, where he was associated with Warner Brothers; Mechthild Harkness-Johannsen in England and then Australia; Deirdre Hurst du Prey at the Children’s Center for the Creative Arts at Adelphi University on Long Island near New York City from 1952; and, in the 1970s, Joanna Merlin, while working as a casting director and actress in New York. Ironically, at the same time, scores of top-rank actors in New York, Hollywood, England, and internationally, continued to practice Chekhov’s method to immense success. Yet, an important aspect of Chekhov’s pedagogy insured that every practitioner of his method could also teach it and would teach it as an integral part of making theatre, with or without a “studio.” At Dartington, as Deirdre Hurst du Prey describes it, the students “from the very beginning had to be prepared to teach any of the exercises to the class, whenever called upon to do

so.”²⁹ And as has been repeatedly noted, half a year before the formal opening of classes at Dartington in October 1936, Chekhov had begun to train a group of his future teaching associates.³⁰ To give a practical example of this, after World War II, a group of Dartington/Ridgefield graduates, led by Alan Harkness (one of the certified teachers and a leader at the Ridgefield studio) formed the High Valley (or Ojai Valley) Players. (See Appendix 4.) Their overall program included their teaching the Chekhov techniques.³¹ While Chekhov came just to direct them in a 1946 production of Gogol's *The Inspector General*, he did not attempt to form a studio or teach there – probably because there was no money available.³² (The former students, and Chekhov, were in fact earning their living as actors in the film industry.) Chekhov's method, as has repeatedly been noted, gave each practitioner a maximum degree of freedom to use and express it.

However, by the late 1970s, thanks to the efforts of students who had studied directly with Chekhov, such as Hurst, Cutting, Merlin, Beatrice Straight, Paul Rogers, Mala Powers, Eddy Grove, Jack Colvin, and others, Chekhov's method began to be passed on to a second generation of students in a more formal way, especially at the New York Michael Chekhov Studio (MCS), 1980-1992, which Straight and producer Robert Cole founded, but also in England, Australia, Germany, Israel, and even underground in Russia. Today's organizations have grown out of this initial expansion, supporting and educating hundreds of Chekhov practitioners, many of whom teach in universities and private studios. (See Appendices 4 and 5.) MICHA interacts with the larger Chekhov studios and their networks, including the Berlin studios and the National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA), and others associated with individual leaders. Most importantly, MICHA is linked to the other “network of artists” organizations, such as Michael Chekhov UK,

²⁹ Hurst du Prey 1992 (in Senelick 1992), p. 162.

³⁰ Chekhov 2000/2018, *passim*. Six students (and a patron) who had been at Dartington – Beatrice Straight, her mother Dorothy Whitney Elmshirst, Deirdre Hurst, Peter Tunnard, Alan Harkness, and Blair Cutting – received teaching certificates from Chekhov at Ridgefield, 5 October 1939.

³¹ Hoye, Richard; Tom Moore; Craig Walker; & The Ojai Valley Museum. 2010. *Ojai*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, p. 122.

³² See Appendix 4. Chekhov's directing script, as adapted by Charles Leonard, is published in Chekhov and Leonard 1963, pp. 108-329.

Michael Chekhov Europe, Michael Chekhov Canada, and other regional Chekhov associations around the globe, which are always represented at the annual MICHA gatherings. Jessica Cerullo, Artistic Director of MICHA, has said, “You can approach an organization, or a budget, or you’ve heard of some planning the classes in a way that’s very organized and logistical – right? But that doesn’t have the heart in it. That’s just from the thinking center, will center. But we try really, and I try really hard, to have the kind of room for expression, for gesture, for pause, for all of these things that are part of Chekhov’s technique – to inherit the structure of the workshop, so it’s not just the idea of it, but the architecture of how we are spending the week together?” (See Appendix 6.)

My attendance at the MICHA master classes in New London, Connecticut, took place in 2016, 2018, 2019, and (virtually online) 2020. I also attended workshops in New York in March 2017 and November 2019.³³ Senior teachers of the technique from around the world led the sessions, which investigated a range of responses to the Chekhov technique. The Five Guiding Principles that Chekhov articulated at the end of his life (see above, Chapter One) govern all the activities at MICHA. It is a notably holistic system, integrating all necessary disciplines into a holistic approach. The emphasis of many of the sessions was on psychophysical gesture and movement and the role of the imagination (image work), including of course many aspects of the Psychological Gesture. Chekhov called it “working with a wise body.” These classes underscored what the Chekhov teacher, David Zinder, has called “a unique advantage over the other training systems since it is based entirely on the *natural* psychophysical processes that occur when the actor crosses the Threshold into the work space.”³⁴ Other MICHA classes, and those offered by Michael Chekhov UK, have investigated “the

³³ With Sinéad Rushe; see Rushe 2019, *passim*.

³⁴ Zinder, David. 2002/2009. *Body Voice Imagination: ImageWork Training and the Chekhov Technique*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, p. 250. See also his article, “ImageWork Training and the Chekhov Technique,” in *Critical Stages* 2017; available URL: <http://www.critical-stages.org/15/tag/by-david-zinder/>.

interface between training and student wellbeing and social engagement” and even the therapeutic nature of the Chekhov work.³⁵

In what follows, I will focus on several dominant themes in my MICHA training, which I have incorporated into my own dramatic performances and teaching. Some of the Chekhov techniques I experienced first at MICHA – such as the Actor’s March, Image exercises, and various ball-tossing exercises for developing contacts within a group (the feeling of an ensemble) – will be incorporated directly into the following Chapter Four, my ideal annotated syllabus for teaching the Chekhov work, and will not be repeated here. This chapter will principally describe what I learned from Joanna Merlin, David Zinder (as well as in his book), Lenard Petit, Scott Fielding, Sol Garre, Craig Mathers, Ted Pugh, and Fern Sloan.

The themes are:

- 1) The concept of the Threshold, including the sense of safe creative space and the bonding or sense of common cause among actors in a group and developing trust and preparing Awareness (also related to Concentration).³⁶ Receiving and Giving/Radiating will be touched upon here, along with the importance of breathing. Joanna Merlin, who, like Mala Powers, worked with Chekhov in the last five years of his life, provided significant examples. The importance of group bonding for Ensemble, as developed for example by Sinéad Rushe,

³⁵ This observation is from the prospectus of a recent course at the MICHA annual gathering and workshops, 21-26 June 2020, entitled “The ‘Third Space’: Chekhov Technique in Pedagogic, Applied, Therapeutic and Community Contexts.” The course, led by Cass Fleming and Roanna Mitchell of Michael Chekhov UK, taught techniques related to “the interface between training and student wellbeing and social engagement,” and discussed the how to separate acting training being therapeutic from therapy (<https://www.michaelchekhov.org/scholar-lab>). See also Mitchell, Roanna. 2014. “Seen but not heard: An embodied account of the (student) actor's aesthetic labour,” in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 59-73; available URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19443927.2013.868367> .

Third Space, also called “Performative Space” has been defined as a zone of transformation, or creative interactive space that is generated when teachers and students integrate everyday and academic knowledge. In theatre training, this can happen within and outside the drama. See also the introduction to Crutchfield, John, and Manfred Schewe. 2017. *Going performative in intercultural education: International contexts, theoretical perspectives and models of practice*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters and Channel View Publications Ltd. See below, Chapter Four.

³⁶ See the previous footnote for the recent pedagogical concept of “third space,” also applicable to Threshold.

will be included here, although aspects of Chekhov's highly important ideas on Atmosphere will be left for the following Chapter Four.

2) Movement/Gesture, including the "Four Brothers" (Feeling of Ease, Feeling for Form, Feeling of Beauty, Sense of the Whole/Entirety).

3) Qualities of movement and images as developed in the MICHA classes will include concepts such as Colors (coloration, both in the sense of emotional and will-driven qualities, and in the abstract sense of Colors (Coloration) as metaphor for their own sake), relation to space and its emotional results (Expansion – Contraction and Polarities), Rhythm and Tempo (staccato/legato, lightness vs. heavy, etc.). Here the emphasis, following Chekhov, is on the use of gesture to evoke Sensations – the Means – in order to call forth Feelings – the Results.

4) Imagination – Image Work – and its application to creating a character, including the application of basic psychophysical movement to character formation in the techniques of the

5) Psychological Gesture (PG) and other archetypal gestures. Here again, the contribution of Joanna Merlin was essential, as well as seasoned Chekhov teacher Fern Sloan. (The discussion in this chapter will be about how the MICHA teachers approached PG and other archetypal gestures. The following Chapter Four on teaching will incorporate Chekhov's own descriptions of the process more fully into my teaching procedures.) The concept of Transformation played an important role in many of the sessions, especially those of Sol Garre.

6) The idea of Centers, including Imaginary Centers, and Focal Points, and their application to characterization and PG.

3.3a (1) Threshold, Awareness, Receiving and Giving

Before describing the Threshold exercises at MICHA, it will be useful to introduce the idea, since it is so important in my own teaching and acting. It indicates commitment and change, leaving behind the old and accepting the new. It is the beginning of our departure from everyday life into the theatrical “adventure” by being open to creativity and following our own creative instincts. Chekhov spoke, in one of his last statements of 1955, of the actor using his/her imagination together with actions, whether in solitude or in the studio, to unlock an emotional “treasure house” in the subconscious mind.

“Deep, deep tremendous creative powers and abilities are buried within ourselves, within the treasure house of our souls, but they remain unused as long as we do not know about them or as long as we deny them. They are so powerful, so beautiful, wonderful, that we are – and this is disease of our present age – we are ashamed of them. That’s why they remain unused and would remain forever if we would not open the door, go fearlessly into this treasure house, and search for them.”³⁷

Chekhov asks the actor to link the images and feelings gathered from the “treasure house” to creative activity, to gestures and actions, which can have the power to evoke feelings in themselves. It’s not about thinking, but about action and imagination linked together by the power of creative intuition. Chekhov would have agreed with Uta Hagen that the actor, in rehearsal and performance, does not “perform” the feelings: the feelings come because you can’t help it otherwise. (Chekhov, of course, wanted the actions or gestures to spark the emotions.)

With regard to the effect of “Crossing the Threshold” into the creative space of the stage or studio, Chekhov and Stanislavsky are in complete harmony. Once the Threshold is crossed and everyday life is left behind (but not lost within the “treasure house” of the psyche), the actor can dig

³⁷ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled acting”; NYPL call no. LT10-4790; recorded at the end of September 1955, just before Chekhov’s death.

deeply into the subconscious. As Stanislavsky said, the actor's task will be aided "if he can really believe in the spontaneous occurrence and use it in his part. ... It will put him on the road toward the 'threshold of the subconscious.' Our freedom on this side of the threshold is limited by reason and conventions; beyond it, our freedom is bold, willful, active, and always moving forwards. Over there the creative process differs each time it is repeated."³⁸ The application to the processes of rehearsal and character formation is implied, and the ability of the technique to re-invigorate the performance of the actor each time is explicit. These were aspects completely embraced by Chekhov, not to mention by Uta Hagen and other actors in the first American generation influenced by Stanislavsky. Of course, some subtle differences separate contemporaries: Sanford Meisner said that acting is doing something real under imaginary circumstances (or "the foundation of acting is the reality of doing."³⁹ Michael Chekhov said that acting is something happening under imaginary circumstances. Chekhov adds concepts such as ease, possibility for variation and spontaneity, and connection with the audience, among others.

The Threshold is an inevitable device which takes you from your everyday life into the world of imagination, when you are ready to start something new. (In performance, it is not only the actor who steps over the Threshold but the audience is taken along on this journey.) It is related both to Atmospheres and to Ensemble, and to a concept Chekhov called "Love in our profession."⁴⁰ To step over this creative Threshold is to enter into a world of new rules of creativity, crossing into the realm of the higher self. Indeed, in the "Safe Space" of the workshop/class situation or the rehearsal session – or as expressed in the performance itself – each exercise contains practical learning, and each is also connected to "the whole" of Michael Chekhov's technique. In Chekhov's philosophy, this kind of deep work

³⁸ Stanislavsky, Konstantin [Constantin Stanislavski]; Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, transl. 1936. *An Actor Prepares*. New York: Theatre Arts and J. J. Little and Ives, p. 267. Cf. Hapgood, Elizabeth Reynolds. 1989. *Stanislavsky's Legacy*. Revised edition. London: Methuen, p.282.

³⁹ Meisner, Sanford, and Dennis Longwell, 1987. *Sanford Meisner on Acting*. New York: Vintage Books, p. 16

⁴⁰ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 11, "On love in our profession"; NYPL call no. LT10-4789.

aspires to the high dream of “the unifying being,” and could lead to the greater spirit behind what theatre can be in the future. Joanna Merlin has spoken of the impact of crossing the Threshold into a class with Chekhov himself, relating it explicitly to Atmosphere:

“And the moment he would walk into this kind of strange, diverse group, the whole atmosphere would change and it was sort of – hard to describe, it was an atmosphere that had a kind of energy that was so constructive and inspiring that you felt as though there was no failure. ... I think that actors are frequently damaged and it’s not as though he was catering to everyone’s ego but he was being gentle [while] leading us into the right direction.⁴¹ And he was relentless about sharing what he had discovered and what he had evolved through the years. It was as though you could feel his intentions and his intention was TO PASS THIS ON.”⁴²

I personally visualized everyone getting ready to paint with bright colors on a clean and empty canvas – a metaphor Chekhov used for the first step in creating Psychological Gesture. The idea is to allow yourself to become the “blank canvas” on which, after you cross the Threshold, you will project and radiate out, ready to playfully interact and improvise. As I understand it the very first step of the transition must happen internally later signaling itself in the physical crossing – from the outside into the classroom, or in the classroom stepping over a tape the teacher put on the floor for everybody to cross over, or from the wings of the stage being invisible to the audience and entering now transformed into another character, the stage itself.

Crossing the Threshold is also a way to help you begin Concentrating, an essential dramatic skill in both Stanislavsky’s and Chekhov’s methods. The goal is to concentrate and focus, but also to gather your vitality (not unwanted tension), awareness, getting in touch with your inner powers

⁴¹ I have heard this said about Peter Brook as well, that he did not let the actor stray from the path.

⁴² Merlin, Joanna. 2015 (in Routledge 2015), pp. 389-398; and speaking at the Michael Chekhov School.org in New York State. Available URLs: <https://vimeo.com/143244066> ; cf. www.MichaelChekhovSchool.org .

which are larger than you think and forgotten. It is the invitation to be intuitive, instinctive, creative and spontaneous. You find your inner energy by being playful, ready to engage the whole body, and fully aware of your breathing. Crossing the Threshold allows you to awaken imagination, enlarging yourself within and without, opening the door to sensations and feelings and allowing you to surprise yourself, to be in a search for discovery ready to explore and “give” fully. It is the act of doing by giving. What is more, this tool does not apply only for an individual but for the whole ensemble (the whole class) and builds the necessary teamwork with everybody doing his or her best. It focuses on the importance of the earnestness the artists will be working with. Hopefully, mutual trust will be established.

In 2016, Joanna Merlin stood with us in the studio; she crossed the Threshold and had us watch her, then invited us to enter with her into a creative and safe space. This important prelude made the subsequent work focused, memorable and good. I took a deep breath and breathed it out, releasing any tension. Once the Threshold is crossed, you should be energized, aware, radiating. In 2018, we also did different types of entrance exercises. In the opening session, the teachers (John McManus, Joerg Andrees, Dawn Arnold) asked us to embrace the people, the cultures we were from, the space itself.

Get in touch with yourself – whatever you need to do, to stretch, or just sit and breathe.

Feel the presence of the others in the space.

Now feel the ground underneath you.

Now stand up and walk in the space. Find somebody and move together.

Once we paired up; we were asked to share how we first learned about the Chekhov work. I shared a story from my research at Ridgefield, Connecticut, where Chekhov’s Chekhov Theatre Studio school was located. The Archivist at the Town Hall there told me about her dad helping Michael Chekhov move to New York City in 1942 after the Ridgefield Studio was closed. My

partner responded with a gesture. (Gestures are of course central to the Chekhov technique.) She stood up, made parallel hands, and was snaking them up and down, “searching” and aiming them to a goal, with her body “pulled beyond” until the hands were upraised. (I translated her gesture as research/goal/achievement.) As with all aspects of the Chekhov work, the emphasis was on integrating the dramatic technique with our personal life and values. I use this in my teaching now by having students listen to a partner, keeping quiet, and then respond to what they have heard with a gesture. The gesture speaks volumes – it becomes stronger than words.

We all were asked to go to the back wall – what I recognize as a Threshold exercise. “Let us take the first step.” We made one step and then walked across the studio and everybody applauded. The session started. We shared our stories with other members of the group, and then moved on to exercises.

Craig Mathers, working with Sol Garre, added details related to the Threshold and the studio space in their session in 2019. There was crossing in and out of the safe space. Within, we did the exercise with a sense of safe play – this is play, a game, so you get to drop the ball. The idea was of being able (in class or rehearsal) to drop it and go back to it with a powerful, maximum use of energy. “Drill it in and out.” Turn it (the energy) on and off. It was like when you were playing hide and seek with your friends as a child, and your mother suddenly came in and said, “dinner”. You stop playing, and then, as Sol put it “return to the play again.” Thereafter, we step out or back, out of the circle or Threshold, “because we can.” Go back to normal. And even walking into the space (crossing the Threshold from everyday life into creative space), be ready to receive, be open, walk with awareness, but be relaxed about it.

Craig made an application to stage business: while working, do a simple task such as getting a sip of water, go sit in the chair (action has a beginning – you pick up the bottle – middle – you take a sip – and end – you put the bottle back down. He also emphasized the Threshold as a constant

tool, to be used before the show starts for the preparation of the actors: to radiate to all directions, connecting with earth, ceiling, in the space find a friend, be friendly, going from moment to moment.

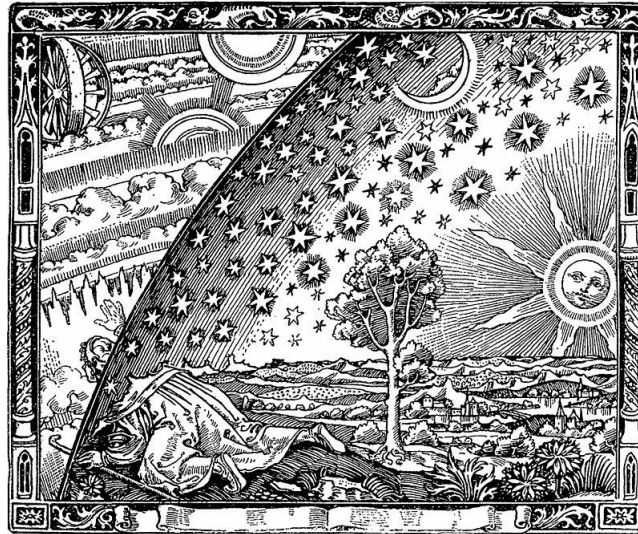
In David Zinder's version, he had us go the wall, spines touching the wall, lining up the spines into a perfect vertical, then move forward as a group, radiating from your center, then step over the Threshold into creativity.

Crossing the Threshold also implies entering the space already radiating the qualities of your character. Scott Fielding gave us an exercise for Radiating, related to Chekhov's exercises where you get energy from the ground, applied to crossing the Threshold. Fielding added, "Now, choose a target – a very specific point in the space and "send out" the image in your mind to that point in the space. Don't forget to ask yourselves the question: "What do I have to do in order to radiate?" What am I actually doing when I radiate? Finally, as has been noted, all of the exercises involving the Threshold at MICHA, and throughout Chekhov's teaching, are related to Concentration, the concept Chekhov shared closely with Stanislavsky. Chekhov's pupil, Hurd Hatfield, noted that Chekhov used a "circle of concentration" to start classes and rehearsals, in order, as Hatfield put it, "to open our hearts to each other." Always did it before a performance, and this made a bond which you have. We had our differences ... but he made us rise to a higher consciousness and level. ... We never did emotional memory."⁴³ This and other Concentration exercises, including those related to Threshold, will be discussed in the following chapter.

The MICHA teachers often compared stepping across the Threshold to stepping into a large bubble. In 2018, Joerg Andrees, David Zinder, and Craig Mathers developed this in exercises. In Craig's session, we "created" a big imaginary bubble and stood outside of it. Then we broke inside it, maybe first with a hand. Another hand followed, and after the head got inside the big bubble, and was pulled out, then one foot in and then out;

⁴³ Keeve 2002/2009-2010.

afterwards another foot went in and then out. Immediately thereafter we put our whole body inside the bubble and felt how it is to be inside this bubble.



Camille Flammarion, *L'atmosphère : météorologie populaire*, 1888.

(This illustration from Camille Flammarion gives a similar effect to a bubble threshold and is not too distant from Chekhov's idea of higher consciousness.)

In 2019-2020, the international Covid-19 pandemic forced teachers of acting techniques to consider ways to adapt their classes to online formats, via access platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, and so forth. In 2020, senior Chekhov teacher, Ted Pugh, offered one such session on the concept of Threshold, which responded in part to ideas he received from Joanna Merlin. In this clarification, the goal of the Threshold became a change of consciousness from being just yourself in ordinary life into being present in the creative space, in the presence of other actors. A way of saying, “here I am.” In the online web space (Zoom in his case) it began on sofas and chairs, whatever the participants were sitting on. The experience was one of self-concentration, or self-attention, not only inwardly but outwardly, with eyes open. We participants were asked to notice where our bodies were – maybe sitting in a chair, perhaps you need to shift. Pugh asked us to remove everything from what we might be hearing except his voice and our inner voice. I had to make it my home, had to shift myself, be with myself, not hold my breath. “You are working,” Pugh said, “with your concentration. If you need to lean forward, do so.” We were not to manipulate breath in any way, but be in the consciousness that surrounds you.

Pugh then prepared us to stand. A change of consciousness may arouse in you the impulse to stand, to rise. Out of that readiness – the impulse to rise, to act – prepare to rise. The body knows what moves the feet; the body is conscious, there is total readiness. Notice everything that has to move in order to stand up. Now, you are in the upright position. Your spine is straight in uprightness, in a vertical. Give yourself to yourself. Is there any tension? Simply be still. Now bend over in partial contraction, bring your arms down with your. Find the movement, the concentration of slow contraction. Notice the different experience of being vertical and bending down. Now return to your upright position. Let the movement continue when you are in the upright position, your arms reaching up into expansion. Now, you will bend/contract – the contraction is inwardly moving – then a staccato [explosive] expansion. When you are standing in expansion, you are not the subject of concentration; you go from concentration to staccato/expansion as if to say, “Here I am.” It is an act of changing consciousness: conscious of yourself but be present in the space. You are now present in the creative space. Take a few minutes to act as being in the space. “Here I am” Now say it out loud.

Ball Toss

Some of the most typical exercises in Chekhov’s technique involve actors tossing fairly large balls to each other, as a means of establishing connections and expressing different centers, will-impulses, feelings, and so forth. The MICHA sessions often involved ball tossing exercises. A selection of these is also included in the Chapter Four on Teaching Chekhov, below.

Golden Hoop

An exercise that often ended sessions at MICHA – and is excellent for ending classes with university students – is the Golden Hoop Group Exercise. It uses imaginary group lifting, in which the students form a circle, then all go down as synchronized as possible and lift up an imaginary

golden hoop. They lift it a bit, then lower it down, then together throw it up to the sun.

3.3b (2) Movement/Gesture and Its Qualities –

The “Four Brothers” and Other Forms

In 2016, Joanna Merlin told us that behind everything she teaches is movement. She offers (gesture) as students are receiving, reaching or dismissing. The body knows intuitively what the body wants- contracting and expanding. Take a moment before you begin the move (impulse), take a breath in as you are opening, then breathe out. We tend to hold a breath. (I have noticed that, in fact, before we go forward with a movement, we move backwards a bit, so there is contra-movement, working against resistance in the space.)

Ted Pugh followed up on this in 2018. Listen to yourself, the place where you are physically: tired, nervous? Don't judge. Breathe and watch: my hands are a bit stiffer than I thought; let the neck listen to itself. Move. Find a tempo that's already there – move in accordance. You want to be truthful – the tempo that's really there, a movement that feels true, right. Find it again by stopping, then move. Move faster than that tempo, then move slower than you want to. (Maybe the whole being is screaming). Is there an inner pulse that matches that?

Concentrate on the feet, acknowledge the feet. Move on the floor like it's clay that you feel. Walk articulating your steps; use all five toes on each foot. You bring a sense of body with you which supports moments, something without inhibition. We live too much above the neck line. Try to climb into our body, putting air into the joints. Bring consciousness from the floor to the ankles, knees, moving up. Whisper with the body, now shout with the body, and now be still. How does it feel? (Ted's image reminded me of a student I taught in the past, who created a wonderful character in Sarah Ruhl's play, *Euridice*. He chose to walk in character as though he was walking through mud. His characterization was memorable because it was so expressive.)

In the version of Fern Sloan, who works with Ted Pugh, she stressed a legato movement down to knees – how the air becomes thicker – it requires more to do to move through, add more resistance; you are leaving an imprint. (Compare the element of earth.) Now around the ankles there is water; it comes all the way up – just our hands are on the surface of the water. Water moves you! It is interesting to see water as a metaphor for resistance as well as, elsewhere in the Chekhov work, for floating – “Many movements are floating, merging in space,” as he put it.

To return to Pugh: now feel your belly along with the feet and move. That quality that you give to the lower part, the guts: strength, walk with power, walk slowly then quickly. Basically you are getting in touch with what’s already there, your vitality: how to listen to it, to your feet. Don’t forget to breathe!

There is consciousness around your head, and the quality is cool and clear. When you look out everything is sharp, colors are bright. Wake up your head: let it carry your qualities, awareness, clarity. (In fact, that was my experience too!) Now you may begin to feel that the middle of the body needs some attention. Stop, just open the heart, the chest; open the arms to the side – feel the warmth, stay open. Everything is opening more; fingers, eyes, heart – sensing the externalizing of the body.

Openness: Chekhov suggests that arms start in the middle of chest, not at the shoulders.⁴⁴ Try this; it feels different and gives you a wider range of motions. Now incorporate what the heart gives: vitality. Move a hand with vitality, one unit of energy that requires force. Vitality is there but again, not unwanted tension. Now do the same movement gently: let it be in the last section of your finger. Now bring it to stillness – this doesn’t mean it has stopped. Now move like you, yourself move. Do whatever you want: you can sit, reach for something. An inner stream *prana* runs through us. Chekhov said we are trying to unblock and free that. Do something small – like stretching – enjoy it. Just send the movement ahead after you feel the

⁴⁴ Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 7.

impulse and decide what to do.

Six-Direction Movement in Staccato and Legato

Fern Sloan, Lenard Petit, and David Zinder (an expanded version) all used an exercise in “Six-Direction Movement,” which features both tempo and relationship to space. According to Zinder, the six-direction staccato/legato exercise was “created by Michael Chekhov, and used in many variations from the early days of the Chekhov’s Studio at Dartington England (1936-39) to Blair Cutting’s Chekhov’s Studio in New York in 1980s. I learned it from my colleague in the Chekhov work, Leonard Petit.”⁴⁵

In my own case, I used it with both Zinder and Sloan in 2018/2019 at MICHA. (A version of Zinder’s exercise is included below, in Chapter Four.) The exercises ask for movement in six directions – up, down, left, right, forwards, backwards – at varying combinations of tempos and often radiating or projecting beyond the body when a gesture ends.

The “Four Brothers” (Feeling of Ease, Feeling for Form, Feeling of Beauty, Sense of the Whole/Entirety)

The general concept of the “Four Brothers” has been introduced above, Chapter One, and will not be repeated here. Instead, I will offer some of the insights the MICHA sessions provided about details of these all-important training exercises and their application in teaching. For example, in the “Four Brothers” exercises, as well as in the inner movement phase of the Staccato/Legato exercise, we were generally urged to create a complete movement/phrase, then to repeat it as precisely as possible. At the end of the repeat, the actors reach a Zero Point and must “surprise” themselves, stepping into a new movement or phrase, if continued. Chekhov often insisted upon the use of repetition in exercises.

⁴⁵ Zinder 2002/2009, p. 46.

Chekhov teacher Lisa Dalton has observed that “cultivating these four Feelings leads to conscious creative activity of attaining a state of inspiration and walking a path of a refined human being. One can choose to experience and be part of the Whole/Entirety, awakening the higher ego. He teaches us to perceive feelings of Ease, Form, and Beauty by choosing to speak, gesticulate and walk, as well as breathe, with these feelings. As we consciously apply “Four Brothers”, we consequently create original, deep, and powerful art.”⁴⁶

The Feeling of Ease

Ease is important to practice because this seeming effortless is what contemporary acting is about, especially acting in front of camera. Michael Chekhov was an expert as a stage and film actor and as an acting coach. Ease in this sense is about maintaining the inner intensity but not about visible muscular tension. Chekhov gives an example of his colleague, the actor/director Yevgeny Vakhtangov: “Vakhtangov’s gaiety, happiness, lightness, meaning light [and] in the sense of ease, too.” Chekhov found in Vakhtangov a brilliant ability to play with four different types of theatrical egos like a juggler, taking into consideration “the actor’s ego like Stanislavsky, the director’s ego, like Meyerhold, and other two egos, the spectator’s ego and the playwright’s ego.”⁴⁷

Merlin also gave us what she called “a key to grace.” Walk in the room. These chairs are in the way; I know I have to move them. Subconsciously I walk into the room, and I am already moving them – which is a key to grace. Now, when you have your body ready, clarity opens up.

The Feeling of Form

⁴⁶ Lisa Dalton; cf. National Michael Chekhov Association website, <http://www.chekhov.net/pdf/iChartInfo/4brothers.pdf> .

⁴⁷ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 10, “On experiences at Moscow art theatre, part II”; NYPL call no. LT10- 4788.

Many of the exercises at Dartington and Ridgefield for which we have photographs concern the Feeling of Form, the Fourth Brother. Jeff Thomakos, the theologian and acting teacher, who has also attended MICHA in the past, observes, “In what I teach, this is a kind of recognition of the compositional structure in each moment. It forces us to reject vague or shapeless movement or action and allows us to concretely play each moment with specificity of intent. This is important for artists because the artist needs to know exactly the kind of effect he or she wishes to produce and how to accomplish it. Not only that, but for performers, they need to be able to repeat the form at will every night when performing onstage (or in a series of “takes” on the movie set). All art has to have this feeling of form. Not only to the artist creating it, but to the audience or observer. Otherwise, the impact is lost.” Thomakos goes on to point out that in life (and one could add, onstage as well), “we need to know the beginning of the beginning, middle to the beginning, and the end to the beginning. It would even be helpful to know the beginning to the beginning of the beginning. ... And so on. Being aware of form is an essential life skill. It makes seeing the whole beautiful picture so much easier. Without it, we are in a muddle.”⁴⁸ Chekhov understood this and sought to make sure the actor was sensitized to Form as an essential element of dramatic art.

Heaviness, Lightness, Balance, and Ease

There was a certain amount of philosophical discussion among the Chekhov practitioners at MICHA in 2019 about qualities of movement that are not exactly feelings, but are used in a metaphorical sense relating to feelings. (This is analogous to the way Milan Kundera uses “lightness” and “heaviness” as philosophical metaphors.) Phenomena such as heaviness, lightness, balance, and so forth, can produce sensations but also a direct psychological response. Ideas such as being “out of a space” or “open to a

⁴⁸ Thomakos, Jeff. 2018. “Michael Chekhov and the Four Brothers: A Sermon.” Available URL: <https://www.michiganchekhov.com/post/2018/11/01/michael-chekhov-and-the-four-brothers-a-sermon> ; posted 1 November 2018. The article began as an actual sermon preached in a Unitarian church in October 2018, emphasizing the spiritual qualities in Chekhov’s method. Thomakos is part of the Michigan (USA) Chekhov group.

space” affect Form; heaviness and lightness affect movement. This is related to exercises based on a group of three sensations – Rising (also called Floating), Falling, and Balancing which were taught as one unit by Michael Chekhov to Jack Colvin in Hollywood.⁴⁹ They often form part of classes and workshops at MICHA and in the studios of Chekhov practitioners. The idea to call the three sensations “The Three Sisters” is unfortunate, as it confuses with the Anton Chekhov play of the same name. These will be included in the following Chapter Four, Class 14.

The Feeling of Beauty

Chekhov’s idea of Beauty in dramatic art was influenced by the early 20th-Century Russian director, Aleksandr Tairov, whose productions (as Vakhtangov’s) provided, in Chekhov’s words, “Beauty. Extreme Beauty for the eye, seemingly – no, it was more than for the eye.”⁵⁰ Tairov used classical music as a way of helping his actors to develop a spiritual union in their scenes as well as achieve a creative state of mind – at Dartington, this collaboration among the arts was universally encouraged, and at Ridgefield, Chekhov continued to include music and the visual arts in both training and developing productions. Chekhov wanted to support true beauty by “breaking through the surface of the situation or character and by digging deeper into it [through] intensive imagining. ... Superficiality and selfishness onstage, kills beauty. True beauty has its roots inside the human being, whereas false beauty is only on the outside.” This search for inner beauty even affected situations in dramas where the role or plot presented ugliness:

Now the question may arise, how are we to perform characters and situations that are ugly and shocking in themselves? For instance, how can we perform Caliban, or Richard III, or the scene from *King Lear* in which Gloucester’s eyes are torn out? Will they become

⁴⁹ See Rushe 2019, p. 170.

⁵⁰ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 9, “On experiences at the Moscow Art Theatre, part I”; NYPL call no. LT10-4787. Chekhov was aware that in 1949 Tairov’s Chamber Theatre in Moscow was accused of “Aesthetism and Formalism” and consequently closed. Tairov died at Moscow in September 1950.

sweet, sentimental, and untrue if they are performed with a feeling of beauty? Of course not. The rudeness and ugliness must and will remain, but through the Feeling of Beauty on the part of the actor and the director, such scenes will be deprived of their realistic, inartistic rudeness, which appeals only to our lower, nervous, and physical reactions. They will be uplifted into a sphere that is higher than that of mere naturalism.

... All these physical-psychological exercises make the actor's body more flexible and receptive to all inner impulses. But purely psychological exercises such as those on Concentration, Imagination,

Atmosphere, and others also make his body more responsive, more sensitive.⁵¹

Feeling/Sense of the Whole (Entirety)

Chekhov began as an actor, moved on to being a director and Studio company manager, and eventually became a teacher. He noted that “as an actor he found that actors concentrated on their parts to the exclusion of everything else, that they observed nothing of what was going on around them, and had no comprehension of the play as a whole.” He insisted in bringing harmony to the whole production, not simply from the director and designers, but also from each actor contributing to the ensemble and Atmosphere.⁵²

3.3c (3) Additional Qualities of Movement and Images

The concept of qualities of movement in much of Chekhov's teaching and writing before about 1948-49 was united with ideas about colors derived from Hindu thought via Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophy and its origins in

⁵¹ 1991/1942, pp. 56-57; not in 1953 *verbatim*, but idea is addressed 1953/2002, pp. 15-16.

⁵² Chekhov (Studio) 1936, Brochure, page 32.

Theosophy.⁵³ Whether a given teacher of the Chekhov work today uses color as a metaphor for qualities depends on how he/she learned the technique, whether there is a connection with Anthroposophy or Eurythmy, and so forth. The term, “coloration,” in the sense of “painting a gesture or movement with a quality or feeling,” bridges the original color theory with what is really desired: adding qualities, especially feelings, to the experience of making a movement. In this regard, many of the teachers at MICHA continued Chekhov’s use of color to sensitize the actor to qualities of movements without necessarily presenting coloration from a spiritual point of view. For example, we worked with colors, coloring our hands with an imaginary orange color, painting the chest, belly, even the marrow in our bones with imaginary colors.

To return to Joanna Merlin in 2016, Merlin explored colors, asking us to stand in a circle for a breathing exercise. As you inhale, you bring sensation of openness – let it flow down to your feet. Use your imagination, a sensation of openness as you exhale. Imagine opened space, and, on every inhaled breath imagine sensations of various colors. Let us start with breathing in redness. To experience color red inside of your body, perhaps you feel that the rhythm of your body might change, weight might shift. Allow at any point the character you are playing to come to life; whatever happens as you introduce the color, let redness grow with you inhaling the breath experience that your body opens. Allow yourself to listen to your “wise actor’s body.”

Then we were to bring sensations of blue, black, green, purple – inhaling the colors and noticing anything that subtly changes as you bring in a color with the openness of breath and send the color out again, floating out of the body, sending the color into the space. We were to notice the changes in our bodies – they may or may not come, Joanna said. We ended with the sensation of yellowness – exhaling the color yellow in the space and

⁵³ Thus, Andrei Malaev-Babel, in his partial translation and commentary on Chekhov’s chapter for the Psychological Gesture in the 1946 *О технике актера* (Chekhov 1953/2002, Appendix, pp. 183-215), translated what Chekhov had given as “color” or “coloration” as “quality.”

bringing all the colors into the center of our body. We breathed with the center filling the space in front and back of us, imagining a very small sun radiating energy from your center/heart. We bent over in a spine roll, opened our eyes and gradually came back to the standing position. We touched the center of our body (heart) experience, breathing lightly in that –what is keeping us alive. We walked around, letting the center guide us, enjoying the radiation of the center. We were asked to have an image – a sensation of openness when you inhale to our “ideal center,” a small sun a couple of inches deep in our chest.⁵⁴

I have applied variations of color exercises successfully in my classes. Working with colors and atmospheres proved to be very important in my Acting Scene Study courses as well as with beginners in Fundamentals of Acting. Like Merlin, I like to ask the students to come into a circle afterwards for a time and reflect. Were there any discoveries in terms of colors, Atmosphere, chakras? The power of colors is important because sometimes color can connect us with the character we are creating and or with a moment in the play. Perhaps there is a connection of color that may create a key sensation for you.⁵⁵ Use colors to open yourself towards imagination. I immediately could tell by looking at the students working in my acting classes with all different colors how their body posture and mood visibly changed for the viewer, and it made an immediate difference in their

⁵⁴ Compare what Cynthia Ashperger (2008, p. 242) reports from Merlin’s classes around 2001, suggesting a long-term stability over three decades in Merlin’s pedagogy: (J. Merlin, “Colour Warm-Up.”) “After taking a deep inhalation and slow exhalation with the natural rhythm of your breathing. Be aware of the breath going in and out of the body with no effort. Let your body be breathed. Then bring the sensation of openness in your body on the inhalations. Then introduce the colors, and after inhaling the color into this open body and exhaling each color into the space for a minute or so. Let the color go and inhale the openness to bring you back to neutral. As you move from color to color, notice the change in tempo, weight, temperature, and whether the color seems to land in any specific part of the body. Then focus on your character and see if a particular color seems to present itself.” The idea of a sun centered in the chest was repeated throughout the classes at MICHA over the three years I was at MICHA, often in connection with a Center in the chest called the “Ideal Center.” One would hear, “Maintain a sense of your ideal center, like a sun a couple of inches deep in your chest.” I was unable to find the concept of an “Ideal Center” as such in Chekhov’s writings. He spoke of a center in the chest (feeling center) and spoke of it leading to an ideal body: “The imaginary center in your chest will also give you the sensation that your whole body is approaching, as it were, an ‘ideal’ type of human body.” [Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 8.] He did not mention a sun. While the original students who worked with Chekhov, principally in California, and the next generation of teachers, probably understand the relationship to Chekhov’s wider teaching, the “Ideal Center” and its sun have taken on a life of their own.

⁵⁵ I used this breathing in and out, with the sensation of the color black subconsciously when rehearsing and performing the role of Masha in *The Seagull*.

work. The students were amazed by the new discoveries they made. In a particularly interesting application, one of my students, in analyzing the bits in a scene, highlighted all of the bits in different colors. She had found different qualities, tempos, and so forth – it was fascinating to see the results of her work. I would also like to mention the book, *Ladění*, written by my professor at DAMU, Eva Kröschlová,⁵⁶ where there is one exercise in Chapter One that I share with my students. It involves coloring the spine – the chakras – breathing in seven points from the sacrum to the crown of the head, moving from (coccyx) with redness / “burning coal”; (abdomen) / “orange fog”; (solar plexus) / “pink fog”; (throat) / “blue ribbon”; (third eye chakra) / “ruby beam”; (head) fontanelle / “opal white air.” It is an excellent exercise. Other coloring applications are found below, Chapter Four.

In 2018, Scott Fielding not only taught during the MICHA sessions, but also elaborated on Chekhov’s movement and emotions in our interview. In all Chekhov work, movement arouses images; images arouse sensations; sensations rouse feelings; feelings lead to emotions. The goal is to create an “emotional array” – as opposed to a clearly-defined emotion. The next step is to move from the abstract to the concrete, physical details. Now the actors will get specific physical qualities (“flabby,” “wiry,” “pale”) – Fielding suggests starting from your hand, head, or legs and gradually working the quality through the entire body. (In 2016, Merlin urged us to physicalize each idea – our destiny, what we will put into our body, so it can arouse our will. Like Fielding, she wanted us to start with one part of the body, such as hands, doing the gesture – to close, push, pull, lift, embrace, penetrate, smash, tear, wring, etc. – then the shoulder, and eventually all the body. With archetypal gestures, don’t rush it.) Fielding wanted us to stay in the realm of qualities, which give greater freedom than the stereotypes of psychological conduct. We sought to translate these multiple qualities (small, hard, black, cold, large, yellow, light, fluffy) into an “image” that we

⁵⁶ Kröschlová, Eva, and Lenka Fišerová. 2002. *Ladění: Psychosomatická příprava k výuce herectví*. V Praze: Akademie múzických umění, Divadelní fakulta (DAMU), 1. lekce (Cvičení na koberci), strana 11-13.

could work from. Colors again played a useful role in these exercises. Similarly, in 2019, in the course of talking about gesture, I experienced and spoke of an open gesture as a “red scream” and a calm gesture as a “grey pyramid.” Other actors expressed gestures as a colored flower blooming. Sol Garre suggested finding words for sensations and feelings, making them into a “palette,” like colors for a painter.

Polarities (Contrasts)

Petit, Merlin, Rushe, and other MICHA teachers use the concept of Polarities in a variety of contexts. Polarities or contrast was an increasingly important aspect of Chekhov’s dramatic theory in the second half of his career in America, applied to PG, image, Atmospheres, scene study and rehearsal, composition of the entire performance, and other elements in his technique. Even before, in pairing ideas such as Expansion and Contraction, polarity was present – Petit gave a useful, similar exercise at MICHA combining Expansion and Contraction in the context of Polarities. I also use this exercise in teaching my own classes, as will be discussed in the following chapter. In my own case, I first encountered these ideas while studying with Marcel Marceau.

Craig Mathers embedded Expansion and Contraction in an exploration of the body’s responses. The more you pay attention to vibration within you, the more you get out of it. We worked on Expansion and Contraction by beginning with a warming up of the lower part of the body, massage of the feet, the calves, thighs. The lower body is the will center (pelvis, below the diaphragm). Legs are the “cousins” of the will center. If you need the students to project, you can suggest they work from the will center. Then we rubbed our hands together until we felt heat, and then made different sizes imaginary balls with the hands – he called it the “energy bubble.” Expansion of the will was connected to the urge to speak. (If you want something, that makes you want to speak.) The sequence was expansion, then the closing/contraction, distinguishing strongly between closing and expanding. He had us say two lines when working with the will

center. With the first line you are expanding; with the second one you are closing/contracting. He asked how the expanding lines' emotions compared with the closing emotions.

3.3d (4) Imagination – Image Work – Application to Creating a Character

During the three extended conferences I attended at MICHA, numerous useful exercises for developing the actor's imagination were offered. Many of these are included below, in Chapter Four. Here I will add some comments and descriptions of interesting aspects of imagination training developed by the MICHA teachers.

In all the Chekhov work, the aim is to discover the image of the character and refine it by acquiring as much information about it as possible. (In my acting and teaching, I, and my students, create an Actor's Journal or "Workbook," studying along the way the character's role in scenes by doing the "Six Steps" exercise popularized by Uta Hagen and breaking each scene into bits, and determining the super-objective.) Eventually the goal and the objectives, via the image of the character in the mind and the physicalization of an action verb summarizing the super-objective of the character (leading to the Psychological Gesture as discussed immediately below), is to "inhabit" the Imaginary Body of that image in order to discover how you behave and feel inside that body, eventually moving to the full development and expression of the character. Joanna Merlin encouraged us to "enlarge yourself, go beyond the image, open the door to the emotions, playfully!" Transformation is the heart of the actor's process. As Scott Fielding put it, if we can imagine the character's physical appearance and get "inside" that body as we imagine it, we can begin to find way toward a powerful transformation.

Scott Fielding also gave us, in 2018, a very interesting and powerful exercise about adding circumstances. In this exercise, sensations lead to emotions. A ball was placed inside the circle of participants. In succession,

(1) it becomes the ball of your lost child; (2) there is a search for that child; (3) bad news comes – we hear (the teacher’s voice) that the child is not only lost but dead; (4) good news comes. In the course of moving to the third “bad news” section, the exercise took me to the ground – ending on the floor weeping. As I was going down, when I was on my knee; I lost all control and hit my forehead on the ground. I tried not to cry, but that made me cry even more. (I actually had a blue bump on my forehead like a child coming home from playing in the kindergarten.) Scott came over and asked, “Lenka, are you OK?” I shared with Scott how at the moment of grief I lost control over myself. He said (admiring my expression of emotion, not my bumping the head), “That’s good!” I found my deep grief over the lost child and then the relief when the child was found. Another professional actor in the group, Bruce Roach of the University of Minnesota, was so happy when he heard the news that the child was well that he also burst into tears. Fielding’s intended application was for us to free our instrument – to allow the feelings to come out. In the context of using an image and acting from it, Fern Sloan and Ted Pugh told a story about a former model who cried uncontrollably during one of their sessions, expressing the sadness of having always to please someone else.

Joanna Merlin has observed that we can’t live without imagination. Simple imagining can become artistic imagination. It can change us – we can be changed by our own imagination. An analytical mind is the last thing you go for. Fern Sloan points to the need to allow something to play through you.

3.3e (5) Psychological Gesture (PG) and other Archetypal Gestures.

Of particular value in the 2016 MICHA conference were Joanna Merlin’s explanations of Chekhov’s concept of the Psychological Gesture, or PG. She speaks with double authority, both as the last living direct student of Michael Chekhov and as someone who has taught PG successfully for decades. Merlin explained what an archetypal gesture was as she stood in

front of a group of us actors, by showing her gesture as a teacher is “Giving.” As she is saying this, she makes a small opening gesture with both of her hands, palms reaching out towards the actors. She asks what they think their (re-)action toward her is? The actors all instinctively say, “Receiving” or “Drawing in,” and make variations on the gesture of “Pulling in,” “Gathering,” or “Embracing.” Characters are not “daily/every day” people, their existence is on a heightened, dramatic plane governed by high concentrations of will, far beyond daily behavior. It is this powerful concentration of will that defines the difference between daily body language and archetypal gestures.

In most cases, the super-objective of a character from a play – the governing desire – can be linked to a gesture invented by the actor from within a fairly limited list of compact, highly evocative actions or gestures. And this is where the training for the PG begins. Merlin cites Chekhov’s description of the Psychological Gesture as “composed of a will-impulse painted by qualities.” It is the physicalization of the character’s objective in archetypal form – a strong, complete movement which is a translation into physical terms of the character’s super-objective, defined as a simple, active verb: to crush, to embrace, to penetrate, and so on. Once the actor discovers the super-objective, he or she simply needs to reduce it to an active verb to begin creating the PG and therefore begin creating the character.

One should also add that Chekhov’s own published suggestion for discovering the super-objective leading to the PG strongly affirms Merlin’s summary of his ideas (and also involves the Imaginary Body technique).

Ask this character to act [moments in the play in] your Imagination and follow its acting in all its details. Simultaneously, try to see what the character is aiming at, what is his wish, his desire?...As soon as you begin to guess what the character is doing, try to find the most simple Psychological Gesture for it. [Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 312, pp. 64-65.]

The PG as translates the action implied by the chosen single action verb into a powerful, archetypal gesture, from which the actor acquires a highly effective, easily accessible psychophysical key to the character. As Merlin notes, it is an extremely simple technique that requires mostly creative intuition.

The “gesture” must be archetypal, in the sense that it can serve, as Chekhov put it, “as an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind.” The applications of the PG are numerous. Merlin also cites application as a warm up, as a vital key for the overall trajectory of the character and for every entrance, as a creative “charge” in the real time of the performance if concentration wanes. Chekhov provides a list, to be used in Chapter Four, below, on teaching his technique. This includes the main PG for the character’s super-objective, of course, and through the creation of an array of related PGs, also includes using the PG as a key into individual scenes, moments, and transitions, and as a technique to create a score for the through-line of actions in the entire play/scene. The PG, as Merlin has noted, is the only element that can effectively be used from the very first stages of the rehearsal process until the very last performance.

This last observation accords well with what we know from Chekhov’s acting career. It is documented that the characters Chekhov was working on during the rehearsal process were not fully “born” until performed in front of an audience – a concept Chekhov shared with Vachtangov. For sure this applied to the role of Skid in *Artisten* for Max Reinhardt at Vienna, when Chekhov had a very limited time to prepare (and remarkably, performed in German language), but also for roles such as Erik XIV, for which his colleagues were frustrated that he was fairly quiet during rehearsals. Meryl Streep also reported that she didn’t know if her characters would “work” until she faced her scene partner/partners in films. Chekhov allowed the actor to keep the main PG (the one derived from the super-objective) private, and actors often follow this idea. Certainly, this supports the idea that learning PG is not about screaming and running around in a group, but finally, more about imagining and working out in solitude at

home. The many other things about the character you want to discover in rehearsals.

The link to the Imaginary Body concept also connects PG to the entire Chekhov technique, with its emphasis on the Imagination. Chekhov's students (and those of Shdanoff, who of course taught Chekhov's techniques), such as Jack Colvin, were hypnotized by this power of characterization: "when he did his internal psychological gesture the whole man changed – fat, heavy, tall, thin, and god knows, young, and then very old again." Colvin, Robert Stack, Lloyd Bridges, and so forth, spoke of Chekhov, as Stack put it, as "someone who gives you a key" to the role. Sometimes this took on a comic, but nevertheless very effective form: in advising Dorothy on how to play an adolescent, Chekhov said, "imagine you have to pee all the time." I gave this advice to one of my students who was playing the role of Marya in *The Inspector General*, and was having trouble distinguishing her adolescent character from that of her mother, Anna, since there was no visible age difference between her and the woman playing Anna. I gave her Chekhov's advice to Dorothy Bridges, and it worked beautifully.

Chekhov suggested more than twenty different archetypal actions/gestures (among others possible), which could form the basis for PG. Over the years some of the leading Chekhov master teachers at MICHA have reduced these to smaller number of eleven archetypal gestures: Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Embracing, Smashing, Wringing, Penetrating, and Tearing. I find nothing in Chekhov's writings mandating this limitation and, on the contrary, feel that Chekhov gave the actor absolute freedom to begin with any original, archetypal sort of gesture that achieved the purpose of embodying the character and its super-objective in image and movement. In fact, in the three years I attended the MICHA extended meetings, many more actions were explored, among them Radiating, Pressing, Crumpling, Coaxing, Separating, Touching, Brushing away, Breaking, Taking, Giving, Supporting, Holding back, Scratching, Cutting, and Caressing, among

others. On the other hand, simple, comprehensive (and therefore archetypal) gestures can imply a range of other actions. So, for example, “Push” can evoke annihilate, humiliate, punch, stop, shock, provoke, dominate, stab, jolt, intimidate, demean, and flatten. (Stated like this, it seems like mechanical theatre, but it would happen in the context of a pre-existing image / inner gesture, as discussed below.)

“The suggested movements,” Chekhov insisted, “must not become a kind of acting. You must avoid pretending, for instance, that you are pulling something with difficulty, and you are becoming tired...Your movement ... must maintain a pure, archetypal form.”⁵⁷ These are movements of a “moderate tempo” engaging the whole body. Notice Chekhov’s clear separation of this kind of psychophysical gesture from classic “corporeal” pantomime (although there is also a connection with this art form).⁵⁸

The idea of archetypes in Chekhov is by no means limiting, as already mentioned, and is extremely useful in helping the actor to find the essence of a character. Among the examples derived from Chekhov and used at MICHA were Beggar (to draw towards one), Star (or Movie Star, to dazzle, to radiate), Diplomat (to wring, to penetrate). Molding, flying, flowing, radiating are all used often in psychological moments of a play. Chekhov’s acting techniques are open-ended and inexhaustible as long as you use your imagination indefinitely – sustained, radiating upwards, indefinitely.

It is worth re-emphasizing how sympathetic the Chekhov work is with other twentieth-century drama pedagogies, especially when insisting that the actor’s work goes beyond the text itself. When Meisner said that “Acting is living under imaginary circumstances, he also added, “... the text is like a canoe, and the river on which it sits is the emotion. The text floats on the river. If the water of the river is turbulent, the words will come out like a canoe on a rough river. It all depends on the flow of the river which is your emotion. The text takes on the character of your emotion.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 20, pp. 41-42; cf. the following Exercise 21, p. 42.

⁵⁸ I make this connection in Pichlíková 2017, op.cit.

⁵⁹ Meisner and Longwell 1987, p. 115.

Peter Brook speaks of an exercise (The Tightrope) where the students mime walking a tightrope. The exercise demands that the tightrope walker have something in the imagination that is true and real – it has to take you from here to there in a way that is interesting and real. Brook adds that the particular gift of an actor is a certain link between pure imagination and the body itself.⁶⁰

The emphasis on action verbs in Chekhov's technique also explains his interest in ball toss exercises. For the archetypal gesture of "throwing," for example, the idea is to throw a heavy medicine ball or casting a heavy fishing net, so that the entire body is involved and the gesture can be sustained and radiated at its peak. Emphasis is on the fullness of the body gesture involved. All the gestures must involve total body movement. Another example of an action/gesture taught at MICHA in 2019, pushing, will indicate the detail given these movements in teaching the Chekhov work. For "Push," even if we are not yet moving, the lower body is always engaged. The head is also pushing, not just the hands – go as far as you can, hold onto the gesture. You do a push, but before you begin, take a moment to find a position where you can give yourself more space. Sort of lean a bit back, use the space behind you and take a bit before you begin. Use as much space and full body as you can. It helps create the radiation, not only physically in the space but in "me" – the inner gesture is stronger than the outer gesture. Keep your legs further apart – hands in position of push. Now inhale the desire of pushing – have a strong image in your mind and exhale into the final gesture. As you exhale (you can make a sound coming from your guts) the radiation happens at the very end of this visible movement, which comes into the body and lives there, and radiates out even when the gesture is "finished". So, don't just finish abruptly but sustain the gesture for a bit longer. (Michael Chekhov said, "The end of the gesture is very important.") Take your time when you are training, when you do it too

⁶⁰ Brook, Simon, and Peter Brook. 2012 (released 2014). *The Tightrope*. Video documentary. [London, Paris, and Rome]: Brook Productions, *et alia*; Marcel Marceau, who had a performance piece called "The Tightrope Walker," used a similar explanation in teaching the mime illusion of walking a tightrope.

quickly, it does not have the power. Know the difference between mechanical movement and “OK, something happened” in an archetypal way. (In our scene work from *Three Sisters* by A.P. Chekhov in MICHA 2019, Solyony is the conqueror; we worked on this character with a gesture of pushing down.)

In 2016, Joanna Merlin shared that sounds can sometimes bring the gestures to the body – when we remember the sound. She suggested we try it in molding way at the beginning (like opening the zipper) – you started the sound when you started the movement. The movement itself needs to create the sound. Wait until the end of the gesture! Perhaps take another breath and continue the hissing or make another sound. Make that sound on the “radiating,” at the end. You can also if needed reduce the gesture in terms of natural behavior. Find the one gesture you feel is the strongest. Sound becomes incorporated: you can find the character’s voice through the sound. Merlin also emphasized this when discussing Polarity, starting with one gesture in one place and end as far as possible from the beginning gesture. She wanted us, when we finished with a gesture, to stay in touch with the vibrating and aftermath of the gesture as we released all the tension. For example, when doing Contracting versus Expansion, she asked us, when starting in a contracted position, to find a sound which voiced the gesture. Before we allowed the movement, and afterwards, we were to remember the sound and inviting it to bring back the experience – the challenge is to bring back vibrant life, to have inner movement which ignites and connects, and brings life to the words and makes them alive. Dawn Arnold gave us a “Psychological Gesture Warm-Up,” which I use in applying aspects of PG in classes (see Chapter Four, below). Another warm-up related to PG adapted the Ball Toss concept to the idea of giving and receiving.

The idea of the PG as a single active verb is something that Meisner and actor/teachers such as Brad Dourif would also embrace. Sol Garre observes that PG is not a result; it is what gives you more possibilities. She calls it a “springboard,” but the more usual explanation (from Chekhov

himself) is that it is a “scaffold” upon which you build the whole complicated architectural construction of the character.

All agree that the PG should be as simple as possible, because its task is to summarize the intricate psychology of a character in an easily available form, to compress it into its essence. As has been discussed, the true PG will initially resemble the broad charcoal stroke on an artist’s canvas before he starts on the details. The PG must also have a very clear and definite form. Any vagueness existing in it should prove to you that it is not yet the essence, the core, of the psychology of the character you are working upon. (This sense of form, you will remember, was implicit in the exercises on molding, floating and other movements mentioned above Chapter One and developed in Chapter Four.)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Craig Mathers emphasizes the offstage-onstage dual function of the PG. You work offstage generating the gesture, then you go onstage and you do all the acting on a “stream.” (Gregorio Rosenblum, a theatre colleague with a master’s degree in directing from DAMU, originally from Chile, directed me in the USA in a one-woman play, *Gertrude*, by Anna Hodková, about Hamlet’s mother. It was wonderful to work with a director whom I understood well and he in return understood me as an actress. He later gave an example of a Greek company performing a tragedy in Chile years ago. Backstage he witnessed a very petite actress who started to smash pillows on the ground, and when she went onstage this petite woman became a ball of fire – unbelievably powerful.)

The MICHA sessions often involved “Veiling,” the interesting moment when the actor hides a desire or motivation. The question is how much to “enveil” and how much to radiate out. Sol Garre pointed out that sometimes your characterization is about how the character hides a secret – for example, I suggest, how Natasha in *Three Sisters* “hides” her controlling nature – that is what “feeds” you as an actor in creating your character. Merlin observed that often Gesture is “what,” hiding is “how” – you might change from one quality to another. This also goes back to Chekhov’s

concept of many-leveled acting, especially in the example he gave of Claudius in *Hamlet* (see above, Chapter Two). Lisa Dalton reminds us that there is not just one PG for a character but several PG's – she is correct, since Chekhov gives the PG two functions, one type to express the main super-objective of the character, and another type of PG to use within a scene (as in his example of Horatio in *Hamlet*, also cited above).

In my own case at MICHA in 2019, I prepared the role of Anfisa in *Three Sisters*. In Act IV, I walked out of Prozorov's house fairly quickly for my age (82), looking for Masha. My PG was Embracing, in the sense of being helpful and motherly towards Irina, the youngest Prozorov daughter, who was outside on the swing enjoying music but also worried about Tuzenbach. Anfisa's character is also about helping and giving to others – street musicians, and so forth – expressing love in action (agapé). The Embrace is all-embracing love in the sense of giving and receiving, functioning for years for the Prozorov daughters in the place of their mother. She speaks honestly about Olga's support, friendship, and faith, praising her in front of Vershinin, especially for providing for her old age.

As an exercise and part of the creative process, we stood in a line at the very back wall of a large studio. Our task was to find the strongest phrase in the play for our character, and then to walk towards the “audience” – instructors Sol Garre and Craig Mathers, as well as Lisa Dalton, who was watching at this point. All of the actors were in a row without saying anything at all (finding PG). The direction was: radiate your character out and sustain. As Chekhov said, “Initially, perhaps, only one minor moment, one phrase, no more; you will repeat this moment, until PG starts to inspire you with every movement, word or even in a silent, motionless position.” (1946) I chose the line, “There's never been a happier soul in the world than me.” I was walking, transformed into an old woman, emotional, on the day people were leaving, worried for Masha, but also happy, with tears welling up in my eyes. We all walked at the same time. The next step was to go back to the wall and, while walking forward, deliver the short monologue of our character with all the richness we had found so far. The teachers had their

mouths open. “That is art!” they said to us. Sol said, “That is creation.” All three of them smiled and applauded us; it was like being at the end of a performance. We all experienced a sense of fulfillment, of finding, and intuitively becoming, the character we envisioned. We continued and added to it the next day. As Chekhov said, “A new experience of PG leads to new movements... So, by working through and perfecting your gesture, you achieve two goals: first, you penetrate the essence of the role in an intuitive way, bypassing the rational analysis.” (1946)

Finally, there are a few additional details of PG training at MICHA worth sharing. In summer 2019, for the first time, Joanna Merlin and Craig Mathers worked on a new approach to the PG through breathing. Craig pointed out that the inner breath is a microcosm of the breath. If in the course of the play, you might lose intentions, find a breath, and that will get you back on track. Merlin added, “You might work with a phrase, a word, and if you can find a gesture, with gesture. But first find a breath. If Tuzenbach wants to embrace Irina (possibly for the last time), he develops breath of staccato quality and panic. David Zinder also observes that “what is presented to the audience is not the character’s psychology, but the actor’s incorporation of that fictional psychology into his own ... his reworking of the play’s text for his character through the filter of his psyche, his dreams, his fantasies, his memories that are explored individually early on in the rehearsal process. If it works, use it; if it doesn’t – throw it out!”⁶¹

3.3f (6) Centers, Imaginary Centers, and Focal Points

The idea of Centers is found in many modern acting systems, and can be applied to a wide variety of theatrical traditions – my own application of it to the stock characters in Commedia dell’Arte is also discussed in my recent article, as mentioned above.⁶² Following the Thinking / Feeling / Willing trio that Chekhov developed, in part under the influence of Rudolph Steiner, practitioners of the Chekhov technique locate the main centers of the body in the head (Thinking Center), chest (heart or Feeling Center), and

⁶¹ Zinder 2002, p. 252.

⁶² Pichlíková 2017, op. cit.

pelvis or legs (the Willing Center, or center for will-impulses). However, there can also be Imaginary Centers, located at different points of the body or even outside of the body, as focal points for gesture and attention. This is a constant theme in Chekhov's writings and one of the most useful points in his technique. According to Chekhov, "the Center can be placed anywhere; in the shoulder; in one of the eyes (e.g. Tartuffe or Quasimodo); in the stomach (Falstaff, Sir Toby Belch); in the knees (Aquecheek), which may create a humorous outer as well as psychological characterization; in front of the body (Prospero, Hamlet, Othello); behind the back (Sancho Panza). All variations imaginable are possible and correct if the actor finds them in accordance with his own and his director's interpretation of the part."⁶³

The MICHA teachers investigated varying uses and ideas involving Centers. Scott Fielding did not want the qualities to be "acted out," just to walk with the sensation of the center being in the head, then in the "stomach" (solar plexus, nearer where the heart is), then in the pelvis and legs. The next step was using lines from the texts we had prepared for the summer session, we walked "from" the stomach/soft belly (or chose another center), reached out to our partner and received him or her, and then said the line – he/she reacted, saying his/her line. Part of the idea was to walk in the space and feel the connection to someone, to look into his/her eyes, and if you feel connection you needed to express your feeling. In discussing this, we talked about not really needing circumstances to create feelings, as well as about our personal feelings versus artistic feelings. Personal feelings are uncomfortable for the audience to watch.

Other MICHA exercises combined the Qualities and Centers, emphasizing the sensations that are aroused by each quality. (What do you feel like when your body is moving with the quality of "angularity" or the quality of "softness"?) The use of centers allows one to focus on a source of energy within the body, which can be adapted to a quality – one method was to give adjectives (soft, hard, etc.) and make nouns indicating qualities

⁶³ Chekhov 1991/1942, pp. 100-101; cf. very similar observations in 1953/2002, pp. 81-82.

(softness, hardness) affecting movement from specific centers, whether within or outside.

In 2018, John McMahon (and other teachers in all three years) applied the three centers to various exercises, both working in pairs and going around the center. Different emphases included energy, radiating, catching with a gesture, body position, and concepts such as straight and rounded applied to each of the centers, emphasizing holistic connections. At one point in John's class, I found suddenly my body transformed into a butterfly-like staccato movement, and I realized that I lived in this kind of body before, when I performed Iris in *The Insect Play* by Karel and Josef Čapek. Later, I also recalled (as has been mentioned previously) Chekhov's choice of the movement of a butterfly for Khlestakov in *The Inspector General* – the movement of a hard-to-catch trickster, who can never stay too long in one place. In both cases, the center was outside the body.⁶⁴



(Photo courtesy of Národní Divadlo online archive.)

My great uncle, Ladislav Pešek, as Khlestakov in *The Inspector General*, Národní Divadlo, Praha, 10.11.1936; Director: Jiří Frejka.

Pešek and Frejka were among the early teachers at DAMU, Pešek was the principle teacher of Josef Bláha, mentioned above as an important influence on my acting.

⁶⁴ Just the opposite effect was achieved by Helen Hunt in the film, *As Good As It Gets* (1997). Larry Moss suggested that she apply Michael Chekhov's technique of finding "the center of energy in the character's body." Hunt was playing a waitress and decided the center of energy was in her feet. Moss suggested she put all her energy into her feet "as far from her brain as she could get," and the two agreed "that she should try to walk as though her feet were the main energy of her survival." Hunt would win an Academy Award for her role. "Once the choice was made," Moss concludes, "a physical character was born out of technique that bypassed the brain and went directly to body impulse." Moss 2006 (2005), p. 121. The chapter is entitled, "Destination, Business, and Gesture: Creating Physical Life for Your Character."

3.4

Concluding Remarks

What were the benefits of my work at MICHA? What new understanding of the Chekhov technique came from these learning sessions and practical experiences, as opposed to previous intellectual self-study of Chekhov?

Studying Chekhov has been the culmination of my acting training and my own pedagogical development. My experience with four annual International Chekhov work and study festivals, with teacher training, at MICHA in New London, plus two MICHA workshops in New York City, visits to individual Chekhov technique studios, and the numerous interviews and conversations I have had with teachers of the Michael Chekhov Technique, have enabled me to solidify my study of the Chekhov work and apply it to my own acting and teaching. It has also shown the ways that an important 20th-century dramatic theatre pedagogy can be transmitted by a diverse network of practitioners and institutions without a single central or dominant authority. MICHA is not an “institution” in the sense of an academic department within a university, a conservatory department, a unit within a national theater, or an independent but established teaching studio. As has been noted in the previous chapter, MICHA is not the same as Chekhov’s group at the MAT-2, or his studios at Dartington Hall and Ridgefield and his classes in New York, with an established faculty, administration, curriculum, and so forth. A decision was made not to be doctrinaire, not to teach one version of the Chekhov technique, but rather, to be an international “forum,” or meeting place where members of institutions and studios and independent artists can come together, trade ideas, celebrate their common heritage in the Chekhov work, and train others in the Chekhov techniques at both an introductory and a more advanced level (on the understanding that their training will continue in other contexts as well). In this, MICHA is quite different from the two Berlin studios (MCIA and MTSB); Dalton and Kilroy's National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA) with its workshops and closely associated trained teachers; Pugh, Sloan, and Freidank’s Michael Chekhov School of Acting and The Actors’

Ensemble; Petit's Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in New York; Arnold's Chekhov Studio Chicago; Michael Chekhov Brasil; and the other national studios and smaller private studios (Fielding, Makela, Shipman, Nikolić, et alia, as listed in the attached Appendix 6.) It is more, I believe, like the other “network of artists” organizations, such as Michael Chekhov UK, Michael Chekhov Europe, and Michael Chekhov Canada, which at times functions as studios and at times as venues or forums – and which, of course, are also represented at the MICHA gatherings, such as the 20th anniversary in 2019.

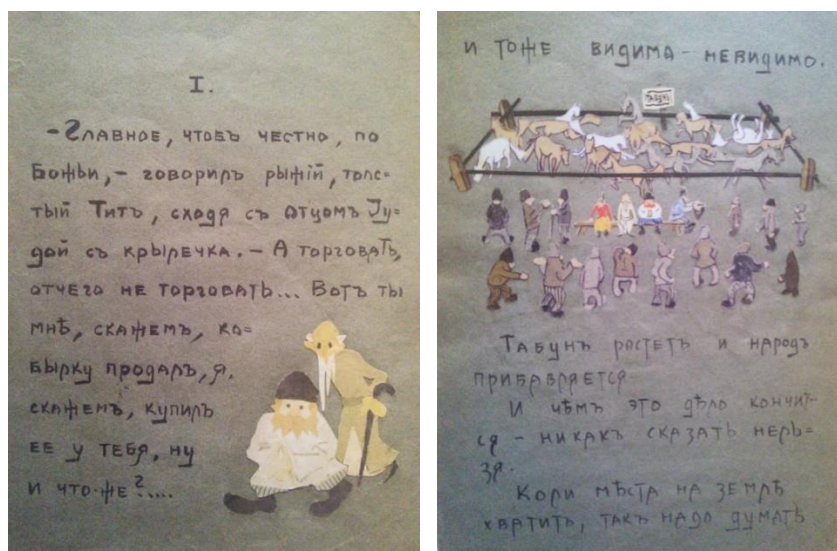
One of the greatest benefits of MICHA, and a source of new learning and experiences, was meeting the people themselves. Working with Joanna Merlin, the last living pupil of Chekhov (and a professional actress who performed on the stage with Laurence Olivier in *Beckett* and Zero Mostel in *Fiddler on the Roof*), who is still teaching, was of course essential, particularly in the case of the Psychological Gesture. John McManus, who teaches drama in Pittsburgh, was also taking classes the first year I visited MICHA and was an instructor the subsequent two years. He shared with me his love for creative speech, developed from his work with Mechthild Harkness (widow of Chekhov pupil and associate, Alan Harkness) in Australia. Creative speech takes many forms among MICHA members. While there is a group at MICHA who still follow classic Eurythmy (or Speech Formation), even more practitioners combine the Chekhov work with other systems of rigorous dramatic Speech. An extremely important member of this circle is Max Hafler from Ireland, whom I interviewed in Galway, Ireland. The connection between dramatic Speech and Chekhov, which I knew from my academic study, is now more fully integrated into my own Chekhov training. A different benefit came from meeting so many international practitioners, in particular the group of determined young artists from Brazil around Hugo Moss.

None of this would have been possible had I not already studied, and continued to research, Chekhov's pedagogical career and writings. I entered the MICHA classes already knowing the theoretical and historical material behind the exercises and scene studies in each session. My “book study”

gave me the power to check what the teachers were saying against what I knew Chekhov did and said, and this has also affected the direction of my application of the technique, in which I try to stay closer to Chekhov's own words and exercises.

What surprised me?

On a professional level, meeting Yana Meerzon from Canada and starting to collaborate was a particularly pleasant surprise. Our meeting resulted in the publication of my article in *Critical Stages*, for which she was at that time an editor, and many other professional and philosophical interchanges. Jessica Cerullo, Artistic Director of MICHA, expanded my knowledge of Chekhov's works – such as a children's book written and illustrated by Chekhov in America, *A Tale about Lies and How Swiftly They Spread Across the Earth*, that MICHA published in 2013, edited by Jessica, with a translation by Andrei Malaev-Babel.⁶⁵ She also helped me discover things in the MICHA archives and, like David Zinder, Dawn Arnold, and others, gave me positive feedback on my Chekhov display and on a lecture I gave about Chekhov's career at MICHA.



Chekhov's children's book: *A Tale About Lies and How Quickly They Spread Across the Earth*, with his own color illustrations. (Photo courtesy MICHA)

⁶⁵ Chekhov, Michael; Jessica Cerullo, ed., Andrei Malaev-Babel, transl. 2013. *A Tale About Lies and How Quickly They Spread Across the Earth*. New York: MICHA Michael Chekhov Association.

A number of techniques surprised me, or at least were new to me, as I worked at MICHA. While I had often worked with Centers in *Commedia dell'Arte* and mime, which are similar to Imaginary Centers, working with the Imaginary Body – as if putting the mask of the character not only over my face but over the whole body, so that I could “step into” the image of the character I had created – was a very important experience.

And while it was not a surprise, my work at MICHA strongly reinforced my ability to “hold a mirror to myself,” going into things within myself that are not part of my ordinary daily life, and that had not been accessible through other dramatic methods before. It was liberating because otherwise all of that would have been staying inside, unused, or accessed in damaging ways – as Chekhov suggested in his debate with Stanislavsky about Affective Memory. The Chekhov technique allows me to bring both good and dangerous qualities, feelings, will-impulses – even things like aggression and worries – into my dramatic work under my own control. I now know I can use these inner resources again and again on stage, and share them with my students, thanks to an ensemble of people who came together to explore the Chekhov work. It is a matter of the transformation when you are working on the role, allowing that other person to come out through you, giving the author’s writing my own feelings, or when necessary, saying the words of the author while also “veiling” inner processes.

In many ways, the key word in my training was Image. Working with images again allowed me to be both open and concentrated at the same time as the image work allowed my deepest feelings to surface. I realized that the images in an actor’s mind, which follow him or her through the rehearsal process and into the performance, are like the images seen in the waking state at the end of a dream, when you are still half asleep and seeing with an inner sight – still possibly dreaming a specific image. In the dream, that image provokes a physical movement/reaction in your body, and continues to do so as you wake. You wake up, and if you take the time to do so, you

observe and think or look at that dream state, its images, and its physical responses, which you can use in your creative state.⁶⁶

In the same way, we can say that since the time onstage is different than in life – if in fact it is just like in the dream state I described above – any thought about what has happened onstage comes in the third place. First, we see an image, then comes the physical reaction, and third, a thought. In the theatre, during a performance, I believe the thought that completes the triad comes from the audience, not from the actor. The result is the character’s artistic life onstage in artistic time, in the midst of a dramatic atmosphere that permeates both the performance and the audience. What is crucial, I believe, is for the actor to be able to get into this creative world of images and impulses with the mind of a juggler, letting the images and impulses flow freely without the brain interfering all the time – trusting your creative imagination, being hyper-aware and fully awake on the stage. But also, to be able to step out of the character you have created and back into your private life afterwards, where you use your own brain to make the right decisions, and where you don’t know *how* the “play” is going to end for you. When seeking to discover what you do not have in common with the character you are creating, you happen to be on the path to discover who you truly are.

⁶⁶ The technical term is “hypnagogia”; see Chamberlain 2004, p. 37.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Teaching Chekhov: An Ideal Annotated Syllabus and Teaching Script – A Resource for Teachers



Michael Chekhov teaching and directing in Dartington, England at his Chekhov Theatre Studio (1936-1938). (Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

*“An actor has three instruments” he used to say,
“his body, his voice, and his imagination”*

(Dorothy Elmhirst on Chekhov, *News of the Day*, Dartington Hall estate publication, October 1955)

Preliminary Notes

The following “syllabus” is for an intensive course on the Chekhov Technique meeting twice a week in sessions of 2.5-3 hours each for a typical academic term of 14 weeks. The course includes scene study applications of the technique, but these are only partly specified, given that the scenes would be tailored to each student’s needs. The “syllabus” includes the teaching script (lectures and comments to be given by the instructor) as well as the usual information provided to students.

The focus is principally on the pedagogical application of Chekhov's original sources, many of them unpublished or difficult to obtain. The exercises performed in class come mainly from these sources.¹ In particular, I wanted to give more space to Michael Chekhov's original 1942 manuscript (as first published in 1991), and to his 1946 Russian edition – О технике актёра, the only one he wrote for publication in his native Russian. I have translated the Russian text as needed for this ideal course, including the entire chapter on Psychological Gesture. This had been the only part of the 1946 text that had been translated into English at all, but only as a fragment.² It is given here complete. (See Appendix 10)

Where necessary for teaching, I have included exercises and explanations from the 1953 text. I have also selected unpublished exercises from Chekhov's lectures in Hollywood in 1955 as well as exercises from Mala Powers, written out to accompany the partial re-issuing of the tapes of Michael Chekhov's 1955 lectures, paraphrased but based on what Chekhov taught her and said in his lectures. There are also a few examples of unpublished information and exercises that were preserved by Powers and others among Chekhov's direct pupils, such as Joanna Merlin and Jack Colvin, as well as versions of the exercises that I have learned in my studies with the MICHA organization. References to MICHA that do not cite a teacher are general exercises; if the source for an exercise is a contemporary Chekhov practitioner, reference is made to the specific teacher.

Where an exercise from Chekhov 1953 (/2002) is used intact, the text is not repeated, but reference is made to that publication, since it is widely available in a number of languages and is used in this course as a textbook.

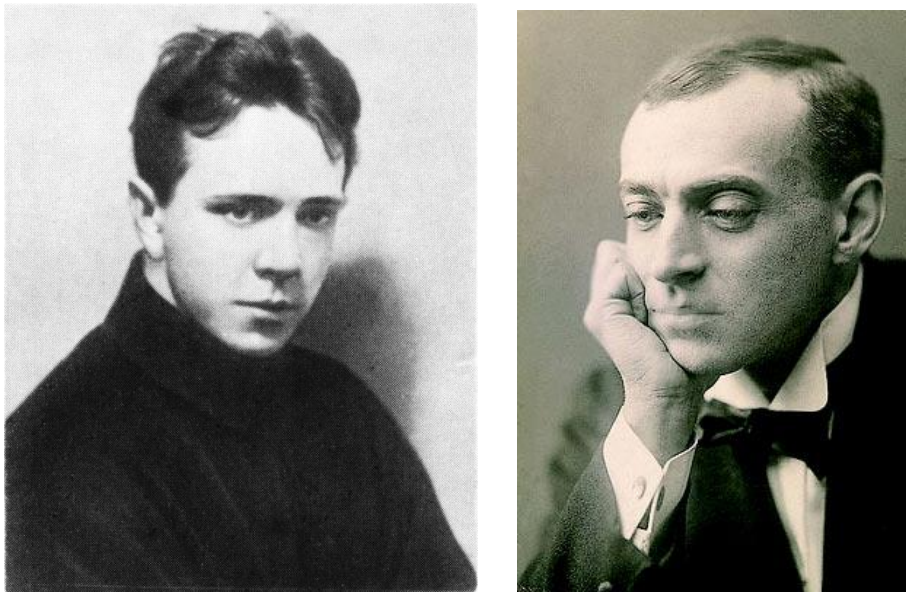
I have tested these selected exercises both for my own acting and, in most cases, with my students. I am convinced that these rediscovered

¹ In the cases where an exercise has been published the source is given in the notes or in the text (Chekhov 1942/1991, Chekhov 1946, Chekhov 1953/2002, etc.), although of course this would not be the case in an actual working syllabus for students. If the exercise has been abbreviated or combined, reference is made to the Verbatim Register, Appendix 8.

² Andrei Malaev-Babel, partial translation and commentary on Chekhov's chapter for the Psychological Gesture in the 1946 О технике актёра; Chekhov 1953/2002, Appendix, pp. 183-215. Also discussed above, Chapters Two and Three.

exercises work well in the 21st century. The syllabus, however, is designed to be subject to minor changes as necessary in the course of teaching, balancing the preparation with the actual situation in the classroom.

In general, I have not indicated here which themes and exercises were derived by Chekhov from Stanislavsky-Sulerzhitsky, and Vachtangov – not to mention parallels with Meisner, Hagen, *et alia* – unless the information was pedagogically necessary. See above, Chapters One and Three, for discussion of these matters.



Michael Chekhov and Yevgeny Vakhtangov, ca. 1914-1920.

SYLLABUS

Textbooks for the course:

Chekhov, Michael; Yul Brynner, introd.; illustrated by Nicolai Remisoff. 1953. *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*. New York: Harper & Row Perennial Library.

Reprinted with additional material in 2002 as Chekhov, Michael; Yul Brynner and Simon Callow, introd.; illustrated by Nicolai Remisoff. 2002. *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting: Revised and Expanded Edition*. London and New York: Routledge – with an appendix by Andrei Malaev-Babel, partially translating О технике актера, Chapter [4], “Psychological Gesture.”

We will use the 2002 expanded edition, cited as “Chekhov 1953/2002.”

Merlin, Joanna. 2001. *Auditioning: An Actor-Friendly Guide*. New York: Vintage Books.

Other resources: Keeve, Frederick; Peter Spirer; Charles X. Block; Gregory Peck; et alia. 2002/2009-2010. *From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*. Venice CA: Pathfinder Home Entertainment, 2002; [United States]: Celebrity Home Entertainment, 2009, and [Zürich, Switzerland]: DIVA. AG, 2010. Available URL:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiuB_6Zj05A .

Plus selected audio clips from Chekhov’s 1955 Hollywood lectures.

OUTLINE OF CLASSES (TABLE OF CONTENTS)

CLASS 1

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES THRESHOLD / CREATIVE SPIRIT
ACTOR’S MARCH

CLASS 2

MICHAEL CHEKHOV’S LIFE; THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE AND
CHEKHOV; CHEKHOV’S CAREER AFTER LEAVING RUSSIA; CHEKHOV
IN DARTINGTON (ENGLAND) AND RIDGEFIELD (CONNECTICUT, USA);
IN HOLLYWOOD

CLASS 3

CONCENTRATION AND IMAGINATION / IMAGES IN THE MIND

CLASS 4

MOVEMENT – CENTERS, IMAGINARY CENTERS
CHARACTER — EXERCISES IN CLASS. CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

CLASS 5

THE “FOUR BROTHERS”: THE FEELING OF FORM
QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT: MOLDING

CLASS 6

THE “FOUR BROTHERS” (CONTINUING): FEELING OF EASE, FEELING OF BEAUTY

CLASS 7 (QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT, CONT'D.)

SENSATIONS: FLOATING (Flowing), RISING (RELATED TO FLYING), FALLING, BALANCING.

CLASS 8 (QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT, CONT'D.)

EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION (THE SENSE OF SPACE)

CLASS 9

RECEIVING – RADIATING

CLASS 10

“FOUR BROTHERS” (CONTINUING): FEELING OF THE WHOLE (ENTIRETY) (ASSOCIATED): FEELING OF STYLE

CLASS 11

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF ATMOSPHERES

CLASS 12

ATMOSPHERE AND INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS (SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE ATMOSPHERES)

CLASS 13

CHARACTERIZATION: EMBODIMENT OF THE IMAGE OF YOUR CHARACTER
THE IMAGINARY BODY (AND ITS CENTER)

CLASS 14

OTHER ASPECTS OF CHARACTERIZATION; FEELING OF TRUTH; SPEECH AND GESTURE. SCENE OBJECTIVES CHARACTER'S SUPER-OBJECTIVE

CLASS 15

PREPARATION AND SUSTAINING THE PAUSE

CLASS 16

GESTURES WITH QUALITIES (PSYCHOPHYSICAL MOVEMENT);
GESTURES AND SENSATIONS (SENSATIONS AS ROUTE TO FEELINGS);
GESTURES EVOKING FEELINGS

CLASS 17

ACTION VERBS – ARCHETYPAL GESTURES

CLASS 18 & 19
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE (PG)

CLASS 20
TRANSFORMATIONS

CLASS 21
FLYING OVER THE PLAY; FORM OF THE PLAY (THE AUTHOR'S IDEA OF
THE PLAY) POLARITIES

CLASS 22
TEMPO – STACCATO AND LEGATO (SIX-DIRECTION MOVEMENT)

CLASS 23
ENSEMBLE FEELING, REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES

CLASS 24
ACTING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA AUDITIONING
TECHNIQUES FOR USE ON THE SET

CLASS 25
REHEARSAL AND APPLICATION OF CHECKHOV'S TECHNIQUES IN
SCENES AND MONOLOGUES

CLASS 26
REHEARSAL (Final Dress) - run through

CLASS 27
FINAL SCENE PRESENTATION (videotaping) invite your friends and family to
come and see you perform!

CLASS 28
FINAL EXAMINATION SESSION: FINAL MONOLOGUE PRESENTATION
(videotaping) Note: Course evaluations and final feedback

CLASS 1

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES THRESHOLD/CREATIVE SPIRIT ACTOR'S MARCH

Michael Chekhov's method has the very great advantage of being applied to the needs of the individual actor: he wants you to succeed on your own terms. Other acting techniques provide many of the same elements (Chekhov was the favorite pupil of Konstantin Stanislavsky). However, Chekhov is holistic and focuses on the actor's Imagination and "wise body," which is trained to obey, both physically (muscle memory) and psychologically (psychophysical movement and gesture). He guides his students to trust their imagination and their creative individuality, finding psychophysical movement and gestures instinctively before analyzing the text. Chekhov provides a constellation of very helpful tools which will be shared throughout the course, such as his "Chart for Inspired Acting" (below) and scores of exercises and wise explanations. For example, for his most famous technique, the Psychological Gesture, he urges the actor to use it "quietly and without any fear, and apply it to your soul. But if you feel that it does no good, push it aside – the gesture, not yourself. Kill the Method, not yourself! ... because the whole idea of the Method is to help and not hinder."³ Help and not hinder! That is our goal. And finally, Chekhov sought to communicate his techniques with easy humor, setting his colleagues and students at their ease even as he kept the standards of performance very high. The Feeling of Ease will be one of our goals as well.

In this syllabus there are number of exercises you are asked to try on your own, as well as exploring them in class in a group, that will hopefully provide you with a way to learn about your creative process and your creative individuality. By repeating the exercises, rehearsing, and perhaps rejecting for now the exercises which did not work for you at the moment, it will help you to advance your journey to self-discovery, and consequently to transformation.

When an exercise does work for you, whether in class or at home, make a note of it, and repeat it on your own. Great actor-teachers, and certainly Chekhov, not to mention the "personal trainers" in gyms, know the power of creative repetition – that is, repetition that is aware of a power growing within you. It is doing the same thing over and over, but doing it, as Chekhov put it, "knowing that repetition is actually the growing power." One way to achieve this is to have a fresh approach – the same interest as if it were the first time – every time that you start a repetition of an exercise. Combined with your memory of having done the exercise before, this energizes the repetition and keeps it creative and growing.⁴

Both students and more advanced actors often ask whether *any* method is needed, especially for those with what the world calls "talent." Chekhov's answer was, "I believe that the more gifted one is the more one needs the method to avoid accidents. If we are gifted, we may not find the character, we may not find the last thing which makes us so happy on the stage, and each day, each year, we will lose

³ See Chekhov 2018, pp. 184-187, lesson for 3 October 1938.

⁴ Chekhov 1985, p. 67, 21 November 1941.

more and more our ability to be always spontaneous and creative.”⁵ Great actors who were great teachers, from Stanislavsky to Uta Hagen, mention needing this power of keeping their acting spontaneous. Having a rigorous, adaptable method always helps us develop our talent.

The first step is an understanding between the teacher and the student that the actor is the radio or transmitter between the author and director and, of course, the audience. Communication is essentially transmitted energy; it’s all about building the connection with the audience and radiating out to them. You as an actor have to put the character you built in front of the audience, and, with the audience’s help, transmit the feelings (emotions), needs, and goals to the audience. To do this your “emotional battery” has to be charged.

(A) HIGHLIGHTS OF CHEKHOV’S TECHNIQUE:

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES THRESHOLD/CREATIVE SPIRIT ACTOR’S MARCH

Five leading and guiding principles, as stated by Chekhov himself:

- 1) Bodily development by psychological means.
- 2) Intangible means by expression while acting and rehearsing.
- 3) Our Spirit and the true intellect as a means of unification.
- 4) The purpose of our Method as means of invoking a creative state of mind.
- 5) Separate points in our Method as the means leading to the freedom of our talents.⁶

As restated by the MICHA organization:

1. The actor must train his or her body through the use of psychological exercises.
2. The actor must use intangible means of expression while acting and rehearsing to achieve tangible results.
3. The actor must employ a creative spirit and the higher intellect to unify the various aspects of the performance.
4. The purpose of the Chekhov method is to embody each component of the method as a means of awakening all parts of the method in order to evoke a creative state of mind.
5. The actor must penetrate each separate point of the Chekhov Technique and then determine to what degree and by what means it frees his or her talent.⁷

⁵ See Chekhov 1985, pp. 105-119, lesson of 5 December 1941.

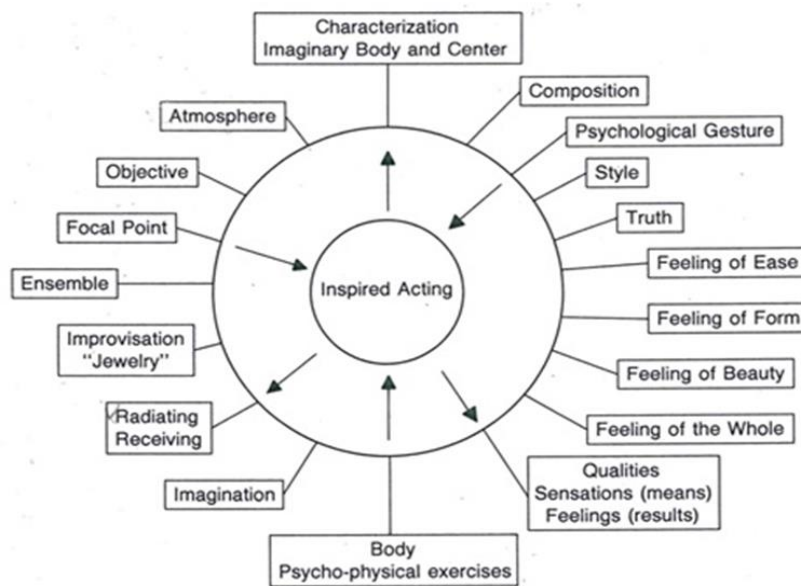
⁶ Unpublished ms, Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers, 1936.

⁷ Available URL: <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/five-principles> .

THE CHART FOR INSPIRED ACTING (1949):

(Also included as Handout 1, Appendix 11.)

The Chekhov method is designed to be an integrated whole: if you access any one



technique or idea, it connects you to the whole. Chekhov used the idea of light bulbs around the circle (as always, he works with images). If I turn on one, two, or three light bulbs, the entire circle lights up; a circuit is completed. (In other words, it all clicks in.) Chekhov originally gave the chart to Mala Powers – see Chapter 1, above.

(B) A PSYCHOPHYSICAL APPROACH

Chekhov insisted “there are no purely physical exercises in our method.” He sought a process that could make the actor’s body sensitive to inner impulses and to convey them expressively to the audience from the stage. All bodily exercises in the Chekhov work are “at the same time psychological ones. Your body must become the expression of your emotions. ... The emotions cannot be “done” – they are there in you.” The idea is that inner psychology, of the actor and in the actor’s image of the character represented, affects outer bodily movement, gesture, and so forth, and that the body and its movement can influence the inner psychology.⁸

A measure of Chekhov’s appreciation for gestures and movement can be found in his words to New York professional actors in 1941:

“Therefore, the very best thing we actors can have is the language of gestures. ... Great actors whom I have met in my life have become lost by analyzing their parts. They lose their time and energy, and become disgusted with the part before they start to act, because they don’t know that there is the possibility of approaching the most complicated part by the most simple

⁸ See the Verbatim Register, Appendix 8, including unpublished material from Chekhov 1935a, Three Lessons, 18 March 1935; lesson from Dartington, 12 October 1936; and in Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 43; not in 1953.

means of the gesture. ... we shall see that this gesture is like a magnet which attracts so many things of a more complicated kind, through our psychology. They will be our individual things, not what has been written about the part—that is not important—what is important is to know what the actor feels. That is a principle which is important for all actors.”⁹

EXERCISES

(C) **THE THRESHOLD.** Even entering the classroom, we should have a sense of crossing a “Threshold,” leaving our ordinary life outside – being ready to work artistically and to act. We will divide the studio room with a line which is the threshold, approaching it with “the intention of increasing the level of your activity as soon as you step over it,” as Chekhov put it. In particular, we will try to raise a “wave” of will-impulse from the center of the earth below, from the legs, up to the chest, and hold it there, taking care not to use unnecessary physical, muscular tension, but at the same time sending out a strong impulse to radiate from your chest straight out in front of you. Try to “radiate” your psychological energy out to the group. After you have crossed the Threshold you need to sustain your sense of being in a creative space. It will be useful if you try to be quiet for three or four following minutes.¹⁰

Notes for pedagogical application: Crossing a “Threshold” requires a lot of concentration, focus and strength. When I used this exercise for the first time with my students, I had no idea how they might react. I asked them to watch me cross the “Threshold” as their teacher and then invited them to follow. This was the first time working with a group that I could witness the power of that exercise outside of the MICHA sessions. All of the students felt the difference and loved the experience as much as I did. The scene work that day was really, really good! I teach the students every year to use this tool.

I will begin by stepping over the Threshold into the center of the circle, then all of you, as you are ready, step in after me and continue radiating (silently) your creative state for several minutes. Then, we will walk in the space of the studio, expanding the creative Threshold to include the whole studio. From now on, every time we enter the studio, we are crossing this Threshold into our creative space.

(D) **THE ACTORS’ MARCH**¹¹

The students walk freely in the space and the instructor recites the text.

“I am a creative artist.

I have the ability to radiate

Lifting my arms above me, I soar

⁹ Chekhov 1985, 5 December 1941, pp. 109-111.

¹⁰ Verbatim Register, Appendix 8, including unpublished material from Dartington on 18 November 1936; 1946 Exercise 24, pp. 126-127; 1991/1942, Exercise 58, p. 116 (not in 1953); Powers in Chekhov 1991/1942, “Afterword,” p. 169.

¹¹ Dawn Arnold and other MICHA teachers, following Chekhov.

Lowering my arms I continue to soar
In the air swirling around my head
And shoulders I feel the power of thought.
In the air swirling around my arms and chest I experience the power of feeling.
In the air swirling around my legs and feet I experience the power of will.
I am that I am.”¹²

(E) **SPEECH WARM-UP FOR ALL CLASSES**

Notes for pedagogical application: We will use a variety of standard breathing exercises and speech warm-ups, often combined with other Chekhov exercises, to begin every class session. The students will receive a handout summarizing these speech warm-ups, so they can practice on their own at home. [See Handout (2a) in Appendix 11: Edith Skinner speech warm-up.]

A Deep Breathing Exercise

Deep breathing only requires a quiet environment and a few minutes of your time. The following are steps to a simple deep breathing exercise:

1. Begin in a comfortable position with a straight spine, such as sitting upright in a chair or lying down on your back.
2. Close your eyes or look down to assist in reflecting inward and focusing.
3. Start to simply notice your breath. Are you breathing in and out from your chest? Are you breathing rapidly or slowly?
4. Keeping your shoulders relaxed and still, begin to breathe with intention. Inhaling deeply and slowly through your nose, feeling your center; expand as you fill your body with the breath. Gradually exhale out through your mouth, letting all of the stale air out.
5. Continue to focus on your breath, noticing how your center rises and falls with each breath you take. Repeat for five to 10 more cycles of breath.
6. As you breathe deeply, notice how you feel throughout your body. Are there areas that feel tenser than others? With each exhalation imagine that your body releases stress and tension.
7. Before ending your exercise, take a few moments to notice how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally.

“3 Part Breath,” the following exercise will allow you to breathe deeply, allowing your breath to slowly move in and out of the stomach, lungs, and throat.

Start by getting yourself into a comfortable position. This may mean sitting upright in a chair with your feet flat on the ground, lying down on your back with your palms turned upward, or simply sitting cross-legged on the floor. You may want to

¹² “I am that I am” reminded me of the book, *I Am That* by Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj (Mumbai/Bombay: Chetana, editions from 1973-2012), which is a compilation of talks on Shiva Advaita (Nondualism) philosophy by a Hindu spiritual teacher who lived in Mumbai.

try different positions to determine what's best for you. Also, remove any restrictive clothing or jewelry, such as a belt, watch, or other heavy jewelry.

Once you have found a calming position, you can further relax through a few stretches and adjustments. Thoughtfully survey your entire body, noticing if there are any places where you are holding tension and tightness. Take a deep breath in and with a breath out, try to let go of some of those sensations. Roll your shoulders and your neck out a few times. Let go of any strain on your forehead, eyes, and throat. Close your eyes or look downward.

Now that your body is more at ease, it is time to center your attention on your breathing. First, simply notice your breath. Is it shallow, noisy, or inconsistent? Through observing your breath, you can begin to become aware of your natural breath.

After observing your natural breath, it is time to deepen your breath. You will be inhaling slowly, first bringing some air into your stomach, then the lungs, and lastly into your throat before exhaling all the breath out.

1. To begin, gently place your hands on your stomach and fill your body with breath as you inhale. Imagine that you are filling your stomach with breath, causing you belly and hands to rise.
2. Next, take more air in, imagining this breath coming into your lungs. At the same time move your hands up your body to allow you to feel your lungs expand.
3. Last, place your hands onto your collarbones and allow your inhale to come into your throat. Hold for just a moment.
4. Finally, exhale all the air out, imagining it leaving your throat, then the lungs, and last out of your belly.
5. Repeat this exercise for 5-10 rounds of deep breaths.

Tips for 3-Part Breathing

- Once you are used to what 3-part breath feels like, you can just rest your arms to your sides instead of on your body.
- The steps here may seem long, but the actual exercise is quicker. You are breathing in deeply to stomach, lungs, and throat then exhaling from throat to lungs to stomach.
- Try to practice this exercise once a day.¹³

Throughout the course we will constantly be trying to include a sense of projection in all our speech. Chekhov suggested that you think of your voice coming not just from your diaphragm, throat, or lips, but also out of you and in front of you. You must visualize a spot in front of you where your voice is.¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.routledge.com/blog/article/11-ways-to-deal-with-stress> Feb 10, 2020.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/breathing-exercise-for-panic-attacks-2584127>.

¹⁴ Verbatim Register, Appendix 8, including Chekhov 1935a, (unpublished), 16 March 1935; exercises from MICHA annual meeting, 2019.

(F) EXERCISES FOR ESTABLISHING FIRM PROFESSIONAL CONTACT WITH YOUR STAGE PARTNERS.

F1) BALL TOSS EXERCISES (continue throughout course)

Note for pedagogical application: A repeated emphasis in Chekhov's teaching were exercises using balls tossed between members of the company as a way to create bonding, interpersonal communication, and a sense of the relationship of the body and its movements to words and feelings. Only a few exercises will be mentioned here, and only one or possibly two will be used in any given class session (depending on the students and the subject of the class). I will be using not only bean bags and juggling balls but mainly larger balls just like Chekhov did in his Studio in Dartington, UK (photo). For the first class, one of the "names" versions will come first.



Students in the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington working with balls, ca. 1937.
(Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

1.1a) **NAME GAME BALL TOSS:** Form a circle. One person has a ball and tosses it to the person opposite across the circle: step back and make a big gesture tossing the ball as you say your name. The name carries, projected into the space as you throw the ball. The person who receives it notes the qualities of the person who tossed (friendly, funny, etc.). Then this person throws with a big gesture, projecting his/her own name as he/she throws. The third person receives the ball and tosses the ball again, and so on throughout the group, so that everyone states his/her name. All the people in the group need to try to remember the names of each person as they throw the ball. Then the instructor points one at a time to each person and the whole class responds with the name.

Repetition with movement: the class moves in the space, each walking quickly, increasing to almost a run. The ball is tossed to a person in the space, who tosses it to another, etc. – each time with the thrower saying his/her own name and projecting it into the space along with the big gesture of throwing.

Variations:

(b) Form a circle. Instructor starts with one bean bag, tossing it to the first person. This person steps into the movement when he/she catches the ball, then throws

it to another person, who throws it to another person, and so on. Then the instructor adds to the game another ball. Eventually there will be up to 6 or 8 balls flying at the same time. Don't look only into your receiver's eyes; keep the gaze open and aware at all times – using periphery vision.¹⁵

- (c) Ball throwing with background music among groups of three students (no talking). Students form into groups of three. Each group of three is spread out and moving around the space of the studio. All the groups of three are moving simultaneously. The first person in the group tosses to (2) second person, who tosses it to (3) third person, who tosses to (1) first person. The group continues this motion for two minutes. Then reverse it and go from (3) to (2) to (1):

- (1). Continue tossing for another two minutes. Music might be something like “An American in Paris” by G. Gershwin.¹⁶

Note: the exercise can also be choreographed, as in the picture above, with, for example, all standing in circle, passing the balls to each other, then bending out like a chrysanthemum or making different groupings such as an inner ring in the center, and so forth – group movement to music.

- (d) Queen/King Ball Toss: In the center is a person who acts like a queen/king. If he/she doesn't catch the ball someone has to go and get it, because he/she is so proud that he/she will never bend down to pick it up. Also, someone from the circle tries to become a “king/queen” and tries to get the ball (steal it) before the king/queen does, and so gets to be the king/queen. Applications: awareness, fast reaction/action.¹⁷

1.2) GROUP PSYCHOPHYSICAL MOVEMENT

Place a group of chairs in the center of the room, leaving adequate space between each chair. Divide into two groups, then one group at a time walks quickly from one side of the room to the other side as a group, trying not to disturb the chairs as they pass through them. The other group watches, then moves to the other side. Try not to disturb the chairs as you pass through them.

¹⁵ Compare to Skill-Based Exercises: work with balls by Vsevolod Meyerhold.

Exercise 4.7

- Still in a circle, and still only using one ball, throw the ball underarm with your right hand to the right hand of the person next to you (anticlockwise round the circle).
- The catcher then throws to the next person and so on, around the circle. The ball should never stop its smooth transition from one individual to the next. Imagine the ball is a ribbon around a huge birthday cake.
- Gradually, introduce another ball, and another, until there is at least one ball for every two participants arcing around the circle. Try to find the rhythm, the tempo which creates the smoothest journey for the ball.
- Then, start again going round the other way – from left hand to left hand, and clockwise round the circle. Build up in the same way to a number of balls.
- Finally, have half the balls going clockwise and half anticlockwise. Those who have a ball already can be skipped by the thrower so that the ball can continue its journey unimpeded.
- Continue the exercise until both the clockwise and the anticlockwise balls can glide effortlessly around the circle, almost as if the agents of this process were not there. Pitches 2018 (2004), p.126.

¹⁶ Craig Mathers 2018; MICHA.

¹⁷ Scott Fielding 2018; MICHA.

Then decrease the space between the chairs. The groups (one at a time) move more quickly, rushing to the other side of the room. Then diminish the space between the chairs again, moving even more quickly. The purpose of this exercise is to increase your focus on a goal, and your confidence in your ability to move lightly and easily and to have control over your body – and also to be aware of others in your group as you move together. On the first pass, you are tempted to “act,” but as it gets harder to pass between the chairs, you become more and more focused on the task.¹⁸

1.3) SPEAKING EXERCISE:

1. A book is placed in the center of the space with the students arranged around it. Inserted into the book are papers with short sentences written on them. Each student, one after the other, opens the book, removes one piece of paper, then lays the book back down and returns to his/her place to memorize the sentence. Then, one by one, each speaks this sentence to the book (as if putting it back into the book) from three separate distances. First from far away, projecting; then move to the book and say the sentence from nearby, as though each word were very tasty; then turn your back to the book and speak the line for the beauty of the sound. This helps projection and to make your ear very sensitive.¹⁹

AT END OF FIRST CLASS AND OTHER CLASSES EMPHASIZING ENSEMBLE:

GOLDEN HOOP GROUP EXERCISE: Group lifting. Form a circle again, as at the beginning of the class. Reach down, bending one knee, and lift up an imaginary golden hoop as a group. Test the imaginary weight. Lift it, then lower it down, then throw it up to “the sun.” Once you send it to the sun, let your arms lower slowly to the side of your body, and then mindfully take a step backwards, stepping “out” of the Threshold. You are ready to return to ordinary life.

(MICHA’s Craig Mathers has noted, “We are stepping out because we can.”)



“Golden Hoop” exercise, Courtesy of *Michael Chekhov Technique* by Sinéad Rushe, UK

HOMEWORK:

Obtain a notebook of at least 50 pages in order to create an Actor’s Journal, where you will record your responses to classes, make drawings, record your rehearsal

¹⁸ Unpublished, 14 October 1936; copies at Dartington and Adelphi.

¹⁹ Unpublished – Chekhov 1935a, Three Lessons, 22 March 1935.

processes, and make other useful notes. BRING THE ACTOR'S JOURNAL to our class next week telling what exercise worked for you in Class 1 and what it trained in you.

It will be your responsibility to keep notes in this journal constantly throughout the course, recording at-home exercises, your work on characterization, your rehearsing, and so forth. We will share our observations in these notebooks in class, as a way of educating each other.

CLASS 2

Michael Chekhov's life; the Moscow Art Theatre and Chekhov; Chekhov's Career after leaving Russia; Chekhov in Dartington (England) and Ridgefield (Connecticut, USA); in Hollywood

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Lecture

Power-Point –visuals Discussion.

Note: the text of the lecture is attached as Appendix 7.

Casting for the assigned scenes to use in the exercises of the first part of the course will be handed out at this time. [Hand-out 3 a) List of plays]

Each character will have a substantial speech in the course of the scene. You must read the entire play your scene is taken from.

HOMEWORK:

(1) You have been assigned a character and scene in a play. For Class 3, find a speech or several lines in the scene for your character; choose a few lines at the climax of this speech. Memorize these lines to be performed in class as a very brief monologue in themselves. (Maximum 2 MINUTES or less.)

You need to prepare the speech with full intuitive understanding of your character. To do this, you must also read the whole play by the same Class 3.

Try to find a few applicable examples of visual arts, music, dance or the like from the play's historical era, to enrich your imagination. (For the next classes, you will continue to research this historical era in order to serve the author's ideas well.)

Print the best picture (bring it next time) you found and are working with to create your character, along with the name of the composer and title of a piece of music from the era.²⁰

(2) Here are some ideas to prepare you for our investigations on Concentration:

I was recently in the hospital, awaiting surgery. As I waited, I observed the medical personnel working around me. I watched the nurse on the other side of the room, who worked quickly, doing activities such as wiping down washable plastic pillows and hospital beds, preparing them for new surgical patients. She was very fast and efficient; there was no extra movement. I thought, "These people here in the surgical center are well trained. They have years of daily practice behind them." She was moving fast on the outside, but her inner rhythm was calm and controlled (see below, Class 23, inner versus outer tempo). The anesthesiologist gave me two nerve block injections in my leg, guided by ultrasound. He was less than half a meter from me: I was able to watch his face, and he was certainly aware of my

²⁰ Texts: Short stories by A. Chekhov dramatized by M. Chekhov: "The Witch," "The Music Store (I Forgot)," full-length play, *Three Sisters* by A. Chekhov, as well as *The Inspector General* by N. Gogol.

presence. Yet, he was totally focused and concentrating on what he was doing – there was no sense that he was being watched. He and the nurse assisting him showed an intensity of focus and concentration very seldom seen in actors, without playing it for the audience (me) or for a curtain call, with no sense of getting credit for it. The orthopedic (bone) surgeon, Dr. Adam Brodsky, was doing the 3-hour operation with his partner. In the operating room I felt as if I was inside a clock, with me at the heart of it. Every person in the room had a function, and in order to make the clock tick, they were totally concentrated on their work. This relates closely to something that Michael Chekhov did while still at the Moscow Art Theatre: he acted as though he were a medical student in order to observe an operation.²¹ It was the last operation of the day for the surgeon, but he had carefully saved his energy for work. He gave all his effort and concentration for this last piece of work.

Homework for next two classes:

As you walk around campus in the next few days, observe people going about their daily work (maintenance workers, librarians, police, etc.). How are they focused on their work, concentrating on it? (If you live off campus, observe people in your neighborhood.)

Note your observations in your Actor's Journal.

²¹ Chekhov 1928/ 2005, pp. 96-97.

CLASS 3

CONCENTRATION AND IMAGINATION / IMAGES IN THE MIND

[Note: Props for the class – 1) a number of chairs, 2) small objects such as balls, props, juggling scarves, displayed on the table.]

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Speech and movement warm-ups:

(For movement, use the Sun Greetings [Sūrya Namaskār] yoga exercise.)

Presentation of short monologues by the students

Chekhov on Concentration:

When we are really concentrating, we use all of our five senses and more. But we must first learn to concentrate on the two senses of the eye and ear because they are more developed. In order that we may simplify the way to concentration, we use only the two senses to understand what it means to be attentive and how to be attentive.”²²

TWO KINDS OF CONCENTRATION –

(1) Picking up an object, a useful or beautiful object, you notice it and concentrate, almost unconsciously, undirected, without thinking about the process actively.

(2) Picking up an object, perhaps even something unattractive, but then you force yourself to notice it with what Chekhov called “a conscious, willed concentration, focusing our whole attention on an object.” This is the concentration the theatre is interested in, concentrating fully, with will, aimed at “penetrating into the life and depth of the object.”²³

Consequences of Developing Attention

Chekhov: Having mastered the technique of attention, you will notice that your whole being will come to life, become active, harmonious and strong. These qualities will appear on the stage during the performance. Shapelessness and vagueness will disappear, and your performance will gain more credibility.

To be really concentrated means in an instant to send ourselves toward the thing on which we are concentrating. When you really concentrate, you will get a sense of expansion. You will feel that you are a larger person than you physically are and that you are flowing with all your being, toward the object of your concentration. Whether it is a physical thing or an image that you are concentrating on, your whole “invisible” person will be in movement.²⁴

²² 1991/ 1942, p. 9 (abridged and reordered) – not in 1953; Chekhov 2018, p. 12, 13 April 1936. In keeping with my desire to use materials not widely available outside of the English-speaking world, I will note when a given exercise is not included in the Chekhov 1953 (or 1953/2002) texts.

²³ Chekhov 2018, p. 12, 13 April 1936.

²⁴ 1946, Exercise 1, pp. 21-23; translated from the Russian.

It is extremely important to realize that Concentration and Attention are powerful life skills, used every day, as well as essential techniques for the stage.

EXERCISES FOR ATTENTION/CONCENTRATION

Please make notes on the following two exercises in your Actor's Journal:

Exercise 3.1:

[There will be real objects placed on a table in the middle of the room. Chekhov, not to mention Meisner and Hagen, also liked to work with real props in classes.]

Start by looking at an object. Describe it to yourself inwardly. Is it broad and low? Is it long and high? Is it of wood or metal? Is it fluid, static, or mobile? Concentrate your attention on it. Try to acquire continuity of attention. As you concentrate do not miss any qualities or details. Certain gaps or distractions will appear to undermine your concentration. Firmly avoid them and continue.²⁵

Exercise 3.2:

Concentrate again on the same object. First, look at it and then close your eyes and imagine it – inwardly embrace the object. As fully as possible, grasp the object as though with “invisible hands.” Experience your connection with the object in your arms, legs, torso. Let your whole being, as it were, participate in this embrace. This will lead you to a sense of merging with the object. At the same time, release any physical tension that may arise; concentration is an inner event. Remain free and relaxed in your body, your eyes, your face, and your brain.²⁶

Practice these exercises outside of class on your own, keeping notes in your Acting Journal.

Exercise 3.3 a) & b): Two Exercises (concentrating on a spot)

(a) [Done as a group exercise while using balls.] You will be provided a ball.

Now, concentrate on a spot somewhere in the room, send yourself to it, become one with it, and when it becomes a living force for you, then begin to move about, bouncing or tossing the ball in the air, becoming freer and freer in your body, but all the time increasing your will toward the spot. Don't drop the concentration (or the ball), but as you move, you have to be mindful of the others in the group – each person – so there will be no collisions. You will all be like suns in a galaxy, part of the universe.²⁷

(b) Sun Greetings / Focus on Spot Do the Sun Greetings (Sūrya Namaskār) – yoga exercise, but this time start standing up, leaning more forward towards the front of your feet; focus on one spot in front of you. No one should be

²⁵ 1991/ 1942, Exercise 4, pp. 9-10; not in 1953.

²⁶ 1991/1942, Exercise 6, p.10.

²⁷ (a) Unpublished, Dartington Hall Archives and Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers, 9 October 1936; (b) adapting exercise from Sinéad Rushe, New York, Fall 2019.

standing in front of anyone else. Make sure you are in a nice vertical. Continue to do the Sun Greetings focusing on that spot in front of you. You concentrate while being mindful of your body.²⁸

CONCENTRATION AND IMAGINATION (IMAGES IN THE MIND)

Concentration makes imagination concrete. – Chekhov

Note: Chekhov placed a central emphasis on Imagination and Images in the mind. Everything distinctive about the Chekhov work has a basis in the ability of the actor to create such Images – logically enough, if psychophysical movement is to connect with interior thoughts, feelings, and will-impulses in the psyche. This class and all that follow present exercises designed to alert students to their own abilities to imagine and see in the mind's eye – and ultimately, to embody – Images of the character and situations they are to play.

How to approach the exercises on Imagination:

- 1 Catch the first image.
- 2 Learn to follow its independent life.
- 3 Collaborate with it, asking questions and giving orders.
- 4 Penetrate the inner life of the image.
- 5 Develop the flexibility of your imagination.
- 6 Try to create characters entirely by yourself.

3.4) Exercise: Where Sound Stimulates Imagination.

In the event the classroom is not simply an empty space, but has coat-racks, furniture, objects left lying around, and so forth – as in the case when you are rehearsing or studying on an empty theatre stage – the teacher asks the students to close their eyes, then creates sounds by striking or touching the objects: hangers on a coat-rack, jingling keys, runs water in a sink, makes a sound with a zipper, lets an object fall on the floor, clicks dishes. Students share what they imagined for the one sound which was most vivid in triggering the imagination or stored memories.²⁹

3.5) Exercise for Difficult Images

Some things are relatively easy to do but hard to imagine. For example, walking backwards. In real life, it is not difficult to do – try it. But in the imagination you need a terrific power of concentration to be able to do it. As you actually walk backwards, concentrate on what you are doing, movement by movement, then apply this to the image in your mind's eye.³⁰

²⁸ Sol Garre; MICHA 2019.

²⁹ I created this exercise under Meisner's inspiration. When I have done this with classes, it was amazing how many different scenarios or stories the students reported imagining in their minds, triggered by the sounds. In situations where time permits, it is possible for the students to collaborate in re-creating, as a group improvisation, the memory or imagined image shared by one or more students.

³⁰ Compare Chekhov 2018, p. 17, 1 May 1936 – students were to imagine a horse going backwards.

Please note the remaining exercises in your Actor's Journal:

3.6) General Imagination Exercise.

a) Sit down comfortably with your partner on the floor (if you can) with your spine erect. Relax, and close your eyes. Imagine a white screen in front of you. As I tell you images, put them “on the imaginary screen.”

The teacher will count down (10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.)

b) Visualize the white screen, and let's put a mushroom on it. Please keep your eyes closed. Raise your hand if you see the image of a mushroom. Ask yourself: what kind of mushroom do I see? What color does it have it? Good – the screen is working!

Now see a horse. Where is the horse? Is there green grass? Do you see it? What color is the horse – the horse's coat? Do you recognize the breed? It has a bunch of long; very fine hair on its tail – does it swish the tail to shoo away the flies? What is the color of the horse tail silk-like hairs? See his strong legs and hooves. Look into the horse's eye. What is the color? Now the horse moves. Make it run. It runs fast and jumps the fence, but it falls and rolls. It is all right; it gets up and walks towards you. Suddenly, it steps backwards.³¹

3.7) Now, sit back to back with your partner on the floor – you should be lightly touching each other. First decide who is going to start. Visualize the screen again. Maybe you see an image of a room. Choose one object in it. Visualize it in detail and frame it as if in a picture frame. Say out loud the word of your image to your partner. He/she takes the image and frames it on his/her screen, in his/her own way, own imagination. He/she goes back to the blank screen and projects another object on the screen, frames it, and says the word for it. And so, each person visualizes and calls out another image (shoes, box, pirate, spoon, book ...), taking turns and taking time for visualizing.³²

3.8) Image and Story Exercise

Chekhov said, “The actor imagines with his body. He cannot avoid gesturing or moving without responding to his own internal images.”

[The instructor narrates the story as the students imagine it, sitting comfortably on chairs. Goal: to help you find the hidden secret of your character.]

Imagine that you are standing on sand dunes overlooking the sea, feel the breeze, maybe hear the seagulls, hear the ocean, feel the sun. Then walk across the bridge to the edge of the woods with tall trees. What is the surface of the path like? What sounds, smells?

Walk into the woods. The woods are getting deeper, thicker, now you can't see anything, just suddenly a flicker of light. You walk towards it; you see a lantern on the porch of a cottage. There is the front door – visualize the door, the door handle; walk in. Inside, in a chair there is a person sitting with back to you. There is lots of light and a fireplace; it is warm here. The person turns

³¹ Sol Garre; MICHA 2019.

³² Sol Garre; MICHA 2019.

around, reaches out to you, gives you a written note, and leaves. You see the person going upstairs.

Now visualize the character you are playing sitting on the chair. (Interchange your character for the imaginary person who left.) The character might invite you to come closer, then stand up and give you the note. How did she or he hand the note to you? You walk together. How did this character walk? See it walking, walk to it, walk with it, become one.

Look at the note you received and read it. The note reveals your (the character's) deep secret. What is it? Instinctively answer for yourself.³³

Write the answer down in your Actor's Journal.

Note to students: The previous exercise is related to a highly important element in the Chekhov method – the Imaginary Body – which we will study more thoroughly in future classes, especially Class 13. For the Imaginary Body, the actor must create in his or her mind's eye a body for the assigned character that is different than the actor's own body. The next step will be a careful process of (imaginatively) putting the actor's body into the imaginary body, trying to move in one's own physical body so that it will follow the characteristic movements and shape of the Imaginary one.³⁴

GOLDEN HOOP GROUP EXERCISE

Homework (for two weeks):

(1) You were asked to take notes after doing exercises 3.1-3.2 and 3.6-3.8, to remember what you imagined. This week and for the next week, repeat these exercises at home, varying them as you wish, thinking of the application to the character you have been assigned.

Make your notes on the exercises and the results in your Actor's Journal.

You may add the following exercise to this program:

(a) Focusing on an actual object, begin to simultaneously perform simple mental and physical actions that do not have a direct relationship to the object. For example, imagining the image of a person who is currently absent; start cleaning the room, arranging books, watering flowers or doing whatever is easy to do; and so forth (be creative).

Try to make clear to yourself that the process of attention takes place in the mental sphere and cannot be disturbed by external actions performed simultaneously with it. Make sure that attention is not interrupted whenever possible. Do not get yourself tired, especially at the beginning. Regularity in exercises (two to three brief times a day) is more important than their duration. From time to time, return to the initial, simpler exercises.

³³ I developed this exercise for my students on the basis of an original exercise by John McManus; MICHA 2018.

³⁴ See also above, Chapter One, "Imaginary Body."

(b) Think of several words describing psychological qualities, visualize them one by one in your mind's eye, and then react physically exactly as you have seen them. For example, "suffering," "joy," "anger," "sadness," "surprise." Record these in your Actor's Journal. Find images illustrating two of these psychological qualities from a newspaper or magazine (or find them online and print them) these feelings, then paste them into your Actor's Journal – bring the Journal to class next time. In class we will add the posture and personal feelings.³⁵

2) Read Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 80-82, on different types of Centers. How would this apply to the concentration and imagination exercises?

³⁵ Unpublished – Chekhov 1935a, Three Lessons, 18 March 1935.

CLASS 4

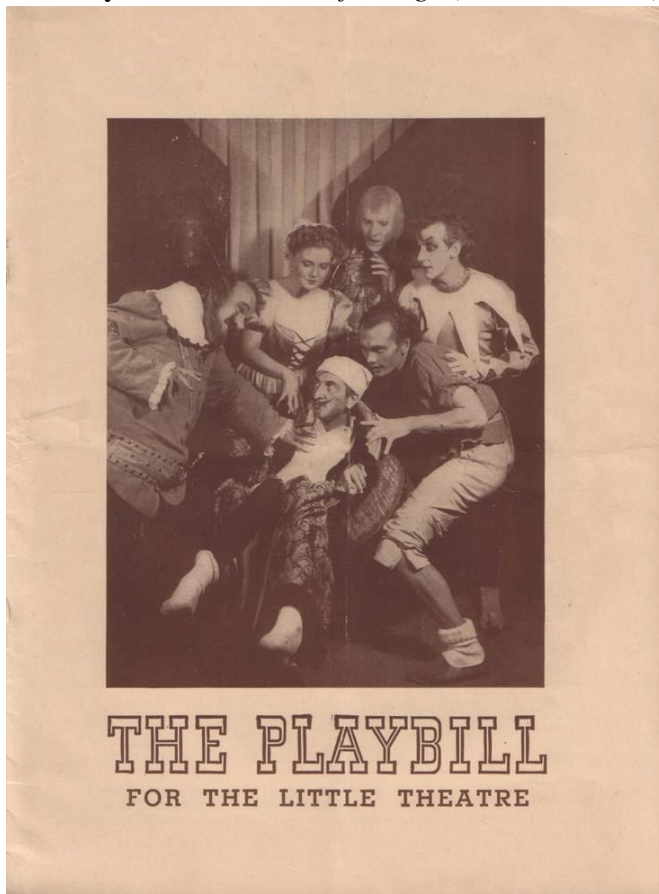
MOVEMENT – Centers, Imaginary Centers

CHARACTER Exercises in Class Stock Characters (Character Types)

Lecture:

The idea of different psychological qualities inhabiting or coming from different parts of the human body is found nearly universally in human cultures. This was strongly reinforced in the West by the Hindu and Tantric concepts of focal points for meditation in the body, called *pranas* or *chakras*, and related concepts. These affected the Stanislavsky system through Yoga, and augmented Michael Chekhov's version under the influence of Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophy, with an emphasis on the trio of Thinking, Feeling, and Willing.

Chekhov in fact went far beyond these sources, expanding the ideas of centers to include "Imaginary" centers which could be located anywhere on the body or even outside of it. The Imaginary Center can be either static or dynamic. Chekhov gave examples for the Imaginary Center in various locations: in the shoulder or in one of the eyes (e.g. Tartuffe or Quasimodo); in the stomach (Falstaff, Sir Toby Belch from *Twelfth Night*); in the knees (Sir Aguecheek from the same),



Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night, Or What*

You Will - The Chekhov Theatre Players: Ford Rainey (Sir Toby Belch) far left, Mary Lou Taylor (Olivia), Sam Schatz (Malvolio) seated, Hurd Hatfield (Sir Andrew Aquecheek), Alan Harkness (Feste), Yul Brynner (Fabian), squatting on the right – directed by Michael Chekhov and George Shdanoff ; Opening night– December 8th , 1941, Broadway, New York City.

which may create a humorous outer as well as psychological characterization"; in front of the body (Prospero, Hamlet, Othello); behind the back (Sancho Panza from

Don Quijote). A conceited and selfish person might have a center in “one slightly raised eyebrow, or protruding jaw, or a hardly noticeable frozen wry smile permanently lingering under the lip.” A nosy inquisitive person might have her center in the tip of her nose, or one of her eyes or ears. An Imaginary Center can be cold or hot, hard or soft, sharp like a needle, or have another “Quality” that affects its psychological value.

Moving from Chekhov’s examples to my own from the stock characters in the *Commedia dell’Arte*, I often ask actors playing the Lovers to place their centers – outside – in their beloved’s body. Many improvisations can be based on *Commedia dell’Arte* stock characters: old man or woman, youth, specific character (Harlequin, Pantalone, Brighella, Smeraldina, and Columbine). All these characters are linked with Centers.

“All variations imaginable are possible and correct,” Chekhov insisted, “if the actor finds them in accordance with his own and his director’s interpretation of the part. Your creative imagination is free to endow each center with different qualities, according to the character.”³⁶

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Physical Warm-Up

Form a circle. One clap from each person goes around the circle. Put energy in it. Make it energetic, sounding loud.

Speech Warm-Up:

(Start with breathing exercises. Then breathe in to fill your lower ribs in back and abdomen.) Start with being aware of the diaphragm. Make laughing sounds (ha-ha-ha-hi-hi-hi), being aware of the movement of your diaphragm. Then take a breath, and on this one breath exhale saying unvoiced “sss,” with your mouth in a smile, then “shh,” with the mouth relaxed and the lips only slightly pursed. Keep repeating these in rapid succession on the same breath. Then do “sss” and “tchsss” alternating and waking up your diaphragm.

4.1) Exercise. Centers Ball Toss.

- a) Working in pairs: release the ball with a large gesture. Students alternate tossing the ball from centers in the head, chest, pelvis, and catching in each of the three different centers. a) Head – the intellectual/thinking center.
- b) Chest – that might feel the most emotional, but the emotions are not practiced at this point.
- c) Belly, pelvis – the “will center” (make couple of steps forward from the pelvis then throw – your receiving maybe will take you a bit backwards.

The idea is to radiate all the time the exercise continues.³⁷

³⁶ Chekhov 1991/1942, pp. 100-101 – very similar observations in 1953/2002, pp. 81-82; Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, “On character and characterization”; NYPL call no. LT10-4781; see the Verbatim Register, Appendix 8, for full text.

³⁷ John McManus; MICHA 2018.

DISCUSSION AND SHARING OF OBJECTS

(The class continues with students sharing their Actor's Journals entries on attention and imagination, discussing the readings in Chekhov 1953, and sharing printed images illustrating two psychological qualities from a newspaper, magazine, or online and pasted in the Actor's Journal.)

IMAGINATION AND THE CENTER

It is important, as you see and hear a character in your imagination, to be aware of where the center is. First find the center, and all the other things will follow more quickly afterwards. Chekhov insisted that “the idea of the center is imaginative but also concrete.” That is, actors need to use their hands, arms, body, etc., but if they do not organize this around a center – with the power of characterization of an Imaginary Center – performances will have no life. “To give life,” Chekhov observed, “means to feel life throughout your whole being. Identifying a center also “unlocks” different body parts, such as the fingers, and connects them to the whole, freeing the entire body to be expressive. Otherwise, he observes, “we will have nothing to do but keep our hands in our pockets.”

4.2) Exercise

- (a) Place the imaginary center in the stomach, and then say, “Hello.” It is already a characterization, but one we have approached from the purely actor's side where we are master – from our world of imagination.
- (b) Now move the center to the right shoulder and listen to what it tells you; adjust your physical body somehow to this imaginary center.
- (c) Place the center in other areas of the head or body: the forehead, the nose, etc.
- (d) Now put the center outside your body – let's say, about two feet above your head. Try moving, dancing, speaking to each other with the center up there. What are the Sensations you feel? What possible changes of psychology do you sense?
- (e) Put the center in the knees, and dance again.³⁸

Make a note in your Actor's Journal of the results of these exercises.

STOCK CHARACTERS

We have already mentioned the stock characters from the Commedia dell'Arte with regard to Centers. These characters, and other, usually comic, characters in social comedies and comedies of manners, the works of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Molière, “situation comedies” (such as on TV), many silent movies, “screwball” comedies, farces, and so forth, are derived from middle class social character types in the ancient Greek and Roman comedies. Some of these are the Old Man (particularly a greedy, lascivious old man, perhaps married to a younger woman or wanting his daughter to marry someone for social gain), the snobby Society Woman (in the Commedia, she is called La Signora), the Wily Servant (both male and, especially, female), the Braggart Warrior, Il Dottore (the Doctor), the Professor, the

³⁸ Chekhov 2018, p. 11, 13 April 1936; Chekhov 1985, pp.143-147.

Clown. Each of these has stereotypical characteristics, and in the ancient comedies and the Commedia dell'Arte, many of these characters actually wore masks, which told the audience what type of character they were. In the Commedia, individual characters even had typical ways of moving, specific steps [Instructor demonstrating], and so forth. (The Renaissance Commedia introduced female stock characters played by women for the first time since Ancient Rome.)

Note: The Virtues of the Mask

Jonathan Pitches, following V. Meyerhold, divides the virtues of wearing masks into three areas: the philosophical, the physical and the theatrical.

Philosophically

- The mask is full of contradictions.
- The mask is both part of history and of 'the moment'.
- The mask constrains and liberates in equal measure.

Physically

- The mask encourages spontaneity, freeing up the expressive work of the actor.
- The mask demands a physical approach to building a character.
- The mask demands clarity of gesture and expression.
- The mask heightens the spectator's awareness of any awkward or unnatural gestures.

Theatrically

- The mask stimulates the imaginations of the audience.
- The mask creates a distance between actor and character.
- The mask can be changed or transformed.
- The mask can show us different perspectives on the same character.³⁹

4.3) Exercise [Note in Actor's Journal for a continuing Homework exercise.]

Imagine typical Character Types in society, such as the "Politician," the "Irish Cop" (think old movies), the "Hustler," the "Gangster" (don't forget the female version, such as running an illegal poker table or robbing a museum), the "Femme Fatale," the drunk, compulsive gambler, computer science nerd, shy person, addict, conqueror, caged animal, lover, dreamer, and so forth. Choose one of these.

Following the image of this one character in your mind, do a small movement, and then include more of your body into the movement. Notice what it is you are doing (e.g. "Grab," which might be good for the Politician, Hustler, or Gangster). See if you can find a sound coming out of the gesture.

4.4) Similarly, one can find typical character types for characters in a specific play. For the character and scene you have been assigned, try to find a typical character type for your role.

(Such as in *Tartuffe* where Dorine is a stock character found in many of Molière's comedies. She is the wise servant who sees through all pretenses.) Explore your role as that discovered character type, starting with finding the right Center. Make small movements based on inner impulses (Feelings, scene objectives, etc.) then enlarge them, using your whole body. Simplify them into one movement. Do the gesture while speaking a line from the text of the play.

³⁹ Pitches 2018 (2004), p.58.

Now speak while hiding this outer gesture.

4.5) Imaginary Centers Palette of Characters (Related to Character Types)

(Like a painter, getting his or her palette with colors ready to paint.)

Using Chekhov's ideas for putting the Imaginary Center in various parts of the body, explore ideas of:

Nose – nosy person.

Eyes – can include blind (as in Gloucester in *King Lear*). Play what is the character missing, he is mainly missing seeing the closest people.

A blind person versus a seeing person in the dark – (How is the dark different for a seeing person and a blind person? The blind person is more powerful (*Wait Until Dark*, 1967 film, with Audrey Hepburn as a young blind woman).

Or imagine and work with the eyes of a child, which are curious, wide open and receiving. Or consider eyes that are made up to show themselves off (false eyelashes, eyeliner, eye shadow). Is it different to look out on the world from these eyes, batting eyelids, etc.

Hands – greedy hands, robber's hands [showing in class video clip – the opening scene with Jean-Louis Barrault in *Les Enfants du Paradis*; 1945]; hands that give; hands that caress (Titania stroking the donkey's ear in *Midsummer Night's Dream*); policeman's hands; hands that work; hands that are refined, never worked; gloves as extension of the hands (Khlestakov in *The Inspector General*). Note this Exercise also in your Actor's Journal.

With regard to Centers: Chekhov also cited a line from *The Inspector General*, in which Chekhov famously played the lead character, Khlestakov. His love interest, the Mayor's daughter, says to Khlestakov's servant, "What a nice little nose your master has." Instead of forcing the line vocally, Chekhov suggests that the actress imagine this "nose" and let her inner image make the phrase funny, lively and easy?

Incidentally, Chekhov picked up on this line and created a false nose for his role.



Chekhov as Khlestakov in Gogol's *The Government Inspector* MHAAT 1921.

Homework

- (a) Continuing throughout the course: you have noted your in-class work with Exercises 4.3 and 4.4 in your journal. Do these daily at home for the next week, keeping notes in your Actor's Journal as to the results.
- (b) Read Chekhov 1953/2002, Chapter One, pp. 1-20. A Handout will also be provided with excerpts from Chekhov's 1942 and 1946 texts.
- (c) Work on understanding deeply and memorizing your assigned role.



Lenka Pichlíková teaching a masks and psychophysical movement workshop, Prague 2017.

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS FOR CLASSES 5 THROUGH 11

For the next seven classes, we will be investigating four artistic “feelings,” that Chekhov applied to dramatic arts. He called these the “Four Brothers”: Form, Ease, Beauty, and “Feeling of the Whole (Entirety).” (The name originally derived from a fairy tale, “The Golden Steed,” that Chekhov used as a study performance in 1937 – four brothers were involved in the plot.) Here is what Chekhov says in your textbook:

In every true, great piece of art you will always find four qualities which the artist has put into his creation: **EASE, FORM, BEAUTY AND ENTIRETY**. These four qualities must also be developed by the actor; his body and speech must be endowed with them because they are the only instruments available to him on the stage. His body must become a piece of art within itself, must acquire these four qualities, must experience them inwardly.⁴⁰

The “Four Brothers” were associated in his training with certain of the various Qualities of Movement he used in exercises. In all of this, he emphasized the importance of separating the “**what**” (lifting your arm) from the “**how**” (how you lifted your arm, with Joy, in Anger, etc.) – again requiring all movement to be Psychophysical, combining action with emotion/feeling or will-impulses.

It is a cardinal principle of Chekhov’s method that physical Sensations and feelings can be stimulated by certain actions. Chekhov’s classical example was the old man who stamped his foot before becoming angry.

Among Chekhov’s Qualities of Movement linked to the “Four Brothers” are those based on the Four Elements of ancient philosophy (earth, water, air, fire): Molding (earth), Floating (water), Rising/Flying (air), Radiating (fire). They are psychophysical and involve the actor’s imagination. We will investigate the Qualities of Movement and the “Four Brothers” over the next seven classes.

⁴⁰ Chekhov 1953/2002, Chapter 1, Exercise 7, p. 14.

CLASS 5

THE “FOUR BROTHERS” FEELING OF FORM

Chekhov: “You must be strong in form but your form must be flexible.”

QUALITIES AND SENSATIONS OF MOVEMENT: MOLDING

[Props and other objects such as chairs will need to be available in these two classes. Because of the open-ended nature of the exercises, one class will spill into the next.]

Speech and Physical Warm-Ups

Chekhov connected the **Feeling of Form** to **Molding Movements**. He observed that in everyday experience we are not aware of any Feeling of Form while moving our body. “This must not be so,” he insisted, “for the Actor if he or she wants to increase expressiveness onstage.” As an artist, **how** you play a character, no matter **what** that character represents, will depend on how complete and perfect your Feeling of Form is. Form is an outstanding quality that distinguishes all great pieces of art. To create with clear-cut forms is an ability which artists in all crafts can and must develop to a high degree. Even in their unfinished works the great masters always had a strong tendency to express a complete form.

The actor cannot deny form, for he/she must always deal with the form of his own body. The human hand, for example, is constructed in such a way that it is almost a crime to abandon it to vagueness – look at the expressiveness of the fingers when they are put in different positions. To give a strong and harmonious impression, our feelings and will-impulses must be equally well shaped on the stage, [combined] with the movable forms of our body. The exercises on the Molding movements can best serve you in acquiring the quality of Form.⁴¹

5.1) Exercises for MOLDING (earth) – Making Forms in Surrounding Space

(a) Make strong and broad movements with your hands, arms, legs, and feet, and finally with your whole body. Imagine that the space around you, thick as clay, is resisting your movement. Move your whole body as if you are carving forms into the space, like a sculptor. You need to be connected to the earth below you, sending your roots deep down. Avoid any unnecessary muscular tension and try to develop a Feeling of Ease.

What you do must have a clear beginning – you must know what you are going to do and how you are going to do it – and a definite end. You must not allow yourself to start or finish your movements in a vague, sluggish way. Also remember that really good form can be produced only from inside you.

Emphasize this inner aspect of the form you produce, and see that these forms do not become outer, dead, empty shells.

Repeat each movement several times until it becomes free and enjoyable, like a designer who, again and again, draws the same line, to achieve clearer and more expressive form.

⁴¹ Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 50, reordered – not in 1953 as stated; cf. similar ideas in Chekhov 1953/2002, Chapter 1.

- (b) Now try the same movements in different tempos.
- (c) Now isolate single parts of your body (e.g. feet, arms/elbows, knees, shoulders, etc.) and move abstractly with the molding quality.
- (d) Transfer this molding quality to a natural series of actual movements with your hands and fingers – an actor’s hands and fingers can be most expressive on the stage if well developed, sensitive and economically used. Take, touch, lift up, put down, and move around different objects, large and small. See to it that your movements are filled with the same molding power, so that the hands and fingers create forms with each movement, as in the previous molding. No need to exaggerate your movements and no need to be discouraged because at first they may look slightly awkward and overdone. When coming in contact with each object, try to pour your strength into it, to fill it with your power. This will develop your ability to handle the objects (such as props on the stage) with utmost skill and ease. (Chekhov was famous for his use of hat, and cane, not to mention his white gloves, as he played Khlestakov in *The Inspector General*.)



Chekhov’s Company in Gogol’s *The Inspector General* on Broadway, 1935; Chekhov is at center in the role of Khlestakov.

In all these exercises preserve the sensation of strength and inner power flowing through your body and out into space.⁴²

5.2) Exercise on Form and Imagination

Stand still and realize that your body is a form. Then, in your imagination, “walk” with your attention focused within your body, as if molding it from

⁴² Chekhov 1991/1942, exercises 29-30, p. 51-55 – not in 1953; combined with 1953 / 2002, Exercise 3, pp. 8-10, similar to Exercise 23 in 1991/1942, p. 45. Chekhov adds, “likewise, learn to extend this power to your partners (even at a distance); it will become one of the simplest means of establishing true and firm contacts with those on the stage, which is an important part of the technique and will be dealt with later. Spend your power lavishly; it is inexhaustible, and the more you give, the more it will accumulate in you.”

inside. Realize that each limb of your body is a peculiarly built form. Focus on the movement of each part of your body in your imagination.

Then transfer this form and movement to the “outside.” Start to move your fingers, hands, arms, and so on, slightly, realizing that your body is a movable form. The motion if it is clear and precise and has a purpose (aim, goal) makes things specific and prevents you from being vague or formless at any moment you are moving.⁴³

5.3) Exercise on Capturing Movement

Imagine that you are falling down a steep slope or cliff.

After you have a firm image in your mind, make your actual body into a “statue” of the movement at one instant, like a “stop action.”



Class work “Statue exercise” in the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington Hall, 1938.

Student Iris Tree in the center, arms raised, facing Michael Chekhov, who is standing and watching on the right.

Photographer unknown. (Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

Hold this position for a time.⁴⁴ So that the whole class will look like *a tableau vivant*, a static scene with number of actors improvising.

5.4) Exercise for Molding an Abstract Idea

Take a pose, for instance that of “thinking.” (Don’t just copy Rodin’s statue. Or choose a different abstract theme.) Feel the psychology of it through your whole

⁴³ 1991/1942, Exercise 30, p. 51; not in 1953.

⁴⁴ Unpublished. [Chekhov 1935], “Lesson Given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (du Prey) by Michael Chekhov,” New York, 18 March 1935 – Hurst du Prey papers, Adelphi University Library Archives, and copies at Dartington.

body, then when you are quite sure of it, change the pose and invent new ones for the same idea. Discover new ways of expressing through your body the idea of “thinking.”

Then take a comic pose, always remembering the theme of “thinking” and occasionally coming back to your first “thinking” pose in order to compare the two, and to make quite sure that you have the right theme.

5.5) Molding in Pairs and in Groups – Preparation for the Feeling of Beauty

(a) Students pair up. One is the “sculptor” and one the material becoming a sculpture (“the sculpted”). Let the sculptor visualize Beauty – ideally, the sculptor is creating something beautiful – and starts to create. For example, bend the sculpted person’s knee, ask him/her to kneel down, open his/her arms, stretch the right arm out with hand palm up, lift or turn the head (aiming the eyes), pull the corners of the mouth into a smile or frown. Imagine the pose as part of a story. Put one foot forward, bend the body, and so forth. Is your sculpture Happy? Sad, even Tragic? Hopeful? Victorious or Celebrating? Humble?

(b) Now exchange places, with the “sculpted” becoming the sculptor.

(c) Now form into two larger groups. Inspired by the previous parts of the exercise, the first group looks around the room and each member chooses one point – maybe a corner of the room – that one can imagine filled with Beauty. Using only gestures, come to an agreement on the target point, then move one by one to that corner and create a group statue symbolizing “Beauty.”⁴⁵



“Living Statue” exercises on the lawn at the Dartington Hall, England, 1937.

(Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

Joanna Merlin, who studied with Chekhov in California, 1949-1955, reported doing similar living group sculptures that Chekhov had previously used at Dartington. “In one of these, we would create a group sculpture, which Chekhov called ‘Harmonious Grouping.’ He would call out a sensation of grief, joy, or some other emotion and one person would begin the exercise by taking a position that embodied

⁴⁵ Adapted from Dawn Arnold; MICHA 2019.

that emotion in an archetypal form. Another would join in harmony with the first and so on until everyone had participated. ... As we became part of the grouping, we experienced the power of the change of atmosphere through collective movement as well as creating a composition with the Feeling of the Whole.”⁴⁶

Chekhov, in your textbook, adds, “Having acquired sufficient technique in doing these molding movements, and experienced pleasure in making them, next say to yourself: ‘Every movement I make is a little piece of art, I am doing it like an artist. My body is a fine instrument for producing molding movements and for creating forms. Through my body I am able to convey to the spectator my inner power and strength.’ These exercises will constantly enable you to create forms for whatever you do on the stage.”⁴⁷

Homework

Prepare for the Exercises as a “Juggler,” next session.

Invent some very simple tricks (card tricks, sleight-of-hand, whatever) to do with two or three small objects, which you need to bring to the class for next time – you will make very simple tricks, but with feeling that you are doing them perfectly, with great dexterity and perfection. (If you are already a skilled juggler, then you can do actual juggling with dexterity instead. Or you can stand on a bouncing disk and juggle to challenge yourself.) You must establish this feeling of confidence in your body so that no matter what you are called upon to do, your body will respond with complete confidence. Our bodies must be very flexible, very proficient and skillful.

Play with the objects while saying your lines from your assigned scene, especially any three-line speech or brief monologue (should be memorized).

⁴⁶ Merlin 2015, in Routledge 2015, p. 390.

On the concept of embodiment, see Fleming, Cassandra. 2013. *A Genealogy of the Embodied Theatre Practices of Suzanne Bing and Michael Chekhov: The Use of Play in Actor Training*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Leicester, England UK: Department of Performing Arts. De Montfort University; available URL: <https://www.dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/9608/Cassandra%20Fleming%20PhD%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=1> .

⁴⁷ Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 9-10.

CLASS 6

THE “FOUR BROTHERS” (CONTINUING): FEELING OF EASE, FEELING OF BEAUTY

AND

CLASS 7 (QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT, CONT'D.)

SENSATIONS: FLOATING/FLOWING, RISING/FLYING, FALLING, BALANCING.

Note on pedagogical application: as in the previous class, the combination of Feeling of Ease and Feeling of Beauty with the Sensations above originates with Chekhov himself. The two classes are presented as a unit. As has already been noted (Chapter Three, above), exercises based on the three Sensations of Rising/Flying), Falling, and Balancing were taught as one unit by Michael Chekhov to his student and Chekhov Technique teacher, Jack Colvin, in Hollywood. To this we add Floating here.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD (As we cross the Threshold, let us add a sense of ease and relaxation as we enter.)

Relaxation exercise How to Do Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Here's how to get started:

Find Some Time. Block off at least 15 minutes to begin. I recommend setting an alarm for yourself, in case you fall asleep. (This will allow you to relax more completely, knowing you won't lose track of time.) I also recommend finding a private place so you'll feel more comfortable.

Sit and Make Yourself Comfortable. After finding a quiet place and several free minutes to practice progressive muscle relaxation, sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable. It's more effective to stretch out and lie down, but if you don't have room to lie down, sitting in a comfortable chair is fine as well. Unfold your arms, however, and uncross your legs so that you have easy circulation and your body is able to really relax.

Start With Your Face. Begin by tensing all the muscles in your face and scalp. Make a tight grimace, close your eyes as tightly as possible, clench your teeth, even move your ears up if you can. Hold this for the count of eight as you inhale.

Let Go of Your Tension. Now exhale and relax completely. Let your face go completely lax, as though you were sleeping. Feel the tension seep from your facial muscles and enjoy the feeling. Take your time and relax completely before you move onto the next step. You can repeat this step until your face feels thoroughly relaxed if desired.

Move to your neck. Next, completely tense your neck and shoulders, again inhaling and counting to eight. Then exhale and relax. Again, this step can be repeated until you feel absolutely relaxed in this area, particularly because many people carry tension in their neck and shoulder muscles. Take your time and let yourself go.

Work your way down. Continue down your body, repeating the procedure with the following muscle groups:

chest; abdomen; entire right arm; right forearm and hand (making a fist); right hand; entire left arm; left forearm and hand (again, making a fist); left hand; buttocks; entire right leg; lower right leg and foot; right foot; entire left leg; lower left leg and foot; left foot; face; neck, shoulders, and arms; abdomen and chest; buttocks; legs, and feet.

Practice. Then Abbreviate. For the shortened version, which includes just four main muscle groups, quickly focus on each group one after the other. With practice, you can relax your body like ‘liquid relaxation’ poured on your head and it flowed down and completely covered you.⁴⁸

Breathing Exercise

Take a wide “horse stance.” [As if riding a horse. Instructor demonstrates.]
Feel the center in the Horse stance. Focus on a spot outside in front of you. Breathe through your nose. Before you start the breathing movement, there is a moment. Visualize the moment as an impulse which makes you take the breath, just as there is a moment of impulse before you make a gesture. Feel, when you breathe in freely, that there is a moment before you breathe out. Then there is a moment when you finish. Continue.
Now, when breathing in, make sure you fill your lungs 100%; so much that you feel it in your fingers. Breathe out only 50%. Now breathe in up to 75% only, out 50%. Switch like this the amount of intensity. Now breathe in - legato. The feeling (quality) is almost like molding. Now take a breath and breathe out while moving to the right; same to the left; then forwards, then backwards, up, down.⁴⁹

Speech and Physical Warm-Ups

“Juggler Psychology”

Viewing the assigned homework: Students demonstrate “tricks” with the small objects brought to class, then they give the memorized monologue while showing skillfulness with objects brought to class.

6/7.1a) Lightness and Heaviness.

There are standard ways to achieve lightness (put weight on toes rather than whole foot, arms up) and heaviness (weight on heels, arms down). One exercise is called “plowing the field”; your partner has to push rocks (you) out of the way – you make yourself heavy and difficult to slide around. With lightness, you are a beach ball, light and in space. Partner puffs and blows you around the space.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Star Katharina, “Progressive Muscle Relaxation”; available URL:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/reduce-tension-with-progressive-muscle-relaxation-3144608>.

⁴⁹ Sol Garre; MICHA 2019.

⁵⁰ John McManus; MICHA 2018.

6/7.1b) Practicing lightness and making heaviness seem easy.

a) Throw a small, light object (a ball, a stick, or a veil/juggling scarf) into the air, like a juggler. All your movements must be in relation to this object.

You must always have the feeling that it is well done.

b) Now pick up a chair, feeling its weight but keeping the effect light, as in the case of the veil – the effect of Ease.

c) Then alternate between one of the small objects and the chair.⁵¹

FEELING OF EASE

“It is the lightness of touch which more than anything else makes the artist.”

– Edward Eggleston⁵²

The goal of achieving a Feeling of Ease is for one’s efforts as an actor – what Chekhov called how something is created onstage – that is to always be separated from what is going on in the text of the play, even if it is heavy and cruel. “The impression that it is terribly heavy must be given, but how it is produced must be artistically light and easy always. ... It makes the actor twice as happy on the stage and the audience three times as happy when watching him. There is no philosophy about it: it is simply a feeling of Ease.” Chekhov, in our text, gives the example of a clown who falls heavily to the ground, “but with such artistic grace and ease that you cannot restrain your laughter.”⁵³

Importance of Humor for Ease (in the context of Comedy):

Chekhov, in your textbook, observes that “Humor that is true, humor of good taste, can be achieved only with complete effortlessness, by means of the greatest possible ease and strong radiations. Ease and radiation, therefore, are two further conditions for the actor who wants to develop a special technique for performing comedy. ... Humor cannot be squeezed out of the actor’s nature any more than can any other human feelings. It must be simply welcomed when it is there, and then it will be helpful.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Adapted from Chekhov, unpublished, 14-15 October 1936, Adelphi Hurst papers.

⁵² Edward Mason Eggleston (1882-1941) was an American illustrator and critic.

⁵³ Chekhov 1985, p.57; 1953/2002, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 127 – 1953, p. 140; 1991/1942, p. 50.



“Leaping,” a “Lightness” exercise, with the Feeling of Ease on the lawn at Dartington Hall, England, 1936. Training outdoors in nature was an important part of the Studio process. Photograph by Fritz Henle. (Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

6/7.2) Exercise: “Grace is ease in force.” (John Ruskin⁵⁵)

Choose any simple business and accompany it with a few words. Try to do this task with the utmost inner sense of Ease and outer graceful movements appropriate to the task. Try to avoid any flat, blank character to your speech. Speak directly and conversationally, happy to share with your audience. This kind of exercise will prevent you from falling into banal photographic representation of so-called “real life,” which can be taken only as a theme, and not as a manner of acting. (When the feeling of ease becomes a permanent ability for you, you will use it unconsciously.)⁵⁶

6/7.3) Exercise: Using a memory to instill the Feeling of Ease.

Form pairs. Each of you should recall a moment when you were happy. What was the weight of your body? Now lift your arms and hands, making the movement a little piece of art. Now toss an imaginary ball from one to the other, using the body very freely. Keep engaged, everyone taking part all the time.

So many emotions will come to us – everything immediately appeals to the feelings, which shows what a childlike nature the artist has, if we appeal to it. This Feeling of Ease is one of four qualities which the actor must have at his disposal all the time.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ John Ruskin (1819-1900) is the most famous British art critic and theorist of the Victorian age.

⁵⁶ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 28, pp. 48-49; not in 1953.

⁵⁷ Chekhov 1985, p.76.



Another image of “Feeling of Ease” (Beatrice Straight in view top right) Dartington Hall, England, 1936. Photograph by Fritz Henle. Dartington Hall Chekhov Archive, courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust. Southwest Heritage Center, Exeter.

QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT / SENSATIONS: FLOATING/FLOWING and RISING/FLYING

In Floating (Flowing) the element is Water, and the movement is a continuous flow like waves on the sea; growing and subsiding. The space around you is liquid. You move your whole body as if being carried along by the space around you. Every movement is slurred into another in an unbroken line. Although they must be well-shaped, these movements must have neither a beginning nor an end but must flow into one another organically. Here is also necessary to be active with a certain power, but the character of the movement must be wavelike, growing and subsiding.

6/7.4) Exercise for Floating

This exercise combines Exercise 4 from your textbook (p. 10) with an exercise from Chekhov’s 1942 text.

(a) Make wide and broad movements, utilizing the whole body; use simple movements at first. Awaken in yourself the following thought: “My movements are floating in space, merging gently and beautifully one into another.” Let them ebb and flow like big waves.

(b) Now change the tempo. The space around you must be felt as if it were the supporting surface of a wave in the water. Pause from time to time. A sensation of calm, poise and psychological warmth will be your reward. Preserve these Sensations and let them fill your whole body.⁵⁸

Explore other floating movements, like autumn leaves floating down to the ground. Explore the psychological associations of floating and allow them to influence your movement. Allow yourself to explore large movements and very subtle ones. Explore floating with different parts of the body.

⁵⁸ Chekhov 1953/2002, p.10, Exercise 4, combined with Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 45, Exercise 24.

With Rising (Flying) movements the element is Air. The goal is to instill a sense of physical Sensations having the positive feeling of being lifted up. Chekhov, in our textbook, begins the exercises by telling us that we can easily grasp the idea of flying if we have ever watched flying birds.

6/7.5) Exercise for Rising/Flying

(a) Imagine that the space inside you is filled with air, just as the space around you. Move as if your body is flying through the air. Stand up and see if you can feel the flying inwardly. Lift yourself up from the ground accompanied by an inward sense of moving further upwards with uplifted feelings of hope, love, joy, pride, freedom, etc.

(b) Imagine and focus on your energetic heart, or your energetic brain, or any specific energetic body part as it floats upward; experience the sensation as you sustain the imagined movement.⁵⁹

6/7.6) Imagine your whole body flying through space.

(a) While making the movements associated with Flying (they are up to you), you must imagine that each of them continues in space indefinitely, flies away from you, departing from your physical body. As in Flowing, your movements must merge into each other continuously without becoming shapeless. In this exercise the physical strength of your movements may increase or diminish according to your desire, but it must never disappear altogether. Psychologically you must constantly maintain your strength. You may come to a static position outwardly, but inwardly you must continue your feeling of still soaring aloft. Imagine the air around you as a medium which instigates and supports (lifts up) your flying movements. Your desire must be to overcome the weight of your body, to fight the law of gravity.

(b) Now move onto the next level. Start this exercise, too, with the wide, broad movements. While moving, change tempos. Then proceed to more natural gestures, but while carrying out the everyday movements, be sure to preserve their truthfulness and simplicity. A sensation of joyful lightness and easiness will permeate your entire body.⁶⁰

(c) Form pairs, standing well apart. Now, taking turns, “fly” to one another. Try flying with different emotions: with joy, with anger, with hope or expectations, etc.

6/7.7 As in the earlier exercise for Ease, think of a time when you were happy and carefree, but now all are assembled as a group. A large, ultra-light weather-balloon type of ball, very soft to the touch, is thrown into the midst of the group when the arms are raised, and bounced from person to person, keeping the ball gently aloft, arching high in the air, with the ensemble creating the

⁵⁹ Includes exercises from the MICHA Workbook, Third Edition, 2009, p.34.

⁶⁰ Chekhov 1953, Exercise 5, p. 11; 1991/1942, Exercise 25, p. 46; combined.

effect of lightness cooperatively. (Note: the exercise relates to both the Feeling of Ease and the Feeling of the Whole, below.)⁶¹

QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT / SENSATIONS: FALLING and BALANCING.

With Falling the feelings are sadness, being psychologically down (blue), falling into despair, losing your grip, becoming disoriented, and losing control (like when you are juggling balls and one falls). Other situations are when we are lost in thoughts, or your heart is loose and weak. The associated Sensations experienced are grief, despair, doubt, devastation, and so forth. You suddenly loose will in the pelvic area. Later, we will see Chekhov associating Falling with the response of King Claudius in the “Mousetrap” scene from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

6/7.8) Exercise for Falling Sensations

(a) Let yourself actually fall backwards (e.g., into a chair).

Actually, try to fall forward to the ground, but catch yourself before really losing control (unless you are actually trained to do a pratfall). Give yourself just enough time to experience the Sensation.

Then imagine you are falling inwardly while you outwardly walk or meet someone but imagine that it is not the person you expected to meet.

(b) Imagine parts of your body falling downwards:

Your heart is falling forward and down.

Your heart is falling out the back.

Your brain is falling out.

Feel the resonance in the rest of your body.

(c) Stand in a circle. Bean bags are passed from one to the other (counterclockwise). When you get the bean bag, do the falling heart exercise with the bean bag dropping down from the heart (chest) as if it were your own heart falling. Do it again. Repeat a third time after you have passed the bag to the next person, trying to repeat the Sensation without the bean bag.⁶²

To give an example from Anton Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, in Tuzenbach and Irina’s good-bye scene, both of the characters may have a sensation of falling.

BALANCING is hoping to restore equilibrium while experiencing Sensations of trying to stay calm and in control, keeping both feet on the ground, so as not to fall or drift away. Other Sensations accompanying this movement might be figuring things out, arriving to an understanding, discovery, etc.

6/7.9) Explore balance through movement:

Find different points of balance and explore the moments when you lose balance. Explore the psychological associations with balance and allow them to

⁶¹ Craig Mathers; MICHA 2019.

⁶² Craig Mathers; MICHA 2018 (elements from Lenard Petit).

influence your movement. We might think, for example, of an unbalanced personality. What kind of movement comes up in us in response to that idea? How might a psychologically unbalanced person move? Perhaps their movement is unusually precise. Allow your imagination to come up with different ideas and explore any other associations that the word 'balance' has for you. Explore large and bold balances and extremely subtle ones. Explore balance in different parts of the body.

6/7.10) Balancing

- (a) Take off your shoes if you are willing. Pretend to walk a tightrope or a straight line. Allow yourself to physically lose your balance – then before you actually fall, catch your balance and feel the Sensation of having saved yourself from falling. Now do it as only an imagination of the movement and sustain this sensation.
- (b) Now pair up with a partner from your scene. Do the same walking on an imaginary tightrope but with closed eyes, your partner next to you to catch you if you lose balance – experience feelings of trust and ease. Trade places so the other partners walk the tightrope.
- (c) Deliver lines from your scene, but this time as “balancer”: for example, perhaps drunk or distracted, or dizzy from illness, etc.

Explore characters which emerge from balancing, floating and falling. Can your assigned character be associated with any of these Sensations?

6/7.11) Combining Falling and Balancing, an exercise with words.

Form in groups of three.

#1 (Bad News Bearer) [Improvise the message.]

#2 Reacts, “falling”: “Oh, my gosh!”

#3 Reacts “balancing” (as if the news made him/her dizzy and needs to keep balance): “I can’t believe it!”

Switch roles until each person experiences reacting with both Sensations. How do the reactions affect the bad news bearer?⁶³

FEELING OF BEAUTY

Chekhov, in your text, observes that “True beauty has its roots inside the human being, whereas false beauty is only on the outside. “Showing off” is the negative side of beauty, and so are sentimentality, sweetness, self-love and other such vanities.

But you may ask: ‘How can I perform ugly situations and repulsive characters if my creation has to be beautiful? Won’t this beauty rob me of expressiveness?’ ...

Ugliness expressed on the stage by unaesthetic means irritates the nerves of the audience. The effect of such a performance is physiological rather than

⁶³ Adapted from Dawn Arnolds; MICHA 2018.

psychological. ... But aesthetically performed, an unpleasant theme, character or situation preserves the power of uplifting and inspiring the audience.”⁶⁴

Homework:

Étude. Use all four Sensations of Floating, Rising, Falling, and Balancing in whatever order and put it together in brief improvisation (it could be as few as four lines). Repeat, with the Sensations in a different order, keeping the same lines.⁶⁵

Exercise for Feeling of Beauty

The following exercise is taken from your textbook [Chekhov 1953/2002, Exercise 8], abridged and adapted. Re-read pp. 14-17 for the verbatim context.

Begin with observations of all kinds of beauty in human beings and things you see in the course of daily life. Distinguish beauty from mere sensuousness or attractiveness.

Then ask yourself: “Why does it (they) strike me as beautiful? Because of its (their) form? Harmony? Sincerity? Simplicity? Color? Moral value? Strength? Gentleness? Significance? Originality? Ingenuity? Selflessness? Idealism? Mastery?” Etc.

Now you are ready to proceed with the following:

Begin, as before, with broad, simple movements, trying to do them with the beauty which rises from within you, until your entire body is permeated with it and begins to feel an aesthetic satisfaction. Do not do your exercises before a mirror; this will tend to stress beauty as only a surface quality when the purpose is to fathom it deep within yourself. Avoid dancing movements.

Go over the four kinds of movements: molding, floating, flying, radiating. Speak a few words. This is the part of the exercise you will bring to class.

Then do everyday movements and simple business. And even in your everyday life carefully avoid ugly movements and speech. Resist the temptation to “appear” beautiful but do the movements with a spirit and awareness of inner beauty.

⁶⁴ 1953/2002, pp. 15-16, combined with 1991/1942, pp. 56-57.

⁶⁵ Adapted from Dawn Arnold; MICHA 2018.

CLASS 8 (QUALITIES OF MOVEMENT, CONT'D.)
EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION (THE SENSE OF SPACE)
SIGNIFICANCE

Note for pedagogical application: Because it involves the use of illustrations, this class will be given using a PowerPoint slide lecture and other aids. The general text of the lecture portion is given here.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Breathing Exercises

Speech and Physical Warm-Ups

Viewing the Homework (molding, floating, flying, radiating. Speak a few words and do the movements with a spirit and awareness of inner beauty.)

With **Expansion and Contraction**, we introduce psychophysical movements leading to the idea of the Psychological Gesture, or PG. (Expansion and Contraction are the first pair of “archetypal,” or basic gestures, in the PG repertory.) Breathing is important in these movements – you breathe in during expansion and out during contraction.

Note: If the gesture feels right to you for expressing the character and his or her thinking/feeling/willing – if it brings the character alive within you as you rehearse, and allows you to radiate successfully – then the form is correct.

In addition to teaching about gesture and its psychological elements, these exercises sensitize actors to their relationship to the space around them, and the complicated interplay of gesture, space, and tempo. When physical movement is preceded by a spiritual/psychological impulse, desire, or decision to make the movement, the psychological power of the impulse will live in your physical movement, even after you have made the movement – this is crucial, sustaining the movement in the silence. (We will return to this in the following class and Class 15.) What is more, by making this movement without excessive, unnecessary physical stress (unnecessary muscle tension), you can preserve this inner mental strength.

Chekhov also spoke of Expansion as a metaphor for the actor’s relationship with stage partners and the audience, but the effects he speaks of also apply to the physical gesture onstage. “The love [an actor has for the profession] is not a state of mind, it is not static; it is constantly moving ... it expands itself continuously, incessantly. And with this expansion, our inner being – the core, the essence of our artistic being – is also constantly expanding itself.”⁶⁶

A bit of pedagogical history: the drawings in your textbook (Chekhov 1953/2002) are derived from a text on acting Chekhov published in America (but in Russian) in 1946 – a few fragments of this book and the original drawings are included as an appendix to your textbook. The following drawings were used in 1946 as Expansion and Contraction, but re-used in a different way in 1953, although Chekhov kept the

⁶⁶ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 11, “On Love in Our Profession”; NYPL call no. LT10-4789.

sense of the contrast of the two gestures and implied or stated some of the ideas.
(Pages 64-68.)



“Expansion” exercises in Dartington, 1937.

Exercises for Expansion and Contraction (To be practiced every day.)⁶⁷

Note for pedagogical application: a selection of these exercises will be used in class, depending on time constraints.

8.1) Exercises for Expansion

Begin in a neutral standing position.

(a) Make a calm, wide gesture of expansion – that is, open up into this gesture slowly and without stressful muscle tension. Continue it in your imagination for an indefinitely long time, extending it (in your imagination) into endless distances.



(b) Now, make the same gesture quickly but without tension, as though in a limited space – making it in the same calm tone, but being aware of the limits to your radiation of the movement.

⁶⁷ Chekhov 1946, introductory remarks and exercises 9 and 10, pp. 91-96, summarized; Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 62, pp. 119-120; not in 1953; other improvisations from L. Pichlíková. See Appendix 8 for verbatim texts. See also the Psychological Gesture chapter in 1946, *passim* (below, Appendix 10), and 1953/2002, Drawing 2 and p. 68. The Expansion and Contraction sequence combines exercises from Chekhov 1946 with Mala Powers’ selection of exercises derived from Chekhov’s 1955 lectures (Powers in Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, pp. 47-49).

- (c) Do a series of broad but simple abstract movements, using as much space as you can, while holding this feeling of Expansion.
 - (d) Make naturalistic movements while maintaining the experience of Expansion (e.g. walk, sit down, stand up again, pick up an object, etc.).
 - (e) Make the gesture of Expansion and speak a few words while in this expanded state.
- 8.2) (a) Now a closing (contracting) gesture. Start with the open gesture and then close it, squeezing the initial unlimited space around you as well. Imagine yourself becoming smaller and smaller, more and more Contracted, until you are only a tiny dot and finally “disappear” within yourself. In our textbook, Chekhov added psychology, with the Contraction pose expressing something “entirely introspective ... isolated ... brooding.” (You are not required to use these feelings but rather find your own.)



- (b) Do this combination of gestures from open to closed with variations in tempo: at first slowly, collapsing over a long time; then make the change quickly.
- (c) Then with variations in both tempo and sense of space: (1) first, the same open and closed gestures, lingering and slowly changing, as if in boundless space; (2) then the change quickly, in a confined space; (3) then quickly, in boundless space; (4) then finally slowly, in a confined space.
- (d) Keeping in mind the Sensations and feelings created by your experience of Contracting, make broad movements while holding this experience inwardly. Notice, as Mala Powers pointed out, that even if you choose exactly the same movements as in the exercise on Expansion, both the quality of your movements and the tempos in which you perform them will tend to be different.
- (e) Make naturalistic movements while maintaining the experience of Contraction.
- (f) Repeat the change from Expansion (open) to Contraction (closed), and then speak a few words in the Contracted state.
- (g) Repeat the change from Expansion to full Contraction, then move back to the Expanded gesture, then back to the Contracted position. Repeat several times, keeping aware of connecting with the surrounding space.

8.2) Improvisations using expansion and contraction

- (a) A shy person enters a store and selects and buys the item he needs. Let shyness come as a result of the reduction or contraction of space in the imagination during the improvisation.
- (b) Into the store comes a loud, disagreeable (cheeky) person. Try to get cheeky, mentally expanding the space during improvisation.

(c) A bored, lazy person, in front of a bookshelf, selects a book for reading. Boredom and laziness are the results of "expanded time" and an indifference to space. Note that moving slowly is NOT the same as cinematic "slow motion."

(d) The same is done by a person looking for a particular book with great interest. The "reduced time" will give you, as a result, the experience of an interested person, very focused on a specific task. Space contracts around him/her as the search is conducted.

Externally (outwardly), in all cases, try to keep approximately the same length for the improvisation.

Note: we use Nicolai Gogol's satirical comedy, *The Inspector General*, in class. Compare the roles of Marya and Khlestakov in Act IV, scene 12 – shy Marya contrasts with cheeky Khlestakov.

SIGNIFICANCE

Chekhov said that Significance is just as instinctive to us as the animal's movement is to it. We will experience our whole bodies differently if we attach Significance to actions. There are places in a performance where a gesture or movement (not to mention a speech) MUST be underscored, must be given Significance.

8.3) Exercise for Attaching Significance to Gesture

(a) Sitting as you are, move your right hand (relatively slowly, legato) and try to make it significant for yourself. Pause. Now look to the left significantly, and back again. Now look up and down in one movement, expressing this significance. It is the best means to attract the audience's attention. (We are always looking for the audience's attention while on the stage. Sometimes we try to use other means to attract the audience and waste our time, whereas we can use Significance and the audience will look at us at once.)

(b) Now let us make the same movements quickly yet preserve the significance. While we are doing these movements, we must overcome the tendency to be stiff and tense. Let it be a purely psychological state, neither too bodily or too spiritual.

(c) Now pair up. Look at each other significantly, then lower the eyes. Sometimes by ignoring a thing you make it significant.⁶⁸

8.4) Exercise – Significance with Expansion and Contraction of a Role.

We can also explore the classical "Four Temperaments": Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Melancholic Personality Types for these short scenes.

⁶⁸ Chekhov 1985, p. 130, 8 December 1941. Chekhov adds an interesting personal example: "Once I was scolding a person in my private life, and I made a very banal movement. I saw that the other person was so impressed by this action, because I was doing it significantly, [that] I lost the whole meaning of the thing!" The gesture was more powerful than words, significantly affecting the other person.

Two partners are given a very brief scene such as the following. They alternate the roles. For example:

In a shop, the salesman and the purchaser (“Do you take credit cards?” “Not today; our internet’s down.” Etc.);

In a restaurant, the customer and the waiter (“There is a fly in my soup.” “Yes, there is.” Etc.).

And similarly: a host or hostess and a guest;
an interviewer and a distinguished personality.

While delivering the lines, both partners must learn to recognize important moments and less significant ones. The partner who is less important at the moment must learn to diminish (Contraction) his Significance, giving the other partner the right to have the “lead” (Expansion) even if it is only for a few seconds. By “giving the stage” to one’s partner, one must not lose either one’s own Significance or one’s presence on the stage, only diminish or increase it. Radiation must go on as always, but a certain kind of withdrawal, a certain veiling of the Significance (Contraction) must also take place.

The actor who knows what Significance is can learn by experience how to increase or diminish his/her Significance while acting. Both partners, while trading the position of Significance, must be aware of the potential presence of an audience – without imagining the audience attending the work, the exercises will lose part of their purpose. One must realize that diminishing the Significance does not necessarily mean that the outer action must always be lessened or stopped.

Homework:

Prepare the following silent scene: You are awaiting the arrival of someone whom you love very much. Show your extreme happiness, then the growth of the fear that perhaps he/she will not come, and then your unhappiness when you realize that he/she is not coming. All this takes place in a period of two minutes.

Observe the people you meet or see on campus or in your neighborhood, trying to guess their experiences of space and time from how they behave or carry themselves. Record your observations, describing the person, in your Actor’s Journal.

Additional preparation for the next class: **Radiating**.

(a) Stand up and sit down, walk around the room, kneel, lie down, etc., trying to do these movements with your inner strength (your psychological impulses, Sensations, etc., directed to the movement). Having finished the movement externally, continue it internally – that is, try to “radiate” the energy of making the movement, the impulses behind it and reactions to it, imaginatively out of your body after the actual movement has stopped. (We will repeat similar exercises in class.)

(b) Now make one of the movements with different Qualities of feeling: anger, joy, determination, expectation of someone coming over, orders from your boss

or teacher, etc. (your choice). Try to remove your attention from the physical body and focus your attention solely on the internal motivation and strength of the gesture. Your radiation will by itself be filled with the Qualities of feeling and Sensations. Be sure to note your reactions in your Actor's Journal.

(c) For this next part of the exercise, you will need to bring one or two of the props to the next class and repeat the exercise briefly (30 seconds – 1 minute). Perform a simple étude (clean the room, set the table, organize the library, water the flowers, etc.). With all movements, try to catch the internal force of the movement and sense the radiation associated with it after you stop the movement.

Through such exercises, you will become acquainted with the force that alone is transmitted to the viewer from the stage, attracting their attention.



Scene from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (Yul Brynner at left rear, Hurd Hatfield at right) during the second tour season and Broadway performance, December 1941. (Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust)



Dramatization of Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*; Ridgefield Touring Company, 1941 (Courtesy of Darting Hall Trust)

CLASS 9 RECEIVING RADIATING

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD.

As before, we will approach the circular Threshold line with the intention of increasing the level of our activity as soon as we step over it, but now emphasizing Radiating your psychological energy from your chest straight out in front of you to the group. At first, the group will be mostly outside the circle, but as the inner space fills up, the person crossing the Threshold will have more direct targets to which to radiate. After the third person, vary the manner of Radiating. Stretch out your arm, pointing at someone; look sharply at someone or some point, radiating from your eyes; open your arms and hands, radiating from your palms; radiate while moving your hand from one side to the other – that is, towards one side of the group to the other; do the same with your glance; with your whole figure; and other variations you may think of.⁶⁹ The entire group, particularly those who have crossed the Threshold, will concentrate on receiving the energy radiated from each person crossing the Threshold.

Speech warm up with activity:

Pair up with distance between you. Tossing balls with the idea of giving (radiating) and receiving, projecting your voice (alternating voiced and voiceless consonants). The consonants are D, T, N, K, and L.

Take a deep breath and project: “Dididi, Dididi, Dididi, Daaa,” tossing the ball while you speak. The receiving partner catches, then tosses the ball back, saying and projecting the voice, “Tititi, Tititi, Tititi, Taaa.” Then no. 1 catches and tosses, saying “Ninini, Ninini, Ninini, Naaa,” with the no.2 (receiver) catches and says, “Kikiki, Kikiki, Kikiki, Kaaa.” No. 1 catches and says “Lilili, Lilili, Lilili, Laaa,” with No. 2 catching and then saying, “Dididi, Dididi, Dididi, Daaa,” starting the sequence over so the partners alternate.

Viewing the Homework, 1: “Waiting” Scenes

Receiving Impressions

Chekhov distinguished between two different ways of receiving impressions and reacting to them. In one case, for example, someone tells you, “please be seated.” You comprehend it and react to it immediately, directly, and spontaneously. In another case, this spontaneity, this directness is impossible, as when someone asks you, “please give me an interesting book to read.” Although you understand the request immediately, but you cannot react immediately, because there is a question of what kind of interesting book is expected (a scientific book, a detective story, or whatever). It requires some questions about what “an interesting book” means.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 58, p. 116, adapted; not in 1953.

⁷⁰ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2; NYPL Call no. [LT10-] 4780.

9.1) Exercise for Connecting, Radiating, and Receiving with a Partner

Scene partners stand about 1.5 meters (5 feet) apart. Each of you has in your chest is a golden sun (place it there): radiate it out. Receive the radiation from your partner as you radiate. Now pull an imaginary “string” out of your heart and attach it to your partner’s heart. He/she will do the same. You are now attached by two strings. Walk in the space connected, taking steps forward, backwards, sideways, etc.; radiate the light.

Now make the two strings thicker, they turn into a rope. Now the rope is even thicker, like the thick hawsers boats are tied together with. Now change it to a transparent tube. Walk through the space: even if you are walking back to back with your partner, feel that you are still connected; even if one of the partners goes and gets water to drink or someone walks between you, you are still connected.

When you find your connection, give and receive these lines:

- (1) What’s your name?
- (2) You’re amazing.
- (1) You’re amazing.
- (2) I have to go.
- (1) I know, you have to go...

The idea is that you sustain the radiation. Practice Sensations/Emotions such as Sadness, Happiness, Anger, Caution, Admiration, Fear.⁷¹

RADIATING

When we did the exercises for Molding, you will have noticed the transfer of your emotional power and impulses to the space around you. This connects the Molding exercises to gestures Chekhov also associated with the Feeling of Ease: Radiating movements. We may associate Radiating with the ancient element Fire. Chekhov and his practitioners today put Radiating in the realm of the heart, and often used the image of the space inside you (especially in your chest) filled with the sun, with light streaming through your body and sending light out to other people. Chekhov thought of Radiating as “giving” – giving to your stage partners and to the audience.⁷²

We have repeatedly mentioned Chekhov’s insistence that the actor should try to do everything as if it were “a piece of art.” “That is the way,” he insisted, “to be a really creative person on the stage. [The great German poet and dramatist] Goethe was permeated with this creative power. When he looked at a flower, he looked at it as if he was creating it. That is the right way to approach our work in the theatre.”⁷³ Looking at something as if you are creating it implies Radiation of your feelings and will-impulses as your Concentration “penetrates” the object.

⁷¹ Craig Mathers; MICHA 2018.

⁷² “Through giving, through radiating, through expanding, with a firm desire to keep nothing within ourselves and for ourselves. ... The more we give, the more we get. We know this. We never get tired from giving.” Chekhov 1955 Lectures. Tape 11; NYPL call no. LT10-4789.

⁷³ Chekhov 2018 Lessons for Teachers, p. 13, 15 April 1936.

All actors learn to project the voice from the diaphragm; Radiating is the equivalent of Projection for gestures and movements. The Chekhov technique always asks us to “appeal to the invisible part of our body [our psyche, emotions, will-impulses] when we are acting.” Chekhov gave the example of a “poor actor,” who would point with the finger and say, “Go,” but the command, Chekhov noted, “will end at the tip of his finger, while the actor who is doing something more than just gesture, will project something with his words, and the feeling will go on.”⁷⁴

Radiation Exercises

9.2) Exercise on Radiating Beyond Movement

(a) Make a sharp, strong movement, throwing your body and arms forward. Having done it, you naturally reach the limit of your physical movement. But continue it the motion mentally, as if you are radiating an internal force in the direction of the movement made. You will continue it, despite stopping the physical body. You will get a feeling that your internal movement goes beyond the limits of your external, physical motion; your strength increases, and your body is freed from muscle strain. This provides you with an emotional force that fills the gesture and awakens your feelings and will.⁷⁵

1) Viewing the Homework

2) Brief études practicing Radiating

9.3) Exercise on Radiating from a Center

(a) Imagine that there is a warm, sun-like center within your chest. Think of this center as the source of the actual impulses for all your movements. Let the power from this source radiate out and flow into your body—your arms, hands, legs, feet, torso, neck and head. Imagine anything that blocks energy from flowing within your body being dissolved by the energy from this warm, sun-like center which flows through your body.

(b) As the energy radiates, begin moving – using naturalistic movements at first. Walk, sit, pick up objects, throw a ball up into the air and catch it. Always keep your consciousness upon the Radiation from the center in your chest and see that the impulse for all the movements you make flows from this imaginary center within your chest and then radiates out into the surrounding space. When done regularly it can give the actor not only enhanced physical energy and freedom of movement but also greater stage presence as well as an increased sense of well-being.⁷⁶

9.4) Pair up with one of your scene partners from your assigned scene.

Now do the same exercise with sound and images. Work with your scene partner on part of your text from the scene. Take turns delivering just one sentence from your

⁷⁴ Unpublished lesson from Dartington Hall, 17 November 1936; Deirdre Hurst du Prey transcripts at Dartington Hall Archives and Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers.

⁷⁵ Chekhov 1946, p. 92-96, including Exercise 9; translated from the Russian and abridged.

⁷⁶ Mala Powers in Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, pp. 47-49, paraphrasing information in Chekhov's 1955 lectures and taught to her in class.

text, to find a subtext. Now please find a scene partner in class with whom you did not work so far. I will make a note of this, and you need to write down the person's contact. It will be for the next assignment. I will give you (during the next class) a short scene from a play.

Homework for next class 10: Keep working on this scene (a larger part of it) with this kind of giving and receiving. Be prepared to present the scene in class next time. This will require you to REHEARSE with your scene partner(s) outside of class.

IMPORTANT: take notice of future Homework (to allow more time to prepare):

Homework for Class 11:

- 1) Read in your textbook, pp. 47-62, and Chekhov's ideas on **Atmosphere** – we will go over many of them again in class.
- 2) Try in everyday life to notice the Atmospheres in which you live. Listen to them like you would listen to music. Make a written list of these and your reactions to them. When you are outside of your home or room, try to determine the mood of other people you see on the street or on campus. Whenever you are in a group (in a class, in the lecture hall, in the cafeteria, in the library, in the gym, in a meeting, attending a performance, etc.), sense what kind of Atmosphere is permeating the space and make a note of it. Add these to your list.

You will bring your list to class next time. We will share some of them, and after you turn them in and I read them, I will return them to you to put in your Actor's Journal.

To prepare and present in the Class 11:

- 3) Choose a character from one of the plays we have been exploring and working on, but NOT a character you have been assigned. Memorize a few lines from this character. In class, you will perform the lines in the Atmosphere of the original play as you understand it, but in two ways: first as you the actor, as if you were somehow placed in the atmosphere, and then as the character in the play.

Homework for Class 12:

- 4) Think about the general Atmosphere (the setting, the situation, the moods of all characters involved) for the scene you have been assigned. Returning to the brief monologue or group of lines from that scene which you have prepared, think about how this Atmosphere relates to and affects you as you would say these lines – that is, affects you as an actor and affects your character. The idea is to harmonize it with the Atmosphere of the scene at that point. The harmony will be achieved more easily and organically if you avoid any pretension, any attempts to “perform” the harmony or the Atmosphere as if someone were looking at you. Simply be aware in your mind's eye of the Atmosphere, the setting, other characters, and the situation surrounding you. Try to be in harmony with the Atmosphere in an honest way, for the sake of the harmony itself, but not in order to “show off.” You can strengthen this result by making the effort to radiate the inner life that has been awakened in you through the objective Atmosphere.

Prepare that monologue for Class 12 – to present in class. Remember to record what you do to rehearse and prepare the monologue, including being aware of the Atmosphere and describing it, in your Actor's Journal.

To summarize:

1. Imagine the air around you filled with a certain Atmosphere.
2. Become aware of the reaction within you.
3. Move and speak in harmony with the Atmosphere.
4. Radiate it back into the space around you.⁷⁷

5) (Class 12, cont'd)

Exercise on External and Internal Action, Transitions, and Pauses

You will be divided into smaller groups and given a short scene from a play. You will need to schedule at least two rehearsal meetings among yourselves before Class 12 starts. You may use the script in class as you do the exercise.

Individually, read through the script and note in your Actor's Journal where the dialogue or action requires a whole or partial (incomplete) pause, or where there is an obvious transition point (a revelation or such). When you get together, compare notes and come to an agreement about these. Also agree on what action precedes the first pause (it doesn't particularly have to come from the actual play – this can be improvisation, but you all must agree) – a rally/demonstration, stormy meeting with heated debate, fun party, hard physical labor, etc.

Improvisation section: In rehearsal and in presentation in class, begin your exercise with a full, saturated Atmosphere of a pause resulting from this previous (imaginary or scripted) action. Recognize the radiating power of the pause and hold it for about 30-60 seconds or so. Then, without breaking the pause, each of you starts turning it internally into an internal impulse from which your further action and dialogue will follow. This means call in yourself an impulse to action (the continuation of the rally, meeting, party, physical work, etc.). When you feel that the pause is “ripe enough”, proceed gradually to action. This can be done as “dumb show” (action only), with some improvised comments. Continue this for a while, then bring the improvisation to a complete pause.

Play reading section. Now regroup and start reading the play, beginning with the same pregnant pause holding the Atmosphere of past action and dialogue. Stop where you feel the need for a complete pause. Realize the individual character of each pause in the scene, and look for incomplete pauses in the same way.

⁷⁷ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 17, pp. 33-34; not in 1953.

CLASS 10

“FOUR BROTHERS” (CONTINUING):

FEELING OF THE WHOLE (ENTIRETY) FEELING OF STYLE

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Speech and Physical Warm-ups

Hand out of a short scene/dialogue from a play

FEELING OF THE WHOLE (Entirety)

Note on pedagogical application: these introductory comments will be presented as a lecture to introduce the concept and connect it to others developing the same sense of wholeness in the actor.

“The ability to grasp things in time and space as one whole thing – an entirety – is important from many points of view. First, if this ability is developed, the actor will not be lost among the many details, but they will become organic parts of the whole. It is the best inspiration for many things – rhythm, timing, meaning.”⁷⁸

In your textbook, Chekhov points out that an actor who plays his/her part “as so many separate and unrelated moments between each entrance and exit, without regard for what he did in his previous scenes or what he will be doing in scenes to follow, will never understand or interpret his part as a whole or in its entirety. Failure or inability to relate a part to its entirety might make it inharmonious and incomprehensible to the spectator. ... On the other hand, if in the beginning or from the very first entrance you already have a vision of yourself playing (or rehearsing) your last scenes – and, conversely, remembering the first scenes as you play (or rehearse) the very last scenes – you will better be able to see your whole part in every detail, as though you were viewing it in perspective from some elevation. You will intuitively stress essentials in your character and follow the main line of events, thus holding firmly the attention of the audience. Your acting will become more powerful.”⁷⁹

To this we can add that just as the play is a whole entity, so should the group of actors performing the play have some sense of unity – that is, they should be an ensemble, but they have to come to a mutual understanding of the Whole or Entirety of the performance, guided of course, by the director. Chekhov offers several tools for finding this mutual understanding, including those he learned from Stanislavsky: the super-objective and through-action (or through-line) of the play, using metaphors such as the “skeleton” or “spine” of the play; the super-objective of each character (which will be essential for developing Psychological Gesture); and the smaller objectives in scenes, especially of the character you are playing. (Chekhov applies the concepts from Stanislavsky to specific plays in Chapter 10 of your textbook.)

⁷⁸ Chekhov 1985, p. 90, 28 November 1941.

⁷⁹ Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 17.

We will pick up on the tools Chekhov provides when we look into what he called “Composition of the Performance” and “Different Types of Performances” (Chapters 8 and 9), and “Flying over the Play,” in Classes 21 and 22.

Three other elements of his method will help us create a Sense of the Whole: these are a Feeling of Style and another Stanislavsky concept, Atmospheres, to which we will devote several classes. Later we will address the concept of Ensemble.

FEELING of STYLE

Chekhov used the word, “Style” to mean a variety of things: the type of play (comic style, tragic style, melodramatic, etc.), the period in which the play was written (Elizabethan, Victorian, etc.), and the style of acting appropriate to the theme of the play or dramatic situations.

Exercise (Group)

Participants choose a theme, for example: sadness, revenge, victory, ecstasy, awe, etc., and then, on the selected theme, build a number of “sculptural groups” (*tableaux vivants*) in different dramatic styles, such as tragedy, melodrama, comedy, or clowning. That is, they choose the theme and styles to play it in. The exercise is as follows: slowly, from different ends of the room, watching each other, the participants converge simultaneously to the center where the group tableau should be formed. Everyone seeks to find for themselves a pose that would be in harmony with the theme and with the poses of others, and would be prompted by the style chosen for the exercise. Gradually, the group forms the tableau by itself. Participants must recognize the harmonizing and unifying power of style.

Do the theme sequentially in at least three different dramatic styles. The idea is that once the group tableau is created and fixed, the participants re-melt it into a different style (for example: ecstasy in the style of melodrama is re-melted into ecstasy in the style of comedy, clowning, etc.). They strive to achieve this with minimal external means: each participant, as far as possible preserving his original posture, trusting a sense of style, tries to give it a different character. In some cases, the theme and style for the formation of a group can be inspired by a musical passage.

The following observation from Chekhov is very important:

When doing an exercise making a tableau vivant, try to avoid dance poses and imitating actual statues (such as famous Greek and Roman works, Rodin, and so forth). Try not to achieve Stylization by external means only, without inner processes (that is, movement should be psychophysical). Chekhov said, “style is born from the depths of the creative soul.”⁸⁰

In your textbook, Chekhov had an interesting observation on the application of style, including Radiation and Atmosphere, to Comedy: “make your entrance with this widespread aura already bubbling all around you. If your partners will help you by

⁸⁰ Chekhov 1946, Exercise 25, pp. 148-149; translated from the Russian and adapted. Abbreviated in Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 67, pp. 125-126; not found in 1953.

doing the same thing, the entire cast will soon find itself enveloped in a strong, sparkling comedy atmosphere which, combined with ease and a *quick tempo*, will rouse your genuine sense of humor as well as that of your spectators.⁸¹



Chekhov Theatre Studio students at Dartington making a group sculpture, ca. 1936-37.
The figure in the dark suit and dress shoes in the left foreground is Chekhov.
(Courtesy of Dartington Hall Trust)

GOLDEN HOOP GROUP EXERCISE

Homework

Homework for Class 11 (repeating the assignments in the previous class):

- 1) Read in your textbook, pp. 47-62, and Chekhov's ideas on Atmosphere – we will go over many of them again in class.
- 2) Try in everyday life to notice the Atmospheres in which you live. Listen to them like you would listen to music. Make a written list of these and your reactions to them. When you are outside of your home or room, try to determine the mood of other people you see on the street or on campus. Whenever you are in a group (in a class, in the lecture hall, in the cafeteria, in the library, in the gym, in a meeting, attending a performance, etc.), sense what kind of Atmosphere is permeating the space and make a note of it. Add these to your list.

You will bring your list to class next time. We will share some of them, and after you turn them in and I read them, I will return them to you to put in your Actor's Journal.

To prepare and present in Class 11:

- 3) Choose a character from one of the plays we have been exploring and working on, but NOT a character you have been assigned. Memorize a few lines from this character. In class, you will perform the lines in the Atmosphere of the original play

⁸¹ Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 127; 1953 ed., p. 141.

as you understand it, but in two ways: first as you the actor, as if you were somehow placed in the atmosphere, and then as the character in the play.

Homework for Class 12 (repeating the assignments in the previous class):

4) Think about the general Atmosphere for the scene you have been assigned.

Prepare that monologue for the class after next – Class 12 – to present in class.

Remember to record what you do to rehearse and prepare the monologue, including being aware of the Atmosphere and describing it, in your Actor's Journal.

To summarize:

1. Imagine the air around you filled with a certain Atmosphere.
2. Become aware of the reaction within you.
3. Move and speak in harmony with the Atmosphere.
4. Radiate it back into the space around you.⁸²

5) **Exercise on External/Internal Action, Transitions, Pauses** (repeating above)

Remember you must have scheduled at least two rehearsal meetings among your group before Class 12 starts. You may use the script in class as you do the exercise.

You should have noted individually any action requiring a whole or partial (incomplete) pause, or where there is an obvious transition point (a revelation or such). Remember to agree within your group on the pauses and what action precedes the first pause. Remember that the Improvisation section begins with a full, saturated Atmosphere pause resulting from this previous action (30-60 seconds).

Turn this into an impulse to action within each character (the continuation of the rally, meeting, party, physical work, etc.). Proceed gradually to action. This can be done as "dumb show" (action only), with some improvised comments. Continue this for a while, then bring the improvisation to a complete pause.

Play reading section. Now regroup and start reading the play, beginning with the same pregnant pause holding the Atmosphere of past action and dialogue. Stop where you feel the need for a complete pause. Realize and discuss the individual character of each pause in the scene and look for incomplete pauses in the same way.

⁸² Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 17, pp. 33-34; not in 1953.

CLASS 11

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF ATMOSPHERES

The spirit in the work of art is its idea. The soul is the atmosphere. Yet, what is visible and audible is its body. And not only the theater, but also the concert hall, the circus, the farce, and the fair are filled with a magical atmosphere. The atmosphere equally leads both the actor and the viewer. Does not the public, especially young audiences, go to the theater often just to be in this atmosphere of unreality?⁸³

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD – Special Atmosphere Double Threshold

“In a Park”

Everyone stands around the Threshold circle. Keeping your eyes open, imagine that you are in an arboretum, a green park, or botanical garden. What is there? Are there trees, grass, a pond?

Step forward (eyes always open), over the Threshold circle, and become one of the trees (in bloom, or weighted with fruit), or become one of the flowers, or other plants there. What sounds surround you? – Birds, squirrels, frogs, wind, and so forth. You too can feel the relief when the fruit falls, or transition into an apple falling off the tree and rolling; or become one of the animals, etc. – create sounds. Then, transition from your imagination back into your ordinary reality, walking out of the imaginary space you just created. You will be stepping over the Threshold circle again, but now you are crossing the Threshold a second time into the creative space of the studio.⁸⁴

Discussion of readings and homework assignments.

Hand in and share from your lists of Atmospheres.

SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

View students work performing the lines in the Atmosphere of the original play as they understand it, but in two ways: first as the actor, as if you were somehow placed in the atmosphere, and then as the character in the play.

ATMOSPHERE

Chekhov (and Stanislavsky) spoke of an “Atmosphere” that surrounded human events – a sort of group psychology, affecting all participant and spectators. The idea is closely linked to the idea of a “mood.” There are two kinds of Atmosphere: a group of feelings and Sensations (a “mood”) inside of a person or a character; and a more “objective” Atmosphere that surrounds, envelopes, and penetrates a building (a soaring Gothic Cathedral for example), or a street, or a city, or a scene in a play. The objective Atmosphere affects everyone, and in a play, it affects the whole play,

⁸³ Chekhov 1946, Chapter 2, pp.29 ff.; translated from the Russian.

⁸⁴ Derived from Craig Mathers, 2018 MICHA.

each scene, all the characters, and the audience. It belongs to all and to nobody special, but it deeply affects everyone. If you enter for instance a library, or a church, or a cemetery or a hospital, or a curiosity shop, you will feel immediately that there is an Atmosphere. Different landscapes (the beach, the mountains, the Grand Canyon), and all kinds of events – a carnival or street fair, an accident or crime scene, different times of year (Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, Passover, New Year’s Eve) – all have their general, objective Atmosphere. You involuntarily change your movements, speech, manner of holding your thoughts, feelings, moods, when moving into a strong atmosphere that has captured you.

Chekhov insisted that a significant part of the content of the play cannot be conveyed to the viewer by any means of expression other than the Atmosphere. Neither the words uttered by the actor from the stage, nor his actions will express that he lives in the Atmosphere – that is up to the actor, through Radiation and developing inner processes (Thinking/Feeling/Willing). If the actors (and the director and scenic designer) do not express Atmosphere, the audience will be looking into what Chekhov called “a psychologically empty space.” The atmosphere connects the actor with the viewer, and the viewer himself begins to play with the actor, sending up from the audience waves of sympathy, trust and love.⁸⁵

In a play, two warring general, objective Atmospheres cannot exist simultaneously: there will be immediate conflict and one or the other will dominate. However, the individual feelings or “mood” of a character – his or her personal, subjective Atmosphere – can meet, even in conflict, with the general, objective Atmosphere of a play or scene.

In fact, when the personal Atmosphere (mood) of the character and the general, objective Atmosphere of the play or scene are truly in opposition to each other, they usually create spectacular moments on stage when they collide. Whether the struggle is resolved by the victory of the general Atmosphere over the individual character’s feelings (mood), or vice versa, the victorious party increases in strength and the public receives new artistic satisfaction as if from a resolved musical chord.

The actor does not need to use the clichés of past performances to maintain creative activity onstage. If the scene is filled with Atmosphere that is sufficient support you. Especially when the individual feelings (mood) of the character are in conflict with the general Atmosphere, the actor, as the performer of the role, has to be especially aware and experiencing the general Atmosphere.

We speak of an “inner dynamic” when a character undergoes an important inner change, such as a change in personality or attitude. Similarly, the Atmosphere of a play or individual scenes is never static, but dynamic – it is an ongoing process rather than a state, living and moving constantly. If the character is placed in a “depressing” Atmosphere, he or she feels the effect as long as the Atmosphere lasts.

The idea is that this Atmosphere, and especially the change of Atmosphere if any, will become for the actor an urging power, an impulse on his or her inner dynamic – an inspiration for his or her imagination and acting. One might even think of it as the

⁸⁵ These comments are combined and paraphrased from Chekhov 1946, Second Chapter, “Atmosphere,” p. 29-38; translated from the Russian. Additional text from Chekhov 2018, pp. 33-37, lesson of 4 June 1936, and Chekhov 1955 lectures, Tape 12, “On Many Leveled Acting,” NYPL call no. LT10- 4790. See Register of Verbatim sources.

Atmosphere having a will of its own, encouraging or suppressing the will-impulses of the individual character. This is even more true when the character's individual Atmosphere (mood) is in conflict with the general Atmosphere.

In such atmospheres as hatred, enthusiasm, heroism, catastrophe, panic, haste, excitement, gay festivity, etc., the inner movement, the urging power, is obvious. But the sensitive actor will find his or her inner dynamic affected by more passive Atmospheres, such as the quiet library, a forgotten cemetery, a warm room, or the peace of a summer evening?⁸⁶

Another way that Chekhov expressed this was to say simply that the Atmospheres awaken the creative feelings of the actor. And although Chekhov did not mention this, it might even be possible to transfer, for example, the sense of Awe of entering a soaring Gothic cathedral or any large impressive space – or even imagining it. You can take the Feeling or emotion and associated Sensations from one context, put it in your “make-up kit” as it were, and carry it to another dramatic task, such as inspiring your character in a scene where, for instance, he or she listens for the first time to a stirring political or religious speaker.

Finally, a few words about using Atmospheres in rehearsals: When all the actors in a play try to be in harmony with the Atmosphere of a play or scene, everyone's role grows, and a connection is established between each actor and his/her partners. This can be essential for a Feeling of Ensemble. When during the rehearsal the Atmosphere really inspires the actors, a lot of unnecessary efforts will disappear by themselves. You can even organize a series of rehearsals where you will go through the whole play, moving from one atmosphere to another. (Remember here that the same Atmosphere can cover many scenes, or the Atmosphere can change several times in the same scene.

By the way, there is a type of play – *Macbeth* for example – where the whole plot can be understood in terms of character's accepting or rejecting the general Atmosphere. Macbeth's personal Atmosphere (mood) and certainly that of his wife, dynamically move towards rejecting the Atmosphere of Duncan's reign. Thereafter, each character's Atmosphere/mood accepts or rejects the Macbeth régime, beginning with Banquo, then Ross and Lennox so forth, then Macduff, whose Atmosphere is violently in conflict with the general Atmosphere around Macbeth. These characters unite with the Atmosphere of Malcolm and the English, and the two warring (literally) Atmospheres collide, symbolized by the fight between Macbeth and MacDuff. The dénouement comes when one Atmosphere defeats the other.

Exercises

11.1) Group Exercise – Changing Atmospheres

The entire group walks peacefully, milling around in the studio. The instructor calls out the following imagined settings, which each actor should imagine:

- 1) An old library where famous scholars did their research. It is very quiet, beautiful old books are on the shelves. You want to take one specific book

⁸⁶ Chekhov 1991/1942, pp. 34-35.

out. You find it. You open it, read few words and put it back. You step out of the library and are now in a cemetery.



Santiago Rusiñol, *Calvario* (park with 14 Stations of the Cross), at Sagunto near Valencia, “Day’s End.”⁸⁷

2) You are walking under the cypress trees with ravens flying high above. You notice one grave, the person died very young, it makes you feel in certain way, and you walk out of the cemetery into

3) A classroom in a kindergarten; you are turned into five years old. It is the last day before summer vacations start. Some of you are chatting, others playing hopscotch, next person is packing up backpack, others are waiting for parents to pick them up, etc. The atmosphere is playful and happy, with hopes for vacation to start.

11.2) Seascape / The Fishers

In your textbook (Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 174-175), there is a scenario for improvisation. You are asked to imagine a scene of fisher folk standing on the shore, waiting for two days and nights in a raging storm for the fishing fleet to come home. They see a boat(s) (or lights in the darkness, then boat(s) as dawn breaks), but one seems to be missing. The survivors return, etc. The idea is to improvise while creating the changing atmospheres, in this case a general mood first of anxiousness, then fear, then confused worry, then despair or sadness among some, and others as you will achieve them. Application: (rhythm, composition, preparation for the PG as well as learning the concepts of inter-disciplinarily and community-building.)

11.3) Viewing the Homework:

Each student has chosen a character from one of the plays we have been exploring and working on, but NOT a character that has been assigned to him/her. Perform the lines in the Atmosphere of the original play as you understand it, but in two ways: first as you the actor, as if you were somehow placed in the atmosphere, and then as the character in the play.

⁸⁷ <http://hispanicsociety.emuseum.com/objects/1460/calvario-at-sagunto-days-end?ctx=f0daf84a-2a38-412e-92fd-b0d09eab32f1&idx=0> Courtesy The Hispanic Society of America, New York.

CLASS 12

ATMOSPHERE AND INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS

(SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE ATMOSPHERES, cont'd.)

TEMPO AND ATMOSPHERES PAUSE

THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD WAY OF REHEARSING

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD – Special Double Threshold (from Class 11)

Physical warm-up; Speech warm-up

12.1) Viewing the Homework – Finding an Atmosphere for your monologue

Frequently, we are able to maintain a strong Atmosphere if we are silent and motionless, but as soon as we speak or make a movement we are inclined to destroy it. The Atmosphere must remain around you and your movements and words must be born out of it.

Each student will present the brief monologue or group of lines from the scene you have been assigned, expressing nonverbally how the Atmosphere relates to you and affects you as you say these lines.

12.2) Exercise: Dialogue in the Atmosphere of the Scene

(a) The class divides according to the play and scene assigned. Each group does the exercise separately, one after another. All participants involved in a certain scene confer to get some mutual understanding of the general objective Atmosphere. Discuss with your partners possible costumes that might be worn, setting/scenery, lights, and stage effects appropriate to the atmosphere of the scene.

(b) Two of the participants live with feelings opposite to the general atmosphere – here we need volunteers. The idea is to choose two who have already prepared dialogue together. The two start their lines, keeping aware not only of the characters' moods but also the general Atmosphere. The rest of the group actively listen to the dialogue, trying to sense how what is said impacts the general Atmosphere they all share.

(c) If time permits, two other characters from the scene say their lines, with the same reaction from the general group.

(d) Then the other group/groups do the same exercise.⁸⁸

Note: we will work using the texts selected for the course: dramatized Anton P. Chekhov's short stories *The Witch*, *The Sneeze* (plays and stories by Anton Chekhov translated and adapted by Michael Frayn) and the full-length plays *Three Sisters* by Anton P. Chekhov, and *The Inspector General* by N. Gogol.

PAUSE, TEMPO AND ATMOSPHERES

We will return to Pauses and Tempo in CLASS 15, but first we must consider the relationship between tempo and Atmosphere, since, especially with the Pause, the

⁸⁸ Chekhov 1946, Exercise 3, pp. 43-46; translated from the Russian.

Atmosphere will take over immediately. As we will discuss more fully, the pause (time between words and/or action) cannot exist alone if it is to have any dramatic meaning: it is always the result of what has just happened, or it is the preparation for a coming event.

12.3) Exercise on External and Internal Action, Transitions, and Pauses

You may use the script in class as you do the exercise. Start with first pause (it doesn't particularly have to come from the actual play – this can be improvisation, but you all must agree).

Improvisation section: in rehearsal and in presentation in class, begin your exercise with a full, saturated Atmosphere of a pause resulting from this previous (imaginary or scripted) action – a rally/demonstration, stormy meeting with heated debate, fun party, hard physical labor, etc. Recognize the radiating power of the pause and hold it for about 30-60 seconds or so. Then, without breaking the pause, each of you starts turning it internally into an internal impulse from which your further action and dialogue will follow. This means to call in yourself an impulse to action (the continuation of the rally, meeting, party, physical work, etc.). When you feel that the pause is “ripe enough”, proceed gradually to action. This can be done as “dumb show” (action only), with some improvised comments. Continue this for a while, and then bring the improvisation to a complete pause.

Play reading section. Now regroup and start reading the play, beginning with the same pregnant pause holding the Atmosphere of past action and dialogue. Stop where you feel the need for a complete pause.

Homework for Class 13:

(1) (Re-) Read Chapter 6 in your textbook, “Character and Characterization” (Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 77-84). Note important concepts in your Actor's Journal.

(2) Consider your assigned character. How is he or she different from you in the three areas of Thinking (thought processes), Feeling (emotions), and Willing (deciding on and then carrying out actions). Ask yourself the questions outlined below in item 13.1). Write down your answers (in detail) in your Actor's Journal and be ready to report on them in class next time. Once you do this, go over your entire part, speaking the lines or perhaps only whispering them, imagining or actually doing your business, and you will notice that very gently and gradually the characteristic features of the part will creep into your performance.

(3) Look at sculptures, paintings, and photographs of people with different bodies: taller than you, shorter than you, bigger or smaller than you, fatter or thinner than you, and so forth. Get some ideas of how to imagine the qualities of these bodies. Take notes in your Actor's Journal about these different bodies. Try imagining you have some of these bodies.

IMPORTANT!! HOMEWORK FOR CLASS 14

Homework for Class 14 (1): Exercise for Characterization

Make a list of stage business which your assigned character is going to fulfill from the beginning to the very end, in the proper sequence. Important stage business as well as seemingly unimportant, even all the entrances and exits, your sitting down, or getting up, or just turning your head to the right or to the left, or just throwing a glance at your partner, or sitting quietly and listening to what your partner is saying to you and so on.

When your list of stage business is ready, start to fulfill this stage business, step by step, in the right and proper sequence. If you've got some idea about your character, even the vague idea of it, it is enough to begin to work with this stage business. And now your whole interest must be concentrated on "How" you fulfill this business? "How" is important? There are two sides to this "how": your character and the given circumstances for each particular stage business.⁸⁹

What does the list tell you about the objectives and super-objectives of your character?

Bring this list, including your ideas on objectives, to Class 14.

Homework for Class 14 (2): This will require you to organize rehearsals outside of class with your scene partner.

(2) Observe unknown people around you. Try to guess what their Objectives might be at the moment of your observation.

(3) Take a simple Objective—to go out of the room; to touch a chosen object; to remove a chair; or to open a certain page in a book—and fulfill it. Do it as many times as necessary to really experience the driving power of an Objective.

(3) Take any short scene (a bit) from your assigned play we are working on in class. Find one or several sentences and some business belonging to the character, and then act them out by yourself, trying to discover the Objective. Write down your responses in your **Actor's Journal**.

(4) Get together with your scene partner, sharing your ideas for each character's objectives for the scene. Then rehearse the scene. How do the objectives interact?

Be ready to perform this short scene in Class 14.

⁸⁹ Adapted from Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, "On character and characterization, I"; NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

CLASS 13

CHARACTERIZATION: EMBODIMENT OF THE IMAGE OF YOUR CHARACTER THE IMAGINARY BODY (AND ITS CENTER) TRANSFORMATION

Note on Pedagogical Application:

On the differences with Stanislavsky –

As has been shown (Chapter One), Michael Chekhov carried many elements of the Method of Konstantin Stanislavsky over into his own system. But even in Russia, in part under the influence of Yevgeny Vachtangov and Vsevolod Meyerhold, Chekhov began enriching many concepts shared with Stanislavsky – atmospheres, characterizations, centers, the importance of movement or action, the way will-impulses function in pursuit of objectives, and the concept of the creative function of the higher ego (higher self). In particular, and famously, Chekhov re-interpreted Stanislavsky's concept of Affective Memory (Emotional Memory) with much more emphasis on Imagination, as well as suggesting a different type of emotional effect based on physical Sensations rather than abstract emotions. The idea of an "Imaginary Body" of the character in the Actor's imagination – an Image in the mind's eye – is central to this process. Mala Powers, one of his principal pupils in California, insisted, "The Chekhov Technique always stresses use of the body and the actor's creative imagination rather than the actor's personal history, characteristics, psychology, or intellect."⁹⁰ For Chekhov, the Image of the character, the Imaginary Body, can act, gesture, and speak in the actor's imagination. The actor can (figuratively) step into this Imaginary Body, and (importantly) step out of it when the rehearsal or performance is over. "Chekhov says: Observe the character (the Image) in the circumstances and ask him to show you what he does."⁹¹

Lecture:

The concept of the Imaginary Body of a character in the actor's mind's eye touches on every aspect of the Chekhov method and will have particularly important consequences as we study the Psychological Gesture. Chekhov described the function of the Imaginary Body as follows: The technique of using the Imaginary Body is very similar to that we discussed while speaking about the Imaginary Center. By studying your character, or even by the first reading of the play, your intuition will give you a certain idea, perhaps at first a very vague one, but still some idea of what the character might be. And now, at once, try to do the following thing: try to imagine what kind of a body your character might have. Soon or perhaps even immediately you will see that the body of your character – the Imaginary Body of your character – is different from yours. Observe this body for a while and then [in your imagination] just step right into this body, so that your actual body and the imaginary body will meet in the same space.⁹²

⁹⁰ Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, accompanying booklet, p. 10.

⁹¹ Quoted in Fielding 2009, p. 37.

⁹² Chekhov consistently encouraged Mala Powers and his other students to discover the differences between the character's personality and their own. Chekhov told her, "It is the differences which the

The Imaginary Body has tremendous influence upon our psychology and our actual physical body. It is good to realize, that in this game with this Imaginary Body, we have actually three elements: one is the Character, another is the Imaginary Body, and the third is your Own Body. The Imaginary Body is, as it were, right between the Character and Yourself. That is why this body can so easily and so fully influence you with your psychology and your physical body and transform you into the character.⁹³

13.1) In your textbook, Chekhov asks you to distinguish between your character and yourself. He subsequently condensed this process into three questions you should ask:

First, what is the difference between my character's way of thinking and mine – between his/her mind and my own mind? (Thinking much faster or perhaps much slower than you, or more passionate than your way of thinking, or more vague, with less clarity and precision, etc.). The more differences you will find between your mind and the mind of your character, the better you will understand what your character is.

Second, try to find the difference between the feelings and the emotions of your character and your own. Perhaps you are more passionate, easily inflammable, or more inclined to love and to forgive people, and so on, while your character might appear cool, never losing his temper, and is inclined to accuse people around him.

Third, investigate the nature of your Will (deciding on and initiating actions) and the Will of your character. Your Will might be strong, unbending, whereas the Will of your character might be weak and feeble. Perhaps you pursue your aims with great insistence, persistence, and never give in, but your character loses and forgets his/her aims and purposes and objectives long before he/she is able to achieve them.

Accumulate and write down in your Actor's Journal all the differences you were able to discover between you and your character in these three spheres: mind, feelings, and will impulses. [Note: notice how these tools match what we have learned in classes 4 and 9 and will work on again in classes 16-19 when studying gesture and Centers of the body, exploring the trio of Thinking, Feeling, and Willing.]

Consider these differences as characteristic features of the character you are working on. And now, with these differences in mind – or rather in the back of your mind – go over your entire part, speaking the lines or perhaps only whispering them, imagining or actually doing your stage business, and you will notice that very gently and gradually the characteristic features of the part will creep into your performance.

But please, do not force the result, do not toil, just do it easily, playfully, and then the result will come by itself. By going this way through your entire part, don't try to

actor must portray, that is what makes the performance artistic and interesting. The similarities will be there by themselves! ... Even if you think that the character is exactly like you, at least give her a crooked little finger!" Powers in Chekhov1991/1942, p. 162.

⁹³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, "On Character and Characterization, I"; NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

keep in mind all the differences at once. Take them one by one. You are going through the Transformation. That is the point of it.⁹⁴

In-class report: Share your study of your character and the differences between you and the character with your fellow class members.

13.2) In-class Exercise on Imaginary Body

- a) Sit comfortably down on the floor with your eyes closed. Imagine the character you just described from the play you are working on this semester. Close your eyes and imagine the character. What was (or is) your first image of this character in your imagination? What does the Imaginary Body look like? The position of this body, how is it carried? Does it have small or big feet? What kind of hands does it have – working hands, refined hands with long narrow nails? What color is the hair? Is it gray, black, brown, blond? What color is the skin? What does the image wear? Is it a blouse and a skirt? A suit? Jogging clothes? A period costume? What are the colors of the outfit?
- b) Now see the image walking. How does it walk? Make it go and sit on a chair. Maybe it picks up some object. Maybe it takes a sip from a glass or a cup. Watch it just in your imagination from where you are seated in the room.
- c) Please keep your eyes closed. Now I will open the door, and your image will walk through the door into the room. Just listen and visualize with your inner sight the image. [The teacher opens the door.] Let your character walk into the room. With your eyes still closed raise your hand if you aren't seeing your image come into the room. [Once all images are "in the room" – all the hands are down – the teacher closes the door, so the sound of closing can be heard.] The teacher continues: your image is in the room. Feel its presence. Let it walk towards you. What color are the character's eyes, the shape of the lips, forehead, and nose?
- d) Now have it stop in front of you and turn its back to you. It has a zipper – unzip it and, like putting on a jump suit – put one foot in and feel it – take your time – then put another foot in the suit; now the hand. Now put in the head, the whole body. Put your own actor's body into the Imaginary Body, absorbing its characteristics, mannerisms, way of moving. Slowly open your eyes and move as your character. Sense the other people, the characters around you.
- e) Now please stand in a line along the wall. Imagine the audience beyond the opposite wall. Choose and experience the strongest line from the text your character has in the play and walk towards the audience, all of you in a row without saying anything at all but feeling this line – your actual way of walking should change. Try to radiate your character out and sustain it. Now stop: What gesture with what Qualities are you inspired to make right now? Bring up an image in your mind's eye and then make it outwardly – make gestures.
- f) Now go back to where you started and begin to walk again in character. When your intuition tells you to, say your character's line from your scene, the one you had in mind before and were feeling and radiating – you may add some

⁹⁴ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3; NYPL call no. LT10-4781.

business, which can be simple but appropriate. Continue until you become free enough to enjoy your character with its speech and stage business.

Class discussion: [Typical questions:] Who was your character? What were the circumstances for this particular scene? What led you to the gestures? [etc.]

This will be a preparation for the Psychological Gesture which we will study in detail in class 19. The PG will inspire you, as Chekhov said, “with every movement, word or even in a silent, motionless position.” You have begun to penetrate the essence of the role by intuition alone, without cluttering the process with rational analysis. Now you will build on it. It will become your second nature. However, think back and recall your creative process and make notes in your Actor’s Journal as homework to be shared in future classes.⁹⁵

TRANSFORMATION We will return to Transformations in Class 20, but we need to introduce the concepts here.

Lecture:

Chekhov was internationally famous for his ability to transform himself, especially for making his small body seem much taller. He counseled actors, if their intuition prompted them to imagine that their character was slightly taller, to focus, in your mind’s eye, on this characteristic. Now, when you “step into” this imaginary body, what will you feel? You will feel that having joined with this imaginary being – your Imaginary Character – who is taller than you are in reality, you inevitably change your psychology.



Chekhov “growing tall” for Jack and Virginia Palance at Chekhov’s home in Beverly Hills, California, 1954.⁹⁶

Chekhov adds that you don’t need always to imagine the whole body of your character. Sometimes it is enough if you imagine only a part of it: a neck longer and thinner than your own. What might be the result? – that you are constantly on the alert? This is already creating the psychology of your character. Or imagine the arms of your character are longer than yours and legs are shorter than yours, so that

⁹⁵ Based on an exercise from MICHA, 2019; Sol Garre and others.

⁹⁶ Caption from Leonard, Charles 1963/84, before p. 111. (Photo courtesy of ZHdK Archiv Boner Papers.)

suddenly you feel very awkward. Or the imaginary nose turned up. You might also use the Imaginary Center along with the Imaginary Body simultaneously (or separately).⁹⁷

A very important tool is being able to imagine bodies thinner or heavier than your own. A number of common comic characters, for example, are understood to be overweight – Falstaff, Sancho Panza, for example. When a thin person wants to seem overweight, external padding alone doesn't do it. The actor must step into the imaginary body of the character. Once this is done, Chekhov notes, he or she can help himself or herself by “creating the characteristic costume that will accentuate the necessary features of the character. Even padding, if necessary, is now permissible.” The actor will no longer be telling a lie inwardly by using these externals.⁹⁸

13.3) Exercise: Turning Yourself into a Character Taller or Thinner Than Yourself.

In order to move in a “taller” body, you do not have to go on tiptoes; in order to be in a “smaller” body, you do not have to scrunch down. There are two things you need to do to give the appearance of being taller, smaller, thinner, heavier, pregnant, etc.

a) First, simply imagine your body as having the different physical attributes and then, just as in Centers exercise, radiate these attributes wherever you move in the space. Remember the photos or paintings you researched for ideas. Create the new body through the sheer power of your imagination, but also work with your Center. Where is it if you are taller? In your upper back, between your shoulder blades, pulling you up? Smaller? Maybe in your lower abdomen, pulling your shoulders and posture towards it? Figure out how you walk, run, sit – radiating in all cases. Be careful of clichés.

b) Try to walk in a tall body; now run as a tall person; and finally sit down, staying in the character. Do the same exercise for a short or small person – heavier, thinner, and so forth. (Pregnant women, for example, have a very heavy center in their lower abdomen, which makes them put weight more on their heels, balancing the weight, and so forth – actors can be asked to play a pregnant character.)

What you have done by imagining a body with different characteristics is similar to when you create an Imaginary Character. their

c) So now, go through the exercises for creating an actual Imaginary Character, inventing a version of yourself, with one of the physical attributes you are trying to assume. Let's say, taller, as an example. Create in your mind's eye an Imaginary Body that is taller and thinner than your own. (When preparing a role, you should visualize this Imaginary Body until you get a clear picture of it.)

d) The next step, as in the previous exercise, will be the careful process of putting your own actor's body into the Imaginary Body, trying to move your own physical body so that it will follow the characteristic movements and

⁹⁷ Chekhov, 1955 lectures Tapes 3 and 4; NYPL call nos. LT10-4781 and LT10-4782.

⁹⁸ Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 99-100.

shape of the imaginary one. So, when you lift up your real arm, you will lift up the imaginary arm with it. In this way you will adopt the characteristics of posture, movement, and so forth or a much taller (or shorter, or thinner, or heavier, etc.) person.

Chekhov concludes, “You will behave and speak and move like a person slightly taller [or shorter, etc.] than you are. And that will happen by itself. You will not and do not need to force yourself to speak differently or to move differently and so on, it will just happen by itself, because you are within this Imaginary Body which is taller than your own.”⁹⁹

Homework (over several days):

The results of these exercises must be written down in your Actor’s Journal.

a) Try to invent a character entirely by yourself. Think about how he/she looks (face, outer appearance), moves, reacts, dresses, thinks, feels, wills – everything, in as much detail as possible. After some effort – maybe days will be required for this – so that you see this person invented by yourself in all the detail, try to transform yourself into your own creation, just as you have been doing with your character that the playwright gave you, or you saw it on the picture, or you saw it in reality. This creative process will increase immensely your ability to inhale and to exhale – that is, to study and to perform your character.

Chekhov adds, “in these exercises we must try to capture our images and remember them. We must write them down, draw pictures of them, and capture them in every way. We must be very attentive to the little flashes of our imagination which we cannot quite get – we must pursue them.

b) Another variation could be to look at a painting or photo of a man or a woman dressed in a period costume. Imagine that you are dressed like that person. Study the position of the person shown on the picture. And now, through the period costume which you wear in your imagination, the possible movement which you imagine will be in harmony with this period costume. You will also penetrate into the imaginary character of the figure you observed on the picture. What matters is that you feel that you are transforming yourself into somebody else, acquiring the knowledge of this imaginary figure, of this imaginary person, and of its inner life.¹⁰⁰

REMEMBER YOU HAVE HOMEWORK DUE FOR CLASS 14

– assigned above, at the end of Class 12.

Homework for 14 (1): Exercise for Characterization

Bring this list, including your ideas on objectives, to Class 14.

Homework for 14 (2): Rehearsals outside of class with your scene partner.

Be ready to perform this short scene in Class 14.

⁹⁹ Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 99-100; compare 1991/1942, Exercise 52, p. 105-106; not in 1953.

¹⁰⁰ Excerpted and adapted from Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 4; NYPL call no. LT10-4782.

Homework for Class 15:

These exercises bridge your work on Objectives with adding psychophysical Qualities to movement.

A.) Preparation, Sustaining, and Pauses

Select a simple phrase and the corresponding action (for example: stand up, pick up a letter from the table, tear it up, and say: "I will leave this letter unanswered"). Perform your action two times: first after a long pause (Preparation), then second, conclude the action with a long pause (Sustaining). Recognize the psychological difference in both cases.

Note the results in your Actor's Journal.

B.) The Arc of Movements

1) Choose three movements. Start with simple, wide movements. Shape them well. Use the whole space you have at your disposal, walking, running, or jumping in it. You may even use steps or platforms. Each time consciously frame your movement with the idea of Preparation and Sustaining in mind.

That is, before you move, think of what you are going to do. You might even imagine a reason for doing it, then try to feel the impulse for it, as though you wish to invisibly accumulate and send out your activity before the movement commences. This is the Preparation.

Immediately after you have completed the movement, pause briefly, as though you wish to evaluate, to realize, to echo, or to let others be aware of the action that has passed. This is the Sustaining. Hold the position you arrived at for a moment – again, think of its effect on others, or the effect you want it to have. Radiate! (The end point, especially if held for a longer time, becomes a complete Pause.)

Repeat each movement until you are able to perform it easily.

Make sure you note your achievement in your Actor's Journal.

For the following, pick the most satisfying and vivid of the three movements.

2) Apart from the ideas of Preparation and Sustaining, try to appreciate the beginning and the end of the movement for their own sake. Feel the Polarity (contrast) of the beginning and the end – that is, think of them as two Poles (like the North and South Poles of the globe), or opposites, and, in your next repetition, try to make the moving from the one pole to the other clearer in the movement itself. Experience the middle part as a “metamorphosis” (or transition) between the two contrasting poles.

3) Adding climaxes. Shape a climactic moment in each of the three parts. This means to find an additional short movement, or second climax, in the middle section as well as in the beginning and end. Make the moment inwardly more intense than the general movement itself. (That is, increase your psychological energy. If it will help, repeat the movements, adding a psychological Quality, such as Caution, Fearful Concern, Joy/Enthusiasm, etc., to this middle moment – appropriate to what you have done before and will do after.)

4) Now determine which (additional or related) Qualities you can add to your movement in the beginning and the end. (Perhaps your motivation is one thing such as enthusiasm at the beginning, then caution in the middle, then relief at the end.) See that the beginning (first climax) and the end (last climax) are polar, and that the middle part and its climax makes a real Transition from one pole to the next. Having elaborated and improved your movement, rehearse it until it becomes a beautiful miniature piece of art. Don't go from one stage of the exercise to the next before you are entirely free and satisfied with the previous one.¹⁰¹ Again, write sections 2-3-4 down in your Actor's Journal, and be prepared to present the movement sequence at the next class.

C.) Rehearsing with your scene partner from your assigned scene:

Prepare one of the "bits" from your scene – maybe two or three minutes. Work together to analyze the scene, finding the "bit" where Pauses are included, or can be for emphasis, and/or where movements intervene. Emphasize the Preparation and Sustaining of these movements and Pauses – this will include dialogue as well.

Be prepared to present this "bit" in Class 15.

¹⁰¹ Adapted from Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 72, p. 131, and Exercise 74, pp. 134-135; neither exercise in 1953.

CLASS 14
OTHER ASPECTS OF CHARACTERIZATION; FEELING OF TRUTH;
SCENE OBJECTIVES CHARACTER'S SUPER-OBJECTIVE.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD
Speech and Movement Warm-Ups

Lecture: Feeling of Truth

Chekhov worked with Konstantin Stanislavsky for sixteen years. "Of course," he said, "he was so many-sided and had so many interesting qualities within him."

But one thing is very interesting: he was virtually possessed, I might say, by the feeling of truth. ... He could accept many things, even against his principles, if they were true. The feeling of truth was something which he always looked for. ... It was twofold, as it were. One truth was what we might call now true to life. Everything [onstage] should be just like in life and he called it "the feeling of truth." And another feeling of truth he applied to the inner life of the character, so the actor and the character should be absolutely psychologically true.

Chekhov did not agree with Stanislavsky on the idea that all staging must be realistic, but he certainly insisted on a truthful inner life of the character – although he differed with Stanislavsky about how to reach this inner life. Chekhov, in his lectures, contrasted Stanislavsky's realism with the imaginative anti-naturalism of Vsevolod Meyerhold, and then reminded his listeners of the theatricality of his older colleague and dear friend at the Moscow Art, Yevgeny Vakhtangov. While Stanislavsky was true to life and Meyerhold true to his own imagination and sense of abstract drama, Vakhtangov, Chekhov said, "was true to the theatre. And he developed this theatricality to such a degree that you started, through Vakhtangov, *to love theatre in quite a new way; the theatre as such*. And in this theatricality, everything what Vakhtangov did was true."

The concept of theatricality as a kind of truth permeates all of Chekhov's dramatic philosophy, whether it is his emphasis on Atmosphere, on Radiating, his appeal to Imagination and Images in the mind – including the idea of "stepping into" the Imaginary Character the actor has created – and his use of "Qualities" to "color" movement and gesture with psychological value. All is oriented towards creating a dramatic effect onstage, a psychologically true but also imaginative theatrical presence.

Chekhov, in discussing the three great Russian directors who most influenced him, concluded that they "taught us to lose forever any fear, meaning theatrical fear. They freed us from all the possible doubts and inhibition ... by having shown to us, in their true imagination, that if there is a living, sharp feeling of truth, everything is possible. ... All three of them, as I say, were saying one thing: use your imagination 100%, use your feeling of truth 100% [and] everything is possible,

everything can be combined, reconciled. Courage, freedom, imagination, feeling of truth.”¹⁰²

The single best dramatic technique to assure a Feeling of Truth to the character is to discover the character’s motivations – his or her objectives or goals in a scene or a subdivision of a scene, and the larger objective of the character throughout the whole play, called the “super-objective.”

OBJECTIVES

Since all students in this course have already studied the fundamentals of acting, we will not spend a lot of time on the basic idea of a character’s Objectives in a play. Among the contributions of the Stanislavsky system is the emphasis it gives to a character’s desires, wants, and goals as they play out in any given scene or part of a scene (a “bit”), and the larger wants and goals of the character throughout the play as a whole, which Stanislavsky called the “Super-Objective.” This motivation directing the character towards goals in spite of obstacles put in his or her way by other characters or circumstances – what Chekhov would call a “will-impulse” – is what drives the action and dialogue in a scene. The super-objective, while not so specific as the objectives in each scene, is what defines the character in the context of the entire plot and themes of the play, and will affect every decision the character makes (in order to achieve the long-term goal or desire). Both objectives and super-objective will become very important as we study the Psychological Gesture.

Reports on Homework: (1) Finding your character’s objectives from stage business. (2) Reviewing the student’s list, including the ideas on objectives.

14.1) Exercise: Choose a sentence and some stage business to go with it.

Pair up. Take a letter as if from your partner’s hand with the words “Don’t send that letter now, it may be dangerous!” Let your Objective be to prevent the sending of the letter. Fulfill it by different means, by persuading, by commanding, by imploring, by frightening, by threatening, by flattering, and so forth. See that your words and movements are in harmony with each other and really help the Objective.¹⁰³

Now switch: the other actor says the lines.

14.2) Presentation of short dialogue scenes from Homework (2).

The emphasis is on the objectives in the “bit”.

¹⁰² Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 9, “On Experiences at The Moscow Art Theatre, Part I”; NYPL call no. LT10-4787. In the freeing of inhibitions, Chekhov and Meisner agree – emotions are allowed!

¹⁰³ Combination of 1991/1942, Exercises 54-57, pp.111-112, with additions.



Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst, Iris Tree and other students with their teacher Michael Chekhov in Dartington, 1937, England; using platforms in the studio.
(Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)



Men and Women students at Dartington in a Eurythmy class doing a movement reminiscent of the Golden Hoop exercise, ca. 1937-38.
(Photograph by Fritz Henle, Courtesy of the Dartington Hall Trust.)

CLASS 15 PREPARATION – ACTION – SUSTAINING THE PAUSE

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD (emphasizing the moment before crossing as motivation and the moment after crossing as realization, worthy of radiating).

SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Special Warm-Up using Expansion and Contraction to develop a sense of inner movement leading to Preparation and Sustaining:

15.1) Expanding – Contracting

Do an expanding gesture, involving your whole body. Imagine the inner movement is preceding/preparing the beginning of your outer physical movement, accompanying your outer physical movement in the middle of the movement, and Sustaining at the end of the outer physical movement.

Do a contracting gesture, involving your whole body. Imagine the inner movement is preceding/preparing the beginning of your outer physical movement, accompanying your outer physical movement in the middle of the movement, and Sustaining at the end of the outer physical movement.

(A) Viewing the second part of the Homework

(B) Movements (beginning – middle – end with polarities and climaxes);

Theme and variations responses to the homework.

SUSTAINING is something which the actor's nature requires. It can become a long and sustained pause. There cannot be a pause on the stage without this sustaining. The important thing is to get in the complete arc of internal and external gesture, imagination, and speech. Again: in actual scenes, this involves what has come before and includes starting to radiate – especially if entering the stage – and having the will-impulses leading to movement and saying the line; actually saying the lines and and/or doing the action; then Sustaining, which has to include Radiation. Through correct Preparation and Sustaining, you will realize more and more that all we call art comes always from an impulse from inside. Furthermore, this realization will be a good guarantee against clichés, which come from outside and remain on the surface, covering and imprisoning all the true creative impulses of an artist.¹⁰⁴ Note that shouting on the stage – something that should be avoided, in contrast to proper voice projection – occurs only if you are without the Preparation or anticipation, and the Sustaining. Any movement or speech will be much more effective if it is produced with the Preparation and Sustaining, which are part of achieving a general Feeling of Ease. If you will exercise this, you will see how pleasant it is to speak loudly without shouting.

THE PAUSE

The pause on the stage – in the sense that there are no words – may be one which follows a certain action or a significant phrase or speech which needs response from

¹⁰⁴ Chekhov 1991/1942, pp. 131-132; not in 1953. See also below, optional homework.

the others. (It might also be part of a soliloquy and need the audience's response before you proceed: "To be or not to be, that is the question." [Pause. Let it sink in that you are contemplating suicide.] "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows ...") The Pause cannot exist as pause [alone] – it is always the result of what has just happened, or it is the preparation for a coming event. Then it is a pause full of theatrical sense. For this, we see the pause on the stage falling into several parts. It must be for the continuation of something, or for the preparation of something, and the most beautiful pauses are those which are the continuation of something (atmosphere) and then the turning point of preparation for something new, and a new action.

(Of course, there are pauses which are only a continuation, and then the pause expires, and the action takes place.)

Preparatory Exercises before viewing the third part of the Homework (C).

15.2) Pair up.

In this exercise you will imagine doing the Expanding and Contracting gestures (as in Class 8) inwardly:

Meet a partner (e.g. shake his/her hand), while inwardly Expanding – add a Pause at the end; repeat the movement, inwardly Contracting. In both cases, notice any impulse that arises within you; follow it during the movement and in the Sustaining/Pause.¹⁰⁵

15.3) (a) With this same partner, ask what time it is; the partner gives the answer. Both must have the Feeling of the Whole, which is impossible without Preparation and Sustaining – that is, both must experience the Preparation and Sustaining together. This is a fine mutual business. (Chekhov makes the comment: it becomes so pleasant for us and for the audience. These inner things which cannot show but can be experienced – that is what the audience wants and needs.)

b) Now add pauses. First the Preparation, then the first person asks the question, "What time is it?", then Sustain/Pause.

c) Then begin another wave or arc of movement/dialogue by saying, "Let's go," then go and sustain. Now put (b) and (c) together as one thing.¹⁰⁶

15.4) First say, "No," out of which the pause starts as a continuation of the "No"; then when I tell you the turning point, prepare it and prepare the word, "Yes," which will be the result of the second part of the pause. Now repeat the exercise: Preparation for "No," sustain, turn the pause, prepare for "Yes," speak and sustain.¹⁰⁷

Viewing the second part of the Homework – performing bits from your assigned scene (C).

GOLDEN HOOP (closing exercise).

¹⁰⁵ Derived from Lenard Petit; MICHA 2016 and online.

¹⁰⁶ Chekhov 1941/1985, p. 91, Lesson of November 28, 1941.

¹⁰⁷ Chekhov 1941/1985, Fourth Class, November 17, 1941, p. 63.

Optional Homework for extending the learning in class:

The following exercise is a perfect example of a preparatory exercise intended to be done privately and NEVER intended to be used onstage during a performance or rehearsal – this is typical of the exercises of Stanislavsky, Chekhov, and also many other modern dramatic techniques. However, it is a good exercise to use privately when having a problem with a scene or preparing to shoot scenes on a movie set. Take a sentence, and then a series of sentences (from the scene, if that is the need). The Preparation and the Sustaining are the same as before: your Activity must be sent out before the word is spoken, and afterward, the word must be allowed to fly away on the wings of your movement in a Sustaining/Pause.

While exercising with the words, you may at first make certain movements with your arm and hand as follows:

Preparation – fling out your hand (not too abruptly) as though you are making way for the word that you are going to pronounce, then say the word;

Sustaining—keep your hand outstretched for a while, as though you are following the word that you have sent out into the space in front of you.

(These are similar to our former Radiating gesture exercises.)

Now combine the action and the word. Start with simple movements followed by words, including improvising on the lines in your assigned scene(s).

Practice regularly until the use of Preparation and Sustaining becomes habitual and doesn't require your conscious attention.

IMPORTANT: You cannot improvise, rehearse, or act onstage while consciously thinking of the exercises! In every case, here and elsewhere, Exercises must “frame and perfect your acting,” as Chekhov put it, without your conscious participation.¹⁰⁸

Homework for Class 16:

Exercise for Awakening Your Creative Feelings:

Raise and lower your hand, performing a simple physical action / gesture.

Like any action, it was the result of a will-impulse (desire to raise and lower your hand).

Repeat the movement, but adding an emotional Quality to the movement – Chekhov would say, “Coloring” it with the Quality. Do it, for example, “carefully.” (Perhaps you are concerned not to knock over a glass or cup on the nearby table.) Repeat the movement with the Quality of being “Careful.”

Now do the same movement with an added Quality, as a gesture of “Caution” – do it cautiously but also radiating out the idea of “Caution.”

(Perhaps you could add a slight pause at the top of the gesture, briefly radiating.) Do the movement several times to let it “set.”

Now do the movement again, trying to be aware of the bodily Sensations it creates in you.

What were these Sensations? (Chekhov reports, probably from his students, a slight uneasiness and alertness, maybe a gentle and warm feeling, or the opposite – a cold isolation? Maybe surprise or curiosity?) Or maybe you

¹⁰⁸ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 73, pp. 131-132; not in 1953.

noticed a feeling of blood rising in your neck or chest muscles near your upper arm or a feeling in your lower abdomen?

Do the movement again several times without thinking or analyzing it. It should repeatedly create the same or similar bodily Sensations.

Then ask yourself, did the gesture arouse Feelings that might be associated with “Caution” (fear, watchfulness, concern, etc.)?

If so, you achieved these Feelings without intending to – they came naturally, as responses to the Sensations now linked to the gesture of Caution that aroused them.

Write your responses, Sensations, Feelings, in your Actor’s Journal. Be prepared to repeat the exercise in class.¹⁰⁹

IMPORTANT:

OPTIONS FOR FINAL SCENES AND MONOLOGUES – Assignments

[Specific plays to be determined – see Handout 3, Appendix 11.]

Look over the options provided – they include your suggestions as well.

Casting for the final scenes and monologues will be done on the basis of your previous work and your interests, and on your desire to work with other members of the class.

Consider the options and work with your fellow class members. Keep in touch with the Instructor on your desires. You will be cast by Class 18. By that time you should have enough information about the options to make informed decisions on what you and the Instructor want to do.

The idea is to do something different from the scenes you were originally assigned at the beginning of the semester. **Make sure you have signed up for a conference with the instructor, including your casting in the final scenes, by Class 17.**

Homework for Classes 18 and 19 Psychological Gesture:

(1) Read over, and begin moving as suggested, in the handouts from Chekhov’s 1946 text on the Psychological Gesture. We will use the movements in class next time.

Study the handouts from Chekhov’s 1942 version of *To the Actor* on Horatio’s meeting the ghost of Hamlet’s father; how might you adapt the illustrated gestures to your own interpretation of the role.

(2a) Work again on your initial role from a play, assigned at the beginning of the course, in the following way:

a) You have already found the super-objective for your character in the play from which your assigned scene is taken. Review and refine your notes in your Actor’s Journal.

b) Now review the following list of **Action Verbs describing Archetypal Gestures:**

Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing in, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Smashing/Crushing, Wringing, Penetrating (Jabbing),

¹⁰⁹ Derived from Chekhov 1946, pp. 53-57; translated from the Russian.

Tearing, Cutting, Grasping/Grabbing, Holding (or Holding Back), Embracing (or Caressing), Receiving (or Taking), Giving, Scratching/Clawing.

c) Imagine your character – in your mind’s eye, imagine him or her trying the most likely of these gestures as expressions of the super-objective. Which one fits the best? Develop the character in your imagination as much and as long as you wish.

d) Now make your “first charcoal sketch on an empty canvas”: Make this gesture physically, paying attention to the posture of your body, the tempo and kind of movements you use to embody the Action Verb. Remember to keep it simple – a strong, complete, *archetypal* movement embodying the psychological qualities of the character’s will.¹¹⁰

Try it several times, refining it as necessary.

e) Once you feel comfortable with the gesture, make it once more and step as if into your scene, launching yourself into your first line as your character.

Make detailed notes / a picture in your Actor’s Journal to allow you to rehearse the gesture every day.

(2b) **To be used in Class 19.**

Is your character’s objective in your original assigned scene essentially the same as his or her super-objective?

f) If not, or if the objective of the scene is a special case within the super-objective, work out a different gesture expressing the objective. Begin by imagining your character in the scene.

g) Review the list of Action Verbs again, finding the one closest to your needs.

h) Imagine the character making this gesture in the context of the scene. Develop the character acting out the scene in your imagination as much and as long as you wish.

i) Make this gesture physically. Remember to keep it simple, strong, complete, and active. Try it several times, refining it as necessary. Will it be visible to the audience?

Note your results in your Actor’s Journal, in order to share them with your scene partner.

¹¹⁰ Adapted from Chekhov 1946, Chapter 4, and Chekhov 1942/1991, Exercise 49; not in 1953.

CLASS 16

GESTURES WITH QUALITIES (PSYCHOPHYSICAL MOVEMENT); GESTURES AND SENSATIONS (SENSATIONS AS ROUTE TO FEELINGS); GESTURES EVOKING FEELINGS

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

BRIEF SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Lecture:

We now come to one of the most essential parts of the Chekhov method, the adding of bodily Sensations and emotional “Qualities” to gestures – what we have called “psychophysical” movement. Chekhov also spoke of “coloring” the gestures with the emotional qualities – in the way that you might dye a piece of cloth with a color, allowing the color to sink into the cloth permanently. Chekhov felt that Sensations were an “immediate, spontaneous, and direct means” to awaken our feelings / emotions, to coax them out of our subconscious minds. Along with his emphasis on Images in the Mind / Imagination, this psychophysical means of awakening emotion is in direct contrast to Stanislavsky’s early, realistic Emotional Memory (also called Affective Memory or Sense Memory) where the actor is asked to remember or relive personal feelings from his or her own life experience, feelings that might be similar to what the actor thinks his or her character might use. Chekhov felt that Emotional Memory, if occasionally useful, was in general a laborious process of digging emotions out of the subconscious mind, “hoping that this memory will awaken our artistic feelings which will flare up within us and will be used by the character.” Chekhov was also greatly concerned (in part due to his own experiences with mental health problems while living and acting in Russia) about the process creating “hysteria” in actors and leading to more problems than it solved, including personal problems.

Instead, Chekhov appealed to a combination of Images and gestures linked to Sensations, which he called “prototypes we can experience immediately, directly, spontaneously. ... Feelings themselves might be very complicated, intricate and complex, but not the Sensations, which are always very simple. And that is just why I recommend, while working upon our parts, to appeal to Sensations, and not to Feelings ... [and the Feelings] will react themselves. ... Called from the depths of the subconscious, they amaze not only the viewer, but also the actor himself.”¹¹¹

Here it is necessary to remind you of an aspect of the Chekhov method we studied in the Five Guiding Principles and the “Chart for Inspired Acting” at the beginning of the course: all techniques in the method relate to all the others, like lightbulbs around a circle – you light one and they all go on. Chekhov also used Atmospheres – the general Atmosphere (the sum of objective feelings surrounding an entire play or scene) and the subjective atmosphere of the individual

¹¹¹ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2; NYPL Call no. [LT10-] 4780; combined with Chekhov 1946, pp. 53-57; translated from the Russian.

actor/character – to awaken the creative feelings of the actor, as we studied in classes 11 and 12.

In the exercise you prepared for today’s class, you performed a simple physical action, made a simple gesture on the urging of a will-impulse. And you made it without difficulty. Then you added what Chekhov called “coloration” or “Qualities” – that is, emotional qualities, feelings, or sometimes, direct bodily Sensations – to the gesture. It was Chekhov’s experience as an actor and teacher that the Quality you attached to your action would awaken or arouse what he called “a whole complex of individual feelings in you.” Of course, neither he nor I would expect this to happen all at once in your first exercise as homework for this class. But eventually, you will learn to associate adding Qualities to movements with being aware of what Chekhov called “a whole chord of feelings” in tune with the Quality you have added.

The important thing is that you have NOT forced your psyche, your inner self, to bring forth Feelings – Feelings slipped into your gesture as if by themselves, naturally. You do not affect your feelings directly. They are the secret of your creative subconscious. “The action,” Chekhov notes, “if you perform it, giving it a certain color [Quality] will cause you to feel.” Action with Qualities has opened the treasury of your subconscious, and, Chekhov adds, “you will soon notice that you get more than you expected ... soon, perhaps, the moment will come when one hint of coloring will be enough to ignite [all of] them.”

Now let’s see what you have prepared.

16.1) Exercise for Awakening Creative Feelings:

- a) Each student (one at a time) raises and lowers a hand, a simple physical action / gesture.
- b) Repeat the movement, but adding an emotional Quality to the movement – in this case, “Caution.” – do it cautiously but also radiate out the idea of “Caution.” (Perhaps with a slight pause at the top of the gesture – radiating.)
- c) After the first student, ask the second student to get up and perform the following improvisation with the first student:

Imagine that you are in a scene where something is going on that cannot be interrupted – it doesn’t matter what, but an interruption would be emotionally difficult. The second student walks into the scene – barging in unexpectedly – and the first student raises his or her hand as a sign of Caution – radiating in both gaze and body language the sense of Caution exemplified in the gesture. Presumably, the entering character will stop and engage with the Atmosphere.

- d) The second student takes over from the first student, does the exercises, and interacts with the third student who enters, and so on to the end of the group.

Discussion: At home, did the gestures arouse feelings that might be associated with “Caution” (fear, watchfulness, concern, etc.)? Were you aware of achieving these feelings without intending to – did they come naturally, as responses to the Sensations now linked to the gesture of Caution that caused them, or at least help

you achieve a sense of emotional engagement? Did adding an actual bit of stage business amplify the experience of Sensations and Feelings / emotions?

For the second actor entering the scene: did you have a sense of receiving the sense of “Caution”?

The movement made cautiously,” Chekhov would observe, “is no longer a mere physical action; now it has acquired a certain **psychological nuance.**”¹¹²

16.2) The realm of Qualities is unlimited. You can take almost any noun or abstract idea, any image in your mind, and turn it into a Quality for your action.

a) Take another simple movement. Everyone in class does it simultaneously without qualities.

b) Ask the students to suggest a Quality (noun, abstract idea, an image, etc.). Do the movement with three or four of the ideas.

16.3) Adding Circumstances.

The goal is to free the actor’s instrument through the action– to allow the feelings to come through.

Form a circle. A ball is placed inside the circle of actors.

a) All actors perform a more complex movement centered on or focused towards the ball, but without Qualities.

b) Now imagine the ball belongs to your lost child, and you seek to find the lost child, by finding the lost child’s ball. Each actor augments the action – but not involving more than a few steps – seeking that ball in the context of the child being lost.

c) Extend the movement to searching for the child him/herself.

d) Bad news comes. We hear (the teacher’s voice announcing) that the child is not only lost, but dead. Do the movement again, focusing now on the ball with the new circumstances.

e) Good news comes. The child is not dead; he/she has been found alive. Do the movement again, focusing on the ball with the new circumstances.¹¹³

Homework:

Note: continue working on the homework for Classes 18 and 19 – you should have scheduled your conference with the Instructor by this week.

1. Movements with different qualities

a) Make a few simple movements and “stage business” such as: move your hands and arms in different directions, then get up or sit down, cross the room, take up different things, move them, and so forth.

b) Make the same movements several times with a selection of the following different Qualities:

¹¹² Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 18, pp.37-38; related to 1953, pp. 58-62 -specifically exercise 15, (1953, p. 59).

¹¹³ Adapted from Scott Fielding; MICHA 2018.

calmly, quietly, surely, carefully, thoughtfully, softly, soothingly, tenderly, lovingly, joyfully, coldly, angrily, fiercely, violently, hastily, staccato, legato, cowardly, superficially, painfully, decidedly, energetically, slyly, willfully, rigidly.

Go on doing this simple exercise until the Feelings begin to respond to the chosen Qualities. Then combine your movement and “business” with one, or several, words. The chosen Qualities must color equally both stage business and speech.

Write down the movements you did and the Qualities you applied to them – and record any Sensations or Feelings that resulted – in your Actor’s Journal.

2. Archetypal Gestures with different qualities

As we will discuss in the next class, an Archetypal Gesture is a basic action gesture from which other gestures derive – such as drawing in, pulling, pushing, pressing, lifting, throwing, crumpling, coaxing, embracing/caressing, hugging, separating, tearing, penetrating, touching, clawing/scratching, brushing away, opening/expanding, closing/contracting, breaking, taking, giving, supporting, or holding back.

Do a selection of these gestures, each with several of the Qualities listed above in (1b).

Each movement must be as broad as possible, so that your whole body and the space around you will be used to the fullest degree. The tempo in which you produce your movements must be moderate, and after each movement, repeat it. The exercises must be done with full, inner activity, and yet you must not strain your muscles and body as you produce properly wide, broad but beautifully executed movements.

The suggested movements must not become a kind of acting. You must avoid pretending, for instance, that you are pulling something with difficulty, and you are becoming tired. Try to adjust yourself to handle the imaginary heavy object more skillfully. Your movements of pulling, pressing, tearing, and others, must maintain a pure, ideal, archetypal form. Unnecessary complications and acting additions will weaken the results of this exercise.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 37-38; combined with 1991/1942, Exercise 20, pp. 41-42; not in 1953.

CLASS 17

ACTION VERBS – ARCHETYPAL GESTURES

“Only powerful gestures of will are needed. In a human gesture must live a human soul.”¹¹⁵

You should have had your conference with the Instructor by this time.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

VOICE AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Lecture:

We have seen in the last class the difference between Action and Qualities: the Action (and Will) expresses “**what**” happens, whereas the Quality (and Feelings) shows “**how**” it happens. Now we turn to the Actions themselves.

“Each gesture, each Action,” Chekhov insisted, “springs from a certain Will-impulse. The opposite is also true: the Gesture the actor makes can stir his Will. We have said that the more definite the Will-impulse, the more expressive the Gesture. Now we can add that the better the Gesture is formed, the stronger and clearer it is, the surer it will reach the Will and stir, stimulate, and arouse it. A strong Gesture of affirmation or denial, expansion or contraction, repulsion or attraction, will inevitably agitate the Will, calling forth in it a corresponding desire, aim, wish. In other words, the Will echoes the Gesture, reacts on it.”¹¹⁶

The Actions, or Gestures, that reach the Will of the character and inspire the actor’s depiction of the character and expression of the character’s feelings are called Archetypal Gestures. They are the foundation of Chekhov’s concept of Psychological Gesture.

In the Chekhov method, Archetypal Gestures are different from the other, ordinary gestures and movements you make in life each day, like pointing something out or picking up a fork and so forth. These are ordinary, particular, private, individual gestures.

Archetypal gestures, and all Psychological Gestures, express qualities such as attraction, repulsion, desire, opening, closing, and so forth. Big ideas. In order to be dramatically effective, Archetypal Gesture has to be general and universal, the “original model for all possible gestures of the same kind.” The analogy that Chekhov used is the idea of a “king” or “queen” – the general idea of a royal person. That would be the Archetype. The particular or specific representation of this would be King George III, Queen Elizabeth II, King Lear, King Henry V, King Richard III, King Kong, Queen Latifah, Queen Isabel, and so forth – a specific royal person. For example, underneath your ordinary everyday gesture of refusing something is an Archetypal Gesture of repulsion, rejection, absence of desire, or some other general quality – can you think of others?

The Archetypal Gesture is an action gesture, but it must also be theatrically impressive. Chekhov used the words “wide, broad, but beautifully executed, engaging the whole body, yet without any undue muscle strain” to describe an Archetypal Gesture.

¹¹⁵ Chekhov 1985, p. 12; unpublished, Talk at End of Term, March 28, 1937 (copies at Dartington Archives and Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers).

¹¹⁶ 1991/1942, pp. 38-39.

Exercises based on the Homework:

17.1) Archetypal Gestures with different qualities

In this and the following classes, we will limit our exercises to the most elementary forms of Archetypal Gesture:

Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing in, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Smashing, Wringing, Penetrating (Jabbing), Tearing, Cutting, Grasping/Grabbing, Holding (or Holding Back), Embracing (or Caressing), Receiving (or Taking), Giving, Scratching/Clawing.

a) Let us choose Pushing, Pulling/Drawing in, Penetrating/Jabbing, and Wringing.

b) The class stands in a circle. We begin with Pushing. All the students do a simple version of the Pushing movement.

As mentioned in the homework, each movement must be as broad, involving the whole body and the space around you; the tempo moderate; the exercises done with full, inner activity, and yet you must not strain your muscles and body. It must not become a kind of acting. Your movements must maintain a pure, ideal, archetypal form. Unnecessary complications and acting additions will weaken the results of this exercise.

c) The instructor goes around the circle, assigning one of the following Qualities from the following list, one quality for each student: calmly, quietly, surely, carefully, thoughtfully, softly, soothingly, tenderly, lovingly, joyfully, coldly, angrily, fiercely, violently, hastily, staccato, legato, cowardly, superficially, painfully, decidedly, energetically, slyly, willfully, rigidly.

d) After a moment to imagine doing the movement with the assigned Quality, the students, one after another, do the Pushing movement with the Quality.

e) The same sequence is followed for the other three Archetypal Gestures.

More advice from Chekhov: “Later, even while producing smaller Gestures you will always feel as though your whole body—your whole being—takes part in them, although your whole body need not necessarily move. This is the point of the exercises. Your Will would not react to the movements if they did not occupy and electrify your body.”¹¹⁷

Archetypal Gestures and Centers

Different gestures imply origins in different parts of the body: Pushing and Pulling definitely come from a center in the pelvis or legs (associated in the Chekhov work as the Willing Center), but also the head. Pulling/Drawing In involves two centers: you want it to involve the Willing Center but it involves the upper torso as well. Wringing of course is in the hands, but the impulse involves other centers.

Let us practice some of the gestures with focus on Centers.

17.2) (a) For “Push,” even if we are not yet moving, lower body is always engaged. The head is also pushing, not just the hands – go as far as you can, hold onto the gesture.

¹¹⁷ Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 37-38; combined with 1991/1942, Exercise 20, pp. 41-42; not in 1953.

Take a stance with legs apart; find a position where you can give yourself space. Lean back slightly, using the space behind you, and take a “bit” before you begin. Using as much space and full body as possible will help create the radiation, not only physically in the space but in your own mind – the inner gesture is stronger than the outer gesture. Keep your legs apart and put your hands in pushing position. Now inhale the desire of pushing; have a strong image in your mind and exhale into the final gesture. Exhale (you can make sounds coming from your abdomen, guts) and push. The radiation happens at the very end of this visible movement, which comes into the whole body and lives there, and must radiate out even when the gesture is physically “finished.” So don’t just end abruptly but sustain the gesture for a bit longer.

b) When Pulling/Drawing-In, emphasize when you start, so it’s not vague. You want to involve the Willing Center in your pelvis – invite your object to come! The concept of “Tok,” from classical mime, emphasizing the moment when the hand grabs onto the imaginary thing pulled, is useful. Hold on longer at the end, as you bring it into the body, again giving emphasis. Don’t forget to breathe!

c) Now create Pulling/Drawing-In for a second time with a Radiating quality. You must start the Radiating before the movement, as part of the Will-Impulse; involve your gaze, directed towards the imaginary object or person to be pulled.

Then try it with either yourself, or the object, floating.

You can even give it a molding quality, like it is clay.

d) For Penetrating, think of a police or private investigator, or a politician; your movement should be smooth and deliberate (*legato*); for Jabbing, the same movement, but very sudden (*staccato*). Be aware of the psychophysical difference between *legato* and *staccato*.

e) For Wringing, it has to begin inside the torso (maybe a wave coming up from the pelvis to the chest and then from the chest muscles to the arms and hands). As in pulling, there is a radiation and gaze that begins first (inner action), then a grasping movement onto the object, then the clutching and wringing. The object – a wet towel (completing a task), or something living (a crime or something done with malice or self-defense or hunger) – does not have to be far away from your body.

17.3) Exercise on gestures for relationships, using Throwing and Pulling/Drawing-In

Pair up. Stand back to back, but separated by a distance. One actor does a Throwing gesture, as if throwing an imaginary moderately sized ball. The other actor does Pulling/Drawing-In.

Then both turn around and face each other. After one actor throws the imaginary ball the other actor pulls the actor who threw the imaginary ball in. Make large gestures. (To throw the ball, you must lean back first, then throw and follow the movement forward; with pulling, you must start by leaning forward and then pull back.)

Then repeat, saying these lines:

- (a – Thrower) I suppose you know why I am here.
 (b) On the contrary. Why don't you tell me?
 (a) All right, I will.
 (b) OK, why don't you.

Say the lines while still using the big gestures.

Then say the lines without the outward or external movement, but keeping the sense of internal movement. (This is essential for work in front of a camera.)

You can do variations, such as creating an inner gesture; maybe make just a little step and movement (like when people say “hmm – did I hear correctly?”). With that “inner gesture”, you will find something exciting; you will become extra active, alert, connected/in touch.¹¹⁸

CLOSING EXERCISE

17.4) Expansion (Opening) and Contracting (Closing)

These two gestures were often used and emphasized by Chekhov in many contexts – Atmospheres, PG, relationships. We have already used them in Classes 8 and 15.

We repeat them here as a way to close our investigation of Archetypal Gesture.

a) Take a relaxed, natural pose. Then step out to the side into a wide stance. Prepare, letting the impulse begin in your legs and flow up through your torso into your arms and hands, which begin to reach out deliberately (*legato*) and expansively, radiating into space. You can add an explosive final gesture, then hold and keep radiating. Repeat three times, emphasizing the elemental nature of the gesture. Be aware of the relationship with the surrounding space, but even more, of the effect the movement has on your inner being – the Sensations, and Feelings generated in you as you move.

b) On the third repetition, hold the pose, then slowly, very smoothly and *legato*, Contract your body, closing it down into a ball, kneeling on one knee and embracing your doubled legs with your arms and hands. Hold the pose as the space comes down around you.

Repeat the motion, but quickly, as if down into a point.

Repeat the motion, *legato* again, but with the thought (you can murmur it to yourself), “I want to be left alone.”

Repeat the motion, quickly again, as if startled or threatened from outside of you in the space.

c) Now return, deliberately, to the Expanded, open position, radiating out to the other members of the class.

On the instruction of the teacher, relax the pose, and step out of the circle as if crossing out of the Threshold.

Homework for Classes 18 and 19 Psychological Gesture:

These were given above, in Class 15.

¹¹⁸ Craig Mathers; MICHA, 2018.

CLASS 18 & CLASS 19 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE (PG)

Note on pedagogical application: Because of the importance and complexity of Chekhov's ideas on the Psychological Gesture, the class must start with a longer lecture with some background information and explanations, based directly on Chekhov's own words. For convenience, we will abbreviate Psychological Gesture as PG.¹¹⁹

[Before the class starts, the following Action Verbs will be written on the black/whiteboard or posted in the classroom or studio:

Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing in, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Smashing, Wringing, Penetrating (Jabbing), Tearing, Cutting, Grasping/Grabbing, Holding (or Holding Back), Embracing (or Caressing), Receiving (or Taking), Giving, Scratching/Clawing.]

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Lecture:

Chekhov described the Psychological Gesture as a way to bridge the gap between the play and the actor. He called it “a condensed form of our entire part and entire character, or even a section of it.” The Psychological Gesture appears first in the actor's mind as a result of a process “of condensation, of uniting, of drawing the conclusion” in the actor's psyche (or spirit). It is important that the PG begin, like so much else in the method, as an Image in the actor's mind.¹²⁰ The PG remains an Image in the mind but it also becomes an actual gesture that can be made outwardly. It is the most typical example of the psychophysical basis of Chekhov's method. For Chekhov, each individual psychological state is always a combination of Thoughts or Images, Feelings, and Will-impulses. The inner impulse comes before the gesture is born. As we will see, there are two types of PGs, but both are designed to remain with the actor and energize everything the actor does, thinks, feels, and wills in the role.

The concept of a “Psychological Gesture” was named as such by Chekhov in a class on 23 November 1936 at Dartington in England, and applied to a dramatization of a Baltic fairy tale, *The Golden Steed* (as already mentioned in Class 4), where a group of brothers had to be distinguished dramatically.¹²¹ Thereafter, it was used frequently in his teaching both as an aid for characterization and a tool in rehearsals. Chekhov wanted the PG to stir the actor's will power (willing or will-impulses) and give it a definite direction. He wanted actors to use the PG to awaken Feelings and to have the PG give the actor “a condensed version of the character.”

¹¹⁹ Verbatim texts from Chekhov in Appendix 8 (English translation of Chekhov 1946, Chapter [Four], pp. 61-96, on Psychological Gesture, including Chekhov 1953 Chapter 5, passim, especially p. 69 ff.); Chekhov 1991/1942, p. 58 ff. (parallel passages to Chekhov 1946, especially pp. 63-65); Chekhov 1991/1942, pp. 38-39 and 59; Chekhov 1941/1985, Ninth Class, December 5, 1941, pp. 108-110 (cf. Eleventh Class, December 11, 1941, passim).

¹²⁰ Tape 2. NYPL Michael Chekhov Tapes 1955, Tape 2 NYPL Call no. [LT10-] 4780.

¹²¹ Hurst du Prey 1977a, class notes from November 23, 1936.

We have introduced Chekhov's idea of "archetypal" gestures in previous classes, such as in our exercises on Expansion and Contraction. Chekhov considered the PG to be a type of Archetypal Gesture, and insisted that each PG must be "archetypal, strong, simple and well formed," serving as "an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind." To add another example, any kind of reaching-out or reaching-up gesture would be related to the archetypal idea of Expansion and its basic gesture. In this class, we will allow a lot of variation in the Archetypal Gestures used to create a PG – what is wanted is for you to develop useful PGs for your characters or scenes.

Chekhov insisted that the PG was particularly useful in scenes where a character has "veiled" emotions, motives, or goals, which are different than the emotions expressed outwardly. Therefore, he wanted his actors to be able to distinguish between inner and outer tempos, something we will practice in exercises. Gestures can express inner thoughts, emotions/feelings, and desires (wills). Chekhov said, "If desire (will) is strong, then the gesture expressing it will be strong." But the opposite is also true: a strong, expressive gesture can trigger a thought, emotion, or desire in you. Chekhov often pointed out the old man in his uncle Anton Chekhov's short story, "who first stamped his foot, then became angry."¹²²

You cannot tell your psyche to feel an emotion or have a goal or burning desire, but, as Chekhov put it, "you can make a gesture, and your will shall respond to it."¹²³

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT CHEKHOV USES TWO TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

(a) ONE USED IN CREATING THE CHARACTER FOR THE ENTIRE PLAY ON THE BASIS OF THE SUPER-OBJECTIVE OF THAT CHARACTER and

(b) ANOTHER TYPE THAT CAN BE A SINGLE GESTURE OR A SERIES OF CONNECTED GESTURES USED IN THE COURSE OF A SCENE.

Chekhov explained these two types when he listed the "Practical Applications of Psychological Gesture" at several points in his writings. (a) For the first type, creating the character for the whole play (overall PG), he also noted that it would also be an important part of the Individual Atmosphere of your character. You can also use the overall PG when working on the text of your role.

(b) For the second, special type of PG, he cited two practical applications, which are basically the same thing (special PGs for specific moments): these are (1) for individual moments of a role, and (2) for scene work, as a succession of PGs within individual scenes, helping you penetrate the essence of each individual scene. In both cases, these special PGs are used simultaneously with the overall PG for your image of the role; they co-exist and do not interfere with the overall PG. This special PG, for scenes, may be visibly (outwardly) revealed to the audience if that is appropriate.

¹²² Chekhov A.P. "The Dependents," short story.

¹²³ Chekhov 1946, p. 63 – translated here from the Russian.

The first type (the overall PG, for the whole role) is never revealed outwardly in a performance or even a rehearsal. Rather it is a way to embody the character inwardly so that it will remain with the actor and energize everything the actor does, thinks, feels, and wills in the role. (In fact, Chekhov suggested it not even be shared with fellow actors – of course, in this class, as a learning experience, we will reveal both types.)

I. THE FIRST TYPE – THE OVERALL “PG” USED TO CREATE THE CHARACTER ON THE BASIS OF THE IMAGE IN THE ACTOR’S MIND.

Joanna Merlin cites Chekhov’s description of the PG as “composed of a will-impulse painted by qualities.”¹²⁴ It is the physicalization of the character’s super-objective throughout the play. **Once the actor discovers the super-objective, he or she simply needs to reduce it to a simple, active verb (to crush, to embrace, to penetrate, and so on) and express this verb in a strong, complete, archetypal movement – a gesture embodying the psychological qualities of the character’s Will.** With this, the actor can begin creating the PG and therefore begin creating the character. It is an extremely simple technique that requires mostly creative intuition.

The result, as Merlin noted, is to acquire a highly effective, easily accessible, intuitive psychophysical key to the character. To cite an important example from modern drama, in Act I, scene 2 and throughout Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the interaction between Stanley and Blanche can be thought of in terms of his Pushing and her Pulling.

Chekhov wanted the actor to start developing the PG for the character as soon as possible in the process of creating a role. “A psychological gesture,” he insisted, “enables the actor working on the role to make the first, free ‘charcoal sketch’ on a large canvas. Your first creative impulse you pour into the form of this psychological gesture.”¹²⁵

Chekhov was also a visual artist, so that the idea of starting a character’s creation by making a drawing on a blank canvas fits his personality well. He was a theatre artist who made many sketches or even cartoons when he was preparing his characters, such as Ivan the Terrible, the first Tsar of Russia. A second idea, or metaphor, is that of “building scaffolding for characterization” from this first ‘sketch’ for the character. This is the intangible (at first) psychological gesture in the mind’s eye, which the actor finds strongly at the beginning of the creating process, and which he or she explores in order to find the character. The first drawing or sketch – the Image in the actor’s mind’s eye – will be so substantial that it will allow an actual physical movement. Even though the form of the PG may grow and develop, throughout the rehearsal and performing processes, the PG remains connected with the first intuition and is always available to the actor. If, at any time, the actor feels “lost” on the stage or feels as if he or she is “losing the character,” the actor can always reach out for the PG (including by doing the gesture physically) and get back into the character again – to lean on the scaffolding, as it were.

¹²⁴ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 48, p. 91.

¹²⁵ Chekhov 1946, pp. 65-63 – translated here from the Russian.

Chekhov said, with regard to the application or outcome of this process, “you do not depend either on chance or on your mood, but from the very beginning you stand on solid ground: you know what you are doing and how.” He felt that, through doing PG exercises, the Image and PG carried in the actor’s mind’s eye would continue to inspire the actor and his or her creation of the character. The goal, he insisted, was for the actor to develop by exercise a high degree of receptivity to the PG.

SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Exercise 18.1) [This exercise is done as a question-and-response with the students.] Try to find a PG for a character you know well from a play, film, novel, fairy tale, or a TV mini-series. (Other students may prefer to choose a historical figure.)

[Asks each student:] Who is the character you want to choose? [Ask if anyone else wants this character, too.]

[After all respond:]

- a) For your character, think what your idea is of his or her super-objective?
- b) Which of our Action Verbs, posted here, might relate to this super-objective?
- c) Take a moment to form an image in your mind’s eye of the character making this gesture.

After a moment, the Instructor goes around the circle asking each to express with the whole body the gesture as their “first sketch” of their PG.

18.2) Viewing the Homework – Super-Objectives of the Characters

One by one each of the students will describe again the super-objective they have discovered for their original assigned character and identify the Action Verb they have chosen to express this. Then the student actors

- a) Take a moment to consolidate the Image in the mind.
- b) Make the gesture physically. Repeat it.
- c) Repeat it again, launching into the first line of dialogue.

Discussion in preparation for next class: Students will share their analysis of whether the super-objective and the objective(s) of their scene are the same, entirely different, or the same but adapted to the circumstances of the scene.

GOLDEN HOOP CLOSING and STEPPING OUT OVER THE THRESHOLD.

Homework:

Whether or not your character's objective(s) in your first, original assigned scene are essentially the same as his or her super-objective, prepare yourself the same way. You may find that the "first sketch" you prepared for the last class on the basis of the limited group of Action Verbs/Archetypal Gestures was incomplete. If so, look over the much longer list of Action Verbs in the **Handout (4)** provided. (See Appendix 11.) Perhaps you can find a more specific verb/gesture to match your super-objective. If, however, the verb chosen is working, you can always refine it as it is and not complicate things.

- a) Perform your PG for the character in the whole play several times to solidify the embodiment of the character's super-objective.
- b) If you feel that the super-objective and the scene objective are identical, you will need to keep the PG hidden, allowing it to affect the stage business and subtext of the lines through your inner psychological processes.
- c) If the scene objective(s) are different, or is a special case within the super-objective, first imagine your character in the scene.
- g) You have already reviewed the limited list of Action Verbs/Archetypal Gestures we have been using and found the one closest to your needs. If it seems adequate, use it. If not, look over the much longer list in the hand-outs, finding the best fit.
- h) Imagine the character again, making this gesture in the context of the scene. Develop the character acting out the scene in your imagination as much and as long as you wish.
- i) Make this gesture physically. Remember to keep it simple, strong, complete, and active. Try it several times, refining it as necessary. Will it help your characterization if the special gesture is visible to the audience?

Now get together please with your scene partner and rehearse the first, original scene, each using the work you have done on the scene gestures. You may wish to share this scene gesture work before starting, especially if you think the scene special gestures (not your general, super-objective PG for your character!) should be outwardly visible.

You will perform this scene in the next class (19).

(Distributed already in **Handout 2b**, Appendix 11, with the text and PG images from *Hamlet*.)

CLASS 19 PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE (cont'd)

[Preparation for class: again, the images used here should be blown up and available in the classroom or studio.]

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Before you cross into the circle, imagine your character from your assigned scene and its entire-play-super-objective overall PG, then do the gesture and keeping the gesture alive cross the Threshold as if stepping onstage into the scene, in character.

VOICE AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Lecture:

As we mentioned in the last class, the Psychological Gesture (PG), was developed by Chekhov over several years at Dartington and Ridgefield in the context of scene study, and the Second Type of specific PG – that applied to scenes and individual moments in the play – is directly derived from these applications. In the 1942 and 1946 editions of *To the Actor* (prior to the publication of your Textbook), Chekhov applies the “scene” type of PG to the early scene in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* where Horatio confronts the Ghost of Hamlet’s father. In both editions, Chekhov provided drawings showing a suggested (“for example”) set of scene PGs for Horatio.

The specific PGs for the scene were not exactly meant to be seen onstage, but could affect the actor’s visible gestures, particularly the second one, where Horatio confronts the Ghost. As Chekhov put it (1946), “You rehearse the gesture(s) many times and then try to say (without a gesture) the lines of the monologue, until the general nature of your gesture with its colors [Qualities] starts to affect the words you say.”

To prepare the motivation before starting the monologue, Chekhov suggests making the following gesture, again only as an example:¹²⁶ “before rushing forward, [move] your hand with a wide, strong, but soft movement that describes a circle in the space above your head. The body, following the movement of the hand, also leans back at first” – the idea is to sum up “all that has accumulated in Horatio’s soul.”



(Drawing 1)

HORATIO

But soft, behold! lo where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.

¹²⁶ For the purposes of this class, I use Nicolai Remisoff’s images from Chekhov 1946.



(Drawing 2)

[“an ardent, violent thrust forward ... a desire to hold back the Ghost and penetrate its mystery”]

Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease and grace to me,

Speak to me:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,

Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid, O, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

Speak of it:

[Horatio is frustrated and defeated as the Ghost begins to leave them.]



(Drawing 3)

stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

(Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)

(By the way, these drawings were used in an entirely different context in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* which we are using as a textbook. This is a good example of how a gesture might, in different contexts, be used for the PGs associated with different Images of a character in the actor's preparation.)

19.1) A volunteer (male or female) is asked to do gestures in “dumb show” while another member of the class reads the Horatio monologue, pausing at the places the gestures apply. (Each student will have a handout with the text and images.)

- a) The volunteer does the preparatory gesture (Drawing 1) before starting, then a pause, then he or she steps into the scene and the reading starts. The first time through, the illustrated gesture (Drawing 2) is used at the beginning, with the

actor (always in dumb show) adding a transition in the central section, from “If there be any good thing ...” to “... For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death? Speak of it ...” By the end of this central section, Horatio is frustrated and losing control.

So, the reader has to pause before going on to “stay, and speak!” to let the volunteer develop an impulse, making the down-pointing gesture (Drawing 3) as he or she says the final lines.

b) Now the reading is repeated, with the actor preparing and using (in the dumb show while the monologue is read) gestures of his or her own invention (not simply using the drawings).

c) The process is repeated with a new volunteer (of a different gender from the first) and a new reader.

This exercise shows a specific scene PG that could be fully or partially visible. However, one must be very careful not to let the gestures become too obvious, mannered, or distracting.

PGs where the gestures are hidden: “Two-Level Acting.”

Chekhov often spoke of situations where both the character’s motivations and feelings are hidden or veiled from the other characters, especially in the case of villains who have something to hide (but other sorts of characters as well – a very shy and insecure person in love, for example). In these cases, Chekhov gives this advice:

Try to produce the inner gesture continuously, and then you can play with your outer gesture as you like. If there is the spine [the underlying super-objective PG and/or the PG for the scene or moment], the audience will get this second level which is always more interesting than the first level. The second level is always the Psychological Gesture.¹²⁷

Chekhov cites two more examples from *Hamlet*: King Claudius greeting Hamlet, with supposed friendship, “How fares our cousin Hamlet?” But underneath, there is a grasping gesture, an “an outstretched hand with clenched fist, and eyes straight forward” – basically the PG for the character throughout the play. Similarly, in the “Mousetrap” scene, when Claudius, realizing that Hamlet’s play is really about his own murder of Hamlet’s father, jumps up, and says “Give me some light: away!”, what should be going on as a scene PG under it all is a gesture of falling backwards, losing control.



(Drawing from Chekhov 1946.)

¹²⁷ Chekhov 1985, pp. 133-134, lesson of 12 December 1941 at New York – the advice was given to professional actors.

19.2) Group Exercise

This exercise will be about the archetypal action verb gesture, “to grasp.”

- a) Stand naturally. With your body relaxed, make a grasping gesture with your arms and hands only.
- b) Now do it with some will-impulse preparation, then leaning forward, perhaps even taking a step, grasping for something in front of you. Repeat the gesture – make it strong and clear.
- c) Now do it only inwardly, remaining physically unmoved, relaxed.
- d) Do the complete gesture physically again. What has happened? “As soon as we have developed this gesture,” Chekhov points out, “it becomes a certain ‘psychology,’ and that is what we want.”
- e) Now, do the gesture physically as you say the line, “Please, darling, tell me the truth.” Let the sound come at the end of the gesture; if it comes too early, you are not allowing the movement to do it.¹²⁸ [This can be done by all the students at once.]
- f) Now do the gesture inwardly, invisibly while saying the line. [Done one by one.] Whereas the whole-play-super-objective PG is a “scaffold” or “spine” to support your characterization, this type of scene PG is more of a “springboard,” launching you into the scene, “and you will see,” Chekhov adds, “that you are much richer than you imagine the gesture to be.”¹²⁹

19.3) Viewing the Homework

Students will get together with their scene partners from the first, original assigned scenes, and perform the scenes.

STEPPING OUT OF THE THRESHOLD

Homework:

A) Exercise: getting inspired by Nature to recognize Qualities of Gesture in PG

Go outside into Nature. Start by observing the shapes of flowers, plants, and trees. Ask yourself: what gestures do these forms conjure up for me? And with what Qualities do I perceive the gestures?

- ❖ cypress (or cedars, or some pines, firs, and hemlocks), for example, rushing upwards (Gesture), has a calm, concentrated character (Quality),
- ❖ while the old branched oak widely and unrestrainedly (Quality) is scattered in the sides (gesture).
- ❖ The violets gently, inquiringly (Quality) peep (gesture) from the mass of grass or leaves,
- ❖ while the fire lily or day lily (or irises) passionately (Quality) breaks out (Gesture) from the ground.

¹²⁸ Advice from Joanna Merlin; MICHA 2016.

¹²⁹ Chekhov 1985, p. 134. Exercise incorporates elements from Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercises 32 and 34, pp. 64-68.

Every leaf, rock, remote mountain range, every cloud, stream, wave will tell you about their gestures and colors. List some of these in your Actor's Journal.



The gardens at Dartington Hall. (Photo public domain.)

Now for some of these plants, flowers, or trees, perform some of the gestures yourself, as though they were a PG themselves, using your notes of what you observed.

(But do not imagine yourself as a flower, do not imitate it, there is no need for it: the psychology of the gesture belongs to you, not to the flower.)

Remember, the PG should be simple.

Move on to the observation of architectural designs: stairs, columns, arches, vaults, roofs, towers, shapes of windows and doors in buildings of different styles. They will also evoke in your imagination compositions of known strengths and qualities. Create the corresponding Psychological Gesture.¹³⁰

Note all of these in your Actor's Journal. Bring your Actor's Journal to class next time, and be ready to perform one of the gestures you were inspired to make.

B) Finish reading the plays for the final performances and continue memorizing your monologue and scene for the finals.

Establish a super-objective for your character and begin working on a Psychological Gesture to go with your image of the character.

You will need to perform the monologue in Class 21.

¹³⁰ Adapted from Chekhov 1946, exercise 6, pp. 67-68; repeated in Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 19, pp. 39-40; not in 1953.

CLASS 20

TRANSFORMATIONS

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD, Part One

SPEECH AND VOICE WARM-UPS

[If necessary: finishing scenes from Class 19]

20.1) Viewing the Homework –

Inspiration from Nature to recognize Qualities of Gesture:

Perform one of the Gestures you were inspired to make, per your Actor's Journal.

20.2) In this exercise we will go back to the make-believe of our childhoods.

- a) Think of a character from a play, film, myth, fairy tale, novel, or cartoon version of these, that is either radically different than everyday human physical nature or has been in some way been transformed: the Minotaur, Gregor Samsa (Kafka's Metamorphosis), Beast (from Beauty and the Beast), Quasimodo (Hunchback of Notre Dame) or Richard III, one of the Seven Dwarves, Malificent or the Queen from Snow White, Shrek/Green Giant, some of the extra-terrestrials from Star Wars or Star Trek, or the Hobbit/Lord of the Rings. Please avoid Horror and Zombie movies – as tempting as Frankenstein may be – and the Superheroes, which are too cartoonish, except maybe for Hulk.
- b) Now imagine this character in your mind's eye, not as he or she appears in the film or wherever you first saw it, but as you imagine it for yourself, and imagine yourself as the character.
- c) When the Instructor claps, assume the posture of the Image in your mind.
- d) When the Instructor claps again, step into the circle in character, with whatever movement you think appropriate. Greet your nearby fellow-actors in character with handshakes or elbow bumps or whatever movement of greeting is appropriate for your imagined character.
- e) When the Instructor claps again, assume your normal actor's everyday identity.

Brief Lecture:

Chekhov believed that every true artist and “especially, talented actors, bear within themselves deeply rooted and often unconscious desire for transformation.” For Chekhov and many other modern drama theorists, even the slightest characterization is already a transformation. ... It doesn't have to be as crude and child-like as we have just done, but to act “is to go through the transformation. That is the point of it.”¹³¹ Chekhov added, “all of us actors have to wear a mask while performing our character.”

¹³¹ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, “On Character and Characteristics, I”; NYPL call no. LT10-4781. In the following discussing of masks, Chekhov's ideas in Tape 4, “On Character and Characteristics, I”; NYPL call no. LT10-4782, are also incorporated. Voice recording partially accessible in Mala Powers in Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, CD 1. See also Appendix 8, Verbatim Register.

When you assumed the cartoon or fantasy character just now, you basically put on a mask.

In fact, you may have noticed that at the beginning of Shakespeare's play, there is a list of "dramatis personae": *persona* is a Latin word for a type of mask that was worn by stage actors in the ancient Greek and Roman drama – the mask represented their character. Our word, "person," comes from this Latin word. "Dramatis personae" means the characters (the "masks") in the drama. In the Commedia dell'Arte and other traditions with stock characters, particularly those that actually wear masks, the characters are referred to as "the masks." But in every theatrical performance the actors, even if they do not actually wear the physical masks of stock characters, can be said to wear implied "masks" that consist of the lines in the script, the emotions of the character, the objectives and super-objective of the character, and the character's actions in the play. The objectives are also permeated with feelings, and the character uses his or her lines and actions to achieve the objective.

Here it is necessary to remind you of some biographical background to Chekhov's pedagogy. Chekhov was a religious man. His spirituality was a mixture of his Russian Orthodox Christian cultural context, his Jewish heritage (his mother was Jewish), and a fairly common type of combined religious consciousness that has been part of Western spirituality since the 19th century. This combines Christian ideas with those of Hinduism and Buddhism. We have spoken of this in passing before – for example, the ideas of the chakras and yoga as they affected Stanislavsky and Chekhov. As we discussed briefly in Class 4, these came into Chekhov's thought and pedagogy via the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner (for example, the trio of Thinking/Feeling/Willing, the Centers, and so forth). We also pointed out, in passing, that the concept of the creative function of the Higher Ego (or Higher Self), also found in Stanislavsky, is much enriched by Chekhov. Without getting caught in the religious details of Chekhov's idea of the Higher Self, we can embrace the idea in terms of a Higher Ego or Higher Self as something within our psyches (or souls) that connects with larger phenomena – it doesn't matter for application to acting whether you understand this spiritually or as psychology. The idea of a Higher Self energizes your acting (and will help you in life). As you step into the Imaginary Body of your character and begin to embody the character physically and emotionally, you do not stop being you, the person who is an actor.

I would add a personal metaphor: the sounds of the words, feelings and emotions, objectives [the will], individual atmosphere, and the voice of our other, Higher Self, are all invisible. It is similar to when you paint or write with milk or lemon juice on a white sheet of paper: the letters are invisible when dry but reappear when the paper is warmed gently over a light bulb or other heat. The actor's job is to make what is created inwardly become outwardly manifest, expressed and apparent, visible to the audience. It is not ourselves in ordinary, everyday life that creates the role, the character, it is our inner creativity, energized and inspired by the Higher Self, allowing us to go beyond mere physical existence or cold intellectual reasoning.

Chekhov notes many advantages to being aware of this Higher Self. As we have seen, Chekhov criticized the previous “declamatory” just-read-the-lines style of acting (still alive in Britain and America in his time) and also the more realistic approach of the early Stanislavsky technique and its dogmatic American imitators (so-called “Method” acting). He described these acting techniques as being self-portraits, one-dimensional acting. Chekhov described this as appearing “before the audience unmasked – naked.” “Do you think,” he asked, “my old aunt wouldn’t be able to read to me aloud a new play? But for that, I wouldn’t consider her to be an actress.” If the aunt asked him why not, he would have said, “Because, my dear auntie, you didn’t transform yourself into any character of the play you just finished. You didn’t wear their masks.” Chekhov’s hypothetical aunt is like a colleague of mine who is also a puppeteer, but he doesn’t change his voice for each character. He is smart and creative, but that actor’s quality of transformation is missing in his (and his puppets’) performance.

Second, when the actor simply plays the part as a stock character of the sort found in a TV sit-com, without any kind of emotional inner life under it, he or she becomes a two-dimensional actor. What is missing is both the whole interior life you could find by developing PG and the rest of the Chekhov method, plus the influence, however you understand it, of your Higher Self.

But third, when you do apply the techniques and allow your Higher Self to function, you achieve three-dimensional acting, and this, Chekhov insists, provides “depth,” and “the finer, deeper bond between the audience and the actor.” Your Higher Self keeps sending “sparks into the creative work.” You, the actor, who has put the “mask” of the character on the whole body, have a witnessing awareness of your character, and this (which Chekhov called the voice of our other, Higher Self) affects the “mask” you wear.¹³² And, to repeat: the tools we are acquiring by studying the Chekhov method enable all of this.

Another thing three-dimensional acting provides is the ability to do “two-leveled acting,” where the actor “veils” his or her character’s true feelings or objectives. The character hides his or her inner life from other characters (but not from the audience!). We have already discussed this in the previous classes. Again, think of villains such as Claudius and Iago, who spend most of the play thinking, feeling, and willing one thing while exhibiting other things outwardly, or the characters in plays by modern playwrights such as Anton P. Chekhov and Tennessee Williams, who talk about everything except what they have burning inside of themselves to express. Subtext!

¹³² Adapted from an unpublished passage in the Chekhov 1955 Lecture, Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10-4790. Similar concepts also found in Chekhov 1946, Chapter [Four] on Psychological Gesture, and noted above in classes 4, 18 and 19. The passage reads, “And now, if we are able to invite our higher self into our performance, then the third dimension comes in, and this is the depth. ... there is a deeper, finer bond between the audience and the actor, of which I had no idea before! And it was clear to me, that this kind of finer connection to the audience can be established only when the higher self sends its little spark into creative work of an actor. This spark shows the way how one can collaborate with his spectators, without being subservient, or egotistical, or anything like that.” Similar concepts are found in Tape 4, “on character and characteristics, II”; NYPL call no. LT10-4782.

Now let's be a bit more thorough about our transformation:

Fantastic Psychological Gesture

When you did the transformation exercise earlier in the class, you began to create a Fantastic Psychological Gesture. Through this version of the PG, you will be able to express for yourself your most intimate, most original artistic intentions.

20.3) Students line up, half along the wall on one side of the room and half on the other.

- a) Again, take a character from a play, film, myth, fairy tale, novel, or related cartoon, per the suggestions above. If your original character had a certain amount of depth to it and was in some way a grotesque and ugly monster, keep working with that one. Otherwise choose something grotesque, ugly, and monstrous.
- b) As before, imagine this character in your mind's eye, not as he or she appears in the film or whatever you first saw it, but again I stress the idea, as you imagine it for yourself, and imagine yourself as the character.
- c) First half of class members: Now, NOT as the character, but as yourself, or an ideal version of yourself, step forward. You are beautiful, elegant, sophisticated. After five steps you began to transform yourself into the ugly, grotesque monster you have chosen. Over the course of eight steps approximately you do the transformation and stay in this monstrous condition for another five steps. Then you transform yourself back into your beautiful shape over the last eight steps.
(If this seems a bit like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, it is.)
- d) Then the other half does the exercise.

What happened? What feelings welled up in you as you slowly stepped into your character's Imaginary Body? As you watched the other half of the group, what did you notice? How did you respond?¹³³

Homework:

A. Continuing the Exercises (for the next several weeks):

- 1) Look at people on the campus or street and try instantly to find in your imagination the Psychological Gesture of their characters. The first fleeting impression you get from the people passing you must be the only ground for your lightning-quick discovery. (Don't expect immediate success from such exercises. Continue for the sake of the exercise itself. Here, as always, the effort is what matters.)
- 2) Do the same exercise, but more deliberately instead of instantly, thinking of different people whom you know well. Try to discover for yourself what kind of Psychological Gesture would express their Will and its main Qualities. Try to imitate them in their everyday life, always aiming at the Psychological Gesture that expresses the whole character of the person you have chosen for

¹³³ Joanna Merlin and others, MICHA 2016 and 2019; Sol Garre, MICHA 2019.

your investigation. Important: Never show the result of your work to the persons you study!

3) Choose any character from a play or a novel.

(Some novelists: Austen, Dickens, Twain, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Zola, James, Tolstoy, Woolf, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Porter, Capote, Kundera, Vonnegut, Mann, Penn Warren, Baldwin, Ellison, Lee, Bellow, Updike, Roth, O'Connor, Morrison, Marqués, Borges – short story writers Ríos, Kincaid, Danticat, Kafka and so forth.)

Try, as before, to discover the Psychological Gesture for the chosen character. Having found it begin to exercise it and gradually come to the words and business described by the author.¹³⁴

Remember to keep notes in your Actor's Journal.

B) Working on your new role and play for the final performances.

a) Have your monologue and now your scene MEMORIZED for our next class and be fully familiar with the whole play in both cases.

b) Make sure that you have fully identified the super-objectives and created Psychological Gestures for your characters. Use all the elements we have learned so far, including discovering the personal and general objective Atmospheres for your scene and monologue.

c) For your scene, make a list of business which your character is going to fulfill from the beginning to the very end, in the proper sequence.

d) For the monologue, try to visualize the monologue you have chosen in different Tempos, then perform it (rehearse) in these tempos. Find out which Tempo is the right one, and which will satisfy your artistic taste to the fullest extent. See also how this scene's Qualities and perhaps the meaning alter under the influence of the different Tempos. You will perform your monologue or just a part of it in our next class.

Note all these things down in your Actor's Journal.

Please, bring highlighted text for your scene and monologue for next class as well as your Actor's Journal.

¹³⁴ Chekhov 1991/1942, Exercise 50 and p.92.

CLASS 21

“FLYING OVER THE PLAY”:

THE FORM OF THE PLAY AND THE AUTHOR’S IDEA OF THE PLAY POLARITIES

Note on pedagogical application: from this point in the course, as the process becomes more involved with scene study, the individual classes may flow into each other, with in-class exercises and presentations spilling over into the next class. The final classes are pure rehearsal, applying the Chekhov work to scenes and monologues.

ALL SCENES/MONOLOGUES MEMORIZED

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Brief lecture:

Chekhov referred to analyzing a play and its climaxes as “flying over the play from place to place, in order to find some special points in the play.”¹³⁵ You have read in your textbook that the Chekhov technique assumes that you conceive your character as unchangeable in its core, in spite of all the transformations it might undergo in the play.¹³⁶ The PG reflects and expresses this unchangeable aspect of the character. This also means that, as a means of rehearsing, actors with a firm Image of their characters and a PG can improvise, not by distorting the text of the author, or the staging plans of the director, but in the way the actor pronounces and gives subtext and emotion to the author’s words, to the director’s *mise-en-scènes*, and the nuance of the interpretation of the role found during rehearsals.

All of this assumes the actor has done his or her homework in analyzing the play and the character’s objectives and super-objectives. (Remember, with Chekhov, this happens after the actor’s creative response to the script and the formation of the Image of the character, and then the actor analyzes the super-objective and embodies it in the PG.) But the “table work,” as it is called, also has to be done.

To remind you, as we look at a scene and the bits into which it is divided, the Climaxes are the moments of greatest tension, forces, and Qualities (“coloring”), typical of each part of the scene. Every scene and sub-scene, and each of their bits, can be thought of as having, as a general structure, two main Climaxes, early in the scene and at the end, with subordinate or auxiliary climaxes (we will call them “sub-climaxes”). We will use this structure in rehearsing the scenes, and to some extent, the monologues. Chekhov underscored the combination of the method and inspiration in rehearsals.¹³⁷ From now on, as you rehearse, you need to be aware of changes in your scene PGs and other elements, and especially, as you note these

¹³⁵ Unpublished Chekhov Lecture Nov.18, 1936.

¹³⁶ Chekhov 1953/2002 ; cf. Psychological Gesture, etc. Exercise 9, p. 19.

¹³⁷ A theme in Chekhov 1946, *passim*.

Climaxes and Sub-climaxes, as you did in today's homework, change the list as needed as you are inspired in rehearsals, until all the scene partners are completely in agreement about the Climaxes. This is also a part of Atmospheres and Ensemble Feeling.

Please note that sometimes during the scene or bit the script demands either a Pause or a moment in which the characters lose connection (each thinking of other things, etc.), and these need to be considered as a type of "non-climax." A Pause can definitely be a Climax, but all Pauses and the moments of disconnect need to be included in your list of Climaxes.

So, let's report on your homework concerning your monologues and scenes. We will begin with the monologues, for which you will report individually, and on your scenes, for which you will join with your scene partner(s). When you report with your partner(s), please bring up any points where you do not fully agree or have questions, so we can try to resolve these here in class.

Students report on their analysis of (1) monologues and (2) scenes.

Before you do your first rehearsal presentation of your monologues, I'd like to remind you of details of the idea of Atmospheres, which Chekhov also considered as a way of rehearsing. Chekhov saw Atmospheres as providing new means of inspiration and expressiveness, a way to "grow your role" harmoniously, and an essential connection between you and your partners. Although we will not use it in our scene study for this class, it is possible to organize a whole series of rehearsals, almost like conducting a musical score with an orchestra, in which you move from one scene Atmosphere to another. (Following Stanislavsky's ideas, Chekhov called this "the score of atmospheres.") One of the best advantages is that "neither you nor your scene partners need to wait for the accidentally arrived mood." The Atmosphere will provide this.

Now, before presenting the first rehearsal of your monologues in class, take a minute to think of the general Atmosphere and the character's own Atmosphere for the play and scene. Don't worry about changes of Atmosphere at this point.

Brief Warm-up

Rehearsal/presentation of monologues and sharing notes.

Students now proceed to **presenting their scenes for rehearsal in-class**.
(Again, before starting, each group discusses their common ideas of Atmosphere.)

[If necessary, for reasons of time, scenes not presented today will be presented at the beginning of Class 22.]

GOLDEN HOOP EXERCISE

Homework (continuing over the next weeks):

For rehearsal of scenes and monologues outside of class:

1) For scenes:

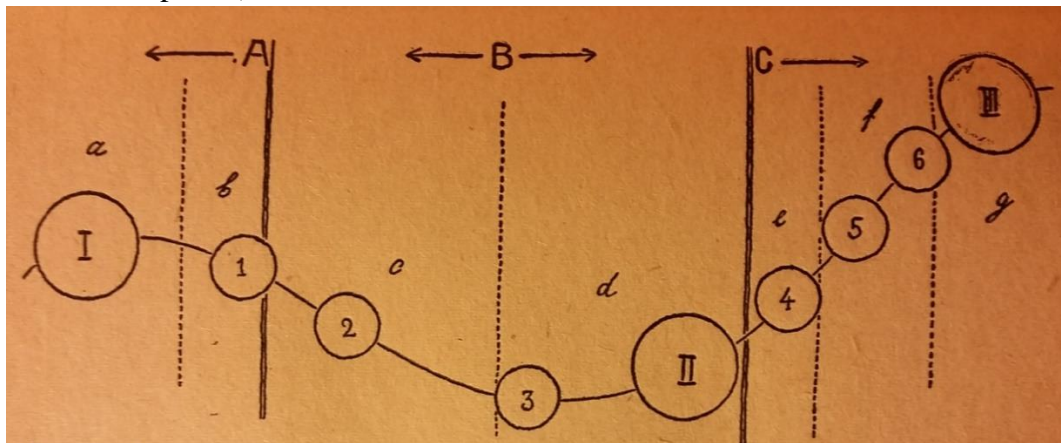
a) Establish the Atmospheres for the beginning and end of the scene (or the scene from which the monologue is taken). Does the general Atmosphere change from beginning to end? Are there notable changes in the personal Atmospheres (moods, for example) of any of the characters in the course of the scene? If so, what is the Atmosphere in the middle section of the scene (or monologue)?

b) Similarly, what is the tempo of the scene (or monologue)? Is the Quality of the tempo Staccato (discontinuous and sharp) or Legato (smooth, flowing, continuous)? Does the tempo change in the course of the scene (or monologue)?

Try variations in tempos: all done quickly; all done slowly; slowly at the beginning, increasing tempo, quick at the end; beginning quick, then slowing down in the middle, then quick at the end. Try any appropriate variation.

Important: is this change continuous and fluid, moving from Crescendo to Diminuendo in a flowing curve (Legato), or sudden and sharp (Staccato).

Chekhov used a “rhythmic wave” connecting the climaxes and subdivisions (and “musical score” of Atmospheres and Tempos) – see your textbook (Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 102):



A, B, C = The three big (main) units of a play or scene. a, b, c, d, e, f, g = Subdivisions.
I, II, III = Main Climaxes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 = Sub-climaxes (Auxiliary Climaxes).¹³⁸

2) Additional Exercises for scenes, including using Polarity:

a) Rehearse the end segment of the scene, paying attention to Atmosphere and Tempo, as well as what came before in the scene – how does the final climax function? All actors must keep their Image of the character, the super-objective of the character and its associated PG, the personal

¹³⁸ Chekhov 1946, p. 196 – cf. pp. 206-207; reprinted in Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 102.

Atmosphere of the character, and the scene objective of the character active in your characterization.

- b) When you feel you have a grip on the end segment, rehearse the beginning segment.
 - c) Now you have a sense of the two poles: beginning and ending. As a group, do an improvisation about what kind of Willing, Feeling, and Sensations provide a transition from the one situation to the other.
 - d) Now rehearse the middle section of the scene as written and prepared by you.
 - e) Finally, do the entire scene. Reflect on the result. Especially, how do you feel about emphasis you put on words, and how loud or soft each of you were speaking – remember loud does not mean shouting but more powerful projecting, and soft does not mean not being heard, but a different kind of diminuendo of volume. (Remember the concept of a projected “stage whisper.” Be aware of the characters around you listening, as well as projecting to the audience.
- Repeat the scene.¹³⁹

All of you should make notes in your Actor’s Journal.

Do not forget to work with Active Verbs expressing Willing for each “bit”:

I want to: empower, seduce, awaken, convert you, impress, scare, enlighten, comfort, annihilate, dominate, destroy, and so forth.

And for your scene PGs: actions such as push, pull, lift, smash, embrace, penetrate, reject, tear, take, etc. – some of which might become part of the action of the scene, if applicable.

Also, the Qualities: expanding, contracting, radiating, floating, flying, etc.; playfully, cautiously, victoriously.¹⁴⁰

3) For monologues: follow the same pattern as for scenes, except the focus will be more exclusively upon your own character. Keep your Image of the character, the super-objective of the character and its associated PG, the personal Atmosphere of the character, and the scene objective of the character active in your characterization. If you ever feel you are losing these, do your overall PG, then imagine (Image in your mind’s eye), your character going through the scene onstage as he or she gives the monologue.

- a) Establish the Atmospheres, as we began in class – don’t forget the “pre-beat” (a brief preparation, or as Meyerhold called it an “upbeat” practicing the tripartite rhythm – see exercise below.) Consider the changes as you go along, which will also require you to consider what might be going on among the characters in the play who are hearing what you say. Even if it is a soliloquy, consider the changes of mood/atmosphere for your own character.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Chekhov, 1946, pp. 137-138.

¹⁴⁰ MICHA 2019.

¹⁴¹ Alternate exercise, derived from Meyerhold: Work with Sticks. (Note: a group exercise or can be practiced alone.) The basic skills developed here are precision, balance, coordination, rhythm, discipline and responsiveness.

Exercise 4.3

- b) Go over your monologue in your mind, without saying the words. Start with the final section (end Climax); then do the beginning; then the middle – considering the movement of Willing, Feeling, and Sensations you experienced. Now go over the whole monologue in your mind in the correct order.
- c) Do the same things, but speaking the lines only, without any movement.
- d) Now once again, reflect on how the overall and scene PGs affect your monologue? Physically perform your scene PG, if there is one (that is, if it is different from the overall PG); then perform your overall PG.
- e) Now say the monologue again, making whatever corresponding movements that happen intuitively. (Except not your overall PG!) Repeat. Reflect on the movements you made. If they were appropriate and felt right and satisfying to you, note them down in your Actor's Journal.
- f) Go through just the movements without words.
- g) Now do the entire spoken monologue again, experimenting with different tempos, as you have already begun doing. If you have already arrived at what you feel is the right tempo, use that, but be aware if the preceding exercises have affected your feelings about the tempo, crescendo and diminuendo, and so forth.
- h) Finally, to match the rhythms of your monologue, begin to be aware of how you are speaking, what words you have intuitively emphasized, volume (see notes above), and so forth.

-
- Take a stick like the one detailed in the 'What you will need' section and hold it vertically in your right hand about halfway down. Toss it to your left hand and catch it in the same place. Build this up so that everyone is throwing the sticks at the same time and to the same hands.
 - Make sure your weight shifts accordingly from right to left and back. You can manipulate the circle in the same way as with the tap steps– making it larger, smaller, rotating individually, for example. Slowly the group will establish its own rhythm and with it a sense of collectivity.
 - Now take the stick and hold it in your right hand about three quarters of the way down its length. Make sure your right foot is forward, your left foot back and that your feet are parallel – even though it feels unstable. Your feet should be spread far enough so that if you knelt on your back knee it would meet with the arch of your front foot.
 - Toss the stick up so that it spins through 180 degrees and you can catch it at the other end. Try to make the stick feel 'soft'. Do not move your hand up to catch the stick, let it arrive softly back into your palm, as if it had never been thrown.
 - Practice a number of times making sure that the impetus for the throw is in your legs.
 - Swap hands and now make sure that your left leg is forward, still with parallel feet.
 - Now repeat the whole sequence, throwing with your left hand.
 - Then toss the stick from left to right with your feet shoulder-width apart keeping the 180 degree rotation.
 - Repeat the same pattern – left, right and then left to right – for a 360-degree rotation (one whole revolution), then for one and a half and then two revolutions. This may take a few sessions.
 - Now divide the actions of the throw into three, that is: the **preparation** for the throw; the throw itself, the **action**; and the catching of the stick and the return to where you started, **end point**. The rhythm is: preparation ... and ... throw / "one", catch/ "two".
If you have studied music – as we know Meyerhold did – then this kind of counting ('and' ... 'one', 'two') will not be unfamiliar to you.
'And' is the upbeat before any phrase of music. It's the sign a conductor gives you to get ready for the beginning of the music. In biomechanics this upbeat is visible in the physical frame of the actor as he prepares for the action itself...
 - Try balancing the stick on your arm, foot, knee, chin, shoulder. Pitches 2018 (2004), pp.122, 123.

As you rehearse over the course of weeks, be sure to note down any changes or flashes of intuition that occur to you in your Actor's Journal. Compare these to what you remember of your first attempts.



Chekhov Theatre Studio students at the Dartington Hall “Farewell Performance,” December 1938 (before transferring to the USA), in Maxim Gorky’s *The Lower Depths*. From left: Woody Chambliss (above), Deirdre Hurst [du Prey] (below), Hurd Hatfield, Erika Kapralik, Sam Schatz, and Patrick Harvey (music composer).
(Courtesy of the ZHdK Archiv Boner Papers, Zürich.)

CLASS 22

TEMPO – STACCATO AND LEGATO

(Six-Direction Movement, Pauses, Crescendo and Diminuendo; Scenic Time)

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

SPEECH AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

[If necessary, scenes not presented in the last class will be presented now.]

Brief Lecture:

In Chekhov's very first American lessons, given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst in 1935, he gave the following advice about tempo and the sense of time onstage:

“The actor must develop for himself a sense of time which has nothing to do with the actual clock. Tempo on the stage depends on our feelings, our soul, and our moods. Therefore, it can be increased with the increasing of the emotions – of the Feelings. The actor who possesses this feeling of time on the stage will never hurry, and [never] suffer from it. He will be always outwardly and inwardly free and at Ease. The inner and outer freedom is the only condition. Your own stage timing, not life timing, is the open door to great expression possibilities. And then a practical note for rehearsing: In order to make the tempo quicker, you must break up your scene into more “bits.” It is not necessary to increase the tempo of the “bits” themselves, but there must be more of them.”¹⁴²

Chekhov also spoke of two kinds of tempo, the inner and the outer, and worked out exercises to help the actor understand how these can occur. “Outer tempo (fast or slow) concerns speech, the movement, the stage business. That means all what we can see or hear. Inner tempo is something different. Inner tempo is the speed with which our feelings, emotions, desires, and will impulses of every kind – thoughts, images and so on – can appear and disappear, change and follow one another with greater or lesser speed. These two different tempos – Inner (purely psychological) and Outer (visible and audible) – are absolutely independent one from the other. They can “run” simultaneously, being both either slow or fast or one of them slow and the other fast and vice versa.

Chekhov suggested that an actor could play the beginning of his or her part in one tempo and the end of it in another tempo (or vice versa), and then create many smaller contrasts and polarities in the stage time between. (This applies to all kinds of plays, comedies, tragedies, or all others, especially farces.) The actor can achieve wonderful effects by changing the tempos abruptly, or alternatively, by making slow and beautiful (legato) transitions or adding crescendos, and diminuendos, and so on. There is a real musical sense at work here. “By doing so,” Chekhov concludes, “you will have tremendous possibilities of playing and combining outer and inner tempos the way you wish.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Unpublished – Chekhov 1935a, Three Lessons, 16 March 1935.

¹⁴³ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 8, “On Monotony in Acting”; NYPL call no. [LT10-] 4786; Chekhov and Powers 1992/2004, CD2, track 15.

It is good to remember that while seeking to express the fast outer tempo onstage, the actor should not simply “hurry up” his or her movements. Instead, the movements should be made using the Flying sensations we studied in Classes 6 and 7. Adding this Quality will help the actor prevent the audience from thinking it is the actor who is in a hurry, and, with the motivation and scene objective, add an interior sense of emotional engagement. Otherwise, the impression will be that the actor is helpless and not sure of himself or herself. Of course, this flying quality should be used with a good taste and not overdone.¹⁴⁴

The point is that movement in different tempos still requires Qualities of movement in harmony with the interior Image of the character and the corresponding PG.

22.1) SCENIC TIME Exercise

This is a variation on the “lost object” exercise (done one student at a time):

You have lost the keys to your car.

- a) Search for them, imagining you need to go to the airport to catch a plane. You are worried that you are going to miss your flight.
- b) Do the same search, but without the same sense of urgency – you are going somewhere later, perhaps. You have time to stop and try to remember where you last put them.
- c) [Pedagogical note: a variation will be for the Instructor to preset the keys without the actors knowing where the keys are]. The second time they do this exercise they have to retrace the same path as if it were “Take Two.”

22.2) Exercise on Tempo (Pace)

- a) The group divides into four groups. The Instructor gives each group a simple, ordinary action, not too short, to do at a specified pace/tempo, WITHOUT distinguishing between the internal and external tempo.
- b) Each group will perform the same action at a different pace(s), noting the different Sensations and Feelings at the different tempos. (Or as Chekhov puts it, “surrendering to those spiritual nuances that will arise in connection with a change in pace.”)
- c) Perform the same action, changing the pace during the time while you are doing it (e.g, quickly, then slowly, then moderately, then quickly, or other combinations), again noting the different Sensations and Feelings as the tempo is changed.

CRESCENDO AND DIMINUENDO

Using a musical metaphor, we can call a complete Pause, on the one hand, and a complete outer action on the other, the two poles between which the Diminuendo and the Crescendo swing. But also, within a complete Pause the actors—and consequently the audience, too—can experience Crescendo as well as Diminuendo. Actors who develop the ability to control these two principles in all their subtleties

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

discover psychological nuances in their own acting that they did not even know they possessed.¹⁴⁵

22.3) Exercise on Crescendo and Diminuendo

Experience shows that the most difficult form of Crescendo and Diminuendo is the one that rises and falls slowly, evenly, and smoothly.

- a) Class members begin this exercise alone. Assume a Pause. Develop out of it any simple stage business, develop it to the extreme outer form of action, and then return to the Pause. All this must be done without any jumps, leaps, or jerking – to continue the musical metaphor: legato.
- b) Now join in groups. Do a brief group improvisation. Avoid complicated themes and stage business at first. See that all your words, voices, movements, even the objects you use while improvising (chairs, tables, and properties) fulfill a smooth, even arc of Crescendo and Diminuendo. See that a strong ensemble feeling is established. Do this several times to be sure that you can justify everything you do and thus make your acting truthful and natural.¹⁴⁶
- c) The groups share their improvisations with the others.

ADAPTING TO STACCATO AND LEGATO MOVEMENTS

The musical qualities of Staccato and Legato are slightly different than Tempo, although Staccato usually implies a fast Tempo and Legato a moderate or slow Tempo. In Staccato all the movements are sure and fixed, separated, sharp and quick, precise. Again, we can call this one pole. Now let us consider the opposite pole: in Legato all the movements are smooth and flowing (remember our Floating/Flowing qualities of movement from Classes 6 and 7). Nothing stops in our bodies, everything is like water, flowing in a continuous movement; nothing is sharp. In this exercise we have to imagine that our movement goes on and streams and Radiates out of our whole body. Not only is the physical body important in this exercise, but the imaginary things and the space around us are even more important.

Chekhov insisted that we be able to change immediately from one kind of existence to another on the stage, both in movements and in speech. (Our speech, he insisted, “depends very much on our ability to move. If we are awkward in our movements, we cannot speak well.”)

22.4) Divide into smaller groups, forming circles. You will be performing the exercise for your group members. A chair will be placed in the middle of the circle.

- a) Walk smoothly in Legato movements to the chair, without any particular qualities except wanting to go sit down.
- b) Imagine that when you touch it, the chair is red hot. Express it with sharp, staccato movements.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Chekhov, 1991/1942, p. 140.

¹⁴⁶ Chekhov, 1991/1942, Exercise 80, pp. 140-141.

¹⁴⁷ Chekhov, 1941/1985, Eleventh class, Psychological Gesture, December 12, 1941, p. 135.

c) Now repeat the movement, adding words. Before you walk, say, “I’m so tired; I need to sit down,” and walk Legato to the chair. (Don’t act as if you are “tired” – the slower Tempo and Legato movement will take care of that.) When you touch the chair, make the Staccato movements and then say, quickly and sharply, “Who left this chair in the Sun? It’s red hot!”

22.5) Six-Direction Staccato and Legato

The following exercise is a famous example of the continuous teaching tradition from Chekhov’s work at Dartington, Ridgefield, Hollywood, through his direct pupils, to the second generation of teachers who studies at the New York Michael Chekhov Studio in the 1980s. The version here was given to Chekhov teacher Lenard Petit by Blair Cutting, one of the first six students certified by Chekhov as teachers in 1939. Here are Petit’s words:

My teacher, Blair Cutting, a student of Michael Chekhov, followed Chekhov’s class plan. He began each class with the exercise of staccato/legato. It was of singular importance to him. I have been doing this exercise for 26 years and it is still as fulfilling as it was when I was a student. I have come to believe that the whole Chekhov technique is in this one exercise. It is an exercise that can be done in many ways, and with different focuses.

Mr. Cutting suggested doing this exercise on the stage in preparation for a performance, before the audience is admitted. I did that then, and still do. This is a wonderful way to warm up the instrument. It also allows you to fill the space with your energetic self. It is a creative act to do with other actors, as it helps the ensemble feeling. I cannot begin a performance without it now. It is a kind of cleansing as I can throw off unwanted stale or negative energy that can insidiously interfere with my best intentions as a performer. The exercise also helps us to ground these two tempos with-in the body, thereby incorporating a dynamic understanding of character and quality.¹⁴⁸

a) Stand naturally, relaxed, in present time. Be ready to move in six directions: right, left, up, down, forwards and backwards. You will move in one direction at a time.

Step b1) Make one movement, which you will repeat in all directions (a total of 36 times). Turn to the right and lunge onto your right foot, stepping on it taking all you weight there. It does not need to travel far; a short lunge is enough, a real commitment to the direction of” right,” so that you are completely facing in this direction from your toes to your face. This first movement cycle of six directions is STACCATO.

While you are making this lunge with the lower half of your body, your hands and arms will move straight out to the right in an underhand movement, ending extended out to the right, palms down (if it will help, imagine throwing two

¹⁴⁸ Petit 2010, p. 38; the exercise is given pp. 38-40. Versions with variations were (and are) taught by Petit, David Zinder, Fern Sloan, Ted Pugh, and others among second-generation students, and many subsequent teachers of the Chekhov techniques.

tennis balls, which fly off into the distance with your Radiating, but with no excessive muscle tension at the end). The final position will therefore be all your weight on your right foot facing completely in that direction, your arms and hands fully extended in front of you. It is all done in one efficient movement, one large gesture of throwing while lunging to the right. Send out your inner energy to the right – Radiate. The energy should radiate out of your fingertips, your face, your chest and your knees – powerful enough to go through the wall facing you. Your gaze follows the direction of the arms/hands off into the distance, joining in the Radiation. The staccato movement (quick with stops) is matched by the Radiation, which continues only briefly; then you return in staccato to the starting position and relax. (It is important to return to this position and be present in it, as if you never left it – also between all the movements.)

Steps b2-b6) Now do the same movement, staccato, to the left; upwards, throwing your arms upwards to the sky, radiating into outer space); downwards, bending your knees, head facing down, throwing and Radiating everything through the floor; backwards on the left foot, stepping back and throwing your arms in a downward arc backwards and Radiating behind you; forwards on the right foot, throwing the arms/hands and Radiating in that direction. (If the opposite foot is more comfortable, use that one.)

Remember to return to the starting posture between each movement.

Steps b7-b12) Repeat the staccato movements one more cycle.

Steps b13-b18) Repeat the same cycle, but now LEGATO, slower with no stops between the directions, so that you move through the whole cycle in a fluid continuous motion, as if floating on waves. However, continue throw the arms/hands and Radiate off in the distance, in this case holding it longer and smoothly returning to the starting posture before smoothly beginning the next movement.

Steps b19-b24) Repeat the legato movements one more cycle.

Steps b25-b30) Repeat the staccato movements one more cycle.

Steps b31-b36) Repeat the legato movements one more cycle.

GOLDEN HOOP EXERCISE – done in Staccato, and then in Legato.

Homework for Class 23:

Read in your textbook, Chapter 3, “Improvisation and Ensemble”
(Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 35-36)

The following is an exercise combining Tempo (or pace) with Ensemble feeling.

Create group improvisations distinguishing between the outer and inner Tempos. You will be divided into groups according to the final performance scene you will be doing.

The improvisation is as follows:

(1a) Servants of a big, wealthy family are packing numerous suitcases and

trunks. The family is going on a journey. The butler, supervising the work of the servants, hurries them. The packing goes on quickly and skillfully. The outer Tempo is fast. But the servants, indifferent to the family's excitement, are inwardly calm and placid, knowing that there is plenty of time. Here the inner Tempo is slow.

(1b) Variation on this exercise, set in a big hotel at night. Porters with quick, skillful, habitual movements carry the luggage from the elevator, sort it out and put it into waiting automobiles that must hurry to catch the night train. The outer tempo of the servants is quick, but they are indifferent to the excitement of the guests who are checking out. The inner tempo of the porters is slow. The departing guests, on the contrary, trying to preserve an outer calm, are inwardly excited, fearing they will miss the train; their outer tempo is slow, their inner tempo is quick.]

(2) Now make both Tempos fast. In a small town, preparations for a local festival are being made. The crowd in the street decorates the houses. Both the inner and outer Tempos are quick.

(3) Now let us make both Tempos slow. A group, after a long and tiring picnic, is about to move homeward. People lazily gather their belongings, bid farewell to each other, and enter their automobiles. Both Tempos are slow. Don't confuse the laziness of the characters with inactivity on the actor's part.¹⁴⁹

Study these improvisations and try them out from your own point of view, at home (alone). Take notes in your Actor's Journal. Bring some suitcase(s) to next class (Class 23) and be prepared to create the (1a) or (1b) improvisation in class, this time as a group with other members of the class.

¹⁴⁹ Chekhov 2002/1953 Chapter 5, Exercise 17, p. 76, 1953 p. 84; 1991/1942; Exercise 84, pp. 144-145.

CLASS 23
ENSEMBLE FEELING IMPROVISATIONS
REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

SPEECH WARM-UPS

MOVEMENT WARM-UPS: Ending with 6-Direction Staccato/Legato Exercise

Chekhov on Ensemble Feeling

The feeling of ensemble is the thing which requires from us this friendly connection to every one of our partners [and] will open these mysterious doors where everyone is connected with everybody else. There are means that are very good to establish the ensemble feeling in a broader sense. ... And even this inhibition which you might call “not to be fully present on the stage” is also connected with this feeling of ensemble.¹⁵⁰

23.1) Improvisation Game (from Viola Spolin): “New York”

Players form two teams of equal size and stand on parallel “goal lines” seven meters or more apart.

The first team huddles together, deciding on what occupation, trade, or type of work will be shown. The first team advances across the space in stages, while the following dialogue takes place:

First Team: Here we come!

Second team: Where from?

First Team: New York!

Second team: What’s your trade?

First Team: Lemonade!

Second team: Show us some! If you’re not afraid!

As they advance, the first team players mime or show individually the chosen trade or occupation. Players on the second team try to identify the occupation, calling out its name. If the guess is wrong, the first team goes on showing.

When someone calls out the correct trade, the first team must run back to its goal with the second team in hot pursuit. Those who are tagged join their pursuer’s side.

Now the second team chooses a trade and dialogue is repeated, followed by showing the trade as before. Both sides have three turns and the team having the largest number of players at the end wins.

23.2) Viewing the Homework: Packing Trunks / Going on a Journey Étude Improvisations.

¹⁵⁰ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 6, “On Ensemble Feeling”; NYPL call no. LT10-478.



Chekhov Theatre Studio improvisation “The Subway”, Ridgefield, 1939
(Vakhtangov’s influence).¹⁵¹

23.3) Exercise for Beginning Connections within the Group (from your textbook).

The purpose of this exercise is to establish a sense of connection among the members of the course. All class members must consider the group to be a creative ensemble that consists of individuals, never an impersonal mass group. In general, in this exercise and throughout the course, we will try to ignore all shortcomings or unsympathetic features we may find in members of the group; instead, we will try to find their attractive sides and the better qualities. Do not overdo it, as Chekhov advised, “with prolonged and overly sentimental stares into their eyes, too friendly smiles, or other unnecessary devices.” The exercise is intended, rather, to give you the psychological means for establishing a firm professional contact with your fellow class members, and with others you work with in the future.

a) We begin by opening up ourselves inwardly, in our thoughts and attitudes, to every other member of the course, receiving and appreciating all of them individually. Just as you were ready to receive as the ball was thrown to you, now you are readying yourself inwardly to receive dramatic contributions from your fellow students. As Chekhov put it, each of us must be ready to receive any impressions, even the subtlest, from each one taking part in this exercise and be ready to react to these impressions harmoniously.”

b) The class outlines a succession of three simple actions to choose from. These might include walking quietly around the room, standing motionlessly, changing places, assuming positions against the walls, coming

¹⁵¹ Source: *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (Autumn, 1983), p. 76.

together in the center of the room, or other simple actions that occur to you. The Instructor will list the three chosen actions.

c) Each member of the group decides which of the three or four actions he or she would like to see all the groups do together, *without telling anyone else openly*. Each member of the group, trying to stay open and connected, must try to figure out which of the agreed-upon actions the group as a whole desires to fulfill. After a few moments of observation, the closer and sharper the better, a signal will be given by the Instructor, and each member will then proceed to carry out the movement he or she thinks the group as a whole will desire.

d) The same process is repeated several times.

Note: It may not work at first. Chekhov's hope was, even if several false starts had to be made by one or all, eventually the common action will be arrived at in concert. The object is for all the members to select and perform the same action at the same time without prearrangement or hint of any kind. Whether we succeed or not, Chekhov insisted, "is of no consequence, because the real value of the exercise lies in the effort to open one's self to the others and to intensify the actor's ability to observe his partners at all times, thus strengthening sensitivity toward the entire ensemble."¹⁵²

23.4) Exercise: Mob Scene Improvisation

The point of this étude is to develop a sense of the character as an individual within a group, surrounded by the Atmosphere but retaining his or her identity. Here the voice of experience is speaking: Chekhov was greatly respected (including in New York) for directing crowd scenes, choruses and extras in opera, etc. "Remember," he advised, "that when the actor takes part in any mob or crowd scene, he or she is inclined to lose his individuality and feel engulfed in the group of people around him—'absorbed' in it, as it were. ... The actor begins to act as if he were the whole crowd. He becomes noisy and restless, and his whole behavior is 'general' instead of being individual. This false and unnatural acting makes the impression that the crowd consists of dolls and puppets. An actor must elaborate his part in a crowd scene with the same care as any other individual part."¹⁵³

General scenario (suggested): A group of students and young adults is upset about a decision made by people in authority – it may be a city hall or national government, a university administration, a corporation affecting the lives of people or the environment, or the like. The important thing is that the decision seems morally wrong and damaging to the people involved. They come together in some outdoor space – a street or city square, the plaza in the middle of campus, a park, etc. Improvise what happens. Some will speak the concerns – after a moment of "hubbub" chaos, the "leaders" will emerge, others will question them and add ideas. Finally, someone will suggest a group action to take, and the group sets off towards their destination.

¹⁵² Full text in Chekhov 1953/2002, Exercise 13, pp. 41-47.

¹⁵³ Chekhov, 1991/1942, Exercise 63, pp. 120-121; not in 1953.

USEFUL DRAMATIC TOOLS

Chekhov, and most drama teachers, separate repetitive clichés and ironclad rules from useful tools to be used onstage. By this is meant certain dramatic tools and theatrical applications of things that are, as Chekhov put it, “absolutely connected to human nature.” These are tools derived from long practical experience, both Chekhov’s and each actor’s, as he or she performs on the stage. Not only can these be useful (if they are not simply clichés), but they may also become sources of creative inspiration, even if they are not “applied on the stage as such.” Every actor must have a repertoire of such devices (his or her “bag of tricks”) – again, always assuming they are not simply old-hat clichés. They have to be real, personally applied, actually connected to human nature.

Chekhov gives the example of one character who wants to persuade another or tell another something. “If we act in the same tempo, it gives the impression that the understanding is not quite complete, but if the rhythms are different, the understanding seems to be there.” That is, if both characters are immediately on the same wavelength, the effect is (dramatically) too artificial. Chekhov also mentioned facing the audience directly when you wish to show your character’s “more emotional, moral side ... whereas if you wish to show that you are thinking clever or sly things, or things to do with the intellect, it is better to show the profile.”¹⁵⁴ When I was a young actress, a famous older colleague, Vlastimil Brodský, reminded me to walk in curving lines onstage, not in straight lines – the curved line gave me a sense of the surrounding space and Feelings of Ease and Beauty.

When working in rehearsal or on a film/TV set where everything is in a hurry, you might find a scene partner needing to use such a “trick.” Respectfully sharing it with that person is a wonderful way to increase ensemble feeling and connection with your scene partner. Chekhov’s colleagues in California, veterans of the Hollywood film and TV industry, reported respectfully sharing this kind of advice with younger colleagues to good effect.¹⁵⁵

ALBANY TIMES-UNION TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1940

CHEKHOV PLAYS HAILED

By EDGAR S. VAN OLINDA
Albany owes a debt of gratitude to Curator John David Hatch, Jr., of the Albany Institute of History and Art for the privilege of being one of the first cities in the country to witness a superb performance of the Chekhov theatre studios, artistic conception of Shakespeare's immortal comedy, "Twelfth Night," which was given in the Institute auditorium before a distinguished audience last evening. In its long history as a "theatre town," Albany has been host to most of the great names in the legitimate theatre, but we can say without equivocation that the performance last night, for sheer artistry and finished work, has never been surpassed since there has been nothing in the past quite of the whimsical and unique character as that offered by the magnificent All-American company. What Walt Disney has been able to accomplish in the media of animated drawings, Michael Chekhov, in collaboration with George Shdanoff, has transferred to the small stage with all the imagination of their Russian background. Judicious curtailing of sequences of essential to the projection of the hilarious comedy has been nicely accomplished and the coadjutors have succeeded admirably in getting the entire comedy content across without sacrifice of essential action or dialogue.

Masters of the art of pantomime. Each member of the cast is an artist in his or her own right. The action and dialogue are so perfectly timed and so thoroughly mastered that the entire performance runs with the smoothness of a 16-cylinder motor car. To pick any individual performance for special approbation would be to destroy the value of the beautifully integrated ensemble.

Suffice it to say that the cast, the beautiful settings and the inspired direction resulted in a red letter day in the Albany theatre. Tonight, the same company will present Dicken's "The Cricket on the Hearth." If you have not made plans to attend this final performance, we urge you most strongly to do so. There will be nothing finer from an artistic standpoint in many years to come.

¹⁵⁴ Chekhov 1941/1985, 11th Class, p. 135.

¹⁵⁵ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 1, “Questions and Answers”; NYPL call no. LT10-4779 (unpublished).

Homework:

Do the continuing Homework exercises previously given.

Arrange at least one rehearsal session after each class with your scene partners – that is, two a week. Keep notes of problem areas or areas with which you are dissatisfied in your Actor's Journal.

Double exercise on Concentration and “Making Friends” with Stage Properties:

Place a group of three or four small objects on a table at home a few feet away from you. If your scene or monologue requires you to handle a prop or use a costume accessory (such as a necklace, fan, or glove), make sure one of the objects is similar or identical to the prop you will use in performing.

- a) One by one, concentrate intently on each object, noting its overall shape, composition (materials and their Qualities such as hardness or smoothness), and the details of its construction. Then imagine using it, how you would grasp it, etc.
- b) After you form these strong and detailed images go to the table and pick up the objects one by one, handling them and getting used to how each one is used – get acquainted with it, being at ease with the object and its use.
- c) Now repeat the exercise in the character you will play in your final scene. Before approaching the table, do your character's overall PG. Pay particular attention to the object similar to any prop you will actually use.
- d) Now do the same as the character for your monologue. Pay particular attention to the object similar to any prop you will actually use.

Write down the results in your Actor's Journal. If one of the objects is similar to an actual prop you will use in either your scene or monologue, bring it to class next time (Class 24).

CLASS 24

TECHNIQUES FOR USE ON THE SET AUDITIONING ACTING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

Assigned text: Merlin, Joanna. 2001. *Auditioning: An Actor-Friendly Guide*. New York: Vintage Books. A film shots chart is in **Handout 5**, and excerpts from this book are in **Handout 6**, Appendix 11.

[Note: the classroom or studio is pre-set with a properties table containing random objects, including capes, canes, hats, gloves, scarves, tools, etc. Chairs will as usual be along one wall.]

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

SPEECH WARM-UPS

MOVEMENT WARM-UPS: Ending with 6-Direction Staccato/Legato Exercise

Using concentration to reduce inhibitions.

Chekhov insisted that everyone has the ability, “even without any training, to concentrate one’s own attention, at least for a few seconds, on something.” This is an essential dramatic tool in all acting systems, but it can also be highly useful when the actor starts having what Chekhov called “inhibitions” onstage (stage fright, blanking out, losing focus in a scene, attention wandering, moment of discomfort, etc.). Just concentrate on something for a few seconds, on anything you wish. Chekhov semi-joked: “if here is nothing better, on the nose of your partner (there are always better things.), just for 30 seconds.” He added, “and really try to see it. What is the shape of the nose? So just to do this thing instinctively, naturally, and that will be very helpful. ... we collect ourselves.”¹⁵⁶

24.1) Imagine a moment in your scene or monologue; get in the mood, the Atmosphere. Now look around the room and quickly focus on something (other than people’s noses) for 30 seconds.

24.2) Performing the Homework

Chekhov, Uta Hagen, and other teachers have stressed how important it was for the actor to be comfortable with the environment of the stage setting (or, even more, the film or video set). They insisted on the necessity of “making friends” with the space (as in our 6-Direction Exercise), but also with the scenery, props, and costumes. On the film or TV set, this extends to the cameras and other technical equipment, with the stagehands (your best audience), and so forth. Props, costumes, and accessories are extensions of us. (For example, gloves are an extension of the hands.)

¹⁵⁶ Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 6; NYPL call no. LT10-4784.

EXERCISE: the table is preset with props and costume accessories.

a) Go to just one object (if you brought one, make sure it is on the table)
As yourself, the actor, examine it and use it as it is intended; get acquainted with it until you are at ease with the object and its use.

b) Find the important moments in its use – beginning, middle, and end – and repeat them several times.

c) Now do the action again in character, either from your monologue or scene.

Chekhov does not suggest that you “play” the character. Imagine the character doing the action, and then continue, “letting the character do it for you.”

Now let your character do the action as though for an audience onstage (your fellow-students will be your audience here) or for the camera.

AUDITIONING AND CAMERA WORK

Note on pedagogical application except as noted, this section of the class is based on Merlin’s text.]

Lecture

This is not a class on acting for the camera or auditioning, but so much of the Chekhov work is adapted to film and TV – remember the last 13 years of Chekhov’s life and both of the acting books he published in his lifetime were done in Hollywood. What is more, one of Chekhov’s most important pupils, Joanna Merlin, worked with Harold Prince in casting and wrote your textbook on Auditioning called *Auditioning: An Actor-Friendly Guide* (including in front of the camera), applying many of Chekhov’s techniques. So, this class has been included as an “appetizer.”

First, some advice from Joanna Merlin (paraphrased): “The auditioning process is unpredictable. The script may or may not be available to you in advance. Space might vary; the atmosphere might be friendly or hostile. The actor’s misperception of the auditioning process can be crippling. Please, keep in mind that without the vision and talent of the actor, the auditors are powerless, they can’t do their work.”¹⁵⁷

Merlin notes that “you are the key to their power. In fact the auditors’ biggest hope is that you will give a superb audition so they can cast the role and go home. Once you realize that there is a balance of power between the actor and director, you might start looking forward to the next audition.”

Today auditioning (even for the theatrical roles, not only film and TV roles) in person has been replaced by self-taped auditions. The actor needs to act quickly and get his or her tape online. Don’t hold back, study your lines once you get the invitation for an audition, be creative and submit the audition as soon as you are prepared – but be prepared before you tape in order to deliver a lively audition that reveals your potential for playing the role. Merlin says in her book that: “The major reason actors resist preparing properly for audition is fear of rejection. Stay resilient and work on your craft/game like tennis champions who win and lose.”

Focus on your preparation for the audition (exercise, relax, warm up, radiate, focus on a detail while sitting and breathing deeply and calmly, looking into

¹⁵⁷ Merlin 2001, pp. 7 ff., *passim*. I have oriented this class to Merlin’s concepts.

your palms finding a focus spot, put yourself into a happy place – be on a “cloud”). “You need to approach an audition,” Merlin insists, “and for that matter your career with the firm belief that you have something to offer that is unique.”

Among the benefits of auditioning are learning to work quickly (very important in TV and Film), helping you explore your character range, and teaching you how to direct yourself so that you can make independent choices confidently. They can open the door to getting work in the future, developing a network, and of course, providing a chance to act. After the audition, you should do some reflection on how well you accomplished your task.

24.3) PERFORMING YOUR MONOLOGUE IN CLASS AS IF FOR AN AUDITION

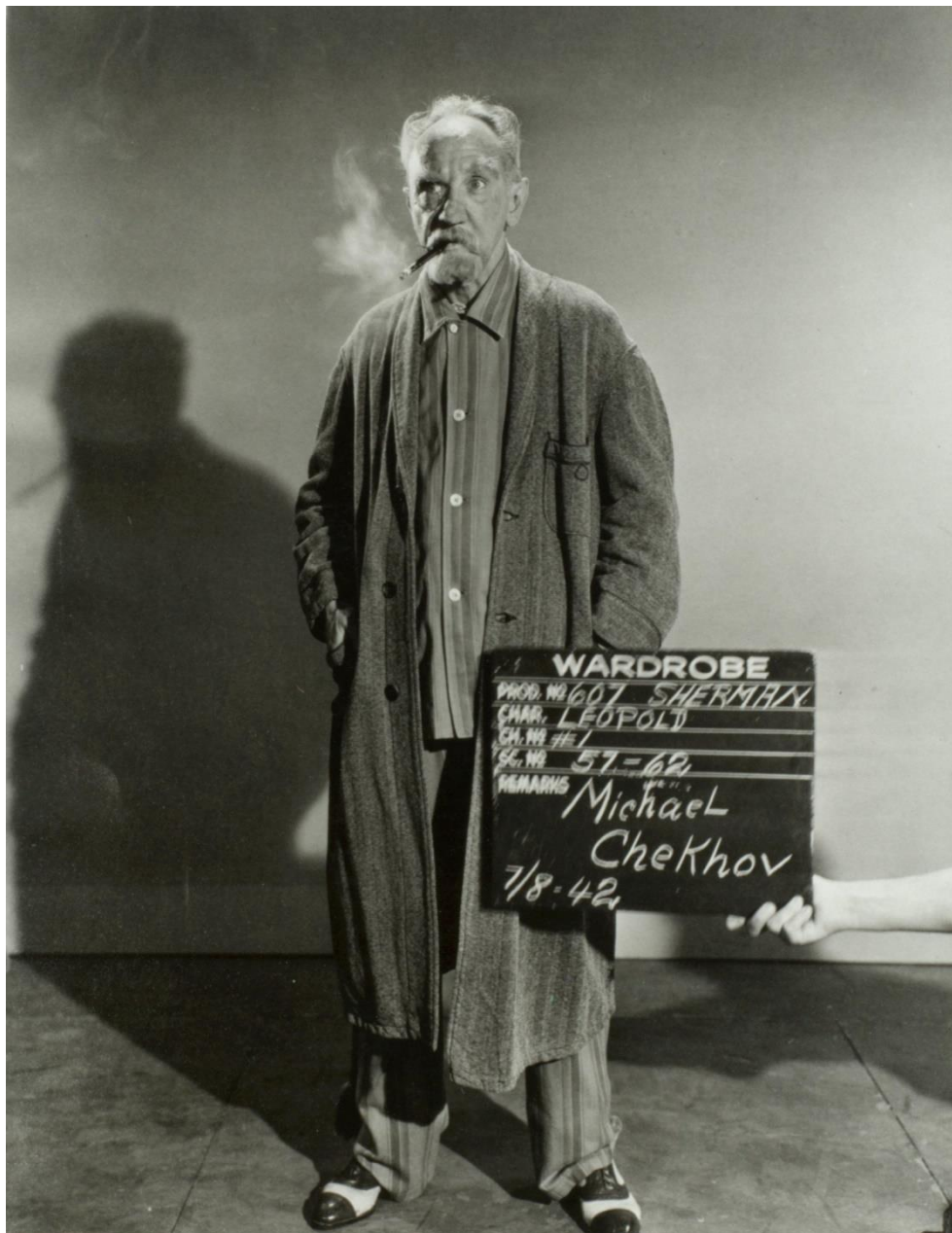
We will now do our monologues as though they are being done for an audition. As we do this, we will keep in mind Chekhov’s principles of keeping the Image of the character in mind, including the super-objective and the corresponding PG, the scene objective, and a sense for the general Atmosphere you are performing under. Some basic elements that Merlin identifies as being those directors look for in an audition (all compatible with the Chekhov work) are Concentration; a Feeling of Truth (projecting authenticity, with everything your character says and does being believable, within the style of the play); a certain spontaneity, playing from moment to moment, or as Merlin puts it, “in touch with your impulses and feelings”; and Specificity, using “acting choices that are particular to the scene and the character.” You need to express creative Energy, “either inner, outer or both,” and know where there is Humor in the lines and how to play it.

Not all the monologues will touch on all these elements, but overall it will require you to display Courage and take risks – don’t play it safe, bland, inhibited –show off your Skill and techniques.

So, take a moment to center yourself on your character. Imagine your character and do its PG in your mind’s eye. Consider the other students in the course the auditioning committee.

Begin by giving your “Slate” – they wrote the information down on a small blackboard in the old days in Hollywood – stating your name, your height, weight, and city directly to the auditors (people hearing your audition), or directly into the camera if taping, before you begin the audition scene. Merlin suggests saying your name in a friendly, straightforward fashion, as a simple means of identification: nothing cute.

Before you start the monologue itself, imagine the scene and follow Merlin’s advice to always pause to get a sense of the “pre-beat” before you start. (Perhaps not fully visible like Meyerhold’s “upbeat”).



1944 (year released) – *In Our Time* – Michael Chekhov as Uncle Leopold Baruta, starring in the film with Ida Lupino; director Vincent Sherman. Notice the “slate” labeling the shot.
(Photo courtesy of ZHDK Archiv Boner Papers.)

Students present their monologues as though auditioning for a stage play.

24.4) Auditioning in front of a camera.

Now we are going to do the monologues in a different way, as medium close shots into the camera. As you might know, and from my own experience in many films and television programs, acting in front of the camera requires you to adapt in several ways. You don't have to project your voice in a resonating way; you speak in conversational tones and volume, but of course clearly, articulating the words in keeping with your characterization. Whereas on the stage you project your voice and even use a “stage whisper” from your diaphragm to give the effect of whispering while still projecting to the audience, in front of the camera, with a microphone, you can actually whisper, as long as it is audible and clear. When giving your “Slate,”

you look directly into the camera; otherwise you should avoid looking directly into the camera unless you are directed to do so, or want to achieve a confrontational, haranguing effect that is likely to startle the viewer.

Merlin advises that, in a medium close-up, “the camera reveals what is happening inside your mind, heart, and body; what you are thinking, feeling, wishing.” Merlin and others point out that you use the space around you (including what is off-screen) as if it were the character’s environment (remember Atmosphere!), but you have a much more limited possibility for movement. Whereas on stage, you speak loudly and move “loudly,” with the whole body expressing how your character feels and wills. In a medium close shot, you must imagine you are performing for a group on the other side of a window the bottom frame of which is just above your waist! (Actually, Merlin suggests that when you look out, imagine a window, a field, or whatever.)

You have to condense your movements to fit the window (or you will go off screen). Don’t “flatten” the script. You need to move, but appropriate to the window of view. Working in front of a camera requires, to quote Merlin again, “a different balance between your inner life and its outer expression.” In the intimate context of a camera close up, “your eyes are your most valuable asset. The camera reads your thoughts and feelings through your eyes.” Every glance tells a story.

You need to think of where to look when filming. As noted, looking directly into the lens is only for very confrontational effect. Better to look a few inches to the left or right of the lens. If your monologue is directed to another person, set that imaginary person to the left or right of the whole camera, where you imagine him or her to be. (In the situations where you are responding to dialogue, this “person” would be called “the reader” – that is, reading the other character’s lines.) When you need to turn away from this listener, turn toward the opposite side of the camera from where the listener is placed. This is called “crossing camera.” It comes up more in dialogue than in monologues, but it should be remembered. If there are two people you are speaking to, one is on each side of the camera. If a group, look to one side or other of the lens or out the “window” if they are further away. Merlin, speaking of the dialogue situation, notes that “looking directly at the reader (not in the camera lens), looking away, the rhythm of your looks, the quality of your looks, have more impact than any other element in camera auditioning in a medium close-up.”

An “aside”: It’s an interesting question how one goes about acting for the camera when you are playing a blind person. In 1979, I had the lead role of a partially blind girl in the film, *The Trumpet’s Song*, for the Czech director, Ludvík Ráža. (It won the First Prize – the “Golden Nymph” Award – for the Best International Film at the Monte Carlo Motion Picture Festival in 1980.) It was very challenging to be cast as a partially blind girl in a movie. You practice and learn not to look at things. It sounds obvious, but let us realize that there are a lot of little things people who can see do. They look at a chair before sitting, for example. Use the sense of touch instead. When finding a chair, put one hand on the back or the arm rest. Do not turn your head. Blind people have little need to move head and neck.



Lenka Pichlíková with Vladislav Beneš in the film *CHVÍLE PRO PÍSEŇ TRUBKY* (*Time for the Trumpet's Song*), 1979.

The exception is when hearing a noise. My character loved music and sang. Blindness heightens your sense of hearing, so you have to develop that. Sighted people turn and look; blind people will turn an ear that way. The quality of movement adapts to the specific atmosphere and space. Blind people sometimes don't turn towards the person with whom they are talking. Don't make eye-contact.

When moving just brush objects with the back of your fingers to help maintain orientation. You can tap the door frame with your hand – use the sense of touch to orient yourself. If you play a blind person in a familiar space to you, you know that, for example, the next six steps need to be at a right diagonal, but you don't turn your head because ... what's the point? There are just subtle differences in behavior.

Now, let's get back to our monologues. Everyone, please go over in your mind your monologue:

To whom is it addressed? Where do you want to look? Think and imagine particularly your movements and stage business, if any. Think about your eyes and facial expressions and how to condense your movement.

Students perform their monologue as though filming an audition.

GOLDEN HOOP EXERCISE

CLASS 25 TO CLASS 28
REHEARSAL AND APPLICATION OF CHEKHOV'S TECHNIQUES IN
SCENES AND MONOLOGUES

CLASS 25
REHEARSAL (SCENES / MONOLOGUES) AND FEEDBACK

CLASS 26
REHEARSAL – run through and technical rehearsal

CLASS 27
DRESS REHEARSAL

CLASS 28
Presentation of your **FINAL MONOLOGUE** (videotaping) Invite your friends and family to come and see you perform!) Note: **Course evaluations and final feedback.**

4.2 Concluding Remarks

The intensive one-semester course on the Chekhov method presented here has tried to combine several elements. It has used, as much as possible, Chekhov's own words, exercises, and ideas, augmenting the course textbook (the 1953/2002 edition of *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*) with material from Chekhov's 1942 and 1946 publications, transcribed lessons, and 1955 lectures. It has been designed to be fully compatible with students' prior training in Stanislavsky-derived techniques, and I feel assured, on the basis of my own prior training in Stanislavsky's, Hagen's, Berghof's, and Meisner's approaches, that the course harmonizes with those methods, even when Chekhov's ideas are different from Stanislavsky's. Furthermore, the course uses much new material (made available here to students and teachers), such as the first complete translation into English of Chekhov's 1946 Russian-language chapter on Psychological Gesture, provided elsewhere in this study.

In looking over the course, it becomes clear that certain elements from Chekhov's method have required repeated or particular emphasis. The Crossing the Threshold exercise is repeated at the beginning of each class. Concepts such as Centers and Imaginary Centers, Image work, Actions with Qualities ("the easiest way to the living feelings – stirring our feelings without

forcing them”), and generally, psychophysical exercises, repeat throughout the course in different contexts after having been introduced. Images, the Imaginary Character, Archetypal Gestures, and Atmosphere are interrelated and central to the Chekhov method, and so are especially emphasized over many classes. Similar emphasis is placed on Psychological Gesture, the most typical example of the psychophysical basis of Chekhov’s method.

It helps that so many of Chekhov’s elements come from his MAT origins, so that the intermediate or advanced students for whom the course is designed will have, for example, some idea of Concentration/Attention and its relation to Imagination, Centers, Scene Analysis (bits) with Objectives, Through-lines and Super-objectives, and so forth. For example, Psychological Gesture requires knowing what a Super-objective is and how to determine it. (However, it cannot be taught unless the student understands Images, since the Psychological Gesture remains an image in the mind while also being an actual gesture.)

One question that should be asked about my intention to base the syllabus/teaching script on Chekhov’s own words is implied by the comments of several of the leading Chekhov practitioners I interviewed. In order to learn the Chekhov method adequately, they needed more than simply reading Chekhov’s *To the Actor*. To put it another way, I asked myself if Chekhov’s words themselves could function well in an introductory course.

However, I was guided by classes and pedagogical workshops with Chekhov teachers, by Chekhov’s own voice in his recorded lectures, and by advice from MICHA members – including those I interviewed. There was also my own prior training in dramatic technique, decades of professional experience, and the ability to share Chekhov techniques with my pupils in university courses. I tried the Chekhov work myself and realized how much it opened up possibilities for free creative expression. The practical application of his techniques in my own work and in my classes led me to trust myself, and therefore to believe that what Chekhov said was trustworthy.

Any wording in Chekhov's texts that was confusing has been paraphrased (with the verbatim source given in the notes and Appendix 8) and adapted to the needs of a modern university classroom/studio. Prior to creating the syllabus/teaching script, I tested many of the exercises in my own acting and in teaching my students, so I knew the effort would be fruitful. (The syllabus makes it convenient for other teachers to apply the exercises to their students' needs and thus further test how effective they are in various contexts.)

On the other hand, it needs to be understood, as the South Asian philosopher, Maharaj, put it, "that each teacher has his own method, usually patterned on his guru's teachings and on the way he himself has realized and his own terminology as well. Within that framework, adjustments to the personality of the disciple are made. The disciple is given full freedom of thought and inquiry and encouraged to question to his heart's content."¹⁵⁸

It is this sense of earnestness that I sought in preparing the syllabus and teaching script. Each person who teaches the Chekhov method is, in Chekhov's words, a "creative individual," so there will necessarily be a certain amount of variation in the manner of teaching, especially since Chekhov gives each actor the same freedom that Maharaj admires. While I have tried to use Chekhov's words, I also have to teach the method according to my own experience and creative individuality. Each of us, as a teacher, helps the student have an experience that will move them forward on the path to artistic discovery.

Furthermore, every effort has been made to place the exercises chosen here into the full context of Chekhov's teaching, including resources Chekhov shared with his pupils in both Dartington/ Ridgefield and California (for example, the "Chart for Inspired Acting" and the records of his hands-on teaching), so that his original words are presented as though within the context of his own pedagogy. The problem the Chekhov practitioners have reported (with just reading) has therefore been addressed within the design of the course (by combining readings with action). Chapter Four is applied

¹⁵⁸ Maharaj and Frydman 1973 (1978)-2012, p. 401.

pedagogy, and I am confident it respects Chekhov's intentions as well as including elements I have tested in my own acting and with my students.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Who was Michael Chekhov? What was his dramatic method? What elements did he bring to his method and teaching from his origins in the Moscow Art Theatre and the techniques of Konstantin Stanislavsky? How did he adapt these techniques and enlarge them, adding many new influences, as he developed the method that bears his name? What role do his publications and the teaching tradition passed down by his students play in the process of learning his technique? What was the lasting influence and importance of his pedagogy? These questions, posed at the outset and throughout this study, can be answered in the most positive way possible, including in my own experience as a scholar, actress, and teacher of theatre arts.

The chapters of this study have described Michael Chekhov's dramatic method and associated scenology and discussed how the method was developed in his pedagogical publications. I have reported on my own dramatic training, learning, and teaching the Chekhov work and offered an example of how an intensive course on the Chekhov method could be prepared.

In addition to an analysis of Chekhov's pedagogy and the documents for investigating it, this study has provided new resources for scholars and teachers, both in the main text of the dissertation and in eleven Appendices such as the Chronology of Chekhov's life (1), a Glossary of his artistic terms (2), a series of recent interviews with contemporary international teachers of the Chekhov method (6), the first complete English translation of Chekhov's 1946 Russian chapter on Psychological Gesture (10), and others documenting the lineage by which Chekhov's work has been carried on.

Chapter One – Chekhov's Method

Chapter One indicated several aspects of Chekhov's method that are essential to any understanding of his pedagogy. To begin with the obvious, the study has repeatedly confirmed that Chekhov's origins as a theatre pedagogue are firmly rooted in the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Leopold

Sulerzhitsky, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov, Chekhov's teachers and colleagues at the Moscow Art Theatre. Of the long list of elements documented and discussed in Chapter One (and many other studies of Chekhov's dramatic theory) as originating in the MAT, we may underscore concepts such as Concentration, Multi-leveled Attention, Imagination, Will-impulses, Super-Objectives, Radiation, Atmosphere of the play, and Rhythm. There were also other, less tangible ways his MAT origins affected Chekhov, such as a sense of Stanislavsky's tremendous energy and dedication to the theatre and his colleagues; the way Stanislavsky's life and art interpenetrated each other; and Vakhtangov's love of beauty and constant awareness of the audience and how it would be affected. At Dartington and Ridgefield this focus on the audience was built into the pedagogical program from the outset. For example, the booklet for the Chekhov Theatre Studio in 1936 insisted, "An attempt to evolve a new type of actor, producer, author and designer will form an important part of the Studio's work. No less important will be a new type of audience. ... The new type of actor, producer, playwright, and artist will develop in himself the power to carry a moral responsibility for what arises in the soul of the spectator."¹ In all that Chekhov did, there is a complete rejection of whatever was superficial and a corresponding embrace of whatever would inspire.

In order to affect the audience in an uplifting and creative way, the process of preparing a dramatic production must be collaborative, including ensemble and participation in the overall concept and design. It cannot be just a director telling everyone what to do. Each actor must visualize his or her connections to the material: how they see the play, its themes, its atmospheres, and so forth. There must be a meeting place. The metaphor I use is that of five rivers approaching the sea. The rivers merge into one stream, that one powerful stream which carries the play and its artistic truths to the audience.

¹ See Chekhov Theatre Studio, Dartington Hall Brochure, 1936, pp.11-14 and ff.

Chekhov himself increasingly emphasized his MAT origins in his teaching in California, in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor*, and in his 1955 lectures. The emphasis was pedagogical as well as strategic. It is important to keep in mind that it was Michael Chekhov who after 1938 carried the light of Stanislavsky's artistic pedagogical torch. By 1945-1950, Stanislavsky elements had become essential to modern dramatic method, and they were needed for his students to understand and apply Chekhov's own innovations, created over three decades.

These innovations are, of course, the most important elements in Chekhov's dramatic theory and pedagogy, and represent the most important, lasting contributions he made to drama pedagogy. Chekhov did not simply imitate what he learned at the MAT. Concepts such as Atmospheres were elaborated by Chekhov into forms both incorporating Stanislavsky's (and Vakhtangov's) ideas and then going well beyond them. In particular, Chekhov's substitution of Imagination and the use of Images for Affective Memory, his emphasis on the physical senses, his psychophysical exercises and exploration of movements with "Qualities" for generating emotions, and his use of the Imaginary Body and Imaginary Centers in building a character, created a completely new dramatic system – even if the foundation was acquired at the MAT. Finally, there is the Psychological Gesture in its two forms, an element unique to the Chekhov method. Nothing in the system is forced; all elements flow organically one into the other. As Chekhov practitioner and teacher Craig Mathers put it in his interview, "for my soul it is more dynamic and it's more of A LIVING ORGANISM, than some other approaches." Properly conducted, classes in Chekhov's techniques should typically "unpack" different aspects of the method, as Lenard Petit has suggested, so that the actor, entering any element, will be automatically connected to all the others. This was intended by Chekhov and is made possible because all of the elements, to repeat David Zinder's observation, are based on natural psychophysical processes.² Furthermore, Chekhov was an

² See Petit's wider comments in Appendix 6, below; Zinder 2002/2009, p. 250 – op. cit. Chapter Three, with discussion.

unusually “hands-on” leader, always in the studio – in the work space, crossing the Threshold with his students, directing the flow towards the artistic goal. His students described him as very kind, but demanding. He was not the sort of drama teacher who sits back in the dark behind a table. (See the photograph in Chapter Four, Class 10.)

An important part of Chekhov’s pedagogy depends on his subtle understanding of human psychology, which yielded a holistic extension into an actor’s life. Chekhov loved actors, and those involved in the Chekhov work develop new sensitivities. This can become very important as actors of various backgrounds and origins – not to mention groups internationally – work together. Each Chekhov actor should be grounded, “entirely self-determined and ruled from within, not from without,” to cite Maharaj again, “[giving] up what is valueless,”³ but committed to the common dramatic purpose. It was wonderful to observe the atmosphere of Ease at the MICHA (the Michael Chekhov Association) sessions, made even more vivid by the extraordinarily international character of the group, the way Chekhov created an international group in Dartington and Ridgefield. The actors came from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, but all were understood, because the technique incorporates understanding into the actor’s movement and inner processes.

The awareness of psychology was stimulated by Chekhov’s spiritual beliefs, especially his interest in Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, and by Chekhov’s personal philosophy, both of which continued to interact with his dramatic theories throughout his career as an actor and as a pedagogue. As has been shown, the spiritual aspects of Chekhov’s dramatic theory, even when they are secularized and presented basically as psychology, and his insistence on a psychophysical approach to acting, are highly innovative and effective. What is more, his spiritual and psychophysical approach seems today to have been a forerunner of today’s interest. As Chekhov practitioner Scott Fielding put it, “today everything is ‘body, mind, soul’; it is on PBS

³ Maharaj and Frydman 1973 (1978)-2012, p. 294.

every weekend.” (See Appendix 6, especially the responses of Fielding, Cerullo, Sloan, Pugh, McManus, Andrees, and Dalton.)

Chekhov’s insistence on intangible, inner elements (thoughts, feelings, will-impulses, images) governing physical and vocal expression, is related to his spiritual approach, but also connects his theory and pedagogy to the MAT and other systems that teach dramatic method. Chekhov’s visual approach offers significant parallels with visual artists of his era, including his collaborators in productions and publications. We must never forget that Chekhov himself had talent as a visual artist, and often used metaphors and examples taken from the visual arts and architecture.

Speech training was highly important in Chekhov’s understanding of theatre. Chekhov’s choice of the speech element in the Dartington and Ridgefield curriculum were the Rudolf Steiner traditions of Eurythmy and Speech Formation. Live music was also an important part of the training context, as documented in Chapter One. Unfortunately, after the closing of the Ridgefield Studio, speech training basically disappears from Chekhov’s pedagogy. Eurythmy is found in the 1942 and 1946 editions of *To the Actor* but not in the 1953 edition. As has been suggested, this may in part reflect a difference of opinion among Chekhov’s students (and patrons) about the value of Eurythmy. In any case speech training is only offered today by Chekhov practitioners with a separate specialty in speech (such as Max Hafler) or previous training in Eurythmy (John McManus), or at Steiner-related institutions such as Emerson College in England. The loss of the speech element seems to me one area where contemporary Chekhov training is incomplete.

Chapter Two – Chekhov’s Publications

An entire chapter of this study of Chekhov’s pedagogy (Chapter Two) has been devoted to an analysis of his published writings, including a comparison to the only partially published 1955 lectures. My motive was to make sure that this and future studies of Chekhov’s method would have a firm basis with regard to the three editions of *To the Actor*. Among the things

I found was a sense of the basic continuity of Chekhov's ideas about the theatre, but also an awareness of the evolution of his approach to teaching and his way of expressing his ideas. Some of this is directly related to other aspects of his career, such as his return to acting, in English, in the 1940s, principally in films. Some of the evolution was "structural" – that is, the loss of a Studio dedicated exclusively to his vision of actor training and ensemble creation, and therefore the necessity of finding other ways to teach and coach acting, and indeed, to publish his ideas.

In this context, the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* – the most widely read and translated of his writings – has been found to clearly express, on the one hand, Chekhov's basic ideas, but also to vary considerably from Chekhov's previous descriptions of his method. As has been noted, a third of the book (Chapters 9-12) provides entirely new material shown in a different light and not included in the 1946 or 1942 editions of his text. Like many Chekhov practitioners, including those teachers with a deeper understanding of the technique than I, I have sought to go back to Chekhov's earlier expressions of his ideas. This is particularly true of the 1946 Russian text, for the many insights provided, especially in the chapter on the Psychological Gesture. As indicated above with regard to Eurythmy, I also document what had been lost in the 1953 publication and why.

Acting in front of the camera is today a necessary part of any dramatic training. Chekhov's refinements in his system, and the evolving expression of his innovative elements, such as Psychological Gesture, which play such an important role in his publications, are also crucial for film and television work. This makes it possible, for the modern student as for Chekhov's own students after 1943, to use his techniques in a wider range of dramatic applications. One might add that literally scores of significant professional actors among his former students have obviously achieved great success applying his techniques. (See Appendix 9 for a selection of these.)

Students and Patrons as “Audience”

Central to any study of Chekhov’s publications and the evolution of his pedagogy is an awareness of how patronage and different groups over the years received his teachings. I have spoken above of Chekhov’s sense of the actor’s responsibility to the audience in the theatre. But in this study, I have extended the idea to include patrons, students, readers, and professional colleagues in his “audiences.” As the study shows, this affected both his ideas and his articulation of them. The succession of these pedagogical audiences began in Moscow, continued in Kaunas and Riga, and found stability in Dartington and Ridgefield. While still leading the Studio in Ridgefield, Chekhov opened a branch of the Studio in New York City and gave additional classes for professional actors. (At Ridgefield, the program even included acting classes and theatrical performances for children – the future audience for the theatre in general.) After the Ridgefield Studio closed and he moved to Hollywood to continue his acting career, he taught or coached a range of actors, from famous movie stars to beginning professional actors and acting students. He made sure that all could benefit from his teachings, even without a full-time Studio or conservatory. And of course, his books and lectures presented his method and life philosophy to an even wider public. As mentioned earlier, Chekhov addressed the needs of actors in the world of film, television, radio, and other commercial media, providing a “short cut” for those already familiar with his method, so they could create roles rapidly. He applied his pedagogy to the needs of his audiences. A great communicator on the stage continued to communicate in the private studio or classroom, as well as the lecture hall.

Chapter Three – Learning Chekhov

Chapter Three of this study addressed my experiences learning the Chekhov method in the context of my previous study of acting techniques. These included basic Stanislavsky technique, including Richard Boleslavsky, the pedagogy of Uta Hagen and Herbert Berghof (possibly influenced itself by Chekhov), and Meisner technique. To repeat the question asked there:

what were the benefits and new understanding of the Chekhov that came from the classes and workshops I attended through the MICHA organization, as opposed to my previous intellectual self-study of Chekhov? In general, my dominant response was a sense of culmination, enabling me to enhance my acting training and pedagogical skills and, more specifically, solidify my study of Chekhov method and apply it to my teaching. A very great source of new learning and experiences was the opportunity to interact with other Chekhov teachers, such as Joanna Merlin, the last living pupil of Chekhov and an esteemed professional actress, casting director, and professor, as well as John McManus from Australia and the US, Scott Fielding, Craig Matthews, Lisa Dalton, Jessica Cerullo, Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, David Zinder, Lenard Petit, Liz Shipman, Dawn Arnold, Cynthia Ashperger and Yana Meerzon from Canada, Joerg Andrees from Germany, Max Hafler from Ireland, Sinéad Rushe from Ireland and Britain, Sol Garre from Spain and Britain, and Hugo Moss from Brazil. (See the interviews with members of MICHA, included in Appendix 6.) Meeting these colleagues was not only a pleasant surprise but produced collaborations, both in pedagogical and scholarly terms, as in my work with Yana Meerzon in the *Critical Stages* scholarly journal.⁴

As a complement to my studies at MICHA, I have been applying Chekhov's concepts to my work with the contemporary Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival at Ridgefield, Connecticut – the location, of course, of the Michael Chekhov Studio from 1939 to 1942. (I was in fact involved with the Festival before I began at MICHA.) As Dramaturg of the festival, I not only give lectures, demonstrations, and provide my skills as an actress in performances, but I also bring the university students to whom I teach Chekhov techniques to attend the plays presented at the festival. I recently applied the Chekhov method to building a comedic character in a contemporary play inspired by Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* for a fund-raising performance to support the festival.

⁴⁴ Pichlíková 2017, op. cit. above.

As noted, one thing that made possible my rapid adoption of the Chekhov techniques was my previous study of Chekhov's career, pedagogy, and writings. When I took a class or workshop, I knew the theoretical material and historical context underlying the exercises and was able to compare this (favorably) to what was being taught. I do something similar in my application of the techniques in classes, in which I try to stay close to Chekhov's own words and exercises. Like many who came to the Chekhov work from reading and study, I found the classes greatly expanded my awareness and understanding.

A number of Chekhov techniques were new to me. For example, I teach *Commedia dell'Arte* and mime, in which we work with Centers. These are similar to Chekhov's Imaginary Centers, but I had never considered working with an Imaginary Body. Putting the "mask" of the character over the whole body, by "stepping into" the image of the character I had created was a powerful tool to have. I also augmented my ability to "hold a mirror to myself," finding feelings, thoughts, and impulses not part of my ordinary daily life that had not been accessible through other dramatic methods before. The Chekhov technique gives me control over both the good and the more risky qualities I bring into my dramatic work. When seeking to discover, as Chekhov insisted, what you do not have in common with the character, you are creating, you happen to be on the path to discover who you truly are. I have also shared with my students these inner resources, ability transform oneself, allowing the character to emerge through you, enlarge the author's words with one's own feelings, and learning more effectively to "veil" characters' inner processes, which are again very important for acting in front of camera.

Another key word that refreshed me, that allowed me to be both open and concentrated at the same time, was Image. While other systems have some concept of this (including the MAT), with Chekhov the idea is central. From the very first contact with the script, the images in an actor's mind

continue through the rehearsal process and into the performance. They access our deepest feelings. If done well, they will inspire similar images in the audience's minds. They are, as I said in the text, like the images seen in the waking state at the end of a dream that provoke a physical reaction in your body, which you can use in your creative state. Here is a truly important contribution.

It should be noted, as indicated previously in this study, that my continued participation in the MICHA sessions was not just about learning acting techniques, but rather, revealed (including in the interviews I conducted), information useful for the understanding of theatre pedagogy, with consequences for both education theory and scenology. A loosely organized, international network of practitioners and institutions has been able to provide stimulus and teaching without being a permanent conservatory, studio, or academic department itself. The common Chekhov heritage, respect for Chekhov's Five Guiding Principles, and access to the teaching traditions, has been sufficient to help MICHA continue the Chekhov work, especially given the many published resources today. The insistence on teacher training and sense of freedom that Chekhov built into his own pedagogy has continued to produce results.

In the meantime, established actors continue to win awards using the Chekhov method, while young adults learn to be actors and find a holistic system helping them improve their lives. Like the MAT system elaborated by Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitsky, and Vakhtangov, the Chekhov method is today an established and necessary part of international dramatic arts training.

Chapter Four – Syllabus and Teaching Script

The final chapter of this study is an actual syllabus and teaching script for an intensive one-semester course on the Chekhov method, expressed as much as possible in his own words (or paraphrases of them). I sought to use exercises and ideas from his 1942 and 1946 publications, relatively difficult of access, as well as lessons from his classes at Dartington and Ridgefield and his 1955 lectures, much of which is unpublished material. The 1953 edition of

To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting (in the 2002 revised edition) is used as a general introduction textbook and resource. The course is designed to be compatible with prior training in standard Stanislavsky-derived techniques, and those developed by Hagen and Meisner. (For the parts taken from the Russian 1946 edition, I have translated as needed, including the entire chapter on Psychological Gesture – see Appendix 10.)

I noted at the end of Chapter Four certain elements from Chekhov's method required particular emphasis, such as Crossing the Threshold, Imaginary Centers, Actions with Qualities, the Imaginary Character, Atmosphere, Archetypal Gestures, and Psychological Gesture, which requires both an element from Stanislavsky (knowing what a super-objective is) and an aspect typical of Chekhov (the predominant role of Images). Psychological Gesture is the most typical example of the psychophysical basis of Chekhov's method, or as Michael Chekhov International Academy founder Joerg Andrees put it, "the most creative thing Chekhov gave out. It is the most unique thing you have in the acting world. Even in the world of psychology." The course also gave an opportunity to introduce useful ideas, such as Ensemble and Improvising Ensemble (devised theatre), Polarities, Triplicity, and the application (benefitting from Joanna Merlin's work) of the techniques for acting in front of the camera and auditioning.

Final Observations

In tracing the evolution of Chekhov's method over the course of teaching in Russia for six years, in exile in the early 1930s, for another six years in Dartington and Ridgefield, and then for over a decade in Hollywood, I have been, like many researchers, aware of how much his teachings are based on his personal experience as an extraordinary performer and studio leader. More urgently, I respect his adaptability. Chekhov faced a series of shocks from the world in which he lived, but they led not to his being crushed but rather to a dynamic evolution of his pedagogy. At every point in this study, we have seen Chekhov respond to new situations in creative ways, reflected in his teaching, writing, and lecturing. Without doubt he was ahead

of his time, and perhaps, ahead of our times. Jessica Cerullo, the Artistic Director of MICHA, points out that, with regard to the mind-body connection, Chekhov “had to do some convincing ... we now take it for granted.”

In August 1922, when Chekhov was only a few years into his teaching career but already one of the most famous actors in Russia and beyond, he performed at the theatre Divadlo na Vinohradech (Královské Vinohrady) in Prague as part of an MCHAT tour. Karel Čapek, the famous Czech writer, wrote a review of Chekhov’s performance in Strindberg’s *Erik XIV*. This increasingly well-known response, analyzing “the secret of a remarkable artistic achievement” may be taken to sum up the ideal effect that the Chekhov method is intended to produce in its practitioners.

What must this actor include in this very intelligent head, this graceful and thin actor’s body, which for one evening, in a foreign language, in a foreign piece, was simply a revelation? The actor's performance is beyond description: if I chewed on the nozzle of my pen, I could not capture in words even a single, impatient, hurried, sharp movement of that aristocratic hand. He stamped, a quick turn, the blink of glowing and fierce eyes. ... If I were an actor, I probably would drown myself after *Erik*; if I were a German, I would probably write an incredibly abstract treatise about acting; if I were a Russian, I would say to myself, “there is no reason to despair, because there must be some redemption in the world, where there is so much art, so much semblance of a body and soul.”

Exactly in those two words, "body and soul," is the secret of this stunning artistic performance. The body can "dress" the soul; it can "symbolize" it; it can "express" it. But now comes this Chekhov, and shows that the body (simply and mysteriously) is the soul, the soul itself, the desperate, fierce, leaping, trembling soul. I have seen many truly soulful actors; their great art was to convince you that something soulful was happening inside, in the crackling bonds of the body. With Chekhov there is no "inside"; everything happens naked, nothing is hidden, everything rushes out impulsively and violently, with an amazing continuity of momentum into the play of the whole body, the whole slender and tingling ball of nerves; and yet it is a game as chaste inside, so mental, as little external as no other. ... I am sure I saw here for the first time something new and important – truly modern acting. Next to Chekhov, everything in the Moscow studio is good modern

stylization; Chekhov himself is the modern actor; he himself is the new. ... [Strindberg's] Erik XIV is a savage fool, excitable, childish, half-rascal and half-enthusiast, and the cruel psychologist Strindberg did not spare him all the possible characteristics of royal degeneration; and yet the beauty of the human soul blazed high in Chekhov's performance – the beautiful reality that we are souls. That reality never came to me so clearly from the contemplation of philosophers and the insistence of moralists as from the face and hands, hurried gestures, shooting movements, all the wonderful nervousness of this actor of a slender character and a sick voice. The theater couldn't have given me more than this, and it never will.⁵

“Body and Soul,” and Spirit – the tripartite human being in complete unity. The actor is empowered, aided by Images and Psychological Gesture, stepping into the Imaginary Body of the character, with thoughts, feelings, and impulses flowing freely without the brain interfering all the time, trusting his or her creative imagination, improvising, being hyper-aware and fully awake: vivid. The result is artistic truth, the character's artistic life onstage in artistic time, in the midst of a dramatic Atmosphere that permeates both the performance and the audience.

Chekhov was always mindful of what a play, a performance, was going to “say” and how it was going to affect and uplift the audience – something beyond the reach of “the contemplation of philosophers.” And even with an Erik XIV, an Othello or Iago, a Claudius, a blinded Gloucester – even a Stanley Kowalski – the actor can create Beauty, something artistically beautiful because it is true to the idea of the work, to the whole of the performance, not just evoking animalistic feelings but radiating and connecting to the minds of the audience, uplifting them. This is the legacy of Chekhov's pedagogy, and it continues to inspire actors today.

⁵ Čapek, Karel. 22 August 1922. “Čechov,” in *Lidové noviny*, Praha. Czech original re-published by Zoja Oubramová in Chekhov 1928/2017, p. 6. See Appendix 1, 1922, for the more complete text of the review in English. Thirteen years later, the American theatre leader Robert Lewis said almost the same words in describing the effect of Chekhov's performances as Khlestakhov and Fraser in Russian on Broadway in 1935, and later when Chekhov demonstrated part of Erik XIV in a New York class ca. 1941-42. Lewis 1984, February 1935, and in Munk 1964, pp. 224-228.

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2. Recording at Chekhov’s home [About Emotions and Sensations] 60:35
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3. On character and characteristics. 48:53
NYPL call no. LT10-4781;
4. On character and characteristics. 30:52
NYPL call no. LT10-4782;
5. On rehearsals 47:33
NYPL call no. LT10- 4783;
6. On ensemble feelings 63:40
NYPL call no. LT10- 4784;
7. On a short cut to approaching a part 55:00
NYPL call no. LT10- 4785;
8. On monotony in acting 55:00
NYPL call no. LT10- 4786;
9. On experiences at Moscow art theatre, part I 59:09
NYPL call no. LT10- 4787;
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VI. Links to online resources. The following were used in a scholarly capacity for information in the text. Additional links, including to individual Chekhov teaching studios and private organizations, may be found in the Appendices.

MICHA – Michael Chekhov Association <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/>
 NMCA – National Michael Chekhov Association <https://www.chekhov.net/>
 Michael Chekhov Canada <http://www.michaelchekhovcanada.com/>
 Michael Chekhov Brazil <http://www.michaelchekhov.com.br/en/index.html>
 Michael Chekhov UK <http://www.michaelchekhov.org.uk/>
 Michael Chekhov Europe <http://www.michaelchekhoveurope.eu/>
 Anthroposophical Society in America <https://anthroposophy.org/>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF MICHAEL CHEKHOV

With Emphasis on his Pedagogy¹

“... If you live and study in such a way that your intelligence will not spoil your morality, but rather that your morals will affect your intelligence, then you’ll be successful in life.”

(Elder Nektar)

“How poor the soul of every man is in comparison with those pictures of the characters [images] which the world of fantasy sends us some times. I do not wish to debase the human soul in general but touch this question from the point of comparison only.”

(Letter from Michael Chekhov in Berlin, 1928, to the actor Vladimir Podgorny [1887-1944], lecturer, storyteller, and cabaret artist. Podgorny wrote the lyrics for the “Fantasy on the Theme of the Ukrainian Folk Song ‘Blow, Wind to Ukraine’.”)

RUSSIA

August 16, 1891 – Mikhail “Michael” Aleksandrovich Chekhov is born in Moscow on 29 August 1891 (Gregorian calendar – 16 August 1891 on the Julian calendar in use at the time of his birth),² the son of Alexander Pavlovich Chekhov and Natalya Alexandrovna Golden, of Jewish origin. Michael is a sickly infant, almost dying in 1892 of a lung infection.

1895 – The family moves to Saint Petersburg. Alexander, a talented man who was also an alcoholic, was the eldest brother of the famous writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov. When Michael, called “Misha,” was eight years old, his uncle Anton Pavlovich wrote about him, “I had lunch with Alexander. ... [Mischa] is a remarkably intelligent boy; from his eyes radiates sensitivity. I think he will grow into a talented man.”

1898 – Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovitch-Danchenko found the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT).

1907-1910 – Michael attends a drama school at the Theater of the Literary Society of Arts (also known as the Suvorin Drama School) and performs with the Maly Theatre in St Petersburg.

1910 – After graduating from acting with honors, he gets to play the role of Yepikhodov at the Maly in *The Cherry Orchard* by A. P. Chekhov. (Yepikhodov provides comic relief in the play; he is a romantic with suicidal tendencies, hopelessly in love with Dushenka.)

1907 – In an evening dedicated to the history of Russian theater in Tsarskoe Selo, organized by the director Nikolai Arbatov for Tsar Nicholas II, Michael plays in

¹ This chronology has benefitted from previous chronologies, such as Gordon 1983a, in TDR 1983, pp. 46-83; and M.A. Ivanova’s “Chronology, Michael Chekhov: Life and Work,” in Routledge 2015, pp. 399-406, based on the much more detailed chronology in Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 2, pp. 434-560. The correspondence and other data in Lit. nasl. 1995, vol. 2, has also been used as noted.

² Henceforth, the Gregorian dates will be provided where possible.

front of the Tsar and shakes his hand, and the Tsar asks him if he wants to join the Imperial Theater.

October 22, 1911 – Plays for the first time *Tsar Fyodor* in the play of the same name by A. K. Tolstoy, with great success. His father becomes aware of him as an actor, praises him, and even kisses his son for the first time. (*Meetings Given Me by Fate: Serafima Birman's Memories*)

March 26, 1912 – Chekhov's aunt, Olga Leonardovna Knipper-Chekhov, arrives in St. Petersburg for guest performances of the Moscow Art Theatre. Through her intervention, Chekhov is introduced to Stanislavsky and reads for him an excerpt from *Tsar Fyodor* and performs Marmeladov from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Stanislavsky tells Nemirovich-Danchenko: "Anton Pavlovich's nephew, Misha Chekhov, is brilliant."

June 16, 1912 – Chekhov is offered a position as an actor in the MAT.

October 6, 1912 – Opening ceremony of The First Studio of the MAT. Chekhov begins to study with Sulerzhitsky and Vakhtangov. In the First Studio, Chekhov prepares the role of Cobus in *The Wreck of The Good Hope* by Herman Heijermans, under the direction of Richard Boleslavsky.

February 4, 1913 – Opening night of *The Good Hope*; Cobus role a great success.

February 10, 1913 – Release of the film, *300 Years's Reign of the Romanov Family*; Chekhov plays Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov.

April 1913 – Chekhov plays on the tour with the MAT in St. Petersburg.

May 17, 1913 – His father, Alexander P. Chekhov, dies.

October 15, 1913 – Plays the role of Fribe, the alcoholic, in *The Reconciliation (Das Friedensfest, 1890)* by Gerhart Hauptmann, directed by Evgeni Vachtangov.

October 27, 1913 – Takes over the role of Yepikhodov in *The Cherry Orchard* on the MAT stage.

May 1914 – On tour with MAT in Kiev.

August 1, 1914 – Beginning of the First World War.

September 3, 1914 – Chekhov secretly marries Olga Konstantinovna Knipper (Olga Tschechowa), his cousin (his aunt Olga's niece), who will become a well-known German film star in the 1920s.

October 24, 1914 – The First Studio's greatest success, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, directed by Boris Sushkevich, brings Chekhov (who is playing Caleb Plummer, the frightened toy-maker) his first international notices. Cricket symbolized a protest against the war as well as an artistic triumph. Konstantin Stanislavsky said Chekhov's performance is "absolutely brilliant."

May, 1915 – MAT's film of *The Cricket on the Hearth* is released, with Chekhov and Maria Ouspenskaya, directed by Sushkevich and Aleksandr Uralsky.

- August 1915 – Chekhov receives an army draft order. After a medical examination he receives a three-month postponement and is eventually exempted from military service in spring 1916.
- December 14, 1915 – Opening night of *The Deluge* by Henning Berger. Chekhov alternates in the role of the bankrupt merchant, Frazer, with Vakhtangov, who is also the director of the production.
- February 10, 1916 – Chekhov begins working closely with Stanislavsky (they are to become good friends and colleagues; Stanislavsky considered Chekhov a genius). Chekhov remembered him as someone whom he respected for his sense of humility and personal ethics to serve instead of demanding service. Chekhov starts to rehearse the role of Treplev in Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* on the main stage of the Moscow Art Theatre.
- September 9, 1916 – Chekhov's daughter, baptized Olga, is born. Later she would become a German actress and perform under the name of Ada Tschechowa.
- December 17, 1916 – Leopold Antonovich Sulerzhitsky, Chekhov's closest teacher, dies.
- February 22 - March 2, 1917 – The February Revolution in Russia.
- Late May 1917 – Chekhov, who had been developing mental problems, suddenly leaves the theatre during a rehearsal for his role of Treplev in *The Seagull*. His mental state has seriously deteriorated. He explains his leaving as "a disorder of his nervous system."
- October 24-25, 1917 – The Bolshevik Revolution.
- December 1917 – The Bolshevik victory in Moscow depresses Chekhov even more.
- December 2, 1917 – His marriage with Olga Konstantinovna breaks up.
- December 13, 1917 – His cousin Volodya Chekhov commits suicide, shooting himself with a revolver he took secretly from the drawer of Michael Chekhov's table. That evening, Michael leaves the theater without finishing the performance.
- December 1917 – In severe mental crisis, he asks Stanislavsky for a health leave. He will return to the MAT in August of 1918.
- Beginning of 1918 – Chekhov opens a private acting studio in Moscow. His knowledge of Rudolf Steiner increases.
- June 3, 1918 – Chekhov marries Xenia Karlovna Ziller. His mental health is slowly starting to improve.
- October 12, 1918 – Performs on stage for the first time after the period of mental crisis.
- January 1919 – "On the Stanislavsky System," by Michael Chekhov, is published in the Proletkult journal *Hearth*. Chekhov describes the work being done at the First Studio without Stanislavsky's permission. The article would be translated

in the 1930s and used by avant-garde actors in New York. See also Chekhov and Leonard 1963, especially the sections on Imagination and Concentration.

Spring 1919 – Chekhov’s mother dies.

August 1919 – Nationalization of theaters in Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.

During 1919, the name of the MAT is changed to the Moscow Academic Art Theatre (Московский Художественный академический театр, or Moskovskiy Hudojestvenny Akademicheskiy Teatr in Latin characters – MHAT).

August 22, 1919 – Begins to rehearse Khlestakov in Gogol's *The Inspector General* with Stanislavsky as director, on the main stage of the Moscow Art Theatre.

June 1920 – Chekhov returns to The First Studio for their tour of the South.

October 3, 1920 – Takes over the role of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* in the First Studio.

March 29, 1921 – Opening night of *Erik XIV* by August Strindberg, with Chekhov in the title role, directed by Vachtangov – a great success.

April 11, 1921 – the first public performance of the private Chekhov Studio students.

July 1921, Chekhov starts to teach at the Proletkult again.

October 8, 1921 – Premiere of Gogol's *The Inspector General* directed by Stanislavsky, with Chekhov in the role of Khlestakov.

Chekhov is a darling of the theater in Moscow, "the most joyful hope of Russian theater that must be tenderly protected."

Fall, 1921 – The private Chekhov Studio stages three plays: *The First Distiller*, Count Leo Tolstoy’s morality play against alcoholism; *Shemyaka's Journey (The Judgement of Shemyaka)*, a story about people who seemingly get away with anything; and a short adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* by F. Dostoyevsky.

October 10, 1921 – Chekhov closes his private studio.

October 15, 1921 – Chekhov meets author and critic Andrei Bely at the Wolfila (Free Philosophical) Association. Bely will guide Chekhov’s interest in studying Anthroposophy.

May 21, 1922 – Chekhov’s true friend, and a great director, Yevgeny Bagrationovich Vakhtangov, dies.

June 23, 1922 – The First Studio of the MHAT tours the Baltic Republics of Lithuania and Estonia, then in Germany and Czechoslovakia. Karel Čapek, the famous Czech writer writes a review of *Erik XIV* (“the secret of a remarkable artistic achievement”):

I saw the acting skills I saw in his Erik XIV for the first time in my life, and I can't imagine ever seeing more. Last year, Prague applauded Kačal [Vasily Kachalov] furiously; and they were triumphs that, after all, never fell on Vojan's head.

What must this actor include in this very intelligent head, this graceful and thin actor's body, which for one evening, in a foreign language, in a foreign piece, was simply a revelation? The actor's performance is beyond description: if I chewed on the nozzle of my pen, I could not capture in words even a single, impatient, hurried, sharp movement of that aristocratic hand: he stamped, a quick turn, the blink of glowing and fierce eyes. Nothing can be said, one can say nothing; and I am, you see, somewhat embarrassed for my craft as a scribe. A scribe never gives himself so fully. Such an extravagant actor, that's what kind of actor he is: just giving himself fully.

If I were an actor, I probably would drown myself after *Erik*; if I were a German, I would probably write an incredibly abstract treatise about acting; if I were a Russian, I would say to myself, 'there is no reason to despair, because there must be some redemption in the world, where there is so much art, so much semblance of a body and soul.'

Exactly in those two words, "body and soul," is the secret of this stunning artistic performance; the body can "dress" the soul, it can "symbolize" it, it can "express" it; but now comes this Chekhov, and shows that the body (simply and mysteriously) is the soul, the soul itself, the desperate, fierce, leaping, trembling soul. I have seen many truly soulful actors; their great art was to convince you that something soulful was happening inside, in the crackling bonds of the body.

With Chekhov there is no "inside"; everything happens naked, nothing is hidden, everything rushes out impulsively and violently, with an amazing continuity of momentum into the play of the whole body, the whole slender and tingling ball of nerves; and yet it is a game as chaste inside, so mental, as little external as no other. Tell me: how is this possible? I don't know. It's impossible to explain or imitate, but I am sure I saw here for the first time something new and important – truly modern acting. Next to Chekhov, everything in the Moscow studio is good modern stylization; Chekhov himself is the modern actor; he himself is the new.

However, I don't want to write about acting; I'd like to confess that this actor Chekhov was to me an apparition of a human soul. Strindberg is not exactly merciful to human souls. His Erik XIV is a savage fool, excitable, childish, half-rascal and half-enthusiast, and the cruel psychologist Strindberg did not spare him all the possible characteristics of royal degeneration; and yet the beauty of the human soul blazed high in Chekhov's performance – the beautiful reality that we are souls. That reality never came to me so clearly from the contemplation of philosophers and the insistence of moralists as from the face and hands, hurried gestures, shooting movements, all the wonderful nervousness of this actor of a slender character and a sick voice.

The theater couldn't have given me more than, and it never will.

[Čapek 22 August 1922; Czech original re-published by Zoja Oubramová in Chekhov 1928/2017, p. 6.]

August 16, 1922 – The *Cricket On the Hearth* is performed at Královské Vinohrady theatre.

The tour lasts until September.

1922/23-1927. Part of the so-called "Kachalov Group" of the MHAT (which had included Olga Knipper, widow of Anton Chekhov and therefore Michael Chekhov's aunt, Vasily Kachalov and his wife, Nina Litovtseva, Vadim

Shverubovich Kachalov (their son), Ivan Bersenev, Nikolay Podgorny, Maria Germanova, and their manager, Nikolay Massalitinov) left the south of Russia and the then independent Georgia, where the group had been cut off from Moscow by the Russian Civil War. Kachalov, Knipper and most of the Kachalov group had returned to the Soviet Union (apparently via Prague and Central Europe) in the summer of 1921, but Maria Germanova and other actors decided to go to Prague, where they may have been associated with the Prague Linguistic Circle, led by Czech critics René Wellek and Jan Mukařovský and linguist Vilém Mathesius, and including Russian émigrés Roman Jakobson, Nikolai Trubetzkoy, and Sergei Karcevskiy. Germanova remained at Prague with her archaeologist husband, Alexander Kalitinsky. She founded the Prague MHAT group with Nikolai Massalitinov in 1923, based at the Vinohradské divadlo (where Chekhov had performed earlier in 1922, and where Jaroslav Kvapil was director, 1921-28). Germanova directed the “Moscow Art Theatre Prague Group” until 1927 – there may have been Czech financial support into the 1930s. The group performed in London in 1928 and 1931. Germanova immigrated to New York in 1929, succeeding Richard Boleslavski as director of the American Lab Theatre until 1933.

[See Ostrovsky, Sergei. 1992. “Maria Germanova and the Moscow Art Theatre Prague Group,” in Senelick 1992, pp. 93-99 and 84-101, *passim*, and Appendix 2, pp. 216-218; and Senelick, Laurence. 2014. “The Accidental Evolution of the Moscow Art Theatre Prague Group,” in *New Theatre Quarterly*, Volume 30, Issue 2, May 2014, pp. 154-167.]

September 23, 1922 – Chekhov becomes Artistic Director of The First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater.

October 2, 1923 – Chekhov rehearses *Hamlet* every day.

Stanislavsky meets director Max Reinhardt in Berlin for the first time.

May 21, 1924 – Chekhov acquires a stage adaptation of the novel by Andrei Bely *St. Petersburg*.

Summer 1924 – Travels to Germany and Holland for medical treatment.

July 24, 1924 – In the Netherlands meets Rudolf Steiner for the first time and attends lectures there. The meeting is confirmed by M.O. Knebel and by Tatarin, and documented by Steiner's date and signature in Tatarin's book. [Literaturnoe Naslednie, p. 487.] Chekhov becomes a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society. (The international Anthroposophical Society was founded on December 28, 1912 in Cologne, Germany, under the leadership of Steiner.)

According to Deirdre Hurst du Prey, after some hesitation, Chekhov decides to return to Russia. [Hurst Adelphi speech, in Adelphi Archives Hurst Papers.]

August 13, 1924 – The First Studio, officially renamed the Second Moscow Art Theatre, moves to a building on Sverdlov Square in Moscow.

- November 20, 1924 – Chekhov performs the title role in *Hamlet*. Critics unanimously emphasize the "deep humanity" of this new interpretation. Anatol Lunacharsky, the Commissioner of Education, awards Chekhov the Medal of Honored Artist of the State Academic Theaters.
- 10 November - 8 December 1925 – Moscow 1925 chess international super-tournament Chekhov was very fond of: "The audience must *want* to see a good performance, and it will see one if it *wills* to do so. A performance consists not only of the actors, but also the audience. With what envy did I watch the audience at the International Chess Tournament in Moscow in 1925! In the presence of Lasker, Casablanca, Marshall and other great chess masters, the audience demonstrated what a power it conceals within itself, and what performances it could make possible if it would only offer Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Moskvin and others the same attentiveness that it gave Reti, Torre, Bogolyubov and so on. [Chekhov 1928, p. 129.]
- November 14, 1925 – Opening of *St. Petersburg* by Andrei Bely, directed by Birman, Tatarin and Ceban, Chekhov plays the role of the old government official, Ableukhov.
- June 16, 1926 – The Chekhovs leave for holiday in Germany and Italy; Michael and Xenia visit Rome, Florence, Venice and Capri.
- November 1926 – Conflicts emerge in the Second Moscow Art Theater between Chekhov, as the director, and a group of seven actors. This opposition is led by Alexei Diky. Chekhov is accused of a lack of revolutionary awareness and of promoting mysticism and Anthroposophy. He is denounced as an "idealist" and mystic. An article in *Novyj Zritel* (New Views) magazine calls Chekhov "a sick artist" and condemns his productions as "alien and reactionary."
- November 23, 1926 – Opening of the Suchovo-Kobylin satirical drama, *The Lawsuit*, with Chekhov in the role of Muromsky.
- March 8, 1927 – Chekhov submits his resignation as director of the Second Theatre, which Lunacharsky does not accept, expressing the hope that everything will end peacefully in the interest of the theater.
- April-May 1927 – The problems at the Second Moscow Art Theater continue to mount.
- August 12, 1927 – Release of the film, *The Man from the Restaurant*, with Chekhov as the main character, Skorohodov; director Yakov Protazanov.
- October, 1927 – The main repertoire commission returns Michael Chekhov's scenario *Fairy Beauty* as an "idealist" play, "absolutely inadmissible for the Soviet stage."
- January-February 1928 – Chekhov's book, *The Path of the Actor*, is published and becomes an unexpected best seller.
- February 3, 1928 – begins to rehearse *Don Quixote*.

Spring 1928 – Censured because of his anti-Soviet attitude and threatened with imprisonment, Chekhov drops most activities with the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

Beginning of July 1928 – After a letter of inquiry, Max Reinhardt offers Chekhov a contract to perform in Berlin and Vienna.

Chekhov becomes a “un-person” in Russia. Only with Lunacharsky’s help do he and Xenia, escape from Russia with their lives in July.

A story Chekhov told Deirdre Hurst indicates the harrowing nature of the Chekhovs’ experience. On the eve of the Chekhov’s’ departure from Moscow in 1928, Chekhov was arrested by the KGB and taken to some kind of club for high-ranking Communists, where he played chess for several hours with a high official, probably Lunacharsky. Not a word was said. Chekhov won the game, and the next day exit visas for him and his wife were brought to their apartment.” According to Hurst, they left that evening by train for Berlin without even saying goodbye to her family. (Deirdre Hurst du Prey 1987 lecture, Adelphi University)

EMIGRATION

Germany

August 1928 – Chekhov signs a contract with Max Reinhardt in Berlin, but remains a Soviet citizen.

August 29, 1928 – Chekhov sends a letter to the ensemble of Second Moscow Art Theater announcing that he is leaving the theater.

September 15, 1928 – Lunacharsky writes about M. Chekhov in the Evening Moscow newspaper.

September 17-22, 1928 – Stanislavsky visits Berlin. Chekhov meets with him, discussing acting technique in a Kurfürstendamm café all night from 9:00 pm to after 1:00 am. Chekhov maintains that Stanislavsky's affective memory devices can lead to the actor's mental breakdown. It is the last time these two theatrical giants see each other.

“The most interesting event in the recent days of my life was my meeting with Konstantin Sergeev [Stanislavsky]. I came to see him for 10 minutes and spent with him 5 hours [...] We compared our systems and found much in common and also many incongruities. In my opinion the incongruities are essential although I did not press hard for that, as I felt awkward criticizing the work and meaning of the whole life of such a giant. As for myself, I derived from this discussion a theoretical result of colossal value and an even greater love for my own system [...] Besides, my system is simpler and more comfortable for the actor. In my method, for example, the actor is fully objective in relation to the character he creates from the beginning of his work till the end. As it seems me in K.S.’s method there are many moments when the actor is forced to undergo personal ‘travails,’ to squeeze out his personal feelings from himself – which is

hard, poignant, ugly, and not profound. For instance, our process of contemplation of the character in the actor's imagination, and further, the imitation of it, corresponds to the contemplation of given circumstances in K.S.'s method. But the actor who contemplates replaces the character by himself and his task is to answer the question: 'How would my character (me this particular moment) act in these particular given circumstances'. This point changes the whole psychology of the actor and seemingly forces him unwittingly to dig into his own poor mean soul. How poor the soul of every man is in comparison with those pictures of the characters [images] which the world of fantasy sends us some times. I do not wish to debase the human soul in general but touch this question from the point of comparison only. Another example: according to K.S.'s system the actor begins with the exploration of the physical task. Moreover he explores it from himself personally: to put the table in its place, to move the chair, to strike a match and so on – all these to ignite the feeling of the truth. The actor of my method has the feeling of the truth incorporated already in that image of the character and merged with it. My actor can develop his feeling of the truth at his home – it is his own business but what is impossible is to begin rehearsal with this. Why? Because "put the table in its place" is a direct route to the horrible naturalistic mood, and to attracting the actor's attention to his own noncreative personality. I conversed with Kostia to our hearts content, parted as friends, which makes me very glad, and went to a café to drink water – it was already about one o'clock at night. I drank mocha." [Letter to the actor Vladimir Podgorny, 1928]

(Not long afterwards, Zinaida N. Reich and her husband, V. Meyerhold, came to Berlin to visit as well. Chekhov attempts to convince them to remain in Germany, which Zinaida considered traitorous – ironically, given the Meyerholds' evil fates in 1939.)

October 9, 1928 – officially resigns as director of the Second Moscow Art Theater.

October 1928 – Chekhov writes to Lunacharsky, explaining that he would return to Moscow if he could be the artistic director of a theatre devoted only to classical plays, and not Soviet propaganda. In the office of a Berlin producer, Chekhov explains his desire to play *Hamlet*.

November 11, 1928 – Chekhov works in Vienna, Austria, playing the role of the clown Skid in German language in the play *Artisten* by G. Watters and A. Hopkins, directed by Max Reinhardt.

April 12, 1929 – plays a title role in Osip Dymov's *Jusik* at the Berlin Kammerspiele, Reinhardt's Chamber Theater in Berlin.

May 1929 – Chekhov starts to work in films with his ex-wife, Olga Tschechowa, on a film she herself directed *Der Narr seiner Liebe* (*The Fool of Love*).

December 11, 1929 and ff. – Chekhov lives and works full-time as an actor and director in Berlin. At a large theater meeting in Berlin, Chekhov decides to direct Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for Habima Players (opening night was in June). In 1941, Chekhov will re-stage the play for his Dartington actors; after a national tour, the production opens successfully on Broadway, December 19, 1941.

September 1930 – Director of Habima Players. The Habima Players Evening is a three-part play performed in Hebrew. The ensemble travels around Europe and plays extremely successfully in London (January 1931). The critic Yury Ofrosimov writes in *Rul* of the enthusiastic applause the performance received: “In this production Chekhov showed that he was a director of European standard and a great master.” Critics such as Kurt Pinthus write: “gracefulness and sureness in his handling of the complex acting.”

March-May 1930 – Correspondence with the President of Czechoslovakia, T. G. Masaryk, and with Jaroslav Kvapil, on the possibilities of establishing a Russian theater in Prague. Kvapil, director of the Divadlo na Vinohradech, 1921-28, had known Chekhov, seen him perform, and led the theatre when Maria Germanova and her “Prague Group” of MHAT artists were in residence, and therefore was the logical recipient of a letter from Michael Chekhov.

May-June 1930 – Chekhov plays the Russian aristocrat, Prince Orloff, who is an alcoholic, in Reinhardt’s production of *Phea* written by Fritz von Unruh. The *8-Uhr Abendblatt* newspaper applauds Chekhov as one “of the greatest hopes of the modern theatre.”

1930 – Chekhov plays in two German films: as the Embezzler in *Phantom of Happiness*, directed by Reinhold Schünzel (silent version made 1929 and re-released in sound 1930), and in the role of the Beggar in *Trojka*, performing once more with Olga Tschechowa; directed by Vladimir Strizhevsky.

Chekhov’s goal to excel as a pedagogue leads to his enrolling in Berlin in Rudolph Steiner School, concentrating on Eurythmy and Speech-Formation, and their application to dramatic speech, perfecting the interest he first studied in 1924-26 back in Russia.

June 30, 1930 – Receives letter-response from Czechoslovakia from T.G. Masaryk, that due to financial difficulties, the establishment of the Chekhov Theater in Prague will not take place. (Chekhov's budget attached to the letter was too high).

1930 – Chekhov refuses an offer of engagement with the Královské Vinohradské Divadlo theater management. He cancels all the contracts he has signed in Germany, including a one-year contract with the Robert Klein Theater, where he was supposed to work as an actor and director, and a contract for the role of Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* directed by Fedor Ocep.

France

October 15, 1930 – Departs with a group of Russian actors to Paris.

October 26, 1930 – The Paris newspaper *Le Quotidien* publishes an interview with Michael Chekhov, in which he talks about opening a theater school in Paris and looking for new methods of work on productions. This desire would not be fulfilled until the Dartington studio opened in 1936.

February 1931 – A group of his supporters, including Reinhardt, Firmin Gémier, Sergei Rachmaninov, and Marguerite Morgenstern, the widow of the German

poet Christian Morgenstern, create a "Society of Friends of the Chekhov Theater." The theatre itself, the Russian-language Le Théâtre Tchekhoff, is officially organized in April-May 1931.

April 4, 1931 – Chekhov performs a reading of texts at the Gaveau Hall, Paris.

April 14, 1931 – Chekhov is contracted to play Khlestakov in *The Inspector General* and Frazer in *The Deluge* in Riga in the Russian Dramatic Theatre (now called the Michael Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre in his honor).

May 17, 1931 – Chekhov returns to Paris, where he meets Georgette Boner for the first time. She is a former pupil of Reinhardt and Ferdinand Gregori in Berlin and a production assistant for Georges Pitoëf in Paris (1929-31).

June 1931 – Thanks to the "Society of Friends of the Chekhov Theater," Le Théâtre Tchekhoff in Paris is able to rehearse several plays with the ensemble from the First and Second Studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. Chekhov performs with his ensemble (Gromov, Kryzjanovska, Bondyrev, Aslanov, and Ada, sister of his first wife Olga, etc.) in the rented hall of the Atelier Theater, including excerpts from *Hamlet*, *Erik XIV*, *The Deluge*, and *Twelfth Night*, as well as dramatized short stories by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, with Chekhov performing all these different parts in the Russian language.

November 9-23, 1931 – The ensemble of Le Théâtre Tchekhoff offers the Symbolist production, *The Castle Awakening: An Essay in Rhythmical Drama*, a “mystical pantomime” based on Russian folk tales and Tolstoy’s allegorical fable, *The Awakening*. The play is written and directed by Chekhov, who also performs the title role of Prince Ivan. The set is by Vasili N. Masyutin. There is little attendance. It is reviewed in *Le Quotidien* (1931) – the critic is not thrilled. *The Castle Awakening* is performed only twice during the three weeks. Chekhov remarked that the Russian audience in Paris was too small to maintain a permanent theater and talked about a "vision" he had for his international experimental theater.

Latvia - Lithuania

February 28, 1932 – Chekhov leaves for Riga, Latvia, to mount productions with Russian-speaking actors of the Russian Dramatic Theatre.

Georgette Boner follows Chekhov to Latvia and Lithuania in 1932 and helps him organize and write down his techniques. Their manuscript, begun at Paris and continued in Riga and Kaunas, is one of the first written versions of Chekhov’s pedagogical methods, and a source for Boner’s later publications, including the “Paris Manuscript” – to date only published in summary. The detailed notes taken in Russian by Chekhov’s pupils at Kaunas in Lithuania in 1932-33, as well as the essay provided for them by Chekhov in 1933 have not been paid the

attention they deserve by scholars outside the Baltic States; they show Chekhov creating a systematic pedagogy.³

March 8, 1932 – Opening night at the Latvian State Theatre in Riga; Chekhov performs in lead roles of *The Inspector General*, *Erik XIV*, *The Deluge*, *Selo Stepanchikovo*, an adaptation of the Dostoyevsky novel, *Hamlet*, *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, and *A.P. Chekhov Sketches*, all with a great success.

April 23, 1932 – Aleksei K. Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* at the Latvian National Theatre; Chekhov and V. Hronov are the directors; Chekhov plays the role of the Tsar Ivan.

May 1932 – Chekhov tours these productions to Kaunas in Lithuania and prepares his *Hamlet* for dual productions in Kaunas and Riga during the summer, collaborating for the first time with scenic designer Mstislav Dobuzhinsky. In Kaunas, Chekhov is reunited with two former Moscow Art Theatre colleagues, the Lithuanian, Andrius Jilinsky Oleka, who had become the Director of the Lithuanian State Theatre, and his wife, the actress Vera Soloviova.

August 18 - November 2, 1932 – Chekhov offers the first series of lectures in Kaunas, emphasizing once again the concept of a studio combining performance and pedagogy. From the very beginning of his lessons, he emphasizes the necessity of remembering (including in the context of Affective Memory) and thinking in images. There is also emphasis on what he called “Charm” – putting pleasure in every movement, taking pleasure in practicing, clearly understand the task behind the exercise. (Cf. “The Feeling of Ease.”) From the second lesson, Chekhov presented what seems at first to be almost circus arts, which he called dexterity and “juggling” (sleight of hand), but from the outset, the emphasis is on developing inner dexterity and inner lightness. Other exercises developed a psychophysical unity, a combination of mental and muscle memory: “Feel the energy moving within you. Now stop the body, but even inside of you is flowing all the same energy. Really remember your state of feeling!”

September 3, 1932 – Chekhov starts a discussion of color influenced by Steiner's color theories. He teaches the concepts of Eurythmy and Speech-Formation as part of the group exercises, such as one “on the theme of creating groups based on words, without musical accompaniment. Theme: disturbance, indignation, revolt.” Chekhov combines these with the elements of action and counter-action he studied before with Stanislavsky and addresses the Feeling of Ease as a movement coming from within. “It is necessary,” Chekhov insisted, “to make every little movement with pleasure ... [and] focused (if one can call it that).” It is notable that Chekhov used real objects, in contrast to many exercises given today in Chekhov-derived programs that use pantomime. [Chekhov 1989: 6-8]

³ Kasponyte, Justina. 2012. *Stanislavski's directors: Michael Chekhov and the Revolution in Lithuanian Theatre of the 1930s*. M. Phil. Thesis, University of Glasgow; available URL <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3437/>.

- October 11, 1932 – Premiere of *Hamlet* at the Lithuania State Theatre in Kaunas, with Jilinsky in the title role and Chekhov directing. Chekhov teaches acting courses with young Lithuanian actors (Gromov is also involved in the teaching) and establishes an actor's studio, the Latvian Actors Association.
- October 21, 1932 – Plays *Hamlet* at the premiere of his production at the Latvian National Theatre in Riga, which goes on to tour Tallinn and Tartu in Estonia.
- November 25, 1932 – Opening night of *Selo Stepanchikovo*, an adaptation of the Dostoyevsky novel (*The Village of Stepanchikovo*) in the Theater of the Russian Drama in Riga; Chekhov plays the role of Foma Opiskin.
- March 1933 – Directs *Twelfth Night* in Kaunas.
- April 1933 – On tour in Warsaw.
- June-August 1933 – Acting seminars in Kaunas, combining the Stanislavsky system with elements of Chekhov's ideas, including Steiner-derived ideas such as the correspondence between sounds and colors. Chekhov repeats at least some of the 1932 lessons.
- August-September 1933 – Chekhov works with Boner on his acting methods, replacing personal affective memories with his intuitive Imagination exercises, “the artistic image,” movement, speech, and the personal development of the actor.
- September 26, 1933 – Plays *The Inspector General* at the National Theater of Lithuania; sets by Dobuzhinsky. As Ivanova notes, the Lithuanian press accuses Chekhov of “communist tendencies and political agitation.”
- October 4, 1933 – Chekhov provides, at Jilinsky's request, a letter summing his teaching technique to his Kaunas pupils – including a lengthy letter/essay on Atmospheres, subsequently published. The letter is his first systematic writing on his own dramatic theory.
- Chekhov's work in Lithuania and Latvia (February 1932 until May 1934), incorporating of course his ongoing dialogue with Georgette Boner, consolidates his adaptation of the Stanislavsky/Sulerzhitsky/Vakhtangov System, sets the stage for his future pedagogy, and leads directly to the structure of the curriculum as developed first at Dartington Hall in England and subsequently at Ridgefield, Connecticut. Not surprisingly, the first group of students at Dartington would include two Latvians, Joe Gustaitis and Edward Kastaunas.
- November 1933 – Starts to direct Wagner's opera *Parsifal* at the Latvian National Opera, Riga.
- January 1934 – Chekhov suffers a heart attack while directing *Parsifal* in Riga, but soon continues his work.
- March 14, 1934 – Opening night of *Parsifal*, with the Prime Minister in attendance; conducted by Teodor Reiter.
- May 15-16, 1934 – Coup d'état and establishment of a military dictatorship in Latvia. Rumors circulate in Moscow that Chekhov will return to Russia and join

the Meyerhold Company. Chekhov leaves Latvia because he is still a Soviet citizen.

Italy

Late August 1934 – On the advice of his doctors, Chekhov, with his wife Xenia and Georgette Boner travels to Italy, with Boner traveling on to Palestine in the fall.

(There is a bit of irony in Chekhov fleeing Latvian fascism and going to Italy. In 1928, describing the process of his becoming a persecuted “un-person” in Moscow, Chekhov mentions that a newspaper “for its part, reported to the reading public that from a political point of view, I must be regarded as an Italian fascist.”)

France

December 1934 – Chekhov and Xenia leave Italy for Paris where Chekhov and Boner are to prepare an American tour at the invitation of the impresario Sol Hurok.

They form a group of émigré Russian actors, called the Moscow Art Players, including several former actors from the MHAT and the Second Studio living in Paris at that time. They prepare to present a four week run, produced by Sol Hurok, at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway, New York, with subsequent performances in Boston and Philadelphia. Chekhov directs and plays the lead roles.

January 1935 – The company tours in Brussels where Chekhov plays Khlestakov in *The Government Inspector*, repeating the performance on January 8 at the Marais Theatre in Paris.

America

February 14, 1935 – The Moscow Art Players leave Paris for the USA, having prepared *The Inspector General* by Gogol, *The White Guard* by Bulgakov, *Poverty Is No Crime* by Ostrovsky, *Strange Child* by Shkvarin, *Marriage* by Gogol, *Enemies* by Lavrenoff and Anton Chekhov's sketch, *I Forget*.

February 16, 1935 – Opening of *The Inspector General* on Broadway in New York, directed and with the lead role performed by Chekhov to critical acclaim and full houses in spite of being presented in Russian. Stella Adler and other Group Theatre members attend and meet Chekhov, as do two young actresses, Beatrice Whitney Straight and Deirdre Hurst.

The Moscow Art Players Company perform in New York in February and March of 1935, followed by engagements in Philadelphia (8-11 April) and Boston (14-21 April), duplicating the New York success.

The American theatre professional, Robert Lewis continued to admire Chekhov's application of his method to his own acting well after Chekhov's death. (Lewis was particularly impressed by the success of Psychological Gesture, at least in the hands of an actor of Chekhov's genius.) His reaction to

Chekhov's depiction on Broadway of Khlestakov in the Gogol play is as follows:

All eyes were opened to what could, for once, accurately be described as "total acting." By that I mean each part Chekhov assumed was minutely executed from point of view of physical characterization – the walk, the gestures, the voice, the make-up – all were meticulously designed to illuminate the character he was playing. Even more remarkable was that, at the same time, his emotions were full, all equally chosen and experienced according to the minds and hearts of the personages he acted. Here was the supreme example of the complete "inside" coupled with the complete "outside" each deriving from the other. Never again could one willingly accept the proposition that emotion was all-important and that if one felt truthfully, characterization would take care of itself. Or conversely, that the delineation of the physical behavior of the part, coupled with intelligible line reading, was satisfactory without the inner life, thought, and feelings being experienced by that particular character.

[Lewis 1984, performance in February 1935; cf. his 1965 interview with Robert Schechner in Munk 1964, pp. 224-228, where he adds his admiration for a PG Chekhov used as Frazer in Henning Berger's *The Deluge*, and in a demonstration of the use of gesture for the character of Erik XIV that Chekhov gave, presumably for one of his classes in New York in 1941-42.]

February 23-24, 1935 – Chekhov performs dramatized short stories by Anton P. Chekhov in New York.

March 16-18-22, 1935 – Three acting lessons given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (subsequently Deirdre Hurst du Prey) in New York. Chekhov's words are translated by Tamara Daykharanova, and Maria Ouspenskaya, with whom Daykharanova was teaching the Stanislavsky method. Daykharanova had originally suggested the two women attend Chekhov's performances on Broadway. (See Dartington Hall Archives, metadata for series MC in the Hurst papers.)

Straight sends a telegram to her mother, Dorothy Payne Whitney Elmhirst, and her stepfather, Leonard Knight Elmhirst, the patrons of a large utopian community, agriculture school, and arts center at Dartington Hall, Devon, England: "HAVE FOUND THE ARTIST FOR DARTINGTON."

Summer 1935 – Chekhov lives at George Somoff's house, in Churaevka, a colony of Russians in Connecticut (ironically not too far from Ridgefield, CT) supposedly learning English, but the correspondence shows that he was already working on a book in preparation to teach in England. The curriculum design process had begun even before Chekhov signs a contract with the Elmhirsts.

September 1, 1935 – Signs a contract with Beatrice Straight, Dorothy Elmhirst, and Leonard Elmhirst to establish a theater studio in England.

September 22, 1935 – Chekhov lectures at the New School for Social Research on "The Actor and the Theatre of Tomorrow."

England

October 1935 – Departs with Xenia for England from New York.

April-June, 1936 – Teaches 18 lessons to train his future acting teachers and assistants in the Chekhov Technique at Dartington Hall, Devon, England.

October 5, 1936 – Opens the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington Hall, teaching 20 international students ages 22-26. He will lecture continually internationally from this point forwards. (Dorothy Elmhirst, who was four years older than Chekhov, takes Chekhov's classes as well. She is one of the first six graduates who received diplomas three years later, in October 1939, by which point the school had moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut.)

The Chekhov Theatre Studio members not only studied and performed in studios and the indoor Dartington Theatre, but also in the open-air theatre and in the gardens of the large estate made available to Chekhov.

1936-38 – A frequent visitor to Dartington is Georgette Boner, who lectures on Commedia dell'Arte and other topics. Georgette Boner gives her first lectures at Dartington in December 1936 and returns in February, March, June and July of 1937⁴, and gives her final lectures the following June and July. Also lecturing in 1936 is Prince Serge Volkonsky, who was invited to give lectures on Delsarte, Dalcroze, and stage speech.⁵ According to Hurst, Volkonsky's writings, published at Paris in 1931, as well as works by Andrei Bely, are translated to be resources at Dartington.⁶ Harold Clurman and members of the Group Theatre visited as well. The multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural nature of the Dartington community also ensured a wide variety of artist, musicians, dancers, philosophers, and so forth visiting nearly continuously.

The first brochure of the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington offers the following observations:

“Classical plays drawn from the literature of the world, and the best work of modern playwrights, together with plays suitable for a children's theatre, will be studied [as part of the training].” (page 11)

The brochure also acknowledged debts to Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitsky, and Vachtangov.

⁴ See Mittelsteiner, Crista. 2015. “Georgette Boner and Michael Chekhov: Collaboration(s) and Dialogue(s) in Search of a Method,” in Routledge 2015, pp. 65 and 57-68, *passim*.

In addition to the Pariser Manuskript discussed in the text, see Boner, Georgette, and Michael Tschechow. 1994. *Hommage an Michael Tschechow: Schauspieler und Regisseur*. Zürich: W. Classen; and Boner, Georgette. 1998. *Schauspielkunst: von der theatralischen Sendung und dem Wunder der Verwandlung*. Zürich: Classen.

⁵ Whyman, Rose. 2015. “Russian Delsartism and Michael Chekhov: The Search for the Eternal Type,” in Routledge 2015, p. 273, and pp. 267-281, *passim*.

⁶ Deirdre Hurst du Prey Archive, Adelphi University. The Bely article was “The Wind from the Caucasus” from 1929.

First aim of the Studio:

New methods of study; to penetrate to the inner meaning of an author's intention and to discover greater depths in a play a wider interpretation of character. (p.11)

The direction of such work will always be towards a synthesis of the elements in a play through its principal ethical idea. In all its work the Studio will struggle against the absence of an ideal in the contemporary naturalistic theatre. Modern problems are so serious, so intricate, and so tortuous that if a solution is to be offered in the theatre, the theatre must leave the ways of mere imitation and naturalism and probe beneath the surface.

Second aim of the Studio:

Means of expression; all technique must be re-scrutinized and revitalized; external technique must be permeated by the power of a living spirit; inner technique must be developed until the capacity for receiving creative inspiration is acquired.

[...] A production will be composed like a symphony following certain fundamental laws of construction, and its power to affect the public should be equal to that of musical composition.

Third aim of the Studio:

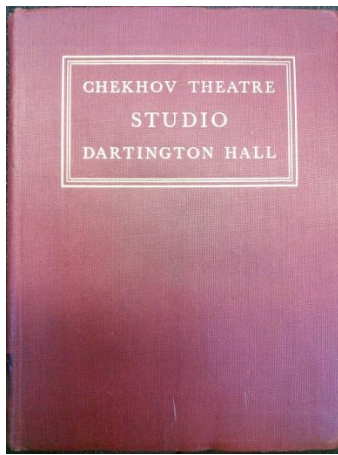
Composition, harmony and rhythm are the forces of the new theatre. Such a production should be intelligible to every spectator regardless of language or of intellectual content. An attempt to evolve a new type of actor, producer, author and designer will form an important part of the Studio's work. No less important will be a new type of audience.

Fourth aim of the Studio:

The theatre has had directors of genius, actors of outstanding personality and authors sufficiently master of their craft to provide plays... to bring about a satisfactory fusion of all these elements...to extend his/ hers knowledge and experience. An actor should be to some degree, also a director, a scene painter, a costume designer, and even an author and musician...The new type of actor, producer, playwright, and artist will develop in himself the power to carry a moral responsibility for what arises in the soul of the spectator.

(From the booklet, "Chekhov Theatre Studio Dartington Hall," 1936, pp.11-14 ff.

In both the Dartington and subsequent Ridgefield there are only four aims, but in the Dartington version the scope was broader including subjects such as *A new type of hero*; *Humor*; *A new type of play*; *The audience*.)



Dartington booklet, 34 pages. (Courtesy Dartington Hall Trust.)

1937 – Stanislavsky’s book *An Actor Prepares*, is published in an English translation by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, one year before Stanislavsky’s death. Both Hapgood and the publisher, Theatre Arts, are connected with the Elmhirsts.

1937 – George Shdanoff joins Chekhov in Dartington as an instructor, and Yevgeny Somoff takes care of the administrative duties.

May 24, 1938– Writes a personal letter to his daughter [Ada] in Germany (Chekhov called her “Морда,” a nickname).

June 1938 – Stella Adler, Luther Adler, and Robert Lewis come to spend a weekend at Dartington Hall and observe Chekhov’s acting classes.

The August 1938 issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* – a New York theatre publication largely sponsored by Dorothy Elmhirst – contains an extensive illustrated article on the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington Hall. Explaining the goal of training young professionals over the course of three years, in order to create a touring company, the article went on to say that “in the winter of 1940, his students will take out to the towns and cities of the old country and to distant regions of the new.” (“The Chekhov Theatre Studio,” in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, August 1938, n.p)

August 7, 1938 – Konstantin S. Stanislavsky dies in Moscow.

1938 – Chekhov’s only child, Ada Tschechova (also called “Olly”) visits her father and Xenia in Dartington. [Xenia Chekhov letter.]

1938 – George Shdanoff, Chekhov’s associate at Dartington since 1937, makes an adaptation of *The Possessed* by Dostoevsky. Chekhov and the Studio play-reading committee give Shdanoff feedback, including rehearsal and production notes.

Especially after the Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938, Chekhov, Beatrice Straight, and the Elmhirsts seek possibilities for transferring the Studio to the United States.

October 1938 – Beatrice Straight flies to New York, seeking an alternate location for the Studio, which she finds in the Ridgefield, Connecticut, School for Boys,

which had just gone out of business, leaving buildings and a large rural estate available, 55 miles from New York. On October 31, Straight sends a telegram to England certifying that she would make all necessary arrangements to transfer the Studio to Connecticut.

The October 1938 issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* includes a lengthy article on the Studio, presumably part of a new public relations effort. [Cornell]

December 16, 1938 – Chekhov’s last day as the Director of the Chekhov Theater Studio at Dartington Hall, England. With the emergence of widespread European fascism and Hitler’s threat (and Chekhov, of course, being half-Jewish), he moves to America with some, but unfortunately not all, the members of his Studio.

December 17, 1938 – Chekhov and his wife Xenia, sail on the ship Normandy to New York with some members of the Studio.

Before they leave, Dorothy Elmhirst writes, “Beloved Michael and Xenia – you have opened a new life for me that neither time nor separation can destroy. My heart is too full of gratitude to speak. Nothing can diminish the power of love I feel for you. Life is forever different because you came.”

[“Dorothy Elmhirst and Michael Chekhov” box 3 Cornell University archives USA]

Return to America

December 22, 1938 – Chekhov and Xenia arrive in New York.

December 23, 1938 – The New York Times announces Chekhov's arrival in New York. “Ex-Moscow Theater Director Transfers Studio to U.S. / Dartington Hall studio moves to Ridgefield, Connecticut” / “Michael Chekhov, a former actor and director of the Moscow Art Theater and the nephew of the great playwright Anton Chekhov, arrived yesterday at the French steamer, Normandy, to move his theater studio from Dartington Hall, England, to the United States.” [*New York Times*, December 23, 1938, page 6]

Later, Dorothy spoke to them on the phone, and Chekhov replies in a letter: “I enjoyed immensely to talk with you through the telephone, but was so excited that I could not understand many of your words. But I was satisfied at hearing your voice and feel nearer to you, which comfort me. After I left Dartington I missed you and still miss you strongly, but hope that these next two months will flow quickly and that we shall meet you on the pier when you come to join our group and our work.” (“Dorothy Elmhirst and Michael Chekhov” box 3 Cornell).



The logo of the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA, 1939-1942.

January 12, 1939 – the Studio reopens as a non-profit educational corporation on the new premises in Ridgefield Connecticut called The Chekhov Theatre Studio; directed by Michael Chekhov and with faculty members: Beatrice Straight (founder and assistant), Shdanoff (assistant director), Alice Crowther (speech), Harkness (assistant), Hurst (assistant), Cutting (assistant), J. Wood (musician), Rainey (fencing), Haynsworth (gymnastics).

In the 1939 “birth of Idea” section of the Studio’s brochure, as part of the explanation why the Studio was moved to Ridgefield, there is an explanation: “where the atmosphere seemed less menaced by threats of war and therefore more receptive to such an undertaking”...the aim is to simply form a professional company, to bring the graduate students (there is a hope for future, because to graduate will take 3 years) in contact with audiences through participation in the professional company. Otherwise the 4 aims are identical:

“The method ... has been changed somewhat, dictated by the reality of our work.”

The main points of Chekhov’s new, simplified method are four;

- 1) To apply a method of training, which will develop emotional flexibility and body technique.
- 2) To develop a technique for the approach to the form and construction of plays.
- 3) To give that actor a practical opportunity to enrich his abilities through knowledge of the methods and problems of the director.
- 4) To form a professional company.

The version was expanded slightly to include Chekhov’s rationale for the three year course of study and also, the text is more polite and less direct, although clear about what the Studio expects of students.

July 11, 1939 –the rehearsing and performing space (their main studio, the former gym) is named the Elmhirst Theatre after Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst. His teaching in Ridgefield, Connecticut marks the era of his pedagogy and directing in America. The first lesson contains a critique of rehearsals of the adaptation of Dostoyevsky’s *The Possessed*.

September 1, 1939 – the beginning of World War II in Europe.

October 5, 1939 – As Chekhov promised three years earlier in Dartington, six of his Dartington students, Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst, Blair Cutting, Peter Tunnard, Alan Harkness, and Beatrice’s mother, Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst, receive the first “diplomas” of the Studio, and could be presented as qualified teachers of Chekhov’s methods.

October 24 – November 4, 1939 – The Michael Chekhov Studio’s first major production, *The Possessed* an adaptation of Doestoevsky’s novel by George Shdanoff, opens at Broadway’s Lyceum Theatre, New York, with direction by Chekhov and set design by Dobuzhinsky – the production receives mixed reviews.

October 24, 1939 – WHN Radio review of *The Possessed* by Bide Dudley.

December 15, 1939 – Chekhov ends the first semester at Ridgefield, CT.

January 4 - November 12, 1940 Second year of Chekhov’s teaching at Ridgefield. Students who had come to the Studio in 1940 and 1941 are also used in roles on the new tours the company makes across the US. The best-known Chekhov associate was of course Yul Brynner (1920-1985), who joins Chekhov at Ridgefield in 1940 and would go on to become one of the principal film stars in Hollywood. (He saw Chekhov perform in Paris in 1935 and had wanted to go originally to study with him in Dartington.)

February 2, 1940 – Chekhov’s former MHAT colleague, the director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and his wife are brutally murdered in Leningrad.

October 5, 1940 – The first of three tours of the Chekhov Theatre Players takes place in 1940. For two months, the company travels by truck, bus, and car in 15 states, performing *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare (opening night of this performance on October 5 1940 at the Elmhirst Theatre in Ridgefield) and *The Cricket on the Hearth* by Dickens. In all, the Chekhov Theatre Players travel for thousands of miles through New England, the Middle Atlantic States, the Southeast, the “deep South,” and the Southwest of the United States, often performing in university theaters, municipal theaters or opera houses, cultural institutions, and art museum auditoriums, but also in tiny high school and community center theatres, women’s clubs, and the like.⁷

July 1940 – New York Daily Mirror critic, Robert Coleman, at the preview performance at Ridgefield in July 1940 reported; “Chekhov has devised a clever and amusing production ... He uses drapes, interchangeable screens, set pieces, and original props to effect rapid scene changes without lowering of the curtain and interruption of the comedy’s action. He uses [crew] in period costumes as integral parts of the production. They whirl the scenery into new arrangements before the audience’s eyes in synchronization with the movement of the play, thus gaining pace and providing novelty.”⁸

⁷ Additional details and reviews are cited by Byckling 2019; available URL: <http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/01/chekhovwest.shtml>.

⁸ Coleman, Robert. 24 July 1940. “Chekhov Troupe Has Clever, Amusing ‘Twelfth Night,’” in New York Daily Mirror.

October 16, 1940 – after the performance of *The Cricket on the Hearth* at the Institute of History and Art in Albany, a critic reported, “An amazing aspect of this new acting troupe on the American scene is the maturity they have achieved in spite of their youth. There is real conviction in their work.”⁹ On the same day, C.R. Roseberry¹⁰ declared that “*Cricket on the Hearth* proves [a] choice bit of artistry.” Similar compliments are given at Williams College in North Adams, Massachusetts, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York (with which Beatrice Straight’s deceased father had a close connection), Manchester, New Hampshire, Lynchburg and Richmond, Virginia, Atlanta, Georgia, and west to Texas and Oklahoma. Typical comments are, “brilliant,” “excellent,” and “great proficiency,” in productions that are described as “novel,” “gay, mad,” “remarkable,” before cheering audiences that “went wild” and gave six curtain calls.

October 25, 1940 – Chekhov writes to Dorothy Elmhirst: “Let me start from the best, which I have now in my heart and mind. Dorothy, it seems to me that our star begins to rise upon the horizon. The *Twelfth Night* and *Cricket* (especially *Twelfth Night*) performances have had a true and real success among a most varied audience. Each time when I attend the performances, which I did constantly up until now, I was full of doubt and fear and suspicion, being not able to eliminate entirely the experience on Broadway, but each time the audience itself awakened me from my heavy dreams, and through the audience rather than my own desire, I enjoyed the success quite objectively. The experience with these two productions, and your kind cable, encouraged me to a great extent, and although I never doubted that sooner or later we would appeal to the audience I feel myself now so free, so happy and so willing to go on creating with our group that I even dare to think of acting *King Lear* myself, if my struggle with the English language will be finally successful. Our group, to my mind, has grown and developed suddenly to a great extent, which I think they feel themselves and which I try to point out to them whenever I can. The acting before the audience alone was for them a great stimulus to force open the buds which they already had. The success which they have had they deserve completely and fully. Their maturity which begins to be seen is of such a kind which can never be compared with the clichéd maturity of so-called professionals. They remain fresh and young in their spirit in spite of the experience which is being so quickly accumulated. It gives me also the greatest joy and proves to me certain principles which I believe in and confirms certain points in the method. ...” (Dartington Hall Archives, Drama 8. M. Chekhov 3. Box), text in Lumpkin 1969. Typescript: Beatrice Straight Papers, Cornell University Library. Partially quoted in Marowitz, Charles. 2004. *The Other Chekhov: A Biography of Michael Chekhov, the Legendary Actor, Director &*

⁹ Also quoted by Byckling 2019.

¹⁰ Roseberry, C.R. 15 October 1940. “Shakespeare Streamlined, Chekhov Troupe Scores,” in *The Knickerbocker News*. Albany NY.

Theorist. New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, pp. 187-88; Byckling 2015, p.35; Byckling 2019; and other scholars.)

George Shdanoff, in his memoirs of the year 1940, gives even more vivid pictures of Chekhov essaying Lear: “He picked up his guitar and decided to learn Shakespeare's language downright musically. He listened and learned intonation, rhythm of the foreign language in this way.”... Shdanoff suggested that Chekhov, who still did not believe he knew English well enough, to prepare a couple of monologues and show them to him. The result was astonishing. “The door opened and I saw in the doorway M.A. [Mikhail Aleksandrovich] wearing ridiculous clothing ... M.A. suddenly, unexpectedly, seriously said: “Can we start?” He moved to the far away corner of the room and I sat at the same time on a chair by the table. M.A. only took off his glasses, standing there looking ridiculous. In a few seconds he came to me, and suddenly I saw something unbelievable happen in front of my eyes. What is it? He looks much taller, came across my mind...he is growing... and eyes... different eyes... his whole face changed... all the shades, nuances what a transformation was going on in his face...and at this point his strange costume didn't bother me, I forgot all about the fact that it was laughable. In front of me *is* a king, and what an amazing atmosphere is created around him. – Yes, this is King Lear. [...] but suddenly the sound of words was carried forth, the words were floating towards me, they were piercing, tortured, and at the same time sharply touched me. I was completely pulled in, holding onto the chair on which I sat with both hands, and he was standing in front of me completely free, without any kind of pretense, with indescribable ease ... where is such strength coming from? Whence comes such a storm, such a hurricane? It is a fire; it is burning lava, which is pouring out at me. [...] Right in front of me, I saw something [carried out] in practice which we had been aiming for as an ideal. [...] it was such an atmosphere of power, such density that you could cut it with a knife; yet what an art of ease and lightness...fully in harmony with a light, dynamic activity – energy. And such expressive hands! [...] He, the actor, playing a future King Lear, free – and I, the audience, chained to my chair, everything screaming inside me. But Chekhov's Lear, even in the moments on the edge of ecstasy, never screamed. Here is the whole ‘psychological gesture’ – the role is found and lives within him; this Lear is inside him. I see the king in my imagination. I am experiencing him; I know him. It was decided that in the next show Chekhov will play Lear, but he never played it. The production was necessary to put on immediately, and Chekhov, in order to prepare the role in English, said he needed one year. M.A. directed Lear himself; he makes drawings for the set, costumes, and make-up.” In spite of his enthusiasm, Shdanoff may have actually agreed with Chekhov that it was too soon for him to try to perform Lear.

November 16, 1940 – *Twelfth Night* performance at Cornell University.

To these two productions *Twelfth Night* and *Cricket* was added Shakespeare's tragedy, *King Lear*, and a story for children, *Trouble-maker Double-maker*, written by Iris Tree and Arnold Sundgaard for the Chekhov Theatre Studio.

December 1940 – The issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, the publication largely sponsored, as has been noted, by Dorothy Elmhirst; features the 1940 Chekhov Theatre Studio production of *Twelfth Night* which they take it on tour through colleges, art museums, and other civic institutions throughout the country. “With Chekhov as director and Beatrice Straight, who plays Viola of this zestful production, in charge, the youthful troupers have already taken to trucks and station wagons with *Twelfth Night* and *The Cricket on the Hearth* for a highly successful tour of the New England states before venturing further afield.” [*Twelfth Night* featured Beatrice Straight as Viola, Blair Cutting as Malvolio, Hurd Hatfield as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Ford Rainey as Sir Toby Belch, Margaret Draper as Maria, Alan Harkness as Feste and Sam Schatz as Fabian].

Mid-December 1940 –In Ridgefield, Chekhov prepares his teaching for the third year in the acting school. By now the Chekhov’s system is established with *higher ego, atmospheres and qualities, centers, imaginary bodies, radiance, style, feeling of ease* (using the “Four Brothers” exercise to replace Stanislavsky’s relaxation technique), *form, beauty, and the whole* among the topics. The students were guided to practice their artistic imagination, speech formation, improvisations, eurhythmy, and so on, per the brochures from 1939/40. Like their colleagues on tour, the students take part in designing stage sets, lighting, set-building, make-up, costumes and so forth – the practical way of making theatre possible. Chekhov stays in Ridgefield to teach the youngest group, write plays, and prepare the first version of his book *To the Actor*.

1940-41 – Chekhov receives an application from Vladimir Nabokov to be a resident playwright at the Studio in Ridgefield. According to Marowitz, Nabokov was to write a dramatized version of *Don Quixote* for Chekhov to direct – the three (Chekhov, Nabokov and Shdanoff) meet several times before the Studio is closed in Ridgefield. (Marowitz 2004: 195).

June 22, 1941– Germany invades the Soviet Union.

October 4, 1941 – *King Lear* premieres in Ridgefield. The performance is a great success; ovation and five curtain calls.

October 21, 1941 – Chekhov teaches his first New York City/ Manhattan Studio acting class to beginners and professional students. (October 21- December 29).

November (5, 7, 11), 1941 – Chekhov speaks about Stanislavsky in three acting classes.

December 2-13, 1941 – On Broadway, New York's Little Theater, the Chekhov Studio premieres *Twelfth Night*, with costume design and direction by Chekhov; performed successfully by the Chekhov Theater Players.

December 7, 1941 – Attack on Pearl Harbor, USA enters the war.

January 29 – March 1942 – lectures at the "Actor's Service," New York. Also, The Chekhov Theatre Players’ professional troupe gave their third and last tour, through the Southern and the Mid-Western states.

February 17, 1942 – again lectures at the "Actor's Service" New York, on "Imaginary Audience," and speaking about Hitler as "an amazingly smart machine, but is an inanimate being. I mean, there is no life without a heartbeat. Hitler is an accurate picture of such a machine."

March 26 and April 12, 1942 – Chekhov lectures to the Members of the Actor's One, New York.

March 1942 – Wartime draft; the Ridgefield Studio disbanded. Although the Studio is no longer active, Chekhov, Deirdre Hurst, and a small number of members and staff are not idle. Beginning in 1940, Hurst and Chekhov had been carrying on the work of preparing Chekhov's ideas and lessons for publications – a process that had already begun at Dartington. From 1940, they collaborate with Paul Marshall Allen, editing and giving form and structure to the book. "Version No.3," as Hurst called it, was completed in 1942 – it was also known as "The 1942 Version." According to Hurst, "final corrections and insertions were made after the Studio's existence was terminated. ...

Later that year, Chekhov will depart for Hollywood, taking typewritten copies of the unpublished manuscript with him. ¹¹

April 16, 1942 – lectures at Hunter College.

Chekhov has hopes to keep the Studio going in New York; he and Shdanoff continue to seek new members. They speak to Tennessee Williams about using his material and including him into the work of the Studio.

September 1942 – Chekhov's theater company is dissolved, and his acting school in Ridgefield CT and in Manhattan, New York is closed due to the war.

September 26 -27, 1942 – New York, Barbizon Plaza – farewell performance – *Evening of Short Stories by A. P. Chekhov*. Michael Chekhov performs in public for the first time in English. He and Shdanoff do a one – act play taken from Anton Chekhov's text, *I Forgot*, it was prepared along with another one – act called *The Witch* in English version adapted for theatre from Anton Chekhov's story by Michael himself. Critics applaud the performance. M. Dobuzhinsky designed the set. Chekhov would use his monologue from *I Forgot* as his screen test audition in Hollywood.

November 3, 1942 – Chekhov directs *The Fair at Sorochyntsi*, an opera by Modest P. Mussorgsky, at the New Opera in New York; Emil Cooper, conductor; sets by Dobuzhinsky; choreography by George Balanchine.

Fall 1942 – 16 out of 23 members of Chekhov Theatre Studio are mobilized for World War II.

¹¹ Deirdre Hurst du Prey, "To the Reader of Several Versions of *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*," p. 4. Deirdre Hurst du Prey Archives, Adelphi University. From Dartington and Ridgefield, one has massive documentation of actual classes from Hurst du Prey's shorthand notes (nicknamed by Chekhov "Pencil"), which may have totaled 500 lessons.

November 7, 1942 – Chekhov has a screen-test/ audition in Hollywood, California, organized by the Russian composer, and Chekhov’s mentor, Sergei Rachmaninoff.

November 23, 1942 – Michael Chekhov signs a contract with Metro-Golden-Mayer in Hollywood, after his successful screen test. His dream of a Studio and repertory company, a community of dramatic artists, would not be resurrected again.

New Year’s Day, 1943, Chekhov sends a bouquet of roses to Rachmaninov, with a note saying, “Most respectful Sergej Vasiljevich! I have left for Hollywood; I want to thank you again for everything you so kindly did for me. I wish you all the happiness in the New Year, always yours M. Chekhov.”¹²

January 5, 1943 – Departs for Hollywood to play in Gregory Ratoff’s film. Michael and Xenia Chekhov had arrived to stay permanently in California. In a letter to Dobujinsky dated January 13, Chekhov says he had been in California for 8 days. “Imagine, I have not seen the director (Ratoff), or producer, or script! Tomorrow I will go to MGM and will say ‘How do you do? I am here. What do you want me to do tomorrow?’ ... California is so beautiful! So beautiful! Sunny, warm, marvelous air, flowers, palms etc. etc.” (Literaturnoe ..Naslednie vol.1, pp. 454-455).

October 30, 1943– German director Max Reinhardt dies in New York. Three years earlier Reinhardt had opened the School of the Theatre in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard and became a US citizen the same year.

February 1944 – In Gregory Ratoff’s *Song of Russia*, shot in 1943, Chekhov plays the role of the collective farmer Stepanov. Chekhov said: “This picture was such torment from start to finish, that I can’t imagine what could be more awful or stupid, so I’m satisfied that my next movie can’t be worse.” [Quoted from Holmgren 2005; Routledge 2015: 330]. In a letter to his dear friend and Ridgefield colleague, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, Michael Chekhov writes: “Ratoff is to such an extent alien to me in doing what he wants from me, and sometimes it seems that he doesn’t want anything from me, which is upsetting me greatly. In fact except for: ‘pace, pace, pace,’ I hear nothing else from him. ...and then he tells me: ‘don’t say just the words, act!’ But he is not giving me even a second’s time for my playing ... I decided that I will try doing it my way – maybe he would be thinking in the same way, perhaps it would be what he wants (but he wants nothing)... the main scene is still awaiting to be done. Ingrid Bergman, with regard to her role in the film *Intermezzo: A Love Story* (Ratoff 1939) in her memoirs famously referred the director as “Crazy Ratoff.”

1944 – Release of the film, *In Our Time*, with Chekhov in the role of Uncle Leopold Baruta; director Vincent Sherman. Chekhov co-stars in the film with Ida Lupino, who would subsequently suggest that Mala Powers study with Chekhov.

¹² Lit. Naslednie, vol. 3, p. 554.

April 1944 – The Russian-language New York publication, *New Journal*, begins publishing Chekhov's Memoir, *Life and Encounters*. (*Novi Zhurnal*, 1944-45) It covers his earliest career to 1925 and 1934, respectively. In it, Chekhov returns to his meeting with K. Stanislavsky: "In 1928, when I was already living abroad, Stanislavsky invited me to come and discuss his 'system' (that was our last meeting). We agreed to disagree on two issues that divided us. The first was the question of 'affective memories. Stanislavsky was of the opinion that if the actor concentrates on memories from his personal, intimate life, they will give rise to the living, creative feelings he needs on stage. I ventured to object that truly creative feelings are achieved through the fantasy [imagination]. In my understanding, the less the actor draws on his personal experiences, the more creative he is. In such a case he makes use of creative feelings that are completely cleansed of the personal element. His soul forgets his personal experiences and treats them in its subconscious depth into artistic experiences. In contrast, Stanislavsky's method of 'affective memories' does not permit the soul of the actor to forget his personal experiences. My opinion is further confirmed by the fact that 'affective memories' often lead to nervous and even hysterical reactions among actors (and particularly actresses). The second issue was also related to this first one. It concerned the way in which the actor is meant to fantasize about the picture of the character or, to use Stanislavsky's expression, 'dream it up'. If the actor is playing Othello for example, he must imagine himself in Othello's situation. This calls forth the feelings he needs to act his role, so Stanislavsky maintained. My objection to this was based on the following. The actor must forget himself and use his imagination to picture Othello in his fantasy in the surroundings befitting Othello. By observing Othello (and not himself) from the outside, as it were, in his imagination, the actor will feel what Othello feels, and in this case his feelings will be pure and transformed and will not ensnare him in his own personality. The image of Othello as seen in fantasy will kindle in the actor the mysterious, creative feelings that are usually called 'inspiration'. The two issues that Stanislavsky and I discussed are in essence one: do the personal, untransformed feelings of the actor need to be eliminated from, or engaged in, the creative process? That conversation, which clarified so many things for me, takes place in a café on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. "It is with gratitude that I now recall those hours that Stanislavsky devoted to me."

May 3, 1944 – Chekhov writes a letter to Mark Aleksandrovich Aldanov, who is a writer of historical novels: "I would love to see you in person. Here is a strange climate – suddenly I started to feel better, you would too feel well here. What worries me is the incredible light and the terrifying darkness of the struggle and division of all humanity into two big groups."

May 9, 1945 – End of World War II in Europe. Chekhov participates in the American Radio program called *VE Day*. He speaks on the radio service of ministry of armed forces USA "Day of victory in Europe." Receives thank you letter with how much it meant for the troops to hear him speak.

May 3, 1945–Writes a letter to the Russian film artists working on *Ivan the Terrible* Eisenstein’s movie (cm. nast. izd.) and Eisenstein writes him back on 25th of January 1946 thanking him for his letter and how interested he is in what Chekhov had to say and he wishes to discuss it in person with him (this letter was published in 1968 “Iskustvo Kino”1968, No 1) He questions issues, such as tempo-rhythm and imagination, the actors encounter in the movie.

September 10, 1945 – Chekhov writes to Aldanov: “Book is special, professional-not for a wide public. 1) The book is about acting, can you find a publisher for such a book? 2) I would love to publish the book in Russian- there would be even few buyers for this- I understand. But my artistic goal- make my mind available to the RUSSIAN actor, in which I believe. If the book will be published here in Russian language, then sooner or later will appear in Russia. I want that. The book is not too large 170 typed pages. I investigated here in Hollywood and I was told that if I would to publish a book in Russian it will come to \$850 for 1000 copies. But I am afraid and am hesitant to do so this all by myself. Speaking of the English version, with translators Lajda and Bertenson. They are bowing in front of me telling me the book will be a success, not only in America, but in Canada and England markets. They started to translate even though they don’t have a publisher. True, they started to correspond with famous publishers, but I told them not to jump into something before I get an advice from you (and as I predicted with Michail Osipovich). Russian publishing interests me spiritually, English materialistically. I am thinking that the Russian publication can find its readers in France and other European countries, once a contact is established”.

December 28, 1945 – Release of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*, with screenplay by Ben Hecht, based on a novel by John Palmer. Chekhov stars along with Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck, playing famously the role of Dr. Brulow, a psychiatrist who protects the identity of an amnesia patient accused of murder, while attempting to recover his memory. Chekhov is nominated as a supporting actor for an Academy Award (“Oscar”).

Jul 3, 1946 – Writes another letter to Eisenstein about the film *Ivan the Terrible*.

July 10, 1946 – He takes a part in a symposium with a topic discussing problems of drama in the world theatre; Michael Chekhov and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky lecture on the theme, “Anton Chekhov and his effect on Russian culture.” (CGALI, 2316.2.93, l. 772)

1946- early 1947 – Chekhov and his wife are living in a modest house on a farm on one acre of land in the San Fernando Valley near Encino, in the heart of the nature – picking fruit, milking goats, and playing chess, “inviting over all the

experts and masters living near Hollywood, and they admire his mastery in the game of chess.”¹³

January 8, 1946 – Plays a role in *This Is My Best*, a radio play based on Ben Hecht’s *The Pink Hussar*.

February 14, 1946 – *Los Angeles Daily News* publishes an article on Chekhov’s method based on his work at the Actor’s Laboratory.

1946 – Chekhov and Shdanoff write a screen play, *That’s It (or True to Life)*; never filmed, but registered with Hollywood Writers Guild, Inc.

May, 1946 – Stars with Judith Anderson in the film, *The Specter of the Rose*, playing the role of Max Polikoff; written and directed by Ben Hecht.

June 24, 1946 – Chekhov becomes a member of American Academy of Film and Sciences.

July 10, 1946 – Chekhov and Dobuzhinsky are among the participants at a symposium on the theme of the problems of drama in world theatre.

1946 – Acquires American citizenship.

Due to his illness, Chekhov limits his activities to teaching and writing.

1946 – Chekhov finishes the Russian-language edition, *O technike aktera*, with illustrations by Nicolai Remizov. (See also below, 1953, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*.) Copies are distributed to libraries.

October 8, 1946 – Opening night for four-week engagement of *The Inspector General* at the Actor’s Laboratory in Los Palmas - Hollywood. Chekhov is invited to teach and direct. With make-up by Feodor Chaliapin Jr. and scenography by Nicolai Remisoff [The drawings by Nicolai Remisoff illustrated the Psychological Gesture chapter of Chekhov’s 1953 book, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*].

October 22, 1946 – *Hollywood Press*: “The inscenation Michael Chekhov’s gave the play a character of a grotesque and that is impressive. Directions of a genius!” *The Inspector General* by Gogol opened exactly 25 years after Chekhov performed Khlestakov in “Revizor” in Moscow. There seems to be a tradition in Chekhov’s career. Chekhov played the role of Khlestakov on the day 8 October 1921 in Moscow. Phil Brown played Khlestakov in Hollywood; he was blacklisted in the 1950s. The reviewer hopes that Brown “should improve as he loosens up.” Also, Lloyd Bridges (mentioned among the names of “outstanding in uniformly good cast”) with his wife Dorothy Bridges (“carried feminine lead with Jody Gilbert easily”). Praised are the make-up artists.

October 26, 1946 – Los Angeles edition, *Billboard*: “Michael Chekhov wields his directorial brush with wide strokes, sometimes overplaying his hand as he roams from pattern of straight comedy to near burlesque. It is this deviation from a

¹³ See Johnson, Grady. 1947. “Chekhov, the Actor, Not the Author,” *New York Times*, 12 January 1947, p. X5. Johnson adopted a breezy, ironic manner which sometimes camouflages his deep respect for Chekhov, who was still recovering from the staphylococcus infection that had begun in his teeth.

definite mood pattern which somewhat dulls the play's edges, since the piece is set neither as a farce nor a comedy, but a puzzling mixture of both. Farcical twists, obviously aimed at milking laughs, could be eliminated in favor of straight comedy". [...] "This isn't the best offering by the Actor's Lab, but it comes near enough to the top to merit attention and generous praise." None of the names of the cast stands out as someone who became famous later.

December 1946 – Two of his films are released simultaneously in December.

Chekhov plays the roles of Peter, an insane actor, in the film *Cross My Heart* (director John Berry), and the role of Solomon Levy in *Abie's Irish Rose* (director A. Edward Sutherland).

Chekhov works very hard and becomes ill. In January 1947 he is interviewed by Grady Johnson: "In his fifth and latest picture, completed before he suffered a siege of blood poisoning" ... Now gaining strength, minus the teeth which poisoned his slight but supple frame, 55-year-old, five-foot-seven Chekhov is soaking up sunshine and goat's milk on his acre of good earth. ... Now comfortably ensconced on his ranch, Chekhov says he has refused three Broadway offers, one from Ben Hecht, for whom he played a Ballet impresario in *The Spector of the Rose*. He'll stay in Hollywood, he says, as long as he is not asked to play himself. Although he periodically becomes engrossed with hobbies like astrology, philosophy, religion, and gardening, he thinks Chekhov is a pretty dull character. (Grady Johnson, "Chekhov, the Actor, Not the Author", *New York Times*, 12 January 1947, p. X5)

Chekhov and his wife are living in a modest house on a farm on one acre of land in the San Fernando Valley, "where life of this great actor is going on in the heart of the nature. Here he picks his fruit, milks his goats." He played chess, inviting over all the experts and masters living near Hollywood are they admire his mastery in the game of chess. (Ferrari, GCTM, 376.4)

1948 – Chekhov starts teaching professional acting classes in Hollywood, initially at the home of his friend, Russian émigré actor Akim Tamiroff, and subsequently in his own living room at home and in a reconstructed garage.

1948-1955 – A few of the actors whom Chekhov taught or coached, either directly as individual students or in the groups attending his lectures and group lessons during his years in Hollywood were – in addition to his colleagues Akim Tamiroff and George Shdanoff – Joanna Merlin, Mala Powers, John Abbott, John Dehner, Jack Colvin, Eddie Grove, Woodrow Chambliss, Ford Rainey, Marilyn Monroe, Lloyd and Dorothy Bridges, Jack and Virginia Palance, Robert Stack, Jennifer Jones, Anthony Quinn, Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Gary Cooper, ZsaZsa Gabor, Burt Lancaster, Jack Klugman, Sam Levine, Rex Harrison, Stirling Hayden, James Dean, and Clint Eastwood.

Monroe was particularly close with Chekhov and his wife, Xenia, to whom she left money. (Beatrice Straight also intervened with publishers to have Chekhov's works published and get royalties for Xenia.)

Several of these actors, such as the Palances and especially, Harrison, Hayden, Stack, Peck, and Neal, worked extensively as well with George Shdanoff and

Elsa Schreiber Shdanoff. Peck is said not to have filmed any important scene without Shdanoff's advice. If one accepts the judgment of Palance and others that Shdanoff's teaching followed closely many of Chekhov's principles and techniques, then the large number of actors who studied with them but not with Chekhov, such as Leslie Caron, Robert Young, Gene Kelly, and Paul Newman, must be added to the list.

1948 – Films the movie *Texas, Brooklyn and Heaven*, where he plays role of Gaboolian.

June 28, 1948 – Chekhov discusses a scenario by E.P. Morozov with Mark Aleksandrovich Aldanov, a Russian émigré writer, who was very critical of the Soviet system. He lived in USA for six years from 1941 and was one of the founders in New York City of the émigré journal *Novy Zhurnal* (“The New Magazine”):

“I have to tell you NOBODY can make it here in Hollywood. How they choose here scripts I don't get. Politics play a role, fashion and taste of the producer and who you know, apparently much more boggling. Don't worry about the bill. Actors are not part of the selection of the scripts. Back to E. Boris Morozov, at this moment I have no idea. I will let you know what's going on as soon as I know more. The screenplay is going to be translated into English. There is a terrible situation -stagnation in the film industry. It is going to the higher spheres of complications so called “film-political” and in Hollywood are many actors without work. No one knows when they will film again. I live, I am no exaggerating quietly and humble. I am beat-up by international situation and feel pessimistic. I have a wish, I am trying to get collected letters by A.P. Chekhov (copy is now at Cornell) but nowhere (not even in Paris) I can get them. Maybe one of your literary friends a good person can sell them to me? My translated into English book “Technique to the Actor” I am sending to New York to the publisher and they, with polite letters, are returning it to me, saying, it is too complicated. Pity. I even got sad. (Retrieved at NYPL or Columbia archive from letter to Mark Aleksandrovich Aldanov).

1948 – Begins *Arch of Triumph*, in the role of a Gestapo agent, with Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Heart disease caused him to leave the production and be replaced by Charles Laughton.

1949 – Chekhov plays in a short film, *The Price of Freedom*, director William Castle.

1950 – Chekhov is hospitalized for six weeks with a heart condition. He continues to teach from home, including students such as Joanna Merlin, Mala Powers, and Jack Colvin (1951).

He also worked on biographical stories about A.P. Chekhov, V. I. Nemirovich – Danchenko and K.S. Stanislavsky. (Retrieved at NYPL or Columbia archive).

July 30, 1950 – Chekhov writes: “My illness – I don't understand anyone.”

In August and part of September Chekhov is hospitalized. On 25 September 1950, A. K. Knipper writes to O. L. Knipper-Chekhov: “Misha is not in the hospital for

mentally disturbed, I received a letter from him - he was for 6 weeks hospitalized for his heart condition. A gossip says otherwise. (Museum, MXAT, K-CH, 2587)

January 1, 1951 – Chekhov agrees to write the foreword to a memoir by Juri Jelagin, a Russian émigré musician, about Soviet artistic repression, including the death of Meyerhold. See Jelagin, Juri; Nicholas Wreden, transl. 1951. *Taming of the Arts*. New York: Dutton.

August 6, 1951 Chekhov writes: “There is no work in film, but it will be better.” (letter at Columbia University archive).

1952 – Chekhov plays the role of Dr. Fromm in the film, *Invitation*; director Gottfried Reinhardt (son of Max Reinhardt).

May 17, 1952 – Chekhov and 24 other California-based theater people asked the American National Theatre and Academy organization to establish a branch on the West Coast “to stimulate the legitimate state [live theater] in California.” [17 May 1952, *New York Times*.]

1952 – Release of the film *Holiday for Sinners*, with Chekhov in the role of Dr. Konndorff; director Gerald Mayer.

1953 – Michaels Chekhov’s *To the Actor* is published by Harper & Brothers in English in New York. The work is edited by the Russian-born Charles Leonard, husband of Betty Raskin, Chekhov’s agent. This edition omitted many references to Steiner, and others to creative inspiration, but attracted critical notice and reviews. Subsequent editions (e.g., Routledge 2004) have tried to restore more of his ideas to the text. In 1991, Chekhov’s California pupil and eventual executrix of his estate, the film actress Mala Powers, and Mel Gordon publish the 1942 version as *On the Technique of Acting*.

In the 1953 edition, Chekhov reveals clearly his emphasis on imagination, intuition and the archetypal psychological gesture. He also pays tribute to Konstantin Stanislavsky as the creator of the one method “expressly postulated for the actor”, who had urged him to write down his thoughts concerning the technique of acting. According to Joanna Merlin, who studied with Chekhov at the time, Chekhov also sent copies of the 1953 edition to “many school libraries.”¹⁴

April 25, 1954 – Chekhov accepts an invitation to take a part in a concert of Society for mutual help of Russian-American artists as a benefit for ill and retired colleagues (senior center) in San Francisco. Chekhov receives great ovations. [*Novaja Zaria*, 25 April 1954.]

May 16, 1954 – “Novoe Ruskoe Slovo” reviews “O Tekhnike Aktera, published in English.”

October 12, 1954 – Writes a preface for Juri Jelagin’s book about Meyerhold. Jelagin, Juri [Elagin, Jurij Borisovic], and M. A. Čehov. 1955. *Temnyj genij: Vsevolod Mejrhol'd*. New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni; see Lit. nasl., vol. 2, p. 559.

¹⁴ Merlin 2015, in Routledge 2015, pp. 391-92, op. cit. above, Chapter Two.

December 13, 1954 – Chekhov writes to Besmertnomu, “Firstly, I am not worried about what the doctor would say, my health worsened within the last couple of months. Secondly, there is too much work, and that is taking all my strength”. [CGALI, 2316.3. 35 Lit. nasl., vol. 2 p. 559.]

1955 – Twelve lectures in the series Chekhov gave to the Drama Society in Los Angeles are recorded through the intervention of John Abbott, John Dehner, and Fanya Mirroll, organizers of the Society. Some are delivered in front of the audience of actors, directors, producers, and acting coaches, but five lectures are recorded at his home because he is too ill to speak in person. The last two lectures (“On love in our profession,” and “On many-leveled acting”) are recorded in late September 1955 at Chekhov’s home, not long before he died. In 1963 Charles Leonard compiles *Michael Chekhov’s To the Director and Playwright*, including partial transcriptions of some of Chekhov’s lectures (Harper & Row). In 1992 (reissued 2004), eight of the lectures were edited and partially distributed on four CDs (with a printed introduction and analysis) by Mala Powers, as *Michael Chekhov on Theatre and the Art of Acting: The Five-hour CD Master Class, A Guide to Discovery with Exercises* ([New York]: (Working Arts Library).

June 27, 1955 – Writes his last letter, to Juri Jelagin. 1955 “malaise and sundries inside and outside keep me in a vice. I beg you, wait. Don’t be upset with me. I love you and your book firmly.... Xenia is resting on the beach - I live alone. Forever and ever yours M. Chekhov” [CGALI, 2316.3.37; published in *Novyj Zurnal*, 1979, no.3.]

September 1955 – Writes, on a magnetic board, his last lessons for American actors at the Drama Society of Hollywood.

Night of September 30 - October 1, 1955 – Michael Chekhov dies at the age of 64 of a heart attack in Beverly Hills, California. (Ironically, James Dean, who might have gone on to be Chekhov’s greatest pupil, dies in a car accident the same day.)

October 1, 1955 – A. K. Knipper writes to O. L. Knipper-Chekhov, “October. Suddenly Misha Chekhov died [...] I received a letter yesterday from Olitchka (*O.M. Chekhova) – she received a telegram from Xenia. It is tragic that he wanted so badly to see Olitschka and her husband with their son (they had a great and lively correspondence) – 5th of October Olitchka wanted to fly with her family to visit Misha – everything was arranged. [...] Misha left all for Olitschka and children. [...] She wrote me a desperate letter – my father was everything to me. He was writing her wonderful, gentle letters, composed stories for children; he illustrated them himself and was sending them often packages. Lately he was writing a lot (about the theatre) and published. Last month was very hot in California, Misha complained, that it is hard on him. He lived till 64 years - that is no “age.” [Museum MXAT, K-Ch, 2592; Lit. nasl., vol. 2, p. 559.]

October 4, 1955 – Michael A. Chekhov is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles.

January 28, 1966 – Chekhov’s only daughter, the actress Ada “Olitchka” Tschechowa (age 49), daughter of Olga Chekhova (Tschechowa), and mother of Vera Tschechowa, Michael Chekhov’s only daughter, dies in the Lufthansa Flight 005 accident in 1966, aged 49. She is buried at the graveyard of the town of Gräfelfing near Munich. [With boxer Conny Rux, she had a son named Mischa (or Michael), and with a physician Wilhelm Rust she had a daughter Vera Wilhelmowna Rust Tschechowa (born 22 July 1940), who is a German film actress.

It was for her and her brother that Chekhov would write children stories such as a book for children written and illustrated by Chekhov, called “A Tale About Lies and How Swiftly They Spread Across the Earth” [Edited by Jessica Cerullo for MICHA, 2013.] written in a folkloric style unique to the Russian language in Russian with side-by-side translation into English by Andrei Malaev-Babel in 2013.]

1980 – Beatrice Straight and Robert Cole found the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York (active until 1991-92), reuniting Chekhov’s former Dartington/Ridgefield and California pupils as teachers.

Addendum

Michael Chekhov played a total of 21 roles in films, initially in 6 silent films in Russia, later in one silent and three sound films in Germany, and eleven in America, plus acting in the 1948 film *The Arch of Triumph* until severe illness caused him to leave the production. (The paradox is that Chekhov played roles in sound films only after he left his native Russia – that is, he played only in foreign languages, German and English.)

IN RUSSIA (Silent films):

1913– Tryokhsotletie tsarstvovaniya doma Romanovykh (short film; directors - Nikolai Larin & Aleksandr Uralskij).

1914– Kogda zvuchat struny serdtsa, (director Boris Sushkevich).

1915– Sverchok na pechi, (Cricket on the Hearth), from the MAT production; directors Boris Sushkevich & Aleksandr Uralsky, starring in this film with Chekhov and Maria Ouspenskaya).

1915– Shkaf s surprizom, (director Vyacheslav Viskovsky).

1916– Liubvi syurprizi tshchetmiye, - (director Vyacheslav Viskovskij).

1927– Čelovek iz restorana, role of Skorohodov - a waiter (director Yakov Protazanov).

IN GERMANY:

1927– *Einer gegen alle*; presented in cinemas March 23 as a silent film; director Nunzio Malasomma, production - Carlo Aldini-Film, distribution - Trianon-Film Denmark production co.

1929– *Phantome des Glücks / The Phantom of Happiness*, role Jacques Brnard, director of "Prudence", director Reinhold Schünzel - silent film and in 1930 he was sounded. Appears in headlines like "Michael Tschechow."

1929– *Der Narr seiner Liebe / The Fool of Love*, filmed after the comedy Poliche by Henry Bataille - the role of Didier Mireuil called Poliche, director Olga Tschechowa (Chekhov), Michael's first wife.

1930– *Troika* role -Paschka, a village idiot, played with Olga Tschechowa his first wife; director Vladimir Strizhevsky.

IN USA:

1944– Released in February; *Song of Russia* –role - Ivan Stepanov, director Gregory Ratoff.

1944– *In Our Time* - Uncle Leopold Baruta; director Vincent Sherman, co-starring Ida Lupino.

1945– *Spellbound / Bleed Soul* – Dr. Alexander 'Alex' Brulov; director Alfred Hitchcock, with Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck. Chekhov was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

1946– *Specter of the Rose* -Max Polikoff, director Ben Hecht, co-starring Judith Anderson.

1946– *Cross My Heart* - role, Peter insane actor; director John Berry.

1946– *Abie's Irish Rose* - role: Father Solomon Levy, director A. Edward Sutherland.

1948– *Texas, Brooklyn and Heaven* - Gaboolian, director William Castle.

1948– *Arch of Triumph*, role of Gestapo agent in film with Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Due to Chekhov's illness, Chekhov was replaced by Charles Laughton in the role of Ivon Haake.

1949– *The Price of Freedom*, short film, director William Castle.

1952 – *Invitation* -Dr. Fromm, director Gottfried Reinhard, son of Max Reindhart.

1952 – *Holiday for Sinners* -Dr. Konndorff; director Gerald Mayer.

1954 –*Rhapsody* -Prof. Schuman; director Charles Vidor, played with Vittorio Gassman and Elizabeth Taylor.



Alfred Hitchcock, *Spellbound*, 1945: Ingrid Bergman, Michael Chekhov (nominated for an Academy Award, Best Supporting Actor), Gregory Peck.



Alfred Hitchcock, *Spellbound*, 1945: Michael Chekhov as Dr. Brulof.

Michael Chekhov's famous scene may be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/165809090> .

Anthroposophy

The Anthroposophical Society, headquartered at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, was founded in 1912 by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Steiner had been a leader in the international Theosophical movement, one of a series of spiritual philosophies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that sought to bring a more “scientific” approach to religious belief and spiritual philosophy, often incorporating South Asian or East Asian religious concepts, especially those derived from Hinduism and Buddhism, into the European Christian world-view. From 1907, Steiner increasingly separated his thought from Theosophy and became concerned with applying spiritual science to the arts, particularly in the technique of Eurythmy performance art, developed from 1911, in which movement expresses vocal sounds and spoken sentences. After founding Anthroposophy in 1912, he sought to combine a Western approach to spirituality derived from German idealistic philosophy, the aesthetic ideas of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Nietzsche, with the Asian spiritual concepts and apply it to religious, artistic, and moral questions. As with Theosophy, Steiner understood the spiritual realm to be accessible to humans. He also equated rational thought with spiritual experience (“spiritual science”), associated colors with spiritual and psychological values, appreciated meditation, embraced Hindu concepts of karma and reincarnation, and emphasized a tripartite division of the human being (body, soul/psyche, and spirit – consistent with Christian understanding) in which the Higher Self is in contact with the spiritual realm. Steiner and his followers founded educational institutions such as the Waldorf Schools and Rudolf Steiner Schools (as in New York City). As frequently noted in this study, Anthroposophy permeates Michael Chekhov’s dramatic theory and pedagogy; current-day Chekhov teachers and practitioners include many Anthroposophists, but the teaching of the method does not depend on this. For further study see Cristini 2015 in Routledge 2015, pp. 69-81, and Hamon-Siréjols 2009, op. cit above and in the Bibliography.

Atmosphere

“Atmosphere” described the combined effect of stagecraft/mise-en-scène (plot, set design, furniture, props, lighting, blocking, music, etc.) and the psychological state (emotions, responses) of the actors expressing characters onstage. It is related to the concept of the “mood” created in scenes. Chekhov elaborated this idea from what he learned and used in the MAT tradition of Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov. Chekhov distinguished two kinds of Atmospheres. There is a general, “objective” Atmosphere permeating either the whole play or individual scenes, in which every character onstage participates. (Chekhov cited the atmosphere that “surrounds, envelopes, all kinds of buildings, places, events, and so on,” and gave the example of walking into a Gothic cathedral and being affected by the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of the place. Other examples included holiday periods, fairs and festivals, occurrences in public spaces, etc.) The second type of Atmosphere is a “subjective”

one, the individual atmosphere (moods, feelings, emotions) of a particular character. Chekhov observed, “these means are absolutely intangible, but strong and often much stronger than the lines which the author gives us.”

Atmosphere is intimately connected to Ensemble. It also can be an important aspect of the plot itself, as when two “warring” objective atmospheres collide in the play, or when a character’s subjective feelings or beliefs are not in agreement with the general, “objective” atmosphere. (Here Chekhov gave examples of an Atheist in a religious meeting, a depressed person in a happy gathering, and similar situations.) Chekhov observed that the details (moods, feelings) of personal, individual atmosphere of a character may change during the course of a play even while the underlying Atmosphere carried by the character is maintained.

Archetypes

Chekhov used the term, “Archetype,” in several different contexts, with slightly different meanings, throughout his teaching and writings. All of these contained, however, the standard ideas of “a prototype; a very typical example of a certain person or thing,” the general concept that all particular representations of that thing or idea depend on. The analogy that Chekhov used is the idea of a “king” or “queen.” There are specific kings or queens – King George III, Queen Elizabeth I, King Lear, King Henry V, King Richard III, Queen Isabel of Spain, and so forth – and then there is the general idea of a royal person. That would be the Archetype. Occasionally, the idea of a symbolic prototype known to all humans (as for example elaborated by Carl Jung; Everyman, Hero, Outlaw, Explorer, Creator, and so forth) crosses the broader concept, but there is no intent to use Jungian archetypes as such. Chekhov strongly resisted equating Archetypes with popular stereotypes, which are usually negative (if not prejudiced), and associated with clichés.

Chekhov also spoke of the role of the human subconscious in combining and condensing private, subjective, particular life experiences into “Archetypes, prototypes of feelings” which are related to a broader sense of physical sensations that can call up feelings and emotions at need. He spoke of archetypal sensations that can “fill you with THE Sadness, THE Joy. You will immediately become as it were The Sadness, The Joy, The Happiness, etc.”

Archetypal Gestures

Chekhov distinguished two kinds of gestures: ordinary, everyday gestures, and “what might be called the archetypal gesture, one which serves as an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind. So, for Chekhov, underneath the ordinary everyday gesture of refusing something is an Archetypal Gesture of repulsion, rejection, absence of desire, or some other general quality. Over the years since Chekhov’s death, some Chekhov teachers have suggested a list of eleven archetypal gestures: Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Embracing, Smashing, Wringing, Penetrating, and Tearing; Chekhov himself suggested more than twenty, and did not limit the number. In any case, Archetypal gestures must be simple and comprehensive in

order to imply a range of other actions. (So, for example, “Push” can also evoke humiliate, punch/jab/stab, shock, provoke, dominate or intimidate, and so forth.) Archetypal Gestures are useful for some dramatic applications in themselves, but are even more important in the Chekhov work because all Psychological Gestures (see below) are meant to be Archetypal. That is, the Psychological Gesture is intended to be something in a relatively simple form coming from deep within the psyche of the actor.

Attention – see Concentration

Audience

An audience is a group of people who attend, watch and hear, and occasionally participate in a theatrical performance. Chekhov, following the lead of his mentor, colleague at the MAT, and friend, Yevgeny Vakhtangov, built an awareness of the audience into an actor’s preparation and rehearsals for a performance.

Beauty – see Four Brothers

Bit/Beat/Unit

This is a chosen section of text, varying in length, in which you identify a *task* or *tasks* for the character or characters. You should give the *bit/beat/unit* a title such as choosing an active verb appropriate to the section or a specific color, emotional quality, or other label which helps you to learn the text. A change in dynamic (tempo-rhythm) or thought or a new event (it can even be a pause/a silent moment) can start a new *bit/beat/unit*, for example when a character’s *task* or *objective* is achieved or prevented, or a character enters or leaves the scene, or a new dialogue between characters takes a new turn.

Stanislavsky used the term, “bit” (кусочек, кусок, частица – бит in modern Russian is a loan-word from the English computer term), and may also have referred to the series of bits being strung together like beads on a string. This metaphor was used by Richard Boleslavsky, who first taught and published the Stanislavsky-MAT method in a systematic way in English. In Boleslavsky’s Russo-Polish accent, “bits” (or “beads”) would be pronounced “beats,” and this term is still often used in American and British dramatic preparation. (The present study uses “bit.”)

Children: Theatre Education for Children / Children’s Theatre

Michael Chekhov’s first concern at Dartington was to train teachers in his method, so that his method would be carried on. He was also interested in children’s education. Already at Dartington, A Fairy Tale Theatre Group was created, and research began on certain main themes to be embodied in plays to be created for children’s audiences. Classes for local children were begun in Ridgefield, where the young professional actors also wrote and performed plays for young audiences. (One of his certified student-teachers, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, subsequently became an important pedagogue in children’s arts education.) Throughout the Dartington-Ridgefield era, Chekhov made extensive use of fairy tales in his pedagogy- the

theme of good and evil/ polarities. In this context, see the children's book written and illustrated by Chekhov in America, *A Tale about Lies and How Swiftly They Spread Across the Earth*. (Chekhov 2013, op. cit. above and in the Bibliography. See also Rushe 2018, p. 309 and Dartington Archives, ms. no. MC/S4/9/F.)

Climax in Character Arcs

In character arcs, as in plot of the play, the Climax is the dot on the end of the exclamation point. The Climax is the reason for the story. You as an actor are “building to a climax.” The Climax is where your character proves that he really is a changed person. Your audience has witnessed his/her evolution.

Color / Coloration

Chekhov's terms, borrowed from Goethe via Rudolph Steiner, often indicating emotional or sensory qualities applied to movements and gestures.

See Qualities.

Concentration / Attention.

Concentration is the action or power of focusing one's strong or undeviating attention or mental effort. Stanislavsky spoke of “stage attention” (сценическое внимание) which he and Chekhov considered an essential part of the “creative state.” The entire concept relates directly to **Observation** focused in a concentrated way in various contexts, for example while viewing people in public, or in the course of rehearsals or performance, when the object of concentration will include one's fellow actors and an awareness of the audience. If the actor is not fully attending to what is going on onstage, there will be a loss of quality and the action may seem mechanical. Chekhov greatly expanded Stanislavsky's concept in his curriculum for Dartington and Ridgefield. See the “Chart of Concentration” illustrated above, Chapter One.

Stanislavsky also discusses *multi-level* attention (connected with Chekhov's *multi-level acting*), where the actor can pay attention to more than one thing at once, such as the stage partners, the internal action of the character and the quality of voice and precision of movement.

Contraction– see Expansion and Contraction

Creative Individuality

Chekhov described “Art” as Creative Individuality at work in its most heightened “Art,” John Dewey noted, “is the complement of science ... the disclosure of the individuality of the artist.” Dewey spoke in ethical terms of the “manifestation of individuality as creative of the future.” (See Alexander, Thomas. 1987. John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature. Albany, NY: The State University of New York, pp. 242-243.) Chekhov was aware of previous philosophical attitudes towards Creative Individuality on the part of predecessors such as Count Leo Tolstoy and Dr. Rudolf Steiner. He linked Creative Individuality with inner creativity, observing that if the actor follows “the psychological succession of inner

events (feelings, emotions, wishes and other impulses) that speak to you from the depths of your creative individuality and you will soon be convinced that this “inner Voice” you possess never lies.” (Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 46.)

As Franc Chamberlain has shown, Chekhov’s sense of Creative Individuality was linked to ideas of a Higher Ego or Higher Self, as opposed to the everyday ego (Chekhov 1953/2002, pp. 86 ff.), and the Higher Self was the source of Creative Individuality. (Chamberlain 2004, pp. 48-52.)

The Creative State

This concept, derived from Stanislavsky but like others, greatly elaborated, was linked to Creative Individuality and inner creativity, was an essential part of the Five Guiding Principles defining his method – “the purpose of our Method as means of invoking a creative state of mind.” The elements of the Creative State in Stanislavsky and Chekhov include Observation, Concentration, Multi-leveled Attention / Many-leveled Acting, Playing for One’s Partner, and the quality of creative fantasy described by the concept of Naïveté, and, in Chekhov, a much-expanded use of Imagination and Incorporation of Images.

The concept is implied in the idea of “Crossing the Threshold,” where one not only enters a creative space, whether the classroom, studio, rehearsal, or stepping into a scene in a performance, but also enters the Creative State of mind.

Difference between Actor and Character

Chekhov insisted that each actor should be aware of the differences between him- or herself and the characters. He asks the actor to “accumulate and write down” all the differences that could be discovered in three spheres: mind, feelings, and will impulses. See below, **Thinking/Feeling/Willing**.

Dual Consciousness

The definition of dual (double, divided) consciousness is the presence of two apparently unconnected streams of consciousness in one individual. In dramatic terms, the actor is both inside and outside the role he/she is playing – a concept going back to Denis Diderot in the 18th century. This is implied in Stanislavsky’s method. Katherine Wylie-Marques has called this “a separation of body and mind,” where the actor “is able to dispassionately ‘observe’ the self in performance.” (Wylie-Marques 2003, p. 150.) Sharon Carnicke has said that in Stanislavsky, the “organicity” of body and soul are in an “ocean of subconscious, engulfing the actor, [where] the inner and the outer are absolutely continuous” and that Stanislavsky’s creative state is “an enmeshment point” where these two modes of consciousness meet. (Carnicke 1998, p. 140; cf. Bendetti 1982, p. 43 ff.). Chekhov first became acutely aware of this dual consciousness in performing the role of the clown Skid in Reinhardt’s 1928 Vienna production the play *Artisten* by G. Watters and A. Hopkins. (Chekhov’s awareness may have been augmented by the fact that he was performing in German.)

The large bibliography on this subject is outside of the scope of this dissertation.

Ease– see **Four Brothers**

Embodiment – see below, **Incorporation**

Ensemble / Ensemble Feeling

Chekhov defined Ensemble as a group of actors “who must find the right connection with each other in order to establish a constant harmony among themselves. The more sensitive they become, through correct training, the more they depend upon each other for mutual support and inspiration. ... Ensemble acting, if rightly understood, is the opposite of what we have called acting with ‘clichés,’ in which everything is outwardly fixed and inwardly deadened.” (Chekhov 1942/1991, pp. 121, 124.) Chekhov’s Ensemble exercises often involved group improvisations. Chekhov never wanted an actor to be isolated. Actors “must develop the ability of collective improvisation, receptivity to the creative impulses of others, a higher degree of creativity and sense of style. (Chekhov 1946, p. 51.) Chekhov also expanded the notion of “Ensemble” to include the larger family of each production, including the technical crew and, with Vakhtangov, the audience. In fact, when speaking to Hollywood actors, he suggested using the crew on the film set as a substitute for the audience in a theatre. Ensemble is connected with Atmospheres and concepts such as Rhythm, and with a broader concept he called “Love in Our Profession.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 11; NYPL call no. LT10-4789.) Furthermore, Chekhov insisted on a spiritual element in Ensemble: “Even such a simple thing as establishing an ensemble feeling, as we call it, among the members of the cast of this or that play would be impossible without interference of our Spirit, because what is ensemble, it is a kind of unification of so and so many people and to unite all these people, only our spirit is able and not our soul [psyche].” (Tape 2; NYPL Call no. LT10-4780.)

Enthusiasm

“And what is enthusiasm? It is a combination of our burning feelings and of our ideas. I wouldn’t even hesitate to say that we can find even traces of heroism in our everyday life. Those moments are just the same, a combination of our thoughts coming from our intellect and a fire, the flame coming from our heart. And actually, every time when we think of doing something for someone else and not for ourselves, every such moment is already combination of the warmth or even fire of our heart and of our thoughts. Of course, we can get sometimes very enthusiastic in an egotistical way, but I don’t mean that. I mean such an enthusiasm or a heroic mood or the desire to do something for somebody else, without egotistic note in it, or at least with very little egotism.” (Ibidem, Tape 2.)

Entirety or Whole – see **Four Brothers**

Embodiment – see below, **Incorporation**

Emotions – see below, Feelings.

Emotional Memory / Affective Memory

Reliving situations in your own life while rehearsing a role, often with the aid of *substitution*, in order to arouse your own emotions. Stanislavsky referred to it in his early writings as *affective memory* or *emotional recall*. Chekhov famously substituted imagination-based processes for this technique.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is performance art in which actors or dancers express the essential forms of speech, music, and "soul experiences" (emotions or feelings) as movements or gestures. Eurythmy has the performers learn a repertoire of movements similar to what Chekhov called "archetypal gestures" (see above), each movement or gesture embodying the quality (sounds and rhythms) of a specific spoken sound, rhythms of musical elements, or movement aspects of feeling. It was developed by Rudolf Steiner in conjunction with Marie von Sivers as a cultural and therapeutic part of Anthroposophy. (A parallel system of Eurythmy was developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze; this teaches concepts of rhythm, structure, and musical expression using movement, generally as a part of music education.) The color theories of Anthroposophy, derived from Goethe, are also incorporated into Eurythmy. The related Anthroposophical speech technique is called "**Speech Formation**," which is the artistic interpretation of literature "in recitation, declamation and conversation." The basis is "the laws inherent in speech and poetry, such as sound, rhythm, gesture of word and breath, content and style." Speech formation often accompanies Eurythmy performances but has a general theatrical application. (See <https://www.anthroposophie.ch/en/arts-architecture/topics/articles/eurythmy/speech-formation/overview.html> .)

Expansion and Contraction

Opening (Expansion) and Closing (Contraction) are two of the basic Archetypal Gestures or Actions in the Chekhov method, psychophysical movements that are directly related to Psychological Gesture (PG). Chekhov used Nicolai Remisoff's drawings illustrating these movements in his discussions of PG in both 1946 and 1953 (in different contexts). Expansion and Contraction exercises are among the most common exercises to train Chekhov techniques.

Chekhov had a broader sense of what Expansion could mean to dramatic method: "And another achievement will be this: What is the most characteristic feature in love as we understand it tonight? It is a constant process of *expansion*. If you will see and realize, that the love is not a state of mind, it is not static, it is constantly moving, so you will see that this movement can be only characterized by only saying, it expands itself continuously, incessantly. And with this expansion, our inner being – the core, the essence of our artistic being – is also constantly expanding itself. What does it mean? That means that our talent grows, loses its chains, and becomes stronger, more powerful, freer, and more expressive. Expanding oneself that means developing oneself as an artist." (Chekhov 1955)

Lectures, Tape 11, "On Love in Our Profession"; NYPL call no. LT10-4789.)

Contraction is obviously the opposite of expansion.

Feelings and Emotions

(See also below, Sensations, and Thinking/Feeling/Willing.)

In the Chekhov method, the actor, in creating the character, must effectively express three "inner" processes: Thinking, Feeling, and Willing. Feeling, in this context, is basically equated with emotions, although semantically, it is a slightly wider concept involving physical sensations ("a loss of feeling in the hands"). We tend to give Emotions names (Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Surprise, Love, Desire, etc.) Feelings are usually understood to be those the actor wants to express on behalf of the character, as a part of embodying the character and the character's inner life. For Chekhov, the physical sensations connected with Feelings or Emotions ("the Sensations of our feelings") in life can be the keys to calling up the Emotions; indeed, in the psychophysical techniques, performing a motion or gesture can call up emotions/feelings.

(See also above, Archetypes.)

Five leading and guiding principles

- 1) Bodily development by psychological means;
- 2) Intangible means by expression while acting and rehearsing;
- 3) Our Spirit and the true intellect as a means of unification;
- 4) The purpose of our Method as means of invoking a creative state of mind;
- 5) Separate points in our Method as the means leading to the freedom of our talents."

Four Brothers (Ease, Form, Beauty, Entirety/Sense of the Whole)

The "Four Brothers" refers to what Mel Gordon called "four linked psychological" (or psychophysical) movement skills:

- 1) the FEELING OF EASE, which Gordon sees as a "substitution" for Stanislavsky's idea of Relaxation, produces the natural relaxed state associated with an accomplished athlete but avoids interference of a command to "relax";
- 2) the FEELING OF FORM, which trains the actor to shape his or her movements, poses, etc., like a choreographer or sculptor. Exercises often involve pairing actors to "sculpt" poses;
- 3) the FEELING OF BEAUTY, which brings the actor into the sphere of pure motion and being, like a dancer, but also adds artistic completion to scenes and characters that may in themselves be repellent;
- 4) the FEELING OF THE WHOLE, which helps the actor find the aesthetic controls over the total development of a scene or character, like a playwright or painter. Gordon paraphrases Chekhov, saying, "an artistic creation must have a finished form: a beginning, a middle and an end. Equally, everything on the stage must convey this sense of aesthetic wholeness. This Feeling of the Whole is strongly felt by an audience and must become second nature to the performer. The Feeling of the Whole can apply to an entire production, a scene, or a single monologue."

(Note: here and as indicated below, I have relied on Gordon 1987, pp. 133-145, for information on terms Chekhov shared with Stanislavsky and the MAT studio leaders.)

Giving – see Radiating

The Higher Self (Higher Ego or Higher “I”)

As noted above, the Higher Self, or Higher Ego is a concept Chekhov derived from Steiner’s Anthroposophy along with the tripartite division of the human being (body, soul/psyche, and spirit – consistent with Christian understanding). The Higher Self – in contrast to the more animalistic, materialistic, and calculating Lower Self – is the part of the conscious mind in contact with the spiritual realm. It is the agent of Creative Individuality and in part can connect the mind with the subconscious. Again, Gordon (1987, p. 170), summarizes: “The individual performer is always limited by his past experiences and habitual way of doing things. But the actor can learn to break out of his own private patterns and choices. Appealing to the higher Ego, the source of all artistic energy, allows the actor to temporarily leave his personality behind and expand his range of theatrical ideas and physical activity. From the Higher Ego comes the inspiration to create new and surprising characters.”

Image – Imagination

Chekhov insisted that the actor must think in Images: “Thinking in images, not intellectually... The intellect must be turned into a vision” (Chekhov in Hurst du Prey 1977a, pp.189, 259 – unpublished.) “The writer will only provide some of the information needed by the actor in a play and the actors must use research and their *Imagination* in order to create the world of the character in full. This idea is very close to Stanislavsky’s concept of Imagination.’ Imagination is the ability to see something invisible...it is very important to be a little bit astonished about this simple thing.” (Ibidem, p. 13.)

But Chekhov went beyond Stanislavsky to use the actor’s Imagination, and the Images the actor creates in his or her mind, to be the basis on which the entire dramatic method was built. The first thing an actor must do is develop a mental image of the character to be played – the first intuitive Image will be built upon as the actor’s work progresses, eventually affecting the sense of the character’s Imaginary body and the Psychological Gesture.

Chekhov identified four stages of Imagination:

- 1) To imagine something, we know exists (an object in the room);
- 2) To imagine something that we are not familiar with, but know it exists (an iceberg);
- 3) To allow what we see in our mind’s eye to affect us, “to let it go through you.” (Chamberlain 2004, quoting Chekhov on 17 February 1942.)
- 4) To control and alter the image we create at will, to imagine it in a different size, colour, circumstance, or transform it into something fantastical, such as a dragon or something extinct. (Quoted in Keeve 2002/2009-2010.)

Imaginary Body

To create characters with different physical features from his own, the actor must first visualize an Imaginary Body – the ultimate step of creating an Image of the character. This Imaginary Body belongs to his character but the actor can learn to inhabit it, through constant practice, the performer can change the length and shape of his body and physically transform himself into the character – the usual metaphor is that the actor “steps into” the Imaginary Body of the character.

Imaginary Center

“Every living person, according to his general character, his main psychological qualities and peculiarities, is ... centralized within himself. Our imaginations can easily find where this Center, as I call it, sits within this or that person.” (Chekhov and Leonard 1963, p.60.) “Each center, wherever it might be located, must have certain definite qualities. The center can be big or small, dark or shining; warm or cold, crispy and dry, or soft and gentle. It might be aggressive, or calm and tranquil. Every center can be either static or moveable.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 3, “On Character and Characterization,” I; NYPL call no. LP10-4779.) Depending on the character, an Imaginary Center can be placed anywhere, even outside the body.

Note: On Imaginary Center (in an ideal type). In current use among practitioners of the Chekhov work, the term, Ideal Center, means a center deep in the chest, often with an imaginary sun illuminating it, but in any case the prime center of radiation. While this may have been a teaching tradition passed down from Chekhov to his students, and so forth, the concept as such seems not to appear in any of Chekhov’s writings. What Chekhov said in several different contexts, but particularly in describing the role of the Imaginary Body, was that the “imaginary center in the chest should gradually evoke in you the feeling that your body becomes harmonious, approaching the ideal type.” Ideal has several meanings, but one is “derived from ideas,” different from natural things, or Imaginary, as well as the usual sense of “the best possible, what everyone wants.” (See Chekhov 1946, p. 102; cf. 1991/1942, p. 100 and 1953/2002, p. 80, where the same idea is presented with only slight variation.)

Improvisation

Acting without a fixed text; playing a character’s actions but with actors own spontaneously invented words. Often used as a rehearsal technique or used as a theatre form in itself.

Incorporation / Embodiment

These two words are partial synonyms in English. “Embodiment” (ВОПЛОЩЕНИЕ) was Stanislavsky’s choice of words when speaking of how an actor becomes a character onstage. In Chekhov’s 1946 edition, written in Russian, he used this same word for the actor “embodying the image” as a part of characterization. The connotations of the Russian and English words are similar; they include “incarnation” (including in the theological sense, whether Christian, in giving a

body to a spiritual being, or in the Hindu sense of “avatar”). “Incorporation” is a secondary definition or synonym in both languages, involving “to cause to become a body or part of a body.” “Embodiment” seems to exactly define what both Stanislavsky and Chekhov meant by developing a character – in Chekhov’s case, the Image of the character in the actor’s mind being incarnated in the actions of the actor onstage.

In 1942 and 1953, however, Chekhov and his English-speaking editors chose to express this same element in Chekhov’s method as “Incorporation,” which means “to unite or work into something already existent so as to form an indistinguishable whole (the inclusion of something as part of a whole); to blend or combine thoroughly.” This loses the spiritual aspects, but perhaps matches more closely the metaphor in which the actor creates an Imaginary Body for the character, then “steps into it,” so to speak, in order to present the character onstage.

One can say that Chekhov, with Stanislavsky, considered Embodiment the outer characterization of the role (the outer expression of the actor’s experiencing), but for Chekhov, embodiment requires the actor to incorporate his or her Image of the character into this outer expression.

In any case, in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor*, Chekhov offers an exercise developing what he means by Incorporation (Embodiment). In it, the student first imagines movements in detail, then attempts to imitate them in actual physical movement of the body, then eventually moves on to imagining a character and recreating the imaginary character’s movements. According to Chekhov, “this exercise will gradually establish those fine connections so necessary to the linking of your vivid imagination with your body, voice, and psychology.” He notes, “when incorporating, you may notice that you sometimes deviate from what you have visualized and studied in detail. If this deviation is the result of sudden inspiration *while* incorporating, accept it as a positive and desirable fact. ... You might, to begin with, choose only one feature from all that stand before your inner vision. By doing so you will never experience the shock (which actors know only too well!) that comes of trying to incorporate the whole image *at once*, in one greedy gulp.” (Chekhov, Michael; *To the Actor*, 1953/2002, Exercise 11, p. 32)

Independence (“The independent existence of the character”)

One consequence of the actor making an Image of the character, of the character’s Imaginary Body, etc., is that the character takes on an existence independent of the actor and yet, as the actor’s creation, to some extent independent of the script. Chekhov also spoke of the the performance in general as “a living being with an independent life.” (Chekhov and Hurst du Prey 2000, p. 70; 2018, p. 35.)

Inner Tempo – see Tempo

Inspiration

“If we learn to use correctly every separate point [in the method] we have a greater chance to invoke our inspiration, and to get into a creative state of our mind by our own will. If we use correctly one of these points we shall see that other points

awaken by themselves. (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2; NYPL call no. LT10-4780.)

Inspired Acting

Real, true acting – meaning inspired acting – is never “doing,” it is always “happening.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 7, “On a Short Cut to Approaching a Part”; NYPL call no. LT10- 4785.)

Objective and Super-Objective (based on Stanislavsky)

The *objective* is what you want to do within a *bit/beat/unit* of the play. As Stanislavsky indicated, it can be expressed as ‘I want to...’. This is what motivates the behavior of the character and is directed towards the other characters onstage. Each character will have their own *tasks*, or *objectives*, *counter-tasks*, or *counter-objectives*, which may be opposite to those of other characters. The best known translation of Stanislavsky’s term (задача) is “task.” It is also sometimes called the *intention* or *the intended victory*.

Super-objective of the Character

The goal, desired end, or dream of the character throughout the whole play; the ultimate objective towards which each character strives throughout the play and directs his or her will-impulses. This is individual to each character. All the character’s tasks and scene objectives are linked to the super-objective, which stands behind them.

Obstacle (in terms of the Objective)

Particularly in the American understanding of Stanislavsky’s system, the word “obstacle” is used as a thing, counter-action, or another character’s will-impulse, that blocks the character’s way or prevents or hinders progress towards the scene objectives or the super-objective. Anything that impedes the Objective.

Outer Tempo (see Tempo)

Pause

It is a temporary stop in action or speech. ‘The extreme pole opposite to the outer action is a complete pause when nothing is expressed outwardly; everything is radiation, atmosphere, any kind of inner suspense, with other words, all the intangible means of expression and no outer expression at all.’ (Chekhov 1955 lectures, Tape 8, “On Monotony in Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10- 4786.)

Physical Actions Method

A practical rehearsal process geared towards creating a ‘score of physical actions,’ where beginning with simple actions in the *given circumstances* begins to unlock *experiencing*. (Based on Stanislavsky).

Polarities (Contrasts)

Chekhov often advised actors and directors to look for polarities in plays, scenes, and bits of scenes. The beginning and end of these dramatic units are, as Chekhov

put it, “polar in principle” – that is, significantly different, if not opposite in theme and meaning. As an active technique he applied this to rehearsals, meanings, thoughts, moods, and methods of improvisations, where one takes the “starting point and the last moment, toward which we have to improvise when we improvise.” With regard to rehearsals, he often suggests beginning with the end, then going back to the beginning, then filling in the midpoint, then continuing in this manner.

See also **Triplicities**.

Polarity in Atmosphere

Chekhov noted that two objective atmospheres might clash in a play – he called it “warring atmospheres” – and that a character’s individual feelings might be in conflict with the prevailing atmosphere of a scene or play.

See also **Atmosphere**.

Projection – see **Radiating**.

Psychological Gesture (PG)

Chekhov called PG “a condensed form of our entire part and entire character, or even a section of it.” The PG is a physical movement that awakens the actor’s inner life. It serves as a key to the essential or hidden features of his character. As noted above (Archetypal Gesture), Chekhov separated ordinary, everyday gestures from what he called “the archetypal gesture, one which serves as an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind.” The PG belongs to the class of Archetypal gestures.

There are two types of PG in Chekhov’s method. The first is the overall PG for a character – and there can only be one for each play. This is created by expressing the super-objective of that character in a simple, “archetypal” gesture. The gesture, derived from the Image of the character in the actor’s mind’s eye, remains in the mind as an Image, but can also be expressed in movement, as an actual gesture. It is generally not shown to the audience or even in rehearsal.

A second type of PG, applied to objectives within a scene, may be used in a sequence, and may also be visible to the audience. (Chekhov gives an example of a sequence of both visible and invisible PGs performed by Horatio encountering the Ghost of Hamlet’s Father in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.) A visibly performed PG may result in a defining moment for a scene onstage and particularly in films. The applied PG does not contradict the overall PG, but rather co-exists with it and complements it. As Chekhov said, this PG “follows us invisibly, intangibly as our guide and friend, as something which inspires us all the time while we are rehearsing or performing. ... [it] bridges the gap between the play and the actor ...” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, “About Emotions and Sensations”; NYPL call no. LT10-4780.)

Qualities

Qualities refer to simple sensations, feelings, or ideas that an actor can express physically, or internal images that he can embody in gesture. Examples are to sit

with a Quality of Love or stand with a Quality of Power. According to Chekhov, “through moving with a specific quality, such as caution, your movement will acquire a certain nuance, a sensation which draws to it feelings and emotions akin to whatever quality you have chosen.” (MICHA, The Michael Chekhov Association. 2009. *MICHA Workbook Third Edition* (online PDF), p. 30.)

These concepts were influenced by Rudolf Steiner and associated with color theory. In the 1946 Russian edition of *To the Actor*, for example, Chekhov used the term “coloration” for qualities. See above, Color.

Qualities of Movement – *molding, floating, flying and radiating*

Furthermore, you can make a good deal of use of the qualities which we usually call molding, floating, flying and radiating. You can distribute them just as well for creating contrasts in bigger or smaller sections of your part. These qualities can be easily applied to your speech, gestures, movements, business, to everything. (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 8, “On Monotony in Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10-4786.)

Radiating (based on Stanislavsky)

The extension or projection, of the actor’s embodiment of the character’s thoughts, feelings, and will-impulses to the other actors onstage and beyond, to the audience. “To radiate on the stage means *to give*, to send out. Its counterpart is *to receive*. True acting is a constant exchange of the two.” (Chekhov 1953/2002, p. 19.)

Radiating is part of the subjective atmosphere of the character that comes from within the character: “The character radiates it and carries it around himself all the time, or as long as it is needed. ... So, let it shine and radiate through your performance, through the mask which you wear on the stage, through the character with its characterization. The human being is the essence of everything in life and in art.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many-Leveled Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10-4790.)

Receiving

Drawing energy in from the surroundings. On the stage, this means the actor “can receive the presence of his or her partners, their actions and words ... the atmosphere ... things and events. In short, he or she receives everything that should make an impression’ upon him or her as a character according to the meaning of the moment.” (*Ibidem*, p. 19. “We have to do some preparatory things psychologically to get, to receive, and to awaken our feelings. In one case we receive the impressions and react upon them directly, immediately as it were spontaneously. In another case, this spontaneity, this directness is impossible.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, “About Emotions and Sensations”; NYPL call no. LT10-4780.)

Sensations (see also Feelings and Sensations)

“Sensations” generally refers to physical sensations, but Chekhov uses the term linked psychophysical processes. “Sensations,” he says, “are as it were immediate, and spontaneous, direct means which awaken and invoke and coax our feelings. ...

Speaking figuratively, we can compare such Sensations with big packages, rich of content, which you get from your subconscious. On each of these packages you can read on one Joy, on Happiness, third Sorrow, and so on. In order to experience Sensations, no preparatory or preliminary work of any kind is needed. Feelings are capricious, as I told you, and might not obey you, but Sensations are always at your disposal, you can always have them as soon as you say to yourself: 'I want to experience the Sensation of Joy, Despair, Happiness, and so forth.' Feelings themselves might be very complicated, intricate and complex, but not the Sensations, which are always very simple. And that is just why I recommend, while working upon our parts, to appeal to the Sensations, and not to the Feelings." (Ibidem, Tape 2.)

Significance and Sustaining

Significance and Sustaining are active forms of RADIATION. Significance exercises teach the performer to endow other objects or things with a unique power. Likewise, in the Sustaining work, the actor practices holding the special power over a word, pose, or object for a certain amount of time.

Six-Direction Exercises

These exercises use motion to the right, left, forwards, backwards, up, and down in order to emphasize the relationship of the body to the surrounding space. Often associated with staccato and legato movements. Derived from Chekhov's teaching, they have been elaborated further by practitioners such as David Zinder, Lenard Petit, Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan, and Sinéad Rushe.

Speech Formation – see above, Eurythmy.

Spirit/Soul

Chekhov was not always consistent in using these terms, part of the tripartite division of human existence he shared with Steiner (and Christianity): Body, Soul [Psyche], and Spirit. When Chekhov says "spirit," he generally means the Russian word, *дух* – spirit, mind, ghost, wind, esprit. When he says "soul," he means the Russian *душа* – with implications of heart, mind, psyche, interior processes. (The words in Russian also overlap.) The context of Chekhov's use is that "soul" and "psyche" are synonyms, and that "spirit" is the more religious (or "spiritual") term.

Subconscious

The "subconscious" is "the part of the mind of which one is not fully aware but which influences one's actions and feelings." In both Stanislavsky's and Chekhov's systems, much of the actor's creative work takes place in the subconscious. Stanislavsky asks the actor to analyze the given circumstances, use the "Magic If," play tasks, and so on, to stimulate the imagination. Chekhov asks the actor to create Images of the character first, imagining how the character would look, and move, speak, react, etc., and then allow the subconscious to aid in developing and embodying the character.

Super-objective of the Character – see above, Objectives

Tempo (Inner and Outer Tempo)

There is inner and outer *tempo-rhythm*. *Tempo* refers to the speed of physical actions and *rhythm* to the inner promptings. There may be a contradiction – the inner agitation of a character may be marked by slow movements in the attempt to appear in control. A play also has a *tempo-rhythm*, as Stanislavsky pointed out.

Chekhov spoke of different tempos:

You know that there are two kinds of tempos: one might be called *inner tempo* and another, *outer tempo*. Outer tempo (fast or slow) concerns speech, the movement, the business. That means all what we can see or hear. And inner tempo is something different. Inner tempo is the speed with which our feelings, emotions, desires, and will impulses of every kind – thoughts, images and so on – they can appear and disappear, change and follow one another with greater or lesser speed. These two different tempos – Inner (purely psychological) and Outer tempo (visible and audible) – are absolutely independent one from the other. They can “run” simultaneously, being both either slow or fast or one of them slow and the other fast and vice versa.

By the way it is always much more interesting for the spectator to watch the laugh of the character on the stage while there are two tempos running simultaneously, one slow and another quick.

In my book [Chekhov 1953] you will find some exercises and examples, concerning these different tempos. Every part, every character gives us many opportunities to play with these tempos, to make it beautiful, wonderful, attractive, expressive, interesting pattern of these tempos – if we look for them, of course

(Chekhov 1955 lectures, Tape 8, “On Monotony in Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10- 4786.)

Theatre of the Future

The “Theatre of the Future” is a recurring idea in Chekhov’s dramatic theory, and expression of his hopes for what the drama profession could do under ideal circumstances. “If we have no money and no one will give it to us, then show the performance in a small room, in a cafeteria, without costumes or make-up; simply show this tremendous desire to overcome these difficulties, these voices around us that tell us we are not allowed. If this strong spirit is there and shown and maintained as long as necessary; if this new life and spirit comes from pain on one hand, and from the inspiration of performing the theatre of the future on the other hand; if this is done by a group of actors, pioneers, then I believe in everything. It is just the same for me, whether it happens tomorrow or in 10, 20, or 50 years. I will be dead and will not see this great event-it does not matter. It is not important who will see it. It is important to know that it will be there, and that the actor will gain all the rights that the actor rightfully has and will create the theatre that is worth creating.”

(From a Lecture at Labor Stage, New York: 12 April 1942, transcribed from shorthand notes by Deirdre Hurst du Prey [Chekhov 1942/1983].)

Thinking / Feeling / Willing

Just as Chekhov, following Steiner and Christian theology, divides the human being into Body/Soul [psyche]/Spirit, so he also follows Steiner and François Delsarte in identifying three “interior” or mental processes of the character as “Thinking/Feeling/Willing” – or alternately, “three spheres: mind, feelings, and will impulses.” Like Steiner, he associated Thinking with the Head, Feeling with the Heart, and Will Impulses with the lower part of the body (pelvis, legs). He applied this to a number of dramatic concepts. For example, in asking the actor to understand how he or she is different from the character, he asked how the actor’s way of thinking differed from the character’s way of thinking (differing minds); how the feelings and emotions of the character differed; or how the actor’s sense of will and the will of the character differed (strong, unbending, versus weak and feeble, etc.).

Thinking heart

“What is this quality? It can be described the following way. There are faults and ideas which are absolutely deprived from any feelings. The real intellect, really great ideas and thoughts must be born and can be born within our heart. We should find within ourselves our thinking heart. And it isn’t so difficult after all. If we only would pay a little more attention to our everyday life, we will find that there are moments when we are enthusiastic, those moments can be very humble and hidden, but still you will find them.” (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 2, “About Emotions and Sensations”; NYPL call no. LT10-4780.)

The Three Sisters (falling, balancing, floating)

Falling

Imagine that your energetic heart is falling downwards, try to sustain the sensation that I awakened by your imagination of this movement.

Balancing

Allow yourself to physically lose your balance, and then before you fall catch your balance and feel the sensation of having saved yourself from falling. Now do it as only an imagination of the movement and sustain this sensation.

Floating

Imagine you’re your energetic heart, or your energetic brain, or any specific energetic body part is floating upward, experience the sensation as you sustain the imagined movement.

(Based on Jack Colvin, who was taught this exercise in private lessons by Chekhov. MICHA Workbook Third Edition, 2009 The Michael Chekhov Association Inc.; p.34)

Three states of consciousness: dreaming, waking and creating

Sigmund Freud divided human consciousness into three levels of awareness: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Each of these levels corresponds and overlaps with Freud's ideas of the id, ego, and superego.' Dreaming is a natural extension of waking conscious experience. 'Let's presume that you agree with me, and you accept my suggestion of acting using many levels – and you experience more and more consciously that these levels are creating, awakening, conjuring up, this fictitious "I" of the character. Yes, it is fictitious, of course, as the entire soul of the character is a fiction which you created. But still, this "I" is somehow akin to your own personal, individual "I" in your everyday life. And these two "I"s – your real "I" in life and your fictitious "I" on the stage – they are constantly attracted to one another; they seek one another. The fictitious "I" becomes a kind of a vessel ready to receive your real human "I," and if you will not resist consciously this friendship, if you will not make any obstacles to these two "I"s which are attracted to one another, they will merge together, and your human self will take part in your acting, making it human, beautiful, attractive, even magic.' (Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, "On Many-Leveled Acting"; NYPL call number LT10-4790.)

Through-line of Action

This is the character's journey through the play, the line of thoughts and actions of the character which the actor must fulfil without losing it. The combined *through-lines* of the characters, based on Stanislavski's system, make the plot.

Transformation

Dramatic change in form or appearance. 'The desire and ability to transform oneself are the very heart of the actor's nature.'(Chekhov 1942/1991, p. 99.)

Even the slightest characterization, a mere hint of it, is already a transformation.

Triplicity (see also Polarities)

Chekhov spoke of Triplicity as "the first rule of composition." The idea was to use a tripartite structure to analyze any dramatic script. Another aspect is, as in the case of Polarities, that everything onstage should have a beginning, middle, and end. As noted there, the idea would be to find the beginning and ending points of a scene or "bit," then work on the middle, and then find other intermediate points. (Chekhov, in part under the influence of Rudolf Steiner, tended to arrange concepts in groups of three: "Thinking/Willing/Feeling"; the principal body Centers, the "Head/Chest/Pelvis"; "Spirit/Soul/Body"; and so forth.)

Veiling

Veiling is an inner action in the character comprising everything which is veiled, muted, and the extreme pole opposite to the outer action. Veiling can be a complete pause when nothing is expressed outwardly – everything is radiation, atmosphere, any kind of inner suspense, with other words, all the intangible means of expression and no outer expression at all.

Will-impulses

An impulse is a strong, sudden urge to act, a normal part of human thinking process, often resulting in action. If a person is strongly willing something, or if he or she acts on a sudden feeling or thought and is following an impulse. Will-impulses can be of every kind – thoughts, images and so on.

Appendix 3

Chekhov-Related Programs Presented by Lenka Pichlíková –

I. Michael Chekhov International Theatre Festival Ridgefield, Connecticut;
II. MICHA, The Michael Chekhov Association, New York and at Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut.

I. Lenka Pichlíková – Dramaturg of the Michael Chekhov International Theatre Festival Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA

<https://chekhovfestival.com/board-of-directors>



The Chekhov International Festival was created to honor this dramatic innovator and to bring live professional theatre to Ridgefield, Chekhov’s adopted home. The festival produces new and classical plays by American and international companies. More information is available at

<https://chekhovfestival.com/>

Lectures by Lenka Pichlíková:



LENKA PICHLÍKOVÁ

2016

From The Ridgefield Press, August 25, 2016, in “*Business, Community, Happenings, People*”:

“The eighth annual Chekhov International Festival kicks off with a lecture by the award-winning actress Lenka Pichlíková at the Ridgefield Library on Tuesday, Sept.

13 at 7 p.m. The lecture centers on Michael Chekhov's years in Ridgefield and includes original film clips and sound bites.

Michael Chekhov was the Russian-born nephew of Anton Chekhov, and a famed actor and teacher who established his own acting method which greatly influenced modern drama. In 1938, he founded an acting school in Ridgefield and later in Hollywood, teaching leading actors including Grace Kelly, Lloyd Bridges, Gregory Peck, Ingrid Bergmann, Gary Cooper, Clint Eastwood, Yul Brynner, and Marilyn Monroe.”

The following biographical information on Lenka Pichlíková is distributed by the festival, and also may be found on her university webpage for the Conservatory of Theatre Arts, College at Purchase, State University of New York:

<https://www.purchase.edu/live/profiles/298-lenka-pichlikova-burke>

“Lenka Pichlíková is an actress of Czech descent, the seventh generation of her family to appear onstage since the 18th century. While in Czechoslovakia, she performed on stage in many theaters, played in twelve films, and created over 40 television roles, rising to the rank of Advanced Master Artist. In addition to performing as a speaking actress, she was also involved professionally in classic pantomime. Since the 1980s, she has resided in the United States, where she has performed onstage in speaking for more than 25 years. Since 1988, she has been a member of the Actors' Equity Association, the union which represents professional actors.

In 2006, she was named the “Best Mime” of Fairfield County, Connecticut. She teaches performing arts, dramatic literature, and cultural history, and translates plays.”

In 2016, the Festival ran from Thursday, Sept. 22 through Saturday, Sept. 24, including an outdoor performance of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* on Saturday night at Ballard Park at 6:30pm (no charge). Other performances were Randy Noojin's one-man show about Pete Seeger on Thursday and Anne Adams' *Strange Country* on Friday, both at Ridgefield's East Ridge Middle School at 7:30pm. Details may be found below.

Shows & Events of the Michael Chekhov International Theatre Festival Ridgefield, CT, 2009-2019:

Michael Chekhov Festival Timeline:

2009 - First Michael Chekhov Festival

2010 - Year two at Ridgefield Theatre Barn

2011 - Year three - John Bergstrom, artistic director –Abby Walker, manager
HAMLET - The Drilling Company from New York - directed by Hamilton Clancy

2012 - Year four - John Bergstrom - artistic director
The MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR directed by Hamilton Clancy,
Schlumberger theatre

2013 - Year five- John Bergstrom - artistic director -
APPLE by Vern Theissen - directed by Vern Theissen – Schlumberger
theatre

2014 - Year six - John Bergstrom - artistic director -
THE NORWEGIANS- directed by Elowyn Castle – Schlumberger theatre

2015 – Year seven –

Lenka Pichlíková joined the festival as a dramaturg and a researcher.

Festival renamed Chekhov International Theatre Festival.

September 24th – September 26th

One man show A REPORT TO AN ACADEMY by Drew Valins

Shakespeare AS YOU LIKE IT The Drilling Company; New York City company performs at the Ballard Park, Ridgefield, CT

A staged reading AUTO BODY BEAUTIFUL

WHAT ‘S YOUR WISH THICKET N’ THISLE, a fairytale folk musical

Our location was at Scotts Ridge Auditorium 750 North Salem Road, Ridgefield, CT

2016 – Year Eight

Location: East Ridge Middle School

Shakespeare MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING The Drilling Company; New York City company performs at the Ballard Park, Ridgefield, CT

SEEGER one man show by Randy Noojin

MILK by Ross Dunsmore (Thrown Stone Company) staged reading

STRANGE COUNTRY by Anna Adams

2017 – Year Nine

TWELFTH NIGHT -The Drilling Company; New York City company performs at the Ballard Park, Ridgefield, CT

THE AMERICAN SOLDIER - A veteran's one-man play. Based on actual letters collected from veterans and their family members from the American Revolution all the way through our current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It explores the bravery of our veterans in combat and the difficulties our veterans with PTSD and their families face when they come back home. Mr. Taurel plays soldiers, family members both men and women, ranging from Revolution, Civil War, World War I, WWII, Vietnam, Iraq & Afghanistan. THE BUTCHER - by Gwydion Suilebhan. Staged reading. Thrown Stone Theatre Company.

Inspired by real-life events, The Butcher tells the tale of two strangers: Jane, an Evangelical Christian struggling with her faith, and Massoud, an Iranian Halal Butcher steeped in tradition, who together witness a peculiar and shocking event. As they and their families try to make sense of these bewildering circumstances, they question their faith, their firmly-held beliefs, and the choices that their cultures have forced them to make. Don't miss this new play that "has the potential to change the way we think about religion and the seemingly insurmountable cultural divide." (Fort Myers News-Press)

ETERNAL YOUTH - Niamh Ryan's sparkling new play reveals two teens grappling with the cares and concerns that young people face as they transition into adulthood. At the heart of this play is a powerful message about mental health and a reminder that we are never alone.

2018 – Year Ten

HAMLET by The Drilling Company

FANCIFOOL, written and performed by Ananda Bena Weber. A hilarious, heart-warming, thought-provoking, one-woman show about Love! Featuring dancing, singing, mime, clown and edgy social

commentary, Fancifool reminds us that, no matter how different we may seem on the outside, in our hearts we are all connected by Love.

THE CAPTIVES by Barbara Blumenthal-Ehrlich. New Haven's Collective Consciousness Theater will present a reading of this award-

winning, gripping new play inspired in part by true events, weaving together messages about capital punishment, gender identity, and the consequences of personal choice.

THE INTIMACY EFFECT by Jeff Tabnick

- "A smart, sophisticated commentary on marriage and family relationships... a playwright with a proficiency for interpreting everyday language with wit and perspicacity."- Los Feliz Ledger

- "Darkly humorous..."

"Mesmerizingly effective. You hold your breath until it's all over."-

Broadway World, Gil Kaan

- "... An engaging, timely examination of the difficulty of identifying abuse..." "...Compelling theatre..." "The conversation surrounding abuse arising from toxic masculinity is both timely and necessary.

RECOMMENDED"

2019 –Year Eleven

ROMEO & JULIET, The Drilling Company; New York City company performs at the Ballard Park, Ridgefield, CT

THROW PITCHFORK

Alexander Thomas's one-man show ran off Broadway at New York Theatre Workshop and the Kitchen Theatre Company in Ithaca, NY before winning a Special Honors at Thespia Mono Drama Festival in Germany. This 75 minute one-act play is about the search for a man's self-definition and the struggle with a Jim Crow legacy. 8 PM Indoor Show - Ridgefield Theater Barn

UNNATURAL ACTS by Plastic Theatre Company

Directed by Tony Speciale. Plastic Theatre Company will present a staged reading of this play which was previously produced at Classic Stage Company in Manhattan under the title The Secret Court.

2 PM Indoor Show - Ridgefield Theater Barn

HONDURAS by Sara Farrington

Directed by Evan Yes Foxy Films Theatre Company – HONDURAS is a solo piece based on true events, accounts, personal experiences from the Honduran immigrant mothers in the New York/New Jersey area, all of whom playwright Sara Farrington and her colleagues at Immigrant Families Together have supported. Each asylum-seeking mother and child in this story crossed the border in the summer of 2018. Indoor Show - Ridgefield Theater Barn

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE BY NEW CARACAS & ALEA

New Caracas, together with Colombian singer-songwriter Alea, will present a song cycle inspired in the Latin American Diaspora, particularly, the Venezuelan migration crisis. The music of New Caracas, a project created and led by guitarist and composer Luis D' Elias, is anchored in the rhythms and traditions of South America, whilst embracing modern harmonies and contemporary songwriting, to elevate the musical inspiration found in the native rhythms of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina.

In 2019 we were officially housed in the Ridgefield Theatre barn for the indoor performances.

<https://patch.com/connecticut/ridgefield/calendar/event/20191019/651795/honduras-michael-chekhov-theater-festival>

<https://chekhovfestival.com/productions>

<https://ridgefieldtheaterbarn.org/chekhov/>

For the 2019 festival, there was a fundraiser on 13 April. Lenka Pichlíková performed the role of Cassandra, at the Ridgefield Theater Barn, CT in a comedy called *VANYA, SONYA, MASHA & SPIKE* by Christopher Durang. The event was a great success artistically as well as financially, so that the festival was able to pay its actors in the fall of 2019.

<https://patch.com/connecticut/ridgefield/calendar/event/20190413/528281/michael-chekhov-theater-festival>



Nancy Ponturo, Sean Hannon, Kate Katcher, Chris Balestriere, Wynter Kullman, Lenka Pichlíková, Bob Ponturo in *VANYA, SONYA, MASHA & SPIKE*, 2019.



An important educational function of the Festival is reaching out to nearby Colleges and Universities. Prof. Pichlíková brings students from SUNY Purchase.



Theatre and Performance Students –On Saturday, September 21, 2019 students from Professor Lenka Pichlikova’s Acting the Classics and Acting Scene Study classes in the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Theatre Arts attended an outdoor performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival in Ridgefield, CT.

https://www.purchase.edu/live/image/gid/50/width/1000/12011_2019_THPStudentsRidgefieldShakespeare.jpg

II. Presentations for: MICHA, Michael Chekhov Association

June 2018 – MICHA, Michael Chekhov Association, Connecticut College:
Lenka Pichlíková, a popular lecture *Michael Chekhov's Career and Teaching in Europe and America*.

June 2019 – 20th Anniversary MICHA, the Michael Chekhov Association (founded in 1999). Lenka Pichlíková presented as part of the celebration *Notes on Michael Chekhov's Career and Teaching* [illustrated display] in the lobby of the theatre at the Connecticut College.



Joanna Merlin, co-founder and President of MICHA and the senior teacher of the Chekhov Method in the United States, at the MICHA annual meeting, June 2019, with Lenka Pichlíková's illustrated M. Chekhov display (three double sided panels).



Lenka Pichlíková at MICHA, 20th anniversary of the organization (June 2019) with Michael Chekhov display.

APPENDIX 4

Chekhov Method Teaching Chronology (Pedagogical Events Relating to Chekhov Techniques, Including Those Leading to the Founding of The Michael Chekhov Association, MICHA)

NOTE: this Chronology is based on information given by MICHA teachers in their interviews and postings on the websites of the organizations listed above, as checked against other documents.

1945-1998. George Shdanoff and Elsa Shdanoff (d. 1982) are teaching and coaching in Hollywood, working on Chekhov's principles and occasionally collaborating; they continue after Chekhov's death.

1945-1952. Alan Harkness, former student and colleague of Chekhov at Dartington and Ridgefield, and one of the original six graduate teachers certified by Chekhov in 1939, tours professionally in the Los Angeles area, with a base at Ojai, California; his wife, Mechthild Harkness-Johannsen, teaches at the High Valley Theatre School in Ojai. At the time of his death in a car-train accident in 1952, Harkness was director of the Lobero and Civic Theatres in Santa Barbara.

Also at Ojai, Harkness, Ford Rainey (1908-2005), Woodrow "Woody" Chambliss (1914-1981), Erika Kapralik (1911-1992), and other Chekhov graduates, form the High Valley (or Ojai Valley) Players; Chekhov directs them in Gogol's *The Inspector General* (presumably in 1946, perhaps in the Actor's Lab production – see Appendix 1). Rainey and Chambliss would have extensive careers in film and television, but it is not known if they taught. Harkness also directed the group.

Mala Powers (1931-2007) and Joanna Merlin study with Chekhov from 1947-48 (Powers) and 1949-50 (Merlin) to 1955.

ca.1948-1980. Blair Cutting, another of the original six teacher-graduates, is "continuously" teaching Chekhov techniques in California and New York. Cutting is also associated with Warner Brothers as an acting coach and casting director from around 1955.

ca.1951- after 1957. Charlotte Clary Dussaq (1918-2002) works for Paramount Pictures as director of its talent program, casting director for Cecil B. DeMille, and acting coach. She attends Chekhov's classes in the last years of his life and is heard on the tapes of his lectures (see below), where she reports applying his methods successfully with young Hollywood actors.

1952-1980s . Deirdre Hurst du Prey joins the faculty at the Children's Center for Creative Arts at Adelphi University on Long Island, New York.

1955. Michael Chekhov gives the series of twelve lectures on his method and background for actors in Hollywood. They are recorded by John Abbott (1905-1996), Fanya Miroff, and John Dehner (1915-1992), organizing

members of Chekhov's study group, the Drama Society.

Chekhov dies on the night of September 30 – October 1, 1955.

1967. Mechthild Harkness-Johannsen (d. 1986) sets up a speech and drama department at Emerson College in Sussex, England, emphasizing Eurythmy and Speech Formation; she subsequently forms the Harkness Studio at Sydney in 1973.

1968 ff. Felicity Mason is said to have offered workshops on Chekhov technique during visits to New York.

ca. 1971. Joanna Merlin begins teaching while working as a casting director for Harold Prince. According to Merlin, "I realized that many good actors could not audition well and started teaching audition techniques. In the course of figuring out an approach to auditioning, I used some elements from the Chekhov technique. Soon after that, I started teaching the Chekhov technique independently from auditioning. I don't have the exact date, but it was in the early 70's. I had never taught before then." [Joanna Merlin, correspondence, 27 January 2019.]

1973. Mechthild Harkness-Johannsen forms the Harkness Studio in Sydney, Australia.

1980-1992. Beatrice Whitney Straight and producer Robert Cole establish the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City to continue the teaching work of the original Chekhov Theatre Studio, in collaboration with Blair Cutting, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Eleanor Faison, and Felicity Mason, who served on the faculty. Cole was the Studio's first artistic director and subsequently had a successful career as a Broadway producer.



Raymond Arroyo, Felicity Cumming Mason, Eleanor Faison, Beatrice Straight, Kevin Cotter, and Deirdre Hurst du Prey at the time of the Michael Chekhov Studio, New York, early 1980s.
(Photograph Courtesy of MICHA Archives.)

Straight, Hurst du Prey, and Blair Cutting were among the original six teachers to whom Chekhov gave diplomas in 1939. They were joined by Eddy Grove (1917-1995) and Joanna Merlin, who had studied with Chekhov in California. Ted Pugh studied with Grove at the Studio and was certified as a teacher in 1983. (Also certified were actor Sims Wyeth, Kevin Cotter – Joanna Merlin's student who taught at Temple University in Philadelphia – and Fern Sloan,

who was certified by Beatrice Straight.)¹ Pugh continued to teach at the Rudolph Steiner School in New York as well. Cole has offered occasional classes at schools while continuing to be a producer and literary agent. Mel Gordon was also at the studio in the 1980s.²

1980s-2005. Jack Colvin (d. 2005), former student of Michael Chekhov and founder and Artistic Director of the Michael Chekhov Studio in Los Angeles, is teaching Chekhov technique.

1984-87 Hurd Hatfield is recorded as teaching classes in Chekhov technique.

1985-95. Eddy Grove continues to give workshops at Yale.

1985- present. Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan found The Actors' Ensemble to perpetuate Chekhov's ideas in performance and teaching. Among their collaborators have been John McManus and Ragnar Freidank, with whom they founded the Michael Chekhov School of Acting | A Theater Laboratory in 2014. Among those attending Pugh's classes in the 1990s at the Rudolph Steiner School is Lisa Dalton. Mala Powers also attends when in New York because, as Dalton put it, "it had been so many years since she had done work with Mr. Chekhov."

1987-2006. Mala Powers begins teaching Chekhov techniques in Los Angeles in 1987. In 1988, she is joined by Lisa Dalton; Dalton teaches both with Powers and in her own independent studio. Wil Kilroy joined them in 1989.

1987- present. Jobst Langhans begins the Michael Chekhov Studio Berlin (MTSB); he was joined by Joerg Andrees, who would later found the separate Michael Chekhov International Academy (MCIA) at Berlin in 2012.

1989-96. Sarah Kane is head of the Speech and Drama program at Emerson College, Forest Row, East Sussex, England, UK, teaching Creative Speech and Chekhov's method. Emerson College was named for the American transcendentalist philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson and is associated with the international Anthroposophical movement.

1992. Joerg Andrees and Jobst Langhans of MTSB establish the first International Michael Chekhov Conference at Berlin, in order to find out who else taught the methods. Among the founders of the Conference is Sarah Kane. (The subsequent three meetings of the International Michael Chekhov Conference were alternately called the Michael Chekhov International Workshops.)

1993. Kilroy, now a professor of theatre at the University of Southern Maine, invites Mala Powers and Lisa Dalton to join him in presenting a workshop on Chekhov in Philadelphia at the meeting of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE). Also in attendance are Arthur Lessac, the voice teacher; Sonya Moore, the Stanislavsky teacher; and David Zinder, who was

¹ I am indebted to Ted Pugh for this information.

² I am grateful to Joanna Merlin for sharing information about the Michael Chekhov Studio and dates.

- giving another workshop at the ATHE sessions. Powers, Kilroy, and Dalton informally found the National Michael Chekhov Association at this time.
1993. The second International Michael Chekhov Conference/Workshop meets in Russia. Mala Powers and Lisa Dalton (as board member) join the attendees there. The International Michael Chekhov Association is founded at the meeting in Russia.
1994. The third International Michael Chekhov Conference/Workshop meets at Emerson College, UK. Organizers include Sarah Kane (professor at Emerson) and Lisa Dalton. Some 350 people attend, including Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Hurd Hatfield, Marina Ivanova, artists from the Moscow Art Theatre, Per Brahe, Joanna Merlin, Lisa Dalton, and David Zinder.³
- 1994- present. Kilroy, Powers, and Dalton begin the Chekhov summer programs at the University of Southern Maine in 1994. These are structured in part in the way Chekhov structured his lab in Los Angeles. The series is still running at various university locations.
1995. The fourth IMCC, referred to as “The Experts Conference,” meets at Berlin; it ended in disagreements.
1995. Sarah Kane and Martin Sharp found the Michael Chekhov Centre UK (now Michael Chekhov UK).
- ca. 1996-97 Mala Powers contacts the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center in Waterford, CT, seeking fiscal sponsorship for the International Michael Chekhov Workshops.
- 1998-99. The first two International Michael Chekhov Workshops in the United States are held at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center in Connecticut, with Mala Powers among the workshop organizers and Lisa Dalton as artistic director.
1999. MICHA, the Michael Chekhov Association, is founded, with Joanna Merlin, Sarah Kane, Lenard Petit, and Ted Pugh as the original, formal founders.
2000. MICHA separates from the O’Neill Center. Jessica Cerullo, O’Neill Center liaison, becomes Managing Director and currently is Artistic Director. In 2000, MICHA begins a program to certify Chekhov technique teachers – a master certification. The program was discontinued around 2004, and MICHA now gives a “certificate of completion” to those who commit to three summers, including two teacher trainings. According to Cerullo, MICHA “won’t use the term, ‘master teacher,’ we won’t bestow it in those ways, we just will continue building a community and environment where people can continue to work.”
2008. Michael Chekhov Europe is founded.

³ I am indebted to Prof. David Zinder for information on this conference, the 1993 Philadelphia meeting, and other events.

APPENDIX 5

Teachers of the Chekhov Techniques (Internationally)

1. Teachers active at MICHA

Joanna Merlin is the only teacher active today at MICHA or anywhere in the world who studied with Michael Chekhov himself (in California). Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Lenard Petit, Wil Kilroy, and Scott Fielding were trained at the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York 1980-92, so they had direct contact with Merlin, as well as with Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Blair Cutting, and the other Dartington teachers there, and with Eddy Grove, another California student. Pugh, and Sloan studied more with Grove – Pugh noted that Grove and Cutting disliked one another – and Craig Mathers studied with Grove at Yale. Kilroy and Petit studied principally with Cutting. Petit and Pugh co-founded MICHA with Merlin. I would like to note that six other teachers currently attending or teaching at the annual MICHA workshops – Craig Mathers, Scott Fielding, Cynthia Ashperger, Jessica Cerullo, Liz Shipman, and Lisa Dalton – mention studying with Merlin. (Jessica Cerullo and Cynthia Ashperger, as well as Dawn Arnold and Ragnar Freidank [not interviewed] had trained at MICHA itself.) That is to say two-thirds of those interviewed for this study were directly connected with Merlin's pedagogy.

Among those studying with Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan, or collaborating in the Actors' Ensemble that they founded, were Lisa Dalton (at the Rudolph Steiner School in New York), Scott Fielding (also with Straight and Hurst du Prey), David Zinder, Craig Mathers, John McManus (also a neighbor, who collaborated in the "Shakespeare Alive" program), Jessica Cerullo, and Ragnar Freidank (who continues to be an active collaborator and colleague). Three of the teachers not interviewed were similarly involved in Pugh and Sloan's Actors' Ensemble, located in Chatham, New York. In fact, Mala Powers also attended Pugh's classes at the Rudolph Steiner School in the early 1980s. Mala Powers taught Zinder (who had been introduced to Chekhov by Peter Frye at Tel Aviv in 1963) and Scott Fielding, and collaborated with Lisa Dalton from 1988.

An important contingent of international Chekhov practitioners is associated with MICHA. These include the MICHA founder, and British teacher, Sarah Kane, whose pupils include Dawn Arnold and Marjo-Riikka Makela, among others who have studied with her. Also prominent are Joerg Andrees, Jobst Langhans, and Ulrich Meyer-Horsch from Germany. Séamus Maynard and Phelim McDermott also come from Britain, while Suzana Nikolic leads the Chekhov group in Croatia, and Sol Garre in Spain. Three Chekhov teachers, Marjolein Baars, Bethany Caputo, and Jessica Cerullo, have studied at the Moscow Art Theatre School of Dramatic Art, and Andrei Malaev-Babel, Sarah Kane, and Marjo-Riikka Makela have been associated with the Stanislavsky Theatre Studio in Russia. John McManus was first introduced to Chekhov and Eurythmy by Mechthild Harkness in Sydney, Australia.

Alphabetical listing of currently active (2020) teachers who have been associated with MICHA The Michael Chekhov Association, founded 1999

<https://www.michaelchekhov.org/>

- Joerg Andrees is a director of theater, dance, music and film and performs solo and improvised work in Germany and abroad.
- Dawn Arnold is an actress, director, and teaching artist. She is the founder and Artistic Director of The Moving Dock Theatre Company, Chicago.
- Marjolein Baars is an actress, clown, and teacher. She is the artistic director of tiny hero PRODUCTIONS, Buzzing Red, and De Stichting Koffer.
- Bethany Caputo is an actress and a teacher in New York City who performs regionally across the country at such theatres as Arena Stage. Trained at the Moscow Art School.
- Jessica Cerullo is a performer and teacher. Her creative work is often socially or civically engaged. In partnership with Joanna Merlin, she has worked with MICHA since its founding in 1999; first as Managing Director and currently in the role of Artistic Director. She is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.
- Kristi Dana is an associated teacher of Miller voice method and is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at the SMU Meadows School of the Arts. She is certified in Knight-Thompson Speech work and holds a certificate of completion from the Michael Chekhov Association.
- Scott Fielding is the Director of Michael Chekhov Actors Studio Boston, where he leads The Chekhov Training and Meisner Foundation Training programs.
- Ragnar Freidank teaches at the Michael Chekhov School in Hudson (NY), which he co-founded with Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan, and with whom he collaborates in the Actors' Ensemble. He is on faculty for the Graduate Acting Program of the New School for Drama (NYC) and has been on the faculty of Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, Brooklyn College and Marymount Manhattan.
- Anne Gottlieb is an actress, director, and the founder of Forty Magnolias Productions, dedicated to new work and the exploration of the collaborative process.
- Sol Garre trained as an actress in Spain and has been teaching Chekhov technique since 1995. She is a senior lecturer of acting at the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático in Madrid.

Sarah Kane co-founded the Michael Chekhov Centre UK in 1995 with Martin Sharp (now Michael Chekhov UK); from 1989 to 1996, she ran the one-year Speech and Drama programme at Emerson College, UK. (See also below.)

Jobst Langhans is a director, actor and teacher. He co-founded the theater company, WERBUHNE BERLIN, and has been its artistic director since 1998. Was taught dramatic technique by Else Bongers and Jurgen von Alten.

Camille Litalien trained at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York and at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

Andrei Malaev-Babel is an Associate Professor of Theatre at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. He was Producing Artistic Director and continues on the board at the Stanislavsky Theater Studio (Stanislavsky Center) in Russia. He has taught and is on the board at MICHA.

Marjo-Riikka Makela is the artistic director and head teacher of the Los Angeles based Chekhov Studio International.

Dale March has been working as an actor and teacher in Sydney, Australia for the last 10 years. His teaching work has woven Michael Chekhov's insights and exercises into the 3-year curriculum at Actors Centre Australia since 2010 and opened a branch of Actor's Centre Australia in Adelaide in 2016.

Craig Mathers has taught with MICHA during their summer International Workshop at the University of Connecticut and at CSU Summer Arts. He is currently an Associate Professor of Performing Arts at Emerson College in Boston.

Séamus Maynard is an actor and musician and has worked with theater companies such as Improbable Theatre (UK), The Belgian National Theater, and (since 2000) with The Actors' Ensemble. Séamus holds a degree in acting from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Phelim McDermott, Doctor *honoris causa*, Middlesex University, improvises with the Comedy Store Players and leads the Improbable theatre company.

John McManus is an Assistant Professor at Point Park University, Pittsburgh, and teaches Voice and Speech at HB Studios in New York City and gives workshops in speech and movement in Australia and the United States. He is artistic director of Shakespeare Alive!

Joanna Merlin, a student of Michael Chekhov, is an actor, teacher, and former casting director. Ms. Merlin is the Founder and President of MICHA.

Ulrich Meyer-Horsch is the artistic director of the Michael Chekhov International School and the Michael Chekhov Studio Hamburg. He is a founding member of MICHA.

Suzana Nikolić is a professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb (ADA, UZ). She is a Founder and Artistic Director of Performing Arts Etra, and Artistic director of Studio Chekhov, Zagreb.

Jan Oberndorff is a member of the VdpS – the Association of German-speaking Private Drama Schools; he also works with the Filmschauspielschule Berlin.

Hugh O'Gorman is an actor, director and writer active in professional theatre for 25 years; for the past 10 years he has been the Head of Acting at California State University Long Beach.

Lenard Petit is the Director of The Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in New York City and the author of The Michael Chekhov Handbook, for the Actor; he is a MICHA Founder.

Ted Pugh is the co-artistic director of The Actors' Ensemble of New York and taught at the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York last seven years of its existence after being certified by Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst du Prey. Along with Ragnar Freidank and Fern Sloan, he is co-founder of The Michael Chekhov School in Hudson, NY. He is a founder of MICHA.

Fern Sloan, an actress for over 40 years, is co-founder and co-artistic director of The Actors' Ensemble and has performed and taught the Michael Chekhov technique internationally. Along with Ragnar Freidank and Ted Pugh, she is co-founder of The Michael Chekhov School in Hudson, NY.

Olivia Rüdinger is the artistic director for dramatic training at the Schule für Schauspiel Hamburg. A graduate in Speech and Drama from the University of Minnesota, she co-founded the dance theater group "Winter auf Mallorca" with Michaela Uhlig. David Zinder is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Theatre Arts at Tel Aviv University in Israel, an acting trainer, and free-lance international director. Since 2002 he has been directing extensively at professional repertory theatres in Romania.

(See also below, Bali: Per Brahe.)

OTHER MICHAEL CHEKHOV STUDIOS AND ASSOCIATIONS INTERNATIONALLY

2. Michael Chekhov School of Acting | A Theatre Laboratory Hudson, New York

<https://michaelchekhovschool.org/>

Note: Associated with the Actors' Ensemble, New York

Faculty: Fern Sloan Ted Pugh Ragnar Freidank (founders and principals)

Phelim McDermott is an actor and director and lives in London, UK. He is a founder member of Improbable Theatre (UK).

Camille Litalien trained at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York and at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, UK.

Jessica Cerullo (see above)

Bethany Caputo

Craig Mathers

Séamus Maynard

John McManus

3. Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in New York

<http://michaelchekhovactingstudio.com/faculty.html>

Lenard Petit, Founder and Director

Dawn Arnold

Akil Apollo Davis Performing Artist and Theater Teacher based in NYC. Akil teaches and develops a rare form of masks and movement.

Melania Levitsky is the Artistic Director of Nikita Productions, and the Associate Artistic Director of Walking the dog Theater Company Inc.

James Luse Actor, director, and teacher based in CT. James has an MFA in Theatre Arts from Brandeis University and studied at the Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in NYC.

Scott Miller Having spent forty years as a coach, trainer and teacher, Scott blends a lifetime of exceptional experience into his work with others. His diverse life paths include two sports at the professional level, a law degree from George Washington University, clerking at DC's Public Defender Service, time as a producer, actor, director, a trainer of lead teachers. He has been, for the last fifteen years, a Professor at NYU Tisch's elite Graduate Acting Program. He is the founder of the Miller Voice Method® and through decades of field and scientific research has developed a transformational and repeatable way to embody presence and empathy for peak performances that sustain both the audience's and speaker's attention.

Hugo Moss Born in the U.K. and half Irish has lived in Brazil for nearly 30 years.

Recognizing how little Michael Chekhov's artistic legacy was known in Brazil, Michael Chekhov Brasil was founded in 2010

Mel Shrawder has performed with the New York Shakespeare Festival under the direction of Joseph Papp, and has appeared at Arena Stage in Washington DC, Portland Stage

Natalie Yalon Artistic director of Michael Chekhov Studio Brussels. Natalie specialized in stage production and Russian theatrical pedagogics in Russia at Moscow's Gitis (the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts) and the Vakhtangov Institute; with teachers Vladimir Skoritz, Andrei Droznin, Boris Rabey, and Slava Kokorin

4. National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA) 1993 Fort Worth, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico (and workshops in Florida)

<https://www.chekhov.net/>

Lisa Dalton studied with Ted Pugh in New York and collaborated with Mala Powers in California. She was among the founders, with Powers, of The International Michael Chekhov Association.

Wil Kilroy is Academic Department Head and Professor in the Theatre Department of New Mexico State University. With Powers and Dalton, he established the Michael Chekhov summer programs, initially at the University of Southern Maine in 1994.

Charlie Bowles, Producer of Institutes and Manager

For a list of the more than 30 teachers certified by the NMCA, working in schools and universities, visit <https://www.chekhov.net/certifiedteachers.html>

Associated institution: Michael Chekhov Studio Florida
<https://www.michaelchekhovstudioorlando.com/>

5. Chekhov Studio Chicago (Chicago, USA)

<http://www.movingdock.org/site/tag/michael-chekhov-acting-studio-chicago/>

Artistic Director: Dawn Arnold

6. Chekhov Studio International Los Angeles <http://chekhovstudio.com/>

Marjo-Riikka Makela

7. The praxis acting studio (Hugo O'Gorman), Los Angeles

<http://www.hughogorman.com/index.html>

Hugo O'Gorman

8. Michael Chekhov Canada, Toronto <http://www.michaelchekhovcanada.com/>

Lionel Walsh is an actor and director and teaches acting and improvisation in the BFA programme at University of Windsor, where is the Director of the Inspired Acting Lab, which explores new exercises in Fantastic Realism. Lionel is a Certified (Master-) Teacher of the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique (Michael Chekhov Association / MICHA).

Rena Polley is a Toronto based actor, writer, producer and teacher. She has worked in theatre, television and film for over thirty years. She has been studying with master teachers from the Michael Chekhov Association for over seventeen years and has her Teacher Certificate of Completion.

Peggy Coffey began her professional career 39 years ago with the Canadian Mime Theatre. She began her Chekhov training in 2005 and received her 'Certificate of Completion' in Michael Chekhov Technique in 2011, studying under master teachers at MICHA.

9. Ryerson School of Performance, Toronto <https://ryersonperformance.ca/>

Cynthia Ashperger-Eastman was born in Zagreb, Croatia where she had extensive experience in the theatre, film and television industry as an actor. She holds a PhD from University of Toronto's Graduate Centre for Studies in Drama. She has taught acting at Ryerson School of Performance since 1994 where she also served as Director of the Acting Program. She holds a Master-Teacher Certificate from the Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA).

10. Michael Chekhov Actors Studio (Boston, USA) <http://mcasb.com/>

Scott Fielding.

11. The Actors Place @ MCITStudio San Diego <http://mcitstudio.weebly.com/>

Combined Chekhov and Meisner techniques.

Liz Shipman (Chekhov); Lisa Berger and Jeffrey Ingman (Meisner)

12. Michael Chekhov Brazil Rio de Janeiro

<http://www.michaelchekhov.com.br/en/index.html>

Hugo Moss is from the U.K. and Ireland, has lived in Brazil for over 25 years and is a naturalized Brazilian citizen. He began exploring the Michael Chekhov technique in 2004 in order to direct actors and later was trained as an actor/teacher by MICHA - Michael Chekhov Association (USA), of which he is a member and participant in international events in the USA, Canada and Europe. He has been teaching the technique since 2010, is Co-Founder of Michael Chekhov Brasil and a faculty member at Michael Chekhov Acting Studio (New York) and Chekhov Training and Performance Ireland.

The late Thaís Loureiro was an actor and teacher trained by Michael Chekhov School and MICHA - Michael Chekhov Association (USA); she graduated in English Language/Literature and studies philosophy at Nova Acrópole. Co-founder of Michael Chekhov Brasil. She was responsible for teaching, as well as workshop planning and parallel projects. Thaís sadly passed away 09/12/2019.

13. Michael Chekhov International Academy (MCIA) since 2012 Berlin

<https://www.chekhovacademy.com/>

Joerg Andrees, Director (see above and below)

Ulrich Meyer-Horsch (see above)

Christiane Görner

Stefan Lenz

Anna-Katharina Andrees

Olga Gorodkova

Fern Sloan (see above)

Ted Pugh (see above)

Sarah Kane (see below)

Lisa Dalton

Jobst Langhans

Lenard Petit (see above)

David Zinder (see above)

Aså Salvesen

David Scott

Wladimir Goerd

Isadora Kohatsu

14. Michael Tschechow Studio Berlin (MTSB) <https://www.mtsb.de/>

Jobst Langhans-Subjects: Chekhov Training, Scene Work, Theory, Directing, Judo

Beate Krützcamp- Director of first and second advanced year - Subjects: Speech, scene reading

Jörg Andrees- Director of the Vocational Acting Seminar - Subjects: Tschechow Training, scene work.

Sarah Kane-Tschechow Training, scene work, project work

Andrea Pinkowski-Scene work

Ilse Ritter-Scene work

Beatrice Scharmann-Scene work, Directing

Justus Carrière-Scene work, Directing

Paul Weismann-Scene work

Rudolf Krause-Improvisation, Scene work

Feodor Stepanov-Improvisation

Christiane Görner-Speech Training, Scene work (Vocational Acting Seminar)

Dido-Marie Laux-Speech training (Advanced Training)

Caroline Intrup-Speech training (Advanced Training)

Guido Medl-Speech Training (Chekhov Foundation Year)

Maria Thomaschke-Singing

Holger Off-Singing

Iru Mun-Singing

Nikolai Orloff-musical director, accompanist
Jörg Brennecke- Pantomime, Neutral Mask
Bernhard Mumm- Feldenkrais, Aikido
Miranda Markgraf- Eurythmy, Dance (postgraduate studies)
Stefan Lenz- Fencing

15. Hamburg Academies: (a) Michael Chekhov International School and the Michael Chekhov Studio Hamburg; Ulrich Meyer-Horsch, artistic director. (b) Schule für Schauspiel Hamburg; Olivia Rüdinger, artistic director for training.

16. Michael Chekhov UK (Michael Chekhov Centre), London and throughout UK
<http://www.michaelchekhov.org.uk/>

“Michael Chekhov UK is a network of artists inspired by and working in a variety of ways with the ideas of ... Michael Chekhov.”

Tom Cornford is a Lecturer in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York and is co-artistic director with Hannah Davies of The Common Ground Theatre Makers Ltd.

Graham Dixon is the director and founder of the Michael Chekhov Studio London which provides a regular space for actors and artists to invigorate and expand their performing techniques.

www.michaelchekhovstudio.org.uk

Gretchen Egolf trained at the Julliard School in New York and has worked in New York, Los Angeles, in regional theatre, and in London. She has taught in London at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, RADA, LAMDA, and Brunel University, as well as the Actors Centre and independent workshops.

Cass Fleming trained at Goldsmiths, and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London. She is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Practice at Goldsmith's College, London.

Sarah Kane trained in Michael Chekhov's approach to theatre and acting, and in Steiner's Creative Speech in Germany, Switzerland and the UK. She co-founded the Michael Chekhov Centre UK in 1995 with Martin Sharp (now Michael Chekhov UK), founded Threshold Theatre in 1997 to further explore Chekhov's techniques in rehearsal and performance, and co-founded the Michael Chekhov Association USA (MICHA) with Joanna Merlin et. al. in 1999. From 1989 to 1996, she ran the one-year Speech and Drama programme at Emerson College, UK.

Julia Krynke is an actress and classically trained musician from Opole, Poland.

Sinéad Rushe is a Senior Lecturer on the innovative BA Acting Collaborative and Devised Theatre three-year course at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, specializing in Michael Chekhov technique and Meyerhold's Biomechanics.

Martin Sharp Martin co-founded the Michael Chekhov Centre UK in 1995 with Sarah Kane (now Michael Chekhov UK) and produced and directed a documentary film about Michael Chekhov's years at Dartington Hall (2002). Recently his work has focused on its therapeutic potential.

17. Studio Chekhov Zagreb, Croatia <https://studiochekhov.hr/en/>

Suzana Nikolić, Artistic Director

Sanja Vejnović, Marina Petković Liker, Irma Omerzo, Zrinka Šimičić Mihanović.

18. Tiny Hero, Amsterdam, The Netherlands <http://tinyhero.nl/>

<http://www.destichtingkoffer.nl/>

Teaches Chekhov technique in application to theatre and daily life, in cooperation with De Stichting Koffer (work with dementia and other social issues); Marjolein Baars, director.

19. Chekhov International Theatre School in Melikhovo

<https://issuu.com/chekhovtheatreschool>

Chekhov City, Russian Federation. Slava Kokorin (1944-2017) and Zoya Zadorozhnaya. Kokorin had taught at MICHA. The last web posting from the school was August 2016.

20. Michael Chekhov Europe

Austria

Dunja Tot <https://www.actorsstudiopallas.com/>

Belgium

Griet Spanhove, Brugge

Croatia

See above, Studio Chekhov Zagreb.

Denmark

Jesper Michelsen, Copenhagen (Glad Teater)

Finland

Tarja Nyberg, Helsinki

Åsa Salvesen, Ekenäs (co-founder of Michael Chekhov Europe) www.asasalvesen.com
asa.salvesen@gmail.com

From 2004-2013, Head Teacher, Drama Program, Västra Nylands folkhögskola, Karis, Finland

Germany

Joerg Andrees, Berlin (see above)

Jobst Langhans, Berlin (see above)

Ulrich Meyer-Horsch, Hamburg (see above)

Jan Oberndorff, Berlin

Olivia Rüdinger, Hamburg (see above)

Israel

David Zinder

Spain

Carlos Aladro, Madrid

Sol Garre (see above)

The Netherlands

Marjolein Baars, Amsterdam

United Kingdom

You-Ri Yamanaka, London

See also above, Michael Chekhov UK.

Bali

Per Brahe A founding member of MICHA, Brahe taught at MICHA until 2002; in 1991, he founded the Michael Chekhov Studio in Aarhus, Denmark; and in 2000 he was the Artistic Director of the Michael Chekhov Conference in Siberia. He is also a mask teacher and an expert in Balinese Mask.

Other training programs in Chekhov technique may be found at Yeditepe University, Istanbul (Turkey); Taipei Theater Lab (Taiwan), and ITI Singapore (People's Republic of China).

APPENDIX 6

Lenka Pichlíková [LP]

Sixteen Interviews with Teachers and Practitioners, Members of MICHA (The Michael Chekhov Association), 2018-2020

These questions were given to the respondents before the interview:

LP: (Question no. 1) How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

LP: (Question no.2) Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

LP: (Question no.3) Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

LP: (Question no.4) Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

LP: (Question no.5) Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

LP: (Question no.6) Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

LP: (Question no.7) Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

LP: (Question no.8) What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in "The Composition of the Performance.")

LP: (Question no.9) Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

Respondents: **Jessica Cerullo**, Artistic Director of MICHA, professor at Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington State; **Dawn Arnold**, Chekhov Studio, Chicago; **Cynthia Ashperger**, Ryerson University, Toronto (not at the conference but replied by email); **Lisa Dalton**, collaborator with Mala Powers, National Michael Chekhov Association; **Scott Fielding**, Michael Chekhov Actors Studio, Boston; **Sol Garre**, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Madrid (at conference, replied by email); **Craig Mathers**, Emerson University Boston; **Joerg Andrees**, MCIA, Berlin; **John McManus**, Shakespeare Alive, New York State as well as Assistant Professor at Point Park University, Pittsburgh and an expert in Steiner's Creative Speech and the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique; **Lenard Petit**, MICHA co-founder, former

teacher at MCS, Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in New York; **Ted Pugh**, co-founder of MICHA and former teacher at MCS; **Fern Sloan**, Pugh's colleague and co-founder of Actors' Ensemble in New York; **Liz Shipman**, The Actors Place @ MCIT Studio, San Diego, CA (at conference, replied by email); **David Zinder**, Tel Aviv University. **Hugo Moss**, Co-founder and director of Michael Chekhov Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. **Max Hafler** who teaches the technique at NUI Galway, Ireland and has taught it in many other colleges.

Jessica Cerullo, interview at MICHA, June 21-23rd 2018

Jessica Cerullo is a performer and the Artistic Director of MICHA, the Michael Chekhov Association. Her original performance work has been supported by the Brooklyn Arts Exchange, PS 122, the Terra Nova Collective, Seattle's Studio Current, Colorado's Tin Shop and Connecticut's Dragon's Egg residency. She has performed in numerous regional theaters, including the Folger Theater, is a former member of the Stanislavsky Theater Studio (now operating as Synetic Theater) and collaborates regularly with The Actors' Ensemble and the Dance Art Lab. Jessica teaches the Michael Chekhov technique internationally and organizes the annual 'Theater of the Future' open space event which brings together artists from around the world to envision our collective future in the theater both in the professional and pre-professional world. Her teaching is influenced by the principles of developmental movement, Body Mind Centering®, Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process and various approaches to improvisation. Together with Fern Sloan she wrote the MICHA workbook to assist those practically studying the Chekhov technique. She is the editor of the book Michael Chekhov: Critical Issues, Reflections, and Dreams. Ms. Cerullo received an MFA in Contemporary Performance from Naropa University. (Biography from MICHA website – <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/jessica-cerulo>.)

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LP: (Question no.1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Jennifer Cerullo: I started as an actor, but in the last 10 years I've been doing lot more teaching – and as a teacher I am directing. I am teaching especially in situations where it is often not specifically Chekhov work; it is broader, so I don't always have the opportunity to frame everything through the Chekhov lens. But [I can include Chekhov] if it's a piece I am directing, or it's a class I am leading that's investigating styles, but because I am teaching undergraduate students, it's really only at things like MICHA where the opportunity to teach people the Chekhov work in a direct way which comes to me of late.

But your question is really about how it has developed. You know in the beginning years it was very much trying to understand it in my own body. Now that the technique lives in me, you know, the capacity grows after a time. It's developed in a way where I am just much freer with it applying it to direct situations, whether that's in a play or even when I am teaching, as I am planning the class, the form of the class is very much in the spirit of Chekhov, having a sense of beginning, middle and an end – a journey. Even if I am teaching some Grotowski that day, or viewpoints, or something like that, the Chekhov work is my bedrock. So it goes into everything.

I sometimes say I don't really act anymore, but in fact I just did two plays. I did an improvised opera: we created this opera where the music was improvised every night but the characters were set. We were working with amazing musicians, who improvised on this baby grand piano the whole time. And then I did a new play in Seattle at a theatre called "On the Boards" – it's a contemporary theatre. So it was no one else knowing or doing Chekhov, basically just me as the actor.

Or I feel like of late especially at MICHA I find it that I use it in lots of situations that aren't theatrical. Like planning this [MICHA] workshop, feeling the – how to say it? You can approach an organization, or a budget, or you've heard of some planning the classes in a

way that's very organized and logistical – right? But that doesn't have the heart in it. That's just from the thinking center, will center. But we try really, and I try really hard, to have the kind of room for expression, for gesture, for pause, for all of these things that are part of Chekhov's technique – to inherit the structure of the workshop, so it's not just the idea of it, but the architecture of how we are spending the week together? Is firmly rooted in the tenets, wherever possible, of the technique, and that happens kind of more and more. That's sort of, in some way, how the system developed in me: first it was something I did as an actor to prepare a character, to rehearse, to go on stage. This still happens, but I also find that the way Chekhov talks about being in the world of a play, I've been able to expand into being in the world of the community of actors, but also in daily life, working in classroom – just really in a broad way. That's been my partner, you know, my partner in those things as well, so that everything you do can be creative, hopefully. (Laughs)

Cerullo: There is also this book *Body-Mind Centering*. I was trained outside of Chekhov work when I went to graduate school, I purposely chose to go to graduate school at a place that had no Chekhov. That's called NAROPA University and they had an MFA, and they still have one in contemporary performance, so most of the training there was in Grotowski, the viewpoints. And I was happy to go because I wanted to see what would stick of the Chekhov work, but without being it being it the main track. And one thing I found that I really loved and developed for me was this mingling of the Body-Mind Centering, which is a somatic practice, with the Chekhov work. The body-mind-centering [approach] is firmly rooted in the first-person knowledge of the body – not from what someone is seeing from outside and telling you, but what the person is experiencing through the inside, with the direct relationship to images of the organs that you're looking from, releasing, or the skeleton – all the systems of the body. And I found that there is a lot of my teaching that changed with the Chekhov work: when I was incorporating the Body-Mind Centering into the qualities of movement, into the explorations, in throwing the ball, and this and that. That was one place also.

The Body-Mind Centering work was articulated by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. She is still living – I think she is 80 or 81. She has a school for Body-Mind Centering. Bonnie works a lot also with developmental movement, studying the way a child develops. So that when the child is reaching, they have to push to reach: these two things are in connection. So when working with gesture and teaching gesture – in order to help students to kind of engage the full body experience and also the breath – I find it's often helpful to come with the Body-Mind Centering base. We used to call it – I remember David Zinder when we were, early on, planning workshops, and he would say, “OK, let's do the Pre-Chekhov and then the Chekhov.” And the Pre-Chekhov was always some kind of movement work, so that the bodies were free and open and ready to work. And then we stopped calling it Pre-Chekhov and just started integrating it in. But that's the form it is taking in my teaching – is really just integrating Body-Mind Centering into the lessons that most of them do that require some kind of full bodied expression. Or where you just want that sensitivity, want the actors to have that sensitivity when they can really [move] with ease from themselves when there is not too much tension in the body and sensation can come. [LP: so it's not the everyday thing.] That's right.

LP: (Question no.2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

About changes in the Chekhov method, probably it's hard to know. Probably there are lots of changes, and anytime if someone is trying to do something with the work on a new play – you know, the work is meeting the material and new things are coming. I think it's one of the things I love the most about the technique is that he describes it as a circle, and so you can enter it from anywhere and it will light up another heart of that circle. Because of that sensibility, I think the new things are happening with the technique all the time, and it's very easy for people to integrate it with other things. It is an inclusive, as opposed to exclusive approach. So I don't really know if I can speak to the changes that are occurring, because, you know, everybody is approaching it in their own way.

I do know that the nature of that technique being so inclusive lends itself, I think, to a lot of alteration. I know at least here, one of the things that I have been trying to do in my position with MICHA is to work with the faculty to recognize the individuals who *are* doing something, or noticing some new connection, developing it and giving them as much as we are able to in the space and time. Like the labs next week. Kristi Dana [teacher of the Scott Miller voice method, who is also certified in Knight-Thompson Speech work and by MICHA] is very interested in the voice. Now, with Chekhov it was Eurythmy, and while there are people who are working with Eurythmy and the Chekhov work there, with the exploration of the voice have grown so much in the last 80 years. And so Kristi is taking that exploration into the Miller voice method, and we say OK. We don't know about that, but we are curious how the Chekhov work might serve the voice as she understands it. So we give the space and time to that. It was the same with Connie Rotunda, who was here for two years exploring Feldenkrais work.

LP: And also with the book.¹

Cerullo: Yes, the book. It is also important we are making space for other people to teach. We have a lot of wonderful older teachers, including many men, but it is really vital we must get the younger people in.

LP: (Question no.3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach the Chekhov method?

I definitely feel that everybody is approaching things differently. John is having the approach that is very much rooted with the voice and the breath, but I don't know if it has anything to do with Australia as much as with his individual path. He studied with M. Harkness, and that's just been his way. You know, in August of 1939, [after Chekhov had moved his Studio from Dartington in England to Ridgefield, Connecticut] he said, "certain mistakes have been made" and that he came here with certain expectations because how I had taught the technique, but now I have met you and you are different and I have to change

¹ [Chekhov 2018] Chekhov, Michael; Deirdre Hurst du Prey; and Jessica Cerullo (ed.). 2018. Michael Chekhov's Lessons for Teachers. Expanded Edition. [New York]: MICHA Michael Chekhov Association. Revision, in trilingual format, with a German Translation by Ragnar Freidank and Mani Wintsch, and a Russian Translation by Maxim Krivosheyev, of Chekhov 2000. <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/lessons-for-teachers>

how I teach. The Russians will probably say – I think I have heard this – “He had watered this down.” How he was teaching and whom he was teaching was changing, and I think that’s happening today as well, depending where people are coming from and their interest. But I wonder about the “watering down”; I think its maybe just actually being fluid, being a responsive teacher as supposed to just, “Here it is! This is it.” There are things about it: Psychological Gesture is Psychological Gesture, but how you teach it is interpretable, and for the situation especially. We’ve just come from Ragnar’s class. We saw how he taught gesture: he created an atmosphere for everybody to like, be free, and then he pointed out, “yes, those movements in you; this is the world of gesture.” As opposed to, “all right, let’s all archetypally ‘push’.” You know, just the direction, the entrance point.

LP: (Question no.4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Cerullo: Have I met anyone who is teaching the work of Michael Chekhov that I haven’t met through MICHA? I met Peter Paul Gerbrands through Michael Chekhov Europe; he is in the Netherlands. I met him in Europe. He is working in the social field. I don’t know a lot of about his work, but I think he also works with non-actors with the Chekhov work. I took some classes with him; he is wonderful. I am not sure if he has a school. I met him through Marjolein [Baars]. You know Uli [Ulrich Meyer-Horsch, Hamburg, Germany] and Suzana [Suzana Nikolić, Zagreb, Croatia], and Jesper Michelsen, teaching in Copenhagen, Denmark. He works with a company of handicapped performers. He is one of the directors for Phelim McDermott in the U.K., whose company is called Improbable Theatre. He is a wonderful director, wonderful actor; he directs a lot of opera. He just directed a piece at the Metropolitan Opera [Philip Glass’s *Satyagraha*]; it transferred from London.²

He’s done an opera for babies. He speaks a lot about Chekhov and how he uses it in opera with the chorus, because the director only gets a few hours with the chorus; rehearsal time is short. And also he says that the molding, floating, flying, radiating with qualities of movement is a wonderful short hand and that singers understand it and so he uses it a lot.

LP: Does anyone work with old retired actors? I remember when Chekhov was in California he started to work and collect money towards facilities for old actors, for their retirement where they could stay and be creative?

Cerullo: I know one of the projects of Improbable Theatre, Phelim McDermott’s company, had to do with elders, I think it was called “The Eldership Project.” It was a project when

² For Gerbrands and Michelson, see <http://peterpaulgerbrands.blogspot.com/> ; <http://www.michaelchekhoveurope.eu/dat-mce/workshops.html> . McDermott co-founded Improbable Theatre in 1996; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phelim_McDermott . [LPB note: McDermott said, “One of our publicity posters for the production’s original run in 2008 asked, ‘Can an opera make us stand up for the truth?’ After working on this piece, I have come to the conclusion that it is perhaps only through an epic form like opera that we can communicate the complexity of ideas behind such a thing as satyagraha. It is through art like this that we can tell stories of what happened, not just as events, but as shifts in group perception about what is possible if people transform their state of being as well as what they do: we can be given a felt sense of what satyagraha might really mean on all of the deep levels it demands. As Gandhi says, ‘Be the change you want to see in the world.’” — <https://www.laopera.org/season/1819-season-la-opera-season/satyagraha/phelim-mcdermott-on-satyagraha/> . See also <https://www.improbable.co.uk/portfolios/the-eldership-project/> .

they worked with older actors and memory and improvisation, because facility for memorizing lines was going. I know that Marjolein Baars (Netherlands) works a lot with Chekhov technique with people who suffer with Alzheimer's dementia, she trains the care workers who work with Alzheimer's patients and their families and uses the Chekhov work to help them be together. Her company is called De Stichting Koffer (The Little Suitcase). She does really wonderful work. I find that, too, a lot of the theatre I make, we make out of interviews so we are devising work, and just even teaching people to interview. You know it's all Chekhov giving and receiving.

Sometimes I don't name it, it is not necessary, or I do just say whom I am inspired by. But even in these very simple exchanges – OK, we are going to go out to the community, we are going to do these interviews, this we are going to listen to – what does it mean to listen? Because it is social art practice which Marjolein is very rooted in, and most of my work is rooted in. I am often teaching the Chekhov technique to non-actors, but to people who are interested in art and what art can offer.

LP: Does this help them find themselves, to consequently grow? Consequently, be happy?

Cerullo: Change? They can actually receive something they didn't have.³

LP: (Question no.5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers? How are you different? What is your trademark?

Cerullo: I don't know that I care to distinguish it, but I will say it's maybe better to ask other people to characterize what they perceive from one's work. I feel I am very much on the side of the training where what I have to offer is in the expressive body. I do direct, but I am not the one who would teach scene study, for example. I do it, because I have to teach and direct and make plays. But where I have the most understanding of the application of the work in my own body is as an actor, so that's translated more in the realm of training the performer's body than the director of scoring and working with people on the composition of the scene and what not. So, that's one way I would characterize my work: it is more embodiment, the vocal and physical embodiment. I am working with the Chekhov work to free the body.

LP: (Question no.9): Are you using Chekhov's books?

Cerullo: That's complicated. When I was studying, I had *On the Technique*. That's the 1991 edition, I guess. So, but I had my students buy the one which came out in 2002. *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*, but I actually often don't let them buy it, because at least where I teach the students are very smart and it's a very competitive school. They have to work really hard to get in there. They are going from my class to their science class. So, I tell them up front, I say: "we are going to do first and we are going to read after," So, I don't give them the book to read; they do sometimes read the book or I read to them from it. The intellect is so strong; the body is so far behind. I am working with 18, 19, 20 year olds, 21

³ Cerullo recently directed *Because You Are Here*, a community-based ensemble creation theater project on immigration, created by her students at Whitman College. See <https://www.nwpb.org/2018/12/17/acting-and-activism-whitman-college-play-explores-community-impact-of-immigration/>.

year olds, and sometimes it is the first time they are in the class where there are no desks. It's not a stage but it is like a studio, and yes we are building a capacity here. We are training, and so I find it is really helpful not to have the book in the room. But I have used – which is no surprise to you – Michael Chekhov's *Lessons for Teachers*, which is a book which has just come out, and I find some of those lessons where he is speaking directly to the students and Deirdre Hurst du Prey has transcribed them. Traverse time: you could say that that text where he says "please where is this fire" – where he is begging his students to kind of connect with the fire in order to engage the will. You know I will give that to my students; I would assign something like that to my students more so than what is in the book. I feel that the book is very much for me at this stage, because for them it is an introduction to the work. So I teach from the book but I don't often assign it. I assign the videos sometimes that MICHA made to accompany *To the Actor* if in class they are shy, which they often are. I'll teach something, and then I say, "Watch this video for homework" – and notice what you notice and I use that as a point of departure. (The speeches were filmed in 2004 and released – Routledge distributed it – in 2007. We filmed it in Spencertown, New York.)

LP: (Question no.8): Do you prefer personally, as a teacher, performer, scholar, director, the 1953 edition to the 1991.

Cerullo: There are people who know this much better than me and hopefully, you'll talk to Ted, because I know the [editions], but someone like Ted he was using the 1953, and then 1991 came along, and he used that. So he has been with each book over time. I haven't, so I don't have a lot to say about the preferences in different places. I mostly teach out of *On the Technique* 1991 and the 2002 which has Andrei Malaev-Babel's translation [of a chapter on Psychological Gesture].

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Cerullo: I think it still reaches the students. I still hear from my students how they read – the ones who are touched by the technique – you know that moment of "Oh my gosh, I can't believe it; it's been written down." Like there is some kind of, "thank God, somebody sees this, the field the way I want to be in it." I still think is that's happening, so I don't feel the text is so in the past that people can't relate. There is something lovely that happens because Chekhov was around so many women, Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst du Prey, when he is teaching them he is actually referring to the actress; the language is not always male because of their presence. But you know in this day and age with teaching we have not – in the English language, we are not using he or she, we are using "they." There is more inclusivity in the language, and we are trying to do it even within our organization, to just be more inclusive. So I think in that way, yes, maybe we should re-write all sorts of texts.

And also the field of acting and performance has grown so much some people don't identify as actors – they identify as performers and what is that mean? And maybe someone should – there are many voice books, like Patsy Rodenburg, who also has written some of her material for lay people who are not actors; she's got like a second circle which is out there for the general population. There is probably a version of Michael Chekhov's book which is not only for actors. Patsy Rodenburg is talking about presence, using it in the sense of the voice for the actor trainer, but she says, you know, all of us need to be able to enter a relationship of our own presence – she calls it second circle – and much of what Chekhov talks about, as he described himself, is what he observed from the daily life, and that he has

then put this language to and employed, with concentration, at will. But so much of what he has to offer can be used by anyone who isn't even an actor. Yes, let's re-contextualize *To the Actor* in so many ways, but I don't feel it is dated what he is saying. He was ahead of his time. So, the body-mind connection, we now take for granted that it's there. He had to do some convincing.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Cerullo: The Anthroposophy, that's where you are heading. I think you know, initially, as I understand it, when the first *To the Actor* was published, they took it out the Anthroposophy, for fears of it being too much. Then it's been put back in. There are scholars who say, you can't understand the Chekhov work without studying Anthroposophy. Then there are Chekhov scholars who will say you don't have to understand Anthroposophy in order to understand Chekhov's work. I fall into the latter category mostly because I haven't studied Anthroposophy or been very interested in studying it. I have a little bit out of curiosity and almost deference to Michael Chekhov; I felt like I owed it to him. But it didn't align with me in a way that I continued it. I followed my interest in other places, but there are many people who have and you can chat with them: I'd say Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, and John Mc Manus, here anyway, the three of them. That was Chekhov, that was his experience and his passion, and his relationship with God was very central to how he talked about the work. We leave it out at MICHA, but we allow it to be in, based on who the individual teachers are that are teaching. Anthroposophy is I guess loosely translated as the study of man. So here we are, actually studying man and woman, who we are, what makes us human, and in those senses Anthroposophy is present. But there are others who bring much more Anthroposophical slant into their work, and Eurythmy.

LP: Who else is using the Anthroposophy here?

Cerullo: It's so hard because I didn't go to all the classes. Did anyone mention Sara Kane? She is in England. She is a voice person, and she is also very rooted in Anthroposophy and Eurythmy, and she has taught the Chekhov work a bunch especially in Dornach in Switzerland [headquarters of the Anthroposophical movement]. She is someone to speak with if you want to speak with someone who is moving out of Anthroposophy. Joerg, and Jobst Langhans who is in Berlin, in Germany, but I was in class with John this week, he was working with the earth breath, with the fire breath. He did not say anything about Anthroposophy. He was talking about the Greeks, and how the trained actors in wrestling, spear throwing, and he was moving in this direction, and I thought, oh, this is the world of Eurythmy I think, but he did not explicitly say. That's where he is coming from, but I can't speak for him, you will have to ask. I did sit on his class this week and that was a moment I thought – echoes.

LP: Could you tell me about how MICHA and the other Chekhov organizations came about?

Cerullo: This is what I think is the case, but the people who were there you should ask. There was a group that came out of – maybe it was the meeting in Emerson, which I was not at: the International Michael Chekhov Conference. I see it always as "IMCW." [LP: International Michael Chekhov Workshops, or Michael Chekhov International Workshops.] I think what happened when I was working at the O'Neil center, Mala had called, and she

asked the O’Neil Center if they would be a fiscal sponsor because the IMCW was, as I understand it an organization of people but they didn’t register, so they didn’t have a bank account, they weren’t an official association in that way, but they were in a sense a group of international Chekhov artists who were trying to meet regularly. Mala approached the O’Neil and asked if O’Neil would be a fiscal sponsor. So the O’Neil did that, and then about a year or two into that, there was this moment when Joanna decided we should formally create an association. That’s when MICHA was born; it was Joanna Merlin, Sarah Kane, Lenard Petit, and Ted Pugh, who were the original formal founders. Before that was IMCW, and I don’t know what that organization was or how it continued, but later at some point came a group that came to be known as the *National* Michael Chekhov Association which has nothing to do with MICHA, which is the Michael Chekhov Association, but I don’t know when it was born, but Lisa [Dalton] would probably know. I think it is her group.

LP: in Fort Worth, now she is in Texas.

Cerullo: Now it is in Fort Worth? I thought it was in Florida. But she also moved quite a bit.

At any rate these were the iterations. I know David Zinder was very involved with the International Michael Chekhov Workshops, IMCW. He was wearing the T-Shirt this week. But when it was formed, this was before my time. When they came to the O’Neill, this is when I met the work. Because I was working at the O’Neill center, and they said, this group wants to come, would you be the liaison? So I was the liaison for a year, then a second year. At which point, Joanna said: “We are forming MICHA, would you come and work with us?” I gradually left O’Neil, and in 2000 MICHA left the O’Neill and we went to another place.

(Looking at photos)

Cerullo: These are Deirdre, Kevin Cotter, Beatrice. Kevin Cotter – ask Ted, he will confirm. The Michael Chekhov Studio in the 1980s, in New York, but Ted will be the one to know. I think they had a good time. So this was huge for MICHA. It was so important to know [indistinct], and for Joanna, to get the Chekhov work out to the colleges, to the universities, to train the teachers. Nowadays, when you look at the calls for all the professors who are being hired for the training programs and Michael Chekhov’s name is now in the description. It wasn’t that way. People in this country knew him but they didn’t know [LP: it was not officially recognized maybe?] Every time you said Michael Chekhov people thought you were talking about Anton Chekhov. In these last 25 years, it’s across the board much more recognized, and I think it was MICHA’s mission from the beginning, and in 20 years it happened, which is I think is a great contribution. Also other things that happened which we didn’t even plan.

The first conference in the States was in 1998, May 29th –June 8th. This was Mala and Lisa. Then another year, in 1999, they had returned to the O’Neill. And I think in March 1999, after the second workshop, Joanna and the others formed MICHA, and then the regular meetings each year started to take a different tenor under Joanna’s leadership. The organization of them, ultimate aim and goal, took a real committed turn, where she decided to do it every year, then we were doing it two or three times a year. There was a push to apply to the National Endowment for the Arts to get funding to make those DVDs.⁴ There were alliances and partnerships formed with different universities: we allied with Amherst

⁴ For example, in DVD there is a conversation among Joanna, Mala, and Jack Colvin.

College, with the University of Windsor, with California State University. We worked purposely with these colleges because we wanted teachers to come. We could have been at O'Neill, but we wanted to be with and among the colleges, universities because we knew if we taught one teacher they would teach many more students, so we were looking for to teacher development as well as professional actors and directors. So it was real intentionality.

The other thing I can give you to read, so that you have a little sense of it. This is our first newsletter 2000 and next year in 2001, after we opened.

You asked, are there any other teachers that do not teach for MICHA. There are 27 teachers who have come; we basically have invited everyone to teach for MICHA that we know, that we feel like has an interest in exchanging. Because the teachers who come, they don't just come to teach, they want see one another teach, they might want to teach something together for the first time. So it's not like a training, you know- those studios are doing that so well. I think people who come here to experience the difference in all of the teachers who are making offerings.

So we formed in 1999, and we started and the certificate program for teachers in 2000. Initially – and this was a big change for us – initially we were doing a master certification, where they had to take all those workshops, and they also had to do demonstration teaching and video and write a thesis. We did it for four, five people and then we stopped. We said, this is not – we are not going to go this route anymore. And there is a statement about that change, because it was much contested, we had to think a lot about it, because a lot of people wanted it and we would have made a lot of money doing it.

But ultimately we felt, and Joanna articulated, you know, it just did not feel right. Michael Chekhov certified teachers, and we thought a lot about Kristin Linklater, she calls it I designate, the designated Kristin Linklater teacher, but she is the one doing it. It is her work, and we felt we are not Michael Chekhov. We are MICHA we can give a MICHA certification or something. We did not feel it was right, and also we felt the work was so open to how it is taught, that it was very difficult and quite individual to say yes, no, yes, no. We decided OK, instead anyone who does the work, anyone who commits to three summers, and two teacher trainings, which would be a minimum of three years – anyone who commits that time and effort, will receive a certificate of completion. We won't use the term, "master teacher," we won't bestowed in those ways, we just will continue building a community and environment where people can continue work. And others have and that's their prerogative – but many of our people who came through our training now gone and created certification programs, but still it's a way we have parted.

LP: How do you feel about that?

Cerullo: Well, the same way we've always felt, that we don't think it should happen. And Joanna has said, "I wish you wouldn't." It's her wish, and who is she? She's just a person who worked with Michael Chekhov and is still teaching. But it's happening, and also, wonderful things are happening, people are studying the Chekhov work. But it's the language of academia also. Academia as you know wants proof, getting funding or money, we need to know that you are getting this thing. And we understand that, but we are not an academic institution and we've always kept that freedom.

LP: Thank you.

Note: additional information from email, June 2018:

The founders of MICHA were Joanna Merlin, Ted Pugh, Lenard Petit and Sarah Kane. Joanna was the one who officially founded it in NYC in 1999. Deirdre [Hurst du Prey] was on our advisory board, but Beatrice [Straight] was not involved. In fact, she wasn't well at that point in time and so was not involved with MICHA in any formal way.

Dawn Arnold, interviewed 20 June 2018

Dawn Arnold is an actress, director, and teaching artist. She is the founder and Artistic Director of The Moving Dock Theatre Company and the Moving Dock Studio in Chicago. Ms. Arnold is a Teacher of the Chekhov Technique. She appears in MICHA's series Master Classes in the Michael Chekhov Technique. She has been on the faculty teaching movement, acting, and voice in the undergraduate and graduate theatre programs of Roosevelt University's Theatre Conservatory, Northern Illinois University, and Aurora University. She teaches the Michael Chekhov Technique in Chicago with the Moving Dock Studio, the Educational Theatre Association, and in guest workshops and residencies for colleges, high schools, and theatre companies. Ms. Arnold performs her solo show, *The Lydia Etudes – About Loving Anton Chekhov*, around the country at theatres and festivals. (Biography from MICHA website – <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/dawn-arnold> ; cf. <http://www.movingdock.org/site/workshops-and-events/>.)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Arnold: I was introduced to Chekhov in Grad school but only as a little teeny moment, a little taste, not training. I was interested in it and I had a book. My first book was *On the Technique of Acting* [LP: note: 1991 ed. of 1942 manuscript, Mala Powers and Mel Gordon, editors.] I am sure that reading it had influenced me, but I didn't think I knew how it was. And I had started my theatre company, the Moving Dock [founded 2003]. And we were doing a lot of experimentation with how essential movement brought us to the form of the show. That was really interesting to me and is why I called it the "Moving Dock", because it was moving, the fluidity of the essentials coming into the shape and form of the show. In 1999 I'd heard about the first MICHA, but I didn't go to it because I was already committed to other workshops. But I was thinking, "Oh, I want to do that." And then in 2000 I went then for the first time, in the O'Neill Center, and I thought it was magic. And so many pieces came into place. I saw that what I was experimenting and trying to figure out on my own, Chekhov had figured out and was doing it. So for me it was just an "aha" moments from all over the place. And I came back and tried to incorporate that in the work of the company, my own work. I was teaching at the University and was trying to bring it into my teaching right away. And more and more it became definitive to me, until I got to the point when I said, "this is my way." And I even would change whatever I was doing, and say I am just doing Chekhov. So in University that wasn't always wanted, but I was just putting it in so adapting everything for various courses. In my theatre company, using it however I could in our rehearsal process, not telling people that I was doing it exactly, just doing it.

LP: And which ones were useful? Atmosphere? Psychological Gesture?

Arnold: Probably mostly gesture, at first. But you see the overall way of Chekhov Technique that goes from essence to form, this was a pattern I'd already understood, and knew that's where I wanted to go. So I think I was taking the Psychological Gesture for the whole: like I would find specific qualities, atmospheres, gestures to create the whole theme of the play.

I didn't work so much one on one with the actors, it was more about forming the show with it and utilizing some of the techniques to bring into the show. At a certain point, my studio

was called from the beginning the studio of Moving Dock Theatre Company, and at one point I started to think I only want to teach in the studio Chekhov. Because of my academic work I had been blending some Laban, some voice work by Kristin Linklater.⁵ You know, blending.

And then I had decided, I know want to, and maybe it is useful for others, that I will be very clear about what I am utilizing. Coincidentally, I had some company members who were in my ensemble, who were annoyed by actors who had also been cast in the same shows they would not been so in love with what we did. So they said, so from now on can we only have actors who want to do Chekhov here? And I said – OK we can do that. So it was getting pretty defined there. And then after a while (I want to say it was in 2010 or 2009), I was doing projects with it and I auditioned people with my approach. So I thought it should solve all the problems, but it didn't, though, because people had sometimes their own acting way in and then they didn't care about doing the Chekhov work. This is what annoyed the others who did want to do the Chekhov work. (Laughs) So that changed, and then, when I was making offerings in the studio, and I was thinking about making the studio not just an offshoot for the company, it was almost like a preparatory space for a show – as a sort of public teaching place.

It was more in 2003, and at that point I was almost completed with my Michael Chekhov Association training and also Scott Fielding had been in Chicago and I was working with him and his company, and he was leaving to teaching New York. I said I should keep going with this Chekhov, and he said yes, and so it seems to me that the baton was passed to me. So I opened the studio and it was still called the studio of Moving Dock Theatre Company, but I was telling the public I was teaching Chekhov. And after a while I said the name is hard, people don't understand, so I changed it to Studio Chicago, and then I was really focused. I had a Studio doing Chekhov and company doing Chekhov. (The actual studio was in 2003, and we finished *Unsung Stars*, an original play about Henrietta Leavitt and the women astronomers of the Harvard Observatory, in 2009 that's when the actors said- keep it among ourselves and I said yes. But that means that we were casting out of people who were training in the studio. Or you know somebody who comes and says I trained with so and so and I want to do this.

LP: Do you have a company per se?

Arnold: I have a group of actors, an ensemble that was working a lot together, and then we expanded. For two years in the row we did a show called The Anton Chekhov Book Club, which is an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's short stories. We did that two years in a row, but there were two different shows because we did different stories.

LP: Which ones did you do?

Arnold: Well we did – I won't remember all the stories – we did *Coming Home* – the girl who is coming back to the steppe after being away a long time; we did *The School Mistress*; we did *The Riders on the train*, I think it was called. We had a beautiful time with all of those. And that was a little core ensemble. And then for the project we are doing now we expanded with three more people, so there are 7 actors in that project and one outside eye. After the first year, I asked Sara Cane is there anybody in Chicago, who is doing Chekhov and she said, yes Scott [Fielding] is there. I did not meet Scott at MICHA, so I had to go find him. Now he is in Boston.

⁵ See <https://www.thelinklatercenter.com/> .

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you feel that there are changes occurring in the Chekhov method today?

I think that there is very interesting, not moving off of him, but every teacher has their own way in to it and their own style and what they emphasize and what is interesting to them. And then situations like this [MICHA meeting] bring us together. We sort of see what each one of us is doing and kind of riff of each other a bit and see also where our terminology taking a little bit different direction the way we say things.

So what I've started to do more and more in my studio is sometimes really read to the students a little thing in the book, so that they know that what I am saying is coming from the source. I have my own way to do it but I want them to know that it is coming from the source, and that's been helpful. It is also good for me to reconnect, because what happens when you constantly are sort of evolving and improvising and that you can start to spin off in your own way about things, so that coming back to see what that's coming from is useful.

LP: Could I ask you how you began to lead this morning's class? What were the words you were saying during the Actor's March? Were they Chekhov's words, or your words?

Arnold: I believe I got it from Lenard [Petit].⁶ I know it is written down on line: there is one of those pictures on line, but "I am that I am," the last sentence, is omitted, it got cut off. This morning, I made a mistake in the phrase, "I experience the power" in the area around my head and shoulders. Sometimes when I say it to myself, I say "I am feeling the power." I made a mistake – I put a different word in my head. But that is an example of how things can really shift, because when I am doing it for myself, there is a different word in my head.

LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it [the Chekhov work]?

Arnold: I feel that the culture of European and American actors is quite different. This might be because I am an American, and I look at the Europeans and I say to myself; I think you have a more artistic sense of this. When I am in America, I feel like the attention is on commercial success, and I enjoy being around the Europeans for that, and I like to feel what they got, and to offer it. I suppose when I am teaching in Chicago and students are coming new to me, they probably think I am from a different planet, too, because of this influence, but I also think that maybe there's a difference in perceiving the work in that.

When I was at MICHA and Slava Kokorin (see below) was teaching, his mission in life was very different from a lot of people I had worked with, and it made for me a feeling that lot of us were missing a boat, that we weren't going after our art form for high enough purpose. I was really, when I was around Slava, I could feel myself shifting, shifting, shifting, because I wanted to be more high purpose like him, I wanted to feel. I could feel my molecules going like shift, shift, shift -wanting to be like him.

⁶ Chekhov may have used this "March" as a threshold exercise before 1935. He introduced it at Dartington Hall in 1936: "March around the room following a leader. You are strong, you are healthy, your hands and arms are free and beautiful, and your legs are strong. Imagine yourself in three parts. Around your head is the feeling of space and power, the power of thought. Around your chest will be the power of feeling and around your feet the power of will. These must be in beautiful harmony as you march. Then you will be concentrated people." Lenard Petit published it in Petit, Lenard; & Michael Chekhov. 2019. *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, Part 2, "Imagination, Threshold."

I also think the difference in culture changes the way people just talk about things. I don't want to make a kind of cliché of this but the Germans break things apart more, they philosophize, you know, like Joerg and Uli – I trained with Uli, Ulrich Meyer-Horsch.⁷ He had more training from others in Europe, but we were together at MICHA. He has his own way, a kind of combination, he is a little less didactic; he is a very free soul. But still there is a tendency to do that. I just find it, well, adorable. I am watching Joerg and Uli, and I always take our differences like they are precious. I like it. I am like a little chameleon and I want to go like that with everybody's ways so that's how it will evolve. And John, he is from his own universe, his experiences from so many different places, so he is unique.

LP: And David of course.

Arnold: And David Zinder is unique, yes.

LP: And do you think it is because of the country they are coming from?

Arnold: And experiences they had in their lives and people they met, and where they are from – all that is quite different.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Arnold: I don't have contact with people outside MICHA. There are even some people that my MICHA colleagues know, that I've seen them work with, certainly some people from the past like Leonard, Ted and Fern, can reference some people they worked with originally, so they are no longer with us.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Arnold: Unique about my work? I don't know, maybe other people need to answer that, what they think about me (laughs) A couple of things though, maybe because, and especially now, I am a professional coach for actors and opera singers, and I have to get them to a result, so I cannot linger with the technique to bring to them utilize it make something to happen. So, it's not to hurry it, but it's just that it has to be put in practice and maybe quicker, or some kind of adaptation in that part of my life. In my studio I can take time with these things. But even so, I find my Chicago actors, they are not there to indulge artistically, they are there to get ready to go, do something – that is their sensibility. And I think that that is a little different, a little less patient. And so maybe I make more connections with them. I never leave class in Chicago that I haven't take them to some place of application. You know, we can't just do Psychological Gesture all morning we have to get – like we did today. You have to have that moment when you play a little scene and you see that it's like what you are going to do in the theatre. Because my Chicago people, if I don't get to that little moment, they will be like, "Oh, what do I need this for?" They might even like it, but they will be, like, I can't do this right now. And the opera singers [rolling eyes] – they will not do technique. So I have to spoon feed very quickly.

⁷ Ulrich Meyer-Horsch is the artistic director of the Michael Chekhov International School and the Michael Chekhov Studio Hamburg; see www.michaelchekhov.org/ulrich-meyrhorsch.

LP: You work with them as well; a lot? That's impressive.

(Question no. 6) Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Arnold: It depends how you do it, but I would say, yes. I remember early MICHAs where it seemed to be some people who were kind of pushing back and I remember watching Lenard and others navigate that with them. There is a funny story about – and you have to ask Leonard for the rest of those too...– but I remember sitting at a table at the O'Neil Center, so maybe it was my first year. It might have been my first year. We used to do this thing in the evening, that the teacher would sit at a table outside and people would just come and ask questions. And Lenard was sitting there, and I was sitting there, and a man came over. He was a professor from a Midwestern College and (laughing) he flunked himself down and he said, "Leonard I have a wife and a mortgage," and it was like he was saying, this artistic work doesn't pay the bills or make the mortgage happen. And Leonard just looked at him and said, "I have a wife and a mortgage." (Laughter) You know? Sometimes people have that kind of perception – which doesn't lead to that somehow. And so they may want to push it away.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system today ask for corrections, adjustments?

Arnold: You mean, should the system be changed to work?

LP: Either in approach, or however you call it. Do you need to adjust it for this type of generation?

Arnold: I think you have to always speak to your students – whoever they are, whatever is going on with them. That's the constant adaptation that is going on. But you don't need to change the method. You just need to bring it into play.

LP: (Question no. 8 – 1953 versus 1991/1942):

Arnold: I like them all, and I've used them all, and when I was at the university, the newest one (the Routledge [version of 1953], *To the Actor*) which is the most accessible. I use that for a text book. I did not use *On the Technique*, I think because when Mala – I don't know, you have to ask Lisa, she knows more about how Mala did that.

But when I was choosing a textbook, *To the Actor* starts with the actor and his body, which is where you will start when you work. And to me, there was a sense of progression there that made sense of the teaching of it. *On the Technique of Acting* has all these interesting thoughts before you get there, and I could tell you right off the bat that my college students would not be able to understand what to do with it. But they could understand what we did in class, you know, with qualities of molding, flying, and so on, and since we do that first and then put it first in the book, then I say, that's the order we will take. Yeah. And that sense of order for me – and it's not just for me everybody at MICHA understands how the psychophysical, the laying this foundation has to happen, you build up into finding a psychological gesture and then you know, and you are getting more and more into the application of it. But you have to build sort of a foundation, and I found that *To the Actor* put that in the right order. (Yes, I used it teaching at the college. In the studio I tell them you can look at either one, and I tell you what to look at.)

LP: Thank you very much!

Cynthia Ashperger (answers submitted in writing July 2018)

Cynthia Ashperger is a professor in the School of Performance at Ryerson University, Toronto; she was among the first group of MICHA students receiving the Master-Teacher Certificate, ca. 2000-2002. (See her 2008 publication of her experiences at MICHA: *The Rhythm of Space and the Sound of Time: Michael Chekhov's Acting Technique in the 21st Century*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.)

LP: Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Ashperger: I started to incorporate it early on as I studied it as I was already and experienced teacher. I teach hundreds of hours every year as well as direct one or more productions. I started with a few exercises and expanded it over time. I had previous experience with the American Method, Stanislavski, Brecht and Lecoq. The circumstances allowed practical learning, theoretical analysis and teaching the technique that all fed each other.

LP: Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Ashperger: Changes are constant in a technique such as this one which encourages experimentation and creative relationship between body and mind. It is a living breathing thing and each master teacher can add something unique. The technique really allows the observer to influence the observed but also to be influenced by what s/he is observing. Many hybrids with other techniques are formed by master teachers. And it is difficult to define the “lofty” title of master teacher. Hours taught, background and practical experience, ability to communicate well, a healthy imagination, ability to improvise and sometimes specialization in another technique can all play into it.

LP: Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Ashperger: I think that teaching depends on the individual and the circumstances. Once again there is a focus by each master teacher on something and that focus also shifts with time and the individual projects also defined the focus. I believe that the project, the group, the individual and the circumstances demand the approach and I have met those who take this into account on all continents. In my book I touch on the difference between the American and Russian circumstances when it comes to teaching the technique.

LP: Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Ashperger: Yes, certainly there are. I believe that Michael Chekhov Europe is an excellent organization. Just look at their schedule – it tells the tale. It is the most active of all them. MCE teachers and their invited guests are always working in a team with a minimum of two teachers teaching at a given moment. This is very helpful in keeping the dialogue alive and in enriching any individual’s repertoire of exercises. Because of quantity of workshops and because it teaches in five modules as well as team teaching I think it can boast the title of the most vital organization teaching the technique at the moment.

LP: Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Ashperger: My main focus these days is to ensure the actors know how to apply the technique constantly to a concrete artistic project and task. I have used the taped playback method constantly since 2007. It was introduced in an hour long demonstration in Windsor and subsequently I have added to it and have developed it considerably. I believe this is a unique way of teaching the application and it has been a very successful method in my own pedagogy. You can read more about in the Routledge Companion.

LP: Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Ashperger: The spiritual aspects were suspect to many then and now. We live in a materialistic culture. The level of comfort and need to include it into pedagogy varies according to an individual instructor.

LP: Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Ashperger: We are using the same basic principles, but many adjustments have been made.

LP: Question no. 8): What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of King Lear in "The Composition of the Performance.")

Ashperger: I believe that one can find inspiration in all of these versions for own approach. I am always guided by the fundamental idea of focusing on the body, imagination, accepting the concept of the Higher Self and also the invisible to visible, working with the space that surrounds us and the concept of polarities. Many leveled acting emerges a communication on many levels: individual level, between the director and the actor (or the teacher and the student) and between two or more partners, between the ensemble and the audience. We apply the technique to the task at hand and this depends on our Creative Individuality.

LP: Question no. 9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

Ashperger: I personally use my book [op. cit., above] as a textbook. I teach the themes and answer the questions as they emerge from the artistic application, the practical work. Themes and questions always do emerge when the time is ripe. I do not ask the students to read it. I do let them know it exists and leave it up to them to reach for it when they choose.

Lisa Dalton interview at MICHA June 20-21, 2018

Lisa Dalton is President of the National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA) in collaboration with Prof. Wil Kilroy; she is a Master Teacher of the Michael Chekhov Technique, actor, director, acting coach. Dalton collaborated as a teacher and conference organizer with Mala Powers from 1987 until Powers' death in 2007.

(Note: Questions in this case are out of order.)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/ directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Dalton: [I studied with] Ted Pugh in New York Rudolf Steiner High School in New York. Mala Powers had an apartment and an office and a publishing office in New York, her husband was an international publisher. They had an apartment in New York and came to New York frequently, and when Mala had time she would come and be a student with us in Ted's class, because it had been so many years since she had done work with Mr. Chekhov. In 1987 I moved to California, and Ted gave me her contact information. She was very polite, didn't completely remember me, but that fall of 1987 was the very first time she taught Chekhov or anything, and she had done a six-week class with a group of Anthroposophists in Michael Chekhov.

I have been teaching some sort of acting since I was in High School. I was always a teaching artist. And ultimately, because I studied with so many people in New York who were parts of the techniques that she did not know, that I knew, that I could teach, she asked me to teach the techniques. And then she would teach how Chekhov coached her with it and how to use them. And this was important for me, because I had learned many, many techniques from all my teachers in New York, but they were not application-based; they were exercises, exercises, exercises. So she brought things to my knowledge that no one else had. She is the only direct student of Michael Chekhov who was coached on starring roles privately, mentored privately on application, who then went on to teach. No one else had that experience with him as a star. A lot of them were up and coming actors, but they were not working, private [students] and getting privately coached.

Many people who went on to teach, many of his students who went on to teach, were already trained in Stanislavsky, so when Mr. Chekhov, in his teaching, did not teach Stanislavsky; it was presumed that you knew it. So what Chekhov was bringing was what was not in Stanislavsky but built upon the basic system of analysis. So people who went on to teach actors just what they learned from Chekhov, eventually started to teach people who never had Stanislavsky, and they wound up with a bunch of tools and not a system to put it together. So, Mr. Chekhov knew that Mala did not have Stanislavsky, so he gave her his own kind of version and that led to her having information about how he was working that none of my other teachers had.

There were very interesting things that I have learned from her.

One was that Mr. Chekhov would not read the script. He would ask you to just stand and talk. And then he would see where the character was already moving in you and reflect at you what you were already filled with. Including understanding that technique is critical to helping the actors to find their psychological gesture. That interview process. I think that that is evident in Gitis Padagimus work: he works with the process of evolving the

psychological gesture through the director interviewing the actor.... and that was carried forth.

LP: (Question no. 1, cont'd):

Dalton: So in the discussion regarding how I have used Chekhov's system and how it's developed over the course of acting, directing and teaching career:

Let me just talk about my use as an actor. When I was training in N.Y. starting from 1980, I did not have any guidance on how to apply the tools and techniques I was learning, but I was making a living as an entertainer, as a stunt woman, as a comedian, and as an actor. So I was auditioning, and I developed ways to use everything for auditioning, and I developed ways to use it for a stunt work. Like I would look at the actor I was doubling, and I would put on her imaginary body, and I would see her center, and I would see her tempo and rhythm, and I would notice whether she was thinking, feeling, or willing predominantly. And so it expanded my ability to be hired, because I could make myself look a lot like the actor even if I was bigger or smaller than they were. And I had very well developed make-up skills, and because of my very plain face with no eyebrows, no eyelashes, I could make myself have any shape of eyebrows that effects the way a face looks, and I have a very no lips and I could shape my lips the way you know, and make myself very much like the actor and so those techniques became very profitable for me. And I used to do a background work in film. And I used atmosphere all the time and used all the characterizations. Sometimes I would get – ah, I could be so many different people. I would get hired on the same movie over and over again because I would never look like the same person.

So, I really made a good money, I made a living off of the work and in commercials, I studied what a commercial was and I saw that it was associating the atmosphere with the product. So, if you understand the atmosphere they want, you just create that atmosphere. I made a lot of money in commercials because of Chekhov. And so I was – that affected the way I taught, because then I was able to start teaching. And for my teaching – I had been teaching for so many years before I found Chekhov – I'd been teaching 6 years, 7 years, and teaching different acting techniques: Grotowski and all the circus arts, clowning, mime, mask, and Viola Spolin's work. And I studied at HB Studio and worked with Uta Hagen's work and Stanislavsky.

What Chekhov did was it brought me into a connection; it connected everything what seemed very external, what seemed very internal, and in a different techniques and it merged it all and removed this idea of it being possible to have internal and external, but it is all a unit – united. And that concept evolved through my performance. I was also always directing, so I immediately began teaching my actors how to work with it so I could direct them with that. And I began following Michael Chekhov's suggestions for the director very early, reversing the rehearsals starting with climaxing moments, breaking them down into the nine events,⁸ and so I was able to accomplish things as a director on camera, on stage, that were quite surprising because I started using camera movement, editing, the music, on camera all in Chekhov ways and then, you know and on stage as well. So the use his work as an actor, the practical applications as a teacher for whom I was teaching, the directing application on camera and on stage, all kept my teaching evolving. So like every time I went onto a film set I went on as a teacher, looking to see what I could experience as an actor that I could then teach.

⁸ This is the nine-event dramatic structure mentioned by Chekhov in *To the Actor*; see Dalton's article, <http://www.critical-stages.org/15/the-art-of-michael-chekhovs-chart-a-training-sequence-for-contemporary-practice-in-professional-studios-and-academia/> .

When I first started teaching in Los Angeles in 1988, I constructed my own studio. Mala Powers started to teach in 1987 and then we started teaching together in 1988 – I started in January 1988. I had my own separate classes. I taught with Mala and I had my own studio.

LP: Is the Book on Directing that Leonard edited helpful?

Dalton: Yes, that's the book I used. And I had, when I was studying at Beatrice Straight's studio in New York, I had read files, and Mala had copies of the autobiographies in early translations of the autobiography, so I had all of that. With Mala, I had access to information that had not yet been published. An especially big thing with Mala was the chart with inspired action which Michael Chekhov hand drew for her.

LP: And your version is in your article in *Critical Stages*. [See above, note 5.]

Dalton: So, Mala and I in 1988 began teaching with the chart as a framework. With Mala in particular I would begin the class with a ball toss, and then I did this in my own classes also, I would have an imagination exercise, psychophysical exercise, characterization exercise, and gesture exercise. So my classes would have those components. Each week it would change, but they would always be these different, and we would do improvisations and games with the exercises.

And then Mala would take us to scene study or monologue study and coaching. And depending on what tools I had worked with, those would be the tools she would show us or help us learn how to use within the scenes. In 1992 the book on techniques "Michael Chekhov on Theatre and the Art of Acting; the five hour CD master Class with the acclaimed Actor-Director-Teacher" had been published (reissued 2004).

Eventually in 1994 – or basically in 1993, when Wil Kilroy arranged for us to present a full day workshop in Philadelphia with the American Association of Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), which is a United States-based non-profit membership organization whose mission is "To support and advance the study and practice of theatre and performance in higher education." And I believe and you may discover differently, and if you do please tell me, but I believe that it was the first Michael Chekhov workshop offered in the United States in a professional conference of any sort in 1993. And that 1993 event had some very interesting people at it – Arthur Lessac the voice teacher, and Sonya Moore the Stanislavsky teacher, were both in attendance at that event, and David Zinder who, as we see in the article in *Critical Stages*, gave a workshop there. I went to David's workshop, and I thought he was doing so much Chekhov, I said you have to come to our workshop to see what we were doing and that unfolded from there. So, from that 1993 workshop there was so much positive responses from it that people said where can we learn more of that? [LPB note: Dalton was a leader in the first two International Michael Chekhov Workshops in the United States at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut, 1998-1999.]

And then, Wil Kilroy went back to the University of Southern Maine and said can we create a summer program? So, in 1994 Wil Kilroy and Mala Powers and I began the summer program, and we structured it with voice warm up and the improvisation, and it was kind of structured like Mr. Chekhov structured his lab in Los Angeles. They had lectures, they had improvisations, and they had scenes, and so it was kind of like we had. Wil Kilroy was doing a lot of the warm ups and improvisations, and I was doing the training of the tools, and Mala was doing the coaching and the scene study part. And then in the evenings we had specialty applications. So that's what we did, we had history of Michael Chekhov and the legacy and we did auditions, we did script analysis, directing, different applications, seminars in the evening. This program is now in its twenty fifth year; we do it twice a year.

LP: (Question no.2) Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Dalton: When Mala passed away in 2007 – seven days ago it was 11 years ago. Today is 18th of June 2018; she died on the 11th of June 2007. We needed to change the structure, and in 2008 we brought the program to Texas and I wanted to videotape it. Because I wanted to videotape it, I thought it would be really cool to have teaching the tool, improvising with the tool and then the scene study one right after the other. And so that we could get basically in one hour a videotape of just expanding, contracting, learning it, improvising with it, applying it. And that sequence proved to be so successful: it seemed to keep everyone very, very active, because we had these long, you know, classes in the afternoon, where everyone was always falling asleep. It's just hard it doesn't matter who is teaching it, it's just the time slot after lunch and it's very hard – and this process just seemed to really keep everyone very vital. And this ribbon of triplicity – learn it, play with it to deepen the experience with it, and then apply it – made it very practical.

And now we have – a couple of years ago I got this idea to actually go around the entire chart on our very first meeting together, the first two hours. We did some ball toss, we get to know each other and then maybe to interview each other, and then we, Wil Kilroy and I, go through the entire chart, all the exercises in 10 minutes with no words, just follow the leader. I'll just do little expanding, contracting, and gesture to Wil and he'll do some molding, flying, flowing, radiating and I do some Michael Chekhov's psychological gestures and we spin around in the circle and nobody knows anything about what we are doing. We just say "follow us," and pretend, you know, and if you can't see us imitate somebody else. And one of the things that happens is that afterwards we can say, when you look at that chart you can feel intimidated, because there is so much on it that you can think: "How can I ever do that?" and we say well you already did.

The rest of the week we are just reviewing what you have already done, so you can do everything, not a problem. And then the week unfolds with us going through this triple rhythm and then the last, on our fifth day or sixth day, we do a complete review of the entire chart in five minute chunks. So it takes about an hour and 15 minutes, 1 hour 20 min with them with their characters in mind with their scene partners, so it's like a two minute review and you go right into a rehearsal, and two more minutes of this technique, so they get triple exposure what we call a "whip through" and then they get the in depth training and then they get a review.

LP: Is it for the mixed level students?

Dalton: Yes, it is. In our program we repeat the same syllabus, I mean it evolves of course, but the new actors, the actors new to it and sometimes we have non actors. We have teachers; we have doctors, life coaches, because our pedagogy is very focused on applying this to human life and development.

And we are very blatantly spiritual, and that's one of the things that changed over the way. I have always wanted the spiritual aspects of Chekhov to be public. And I was blocked and stopped and Mala was... Well people called... any spiritual aspect of it. People would call Mala and complain, tell her that she had to make me stop publicly connecting spirituality with Chekhov. And of course, she was a devout Anthroposophist, because Michael Chekhov gave that to her. She sat down as a young woman and said – you know he called her little pixie; she called him big pixie: "Big pixie you are lying to me, you are not telling me the

truth! What do you not tell me?” And so, he told her about Anthroposophy, and he never used archetypal gestures with her, he used eurhythmy gestures with her, not push and pull, lift and smash.

So, which is by the way the other thing, because I’ve studied with more direct students of Mr. Chekhov than anyone in the world and I discovered, he gave each person something different. What he gave to Mala Powers was not what he gave to George Shdanoff, is not what Joanna Merlin got, it’s not what Jack Colvin got, what Eddy Grove got, is not what Deirdre Hurst du Prey got, it’s not what Felicity Mason, Beatrice Straight, they all got something different. Hurd Hatfield, all those people – something different depending on who they were as a spiritual being. In my interviews with all of them now all of them come back to talk about this spirit. Even though many of them would not publicly talk about it, they on their interviews would all talk about the spirit, the spiritual power that awakened in them.

I just felt it was my destiny to be bold, and in 2005 after I had a very first website on Chekhov in 1996. It was mine, I paid for it, I bought it, I owned it, and people were complaining that I didn’t have the right to put this on my own website. And in 2005 Mala came over to my house with a print-out of my website. Someone had – it was not her writing, I knew her writing, I was her associate for 18 years. I knew someone had highlighted and circled everywhere what they felt it was inappropriate on my website: references to spirit, references to my own personal knowledge that it is not appropriate for me to claim that I have studied with more direct students than anyone in the world. That is a fact. No one can, because they died. No one did that, no one traveled all over the world with a video camera documenting it.

And people called around the world to complain about my public inclusion of spirituality, and she sat me down and she was crying and she asked me, because it was hard for her to keep defending me, defending my right to do this. And she asked me to remove things. And I had already removed a great deal of it and after she left, she drove about two minutes and she pulled over and she called me up on the phone and she said: “Lisa, forget everything I just said. You need to be you; you need to do what you need to do. And you put whatever you want and you are who you are, your creative individuality is your right and Mr. Chekhov would want that.

And that, you know, I wasn’t going to stop, I need to be who I am in our Chekhov talks much about honoring the creative individuality, the artist. Each teacher has their own creative individuality as a teaching artist. And that’s in the same way that he honored and gave to his students what they shared is going to be, what each teacher will share through is their own lens. And I have a very sort of practical lens, you know, I wanted to be able to apply it to every aspect of living and to every aspect of performance – marketing, commercials, things that people felt were sacrilegious to apply Chekhov to. You know, it is not appropriate to use it for commercials, but if I can create a commercial with that power, why would I not. The commercial world of entertainment needs Chekhov more than any other. Because it is impacting the masses, you know?

And if I want to use it for clowning and for stunts and for life because it made me healthier, made me able to function in the world and made me happy and fun, so I have one of the things that’s developed is that I am more and more publicly speaking about the spiritual forces, because I believe it’s the unique gift: the power of love, love lectures. How can you listen to the audiotapes and not know this is about spirit. And the spirit of love and love and spirit – you know the guiding principles of spirit uniting and all of that. To me, we do a great disservice by being ashamed of it like Mr. Chekhov talks about – people being ashamed to talk about love.

LP: (Question no. 6) Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Dalton: About the cultural climate – I think that spiritual aspects are much more available to today's cultural climate. There are many people – I believe the society is much more ready; I believe most of the people come actually, most of the people are drawn to the work because of the spirit, and you began our lunch today by talking about how the welcoming spirit so moved a first timer so that they are back because of that. And that singular element of having a deep and welcoming spirit, heart-centered spirit, opening, I think is more of a draw many time more opening than a block. I think that it is an opening to many more people. I think the mechanization of the world today is calling, and the artist being subjected to the mechanization calls upon us to meet a deeper need that is being lost in the world around us. And the artist needs to nurture this creative spirit and force of love and radiate it. Live theatre especially is going to become more and more of a spiritual experience. I mean, Hamilton: people paying \$500, \$1000, \$1500 for a ticket to a theatre show? This is not just entertainment, they are going for transformation, and their need to see that show, whatever it is, is providing something that goes to their spirit. And they are digging deep into their wallets for it. And so, that's who we are. You need to train the artist to be operating on the highest spiritual levels, and Mr. Chekhov has paved the way for that! I really think – does the system asks for corrections? I think it asks for exposition, exposing the deeper elements of it. I do feel that. I feel we will need to use some new language. One of the things I want to ask you about it: in this 1946 version did you find him talking about this sphere of images?

LP: Yes, in a way. He is changing things in the 1953 version, very clearly because he likes the images. Some of them [the drawings by Remisoff] were used before in 1946, some of them were redone. Obviously, he likes it for the visuals. Some of them come back, some come out of sequence, including the drawing A, and so on. Some of the things are completely new, some of them are old. The chart, essentially, I don't know if he talks about it. There is definitely not a drawing included or anything. So I don't think that's there.

LP: (Question no.8) What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in "The Composition of the Performance.")

Dalton: So I got from the Russians in Tashkent, Uzbekistan – the Uzbeki, Vladimir Bouchler, and Yelena Ibrakimova. They're now in Brussels. They got a samizdat copy and went into the basement of Tashkent State Theatre with a candle at one o'clock in the morning – they described it to me on my interview with them, the video – they were so nervous they did not know how to start and they let the book fall open and they read about this sphere of images that was outside the Earth's ozone layer and inside the sphere all images existed and we can connect with this sphere. And I never heard that in the English, never read it nobody shared that with me.

LP: and this was something that was published when?

Dalton: This was in the 1980s.

LP: And somebody put it down when he was lecturing in Kaunas or somewhere?

Dalton: I don't know.

LP: And it was Chekhov?

Dalton: Yes. The actor-directors from Tashkent were describing what they read - the first thing they read. And I took that, I mean they told this to me. I took the idea, the image.

LP: But you never saw it?

Lisa: No, I never saw it and I've never seen it in print, I don't know where it is in Russian. I don't know. I am trying to find it, because I've never seen it in English. I am trying to see where it was, where it came from. But what I've done with it is as a teaching tool – it connects to where Mr. Chekhov says all the images exist, but where? So, it gives this place to imagine it. It could be that way, that way, but around the whole sphere of earth is this special sphere of all images: the stories are up there, the furniture is up there, the costumes, the characters – everything is up there. Past, present, future-imaginary, real, historical – it's all there. So, all I have to do is center myself, ground myself, radiate and “poom”—into the sphere. And I can download it, like Star Trek. I can beam down the images. Or I can go up there and find a garden and sit and have a conversation.

And now when I am teaching young people, I tell them they have their own iCloud. It's your own iCloud. If you want a picture of the Eiffel Tower, you go to your computer and you put “Eiffel Tower Image”, right? And you hit search. And now you can go in here- this is your search button, your ideal artistic search button - IDEAL ARTISTIC SEARCH BUTTON and you just tap that search button and say, “show me an Eiffel tower,” and bang! An image will download. You're like the printer. You print it out and show it to everybody (laughs). But the images are all there. And they relate to that, and I say it doesn't matter whether it's true, you just pretend it is. You know what? Even if you don't find anything, pretend that you do. Make it up like you got something, just pretend. And when they have permission to pretend, where did they make it up from, where did they pretend from? Of course – right.

So, using the internet image and planting this idea of this sphere of images, and in my sense [for Chekhov himself] is that a couple of things happen. That in the migration west, this sphere became the Higher Ego, the language for this sphere. Instead of calling it this sphere of images and working with it that way, it became the Higher Ego. And the goblet images that were laid out in Lithuania – when you get to the teacher – the lessons for the teacher, it's a stick figure, right? Like that. And it doesn't have the spiritual beings coming in and radiating through and it doesn't talk about our receiving, radiating, and assisting them in their growth. That's all very Steiner. It's all Rudolf Steiner stuff, you know and that's all gone. Yes, the colors, and I am now really teaching it with all the radiance and spiritual being and stuff like that. And just I started really being bold with that in the last two years. And people love it. I am teaching adults, young kids, (college students). I do special workshops for High school, stuff like that, but I think everybody is – they are kids.

[LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Dalton: Let me just jump into really quickly into question no. 3.

There are more so than Europeans, Americans – I see two different ways. One way is a very, very slow, very exercise-driven and not a lot of application. The whole methodology is very, very, very slow, thoughtful – very, very experiential, experiential but not application driven. And that's how I think, and for me it was really great. I think from a very process-oriented you know period of time. So molding for two hours and not talking about what

molding really is but how to find it. I worked two and half years with Ted before we did a monologue. You know for me it was great. But I had already experienced the whole technique on a play before I met Ted (Pugh), so I knew where it was going, and I was able to go out and play it. Most students today can't move that slowly, can't connect the dots that I teach, and most teachers today have students for shorter periods of time and have to move more quickly. And so I think there is a set of teachers who really are looking for practical applications, who have a faster tempo, and I think that's a lot like there's the very slow, deep – what I do I offer a very fast process and then I have special courses for a slow deep after that. So that once you got the whole basic idea and can begin exploring it than you can go more deeply, slow it down, special events where you can really learn the process. I do both, because I believe in the value of both, just for practical purposes in colleges, in High Schools, in professional world – it's like the way Mr. Chekhov evolved in his own teaching, the way he taught in Hollywood. My teachers who trained with him in Hollywood taught very differently than my teachers from Dartington. In Hollywood: Mala Powers, Joanna Merlin, and George Shdanoff – these are the three primary teachers in Hollywood, and Jack Colvin. Eddy Grove was also from Hollywood. I mean, I studied with Joanna in New York, but she was from that [Hollywood] period. But Felicity Mason, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Hurd Hatfield, Beatrice Straight, those teachers taught more like at Dartington, and it was slower and it was specific for gestures: you put your foot here, your hands here; this is how you do it.

By the time he got to Hollywood he gave a set of criteria and said make it up yourself. It had to be one full breath, it had to use your whole body, it had to go through extreme polarity, it had to be a 100% of your effort, and it had to have a clear beginning, middle and end with a preparation and action and sustaining. Those were the criteria. If you were doing a gesture and it did not awaken an urge in you, then you checked back with the criteria.

LP: (Question no.5) Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Dalton: So if you – in my experiences – if you employ this criteria you come up with a form that I was taught from the Dartington teachers. The ideal archetypal form, but because you don't have time to teach the form, you got just a few minutes with people, you give them the basics. If the form isn't triggering you, isn't serving you, ask these questions, lead yourself with these questions: is it full body? Is it how you are using your breath...? Ask the questions. Adjust your form and awaken the urge. That's an example of the difference in the teaching styles. And really, his little piece of art concept that he developed as a reaction against the ordeal coping with the movie, the film set, the short takes were you have no continuity. And so he had this motto to fall in love with the problem – you need to fall in love with the problem. And the problem was no continuity, short takes, redo, etc. So, it's like how do I fall in love with a problem. And that little piece of art became his way of seeing the beauty, and falling in love with a problem is beauty thing and that really helps.

LP: (Question no.4) Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well? <http://chekhov.net/LisaDaltonWork.html>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Dalton
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Michael_Chekhov_Association

LP: (Question no.7) Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Dalton: One of the biggest things I think the system needs, asks for corrections is understanding that this what Chekhov taught was based on people who already knew Stanislavsky. So, I think that one of the mistakes that are made is posing Chekhov against Stanislavsky and not realizing that Stanislavsky's fundamental system of analysis is the framework. Chekhov said he did not teach it because he felt he respected it and was building on it and not denying it. So that piece of information could filter into the overall pedagogy more powerfully.

LP: Actions rather than feelings.

Dalton: The idea about the emotional memory and all that, and that he would go for the sensations.

LP: (Question no.9) Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

Dalton: Yes. I have a book, *Murder of Talent: How Pop Culture's Killing It* (February 2017), and I talk about what I understand the fundamental difference.

I have also my textbook and a book on my stunt work. "Murder of Talent" is a Stanislavsky quote. Do you know Sharon Carnicke – very good work, very good. I consider her, among Americans, to be – I don't know of a Stanislavsky expert in United States beyond Sharon. She was part of the Benedetti, Smeliansky, Carnicke group – the Stanislavsky focus. [LP: I was introduced to Mr. Anatoly Smeliansky, he is a leading Russian theater writer, scholar, and critic. He joined the Moscow Art Theater (MXAT) in 1980 as Literary Director and lives currently in Boston, MA.] And she told me that she read Stanislavsky's journal or something like that, that he was afraid his system would be the murder of talent. And I was like oh my god, yeah, bang –that's my title—title for my book.

LP: Thank you. Thank you so very much!!!

Scott Fielding 21st of June 2018, with additions 19 January 2019

Studio Director and Master Teacher

Scott is MCASB's founding director and master teacher. He leads the studio's core training programs including The Chekhov Training and The Meisner Foundation Training. His artistic and pedagogic work across multiple disciplines is strongly influenced, above all, by thirty years' experience with Michael Chekhov's visionary perspective and creative method.

Scott is a long-standing member of the international faculty of the Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA). He studied with first generation Chekhov teachers Beatrice Straight, Mala Powers and others personally trained by Michael Chekhov. Most impactful upon his development as an actor, director and teacher was ten years of intensive creative work with Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan, also his teachers and Actors' Ensemble colleagues. <http://mcasb.com/studio/faculty/>

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of Chekhov develop; how did you make it your own? That is, how do you make sure it functions as you make the Chekhov system yours as an actor, director, and teacher?

Fielding: It is not easy, a super-brief biography, as for my relationship to the method. I met with the work in 1986. First as an audience member, when I saw a very early incarnation of the Actors ensemble, who were devoted to exploring the use of Chekhov work? And then after that, I right away went, because I was living in Los Angeles, I sought out Mala Powers, but not personally, not right away. I went to the library and I found a book, Lessons to the Professional Actor." I took out that book, and I found out that somebody named Mala Powers teaching in Los Angeles. So, I began to study with Mala. I think it was just a once a week class that I took. And then after a period I went to New York to the original Michael Chekhov Studio, and I had the good fortune at that time not only to study with Ted, who was already teaching, and Fern, who are both today Emeritus here, but also with Beatrice Straight also with Deirdre, who really wasn't a full-time] teacher but she taught a bit. And all the old, grey-haired ladies of Chekhov – Felicity and the old ladies – I had the great fortune to spend a couple of years there.

Now in using the technique, I acquired it as a student first, that's what you have to do. And my route anyway was really a long route, and I think it's anybody's route – I don't think there are any short cuts to this work. There are maybe some people with more of a refined instrument at their start, so maybe it moves along more quickly for them, or there are people who just are maybe more talented, I don't know, but it was really a process when I studied with Mala. I don't know if any of it – I made use of anything I've learned from her during that time. I think it was more of a just getting a some kind of overview of this field called Chekhov work, and then as I got to New York I really devoted myself devotedly. Yeah, it was just work for me and that's what I teach today's [students].

And my leading quote when I teach comes from Chekhov. He said there is one principle in our school – and I said it in class yesterday – this is his principle: work, work and more work. That's been my guiding light; just work, just the hard kind of suffering of hard work, yeah. More than once, Chekhov said the actor's profession is 99% suffering and 1 % joy.

LP: I don't know about that one; it sounds like what Guy de Maupassant said, "I have coveted everything and taken pleasure in nothing."

Fielding: That kind of suffering that he speaks about there doesn't preclude the experience of joy. So it is a paradox. But the discipline of training hard is work; its hard work, it's not funny games. There is fun to be had; there is a pleasure to be had. You're training hard. There is a pleasure to be had – the athletes know that. And I think musicians know that and dancers know that. That was an important point to me; so, maybe because I needed to, because if I didn't work I wasn't going to get anywhere. Because I wasn't just going forth with talent, you know.

I worked a lot, trying to master it. That's now more than 30 years. That's long ago – from 1986. We started to play, we did a project through the school there – studio rather. At the end of the three months I was on stage, trying to apply it. I can't say if it was successful or not but we tried, and the next year there was more work in New York, to try do a play. But my personal story is that after about three years of that work – three, four years – there was something missing in my grasp of the actor's technique. Something was missing. I already started acting late with a very, very good teacher for a couple of years before "meeting" Chekhov, and I was always bold in acting in theatre, directing from the time I was a child actually, but I knew there was something missing. One of the actors from the ensemble named Charles Harper, who is now passed on, recommended to me to study Meisner, because he had. And I took his advice. The best guy in the country that teaches Meisner is Bill Esper. For three years I studied Meisner with devotion and commitment, and I teach that work now. It turned out really to be missing link for me. Here in Boston I teach a two-year Meisner program.

LP: What filled it in? What was it that Meisner had?

Fielding: It's going to sound strange, because Chekhov talks again and again about the most important thing that Meisner said: the TRUTH.

LP: I knew you are going to say that.

Fielding: You knew? How did you know?

LP: Maybe it was on your mind and I picked it up. But that's what I found missing exactly when I was taught in Prague, Stanislavsky's method. I moved to States, and Brad Dourif was teaching Meisner technique to us at Columbia. I knew that that is what I wanted, because I did not have it. I was studying also in HB Studio with Uta Hagen, that was more towards Stanislavsky – you know what I am saying – and her teaching gave you tools like Six Steps and so on. So it was a bit more organized for me, but I know exactly what you are saying.

Fielding: Well, but it is ironic though because as I just said, you know it's all over Chekhov. There's probably nothing that he said more often, you know, arguably, but he spoke again and again about the sense of TRUTH. But he [Chekhov] didn't really – you know, his methods were for teaching the actor how to develop a sense of TRUTH. I think it's a long path to develop this sense of TRUTH purely through Chekhov. But it is incredibly important, and it is – he knew it and he stressed it. For a lot of years, Chekhov technique did have a bad name. Of course it did – did you know that?

LP: But now it is getting popular.

Fielding: But in no small part thanks to us here, to MICHA and but also to others, to private teachers.

LP: What do you the bad name was about? Was it because of the spirituality of it?

Fielding: Well, that's what's said, but I don't think that is the reason. No, I think it is because "Chekhov acting" was equated with bad acting, like NOT truthful acting. Like not truthful and I think that in any technique there is this potential for the technique to fail to serve the actor. In the opening quote in his book – he quotes Jasper Johns (maybe you remember) that in the hands of a lesser artist, technique is apt to dampen, but in the hands of a great artist, it fires it up, frees him up. There was never a time when there was a lot of Chekhov out there, but insofar as there was Chekhov out there, maybe it was not perceived so well.

LP: You think it was because of acting in front of the camera in the USA – I am going to use the word industry – or he was more like a stage actor, and then it became that it has something to do with the artistic truth on stage?

Fielding: No, I think it has something to do with how it was taught. I think people maybe did these exercises but did it without bringing this so important sense of truth to their work. You can just see the potential in any Chekhov class. You can see the potential for a lot of bad acting. And we understand that classes are developmental ground. It is not a performance in class. You don't judge a classroom work as if it were a performance. That's a terrible mistake, of course. But there is a danger there that practice of exercises doesn't transcend the exercise, and instead of really coming in contact with creative inspiration and performing – acting out of a sense of truth under the circumstances – there could be this kind of bad acting. So, I think Chekhov suffered from that reputational. That was an aspect; it is not the whole story. By all means it is not the whole story. But I feel very much that that's a piece of the story. So Meisner gave me something.

[Addition from Boston interview, 1/19/2019:]

What I was saying was that you understand perfectly well as a teacher that there is an exercise work which has the aim of developing the instrument or developing craft, skills – developing talent- all that stuff. And that's like, over here; and we don't confuse that with what a performance is.

Here is an interesting note about Chekhov. He said we must put our exercises on stage. And one could ask what did he mean by that? So, if I answer that question: one thing he wanted – as he said in the opening *To the Actor*, "This book is the result of prying behind the curtain of the Creative Process – prying that began many years ago in Russia at the Moscow Art Theater, with which I was associated for sixteen years." I think he was interested in saying to the public – here is the actor's work, so let's do staccato, legato in front of the audience. Let's show them, here is what we do. He was way ahead of his time, but today it is pretty much, it's not like a big deal; people go to open rehearsals, etc. People like stages – today the modern stage is a "stage," where you see the plumbing and the wires and so forth very often, right? It's almost a cliché now, but in 1936 or 1942 or 1932 or whatever it was, that was not [the situation]!⁹

⁹ This also applies to Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, who already in 1927, when they were working on *Mahagonny*, were using Brecht's idea of "separation of the elements." He explained this in *The*

Fielding: The artist's process in modern art is very much letting the viewer into the process: not finishing the painting, leaving the viewer the opportunity to finish the painting in a way for you. But Chekhov was way ahead of his time in the acting field for that. So on one side he wanted to say; let's put our exercises on the stage, and on the other side, take the exercises and use them as creative means or rather as means to enter creative state, out of which then filled with inspiration we can play, we can perform. The problem I was speaking about here is that we see actors – and this is the danger with Chekhov, but with any technique for that matter but somehow more so in Chekhov than anything else, maybe arguably, I say that quietly because I don't know if it is true it's kind of it always been my question— that actors are doing Chekhov technique in performance and that just tends to be bad acting, instead of having mastered and incorporate- assimilated the exercises - the value of the exercises I should say – and the technique that they teach and then stepping through the door to playing. I am not being so articulate, I am afraid, right now. Maybe I could say something - a concrete example.

LP: Which exercises do you use to unleash.

Fielding: Any exercises, any exercise.

LP: You like to do with your students. Some things are maybe not going; maybe practice atmosphere is difficult at the beginning. What really amazed me when you gave us the exercise – I have to go back to my note, If I put it down, I don't know if you can repeat the exercise- I am not sure if we worked with those juggling balls or what it was I remember that there was a prop and I think that was maybe the juggling ball and you said that is the last thing – it was your little child's toy. It is the last thing, your last connection with your child because the child is lost. Remember?

Fielding: Oh, I remember.

LP: Oh, my:

right there in two seconds, I was weeping to the point that hasn't happen to me that I lost my control over my body at that moment, I was already down on my knees and my head collapsed to the floor and I hit my head on the floor and I had a bump on my forehead like a three year old coming back from kindergarten.

Fielding: Oh, no. (Laughs)

LP: that haven't had that happen to me for a long time; to be so opened, unleashing to the point that I was just wondering about the way the way you went in the depth of the material. None of the teachers workshop except for working with John Mc Manus when I was remembering," I was/ lived in that kind of body once- when we did lightness and staccato- when I performed in Karel Čapek's *The Insect Play* was a butterfly-Iris and as we were doing the exercise suddenly That thing came to me and I felt that I have been in a body like that before. And I was like: "Yes, that's Iris (name of the character I was playing years ago). Maybe that is how he worked with different characters. Not that might be how

Modern Theatre Is the Epic Theater" in 1930. Also, Max Reinhardt, with whom Chekhov worked and who was in the United States as well, directing *The Miracle* in 1924, did a popular version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1927.

Chekhov worked with different characters – he could play. I am not saying I am like Chekhov, but he could play Erik IV in the evening and Khlestakov in *Revizor* in the afternoon. He had this character he visualized, and he just jumped into the skin of the character- the movements, the rhythm, speech- he had it all and just became the character. How he did it? He was a genius. But it was very interesting what happened to me emotionally in your class completely, and so quickly, so raw and strong- not that it was right or anything, I don't know, but what was it? What do you do to unleash that?

Fielding: I know how I work. I know the principles I work on. I don't know in that moment we did whatever we did.

LP: Are you using the Five Guiding Principles?

Fielding: No, not consciously. I just mean the principles, the basics, and that kind of idea, what we talked about that I was so fully trying to find my way to this. Nobody wants to see an actor do technique! Nobody wants to see an actor do Chekhov work on the stage in performance. Again: the exercise, showing the exercise, that is one thing. But now we are playing, and I tell you who speaks about it, now that I think about it, who was very keen about it, was Shdanoff. He gives credit to Chekhov that they worked on the technique together.¹⁰

And I am not a student of Shdanoff and don't know much what he said or taught, but I remember somewhere along the way reading something that he spoke about this. He said; people get Chekhov wrong! And this is really what I am talking about – this is not from Shdanoff; this is from my own experience. I agree with him that we don't want to do technique in performance; we want to use technique to get inspired and then we want to play freely and that's what happened with you. You got inspired, and I led you, let's say, through some process that brought you to this Threshold of what Chekhov again and again calls creative inspiration. And once there, because you had an instrument that was functioning well, and that the parts were in harmony with one another, then you could just have that huge experience. And [with] that big expressive experience, you were not doing a technique at that point. The technique is what led, what opened, what brought you to that Threshold, and then you crossed that Threshold and then what happened? But of course, the thing about the technique is that so you could repeat it! It wasn't just – I can get anybody, anybody – most anybody – to some point where one goes off. They can have a big experience; they can be mesmerized. I've seen that many, many times. But if they don't have technique, if they are just following me through the process, then they can't repeat it.

LP: If I remember that moment, the emotional moment after I crossed the Threshold, I see an IMAGE: a woman on her knees. And I feel my tears are starting to come to my eyes. It is the haunting image of Niobe.¹¹

¹⁰ George Shdanoff was born in Russia on 5 December 1905 and died in Los Angeles 14 August 1998. He and Chekhov became co-directors of the Chekhov Theater Studio, which was formed in England and subsequently moved Ridgefield, CT, in 1939, and in New York. "An Evening of Anton Chekhov's One-Act Plays and Sketches," one of their many productions, was performed by Chekhov and Shdanoff themselves. After the Chekhov Theater dissolved in 1942, Shdanoff became a director and teacher at the Actor's Lab in Los Angeles, as well as an important acting coach, along with his wife, Else, continuing after Chekhov's death in 1955. He also went on to work as a special consultant on numerous films, television, and play scripts.

¹¹ Niobe was the daughter of king Tantalus and a goddess. Her pride caused her tragedy. When, as queen of Thebes, she expressed her pride that she, with seven sons and seven daughters, was better

Fielding: So, the actor trains and practices the technique in order that they can lead themselves or repeat once they have been led to some experience, again and again. Whether it's multiple takes on camera or whether it's night after night in the theatre. And the bad acting is again, you know, when "I am doing" my Center: I have a Center in my chest and I am full of my Center in my chest. But nobody cares about that. That's not interesting; it's not really alive. What's alive is when I can put that center in my chest and forget about it and let do it its job, and now all my attention (that's why I made the transition on Meisner in there) – now all my attention is (like a good Meisner actor) on you, my partner, or on the object that I am dealing with in the moment, or on the inner object which is my image, whatever, my picture. I am not doing my imaginary body, I am not doing my Center, or doing my gesture, whatever, this that or the other thing. There are moments when I may want to break through right there on stage: do my technique – moments, right? But basically, you know how they say Chekhov could play Khlestakov in the afternoon and Erik at night; it's like saying, you know, how Yo-Yo Ma can play his Shostakovich in the afternoon performance and at night do Appalachian music that he plays. Of course he can! He's a musician. He can play his instrument. It is not such a big deal in a way, you know? Maybe it's exhausting, but he has that flexibility. Chekhov said it's maybe a process of training, a long, long, long one, but once we've done that work then we can make Hamlet in a week? Or then we can – he did not say this but he might have very have – said that than we can play Hamlet in the morning and Erik at night.

LP: Yes, he was talking more of the flexibility of being comedian – comical as Khlestakov, you know, satire – and then playing tragic roles/drama. He wanted the actor to play it all. He wanted the actress/ actor to be versatile.

Fielding: Yes.

LP: How would you say – what is a Psychological Gesture? What is it?

Fielding: Ok, so we are turning now. Did you ask everybody that? Did you get different answers? (Laughs)

LP: It is very difficult to define it.

Fielding: I don't know if it is difficult to define it. Is it what people said: difficult to define it, or is that what you are saying?

LP: That they were not teaching it. The grey-haired ladies were not teaching it. It was not taught.

Fielding: But they were not teachers.

LP: What is sensation versus emotions/feelings, and working with it to create Psychological Gesture?

than Latona, the mother of the gods Apollo and Artemis (who only had two children), the two gods came and killed all but one of her children with poisoned arrows. Their father, King Amphion of Thebes, once he saw his dead sons, killed himself (or by Apollo in some versions). There is an outcropping of rock on Mount Sipylus near Manisa in Turkey called the Weeping Rock, which was associated with Niobe's legend. Niobe's disaster was often depicted in ancient and European art.

Fielding: I mean, there are several answers for these questions. But maybe getting to them is not so simple. Sensation is always – sensation lives in the space between the body and psychology. No body, no sensation. You understand? No consciousness, no sensation. To have a sensation I need my body. I know, I need my body for feeling and for emotions also.

LP: How is it different?

Fielding: In the first place – and this isn't a cop out – in the first place it doesn't matter. And if you go back to your philosophies and to your psychologies and to your neuro-researchers and all that, they are still fighting over those definitions. They really are. I thought about them over the years, they are still finding out and what not...nobody who has definitely defined what is an emotion and what is a feeling. You are not going to get a satisfactory answer. The important answer for the actor is that IT IS ABOUT EXPERIENCE, right?

So, that's the key thing. It is about the actor having the experience. And I experience whether we call it I experience, sensation, or I experience the feeling, or I experience the emotion. It really doesn't matter. You understand? I can tell you that the sensation is in this middle place between the body and the psychology and that's OK and I'll stand by that, but it doesn't really matter. What matter is this is how the actor knows through sensations or through feelings? Chekhov mixes up the terms. He is not definite about that? That's why we have questions, because he mixes up the terms.

LP: I understand it that sensation is like a big box and that's a box called – the label is "sadness" – you open the box and there is maybe "distress", or "frustration," like different qualities, or different type of sadness. The sadness is the "whole," but then you choose the right feeling you need to use for the character. Use your imagination rather than your own experience necessary even though it could be mixed out.

Fielding: This is one of the images he uses in one of the lectures; that is where you heard that.

Fielding: And now you are bringing up a question about using it. So, that is a different question. One thing is to try to define it or characterize it, and another thing is a method for creating a character, creating it and using it, so it is just to be clear they are two different two related different things, right?

Again – it is about experience! It is absolutely about experience. Whether we call it a sensation or feeling or emotion, you know it because you experience it. We typically say, "I feel," but you can say, "I sense." If you blow on the vulnerable soft skin, do you say I have a sensation of wind on my arm or do you say, I feel a wind on my arm? Does it matter which one you say? It doesn't matter what you say, but you have some experience, something happening. I know it because I feel it, I sense it. Why quibble about those words, you know? Where I think the sensation is important is to understand the relationship of sensations and qualities of movements, and that gets to your technique question. So that we know that if I move with a quality, I experience this sensation, and sensation is the experience because it becomes the movement, which is about the body, and the sensation is just that next layer that comes between that body and that soul life that I have. So, if I move sharply [slams the table], I experience this sensation of: maybe "anger," maybe "aggression" – I don't know, whatever it is. The urgency, whatever it is. I experience it as a sensation. If you want to use the word feeling go ahead use the word feeling, why not?

LP: So where does the Psychological Gesture come into this. What is it? Do you train it?

Fielding: Of course, you train it. How do you train it? Nobody is considered a Chekhov teacher if he or she doesn't train it. Yeah. Because it is – everything is Psychological Gesture for Chekhov!

Right, you've read that. So, you can't say, "I don't teach Psychological Gesture," and say you are Chekhov teacher. You can't say, "I use Chekhov method," and not use the gesture. It is all Psychological Gesture. Gesture is a movement; it's a form in motion. Psychological has to do with Psyche, with the soul. That means your inner life for a human being, for any conscious animal. It always has to do with what's inside. So, the psychological gesture has to do with an inner movement. The movement has a form of course, must have a form. We make the form conscious when we use it as a technique, but it's implicit in the movement. Of course it's form in the movement. And that form, that inner moving form for the Psychological Gesture, has some kind of intention: it wants something. So, it relates to all three parts of the human being. Like my will; so there's a will element: what I want, what I am doing. What I am doing has a purpose, so that it implies what I want. It has an image or thought, a thought image. It has to do with the thinking part of myself as a human being, and has sensations or feelings or emotions, some combination (they are all related), and that has to do with my middle part of myself as a human being. Right, the part of me that's about feeling and sensing. You can't come to an understanding of psychological gesture if you don't have a functioning instrument. So, Chekhov said for example, we'll take up the work on the psychological gesture – whenever it was, 1938 or 1939 – Psychological Gesture we'll do later. We'll get to Psychological Gesture. You can't really much start with Psychological Gesture unless the actor is bringing an instrument which is already just supple and healthy and flexible and holistic – unless he is bringing that to the table. If you are training, you got to train the instrument before you can really begin to grapple with this psychological gesture. But there is always psychological gesture. There is always, there is right now.

LP: In his 1942 manuscript of *To the Actor*, he was giving an example of the scene from *Hamlet* between Horatio and the Ghost, remember? So there was with every little piece of text a gesture that he talked about. But it is one thing to talk about it and another is to test it, to do it, right?

Fielding: Yes.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today? Are you maybe not using the exercises he would teach his students? Has his method changed over the years?

Fielding: I was teaching at the conference in 1994; I was teaching maybe the year before, 1993. I mean there were not so many teachers, period! I went across the country to the Studio – there was Mala in Los Angeles, and it was not her fulltime thing, she taught a class once a week. And there was a Studio which opened in 1980, and there was work being taught there, of course. And there was Shdanoff teaching in LA, but I actually never had contact with Shdanoff, so I can't speak about him or his wife. Basically that was it. Jack Colvin was teaching later. Jack began teaching in LA at some point after I left, so when I started he wasn't teaching. He had a television career going, and sometime movie career I guess, so I don't really think he was teaching much at that time if at all.¹²

¹² Jack Colvin (1934-2005) was an actor and director principally in television, who taught acting classes at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts (LA), at the Central School of Cinematography in

Maybe somebody would know better than me, but I don't believe so. And as far as I know, I don't think there was anyone else in America. There may have been here or there, but you had to find it, and elsewhere? He wasn't taught in Russia, and even that kind of German impulse came and I don't know – there weren't in the world places where it was taught and now he has been taught in lots and lots of places.

LP: Why did he become so popular; do you feel?

Fielding: The seed was really Beatrice [Straight] and the folks around that time in 1979, I guess. He died in 1955, and around 1979 they were contemplating opening the Studio.¹³ And with that opening of that Studio in New York, kind of anybody, most anybody else who was still alive – they were either in New York or in LA – they were somewhat connected with the Studio which graduated few people: you know, Ted; Lenard was one of the last graduates from that studio. And then, I think, the work of Ted and Fern, they carry those seeds forward, as far as I am concerned, in the most important way as anybody anywhere, because they were really interested in going deep down unafraid – and I got that from them. I always challenge people and the class really works – you know that from yesterday. Or today! I don't stay on the surface much, and those seeds got planted.

Fielding: And then MICHA came along a few years later, and MICHA is training, little by little, these people who are going out into these colleges. And I think you got to give a credit to Beatrice and all these people around with her and Mala of course on the West coast. But I don't know how important is Mala in that story, really? You might want to ask Lisa. Lisa might say she was very important – certainly in getting the earlier book published in terms of kind of really disseminating the work and the tapes absolutely. You'll see if you come again, the teachers, there are some people who are kind of really, so to speak, creative, and others are more kind of fundamentalists.

Did it change? In a way Chekhov is such a living thing. It is based on principles, not on technique. It is based on principles. So, I wouldn't say it changed at all, anyone who is really doing it. There is no iterations; there is a little creative in this, there is a little different task, but the heart is the heart, the essence is the essence. It takes some different forms.

LP: (Question no. 3: Do you feel that with John, coming from Australia, or maybe Joerg from Germany, that there a difference in teaching approach because they come from a different part of the world? Can you tell? Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Fielding: There is a different vibe with the Europeans, but even in Europe and the German approach, they are really connected to what America did too. Joerg and Jobst can talk to you. They also had the Ted and Fern connection early on, right. So, that's why their impulse was super, super influential. And John was a Eurythmist first and he studied with a very

Rome, at California State Northridge, and (as artistic director) at The Michael Chekhov Studio in Los Angeles.

¹³ That is, the Studio was opened 25 years after Chekhov's death. In 1936, Straight had worked with Michael Chekhov to establish the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington in England. The studio trained actors according to Chekhov's techniques. Straight continued to work with the company when it relocated to Ridgefield, Connecticut in 1939. In 1980, Straight, in collaboration with Michael Cole, established the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City to continue the teaching work of the original Chekhov Theatre Studio. Dartington/Ridgefield associates, Deirdre Hurst du Prey, Felicity Anne Cumming Mason, Eleanor Faison, and Blair Cutting served on the faculty as well, as well as Joanna Merlin and Eddy Grove from the group of Chekhov's California students.

important Eurythmy teacher, and Chekhov's work bears a strong connection to Eurythmy and the impulse behind eurhythm which is Anthroposophy if you know about that, and so anybody who is seriously drawn to his waters...

LP: David Zinder in Israel?

Fielding: David is maybe something else again; I wouldn't know quite how to characterize that. David tells the story that he has been connected since 1967 because his teacher in school was somebody who studied with Chekhov. David and I met in England.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Fielding: To my knowledge? No, almost anybody who is teaching, even internationally, today has been trained or spent some time under the influence of some of us teaching. This is going to be 20 years of MICHA and before MICHA there was a Chekhov Studio and there was nobody before that. MICHA owes its existence and everything to the people who came to the Chekhov Studio. No, I mean, I remember from a big conference that was at Emerson in England in 1994 there were a couple of Russians, very impressive, one or two, but not directly connected with MICHA. There was Andrei A. Kirillov; he is a researcher. I don't know about him as a teacher, but we are going back 20 years. He certainly knows his Chekhov, absolutely as far as I could say.

LP: Was it the first international conference?

Fielding: Yes, it was the first big one, really serious one. There was a thing in Germany; you probably talked to Joerg about that. There was one really big one first one in 1991, I think.

LP: And also there was 1993, the one in Philadelphia. You were not in Philadelphia? Lisa was mentioning it and David Zinder was giving a workshop there in 1993. (Critical Stages) Lisa said that it was the first meeting in US as far as she knows. Maybe I will find out otherwise.

Fielding: This is the first thing I ever heard anything about Philadelphia meeting. I met Zinder in 1994 in England at this first big conference, and he didn't even know he was doing – he likes to tell the story. He likes to say – I did not even know I was doing Chekhov until I went to that conference. So, he was not in Philadelphia teaching. It was in England.

LP: Lisa was talking about the same Zinder story, but set in Philadelphia in 1993. Was Mala Powers there in London?

Fielding: No, I don't believe so. To answer you – there is Kirillov, and Liisa Byckling, another MICHA person, she is researcher, a teacher, and there are a couple of people, but they don't really know. There is another researcher, Yana Meerzon – she is not associated with MICHA.

LP: She doesn't teach at MICHA; she says she is just a researcher [on this subject].

Fielding: There are the people who were taught, for example, by Lisa's organization, but I frankly don't know these people. I can't say anything about that.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Fielding: You are almost in a better position to say. You mentioned that I was working deeply in my classes here at [the MICHA conference]. I might say that there probably is something to that. You know, I've been criticized for taking too long, spending too long to get being in the process with people but that is my process. I do, and I spend time, and I like to think that I am very thorough and try to penetrate to something. This thing on the bad acting that we started off with – you know, my approach is not just to skim quickly over the surface things because I don't think there is a lot of value in that, not in training. So I guess that's what I say.

You know, I haven't been to Australia. John came to Chekhov through Eurythmy, and Eurythmy is very special, and that gives him a certain unique foundation, a special training and as a teacher and as a practitioner.

LP: When you are working, do you work with sounds or language or lines from a play, or do you energize the body first without any kind of sounds. I seem to remember from a video, that Fern was saying at first they were training with lots of movement, and then they realized it was a mistake and that they need to incorporate sound – not that it needs to be Eurythmy necessarily. I am finding out that while practicing yoga my throat, my instrument opens up, and through this openness, I create a much stronger sound/voice when I need it in performance. It feels easier to move without making sounds. But I am just wondering if you are incorporating the sound right from the beginning or if it is a step two?

Fielding: I think I would say the answer is probably no. I come from this for mostly I come from this from the history with Ted and Fern. I went through a lot of early experience with them when we did so much practice without speaking. And so, I know first-hand about that and that's still, and I am not a speech person.

LP: No? You've got such a gorgeous voice.

Fielding: Thank you. I am not a speech teacher, but of course I incorporate speech into our practice of course. Even today, I taught Fundamentals of Acting course what would be an equivalent of fundamental class – not in Chekhov, just a one-off 6 weeks thing, just to see if I can get some new people involved in mid-year – and we worked with sound and movement from the very first thing, right off the bat. If you go study Joe Chaikin, sound and movement was his thing. That was my earliest training before Chekhov.

LP: In a 1999 interview on why he was compelled to start Open Theater, Chaikin responded, "I'm not crazy about naturalism on stage. An actor is an interpretive artist. They can take their talent further. I wanted them to stretch, be creative."¹⁴ My colleague from SUNY Purchase Christopher McCann was a member of Chaikin's experimental workshop company called The Winter Project in 1977, in which Chaikin proposed and participated in explorations of the boundary between life and death, with the actor as storyteller, with listening, found dialogue and more.

¹⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chaikin .

Fielding: No, the voice is it essential, but for my approach with Chekhov there is much more work with the body than it is with voice.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Fielding: I mean, it is a theoretical question. My impulse to an immediate answer will be "yes" of course, because we passed from 1953, jumped to 1960, 1968, the summer of love and America and the new age movement that followed out of that into the 70s. I mean it's a whole, spiritually very different world, since the 60s even never mind in 2019 now. I mean the answer has to be yes, I think. You know when Chekhov started to teach about psychophysical work, and, you know, nobody was speaking about this kind of thing as far as I know. And back in his day. Never mind 1953, go back to the way he is teaching about psychophysical development, about the relationship and the body and psychology, back in the 30s and 20s even, I suppose. Nobody was speaking about that to my knowledge. And today everything is "body, mind, soul"; it is on PBS every weekend. Just like "This person, that person – the body-mind code". The bookstores are filled with books talking about body and mind. So I think it's much more current.¹⁵

LP: Do you talk about it in class? Soul? Spirit?

Fielding: I do. I mean, not ad nauseam, but yes, I will for sure absolutely. I speak about the human being and the nature of human beings, and the esoteric as well as exoteric nature of human beings, and I think the actor has to understand that; that's the instrument. It's not so weird today as it was 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. What hasn't changed is that the whole movement of consciousness is towards ever deeper levels of materialism, ever deeper levels of materialistic thinking. Chekhov was talking about this from early on and that has not changed. It's only more and more materialistic all the time, and yet there is a counter movement at the same time that we're also – you know, people are more and more open, or some number of people is more and more open to the spirit. You can speak about these things and some actors' will just close off immediately, and others will be very open to engage with you in that way and be inspired.

Chekhov did talk about it, in the lectures. Steiner and Eurythmy are in *On the Art of Acting*, 1991.

I don't think he said it in 1953. The editors cut it out.

LP: It is not there in 1953. [The 1991 edition went back to the 1942 manuscript.]

Fielding: And in the [1955] lectures.

LP: He was not recruiting anybody.

Fielding: No, absolutely not, if someone was interested, absolutely.

LP: He would open the door – just like for Mala Powers.

¹⁵ Martinez, Mario E., and Stevin McNamara. 2009. *The Mind Body Code*. Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True Audio Learning Course (Audiobook on CD). See also <https://soundstrue.com/store/the-mind-body-code-191.html>.

Fielding: Sure.

[LP: note: From Chekhov's 1955 lecture. "We tried to introduce in our method that which we might call the spiritual element. We introduced it so far in a very modest, limited way. Well, that's enough for the beginning. What is this Spirit, as we understand it, in the frame of our professional work? What its influence is? What its practical value is? Every time when we mention in our discussions our so-called higher self, higher ego, our better self, we have already in mind our spirit, or rather sparks from it ... rays coming from this shining higher self. Remember for instance two of our discussions where we spoke about the attitude of ourselves to the type of people we are performing on the stage with or about the love which permeates our entire profession. In both cases we had in mind the spirit and its practical influence upon our work, and its strong influence in developing our talents. With our soul, we live in the closest connection to our environment. Our soul, using its senses, accumulates a number of life experiences, it accumulates them, and it gives them over to the spirit. The spirit unites them, draws the conclusions, and creates principles, which the soul cannot do. The soul is only accumulating so and so many experiences and that is a limit of its abilities. What we called previously our hidden unconscious laboratory that is where our spirit works where he alters, summarizes, amalgamates, draws the conclusion for all the experiences our soul was able to accumulate. There in this hidden laboratory sits a wise scientist who is our spirit.]

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today.

Fielding: Well corrections. I don't think corrections. No. Because the method the whole Chekhov's whole work is based on principle. It's not just "here are some techniques I came up with." It's all based on principles, and the principles are absolutely sound. So, corrections it would be like, no, what is there to correct? How do you correct something that is based on a fundamental principle? So I would say no. Corrections: I would not say a definite no, because I have not thought it through, but I suspect not. I don't have any experience where one would say Chekhov was wrong and he should be corrected. I don't think so. Methodologically, are there adjustments? Probably there are, but what are they? That's a big question I think. Chekhov wanted everybody to you know he thought that everybody must find their own way to this work. Everybody had to put kind of their individual stamp on it. Everybody who teaches it has to find their own kind of adjustments within the general approach, and everybody has to teach and speak out of themselves. I can't teach I like Joanna, you know; I can't teach it like the next guy. I got to teach it like how it speaks to me.

The problem today is that the people want to learn quickly, more so than ever. And they want to learn cheaply, "QUICK AND CHEAP". And there is no instant development with Chekhov. There is a kind of instant acting which is, if you develop – already said it earlier – if you develop the instrument and you have mastered the techniques, then you can work very, very quickly. But if you in the first place don't even have the instrument, a healthy instrument, holistic, and with all the qualities the actor needs – if you don't have it, how can you make use of any of this? I don't know how you can make use of any of it, or much of it anyway. And that just takes time. If you want build a Stradivari: Stradivari only made how many Stradivari's? I don't know, but he didn't make 1000 of them, I don't suppose, why? Because it took time, it takes time to go out and look through the forest to find the right tree, you know, and then it takes time to craft the dam thing, and it's the same with our

instrument, isn't it? It just takes time. And that's really counter to the cultural impulse of our time, everything is quick, quick, quick, fast and cheap, and I try – I've insisted since I've been in Boston – I teach this Chekhov technique over a year's time. We meet twice a week, and people have studied with me for years, some people. And year by year they get – those that really do that, I mean I see it with my eyes – they really develop.

But I've also taught Chekhov once a week. I do Chekhov classes once a week now. You can give them knowledge once a week and some of them, especially if they are experienced and have a certain facility, they begin making use of that. But you don't develop an instrument working once a week. And even working twice a week for a year you only make so much progress and that's my point of view on that, and somebody else might differ. The key is time! And develop persistent effort over time. Methodologically, there are things that are for me more important than other things. I mean I would say that there are things more important than to teach other things. But whatever we are teaching, if you are interested really developing an instrument, the key to the whole story, it just takes time! People don't necessary like that, but that's the truth of it, as far as I am concerned. I don't know if that answers the question.

LP: Do you have a set of exercises for them to work on, or they remember the exercises in class and make a routine out of them? Do they practice outside of the class?

Fielding: I am evangelizing them about that from day one. You want to learn that stuff? You got to practice it. And you don't have to set aside a special time to practice it, although it is nice if you can. You got to practice it wherever you are whenever you are. You practice it when you are standing in line in the grocery. You practice it sitting on a train; you practice it walking to work in the morning. That's the beauty of much of Chekhov work – not all of it, so much of it – is you really can practice it at any time. It requires the will you know and the enthusiasm, but you really can, and if you are serious about not being a bad Chekhov actor, to bring up that terrible story, but actually being a master of Chekhov, somebody who can really employ it as a professional, then you have to make time on a regular, daily basis to practice – and you can! You can practice here sitting down and drinking coffee. Right, I can drink coffee with a quality of ease. And then I can become attentive to the sensation of ease that I awaken in myself, and then I can speak with ease.

I can speak to you from this or that center; I can produce an inner gesture when I am talking to you even if I am not making a big outer scaffolded Psychological Gesture. I can imagine a different atmosphere. It's just –will I do that? I can work on objectives with you sitting around drinking coffee. There is very much to do without designating, you know this my Chekhov time to practice. Wonderful if you can and I think you should but even if you are doing that you still can take – Chekhov said: “If you are an actor you are acting 24/7 basically,” however he said that. I mean you are always an actor. You know, just being awake and attentive to life - is to practice acting isn't it?

LP: (Question no. 8-9): What is your idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in “The Composition of the Performance.”) Do you give either of the books to your students?

Fielding: I don't give the books to the people; I don't tell the people especially you should read the books. I don't tell them not to read the books, and I mention the books, I mean I

don't say don't read the books, but I don't make a secret? Because there are people they can work with the book, and there are people that can't work with the book. And the people that I engage with they come to me to learn from me, and so I am happy to have them practice what they are doing with me. For some people is really, and most of my students wind up getting one or another of the books and spending some time with it. But you know, Ted likes to tell the story he had the book I forget for how many years and could not make heads and tails out of it, until he had some firsthand experience with that with his teacher. So I certainly don't tell people. What I will tell people, even to people who call me interested in the work I will at that point I very often say: "You know what you might do to pick up Chekhov book and just read a little bit. Dip into it. And I say, if something in there resonates because there is a spirit in there, like there is like a bell that goes off or it doesn't go off for people with that book. I say if something resonates with you, then it might be good sign that this might be something to look into. And if something doesn't, it does not necessarily mean the book is not for you, but that's also maybe something informative. So I don't promote or push the books, but I don't tell people not to read the book. So that's about the books. About the versions I mean – Lenard and I used to have a thing years ago, where I was the *To the Actor* guy and he was On the Technique guy. Because that was somehow more his book and that's years ago. No, I mean I can show you books, copies they are completely falling apart and frayed. I always go back and dip into both of them because there is something about the 1942 that I like there are passages that there are not in 1953 book and I like those passages. But my first boo was *To the Actor*. There is no difference between 1953 and 1991 – the only difference is Andrei has he added this lost chapter on Psychological Gesture and that is like an addition that is nice. But other than that and the foreword is exactly the same in the book there is no other difference. I terms of Mala, that little work book, I have a copy but that's mainly just taken the notes as I remember on the lectures, on the tapes, but I don't keep that or put much stock in that.

LP: And Lisa Dalton is teaching the [circle]; it was published in *Critical Stages*, what Mala gave that to her. A circle that when you start somewhere wherever you start it will trigger.

Fielding: Chekhov called it his "Chart for Inspired Acting."

LP: Yes.

Fielding: She kind of really works with that, I don't do that in the way that I believe Lisa does, I don't call attention to it, I don't photocopy that and give it to the students, but once in a while I bring in a book and show it to the students. But we work with all those elements, and the basic understanding of that chart or that sphere whatever you call it – which gives the understanding of the whole method – is that everything relates. People ask me about Meisner/Chekhov and I always say, Meisner is extremely systematic, fundamentally the first year, particularly, but the whole training is very systematic. It starts at point A, B, C, and D up to; it goes up to, not Z but some of the way. You can think of it as a linear approach, a training approach. Chekhov is an ORGANIC approach. It is an organic approach, and organic means that everything is contained in everything; the whole is contained in the smallest parts. That's Goethe.

So, in the Psychological Gesture you find basically, a relationship to everything else, anything else you find everything else. So the whole is always there in all the parts. So whatever I am working on, the other thing in a way comes to meet it. He [Chekhov] gives the picture of light bulbs around the circle – the elements, I think of them as light bulbs. If I turn on one, two, three light bulbs – I can light up this bulb and that and the other bulb, and

the circuit kinds of completes and everything kind of lights up- that's the picture that he gives. And that's of course right, and that's called coming back to the beginning. That's what you experienced, I would say, when you talk about your experience with me over the summer. It is that we worked on whatever we worked on – it was probably ease that we worked on. We worked on some gesture I don't remember; maybe there was some image, and there was the object, the ball, and then at some point because we worked thoroughly. We really turned on this bulb and the other bulb; then suddenly the circuit completed. Just suddenly, from the periphery of that circle, you were suddenly in the center of the circle, and the center of that circle is this state of the creative inspiration that we are always trying to get to. And then everything flows; I am emotional. Then my images are cooking; now I have the will to do something; I want something. The body is engaged, the voice is connected, everything is just, you know.

LP: and of course the atmosphere when there is the team of people working together. It lifts you – the ensemble creation as well, and that energy inspires you. I remember Bruce, was it, when he broke down when he found out that his child was alive and found.

Fielding: Oh, I remember.

LP: Interesting things were happening.

Fielding: Yes, of course that's the power of ensemble.

LP: What about the CDs, the lectures? Interesting, yes?

Fielding: Of course interesting; how couldn't be interesting? I listen to these often, on and off for years. I carry it on my telephone, and though I don't listen to it every day, I go back and listen. Because it is always inspiring; it is incredible, you know. It is like reading the Bible, you go back to the Bible, if it inspires you, and you read a little bit, and right away you are in that place.

LP: Right. Thank you so much!!!

Sol Garre interviewed 21 June 2018 and replied via email July 2018.

Sol Garre is Senior Lecture of Acting in Physical Theatre and Head of the International Department of the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático at Madrid (RESAD). She trained as an actress in Spain and has a doctorate from Exeter University in England. She is a founding member of Vértico, a non-profit association aiming to provide actors opportunities for training and research and a member of Michael Chekhov Europe's International Training Program. (Biography from <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/sol-garre> and material submitted with interview.)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Garre: A breakthrough in my teaching and concepts about acting (and therefore teaching and MC techniques) came from my practice with Phillip Zarrilli¹⁶, a psychophysical approach to actor training through Asian Martial Arts. I met Phillip 5 years after I was intrigued and learning from each teacher I could find in Europe on Michael Chekhov techniques.

During my MA and PhD at Exeter University (under Phillip's supervision) I found not only similarities, but a complementary form of understanding through the body-and-mind what Michael Chekhov's techniques were doing through my body, acting and perspectives on art (being an artist). I deeply understood/experienced the sense of the body, mind as a complete psychophysical experience and knowable of their powers: concentration, energy and focus; more interesting than that, I was starting to recognize and module them. That was an incredible set forward in my own creative application of the techniques and the way I was teaching them. My focus evolved through special emphasis first in (a special type of) concentration and lately on creativity and perceptual processes, in both those who learn and those who watch. I was learning this mostly from a "movement" point of view on acting and physical approach to theatre. My training in both disciplines has continued during these last 18 years, especially through teaching, but also with Phillip when I could. I normally do the psychophysical training sequence (Yoga, Tai Chi and Kalarippayattu) while I teach (always depending on the moment in the learning process and the type of students, of course) and after it, Michael Chekhov techniques. Training is (for me and I hope to teach that to my students) more a means to do research than an acting tool for getting more or less preconceived or pre-directed results. Your own master is the training more than the forms or techniques themselves.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Garre: Definitely. One of the reasons by which I became deep interested in Zarrilli's training it was because I always had this restlessness to find out if I could understand (as an actress) acting-and-teaching through means that were no so much dependent on my psychology (I have also a degree in psychology, curiously enough). This is not the place to speak about the relation between art and psychology, but it is an important one you know in all of this, and rather complex to tackle).

¹⁶ Phillip Zarrilli passed away on April 28, 2020 from cancer at the age of 73.

I came to theatre from sports, which I suppose made a difference in my way to handle artistic matters and activity. Perhaps this interest was what at certain moment of my career made me reinforce my training with Phillip instead of with MICHA. By the time I met Phillip (year 2000) I could have been more involved in MICHA teacher's program but I could not do both things. I say that because my training as a teacher of MC techniques is rather autodidact though it has certainly an influence from Joanna and MICHA. Phillip's training felt at the time complementary to my quest and gave me a new prism for reading what I already knew, which it indeed did. However, Zarrilli's overview on acting also help me even further that planned. By changing the paradigm in which Michael Chekhov techniques could be applied, I was also getting closer to understand another way of getting into or enjoying acting, a different perspective to read the techniques from. That perspective was the body-mind. (Later on I will explain a bit further this point, speaking about text and technique.) Academically Phillip has helped enormously to introduce new discourses into the art of acting, as for example, those coming from phenomenology, embodied consciousness and a new awareness of sensory motor learning processes.

LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Garre: Well. I am not sure how to approach this question. Delicate. I met many Chekhovian people during my career and had fabulous master teachers. Taking into account this - only those who I met, learned, talked... - I may try to do a division. Always sort of superficial and dependent on how I look at the aspects I learned or shared with them. It is my experience that when a true encounter with the teacher or student happens (as for example it has happened in our retreat in August) cultural or national differences really disappear, or pass by unappreciated.

I would have a lot to doubt about my own words and opinions. The following rough common features are perhaps dependent more on each own culture, society and theatre life than in the technique or even the approach itself. With all my respect:

- Russia: (unfortunately I only met and worked personally with Slava Kokorin and the rest was by reading or speaking) – Slava was an incredible inspiring teacher in the sense that he could connect with a practical-disciplined-profound and extremely enjoyable connection with your energy and spirituality. In general the feeling that I have of the Russian theatre is serious, that acting is a hard labor of finding and determining the right approach to creativity, more than one's right approach. Even though the freedom of spirit and imagination are considering part of the process, the search for a truth (as an underlying philosophical foundation from where to work) is predominant. Slava knew how to dissolve such seriousness into the flow of Chekhov's approach without diminishing the quality of it or its importance (my impression).

- United States: (I did not work directly with MICHA in the US, I am thinking in my colleagues at MCE and MICHA during early 2000 while I meet them in Europe and Spain, primarily Joanna and Lenard). There was always a text, a classical text where to apply the technique at MICHA workshops. One part of my research and teaching become a matter of trying to understand and explain the difference between training and technique, and the role of actor's physicality and energy in both areas. In Spain these two concepts have two different words for them, and each of them holds specific meaning underneath which oftentimes I feel needs to be clarified. Sometimes we (teachers or professionals) do not refer to the same thing.

My work at RESAD, on the other hand, urged me to define the area of the professional knowledge I was covering with both forms of training or “techniques” (Zarrilli’s and MC), with which I was “training” actors in acting for physical theatre in RESAD. My own training and teaching was also enabling me to understand this important difference. New dramaturgies on which to work professionally and the orientation of the actor within each of them was also one of the main aspects which I felt I was missing from MICHA’s approach. Different dramaturgies imply different forms of training, but not necessarily different acting techniques. Ted Pugh during our retreat in Groznjan this year explained how he now was moving also into this direction. Fern, in a Skype chat, also explained that now she did not start from the text (words) at hand, just from the images or sensations she was feeling moved by. Ted and Fern were also the two teachers from whom I most learnt the importance and practicality of experiencing a different quality of the spiritual approach to acting through the movement (in the text) from the American “perspective”.

- Europe: My main influence was through Sarah Kane and Graham Dixon, and I will also include David Zinder from Israel. The three of them are concerned with very concrete aspects of the technique, they share let’s say a closer philosophy or mentality to me. The three of them master their area and go very deep on it not as much for its application but also as the seed of one’s creativity. From the depth of their practices I can see the possibility of developing your own practice, so to speak, and the wide range of possibilities and application that may spread. However, it can be too open of course and not always fructify successfully in an artistic product ready to announce.

In my experience, Sarah, Graham and David focus, respectively, in speech and eurhythmic roots, actor’s energy-and-spirituality and the connections building body-voice-and-imagination. I may suppose that their way to approach and teach these practical knowledge(s) respond more to a context in which creation and experimentation, and not so much concrete professional results and are considered. It is where “good” and “truth” is often questioned in many levels of life; or perhaps responding to the need of Europe to find new ways of expression, and new cultural “enterprises”. And this experimentation seems to be common in all arts, not only in theatre.

I think that I am not speaking of differences here but realities by which one reads their experience, and Michael Chekhov becomes one, among others, one of those realities to read, I believe, rather important for many of us. And all of these differences/realities exist in each country but in different forms. I have just met my first Australian colleague and I have not much to say about her approach by now, but I intuitively “smell” that hers would be unique too.

LP: (Question no.4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Garre: Do you mean “as well”? When I started teaching Chekhov in Spain, 1995, not many people knew this work. Jose Luis Gómez, artistic director of Teatro de La Abadía, is the person who brought Michael Chekhov ideas and practice to Madrid in a professional venue. I was lucky to be in one of the earliest generations of this great project. Now many people teach with quite different backgrounds and use Michael Chekhov in their classes and acting from their ideas and experiences with different techniques, mixing them or exchanging concepts. This happens both in RESAD and outside. This is for me important to appreciate. I do not mix either technique(s) or training(s), nor combine or make a hybrid of techniques

in my classes and teaching. In that sense I do not have a system. I try to keep them as separately, as independent, as I am able, and I try to build bridges in between them while teaching. These bridges and the way to find those bridges are continuously evolving as I study or train more and more. That is, if I may say, my own approach or contribution to the techniques. Fortunately, within this approach and contribution each of my students would learn-find his or her variety. The teachers that came out of La Abadía have a concrete defined approach to the technique, which is also very specific and ready to apply to play and text. I try to open my teaching of Chekhov's to other perspectives on art and theatre.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Garre: No. I think I have a lot to learn still from them in any case. I am also realizing with the years (and their big tendency to fanaticism) how important it is to train young students in such a way that there is enough space to considering dramaturgy both in the commercial world as much as in the experimental or alternative venues. It is a delicate question.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Garre: I do. But I also feel today's cultural climate as a bit scary and perhaps dangerous. I fear because our need to go through and review our values today is so real and urgent that the use or overuse of certain aspects of Chekhov's techniques can reveal themselves at risk. When the spiritual concerns circumscribe them, our artistic experience and perhaps our life are enhanced. But there is also a danger of mixing realms, due to the weight of our psychological difficulties, daily life worries, and religious-spiritual needs, which may (and should) have nothing to do with our acting. The spiritual, in the sense of mystery may be useful for one actor, may be re-interpreted by another actor, or just not practical for a paid job. I don't see that grasp on spirituality as the point of Chekhov's prompt into the future-present acting. Spirituality covers one of the levels of our human experience. And that, living humanity and connection, is what we are losing today and therefore we are more in need. Love, creativity and freedom are human, and I am not sure how much part of our spirituality they are, but it is by them that spirituality is made tangible to us.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Garre: I think the discourses we have today to read Chekhov's work have advanced; artistic, scientific and philosophical foundations today can and will contribute and facilitate our understanding and management of creative knowledge and techniques. Chekhov is a pioneer into those incursions.

LP: (Question no. 8): What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in "The Composition of the Performance.")

Garre: I think that the student should read 1953. The researcher or academic may read 1942 unpublished version, better all of it. But definitively what it is of use is to read about

MC lessons, staging and doubts included, in the archives. I do not think MC is easy to adapt to other techniques mainly because the kind of knowledge Chekhov is concerned with is not the kind of knowledge acting techniques normally focus on (or used to focus until recently). Chekhov's acting techniques come from his unique personal search of opening up to another type of professional knowledge. However, "acting technique" and "practical knowledge" are not necessarily the same thing, nor they belong to the same realm or level of our experience, this is why the techniques can still be useful in many other systems or teachings. This is why we can read Chekhov in Stanislavski or vice versa and still maintain they are completely different in a certain sense.

LP: (Question no. 9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

Garre: I use the 1991 version for explaining concrete points or concepts of the technique, so I can use Michael Chekhov's words better than mine.

Craig Mathers interview at MICHA, June 23rd 2018

Craig Mathers has taught with MICHA during their International Workshops and at CSU Summer Arts (2014 and 2016). He has also taught for Michael Chekhov Europe in Groznjan, Croatia. Additionally, Craig taught acting, both contemporary and classical, at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts and at NYU's Cap 21. He is currently an Associate Professor of Performing Arts at Emerson College in Boston, where he teaches Chekhov and Stanislavsky based approaches as well as Shakespeare Text. Craig studied under Stanford Meisner at the Neighborhood Playhouse and received his MFA from Yale Drama School. He also trained at Shakespeare and Company and is a longstanding member of MICHA as well as a designated Linklater teacher. (Biography from MICHA website <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/craig-mathers>.)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Mathers: So, I teach at Emerson [College in Boston]. I started in 2007, and Emerson – like a lot of schools and it is smart to do and also generous of them to do – they give funds to teachers so they continue study. Now when I arrived at Emerson I was, I am an acting teacher. I would teach Stanislavsky, and scene study, Meisner, Shakespeare, performance and Linklater voice work.

I worked very hard to become a Linklater teacher, and it's an amazing work, it really is. But for whatever reason I like to receive that work, but I don't so much enjoy teaching it – the fit isn't quite perfect, not that anything is. So when I arrived at Emerson I said to myself I am going to take advantage of the funds that they use to support teachers, and I am going to start studying the Chekhov work. And the reason I did is because these four wonderful amazing teachers that I worked with in my life – one was Sandy Meisner, another one was Earle Gister,¹⁷ another one was Tina Packer,¹⁸ and the fourth was Kristin Linklater. They all have said that, you know, Chekhov's work goes really well with what I teach. So they were all claiming him as the perfect sort of partner for their work, because no acting approach teaches everything – how could it?

And one of them, Earle Gister, said to me, you have to study the Chekhov work. You have to go into Chekhov work. I think because he sensed that I had sensitivity for IMAGE, I am not sure. He is dead now, too late to ask. Yes, an interesting man.

LP: I met him in 1990.

Mathers: It was the year I started there.

LP: I just finished my degree at UTD in Texas and Robert Corrigan, I don't know if you knew him?

¹⁷ Earle R. Gister (1934-2012) taught acting at Carnegie Mellon and Yale Universities from the mid-1960s and is considered a pioneer in theatre training. He was also a specialist in the plays of Anton Chekhov.

¹⁸ Packer is the founding director of Shakespeare & Company in Lenox Massachusetts; she became an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company, performing at Stratford, West End, etc.

Mathers: Oh, sure!

LP: He was my mentor there and we worked on Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, I played Yelena, later in Theatre West I played Masha in The Seagull."

Mathers: He would only use Corrigan's translation of those plays.

LP: And Robert said to me, you must study with Earle Gister, and I asked Mr. Gister if I could audit his acting classes based on Prof. Corrigan's recommendation – I could not be a full time student I had a one year old son and my husband was busy teaching at Yale at that time – but Mr. Gister said, "I am sorry you would have to enroll in the class, we do not take any auditors." And that was it, very unlike when I was in New York at Columbia University, participating in everything that was done in class when studying Meisner technique there.

Mathers: Earl Gister was a very black and white teacher. He would say "yes" and "no". But an amazing man who loved the actors. But he said to me, you know, when he looked me in the eye he said: you have to at some point. He would talk about Psychological Gesture, and I didn't understand it then and he brought someone in. He brought in Eddy Grove.¹⁹ Eddy would lecture, and then he would sort of not perform, but he would use an image and you would see him change in front of us. We were like: "What is this, what is this"? After the whole seventeen years later, after I graduated from Grad School and done teacher training in various places and approaches, I got to Emerson and I had these funds so I said, "Darn it, I am going to do this for me as supposed to what should be done or what not. And that was 10 years ago and I met Joanna Merlin out in California, with Fern and Scott Fielding, and that was my first sort of taste of it. It was a good five years before I started teaching it at my school. I wanted to acquire more knowledge before. I mean I would slip little exercises in, and I would say to the students this is Michael Chekhov's work. But it wasn't until about five years later that I had a dedicated class, dedicated to the Michael Chekhov work, and now I teach that every fall. It is dedicated to the Chekhov technique. Teachers usually teach a little bit of this and little bit of that.

LP: Just devote the class for the semester to the Chekhov technique – I haven't heard that yet, that's wonderful.

Mathers: Well I wanted to call it Psychophysical Acting, because when you use the person's name it just seems to limit the scope of it, but the school said no, use his name, because the students, they see "psychophysical acting," and they want know what that is. I understand that, but ... Yes, so that's a semester long. I like to teach it in the spring as well, because I just want to be in it all year long – I want to be around it – but you know if I teach that, then they have to take me out of scene study. So it's a chess game trying to figure it all out, but we will see moving forward maybe.

LP: I understand that. You are saying five years, did it change?

Mathers: Yes, yes – I am making more connections, because – I don't know, let's use qualities of movement. To begin to teach something like qualities of movement, well, to

¹⁹ Eddy Grove (1917-1995) was an American actor who studied with Chekhov in Hollywood; he was active mostly on television in the late 1950s.

receive it – sometimes I would go “oh wow, this is amazing”, but then I wouldn’t know how I got there. You know Fern or some other wonderful teacher would get me into the experience.

- 1) So, the first thing is you feel the work, but you didn’t know how you did it.
- 2) I think the second step is something that came to: Oh, setting up the conditions where you can bring on that experience. And realizing, oh, this is how, these are the steps and fall.
- 3) And the third is to bring that understanding to other people, to teach it.
- 4) And it seems to me the fourth step is, you know, how to communicate it all so others can have the experience, but you can also understand how it branches of into the other parts of the work.

How the qualities of movement might set you up well to then get to the atmosphere. Or how giving and receiving is a nice way to set up going into Psychological Gesture. So, what I am learning now is I am getting connections, I am getting the context I think more than I ever did before of how these elements of the work can merge from one into the other. The Linklater work for example is very sort of corporate, this step leads to this step and to this step and then you want to get here – it’s very vertical, when the Michael Chekhov work is sort of an ORGANISM. It’s not like this – you know what lava lamp is? And it’s like a LAVA LAMP, (those lamps that go like this) and you can start anywhere, and you are going to be connected to any and everything else in some way and form. For my soul it is more dynamic and its’ more of A LIVING ORGANISM, than some other approach.

LP: that’s beautiful!

Mathers: And I think it has a lot to do with the content of it, but also, more than the content the approach, the demeanor of the teachers and I think that really comes from Chekhov himself. I know very few, I mean Joanna is the only one alive, who worked with him personally. But she is so, when she is teaching the Psychological Gesture she inhabits EASE and she is RADIATING something like LOVE. You know it is weird to use that word in today’s day and age, I mean this is a technique that talks of BEAUTY and not gaging who is beautiful and who is not. Each of us has the birth right to work with beauty, you know. So it’s kind of REVOLUTIONARY in how ENNOBLING it is. I mean how dare anyone today to work with beauty or radiate love? That’s like Especially now in this country is such a dichotomy, you know, what is in the air. So, it’s more important than that. And things like technology where kids are always here to get them out of technology and connecting with others. As Ted said once, you know, the younger generation they don’t really know how to penetrate any more. They press the numbers on the screen and there is no gear and in our days there was.

Even the act” going through, reaching through” is something that is getting little rarer than it used to be. So, it’s very important work. I would say. But you know, to wrap the first question up, there is MAKING CONNECTIONS and I am seeing things in a deeper way than I did before. This makes me very happy, and I am learning that very often from my students and very often from my colleagues. I sat in on the class with Dawn, and I made all kinds of connections through her generosity, so it is lovely to have colleagues who are dedicated to helping each other, yeah.

LP: (Question no. 9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a “textbook”?

Mathers: I keep them away from text to have to embody the experience first. And then, after they’ve had, “Oh, what is this?” then they can organize it, but if they start with

organizing it, I am afraid they'll never take the journey from here to here. And you know if I slap a book in front of someone where they see these sketches where people are going like [the Remisoff drawings] "Why is that?" But if they go "Oh my God what is this!?" If they have this "Aha Moment" first then they come to me:" What is this?" " What is this?" and then you have them, you have them! So I start with the experience, the intelligence of the skin, then we go to the grand [indistinct]. I don't suggest the early version or the late version; I give them the titles and let them choose. Yes, if it makes sense?

LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Mathers: I would say yes, in every single way. I'll give you a way – the person you mentioned, all of us, I would say a big yes, and it is creative individuality. And there is a little difference in language, nothing that's insurmountable, and I think a little bit of that is healthy. But they are all such strong personality – by strong, well, I mean in the sense of the word there is gentleness, there is conviction, there is passion, there is deep-seated desire to hand this off, to give. That is really in all the people in this year's faculty. In every Chekhov teacher I've ever met (laughs), but each one is different coming from their creative individuality and of course who they studied with and such. I don't see a trend. Oh, the Americans go this way or the Germans go that way. I see it coming from each individual, the difference if it makes sense.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Mathers: I think there are changes just because of the generations. I don't think necessarily there are changes in the technique itself. People come up with exercises that address atmosphere and they come up with their own exercises and if someone sees that they say, "Oh lovely, I am going to try that." And trying to do that, there is always piece of themselves involved. So, there is a – well again, it goes back to creative individuality, you know. There are things that are shifting and moving, but I don't see, you know, trending [in the sense of] "Oh, we are moving away from the four brothers – there is a fifth brother." I think it is in "HOW." The Change is in the how, the quality and the temperament, but also the generation, you know? Ted and Fern and Joanna are the old masters, and they were forged in the events of their lifetime. The younger people who are now teaching just have different life experiences. So, I think there is a shifting or sifting perhaps but I don't think there are changes to the technique itself.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Mathers: Well, MICHA is here in USA, Michael Chekhov Europe is in Europe – they are a sister organization and they came from MICHA. The Great Lakes Consortium – their teachers came from MICHA – this is all one big family! There are some people who I don't know who had either stayed away from MICHA, so I can't really speak to them, but you know MICHA was founded by Joanna, and you know she was his student. So, there is something that is very comforting to me of that knowing that she is passing on her notes, thoughts and her feelings in her teaching from him, and outside of that. I am not even gossiping: you gossip when you know something and I don't know. All I want to say is that I am heartened that this group and this sister umbrella group has a direct connection to the man (Chekhov) himself.

LP: Wonderful.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you feel the difference between your approach and other teachers?

Mathers: So interesting, I keep going back to CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY. You know, that I mean there is something I can learn from every teacher here, not just the one who appeared this year. Every year I came away with a nugget from some teacher, and I receive it probably because maybe other people have had said it certain way before, but it comes from this person and their creative individuality. So, I am not sure if the difference is in the technique or the difference is in the person. Actually, I do I think it is more in the leader, in the person, the creative personality and how they frame or phrase something, or how much time they spent in the steps going through something. And then suddenly I go, oh, now this is how it goes this is how we got here! So, the differences between us really spring from you have this is fullness – this full thing which is your creativity. And it's yours and not anybody else's. So, I think the difference in our teaching springs from the universe we each have – yes, that creative individuality.

LP: It's interesting in the way you say creative individuality – it's like it's theirs and it's not anybody else's. It's not a horse race; it's not a competition.

Mathers: (more regarding question no. 5): I come back now three times and I think what I do, I tend to linger on topics or areas of work that I understand well, and the older I get and the more I study this, that area of the work is opening up for me. I know this, Ok, Ok. So, that is something that is shifting in me.

LP: What are those?

Mathers: Up until two years ago I would stay away from “atmosphere” because it is so intangible, it's so abstract – atmosphere. When other people would teach it, I would get this experience: how am I going to teach this? And I can't quit – I can tell you what has happened not as much how it happened and now it's one of my favorite things I love to teach. It seems to me that teaching of atmosphere is the teaching of the setting up of the atmosphere, is really spending time on the container and then you pour in the content. It's like baking a soufflé – you know there are several steps and if you miss a step- ah, you know...

LP: [laughs]: Uta Hagen also loved to cook; she actually published a cookbook, “Uta Hagen's Love for Cooking” 1978.

Mathers: And now maybe because I am more confident, I think, but you know I used to teach the lesson like this, you know, and now I can put it down a little bit and actually see where the person is: maybe she needs a little help with this, he maybe needs to, you know... So, I have been trying to spend a little more time in front of Ted and Fern and Dawn and Joanna. I have been on sabbatical since Christmas, I went to Germany, I was with Uli, and Lynn was there and then I taught in Warsaw and Gdansk and Havana. (The school sent me, so I am in a very happy niche).

LP: I very much liked that you used music in class; you played Gershwin for us. I know Chekhov loved music, and especially in Dartington he had all the musicians available and

live piano music was used in class. Do you like to work with music? I loved it, moving to the music when one is experiencing different tempos.

Mathers: Sure, It changes the inner tempo. I love music and I use it with warm-ups usually, but also sometimes music, eh [negative] – I think it is important not to get addicted to music, because sometimes the music tells you what to feel? Or help you towards an agenda. So I love to use it, but I also ask myself: “Craig, are you getting lazy here?” Sometimes the music helps to do the work for the teacher a little bit. So I try to keep a track on that. It’s just so powerful, you know?

LP: Besides atmosphere what else do you enjoy teaching?

Personal atmosphere, gesture, it’s so funny. One of the first things I looked into was a quality of movement. Now it’s interesting but I find that I get a little- that’s one that I still a little, I want a double bag around and get more inside it. So it’s something like atmosphere which used to be so tough is now so accessible for me I think and quality of movement which was never really tough, I feel I need to go deeper understanding of that and it’s placement, so that is something I have my eyes open to.

LP: what is the depth of it?

Mathers: I can’t really seek it until I am there. There is oh, I need to go back inside that, and I love playing with space, front space, back space, down, sides. Because I think that sets up atmosphere and personal atmosphere beautifully.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov’s ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Mathers: I mean there is this whole zone in his work which is – you know, when I do this work it leads me to understand something and what it leads me to understand is that it’s not about me, you know even with gesture, it comes from the will. You can receive the gesture from the impulse, and to use the image of a stream, it comes from behind you in the stream and you hitchhike on it, and then you go through the gesture and then you sustain. So inherently if you have an experience of that artistic frame you’re working with something that is not you: that is deeply spiritual. I don’t talk about that too much, until the student starts going: Hey, is this? So, they had the experience of something and then their question or their thought – “Oh, this is spiritual” – comes from a place called knowledge and experience.

You know they asked Dalai Lama once “what about faith, where is faith in your paradigm.... And he said I don’t need faith I have experience. I don’t think it was poo-pooing faith. He was just saying I have something; I have a different path, you know. So, just anecdotally, personally, I find sometimes that there is something in the room when you are connecting to the stream or what not, and I let that simmer on its own. It seems to me that some people have sensitivity to it and some people don’t. It’s like the chakras that go up through the body, some people are really living here, and some are here and here whatever the top is [pointing to chakras] and people live in different places. So I tend to work more on my feet more than talk, so I don’t sit them down and talk about the spiritual aspect of Chekhov, I let whatever chakra, so to speak, is alive in them, let them speak from it. But every semester I’ve been teaching it at Emerson, at least few times during the semester – whoa! This is something, something spiritual – and I tip my hat and I say you could say that couldn’t you? It’s not about me.

But that doesn't so much answer your question. The last couple of years in this country, things are – of course it is about politics, nationalism, and rhetoric. I find I deeper need than ever before for it [spiritual elements]. Well, I was not around in 1953, but from pictures, Eisenhower was in the White House playing golf, Black Americans were trying to get a seat at the table – I mean like even into the dining room – it was just a kind of crooked cover: this is American happiness, this is what it is, you know. That's my rear-view back. We were saying to ourselves everything was wonderful.

LP: But there was McCarthy and Blacklisting,

Mathers: Which in a way is happening again, in colleges and stuff you must be very careful around the topic of religion, they want to make sure that people are not proselytized you must be very careful. I mean I am sure it's changed, but I am measuring what I sense now with what I imagine then. I feel pretty secure in saying that whichever way it shifted – towards being more tolerant or less tolerant – I think there is a dire need for this work now! You know, with the room, so people can say, "oh this is spiritual," and they can be led to the gate of that. And some, whoever wants to go through, can go through, and whoever wants to stay on the secular side of the fence, God bless him, great. But at least they can see there is a threshold there or a need for that.

[LP: "Nice."] Not to go too far off on this, but it seems to me like there is an arrogance in the far, far fringes who think, "Ok, the world is this," whether it is on left or right. You know, the bible thumper and a chemist, and they start shooting at each other and its like, "oh, the certainty of the answer for this world," or what not. And this work asks us to live in the middle of things, to experience; I don't know, not give the answers but experience the question. So, it is essential, essential.

LP: Beautiful. Thank you.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Mathers: I don't think it asks for corrections, but the way it is communicated, I think now, I mean for example, most students love this work. Years ago I went to the Neighborhood Playhouse, and I studied with Sandy Meisner, and they told us how to do but the Meisner approach. And you were to go outside the room and spend 10 min alone and you would have come back in – you know, in a rage or you are dredging up these things. And to his credit you don't have to use your own life you can use your imagination, but it is very often good to start with some aspect of truth of your own life and then go into something imaginative. Some students could get a handle on it, and some couldn't, and he said, "keep trying, keep trying." So it became about your ability to concentrate. If you couldn't do that, your concentration was questioned. In this day and age, I can't ask my students to go out in the hall by themselves for 10 minutes, or I can't ask them to go home and try that. They are just not built this way, they are more this way, more this way – there is something sad about that. But I have to say when they come into the Chekhov work, they are so playful, and it doesn't require like this deep, lonely, scary journey, you bump into things as that are, lonely or scary or funny, you bump into it, but you bump into it through play.

Sometimes I have a student who has an experience and goes, "whoa, I can't do that." I say, "No, we are playing this, [not living it]. I know it makes you feel certain things, but this is your artistic feeling, not your everyday feelings." But this work – Chekhov work – happens to be, I think, really poised in a very good place, because the millennials, the young

generation, they don't want to work the old way. It is either they don't want to or they can't. So, this way of working is a beautiful way to get them into experiences beyond themselves, experiences beyond their everyday lives!

I don't think there needs to be any corrections in that. I think the world is kind of taking towards this work, at least the young generation. How the teacher communicates with the class, I think that's it. Back in the acting studio they were always men, the teachers, and they were always behind the desk, sitting behind the desk, smoking, and they would tell us what to fix and what to change. And now – it's about time – now there are female acting teachers, teachers of color, everything seems to be changing, but more and more the teachers are up in the room moving and playing with the students. I've seen that as a whole picture, not just Chekhov. So, I think Chekhov is ready to ride this wave, which seems to be turning towards the Chekhov work. I don't think it needs to be corrected. People have their own verbiage, their own wording of certain things. At its heart, I don't think so.

LP: Do you feel that my personal question and observation – what I sensed in your class – and I think I said it, and I would like to say bit now. The friendship you are establishing and a role almost as a father toward the students – that they are doing almost a confession – they can open up, yes? No?

Mathers: Well. It's so funny everything you ask me (it is about creative individuality). I mean, I try to model what we are working on. So if we are working on radiation, I have to want to experience it myself as I am teaching it. And there have been times in my past in the classroom, for whatever reason – whether it is this work or other work, something that I was so nervous or so here – [LP: “in the mind?”] that I would model something, but I would not be actually doing it. I would be posing it. I'd like to think that that's not the case anymore, and I do think that's not the case anymore. It's funny how palpable it is when the teacher models, and the students, because they are receiving something but they are also receiving you know the stream that's taking place and that's happening in real time, and if they feel that stream, I think their shoulders go down because they know they are not alone, that they are connected. To the teacher who is working and if the two of us get that going the people who are watching the lesson, they get invited to the (I guess we call it) stream as well. I saw lots of it in Ragnar's class there was a lot of “ah” – that connectivity going on.

But it's not a thought. OK, I should be the father figure because that would help this one, it's not a thought, it's a “oh” someone. Well David Zinder was talking about, you know, “We learn technique so that we can forget it.” And he had a phrase which is, “You do it so much that it becomes a second nature, so you don't realize it's there anymore.” So I guess it's an approach, and it comes from the tenets of this work; it's not a conscious thing for me. But I also like to be up here when I am teaching. I connect. The teacher creates a culture in the room, and some do this [snaps fingers], others less of that. I like to do less of that. In crossing the year someone is always late, and I have to take them aside. I don't have much issue doing that, but the older I get the less I like doing that. When you have to take someone on, there is an event that takes place, but there is an inner event that takes place. I just don't want to teach them that. That's not my first or second thought anymore.

I like to be as best as I can a peer as opposed to a high status. And I know that the mantle of teacher puts you above anyway, so I think I need to do is to do what I can to even that out, and hopefully that is received in some sense so that the shoulders can go down a little bit, if that makes sense.

LP: Yes, it does. It's beautifully said.

Mathers: Giving receiving class is a wonderful set up for archetypal gesture and PG. The experience especially of the stream sets up the beginner actor to receiving the PG before launching. It also invites the actor to sustain via the image/ experience of the stream.

LP: I just wanted to ask you when I was at Columbia Brad Dourif was teaching Sanford Meisner's technique. So Scott [Fielding] was there with you then?

Mathers: No, I was there 1984-1986.

LP: So you were there maybe before him, because he studied with Bill Esper. And you studied with Sanford Meisner directly?

Mathers: Yes. You know Bill Esper is known to be the best teacher of Meisner.

LP: I thought you are going to say he was better than Sandy Meisner.

Mathers: Well, no. Sandy at the end was, he started to lose his eyesight, so he would listen. If he could hear the emotion, it would be OK. But sometimes, some people when they start to shift, they change color, so at the end – he was so old, even though it was his technique, his approach, but at the end. He died in 90s, I was there from 1984 to 1986, and even between the two years I could see a difference. He would hang on for probably for a decade after that.

LP: I really love the approach; it was something completely new for me, coming from the Stanislavsky system. That was something I'd never learned before.

Mathers: I think Stanislavsky is a tree, and Meisner comes out – he is a branch of the tree.

LP: (Question no. 8): What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the, 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published?

Mathers: Oh yeah, the two versions, I am not into the minutia of that, so I really wouldn't know.

Well, I hope all of this helps.

LP: Great! Definitely great! Thank you so very much

John McManus interviewed 20 June 2018, with email additions, 6 February 2019.

John McManus, Assistant Professor at Point Park University, Pittsburgh, and studied Rudolf Steiner's Creative Speech and the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique with Mechthild Harkness in Australia. He came to the United States in 1984. He also studied Eurythmy and the voice and speech techniques of Patsy Rodenburg, Kristin Linklater, Catherine Fitzmaurice and Louis Colaianni. He is Shakespeare Alive! in New York State and directs and teaches internationally. (Biography from <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/john-mcmanus> .)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

McManus: I started working with the Chekhov system in 1979, when I was in my early twenties. I lived mostly in sensations. Sensations helped me to relate to the Chekhov work. I felt qualities, atmospheres, the effects of centers, the power of gesture, etc., and trusted in the feeling and the world of my imagination. Even if I didn't feel it I never doubted it. I always affirmed that something was happening even if I had no idea of what that was. Perhaps it came to me unconsciously because it was in classes I was taken in Australia with Mechthild Harkness.²⁰

I was really looking at how to apply it as an actor and it was my only acting technique, I did not have any other acting technique that I could use. Then I changed and I became interested in Eurythmy, and we did Eurythmy at school as well. And then after a year of acting, I decided to go study Eurythmy. And I found a lot of similarity between Eurythmy and Chekhov technique. I found just about everything that Chekhov technique was in Eurythmy and Eurythmy is in Chekhov technique. And they are the two most common things but they are very, very, very different.

And after that – 10 years later – it changed, because I was asked to be a teacher. I was asked to teach Eurythmy to high school kids. And I found that the best way to get to the high school kids to Eurythmy was through Chekhov. I brought many of the Chekhov exercises in the Eurythmy curriculum because they helped to form a bridge to a practical understanding of Eurythmy. Through this I discovered, out of necessity, to create my own exercises that were inspired by a combination of Eurythmy and Chekhov. I observed what worked with young people and took a phenomenological approach. It was important to bring the more immediate relationship with space, to imagination, rather than into the abstract conceptual and spiritual content of Eurythmy.

Then I thought that yes, I could start using Chekhov technique to teach, and I began with high school students. I did that for many, many years, for twelve years actually.

After I stopped teaching Eurythmy, I started acting, directing and teaching – I started my own school, with a group of us – using the Chekhov method. With the help of Ted Pugh and

²⁰ Mechthild Harkness-Johannsen, born in Switzerland, and immigrated to the United States in 1923. She studied Eurythmy, drama, and interpretive dancing, and worked at Daykarhanova's School, New York. In 1946 she joined the company of Alan Harkness, who became her husband, touring with him and teaching in the High Valley Theatre School in Ojai, California. After Harkness's death in 1952, Mechthild continued to act, becoming a member of the acting ensemble at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. In 1967, she set up a speech and drama department at Emerson College in Sussex, England. After moving to Australia in 1969, she formed the Harkness Studio at Sydney in 1973. The studio emphasized the heritage of Rudolf Steiner, Eurythmy, and Speech Formation. She died in 1986.

Fern Sloan I started teaching text work developing and directing Shakespeare plays. I noticed a big change in my relationship to the work. The sensations were not as strong. I had to work harder, and I had to work more consciously to achieve satisfying results. At this stage I had a very clear idea of what was full and alive and what was empty or dead and I wrestled with this polarity for many years. The school was called “Shakespeare Alive”. Ted and Fern taught Chekhov technique, and I was teaching voice and speech. “Shakespeare Alive” was created as a summer program in 1999; it was in Hudson New York, with a full-time program for three years, starting 2001 to 2003. The summer program continued to 2007. I lived 15 minutes from where they lived; I still live 15 minutes away from them. And we were taking each other classes, so Ted would permeate my class and I would take theirs, for the three years that we did this. We worked with Chekhov exercises, Eurythmy, and speech, and all of that.

And after, I was directing Shakespeare’s plays using Chekhov technique, because it was called “Shakespeare Alive,” and every semester we would do a Shakespeare’s play or a different play, mostly Shakespeare. This was upstate New York at the beginning of this century, 2001, 02, 03.

LP: So you are a trio?

McManus: Well, there are many, many more of us, like Ragnar Freidank, Mr. Carrera, David Anderson, It really is a real HAVEN for drama!

LP: You have a community, you have a family-you created an audience, they love you and support you.

McManus: They loved us and supported us and packed the house every time. We had lot of luck as well with facilities and people donating. We did both – outdoor and indoor. We started off in one place and went to another; the first place was called “Time and Space limited.”

The last stage was becoming a university-level teacher. I started off at HB Studio in New York City as an adjunct teacher, and then I was offered a fulltime professorship at Quinnipiac University. And so for the last seven years that’s what I have been doing. I’ve been teaching voice and speech, Shakespeare, and Acting through the Chekhov technique. I now teach at MICHA and COPA (the Conservatory of the Performing Arts) at Point Park University in Pittsburgh. I have also come to the third development of my method which involves research into the sources of the Chekhov Technique and its relationship to the use of language, i.e. whole body and whole voice. At this stage I am finding support in the simplicity of the basic principles.

LP: When where you at HB Studio? I was there in class with Edith Minks, Cecilia Peck, Gregory’s Peck daughter, and Leonard Bernstein’s son 1983-84.

McManus: I was there much later, in 2010-2011.

LPB- When you teach speech, are you using Chekhov’s exercises?

McManus: You know, it is so integrated, the thing is- Chekhov’s technique is about learning artistry, it’s about learning artistry. It is about being human artist with the word, with the body, with the psychology. So is the speech, so is the Eurythmy, so is any acting when you are very good. It is not an isolated thing: it contains the whole world, the human

artist, the human performing artist. I never really sat down to learn the Chekhov technique, in a sense where I know it you know? I am always come to it as the beginner, and I've been doing it since I was twenty. I really never thought I was Chekhov teacher. It was only when I was asked to teach at MICHA in 2011 that I had certain responsibility to teach in the Chekhov technique. And I still think, "I am not a Chekhov teacher; I am not supposed to be teaching this", you know. And I just have to trust myself; it is really artistry, how do we access artistry, and it is a huge subject. And of course, if I look at my limitations in the area, I feel inadequate, but I also have to look at the other side there are also different things that I have achieved over the years that help me access imagination. You know: my space around me, my body, and intentions – all these things, which you cannot do without, in any form of the art.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

McManus: Yes, I do. I see changes occurring, and I think they are all good. I see a lot more imagination and experimentation in the work today. Many people making it their own. I think this is important because Chekhov has made space for and encourages individuality creativity.

I think it has to do with exploration, new discoveries, new souls, new time – we live in a different time now. And I think people are exploring, and feel free to explore, and I think Chekhov gave them that license to explore. That's why it is so active, and that's why I am so accepting of what people are doing, because I just say, "Hey, that's exploring." I am not a person who says this is the way it should be done. I am not about that at all. I think it is about exploring, and if it makes sense to us, if it is effective, and exact – it has to be artistic and scientific at the same time. So, yes, I think there are new people coming up, new teachers all the time. And I just want to work with them, because I think everyone has a different approach and a different angle to it.

LP: And no problem finding people; you have plenty of interest.

McManus: Yes.

LP: (Question no. 3) Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach teaching the Chekhov work? Did you have a different approach coming from a different part of the world?

McManus: There is a difference and I think there needs to be a difference according to the physical/soul environment of the people/country. However, that difference finds a place in a feeling of the whole, a certain universality which Chekhov achieved in his technique which makes the principles accessible to unprejudiced understanding on a cosmopolitan human level.

And I would say, if I am just looking around here: like myself, and David, Joerg, and Craig and Scott – and Craig and Scott are Americans, they have an American approach about it and I just love that. Then David comes in and David adds this wonderful thing.

LP: What is the American approach?

McManus: You know, it's a certain openness and strength at the same time. And there is something in Joerg, and it's German, there is something about his approach that is very clear. All these different qualities: I worked with Uli, and Suzana from Croatia, and other people from different countries, they all bring a flavor I would say.

LP: Joerg in his German way, what do you think?

McManus: I think there is more structure. More structure and more sort of purpose, there is a really strong purpose inherent in the form. These are just very limited observations.

LP: (Question no. 4): Do you know somebody who is not connected with MICHA, but teaches Chekhov well, someone I should be aware of?

McManus: Absolutely! Chekhov's ideas are available to anyone who genuinely works to embody his principles. The Creative Individuality lives, as potential, within every human being and can guide teachers of the Chekhov work to their own unique expression and capacity. In Australia is Dale March, who was one of my students from "Shakespeare Alive." He was invited here to teach two years ago, the year you came. He must be a young guy, around 30 now. I still go back to Australia. I have invitations to work there, but I haven't taken it up yet.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize among your approach and other American teachers?

McManus: The difference between my approach and other teachers has with our interests and, obviously, with our backgrounds. My main interest comes from my background which is creative speech formation and Eurythmy – based on sound and movement and influenced by my study of Steiner's Creative Speech and the Art of Eurythmy. I can't get rid of that. It happened in my life when I was younger, and I was forming and I have that as a quality. I am interested in the phenomena of the present – i.e., what is happening from moment to moment, and particularly how voice and speech get incorporated into this psychophysical phenomenon.

So I am working towards the instrument and the voice instrument; that's really where I put my emphasis. And I see that Chekhov deals most incredibly with imagination and the psychology, the actor's psychology, and the actor in character and things like that. So I am trying to find a way, find a way how to get the work into the language. I'll be doing a little bit of that this afternoon just the beginning stage of that. I am using the Imagination to bring it onto the breath.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you think that the cultural climate today makes the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

McManus: Yes and No. I think that particularly younger people, all the people in MICHA, are incredibly open, even though we as teachers are afraid to open it up too much. Do you know what I mean? I think that there is much more openness that there ever has been on planet. I think that people are hungry for practical/spiritual ideas. The undergraduate students I teach have an enthusiastic response to the sensations that arise from applying Chekhov's ideas. They simply love it!

However, there is a battle raging between the mediated, virtual world of technology and the spiritually real world of Nature. Technology demand attention and people are distracted by its insistence. There are two things going on here: a big openness and at the same time. a big distraction from it. They are very easily distracted today. There is little perseverance or little patience. So, there is a great interest initially, but not necessarily the ability to maintain that interest. They lack the concentration to develop their imaginations into driving forces of

action. The sheer magnitude of mediated information overwhelms the human psyche and can render it impotent for the embodiment of spiritual ideas. If a student doesn't activate a strong will, he or she can lose interest. So, yes, it could even appear as a distraction: "Oh, I am interested in that; now I am interested in this."

LP: Would you as a teacher be giving the students some kind of guidance on how to practice – you know how Chekhov wanted the actors to practice even on their own. It is so much easier to practice in the room: you get support, atmosphere, the teacher is there to support you; everybody wants, but then the laziness kicks in, something else kicks in. Would there be something to lean upon when this is over, besides our notes – that would be so helpful.

McManus: It is very, very hard to give yourself an appointment where you have to go and work. Discipline yourself; do you know what I mean? Very, very hard to set yourself up: "Ok. I am going to practice this every day."

LP: I mean the tools, exercises, like scales. For example Peter, when he remembered Slava Kokorin, he gave us an exercise that within three minutes you can get in touch and get in contact with your scene partner.

McManus: I think there is, you know if you did every day let's say a physical exercise where you just did very simple connection with gravity and levity or expansion and contraction, and really try to make it a little bit more beautiful every day, that would be so powerful. Chekhov himself said, the problem with the actors – and the reason why am I telling you is that he had trouble with his students and told them directly: Your problem is that you don't have the fire, and therefore you cannot be an artist. So he sent them off and he said: I want you for five minutes every day to imagine the fire in you. If you do that, imagine the fire in you for five minutes only a day, and do not miss one day, you will increase your ability as an actor tremendously. But if you miss a day, it will go back so much faster than it is building up. And he said that's what you need to be as an actor! And he talked about this: "The Fire Is Missing!"

So there are two possibilities. I know that I have to do speech exercises every day, and when I don't, I really, really suffer. I have to do voice exercises, speech exercises. I have to keep challenging myself. Just to have any variety.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

McManus: I think one should make adjustment all the time. The times are changing rapidly and we must keep pace. One should be willing to make adjustments on the spot, in the course of a lesson by listening and following the inspiration of the moment. This is how corrections come about. They must reflect what is happening and what the participants can, actually, make real. Abstract concepts have a tendency to block the flow of the creative process. Chekhov's ideas can easily become abstract. They must be incorporated to become real. This can be achieved through devoted repetition of exercises and the discovery of new imaginations which stimulate and activate the urge to be creative. I think corrections lie not in the "what" but in the "how". We should bring more clarity to the concepts and particularly how they can be applied.

Today, we have a bigger adjustment we have to make, because the bodies are not ready for it; they have been damaged by the society, by technology, by lack of awareness, by over

thinking; thinking fills the life. And it's not the right thinking, it doesn't, it's not the fiery thinking of the will; it's kind of just thoughts, random thoughts that are destroying the body. And the young people are very old. Even a 20-year-old, can hardly move in their bodies, they are not in their bodies. And so, we have to do a lot of body work, because it's all based on the body.

LP: (Question no. 8): [About 1953 vs. 1991/1942 editions of Chekhov's book.]

McManus: I've got the old one, the 1953 edition. I haven't read the 1991 version.

LP: (Question no. 9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

McManus: *To the Actor* is on my list of recommendations for reading in all my classes. My students, who never came across the book before, love it. My school students love it, and in some way they all feel touched by it. They all feel the feedback. "I am continually getting better, this is making me a better actor, a better human," that's what they say. And that's very interesting for a naïve person to say that. You know, it's not something they've heard before, but they experience it, they say, "I feel better".

LP: Maybe it's freeing them?

McManus: Yes, I am assuming that. I do two things: I put it on my syllabi and I say recommended reading. And then I bring something, like I might bring a chapter two on Imagination in *To the Actor*. I give it to them to read, and then I ask some questions about it. And then we do some work on imagination. This is an introduction, and that way I get to get them thinking about imagination. Otherwise, I let them be free. They are just getting a taste for it. Most people are just getting a taste for it.

LP: Thank you very much!

Lenard Petit interviewed 24 June 2018

Lenard Petit is one of a handful of teachers trained by the original members of Michael Chekhov's Theater School. He is a founding member of the Michael Chekhov Association, MICHA, and the Director of the Michael Chekhov Acting Studio in New York City since its inception in 1996. Author of Michael Chekhov Handbook, for the Actor, he has been working in the theater for forty years collaborating with other artists to create original works for stage, film and television. He has directed plays and performance pieces on and off Broadway and in Great Britain. As an actor, he has performed in works by Julie Taymor, Meredith Monk, Richard Foreman, Ping Chong, and many others. In 2016 Mr. Petit was invited to create a Michael Chekhov Workshop and Festival in connection with the Shanghai Theater Academy in Shanghai, China. He has been invited to teach Master Classes in Munich, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Rome, Lisbon, Madrid, Berlin, Oslo, Reykjavik, Brussels, Rio de Janeiro, Zürich, Dublin, London, Riga, Vilnius, and Irkutsk, Siberia. For twenty-five years he taught the Chekhov Technique in the MFA and BFA Acting programs at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.

<http://michaelchekhovactingstudio.com/lenard.html>

(Note: Questions in this case are a bit out of order)

LP: (Question no. 1): The first question – You are an actor, director, teacher. When did you start to encounter this method? And how is it evolving, because you are working with it for years?

Petit: I found it in 1974, maybe 1973. I found a book To the Actor from 1953. I was just beginning to get involved in the theatre, and I was working with pantomime, so you know the movement and the first chapter of the book is about movement and the body, so I bought the book and I became excited and interested. He was a dead man, I did not know whom to study it with anybody, I didn't think so. I just liked the book and tried to do something with the book for some years and...

LP: When did you start to teach it?

Lenard: Around 1990, I think.

LP: And your brother teaches it too, right?

Petit: Yes, he does, he incorporates that into his teachings that he works with, yes. But I don't think. He makes it a claim to be the Chekhov teacher of Chekhov acting.

LP: I just saw it in the archive here, in a pamphlet – where all the teachers have a picture and a short bio – I think it was in China.

Petit: Yes, we went to China and I was invited to China few years ago. 5 years ago I think now and they asked me to bring a team teacher with me. I was telling him about it. And he said: Can I be on your team? I knew that he had worked here, and he can speak the language so he came as one of the teachers on the team

LP: So obviously you put that in your book, it must have been an incredible amount of work. You are using your book to teach the method?

Petit: I guess I am, I mean, don't read out of my book anymore.

Petit: Of course, because is yours.

LP: (Question no. 8): If you would recommend a book or ask your students to use a book about Chekhov technique, would you ask them to read Mala Powers and Mel Gordon's 1991 edition or the edition from 1953?

Petit: I'd choose the 1953 book.

LP: Why is that?

Petit: I don't know. I think the other one was edited in a choppy kind of way for me, or very modern sound bites in a way, little pieces extracted; - and they took out some of the best parts of the book. And I don't know, I always believed that in the 1953 book that it was Chekhov talking. But the best book is *Lessons for the Professional Actor*.²¹ That's the best book; I think that's the best book. I think Michael Chekhov would like it too. (Laugh) So, I don't force the students to read my book, but I would recommend to them and I give my students the audio tapes that Chekhov [distributed by Mala Powers]. I give that to them.

LP: Is it easier to hear it than read it?

Petit: No, I listen to them a lot, in my car when used to I drive down to Rutgers University to teach and I would listen to them. It's just my thing, I don't say you have to listen to this, it's just like I give that to you and it is part of your tuition. And I ask if you want it – not everybody takes it.

LP: Tell me, please with the pantomime, should I understand it that when you are performing or doing pantomime, you are creating the objects out of thin air with illusion. Is it with this technique that you are actually becoming – is it more within you rather than outside you?

Petit: No, I mean, I don't really do that work anymore. I mean, that's not really what I did. I started there and then I ended up –I studied with Etienne Decroux in Paris, and he was against this kind of thing.

LP: Against what kind of thing – this Chekhovian thing?

Petit: No, no (laughs) – this creating the world of objects, the world of illusion; that was not Etienne's thing.

LP: You mean Etienne Decroux, who was Marcel Marceau's teacher.

Petit: Yes.

LP: Because I studied with Marceau.

²¹ [Chekhov 1985] Chekhov, Michael; Deirdre Hurst du Prey; and Mel Gordon (introd.). 1985. *Lessons for the Professional Actor*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications. Publication of Chekhov's classes in New York City, 1941, passim.

Petit: But Marceau, the work that he was doing was more influenced by his wife than by Decroux.

LP: Which wife?

Petit: Ella

LP: Ella Jaroszewicz, the Polish wife.²²

Petit: Yes, Polish. I think that she had an updating influence on what he ended up doing than Decroux did. And Decroux at the end seemed to despise him. I mean, if you mentioned Marceau's name in the classroom, you were thrown out of school. Yes, he despised that work and was ultimately disappointed with Marceau going in that direction. But Marceau is famous; Decroux was not so famous. I did a little bit of that kind of work, but I was more interested what Decroux gave to me. It was more dance, not like illusion pantomime.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Petit: No. I don't really know what Chekhov did. (Laugh) You know, you can read about it. My teachers were all his students. All my teachers were his students. I know that I don't do exactly what they did, as opposed to a creative person. I think it probably changed somewhat, to suit people because some people couldn't hear it, couldn't listen to it.

LP: So, the language is different, approach is little different?

Petit: Yes.

LP: Do the students have enough patience? Did that change?

Petit: None of us is Michael Chekhov, and all of his students always talk about what genius he was. How they could listen to him speak all day, he was always so perfect and so well prepared and looked good and treated everybody equally and everything else, you know we go to work in t-shirts. Every picture of Chekhov teaching he is wearing a suit (laughs), nice shoes, tie with a smile on his face. It's not always that way. Maybe he didn't, I don't know. I don't – but lot of us seems to do lots of demonstrating, I don't always demonstrate things, but I show in T-shirts. We had to wear a special kind of shoes as students. My teacher would come dressed, not in a suit but better than we did.

LP: In the classes I teach, we wear clothes so one can move freely in class, wearing comfortable dance shoes (not sneakers). Later, when creating a character and actually performing a scene, I ask the student to start from the shoes, from the character's walk. How does the character walk, what kind of shoes does he/she wear in that particular scene? That was actually the advice my great uncle, the Czech actor Ladislav Pešek, gave me. He was teaching himself at DAMU (the Prague Faculty of Dramatic Arts). I had a student this semester that came to perform *Blanche* from *A Streetcar Named Desire* in winter boots. I could tell that she did not care to delve deeply into the character.

²² Ella (Elzbieta) Jaroszewicz, who married Marceau in 1966, was trained by Henryk Tomaszewski at Warsaw. She established the Studio Magenia of "corporeal theatre" at Paris in 1974.

Petit: Maybe the presentation is different now than it was with [Chekhov]. He was also a very spiritual man connected with Rudolf Steiner's work and stuff, and by the time he became to be a teacher of this in the West and none of us saw any of it with the work. It's just interesting – have you met with Joanna?

LP: Yes, two years ago, I took her classes. But I never had a conversation like this.

Petit: Well she was a student of his and also a teacher of mine, and everybody that was a teacher of mine had been a student of his. And I felt in them Chekhov. I felt they were really carrying the man – but I have no man to carry. I have the work to carry, and that's what I have done. I don't carry the man. I can't be anything like him, because I don't know what he was like. They somehow tried to be something like him, because that's how teachers should be, because they were taught that way, and so there was something of that man in all those teachers of Michael Chekhov. I don't know, I don't know.

LP: That's beautiful.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well? That is, besides the MICHA group, do you know people in the world who are teaching the system and you respect them?

Petit: The Group of Michael Chekhov Europe. [However, the Chekhov method] it's alive in Europe because of what's happening in here, I think. All the people in Europe studied with us. You know.

LP: Do you know some names from Russia. I know it used to be Maria Knebel.

Petit: There is Slava Kokorin, who just passed away.

LP: Yes. We had a memorial for him the other day.

Petit: He was a great man. Intuitively came to all of this. I mean you couldn't even for many, many years even read Michael Chekhov, and these people who carried on his work. They talk about this. I don't know if you remember.... called mimeograph. The stencil duplicator or mimeograph machine (often abbreviated to mimeo) is a low-cost duplicating machine that works by forcing ink through a stencil onto paper. It was kind of copying, always put into the blue ink; I used to have it when I was a kid.

LP: Like *samizdat*?

Petit: They were passing versions of his book like that under the table; this precious, precious thing passing around. And actually, the people that I did respect and known were doing this in Russia had all passed. So, I don't know about Russia. I don't like to go there. I've been there a few times, you know.

LP: What turns you off?

Petit: The social feeling there. The law, the crossing the border, the airport – it's awful. The Russian artists that I met, I love them. These people in Moscow Art Theatre they are not really into this. They might say they are, but they are not. The core elements of it were

forbidden, the spirituality. Yes, yes. And you have to deal with that at some point if you are going to get involved.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Petit: Yes, I do believe that! I really believe that he was talking to us! All of his work, all of his teachings, all of his writings seemed to be indicating not his time but the time in the future – the theatre of the future. The Actor of the Future, that's who he was talking to, and I think that's us, because you know, as I say that in my book, so many people are doing yoga or Tai Chi, and some sort of spiritual connection with something other than flesh. That's in the core words.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today? Does the language need to be changed? The way Charles Leonard edited the book?

Petit: No, it needs to be unpacked, but not adjusted.

LP: what's the word you just used?

Petit: UNPACKED.

LP: I like that.

Petit: It's dense and it's somewhat even esoteric. So, one has to unpack it. The language is correct. The language works. You know, people read – and it's same for me – people read that book and the promise is just tremendous, is the best. This is what I had hoped the theatre should be what an actor's life should be. That was really good. [However,] the language of the exercises and all that – I think that needs to be changed. It's not accessible, his book is not accessible, and it's only inspirational.

LP: How it could be better accessed? I think he felt it too, that's why I think he had Remisoff creating the illustration/pictures in the 1953 book. If you read the exercises, do you understand it correctly, is one sure of that?

Petit: I think you have to lead people to the point where, through the experience of doing it, they recognize the life of it. The language in the book is a bit foreign in a way, that you don't recognize that as really part of our living life. But when we have experienced the exercises – an exercise – with the right intention – one of my first questions that I ask the actors when it's finished is, "Do you recognize that? Have you experienced it before?" I don't tell them what they are going to experience. I don't say this is going to produce tears, or this is going to make you very happy, or this is going to make you very jealous, or whatever. I don't say that. I just say, "Do this, practice this and we will see what comes, what comes out of the arena today." But I don't prescribe what they are going to feel, experience. I just go there, and then we talk about that. And they invariably say, "Yes, I do recognize that. I had this feeling, this sensation before in my life." Then I will say, OK and do it again.

LP: Do you feel because it is maybe a little complicated in a situation where you have a mixture of people trying the technique for the first time, actors and maybe writers and mixture of different people. Do you have a system as for what to introduce first? What is your experience over the years how to lead students to opening up, to freeing them?

Petit: I do have a method. I always start at the same place, which is lots of movements, very specific chaotic things to force the actor out of the head to experience the body. The ENERGETIC BODY is the first order of business for me, because it is the key to everything. And at many places people say, "We know Michael Chekhov, we worked a lot with Michael Chekhov, we know about moving bodies, we know what a Psychological Gesture is, we know this and we know that." Well that's great! But we don't know what's doing it? And they don't know how to work with it. So, I say, "You have a 'toolbox,' but it is locked." I come with the key, and the key is the energetic body. So that's where I start, because everything comes through that.

LP: I think that's why my students like Commedia, because they are moving a lot and the technique comes through the body first, versus just regular physical warm-up and speech warm-up in Fundamentals or a Scene Study.

Petit: I mean the whole Psychological Gesture, which I consider to be a flower of the method

LP: In the sense of the best thing?

Petit: Yes. A shining, beautiful thing that is always effective, always beautiful, always fascinating – it is like a flower. And it comes out of building from a lot of things. This is impossible without the energetic understanding. In my book I called it "Life Body." There have been problems with my colleagues [over] that term, and I appreciate that Chekhov never used that term. I make a disclaimer in the book, and I say I never read this in Chekhov, never came across this term. I have worked with this material, and need to give it name, so that people can have a picture of it. "Life Body" sounds like a good picture for me, because it is a life force that we are dealing with, you know. The Chinese call it Ch'i. [LPB note: in Chinese philosophy and traditional medicine, Ch'i or Qi is the psychophysical energy, the circulating life energy that permeates all things.] In yoga they call prana, and Chekhov was doing all that kind of stuff, working with prana, working with radiating. What is that? What is radiating? It is using that, sending that out, beyond your own skin. So, that's what I am doing. But I think, I am the only one who does that. I am the only one who trusts that it is all right. In this community, they are all a little bit "I don't want [people] thinking that we're some kind of a cult. You know it is not religion, or whatever." And yes, it is not a religion. This is something I have been working on. He talks about the inner body, he talks about the inner gesture – what is he talking about? So I had to unpack that stuff, and give it a way to talk about and make it very practical a real thing. The way that I introduce it, everybody gets it right away. Ok, you got that now we can move on. And then the next part is to understand what it is to grow; it's the foundation, expansion and contraction.

LP: Can you do that like him? You know grow tall like Chekhov did in front of others, how he was impressing everybody?

Petit: I can do that. I used to do that with my son, when, you know, I used to play games with him. Yes, I can do all of that.

LP: Do you feel if you are radiating all the energy out, expanding the energy by doing that, you are also getting that back from the students? Or do you have a system to restore yourself, because it is a lot of energy, different energy to teach?

Petit: Actually, I don't really.

LP: After expanding, after giving energy, how do you "recharge the battery" for yourself?

Petit: I think as soon as you engage the energy, it's self-charging. Right, so in the beginning you don't really know about it. What is this thing here? And then you start to work with it, and as soon as you begin to work with it, you increase – it's self-generating. So the more you work, the more there is to work with. But in the beginning, it seems a finite thing, but it isn't. What happens in the end is you are either energized or enervated by the work. And if you are enervated by the work than you are not doing it the right way, and if you are energized by the work that's the way you should be working. Lots of people say, I am so exhausted, completely exhausted. You were working and making discoveries, but you were not working [correctly].

LP: If you will put yourself in my shoes as a student, as a beginner, would you throw yourself in it fully without thinking, "I have to put it down." I just could not, myself, to think about taking notes; I just wanted to experience it and sometimes, a lot of times, I just maybe put a word down or two words. I just could not observe myself and witness what I was doing while I was doing it. Did you achieve that?

Petit: We weren't allowed to take notes.

LP: Not allowed?

Petit: No. That's Chekhov's plan. The separation of what's going on. It is an engagement of another part of you. That you try to quiet in the work, right? So, he developed this method, which we talk about here, called the "spy back" – to look back to what you just did – but not every time. And so what we were told was that he did not allow people to take notes and so, when I see people taking notes I ask them to stop. I say you know, when the class ends if you need to remember anything, I'll help you. You know, just help you do that. And so we were told that he would give students a very long lunch, so that they could collect the work together and this "Spy back" in writing, so that as an OK time to do that. So it was OK to engage that part of your being in that kind of work but not while doing the exercises.

LP: Do you see anything we didn't address? Or would like to share some thoughts about pedagogy, your findings? To help us understand what you will be focusing on next week.

Petit: These Audio Tapes of Chekhov are really priceless, and you know, it's easy to listen to it. It's easy to get distracted while you are listening, too, but it's really easy to listen to. There is one section that I am particularly fond of, and it helps to understand what we are doing, and what it is we want to do.

These are the FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES. And so I am teaching teachers this week, and we've been having some email discussions of what we will do, we three teachers. And some of the things that we talked about I didn't think were necessarily appropriate for this level of teaching. But I think it is important to teach out of these "Five Guiding Principles," because

these are the things that hold the technique as a whole together. It helps us understand it all. I couldn't have written my book without those "Five Guiding Principles." I couldn't have written the book without having a real living picture of the method as a whole – a whole thing, where the pieces fit, because people are overwhelmed by this. Because people tell me, oh, I know how to do this and know to do that, I know what that is, but I don't know what to do with it. This is being overwhelmed by this information, basically. It's all very nice, but what to do? What the "Five Guiding Principles" do is to help us understand where to fit things and how it all works.

LP: Where they part of the DVDs as you did it some years ago as a product of MICHA.

Petit: The Five Principles are on the CDs [of Chekhov's 1955 lectures] and they are in my book.²³

Petit: I don't think that we discuss the 5 guiding principles on the DVDs – I haven't seen them for a long time. If I would have directed the project it, would have been different. I am not saying that it will be better, but it will be different. So you know we did a lot of work, and then it all got edited and its where it is. Ragnar was in charge of the project, actually; he was directing it, so he decided what to put in, what was left out, and how it should be I don't know what his relationship is to the guiding principles. They're not really discussed in there – although they are, because they contain the work. But they help to order the work. And when I teach students, I don't talk about them, because it's heady, heady stuff. I teach through them, I address those. The exercises I choose have to do with this, and I lead them.

LP: Name them for me please:

Petit: 1. the work is Psychophysical. 2. Intangible means of expression lead to tangible results. 3. Spiritual but not religious or mystical— that's a big one, just the words right there need unpacking. 4. To be involved with one element means to be involved with all of them – that circle in Mala Power's book, if you work with this here, this [other] thing will start to unpack. Basically what that means is that, in the course of rehearsal, you will play with all these things, one thing at a time. They are known by you, and if you engage this, it will engage that [other thing] as well – that fires up, lights up. 5. Artistic Freedom which piece of the element or tool gives you Artistic Freedom.

Because, you know, I had teachers who didn't work with the psychological gesture, did not teach the psychological gesture, because it never meant anything to them. The pieces they taught – somehow the Psychological Gesture would become activated without them even knowing it, because of other things they had done. But they consciously said, "I don't do it." And I had a teacher – my main teacher – who said, "That's everything! The Psychological Gesture is everything." So I worked on PG by doing *this*. And then another teacher said, "No, Psychological Gesture is *this*" – you know, "*this* is how to work with it." So you really have to come to your own understanding, so to speak. When I was doing mime, I was working with the Psychological Gesture, because I was reading his book. What I thought was Psychological Gesture was doing something for me, but when I look back now at what I did as Psychological Gesture, it was not what I do now as Psychological Gesture.

²³ Petit reviews the principles in a video posted by the Michael Chekhov Acting Studio NYC, "Lenard Petit on Michael Chekhov's 5 Guiding Principles for Actors" – excerpted from a documentary film made by Guillermo G. Peydró in 2011. Available URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PufzXM820w4> .

LP: How did it change?

Petit: I think it became more centralized less decorative – you know, Decroux’s work was very decorative in a way, so my understanding of movement and gesture was full of decoration, style and esthetic, and I think the Psychological Gesture has to be a beautiful thing, but it is very simple. It is most simple thing in the world actually. I was just complicating it. It was working for me because I was really steeped in decoration. It was working for me, and I liked it, but over the years it has changed quite a lot.

LP: Is it maybe because it is suddenly connected with ease?

Petit: No, it had to do more with essence. And here is no decoration in that.

Petit: Wonderful. Thank you so very much!

Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan 24 June 2018 MICHA, with additions 2 February 2019

Ted Pugh is the co-artistic director of The Actors' Ensemble of New York and has appeared on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Regional theaters around the United States. After having trained at the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City, Mr. Pugh was certified as a teacher by Beatrice Straight and Deirdre du Prey in 1983, and was on the faculty at the Studio for the last seven years of its existence, and also taught at the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan. Mr. Pugh has also taught workshops throughout the U.S., Europe, Russia and Australia. A founding member of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut under the direction of Jon Jory, he began his career at Arena Stage in Washington DC in 1962. Along with Ragnar Freidank and Fern Sloan, he is co-founder of The Michael Chekhov School in Hudson, NY. (Biography from <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/ted-pugh> . See also Lisa Dalton's biography for IMDb.)

Fern Sloan, an actress for over 40 years, is co-founder and co-artistic director of The Actors' Ensemble and has performed and taught the Michael Chekhov technique in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia. Along with Ted Pugh and Ragnar Freidank, she is also co-founder of The Michael Chekhov School in Hudson, NY. Fern was certified by the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City to teach the work of Michael Chekhov and was on its faculty for the last three years of its existence. She was co-director and on the faculty of the Speech and Drama Program of Sunbridge College. Prior to founding The Actors' Ensemble, Ms. Sloan played leading roles in numerous regional theaters in the US and Off-Broadway. Together with Jessica Cerullo, Ms. Sloan wrote the MICHA Workbook to assist those practically studying the Chekhov technique. (Biography from <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/fern-sloan> .)

(Note: Questions in this case are a bit out of order)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Pugh: You know the Chekhov work really wasn't available for years because Chekhov died in '55. I was given that book when I was in college. A friend of mine found that book, *To the Actor*. I was either 19 or 20, and I was to do theatre in Massachusetts while at school at the University of Oklahoma. I had the book and tried to work with it on my feet for years. I looked for someone who would teach me everything that was in the book. It wasn't until 1980. It was 1957 when I got the book – two years after he died. Chekhov sent the book to the universities and colleges all over the country, so it was in the libraries.

I had heard that there was a woman on Long Island that taught it, and I guess it must have been Deirdre Hurst du Prey. But I didn't know who she was or where she lived.

Many years later I left the business for a while and went to Germany, and when I came back to New York, a friend of mine Paul Corman – we were going to have a lunch – and he said I will not be able to have a lunch with you, I have an audition. I said, what are you auditioning for? And he said, "The Michael Chekhov Studio." I couldn't believe that there actually was a Michael Chekhov Studio. Beatrice Straight, after she won the Academy Award, opened that Studio, and of course hundreds of people flocked to it. There was a rumor that she was also going to start an ensemble, which turned out not to be true. But in any case, I got myself down to the Michel Chekhov Studio – by that time, I was in my forties – and I had a teacher who basically went through the book – just what I was always looking for. Get me on my feet and say, chapter one, and that's basically what he did. His

name was Eddy Grove, and he had studied with Chekhov in California. I was at the Studio for three years when they asked me to teach. I was certified by Deirdre and Beatrice and began teaching at the studio.

(Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today? Has it changed obviously, or maybe not obviously, the way you are seeing the method and teaching it over the years?

Pugh: Yes, I would have to say that we have [to Sloan:], haven't we? I mean if you are an actor, changes are bound to take place....

Sloan: There is the basic principal of psychophysical activity which lays the foundation for the Chekhov work, and you keep approaching these basics in many different ways as your own experience with them continues to evolve. I didn't get to the technique of Michael Chekhov until I'd had a career working primarily out of my own biography. I left the theatre because I thought it was silly and I didn't like the way I was working and felt terribly limited. Ted found out that I had been an actor as we both were Anthroposophists and moving in the same circles. He wanted to know if I was interested in talking about Michael Chekhov. At that point I was not interested in going back into the theatre, but we talked. He was teaching a class in Rudolf Steiner High School (I was then reaching handwork in the Rudolf Steiner School grade school. Shortly after our conversation I attended one of his classes, and immediately I knew that I would return to the art of acting through the work of Michael Chekhov. Meanwhile I had done a lot of body work, so I was very much in my body, discovering that there was no separation between what I did physically and the corresponding experience within. To discover that there was a method of acting based on this principle, left me feeling like I had "died and gone to heaven."

When we started working, we formed an ensemble. Ted had come to a couple of us and said, "I've been looking for a company and three is a company". We worked every day for hours, for weeks, for months, for years. We *really* trained ourselves; we are still training ourselves. We still are! We liken it to a musician: a violinist doesn't pick up the bow and do a few scales and he is a master! We do it every day, every day, and every day. The work evolved due to our dedicated research. And It became more and more essential that everything we did had to be full body. That was the bases upon which we began our investigations. You had to start from where you are. You had to bring your whole being to it. You cannot be outside observing, you had to be at one with your body and soul. We were always seeking an experience, a sensation as distinct from an idea.

Pugh: We had both studied with Uta Hagen.

LP: I did too.

Pugh: I also studied with Michael Howard, and his teachers were Strasberg and Meisner, so we both had a good Method training. And when I started at the Studio, I already had a career. Some of the teachers at the Studio were, Deirdre du Prey and Eleanor Faison. They were in Dartington when they were young people. So when Beatrice started the Studio, she tracked them all down and said I am starting a Studio, I'd like your help.

Sloan: Which is amazing, because they were elderly ladies by that time, and they were still so devoted, so enthusiastic, so wanting to move the mission forward. It always moves us when we think about it. We wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for that Studio. It was these

elderly women who had – they still had the spark, the image, the vision, even though they were not actors.

Pugh: It's very unlikely that MICHA wouldn't exist if Beatrice hadn't opened the Studio.

LP: And Deirdre studied with Martha Graham as well, so she was into movement.

Pugh: Did she study with Martha Graham?

LP: Yes, she did, as a young woman; and she took dance and mime courses at Dartington in 1934 and at the Cornish School before she met Beatrice.²⁴ Was she teaching movement?

Pugh: Well, she was on a cane, but she taught, and was a beautiful mover.

Sloan: I didn't know her when she was a mover. I never saw her move.

Pugh: She would demonstrate things, and it was clear that she had training.

LP: I am very interested the fact that you are Anthroposophists, and so now we go to the question (Question no. 6): Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953? Is the cultural climate more available, open?

Sloan: It is the ground upon which we teach. I don't talk about it. It's not that I couldn't or wouldn't, because I do think that there is a receptivity now, more so than when we started. It's the essence of the work. Chekhov talks about creating a goblet that the spiritual world can be pour into. That to me is worth striving for. You get your little "I", your little "me" self, out of the way, so you can be played by the spiritual forces through the imagination.

Pugh: Chekhov uses the term creative individuality [Sloan: and the Higher Self] which is creativity, and of course these kinds of things were never mentioned in Method training. And you know I think, your question is, are people more available to it. I think they are.

LP: Especially in this business in order to stay rooted?

Pugh: You know, creative people I think are very drawn to Eastern things like yoga and Tai Chi. And it's very much like Tai Chi, or Thích Nhất Hạnh's mindfulness. He talks about how you wash dishes, every stroke that you take, every part or corner of that plate you wash; it is very compatible with the Chekhov work. We are awakening our consciousness to every part of our body in the training.

Of course when you are on the stage, when you are performing, your attention is of course on your choices, who this character is and whether you are taking in something or giving out something. All Chekhov has done really, has shown us all of the human processes that we

²⁴ Dartington Hall's archives have records of Deirdre Hurst du Prey's dance and drama education ca. 1931-32 with former MHAT actor and author, Alexander Koiransky, at the Cornish School, Seattle (where Deirdre Hurst and Beatrice Straight first met). Later records are from the Dartington Hall School of Dance-Mime (1933-35), where she studied along with another Chekhov student who was later certified in Chekhov teaching, Blair Cutting. Among the Dartington teachers was Kurt Joos, and, from the Cornish School, Ellen Van Volkenburg and Margaret Barr, a former student of Martha Graham. Hurst probably studied with Graham in New York in 1935, when she also attended a lecture by Benno Schneider on 'Rhythm' at the Workers' Theatre, New York, March 1935. Later, in 1953, Hurst co-directed the Creative Theatre Studio, in New York; she gave a lecture on Shakespeare before a performance at the Henry Street Playhouse. Further documents of her career are in the archives at Adelphi University.

are involved in every day, expanding and contracting, our gestural life. My inner gesture goes from me to you. When I am trying to convince you - something moves forward, and I am inwardly gesturing to either pull you or to convince you, to penetrate you. We are involved in that all the time and it's here, here between us. And Chekhov has exercises that awaken us, making it conscious.

You are an actor so you can come into contact with those things which go out from you, those things which close you up, those things which contact you, those things which liberate you, and that's really what all the exercises – are about things we practice all day long every day, but as an actor we must bring everyday things on to the stage, and he is giving us technique where that is possible.

LP: When you practice, the practice the gesture for example it gets larger than everyday life gesture, it goes beyond - yes?

Pugh: What do you mean by that?

Sloan: Are you talking about the archetypal gesture?

LP: Yes, perhaps yes – that when one practices, we are doing these gestures in everyday life, but they are limited, right?

Pugh: Yes.

LP: So, when you practice like the scales it becomes more intensive.

Pugh: And more powerful, more conscious. The gestures can be enormous. Just look at the newspaper everyday pictures of these women whose child has been bombed! These horrible things that are happening in the world and you see people, in powerful situations, and are affected in a powerful way by them.

LP: I do an exercise with my actors and I ask them to bring – cut out of the newspaper a photograph of people in a powerful situation, and actors in class take one specific person from the image and become that person. At first as a “tableau,” later an acted situation without words which ends up in this specific tableau, and the third time with sound-dialogue.

Sloan: It is imperative that the actor make the gesture large to awaken the will and feeling. It is essential that the gesture engage the fullness of the being employing maximum body and maximum space... You have as much space as you have body, otherwise it can become an idea very quickly as opposed to something that engages the fullness of your being, and the actor is seeking to put something in the space between him and his acting partner. It takes practice! It takes doing it over and over again.

LP: And I suspect it must be beautiful that you are working on the piece together because I imagine it is like truly a duet. Because if you practice and you will encounter somebody who cannot or will not take your impulses it might be frustrating, I would imagine - yes, no?

Pugh: The great thing about working with Fern is that it's the masculine / feminine, and very often Fern

sees things I don't see. And with students it's very often Fern they go to – they stay and cry, and she is a big mama – I mean she takes care of them in a way that I don't.

LP: that's beautiful.

Sloan: But the very fact that the students cry, you know, it's not like we are Method teachers and we want them to cry, it's just that they opened up something that they never experienced before. Like I was teaching in Monterey a couple of years ago, and these were underprivileged young people who had first time - they were the first one going to the college, they'd had their own tuition paid because they didn't have money. We were working with expanding and contracting and soon people started crying and it took my breath away. They had never known that they can really expand and live in the world this way.

And it was stunning, and it was really heart - heartfelt. And we had students who were just sobbing and sobbing because they've experienced something, they didn't know they were allowed to experience. And it is just our human processes opening. And we said we were so privileged to be actors because we have the possibility, without being intrusive at all, but just through a natural process align yourself to open to what's already there but you didn't know it.

Pugh: There was one young lady, beautiful, Swedish girl.

Sloan: A professional model.

Pugh: Yes, professional model. And when she worked with the center in the chest (what Chekhov calls the Ideal Center), she would break down and sob, uncontrollably, loudly, just sob, and she said to Sloan: "I feel like I am always trying to satisfy what everybody wants me to be rather than who I really am." I remember the first time when it happened, I went on with the class, [Fern responds], and one reason I did, I didn't want her to have the feeling that she had stopped the class, and she was deeply embarrassed. So, we went ahead, but Fern was with her, and I think just this finding herself, because she felt – and these are my words – that she was constantly giving herself away and trying to be what everybody else wanted her to be.

Sloan: We now have these immersions in the Michael Chekhov School in Hudson, NY, where we work from 9:30 – 5:30 every day, 5 days a week. It is a different experience from MICHA where you have many different teachers, and it's only a week, it's five days. If you go for an immersion than you begin to open! Possibilities begin to be apparent that you didn't know existed. It's your humanity you are discovering, you are not forcing anything. These exercises that Chekhov has given us, what we call investigations, explorations, are simply opening one to his/her human potential

At the end of the first week of a five week immersion, we had these two young men from Poland, and one of them said, "I would wake up at night and I would think –OPEN, OPEN, OPEN." (Laugh) That's right. It is all about opening. Ted: Who was that? Sloan: Gregor and Kuba.

Sloan: You have to also balance that opening to know how to protect yourself, so that you are not all of a sudden vulnerable.

LP: I don't know if you remember a very spiritual girl of Russian descent named Luca. I was teaching her acting at SUNY Purchase. She was a student in my "Fundamentals of

Acting class". Her name is Luca Khosrova, she studied with you at Hudson, do you remember her?

Sloan: LUCA! But she only came for one weekend. She seemed so interested; we asked Ragnar why she did not come back?

LP: I told her: You should be an actress, No, she said - I want to be a painter. She took Fundamentals of Acting, Scene Study, like that, in my classes at SUNY Purchase.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you feel differences in another American teachers' approach?

Sloan: Everyone teaches his/her own way. It is the creative individuality at work. It isn't possible to claim that there is only one way to awaken to one's creative individuality.

Pugh: And it also depends who their teachers were. I was very lucky. I had all those people. All of my teachers were people who studied with Chekhov. So, I got those who studied with him at the end of his life and those who studied with him at the very beginning and were part of these "Lessons to the Teachers"- that was basically Deirdre and Beatrice.

Sloan: That was early on.

Pugh: And they were people Chekhov had certified, and we had them as teachers and they certified Fern and me.²⁵

Pugh: So I was very lucky— as they would work with us, they'd start remembering things, because all of them remembered different things. And there was Hurd Hatfield, who of course became a film actor.

LP: Hatfield did *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1945 and he famously said: "The film didn't make me popular in Hollywood," he commented later. "It was too odd, too avant-garde, too ahead of its time. The decadence, the hints of bisexuality and so on, made me a leper! Nobody knew I had a sense of humour, and people wouldn't even have lunch with me."²⁶

Pugh: that's right. Some people would say he was kind of cold and little dead, but that was the part he was playing. He found this soul-less person and he did it very well. Hurd studied

²⁵ On 5 October 1939, in Ridgefield, Connecticut – exactly three years from the opening of the Michael Chekhov Studio theatre school at Dartington, Devonshire, England, Michael Chekhov gave actor-teacher diplomas to six students who had entered the Studio in the first group at Dartington and came with him to Connecticut: Beatrice Whitney Straight, her mother Dorothy Whitney Elmshirst, Deirdre Hurst, Peter Tunnard, Alan Harkness, and Blair Cutting. Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst [du Prey], and Cutting, along with Eleanor Faison, Felicity Anne Cumming Mason, and Hurd Hatfield, all of whom had also studied in the original Studio, were in the New York group. There were also Joanna Merlin, Mala Powers, and Eddy Grove, who had studied with Chekhov in California.

²⁶ Tom Vallance. "Obituary: Hurd Hatfield," in *The Independent*, Thursday 31 December 1998, Section 1, page 2; available URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-hurd-hatfield-1194990.html>. Hatfield did 10 major movies between the years 1945-1950, including *Joan of Arc* where he played Father Pasquerer, Joan's chaplain. (Joan was played by Ingrid Bergman) His film debut in fact was in *Dragon Seed* (1944), in which his co-stars were Katharine Hepburn, Akim Tamiroff, Aline MacMahon, and Turhan Bey. Hatfield came to England to study acting at the Chekhov Theatre Studio in Devonshire, and returned to the United States with Chekhov's company in 1939.

in Ridgefield and they toured and performed all over the country—he said one time, that’s all I ever wanted, what I had in the early part of my life. And then it was taken away and I never ever got back to that. That’s what I had when I was in my twenties; and that’s what I wanted.

LP: Meaning having school, putting the training in practice, traveling with the performances

Pugh: Having an ensemble, having the company.

LP: Having a mentor, having a teacher. And that’s what Chekhov wanted all his life.

Pugh: And being an ensemble.

Sloan: Yes.

LP: And that’s what Chekhov wanted all his life. He wanted his school and was taken away from him because in Hollywood it must have been very different. And of course he had to close not only his Ridgefield school but also his school on Manhattan.

Pugh: You know when the school closed. And all of that kind of came to an end, and there he was in a country that wasn’t his own, his wife didn’t speak English. He had a heart problem and really as I understand it the support that he had from the Elmhirsts ceased then, and so many, many Russian actors came to Hollywood working on film, and one of the called I don’t know if it was Akim Tamiroff and he said, “Misha, come to Hollywood, they love Russian actors.” Well he wasn’t really interested in film, but he had a wife, he didn’t have a job, and he had a heart problem. Is he going to leave his wife in a country with no money? She doesn’t speak English. So he went, and it was difficult for him, because he had to relate to a movie camera. He finally did find that; he found the relationship. I don’t know if you remember, Fern that he had said that he marveled at Ingrid Bergman because she had such a relationship to the camera. And she just turned on and was of course exquisite, and he just kind of marveled at it.

Pugh: I don’t know if the first film was “Spellbound?” He was nominated for the Academy Award; he was wonderful in it.

LP: Do you know the secret? Ingrid Bergman’s secret? I’ve heard her saying in an interview, or a book – maybe Ingmar Bergman’s book, because they worked together on “Autumn Sonata” – her dad, when she was a little girl used to take pictures of her, and filmed her, and she loved him and he passed away when she was only 12, so the camera became him.

Sloan: That is great.

LP: That is the secret.

Sloan: That’s wonderful.

Pugh: I wonder if Chekhov knew that, if she told him.

LP: (Question no. 9): Do you offer or mandate a book by Chekhov?

Pugh: No, we don't. Occasionally we read, maybe often we read from one of the books, but we don't assign it. I am not shy about quoting Rudolf Steiner either. Because lots of things that Steiner said are very appropriate and applicable too, of what Chekhov taught.

LP: Could you share which moments from Steiner?

Pugh: You know, it pops out spontaneously in the moment.

LP: And the colors, yes?

Pugh: Oh definitely. And Steiner talks about these three, what he calls "Soul Forces," thinking, feeling, and willing. And they are very different and very much spiritual activities. And of course all through Chekhov's work, there is thinking-feeling-willing. We developed a whole warm-up where we use the willing center and the thinking center and the feeling center. And that is my warm-up I do that every day with students.

Sloan: That came directly out of Steiner's "First Class Lessons."²⁷

Pugh: There is something called "The First Class Spiritual Science" by Steiner. You have to be an Anthroposophist for a year then you can become a member of the First Class, and it's not available publicly, only to the people that are members.

[LPB note: The word Anthroposophy originally points to the wisdom (sophia) that is woven into our development as human beings (anthropos). Rudolf Steiner described it simply as "consciousness of our human situation" which becomes "a path from the mind and spirit in the human being to the mind and spirit in the cosmos." He added that "it arises as a need of the heart." See <https://anthroposophy.org/learn-more/society-in-america/>]

LP: How do you connect with that? How do you connect with the people? How do you find out if that could maybe resonate with you? Let's say if I were interested and would want to learn.

Sloan: That would depend on how involved you were with the basics of Anthroposophy. If you embrace that as your spiritual path, you may wish to deepen it, and you would then apply to join the first class.

Pugh: You know, I love saying to people that Michael Chekhov was the only person who knew both Rudolf Steiner and Marilyn Monroe. (Laugh) But he did have a relationship with Steiner. I don't mean that they were close friends, because Chekhov was in Russia and Chekhov was in lots of trouble in Russia. He was under house arrest; he was going to be sent to Siberia, because they told him to quit bringing Steiner into his classes – not physically, but in his teachings. And he said I won't do that, and they couldn't tolerate it. You know he was so beloved in Russia, maybe the most beloved actor at the Moscow Art Theatre. After doing *Hamlet* (1924) people would chase after his sled when he was going home and yell at him, "What do you believe, what do you believe that you can act like that?" They saw something very spiritual in what he did. Isn't that amazing? People said, "What do you believe?" But you know, of course they were Russians – with the Russian soul.

²⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The First Class Lessons and Mantras*; 1924. See also *The Michael School Meditative Path in Nineteen Steps* (Steiner, Collected Works [CW] 270) – Edited by T. H. Meyer Translated by Jannebeth Röell, Paul V. O'Leary and James Lee. Steiner Books, 2017. See also Rudolf Steiner, "Michaelmas and the Soul Forces of Man"; 4 lectures, Vienna, September 27-October 1, 1923 (from CW 223).

LP: When did you become an Anthroposophist; were you inspired by Mala Powers?

Pugh: No, no. I became one many years before. I don't even know when I became an Anthroposophist that Michael Chekhov was an Anthroposophist. I didn't know that. Early on, I had his book when I was 19 or 20 years old, and then I was in my thirties and I discovered Anthroposophy.

Sloan: And I was in my forties. I came to it late. We know many, many people in our circle that have been Anthroposophist since they were teenagers.

Pugh: In the college I was very interested in Hinduism, I meditated, and I studied with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Once I went to Maine and I did transcendental meditation. So I did all of that, all the eastern stuff before I heard of Steiner.

LP: Do you ever go to an ashram?

Pugh: We are so busy with the school, but I would like to go to more of the international spiritual conferences. The great thing is that they are all in English.

Sloan: Ted is going to Croatia. You know about the Croatia [Chekhov] Retreat.

LP: I've heard about that.

Sloan: I am not going. I am not traveling anymore. My husband is old, and I don't want to be away from him. Many of the Chekhov teachers are going to be there.

Pugh: It will be three weeks, one in July and two in August. Michael Chekhov Europe is really very active, and they are the ones sponsoring it.

LP: They are part of MICHA, most of them.

Sloan/Pugh: Yes, most of them.

LP: Do you know some other people besides, who are connected with MICHA teaching?

Pugh: There's Hugo Moss in Brazil – he is with MICHA.

LP: He is sending students here to MICHA too. Thank you!

Fern: In the USA there is a Chekhov studio in LA, there is a studio in Chicago, a studio in Boston, in New

York; we have our school upstate. All of that is within the last 10-15 years.

LP: Thank you so much!

Liz Shipman interviewed at MICHA, 20-22 June 2018 and replied by email July 2018.

Liz Shipman is Co-Artistic Director and the Chekhov Specialist at The Actor's Place @MCIT Studio, a Meisner/Chekhov integrated training studio in San Diego, CA. She trained in the Chekhov technique at MICHA with Joanna Merlin. Her work integrates the theories and practices of Michael Chekhov, Rudolph Laban, and Arthur Lessac voice work. She was Co-Founder/Artistic Director for the Kings County Shakespeare Company (KCSC) in New York City from 1983 to 2001.

(Biography from <http://mcitstudio.weebly.com/faculty.html>.)

LP: (Question no. 1) How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/ directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Shipman: I am a trained dancer/choreographer and from my earliest days, connected what I was learning/ discovering to the Art of Acting as well. I noticed that actors performing at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego (where I worked as choreographer, performer and Co-Director of their outdoor pre-shows) were either effective or less so in accordance with how much or how little they were fully engaged in their bodies. This set me on a lifelong quest. How do we train actors toward full expression and unique performances? At USD, as a graduate student, I was first introduced to the work of Rudolph Laban and knew there was something in that work to address the needs of actors. When I moved to NYC to pursue my aspirations as a choreographer, I was drawn to the Laban Institute of Movement Studies (LIMS). I had also formed a company of dancers, actors, musicians and visual artists, Artists at Work, and Co-Founded The Kings County Shakespeare Company. While studying at LIMS, I realized the Movement Theories, Principles and Practices I was exploring were directly applicable to acting.

That began my development of a Laban-Based Approach to Acting which is still integral to my work with actors in class and as a director. I was introduced to the Chekhov Work several years later and immediately recognized a kindred spirit and a true companion to my Laban-based Work. I was given *To the Actor*, and with that book I set a path for myself that eventually led me to MICHA. Over the years, I have taught, coached and directed actors using an eclectic psychophysical approach that integrates Laban, Chekhov, and other like approaches. By now, I do not know where one ends and the other begins. Depending on the class, project and participants, I may favor one approach above the other, but within me I hold both, so both are ever present, teaching, coaching or directing at my side.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Shipman: I believe that is inevitable and desirable. The beauty of both the Chekhov and the Laban Work is that every individual who studies the work is called upon to make it their own. Every teacher brings his or her own understanding and style to the work. To me, that enriches the whole of the Chekhov work. It in no way diminishes it. Although it is important to visit and revisit the work in its purest (or as originally conceived) form, the nature of Michael Chekhov's Work is expansive and invites the student to place their own stamp on the application process. The actors and teacher must personalize the work.

LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Shipman: The differences are surely there, but it does not matter as long as we don't hold "our way" too preciously. As stated in the answer to the previous question, Chekhov invites to make the work our own. If we can open ourselves to the differences in our ways of working and our interpretation, we will always learn and grow the work. I think in Europe in particular, the deep connection with Rudolph Steiner impacts the Chekhov work in a particular way. This might also be true for the Australians. I know John McManus has that influence.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Shipman: I know lots of people are teaching the work that have been trained elsewhere and/or are working with the ideas without much formal exposure. For years, I was teaching actors, using the Chekhov work as I had interpreted it from reading his books. As with any discipline, some will represent the work clearly and well. Others may not. However, MICHA is not the only place to learn this work. In the USA there are several studios and schools who present the work effectively and, in the UK, Europe, Australian and South America, there are numerous places to study the Chekhov Approach.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Shipman: Of course the major difference would be the individualized coloring of my teaching of Chekhov by everything else that has created the artist and teacher that I am. That is chiefly my Laban and Lessac Training and Integration. Also, I have been impacted by every MICHA teacher that I've had the pleasure of studying with, and my work is truly impacted by the many colleagues that I've met and with whom I've shared ideas and individual approaches to the work. Lastly, in each class, warm up and workshop, I've explored the Chekhov material with extraordinary others. From them I learn and grow. From that invaluable contact, my work evolves.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Shipman: I do not know the answer to that question. I think it is very much about (perhaps as it's always been) the openness of the individuals who claim the Chekhov work and the rippling influence of their teaching and creative works.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Shipman: The system will evolve and adjust as it will. There is human truth in the experience of the body in full expression. That has not changed. Yet again, nothing ever remains the same...nor should it...nor would Chekhov wish it to.

LP: (Questions nos. 8): What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the

1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in “The Composition of the Performance.”)

LP: (Question no.9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a “textbook”?

Shipman: My preference is the 1953 version. I find the 1991 version a bit wordy and the “extras”, a bit distracting. I really love *On the Technique of Acting* as well. It feels more complete. I recommend both to my students. There is also a recent republishing (2014) of the 1953 version of *To the Actor* that I recommend to students.

David Zindner interviewed 22 June 2018

David Zinder is an acting trainer and free-lance international director. Since 2002 he has been directing extensively at professional repertory theatres in Romania. He is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Theatre Arts at Tel Aviv University in Israel where he taught acting and directing for 28 years. After studying acting in the 1960's with Peter Frye, a former student of Michael Chekhov's, Mr. Zinder was re-introduced to the Chekhov Technique in the early 90's by Mala Powers and has been studying and teaching the Technique ever since. The second edition of his book on acting training, *Body Voice Imagination: ImageWork Training and the Chekhov Technique*, came out in 2010. Mr. Zinder received his B.A. in Drama from Manchester University, England and his PhD at the Drama Department of the University of California at Berkeley. His PhD thesis, *The Surrealist Connection: An Approach to a Surrealist Aesthetic of Theatre* was published by UMI (Ann Arbor) in 1981. (Biography from MICHA website – <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/david-zinder>.)

LP: (Question no. 1): How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Zinder: I discovered in 1992 that the training that I had developed as a teacher – ImageWork Training - was very similar to the Chekhov Technique, so I spent a few years studying the Technique and then incorporated it into my form of training.

LP: (Question no. 2): Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Zinder: The Chekhov work is developing along with the teachers. Each one is developing his or her own "take" on the various elements of the Technique. There is no specific change that I can think of, but the exchange between the teachers at MICHA or MCE events have produced many advances.

LP: (Question no. 3): Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Zinder: It's not a question of geography – only of teachers' different approaches.

LP: (Question no. 4): Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Zinder: Most of the teachers around the world grew up either in MICHA or MCE, but I know of a few teachers in Israel who teach the Chekhov technique and are not connected to either organization.

LP: (Question no. 5): Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Zinder: My approach is strongly influenced by my own Image Work Technique, and this is not part of the agenda of American teachers of Chekhov.

LP: (Question no. 6): Do you still think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Zinder: On the contrary. I think the spiritual side of the Chekhov Technique is less acceptable today.

LP: (Question no. 7): Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Zinder: I think the Technique has developed consistently over the years in more or less the same way it was originally proposed by Michael Chekhov.

LP: (Question no. 8): What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in "The Composition of the Performance.")

Zinder: Someone should make a comparative study of all the versions of the book in order to come up with a definitive version that includes everything that was published in all the editions.

LP: (Question no. 9): Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

Zinder: No – I don't think it is a textbook. Actors can only learn by doing, not by reading. The exercises are hard to do without coaching from a teacher.

Joerg Andrees, interviewed 21 June 2019 at MICHA

Is the Director of the Michael Chekhov International Academy (MCIA), Berlin, since 2012 (<https://www.chekhovacademy.com/>), and has served on the faculty of the Michael Tschechow Studio Berlin (<https://www.mtsb.de/>), founded by Jobst Langhans in 1987, for nearly 30 years. In 1992 he co-founded the first Michael Chekhov International Conference in Berlin. Andrees studied the Chekhov technique in New York with Ted Pugh and Fern Sloan in 1989. (Biography from <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/joerg-andrees> and MCIA website.)

(Note: Questions in this case are out of order)

LP: (Question no. 1) What do you find most effective in the Michael Chekhov Technique and what are you using? How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Andrees: I believe I use everything that I've got as his technique. Especially what is the more obvious frame – the obvious things – the understanding of the creative process. And out of that, the Chekhov technique as a whole. Then you go to my left side – I have a second headline: creative development for all kinds of the art.

Even when I teach in my program – I teach acting technique only in the program, but I work with the technique for singers, dancers, musicians, painters, sculptors. That means that the central point of this is an understanding of creativity, how creativity works maybe. It's not a scientific research that Chekhov did. It is artistic research for the creativity. And it is an essential point and all of that of course I use this tool, this tool, this tool, and I do with people exercises, exercises, exercises.

LP: (Question no.8) What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in "The Composition of the Performance.") What textbooks are you using [1953 or 1991]?

Andrees: I use all what is available. I ask them you have to have a minimum of one; it doesn't matter which one. We also have the German version which is a little bit different from all the others. And so I say it doesn't matter what you have at least – they are all the same. Not really of course, but then in the teacher program, the teacher classes, I discuss more in detail what is the difference between the books.

So they read the book, if they read, that's it. I don't prefer [1953 or 1991]; in each is something different. I know exactly what it is and how it differs from the other, and if it is an addition to the other. The best thing is to understand what it is and how he means it.

LP: Are you using the Georgette Boner Manuscript or not?

Andrees: *Werkgeheimnisse*? Yes, I use it, but it is out of print and in Antikvariat and is very expensive. So now I have mostly English-speaking students who can use the English [books], and if people from Germany are there then they can go to the Germans to understand English better. I teach in English in Berlin- it is an international academy – my aim is to make it possible that there is more or less in the Europe area a teacher training. We

also get sometimes people from Argentina which is nice. This is the central aim. There is also Michael Chekhov Europe with a nice program, and although [they are] teaching in English, in Germany sometimes they and I are teaching in German. The teacher training is the only one what I do.

LP: Do you give certificates out?

Andrees: Yes, of course, we have to, because people – think all the world is based on illusions – so people want to have something at the end that they can show.

LP: How do they earn it? How much or how long do they have to study with you?

Andrees: They have to do my eight weeks program. I have to say immediately that I have no illusion that this is enough. But focusing the time, I mean all our time, on the culture. They have to do what is possible and doing some positive things is better than not to do them because you think you can't reach the ideal.

LP: (Question no.2) Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Did that change over the years? Did you use to teach for a longer period to give a certificate?

Andrees: No, but I will extend it.

LP: The interest is there?

Andrees: Until now I can say, thanks to heaven, yes. Sounds like Chekhov: I don't know.

LP: Do you think the Psychological Gesture is the essential tool to understand Chekhov, or is something else? What is popularizing the method?

Andrees: The Psychological Gesture is the most creative thing Chekhov gave out. It is the most unique thing you have in the acting world. Even in the world of psychology. I have worked with many psychotherapists, doctors, and such people taking the course, not my teacher program, but in my earlier classes, and came to have very often an exchange [with them]. Psychological Gesture is the most central thing, but also the most misunderstood from my point of view, of course.

LP: How could there be an error made in understanding Psychological Gesture? How is it understood clearly? How do you understand it? What is it? Or where the mistake could be made?

Andrees: The mistake generally is made by a kind of superficial relationship to it. To make it annehmbar, acceptable – anzunehmen für die Leute – to make it accessible. It is broken down; it seems sometimes, to simplicity, but not touching the central part. It depends ... you cannot describe it abstractly. To create with each Psychological Gesture a new idea about what you are creating the Psychological Gestures for. It's always unique – each Psychological Gesture at the end. Absolutely unique Psychological Gesture. It has nothing to do with any of the others. And Archetypal Gestures are, from that point of view, not Psychological Gestures. Archetypal Gestures can be used to make it simple, can be used as [indistinct] from that point. The Archetypal Gestures are maybe basically something for the training so that you can develop the skills you need for the Psychological Gesture. I don't know, in this abstract way, if it means something. And I see very much that the term, there is one point the term, archetypal, is misunderstood. That clearly, going to the root of it, just taking the word as it is now known as a word - so it leads to a misunderstanding the same as the term, "psycho" – Psychological Gesture, psychophysical training.

LP: Does it have something to do with, maybe, a little bit of fear of not being understood by the audience, that you are turning it into Archetypal Gesture to be serving, versus going into depth and exploring and being unique. Is it a question of fear?

Andrees: This I don't know. I think it is a question not clearly thinking. And even when you go to the book, really trying to understand what he is preaching. This is very different. Just in the class we were working on the archetypal gesture, when I was reading it, then you know what I mean? I read only once from his book when he speaks about Archetypal Gestures. You might remember that I was going to Goethe. [LP: Whom Chekhov loved and respected and quoted in many places in his book.]

LP: (Question no.7) Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today? Must one make adjustments?

Andrees: It depends on the class and the teacher. Generally, I would say "No". You have really go to the Chekhov technique completely, instead of make it adjustable to this Meisner technique, this Strasberg technique, this Stanislavsky technique. They have their own field and they are what they are, but I don't need to make the Chekhov technique accessible to involve [the other techniques] so that the people will get a better understanding. You have really to go to the Chekhov technique completely, instead of making it adjustable to this Meisner technique, this Strasberg technique, this Stanislavsky technique. They have their own field and they are what they are, but I don't need to make the Chekhov technique accessible to involve [the other techniques] so that the people will get a better understanding. It leads/reads mostly just without that. [LP: but Chekhov came from Stanislavsky! They all came from Stanislavsky just like Dostoyevsky said "We all came from Gogol's Overcoat"]

LP: (Question no.3) Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Andrees: This is one of the difficult political questions. When I say "NO," then I don't say the truth. When I say "yes," then I also don't say the truth. Because in general, from the point of view of the technique itself, what Chekhov gave, there is no difference. The difference is created by the individualities. And we have here [at the MICHA meeting] all day around, nobody can teach Chekhov, because nobody is Chekhov. Only Chekhov can teach Chekhov. This is nice! Then you have to say that nobody can work with Einstein's theories, because only Einstein is Einstein.

You see, when you go philosophical to that question, there are twelve different points of views to answer it. Then you answer all the twelve and then you will reach a little bit of truth. One point is the technique itself, another should be individualized, just the polarity: the technique is Chekhov technique, as he brought it, otherwise it is the individualization. The next part is all the personalities.

LP: (Question no.4) Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well? Where, outside of MICHA, would you send me to learn about Chekhov?

Andrees: I would send you to Berlin. Also, to Ireland: it is also on the one side MICHA-oriented, and the other side not so much MICHA-oriented. They do it differently. You see there is much, much more to talk about, and it is very difficult, I would try to write something because that is maybe a starting point to develop out of that some more questions for meetings with one another.

Because I feel that there is a little bit need to look to some quality, even I am not Chekhov and I don't believe I teach Chekhov technique in only right way. That's not my understanding, I do it very individualized.

LP: (Question no.5) Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Andrees: You asked [about] areas of the world where it is done: the American culture is absolutely different from the Russian culture; they have in our time many, many cross points. The European culture is very different from the American. The way of thinking is one thing; it is absolutely different. The way of feeling is different, the way of what is psychological in the scene. Another question is: what the aims of this technique are, and so on, and then you can come to that point.

LP: (Question no.6) Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Andrees: The answer is: Mr. Chekhov's deep relationship to Anthroposophy and Christianity. And this is, even when it is discussed in some publications from nice scientists, from the point of view never have been connected as any of the Anthroposophical ideas – from the outside. Chekhov was not connected to the Anthroposophy from the outside. But I feel there is a need to look at this a need to look for that from another point of view. ...

But the central point upon the Chekhov technique is his relationship to Anthroposophy and Christianity and out of that you can understand each of the exercises.

LP: Thank you!

Hugo Moss, interviewed June 2019

Hugo Moss, Co-founder and director of Michael Chekhov Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. Hugo Moss is from the U.K. and Ireland and is a naturalized Brazilian. He is a teacher, translator, artist working in theatre, film, visual arts, photography and literature. He speaks English, French, German and Portuguese and has lived for over 30 years in Rio de Janeiro, where he develops a variety of artistic, cultural and social projects and creative activities. In 2010 a weekly initiative was launched in Rio de Janeiro with small groups of actors exploring Michael Chekhov's artistic legacy throughout the year. In 2012, Thaís Loureiro and Hugo Moss founded Michael Chekhov Brasil, creating an ambitious program which established for the first time in Brazil a source of practical exploration and knowledge of this artistic philosophical universe.

LP: (Question no. 1) How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career? (How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Hugo Moss: Well I did come across Chekhov at school. I had a teacher at school, but I went in lots of different directions after school. I did not go straight into acting and directing or teaching any of that. I've been doing lots of different things, including painting. Always was in the arts and music. But at some point, I was given some money to make a film, and I needed to direct actors. And I remembered the Chekhov book, and I bought it. I had a painter's studio, and I just closed the doors and started to read the book in order to direct the actors. I realized I had to do it myself. So I just went back to acting rather through directing. So that's how it started, how I developed the work from the book, *To the Actor*. You can't learn the whole technique just from the book. I think probably it's pretty hard to get into the big space, but I managed to find a way. And then I later I had also a group, Allegra and I, of actors with whom I used the book a lot for. That was about 15 years ago, I was working with a group of actors, directing them, and also doing Eurythmy, I realized that there was some echo here. Then I went to visit my mother in Dublin in January 2010, and MICHA was going to Galway. I just heard about that; I researched the internet. And I said, hmm, that's the Michael Chekhov stuff I do. I will go check it out. That's when things changed completely for me. I walked into the room, and Fern Sloan was teaching, and I just felt the whole ground shifting. And I realized that I wanted to bring this into my life. It sort of brought in – like the butter you put in at the end of risotto – brings all the flavors together. And I realized that this was something that which was going to bring all these different, a little bit of different mess of seeking – artistic seeking – into one thing. So what I did, I came back from Galway and literally spent time and made all these exercises my own. At home, just working on a cleaning the sofas and chairs. And I would just make it my own. And that's how made it my own just bringing the work. And then I studied a lot, coming up to MICHA. I came up many times over the next years. At the same time, I started teaching, bringing students, because I realized there was no Chekhov work in Brazil. And just I realized that is what I want to do. So I just started working learning, I guess a third of it, from doing it, from putting it in my body, and a third from the teachers that I was coming to work with Joanna Merlin, Fern, Ted, Dawn, and all these other wonderful teachers around the MICHA association. And later on, John McManus has been a great inspiration, and so I just kept coming back. The first third will be my work, the other third will be the teachers, and the other third would be the students who were working with me. They teach you how to teach themselves. That's how it sort of came into the last ten years completely full (of) Michael Chekhov exploration.

LP: (Question no.2) Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov methods today?

Hugo Moss: Well, that's an interesting question. Yes, I suppose that would have to be yes. Because the Chekhov work is a flowing thing. It's not very rigid in its form. Just by a definition. And the answer is yes, for sure. In its essence, I think it is stable as it were, it is

not going off somewhere, but there are so many more, even in the short time I have been involved with Chekhov. (I have ten years – not very long – but even in that time, going back – when I think ten years ago – the thing exploded in the last five years. I believe a number of people going because even in 10 years ago in Europe – Michael Chekhov Europe was only just starting – they were just starting. They didn't have workshops every five minutes – in Istanbul, Rome, and Taiwan. It wasn't happening yet. It was still – the wheel was still turning gently. The fact that there are a lot more practitioners having grown – that means that the work is changing, because the work ... in that way we developed our way of working in our studio in Brazil, Thais and myself. Which is different to everybody? You go in the class with the teachers here at MICHA, you have different ways of working; developing different things.

[NB something new:] Joanna was telling me this morning about a new way she and Craig have been working with the breath in the gesture, quality of a breath as a starting point for gesture. So this is changing something; this is something which has not been happening before. It is in constant flow, I suppose.

[LP: I talked to your student, Fran. She experienced this and it worked for her.]

LP: (Question no.3) Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach it?

Hugo Moss: I don't know if its country-centric, but the studios and teachers work in different ways. I don't know whether they could bunch them together in the European or American, but you certainly have, you could say, you have like in everything in life. You have material world and you have the imaginary world. The world of the cosmos and the intangible and then you have yourself, as in Anthroposophy, we have a threefold vision of man as his experience in being in the world, and that involves all of us all the time. We are living in a very materialistic era, so then that effect and colors the art as well, and colors our society, in a way, we educate ourselves and there is Michael Chekhov community is not different. I would say there is more, you see some lineage which has more to do with physical and the more tangible things and then you have more spiritual side of the Michael Chekhov technique. There are styles of teaching which are more, maybe have more influence from other things, but in this case it will be probably from Steiner world in the spiritual side and in this case will be more the physical actions where we are using gestures in more physical practical way rather than. You know what I mean I would say that would be a difference. But I don't know whether I could attach it to a country

LP: It also depends on every individual and the creative individuality.

Hugo Moss: Yes, there is that too. In my case in my case in Brasil, we have two teaching practices in the world which is what they call in Brasil Stanislavsky. But I think Konstantin would have a fit if he heard his name, it is just sort of method – sense memory and emotional memory – Lee Strasberg stuff – is that which is very strong in a cinema and then there is a physical theatre really very, very tough hard core physical theatre. That's the sort of two lineages which have been in Brasil for the last decades. And now we are working with Michael Chekhov for last ten years only. So that's the third thing coming in now mixing things up. Students usually come from – had usually experience with one of these two methods. They react to the Chekhov work coming from some sort of points of view; the physical guys all find it very difficult to do the subtle you know using the energy of the body to change the psychology. That's they used to defining stuff very well. But we are always between these – doing too much of that or too much of that; or in case of Lee Strasberg doing too much of the personal. So what I think is wonderful about Chekhov is (if we get it right) when we get it right that you have a BALANCE between these three worlds of the imagination, cosmos, the physical which is the blocking and the text and the physical stuff and then there is *me* my contribution to this mix you know this creative thing.

LP: your students have Stanislavsky's Method as a base?

Hugo Moss: Yes, they usually come – unless they have not done any acting before. If they have done any training, they've done one of those two things.

LP: You take anybody who is interested?

Yes, we take everybody.

LP: You have a variety of students, yes?

Hugo Moss: Yes, we have a variety.

LP: (Question no.4) Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?

Hugo Moss: Oh, yes. I am sure, yes.

LP: Besides MCH Europe.

Hugo Moss: Yes, I do not have actually much personal experience. But that must be/ Like MCH Brasil (laughs) and I know not from a personal experience visiting them but I know the Chekhov collective in London, which I think is doing a fantastic work for instance.

LP: You mean Sarah Kane?

Hugo Moss: No, I am talking about Cass and Gretchen Egolf (MCUK). They are doing some very interesting work.

LP: (Question no.5) Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?

Hugo Moss: I am not sure how to answer the question. It's very hard to answer this question.

LP: I understand somebody outside can tell about your teaching and it is hard for you to compare your work with others.

Hugo Moss: I think that would be a question for students. But I understand. I am wondering what your students would say.

Hugo Moss: It is the same thing we talked about spiritual and material as a polarity within the style of teaching and I am sure you can pinpoint certain teachers who more this or that. I would characterize the work we do: would be centers towards the spiritual side – that's very strong (imagination and concentration) is very strong and comes in right at the beginning of anything you do with us and we are definitely based on that side not on that material side.

So that would be difference to the more material based what I would call more material base approach – that is when you do more practical things. I mean the imagination can be practical, that's where we are going but I am talking about the more physical thing.

The imagination comes in very quickly at the beginning and is very strong and illustrates and is something very strong between us and we really get that going right at the start – imagination and concentration; and we talk about that as being the two sides of one coin – imagination and concentration. It is the same coin, just two sides of that. And we have an exercise that illustrates that and that's a penny which drops very quickly for our students.

LP: Do you use your creativity as a painter?

Hugo Moss: No, no, no.

LP: (Question no.6) Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Hugo Moss: I would suspect that they are the same or worse. Well, I think the materialism which Chekhov rallied against and complained about the whole time – nonstop. He wouldn't be able say that that's got any better and with the digital revolution it got even worse, I think. That our attention, our being in the world (what I am saying) being connected to the world, has diminished. I am not talking about young people; I am talking about myself. These phones we have now they take us away from, they make us take into that world. That's an advance and an extraordinary big advance in a sense we have. I mean I feel people of certain age when we didn't digital technology it is like being an emigrant from another country right now. We remember the old country, but people who are living here have no idea what it was like then and how to really imagine that. You can tell stories, but it's just not like in advance technology, like car has been invented. It is like being an emigrant I think like from another country. You remember the old days? It's just not nostalgia for a different time; it's a whole different world. What I am saying the connection, I would say if we are not careful I would say the connection is less, things got worse in

many ways but at the same time it is not worse in many ways, but at the same time it's not less successful, if you get it it's there but I think Chekhov would say – it is much better.
(laughs)

LP: (Question no.7) Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

Hugo Moss: I don't think it has to. It doesn't need an adjustment. The foundation work that Chekhov developed especially after he started teaching which was his way—trying to find ways experimenting with communicating about this stuff. He had it all he had to share it, starting with his trip to Latvia and Lithuania where he started to develop share his work with atmospheres already and do that, but then in Dartington more specifically when he had classes. He brought came up as an attempt which then he often said this isn't working and we will try something else, you are not getting it and all this... So, it was a work in progress when he which he developed certain body of work and where we have our atmospheres and we have our you know – imaginary body, centers and all these exercises and obviously the Psychological Gesture and all these other exercises staccato and legato all the things which he developed and are there., but if he carried on they would have grown there is not much voice work. He did not leave voice exercises for us so that whole area which you presumably he would have been working on it instead of I imagine would have completed certain things which are not very well developed and what has been happening now is being re continuing like the other question. Things are moving forward in a flow. I don't think any of this needs adjusting. What he left is all brilliant and beautifully presented even in transcriptions of classes. I mean he talks beautifully. The flow of images and ideas are always beautifully phrased in his funny Russian- English he always presented ideas in a beautiful way. So I think that still would be a foundation. I don't think it needs any adjustments. I never come across a bit of a Chekhov book or a class transcription or any archival material where I go:” That's not good, that doesn't work.” It's all beautifully done, beautifully crafted.

LP: In Ridgefield and in Dartington he had other teachers teaching Eurythmy and speech and other things. So that was another addition.

Hugo Moss: I don't think there is anything in his legacy that needs changing. IT NEEDS DEVELOPING MORE.

LP: Was it the 1953 book?

Hugo Moss: Yes.

LP: (Question no.8) What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in “The Composition of the Performance.”)

Hugo Moss: I have a doubt about that. The 1942 you are talking about. Is that the Russian edition? That was 1946, yes?

LP: 1942 Deirdre and others compiled and took he took the manuscript Hollywood.....

Hugo Moss: 1953 they were eliminating lot of the Eurythmy stuff and all that. That was because they thought the Americans would not go for it!

LP: No mentioning of.... the PG chapter is much shorter, yes. There were certain complaints from Deirdre – could we publish the 1942 manuscript which eventually Mala P. published in 1991 it's based on 1942.....

Hugo Moss: I mean I have 1946 edition (the Russian Book translated into German but not into English)

“The Kunst des Schauspielers“ 10 years ago published by Urahouse – “Der Moscow Ausgabe.” It's Brilliant – wonderful! This book by Boner is lovely, with picture. I have two books by Boner. One is specifically about Chekhov the other book is about theatre and half of it about Chekhov.

LP: They worked together for almost 3 years were writing in German – the practical part is gone (Zürich Archive) ... That practical part is gone.

Hugo Moss: I want to go to Zürich to Boner Archive.

Hugo Moss: 1946 is the most elegantly structured book. When you open it and you start, you go through right from the beginning to the end, right?

LP: I feel that is the clearest one I have read personally -the Russian one.

Hugo Moss: You read it in Russian?

LP: Yes, I did.

Hugo Moss: *To the Actor* is wonderful 1953 but it seems badly structured, because for instance: if you open the book at the beginning it says exercise #1. You are just moving in the space and then you are making more specific movements in the space like the hamming and pushing and pulling. But I mean that, if you did all of that – that is like 6 exercises (laughs). It is not evenly organized. It is clearly not the director's cut. You can tell, obviously you can't tell when you are reading it for the first time, and you don't know anything about Chekhov. But very quickly if you buy the one *On the Technique* 1991 then you see that that is obviously much bigger, much better organized work and there are hundreds of exercises on the technique and they are well divided and he talks about the background his things to Eurhythm and Steiner that seems to me they are both complimentary. I suppose if I was recommending to someone which one to buy only one to buy, I would probably say 1991 version. But I am not one of those people it's the better, the 1953 is not worth anything, it has lots of good stuff in it which is not elsewhere.

Hugo Moss: CH. Leonard *On Directing* –that's a funny book.

LP: Do you like it?

Hugo Moss: The first half is interesting because it has story of the Moscow Art Theatre life –lectures. That's very good, but the second half where he is commenting sort of annotated version of *The Inspector General*, I never really got much out of that.

LP: I am just wandering how much Chekhov was influenced by Leonard's editing, we cannot speculate...

Hugo Moss: Maybe there is an echo there of the organization, maybe Leonard was not the organizational genius... (laughs) I don't know but certainly that book seems like funny little. It is not really what it says on its cover. You could say assorted writings would be. But it is not really talking to the directors.

LP: (Question no.9) Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?

MB We use the 1953 version only for a simple version, because it is the only version in Portuguese.

LP: Aha.

MB We in fact keep a stock; the publisher sends us copies so we always have a stock of books. We have the whole digital archives.

We use everything. We have the whole Deirdre archives in digital form – The one that Lenard is publishing now.

LP: You mean in Canada?

Hugo Moss: He published one in Canada; we photographed the whole archive year ago the one in New York [NYPL] archive in several visits. So we have the whole things. Jessica invited me to help her editing the new sections of *The Lessons for the Teachers*, because I have it. A few years ago when she was preparing that I went through the whole thing looking for sections to publish. We use everything. We use the two editions, the German, and the *Moscow Ausgabe* and lots of other things. What I did is that I read through – it was more the gold mining section. She went to NYPL. But when she went to the NYPL, when she had decided we were going to republish the *Lessons for the Teachers*, because she knew

I had this material and was interested in it and read it quite a lot, she said, would you like to help choose additional lessons to publish, to expand it?

So I did that; I spent six months working with her, reading, sending her up sections – I just helped her with the gold mining.

[What about the change of title, “To the Teachers,” instead of “for the teachers”] I wasn’t taking part in all the publishing and the introduction and so on, just the original selection and just the reading and the gold mining.

So we use that – I’ve always used the *Lessons for the Teachers*. Anything that is available of Chekhov’s writing and audios

LP: Do you like the Mala Powers CDs?

Hugo Moss: The Mala Powers CDs are great, they’re wonderful – we play them to the students in class.

LP: do you feel it would be good to have the lectures in the original version instead of the way Mala edited them and put it together?

Hugo Moss: I don’t have an opinion about that. I don’t really know what it was like differently. I just know the audio.

LP: These CDs are great, yes?

Hugo Moss: They are wonderful!

LP: Thank you so very much!

From: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGvr8AXqN6g>

2015

We are growing accustomed to seeing actors on the stage, rather than characters.”

And that really sums up how I see our theatre nowadays, what’s missing. What Chekhov meant when he underlined the idea of transformation as being what, deep, deep down, and each actor truly desires from the first moment he says: “I want to be an actor.” It’s intuitive, perhaps you’re 16 or so and you decide you want to be an actor. If you take that impulse, it’s a desire for transformation. And for actors this transformation means the other, a character. Of course, any artist who transforms the world, be it a painter through a painting or a poet through a poem, is transforming the space and the people around him. So the actor’s transformation is part of an artistic desire to illuminate or transform the world in some way (2015 for the first time they launched the workshop on transformation)

... We see in the past few years “a redefinition of what the actor’s craft actually is.... This new direction is such a reduced version of what an actor is able to produce, of what he’s capable of in artistic terms. It’s a very poor version. In fact, it’s a way of working which non-actors can easily attain; it’s not something you need to be an artist to practice. For an actor or non-actor going into the work in this way, of actually experiencing themselves what’s on the page, the limits are their physical form and their energy in the moment. For the actor-artist the limits are quite different. They are the frontiers of his imagination, which may include images, atmospheres, and a whole universe of possibilities. And another limit would be his technical abilities, which the artist needs in order to synthesize all that’s flowing from the imaginary universe, in order to give it form and meaning and a sense of truth, and to express all this. Michael Chekhov described three states of consciousness: dreaming, waking and creating. And what the artist does is he goes to this place, this state of creating and he sustains it for the duration of a 0-second shot or a 2-hour play. He sustains something, and then afterwards he returns to his state of consciousness of being awake.

Unfortunately, what we see all too often on our stages and screens are actors (or non-actors) who are merely awake. This satisfies many directors and audiences, and sometimes the work is interesting, but it is part of the material world around us, where practical things are highly valued, things which are fast are valued, and to a certain extent working like this can be more practical and faster, but it’s a shame. Of course, an artistic creation will in one sense be harder work, and take longer to be developed, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do it. He mustn’t live in a reduced world just because it’s practical. So it’s a shame that we’ve rather lost the thread in this sense, of the artist. We’re absolutely certain that, although most actors have rather recoiled and are working in ways which aren’t very expansive, as it were, we’re quite sure that there are tens and hundreds of thousands of actors out there who deep down are artists. We really believe this, because the impulse does

come from a desire for transformation, and we try to share what it is to be an artist, to truly create a character, from scratch, and create it artistically. So the artist creates the dramatic moment where the character loses a child and with love and great pleasure he creates what is a very difficult moment for the character. Clearly there is far more space in this, more art is involved. So we explore specific tools for all this, but we also do a lot of questioning, as you can perhaps sense from the way I've been speaking." ...

Max Hafler, interviewed August 2019 in Galway, Ireland

For Max Hafler primary inspirational figures are Peter Brook and Bruce Myers, one of Brook's mainstay actors, with whom he worked at the Tramway in Glasgow. More recently he is much involved with The Michael Chekhov Association. He is certified teacher of Chekhov Technique. Max Hafler taught voice before he left England, but it was not until he came to live in the West of Ireland that his teaching career really began in earnest, in Galway Youth theatre and youth theatres all over the country in voice, acting and ensemble. The youth theatre network in Ireland is a vibrant movement [much pressed by the present recession however] When the National University of Ireland established drama courses in 2000, he was invited to teach there, and still teach on the MA and BA programmes. See Hafler, Max. 2016. *Teaching Voice: Workshops for Young Performers*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2016.

LP: (Question no. 1) *How did your use of the Chekhov system develop over the course of your acting/directing/teaching career and especially during the course of your teaching career?*

(How did you make it your own and incorporate it into your own methods?)

Max Hafler: I started with Michael Chekhov's technique late, maybe started learning 14, 15 years ago, and I started to teach about 10 years ago. Although I always worked with body and imagination – I've always been committed to it – I went to a very conventional acting school, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. We did a lot of conventional stuff for that time (the mid-70s), so we didn't do Chekhov, though we did get some ensemble and movement theatre training. When I met first the Chekhov work, which was actually at the American ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) conference in 2007, I did some exercises. They got us to use some exercises, and I was really blown away by it and thought, "This is amazing. This is kind of what I've been doing all my life, but it's in a technique." (I know lots of people who had that experience). I asked the person who was running the ATHE session, 'what is this all about?' And she said it is the Michael Chekhov technique. I said, "I've read about it, and I have read *On the Technique of Acting*." But because I hadn't practically *done* it – I mean just reading the books doesn't get you very far. So, I was aware of it, but that's all really. Anyway, she told me about MICHA and I did all of my early courses with them, up to getting my certificate and I found it absolutely revelatory, just extraordinary; really it transformed me. I can honestly say that. And it transformed my teaching, the way I saw the theatre, and ultimately the way I saw the world. It really changed my life in a really massive way, partly because of the spiritual component (which I know you have a question about later) but that enabled me to really see the world differently.

How did I make Chekhov Technique my own?

One of the things I do is I teach voice, and I've been doing that since I came to Ireland. I have a copy of my book to give you, which is for facilitators and people who are working in youth theatre or people teaching university courses, where they are not necessarily voice teachers themselves. It incorporates a lot of Chekhov in it. And I am now doing a book 'What Country Friends Is This?' *Directing Shakespeare with Young People*, which employs Chekhov technique vocally but also in terms of directing a play. I use Chekhov a lot in the voice work, but I always used the body in the voice work. It is just an extension. It was just like this natural extension.

And how else did I make it my own? I suppose a lot of the way you make the work your own depends on the catchment and type of students you have. So for instance if you are teaching a course where people come for a week and then they go away, you are going to have people in that group who've never done any Chekhov before, perhaps even don't know what it is, and so you always have to put some of the early work in there, whether some of the more 'advanced' people want to do it or not. It is useful for people to touch base with the basics of the work even if they are experienced, to keep touching base. That is never wasted. There is a particular skill in teaching multi-level but usually it is a very positive experience.

I suppose one of the areas which I feel I have made my own is in terms of directing. I think that's a very important area. I have had a lot of opportunity to direct people, after I have given them some training in the Technique so they really learn how to apply it practically. I talk about this in the new book. Of course, you adapt: you change the exercises; you learn an exercise from someone, and then you make it completely different or you give it a different emphasis. But it's still Chekhov, and that's something I think is very important. You have a respect for the learning and the source of the knowledge. It must not be in aspic but it must be true to what you believe is the core of the work. It's very easy for the teachers once they become experienced or comfortable, to kind of go off on a different tangent, like very Egotistic or something. You know that when it happens – and it happens to everybody now and then – you have to be aware of it. That's another subject.

Which exercises from Chekhov are you tailoring to the students in your classes, or do you have a group of exercises that are the most effective?

Every class you do is different. Sometimes I would like to use atmosphere as I was taught with the piece of the tape on the floor; now you're in the atmosphere, you push through. But sometimes you don't need to do that. It just depends.

I would prefer to say, what are the most important things in terms of the basic elements that you have to teach people? They have to be able to do Radiating and Receiving and understand and fully experience what that is. They have to understand about energy and the movement of energy and how they have that capability. They have to know about the Ideal Center. And they have to know about Qualities. Those are the three basic things for me. And also they have to have some Imagination input, as well. I mean how to use your Imagination; some kind of connection to the Imagination, regular exercise where you are really developing Images. They are developing Images and they understand, and you teach them to *trust* these things, because lots of people don't trust them. They go: "Oh, so fabulous, so cool!" and then they get a script in front of them and it's gone. And then you say, "Well, you can actually *apply* this." So, that would be it – I can't give specific exercises because I think, as I say, it really varies. You know yourself – you are a teacher – and you know what happens. Every group is different. For instance, I say in my second book that when I am dealing with Atmosphere with young people, it can be really good to work with personal Atmosphere *first* because they understand that better. They experience very strongly this idea that they are carrying something around with them, surrounded by an atmosphere which is only *theirs*.

LP: (Question no.2) *Do you see changes occurring in the Chekhov Method today?*

Max Hafler: Well, hm, hm ... do I see changes? It's kind of hard to say, because my history with the technique is, you know, only 12-14 years or whatever it is. I would say that the types of theatre have changed and so M. Chekhov is used in a different way. I used to teach ensemble and Devising at the University (NUI Galway) - I would start to slide the Chekhov stuff into all my ensemble and devising work. I would say, well we've got this vocabulary that you can all understand, and we can use it. So, if you work with Chekhov in devising for instance, you might focus on Qualities of movement and use them primarily as a language. For instance, we have to do a scene change; we are going to Mold, because that's really going to introduce the atmosphere for the next scene, so we are going to set the next scene, and somehow we are going to move everything nice and s l o w l y and with great effort. And Atmosphere of course you can use for anything. It is my favorite thing. Also I am not the only person who combines Chekhov with voice work. Also I've done a lot of applied drama with medical students or a lot with young people, or business students, and lecturers too. I would utilize a lot of the Chekhov tools, if I may call it that, for communication. So, Radiating and Receiving, which is one of the most important things that we can teach people through this technique, and understanding that your energy is going backwards and forwards, is an important tool for anyone in any walk of life.

LP: (Question no.3) *Is there a difference between the way Europeans, Americans, and Australians, for example, approach the Chekhov work?*

Max Hafler: Well, I have no idea about Australians.

LP: *Like John Mc Manus.*

Max Hafler: Well, John and I were at a teachers retreat together last year and we really bonded and talked a lot. We met before once, you know, he teaches voice with Chekhov and we have a lot to talk about. I think that everyone teaches the technique from their own perspective, and certain people have something that interests them, that is particularly important to them, that they make a focus. I think that I wouldn't want to split it up into Nationalities: I don't want to get into Europeans do this, and Americans do this. I mean I was taught by the Americans to keep my feet on the ground when I do a Psychological Gesture, and I know that at other places people don't necessarily follow that. But I stuck with that, because I think that works best. So, I can't answer that question. I don't know. The person to ask about that will be Uli (Ulrich Meyer-Horsch); he teaches everywhere. He runs MCE and he teaches all over.

[LPB note: Ulrich is a co-founder of Michael Chekhov Europe and member of the international faculty of MICHA, New York. In his approach to the Chekhov Technique he incorporates the exploration of children's games and work with masks. For the last 20 years, he has been teaching throughout Europe, the US, Russia, Brasil and Taiwan.
www.michaelchekhov.eu]

LP: (Question no.4) *Are there people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well?*

Max Hafler: This was one of the loaded questions I didn't like. Are there other people who are not connected with MICHA who are teaching Chekhov technique well? Yes, of course there are!

I am not really connected with MICHA, and I am pretty good teacher (laughs). I mean there are lots of people teaching it well in my opinion.

I would say a danger of NOT teaching it well – without saying oh that person does it and this person doesn't do it – a danger of not teaching the technique well is to over intellectualize and compartmentalize the work. It's got to remain primarily experiential; if it isn't, you are in trouble. And that makes for a lot of difficulty if you are in a university setting, when you have to mark papers or mark exercises or whatever which encourages compartmentalizing learning.

One of the things I really admire about MICHA is that they let you work at your own rate. Do you know what I mean? They don't have a fully kind of comprehensive course, but I think that's the way Michael Chekhov would have wanted it.

If you try to hold it intellectually and put too much structure on it then you are in danger of losing something absolutely fundamental of the organic route everyone takes in their learning. On the Masters Course I teach on there is *some* structure and you move through it but it changes radically with your students – 'I think you still have to elasticated it as much as you can.

Because I feel [otherwise] it is really counter, against the idea of what Michael Chekhov technique is. So, that is something I feel is very important. As long as you don't do that [intellectualize and compartmentalize], and you give yourself freedom and space but at the same time you hang onto what are the tenets of the technique, then that is the best place for teaching. Keep the core but give yourself some freedom.

LP: (Question no.5) *Do you care to characterize the differences between your approach and that of other American teachers?*

Max Hafler: (Well, I'm not American for a start.) No, not really. I mean, I answered in the other question. I might say what I do. What I think is important.

I feel that I want people to transform in the way I did when I started learning it. I still feel I am doing it to some extent. I want people to get that, and I see it happening in class all the time. So, it is a very joyful experience. Keep the core and give yourself some freedom. One

thing I like to use application in my courses. So, even if people are not quite ready to apply it, I like to push them into that zone a bit, so they get a sense of it. Saying to them, "This is where you are going." I mean, I don't do application every five minutes, but I do think it's important. That is an issue in all training courses. Do we just teach the exercises, trying get everyone to be as good as possible? I suppose I say that because I've had so many people say to me this is really wonderful, but what is going to happen when I am in a play? Especially if you are going to be in a play with people who do not do Chekhov (laughs). And what's the director going to make of it? I talk a lot about all of this with people; we explore those things. And this is something else that I think is very strong. And then the other thing is rather like John, I like mixing the Chekhov with voice work, and accepting that the voice is a radiating instrument, rather than something that is just a kind of adjunct to acting.

*LP: May I ask you, please? When you are talking about application does it mean that perhaps, like we did there at MICHA, there is a text (Sarah Ruhl's *The Melancholy Play* or this year, A. Chekhov's *Three Sisters*), everybody learns a two-minutes-long monologue and explores the character throughout those couple of days? Or do you have scene work, or do you have scenes prepared from the plays, or do you ask the students to bring in their own material that they are or have been working on?*

All of those things. It depends; it depends on the subject of the workshop. Very often I will do a workshop which will be, you know, voice focused (with lots of Chekhov within it), and everybody will know that's what it will be. This year where we worked on poetry from Yeats.

LP: I just saw the exhibit in Dublin about his work and life; it was so well done. In the National Library. I mean William Butler Yeats.

My friend Declan Drohan, who is at Sligo, he is a Chekhov teacher, too, and he is doing some work with Yeats and Chekhov. Back to application, I think it is important that people try to see what it is like to have a Center that's a cloud in my head and how is that going to sound when I try acting it with you. What's that going to be *like*? What does it *feel like*? I think it is important to do that. For instance, we are doing a workshop on *Woyzeck*, we are doing with Declan and myself this week and we are going to give them some scenes to look at and some materials, then we are going to let them be in two groups and make a piece. You know what I mean? Using the specific elements of the technique we have worked on. I am being quite strict about it, not saying "oh, you can use whatever you want."

LP: (Question no.6) Do you think that the cultural climate today continues to make the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's ideas more acceptable than they were in 1953?

Max Hafler: This is an interesting question. First of all, I wasn't alive in 1953, so I don't know. I find the spiritual aspects of the Michael Chekhov technique one of the things that really binds me to it and is so wonderful. I know that everybody does not agree with this and some people really shy away from it, because they consider that is going to frighten people off or something. And I think the spiritual element is more acceptable than it was, I just feel that my students are more open to it. They will often offer that phrase themselves – what did that feel like, you know? How were you finding the weekend course? "It's really kind of spiritual and I kind of wasn't expecting that." It is a surprise for them. So it's lovely. So, I'd like to think that it is more acceptable. I think the big problem with materialism is more widespread, more universal so the idea of Chekhov being 'spiritual' in a broad sense, for some people, is off-putting. This is a big issue for Drama schools and Acting training, and training for 'the business' and all of that. This idea of "the Chekhov tools," which doesn't really sit well with me! I call them Elements. I don't know if it makes it any better, but this idea of "tools" is like a trick almost, and I don't like that.

LP: (Question no.7) Does the system ask today for corrections? Does it speak methodologically in the same way or must one make adjustments in order to use it today?

LP: *Because there are so many translations, he worked with so many languages. (Russian, German, English) That's part of it, a little bit, as well.*

Max Hafler: Yes, it can get confused. People might say, "oh no, he meant this" or "he meant that." That kind of thing,

I would say, "It doesn't need corrections." You can use the elements in a completely different way, like in devising. You don't have to use the Qualities or the Image Centers for instance as something to create a realistic character. You can go in a completely different direction; you can make a Quality of movement from it or a grotesque character or something like that. When I look at some of the examples of improvisations Chekhov puts in his books, yes, they seem old fashioned, but I simply don't use them. It doesn't make them bad. They are just for another time. But the core of the work is universal and timeless. I think what is more problematic is this idea that you don't really have to do anything to get on the stage to act. You don't have to have any skills. Chekhov was dealing with that himself. You know it is in the books. And there is this kind of – "I don't need to Radiate, I don't need to do anything, I can just come on and move this chair and everybody will be fascinated. And then I can read in this great monotone and everybody will be interested." To me this is a nightmare when I witness it, because I just feel that I am being robbed of my time and my ticket money. I do not see what is remotely interesting about that sort of theatre at all. And so things like Radiating and Receiving are not relevant to people involved in that kind of approach (laughs). Because they either see it as being "too much" or "too big," The idea is, "we are just going to go on and be ourselves," but not in the way, interestingly (laughs), not in the way Chekhov talks about it – kind of more Method-related, the kind of thing where you are just bringing everything from your own life directly – but almost like a defiance, a lack of energy or something. And I saw a show like that recently which came out of the Abby, which I was very, very, very disappointed by, and it was all young people. I thought it was going to be dynamic, and it was awful. And I just thought – is this acting is supposed to be? So if you ask, does the system is asking for corrections, I would say NO. It is the theatre that requires the corrections, not the system.

And Chekhov himself was very aware of this, you make adjustments when you film or do television or something like that. You make those adjustments, and he was very aware of these things himself.

LP: (Question no.8) *What is your current idea of the relationship between the 1953 publication of Chekhov's system, edited by Charles Leonard, and the 1991 version, based on the 1942 manuscript, that Mel Gordon and Mala Powers published? (I know that the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of King Lear in "The Composition of the Performance.")*

Max Hafler: *On the Technique of Acting* 1991 (yellow and purple) – that is my favorite! The Mala Powers book with lots of exercises, very spiritual, very focused on the spiritual aspect of it, so it is interesting the 1991 version left out much of the analysis of *King Lear* in the composition.

So I might [use the 1953 Leonard-edited] book, because I am doing a weekend workshop on good and evil in *King Lear*.

LP: (Question no.9) *Do you give either of the two books to your students to read as they study with you? Are either actually useful as a "textbook"?*

Max Hafler: I use *To the Actor* for students primarily; I use that one because it is more like an acting manual. So it is a bit more like they would understand. This is *To The Actor* which has a foreword by Simon Callow (2004) – that is the book I use in the first year primarily. [LP: the 2004 re-printing with Callow's foreword is the text from the 1953 Leonard-edited publication.]

I also recommend other books, I recommend Lenard Petit's book and also Franc Chamberlain's book – it is a very good book for people just to understand what Chekhov is

if they want to, if they are really academic students and want to read up and see what it might be.

LP: I talked to Hugo and he answered that he himself has access to the German Books because he reads German but the 1953, was the only book translated to Portuguese so he has no choice. It just becomes practical in a way as for what is available.

Max Hafler: And some people wouldn't give the books to read. When I teach my own courses outside the college, I don't push the books at all. I talk about them and say, if you want to look at this you can read some more, but I focus pretty much totally on the practical stuff. At the college I use *To The Actor* because it gives a structure to them you know, and they feel happier because it is a bit more like their other courses. If we are doing Atmosphere for instance in a session, I suggest they read the chapter *after* the class.

LP: Do you use the circle diagram Mala Powers talks about in the 1991 preface?
Yes, sometimes I do. I mean it can be useful and it takes the stress out of it. "Oh, what is my Atmosphere, what my Center is, what is my Psychological Gesture, and how to do all of those things?" – feeling like you have to do all of those things at once. But actually, if you say, "If you do this, use this element effectively, all of these [other] little lightbulbs come on." They probably will, so the answer is yes and that's why!

LP: Are they actually useful as a textbook?

Max Hafler: I think they are. But they wouldn't be much use as a textbook without the practical work. That is what I would say. I don't think you can learn it from a book. Like lots of things, you can't learn it from a book. The book gives you so much insight. I still read *On the Technique of Acting* and I find new things there all the time. But I can imagine if you first encounter the book, then it could be daunting. So I am careful with everybody knowing that.

No more questions?

LP: Did they ever ask you to teach a course on Chekhov only? (I mean at the University?)

Max Hafler: Yes, I teach Chekhov the whole semester but it is only four hours a week.

LP: That is not bad 4 hours a week.

Max Hafler: So, I teach 4 hours a week for a term. But then when I do a production in the following term which sometimes happens some of those people are in it, and they get than to apply what they have learned seriously through the production. That goes on for another six weeks into the term, but I am not doing it this year.

LP: And what play did you do with them, if I may ask?

Max Hafler: *Twelfth Night* that would be one of them and *The Bacchae* the year before that, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* before that. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, I would say, would have been a mixture of different sorts of level and training, whereas *The Bacchae* especially and *The Twelfth Night* were very Chekhov based. In fact, part of my new book is based on doing the production with the students – what we did to kind of open the play at the beginning.

LP: So you are using your book?

Well not the Shakespeare one, because it is still being edited. But I teach a voice course as well – a Shakespeare voice course, which has a lot of Chekhov in it and I used my book for that.

At this point he opens his bag and presents Lenka his book.

Lenka applauds: "you are so sweet to do that, to share with me."

LP: Do you know Scott Fielding?

Max Hafler: I don't know him well. He taught me in class once.

LP: It was interesting that he felt that there is not enough voice training to go with Chekhov. He feels that when he teaches, he needs to apply voice more to his Chekhov teaching.

Max Hafler: It was very apparent to me when I started learning Chekhov that people weren't connecting that voice up. So that was something I became very aware of. John McManus and I were talking about that in Croatia last year. Not this year, but last year, 2018.

LP: Unfortunately, I have never experienced the workshop in Croatia. Thank you so much. Would you be so kind please to sign for me your book?

Max Hafler: I will sign it. When you get bored you can read that. That's what I would say to the kids.

Ok I want you to get this book.

LP: laughs – You have to make them laugh.

Max Hafler: Yes, I think so, if you are going to get anything.

LP: Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you so much.

GENERAL NOTE:

Michael Chekhov's concept of the "Psychological Gesture" is mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews.

Chekhov introduced Psychological Gesture (officially) on November 23, 1936 at Dartington. On that day his students studied the Psychological Gesture as part of larger session including critiques of previous lessons, incorporation of Images, and Form related to "What" and "How." He also gave examples of work by Stanislavsky, Prince Sergei Volkonsky, and Delsarte.

He applied the idea of the Psychological Gesture to work the students were doing on a folktale inspired play written in 1909 by the Latvian poet Janis Rainis, who called it a "winter solstice tale in five acts." According to Chekhov, "In *The Golden Steed* we must develop the line of the two evil brothers in gesture. The more we work the more you will understand what I mean by gesture. It is not only a movement with the body. It is movement and feeling, and will impulses, and interpretation, and atmosphere as well. This kind of movement must be used in our theatre. It is not movement which was used before. It must be a new kind of psychological gesture, or interpretative gesture, or what you want to call it. This is the kind of movement we need to have underneath our play, and rehearsing with this kind of gesture is what I want. Therefore, when I say don't act but find the gesture, I mean be this that by trying to find this kind of gesture the actor will be forced to go deeper into the play and his part than he would otherwise do. ... Next term we will have a special kind of movement and speech work, and then you will understand better what we mean by this special kind of gesture."

(Unpublished Lesson of 23 November 1936, in Deirdre Hurst du Prey Archives, Adelphi University. Also copied in the Dartington Hall Archives, Devon.)

APPENDIX 7

Lecture for Chapter Four, Class 2, of Teaching Syllabus

[Note: the lecture would be illustrated with images (slides), not included here.]

Mikhail Aleksandrovich "Michael" Chekhov (Михаил Александрович Чехов, 29 August 1891 – 30 September 1955)

Michael Chekhov was born at Moscow, Russia, on the 16th of August in 1891 and died in Hollywood on September 30th 1955. His father, Alexander Chekhov, was the older brother of the famous playwright, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov; they both were in love with Natalya Alexandrovna Golden. She became Alexander's second wife and Michael was her only child, while Alexander had two children from a previous marriage. (Later she would become obsessed with her only, beloved son, and may have contributed to the failure of his first marriage.) She belonged to the minority group of the Jewish population which was hit hardest by Russification at the end of the nineteenth century. This promoted Russian language, while minority centers, theatres, and publishing houses were shut down. Violent persecution of Jews, the "pogroms," began in Russia 10 years before Michael was born, but the year he was born Jews were expelled from Moscow and many emigrated to Europe or to the United States. His mother was spared of this because of her marriage. The family moved to Saint Petersburg in 1895, when Chekhov was four.

Saint Petersburg at the time of his birth was a flourishing center of culture, the capital of Czarist Russia and the home of the Russian court, which had moved there from Moscow in the eighteenth century and created a huge metropolis with enormous diversity, full of contrasts, from the dukes, countesses, and military officers, to the poor citizens we read about in Dostoevsky. Even today, the monumental buildings, squares, riverfronts, and palaces of Saint Petersburg are astonishing in their richness. It was a city filled with music, ballet, theatre, art and culture. When Michael Chekhov was two, Tchaikovsky conducted his Sixth Symphony in Saint Petersburg.

Moving out to the country, one found the wonderful beauty of the Russian landscape. The country houses of the nobles and wealthier middle class also embraced the sense of closeness to nature which accompanied Russian Orthodox spirituality.

When Michael was only a year old, he became very ill and almost died. In order to stay healthy, the family started to spend time outside the city in nature, at their country house. In this relative isolation as a young boy, Michael often was dressing up and putting on various outfits he found in the house, transforming himself into different characters, to the vast amusement of his Nanny, who would laugh until she cried, calling out, "look what he can do!" In his adult career, this ability to transform himself into his characters was one of his greatest strengths. The playwright Anton Chekhov wrote in a letter about his four-year-old nephew at that time after having lunch with him and his father, older brother Alexander – "He is remarkably intelligent boy, from his eyes radiates sensitivity. I think he will grow into a talented man".

In 1907, Michael Chekhov entered the Alexei Suvorin Dramatic School in Saint Petersburg at age 16; he graduated in 1910 and performed at the Suvorin Theatre, so-called Maly (Little) Theatre – it is still active today, and the company visits New York periodically. Also, in 1907 Chekhov performed with Suvorin's

company for the czar, Nicholai II at his summer palace Tsarskoe Selo. Michael played the role of Czar Feodor. The Czar was impressed by the 16-year-old actor's ability to transform himself into the older character and asked how his artificial nose stayed on. Michael removed the nose to show the Czar how. The Czar then offered to shake hands, but the nose putty and makeup stained the czar's white glove, much embarrassing the young man. The Czar ignored it and offered him a job as an actor in the Imperial Theatre.

More importantly for Chekhov on the earlier opening night in St. Petersburg his father, with whom he had a difficult relationship, appreciated the performance and gave Michael a kiss for the first time that he could remember.

While Michael Chekhov was studying in St. Petersburg, The Moscow Art Theatre, the innovative dramatic company and school most closely associated with his Uncle Anton, was developing the acting system that would come to dominate twentieth-century theatre and films. The director of the Moscow Art Theatre, Konstantin Stanislavsky, in collaborated with Leopold Sulerzhitsky, who directed the Moscow Art Theatre's school from 1910 to 1916. They developed a series of methods by which an actor could construct a believable character for his or her roles onstage, express realistic and believable emotions in character, and maintain the life of this character and emotions over the course of the run of the play. Among the methods – and you have surely heard the term, “method acting,” was one called Emotional Memory, where the actor, if his or her character has to be sad onstage, thinks of something sad in the actor's own life and transfers the emotions to playing the character. Obviously, there is a great deal more to it than this, but I hope you get the idea. Chekhov disagreed with Stanislavsky on this point of method, preferring to emphasize the imagination rather than only use memories.

There is a story that Stanislavsky asked the students to play a sad event that they experienced. The newly arrived Chekhov did it so well that Stanislavsky was astonished and asked him what was behind the story, and Michael told him that his father had died. Later, when Stanislavsky found out that Chekhov had made it all up – his father was still alive– he almost kicked Chekhov out of the class.

On the 26th of March 1912, the Moscow Art Theatre company came to perform in St. Petersburg, and among them was Michael's aunt, famous actress Olga Knipper-Chekhova, who was the widow of his uncle Anton, and the chief interpreter of his female roles. She was one of many women who played an important role in Michael's life and introduced Michael to the theatrical giant Stanislavsky and arranged Michael's audition for him. After the audition, Stanislavsky famously said that “Michael Chekhov, the nephew of Anton Pavlovich, is a genius.” (Michael would also later elope with Aunt Olga's niece, also called Olga Knipper, in 1914. When the younger Olga became an actress in Germany, she used the name, Olga Tschechowa. Their daughter, born in 1916, was also christened Olga, but everyone called her Ada.)

In 1912, Michael was accepted into the Moscow Art Theatre School led by Stanislavsky and Danchenko. In May 1912 he began studying with Leopold Sulerzhitsky and also under the slightly older actor and director Yevgeny Bagrationovich Vakhtangov, who initially rejected Chekhov but eventually became his closest associate. The next years, 1913-1917, saw Chekhov play a series of important roles for directors such as Richard Boleslavsky, who would later come to America. Chekhov played in silent films, gave a virtuoso performance in the role of Fraser in Henning Berger's *The Deluge* under Vakhtangov's direction, took productions on tour, secretly married, as we have said, Olga Knipper the younger, and played the elderly toymaker, Caleb Plumme, in Dickens' *Cricket on the Hearth*.

For the Dickens part, Chekhov actually made the toys he used in the performance. He worked with Stanislavsky, preparing the role of Treplev in *The Seagull*.

Chekhov's life took a dark turn in 1917. In 1913 Chekhov's father did actually die; his beloved teacher, Sulerzitsky, died in December 1916. In 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution took place, and soon after, Chekhov, in spite of the birth of their daughter, divorced his wife Olga. At the end of 1917, in December, his cousin Volodia committed suicide, with Michael's revolver. When he was informed of Volodia's death, he was performing a play. He simply walked off the stage in the middle of a scene, and the performance was never finished. (In 1919 Chekhov's mother, to whom he was very attached, would also pass away.) Stanislavsky gives him a year off to heal his psychological crisis. What saved him from alcoholism and deep depression at that time was his good relationship with his second wife Xenia Ziller, whom he married in 1918, and the fact that he had opened his own private studio in his Moscow apartment.

By December 1918, he is back onstage. In 1920, on the Moscow Art Theatre mainstage, he plays Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. In 1921, Vakhtangov would direct Chekhov in Strindberg's play *Erik XIV*; later that year, Chekhov played his most famous role: Khlestakov, the lying, scheming, comic faker in Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General*. This production was directed by Konstantin Stanislavsky himself. Chekhov became the darling of the Moscow audience.

In 1922, Chekhov lost his dear friend, Vakhtangov, to an illness, and discovered the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, who called his "spiritual science" Anthroposophy. In 1924, Chekhov performed the title role in a mystical production of Hamlet Chekhov. Also, in 1924, he became the director of the semi-independent Second Moscow Art Theatre. In 1925 and 1926, he took his young company out on tours. In January 1928 his autobiography *The Path of the Actor* was a runaway best-seller.

Then, at the height of his success, Chekhov's world comes crashing down. In June 1927, a group of rivals from the theatre had revolted, left the theatre, and denounced Chekhov as an idealist and mystic producing "alien and reactionary" shows. In Stalin's Russia, this was enough to get you killed, and Chekhov became an "unperson." Only with the help of the Commissar of Education Lunacharsky did he and his second wife, Xenia, escape from Russia with their lives.

Do you know the novel, 1984, by George Orwell? Like in the novel, the name of Michael Chekhov was erased from Soviet theatre history, not to reappear until 1959. A really bizarre thing occurred to Chekhov right before he escaped from Russia. He was arrested but taken to some kind of a club for the Communist elite, where he was expected to play chess for hours with important Communists, without a word being spoken. He won the chess games, was taken home, and the next day the visas for him and his wife arrived at their apartment. They left Russia immediately. Xenia did not have a time to say goodbye to her mother and father.

After leaving Russia, Chekhov and his wife travelled to Germany. Chekhov signed a contract as an actor with great figure in modern drama, Max Reinhardt. Chekhov famously created a role under Reinhardt's direction, a clown-like character called Skid in the play *Artisten*, which he performed in German in Vienna, Austria. He directed Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for the Habima Hebrew theatre in Berlin in 1930 and this critically acclaimed production subsequently toured Europe and Britain, but Chekhov was not traveling with them. Chekhov also tried to start a theatre in Prague, with the so-called Prague Group of exiles from the Moscow Art Theatre, but he could not get enough funding to do so.

Chekhov acted in German in sound films (one, called *Fool for Love*, directed by his ex-wife Olga, who became a movie star and later Hitler's favorite).

In 1931, he left Berlin for Paris, where he continued working with the Habima Hebrew Theatre. With the help of his supporters, such as the composer Sergei Rachmaninov, the Morgensterns, and a young Swiss theater director and patron Dr. Georgette Boner, he opened the Tchekhow Theatre in Paris in 1931, which closed with the production named *The Castle Awakening*, performed only twice. But Chekhov and his company performed other plays in Russian three weeks after the Castle closing night. (Chekhov starred as Eric, Hamlet, Frazer, and Malvolio). Unfortunately, the Russian-speaking audience in Paris was relatively small, and Chekhov found himself in debt and could not continue.

He then got an offer at the beginning of 1932 from Latvia and Lithuania, where he performed as an actor, taught at drama school and directed in the National theatre. You can see why historians call this his “period of wandering” in Europe! He also directed operas, such as *Parsifal* by Wagner in Riga, Latvia in March 1934. During the rehearsals in January, he suffered a mild heart attack or angina and was temporarily hospitalized. (A year later, when Chekhov played on Broadway, Georgette Boner would be relieved that he was healthy and strong again.) Much later, in February 1942, Chekhov would direct another opera, *The Fair of Sorochinsk* by Mussorgsky, in New York, with choreography by George Balanchine. *Parsifal* premiered in May of 1934, but that same month, right-wing coup replaced the Latvian government. In August, Michael Chekhov, his wife Xenia, and Georgette Boner would go to Italy, with Boner traveling on to Palestine in the fall.

Then, in October 1934, Chekhov’s luck changed. He was asked by the Russian-American theatre impresario, Sol Hurok—some of you may remember him as the man who brought the Bolshoi Ballet to America—to bring a troupe of Moscow Art Theatre veterans (who were also in exile) to New York in 1935. Some of these were the ones who had stayed in Prague and some came with Chekhov from the Baltic countries and rehearsed with him in Paris for the US tour. They were to call themselves “The Moscow Art Players,” in order to capitalize on the fame of the Moscow Art Theatre. The Soviets protested and even tried to put notices in newspapers and Time magazine denying any connection—another example of Chekhov being an “unperson” in Russia.

In February 1935, they appeared at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway in a repertory season that included Nikolai Gogol’s *The Inspector General*, an evening of one-act plays, and dramas by Ostrovsky, Henning Berger, and Bulgakov. Although the performances were in Russian, the acting, and above all, Chekhov’s performance as Khleshtakov in *The Inspector General*, was so spectacular that the New York theatre world was hypnotized. The American director, Robert Lewis, saw the performances, along with the other members of the famous Group Theatre, such as Stella Adler, who had actually studied with Stanislavsky. Lewis recalled, “All eyes were opened to what could, for once, accurately be described as ‘total’ acting. By this I mean each part Chekhov assumed was minutely executed from the point of view of physical characterization—the walk, the gestures, the voice, the makeup—all were meticulously designed to illuminate the character he was playing. ... His Khlestakov in the Gogol play was a prime example of total acting.”¹

Among the audience were two young actresses, Beatrice Whitney Straight and Deirdre Hurst, who were already training in the new Russian methods and other traditions connected with Chekhov. Their admiration for Chekhov’s performance would set in motion events that led to Chekhov coming to Ridgely in late 1938. Beatrice Whitney Straight was the daughter of Dorothy Whitney Straight Elmhirst.

Beatrice's father had died when she was young, and Dorothy had remarried, to Leonard Elmhirst, an Englishman with advanced ideas about utopian communities, farming innovations, and the arts. Beatrice and Dorothy were members of the wealthy Whitney family. Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst founded Dartington Hall near Devon in England. They purchased 14th century castle and turned it into a school of agricultural innovation, a truly utopian community, and increasingly, a school for the arts. It is still in business today.

The character of the arts program at Dartington was highly influenced by Leonard Elmhirst's international perspective and connections with South Asian (Indian) culture. The resident artists included the Kurt Jooss ballet and, one should especially note, Uday Shankar's dance troupe, which offered a direct connection with Chekhov through the patronage of Georgette Boner's sister, Alice. Uday was the older brother of the famous musician, Ravi Shankar.

Dorothy was interested in the theatre, and she and Leonard were patrons of some of the best British theatre directors and producers. Her daughter, Beatrice, was increasingly drawn to acting, and in 1935, she was in New York with her friend, Deirdre Hurst, whom she had met through the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, which both had attended. Hurst had also been in the School of Dance and Mime at Dartington the previous year, 1934. Beatrice was studying acting with Tamara Daykarhanova and Maria Ouspenskaya, former members of the Moscow Art Theatre – Maria Ouspenskaya is even today known for her character roles in Hollywood. Hurst was studying with Martha Graham. Both Hurst and Straight had experienced Russian acting techniques at Cornish. After seeing Chekhov perform, and taking lessons from him which Daykarhanova and Ouspenskaya translated as he was teaching, Beatrice urged her mother and stepfather to consider bringing him to Dartington to create a theatre school.

The Elmhirsts came to the US, interviewed and worked with Chekhov in Philadelphia where he was on tour, and offered him the opportunity to come to Dartington. From the beginning, there was a great mutual understanding between Dorothy and Chekhov.

After a year of learning English, first in Southbury, Connecticut, and then at Dartington, where he also set up the school curriculum, Chekhov opened the Theatre Studio in the fall of 1936 with 22 students; eight more came in the spring of 1937. Many of the students were American, Canadian, or Australian as well as Latvian and Lithuanian. The opening Day was 5th of October 1936.

In a moment I will say something about the teaching techniques that Chekhov used at Dartington, Ridgefield, and in Hollywood. But now I just want to point out that his two years at Dartington, 1936 to 1938, offered him an ideal situation, a safe haven, for him to create what he thought of as a "laboratory" to refine his techniques in collaboration with his students and colleagues.

However, by 1938 it was becoming clear that the gathering clouds of World War II would make it impossible to continue the Theatre Studio in England. The crisis in the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia – and remember that Chekhov had a close relationship with Prague – and the appeasement of Hitler in the Munich Agreement of September 1938 are just two examples. Chekhov and the Dartington trustees agreed to transfer the Studio to America, especially since over half the students were American or Canadian.

Beatrice Straight took a plane to New York to seek out an alternate location for the studio. The Ridgefield School for Boys on North Salem Road (across from today's High School and Scott's Ridge Middle School) had just gone out of business, leaving classrooms and other spaces that could be used to create studio spaces, a dormitory and cafeteria with, as Deirdre Hurst described it, "knives and

forks and faded blankets on the bed and everything, just waiting to be taken over.” The main building is still there as a private house, with the upper floors removed. The barn-like gymnasium was turned into the Elmhirst Theatre. It is still there, part of the property of another, nearby house. Mamasasco Lake was part of the property and would provide recreational facilities. Back in England, Hurst organized packing the school’s properties for shipment to Connecticut. Everyone seems to have agreed that the location seemed to be ideal; it “approximated the beautiful rural setting of the Dartington Hall Studio and was only 55 miles from New York.”

A farewell performance was given by the students in Dartington in the middle of December 1938. Chekhov and his wife Xenia sailed for America on 17th of December 1938. Before they left, Dorothy Elmhirst sent them the following note: “Beloved Michael and Xenia – You have opened a new life for me that neither time nor separation can destroy. My heart is too full of gratitude to speak. Nothing can diminish the power of love I felt for you. Life is forever different because you came.” One of Chekhov’s principle students, Hurd Hatfield spoke about the 1938 trip aboard the liner, Normandie: “I traveled on the boat with Chekhov. Before we boarded Chekhov was very nervous because, back in Soviet Russia, they were shooting people – the distinguished ones, like the generals. And he was afraid to walk his dog, and he said: ‘You Hurd, walk my darling, my dog Assik.’ But the dog tended to bite everyone. So, I walked him and he kept biting my heels.”

By late January 1939 pretty well all of the women and the non-British men from Dartington had arrived in Ridgefield and set immediately to work on their studies, taking up pretty much where they had left off in England.

One important thing that Chekhov took with him from Russia was his own version of Stanislavsky’s, Sulerzhitsky’s, and Vakhtangov’s techniques. He always acknowledged that his own techniques derived from theirs. However, he formulated these methods into a new system; one based more on imagination and creative intuition than on pure emotional memory.

Two of the most important other elements in the training of the Studio in both Dartington and Ridgefield were derived from Rudolph Steiner’s ideas. These were Speech Formation, which Chekhov had studied in Germany, and Eurythmy, a word derived from the Greek roots meaning “rhythm” and “beautiful.” For Steiner, speech was a process of forming imaginative pictures through individual sounds. Not all of Chekhov’s students found the speech formation training useful. Beatrice Straight thought that it caused an actor to “sing” lines in a similar manner for every character that he or she was playing. Others found it useful for that allowed them to develop their voices.

Eurythmy is an art of movement which is different from dance, an art of moving to speech as well as to music. Eurythmic movements relate to the sounds and rhythms of speech, to the tones and rhythms of music, and to emotions such as joy and sorrow. Steiner called it "visible music" or "visible speech." Chekhov focused in his training sessions on moving to speech. Chekhov also had sculptors and painters come to the studio and lead sessions where the actors worked with clay and chalk as they listened to music. Improvisations were also a big part of the training program.

A closely related concept, which Chekhov first introduced at Dartington in the fall of 1936, is the “Psychological Gesture,” one of the elements of the Chekhov techniques that today are used very widely throughout the world. Psychological gesture is a way of outwardly expressing inner emotions and thoughts. Later I will show you some examples from the acting of Chekhov himself in American films and of actors whom he influenced, such as Anthony Quinn. According to Chekhov,

“Everyday gestures are unable to stir our will because they are too limited, too weak, and particularized. They do not occupy our whole body, psychology, and soul, whereas the psychological gesture as an archetype takes possession of them entirely.” With Psychological Gesture, Chekhov was also influenced by South Asian (Indian) dance, particularly that of his Dartington colleague, Uday Shankar. Chekhov spoke during his first lesson in Dartington of Shankar, saying, “What does it mean to do something with our whole being? Shankar can lift one eyebrow and we say – how beautifully he dances. Words are so clever but movement is simpler. Therefore we can begin our work with movement, with Psychological Gesture, and let the words come on the movement. Your body must say the words.”

Other exercises sought to develop a feeling of ease onstage, to avoid psychological tie-ups, stage fright, and so forth. There were several exercises using balls for props, to investigate communication between actors in a physical way.

As should be clear, The Chekhov Theatre Studio at Ridgefield was a direct continuation of the work of the Studio at Dartington, but it was also more connected to the New York theatre scene. In fact, Chekhov would soon establish a center in Manhattan for courses available to professional actors there, which perpetuated the Studio for several months after it had stopped functioning in Ridgefield in early 1942. One big difference was that the training at Ridgefield was more practical, more hands-on, and the students were more quickly involved in actual professional productions. This was possible because, in October 1939, exactly three years after the opening of the Studio at Dartington, Chekhov graduated six of his original students, who also helped him teach in Dartington - including Dorothy and Beatrice Straight, Deirdre Hurst, Peter Tunnard, Alan Harkness, and Blair Cutting, who by now had three years of Chekhov technique experience and became professionals in their field.

The first professional production featuring the students was, however, a failure. In England, Chekhov and his number two associate, the Russian writer, director, and filmmaker, George Shdanoff, had created a dramatic piece based on Dostoyevsky’s writings called *The Possessed*. It opened at the Lyceum Theatre on Broadway on October 24, 1939 and closed in two weeks. Many of the New York critics were extremely harsh, especially criticizing Shdanoff’s text of the play, although they praised the group scenes that Chekhov had directed. Others had reserved praise for the work and more for the young actors, but the mixed praise was not enough to ensure the commercial success of the production. As the American critic and director, Norris Houghton, observed, Chekhov should have taken the play out of town on tryouts to see if the scenes worked with American audiences before coming to Broadway. Chekhov in effect violated one of his own principles, which was to tour first so the students could learn from the production and improve the production.

In any case, in 1940 the Chekhov Theatre Studio began an extensive national tour – 5000 miles through New England, the Middle Atlantic States, the South, and the Southwest, from New Hampshire and Vermont to Texas and Oklahoma, 15 states altogether. This professional touring company was produced by Beatrice Straight and managed by Straight and Alan Harkness. The Chekhov Theatre Players performed in numerous civic auditoriums, opera houses, women’s clubs with theatres, museums, schools, and particularly, universities, to sell-out crowds and enthusiastic audiences. For two months, the company travelled by truck, bus, and car.

The students performed *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare and *The Cricket on the Hearth* by Dickens – you will have noticed that these are the same plays Chekhov himself performed in and directed in Europe. Chekhov directed these plays

with the help of George Shdanoff and Alan Harkness. They had come to understand the realistic tastes of American audiences, but in directing them, Chekhov brought to the American stage Russian and continental ideas and his own interpretations. The critics applauded wildly.

The Chekhov Theatre Players were finally able to demonstrate a way of playing the classics that seemed relevant to contemporary audiences. As for the technical aspects of the productions, there was a great deal of attention to detail. For example, the toys in *The Cricket on the Hearth* were designed by Michael Chekhov and painted by artist Bob Gundlach and the students – remember that he had made his own toys when he did the role in the 1920s.

The tour was repeated in 1941, by which time a young Russian-born actor and circus artist from France, Yul Brynner, had joined the troupe. Chekhov particularly admired the way Brynner invented his own make-up and created his characters. Their Broadway “Studio Production” in December 1941 was enthusiastically received. Chekhov directed Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* for Broadway, and it was a success. They also added *King Lear* to the repertory. Chekhov wanted to play Lear himself, but was always worried about his command of English, so he directed the play for his company, with Ford Rainey in the title role. Chekhov also thought the play was an appropriate response to a world at war.

War came soon enough to the Theatre Studio; in fact, while they were playing on Broadway, Pearl Harbor occurred. The last, brief tour was in early 1942, by which time most of the men were either already drafted or awaiting the draft, or, like Brynner, already working in the communications efforts surrounding America’s entry into the war. Several of the women, from both Dartington and Ridgefield, went to war. Mary Haynsworth, for example, served with the American Red Cross in Europe, 1943-46, establishing clubs for soldiers in England and France, and driving a “club mobile” to bring entertainment and refreshments to soldiers in the field. After the war, she returned to the stage, participating in touring Broadway shows.

Chekhov’s last career performance onstage was a sort of farewell benefit at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel’s theatre auditorium in New York in 1942. He performed for the first and last time on stage in English. Five students from Ridgefield Studio joined him, including Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst. He and Shdanoff did a one-act play taken from Anton Chekhov’s text, *I Forgot*, in which an elderly man torments a shop keeper by forgetting why he came to the shop. It was prepared along with another one-act called “The Witch” in English version adapted for theatre from Anton Chekhov’s story by Michael himself. The critics applauded the performance. Chekhov would use his monologue from *I Forgot* as his screen test audition in Hollywood.

Another important gift which his work at Dartington and Ridgefield gave Chekhov was the opportunity to write down his teaching methods for future publication. Deirdre Hurst became, in effect, personal assistant to Chekhov. Her ability to take shorthand – Chekhov nicknamed her “the pencil” – allowed her to record his classes and lectures as an unpublished manuscript in 1942 called **To the Actor**, which made possible all subsequent editions of this book. Chekhov would take the manuscript to California with him when he left New York. In California, Chekhov finished a Russian-language edition, *O technike aktera*, with illustrations by Nicolai Remisoff, in 1946. Subsequently, he would work with Russian-born Charles Leonard, his agent’s husband, to re-edit his writings into the 1953 publication, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. This edition omitted many references to Steiner, and others to creative inspiration, and subsequent editions have tried to restore more of his ideas to the text. In 1991, Chekhov’s California

pupil and eventual executrix of his estate, the film actress Mala Powers, published the 1942 version as *On the Technique of Acting*.

Chekhov's work at Dartington and Ridgefield was the first of the two final phases of his career: a period of teaching and directing in his own studio, and then, a period in Hollywood, where he would act in films, teach and coach an important generation of American film actors, and publish the books documenting his theories and teaching methods, which I once more note was due to the careful records of Deirdre Hurst du Prey. I show you here the first edition of *To the Actor* from 1953, as well as a manuscript children's book written by Chekhov, entitled *A Tale about Lies and How Swiftly They Spread across the Earth*.

Just like his famous uncle, the writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, Michael Chekhov was beloved by many friends and colleagues, who called him Mischa. Among his friends was the composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, who also helped Chekhov get his first screen test in Hollywood in 1942, launching Chekhov's career as a film actor. He not only played in a number of great films – for one of which, Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, Chekhov was nominated for an Academy Award for best supporting actor – but also taught or coached many famous film stars. I want to underscore the close connection between his acting and his teaching in Hollywood. For example, Gregory Peck also starred in *Spellbound*. He embraced Chekhov's techniques, and was subsequently coached by George Shdanoff and his wife, Elsa, in every film he made.

Similarly, Chekhov made a film with Ida Lupino, one of the most successful actresses in Hollywood but also one of the few women film directors of the period.

When Mala Powers, then a young actress, asked Lupino's advice about training, she urged her to go to see Chekhov. Powers became one of Chekhov's closest associates in Hollywood, and, as we have seen, was executrix of his estate and helped edit his books.

Chekhov's famous performance in a scene from Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, was one which came to symbolize his idea of Psychological Gesture for a whole generation of actors. {{ play film clip }}

The famous Hollywood actor, Anthony Quinn – a great admirer of Chekhov – reports that when Chekhov did this scene, after many takes, the technical crew broke out into applause. In fact, Chekhov used the crew on a movie set as his "audience." Quinn may even be said to have been Chekhov's most loyal student in Hollywood, along with Jack and Virginia Palance, Lloyd Bridges, Gary Cooper, and of course, Marilyn Monroe, who left money in her will to Chekhov's widow, Xenia. Quinn and Patricia Neal tell an interesting story about Gary Cooper's use of Chekhov's techniques while filming *The Fountainhead*. Cooper was famously bashful about doing exercises in class. However, he was having trouble with one scene (they apparently did something like 50 takes). They stopped filming and took a break for lunch. During the break Gary Cooper hid himself behind a large tree. He stood there and did a Chekhovian exercise about which he had been skeptical in class: "Pretend you are a tree, send tubes down, down to the middle of the Earth – 1 mile down, 1½ mile down – at your feet. Spread your arms, you are full of gold, send it out to the world." According to Quinn (who probably got it from Neal), "It was funny to see Gary doing it, but it worked. He came back. They started and did the scene in one take."

The number of Hollywood actors affected by Chekhov directly, or through George and Elsa Shdanoff, is staggering. From the Ridgefield group, there were Beatrice Straight, Yul Brynner, Hurd Hatfield, Woody Chambliss, Ford Rainey, and many others; from the Hollywood group there are Powers, Peck, Quinn, Cooper, Monroe, the Palances, Bridges, Neal, Robert Stack, Sterling Hayden, Burt Lancaster

(who occasionally disagreed with Chekhov), Rex Harrison, James Dean, Clint Eastwood, and Jack Nicholson. Beginning with Straight and Brynner from the Ridgefield group, Chekhov's pupils won more than 15 Academy Awards. The list of Tony and Emmy Awards is even longer.

Here are some of the remembrances of Chekhov's students – brief selection (slides 54-59, about 30 sec each image):

- + Anthony Quinn and Yul Brynner
- + Hurd Hatfield + Mala Powers
- + Sanford Meisner and Gregory Peck
- + Clint Eastwood and Jack Nicholson
- + Marilyn Monroe (pause the Power-Point in order to read)

Please note Monroe's words: "man of great spiritual depth," "saint-like and witty, too"

"Acting became important ... an art that increased your life and mind. Acting became more than a profession to me. It became sort of a religion."

In the months before his death at the end of September, 1955, Chekhov's Hollywood followers arranged to tape a series of lectures – some of them from his home, as he was too sick to lecture in front of the audience – summarizing his experiences in Russia and many aspects of his methods for dramatic training. Circulated as audio programs, and partially transcribed, these lectures joined his other writings as resources for those who sought to carry on his work.

After Chekhov's death, George Shdanoff remembered asking Chekhov: "Misha, what we're doing here in Hollywood? We didn't become involved with the theatrical profession to make better actors for Louis B. Mayer."² Chekhov answered, "We're not making better actors for Louis B. Mayer, we are helping people to grow spiritually and become better humans."

Michael Chekhov was a human being of a great resilience. He was persona non grata in Russia and could easily have been killed under Stalin's regime, yet was also active in Hollywood as a Russian émigré during the McCarthy era, when Beatrice Straight and other people associated with Chekhov were actually blacklisted. We may say that he was a man who lived in a double exile: exiled from his homeland as well as from his native language – although Chekhov was fluent in German and acted on stage in Austria and Germany, as well as in German-language films. Yet, he was very aware of how difficult it is for a foreign actor to perform onstage in English. He became, of course, a Hollywood character actor, for whom an accent was in fact an advantage in film roles. More importantly, he became someone who could nurture talent and be a mentor.

From the late 1940s, Chekhov's health became a problem. From 1954, it deteriorated markedly. He gave a series of lectures – which were fortunately recorded – in 1955. On September 30, 1955, he died of his third heart attack. Ironically, James Dean, who might have gone on to be Chekhov's greatest pupil, died in a car accident the same day.

The influence of Michael Chekhov's teachings is truly global, international. Ridgefield, CT is proud on hosting such a personality in their town from 1939 to 1942 and now since 2009 hosting every year in the fall – Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival. I feel that it is wonderful to continue the tradition and celebrate Michael Chekhov and his genius – his influence on the art of theatre.

[clip of Chekhov speaking³]

End.

²Co-founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios (MGM).

Appendix 8 “In his own words.”

Register of *verbatim* texts of Michael Chekhov exercises, including those translated from the Russian of *O technike aktera*, 1946, summarized in the exercises in the chapter on Teaching Chekhov, above.

Class 1

Chekhov: There are no purely physical exercises in our method. These would be useless, since our primary aim is to penetrate all of the parts of the body with fine psychological vibrations. This process makes the physical body more and more sensitive in its ability to receive our inner impulses and to convey them expressively to the audience from the stage. Our bodily exercises, therefore, are at the same time psychological ones, and the actor who wishes to get the right results from the suggested exercises must remember this while working on them. [1991/1942, p. 43; not in 1953]

Your body must become the expression of your emotions. It is a mistake for the actor to think that right away he must be emotional, because the emotion will grow up itself from some conditions on the stage and that these conditions may be present, we have to study. The emotions cannot be "done" - they are there in you. The study of the emotions is how to clear up the way in order that the emotions may come through. To see the "statue" or image for instance, opens the door a little bit towards the expression of the emotions. ... [Unpublished – Three Lessons Given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (du Prey) by Michael Chekhov, New York, 18 March 1935.]

The psychology of this type of exercise is that the psychology influences the body, and the body the psychology. [Unpublished lesson, 12 October 1936]

Crossing the Threshold when you come into the Studio. But we must help to do this with some outer thing: try to be quiet for three to four minutes before the class begins. This is a very good habit to begin with, as we shall need this power for our future performances. [Unpublished Nov. 18, 1936]

1946 Exercise 24.

Divide your room into two parts. [Establish a line which is] the "threshold" of the stage/scene. Approach the "threshold" with the intention of increasing your the level of your activity as soon as you step over it. Make an internal effort to raise the internal volitional wave [your will-impulse] from below, from the legs, up to the chest, and hold it there. Do this exercise many times. Make sure that activity does not go into physical, muscular tension. When the exercise is properly executed, you will feel your whole being expand and increase. With muscle tension, on

the contrary, you will experience a kind of contraction, a reduction in your being.

As you cross the “threshold,” begin to radiate your activity from the chest, then from outstretched arms and, finally, from your whole being. Send radiation in various directions.

Radiate activity by giving it a certain color [quality].

Proceed gradually to simple improvisations. Try to make them, keeping activity and radiation.

Group exercise: one after another, participants enter the stage, crossing the planned line of the “threshold”. Each incoming participant contributes to a higher level of activity. He or she radiates it into the space around them. So do the rest. Activity accumulates, saturating the space (at least, the participants of the exercise should imagine this).

[At this point, the class or improvisation begins.] Having come together, they begin to do improvisation, using both their inner activity and the activity accumulated in the space around them.

The purpose of the exercise is achieved when its participants can say to themselves: “Activity has a unifying force. It helps to engage in communication with partners and encourages collective creativity.”

Make it a rule not to start rehearsals or performances without crossing the “threshold” into the scene.

[1946, Exercise 24, pp. 126-127; translated from the Russian]

NOTE: see below, Class 8 Radiating, for a reprise of the Threshold exercise with emphasis on Radiating:

EXERCISE 58. Threshold (to also be reprised in class on Radiating)

Define a line on the floor as if it were the threshold of a door which you have to cross. Approach it from the distance, keeping in mind that while crossing it you have, through a sudden impulse, to increase your Activity as much as you can. Do this many times until you are sure that you do not strain your muscles instead of producing a psychological flash of Activity. By doing this correctly you will experience a sudden expansion, whereas tense muscles will only cause inner contraction.

Now, add to this sudden flash of Activity, a strong impulse to radiate from your chest straight out in front of you. Avoid any tension of the muscles.

Vary the manner of radiating. Stretch out your arm, pointing at some definite spot; look sharply at some point, radiating from your eyes; radiate from your forehead; open your arms and hands, radiating from your palms; radiate while moving your hand from one point in the room to the other; do the same with your glance, with your whole figure, and so on.

[1991/1942, Exercise 58, p. 116; not in 1953]

THE WORD – THE VOICE

Your voice does not come from your diaphragm, throat, or lips, but out of you and in front of you. You must visualize a spot in front of you where your voice is.

Exercise: Say a sentence beautifully, then harshly, and make the difference not with intonation, tone, or stress, but in the quality of feeling in the voice; for instance, "Mary had a little lamb." Then the words "Mary," then send your voice to different places. First near to you, and then farther away, by degrees, trying each time to reach just that spot and nowhere else. [Unpublished – Three Lessons Given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (du Prey) by Michael Chekhov, New York, March 16th 1935]

The ACTOR'S MARCH

March around the room following a leader. You are strong, you are healthy, your hands and arms are free and beautiful, your legs are strong. Imagine yourself in three parts: around your head is the feeling of space and power, the power of thought. Around your chest will be the power of feeling and around your feet the power of will. These must be in beautiful harmony as you march. Then you will be concentrated people.

(Unpublished exercises 1936, Adelphi University Archives and Special Collections, Deirdre Hurst du Prey archives, The Michael Chekhov Manuscript Collection; Box 1 folder 1, October 5, 1936 – underlining in original. Also quoted in Gordon, Mel. 1983. "Chekhov on Acting: A Collection of Unpublished Materials (1919-1942)," in *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 27, no. 3, Michael Chekhov number, Autumn 1983, p. 51. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1145460>.)

ACTORS MARCH: (Dawn Arnold) The students walk freely in the space and the instructor recites the text.

"I am a creative artist.

I have the ability to radiate

Lifting my arms above me, I soar

Lowering my arms I continue to soar

In the air swirling around my head

And shoulders I feel the power of thought.

In the air swirling around my arms and chest I experience the power of feeling.

In the air swirling around my legs and feet I experience the power of will.

I am that I am.

The Actor's March is documented repeatedly in Chekhov's teaching, both in Dartington/Ridgefield (as per Hurst du Prey) and from the beginning in Russia [Olga Pizhova, *Prizvanie (Calling)* (Moscow: Iskysstvo, 1974), p. 204. Whether the exact words that Dawn Arnold uses are all Chekhov's or include a few of his students' interpretations over the years is hard to say, but in general it reflects his ideas, as recorded by Hurst du Prey and Pizhova.

(Petit, Lenard. 2019. *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*. Oxford and New York: Routledge, Part 2, "Imagination." Petit cites a different collection of Hurst du Prey's Dartington notes at Adelphi entitled, *The Actor is the Theater: A collection of Michael Chekhov's*

unpublished notes and manuscripts on the art of acting and the theatre, typescript, 1977.)

Chekhov 1953 Exercise 13 (for a group) – moved up to the first class, above, is found in the textbook, 1953/2002, pp. 41-46.

[Homework:]

Exercise:

1. Take a book. [Open it, lay it down in the middle of the space] and speak a sentence into it from various distances. First near, then far away, and then alternate.

This helps your sense of projection.

2. Take a sentence and speak it first as though each word were very tasty. Then speak it for the beauty of the sound. Then try to combine the two. Do this one way and then the other. This helps to make your ear very sensitive.

[Unpublished – Three Lessons Given to Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst (du Prey) by Michael Chekhov, New York, March 22nd 1935]

CLASS 9 Expansion and Contraction

[1946, introductory remarks and exercises 9 and 10, pp. 91-96, summarized; see Appendix 8 for verbatim texts. See also the Psychological Gesture chapter in 1946, *passim*, and 1953/2002, Drawing 2 and p. 68]

Gesture extends beyond the physical body (not in Malaev-Babel 2002)

[I have already said that a weak, limp Psychological Gesture, made without will, cannot sufficiently awaken your feelings and will-impulses. But how to make the Psychological Gesture strong? While doing the exercises, you may have noticed that excessive muscle tension weakens the strength of the gesture rather than increases it. A different kind of force is needed.]

Your physical movement is preceded by a spiritual impulse, desire, or decision to make this or that movement. This impulse is spiritual power. It continues to live in your physical movement even after you have done it. By making a physical movement, you can either preserve this inner mental strength, or exhaust it prematurely. Excessive physical stress depletes it. On the contrary, physical movement without undue stress preserves it. But you can not only preserve this power, but also increase it, by making a gesture. Suppose you make a sharp, strong movement, throwing your body and arms forward. Having done it, you naturally reach the limit of your physical movement. Your body should stop. If you try to continue to move outwardly, you will be forced to strain your muscles excessively and at the same time lose a significant part of the original internal strength. But you can continue your movement without such muscle strain. If you continue it by radiating an internal force in the direction of the movement made, you will continue it, despite stopping the physical body. You will

get a feeling that your internal movement goes beyond the limits of the external, physical [motion]; your strength increases and your body is freed from muscle strain. This is the force that fills the Psychological Gesture and awakens your feelings and will.

You should not be embarrassed if at first it seems to you that you are only imagining inner strength. Imagination in connection with the exercises will gradually make this force a reality. [1946, pp. 91-92; translated from the Russian]

1946 Exercise 9.

Start with simple movements: raise your hand, lower it, pull it forward, to the side, etc. Make this movement without excessive muscular tension [unnecessary physical tension], imagining the radiation going in the direction of the movement.

Perform the same movements with greater physical strength, but without excessive muscular tension and at a faster pace, imagining as before the strength of the radiating force.

Now do the same movements, [but] *with* excessive physical tension. Gradually relax the muscular tension, while at the same time imagining that physical force is being replaced by an ever-increasing mental strength. Stand up and sit down, walk around the room, kneel, lie down, etc., trying to do these movements with your inner strength. Having finished the movement externally, continue it internally.

[Homework:] Perform the Psychological Gesture with colors [coloration/qualities], trying to remove your attention from the physical body and focus your attention solely on the internal strength of the gesture. Your radiation will by itself be filled with the coloration/qualities of the Psychological Gesture.

[Homework, props needed for sharing in class:] Perform a simple étude (clean the room, set the table, clean up the library, water the flowers, etc.). With all movements, try to catch the internal force and radiation associated with them.

Perform a series of simple movements again, but only in your imagination. In this case, you will be dealing with a pure form of internal strength and radiation. [Do the same for the Psychological Gesture.]

Through such exercises, you will become acquainted with the force that alone is transmitted to the viewer from the stage, attracting their attention. [1946, Exercise 9, pp. 92-94; from the chapter on Psychological Gesture; translated from the Russian]

Exercise 10.

Start with simple gestures: raise your hand calmly, imagining that it takes a lot of time. Make the same gesture, accompanying it with the idea of the shortest amount of time.

Do these simple exercises until you feel that your imagination has gained the power of persuasiveness for you.

Make a calm wide gesture of expansion. (see Fig. 15). [Note: that is, open up into this gesture slowly and without stressful muscle tension.]



fig.15

[Note: a good individual (everyday) exercise.]

Continue it in your imagination for an indefinitely long time, extending it [in your imagination] into endless distances. Make the same gesture instantly, [as though] in a limited space, actually making it in the same calm tone. [Note: move quickly but without tension.]

Do the same with a closing gesture.

Start with an open gesture and then close it, squeezing the initial unlimited space to a point (see Fig.16).



fig.16

Make the gesture at first for a long time, then quickly. [Make] the same gesture: at first for a long time, in boundless space; towards the end: quickly, in a confined space. Then: first, quickly, in boundless space, and then, towards the end, for a long time, in a confined space.

Go on to simple improvisations. For example: a shy person enters a store and selects and buys the item he needs. Let shyness come as a result of the reduction or contraction of space in the imagination during the improvisation. Into the store comes a loud, disagreeable (cheeky) person. Try to get cheeky, mentally expanding the space during improvisation. A bored, lazy person, in front of a bookshelf, selects a book for reading.

Boredom and laziness are the results of "expanded time." The same is done by a person looking for a particular book with great interest. The "reduced time" will give you, as a result, the experience of an interested person. Externally (outwardly), in all cases, try to keep approximately the same length for the improvisation. Do the same with images from plays and literature.

Observe your "fantastic" experiences of time and space in everyday life. Observe the people you meet, trying to guess their experiences of space and time. [1946, Exercise 10, pp. 95-96; from the chapter on Psychological Gesture; translated from the Russian]

EXERCISE 62.

Two partners improvise a scene such as the following; in a shop, the salesman and the purchaser; in a restaurant, the customer and the waiter; a host or hostess and a guest; an interviewer and a distinguished personality. While improvising, both partners must learn to recognize important moments and less significant ones. The partner who is less important at the moment must learn to diminish his Significance, giving the other partner the right to have the "lead," even if it is only for a few seconds. This exercise requires a delicate kind of execution and also long and patient work. By "giving the stage" to one's partner, one must not lose either one's own Significance or one's presence on the stage. Radiation must go on as always, but a certain kind of withdrawal, a certain veiling of the Significance must take place.

The actor who knows what Significance is, can learn by experience how to increase or diminish his Significance while acting. Both partners, while trading the position of Significance, must have a feeling for the audience. Without imagining the audience attending the work, the exercises will lose part of their purpose. One must realize that diminishing the Significance does not necessarily mean that the outer action must always be lessened or stopped.

CLASS 11 & CLASS 12 ATMOSPHERES

Because of the importance of this concept in Chekhov's method and dramatic philosophy, the following passages from Chekhov 1946 are here translated from the Russian, followed by excerpts from Chekhov's 1955 lectures.

The spirit in the work of art is its idea. The soul is the atmosphere. Yet, what is visible and audible is its body. ...

And not only the theater, but also the concert hall, the circus, the farce, and the fair are filled with a magical atmosphere. The atmosphere equally leads both the actor and the viewer. Does not the public, especially young audiences, go to the theater often just to be in this atmosphere of unreality?

The atmosphere connects the actor with the viewer.

The actor who retained (or re-acquired) a sense of atmosphere knows well what inextricable connection is established between him and the viewer if they are enveloped in the same atmosphere. In it, the viewer himself begins to

play with the actor. He sends up [from the audience] waves of sympathy, trust and love. The viewer could not have done this without the atmosphere coming from the stage. Without it, he would remain in the realm of reason, always cold, always alienating; no matter how subtle his evaluation of the technique and skill of the actor's performance. Remember how often an actor has to resort to all sorts of tricks in the hope of attracting the attention of the public. The performance arises from the interaction of the actor and the audience. If the director, actor, author, artist (and often musician) create the atmosphere of a performance for the viewer, he cannot help but participate in it. (1946, Chapter 2, pp.29 ff.; translation from the Russian)

Atmosphere and content

Although the atmosphere belongs to the field of objective feelings, its significance and task in art go beyond this area. Actors who receive and love the atmosphere on stage know that much of the content of the performance cannot be passed on to the viewer by any other means of expressiveness but the atmosphere. Neither the words uttered by the actor from the stage, nor his actions will express that what lives in the atmosphere. Ask yourself how, while sitting in the audience, will you perceive the content of the same scene played in front of you once without an atmosphere and another time with an atmosphere? ...As a spectator, have you never experienced that special state when, following a scene played out in front of you without an atmosphere, you seem to be looking into a psychologically empty space? ...You must have also seen such performance when the wrong atmosphere distorted the content of what is happening on the stage...

Atmosphere and the Play

Have you noticed how you involuntarily change your movements, speech, manner of holding your thoughts, feelings, moods, when moving into a strong atmosphere that has captured you? And if you do not resist it, its influence on you increases. So is in life and on stage. Each performance is surrendering to the atmosphere, you can then enjoy new details in your performance. You do not need to fearfully hold on to the tricks of past performances or resort to clichés. The space, the air around you, filled with an atmosphere; supports a lively creative activity in you.

Objective atmosphere and subjective feelings.

Between the individual feelings of the actor on stage and the surrounding atmosphere (despite the fact that they are equally related to the field of feelings), there is a fundamental difference. While personal feelings are subjective, the atmosphere must be recognized as an objective phenomenon. ... The subjective feelings in a person, and the objective atmosphere outside of the person, are so independent in relation to each other that a person, staying in an opposing atmosphere, can still retain personal feelings in him - or herself. An atheist, for example, can maintain his skeptical feeling in an atmosphere of religious reverence, or a person surrounded by a cheerful and joyful atmosphere - experiencing a personal deep sorrow.

While two warring atmospheres cannot exist simultaneously, not only can individual feelings and the atmosphere opposite to them get along together, but they usually create spectacular moments on stage, giving the viewer aesthetic satisfaction. If the individual feelings and the atmosphere contradict

each other, there is the same type of struggle as between two warring atmospheres. This struggle creates a tension of scenic action, attracting the attention of the viewer. Whether the struggle is resolved by the victory of the atmosphere over an individual feeling, or vice versa, the victorious party increases in strength and the public receives a new artistic satisfaction as if from a resolved musical chord.

Needless to say, when the individual feelings of the actor on stage are in conflict with the general atmosphere, the actor, as the performer of the role, is fully aware and experiencing this atmosphere. She/he is fully incorporated into it. If this were not so, how could she/he convincingly, with artistic veracity and tact, convey the conflict of the actor with the atmosphere prevailing on the stage?

[Chekhov 1946, Chapter 2, pp. 29-38, abridged; translated from the Russian.]

General Atmosphere – Objective atmosphere.

The atmosphere usually surrounds, envelopes, all kinds of buildings, places, events, and so on. If you enter for instance a library, or a church, or a cemetery or a hospital, or a curiosity shop, you will feel immediately that there is an atmosphere belonging to nobody, just an objective general atmosphere which envelops this or that place or a building or a home or a street. Different landscapes have for instance different atmospheres, all kinds of events, like for instance a carnival or a street accident, different times of year have their own atmospheres: Christmas time, Easter time, and New Year time – all have their general, objective atmosphere. These atmospheres usually hang in the air, or rather float in the air and influence people who enter the sphere of this or that atmosphere.

Individual, Personal, Particular Atmosphere

On the stage, the atmosphere can envelop the entire play or a part of it, it depends. But there is another kind of atmosphere, which we might call individual, personal, particular atmosphere of this or that character. It can be pleasant or unpleasant, sympathetic and unsympathetic, tragic, happy, dull, aggressive, dangerous, mysterious, pessimistic, optimistic, loving, hateful – all kinds of personal individual atmospheres, of course with all their nuances and so on.

[Chekhov 1955 Lectures, Tape 12, “On Many Leveled Acting”; NYPL call no. LT10- 4790.]

APPENDIX 9

Famous Actors Associated with Michael Chekhov (Students and Fellow Professionals of Michael Chekhov and George Shdanoff at Dartington, Ridgefield, New York, and Hollywood)

Note: this list was put together from a wide variety of popular sources, including: IMDb Pro (https://pro.imdb.com/?rf=google_brand_us_187248834); IBDB Internet Broadway Data Base; veterans and women veterans' historical websites; information documented in Appendices 1 and 6, above; and individual webpages of the subjects, including those on Wikipedia. Additional information was obtained from Keeve 2002/2009-2010.

Students from Dartington and Ridgefield are marked with a “§”; Academy Award winners are marked with an asterisk*.



§ **George Shdanoff** (1905–1998 – on right; shown here with Chekhov)

Shdanoff was Chekhov's principal associate in the Dartington and Ridgefield Chekhov Theatre Studio. Born in Russia and trained at the MAT, he became a writer and actor in Germany, before meeting Chekhov in Berlin in 1928 and working with him in the Russian Theatre Company. Shdanoff directed the anti-war film *Hell on Earth* (1931). After going to Dartington, he and Chekhov alternated directing duties, and, in 1942, acted together in “An Evening of Anton Chekhov's One-Act Plays and Sketches” in New York. His American film roles include *Hostages* (1943), *Royal Scandal* (1945) and *Specter of the Rose* (1946). He was still active at the age of 90 when he appeared in the documentary, *From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff* (2002). Shdanoff taught alongside Chekhov in Hollywood, and he and his wife, Elsa (who was associated with Universal studios) coached professional actors who had studied with Chekhov, such as Jack Palance, Yul Brynner, and Robert Stack, as well as others, such as Gene Kelly, Gregory Peck, and Rex Harrison, among many others. Shdanoff continued Chekhov's pedagogical work long after Chekhov's death in 1955 and was an important part of keeping the Chekhov legacy alive until his death in 1998. (See also <https://russianlandmarks.wordpress.com/tag/george-shdanoff/>.)



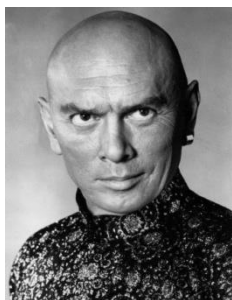
John Berry (Jak Szold – 1917-1999), director and writer, was born in New York City; he was associated with Orson Welles and John Houseman at

the Mercury Theater. Active under Houseman at Paramount Pictures, he directed *From This Day Forward*, and a film in which Chekhov acted, *Cross My Heart*, in 1946. He was also a writer. He attended the sessions of Chekhov in the late 1940s. Blacklisted in the McCarthy era, he moved to France, directing for the stage and films in Europe and England. In the 1970s, he directed Athol Fugard's play, *Boesman and Lena* in New York (1970) and worked again in Hollywood, making films such as *Claudine* (1974) and *The Bad News Bears Go to Japan* (1978). His last production was a film of *Boesman and Lena*, then editing of which was finished in 2000, after his death.



Dorothy Dean Bridges was born on September 19, 1915 in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA as Dorothy Louise Simpson. She was an actress, known for *Finders Keepers* (1921), *See You in the Morning* (1989) and *Secret Sins of the Father* (1994). She was married to Lloyd Bridges for more than 50 years, training her actor sons Beau and Jeff in the Chekhov techniques. She died on February 16, 2009 in Los Angeles.

Lloyd Bridges (Lloyd Vernet Bridges, Jr.) Bridges was born on January 15, 1913 in San Leandro, California; his parents owned a movie theater. He acted at the University of California at Los Angeles. (Dorothy Bridges appeared opposite him in a romantic play called "March Hares.") He later worked on the Broadway stage, helped to find an off-Broadway theater, and acted, produced and directed at Green Mansions, a theater in the Catskills. Bridges made his first films in 1936 and went under contract to Columbia in 1941. He was accused and cleared of Communist Party involvement in the hearings of the early 1950s. On television, Bridges made the "Sea Hunt" series (1958), one of the most successful syndicated programs. He also made *Airplane!* (1980) and *Hot Shots!* (1991) and their respective sequels. Lloyd Bridges died on March 10, 1998.



§ * **Yul Brynner** (1920-1985), the best known of the Chekhov Theatre Studio graduates, was born at Vladivostok, in far eastern Russia, but emigrated to Paris in the 1930s, where he was a musician and a circus trapeze artist. He joined Chekhov at Ridgefield and participated in the touring company, 1940-41. His most famous role, on stage and in film, was King Mongkut in *The King and I*, for which he won two Tony Awards (original 1951 production and a revival) and an Academy Award for Best Actor for the film (1956). In addition to doing *The King and I* 4625 times onstage, he made 39 films, including *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *The Magnificent Seven*, and various television programs. Brynner was

also a director, author and photographer. He provided the introduction to Chekhov's 1953 *To the Actor*.



Leslie Caron (Leslie Claire Margaret Caron) was born in France on July 1, 1931. She trained and worked as a French ballet dancer until discovered by Gene Kelly and asked to co-star in *An American in Paris* (1951), based on the music of George Gershwin. She studied with and was coached by the Shdanoffs and cited Chekhov's influence. Her acting and singing ability and fluid dancing skills made her one of the top foreign musical artists of the 1950s in films, and subsequently, onstage as well as in films. Her work in *Lili* (1953, Academy Award Nomination), *Daddy Long Legs* (1955), *Gigi* (1958), *Fanny* (1961), *The L-Shaped Room* (1962, Academy Award Nomination), and *Father Goose* (1964). In London, with the Royal Shakespeare Company, she appeared in the revival of "Ondine," in 1961. Her work in the 1960s and 1970s included comedies with Rock Hudson, Cary Grant and Warren Beatty, among others, and more complex roles, such as the working class mother the Italian film, *Il padre di famiglia* (1967), as well as *Valentino* (1977), starring ballet star, Rudolf Nureyev. She was active onstage and in television, winning an Emmy Award in 2007.

Another actor in Caron's circle who studied with the Shdanoffs was Gene Kelly; Robert Young and Paul Newman also work with the Shdanoffs.



* Gene Kelly



Robert Young



* Paul Newman



§ **Woodrow "Woody" Chamblis** (1914-1981) and § **Erika Kapralik** (1911-1992) were married while in the Chekhov Theatre Studio; they both were part of the Ojai High Valley Players group. Woody, born in Bowie, Texas played character roles in feature films, and both supporting and leading roles in over 150 television programs,

including a recurring role in the series, “Gunsmoke” (1952-1961). Kapralik played a feature role in *Forever* (1978) and other films.



Jack Colvin (1934- 2005) was born in Lyndon, Kansas, and performed onstage as a child. In 1951, he began studying with Michael Chekhov in Hollywood. He had a long career as character actor in films and especially, on television. Simultaneously, he continued acting onstage in works by Shakespeare, Wilde, Shaw, Emlyn Williams, and O’Neill. Among his films were *Scorpio* (1973), *The Terminal Man* (1974), and *Rooster Cogburn* (1975), and recurring television roles in *The Rockford Files*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Kojak*, *The Bionic Woman*, and particularly, as a reporter in *The Incredible Hulk* (1977–88). From the 1960s, he performed a stand-up comedy act with Yvonne Wilder (“Colvin and Wilder”), including numerous television appearances (Ed Sullivan, Johnny Carson, etc.) and at Carnegie Hall. Colvin taught Chekhov technique at universities, at MICHA, and for many years at his own Michael Chekhov Studio USA West until his death, maintaining a presence for the Chekhov work in Los Angeles.



* **Gary Cooper (Frank James Cooper, 1901-1961)** was born in Helena, Montana, and educated there and in England, spending summers on a family ranch. His Hollywood career began in silent films; his first sound film was *The Virginian* (1929); he would eventually make 84 films, winning three Academy Awards and three additional nominations. Films such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Sargent York* (1941, Academy Award), *Ball of Fire* (1941), *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943) had already made Cooper a huge star before he began attending Chekhov’s sessions for professional Hollywood actors in the late 1940s. He applied Chekhov techniques in films such as *The Fountainhead* (1949) – co-starring Patricia Neal, with whom he had a three-year romantic relationship – *High Noon* (1952, Academy Award), and *Friendly Persuasion* (1956). He continued making films until the year of his death.



§ **Felicity Anne Cumming** (1917-1993) married her fellow-Chekhov Studio member, § **Henry Lyon Young**, who shared her interest in writing, at

Dartington. They divorced in 1948. During the war, she worked for British Intelligence. Under the name Anne Cumming, she wrote novels, some of them autobiographical accounts of her own travels and romantic adventures. As a public relations agent in the Italian film industry, she worked with Pier Paolo Pasolini and Luchino Visconti. She taught in the New York Chekhov Studio with Straight in the 1980s. Henry Lyon Young wrote historical works and novels, often associated with his South American family ties. Among his better-known works are *Eliza Lynch*, *Regent of Paraguay* (1966) and *Memoirs of a Castrato* (1981).



§ **Blair Cutting** had a career as an actor onstage in New York after World War II. He was an important continuer of the Chekhov teaching and acting methods, “continuously” teaching Chekhov techniques from 1948 in New York and California, where he was associated with Warner Brothers as an acting coach and casting director from around 1955. He joined Beatrice Straight to teach in the New York Studio in the 1980s.



Dorothy Dandridge (Dorothy Jean Dandridge, 1922-1965) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and from childhood performed as a singer with her sister, Vivian. The family moved to Hollywood in 1930, where Dorothy attended school. The Dandridge Sisters appeared in films in the 1930s, and Dorothy had dramatic roles from 1940 and performed in musical films, although she rejected stereotype race roles. From 1951, she had increasingly featured roles in films in parallel with a nightclub career. Her first starring role was in *Bright Road* (1953) with Harry Belafonte. Dandridge became a major star with the film of *Carmen Jones* (1954), for which she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. It was presumably in this period when Dandridge was studying with Chekhov.



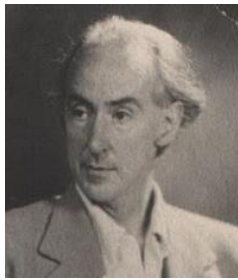
James Dean (James Byron Dean, 1931-1955) is remembered particular for roles of social estrangement in films such as *East of Eden* (1955), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *Giant* (released 1956) – he was twice nominated for an Academy Award (posthumously for *Giant*). Dean came to study with Chekhov, but both died tragically in an automobile accident on 30 September 1955, the same day Chekhov died.

§ **Louise Dowdney**, § **Mary Lou Taylor**, and § **Alfred Boylen** all worked on the New York stage after leaving Chekhov. Taylor also made films, and Boylen served as stage manager for Broadway productions. Ellen Van Volkenburg, James Taylor, and the other New York professionals hired only for *The Possessed* in 1939 (Volkenburg replacing Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst), had extensive careers before and after their work with Chekhov.



***Clint Eastwood (Clinton Eastwood Jr., born 1930)** grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, attending local schools. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War but did not see combat. His army contacts led to an audition and contract with Universal Pictures in 1954, which urged him to take acting lessons – this may have been when he first encountered Michael Chekhov and his method. Eastwood has said of Chekhov: “You have to teach yourself to act, but Michael Chekhov will give you the necessary tools – and for me, Psychological Gesture and Centers are extremely valuable. They work like a charm. I’ve used them all along and still do.” Eastwood worked in 1954-55 in films and television for Universal Studios, then as an independent actor in a series of films and television shows for other producers in the late 1950s. In 1958, he received his first breakthrough role, as the rebellious young cowboy Rowdy Yates in the long-running television series, “Rawhide.” In 1963, he began to make a trilogy of films with the Italian director, Sergio Leone, beginning with *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), and continuing with *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). Other western films followed, such as *Hang 'Em High* (1968), and films from Eastwood’s own production company, Malpaso Productions, notably *Coogan’s Bluff* (1968), *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970), *The Beguiled* (1971), *Play Misty for Me* (1970-71), the highly influential *Dirty Harry* (1971), *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* (1974), *Every Which Way But Loose* (1978), *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979), *Unforgiven* (1992), *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995), *Space Cowboys* (2000), *Mystic River* (2003), *American Sniper* (2014), and *Sully* (2016). He has remained active into his 90s.

In all, he has been involved in more than 50 films and directed 30 films. Films he has produced or directed have been nominated for 41 Academy Awards and won 13 times.



§ **Alan Harkness** (1907-1952) was born in Perth, Australia. He came to Dartington, where he was a teacher, Chekhov's assistant in the production of *King Lear*, and, with Beatrice Straight, co-manager of the road tours of the Chekhov Theatre Studio, 1940-42. After World War II, Harkness had a distinguished career as an actor, theatre director, and teacher; the Anthroposophical element was important in his work. In 1947, Harkness, with Ford Rainey, Daphne Moore, Woody Chamblis and Erika Kapralik Chamblis, and Iris Tree – all veterans of the Dartington-Ridgefield Studio – founded the Ojai High Valley Theatre and School, based on Chekhov's principals. He continued the teaching of Chekhov's methods, and Chekhov himself was occasionally involved. From 1946 Mechthild Johannsen, who was trained in Eurythmy, worked with Alan. They married; she taught in the School and toured with him in Europe, 1949-1951. At the time of his death in an automobile accident in 1952, he was director of the Lobero Theatre and the Civic Theatre, Santa Barbara, California.



§ **Sterling Hayden (Sterling Relyea Walter, 1916-1986)** was born in Upper Montclair, New Jersey; the name "Hayden" came from his stepfather. He was dropped out of high school at 16 and became a sailor, eventually becoming a master (captain). He was recruited by Paramount pictures in May 1940. During World War II, he served first in the Army and then as a much-decorated officer in the Marine Corps, serving with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). He was a leading man or featured actor in films such as *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *The Killing* (1956), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *The Godfather* (1972), *The Long Goodbye* (1973), *1900* (1976), working with directors such as John Huston, Stanley Kubrick, Francis Ford Coppola, and Bernardo Bertolucci. Hayden's films were often made at Paramount Pictures, where Charlotte Clary worked in the early 1950s as an actress, coach, mentor for young actors, and casting director, leading the "talent program" there. Clary was an important member of Chekhov's Hollywood actor's group, and may also have known Hayden through her husband, René Dussaq, who was also associated with the OSS.



§ **Mary Haynsworth** (1917-2011), was in the Chekhov Theatre Studio in Dartington and Ridgefield, participating in the touring company, 1940-41. She served with the American Red Cross in Europe, 1943-46 (see picture, taken in Germany 1945), establishing clubs for soldiers in England and France, and driving a “club mobile” to bring entertainment and refreshments to soldiers in the field. After the war, she returned to the stage, participating in touring Broadway shows. She married fellow-actor George Mathews in 1951. They acted in New York, then moved to South Carolina near her native Greenville after his retirement from the stage, where she taught dance and acted in local professional theatre. [See <http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/WVHP/id/1048>.]



§ **Hurd Hatfield (William Rukard Hurd Hatfield, 1917–1998)** was born in New York and came to England to study acting at the Chekhov Theatre Studio in Devonshire under Chekhov. He was a senior student assistant and member of the touring company at Ridgefield and helped Chekhov and Deirdre Hurst [du Prey] prepare the 1942 edition of *To the Actor*. He worked continually in films, television, and onstage from 1944 to his death. He was best known for his portrayal of the title character in the Oscar-winning 1945 film *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; other roles included including Father Pasquerer, in *Joan of Arc* with Ingrid Bergman (1948), and *Dragon Seed* with Katharine Hepburn and Akim Tamiroff (1944). Hatfield received an Emmy nomination for his television work, appearing in series such as *Murder, She Wrote* (1984) with his friend, Angela Lansbury. As happened to Chekhov himself, Hatfield’s early success led to his being type-cast, which he often regretted. “I’m glad,” he said, “that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* found its audience ... but for me, *Dorian Gray* was a character part. That wasn’t me.”



* **Anthony Hopkins (Sir Philip Anthony Hopkins CBE, 1937)** was born in Port Talbot, Glamorgan, Wales, and attended the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, from which he graduated in 1957, and subsequently at

the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He joined the Royal National Theatre in London under Laurence Olivier in 1965. Hopkins' career has alternated among films, television, and acting onstage; he has also produced and directed. His best-known films are:

The Lion in Winter (1968); his five films with Richard Attenborough; *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor, and its related films, *Hannibal* (2001), and *Red Dragon* (2002); *Shadowlands* (1993), *The Remains of the Day* (1993), *Nixon* (1995), *Amistad* (1997) and *The Two Popes* (2019). Hopkins is also known for applying Chekhov's concept of the Psychological Gesture and discussed this on the television program, "Inside the Actors Studio."

The American actor, producer, and musician, **Johnny Depp (John Christopher Depp II, 1963)** has also expressed his admiration for Michael Chekhov's method.



§ **Deirdre Hurst du Prey** (1906-2007) was born in Vancouver, Canada and educated, like Ford Rainey and Beatrice Straight, at the Cornish Drama School in Seattle. Hurst, who studied dance (including with Martha Graham), became close friends with Straight, joined Straight in three classes given by Chekhov for them in 1935 – these led to Chekhov's employment at Dartington. From this point, Hurst made use of her shorthand skill to record verbatim Chekhov's classes for the next six years – Chekhov called her, "the Pencil." (In the picture, taken at Dartington, Deirdre is seated and talks with Chekhov; George Shdanoff on the left.) Soon after helping Chekhov write "The 1942 Version," Hurst married and began a family. From about 1948, she returned to teaching, working with children. From 1951-1971, she taught at the Steiner-inspired Waldorf School of Garden City, New York, and was on the faculty of the Children's Center for Creative Arts at Adelphi University, 1952-82, eventually becoming Assistant Professor in the Speech and Drama Departments. In 1980, she joined Straight, Blair Cutting, and others from Dartington and Ridgefield, as well as Joanna Merlin and Eddy Grove from California, at the New York Michael Chekhov Studio, 1980-1992.

[See Caracciolo, Diane. (2017). "Transformation and Renewal Through the Arts: The Life and Work of Deirdre Hurst du Prey, in Caracciolo, Diane, and Courtney Lee Weida, eds. 2017. *The Swing of the Pendulum: The Urgency of Arts Education for Healing, Learning, and Wholeness*, New York: Springer Publishing, pp.135-147.]

Available URL:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Diane_Caracciolo/publication/321031035_Transformation_and_Renewal_Through_the_Arts/links/5bfe1ca092851c78dfafbcd3/Transformation-and-Renewal-Through-the-Arts.pdf?origin=publication_detail .



* **Jennifer Jones (Phylis Lee Isley, 1919 – 2009)**. Jones was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, working as a model before coming to Hollywood; her first roles were in 1939. For her third role, in the *Song of Bernadette* (released 1943), she won the Academy Award for Best Actress. She was also nominated for *Since You Went Away* (1944), *Love Letters* (1945), and *Duel in the Sun* (1946). Producer David O. Selznick, whom Jones married in 1949, asked Chekhov to give her private acting lessons. Subsequent films include *Madame Bovary* for Vincente Minnelli (1949), *Ruby Gentry* (1952), *Beat the Devil* for John Huston (1953), Vittorio De Sica's *Terminal Station* (1953), *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), earning another Academy Award nomination. Selznick died in 1965; Jones married industrialist and art collector, Norton Simon, and partially retired, focusing on philanthropy.



Robert Lewis (1909-1997) was born in Brooklyn, NY, studied music as a child, and joined Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre in New York City in 1929. In 1931 Lewis was a founding member of the American Group Theatre, an important early source of Stanislavsky technique in America (closed 1941). Lewis acted in New York but is better known as a director and studio leader. In 1935, he and other Group Theatre Members attended Michael Chekhov's performances on Broadway. Lewis said of Chekhov,

All eyes were opened to what could, for once, accurately be described as 'total' acting. By this I mean each part Chekhov assumed was minutely executed from the point of view of physical characterization – the walk, the gestures, the voice, the makeup – all were meticulously designed to illuminate the character he was playing. ... His Khlestakov in the Gogol play was a prime example of total acting.”

In 1938, Lewis directed a production of Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy* in London. He took the opportunity to attend the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington Hall. In the 1940s, Lewis was a character actor and director in Hollywood, returning in 1947 to New York, where he was a founder of the Actors Studio. Among the actors in Lewis's group was Beatrice Straight. He was the Head of the Yale School of Drama Acting and Directing Departments in the 1970s.



Joanna Merlin (Joann Ratner, born 1931) is the leading teacher of the Chekhov method, having studied with Chekhov himself in Hollywood. Active onstage from age 11, Merlin graduated from UCLA and began studying with Michael Chekhov in the early 1950s. She has appeared in over 30 films, including *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *All That Jazz* (1979), *Fame* (1980), *The Killing Fields* (1984), as well as casting director for *Year of the Dragon*, *The Last Emperor*, *Jefferson in Paris*, and producer, co-writer, and actress in *Beautiful Hills of Brooklyn* (2008). She began teaching in the 1970s. Her numerous television roles include a recurring role in *Law and Order*. In the 1960s, Merlin was active on the Broadway stage, in *Becket*, and premiering the role of Teitzel in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Thereafter, she worked in Harold Prince as a casting director for major musical shows, including Stephen Sondheim's *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, and *Into the Woods*. A founder of MICHA in 1999, she has taught at MICHA sessions and at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She is the author of the book, *Auditioning: An Actor-Friendly Guide*.

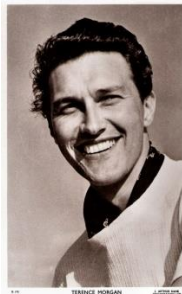


Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jeane Mortenson, 1926-1962) was born in Los Angeles but orphaned as a child; she married in 1942 at age 16, the first of three marriages. After a modeling career in the 1940s, she began to act in films in 1946-47, going on to notable roles in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) and *All About Eve* (1950). She was already an established star in the early 1950s when she began working intensively in private lessons with Chekhov, who became an immense influence on her life and acting. In this period she made *Clash by Night* (1952), *Niagara* (1953), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), *River of No Return* (1954), and *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). Monroe dedicated a chapter in her autobiography to Michael Chekhov, entitled "A wise man opens my eyes."

The most brilliant man I have ever known is Michael Chekhov, the actor and author. ... He is a man of great Spiritual depth. He is selfless and saint like and witty, too. In Russia he was the best actor they had. And in Hollywood in the half dozen movies he played, he was considered superb. There was no character actor who could hold a candle to Michael Chekhov, who could play clown and Hamlet, and love interest, half as wonderfully. But Michael retired from the screen ... and devoted himself to writing, gardening, and

teaching acting to a few people. I became one of them. As Michael's pupil, I learned more than acting. I learned psychology, history, and the good manners of art—taste. I studied a dozen plays. Michael discussed their characters and the many ways to play them. I had never heard anything so fascinating as my teacher's talk. Every time he spoke, the world seemed to become bigger and more exciting. ... To set a scene with Michael Chekhov in his house was more exciting than to act on any movie set I had known. Acting became important. It became an art that belonged to the actor, not to the director or producer, or the man whose money had bought the studio. It was an art that transformed you into somebody else, that increased your life and mind. I had always loved acting and tried hard to learn it. But with Michael Chekhov, acting became more than a profession to me. It became a sort of religion.

[Monroe, Marilyn, and Ben Hecht. 1974. *My Story*. New York: Stein & Day, Chapter 33, pp. 170-172.]



§ **Terence Morgan** (1921-2005) had a career in British films after the war, 1948-1964, often playing villains. He retired from films in the mid-1960s and ran a hotel and was a real estate developer in Hove, near Brighton, East Sussex, thereafter. Among his films were Lawrence Olivier's 1948 *Hamlet*, in which he played Laertes to Olivier's Hamlet, and *Sir Francis Drake* (1961).



* **Patricia Neal (Patricia Louise Neal)** was born in Packard, Kentucky, on 20 January 1926. A founding member (with Beatrice Straight) of Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio. she studied with George Shdanoff and Michael Chekhov in Hollywood. She is best known for *The Fountainhead* (1949), opposite Gary Cooper, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) and both the stage and film versions of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), also directed by Kazan, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), and *Hud* (1963) opposite Paul Newman, for which she won the Academy Award for Best Actress. On Broadway, she also appeared in the revival of Hellman's play, *The Children's Hour* in 1952 and co-starred with Anne Bancroft in the Broadway production of *The Miracle Worker* (1962), as well as in the London production of Williams' *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959). She married the writer, Roald Dahl, in 1953; they would have five children in 30 years of marriage. Her last child was born in 1965, after she suffered a series of strokes. She recovered sufficiently to resume her career, in films

such as *The Subject Was Roses* (1968). Patricia Neal died on August 9, 2010 in Edgarton, Massachusetts from lung cancer.



* **Jack Nicholson (John Joseph Nicholson, born 1937)** grew up in New Jersey, coming in 1954 to Hollywood, where he attended Chekhov's classes. Among his films are *Easy Rider* (1969); *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975); *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), *Chinatown* (1974), *The Shining* (1980), *Terms of Endearment* (1983), *Prizzi's Honor* (1985), *A Few Good Men* (1992), and *The Departed* (2006). Nicholson has been nominated for 12 Academy Awards, the most for a male actor, and has won three, including for *As Good as It Gets* (1997). Both Nicholson and co-star Helen Hunt acknowledge the Chekhov work having contributed to their performances: Hunt through the use of an Imaginary Center and Nicholson, in accepting the 1998 Golden Globe, saying, "There's always this need to continue growth, to expand. For me, Chekhov's system is the most complete."



* **Jack Palance (Volodymyr Jack Palahniuk, 1919–2006)** won an Academy Award and two additional nominations. He studied with Chekhov in Hollywood in the early 1950s. Born in Pennsylvania exemplified evil incarnate on film – portraying some of the most intensely despised villains witnessed in 50s westerns and melodrama. A professional boxer, World War II decorated bomber pilot, journalist, and radio announcer before becoming an actor; Palance made his stage debut in *The Big Two* in 1947 and understudied, then replaced Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski in the groundbreaking Broadway classic *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His roles on Broadway won awards, and he moved to Hollywood to make Elia Kazan's *Panic in the Streets* (1950). He had been badly burned in the war, and his resulting leathery face led to his being cast as a soldier, boxer, or villain in many films, such as *Halls of Montezuma* (1951, playing a Marine boxer), *Sudden Fear* (1952), and the menacing gunslinger, Jack Wilson, versus Alan Ladd in *Shane* (1953). Other outstanding roles were in *Man in the Attic* (1953), *The Big Knife* (1955), and *Attack* (1956), as well as a famous television role in *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1956, Emmy Award). He also played in historical and biblical epics and in European films, including Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt* (1963). He continued acting on television and films into his 70s, winning an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in *City Slickers* (1991). An accomplished linguist, Palance spoke Ukrainian, Russian, Italian, Spanish, French and English.



* **Gregory Peck** (Eldred Gregory Peck, 1916-2003) was born in San Diego, California, and was educated there and at the University of California, Berkeley, also studying at the Neighborhood Playhouse with Sanford Meisner. His extensive stage career began in 1941; he acted in over 50 plays in San Francisco, on Broadway, and at the La Jolla Playhouse, which he co-founded in 1947. He acted in films from 1944, including *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1944 – first of five Academy Award nominations), *Spellbound*, with Michael Chekhov (1945), *The Yearling* (1946), *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), *Twelve O' Clock High* (1949), *Roman Holiday* (1953), and *Moby Dick* (1956). He probably became interested in the Chekhov work through Chekhov himself, but he studied with Elsa Shdanoff, who often accompanied him on film sets as his acting coach. His most famous role was in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), for which he won an Academy Award.



Mala Powers (Mary Ellen Powers, 1931-2007) was born in San Francisco, California, moving to Los Angeles in 1940. She was onstage and in films from the age of seven. In 1947, she began working in radio dramas, and was in feature films from 1950. Her best known roles was as Roxane in *Cyrano de Bergerac* opposite José Ferrer (1950, Golden Globe nomination). After a near-fatal illness, she returned to films, including lead roles in *Rose of Cimarron* (1952), *City Beneath the Sea* (1953), *City That Never Sleeps* (1953), *Man on the Prowl* (1957), and others into the 1970s. She increasingly appeared in television series, filming over 100 episodes.

Powers studied with Michael Chekhov in the early 1950s in both group and private lessons. She became executrix of the Chekhov estate after his death in 1955. She edited or published Chekhov's 1942 *On the Technique of Acting* (1991), as well as new editions of *To the Actor* (2005), and *The Path of the Actor*, along with part of Chekhov's 1955 Lecture series (see Bibliography). Powers taught Chekhov scene technique from 1987, collaborating with Lisa Loving Dalton. Dividing her time between Los Angeles and New York, she was able to renew her Chekhov studies with Ted Pugh and others. Powers co-founded the National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA) with her colleagues, Wil Kilroy and Lisa Loving Dalton, with whom she taught from 1993 to 2006 at the University of Southern Maine Michael Chekhov Theatre Institute. She was also a children's book author and an editor.



* **Anthony Quinn** (1915-2001) was a Mexican-born American actor, painter and writer. He studied acting with Chekhov in the late 1940s and early 1950s in Hollywood, after he had already made more than 50 films, including *Blood and Sand* and *The Black Swan* (1942) with Tyrone Power. Among many acclaimed roles subsequently were those in *La Strada* (Federico Fellini, 1954), *The Guns of Navarone*, *Zorba the Greek*, *Guns for San Sebastian*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Message*, and *Lion of the Desert*. He won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in Elia Kazan's *Viva Zapata!* in 1952 (opposite Marlin Brando) and *Lust for Life* in 1956 (opposite Kirk Douglas). He also worked on Broadway and, like Jack Palance, took Marlin Brando's role of Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.



§ **Ford Rainey (1908–2005)**. Rainey was one of the principal students to work at Dartington with Chekhov; he played leading roles, including King Lear, in the touring companies Chekhov sent out in 1941-42. A native of Idaho and, like Deirdre Hurst and Beatrice Straight, a student at the Cornish Drama School in Seattle, Rainey also worked as a logger, electrical lineman, and carpenter to support his acting career. After service in the Coast Guard, he moved to California where he founded the Ojai Valley Players with other Chekhov graduates. He acted in films from 1949, eventually become one of the best known character actors in both motion pictures and television, while continuing to act onstage. (At the age of 90, he played Giles Corey in *The Crucible*.) His television roles (he appeared weekly for decades) included repeated performances as Abraham Lincoln from 1953, as well as judges, doctors and police officials. Rainey appeared in *Window on Main Street* (1961), *Search* (1972) *The Man Hunter* (1974), and *The Bionic Woman* (1975), and was a member of the repertory company on *The Richard Boone Show* (1963), playing a different role each week. He was active through the 1980s.



§ **Paul Rogers (I) (1917–2013)** was a distinguished British actor in both contemporary and Shakespearian roles. He was born in Plympton, Devonshire, England, and studied with Michael Chekhov at nearby Dartington Hall from 1936 to 1939. After six years in the Royal Navy, he returned to acting in the

Old Vic Company in Bristol and London, and eventually with the Royal Shakespeare Company. He originated the part of Max in Pinter's *The Homecoming* and won a Tony Award for Best Actor in 1967 for the role on Broadway, where he also played the role of Sir in Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser* (1980). Other awards include the Critics Circle Theatre Awards (Drama Theatre Award) for Best Supporting Actor of 1981 for *A Kind of Alaska* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* and additional an Tony nomination. He added roles in Shakespeare's plays on television.



Robert Stack (Charles Langford Modini Stack, 1919–2003) was born in Los Angeles, spent his early childhood in Europe, and worked in films from 1939. He appeared in *The Mortal Storm* (1940), *To Be or Not To Be* for Ernst Lubitsch, with Jack Benny and Carole Lombard (1942), and films with Deanna Durbin and Gloria Jean, before serving in the U.S. Navy as an instructor. He studied with Chekhov and Shdanoff in the early 1950s. Stack was close friends with John Wayne, who co-produced the *Bullfighter and the Lady* (1951), with Stack in the lead role; he later co-starred with Wayne in *The High and the Mighty* (1954). He was nominated for an Academy for his role in the film *Written on the Wind* (1956), later crediting Chekhov for techniques leading to his success. He also starred in the first color 3D film, starred in *Bwana Devil* (1952). He continued acting in films until two years before his death, but from 1959, devoted much time to television series, including *The Untouchables* (1959–1963, Emmy Award 1960), *Unsolved Mysteries* (1987–2002), and many others.



§ * **Beatrice Straight (Beatrice Whitney Straight, 1914–2001)** was one of Chekhov's first two American students and, with her mother, Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst, and stepfather, Leonard Elmhirst, among Chekhov's most important patrons. She studied, like her fellow Chekhov Theatre Studio colleagues, at the Cornish Drama School in Seattle. She debuted on Broadway in *Bitter Oleander* (1935); then moved to Dartington to work and study with Chekhov. Instrumental in moving the school to Ridgefield in 1939, she was a leader in the touring company, a co-producer of the Broadway production of *The Possessed*, and one of the first group of students certified as teachers of the technique. A founding member of the Actor's Studio, she initially performed onstage in New York. She succeeded Wendy Hiller as Catherine Sloper in Shaw's *The Heiress* (1948), and won a Tony Award for the role of Elizabeth Proctor in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

(1953). She was a frequent performer on television and was nominated for an Emmy Award for the mini-series, *The Dain Curse* (1978). She made 17 films, winning an Academy Award for her supporting role in *Network* (1976). In 1980, Beatrice Straight and Robert Cole opened The Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City. Although the Studio was only open for a decade, it fostered the next generation of teachers of his technique.

See <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/11/arts/beatrice-straight-versatile-star-dies-at-86.html> .



Paula Strasberg (Pearl Miller, 1909-1966) made her debut on Broadway in 1927 and acted in more than 20 plays until 1948. She married Lee Strasberg, the associate of Robert Lewis in the American Group Theatre in 1935. She attended Chekhov's lessons for New York professional actors in 1941, and was, like her more famous husband, in the Actor's Studio, where she knew Beatrice Straight. Strasberg was Marilyn Monroe's acting coach from 1955 to 1962.



Iris Tree (1897-1968) had worked as an artist's model (Augustus John, Amadeo Modigliani, Man Ray) and was a published poet before coming to the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington and Ridgefield. After 1942, she continued as an author, particularly in poetry, and settled in California. She was a member of the Ojai High Valley Theatre company with Harkness, Rainey, and other Chekhov actors. She played roles in *Moby Dick* (1956) and (as herself) *La Dolce Vita* (1960). [See Fielding, Daphne Vivian. 1974. *The Rainbow Picnic: A Portrait of Iris Tree*. London: Eyre Methuen.]

APPENDIX 10
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE
The Fourth Way of Rehearsing
(From Michael Chekhov, О технике актера, 1946,
Fourth Chapter, pp. 61-96; translation from the Russian
original.)

*The soul wants to dwell in the body, because
without it, it can neither act nor feel.*
Leonardo da Vinci

Gesture and Will [1946, p. 63]

As in coloring,¹ you are given the key to feelings, so in actions - to the will. Gestures talk about desires (will). If the desire (will) is strong, then the gesture expressing it will be strong. If the desire is weak and vague - the gesture will also be weak and uncertain. This is the opposite of the gesture and will. If you make a strong, expressive, well-formed gesture - you can flare up a corresponding desire. (Remember the old man, the hero of Chekhov's story, who first stamped his foot, then became angry.) You cannot want to order. Your will does not obey you. But you can make a gesture, and your will react to it.

Psychological Gesture

There is a kind of movement, gestures that are different from naturalistic movement but related to it, as GENERAL is to PARTICULAR. From them, as from a source, all naturalistic, characteristic, particular gestures follow. There are, for example, gestures of repulsion, attraction, opening, closing in general. From them arise all individual gestures of repulsion, attraction, disclosure, etc., which you will do in your own way, or I in my own way. General gestures we, without noticing this, always produce in our soul.

Consider, for example, human speech: what happens in us when we speak or hear expressions such as: [64]

¹ As has been noted above, the Russian word translated here as “coloring” (or occasionally, “color”) is окраска, for which the closest English translation is technically “coloration” – virtually identical with “coloring.” Chekhov meant the concept of “coloring” a gesture as giving it emotional or will-related Qualities (fear, love, attraction, etc.) – indeed, Andrei Malaev-Babel, in translating окраска, used the word, “Quality.” See Malaev-Babel, in Chekhov 1953/2002, *passim*. Although Malaev-Babel only partially translated Chekhov’s 1946 chapter on Psychological Gesture, I have benefitted from reading his translation.

TO DRAW a conclusion.
TO TOUCH UPON the problem.
TO BREAK connections.
TO GRASP the idea.
TO SIDESTEP responsibility.
TO FALL into despair.
TO POSE a question, etc.

What do all these verbs say? About gestures, specific and clear. And we make these gestures in the soul, hidden in verbal expressions. When we, for example, touch upon the problem, we touch it not physically, but mentally. The nature of the mental gesture of touching is the same as the physical gesture, with the only difference being that one gesture has a general character and is performed invisibly in the mental sphere, the other physical, has a particular character and is executed, visibly, in the physical sphere. In everyday life, we do not use general gestures, unless in cases when we are overly excited or when we want to talk with pathos. However, such gestures can often be admired, talking with Italians, Jews or Russians. All these gestures, these still live in each of us as the prototypes of our physical, domestic gestures. They stand behind them (as well as behind the words of our speech), giving them meaning, strength and expressiveness. In them, invisibly, our psyche is gesticulating. These are PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURES. [65]

A psychological gesture enables the actor working on the role to make the first, free “charcoal sketch” on a large canvas. Your first creative impulse you pour into the form of a psychological gesture. You create a plan, according to which step by step you will implement your artistic design.

An invisible psychological gesture you can do visually, physically. You can connect it with a certain color and use it to awaken your feelings and will. As a gesture of a general nature, it naturally penetrates deeper into your soul and acts on it with greater force than a gesture that is particular (private), casual, naturalistic. A clear, precise form and great inner strength will require such a gesture to ignite your creative will and awaken feelings. Through exercise, you will learn how to do it in the right way. (In the following, for brevity, I will designate a psychological gesture as a PG.)

Exercise 5.

Find the PG for the following actions: pull, drag, crush, beat, break, divide, lift, throw, touch, open, close, tear, crumple, take, give, support, etc.

Perform them with all possible clarity and strength, but without excessive muscular tension. First do them without a certain color.

Observe the following four conditions:

1. Do not "play" your gestures, that is, do not pretend that you are pulling, for example, something heavy, tired, resting, pulling again, etc. Let your gestures remain pointless, not naturalistic. Let them be wide, [66] beautiful and free (like "charcoal sketches on a large canvas").
2. Make movements with your whole body, trying to use as much as possible all the space around you.
3. Move at a moderate pace. Quietly end the gesture, before you repeat it again. Carelessness, rushing or excessive slowness will impair the exercise.
4. The exercise must be done actively. It is better to interrupt it than do it sluggishly.

Do the same gestures with coloring.

Make a simple, everyday gesture. Find its ideal prototype (PG).

Make the gesture several times with different colors. Patiently seek that the PG and its coloring will awaken inside of you your will and feelings. Do all the PG of the previous exercise mentally. Make sure that a mental gesture affects your feelings and will as well as the actual gesture.

Fantastic PG

You can make the PG more or less similar to naturalistic gestures. But you can also create a fantastic PG. Through it you will be able to express for yourself your most intimate, most original artistic intentions. Through exercises you will develop the ability to create such gestures. [67]

Exercise 6.

Start by observing the shapes of flowers and plants. Ask yourself: what kind of gestures and what colors do they evoke in you? Cypress, for example, reaching upwards (gesture), has a calm, concentrated character (color), while the old branched oak is widely and unrestrainedly (coloring) spreading to the sides (gesture). Violet gently, questioningly (coloring) peeps (gesture) from the mass of

leaves, and the fiery lily passionately (coloring) breaks out (gesture) from the ground. Every leaf, rock, remote mountain range, every cloud, stream, wave will tell you about their gestures and colors. Try it yourself: notice the PG in these observations. (But do not imagine yourself as a flower. Do not imitate [a flower]; there is no need for it: the psychology of the gesture belongs to you, not the flower.) Remember that the PG should be simple.

Move on to the observation of architectural designs: stairs, columns, arches, vaults, roofs, towers, shapes of windows and doors in buildings of different styles. They will also evoke in your imagination compositions of known strengths and qualities. Create the corresponding PG.

If Leonardo da Vinci did not do internal gestures, concluded in architectural forms, he could not say: " An arch is nothing but strength created by two weaknesses; the arch consists of two parts of a circle, and each of these parts, in itself weak, wants to fall, but since each of them is [68] leaning one against the other, the two weaknesses become one strength."

Try to find PG with their colors for landscapes. (You can use pictures and photos for this.)

Create PG for fantastic images (myths, legends, fairy tales).

Practical Applications of PG

There are five possible applications of PG in practice:

1) For the role as a whole.

You can use PG to master the image of the role as a whole. The stage image has will and feelings. Looking at the actions, desires, moods, experiences of your hero, listening to his speech, noting his internal and external features, tracing his relationship to other characters in the play, you come to the moment when the first idea of the basic nature of his will-intuitively arises in your feelings. Without analyzing your first impression, you embody it in PG, no matter how primitive it may seem to you at first. In movement you express the will of the hero, in colors – [in] his feelings.

When working on the role of the Governor [in *The Inspector General* by Gogol], for example, you might discover that his will tends to rush forward (gesture) in a cowardly way (coloring). You create a simple gesture matching your first impression of the PG. Let us assume that this gesture will be as follows (see Drawing 1).



Drawing 1

[69] Having done this and concretely experienced it, you feel the need for its further development. Your intuition can tell you: down to the ground (gesture), heavy and slow (coloring) (see Drawing 2).



Drawing 2

A new experience of PG leads to new movements. Now it might become, for example, that the gesture gets slanted to the side (cunning), the hands are clenched into fists (intense will), the shoulders are raised, the whole body slightly bows down to the ground, the knees are bent (cowardice), the legs are slightly turned inwards (secretiveness) (see Drawing 3).



Drawing 3

So, by working through and perfecting your gesture, you achieve two goals: first, you penetrate the essence of the role in an intuitive way, bypassing the rational analysis. (And reason can show its own rights - to judge, verify, make changes, amendments,

additions, give advice, etc., but only after artistic intuition has done its job.) Secondly, you learn the role as an actor who will fulfill this role, not only know it and be able to talk about it.

With this kind of work, you do not depend on chance or mood, but from the very beginning you stand on solid ground: you know what and how you are doing. From the first moment, you started your work as a professional with the technique, and not as an amateur. Having learned the PG you have created by multiple repetitions, you can now play one moment or another in the role with words. At first, perhaps, only one insignificant moment, one phrase, no more; you will repeat this moment, until the PG begins to inspire [70] you with every movement, word or even in a silent, motionless position. Continuing to work in this way, you come gradually to the moment when the whole role comes to life in you and you start playing it with all the possible details, no longer thinking about PG. [The PG] goes into your subconscious and from there "watches" your acting.

To find the PG of the whole role is, in effect, to find a role. You can create the PG yourself, or the director can tell you, but you should not discuss this gesture. Both your director and you also need to show each other the changes that you want to make in PG. So gradually a new working language is created between the actor and the director.

It should be remembered that PG cannot be used by you while playing on stage. After the PG has awakened your feelings and will, which you need for this image, the PG's task is over. Gestures that you use on stage when performing must be characteristic of the person you portray must correspond to the era, style of the author and staging, etc. PG as a preparatory technique should be hidden from the public. However, you can always return to it again if you feel that you are deviating from the right path.

2) For Separate Moments of a Role

At the same time as you work on the entire role, you can seek special PG[s] for its separate moments. This process is essentially identical with the previous one, [71] with the only difference being that you keep one moment in your field of attention, examining it as a complete and finished whole.

Suppose that you already have PG for the whole role and now you have to find a series of gestures for its separate moments. All of them are more or less different from each other. What should you do in this case? Should you try to combine them into one? No.

You leave them in the form in which they were found, and use each of them separately, allowing them to affect you freely. In doing so, you will soon notice that, despite the differences in gestures, they still serve the same purpose, complementing and enriching each other. You will also notice that they will begin to change, gradually, in details and nuances. You will follow their desires without imposing your own on them. PGs, like living, animated beings, will grow and develop themselves if you do not kill their lives with your impatient rational intervention. Through them, your creative subconscious will speak with you.

3) For Separate Scenes

With the help of the PG, you can also penetrate the essence of each separate scene, regardless of the role you perform. The nature of the scene consists of the actions of the characters, their relationships and characterization, the atmosphere, the style, its place within the composition of the play, and so on. And here you turn to your artistic intuition, creating a PG step by step for the scene. Despite the variety [72] and complexity of the elements that make up it, thanks to the PG the scene will appear before you as a unity. The basic nature of the character's will and feelings will become clear to you.

Let's take an example from Gogol's "Marriage" (the grooms and Agafya Tikhonovna, Act I, scene 19). With the arrival of the last groom, after an awkward silence sets in, a gesture for the scene begins to appear in front of you. In a large, as it were empty space, the waves of hope and fear rise and fall heavily and awkwardly. A tense atmosphere surrounds the participants from the very beginning. Seeking gesture for the scene, you can experience a desire to embrace as much of the space around you as possible. Your hands are slightly swaying, as if holding a large balloon filled with air. (see Drawing 4).



Drawing 4

Your arms, shoulders and chest contract slightly. A coloring of hope and fear permeates your gesture. The destiny of all participants in the scene will be decided within the period of five to ten minutes. Emptiness and uncertainty become unbearable. The grooms start talking about the weather. The tension grows, and the space seems to be contracting further; your hands press the ball and grow steadier. The increasing tension threatens to explode. The grooms, as if throwing themselves into the fire, approach the awkward topic closely. Formerly large and empty, the space becomes extremely compressed and tense: your hands have dropped down and already completely squeezed the space around your body with maximum force (see Drawing 5).



Drawing 5

The bride, unable to tolerate the shame and this tension, runs away – the atmosphere explodes (see Drawing 6).



Drawing 6

[73]

4) For the Score of Atmospheres

You can use PG in order to master the score of atmospheres. I have already mentioned that the atmosphere has its predominant will (dynamics) and feelings and, therefore, can easily be embodied in a gesture with its coloring. Again, let's take an example. The final scene of Gorky's play "The Lower Depths" gives a typical example of a strong atmosphere that appears unexpectedly. The

tenants of a shelter are preparing for their nightly debauchery. They strike up the song, but...

(The door opens quickly.)

BARON (standing on the threshold; shouts) Hey ... you there!..

Come ... come here, hurry! In the vacant lot ... out there ... the Actor ... has hung himself!

(Silence; Everyone looks at the BARON; NASTYA appears from behind him and slowly, with wide-open, staring eyes, goes to the table.)

SATIN (In a low voice) Eh ... He's spoiled the song ... The foo-ool!

(Curtain)

With the arrival of the Baron, the atmosphere suddenly changes. It begins with a shock and with its tension in the beginning at a maximum; towards the end the tension gradually weakens in its strength. Its predominant initial basic coloring can be experienced as sharp pain and amazement at the beginning, turning into a dreary [74] melancholy at the end. You make the first attempt to discover the PG. It can be, for example, such as this (see Drawing 7):



Drawing 7

Your arms are quickly (power) thrown upwards (amazement), the fists are clenched (pain and force), and after a pause (shock), they slowly descend (increasing melancholy and depression) – (see Drawing 8).



Drawing 8

You perhaps will find that the color of pain in the first shock will be more strongly reflected in the gesture, if you, having thrown your arms upwards, cross them over your head (see Drawing 9).



Drawing 9

After a pause, slowly, with an increasing coloring of melancholy, you lower your hands down, keeping them close to your body (depression). The ending phase of the atmosphere is associated with helplessness – you gradually unclench your fists, your shoulders go down, your neck stretches, your legs straighten and tighten against each other (see again, figure 8).

Having executed these kinds of PGs, you and your partners will get accustomed to feeling the scene's atmosphere and whatever blocking will be suggested to you by the director, whatever words the author will give you: through them you will radiate the atmosphere into the auditorium. It will unite you with both your partners and the audiences, inspire your acting, and free you from clichés and bad stage habits.

5) For Speech

Finally, you can use PG when working on the text of your role.

Rudolf Steiner, who created on the basis of spiritual research a new method for the development of artistic speech, says: [75] "The speech of man is movement, action" [* That part of Rudolf Steiner's eurythmy, which is devoted to the development of artistic speech, in contrast to musical, pedagogical, medical eurythmy, called Laut Eurythmie ("sound eurythmy"). (Author's note.)]. Each sound, both a vowel and a consonant, invisibly encloses a certain gesture. It can be opened and made visible, as a gesture of the human body. These gestures are different, just like the sounds themselves.

The sound of "a", for example, contains in itself an invisible gesture of disclosure, acceptance, surrender to the impression coming from outside, a gesture of amazement and reverence awe. Expanding at an angle from the

chest, as from the center, arms open, taking the form of a bowl. The gesture "u", on the contrary, tends to close, to close itself from the external impression. It guards the consciousness, fear lives in it. The outstretched arms tend to assume a parallel position, while the legs fit snugly against one another. The consonant sound "m", for example, penetrates deeply, meditatively into the phenomenon, comprehending its essence. Hands, one after another, rush up, as if plunging ever deeper into the object of knowledge.

"H", on the contrary, touches the impression lightly, glides along its surface without penetrating deeply into it. The tinge of irony lives in the gesture "n": the hands and fingertips only lightly, for a moment touch the object of knowledge. Vowel sounds are more intimately connected with the person's inner life, with his emotional experiences, feelings, likes, dislikes. Consonant sounds reflect in themselves, in their gestures, a world of external phenomena. [76] In them, in ancient times, a man imitated these phenomena first in gestures, then in sounds.

Performing these gestures eurythmically, that is, apparently, you awaken in yourself feelings, strengths and images that correspond to the content of each sound-gesture. Being awakened in your soul, they penetrate into the very sound of your voice and make your speech meaningful, lively and artistic. Sounds, combined in syllables, words and phrases, affect each other, causing an endless variety of nuances, enriching and changing each other. The actor must re-learn how to pronounce each sound individually (as in childhood he learned to write each letter separately), in order to later have the right to forget his painstaking preparatory work, to surrender freely to his creative speech.

I cannot give, here at least, any comprehensive idea of the sound eurythmy of Rudolf Steiner. On this subject there is an extensive literature, and I refer the reader to it, considering it my duty to warmly recommend to him a thorough acquaintance with it. (Note: The reader will find a list of the most important books on eurythmy at the end of this book.)

The main difference between PG, as it is described here, and the eurythmic gesture is that firstly you yourself create it. It has a purely subjective value. Secondly – it exists objectively and cannot be changed by you (as the sound "a" cannot be changed into the sound "b"). You can vary the eurythmic gesture, already given in advance, while the PG must be formed by you, reinvented. But both of them serve one purpose: they give strength, [77] expressiveness, beauty, life to your speech. It is not necessary, however, to forget that PG cannot completely replace the eurythmic gesture in working on the actor's speech in general. In comparison with it, the PG will always be only a special case. In addition, the actor who has mastered the eurythmic gesture, thanks to its perfection and completeness, will find it easier to discover psychological gestures. In many cases, the actor undoubtedly prefers

to use eurythmic gesture (and this is not just for speech), instead of looking for his PG.

Nothing can limit the manifestation of your talent to such an extent as speech, in which only your vocal cords take part. This happens always when the impulse of speech comes from the mind, when your feelings and will remain cold and passive. Your focus is on what you are saying. But this does not determine the value of artistic speech. The way the speech sounds is its dignity. PG, like a eurythmic gesture hidden in sound and word, awakens your feelings and will, raises your speech beyond every day and makes it a conductor of your creative (not rational) impulses.

I'll try using an example to demonstrate to you the practical application of the PG in the work upon the role. You are preparing the monologue of Horatio in the scene where the Ghost (the Spirit of Hamlet's father) first appears to him. [78]

HORATIO

But soft, behold! lo where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid, O, speak!
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.
(Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)

As before, you are appealing to your imagination. While listening carefully to Horatio's speech and looking closely at his movements, you make the first attempt to create a PG for his speech. It all appears to you as an ardent, violent thrust forward, as a desire to detain forward as a desire to hold back the Ghost and penetrate into its mystery. Suppose the first "draft" of your PG was like this: a strong thrust forward with your entire body, your right arm also striving forward and upward (see Drawing 10).



Drawing 10

You rehearse the gesture many times and then try to say (without a gesture) the lines of the monologue, until the general nature of your gesture with its colors starts to affect the words you say.

Now start searching step by step for the details of the monologue. [79] The first thing, perhaps could be, that your creative intuition will alert you to the contrast that distinguishes the beginning of the monologue from its ending. Confidently, firmly, but still reverently, Horatio starts his appeal to the Ghost. Pleading sounds can be heard in his words. But the Ghost starts to leave without giving an answer. Horatio's efforts are in vain. He is losing patience. His confidence turns into confusion, reverence gives way to insulting perseverance; his plea becomes an order, and instead of solemnity, it is harsh irritability that can now be heard in his words. You already have two gestures: one mirrors the will and color of the beginning – the other, the end. They are built on contrast upon the principle of polarity (see Drawing 11).



Drawing 11

Having exercised and mastered these gestures, you now say the lines of the beginning and the end of the monologue, until the contrast that you've built into the gestures starts to permeate your lines. You go further and, perhaps, find that the tempo of both gestures is different: at the beginning it is

slower than at the end. You again work on the gestures and then on the text. Gradually, you reveal more and more details and embody them in gestures.

The more you find out the contrast of the beginning and the end, the more the middle part of the monologue appears before you as a gradual transition. You see that the middle part of the monologue itself breaks up into several parts. Each part, every new attempt by Horatio to stop the Ghost is the stage of transition from the beginning to the end: [80]

1.

But soft, behold! lo where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:.....

2.

..... If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,

3.

Speak to me: If thou art privy
to thy country's fate,
Which, happily,
foreknowing may avoid,

4.

Oh, speak!

5.

..... Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure, in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits,
oft walk in death,?

6.

Speak of it:.....

7.

..... stay, and speak!

8.

Stop it, Marcellus! "

Horatio's speech does not flow smoothly: it is interrupted (externally and internally) after every failed attempt to stop the Ghost and reveal its secret. For each of these parts, you create separate gestures (transition from the beginning to the end) and work through them. Now let's take a look at the first part [of the monologue]: how many vague forebodings have accumulated in Horatio's heart in anticipation of a meeting [81] with the mysterious Ghost, what a struggle between faith and unbelief had worried his soul! What a

hidden power lived in him before he uttered his first word in the presence of a mysterious Ghost!

You feel that the beginning of the monologue has a kind of prelude. You embody it in a gesture: before rushing forward, your hand with a wide, strong, but soft movement describes a circle in the space above your head. The body, following the movement of the hand, also leans back at first (see Drawing 12).



Drawing 12

After this prelude ("But soft, behold! lo where it comes again!"), after all that has accumulated in Horatio's soul in anticipation of a meeting, a speech is sent out. The words of Horatio sound: "I'll cross it, though it blast me. ..."

[Now] you peer at the last, final part of the monologue. Horatio has lost his dignity, self-control, peace. His soul is devastated. What precedes his last words? Nothing! There is no "Prelude." Words break out suddenly, quickly, without preparation.

Working through the monologue in this way, you will find many details in each of its parts. But not always you will find a monologue, built harmoniously. What should you do in this case? Having found a general gesture embracing your entire monologue (or dialogue), you look for the most important individual words in terms of their psychological meaning and turn them into the PG. They will serve you as stages of your monologue (or dialogue) just as in the example analyzed above, such stages were relatively independent parts of Horatio's speech.

But you can also come across a case where what is happening on the stage is one of the important moments of the play, when not only every movement, but every sound, every tone of voice is a crucial part [82] of the development of the action, and when at the same time the words given by the author are insignificant, inexpressive and weak in content. In this case, all responsibility falls on you as an actor. You have to fill insignificant lines with content corresponding to the power and depth of the moment. Here PG can provide you with an indispensable service. You create it, based on the

psychological content of the given situation, and you will use it as a foundation for both your acting and the author's text.

Let's take an example: the "Mousetrap" scene in *Hamlet* (Act III, scene 2). Hamlet presents a play at court. Actors perform the scene of poisoning the King. Hamlet observes King Claudius, and his reaction to the scene will tell Hamlet if Claudius has truly committed the murder. A tense atmosphere foreshadows a catastrophe. The wounded conscience of the king arouses chaotic powers within his soul. The crucial moment is approaching: the murderer on the stage pours poison into the ear of the sleeping "king." Claudius loses his self-control. The intense atmosphere explodes:

OPHELIA, The king rises!

HAMLET, What, frightened with false fire!

QUEEN GERTRUDE, How fares my lord?

LORD POLONIUS, Give o'er the play.

KING CLAUDIUS, Give me some light: away!

ALL Lights, lights, lights!

(Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)

You see that, apart from Hamlet's line, all words are deprived of deep meaning. Take the king's line, "Give me some light: away!" If you, playing this role, want to limit yourself to say the remark [83] as given by the author, you risk weakening the strength of the climactic moment in your performance as well as the tragedy as a whole. Horror, hatred, torment of conscience, thirst for revenge ... The king flees ... and maybe still tries to preserve the royal dignity ... Images of possible vengeance and salvation flare up in the king's mind, but his thoughts get confused, slip away, fog obscures his eyes ... there is no support ... he's entrapped like a wild, hunted beast ... You must convey a lot to the audience at that moment with your actions and words that express so little of significance and strength of the moment.

You are searching for a PG. Despite the complexity of the moment, your gesture should be, as always, simple and clear. Your intuition suggests to you, for example, a broad gesture of falling backwards, down onto your back, into unconsciousness, into obscurity, into darkness ... Hands are forced upwards, and along with the body and head, they are thrown back. The palms and fingers of the hands open in self-defense ... in pain, fear, coldness (coloring of the gesture). Leaning back to the limit, you continue to fall deeper and deeper in your imagination (see Drawing 13).



Drawing 13

You "rehearse" the gesture, perfecting and developing it in detail, and when its strength and coloring [affect how] your words sound, they will give your phrase the missing significance of the moment.

I urge my reader to remember that all the psychological gestures described above and the associated interpretation of roles and individual scenes are no more than examples of possible interpretations. The reader, using a psychological gesture, can and must maintain [84] his individual approach to roles. I wanted to show the reader an example of HOW he can use a psychological gesture, but by no means WHAT should he think about this role or a different one, scene, atmosphere, etc.

The Image Behind the Word

I would like to say a few words about the role of imagination in artistic speech. The rational content or abstract thought usually found behind the words of our everyday speech do not allow it to rise to the level of artistic expression. On the stage, we often reduce our speech to an even lower level; depriving it of even more meaningful content. Words turn into shallow forms of sound. Such words quickly bore the actor and become obstacles in his work on the role. The actor begins to force his feelings, resorts to vocal clichés, invents intonations, "stresses" individual words, etc., weakening the creative impulse.

One of the best ways to enliven speech and raise it above the level of everyday speech is through your imagination. The word with an image behind it gains strength, expressiveness and remains alive, no matter how many times you repeat it. If you are in scenes that seem important to you and are essential for the play as a whole or to your role, find the main phrases and important words in them and then turn those words into images: you will enliven your speech. Its expressiveness will gradually spread beyond the boundaries of the

words you have chosen, more and more awakening creative [85] joy in you when pronouncing the text of your role.

How will you, without having well-developed images behind the words, speak from the stage such monologues of *King Lear* as "Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear!" (Act I, scene 4), "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks..." (Act III, scene 2), " You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave: (Act III, scene 7), etc.? You can also take words related to one particular theme in the play and create images for each of these words.

You can also, for example, highlight all the words where Lear talks about his children. Upon a more in-depth approach toward the work, you will discover that nowhere in the entire tragedy does he put the same meaning into the words "Cordelia," "Regan," and "Goneril," or address his daughters as "you", "thou" etc., with the very same connotation. Behind these words different images appear in Lear's mind. You, as the actor playing the part of Lear, should evoke these images in your imagination. You will see how these images will fill the words, phrases, and scenes with great expressiveness.

In *Twelfth Night*, by highlighting all the words related to the theme of love as you find different images – all the characters of *Twelfth Night* are either attracted to somebody or in love with someone – your speech will be spontaneous, and will consequently contribute to the main theme of the play. And it is not only the important words that you must imagine and refresh in your role. For every word that "does not turn out well" you can create an image of it that will make it come alive. "What a cute little nose your master has," says the daughter of the Mayor, to Osip (in Gogol's *The Inspector General*). How often does the actress push this line in order to make the audience laugh? Is it not easier to imagine this "cute nose" [86] and let it the image make the line funny, alive, and easy?

Practice the images you create day by day, improving and strengthening them.

Let's return to PG.

Reading a Play

I have indicated five cases of the use of PG in practical work on the role, but as you begin to master the technique of PG, you will see that its use, in essence, is much wider and freer. You will learn, for example, a new way of reading a play. For a play's events, images and actions; for feelings, strong-willed impulses; for the laughter and tears of the author; you will begin to see PG flashing here and there. And you will not ask yourself how this or that gesture appeared in your imagination, what it reflected: whether it was the atmosphere, the character of the hero, the scene or the word – just as

you would not ask from which individual letters a word is composed, the meaning of which you catch at a cursory glance at it. Such a dramatic gesture will be a new way for you to penetrate the play: you will read it as an actor, turning a literary work into a stage work. Simplicity, saving time in mastering the play, and a deeper penetration into its psychological content will be the result of such reading.

Exercise 7.

Choose for your exercise one of the works of Dickens or Dostoevsky. (They both wrote as actors, and their images provide the best material for the PG exercise.) You can, of course, also work on plays, especially for speech. [88]

Do an exercise on PG in the following order:

1. For the entire selected vamp [seductress] image as a whole.
2. For an individual moment of the same image.
3. For the atmosphere. (Dickens and Dostoevsky are rich in atmospheres.)
4. For a separate scene.
5. For speech.

Make sure your PG is always simple. Work on it for as long as it takes to really awaken your will and feeling in you. Then the PG will merge with you and will not be present in your consciousness separately, diverting your attention.

Build your exercises for speech in this way: first, exercise in a gesture only. Then make a gesture and say the words (or the word) at the same time. And, finally, say the words without making a gesture.

Practice this in the reverse order: first make a complete, well-formed gesture and then start to imagine: which scene could be played based on this gesture? What image? What kind of atmosphere? What phrase could be spoken?

Make another PG and, having mastered it, begin improvising short scenes with words (alone or with partners).

Try to find PG:

- 1) for persons known to you from history,
- 2) well known to you in life,
- 3) fleetingly met on the street,
- 4) for fantastic figures (fairy tale),
- 5) for the figures depicted in the pictures,

6) in caricatures. (Do not try to be funny. The more seriously you look for a PG, the more likely it is that it will awaken your humor and become funny.)

After completing the proposed exercises, try to master the technique of reading the play, as it was described above. At the same time, I recommend that you do not stay too long at this or that moment of the play, waiting until a PG appears. Go ahead if PG does not even appear right away. You will gradually develop the ability to quickly catch flashing gestures here and there. Remember that your goal is to develop a new way of reading the play.

Susceptibility to PG

I turn to some features of PGs, which are important in its practical application. The PG will perfectly fulfill its purpose for you only when, through exercise, you develop your sensitivity to it to such a degree that the slightest change in it will immediately cause a reaction of your feelings and will.

Exercise 8.

Take a simple PG. Do not determine its coloring (coloration). Choose a short phrase that matches the PG. For example, a closing gesture and the phrase: [89] "I want to be left alone" (see Drawing 14).



Drawing 14

Make this gesture and try to "hear" inwardly, what coloring appears in your soul. Suppose that this coloration will be "peace." Make a gesture with this coloring. Assume the pose. Make a gesture while saying the phrase. Say the phrase without making a gesture.

Now, do the same PG again, slightly changing it. If, for example, the position of your head was straight - tilt your head slightly forward and lower your eyes. What psychological change has happened within you? Perhaps a shade of light perseverance joined with peace. Again, repeat the changed PG until you are able to say the phrase you have chosen in perfect harmony with it.

Make a new change: bend, for example, the knee of the right leg slightly. Try to catch a hint of hopelessness. Say the phrase.

Join hands slightly higher than before (closer to the chin). The previous coloring will intensify, and a new shade of the need for loneliness will appear.

Raise your head and close your eyes: pain and supplication.

Turn the palms of your hands outward, from yourself: self-defense.

Slightly tilt your head to the side: a sentimental pity for yourself.

Bend the three middle fingers of each hand (palms outward): a slight hint of humor might occur. (I repeat: [90] all this is no more than examples of possible experiences of a psychological gesture.)

Continue, easily varying the same gesture, listen to the changes taking place in you. Say the same phrase. The smaller the changes are, the weaker the susceptibility. Exercise until your entire body, the positions and movements of your head, shoulders, neck, arms, fingers, elbows, body, legs, direction of your gaze, etc. will evoke in you a spiritual reaction.

Do the suggested exercise in your imagination. Get the reaction of your will and feelings as if you were actually making a gesture.

Listen to (or remember) a well-known musical phrase. Create the corresponding PG with the colors. Do it. Take the following musical phrase. Find the PG for it. Make both gestures one by one, moving harmoniously from one to the other. Connect in this way a number of PGs created when inspired by the music.

Make sure that your gestures do not take the character of dance, or so-called plastic/aesthetic ones. They should still be simple and clean in form.

Now go to naturalistic, everyday movements and positions. Choose a phrase and pronounce it in various ways in different positions, for example: sitting, lying, standing, pacing the room, [91] leaning against the wall, looking out the window, opening and closing the

door, entering and leaving the room, taking, laying and discarding objects, etc. Make sure that the intonations of the phrase you are saying are prompted by a pose or movement and sound in harmony with them.

Do the same exercise, quickly changing your poses and actions. Try to develop the ability to instantly respond internally to an external action or position.

In addition to a subtle sensitivity to the gestures you make, the last two exercises will awaken in you a sense of harmony between the inner experience and its external manifestation. The stage truth will become an inner necessity for you.

PG Goes Beyond the Limits of the Physical Body

I have already said that a weak, will-less PG cannot sufficiently awaken your feelings and volitional impulses. But how to make PG strong? During the exercises, you may have noticed that excessive muscle tension weakens the strength of the gesture rather than increases it. You need another kind of strength.

Your physical movement is preceded by a heart-felt [*or* spiritual] impulse, desire, or decision to make this or that movement. This impulse has spiritual strength. It continues to live in your physical movement and even after you have done it. By making a physical movement, you can either retain [92] this inner mental power, or exhaust it prematurely. Excessive physical stress drains it. On the contrary, a physical movement without undue tension preserves it. But you can not only preserve this power by making a gesture, but also, you can increase it. Suppose you make a sharp, violent movement, throwing your body and hands forward. Having done it, you naturally reach the limit of your physical movement. Your body should stop. If you try to continue to move outwardly, you will be forced to over-strain your muscles and at the same time lose a significant part of the original inner strength. But you can continue your movement without such muscle tension. If you continue it by emitting an internal force in the direction of the movement made, you will continue it, despite the stopping of the physical body. You will get a feeling that your inner movement goes beyond the external, physical body; your strength increases, and the body is freed from muscular tension. This is the power that fills the PG and awakens your Feelings and Will.

You should not be embarrassed if at first it seems to you that you are only imagining inner strength. Imagination in connection with the exercises will gradually make this force a reality.

Exercise 9.

Start with simple [93] movements: raise your hand, lower it, stretch it forward, to the side, etc. Do these movements without excessive muscular tension, imagining the energy radiating in the direction of the movement.

Do the same movements with a greater physical strength, but without excessive muscular tension and at a faster tempo, imagining, as before, the radiating force.

Now do the same movements - with excessive physical stress. Relax gradually your muscular tension, while at the same time imagining that physical strength is being replaced by an ever-increasing mental strength. Stand up and sit down, walk around the room, kneel, lie down, etc., trying to make these movements with the help of your inner strength. Having finished the movement externally, continue it internally.

Create PG with coloring, trying to forget about your physical body and focus your attention solely on the inner strength of the gesture. Your radiation itself will be filled with the PG's coloring.

Do a simple etude (clean the room, set the table, clean up the library, water the flowers, etc.). With all movements, try to catch the internal force and radiation associated with them.

Again, perform a series of simple movements, but only in your imagination. In this case, you will be dealing with a pure form of internal strength and radiation. You will create the image of the PG in this way. [94]

Through such exercises you will introduce yourself to the power that is transmitted to the audience from the stage, attracting their attention.

Imaginary Space and Time

The next exercise of PG is related to the experience of space and time.

Our soul is naturally inclined to live in unreal space and time. Every day it brings an element of fantasy into our daily life. Remember the minutes when your soul was tuned happily and joyfully? Did not the space become wider for you in these minutes, and the time shorter? And, on the contrary, in the hours of longing and emotional depression did you notice how space pressed you and how slowly time passed? Our reason, imposing a ban on all the fantastic and unreal, also hides from us these deviations from the "normal" that are so often encountered in life. But the artist, the actor, should not

forget about them. The world in which he lives is an imaginary world. All his activities lose their meaning, as soon as he turns off an element of fantasy from it. Without it, there is no art.

Our PG (having so little in common with the intellect!), already brings this element into dramatic art and enables the actor to develop and awaken in himself a love for the fantastic. Thanks to imaginary space and time, the actor awakens in his soul creative feelings, images and volitional impulses, which otherwise would not have been opened for him. [95]

In the proposed exercise, your imagination plays the same important role as in the previous one.

Exercise 10.

Start with simple gestures: lift your arm calmly, imagining that it takes a long time. Make the same gesture, accompanying it with the idea of a very short period of time.

Do these simple exercises until you feel that your imagination has gained-the power of persuasion.

Make a gesture of opening in an easygoing tempo (see Drawing 15).



Drawing 15

Continue it in your imagination for an indefinitely long time, extending into endless distance. Make the same gesture instantly, in a limited space, while actually doing it in the same easygoing tempo.

Do the same thing with a gesture of closing.

Start with an opened gesture and then close it, compressing the original unlimited space into a tiny point (see Drawing 16).



Drawing 16

Make a gesture first for a long time [i.e., slowly], then quickly. [Make] the same gesture: at first for a long time, in infinite space, to the end, then quickly, in a limited space. Then begin making [the gesture] quickly, in an infinite space, to the end, and then for a long time, in a limited space.

Discover some variations with PG.

Move on to simple improvisations. For example: a shy person enters the store and chooses [96] and buys the thing he needs. Let the shyness come as a result of the reduction, compression of space in the imagination during improvisation. Then, a cheeky person enters the store. Try to achieve forwardness by mentally expanding the space during the improvisation. A bored, lazy man in front of a bookshelf selects a book to read. Boredom and laziness will result from "extended time." The same is done by a person looking for a certain book with great interest. The "reduced time" will give you as a result the experience of an interested person. Externally, in all cases, try to keep approximately the same length of improvisation every time. Do the same with the characters from plays and literature.

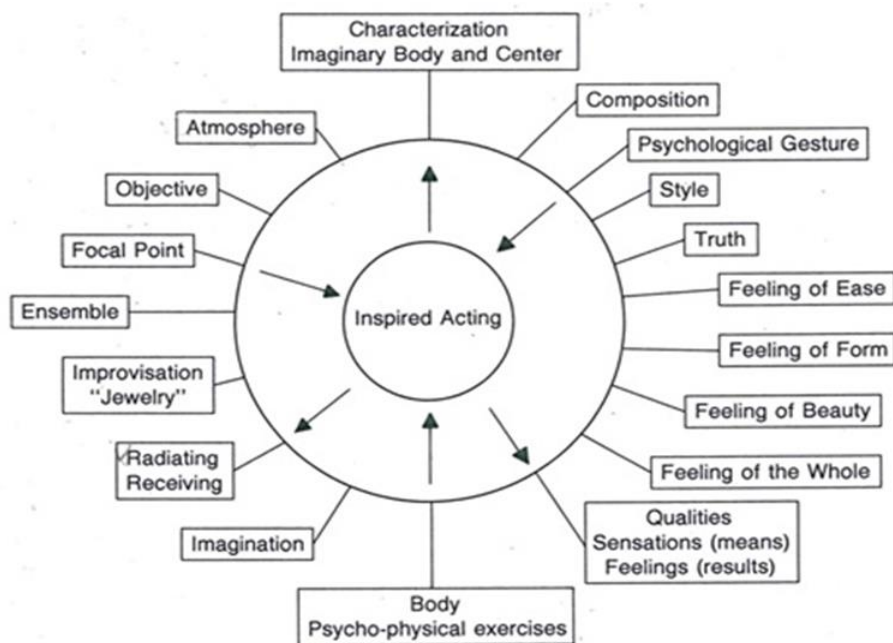
Notice your "fantastic" experiences of time and space in everyday life. Observe the people you meet, trying to guess their experiences of space and time.

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APPENDIX 11
Supplementary Materials – Handouts –
For Students in the Class Described in Chapter Four

Handout 1, Class 1

The “Chart for Inspired Acting,” given to Mala Powers by Chekhov, ca. 1949.



Handout 2a, all Classes

Speech Warm-up

8 WARM-UP EXERCISES AND PHRASES

Edith Skinner

8

- 1 Begin with stretching loosening exercises for shoulders, head and neck, facial muscles, brow, tongue (both and inside and outside the mouth), and LOWER JAW.
- 2 Repeat lightly and easily, feeling a crisp movement with a minimum of tension:
 wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee
 waw-waw-waw-waw-waw-waw-waw-waw-waw-waw (Don't let "waw" become "wah")
 wee-waw-wee-waw-wee-waw-wee-waw-wee-waw
- 3 Slowly and easily, without glottalizing yet maintaining clarity of enunciation:
 ee oo aw oo ee oo aw oo ee oo aw oo
 oo aw ai ee oo aw ai ee oo aw ai ee ("ai" as in "high") aï
- 4 With the lower jaw relaxed open and kept still, point your tip of the tongue:
 straight out - relaxed in - straight out - relaxed in etc.
 right - left - up - down - right - left - up - down etc.
 left - right - down - up - left - right - down - up etc.
 Make a big perfect circle in a smooth rhythm with your tip; reverse direction
- 5 Shake out your tongue; shake out your lips by blowing through them.

6 Edith's Favorites:

a:	eï	i:	aï	o:ü	u:
MAH	MAY	MEE	MY	MOH	MOO
NAH	NAY	NEE	NIGH	NOH	NOO
LAH	LAY	LEE	LIE	LOH	LOO

REPEAT FOR CLARITY OF ARTICULATION - WORK FOR PRECISION WITH MINIMUM OF TENSION, AND EVENTUALLY, SPEED IN REPETITION

- 7 P p pah b b bah t t tah d d dah k k kah g g gah THEN reverse order
- 8 TTTTTTTTTTTTTT DDDDDDDDDDDDDAHH NNNNNNNNNNNNNN LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLAH
 (8 t' and a t'a: d' da: n' na: l' la:)
- 9 Alternate the following phrases: paper poppy (4 times) baby bubble (4 times)
- 10 Peter Piper the pickled pepper picker picked a peck of pickled peppers.
 A peck of pickled peppers did Peter Piper the pickled pepper picker pick.
 Now if Peter Piper the pickled pepper picker picked a peck of pickled peppers,
 Whe-reis the peck of pickled peppers that Peter Piper the pickled pepper picker picked?
- 11 If a Hottentot tot taught a Hottentot tot/ To talk e'er the tot could totter,
 Ought the Hottentot tot be taught to say, aught, / Or what ought to be taught her?
- 12 A tutof who tooted the flute/ Tried to tutof two tooters to toot.
- 13 Said the two to the tutof, / "Is it harder to toot of/ To tutof two tooters to toot?"
- 14 can't you won't you don't you (3 X's) did you would you could you (3 times fast)
- 15 kinky cookie
- 16 giggle goggle g! (don't swallow l)
- 17 lilli lolli lilli lolli 'l' l' l' l' l' 18 lilli lolli looli lawli l' l' l' l' l'
- 19 Culligan and calla lily 20 philological ability
- 21 eleven benevolent elephants 22 li-te-ra-ly li-te-ra-ry -rə rɪ
- 23 will you William will you William 24 brilliant Italian William
- 25 Topeka Topeka Topeka t'ə t'v 26 Bodega Bodega Bodega
- 27 rubber baby buggy bumpers 28 moomala poppala
- 29 red leather yellow leather 30 inimically mimicking
- 31 minimal animal minimal animal 32 whither which way m m w
- 33 lemon liniment 34 unique New York
- 35 toy boat 36 Peggy Babcock

Handout 2b, Class 19

Psychological Gesture for a scene from *Hamlet*:

To prepare the motivation before starting the monologue, Chekhov suggests making the following gesture, again only as an example:⁵¹⁹

“before rushing forward, [move] your hand with a wide, strong, but soft movement that describes a circle in the space above your head. The body, following the movement of the hand, also leans back at first” – the idea is to sum up “all that has accumulated in Horatio’s soul.”



(Drawing 1)

HORATIO

But soft, behold! lo where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.



(Drawing 2)

[“an ardent, violent thrust forward ... a desire to hold back the Ghost and penetrate its mystery”]

Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease and grace to me,

Speak to me:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,

Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid, O, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

Speak of it:

[Horatio is frustrated and defeated as the Ghost begins to leave them.]

⁵¹⁹ For the purposes of this class, I use Nicolai Remisoff's images from Chekhov 1946.



(Drawing 3)

stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

(Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)

(By the way, these drawings were used in an entirely different context in the 1953 edition of *To the Actor* which we are using as a textbook. This is a good example of how a gesture might, in different contexts, be used for the PGs associated with different Images of a character in the actor's preparation.)

19.1) A volunteer (male or female) is asked to do gestures in “dumb show” while another member of the class reads the Horatio monologue, pausing at the places the gestures apply. (Each student will have a handout with the text and images.)

a) The volunteer does the preparatory gesture (Drawing 1) before starting, then a pause, then he or she steps into the scene and the reading starts. The first time through, the illustrated gesture (Drawing 2) is used at the beginning, with the actor (always in dumb show) adding a transition in the central section, from “If there be any good thing ...” to “... For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death? Speak of it ...” By the end of this central section, Horatio is frustrated and losing control.

So the reader has to pause before going on to “stay, and speak!” to let the volunteer develop an impulse, making the down-pointing gesture (Drawing 3) as he or she says the final lines.

b) Now the reading is repeated, with the actor preparing and using (in the dumb show while the monologue is read) gestures of his or her own invention (not simply using the drawings).

c) The process is repeated with a new volunteer (of a different gender from the first) and a new reader.

This exercise shows a specific scene PG that could be fully or partially visible. However, one must be very careful not to let the gestures become too obvious, mannered, or distracting.

Handout 3, Class 15

Selected plays and dramatized stories

Anton P. Chekhov's short stories, dramatized:

- 1) *The Witch*, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1944/1944-h/1944-h.htm#link2H_4_0001 (this is the original story and I will provide Michael Chekhov's dramatization of this story). You can also find on this link: (*A Malefactor and The Student*)
- 2) *The Sneeze Plays and Stories* by Anton Chekhov; translated and adapted by Michael Frayn (*The Sneeze, The Bear, The Evils of Tobacco, The Proposal*); Samuel French, Inc.

Scenes from the full-length plays:

- 3) *Three Sisters* by Anton P. Chekhov (translated by Štěpán S. Šimek, Portland- Oregon Experimental Theatre Ensemble at the Reed College Diver Studio Theatre (link to the PDF is provided on Moodle page.)
- 4) *The Inspector General* by N. Gogol.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3735/3735-h/3735-h.htm>

Handout 4, Class 17

LIST of OBJECTIVES and ACTIONS

Annihilate, awaken, arouse, badger, bait, balance, bang, beat, beguile, bend, blitz, bombard, bury, charm, choke, command, conquer, consume, control, corrupt, dazzle, demean, devour, discover, dissect, distract, dominate, elevate, embrace, eviscerate, exalt, expose, fascinate, feed, fill, flatten, fly, force, grab, grasp, heal, humiliate, illuminate, incite, inflame, inspire, intimidate, inspire, intimidate, jolt, kick, kiss, lift, manipulate, mask, mold, nail, nurture, offer, oil, open, overwhelm, penetrate, pinch, please, poison, poke, possess, probe, protect, provoke, pull, purge, push, quench, reveal, rip, root out, rule, scare, screw, seduce, seize, serve, shake, shed, shine, shock, slap, smooth, soar, soil, soothe, stalk, stop, strengthen, strip, suck, tantalize, taste, tear, tempt, threaten, trick, transcend, trap, twist, uncover, unite, uplift, wring.

LIST of ACTION VERBS describing ARCHETYPAL GESTURES:

Opening (expansion), Closing (contraction), Pulling/Drawing in, Pushing, Lifting, Throwing/casting, Smashing/Crushing, Wringing, Penetrating (Jabbing), Tearing, Cutting, Grasping/Grabbing, Holding (or Holding Back), Embracing (or Caressing), Receiving (or Taking), Giving, Scratching/Clawing.

Handout 5, Class 24

Film shots chart

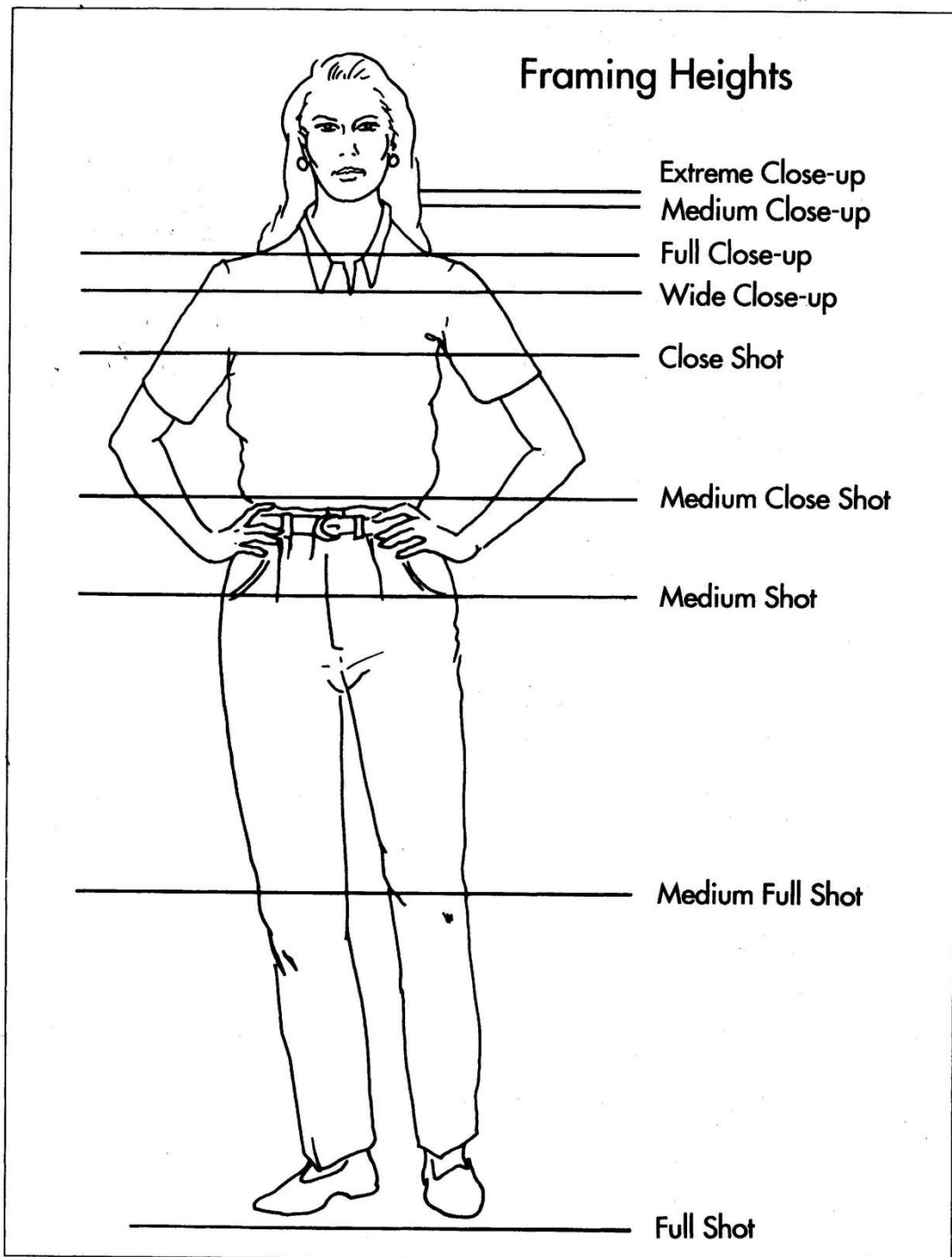


Figure 6.1: Basic Framing heights for the human figure.

(From Katz, Steven D. 1991. *Film Directing Shot by Shot*. Los Angeles, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, p. 122.)

Handout 6, Class 24

AUDITIONS – Advice from Joanna Merlin

Actors who have a lot of experience auditioning have learned that an investment of time and energy in every audition pays off. Preparation will always help minimize your nervousness; do not keep resisting the auditioning process. You need to approach an audition and for that matter your career with the firm belief that you have something to offer that is unique.

Listen to what Lawrence Olivier said in his book *On Acting* “Whatever people may have thought of my Hamlet, I think it was not bad. I know it was not perfection, but it was mine.”

Self-confidence is your lifeline in this business. If you don’t believe in your talent, no one else will. I don’t mean for you to be arrogant. The casting director Jay Binder says, “For those five or ten minutes, you do have the part. No one else is in the room doing that part. It is yours. Own it.”

Auditions can be accepted as an opportunity to reveal your ability to play a particular role- the audition can be rewarding rather than punishing.

Ask yourself afterwards: “Was my preparation adequate? Did I have the courage to follow my impulses? Was my work quantitatively better at home? Was I inhibited by the auditioning circumstances? Were my nerves the problem? Did I have enough energy? Was I pushing my performance? Was I using myself fully? What was lacking? Was I in control? Did I make the adjustments the director asked for? If not, why not? What can I do to improve my next audition?” Make notes of everything you learn from each audition.

Outcome:

- 1) Audition will teach you how to work quickly. In TV and film work, scripts are changed from moment to moment, and you need to incorporate those changes on the spot. In producing a new play, things might be changed during the previews and changes often go into the performance the same night.
- 2) Audition will help you explore your character range. (By working on one specific character you might discover what you tapped into and incorporate when working on other roles.
- 3) Every audition has the potential for opening the door to work; if not now; then in the future. (You will develop a network of directors, producers, playwrights, casting directors-keep a journal as for how were you seeing at your auditions. Send them good reviews; let them know what you are working on.
- 4) Auditions teach you how to direct yourself so that you can make independent choices confidently. The idea is to stay comfortably within the established framework while bringing your own transforming vitality of you are an understudy and are asked to step in, for example.
- 5) Auditions provide you with a chance to act. If a talented actor is fully present and has done his homework, our imagination will fill in the rest. If the actor is courageous and free, surprises happen that can be exciting for the actor as well as the auditors. Go beyond the comfort zone; a good audition is not a “safe” one. As G. C. Scott the actor said “Safe actors hold back, experiment not, dare not, change nothing, and have no artistic courage...” The audition space is yours; the time is yours...don’t waste it.

Practice your skills and commitment to your acting artistic choices.

Keep in mind that your director may be very open to a portrayal of your character very different from what she had originally in mind (An example: a casting director needed to find 14-year-old girl. Gwyneth Paltrow was 19 then and she met the director James Ivory and asked if she could audition for the role. She read the role

with a great intelligence, sensitivity and emotional immediacy that the director changed the age of the character because Gwyneth would enrich the whole film with her approach and she did *Jefferson in Paris*.

BEFORE you start the audition, you need to take a few moments to connect with – “PRE-BEAT” Create your own acting space, a space that is not dependent on the atmosphere in the room.

Ask these 10 questions:

1. What are your first impressions, your immediate intuitive responses to the scene?
2. What is the world of the play?
3. What is the scene about?
4. Who is the character?
5. What is the character’s objective?
6. What is the obstacle to achieving the objective?
7. What are the relationships in the scene?
8. Where are the “moments” in the scene?
9. What is the atmosphere of the scene?
10. What is the “pre-beat”?

NEGATIVE objectives can be turned into positive objectives

Example: “I don’t want to listen” can become “I want to shut you out.”

“I don’t want to stay here” can become “I want to get out of here.”

STATIC “TO BE” CAN BE ENERGIZED BY “I WANT TO BE...HAPPY”,
or “I WANT TO BE FUNNY”

CASUAL objectives won’t give you an impulse for action.

The initial objective should be so strong that it will charge you up.