

From Appendix 1

In the middle of June, 1926, Michael Chekhov went on holiday to Italy via Berlin. It was most probably in Germany that he got hold of a copy of Rudolf Steiner's lectures on Speech and Drama, which had been published that spring. They made a tremendous impression on him. He realised that the contents were what had been vaguely present in his soul for a long time. At that period of time, Chekhov was evidently afraid that it might not be possible to bring the book back to Russia, so he decided to summarise its contents, lecture by lecture. Moreover he was even aware that he would need to be cautious in what he wrote. He resorted to using hints and allusions. Convinced that Gromov would understand the drift of his thought, Chekhov used various kinds of abbreviations, omissions and the device of crossing out "non-materialistic" terms in the text, which his like-minded friend was meant to restore when reading it.

Michael Chekhov – Letters to Viktor Gromov¹ ***(Translation by David Ball, kindly edited by my dear friend, Graham Dixon)***

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July 15th 1926 Lido

O Mensura² mine!

How pleased you were to receive my letter! And how glad we were to receive yours! I was disappointed to learn that you would not be coming to Moscow before my departure. But then I realised that the Georgian Military Highway is providing you with wonderful impressions. I am happy for you and oh, how I am pressing, weaving, cutting and plucking!³

I have found a book here, in which the author sets out his views on the theatre and the formation of correct artistic speech for the stage⁴. This research is extremely interesting in my opinion. I have decided to outline the content of this theatre research for you. So I'll begin.

From the Foreword⁵ (The Foreword was written not by Rudolf Steiner, the author of the book, but by a lady, called Marie. I can't remember her surname, but it isn't important).

Through speech the human being grasps his divine origin. The sounds of the alphabet are creative forces connecting the human with his origin and showing him the way to his spiritual source. Through them he feels his way back to his divine "I", and, in so doing, rises above the animals. In speech, the individual power of the "I" can express itself through sounds and know itself through them. (which cannot be found either in animal sounds or in wonderful birdsong). Through speech the universe can know itself in the focal point of the human "I";

and through this “I” it can begin to create anew. The uprightness of the human body releases the capability of human speech. I will continue by quoting a passage. It expresses very poetically what artistic speech should be in the true sense: “... to live in the breath, to form the breath, to sculpt the air with the chisel of the breath and feel the trembling and subtle vibrations of the air (and of the ether⁶), high and low tones and the very subtle chimes of the diphthongs ... such artistic creativity in the sphere of the most subtle substantiality is a more noble task than to emit human emotions in the form of animal sounds...”. Isn’t that wonderful?

It continues: as long as true inspiration cannot be differentiated from trivial emotionalism, the path to the redemption of art through the *word* will be blocked. Naturalism leads initially to animalisation and then to “gramophonism”. It is necessary to *become conscious of* the laws that lie at the foundation of speech, and then by devoting oneself to them, resurrect artistic creativity through them. *Truth* is essential for art, and not random copying. Speech is flowing movement, imbued with inner music and the charm of colourful images and sculptured forms. We kill the artistic element in speech if we view it as a means of comprehension, as a vehicle for intellectual content. It is not speech that should be adapted to the intellect, rather the intellect should be shone through by speech. And again I will translate another poetical passage about language: “... it is ablaze with multi-coloured rays ... its rhythms, melodies and sculpture, the contours and architecture of its aspiring forces, its sonorous or soft metric steps, its proud cadences; the line connecting and disconnecting all of this and intermingling one with the other in its swirling until this whole movement swells into Dionysian dance or, clear and bright, flows into an

¹ See Appendix 1

² “A graduated glass vessel for measuring liquids” (*Latin: mensura*).

³ From Chekhov’s own memoirs and those of his contemporaries, it is well-known that he had a fine and unusual sense of humour. This trait of his was evident in his creation of exceptional stage characters and also in his everyday life. Chekhov said of Gromov that he had a sense of humour very similar to his own.

⁴ The book in question was the first printed edition of Rudolf Steiner’s course of lectures on Speech and Drama, given in Dornach, Switzerland in 1924.

⁵ Written by Rudolf Steiner’s wife, Marie Steiner von Sivers. From 1901 she had been one of his closest collaborators and founded with him the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902, which later evolved into the Anthroposophical Society in 1913.

⁶ See footnote 6.

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Apollonian circle dance⁷”... The book in question purports to be the key to this form of the art of speech. It states the necessity to approach all this consciously, without any apprehension that consciousness will kill the artistic impulse. It will not kill it, but raise it up to the “I” and liberate it from the confines of the mask of

the “personality”. It must be seen and then detached from us and cognised. And when we cognise all this, consciousness will return to us from the outside as something free, self-evident and objective.

In the course of time an inner stratification of the primeval unity came about: thinking branched off to the “I” (see the sketch⁸), language remained in the astral body (the circle A.B.), and feeling descended to the ether body (E.B.). Primeval poetry was a unity. Now however, as a result of stratification, the following has come about: feeling that descended to the ether body is the source of the *Lyric*. The *Epic* arises directly out of the circle of the astral body. But what the human being in his speech directs predominantly *toward the outer world* (through the upper circle) is the *Dramatic*. And when the dramatic artist speaks on stage (if it is not a monologue), he is *really* standing facing someone. He is *in actual fact* communicating with the outer world. And the *fact* that the artist is facing *the outer world also* applies to his speech; and likewise to what he is simultaneously experiencing within himself. The *lyric*, on the other hand, is not addressed to anyone external. It is sufficient unto itself. And the lyrical artist should speak in such a way that his speech is the pure expression of the inner human world. In this case even his consonants should in a way become vowels. (Every consonant has its corresponding vowel sound, for instance L = *ee*, R = *ah*.) One has to learn to feel *the vowel of each consonant*. The *epic* artist should feel: I come closer to the inner world of the human being when I speak a *vowel* and when I speak a *consonant* I come closer to outer things. With the *epic*, we are dealing with the outer world, but only as *imagined* by us. (Otherwise it would not be epic, but dramatic.) The epic speaks of an *imagined* object. The *lyric* is a stirring of inner feeling. *Declamation* comes about when this stirring is so strong that it bursts out as a *summons* or *call*. The epic artist shows his audience his imagined object through the magic of his word. He *creates an embodiment* of it in front of the audience and, by citing it, *recitation* comes about. The *dramatic* form of speech gives rise to *conversation* when the speaker is facing his counterpart in the flesh in the outer world.

In the diagram it looks like this:

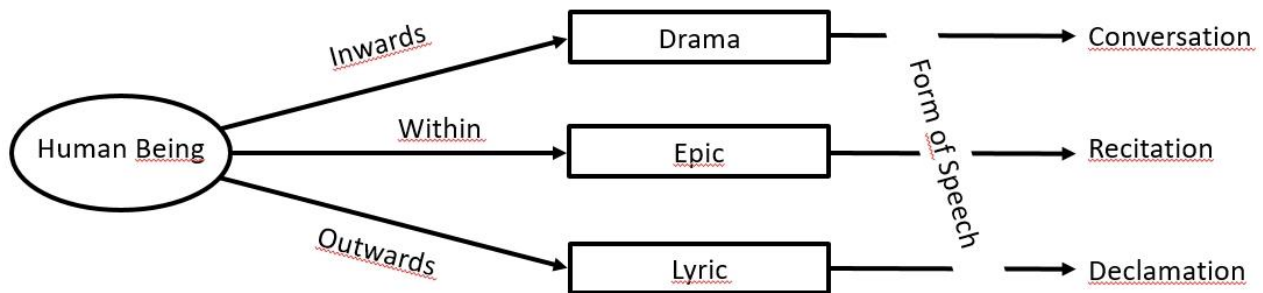
The art of speech consists of these three forms. (It should not be forgotten that in reality all these three forms are intricately entwined with each other and that lyric and epic elements can be found in drama.)

The book continues with an explanation of certain sounds: *Ah* (A) = the full opening of the speech organism. It is the striving (of the astral body) to go into the outer world. *Ah* is the most consonantal of all the vowels. The complete

opposite to the sound *Ah* is the *Oo* (U). In the case of the latter the whole speech organism is closed. *Oo* is the most vowel-like of all the vowels. With the *Ah*, the human being is falling asleep, with the *Oo* he is most awake. With the *Oo*, the astral body connects strongly with the ether and physical bodies. The *Oh* lies between the *Ah* and the *Oo*; it contains within itself in a harmonious union the processes of the self's opening up (*Ah*) and closing up (*Oo*). In the case of the *Oh*, the human wakes up rather more than in the actual present. The *Oo* means: I want to be awake in relation to an object I am facing. All the vowels are located between *Ah* and *Oo*. *Oh* lies in between and not quite in the middle, just as the musical interval, the fourth, is situated in relation to the octave. *Oh* is the state

⁷ For a closer understanding of the anthroposophical understanding of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles see Steiner's lecture cycle: *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*.

⁸ See Steiner's book *Theosophy*, in which he lists the seven sheaths of the human being and their interrelationships.



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between falling asleep and waking up. Hence the ancient exercise with the OM (AUM)⁹. The ancients thought that if you repeat this syllable often, you would enter the state between sleeping and waking. The next stage with the ancients was the speaking of the AOUM. Here the *Ah* and the *Oo* strive to meet each other and when the ancients spoke this syllable they were able to proceed from the *Ah* state to the *Oo* state (*Oh*) lies between them, of course). There then follows a description of the five Greek gymnastic exercises, with which the first chapter closes. Before outlining the second chapter I am going to skip ahead and describe some practical exercises for you to try out, if they appeal to you.

Exercise 1 In order to make speech moulded and musical, you have to bring a *gesture* into it. Traces of gestures still exist in speech, such as “the tone of the voice” (I don't know how to translate *das Stimmliche*); but, as such, the gesture has disappeared. It needs to be reinstated. (The five Greek gymnastic exercises, which encompass all kinds of gestures, form one component of the exercises to introduce the gesture on stage as an external aid for the spoken word. In essence there are no other gestures than those contained in Greek gymnastics. There are

their *Abschattungen* (shades of difference)¹⁰. That is one pole. The other pole is *speech itself*. Therefore: one pole is the *gesture*; the other, *speech*. I'll now go into the latter pole, but you will see that it is also connected to the gesture.) Now, *what qualities can be attributed to speech? What is speech capable of in general?*

Speech can be: 1) *effective*. However, in order to learn this first nuance of speech, you need to study the corresponding gesture. While doing this, the gestures are performed *without speaking*. Arbitrariness will arise if you start with the *word*. That is because the gesture as such *has disappeared* in the word and it has to be studied separately. Then both the word and the gesture will become alive. (In present-day acting, chaos reigns in this sphere.) You need to understand that the guiding spirit of language works through the six nuances of speech (the first one has been mentioned, the others follow below), and if we devote ourselves to studying the activity of this guiding spirit by means of gesture, then we will approach the word in the right way. Thus: a *pointing, indicating* gesture corresponds to effective speech. When you have thoroughly studied this gesture, you need *to give it back* to the word. To achieve this, you need to grasp *the method of speaking* the word in the proposed, effective nuance of speech. This method is the *sharp, incisive* forming of the word. In this process the inner strength of the human being penetrates the word, fills it with *mettle*; the strength is such that it breaks out in exhalation. So here we have the first nuance of speech in its three aspects:

1) Effective – the pointing gesture – sharp.

The second nuance of speech draws the attention to inner processes taking place within the human being. The speech of this nuance is: 2) *thoughtful*. The gesture to be employed to learn this nuance is: *to bring the limbs into a connection with the body*. (close to the forehead, nose, arms akimbo etc.). And finally, what is inherent in this gesture revealing thoughtfulness should find expression in the word pronounced in a *full-bodied* manner. Here there should be nothing metallic in the voice. Here both the vowels and the consonants should be spoken in a full-bodied manner. And so:

2) Thoughtful – the gesture kept close to the body – full-bodied.

(The ability to be decisive – keeping the gesture still, *Stillhalten der Gebärde*¹¹ – pronouncing slowly.)

The third nuance of speech is called: *speech feeling its way forwards against resistance*. The explanation here is the following: penetrating into the outer world with a question or a wish, but without the certainty of how the circumstances are

in this outer world. There may even be hindrances in the outer world. The gesture that corresponds to this is: *making rolling movements forwards with the arms*. Here the formation of the words should be *trembling, vibrating*. (Here it is good if the sentence contains many 'p's, as this will facilitate the trembling.) And so:

3) Speech feeling its way forwards against resistance – rolling movement – trembling.

⁹In Hinduism the sacred word inherent in all that exists.

¹⁰I.e. all the movements that can be seen on stage are derived from the prototypes of the Ancient Greek pentathlon. ¹¹The original German text states: *Stillhalten der Glieder* – keeping the limbs still.

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The next nuance: expressing *antipathy*. The gesture: flinging one of the limbs away from the body. (The author says that badly educated people do this gesture with the leg or foot.) Here the pronunciation is *firm, hard*.

4) Antipathy – flinging the gesture away from the body – hard. The next gesture is very simple – I'll state it directly:

5) Sympathy – stretching out the arm with the intention of touching an object or caressing it. This gesture can have something affirming – soft

And the last gesture:

6) Withdrawing into oneself – gesture away from the body – concise.

Everything I have described should be practised until it becomes instinctive. Now I'll continue to the following practical exercise.

Exercise 2 concerns knowing how to *form* artistic speech correctly when talking. Almost half of the book is devoted to the question of this speech formation and, from the further chapters, it becomes clear that in general nothing can be achieved in the art of drama without *this*. Now specific *formative forces* (etheric forces) are inherent in the human being. These must be developed through a whole sequence of exercises. These forces lie deep within the human organism. For the vowels they lie in the lungs, but they are primarily located in the organs in the region of the throat. They also lie higher up: in the organs of the nose, at the front of the mouth etc. The exercises are built on the principle that we take our starting point from *living* speech and not from anatomy and physiology. We have to learn to relate to *living speech* as something existing in its own right, separate from the human being and to be treated objectively. Speech should be viewed as a *being* within us. And just as the human exterior can be described in *a particular order*, e.g. the head, neck, chest, abdomen and legs (and not the legs, head and

then the abdomen and so on), so also the living organism of speech can be described *in a particular order*. This is how it is described: the sequence of the vowels gives us a picture of an independent being, the speech organism. These vowels are: *a(ah) e(eh) i(ee) oh ä ö ü u(oo)*¹². When we pronounce them in this order, we will realise, experience and feel what the speech organism is. When we pronounce these vowels, we need to experience inwardly their proper position in the speech organism and their proper formation. To be precise: in the case of the *ah* the entire speech organism *opens up towards the outer world*. The *ah* comes out of the depths. In the case of the sound *eh*, the space through which it passes is narrower, reduced. But all the same it lies very deep in the speech organism. With *ah* and *eh*, nothing happens in the front part of the speech organism. With the *ee*, the space is completely reduced to a narrow slit. With the *oh*, we feel it proceed so far forward that it is located *in front of the slit* formed for the *ee*. Thus, living our way into the secret of the shaping of these vowels, we come to the *ü* and *oo*, which are formed then entirely in the front part of the speech organism. By practising this sequence we reach the point, at which the speech organism becomes separate from ourselves (which is a cardinal requirement to proceed further) and through this learning process we come to pronounce the vowels in a correct and *healthy* manner. The voice also becomes strong and healthy in the process of practising these exercises. Following these exercises there comes a whole host of similar ones, which form a unity when taken all together. I'll describe them for you in the next letter, but meanwhile I will mention one more exercise of a different nature. By the way, lest I forget: the author cites this statement as the motto of his book: *Mensch, rede, und du offenbarst durch dich das Weltenwerden*. ("Speak, human being, and you reveal through yourself the process of the world's becoming.")¹³

Exercise 3 Observing the rainbow. This is important for creating scenery and for developing *artistic agility of the body on stage*. Artistic agility of the body is altogether only conceivable when the

¹²Translator's note: approximations of the three German Umlaut sounds – *ä, ö und ü* – in English could be the *a* sound as in "cat"; the *or* sound as in "worth"; and the *you* sound as in youth. However the muscle tension in the lips is tauter with the German sounds than with the English ones.

¹³This utterance expresses the essence of the teaching of the ancient Mystery School of Ephesus, the Logos.

corresponding inner qualities of the Soul are present. And these are given to us by the rainbow. We have to surrender ourselves to it and feel that: the *violet* edge of the rainbow conveys the prayerful devotion to the divine beings and the transition to *indigo* is a calm mood of soul. With *green* we feel that our soul pours out over

everything growing, blooming and blossoming and as if we have come from the *divine worlds* (by way of violet and indigo). *Green* opens the portal that makes possible the sense of wonder for all things and beings, as well as sympathy and antipathy toward them. If you have lived your way into the green of the rainbow, you will be able to a certain extent to understand all the beings of the world. With *yellow* you feel strengthened within, you feel your right to be a human being *within nature*. *Orange* is the feeling of one's own inner warmth and also of the worthiness and shortcomings of one's own character. *Red* is enthusiasm and joy, inspired self-surrender and love, love for all beings. The author says at this point that people usually regard the rainbow as something external and see nothing more in it than if they would want to see the human being and for this purpose would examine a human figure made of papier-mâché. Just as through Greek gymnastics the actor grasps the earth with his will and finds himself upon it, so *he grasps the wonders of heavens¹⁴ through the contemplation of the rainbow*. And he grasps the world as it reveals itself to him from two aspects; and a revelation of the world is what the art of acting is meant to be.

That's all for now. I'll continue to write about this book next time. I really want to see you. I miss your cheeky mug and one minute I see you in one street of Venice, then in another or on one of the bridges or in my arms. Kisses, kisses, kisses.

My greetings to Nina¹⁵. Don't forget. Your Mizdra

Write to me in Roma. Poste restante. A postcard that you've received this letter will do.

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July 21st 1926 Lido This is the second letter from here.

Good'ay failed Genius!

I'm growing a beard, it's grey. Its general appearance is nothing special. Bazba¹⁶ is cross. Do you desire further summaries from the realm of the dramatic art? Here they are:

Chapter 1 Eurythmy¹⁷ is very close to the contemporary art of drama. In the future rhythmic and the art of drama will merge into one. Those who use language in some form or other in their artistic works fail to grasp sufficiently the *artisticness of language* as such. Skill in working with language and speech requires the same preparatory training as, for instance, the art of music. And for anyone wanting to *speak artistically* the very pronunciation of *each separate sound* must become an *art* (as it is in music with regard to each separate note). The genuine training of artistic speech gives rise to *style*. Without style there is no

art whatsoever. Where does speech originate in the human being? From the astral body (the soul). The “I” modifies (the astral body) and it receives the impulse of speech. The animal has no “I” to bring about this modification and therefore has no speech¹⁸. In the speech of the ordinary person, the sounds are formed at the unconscious level, with the artist of the word, consciousness must penetrate into the sphere where the sounds arise, where speech is born. Consequently it is necessary to contemplate

¹⁴ In the German original: *das Himmelswunder des Regenbogens*. Here Chekhov misunderstood Steiner’s thought that there are two paths of penetrating into reality. The first path involves leaving the body (the will) and leads to an understanding of the natural environment. The second takes its starting point from outer phenomena (“the heavenly wonder of the rainbow”) and leads into the inner world where the soul experiences colour.

¹⁵ Nina Neinkirchen, who was Gromov’s first love, was a very beautiful deaf and dumb woman.

¹⁶ Nickname for Chekhov’s wife, Xenia Chekhov (1897 – 1970).

¹⁷ Eurythmy, a stage art based on anthroposophy. In eurythmy the sounds of speech and music are expressed in bodily movement.

¹⁸ In common with the human being, the animal has a physical, ether and astral body, but lacks an individual entity, an “I”. According to anthroposophical teaching, each animal species has a group soul in the spiritual world, its own group “I”. For another angle on this subject, see Appendix 2, an excerpt from Graham Dixon’s book *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.

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(meditatively) everything that is spoken about this process. The following feeling has to be developed: human speech arose not out of human cognitive forces, but out of the *artistic* ones. (A vague hint for the understanding of this is provided by the Egyptian hieroglyphic script.)

In earlier times people were totally incapable of speaking in an unrhythmical manner. And besides that, people in those times spoke not only mere thoughts, they spoke something *that sounded artistically like speech*, and that was the main thing. In our time, the feeling for the artistry of speech has been lost and you often hear: “You are not speaking *correctly*”, but alas, you do not hear: “You are not speaking *beautifully*”! The processes of the astral body take place (for the most part) unconsciously. The artist of the word must learn to have the processes that give rise to speech at his conscious command. At this point Steiner says that the numerous methods of teaching speech and singing arose out of a divining of this need to penetrate consciously into the processes shaping speech. However, they all fail to achieve their goal because they do not start from *living language itself*, but from anatomy.

Above all, the *speech organism* must grasped cognitively. It came about gradually in the human being under the influence of the “I”, which modified the human (astral) body. Imagine such a diagram of the speaking human being: *vowels* arise

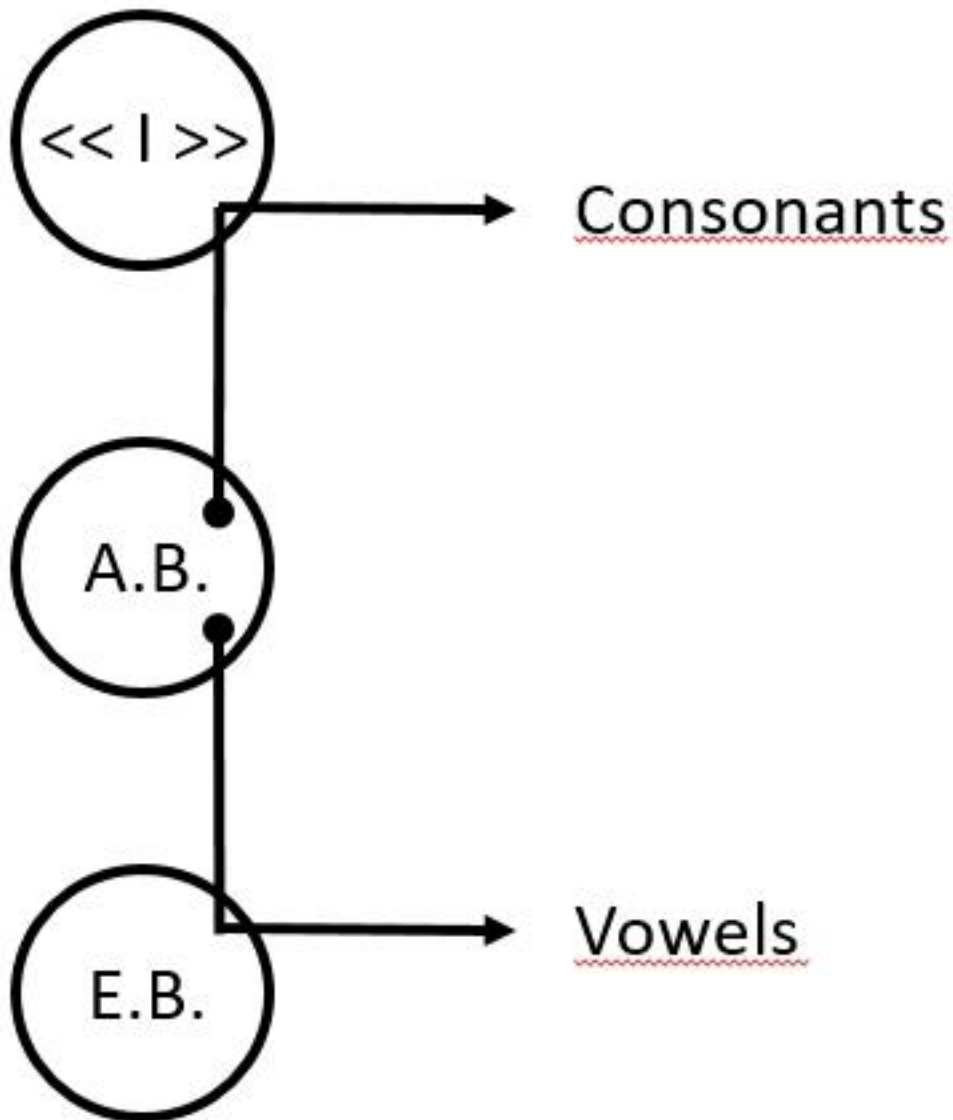
when the speech impulse descends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle designated as E.B.; *consonants* arise when the speech impulse ascends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle “I”. Vowels originate at the deepest and most inward level of the human being. For that reason they express what is most inward in the human being and are located at the most unconscious level. The human “I” (in its present state) brings about sense perceptions and the substantial part of thinking takes place in the “I”, as also does ordinary conscious activity. And when the speech impulse ascends to the upper circle, the *consonants* originate and they are, in general, more accessible to human conscious perception than the vowels are.

In primeval language, humans not only spoke in rhythm, beat, assonances and alliterations, they *also thought and felt in language*. All *feeling* immediately gave birth to the corresponding speech. They had to imbue feeling with a familiar form of speech. For instance: they didn’t say: “I love the child affectionately”, but said something like: “I love the child *bye baby bye bye*”. The same applied to thinking. Modern abstract thought did not exist. When humans thought, their thought became a word, a sentence. *They spoke inwardly*. (That’s why the verse is not: “In the Beginning was the Thought”, but “In the Beginning was the...”¹⁹) Speech was a “precious casket for thoughts and feelings”. And the text continues with many more enchanting passages, but I will leave them out in order to give you as much of a general impression as possible. But, of course, you have to experience every word of this exposition. Altogether Steiner admonishes us that we need to meditate and ponder a great deal over what he sets forth. Now I’ll continue from the same Foreword.

It can be proved historically that every art form is based upon a particular world view. The Foreword deals with the origin of art in general and the necessity of returning to that source (the mysteries). In conclusion, the lady who wrote the foreword promises to publish a new book consisting of exercises received by her previously from the author of the present book²⁰. However, that will be in the

¹⁹ Chekhov is implying that Steiner meant the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John.

²⁰ Marie Steiner planned to publish a systematic, instructional guide to speech formation, but her intention remained unaccomplished. The working material for it was compiled and published after her death as: *Methodik und Wesen der Sprachgestaltung*, Dornach 1955.



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future. And now I'll describe a number of practical exercises for you from the book itself and not from the Foreword. There are 19 chapters in all.

Exercise 1

Speech eurythmy is a must²¹. It is not necessary *per se*, as an independent art, but in the following specific context: the actor makes the 'ee' sound in eurythmy for instance. While he is doing that, the main thing is not stretching the arm, but registering inside himself what the muscles are actually experiencing; and this experience of the muscles should be like an apparition, a mirror image from within that accompanies every 'ee' spoken by the actor on stage. This will, of course, happen instinctively when all the sounds of speech have been sufficiently worked through eurythmically. So you express a particular sound in eurythmic

movement as fully as possible. Then you take the feeling you had while expressing this sound in movement and what the muscles experienced during the sounding of the “*ee*” and transfer inwards into your soul. Then, with this experience, this feeling, you speak the sound *without* the outer gesture. Through practising this exercise, there will remain forever a counter-image, an apparition of the sound and it will do its work when you are speaking on stage.

Exercise 2

The Greek gymnastic exercises are useful for the actor. Here they are.

- 1) *Running*. The Greek felt the inter-relationship of forces between himself and the earth when running. He felt that his will forces were present in his limbs. When running he felt the inter-relationship of his own forces with the earth. The “I” and the earth. Furthermore, when the actor has trained himself to run in an artistic manner, without suspecting it, he will have learned to walk about the stage; and to walk in such a way that his walking will serve him as the power to articulate his speech correctly.
- 2) *Jumping*. The Greek realised that when he jumped he had to somehow *to draw certain dynamics out of himself*. The dynamics of the legs had to be increased. The jump provides a modified relationship to the earth, to the forces of gravity. By practising jumping, the actor also instinctively acquires the ability *to modify his walking* on stage. Moreover, this modified way of walking will correspond to a modified way of speaking. That is: if you speak slowly or clip your words in some way or speak with a trembling, firm or soft voice, then thanks to the jumping exercises you will acquire the ability to walk on stage in complete harmony with your manner of speaking. For speech on stage should be accompanied in the corresponding manner by walking.
- 3) *Wrestling*. Further, in addition to the mechanics that have to be developed in the legs for jumping, it is necessary to add the mechanics that determine *balance in the horizontal direction* (as opposed to balance in the vertical direction as in the preceding exercises). This is wrestling. Therefore, in wrestling we have the earth and another object. The result of this exercise will be that the actor acquires the ability *to move his arms and hands* instinctively and in the best possible manner *while actually speaking*.

- 4) *The discus throw*. For this exercise, a person *is handed an object* that is *large and heavy*. The dynamics as such undergo a certain development throughout the sequence of these exercises. Throwing the discus, the actor learns *mastery of his facial expressions* (and also the correct use of his arms and hands, as in the previous exercise). By following the discus as it flies and accompanying it with his attention during the whole flight, the actor develops flexibility in his facial expressions and control of the muscles necessary for mimicking. (A ball or other object may be used instead of a discus.)
- 5) *The spear throw*. The dynamics of *direction* are then added to the discus throw (in which a person is only dealing with the dynamics of handling heavy objects). And by practising this, the actor learns *to speak!* Namely to speak in such a way that his speech becomes *effective*, but not in the sense of meaning or intellectual content, but in an artistic, “speech sense” (if one can use such a term). Speech becomes a fact “in its own right”. In other words, the actor gains possession of the *lost secret of speech*. Speech frees itself from the intellect and enters the organs of speech themselves. Long sticks can also be used for practice.

²¹ Eurythmy is meant here.

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These five exercises correspond in the best possible manner to the cosmic interrelationships. They *reveal* the human being in his totality. The author calls the five Greek exercises *total speech*.

That’s it for this time, my dear. Next time I’ll start with the book’s first chapter²² on the theatre. I send you a thousand kisses. Moisten them, take them for yourself and then give them to your grandmother as a present. Give Nina the letter. It doesn’t contain any secrets. Or you can read it to her. Let me know when you receive this letter and whether you like what I’ve written. Is it comprehensible, shall I continue to write?

Your “I”

Write to me at the following address: Pension Venier, Villa Marina, Lido, Venezia, Italy.

We’re going to be here until approximately August 15th. Perhaps a bit longer. It’s August 1st. In any case scribble me a few lines to *poste restante* in Rome. Rome is

written *Roma*.

I forgot to add that the author says that all his research and indications will only make sense when they are *put into practice*.

Hello my dear one!

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How are things with you? Do drop me a line or two. As for me, I'm totally confused as to which language to speak. That easily happens, given the number of languages I know. In difficult situations I do as follows: I assume a serious appearance and pronounce indistinctly: "Si, la u, ja....." and the like. Well that's not interesting, so allow me to present a summary of *the contents of the second chapter* of the book on the art of drama. I've already mentioned that there exist six nuances of speech. The beginning of the second chapter deals with them and then it continues: by training these six nuances we will learn to bring the *gesture* into the *word*. There are sounds that are called spirants (*Blaselaute* – "blowing sounds"²³). Imagine you have frozen the air in a trumpet while it is sounding. The frozen shape will give us the beautiful gesture concealed in the blowing air. The human speech apparatus is also to a certain extent like a musical instrument that is blown; and when a spirant, a blowing sound, is pronounced, this amazing gesture is formed in the air. The spirants are such that they should be *listened to* and *in the listening* the gesture concealed in them should be perceived. The spirants are: *h, ch* (as in Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f* and *v*. Other sounds are such that the gestures concealed in them call forth the desire to *see* them. These sounds are the plosives (*Stosslaute* – "pushing sounds"): *d, t, b, p, g, k, m* and *n*. Then there is one "quivering sound" (*Zitterlaut*): *r*²⁴, which should be felt *with the arms and hands*. If you hold your arms loosely and listen to an *r*, you should have a kind of tingling sensation in them. Then there is one "wave sound" (*Wellenlaut*): the liquid *l*. With this sound you feel the desire to become it yourself, to feel the flow of the life element in it. When another person speaks the *l*, you also have to *feel it, but with the legs* and not with the arms. In the case of the spirants, the gesture *has disappeared in the sound* to such an extent that you can only try to *hear* it. This is why good poets instinctively make use of spirants if they want to express something that is far removed from the human sphere. If a poet wishes to depict a person waving his arms, fighting off, hitting someone or the like, he uses plosive sounds. And if the line is written in such a way as to arouse a *feeling*, then look for *l* and *r*. In a nutshell, all sounds *other than* spirants can point to the human being and his gesturing.

²² I.e. the second lecture of the Speech and Drama Course. The first lecture was an introductory one.

²³ It is important to note that the basis for Steiner's classification of the sounds is neither the method of their

articulation nor what occurs in the larynx, but what happens in the surroundings when the speaker forms and moulds the air. In other words, Steiner's approach is not the mechanics of the speech apparatus, but the phenomena on the physical-etheric (sound) and inner-soul experiential levels. The primary aspect is in the listening and the activity, both of which are perceptible to the speaker. The anatomical details of the vocal apparatus are a secondary, instrumental aspect.

²⁴In Russian the *r* sound is rolled, as was formerly the case in stage German.

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The human being lives in gestures. The gesture *disappears into language*. When a word is spoken, the human being reappears in the word; and we find the whole person in what a person speaks. However, we must know how to form speech. In a word, *the human being who has disappeared in gestures, is resurrected in speech*. But what is characteristic and appealing in the art of drama is that the actor on stage (i.e. the human being) *does not disappear completely in the gestures and does not resurrect completely in the word*. This gives the audience the possibility of complementing with their imagination that which has not been fully resurrected in the word.

The contents of the second chapter close on this note. It's rather difficult. I fear I may have summarised the contents inadequately, but I couldn't make a better job of it. Incidentally, the author says that you will grasp it if you "meditate" and think about it *a great deal*. Now to move on, I will summarise some aspects of the practical exercises to develop speech.

Exercise 1

I've already mentioned that the vowels should be pronounced in the following order when practising: *a, e, i, o, ä, ö, ü, u* (German pronunciation). Now we have further exercises for the vowels. The vowels need to be practised particularly intensively, despite their being given in combination with consonants. The exercises are devoid of any intellectual content whatsoever: they are a set of words and their significance lies only in the training of correct speech and the correct formation of the sounds.

A *Aber ich will nicht dir Aale geben.*

Ask them if we need these ardent gages²⁵.

This is an exercise for the lungs, the larynx and the diaphragm. Take a look at the vowels, they go like this: *ah–eh–ee–ee–ee–ee–ah–eh–eh–eh*. Starting with *ah, eh–* you then arrive at the closed position of the speech organism: *ee, ee, ee, ee*. Hold on firmly²⁶ to these *ee* sounds and then finish the exercise in the same way as you

started it, i.e. the speech organism does *ah – eh...* as at the start. The next combination of words develops the resonances (nose and head) and makes the organs that lie at the front of the speech organism²⁷ flexible (compare the progression of the vowels between *ah* und *oo* in my previous letter):

B *O schäl und schmor mühevoll mir mit Milch Nüss' zu Muß*²⁸. *Oh where do words full force meet me with news to muse.*

The third exercise is for the consonants. Here the spirants, plosives, liquid and quivering sounds are placed in their correct order. This develops the organs necessary for forming the consonants and *flexibility* in pronouncing them. Speech and the corresponding organs of speech are brought into a healthy state. Here's the exercise itself:

C *Hartestärke—aaa—Fingersind—iii—beiwackren—aaa—Leutenschon—aa a — leicht — i i i — zu finden — u u u.*

Hardly started – ah ah ah – finger tips – ee ee ee – by fractions – ah ah ah – loiter slow – ah ah ah – lightly – ee ee ee – to finish – oo oo oo.

There follows a sequence of poetic excerpts. Their content is irrelevant, the whole essence is that the sequence of sounds in them is such that it leads you into speech formation in an astonishing manner. This develops the individual organs, resonances, the flexibility of speech and so on and so forth. I'll write

²⁵ The English versions of these speech exercises were devised by Sophia Walsh.

²⁶ The German original text states: *Die Grenze halten Sie ganz scharffest.* "Keep the borderline in sharp focus." In the course of the exercise the position of the vowels moves from the pharynx (*ah*) forwards in the mouth (*eh*) and reaches the area behind the teeth (*ee*), which Chekhov calls "the narrow slit" in the previous letter. In this case the objective is to hold the formation of the sound (*ee*) behind the borderline of the teeth. The next exercise, in contrast, is based on the continuation of the vowel sequence beyond this borderline.

²⁷ In the original text, the organs of articulation are meant and not the speech organism as such.

²⁸ Beneath this exercise in the letter, the vowel sequence: *o ä u o ü o i i i ü u u* is written in purple coloured pencil, presumably by Gromov himself.

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these excerpts down for you. The letters in red pencil alongside the exercises and verses are there to make clear the sequence in which the exercises and verses are to be spoken. You'll find the sequence below:

I

*Und der Wanderer zieht von dannen, Denn die Trennungsstunde ruft; Und er singet Abschiedslieder. Lebewohl! tönt ihm hernieder, Tücher wehen in der Luft*²⁹.

II

*Ich sonne mich im letzten Abendstrahle
Und leise säuselt über mir die Rüster.
Du jetzt, mein Leben, wandelst wohl im Saale,
Der Teppich rauscht und strahlend flammt der Lüster³⁰.*

III

*Und drüber hebt si d'Sunne still in d'Höh
und luegt in d'Welt und seit: «was muesz I sê In aller Früei?» — Der Friedli
shlingt si Arm um's Kätterli und's wird em wol und warm. — Draf het em's
Kätterli ä Schmüezli êe³¹.*

See the red letters and numbers overleaf for the sequence of these exercises:

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times I – once

A — another 10 times

B — another 10 times AB — another 10 times C — another 10 times ABC —
another 10 times II – once

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times III – once

Apropos the exercises in general: keep in mind when practising that you are not learning from mere exercises, but learning by means of the exercises from *the sounds themselves* and the speech organism itself. The sounds are our teachers, (the divine beings).

²⁹From *An der Saale hellem Strande* by Kugler

³⁰From *Ausgewanderter Dichter* by Freiligrath

³¹From *Die Überraschung im Garten* by J.P.Hebel, written in the Alemanic dialect of German.

Exercise 2 The artist of the word (the actor), needs to develop an awareness for the processes happening within the human being when speech is being formed. Imagine a person who has spent his whole life on a desert island and has not learnt to speak through lack of human contact. He is *capable* of speech: he has hearing and the organs of speech. This person suddenly finds himself in human society. He feels the desire to start speaking and the sounds *hm, hum, ham, hem, him* break free from him.

The exercise consists of speaking these sounds and seeking in them, at a deeper level, the processes occurring within yourself, while forming speech (the astral body takes hold of the ether body). Feel the very strong dynamic of speech in these sounds. You have to pronounce these syllables in depth and practice insightful devotion to feeling the processes of speech formation. You will have the sensation of an inner whooshing, zooming sound.

So, there you are, Mitsoopochka, that's all for now. I send you a thousand kisses. Scribble me a postcard upon receipt of this letter.

Your Mitsooza.

4

My dear and golden Mitsoopochka!

I can't stop thinking of you, I miss you and send you all my love and embraces. Relax and enjoy the summer and nature. Meanwhile for your diversion, I will write you a summary of the contents of the *third chapter* of the book on the art of the stage. I'll begin: modern *prose* is not artistic. Its concern is to bring thoughts, which have detached themselves from language and become located in the head, back into speech again. In other words, prose began to convey the naked content of thoughts, devoid of any kind of artistic element. The thoughts of the head are all directed downwards onto the material level. True thoughts on the other hand, can only arise out of the *whole* human being. This is where the connection of artistic speech with the gesture begins.

The head (roundness) does not have gestures (the remnants of gestures in the head are the eyes and the facial expressions), and the gesture has to be taken from the *rest* of human being. Therefore speech must take *the human being in his or her entirety* as its starting point. And this is the meaning of the phrase: 'gestures must be brought into speech'. (The thoughts in the head are all mixed up in chaotic formlessness, which is evident if only from the fact that one can, for instance, be a good anatomist and know nothing about the human soul. All this has nothing in common with the artistic element.) In a word: prose as a conduit for the thoughts of the head is devoid of *style*, and *style* is the prerequisite of any artistic work. Otherwise: if you start from the desire to convey the content, the thought, there is no art; if you start directly and immediately from *the feeling of style*, then there is art. However, even prose as narrative can and should be artistic. For that the arms and, more importantly, the *legs and feet* need to be involved. What is a "narrative", a prose "account"? It is the *epic*. An epic deals with the narrative of an imagined object; and it uses the hexameter for this purpose. For the essence of the hexameter is that it brings *the legs and feet* into speech. It brings the rhythm of the feet into speech. (It's not for nothing that one

talks about the verse “foot”.) The proper feeling of the hexameter is that not only you can *speak* it, but you can *walk* it as well. Narrating something implies being thoughtful (the 2nd nuance of speech). We stand on one foot and speak the *oh* in a rounded and slow manner (also an aspect of the 2nd nuance of speech). Then we take two steps, as if we were sliding through our speech: *eh – eh*, and return to “thoughtful” with a rounded and slow *oh*. So we have *oh eh eh, oh eh eh, oh eh eh*: long—short-short- long—short-short- long—short-short- and so on. We end up with the familiar form of stepping the rhythm in speech work. Then the *whole* person participates in what the head has created as its product. (You can also take sideways steps.) When we hear a hexameter, we have the feeling: something is being narrated to us through it. It feels as if our inner life and our moving feet have been freed from the force of gravity.

Now for the opposite: we can take our starting point from a *feeling*, i.e. from what is within the person. After being in an uncertain state of emotion for some time, we want to attain clarity and focus

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our feeling and then the anapaest comes about: short-short-long – short-short-long--- short-short-long--- and so on. With the anapaest we are dealing with an *expression of feeling* and not a *narrative*. Just as we learn the epic by means of the hexameter, so too we learn the *lyric* by means of the *anapaest*. (We have to remember that both the hexameter and the anapaest can be found *in language itself* and that we have to learn everything that is connected with the various laws of speech *from language itself*. This is a very important and fundamental feeling when training.) When we read hexameters, we learn to use the tongue, the palate, the lips and the teeth, i.e. we learn to pronounce the *consonants*. When we read anapaests, we learn to use the larynx, the lungs and the diaphragm; they teach us how to pronounce the vowels. We learn to *dwell* on the vowels. We learn the trochee through the hexameter and the iamb through the anapaest.

Further, the author mentions two concepts that are not very clear to me. They are: the drama of style and the conversational drama. The iamb is suitable for the first type of drama, which is more *internal*; and the trochee for the second. Anyone wanting to learn how to read fairy tales, for example, should prepare by reading *trochees*. He will acquire the feeling that the consonants are important for fairy tales and that something particularly powerful is meant to work through them. Reading a fairy tale emphasizing the vowels will create the impression of unnaturalness. If the consonants are spoken faintly, the impression created will be

of something light and ghostlike. The iamb is needed if you want to perform something realistic in a poetical manner. The *vowels* play a role in the iamb (although the consonants are not excluded completely) and this type of speech is the only one possible when you want to present something realistic in a more poetic light. For this reason, exercises using the iamb are very important for the actor. (They will also be a help in works written in trochees.) The iamb is necessary for prose drama.

The author continues by describing how he once saw a performance in which the actors wore masks like the ancient Greeks did. He says what a delight it was not to see boring human heads and insincere human faces! He admired the bodies and their gestures and the possibility of expressing so much without the aid of the head and face! He says the moving mouth and facial expressions of the speaker create a repulsive impression. He continues by giving many indications concerning facial expression and especially *the movement of the lips* when speaking. Hence you can conclude that he is taking a stance against dilettantish speech and this is what he finds offensive in all its forms. There is one sentence: “By means of the face there can only be expressed what real speech or singing is and what the inner appropriate complement is of what the human gesture can actually reveal in such a splendid way”. The chapter concludes with the thought that speech which is not transformed gesture has no ground beneath its feet.

Now I’ll write down a *breathing* exercise for you. It just consists of *not taking a fresh supply of air into the lungs until the entire preceding air stream has been used up in speech*. However this needs practice. It must become instinctive. When practising, you need to take air into the lungs and hold your hands close to the diaphragm to check that the inbreathing is correct. Then you speak: *ah eh* until all the air is exhaled. In the same way practise with the consonants: *k l s f m* (these sounds must be spoken slowly to spread them out over one entire exhalation). In these exercises, the process connected with the breathing should be observed attentively and consciously.

Then this exercise with the breathing³²:

*Und es wallet und woget³³ und brauset und zischt, Oh wild West Wind, thou
breath of Autumn’s being*

(breath)

*Wie wenn Wasser mit Feuer sich menget Thou, from whose unseen presence the
leaves dead*

My dear, now I will also describe the contents of the *Fourth Chapter*. Gather your patience and read on. To refresh your memory: the lyric requires the iamb, prose – the trochee or the dactyl.

³² Graham Dixon's note: the breath is not stored or held, as in diaphragmatic breathing, until there is no more air in the lungs. It is rather the case that the stream of the breath goes right through to the end of the line or phrase. The in-breath is the breath of intention, on it the speaker is receiving the meaning and/or the image.

³³ In this excerpt from Schiller's poem *Der Taucher*, *siedet* is replaced by *woget*.

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The trochee and the dactyl are for the narrative element. The tone of the narrator's voice lives in the trochee or dactyl. We are dealing with an *imagined* object in the case of the narrative or epic. However, this object can be imagined so vividly that it only remains for you to make yourself the *instrument* for everything the imagined object speaks and does; and then *performance* comes about. Herewith the path is outlined from the tale or epic to the drama and performance. (But not every epic work is so constructed that it contains within itself the possibility for such a transition. The author cites *The Cid*³⁴ by Herder as an example of an epic making the transition to drama or rather, to the possibility of *performance*.) It is not recommended to deal directly with drama during training because then it is very easy to make everything external and lacking in depth. One should start precisely with the narrative, the epic; for this is where *imagination* is required (for the object is only imagined). The ability "to transpose yourself into another person" and to *perform* him is what is required. For in actual fact he doesn't exist, he is only in your imagination. By practising giving ourselves to the character, we acquire the on-stage professional faculty of *listening to our fellow actor* and allowing his speech to resonate within us. This constitutes a complete co-experiencing with our fellow actor.

Then, following a section with examples from poetry, the book states that the artist must develop a *sense*, a *feeling* for the *medium* he is working with, as Michelangelo felt the marble and spent a long time searching for it in the quarries. The *word* must be sensed as the medium. You have to feel that *you are* to be an apparatus, an instrument, *through* which something is brought about on stage. The next thought: you need to develop a *sense out of the depths of your heart* – a sense that tells you what is *good and what is bad in poetry*. The forces that guided us in this direction in the past are disappearing and we are now faced with the need to draw out of ourselves what was shown us in the past. When speaking, we must learn to sense that we are communing with divine beings, we must learn not simply to *think*, but to *speak inwardly*. The author refers to a play (apparently called *The Portal...*³⁵), to the seventh scene and says it is written as if

it had been *heard*. It was not written out of thoughts or the choice of words, but directly from what was inwardly *heard in words*. In a nutshell, we have to deepen, intensify and address most earnestly the issue of *artistic taste*. Taste in its highest sense can become our guide in art. The last thing we need in art is intellectualism; the very first thing we need is artistic sensing. Alexandrine verse is also mentioned in this chapter and he treats it as a compromise between prose and poetic form, but not knowing what alexandrine verse is, I didn't grasp anything. Pardon vous! This is the end of Chapter 4. Don't be horrified, I'm starting **Chapter 5!**

Schiller said: "The destruction of matter³⁶ through form is true artistry". Feeling and sensing are the actor's materials. They must be destroyed, absorbed by form, i.e. the proper form of speech and gesture on stage. This is mastery, this is art. Form (the word, gesture, image, rhythm) must work in art just as natural emotions do outside of art. So it is on the stage, so it is also in the other arts. If you read properly written poetry properly, your voice will develop *by itself*. When preparing a poetic work for reading, you should transpose it from verse into rhythmically heightened prose (similar to Andryushan's³⁷ prose) and devote yourself to feeling and sensing the work in this form. When you have fully experienced and amassed the feelings, go on to the form of the verse and your feelings will take on *form*. Form swallows up, destroys matter (i.e. the natural feelings such as they are). This is necessary in order to avoid skipping over the feelings themselves and not to be taken up with the mere technique of the form-giving process. At this point the author mentions the formative forces embedded in the human speech organism. I wrote about them before in the exercises for the vowels.

Chapter 6 Naturalism is a repetition of life, it imitates and photographs it and that's why it isn't art. Art must *portray and present* everything using its own means and must not resort to natural means, as naturalism does. Everything in art must be *manifested even to the smallest detail*, everything must be *clear, consummate and visual*. For instance, the audience should not have to rack their brains to guess what the image in front of them is. They should receive it in full and *grasp* it without effort or guesswork. The actor should be skilled enough to employ the resources of his art – the word, the forming of the word, his facial expressions and gestures – so that they contain everything he wishes to portray, without anything superfluous or lacking in complete clarity for the audience. The *integrity* of art lies in

³⁴ During the lecture Marie Steiner read the first, third and fourth romances from *The Cid*. An example of this in English would be Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur*.

³⁵ Rudolf Steiner's first Mystery Drama, *Die Pforte der Einweihung* (In English: *The Portal of Initiation*).

³⁶ See Schiller's work: *Letters on Aesthetic Education*.

this. All this is hindered by the fact that we have lost the feeling for the “word” and the “sound”. We hear *the meaning through* the words, its intellectual *content*, but we don’t hear the *word* itself or understand it either. We have lost the capacity to *understand while hearing*. And that is a huge difference. This difference must become quite clear to the actor. Through understanding the meaning of each individual sound we are led to what we have lost. Besides that, we have to realise that the vowels are the expression of the soul’s inner experience (in relation to the outer world, for example: *ah* is amazement at something etc.). The consonants express the soul’s attempt to *depict in the form of sound* some outer phenomenon or object, to imitate the outside world *using sounds*. We must practise analysing a word according to the meaning of its sounds. By experiencing and feeling our way into each individual sound of a word, we will grasp its deep meaning and discover its secret, the secret of its origin.

The author gives an analysis of several words. I’ll mention one example. This will help when practising. The German word *Band* (bond, link, bow). The word contains the *ah* sound – amazement. There was amazement at the fact that something can be joined together, connected. In reality it is amazing that something can *hold together* when we tie it up! This human amazement was expressed in the *ah*. The word *Band* originated in amazement. Further: when I tie or join something together, one thing envelops another. It encloses the other thing, wraps round it. The sound *b* in the word is, as it were, the expression of this wrapping round. Then there is the sound *n*. It signifies something fleeting that is light to take hold of; and *d* signifies something fastened, reliable. So, in the word analysed, *n – d* mean that something of an unstable nature is fastened together during the *Band*. In a similar way, every word can be *imbued with feeling* from start to finish. This is necessary for the actor, who is the artist of the word. Interjections must be observed and studied. Much can be learned through them in this direction. In the world there exists *one single* language although it is spoken by different peoples. The only thing is, they see something different in one and the same object because they express it using different sounds of one and the same language that is common to all. For this reason, the Italian says *testa*, the German *Kopf* and the Russian *golova*. And when we analyse the meaning of these words according to their sounds, we see that the German *understands* the head in this way, the Italian sees something else and the Russian something else again. If they all perceived one and the same thing in “head”, then they would have one and the same word for it. To understand that however, you have to distance

yourself from the heady, intellectual meaning of the word. The relationship to words as described here must become instinctive. When listening to your fellow actor on stage, one or the other sound should sound in the background of your soul, depending on what he or she is saying to you. But all of this should be completely instinctive. In a way, the sounds should become the actor's faculty of "listening". Correspondingly, if the actor replies to his fellow actor after listening to him with, let's say, the sound *ee* resounding within him, his reply will sound different to when he listens with the inner experience of the sound *ah*. The very fine nuances arising from this have the power to reach the audience both in the balcony and in the stalls; and the audience will say it is "good" or "bad" because it hears the music of the soul coming towards it from the stage instinctively, not intellectually. That's the end of Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 is completely devoted to an analysis of a play set in the French Revolution³⁸. The analysis is based on sounds. The scenes, the characters and the whole play are depicted as sounds or sequences of sounds. Robespierre for instance is: *ee, o, d, t*; and Danton: *ä, ee y,l*; but it's impossible to summarise without having a copy of the play in front of you. For this reason I'll limit myself to individual ideas taken from the chapter. To analyse a play in this manner, your *know-how* has to have become *instinctive* through practice. When a director or actor analyses a play, his aim should be to have its moods laid out before him, in the palm of his hand, as it were.

From Chapter 8: Mastery of the art of true word formation depends to a great extent on adapting yourself inwardly to the moulded and pictorial elements of speech as such. There must be *truth* and *reality* in art; naturalism wants to attain this *truth*, but it uses *natural means* to express it. Art, however, must use its own, *other means* to express *truth* and not natural ones. The truth of *nature* goes to meet the Spirit. Spirit *shines through* the truth of art. When we grasp this, we shall begin to understand what *style* is in art and we shall find the way to it. For this reason we should practise speaking in a language that is not our

³⁸ The tragedy *Danton und Robespierre* by Hamerling.

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native language, that is: the language that is not the *natural* one. The book cites the example of a Frenchman who speaks broken German³⁹.

All training must take place in complete freedom. The spirit of what the author presents is what we should grasp and then we should in freedom vary and work out in detail the contents of the book, out of the spirit of the *whole*. There is no

room for *pedantry* here. During a scene on stage each actor should be involved in the action. When one actor is speaking, the others should act what he is saying (this requirement isn't clear to me); but when listening to your fellow actor on stage, you have to act that you are listening to him (no naturalism here!

Naturalism on stage has a *doll-like* effect).

When speaking about something of an *intimate* nature, you should walk from the back of the stage towards the proscenium. When speaking to a crowd on stage and the impression should be created that they understand what is being said to them, the speaker should slowly move backwards (either in the midst of the crowd itself or outside it⁴⁰). If the opposite is the case and the speaker walks about in the crowd and moves forwards in the direction of the audience, the latter will have the feeling that the crowd doesn't understand the speaker. The audience perceive different things with different eyes. The right eye is adapted for *understanding*, the left for *interest*. If the actors move on stage towards the audience's right eye, the latter understand what is happening. If the movement is towards the left eye, the audience's interest in the action is aroused (see diagram).

When bringing news on stage: speak loudly from a distance. When the messenger has approached and he tosses his head back somewhat: this gives the impression that he knows what he is talking about. In the case of joyful news, the fingers are spread⁴¹. In the case of sad news, the entrance is slow, the messenger halts and his fingers are close together.

Everything the author proposes in this direction is accompanied by a caution to the effect that it is not meant to limit the actor's or director's freedom. It is merely the statement of the proper laws of stagecraft, and that alone. Even when these laws are observed as set out, there still remains much room for freedom. This is the end of Chapter 8.

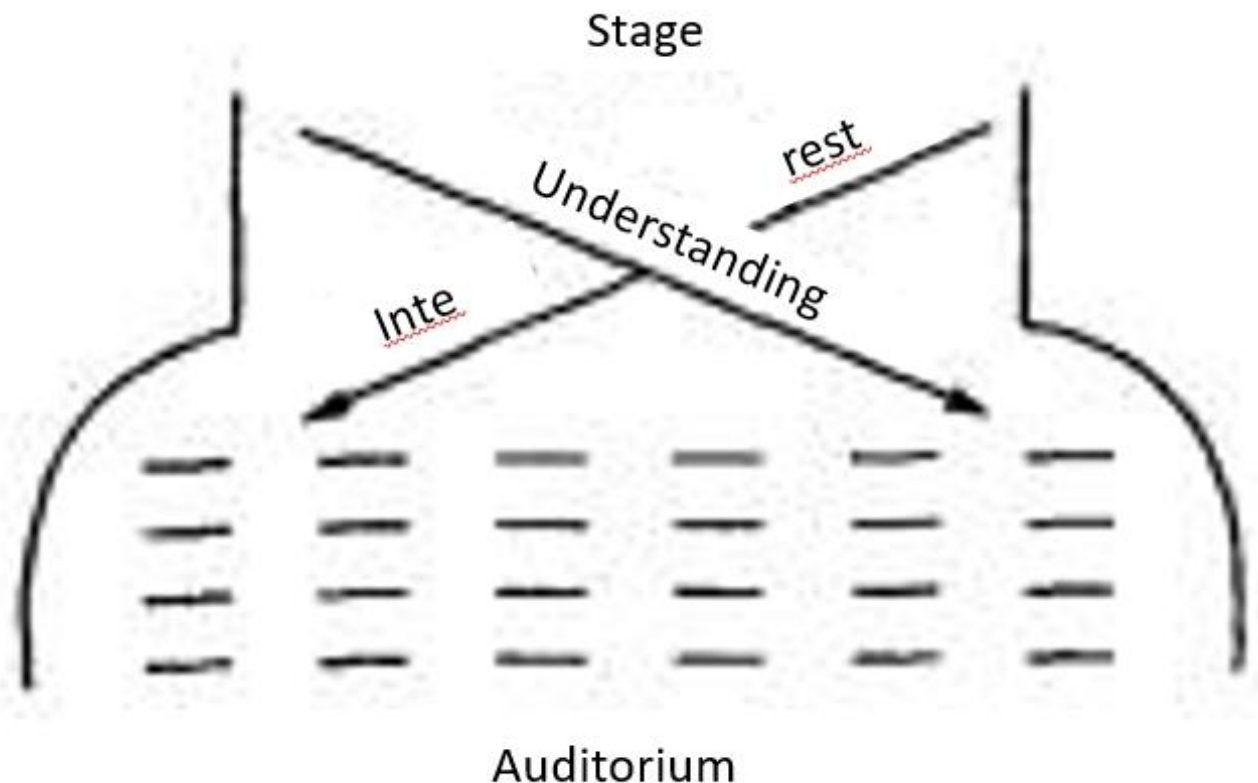
Chapter 9 I'll outline the main idea from a long section of text. An artist can build his work on the foundation of all possible traditions, which will result in the work getting finished; but it won't be a very honest creation. Art is honest when the artist creates his work entirely: from the foundation right to the top; when he himself remains *from start to finish grounded in the creative process*. The artist must derive everything that ultimately constitutes his artistic work *out of himself* and not from anywhere else (say, tradition). However, this kind of art often does not reach completion. But at least it is *honest*⁴².

³⁹ Marie Steiner read a scene from Lessing's *Minna von Bornholm*, in which one of the characters speaks French interspersed with broken German.

⁴⁰ The lecture does not mention the speaker being outside the crowd.

⁴¹ In the lecture: the fingers of the right hand.

⁴² Steiner takes Goethe as his example. The latter created works written out of the sound element of speech. In this respect his verse dramas are without compare. However, he was unable to go further and create real drama, as it takes shape and lives its own life on stage. Goethe was very aware of this and his dramatic works written after *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* were unfinished. The only exception was his *Faust*, which while being a work of high poetic achievement, resorted to traditional, Catholic imagery in its final scenes. In this respect, Goethe showed great honesty in that he was unable to create out of the depths of his own artistic feeling.



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You should not stand facing your fellow actor when listening to him on stage, but with your *ear* towards him!! For the face should be turned to the audience. (A strange demand, don't you think?). In everyday situations, out of *politeness* you face the person speaking, but it contradicts the law of acoustics. Don't turn your back on the audience; only do it on the rarest of occasions, when it is justified from within the actor. In general, the author attaches enormous importance to what is justified from an inner point of view. He even justifies smoking on stage, for instance in situations that enhance the image to be created. For example, a juvenile enters with a cigarette – this is a clear indication of his desire to appear grown-up, and in this case smoking is justified. In general, however, the author blasts smoking on stage. What kind of speech formation can there be, when a foreign body, a cigarette, is sticking out of the organ of speech! Other reasons why the *ear* should be turned to the speaker when listening to him are: firstly, that the audience can see that the actor *is listening* and secondly, to show *what* he is listening to. (An actor's facial expressions can be developed to the degree that they radiate *power!*⁴³) He continues by saying that listening is expressed by

turning the head three-quarters of the way to the audience, leaning it in the direction of the speaker and forwards a little. This, in connection with various similar exercises, will develop the instinct for miming in the proper manner. This manner of listening is good when one character is giving instructions to one or more actors. It may be objected that it would be stereotypical if several characters adopt the same listening stance. The author replies: Raffael would never have said that. For the sake of the *aesthetic whole* he would have positioned all those listening in the above-mentioned manner, but with some minor modifications.

Another thing about listening (this time not in the sense of an instruction): If the speaker is using the second nuance of speech, the listener reacts in silence using gestures of the first nuance. If, for instance, the speaker uses the sixth nuance for his utterance, the listener gestures in the second nuance. These are all examples of *harmony*. However, this cannot be done intentionally. It must become flesh and blood through practice, become artistic *instinct*. You have to learn to distinguish between two closely related nuances: i) persuading and ii) convincing. The author distinguishes the two in detail, the difference being experienced inwardly and expressed in gestures in connection with the nuances of speech. I can't describe that section because it isn't completely clear to me how to translate it. However, you can feel the difference when you think about it and have selected a number of examples and found the gestures for the nuances.

Standing in *profile* gives the impression of intelligence (or foolishness depending on the profile). Turning from profile to the audience (and even tossing the head back slightly) evokes the character's *intellectual worth*. A *three-quarter turn* to the audience with the head slightly tilted or bowed gives the impression that the character is *intellectually participating* in what is being said. *Frontal* conveys the moral worth of the character. That means, if an actor on stage is having a verbal effect on his fellow actor, then, depending on how the fellow actor is standing in relation to the audience, the impression will be conveyed of how he is perceiving the words spoken – with the head or with the heart. *Will* is always expressed through *movement*. The movement should be selected consistent with the content of the will, i.e. everything that has been said about the forms of movement in general should be taken into consideration in this case. One actor, for instance, expresses his *will* to another actor using the appropriate words. The latter may wish to unite himself with the former's will or to oppose it. In the case of acceptance or acquiescence, the actor listening should make a movement from *left to right*. But if the movement is from *right to left*, the audience will receive the impression that he does not accept or agree, and will create obstacles.

Movements can be made either with the *arms* or with the *head* (which is the better option) or even with the entire body. (The body should in any case always assist the movement.) Just as one can have the feeling of “not being in the voice”,

one can also have the feeling of “not being in the body”. Greek gymnastics master this poor control of the body. When *learning* the gesture and the word, it is necessary to unite them *consciously* and then at last true artistic *style* will become manifest in the actor’s art.

Temperament is essential. People are embarrassed to show it, but they have it. It has to be set to work. Teaching also takes temperament. A teacher should always have a cheerful face, a sense of humour and temperament. You can write a book without temperament and some people will like it and others, not. In either case the author is not visible at that moment. However, it is inconceivable and inadmissible not to have temperament when you put *your very self* on display every evening.

⁴³ In Steiner’s lecture, it is not the power radiating from the actor’s facial expressions that is meant, but his ability to have his face under his control on stage.

16

Temperament belongs to art. And enhanced temperament is humour! And then things will become real. “Esoteric”.

That’s the end of Chapter 9 and my letter. I’m burning with impatience to learn whether you like this work on the theatre. My perception is that it is a wonderful, holistic piece of work, rather like a Michelangelo statue.

10,010,903 kisses. I bite your calf and squeeze your shoulders!

Yours as ever,
Mich. Chekh.

5

July – August 1926 Capri

Hello my dear, my golden one,

I miss you and long to see, hear, touch and squeeze you! I still haven’t received a single letter from you. Probably there is already news from you awaiting me in Rome at *poste restante*.

I want to give you a summary of **Chapter 10** of the book on the art of drama. So I’ll begin. It is necessary to penetrate more deeply into an understanding of the art of drama. Performances in ancient times in the places where theatre originated⁴⁴ were very wide-ranging. They touched on sublime images and could channel the impulses of these spiritual images right down onto the material, physical level itself. The path to understanding this and using it on stage is such that you need to immerse yourself in sensations of *taste*. The *sour* is experienced along the edges

of the tongue, the *sweet* on the tip of the tongue and the *bitter* at the root of the tongue and on the palate. The word “taste” is used both for the experience of eating and the assessment of art and morality. By going experientially into the “tastes” in the various parts of the tongue, we will grasp that the physical arouses sensations on the same pathways as the moral element arouses speech. For it is with the very same organs that we use for *speech* that we also experience the tastes: sweet, bitter and sour. If the experience of moral bitterness on stage is intensified by the experience (in the performance) of the taste of bitterness *on the tongue*, this will have great significance for the pronunciation of the *words*, the *facial expressions* and even the *gestures* at that moment. The secret of the transition from *sensations* to *speech* is contained herein. When we taste the sourness of vinegar, there is stimulation of the tiniest organs of the tongue, which is more of a *passive* nature. And when an “aunt⁴⁵” has a sour facial expression, the tiniest organs of her tongue are stimulated in the same way, only more *actively*.

In the ancient places where performances were given, various kinds of non-human beings⁴⁶ were portrayed through the medium of the chorus. A particular aspect of recitation by the chorus was that a *certain something* could work through it and a special atmosphere, an “astral aura”, filled the space between the stage and the audience. In this atmosphere, the audience found itself in a *different* dimension, in which it experienced fear of the Divine World (in the best sense of the word). Gradually the ability to experience anything that wasn’t merely naturalism was lost. What had lived as the moulded-pictorial-musical element in the word and as recitation filled with style, all this that had served as a means of portraying the Higher, was replaced by the figure of the human being himself. The human being began to portray the god Dionysos, whereas previously divine beings only spoke through the chorus. He put on a mask, which was intended to express the unchanging dimension of the eternal, fixed world of the gods. For the mask of an animal⁴⁷ is unchanging, whereas the human face is in perpetual motion and cannot serve as the symbol of the eternal. Only in *death* is the human face motionless. The human being sensed the presence of something behind natural phenomena and then he also learned to feel something within, which was a kind of echo of what he saw behind the natural phenomena. Then he began to experience his innermost being in this sense. From this there arose the notion of the human soul.

⁴⁴ Steiner spoke about the dramas of Aeschylus, which still contained an echo of the art of the Ancient Greek Mysteries.

⁴⁵ A sarcastic term of Steiner’s for an anthroposophical lady “who is a dogmatic caricature of Anthroposophy”.

⁴⁶ The Gods of the Ancient Greeks.

⁴⁷ Owing to the condensed form of Chekhov’s summary, two ideas that Steiner described separately became merged into one. In Ancient Egypt the gods were depicted with the heads of animals because the expressionless features of the latter came closest to personifying the principle of the eternal, whereas the ever-changing

expressions of the human face were considered unfitting for this purpose. Steiner goes on to describe how in Greek drama the actor wore a mask to portray Dionysos.

17

The technique and significance of the contemporary art of acting lies in the actor being able to completely forget his everyday personality and ordinary self on stage and, by means of speech formation in the full sense of the word, being able to surround himself on stage with an atmosphere (aura) that the audience can perceive instinctively.

Chapter 11 Every physical and physiological action on stage should be based on the foundation that the actor creates by learning to feel and experience the meaning of the different *sounds*. Nothing on stage should be expressed outwardly without an underlying mood of what lives in the sounds of speech. For instance, *anger* should be learned as consisting of two parts: i) tension and strain in the muscles and ii) relaxation, weakening and falling asleep. The sound *ee* corresponds to the first part and *eh* to the second. When preparing to portray anger, you should have someone read that section of the script whilst you at the same time intone inwardly the sounds *ee-eh, ee-eh...* and tense and relax your muscles. This will be the right approach to mastering the outer manifestations of the art of acting. Similarly, concern should be prepared with the sound *ö*, combined with slowly sinking gestures and eyelids. If you are made up to look pale, as the permanent trait of the character, your lips should be pressed together. The author gives a whole host of similar examples, but I'll leave them out to give you a quicker overview of the book. You need to know a number of correspondences that are encountered in life. For example: a *sigh* or a *groan* is impossible when in a state of profound grief. It becomes possible, if an effort is made to fight the grief, if there is a desire to go through it, if it is overcome even to the extent of one being able to speak a few words. The facial expression for *weeping* is learned through the sound *ah*, the facial expression for laughter (and the beauty of laughter on stage) through *o eh* (or in a weaker form through *ä ah*). I'm skipping over a lot. Similar methods of learning legitimate expressions of emotion on stage greatly *accelerate* the actor's development. Also, many other parts of the actor's organism are developed at the same time. For instance: *listening to something sad*: the face is motionless, with a slight shaking of the head; but simultaneously the diaphragm and the lower torso develop by themselves.

I've already mentioned the importance of the eurythmy gestures, which the actor should experience as an inner reverberation when he is pronouncing sounds. It should be added that the practising of eurythmy gestures gives the actor a real

grasp of the essence of language and the art of drama in particular. The very position of the human being in the universe becomes clear through them. Compare animal sounds and human speech. The human being is placed nobly at the centre of the universe. In a word, the author attaches a universal importance to the eurythmy gestures. In order to grasp the significance of the human being in the universe, he suggests that one should give some thought to what humans are capable of: they can express their inner feelings in the vowels and co-experience the outer world in the consonants, and all this is complemented by gestures and facial expressions.

Chapter 12 There are two types of dramatic works: those in which the playwright starts out from an interest in the *subject* of the play, its characters etc. In these plays, the artistic and poetic style does not come to full expression. In plays of the second type, the *style*, the *aesthetics* of the work interest the playwright as such, he starts out from an artistic feeling and intent, and only then does he seek out a *subject* for the play, as a secondary element. Such works are full of what the author calls *the artistic, the stylistically accomplished*. Examples of plays of the first type: *Die Räuber* (Schiller), *Götz von Berlichingen* (Goethe), Part 1 of *Faust* (Goethe), *Don Carlos*, *Fiesko*, *Kabale und Liebe* (Schiller). Plays of the second type (all by Schiller): *Maria Stuart* (the moods are stylised), *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (the events are stylised), *Wilhelm Tell* (true psychological images, the stylisation of the characters, the psychological depiction), *Die Braut von Messina* (The stylisation here is expressed in a moulded inner landscape on stage), *Demetrius* (the encompassing stylisation of the human element within the unfolding events). By working on plays of both types, the actor grasps the secret of his own acting *stylisation*. He must prepare differently for each of the two types of play. For the first type, he should proceed as quickly as he can from gesturing, while being read to by someone else, to speaking his words himself, i.e. to combining gestures and words as fast as possible. For the second type: he should make the stage of silent gesturing while being read to as long as possible. I can't say why that is so because I don't understand the German text⁴⁸.

However the basic idea is that we distance ourselves from *naturalism* by rehearsing in this manner. In no way should we *perform* naturalistically what is *written* naturalistically. We have to

⁴⁸ Steiner said the gestures, which the actor creates while being read to, help him to form his words instinctively, subconsciously.

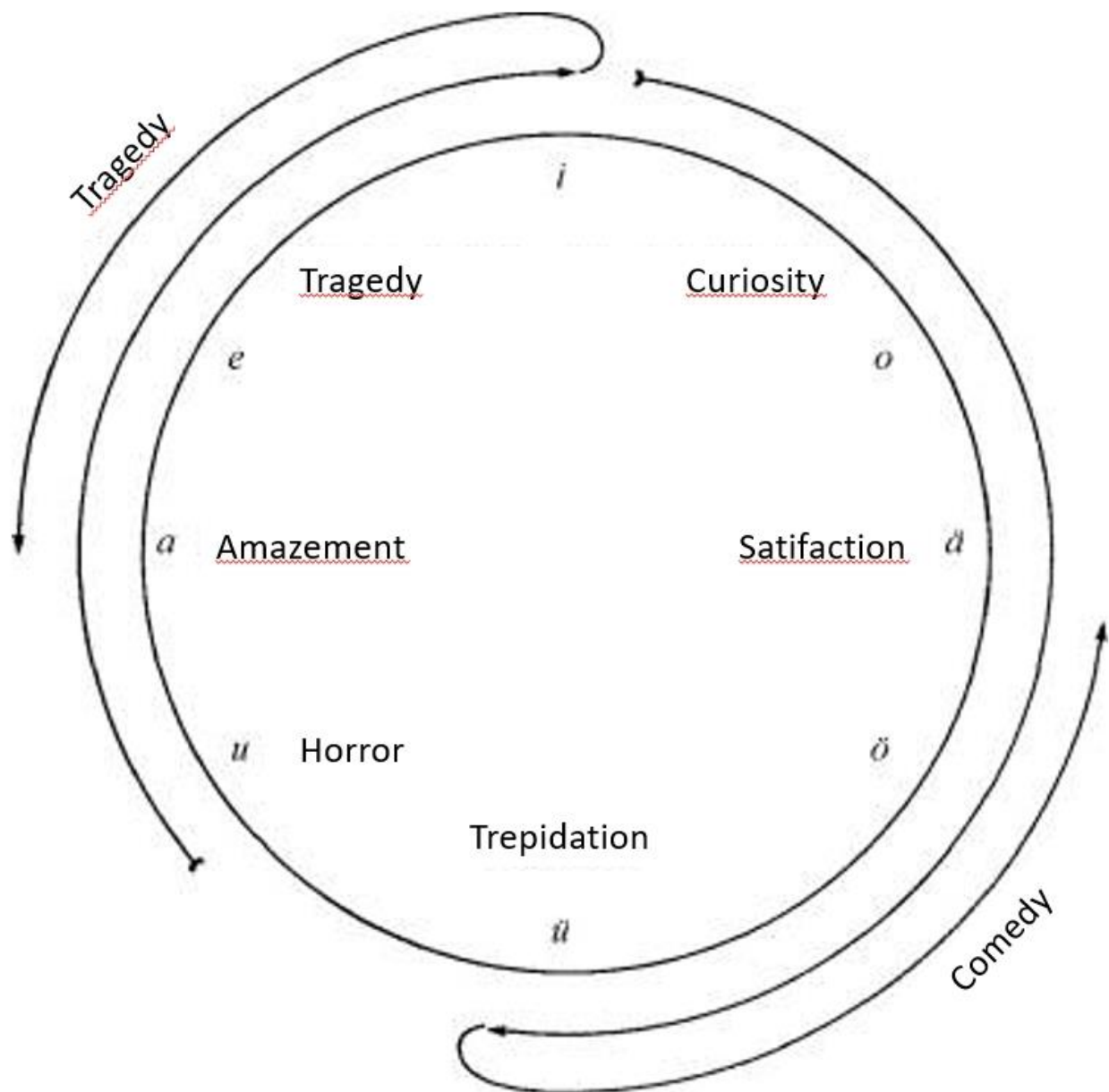
extricate the audience from naturalism and this will enable them to be completely integrated with the actors. Naturalistic inner experiences just *don't reach* the audience. When creating the *scenery*, you need to give thought to creating an atmosphere suited to the characters speaking in front of it. On one hand you should avoid naturalism in the scenery; but on the other, you shouldn't arbitrarily overload it with lines and forms, nor should you stylise it artificially and invent new forms. *Colours* are of the essence. Stylisation should only involve *colours*. For example, if a scene is set in a forest, but the mood of the scene (or of the entire play) is red, shades of red should be added to the *colouring* when depicting the forest. Neither should costumes be sewn in some arbitrary style so that people look like clowns. A properly sewn costume should also have a *colouring* that is appropriate for the character wearing it. In addition, the costumes of the entire cast should harmonise with each other, setting off one character against another.

Chapter 13 The play as a work of literature is just a *musical score* for the actor. He must *recreate* the play within himself. The score is the zero point between the playwright and the actor and they must converge and *meet* at this very point. The score should be analysed from two aspects: i) the individual characteristics of the roles and how they complement each other harmoniously; and ii) the play *in its entirety*. Character should be analysed and assessed using the sounds and by connecting it with sounds. To do this, you must have a strong inner experience of the sounds in general. The play as a whole must also be analysed in connection with the sounds and on the basis of the sounds. Tragedy has its own laws, as does comedy. Tragedy goes from *oo* (horror, fear) to *ee* (compassion), which is the culmination of tragedy, and then back to *ah* (amazement). At the end of the play, *oo* should sound a little bit, but from the distance. Comedy: from *ee* (curiosity) to *oo* (trepidation) and in conclusion, to *ah* (satisfaction). (See diagram.)

With regard to costumes, I forgot to add that they can be modified so as to show the essence of the character, but one shouldn't make a character look ridiculous! Don't do anything whimsical or nonsensical.

Chapter 14 Aristotle defined tragedy as *catharsis*⁴⁹ (purification) that occurs when the audience experience strong emotions: horror (*oo*), compassion (*ee*) leading to the experience of *ah* (or *oh*). The audience were healed of the passions that plagued them in daily life. Catharsis occurred from watching a tragedy repeatedly. In his definition of tragedy, Aristotle mentions its connection to the ancient places

⁴⁹ Steiner differentiated between what Aristotle defined as the emotional stages of tragedy and how this inner process would have been expressed in vowels in the ancient mysteries of mankind. Chekhov combines the two aspects into one.



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where performances were held and where people left the everyday world of feeling behind them and were lifted into a higher world. However for all that, the author suggests we shouldn't confuse tragedy with the ancient places where it was performed. Aristotle defines *comedy*⁵⁰ as a plot that is enclosed in itself, the aim of which is to evoke in the audience feelings of curiosity (*ee*) and of faintheartedness and trepidation (*ü*), through which *human interest in life is enhanced*. But everything the author presents as the results of his research, all this should be understood through the life of the sounds, through the meaning of the sounds themselves.

He states that the art of the stage must become the true experience of the human soul, as embodied in language and gesture. With regard to the scenery: it

shouldn't be stylised using modifications of forms and lines. The stylisation of the scenery is in the *lighting* and *colour* effects. The scenery isn't a *landscape*, a *picture*. It doesn't stand alone. It is *not complete* in itself, as a painting can be *complete* and *finished*. The scenery is only *complete* when it is *stage lit* and is viewed *together with* what is happening on stage as performance. The scenery is an addition to the performing actor; and *lighting* and colour are the means of stylising it. The whole human soul lives in colours. That's why the colours of the scenery and the costumes are so important. An outer colour can be experienced as an inner one. For instance, a loud red – as joy, green – as thoughtfulness, yellowish green (speckled) – as the soul devoured by egoism etc.. Once the curtain goes up, the audience should *see* the colours that radiate from the soul of the actors;⁵¹ also they should *hear* the colour tones resounding from within the actors. The harmonious consonance of the colours of the costumes, the scenery and the lighting that changes in the course of the action –all these create the right effect on the audience. The overall mood of the play is expressed in the colours of the scenery (or scenarios). The changing moods reflected by the actors are expressed in the coloured lighting changes. The character of the various actors is mirrored in the colour range of their costumes (right down to such details as the colour of a tie, not to mention costumes of former times). At this point, the author speaks of the importance of observing the rainbow in order to grasp the life of the colours and to develop a deep understanding of colours on stage.

Now I'll proceed to tell you about some practical exercises. They need *to be thought through in depth and practised*.

1) The plosive sounds (*d, t, g, k, b, p, m, n*) correspond to the firm element of the earth⁵². When spoken, they descend towards the earth and work within it. Each of these sounds forms the air in a particular manner.

The spirants (*h, ch* (as in the Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f, v*) correspond to fire, the element of warmth. When pronouncing one of these, we should feel that warmth, fire is being kindled; and we sense how this fire works back on us as a strengthening of our whole being. The quivering sound (*r*) corresponds to the element of air and the liquid sound (*l*) to that of water. We can practise consciously transforming one element into another. For instance: we consolidate the watery element in *lobe* and make the firm element liquid in *bowl*. The flowing element is turned into air in *lyre*. The airy becomes fiery in *rush*. And so on. There are all kinds of combinations. But that isn't all, and this is where the second exercise begins (and I find it fascinating). A particular sort of combination of these sounds gives rise to a particular faculty in the actor, namely: the combination of a plosive with the liquid sound. The author has a special term for this: *Stoss-Wellen* (literally "push-waves"). For example: *kyle, deal, lead, tale*,

late, bowl, lobe and endless more. They endow the actor with *faculties* which the author describes as follows: the ability to merge words and embed them into sentences, and so endow them with an amazing, harmonious flowing quality. Speech acquires the faculty of being so expressive that gradually the certainty arises: “What I am speaking *is being perceived* by the audience”. Speech acquires an inner moulded *force*: the ability to switch, to modulate from one wonderful word creation to another. An entire sentence is one single streaming. What an amazing, startling sensation it is in the mouth when speech flows. Now for the combination of other sounds: air and fire, i.e. *r* and all the spirants and fricatives (*h, f, s* etc.). For instance: rife, rice, rush, rave and any other combination of *r* with a spirant. The author describes the result of this exercise as follows: what the actor speaks, acquires the potential *to be alive everywhere* in the auditorium: from the stalls to the upper circle. In a nutshell, the word of the actor *is alive everywhere*. Speech flows and floats through the entire auditorium. The quivering of the air

⁵⁰ Steiner actually stated that the works of Aristotle have come down to us in an incomplete form and that his definition of comedy has been lost. However, he gave an approximation of how Aristotle would have defined it. This is what Chekhov was actually referring to when he wrote “Aristotle’s defines comedy as ...”.

⁵¹ See also the chapter: *Thought forms and the human aura* in Steiner’s book *Theosophy*.

⁵² Chekhov was referring to the ancient doctrine of the four elements, as can also be found in Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.

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transforms into movement through the transition to the spirant. One opens oneself up to the outer world. Further, to acquire the ability of having a hypnotic effect on the audience, you need to pronounce *v ei w*⁵³. Next! When we pronounce the syllables *hum, ham, him, hom, hem, hm* (the order is

unimportant), we obtain as a result (or in other words: we set ourselves the goal of obtaining) practical knowledge of what it means to form the air on a grandiose scale. We receive a general idea of what the *dynamic of speech* is. By pronouncing the sound *m* at the end of the aforesaid syllables, we learn what the “push”, which is present in all the plosive sounds, actually is. Practising it, we become aware of an important feeling of an *inner, independent* whooshing, zooming sound. We become conscious of a second, independent human being within us, the being that speaks and must become separate from us, so that we can become true artists of the word by directing this being from without. We are independent of it. It is the one who speaks. It is our speech instrument. It is our medium. Seek the idea of speech formation in it. A certain something becomes

free and lives in pure vibrations. Besides that, I have already mentioned to you the significance of the “astral takes hold of the ether” exercise.

Now for the next exercise: The actor’s speech must become imbued with feeling; an inner tone of feeling must sound in his speech. To achieve this, you have to practise directing outer sensations and feelings inwards so that they become internalised and then express them in some particular word form that seems fitting for you personally. Examples from the book are: *outer* warmth (in a room, let’s say) can be experienced inwardly and expressed in the words *it whooshes around me*. Or another feeling: cold can be turned inwards and be expressed as *it prickles me*. But this *quality* has to be inside you, in every fibre of your being, in every limb. The author says that if you practise *a good number* of such examples for yourself, it will have the required effect. With regard to this exercise and all the others, it should be remembered that, when you practise one thing, you are unnoticeably learning other things at the same time. Besides, you shouldn’t think, for instance, that when the author states that a certain result is achieved by practising the sounds *b* and *l*, that the said result only applies to these sounds. Oh no. You must practise these sounds specifically, but the result will extend as a *faculty* to all kinds of speech, regardless of the sounds present in it. Altogether, it is important to feel *language and speech as a totality*. And in general, as the highest goal, you need to strive to make speech a matter of ease, something flowing and not requiring any special effort of the actor when he speaks. If you were woken up during the night, you should be capable, as it were, of reciting some soliloquy without difficulty; the soliloquy should just pour out of you by itself; and you, the actor, as a human being-artist, should become detached while this is happening, quite free and even filled with admiration for his artistic speech from without! This is exactly the aim of true, artistic speech formation. But to achieve it, you have to go through the whole training with the sounds and the other things that the author describes in the book and then master everything to the point of it becoming *instinctive*.

Chapter 15 You have to remember that art originated from ancient spiritual sources⁵⁴ and what it portrays must be connected with the spirit through the idea. For this reason the artist should be his own instrument. He should be capable of playing his physical organism like an instrument. In addition, the actor should develop himself as a human being who is profoundly interested in life, has a feeling for life and is not floating in the clouds. And we shall be on the right path when we separate out that special “speaking human being” within ourselves. And we shall achieve something else of great importance – we shall not get swallowed up and engrossed in the *content and the conceptual aspect* of speech. Being free, we shall, in an inspired state, observe and have at our command our very own work of art from the outside! And the time will come when the actor will

understand that his life on stage is a special part of his life, which stands apart from his ordinary life and has nothing to do with it; and he will not bring naturalism, vulgarity and the commonplace onto the stage, nor will he take with him from the stage an abstract dissipation that deprives him of his true humanity. He will live a full life until the footlights go on and then he will in an inspired sense take part, observe and command himself as a work of his very own creating. But you mustn't become *obsessed* by your role, you mustn't become a *medium*. That would be the wrong thing. You have to stand next to your role, but experience joy and sorrow unconstrained while you contemplate your work. (I don't know whether you're getting the point of what

⁵³ In the passage that Chekhov was referring to, Steiner comments on the imaginary German word *veiw* (pronunciation as "five" in English), the sounds of which have a hypnotic effect when spoken.

⁵⁴ The original 15th lecture opens with the words: "All artistic activity also has its esoteric aspect to the extent that a certain foundation must exist for it to be fashioned out of the spiritual world."

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I'm trying to convey in this jumbled fashion.) (Esotericism) And here again the author speaks about observing the rainbow as being of the greatest importance to the actor. I mentioned that earlier.

Now another thing is necessary: you need to develop a subtle, intimate feeling with regard to your dreams and the images they contain. You have to immerse yourself with complete understanding in remembering your dreams. You must become acquainted with the difference between *dreaming* and *ordinary life*. The difference is clear and familiar to everyone, but the actor must grasp it to a particularly high degree. He must become familiar with two poles: i) everyday stimulation of life *through the outer world*⁵⁵ and ii) profound, vigorous, *inner* immersion in memories of his dream life. When he practises these two contrasting lives (outer reality and dreams), he will grasp the "esoteric" art of drama. The actor should experience his role as being intimately internalised, just as a dream can live within him, inwardly, intimately. So, on the one hand, the role is fully rehearsed from the point of view of speech formation; it is "uttered" in beautiful verbal forms with complete ease and independence from within by "the other person". On the other hand, the role is alive in me, like a dream and it manifests in me as separate passages, agile and lively, and these passages merge and complement each other – they are alive; and, finally, I contemplate them and the point is reached when the fragments disappear, as it were, and I receive my entire role as a kind of *single whole*, as a kind of *dream of my entire role*! Is this conjuring trick clear to you? This is precisely it: on the one hand you have the complete technical perfection of speech and artistic word formation that is full of style, and on the other, your role is like a wonderful *dream*. And you are the

artist, the free creator and observer of your own artistic work. (The author considers it necessary to caution the actor who attains this state against getting carried away by it!) And when this *sense* for the whole as a picture is reached, the artist will have the possibility of giving *his very best* when on stage. And then, (when he has this sense of the whole), the appropriate and best moment has arrived for arranging and fitting up the stage itself.

The *director* sees the play and senses it as a *complete picture*, a oneness, and then he knows how to construct and fit out everything needed for the set. He contemplates now the middle, now the end, now the beginning or any detail of the play and shapes them on the stage; but his attention is constantly directed to the *whole* and this is his guide. And all this is achieved through the dream exercises. There must be nothing *thought up* here. Everything should be derived from feeling, from dreamlike imagination. Modern theatre is lacking in this *wholeness*. Seeing the *whole* and making this *whole* manifest is the *sine qua non* of contemporary theatre. The author talks a lot about open-air theatre at various points in the book, but since the time is not yet ripe for this kind of theatre, he doesn't consider it to be his job to make practical remarks on this subject. But the important thing is that all his directions apply to theatre indoors with stage sets, artificial lighting, evening performances etc. He also says that, whereas the actors used to shout instead of speaking in Shakespeare's times or in outdoor performances, nowadays with indoor theatre, the acting needs to be toned down to a certain extent, i.e. not overdone. Rather, it should stop short of the inner intensity needed for open-air performances. In a word, there needs to be that dreamlike feeling, that breath of the dreamlike that we discussed above. And if the actor reaches the stage in his inner development where he can remain objective with regard to his artistic creation on stage, as was outlined above, he will notice the following. On his way home after the performance, for instance, he will suddenly begin to see a whole succession of pictures of things he has observed in the auditorium unbeknown to himself during the performance. He will see a whole succession of individuals from the mass of the audience. He will see them in detail, see what they were doing, how someone reacted, and so on and so forth. This will happen because while on stage, his consciousness was taken up with the essence of the play, but his subconscious self was moving about freely among the various impressions. The more intensely his consciousness was occupied, the better his subconscious was working at the same time. Images of this kind are a sign that the actor is grounded properly and objectively in reality. If he is able to set the bounds between life on stage and off stage and relate to both with interest, his subconscious will serve him well.

Chapter 16 *Fate* was the main impulse in ancient drama. Human individuality was not taken into consideration. The face was covered by a mask and the voice

was blended with the sounds of musical instruments, in short: fate worked from above. However, with the beginning and ongoing development of the epoch of the consciousness soul, a new element emerges: that of love. Love was also connected with fate and social matters in former times (*Antigone* for example), but with the inception of the epoch of the

⁵⁵ The original German is: *Aufgeriebensein vom äußern Leben* – the inner state of exhaustion (“wear and tear”) caused by outer life.

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consciousness soul⁵⁶, love between the sexes emerges as love between individuals. Humour emerges in exactly the same manner, replacing satire (Aristophanes). Unconstrained humour, a humour not bound by specific conditions of life or community, as was the case with satire, but liberating humour. Humour emerged just at the point when the human being (in drama) began to free himself from the influence of *fate* and began to *create his own destiny*. Parallel to all this, *character* appears, *the character of the human being*. And *character masks* begin to take the place of the ancient masks. Human individuality in its vast wholeness was not yet seen, but there was an interest in the *characteristics* of one *type* or another (Pantalone, Trufaldino, Brighella, the lawyer from Bologna⁵⁷ etc.). You find something similar to this in Shakespeare as well. All of these are, of course, *popular*, stock characters. The author recommends using this type of play for training purposes to learn how the type grows out of a geographical environment and this will enable the actor to portray what is individual. The combination of *destiny* with *character* gives rise to a third element: the *plot*. This is called character drama as opposed to fate drama. It is important to distinguish between two opposites: traditional Christmas plays, in which destiny is working from *another, higher level* and the already mentioned character dramas.

Comedy has its origin in the types of human character, in love and humour. How should *tragedy* and *comedy* be performed? Tragedy should *start* in a *slow tempo*, with *pauses*: pauses in the speech and pauses between the scenes. This doesn't mean a slow tempo inwardly, but a slow tempo *due to the pauses*. This is necessary to give the audience time to connect inwardly with what is happening. The *middle* is the climax of the drama: the pauses disappear, but the tempo of speech and movements slows down. The *end* is performed in an accelerated tempo. (Otherwise the audience is left feeling sour, which is inadmissible when the *denouement* of the tragedy is reached.) Speed in speech and gestures. (Naturally, in a balanced manner.)

Comedy: Character already appears in it. The play opens with the emphasizing of the various types of *character*. (If characters appear such as Pantalone etc., they *merrily* tell us about themselves, but we, as modern actors, perform not so much our *character* in the former sense of a type, but as the one or other *individual*. At the *beginning* of the comedy, we should portray the character, the type, the individual we are acting *through speech and gesture*. As Sasha⁵⁸ would say, this is “our visiting-card”.) Compare this with the opening of a tragedy: there we are dealing with the *how*, in comedy however with the *what*. The *middle*: interest is aroused in what will come of all the clashes?! *Behaviour* should be presented; action, plot, so to say. (The author says: portray behaviour *by characterizing the words*, but I’m not at all sure what that means; in any case, present the *plot* in the middle of the play.) The *ending*: bring in *destiny*. Destiny intrudes and all ends in general wellbeing. To be able to do all this properly, you need to have a good grasp of what *character, plot and destiny* are.

To get a good grasp of what the two poles *tragedy* and *comedy* are, the author gives exercises, “meditative” verses. They have to be repeated in every free moment. (It would be good to practise them in accordance with all the principles of art, so that they speak in us, as I described earlier; and we ourselves are free to live with our thoughts, feeling and will in the verses, when speaking them. The author says: repeat these verses whenever you have a free minute.) meditative verse with inner warmth:

*Ach, Fatum Du hast stark mich umfasst nimm weg den Fall
in den Abgrund.*

⁵⁶ This period of historical development began in the 15th century and will last for approximately two thousand years. See Steiner *Occult Science*.

⁵⁷ Characters from the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, in which masks were also used.

⁵⁸⁵⁸ Presumably Alexander Cheban (1886-1954), actor and director and mutual friend.

Immerse yourself in the *tragic*

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Ah, star-rule you are arduous in me; spare me

*the plunge
into the gloom.*

Ach (this is only the lead-in). In the word *Fatum* it is important to concentrate inwardly on the sounds *ah* and *oo*. The *ee* sound appears in the word “mich” in

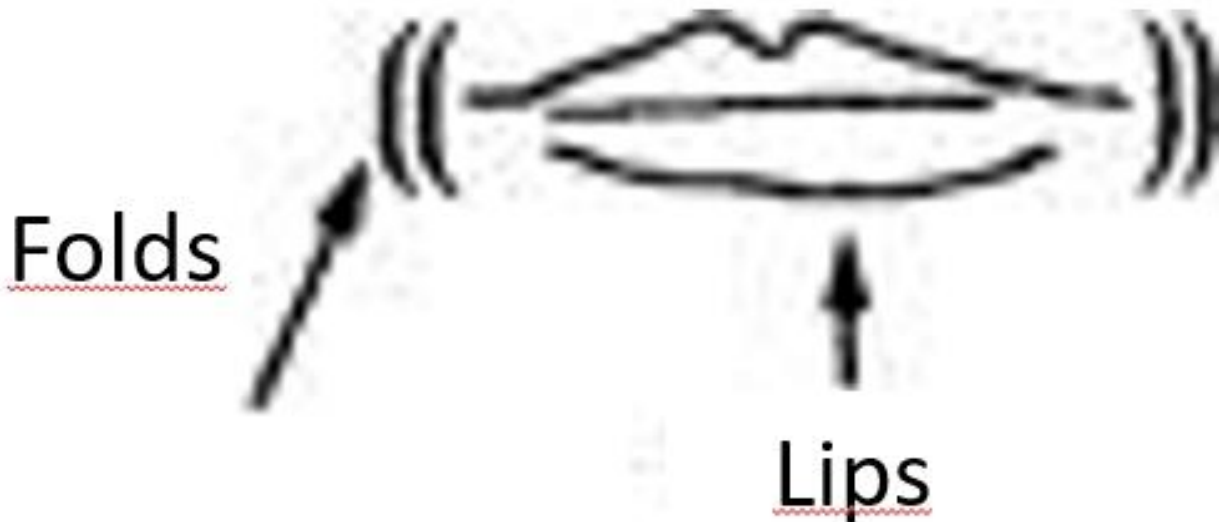
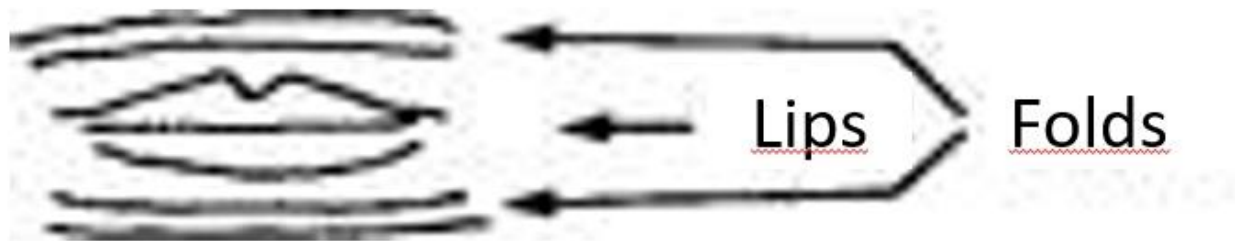
order to place you in the content of the verse; and then the *tragic* sounds *ah, oo* and *ee* reappear in the second half of the verse. Following this, we have the verse for *comedy*. When you speak it, you should not keep the humour inside yourself, but endeavour to put the experience of the content into the sounds. As you see, the sounds are combined in a very funny way. You have to *laugh using the words, to laugh your way into the sounds*.

*Izt' fühl ich
wie in mir linklock-hü
und link-lock-hi völlig mir witzig
bläst.*

Each new fit fills me with link lock who and link lack he with wit dispersing⁵⁹

It's not a question of giggling, because then it won't be at all funny, but to experience inward, true laughter entering the sounds or drawing it out of the sounds or expressing it in the sounds. It takes time to understand this. "Linklock-hü" is pronounced with the lips protruding, so that folds form above and below them like this:

(Moreover, the upper lip seems to be protruding a little more than the lower lip, but I don't know that for certain.) "Locklack-hi" is pronounced with the lips stretched sideways and with folds on both sides like this:



⁵⁹ English versions of these two exercises by Sophia Walsh.

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Got it? I've drawn the folds, but haven't attempted to draw the positions of the lips. Go by the *folds* and find the rest on that basis. This exercise leads into the essence of humour.

Chapter 17 I've already mentioned all the essential parts. There is perhaps only one more thing: the musical element leads us back to the divine beings of the past and the moulding, pictorial element leads us towards the divine beings of the future⁶⁰.

Chapter 18 speaks about the necessity for the actor to have a serious, spiritual attitude towards his work. Through what he does and what he is, the actor should be a leader in his culture, but without wanting to destroy it. It is in this most earnest mood that we should approach the knowledge that the world is revealed in the human form. Let us approach the way that the world reveals itself through speech formation and word formation from a new angle. The human *lips* are the organ, through which the essence of the human being is revealed because he manifests himself through speech. Three sounds are pronounced using both lips:

m, b, p. If we pronounce sounds other than these three using both lips, we sin against speech formation and that has an adverse effect on our entire organism. If we pronounce these three sounds without being constantly and instinctively conscious that *both lips must be used for these sounds*, we likewise harm our organism and speech formation. The sounds *f, u and v* are pronounced using the lower lip and the upper row of teeth. The entire karma⁶¹ of the human being is contained in the muscles of the lower lip. It is where all the currents that live in the limbs of the human body (with the exception of the head) flow and intermingle; thus, when the lower lip moves, the *whole person* is revealed (apart from the head). The upper lip and the upper row of teeth in particular, reveal what is contained in the organization of the head⁶². What the human head constitutes as the totality of the secrets of the universe seeks, as it were, to be consolidated in the upper row of the teeth. Hence the philosophy of the sounds *m, b and p* and the sounds *f and v* is comprehensible: it is what is revealed when we combine the lips or the lips and the teeth and so on. (It should be noted that in the case of the *v*, the lower lip vibrates like a wave, which isn't the case with the *f*, for example.) Both rows of teeth are needed for the sounds *s, z and ts*. This is where both parts of the human being come into balance: the human head and the rest of the person, i.e. the part containing the limbs. The world is seised in that moment by the human being and he sends his being into the world. If we go further into the depths, we come to the tongue, which is where the soul, the feeling element is revealed. Revelation through the tongue and the upper teeth gives us the sounds: *l, n, d and t*. Whereas what the human being has become thanks to the world is expressed through the lower lip and upper teeth, what he owes to the fact that he has a soul is revealed through the tongue and the upper teeth. Here is revealed what interacts between his soul and his head, his tongue and his upper teeth. It is very important to be aware (for those who lisp and those who are training) that the tongue is always *behind the teeth, at the back of the teeth*. For the tongue *never ever* dares to appear in speech *in front of* the teeth. If this happens (as with lisping, for instance), the result is the same as if the soul wanted to go out into nature without the physical body. Let us go even deeper. We need to develop awareness of what the *root of the tongue* does during speech. The sounds that come into question here are: *g, k, r, y (as in York) and q*. (You have to be able to pronounce both the rolled *r* and guttural *r*, as in French.) The lips and the sounds themselves are our teachers; you only have to learn their correct positioning. We must experience that the mouth and the larynx are the creators of the sounds in us. By the way, the author mentions that stuttering is connected with the incorrect use of the root of the tongue and incorrect breathing and that it can be helped with the corresponding exercises. I say that in parenthesis.

To continue: we must nurture a religious, earnest attitude within ourselves towards the sounds, for the entire world from its origin onwards is contained in them. (In the Beginning was the Word.) The author attaches colossal importance to the mood of the actors and the director with regard to the stage and the auditorium. He says: the stage and the wings are one world and the auditorium another. Both worlds are miles apart. Backstage there is a specific life and reality; you might say, trivial and commonplace

⁶⁰ Steiner added that the art of theatre lies between these two principles and is directed to the spirits of the present.

⁶¹ The anthroposophical understanding of karma (destiny) is based on the forces of the individual 'I' and the idea of personal development and is, as such, radically different to Eastern views on the subject. See Steiner *Theosophy* and *Occult Science*.

⁶² Chekhov was already well acquainted with the anthroposophical conception of the threefold organization of the human being, according to which the body has three functional systems: 1) the sense and nerve system, 2) the rhythmical system comprising breathing and circulation and 3) the metabolic and limb system. Anatomically they are located in the head, chest and lower half of the body. They are also related to the three soul forces: thinking, feeling and will. Steiner started by characterizing the polarity between the head and the limbs and then added the middle system as the emotional, soul element.

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reality: the shifting of sets and machines, various devices producing sound and other effects and so on. That is backstage reality. And this trivial reality has to be transformed *into a beautiful illusion* for the auditorium. Juxtaposing these two worlds, the author says that the actors and the director should change their attitude to the world backstage; they should desist from *commonplace* remarks about the technical devices to be found there and develop a reverential attitude towards them, because these very backstage technical devices are what becomes an illusion of beauty for the auditorium. In this way care should be taken to unite the auditorium and the stage. When you operate some device backstage, you should not experience and feel: "I'm cranking some machine," but rather that it is a creative means serving art. This must be *worked at* in theatre, it cannot be achieved with sentimental talk. We shouldn't forget for a minute that in the auditorium the illusion must be created out of the mood that lives in the hearts of the actors and the director. And even if the auditorium at present is not up to the mark, we shall only ultimately succeed in raising the level of the audience by means of the method just outlined.

(Final) Chapter 19 The sounds of speech are connected with the whole human organism. The sounds formed in the region of the palate (and to a lesser extent in the region of the larynx) penetrate the *entire* person down to the soles of the feet and the tips of the toes. The sounds formed with the aid of the tongue are connected with the head, they include the upper lip (but exclude the lower lip) and from here they extend to the spinal column. The sounds pronounced with the

lips and teeth are connected with the chest and the front parts of the body in general. The whole human being is involved in language, speech, in these three directions. Speech creates the whole person in these three directions. From this it follows, for instance, that we learn to walk on stage thanks to the palatal sounds, because they penetrate right down to the feet. The author says, however, that there is no need to give further rules. One should elaborate this whole subject for oneself. In general, he says he does not want to be understood as advocating that we just devote ourselves to a study of the sounds in a dry, pedantic sense. (The sounds are a world to themselves and naturally we should study them.) The main thing is that we should gain a general grasp of everything he proposes and that we work towards the goal of attaining beautiful, true, flowing speech in general. When we train, let's say, the guttural sounds we are also doing something for the labial sounds and so on. Everything is interconnected, everything forms an organic whole. It isn't pedantry, although it is an *exact* training. The correct exercises will lead to your learning everything from speech itself. By immersing himself in the life of the sounds, the actor moves away from coarse, conceptual meaning. His work should be *sacrificial*.

An umlaut signifies that something has been multiplied, for example: *Bruder – Brüder* (brother – brothers), *Wagen – Wägen* (wagon – wagons). Language is the *fullness of human feelings*. Or the universal, all-feeling Human Being. The sounds and tones express *everything*. Speech is the gathering of the all-sensing Divine Beings.

Next: the actor should not only be able to speak by developing his speech organism in the proper manner, he should be able to *hear properly spoken speech inwardly*; and hear his soliloquies, dialogues, passages of text and scenes “*with a sense of hearing for the inaudible*”. The ability to speak properly, that is the entire wisdom of speech formation must be so cultivated and brought to such perfection that speech becomes separate from the person (as I wrote earlier). For, when it is thus separated, the actor will be given the ability to *hear* his speech inwardly, *before it is uttered*, and then speak out of that which has been heard inwardly by his soul! This is the lofty mode in which the author wrote certain scenes of his dramas⁶³. *To speak completely out of hearing*. Then the need will arise to live in the words and feel the syllables and sounds. Then the human being will be uplifted in the sense of the author's book, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds...* You need to have someone around you whom you ...*listen to*. Much will be understood from such listening for the role itself with regard to character and for everything else (if the author who wrote the literary work is himself highly gifted). The author calls this inner listening a special kind of actors' intuition. The audience will perceive the role, as “heard” by the actor, with understanding; and you may ask such an actor why he performs his role *like this* and not *like that*. He

will be entitled to reply: “I hear this stage character like this”; and he will be right, because this is where the freedom of the actor’s individuality lies. He is free in this situation; he, as a free creative individual, can *hear* his whole character. Then the author quotes the soliloquy “To be or not to be” and states: “So you see, many underlying causes need to be at work in the art of drama”. However, everything he proposes is only meant to serve as indications, hints and seeds to be elaborated and developed in the direction shown.

⁶³ Steiner’s Four Mystery Dramas.

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There is an extraordinary earnestness in the author’s concluding words about the actor and the great significance of theatre. When the human being, *in his entirety*, devotes himself to serving the Spirit through the Word and the Gesture: then this is also a Path of inner development.

There, my dear Mitzzzzupochka, that’s it. Of course it’s not everything, only hintings at hints. But I just so much wanted to give you a complete picture of the 19 chapters of the book on drama. Let me know when you receive this letter. This is the address: Pension Weber, Piccola Marina, Capri (Napoli), Italy. Apropos round movements⁶⁴, I don’t think they are meant to be horizontal, but like this:

In short, I did it as in the drawing, but that may not be the way for you! From the entire description, you’ll have probably grasped what speech formation is by now. But if anything is unclear, just ask me again. As for the Russian language, I think much will be self-explanatory if you do the exercises in German and then do what is possible in Russian as well. But, how I kiss you! If only you knew, you blackguard, how I love you and kiss you and bite you and tear out what I’ve bitten and rub what I’ve torn out and crumple what I’ve rubbed and weave what I’ve crumpled and wear out what I’ve woven and drench what I’ve worn out and I put what I drenched back together and again I tear and hammer and put it back together and, just imagine, so it goes on endlessly.

Completely yours, Misha.

While reading what I’d written to you, I was so enraptured that I charged through the room and banged my forehead against a wall lamp, which brought me back to my senses, as I now report. I’m very concerned that I haven’t written anything to Nina; but all the time allotted to writing has been taken up with the letters to you and I beg you to tell Molly that I think of her and be sure to tell her why I’ve had no time to write to her. My dear, I still haven’t written about my impressions of Rome, Naples, Vesuvius etc. but now it’s clear that I’ll bowl you over with Istanbul! I’ll only say that the holiness of the Italians has reached such heights

that they've called one of the banks in Rome "The Bank of the Holy Spirit". They serve "filet à la San Pietro". The best wine is called "The Tears of Christ". In short, it's either rollicking laughter or shamefulness. There are the statues of the popes in St. Peter's (each pope commissioned his own statue) and one pope even whammed a portrait of his mistress onto the wall of the basilica. This is all the ridiculous side, but there is an overabundance of serious and ineffaceably profound impressions. To do justice to them all would require at least six volumes with foreword and afterword plus commentaries. I'm hammering away. I suck you up into myself, and there you'll stay!

Apropos the left arm during the discus throw: there are no instructions. You have to find the answer instinctively. The author says several times that the gymnastics should be modified somewhat from the Greek form, but since we don't know what that was, it's hard to alter anything. Simply let your instinct guide you.



⁶⁴ See the description of the third nuance of speech in Chapter 1.

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6

August 24th 1926 Capri

My dear Eminence!

How happy I was to receive your letter. Of course, your other letters reached me too, but they're not enough and for that reason I wail: "He doesn't write, he doesn't write"! I'll answer your questions. 1) I think the book about art⁶⁵ we're

planning is something *very important*, but with lots of additions, of course. 2) I'm not hopeful about "Don Quixote⁶⁶" and I'm all a-tremble about your work this summer on the mime based on motifs from Afanasiev's fairy-tales⁶⁷. 3) There's no mention of how the "I" modifies the astral body; and how exactly the sounds come about isn't mentioned either. You have to meditate and ponder it. 4) It is precisely the speech exercises that will form the speech organism. That is correct. In essence nationality is not important. True, we are deprived of such knowledge about *ы* and *ë*, *ь* and *ѣ*⁶⁸. But that's a matter for the future, and quite apart from the hard sign there is much work to be done. 5) *Schmor*⁶⁹ and not *schmor*. Now I'll add something as a correction, or rather a supplement. When I was dealing with the first nuance of speech, I said that the gesture for this nuance was a pointing or indicating one. However, having studied it practically and theoretically, I've understood what the author meant with the word *deutend* : *signifying, designating, expressing something*; in short, *expressive, graphic*. (As well as *pointing*, of course.) That is: the gesture can be most varied, provided that it clearly expresses the feeling of *effectiveness*. You have to experience clearly: *your soul is active, effective to the utmost in this gesture!* To understand what it is that I want to add an afterthought to the 1st nuance: try to speak the following silently and only using gestures: "All of you stand up, I pick up this stone, raise it above my head and hold it very menacingly and fling it into the distance. You rend your garments and rush after the stone!" Excuse the literary composition, but after doing the gestures of these words you, *Madame*, will get what I mean. The main thing is, the gesture should *express* something and be *effective* at the same time. When I do the voice exercises (A, B, C etc.)⁷⁰, I'm amazed and delighted at the result, which lasts for the whole day sometimes: I don't recognise my own voice. Its dusty quality, much praised by the newspapers, disappears and... (secretly) ... I dream of working on a new version of ... forgive me... *Romeo* in a completely new way, using speech formation. Oh, oh, oh! – don't tell anyone. Hold your tongue and fall forever silent. My impertinence is only thinkable in secret! I think my ardour will dissipate as soon as I have performed the first night and I get up the next morning with a voice sounding as if it's coming out of my a..e. Then my hopes and dreams will be shattered because I experienced new vocal sensations when practising, as well as new reveries connected with them! I'm horrified at the thought of performing anything at all from my previous repertoire and want to work on something new, in a novel, pure, creative way (*Romeo!* Sorry!). I'm absolutely shocked at the catastrophe that befell Andryushan⁷¹. I wish him a speedy recovery. You are completely immersed in theatre work by now?! My enchanting one, drop me a few lines about your impressions of the theatre. Write to Seestrasse 22, in Berlin. We'll be heading back to Moscow soon. I can't wait to see you! Off to the steam baths! On the very first day, off to the baths and the pool. Get your sackcloth out (I mean a clean

nightshirt). Well, I've sent you five letters setting out the ideas on theatre. Let me know immediately upon receipt of all five of them. I'll be really upset if even one of the five letters gets lost, for they are a *synopsis*, albeit a poor one. There won't be time to summarise them again and what is more, from the German. Vladimir⁷² made copies of the five letters for himself, but he left some things out; so there would be no complete summary. I kiss you all over.

Truly yours, Misha

⁶⁵ According to M. Ivanova, Chekhov was referring to the plan to write a book on the technique of acting.

⁶⁶ A play based on Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was included in the repertoire of the Second Moscow Art Theatre in December 1925. ⁶⁷ The mime, *The Wondrously Beautiful One*, was staged in Paris in November 1931.

⁶⁸ Letter in the Cyrillic alphabet, the last of which is the so-called "hard sign" mentioned in the next sentence.

⁶⁹ See Letter 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Andrei Belyi was hit by a tramcar in Moscow at the end of August

⁷² Vladimir Tatarinov, husband of Maria Scriabina, daughter of the composer Alexander Scriabin. Vladimir was a close friend of Chekhov's, an actor and director. He and his wife were members of the Russian Anthroposophical Society in Moscow, in which Andrei Belyi also played an important role.

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There are five letters about art, besides this one. This is the sixth letter.

My dear Tilsit, pass the enclosed letter on to Andryushan.

Give my regards to Nikolasha. Is he working? To Novikov and Zhenya. Are they in the theatre? To Semyonich and Shelaput.

My compliments to your mama and papa. To your little sisters too. The various colours of my handwriting are due to the pencils becoming blunt⁷³.

Bazba sends keeszez.

7

August 28th 1926 Capri

Greetings my incomparable, inimitably unique work of Nature!

I mi-mi-miss you, my oh my oh my. If you were married, I would hate your wife⁷⁴. You are mine!

I'm going to write down my thoughts about the school. I want you to give this subject some thought and then draw up some relevant ideas. The school will be divided into two classes, sections or groups, if you will. The junior group will have four teachers: Sofya⁷⁵, Volodya⁷⁶, Sasha⁷⁷ and you. I don't know whether you'll teach together or take turns. I don't know either if you'll each have your own group, or if you'll take the whole group in turn. I'm inclined to think: the whole group in turn. I will take the senior, smaller group. Both groups will most likely have lessons simultaneously. These are external considerations. The

internal ones are: what will you four teach in the second year? As a basis: selected exercises from the previous year and then new ones to be decided jointly by us. How are the new elements to be taught? Naturally, not in the form that we ourselves study them. We must interpret the new elements and adapt them to the students' level of comprehension, taking into account their awareness and previous experience gained from us. For example: what is clear to us from the mere mention of the concept "speech organism", will have to be explained to them using imagery, poking various parts of their anatomy, drawing analogies, depicting feelings, captivating them with graphic expressions, demonstrating the right way together with the wrong way, providing examples: Chaliapin and anyone from the Korsh Theatre⁷⁸; seizing on the moments that are spot-on and pointing out delicately their mistakes. In a nutshell, a long, full, many-sided process of explaining, demonstrating and practising the speech organism on their own persons. The ideal is to aim at getting them to the point where they realise that the speech organism is an independent being, separate from themselves. We'll need to activate all the *pedagogical intuition* at our disposal; and you, Volodya and I *have* that intuition. Here we touch upon an important question: you and Volodya are capable of teaching the second year the new elements, Sasha and Sonya are not. Hence the conclusion: to divide up the curriculum between you. Sasha and Sonya's main work will be to continue teaching selected exercises from the first year. You and Volodya, selected new ones. Contact between the four of you will be maintained through teachers' meetings.

Now, as for your apprehension that it will take years of training before starting to teach. I categorically retort: 1) The author states constantly that he is voicing ideals, which will need time to be achieved, but that the essential thing is to sow *seeds*. And that we can and are obliged to do. All the more so since we *have* gifts. 2) Don't forget that what you, Volodya and I know about the art of drama exceeds the knowledge and *experience*, the inner *experience*, of all our fellow theatre professionals to such an extent that we have something to offer them out of the depths of our hearts and our *experience*. We should not just think of ourselves and wait until we consider we're up to the mark and capable of starting to teach. You have to pass on what you've received. By refusing to enrol students, you choke on your own self-sufficiency and fail those who are capable of receiving. That's my reply to you and Volodya and to myself on that score. 3) Destiny has placed us in the right circumstances and knows better than we do what the results of our teaching will be. 4) In the process of teaching, we ourselves will be learning. 5) By preparing our lessons, we will be able to assume responsibility for what we do. 6)

⁷³ The letter was written in various shades of coloured pencils.

⁷⁴ According to a friend, Gromov and his future wife, Alexandra Davydova, had been inseparable since 1924, but only married in 1946. ⁷⁵ Sofya Giantsintova ("Sonya") (1895-1982), actor and director.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁷⁷ Alexander Cheban.

⁷⁸ Actors of the theatre founded by the entrepreneur, F. Korsh (1852-1923).

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Much of what Steiner states has put into words what has been vaguely present in our souls for a long time now. If you consider our theatre work, you will realise that for a long time now much of our teaching has been along these lines, but it wasn't very clear or worked out in detail. Now, however, the firmest foundation has appeared for what we had already anticipated inwardly in our own teaching. So in that respect what the author offers us is strength, not doubts and weakness. We shall keep to ourselves what we do not know; but what we do know we shall pass on with a sense of responsibility. 7) We're not going to conceal from our students that we *want to learn* together with them. They will understand that in the best sense of the word. 8) We're going to teach *a little at a time*, but work long and meticulously on one and the same thing. This will also greatly enhance our knowledge of the subject.

To continue: we can suggest that anyone wanting to teach segments could do so, but under my supervision. There will be more new exercises in the senior course, but here again adapted to the students' level of understanding. The selection process for students and their allocation to the first or the second course are matters that are the most unclear to me. I ask you to think through and criticise what I've written. Part of the exercises will be taught with both courses together, for example: Greek gymnastics. Besides that, Zhenya Novikova will be engaged to teach classes in eurythmy. And absolutely everything that is going to be taught must be presented not as something abstract and remote, but as being closely related to stage practice. Threads must be devised to connect up with our practical work. This is to make matters concrete and motivate the students. They don't like distant horizons, alas! So there you have, more or less, my optimistic thoughts about the school. One pessimistic thought: there's a great deal that's impossible to teach our young hopefuls, *whatever sauce you serve it with*. They won't grasp that much, but we'll need to be patient.

Apropos "style": this is a difficult and unclear question. It isn't clear to many who have read the book. Nevertheless, I've worked out an idea for myself as to what the author calls "style" in art, but that is only *my own personal* understanding. Perhaps you'll see it differently when you've read the book. I see it like this: it's not about "style" in the sense of "rococo" or any other well-known "styles". Style is always mentioned by the author in the passages dealing with the spirituality of art and the actor. When the actor lives in his dreams, he receives a feeling for style. Being touched by spiritual truth is style. Whenever the voice *comes from*

there, “style” is born. Andryushan’s concept of “rhythm”⁷⁹ is, I think, what the author means with the word “style”. It’s impossible to find a specific, set form of this “style” as meant by the author. It isn’t the crystallised form of the Renaissance or Gothic, living on for centuries; it is the ever new, ever other “style”. *Style* is the organ of perception *for that*. The *feeling* for style is the bringing down of truth into art. *Style* is the voice of the *individuality* (not the personality)⁸⁰ of the artist. However, each individuality is unique and, even for oneself, style is unique in different moments. The themes of artistic creation are inexhaustible and unique: which means *style* is the *life of the individuality creating in the present moment*. Living form of the living, creating spirit – this is “style”. People who are beautiful in soul manifest “style” in their lives. The harmony of the “upper” and the “lower”⁸¹ is always full of “style” or, as Andryushan would say, “rhythmical”. So, there are the feelings (and much else) that rise up within me when I try to fathom what the author means with the word “style”. As an art, the whole of eurythmy is full of “style”. According to the author, the enemy of “style” is “stylization” in the bad sense of the word and also symbolism, for example: a tree resembling an animal or a cloud symbolizing a coffin and other such nonsense. All such things are inventions; and “style” is not *invented*, it is *experienced, sensed* in the creative, inspired state. “Style” is the opposite of intellectualism.

Next: you can fantasise all kinds of words and gestures when practising the six nuances of speech, but the main thing here is to start *silently*, to feel how the word is meant to sound from the essence of the *Gesture* itself. And only then pronounce the word when the inner certainty has grown that it sounds the way that the inwardly experienced meaning of the *Gesture* dictates. Moreover, a whole phrase can sound as if it is devoid of a nuance and only one or two words assume the whole expressiveness of the nuance. Here’s an example from the book: the 3rd nuance – *You tell me I am supposed to achieve this goal. **Can** I really do that?*. The word “Can” as such is spoken in the nuance *trembling*. The 6th nuance: *You suggest I look after the shop now. **I would like to go for a walk!*** The words in bold print are the main bearers of the nuance *concise*. The 5th nuance: *You are bringing me the*

⁷⁹ Chekhov is most likely referring to the contents of talks that Belyi gave at his home and also to preparatory work for the staging of his play, *Peterburg*, at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

⁸⁰ Steiner distinguished between the spiritual individuality (the “Higher Ego”), that incarnates in repeated lives on Earth and the personality (the “Lower Ego”), the earthly, subjective “I”, the development of which is influenced by outer circumstances. See *Theosophy*.

⁸¹ I.e. the higher and lower principles.

*child I always like to see: **Come!*** The word in bold print is the bearer of the nuance. You study this “Come!” on the basis of the movement, the gesture.

Next point: there is no mention at all of the amphibrach. However, another book is soon to be published by the author’s wife, as a continuation of this one; and the amphibrach will probably be dealt with in that one. So there will still be something more for us to learn about the art of the stage!

As regards the position of the German sounds *ä*, *ö* and *ü*, the author doesn’t say anything in particular, only that they lie between *o* and *u*⁸². This can easily be felt with a little practice. I think you’ve already grasped it by now. Just in case you haven’t, I’ll sketch it: excuse the vile, dense drawing. Let’s assume the speech organism is outlined in red and within it is the point of origin of the sounds. The *o* is in the oral cavity.

Here I’ve drawn the oral cavity and in it the *ä*, as it were, plops into place. It sort of occupies the whole space of the mouth, but protrudes further forwards out of the mouth than the *o*.

This is, for my feeling, the position of the *ö*:

This is the position of the *ü*. The lips are somewhat narrower than in the drawing. And finally, right at the front, the *u* jumps out, as if out of a tube.

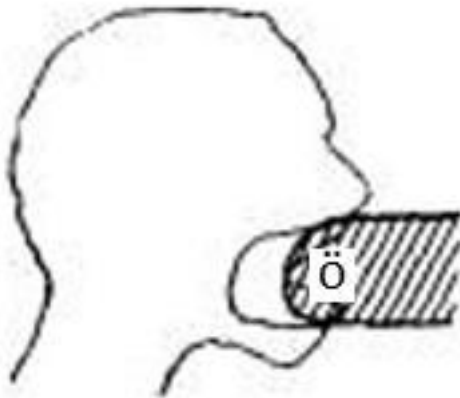
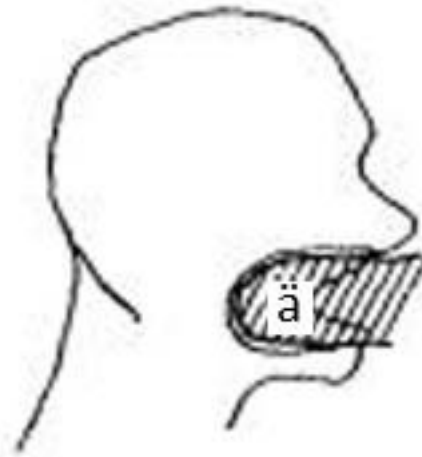
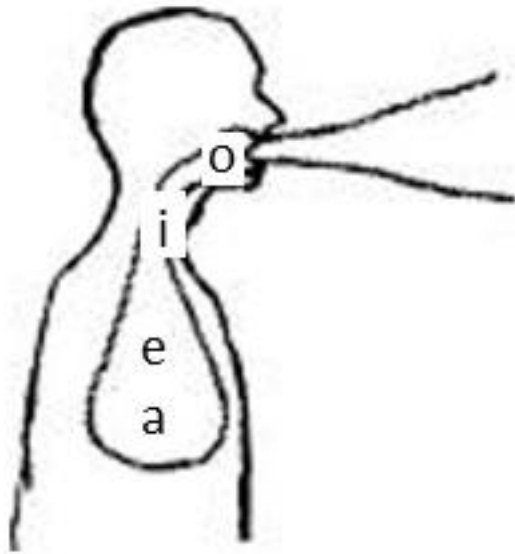
All this is how I sense these sounds, for what it’s worth. But you asked me to explain them; so my dear, I’ve done my best.

There are great hopes as far as mime is concerned! In it the word can be presented in all its beauty because there will be few words and the life of the gesture can be developed, there the music is! The two of us could work on that! (Judging from Nadya’s⁸³ letters there will be a delay with *Don Quixote*.)

PS Another important factor for the psychology of teaching is that we are merely *passing on* what we have learned ourselves. This is a very important realization. We offer to work on the technique of acting following a particular method. We can describe the working method to the students, but they have to work at it themselves.

⁸² See Letter 3.

⁸³ Nadezhda Pavlovich (1895-1980), poetess and translator.



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I bite and kiss you and weave all around you. How I'm going to squeeze you when I return! Give my greetings and kisses to Nina. How is Andryushan's health? Write to me at Seestrasse. Greetings to all at the theatre. I think I'll arrive

on the 28th, but I don't know for sure. Kiss Sonya and Vanya⁸⁴ from me. Don't tell anyone at the theatre for now that I'm thinking of coming back earlier, or else they'll start building the repertoire around that. I don't know if I'll arrive by that date and I'll need two days to come to myself after the journey. Off to the steam baths!

Tomorrow is my birthday – my 35th! Oh! Oo! Ee!

8⁸⁵

My enchanting, absolute Tsezurochka und quite stunning and stunned Vovochka Why haven't I written to you for so long? The reason is I received two letters from you both separately and I wanted to reply to your questions when I teach you, my dear and enchanting ones. Thank you, Vovochka, for your wonderful letter. I was very pleased to receive it. Thank you, Gundoza, for your letter and the newspaper cuttings. I still haven't received a reply from the People's Commissariat of Education, although I sent Lunacharsky a long and detailed explanatory letter, setting out the reasons for my temporary absence from Moscow, I wrote about the press, the Repertkom (Chief Committee for the Control of Repertoire) and other things. I wrote about what I am doing here and wrote that, wherever and whatever I am acting here, my ultimate aim is to return to Moscow, but that my return depends on whether I'm given a theatre at my full disposal and real working conditions are created. I also set out intelligibly my opinion on those conditions in the letter to Lunacharsky. I'm waiting for a reply, but I don't think it will come soon because the question is not an easy one and I requested a completely *serious and detailed* reply and nothing vague. I even begged him not to make a hasty reply, but with the proviso that it is final and has been discussed at all relevant levels. If you hear anything about this in theatre circles before I do, please let me know.

I'm really happy that Nadezhda⁸⁶ and Maria⁸⁷ are pleased with Vovochka's flat⁸⁸. I wish them great joy and all happiness and well-being in the future. How is Nadezhda's health? How is her German? Does she still intend to improve it, as she planned? Has Maria got any new parts? Has Alexandra⁸⁹ got any new parts? I gathered from the newspaper cuttings that you, Gundozochka, have been acting like a buffalo. I wish you boldness and good spirits as you move into the future. Already under my supervision you made huge progress in your acting, keep up the momentum going forwards. Let your motto be: boldness and lack of fear of making mistakes on stage. That will be easy when you know what you are going out onto the boards for each time you appear. You can always modify and vary your aims. An acquaintance, with whom I stayed in the summer⁹⁰, wrote something to me recently that gave me a lot of strength. He wrote: "You will never fail at whatever *you* play". I should like to share this very same thought

with you in your quality as an actor and with Vovochka in his quality as a director. My dear, dear ones, since sending you my last letter there have been big changes in my destiny. I can't say exactly how and why all this has happened, but my shares have suddenly increased unbelievably in value. The signing of the contract with Reinhardt's theatre⁹¹ has evidently played a decisive role. Theatre bigwigs here have become interested in me and I have received all kinds of film and theatre

⁸⁴ Ivan Bersenev (1899-1951), actor and director.

⁸⁵ This letter is addressed both to Viktor Gromov ("Tsezurochka", "Gundoza", "Gundozochka) and Vladimir Tatarinov ("Vovochka").

⁸⁶ Tatarinov's sister, also a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society.

⁸⁷ Maria Scriabin. She made a full translation of the Steiner lecture course, on which these letters are based, but it was never published: Also in her possession was a copy of the first edition of the Speech and Drama lecture course, the backing of which has turned yellow with age and bears the title and a drawing in ink. Judging from the handwriting and the style of the drawing it must have belonged to Chekhov personally. A dedication on the opening page says: "To my fellow pupil". There is every reason to assume that this copy belonged to Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁸⁸ From 1928 on, this flat was the home of Tatarinov and Maria Scriabin

⁸⁹ Gromov's future wife.

⁹⁰ Michael Bauer (1871-1929), author of many religious, philosophical, artistic and educational works, was one of the first and closest pupils of Steiner. Chekhov found in him a genuine mentor in matters of spiritual development. Bauer spent his last years at the home of Margareta Morgenstern, the widow of the poet Christian Morgenstern in Breitbrunn-am-Ammersee in Bavaria. Chekhov and his wife visited them in the summer of 1928.

⁹¹ This took place no later than September 10th 1928. Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) was a leading actor and director in Berlin.

October 13th 1928 Berlin

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offers. I have two invitations to America. America scares me, of course, because of the Atlantic Ocean. All around me I hear not voices, but wailing...
(The letter breaks off here and the continuation has been lost.)

Appendix 1

In the middle of June, 1926, Michael Chekhov went on holiday to Italy via Berlin. It was most probably in Germany that he got hold of a copy of Rudolf Steiner's lectures on Speech and Drama, which had been published that spring. They made a tremendous impression on him. He realised that the contents were what had been vaguely present in his soul for a long time. At that period of time, Chekhov was evidently afraid that it might not be possible to bring the book back to Russia, so he decided to summarise its contents, lecture by lecture. Moreover he was even aware that he would need to be cautious in what he wrote. He resorted to using hints and allusions. Convinced that Gromov would understand the drift of his thought, Chekhov used various kinds of abbreviations, omissions

and the device of crossing out “non- materialistic” terms in the text, which his like-minded friend was meant to restore when reading it.

Chekhov was becoming alarmed about the atmosphere that was making itself felt in his work in the theatre. Later, in his memoirs, he would write about his visit to the *starets* (an elder or spiritual teacher in the Russian Orthodox Church, often possessing clairvoyant powers) of the Optina Monastery in March 1925: he had the feeling that he was under constant surveillance by the security service. This feeling proved to be true. In the autumn of 1926, Andrei Belyi described that the systematic harassment of Chekhov in the Moscow Art Theatre had begun. In the meantime, however, while enjoying the sights of Venice, which he so adored, he realised the full significance of the ideas that were to become the foundation of his approach to the actor’s work on himself. He began to dream of creating a new type of drama school which was destined to become reality, but unfortunately in exile.

Chekhov’s synopsis is heartfelt and exact. The present material sheds light on the professional guidelines that allowed him to fathom the full depth of his genius and fulfil the testament of his teacher: it is not a dogma, but living knowledge gained on the path of creative freedom.

The academic study of the reception of Rudolf Steiner’s Science of the Spirit or Anthroposophy on the part of the Russian intelligentsia in the early 20th Century is only just beginning. It can be assumed that the publication of new material from the archives and its analysis and comparison with already available material will substantially alter outdated notions concerning the divergences, ideals and motivations of the participants in cultural life in Russia and in emigration in that period.

It is interesting to note that it was Marie von Sivers (later Marie Steiner), who was educated in St. Peterburg and studied recitation and drama at the *Conservatoire de Paris* (1895-97) and Maria von Strauch (stage name: Maria Spettini), actress at the German Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg and founder of a theosophical circle there in 1902, who first introduced the ideas of Rudolf Steiner in Russia. By 1914 when work started on the building of the First Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, which was to become the centre for the dissemination for anthroposophical ideas worldwide, many Russian writers and artists had become involved in activities there. They include: Andrei Belyi and his wife Asya Turgenev, Maximilian Voloshin and his wife Margarita Voloshin, Tatiana Kiseleff, Marie Savich and others.

Chekhov had first heard about Steiner from Stanislavsky. In the Spring of 1918 his attention was attracted by a book in a shop window: *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* by Rudolf Steiner. He read the book and put it aside. He pursued his

interest in yoga and got to know various theosophists. However, his acquaintance with theosophical literature did not lead him further in his spiritual search. The book by Steiner came back to mind and from then on he read all the anthroposophical literature he could find. The young cinematographer, Sergei Eisenstein, just arrived in Moscow from the provinces in the autumn of 1920, attended theosophical and other study groups, where he experienced Michael Chekhov and wrote home to his mother: “The conversations have a predominantly theosophical leaning. Rudolf Steiner’s name is mentioned more and more often.” In October 1921 Chekhov was introduced to Andrei Belyi (“Andryushan” in the letters), who became his mentor in Steiner’s Spiritual Science. During the following year he became a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society. In July 1924 he and Vladimir Tatarinov attended a course of lectures given by Steiner in Arnhem, Holland entitled *The Karma of the Anthroposophical Movement*, after which they had a personal meeting with Steiner. The meeting took place on July 24th, as is attested by a copy of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* autographed by Steiner.

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The book remained in the possession of Tatarinov’s wife, Maria Scriabin, after his death. Their flat in central Moscow served as a meeting place for Russian anthroposophists and many artists (including Boris Pasternak) until her death in 1989.

The present collection comprises all the letters from Chekhov to Gromov in the possession of the Museum of the Moscow Art Theatre. The last letter was written after he had already emigrated.

Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov (1899-1975) was a close friend and pupil of Chekhov’s and performed with him in many productions. In 1928 he moved with the Chekhovs to Berlin. His future wife Alexandra Davydova joined them in 1929 and up until the return of Alexandra and Viktor to Russia in 1934, the two couples were virtually inseparable. They worked together in Berlin, Paris and Riga. Chekhov gave Gromov a letter of recommendation to take back with him and present to the famous director, V. Meyerhold, who ran his own theatre in Moscow. Viktor (as an assistant director) and Alexandra (as an actress) worked there until the theatre closed in 1938. In this letter Chekhov wrote:

I’ve decided to trouble you, do not be angry with me for that. It’s about the future of a person who is close and dear to me; for this reason I have decided to approach you with a request. My friend, my longstanding companion in matters of the theatre – Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov – is returning to Moscow and bringing this letter with him to give to you. Before expressing my request regarding him, I will tell you about him briefly.

Gromov entered my acting studio in 1918. Approximately one year later I entrusted him to give lessons independently.

In 1922 he joined the Second Moscow Art Theatre. As a character actor he played the following roles: The Actor, Charlie, Stretton (in 'The Flood'), Kobus, Dante (in 'The Death of Hope'), Biondello (in 'The Taming of the Shrew'), Morkovina (in 'Peterburg'), the Gravedigger (in 'Hamlet') and so on... He was co-director in a whole series of productions at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.....

While abroad Gromov played Polonius, Sir Toby and many other character parts....

*Dear Vsevolod Emilyevich, after giving you a brief description of all of Gromov's activities in the theatre, I allow myself to request you to take him under your patronage and admit him to your troupe of comrades-in-arms; Gromov is capable, he wants and loves to **learn and work**: two qualities that you, Vsevolod Emilyevich, assuredly hold in high esteem.....*

Thereafter he worked as chief director of the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre. He was awarded the title of Artist of Merit of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and wrote a biography of Michael Chekhov in the series *A Life in Art* that appeared in 1970.

Appendix 2

From *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.
By Graham Dixon. Appendix A.

The Numbers – Where the Impulses for Actions Originate

Number 1. (Physical Body)

The physical part in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Our instrument, called the physical body, which we as actors use; both to manifest the inner life of the character and to express the outer impulses which come to us from the outside, physical world.

Number 2. (The Soul)

Our inner life or psyche, the other half in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Consisting of thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, lusts, desires, striving, sensations, etc. In other words, our soul.

Number 3. The Outer World

The outside world and everything within it. The mineral world (dust, rocks, rivers, mountains, diamonds, gold), plants (flowers, trees, fruit, vegetables), animals (birds, snakes, insects, mammals), people, the cosmos (stars, planets, suns, galaxies), inanimate objects.

Number 4. The Ego

The unique part of ourselves that we call 'I'. The everyday ego. Our Number 4 is manifested and experienced in our Number 2. At this stage of our human evolution, we need a soul to feel, to know who we are.

Number 5

What Chekhov calls the higher creative self - the real actor within us. Number 5 marries with our Number 4, and is also manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 6

Similar in a way to what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious and what Rudolf Steiner called the folk soul. Unspoken things which affect us, such as nation, religious life and morality. It is married into our Numbers 4 and 5. Much like them, it is manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 7

The spiritual world in its objective, pure and uncoloured form.

Michael Chekhov – Letters to Viktor Gromov¹

(Translation by David Ball, kindly edited by my dear friend, Graham Dixon)

1

July 15th 1926 Lido

O Mensura² mine!

How pleased you were to receive my letter! And how glad we were to receive yours! I was disappointed to learn that you would not be coming to Moscow before my departure. But then I realised that the Georgian Military Highway is providing you with wonderful impressions. I am happy for you and oh, how I am pressing, weaving, cutting and plucking!³

I have found a book here, in which the author sets out his views on the theatre and the formation of correct artistic speech for the stage⁴. This research is extremely interesting in my opinion. I have decided to outline the content of this theatre research for you. So I'll begin.

From the Foreword⁵ (The Foreword was written not by Rudolf Steiner, the author of the book, but by a lady, called Marie. I can't remember her surname, but it isn't important).

Through speech the human being grasps his divine origin. The sounds of the alphabet are creative forces connecting the human with his origin and showing him the way to his spiritual source. Through them he feels his way back to his divine "I", and, in so doing, rises above the animals. In speech, the individual power of the "I" can express itself through sounds and know itself through them. (which cannot be found either in animal sounds or in wonderful birdsong).

Through speech the universe can know itself in the focal point of the human "I"; and through this "I" it can begin to create anew. The uprightness of the human body releases the capability of human speech. I will continue by quoting a passage. It expresses very poetically what artistic speech should be in the true sense: "... to live in the breath, to form the breath, to sculpt the air with the chisel of the breath and feel the trembling and subtle vibrations of the air (and of the ether⁶), high and low tones and the very subtle chimes of the diphthongs ... such artistic creativity in the sphere of the most subtle substantiality is a more noble

task than to emit human emotions in the form of animal sounds...”. Isn’t that wonderful?

It continues: as long as true inspiration cannot be differentiated from trivial emotionalism, the path to the redemption of art through the *word* will be blocked. Naturalism leads initially to animalization and then to “gramophonism”. It is necessary to *become conscious of* the laws that lie at the foundation of speech, and then by devoting oneself to them, resurrect artistic creativity through them. *Truth* is essential for art, and not random copying. Speech is flowing movement, imbued with inner music and the charm of colourful images and sculptured forms. We kill the artistic element in speech if we view it as a means of comprehension, as a vehicle for intellectual content. It is not speech that should be adapted to the intellect, rather the intellect should be shone through by speech. And again I will translate another poetical passage about language: “... it is ablaze with multi-coloured rays ... its rhythms, melodies and sculpture, the contours and architecture of its aspiring forces, its sonorous or soft metric steps, its proud cadences; the line connecting and disconnecting all of this and intermingling one with the other in its swirling until this whole movement swells into Dionysian dance or, clear and bright, flows into an

¹ See Appendix 1

² “A graduated glass vessel for measuring liquids” (*Latin: mensura*).

³ From Chekhov’s own memoirs and those of his contemporaries, it is well-known that he had a fine and unusual sense of humour. This trait of his was evident in his creation of exceptional stage characters and also in his everyday life. Chekhov said of Gromov that he had a sense of humour very similar to his own.

⁴ The book in question was the first printed edition of Rudolf Steiner’s course of lectures on Speech and Drama, given in Dornach, Switzerland in 1924.

⁵ Written by Rudolf Steiner’s wife, Marie Steiner von Sivers. From 1901 she had been one of his closest collaborators and founded with him the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902, which later evolved into the Anthroposophical Society in 1913.

⁶ See footnote 6.

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Apollonian circle dance⁷”... The book in question purports to be the key to this form of the art of speech. It states the necessity to approach all this consciously, without any apprehension that consciousness will kill the artistic impulse. It will not kill it, but raise it up to the “I” and liberate it from the confines of the mask of the “personality”. It must be seen and then detached from us and cognised. And

when we cognise all this, consciousness will return to us from the outside as something free, self-evident and objective.

In the course of time an inner stratification of the primeval unity came about: thinking branched off to the "I" (see the sketch⁸), language remained in the astral body (the circle A.B.), and feeling descended to the ether body (E.B.). Primeval poetry was a unity. Now however, as a result of stratification, the following has come about: feeling that descended to the ether body is the source of the *Lyric*. The *Epic* arises directly out of the circle of the astral body. But what the human being in his speech directs predominantly *toward the outer world* (through the upper circle) is the *Dramatic*. And when the dramatic artist speaks on stage (if it is not a monologue), he is *really* standing facing someone. He is *in actual fact* communicating with the outer world. And the *fact* that the artist is facing *the outer world also* applies to his speech; and likewise to what he is simultaneously experiencing within himself. The *lyric*, on the other hand, is not addressed to anyone external. It is sufficient unto itself. And the lyrical artist should speak in such a way that his speech is the pure expression of the inner human world. In this case even his consonants should in a way become vowels. (Every consonant has its corresponding vowel sound, for instance L = *ee*, R = *ah*.) One has to learn to feel *the vowel of each consonant*. The *epic* artist should feel: I come closer to the inner world of the human being when I speak a *vowel* and when I speak a *consonant* I come closer to outer things. With the *epic*, we are dealing with the outer world, but only as *imagined* by us. (Otherwise it would not be epic, but dramatic.) The epic speaks of an *imagined* object. The *lyric* is a stirring of inner feeling. *Declamation* comes about when this stirring is so strong that it bursts out as a *summons* or *call*. The epic artist shows his audience his imagined object through the magic of his word. He *creates an embodiment* of it in front of the audience and, by citing it, *recitation* comes about. The *dramatic* form of speech gives rise to *conversation* when the speaker is facing his counterpart in the flesh in the outer world.

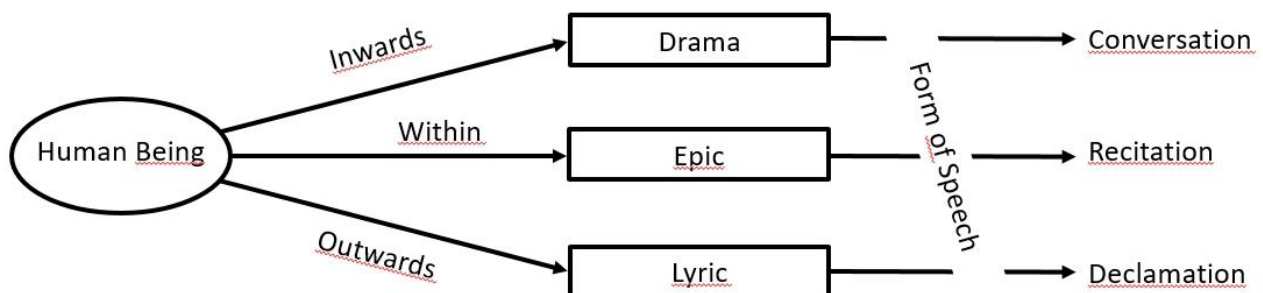
In the diagram it looks like this:

The art of speech consists of these three forms. (It should not be forgotten that in reality all these three forms are intricately entwined with each other and that lyric and epic elements can be found in drama.)

The book continues with an explanation of certain sounds: *Ah* (A) = the full opening of the speech organism. It is the striving (of the astral body) to go into the outer world. *Ah* is the most consonantal of all the vowels. The complete opposite to the sound *Ah* is the *Oo* (U). In the case of the latter the whole speech organism is closed. *Oo* is the most vowel-like of all the vowels. With the *Ah*, the human being is falling asleep, with the *Oo* he is most awake. With the *Oo*, the astral body connects strongly with the ether and physical bodies. The *Oh* lies between the *Ah* and the *Oo*; it contains within itself in a harmonious union the processes of the self's opening up (*Ah*) and closing up (*Oo*). In the case of the *Oh*, the human wakes up rather more than in the actual present. The *Oo* means: I want to be awake in relation to an object I am facing. All the vowels are located between *Ah* and *Oo*. *Oh* lies in between and not quite in the middle, just as the musical interval, the fourth, is situated in relation to the octave. *Oh* is the state

⁷ For a closer understanding of the anthroposophical understanding of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles see Steiner's lecture cycle: *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*.

⁸ See Steiner's book *Theosophy*, in which he lists the seven sheaths of the human being and their interrelationships.



2

between falling asleep and waking up. Hence the ancient exercise with the OM (AUM)⁹. The ancients thought that if you repeat this syllable often, you would enter the state between sleeping and waking. The next stage with the ancients was the speaking of the AOUM. Here the *Ah* and the *Oo* strive to meet each other and when the ancients spoke this syllable they were able to proceed from the *Ah* state

to the *Oo* state (*Oh*) lies between them, of course). There then follows a description of the five Greek gymnastic exercises, with which the first chapter closes. Before outlining the second chapter I am going to skip ahead and describe some practical exercises for you to try out, if they appeal to you.

Exercise 1 In order to make speech moulded and musical, you have to bring a *gesture* into it. Traces of gestures still exist in speech, such as “the tone of the voice” (I don’t know how to translate *das Stimmliche*); but, as such, the gesture has disappeared. It needs to be reinstated. (The five Greek gymnastic exercises, which encompass all kinds of gestures, form one component of the exercises to introduce the gesture on stage as an external aid for the spoken word. In essence there are no other gestures than those contained in Greek gymnastics. There are their *Abschattungen* (shades of difference)¹⁰. That is one pole. The other pole is *speech itself*. Therefore: one pole is the *gesture*; the other, *speech*. I’ll now go into the latter pole, but you will see that it is also connected to the gesture.) Now, *what qualities can be attributed to speech? What is speech capable of in general?*

Speech can be: 1) *effective*. However, in order to learn this first nuance of speech, you need to study the corresponding gesture. While doing this, the gestures are performed *without speaking*. Arbitrariness will arise if you start with the *word*. That is because the gesture as such *has disappeared* in the word and it has to be studied separately. Then both the word and the gesture will become alive. (In present-day acting, chaos reigns in this sphere.) You need to understand that the guiding spirit of language works through the six nuances of speech (the first one has been mentioned, the others follow below), and if we devote ourselves to studying the activity of this guiding spirit by means of gesture, then we will approach the word in the right way. Thus: a *pointing, indicating* gesture corresponds to effective speech. When you have thoroughly studied this gesture, you need *to give it back* to the word. To achieve this, you need to grasp *the method of speaking* the word in the proposed, effective nuance of speech. This method is the *sharp, incisive* forming of the word. In this process the inner strength of the human being penetrates the word, fills it with *mettle*; the strength is such that it breaks out in exhalation. So here we have the first nuance of speech in its three aspects:

1) Effective – the pointing gesture – sharp.

The second nuance of speech draws the attention to inner processes taking place within the human being. The speech of this nuance is: 2) *thoughtful*. The gesture to be employed to learn this nuance is: *to bring the limbs into a connection with the body*. (close to the forehead, nose, arms akimbo etc.). And finally, what is inherent in this gesture revealing thoughtfulness should find expression in the word pronounced in a *full-bodied* manner. Here there should be nothing metallic in the voice. Here both the vowels and the consonants should be spoken in a full-bodied manner. And so:

2) Thoughtful – the gesture kept close to the body – full-bodied.

(The ability to be decisive – keeping the gesture still, *Stillhalten der Gebärde*¹¹ – pronouncing slowly.)

The third nuance of speech is called: *speech feeling its way forwards against resistance*. The explanation here is the following: penetrating into the outer world with a question or a wish, but without the certainty of how the circumstances are in this outer world. There may even be hindrances in the outer world. The gesture that corresponds to this is: *making rolling movements forwards with the arms*. Here the formation of the words should be *trembling, vibrating*. (Here it is good if the sentence contains many ‘p’s, as this will facilitate the trembling.) And so:

3) Speech feeling its way forwards against resistance – rolling movement – trembling.

⁹ In Hinduism the sacred word inherent in all that exists.

¹⁰ I.e. all the movements that can be seen on stage are derived from the prototypes of the Ancient Greek pentathlon. ¹¹ The original German text states: *Stillhalten der Glieder* – keeping the limbs still.

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The next nuance: expressing *antipathy*. The gesture: flinging one of the limbs away from the body. (The author says that badly educated people do this gesture with the leg or foot.) Here the pronunciation is *firm, hard*.

4) Antipathy – flinging the gesture away from the body – hard. The next gesture is very simple – I'll state it directly:

5) Sympathy – stretching out the arm with the intention of touching an object or caressing it. This gesture can have something affirming – soft

And the last gesture:

6) Withdrawing into oneself – gesture away from the body – concise.

Everything I have described should be practised until it becomes instinctive. Now I'll continue to the following practical exercise.

Exercise 2 concerns knowing how to *form* artistic speech correctly when talking. Almost half of the book is devoted to the question of this speech formation and, from the further chapters, it becomes clear that in general nothing can be achieved in the art of drama without *this*. Now specific *formative forces* (etheric forces) are inherent in the human being. These must be developed through a whole sequence of exercises. These forces lie deep within the human organism. For the vowels they lie in the lungs, but they are primarily located in the organs in the region of the throat. They also lie higher up: in the organs of the nose, at the front of the mouth etc. The exercises are built on the principle that we take our starting point from *living* speech and not from anatomy and physiology. We have to learn to relate to *living speech* as something existing in its own right, separate from the human being and to be treated objectively. Speech should be viewed as a *being* within us. And just as the human exterior can be described in a *particular order*, e.g. the head, neck, chest, abdomen and legs (and not the legs, head and then the abdomen and so on), so also the living organism of speech can be described *in a particular order*. This is how it is described: the sequence of the vowels gives us a picture of an independent being, the speech organism. These vowels are: *a(ah) e(eh) i(ee) oh ä ö ü u(oo)*¹². When we pronounce them in this order, we will realise, experience and feel what the speech organism is. When we pronounce these vowels, we need to experience inwardly their proper position in the speech organism and their proper formation. To be precise: in the case of the *ah* the entire speech organism *opens up towards the outer world*. The *ah* comes out of the depths. In the case of the sound *eh*, the space through which it passes is narrower, reduced. But all the same it lies very deep in the speech organism. With

ah and *eh*, nothing happens in the front part of the speech organism. With the *ee*, the space is completely reduced to a narrow slit. With the *oh*, we feel it proceed so far forward that it is located *in front of the slit* formed for the *ee*. Thus, living our way into the secret of the shaping of these vowels, we come to the *ü* and *oo*, which are formed then entirely in the front part of the speech organism. By practising this sequence we reach the point, at which the speech organism becomes separate from ourselves (which is a cardinal requirement to proceed further) and through this learning process we come to pronounce the vowels in a correct and *healthy* manner. The voice also becomes strong and healthy in the process of practising these exercises. Following these exercises there comes a whole host of similar ones, which form a unity when taken all together. I'll describe them for you in the next letter, but meanwhile I will mention one more exercise of a different nature. By the way, lest I forget: the author cites this statement as the motto of his book: *Mensch, rede, und du offenbarst durch dich das Weltenwerden*. ("Speak, human being, and you reveal through yourself the process of the world's becoming.")¹³

Exercise 3 Observing the rainbow. This is important for creating scenery and for developing *artistic agility of the body on stage*. Artistic agility of the body is altogether only conceivable when the

¹²Translator's note: approximations of the three German Umlaut sounds – *ä, ö und ü* – in English could be the *a* sound as in "cat"; the *or* sound as in "worth"; and the *you* sound as in youth. However the muscle tension in the lips is tauter with the German sounds than with the English ones.

¹³This utterance expresses the essence of the teaching of the ancient Mystery School of Ephesus, the Logos.

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corresponding inner qualities of the Soul are present. And these are given to us by the rainbow. We have to surrender ourselves to it and feel that: the *violet* edge of the rainbow conveys the prayerful devotion to the divine beings and the transition to *indigo* is a calm mood of soul. With *green* we feel that our soul pours out over everything growing, blooming and blossoming and as if we have come from the *divine worlds* (by way of violet and indigo). *Green* opens the portal that makes possible the sense of wonder for all things and beings, as well as sympathy and antipathy toward them. If you have lived your way into the green of the rainbow,

you will be able to a certain extent to understand all the beings of the world. With *yellow* you feel strengthened within, you feel your right to be a human being *within nature*. *Orange* is the feeling of one's own inner warmth and also of the worthiness and shortcomings of one's own character. *Red* is enthusiasm and joy, inspired self-surrender and love, love for all beings. The author says at this point that people usually regard the rainbow as something external and see nothing more in it than if they would want to see the human being and for this purpose would examine a human figure made of papier-mâché. Just as through Greek gymnastics the actor grasps the earth with his will and finds himself upon it, so *he grasps the wonders of heavens¹⁴ through the contemplation of the rainbow*. And he grasps the world as it reveals itself to him from two aspects; and a revelation of the world is what the art of acting is meant to be.

That's all for now. I'll continue to write about this book next time. I really want to see you. I miss your cheeky mug and one minute I see you in one street of Venice, then in another or on one of the bridges or in my arms. Kisses, kisses, kisses.

My greetings to Nina¹⁵. Don't forget. Your Mizdra

Write to me in Roma. Poste restante. A postcard that you've received this letter will do.

2

July 21st 1926 Lido This is the second letter from here.

Good'ay failed Genius!

I'm growing a beard, it's grey. Its general appearance is nothing special. Bazba¹⁶ is cross. Do you desire further summaries from the realm of the dramatic art? Here they are:

Chapter 1 Eurythmy¹⁷ is very close to the contemporary art of drama. In the future rhythmic and the art of drama will merge into one. Those who use language in some form or other in their artistic works fail to grasp sufficiently the *artisticness of language* as such. Skill in working with language and speech requires the same preparatory training as, for instance, the art of music. And for anyone wanting to *speak artistically* the very pronunciation of *each separate*

sound must become an *art* (as it is in music with regard to each separate note).

The genuine training of artistic speech gives rise to *style*. Without style there is no art whatsoever. Where does speech originate in the human being? From the astral body (the soul). The “I” modifies (the astral body) and it receives the impulse of speech. The animal has no “I” to bring about this modification and therefore has no speech¹⁸. In the speech of the ordinary person, the sounds are formed at the unconscious level, with the artist of the word, consciousness must penetrate into the sphere where the sounds arise, where speech is born. Consequently it is necessary to contemplate

¹⁴ In the German original: *das Himmelswunder des Regenbogens*. Here Chekhov misunderstood Steiner’s thought that there are two paths of penetrating into reality. The first path involves leaving the body (the will) and leads to an understanding of the natural environment. The second takes its starting point from outer phenomena (“the heavenly wonder of the rainbow”) and leads into the inner world where the soul experiences colour.

¹⁵ Nina Neinkirchen, who was Gromov’s first love, was a very beautiful deaf and dumb woman.

¹⁶ Nickname for Chekhov’s wife, Xenia Chekhov (1897 – 1970).

¹⁷ Eurythmy, a stage art based on anthroposophy. In eurythmy the sounds of speech and music are expressed in bodily movement.

¹⁸ In common with the human being, the animal has a physical, ether and astral body, but lacks an individual entity, an “I”. According to anthroposophical teaching, each animal species has a group soul in the spiritual world, its own group “I”. For another angle on this subject, see Appendix 2, an excerpt from Graham Dixon’s book *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.

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(meditatively) everything that is spoken about this process. The following feeling has to be developed: human speech arose not out of human cognitive forces, but out of the *artistic* ones. (A vague hint for the understanding of this is provided by the Egyptian hieroglyphic script.)

In earlier times people were totally incapable of speaking in an unrhythmical manner. And besides that, people in those times spoke not only mere thoughts, they spoke something *that sounded artistically like speech*, and that was the main thing. In our time, the feeling for the artistry of speech has been lost and you often hear: “You are not speaking *correctly*”, but alas, you do not hear: “You are not speaking *beautifully*”! The processes of the astral body take place (for the most part) unconsciously. The artist of the word must learn to have the processes that give rise to speech at his conscious command. At this point Steiner says that

the numerous methods of teaching speech and singing arose out of a divining of this need to penetrate consciously into the processes shaping speech. However, they all fail to achieve their goal because they do not start from *living language itself*, but from anatomy.

Above all, the *speech organism* must grasped cognitively. It came about gradually in the human being under the influence of the “I”, which modified the human (astral) body. Imagine such a diagram of the speaking human being: *vowels* arise when the speech impulse descends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle designated as E.B.; *consonants* arise when the speech impulse ascends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle “I”. Vowels originate at the deepest and most inward level of the human being. For that reason they express what is most inward in the human being and are located at the most unconscious level. The human “I” (in its present state) brings about sense perceptions and the substantial part of thinking takes place in the “I”, as also does ordinary conscious activity. And when the speech impulse ascends to the upper circle, the *consonants* originate and they are, in general, more accessible to human conscious perception than the vowels are.

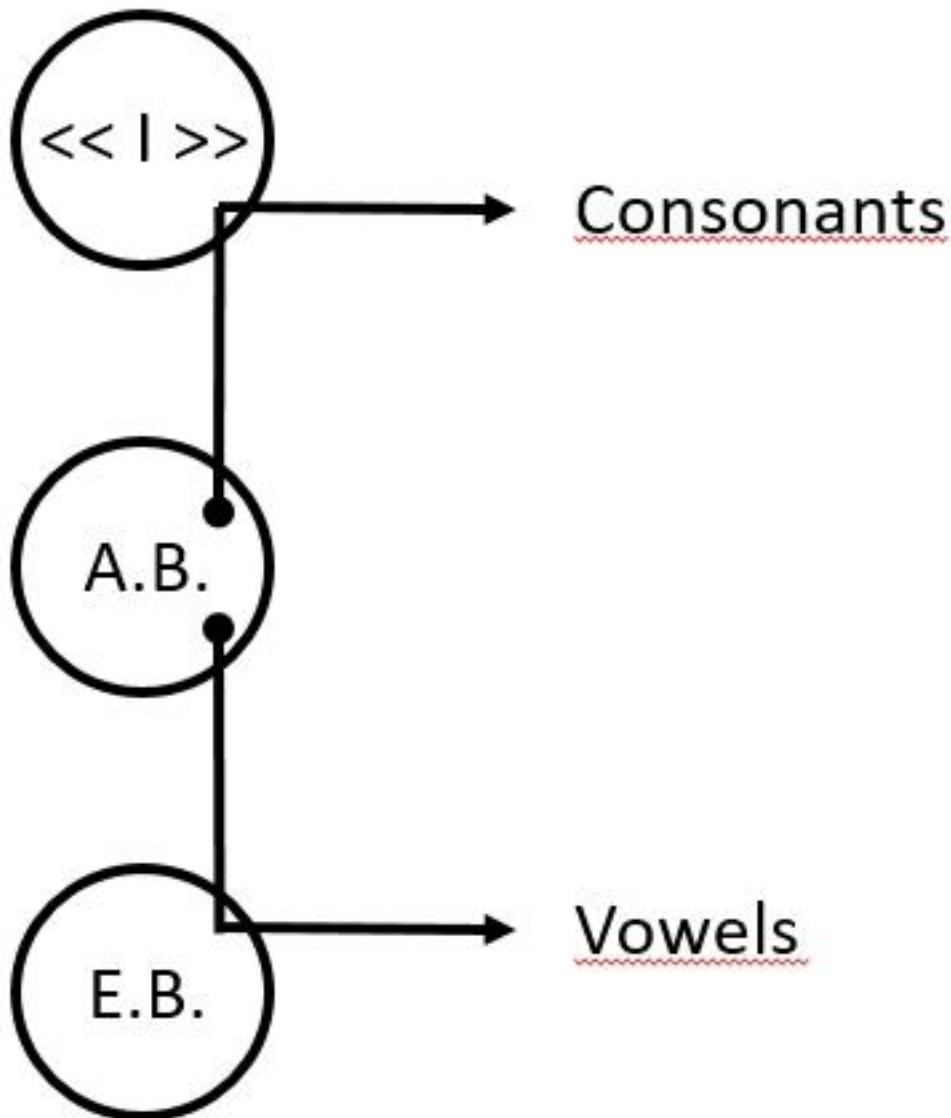
In primeval language, humans not only spoke in rhythm, beat, assonances and alliterations, they *also thought and felt in language*. All *feeling* immediately gave birth to the corresponding speech. They had to imbue feeling with a familiar form of speech. For instance: they didn’t say: “I love the child affectionately”, but said something like: “I love the child *bye baby bye bye*”. The same applied to thinking. Modern abstract thought did not exist. When humans thought, their thought became a word, a sentence. *They spoke inwardly*. (That’s why the verse is not: “In the Beginning was the Thought”, but “In the Beginning was the...”¹⁹) Speech was a “precious casket for thoughts and feelings”. And the text continues with many more enchanting passages, but I will leave them out in order to give you as much of a general impression as possible. But, of course, you have to experience every word of this exposition. Altogether Steiner admonishes us that we need to meditate and ponder a great deal over what he sets forth. Now I’ll continue from the same Foreword.

It can be proved historically that every art form is based upon a particular world view. The Foreword deals with the origin of art in general and the necessity of

returning to that source (the mysteries). In conclusion, the lady who wrote the foreword promises to publish a new book consisting of exercises received by her previously from the author of the present book²⁰. However, that will be in the

¹⁹ Chekhov is implying that Steiner meant the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John.

²⁰ Marie Steiner planned to publish a systematic, instructional guide to speech formation, but her intention remained unaccomplished. The working material for it was compiled and published after her death as: *Methodik und Wesen der Sprachgestaltung*, Dornach 1955.



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future. And now I'll describe a number of practical exercises for you from the book itself and not from the Foreword. There are 19 chapters in all.

Exercise 1

Speech eurythmy is a must²¹. It is not necessary *per se*, as an independent art, but in the following specific context: the actor makes the ‘*ee*’ sound in eurythmy for instance. While he is doing that, the main thing is not stretching the arm, but registering inside himself what the muscles are actually experiencing; and this experience of the muscles should be like an apparition, a mirror image from within that accompanies every ‘*ee*’ spoken by the actor on stage. This will, of course, happen instinctively when all the sounds of speech have been sufficiently worked through eurythmically. So you express a particular sound in eurythmic movement as fully as possible. Then you take the feeling you had while expressing this sound in movement and what the muscles experienced during the sounding of the “*ee*” and transfer inwards into your soul. Then, with this experience, this feeling, you speak the sound *without* the outer gesture. Through practising this exercise, there will remain forever a counter-image, an apparition of the sound and it will do its work when you are speaking on stage.

Exercise 2

The Greek gymnastic exercises are useful for the actor. Here they are.

- 1) *Running*. The Greek felt the inter-relationship of forces between himself and the earth when running. He felt that his will forces were present in his limbs. When running he felt the inter-relationship of his own forces with the earth. The “I” and the earth. Furthermore, when the actor has trained himself to run in an artistic manner, without suspecting it, he will have learned to walk about the stage; and to walk in such a way that his walking will serve him as the power to articulate his speech correctly.
- 2) *Jumping*. The Greek realised that when he jumped he had to somehow *to draw certain dynamics out of himself*. The dynamics of the legs had to be increased. The jump provides a modified relationship to the earth, to the forces of gravity. By practising jumping, the actor also instinctively acquires the ability *to modify his walking* on stage. Moreover, this modified way of walking will correspond to a modified way of speaking. That is: if you speak slowly or clip your words in some way or speak with a trembling, firm or soft voice, then thanks to the jumping exercises you will

acquire the ability to walk on stage in complete harmony with your manner of speaking. For speech on stage should be accompanied in the corresponding manner by walking.

- 3) *Wrestling*. Further, in addition to the mechanics that have to be developed in the legs for jumping, it is necessary to add the mechanics that determine *balance in the horizontal direction* (as opposed to balance in the vertical direction as in the preceding exercises). This is wrestling. Therefore, in wrestling we have the earth and another object. The result of this exercise will be that the actor acquires the ability *to move his arms and hands* instinctively and in the best possible manner *while actually speaking*.
- 4) *The discus throw*. For this exercise, a person *is handed an object* that is *large and heavy*. The dynamics as such undergo a certain development throughout the sequence of these exercises. Throwing the discus, the actor learns *mastery of his facial expressions* (and also the correct use of his arms and hands, as in the previous exercise). By following the discus as it flies and accompanying it with his attention during the whole flight, the actor develops flexibility in his facial expressions and control of the muscles necessary for mimicking. (A ball or other object may be used instead of a discus.)
- 5) *The spear throw*. The dynamics of *direction* are then added to the discus throw (in which a person is only dealing with the dynamics of handling heavy objects). And by practising this, the actor learns *to speak!* Namely to speak in such a way that his speech becomes *effective*, but not in the sense of meaning or intellectual content, but in an artistic, “speech sense” (if one can use such a term). Speech becomes a fact “in its own right”. In other words, the actor gains possession of the *lost secret of speech*. Speech frees itself from the intellect and enters the organs of speech themselves. Long sticks can also be used for practice.

²¹ Eurythmy is meant here.

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These five exercises correspond in the best possible manner to the cosmic interrelationships. They *reveal* the human being in his totality. The author calls the five Greek exercises *total speech*.

That's it for this time, my dear. Next time I'll start with the book's first chapter²² on the theatre. I send you a thousand kisses. Moisten them, take them for yourself and then give them to your grandmother as a present. Give Nina the letter. It doesn't contain any secrets. Or you can read it to her. Let me know when you receive this letter and whether you like what I've written. Is it comprehensible, shall I continue to write?

Your "I"

Write to me at the following address: Pension Venier, Villa Marina, Lido, Venezia, Italy.

We're going to be here until approximately August 15th. Perhaps a bit longer. It's August 1st. In any case scribble me a few lines to *poste restante* in Rome. Rome is written *Roma*.

I forgot to add that the author says that all his research and indications will only make sense when they are *put into practice*.

Hello my dear one!

3

How are things with you? Do drop me a line or two. As for me, I'm totally confused as to which language to speak. That easily happens, given the number of languages I know. In difficult situations I do as follows: I assume a serious appearance and pronounce indistinctly: "Si, la u, ja....." and the like. Well that's not interesting, so allow me to present a summary of *the contents of the second chapter* of the book on the art of drama. I've already mentioned that there exist six nuances of speech. The beginning of the second chapter deals with them and then it continues: by training these six nuances we will learn to bring the *gesture* into the *word*. There are sounds that are called spirants (*Blaselaute* – "blowing

sounds”²³). Imagine you have frozen the air in a trumpet while it is sounding. The frozen shape will give us the beautiful gesture concealed in the blowing air. The human speech apparatus is also to a certain extent like a musical instrument that is blown; and when a spirant, a blowing sound, is pronounced, this amazing gesture is formed in the air. The spirants are such that they should be *listened to* and *in the listening* the gesture concealed in them should be perceived. The spirants are: *h, ch* (as in Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f* and *v*. Other sounds are such that the gestures concealed in them call forth the desire to *see* them. These sounds are the plosives (*Stosslaute* – “pushing sounds”): *d, t, b, p, g, k, m* and *n*. Then there is one “quivering sound” (*Zitterlaut*): *r*²⁴, which should be felt *with the arms and hands*. If you hold your arms loosely and listen to an *r*, you should have a kind of tingling sensation in them. Then there is one “wave sound” (*Wellenlaut*): the liquid *l*. With this sound you feel the desire to become it yourself, to feel the flow of the life element in it. When another person speaks the *l*, you also have to *feel it, but with the legs* and not with the arms. In the case of the spirants, the gesture *has disappeared in the sound* to such an extent that you can only try to *hear* it. This is why good poets instinctively make use of spirants if they want to express something that is far removed from the human sphere. If a poet wishes to depict a person waving his arms, fighting off, hitting someone or the like, he uses plosive sounds. And if the line is written in such a way as to arouse a *feeling*, then look for *l* and *r*. In a nutshell, all sounds *other than* spirants can point to the human being and his gesturing.

²² I.e. the second lecture of the Speech and Drama Course. The first lecture was an introductory one.

²³ It is important to note that the basis for Steiner’s classification of the sounds is neither the method of their articulation nor what occurs in the larynx, but what happens in the surroundings when the speaker forms and moulds the air. In other words, Steiner’s approach is not the mechanics of the speech apparatus, but the phenomena on the physical-etheric (sound) and inner-soul experiential levels. The primary aspect is in the listening and the activity, both of which are perceptible to the speaker. The anatomical details of the vocal apparatus are a secondary, instrumental aspect.

²⁴ In Russian the *r* sound is rolled, as was formerly the case in stage German.

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The human being lives in gestures. The gesture *disappears into language*. When a word is spoken, the human being reappears in the word; and we find the whole person in what a person speaks. However, we must know how to form speech. In a word, *the human being who has disappeared in gestures, is resurrected in speech*. But what is characteristic and appealing in the art of drama is that the actor on stage (i.e. the human being) *does not disappear completely in the gestures and does not resurrect completely in the word*. This gives the audience the possibility of complementing with their imagination that which has not been fully resurrected in the word.

The contents of the second chapter close on this note. It's rather difficult. I fear I may have summarised the contents inadequately, but I couldn't make a better job of it. Incidentally, the author says that you will grasp it if you "meditate" and think about it *a great deal*. Now to move on, I will summarise some aspects of the practical exercises to develop speech.

Exercise 1

I've already mentioned that the vowels should be pronounced in the following order when practising: *a, e, i, o, ä, ö, ü, u* (German pronunciation). Now we have further exercises for the vowels. The vowels need to be practised particularly intensively, despite their being given in combination with consonants. The exercises are devoid of any intellectual content whatsoever: they are a set of words and their significance lies only in the training of correct speech and the correct formation of the sounds.

A *Aber ich will nicht dir Aale geben.*

Ask them if we need these ardent gages²⁵.

This is an exercise for the lungs, the larynx and the diaphragm. Take a look at the vowels, they go like this: *ah-eh-ee-ee-ee-ee-ah-eh-eh-eh*. Starting with *ah, eh-* you then arrive at the closed position of the speech organism: *ee, ee, ee, ee*. Hold on firmly²⁶ to these *ee* sounds and then finish the exercise in the same way as you started it, i.e. the speech organism does *ah – eh...* as at the start. The next combination of words develops the resonances (nose and head) and makes the

organs that lie at the front of the speech organism²⁷ flexible (compare the progression of the vowels between *ah* und *oo* in my previous letter):

B *O schäl und schmor mühevoll mir mit Milch Nüss' zu Muß²⁸. Oh where do words full force meet me with news to muse.*

The third exercise is for the consonants. Here the spirants, plosives, liquid and quivering sounds are placed in their correct order. This develops the organs necessary for forming the consonants and *flexibility* in pronouncing them. Speech and the corresponding organs of speech are brought into a healthy state. Here's the exercise itself:

C *Hartestärke—aaa—Fingersind—iii—beiwackren—aaa—Leutenschon—aa a — leicht — i i i — zu finden — u u u.*

Hardly started – ah ah ah – finger tips – ee ee ee – by fractions – ah ah ah – loiter slow – ah ah ah – lightly – ee ee ee – to finish – oo oo oo.

There follows a sequence of poetic excerpts. Their content is irrelevant, the whole essence is that the sequence of sounds in them is such that it leads you into speech formation in an astonishing manner. This develops the individual organs, resonances, the flexibility of speech and so on and so forth. I'll write

²⁵ The English versions of these speech exercises were devised by Sophia Walsh.

²⁶ The German original text states: *Die Grenze halten Sie ganz scharffest.* "Keep the borderline in sharp focus." In the course of the exercise the position of the vowels moves from the pharynx (ah) forwards in the mouth (eh) and reaches the area behind the teeth (ee), which Chekhov calls "the narrow slit" in the previous letter. In this case the objective is to hold the formation of the sound (ee) behind the borderline of the teeth. The next exercise, in contrast, is based on the continuation of the vowel sequence beyond this borderline.

²⁷ In the original text, the organs of articulation are meant and not the speech organism as such.

²⁸ Beneath this exercise in the letter, the vowel sequence: *o ä u o ü o i i i ü u u* is written in purple coloured pencil, presumably by Gromov himself.

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these excerpts down for you. The letters in red pencil alongside the exercises and verses are there to make clear the sequence in which the exercises and verses are to be spoken. You'll find the sequence below:

I

Und der Wanderer zieht von dannen, Denn die Trennungsstunde ruft; Und er singet Abschiedslieder. Lebewohl! tönt ihm hernieder, Tücher wehen in der Luft²⁹.

II

*Ich sonne mich im letzten Abendstrahle
Und leise säuselt über mir die Rüster.
Du jetzt, mein Leben, wandelst wohl im Saale,
Der Teppich rauscht und strahlend flammt der Lüster³⁰.*

III

*Und drüber hebt si d'Sunne still in d'Höh
und luegt in d'Welt und seit: «was muesz I sê In aller Früei?» — Der Friedli
shlingt si Arm um's Kätterli und's wird em wol und warm. — Draf het em's
Kätterli ä Schmüezli êe³¹.*

See the red letters and numbers overleaf for the sequence of these exercises:

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times I – once

A — another 10 times

B — another 10 times AB — another 10 times C — another 10 times ABC —
another 10 times II – once

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times III – once

Apropos the exercises in general: keep in mind when practising that you are not learning from mere exercises, but learning by means of the exercises from *the sounds themselves* and the speech organism itself. The sounds are our teachers, (the divine beings).

²⁹From *An der Saale hellem Strande* by Kugler

³⁰From *Ausgewandelter Dichter* by Freiligrath

³¹From *Die Überraschung im Garten* by J.P.Hebel, written in the Alemanic dialect of German.

Exercise 2 The artist of the word (the actor), needs to develop an awareness for the processes happening within the human being when speech is being formed. Imagine a person who has spent his whole life on a desert island and has not learnt to speak through lack of human contact. He is *capable* of speech: he has hearing and the organs of speech. This person suddenly finds himself in human society. He feels the desire to start speaking and the sounds *hm, hum, ham, hem, him* break free from him.

The exercise consists of speaking these sounds and seeking in them, at a deeper level, the processes occurring within yourself, while forming speech (the astral body takes hold of the ether body). Feel the very strong dynamic of speech in these sounds. You have to pronounce these syllables in depth and practice insightful devotion to feeling the processes of speech formation. You will have the sensation of an inner whooshing, zooming sound.

So, there you are, Mitsoopochka, that's all for now. I send you a thousand kisses. Scribble me a postcard upon receipt of this letter.

Your Mitsooza.

4

My dear and golden Mitsoopochka!

I can't stop thinking of you, I miss you and send you all my love and embraces. Relax and enjoy the summer and nature. Meanwhile for your diversion, I will write you a summary of the contents of the *third chapter* of the book on the art of the stage. I'll begin: modern *prose* is not artistic. Its concern is to bring thoughts, which have detached themselves from language and become located in the head, back into speech again. In other words, prose began to convey the naked content of thoughts, devoid of any kind of artistic element. The thoughts of the head are all directed downwards onto the material level. True thoughts on the other hand, can only arise out of the *whole* human being. This is where the connection of artistic speech with the gesture begins.

The head (roundness) does not have gestures (the remnants of gestures in the head are the eyes and the facial expressions), and the gesture has to be taken from the *rest* of human being. Therefore speech must take *the human being in his or*

her entirety as its starting point. And this is the meaning of the phrase: ‘gestures must be brought into speech’. (The thoughts in the head are all mixed up in chaotic formlessness, which is evident if only from the fact that one can, for instance, be a good anatomist and know nothing about the human soul. All this has nothing in common with the artistic element.) In a word: prose as a conduit for the thoughts of the head is devoid of *style*, and *style* is the prerequisite of any artistic work. Otherwise: if you start from the desire to convey the content, the thought, there is no art; if you start directly and immediately from *the feeling of style*, then there is art. However, even prose as narrative can and should be artistic. For that the arms and, more importantly, the *legs and feet* need to be involved. What is a “narrative”, a prose “account”? It is the *epic*. An epic deals with the narrative of an imagined object; and it uses the hexameter for this purpose. For the essence of the hexameter is that it brings *the legs and feet* into speech. It brings the rhythm of the feet into speech. (It’s not for nothing that one talks about the verse “foot”.) The proper feeling of the hexameter is that not only you can *speak* it, but you can *walk* it as well. Narrating something implies being thoughtful (the 2nd nuance of speech). We stand on one foot and speak the *oh* in a rounded and slow manner (also an aspect of the 2nd nuance of speech). Then we take two steps, as if we were sliding through our speech: *eh – eh*, and return to “thoughtful” with a rounded and slow *oh*. So we have *oh eh eh, oh eh eh, oh eh eh*: long—short-short- long—short-short- long—short-short- and so on. We end up with the familiar form of stepping the rhythm in speech work. Then the *whole* person participates in what the head has created as its product. (You can also take sideways steps.) When we hear a hexameter, we have the feeling: something is being narrated to us through it. It feels as if our inner life and our moving feet have been freed from the force of gravity.

Now for the opposite: we can take our starting point from a *feeling*, i.e. from what is within the person. After being in an uncertain state of emotion for some time, we want to attain clarity and focus

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our feeling and then the anapaest comes about: short-short-long – short-short-long--- short-short-long--- and so on. With the anapaest we are dealing with an *expression of feeling* and not a *narrative*. Just as we learn the epic by means of the hexameter, so too we learn the *lyric* by means of the *anapaest*. (We have to remember that both the hexameter and the anapaest can be found *in language itself* and that we have to learn everything that is connected with the various laws of speech *from language itself*. This is a very important and fundamental feeling when training.) When we read hexameters, we learn to use the tongue, the palate, the lips and the teeth, i.e. we learn to pronounce the *consonants*. When we read anapaests, we learn to use the larynx, the lungs and the diaphragm; they teach us how to pronounce the vowels. We learn to *dwell* on the vowels. We learn the trochee through the hexameter and the iamb through the anapaest.

Further, the author mentions two concepts that are not very clear to me. They are: the drama of style and the conversational drama. The iamb is suitable for the first type of drama, which is more *internal*; and the trochee for the second. Anyone wanting to learn how to read fairy tales, for example, should prepare by reading *trochees*. He will acquire the feeling that the consonants are important for fairy tales and that something particularly powerful is meant to work through them. Reading a fairy tale emphasizing the vowels will create the impression of unnaturalness. If the consonants are spoken faintly, the impression created will be of something light and ghostlike. The iamb is needed if you want to perform something realistic in a poetical manner. The *vowels* play a role in the iamb (although the consonants are not excluded completely) and this type of speech is the only one possible when you want to present something realistic in a more poetic light. For this reason, exercises using the iamb are very important for the actor. (They will also be a help in works written in trochees.) The iamb is necessary for prose drama.

The author continues by describing how he once saw a performance in which the actors wore masks like the ancient Greeks did. He says what a delight it was not to see boring human heads and insincere human faces! He admired the bodies and their gestures and the possibility of expressing so much without the aid of the head and face! He says the moving mouth and facial expressions of the speaker create a repulsive impression. He continues by giving many indications

concerning facial expression and especially *the movement of the lips* when speaking. Hence you can conclude that he is taking a stance against dilettantish speech and this is what he finds offensive in all its forms. There is one sentence: “By means of the face there can only be expressed what real speech or singing is and what the inner appropriate complement is of what the human gesture can actually reveal in such a splendid way”. The chapter concludes with the thought that speech which is not transformed gesture has no ground beneath its feet.

Now I’ll write down a *breathing* exercise for you. It just consists of *not taking a fresh supply of air into the lungs until the entire preceding air stream has been used up in speech*. However this needs practice. It must become instinctive. When practising, you need to take air into the lungs and hold your hands close to the diaphragm to check that the inbreathing is correct. Then you speak: *ah eh* until all the air is exhaled. In the same way practise with the consonants: *k l s f m* (these sounds must be spoken slowly to spread them out over one entire exhalation). In these exercises, the process connected with the breathing should be observed attentively and consciously.

Then this exercise with the breathing³²:

*Und es wallet und woget³³ und brauset und zischt, Oh wild West Wind, thou
breath of Autumn’s being*

(breath)

*Wie wenn Wasser mit Feuer sich menget Thou, from whose unseen presence the
leaves dead*

My dear, now I will also describe the contents of the **Fourth Chapter**. Gather your patience and read on. To refresh your memory: the lyric requires the iamb, prose – the trochee or the dactyl.

³² Graham Dixon’s note: the breath is not stored or held, as in diaphragmatic breathing, until there is no more air in the lungs. It is rather the case that the stream of the breath goes right through to the end of the line or phrase. The in-breath is the breath of intention, on it the speaker is receiving the meaning and/or the image.

³³ In this excerpt from Schiller’s poem *Der Taucher*, *siedet* is replaced by *woget*.

The trochee and the dactyl are for the narrative element. The tone of the narrator's voice lives in the trochee or dactyl. We are dealing with an *imagined* object in the case of the narrative or epic. However, this object can be imagined so vividly that it only remains for you to make yourself the *instrument* for everything the imagined object speaks and does; and then *performance* comes about. Herewith the path is outlined from the tale or epic to the drama and performance. (But not every epic work is so constructed that it contains within itself the possibility for such a transition. The author cites *The Cid*³⁴ by Herder as an example of an epic making the transition to drama or rather, to the possibility of *performance*.) It is not recommended to deal directly with drama during training because then it is very easy to make everything external and lacking in depth. One should start precisely with the narrative, the epic; for this is where *imagination* is required (for the object is only imagined). The ability "to transpose yourself into another person" and to *perform* him is what is required. For in actual fact he doesn't exist, he is only in your imagination. By practising giving ourselves to the character, we acquire the on-stage professional faculty of *listening to our fellow actor* and allowing his speech to resonate within us. This constitutes a complete co-experiencing with our fellow actor.

Then, following a section with examples from poetry, the book states that the artist must develop a *sense*, a *feeling* for the *medium* he is working with, as Michelangelo felt the marble and spent a long time searching for it in the quarries. The *word* must be sensed as the medium. You have to feel that *you are* to be an apparatus, an instrument, *through* which something is brought about on stage. The next thought: you need to develop a *sense out of the depths of your heart* – a sense that tells you what is *good and what is bad in poetry*. The forces that guided us in this direction in the past are disappearing and we are now faced with the need to draw out of ourselves what was shown us in the past. When speaking, we must learn to sense that we are communing with divine beings, we must learn not simply to *think*, but to *speak inwardly*. The author refers to a play (apparently called *The Portal...*³⁵), to the seventh scene and says it is written as if it had been *heard*. It was not written out of thoughts or the choice of words, but directly from what was inwardly *heard in words*. In a nutshell, we have to deepen, intensify and address most earnestly the issue of *artistic taste*. Taste in its

highest sense can become our guide in art. The last thing we need in art is intellectualism; the very first thing we need is artistic sensing. Alexandrine verse is also mentioned in this chapter and he treats it as a compromise between prose and poetic form, but not knowing what alexandrine verse is, I didn't grasp anything. Pardon vous! This is the end of Chapter 4. Don't be horrified, I'm starting **Chapter 5!**

Schiller said: "The destruction of matter³⁶ through form is true artistry". Feeling and sensing are the actor's materials. They must be destroyed, absorbed by form, i.e. the proper form of speech and gesture on stage. This is mastery, this is art. Form (the word, gesture, image, rhythm) must work in art just as natural emotions do outside of art. So it is on the stage, so it is also in the other arts. If you read properly written poetry properly, your voice will develop *by itself*. When preparing a poetic work for reading, you should transpose it from verse into rhythmically heightened prose (similar to Andryushan's³⁷ prose) and devote yourself to feeling and sensing the work in this form. When you have fully experienced and amassed the feelings, go on to the form of the verse and your feelings will take on *form*. Form swallows up, destroys matter (i.e. the natural feelings such as they are). This is necessary in order to avoid skipping over the feelings themselves and not to be taken up with the mere technique of the form-giving process. At this point the author mentions the formative forces embedded in the human speech organism. I wrote about them before in the exercises for the vowels.

Chapter 6 Naturalism is a repetition of life, it imitates and photographs it and that's why it isn't art. Art must *portray and present* everything using its own means and must not resort to natural means, as naturalism does. Everything in art must be *manifested even to the smallest detail*, everything must be *clear, consummate and visual*. For instance, the audience should not have to rack their brains to guess what the image in front of them is. They should receive it in full and *grasp* it without effort or guesswork. The actor should be skilled enough to employ the resources of his art – the word, the forming of the word, his facial expressions and gestures – so that they contain everything he wishes to portray, without anything superfluous or lacking in complete clarity for the audience. The *integrity* of art lies in

³⁴ During the lecture Marie Steiner read the first, third and fourth romances from *The Cid*. An example of this in English would be Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur*.

³⁵ Rudolf Steiner's first Mystery Drama, *Die Pforte der Einweihung* (In English: *The Portal of Initiation*).

³⁶ See Schiller's work: *Letters on Aesthetic Education*.

³⁷ Andryushan is the Russian poet and novelist Andrei Belyi.

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this. All this is hindered by the fact that we have lost the feeling for the “word” and the “sound”. We hear *the meaning through* the words, its intellectual *content*, but we don't hear the *word* itself or understand it either. We have lost the capacity to *understand while hearing*. And that is a huge difference. This difference must become quite clear to the actor. Through understanding the meaning of each individual sound we are led to what we have lost. Besides that, we have to realise that the vowels are the expression of the soul's inner experience (in relation to the outer world, for example: *ah* is amazement at something etc.). The consonants express the soul's attempt to *depict in the form of sound* some outer phenomenon or object, to imitate the outside world *using sounds*. We must practise analysing a word according to the meaning of its sounds. By experiencing and feeling our way into each individual sound of a word, we will grasp its deep meaning and discover its secret, the secret of its origin.

The author gives an analysis of several words. I'll mention one example. This will help when practising. The German word *Band* (bond, link, bow). The word contains the *ah* sound – amazement. There was amazement at the fact that something can be joined together, connected. In reality it is amazing that something can *hold together* when we tie it up! This human amazement was expressed in the *ah*. The word *Band* originated in amazement. Further: when I tie or join something together, one thing envelops another. It encloses the other thing, wraps round it. The sound *b* in the word is, as it were, the expression of this wrapping round. Then there is the sound *n*. It signifies something fleeting that is light to take hold of; and *d* signifies something fastened, reliable. So, in the word analysed, *n – d* mean that something of an unstable nature is fastened together during the *Band*. In a similar way, every word can be *imbued with feeling* from start to finish. This is necessary for the actor, who is the artist of the word.

Interjections must be observed and studied. Much can be learned through them in this direction. In the world there exists *one single* language although it is spoken by different peoples. The only thing is, they see something different in one and the same object because they express it using different sounds of one and the same language that is common to all. For this reason, the Italian says *testa*, the German *Kopf* and the Russian *golova*. And when we analyse the meaning of these words according to their sounds, we see that the German *understands* the head in this way, the Italian sees something else and the Russian something else again. If they all perceived one and the same thing in “head”, then they would have one and the same word for it. To understand that however, you have to distance yourself from the heady, intellectual meaning of the word. The relationship to words as described here must become instinctive. When listening to your fellow actor on stage, one or the other sound should sound in the background of your soul, depending on what he or she is saying to you. But all of this should be completely instinctive. In a way, the sounds should become the actor’s faculty of “listening”. Correspondingly, if the actor replies to his fellow actor after listening to him with, let’s say, the sound *ee* resounding within him, his reply will sound different to when he listens with the inner experience of the sound *ah*. The very fine nuances arising from this have the power to reach the audience both in the balcony and in the stalls; and the audience will say it is “good” or “bad” because it hears the music of the soul coming towards it from the stage instinctively, not intellectually. That’s the end of Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 is completely devoted to an analysis of a play set in the French Revolution³⁸. The analysis is based on sounds. The scenes, the characters and the whole play are depicted as sounds or sequences of sounds. Robespierre for instance is: *ee, o, d, t*; and Danton: *ä, ee y,l*; but it’s impossible to summarise without having a copy of the play in front of you. For this reason I’ll limit myself to individual ideas taken from the chapter. To analyse a play in this manner, your *know-how* has to have become *instinctive* through practice. When a director or actor analyses a play, his aim should be to have its moods laid out before him, in the palm of his hand, as it were.

From Chapter 8: Mastery of the art of true word formation depends to a great extent on adapting yourself inwardly to the moulded and pictorial elements of

speech as such. There must be *truth* and *reality* in art; naturalism wants to attain this *truth*, but it uses *natural means* to express it. Art, however, must use its own, *other means* to express *truth* and not natural ones. The truth of *nature* goes to meet the Spirit. Spirit *shines through* the truth of art. When we grasp this, we shall begin to understand what *style* is in art and we shall find the way to it. For this reason we should practise speaking in a language that is not our

³⁸ The tragedy *Danton und Robespierre* by Hamerling.

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native language, that is: the language that is not the *natural* one. The book cites the example of a Frenchman who speaks broken German³⁹.

All training must take place in complete freedom. The spirit of what the author presents is what we should grasp and then we should in freedom vary and work out in detail the contents of the book, out of the spirit of the *whole*. There is no room for *pedantry* here. During a scene on stage each actor should be involved in the action. When one actor is speaking, the others should act what he is saying (this requirement isn't clear to me); but when listening to your fellow actor on stage, you have to act that you are listening to him (no naturalism here!

Naturalism on stage has a *doll-like* effect).

When speaking about something of an *intimate* nature, you should walk from the back of the stage towards the proscenium. When speaking to a crowd on stage and the impression should be created that they understand what is being said to them, the speaker should slowly move backwards (either in the midst of the crowd itself or outside it⁴⁰). If the opposite is the case and the speaker walks about in the crowd and moves forwards in the direction of the audience, the latter will have the feeling that the crowd doesn't understand the speaker. The audience perceive different things with different eyes. The right eye is adapted for *understanding*, the left for *interest*. If the actors move on stage towards the audience's right eye, the latter understand what is happening. If the movement is towards the left eye, the audience's interest in the action is aroused (see diagram).

When bringing news on stage: speak loudly from a distance. When the messenger has approached and he tosses his head back somewhat: this gives the impression

that he knows what he is talking about. In the case of joyful news, the fingers are spread⁴¹. In the case of sad news, the entrance is slow, the messenger halts and his fingers are close together.

Everything the author proposes in this direction is accompanied by a caution to the effect that it is not meant to limit the actor's or director's freedom. It is merely the statement of the proper laws of stagecraft, and that alone. Even when these laws are observed as set out, there still remains much room for freedom. This is the end of Chapter 8.

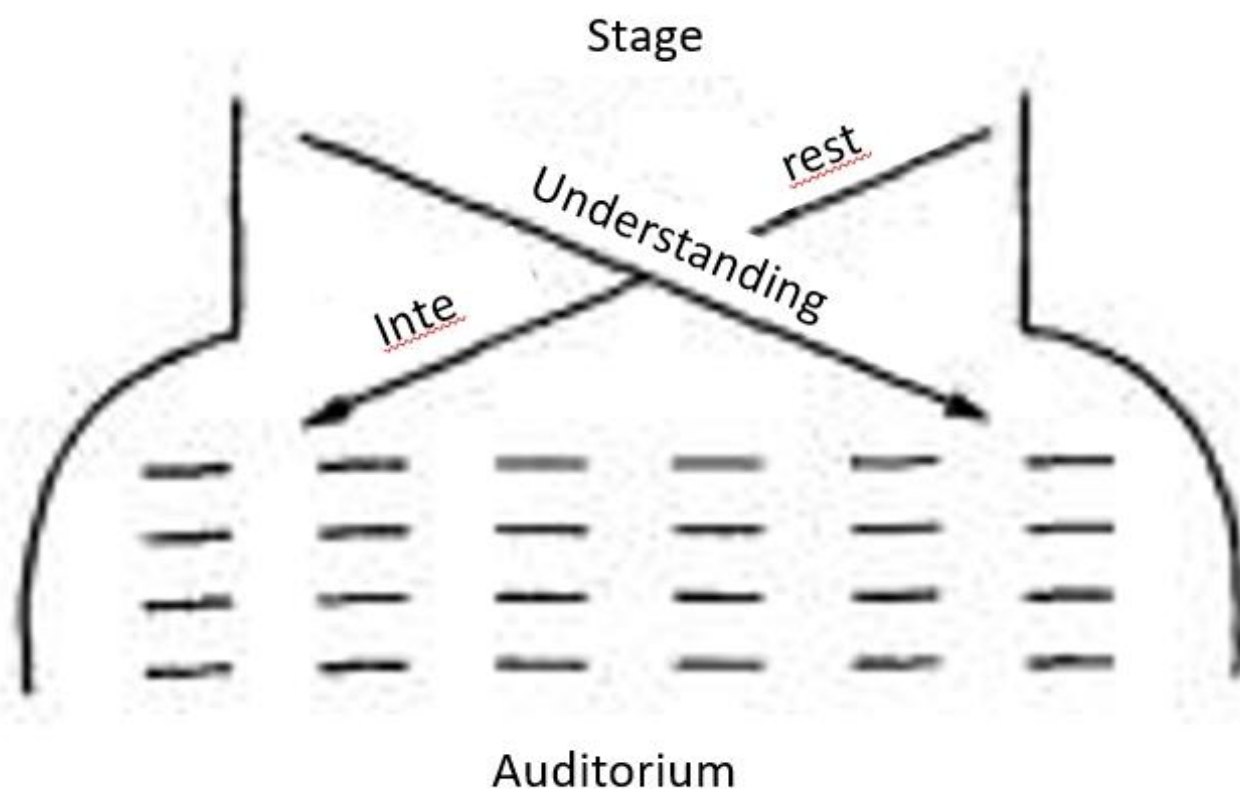
Chapter 9 I'll outline the main idea from a long section of text. An artist can build his work on the foundation of all possible traditions, which will result in the work getting finished; but it won't be a very honest creation. Art is honest when the artist creates his work entirely: from the foundation right to the top; when he himself remains *from start to finish grounded in the creative process*. The artist must derive everything that ultimately constitutes his artistic work *out of himself* and not from anywhere else (say, tradition). However, this kind of art often does not reach completion. But at least it is *honest*⁴².

³⁹ Marie Steiner read a scene from Lessing's *Minna von Bornholm*, in which one of the characters speaks French interspersed with broken German.

⁴⁰ The lecture does not mention the speaker being outside the crowd.

⁴¹ In the lecture: the fingers of the right hand.

⁴² Steiner takes Goethe as his example. The latter created works written out of the sound element of speech. In this respect his verse dramas are without compare. However, he was unable to go further and create real drama, as it takes shape and lives its own life on stage. Goethe was very aware of this and his dramatic works written after *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* were unfinished. The only exception was his *Faust*, which while being a work of high poetic achievement, resorted to traditional, Catholic imagery in its final scenes. In this respect, Goethe showed great honesty in that he was unable to create out of the depths of his own artistic feeling.



15

You should not stand facing your fellow actor when listening to him on stage, but with your *ear* towards him!! For the face should be turned to the audience. (A strange demand, don't you think?). In everyday situations, out of *politeness* you face the person speaking, but it contradicts the law of acoustics. Don't turn your back on the audience; only do it on the rarest of occasions, when it is justified from within the actor. In general, the author attaches enormous importance to what is justified from an inner point of view. He even justifies smoking on stage, for instance in situations that enhance the image to be created. For example, a juvenile enters with a cigarette – this is a clear indication of his desire to appear grown-up, and in this case smoking is justified. In general, however, the author blasts smoking on stage. What kind of speech formation can there be, when a foreign body, a cigarette, is sticking out of the organ of speech! Other reasons why the *ear* should be turned to the speaker when listening to him are: firstly, that the audience can see that the actor *is listening* and secondly, to show *what* he is listening to. (An actor's facial expressions can be developed to the degree that they radiate *power!*⁴³) He continues by saying that listening is expressed by turning the head three-quarters of the way to the audience, leaning it in the

direction of the speaker and forwards a little. This, in connection with various similar exercises, will develop the instinct for miming in the proper manner. This manner of listening is good when one character is giving instructions to one or more actors. It may be objected that it would be stereotypical if several characters adopt the same listening stance. The author replies: Raffael would never have said that. For the sake of the *aesthetic whole* he would have positioned all those listening in the above-mentioned manner, but with some minor modifications.

Another thing about listening (this time not in the sense of an instruction): If the speaker is using the second nuance of speech, the listener reacts in silence using gestures of the first nuance. If, for instance, the speaker uses the sixth nuance for his utterance, the listener gestures in the second nuance. These are all examples of *harmony*. However, this cannot be done intentionally. It must become flesh and blood through practice, become artistic *instinct*. You have to learn to distinguish between two closely related nuances: i) persuading and ii) convincing. The author distinguishes the two in detail, the difference being experienced inwardly and expressed in gestures in connection with the nuances of speech. I can't describe that section because it isn't completely clear to me how to translate it. However, you can feel the difference when you think about it and have selected a number of examples and found the gestures for the nuances.

Standing in *profile* gives the impression of intelligence (or foolishness depending on the profile). Turning from profile to the audience (and even tossing the head back slightly) evokes the character's *intellectual worth*. A *three-quarter turn* to the audience with the head slightly tilted or bowed gives the impression that the character is *intellectually participating* in what is being said. *Frontal* conveys the moral worth of the character. That means, if an actor on stage is having a verbal effect on his fellow actor, then, depending on how the fellow actor is standing in relation to the audience, the impression will be conveyed of how he is perceiving the words spoken – with the head or with the heart. *Will* is always expressed through *movement*. The movement should be selected consistent with the content of the will, i.e. everything that has been said about the forms of movement in general should be taken into consideration in this case. One actor, for instance, expresses his *will* to another actor using the appropriate words. The latter may wish to unite himself with the former's will or to oppose it. In the case of acceptance or acquiescence, the actor listening should make a movement from

left to right. But if the movement is from *right to left*, the audience will receive the impression that he does not accept or agree, and will create obstacles. Movements can be made either with the *arms* or with the *head* (which is the better option) or even with the entire body. (The body should in any case always assist the movement.) Just as one can have the feeling of “not being in the voice”, one can also have the feeling of “not being in the body”. Greek gymnastics master this poor control of the body. When *learning* the gesture and the word, it is necessary to unite them *consciously* and then at last true artistic *style* will become manifest in the actor’s art.

Temperament is essential. People are embarrassed to show it, but they have it. It has to be set to work. Teaching also takes temperament. A teacher should always have a cheerful face, a sense of humour and temperament. You can write a book without temperament and some people will like it and others, not. In either case the author is not visible at that moment. However, it is inconceivable and inadmissible not to have temperament when you put *your very self* on display every evening.

⁴³ In Steiner’s lecture, it is not the power radiating from the actor’s facial expressions that is meant, but his ability to have his face under his control on stage.

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Temperament belongs to art. And enhanced temperament is humour! And then things will become real. “Esoteric”.

That’s the end of Chapter 9 and my letter. I’m burning with impatience to learn whether you like this work on the theatre. My perception is that it is a wonderful, holistic piece of work, rather like a Michelangelo statue.

10,010,903 kisses. I bite your calf and squeeze your shoulders!

Yours as ever,

Mich. Chekh.

5

July – August 1926 Capri

Hello my dear, my golden one,

I miss you and long to see, hear, touch and squeeze you! I still haven't received a single letter from you. Probably there is already news from you awaiting me in Rome at *poste restante*.

I want to give you a summary of **Chapter 10** of the book on the art of drama. So I'll begin. It is necessary to penetrate more deeply into an understanding of the art of drama. Performances in ancient times in the places where theatre originated⁴⁴ were very wide-ranging. They touched on sublime images and could channel the impulses of these spiritual images right down onto the material, physical level itself. The path to understanding this and using it on stage is such that you need to immerse yourself in sensations of *taste*. The *sour* is experienced along the edges of the tongue, the *sweet* on the tip of the tongue and the *bitter* at the root of the tongue and on the palate. The word "taste" is used both for the experience of eating and the assessment of art and morality. By going experientially into the "tastes" in the various parts of the tongue, we will grasp that the physical arouses sensations on the same pathways as the moral element arouses speech. For it is with the very same organs that we use for *speech* that we also experience the tastes: sweet, bitter and sour. If the experience of moral bitterness on stage is intensified by the experience (in the performance) of the taste of bitterness *on the tongue*, this will have great significance for the pronunciation of the *words*, the *facial expressions* and even the *gestures* at that moment. The secret of the transition from *sensations* to *speech* is contained herein. When we taste the sourness of vinegar, there is stimulation of the tiniest organs of the tongue, which is more of a *passive* nature. And when an "aunt⁴⁵" has a sour facial expression, the tiniest organs of her tongue are stimulated in the same way, only more *actively*.

In the ancient places where performances were given, various kinds of non-human beings⁴⁶ were portrayed through the medium of the chorus. A particular aspect of recitation by the chorus was that a *certain something* could work through it and a special atmosphere, an "astral aura", filled the space between the stage and the audience. In this atmosphere, the audience found itself in a *different* dimension, in which it experienced fear of the Divine World (in the best sense of the word). Gradually the ability to experience anything that wasn't merely

naturalism was lost. What had lived as the moulded-pictorial-musical element in the word and as recitation filled with style, all this that had served as a means of portraying the Higher, was replaced by the figure of the human being himself. The human being began to portray the god Dionysos, whereas previously divine beings only spoke through the chorus. He put on a mask, which was intended to express the unchanging dimension of the eternal, fixed world of the gods. For the mask of an animal⁴⁷ is unchanging, whereas the human face is in perpetual motion and cannot serve as the symbol of the eternal. Only in *death* is the human face motionless. The human being sensed the presence of something behind natural phenomena and then he also learned to feel something within, which was a kind of echo of what he saw behind the natural phenomena. Then he began to experience his innermost being in this sense. From this there arose the notion of the human soul.

⁴⁴ Steiner spoke about the dramas of Aeschylus, which still contained an echo of the art of the Ancient Greek Mysteries.

⁴⁵ A sarcastic term of Steiner's for an anthroposophical lady "who is a dogmatic caricature of Anthroposophy".

⁴⁶ The Gods of the Ancient Greeks.

⁴⁷ Owing to the condensed form of Chekhov's summary, two ideas that Steiner described separately became merged into one. In Ancient Egypt the gods were depicted with the heads of animals because the expressionless features of the latter came closest to personifying the principle of the eternal, whereas the ever-changing expressions of the human face were considered unfitting for this purpose. Steiner goes on to describe how in Greek drama the actor wore a mask to portray Dionysos.

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The technique and significance of the contemporary art of acting lies in the actor being able to completely forget his everyday personality and ordinary self on stage and, by means of speech formation in the full sense of the word, being able to surround himself on stage with an atmosphere (aura) that the audience can perceive instinctively.

Chapter 11 Every physical and physiological action on stage should be based on the foundation that the actor creates by learning to feel and experience the meaning of the different *sounds*. Nothing on stage should be expressed outwardly without an underlying mood of what lives in the sounds of speech. For instance, *anger* should be learned as consisting of two parts: i) tension and strain in the muscles and ii) relaxation, weakening and falling asleep. The sound *ee*

corresponds to the first part and *eh* to the second. When preparing to portray anger, you should have someone read that section of the script whilst you at the same time intone inwardly the sounds *ee-eh*, *ee-eh...* and tense and relax your muscles. This will be the right approach to mastering the outer manifestations of the art of acting. Similarly, concern should be prepared with the sound *ö*, combined with slowly sinking gestures and eyelids. If you are made up to look pale, as the permanent trait of the character, your lips should be pressed together. The author gives a whole host of similar examples, but I'll leave them out to give you a quicker overview of the book. You need to know a number of correspondences that are encountered in life. For example: a *sigh* or a *groan* is impossible when in a state of profound grief. It becomes possible, if an effort is made to fight the grief, if there is a desire to go through it, if it is overcome even to the extent of one being able to speak a few words. The facial expression for *weeping* is learned through the sound *ah*, the facial expression for laughter (and the beauty of laughter on stage) through *o eh* (or in a weaker form through *ä ah*). I'm skipping over a lot. Similar methods of learning legitimate expressions of emotion on stage greatly *accelerate* the actor's development. Also, many other parts of the actor's organism are developed at the same time. For instance: *listening to something sad*: the face is motionless, with a slight shaking of the head; but simultaneously the diaphragm and the lower torso develop by themselves.

I've already mentioned the importance of the eurythmy gestures, which the actor should experience as an inner reverberation when he is pronouncing sounds. It should be added that the practising of eurythmy gestures gives the actor a real grasp of the essence of language and the art of drama in particular. The very position of the human being in the universe becomes clear through them. Compare animal sounds and human speech. The human being is placed nobly at the centre of the universe. In a word, the author attaches a universal importance to the eurythmy gestures. In order to grasp the significance of the human being in the universe, he suggests that one should give some thought to what humans are capable of: they can express their inner feelings in the vowels and co-experience the outer world in the consonants, and all this is complemented by gestures and facial expressions.

Chapter 12 There are two types of dramatic works: those in which the playwright starts out from an interest in the *subject* of the play, its characters etc. In these plays, the artistic and poetic style does not come to full expression. In plays of the second type, the *style*, the *aesthetics* of the work interest the playwright as such, he starts out from an artistic feeling and intent, and only then does he seek out a *subject* for the play, as a secondary element. Such works are full of what the author calls *the artistic, the stylistically accomplished*. Examples of plays of the first type: *Die Räuber* (Schiller), *Götz von Berlichingen* (Goethe), Part 1 of *Faust* (Goethe), *Don Carlos*, *Fiesko*, *Kabale und Liebe* (Schiller). Plays of the second type (all by Schiller): *Maria Stuart* (the moods are stylised), *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (the events are stylised), *Wilhelm Tell* (true psychological images, the stylisation of the characters, the psychological depiction), *Die Braut von Messina* (The stylisation here is expressed in a moulded inner landscape on stage), *Demetrius* (the encompassing stylisation of the human element within the unfolding events). By working on plays of both types, the actor grasps the secret of his own acting *stylisation*. He must prepare differently for each of the two types of play. For the first type, he should proceed as quickly as he can from gesturing, while being read to by someone else, to speaking his words himself, i.e. to combining gestures and words as fast as possible. For the second type: he should make the stage of silent gesturing while being read to as long as possible. I can't say why that is so because I don't understand the German text⁴⁸.

However the basic idea is that we distance ourselves from *naturalism* by rehearsing in this manner. In no way should we *perform* naturalistically what is *written* naturalistically. We have to

⁴⁸ Steiner said the gestures, which the actor creates while being read to, help him to form his words instinctively, subconsciously.

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extricate the audience from naturalism and this will enable them to be completely integrated with the actors. Naturalistic inner experiences just *don't reach* the audience. When creating the *scenery*, you need to give thought to creating an atmosphere suited to the characters speaking in front of it. On one hand you

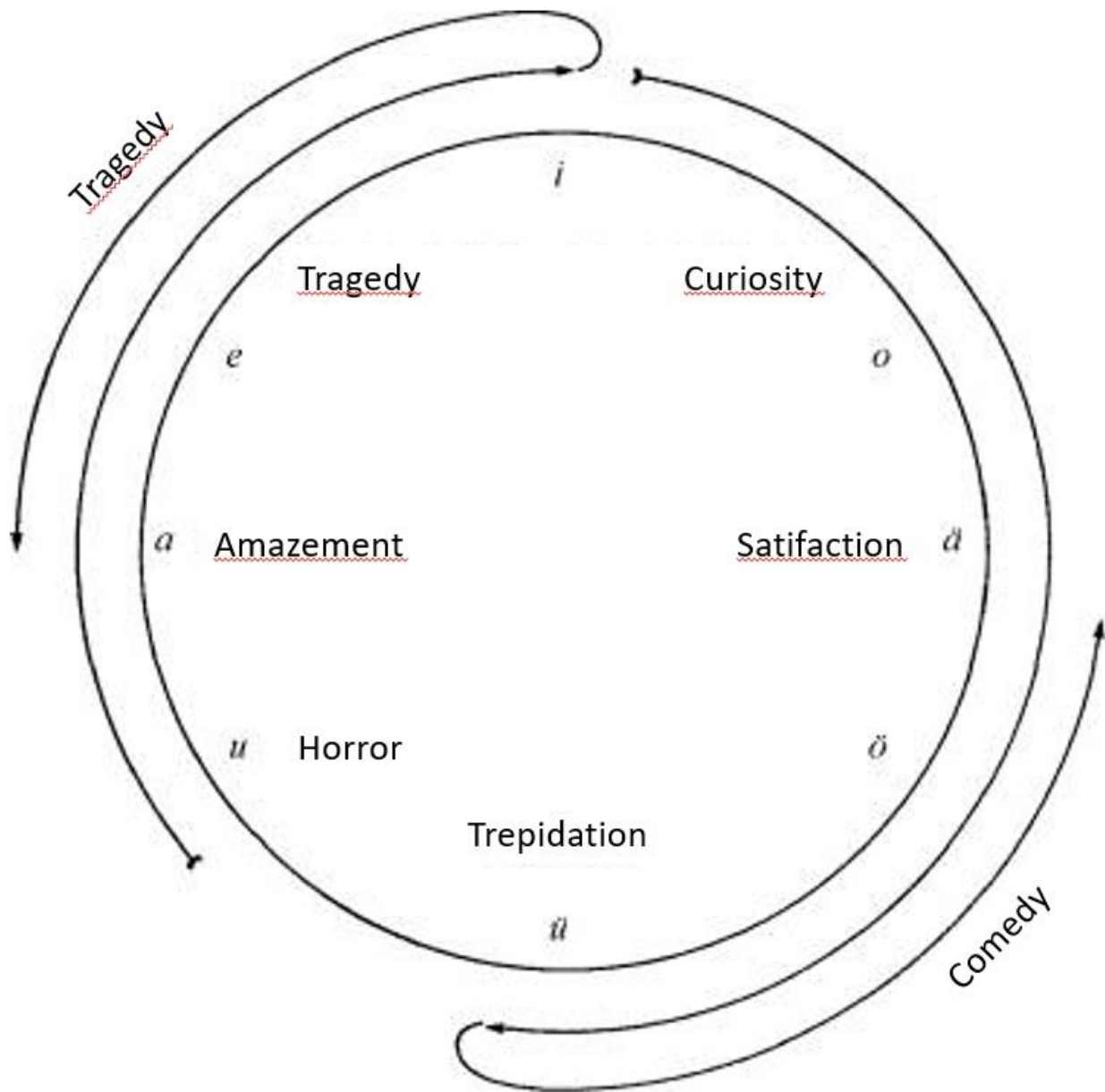
should avoid naturalism in the scenery; but on the other, you shouldn't arbitrarily overload it with lines and forms, nor should you stylise it artificially and invent new forms. *Colours* are of the essence. Stylistation should only involve *colours*. For example, if a scene is set in a forest, but the mood of the scene (or of the entire play) is red, shades of red should be added to the *colouring* when depicting the forest. Neither should costumes be sewn in some arbitrary style so that people look like clowns. A properly sewn costume should also have a *colouring* that is appropriate for the character wearing it. In addition, the costumes of the entire cast should harmonise with each other, setting off one character against another.

Chapter 13 The play as a work of literature is just a *musical score for* the actor. He must *recreate* the play within himself. The score is the zero point between the playwright and the actor and they must converge and *meet* at this very point. The score should be analysed from two aspects: i) the individual characteristics of the roles and how they complement each other harmoniously; and ii) the play *in its entirety*. Character should be analysed and assessed using the sounds and by connecting it with sounds. To do this, you must have a strong inner experience of the sounds in general. The play as a whole must also be analysed in connection with the sounds and on the basis of the sounds. Tragedy has its own laws, as does comedy. Tragedy goes from *oo* (horror, fear) to *ee* (compassion), which is the culmination of tragedy, and then back to *ah* (amazement). At the end of the play, *oo* should sound a little bit, but from the distance. Comedy: from *ee* (curiosity) to *oo* (trepidation) and in conclusion, to *ah* (satisfaction). (See diagram.)

With regard to costumes, I forgot to add that they can be modified so as to show the essence of the character, but one shouldn't make a character look ridiculous! Don't do anything whimsical or nonsensical.

Chapter 14 Aristotle defined tragedy as *catharsis*⁴⁹ (purification) that occurs when the audience experience strong emotions: horror (*oo*), compassion (*ee*) leading to the experience of *ah* (or *oh*). The audience were healed of the passions that plagued them in daily life. Catharsis occurred from watching a tragedy repeatedly. In his definition of tragedy, Aristotle mentions its connection to the ancient places

⁴⁹ Steiner differentiated between what Aristotle defined as the emotional stages of tragedy and how this inner process would have been expressed in vowels in the ancient mysteries of mankind. Chekhov combines the two aspects into one.



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where performances were held and where people left the everyday world of feeling behind them and were lifted into a higher world. However for all that, the author suggests we shouldn't confuse tragedy with the ancient places where it was performed. Aristotle defines *comedy*⁵⁰ as a plot that is enclosed in itself, the aim of which is to evoke in the audience feelings of curiosity (*ee*) and of faintheartedness and trepidation (*ü*), through which *human interest in life is*

enhanced. But everything the author presents as the results of his research, all this should be understood through the life of the sounds, through the meaning of the sounds themselves.

He states that the art of the stage must become the true experience of the human soul, as embodied in language and gesture. With regard to the scenery: it shouldn't be stylised using modifications of forms and lines. The stylisation of the scenery is in the *lighting* and *colour* effects. The scenery isn't a *landscape*, a *picture*. It doesn't stand alone. It is *not complete* in itself, as a painting can be *complete* and *finished*. The scenery is only *complete* when it is *stage lit* and is viewed *together with* what is happening on stage as performance. The scenery is an addition to the performing actor; and *lighting* and colour are the means of stylising it. The whole human soul lives in colours. That's why the colours of the scenery and the costumes are so important. An outer colour can be experienced as an inner one. For instance, a loud red – as joy, green – as thoughtfulness, yellowish green (speckled) – as the soul devoured by egoism etc.. Once the curtain goes up, the audience should *see* the colours that radiate from the soul of the actors;⁵¹ also they should *hear* the colour tones resounding from within the actors. The harmonious consonance of the colours of the costumes, the scenery and the lighting that changes in the course of the action –all these create the right effect on the audience. The overall mood of the play is expressed in the colours of the scenery (or scenarios). The changing moods reflected by the actors are expressed in the coloured lighting changes. The character of the various actors is mirrored in the colour range of their costumes (right down to such details as the colour of a tie, not to mention costumes of former times). At this point, the author speaks of the importance of observing the rainbow in order to grasp the life of the colours and to develop a deep understanding of colours on stage.

Now I'll proceed to tell you about some practical exercises. They need *to be thought through in depth and practised*.

1) The plosive sounds (*d, t, g, k, b, p, m, n*) correspond to the firm element of the earth⁵². When spoken, they descend towards the earth and work within it. Each of these sounds forms the air in a particular manner.

The spirants (*h, ch* (as in the Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f, v*) correspond to fire, the element of warmth. When pronouncing one of these, we should feel that warmth, fire is being kindled; and we sense how this fire works back on us as a strengthening of our whole being. The quivering sound (*r*) corresponds to the element of air and the liquid sound (*l*) to that of water. We can practise consciously transforming one element into another. For instance: we consolidate the watery element in *lobe* and make the firm element liquid in *bowl*. The flowing element is turned into air in *lyre*. The airy becomes fiery in *rush*. And so on. There are all kinds of combinations. But that isn't all, and this is where the second exercise begins (and I find it fascinating). A particular sort of combination of these sounds gives rise to a particular faculty in the actor, namely: the combination of a plosive with the liquid sound. The author has a special term for this: *Stoss-Wellen* (literally "push-waves"). For example: *kyle, deal, lead, tale, late, bowl, lobe* and endless more. They endow the actor with *faculties* which the author describes as follows: the ability to merge words and embed them into sentences, and so endow them with an amazing, harmonious flowing quality. Speech acquires the faculty of being so expressive that gradually the certainty arises: "What I am speaking *is being perceived* by the audience". Speech acquires an inner moulded *force*: the ability to switch, to modulate from one wonderful word creation to another. An entire sentence is one single streaming. What an amazing, startling sensation it is in the mouth when speech flows. Now for the combination of other sounds: air and fire, i.e. *r* and all the spirants and fricatives (*h, f, s* etc.). For instance: *rife, rice, rush, rave* and any other combination of *r* with a spirant. The author describes the result of this exercise as follows: what the actor speaks, acquires the potential *to be alive everywhere* in the auditorium: from the stalls to the upper circle. In a nutshell, the word of the actor *is alive everywhere*. Speech flows and floats through the entire auditorium. The quivering of the air

⁵⁰ Steiner actually stated that the works of Aristotle have come down to us in an incomplete form and that his definition of comedy has been lost. However, he gave an approximation of how Aristotle would have defined it. This is what Chekhov was actually referring to when he wrote "Aristotle's defines comedy as ...".

⁵¹ See also the chapter: *Thought forms and the human aura* in Steiner's book *Theosophy*.

⁵² Chekhov was referring to the ancient doctrine of the four elements, as can also be found in Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.

transforms into movement through the transition to the spirant. One opens oneself up to the outer world. Further, to acquire the ability of having a hypnotic effect on the audience, you need to pronounce *v ei w*⁵³. Next! When we pronounce the syllables *hum, ham, him, hom, hem, hm* (the order is

unimportant), we obtain as a result (or in other words: we set ourselves the goal of obtaining) practical knowledge of what it means to form the air on a grandiose scale. We receive a general idea of what the *dynamic of speech* is. By pronouncing the sound *m* at the end of the aforesaid syllables, we learn what the “push”, which is present in all the plosive sounds, actually is. Practising it, we become aware of an important feeling of an *inner, independent* whooshing, zooming sound. We become conscious of a second, independent human being within us, the being that speaks and must become separate from us, so that we can become true artists of the word by directing this being from without. We are independent of it. It is the one who speaks. It is our speech instrument. It is our medium. Seek the idea of speech formation in it. A certain something becomes free and lives in pure vibrations. Besides that, I have already mentioned to you the significance of the “astral takes hold of the ether” exercise.

Now for the next exercise: The actor’s speech must become imbued with feeling; an inner tone of feeling must sound in his speech. To achieve this, you have to practise directing outer sensations and feelings inwards so that they become internalised and then express them in some particular word form that seems fitting for you personally. Examples from the book are: *outer* warmth (in a room, let’s say) can be experienced inwardly and expressed in the words *it whooshes around me*. Or another feeling: cold can be turned inwards and be expressed as *it prickles me*. But this *quality* has to be inside you, in every fibre of your being, in every limb. The author says that if you practise *a good number* of such examples for yourself, it will have the required effect. With regard to this exercise and all the others, it should be remembered that, when you practise one thing, you are unnoticeably learning other things at the same time. Besides, you shouldn’t think, for instance, that when the author states that a certain result is achieved by practising the sounds *b* and *l*, that the said result only applies to these sounds. Oh

no. You must practise these sounds specifically, but the result will extend as a *faculty* to all kinds of speech, regardless of the sounds present in it. Altogether, it is important to feel *language and speech as a totality*. And in general, as the highest goal, you need to strive to make speech a matter of ease, something flowing and not requiring any special effort of the actor when he speaks. If you were woken up during the night, you should be capable, as it were, of reciting some soliloquy without difficulty; the soliloquy should just pour out of you by itself; and you, the actor, as a human being-artist, should become detached while this is happening, quite free and even filled with admiration for his artistic speech from without! This is exactly the aim of true, artistic speech formation. But to achieve it, you have to go through the whole training with the sounds and the other things that the author describes in the book and then master everything to the point of it becoming *instinctive*.

Chapter 15 You have to remember that art originated from ancient spiritual sources⁵⁴ and what it portrays must be connected with the spirit through the idea. For this reason the artist should be his own instrument. He should be capable of playing his physical organism like an instrument. In addition, the actor should develop himself as a human being who is profoundly interested in life, has a feeling for life and is not floating in the clouds. And we shall be on the right path when we separate out that special “speaking human being” within ourselves. And we shall achieve something else of great importance – we shall not get swallowed up and engrossed in the *content and the conceptual aspect* of speech. Being free, we shall, in an inspired state, observe and have at our command our very own work of art from the outside! And the time will come when the actor will understand that his life on stage is a special part of his life, which stands apart from his ordinary life and has nothing to do with it; and he will not bring naturalism, vulgarity and the commonplace onto the stage, nor will he take with him from the stage an abstract dissipation that deprives him of his true humanity. He will live a full life until the footlights go on and then he will in an inspired sense take part, observe and command himself as a work of his very own creating. But you mustn’t become *obsessed* by your role, you mustn’t become a *medium*. That would be the wrong thing. You have to stand next to your role, but experience joy and sorrow unconstrained while you contemplate your work. (I don’t know whether you’re getting the point of what

⁵³ In the passage that Chekhov was referring to, Steiner comments on the imaginary German word *veiw* (pronunciation as “five” in English), the sounds of which have a hypnotic effect when spoken.

⁵⁴ The original 15th lecture opens with the words: “All artistic activity also has its esoteric aspect to the extent that a certain foundation must exist for it to be fashioned out of the spiritual world.”

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I’m trying to convey in this jumbled fashion.) (Esotericism) And here again the author speaks about observing the rainbow as being of the greatest importance to the actor. I mentioned that earlier.

Now another thing is necessary: you need to develop a subtle, intimate feeling with regard to your dreams and the images they contain. You have to immerse yourself with complete understanding in remembering your dreams. You must become acquainted with the difference between *dreaming* and *ordinary life*. The difference is clear and familiar to everyone, but the actor must grasp it to a particularly high degree. He must become familiar with two poles: i) everyday stimulation of life *through the outer world*⁵⁵ and ii) profound, vigorous, *inner* immersion in memories of his dream life. When he practises these two contrasting lives (outer reality and dreams), he will grasp the “esoteric” art of drama. The actor should experience his role as being intimately internalised, just as a dream can live within him, inwardly, intimately. So, on the one hand, the role is fully rehearsed from the point of view of speech formation; it is “uttered” in beautiful verbal forms with complete ease and independence from within by “the other person”. On the other hand, the role is alive in me, like a dream and it manifests in me as separate passages, agile and lively, and these passages merge and complement each other – they are alive; and, finally, I contemplate them and the point is reached when the fragments disappear, as it were, and I receive my entire role as a kind of *single whole*, as a kind of *dream of my entire role*! Is this conjuring trick clear to you? This is precisely it: on the one hand you have the complete technical perfection of speech and artistic word formation that is full of style, and on the other, your role is like a wonderful *dream*. And you are the artist, the free creator and observer of your own artistic work. (The author considers it necessary to caution the actor who attains this state against getting carried away by it!) And when this *sense* for the whole as a picture is reached, the artist will have the possibility of giving *his very best* when on stage. And then,

(when he has this sense of the whole), the appropriate and best moment has arrived for arranging and fitting up the stage itself.

The *director* sees the play and senses it as a *complete picture*, a oneness, and then he knows how to construct and fit out everything needed for the set. He contemplates now the middle, now the end, now the beginning or any detail of the play and shapes them on the stage; but his attention is constantly directed to the *whole* and this is his guide. And all this is achieved through the dream exercises. There must be nothing *thought up* here. Everything should be derived from feeling, from dreamlike imagination. Modern theatre is lacking in this *wholeness*. Seeing the *whole* and making this *whole* manifest is the *sine qua non* of contemporary theatre. The author talks a lot about open-air theatre at various points in the book, but since the time is not yet ripe for this kind of theatre, he doesn't consider it to be his job to make practical remarks on this subject. But the important thing is that all his directions apply to theatre indoors with stage sets, artificial lighting, evening performances etc. He also says that, whereas the actors used to shout instead of speaking in Shakespeare's times or in outdoor performances, nowadays with indoor theatre, the acting needs to be toned down to a certain extent, i.e. not overdone. Rather, it should stop short of the inner intensity needed for open-air performances. In a word, there needs to be that dreamlike feeling, that breath of the dreamlike that we discussed above. And if the actor reaches the stage in his inner development where he can remain objective with regard to his artistic creation on stage, as was outlined above, he will notice the following. On his way home after the performance, for instance, he will suddenly begin to see a whole succession of pictures of things he has observed in the auditorium unbeknown to himself during the performance. He will see a whole succession of individuals from the mass of the audience. He will see them in detail, see what they were doing, how someone reacted, and so on and so forth. This will happen because while on stage, his consciousness was taken up with the essence of the play, but his subconscious self was moving about freely among the various impressions. The more intensely his consciousness was occupied, the better his subconscious was working at the same time. Images of this kind are a sign that the actor is grounded properly and objectively in reality. If he is able to set the bounds between life on stage and off stage and relate to both with interest, his subconscious will serve him well.

Chapter 16 *Fate* was the main impulse in ancient drama. Human individuality was not taken into consideration. The face was covered by a mask and the voice was blended with the sounds of musical instruments, in short: fate worked from above. However, with the beginning and ongoing development of the epoch of the consciousness soul, a new element emerges: that of love. Love was also connected with fate and social matters in former times (*Antigone* for example), but with the inception of the epoch of the

⁵⁵ The original German is: *Aufgeriebensein vom äußern Leben* – the inner state of exhaustion (“wear and tear”) caused by outer life.

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consciousness soul⁵⁶, love between the sexes emerges as love between individuals. Humour emerges in exactly the same manner, replacing satire (Aristophanes). Unconstrained humour, a humour not bound by specific conditions of life or community, as was the case with satire, but liberating humour. Humour emerged just at the point when the human being (in drama) began to free himself from the influence of *fate* and began to *create his own destiny*. Parallel to all this, *character* appears, *the character of the human being*. And *character masks* begin to take the place of the ancient masks. Human individuality in its vast wholeness was not yet seen, but there was an interest in the *characteristics* of one *type* or another (Pantalone, Trufaldino, Brighella, the lawyer from Bologna⁵⁷ etc.). You find something similar to this in Shakespeare as well. All of these are, of course, *popular*, stock characters. The author recommends using this type of play for training purposes to learn how the type grows out of a geographical environment and this will enable the actor to portray what is individual. The combination of *destiny* with *character* gives rise to a third element: the *plot*. This is called character drama as opposed to fate drama. It is important to distinguish between two opposites: traditional Christmas plays, in which destiny is working from *another, higher level* and the already mentioned character dramas.

Comedy has its origin in the types of human character, in love and humour. How should *tragedy* and *comedy* be performed? Tragedy should *start in a slow tempo*, with *pauses*: pauses in the speech and pauses between the scenes. This doesn't

mean a slow tempo inwardly, but a slow tempo *due to the pauses*. This is necessary to give the audience time to connect inwardly with what is happening. The *middle* is the climax of the drama: the pauses disappear, but the tempo of speech and movements slows down. The *end* is performed in an accelerated tempo. (Otherwise the audience is left feeling sour, which is inadmissible when the *denouement* of the tragedy is reached.) Speed in speech and gestures. (Naturally, in a balanced manner.)

Comedy: Character already appears in it. The play opens with the emphasizing of the various types of *character*. (If characters appear such as Pantalone etc., they *merrily* tell us about themselves, but we, as modern actors, perform not so much our *character* in the former sense of a type, but as the one or other *individual*. At the *beginning* of the comedy, we should portray the character, the type, the individual we are acting *through speech and gesture*. As Sasha⁵⁸ would say, this is “our visiting-card”.) Compare this with the opening of a tragedy: there we are dealing with the *how*, in comedy however with the *what*. The *middle*: interest is aroused in what will come of all the clashes?! *Behaviour* should be presented; action, plot, so to say. (The author says: portray behaviour *by characterizing the words*, but I’m not at all sure what that means; in any case, present the *plot* in the middle of the play.) The *ending*: bring in *destiny*. Destiny intrudes and all ends in general wellbeing. To be able to do all this properly, you need to have a good grasp of what *character*, *plot* and *destiny* are.

To get a good grasp of what the two poles *tragedy* and *comedy* are, the author gives exercises, “meditative” verses. They have to be repeated in every free moment. (It would be good to practise them in accordance with all the principles of art, so that they speak in us, as I described earlier; and we ourselves are free to live with our thoughts, feeling and will in the verses, when speaking them. The author says: repeat these verses whenever you have a free minute.) meditative verse with inner warmth:

*Ach, Fatum Du hast stark mich umfasst nimm weg den Fall
in den Abgrund.*

⁵⁶ This period of historical development began in the 15th century and will last for approximately two thousand years. See Steiner *Occult Science*.

⁵⁷ Characters from the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, in which masks were also used.

⁵⁸⁵⁸ Presumably Alexander Cheban (1886-1954), actor and director and mutual friend.

Immerse yourself in the *tragic*

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Ah, star-rule you are arduous in me; spare me

the plunge

into the gloom.

Ach (this is only the lead-in). In the word *Fatum* it is important to concentrate inwardly on the sounds *ah* and *oo*. The *ee* sound appears in the word “mich” in order to place you in the content of the verse; and then the *tragic* sounds *ah*, *oo* and *ee* reappear in the second half of the verse. Following this, we have the verse for *comedy*. When you speak it, you should not keep the humour inside yourself, but endeavour to put the experience of the content into the sounds. As you see, the sounds are combined in a very funny way. You have to *laugh using the words, to laugh your way into the sounds*.

Izt' fühl ich

wie in mir linklock-hü

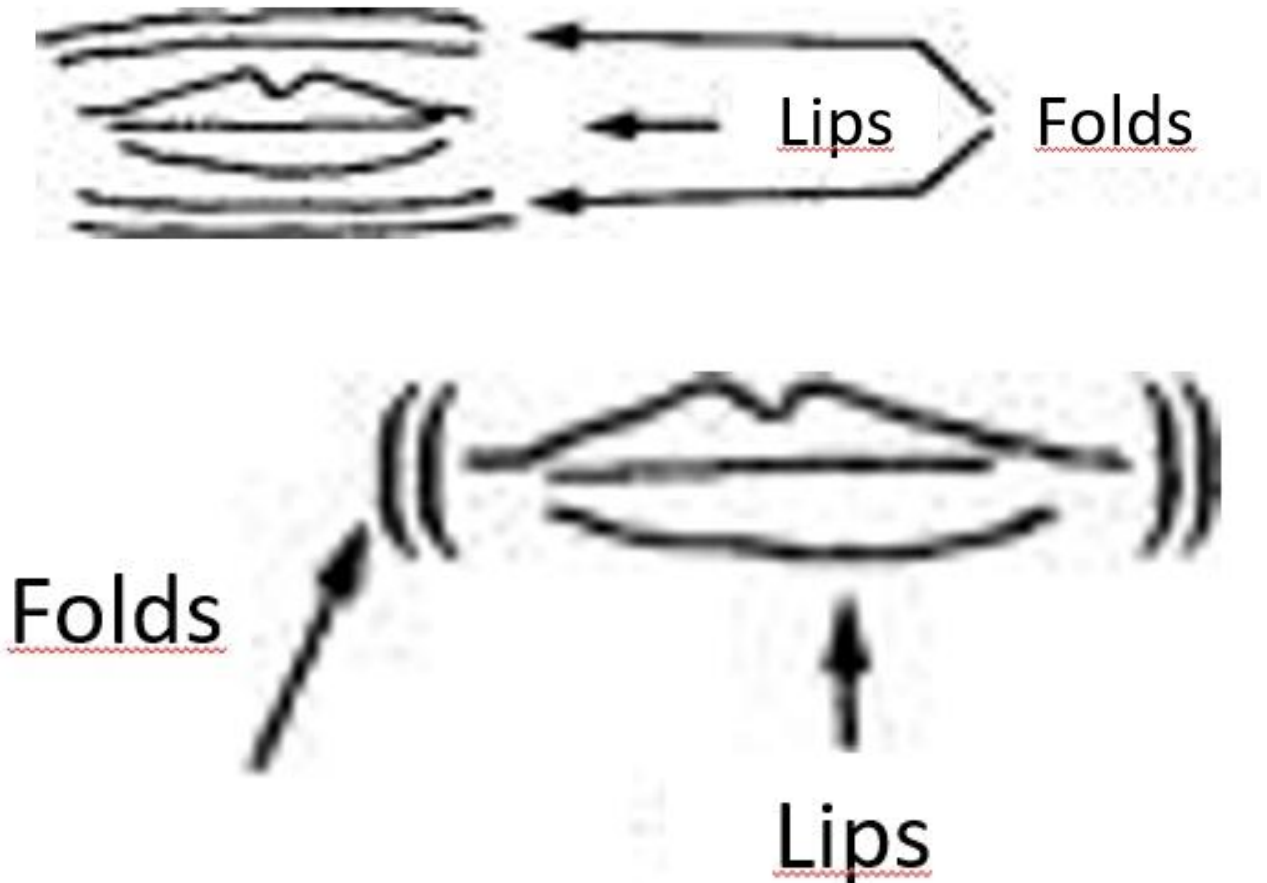
und link-lock-hi völlig mir witzig

bläst.

*Each new fit fills me with link lock who and link lack he with wit dispersing*⁵⁹

It's not a question of giggling, because then it won't be at all funny, but to experience inward, true laughter entering the sounds or drawing it out of the sounds or expressing it in the sounds. It takes time to understand this. “Linklock-hü” is pronounced with the lips protruding, so that folds form above and below them like this:

(Moreover, the upper lip seems to be protruding a little more than the lower lip, but I don't know that for certain.) "Locklack-hi" is pronounced with the lips stretched sideways and with folds on both sides like this:



⁵⁹ English versions of these two exercises by Sophia Walsh.

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Got it? I've drawn the folds, but haven't attempted to draw the positions of the lips. Go by the *folds* and find the rest on that basis. This exercise leads into the essence of humour.

Chapter 17 I've already mentioned all the essential parts. There is perhaps only one more thing: the musical element leads us back to the divine beings of the past and the moulding, pictorial element leads us towards the divine beings of the future⁶⁰.

Chapter 18 speaks about the necessity for the actor to have a serious, spiritual attitude towards his work. Through what he does and what he is, the actor should be a leader in his culture, but without wanting to destroy it. It is in this most earnest mood that we should approach the knowledge that the world is revealed in the human form. Let us approach the way that the world reveals itself through speech formation and word formation from a new angle. The human *lips* are the organ, through which the essence of the human being is revealed because he manifests himself through speech. Three sounds are pronounced using both lips: *m, b, p*. If we pronounce sounds other than these three using both lips, we sin against speech formation and that has an adverse effect on our entire organism. If we pronounce these three sounds without being constantly and instinctively conscious that *both lips must be used for these sounds*, we likewise harm our organism and speech formation. The sounds *f, u and v* are pronounced using the lower lip and the upper row of teeth. The entire karma⁶¹ of the human being is contained in the muscles of the lower lip. It is where all the currents that live in the limbs of the human body (with the exception of the head) flow and intermingle; thus, when the lower lip moves, the *whole person* is revealed (apart from the head). The upper lip and the upper row of teeth in particular, reveal what is contained in the organization of the head⁶². What the human head constitutes as the totality of the secrets of the universe seeks, as it were, to be consolidated in the upper row of the teeth. Hence the philosophy of the sounds *m, b and p* and the sounds *f and v* is comprehensible: it is what is revealed when we combine the lips or the lips and the teeth and so on. (It should be noted that in the case of the *v*, the lower lip vibrates like a wave, which isn't the case with the *f*, for example.) Both rows of teeth are needed for the sounds *s, z and ts*. This is where both parts of the human being come into balance: the human head and the rest of the person, i.e. the part containing the limbs. The world is seised in that moment by the human being and he sends his being into the world. If we go further into the depths, we come to the tongue, which is where the soul, the feeling element is revealed. Revelation through the tongue and the upper teeth gives us the sounds: *l, n, d and t*. Whereas what the human being has become thanks to the world is expressed through the lower lip and upper teeth, what he owes to the fact that he has a soul is revealed through the tongue and the upper teeth. Here is revealed what interacts between his soul and his head, his tongue and his upper teeth. It is very important

to be aware (for those who lisp and those who are training) that the tongue is always *behind the teeth, at the back of the teeth*. For the tongue *never ever* dares to appear in speech *in front of* the teeth. If this happens (as with lisping, for instance), the result is the same as if the soul wanted to go out into nature without the physical body. Let us go even deeper. We need to develop awareness of what the *root of the tongue* does during speech. The sounds that come into question here are: *g, k, r, y (as in York) and q*. (You have to be able to pronounce both the rolled *r* and guttural *r*, as in French.) The lips and the sounds themselves are our teachers; you only have to learn their correct positioning. We must experience that the mouth and the larynx are the creators of the sounds in us. By the way, the author mentions that stuttering is connected with the incorrect use of the root of the tongue and incorrect breathing and that it can be helped with the corresponding exercises. I say that in parenthesis.

To continue: we must nurture a religious, earnest attitude within ourselves towards the sounds, for the entire world from its origin onwards is contained in them. (In the Beginning was the Word.) The author attaches colossal importance to the mood of the actors and the director with regard to the stage and the auditorium. He says: the stage and the wings are one world and the auditorium another. Both worlds are miles apart. Backstage there is a specific life and reality; you might say, trivial and commonplace

⁶⁰ Steiner added that the art of theatre lies between these two principles and is directed to the spirits of the present.

⁶¹ The anthroposophical understanding of karma (destiny) is based on the forces of the individual 'I' and the idea of personal development and is, as such, radically different to Eastern views on the subject. See Steiner *Theosophy and Occult Science*.

⁶² Chekhov was already well acquainted with the anthroposophical conception of the threefold organization of the human being, according to which the body has three functional systems: 1) the sense and nerve system, 2) the rhythmical system comprising breathing and circulation and 3) the metabolic and limb system. Anatomically they are located in the head, chest and lower half of the body. They are also related to the three soul forces: thinking, feeling and will. Steiner started by characterizing the polarity between the head and the limbs and then added the middle system as the emotional, soul element.

reality: the shifting of sets and machines, various devices producing sound and other effects and so on. That is backstage reality. And this trivial reality has to be

transformed *into a beautiful illusion* for the auditorium. Juxtaposing these two worlds, the author says that the actors and the director should change their attitude to the world backstage; they should desist from *commonplace* remarks about the technical devices to be found there and develop a reverential attitude towards them, because these very backstage technical devices are what becomes an illusion of beauty for the auditorium. In this way care should be taken to unite the auditorium and the stage. When you operate some device backstage, you should not experience and feel: “I’m cranking some machine,” but rather that it is a creative means serving art. This must be *worked at* in theatre, it cannot be achieved with sentimental talk. We shouldn’t forget for a minute that in the auditorium the illusion must be created out of the mood that lives in the hearts of the actors and the director. And even if the auditorium at present is not up to the mark, we shall only ultimately succeed in raising the level of the audience by means of the method just outlined.

(Final) Chapter 19 The sounds of speech are connected with the whole human organism. The sounds formed in the region of the palate (and to a lesser extent in the region of the larynx) penetrate the *entire* person down to the soles of the feet and the tips of the toes. The sounds formed with the aid of the tongue are connected with the head, they include the upper lip (but exclude the lower lip) and from here they extend to the spinal column. The sounds pronounced with the lips and teeth are connected with the chest and the front parts of the body in general. The whole human being is involved in language, speech, in these three directions. Speech creates the whole person in these three directions. From this it follows, for instance, that we learn to walk on stage thanks to the palatal sounds, because they penetrate right down to the feet. The author says, however, that there is no need to give further rules. One should elaborate this whole subject for oneself. In general, he says he does not want to be understood as advocating that we just devote ourselves to a study of the sounds in a dry, pedantic sense. (The sounds are a world to themselves and naturally we should study them.) The main thing is that we should gain a general grasp of everything he proposes and that we work towards the goal of attaining beautiful, true, flowing speech in general. When we train, let’s say, the guttural sounds we are also doing something for the labial sounds and so on. Everything is interconnected, everything forms an organic whole. It isn’t pedantry, although it is an *exact* training. The correct

exercises will lead to your learning everything from speech itself. By immersing himself in the life of the sounds, the actor moves away from coarse, conceptual meaning. His work should be *sacrificial*.

An umlaut signifies that something has been multiplied, for example: *Bruder – Brüder* (brother – brothers), *Wagen – Wägen* (wagon – wagons). Language is the *fullness of human feelings*. Or the universal, all-feeling Human Being. The sounds and tones express *everything*. Speech is the gathering of the all-sensing Divine Beings.

Next: the actor should not only be able to speak by developing his speech organism in the proper manner, he should be able to *hear properly spoken speech inwardly*; and hear his soliloquies, dialogues, passages of text and scenes “*with a sense of hearing for the inaudible*”. The ability to speak properly, that is the entire wisdom of speech formation must be so cultivated and brought to such perfection that speech becomes separate from the person (as I wrote earlier). For, when it is thus separated, the actor will be given the ability to *hear* his speech inwardly, *before it is uttered*, and then speak out of that which has been heard inwardly by his soul! This is the lofty mode in which the author wrote certain scenes of his dramas⁶³. *To speak completely out of hearing*. Then the need will arise to live in the words and feel the syllables and sounds. Then the human being will be uplifted in the sense of the author’s book, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds...* You need to have someone around you whom you ...*listen to*. Much will be understood from such listening for the role itself with regard to character and for everything else (if the author who wrote the literary work is himself highly gifted). The author calls this inner listening a special kind of actors’ intuition. The audience will perceive the role, as “heard” by the actor, with understanding; and you may ask such an actor why he performs his role *like this* and not *like that*. He will be entitled to reply: “I hear this stage character like this”; and he will be right, because this is where the freedom of the actor’s individuality lies. He is free in this situation; he, as a free creative individual, can *hear* his whole character. Then the author quotes the soliloquy “To be or not to be” and states: “So you see, many underlying causes need to be at work in the art of drama”. However, everything he proposes is only meant to serve as indications, hints and seeds to be elaborated and developed in the direction shown.

There is an extraordinary earnestness in the author's concluding words about the actor and the great significance of theatre. When the human being, *in his entirety*, devotes himself to serving the Spirit through the Word and the Gesture: then this is also a Path of inner development.

There, my dear Mitzzzzupochka, that's it. Of course it's not everything, only hintings at hints. But I just so much wanted to give you a complete picture of the 19 chapters of the book on drama. Let me know when you receive this letter. This is the address: Pension Weber, Piccola Marina, Capri (Napoli), Italy. Apropos round movements⁶⁴, I don't think they are meant to be horizontal, but like this:

In short, I did it as in the drawing, but that may not be the way for you! From the entire description, you'll have probably grasped what speech formation is by now. But if anything is unclear, just ask me again. As for the Russian language, I think much will be self-explanatory if you do the exercises in German and then do what is possible in Russian as well. But, how I kiss you! If only you knew, you blackguard, how I love you and kiss you and bite you and tear out what I've bitten and rub what I've torn out and crumple what I've rubbed and weave what I've crumpled and wear out what I've woven and drench what I've worn out and I put what I drenched back together and again I tear and hammer and put it back together and, just imagine, so it goes on endlessly.

Completely yours, Misha.

While reading what I'd written to you, I was so enraptured that I charged through the room and banged my forehead against a wall lamp, which brought me back to my senses, as I now report. I'm very concerned that I haven't written anything to Nina; but all the time allotted to writing has been taken up with the letters to you and I beg you to tell Molly that I think of her and be sure to tell her why I've had no time to write to her. My dear, I still haven't written about my impressions of Rome, Naples, Vesuvius etc. but now it's clear that I'll bowl you over with Istanbul! I'll only say that the holiness of the Italians has reached such heights that they've called one of the banks in Rome "The Bank of the Holy Spirit". They

serve “filet à la San Pietro”. The best wine is called “The Tears of Christ”. In short, it’s either rollicking laughter or shamefulness. There are the statues of the popes in St. Peter’s (each pope commissioned his own statue) and one pope even whammed a portrait of his mistress onto the wall of the basilica. This is all the ridiculous side, but there is an overabundance of serious and ineffaceably profound impressions. To do justice to them all would require at least six volumes with foreword and afterword plus commentaries. I’m hammering away. I suck you up into myself, and there you’ll stay!

Apropos the left arm during the discus throw: there are no instructions. You have to find the answer instinctively. The author says several times that the gymnastics should be modified somewhat from the Greek form, but since we don’t know what that was, it’s hard to alter anything. Simply let your instinct guide you.



⁶⁴ See the description of the third nuance of speech in Chapter 1.

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6

August 24th 1926 Capri

My dear Eminence!

How happy I was to receive your letter. Of course, your other letters reached me too, but they're not enough and for that reason I wail: "He doesn't write, he doesn't write"! I'll answer your questions. 1) I think the book about art⁶⁵ we're planning is something *very important*, but with lots of additions, of course. 2) I'm not hopeful about "Don Quixote⁶⁶" and I'm all a-tremble about your work this summer on the mime based on motifs from Afanasiev's fairy-tales⁶⁷. 3) There's no mention of how the "I" modifies the astral body; and how exactly the sounds come about isn't mentioned either. You have to meditate and ponder it. 4) It is precisely the speech exercises that will form the speech organism. That is correct. In essence nationality is not important. True, we are deprived of such knowledge about *ы* and *ë*, *ь* and *ѣ*⁶⁸. But that's a matter for the future, and quite apart from the hard sign there is much work to be done. 5) *Schmor*⁶⁹ and not *schmor*. Now I'll add something as a correction, or rather a supplement. When I was dealing with the first nuance of speech, I said that the gesture for this nuance was a pointing or indicating one. However, having studied it practically and theoretically, I've understood what the author meant with the word *deutend*: *signifying, designating, expressing something*; in short, *expressive, graphic*. (As well as *pointing*, of course.) That is: the gesture can be most varied, provided that it clearly expresses the feeling of *effectiveness*. You have to experience clearly: *your soul is active, effective to the utmost in this gesture!* To understand what it is that I want to add an afterthought to the 1st nuance: try to speak the following silently and only using gestures: "All of you stand up, I pick up this stone, raise it above my head and hold it very menacingly and fling it into the distance. You rend your garments and rush after the stone!" Excuse the literary composition, but after doing the gestures of these words you, *Madame*, will get what I mean. The main thing is, the gesture should *express* something and be *effective* at the same time. When I do the voice exercises (A, B, C etc.)⁷⁰, I'm amazed and delighted at the result, which lasts for the whole day sometimes: I don't recognise my own voice. Its dusty quality, much praised by the newspapers, disappears and... (secretly) ... I dream of working on a new version of ... forgive me... *Romeo* in a completely new way, using speech formation. Oh, oh, oh! – don't tell anyone. Hold your tongue and fall forever silent. My impertinence is only thinkable in secret! I think my ardour will dissipate as soon as I have performed the first night

and I get up the next morning with a voice sounding as if it's coming out of my a..e. Then my hopes and dreams will be shattered because I experienced new vocal sensations when practising, as well as new reveries connected with them! I'm horrified at the thought of performing anything at all from my previous repertoire and want to work on something new, in a novel, pure, creative way (Romeo! Sorry!). I'm absolutely shocked at the catastrophe that befell Andryushan⁷¹. I wish him a speedy recovery. You are completely immersed in theatre work by now?! My enchanting one, drop me a few lines about your impressions of the theatre. Write to Seestrasse 22, in Berlin. We'll be heading back to Moscow soon. I can't wait to see you! Off to the steam baths! On the very first day, off to the baths and the pool. Get your sackcloth out (I mean a clean nightshirt). Well, I've sent you five letters setting out the ideas on theatre. Let me know immediately upon receipt of all five of them. I'll be really upset if even one of the five letters gets lost, for they are a *synopsis*, albeit a poor one. There won't be time to summarise them again and what is more, from the German. Vladimir⁷² made copies of the five letters for himself, but he left some things out; so there would be no complete summary. I kiss you all over.

Truly yours, Misha

⁶⁵ According to M. Ivanova, Chekhov was referring to the plan to write a book on the technique of acting.

⁶⁶ A play based on Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was included in the repertoire of the Second Moscow Art Theatre in December 1925. ⁶⁷ The mime, *The Wondrously Beautiful One*, was staged in Paris in November 1931.

⁶⁸ Letter in the Cyrillic alphabet, the last of which is the so-called "hard sign" mentioned in the next sentence.

⁶⁹ See Letter 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Andrei Belyi was hit by a tramcar in Moscow at the end of August

⁷² Vladimir Tatarinov, husband of Maria Scriabina, daughter of the composer Alexander Scriabin. Vladimir was a close friend of Chekhov's, an actor and director. He and his wife were members of the Russian Anthroposophical Society in Moscow, in which Andrei Belyi also played an important role.

There are five letters about art, besides this one. This is the sixth letter.

My dear Tilsit, pass the enclosed letter on to Andryushan.

Give my regards to Nikolasha. Is he working? To Novikov and Zhenya. Are they in the theatre? To Semyonich and Shelaput.

My compliments to your mama and papa. To your little sisters too. The various

colours of my handwriting are due to the pencils becoming blunt⁷³.

Bazba sends keessez.

7

August 28th 1926 Capri

Greetings my incomparable, inimitably unique work of Nature!

I mi-mi-miss you, my oh my oh my. If you were married, I would hate your wife⁷⁴. You are mine!

I'm going to write down my thoughts about the school. I want you to give this subject some thought and then draw up some relevant ideas. The school will be divided into two classes, sections or groups, if you will. The junior group will have four teachers: Sofya⁷⁵, Volodya⁷⁶, Sasha⁷⁷ and you. I don't know whether you'll teach together or take turns. I don't know either if you'll each have your own group, or if you'll take the whole group in turn. I'm inclined to think: the whole group in turn. I will take the senior, smaller group. Both groups will most likely have lessons simultaneously. These are external considerations. The internal ones are: what will you four teach in the second year? As a basis: selected exercises from the previous year and then new ones to be decided jointly by us. How are the new elements to be taught? Naturally, not in the form that we ourselves study them. We must interpret the new elements and adapt them to the students' level of comprehension, taking into account their awareness and previous experience gained from us. For example: what is clear to us from the mere mention of the concept "speech organism", will have to be explained to them using imagery, poking various parts of their anatomy, drawing analogies, depicting feelings, captivating them with graphic expressions, demonstrating the right way together with the wrong way, providing examples: Chaliapin and anyone from the Korsh Theatre⁷⁸; seizing on the moments that are spot-on and pointing out delicately their mistakes. In a nutshell, a long, full, many-sided process of explaining, demonstrating and practising the speech organism on their own persons. The ideal is to aim at getting them to the point where they realise that the speech organism is an independent being, separate from themselves. We'll need to activate all the *pedagogical intuition* at our disposal; and you, Volodya and I *have* that intuition. Here we touch upon an important question: you and Volodya are capable of teaching the second year the new elements, Sasha and

Sonya are not. Hence the conclusion: to divide up the curriculum between you. Sasha and Sonya's main work will be to continue teaching selected exercises from the first year. You and Volodya, selected new ones. Contact between the four of you will be maintained through teachers' meetings.

Now, as for your apprehension that it will take years of training before starting to teach. I categorically retort: 1) The author states constantly that he is voicing ideals, which will need time to be achieved, but that the essential thing is to sow *seeds*. And that we can and are obliged to do. All the more so since we *have* gifts. 2) Don't forget that what you, Volodya and I know about the art of drama exceeds the knowledge and *experience*, the inner *experience*, of all our fellow theatre professionals to such an extent that we have something to offer them out of the depths of our hearts and our *experience*. We should not just think of ourselves and wait until we consider we're up to the mark and capable of starting to teach. You have to pass on what you've received. By refusing to enrol students, you choke on your own self-sufficiency and fail those who are capable of receiving. That's my reply to you and Volodya and to myself on that score. 3) Destiny has placed us in the right circumstances and knows better than we do what the results of our teaching will be. 4) In the process of teaching, we ourselves will be learning. 5) By preparing our lessons, we will be able to assume responsibility for what we do. 6)

⁷³ The letter was written in various shades of coloured pencils.

⁷⁴ According to a friend, Gromov and his future wife, Alexandra Davydova, had been inseparable since 1924, but only married in 1946. ⁷⁵ Sofya Giantsintova ("Sonya") (1895-1982), actor and director.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁷⁷ Alexander Cheban.

⁷⁸ Actors of the theatre founded by the entrepreneur, F. Korsh (1852-1923).

Much of what Steiner states has put into words what has been vaguely present in our souls for a long time now. If you consider our theatre work, you will realise that for a long time now much of our teaching has been along these lines, but it wasn't very clear or worked out in detail. Now, however, the firmest foundation has appeared for what we had already anticipated inwardly in our own teaching. So in that respect what the author offers us is strength, not doubts and weakness.

We shall keep to ourselves what we do not know; but what we do know we shall pass on with a sense of responsibility. 7) We're not going to conceal from our students that we *want to learn* together with them. They will understand that in the best sense of the word. 8) We're going to teach *a little at a time*, but work long and meticulously on one and the same thing. This will also greatly enhance our knowledge of the subject.

To continue: we can suggest that anyone wanting to teach segments could do so, but under my supervision. There will be more new exercises in the senior course, but here again adapted to the students' level of understanding. The selection process for students and their allocation to the first or the second course are matters that are the most unclear to me. I ask you to think through and criticise what I've written. Part of the exercises will be taught with both courses together, for example: Greek gymnastics. Besides that, Zhenya Novikova will be engaged to teach classes in eurythmy. And absolutely everything that is going to be taught must be presented not as something abstract and remote, but as being closely related to stage practice. Threads must be devised to connect up with our practical work. This is to make matters concrete and motivate the students. They don't like distant horizons, alas! So there you have, more or less, my optimistic thoughts about the school. One pessimistic thought: there's a great deal that's impossible to teach our young hopefuls, *whatever sauce you serve it with*. They won't grasp that much, but we'll need to be patient.

Apropos "style": this is a difficult and unclear question. It isn't clear to many who have read the book. Nevertheless, I've worked out an idea for myself as to what the author calls "style" in art, but that is only *my own personal* understanding. Perhaps you'll see it differently when you've read the book. I see it like this: it's not about "style" in the sense of "rococo" or any other well-known "styles". Style is always mentioned by the author in the passages dealing with the spirituality of art and the actor. When the actor lives in his dreams, he receives a feeling for style. Being touched by spiritual truth is style. Whenever the voice *comes from there*, "style" is born. Andryushan's concept of "rhythm"⁷⁹ is, I think, what the author means with the word "style". It's impossible to find a specific, set form of this "style" as meant by the author. It isn't the crystallised form of the Renaissance or Gothic, living on for centuries; it is the ever new, ever other "style". *Style* is the organ of perception *for that*. The *feeling* for style is the

bringing down of truth into art. *Style* is the voice of the *individuality* (not the personality)⁸⁰ of the artist. However, each individuality is unique and, even for oneself, style is unique in different moments. The themes of artistic creation are inexhaustible and unique: which means *style* is the *life of the individuality creating in the present moment*. Living form of the living, creating spirit – this is “style”. People who are beautiful in soul manifest “style” in their lives. The harmony of the “upper” and the “lower⁸¹” is always full of “style” or, as Andryushan would say, “rhythmical”. So, there are the feelings (and much else) that rise up within me when I try to fathom what the author means with the word “style”. As an art, the whole of eurythmy is full of “style”. According to the author, the enemy of “style” is “stylization” in the bad sense of the word and also symbolism, for example: a tree resembling an animal or a cloud symbolizing a coffin and other such nonsense. All such things are inventions; and “style” is not *invented*, it is *experienced, sensed* in the creative, inspired state. “Style” is the opposite of intellectualism.

Next: you can fantasise all kinds of words and gestures when practising the six nuances of speech, but the main thing here is to start *silently*, to feel how the word is meant to sound from the essence of the *Gesture* itself. And only then pronounce the word when the inner certainty has grown that it sounds the way that the inwardly experienced meaning of the *Gesture* dictates. Moreover, a whole phrase can sound as if it is devoid of a nuance and only one or two words assume the whole expressiveness of the nuance. Here’s an example from the book: the 3rd nuance – *You tell me I am supposed to achieve this goal. **Can** I really do that?*. The word “Can” as such is spoken in the nuance *trembling*. The 6th nuance: *You suggest I look after the shop now. **I would like to go for a walk!*** The words in bold print are the main bearers of the nuance *concise*. The 5th nuance: *You are bringing me the*

⁷⁹ Chekhov is most likely referring to the contents of talks that Belyi gave at his home and also to preparatory work for the staging of his play, *Peterburg*, at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

⁸⁰ Steiner distinguished between the spiritual individuality (the “Higher Ego”), that incarnates in repeated lives on Earth and the personality (the “Lower Ego”), the earthly, subjective “I”, the development of which is influenced by outer circumstances. See *Theosophy*.

⁸¹ I.e. the higher and lower principles.

*child I always like to see: **Come!*** The word in bold print is the bearer of the nuance. You study this “Come!” on the basis of the movement, the gesture.

Next point: there is no mention at all of the amphibrach. However, another book is soon to be published by the author’s wife, as a continuation of this one; and the amphibrach will probably be dealt with in that one. So there will still be something more for us to learn about the art of the stage!

As regards the position of the German sounds *ä*, *ö* and *ü*, the author doesn’t say anything in particular, only that they lie between *o* and *u*⁸². This can easily be felt with a little practice. I think you’ve already grasped it by now. Just in case you haven’t, I’ll sketch it: excuse the vile, dense drawing. Let’s assume the speech organism is outlined in red and within it is the point of origin of the sounds. The *o* is in the oral cavity.

Here I’ve drawn the oral cavity and in it the *ä*, as it were, plops into place. It sort of occupies the whole space of the mouth, but protrudes further forwards out of the mouth than the *o*.

This is, for my feeling, the position of the *ö*:

This is the position of the *ü*. The lips are somewhat narrower than in the drawing. And finally, right at the front, the *u* jumps out, as if out of a tube.

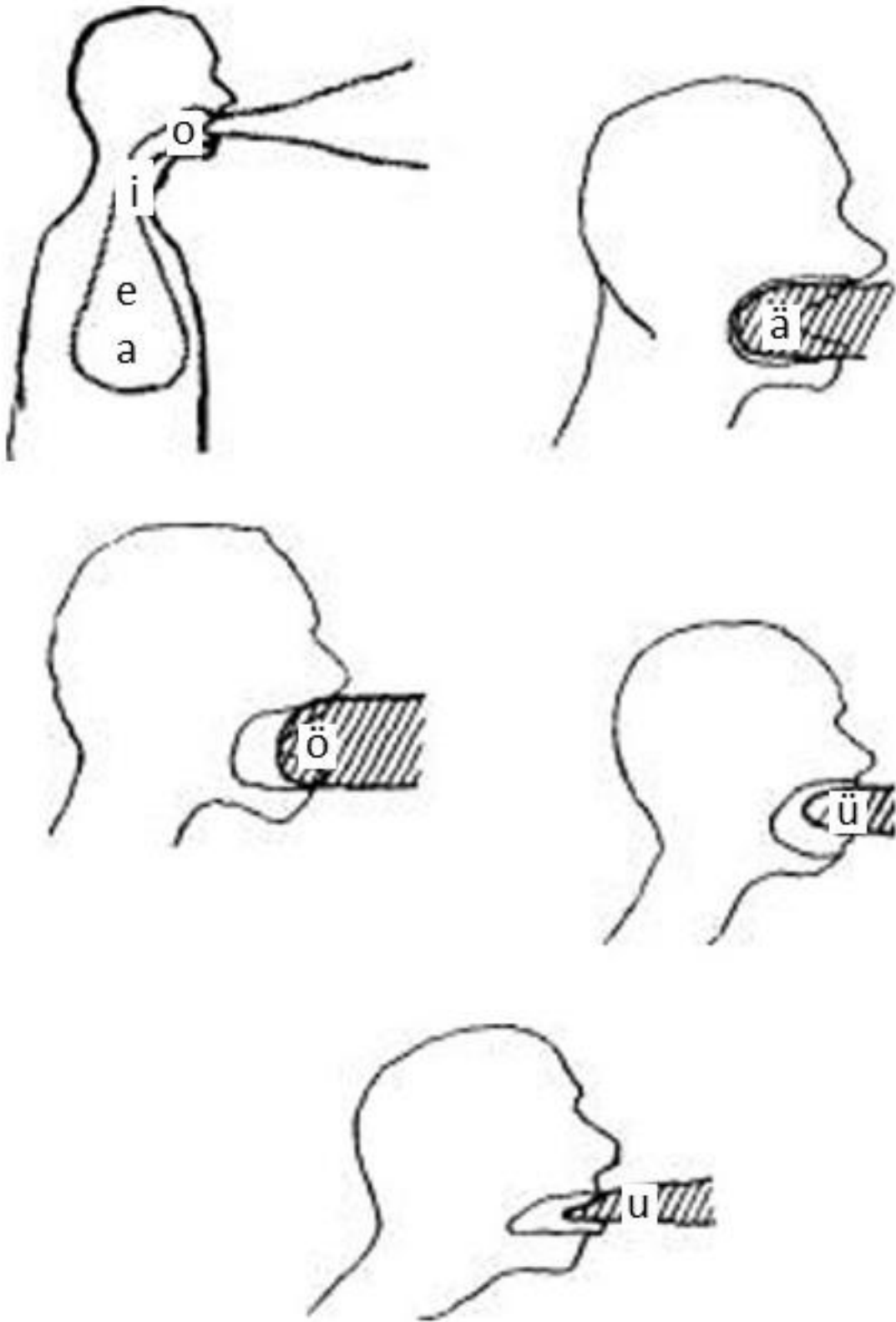
All this is how I sense these sounds, for what it’s worth. But you asked me to explain them; so my dear, I’ve done my best.

There are great hopes as far as mime is concerned! In it the word can be presented in all its beauty because there will be few words and the life of the gesture can be developed, there the music is! The two of us could work on that! (Judging from Nadya’s⁸³ letters there will be a delay with *Don Quixote*.)

PS Another important factor for the psychology of teaching is that we are merely *passing on* what we have learned ourselves. This is a very important realization. We offer to work on the technique of acting following a particular method. We can describe the working method to the students, but they have to work at it themselves.

⁸² See Letter 3.

⁸³ Nadezhda Pavlovich (1895-1980), poetess and translator.



I bite and kiss you and weave all around you. How I'm going to squeeze you when I return! Give my greetings and kisses to Nina. How is Andryushan's health? Write to me at Seestrasse. Greetings to all at the theatre. I think I'll arrive on the 28th, but I don't know for sure. Kiss Sonya and Vanya⁸⁴ from me. Don't tell anyone at the theatre for now that I'm thinking of coming back earlier, or else they'll start building the repertoire around that. I don't know if I'll arrive by that date and I'll need two days to come to myself after the journey. Off to the steam baths!

Tomorrow is my birthday – my 35th! Oh! Oo! Ee!

8⁸⁵

My enchanting, absolute Tsezurochka und quite stunning and stunned Vovochka Why haven't I written to you for so long? The reason is I received two letters from you both separately and I wanted to reply to your questions when I teach you, my dear and enchanting ones. Thank you, Vovochka, for your wonderful letter. I was very pleased to receive it. Thank you, Gundoza, for your letter and the newspaper cuttings. I still haven't received a reply from the People's Commissariat of Education, although I sent Lunacharsky a long and detailed explanatory letter, setting out the reasons for my temporary absence from Moscow, I wrote about the press, the Repertkom (Chief Committee for the Control of Repertoire) and other things. I wrote about what I am doing here and wrote that, wherever and whatever I am acting here, my ultimate aim is to return to Moscow, but that my return depends on whether I'm given a theatre at my full disposal and real working conditions are created. I also set out intelligibly my opinion on those conditions in the letter to Lunacharsky. I'm waiting for a reply, but I don't think it will come soon because the question is not an easy one and I requested a completely *serious and detailed* reply and nothing vague. I even begged him not to make a hasty reply, but with the proviso that it is final and has been discussed at all relevant levels. If you hear anything about this in theatre circles before I do, please let me know.

I'm really happy that Nadezhda⁸⁶ and Maria⁸⁷ are pleased with Vovochka's flat⁸⁸. I wish them great joy and all happiness and well-being in the future. How is Nadezhda's health? How is her German? Does she still intend to improve it, as she planned? Has Maria got any new parts? Has Alexandra⁸⁹ got any new parts? I

gathered from the newspaper cuttings that you, Gundozochka, have been acting like a buffalo. I wish you boldness and good spirits as you move into the future. Already under my supervision you made huge progress in your acting, keep up the momentum going forwards. Let your motto be: boldness and lack of fear of making mistakes on stage. That will be easy when you know what you are going out onto the boards for each time you appear. You can always modify and vary your aims. An acquaintance, with whom I stayed in the summer⁹⁰, wrote something to me recently that gave me a lot of strength. He wrote: “You will never fail at whatever *you* play”. I should like to share this very same thought with you in your quality as an actor and with Vovochka in his quality as a director. My dear, dear ones, since sending you my last letter there have been big changes in my destiny. I can’t say exactly how and why all this has happened, but my shares have suddenly increased unbelievably in value. The signing of the contract with Reinhardt’s theatre⁹¹ has evidently played a decisive role. Theatre bigwigs here have become interested in me and I have received all kinds of film and theatre

⁸⁴ Ivan Bersenev (1899-1951), actor and director.

⁸⁵ This letter is addressed both to Viktor Gromov (“Tsezurochka”, “Gundoza”, “Gundozochka”) and Vladimir Tatarinov (“Vovochka”).

⁸⁶ Tatarinov’s sister, also a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society.

⁸⁷ Maria Scriabin. She made a full translation of the Steiner lecture course, on which these letters are based, but it was never published: Also in her possession was a copy of the first edition of the Speech and Drama lecture course, the backing of which has turned yellow with age and bears the title and a drawing in ink. Judging from the handwriting and the style of the drawing it must have belonged to Chekhov personally. A dedication on the opening page says: “To my fellow pupil”. There is every reason to assume that this copy belonged to Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁸⁸ From 1928 on, this flat was the home of Tatarinov and Maria Scriabin

⁸⁹ Gromov’s future wife.

⁹⁰ Michael Bauer (1871-1929), author of many religious, philosophical, artistic and educational works, was one of the first and closest pupils of Steiner. Chekhov found in him a genuine mentor in matters of spiritual development. Bauer spent his last years at the home of Margareta Morgenstern, the widow of the poet Christian Morgenstern in Breitbrunn-am-Ammersee in Bavaria. Chekhov and his wife visited them in the summer of 1928.

⁹¹ This took place no later than September 10th 1928. Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) was a leading actor and director in Berlin.

October 13th 1928 Berlin

offers. I have two invitations to America. America scares me, of course, because of the Atlantic Ocean. All around me I hear not voices, but wailing... (The letter breaks off here and the continuation has been lost.)

Appendix 1

In the middle of June, 1926, Michael Chekhov went on holiday to Italy via Berlin. It was most probably in Germany that he got hold of a copy of Rudolf Steiner's lectures on Speech and Drama, which had been published that spring. They made a tremendous impression on him. He realised that the contents were what had been vaguely present in his soul for a long time. At that period of time, Chekhov was evidently afraid that it might not be possible to bring the book back to Russia, so he decided to summarise its contents, lecture by lecture. Moreover he was even aware that he would need to be cautious in what he wrote. He resorted to using hints and allusions. Convinced that Gromov would understand the drift of his thought, Chekhov used various kinds of abbreviations, omissions and the device of crossing out "non-materialistic" terms in the text, which his like-minded friend was meant to restore when reading it.

Chekhov was becoming alarmed about the atmosphere that was making itself felt in his work in the theatre. Later, in his memoirs, he would write about his visit to the *starets* (an elder or spiritual teacher in the Russian Orthodox Church, often possessing clairvoyant powers) of the Optina Monastery in March 1925: he had the feeling that he was under constant surveillance by the security service. This feeling proved to be true. In the autumn of 1926, Andrei Belyi described that the systematic harassment of Chekhov in the Moscow Art Theatre had begun. In the meantime, however, while enjoying the sights of Venice, which he so adored, he realised the full significance of the ideas that were to become the foundation of his approach to the actor's work on himself. He began to dream of creating a new type of drama school which was destined to become reality, but unfortunately in exile.

Chekhov's synopsis is heartfelt and exact. The present material sheds light on the professional guidelines that allowed him to fathom the full depth of his genius and fulfil the testament of his teacher: it is not a dogma, but living knowledge gained on the path of creative freedom.

The academic study of the reception of Rudolf Steiner's Science of the Spirit or Anthroposophy on the part of the Russian intelligentsia in the early 20th Century is only just beginning. It can be assumed that the publication of new material from the archives and its analysis and comparison with already available material will substantially alter outdated notions concerning the divergences, ideals and motivations of the participants in cultural life in Russia and in emigration in that period.

It is interesting to note that it was Marie von Sivers (later Marie Steiner), who was educated in St. Peterburg and studied recitation and drama at the *Conservatoire de Paris* (1895-97) and Maria von Strauch (stage name: Maria Spettini), actress at the German Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg and founder of a theosophical circle there in 1902, who first introduced the ideas of Rudolf Steiner in Russia. By 1914 when work started on the building of the First Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, which was to become the centre for the dissemination for anthroposophical ideas worldwide, many Russian writers and artists had become involved in activities there. They include: Andrei Belyi and his wife Asya Turgenev, Maximilian Voloshin and his wife Margarita Voloshin, Tatiana Kiseleff, Marie Savich and others.

Chekhov had first heard about Steiner from Stanislavsky. In the Spring of 1918 his attention was attracted by a book in a shop window: *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* by Rudolf Steiner. He read the book and put it aside. He pursued his interest in yoga and got to know various theosophists. However, his acquaintance with theosophical literature did not lead him further in his spiritual search. The book by Steiner came back to mind and from then on he read all the anthroposophical literature he could find. The young cinematographer, Sergei Eisenstein, just arrived in Moscow from the provinces in the autumn of 1920, attended theosophical and other study groups, where he experienced Michael Chekhov and wrote home to his mother: "The conversations have a predominantly theosophical leaning. Rudolf Steiner's name is mentioned more and more often." In October 1921 Chekhov was introduced to Andrei Belyi ("Andryushan" in the letters), who became his mentor in Steiner's Spiritual Science. During the following year he became a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society. In July 1924 he and Vladimir Tatarinov attended a course of lectures given by Steiner in Arnhem, Holland entitled *The Karma of the Anthroposophical Movement*, after which they had a personal meeting with

Steiner. The meeting took place on July 24th, as is attested by a copy of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* autographed by Steiner.

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The book remained in the possession of Tatarinov's wife, Maria Scriabin, after his death. Their flat in central Moscow served as a meeting place for Russian anthroposophists and many artists (including Boris Pasternak) until her death in 1989.

The present collection comprises all the letters from Chekhov to Gromov in the possession of the Museum of the Moscow Art Theatre. The last letter was written after he had already emigrated.

Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov (1899-1975) was a close friend and pupil of Chekhov's and performed with him in many productions. In 1928 he moved with the Chekhovs to Berlin. His future wife Alexandra Davydova joined them in 1929 and up until the return of Alexandra and Viktor to Russia in 1934, the two couples were virtually inseparable. They worked together in Berlin, Paris and Riga. Chekhov gave Gromov a letter of recommendation to take back with him and present to the famous director, V. Meyerhold, who ran his own theatre in Moscow. Viktor (as an assistant director) and Alexandra (as an actress) worked there until the theatre closed in 1938. In this letter Chekhov wrote:

I've decided to trouble you, do not be angry with me for that. It's about the future of a person who is close and dear to me; for this reason I have decided to approach you with a request. My friend, my longstanding companion in matters of the theatre – Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov – is returning to Moscow and bringing this letter with him to give to you. Before expressing my request regarding him, I will tell you about him briefly.

Gromov entered my acting studio in 1918. Approximately one year later I entrusted him to give lessons independently.

In 1922 he joined the Second Moscow Art Theatre. As a character actor he played the following roles: The Actor, Charlie, Stretton (in 'The Flood'), Kobus, Dante (in 'The Death of Hope'), Biondello (in 'The Taming of the Shrew'), Morkovina (in 'Peterburg'), the Gravedigger (in 'Hamlet') and so on... He was

co-director in a whole series of productions at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.....

While abroad Gromov played Polonius, Sir Toby and many other character parts....

*Dear Vsevolod Emilyevich, after giving you a brief description of all of Gromov's activities in the theatre, I allow myself to request you to take him under your patronage and admit him to your troupe of comrades-in-arms; Gromov is capable, he wants and loves to **learn and work**: two qualities that you, Vsevolod Emilyevich, assuredly hold in high esteem.....*

Thereafter he worked as chief director of the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre. He was awarded the title of Artist of Merit of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and wrote a biography of Michael Chekhov in the series *A Life in Art* that appeared in 1970.

Appendix 2

From *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.
By Graham Dixon. Appendix A.

The Numbers – Where the Impulses for Actions Originate

Number 1. (Physical Body)

The physical part in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Our instrument, called the physical body, which we as actors use; both to manifest the inner life of the character and to express the outer impulses which come to us from the outside, physical world.

Number 2. (The Soul)

Our inner life or psyche, the other half in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Consisting of thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, lusts, desires, striving, sensations, etc. In other words, our soul.

Number 3. The Outer World

The outside world and everything within it. The mineral world (dust, rocks, rivers, mountains, diamonds, gold), plants (flowers, trees, fruit, vegetables), animals (birds, snakes, insects, mammals), people, the cosmos (stars, planets, suns, galaxies), inanimate objects.

Number 4. The Ego

The unique part of ourselves that we call 'I'. The everyday ego. Our Number 4 is manifested and experienced in our Number 2. At this stage of our human evolution, we need a soul to feel, to know who we are.

Number 5

What Chekhov calls the higher creative self - the real actor within us. Number 5 marries with our Number 4, and is also manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 6

Similar in a way to what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious and what Rudolf Steiner called the folk soul. Unspoken things which affect us, such as nation, religious life and morality. It is married into our Numbers 4 and 5. Much like them, it is manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 7

The spiritual world in its objective, pure and uncoloured form.

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Michael Chekhov – Letters to Viktor Gromov¹

(Translation by David Ball, kindly edited by my dear friend, Graham Dixon)

1

July 15th 1926 Lido

O Mensura² mine!

How pleased you were to receive my letter! And how glad we were to receive yours! I was disappointed to learn that you would not be coming to Moscow

before my departure. But then I realised that the Georgian Military Highway is providing you with wonderful impressions. I am happy for you and oh, how I am pressing, weaving, cutting and plucking!³

I have found a book here, in which the author sets out his views on the theatre and the formation of correct artistic speech for the stage⁴. This research is extremely interesting in my opinion. I have decided to outline the content of this theatre research for you. So I'll begin.

From the Foreword⁵ (The Foreword was written not by Rudolf Steiner, the author of the book, but by a lady, called Marie. I can't remember her surname, but it isn't important).

Through speech the human being grasps his divine origin. The sounds of the alphabet are creative forces connecting the human with his origin and showing him the way to his spiritual source. Through them he feels his way back to his divine "I", and, in so doing, rises above the animals. In speech, the individual power of the "I" can express itself through sounds and know itself through them. (which cannot be found either in animal sounds or in wonderful birdsong).

Through speech the universe can know itself in the focal point of the human "I"; and through this "I" it can begin to create anew. The uprightness of the human body releases the capability of human speech. I will continue by quoting a passage. It expresses very poetically what artistic speech should be in the true sense: "... to live in the breath, to form the breath, to sculpt the air with the chisel of the breath and feel the trembling and subtle vibrations of the air (and of the ether⁶), high and low tones and the very subtle chimes of the diphthongs ... such artistic creativity in the sphere of the most subtle substantiality is a more noble task than to emit human emotions in the form of animal sounds...". Isn't that wonderful?

It continues: as long as true inspiration cannot be differentiated from trivial emotionalism, the path to the redemption of art through the *word* will be blocked. Naturalism leads initially to animalization and then to "gramophonism". It is necessary to *become conscious of* the laws that lie at the foundation of speech, and then by devoting oneself to them, resurrect artistic creativity through them. *Truth* is essential for art, and not random copying. Speech is flowing movement, imbued with inner music and the charm of colourful images and sculptured

forms. We kill the artistic element in speech if we view it as a means of comprehension, as a vehicle for intellectual content. It is not speech that should be adapted to the intellect, rather the intellect should be shone through by speech. And again I will translate another poetical passage about language: "... it is ablaze with multi-coloured rays ... its rhythms, melodies and sculpture, the contours and architecture of its aspiring forces, its sonorous or soft metric steps, its proud cadences; the line connecting and disconnecting all of this and intermingling one with the other in its swirling until this whole movement swells into Dionysian dance or, clear and bright, flows into an

¹ See Appendix 1

² "A graduated glass vessel for measuring liquids" (*Latin: mensura*).

³ From Chekhov's own memoirs and those of his contemporaries, it is well-known that he had a fine and unusual sense of humour. This trait of his was evident in his creation of exceptional stage characters and also in his everyday life. Chekhov said of Gromov that he had a sense of humour very similar to his own.

⁴ The book in question was the first printed edition of Rudolf Steiner's course of lectures on Speech and Drama, given in Dornach, Switzerland in 1924.

⁵ Written by Rudolf Steiner's wife, Marie Steiner von Sivers. From 1901 she had been one of his closest collaborators and founded with him the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902, which later evolved into the Anthroposophical Society in 1913.

⁶ See footnote 6.

1

Apollonian circle dance⁷... The book in question purports to be the key to this form of the art of speech. It states the necessity to approach all this consciously, without any apprehension that consciousness will kill the artistic impulse. It will not kill it, but raise it up to the "I" and liberate it from the confines of the mask of the "personality". It must be seen and then detached from us and cognised. And when we cognise all this, consciousness will return to us from the outside as something free, self-evident and objective.

In the course of time an inner stratification of the primeval unity came about: thinking branched off to the "I" (see the sketch⁸), language remained in the astral body (the circle A.B.), and feeling descended to the ether body (E.B.). Primeval poetry was a unity. Now however, as a result of stratification, the following has come about: feeling that descended to the ether body is the source of the *Lyric*. The *Epic* arises directly out of the circle of the astral body. But what the human being in his speech directs predominantly *toward the outer world* (through the

upper circle) is the *Dramatic*. And when the dramatic artist speaks on stage (if it is not a monologue), he is *really* standing facing someone. He is *in actual fact* communicating with the outer world. And the *fact* that the artist is facing *the outer world also* applies to his speech; and likewise to what he is simultaneously experiencing within himself. The *lyric*, on the other hand, is not addressed to anyone external. It is sufficient unto itself. And the lyrical artist should speak in such a way that his speech is the pure expression of the inner human world. In this case even his consonants should in a way become vowels. (Every consonant has its corresponding vowel sound, for instance L = *ee*, R = *ah*.) One has to learn to feel *the vowel of each consonant*. The *epic* artist should feel: I come closer to the inner world of the human being when I speak a *vowel* and when I speak a *consonant* I come closer to outer things. With the *epic*, we are dealing with the outer world, but only as *imagined* by us. (Otherwise it would not be epic, but dramatic.) The epic speaks of an *imagined* object. The *lyric* is a stirring of inner feeling. *Declamation* comes about when this stirring is so strong that it bursts out as a *summons* or *call*. The epic artist shows his audience his imagined object through the magic of his word. He *creates an embodiment* of it in front of the audience and, by citing it, *recitation* comes about. The *dramatic* form of speech gives rise to *conversation* when the speaker is facing his counterpart in the flesh in the outer world.

In the diagram it looks like this:

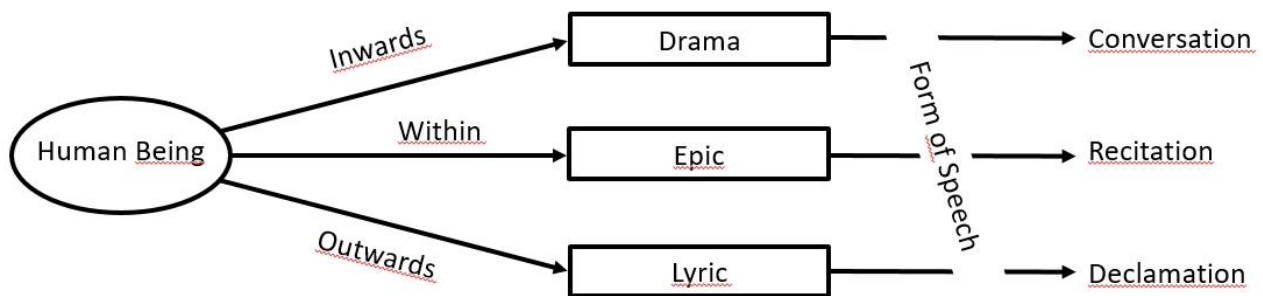
The art of speech consists of these three forms. (It should not be forgotten that in reality all these three forms are intricately entwined with each other and that lyric and epic elements can be found in drama.)

The book continues with an explanation of certain sounds: *Ah* (A) = the full opening of the speech organism. It is the striving (of the astral body) to go into the outer world. *Ah* is the most consonantal of all the vowels. The complete opposite to the sound *Ah* is the *Oo* (U). In the case of the latter the whole speech organism is closed. *Oo* is the most vowel-like of all the vowels. With the *Ah*, the human being is falling asleep, with the *Oo* he is most awake. With the *Oo*, the astral body connects strongly with the ether and physical bodies. The *Oh* lies between the *Ah* and the *Oo*; it contains within itself in a harmonious union the

processes of the self's opening up (*Ah*) and closing up (*Oo*). In the case of the *Oh*, the human wakes up rather more than in the actual present. The *Oo* means: I want to be awake in relation to an object I am facing. All the vowels are located between *Ah* and *Oo*. *Oh* lies in between and not quite in the middle, just as the musical interval, the fourth, is situated in relation to the octave. *Oh* is the state

⁷ For a closer understanding of the anthroposophical understanding of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles see Steiner's lecture cycle: *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*.

⁸ See Steiner's book *Theosophy*, in which he lists the seven sheaths of the human being and their interrelationships.



2

between falling asleep and waking up. Hence the ancient exercise with the OM (AUM)⁹. The ancients thought that if you repeat this syllable often, you would enter the state between sleeping and waking. The next stage with the ancients was the speaking of the AOUM. Here the *Ah* and the *Oo* strive to meet each other and when the ancients spoke this syllable they were able to proceed from the *Ah* state to the *Oo* state (*Oh*) lies between them, of course). There then follows a description of the five Greek gymnastic exercises, with which the first chapter closes. Before outlining the second chapter I am going to skip ahead and describe some practical exercises for you to try out, if they appeal to you.

Exercise 1 In order to make speech moulded and musical, you have to bring a *gesture* into it. Traces of gestures still exist in speech, such as “the tone of the voice” (I don't know how to translate *das Stimmliche*); but, as such, the gesture has disappeared. It needs to be reinstated. (The five Greek gymnastic exercises, which encompass all kinds of gestures, form one component of the exercises to introduce the gesture on stage as an external aid for the spoken word. In essence there are no other gestures than those contained in Greek gymnastics. There are

their *Abschattungen* (shades of difference)¹⁰. That is one pole. The other pole is *speech itself*. Therefore: one pole is the *gesture*; the other, *speech*. I'll now go into the latter pole, but you will see that it is also connected to the gesture.) Now, *what qualities can be attributed to speech? What is speech capable of in general?*

Speech can be: 1) *effective*. However, in order to learn this first nuance of speech, you need to study the corresponding gesture. While doing this, the gestures are performed *without speaking*. Arbitrariness will arise if you start with the *word*. That is because the gesture as such *has disappeared* in the word and it has to be studied separately. Then both the word and the gesture will become alive. (In present-day acting, chaos reigns in this sphere.) You need to understand that the guiding spirit of language works through the six nuances of speech (the first one has been mentioned, the others follow below), and if we devote ourselves to studying the activity of this guiding spirit by means of gesture, then we will approach the word in the right way. Thus: a *pointing, indicating* gesture corresponds to effective speech. When you have thoroughly studied this gesture, you need *to give it back* to the word. To achieve this, you need to grasp *the method of speaking* the word in the proposed, effective nuance of speech. This method is the *sharp, incisive* forming of the word. In this process the inner strength of the human being penetrates the word, fills it with *mettle*; the strength is such that it breaks out in exhalation. So here we have the first nuance of speech in its three aspects:

1) Effective – the pointing gesture – sharp.

The second nuance of speech draws the attention to inner processes taking place within the human being. The speech of this nuance is: 2) *thoughtful*. The gesture to be employed to learn this nuance is: *to bring the limbs into a connection with the body*. (close to the forehead, nose, arms akimbo etc.). And finally, what is inherent in this gesture revealing thoughtfulness should find expression in the word pronounced in a *full-bodied* manner. Here there should be nothing metallic in the voice. Here both the vowels and the consonants should be spoken in a full-bodied manner. And so:

2) Thoughtful – the gesture kept close to the body – full-bodied.

(The ability to be decisive – keeping the gesture still, *Stillhalten der Gebärde*¹¹ – pronouncing slowly.)

The third nuance of speech is called: *speech feeling its way forwards against resistance*. The explanation here is the following: penetrating into the outer world with a question or a wish, but without the certainty of how the circumstances are in this outer world. There may even be hindrances in the outer world. The gesture that corresponds to this is: *making rolling movements forwards with the arms*. Here the formation of the words should be *trembling, vibrating*. (Here it is good if the sentence contains many ‘p’s, as this will facilitate the trembling.) And so:

3) Speech feeling its way forwards against resistance – rolling movement – trembling.

⁹ In Hinduism the sacred word inherent in all that exists.

¹⁰ I.e. all the movements that can be seen on stage are derived from the prototypes of the Ancient Greek pentathlon. ¹¹ The original German text states: *Stillhalten der Glieder* – keeping the limbs still.

3

The next nuance: expressing *antipathy*. The gesture: flinging one of the limbs away from the body. (The author says that badly educated people do this gesture with the leg or foot.) Here the pronunciation is *firm, hard*.

4) Antipathy – flinging the gesture away from the body – hard. The next gesture is very simple – I’ll state it directly:

5) Sympathy – stretching out the arm with the intention of touching an object or caressing it. This gesture can have something affirming – soft

And the last gesture:

6) Withdrawing into oneself – gesture away from the body – concise.

Everything I have described should be practised until it becomes instinctive. Now I’ll continue to the following practical exercise.

Exercise 2 concerns knowing how to *form* artistic speech correctly when talking. Almost half of the book is devoted to the question of this speech formation and, from the further chapters, it becomes clear that in general nothing can be

achieved in the art of drama without *this*. Now specific *formative forces* (etheric forces) are inherent in the human being. These must be developed through a whole sequence of exercises. These forces lie deep within the human organism. For the vowels they lie in the lungs, but they are primarily located in the organs in the region of the throat. They also lie higher up: in the organs of the nose, at the front of the mouth etc. The exercises are built on the principle that we take our starting point from *living speech* and not from anatomy and physiology. We have to learn to relate to *living speech* as something existing in its own right, separate from the human being and to be treated objectively. Speech should be viewed as a *being* within us. And just as the human exterior can be described in a *particular order*, e.g. the head, neck, chest, abdomen and legs (and not the legs, head and then the abdomen and so on), so also the living organism of speech can be described *in a particular order*. This is how it is described: the sequence of the vowels gives us a picture of an independent being, the speech organism. These vowels are: *a(ah) e(eh) i(ee) oh ä ö ü u(oo)*¹². When we pronounce them in this order, we will realise, experience and feel what the speech organism is. When we pronounce these vowels, we need to experience inwardly their proper position in the speech organism and their proper formation. To be precise: in the case of the *ah* the entire speech organism *opens up towards the outer world*. The *ah* comes out of the depths. In the case of the sound *eh*, the space through which it passes is narrower, reduced. But all the same it lies very deep in the speech organism. With *ah* and *eh*, nothing happens in the front part of the speech organism. With the *ee*, the space is completely reduced to a narrow slit. With the *oh*, we feel it proceed so far forward that it is located *in front of the slit* formed for the *ee*. Thus, living our way into the secret of the shaping of these vowels, we come to the *ü* and *oo*, which are formed then entirely in the front part of the speech organism. By practising this sequence we reach the point, at which the speech organism becomes separate from ourselves (which is a cardinal requirement to proceed further) and through this learning process we come to pronounce the vowels in a correct and *healthy* manner. The voice also becomes strong and healthy in the process of practising these exercises. Following these exercises there comes a whole host of similar ones, which form a unity when taken all together. I'll describe them for you in the next letter, but meanwhile I will mention one more exercise of a different nature. By the way, lest I forget: the author cites this

statement as the motto of his book: *Mensch, rede, und du offenbarst durch dich das Weltenwerden*. (“Speak, human being, and you reveal through yourself the process of the world’s becoming.”)¹³

Exercise 3 Observing the rainbow. This is important for creating scenery and for developing *artistic agility of the body on stage*. Artistic agility of the body is altogether only conceivable when the

¹² Translator’s note: approximations of the three German Umlaut sounds – *ä, ö und ü* – in English could be the *a* sound as in “cat”; the *or* sound as in “worth”; and the *you* sound as in youth. However the muscle tension in the lips is tauter with the German sounds than with the English ones.

¹³ This utterance expresses the essence of the teaching of the ancient Mystery School of Ephesus, the Logos.

4

corresponding inner qualities of the Soul are present. And these are given to us by the rainbow. We have to surrender ourselves to it and feel that: the *violet* edge of the rainbow conveys the prayerful devotion to the divine beings and the transition to *indigo* is a calm mood of soul. With *green* we feel that our soul pours out over everything growing, blooming and blossoming and as if we have come from the *divine worlds* (by way of violet and indigo). *Green* opens the portal that makes possible the sense of wonder for all things and beings, as well as sympathy and antipathy toward them. If you have lived your way into the green of the rainbow, you will be able to a certain extent to understand all the beings of the world. With *yellow* you feel strengthened within, you feel your right to be a human being *within nature*. *Orange* is the feeling of one’s own inner warmth and also of the worthiness and shortcomings of one’s own character. *Red* is enthusiasm and joy, inspired self-surrender and love, love for all beings. The author says at this point that people usually regard the rainbow as something external and see nothing more in it than if they would want to see the human being and for this purpose would examine a human figure made of papier-mâché. Just as through Greek gymnastics the actor grasps the earth with his will and finds himself upon it, so *he grasps the wonders of heavens*¹⁴ *through the contemplation of the rainbow*. And he grasps the world as it reveals itself to him from two aspects; and a revelation of the world is what the art of acting is meant to be.

That's all for now. I'll continue to write about this book next time. I really want to see you. I miss your cheeky mug and one minute I see you in one street of Venice, then in another or on one of the bridges or in my arms. Kisses, kisses, kisses.

My greetings to Nina¹⁵. Don't forget. Your Mizdra

Write to me in Roma. Poste restante. A postcard that you've received this letter will do.

2

July 21st 1926 Lido This is the second letter from here.

Good'ay failed Genius!

I'm growing a beard, it's grey. Its general appearance is nothing special. Bazba¹⁶ is cross. Do you desire further summaries from the realm of the dramatic art? Here they are:

Chapter 1 Eurythmy¹⁷ is very close to the contemporary art of drama. In the future rhythmic and the art of drama will merge into one. Those who use language in some form or other in their artistic works fail to grasp sufficiently the *artisticness of language* as such. Skill in working with language and speech requires the same preparatory training as, for instance, the art of music. And for anyone wanting to *speak artistically* the very pronunciation of *each separate sound* must become an *art* (as it is in music with regard to each separate note). The genuine training of artistic speech gives rise to *style*. Without style there is no art whatsoever. Where does speech originate in the human being? From the astral body (the soul). The "I" modifies (the astral body) and it receives the impulse of speech. The animal has no "I" to bring about this modification and therefore has no speech¹⁸. In the speech of the ordinary person, the sounds are formed at the unconscious level, with the artist of the word, consciousness must penetrate into the sphere where the sounds arise, where speech is born. Consequently it is necessary to contemplate

¹⁴ In the German original: *das Himmelswunder des Regenbogens*. Here Chekhov misunderstood Steiner's thought that there are two paths of penetrating into reality. The first path involves leaving the body (the will) and leads to an understanding of the natural environment. The second takes its starting point from outer phenomena ("the heavenly wonder of the rainbow") and leads into the inner world where the soul experiences colour.

¹⁵ Nina Neinkirchen, who was Gromov's first love, was a very beautiful deaf and dumb woman.

¹⁶ Nickname for Chekhov's wife, Xenia Chekhov (1897 – 1970).

¹⁷ Eurythmy, a stage art based on anthroposophy. In eurythmy the sounds of speech and music are expressed in bodily movement.

¹⁸ In common with the human being, the animal has a physical, ether and astral body, but lacks an individual entity, an "I". According to anthroposophical teaching, each animal species has a group soul in the spiritual world, its own group "I". For another angle on this subject, see Appendix 2, an excerpt from Graham Dixon's book *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.

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(meditatively) everything that is spoken about this process. The following feeling has to be developed: human speech arose not out of human cognitive forces, but out of the *artistic* ones. (A vague hint for the understanding of this is provided by the Egyptian hieroglyphic script.)

In earlier times people were totally incapable of speaking in an unrhythmical manner. And besides that, people in those times spoke not only mere thoughts, they spoke something *that sounded artistically like speech*, and that was the main thing. In our time, the feeling for the artistry of speech has been lost and you often hear: "You are not speaking *correctly*", but alas, you do not hear: "You are not speaking *beautifully*"! The processes of the astral body take place (for the most part) unconsciously. The artist of the word must learn to have the processes that give rise to speech at his conscious command. At this point Steiner says that the numerous methods of teaching speech and singing arose out of a divining of this need to penetrate consciously into the processes shaping speech. However, they all fail to achieve their goal because they do not start from *living language itself*, but from anatomy.

Above all, the *speech organism* must grasped cognitively. It came about gradually in the human being under the influence of the "I", which modified the human (astral) body. Imagine such a diagram of the speaking human being: *vowels* arise when the speech impulse descends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle designated as E.B.; *consonants* arise when the speech impulse ascends from the circle of the A.B. to the circle "I". Vowels originate at the deepest and most inward level of the human being. For that reason they express what is most inward in the human being and are located at the most unconscious level. The

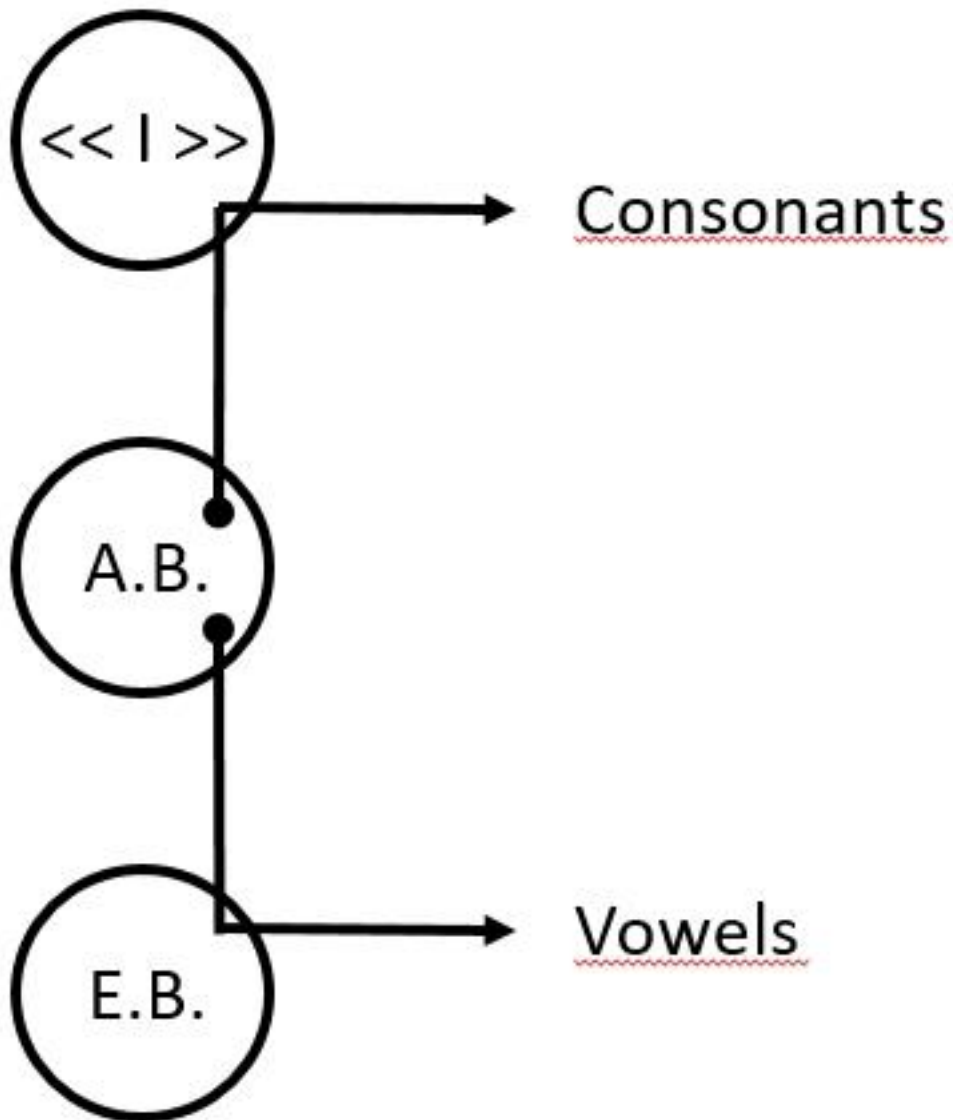
human “I” (in its present state) brings about sense perceptions and the substantial part of thinking takes place in the “I”, as also does ordinary conscious activity. And when the speech impulse ascends to the upper circle, the *consonants* originate and they are, in general, more accessible to human conscious perception than the vowels are.

In primeval language, humans not only spoke in rhythm, beat, assonances and alliterations, they *also thought and felt in language*. All *feeling* immediately gave birth to the corresponding speech. They had to imbue feeling with a familiar form of speech. For instance: they didn’t say: “I love the child affectionately”, but said something like: “I love the child *bye baby bye bye*”. The same applied to thinking. Modern abstract thought did not exist. When humans thought, their thought became a word, a sentence. *They spoke inwardly*. (That’s why the verse is not: “In the Beginning was the Thought”, but “In the Beginning was the...”¹⁹) Speech was a “precious casket for thoughts and feelings”. And the text continues with many more enchanting passages, but I will leave them out in order to give you as much of a general impression as possible. But, of course, you have to experience every word of this exposition. Altogether Steiner admonishes us that we need to meditate and ponder a great deal over what he sets forth. Now I’ll continue from the same Foreword.

It can be proved historically that every art form is based upon a particular world view. The Foreword deals with the origin of art in general and the necessity of returning to that source (the mysteries). In conclusion, the lady who wrote the foreword promises to publish a new book consisting of exercises received by her previously from the author of the present book²⁰. However, that will be in the

¹⁹ Chekhov is implying that Steiner meant the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John.

²⁰ Marie Steiner planned to publish a systematic, instructional guide to speech formation, but her intention remained unaccomplished. The working material for it was compiled and published after her death as: *Methodik und Wesen der Sprachgestaltung*, Dornach 1955.



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future. And now I'll describe a number of practical exercises for you from the book itself and not from the Foreword. There are 19 chapters in all.

Exercise 1

Speech eurythmy is a must²¹. It is not necessary *per se*, as an independent art, but in the following specific context: the actor makes the 'ee' sound in eurythmy for instance. While he is doing that, the main thing is not stretching the arm, but registering inside himself what the muscles are actually experiencing; and this experience of the muscles should be like an apparition, a mirror image from within that accompanies every 'ee' spoken by the actor on stage. This will, of

course, happen instinctively when all the sounds of speech have been sufficiently worked through eurythmically. So you express a particular sound in eurythmic movement as fully as possible. Then you take the feeling you had while expressing this sound in movement and what the muscles experienced during the sounding of the “*ee*” and transfer inwards into your soul. Then, with this experience, this feeling, you speak the sound *without* the outer gesture. Through practising this exercise, there will remain forever a counter-image, an apparition of the sound and it will do its work when you are speaking on stage.

Exercise 2

The Greek gymnastic exercises are useful for the actor. Here they are.

- 1) *Running*. The Greek felt the inter-relationship of forces between himself and the earth when running. He felt that his will forces were present in his limbs. When running he felt the inter-relationship of his own forces with the earth. The “I” and the earth. Furthermore, when the actor has trained himself to run in an artistic manner, without suspecting it, he will have learned to walk about the stage; and to walk in such a way that his walking will serve him as the power to articulate his speech correctly.
- 2) *Jumping*. The Greek realised that when he jumped he had to somehow *to draw certain dynamics out of himself*. The dynamics of the legs had to be increased. The jump provides a modified relationship to the earth, to the forces of gravity. By practising jumping, the actor also instinctively acquires the ability *to modify his walking* on stage. Moreover, this modified way of walking will correspond to a modified way of speaking. That is: if you speak slowly or clip your words in some way or speak with a trembling, firm or soft voice, then thanks to the jumping exercises you will acquire the ability to walk on stage in complete harmony with your manner of speaking. For speech on stage should be accompanied in the corresponding manner by walking.

- 3) *Wrestling*. Further, in addition to the mechanics that have to be developed in the legs for jumping, it is necessary to add the mechanics that determine *balance in the horizontal direction* (as opposed to balance in the vertical direction as in the preceding exercises). This is wrestling. Therefore, in wrestling we have the earth and another object. The result of this exercise will be that the actor acquires the ability *to move his arms and hands* instinctively and in the best possible manner *while actually speaking*.
- 4) *The discus throw*. For this exercise, a person *is handed an object* that is *large and heavy*. The dynamics as such undergo a certain development throughout the sequence of these exercises. Throwing the discus, the actor learns *mastery of his facial expressions* (and also the correct use of his arms and hands, as in the previous exercise). By following the discus as it flies and accompanying it with his attention during the whole flight, the actor develops flexibility in his facial expressions and control of the muscles necessary for mimicking. (A ball or other object may be used instead of a discus.)
- 5) *The spear throw*. The dynamics of *direction* are then added to the discus throw (in which a person is only dealing with the dynamics of handling heavy objects). And by practising this, the actor learns *to speak!* Namely to speak in such a way that his speech becomes *effective*, but not in the sense of meaning or intellectual content, but in an artistic, “speech sense” (if one can use such a term). Speech becomes a fact “in its own right”. In other words, the actor gains possession of the *lost secret of speech*. Speech frees itself from the intellect and enters the organs of speech themselves. Long sticks can also be used for practice.

²¹ Eurythmy is meant here.

These five exercises correspond in the best possible manner to the cosmic interrelationships. They *reveal* the human being in his totality. The author calls the five Greek exercises *total speech*.

That's it for this time, my dear. Next time I'll start with the book's first chapter²² on the theatre. I send you a thousand kisses. Moisten them, take them for yourself and then give them to your grandmother as a present. Give Nina the letter. It doesn't contain any secrets. Or you can read it to her. Let me know when you receive this letter and whether you like what I've written. Is it comprehensible, shall I continue to write?

Your "I"

Write to me at the following address: Pension Venier, Villa Marina, Lido, Venezia, Italy.

We're going to be here until approximately August 15th. Perhaps a bit longer. It's August 1st. In any case scribble me a few lines to *poste restante* in Rome. Rome is written *Roma*.

I forgot to add that the author says that all his research and indications will only make sense when they are *put into practice*.

Hello my dear one!

3

How are things with you? Do drop me a line or two. As for me, I'm totally confused as to which language to speak. That easily happens, given the number of languages I know. In difficult situations I do as follows: I assume a serious appearance and pronounce indistinctly: "Si, la u, ja....." and the like. Well that's not interesting, so allow me to present a summary of *the contents of the second chapter* of the book on the art of drama. I've already mentioned that there exist six nuances of speech. The beginning of the second chapter deals with them and then it continues: by training these six nuances we will learn to bring the *gesture* into the *word*. There are sounds that are called spirants (*Blaselaute* – "blowing sounds"²³). Imagine you have frozen the air in a trumpet while it is sounding. The frozen shape will give us the beautiful gesture concealed in the blowing air. The human speech apparatus is also to a certain extent like a musical instrument that

is blown; and when a spirant, a blowing sound, is pronounced, this amazing gesture is formed in the air. The spirants are such that they should be *listened to* and *in the listening* the gesture concealed in them should be perceived. The spirants are: *h, ch* (as in Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f* and *v*. Other sounds are such that the gestures concealed in them call forth the desire to *see* them. These sounds are the plosives (*Stosslaute* – “pushing sounds”): *d, t, b, p, g, k, m* and *n*. Then there is one “quivering sound” (*Zitterlaut*): *r*²⁴, which should be felt *with the arms and hands*. If you hold your arms loosely and listen to an *r*, you should have a kind of tingling sensation in them. Then there is one “wave sound” (*Wellenlaut*): the liquid *l*. With this sound you feel the desire to become it yourself, to feel the flow of the life element in it. When another person speaks the *l*, you also have to *feel it, but with the legs* and not with the arms. In the case of the spirants, the gesture *has disappeared in the sound* to such an extent that you can only try to *hear* it. This is why good poets instinctively make use of spirants if they want to express something that is far removed from the human sphere. If a poet wishes to depict a person waving his arms, fighting off, hitting someone or the like, he uses plosive sounds. And if the line is written in such a way as to arouse a *feeling*, then look for *l* and *r*. In a nutshell, all sounds *other than* spirants can point to the human being and his gesturing.

²² I.e. the second lecture of the Speech and Drama Course. The first lecture was an introductory one.

²³ It is important to note that the basis for Steiner’s classification of the sounds is neither the method of their articulation nor what occurs in the larynx, but what happens in the surroundings when the speaker forms and moulds the air. In other words, Steiner’s approach is not the mechanics of the speech apparatus, but the phenomena on the physical-etheric (sound) and inner-soul experiential levels. The primary aspect is in the listening and the activity, both of which are perceptible to the speaker. The anatomical details of the vocal apparatus are a secondary, instrumental aspect.

²⁴ In Russian the *r* sound is rolled, as was formerly the case in stage German.

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The human being lives in gestures. The gesture *disappears into language*. When a word is spoken, the human being reappears in the word; and we find the whole person in what a person speaks. However, we must know how to form speech. In a word, *the human being who has disappeared in gestures, is resurrected in*

speech. But what is characteristic and appealing in the art of drama is that the actor on stage (i.e. the human being) *does not disappear completely in the gestures* and *does not resurrect completely in the word*. This gives the audience the possibility of complementing with their imagination that which has not been fully resurrected in the word.

The contents of the second chapter close on this note. It's rather difficult. I fear I may have summarised the contents inadequately, but I couldn't make a better job of it. Incidentally, the author says that you will grasp it if you "meditate" and think about it *a great deal*. Now to move on, I will summarise some aspects of the practical exercises to develop speech.

Exercise 1

I've already mentioned that the vowels should be pronounced in the following order when practising: *a, e, i, o, ä, ö, ü, u* (German pronunciation). Now we have further exercises for the vowels. The vowels need to be practised particularly intensively, despite their being given in combination with consonants. The exercises are devoid of any intellectual content whatsoever: they are a set of words and their significance lies only in the training of correct speech and the correct formation of the sounds.

A *Aber ich will nicht dir Aale geben.*

Ask them if we need these ardent gages²⁵.

This is an exercise for the lungs, the larynx and the diaphragm. Take a look at the vowels, they go like this: *ah–eh–ee–ee–ee–ee–ah–eh–eh–eh*. Starting with *ah, eh–* you then arrive at the closed position of the speech organism: *ee, ee, ee, ee*. Hold on firmly²⁶ to these *ee* sounds and then finish the exercise in the same way as you started it, i.e. the speech organism does *ah – eh...* as at the start. The next combination of words develops the resonances (nose and head) and makes the organs that lie at the front of the speech organism²⁷ flexible (compare the progression of the vowels between *ah* und *oo* in my previous letter):

B *O schäl und schmor mühevoll mir mit Milch Nüss' zu Muß²⁸. Oh where do words full force meet me with news to muse.*

The third exercise is for the consonants. Here the spirants, plosives, liquid and quivering sounds are placed in their correct order. This develops the organs necessary for forming the consonants and *flexibility* in pronouncing them. Speech and the corresponding organs of speech are brought into a healthy state. Here's the exercise itself:

C *Hartestärke*—aaa—*Fingersind*—iii—*beiwackren*—aaa—*Leutenschon*—aa a
— *leicht* — i i i — *zu finden* — u u u.

Hardly started – ah ah ah – *finger tips* – ee ee ee – *by fractions* – ah ah ah –
loiter slow – ah ah ah – *lightly* – ee ee ee – *to finish* – oo oo oo.

There follows a sequence of poetic excerpts. Their content is irrelevant, the whole essence is that the sequence of sounds in them is such that it leads you into speech formation in an astonishing manner. This develops the individual organs, resonances, the flexibility of speech and so on and so forth. I'll write

²⁵ The English versions of these speech exercises were devised by Sophia Walsh.

²⁶ The German original text states: *Die Grenze halten Sie ganz scharf fest.* "Keep the borderline in sharp focus." In the course of the exercise the position of the vowels moves from the pharynx (ah) forwards in the mouth (eh) and reaches the area behind the teeth (ee), which Chekhov calls "the narrow slit" in the previous letter. In this case the objective is to hold the formation of the sound (ee) behind the borderline of the teeth. The next exercise, in contrast, is based on the continuation of the vowel sequence beyond this borderline.

²⁷ In the original text, the organs of articulation are meant and not the speech organism as such.

²⁸ Beneath this exercise in the letter, the vowel sequence: *o ä u o ü o i i i ü u u* is written in purple coloured pencil, presumably by Gromov himself.

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these excerpts down for you. The letters in red pencil alongside the exercises and verses are there to make clear the sequence in which the exercises and verses are to be spoken. You'll find the sequence below:

I

*Und der Wanderer zieht von dannen, Denn die Trennungsstunde ruft; Und er singet Abschiedslieder. Lebewohl! tönt ihm hernieder, Tücher wehen in der Luft*²⁹.

II

*Ich sonne mich im letzten Abendstrahle
Und leise säuselt über mir die Rüster.
Du jetzt, mein Leben, wandelst wohl im Saale,
Der Teppich rauscht und strahlend flammt der Lüster*³⁰.

III

*Und drüber hebt si d'Sunne still in d'Höh
und luegt in d'Welt und seit: «was muesz I sê In aller Früei?» — Der Friedli
shlingt si Arm um's Kätterli und's wird em wol und warm. — Draf het em's
Kätterli ä Schmüezli êe*³¹.

See the red letters and numbers overleaf for the sequence of these exercises:

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times I – once

A — another 10 times

B — another 10 times AB — another 10 times C — another 10 times ABC —
another 10 times II – once

A — 10 times

B — 10 times AB — 10 times C — 10 times ABC — 10 times III – once

Apropos the exercises in general: keep in mind when practising that you are not learning from mere exercises, but learning by means of the exercises from *the sounds themselves* and the speech organism itself. The sounds are our teachers, (the divine beings).

²⁹From *An der Saale hellem Strande* by Kugler

³⁰From *Ausgewandeter Dichter* by Freiligrath

³¹From *Die Überraschung im Garten* by J.P.Hebel, written in the Alemannic dialect of German.

Exercise 2 The artist of the word (the actor), needs to develop an awareness for the processes happening within the human being when speech is being formed. Imagine a person who has spent his whole life on a desert island and has not

learnt to speak through lack of human contact. He is *capable* of speech: he has hearing and the organs of speech. This person suddenly finds himself in human society. He feels the desire to start speaking and the sounds *hm, hum, ham, hem, him* break free from him.

The exercise consists of speaking these sounds and seeking in them, at a deeper level, the processes occurring within yourself, while forming speech (the astral body takes hold of the ether body). Feel the very strong dynamic of speech in these sounds. You have to pronounce these syllables in depth and practice insightful devotion to feeling the processes of speech formation. You will have the sensation of an inner whooshing, zooming sound.

So, there you are, Mitsoopochka, that's all for now. I send you a thousand kisses. Scribble me a postcard upon receipt of this letter.

Your Mitsooza.

4

My dear and golden Mitsoopochka!

I can't stop thinking of you, I miss you and send you all my love and embraces. Relax and enjoy the summer and nature. Meanwhile for your diversion, I will write you a summary of the contents of the *third chapter* of the book on the art of the stage. I'll begin: modern *prose* is not artistic. Its concern is to bring thoughts, which have detached themselves from language and become located in the head, back into speech again. In other words, prose began to convey the naked content of thoughts, devoid of any kind of artistic element. The thoughts of the head are all directed downwards onto the material level. True thoughts on the other hand, can only arise out of the *whole* human being. This is where the connection of artistic speech with the gesture begins.

The head (roundness) does not have gestures (the remnants of gestures in the head are the eyes and the facial expressions), and the gesture has to be taken from the *rest* of human being. Therefore speech must take *the human being in his or her entirety* as its starting point. And this is the meaning of the phrase: 'gestures must be brought into speech'. (The thoughts in the head are all mixed up in chaotic formlessness, which is evident if only from the fact that one can, for

instance, be a good anatomist and know nothing about the human soul. All this has nothing in common with the artistic element.) In a word: prose as a conduit for the thoughts of the head is devoid of *style*, and *style* is the prerequisite of any artistic work. Otherwise: if you start from the desire to convey the content, the thought, there is no art; if you start directly and immediately from *the feeling of style*, then there is art. However, even prose as narrative can and should be artistic. For that the arms and, more importantly, the *legs and feet* need to be involved. What is a “narrative”, a prose “account”? It is the *epic*. An epic deals with the narrative of an imagined object; and it uses the hexameter for this purpose. For the essence of the hexameter is that it brings *the legs and feet* into speech. It brings the rhythm of the feet into speech. (It’s not for nothing that one talks about the verse “foot”.) The proper feeling of the hexameter is that not only you can *speak* it, but you can *walk* it as well. Narrating something implies being thoughtful (the 2nd nuance of speech). We stand on one foot and speak the *oh* in a rounded and slow manner (also an aspect of the 2nd nuance of speech). Then we take two steps, as if we were sliding through our speech: *eh – eh*, and return to “thoughtful” with a rounded and slow *oh*. So we have *oh eh eh, oh eh eh, oh eh eh*: long—short-short- long—short-short- long—short-short- and so on. We end up with the familiar form of stepping the rhythm in speech work. Then the *whole* person participates in what the head has created as its product. (You can also take sideways steps.) When we hear a hexameter, we have the feeling: something is being narrated to us through it. It feels as if our inner life and our moving feet have been freed from the force of gravity.

Now for the opposite: we can take our starting point from a *feeling*, i.e. from what is within the person. After being in an uncertain state of emotion for some time, we want to attain clarity and focus

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our feeling and then the anapaest comes about: short-short-long – short-short-long--- short-short-long--- and so on. With the anapaest we are dealing with an *expression of feeling* and not a *narrative*. Just as we learn the epic by means of the hexameter, so too we learn the *lyric* by means of the *anapaest*. (We have to

remember that both the hexameter and the anapaest can be found *in language itself* and that we have to learn everything that is connected with the various laws of speech *from language itself*. This is a very important and fundamental feeling when training.) When we read hexameters, we learn to use the tongue, the palate, the lips and the teeth, i.e. we learn to pronounce the *consonants*. When we read anapaests, we learn to use the larynx, the lungs and the diaphragm; they teach us how to pronounce the vowels. We learn to *dwell* on the vowels. We learn the trochee through the hexameter and the iamb through the anapaest.

Further, the author mentions two concepts that are not very clear to me. They are: the drama of style and the conversational drama. The iamb is suitable for the first type of drama, which is more *internal*; and the trochee for the second. Anyone wanting to learn how to read fairy tales, for example, should prepare by reading *trochees*. He will acquire the feeling that the consonants are important for fairy tales and that something particularly powerful is meant to work through them. Reading a fairy tale emphasizing the vowels will create the impression of unnaturalness. If the consonants are spoken faintly, the impression created will be of something light and ghostlike. The iamb is needed if you want to perform something realistic in a poetical manner. The *vowels* play a role in the iamb (although the consonants are not excluded completely) and this type of speech is the only one possible when you want to present something realistic in a more poetic light. For this reason, exercises using the iamb are very important for the actor. (They will also be a help in works written in trochees.) The iamb is necessary for prose drama.

The author continues by describing how he once saw a performance in which the actors wore masks like the ancient Greeks did. He says what a delight it was not to see boring human heads and insincere human faces! He admired the bodies and their gestures and the possibility of expressing so much without the aid of the head and face! He says the moving mouth and facial expressions of the speaker create a repulsive impression. He continues by giving many indications concerning facial expression and especially *the movement of the lips* when speaking. Hence you can conclude that he is taking a stance against dilettantish speech and this is what he finds offensive in all its forms. There is one sentence: “By means of the face there can only be expressed what real speech or singing is and what the inner appropriate complement is of what the human gesture can

actually reveal in such a splendid way”. The chapter concludes with the thought that speech which is not transformed gesture has no ground beneath its feet.

Now I’ll write down a *breathing* exercise for you. It just consists of *not taking a fresh supply of air into the lungs until the entire preceding air stream has been used up in speech*. However this needs practice. It must become instinctive. When practising, you need to take air into the lungs and hold your hands close to the diaphragm to check that the inbreathing is correct. Then you speak: *ah eh* until all the air is exhaled. In the same way practise with the consonants: *k l s f m* (these sounds must be spoken slowly to spread them out over one entire exhalation). In these exercises, the process connected with the breathing should be observed attentively and consciously.

Then this exercise with the breathing³²:

*Und es wallet und woget³³ und brauset und zischt, Oh wild West Wind, thou
breath of Autumn’s being*

(breath)

*Wie wenn Wasser mit Feuer sich menget Thou, from whose unseen presence the
leaves dead*

My dear, now I will also describe the contents of the **Fourth Chapter**. Gather your patience and read on. To refresh your memory: the lyric requires the iamb, prose – the trochee or the dactyl.

³² Graham Dixon’s note: the breath is not stored or held, as in diaphragmatic breathing, until there is no more air in the lungs. It is rather the case that the stream of the breath goes right through to the end of the line or phrase. The in-breath is the breath of intention, on it the speaker is receiving the meaning and/or the image.

³³ In this excerpt from Schiller’s poem *Der Taucher*, *siedet* is replaced by *woget*.

The trochee and the dactyl are for the narrative element. The tone of the narrator’s voice lives in the trochee or dactyl. We are dealing with an *imagined* object in the case of the narrative or epic. However, this object can be imagined so vividly that it only remains for you to make yourself the *instrument* for

everything the imagined object speaks and does; and then *performance* comes about. Herewith the path is outlined from the tale or epic to the drama and performance. (But not every epic work is so constructed that it contains within itself the possibility for such a transition. The author cites *The Cid*³⁴ by Herder as an example of an epic making the transition to drama or rather, to the possibility of *performance*.) It is not recommended to deal directly with drama during training because then it is very easy to make everything external and lacking in depth. One should start precisely with the narrative, the epic; for this is where *imagination* is required (for the object is only imagined). The ability “to transpose yourself into another person” and to *perform* him is what is required. For in actual fact he doesn’t exist, he is only in your imagination. By practising giving ourselves to the character, we acquire the on-stage professional faculty of *listening to our fellow actor* and allowing his speech to resonate within us. This constitutes a complete co-experiencing with our fellow actor.

Then, following a section with examples from poetry, the book states that the artist must develop a *sense*, a *feeling* for the *medium* he is working with, as Michelangelo felt the marble and spent a long time searching for it in the quarries. The *word* must be sensed as the medium. You have to feel that *you are* to be an apparatus, an instrument, *through* which something is brought about on stage. The next thought: you need to develop a *sense out of the depths of your heart* – a sense that tells you what is *good and what is bad in poetry*. The forces that guided us in this direction in the past are disappearing and we are now faced with the need to draw out of ourselves what was shown us in the past. When speaking, we must learn to sense that we are communing with divine beings, we must learn not simply to *think*, but to *speak inwardly*. The author refers to a play (apparently called *The Portal...*³⁵), to the seventh scene and says it is written as if it had been *heard*. It was not written out of thoughts or the choice of words, but directly from what was inwardly *heard in words*. In a nutshell, we have to deepen, intensify and address most earnestly the issue of *artistic taste*. Taste in its highest sense can become our guide in art. The last thing we need in art is intellectualism; the very first thing we need is artistic sensing. Alexandrine verse is also mentioned in this chapter and he treats it as a compromise between prose and poetic form, but not knowing what alexandrine verse is, I didn’t grasp

anything. Pardon vous! This is the end of Chapter 4. Don't be horrified, I'm starting **Chapter 5!**

Schiller said: "The destruction of matter³⁶ through form is true artistry". Feeling and sensing are the actor's materials. They must be destroyed, absorbed by form, i.e. the proper form of speech and gesture on stage. This is mastery, this is art. Form (the word, gesture, image, rhythm) must work in art just as natural emotions do outside of art. So it is on the stage, so it is also in the other arts. If you read properly written poetry properly, your voice will develop *by itself*. When preparing a poetic work for reading, you should transpose it from verse into rhythmically heightened prose (similar to Andryushan's³⁷ prose) and devote yourself to feeling and sensing the work in this form. When you have fully experienced and amassed the feelings, go on to the form of the verse and your feelings will take on *form*. Form swallows up, destroys matter (i.e. the natural feelings such as they are). This is necessary in order to avoid skipping over the feelings themselves and not to be taken up with the mere technique of the form-giving process. At this point the author mentions the formative forces embedded in the human speech organism. I wrote about them before in the exercises for the vowels.

Chapter 6 Naturalism is a repetition of life, it imitates and photographs it and that's why it isn't art. Art must *portray and present* everything using its own means and must not resort to natural means, as naturalism does. Everything in art must be *manifested even to the smallest detail*, everything must be *clear, consummate and visual*. For instance, the audience should not have to rack their brains to guess what the image in front of them is. They should receive it in full and *grasp* it without effort or guesswork. The actor should be skilled enough to employ the resources of his art – the word, the forming of the word, his facial expressions and gestures – so that they contain everything he wishes to portray, without anything superfluous or lacking in complete clarity for the audience. The *integrity* of art lies in

³⁴ During the lecture Marie Steiner read the first, third and fourth romances from *The Cid*. An example of this in English would be Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur*.

³⁵ Rudolf Steiner's first Mystery Drama, *Die Pforte der Einweihung* (In English: *The Portal of Initiation*).

³⁶ See Schiller's work: *Letters on Aesthetic Education*.

³⁷ Andryushan is the Russian poet and novelist Andrei Belyi.

this. All this is hindered by the fact that we have lost the feeling for the “word” and the “sound”. We hear *the meaning through* the words, its intellectual *content*, but we don’t hear the *word* itself or understand it either. We have lost the capacity to *understand while hearing*. And that is a huge difference. This difference must become quite clear to the actor. Through understanding the meaning of each individual sound we are led to what we have lost. Besides that, we have to realise that the vowels are the expression of the soul’s inner experience (in relation to the outer world, for example: *ah* is amazement at something etc.). The consonants express the soul’s attempt to *depict in the form of sound* some outer phenomenon or object, to imitate the outside world *using sounds*. We must practise analysing a word according to the meaning of its sounds. By experiencing and feeling our way into each individual sound of a word, we will grasp its deep meaning and discover its secret, the secret of its origin.

The author gives an analysis of several words. I’ll mention one example. This will help when practising. The German word *Band* (bond, link, bow). The word contains the *ah* sound – amazement. There was amazement at the fact that something can be joined together, connected. In reality it is amazing that something can *hold together* when we tie it up! This human amazement was expressed in the *ah*. The word *Band* originated in amazement. Further: when I tie or join something together, one thing envelops another. It encloses the other thing, wraps round it. The sound *b* in the word is, as it were, the expression of this wrapping round. Then there is the sound *n*. It signifies something fleeting that is light to take hold of; and *d* signifies something fastened, reliable. So, in the word analysed, *n – d* mean that something of an unstable nature is fastened together during the *Band*. In a similar way, every word can be *imbued with feeling* from start to finish. This is necessary for the actor, who is the artist of the word. Interjections must be observed and studied. Much can be learned through them in this direction. In the world there exists *one single* language although it is spoken by different peoples. The only thing is, they see something different in one and the same object because they express it using different sounds of one and the same language that is common to all. For this reason, the Italian says *testa*, the

German *Kopf* and the Russian *golova*. And when we analyse the meaning of these words according to their sounds, we see that the German *understands* the head in this way, the Italian sees something else and the Russian something else again. If they all perceived one and the same thing in “head”, then they would have one and the same word for it. To understand that however, you have to distance yourself from the heady, intellectual meaning of the word. The relationship to words as described here must become instinctive. When listening to your fellow actor on stage, one or the other sound should sound in the background of your soul, depending on what he or she is saying to you. But all of this should be completely instinctive. In a way, the sounds should become the actor’s faculty of “listening”. Correspondingly, if the actor replies to his fellow actor after listening to him with, let’s say, the sound *ee* resounding within him, his reply will sound different to when he listens with the inner experience of the sound *ah*. The very fine nuances arising from this have the power to reach the audience both in the balcony and in the stalls; and the audience will say it is “good” or “bad” because it hears the music of the soul coming towards it from the stage instinctively, not intellectually. That’s the end of Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 is completely devoted to an analysis of a play set in the French Revolution³⁸. The analysis is based on sounds. The scenes, the characters and the whole play are depicted as sounds or sequences of sounds. Robespierre for instance is: *ee, o, d, t*; and Danton: *ä, ee y,l*; but it’s impossible to summarise without having a copy of the play in front of you. For this reason I’ll limit myself to individual ideas taken from the chapter. To analyse a play in this manner, your *know-how* has to have become *instinctive* through practice. When a director or actor analyses a play, his aim should be to have its moods laid out before him, in the palm of his hand, as it were.

From Chapter 8: Mastery of the art of true word formation depends to a great extent on adapting yourself inwardly to the moulded and pictorial elements of speech as such. There must be *truth* and *reality* in art; naturalism wants to attain this *truth*, but it uses *natural means* to express it. Art, however, must use its own, *other* means to express *truth* and not natural ones. The truth of *nature* goes to meet the Spirit. Spirit *shines through* the truth of art. When we grasp this, we

shall begin to understand what *style* is in art and we shall find the way to it. For this reason we should practise speaking in a language that is not our

³⁸ The tragedy *Danton und Robespierre* by Hamerling.

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native language, that is: the language that is not the *natural* one. The book cites the example of a Frenchman who speaks broken German³⁹.

All training must take place in complete freedom. The spirit of what the author presents is what we should grasp and then we should in freedom vary and work out in detail the contents of the book, out of the spirit of the *whole*. There is no room for *pedantry* here. During a scene on stage each actor should be involved in the action. When one actor is speaking, the others should act what he is saying (this requirement isn't clear to me); but when listening to your fellow actor on stage, you have to act that you are listening to him (no naturalism here!

Naturalism on stage has a *doll-like* effect).

When speaking about something of an *intimate* nature, you should walk from the back of the stage towards the proscenium. When speaking to a crowd on stage and the impression should be created that they understand what is being said to them, the speaker should slowly move backwards (either in the midst of the crowd itself or outside it⁴⁰). If the opposite is the case and the speaker walks about in the crowd and moves forwards in the direction of the audience, the latter will have the feeling that the crowd doesn't understand the speaker. The audience perceive different things with different eyes. The right eye is adapted for *understanding*, the left for *interest*. If the actors move on stage towards the audience's right eye, the latter understand what is happening. If the movement is towards the left eye, the audience's interest in the action is aroused (see diagram).

When bringing news on stage: speak loudly from a distance. When the messenger has approached and he tosses his head back somewhat: this gives the impression that he knows what he is talking about. In the case of joyful news, the fingers are spread⁴¹. In the case of sad news, the entrance is slow, the messenger halts and his fingers are close together.

Everything the author proposes in this direction is accompanied by a caution to the effect that it is not meant to limit the actor's or director's freedom. It is merely the statement of the proper laws of stagecraft, and that alone. Even when these laws are observed as set out, there still remains much room for freedom. This is the end of Chapter 8.

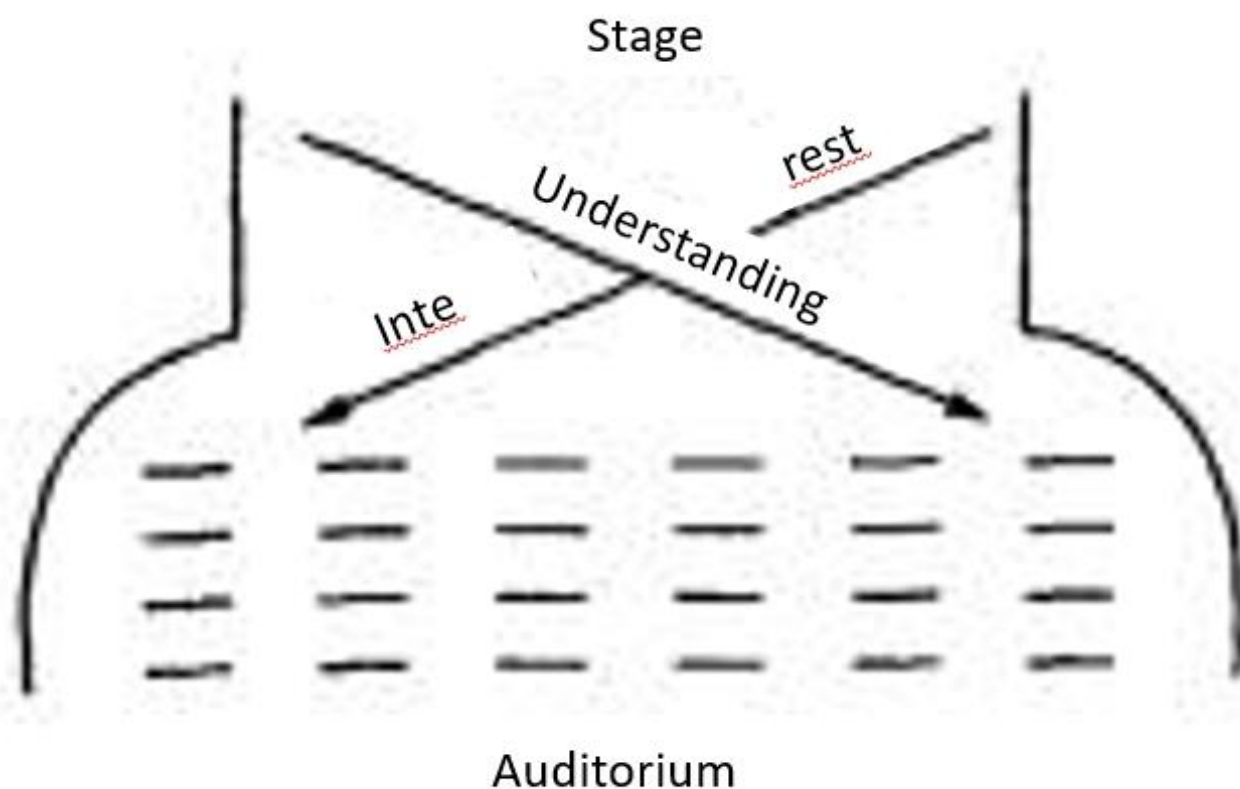
Chapter 9 I'll outline the main idea from a long section of text. An artist can build his work on the foundation of all possible traditions, which will result in the work getting finished; but it won't be a very honest creation. Art is honest when the artist creates his work entirely: from the foundation right to the top; when he himself remains *from start to finish grounded in the creative process*. The artist must derive everything that ultimately constitutes his artistic work *out of himself* and not from anywhere else (say, tradition). However, this kind of art often does not reach completion. But at least it is *honest*⁴².

³⁹ Marie Steiner read a scene from Lessing's *Minna von Bornholm*, in which one of the characters speaks French interspersed with broken German.

⁴⁰ The lecture does not mention the speaker being outside the crowd.

⁴¹ In the lecture: the fingers of the right hand.

⁴² Steiner takes Goethe as his example. The latter created works written out of the sound element of speech. In this respect his verse dramas are without compare. However, he was unable to go further and create real drama, as it takes shape and lives its own life on stage. Goethe was very aware of this and his dramatic works written after *Iphigenia* and *Tasso* were unfinished. The only exception was his *Faust*, which while being a work of high poetic achievement, resorted to traditional, Catholic imagery in its final scenes. In this respect, Goethe showed great honesty in that he was unable to create out of the depths of his own artistic feeling.



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You should not stand facing your fellow actor when listening to him on stage, but with your *ear* towards him!! For the face should be turned to the audience. (A strange demand, don't you think?). In everyday situations, out of *politeness* you face the person speaking, but it contradicts the law of acoustics. Don't turn your back on the audience; only do it on the rarest of occasions, when it is justified from within the actor. In general, the author attaches enormous importance to what is justified from an inner point of view. He even justifies smoking on stage, for instance in situations that enhance the image to be created. For example, a juvenile enters with a cigarette – this is a clear indication of his desire to appear grown-up, and in this case smoking is justified. In general, however, the author blasts smoking on stage. What kind of speech formation can there be, when a foreign body, a cigarette, is sticking out of the organ of speech! Other reasons why the *ear* should be turned to the speaker when listening to him are: firstly, that the audience can see that the actor *is listening* and secondly, to show *what* he is listening to. (An actor's facial expressions can be developed to the degree that they radiate *power!*⁴³) He continues by saying that listening is expressed by turning the head three-quarters of the way to the audience, leaning it in the

direction of the speaker and forwards a little. This, in connection with various similar exercises, will develop the instinct for miming in the proper manner. This manner of listening is good when one character is giving instructions to one or more actors. It may be objected that it would be stereotypical if several characters adopt the same listening stance. The author replies: Raffael would never have said that. For the sake of the *aesthetic whole* he would have positioned all those listening in the above-mentioned manner, but with some minor modifications.

Another thing about listening (this time not in the sense of an instruction): If the speaker is using the second nuance of speech, the listener reacts in silence using gestures of the first nuance. If, for instance, the speaker uses the sixth nuance for his utterance, the listener gestures in the second nuance. These are all examples of *harmony*. However, this cannot be done intentionally. It must become flesh and blood through practice, become artistic *instinct*. You have to learn to distinguish between two closely related nuances: i) persuading and ii) convincing. The author distinguishes the two in detail, the difference being experienced inwardly and expressed in gestures in connection with the nuances of speech. I can't describe that section because it isn't completely clear to me how to translate it. However, you can feel the difference when you think about it and have selected a number of examples and found the gestures for the nuances.

Standing in *profile* gives the impression of intelligence (or foolishness depending on the profile). Turning from profile to the audience (and even tossing the head back slightly) evokes the character's *intellectual worth*. A *three-quarter turn* to the audience with the head slightly tilted or bowed gives the impression that the character is *intellectually participating* in what is being said. *Frontal* conveys the moral worth of the character. That means, if an actor on stage is having a verbal effect on his fellow actor, then, depending on how the fellow actor is standing in relation to the audience, the impression will be conveyed of how he is perceiving the words spoken – with the head or with the heart. *Will* is always expressed through *movement*. The movement should be selected consistent with the content of the will, i.e. everything that has been said about the forms of movement in general should be taken into consideration in this case. One actor, for instance, expresses his *will* to another actor using the appropriate words. The latter may wish to unite himself with the former's will or to oppose it. In the case of acceptance or acquiescence, the actor listening should make a movement from

left to right. But if the movement is from *right to left*, the audience will receive the impression that he does not accept or agree, and will create obstacles. Movements can be made either with the *arms* or with the *head* (which is the better option) or even with the entire body. (The body should in any case always assist the movement.) Just as one can have the feeling of “not being in the voice”, one can also have the feeling of “not being in the body”. Greek gymnastics master this poor control of the body. When *learning* the gesture and the word, it is necessary to unite them *consciously* and then at last true artistic *style* will become manifest in the actor’s art.

Temperament is essential. People are embarrassed to show it, but they have it. It has to be set to work. Teaching also takes temperament. A teacher should always have a cheerful face, a sense of humour and temperament. You can write a book without temperament and some people will like it and others, not. In either case the author is not visible at that moment. However, it is inconceivable and inadmissible not to have temperament when you put *your very self* on display every evening.

⁴³ In Steiner’s lecture, it is not the power radiating from the actor’s facial expressions that is meant, but his ability to have his face under his control on stage.

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Temperament belongs to art. And enhanced temperament is humour! And then things will become real. “Esoteric”.

That’s the end of Chapter 9 and my letter. I’m burning with impatience to learn whether you like this work on the theatre. My perception is that it is a wonderful, holistic piece of work, rather like a Michelangelo statue.

10,010,903 kisses. I bite your calf and squeeze your shoulders!

Yours as ever,

Mich. Chekh.

5

July – August 1926 Capri

Hello my dear, my golden one,

I miss you and long to see, hear, touch and squeeze you! I still haven't received a single letter from you. Probably there is already news from you awaiting me in Rome at *poste restante*.

I want to give you a summary of **Chapter 10** of the book on the art of drama. So I'll begin. It is necessary to penetrate more deeply into an understanding of the art of drama. Performances in ancient times in the places where theatre originated⁴⁴ were very wide-ranging. They touched on sublime images and could channel the impulses of these spiritual images right down onto the material, physical level itself. The path to understanding this and using it on stage is such that you need to immerse yourself in sensations of *taste*. The *sour* is experienced along the edges of the tongue, the *sweet* on the tip of the tongue and the *bitter* at the root of the tongue and on the palate. The word "taste" is used both for the experience of eating and the assessment of art and morality. By going experientially into the "tastes" in the various parts of the tongue, we will grasp that the physical arouses sensations on the same pathways as the moral element arouses speech. For it is with the very same organs that we use for *speech* that we also experience the tastes: sweet, bitter and sour. If the experience of moral bitterness on stage is intensified by the experience (in the performance) of the taste of bitterness *on the tongue*, this will have great significance for the pronunciation of the *words*, the *facial expressions* and even the *gestures* at that moment. The secret of the transition from *sensations* to *speech* is contained herein. When we taste the sourness of vinegar, there is stimulation of the tiniest organs of the tongue, which is more of a *passive* nature. And when an "aunt⁴⁵" has a sour facial expression, the tiniest organs of her tongue are stimulated in the same way, only more *actively*.

In the ancient places where performances were given, various kinds of non-human beings⁴⁶ were portrayed through the medium of the chorus. A particular aspect of recitation by the chorus was that a *certain something* could work through it and a special atmosphere, an "astral aura", filled the space between the stage and the audience. In this atmosphere, the audience found itself in a *different* dimension, in which it experienced fear of the Divine World (in the best sense of the word). Gradually the ability to experience anything that wasn't merely

naturalism was lost. What had lived as the moulded-pictorial-musical element in the word and as recitation filled with style, all this that had served as a means of portraying the Higher, was replaced by the figure of the human being himself. The human being began to portray the god Dionysos, whereas previously divine beings only spoke through the chorus. He put on a mask, which was intended to express the unchanging dimension of the eternal, fixed world of the gods. For the mask of an animal⁴⁷ is unchanging, whereas the human face is in perpetual motion and cannot serve as the symbol of the eternal. Only in *death* is the human face motionless. The human being sensed the presence of something behind natural phenomena and then he also learned to feel something within, which was a kind of echo of what he saw behind the natural phenomena. Then he began to experience his innermost being in this sense. From this there arose the notion of the human soul.

⁴⁴ Steiner spoke about the dramas of Aeschylus, which still contained an echo of the art of the Ancient Greek Mysteries.

⁴⁵ A sarcastic term of Steiner's for an anthroposophical lady "who is a dogmatic caricature of Anthroposophy".

⁴⁶ The Gods of the Ancient Greeks.

⁴⁷ Owing to the condensed form of Chekhov's summary, two ideas that Steiner described separately became merged into one. In Ancient Egypt the gods were depicted with the heads of animals because the expressionless features of the latter came closest to personifying the principle of the eternal, whereas the ever-changing expressions of the human face were considered unfitting for this purpose. Steiner goes on to describe how in Greek drama the actor wore a mask to portray Dionysos.

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The technique and significance of the contemporary art of acting lies in the actor being able to completely forget his everyday personality and ordinary self on stage and, by means of speech formation in the full sense of the word, being able to surround himself on stage with an atmosphere (aura) that the audience can perceive instinctively.

Chapter 11 Every physical and physiological action on stage should be based on the foundation that the actor creates by learning to feel and experience the meaning of the different *sounds*. Nothing on stage should be expressed outwardly without an underlying mood of what lives in the sounds of speech. For instance, *anger* should be learned as consisting of two parts: i) tension and strain in the muscles and ii) relaxation, weakening and falling asleep. The sound *ee*

corresponds to the first part and *eh* to the second. When preparing to portray anger, you should have someone read that section of the script whilst you at the same time intone inwardly the sounds *ee-eh*, *ee-eh...* and tense and relax your muscles. This will be the right approach to mastering the outer manifestations of the art of acting. Similarly, concern should be prepared with the sound *ö*, combined with slowly sinking gestures and eyelids. If you are made up to look pale, as the permanent trait of the character, your lips should be pressed together. The author gives a whole host of similar examples, but I'll leave them out to give you a quicker overview of the book. You need to know a number of correspondences that are encountered in life. For example: a *sigh* or a *groan* is impossible when in a state of profound grief. It becomes possible, if an effort is made to fight the grief, if there is a desire to go through it, if it is overcome even to the extent of one being able to speak a few words. The facial expression for *weeping* is learned through the sound *ah*, the facial expression for laughter (and the beauty of laughter on stage) through *o eh* (or in a weaker form through *ä ah*). I'm skipping over a lot. Similar methods of learning legitimate expressions of emotion on stage greatly *accelerate* the actor's development. Also, many other parts of the actor's organism are developed at the same time. For instance: *listening to something sad*: the face is motionless, with a slight shaking of the head; but simultaneously the diaphragm and the lower torso develop by themselves.

I've already mentioned the importance of the eurythmy gestures, which the actor should experience as an inner reverberation when he is pronouncing sounds. It should be added that the practising of eurythmy gestures gives the actor a real grasp of the essence of language and the art of drama in particular. The very position of the human being in the universe becomes clear through them. Compare animal sounds and human speech. The human being is placed nobly at the centre of the universe. In a word, the author attaches a universal importance to the eurythmy gestures. In order to grasp the significance of the human being in the universe, he suggests that one should give some thought to what humans are capable of: they can express their inner feelings in the vowels and co-experience the outer world in the consonants, and all this is complemented by gestures and facial expressions.

Chapter 12 There are two types of dramatic works: those in which the playwright starts out from an interest in the *subject* of the play, its characters etc. In these plays, the artistic and poetic style does not come to full expression. In plays of the second type, the *style*, the *aesthetics* of the work interest the playwright as such, he starts out from an artistic feeling and intent, and only then does he seek out a *subject* for the play, as a secondary element. Such works are full of what the author calls *the artistic, the stylistically accomplished*. Examples of plays of the first type: *Die Räuber* (Schiller), *Götz von Berlichingen* (Goethe), Part 1 of *Faust* (Goethe), *Don Carlos*, *Fiesko*, *Kabale und Liebe* (Schiller). Plays of the second type (all by Schiller): *Maria Stuart* (the moods are stylised), *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (the events are stylised), *Wilhelm Tell* (true psychological images, the stylisation of the characters, the psychological depiction), *Die Braut von Messina* (The stylisation here is expressed in a moulded inner landscape on stage), *Demetrius* (the encompassing stylisation of the human element within the unfolding events). By working on plays of both types, the actor grasps the secret of his own acting *stylisation*. He must prepare differently for each of the two types of play. For the first type, he should proceed as quickly as he can from gesturing, while being read to by someone else, to speaking his words himself, i.e. to combining gestures and words as fast as possible. For the second type: he should make the stage of silent gesturing while being read to as long as possible. I can't say why that is so because I don't understand the German text⁴⁸.

However the basic idea is that we distance ourselves from *naturalism* by rehearsing in this manner. In no way should we *perform* naturalistically what is *written* naturalistically. We have to

⁴⁸ Steiner said the gestures, which the actor creates while being read to, help him to form his words instinctively, subconsciously.

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extricate the audience from naturalism and this will enable them to be completely integrated with the actors. Naturalistic inner experiences just *don't reach* the audience. When creating the *scenery*, you need to give thought to creating an atmosphere suited to the characters speaking in front of it. On one hand you

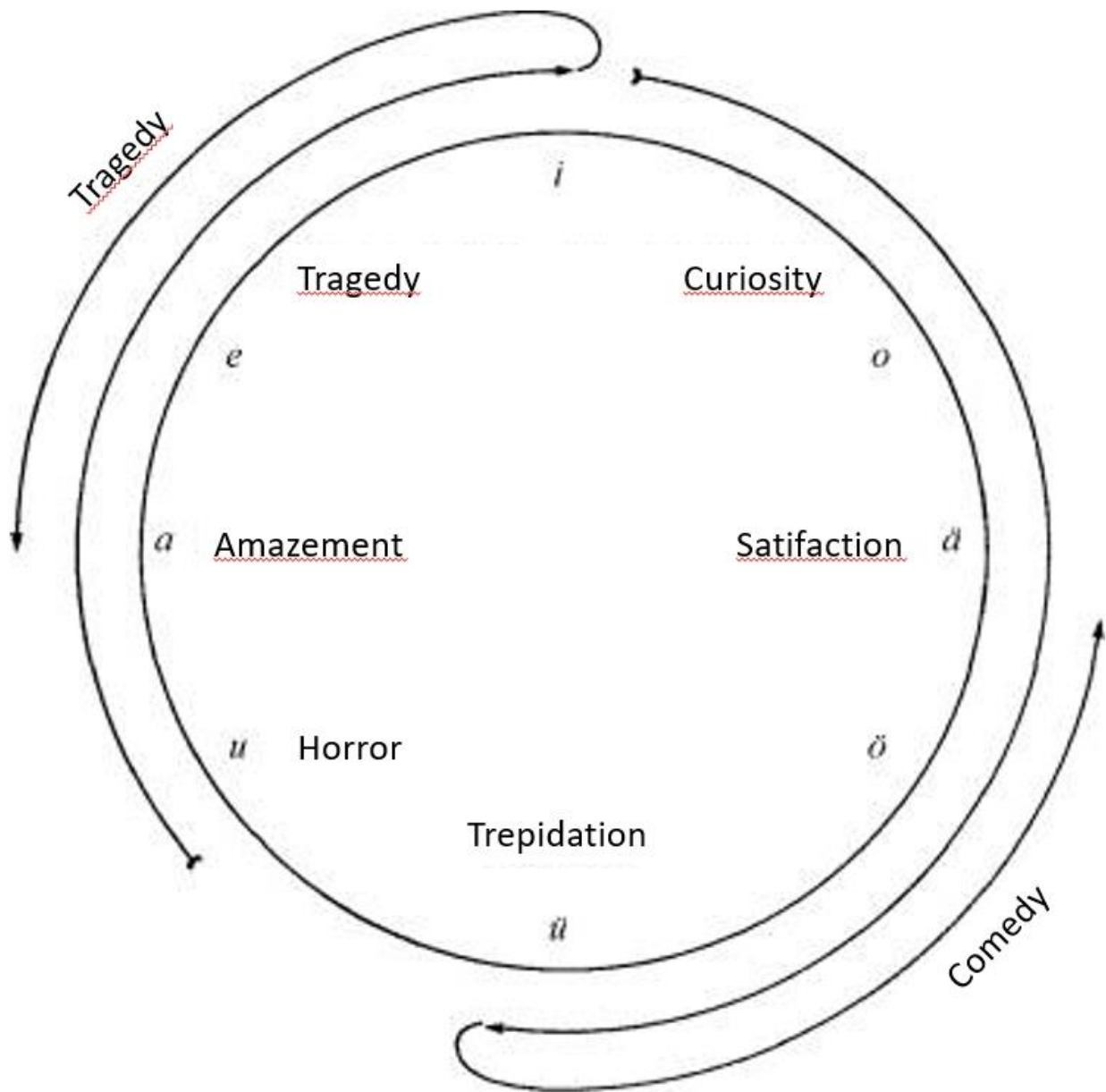
should avoid naturalism in the scenery; but on the other, you shouldn't arbitrarily overload it with lines and forms, nor should you stylise it artificially and invent new forms. *Colours* are of the essence. Stylistation should only involve *colours*. For example, if a scene is set in a forest, but the mood of the scene (or of the entire play) is red, shades of red should be added to the *colouring* when depicting the forest. Neither should costumes be sewn in some arbitrary style so that people look like clowns. A properly sewn costume should also have a *colouring* that is appropriate for the character wearing it. In addition, the costumes of the entire cast should harmonise with each other, setting off one character against another.

Chapter 13 The play as a work of literature is just a *musical score for the actor*. He must *recreate* the play within himself. The score is the zero point between the playwright and the actor and they must converge and *meet* at this very point. The score should be analysed from two aspects: i) the individual characteristics of the roles and how they complement each other harmoniously; and ii) the play *in its entirety*. Character should be analysed and assessed using the sounds and by connecting it with sounds. To do this, you must have a strong inner experience of the sounds in general. The play as a whole must also be analysed in connection with the sounds and on the basis of the sounds. Tragedy has its own laws, as does comedy. Tragedy goes from *oo* (horror, fear) to *ee* (compassion), which is the culmination of tragedy, and then back to *ah* (amazement). At the end of the play, *oo* should sound a little bit, but from the distance. Comedy: from *ee* (curiosity) to *oo* (trepidation) and in conclusion, to *ah* (satisfaction). (See diagram.)

With regard to costumes, I forgot to add that they can be modified so as to show the essence of the character, but one shouldn't make a character look ridiculous! Don't do anything whimsical or nonsensical.

Chapter 14 Aristotle defined tragedy as *catharsis*⁴⁹ (purification) that occurs when the audience experience strong emotions: horror (*oo*), compassion (*ee*) leading to the experience of *ah* (or *oh*). The audience were healed of the passions that plagued them in daily life. Catharsis occurred from watching a tragedy repeatedly. In his definition of tragedy, Aristotle mentions its connection to the ancient places

⁴⁹ Steiner differentiated between what Aristotle defined as the emotional stages of tragedy and how this inner process would have been expressed in vowels in the ancient mysteries of mankind. Chekhov combines the two aspects into one.



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where performances were held and where people left the everyday world of feeling behind them and were lifted into a higher world. However for all that, the author suggests we shouldn't confuse tragedy with the ancient places where it was performed. Aristotle defines *comedy*⁵⁰ as a plot that is enclosed in itself, the aim of which is to evoke in the audience feelings of curiosity (*ee*) and of faintheartedness and trepidation (*ü*), through which *human interest in life is*

enhanced. But everything the author presents as the results of his research, all this should be understood through the life of the sounds, through the meaning of the sounds themselves.

He states that the art of the stage must become the true experience of the human soul, as embodied in language and gesture. With regard to the scenery: it shouldn't be stylised using modifications of forms and lines. The stylisation of the scenery is in the *lighting* and *colour* effects. The scenery isn't a *landscape*, a *picture*. It doesn't stand alone. It is *not complete* in itself, as a painting can be *complete* and *finished*. The scenery is only *complete* when it is *stage lit* and is viewed *together with* what is happening on stage as performance. The scenery is an addition to the performing actor; and *lighting* and colour are the means of stylising it. The whole human soul lives in colours. That's why the colours of the scenery and the costumes are so important. An outer colour can be experienced as an inner one. For instance, a loud red – as joy, green – as thoughtfulness, yellowish green (speckled) – as the soul devoured by egoism etc.. Once the curtain goes up, the audience should *see* the colours that radiate from the soul of the actors;⁵¹ also they should *hear* the colour tones resounding from within the actors. The harmonious consonance of the colours of the costumes, the scenery and the lighting that changes in the course of the action –all these create the right effect on the audience. The overall mood of the play is expressed in the colours of the scenery (or scenarios). The changing moods reflected by the actors are expressed in the coloured lighting changes. The character of the various actors is mirrored in the colour range of their costumes (right down to such details as the colour of a tie, not to mention costumes of former times). At this point, the author speaks of the importance of observing the rainbow in order to grasp the life of the colours and to develop a deep understanding of colours on stage.

Now I'll proceed to tell you about some practical exercises. They need *to be thought through in depth and practised*.

1) The plosive sounds (*d, t, g, k, b, p, m, n*) correspond to the firm element of the earth⁵². When spoken, they descend towards the earth and work within it. Each of these sounds forms the air in a particular manner.

The spirants (*h, ch* (as in the Scottish *loch*), *y* (as in *York*), *sh, s, f, v*) correspond to fire, the element of warmth. When pronouncing one of these, we should feel that warmth, fire is being kindled; and we sense how this fire works back on us as a strengthening of our whole being. The quivering sound (*r*) corresponds to the element of air and the liquid sound (*l*) to that of water. We can practise consciously transforming one element into another. For instance: we consolidate the watery element in *lobe* and make the firm element liquid in *bowl*. The flowing element is turned into air in *lyre*. The airy becomes fiery in *rush*. And so on. There are all kinds of combinations. But that isn't all, and this is where the second exercise begins (and I find it fascinating). A particular sort of combination of these sounds gives rise to a particular faculty in the actor, namely: the combination of a plosive with the liquid sound. The author has a special term for this: *Stoss-Wellen* (literally "push-waves"). For example: *kyle, deal, lead, tale, late, bowl, lobe* and endless more. They endow the actor with *faculties* which the author describes as follows: the ability to merge words and embed them into sentences, and so endow them with an amazing, harmonious flowing quality. Speech acquires the faculty of being so expressive that gradually the certainty arises: "What I am speaking *is being perceived* by the audience". Speech acquires an inner moulded *force*: the ability to switch, to modulate from one wonderful word creation to another. An entire sentence is one single streaming. What an amazing, startling sensation it is in the mouth when speech flows. Now for the combination of other sounds: air and fire, i.e. *r* and all the spirants and fricatives (*h, f, s* etc.). For instance: *rife, rice, rush, rave* and any other combination of *r* with a spirant. The author describes the result of this exercise as follows: what the actor speaks, acquires the potential *to be alive everywhere* in the auditorium: from the stalls to the upper circle. In a nutshell, the word of the actor *is alive everywhere*. Speech flows and floats through the entire auditorium. The quivering of the air

⁵⁰ Steiner actually stated that the works of Aristotle have come down to us in an incomplete form and that his definition of comedy has been lost. However, he gave an approximation of how Aristotle would have defined it. This is what Chekhov was actually referring to when he wrote "Aristotle's defines comedy as ...".

⁵¹ See also the chapter: *Thought forms and the human aura* in Steiner's book *Theosophy*.

⁵² Chekhov was referring to the ancient doctrine of the four elements, as can also be found in Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.

transforms into movement through the transition to the spirant. One opens oneself up to the outer world. Further, to acquire the ability of having a hypnotic effect on the audience, you need to pronounce *v ei w*⁵³. Next! When we pronounce the syllables *hum, ham, him, hom, hem, hm* (the order is

unimportant), we obtain as a result (or in other words: we set ourselves the goal of obtaining) practical knowledge of what it means to form the air on a grandiose scale. We receive a general idea of what the *dynamic of speech* is. By pronouncing the sound *m* at the end of the aforesaid syllables, we learn what the “push”, which is present in all the plosive sounds, actually is. Practising it, we become aware of an important feeling of an *inner, independent* whooshing, zooming sound. We become conscious of a second, independent human being within us, the being that speaks and must become separate from us, so that we can become true artists of the word by directing this being from without. We are independent of it. It is the one who speaks. It is our speech instrument. It is our medium. Seek the idea of speech formation in it. A certain something becomes free and lives in pure vibrations. Besides that, I have already mentioned to you the significance of the “astral takes hold of the ether” exercise.

Now for the next exercise: The actor’s speech must become imbued with feeling; an inner tone of feeling must sound in his speech. To achieve this, you have to practise directing outer sensations and feelings inwards so that they become internalised and then express them in some particular word form that seems fitting for you personally. Examples from the book are: *outer* warmth (in a room, let’s say) can be experienced inwardly and expressed in the words *it whooshes around me*. Or another feeling: cold can be turned inwards and be expressed as *it prickles me*. But this *quality* has to be inside you, in every fibre of your being, in every limb. The author says that if you practise *a good number* of such examples for yourself, it will have the required effect. With regard to this exercise and all the others, it should be remembered that, when you practise one thing, you are unnoticeably learning other things at the same time. Besides, you shouldn’t think, for instance, that when the author states that a certain result is achieved by practising the sounds *b* and *l*, that the said result only applies to these sounds. Oh

no. You must practise these sounds specifically, but the result will extend as a *faculty* to all kinds of speech, regardless of the sounds present in it. Altogether, it is important to feel *language and speech as a totality*. And in general, as the highest goal, you need to strive to make speech a matter of ease, something flowing and not requiring any special effort of the actor when he speaks. If you were woken up during the night, you should be capable, as it were, of reciting some soliloquy without difficulty; the soliloquy should just pour out of you by itself; and you, the actor, as a human being-artist, should become detached while this is happening, quite free and even filled with admiration for his artistic speech from without! This is exactly the aim of true, artistic speech formation. But to achieve it, you have to go through the whole training with the sounds and the other things that the author describes in the book and then master everything to the point of it becoming *instinctive*.

Chapter 15 You have to remember that art originated from ancient spiritual sources⁵⁴ and what it portrays must be connected with the spirit through the idea. For this reason the artist should be his own instrument. He should be capable of playing his physical organism like an instrument. In addition, the actor should develop himself as a human being who is profoundly interested in life, has a feeling for life and is not floating in the clouds. And we shall be on the right path when we separate out that special “speaking human being” within ourselves. And we shall achieve something else of great importance – we shall not get swallowed up and engrossed in the *content and the conceptual aspect* of speech. Being free, we shall, in an inspired state, observe and have at our command our very own work of art from the outside! And the time will come when the actor will understand that his life on stage is a special part of his life, which stands apart from his ordinary life and has nothing to do with it; and he will not bring naturalism, vulgarity and the commonplace onto the stage, nor will he take with him from the stage an abstract dissipation that deprives him of his true humanity. He will live a full life until the footlights go on and then he will in an inspired sense take part, observe and command himself as a work of his very own creating. But you mustn’t become *obsessed* by your role, you mustn’t become a *medium*. That would be the wrong thing. You have to stand next to your role, but experience joy and sorrow unconstrained while you contemplate your work. (I don’t know whether you’re getting the point of what

⁵³ In the passage that Chekhov was referring to, Steiner comments on the imaginary German word *veiw* (pronunciation as “five” in English), the sounds of which have a hypnotic effect when spoken.

⁵⁴ The original 15th lecture opens with the words: “All artistic activity also has its esoteric aspect to the extent that a certain foundation must exist for it to be fashioned out of the spiritual world.”

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I’m trying to convey in this jumbled fashion.) (Esotericism) And here again the author speaks about observing the rainbow as being of the greatest importance to the actor. I mentioned that earlier.

Now another thing is necessary: you need to develop a subtle, intimate feeling with regard to your dreams and the images they contain. You have to immerse yourself with complete understanding in remembering your dreams. You must become acquainted with the difference between *dreaming* and *ordinary life*. The difference is clear and familiar to everyone, but the actor must grasp it to a particularly high degree. He must become familiar with two poles: i) everyday stimulation of life *through the outer world*⁵⁵ and ii) profound, vigorous, *inner* immersion in memories of his dream life. When he practises these two contrasting lives (outer reality and dreams), he will grasp the “esoteric” art of drama. The actor should experience his role as being intimately internalised, just as a dream can live within him, inwardly, intimately. So, on the one hand, the role is fully rehearsed from the point of view of speech formation; it is “uttered” in beautiful verbal forms with complete ease and independence from within by “the other person”. On the other hand, the role is alive in me, like a dream and it manifests in me as separate passages, agile and lively, and these passages merge and complement each other – they are alive; and, finally, I contemplate them and the point is reached when the fragments disappear, as it were, and I receive my entire role as a kind of *single whole*, as a kind of *dream of my entire role*! Is this conjuring trick clear to you? This is precisely it: on the one hand you have the complete technical perfection of speech and artistic word formation that is full of style, and on the other, your role is like a wonderful *dream*. And you are the artist, the free creator and observer of your own artistic work. (The author considers it necessary to caution the actor who attains this state against getting carried away by it!) And when this *sense* for the whole as a picture is reached, the artist will have the possibility of giving *his very best* when on stage. And then,

(when he has this sense of the whole), the appropriate and best moment has arrived for arranging and fitting up the stage itself.

The *director* sees the play and senses it as a *complete picture*, a oneness, and then he knows how to construct and fit out everything needed for the set. He contemplates now the middle, now the end, now the beginning or any detail of the play and shapes them on the stage; but his attention is constantly directed to the *whole* and this is his guide. And all this is achieved through the dream exercises. There must be nothing *thought up* here. Everything should be derived from feeling, from dreamlike imagination. Modern theatre is lacking in this *wholeness*. Seeing the *whole* and making this *whole* manifest is the *sine qua non* of contemporary theatre. The author talks a lot about open-air theatre at various points in the book, but since the time is not yet ripe for this kind of theatre, he doesn't consider it to be his job to make practical remarks on this subject. But the important thing is that all his directions apply to theatre indoors with stage sets, artificial lighting, evening performances etc. He also says that, whereas the actors used to shout instead of speaking in Shakespeare's times or in outdoor performances, nowadays with indoor theatre, the acting needs to be toned down to a certain extent, i.e. not overdone. Rather, it should stop short of the inner intensity needed for open-air performances. In a word, there needs to be that dreamlike feeling, that breath of the dreamlike that we discussed above. And if the actor reaches the stage in his inner development where he can remain objective with regard to his artistic creation on stage, as was outlined above, he will notice the following. On his way home after the performance, for instance, he will suddenly begin to see a whole succession of pictures of things he has observed in the auditorium unbeknown to himself during the performance. He will see a whole succession of individuals from the mass of the audience. He will see them in detail, see what they were doing, how someone reacted, and so on and so forth. This will happen because while on stage, his consciousness was taken up with the essence of the play, but his subconscious self was moving about freely among the various impressions. The more intensely his consciousness was occupied, the better his subconscious was working at the same time. Images of this kind are a sign that the actor is grounded properly and objectively in reality. If he is able to set the bounds between life on stage and off stage and relate to both with interest, his subconscious will serve him well.

Chapter 16 *Fate* was the main impulse in ancient drama. Human individuality was not taken into consideration. The face was covered by a mask and the voice was blended with the sounds of musical instruments, in short: fate worked from above. However, with the beginning and ongoing development of the epoch of the consciousness soul, a new element emerges: that of love. Love was also connected with fate and social matters in former times (*Antigone* for example), but with the inception of the epoch of the

⁵⁵ The original German is: *Aufgeriebensein vom äußern Leben* – the inner state of exhaustion (“wear and tear”) caused by outer life.

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consciousness soul⁵⁶, love between the sexes emerges as love between individuals. Humour emerges in exactly the same manner, replacing satire (Aristophanes). Unconstrained humour, a humour not bound by specific conditions of life or community, as was the case with satire, but liberating humour. Humour emerged just at the point when the human being (in drama) began to free himself from the influence of *fate* and began to *create his own destiny*. Parallel to all this, *character* appears, *the character of the human being*. And *character masks* begin to take the place of the ancient masks. Human individuality in its vast wholeness was not yet seen, but there was an interest in the *characteristics* of one *type* or another (Pantalone, Trufaldino, Brighella, the lawyer from Bologna⁵⁷ etc.). You find something similar to this in Shakespeare as well. All of these are, of course, *popular*, stock characters. The author recommends using this type of play for training purposes to learn how the type grows out of a geographical environment and this will enable the actor to portray what is individual. The combination of *destiny* with *character* gives rise to a third element: the *plot*. This is called character drama as opposed to fate drama. It is important to distinguish between two opposites: traditional Christmas plays, in which destiny is working from *another, higher level* and the already mentioned character dramas.

Comedy has its origin in the types of human character, in love and humour. How should *tragedy* and *comedy* be performed? Tragedy should *start in a slow tempo*, with *pauses*: pauses in the speech and pauses between the scenes. This doesn't

mean a slow tempo inwardly, but a slow tempo *due to the pauses*. This is necessary to give the audience time to connect inwardly with what is happening. The *middle* is the climax of the drama: the pauses disappear, but the tempo of speech and movements slows down. The *end* is performed in an accelerated tempo. (Otherwise the audience is left feeling sour, which is inadmissible when the *denouement* of the tragedy is reached.) Speed in speech and gestures. (Naturally, in a balanced manner.)

Comedy: Character already appears in it. The play opens with the emphasizing of the various types of *character*. (If characters appear such as Pantalone etc., they *merrily* tell us about themselves, but we, as modern actors, perform not so much our *character* in the former sense of a type, but as the one or other *individual*. At the *beginning* of the comedy, we should portray the character, the type, the individual we are acting *through speech and gesture*. As Sasha⁵⁸ would say, this is “our visiting-card”.) Compare this with the opening of a tragedy: there we are dealing with the *how*, in comedy however with the *what*. The *middle*: interest is aroused in what will come of all the clashes?! *Behaviour* should be presented; action, plot, so to say. (The author says: portray behaviour *by characterizing the words*, but I’m not at all sure what that means; in any case, present the *plot* in the middle of the play.) The *ending*: bring in *destiny*. Destiny intrudes and all ends in general wellbeing. To be able to do all this properly, you need to have a good grasp of what *character*, *plot* and *destiny* are.

To get a good grasp of what the two poles *tragedy* and *comedy* are, the author gives exercises, “meditative” verses. They have to be repeated in every free moment. (It would be good to practise them in accordance with all the principles of art, so that they speak in us, as I described earlier; and we ourselves are free to live with our thoughts, feeling and will in the verses, when speaking them. The author says: repeat these verses whenever you have a free minute.) meditative verse with inner warmth:

*Ach, Fatum Du hast stark mich umfasst nimm weg den Fall
in den Abgrund.*

⁵⁶ This period of historical development began in the 15th century and will last for approximately two thousand years. See Steiner *Occult Science*.

⁵⁷ Characters from the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, in which masks were also used.

⁵⁸⁵⁸ Presumably Alexander Cheban (1886-1954), actor and director and mutual friend.

Immerse yourself in the *tragic*

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Ah, star-rule you are arduous in me; spare me

*the plunge
into the gloom.*

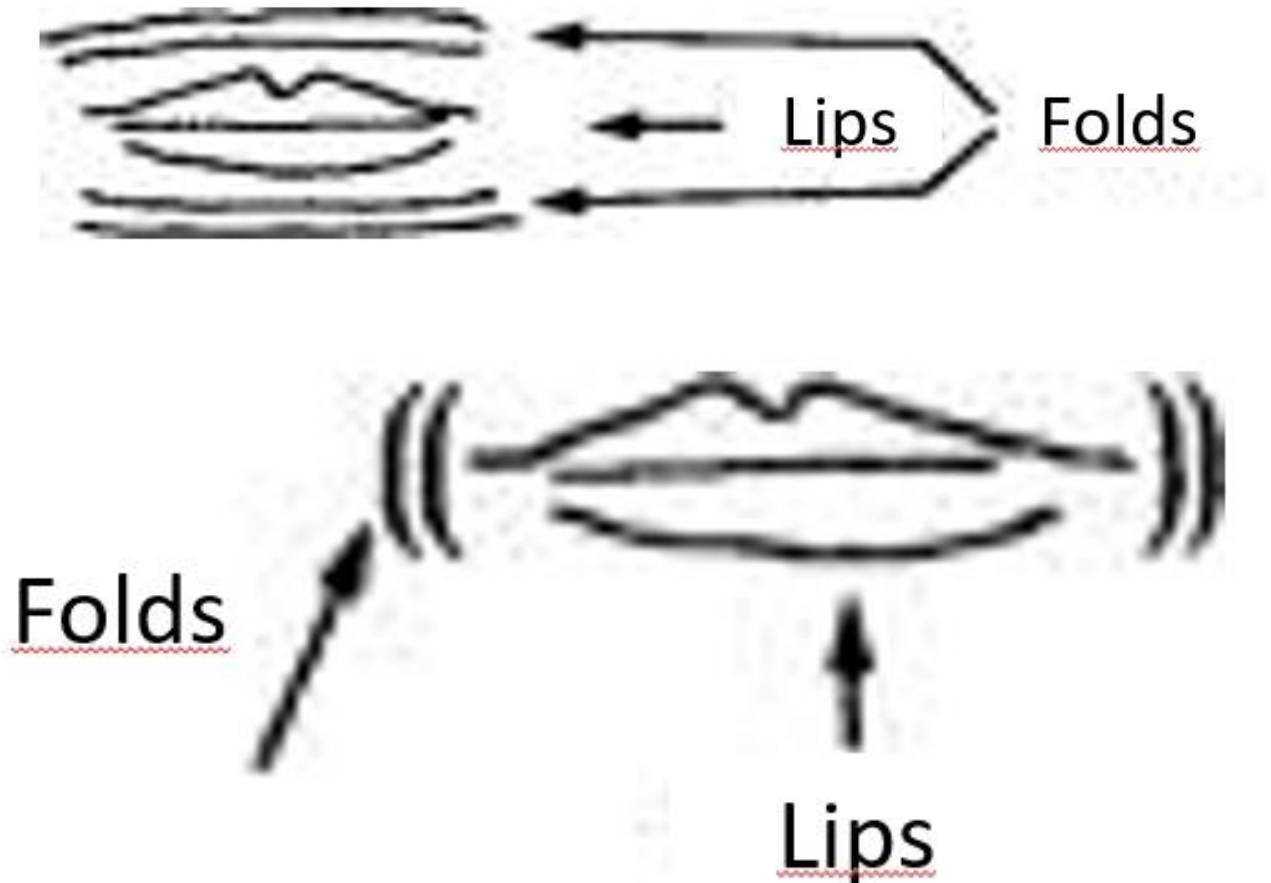
Ach (this is only the lead-in). In the word *Fatum* it is important to concentrate inwardly on the sounds *ah* and *oo*. The *ee* sound appears in the word “mich” in order to place you in the content of the verse; and then the *tragic* sounds *ah*, *oo* and *ee* reappear in the second half of the verse. Following this, we have the verse for *comedy*. When you speak it, you should not keep the humour inside yourself, but endeavour to put the experience of the content into the sounds. As you see, the sounds are combined in a very funny way. You have to *laugh using the words, to laugh your way into the sounds*.

*Izt' fühl ich
wie in mir linklock-hü
und link-lock-hi völlig mir witzig
bläst.*

*Each new fit fills me with link lock who and link lack he with wit dispersing*⁵⁹

It's not a question of giggling, because then it won't be at all funny, but to experience inward, true laughter entering the sounds or drawing it out of the sounds or expressing it in the sounds. It takes time to understand this. “Linklock-hü” is pronounced with the lips protruding, so that folds form above and below them like this:

(Moreover, the upper lip seems to be protruding a little more than the lower lip, but I don't know that for certain.) "Locklack-hi" is pronounced with the lips stretched sideways and with folds on both sides like this:



⁵⁹ English versions of these two exercises by Sophia Walsh.

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Got it? I've drawn the folds, but haven't attempted to draw the positions of the lips. Go by the *folds* and find the rest on that basis. This exercise leads into the essence of humour.

Chapter 17 I've already mentioned all the essential parts. There is perhaps only one more thing: the musical element leads us back to the divine beings of the past and the moulding, pictorial element leads us towards the divine beings of the future⁶⁰.

Chapter 18 speaks about the necessity for the actor to have a serious, spiritual attitude towards his work. Through what he does and what he is, the actor should be a leader in his culture, but without wanting to destroy it. It is in this most earnest mood that we should approach the knowledge that the world is revealed in the human form. Let us approach the way that the world reveals itself through speech formation and word formation from a new angle. The human *lips* are the organ, through which the essence of the human being is revealed because he manifests himself through speech. Three sounds are pronounced using both lips: *m, b, p*. If we pronounce sounds other than these three using both lips, we sin against speech formation and that has an adverse effect on our entire organism. If we pronounce these three sounds without being constantly and instinctively conscious that *both lips must be used for these sounds*, we likewise harm our organism and speech formation. The sounds *f, u and v* are pronounced using the lower lip and the upper row of teeth. The entire karma⁶¹ of the human being is contained in the muscles of the lower lip. It is where all the currents that live in the limbs of the human body (with the exception of the head) flow and intermingle; thus, when the lower lip moves, the *whole person* is revealed (apart from the head). The upper lip and the upper row of teeth in particular, reveal what is contained in the organization of the head⁶². What the human head constitutes as the totality of the secrets of the universe seeks, as it were, to be consolidated in the upper row of the teeth. Hence the philosophy of the sounds *m, b and p* and the sounds *f and v* is comprehensible: it is what is revealed when we combine the lips or the lips and the teeth and so on. (It should be noted that in the case of the *v*, the lower lip vibrates like a wave, which isn't the case with the *f*, for example.) Both rows of teeth are needed for the sounds *s, z and ts*. This is where both parts of the human being come into balance: the human head and the rest of the person, i.e. the part containing the limbs. The world is seised in that moment by the human being and he sends his being into the world. If we go further into the depths, we come to the tongue, which is where the soul, the feeling element is revealed. Revelation through the tongue and the upper teeth gives us the sounds: *l, n, d and t*. Whereas what the human being has become thanks to the world is expressed through the lower lip and upper teeth, what he owes to the fact that he has a soul is revealed through the tongue and the upper teeth. Here is revealed what interacts between his soul and his head, his tongue and his upper teeth. It is very important

to be aware (for those who lisp and those who are training) that the tongue is always *behind the teeth, at the back of the teeth*. For the tongue *never ever* dares to appear in speech *in front of* the teeth. If this happens (as with lisping, for instance), the result is the same as if the soul wanted to go out into nature without the physical body. Let us go even deeper. We need to develop awareness of what the *root of the tongue* does during speech. The sounds that come into question here are: *g, k, r, y (as in York) and q*. (You have to be able to pronounce both the rolled *r* and guttural *r*, as in French.) The lips and the sounds themselves are our teachers; you only have to learn their correct positioning. We must experience that the mouth and the larynx are the creators of the sounds in us. By the way, the author mentions that stuttering is connected with the incorrect use of the root of the tongue and incorrect breathing and that it can be helped with the corresponding exercises. I say that in parenthesis.

To continue: we must nurture a religious, earnest attitude within ourselves towards the sounds, for the entire world from its origin onwards is contained in them. (In the Beginning was the Word.) The author attaches colossal importance to the mood of the actors and the director with regard to the stage and the auditorium. He says: the stage and the wings are one world and the auditorium another. Both worlds are miles apart. Backstage there is a specific life and reality; you might say, trivial and commonplace

⁶⁰ Steiner added that the art of theatre lies between these two principles and is directed to the spirits of the present.

⁶¹ The anthroposophical understanding of karma (destiny) is based on the forces of the individual 'I' and the idea of personal development and is, as such, radically different to Eastern views on the subject. See Steiner *Theosophy and Occult Science*.

⁶² Chekhov was already well acquainted with the anthroposophical conception of the threefold organization of the human being, according to which the body has three functional systems: 1) the sense and nerve system, 2) the rhythmical system comprising breathing and circulation and 3) the metabolic and limb system. Anatomically they are located in the head, chest and lower half of the body. They are also related to the three soul forces: thinking, feeling and will. Steiner started by characterizing the polarity between the head and the limbs and then added the middle system as the emotional, soul element.

reality: the shifting of sets and machines, various devices producing sound and other effects and so on. That is backstage reality. And this trivial reality has to be

transformed *into a beautiful illusion* for the auditorium. Juxtaposing these two worlds, the author says that the actors and the director should change their attitude to the world backstage; they should desist from *commonplace* remarks about the technical devices to be found there and develop a reverential attitude towards them, because these very backstage technical devices are what becomes an illusion of beauty for the auditorium. In this way care should be taken to unite the auditorium and the stage. When you operate some device backstage, you should not experience and feel: “I’m cranking some machine,” but rather that it is a creative means serving art. This must be *worked at* in theatre, it cannot be achieved with sentimental talk. We shouldn’t forget for a minute that in the auditorium the illusion must be created out of the mood that lives in the hearts of the actors and the director. And even if the auditorium at present is not up to the mark, we shall only ultimately succeed in raising the level of the audience by means of the method just outlined.

(Final) Chapter 19 The sounds of speech are connected with the whole human organism. The sounds formed in the region of the palate (and to a lesser extent in the region of the larynx) penetrate the *entire* person down to the soles of the feet and the tips of the toes. The sounds formed with the aid of the tongue are connected with the head, they include the upper lip (but exclude the lower lip) and from here they extend to the spinal column. The sounds pronounced with the lips and teeth are connected with the chest and the front parts of the body in general. The whole human being is involved in language, speech, in these three directions. Speech creates the whole person in these three directions. From this it follows, for instance, that we learn to walk on stage thanks to the palatal sounds, because they penetrate right down to the feet. The author says, however, that there is no need to give further rules. One should elaborate this whole subject for oneself. In general, he says he does not want to be understood as advocating that we just devote ourselves to a study of the sounds in a dry, pedantic sense. (The sounds are a world to themselves and naturally we should study them.) The main thing is that we should gain a general grasp of everything he proposes and that we work towards the goal of attaining beautiful, true, flowing speech in general. When we train, let’s say, the guttural sounds we are also doing something for the labial sounds and so on. Everything is interconnected, everything forms an organic whole. It isn’t pedantry, although it is an *exact* training. The correct

exercises will lead to your learning everything from speech itself. By immersing himself in the life of the sounds, the actor moves away from coarse, conceptual meaning. His work should be *sacrificial*.

An umlaut signifies that something has been multiplied, for example: *Bruder – Brüder* (brother – brothers), *Wagen – Wägen* (wagon – wagons). Language is the *fullness of human feelings*. Or the universal, all-feeling Human Being. The sounds and tones express *everything*. Speech is the gathering of the all-sensing Divine Beings.

Next: the actor should not only be able to speak by developing his speech organism in the proper manner, he should be able to *hear properly spoken speech inwardly*; and hear his soliloquies, dialogues, passages of text and scenes “*with a sense of hearing for the inaudible*”. The ability to speak properly, that is the entire wisdom of speech formation must be so cultivated and brought to such perfection that speech becomes separate from the person (as I wrote earlier). For, when it is thus separated, the actor will be given the ability to *hear* his speech inwardly, *before it is uttered*, and then speak out of that which has been heard inwardly by his soul! This is the lofty mode in which the author wrote certain scenes of his dramas⁶³. *To speak completely out of hearing*. Then the need will arise to live in the words and feel the syllables and sounds. Then the human being will be uplifted in the sense of the author’s book, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds...* You need to have someone around you whom you ...*listen to*. Much will be understood from such listening for the role itself with regard to character and for everything else (if the author who wrote the literary work is himself highly gifted). The author calls this inner listening a special kind of actors’ intuition. The audience will perceive the role, as “heard” by the actor, with understanding; and you may ask such an actor why he performs his role *like this* and not *like that*. He will be entitled to reply: “I hear this stage character like this”; and he will be right, because this is where the freedom of the actor’s individuality lies. He is free in this situation; he, as a free creative individual, can *hear* his whole character. Then the author quotes the soliloquy “To be or not to be” and states: “So you see, many underlying causes need to be at work in the art of drama”. However, everything he proposes is only meant to serve as indications, hints and seeds to be elaborated and developed in the direction shown.

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There is an extraordinary earnestness in the author's concluding words about the actor and the great significance of theatre. When the human being, *in his entirety*, devotes himself to serving the Spirit through the Word and the Gesture: then this is also a Path of inner development.

There, my dear Mitzzzzupochka, that's it. Of course it's not everything, only hintings at hints. But I just so much wanted to give you a complete picture of the 19 chapters of the book on drama. Let me know when you receive this letter. This is the address: Pension Weber, Piccola Marina, Capri (Napoli), Italy. Apropos round movements⁶⁴, I don't think they are meant to be horizontal, but like this:

In short, I did it as in the drawing, but that may not be the way for you! From the entire description, you'll have probably grasped what speech formation is by now. But if anything is unclear, just ask me again. As for the Russian language, I think much will be self-explanatory if you do the exercises in German and then do what is possible in Russian as well. But, how I kiss you! If only you knew, you blackguard, how I love you and kiss you and bite you and tear out what I've bitten and rub what I've torn out and crumple what I've rubbed and weave what I've crumpled and wear out what I've woven and drench what I've worn out and I put what I drenched back together and again I tear and hammer and put it back together and, just imagine, so it goes on endlessly.

Completely yours, Misha.

While reading what I'd written to you, I was so enraptured that I charged through the room and banged my forehead against a wall lamp, which brought me back to my senses, as I now report. I'm very concerned that I haven't written anything to Nina; but all the time allotted to writing has been taken up with the letters to you and I beg you to tell Molly that I think of her and be sure to tell her why I've had no time to write to her. My dear, I still haven't written about my impressions of Rome, Naples, Vesuvius etc. but now it's clear that I'll bowl you over with Istanbul! I'll only say that the holiness of the Italians has reached such heights that they've called one of the banks in Rome "The Bank of the Holy Spirit". They

serve “filet à la San Pietro”. The best wine is called “The Tears of Christ”. In short, it’s either rollicking laughter or shamefulness. There are the statues of the popes in St. Peter’s (each pope commissioned his own statue) and one pope even whammed a portrait of his mistress onto the wall of the basilica. This is all the ridiculous side, but there is an overabundance of serious and ineffaceably profound impressions. To do justice to them all would require at least six volumes with foreword and afterword plus commentaries. I’m hammering away. I suck you up into myself, and there you’ll stay!

Apropos the left arm during the discus throw: there are no instructions. You have to find the answer instinctively. The author says several times that the gymnastics should be modified somewhat from the Greek form, but since we don’t know what that was, it’s hard to alter anything. Simply let your instinct guide you.



⁶⁴ See the description of the third nuance of speech in Chapter 1.

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August 24th 1926 Capri

My dear Eminence!

How happy I was to receive your letter. Of course, your other letters reached me too, but they're not enough and for that reason I wail: "He doesn't write, he doesn't write"! I'll answer your questions. 1) I think the book about art⁶⁵ we're planning is something *very important*, but with lots of additions, of course. 2) I'm not hopeful about "Don Quixote⁶⁶" and I'm all a-tremble about your work this summer on the mime based on motifs from Afanasiev's fairy-tales⁶⁷. 3) There's no mention of how the "I" modifies the astral body; and how exactly the sounds come about isn't mentioned either. You have to meditate and ponder it. 4) It is precisely the speech exercises that will form the speech organism. That is correct. In essence nationality is not important. True, we are deprived of such knowledge about *bl* and *ë*, *b* and *ɔ*⁶⁸. But that's a matter for the future, and quite apart from the hard sign there is much work to be done. 5) *Schmor*⁶⁹ and not *schmor*. Now I'll add something as a correction, or rather a supplement. When I was dealing with the first nuance of speech, I said that the gesture for this nuance was a pointing or indicating one. However, having studied it practically and theoretically, I've understood what the author meant with the word *deutend* : *signifying, designating, expressing something*; in short, *expressive, graphic*. (As well as *pointing*, of course.) That is: the gesture can be most varied, provided that it clearly expresses the feeling of *effectiveness*. You have to experience clearly: *your soul is active, effective to the utmost in this gesture!* To understand what it is that I want to add an afterthought to the 1st nuance: try to speak the following silently and only using gestures: "All of you stand up, I pick up this stone, raise it above my head and hold it very menacingly and fling it into the distance. You rend your garments and rush after the stone!" Excuse the literary composition, but after doing the gestures of these words you, *Madame*, will get what I mean. The main thing is, the gesture should *express* something and be *effective* at the same time. When I do the voice exercises (A, B, C etc.)⁷⁰, I'm amazed and delighted at the result, which lasts for the whole day sometimes: I don't recognise my own voice. Its dusty quality, much praised by the newspapers, disappears and... (secretly) ... I dream of working on a new version of ... forgive me... *Romeo* in a completely new way, using speech formation. Oh, oh, oh! – don't tell anyone. Hold your tongue and fall forever silent. My impertinence is only thinkable in secret! I think my ardour will dissipate as soon as I have performed the first night

and I get up the next morning with a voice sounding as if it's coming out of my a..e. Then my hopes and dreams will be shattered because I experienced new vocal sensations when practising, as well as new reveries connected with them! I'm horrified at the thought of performing anything at all from my previous repertoire and want to work on something new, in a novel, pure, creative way (Romeo! Sorry!). I'm absolutely shocked at the catastrophe that befell Andryushan⁷¹. I wish him a speedy recovery. You are completely immersed in theatre work by now?! My enchanting one, drop me a few lines about your impressions of the theatre. Write to Seestrasse 22, in Berlin. We'll be heading back to Moscow soon. I can't wait to see you! Off to the steam baths! On the very first day, off to the baths and the pool. Get your sackcloth out (I mean a clean nightshirt). Well, I've sent you five letters setting out the ideas on theatre. Let me know immediately upon receipt of all five of them. I'll be really upset if even one of the five letters gets lost, for they are a *synopsis*, albeit a poor one. There won't be time to summarise them again and what is more, from the German. Vladimir⁷² made copies of the five letters for himself, but he left some things out; so there would be no complete summary. I kiss you all over.

Truly yours, Misha

⁶⁵ According to M. Ivanova, Chekhov was referring to the plan to write a book on the technique of acting.

⁶⁶ A play based on Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was included in the repertoire of the Second Moscow Art Theatre in December 1925. ⁶⁷ The mime, *The Wondrously Beautiful One*, was staged in Paris in November 1931.

⁶⁸ Letter in the Cyrillic alphabet, the last of which is the so-called "hard sign" mentioned in the next sentence.

⁶⁹ See Letter 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Andrei Belyi was hit by a tramcar in Moscow at the end of August

⁷² Vladimir Tatarinov, husband of Maria Scriabina, daughter of the composer Alexander Scriabin. Vladimir was a close friend of Chekhov's, an actor and director. He and his wife were members of the Russian Anthroposophical Society in Moscow, in which Andrei Belyi also played an important role.

There are five letters about art, besides this one. This is the sixth letter.

My dear Tilsit, pass the enclosed letter on to Andryushan.

Give my regards to Nikolasha. Is he working? To Novikov and Zhenya. Are they in the theatre? To Semyonch and Shelaput.

My compliments to your mama and papa. To your little sisters too. The various

colours of my handwriting are due to the pencils becoming blunt⁷³.

Bazba sends keessez.

7

August 28th 1926 Capri

Greetings my incomparable, inimitably unique work of Nature!

I mi-mi-miss you, my oh my oh my. If you were married, I would hate your wife⁷⁴. You are mine!

I'm going to write down my thoughts about the school. I want you to give this subject some thought and then draw up some relevant ideas. The school will be divided into two classes, sections or groups, if you will. The junior group will have four teachers: Sofya⁷⁵, Volodya⁷⁶, Sasha⁷⁷ and you. I don't know whether you'll teach together or take turns. I don't know either if you'll each have your own group, or if you'll take the whole group in turn. I'm inclined to think: the whole group in turn. I will take the senior, smaller group. Both groups will most likely have lessons simultaneously. These are external considerations. The internal ones are: what will you four teach in the second year? As a basis: selected exercises from the previous year and then new ones to be decided jointly by us. How are the new elements to be taught? Naturally, not in the form that we ourselves study them. We must interpret the new elements and adapt them to the students' level of comprehension, taking into account their awareness and previous experience gained from us. For example: what is clear to us from the mere mention of the concept "speech organism", will have to be explained to them using imagery, poking various parts of their anatomy, drawing analogies, depicting feelings, captivating them with graphic expressions, demonstrating the right way together with the wrong way, providing examples: Chaliapin and anyone from the Korsh Theatre⁷⁸; seizing on the moments that are spot-on and pointing out delicately their mistakes. In a nutshell, a long, full, many-sided process of explaining, demonstrating and practising the speech organism on their own persons. The ideal is to aim at getting them to the point where they realise that the speech organism is an independent being, separate from themselves. We'll need to activate all the *pedagogical intuition* at our disposal; and you, Volodya and I *have* that intuition. Here we touch upon an important question: you and Volodya are capable of teaching the second year the new elements, Sasha and

Sonya are not. Hence the conclusion: to divide up the curriculum between you. Sasha and Sonya's main work will be to continue teaching selected exercises from the first year. You and Volodya, selected new ones. Contact between the four of you will be maintained through teachers' meetings.

Now, as for your apprehension that it will take years of training before starting to teach. I categorically retort: 1) The author states constantly that he is voicing ideals, which will need time to be achieved, but that the essential thing is to sow *seeds*. And that we can and are obliged to do. All the more so since we *have* gifts. 2) Don't forget that what you, Volodya and I know about the art of drama exceeds the knowledge and *experience*, the inner *experience*, of all our fellow theatre professionals to such an extent that we have something to offer them out of the depths of our hearts and our *experience*. We should not just think of ourselves and wait until we consider we're up to the mark and capable of starting to teach. You have to pass on what you've received. By refusing to enrol students, you choke on your own self-sufficiency and fail those who are capable of receiving. That's my reply to you and Volodya and to myself on that score. 3) Destiny has placed us in the right circumstances and knows better than we do what the results of our teaching will be. 4) In the process of teaching, we ourselves will be learning. 5) By preparing our lessons, we will be able to assume responsibility for what we do. 6)

⁷³ The letter was written in various shades of coloured pencils.

⁷⁴ According to a friend, Gromov and his future wife, Alexandra Davydova, had been inseparable since 1924, but only married in 1946. ⁷⁵ Sofya Giantsintova ("Sonya") (1895-1982), actor and director.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁷⁷ Alexander Cheban.

⁷⁸ Actors of the theatre founded by the entrepreneur, F. Korsh (1852-1923).

Much of what Steiner states has put into words what has been vaguely present in our souls for a long time now. If you consider our theatre work, you will realise that for a long time now much of our teaching has been along these lines, but it wasn't very clear or worked out in detail. Now, however, the firmest foundation has appeared for what we had already anticipated inwardly in our own teaching. So in that respect what the author offers us is strength, not doubts and weakness.

We shall keep to ourselves what we do not know; but what we do know we shall pass on with a sense of responsibility. 7) We're not going to conceal from our students that we *want to learn* together with them. They will understand that in the best sense of the word. 8) We're going to teach *a little at a time*, but work long and meticulously on one and the same thing. This will also greatly enhance our knowledge of the subject.

To continue: we can suggest that anyone wanting to teach segments could do so, but under my supervision. There will be more new exercises in the senior course, but here again adapted to the students' level of understanding. The selection process for students and their allocation to the first or the second course are matters that are the most unclear to me. I ask you to think through and criticise what I've written. Part of the exercises will be taught with both courses together, for example: Greek gymnastics. Besides that, Zhenya Novikova will be engaged to teach classes in eurythmy. And absolutely everything that is going to be taught must be presented not as something abstract and remote, but as being closely related to stage practice. Threads must be devised to connect up with our practical work. This is to make matters concrete and motivate the students. They don't like distant horizons, alas! So there you have, more or less, my optimistic thoughts about the school. One pessimistic thought: there's a great deal that's impossible to teach our young hopefuls, *whatever sauce you serve it with*. They won't grasp that much, but we'll need to be patient.

Apropos "style": this is a difficult and unclear question. It isn't clear to many who have read the book. Nevertheless, I've worked out an idea for myself as to what the author calls "style" in art, but that is only *my own personal* understanding. Perhaps you'll see it differently when you've read the book. I see it like this: it's not about "style" in the sense of "rococo" or any other well-known "styles". Style is always mentioned by the author in the passages dealing with the spirituality of art and the actor. When the actor lives in his dreams, he receives a feeling for style. Being touched by spiritual truth is style. Whenever the voice *comes from there*, "style" is born. Andryushan's concept of "rhythm"⁷⁹ is, I think, what the author means with the word "style". It's impossible to find a specific, set form of this "style" as meant by the author. It isn't the crystallised form of the Renaissance or Gothic, living on for centuries; it is the ever new, ever other "style". *Style* is the organ of perception *for that*. The *feeling* for style is the

bringing down of truth into art. *Style* is the voice of the *individuality* (not the personality)⁸⁰ of the artist. However, each individuality is unique and, even for oneself, style is unique in different moments. The themes of artistic creation are inexhaustible and unique: which means *style* is the *life of the individuality creating in the present moment*. Living form of the living, creating spirit – this is “style”. People who are beautiful in soul manifest “style” in their lives. The harmony of the “upper” and the “lower⁸¹” is always full of “style” or, as Andryushan would say, “rhythmical”. So, there are the feelings (and much else) that rise up within me when I try to fathom what the author means with the word “style”. As an art, the whole of eurythmy is full of “style”. According to the author, the enemy of “style” is “stylization” in the bad sense of the word and also symbolism, for example: a tree resembling an animal or a cloud symbolizing a coffin and other such nonsense. All such things are inventions; and “style” is not *invented*, it is *experienced, sensed* in the creative, inspired state. “Style” is the opposite of intellectualism.

Next: you can fantasise all kinds of words and gestures when practising the six nuances of speech, but the main thing here is to start *silently*, to feel how the word is meant to sound from the essence of the *Gesture* itself. And only then pronounce the word when the inner certainty has grown that it sounds the way that the inwardly experienced meaning of the *Gesture* dictates. Moreover, a whole phrase can sound as if it is devoid of a nuance and only one or two words assume the whole expressiveness of the nuance. Here’s an example from the book: the 3rd nuance – *You tell me I am supposed to achieve this goal. **Can** I really do that?*. The word “Can” as such is spoken in the nuance *trembling*. The 6th nuance: *You suggest I look after the shop now. **I would like to go for a walk!*** The words in bold print are the main bearers of the nuance *concise*. The 5th nuance: *You are bringing me the*

⁷⁹ Chekhov is most likely referring to the contents of talks that Belyi gave at his home and also to preparatory work for the staging of his play, *Peterburg*, at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

⁸⁰ Steiner distinguished between the spiritual individuality (the “Higher Ego”), that incarnates in repeated lives on Earth and the personality (the “Lower Ego”), the earthly, subjective “I”, the development of which is influenced by outer circumstances. See *Theosophy*.

⁸¹ I.e. the higher and lower principles.

*child I always like to see: **Come!*** The word in bold print is the bearer of the nuance. You study this “Come!” on the basis of the movement, the gesture.

Next point: there is no mention at all of the amphibrach. However, another book is soon to be published by the author’s wife, as a continuation of this one; and the amphibrach will probably be dealt with in that one. So there will still be something more for us to learn about the art of the stage!

As regards the position of the German sounds *ä*, *ö* and *ü*, the author doesn’t say anything in particular, only that they lie between *o* and *u*⁸². This can easily be felt with a little practice. I think you’ve already grasped it by now. Just in case you haven’t, I’ll sketch it: excuse the vile, dense drawing. Let’s assume the speech organism is outlined in red and within it is the point of origin of the sounds. The *o* is in the oral cavity.

Here I’ve drawn the oral cavity and in it the *ä*, as it were, plops into place. It sort of occupies the whole space of the mouth, but protrudes further forwards out of the mouth than the *o*.

This is, for my feeling, the position of the *ö*:

This is the position of the *ü*. The lips are somewhat narrower than in the drawing. And finally, right at the front, the *u* jumps out, as if out of a tube.

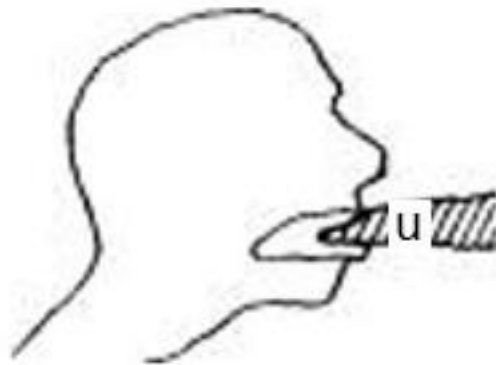
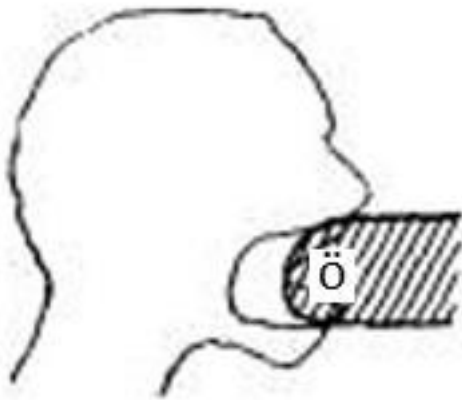
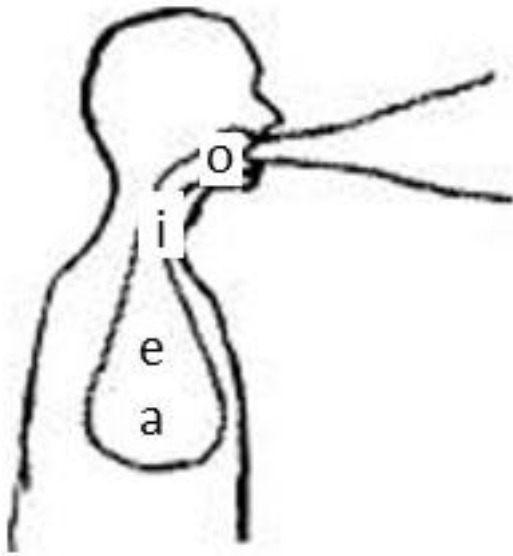
All this is how I sense these sounds, for what it’s worth. But you asked me to explain them; so my dear, I’ve done my best.

There are great hopes as far as mime is concerned! In it the word can be presented in all its beauty because there will be few words and the life of the gesture can be developed, there the music is! The two of us could work on that! (Judging from Nadya’s⁸³ letters there will be a delay with *Don Quixote*.)

PS Another important factor for the psychology of teaching is that we are merely *passing on* what we have learned ourselves. This is a very important realization. We offer to work on the technique of acting following a particular method. We can describe the working method to the students, but they have to work at it themselves.

⁸² See Letter 3.

⁸³ Nadezhda Pavlovich (1895-1980), poetess and translator.



I bite and kiss you and weave all around you. How I'm going to squeeze you when I return! Give my greetings and kisses to Nina. How is Andryushan's health? Write to me at Seestrasse. Greetings to all at the theatre. I think I'll arrive on the 28th, but I don't know for sure. Kiss Sonya and Vanya⁸⁴ from me. Don't tell anyone at the theatre for now that I'm thinking of coming back earlier, or else they'll start building the repertoire around that. I don't know if I'll arrive by that date and I'll need two days to come to myself after the journey. Off to the steam baths!

Tomorrow is my birthday – my 35th! Oh! Oo! Ee!

8⁸⁵

My enchanting, absolute Tsezurochka und quite stunning and stunned Vovochka Why haven't I written to you for so long? The reason is I received two letters from you both separately and I wanted to reply to your questions when I teach you, my dear and enchanting ones. Thank you, Vovochka, for your wonderful letter. I was very pleased to receive it. Thank you, Gundoza, for your letter and the newspaper cuttings. I still haven't received a reply from the People's Commissariat of Education, although I sent Lunacharsky a long and detailed explanatory letter, setting out the reasons for my temporary absence from Moscow, I wrote about the press, the Repertkom (Chief Committee for the Control of Repertoire) and other things. I wrote about what I am doing here and wrote that, wherever and whatever I am acting here, my ultimate aim is to return to Moscow, but that my return depends on whether I'm given a theatre at my full disposal and real working conditions are created. I also set out intelligibly my opinion on those conditions in the letter to Lunacharsky. I'm waiting for a reply, but I don't think it will come soon because the question is not an easy one and I requested a completely *serious and detailed* reply and nothing vague. I even begged him not to make a hasty reply, but with the proviso that it is final and has been discussed at all relevant levels. If you hear anything about this in theatre circles before I do, please let me know.

I'm really happy that Nadezhda⁸⁶ and Maria⁸⁷ are pleased with Vovochka's flat⁸⁸. I wish them great joy and all happiness and well-being in the future. How is Nadezhda's health? How is her German? Does she still intend to improve it, as she planned? Has Maria got any new parts? Has Alexandra⁸⁹ got any new parts? I

gathered from the newspaper cuttings that you, Gundozochka, have been acting like a buffalo. I wish you boldness and good spirits as you move into the future. Already under my supervision you made huge progress in your acting, keep up the momentum going forwards. Let your motto be: boldness and lack of fear of making mistakes on stage. That will be easy when you know what you are going out onto the boards for each time you appear. You can always modify and vary your aims. An acquaintance, with whom I stayed in the summer⁹⁰, wrote something to me recently that gave me a lot of strength. He wrote: “You will never fail at whatever *you* play”. I should like to share this very same thought with you in your quality as an actor and with Vovochka in his quality as a director. My dear, dear ones, since sending you my last letter there have been big changes in my destiny. I can’t say exactly how and why all this has happened, but my shares have suddenly increased unbelievably in value. The signing of the contract with Reinhardt’s theatre⁹¹ has evidently played a decisive role. Theatre bigwigs here have become interested in me and I have received all kinds of film and theatre

⁸⁴ Ivan Bersenev (1899-1951), actor and director.

⁸⁵ This letter is addressed both to Viktor Gromov (“Tsezurochka”, “Gundoza”, “Gundozochka”) and Vladimir Tatarinov (“Vovochka”).

⁸⁶ Tatarinov’s sister, also a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society.

⁸⁷ Maria Scriabin. She made a full translation of the Steiner lecture course, on which these letters are based, but it was never published: Also in her possession was a copy of the first edition of the Speech and Drama lecture course, the backing of which has turned yellow with age and bears the title and a drawing in ink. Judging from the handwriting and the style of the drawing it must have belonged to Chekhov personally. A dedication on the opening page says: “To my fellow pupil”. There is every reason to assume that this copy belonged to Vladimir Tatarinov.

⁸⁸ From 1928 on, this flat was the home of Tatarinov and Maria Scriabin

⁸⁹ Gromov’s future wife.

⁹⁰ Michael Bauer (1871-1929), author of many religious, philosophical, artistic and educational works, was one of the first and closest pupils of Steiner. Chekhov found in him a genuine mentor in matters of spiritual development. Bauer spent his last years at the home of Margareta Morgenstern, the widow of the poet Christian Morgenstern in Breitbrunn-am-Ammersee in Bavaria. Chekhov and his wife visited them in the summer of 1928.

⁹¹ This took place no later than September 10th 1928. Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) was a leading actor and director in Berlin.

October 13th 1928 Berlin

offers. I have two invitations to America. America scares me, of course, because of the Atlantic Ocean. All around me I hear not voices, but wailing... (The letter breaks off here and the continuation has been lost.)

Appendix 1

In the middle of June, 1926, Michael Chekhov went on holiday to Italy via Berlin. It was most probably in Germany that he got hold of a copy of Rudolf Steiner's lectures on Speech and Drama, which had been published that spring. They made a tremendous impression on him. He realised that the contents were what had been vaguely present in his soul for a long time. At that period of time, Chekhov was evidently afraid that it might not be possible to bring the book back to Russia, so he decided to summarise its contents, lecture by lecture. Moreover he was even aware that he would need to be cautious in what he wrote. He resorted to using hints and allusions. Convinced that Gromov would understand the drift of his thought, Chekhov used various kinds of abbreviations, omissions and the device of crossing out "non-materialistic" terms in the text, which his like-minded friend was meant to restore when reading it.

Chekhov was becoming alarmed about the atmosphere that was making itself felt in his work in the theatre. Later, in his memoirs, he would write about his visit to the *starets* (an elder or spiritual teacher in the Russian Orthodox Church, often possessing clairvoyant powers) of the Optina Monastery in March 1925: he had the feeling that he was under constant surveillance by the security service. This feeling proved to be true. In the autumn of 1926, Andrei Belyi described that the systematic harassment of Chekhov in the Moscow Art Theatre had begun. In the meantime, however, while enjoying the sights of Venice, which he so adored, he realised the full significance of the ideas that were to become the foundation of his approach to the actor's work on himself. He began to dream of creating a new type of drama school which was destined to become reality, but unfortunately in exile.

Chekhov's synopsis is heartfelt and exact. The present material sheds light on the professional guidelines that allowed him to fathom the full depth of his genius and fulfil the testament of his teacher: it is not a dogma, but living knowledge gained on the path of creative freedom.

The academic study of the reception of Rudolf Steiner's Science of the Spirit or Anthroposophy on the part of the Russian intelligentsia in the early 20th Century is only just beginning. It can be assumed that the publication of new material from the archives and its analysis and comparison with already available material will substantially alter outdated notions concerning the divergences, ideals and motivations of the participants in cultural life in Russia and in emigration in that period.

It is interesting to note that it was Marie von Sivers (later Marie Steiner), who was educated in St. Peterburg and studied recitation and drama at the *Conservatoire de Paris* (1895-97) and Maria von Strauch (stage name: Maria Spettini), actress at the German Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg and founder of a theosophical circle there in 1902, who first introduced the ideas of Rudolf Steiner in Russia. By 1914 when work started on the building of the First Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, which was to become the centre for the dissemination for anthroposophical ideas worldwide, many Russian writers and artists had become involved in activities there. They include: Andrei Belyi and his wife Asya Turgenyev, Maximilian Voloshin and his wife Margarita Voloshin, Tatiana Kiseleff, Marie Savich and others.

Chekhov had first heard about Steiner from Stanislavsky. In the Spring of 1918 his attention was attracted by a book in a shop window: *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* by Rudolf Steiner. He read the book and put it aside. He pursued his interest in yoga and got to know various theosophists. However, his acquaintance with theosophical literature did not lead him further in his spiritual search. The book by Steiner came back to mind and from then on he read all the anthroposophical literature he could find. The young cinematographer, Sergei Eisenstein, just arrived in Moscow from the provinces in the autumn of 1920, attended theosophical and other study groups, where he experienced Michael Chekhov and wrote home to his mother: "The conversations have a predominantly theosophical leaning. Rudolf Steiner's name is mentioned more and more often." In October 1921 Chekhov was introduced to Andrei Belyi ("Andryushan" in the letters), who became his mentor in Steiner's Spiritual Science. During the following year he became a member of the Russian Anthroposophical Society. In July 1924 he and Vladimir Tatarinov attended a course of lectures given by Steiner in Arnhem, Holland entitled *The Karma of the Anthroposophical Movement*, after which they had a personal meeting with

Steiner. The meeting took place on July 24th, as is attested by a copy of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* autographed by Steiner.

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The book remained in the possession of Tatarinov's wife, Maria Scriabin, after his death. Their flat in central Moscow served as a meeting place for Russian anthroposophists and many artists (including Boris Pasternak) until her death in 1989.

The present collection comprises all the letters from Chekhov to Gromov in the possession of the Museum of the Moscow Art Theatre. The last letter was written after he had already emigrated.

Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov (1899-1975) was a close friend and pupil of Chekhov's and performed with him in many productions. In 1928 he moved with the Chekhovs to Berlin. His future wife Alexandra Davydova joined them in 1929 and up until the return of Alexandra and Viktor to Russia in 1934, the two couples were virtually inseparable. They worked together in Berlin, Paris and Riga. Chekhov gave Gromov a letter of recommendation to take back with him and present to the famous director, V. Meyerhold, who ran his own theatre in Moscow. Viktor (as an assistant director) and Alexandra (as an actress) worked there until the theatre closed in 1938. In this letter Chekhov wrote:

I've decided to trouble you, do not be angry with me for that. It's about the future of a person who is close and dear to me; for this reason I have decided to approach you with a request. My friend, my longstanding companion in matters of the theatre – Viktor Alexeyevich Gromov – is returning to Moscow and bringing this letter with him to give to you. Before expressing my request regarding him, I will tell you about him briefly.

Gromov entered my acting studio in 1918. Approximately one year later I entrusted him to give lessons independently.

In 1922 he joined the Second Moscow Art Theatre. As a character actor he played the following roles: The Actor, Charlie, Stretton (in 'The Flood'), Kobus, Dante (in 'The Death of Hope'), Biondello (in 'The Taming of the Shrew'), Morkovina (in 'Peterburg'), the Gravedigger (in 'Hamlet') and so on... He was

co-director in a whole series of productions at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.....

While abroad Gromov played Polonius, Sir Toby and many other character parts....

*Dear Vsevolod Emilyevich, after giving you a brief description of all of Gromov's activities in the theatre, I allow myself to request you to take him under your patronage and admit him to your troupe of comrades-in-arms; Gromov is capable, he wants and loves to **learn and work**: two qualities that you, Vsevolod Emilyevich, assuredly hold in high esteem.....*

Thereafter he worked as chief director of the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre. He was awarded the title of Artist of Merit of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and wrote a biography of Michael Chekhov in the series *A Life in Art* that appeared in 1970.

Appendix 2

From *The Master Key to Acting Freedom - Getting ready for the theatre of life*.
By Graham Dixon. Appendix A.

The Numbers – Where the Impulses for Actions Originate

Number 1. (Physical Body)

The physical part in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Our instrument, called the physical body, which we as actors use; both to manifest the inner life of the character and to express the outer impulses which come to us from the outside, physical world.

Number 2. (The Soul)

Our inner life or psyche, the other half in Chekhov's term psychophysical. Consisting of thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, lusts, desires, striving, sensations, etc. In other words, our soul.

Number 3. The Outer World

The outside world and everything within it. The mineral world (dust, rocks, rivers, mountains, diamonds, gold), plants (flowers, trees, fruit, vegetables), animals (birds, snakes, insects, mammals), people, the cosmos (stars, planets, suns, galaxies), inanimate objects.

Number 4. The Ego

The unique part of ourselves that we call 'I'. The everyday ego. Our Number 4 is manifested and experienced in our Number 2. At this stage of our human evolution, we need a soul to feel, to know who we are.

Number 5

What Chekhov calls the higher creative self - the real actor within us. Number 5 marries with our Number 4, and is also manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 6

Similar in a way to what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious and what Rudolf Steiner called the folk soul. Unspoken things which affect us, such as nation, religious life and morality. It is married into our Numbers 4 and 5. Much like them, it is manifested and experienced in our Number 2.

Number 7

The spiritual world in its objective, pure and uncoloured form.

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