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## IMMEDIACY

THE FIGHT to prevent anticipation, to prevent thinking and planning ahead, to prevent setting yourself for an action already knowing what its consequence will be, and how to arrive at immediacy (It is happening now) is a struggle that seems to go on and on, for established actors as well as for those just beginning. We know that we shouldn't anticipate. We know that when we do, our actions become mechanical, and we start to concern ourselves with the outer form, and bad acting always results. We even *know* that we *should* give ourselves with innocence and trust to the moment and allow it to evolve into the next.

In life we think ahead and have expectations about what will happen but even when, on occasion, we are right, we never know *how* it is going to happen. And, of course, we never know if we will succeed or fail in fulfilling these needs. We have future plans of action and think ahead to the other possibilities when the one we are involved with is unsuccessful or tedious. It goes without saying that this is an entirely different process from the one of anticipating our character's actions or the actions which are directed to us.

### *Immediacy*

In order to isolate the problem of anticipation and search for the immediacy of a moment, and go from theory to practice, I suggest an exercise in which you will test immediacy by hunting for something you have lost or mislaid. Misplacing or losing something is an almost daily occurrence. Become aware of what you do and what happens to you. Find the human logic behind what may seem outwardly illogical in the stages of your hunt. (I have looked for a purse under a single sheet of paper on occasion.)

I don't mean that you should select only irrational or idiotic behavior, but if you discover it, don't eliminate it from your score but give it human *cause*. After a few days of self-observation you will probably get ideas for the exercise—the circumstances under which you would look for a given object or a lost one. Give yourself high stakes in this object—a treasured earring or watch, a love letter, money. Even a lost comb can have importance if your hair is a mess, and you are on your way to an audition and have no brush.

Do not preconceive or shape the psychological or emotional effect of your inability to find it, or the moment of discovery. Most of you have the mistaken idea that the emotions rise upward and increase on an even curve until they reach a peak. On the contrary, our anxieties, frustrations, disappointments, angers and joys may be charted like the fever of a patient when his temperature jumps up, drops down, levels off, drops and climbs again. Leave room in your work for this. If a sudden calm settles over you, don't judge it as wrong for your circumstances—it may precede the storm.

You are on your way out to an important engagement, putting on your gloves as a finishing touch. You check your bag for your house key. It's not in your bag where it ought to be. You know that you will be returning late, and the superintendent will be asleep, unable to let you in. Your roommate is away for the weekend, you won't be able to get back

## THE OBJECT EXERCISES

into your apartment without your key. You empty your bag and look through the contents. You replace them. You check your pockets. You look other places where the key ought to be, where it might be, where it ever was, and if all else fails, where it couldn't possibly be. You methodically rifle your bureau drawer, run to your closet, grab your raincoat, put your hand in the pocket, and the key is found.

After improvising on your circumstances until you have found many possibilities for objects to deal with in the hunt, places to search through, and the endless variations of behavior which result, make precise decisions about your course of action and give cause to it, as well as to your expectancies. If your plan remains too loose, you will still be improvising when you present the exercise, and you will only be testing the technical problem of anticipation at a minimum.

Anticipation does not present itself as a problem only at the moment of finding the lost object (which you yourself have concealed) but at every moment of the search. Go through the bag where you expect your key ought to be with faith and conviction; *really* examine the contents until you are certain it isn't there. *Really* look into the bureau drawer and *know* that it might be there, because it has been on several occasions. Go to the next logical or possible place with the faith that you might have left it there and *really* give your full attention to it so that, if anything, your need to find the key will strengthen. The expectancy and speculation as to where it could be or should be, the trying to remember where it was last or where it was yesterday, is inherent in every search.

If the exercise succeeds for you, a genuine sensation of relief or joy or perhaps rage will come over you when you finally put your fingers on the key in the corner of your raincoat pocket. And this process of genuinely getting caught up in each moment can reoccur while you are following a

## *Immediacy*

specific plan which you may have repeated for the tenth—no, the hundredth—time.

A few mechanical problems should be considered which haven't arisen before in the other exercises. In order to keep your faith high, you must take even more care in reconstructing the place. Be sure that you have enough places to look. If at home you looked through drawers which were crammed with belongings, make sure that the drawers in your studio have makeshift things in them. Nothing will break your faith more quickly than yanking open an empty drawer and having to pantomime groping through it or having to indicate looking around and under imaginary clothing or other objects. Or looking under a sofa pillow and trying to justify the prop pistol that some other actor has left behind.

Let what you are looking for be a small object. A large object, such as a shoe, may take a half hour to locate at home, but will be difficult to lose in the smaller and barer confines of the studio. Or if your eye goes to your coffee table, which at home was piled with litter but is now bare, you will have a big gap in your "immediacy."

When you have conquered and understood what it was that held you and involved you in each moment of your task, and what allowed you to proceed without anticipation in this exercise, you can apply the same principle to any scene or play. You can also apply it to sending and receiving the words of a play. Someone once said, "A fine actor *forgets* what's coming." He forgets even the next line he has learned until he needs it!

This exercise is easy to understand. It is difficult to execute. Start doing it.