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fact that you eventually cover them all. You may begin with a relationship to someone and build an objective around that, which you then clothe in circumstances, or you may begin with an objective. Let me repeat that no matter how much you improvise in the course of your rehearsals, the final work entails the decisiveness of the actions which have evolved from your particularizations of all the elements I have described in such detail. I sometimes call this your final score. The final shape you give the whole, the determination of the objectives, whether they succeed or fail as they lead you on to the next one should become inevitable. And your craft will be tested by your ability to present the final shape with the spontaneity of the first time.

How much of your behavior has been subconscious and reflex will become clear to you as you put it under the microscope in this fashion. You should also discover that your actions are dependent on your wishes and the objects which surround you.

All technical variations of the ensuing exercises incorporate the elements you have examined in this one. Don't omit any of them.

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THREE ENTRANCES

HAVEN'T you stood nervously in the wings waiting to make an entrance, fighting for concentration to gain faith in your character, in your circumstances, in your very state of being, while stagehands scurried around, whispering near the light board, and other actors chatted distractingly? If you were *on* stage when the curtain went up, although some of the distractions were similar, at least you were surrounded by furniture and objects which allowed you some kind of illusion. You didn't stand frozen while waiting for the curtain, but probably connected yourself with some small doing which came from the events that would lead you forward into your activities as the curtain rose.

How to overcome the ice-cold shower-shock of the first contact with the audience as "He enters" from backstage onto the stage has been a problem for even some of the great stars I've worked with. Actors protect themselves from this shock usually in one of two ways, both incorrect. In the extreme, they either sneak on and into the stage area, floating inconspicuously without decisive action until some object engages them so that it must really be dealt with, or they

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smash on stage with an attitude of accept-me-or-else-dammit until their involvement with a task becomes genuine. In the wings, they either review all of their homework—background, circumstances, relationships, events, substitutions—until the brain is gummed up and the thinking diffused, or they think of themselves as a “pro” who doesn’t need “all that stuff,” and whisper jokes to the nearest stagehand just before they enter. Either way spells disaster.

After many years of playing, of trial and error, of faulty entrances, and of wondering why in performance maybe three out of eight first entrances in a week were successful, I was finally able to distill from the successes three essential steps of preparation. Anything *more* or *less* left a gap or interfered with my goal: to come *into* my stage life *from* a past as if for the first time with the full involvement of my character, with purpose, in focus. In other words, I want to be *in*, not *on*!

Assuming that I have shed my private problems and my private address long ago at the stage door, and that I have slowly and calmly applied my makeup and dressed my character (and started to put my attention toward my character’s life while doing it), and assuming that the rehearsals and homework were thorough and complete, what can I do backstage while waiting for my cue? First of all, I must convince myself with true innocence that I exist *now*—not yesterday. I cannot think that I will repeat my last performance or my last rehearsal, yet I have to trust that whatever I found in them will serve me now. Spontaneity, a feeling of immediacy, can only be achieved if I give my whole attention to this moment. My three essential steps of preparation are: What did I just do? What am I doing right now? What’s the first thing I want?

And then, go for it! Even after I discovered that these three steps worked for me, I occasionally muddled an en-

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trance or left room for anxiety and tension by simply paying lip service to the steps or mechanically clicking them off. They must be fully done!

This object exercise involves the preparation for, and the making of, an entrance utilizing the three steps just mentioned. Having settled on the circumstances, time, place and objectives of your exercise, vary and make changes in steps 1 and 2 to see how they influence and change step 3.

EXAMPLES: An early morning in late November. You slept seven hours with a minimum of anxiety dreams. You are in the middle of rehearsals on a workshop production. You are facing an interesting problem with your “big” scene in the rehearsal ahead of you today, and you want to be at your very best for it. After having gotten up from your bed, your first objective is to get a cup of coffee to clear your brain.

- Step 1* (offstage) You give your attention to the fluffy new bedroom slippers you have *just* put on.
- Step 2* You are standing outside your kitchen door while you actually *are* yanking at the belt of your robe, pulling it too tightly around your waist because you’ve gained a pound.
- Step 3* You open the kitchen door and look to see if the coffee pot is on the side of the sink, washed and ready. It is. You head briskly toward it: your taste buds are primed for the coffee. You have *entered* without knowing it, in the pursuit of your wishes.

Then change it

1. You have *just* stubbed your toe on the edge of the bed.
2. You stop outside the kitchen door and *are* rubbing your toe, which makes you remember a comic toe-stubbing routine that breaks you up.

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3. You come into the kitchen and discover the coffee pot on the stove, so you blissfully hobble toward it to re-heat the coffee you made freshly last night. (You have *entered* laughing.)

Then change it

1. You give your attention to the assumption that you have *just* brushed your teeth.
2. You *are* tasting the toothpaste, running your tongue across your teeth and considering an overdue dentist's appointment.
3. You *have come into* your kitchen to hunt for the coffee pot which is ready on the table. You quickly fill the pot with water, singing loudly to push the idea of the dentist out of your head.

Or take circumstances such as coming home on a crisp October day at three in the afternoon from shopping in order to prepare a gourmet dinner for six people. Your groceries are being delivered immediately. You are outside your front door, and the telephone is ringing in your apartment. You hope it isn't one of the guests reneging on your invitation.

1. The superintendent *just* shouted that your rent is overdue.
2. You *are* getting your key out.
3. You unlock the door and run to the phone before it stops ringing.

Then

1. You *just* took off your coat as you ran up the last flight of stairs.
2. You *are* picking up your keys which fell from your coat pocket.

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3. You frantically get the door open and *throw* your coat on the floor because the phone has stopped ringing.

Then

1. You *just* saw a roach on the welcome mat.
2. You *are* using the wrong key in the door.
3. You finally *get* the door open and shiver in disgust as you *sidle* to the phone, looking for more roaches en route.

In each instance, you have set yourself the task of a continuance of your life, which has brought you from the past into the present with a future at stake, as opposed to the task of "entering" or simply getting on stage. While waiting for the entrance, you have responded to an imagined immediately preceding event by a real doing which allows you to continue your assumed life on stage. The examples for the entrance are primitive; nevertheless, to begin with, choose equally primitive ones.

Later, when they are applied to scene work or to the individual entrances of a character in a play, there are, of course, many other principles at stake:

1. No matter how precisely you have selected your off-stage stimuli and consequent doings, they will have little or no value unless they feed and act as a springboard for the life which must be fulfilled on stage. You must be tuned in to the experience of your character.

2. Your selections must be in harmony with the character's state of being, whether it is at a depth of despair or peak of emotional crisis or at peace with the world. (Refer back to Chapter 4, "Emotional Memory.")

3. Whatever preparation you used to *lead up* to these immediate three steps before the entrance is highly personal and can take many forms. Reexamine what has served you in

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the past, if you are an experienced actor, and see what can serve you now. If you are inexperienced, you will experiment with many things. Quiet, stillness, aloneness always help me to clear the way. Empty yourself like a vessel so that you can fill yourself with your character. I like to compare myself to an athlete who must warm up for an event. Victory is not a result of panting and puffing and tensing up.

4. If the scene itself is muddy or ill-defined, the entrance may be of only momentary service, or, more likely, it will be chosen for its own sake rather than as an essential beginning for the total scene.

5. There is an added dimension to the entrance—one so highly individual that it is difficult to make theoretical, yet it should be mentioned. An actor playing a fight manager making an entrance into his fighter's changing room used the three specific steps to bring him from the outdoors into the room, but still somehow he felt it wasn't enough; he wanted something more for his character. He himself wasn't as muscular, powerful, and aggressive as the role required. He solved his problem by imagining he had just walked against a strong gale. It actually transformed him as he entered.

The exercise for an entrance can go beyond just the problem of preparation in its usefulness by making you examine the endless variations and small adjustments you have to choose from, after which you must test how they can change an entrance, and from these changes prove to you how important the final selection should be to serve a character in a play. By repetition and correct execution, when you present this exercise you will see that you have dealt with the essentials for involvement and immediacy, which leaves no room for entrance "nerves."

When making an entrance in a play, you must come in with the expectancy of the character's life, and encounter what actually moves in on you—with the problems your

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character meets with which compel you to fulfill your character's needs through the character's actions!

I will never forget the magic created by Laurette Taylor's first entrance in *Outward Bound*. She came onto the stage *backwards*, stepping over the high sill from the deck to the salon of the boat, still nodding and bidding farewell to an imagined passenger on the outer deck. Once into the salon, she turned to the people on the stage, and recognized her son with a wailing, "Owwww!" Did that entrance ever come from a past into the present with a future!