This is a copy of Michael Chekhov’s visualization of his technique. He saw each technique as a light bulb that would light up after the artist gained mastery over it. Once two or three techniques are mastered the other light bulbs begin to light up in a sympathetic chain reaction of creativity.
Below is my schematic for processing the various aspects of the Chekhov technique. Building from 3 Characterization towards 1 Inspired Acting. Psycho- physical training could really be the umbrella over both Imagination and Characterisation, but I have placed it between the two as a unifying aspect of the technique.

From the *Preface* of Michael Chekhov’s *On the Technique of Acting* by Mala Powers

**Characterization (Imaginary Body and Center)**

To create characters with physical features different from his own, the actor must first visualize an *Imaginary Body*. This Imaginary Body belongs to his or her character, but the actor can learn to inhabit it. Through constant practice, the performer can appear to change the length and shape of his body and physically transform himself into the character. Equally, every character has a *Center*. This is an imaginary area inside or outside the body where the character’s impulses for all movement originate. The impulse from this Center initiates all gestures and leads the body forward or backward, and to sit walk and stand, etc. A proud character, for instance, can have a Center in his chin or neck, a curious
character, one at the tip of his nose. The Center may be any shape or size, color, or consistency. A single character may even have more than one Center. Finding a character’s center can lead to understanding his or her entire personality and physical makeup.

Composition

In nature and art, there are mathematical laws and principles that structure and balance form. This feeling for Composition creates contours and prevents the expression of ideas, dialogues, movements, colors, shapes, and sounds from being nothing more than a flattened-out accumulation of impressions and events. The sense of Composition guides the artist and the spectator into the sphere of creativity and understanding.

Psychological Gesture

This is a movement that embodies the psychology and Objective of the character. Using the actor’s entire body, and executed with the utmost intensity, it gives the actor the basic structure of the character and at the same time can put the actor into the various moods required by the script.

Feeling of Style

Everything on the stage is unreal. An actor working with a Feeling of Style attempts to capture the special nature of a play, screenplay or scene, rather than strive for a superficial sense of “reality.” Tragedy, drama, melodrama, farce, comedy, and clowning are stylistic categories or modes that require separate and precise experience. (The Feeling of Style shares a similarity with LeCoq’s dramatic territories: Melodrama, Commedia dell’Arte, Bouffons, Tragedy, Clowns.)

Feeling for Truth

This is a question of “opening” yourself – developing your sensitivity to truthful behavior while acting. There are several facets of truth. (1) Individual or psychological truth: “My movements and my speech are true to myself, to my psychology.” (2) Being true to the given circumstances of the script. (3) Historical truth: When playing period plays, do not overlook the sense of style of the age. Also, penetrate the style of the Nation where the action takes place. (4) Stylistic truth: Experience the style of the play – tragedy, comedy, farce, drama, etc. Also, learn to experience other nuances of style in addition to those categories of theatre – Brechtian, Shakespearean, etc. (5) Being true to the character. This will differ with every role. The character dictates it, and you must become more and more receptive to what the character is showing you about itself. (6) The truth of relationship: The often subtle differences and attitude of one character to each of the other characters around him.

Feeling of Ease

This is a rich alternative to Stanislavski’s relaxation technique. As a directive, it produces immediate sensations and visceral imagery in the actor and avoids the intellectual, conscious process of interpreting a command. For instance, the actor can be asked “to sit with a Feeling of Ease,” rather than
“to relax.” The actor can quickly perform the first command but must stop and think about the second one.

Feeling of Form

The actor must be sensitive to the form of his or her own body as well as to his own movement through space. Like a choreographer or sculptor, the actor molds bodily forms. When the actor awakens this feeling for his body’s form and sculptural movement, it enhances his ability to influence his body in the most expressive ways. This special awareness is called the Feeling of Form.

Feeling of Beauty

Within each artist, often deeply hidden, is a wellspring of living beauty and harmony of creation. Becoming aware of this inner beauty of being is a first step for the actor who can then allow this beauty to permeate all his or her expressions, movements, and characterizations— even the “ugly” ones. Beauty is one of the outstanding qualities that distinguishes all great works of art.

The Feeling of Entirety (or the Whole)

An artistic creation must have a finished form: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Equally, everything on the stage or screen should convey this sense of aesthetic wholeness. This Feeling of the Whole is strongly felt by an audience and must become second nature to the performer. It can apply to an entire production, a scene, or a single monologue.

Qualities (Sensations and Feelings)

Feelings cannot be commanded, they can only be coaxed. The means for coaxing up Feelings are Qualities and Sensations. Qualities are immediately accessible to you—or especially to your movements. You can immediately move your arms and hands with the Quality of tenderness, joy, anger, suspicion, sadness, impatience, etc., even though you do not experience the Feelings of tenderness, joy or anger. After moving with one of these qualities, sooner or later you will observe that you are experiencing the Sensation of tenderness, and very soon the Sensation will call up a true emotion or Feeling of tenderness within you.

Body (Psycho-Physical Exercise)

The human body and mind are inseparable. No work of the actor is completely psychological nor exclusively physical. The physical body of the actor (and character) must always be allowed to influence the psychology and vice versa. For this reason, all of the actor’s exercises must be psycho-physical and not executed in a mechanical fashion.

Nearly all acting is the result of the performer’s ability to Imagine and reproduce the reality of the play’s fiction on stage or screen. The more an actor can stimulate and train his Imagination and fantasy life, the greater will be his or her power to communicate the depth and meaning of the character.
Radiating/Receiving

*Radiating* is the ability to send out the invisible essence of whatever quality, emotion, or thought you wish. It should be sent with great strength. Radiating is an activity of your “Will.” You may even consciously “radiate” your character’s presence onto the stage or set before you make an entrance. The “charisma” of an actor or actress on stage or screen corresponds to the degree of purely invisible radiation he or she is able to achieve. Some people have this ability naturally, others need to spend a good deal of time “Radiating” in order to develop it.

*Receiving* has just as strong an effect as Radiating, but instead of “sending out” Qualities, Thoughts, and Feelings, the character “pulls them in” from other characters, from Atmospheres, from the audience, from everywhere. The actor must develop the ability to do this with great strength, just as with Radiating. It is valuable for you to ask of each character you are playing, “Are you principally a “Radiating character” or a “Receiving character”? Bear in mind that “Radiating characters” will switch to strong “Receiving” In some scenes, and vice versa.

Improvisation and “Jewelry”:

In addition to using improvisation in preparatory work, Chekhov suggested that Improvising is also valuable during the final stages of work on the part. After your scaffolding is built – your characterization established, your lines, sequences of business, and emotional sections firmly memorized – improvise once more. Paraphrase the lines or ignore them altogether, perhaps allowing your character to speak the “subtext” (what he or she is really thinking). Use modified business or entirely different business and pay special attention to “how” your character is fulfilling this business. Notice all the things your character is aware of, what he sees or hears or pays momentary attention to while the scene is progressing. Rehearsing invented activities will make it much easier to develop the “Jewelry” in your performances – nuances and little shining moments of uniqueness that are memorable and that delight both you and the audience.

Ensemble

Theatre is a collective art. The way one develops a performance in rehearsal is almost always manifested in production. When actors are artistically open and tuned in to each other, the total theatrical experience for artist and audience is heightened. Atmospheres become more powerful, the relationship between characters is stronger and more clearly defined, even the actor’s “timing” and the rhythm of scenes becomes more fluid and alive. A sense of Ensemble also allows the actors to radiate a feeling of artistic control and to convey the power of the human spirit.

Focal Point

Not everything going on in a scene is of equal importance. Generally the director should be in charge of the *Focal Point* (what he or she wants the audience to focus on at any given time), but the actor should also become aware of the most important moments in the script. The actor must know which moments are most important for his own character. *How* the actor focuses the attention of the audience on those
moments is a truly creative task. The actor may choose to communicate it to the audience by subtly stressing (or Radiating) a gesture or by the lift of an eyebrow, rather than by stressing or relying upon the spoken line. A pause or a tiny unexpected jerk of the shoulders may also create the Focal Point and garner the audience’s attention for the desired communications.

**Objective**

This is the purpose or goal toward which your character is striving. Each character has both the *Objective* and a *Super – Objective*. An example of a Super – Objective might be “I want to serve humanity.” An example of the *Objective* might be “I want to keep peace among these particular people.” Ideally, all *Objectives* should begin with “I want to . . .” followed by an “actable” verb.

**Atmospheres**

*Atmospheres* are sensory mediums, like fog, water, darkness, or confusion, that permeate the environments and Radiates from people. On stage, the heightened mood of Atmospheres fills the theatre; both performer and spectator are unconsciously affected as an atmospheres unseen waves are absorbed by the actor and Radiated out to the audience. Although they cannot be seen, Atmospheres can be felt strongly and are a primary means of theatrical communication. The Atmosphere of a Gothic cathedral, a hospital, or a cemetery influences anyone who enters those spaces. They become enveloped in the Atmosphere. People also give off personal Atmospheres of tension, hate, love, fear, foolishness, and so forth. The play or the director suggests the Atmosphere of a scene and the performers work together to create and maintain it; they are in turn influenced by it.