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The actor feels very, very swiftly, almost the moment he steps *on* the stage, the temper of the audience; and, of course, it is his business to control this temper. You're – oh – driving a horse, as it were, you're going through, in great detail the exact movements which have been decided on, you're going through the 'ballet' part of it as it were, and you're also listening to the audience, as I say, keeping if you can very great control on *them*; and then you're also slightly *creating* the part, in so far that you're *refining*, consciously *refining* the movements and perhaps inventing tiny other experiments in new ones; and then, at the same time, you *are really* living in one part of your mind, what is happening. Acting is to some extent a controlled dream. In one part of your consciousness, it really and truly is happening; but, because to make it true to the audience *all* the time the actor must at any rate *some* of the time believe himself that it is really true. But this, in my experience at any rate, this *absolute* reality – this layer of *absolute* reality – is a comparatively small one. The rest of it is technique, as I say, of being very careful that the thing is completely *accurate*, completely *clear*, completely *as* laid down, completely *as* shaped beforehand; what you're *reshaping* – because in every performance you're trying to find a *better* way to do it – these experiments were very, very small indeed, and quite unnoticed indeed by your fellow actors, but they're working all the time. But three or four layers of consciousness are necessary, or *work*, during the time of playing.¹

1 Sir Ralph Richardson, speaking in 'The Late Show Presents Great Acting' (1989), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0dIF4nVJVU&t=16s,9'50> (last accessed 02-02-2022).