

Michael Chekhov

June 1, 1937

THE ARCHETYPAL PLAN  
ADVICE TO DIRECTORS  
ONE POINT AT A TIME  
INSPIRATION - IMPROVISATION

THE ARCHETYPAL PLAN:

Criticisms: The Fairy Tale:

This is a great achievement - a real demonstration for the feeling of truth. Here we have a fairy tale without any naturalistic approach - without any reason-and yet it is absolutely believable. The whole play is one big archetypal performance. The power of this archetypal approach is that it puts everything in its right place. Without this approach the actor is compelled to add one thing to another, but the chain which appears before the audience is very crooked. It is not possible for the actor to know how to put things together, without having an archetypal ground. By having this ground, it is not only easier for the actors and directors to find the details, but the plays themselves are absorbing this archetypal plan. Another good thing about this Fairy Tale is that it is absolutely full of humor, while being absolutely serious - nobody tries to make the audience laugh, but it is full of humor.

How has the director been able to reach this effect with such young actors, being young himself? What was right about his work that has achieved this? How can he keep this quality and not lose it?

I would suggest, however, that the director should be more careful with the method of his directing. He is in danger of being chaotic and amateurish. This is the thing

which you must bring in order. For example, you asked your cast to create the atmosphere, and then you forgot all about it and worked on details. This is wrong. The director himself must find the way to make his work more organized. After each rehearsal he must rehearse it again in his imagination, and improve some moments, and plan his next rehearsal in a more organized way.

If the director changes his mind during the rehearsal, he must do it in an organized way. Tell your cast that you are going to do something different. Otherwise your cast is led astray. The director is free to change his ideas at any moment, but he must let his cast know of the change, and what he wants them to achieve, and by what means - atmosphere, tempo, imagination, and so on. The actors must know that they are trying to reach the tempo by means of various things. Then you will get a response from your cast much more quickly because if the actor does not know the way to give the director what he wants, he is not able to respond.

We do not want to limit or restrain the director - the moment our Method becomes restraining, then the Method is wrong, or the way of using it is wrong. The Method can only give assurance, and a very clear idea of what and how, but the individual director must be free in the Method. John's individual power as a director is that he shows his actors how to act, and he must use this power freely. Showing is what we want to have, much more than explaining. By showing you are absolutely clear. Ask yourself the reason for this good achievement today.

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ADVICE TO DIRECTORS:

Criticism: Carnival.

In the Fairy Tale rehearsal this morning, we saw a director who was going through the rehearsal without explaining anything to his cast - working absolutely instinctively, but forgetting all the things which could clarify and make the work more economical and helpful. This afternoon in Peter's rehearsal of Carnival we have the other extreme. He has a lot of things to give and he throws them at his cast all at the same time. This creates chaos. The actor may be able to keep all the suggestions he is given by concentration of a purely intellectual nature, but this has nothing to do with his actor's soul. If the director gives too many different suggestions his cast will not be able to fulfil or remember them.

ONE POINT AT A TIME:

I would suggest that the director should be more economical and divide and distribute his suggestions with more care. If the director wants his cast to give him atmosphere, then concentrate on it alone. This will give the director his cast in his hands, and the actors will be more sure of what they are doing. At the present time there is chaos in (Peter's) his soul about the play. This director's personal charm makes the whole thing much easier, but when we compare the Method with what he is doing, we know that it is wrong.

The method must be applied in different ways, but must not be used and then thrown down. The idea is very simple.

but the directors must keep it always in their minds. This is the sphere into which we must penetrate. We can penetrate it through many doors. Directors in the theatre today try to push from different sides into this circle, with the result that the circle is distorted and the actor's soul is closed. The result is very banal. In our Method we have many doors through which we can enter - imagination, atmosphere, psychological gesture, etc. With all these doors at his disposal what must the director do? We must be careful to tell his cast to enter through this door, then through another door, and now through this door. When the director gives the order to enter through all the doors, there is a certain difficulty. It is possible to enter through two doors at the same time - psychological gesture and atmosphere for example - but only when the director is sure that his cast is ready for them, then he can combine them. The actors can then go through this wider passage.



There is a happy medium between John's mistake which was to approach without any idea of the doors, and Peter's mistake which was to go through too many doors at once. Directors must develop an instinct for this happy medium. When the director gives the order to act, it means that he and his cast are in the middle of the circle, having entered the doors many times. They will start from the middle and then

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develop. This is quite legal [legitimate] as far as the method is concerned. The director must not expect a beautiful performance but will get many suggestions from this type of rehearsal, and tomorrow the director can ask his cast to enter special doors. As a result of what he has seen, he can find the weak points. The director must repeat this many times until it - the real performance - is absolutely satisfactory for him and for the audience.

#### INSPIRATION - IMPROVISATION:

There are two means of approach: one is through our will, which leads us through various doors, and there is another approach - acting. This means you must open your soul for inspiration which comes to you, and which inspires you, and gives you all the new things you need. These are two different things. Our aim is to be inspired, and all our work is the way to get inspiration. In the future we will speak about inspiration and will do exercises in improvisation. This will be done without work on the Commedia dell' Arte.