

Michael Chekhov

December 4, 1936

FEELING OF TRUTH  
REPETITION  
STUDENTS' DESIGNS

When we start our rehearsals, we must have activity from the very beginning without interruption. We must not allow ourselves to be disturbed for one moment - such distractions kill the work. Try, from the moment we start, to keep this special professional feeling, "I am working; therefore, I am not able to be distracted." Don't rest before we take a rest. This is real professional skillfulness. Many workers must do this kind of concentrated work with machines. We must acquire the same skill in our work.

FEELING OF TRUTH:

When rehearsing, we must actually see everything each time - not in an abstract unseeing way but in a real way. Don't be abstract. Have the feeling that something is going on to which you have to react. Be aware of everything as it is. Then you will find the truth, and through this truth the right style and character.

In The Golden Steed we are trying to find the moment of the meeting between the brothers and Antin, by means of pauses and exclamations - very primitive but without losing any psychological links. Try to imagine the whole scene again.

You must train yourself by really seeing, really hearing, by being aware of everything that is happening; and then you will reach other things. Don't be abstract and only

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vaguely aware of what is happening. You must really see who is speaking. The moment you see something without truth, you kill yourself, the play, and the audience.

Everything is possible if you have the feeling of truth, and this feeling of truth will never lead you to naturalism. If you have this conviction of truth, this belief in what you are doing, everything will be possible for you, and your audience will believe you.

#### REPETITION:

It is possible that you will find the kind of repetitive work we are doing in The Golden Steed very tiring, but you must realize that every profession is really much more tiresome than it seems. In order to get a good, fine performance, we need much tiresome work and much energy; just as exercise in a ballet school must be done for years, and the pianist must practice his scales. Only our profession seems to be very easy. This is the feeling which has so deeply offended me all my life. Actors who have had a lot of experience begin to know that they must work, but in schools pupils come expecting only pleasant things. This is the right from the artistic standpoint, but there is another side to it - the tiresome side of our work.

Unless our actors are prepared to be tired from work, they will be no better than the actors of today, who are, in

reality, despised by the audience, who come to the theatre mainly to aid the process of digestion. This had developed because actors had nothing more to offer their public than to give pleasure. Our only way to overcome this is to show our ability to work, and when we can show the results of some of our serious work, the audience will begin to change its attitude toward us. We must recognize that our profession is one percent pleasure and the rest tiresome work.

Begin with the scene in which the brothers disappear and Antin appears. The good group follows him and the White Old Man to the mountain, which Antin tries to ascend, but he is overcome. The crowd has the feeling that it is observing a mystery, not a disaster, when Antin falls. It recedes before the White Old Man, with a feeling of wonder and joy. The next moment is when the earth laughs, and the people are brought down again to earthly, passionate, physical things.

The next moment, when the brothers appear on the mountainside and fall down from it, the crowd has a feeling of disaster, of something dreadful which has happened.

The Old Woman is very wise, very patient, very knowing. She is very penetrating and knows from her long experience of life what is going to happen. Her wisdom comes from long years of living, observing, penetrating, and knowing.

#### STUDENTS' DESIGNS:

Each must begin to draw and to model settings, costumes,

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and make-up for the various characters in the play. You must continue with this until I tell you to stop. This must be done without any connection to any particular theatre style. Your imagination must be free. It is not necessary to be able to draw, but you must do something to express your imagination about settings, costumes, and make-up for your own and other characters. You must repeat your efforts again and again, and give your work to Mr. Peters with your name and the date clearly printed on it.<sup>1</sup>