

Michael Chekhov

(afternoon) June 29, 1937

THREEFOLD ACTIVITY
BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END
RHYTHMICAL ACTIVITY

Hamlet

(Lesson on the beginning, middle, and end, given by Beatrice Straight)

M. Chekhov:

THREEFOLD ACTIVITY:

You must fill yourselves with this threefold activity. When you are doing the most simple things, like getting up in the morning, washing yourselves, brushing your teeth, you can experience this threefold rhythm, this rhythmical activity. Every part of your body must be filled with this threefold activity, and this will increase your rhythmical feeling. Nobody can tell you what 1, 2, or 3 is - this depends upon your instinct.

For example, in Hamlet the division in the play will depend upon the director's imagination. In the beginning a ghost force, in the second part the play is opening up, and in the third part so many people are dead, it is more than open, it has disappeared from the stage.

BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END:

No one can say where these divisions come; the first part can be very clever and intellectual, the second part very full of feelings and passions, and the third part can be absolutely slow - killing, dying. It depends absolutely on the director. There are no rules, but talent is very responsible to

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this threefold rhythmic activity.

RHYTHMICAL ACTIVITY:

You ask whether there can be two rhythmical things instead of three? Between these two parts there is something absolutely timeless. For example, like breathing in and out. In between these two things there is something which exists - it is nothing, and the nothing is what exists. Between two lines, three - even the most abstract thinking will not be able to deny this.