

COSTUMES MUST ACT
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE - ARCHETYPAL FORM
MISE EN SCÈNE

Balladina:

This director's special mistake is that she confuses the psychological gesture, action, and mise en scène. The psychological gesture and action cannot be mixed, and in this instance it has produced a confusion.

COSTUMES MUST ACT:

We must understand our costume as part of our body, of the body of our character. Each designer tries to find a costume in harmony with the character, but we must take a step forward in this way. In creating our costumes we must think of three things:

1. That the costume is not something which hides the body, but which on the contrary shows the body. This first principle must be absolutely carried through. In order to play a character part, we must create in our imagination another body, and for this second body we must find the costume. In modern plays the question of characterization is forgotten entirely, and this is wrong. If you will be attentive to our modern clothes you will see how characteristic they can be. In approaching the costume question, not only in costume plays but in modern plays as well, we must understand the problem in the same way. We must make the costume for the character's body, and never for our own real body.

2. The costume must be a part of our second body. To show this second body is the first principle, and to be part of this body is the second principle.

3. We have to create costumes which will be flexible. For instance, in each good play we have such contrasts which require other costumes. We must not think that the costumes will remain the same throughout the whole play - we must find the possibility to create costumes which will change their shape, etc. This principle has almost never been used on the European stage. The costumes must act!

We will explore this principle in the costumes designs for our sketches - The Fishing Scene is an example of this. For The Golden Steed we must create the costumes through the psychological gesture. The costumes must do the psychological gesture too, and this will be the main thing in our costume problem for this play.

As an example - in The Fishing Scene - let us take the costume for the Old Woman. The hood is good because it hides her and makes her more mysterious and old. The color should be more grey and the texture should be soft and the edge rough rather than sharp. Remember, the costumes must act!

Balladina: (Director's exercise:)

Establish the atmosphere at the moment when Balladina enters the room with the ikons. Go through the whole scene with the psychological gestures, accompanied by someone speaking.

Criticism:

The creation of the atmosphere was very good and strong. It is very interesting to see how easily the atmosphere was created because you approached it through the imagination. The whole scene was a composition of psychological gestures. But in giving such a problem the danger lies in doing everything too quickly. There were so many gestures, each one of which was an event which must be explored. When doing these gestures, the actor is not yet able to listen to all the reactions. It is only an illusion that you have done the whole scene with psychological gestures.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE - ARCHETYPAL FORM - SPEECH:

When all the gestures come together they build the archetypal form of the future performance. If the director wishes to put the gestures together, then the gestures must be rehearsed so well that they form a chain, or become similar to the scales on the piano. Be sure that your actors have digested the gestures before they read the lines, as was done in this exercise. If you wish to explore the speech and prepare the speech through psychological gestures, then you must find the gesture for each sentence. It is possible to find a gesture for a whole block of speech, and say only a word or two of the whole script. The gesture takes the place of the words.

There is a confusion in the minds of some of our

M. Chekhov

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directors. We must apply the psychological gesture to everything, to the character, to the settings, to the costumes, to the atmosphere, to everything.

In reading the script, the actors must have the closest connection to the reader. It is better to take a general gesture for the whole block of speeches. You must be clear as to whether the psychological gesture is for future acting, or whether it is for the text. After doing the psychological gesture in general, then you must explore the gesture in the speech. The psychological gesture is applicable to everything, in every form, but one thing must be understood - whenever the gesture is separated from the thing which you are exploring, then it is nothing. You must know the clear aim of why you are doing the gesture - to explore one word, or the whole scene, or to listen to the whole text.

MISE EN SCÈNE:

When exploring the mise en scène, you must remember that it must mean something. You must explore it from the point of view, what does it mean? Your actor must know why he is in a certain place and not in another. For instance, why must Balladina step down into the scene and use the steps? What is the Saint? Is he Balladina's conscience? Is he reality or unreality? You must find some way of showing the Saint and yet hiding him at the same time. These questions must be solved by experience.