

Michael Chekhov

November 27, 1936

RHYTHM - BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END
THE WHOLE
STYLE
COMPOSITION OF THE PLAY

Ibsen
Anton Chekhov
Brand

RHYTHM - BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END:

Every rhythmical movement consists of a beginning, a middle part, and an end in each case. When we have a feeling for the beginning, the middle, and the end, we will be able to feel the whole movement. When we start at the beginning, we must feel the middle and the end. When we are in the middle, we must feel the past and the future; and when we are at the end, we must feel the middle and the beginning. When you have finished and are out of this pattern, then you have the feeling of the whole which has happened. The same is true before you start. You must feel the beginning, the middle, and the end just as well as you do when you have finished and have experienced them. This is one of the principles which we must elaborate later on.

When we don't anticipate the end, we are not ready to stop instantly. We start too late because we have not anticipated. We don't anticipate or remember sufficiently and so don't develop the feeling for the whole, which can only be developed by realizing that each event comprises a beginning, middle, and end.

THE WHOLE;

In these three divisions there may be many other divisions, but the most important ones are the beginning, middle, and end. Each event, if it is rhythmical, consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end. This is the mission of the artist, to conceive and do each event rhythmically. For this the artist must be able to anticipate, and to remember, and be able to see the thing as a whole. The space and the time is one thing for an artist, from which he is able to create the past and the future.

Each person must understand this psychologically. Each person requires a different amount of preparation for the beginning and the end. In order to fuse your will and the rhythmical pattern, you must feel your whole body and use your whole body. This is the only way you can command your body - by using it and knowing it perfectly. The will is your legs and arms, and the body is its center. The will is not feeling or thinking. When I am wishing and doing and willing, the whole center is working - the whole body.

Rules must swim in water, which is freedom. You must be free in combining the rules which govern us, as with the letters of the alphabet - a, b, c. These simple letters, in different compositions, gave us the works of Shakespeare and Goethe. The final combination depends on our artistic instinct, our artistic freedom, our artistic feelings. Naturally, without

rules and laws and exercises our artistic feelings will remain latent forces. Our decisions are always affected finally by that which is the most artistic, the most tasteful.

All the things we want to realize now will be added to later on by lights, costumes, settings, the rhythmical means of tempo, etc. We must try to express all the things we have spoken of with many means. Therefore, nothing can be fixed, or arbitrary. Different circumstances will change many things.

STYLE:

At the present time our movements and speech are all very different. Each one in its way is good, but they must be fused, and the style of the play must be found. We can only do this by taking something from each other and watching and observing each other every day, in every moment of the rehearsal, trying to find the right style for the fairy tale in which we must believe. This will come gradually. It is the most difficult and the most fine thing, and it can only be developed with time in our subconsciousness. We are not speaking of the style of a Greek temple or a Gothic dome. We must create a new style for each performance.

By developing a feeling for style, a love for style, we will be able to create a new style for each play. Naturally, the styles are very close to one another, but the style of the tragedy of Hamlet is different from the style of Othello. If there is a fine feeling for style, these two plays cannot be

acted in the same way. What is absolutely important to know is that the full naturalistic thing kills every possibility for style. It can have mood and everything else, but it will not have style. Therefore, the style is something which must be found over and above naturalism. Through your imagination, feelings, and senses you will gradually begin to sense the style of the play. If you are forced to find the style in a few hours, you will never do it. It will only grow with time.

COMPOSITION OF THE PLAY:

Before the style can be found, you must do the work of finding the gestures for each individual, for each speech, for each scene, for the whole performance; and then you will find the ground on which the style for the play can be based.

There is a law of repetition. There is one point in the play which is alone, but other things must be repeated.



These things will give to the audience and to the actors the deepest feelings. A figure rightly felt and placed will have more to the audience than all our efforts to be powerful. Such efforts will not be as powerful as some slight thing which perhaps the audience will not consciously notice, but they will feel it.

M. Chekhov

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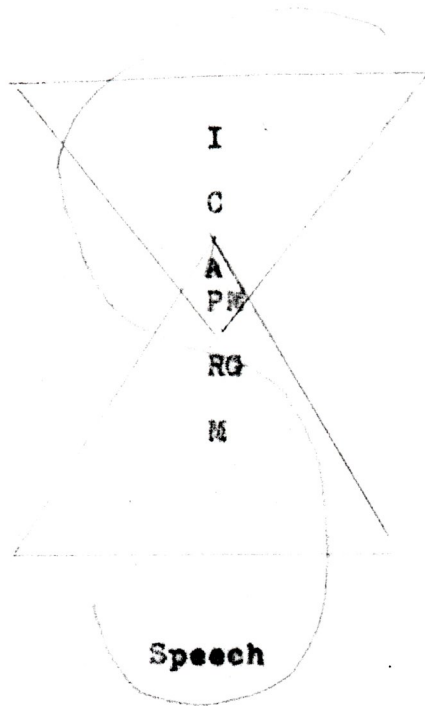
This language of composition is much better than the psychology of the individual. Naturalism is based on the psychology of one person. Ibsen and Chekhov, lived in the period of blossoming of the personal psychology. But the time has come when this individual psychology is not so interesting because the living newspaper of today is really much more important. This principle applies to the whole world today. The psychology of Brand has disappeared. Brand was seen through the spectacles of personal psychology, although he had some other things, too.

If we answer to our present life, which is so complicated and so tragic, then we are in harmony with life. If we are asked what we are doing, we can say that we are doing something which has a right to exist in the world today because we are doing our small work with the same tools, the same diapason, the same pattern, the same idea. That gives us the right to exist. This is not only a theory - I want to awaken your most deep feelings, your enthusiastic feelings for doing things which are in absolute harmony with our life and which will speak deeper than personal psychology.

M. Chekhov

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Imagination

Character

Atmosphere
Personal Mood

Rhythmical Gesture

Movement