

Michael Chekhov

February 15, 1937

GROUP FEELING (ENSEMBLE)
THE ACTOR'S ROLE IN SOCIETY
COMPOSITION OF THE PLAY
COSTUMES

GROUP FEELING (ENSEMBLE):
The Golden Steed:

The last rehearsal of The Golden Steed made me very unhappy because of the way you have acted. I am afraid of such an attitude of mind. We must try to overcome this difficulty and try to create another approach to our work. How we are rehearsing is as important as how we are acting. To be gifted is only half of the story, the other half is what we call discipline. We want not only to be a good theatre, but we want to be a good group, a good society. Our group work is essential. We are not able to work independently from one another. If one is working badly, the others will make the same mistake. One is keeping our banner high, but the other will drag it down. Each of us has full responsibility in each moment, in each case.

THE ACTOR'S ROLE IN SOCIETY:

If you think of the Method you will notice one other characteristic thing. It is to be with the part, with the moment, with our whole being. We are not able to work only with our heart or with our brain, or with our will. It means that the whole group is one being. As long as we are together, we must be one being. This is the secret of real social life. This means a special psychological gesture towards our work. We must try, when rehearsing our play, to be concentrated on one problem which we are tackling at the moment. We must not

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be concentrated on our parts, but on our work. This is the only way we can get away from the difficulty of being "absent" while the others are working - which means not only to be "absent" but to be disturbing. It means that we must be harmonious not only in our own being, but in the being of our group, our society. We are giving our lives, and therefore, it must be the best place. This is our place where we are trying to give our lives, and if not then we do not belong to this group. But if we belong to the group, it must be the best place to put our feelings.

We have spoken about our profession several times. I don't want you to think only about our narrow profession. Just the opposite. If we are able to be social in our life here, then we will be able to be of value to the social life in the world. People have only pseudo-social conversations because we don't really know what it means to be social. You can see how difficult it is in our small group. It means that in reality to be social is so difficult, that if we try to apply it to such things as the Spanish War disaster, we will see that our feelings are not real. Our thoughts and our words must be social, and that means really to be social, and not only to speak about it. We must be social in our small group, and from this real social ground on which we can stand, we will understand what it means to be social towards humanity, to our nation, to the world.

It is an illusion that we are social because we read

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the newspapers and speak about it. It is the wrong attitude of mind to think we are social in our social life. To be really broadminded, you must be really social in your profession - not the opposite. Through your profession you can bring something to the world. Therefore, will you try in your rehearsals to find the point on which we must concentrate as a whole organism. For instance, everybody must want the director to reach the best possible results, etc. Being always concentrated on one point ^{we} will start our work today.

The Golden Steed:

The moment when the White Old Man gives Antin the power to climb the second time. It must be very much accentuated. After this moment the power comes back to Antin, but then he falls down with the brothers. It depends very much on the White Old Man who must increase all his powers of going up, as Antin is going down. The White Old Man must give Antin the power to try the second time. The theme of the guard and the two brothers is the same, but it is intensified in the case of the brothers.

In the real theatre everything must act - the sets and everything must become alive by the power of the acting. Everything depends on how we approach the problems of the theatre.

COMPOSITION OF THE PLAY:

Balladina:

The scene we will exercise begins with a prologue,

and ends with an epilogue. Between the two there are very high moments. We must discover where the highest moments come in the scene - the moments of greatest intensity. We must make alterations on our graphs as we get to know more about the play. On your graphs you must show: 1. The revelation of self, and the revelation of soul, which takes place between Balladina and the Saint. 2. Show on your graph where the highest moment of the scene with Gralon comes. Is it before or after his death? 3. What difference do you see in the three scenes between Kostrin and Balladina? What is the difference in relationship? 4. What is the highest and most tragic moment in the scene between Balladina and her mother? Give names to the three scenes and the scenes within them. Avoid the intellectual in these graphs - wait until you get something from your heart.

Try your costumes - mold your costume to yourself and discover what it can tell you about your character. Try the moment when the mother comes in. This will be a very interesting moment because we will see how Goplana has covered up Alina's body in the previous scene. The mother must try her entrance. See in your imagination how she grasps the goblet from Balladina, and then how she draws herself up with great dignity at the last moment.

COSTUMES:

Criticism:

Ask your costumes to tell you what they give. Your

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costume may suggest a different image. A wig will tell you something, and make-up something else. Your image must be flexible - it must be your original image but it may change with the inspiration from your costumes, etc. The director can begin to give the structure and construction of the play very early - he does not have to wait. He can begin gradually to touch on the structure of the play.