

Michael Chekhov

July 7, 1937

TEMPO - TIMING - QUALITY  
NUANCES  
OBJECTIVE  
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OBJECTIVE  
INSPIRATION  
THE ACTOR-ARTIST: TWO STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The Inspector General

Balladina:

It is necessary at the end of a full rehearsal for the actors to know what good things they have done during the rehearsal, in order that they may build on these good points.

TEMPO:

By means of atmosphere you can get everything, and you can require everything from your actors, but tempo is a special thing. If you start the work with tempo you must combine tempo as timing and quality. For instance, which quality do you expect to get from this timing? Or the opposite; you can get certain qualities from increasing the tempo. It is helpful for the actors to know in which way they are working. If the director wishes to start the work with tempo, he must mention the quality.

Up to now we have worked without mentioning tempo, but if you wish to touch on it now you may, although it should perhaps come later, but then you must mention the tempo with the qualities you wish to reach. If you have the quality and atmosphere you may not have mentioned tempo, but the tempo will



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be there. Although we have not yet started to elaborate the tempo, certain tempo is always present. You must change the tempo by changing the quality, or change certain qualities by changing the tempo. It is possible to change the tempo but leave the same quality, as for example in The Inspector General in which there are many tempos, but the quality of gaiety is the same. It is possible because all these things are so flexible, and follow each other so closely, but on the principle tempo is quality and quality is tempo. What is absolutely wrong is when tempo is considered as time; the director looks at his watch and sees that the performance was three minutes longer, so he asks his cast to be quicker next time.

#### NUANCES:

The director can take one scene and the given atmosphere and then tell the cast that the tempo will be like so, and the quality like so. The scene with the Saint was good in the style of tragedy, and on this basis the director can elaborate everything, because there is already some quality in this scene; we are already on some ground. There was another good thing in this rehearsal. Do you remember when we spoke of nuances, and that they are able to put together all the different pieces on the stage. Already I have seen that nuances are flying in the air around the actors, and they are leading one line through all these things. This one line is very important. Blair now has the character in general,



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but it is not yet individual enough in character. The director would be wise to ask him to begin to dream about this particular character. I feel that Terrence goes on in a very interesting way to get his part.

We must never confuse being in a hurry and increasing the tempo. Tempo is very bound up with rhythm.

#### OBJECTIVE:

What does it mean to have an objective? It means that every part of the actor's being must be filled with the objective. We will exercise this in the most simple form; take one of the boxes and place it in the middle of the room, and then bring another box and put them together. Observe the moment when you must drop your objective because it has been fulfilled. Do this without any conditions.

#### REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE:

Rehearsals for performances on July 17th and 19th:

The meaning of these rehearsals:

1. For the actors: to convey the full experience of acting without any interruption, as though it were a performance.
2. For the directors: by making careful notes during the rehearsal performances of the 17th and 19th, they will get material for consideration during the summertime, for further preparation of the work with the sketches next term, and they will be helped to find out the shortest way to achieve the necessary results, by applying the method given in our studio.



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3. For the designers, and authors: by making notes they will discover their mistakes, and they will get a practical idea of what an ideal performance should be. They must make notes of things which are lacking now.
4. The day of the 18th will be allotted to criticisms which will be done in the following way: Mr. Chekhov will give some suggestions in general, and then each student will give his suggestions to the directors. These suggestions must be written down by the directors so that they will have them for consideration during the summer. It should be noted that the directors are not compelled to accept any of the suggestions which will be given them during the 18th.
5. Students will be requested to observe that the days of the 17th and 19th will be carried out with great concentration. Upon entering the theatre, silence must be observed, and a concentrated, responsible, professional activity should be presented. We must consider these two evenings as the birthday of our future theatre.

The order of the sketches will be:

1. The Fishing Scene
2. Balladina I
3. Balladina II
4. Peer Gynt
- . INTERMISSION
5. The Golden Steed
6. Fairy Tale - Two Kings

OBJECTIVE:

The objective is the will of the actor, and by doing nothing except having this activity of the objective, and consciously sending it out, it is very attractive for the watcher.



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INSPIRATION:

If we rely only on inspiration we will never be able to be good professional actors. Inspiration will come to us from the love of the part, the costumes, settings, etc., from hundreds of ways, but this is a present and we must not rely upon it. We must be happy if inspiration comes, but we have our Method to keep us in such form and order, that we will have a ground which will be most attractive for inspiration each time we perform. In the case of The Fishing Scene, if Deirdre had had this real ground for the objective, or justification, or feeling of truth, or atmosphere, or all together, then the actors could have acted, and the technical workers would not have disturbed them. Because if the actors are pretending in the good sense of the work, then the technical workers cannot disturb them. When you become independent enough, you will take from the Method all the things you need for the moment, and never appear on the stage with the feeling that you are acting without any conscious ground. Until we are able to do this we are not yet masters of the Method.

OBJECTIVE:

We must be able to recall the experience, and find what we can get from it. Then you will really get something. If you will recall the exercise, and ask yourself what you have got from your experience today, then you will get it twice as quickly, because of this effort to get a conscious result.



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THE ACTOR-ARTIST: TWO STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

To be clear and cool in your head, and flaming and warm in your heart - this is what it means to be an artist. The artist must be able to divide his being into two consciousnesses - one cool and deliberate, and the other unconscious and warm and active. The actor must be able to take in suggestions with his consciousness, and not be disturbed in what he is doing.

As an exercise, let us take the moment in The Golden Steed when the brothers enter and say, "Fear not for us." The crowd is deeply dejected and dark in themselves, and in everything around them. Their objective is to penetrate first with every part of their beings, with their heads and necks, then with their shoulders and arms and hands, then with their legs, knees, and the small of the back.