

Michael Chekhov

November 18, 1936

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD
FLYING OVER THE PLAY
MOVEMENT AS TRAINING FOR
ACTORS AND DANCERS

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD:

Our work appeals to the best part of your being; therefore, you cannot escape the suggestion of crossing the threshold when you come into the Studio. But we must help to do this with some outer thing; try to be quiet for three to four minutes before the class begins. This is a very good habit to begin with, as we shall need this power for our future performances. We must prepare a special program for the visit of the Jooss Dance School. Remember that they have a very good understanding of rhythm and movement, and we must show our best exercises in our kind of movement.

FLYING OVER THE PLAY:

The Golden Steed:

Our plan has been to fly over the play from place to place in order to find some special points in the play. Next term I will be able to tell you of some special laws which I have found, which will lead us through our plays. Now we are trying to fly over the play entirely freely, after which I will tell you what the laws are, and we will then accept them with more understanding. Today we must fly over the play in the direction of the life of the crowd. Feel the distribution of the space. Your heart, your feelings, must lead you to the right place on the setting.

MOVEMENT AS TRAINING FOR ACTORS AND DANCERS:

The idea of Peter Tunnard's exercise is that we are actors, and our profession is different to that of dancers. We are not able to train our bodies as dancers because dancers have a very large series of movements. They have very special movements which are clearly defined. We do not have this because we must feel our body in each movement. We must create each movement each time as a new one. All our movements exercises are only preparation for creative work. Dancers, for instance, are able to study movements which they can repeat, each time very skillfully and elaborately. We, as actors, have not the same possibility. We must create each time a new movement. We must elaborate the idea, but not the movement itself. It is absolutely important to define once and for all this difference between dancers and actors. Training is as necessary for us as it is for dancers. We have our own kind of movement training. We must bind together our feeling with our body. We must train ourselves to ask our body, by taking new positions, which feeling is arising in us. If we are standing in a certain way, for instance, we must ask our body what we have to feel. Each position, each movement, has something to say to us. We have two sources for our feelings - one is our imagination and the other is our body.