

Michael Chekhov

December 14, 1936

MOVEMENT - GESTURE

Prince Volkonsky
Dr. Rudolf Steiner

The Golden Steed:

Repeat the scene with the two evil brothers, then go back to the scene with the fat old Nobleman. This scene begins at a very high moment with the crowd, just after Antin has left. Descending from this high point, the crowd sees the surface of the earth in the fat old Nobleman; they are lightly amused by his antics and gradually descend to the point where they can see the brothers, and the surface of the earth opens up before them.

The crowd must be able to think back and feel the moment of tension which was the result of the mystery of Antin's fainting. They must be able to remember and feel this tension so that it will effect the scene that comes after it. The most important thing to accomplish is to be able to remember what we have done from day to day, otherwise it will be impossible for us to advance.

The marvelous power which the actor possesses is the ability to lift the audience up or to bring it down. In the moments with Antin and the mystery, and then with the brothers and the abyss, we have the possibility of lifting our audience up and drawing them down again. This makes for great beauty in the performance.

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Remember the law which Prince Volkonsky told us about. There are moments when we are able to express height by doing a gesture with our bodies which goes down, and just the opposite, we can do a gesture going up when we wish to show an abyss opening below. It is very important for us to understand that all these small movements which we are trying to find are as important as soliloquies on the stage. The theatre of the future will speak with every movement, every gesture, every sound, every nuance.

The thing that is killing the theatre today is that we speak about beautiful words and a beautiful play, but nobody speaks about the beautiful movements. But movement is the language of a theatre, just as much as words are. When writers, who are not gifted, are just speaking through the mouths of the actors, we are so weak as actors that we are not able to overcome the author's stupidity. This is the tragedy of the theatre, but it can be cured. When we find the real way so that the audience will say, "They moved beautifully in this scene. Did you see how he or she walked?" That is the feeling we must have - how we speak the words, not the content, that is the theatre of the future. Therefore, we must love such rehearsals with movements, because we want to create a new language which will be a theatre language. Gifted authors will want to be performed in our theatre because they will see that their plays are understood fully.

The scene before Antin's mystery is the scene in which the brothers disappear up the mountain - the moment when the good people become "trees" - silent trees with a deep feeling of depression. The next moment is when the Silver Steed has fallen.

When we try to find the right positions then many beautiful forms will arise of themselves. Try to be far, far away from each event and show that you are not able to understand what is going on. The crowd will be framed by the most understanding figure, that of the Eighth Woman (Mrs. Elmhirst), and the figure which has the least understanding, that of the Old Woman. In this way the crowd will become the whole play in between the extremes of these two figures. Without these two figures the crowd or the picture would have no shape. This is again the same rhythmical plan that we have for the whole play - the introduction and the coda.

We know from Rudolf Steiner's method that the round line always gives the impression of the will, while the straight line gives a feeling of thought. Therefore, by bringing Antin down in a round form, we give the impression of will, which is true for this scene. The audience will see this and will react with the will and understanding it as a mystery. Then go back to the moment of the appearance of the Silver Steed.

Try to find the world of the fairy tale among these new conditions created by the new set of platforms. Walk among

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them and experience new reactions to them, doing all this with the fairy tale feeling. Continue the work of going back in the play to the point where Antin says, "I try a second time," and then to the first entrance of the two brothers. The Old Woman must find her new relationship - that of not understanding anything of what is going on. First she is with the bad group and then with the good group.