

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY
MISE EN SCENE
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE
AFTER THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY:

Let us speak about yesterday's rehearsal. Getting costumes is always disturbing and destructive, and the cast will lose its direction in the play - this is a normal state of things. It is well known that young actors and students lose very easily the structure they have already had. It is a very normal and usual thing, and there is no one to blame. But we can draw one conclusion from this rehearsal, and that is that our plays must get more and more composition in their inward and outward form. We must get the scaffolding in our consciousness and follow it.

Now we are stepping into the period when we will start to try to find a structure for The Golden Steed, and this structure you must keep under all circumstances. We have already tried to find some forms when we explored the three parts of red, blue and yellow. The results of this you must keep in your souls and your bodies. Whenever you are acting in this play you must refer to these three colors.

This work of finding and establishing the form is sometimes very dull for actors, and this is the period when you must consider yourselves as workers with hammers and tools. You must work without waiting for some pleasure or amusement from this work. From today on it will be hard, pedantic work, but this period must be done. This is not so much

creative work for the cast, but they must be ready for it and must regard themselves as workers. The cast must be patient and very attentive even if it is dull, because it is the preparation for a future creation.

The director will lead the play and will reach a complete form, and will lead the cast through this form to the acting. The director will be Terence, who will also be able to act his part. When the director comes to the stage where he must establish the form of the play, he must start with the most important moments, and lead his cast through them.

MISE EN SCÈNE:

Each mise en scène must have an idea. The director must distribute the figures of his cast in the space so that they know clearly what they have to do. The director must justify each moment, and must find the most expressive composition for the individual. Each person must know why he is stepping forward, going down, etc., everybody must know why, must know the justification for all the movements, compositions, etc.

Balladina: Criticism:

Why has the director repeated the scene which was done yesterday, and gone over it in the same way? If the director appeals to the imagination of the actors it means

that the director will not have to repeat himself. The actors must do this work each day, and the director must give new color, new imagination. If this was done only to remind the cast, it is lost time. The cast must know the play so well that they will understand the slightest hint from the director. If the director gives a gesture, then the actors must come to the next rehearsal having worked on the gesture. The work must be prepared. Each director and actor must know this, and the director must require this of his cast. If the director will keep the spiral in mind, the actors will find the right approach.

(Director's exercise:)

Alina's gesture must be one of real freedom and trust, while Balladina's is tight and compressed. Alina's gesture is to bring her hands from behind her back and say, "Look," while Balladina produces her hands towards her and says, "Full." The next gesture is one of recoil on Alina's part, and she says, "Sister," as Balladina steps towards her and says, "Go!" Alina's next gesture is one of sympathy towards her sister as she says, "Tell me," and Balladina replies by pointing straight at her sister and saying "You." These three gestures are really one.

Both Goplana and Balladina in their different ways are really working in the same way - they are in the same stream of life. Goplana is on a platform above Balladina.

M. Chekhov

February 3, 1937

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

They both do the same gesture - rising out of the earth with a gesture of possessiveness, which gathers more strength each time. They are affected by each other.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

Criticism:

What was good and new today was that the director had taken part of the text and explored it as a gesture, using some words as a substitute for the whole text. This is a very good step and is the right approach. The mistake on the part of the actors was, that in exploring the gestures, they did not use their whole bodies. If the gesture is only a physical one it is not a psychological gesture, and it will not awaken any other powers.

The idea of the psychological gesture is to awaken everything you have as actors. In order to accomplish this you must make a hundred percent effort to awaken all the streams you possess. Never be satisfied with just a physical result. There are times of course when you may perhaps have a special aim in doing a physical gesture, but that is not the psychological gesture. The best way to find the psychological gesture is to imagine what streams flow around the body, then you will feel whether it is the right gesture. For instance, if you are "taking in" by looking, it means not only looking physically, but the whole body is "taking in". When you have "taken in" something, you must compose it inside and transform these feelings in another form.

M. Chekhov

February 3, 1937

AFTER THE CURTAIN IS DOWN:

The Golden Steed:

There are three moments which we will later call climaxes. These three points are the moments which will lead us through the whole play. Our play begins with a certain silence and ends with a silence, and between these two silences lies the whole play. Now we must try to find some technical mise en scène for the beginning and the end; as a frame. The silences occur before the curtain goes up, and after the curtain goes down.

It is wrong for a play to end when the curtain goes down as it does in the theatre today, because if we have acted for the whole evening the result of the performance is always after the curtain is down. The better the performance, the more the audience will feel that it does not want to move. The actors must remain for a few moments in the atmosphere at the end of the play. We must establish a new habit to act after the fall of the curtain. Gradually the audience will understand that this is the most precious moment.