

Michael Chekhov

February 22, 1937

GRAPHS AND SCHEMES
CONCENTRATION - IMAGINATION

Carnival:

There are times when we must try to appreciate what other members of the group are doing. Today we must try to take in the qualities of one member of our group - Peter - and his quality of good activity. We must see Peter in our imaginations for several seconds, and see his activity, then we will begin to get this same activity in our group, and this will bring us nearer to Peter and nearer to each other. For instance, to observe a beautiful thing like Michael Angelo's "Moses" means that we can take some of the qualities of this great figure. Just so, by being aware of each other's good qualities we will gain very much. Another one of Peter's good qualities is that he knows exactly what he wants. It gives such a beautiful power, because he knows every moment what he wants to do.

GRAPHS AND SCHEMES:

Peer Gynt:

The greatest enemy in our profession is the intellectual approach. This applies even to the make-up. If we try to think about our make-up, it will be spoiled. We must picture everything. Alan, as the director, tried to give his ideas about Peer Gynt in an intellectual form. The ideas were right but it was very cold. Then he was asked to picture his idea. He brought a scheme or graph which was very good, but in order to understand it we would have to go again to the intellect.

Alan must now try to create out of this scheme a number of smaller schemes. By looking at each scheme we must get the feeling of understanding. This is the right method in our theatre. We must share our ideas. The principle, therefore, is that everything must be in pictures, and in such pictures that by looking at them the ideas will be understood, or felt or anticipated. The idea of the whole will come through it. By looking at Alan's graph we were not able to grasp at once what the whole idea was.

The Golden Steed scheme is different - it represents the notes which we make after we have acted each step - it is our notebook as it were, whereas Alan's was a scheme of ideas. In The Golden Steed we are writing down not with words, but with visible signs. If we wish to explain the idea of the fairy tale, we have done so by appealing to the imagination. But if the director asks the cast to imagine their pictures then they would have to show some elaborated pictures. You must see how the idea is visible for us and you will get at once the scenic reaction from your cast.

CONCENTRATION:

The Golden Steed:

The power of concentration will help us in our next step, which is improvisation. Keep and develop the ability to be concentrated absolutely from the beginning to the end of the rehearsal. It will be tiring at first, but then you will find that without concentration you will be much more tired.

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IMAGINATION:

The actor must be able to imagine quickly and with great activity. Exercise: Hear a sound and see some picture in your imagination, and then incorporate it in your body. For this special exercise it is better for us as actors to have a picture in connection with our body, but on principle we must see everything abstract, as well as through our bodies. Be sure that you have seen. The three important things which must be done in this exercise are: 1. I have received or seen. 2. I have reacted. 3. I have incorporated.

It is only an illusion when a person says he is unable to imagine. As a director you must deny such a statement at once. If the actor says he cannot react, it means that he is unable to concentrate on his first image when it does appear.