

Michael Chekhov

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PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE  
CRITICISM OF STUDENTS' LESSONS  
INCORPORATION OF IMAGES  
FORM - "WHAT" AND "HOW"

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

Stanislavsky  
Prince Sergi Volkonsky  
Delsarte

In The Golden Steed we must develop the line of the two evil brothers in gesture. The more we work the more you will understand what I mean by gesture. It is not only a movement with the body. It is movement, and feeling, and will impulses, and interpretation, and atmosphere as well. This kind of movement must be used in our theatre. It is not movement which was used before. It must be a new kind of psychological gesture, or interpretive gesture, or what you want to call it. This is the kind of movement we need to have underneath our play, and rehearsing with this kind of gesture is what I want.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, when I say don't act but find the gesture, I mean by this that by trying to find this kind of gesture the actor will be forced to go deeper into the play and his part than he would otherwise do. Any other kind of acting is so superficial. We can find these gestures, and we can act almost the whole play with nothing more. To escape the other bad kind of acting we must say don't act but first find this kind of gesture. Next term we will have a special kind of movement and speech work, then you will understand better what we mean by this special kind of gesture.<sup>2</sup>

Now we must find these gestures for the first, second, and third scenes with the evil brothers. First, how they appear. Second, how they work; and third, how they disappear. The first gesture of the brothers is to penetrate, and the gesture which the crowd must explore is to take them into their midst, following the same four steps which the brothers take in their development. Work very consciously.

#### CRITICISM OF STUDENTS' LESSONS:

The group listening to the teacher was not attentive enough. This is very difficult for the teacher. Be very attentive, very open, and the audience will follow you. It is absolutely important.

Alan's lesson: You must reach such a standard in your exercises that each movement is artistic. This was not the case because each person was not always aware of an artistic feeling. This is a question not so much of the body but the feeling in general - the feeling that "I am an artist," and "I am beautiful." This is the way to be aesthetic. Try to reach this standard.

Esme's lesson: You must give more, help more. While the students are walking, remind them of their heads, their shoulders, their chests, etc.

Peter's lesson: I want to see more warmth. You are very light and charming, but a little bit cold. A little intellectual. Speak from your heart, and it will be much warmer.

M. Chekhov

November 23, 1936

Make an effort, and you will reach this. It will be very useful to you as an actor. Before you commence your exercises, you must see that the students are standing in some beautiful connection with the room, not just in any old way. Everyone has forgotten that we must start each exercise with pleasure. We begin, and we finish with a feeling of pleasure - this is one of the small thresholds we must cross before we start.

You gave some words - your lesson was very short and that was good - but it was so short that you could use the same words all the time and then they would be more expressive. Another thing which diminished the effect of your lesson was that it was not clear for the audience what you were doing. It must be very clear. For instance: (1) Because your hands are in a certain place, (2) Some certain feelings will be experienced, (3) By speaking certain words in a sentence some result will be felt, etc. This must be given point by point. In giving a lesson we must point each moment. This will help the student to swallow one thing after another.

One of the most important things in our school is that each member of the group must be very active. Only I will tell each one what is the general way of the School, because I am the director and I must. But everything that is in the direction of our School and is the creation of one of our members is welcomed very warmly.

## INCORPORATION OF IMAGES:

Don't be satisfied with an ordinary characterization - search and explore until you find something really fine. We must never be satisfied as long as there are traces of old, bad actor's habits and common and cheap habits. It will hurt to get rid of them, but it is better to be hurt than to be satisfied with things which are obvious. We must always fight with these worn out habits of actors. Stanislavsky has always fought this. His actors hated him because he tortured them with these things, but he was right because now the actors of the Moscow Theatre are the most original actors because of this long training.

## FORM - "WHAT" AND "HOW":

"The Form annihilates the Contents." (Schiller) We must realize that in all our work we are living rather than thinking. If our theatre becomes an intellectual one, it may produce brilliant stars, but they will be hard. The intellectual part of the play seems to be the very content which we must fight. It will never disappear; it will be annihilated as content, but the artistic form will be there. "What" is important, but "how" is much more important.

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Prince Volkonsky gave a lecture on the subject of Delsarte - his life and his contribution to the art of gesture

M. Chekhov

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through the Delsarte system, which was called Eurythmics.<sup>1</sup>

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