

Michael Chekhov

November 24, 1936

CONCENTRIC AND ECCENTRIC MOVEMENTS
DYNAMICS

In the morning, Prince Volkonsky gave his second talk speaking on Eurythmics, a lecture on the method of Emile Jaques-Dalcrose.¹

The Golden Steed:

Continue the exploration of the evil theme in the fairy tale, which is represented by the two brothers. The first step shows how the brothers appear and the positions they take up. The second step shows how they dance, and the third shows how they disappear. In these three steps we have, in general, the kind of evil which is represented by these two brothers.

CONCENTRIC AND ECCENTRIC MOVEMENTS:

The play begins with concentric movements and ends with eccentric ones. The more the crowd expands, the more the brothers contract; their death is extremely concentric. The whole third scene must be found through the understanding that their gestures are like stone, immovable, hard, and cold.

DYNAMICS:

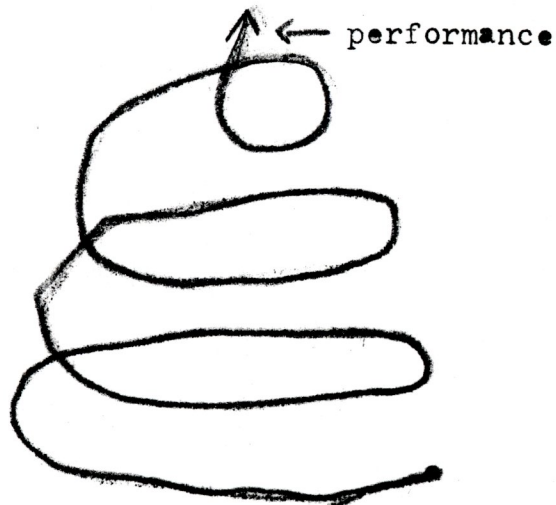
Try to find the right kind of speech by understanding the life which is going on in your body when you are doing certain movements. If you will exercise this kind of movement - and we must invent such movements for every moment of our part - then you will feel some kind of dynamic; you will feel a certain

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dynamic of the whole scene. You have to act this scene with many nuances and details and even with the kind of speaking you are using now; but the foundation, or stream, which is going on underneath all that you will produce afterward must be found through these gestures.

Try to "fly" over the whole play and realize what we have done up until today - what we have understood through our movements, words, and positions. This is not yet acting; it is just the approach to acting, and we must cross over it many times; this is the right kind of researching.



We must do the same things on different levels. We will never be able to say that we have read the play and that it is finished; each time we must read the play with new eyes. We have tried to find some new atmospheres, and we must do this again and again. The gestures we have tried to find we must do again and again. Everything must be done again and again

but each time on a new level.

This is only possible if you know your text - if you don't know your text, you will never be able to rehearse properly; your whole concentration will go in remembering your words, and you will not be able to do anything else. This is very harmful for an actor; it is a catastrophe for an actor not to know his words. He loses all the work which was done before. You must save yourself for creative work, - each moment must be creative.

If you are not creative in doing these simple gestures, you will not be creative in the highest point, too. By doing these gesture with your full talent and temperament and your full wish to be an actor, then you will really hear some voices coming to you from this kind of exploring of the body. But how can you do these movements if you do not know the words? It is possible for us as actors to learn a new soliloquy in twenty-four hours. We are living in a paradise for work. Each day we can learn a new soliloquy. We are here only for this - for our profession. Therefore, I am right in telling you that you are wrong in trying to justify yourselves for not knowing your parts by heart. I am not able to help you if you find it too difficult to learn each day five new sentences!

On one occasion I had to learn a leading part in Artisan in a foreign language in eight days.² I could do this because it was necessary. My whole life I have done this

work in the theatre, and when I meet beginners who don't know their words, it depresses me, and I lose the idea of why we are together; and when I lose the way, then I am not able to work. In this position I am helpless.

We must learn to control our bodies by our feelings - by the things we have done today. To be an actor it means that I am using my body - I must be the master of my body. My body is the instrument of my will, of me. I Am, and my body is the instrument, the tool, by which I can present myself to my audience. I give myself to my audience. Without me, my body is a corpse. For what purpose am I on the stage? To radiate my spiritual being. I Am, and my body obeys my will.

It is possible to play a whole role, such as Othello, Hamlet, or Joan of Arc in the moment in which the actor sends forth his soul.

Exercise:

Lift your arms, feeling that your soul is dictating the movement to your body. Do the staccato and legato exercise with the same feeling, sending out your feelings, your soul, each time. Then do the same exercise "without body." Then lay your body down on the floor and lift it up. Then the same thing, feeling that your body is a veil. Then cross the invisible threshold of the stage and walk forward to the footlights and send forth your being to the audience. Ask yourself why are you on the stage? To send forth the radiance of your soul, your feelings, your creative being to the audience.