

CENTER  
SPACE \

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Why are we trying to study this difficult but necessary thing of moving the center on the stage - this center which gives unity for the performance at each moment? There are two very bad habits on the stage, which you have seen and which all old actors have. If the scene belongs to someone - let us say to the leading characters - then the other actors do not act at all. This is one extreme. Another extreme is when there are no leading characters on the stage, everyone acts. Both extremes are very bad. There is only one possibility for the actor and that is he must be acting all the time. But how? That is the question.

You must understand clearly what it means to follow the center, to create it and to carry it on. For this purpose we will do some simple exercises. Take the moment when the whole town is sleeping and the showman enters.

The more activity, the quicker the time. The less activity, the longer the scene seems to drag. If we repeat the same thing without any change, it gives the impression of endlessness or eternity, which either attracts or disturbs.

Repeat the exercise with the crowd and the three centers - the scene in which someone asks Paul, "Is Catherine your wife?" and Paul replies, "Yes, she is." The center of interest moves between the mother, the son and his wife, and

M. Chekhov

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the crowd.

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The further back on the stage, the more "in general" is the figure; and the more you try to be an individual human being from that part of the stage, the more your figure will be lost. With time we must instinctively know that each place on the stage requires a different psychology.