

THE CLIMAX
ATMOSPHERE,
JUSTIFICATION
CONCENTRATION
FLYING OVER THE PLAY
THE FEELINGS

The Moscow Art Theatre
The Inspector General

The Golden Steed:

Try to understand the scheme which we have created and which hangs on the wall to remind us. You must know what it means to you, not only as a geometric thing, but how it speaks to you as an actor. Try to imagine the scene and how you are acting each moment.

THE CLIMAX:

We have begun to realize the difference between the three atmospheres, and there is some difference in your souls and beings. Try now to make an effort to reach the climaxes. Try to start the Silver Steed with fortissimo and reach the climax pianissimo. In the Copper Steed we try to show what is passionate. In the Silver Steed we are trying to show the spiritual. The director must choose the way in which to show this spiritual quality more clearly. Parts of the play must be muted - those parts which are under the earth. The tempo - forte fortissimo - can be reached in many ways, it does not depend upon speed.

The three different keys for the three Steeds are:

1. Copper Steed - passionate, climbing up all the time.
2. Silver Steed - feelings, beginning with accent from forte to pianissimo.
3. Golden Steed - will, assertion, affirmation.

M. Chekhov

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It may seem now that you are not free because of this form, but without such efforts you would only be chaotic, not free. This is the real way to be free.

ATMOSPHERE:

Each sound, each event, each thing has an atmosphere or can suggest an atmosphere, but we are not yet trained enough in everyday life to get the atmospheres from everywhere. You must realize what you do, what does it mean to get the atmosphere and to radiate it? It is really simple - as an exercise it is simple.

JUSTIFICATION:

You will be given some movements and positions without being told what they are for, and you must find something which will justify them. 1. Get up and walk directly to the corner of the structure, wait there for the count of five and justify why you are doing this. It must be absolutely natural, and you will be sure it is right because of the psychological idea which you have in your mind. This exercise means to do the task very exactly, but also to find inside yourself the justification for your actions.

This exercise can be done very often in your work at home, and it will develop your actor's feeling very much, and as a result each mise en scène will mean much more to you. By this exercise you will awaken a great freedom as an actor, because if as an actor you are unable to justify

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for yourself the things which the director or author gives you, you will be doomed. This exercise awakens the most necessary actor's abilities.

Now another exercise for justification: You must cross the room until you reach a certain point. At this point you must make a small circle to the right, and then retrace your steps. And still another justification exercise: Two people are walking parallel and when they reach a certain point one person goes forward to a certain point, while the other person puts his hands to his head and then turns back.

CONCENTRATION:

Try to realize what you do when you are concentrating - whether you are stretching some parts of your soul, or pulling in something, whether you are enlarging yourself, etc. Everything is there, it depends upon the conditions. You are very flexible in the powers you possess in concentration. The less tense your body is, the more free you are. Therefore it is very important to relax your body. Real concentration is freedom of your invisible powers. Remember that concentration is like having a stone in your hands. When you are really concentrated on something, there is something stone-like and fixed in your soul - but not in your body.

JUSTIFICATION:

Another form of the exercise for justification is to take some picture or sculpture and try to imitate it and

justify the position.

The feeling of truth will be your real guide throughout your profession. Like a mother with her child - the mother will never be untruthful to her child. We must bear this child - we must have this feeling of truth in all our actions, our speech, etc.

The Fishing Scene: (Director's exercise:)

1. Incorporation of images at first moment of play. Imagine lying on the sand in a heavy exhausted sleep, waking as dawn comes; imagine the moment when the realization of where you are and what is happening is borne in upon you. Incorporate this moment.

2. Create the atmosphere of the first few moments of the play and try to speak the dialogue out of the atmosphere.

Criticism:

The cast must not "sleep" during the rehearsal. The director must not allow his cast to lose its energy, or to be phlegmatic or unresponsive. Each member of the cast must make a conscious effort to create an active and receptive state, as a result of which each individual will feel a new life and will get the ability to create. If you are fully aware and active every moment when you are working, you will rest better during the rest hours. The loss of energy and activity is a condition which will make the actor's profession weak. We must find a new attitude of mind towards

the theatre, and this means we must find a new activity.

The director must remind his cast not to be lazy, and the cast must make an effort to be alive. This is the way to creation. When your minds and bodies are asleep, then it is impossible to create.

FLYING OVER THE PLAY:

Our Method gives us the possibility to fly over the whole play and to touch any moment we want with our imagination, or by the incorporation of images, or by the other means which we have. Therefore the director must concentrate not only on the beginning of the play because then only one part of the play is born. The reason that I have included this flying over the play in the Method, is because all my life in the theatre I suffered because we always started with the first act and went over it again and again, and then remembered that we had the second and third act to create before the performance. This was true even in the Moscow Art Theatre. The first act was always good, but the other acts didn't come up to that standard.

The longer the director will postpone the moment of tragedy, the more difficult it will be. The actor's subconscious fears the most important moment. It is absolutely necessary to touch all the important moments in the play, otherwise you will find that some of your actors are growing in their parts while others are not yet born. If you try

to understand the scheme of the Method you will find that there are many means by which you can touch the play. If not, the Method would be worth nothing, and we would have to fall back on the old habits which are full of fear.

I know this from my own experience. When I was given the leading role in Gogol's The Inspector General, I was terrified of it because I knew it was one of the most important roles in the theatre.¹ I was afraid of it until one old actor told me to think of the part as if it were the most stupid and unimportant one. I did this and then I was free.

THE FEELINGS:

This was only an accident, but now we have our Method which makes us free. That is the reason why I eliminated "feeling" from the scheme, because this is the most frightening thing the actor has to deal with. Our Method is not to feel but to do something which will awaken the feeling. We can do things without being ashamed, and in doing we will awaken some feelings which will help us. We have the possibility to approach the play without any of the fears, shame, or suffering which are the ghosts of the old actor's method.

We are able to touch the most important moment of the play without spoiling it. For instance, you could find a psychological gesture for the moment when John knows that he is saved and that all the others are dead. You must prepare your actors for this important moment. You must not be

afraid of touching the most important moments. If you had only the old methods you would not be able to do this. But by touching on the play you are able to do everything, and your imagination will work simultaneously with the gesture. The climax of this play is a most tragic situation. It is at the moment when Jocelyn meets her husband.

The main point of our Method is that we must not be afraid of the most important moments. Imagine the moment when John is trying, with his heavy wet boots, to jump out of the boat. We are able to touch this moment of the play without spoiling anything.

You must find the most important points in the play. By finding the important points you will build a skeleton and this will be of great importance to the actor who will know the important point to which he is working.

It is not necessary to employ naturalistic or realistic means in order to create a strong play. It is always possible to express the same thing in an aesthetic way. This is true of music, painting, etc. For example, some modern painters are painting almost anatomically. This is an extreme instance, but everyone of us living in our present culture, which is so anatomical, has lost the border between art and anatomy. There are things in our everyday life which must be hidden. We must escape the naturalistic approach.