

Meyerhold's Biomechanics

About Vsevolod Meyerhold <http://web.syr.edu/~kjbaum/aboutvsevolodmeyerhold.html>
(10. 2. 2008):

Vsevolod Emilovich Meyerhold (1874-1940) was one of two actors fresh out of drama school who were invited to join the newly formed Moscow Art Theatre in the spring of 1898. (The other was Olga Knipper, Chekhov's future wife.) Meyerhold stayed with the Art Theatre for four years, playing approximately eighteen roles-including Treplev in the Art Theatre's original production of Chekhov's *Seagull*.

Meyerhold became increasingly interested in exploring other theatrical forms in addition to the Realism/ Naturalism of the Art Theatre. His real interest was no longer in a theatre that seeks to "recreate" life and whose laws are those of "nature." Rather, Meyerhold sought a theatre capable of revealing "inner dialogue by means of the music of plastic movement" (Meyerhold on Theatre, Edward Braun). Meyerhold left the Art Theatre and began developing his own aesthetic.



Meyerhold regarded movement, gesture, space, rhythm and "music" as the primary elements of the "language of the theatre." He dreamed of "retheatricalizing" the theatre, of creating a theatre that would give its audience *truthful images* of life but that wouldn't seek to imitate or copy life.

A director should, according to Meyerhold, begin his work in rehearsal with the search for *form*. And this search begins with the creation of a "movement score" for the production. The director's task is to create "a pattern of movement on the stage" by means of a "deft mastery of line, grouping and costume color" (V. E. Meyerhold quoted in Braun). Movement on the stage is created not only by "movement in the literal sense, but by the disposition of lines and colours and by the ease and cunning with which these lines and colours are made to cross and vibrate" (V. E. Meyerhold quoted in Braun).

Meyerhold's directorial experiments led to an invitation from Stanislavsky to head a new experimental Studio at the Art Theatre. While this first Studio was short-lived, Meyerhold's work there led him to a crucial realization. There was a general consensus among theatre people who had seen dress rehearsals that there were some interesting experiments in suggestive and nonrepresentational design, but that the acting was terrible. The actors were simply not equipped to meet the demands Meyerhold made of them. Meyerhold realized that from now on an exploration of actor training was going to have to run in tandem with his exploration of form in the theatre. Like the American pioneers in modern dance after him, he would have to create a system for training artists that would enable them to give life to the forms he envisioned. For the next thirty-five years, Meyerhold explored a vast array of styles as a director and developed the system of actor training and approach to theatre that would become known as "Biomechanics."

Meyerhold's Biomechanics <http://web.syr.edu/~kjbaum/meyerholdsbiomechanics.html>
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"If the tip of the nose works, the whole body works."

V. E. Meyerhold

Biomechanics is an approach to actor training and to theatre developed by Russian actor, director and teacher, Vsevolod Meyerhold during the 1920' and 1930's. For political reasons, Biomechanics was forced underground after Meyerhold's execution by the Soviet regime in 1940. During the 1970's it began to re-emerge semi-secretly.

In 1972 Moscow's prestigious Theatre of Satire invited the teacher of Biomechanics from Meyerhold's own school, Nikolai Kustov, to train a group of the Theatre's young actors. One of these was Gennadi Bogdanov. Mr. Bogdanov has become one of the leading exponents of the living tradition of Meyerhold's work. Glasnost and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union have brought Mr. Bogdanov invitations to teach in the West-first in Europe, then in the United States. Thus Meyerhold's legacy has become available for study here.

This approach, which Meyerhold developed over some thirty-five years of experimentation and exploration as a director and as a teacher, provides the acting student with a comprehensive, detailed program for the development of her/ his psycho-physical instrument. Probably the most striking thing about training in Biomechanics is the degree of integration between "purely" physical training and the application of that physical work to concerns specific to acting.

A course in Biomechanics begins with physical training. But the purpose of that training is to forge the connection between mind and body, to "teach the body to think." In Biomechanics, even the simplest exercises that at first glance might seem to be essentially traditional ones designed solely to develop physical capacities such as strength, agility, coordination, balance, flexibility and endurance become-because of the thought process involved-acting exercises. Thus while students run, jump and work every muscle and joint in a dizzying array of exercises during the initial physical training phase of the work, they are already required to be continually aware of their relationship to the space and to the other actors in their "ensemble"-as well as their own "inner movement."

The training is highly systematic and sequential. Thus it begins with fairly simple (although not necessarily easy!) exercises. In time actors are asked to do a great variety of exercises: work with objects such as balls and dowel rods, leaps and rolls over platforms and up and down ramps and stairs, and partner lifts and acrobatics. This phase of the work culminates in the study of the Classical Biomechanical Etudes. These are highly stylized movement pieces which Meyerhold choreographed as exercise material for his students.

The kinesthetic, spatial and relational awarenesses that the student develops through training in Biomechanics may, initially, be primarily in terms of the physical demands posed by the exercises. But as the training progresses, the actor's moment to moment awareness expands and deepens. As a result, Biomechanics provides the student with a concrete methodology for addressing-physically and through action-issues of acting that are almost universally regarded as fundamental in the Western tradition since Stanislavski. These include: "as if for the first time," "give and take," "listening," "seeing," and "moment before."

All of this develops the actor's sense of her/ his psycho-physical being as a malleable instrument and an awareness of space and rhythm as variables to be explored in the creation of a role. The actor's heightened awarenesses and capacities are equally valuable for work that is highly theatrical or absolutely realistic. As Igor Ilynsky, one of Meyerhold's finest actors, put it: "Technique arms the imagination" (quoted in Meyerhold at Work, Paul Schmidt).

Krátký film s ukázkou

<http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/~mdenner/Drama/directors/stan2.mov>

(10. 2. 2008)

Biomechanics <http://theatreconversation.blogspot.com/2006/05/biomechanics.html>

(10. 2. 2008):

Meyerhold's revolutionary Biomechanics technique was first shown publicly in June of 1922. Meyerhold introduced the acting technique within the confines of the new sociopolitical structure of the Soviet Union. The Communist revolution moved society into a mechanical

age; one who puts the skilled worker at the forefront of citizenry and societal involvement. It is the age of the scientific revolution based heavily on Taylorism, posited by Frederick Taylor, writer of *The Principles of Scientific Management*. In his book, Frederick Taylor speaks of a system “designed to increase industrial output by rationalizing the production process. Meyerhold said in June 1922:

In the past the actor has always conformed to the society for which his art was intended. In future the actor must go even further in relating his technique to the industrial situation. For he will be working in a society where labour is no longer regarded as a curse but as a joyful, vital necessity. In these conditions of ideal labour art clearly requires a new foundation [...] The actor embodies in himself both the organizer and that which is organized (i.e. the artist and his material). The formula for acting may be expressed as follows: $N = A1 + A2$ (where N = the actor; $A1$ = the artist who conceives the idea and issues the instructions necessary for its execution; $A2$ = the executant who executes the conception of $A1$). The actor must train his material (the body), so that so that it is capable of executing instantaneously those tasks that are dictated externally (by the actor, the director...) [...] since the art of the actor is the art of plastic forms in space, he must study the mechanics of his body.

Meyerhold would go on to underscore that everything in psychology, and therefore emotion is dictated by physiological process; or put more plainly, movement. In this seminal demonstration, Meyerhold’s students exhibited a number of Biomechanical “études.” The études are basically movement scores, or a series of movements that, in a way, tell a short story; comprising a score from the sum of their parts. The études demonstrate what Meyerhold and his pupils called “acting cycles.” The acting cycle has three parts: Intention, realization, and reaction.

The separate movements are comprised of four distinct parts, they are: otkas (literally, refusal), posyl (literally, the sending), stoika (or stance), and tormos (the brake). The otkas is the movement in preparation of the action itself and is manifested in a movement in the opposite direction, like a spring. The posyl is the actual execution of the intended action, set up by the otkas. And the stoika is both the completion of the movement (coming to a halt) as well as the starting block for the next movement in an étude. Tormos is the “brake” or “resistance.” It is that which helps the body to move in a fluid and controlled motion through all stages of a movement. The actor not utilizing tormos will be sloppy and unmeasured; without precision in the otkas, posyl, and stoika. Some examples of solo classical études are “Throwing the Stone,” and “Shooting from the Bow.” In addition, each étude begins and ends with the “Daktyl,” a rhythmic movement including all the parts of a Biomechanical movement (otkas, posyl, stoika, tormos). This movement is meant to set the rhythmic and energetic tone for the execution of the etude.

Before an actor can begin to work on the études in a truly meaningful way, they must be subject to rigorous physical training to develop muscle, balance, and flexibility, as well as participating in exercises that develop a sense of their spacial relationship to and awareness of the other actors on stage and the environment. Once the actor has completed these exercises and has worked on the individual études, they can begin working on études with a partner. In these two-person études, the actors share a movement score and must work together through observation and response. Some examples of classical études are “The Slap,” “The Stab with the Dagger,” and “The Leap onto the Chest.”

These exercises in Biomechanics have as their basis, a technique of acting which does not exclude psychological or emotional response, but instead, posits a new process for achieving said response, as well as creating expressionistic arrangements of the body in space. In Meyerhold’s Biomechanics the inner is derived from the outer; it is the physiological which excites the psychological. The actor therefore must internalize the basic principles of Biomechanics as a result of their work. This includes the crucial “Principle of Totality,”

which is the idea of the entire body being involved in every single physical movement; and with regards to center of gravity, tension and release, and rhythm of movement.

Advanced work in Biomechanics includes music with the études (including piano pieces Meyerhold originally selected for specific movement scores). Since the outer physiology prescribes the inner emotion, once the actors have mastered the études, they are invited to vary the movement score by “structuring it emotionally.” There is most certainly a large element of improvisation that will happen at this point, as the actors are able to communicate with each other in profoundly visceral ways and manipulate their bodies to the fullest extent. The actors respond to each other as well as to the introduced music, sometimes working with it and sometimes against it.

When one watches a Biomechanical etude they cannot help but reflect on the seemingly melodramatic and overly emphatic nature of the movement scores (especially one like “the stab with the dagger”; but Meyerhold was battling naturalism, and was heavily influenced by the “over-the-top” style of commedia dell’ arte. He wanted actors in his productions who would not say things like “my character wouldn’t do that,” because if Meyerhold prescribed a physical activity, the actor must perform it and derive the inner emotional response from the physical activity he was performing (hence the $N = A1 + A2$ equation). This way of moving is far removed from any type of natural behavior, and that is exactly what Meyerhold strived for. His “Theatre of the Grotesque” employed a philosophy that art and life were completely different, and should make no attempt to imitate each other. It is no surprise, in many ways, that it is a director who developed it, based on the sort of productions he wanted to make, and the inability of the Stanislavskian actor to meet the challenges therein.

In production, Biomechanics first appeared in Meyerhold’s production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* Meyerhold said of the production, “With this production we hoped to lay the basis for a new form of theatrical presentation with no need for illusionistic settings or complicated props, making due with the simplest objects which came to hand and transforming a spectacle performed by specialists into an improvised performance which could be put on by workers in their leisure time.” Throughout the rehearsal process for the performance, the actors had been training in all sorts of physical technique in everything from tumbling and fencing to mime (and, as we came to learn, Biomechanics as well; in fact, the seminal movement of the étude “The Leap to The Chest” was featured, and it is likely that many others were as well).

Biomechanics trains the body in a codified way to work from the outside in. To tap into a psychological and emotional life through the outer physical form, and a codification of training. These actors trained in Biomechanics are truly athletes.

The development of Meyerhold’s Biomechanics is a clear product of Meyerhold’s interpolation of experience over time. It combines Japanese movement sensibilities, commedia dell’ arte, plasticity, musical rhythm, and science to the ends of creating a very specific aesthetic for a very specific ideology of what theatre should look like. To quote Anton Chekhov in a conversation with an actor during a rehearsal of his play, *The Seagull*: “The stage is art. There’s a genre painting by Kramskoy in which the faces are portrayed superbly. What would happen if you cut the nose out of one of the paintings and substituted a real one? The nose would be ‘realistic’ but the picture would be ruined.”

<http://www.unet.com.mk/mian/english.htm> (10. 2. 2008):

The bio-mechanical system of Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold can be defined not only as a system for the basic grounding of actors and stage articulation, but also (although not quite finalised, is still well enough set out) of a global theatrical system. In connection with this, one should bear in mind the opinion stated by Aleksey Aleksandrovich Gvozdev, who, when speaking about a theatrical system, refers to it as the "relationship between dramaturgy, stage, actor’s performance and the spectators." Coming in between the interaction of these four

elements: stage area, audience, actor's performance and dramatic substance, followed by the theatre director with his role as an innovative power to elevate all these elements, one can find the main features of the creative work of Vsevolod Emilevich, and in the same scope, the theory of biomechanics. Among the first theoretical and practical innovations which Meyerhold introduced through his text as a theatre director, is the re-structuring of the stage, deconstruction of the stage area and the abandonment of the concept of "a box without the fourth wall". His reformation of the stage begins with the approach to style, published during his period at the Theater-Studio. This stylisation leads Meyerhold to the "arrangement of the stage with flat surfaces", specifically, to eliminate the scenery and present the actor, as a principal mechanism for theatrical expression, as the "setting". This is the beginning of the deconstruction of the stage space, inherited from the old theatre, the theatre called by Aleksey Gvozdev "a theatre of the Renaissance", which, apart from anything else, encourages the box-stage idea. The de-structuring of the stage made Meyerhold take an interest in theatrical systems which had abandoned the box-stage, more precisely, in the theater of the pre-Renaissance period, mainly the Spanish theater, commedia dell'arte and, certainly, the ancient theater: "If the *Conditional theater* prefers the destruction of decorations [...], despises ramps [...], isn't that theater leading to the resurrection of the theater from antiquity? Yes, it is. The ancient theater, judging by its architecture, is a theatre which contains everything necessary to our contemporary theatre: it has no decorations, the space is in three dimensions. The ancient theater with its simplicity, with its auditorium in the shape of a horse-shoe, with its orchestra, is a unique theater which can be used for a varied repertoire: *Fairground Booth* of Blok, *The Life of Man* of Andreyev, the tragedies of Maeterlinck..."

The disarrangement of the stage, which in practice began in the Theater-Studio, and which was theoretically explained in the article "To the history and technique of the theater", had its climax in the constructive solution of the *The Magnificent Cuckold* and *The Death of Tarelkin*. The stage in these two performances not only resembles the renaissance box, but is also made as dynamic as possible and put completely to the benefit of the performance itself. It is stripped to the maximum extent, left with only enough elements to enable the actor to convey his art. So, in the 20's, Meyerhold's dreams from 1912 finally came true, when he published *To The History And Technique Of The Theater*: the props on stage are not *mise en scene* any more, but rather a supplement to the actor's body and movement. Thus, the wings of the windmill in *The Magnificent Cuckold* rotate in strictly defined moments, actors vigorously pass through the meat-grinding machine in *The Death of Tarelkin*, the stairs in the *Cuckold* are a three-dimensional extension of the area used. The lighting is also subservient to the arrangement of the stage area. Meyerhold is one of the first theatre directors of the 20th century who moved the lighting from the stage to the auditorium. In addition, Meyerhold elevated the role of light and lighting to a level equal to the role of music and rhythm in the performance. "The light should touch the spectator as does music. Light must have its own rhythm, the score of light can be composed on the same principle as that of the sonata."

Disarrangement of the "box-stage" in the theatrical system inevitably includes another element, which is very important to Meyerhold – the spectator. An imaginary wall of the room no longer separates the stage from the auditorium. Actors do not play "as if they are alone"; and they are supposed to be aware of the audience's reaction at any moment: "A specific peculiarity of the actor's creativity (as opposed to the originality of the playwright, the theatre director or the other artists) is that the creative process is being conducted in front of the audience. As a result, the actor and the spectator are interposing a particular mutual relationship, specifically, the actor puts the spectator in the position of a sounding board, which reacts to every action upon his command. And vice versa – sensing his own resonator (the audience), the actor immediately reacts, by improvisation, to all the demands coming from the audience. Following a series of signs (noise, movement, laughter etc.), the actor must

define the attitude of the audience towards the performance correctly." Thus, Meyerhold contends, the goal will be achieved – "having control over the audience, arousing even the most indifferent spectator's emotions." The theatre director must also think of the structure of spectators and their reactions while creating the play: "A theatre director makes a great mistake if he does not take account of the audience while preparing the play..." In order to fulfil this request, Meyerhold thinks that "primarily, the spectator should be placed so that the rhythm of the play can reach right down inside him." Therefore the *proscenium*, as the best way of reaching this goal, is introduced. The proscenium of Vsevolod Emilevich is the bridge between the stage and the auditorium, enabling the audience to infiltrate their emotions into the play. The function of the proscenium, its redesign in fact, offered a new role to the audience, and led to the final destruction of the box-stage. According to Vsevolod Emilevich, the architecture of the Renaissance theater, by its separation from the auditorium seats, balconies and boxes, does not correspond to the essence of theater itself, since the spectator is set apart from the play. Furthermore, such separation is not suitable because of the different angles from which the audience follows the events on the stage. (This attitude, expressed in 1934, corresponds to the systems of a *triangle-theater* and *straight line-theater*, mentioned by Vsevolod Emilevich in 1912. In the triangle-theater, the spectator is outside the triangle, while in the straight line-theater, the audience is already involved within the theatrical structure. Meyerhold chose the straight line-theater, which offers many opportunities to the theatre director to emphasize the temporary nature, as a natural feature of the scenic art). In order to avoid separation of the audience from the play and at the same time, involving the audience into the play, Meyerhold suggests, firstly, "disarrangement of the box-stage. The first attack was made by those who extended the proscenium deep inside the auditorium.[...] The new theatre [...] will have no box-stage; there is only the proscenium, where the action takes place. In the ancient theatre, that place was called the *orchestra*. The orchestra can have a circular, quadrangular, trianglular or elliptical shape, it does not matter which. Its shape meets the demands of the composition, as decided by the theatre director, as the creator of the whole project."

The contemporaries of Vsevolod Emilevich reacted noisily to his interpretation of the dramaturgical material. It is the *dramaturgical material*, not the *dramaturgy*! It develops from the *material* shaped by the theatre director according to his own needs, depending upon the imaginary structure of the play and upon one's own theatrical aesthetics. At this point, one can see the serious disagreement between the attitudes Meyerhold held in his early years to those of his mature ones. While in 1912, he considered that "the new theater arises from literature", ten years later Vsevolod Emilevich had no time to wait for the dramaturgy which corresponds to his theater, but "he takes over the initiative himself and uses his own theatrical methods in order to imbue a new spirit into the old body." With Meyerhold, the issue of which element had priority: drama text – theater, simply does not exist. Everything is subordinated to the theatrical expression as a whole. Therefore, without having any prejudice, in 1924 he dissects the play *The Forest* by the classicist Ostrovsky into 33 episodes, thus abandoning all the "rules of fine behaviour" and respect to Russian classical dramaturgy. Moscow, as well as the whole of theatrical Russia was scandalized in 1926, finding Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, (sometimes titled *The Inspector General*) completely changed. Meyerhold remodelled the Gogol's comedy, deleting whole scenes, makes one character out of two. The outcome was: Vsevolod Emilevich created a performance in which there are only traces of Gogol; however, the theatre director Meyerhold is constantly present. Vsevolod Emilevich, while analyzing *The Government Inspector* in front of his theatre staff, says: "What makes this play difficult is that, like other plays, it is directed towards the actor, not towards the theatre director." Meyerhold is quite certain about who should manage the complex theatrical mechanism. Therefore, the Master, should "create (through changes in the

text, amongst other things) a situation which would be easiest for the actor, enabling him to put on the performance without any difficulties." Such an approach gives the theatre director an opportunity to model the text and adjust the dramaturgical material to his own theatrical and aesthetic needs and principles. At the same time, the theatre director, while selecting the play, is no more limited by the dramaturgic or literary values of the text. Simply, it is possible to take low-quality dramatic material and re-arrange it. The limits, in this case, are set only by the creative powers of the theatre director and of the actors.

Finally, we have reached the fourth basic element in the theatrical system advocated by Meyerhold: the actor. Prior to giving a resume of Vsevolod Emilevich's attitudes about the actor and actor's play, we will briefly point to the specific relationship between the actor and the theatre director in Meyerhold's theatrical concept. Very often, at different times and at different places, Meyerhold defines the actor as the main, fundamental element of the theatrical performance. At first sight, such a definition is opposed to his proclaimed attitude that the theater of Vsevolod Emilevich is a director's theatre, a system where the theatre director is the principal creator of the play. But only at first glance. Specifically, since the actor is, to Vsevolod Emilevich, the central figure in the theater, he is the only "medium" by which the theatrical director's ideas can be transmitted to the audience. Therefore, in one of his appeals, Meyerhold calls the actors "living representatives of the theatre director's idea." Certainly, in order to be successful, the actor should have great natural creativity, in order to convey the theatre director's instructions through his own creative filter. According to Vsevolod Emilevich, the task of the theatre director is "to sublimate certain elements of the play, certain characters, each part, into an organic whole, suitable to his own general idea of the complete play." On the other hand, the actor's task, while accepting some of the theatre director's ideas about his character, is to convey them through his own creative filter and transfer them to the audience. The main issue in this piece of work is to study this transmission, namely, the manner of the actor's performance and the preparations for that performance.

The biomechanics, conceived by Vsevolod Emilevich, is simultaneously both a particular actor's training and a way of an actor's performance, whose purpose is to effect the main request made by Meyerhold on the stage, a request which he had made as early as 1905, in the theater studio, and didn't give up until his imprisonment in 1939: the flexibility of the actor to convey his own creation through his body (consciously controlled!) and his movements. "The creativity of the actor is shown in his movements, which are, through the excitement, enriched by glare, colours and skills in order to stimulate the spectator's imagination." The biomechanic system, according to Meyerhold, "is not a theatrical system, nor a specific kind of training; it is a part of the exercises in the area of culture." However, this training is completely integrated within Meyerhold's theatrical system, requiring the actor to be a perfect machine using the material performed in front of the audience – his body, to the utmost limits: "The material of the actor's art is the human body, i.e. the torso, the limbs, the head and the voice. While studying his material, the actor should not rely upon the anatomy, but upon the possibilities of his body, as a material for stage performance. "

The biomechanical way of training the actor's body starts from the principles of tailoring the movements. The theory of Frederick Winslow Taylor for rejecting all unnecessary movements during the work, in order to reach greater productivity and effectiveness, and reduce the consumption of physical power of the worker, corresponds to Meyerhold's experiments in the theater and to his searching for an actor who will respond to these experiments. "In the work process, it is possible not only to distribute properly the rest period, says Meyerhold in one of his speeches, but *it is necessary to find such moments during work*, (Meyerhold's italics – M. P.) which will thus provide the very best use of the whole working time [...] This refers completely to the actor of a future theater." The part which Meyerhold

stressed in this declaration is, in fact an improvement of Taylor's theory. However, Vsevolod Emilevich, in his creative demands, cannot be reduced to being a mere imitator of the thesis "man-machine", which was very popular in Soviet Russia in the years after the October Revolution. It is quite clear that he recognizes the actor as some kind of a machine (one of the principles of biomechanics says: "the body is a machine, the worker is a machinist"), with a very important correction – he lets the actor preserve creativity in his acting. That is the idea of actor's ambiguity. Specifically, starting from Coquelin senior, saying that the actor is both a creator and a substance to the creativity, Meyerhold says: "It seems that in each actor, when starting to play his role, there are two actors: the first one is himself, the actor who actually exists and is ready to play the role on stage – A1, and the second, who doesn't yet exist, whom the actor is ready to send on stage – A2. A1 looks upon A2 as material which still needs to be worked upon. Firstly, A1 should consider A2 within the stage area, since it is clear that the actor's performance depends greatly upon the size of the stage, its shape etc." Such a structured concept of the actor's technique is linked to the need for "excitement", as a necessary element in the actor's art. To Meyerhold, "the excitement is the capability to convey an externally received task through feelings, movements and words [...]. The coordinated demonstration of reflecting excitement, in fact, represent the actor's *performance*." The actor-creator (A1 – using the terminology of Vsevolod Emilevich), quite consciously, using his previous knowledge, capabilities, physical abilities and, of course, following the theatre director's own concept, shapes the material which is at his disposal -- primarily his own body. Up until now, the need for biomechanics and its principles, primarily as a method of training for an actor, but also as a principle for stage performance, has only been applied to its fullest extent in a couple of performances (in the *Magnificent Cuckold* and in the *Death of Tarelkin*). From this point of view, *The Cuckold* is, perhaps, the most extreme example of Meyerhold's work, but, as Vsevolod Emilevich says, "The *Generous Cuckold*" "was to demonstrate the basis of the new technique of the play in a new artistic situation," particularly, to raise the actors' performance to the absolute limits of the experiment, to test in practice the theoretical surmises of Meyerhold and his colleagues.

Biomechanics, in a way, raises these theoretical attitudes to their culminating height. Vsevolod Emilevich said, "if the tip of the nose works – so does the whole body". This continues the tradition of stressing the need for an actor "to observe himself" on the stage, in other words, stressing (once again) the actor as one who synthesises both the creation and the material from which that creation is made. This idea means that an actor has to be capable of "co-ordinating in the space and on stage, the ability to find himself in the whole course of the play, the ability to adjust and the ability to define visually the distance between actors on the stage." The actor must have these qualities in order to construct the whole performance in the best possible way and to give the theatre director (the final sublimer of the creativity of all participants in the theatre) the means by which to plan the development of the performance to the smallest detail.

One should bear in mind that the whole concept of the actor's performance, the introduction of biomechanics into the theatre, is, as far as Meyerhold is concerned, only part of a constant effort to define a theater which will go back to the roots of the theater, which will resurrect the inherited dependence of the theatre, as a working principle. Whatever variety there was in his creative work, whatever verbal inconsistencies and contradictions there may have been, Meyerhold's creative work has, over forty years, been directed towards one unique goal: not to let theater be the same as life.

Translation: Evdokija Zafirovska

<http://act.vtheatre.net/biomech.html>

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Meyerhold proposes „1 – 2 – 3“ structure as a composition of action. VOCABULARY OF MOVEMENT in his own words begins with *Excitability*.

An actor must possess the capacity for *Reflex Excitability*. Nobody can become an actor without it.

Excitability

Excitability is the ability to realize in feeling,¹ movements and words a task which is prescribed externally.

The manifestation of excitability

The coordinated manifestations of excitability together constitute the actor's performance.

Each separate manifestation comprises an *acting cycle*.²

Each *acting cycle* comprises three invariable stages:

1. INTENTION
2. REALIZATION
3. REACTION

The *intention* is the intellectual assimilation of a task prescribed externally by the dramatist, the director, or the initiative of the performer.

The *realization* is the cycle of volitional, mimetic³ and vocal reflexes.

The *reaction* is the attenuation of the volitional reflex as it is realized mimetically and vocally in preparation for the reception of a new intention (the transition to a new acting cycle)...

[Meyerhold, Bebutov and Aksyonov, *Emploi aktera*, Moscow, 1922, pp. 3 – 4]⁴

Basic composition of movement consists (as any other composition) of exposition (intention), middle (realization) and resolution (reaction). [Garin's description of the erow etude.]

Again, acting as reacting. By reacting to imaginary event we create this event – visualization. (Pantomime is based on this phenomena). By reacting to space, we create space. Distance gives us a tool to contrast the space. The intention (preparation) gives us not only a sense of distance, but a direction as well. That's how space dimension becomes dramatic.