

# TYRONE GUTHRIE

## Lecture on "Directing a Play"

Delivered at the West Side Y.M.C.A., N.Y.C.

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# DIRECTING A PLAY

A LECTURE BY

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## Tyrone Guthrie

(Delivered At The West Side YMCA, New York)

**TYRONE GUTHRIE** is one of the most distinguished directors in the world today. Inventiveness, imagination and a probing sense of theatre characterize his numerous productions.

Of Scotch and Irish ancestry, Tyrone Guthrie received his schooling in England and attended Oxford on a fellowship. His career as a director began in 1926, and at the age of 33, he became the youngest director the Old Vic ever had. Dr. Guthrie remained with this company until 1945, when he began free-lancing throughout the world. He directed productions for the Habimah Players in Tel Aviv, at the Edinburgh Festival, the Gate Theatre in Dublin, the Svenska Tern in Helsinki, and at the Shakespeare Festival in Ontario.

On Broadway he directed "The Matchmaker" by Thornton Wilder, the musical "Candida" and the Old Vic's production of "Troilus and Cressida". He was responsible for some outstanding productions at the Phoenix Theatre, including his own adaptation of Carl Kapek's "The Makropoulos Secret"

In 1959, Dr. Guthrie staged Paddy Chayefsky's comedy hit "The Tenth Man" which ran for two seasons, and in 1961 he directed "Gideon" by the same author.

A theatre is in the process of being built for Dr. Guthrie in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and he has been named its artistic director.

Tyrone Guthrie's professional memoirs, "A Life in the Theatre", have been published by McGraw-Hill.

**THE Y. M. C. A.** is an international fellowship of men and women dedicated to the brotherhood of people everywhere, irrespective of race, creed or nationality.

Anything that stimulates the individual to think more deeply, anything that increases his knowledge or broadens his horizon will foster the feeling of brotherhood between all peoples of the world.

The Y. M. C. A. pioneered in the field of adult education. Out of this grew the modern concept of evening classes for adults. Y. M. C. A.'s throughout the world followed this up with open platforms where people could freely discuss important issues of the day.

It has been Y. M. C. A. policy to present educational and cultural programs for the benefit of those living in the community. The lecture series that is being sponsored by the West Side Y. M. C. A. (New York City) is in keeping with this tradition and purpose.

Tyrone Guthrie delivered the lecture on "DIRECTING A PLAY" in September, 1961. It was open to the public without charge and presented as a ser-

vice to the community. The West Side Y. M. C. A. plans to follow this up with the appearance of other outstanding personalities in the field of theatre, music, art and letters.

This recording was taken from a tape made and broadcast by Riverside Radio WRVR.

The idea for presentation as a record originated with NORMAN J. KING, a research assistant with United Press International, New York City.

### SIDE I THE DIRECTOR AND THE SCRIPT

#### Band 1: Getting A Script View

I'm going to talk tonight about producing a play, well, directing a play. The terms, er-it's confusing--in Britain we speak of the producer where you say the director and we don't have a director and where you say producer we say manager or management but it really doesn't matter and in neither case, director nor producer does the term I think give the slightest indication of what the fellow is expected to do. I'm going to divide the job into two parts, first of all your dealings with the author, and the script which is preliminary and secondly the dealings with the actors and the other technicians in the preparation of the play for rehearsal. In point of fact, the director doesn't meet the public very much at all. The public of course is the final arbiter of whether they go or stay home and we often think they make the oddest decisions but by the time that's happened, the work of the director is over and the matter, although financially important, is in other respects comparatively negligible. Perhaps some of you may wonder how plays get on the stage and indeed I've often wondered myself. Of course like everything else there is no hard and fast rule. In London the channels are more orthodox and on the whole I think that the methods are more efficient. In New York it's more unorthodox, it's often wildly inefficient, but that has its own wild strange charm and produces some excellent results. Now I think this is largely a matter of economics in New York, there's much more money knocking about. It's possible for a group of 10 or 12 people who really not any one of them being wildly rich, to come together and to badger the life out of their friends, to raise money and put on a play. And it constantly happens that they do so, and make all the mistakes that beginners make at everything. You know it's like you're coming on and playing croquet for the first time, you just play terribly badly. And a lot of these amateur managements make just about every possible mistake you can make. They know nothing about it and they make all the mistakes of ignorance and over-excitement and over-enthusiasm and so on and so forth but it performs one inestimable service: it means that no play, really no play can be nutty enough and boring enough and silly enough and wild enough not eventually to get on. Now I think that's great. It

does mean that there are some extraordinary evenings in the theatre but also that's the only way that interesting innovations can take place. The weird things happen and suddenly out of some weird little group of people who know nothing about anything really, they produce something which is splendid and memorable and influences the theatre possibly for generations. In London its all more proper and more orthodox. There are fewer managements and most of them have been in the game not just for years but for generations. And they know a very very great deal about it but they tend to know about it in a very stereotyped way. And things certainly run on much more oiled wheels, it's easier for everybody, things happen more punctually, there's far less screaming and hollering and cursing and anxiety and panic, but it's all so dull. In a bracket, the same thing precisely applies to the trades union situation in New York, the theatre is artistically hampered at every turn by what I consider the gross tyrannies of the stage unions who are entirely sectarian in their interests, they don't look at the thing as a whole at all they simply say "what's in it for our chaps, I propose to squeeze the last drop, the last fragment of blood out of the stone for my section", be it the electricians, the musicians, the stage-hands, the actors, whoever else it may be. It's not only selfish, it's silly but it's very well understood how it came about: it's come about through gross oppression. In London at no time was the oppression as great as it was in New York 50 to 60 years ago - and the bitterness of the underdogs consequently is not now expressing it in biting every hand it can lay teeth into and it's all a little easier, there are more concessions, the demands are not made in such a hostile spirit and the demands themselves are not as extravagant. And there is a little more awareness all around that this is a common affair, that the stage-hands have as much to gain, no not as much, but a great deal to gain from a prosperous and successful theatre and a great deal to lose if they ruin the theater by exorbitant demands just for their private members. But I didn't come here to talk politics, I only put that in a bracket. Also I didn't come here to compare the New York to the London theatre, I've often been asked, I've worked a lot in both and I'm often asked what I think about it and it's basically a silly question, the two things so different and the differences depend upon such a complicated series of factors. What I'm here to discuss is the job of the director and basically, with differences of procedure and differences contingent on the climate of the two theatres, basically speaking, the thing is the same.

#### Band 2: A Reading of the Script

First of all you get sent a play. When you're young, you die of excitement if somebody sends a play and would you consider producing it and you write back simply before you've opened the envelope, "Yes of course, I think its the greatest play I've ever read, when do we start rehearsal". When you get a little older, you get more choosy because if you're successful at all, you're getting more scripts sent to you than you can deal with and you space your time out according to whatever you think is the best way of doing so. Again when you're young, you're sent a script and you're told by the management who sends it that the leading part will be played by Mr. X and the leading lady will be Mrs. Y and the and the designer will be Mr. Z and so on and so forth and you accept or refuse the package. As you get up in the world a bit you get a bit more say in all that. When you're a kind of Methuselah like I am, you're in a position where you don't accept a package unless it's a very nice one, you

say, "Well I would like to be consulted about the choice of these people and I think the best designer for this would not be Mr. W at all but Mr. J." and so forth and so on but I think that is precisely like any other business, as you get older and more experienced and they know you better, they can trust you with a little more responsibility. And I think even for a young director it's not wise for a management to force them into the package because the director, and I shall come to this in a moment, under the matter of his dealings with his collaborators, the director has to be the chairman of the proceedings. And its rather easier to chair proceedings if you've packed the committee. But the first thing you have to deal with is the script itself and this may strike you as a very revolutionary statement, certainly most of the directors I know would consider it such but it always seems to me that the first thing to do with the script is to read it.

#### Band 3: Visualizing The Stage Directions

Not once and again, but like the young lady of Spain again and again and again and again. And again. And at some stage of the game, to read it aloud, not necessarily to somebody, but to your cat if you've got one. Reading the play aloud in my experience shows you all kinds of things that you hadn't found when you're reading to yourself. Everybody reads a play differently and this is why I think a very great deal of dramatic criticism proceeds on a fallacy. Dramatic criticism of the classics certainly is nearly always conducted on the assumption that there exists, probably in the mind of the critic, an ideal performance which completely realizes the intention of, be it Shakespeare or Moliere or Eugene O'Neill or whoever else. What they see on the stage is judged in comparison with that imagined ideal performance. Now I think that is just nonsense. Every performance of a play, every contact with the play is that person's comment on it. If you read a play, if you read a novel, if you look at a picture, you may not be aware of it but what you're seeing is only part of the author's intention and you're also seeing things that the author never meant to put in. In other words your contact with the work of art is your personal comment upon it. You go and look say at the Mona Lisa in the Louvre and you must see something quite different to what I've seen. And I always think it would be a very amusing game to take a group of people who've never seen an important picture before, set'em down before it for 10 minutes, then take them away and say "Write down what you saw in the fullest detail" and you know as well as I do that what they wrote down would differ in the wildest and most extravagant respect, as wildly as differs the police-court evidence of the 5 or 6 people who see a motor accident, who all see something totally different, none of whom are probably lying. And what you see in that picture is what its got to say to you. What I see is what its got to say to me. When you read a play, you get out of it what you can which may be pretty little or it may even be a great deal more than even the author put into it. But if you're honest, that is what your interpretation is going to be based on. All my life in the theatre I've been fairly severely criticised, much more in Britain than here, but somewhat here, and really punished in Britain for what the critics have considered my impudence in daring to interpret Shakespeare. What else can you do? If you're asked to put a Shakespeare play upon the stage, you do two things, you either get the actors and try to make them help to make

it what you think Shakespeare was after, which clearly is not precisely what Shakespeare was after, but its the impression he's made on you; or you put something on that is like some other Shakespearian production that you've admired. You warm up cold pudding and cold second-hand pudding at that. And of the two I would prefer to risk the impertinence of trying my own thing. And if its consistently bad enough you won't be asked to do it again. Now in the case of Shakespeare you may say that this is somewhat impertinent and I agree it is. There is a certain impertinence in relating yourself to a great master of anything and saying well now I've got to interpret you and its going to be done my way. But Shakespeare ain't here to defend himself. And what is the alternative? Of course, I'm not going to say that you don't mug up in the books and read what the critics have said and read all these notes, most of which I'm sure you'll agree are just ineffably dreary, the dull scribblings of ponderous, pompous dullards who've been well-paid to be dull. But now and again something good comes up. But then, having read all that, having absorbed all that, you've got to get back to the fact that you read the text and it makes on you an impression of such and such a kind. And I think that the conscientious artist has no alternative but to take his courage in both hands, shut his eyes, hold his nose and jump in and do it best he knows. Because the only other thing is just to do it the stock way and there really is no other stock way, you just do it as what you remember of Walter Hampton's production of "Major Fair" and "Purple Velvet." And I don't think that's any good, its not a service to Walter Hampton, to the public, to Shakespeare or to anybody else. Now this may seem a little impertinent when its applied to Shakespeare but I don't think it is because when you come to think of the nature of a play, it is not a thing in itself.

#### Band 4: Visualizing The Actors

The dramatist writes down the script and with the deference due which in my opinion is not a very high deference to all the professors of literature in all the universities of the world for the last 400 years, the printed script is not the end of the matter, its the beginning. The printed script bears no more relation to the author's intention than the score of a symphony bears to the composer's intention. And its generally accepted that the score of a symphony is merely there, its merely the raw material waiting for a conductor and an orchestra to bring it to life. Similarly the printed text in the play is the raw material of the dramatic performance. It seems to be more because any literate person can read the text and very few literate people can read the score of a symphony. But there isn't one of us who can't put on our specs and read "To be or not to be, that is the question... whether 'tis nobler, etc. etc. etc..." So that there then goes about the erroneous idea that the reading of the play is enough, that everybody by reading that can extract the full meat out of it. Well, of course they can't. Many people can, and many people justifiably find the reading of a speech like that a more satisfactory experience than listening to it spoken by anybody. The best speaker of that speech that I've ever heard is John Gielgud who makes of it, I think, a matchless piece of music, its an operatic aria that in itself is a joy to the ear but far more than that, he sets it in its context. He apprehends with his actor's intelligence that through what has gone before and what is to

come and what is inside himself, this is a young man at his wit's end who is really out on the battlements of Elsinore in the dead of night saying "Shall I take my own life or shan't I?" And when in a dramatic performance, he speaks that that's as clear as mud. But when you read it in the classroom or when you read it to yourself, I don't think most of us know enough about reading plays to apply all that imaginative context. And even if we can supply the facts of it, few of us are trained enough, imaginatively or in the techniques of the theatre, to be able to body forth the idea with the poignancy that a gifted actor can do. In other words its not at all an easy matter to read a play, its not a question of just reading the words, you've got to supply, which is something that we none of us to the ends of our lives can do fully, you've got to supply the architecture of the scene, you've got to see where the climaxes are, how the thing builds up to a certain point which is the crisis of it which leads to the next thing and so on and so forth. Because a play is in a way a piece of architecture, Shakespearian plays are great complicated cathedrals. Great echoing cathedrals, filled with music, the music itself is dependent upon the shape of the thing into which they're put. These scenes are all designed, they have some sort of a shape. Now there isn't a definitive shape, nobody is entitled, this is my point. The critics says "Yes there is: Shakespeare intended the play to be just precisely so, only nobody quite knows precisely how and anything that doesn't realize that is no good." I say No! If a play is any good, any act of it, any scene of it, any character of it, can be interpreted 15 different ways, each one as good as the other or each one as bad as the other. And if you come to think of it, it must be so. No playwright, except amateurs, of course I'm always getting plays from beginners, which begin with 11 pages for stage direction which say Cynthia is an exquisitely pretty girl of 19 and 3/4, she was born in May, so and so, she has blue eyes, then they proceed to give her bust, waist and hip measurements, her shoe size, what she has for breakfast, an amateur psychoanalysis of her character, then proceed to do that for the rest of the characters in the play, then they describe in four pages, the set, which is just the ordinary usual drawing-room comedy set with the usual mistakes made like placing the windows at the back so that the brightest light is in the audience's eyes; and so you go on from there but that's the amateur. The professional and the greater the professional I think the more terse are his stage directions. Shakespeare's stage directions are absolutely minimal for two reasons: he knows that piles of stuff about what Cynthia had for breakfast on Tuesday last week and all that kind of rubbish is only inhibiting for people's imaginations who've got to interpret the play, it puts their backs up, it bores them and prevents them from thinking the thing out freshly for themselves. Secondly he knows very well that if the play is any good, its going to be performed in a thousand different contexts. Hamlet we have reason to suppose was written for Burbich who was a big fat man a bit old for the part. But Hamlet can be played by a big man, a little man; a tenor, a bass; a manly man, an effeminate man; an aggressive man, a shy man; there are 15,000 different ways of playing Hamlet, all of which still add up and make the play interesting. Claudius is a little more limited because the script perfectly well tells us that he's bloat king, that he drinks a good lot, that he smiles and smiles and is a villain. There are certain obligations under Claudius to conform to things in the text but still it can be played in many many dozens of ways, it is possible to pass Mr. A, B, C, D, E, F or G and on the casting of that and of the 5 or 6 other main

parts, of course depends the interpretation of the whole play. If John Gielgud plays it with a certain group, it is one thing; if Maurice Evans plays it with another group, the play becomes something totally different. The words are the same, the episodes are the same, but the general impression on the audience, both may be interesting, indeed fascinating, but they will be totally different. And any playwright who's setting out to do this thing seriously knows that the same thing holds true. That you don't just write that you think your play is going to be performed in the Longhurse Theatre by Ethel Barrymore, X, Y and Z and that its going to be precisely so; of course it isn't. If the play's any good it's going to be performed all over the world by countless different people in the parts, by countless different directors throwing in their two cents-worth. And if you're a playwright of any ambition at all, you hope that your play is going to go on long after you're dead. When theatrical fashions change because theatrical fashions change just as often as dress fashions. The performance of a play that is given now, let us suppose a new play, and is acclaimed a great masterpiece; if its a great masterpiece it sure won't be but lets just for fun suppose it is; the author naturally hopes that it will still be playing in Uzbekistan in 2061, when you know they'll all be in great beards and blowing horns and carrying on in the maddest way and the whole theatrical context will have changed. And things will be being done to that play that he could not possibly have envisaged but if the play is any good the meat of it will still be there. The general philosophy of the play will come through but the trappings will be totally different.

#### THE DIRECTOR AND THE PRODUCTION

##### SIDE II, Band 1: The Role of The Author

Then there's another point: No author who's any good, I've come to the conclusion, has the faintest idea really of what he's written. This is my opinion and its very hard to substantiate but I haven't arrived at it lightly. Anything that distinguishes it from journalism that really gives it a bit of earth-wisdom, has got in between the lines and over and above the conscious intention of the audience. I didn't understand this at first; when I was much younger I was very friendly with James Bridey, the Scottish dramatist, I don't know if his work is familiar here to anybody, he's not as well-known on this continent as I think it should be; and for years he used to send me drafts of his plays as he was writing them and ask what I thought. And for years I used to write back in very similar terms, you know couched in this way and that way but the gist of the letter was "Well I think its immensely amusing, there are some great jokes, it'll make a cat laugh and there's some wisdom and splendid things in it but what's it all about?" And always he would reply "Well I don't know I only wrote the thing." And I thought that was his kind of whimsical, ironical, Scot's way of making a fool of me and saying "Well don't you try to teach me my business" but as the years passed I learned that he meant it in literal sober fact; that he considered that anything in his plays that got in, that was any good had got in there without his knowing it. And I'm pretty sure of that. Take this present play that I'm working on which is "Gideon" by Paddy Chayevsky. Now I don't want to sell it to you as the greatest play in the world, I think its an important play but that's not for me to say, but for you. It's beautifully written, has all of Chayevsky's uncanny skill of setting up a sentence so that the laugh comes at the right moment; setting the poignant

moments against the laughs so that they enhance one another; setting the important and weighty ideas in a sort of fluff of meringue so that they stick out like lighthouses in a stormy sea; it's a very big advance on "The Tenth Man" in seriousness and in topic and that kind of thing and on the conscious level an enormous amount of artifice and know-how has gone into the construction of this, but again and again and again and again, we come on things and the actors say the lines in a certain way and he says "By God that's marvelous, I had no idea that was the way it was to be spoken." And the collective thing of the group sheds light on the things that he didn't know were there. They were in it all right, because they were in his unconscious but what distinguishes the first-rate from the merely journalistic is that it somehow carries this load of dynamite of the over and above from the author's subconscious. Do you really believe that when Shakespeare sat down to write Hamlet he said to himself, "I'm going to create a character so interesting that 600 years later, a public librarian will say, 'The biographies of three people are in outstandingly greater demand than those of anybody else' (This was said to me in England during the war by a public librarian) 'and the three people in order of preference were 1. Jesus Christ, 2. Napoleon, Hamlet'" This figment is of surpassing interest to all of us, down the generations, across the world. Well now do you think Shakespeare sat down and said "I'm going to write something that is the mind of every man, that is every young man or young woman that is in torture in a certain situation"? No author can write a great part without drawing enormously on their own experience. And if you happen to be as Shakespeare was, a tremendous poet, the subconscious bubbles rather quickly into the consciousness and creeps up in the lines and very soon this young man was speaking the innermost thoughts and intuitions of the human race, but he didn't mean to. Nor is the thing set down in such a form that anybody can possibly have the impudence to say that this is the definitive way of doing it. And when you press people who take that point of view and really push them into a corner, you find that what they've got in mind is some performance that they saw when they were 17 and were in a faint about, which left an immense---because you know, we're all in the same boat, there's no great acting after one's 18 years of age, great acting is one's memories of the great actors that one saw when one was very very young and impressionable. And these people remember something as being wonderful, they will remember---well when I was young, it was the performances of Irving and Ellen Terry in Britain that were the sort of standard, and things that departed from the way Irving and Ellen Terry played the part, was wrong. It wasn't just different, it was wrong. They were right, it was wrong in the eyes of the senior critics. And I've noticed that---and this doesn't just apply to Shakespeare, it goes all the way down the line---there are certain ways of doing things which dramatic critics claim are right and are wrong. There is no right way of doing anything, there're a million wrong ways and some of them are wronger than others but there is no right way. Therefore I think that when you're dealing with the script, one must not be humble you must say, "This is what it seemed to mean to me" and if the author is there that's fine you adjust the things as they come along and I'm here to say that all the authors I've worked with and I've worked with many live authors, have never been nuisances. If you ask them what they mean by something they always say humbly "Well I'm not really quite sure that I know but I think its something like this." The only place Paddy Chayevsky's ever dogmatic

about his plays is in certain, nearly always quite unimportant ways of getting a laugh. He says "I think it would be much funnier if he delayed the take, instead of you know just snapping back on the answer, if he looked at the guy as if he didn't understand and then gave the reply very mildly after a pause" or something like that, little technical points like that, which is something that he has heard when he was writing it and God knows that's something that he should know all about and the ideal way of putting on a play is for the author himself to direct it. But authors are rarely good directors, they haven't got what it takes as a general rule in the other department which is dealing with the collaborators. I hope I haven't left the impudent impression that I think that directors know more about authors' scripts than the authors do themselves. Of course I don't. I'm only saying that the author doesn't know everything about his script and that the script itself is merely the raw material upon which a group of collaborators have got to work, it is not the finished article. That idea is merely the invention for the most basely materialistic reasons of literary professors. I'm not going to go maundering on about the business with the script. There is a good deal to be said: there's no script however good--I didn't say this Ezra Pound did--- that isn't the better for cutting. Everybody writes too long. The Sermon on the Mount could take a bit of cutting.

#### Band 2: Casting The Play

Well now then on to the next thing: the collaborators department. First of all, you've got to face it--that you never get the people you want. If you're casting a play, everybody goes for the leading part for 5 or 6 leading actors who are hot at the time, and as every management in the world including the films and including the television, is casting their crowns before them, -- in the case of the films and the television, the crowns are much more heavily jewelled--the chances of getting the top 5 are slender. Then there are thousands of reasons why you can't get the people you want for the other parts--well you can't get Miss So and So because she used to be married to the leading man and now she ain't or you didn't know it but the stage-manager tells you that she's drinking fairly heavily right now or she's gone away on vacation or she's making a film--actors are not; popular supposition is that actors' lives are spent sitting at the telephone waiting for it to ring and all of them say Yes! to any offer made to them. Its not so. There are many thousands of actors like that at the bottom but alas and alack so unfair is life that those are not the people you want for leading parts. Then there is the further thing that the best actors are not always the best citizens. I won't say that they're the worst citizens, but the best citizens are the people who are never late, who never fluff a cue, who always know their lines, who're always helpful, tidy, sober, reliable, cooperative and perfectly dear in every way--usually have no talent. And alas the converse is true, the bundles of talent are usually bloody nuisances. So that you can face it from the start, the collaboration will not be exactly what you've dreamed of.

#### Band 3: The Actors in Rehearsal

Nevertheless the first, in my opinion, I think the most important function that the director performs is creating a certain atmosphere at rehearsals. And the first essential for that is to make the company feel that they are in fact a unit. Now that's much harder in New York than it is in London because the theatre is so vast. The theatre here is almost the entire assemblage of professional talent from the whole continent. There are literal-

ly tens of thousands of actors and a company is assembled and you know that you perhaps won't see any one of those people again for ten or 15 years. In London its quite different, the market is much smaller, we all know one another, everybody is on first-name terms, most of them are God-parents of the other ones' children and all that kind of thing and its much more chummy and much more a family affair and the same thing goes for the relation with the staff. Oddly enough in this democracy, the people who do the manual work are far more below the sort in the New York theatre than they are in London. In the London theatre there will be old stage-hands who have worked--and their fathers before them and their grand-fathers before them--in the same theatre and generations of actors have come and you know when they're young kids these old boys will have been kind of uncles and daddys to them. And they're not the lower classes at all, they're respected and like friends and the relation is infinitely more friendly and sort of mutually supporting between them. The New York theatre, not for any failing of the human thing but simply because its such a huge great, over-competitive, over-bustling, money-making machine has extraordinarily little of that kind of humanity. Therefore it is harder for the director to do what I think is his first duty, which is to make everybody feel that they are part of a oneness, that the company is a unit, to create a morale in which everybody wants to do well not just for their own self-advantage but for the forwarding of the cause for which we are met. And allied to that but not quite the same thing, its up to the director immensely to create the atmosphere of a rehearsal. A director who is unpunctual or who is lazy will never have good rehearsals going. Its my experience that people have got to feel that they've got to arrive on time, its a duty for them to be absolutely punctual, not because punctuality in itself is anything but its a nuisance if the others are kept waiting. And the proceedings have got to move at a certain speed. Its up to the director to see that the people you know who have to wait by for a long time and then come on and say "My lord the carriage waits" and then bugger off and not say anything again until the end of the play--that they don't have to wait for hours and hours and hours to do that, that they are called--you can't say precisely when--but maybe 20 minutes before their turn comes and are allowed to go after it. And little things like that which make an immense difference to the morale of rehearsal and the humaness and the pleasantness of going on. Then on a deeper level its the director's business to create an atmosphere in which people can do often quite embarrassing things--play love scenes with people whom you don't find in the least sexually attractive, or perhaps even more embarrassing, play love scenes with people whom you find overwhelmingly sexually attractive. Make concessions, show all sorts of strange things about themselves. Its an odd paradox of the stage that as soon as you start pretending to do something and enlarge it to the scale that is necessary to carry it to the back of the theatre, you not only portray what you're pretending to do, but you portray yourself, your innermost self, in capital letters, red ink and underscored three times. Homosexuality peeps out from the butch men, gentlemen who carry on you know like they're great lechers and things, suddenly they have to do some king of a revealing scene and you see suddenly that inside all this facade of tweed and manliness is a terribly frightened little spinster lady. And not only in the sexual department sweet-faced spinster women, pillars of the Presbyterian Church, have to get up and show something and suddenly you see that inside all this, there is a raging, voluptuous tigress. Well, that's not awfully funny, it can be very shaming if you have to undergo it and there is a sort of free-masonry of the stage that we accept that--that those things you know that

is why the stage is often accused of being too tolerant of irregularity. But it is because we've learned that that has got to be taken, that people are not what they seem to be, that the world is just chock-full of homosexual clergymen and kleptomaniac ladies of the utmost respectability and all kinds of things like that. I think the important thing is the creation of the atmosphere of rehearsal. And the most single important thing about that is that it must not become a bore. And I'm inclined to be pretty bored by the sort of rehearsals in which the director goes into long psychoanalytic huddles with certain members of the cast and they whisper and whisper and whisper and whisper and everybody else hangs about. And as often as not all that sort of talk doesn't really show in the performance at all. If you want to do it for God's sake yes, but not in rehearsal hours. You go out and have a drink and do that in some dark corner. And similarly the scales have got to be held, the powerful and rich and important actors must not oppress the small-part people, I don't think they're apt to but you have to watch that and equally the small-part people must not be allowed to bother and suck up to the vex the lives out of the big ones. Because in the desperate struggle and again this applies particularly to New York, in the desperate struggle to get on the small-part people with their way to make have no option but to try to make contact with people that they think are going to be useful--and to be dreadful nuisances. And the little people in the company very often feel that its necessary for their self-advantage to get to know the big people and they rather push and hang around and make themselves nuisances in a not really very suitable way. And although its not really the director's business, I think as the sort of chairman of the meeting, you can protect them a bit from that you can suggest to the young people that there are better ways of getting on.

#### THE DIRECTOR AND STAGING

##### Band 4: The Director in Rehearsals

Well then it is not my view that the director is there to instruct actors how to do things. You have to set up a framework in which they can work, its no use us saying "Well there's the stage and the door's going to be there dear and the window's there and the stair-case there and the sofa here, now get on and act it." That's not a help. Any actor and I've been an actor and I know that you've got to be, to some extent, put into a framework. Its much more helpful to be told more or less, start it off anyway with precise positions and if the director is wise he will start that precisely and he will say, "When you say the word 'spit' you will stand up and you walk over to the sofa and when you say the word 'teapot' you will sit down and begin pouring out the tea." But if he's also sensible he will say "Now this is only a preliminary thing, when you've done it a few times and if you want to change this, let's discuss it, its not a hard and fast drill there are certainly 6 ways in which it could be done." But its a help, I think, always, if only because it saves time, if somebody blocks it out absolutely autocratically at first, provided its understood by everybody that no offense is going to be taken if they say "I feel very uncomfortable here, do you mind if I cross later?" And I think that certain decisions have to be taken by the director as to the general interpretation of a play and inside that the particular interpretation of a scene. Of course again the wise director is not autocratic about this, if somebody disagrees they should certainly be entitled to say so, but not in front of everybody and not in such a way that it wastes the time of the whole gang. They say "I'm not happy about this can we discuss it" and you say "Yes" and at the end you discuss it and they say "I quite disagree with you because-because-because-because-because" and if you're sensible you listen very carefully and probably they're right. But any scene must be arranged so that the climax comes at a certain

point. Dialogue must be arranged, to some extent, orchestrated, because the dialogue of a play is its music upon which it lives and the pace of that music of the evening and just as an orchestra cannot play a symphony without a conductor for very obvious reasons, so a company cannot play a play without somebody who's going to regulate the music of the play; who says its going to get steadily louder, faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, mounting to that point; pause, and then begin and then you start building again, all that's a very obvious instance but there are many things that can be done with the music. The pattern of it must be agreed before-hand and the actors must know the pattern into which they're expected to fit. And again I don't think that this should be dogmatic. An actor can say "Well I think I can make that line much more effective if I didn't have to gabble it and if the climax could come a little bit earlier so that my line is the beginning of the anti-climax---you can see that sort of talk which is very easy to have.

##### Band 5: The Designer's Role

Well the director of course is responsible for the "Scene" -- the designer designs and if the director is sensible he will let him design but only exercise some kind of an over-all control. No sensible director says, "Oh I couldn't have the ribbons on that dress pink, they must be blue" but he does say, "Well, she's got to get up some very steep stairs so there's no use giving her a skirt that's that tight, you'd better think again about that" or "She's got to get through a narrow door-way so there's no use giving her a hat that sticks out to here" or "She's got to be seen from the dress circle so there's no use having a hat that does that." And common sense stuff like that. But overall the style of a play, particularly in a classical play, has got to be determined, the director I think has got to be the chairman of this but if he's wise he won't autocratically settle it he will do it by discussion. The designer with whom I've worked a very very great deal and most of my classical productions have been done with is Tanya Moisevyich and we've worked so much together that we've developed almost a sort of shorthand. We discuss the thing and we have our own king of abbreviations and we refer back to other things that we've done and say "If it were a little like this only not so black" and "If this was dark black" and drawings are made on the backs of envelopes and half-sheets of paper of a very rough nature and we exchange these drawings and then the drawings are done, rough models are cut out in cardboard and the thing is set up so that you can see what is happening not merely in the flat but in two dimensions. And if that is agreed then the rough cardboard model gives place to a tidy one which is painted and the dress sketches go through a rather similar thing: very rough scribbles on the back of an envelope are replaced by samples of material and then the samples of material are the basis for more careful painted drawings. But I don't think any director who's any good is taken in for very long by the elaborately finished drawings you know with sort of shaded backgrounds and immensely realistic imitations of texture and things which many, particularly commercial designers, put in because they think that only so can they get the job. In fact the design should show just without any frills at all how the thing is made, what its going to be made of and why its being made in that particular way. And there's plenty more that might be said but I hope I've given you an indication of my attitude to this job and some of the things that the job embraces and again before I finish may I say that if I've ever given a dogmatic impression I really think I've belief myself. It was never my intention either off the stage or on it to be dogmatic. Direct, yes and without frills, yes but not to the point of view of thinking that my point of view is right and that nobody else knows anything.