

Title: Milos Forman's Non-scripted Approach Culminating into Sophisticated Screenplays.  
Author: Karen von Kunes, Yale University

Abstract:

My paper discusses importance of various elements of Forman's collaborative screenwriting based on the original story, novel and theater play, and editing techniques of the final product. Influenced by Italian *Neo-realism* and French *Cinéma vérité*, Forman became a master of Czech *New wave* by his remarkable ability to capture a spirit of the time in the Hegelian sense, and by combining it with a healthy dose of Czech black humor. In his first features, *Black Peter*, *Loves of a Blonde*, and *Firemen's Ball*, he has achieved his fame by means of his unique vision of interpreting the surrounding world with an approach of semi-documentary realness and without using his freely-written scripts, not letting his actors (or rather "non-actors"—everyday people without acting experience) read them. However, once he left his homeland and began to create in America, this approach that was highly successful for its effectiveness in a culture of communist repression, failed. The subtle comedy, as an expression of criticism of the system that brought him international recognition, could not be replicated in American society. As Forman gradually realized, it was a well-written screenplay that was crucial to become a successful filmmaker in his new country. His collaboration with Michael Weller and Peter Shaffer, two highly skilled and detail-oriented screenwriters of meticulous precision, turned to be fruitful. Forman arrived to a conclusion that a screenplay is one of the most crucial elements of filmmaking, followed by editing. This paper analyses specific examples of both, Forman's Czech films and his American features, *Hair*, *Ragtime* and *Amadeus*, to examine screenwriting strengths and difficulties in turning playwrighting and novel writing into a screenplay. In addition, the attention is paid to the perception and understanding of the picture that can be easily changed by the process of editing and omitting/adding scenes.