

Michael Chekhov

June 29, 1939

Suggestions for style for Pickwick  
Adventures of Samuel Pickwick, Esq.

1. The characters are full of temperament. They keep nothing inside, but open themselves in a lot of gestures, situations, positions, etc. There is nothing restrained about the characters or the situations. When a character is restrained, Dickens describes it as an exceptional thing - (i.e. the incident of the two restrained gentlemen wherein one deliberately walked with his eyes over the other.)  
 [Cruikshank]
2. In studying the engravings you will see how the figures are expressing emotions. We must act so that if the expression is to be shown on the stage, it must be shown with the whole body.
3. The manner in which they bow and do everything is so particular - if you study the engravings, you will see what kind of movements must be made. This will help you to wear the costumes in the right manner.
4. One thing you must not take from the engravings - the grimaces.
5. Pay special attention to bridges and transitions in the play. We must make everything seem psychologically complicated - everything in Dickens has been so compressed to such a point that he looks at things through a microscope. In imagining your characters, imagine them as very complicated - your acting must be the result of very complicated work, although in the end we may do it absolutely simply.
6. By studying the engravings you will begin to feel that these people's lives are not continuously flowing but are expressed by means of bridges and transitions and points. Moving, stopping, and moving.
7. The settings will be slightly out of perspective as suggested by the engravings - (this may also be true of costumes.)
8. There will also be an element of dust about the costumes and settings so that they will give an old appearance, although the colors will not disappear. The audience must feel that it is a "tasty dish."

Do not look at the engravings from the point of view



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of aesthetic or intellectual pleasure, but really act them in your imagination. Re-live the pictures and make them live for you.

Read the novel as well as the play.