

Michael Chekhov

October 30, 1936

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD  
CREATING THE NEW ACTOR AND THEATRE  
ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORK

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD:

I have spoken about the threshold which we must cross when we come into the class because this is the permanent atmosphere of our theatre. Atmosphere is not only necessary in our plays but also in our work. Through this atmosphere we must understand our Method. Our desire to create a new theatre will be better understood, and we will have more power to create this new theatre (perhaps not so new but good). Again, it is not a private feeling with which we enter the room. During the time we are working in our rehearsal rooms, we must have an energetic atmosphere. We must throw away our everyday style and habits while we are in the rehearsal rooms. I must repeat this because I see very often that it is not so.

CREATING THE NEW ACTOR AND THE THEATRE:

Our task is to create a new atmosphere not only here, where we work, but around our theatre, too. We must create another atmosphere. The people who see our work in the Studio and in our theatre must speak of us in other terms than are usually applied to the theatre today. At the moment they speak about actors as unimportant persons. This is a tragedy for us. We have the power and the possibility here to re-create this opinion about us, but it can be done only step by step, when we learn to cross the threshold of our school with a

feeling of admiration and respect. In this way we can help to create a new point of view toward actors and the theatre. This is a great mission which we can fulfill.

The Golden Steed:

Enter Antin alone. Antin is the climax of the longing of the good group. They create an image which is out of their longing.

From the moment of solitude and deep dejection they again look to the mountain for help, and with growing hope, advance toward it, lifting their arms to it. The climax is reached with the words, "Our longing." At this moment, Antin is born and is sent out from the group. He voices the longing of the crowd toward the mountain in the words, "For them all." The crowd retreats from him with the feeling that he embodies all their hopes - he is their representative, and they will wait for him to fight for them. Antin finds himself forsaken and cries, "Alone." There is a pause after which the crowd changes into an evil group which advances slowly toward Antin with a feeling of cynicism - jeering, menacing.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORK:

I am very unhappy because I see that you are so tired. You are pale, yawning, and moving slowly. I am not able to work with such people. All I can give you or am able to give you I cannot because you are not able to take as much as would

M. Chekhov

October 30, 1936

be possible if you were in your full power. I feel it myself when I come into the school. I feel heavy the moment I come in. Perhaps this is a question of your personal life. Perhaps you are going to bed too late.

Nowhere in the world is there such an opportunity as we have been given by Dartington, and we must answer it with our energy, our life. If we answer it by spending our time staying up late at night and coming in the morning tired and listless, we can really lose our time and our power. If some of you grow a little, and others not, what shall I say at the end of the year? Must I say that the whole year we have been tired? If we start such a really serious work as a three-year course, something must be done in our private life.

Perhaps something is wrong in our schedule, or perhaps we are doing too many other things. You find it so exhausting to be thrown on yourselves in the work on The Green Cockatoo. But it is important to be thrown on yourselves - you must meet some difficulties and overcome them. We lose our time by this attitude, and we must find some solution. We must be aware of the psychological effect of crossing the threshold and entering the room, drawing upon our creative energy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Deirdre Hurst gave a lesson in movement, dividing

M. Chekhov

October 30, 1936

the group into three, moving with staccato movements and creating groups - a festive group, a warrior group, and the group which bridges the two.

Mrs. Elmhirst gave a lesson in atmosphere; a crowd entering a railway station.