

Michael Chokhov

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CHARACTERIZATION

Twelfth Night

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Scene III: It is morning. - Sir Toby Belch comes back from his gay night, singing so that the whole town can hear him - full of activity - the last activity of the dawn, before going to bed. He is not as drunk as he was. It is his last effort to leave before the whole will collapse. That is the state in which he enters. He enjoys the presence of Maria and his shadow, Aguecheek. He does not speak to Sir Andrew, but he directs him. Sir Andrew tries to do the same as Sir Toby, and he appears singing but in a small voice - he is an echo. He is dependent upon Sir Toby for everything he does.

One atmosphere is absolutely free and unbridled and the other - from Maria - is cautious, frightened, trying to quiet things. They use the opportunity to make everything from nothing. Sir Toby and Aguecheek greet each other with great ceremony and formality, and Maria is very seductive. Aguecheek appears thin, meager, without blood, pale hair and pale face - always weak. Weakness is like a dream which he lives - he always wants muscles, but he is too weak. Two things make Maria laugh - the amusing, stupid jokes of Feste and the sight of Aguecheek. She takes Sir Toby very seriously.

M. Chekhov

February 1, 1940

Toby cannot look fully at Maria in this scene because he is afraid of her, like a guilty child.

Scene IV: General indications for this scene: Imagine a very beautiful setting - very elegant - bright colored silks. This will help you to get the light touch which is essential for this scene. Take this silk quality as a psychological suggestion. Olivia's psychological gesture is the spine of the whole scene. What is this gesture? Imagine a very young girl of fifteen who has lived always in this silk atmosphere and knows nothing of anything. Everything is a new world for her, a new experience. She receives everything with absolute wonder, curiosity and astonishment. She is actually playing at life - unconsciously, like a child with a doll's house. She is seen in a mourning veil - she enjoys this little play of sorrow, just like a child. There are many toys around her - beautiful and strange toys - but she does not play with them because she is in mourning. All the attempts to play with her fail. The whole "what", as it were, is in mourning, but no one is mourning.

They try to maintain this atmosphere which Olivia wants to spread around her. When Orsino's messenger comes in, we see a bit of the child who wants to play another game. She cannot run and jump, therefore, she jumps with her words - trying to fence. This is the second part, and the third and biggest part is when she begins to take life seriously - she falls in love with Viola, the messenger. There are three

M. Chekhov

February 1, 1940

main gestures: (1) the play with sorrow, (2) the play with gaiety, (3) the real spark of love.

Another line is that of Viola. She comes with a gesture which is like an arrow - she has to fulfill her duty. Then she meets this heartless being, Olivia, and anger comes. She wants to beat her with her words, and she goes away absolutely full of anger. That is her main gesture.

Malvolio is jealous of Viola - he is secretly in love with Olivia in his own way. When the others speak with her, he is suffering because he wants to take her with him and have her alone. He suffers terribly. He speaks very stupidly actually, but there are two ways - either to act him as a kind of fool or to show him absolutely absorbed in this type of profound love so that he is not sure of what he speaks. He is lost in his thoughts of her, and he tries to be humorous and to make jokes to hide his preoccupation. He tries to mask this by trying to be with the others. He tries to hide his pain in this way, but a certain stupidity is there in him.

Feste is, of course, a very clever boy, the most clever person in the play perhaps. He is terribly lazy and wants to have his rest. He drinks so much that he always has a headache, and we find him sleeping everywhere like a little dog with his headache.

Toby is an elephant with wings, not realizing what he is doing or where he is going. He is always so drunk that

M. Chokhov

February 1, 1940

he can only realize actual things.

Maria's character is that of a person supervising what is going on and being ready to repair things. There is danger from every corner because of the stupidity of these people. Like a captain of a ship she is very busy, very occupied with this business. She is clever enough and careful enough so that Toby will not be thrown out or that the Fool will not be thrown out with Fabian. She must protect them from Olivia.

In the room there is a throne, and on the throne lies Feste in a last effort to get rest and sleep. Maria enters with all the toys and balls and brings them into this atmosphere of mourning. She awakens Feste, but it is a very dangerous situation because he is so drunk. Then Malvolio's face is seen. Olivia enters in too much hurry. Malvolio is unable to understand the joking because he has no humor. Olivia laughs and Toby and Maria, with this light silk quality, help her to laugh. The whole scene is very subtle. All the rude things are in other scenes with Toby. Maria is always trying to distract Olivia. Every time Olivia speaks to Malvolio he is happy - when she gives him orders he is delighted. Maria and Feste try to hide Toby - they are afraid of his appearance, as is Olivia. They are always a little uneasy about him. Olivia is afraid of Orsino - she senses something. It is a strange fear - a fear before something which she does not quite know or realize.

M. Chekhov

February 1, 1940

Malvolio is working for Olivia with great activity - he wishes to fulfill her orders with great conscientiousness. However, he is over-servant, over-messenger, over-lover - everything with him is overdone. Always when he appears with her on the stage, it is in a wrong tone. It is, therefore, a little bit tragic. Olivia is always bored by his dullness - everyone is bored by him - but the others are tormenting him because they hate him. Malvolio even fawns a little at times. In this scene Malvolio, with his torture and his inability to find the contact, is more and more boring and irritating to Olivia. When Olivia covers herself and Maria with the veil, Malvolio is absolutely lost. When Olivia sends them all out of the room, they don't want to go. Malvolio is terribly unhappy because of the messenger - he has a growing hatred for this new element in Olivia's life. It is as if Olivia beats him when she asks him to leave, and he shows his teeth to Viola. Malvolio is always at Olivia's feet in his love for her, but she does not see him there. The next scene is a very subtle one in which love grows both for Olivia and for Viola - Viola loves Orsino more and more, as she becomes more jealous.

Orsino starts with a love which is almost pure. He is not in love in the sense that he does not have a physical object of his love. He cannot be absolutely romantic because there is a certain passion in him, although very purified. He is still a man, and certain red sparks are in the fire of

M. Chekhov

February 1, 1940

his love. At the end he becomes more active, but even then it is not a sexual passion but very near to it. It is essential for the combination of the characters in the play. Fiery, passionate but romantic - a pure but strong man. Sebastian, for instance, is without any trace of passion. Olivia's love is quite different. She steps into the world which is unknown to her - she is not yet born for love - she is entering this strange world of love, but she is only playing a game.

Viola is the absolutely ideal romantic thing, without any sweetness or sentimentality, very strong but pure, pure, pure. To have the power in love, and yet to be pure. A certain strength and directness - certain boyish qualities. No complications, clear, strong, and without sentimentality, simple and straightforward. Both Viola and Orsino are sound and strong with no half-tones or complications. The scene between them is a constantly moving scene - nothing is static - a slow growing up like a plant.

Orsino's first speech is in three parts: (1) He feels the psychological gesture of the music - imagination of things he hears. (2) A drop of blood, as it were, aridness, almost sexually. (3) He is confused about what he hears - amused - will. In the second scene Orsino is psychologically running through his castle - he is so filled with will ^{with} a king spirit.

Viola's gesture is to absorb everything to the point where she makes a certain conclusion for herself. Her objective is to make him understand.