

Michael Chekhov

November 3, 1938

REHEARSAL SUGGESTIONS
TEMPO
STYLE AND TEMPOSpanish Evening:

How much it means in the theatre when the actors are so active! Now I can start to work with Erica and Paula, because they have brought me something to go on with. So many times in the past when you have been given tasks you did not bring anything, and we had to start again and again on the same spot. Now you see how essential it is for the actor to work, then the director can go on. I can help the actors and they can help me. As the director I can mold the part with the actor; the director cannot do anything with the actor if he has nothing.

Erica and Paula: Try to get the same thing, but be much older - she must be sixty. Justify this in all your movements in your limbs and in everything you do. Paula should be just a little bit older - you feel the necessity for tempo which is so good, so keep it and increase it.

Terry, Peter, and Mary Lou and Mary La: Peter: I would give you the suggestion to make it in one big wave. At the present time you are making many steps. Add the quality of flying. The more scenes you are able to take in one breath as it were, the better it is. Your words are very poor. Get your speech out. Waving with the body, but spreading out with the voice. The same with Mary Lou and Mary La.

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TEMPO:

The tempo you can get from many points. For instance, you can choose any one, but first of all it is the style of this given play - this is comedy near to vaudeville, therefore everything must be quick. This is the easiest way, and comes as your instinct. Comedy cannot be dragged. If this does not help you then take some objectives. For instance, in order to get what you are aiming for you do it as quickly as possible, because someone can stop you. Such simple objectives, just to coax out of you this necessity for tempo. You can also get the tempo by visualising the character acting in tempo several times, then you will get it. You can also take some qualities which will help you.

Terence: I like all the things you have done, but I would like you to give only a hint of them and not act them so fully. You are doing your objectives fully, and this is right, but if you act the other things too big, there is a certain confusion as to what the character really is. Give only some hints, only suggestions of these things then they will be much stronger. In all parts, whether tragedy, comedy, etc., there is always the main line and the "gravy." When the "gravy" grows too big, the main part is lost. This happens very often, and this is a good sign, the good actor likes this "gravy" because it gives the tone. But the director's duty is always to say to the actor, "Down with the gravy," after the tenth performance? The voice is absolutely wrong.

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If you want to use a nasal voice it is good.

Suggestions: I see all of you are much freer than ever before in these two years. This makes me very happy, and so hopeful. Please appreciate this freedom which you are gradually getting. We may make mistakes, it does not matter as long as you are creative, and are always bringing something, you may make hundreds of mistakes. If you are not free and you are lazy, then no one can do anything. But you have shown me something new, so I tell you to go on.

Deirdre and Woodie: You are going on so that you show many new qualities each time, and you give new hints so that they are like small green plants which can grow later on. Show again this exhibition of small green shoots, and we will choose what is best and combine them. Go on quite freely, making jokes and stupidity. Woodie, your acting chokes your speech. Pay attention to this during rehearsals.

STYLE AND TEMPO:

Deirdre: Try to continue the work with the soliloquy in both ways, but in both cases I would like you to start in a gay manner, and to finish with real tragic qualities, as if the comedy has stopped and now we hear the voice - a very serious one - speaking about certain things. This is why I asked the playwright to write three serious soliloquies. If we say them in the same manner they will have no sense; this is the beauty and finesse of real art, if it is tragic to find out

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how to be funny sometimes, and if it is comedy to sometimes show the depths of tragedy. Then it is something which always makes humor deeper and tragedy supporting this depth of humor. Therefore, we work more and more on these soliloquies, to get the right words which will strike the audience from certain points of view. So start with the gay mood, and gradually come to this tragic one.

Jean: I am very much surprised about your soliloquy. None of your movements belong to the soliloquy - they express something else which is much more interesting. It is a very good way you have started. Next time do, "I want to live," and then add, "I want to dance." Then try to combine this dance which cannot be done. Try to combine these tricks and the seriousness. Combine all these things and it will be a very fine thing. It shows the quality of a powerful actress who is able to combine everything she wants. This is so precious. Please add this, "I want to dance," and feel the whole life as if you are subconsciously dancing. For all the previous scenes and for the soliloquy the tempo was absolutely wrong. Only at the end of the soliloquy can it be justified, not before, and not in the other scenes otherwise you kill that effect, and the scenes are dragged. Only at the end of the soliloquy do you have the right to stop the whole life in the whole world, and send these strong rays of seriousness into the very funny comedy. The tempo is sitting in you; don't keep it back but let it grow fully.

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The scenes with Paul and Hurd: Paul: Your character as an actor is that you need time to live into the character and the part, and then you will get from inside the justification of these things. All the colors and changes you have shown are still very fresh and it is very obvious how you do them, but this is your way. You will go through the whole play the same way, just as you have done with Sancho Panza, which came gradually. This is your way, and you must go on in this way. Remember the scene with the blanket? Paul needs this time for this inner freedom.

Go on with these things. You have already some fine hints, and when you will justify them they will be something from which you must start to play. Whatever qualities you will find, try to find this "helpless" character. For instance, when you are chasing your son, you are now too clever; you must not know what to do, where to go; your hands are helpless, everything is helpless. It is more in the line of the play. Try to look upon everything through the spectacles - how can I perform him helpless and stupid.

Hurd: Three qualities. In the first part you were too gloomy this time; you must not be gloomy. I want you to bring the color of an absent-minded butterfly; flying somewhere, looking and not seeing. Just a little quality of an idiot, but not serious at all. You are absent-minded; you are a poet and not very unhappy. Others will show the unhappiness. In the whole scale of the world of these things

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people must not be the same. Your quality is to show this poetry far away from the world.

In the second part you must do everything as if astonished, awakened. When you see the actors doing something you are full of activity which will burst in half an hour. Everything is interesting for you. In the third part he is active, loud and gay and he can do everything. He is the first person because the father is old. It must be very funny, and at the same time somehow deep, so that they will want to see the comedy again and again. If we attract them with these secrets of playing with dark and light things, light and dark, they will come again. Now your part is being enlarged and at the end you become more the master of the whole situation. Therefore these three stages - 1. Dreaming. 2. Awakening 3. Full power.

Alan: work upon your part through the whole play, with all the partners you need, so that each of your scenes will be completed. Only your line, but all your partners must be there.