

## STYLE

Dostoyevsky - The PossessedRun-through of "The Possessed":

My impression is that the performance is now there to a great extent, and this was not so before. Before it was many different scenes, but now I begin to see a performance. Now that the performance begins to be, the director can write down detailed suggestions which he was not able to do before. When there is only chaos on the stage, the director cannot concentrate on details. I am quite happy today about this stage of rehearsal because now we can begin to mold the performance. The play is always a play written in a book, but a performance must be created. This is a good and positive thing.

## STYLE:

General criticism and suggestion:

In each stage of rehearsing, there are different periods for receiving the general suggestions of the director. In the first stage, general suggestions cannot be taken. But this is not the first stage, and you are now in the position to receive some general suggestions. The first and most important thing is that you have not yet got the style of the play sufficiently. The style is necessary from two points of view. First: from the point of view of the modern audience's

M. Chekhov

July 25, 1939

mind, and the modern psychology of humanity; they cannot take things which are not urgent - in everyday life and in art as well.

You can draw fine subtle things in painting, but the audience will not accept them because the life and mind of today is sharp - everyone requires strong food, otherwise the food will not be taken. A glass of pure water will not satisfy the hunger of the majority of humanity today. There is only one way to give them pure water: you can only give it to a few people who are ready to receive certain things. But this is a special corner in this life of ours. We are not yet in that corner; we are working in the broad world in which we must count with people from all walks of life. So it must be a very strong thing we give them, and not a glass of pure water. One of the urgent things we can give them is the style of this play, which must be there from the beginning to the end.

There are some moments when the play falls to the level of simple conversation, and this is impossible for this play in which there are so many thoughts. It can't be conversation - we kill ourselves by conversing where we must act, and desire, and feel, and influence one another, but not converse! The style gives us a general ground for not conversing on the stage, but for acting. Urgency is point one. Then form - then form filled with activity - then form which breaks sometimes.

M. Chekhov

July 25, 1939

Point one makes it necessary for us to take this style, and point two is that Dostoyevsky cannot bear things which are not urgent. As a playwright and as a human being, Dostoyevsky was fire and urgency from the beginning to the end. If we don't act his ideas with urgency, we will miss the point. It is much easier for us not to, but it is wrong and it is detrimental to try to perform this play in a style which is not Dostoyevsky's. Fire, form - form filled with content which breaks sometimes. The style is the lever with which we can lift the play or drop it.

1. Form:

Form in every sense - physical and mental and psychological. In this play there is form everywhere - form all around and in you. The form that you move is like the line of a comet. When you speak, it is before you - everywhere this beautiful form.

2. Presence:

"I Am" - realize that there is no other individual in the world like you. You are unique in being yourself. You will recognize the individuality of the other man too. Appreciate this wonderful fact that you, as an individual, are unique in the world and that there is none other like you.

3. Urgency:

If you are psychologically harmonious, you will find that you, as a human being, are urgent. The ability to think

M. Chekhov

July 25, 1939

clearly - to really think in the spiritual sense. The ability to follow a thought and not be distracted - this will give you this state of urgency.

4. Tempo:

If you are spiritually awakened, you will find tempo. You can always be in tempo if your will, your imagination, your spirit and your body are awakened. Tempo does not mean to be fast or slow. It is an inner psychological state. The whole being is alive and alert. Hurry will never give any qualities.

5. Open & Close:

The ability to open and close the form psychologically is absolutely essential for this play.

If you will follow all these points, you will acquire the style.