

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHARACTER
NUANCES
BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS
TEMP
STYLE
DIRECTORS
MUSIC, SCENES, VOICES, LIGHTS, COSTS
DYNAMICS OF GOOD AND EVIL

Stanislavsky - _____
Vakhtangov
Miss Lear

Criticism of the Acting on March 9th:

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHARACTER - NUANCES:

We have spoken about: 1. the groundlessness. 2. The settings, colors, costumes, etc. 3. the preparation of the performance as a psychological gesture.

We are very weak in this third and very important point, but this is always so in a group of young actors. This is not a failing - it is something which must be developed. But the great danger is that you are taking everything on the stage in a much more primitive way than you are able to take things in everyday life. The psychology on the stage seems to you to be much more simple, but it is not simple. The performance is much more complicated from the point of view of psychology, transitions, bridges, etc., than it seems to be in your minds. Your interpretation and incorporation of everything is too primitive.

You must develop another approach to the character, to the setting, to the situation. You must approach it with the feeling that the life you are going to perform is much

more complicated than our everyday life. This point of view is absolutely necessary, because without it you will never be able to create fine things, you will only be able to create primitive, almost schematic things. All your attempts on March 8th had a simplicity which was not a good one, it was not simplicity but a hidden kind of poverty of means of expression. The question is, how to develop the approach which will show you all the things on the stage in a more complicated and, therefore, finer and more beautiful form.

NUANCES - RADIATION:

In the following examples we will see instances of this bad kind of simplicity: In Jean of Arc, at the moment when the voices were heard, Joan jumped up and went directly under the cross. We saw no transition. Many beautiful nuances we have not seen, but we must see them, because this is one of the most beautiful points. This moment is the real climax, and to jump into the climax without any transitions is impossible. How did Joan come to this moment? Where are the "notes" in between? You will not get the same impression if you omit these moments.

Let us take the scene where Balladina is lying in a faint before the Saint, and Kostria approaches her and speaks. This scene is nothing other than the composition of beautiful nuances, bridges and transitions. It is the most expressive moment for showing that the evil spirit which lives in the

soul of this strange person, Kostin, is not at all as simple as it was shown. Such moments are given in the play to show the depth of the evil. But what kind of evil was living in him could not be seen as you played it. We must know how to describe the kind of evil in Kostin. The actor and director must explore this moment, and not only perform it as complete as given by the author, but much more so because, as director and actor, they must create new complications in the character.

BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS:

As an example, I can tell you that when I was performing the character of Caleb Plummer in The Cricket on the Hearth, I liked to do all these transitions and complications on the stage, and such directors as Vakhtangov and Stanislavsky had always to fight with me over these details which I loved.¹ Stanislavsky explained that all such bridges and transitions and details must be shown only at the most important moments in the play. If you act with many details in that part of the play which is not the climax, or an auxiliary climax, or in places where it has no significance, then such bridges are only bad. Therefore, in trying to elaborate all these fine things, you must know which place permits you to do this, and which places must be shown as simple and natural as possible. Then you will get the right composition and development of the play.

Take an example from any modern performance and you will see that there is a mixture of scenes and very elaborated details, but without any idea as to whether they are necessary

or not. Therefore, it is difficult to get a feeling about modern actors - an actor may be good but he does not know how to distribute his own abilities and powers.

Another good example was when Balladina spoke before she fainted. In her soliloquy, when she approached the figure of the Saint, the transition was there and the necessary psychology. The elaboration of these subtleties was right, and in the right place. Also in Igor Symbi, Ieer's "Good evening," was full of nuances. It was so complete. This is another example, but they were different. The subtlety in Balladina's scene with the Saint was visible in time and space, while Ieer's was only a moment - no time, no space - but through his face, his voice, his figure, his radiation, he gave a lot of nuances.

Why do we pay so much attention to the radiation of the actor? Because the radiation is the means of conveying to the audience many nuances. One glance can give the audience as much as half an hour of performance. We know what radiation, imagination and inspiration can mean. Another example had to do with only one sentence. It should have been full of nuances, but it was empty - "Now I can leave you in peace." Compare this sentence with Ieer's "Good evening," and you will see what we are speaking about. The one was not ready in the actor's soul and, therefore, there was nothing to radiate - it was empty. You will gradually get a love for these nuances, and you will develop taste by paying attention to them in the right

place.

All directors should pay attention to these nuances. It is the director's business to give his actors such scenes that they must find nuances. He must give them so many atmospheres and images, and lead them through so many imaginations that the play will have an aura. Very often the nuances are the key to the scene. An excellent example of this is the presence of John in The Fishing Scene. This presence is only a nuance from the beginning to the end, and if you try to act this as a bare fact, the way it is being done now, you will get the impression that the actors are tense and wooden and without feeling, because the approach to this scene is wrong.

Now imagine the presence being full of nuances, a chain of nuances, and you will at once get the idea of this scene, and it will be in the actor's and director's hands. At present each answer, each movement that John gives is wrong, and every figure around him is wrong. Why? Because it is too primitive, too simple. This is the climax, the highest point in the play. The presence of John is everything for the play. Remember that we are waiting for John's presence.

The audience is already prepared for such a complicated and complete picture, that if the actor appears and is more simple than we expected, it will never satisfy us. The only key to this situation is a strong chain of nuances, or climaxes. The director must pay special attention to all these climaxes. Imagine if John did not give any answers.

It would be much better - silence, and the answer is there itself. It would be much finer. Let your audience create something - it will be waiting for the answer of John, and in its mind there will be a thousand answers. When John does not answer, the audience will have the full satisfaction. Let the nuances be flying through the air.

Remember when the people are pulling the boat in. This is a long process in which many, many nuances must take place. The nearer the boat, the more nuances. Let this be created together with the audience. Let these climaxes be more mysterious, and then if you will let the audience create something in expectation, then each movement, each word will be so important, so telling. Imagine such simple things: John is asked where the others are, and he answers, "I am alone." The movement and answer are nothing because the audience is much richer in its imagination. Try to ask the question again, then a pause. The audience is no longer waiting. It is already creating something, and John has only to finish the creation of the audience by a gesture. In such cases the actor and director must act not only with the audience, but after. The actor has to begin, then the audience has to develop, and the actor must make a point - and the scene is finished. This is another way of creating nuances - with the help of the audience. This is a special case, and it is therefore not possible to make it a general rule. The director must elaborate this moment very carefully.

Eleanor has found a very happy character in the Fishing Scene. It is simple but full of nuances. This is another kind of nuance - she has found something as a character so that each movement, and each glance is full of nuances. If I could paint I could show each movement of her eyes because of the nuances she gave me. The audience very often speaks about the eyes of the actor or actress - they are not able to see them, but they create them themselves. We must not disillusion them, but this is only possible if the nuances are there.

Let us take the first appearance of the soldier in Jean of Arc, as another example. The beginning is empty of nuances. Or let us take the soliloquy of Lear in Lear. The beginning was without nuances. At the moment when the nuances could be felt, the performance began.

In The Cave of Salamanca, compare Deirdre's performance with that of Jocelyn. Deirdre is on the way to finding nuances, and Jocelyn is not yet. Try to compare these two figures with that of Henry. Deirdre has begun to have pleasure in finding nuances. Whose fault is this? It is the director's fault because she has paid too little attention to Jocelyn, and has not given her enough help. When the student is silent he is full of nuances, but when he begins to speak I feel no nuances. From this we can discover one interesting thing. To have a part ready inside does not mean that you are able to incorporate all these things. This is

again the question of incorporation of nuances, and therefore we have a special exercise for incorporation, because this is the very important moment of "bearing the child". The part is ready but it is not yet incorporated. When incorporating, you have to pay attention to nuances, because if you are able to see your part with nuances, you must incorporate with nuances.

Let us compare the performance of Kleanor in the beginning of The Fishing Scene, and then in Don Quixote, and finally in The Meeting Scene - nothing! This is an example of how one person can be absolutely different, by having nuances and not having them. The quality of the actor is absolutely different, by having nuances and not having them. The quality of the actor is absolutely changed by nuances. You will be judged by your nuances. Why are auditions so painful and dreadful? Because, through custom, people are not able to show any nuances.

Another example: very often actors confuse subconsciously many movements and affects instead of nuances. A very good example of this was in the "Carnival" scene. In spite of all the noise and shouting, the room was full of everything but nuances. Terence's appearance brought some nuances, but this was absolutely from the actor, and not from the director. The actor radiated something; perhaps because he loves to dance. It became less and less during the dance, but in the first moment, as an actor, he felt the pleasure of his appearance. That was enough to awaken some nuances.

In our new exercise of the under-graduate at Oxford, we will find that this is the way to the nuances, because there was nothing more to it. These attempts to invent will lead you in time to the feeling that you must be full of nuances, otherwise you will be flat. This exercise will help us to awaken the ability to create nuances.

Another way is the work by the directors on climaxes and graphs. When the director tries to find such graphs he will be full of nuances which he must give to his actors. By finding these compositions - in the form of graphs - the director will find many nuances, and he will know where they must be performed, and where they have not the right to appear. Each director must work with such graphs in his rehearsal room from now on. From these graphs, or schemes, you will see how many nuances you will get in your imagination, and how helpful they will be for the actors. The graphs for The Fishing Scene are a good example.

Nuances depend very much on the gesture which is lying underneath. The gesture can be very rich or very poor, therefore the director must pay more attention to the gestures, and must be sure that the gesture is right and that it will bear many nuances.

TEMPO:

The tempo is almost always wrong, and always slower than it should be, but this is a very delicate question. If

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we try to force the tempo, we will lose some stages in our work which we can only do in a slow tempo. On the other hand, we cannot get the right quality of the scene in the wrong tempo. These are two things which contradict each other. The only solution to this problem at this stage is to appeal to your own tact, whether to give the right tempo and right qualities, or to leave it for a few days. It is not possible to make rules about this, so please remember Alan's lessons and be free at the same time. The idea is that the more you are right in some regions of your soul, the more you will be able to reach the right tempo.

STYLE:

Each director must pay more attention to the style of his sketch. There is a great mixture and uncertainty in style in the various scenes. For example, in Palladina and in Peer Gynt, you will see that the style of these two sketches was almost the same, but in reality they are two different things - Palladina is a tragedy and Peer Gynt is a drama. You must develop the two different styles, and not confuse drama with tragedy. Another example was in the numerous sketches - The Cave of Salamanca and Carnival. They are two different things but we have seen them in almost the same style. Try to meditate on this.

One of the great mistakes of all our actors was that they were acting introspectively. This is never allowed. If

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the audience is there in front of you, you must act to them. That is why we have our exercises for sending out, radiation, etc. The directors must make their actors act extrovertly - especially in tragedy. It is not possible to send out quietly in tragedy - tragedy is like a gun - drama can be quiet. Sometimes the characters are not well prepared, but this is only a warning to the directors - do not let your actors sit in the same place. They must develop more and more, and more all the time.

DIRECTORS:

Vakhtangov as a director was a genius.² The Dybbuk was his great work. He was absolutely ingenious and original. His principle in directing was to imagine that the audience is already there. From the very beginning he directed for the audience which he imagined, and therefore he never failed in his effects, in his means of expression. He knew absolutely what the audience would take and what it would not take, and this point of view is very helpful for us.

Have an imaginary audience when you are directing, and you will know at once what is right and what is wrong, and when you will show your plays in front of a real audience, you will go through a very interesting experience. When the audience is there you will get hundreds of good ideas as to how it could be done because of the presence of the audience, but it is too late. This is an absolute torture for the

director, because the inspiration of the audience raises his creative spirit, and he is a real director for the first time on the opening night.

But Vakhtangov advised us to anticipate this, by working with an imaginary audience. I have added to this. I have chosen two actors who I admired very much, and I have got inspiration from these two imaginary figures. It is very helpful to imagine the audience in general, and also somebody who you believe in and like - they will always give you inspiration.

MUSIC:

The music in Jean of Arc was very good, but how do you think it will be incorporated - orchestrated?

VOICES:

Pay attention to the timbre of your voices. They are not yet harmonious - sometimes they are in the Fishing Scene - but you must be careful to speak on the right pitch, or key.

LIGHTING:

Every face, every figure must be seen. If it is dark and it gives a beautiful impression, but the audience is not able to look or understand what is going on, you will make your audience angry.

MUSIC:

The music in the fishing scene. We must observe a very fine rule on the stage. Some things must be justified, and some things need not be. What must be justified, and why must we justify it? Only to let the audience believe in what we are doing. If you can reach this without justification, then do it. If not, then give a little justification, and if that is not enough then give a little more, but do not justify only for the sake of justifying.

In this case I felt it could be a little more justified, but not at all fully justified. It is very good and makes a great impression, but we must consider it from the feeling of justification. The shouting about the tiller was not good. The two gestures are conflicting. You will find the right gesture of the whole setting and the scene, and then you will feel whether it must be done or not. Towards the sea.

COLCH:

Imagine a dirty red and green. Imagine the people as green and the background as bluish green. Then you will get the impression that the green, being reddish, tries to push all the people into the sea, and the people being blue will try to escape it. Now try to imagine another combination, another composition. A bluish background and everything reddish - you will see that the coast is trying to keep the people back, and the people are streaming towards the sea.

The director must decide what the idea is - whether

the coast is protecting and keeping the people back or whether the sea is angry and is forcing the people into the sea. For instance, such naturalistic things as the wind can be used in a poetical way, and by using the wind it must not irritate nature but let it speak at certain moments. Try to listen to the voice of the wind and make a soliloquy of it, trying to ignore the naturalistic quality of the wind. For instance, if you wish to show the people wanting to be out at sea where the men have died, then you can have such a naturalistic thing as a fan, and by having the sound of the wind you can, when finishing the composition of the figures, move a little bit of the costumes. But you must know in which direction, and the audience will be led by this. The costumes, music and the gesture. Another movement in which a piece of hair can move - it will be absolutely speaking, and not naturalistic. It is not necessary to have the wind blowing throughout the whole scene. You can use such things as the wind, not from the naturalistic point of view but from the gesture.

About the wind and other sounds in Joan of Arc - Alan must find a whole symphony of sounds in this scene. He must explore this realm because the sounds have been used only in a naturalistic way heretofore. The fight in this play can give you a good opportunity to develop this symphony of sounds.

In The Cave of Salamanca, it was good that the director started with a serious approach to the humorous moments. If the director tries too hard to find the humor he will

lose it. Always try to look at it with a serious eye, and then you will find at once that it is absolutely funny. Don't try to be humorous. If you lose the humor - which always happens in rehearsals - then try to be serious and the humor will come back. The beauty of the characters as you have interpreted them is that they are absolutely innocent people. This is a very important thing which the director has found.

In Don Quixote, Sancho must find some manner of walking in order to appear lower - this will be his outer and inner expression of the character. It is forbidden to have two centers on the stage. There must never be two centers at the same time. For example, when Don Quixote was doing something, someone else was giving someone bread. This breaks the performance and something is lost.

MASKS:

Esme's mask in The Fairy Tale gave a beautiful impression. Perhaps the whole play could be done with masks.

In The Fishing Scene, the great problem for the director is the end of the play. This walking off the stage is good and it is bad. It is not yet the right solution. When they leave the stage the movement is good, but while they are walking so slowly it is bad. The director will find it out of the whole gesture.

DYNAMICS OF GOOD AND EVIL:

In The Fairy Tale the impression we got from the characters and the idea in general was so right, and so fresh,

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but one thing was very wrong. Your play has only one leg and nothing is going to support it. One thing which always gives the play balance is the interpretation of good and evil in the play. The play must include this theme, without it you will never be able to finish your work. The audience will require an answer, and if it does not get the answer it will be disappointed.

The power of King Lear lies not only in Shakespeare's genius, but he was absolutely free with the qualities of good and evil. This is the dynamic of the performance, to push together good and evil powers. Every play must have this. It is only an intellectual point of view to believe that a play can be played without these two points of view. If you will analyze your life you will find that everything is for you either good or bad. Don't try to eliminate this, because it will only make you poor as artists.

In the Work sketch, Terence was one of the few people who showed the tragedy of the soul.