

Michael Chekhov

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STYLE - RHYTHMICAL EVENTS  
CHARACTERIZATION  
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE

STYLE - RHYTHMICAL EVENTS:

Style from the point of view of rhythm. Each rhythmical event has, as we know, a beginning and an end - what is in the middle we will leave for the moment. But there is a beginning and an end, and the feeling of the whole is absolutely connected with this feeling of the beginning and the end. The rhythmical event can embrace everything, or it can be one small movement of the thing. From the rhythmical point of view the small movement can be as precious as the big movement, if it has a beginning and an end. From this point of view we will move and speak and do everything in Spanish Evening, and we will experience everything as a rhythmical something.

Spanish Evening:

The line of the development of the magic in this play is a very important one, and we must try to trace it. The magician will show us some tricks, which we must develop by means of the bridges and transitions in between, which will lead us from the state of not being attracted to him to being more and more concentrated on the things he shows us. Then we will begin to guess that there is some power behind this, and will develop this psychological line

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in quite a mystical mood. Then we will lead it to the moment when the influence of the showman is not only confined to his tricks, but everybody becomes more and more influenced, and a line will be developed so that everybody is dependent upon him. This line is very important for everybody and everything in this play. For the showman, the line is not to be able to show anything, and the idea to hide himself must be there. This must gradually lead to the magical line.

For the moment leave style, characters and everything, and try only to trace the psychological line. One thing will help us - a psychological gesture which we will not elaborate, but the idea of it will be enough. The gesture of the showman is that from a certain point in his chest, which is very contracted, he expands more and more. The crowd is distracted - the gesture is everywhere - they are touching vaguely everything in the world around them. Then more and more concentration on the physical part of the showman's tricks, and then more participation in the pseudo-spiritual world, and then the gesture of submission.

CHARACTERIZATION:

Our Phantoms - [The Possessed]:

There are two different and opposite psychological gestures of two heroes in this play. The most compli-

cated, and tortured, and striving person is the psychology of Nicholas. In him we feel that behind this figure are standing different forces, which want to have possession of this human soul. He himself is the place on which these different powers meet and have their fight. Complicated psychological situations arise from these powers, which meet themselves in him; from one side and from another side, his own ego resists in order to preserve its own individuality. Therefore, the picture of Nicholas's soul is so extremely complicated - he himself, and powers in him. We shall go deeper and deeper into the psychology of this man. Today we shall imagine some powers around him and in him, and his own power as an individual, and all of them are fighting with each other.

Quite an opposite character in the play is the bridegroom, the officer. There is no fight, no complication inside him. He is quite the opposite character to Nicholas - two extremes. He has no questions inside him. Everything for him is clear and obvious. Everything is clear for his understanding, and his action. He always knows what to do and what not to do. If the psychological gesture of Nicholas's character is a very complicated group of gestures which are combined, so the psychological gesture of the bridegroom, we may say, is absolutely straight forward - forward to the life - the gesture of holding, the

gesture of moving absolutely straight, and this is the beauty of the character.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

We shall try to explore the meeting between these two characters, on the basis of these different gestures - one extremely complicated, another extremely straight. In this case Nicholas does not apply this gesture because the whole collision between the two characters is too obvious, too simple. Nicholas simply denies the other person inwardly - he does not exist for him. This is perhaps the only scene when Nicholas shows the quality of disinterest. He ignores the officer. Although the person is standing before him, he is still alone. The officer must explore the line of straight on, straight forward.

Just before this scene was the scene between Nicholas and Lisa, when she told him that she hated him. She persuades him to remember his revolutionary past, and to take part very actively in the Society of the spy. The officer always follows Lisa, and is always ready to help her, to save her, to preserve her from all difficulties. Nicholas is sitting in his room and the officer stands before him and tries to make everything clear. We feel the music between these two opposite characters. This is the beauty of this scene.

The key to Nicholas's character is this - one side

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of his character is that he pretends to be very interested in the person he is talking to, but he is absolutely disinterested inside himself. Sometimes he really disappears. He is "as if" here. He hears and yet he does not hear. Withdrawn. Under this guise he has different colors. He must be at the limit to be here and not to be here. Perhaps he will be awakened and perhaps not. With his mother at some moments there is a complete breakthrough, and in the scene with the beggar girl when he curses her, he breaks through. The spy's idea is to get rid of the girl because her influence leads Nicholas to certain spiritual feelings and ideas, which are dangerous for his revolutionary activity. He has decided to substitute Lisa for the girl and thus get Nicholas again in his power.