

Michael Chekhov

October 18, 1937

IMPROVISATION:
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE
ATMOSPHERE

IMPROVISATION: Old Students:
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

Improvisation on the theme of "The Spanish Evening."

The old man is departing and he wants to be sure that his wife is going to be faithful to him while he is away. The wife wants to get rid of him and so does the servant girl, and some young people around also want to get rid of him. On the basis of the psychological gesture; the gesture of the old man is to collect everything and keep it next to his stomach. The gesture of the wife is to send him away, but very carefully. The gesture of the servant girl is to begin carefully, and then to push him. The gesture of the young people is a very big, broad one.

Improvisation in the style of drama. Continuation of the scene between the two political enemies. This scene is between the son and the mother. The son has two worlds in which he lives - one is unknown to him, and that is the spiritual world. He feels that there is something more than this business on the earth, but he has no idea of the mystery. The other world is his world of politics - he is a member of an anarchist party, but he is now convinced that the world will never be bettered by such means.

There is great emptiness and suffering inside this person. His mother has never understood him, because he has

088

M. Chekhov

October 18, 1937

always been very reserved. She feels that he is suffering, and she wants to help him, to give him everything, but there is no approaching him. The son's gesture is to have everything closed and to hide his being from everyone. The mother's gesture is to penetrate into the soul of her son, and to open it.

The son sits alone in his room at night, in great suffering, being drawn to the one point which is the most dreadful point for him. He falls asleep without realizing, and the mother enters and tries to penetrate into him. He awakens but only with his eyes. From this moment you must establish connection between mother and son, and improvise from this moment on.

ATMOSPHERE:

Repeat the scene but on the basis of atmosphere. The whole household is expecting that the son will commit suicide - he is in such a state - he knows that everyone watches each step he takes. That makes him more unhappy and angry. It is night - three or four o'clock in the morning when the mother enters. She is prepared to see anything, therefore she opens the door with premonition - perhaps he is dead - she does not know.

Develop this scene with some psychological gestures on the basis of the atmosphere. The mother worships the son, but the son must be very economical with his warmth towards his mother. At the end he will take his mother's hand, and that means everything for her. She has waited for this moment for years. A sad and strange and tense connection between these

M. Chekhov

October 18, 1937

two people.

Criticism:

As an exercise for objectives it was good, but the atmosphere was not strong enough. The voices were too intimate. The more creative your state is the better your voice, your speech, should be. We must watch this thing - when you begin to improvise you hold the voice in. We must bring the right speech with us, because we hope to bring these improvisations to the stage some time. So we must be very pedantic with the speech.