

Michael Chokhov

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IDEAS OF THE PLAY
 RADIATION - PRESENCE
 STYLE
 THE ACTOR'S CREATION

IDEAS OF THE PLAY:

The Possessed:

In this play there are certain ideas which we must point out to the audience in some way - we must place certain ideas or even words before them. They will be accepted subconsciously or consciously by some of the audience at once, others will realize it later in years or decades. But if we believe we have a mission in the theatre, we must put certain words before the audience, such as "Christ," "infancy," and the idea at the end of the play that the devil is not defeated. These main ideas we must put before the audience.

Rehearsal - RADIATION AND PRESENCE:

The rehearsal was not good. There are many details which are not good, but they do not worry me. What is bad and what frightens me is that in spite of your effort to have radiation and tempo it was terribly low and indifferent. It fell back to the stage where it is still conversation. That will kill the play - conversation on the stage is not the business of our theatre. Our theatre must act everything, must act not only emotions but thoughts, and not just speak them. Anyone can speak thoughts - this has nothing to do with acting. But we are actors and not speakers, and if this

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play sounds like a conversation it is absolutely wrong. The only means to overcome this is a tremendous great effort to be present, then the fire will come and the pleasure will come for you and for us to look at you. But you must get the real desire to step over this threshold between actors and speakers and reciters.

STYLE:

We have worked upon the style of the play - everything was directed towards the presence and activity, and the form was always filled to the boundary when it could break. The form was never closed without form and activity, and open without shouting. In both cases there was fire and activity. I am afraid of the fact that you can do it so badly. Then we have no guarantee that you will not do the same on our opening night. I can give you details and elaborate them with you, but I cannot give you this activity.

It is the point which you must decide for yourselves. If you believe in it as I believe, or if you see it, you will be horrified by these two different impressions - everything is the same and at the same time it is absolutely different. One is bad and the critics will have the right to scold us, but if you will show your presence and your individuality, no one else will scold us. They will discuss and speak about it - there will be many points of view - but they will accept you

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and that is our first aim. We must be accepted as a group of people who bring their lives, their individualities, on to the stage. This is the first step we must take in the long path which we must go and to fight with the many powers which will try to kill our group. If they kill us because we have no individualities, then they will succeed; but if we are individualities on the stage, nothing can harm us.

Run-through:

It was better, and that shows us that we can do it but it depends upon you. If you will imagine how much harm you are making when you are acting without power. It is like a constant shower of rain on the stage, and each drop is an unnecessary little pause which makes the scene blurred and confused. It can't be calculated - we cannot say that it is too long, but this shower of rain must not come through our roof. It can be cured if we take one big gesture as artists that we start our performance and lead it to the end without this series of little disappearances.

THE ACTOR'S CREATION:

After this performance I want the audience to say that the whole group is somehow crazy. They don't have any comparison for this. The group gave everything - what a strange performance! We have not seen anyone who speaks perhaps only one word, who does not give everything. The first

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and the last person are all equal in their understanding of the theatre. They gave us not a performance but themselves, and for that we shall say, "Bravo" to this new group. But the moment you show them professional laziness and nonchalance - finish! Then we are only one troupe in the big ocean, and no one will speak about us, only perhaps about the play.

My impression is that everyone will speak about how people should have sacrificed themselves, being before the audience. That will be your pride later on. In the whole world everyone has got accustomed to choose who is the best, who is the star - no stars with us, everyone is a star. We must all feel ourselves like stars because we are giving ourselves without any restraint. Therefore, we have to sacrifice ourselves. This will give you fire.

The whole difference is whether the actor is sitting there on the stage. I don't want to see your creation on the stage when you yourself are sitting in another room. You yourself must sit in your creation and speak with the audience through your creation. That is our profession - we can't be somewhere else and our work here - we must be in it with full activity. Things begin to live around you when you are alive, and they don't live when you are not present in your own creation. When you are in it, everything lives and trembles. Everything lives around you and this is the thing which we must bring into the history of the theatre - where we sacrifice ourselves.