

Michael Chekhov

Extracts from "The Wind from the Caucasus"

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I search after analogies for my impressions, but I cannot find them. Suddenly Chekhov comes to my mind. Yes, this artist presents the analogy, in that in him a bright and rhythmical gesture makes a new relief, unexpected, quick, and revolutionary. All landscapes have the quality of being different in their gestures - just as one must see Chekhov more than once in Hamlet, Eric, and Fraser in order to see the zig-zag of his fundamental and powerful gestures. So with these mountains - they expand by the study of their impression on the eye.

Chekhov plays from the "pause" - other actors play from the word. With them the pause is not the skeleton of acting but only a psychological retouching of the play. Once Chekhov enters into the role he appears from the centre silently. Remember how in Hamlet he sits looking away. Before his first words are spoken the full character of Hamlet is given from the beginning to the end. Everything that will develop later is contained in that first action - as in a grain of wheat. From the pause - to the word. But in this pause is the colossal strength of potential energy, at a

moment when all the body is like lightning. From the peak of this lightning comes an outburst of energy, and this is the word. The word is the last of all expressions. With others, the word is first. Then comes the gesture of the face or the movements of the hands or feet, which are often not fixed. With them, the pause is like an exhaled breath which comes after a word - an act of passivity. This pause is like a yawn. With Chekhov the pause is an in-breathing which fills the blood with life and makes the muscles move. The gesture flies from the pause like an arrow zig-zagging lightly through the air. From the gesture is born the word, as the fruit of all the action.

I see the mountains of the Caucasus in the potential energy of the pause... Yes, the mountains of the Caucasus, and Chekhov.