

Michael Chekhov

(afternoon) March 11, 1938

STYLE

STYLE: Shdanoff Play:

The same story with the Style. The style becomes more and more a certain thing which inspires us. Therefore, we must spend a lot of time getting more and more of the style into us and using it for speaking, for moving, for everything.

Meeting scene with "Spy" as Chairman:

In this speech, first of all we must see this clever "machine-gun" person, without any idea of heart - a clever, sly machine. Secondly, it must be at the same time the style of the whole play - threatening. If the form breaks it will do much harm. It is for you to explore how to say the speech on the basis of the style.

Waves of "threatening": From the point of view of style the "threatening" was not there yet - these waves we have spoken of must be there - then it will be more dangerous.

The Holy Man scene:

In the scene between Nicholas and the holy man nothing is intellectual - it is much deeper than the heart is, especially in the old man, and also in Nicholas there is a deep current, although the style must be still preserved - the waves of "threatening" must still be there. Nicholas speaks with



M. Chekhov

March 11, 1938

great difficulty under the mask of despising the old man, who is very deep - the holy man is "threatening" with his open heart, with his good will, with his clairvoyance. The idea is that with each sentence which is rightly spoken we can break the form, but only if it is threatening.

Nicholas is a genius who cannot find the right way. He is not intellectual in the same way as the spy. Nicholas is very much will and very much heart, with emotional and philosophical difficulties in the sense that philosophy has taken possession of his whole being.

Scene between Mother and Nicholas

This scene is very difficult because both of these two heroes are removed, but not without will. In this very weak scene, the whole power of the play must remain. The mother speaks almost without moving her lips - almost without any idea of what she asks Nicholas, or whether or not he will answer. They are, as it were, not in the room, they are not here. He packs his things and does not see or hear the mother. The mother must speak very, very clearly because she has lost contact with him. We will get from this clear kind of speaking a certain helplessness.

STYLE: The Form is Broken:

There are many such moments when the form is broken. All the characters break the form sometimes and we will be able



to get the technique by keeping the form and not letting it break.

Scene between Nicholas and Liza:

This is another kind of breaking the form. Liza is only passionate. Very much passion - Lucifer. She is very much in love with Nicholas and no matter if she says that she hates him, underlying it all is, "I love you," in a very passionate way. Two masks are always there; the one, "I hate you," and the other, "I speak about politics but I love you, I love you." Under it all is love, love, love.

Nicholas and the Engineer:

The idea is that the engineer is absolutely a child - absolutely open. He speaks about committing suicide as a beautiful theory which makes him happy, but when he is compelled to take the gun in his hand, he realizes that it has all been a beautiful theory. He must still be in this "threatening" style having this beautiful dream and being absolutely far away from reality. A headless person (in the good sense) - instead of a head, he has clouds and dreams. He cannot understand himself or what he is saying because he is dreaming. Urgent - alarming - threatening style.

Nicholas and the Young Husband:

The difficulty with this character is that he is



M. Chekhov

March 11, 1938

a person without humor. He is not intellectual, he is not heartless, he is not weak, but he is without humor. He is quite clear about everything - one level - an attractive, noble person, not a caricature. He is a tragic person because he is without humor.

The Beggar Girl:

Fairy tale (see yesterday's notes for her character). We must find how this beggar girl keeps the form - some of the characters speak of her as an idiot. She gives the impression she is not quite normal. She is always looking through and seeking for Nicholas.

The Governor:

Humorous. He thinks he is full of modern ideas but really he is not. Pompous - he has a feeling he has spoken after uttering a few mumbo-jumbos.