

Michael Chekhov

March 7, 1939

"APPLE" SCENES  
BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS  
STYLE

"APPLE" SCENES:

Criticism of Spanish Evening rehearsal:

I want to make points quite clear. First of all, what was very good and right was that everyone had something to do - something to do actively inwardly and outwardly all the time. This is good because the theatre is an acting business, not only conveying the author's words. From this point of view the rehearsal was absolutely right. But there are some dangers - certain "apple" scenes grow too much - certain things are not justified at all. By "apple" scenes I mean unnecessary things which have no connection with the deepest current in the play, or even the most superficial connections.

I want to make some points clearer in the manner in which Terrence, as director, is working. On the principle, the approach is a very right one, which can and must be a little polished and adjusted. Certain moments are dangerous and must be taken away, for a certain period of preparatory work in which the play is at the moment, but I feel it is instinctively right. First of all, what is good and right is that everyone has to do something - not only speaking the words and taking the position given by the director. It is good and necessary. Here we have invented something to do, something

2428  
M. Chekhov

March 7, 1939

actively inwardly and outwardly all the time, and this is true because from our standpoint the theatre is an acting business - not only conveying the author's words but an acting business. From this point of view it is absolutely right.

It is tremendously enlarged and applied to the play the exercise for bridges and transitions. This is the way, in a certain preparatory period, to awaken the activity both in an inner and an outer way. From this point of view I have no objections at all. But there are some small dangers - certain "apple" scenes grow too much - things are not justified at all. In such "apple" scenes unnecessary things which have no connection to the deepest currents in the play or even to the superficial actions.

There is something which must lead us through all these bridges and transitions. And what is it? I would take it as a rule - first of all, there are two sides, the group of actors and the director and both of them have quite different ways to overcome these "apple" scenes. The actors have to imagine the play from morning to evening. On the basis of this imagination about the play only we can escape all these unnecessary scenes, words, movements, etc.

#### BRIDGES AND TRANSITIONS:

Now let us imagine an extreme case - I have a play in my pocket, and I don't even tell you what it is, except

M. Chokhov

March 7, 1939

that in this play there is the word "go" and the answer "no." If it is a simple exercise in bridges and transitions, you must act the play, its characters, its author, its opoc, its style, etc. Then you will find the bridges and transitions in the right way. If I tell you that there are no conditions, you will have an exercise in freely building bridges and transitions, but it will not have any connection with the rehearsal of this particular play which I have in my pocket. To be able to create these bridges and transitions for this particular play, what have we to know? We have to know the play. In our Studio we call it imagination - to be able to imagine the play through and through from the beginning to the end, this part, this character, this sound, etc. So the imagination is the basis for the group to go on rehearsing - the less imagination you have as a background, the more "apple" scenes and things of that kind which have no connection to the play you will be forced to create because you do not know who is who and what is what and why.

This kind of rehearsing requires activity. For the actors it means continuous imagination, and developed imagination about this particular play. For the director, he has all the means to lead and direct the actors by giving them the situation, the objectives, whatever he likes. Then the work is an organic one - the director leads the actors and the actors, being led, will never lie and perform things which are far away

7122

4555

M. Chekhov

March 7, 1939

from the play which they have imagined.

This kind of directing is right and true, but it must be based on the right foundation. This is such an important point that I would like to do the following thing. Please imagine the whole play, from the beginning or from any part. Do not let your creative instinct confuse it with any other play which may be like it...such as The Servant of Two Masters, by Goldoni, which is near to it but not it.

Find through your imagination what is the play which we are going to act - try to find out what this particular play is as a living being. Study the situations by seeing them in your imagination. We will go on rehearsing in this way, and you will see whether you are able to be lead by your imagination from one side, and the director's suggestions from another, to go on developing this kind of activity which will lead us more and more to the heart of the performance which must be discovered. We must discover this heart, and in order to do so we must find out how to move towards it, not blindly, but through the imagination for the actor, and for the director through the objective, etc., etc. This will help us to escape "apple" scenes.

STYLE:

There are certain boundaries set by the play and the style of the play. The style of this play requires expressive

M. Chekhov

March 7, 1939

movements, but this does not mean the actor must do extra tricks. Even the action of moving your hands will be right, having these bridges and transitions. For The Possessed we might do an opposite thing - we might find all the bridges and transitions in an inward way. If you will grasp it as consciously as an exercise, it will enrich you later on. You will be somehow enriched by being full of these things when you say the words. You will have a certain store of things awakened there.

All my life I have seen this thing in students - simple action. I wasn't able to fight this, but I have found now that bridges and transitions are the way to fight it. Simply to awaken certain activity in the line of the play, then it gives everything later on. With the years you will get these things awakened continuously in you, but to awaken them we have to use certain methods.

There are another two things which I would suggest - bridges and transitions are never painful and disturbing. And there is another thing which is used in many schools - it is called improvisation, and it is painful. It is only the question of changing the psychology - you are not improvising the scene, but rather following these inner bridges and transitions. The director should not give lots of indications and conditions, nor should he require outer action from the actors. Which technique to take - that is the whole difference. Give them two

M. Chekhov

March 7, 1939

points - this is the beginning and this is the end - perhaps in the middle there will be a word in the style of the play. If it is too vague, then give another condition which will lead them. Then perhaps it will be nearer to the exercise - when it is taken as an exercise, then it can be given consciously. The director can add conditions later on. If it is too vague and means nothing, the director can give an objective, or simply tell the actors it is too vague and ask them to find transitions from one point to another. For instance with Deirdre, if it is too inward, then ask her to do it in the style, and then she will come of necessity to certain expressions and movements. Activity is part of the style. For instance, Mary La has been led very wrongly by these actions - she always kills things. We also require psychology and not empty movements. Even if it is done too deeply, lead them gradually. Let them do as simple as the action, and then give them leading questions. Or ask them leading questions. Some will do it quite correctly, and they are disturbed by conditions. Those who are not able to do it correctly immediately are also disturbed by conditions. So give it point by point, in each individual case and lead them by leading questions.

Take the following task: Find the time to write down very briefly what you already know about the Method. The old students must pretend that they know nothing beyond the knowledge of the young students. They must help the new students to

M. Chokhov

March 7, 1939

formulate in a brief form what they already know. Each point of the Method must be quite clear, and there must be a short comment about it.