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Michael Chekhov

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PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE

Rehearsal of scene from The Possessed: Scene between Drozdov (Peter Tunnard), Stavrogin (John Flynn), and Shatov (Blair Cutting).

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

SHATOV (Blair Cutting):

Change the psychological gesture - make it still more dramatic for this character. He is simply pressing something down the whole time, during the whole scene; pressing down with the condition that he looks straight forward. This will give certain activity, certain will character which he must express. If he looks down, it will be too clever, and if up, it would be too romantic, but straight forward, he becomes a primitive being who can work and work. He must not be flying psychologically, but working psychologically. Working with toil - it is a very difficult work for him. He is opposite to Lisa, who is always flying, making her tricks, and everything flying. She does not even understand what she does. But he works and works.

In the Meeting scene you will take another psychological gesture - to take something, to love it, and to throw it. Then we will have this diapason.

Work to be shown next time: Include the atmosphere which is night; the moon shining through the window, a very dark, small room, so small that Shatov can hardly move there. Two chairs, one big table, many books, newspapers, the bed.

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He can't move in this one room. Very low ceiling, very little air, and everything is pressing and depressing. Everything, even the air is filled with this philosophy of Christ. "What shall we do? What shall we do?" - he is continuously thinking and thinking, without being able to discover any ideas. A being who is absolutely not able to catch the ideas, but must elaborate one after another. His whole life has been spent in acquiring six, five, or four ideas which he follows all the time. The atmosphere is one of depression.

Try to get a certain inspiration from his outer appearance. He is untidy because of his psychological work, and he forgets everything. When rehearsing, do it with the hair in disorder, his coat much larger than he needs, his trousers longer than he needs - everything that will give the impression that he is untidy. Try to get inspiration from these things, from his trousers, his hair, from this dark, depressing atmosphere, and work, and work, and open eyes. A bear, sitting in his den, working, working. Three things: 1. The psychological gesture; 2. Untidiness; 3. Atmosphere.

STAVROGIN (John Flynn) and DROZDOV (Peter Tunnard):

The psychological gesture for Stavrogin - I am going on, pushing aside everything. I don't want to stop, and I am unable to do so. Eyes a little above the normal level, because he does not pay attention to the earth. The idea of the gesture is that I am going on-- I don't stop at all. I

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pay no attention to anything. Another quality: The tempo inwardly must be quicker, almost flying over the space but this is too spiritual for him. He is half aware of what he does, but only with his hands. Half aware, half oblivious, almost contempt for the situation. Try to elaborate this gesture.

For all three characters: Consider the dialogue as if it were a soliloquy. When you start to speak, pay no attention to the other person. You must justify the silence outwardly, but inwardly you are going on. Psychologically they are going on continuously with their own train of thoughts and will.

STAVROGIN (John Flynn and understudy Peter Tunnard):

Imagine and incorporate the following scene when Stavrogin enters the drawing room, and everybody is astonished by this image. Incorporate the following things: He enters, being absorbed in his own feelings which are very gloomy and dark. They are torturing him - always this complicated psychology which he has. He then encounters a certain atmosphere of astonishment of acceptance and denial - the people around him are always strongly divided in their feelings. Then he realizes and becomes aware of the atmosphere. And in the third moment he disperses this atmosphere - three definite moments. 1. He enters, being absorbed in his own world. 2. He ignores the atmosphere, and is aware of everyone.

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3. Psychologically he disperses the whole atmosphere and everyone around him, in a purely psychological way.

The atmosphere is one of acceptance and antagonism. Three definite steps - don't confuse them. He consciously crosses the threshold and enters and then he evaluates the atmosphere quite definitely, and then he definitely disperses everyone with their antagonism. The fourth step is to push everyone away, and then to go straight to the person whom he has chosen from among them. He has excluded everyone from his mind, and only one person is there to whom he has given his whole being - his mother. He throws the others away as if they were things.

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The approach to the method: 1. Inner and outer technique as applied to the method. 2. Simply exercises of staccato and legato - do these in various compositions.