

Michael Chekhov

November 3, 1938

REHEARSAL SUGGESTIONS FOR
SPANISH EVENING AND
THE POSSESSED

Mr. Shdanoff's Play: [The Possessed] Suggestions to Mary Lou: Many good things and many new things were shown by you today, but will you please distribute all these things in the following way: In the first part we could accept this contracted figure, but in the second and third part it is not good. For all three parts you have given different hints; please develop them more fully:

1. In the first part when you are doing contracted things, you must add to this the psychological gesture which you were given. Do it more fully because I want you to escape this similarity in the part of Martha. It is not good to see the same qualities in you as an actress. Although in the first part of the play you may have this closed quality, still it must have this feeling of astonishment.

2. In the second part you must lose the contracted quality entirely, and only have the open quality. Even if you open yourself you must do it with the same quality.

3. In the third part you must simply have pleasure in meeting your mother. You must study Lisa and the others and imitate all these things which they do. But one thing must be different; they are real evil spirits, but you must enjoy these evil qualities. You are quite gay from the imitation of it. So, in the first part you are a little open, in the second part you are absolutely open, and in the end an

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imitation of these evil things.

Try to find where the first, second and third parts are in the play, and the transitions, and try to read the whole play from this point of view. The next task will be tempo.

Spanish Evening: Suggestions to Mary La: Before we can accept any of these forms or elaborate one which will include them all; when you meet him and then you turn away, this is a short way to get the right thing. I would suggest the opposite - your psychology is turning away but you are still there. Try next time to do the whole thing with a very different ground, but one thing is necessary you must never go away from him, or if you do we must feel that you are with him.

Paul: I will give you suggestions as the barber; now do the same things but only as a mere hint. It is much stronger than if you really do the thing. You can do all the crazy things you want, and don't change them into other things, only don't do them fully, outwardly. Do everything as a hint.

Sides and facets of the crowd: Criticism: Again the freedom was very much there and this is a good sign. The second good thing was that individual scenes were done more and more with the feeling of truth, which is again a very good sign because I did not remind you - you did it yourselves. It was more and more truthful. Your natures now begin to require right things, without having a voice from outside tell

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you that you are doing something wrong. Your nature instinctively requires that it should be more truthful.

The Manager's influence is a killing one. The crowd's relation to the Manager: 1. You are suspicious of him. 2. You die under his influence. 3. You become angry with him. 4. You think he is a fool, and are scornful and mocking towards him. 5. You come back from the tavern slight drunk. It is the same quality as in the first part, but something is wrong. 6. You must hide from the Manager that you have had a drink because the agreement is not yet signed. Enter slightly drunk, hiding from the Manager, and fall asleep. 7. Awaken with childish wonder and begin to realize that the Manager is there, and that you must perform at once. These qualities must be clear as crystal. Each facet must be as clear as geometry, then the audience will appreciate each facet when they see it.

This time it was clearer as to what has happened, and this is so important for this play. The theme is that the old people greet each other, then see Minjaca in the window and greet her. The old people speak through tight teeth and have peculiar walks; the young people are always flying up. Everyone is old first and then young. Then comes the dressing of the people in their costumes. The more you will try to find exclamations in these scenes, the more comfortable you will feel in doing your parts. Now do the dressing scene with the childish quality.