

Michael Chekhov

February 26, 1940

CONTINUOUS REHEARSING  
SPEECH  
CHARACTERIZATION

Cricket on the Hearth - Run-through:

CONTINUOUS REHEARSING:

There are certain pleasant moments but certain disappointments, too. I feel that during this long period in which you have not rehearsed, you have not worked upon it. The play must not be stopped, and your work on it must not be stopped. A conscientious actor would have made much more progress. From now on, if we are going to rehearse four plays, they must be rehearsed by you alone, in your rooms, in your dreams and imagination, and must never stop, otherwise it is something quite different from what our profession is and what our ideals are. Suggestions must be fulfilled.

SPEECH:

Suggestions: First of all, you must ask for help with your speech. There are things which are impossible. You are unable to manage your speech to such an extent that important words are swallowed and dropped. So much so that I do not even understand the plot. When important words and sentences are dropped, we lose the content.

CHARACTERIZATION:

John: You have definitely improved along all lines. You can go on working alone. Some moments are not yet balanced,



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although everything is almost correct. At some moments you can be more open and expressive as John Peerybingle. Amongst all these characters, he is the most open and elementary, simple, and primitive. He does not hide his feelings. At some moments you make the great mistake of hiding your feelings while at other moments - when you are speaking to Tackleton or in the nightmare scene - you are too open. Do not diminish the quality, but when, for instance, you touched Tackleton's knee, that is impossible.

Where to make it muted and where to take this away and show your full dimension - these things are still wrong and that is the only thing for you to work upon at the moment. You must be absolutely clear whether you have to act completely open or whether hidden. Therefore, the part is not yet balanced - we guess the character but there are wrong things in it. Your entrance can be more open still and more closed when talking to Tackleton.

Sam: The first scene is very good - it is right, and it is there. You are much assured in this scene because you are on the right way. You speak calmly, but we get more than when you shout. The first scene is, therefore, the key for you. The second scene is wrong from every point of view - from both outer and inner expression. There was not the slightest suggestion of the objective, which is to explain to two idiots. Hegel's philosophy. It was simply scolding without meaning.



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So your task is to elaborate that you must explain these philosophical ideas to two idiots - the objective is so expressive that nothing else is needed. The third scene we will leave for the moment. The last scene must be much more on the top of everything - the highest point of curiosity, highest disappointment, highest fury, and the last moment still more human. The second act is too even. The first act is coming along. Re-work the second act. Forget the third scene. In the last scene, increase to the fullest extent all these qualities. Take it as expressive as it is primitive.

Katherine: Sentimental things come through the tears in your voice and outer nervousness. That is your only mistake. You must be a strong human being on the stage. Don't show all these feelings, and then it will be an original character.

Blair: You have lost the tragic note in your character - it is not Caleb because you have become a charming old man. Therefore, we accept you as a charming old man, and we do not believe you in your tragedy in the second scene because we have the first impression. In the fourth scene there is no solution because there is no tragedy. Re-build and re-imagine and rehearse the whole part from the point of view of real human tragedy. Imagine that he is going to die - what will happen to Bertha? Who will go on with these things? People will disclose to her the whole world. You must imagine this tragedy, because without it there is no part - it is not The



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Cricket on the Hearth. You have made a little outer mistake of taking small steps - don't do it.

Daphne, (Tilly): Before you walked very normally - now you have exaggerated it a little. Discard it.

Ronnie: The way you are going is right, but you must go more quickly. Light messenger - nothing more complicated. Different colors on this one light things. Go on quicker and develop it more.

Deirdre: On the basis of the character, put the different objectives more quickly. I know them, but I don't hear them. Take the character as it is and make the objectives clearer. At the end, coax from them their tears, but do not cry yourself.

Mary La: The task is very simple - there are two lines you must pursue - much more youthful and more will. Sometimes you are half asleep. You must be alert and awakened as Dot, more than anyone else in the play because she represents the life itself. Life and will - she is the bearer of life, young life, fully awakened - not as a modern person half asleep. Fully aware of her husband, of the parcels, of Tilly, of the child. This quality of youth awakened is point one, and point two is still more and more feeling of ease. You are still only half way there - she is so alive and so aware that you do not need to push on it. Super-sensitive - this will bring lightness and tremendous vitality. Don't try to squeeze it out - that will give the opposite result.



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Erika: You must get one thing which you have not yet got. You are opposite, as it were. You must interpret it differently. In the third scene where you are depressed, you are "as-if" covered with a veil. You must be just the opposite in the last scene; you have the right to be a bride, but you are still somewhat covered. Change the character in the last scene; there we must see you victorious. The first person, because she is the center of the whole story. The character is important even if she only has a few words. You must not have the psychology of the third scene in the last scene. It must be open radiation. Consider yourself as the first character in the play. Like a jewel which was hidden and which is now shown.

Everyone must be ready with these tasks at any time. Work upon them simultaneously with other rehearsals. You have no right to rest until we have performed these four plays,

What we still lack in the whole play. This play is filled with atmospheres, and we have not worked upon them. From now on we shall work upon the atmospheres. So now pay attention to all these points in the atmospheres. This is the new stage to which we must come.