

7271
Michael Chekhov

February 8, 1938

STYLE
TEMPO
FEELING OF FORM
SIGNIFICANCE
OBJECTIVE - CONDITION

STYLE:

We must always go back to some things in order to create the background or the style of this or that play. You must not think it is only repetition. It is most important for the future action. We shall come to the point where we will be able to elaborate this or that special scene, character, sentence, or word, and then quite subconsciously or super-consciously it will be supported by the work we are doing now. This work as such, must disappear later on - this elaboration of the style-and when it disappears the real and concrete result of this work will first be seen.

Today, I want you to do first one style, then another - Mr. Shdanoff's and Henry's plays, so that this contrast will tell our creative souls something for the future. The difference between them is very speaking, and as we are going to play both of them, we must digest and enjoy the beauty of the contrast.

Let us begin with Henry's play [Spanish Evening]. First establish the rehearsal atmosphere. Now enter the sphere, or the atmosphere, or the style of the play, step by step. Do it very consciously and keep it and try to ac-

M. Chekhov

February 8, 1938

accumulate it without losing the first steps you have taken. First of all, quite consciously take the inner activity which we call "feeling of ease" - the activity we have called "butterfly." We want to be lifted up. Now listen to one sentence on the piano and transform it into your inner activity. Now do the psychological gesture. Now do it inside you. Now lift your hands with the condition that your whole body is full of the powers which are streaming inside you. Try to keep this light "butterfly" style inside you. When we are able to keep the style inside us indefinitely, then we really have the ground of the style beneath us.

TEMPO:

Exercise - in "butterfly" tempo - "Today is my wedding day." The costumes must express certain characters. Go up to Miss Crowther and say, "Today is my wedding day."

FEELING OF FORM:

Mr. Shdanoff's play: [The Possessed]

We shall explore this style which we think will be the ground for the play. We shall explore it more and more - we have not found it. This time I want you to give it the feeling of your own body as we do in the Actors' March - the body is beautiful, etc., and to realize our own body, the

1271
M. Chekhov

February 8, 1938

ideal body with the center in our chest, and where our arms and legs are; our torsos are supporting our heads which are sitting on the neck, and the whole composition is beautifully built, and the torso which keeps the head is situated on our legs, which are the harmonious connection to the earth. They are supporting the whole bodily construction, and here we have the center of our being, and when we move because of this activity, we give to our center and the center moves out from us.

Move with the ideal figure. Feeling of form. When you walk, walk inside yourselves and try to mold your own figures in the ideal sense; having a round emotionless head supported on the torso and the whole body consciously, and try to build it in the most beautiful and ideal way.

I want you to explore the feeling of form, and keep it during walking, and we shall take the steps of the Actors' March, and this will be the exercise for the feeling of form. Each movement increases our feeling of form. Use the movement for increasing our feeling of form, the real and harmonious form of our own body. Try to feel this composition of our bodily construction.

Now do one movement by sending out the whole activity you have towards me. The play is filled with bursting form and we have to send out this activity. Realize the streams of power inside of our physical body, like a plant

M. Chekhov

February 8, 1938

which is generating this power. Now legato. Now the same staccato.

Do you remember we have spoken about these powers which are growing inside of us, and they give us a certain feeling of warmth and increased life. Will you try to realize as much as possible this life inside of us and send out in the legato movement. Now staccato. Now legato.

Now we add to this what we have spoken of especially for Mr. Shdanoff's play, and try to realize that we are like a form, strong, clear cut, full of a certain kind of activity, and we are sending it out. This activity fills the form which is at the moment our own.

Then will you please speak the word from Mrs. Elm-hirst's part, "Stop!", on the condition that the form of the movement is clear cut, well shaped, and full of activity which we are sending out. The whole time must be the feeling of breaking the form. It does not break always. On the gesture (upraised hand) turn to Miss Crowther. The form must not burst yet. There are certain scenes in this play when we have to show our activity, where it bursts through the form and there is chaos. Therefore, the form must keep this activity, and stop on the boundary limit of this breaking point. It is a very important moment, the breaking out. Therefore, I want you to find this fine thing, to be on the limit of it, and not to break. Only certain scenes break,

M. Chekhov

February 8, 1938

and then chaos, and then form again. Stop on the psychological gesture. Sit down with the feeling of this beautiful form. Now get up and say, "Stop!" Repeat. Now please do the same active words without breaking the form.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Today I want you to add to this style the significance of the style. Try to add to this things. Be very careful about exaggeration. Well developed - well bred, in the finest, subtlest sense. Will you please, in the same style, do the Church Entrance scene. I want you only to walk home, trying to keep together all these things, full of activity and with significance.

OBJECTIVE:

Now take the objective, "I want to go home," consciously, and fill the whole body with this. Do the same simple thing without the objective. Work inside. Try to be able to keep these things together consciously, and they will become subconscious later. Leave the objective quite consciously.

Do the same with the condition that this lady or gentleman has to stop here and give the beggar money, and then continue on her way. The same objective must be like a form filled with activity. Enjoy this feeling of form which always gives us much pleasure if it is there.

Anticipation of action to follow. Example: We

M. Chekhov

February 8, 1938

must not be aware and anticipate the action because there
will be no conviction when the action actually happens.