

Michael Chekhov

November 19, 1937

FEELING OF FORM
CONTACT
CONCENTRATION
STYLIZATION
OBJECTIVE

The Habima Players
The Dybbuk

The reason for your being in our school is to get the ability to manage the things in our method on your own. From today on I want you to really try to do this. I will give suggestions but you must always do this work inside you. Do it inside - add everything I have not mentioned - add by yourself.

FEELING OF FORM:

Start with the feeling of form which is a psychological as well as a physical form. Psychologically I must feel that I want to take this form. It can be a very vague thing psychologically and this is very bad for the artist. Follow each person's movements on the stage with the feeling of form, as though you were a shadow. Psychologically you are molding their movements together with them. Realize that this feeling of form is a psychological state, and then you will get persuasive bodies.

CONTACT:

We have a new setting which you must explore through the feeling of contact. You must walk about as we have done

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with previous settings and find the real contact between your bodies and these spaces and forms. With your will and activity, find the contact with the setting. Now consciously add to this something from the method which you have chosen yourself. During the whole rehearsal, be aware of the necessity to be active.

CONCENTRATION:

Let us do the scene with the players and add the following conditions to the concentration on which the scene is based. Hamlet is mad, and this is the thing around which this part of the tragedy revolves. Hamlet uses this opportunity to hide what he wants, and to show what he wants, as if he were mad. On the ground of this fact, take the objective, in addition to concentration, to understand where the point of his madness lies, and where he is dangerous for everybody. We want to be able to stop everything if it is too dangerous. To protect, to cure, to prevent everything; to make order inside Hamlet, and to protect everybody around him. Take the objectives more strongly.

Criticism:

Why do you allow yourselves to live in these delusions which are so obvious - you know what is delusion and what is reality. Why do you allow yourselves to be in this delusion, "as if" you are really working inside? Don't allow yourselves to be so blind, so quiet. This is your private business, and

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I am not able to sit inside you. You must be your own managers. This is your profession. Courage! Make mistakes. They are so obvious, but to hide them is so dreadful. Show them and finish with them once and forever.

STYLIZATION: The Habima Players' Performance:

You must not be shocked at the stylization of The Dybbuk. This was a special task. When they started to work on this play they were very interested in stylization. Therefore, you must realize, when looking at this performance, that during the period of the preparation of this play they were very, very busy with stylization. This is good to know. It is a very strong kind of stylization. This production is very, very Jewish in character. They have taken all the sides of their character and based the play on it. This is one of the most beautiful things about the performance, that they have opened this source which is thousands of years old. You must know that this is simply a Jewish group, which wanted to use the Jewish sides of their characters in a very stylized form. If you have this idea you will understand more about what they have wanted to achieve. Their make-up is black and white only - very strong. The settings and movements and the dance are in the same style.

Later they left this stylized form, after they had explored it, and they tried to play Shakespeare.¹ They are very,

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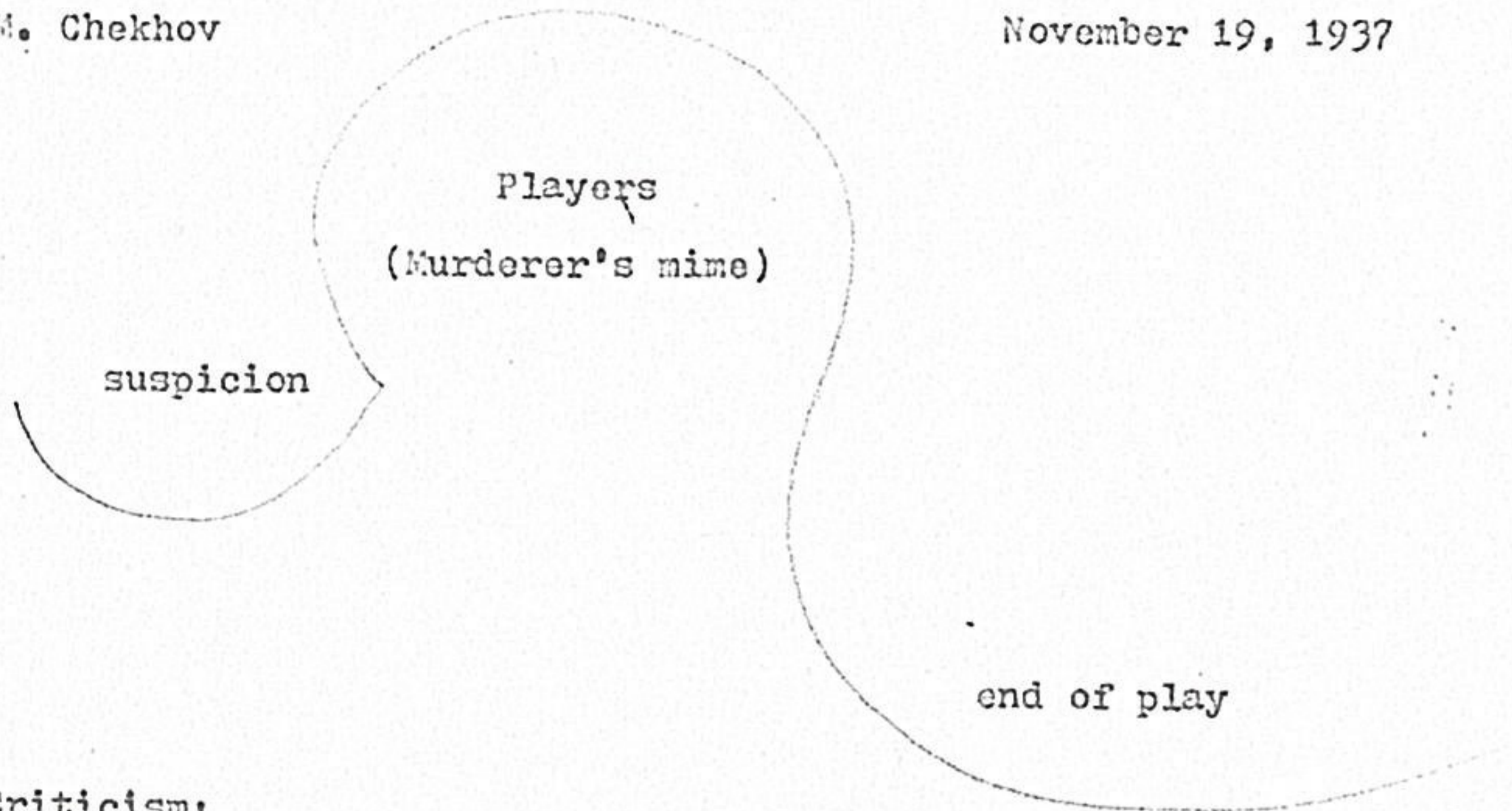
very interested in progressing, and from this point of view they must be very much appreciated. They do not want to remain on the same level, but try always to reach a higher level than before. The Dybbuk and Shakespeare are very characteristic of them. As Jewish actors and characters they are very heavy, and therefore they try to overcome this. They try to dance through the whole performance. Their language, as you know, is a very heavy molding one, but they try to play the poetry of Shakespeare, and they have reached it. Their work is very interesting. They are not able to direct - this is their misfortune. They have only actors and organizers in the company. They have been longing for a director for their whole life, and they have had many, many directors, but they have been unhappy with them.

OBJECTIVE: Old Students:

It was very necessary to tell you your mistakes this morning. Now try to start again with the objective - Hamlet is mad - the objective is to cure, to protect, to help - all of these together in one objective. When the players enter they, together with the whole court, must use this opportunity to help Hamlet. The objective is the same, but it is taken in the sense that now he will be cured. The players and the court must make the following inner gesture:

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Criticism:

It cannot be compared to what you did this morning - it was done! That means that you can, and that means that you must always do it. For instance, Eleanor was absolutely attractive because she was here with her actor's being. You were quite free to do everything under the objective. Now improvise only the moment from the entrance of the players group until the murderer mimes the poisoning. This is quite conscious work, and the activity is the secret to your work.

Do the scene in the atmosphere of tragedy, then in comedy, and then in circus style. Repeat.

Criticism:

You lost the quality because you lost your concentration - this is not allowed. The structure must be absolutely firm. You must not forget things. You take the objective or the atmosphere and it makes you slow, and you are oppressed by it. The question of tempo is a different one, but this is a

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question of your inner activity. We must overcome this before we touch the question of tempo. It is the question of your actor's activity.