

Michael Chekhov

May 1, 1939

SPEECH

Rehearsal: The Robbers:

Scene opens with group on stage - some playing cards, others grumbling, sleeping - bells are heard - whistle - pause - each one makes a sign, or a word, or a gesture to stop the noise. Then comes the pause as they realize that the horses are approaching. The leader gives the word, and then begins the preparation. Feeling of form. They are professionals in preparing this thing - dressing. The travellers are so cold they take great care in getting warm - physical thing. Food - singing - signals - music - dancing first slow, swaying, then faster, same music but very fast and quick and passionate - crescendo, single note, silence. Evil faces - staccato - stealing - struggle.

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Suggestions to Teachers:

Doirdre and Mary La must be more with the students when talking to them. Doirdre spoke too much to the students while they were working. She explained things too much. You must think of yourself as leading each individual through certain experiences. You are leading them through experiences which may be of use to them as actors. Your mistake is that you tell them too many things. Give them a little more time, and don't beat on their heads with too many phrases. This has

M. Chekhov

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a deadening effect on them. Try to take each lesson as if for the first time - objective, atmosphere, psychological gesture, concentration, imagination, etc.

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SPEECH:

You "spit" upon your own language, which is very offensive to me, a foreigner. Speech is the most important part of our profession. Why do you create these half-words, half-beings, like arms and legs or eyes hanging about, but not really beings fully formed? It is offensive and repellant and sentimental. You seem to despise your own language. You "spit" on it!

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The Possessed: Meeting Scene

Atmosphere. Expectation of action - anticipation of release - legato - being ready to act. On Vorkevsky's appearance it becomes staccato, but same atmosphere. Then comes an atmosphere of emptiness - deserted - everyone is alone - nothing is going on. It is the key to this play to be able to express thoughts, not intellectually but emotionally.

Speech - each sentence must have its own special intonation - you must mold and paint each sentence, otherwise it makes the hearing ear tired. Try to find different levels.