

Michael Chekhov

(afternoon) February 8, 1938

STYLE - SIGNIFICANCE AND FEELING OF FORM
SPEECH

Mr. Shdanoff's play: [Our Phantoms - The Possessed]

Short exercise on Style in general.

STYLE - SIGNIFICANCE AND FEELING OF FORM:

First, try to awaken the feeling of significance - only the significance. Permeate your whole body with this significance. Then try to move a little bit by keeping this feeling in each movement. Gradually try to move your whole body, but under control. Now get up, keeping the feeling which we will use as an element during this performance. Now to this add the feeling of form - significance and feeling of form. A quicker tempo will make you more free. Now add carefully the feeling of the form to be "broken" or "burst".

Out of this style, will you please speak the sentence, "Where have you been?" in this bursting style. Will you please say this with the same feeling, "Maybe I could be of service to you?" Now, move and speak this sentence. Take the short word "Stop!" and do the same. Try to say this "stop" so that the form is broken.

1. Breaking point
2. Break it
3. Close it

Do it on the following points: Move again; do not make panic but try to get the feeling that it is broken.

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Move without panic.

Now, "Maybe I could be of service to you?" three times. Turn your head and look this way and that. Keep this style and sit down.

Scene:

The son is waiting for the girl's entrance. They tell fairy tales. Try to awaken these significant things. When I give the sign that means the girl enters the room. Will you please turn and meet her. Catherine - I want you to approach the door with the feeling, "Shall I enter?" The son says, "Come in". This must be said with love. (If we were acting Ibsen or Chekhov we should do quite the opposite gesture - quiet and subdued. Everything in this play requires that everything be vibrating on the surface.)

The girl sees two images - one black and another shining. The whole sketch must be done in this state - listening and touching invisible things you are longing for. Fearless - night - quiet. Fire - the son's character is that of a human being who has gone the limit of human suffering and finally breaks. Each part of his body must be strong but at the same time free. Example: Hand on table - one way weak - other way strong (significant). If he does something it is done - he is very free - his body is at the same time his mind. Decisive. He can do things freely but they are always done fully. If he wants to do something

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which is unusual he does it fully. His words will have a certain power if he has the inner feeling - you will not need to shout. He has the right to take any position because he is inwardly right.

When the fairy tale is told they see each other - one being and one fairy tale. This is one of the subtlest moments, then the form breaks and chaos is here. She says to him, "You are this blackguard prince," and shouts, "I hate you". This is full chaos. She is desperate. His misfortune is that when he begins to hear and feel this world which can save him, he always sees in a certain form the spy, and he turns everything to evil. He has always to fight with this spirit which is incorporated in the person of the spy. Prepare for next time this unreal state when you are creating the fairy tale - reality into the land of fairy tale. This can be done with Miss Crowther's help.

SPEECH: (Miss Crowther:)

When you get into the fairy tale world you must live more in your consonants - you must be in the consonant, not in the vowel. Break it down. The dark one you would get more on the palate, and the light one on the lips. Two placements with the same quality working on the consonants. Fairy tale speech must be very simple. It is very difficult to be so simple. The simplicity must be in the sounds. They can carry you away into some other world, then you

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would get this change back into reality which would be very much stronger. Do you remember about a week ago, Mr. Chekhov asked you to be as naive as a child. The fairy tale has something of that quality. If you make it tragic, you can never get away to this other world.

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Sit as you are now, and try to awaken what we have been doing this afternoon. Inner Significance. Now, will you get up with the significance. Now, by saying the words, stop on the limit. Now break the form and break into the chaos. Now close it. Now with the words, "Maybe I could be of service to you?" One gesture. Break the form by being immovable, close. Now run back to your places, and do not sit down. Keep the form and significance. Now sit down.

New psychological scene of the engineer and young man. I want the son to penetrate into this life - perhaps there is something in this world - everybody laughs at the engineer's words, but the son's idea is always to find something behind this crazy man's idea - there may be something.

The engineer is always wrapped in his own thoughts - he is unaware of anything going on around him. His idea is, "The one who can kill himself without fear becomes God." Repeat the sentence, and each time you must give it as though it were absolutely a new sentence.

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The spy's position is that he is a "showman" and this is his trick. This is one psychological "knot" which we are using.

The engineer wants to say something quite different - certain dark ideas are before his eyes. "Whoever will be able to tell the world that it is all right, will save the universe." "He came and was crucified - He will come again."

Toward the middle and end of the play, the engineer is in the spy's power. The spy comes to him and understands this is the moment when he really has to kill himself. The engineer is lost. Nothing makes any sense - his body is not his body - the floor is not the floor. He doesn't want to do it. He implores the spy. This is one of the darkest lines in the play which makes the whole situation so tragic. Throughout the whole play is this light way and dark way. Tension is very important in the whole body, but not in the head at all.

Another scene:

The spy asks the idealist to give him important documents which he has brought from abroad. When he is trying to get them, two assistants enter and catch him, the idealist, so that he is unable to move. At this moment he understands that he is lost. The idealist says he will call the engineer, but he cannot do this because the spy shows him a letter which says, "I have killed my friend the idealist," and it

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is signed by the engineer. After he has read this letter,
find the reaction. His reaction is to give him ^{- the spy -} a blow.
Then the scene is again much more complicated.

Two additions: First of all, the idealist de-
spises the spy. He swears at him. When you do this, try
to find the psychology that you know he is an absolute black-
guard.