

Michael Chekhov

February 3, 1939

CHARACTERIZATION

CHARACTERIZATION:

Individual Criticisms and Suggestions:

Drezdov in The Possessed:

Terrence: your psychological pattern was not clear - very weak interpretation - very bound - very tense.

Peter: You were more convincing. Continue on the basis of the same psychological gesture which is not yet clear. It is not yet powerful enough. Discard the military thing, because the costume will do it for you. Do something quite opposite to the outer form. Try to move yourself quite freely as if you are not in this uniform. Freer than you would do it if you were not in such a difficult situation. This suggestion is for Terrence, too.

For Drezdov there is psychologically the desire to be on the same level as Stavrogin, this absolutely free man with whom he speaks. If he is somehow bound, it will be difficult for him to speak. Underline this freedom, this independence - the costume will put you in the form - justify and interpret the gesture from the point of view of the style of the performance. It is one thing to do it freely and another to do the gesture in the style of the play. The gesture was weak today, but even if it had been strong, it is not yet in style.

M. Chokhov

February 3, 1939

For Peter: discard the military thing and explore the gesture more profoundly, and do it in the style of the play.

For Terrence: make him an officer who is a philosopher at the same time. He thinks, and because of this thinking ability he cannot be very angry, very loving, very amorous, he cannot be punished, he cannot forgive - he just thinks. Everything for him is black and white. If this is done then Lisa, between Stavrogin and himself, will make a marvelous composition.

The Barber in Spanish Evening:

Warner: find a soliloquy which the barber speaks during the first scene with the husband. The theme you will find yourself. Here is the husband of one of the ladies you are in love with, and he knows it, or you think he does, and so you are afraid of him. You must speak the whole time, so as not to give him the opportunity to ask any question which would bring you to such a state that he would guess immediately. That is the reason why you speak the soliloquy. Try to hear the voice of the character - how he speaks, being in this difficult situation, trying to preclude any questions from the husband.

When the lady comes, create the words - not a long soliloquy - one or two sentences, one word, one exclamation, one sign. He cannot find the theme because he is too much in

M. Chekhov

February 3, 1939

love. He is blushing, then getting pale. Whatever it is, underneath must be, "I love you. I love you." Underneath the first soliloquy is, "Be silent, Be silent. I am afraid of you." Explore both scenes in this way; it will be very useful for the style later on.

The Carpenter in Spanish Evening:

Sam: explore the gesture of a helpless, frightened being, in the style of the comedy. Go out, and then, as if being slapped, and in. Like a bird which prepares to fly.

Martha in The Possessed:

Frances: try to create a complicated figure, a complicated character with a definite psychology, and definite appearance. I will give you some characteristic points, and you must elaborate the whole character around these points. This is the exercise for the imagination and other things. This is a very good exercise for developing the imagination.

Deliberately take some points, and give yourself the task of elaborating and justifying the character from these points. (1) A girl of 17. (2) She is lame. She does not limp very much, but certain difficulties are there. (3) If you look into her eyes you will see that she has the ability to see more than we see. She is looking somehow through things, and she sees things which can only be seen by her. (4) A very, very poor girl. Her clothes are very

M. Chekhov

February 3, 1939

simple and worn. In her hair she has a flower made of very cheap paper. (5) She is an absolutely soft and gentle and loving person. (6) She is of simple origin. (7) She is fearless.

Try to create around these disconnected points something which you will find in your imagination. Try some situations - she is playing cards alone in the night - she is in the church praying. Show a series of such events, showing what you have elaborated in your imagination.

Lower Depths:

Each scene starts in darkness - the curtain goes up in darkness, then they start acting and then comes the light. In the third scene they begin to sing in darkness. Sam will expand the music from the point of view of the song - where the crescendo is, and where it dies away. The first song is as if everything is dead, while in the third scene there is pleasure - it is not so much singing as joking.

Criticism of Second scene:

Your mistake was that you have again remembered the thing more than you have created and imagined it anew. Do not forget that in our sense imagination means inner acting, it is not showing or thinking at all. When I have asked you to imagine, I mean acting fully inwardly. There is a certain weakness in your imagination. You must get this

HFNS

1012

M. Chekhov

February 3, 1939

power of imagination so that it will overpower you. Leading question: What keeps them together?