

Michael Chekhov

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CHARACTERIZATION

The Cricket on the Hearth

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You may feel that Dickens has a certain sentimentality. It is true, but you must know that in Dicken's time it was necessary because so many things were good all around which required certain heart life. On the other hand, so many things were cold and heartless during his time that it was not only not sentimental, it was absolutely necessary to put a drop of warmth into the cold, stiff life. Therefore, we have to understand all these things, not from our present point of view, but from Dickens' point of view.

Then we shall see one very important thing - at all moments when Dickens seems to be sentimental we must be absolutely serious on the stage. This will kill sentimentality, and we will understand Dickens, who has taken his sentimental things so seriously. He was not sentimental, it is we who interpret it as if it were sentimental. We have to show his seriousness by creating this human business which is going on in the heart. Instead of becoming sentimental, we will get a big, big human heart. Dot is the archetypal woman who opens her heart at the right moment, and that moment becomes sacred for men and woman. If we act Dot with our heart, there will be no sentimentality.

All the characters are a little like dolls - not

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only in appearance but in psychology. All the characters can be imagined as dolls. Caleb, Mrs. Fielding, and the Stranger must be absolutely old in voice, in looks, and in body, in costume, and everything. They must be finely acted old bodies, psychology, and voices. Bridges and transitions are the most important thing in this play.