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Dickens
 Shakespeare
King Lear

Adventures of Samuel Pickwick, Esq.

We have to be in great haste about Pickwick. You have proved yourselves as well-trained actors, now we have to prove our experience of the stage. One way is to be able to work as quickly as possible but still having inside the Method. I will give you tasks, and I will require that the tasks are accomplished in one or two hours, not in the manner of senseless hurry but because you are able to manage yourselves. The first step is to imagine your character.

STYLE:

We must give the impression from the stage, by means of sitting and by means of acting, that this is something very distant and very old, in the sense of old furniture which is precious and beautiful. How to get it? First we must find the bodies which we see in the illustrations. You must swallow and digest entirely the psychology of the bodies - why certain characters have such knees, such backs, etc. Psychologically why.

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PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHARACTER SHOWN BY THE BODY:

(1) The bodies must be taken from the illustrations [Cruikshank], but your business is to achieve all these things. For this aim you have to meditate in your imagination on these figures. Don't fly over the pictures simply to get a superficial impression. Try to take one of the figures and imitate it with your psychology so strongly that your body needs to be changed because of this psychology. Absolutely a psychological approach to these new bodies. Take one figure and work upon it, then another and work upon that - different figures which you will cling to.

FEELING OF TRUTH:

(2) Absolute and complete feeling of truth. It is essentially important in this play because if we lie a little in our bodies or voices or psychology, we will immediately become too young - as though the old furniture is here but some modern person has imitated it by very rude means. You will immediately feel that it is a crime, and it is not true. In the same sense you will feel the need of the feeling of truth in this play especially. All these points will give the impression of something beautiful because it is from far away.

FEELING OF EASE - LIGHTNESS:

(3) Complete feeling of ease - quite the opposite to The Possessed, in which the form was somehow continually

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filled with something which we were continually pushing into the audience. Here, there is a complete feeling of ease and lightness. The feeling of ease must always belong to the actor, but the quality of lightness belongs to this play. Lightness in the speech too, so that the performance will be light and like a marvelous dream in which everyone flies - not a nightmare as in The Possessed - a dream in which things seem to be and yet not to be.

SPEECH:

The voice will be very decisive in this play. Everyone must work on his voice to get this special kind of ease and lightness. That is the style. If the critics and audience say you speak artificially - they have not got accustomed to it yet, but we are going to develop this new human speech - not market place or street speech; there is nothing to develop there - other actors bring it onto the stage, and they are content with it, but we shall go along the line of this beautiful human speech which we are developing. Each performance will make you more competent in your use of this speech.

ACCENTS AND POINTS:

(4) Don't start with this, and I will not force you to do it, but it is something which will give us the style of the play. It is a very fine and intangible moment on the stage which is like our exercise of wrestling without muscles - this kind of beauty must be on the stage. Then moments with

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certain figures are fixed and then very light and easy movements and again fixed moments which will become marvelous accents and points on the stage and which will give more and more charm to this performance. This will come later.

If you will really meditate on these points and imagine the settings - the charm of old England - if you will meditate on it, you will see that this is the point and the style of the play. Nothing of exaggeration or grotesque - truthful and in the style. In this play try to radiate yourselves from your chests - not your ideas but yourselves. Radiate yourselves.

First Scene: Stately, sunny, gay, formal Sunday atmosphere. Polite, refined society, these people give themselves. Pickwick sends his joyful being from his chest. He is the master, the leader, and the others open themselves to receive him. Giving and receiving psychologically.

Second Scene: Those listening must follow Jingle's description. Jingle must first see what he is describing before he describes it. He is the spectator and relator at the same time, and he is more astonished than anyone else at what he says. He never knows what he is going to tell next. He enjoys when his listeners feel the effect of his imagination. He is two men sitting in one - an angel and a devil. He is possessed of this creative spirit which is Dickens' justification for each character, but he has a childish obsession with

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his imagination. He is not afraid of anything. His listeners destroy the spell he has created, and then he comes out of it, but he never does it himself. He is a magician. There must be a transition from the real life which is unpleasant, into the world of his imagination which is pleasant. He is impudent.

First Scene: Meeting with Mrs. Bardoll and Sam.

This is one whole scene, with a beginning and an end. Each piece must be complete because our attention is drawn here and there constantly. The attention of the audience must be fixed by this feeling of the whole which will lead them. For the character of Sam you must add another quality - try to be suspicious of everything and everyone, throughout the whole part. Even when he speaks with Pickwick, whom he loves, he is suspicious that he will do something good. Mrs. Cluppins must be more calm, without hurry - try to get this quietness and poise. This poise must not destroy the choking and killing quality - choking everything, the life, the people, everything - even herself. Her objective can be "I want to find something, constantly, to manage and to choke." The quality for Pickwick is that he enjoys himself as a gentleman.

CHARACTERIZATION:

In the drawings [Cruikshank], each figure has a certain psychology which does not belong to any particular character, but to all of them. We got this style by studying the drawings. But how? You must take a figure and try to penetrate

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into the psychology of the figure - don't imitate it outwardly. Try to find out why the person stands in a certain way - if you confuse these two things, you will not find the style. You must experience the soul of the figure. Choose one of the figures and try to find the psychology, then do it as long as you feel you have the right to keep your leg in a certain position - as long as you feel it is psychologically right. When you have justified it inwardly, then please try to move, find out how the person would move - it must be the psychology that moves. Choose the figure, study it, and then begin to move. It requires extremely developed feeling of ease so that the audience won't know whether it exists or not, it will be so light and easy.

The charm of the play is that it is somehow removed in time - but not old fashioned - a very fine thing - neither the past nor the future. We don't mean a wrong anticipation of the future, but a very fine thing - things can be removed in time just as they can be removed in space. The style requires that we get the impression that it is removed in a good sense - veiled. The feeling of ease will remove us in time. For instance, surrealism in painting is the wrong anticipation of these future things.

Don't imitate the face of the drawing - the face is the finest membrane - the face and eyes will radiate themselves the powers which we have in our whole being.

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The style of the play requires that all these moving figures will sometimes come to a wonderful kind of standstill. Later we will have the ability to move, and then for an instant there will be a certain pause, and then on again.

Absolute feeling of truth. There must be nothing of exaggeration, of showing off, or squeezing out of emotions. Try to imagine all the suggestions together, and you will get a feeling of the style.

If you will study the drawings, you will see that the characters are full of emotions - passionate. They are not reserved as the English people are today. They are so full of emotions, so allow yourself to develop your emotions in this play to the fullest extent. We are going to perform a very passionate company of people with inner power and fire and unbridled manner of living. Combine this with an extreme feeling of ease.

No one is allowed to shout on the stage - the voice may be loud but never become shouting because of the fact that it is removed in time. If you will visualize the performance, you will be so shocked by imaginary shouting.

In Dickens there are two very obvious qualities - he takes sometimes a long, great event and a complicated psychology in one movement and describes with a few words the thing which perhaps goes on for weeks and weeks. On the

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other hand, he has such a fine instrument that he begins to elaborate details of the details of the details. This is just as characteristic of him as the big things. He looks at things through a microscope - this is very characteristic of him.

RHYTHM - BREATHING:

Rhythm has the process of breathing as one of its elements, and the breathing in Dickens is one big sweep and then a little group of details. That is his rhythm. In Shakespeare's plays you will find the whole play breathes so marvelously. As in Lear - how it starts - everyone expects the appearance of Lear, and nothing is going on on the stage - waiting for something - Lear approaches - the scene begins to be filled with outer means of expression - music - and Lear appears as an outer thing - red, gold, shining, the earth, and the world of tremendous outer powers. Then, after he has committed three crimes - cursed his daughter and destroyed his kingdom in evil power - then again the action goes down and then we have the scene in which the sisters are speaking - then the pause which is included in the rhythmical event, and then Edgar begins to speak his soliloquy. In all of this you will see this marvelous breathing process.

Just so in Dickens, he breathes in general and then in details. You will find this in the rhythmical pattern of the growing plant - out and in - and finally the seed. It is

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rhythm and music, and when we will get it, we will understand such things in our acting, as charming and as intangible as music. Out of this, climaxes appear - climaxes are accumulating essential and important things in the play - they are compressing them into one thing and then dissolving it - then other things come, such as anti-climaxes. There are really no anti-climaxes - there are reversed climaxes which give the impression, but it is really another thing - the polarity.