

Michael Chekhov

February 7, 1940

CHARACTERIZATION

STYLE - FAIRY TALE COMEDY CLOSE TO VAUDEVILLE

Troublemaker - Doublemaker:

This fairy tale will be a funny one; the characters are very simple, and the simplicity must be preserved. They are much simpler than the characters in the other fairy tale, The Mother, and the depth of this fairy tale lies not so much in the characters, as in the situation.

CHARACTERIZATION - INNER AND OUTER:

You must work on these characters absolutely out of your imagination, and then we will listen to the text through the spectacles of your characters knowing who is who. So go on working instinctively, although you have no text yet, so that each time you will bring more elaborated characters and characterizations. It is based on the characterization of each character. It is one exercise for inner and outer characterization.

The main line of this fairy tale is the following: there is a family living in the Texas desert. The name of the man who owns the ranch is Richpikle. This character will be played by Blair. He is rich, and a very wicked man - a very bad character - but very bad! He is suspicious of everyone. He thinks everyone deceives him and that everyone is trying to kill him. Therefore, he is getting angry and

M. Chekhov

February 7, 1940

life with him is quite impossible. All in a funny way, of course.

This gentleman has a wife - a very charming wife whose name is Gabby. She is the victim of her husband. She is always suffering and crying, and she does not know what to do with her husband. She is like a duck!

There is a daughter - (Katherine or Mary Lou) - who is in love with someone called Peter - (Ronnie). They are in love to such a degree that they do not see the things on the earth! Both are afraid of Richpickie. Peregrone is the daughter's name.

There are three servants. One is called Nipsnuff - (Woodie, Hurd, or Lonnie). He thinks he is a very fine person - the most sensitive and clever. Unfortunately he was in Europe for two years, and this has made him quite crazy. He thinks nothing can be compared to his life experience. He had an accident when a child, and he feels that he is like a harp - so sensitive. When he gets blows from Richpickie, he is hurt not only physically but spiritually.

Then there is the servant girl who is like a little devil. She hates this Nipsnuff through and through and always makes faces at him. She makes jokes at him, and he is always in great difficulty through her. She is full of life, and very gay and clever. She manages everything and is actually the mistress of the house. Her name is Mimsie - (Mary Lou or Katherine).

M. Chekhov

February 7, 1940

The cook - (Deirdre) - is named Sloopy. She is absolutely in love with Nipsnuff, but he pays no attention to her. She follows him like a dog everywhere, looking into his eyes. She has only one desire which is that he will throw a glance at her, but he does not. When he sneezes, she is absolutely unhappy because he is getting a cold. She is like his guardian angel. She has no life of her own - she belongs to him.

There are two spirits - one is Silver King, a very noble and fine spirit - absolutely silver in face and heart and mind - like a moon. A beautiful being. A powerful being. He appears and changes his appearance twice.

The plot is very simple. Mr. Richpuckle tortures his whole family, servants, wife, and daughter. He thinks that no one understands him, no one loves him, everyone wants to kill him, etc. He finally decides to go and live alone with his suffering. He breaks everything in the house, all the furniture, and disappears into the desert. There he meets the Silver King who tells him that he must go home and experience the following thing. His wife, in her despair, has sent a message to her brother, asking him to help to change her husband. They are now expecting the brother. Silver King tells Richpuckle that he will turn him into the brother, and he will appear as if he is the brother, and when he goes home, he will meet himself there. Then you will see what will

M. Chekhov

February 7, 1940

happen. Richpickle protests, but Silver King turns him into his wife's brother. Now he will have two psychologies: his own and the brother's.

On the wall in the house there is a big mirror, and there is a picture of Richpickle and one of the brother on each side of it. When Richpickle is turned into his brother-in-law, we see immediately that it is he.

Now in the desert we see the ^{real} brother-in-law riding a horse in the direction of Richpickle's house. He is very happy, riding along and whistling. When Richpickle is turned into the brother-in-law, Silver King tells his servant-helper ~~tell the servant~~ that he, Silver King, will turn himself into Richpickle and that the servant must keep the real brother-in-law away by making him lose his way. When Richpickle turns into the brother-in-law and disappears, then the real brother-in-law goes riding on his horse and the spirit makes a little trick so that he loses his way and rides back the way he came quite happily, without noticing it.

Then we see the house of Richpickle, who appears there as his own brother-in-law. Everyone thinks the brother-in-law has arrived, and although he (Richpickle) hates them all, he has to go through with all the welcome business.

Then we hear the voice of Silver King who speaks with Richpickle's voice and appears in the house and almost repeats the first scene. At first the other Richpickle-brother-in-law

M. Chokhov

February 7, 1940

feels what a wonderful character he is, so strong - like a real man. Then he begins to doubt whether the character is really a good one, and finally he begins to hate himself to such an extent that he wants to kill himself. Then they have a terrible fight. When he wants to kill him, he cannot do anything because he will kill himself immediately. So when the Silver King pretends to be ill, immediately Richpickle becomes ill but only shouts "Cure him." So they come to the moment when they have a duel because everyone is so afraid that if he shoots him, he will die. Then begins this feeling that he cannot get rid of himself.

Richpickle
Finally the Silver King says he must be changed back, but he does not want to be. The servant spirit says that the real brother-in-law is coming to the house and that the Silver King must change Richpickle back into himself. There is danger that they will both meet. They are running after each other. Through all these difficulties Sloop is trying to get a glance from Nipsnuff.

Finally they come to the moment when the real brother-in-law comes into the empty house. He thinks he is too late, and hearing voices, he goes into the garden. Now we see them running all over the place - the two brothers-in-law running. Everyone is out of breath.

Finally one brother-in-law runs and meets the other, and then everyone sees that there are two brothers-in-law.

M. Chekhov

February 7, 1940

Then one by one they faint so that the room is full of these fainting figures. Finally the real brother-in-law faints and only Richpickle is left. The Silver King catches him and turns him back into the real Richpickle, and then goes away. Richpickle stands alone as before and realizes that he is now as unhappy as before because he has become himself. The Silver King and his servant have put on the wall the picture of Richpickle, but this time the picture is different - we see a very smiling, good-natured face.

At the end, the others slowly awaken, and Richpickle acquires the ability to love. He resembles the new picture, and he becomes a good man. The Silver King turns the daughter into a bride, and everyone is happy.

The Silver King appears first in the mirror as a fine silver image. When Richpickle goes to the desert, then the Silver King meets him there as an old man. Richpickle pushes him to the ground, and then he becomes the Silver King immediately. First the Silver King, then the old man, then again the Silver King, and then Richpickle - all these images. Then he becomes the Silver King again at the end. The other spirit, the helper or servant, who is called Limp, is actually a silver spirit - a caricature of him. He is somehow funny and lopsided, but also silver. He cannot speak at all, but can only whistle. He explains everything by whistling and gestures.

M. Chekhov

February 7, 1940

The brother-in-law is a simple, good-hearted gentleman. He is called Dodderdolt. Richpickle and Silver King must find everything together. It must be very obvious, very simple and "as-if" schematic. The voice must be the same.

STYLE - FAIRY TALE COMEDY CLOSE TO VAUDEVILLE:

The style is fairy tale comedy, almost to vaudeville, but still fairy tale - vaudeville in the sense that everything is too primitive, too obvious. The idea is that when one really sees himself, it must be taken deeply in one sense, but with laughter - real profound ideas, but with laughter. For all the suffering characters - Richpickle, wife, cook - they must suffer but in a funny way. Not real suffering. We must not have any compassion for them.

The cook is full of love. She has a very big backside, sloping shoulders, with loving eyes looking for Nipsnuff. All the transformations must be very naive and simple. Like children's drawings. Certain primitive quality must be there in all the characters. If you will imagine it in this style, perhaps we can elaborate this strange simplicity.

In the other fairy tale everything has a tremendous background. Here it is different - quite the opposite - everything is very simple. Compare the two fairy tales, and you will get suggestions for both.