

Michael Chekhov

April 23, 1940

CHARACTERIZATION

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The Cricket on the Hearth Run-through:

The weakest point was the speech. So many words could not be heard. Peerybingle

Peerybingle (John): From the actor's point of view, the scene was excellent. It was intimate, imaginary things were around you; it was not you acting but someone around you - very very big. The talk with Tackelton was absolutely right, except for the words in the first part. Many atmospheres came of themselves because you followed certain main lines.

Bertha (Tany): At the moment when Tackelton appears in the second scene, when you hear his voice, through your imagination and radiation send profound love to him - not smiling love, or superficial love, but the love for someone you admire and would sacrifice your life for.

Edward (Ronnie): More feeling of ease in your last speech, then you will free your temperament - you will not be so bound. You must invent twenty-five outer gestures because you have only one gesture which is too attractive to the audience.

Peregrine (Mary Lou): You have developed very much as an actress - perhaps not because of the Method, but you have developed. But you must get rid of the habit of clinging with your eyes to your partners - it is a wrong kind of contact.

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Peerybingle (John): It is absolutely right, and it grows artistically. It is much more truthful psychologically and in every way. There is one moment in the third act when you are conscious of the effect, and it is always wrong - "Hoorah." When you anticipate it, it is not funny, and you underline and overdo it. Forget the effect and follow the line truthfully.

It is just as innocent as other things he says. You must avoid certain gestures which are not typical of your character.

Mrs. Flolding (Deirdre): It is a very interesting case. The character is very far away from Dickens, but you can go on that way. We don't always have to follow the author. We can have our own artistic ideas about the character, and we must follow them - not slavishly follow the author's ideas. Get a bit more authority - otherwise you are in danger of becoming too tragic.

Caleb (Blair): You have got the part, the psychology, the idea, absolutely. You are on the right way. If we feel that we are on the right way and the main line is there, then we must enjoy the freedom to elaborate around it - add "sauce" to it, as it were. Perhaps by making your voice more tragic, your body more tragic or by more characterization. When we have the germ of the scene, then it is most pleasant to add things until it becomes surrounded by a "sauce" Let your imagination run freely and add different things. Woodie, as Caleb, has elaborated this "sauce," or "gravy," to a very great extent,

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both inwardly and outwardly, and it makes the character very full and pleasant. Whether it is costume or psychological characterization or physical, bring this "gravy" to it.

Dot (Mary La): It is right, and many things have become alive, but certain moments are still too even. When the feeling of ease leaves, you become tense.

Caleb (Woodie): Everything is all right. It is already such an inner spring that you have found that it will develop you very quickly. Whether you imagine or not, I feel that you find these things through imagination. But growing so quickly, one is in danger, first subconsciously and then consciously, of becoming conceited. If you allow yourself even a little germ of conceit, it will kill your talent and your development because conceit for a creative spirit, which you are, is just like a frost. If the frost catches you, then you will be spoiled. So preserve your talent by keeping the door closed to all these devils of conceit. And stop the threading habit which you have.

May (Erika): I see something from you which you do not. Somewhere sits this idea that you are not important in the play, therefore, you are not fully present on the stage. You feel yourself of secondary importance. I see you physically as May, but I do not see you psychologically.