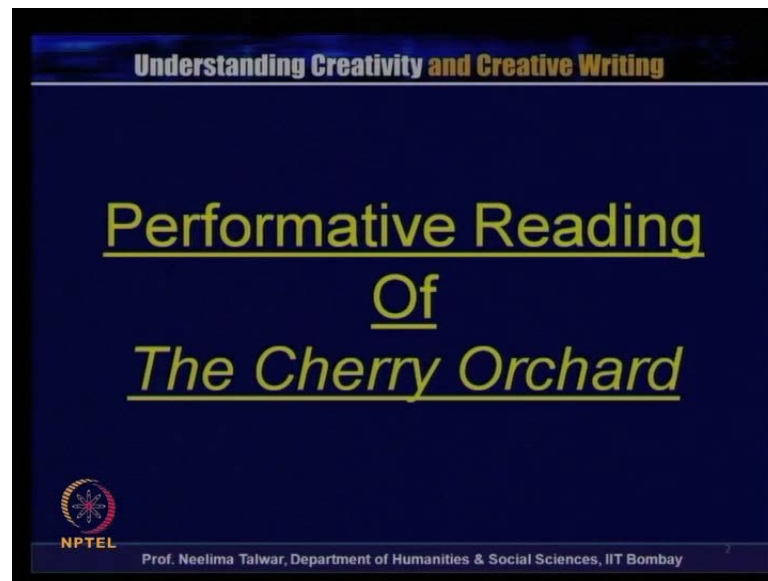


Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing
Prof. Neelima Talwar
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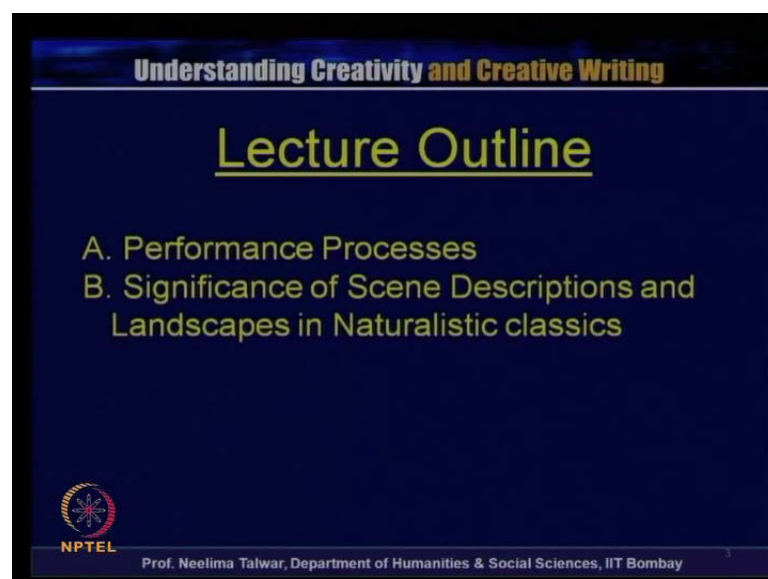
Lecture - 37
Performative Reading of the Cherry Orchard

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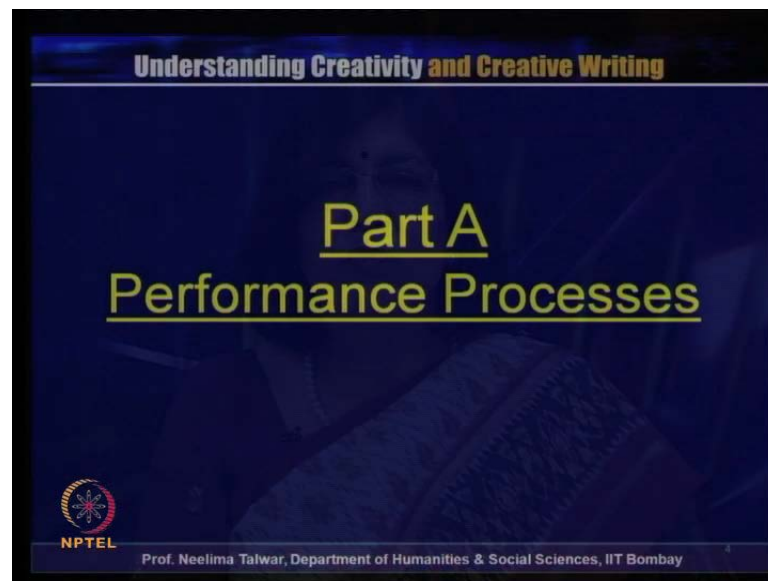
This lecture is titled Performative Reading of Cherry Orchard. It is with great pleasure that I shared this lecture with you, because much of it is by way (()) of the students work. The lecture for the purpose of clarity is divided into two parts.

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The first part deals with performance processes. And the second part deals with this notion of scene description says, title significance of scene descriptions, and landscapes in naturalistic classics. This is an important part of our understanding of drama, because often people or new students who are not use to reading plays ignore the scene descriptions. So, we want you to understand that it is a very vital part of the artistic vision of an artist.

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The performance processes will unfold gradually, and in some ways they are very close to the way, this activity unfolded in the actual classroom. We indeed would have taken you to our actual classroom, but acoustically the recordings really do not work out very well. So, the best methodology we thought was to bring some of the activities on board here for your own enjoyment and assessment.

So, now this particular part emphasizes the experience of the play that is in addition to reading of a particular play, I feel that it is important to experience the doing of the play. In order to write plays and to become a play write, this is again an important part of your understanding. It does wonderful things, it loosens you up it helps you participate in number of activities with other people. And so what I have done here is to show the gradual unfolding of the process and this will culminate in the end semester question paper which was given to the students taking care of all these facets that we had discussed earlier in the classroom. So, this will give you also a sense of how none of

these activities are considered valueless, they are all assigned a value in a literal sense also within the academic framework.

So, the academic framework need not be just a totally verbal framework, but it can also incorporate performative activities. It is a kind of via media between these two that we have tried to work out, mainly because our purpose is to help you write better.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Experiencing The Play

- ❖ Close reading of the selected play
- ❖ Extensive discussion of content and form.
- ❖ Reading the play within the writer's historical context.
- ❖ Readings of the play in India.
- ❖ Performance by elective students after discussion and rehearsals.
- ❖ Writing: creative reinterpretations.

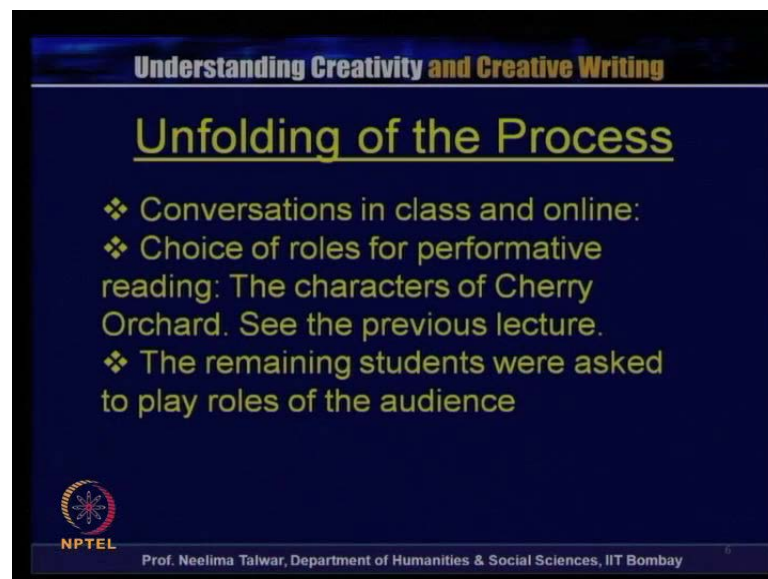
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So then experiencing the play, it started with close reading of the selected play and extensive classroom discussion of the content and form, lots of you know puzzle responses came often the students did not have background in reading plays, and even those who had background in reading plays really quite genuinely found check (()) check of (()) and that those very very interesting discussions. Then what we decided is to read the play within the writers historical context, I know that academically this is sometimes challenged this historical contextualization is challenge, but personally I value that greatly, because it also helps you extend yourself, not only in terms of the otherness of the characters, but otherness of other cultures historical periods and so on.

We also tried to check out as to the sort of performative readings of the play in India whatever information we had we shared it with each other. And then finally, it led to a performance by the elective students after another round of discussions about how to flesh out the performative aspects, how to flesh out the content in terms of performative details and they have lots of rehearsals and I judiciously kept out of it. So that they could

have lot more fun rehearsing, but from time to time I also was there to ensure that we were on the same page. Finally, this activity led to creative reinterpretations and again we will give you a sample, because often it is really not an imitative mode that we want to you know highlight or emphasize. In fact, we never want that happen in creative writing, we are sharply aware of the fact that each writer has to find his or her creative direction. So, from that point of view, some activities were generated which was by the reading of Cherry Orchard.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Unfolding of the Process

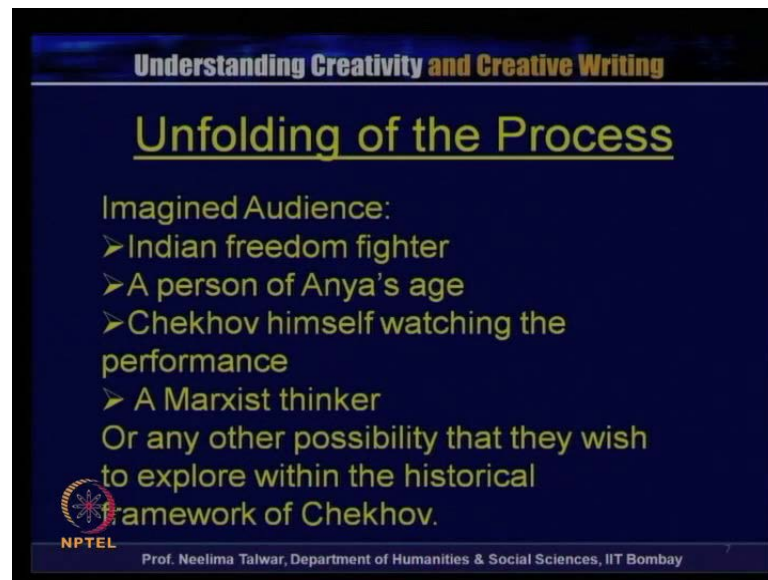
- ❖ Conversations in class and online:
- ❖ Choice of roles for performative reading: The characters of Cherry Orchard. See the previous lecture.
- ❖ The remaining students were asked to play roles of the audience

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So, as I said there were lots of these conversations amongst us in class and online through the IIT system of module that is made available to us. And then the students decided voluntarily on the different characters they wanted to read and perform. And after that I realized there were still students who had not really taken any role, because they were already exhausted, and so the best thing was to actually choose their role as an audience as imagined audience in Chekov Russia. And so then I (()) up these ideas here and I thought that you know they could add their own interpretations.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Unfolding of the Process

Imagined Audience:

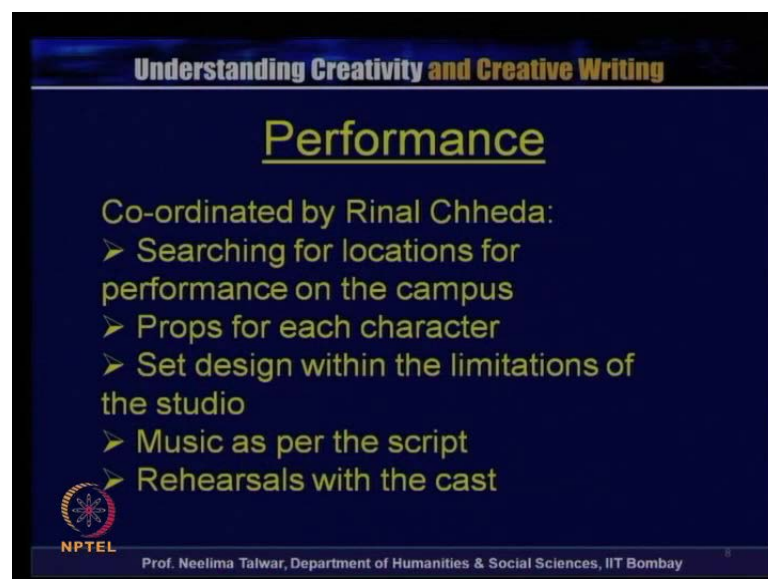
- Indian freedom fighter
- A person of Anya's age
- Chekhov himself watching the performance
- A Marxist thinker

Or any other possibility that they wish to explore within the historical framework of Chekhov.

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So, one of them could be the Indian freedom fighter visiting Russia of Chekov time or a person of Anya's age a that is young person or Chekov himself watching the performance or a Marxist thinker again watching this play and analyzing it. Or any other possibility that they wish to explore within the historical framework of Chekov, so that was the key guiding principle, the historical framework. So, you could speculate and you could play around with that historical framework.

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Performance

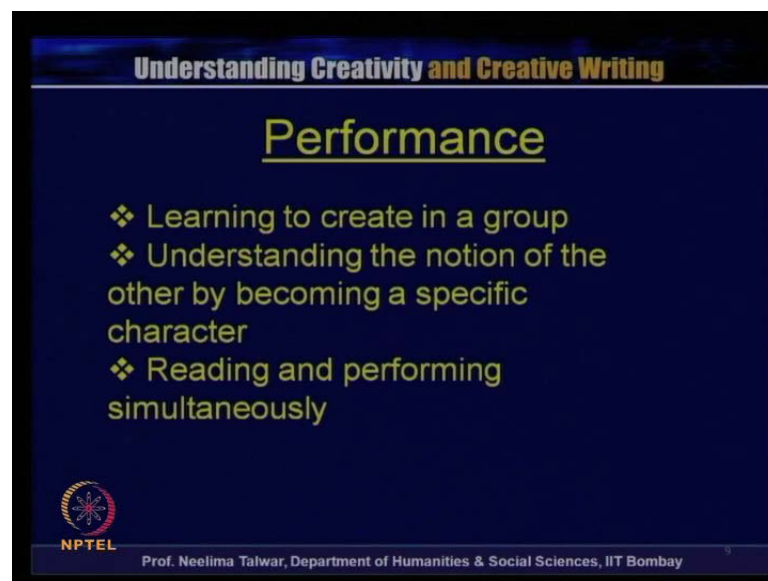
Co-ordinated by Rinal Chheda:

- Searching for locations for performance on the campus
- Props for each character
- Set design within the limitations of the studio
- Music as per the script
- Rehearsals with the cast

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The performance was co-ordinated very ably by Rinal Chheda. They there students went around searching for locations for performance and then we realized that if we do that the quality of the recording may not be up to the mark. And so we decided to settle on the studio space, but at the same time there was a sense of designs, space, (()) place and whatever relevant details that they could work out - music, rehearsals, all of these were coordinated by Rinal, but everybody participated very actively.

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What it did was to break there isolation, because I found many of them were being very quiet and it happens many times that some of the more articulate or some of the more enthusiastic students they speak a great deal and the others become really very silent spectators. So, I think with this kind of activity, we were able to break that isolation that is a lot of wonderful new kind of energy that developed. And also I think they realized that there is a lot of art and craft involved in interpreting a character for performance and therefore, all these specific you know specific aspects of interpretation they try to work out.

But they what they have done finally, is to read and perform simultaneously. So, this is really not like a professional performance, it is still performance which does take care of the transformation that occurs when a person or an actor plays a character, but at the same time this is not a complete a performance. It is a reading cum performance, which was useful for the classroom purpose, and also they did not really have the kind of time

which requires a fully fleshed out performance. They perfectly capable of it, but we did not have that kind of time during the pace of the semester.

Now very quickly I would just point out that the Cherry Orchard has been have already noted, I think again the question of plot is very important. We do realize that in terms of the Cherry Orchard, the plots structure does partially reveal the economic and psychological dimensions of each character. One can say that it is almost in some ways deterministic, but not fully really and that is where that (()) comes in, but so partly like other realistic and naturalistic plays, there are causal elements in the play which also a very important. At the same time what stands out is this comic come tragic aspects of each characters lack of fulfilled dialogue.

And this is almost is this is something that cannot be explained fully only through the causality of the plot structure. So, due to various a varying economic situation, but at the same time the pervasiveness of these deep sense of loneliness that you experience through this play and through the characters in this play, there is a kind of coral quality in Chekovian drama. Leading to this feeling that there is a world view or defined world view that one can asses, but I would not go into that right now, because I think basically multiple interpretations are possible an indeed that is what the students have done in all their work.

I thought that at this point in time because we are talking about performing the play it is important to bring in Stanislavsky who actually worked very closely with Anthon Chekov and developed the method, acting ideas. But mainly I have relied on Stanislavsky's owned writing on Chekov in general his notion of the subtext of cost Stanislavskys notion of the subtext points out.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Stanislavsky's Interpretations

- ❖ The text is created by the playwright, the subtext by the actor.
- ❖ The notion of subtext captures the mismatch between the external view of the character and how the character views herself or himself.
- ❖ When the actors "breathe life of their own into the subtext of a piece of writing to be conveyed to an audience" the inner essence of the character is released.

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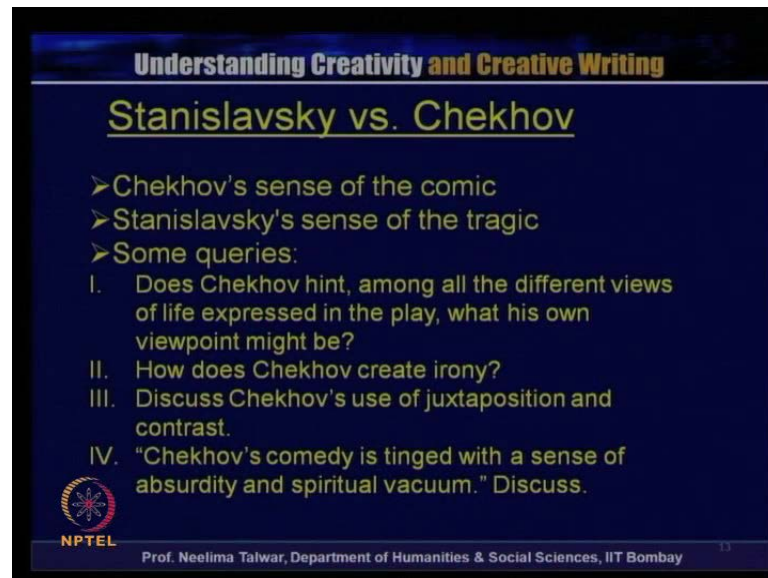
That if the text is created by the playwright then the subtext that is the implied meaning of every action, the implied internal meaning of the action of the characters actors is supplied by the actor. So, there is this whole world of interpretation that they bring in they animate this in a world. So, I think what you can perhaps do is to think of the subtext in terms of also the fact that the reason it needs this kind of interpretation. We careful a deep interpretation is because very often you find in Chekov that the external view of the character does not match up with the internal self view of the character. Sometimes they are not even in touch with that internal self-view they are aware of it.

So, it is this trajectory that is brought out through the notion of the subtext, and then I thought you know it would be really wonderful to remember that Stanislavsky directed the first production of cherry orchard and Chekov and Stanislavsky had great deal of disagreement on the interpretation. However, they are these eloquence statements that Stanislavski has made about the cherry orchard where he said that one is almost like a bud I am not reading the full quotation.

But he says that you know it was difficult getting everything right in the production because it is a very difficult play its attraction lies in its elusive deeply barrette fragrance to smell it you have to open the bud as it were and make it flower. But this must happen of its own accord without force otherwise you will crush the fragile bloom, and it will die

so he is aware of the complexity demands and he loved Jacobean writing and the provocations that it provided at that point in time the disagreement between Stanislavski.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Stanislavsky vs. Chekhov

- Chekhov's sense of the comic
- Stanislavsky's sense of the tragic
- Some queries:
 - I. Does Chekhov hint, among all the different views of life expressed in the play, what his own viewpoint might be?
 - II. How does Chekhov create irony?
 - III. Discuss Chekhov's use of juxtaposition and contrast.
 - IV. "Chekhov's comedy is tinged with a sense of absurdity and spiritual vacuum." Discuss.

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And Chekov as I have listed here that actually revolve round the notion on the comic and the tragic Chekov felt and he clearly stated this in the title subtitle of the play he called cherry orchard a comedy where as Stanislavski in his interpretation emphasize the tragic. So, I have just posed a few questions for you to think about as I said multiple interpretations are possible. So, you know you can have your own take because I think it is important for you to have your own position on this. So, now...

So, some of the queries are placed before you does Chekov hint among all the different views of life expressed in the play what his own view point might be how does Chekov create irony. So, the surface shows something else and the implied meaning is entirely different that is what irony is all about. So, how does Chekov create irony also you can have a look at the manner in which Chekov uses juxtaposition and contrast you know contrasting elements characters.

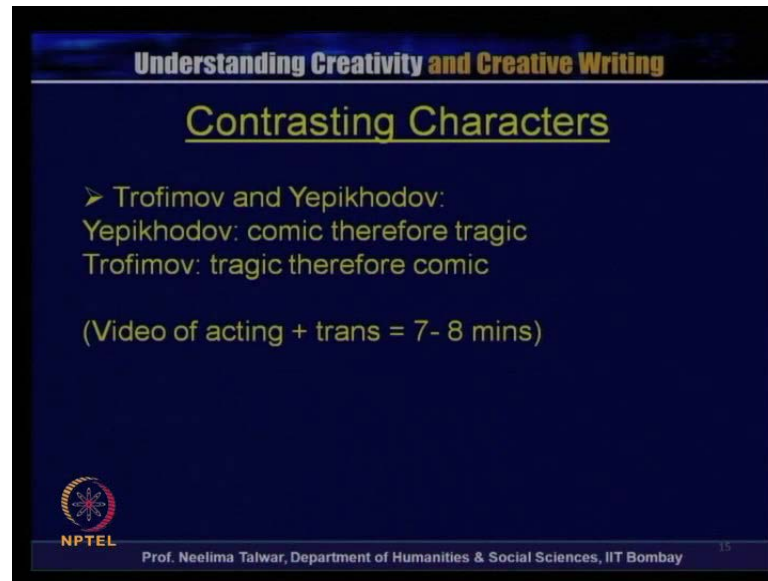
The other question relates to Chekov's comedy being tagged with a sense of absurdity and spiritual vacuum. The term absurdity as you remember we had discussed it with reference to Albert Camus and his philosophy of the absurd the term has philosophical bearing. And therefore, it does reflect a state of being which has great deal of value in terms of its continuity and its content. So, have a look at the term absurdity even in

Chekov a bit carefully because Chekov in some ways allows you to discuss realism naturalism and at the same time it almost brings the you know possibilities of this form to its extreme almost leading on to the non realistic representational modes. So, have a careful look it will allow you to understand many other movements and canonized text much better

There is a lot of discussion about why Chekov was not really very political in his outlook although he actually wrote a myths revolutionary ferment there was such a lot of talk about change and fundamental change in Russian society at that time he himself came from very deprive background. So, there is always been this question about the revolutionary period and Chekov, and I just will place Stanislavsky's point of view here which I think I do relate to he says that in his appeals to build a new life Chekov often uses the rule of contraries.

He says that here is a fine chap and there is another one and the third all nice people leading a good life and they shot comings are charming and amusing. But taken all in all everything is useless irritating and what is to be done we must join forces and change everything strive for a different and better life that is what Stanislavsky felt and if you look at a some ways this is the voice that you here. So, then what we will do here at this point is to place not Trofimov because we have already shared various interpretation of Trofimov very very interesting interpretations of Trofimov, but now we would place a reading of Yepikhodov undertaken by the students.

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The slide is titled "Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing" and "Contrasting Characters". It lists the characters Trofimov and Yepikhodov, describing them as "comic therefore tragic" and "tragic therefore comic" respectively. It also mentions a video of acting and translation lasting 7-8 minutes. The NPTEL logo is visible in the bottom left corner, and the footer identifies Prof. Neelima Talwar from the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay.

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Contrasting Characters

➤ Trofimov and Yepikhodov:
Yepikhodov: comic therefore tragic
Trofimov: tragic therefore comic

(Video of acting + trans = 7- 8 mins)

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So, in terms of the contrasting characters is Trofimov and Yepikhudov. Yepikhudov whose comic through and through and therefore, the tragic element surfaces from time to time in a very different combination, but as Trofimov seems like a tragic figure fighting against various odds and actually turn out to be somewhat comic also. So, now, let us have this a presentation of Yepikhudov and also the translation of Yepikhudovin the students mother tongue.

Hi I am Venkatesh D I played the character of Yepikhudovin the play cherry orchard I found that play funny and amusing I would like to take the pleasure of extending this joy through the translation of some of Yepikhudovs dialogues in to my mother tongue Telugu Yepikhudov.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Contrasting Characters

➤ Yasha and Feers
Yasha: A new-age helper. Cunning and dehumanized.
Feers: An old-world helper. Dedicated and dehumanized.

(Video + audience member playing an old person of Feers' vintage: Aditya Dachalwal)

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The next contrasting character that I want to place before you is Yasha and Feers. Yasha if you remember is a new age helper is shown to be cunning and dehumanized fears on the other hand is a old world helper and I used a word helper because I really do not like the word servant at all and again he is dedicated and still dehumanized. So, both are dehumanized characters one of the students decided to be an audience member of fears vintage.

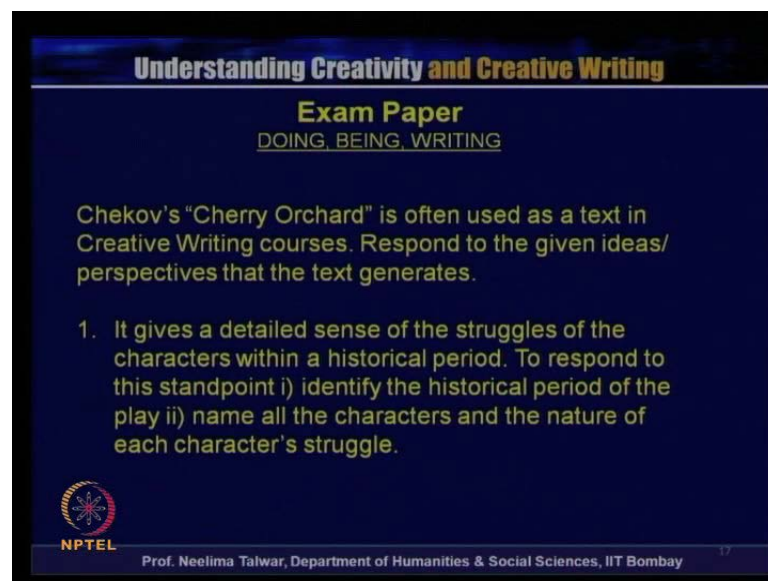
And this is the write up he wrote as a audience member after looking at the performance of selected parts of cherry orchard by his fellow students, and I am reading his response the students name is Aditya Datchalwal. And he was at audience member of fears vintage being an old person I have seen a lot in my life, and now have reached the stage where I do not want any more changes or surprises. I just want a stagnant life which I know, which I understand in short I resist any form of movement and lead a completely sedentary life style fears is perfect example for my case even though he has been a slave for his entire life yet. He does not regret it at all not as he want to be free his with forgoing the freedom that he rightly deserves.

In this way, his completely opposite to Trofimov who always talks about liberation fears represents the mentality of an ancient serve who has known this life. At this life only and is a verse to change it could even be said that his institutionalized unable to adopt with rapidly changing's with the rapidly changing social system around him. But near the end

of the play when Feer says that his life went on as if he had never lived at all this touched my heart and aroused in me the need to do something in my old age am also a versa to change since familiarity. However, distressing is always preferable over an uncertain future specially for an old man like me steeped in custom and habits. But Feer makes we realize if you get stubborn and do not change with the times the present will forget you and leave you behind you will end up just a relic of the past gone by is never too late for a change and I do not want my life to end up like Feer's.

So, as I pointed out to you all these intricate activities which unfolded over a semesters time frame they led to the end semester examination. So, I am not giving the full question paper although when I look at the answer book some of them really prompt me to place the full examination question paper and all the answers before you because they are really very interesting fascinating in creative, but I will resist that temptation part of this exam paper is placed before you. So, let us have a look at it is titled doing being writing.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

Exam Paper
DOING, BEING, WRITING

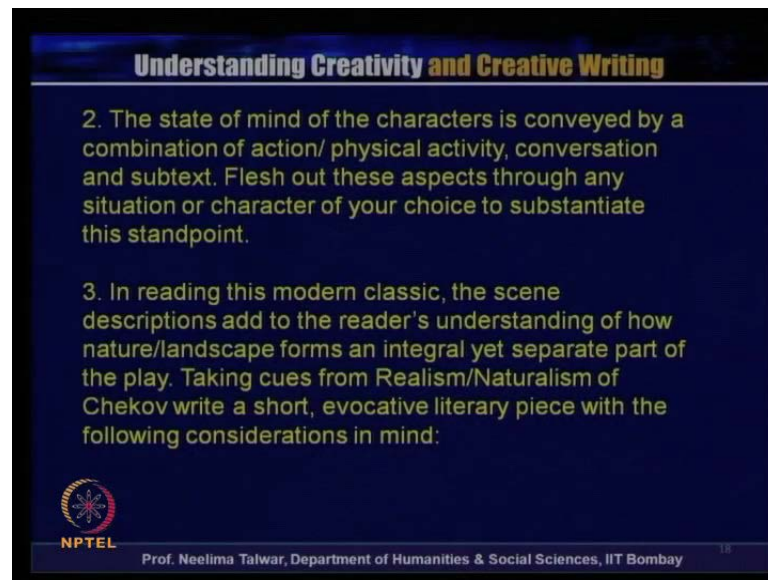
Chekov's "Cherry Orchard" is often used as a text in Creative Writing courses. Respond to the given ideas/ perspectives that the text generates.

1. It gives a detailed sense of the struggles of the characters within a historical period. To respond to this standpoint i) identify the historical period of the play ii) name all the characters and the nature of each character's struggle.

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And the question revolves around Chekov's Cherry Orchard and I am reading directly from that question paper as it was were written Chekov's Cherry Orchard is often used as a text in creative writing courses respond to the given ideas perspectives that the text generates it gives a detailed sense of the struggles of the characters within a historical period to respond to this standpoint identify the historical period of the play, name all the characters, and the nature of each characters struggled.

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2. The state of mind of the characters is conveyed by a combination of action/ physical activity, conversation and subtext. Flesh out these aspects through any situation or character of your choice to substantiate this standpoint.

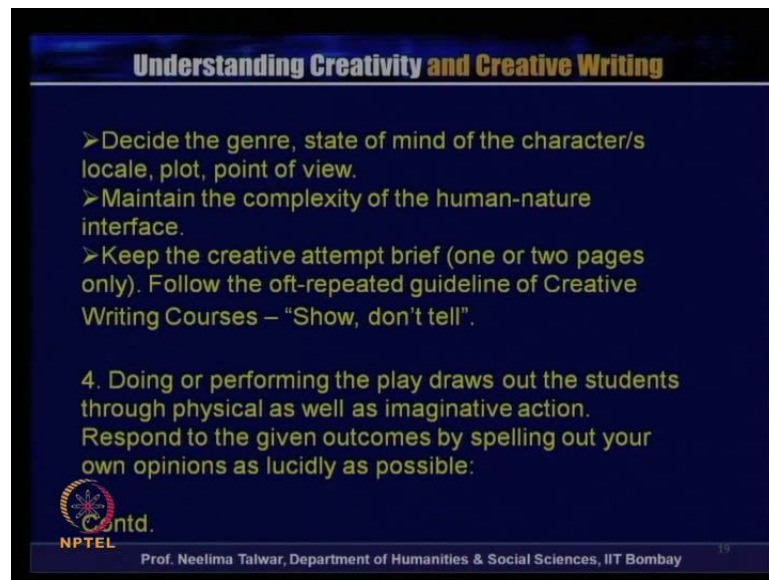
3. In reading this modern classic, the scene descriptions add to the reader's understanding of how nature/landscape forms an integral yet separate part of the play. Taking cues from Realism/Naturalism of Chekov write a short, evocative literary piece with the following considerations in mind:

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The state of mind of the character is conveyed by a combination of action that is physical activity, conversation and subtext. Flesh of these aspects through any situation or character of your choice to substantiate this standpoint. In reading this modern classic, the scene descriptions add to the reader's understanding of how nature or landscape forms an integral yet separate part of the play.

Taking cues from Realism, Naturalism of Chekov write a short evocative literary peace with the following considerations in mind. And this is the part that right now, I would like you to focus on because all our activities finally, lead to independent creative writing that is there aim. On the other hand, we do want our students to become a very good readers, because that is also very important for becoming good writers to understand the craft the milestones the possibilities, but at the same time eventually it is their own creative work which we value the most. So, do pay attention to this question from that point of view because within this I have given couple of guidelines.


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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

- Decide the genre, state of mind of the character/s locale, plot, point of view.
- Maintain the complexity of the human-nature interface.
- Keep the creative attempt brief (one or two pages only). Follow the oft-repeated guideline of Creative Writing Courses – “Show, don’t tell”.

4. Doing or performing the play draws out the students through physical as well as imaginative action. Respond to the given outcomes by spelling out your own opinions as lucidly as possible:

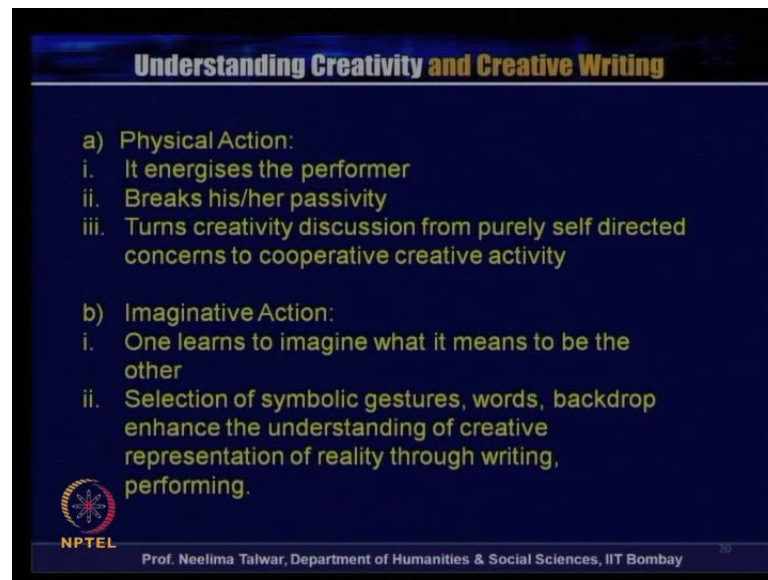
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So, what are these guidelines? Let us have a look at them decide the genre state of mind of the character or characters locale plot point of view. Maintain the complexity of the human nature interface. Keep the creative attempt brief one or two pages only. Follow the oft-repeated guideline of creative writing courses show do not tell. Doing or performing the play draws out the students this is again it goes on in another direction, but just keep that particular point in mind. I will read the rest of it also doing or performing the play draws out the students to physical as well as imaginative action. Respond to the given out comes, but spelling out your own opinions as lucidly as possible.


Again this is kind of interesting and an important from my perspective because I do feel the drama is not taught in the way it should be taught in our classrooms it does many interesting things apart from off course exposing students to a great art form. And so I have taken in to consideration the fact that many of the students were doing this activities for the first time. So, then doing or performing of the play is the focus of this part of the question and again their opinions on the following ideas were sort physical action. So, out of this there were three ideas that were placed for their own a choice and further elaboration it energizes.

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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

- a) Physical Action:
 - i. It energises the performer
 - ii. Breaks his/her passivity
 - iii. Turns creativity discussion from purely self directed concerns to cooperative creative activity
- b) Imaginative Action:
 - i. One learns to imagine what it means to be the other
 - ii. Selection of symbolic gestures, words, backdrop enhance the understanding of creative representation of reality through writing, performing.

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The performer brakes his or her passivity, turns creativity discussion from purely self directed concerns to cooperative creative activity. B, imaginative action one learns to imagine what it means to be the other. Selection of symbolic gestures words backdrop enhance the understanding of creative representation of reality through writing performing. And so now I would place before you two examples or two samples of the end semester question paper, where the students responded to the human relationship with nature or landscape. You have already actually been introduced to these students, I would been saying wrote a piece called six feet under and that is the piece I am reading first and then I will read Rinals write up. So, without any comment this is the creative piece he wrote.

I am Rizwan or rather it would be more appropriate for me to say, I was Rizwan. You see, I am dead. How did I die you ask. When I died by the most depraved indecent way known to humanity, gastric juices ate away my stomach my organs one by one shut down. I died slow, painful death. Yes I died of hunger. It was the third year of the drought, the sun beat upon the ugly, cracked up earth and roasted its soul. The seeds we have planted had long since weathered burnt for the want of water. The food supply we had long since exhausted. Now I fed my kids boil grass and roots. They threw up violently at night thrashing with stomach cramps, and I watch them each night helpless. Until one day they stopped moving, just lay on their stomachs. The lights in their eyes

exhausted, nights were in tolerable, out of every house gave the sound of eating and death. The village was a graveyard and we were all walking dead.

They came again yesterday guards of the money lender asking me for my pound of flesh. What is left for you to take every plea piece of clothing, and even the last vessel you took months ago. What you want now? You still have your land, sell it to us and be free. My land? No, it is been there for generations of my family I am nothing if not a former, I would not sell my land, I would rather die.

Then so be it you might wonder why is this man willing to die rather than let go off his land. Why does not he move away, he lets his wife and children die what sort of a monster is this man. You would not understand only a man who has loved his land like a wife care for it like a childhood. My land is my identity, the only thing left to me by my forefathers - I am, and my land. And I would not let go this shall be my last victory over the world I did not bend I rather broke apart.

The burning in my stomach is a dull ache now familiar almost pleasing. I have nary strength left in me I just watch myself with other way. I just hope they let me have my 6 feet of my own land to rest in peace I hope. The second piece is by Rinal and it is very different it feel interestingly both the students spoke from the position of the other dog. It was nearing sunset. The sky seemed painted with the shade of colors, red peach, pink and purple all melting into one another ship it him farewell as he boarded the ship. He would come back soon he had said she stood there till the ship seems like a tiny spec on the horizon. The light was fading and it was dark by the time she returned home. He had promised to get her back just like Rani their neighbor had, and in return she had promised to go to school daily.

She lived in a small chawlin a shabby room that served as a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen all in one. She would cook twice a day trying to save as much money as he had as he had left her. She was sneak in to the local school some day, and sit unnoticed in a corner she could not afford the fees she would sit by the window sometimes hoping that he would return soon sometimes. She would go to the sea at night she would lie awake staring at the black wall and at the impressions of the suit on it. Days turned into weeks until she finally decided to go in search of her father. She went to the sea and asked

everyone if they knew anything about him. Her search was fruitless and she has lost all hope.

She then met a group of men who told her she must cross the sea, and she would find a purpose to live. Her father had warned her of the sea and its waves. She did not know what to do, but I have to find a reason to live she thought to herself, I need money to go on. The sun was shining bright above, casting its shadow ahead of her. I am sorry the sun was shining bright above, casting her shadow ahead of her. She decided to take a boat across she thought she had no other way out. She took a last look at the town she had spent her childhood in. The boat had reached the middle of the sea, she could hear a distant bell, she was far away and there was no coming back.