

QUESTION 22

As an actor, what is your sense of Shakespeare's personality?

Simon Callow

I think that as an actor you get a very clear sense of an author's personality and that of Shakespeare is above all open – open and receiving rather than judging or controlling. He allows his characters to have their own life, and he observes human life with absolute clarity, and some compassion.

It's exactly the opposite sensation that you get from, for example, acting in the plays of Ben Jonson, in which you have a strong sense of him controlling everything, judging everything, condemning everything, a hard, intemperate personality. Shakespeare is all yielding, all experiencing, and nothing human is alien to him, and that's an extraordinarily warm and generous feeling.