

## An Actor Prepares

*Constantin Stanislavsky (1936)*

- Dangers - Overacting & Mechanical Acting (stencils, stamps)
- Emotions cannot exist merely by themselves, they happen through action
- Acting starts on the inside
- What is the activity? What is the motivation/drive/force?
  - Someone trying to get in
  - Trying to accomplish a task within a time limit
  - Trying to escape
  - Danger is always exciting
- **IF** ---> What would happen if...?

### Creativity

- Unconscious creativeness through conscious technique
- Sincerity of emotions - Truthful
- Direct your attention to the given circumstances (conscious)
- **Emotions come from the subconscious and cannot be commanded**
- What are you most sensitive to? What arouses your feelings, fears and joys?
- What will produce an inner stimulus and challenge to action?
- **Inner images** - Inner audio: what can you imagine?
- The **imagination is built up on facts** and must be able to answer all the questions (when, where, why, how)
- "Every movement you make on the stage, every word you speak is the result of the right life of your imagination."
- "If you speak any lines or do anything mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination" ... "You will be nothing more than a wound-up machine, an automation"

### Concentration of Attention

- "In order to get away from the auditorium you must be interested in something on the stage"
- Intensive observation of an object naturally arouses a desire to do something with it
- Exercise of observing (30, 20 ... 2 sec) then recalling what you saw
- Circle of attention - sm, m, lg - Circle of solitude - an imaginary circle you see around yourself - Removes the audience
- Before sleep, review your day - thoroughly, in detail. Try to recall friends and people who've passed away.
- **Attention** ---> Intellectual - detailed observation  
---> Emotional - imagined circumstances
- Layers of attention - Many built of habit.
- Search out **beauty and its opposite**
- The ultimate attention/observation is **to see a person's soul**. To know why they do something, to understand what they're thinking. This cannot be practiced intellectually.

### Relaxation of Muscles

- **First:** Superfluous tenseness which comes necessarily with each new pose taken and with the excitement of doing it in public.
- **Second:** The mechanical relaxation of that superfluous tension, under the direction of the controller (the 2nd you, outside yourself)
- Third: Justification of the pose if it in itself does not convince the actor.

- A live objective and real action (believable circumstance) naturally and unconsciously put nature to work. And it is only nature itself that can fully control our muscles, tense them properly or relax them.

### Units and Objectives

- It's important to understand the common thread/road of a character, the big picture and not get caught up in the details.
- Do not break up a play (story/script) more than is necessary
- Do not use details to guide you
- Create a channel outlined by large divisions, which have been thoroughly worked out and filled won to the last detail.
- Ask: What is the core of the play? Then go over the main points.

### Faith of a Sense of Truth

- The reality of the inner life of a human spirit in a part and a belief in that reality. We are not concerned with the actual naturalistic existence of what surrounds us on the stage, the reality of the material world.
- Begin working from the inside.
- "Truth on stage is whatever we can believe in, with sincerity"
- Truth cannot be separated from belief
- Everything that happens must be convincing to the actor
- Be careful not to overplay truth. Be cool and impartial. Actors tend to overact to enhance their delivery to the audience.
- It's important to **develop self-study & self-knowledge**
- Understanding the truth of your physical actions will bring ease to the actor
- When a whole act is too large, break it up.
- If one detail is not sufficient to convince you of the truth, add others to it until you've achieved a greater sphere of action
- Exercise: Physical actions, physical truths and physical beliefs in them.
- It's absolutely important to understand the role, the person, their history, their relationships to those around, history within those relationships. Then action becomes far more understood.
- **\*\* Magic IF's and given circumstances, not physical details.**
- Truth & Belief ---> Feeling & Experience
- **If you give the actor some simple physical action to solve and wrap it up in interesting, affecting conditions, they will set about without alarm or thinking too deeply.**
- The easy way is familiar, habitual and mechanical - least resistance. Must grab hold of what is substantial, tangible. Easy to grasp, easy to allow you to get to your true objective.
- External conventions and lies clip your wings. Imagination, feeling and thought makes you soar.
- **Truth transformed into a poetical equivalent by creative imagination.**
- If overacting, cut out 90%.

### Emotion Memory

- Ability to recall emotions that you went through.
- The greatest emotion comes from nature.
- Through subconscious means we reach the subconscious
- An actor chooses very carefully from among his memories. He weaves the soul of the person he is trying to portray out of emotions that are dear to him.
- Use your own feelings, anything else leads to false acting.

- Never lose yourself while acting. Always act in your own person, as an artist. You can never get away from yourself. The moment you lose yourself marks the departure from truly living your part & the beginning of false acting.
- Feelings come and go quickly, rely on emotion memory to carry you through, but allow real emotions to come and go.
- You must play yourself. But it will be in an infinite variety of combinations of objectives and given circumstances which you have prepared for your part and which have been smelted in the furnace of your emotion memory. This is the best and only true material for inner creativeness.
- Develop Emotional Material (memory)
- Discovering methods of creating an infinite number of combinations of human souls, characters, feelings, passions for your parts.
- Emotion and mood. Sounds and surroundings affect mood and emotion, the better the surroundings, the better the performance.
- You cannot re-create an accidental sensation experience any more than you can revive a dead flower. It is better to try and create something new than to waste your efforts on dead things.
- Trace your aroused emotion back to the original stimulus.
- **Sympathy** can arouse and drive emotion. Its how roles are started.
- Observe until sympathy is transformed into feelings of our own
  - Break scenes up into units and objectives
  - Living objects on stage and audience become a real stimulus
  - True physical action and your belief in it.
  - Text and it's meaning
  - Relationships w/other actors - The illusion of real life and its living moods
- Our artistic emotions are at 1st as shy as wild animals and they hide in the depths of our souls. If they do not come to the surface spontaneously you cannot go after them and find them. All you can do is concentrate your attention on the most effective lure to draw them out.
- Bond between the lure and the feeling.
- Study the life and psychology of people around you and abroad
- Observer, conjecture, experience, be carried away w/emotion
- What is eternal, what will never die? Always young.

### **Communion**

- The mind wandering - Either the person wants to shared their thoughts/feelings or things around them.
- Objects become lively because of our interest in them.
- Absorbing from others - giving of yourself
- The eye is the mirror the soul.
- The actor will not give himself up wholly to his part unless it carries him away. When it does so , he becomes completely identified w/it and transformed.
- If the mind is on the actor's personal life, acting will be mechanical. One must give oneself TOTALLY and become the person portrayed.
- An uninterrupted exchange of feelings, thoughts and actions.

### **Self Communion - Talking to ourselves**

- when agitated, we cannot contain ourselves
- Wrestling w/a difficult idea that's difficult to understand
- When making an effort to memorize
- When relieving our feelings - happy or sad our emotional antennae & feel the soul of another person. Get into communion w/a living spirit.
- Every manifestation of inner activity is important & valuable.
- Inner communion is one of the most important sources of action.

- Commune w/the other actor, don't just represent that relationship.
- Real communion not just imitations
- Is there thought and emotion behind the words and actions?
- Exhibitionism - A diva, form, face, gestures, poses, mannerisms, movements, walk, voice, diction, speech, intonations, temperament, technique - everything except feelings.
  - Direct communication w/an object on stage. & indirect Communication w/public
  - Self Communion
  - Communication w/absent or imaginary object
- **Fingers are the eyes of the body**
- Irradiation (giving out & absorbing rays)
  - **Invisible currents/rays/energy that pour out of us**
  - Using visual imagery in your head to put forth a feeling/energy
- The power of attention and ability to remain in contact with one another - by the strength and continuity of their grasp.
- External aids stimulate an inner process.
  - Relaxation of muscles (not angry or contorted)
  - Concentration of attention

### **Adaptation**

- Both the inner & outer human means that people use in adjusting themselves to one another in a variety of relationships and also as an aid in affecting an object.
- You must learn to adopt yourselves to circumstances, to time and to each individual person. Find the simplest means with which to reach his mind and understanding.
- Be wary of adapting your behaviour to the audience for the sake of comedy that you don't lose focus on the maintaining the reasons for your actions.
- It's important not to be one emotion for it's own sake otherwise your true feelings and actions will disappear
- Adapt yourself to your partner.
- Adaptations are made consciously & unconsciously
- Expose the finer, barely perceptible shades of feeling
- Intuition & the subconscious - unexpected approach

### **The Unbroken Line (p 237)**

- The clean, uninterrupted flow of attention, concentration & action
- You read & begin to understand the dialog - Begin to grasp the text.
- In the beginning the understanding of the inner significance of a play is necessarily too general. It usually takes thorough study.
- Until your goal is clear the direction of your activities will remain unformed. You will feel only individual moments in the role. The flow of thought appears.
- \*\*\* It is only when he comes to a deeper understanding of his part and a realization of its fundamental objective that a line gradually emerges as a continuous whole. This is just the beginning of the creative work.
- Inner activities have many lines.
- You create one whole unbroken line that flows from the past, through the present, into the future. Individual lines flow together.
- The unbroken line is of utmost importance to an artist and you should learn to establish it within yourselves.
- Attention goes from one thing to another which is focused & controlled. It's when the mind wanders off that focus and the line become broken.

### **The Inner Creative State/Mood**

- Dangers - Lazy habits, inattention, poor health, personal worries
- An actor may lose his self possession from fright, embarrassment, shyness, agitation. He may become incapable of speaking , listening, looking, wishing, feeling, walking or moving. May feel the need to gratify the public or show off.
- Put in one false element and the whole is ruined.
- "Try choosing some artificial instead of a real objective or use your role to display your temperament. The moment you introduce a false note, truth becomes a theatrical convention. Belief becomes faith in mechanical acting. Objectives change from human to artificial; imagination evaporates"
- Prepare 2 hours before a performance.
  - **Drill Work:**
    - Relaxation of muscles.
    - Choose an object or a picture - What does it represent? How big? Colors?
    - Choose come physical objective - Motivate it, add imaginative fictions.
- Am I sure of my attitude of the particular place... people?
- The actor watches himself perform and makes adjustments. It is a double function.
- One must dig deep to find the motive forces of that most subtle of human souls.
- A clear cut objective or goal = solid inner state

### The Super-Objective of the play/story

- The purpose, the drive of the overall story that binds all the characters.
- All minor objectives and tendencies should be aimed towards the Super-Objective
- All forces drive ----->> SuperObjective
- \*\*\* Above all, preserve your SuperObjective and through line of action. Be wary of all extraneous tendencies and purposes foreign to the main theme.
- Every **action** meets with a **reaction** which intensifies the first.  
*action -----> reaction -----> action*
- Every action has its opposite counter action. This causes problems that need to be solved.
  - An idea struggles with feeling
    - Inner grasp
    - The through line of action
    - The SuperObjective
- On the stage "I am comfortable, I know what to do, I have a purpose in being there, I have faith in my actions & believe in my right to be on the stage"

### On the Threshold of the Subconscious

Conscious	Subconscious
True seeming emotions	Sincerity of emotions
Limited fantasy	Larger imagination
Freedom is limited by reason & conventions	Freedom is bold, willful, active & moving forward The creative process differs each time it's repeated The realm of emotions that picks up & carries away the actor.

- "Region of the Subconscious" The mind going into an emotional state that is close to memories or "if" that were to happen.
- We live on emotional memories of realities. At times these memories reach a point of illusion that makes them seem like life itself.
- "A creative artist feels his own life in the life of his part and the life of his part identical with his personal life. This identification results in a miraculous metamorphosis."
- Often a simple external occurrence... injects a bit of real life into the theatre and instantly sweeps us into a state of subconscious creativeness.
- Use accidents wisely - try to take advantage of them.
- When an actor is making too much effort it is sometimes good to introduce a lighter, more frivolous approach
  - Tenseness, Relaxation, Justification
- Strained attention will keep you from relaxing.
- When your inner attention is strained your subconscious cannot develop normally. You must achieve inner freedom and physical relaxation. Search out the point of tension.
- Put your thought on what arouses your inner motive forces and what makes your inner creative mood. Think of your SuperObjective & the through line of action that leads to it. Have in your minds all that is conscious & that will lead to the subconscious.
- Never try the direct approach for inspiration, always indirectly, through the subconscious

### **Obstacles**

- Unnecessary information will clutter the mind - only immediately needed info
- Vagueness - Unclear, mediocrity, uncertainty
- Limitations - characters they can play
- Trying too hard - Forcing feelings, expressions the actor doesn't feel. Don't try so hard
- Make the most of mood/emotional changes.
- **SuperObjectives**
  - Emotional objectives are necessary
  - Objectives based on will
- We need a Super Objective which is in harmony with the intentions of the playwright and... arouses a response in the soul of the actors. We must search for it in the play and also within the actors.
- Give your actions up to your subconscious
- Actors need to gestate their roles, like a baby in the womb, grows up, argues, reconciles.