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3[B] – Stanislavski and the Craft of Acting eTOC G1 Chobun TypeB G1 12-1

No one has had a greater influence on modern acting than Konstantin Stanislavski. Born in 1863, the Russian actor and theater director devised a new set of acting techniques to make acting more realistic. He rejected the stylized, exaggerated speech and gestures that performers traditionally employed to signal “emotions” on the Moscow stage, and instead encouraged the actors to utilize psychological analysis and reflection. In his view, a fresh, truthful performance could only be given if an actor genuinely understood a character’s background, predicament, and motivation. At the core of this system was the technique of “emotional memory,” the idea that actors should draw upon their own lives—in particular, their memories—to create and express a character’s emotions during a performance.



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(35) What was a key idea of Konstantin Stanislavski’s original system?

- Actors should make use of their personal experiences while performing a role in order to make the character convincing.
- Actors should first master established patterns of speech and physical gestures in order to be able to successfully express real emotions.
- Actors should gain a solid knowledge of both history and psychology if they wish to create characters that audiences will find interesting.
- Actors should intentionally put themselves in real-life situations that enable them to experience the emotions they need to express when performing.

Further Questions

1) Who was Konstantin Stanislavski?

He was the Russian actor and theater director who devised a new set of acting techniques to make acting more realistic.

2) In Stanislavski’s view, what must an actor understand to give a fresh, truthful performance?

In his view, a fresh, truthful performance could only be given if an actor genuinely understood a character’s background predicament and motivation.

Stanislavski’s ideas were taken up enthusiastically by American actors Lee Strasberg, Stanford Meisner, and Stella Adler, who studied them in New York theater groups during the 1930s and went on to become famous acting teachers themselves. Meisner taught at the renowned Actors Studio, and Strasberg became its director in 1951. Strasberg formulated the “Method,” a system based on Stanislavski’s concept of emotional memory. The Method left an indelible mark on a new generation of American stage and screen actors, including James Dean and Marilyn Monroe. Strasberg’s Method indulged the American propensity for self-analysis. It also arrived at a time when, following the horrors of World War II, many critics and moviegoers expected gritty realism in actors’ performances. Furthermore, the raw, naturalistic acting the

39. Method elicited proved perfectly matched to the art of filmmaking, with its
40. revealing close-up shots. Method acting became associated with a robust,
41. sincere authenticity. It stood in opposition to the classic British dramatic style,
42. which prized a fine and melodious vocal delivery.

43. **(36) What was one reason Method acting became popular in the United**
44. **States?**

45. 1. American actors were no longer interested in portraying characters from
46. the classic plays that were part of the British dramatic tradition.
47. 2. Actor-training programs had become focused on preparing actors for
48. careers in films, not theater, so there was little demand for traditional training.
49. 3. The style was well suited to the type of acting that American audiences
50. demanded in the aftermath of World War II.
51. 4. The end of World War II saw a dramatic increase in the number of actors,
52. so there was a need for a standardized way to train them.

53. **Further Questions**

53. **3) Where did Strasberg and Meisner teach?**

54. *Meisner taught at the renowned Actors Studio and Strasberg became its*
55. *director.*

56. **4) What is the “Method”?**

57. *It is a system based on Stanislavski’s concept of emotional memory.*

58. **5) What did moviegoers expect following the horrors of World War II?**

59. *Many critics and moviegoers expected gritty realism in actors’ performances.*

60. While Strasberg held fast to the concept of emotional memory as the basis for
61. the Method, the notion that an actor should discover a character by delving
62. into their own emotional history proved controversial. Stanislavski himself
63. made revisions to his original system throughout his life, and he eventually
64. came to discourage emotional memory after witnessing actors become
65. psychologically traumatized as a result of applying it. In his later teachings, he
66. instructed actors to use imagination, rather than personal memories, to
67. conjure emotions. Stella Adler, having studied with Stanislavski after he
68. revised his system, also began to see emotional memory as unhealthy, and she
69. eventually broke with Strasberg over the issue. Sanford Meisner, concerned
70. that Method actors focused too much on themselves—as opposed to the stories
71. their characters were involved in—began to discourage the technique as well.
72. Playwright David Mamet has echoed this sentiment, insisting that “nothing in
73. the world is less interesting than an actor on the stage involved in his or her
74. own emotions.” In Mamet’s view, an actor’s job consists solely of
75. communicating a story to an audience, which requires little more than a
76. well-trained body and voice.

77. **Further Questions**

77. **6) What did Stanislavski himself come to discourage emotional memory?**

78. *He came to discourage emotional memory after witnessing actors become*

79. *psychologically traumatized as a result of applying it.*

80. **7) Why did Meisner begin discouraging using the “Method”?**

81. *He was concerned that Method actors focused too much on themselves, as*
82. *opposed to the stories their characters were involved in.*

83. Although debate over Stanislavski’s ideas continues, his influence on modern
84. acting cannot be doubted. As critic Michael Billington writes, “Almost all the
85. acting we see today, on stage or screen, is either an endorsement of, or a
86. reaction against, his principles.”

87. **(37) David Mamet’s view echoes that of Sanford Meisner in that Mamet**
88. **believes**

89. 1. Stella Adler’s interpretation of the Method relies too much on the physical
90. capabilities of actors to be truly effective.

91. 2. Audiences are ultimately more interested in the thought process of the
92. various characters in a play than the plot itself.

93. 3. Stanislavski’s early ideas were superior to his revised system because the
94. latter does not teach actors how to express real emotion.

95. 4. Actors should avoid using the Method as it leads to self-centered
96. performances that distract audiences from the story being portrayed.

Further Questions

97. **8) What does Michael Billington write about Stanislavski’s principles?**

98. *He writes that almost all the acting we see today, on stage or screen, is either*
an endorsement of, or a reaction against, his principles.

99. 解答: (35) 1 (36) 3 (37) 4



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