

What skills did
stanislavski think a
successful actor
needed



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Constantin Stanislavski was really the first to introduce a definite method that can be employed in specific ways for any given role. He revolutionized the way we think of acting and felt that an acting technique is absolutely essential for the actor's continued growth as an artist. A successful actor needs three things: a vivid imagination, a desire to perform and a dedicated commitment. Another point an actor should be aware of is, that it is the responsibility of each actor to examine the techniques, and make informed decisions, in order to better his performance.

A definite technique is what actors need most and the more talent an actor has the more he cares about his technique. He uses many aspects in his system to help the actor prepare for a role and the imagination plays the biggest part. The imagination is the formation of a mental image of something that is not perceived as real and is not present to the senses. Every invention of the actor's imagination must be thoroughly worked out and solidly built on a basis of facts. It must be able to answer all the questions of how, who, why and when.

No person on the stage can be convincing without this skill. An actor, when beginning a role, must be able to ask himself how he would act in the situation given by the playwright. This is Stanislavski's " Magic If," or the 'Given Circumstances. ' The given circumstances are everything the actor knows about his character and his character's relationships to others on the stage. Imagination is activated by the actor's discovery of these circumstances. The actor must begin to answer not only how anyone would act in the given circumstances, but how and why does his character act in a particular way?

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As soon as the actor employs the word "if," he is able to enter a new realm of reality, through his imagination. "Every movement you make on the stage, every word you speak, is the result of the right life of your imagination." To get a student's imagination to work Stanislavski firstly finds out if it is active if it isn't he would ask them a few questions. If the student responds thoughtlessly, he wouldn't accept the answer. Then, in order to give a more satisfactory answer, the student must either rouse his imagination or else approach the subject through his mind, by means of logical reasoning.

Work on the imagination is often prepared and directed in this conscious, intellectual manner. The student sees something, either in his memory or in his imagination, certain definite visual images are before him. For a brief moment, he lives in a dream. After that, another question and the process is repeated. So with a third and fourth, until I have sustained and lengthened that brief moment into something approaching a whole picture.

Concentration is another important aspect of an actor's success in his ability to remain focused on the reality of the stage. This allows the body and emotional responses to be more free and spontaneous.

In the reality of everyday life, people are always concentrated on something, whether it be an inanimate object, a thought, or a physical feeling. When onstage, the actor must always have his concentration on the reality of the stage. But if the actor was to lose his concentration, the actor can regain this by using a circle of attention. Like ripples on a pond, these circles radiate from the centre of attention (the actor) and in ever increasing

circumferences embrace the whole stage. In the smallest circle an actor can create what he calls public solitude.

By increasing the focus the actor can begin to take in further objects and gradually, by concentration, the whole of the stage/imagined world is brought into focus. The actor must be so involved with the truth of the play that the audience is drawn into his world. Concentration allows the body and the mind to relax and become responsive to the action and characters onstage. This is what draws the audience in, what makes them feel as if what they are experiencing is "real." This is what actors refer to as "being in the moment," the most desirable state for a convincing performance.

If an actor is relaxed and his energy is concentrated on an object, it also creates the illusion that the action is happening for the first time. Another quality that works in conjunction with concentration is the actor's ability to relax. Relaxation was necessary for the actor to reach his potential. Of course some amount of tension is required in order to support our bodies. Stanislavski refers to unnecessary bodily tension that cuts off the power of the voice or hinders the actor's natural creative impulses. An actor must be aware of his bodily tension, and can work to diminish it through yoga and other exercises.

An exercise to help your body relax is to lie on your back on a flat, hard surface, such as a floor and making a note of various groups of muscles throughout the body that are unnecessarily tense. The places noted should then be immediately relaxed and others searched out. In order to make a sculptural imprint on a soft surface, when we lie down we must rid our

bodies of every muscular contraction. That will give the body a better chance to rest and in a matter of an hour or so you can refresh yourself more than by a whole night of lying in a constrained position.