

Jerzy Grotowski

Biography

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www.stagebuzz.info

Jerzy Grotowski

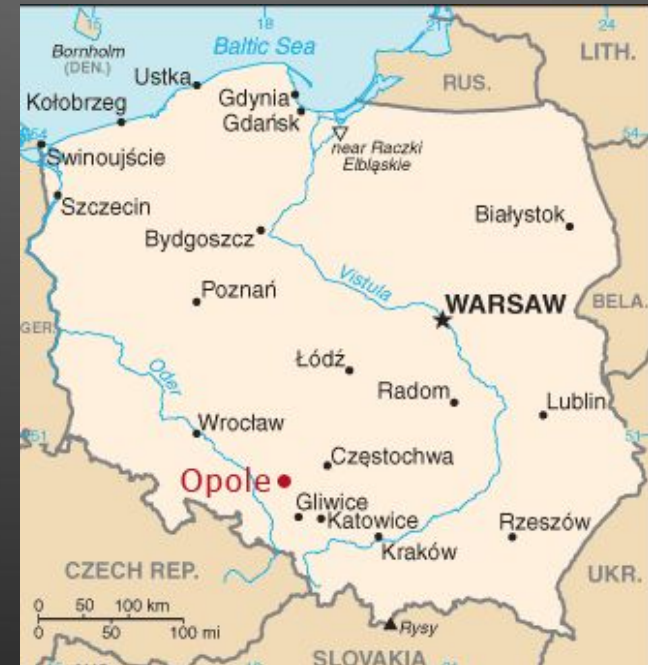


- Jerzy Grotowski (August 11, 1933 - January 14, 1999) was a Polish theatre director and a leading figure of theatrical avant garde of the 20th century.

Poland his Homeland

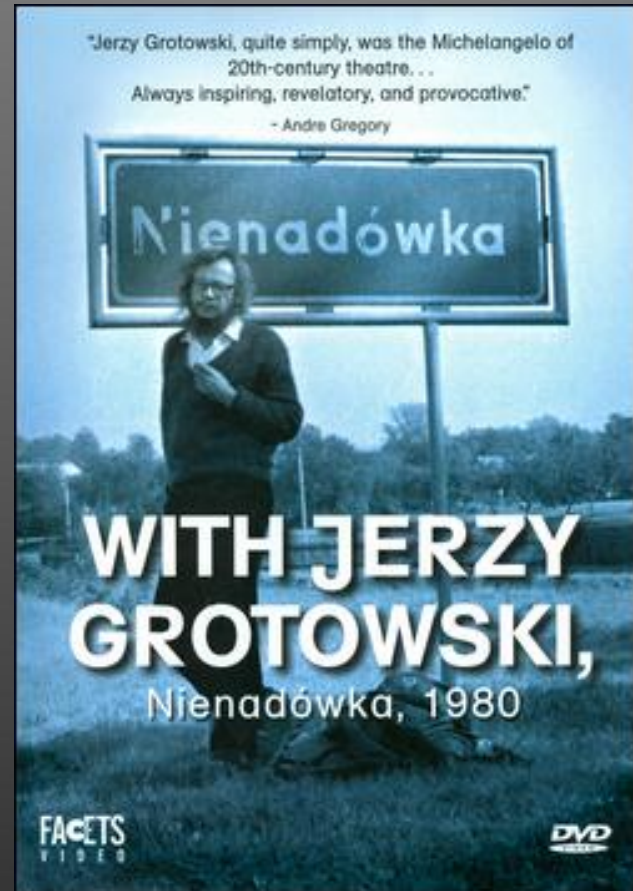


- Jerzy Grotowski was born in Rzeszów (ZHESH-oof) in Poland and lived until the age of six in Przemyśl (shēm'ish-el).



Nienadowka

- During World War II, the family was separated: his mother and brother moved with him to the small village of Nienadówka, [ɲenaˈdufka]
- Here they were concealed from the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation of Poland.
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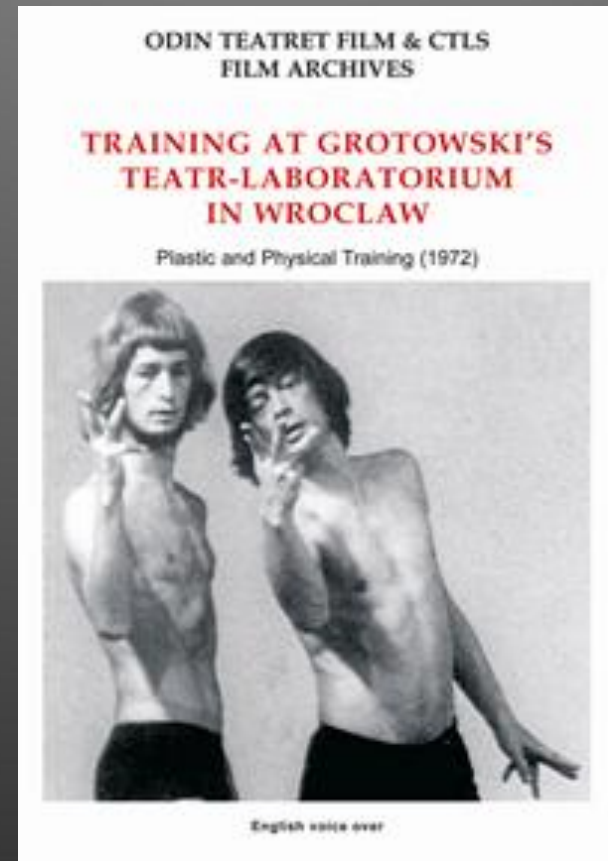
Opole, Poland



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Laboratorium, Wrocław

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Towards Poor Theatre



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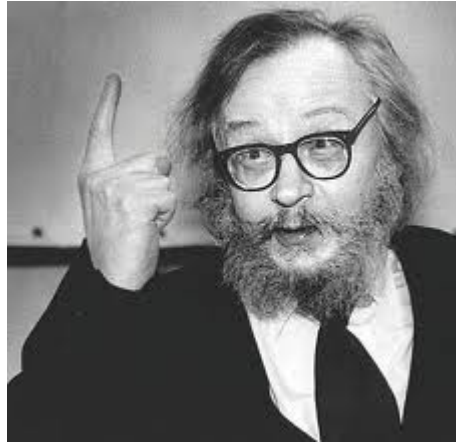
Poor Theatre

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Jerzy Grotowski



Biographical Sketch

- Polish-born U.S. stage director
- Born Aug. 11, 1933, Rzeszów, Poland
- Died Jan. 14, 1999, Pontedera, Italy
- Joined the Polish Laboratory Theatre of Wrocław in 1959 and founded a permanent company in 1965.
- The **Laboratory Theatre** made its U.S. debut with *Akropolis* (1969); it was followed by *Undertaking Mountain* (1977) and *Undertaking Earth* (1977-78),
- By this time Grotowski was living mostly in the U.S. Known as an avant-garde theorist, he sought to create *dramatic tension* by setting up *emotional confrontations* between *audience* and *actors*.
- His book *Towards a Poor Theater* (1968) emphasized the centrality of the actor and advocated minimal stage sets.
- He influenced U.S. experimental theatre movements, notably the [Living Theatre](#).
- He had the most powerful influence on the prolific Indian playwright director - **Badal Sircar** who was the founder of *Third Theatre* in India

Acting Through Focus and Awareness

- His actors were so vocally and physically skilled that they could communicate clearly through **sounds and movements**.
- The actors would create an **inner harmony** and **peace of mind** that would keep them healthy in both mind and body.
- Grotowski actors believe that acting is a search for self knowledge and **awareness**.
- **Their style of training taught them to break free of limitations and realise their full potential.**

Evoking Silence Option 1

- Grotowski stated that an actor must begin by doing nothing. He called this **creative passivity**.
- He believed that if a group of actors could remain completely still for several minutes in complete silence, with no outside noises or disturbances, then they would begin to experience an **internal silence** as well.
- By making this silence happen, by evoking it, they could learn to **concentrate** intensely.

Human Contact

- He believed in true contact between human beings.
- He believed that real harmony in human relationships only developed when people really learned to **look** at each other and **listen** to each other.
- He wanted actors to be more **aware** of the **impact** they had on other people

Memory

- Like Brecht, Grotowski emphasised the use of **emotion memory** to recall an experience and recreate the feeling that went with that memory.
- He demanded total **honesty** and total **commitment** from his actors in their use of emotion memory.
- They had to make use of all their memories, no matter how painful or private.
- This made their performances genuine. Through this process, actors would come closer to knowing the **truth** about themselves. It is an important path to **self knowledge**.
- Grotowski demanded total commitment and **belief** in every activity, even the simplest exercise.

Physical Training

- His actors were extremely physically skilled.
- They developed a technique of movement which allowed them to control every move they made, even the smallest in every detail.
- It is our bodies that express everything about us. Everything we think and feel is expressed through our bodies and everything we experience is felt through our bodies.
- He gave actors physical skills for fully expressing their imaginations and their personalities.

Training at Grotowski's "Laboratorium" in Wroclaw in 1972 Screener

□ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRyLLTvs00c>

Transformation

- In his '**poor theatre**' he always aimed for the simplest possible use of **staging, lighting, costumes and special effects**.
- This forced actors to use all their **skills to transform** empty spaces and simple objects into a whole range **of imaginative worlds**.
- Symbolism was essential in this form of theatre.
- In the theatre of poverty, the only important elements were the actors themselves and their relationship with the live audience.
- Often actors were in the audience's personal spaces, close enough to touch them.
- Grotowski arranged the space he was using so that the audience would be completely involved in the theatre as possible.

The Constant Prince

Rena Mirecka, Ryszard Cieslak



The Constant Prince

Maja Komorowska, Ryszard Cieslak



Truth

- Grotowski warned his actors to avoid what he called 'the beautiful lie', both on stage and in their everyday lives.
- By this he meant not doing something just because it looked good or because it was what people expected them to do.

Voice

- Vocal training was essential.
- They focussed their voices as though they were coming from different parts of their bodies.
- They used full registers of their voices from very high to very low.
- He emphasised clarity and used techniques such as singing, chanting and reciting poetry.
- All actors were so vocally strong that they were able to recite atmospheric sounds of the world such as mechanics, animals, thunder and so on.
- **To Grotowski the voice is an instrument.**

Vocal Training at Odin Teatret

□ <https://youtu.be/S97jHiIz6lU>

Physical Training Improvisations at Odin Teatret, 1972

□ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8dj4awiMJY>

Odin Teatret - Vocal Training Screener

Voice Projection From Different Parts of Body

□ <https://youtu.be/kvdepoSpjJQ>

Working in Silence (Option 2)

- Grotowski stated that an actor must begin by doing nothing!
- He believed that if a group of actors could remain completely still for several minutes without disturbances, then they would be able to concentrate more intensely and use it as a creative passage.

Poor Theatre 1

Grotowsky differentiated between what he called the "Rich theatre" and the "Poor theatre.

"The "Rich" is one that is rich in faults. It draws upon other disciplines but fails to produce a work of art that has integrity.

The Rich theater, in its attempt to compete with film and television, uses mechanical devices that are more appropriate for film and television.

Cluttered Set



Cluttered Set 2



Poor Theatre - 2

- ❑ Grotowski proposed **Poverty** in the theater, one in which a new space is designed for actors and spectators for each new work.
- ❑ He eliminated costumes, lighting, makeup, and music from his theater and insisted that the actors' physical flexibility is infinitely more interesting than costumes or makeup.
- ❑ Direct lighting and shadows can be utilized effectively without the need for elaborate lighting schemes and mechanisms.
- ❑ The actor can make his own music with his voice.

Poor Theatre - 3

To this concept of 'poor theatre' Jerzy Grotowski (an atheist) added the concept of the '**priesthood**' or **sacredness** of the actor.

When the actor entered the sanctity of the performance space, then a special event occurred, much like the Mass in the Catholic Church.

It was in this space, in the holy relationship between the actor and the audience, that an audience was challenged to think and be transformed by theatre.

In this sense, Jerzy Grotowski was one of the key figures in the development of political theatre in the 20th Century.

Political Theatre

His theatrical productions often contained political and social themes.

The actor, depending only on the natural gifts of voice and body, could bring the sacred rituals of theatre and the themes of social transformation to the audience.

The audience became pivotal to theatrical performance, and theatre became more than entertainment: it became a pathway to understanding

Grotowski Project

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsKxJiPSdJU>
- A short video showing the directing methods adopted by the polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski.
- Dramatised film version by Jordan Bostock and Paige Sweed.
-

Grotowski Performance Style - Prometheus Bound

□ <https://youtu.be/21fBlmb99Qc>

- A dramatization in Grotowski style of the play “*Prometheus Bound*” It is a tragedy often attributed to the ancient Greek playwright **Aeschylus** . It is based on the myth of **Prometheus**, the Titan who was punished by the god Zeus for giving fire to mankind.

About Prometheus Bound 1

At the beginning of the play, Hephaestus, the blacksmith of the gods, accompanied by Kratos and Bia (representing Power and Force), reluctantly chains **Prometheus** to a mountain in the Caucasus, (considered by the ancient Greeks to be the end of the earth), while Kratos heaps abuse on him and Bia remains mute throughout. Although Hephaestus has some sympathy for **Prometheus**' plight, especially in that **Prometheus** was instrumental in Zeus' victory in the great battle against the Titans, Kratos reminds him that this is Zeus' punishment for **Prometheus**' theft of forbidden fire from the gods.

About Prometheus Bound 2

A Chorus of ocean nymphs (Prometheus' cousins, the Oceanids), attempt to comfort Prometheus. He confides in the Chorus that his gift of fire to mankind was not his only benefaction, and reveals that it was he who thwarted Zeus' plan to obliterate the human race after the battle against the Titans, and then taught men all the civilizing arts, such as writing, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, architecture and agriculture (the so-called "Catalogue of the Arts")

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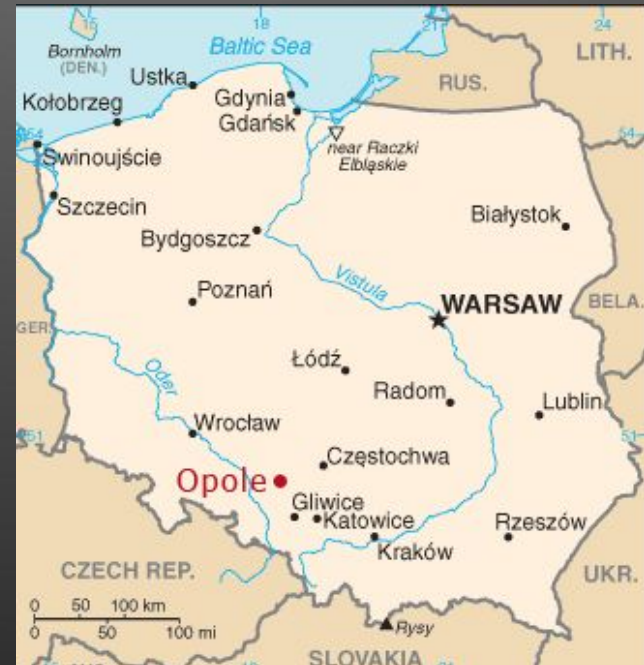


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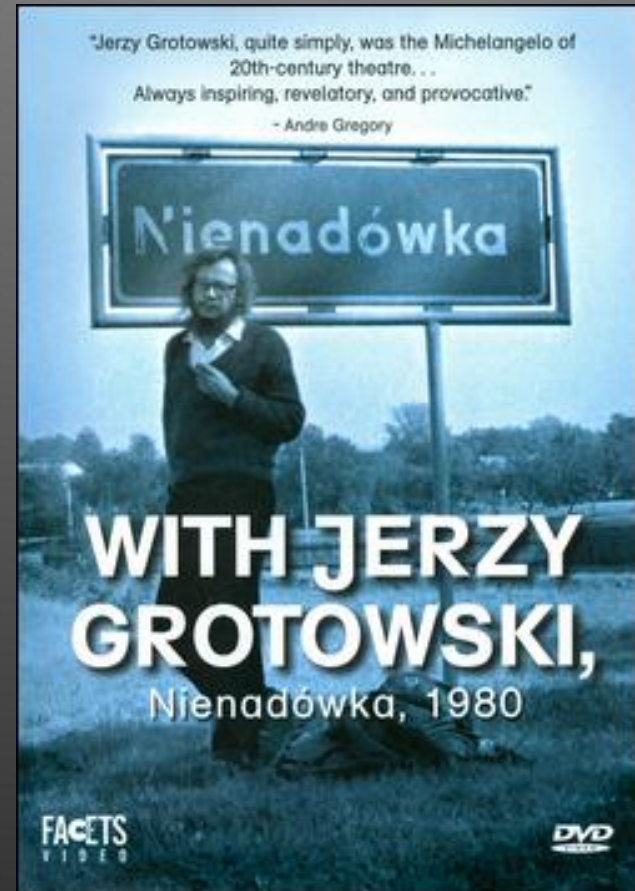


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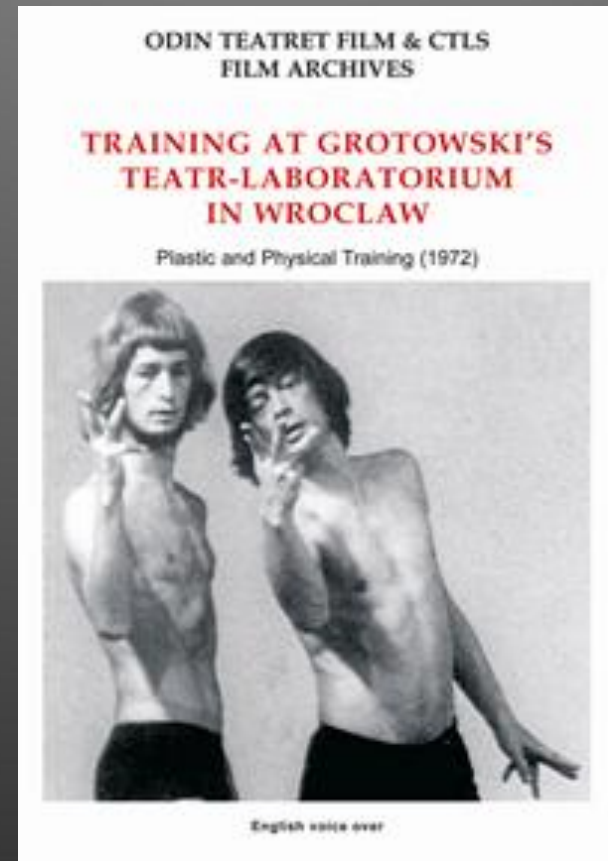
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Constantin Sergeyevich Stanislavski

A Presentation by
Manohar Khushalani.

Constantin Sergeyevich Stanislavski

- Born Konstantin Sergeievich Alexeiev (January 17 1863 – August 7, 1938), he was a Russian actor and theatre director.
- **Stanislavski's** innovative contribution to modern European and American realistic acting has remained at the heart of mainstream western performance training for much of the last century.



Career

- In 1885, Stanislavski studied at the Moscow Theatre School, where students were encouraged to mimic the theatrical 'tricks' and conventions of their tutors. Disappointed by this approach, he left after two weeks and instead went to study at the Maly Theatre, where he learned to rehearse well, appear fresh during performances, and extract energy from the other stage players, rather than the audience.

Tommaso Salvini in Othello.

- Stanislavski's enlightenment came mostly from his encounter of Italian master actor Tommaso Salvini's portrayal in *Othello*. Stanislavski thought Salvini was a "tiger of passion," full of truthfulness, power, artistry, graceful movement and perfection.



Stanislavski as Othello

- Stanislavski shaved his goatee and trimmed his moustache like Salvini and, at twenty-five, adopted the name Stanislavski, unsurprisingly similar to Salvini's name.



Name and Fame

- Stanislavski began attaining a reputation throughout Moscow as a modern and innovative director with such productions as *Uriel Acosta*, *Othello* (where Stanislavski travelled to Venice for costumes and artifacts) and *The Polish Jew* In 1897,

Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko



- In 1897, the Society had a slew of failed productions and unmotivated actors. It was then that critic, teacher and dramaturg Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, conversed with Stanislavski for 18 hours about their problems with modern theatre and their desire to create what would be known as the Moscow Art Theatre.

The Moscow Art Theatre

- In 1897 he co-founded the **Moscow Art Theatre** (MAT) with **Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko**, but the theatre started operating in 1898. The first production MAT produced was the critically acclaimed (and previously censored) ***Czar Fyodor*** by **Alexei Tolstoy**. **Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*** was also performed. Stanislavski beautified and innovated **Chekhov's** script, and it created shock in the audiences.

Psychological Realism

- According to Mel Gordon, "his detailed realism transformed the most commonplace scene into an orchestrated display of minute effects... something modern had been born." The MAT had created what became known as psychological realism.

Psychological Realism

- Psychological realism embodied **hidden conflicts** within **relationships**, which exposed that which is so embedded in **everyday life**.

House of Chekhov

- MAT became known as the House of Chekhov as they produced Chekhov's melancholic plays (though the playwright himself always insisted they were comedies) like *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

artistic divinities

- The group traveled to **Germany** and **Eastern Europe**, where they were so admired that one German playwright called them "artistic divinities." Parades were made in their honor, as the Europeans never saw such brilliant theatre.

acting system

- Upon returning to Russia, Stanislavski fell into an **artistic crisis**, where his acting and directing became erratic, as he professed his lack of fulfillment and inspiration. He went to **Finland** with his wife to vacation, and came back to give birth to his **acting system** that would change what it means to be an actor.

Method

- Stanislavski organized his realistic techniques into a coherent and usable 'Method', thanks to its promotion and development by acting teachers who were former students and the many translations of his theoretical writings

‘system’

- Stanislavski's 'system' acquired an unprecedented ability to cross cultural boundaries and developed an international reach, dominating debates about acting in the West.

‘system’

- Stanislavski treated theatre-making as a serious **endeavour**, requiring dedication, discipline and integrity, and the work of the actor as an **artistic** undertaking.

‘system’

- His 'Method' resulted from a persistent struggle to remove the blocks he encountered. He developed a theorized **praxis** in which **practice** is used as a mode of inquiry and **theory** as a catalyst for creative development.

Aquinas College

- Stanislavski believed that after seeing young actors at Aquinas College in Moscow he could see why theatre needed to change to a more disciplined endeavour.

Two 'realism' s

- Stanislavski's work was as important to the development of socialist realism in the **USSR** as it was to that of psychological realism in the **United States**

Influences

- Stanislavski's work draws on a wide range of influences and ideas, including his study of the modernist and avant-garde and avant-garde developments of his time (naturalism and avant-garde developments of his time (naturalism, symbolism and Meyerhold's constructivism constructivism), Russian formalism constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange (via Ribot constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange (via Ribot) psychophysiology constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange (via Ribot) psychophysiology and the aesthetics of Pushkin constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange (via Ribot) psychophysiology and the aesthetics of Pushkin, Gogol constructivism), Russian formalism, Yoga, Pavlovian behaviourist psychology, James-Lange (via Ribot) psychophysiology and the aesthetics of Pushkin, Gogol, and Tolstoy. He described his approach as 'spiritual Realism

Stanislavski's 'system'

- Many actors routinely identify his '**system**' with the **American Method**, although the latter's exclusively psychological techniques contrast sharply with Stanislavski's **multivariant, holistic and psychophysical** approach, which explores character and action both from the '**inside out**' and the '**outside in**'

Stanislavski's 'system'

- 'system' focused on the development of artistic truth onstage by teaching actors to "live the part" during performance. Despite being primarily known in The United States for Realism, Stanislavski developed the system to be applied to all forms of theater, directing and producing melodrama, vaudeville, opera, etc. In order to create an ensemble of actors all working together as an artistic unit, he began organizing a series of studios in which young actors were trained in his system.

Stanislavski's 'system'

- At the First Studio of MAT, actors were instructed to use their own **memories** in order to naturally express emotions. Stanislavski soon observed that some of the actors **using** or **abusing Emotional Memory** were given to **hysteria**.

Stanislavski's 'system'

- Although he never disavowed Emotional Memory as an essential tool in the actor's kit, he began searching for less draining ways of accessing emotion, eventually emphasizing the actor's use of imagination and belief in the given circumstances of the text rather than her/his private and often painful memories.

Stanislavski's 'system'

- Stanislavski's 'system' is a systematic approach to training actors. This system is at some point different from but not a rejection of what he states earlier in affective memory. At the beginning, Stanislavski proposed that actors study and experience subjective emotions and feelings and manifest them to audiences by physical and vocal means - Theatre language.

The Method of Physical Actions

- While his System focused on creating truthful emotions and then embodying these, he later worked on **The Method of Physical Actions**. This was developed at the Opera Dramatic Studio from the early 30s, and worked like **Emotion Memory in reverse**. The focus was on the **physical actions** inspiring **truthful emotion**, and involved **improvisation** and **discussion**. The focus remained on reaching the subconscious through the conscious.

The Method of Physical Actions

- *The Method of Physical Actions* is in no way a rejection of his early interest in sense and affective memory. At no time did he ever reject the notion of emotion memory; he simply found other means of accessing emotion, among them the absolute belief in given circumstances; the exercise of the imagination; and the use of physical action.

Socialist realism

Socialist realism is a teleologically-oriented style of **realistic art** which has as its purpose the furtherance of the goals of **socialism** and **communism**. Although related, it should not be confused with **social realism**, a type of art that realistically depicts **subjects of social concern**.



"Roses for Stalin", Boris Vladimirski, 1949

psychological realism

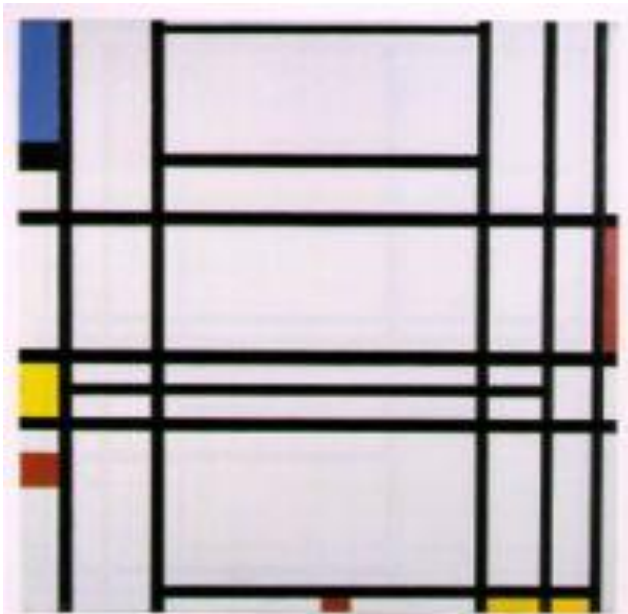


Realism was a general movement in the late nineteenth century that steered theatrical texts and performances toward greater fidelity to real life. The realist dramatist **Thomas William Robertson** in **Britain**, **Henrik Ibsen** and **August Strindberg** in **Scandinavia**, and **Anton Chekhov** and **Maxim Gorky** in **Russia**, among others, as well as **Eugene O'Neill**, in the **United States** of America, rejected the complex and artificial plotting of the well-made play and instead present a theatrical verisimilitude that would more objectively portray life as recognizable to the audience.

Roses for Stalin



Modernism / Avant Garde



- **Modernism** describes a series of reforming cultural movements describes a series of reforming cultural movements in art describes a series of reforming cultural movements in art and architecture describes a series of reforming cultural movements in art and architecture, music describes a series of reforming cultural movements in art and architecture, music, literature describes a series of reforming cultural movements in art and architecture, music, literature and the applied arts which emerged roughly in the period of 1884-1914.
- The term covers many political, cultural and artistic movements rooted in the changes in **Western society**

Naturalism



- **Naturalism** is a movement in theater is a movement in theater, film is a movement in theater, film, and literature is a movement in theater, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable is a movement in theater, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality is a movement in theater, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism is a movement in theater, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment.
- Naturalistic writers were influenced by the evolution theory of Charles Darwin

Symbolism

- **Symbolism** was a late nineteenth century art movement was a late nineteenth century art movement of French and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts.
- Symbolism was largely a reaction against Naturalism and **Realism**, **anti-idealistic** movements which attempted to capture reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal.



Constructivism

- **Constructivism** was an artistic was an artistic and architectural was an artistic and architectural movement in Russia was an artistic and architectural movement in Russia from 1919 onward (especially present after the October Revolution was an artistic and architectural movement in Russia from 1919 onward (especially present after the October Revolution) which dismissed "pure" art in favour of an art used as an instrument for social purposes, specifically the construction of a socialist system



Tatlin Tower. Model of the *Monument to the Third International*

Russian formalism



- **Russian formalism** was an influential school of literary criticism in Russia from the 1910s to the 1930s. It includes the work of a number of highly influential Russian and Soviet scholars (Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Boris Eichenbaum, Roman Jakobson,) who revolutionised literary criticism between 1914 and the 1930s by establishing the specificity and autonomy of poetic language and literature.

Affective Memory



- **Affective memory** requires the actor to call on the memories he or she felt when they were in a situation similar (or more recently a situation with similar emotional import) to that of their character.

Vaudeville

- **Vaudeville** was theatrical was theatrical genre w as theatrical genre of variety entertainment was theatrical genre of variety entertainment popular in the United States was theatrical genre of variety entertainment popular in the United States and Canada from the early 1880s until the early 1930s. Each performance was made up of a series of separate, unrelated acts grouped together on a common bill.

Vaudeville



- Types of acts included popular and classical musicians, dancers, comedians, trained animals, magicians, female and male impersonators, acrobats, illustrated songs, jugglers, one-act plays or scenes from plays, athletes, lecturing celebrities, minstrels, and movies. Vaudeville was one of the most popular types of entertainment in North America for several decades



Konstantin Stanislavsky

Method Acting

Presented by

Manohar Khushalani



“The main difference between the art of the actor and all other arts is that every other artist may create whenever he is in the mood of inspiration. But the artist of the stage must be the master of his own inspiration and must know how to call it forth when it is announced on the posters of the theatre. This is the chief secret of our art.”

- Konstantin Stanislavski

Method Acting

- The method requires that an actor utilize, among other things, his emotional memory (*i.e.*, his recall of past experiences and emotions).
- The actor's entrance onto the stage is considered to be not a beginning of the action or of his life as the character but a continuation of the set of preceding circumstances

The Method of Acting

- Developed in the early 20th century at the Moscow Art Theater by Constantin Stanislavski,
- The Stanislavski method of acting is a set of techniques meant to create realistic portrayals of characters.
- The major goal of the Stanislavski method is to have a perfect understanding of the motivations, obstacles, and objectives of a character in each moment.
- Actors often use this technique for realistic plays, where they try to present an accurate portrayal of normal life.
- It is not the same as "Method Acting," which goes even further into becoming a character.

Three Core Elements

- To begin employing the Stanislavski method, actors generally go over the script very carefully, looking for key identifying factors.
- A performer discovers
 - what a character wants,
 - what prevents the character from getting it, and
 - what means the character will use to achieve this goal.
 - These concepts are frequently referred to as "**objective**," "**obstacle**," and "**method**."

Three Core Elements

- Actors must also determine the given *circumstances* of every scene, such as
 - where the scene takes place,
 - what is in the room, and
 - what is going on in the outside world.

Objectives

- To identify the objective clearly, an actor breaks down a scene into “**beats**” or “**bits**,” which are short sections that end with each change of objective.
- In a basic example,
 - if a character pours a cup of coffee,
 - answers the phone, and
 - then runs screaming out of the house,
 - the scene has at least **three separate beats**. At the bare minimum, the objective changes from pouring coffee, to answering the phone, to getting out of the building.

Objective Words

- Beats are not determined on action alone, however, and may be based on a **change of argument or emotion**.
- Actors can define objectives even within individual lines of dialogue, based on a concept called "**objective words**."
 - It is the actor's job to understand and play the character's objective not only in the entire play or film, each scene, and each beat, but also in each line.
- Determining what the key **motivation** is behind each line is a basic practice in the Stanislavski method.

The "Magic If"

- In order to help actors portray the honest objective of the character, Stanislavski pioneered a concept called the "**magic if.**"
- To help connect the character to the actor, performers must ask themselves:
 - *"What if this situation happened to me?"*
- Through this activity, actors **identify** with characters as *possible aspects of themselves*, allowing them to *think like the characters*, rather than just impersonate them.

Obstacles and Methods Within a Scene

- **Obstacles** are things preventing a character from achieving his or her objective.
- In the previous scene, if the character *trips* while trying to run, it would present an **obstacle** to the objective of getting out of the house.
- Obstacles are dealt with through one of three methods:
 - the character gives up the objective because of it,
 - finds a way to go around it, or
 - plunges along regardless.
- The **method** a character chooses in dealing with obstacles gives great insight into that character; the basis for much of the Stanislavski method lies in defining how and why a character chooses a particular response.

The Internal Monologue

- Understanding the objectives and methods of a character allows a performer to create an internal monologue for that character.
- Real people typically have a *semi-constant flow of thoughts* going on in their minds, and the Stanislavski method attempts to create a similar **internal monologue** for a character.
- This technique helps each action feel as if it comes spontaneously, rather than simply because the script says it should happen.
- Actors also use this monologue to help them prevent a scene from becoming repetitious or dull even after many performances.

Differences from "Method Acting"

- Due of its emphasis on **realism**, the **Stanislavski Method** is often used in modern plays, film, and television.
- It should not be confused with *Lee Strasberg's "Method Acting,"* however, which involves an actor attempting to completely become a character.
- The **Stanislavski Method** maintains that a performer must remain somewhat separate from the character, in order to properly understand his or her motivations and goals.

How to use Stanislavski system

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmhgg_aEuJj8

Stanislavski's method of physical actions

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpEGXrDSXo8>

Stanislavski, vulnerability in a rehearsal space

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGLavvUup_Y