

Title:

Acting - Method Acting

Word Count:

489

Summary:

In this article we're going to discuss what is considered the most difficult form of acting, that of method acting.

Keywords:

acting

Article Body:

The art of method acting was made popular by Lee Strasberg at The Actors Studio and the Group Theatre in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s. It was actually derived from the Stanislavski System who pioneered similar ideas in his teachings, writings, and acting at the Moscow Art Theatre which was formed in 1897.

Some of Strasberg's students included some very famous actors such as Paul Newman, Al Pacino, James Dean and a ton of others. The list is endless.

Method acting is considered the most difficult to teach and to learn. Its main characteristic is that it lacks any specific or technical approach to acting. It is what the supporters of this type of acting refer to as the alternative to the clichéd, unrealistic, and so-called rubber-stamp acting. In other words, it is based in realism and realistic emotions.

Because there are many versions of method acting the exact approach depends on the particular version, which can include such practices as substitution acting or what is called emotional memory.

Sanford Meisner, who was another Group Theatre pioneer, taught a closely related form of method acting. He differed from Strasberg's emotional memory theory and taught one that revolved around "fully immersing oneself in the moment of a character, and experiencing all sensations as the character would."

Stella Adler had another approach to method acting. Her technique is based on the idea that an actor must not use memories from their own past to bring up emotion, but instead use circumstances from their own imagination. She also

taught that action was very important. It wasn't so much what we said but what we did while we said it.

Contemporary acting teachers, names like Jason Bennett, combine many of the acting theories of the last generation of acting teachers. These methods utilize a number of devices such as using the actor's imagination, calling on his or her life experiences to dive into the part, and various forms of psychology where actors are taught to imagine what a person would psychologically do when confronted with the situation in the script. For example, how would a person truly react if another person pulled a gun on them and was ready to shoot them? What terror would they feel? From that the actor tries to convey that psychological terror in the performance.

Bennett also worked on what is called the use of human archetypes. Archetype work is rooted in Jungian Psychology and in the works of Michael Chekhov. Chekhov was very closely associated with Stanislavski. As Chekhov's work evolved, he broke away from Stanislavski, Strasberg and the original members of The Group. Many believe that later in his life, Stanislavski began to recognize that Chekhov's work was very important in developing modern acting theory.

Even though method acting is very hard to teach and even harder to learn, it is still regarded as the most realistic form of acting that there is.